Theatre as Truth Practice: Arthur Miller's The Crucible
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Theatre as Truth Practice: Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* ─ a Play Waiting for the Occasion

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Introduction

0.1 Why a Play? – and Why One that Waits for an Occasion?

Why study a text again – Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* from 1952 – of which it has been said that it 'has been widely read (one could say overread) as a commentary on McCarthyism'?[1] My reason for studying it is not to give it a new interpretation. It is to reconsider its relevance, a relevance that goes beyond the play merely 'warning us': against mass hysteria, for instance, or totalitarianism, manipulation, fanaticism. I do not believe people really need such warnings, nor do I believe that the strength of the play lies in the fact that it is a warning. I want to study the play in its relation to truth, not just one truth, but forms of truth, including even what one could call clairvoyance. With respect to this, the play stands in stark opposition to the way in which theatre has been identified, for millennia, with falsehood, illusion and deceit. One Latin term for a certain kind of 'actor' (a mime-player, in fact) is telling in this context: *hypocrita*. In essence, the reason for the fact that theatre has been identified with falsehood so often is that theatre embodies the breach in representation so strikingly: the breach between mask and reality, between character and actor, between representation and the so-called real. Theatre is a world of appearances, of masks, of the artificial and, as a result, the status of an underlying reality becomes difficult to assess. At the same time, however, theatre has also at times been linked to truth and veracity. This study considers the possibility of theatre as a truth practice in terms of an active response to political lies, fabrications, frame-ups and falsities.

The truth practice I will focus on relates to this one particular play: Miller's *The Crucible*, written in 1952 and performed for the first time in 1953. My question with regard to it is fourfold. The first, fairly basic yet rather complex, question is: Why did Arthur Miller choose a *theatre play* to respond to the politics of McCarthyism in the 1950s; could the same result have been achieved with a novel, a poem or an essay? The second question is how the way in which history is represented in the play, both directly and indirectly, functioned, functions and *may* function dramatically to *actualize* history (and I will come back to the term 'actualization' as opposed to 'making'). In relation to both questions, a third question asks how this all relates to different kinds of truth. These three questions bring me to my fourth and perhaps most central

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[1] Erin Graff Zivin, *Figurative Inquisitions: Conversion, Torture and Truth in the Luso Hispanic Atlantic* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), p. 63.

question: how can we see the play as one that waits for an occasion to become truly active?

As for the latter question, the answer is related to a different reading of a well-known generic term: occasional poetry. Despite the fact that it is a well-known genre, there are no studies, to my knowledge, of this form of poetry that take it seriously as a genre. This could make us forget how much of what we now consider to be pieces of world literature were made 'for the occasion'. I suppose most classical Greek authors would be more than astonished to learn that their pieces would be performed worldwide, two and a half thousand years later. This would remain so up until the 18th century, one could argue. Ovid's boast that he would make a work that would last throughout history is a lonely, almost Romantic voice in the crowd of authors that had no other aim than to win a festival, to write something that would please their Maecenas, or an audience. My argument will be that *The Crucible* is an occasional play-in-reverse. For one, and most basically, it was written for the occasion of McCarthyism. Since then it got, in part, a quasi-universal meaning, just as any Shakespearean play would have. This is to say, that it was taken up in the repertoire of all sorts of companies, worldwide. As such, however, the play has lost, in a pivotal sense, the occasion for which it was written and to which it was a remarkable and courageous response. It was written in times in which a politically motivated atmosphere of fear made it impossible to seek the truth. In working counter to this atmosphere and in its aim to seek the truth, *The Crucible* was a veritable *truth practice*. It wanted to speak the truth in direct response to a power that could have destroyed both the piece and its author. It is such an occasion that the play is waiting for to become active again in a basic sense.

As for the first of the questions posed, my contention will be, in the context of *The Crucible*'s requiring a truth practice, that the play could not equally well have been a novel, a poem, an essay, or any other genre. All other genres miss something that is intrinsic to the theatre, and to drama, namely that it requires people to act physically, to play something again, to *do* something *familiar anew*. This may seem trivial. Yet it connects to something that Bertolt Brecht considered to be drama's major didactic force: that it asked people to *enact* something instead of reading something, or looking at it. With regard to this issue, the play will bring me to the heart of an issue that is both specific, in the sense that it is related to the period of McCarthyism, and that is more general, as a trait of American culture of the past three centuries. The play studies the production of fear in that it is made possible by a structuring

Manichaean principle. When president Ronald Reagan held his evil empire speech on 8 March 1983, this proved to be a prefiguration of president George Bush's 'axis of evil' in his State of the Union Address on 29 January 2002. The play's subject begs the question of how the play relates to a seemingly persistent Manichean element or aspect of American culture. The issue at stake, then, is whether this culture works by means of the persistent recurrence of a painful and problematic dynamic and whether this is inevitable. In this respect, my question of whether *The Crucible* had to be a play concerns a play's abilities to both show and re-enact a certain cultural dynamic, repeating and confirming it but also offering the possibility of change. It touches upon a play's ability, that is, to repeat things in the sense of working them through, almost like a therapy, or in the sense of acting them out again, as a wager on the appearance of something new, perhaps even in order to change the dynamic at play.

In the light of the latter, Miller's text is, in a somewhat twisted sense, an example of what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has called 'critical intimacy.'[2] The play works with and on a cultural dynamic that is European, Western in nature, but also specific to the United States of America. In this perspective, it takes a critical stance to this dynamic while being intimate with it at the same time. As a result of this critical intimacy, the play cannot lead to a solution. The cultural dynamic at stake, the one that is both intimately familiar in the text and critically judged by it, works on the basis of an opposition between good and evil, between God and devil. It is a dynamic that, as will be argued, cannot truly be mastered. It needs to be enacted, physically, in the present, in close proximity, and it needs to be judged as from a distance. Herein lies one of the reasons why *The Crucible* had to be a play.

There are other reasons why *The Crucible* had to be a play. One is a matter of the didactic powers of modern theatre, a power that was the key characteristic of art for centuries and even millennia but that has become problematic since the 19th century, when for instance Edgar Allan Poe called didactic literature the 'worst of heresies'. Another reason why *The Crucible* had to be a play is to do with the intrinsic relation between politics and theatre. With respect to the former, in a sense, this study places itself in the tradition of Brechtian theatre: a form of theatre that was aimed at unveiling ideological illusions and falsity by showing audiences the real conditions under which they

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[2] Diana Brydon, 'Cross-talk, Postcolonial Pedagogy, and Transnational Literacy', in *Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy, and Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Conchita Sugars (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004), p. 62.

lived. In other words this study does not restrict itself to the relation between the stage production of a play, with its spectators implied, as a matter of (mere) entertainment. Nor is it focused on a play's Aristotelian function of evoking the audience's feelings of pity, fear and catharsis. Rather, in my study, just like in Brecht's epic theatre, the play's aim is to appeal to the spectators' reason and to ultimately make them come to grips with the political reality in terms of action.[3] This is made possible by the playwright's technique of 'alienation', which requires spectators to maintain an emotional distance from the characters in the play in order to engage in a critical evaluation of dominant theatrical and social practices.[4] Brecht famously called it *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect or distancing effect) and he encouraged it for the sake of rational activism in the audience, in a wilful negation of an attitude of emotional arousal or passivity.[5]

To this end, in epic theatre, narrative commentary accompanies the dramatic plot and action. As Brecht mentions:

> The stage began to narrate. The narrator no longer vanished with the fourth wall. Not only did the background make its own comment on stage happenings through large screens which evoked other events occurring at the same time in other places, documenting or contradicting statements by characters through quotations projected onto a screen, lending tangible, concrete statistics to abstract discussions, providing facts and figures for happenings which were plastic but unclear in their meaning.[6]

The quote may help, first of all, to define the object of my study. As indicated, I will not focus on specific performances. I will be focusing instead on what propels the performance: the authorized text. If there is theatre at play here, it is an internal theatre, one that connects individuals to collectives. In *The Crucible* Miller added narrative parts, which appear to introduce the characters but which also, if only because of their sheer length, disrupt the dramatic plot. As a result, the text also displays characteristics of the epic theatre. The narrative parts do

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[3] Bertolt Brecht, 'The Epic Theatre and its Difficulties', in *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p. 23.

[4] Delia Pollock, 'The Play as Novel: Reappropriating Brecht's *Drums in the Night*', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74.3 (1988), p. 296.

[5] W. A. J. Steer, 'Brecht's Epic Theatre: Theory and Practice', *The Modern Language Review* 63.3 (1968), p. 639.

[6] Bertolt Brecht and Edith Anderson, 'Theatre for Learning', *The Tulane Drama Review* (1961), p. 19.

not turn this into a narrative but work dramatically, hand in hand with the plot to both engage the readers and to switch between generic modes that make it impossible for the reader to merely *experience* the play. As a result, the narrative parts help to comment on the history of events, to explain them, and encourage the reader or participant to reach a judgment as to their true status. Considering the political potential of the epic theatre, the narrative commentary in this play instructs the audiences in a didactic way to judge and assess the things that are represented, with the ultimate aim of making them ready for political action. Finally, in terms of a possible performance, the play's 'background' does not so much operate formally and theatrically as Brecht described it, but the text works on the basis of what can be called an alienating background. Although formally speaking the play is set against the background of the 17th century, it only works because this historical setting gets yet another background. The context of the 1950s does not simply form the 'natural', historical context of the play. It becomes an alienating one in relation to the historical reality of the 17th century.

Alienation, or *Verfremdung*, was not a formal exercise. It was aimed at judgment. Consequently, in this text, as in Brechtian theatre, a transition is staged from theatre to tribunal and from spectator to judge.[7] Unlike the classical Greek tragedies or the many tragedies that were produced in Europe and the West in later times, the epic nature of this play is also evident in that its protagonists are common people, whose wills and passions do not constitute the motivating force behind the dramatic action. Rather, they are all subjected to the manifold forces in the outer world in their immediate political, social and economic environment. Hence it is an open dramatic form in which any protagonist's individuality is not the focus of all the action.[8]

Yet the confrontation between the different historical backgrounds also works on the basis of the fact that both are historically realistic and accurate, and this may also serve to offer possibilities of identification. The play is thus not entirely Brechtian. It is concerned with truth even, as we will see, in other ways than suggested by Brecht. My approach will not be specifically Brechtian either, therefore. The reason for this is that I will be focusing on a play that cannot actively produce truth but that became active, and has to become active, in a historically speaking *timely* way, this is to say: in response to particular

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[7] Yasco Horsman, *Theaters of Justice: Judging, Staging, and Working Through in Arendt, Brecht, and Delbo* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 92-93.
[8] Steer, p. 638.

historical circumstances: what I called an occasional play-in-reverse. When I consider the play a matter of truth practice, this is not so much in the sense that it unveils false ideologies to reveal the true conditions under which people live. The play is more a truth practice in that it stimulates actors, individually or collectively, to work through a complex dynamic in which they have to do justice to all the parts. Seen in this light, the play as a whole is a truth practice in the sense in which Michel Foucault used the classical Greek notion of *parrhesia* i.e. speaking freely and openly: a certain way of expressing everything without fear of consequences. Foucault seems encouraged by this Nietzschean question: '*What* really is it in us that wants 'the truth'…*why not* rather untruth?'[9] He defines *parrhesia* as 'telling the truth without concealment, reserve, empty manner of speech, or rhetorical ornament which might encode or hide it'. 'Telling all' is then: telling the truth without hiding any part of it, without hiding it behind anything.'[10] *Parrhesia* in his view is a political notion that has been in use since antiquity to influence relations of power and the interplay between the subject and the truth.[11] This free-spokenness is fraught with risk, as it requires the addressee or the interlocutor to agree to listen to the hurtful truth of the parrhesiast (*parrhesiastes*) in a parrhesiatic 'game'. It is thus also a dialogic, dramatic, questioning process in which the counterpart may respond with violent means. Hence it requires the courage to speak the truth despite the risk of losing one's life, as when it not only offends the other but also forces this more powerful other to annihilate the one who spoke the truth.

Foucault studied the practice of speaking the truth in antiquity. What distinguishes, in essence, the parrhesiast from the prophet, sage or technician (teacher) is his courage to speak the truth without fear. He states:

> We can say then very schematically, that the parrhesiast is not the prophet who speaks the truth when he reveals fate enigmatically in the name of someone else. The parrhesiast is not a sage who, when he wants to and against the background of his silence, tells of being and nature (*phusis*) in the name of wisdom. The parrhesiast is not the professor or teacher, the expert who speaks of *tekhne* in the

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[9] Matthew Sharpe, 'A Question of Two Truths? Remarks on Parrhesia and the "Political-Philosophical" Difference', *Parrhesia* 2 (2007), p. 89.

[10] Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (the Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984,* ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK / New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 10.

[11] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth,* p. 8.

name of a tradition. So he does not speak of fate, being, or *tekhne.* Rather, inasmuch as he takes the risk of provoking war with others, rather than solidifying the traditional bond, like the teacher, by [speaking] in his own name and perfectly clearly, [unlike the] prophet who speaks in the name of someone else, [inasmuch as] finally [he tells] the truth of what is in the singular form of individuals and situations, and not the truth of being and the nature of things, the parrhesiast brings into play the true discourse of what the Greeks called *ethos.*[12]

Foucault contends, then, that prophecy, sagacity or wisdom, teaching and *parrhesia* are four different modes of veridiction. They require different figures for their expression, they call for different modes of speech and they belong to different domains defined by the concepts fate, being, *tekhne* and *ethos.*[13] *Parrhesia* in ancient Greece grew out of political culture as a democratic practice that served as a leveller, as Kerry Burch defined it, between the powerful hierarchies of the superiors and the common people.[14] Socrates' courage in addressing power is a parrhesiastic practice that has rational-democratic or philosophic underpinnings that sustain the principle of 'care of the self.' This courage to speak the truth is embedded in democratic principles and is different from the prevalent cultural prestige of valour and heroic aristocratic manliness in ancient Greece. As concerns *The Crucible,* I do not consider Miller as a prophet, for he does not speak in somebody else's name; or as a teacher, for he is not solidifying a tradition; or as a sage, for he does not appeal to superior wisdom. He is, indeed, a parrhesiast.

As for its potential to speak the truth, *The Crucible* is one of Miller's most famous plays. It has become a classic since the early fifties, especially in American literature.[15] Compared to, for instance, Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* has certainly seen numerous performances, although not as many as *Death of a Salesman*, which has been the object of innumerable productions inside and outside the United States, and was the recurrent topic of television versions and cinema. *The Crucible* has, to my knowledge, been less

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[12] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth,* p. 25.

[13] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth,* p. 25.

[14] Kerry Burch, 'Parrhesia as a Principle of Democratic Pedagogy', *Philosophical Studies in Education* 40 (2009), pp. 72-73.

[15] Susan C. W. Abbotson, introduction, *Masterpieces of 20th-Century American Drama* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2005), p. 9.

frequently produced, especially outside of the States. One significant exception is the French-Eastern Germany film version from 1957, based on a scenario by Jean-Paul Sartre.[16] Still, this version also hints at why *The Crucible* has not known as many productions, at least outside of the United States, since the time of its writing and performance. The reason may be that *The Crucible* is so unquestionably linked to a historically distinct American period: the late forties and early fifties period of McCarthyism. It was McCarthy's Communist-hunt in the States, in short McCarthyism, which appears to define and frame the play. This is also what Sartre's movie clearly responds to. The film not only benefitted from cooperation between French and, at the time, communist East Germany industries, but it also took a stance in the battle between capitalist and communist parties, in favour of communism.

Much like George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Miller's *The Crucible* appears to be historically 'anchored,' perhaps even 'frozen' as an allegory that reflects specifically on its own times. According to Graff Zivin, as we saw earlier, the play 'has been widely read (one could say overread) as a commentary on McCarthyism'.[17] It may therefore seem to have lost its ability to speak more universally, or rather, more singularly or particularly in many different circumstances. As if to prove the point, one internet site about the film version of *The Crucible* that was made in 1996 has it that 'Despite the obvious political criticisms contained within the play, most critics felt that *The Crucible* was 'a self contained play about a terrible period in American history'. Consequently the 1996 film version was considered to be a failure because it was out of touch with the period of the nineties.[18] Nevertheless, the Broadway version of 2002 appeared to be very much in sync with the times, as the responses suggested.[19] This leads me to postulate that this is a play that has been waiting, had to be and will be, for the right historical circumstances in order to be able to become truly active again, as a truth practice.

The latter fact helps me to specify one of the elements that the answer to my initial questions must contain. In my reading of and dealing with the play, I found that it is concerned with truth, or different forms of truth. As the plural suggests, these are not absolute or objective truths, let alone universal ones, nor

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[16] In French: *Les Sorcières de Salem*; in German: *Die Hexen von Salem* or *Hexenjagd*, 1957; Christopher Bigsby, 'The Crucible', in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: The Crucible,* ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), p. 192.

[17] Graff Zivin, p. 63.

[18] 'The Crucible by Arthur Miller' <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/sal_cru.htm> [accessed 21 February 2014].

[19] Elaine Wiggins, '*The Crucible* Still Burns', *Northwest Theater Review* 10 (2004), p. 35.

is there one 'deep' truth in it, in a historical hermeneutical sense, as if the play captured the deeper truth of McCarthyism. The play enacts a specific historical, culturally and politically charged truth-practice that is not so much *revealed* through theatre as it is *made possible*, aesthetically and politically, by theatre. As such, the play does not so much embody the classical nineteenth-century 'true mirror' that is held up to society.[20] This is to say: it does not *reflect* truth. It is through theatrical enactment and dramatization that truths can be *established*, which is something altogether different. There is an intriguing passage, in this context, in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* in which she states that theatre is 'the political art par excellence, for only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art'.[21] Why this may be so is a question that this thesis seeks to answer. Arendt conceives of politics as a stage, or a space of appearance, on which the agent's self is truly disclosed through what she calls 'fragile' forms of speech and action in the context of public debate.[22] Theatre in her view is the sublime art form for the representation of every action and speech that constitute the political. She maintains that:

> …the specific revelatory quality of action and speech, the implicit manifestation of the agent and speaker, is so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking that it can be represented and 'reified' only through a kind of repetition, the imitation or *mimesis,* which according to Aristotle prevails in all arts but is actually appropriate only to the *drama,* whose very name (from the Greek verb *dran,* 'to act') indicates that playacting actually is an imitation of acting. But the imitative element lies not only in the art of the actor, but, as Aristotle rightly claims, in the making or writing of the play, at least to the extent that the drama comes fully to life only when it is enacted in the theatre.[23]

So, Arendt argues that both the content and the meaning of political action and speech can have various forms of reification in art works, which transform them

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[20] A paradigmatic case would be Clayton Hamilton's 'The Magic Mirror: Naturalism and Truth in the Theatre', in *The Theory of the Theatre: And Other Principles of Dramatic* (New York: Henry Holt, 1910), pp. 184-87.

[21] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2nd edn (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 188.

[22] Richard Halpern, 'Theatre and Democratic Thought: Arendt to Rancière', *Critical Inquiry* 37.3 (Spring 2011), p. 548.

[23] Arendt, p. 187.

and condense them. With respect to this, drama as an art form is politically the most powerful medium to enact politics as it is a repetition of *action* (the most basic definition of mimesis), which, according to Arendt, is by definition political. Politics in Arendt's view is a matter of things being acted out, publicly, theatrically and dramatically. In this context, and despite the fact that politics is nowadays perhaps too often considered as the art of government, I will consider it in terms of its 'moments' in what follows. No politician can do whatever he or she likes at any given moment. The moment has to be there, ready to be 'taken' or used. My contention is that *The Crucible* is political in the sense that it cannot be used at any given time. It needs an occasion; a moment.

I aim to trace, in part, the historical and cultural agency through time of one particular work of art, then: Miller's *The Crucible*. As such this study is distinctly different from previous studies that have traced the historical and cultural manifestations of a single work of art. A paradigmatic example would be George Steiner's *Antigone*, in which Steiner sketched the meanings given to this play by Sophocles in different historical contexts and the ways in which the play was reworked time and again.[24] Other studies about, for instance, plays by Shakespeare have followed a similar pattern. My aim for this study is different. As history has proven, *Antigone* was performed time and again in many different circumstances, just as *Hamlet* for instance was performed all over the world, in both the most innocent and charged of circumstances, on innumerable high school stages but also in prisons and labour camps.[25] My contention will be that *The Crucible* is not that flexible. It has to act, or can only act in response to specific circumstances. These circumstances form, in a sense, the necessary counterpart of the play's possibility to act. They form the occasion that the play is waiting for to be truly operative, or better, that the play is waiting for in order to become a veritable truth practice.

0.2 Theatre versus Poetic Fabrication

So many things have already been written about the play that it would be a daunting task to come up with new interpretations. As said, this is not my major point of concern. Rather, I will use existing interpretations to examine the play for a more or less systematic exploration of theatre's possibilities to work

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[24] See George Steiner, *Antigones: How the Antigone Legend has Endured in Western Literature, Art and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

[25] For one prison-variant of Hamlet, see PrisonperformingArts, 'Prison Performing Arts─Hamlet' *Youtube.* You Tube. June 5, 2007. Web. < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCk38bDbot0> [accessed 18 August 2014]

through a specific historical, political, and cultural dynamic that may manifest itself in different historical circumstances but that nevertheless also needs a specific historical circumstance, the primary characteristic of which is producing fear. This is to say that I will be looking at the way in which this play can offer us a stage on which to operate truthfully in response to fear. The play can show us, in this context, how fear is produced and how a play is never a simple means to *find* truth. Instead the play is an experiment, in that it needs a process, a development in time, to establish truth. Moreover, it helps us to establish a truth by analyzing a cultural pattern while at the same time, through forms of dramatization, helping us to find alternatives for it. There are of course many more aspects to theatre (and some of them will be addressed in what follows). This is why I said that I will be working 'more or less' systematically. I will systematically look at the ways in which this play, as a theatrical piece, attempts to practice truth.

This may seem to be in line with the oft quoted words of director Peter Brook: 'In everyday life, "if" is a fiction, in the theatre "if" is an experiment. In everyday life, "if" is an evasion, in the theatre "if" is the truth.'[26] However, my study will not simply accept the contention of the second sentence since the fact that Miller chose to write an allegory was a (politically speaking: wise) matter of evasion. The contention in the first sentence is more to the point. When I say that the answer to my initial question will concern truth(s), I mean that it will deal with the question in terms of performativity, both in the sense of performance and of the speech act meaning of performativity. An experiment has to be carried out, it has to be done, time and again, to see what comes out of it. The outcome, moreover, since such is the nature of an experiment, is not defined beforehand and cannot be defined beforehand. Likewise, a truth practice is not a straight road towards finding the truth. A truth practice is a brave experiment to create a situation in which the core issue is the definition of the truth.

In terms of experiment, the play has proven its powers while at the same time appearing to be waiting for different times. I will be looking at the way in which *The Crucible* has been making history with regard to the American past, with regard to the period in the United States in which it was written and in which it intervened, and in relation to a future into which the play projects itself (which might be our current present). I will therefore seek to explore

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[26] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968).

systematically the play's agential force.[27] This concerns its potential to actualize history, and by using the term 'actualize' I want to emphasize that it does not 'make' history. I agree with Arendt that history cannot be made, like an object that is make-able. Actions actualize history. In addition I will not be looking at historical contexts in which the play was received differently or performed differently. Instead, I will be looking at the way in which the play partakes in a cultural dynamic with a certain historical persistency, while criticizing that cultural dynamic. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I will be looking at the way in which the play seeks to educate the audience in the sense of eliciting a truth-practice, in response to politically invested strategies that are aimed at subjecting people by means of fear, or productions of illusionary fears. By this I do not mean to imply that these fears are not real and therefore less deep. Illusionary fears can be very real, they can be deeply felt, and they can physically and psychologically alter people. Their source may be illusionary nevertheless.

The fact that one can speak of a play's performance in terms of a 'production' is telling. We will see that there are different forms of play and production involved in *The Crucible*, and they relate to the play's dealing with past, present and future. On the face of it, *The Crucible* deals with an historical event from the seventeenth century in order to reflect on things that happened in the 1950s. In my reading, however, the play does actually reflect on what, from the perspective of its own time, should be called the future. In all three cases – past, present and future – the play demands to be produced in response to other productions which are all, in some sense, concerned with theatrical performance without being truly theatre plays. The most accurate term to describe this dynamic is Hannah Arendt's definition of the political type of *poièsis* that, in her reading, was considered to be at the heart of sovereign power.[28] In that context *poièsis* meant 'strategic fabrication'. This should be distinguished from the often pejoratively used notion of manipulation. Rhetorically speaking there

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[27] 'Agential force' in first instance might seem to refer here to Karan Barad's theory of agential realism, according to which the world is made up of phenomena, which amount to an 'ontological inseparability of intra-acting agencies.' However, I would like to point out that agential force, well beyond the domain of aesthetics, has been intrinsic to art ever since it came into existence.
[28] Allan Parsons, 'What is it that we "do", when we perform an action?' in *Praxis and Poiesis* (May 2013).
.<https://sites.google.com/site/praxisandtechne/Home/architecture/performativity/poiesis-and-praxis> [accessed 27 February 2014]. See also Keith Breen, 'Law Beyond Command? - An Evaluation of Arendt's Understanding of Law', in *Hannah Arendt and the Law*, ed. by Marco Goldoni and Christopher McCorkindale (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2012), pp. 35-54.

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is no escaping the skilful handling of material. Even the most honourable speaker, whether or not 'honourable' is being used ironically here, will have to deal skilfully with the material. We must draw a distinction, however, between this manipulation and the strategic fabrication that does not show or unveil the truth but that wilfully and strategically hides or distorts it. Something is being played out in terms of a political production, and as we will see, these productions serve another kind of production, namely the socio-political production of fear.

One theme of this study, indeed, addresses how fear is *produced* as a result of 'work', a term that is used to differentiate it from action, which Arendt refers to as *political*. Whether we take the example of the Salem process, of the McCarthyism of the 1950s, or the more recent so-called war on terror, fear is produced in the sense that it is *made*. Again, this is far from saying that the fear that is produced is not real in all these different circumstances. Politically speaking, fear can only work when it is experienced as real. The question is whether it was the result of a generally and simultaneously felt fear caused by a manifest, real threat, or whether it was, at least partly, *produced* as such or, in Arendt's words, fabricated. With respect to this it is important to emphasize that this is not a psychological study. Yet fear is one of the dominant themes addressed by this play. I will not be looking at how fear works psychologically, however, but at how it was produced, fabricated and performed. Here as well the theatrical approach is crucial. Joseph McCarthy's hearings, as mediatized trials, worked as an orchestrated spectacle with an unmistakable theatrical aspect to them and triggered real fears.[29]

However, my focus does not concern the anxieties, in terms of an American psyche (if such a thing exists), of Americans living in the seventeenth, twentieth or twenty-first century. I will be looking at the ways in which fears are elicited, at how people's anxieties are tapped into and how fears are used politically. This is to say that I am considering fear in terms of a *politics* of fear. Hannah Arendt's theatre metaphor in politics is vital to explain the similarity and difference between stage actors and their spectators and political actors in the public realm, or between spectacle and theatre. An audience consisting of spectators watches actors acting on the stage and observes them, interprets them during their repeated performances and the spectators construct different narratives of the dramatic action in their

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[29] Nicole Rogers, The Play of Law: Comparing Performances in Law and Theatre', *Queensland University of Technology Law and Justice Journal* 8 (2008), p. 429.

memories. *The Crucible* is a political intervention in the sense that it tries to explain how fear is produced from the political stage by political actors for the consumption of spectators who reciprocate it by succumbing to it. By contrast political actors need a public arena to reciprocate their words and actions, they work with an audience that is equally part of the action.[30] It is important to note in this respect that politics is distinctly different here from what Chantal Mouffe calls the political.[31] Whereas politics concerns the practical everyday execution of power, including manipulating things, the political concerns the choice between incompatible worlds. In the contemporary world, this political choice, according to Mouffe, is significantly suppressed by the hegemony of liberalism, which negates the ineradicable character of antagonism in human society.[32] In both uses it is important to trace how fear is used and to unveil its tactics because it will determine the type of world we choose to live in or, more fundamentally, our ability or power to choose. As for this ability, fear will also determine the scope of possible choices.

The consequences for the *actualization* of history are considerable. The production of fear serves the political goal of directing history in one specific direction instead of another one. In the context of *The Crucible,* I am therefore interested, to a certain extent, in the role of art in an historical context, and more in general with its historical agency. I must emphasise, however, that this study is not historical in a restricted sense. I will indeed focus on the specific historical means of production of fear of the 1950s and the specific fabrications that were used at the time. Yet I will also focus on the ways in which the play works with more general, culturally persistent forms of fear, and how they are shown and analysed in the play. The work of art, in other words, is centre stage. History returns here because the play as such does not find itself outside the cultural dynamic that I hinted at, and as a consequence it cannot reflect on it from the outside. The play is part of it, has to be part of it, toying artificially with a persistent societal problem.

On the face of it, Miller performs a well-known literary trick. At a time of considerable forms of censorship, which were sometimes almost inescapable, Miller chooses a story from the past that allows him to speak allegorically about the present. All totalitarian systems or those with strong censorship have prompted this form of art. As we will see in chapters 3 and 4, the allegorical

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[30] Leora Y. Bilsky, 'When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom: Reflections on Hannah Arendt's Concept of Judgment', *History and Memory* 8.2 (1996), pp. 140-1.
[31] Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 8-10.
[32] Mouffe, p. 10.

frame should not be applied too easily, as Erin Graff Zivin argued, following an argument developed by Idelber Avelar in *Untimely Present*. For Graff Zivin, the following in Avelar's analysis is crucial:

> …not because in order to escape censorship writers have to craft 'allegorical' ways of saying things that they would otherwise be able to express 'directly' […] but because the petrified images of ruins, in their immanence, bear the only possibility of narrating the defeat.[33]

As Graff Zivin rightly argues in response, the truth may be that both modes of allegory are operative: the one that functions by means of veiling things and the one that in the end ruins the coherence of meaning. I will make use of these in chapters 3 and 4, respectively.[34] Moreover, what makes Miller's piece so special, in the context of allegory, is that the event from the past is not altogether 'other' as the *allo-* in allegory suggests. The events from the past border on the events in the present, metonymically, thematically and culturally. Miller is not just taking an event from the past that is, metaphorically, convenient enough for dealing with the present. As Jonathan Culler suggests, all powerful metaphors may depend on metonymy.[35] The metonymy at play here is a cultural one. It relates to a persistent, recurring cultural dynamic that can be traced to seventeenth-century Salem, to the 1950s and to the first decade of the twenty-first century. I should emphasise that such persistence is not a natural given, as if it were a matter of essence. How could it be, since it concerns an intrinsically politically charged, cultural matter that as such is partly made and partly actualized?

In the three periods that I will be considering fear is produced in different ways, with different interests involved and different worlds to choose from. In chapters 1 and 2 we will see that fear is produced by religious powers in a society that is considered to be traditional from an Enlightenment stance. The belief in witches and witchcraft is widespread. Historically speaking, this is pre-Enlightenment, with events taking place shortly before the turn of the eighteenth century. Therefore the play is able to introduce characters that announce the

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[33] Idelber Avelar, *The Untimely Present: Post-Dictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 69.
[34] Graff Zivin, p. 62.
[35] Jonathan D. Culler, Preface, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. xx-xxi.

Enlightenment stance against witches and witchcraft. The battle between a more scientific and traditional worldview (and world) is a matter of urgency in the play, as it was in the historical reality. Fear is aroused, in this context, in a town's community that is best studied from an anthropological point of view. It concerns a small scale community, where everyone knows everyone else, in a predominantly rural society. A politics of fear is clearly used by religious parties. The political choice is one between a world ruled by superstition and a world ruled by knowledge and practical wisdom.

This image changes radically once we consider the play in the context of the 1950s. Here we have a large-scale society that to a certain extent sees itself as a party pitted against another in the global battle for dominance. This battle is not just a matter of politics, however, it is an economic matter with strong moral overtones. Democracy is opposed to totalitarianism, capitalism to communism, free market to state control, freedom to subjection. The dangers and fears involved concern the infiltration of society by elements from the so-called evil enemy. Since fears are not spread or fuelled by hearsay and pamphlets in this case, but by massive modern media such as radio, newspapers, cinema and television, an anthropological approach might still be useful but would also fall short in terms of scope and in terms of media. Guy Debord only published his *The Society of the Spectacle* in 1967 but the previous decade had provided him with extensive evidence, especially in the States, of what he described a decade later. The American audience was bombarded, almost relentlessly, with images and texts that served to produce fear. Politicians that may or may not have had clear religious convictions used the politics of fear. The political choice was one between worlds that were first and foremost *morally* incompatible, as well as economically, politically and aesthetically.

Things change again when we read the play in the context of the first decade of the 21st century. The so-called 'war on terror' ostensibly started after 2001, but its tactics and goals were already in place in the 1980s and 1990s under both the Bush Sr administration and the Clinton administration. Still, its dynamics clearly changed after 9/11. Another antagonism arose that was defined by some as a clash between civilizations.[36] It was more complicated than that, however, since these civilizations were not divided by any kind of iron curtains. Civilizations mingled, with all Western societies having become *de facto* multicultural. It has been said that the clash of civilizations was a battle between

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[36] Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49.

secular and Islamic religious societies. The irony was that the so-called secular society of the US was deeply religious, whereas in 'secular' Europe some called for a return to religious, so-called Judeo-Christian roots. Another irony was that so-called Islamic religious parties wanted political change whereas some secular societies gave more and more space to orthodox or radical religions. The battle was thus being waged both on the outside and the inside, taking place both here and there, in a globalized system that has been defined as a network society and a society of control. Almost all parties involved used a politics of fear, and the political choice was not simply between one world or another, but between many worlds, all of them different.

Nevertheless *The Crucible* forms a connecting point or node by simply connecting elements between these radically different periods. As a play, in this respect, it works distinctly differently from, say, a Shakespeare play. Any Shakespeare play might allow us to compare different periods in time in relation to different enactments or productions of that one play. Such a play functions differently, that is, in different historical context. My contention will be that *The Crucible* needs a specific context because it is aimed at one. It can function as a guiding thread or a guiding line because it deals not just with some sort of cultural persistency but with a specific cultural pattern and it responds to specific forms of recognizable political tactics and strategies: fabrications. The play can be seen to act on the level of representation in a battle for truth. In one sense, this battle is defined within the parameters of the Enlightenment as a battle against superstition and deficient or false representations. In another sense, however, the truth at stake is one threatened by political or ideological fabrication. In the trials organised by McCarthy and his men, or by the HUAC, people were being 'framed'. The media, through photographs, newsreels and articles framed them, but they were also framed in the sense of being cheated, as they were brought into the wrong context as a result of twisted words and manipulated proof. The role of art in this context is not to show truth without representation but to use representation in order to unveil, to unmask and to relieve people from the burden of falsity.[37]

The artistic framework can be distinguished from the political setup. The ever circumstantial politics of fear is investigated by the play for the purpose of a political truth. This is not the truth of politicians 'speaking the truth.' Fundamentally in a representative democracy the so-called 'breach of

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[37] Peter Zazzali, 'The Role of Theatre in Society: A Comparative Analysis of the Socio-Cultural Theories of Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno', *The European Legacy* 18.6 (2013), p. 692.

representation' as Frank Ankersmit calls it, implies that politicians cannot tell the truth directly, as it is.[38] This truth is political in the sense that it concerns the truth of incompatible worlds, the truth of this variety, and the fact that we have a true choice between them. The production of fear is always aimed at making this truly political choice impossible. *The Crucible* does not simply open up that choice. As a work of art it cannot be simple. Yet in representing the different parties that stand for incompatible and antagonistic worlds and by giving them a voice, the play can become a truth practice in the sense of an enactment, not of any particular politics, but of the battle between parties that all strive to see a world become reality. This is what makes the play political in the sense of Mouffe's 'the political,' which she defines in relation to politics:

> By 'the political' I mean the dimension of antagonism, which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by 'politics' I mean the set of practices, and institutions through which an order is created organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political.[39]

The Crucible contains this antagonistic dimension that constitutes the political as defined by Chantal Mouffe and this antagonism leads to conflict as the play unfolds. This political battle is ultimately waged with a view to realizing the truth that each party strives for. Through the representation of different characters with different political motives the play acts as a truth practice much like Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre in which the actors' work is seen as a didactic commentary for the benefit of theatre's social function. The ultimate goal of this practice is to invite the audience to constructively judge and criticize the represented scene. Therefore drama serves a pedagogical function by instructing its audiences. Miller seems to engage his readers and audiences by maintaining an emotional distance between them and the main action in the play, in order to foreground the play's theatrical aspects and underscore the socio-political message of drama.

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[38] Frank R. Ankersmit, 'Representational Democracy: An Aesthetic Approach to Conflict and Compromise', *Common Knowledge* 8.1 (2002), pp. 24-25.
[39] Mouffe, p. 9.

0.3 Heterogeneous Voices, Individual Responsibility

Considering the play's potential and action through time might easily lead one to conclude that the play has a universal message, one that could be qualified as 'deeply human.' Engaging in a (familiar) scholarly argument about the meaning of words that elude an exact definition is unnecessary. If by universal we mean that the play is applicable to or meaningful in different cultures and for many people, this is an understandable description. If, however, universal is defined in a philosophically underpinned and radical way, I would argue against calling the play the carrier of a universal message. The simple reason is that the play takes a stance, it takes sides and picks an enemy without, however, rejecting this enemy beforehand.

We need to be more precise. The play introduces us to specific characters. This is where universality could come back with a vengeance, as these characters could be the carriers of a universal message since, as Žižek argues, there is no universality without particularity.[40] Yet I would like to make a distinction between particularity and singularity for clarity's purpose. Whereas the singular relates to the universal, the particular relates to the general or, by implication, to the generic. Thus the play depicts a particular situation that is easily recognizable as a specimen of a general condition. In terms of singularity, this holds for certain performances, or a single performance, in one place, for a specific audience, at a specific moment. Both are the topic of this study. I deal with the text of the play as the starting point for many performances and, as such, it concentrates on a particular situation that is generally applicable. Yet in terms of the play's potential, I will argue that it is unlike many other plays. It needs a political moment to become active.

Defining the play's message as universal has detrimental and, scholarly speaking, untenable consequences. It has often been argued that the very idea of universal rights relies on one particular approach which, historically speaking, has been defined as European or Western. I do not have strong reservations about this as there is no reason why an idea from a particular source could not have universal implications, or universal value. The pressing question is whether these ideas really are European or Western, or whether they are *claimed* to be. Just as the modern form of democracy has more than one forerunner, likewise freedom of expression, universal equality or the right to be able to live unharmed have also been explained through the prism of different cultures. The problem, however, remains that the label 'universal' is used where empirically,

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[40] Slavoj Žižek, 'Tolerance as an Ideological Category', *Critical Inquiry* 34.4 (2008), pp. 660-82.

historically, culturally, politically, socially, in short generally, it is not applicable. It is as human to exploit as it is human to fight against exploitation. McCarthy is as human as Arthur Miller. The desire (or right) to bear arms is as human as the call for peace. In terms of the play's characters: they are all particular human beings. To call only one of them the carrier of a universal message is ignoring the fact that the play's particularity points to a general condition of disaccord, of struggle, of abuse of power and so forth. This is why the play is a truth practice that questions the reader or the audience which side they dare or want to choose, and what kind of human being they want to become, or risk to be. In this regard, the play is distinctly heterogeneous and, as a consequence, it is resolutely and tellingly theatrical and dramatic.

The etymological meaning of the Greek word for actor – *hypokritès* - is 'he who answers.'[41] The underlying idea of the actor is that a speaker becomes split in two. Therefore, response is at the heart of theatre. In the case of someone telling a story, the narrator can produce many voices as a result of which there is always a hierarchy involved: the speaker has to give the floor to the other speaker embedded in him or her. The idea of theatre is that all voices and all actors are equal on the level of the language situation, which consequently can be defined as dramatic in two ways. If we consider drama as the element of action in theatre, the dynamic of independent voices operating on an equal level drives the plot forward. This dynamic of independent voices will involve conflict, tension and confrontations that unite or confront the audience. In terms of the play, it is not merely the characters appearing on stage (theatrically), speaking to one another (both dramatically and theatrically) and acting (dramatically), it is also the play itself that operates theatrically and dramatically in relation to the reader and the audience by asking: what will you say in response, what will you *do*?

In this perspective, the play is both individual and collective in terms of scope. This is why I can both accept and criticize the idea that the play is about individual responsibility. Many individuals were taking a stance against the forces of McCarthyism. Many of them were crushed. It seems that Miller did not make this oppression his main theme. Neither was he promoting an heroic individual who could singlehandedly withstand the forces of evil and come out of the conflict victoriously. He depicted an entire force field. Politically speaking, the play addresses the audience (be it the reader or the viewer) both as

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[41] A. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Ancient Athens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953).

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a collective of individuals and as an individual that is indexically related to a collective. They will all have to make an ethical decision since they are being called upon by the play. The idea of theatre makes it equally possible for people to take the side of either Proctor or Danforth. This is why the play does not present a universal story of an heroic individual conquering the powerful forces of totalitarianism. The play is distinctly and intrinsically political in that it divides the audience into opposing sides. Even those who define Proctor as the true hero of this story may belong to radically opposed parties.

This leads to the question, of course, of how I will deal with the play as both a member of the audience and a scholar studying it. Cultural analysis, as I see it and use it, can partly be considered as a form of cultural studies. If my analysis is also a form of cultural history it concerns the issues of historical continuity and contingency. There is no law that requires history to develop in only one way, and cultures are never fixed and stable through time. They do resist change, however, and provide people with forms of stability. Institutional organizations are put in place to guarantee such stability. Nevertheless, people can change culture as much as culture can change them. In chapter 5 and the conclusion this dynamic will be the central point of concern when I re-assess the culture theory put forward by Geert Hofstede. For Hofstede the emphasis lies on the persistency of and in culture. This is a theory with considerable explanatory power. It helps us to understand how cultures can stay the same. It does not help us to understand, however, how cultures may change, sometimes radically. For this, I will turn to Judith Butler in my conclusion.

0.4 A Play Waiting for the Occasion: Theatre as Truth Practice in Relation to History

In terms of organizing my argument, the book is structured on the basis of fundamental generic forms that are pivotal for the play's socio-cultural and political meaning and, consequently, action. These forms are: narrative, theatre and drama. The play represents and uses a history in the form of a narrative: the story, or rather one of the stories, of what happened in Salem. It is also a theatrical play, and as such it was instrumental in acting against a certain form of political spectacle in its own times. Thirdly the text is not prophetic per se, but it speaks to the future, it has spoken to the future, both in terms of what it saw as a repetitive issue, or a pattern, and in terms of an attempt to find an opening to something new. As such, the play is dramatic, both in the sense that it prescribes, as a script, what must happen, but also much like a scenario that

needs to be enacted, in that it generates enactments that are each time new, or that may open up to something new.

In chapter 1 I focus on the way in which the play deals with history in terms of representation, with narrative as its dominant form. *The Crucible* is ostensibly a play but it is based on the author's historical research that led him to shape his own historical narrative of the events. I will make a distinction in this respect between narrative and plot. The plot of the play will be of importance in chapter 5 and the conclusion, since it concerns the way in which a play, in terms of action, is geared towards its completion, and in that sense towards a future. The narrative, however, concerns the reconstruction of past actions and events in terms of their logico-chronological ordering. With respect to this my terminology is clearly derived from narratology where each narrative text is characterized by three aspects: text, story and history.[42] The text, in this case, is a play but it is intersected by important narrative sections that bring coherence to the text as a story and that may serve to reconstruct the history that underpins it. I am not considering the issue of history's representation as a formal exercise. The play does not merely amount to *using* a history from the past anecdotally, as if it could help make 'a good story.' The play claims to present a truth that calls in question another truth and, theatrically speaking, the narrative serves to *set the stage* for this contest. This setting the stage relates to narrative's intrinsic requirement of selection. The theme itself of the Salem witch-hunt was a matter of selection, one that Miller struggled with as his autobiography shows. Once he had selected it there was the problem of how the Salem history could be used to set the stage for a confrontation with McCarthyism.[43] The narrative functioned as a means to do this.

Moreover, as an historical piece or narrative, the play makes a claim of truth, which is important in a context of political framing. The question of course is, in an historical context, what kind of truth is at stake. In order to assess this I will first explain how the play relates to recent debates on historiography. Whereas the writing of history has been described by and large as a form of hermeneutics, the eighties of the 20th century saw a debate on the specifically narrative nature of the historical report. Some saw this as an attack on the ability of the historiographers to represent historical truth and Ankersmit in particular was accused of being postmodernist and therefore a proponent of

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[42] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative,* 2nd edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

[43] Arthur Miller, *Timebends: A Life* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 331.

the presumably postmodern maxim of 'anything goes'.[44] Still, if we read the work of Hayden White or Frank Ankersmit today, it is definitely marked by the main demands in the domain of history writing, in that their work is concerned by the principle of historical truth. The point they made was that there is no escaping the generic form, or the use of structuring tropes that make us see the past in a certain light. That said, it may be obvious that there is no such thing as 'the,' that is the one and only historical truth. Yet the play's claim of an historical truth is part of its rhetorical power.

Nevertheless, I will also read the play, in chapter 2, as a postmodern work of art. This is to say that I do not contend that the play actually *is* postmodern, certainly not in the political context of the fifties, but that I consider its postmodern potential. Again, this is not a formal matter. Postmodern works of art have been considered for their political potential in the works of such important theorists as Linda Hutcheon and Brian McHale. Instead of claiming to write a proper story about what happened historically, postmodern works of art, and especially literature, have been the battlefields where the contest for a historical truth was fought. My study relates to the work of Michel Foucault, who was pivotal in considering historical truth as what is ideologically made. His work is also crucial when considering a culture's organization and persistent force through time, and even more so in relation to a period in which the parties claiming to be fighting for the truth proved to be experts in falsity, blackmail and framing.

Reading the play in a postmodern way will help me to consider it as a parody or as an allegory. The latter will be central to chapter 4, where history in the making is the issue, in its contemporary situation. Chapter 2 looks at the making of history with regard to the past, although this will always be in the context of a present. As a work of art that embodies the past in the present, *The Crucible* can also be read in what has been called by Mieke Bal, following Spivak, a 'preposterous reading'. Such a reading reverses the time scales. Historically the Salem trials happened first (in 1692), and the play followed, in fact more than two and a half centuries later. Yet most readers and the general public only became familiar with the trials of Salem through the play. The

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[44] See for instance Frank R. Ankersmit, 'Historical Representation', *History and Theory* 27.3 (1988), pp. 205-28; Frank R. Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism', *History and Theory* 28.2 (1989), pp. 137-53; Perez Zagorin, 'Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations', *History and Theory* 29.3 (1990), pp. 263-74; Frank R. Ankersmit, '[Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations]: Reply to Professor Zagorin', *History and Theory* 29.3 (1990), pp. 275-96; John H. Zammito, 'Ankersmit's Postmodernist Historiography: The Hyperbole of "Opacity"', *History and Theory* 37.3 (1998), pp. 330-46.

rhetorical effect can be 'preposterous' or 'scandalous', including in the sense of being brought into an anachronistic situation. Here again I contend that such a preposterous operation has defined the play's rhetorical and political power, by showing McCarthyism as a preposterous strategy that also reversed the time scales, by reading all sorts of actions that happened in the past in the light of a present.

In chapters 3 and 4 I will focus on the specifically theatrical and allegorical nature of the play. Whereas a narrative is organized in terms of historicity, a theatre play is aimed at a performance that always takes place in a present, and in terms of presence. In chapter 3 I will show that the play is wilfully and purposefully a theatrical response to the operations of McCarthy and his men. Although the accused were brought into a situation with theatrical elements and aspects that have an important role in any legal setting such as a court, the theatricality of the situation was ruled, or rather framed, by the generic form of the spectacle. My analysis will radicalize the notion of frame, which has been used in the field of the humanities, especially in a semiotic sense but also as a replacement for the often-used term of 'context'.[45] In Miller's case, however, the meanings and uses of frame are more condensed. Firstly, there was McCarthy's seemingly unassailable frame of an American democracy defending itself against communist totalitarianism. In the context of this Manichaean frame, framing was the major strategy followed by McCarthy. Miller, for one, was framed. In response, Miller put his own point forward, the distance point – a point that organizes perspective – of a theatrical play. He used this in *The Crucible* to theatrically unhinge the machinations of McCarthyism. His play was a theatrical intervention in an ideological force field that served to puncture what I will call the veil of its spectacle. The puncturing power resided in a particular use of allegory.

In chapter 4 I will expand my reading of the play as a distinct form of allegory. Basing myself on a reading by Ernesto Laclau of Paul de Man's work,[46] I will consider the power of allegory with respect to the actualization of history. This power depends on two tropes: metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor in this case concerns the sustained metaphorical relation between McCarthyism and the Salem witch-hunt. Two different chunks of history, with their own

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[45] Read Jonathan Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions.* Oklahoma Project for Discourse and Theory (Norman & London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).
[46] Ernesto Laclau, 'The Politics of Rhetoric', in *Material Events: Paul De Man and the Afterlife of Theory*, ed. by Tom Cohn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 229-53.

dynamic of signifiers and signified, are brought together by the play, forcing us to find what motivates the comparison. As Laclau explains, the metaphorical comparison by means of allegory implies an attempt to bring different histories under the heading of one power. *The Crucible* is an upfront political confrontation, claiming its own powers of control. At the same time, however, the two periods are not simply different just as two separate worlds can be different. The periods are also bordering on one another in space and time because of the culture that connects them. Culturally speaking, especially in relation to its fascination with Manichaeism, the opposition of good and evil, the two histories relate in terms of contiguity. Here metonymy is at stake, which Laclau considers in terms of hegemony. In this light, the play is both a confrontation in a battle for power, but it also suggests that there may be another way of organizing culture. Or, in other words, that there might conceivably be another organization of the world.

Both the metaphorical and metonymic power of *The Crucible* as an allegory will be explained further in chapter 5 and the conclusion, in relation to the play's future, which is our present. Here, the question arises what its power may be for the present, since, in a sense *The Crucible* can be seen as an historically framed play, again much like George Orwell's *Animal Farm.* It is indeed difficult to read the play without reference to McCarthyism, which is why Zivin suggested that the play has been over-read. However, I will argue that, dramatically speaking, the play embodies a form of cultural analysis in our present: the first decade of the twenty-first century. I will consider the play as a cultural scenario, one that presents a story that needs to be enacted or *done* (the etymological root of drama: *dran* means to do) or that functions as the basis of what needs to be worked out. The scenario is the opposite, in this respect, of the historical narrative. It is a dramatic form that produces history, and the question is what kind of history: one that repeats a familiar pattern or one that allows a new opening? To answer this question, I will expound my view on the notion of persistency in culture, and whether I consider this to be an inescapable persistency. The issue is whether the play in effect participates in making a culture persist, as a script and consequently a prescribed plot, or whether it may help open up history, or a culture's trajectory. In chapter 5 therefore I will give due consideration to the fact that the play is not just considering the Manichean structure from the outside. It engages in it, and it can only do so effectively if it forces the readers to enact it by going through it. In this sense the play can be

said to contribute dramatically to the cultural persistency whilst critiquing both the Manichean structure and its persistency at the same time.

In the conclusion I will read the play as a scenario rather than a script, or rather as a cultural scenario. Here Judith Butler will help me to study a scenario for its performative powers, both in terms of enactment and in terms of performativity, as in speech act theory. In Butler's reading, a scenario can be seen as the embodiment of iterability and of a culture's force to repeat itself and persist in the future. Yet, as Butler argues, every repetition and every performative act may actually produce a new context and a new meaning. The familiar story may get another meaning, as in the basic meaning of allegory: to give the story another (allos) meaning. With the possibility of such an *other* meaning my dealing with *The Crucible* will find its conclusion.

Chapter 1
A Truthful Account: the Events of the Salem Trials in a Literary Work of Art

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is, in first instance, a literary reconstruction of a historical event: the Salem trials that took place in the village of Salem in Essex County, New England (today Danver, Massachusetts) in 1692. As Miller explains in his autobiography *Timebends* (1987) and as is clear from his introduction to the play, he not only carried out scholarly research in preparation of writing the play, he also reflected explicitly on how he had used the historical material to reconstruct a story. The central issue in this chapter and the next is the position taken by the play with regard to writing history – historiography – and to the question: what is historical *truth*? How does the play relate to the issues of representing history and historical truth?

To answer these questions I will, in this chapter, give an extensive overview of the historical debates about witchcraft in order to situate Miller's position on this topic. In the next chapter I will position Miller's work within more general debates about historiography, and the historian's possibilities of rendering a historical 'truth'.

1.1 Salem: Aspects of the Case

In 1692 in Salem Village, which is slightly to the west of Salem Town, several girls in the household of the minister Samuel Parris became 'afflicted' and started suffering from fits and bad vision. An initial debate among the adults was followed by an examination by the local physician, William Griggs, about the cause of the seizures, who concluded that the girls were 'possessed by the Devil' and thus that the cause of their afflictions was 'unnatural'. Both the girls and their parents became convinced that they were 'bewitched' by 'the Evil Hand' or malign witchcraft.[47] They sought help from Reverend John Hale of Beverly, a renowned expert in demonology in those days. The girls accused other townspeople of tormenting them with spectral forms – i.e. that ghosts of other townspeople made them fall in convulsions and screams without obvious cause and at times afflicted and pinched their bodies.[48] In this context Hale

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[47] Martha M. Young, 'The Salem Witch Trials 300 Years Later: How Far Has the American Legal System Come? How Much Further Does It Need to Go?', *Tulane Law Review* 64 (1989), p. 237.
[48] Risto Hiltunen, '"Tell me, be you a Witch?": Questions in the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692', *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 9.1 (1996), p. 19.

vitiated the doubts about the superstitious elements in the outbreak upon confirming: 'Now let me instruct you. We cannot look to superstition in this. The Devil is precise; the marks of his presence are definite as stone'. [49] Soon more people, especially women, became afflicted, and accusations spread in Salem village. Girls were also invited to the neighbouring Andover region to reveal the witches hidden there. They accused 49 people before local legal instances stopped issuing new warrants. In June, the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, Sir William Phips, set up a special court of 'Oyer and Terminer' (to 'hear and determine') to try the witches. [50] Over 150 people were accused but the majority were spared because they confessed, repented or accused others to avoid capital punishment. [51] In the end, nineteen people were hanged for the crime of witchcraft (thirteen women and six men), two more died in jail, and Giles Corey was pressed to death for showing a recalcitrant attitude towards the prosecutions. Two dogs were also hanged on suspicion of being devils. On 29 October, in the face of increasing scepticism, governor Phips suspended the court. Upon reconvening, the court acquitted all remaining suspects due to criticism of the fairness of the trials. [52]

Scholarly interest in this historical episode has been immense. A study of James Arnt Aune distinguishes seven different types of interpretation of the historical event, each on the basis of a different methodological approach to history. [53] There are psychological/psychoanalytical, sociological, medical, religious, anthropological, feminist and political explanations of what happened. This variety of approaches is due to the complex nature of the phenomenon of European and American witchcraft. According to Thomas A. Fudge: 'witchcraft historiography considers numerous topics including, but not limited to, history, anthropology, magic, popular superstitions, religion, theology, law, psychology, sexuality, gender, sociology, medicine, politics, language, popular beliefs, folklore studies, and popular culture'. [54] Yet, as Isaac Reed observes, the various

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[49] Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*, Student Editions (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), p. 36. All references to the text of the play in this dissertation have been given from this edition.
[50] Young, p. 240.
[51] Peter Grund, 'From Tongue to Text: The Transmission of the Salem Witchcraft Examination Records', *American Speech* 82.2 (2007), p. 121.
[52] Isaac Reed, 'Why Salem Made Sense: Culture, Gender, and the Puritan Persecution of Witchcraft', *Cultural Sociology* 1. 2 (2007), p. 212.
[53] James Arnt Aune, 'Witchcraft as Symbolic Action in Early Modern Europe and America', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6.4 (2003), pp. 766-68.
[54] Thomas A. Fudge, 'Traditions and Trajectories in the Historiography of European Witch Hunting', *History Compass* 4.3 (2006), p. 489.

approaches to witchcraft can be divided into two main strands.[55] The first strand focuses on the systematic elements and structural factors in its explanation of the phenomenon, e.g. when witchcraft is understood in terms of large-scale economic and political developments. The second strand offers detailed descriptions of particular lives, communities and regions, and understands witchcraft in relation to social development of various communities. Since the 1970s, as Reed points out, under the influence of social history these two strands have been brought together, which led to the rise of what could be called the interdisciplinary field of 'witchcraft studies'.[56] Witchcraft studies is a subfield within social history which came up during the late 1960s, and which regarded witchcraft as a social and anthropological aspect of the given societies, including town study, patterns of property ownership and methods of litigation.

Religious explanations surfaced immediately after the end of the trials, in which diabolical malevolence was blamed for wreaking havoc in the communitarian Puritan culture of religious conservatism and official piety. Chadwick Hansen argues that the witch hysteria was an historical reality in seventeenth-century Puritan social consciousness and he discovered that there were actually practising witches in Salem.[57] In his review of Hansen's work, Max Savelle explains that Hansen's main premise was that 'the Salem society believed in witchcraft and for a society that believes in witchcraft, witchcraft is terribly real' (a contention in line with what I touched upon in my introduction, namely that fabricated fears are not unreal).[58] However, real beliefs and fears did not necessarily mean that witches were real. In this respect, it was the disjunction between the theological and the magical conceptions of witchcraft, that, according to Richard Godbeer, undermined the legal process.[59] Godbeer suggested that the Salem witch hysteria was a manifestation of the community's predisposition to project the blame of their personal sufferings upon external causes. The relationship between witchcraft, magic and Puritanism in Salem made it convenient for several parties to suspect outside forces to have caused havoc in the northern colonies during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The church and the patriarchal elite became very cautious as soon as they

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[55] Reed, p. 213.
[56] Reed, p. 213.
[57] Chadwick Hansen, *Witchcraft at Salem* (New York: George Braziller 1969), p. 86.
[58] Max Savelle, 'Chadwick Hansen. Witchcraft at Salem', pp. xvii, 252 (New York: George Braziller, 1969), *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 386.1 (1969), p. 180.
[59] Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 181.

suspected a community's interest in Wicca and neo-pagan superstitious beliefs, such as displayed, according to the church, by some cunning people or 'pubescent girls'. Rossell Hope Robbins echoed this view in the twentieth century when he stated that the so-called vicious girls 'knew exactly what they were doing. Their acts during 1692 imply a state of utter delinquency, causing death without rhyme or reason, for sport'.[60]

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's ground-breaking work *Salem Possessed* offers a sociological explanation of the Salem episode, emphasizing the merchant-farmer conflict between Salem Town and Salem village amongst the Putnam and the Porter families of New England.[61] Their analysis is based on local tax records for 1691, the preceding year, which reveal an important difference between the payments by the pro-Parris factions and the anti-Parris factions. On the basis of these findings, they assert that the Salem witch-hunts were caused by the advancement of early capitalism. Boyer and Nissenbaum observed that the east side of Salem village was inhabited by wealthy and affluent Porter families who possessed various holdings and had access to Salem Town and its port. On the west side of the village, on the other hand, the Putnam family, whose main vocation for decades had been agriculture, saw a gradual dwindling away of their agricultural farm lands because of the Puritan inheritance system. The inheritance system was patriarchal and land was divided equally among sons. Taking the tax records as evidence, Boyer and Nissenbaum observe that the Putnam and the Porter families found themselves on opposing sides at town meetings, regarding petitions and other institutional and liturgical matters. They view the trials as a pathological effect of the trends in the pre-capitalist economic reconfiguration of the locality and the success or failure of the respective families.

The economic competition explanation was rivalled by the theory that witch-hunting was the brainchild of the ecclesiastical and the legal elite who sought to strengthen their hold on church power. Richard Weisman's work on Salem is of particular relevance in this context. Weisman argues that relatively few cases of witchcraft convictions and executions in Salem prior to 1692 were the result of local accusations from the village. In Salem, they were firmly dealt with by the suspicious legal elite as they were perceived as movements for

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[60] Rossell Hope Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Peter Nevill, 1959), p. 435; also quoted in Robert Detweiler, 'Shifting Perspectives on the Salem Witches', *The History Teacher* 8.4 (1975), p. 599.
[61] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (New York: MJF Books, 1997), p. 110.

social justice. Hence there was resistance from a legal system that was opposed to radical demands and focused more on maintaining the status quo and the traditional community unity sanctioned by Puritan theodicy. Since the early days when the pilgrims landed in New England, their form of government had been established as a strict legalistic theology which was aimed at controlling the community through contractual relation between the individual and God via covenants.[62] Weisman opines, then, that Salem was a case in which the judiciary went on an official offensive for the purpose of communal regeneration. This official offensive also signified the conservative power elite's attempt to contain diminishing ministerial prosperity and regain ministerial religious and social control.[63]

Also taking a view from a legal angle, David C. Brown argues that the 1692 trials in Essex County were a consequence of the clash between two legal cultures, i.e. the English common law and the indigenous laws of Massachusetts. English common law partially replaced colonial criminal procedure law in Massachusetts during the early months of 1692. This was done in accordance with the 1691 charter, enacted in May 1692, which ensured that provincial laws were not in breach of English common law. According to Brown, this drove a wedge in the colony and led to a legal crisis which lasted until October 1692, when the Massachusetts General court reasserted the supremacy of the provincial laws. Prior to the 1692 trials, the first hints of a clash between the two legal systems were evident under the Dominion of New England between 1686 and 1689, when the Andros regime anglicised the colonial legal system in criminal and legal cases. The colonial legal system was restored to its pre-1686 set up after the overthrow of the Dominion government and it operated as such until the province charter was introduced in May 1692. Brown observes that the judges in the Oyer and Terminer court employed English legal techniques to establish the guilt of the accused, which included spectral evidence and the search for witch marks on suspects. The court overlooked the colonial legal convention of the two-witness rule that was applied in previous cases.[64] This may have been necessitated by the legitimacy deficit faced by the colonial government, because shortly after 1684, and shortly

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[62] Richard Weisman, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984),p. 121; Ernest W. King and Franklin G. Mixon Jr, 'Religiosity and the Political Economy of the Salem Witch Trials', *The Social Science Journal* 47.3 (2010), pp. 679-80.

[63] King and Mixon, p. 682.

[64] David C. Brown, 'The Forfeitures at Salem, 1692', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 50.1 (1993), p. 86.

before his death, King Charles II revoked its original charter of 1629, which legitimated the colonial right of self-government for more than fifty years. A new Anglican governor was installed who was later overthrown and a new charter was eventually enacted.[65] As a result of the inclusion of Quakers and Anglicans, an inclusion that formed an unprecedented step towards inclusive and participatory politics, the custodians of the newly introduced secular order seriously questioned its theological legitimacy. Weisman observes that this presented the background for breaking the clerical precedence and permitting spectral evidence in the court hearings. It also accounts, according to Richard Latner, for the carrying over of the accusations and the trials beyond the town of Salem to Andover and for the role played by the new governor in finally bringing the trials to a halt.[66]

The psychological or psychoanalytical explanations of the Salem trials suggest that the afflicted girls suffered from hysteria, caused by the Puritan culture of social repression. Marion L Starkey explains the nature of the hold this hysteria had on the girls and the ministers: 'The magistrates could not be blamed for their credulity; belief in witchcraft was almost an article of faith. They were not to be blamed for their failure to understand the nature of hysteria; in their day no one did'.[67] In a similar vein, Chadwick Hansen argued that the general population of Massachusetts had reached a state of excitement, that he claimed was inaccurately called 'mass hysteria'. However, he believed that it was the popular fear of witchcraft rather than the preaching of the clergy that was at the root of this spell of collective psychic excitement. According to Hansen, the clergy were opposed to the way in which the events at Salem were being dealt with, especially the proceedings of the special court. For this same reason, Hansen says that it is impossible to understand and estimate the nature of all aspects of the Salem events without recognizing the power and hold of witchcraft on a society that genuinely believed in it.[68]

Anthropological explanations of the Salem episode are based upon cross-cultural studies of witchcraft beliefs and practices amongst people from other continents such as Asia and Africa. They tend to argue that the effects of witchcraft are caused by the belief in witchcraft itself. As Robert Detweiler

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[65] Weisman, p. 123.
[66] Weisman, pp. 123-25; Richard Latner, '"Here Are No Newters": Witchcraft and Religious Discord in Salem Village and Andover', *The New England Quarterly* 79. 1 (March 2006), p. 116.
[67] , Marion L. Starkey, *The Congregational Way: The Role of the Pilgrims and their Heirs in Shaping America* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 111.
[68] Hansen, p. x.

shows, these anthropological theories can be divided into three general models that argue that: '(a) witchcraft serves as a way to explain life's misfortunes hence it is socially functional (b) witchcraft operates as a form of social control; and (c) witchcraft functions as a release of social tension'.[69] In an anthropological study of witchcraft, it is fundamental to admit that witchcraft beliefs are to be rationalized as an integral part of any 'possessed' society and that they assume the worth of a palpable reality for its people, just as much as empirically tested notions have in our contemporary world. Simply put, it becomes almost 'natural' for the afflicted people to resort to these beliefs to explain the misfortunes of life. Witchcraft may thus be a very convenient agency to blame when the conventional ways of dealing with misfortune fail, for example when one is hit by lightning, hurricanes, epidemics, sterility, sickly livestock, miscarriages, famine, or draught. Hence, in providing partial relief and emotional solace to the sufferer by putting the blame upon the supernatural, societies maintain a relative stability.

The medical explanations of the trials relate the incidents to the spread of ergotism or encephalitis in the area.[70] However, these explanations have largely been discredited lately in the social science analyses of the events, on the grounds that a singular thrust on the clinical nature of the problem is tantamount to a too reductive estimate of a broad problem in a community that was hostage to social, political, religious and economic forces.

Given the extraordinary number of women being accused and prosecuted in the European witch-hunts but also in Salem, the feminist explanations remain of vital importance, elaborating why women were the prime suspects. Carol Karlson explains that women's executions were triggered by the prevalence of traditional misogyny in the Western world. As Carlson argues, the New England society was no exception and deemed women's trespasses as challenges to God, as attempts to subvert the order of Creation and also as challenges to prescribed gender arrangements. Based upon the normative distinctions for different social groups on the basis of their class, gender and race, women in New England were granted and prescribed certain forms of behaviour.[71] As Clarke Garrett observes, the Puritan home was a precarious territory for the exercise of feminine power

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[69] Detweiler, p. 601.
[70] Linnda R. Caporael, 'Ergotism: The Satan Loosed in Salem?', *Science*, New Series, 192.4234. 2 (April 1976), p. 23; Alan Woolf, 'Witchcraft or Mycotoxin? The Salem Witch Trials', *Clinical Toxicology* 38.4 (2000), pp. 459-60.
[71] Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York / London: W.W. Norton, 1987), pp. 118-19.

and a venue for the constitution of interpersonal relations with men from outside the hierarchies of village authority. In such a social space, single, poor, marginalized, older, post-menopause and widowed women had an especially tenuous existence and they became rather easy suspects as possessed witches.[72] Elizabeth Reis observes that in Puritan New England, which was a patriarchal society, women's bodies were represented as vulnerable, unsatisfied, yearning, physically fragile and sexually tempting, and their feminine souls were believed to be a convenient target for the Devil's advances. In contrast, men, being audacious and physically strong, were likely to repel Devil's temptations.[73] In Salem society, a certain deferential paternalism prevailed, which immediately sanctioned any transgression by women from the community's accepted norms. The religious jargon clearly contained a sexist prejudice against women as a social group. Men were generally amongst those who wielded power whereas most of the men who were accused were either husbands, family members of the suspected witches or had poor social standing. Many women were implicated by other women too on account of their personal rivalries and jealousies arising out of day-to-day interactions in their close-knit Puritan culture. Hence there was clearly a strong gender pattern in the Salem prosecutions.

The gender politics in Salem makes more sense, however, when analysed in combination with the broader politics of the real political interests which underpinned the Salem Trials. Mary Beth Norton famously put this explanation forward. She evaluated correspondences and journals during the late 1680s and early 1690s and found that the dominant concern of the Essex County residents during this time was the Second Indian War or the so-called King William's War (1688-97).[74] She studied the events in 1692 Salem as an attempt by the ruling elite to further control things politically at home in order to protect the colonial government and the society at large against the heathen Indians and the Catholic French at the north-eastern frontier. They would blame the devil and its deputies (that is to say, the witches) at home for working as accomplices of the French and the Indians to weaken their government.[75] As Philip Gould also observes, when disenfranchised young girls like Elizabeth Parris, Abigail

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[72] Clarke Garrett, 'Women and Witches: Patterns of Analysis', *Signs* 3.2 (1977), 465-66.

[73] Elizabeth Reis, 'The Devil, the Body, and the Feminine Soul in Puritan New England', *The Journal of American History* 82.1 (1995), pp. 15-16.

[74] Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), pp. 297-98.

[75] For a detailed account of the Second Indian War and its political impact on the Salem trials, see Norton, *In the Devil's Snare,* pp. 93-155.

Williams, Samuel Parris's Caribbean slave Tituba and John Proctor's maid Mary Warren temporarily wielded power to accuse men, fellow women and influential families in control of the village, the political elite shuddered at their ability to shape the broader political course of the events. The trials' formal end upon the accusation against governor Phips' wife testifies to the political nature of the whole witch-hunting episode in Salem.[76]

None of the above analyses can claim to give access to the truth *per se* although they all deal with aspects of the historical truth, some of which may seem more plausible than others or may have more explanatory power. Miller, in writing his play, might have been interested in all kinds of arguments that could explain the Salem witch trials or that could shed some light on what happened, historically speaking. The question, however, is whether he was mainly interested in an historical explanation. He was certainly not interested in doing justice to all the aspects mentioned above. Perhaps the thing that captured his attention the most was the element of political *fabrication*.

1.2 Witchcraft and Fabrication

A recurring question in the historical studies of the Salem case is how it relates to the history of witchcraft in Europe. In Europe, the spell of witchcraft occurred in the early modern period between 1480-1750 and it spanned a period of three centuries, which also witnessed such epic political events as the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War from 1618 to 1648. In Europe, much of the prosecution of witches took place in a sixty-year period between 1570 and 1630.[77] The North American episodes, which obviously include the Salem trials of 1692, are historically close to this period, yet slightly later. Nevertheless, David D. Hall asserts that 'belated though it was, witchcraft and witch-hunting in New England had the same structure as witchcraft in England and, taking due account of certain differences, as witchcraft on the Continent'.[78] Hall argues that despite being geographically apart, there was a cultural affinity between the witchcraft phenomenon in New England with continental European and English witch-hunts in the early modern era.

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[76] Philip Gould, 'New England Witch-Hunting and the Politics of Reason in the Early Republic', *The New England Quarterly* 68.1 (1995), pp. 66-67.

[77] Dale Hoak, 'The Great European Witch-Hunts: A Historical Perspective', *American Journal of Sociology* 88.6 (May, 1983), p. 1270.

[78] David D. Hall, 'Witchcraft and the Limits of Interpretation', *The New England Quarterly* 58.2 (1985), p. 253.

When the interpretation of an earlier generation of historians, such as Joseph Hansen, H. Trevor-Roper and Henry C. Lea, who understood the fear of witchcraft as a violent expression of an inquisitorial fanaticism of the Christian Church, was proven to be insufficient to explain the true nature of the incidents this was a turning point in the historiography of European witchcraft. The historians just mentioned saw the witchcraft phenomenon as an anomaly and an irrational, psychopathological episode in human history.[79] In contrast, the so-called functionalist interpretation of witchcraft took witchcraft seriously as a historical phenomenon which, as such, had a *function*. The historians Alan Macfarlane and Keith Thomas carried out two paradigmatic studies, and made an anthropological study of European witchcraft in their respective works, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (1970) and *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971). In their view, witchcraft was endemic and arose from the very roots of the respective societies, as a form of social interaction in the close-knit communities to meet certain social needs. The vengefulness of villagers or of cunning traders looking for a profit led to accusations and to a manipulation of the guilt of those who had angered their counterparts in deals and bargains. Hence social strain provided an excuse for resorting to accusations of diabolism and sorcery. It made people deal with both beneficent and maleficent magic in society.[80] According to Keith Thomas, it was one of the means of making sense out of misfortune, for which there was no other obvious cause readily available. Thomas linked the increase in witchcraft cases to the Protestant Reformation, which, he contends, had discredited most of the counter-magic that the villagers had previously employed to protect themselves against *maleficium*, which related to the occult means of doing evil or harm.[81] Alan Macfarlane concurs with Thomas when he mentions that the Catholic Church in England prior to the Reformation provided the religious template that, through its rituals and a dramatization of the expulsion of evil and communal propitiation, in a sense comforted people with a sort of a social solace and solution to their misfortunes. Macfarlane argues that, as a result of the Reformation, the communal

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[79] Hall, p. 253; Fudge, p. 488, pp. 490-92; Scientific and clinical explanations also emerged to reinforce the rationalists' thrust on Witch-hunting as a mass delusion. See George Rosen, 'Psychopathology in the Social Process: I. A Study of the Persecution of Witches in Europe as a Contribution to the Understanding of Mass Delusions and Psychic Epidemics,' *Journal of Health and Human Behaviour* 1.3 (Autumn 1960), p. 201.

[80] Richard A. Horsley, 'Who were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in the European Witch Trials', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9.4 (Spring 1979), pp. 697-98.

[81] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1971), p. 111, pp. 51-77.

misfortunes that continued to infect society had been dealt with through a religious and ritual framework, a framework that was now destroyed. This would account for the witchcraft crisis erupting from within that society.[82]

More important in Thomas' reading, however, was the social strain resulting from the onset of a market economy. The traditional village economy, which had sustained an ethic of charity to one's neighbours and protection of the poor through the old manorial system of poor people's relief, was now being eroded by trends such as land hunger, commercialization, price hikes, agricultural specialization and growing towns. According to Thomas, in this era of change and rapid flux in Tudor and Stuart England, the old conflict resolution mechanisms of the manorial courts and the village guilds had disappeared, leaving society to disintegrate and confront itself, especially when it reached breaking point. The Reformation, the economic liberalization, the disappearance of old norms of charity, friendship and sharing were the triggers for the increase in litigation and trials in that period.[83]

When compared to what we know from the continental witch prosecutions, the English witches were relatively poor, belonging to the lower social classes, and during the trials the authorities weighed convincing and unconvincing evidence to establish their conviction. Thomas and Macfarlane found that the machinery of enforcement in the executive ceased to function long before accusations disappeared. The European witch-hunts were markedly different in different countries, as Nachman Ben-Yahuda observes, just as Scottish trials differed from the British and resembled more the continental European trials. He observes that the most severe European witch-hunts occurred in Germany, France and Switzerland.[84] In all these different cases, however, the functionalist approach would hold that witchcraft itself had a certain function that did not depend so much on whether people truly believed in witches. Instead accusations of witchcraft were, in a sense, fabrications with a social function.

One of the critics of *Religion and the Decline of Magic* is Norman Cohn, who feels that Thomas has not really explained the historical appearance of

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[82] Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 195.
[83] Thomas, p. 563.
[84] Nachman Ben-Yehuda, 'Problems Inherent in Socio-Historical Approaches to the European Witch Craze', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20.4 (Dec. 1981), p. 327.

witchcraft as an issue of societal concern.[85] Cohn points out that *maleficium*, the use of magic to cause damage, antedates the witch-hunts of the early modern period. He says: 'It is clear that many of the forms of *maleficium* that figure in the witch-trials of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been familiar for many centuries before'. Because of the prevalence of this concept of *maleficium* in Europe since the Middle Ages, Cohn finds it an unconvincing excuse for the mass witch-hunts at that time in European history. He asserts that the concept of *maleficium* was transformed into an ideology and was deemed by the Church to be a rival heretical and pagan practice to uproot the religious foundations of society. The religious elites therefore genuinely believed that the witches were engaged in an organized conspiracy against the Church. Cohn explains: 'Like almost all of their contemporaries, the Fathers accepted without question that magic worked, that it really could produce miracles – but these were pernicious miracles, evil devices by which the demons tricked human beings into opposing God.'[86] Cohn consequently claims that the peasant community had always succumbed to supernatural explanations and practices in the past without any official church sanction. Yet from the fifteenth century onwards, the church elite readily offered official sanction and patronage to accusations based on the concept of *maleficium*. This is why Cohn states: 'peasant fears could now find expression in formal accusations. As the authorities became more concerned with new concepts of witchcraft, so they became more willing to lend an ear to popular complaints about *maleficium*'.[87] Therefore, the popular peasant beliefs were given an official importance and in most cases the judges prosecuted the witches with the intention to rescue Christendom from an assault by Wicca and other pre-Christian pagan creeds.

I do not feel that I am in a position to decide whether Cohn's critique of Thomas and, by implication, Macfarlane, is *correct*. In relation to Miller's *The Crucible,* there is a more interesting point that can be derived from the tension between the functionalist approach and Cohn's criticism. Either people were clearly fabricating accusations of witchcraft or they strongly believed that there was a genuine attack going on. The latter did not mean there was no fabrication involved, the former did not mean that fabrications could not produce, or affect, forms of belief that were distinctly *real*. In fact the tension between the two options is evidence for the pernicious nature of fabrication, which is either that

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[85] Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: Sussex University Press, 1975), p. 148, p. 153.
[86] Cohn, p. 156.
[87] Cohn, p. 239.

one tends to forget that it is fabricated or that one may underestimate the reality of feelings that can be produced by fabrication. In both cases criticism becomes extremely difficult. This, I think, is what Miller faced in his own time and one of the reasons why the Salem witchcraft case was such a tempting analogy.

1.3 A Truthful Account

How then does Miller's text position itself with regard to these various interpretations of the historical events that took place at Salem? Does his text offer another interpretation that could be placed next to earlier interpretations? Or does *The Crucible* aim at an altogether different type of 'truth'? These questions are implicitly or explicitly dealt with in a short 'Note on the Historical Accuracy of this Play' that precedes the play, in which Miller explicitly states that 'This play is not history in the sense in which the word is used by the academic historian'.[88] Miller continues to spell out the differences by pointing out that dramatic purposes and poetic licence granted him the opportunity to fuse historical counterparts of the dramatic personae into one or more figures and alter their age and roles in history to suit the artistic flair of the piece. Yet, he also highlights what he calls the 'accuracy' of the play. This suggests that the truth-value of this representation depends partly on historical accuracy but is not confined to the question of what really happened in Salem. The first element is made explicit when Miller says that 'The fate of each character is exactly that of his historical model'. The term 'exactly' is repeated a little later when Miller states that some of the characters played a role in history that was 'exactly the same'. This raises the question what 'exact' similarity Miller hints at. That there may be more to it than just historical accuracy is indicated elsewhere, at a much later date, in an interview in 1980 in which Miller explained: 'There are lines of force – economic, political, mythic memories, genetic imprints – many more, and where they intersect in a human situation in which man must make choice – is drama'.[89] Here it may be clear that the drama that interests Miller is both historical and singular but also more general, as a meeting point of transhistorical 'lines of force'. Apparently his account has to answer to a set of requirements that is both historical, and concerns a specific and charged situation, and does justice to these more general lines of force.

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[88] Miller, *The Crucible* p. 3.
[89] V. Rajakrishnan and Arthur Miller, 'After Commitment: An Interview with Arthur Miller', *Theatre Journal* 32.2 (1980), p. 196.

Some of its critics thought *The Crucible* too specific, though, and considered it to be a propagandist play aimed at hitting an isolated political phenomenon too hard, or too simplistically, through allegory.[90] Miller defended himself against these objections with a similar mixture of historical specificity or accuracy and generality by saying that he was writing a play based upon immutable historical facts. After seeing the role of the prosecutors in the trial records, he was convinced that 'there are people dedicated to evil in the world; that without their perverse example we should not know the good. Evil is not a mistake but a fact in life'.[91] He further emphasizes that there are certain types of situation that are typically human, which are intermittently repeated in different societies and social arrangements. In 1980 this was defined even more concisely when Miller stated there are some types of people who seem to reproduce their own kind through millennia. Miller proceeded to argue that the continuity of certain types of character and social situations in history must retain our interest in a book, a play or a poem that is based upon a subject from an entirely different age. This would define their historical relevance.[92]

Historical specificity and more general lines of force that transcend historical situations might seem to hint at historical continuity. Yet the play is *aimed* at its contemporary present while ostensibly dealing with a historical episode and thus alludes to anachronism, as a mismatch between two times (on which more in chapter 2). The play deals with history but it also unhinges a period in history to address its own times, and is produced in the present with its own cultural and political ground realities. In general, the chronological distance between the production of the play and its subject matter is revealing with respect to the way in which history affects a culture in any present. According to Frans-Willem Korsten, anachronism opens up another interesting potential as that which can never be contained in one domain alone. He writes that:

> Things, ideas and texts travel through time and are taken up differently in different times. In a fundamental sense, any historical artefact that functions in some kind of present can be seen as an example of anachronism. The complexity here is not so much a

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[90] David R. Samuelson, 'I Quit This Court: Is Justice Denied in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible?*', *University of Chicago Law School Roundtable* 2 (1995), p. 619. See also George Jean Nathan's four point critical response to *The Crucible* in Philip G. Hill, 'The Crucible: A Structural View', *Modern Drama* 10.3 (Fall 1967), pp. 313-14.

[91] Miller, Introduction to the 'Collected Plays', p.158.

[92] Rajakrishnan and Miller, p. 196.

matter of language or representation, but is primarily an issue of how we can connect to, or experience history, or deal with history in terms of actuality.[93]

When brought to life, an historical artefact like *The Crucible* is therefore anachronistic *per se*, but in this case the anachronism shifts to a meta-level in the sense that its subject is a three-hundred year old incident that is represented in a theatrical mode by a playwright in the middle of the twentieth century to address the present. The play presents history as a matter of *actuality*. For Miller and his contemporaries the issue was how this disconnection in history operated to forge a link within history as something that actually had occurred and was true, and was now occurring again.

With respect to the truth of historical accounts, historical narratives may suffer from what Ankersmit called historism, with emplotted texts full of facts and records, and historians presenting them as if they had actually experienced them. In this context, they disregard at times the anachronism that separates history from the present in which it is being written. What, indeed, distinguishes Miller's play from the historical works about Salem is its regard for *past, present and future*. It would have been just another play dealing with history, describing history in order to understand history if its subject were merely past. As it is, the play is a work of art that is anachronistic by virtue of its dealing with history in its present and future present. Perhaps paradoxically, historical accuracy is nevertheless key for this anachronistic operation.

After examining the trial records and the historical data of the Salem episode, Arthur Miller constructed the plot of his play. His aim to work on a truthful account clearly emerges from the narrative texts that Miller inserted between the sketch of the stage-setting – 'a small upper bedroom' – and the actual dialogues in Act 1, and then at the moment that the different characters, for instance the Reverend John Hale, appear for the first time.[94] The first account sketches the historical background of the Act to come:

> But the people of Salem in 1692 were not quite the dedicated folk
> that arrived on the *Mayflower.* A vast differentiation had taken
> place, and in their own time a revolution had unseated the royal

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[93] Frans-Willem Korsten, 'Vondel's Dramas: Ways of Relating Present and Past', *Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*, ed. by Jan Bloemendal and Frans-Willem Korsten (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 26.
[94] Miller, *The Crucible,* pp. 32-35.

government and substituted a junta, which was at this moment in power. The times, to their eyes must have been out of joint, and to the common folk must have seemed as insoluble and complicated as do ours today. It is not hard to see how many could easily have been led to believe that the time of confusion had been brought upon them by deep and darkling forces. No hint of such speculation appears on the court record, but social disorder in any age breeds such mystical suspicions, and when, as in Salem, wonders are brought forth from below the social surface, it is too much to expect people to hold back very long from laying on the victims with all the force of their frustration.[95]

Clearly, the accuracy of Miller's account was concerned with not just facts and figures from the surface. Miller refers to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England, which marked the formal end of absolute monarchy there. As a build-up to the moments of tension in Salem society, Miller observes that the Salemites of 1692 were significantly more secure than the first Puritans who had known hard times in Massachusetts and Virginia. They were less dedicated religiously compared to the previous generation who had sailed to American shores aboard the *Mayflower* and landed in New England to preserve their Puritanical faith. They established an 'autocracy by consent', designed to perpetuate and preserve the ideology and safeguard community unity as a source of their power against human and demonic rival elements such as the French colonialists and the Indians in the wild north-eastern parts of the county. In the case of Salem, however, autocracy turned into theocracy, and the desire to keep the community together turned into repression by, in Miller's words, a 'junta'.[96]

As may be clear from this, Miller set his play against a socio-historical background. When listing the many factors which possibly and logically led to the rift in the seemingly placid Salem society, Miller opines that 1692 was the watershed year for the conflict to take place. The situation was in no way unusual, however, nor was it simple. Arthur Miller ponders on the truthfulness or historical accuracy of his account in the introduction to his *Collected Plays*. He concludes that it was the truthfulness of his account that had also troubled the audience:

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[95] Miller, *The Crucible,* pp. 7-8.
[96] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 8.

I believe that the very moral awareness of the play and its characters – which are historically correct – was repulsive to the audience. For a variety of reasons I think that the Anglo-Saxon audience cannot believe the reality of characters who live by principles and know very much about their own characters and situations, and who say what they know. Our drama, for this among other reasons, is condemned, so to speak, to the emotions of subjectivism, which as they approach knowledge and self-awareness, become less and less actual and real to us. In retrospect I think that my course in *The Crucible* should have been toward greater self-awareness and not, as my critics have implied, toward an enlarged and more pervasive subjectivism. The realistic form and style of the play would then have had to give way. What new form might have evolved I cannot now say, but certainly the passion of knowing is as powerful as the passion of feeling alone, and the writing of the play broached the question of that new form for me.[97]

Arthur Miller reflects on the critical response of a contemporary audience, which found a morally self-conscious society too unrealistic a subject to be framed within a dramatically attractive fold, and which would have preferred a presentation that would have facilitated identification. Miller objects to this and emphasizes once more the importance of 'the realistic form and style of the play'. He adds: 'But we do do *Hamlet,* we do do *Macbeth,* we do a number of more mediocre plays as well; but the ones that last are the ones that we recognize most immediately in terms of the details of real human behavior in a specific situation'.[98] The paramount goal of the literary artist in Miller's opinion is to draw a portrait of the characters and the situations, which leads to greater self-awareness of the individual characters who in the end emerge as more real and true to life. Miller seems dedicated to a theatre of 'heightened consciousness' which encourages a passion for *knowing* instead of merely a passion for feeling, however appealing this may be to the emotive side of the viewers and the readers.

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[97] Miller, 'Introduction to the Collected Plays', p. 159.
[98] Arthur Miller and Phillip Gelb, 'Morality and Modern Drama', *Educational Theatre Journal* 10.3 (1958), p. 193.

The public and social ability of drama to make people *know* led Miller to write *The Crucible* as a response to political forces that were only too willing to rewrite history. As Tom Driver puts it the element of knowledge is key, here: 'Drama is akin to the other inventions of man in that it ought to help us to know more, and not merely to spend our feelings'.[99] The desire to know and explore the truth of the historical episode in Salem with a passion that was as important as the passion the work out the individual characters, led Miller to invest his skills in producing this new form of dramatic writing with an enigmatic historical episode as its subject, addressed at his own times - and that implied an address to the future, as we will see. As for this future, the play is distinctly not, in my reading, 'a prescient warning against tyranny' that can reverberate 'with fresh power in each culture and generation', as the back flap of the most recent edition has it. Instead I would argue that there is an historical specificity and accuracy involved, a truthfulness in Miller's account underpinning *The Crucible*, that makes the play difficult to translate. It is not universally applicable or mouldable. In terms of truth practice the play kindles a desire to know what happened, and seeks to give an account that is as truthful as possible. This is posited as both a precondition of the play and as its aim. Without this historiographical desire, the play could not have had such a powerful impact. Or it would have lost its historical and political relevance.

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[99] Tom F. Driver, 'Strength and Weakness in Arthur Miller', *The Tulane Drama Review* 4.4 (1960), p. 47.

Chapter 2
Showing It as It is Through (Postmodern) Parody: History's Spectrality and Anachronism

In this chapter I will read *The Crucible* in relation to the past as a postmodern play. This may seem strange since Miller is not known as a postmodernist author. Moreover, in the light of the previous chapter, it may even seem inconsistent, since historiography's desire for truth was a paramount target of criticism in postmodern works of art. Still, there are reasons to consider this work as a postmodern play. One concerns the specific modes in which it deals with history, another the way in which theatre intermingles with narrative. Miller himself inserted important explanatory narrative parts in the authorized edition of the play, as we have already seen, such as the following, in which he describes one of the main characters:

> Mr. Hale is nearing forty, a tight skinned, eager-eyed intellectual. This is a beloved errand for him; on being called here to ascertain witchcraft he felt the pride of the specialist whose unique knowledge has at last been publicly called for. Like almost all men of learning, he spent a good deal of his time pondering the invisible world, especially since he had himself encountered a witch in his parish not long before. That woman, however, turned into a mere pest under his searching scrutiny, and the child she had allegedly been afflicting recovered her normal behavior after Hale had given her his kindness and a few days of rest in his own house. However, that experience never raised a doubt in his mind as to the reality of the underworld or the existence of the Lucifer's many-faced lieutenants.[100]

One could read this quote as the narrative underpinning of what is supposed to be a dramatic person or character. Reverend John Hale himself is given a history, with details ('tight skinned') that can work to produce the effect of the real, as Barthes defined it.[101] Such information comes in handy and might even be necessary for actors, directors and readers alike. In fact, more modern plays

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[100] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 32.
[101] Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect', in *The Novel: An Anthropology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000,* ed. by Dorothy J. Hale (Malden, MA: John Wiley, 2006), pp. 229-34.

contain such passages. Narrative, in that case, would not be substantial to the plot itself. Yet there are more narrative underpinnings, as we have seen. As I argued in chapter 1, the entire play is underpinned by a historical narrative, or, depending on the scale of focus, several ones. In the first instance there is no need to devote particular attention to this intermingling of dramatic text and narrative, apart from the fact that narratives, because of their logico-chronological orderings, are suitable vehicles for the writing of history.

However this is complicated by a passage a little further on in the text of the play. In his description of the Reverend John Hale, Miller contrasts the historical times of Salem with the hunt for Communists in the 1950s, when he states that there may be an analogy between the two:

> The analogy, however seems to falter when one considers that, while there were no witches then, there are communists and capitalists now, and in each camp there is certain proof that spies of each side are at work undermining the other. But this is a snobbish objection and not at all warranted by the facts. I have no doubt that people *were* communing with, and even worshipping, the Devil in Salem, and if the whole truth could be known in this case, as it is in others, we should discover a regular and conventionalized propitiation of the dark spirit.[102]

Several points require our attention here. First of all, there is Miller's conviction that 'the whole truth couldbe known'. At the same time he adds the revealing 'if,' which implies that not all of the historical truth can be known. As for the analogy between the Salem-period and the McCarthy-period, Miller tellingly does not suggest an uninterrupted history between the two but an analogy, which is not so much narrative in nature as *scenic*. One historical period is seen in the light of, or seen through, the other, or the two are mirroring each other whilst it remains unclear all along which is the dominant one. If we combine the two passages, narrative intermingles with scene, and historical truth with analogy. Apparently, drama and narrative – or to be more precise: historical narrative – are both relevant when studying *The Crucible* in relation to past and present, as are 'facts' or, for that matter 'the whole truth'. At the same time it seems as if the two periods concerned are pitted against each other by a

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[102] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 34.

mirroring analogy that 'seems to falter', whereas the 'seems' suggests that the analogy does not falter at all.

Whether or not historical truths can be *known*, the dynamic of facts and their narrative representations and of the powers interested in them, or the way in which histories may be set in a mise en scene as if mirroring one another, these were all issues of the highest relevance to postmodern authors. I want to test in this chapter what a postmodern reading of *The Crucible* will bring us, or even whether the play may, in a sense, *be* a postmodern work. This is not a formal issue. It relates to the political power underlying this text and our dealing with it. Therefore, in this chapter, I want to consider the play as a fictional and dramatic play with narrative.

Linda Hutcheon defined the importance of fiction as narrative for postmodernist writing as follows:

> All of these issues – subjectivity, intertextuality, reference, ideology – underlie the problematized relations between history and fiction in post-modernism. But many theorists today have pointed to narrative as the one concern that envelops all of these, for the process of narrativization has come to be seen as a central form of human comprehension, of imposition of meaning, and formal coherence on the chaos of events (H. White 1981, 795; Jameson 1981a, 13; Mink 1978, 132). Narrative is what translates knowing into telling (H. White 1980, 5), and it is precisely this translation that obsesses postmodern fiction. The conventions of narrative in both historiography and novels, then, are not constraints, but enabling conditions of possibility of sense-making (W. Martin 1986). Their disruption or challenging is bound to upset such basic structuring notions as causality and logic - as happens with Oskar's drumming in *The Tin Drum*: narrative conventions are both installed and subverted. The refusal to integrate fragments (in novels like *The White Hotel*) is a refusal of the closure and telos which narrative usually demands (see Kermode 1966, 1967).[103]

Hutcheon makes clear at the outset that narrative is the preferred medium for the emplotment of disparate fragments, both in fictional and historical discourse. On

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[103] Linda Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction: "The Pastime of Past Time"', in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 121.

the positive side, narrative makes cohesion possible. On the negative side, it works against truth, almost paradoxically, because it enforces cohesion and consistency on what in historical truth is a collection of fragments.

Hayden White emphasizes the point of narrative's power to bring cohesion to fragmented historical material. To him, postmodernists in architecture, the arts, literature, cinema and philosophy tend to view the past as vast, inchoate, fragmented, decontextualized, synchronic congeries of forms, media, genres, and ideas that can be treated as objects of truth.[104] White writes:

> For the postmodernists, the past, irredeemably absent and accessible only by way of spoors, fragments and traces – is the place of memory, reverie and fantasy, and therefore of poetic inspiration, rather than a space of past human actions that can be recovered and represented more or less accurately as it really was (as it is for scientifically oriented, modern professional historians). Postmodernists are much more interested in the meanings which, by means more or less artistic can be produced by reflection on pastness than they are in truth understood as a finite set of true statements about discrete periods of history attested by a documentary record. There are few postmodernist histories because postmodernists reject what professional historians would recognize as scientific historiography.[105]

Perhaps White is slightly too romantic, here, shifting from the scientific study of the past to the realm of 'reverie, and fantasy,' and on this last point he may even be contradicting himself. The contradiction consists in the fact that on the one hand scientific historiography needs to be rejected. But how can we distinguish or even notice reveries and fantasies if not in connection to some sort of scientific, historical accuracy? Seen from this angle, if *The Crucible* had only been that, a simple memory or reverie or fantasy, or merely a matter of 'poetic inspiration', it could not have had such a considerable political force because it could have been rejected, in the context of charged political realities, as precisely that: fantasy. There is no doubt that White's and Ankersmit's

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[104] Hayden White, 'Postmodernism and Historiography', Special Public Opening Symposium 'After Metahistory: Lecture on Postmodernism' (unpublished lecture, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, 12 November 2009) n.p.
<http://www.ritsumei.ac.jp/acd/gr/gsce/news/200901022_repo_0-e.htm>. [accessed 3 June 2013]
[105] White, 'Postmodernism and Historiography' n.p.

opponents would be those scientific historians who stick to a view of the past in terms of representing past events in 'truth,' which, according to White and Ankersmit, would never amount to much more than linguistically captured *narratives*. Yet *The Crucible* is a play. This provokes the question once more how this generic form relates to the problems outlined above.

Narrative's power to provide cohesion and thereby twist the very fragmented nature of what it makes coherent, picks up on what Hutcheon ended with: narrative's tendency towards *closure* (on which more later). Historical reality in itself is not closed as such, and cannot be closed. Both in history and fiction, moreover, narrative is the medium, which translates knowledge into telling and illustration. Narrative works epistemologically in the sense that it translates archival evidences and references into coherent pieces of writing. This has been problematized in postmodern fiction, as White rightly points out, and postmodern authors are most fascinated by the translation of 'knowing into telling' according to Hutcheon (who is following White's major work, here, from 1973, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*).

Contrary to modernist assumptions regarding historical inquiry, as for example Lynn Fendler argues, postmodern historiography is based on those approaches that eschew modernist assumptions about history which include essentialism, grand narratives, notions of progress and emancipation, objectivity, truth, realism, teleology, coherence, universality, determinism, etc.[106] In White's view this clearly does not mean that postmodernists are not interested in the past, history and its interpretation, or by historical truth for that matter. On the contrary, many postmodernists believe that a specifically postmodernist idea of 'history' provides a history to those who have been deprived of one. However, such a postmodernist form of reading history has little in common with what has been posited as the basis for modern, scientific historical research. In fact, as White maintains, it has closer ties to pre-modern conceptions of history understood as a reserve of examples to be drawn on for practical (political, pedagogical, ideological) purposes and as a discourse rather than a discipline.[107] This is where *The Crucible* borders on postmodern literature. It clearly uses the past as a reserve of examples and its purpose is indeed *practical*, although not *just* practical. For *The Crucible* truth does not

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[106] Lynn Fendler, *Postmodern Historiography. Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies*, ed. by Craig Kridel (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010. <http://knowledge.sagepub.com/view/curriculumstudies/n358.xml > [accessed 18 August 2014].
[107] White, 'Postmodernism and Historiography' n.p.

matter *per se*, in an essentialist or objective sense, it matters in relation to an opponent who was an expert in falsification, fabrication and fake accusations.

In relation to postmodernism's fascination with narrative, the question is how this problematic may relate to a *play* that is distinctly not 'telling' but 'showing'. However, is drama not the quintessentially suitable genre for both 'installing and subverting' narrative conventions; and can it not be characterized by its demand to be *performed* time and again and thus to 'refuse closure'? Or, to put this yet differently, is Hutcheon not talking, in a sense, about a theatricalization of history in postmodern fiction? By this I mean that postmodern authors are interested in unveiling the way in which telling may have the seemingly natural effect of showing, or that they will seek to dramatize the choices implied in telling a story in a particular way. Where and how can Miller be said to be postmodern in this complex of issues and generic possibilities?

2.1 Spectral Illusion: Doing Justice to the Facts between Telling and Showing

In the study of history, as was explained in chapter 1, the Salem trials have been recorded and narrated from various viewpoints. No single narrative can claim a monopoly on the truth and reality of the historical episode because, unavoidably, they are interpretations of the available data of evidences. As White argues, the issue of the relation between truth and reality in history is particularly evident in the difference between historiography and realist historical fiction. The writing of history deals with the representation of truth inherent in some part of reality in the past, whereas fiction has the prerogative to enter the domain of the possible without neglecting the truth while representing reality in its totality. White reflects on this relation as follows:

> A simply true account of the world based on what the documentary record permits one to talk about what happened in it at particular times, and places can provide knowledge of only a very small portion of what 'reality' consists of. However, the rest of the real, after we have said what we can assert to be true about it, would not be everything and anything we could imagine about it. The real would consist of everything that can be truthfully said about its

actuality plus everything that can be truthfully said about what it could *possibly* be.[108]

White's argument is at the same time extremely simple and complex. It is simple because any historical reality is *vast*. To describe historical reality in its entirety is simply impossible. The claim to truth can therefore only concern a small portion, a portion that the history writer will claim to be 'real'. That leaves a substantial amount of material, which is not a matter of concern in the historiographical imagination. White maintains, in this context, that disciplinary history focuses on the search for truth that belongs to the historical reality. Yet this 'real' can only be symbolized and can never be represented as a whole. This is why, according to White, the positivist trend in history to embark upon a search for the truth at the expense of anything that can be imagined about the 'real' in terms of probability, has reduced history to a lower status than modern scientific disciplines. Modern sciences aspire to grasp the 'real' while validating true hypotheses and many historians since the nineteenth century have strived to do the same. Thus disciplinary history has granted truth a benchmark value, represented by historians through their writings, which in turn are based on evidence-based proof.

However, the mere truth value is not enough to conclude that historical writing is able to *completely* represent a historical reality. That is why a realistic representation of the past, in terms of fiction, should consist of anything that can be truthfully said about it but also anything that can be faithfully imagined as a historical possibility. White refers, here, to the inclusion of artistic means in the representation of historical reality that enable any such representation to have a broad view of the possibilities in the past. He argues:

> The conjuring up of the past requires art as well as information. And the reason why historical studies are in crisis today is not because a bunch of wild-eyed 'postmodernists' have captured the minds of the impressionable young; it is because historical studies have manifestly failed in their efforts to become the kind of 'science' they hoped to become in the nineteenth century. Prior to this time, history was cultivated in profitable combination with *belles-lettres,* epistolography and philosophy, as branches of

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[108] Hayden White, 'Introduction: Historical Fiction, Fictional History, and Historical Reality', *Rethinking History* 9.2/3 (June/September 2005), p. 147.

rhetoric, serving as the foundation of a pedagogy of virtue and as a kind of archive of experience useful for statesmen, diplomats, soldiers and other servants of the public weal. But the scientization of historical studies was thought to require their severance from any connection between, not only poetic and rhetoric but also between philosophy and imaginative literature (the novel and especially the romance).[109]

As a philosopher of history, White upholds the distinction between information and art, as if one could exist without the other, or as if the two were really distinct. Nowadays, so his argument runs, disciplinary history is in crisis because since the nineteenth century, the historians have abandoned non-scientific disciplines like philosophy, rhetoric, literature, art, etc. in order to claim history as a science that seeks the truth and rejects anything fanciful, imaginative and bordering on probability and conjectures. However this severance from other disciplines like rhetoric, literature, law, or philosophy did not make history truly scientific. Unlike scientific facts, historical writings are debatable and are often reversed through new interpretations. Most importantly, historiography is not simply the transfer of information. Historians *tell*. They use art. They might even use dangerous arts since they 'conjure up'.

Although the very phrase 'conjuring up' would make any scientist or scholar nervous, such nervousness would very much interest postmodern authors. The Dutch philosopher of history, Frank Ankersmit, concurs with White's thoughts when he says about his colleague historians that they:

> …are painfully aware that historical debate rarely leads to conclusive results and that such regrettable things as intellectual fashions or political preference may strongly color their opinions about the past. In short, deep in their hearts historians know that, despite their emphasis on the necessity of accurate investigation of sources and on prudent and responsible interpretation, history ranks lowest in scientific status of all the disciplines taught at a university.[110]

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[109] White, 'Historical Fiction, Fictional History, and Historical Reality', p. 149.

[110] F.R. Ankersmit, 'Hayden White's Appeal to the Historians', *History and Theory* 37.2 (May 1998), p. 183.

Frank Ankersmit takes the view that historians mainly focus on interpretations of the available facts and evidences and that their debates are unavoidably coloured by the intellectual fashions of the times and also by the political preferences of the times. He also brings in a matter of hierarchy and academic politics when he claims that history 'ranks lowest' in scientific status. Not only are objectivity and truth most likely to be affected when historians represent an historical reality, they are politically in choppy waters for two reasons: their writing is always politically invested and, academically speaking, their writing is political.

Despite its positivist thrust, disciplinary history is evidently still not acknowledged as a scientific discipline. For White and Ankersmit this is no reason for despair. They emphasize how historical discourse utilizes *narrative* to emplot stories on the basis of past incidents and events, and they accept the inevitability of language as the medium to narrate. For several reasons this language contains rhetorical tropes and figures of speech in order to configure plots with a proper beginning, middle and end. Emplotment demands what White would call 'tropological inventions'. In this respect, narrative is not a natural given in historical representations, as if narrative were a genre that enabled historians to shape stories from the past transparently. As Hans Kellner explains:

> I do not believe that there are 'stories' out there in the archives or monuments of the past, waiting to be resurrected and told. Neither human activity nor the existing records of such activity take the form of narrative, which is the product of complex cultural forms and deep-seated linguistic conventions deriving from choices that have traditionally been called rhetorical; there is no 'straight' way to invent a history, regardless of the honesty and professionalism of the historian.[111]

In light of my earlier discussion about *The Crucible*'s historical accuracy, Kellner would argue that narratives are not ontologically comparable to what one could 'find', like a letter or a stone. Narratives are a cultural form and product, depending on language conventions, which act as a medium that allows historians to translate real life events from the past into written records. These

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[111] Hans Kellner, 'Language and Historical Representation', in *The Postmodern History Reader*, ed. Keith Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 127.

past events do not repose in the archives as readymade stories which could somehow naturally be reproduced, they need to be fabricated. They cannot simply be *shown*, they need to be told.

The necessity of fabrication in the writing of history, or the impossibility of simply *showing* history, causes a distinct disciplinary unrest. Ernst van Alphen defines this unrest as a form of justified suspicion when he deals with the historians' thrust upon narrative. In clear consonance with White and Kellner, he writes:

> But when considering what it is that makes the historical mode so urgent, the inevitable conclusion is that even history-writing is not good enough for the purpose. Many historians approach even the most elementary narrative plot with suspicion. They do have a point; narrative plots are always simplifications compared to the complexity of historical reality. And the coherence and unity of traditional plots produce meaning effects that may not have been present in the past. One aspect of the realist plot, for instance, is its closure: everything comes to an end, an end that somehow satisfies. And more often than not, that end is good. If the very shaping of facts into a narrative, however truthful, is inherently unable to do justice to the facts, then the only mode of representation that might satisfy, however poorly, is the archival mode: the collecting, ordering and labelling of facts, items, pieces of evidence, testimonies.[112]

Several elements are of relevance for my analysis of *The Crucible*. Narratives do not come into existence as true pictures of the historical events. They are rhetorical and cultural in nature and are served by linguistic tropes that elaborate upon the available facts and evidences in written and oral histories. Compared to the enormous complexity of historical facts, narrative plots are rather simplistic and artificially coherent to create meaning effects, leading for instance to happy endings (most of the times actually, as Van Alphen observes). Moreover, one defining characteristic of narratives is that they lead to forms of closure. Such closure is always artificial, which is why archival evidence may come to the rescue, as when 'items, pieces of evidence, testimonies' – as first-hand historical sources - are used to *show* how 'it' was, without such artificial closure. As Van

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[112] Ernst van Alphen, 'Visual Archives as Preposterous History', *Art History* 30.3 (2007), p. 365.

Alphen suggests, they may somehow be a better source than narrative history to 'do justice to the facts.' I leave aside the paradoxical situation that arises as the interpretation of archives also requires narrative plots to link various dots dispersed throughout time. Yet of the essence is this 'doing justice to the facts.' Doing justice does not reside in the past. One does justice to a fact from the present and showing is of more importance here than telling.

When *The Crucible* seeks to do justice to historical facts, these facts are twofold. They are facts from the past but also from the present in which the play is written and in which it intervenes. For instance, John Proctor's statement to Danforth in Act 4 of the play bears a close resemblance to the public nature of confessions in both historical episodes: 'I have confessed myself! Is there no good penitence but it be public? God does not need my name nailed upon the church! God sees my name; God knows how black my sins are! It is enough!'[113] The passage serves to connote both past and present, be it in different generic modalities. Regarding its relation to the past, this passage, and by implication the play as a whole, has first of all a narrative quality to it, in the form of the historical research underpinning it, which shaped the drama's *plot*. Secondly, in the written version of the play, narrative sections positioned and introduced the historical characters. In light of the past and the Salem trials historiography, the play is narrative in the sense that it is closed, in that it provides one of the many interpretations of the incident that have so far been presented by the historians and interpreters from other disciplines. In its relation to the present, the narrative of Miller's opponents is broken open by means of the play in a dramatic mode. Such a dramatic mode may connect to the 'archival mode' that Van Alphen talked about, as when a testimony from the past is presented that does justice to the facts and as such has an openness to it that jeopardises the narratives of closure.[114] This is much more than what Barthes called the reality effect. Such an effect takes place, for instance, when Proctor speaks to Elizabeth in Act 2 and sketches the beauty of Massachusetts in winter: 'Lilacs have a purple smell. Lilac is the smell of nightfall, I think. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring'.[115] For the development of the plot lilacs are irrelevant. They simply serve to give the impression of reality. When John Proctor gives this testimony, however, this is clearly fictional but not entirely. Miller's historiographical

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[113] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 129.

[114] Stephen A. Marino, 'Poetry and Politics in The Crucible', in *Arthur Miller's The Crucible: Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: The Crucible,* ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), p. 161.

[115] Miller, *The Crucible* p. 49.

mode of dealing with such testimony, through theatre, may also work, in part, under the heading of what Van Alphen calls an archival mode. It is then as if John Proctor is a voice from the past giving testimony in the present.

David Lewis dwells upon the fragmentary nature of such an archival mode when he states:

> We depart from actuality as far as we must to reach a possible world where the counterfactual supposition comes true (and that might be quite far if the supposition is a fantastic one). But we do not make gratuitous changes. We hold fixed the features of actuality that do not have to be changed as part of the least disruptive way of making the supposition true. We can safely reason from the part of our factual background that is thus held fixed.[116]

Something is held factually fixed, despite counterfactuals. In *The Crucible*, Miller also introduces counterfactual suppositions, for instance by altering Abigail and Proctor's age, by showing the relentless wickedness of the prosecution and also by inventing a love triangle between John Proctor, Abigail and Elizabeth. But he did not alter historically proven facts, such as the roles played by each character in history. His play is not just a *play*. It is a play based on *research*.[117] As such, the play is the opposite of historically naïve, however. It aims not to merely represent the past truthfully but to do so in order to be effective in the present. Miller alludes to this motive in his autobiography: 'I knew that to simply will a play into existence was to insure a didactic failure. By now I was far beyond the teaching impulse; I knew that my own life was speaking here in many disguises, not merely my time'.[118] Thus, for Miller, there was clearly a personal element in this historical episode that he dramatized in his own times, which witnessed political witch-hunts of another sort. Yet this personal element was not a subjective matter. If we take Miller seriously, his own life is historically 'speaking,' as if it were an expressive subject. Likewise we could say that the historical characters in his play are historically 'speaking'. Of course, their creation is a matter of 'conjuring up' history as Sean Purdy puts

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[116] David Lewis, 'Truth in Fiction', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15.1 (1978), p. 42.
[117] Miller, *Timebends,* p. 336.
[118] Miller, *Timebends,* p. 338.

it.[119] This conjuring up, however, can only get teeth if there is also an archival element to it, an element of labelling, of evidence, of testimony. Yet what is the difference then, between the reality of Miller's own life, which he made to speak through his work, and the reality of his characters?

It is relevantto emphasize, in this context, that the postmodern historiographers that I have focused on so far do not deny historical reality. On the contrary. According to Kellner, the honesty and upright professionalism of historians contributes to the writing of 'true' narratives. Such truthfulness, in turn, does not deny fiction. The rhetorical aspect of historiography is akin to literary representations, as Kellner suggests: 'If beginning and ending a historical text are artful, literary acts, then are not historical periods, or historical events themselves, equally literary creations, composed by the same conceptual process?'[120] Ankersmit elaborates on White's position on the metahistorical nature of the past in historiography, although not so much to raise this query to a level of radical dismissal of objective truth and ultimate scientific veracity in historical representation. Ankersmit writes:

> Precisely by focusing on and by problematizing the historian's language, White demonstrates *not* the impossibility of getting hold of past reality, but the naiveté of the kind of positivist intuition customarily cherished in the discipline for how to achieve this goal. More specifically, what these positivist intuitions proudly represent as historical reality itself is a mere spectral illusion that is created by the historical discipline itself. Surely there is a historical reality which is, in principle, accessible to the historian. But historians have forgotten about this historical reality and mistaken the product of their tropological encoding of the past for the past itself.[121]

Plainly, Ankersmit accepts the objective existence of an historical past, as he does accept our ability to study it. This is something else, however, than the outcome of that study. In fact, Ankersmit hints at a metahistorical aspect of any historical writing. Such writing is not only a representation of a past reality but also and predominantly a verbal and intellectual construct that is impossible

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[119] Sean Purdy, 'Conjuring History: The Many Interpretations of the Salem Witchcraft Trials', *Rivier Academic Journal* 3.1 (Spring 2007), p. 13.
[120] Kellner, p. 129.
[121] Frank Ankersmit, 'Hayden White's Appeal to the Historians', *History and Theory* 37.2 (1998), p. 187.

without the mediality of language, as a result of which it becomes a 'spectral illusion'. In disciplinary history the *representation* of the past is presented unreflectively as a 'show', as an optimal and transparent picture of the historical truth. In both White and Ankersmit's observations, this nevertheless amounts to representation, one that is illusionary or, rather, *spectral* as compared to the real past that was physically lived in by its real actors and participants.

In the context of *The Crucible,* this presents us with a doubly fictive, narrative and archival mode that relates to two different modes of *spectrality*. On the one hand the play, in its narrative mode, presents us with a spectral illusion of the past on the level of representation. On the other hand, as a drama, the play shifts to a more archival mode that depends on the fact that this play also is some sort of a testimony, in that it offers a spectral illusion of live bodies coming to us from the past through language and theatre performances (in chapter 5 we will come back to spectrality in yet another mode). The play thus works through a nuance, or perhaps it does much more than this, in the discussion about the postmodern nature of historiography. The question may not so much be whether historical representations relate epistemologically to events in the past but whether they relate ontologically to the construction of worlds in the present. This is particularly relevant in *The Crucible* because this play is re-enacting history in the context of its action in a present. In this context it does more than represent history, either in a narrative or archival mode.

2.2 Beyond Representing History?

As may have become clear, the relation of language with historical reality is not just a matter of the past, but it is not a matter of simple scientific epistemology either. Adrian Kuzminski, in his analysis of White's notion of 'metahistory', correctly notes that the distinction between arguments and narratives for White is that 'for arguments there are the modes of Formism, Organicism, Mechanism, and Contextualism; for emplotments there are the archetypes of Romance, Comedy, Tragedy and Satire; and for ideological implication there are the tactics of Anarchism, Conservatism, Radicalism and Liberalism'.[122] Whereas the first two sets relate to argument and emplotment on the level of representation, the last set relates to an ideological position that not only concerns the present but an attitude, a position in, and a preference for a distinct world. The respective subcategories of arguments, plots and ideologies lend

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[122] Adrian Kuzminski quoting White in 'A New Science?', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18.1 (1976), p. 135.

historical writing more than a rhetorical tinge. They mean much more than the fact that history writing is inevitably reduced to encoded intellectual constructs in language. In fact, historiography understood in a truly postmodern sense weaves together past and present *ideologically*.

Both White and Ankersmit seem predominantly concerned with historiography in its relation to the past. They argue, for instance, that the postmodern nature of history as a discipline is evident from the relation between reality and language, which historians use to represent the past. Likewise, they observe that historical language retains an opacity that historians most often associate with the past reality itself. Although historical debates must revolve around finding a true picture of the past, this always concerns language as well as the words that mediate a past reality into its current representations. As already became clear, Ankersmit observes that, in their intellectual discussions and debates, historians frequently confuse historical language with the past reality itself. In this context Ankersmit argues that the postmodern nature of history as a discipline exposes and accounts for the neglect of the language-reality dichotomy displayed by historians when they confuse the truth-making capacity of language as a medium with the historical reality itself.[123] Nevertheless, his concern, and the concern of historians in general, is the past.

To be sure, Ankersmit's position cannot be reduced to the view that historiography relates only to the past. This is what John Zammito observes regarding Ankersmit's thoughts about language in historical representation:

> Ankersmit claims that *sets* of statements – *texts* or 'narratios' or verbal representations – have logical or epistemological peculiarities that demand philosophical attention. For him, such sets taken as *wholes* expand ontology: they add new *things* ('narrative substances') to the world. In a word, there are some *things* that belong *both* to language and to reality, and historical representations are a primary instance. 'A historical representation is a thing that is made of language' (HR: 13) [sic.]. The point Ankersmit wants to make, without falling back into the analytic/synthetic dichotomy, is that 'language can be a truth maker no less than reality' (HR: 13). He is persuaded that as one moves from the natural sciences to the humanities, 'the indeterminacy of

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[123] Frank Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism', in *The Postmodern History Reader,* ed. by Keith Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 284.

truth by this compulsion of experience and truth by the compulsion of language will increase to the extent that it will be more difficult to pin down with precision which part of language corresponds to what chunk of reality' (HR: 37).[124]

At first sight Zammito scrutinises Ankersmit's position on the relation between language and historical reality with reference to the sets of statements in representation. He argues that these sets of statements or verbal representations are distinctive and logical in nature with regard to knowledge about the past, and that they need to be assessed independently from a philosophic perspective. Yet they are also a source of production of new things which Ankersmit calls narrative substances. The world comprises both things that are historically real and present in the contemporary situation, not just on a linguistic level. Ankersmit anchors his argument in the proposition that language constructs truth, and that this is no less a truth-maker than reality itself.

Yet, I would argue that the shift of interest towards narratives and verbal representations after the linguistic turn and in postmodern approaches towards history has turned into an obsession. According to Samuel James, it is an obsession about: 'what humanity made of its world, and thereby displaced the question of how the world might be in itself'.[125] Here, clearly, the scope of the argument has been extended from a purely epistemological level to an ontological one. The question therefore is whether White and Ankersmit would want to follow James to the very end. As true historians, White and Ankersmit's position appears to be ambiguous. In a sense their attention remains by and large focused on the past. They assert, for example, that historians are actually at a loss when they claim to have grasped the past to the full and when they believe that their intellectual constructs explain a historical reality to the highest level. White and Ankersmit contend that, in fact, the historians' interpretations of the available facts are mostly linguistic representations, just like the representations of some past event or reality by literary artists who are better equipped to explain a *truth* through their imaginative insights about the 'probable' aspects of an historical reality that the historian might overlook. Here, however, they move towards the present, without acknowledging it. A literary work of art is not so

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[124] John Zammito, 'Ankersmit and Historical Representation', *History and Theory* 44 (2005), p. 157.
[125] Samuel James, 'Louis Mink, "Postmodernism", and the Vocation of Historiography', *Modern Intellectual History* 7.1 (2010), pp. 152-53.

much judged for its scholarly adequate representation of the past but for its effective force in the present.

Ankersmit appears to be aware of this, or relates to this when he reflects on the postmodern concept of history:

> To formulate this in the paradoxical manner so popular among postmodernists: the essence of the past is not, or does not lie in, the essence of the past. It is the scraps, the slips of the tongue, the *Fehlleistungen* of the past, the rare moments when the past 'let itself go,' where we discover what is really of importance for us. I suspect that at least a partial explanation can be found here for what Jorn Rusen referred to as the 'paradigm change' in present-day historiography, a paradigm change which in his opinion consists mainly of exchanging *makrohistorische Strukturen* for *mikrohistorische Situationen und Lebensverhältnisse* as the object of the historian's attention. What we are witnessing could perhaps be nothing less than the definitive farewell for the time being to all the essential aspirations which have actually dominated historiography as long as it has existed.[126]

In first instance, Ankersmit maintains that recent interests have been shifted from macro-histories to micro-histories, which have in the past escaped the attention of historians as unimportant and non-significant in the context of their respective narrative plots. As John Rusen's observations suggest in this quote, the focus in postmodern historiography is on the localized narratives of the living conditions of the oppressed of history who have been denied a representation by those in power - as the latter merely had an interest in what they would want to call 'the essence and true meaning of history'. In this light, postmodernism sees history as comprising many small narratives, unlike the Enlightenment model of rationalist metanarratives. Ankersmit moreover observes that essentialism in history has been the guiding principle for historians in the West across the board. The Augustinian theological concept of history, for instance, was the precursor of its secularized version of science and positivism as the lone rescuer of humanity's progress.[127] Having said that, and despite the phrase 'what is really of importance for us,' the passage shows that

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[126] Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism', p. 289.
[127] Ankersmit, 'Historiography and Postmodernism', p. 289.

Ankersmit is an historian at heart, focusing on the past and not so much on the construction of new worlds in the present. To put this differently, his main focus remains epistemological, which is not very postmodern.

The above is of importance in relation to my postmodern reading of *The Crucible*. Does this play's power only reside in a (modernist) correct epistemologically testable narrative of past events (as I suggested in chapter 1) or does the play work performatively, by ontologically fusing two different worlds in order to produce something new? A fusion of two worlds may be found at play when John Proctor addresses Danforth in the climax of Act 4 and, in refusing to sign what he confessed, expresses how his soul has been seized from him through a false confession under duress and under pressure of the authorities:

> Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name![128]

This is a character speaking from the past whereas equally well it could have been a contemporary of Miller who had gone through the anti-Communist prosecutions in the 1950s. In this context, the point would be that we move away from postmodernism's obsession with representation and its almost parasitic relation to modernism and modernity in terms of a critical response. This position of dependence is hinted at when White, for instance, states that: 'Postmodernism is a term which names, first a certain epochal self-consciousness, a sense shared by many artists and intellectuals of having to work and create in a situation deprived of the certainties of twentieth century modernism' (sic). This becomes even more explicit when he adds that postmodernism 'arose on the ruins of the search for certainty, objectivity, foundations and even truth itself that had underwritten the West's belief in 'progress' since the time of the enlightenment'.[129] According to White, consequently, the term postmodernism can be defined rather by what it has denied, rejected, or simply abandoned with regard to the philosophical and

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[128] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 130.
[129] White, 'Postmodernism and Historiography' n.p.

social endowment of the Enlightenment, than by any positive cognitive content or utopian aspiration of a distinctively modern kind.[130]

As Brian McHale makes clear, postmodernism exists without any particular clear point of reference and it is a discursive artefact constructed by readers, writers and literary historians, as a consequence of which it can be constructed in a variety of ways.

> Thus there is John Barth's postmodernism, the literature of replenishment; Charles Newman's postmodernism, the literature of an inflationary economy; Jean Francois Lyotard's postmodernism, a general condition of knowledge in the contemporary informational regime; Ihab Hasan's postmodernism, a stage on the road to the spiritual unification of humankind; and so on.[131]

Here we turn, by implication, from a focus on the past to a focus on the present since all the people mentioned by McHale act in the present. Literature is considered in this case not so much in terms of the adequacy of its representation, but in terms of its ability to make the world, or to make worlds, by battling one another through language. On the positive side this does not support any accusation of moral relativism. In fact, postmodernism encourages endless debate on all values. This also clearly emerges from Jane Flax's definition, from a feminist perspective, of the core issues of postmodernism:

> These crucial subjects include: (1) contemporary Western culture - its nature and the best ways to understand it; (2) knowledge - what it is, who or what constructs and generates it, and its relations to power; (3) philosophy - its crisis and history, how both are to be understood, and how (if at all) it is to be practiced; (4) power - if, where, and how domination exists and is maintained and how and if it can be overcome; (5) subjectivity and the self - how our concepts and our experiences of them have come to be and what, if anything, these do or can mean; and (6) difference - how to conceptualize, preserve, or rescue it.[132]

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[130] White, 'Postmodernism and Historiography' n.p.
[131] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York & London: Methuen, 1987), p. 4.
[132] Jane Flax, 'Postmodernism: Thinking in Fragments', in *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 188.

So, according to Flax, postmodernism is concerned with our *understanding* contemporary Western Culture, the nature of the production of *knowledge* in its relation with power, and the *crisis* of philosophy. All three again emphasize issues of epistemology. Yet Flax considers postmodernism critically from a feminist standpoint, with reference to its failure to bring about change in the world apart from only interpreting it. To be sure, power is a dominant motif of postmodernism and it is studied in an attempt to discern the modalities of domination and the ways to overcome it. But Flax asks how practical postmodernism can become, in this respect, and how it can do justice to the subjects that are still struggling for emancipation and self-realisation. In general, the concept of subjectivity is analyzed in postmodern studies more with reference to what the self might *mean*, than for what it might *do*. As we will see in the conclusion of this thesis, it will take Judith Butler to overcome the postmodernist tendency to *read* differentially as opposed to *acting* differentially. The latter is also what Flax is concerned with.

Flax's position is of importance in my dealing with Miller's play, for if I read it as a postmodern play, some forms or aspects of postmodernism might have reduced its powers in terms of effect. The question is: which forms or aspects *empowered* it? In my take on the matter I consider a version of postmodernism relevant which considers historiography as a battlefield for truth. So I need to return to Linda Hutcheon.

2.3 *The Crucible* as a Postmodern Parody of History: Salem as the Parody of McCarthyism

The production of the play in the early 1950s is in itself not enough to call it postmodern. Yet, its intense self-reflexivity, and its obvious intention to intervene in the playwright's present political environment compel me to read *The Crucible* as a postmodern work. Its self-reflexivity is evident from the interspersed narrative commentary in the text which reminds the reader that he/she is reading a text, language, and a drama and not viewing a world without mediation. However, the point is that the drama itself facilitates a mapping of two worlds and the question is how we can understand this mapping. The latter is evident when Miller explains the genesis of *The Crucible* in an interview with Olga Carlisle and Rose Styron. In it he says that in the 1950s, when Senator Joseph McCarthy waved the card in the air by saying 'I have in my hand the names of so-and-so', it felt eerily similar to the standard tactic of seventeenth-

century prosecutors. In Salem, they would announce: 'we possess the names of all those people who are guilty. But the time has not come yet to release them'. This was a way of inflicting guilt upon the whole village. Many responded genuinely and many out of fear. McCarthy re-enacted this show at the national level in the 1950s by demonizing the Communists.[133]

The mapping of two worlds is distinct from the potential of postmodern fiction to represent history in order to open it up to the present. Linda Hutcheon explains this relation of historiography to the present in postmodern fiction as follows: 'Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological'.[134] Hutcheon elaborates on this in her essay 'Historiographic Metafiction':

> In the postmodern novel the conventions of both fiction and historiography are simultaneously used and abused, installed and subverted, asserted and denied. And the double (literary/historical) nature of this intertextual parody is one of the major means by which this paradoxical (and defining) nature of postmodernism is textually inscribed.[135]

The difference with White and Ankersmit is crucial. It concerns not so much opposing two approaches as the simultaneous realization of possibilities. So-called postmodern metafiction is a type of fiction that self-consciously addresses the devices of fiction without, however, turning everything into mere fiction. In drawing attention to itself as a work of art, the work both emphasizes artifice and exposes the truth inhering it. In Patricia Waugh's view, metafiction is a fictional writing that draws attention to itself as an artefact, not to ignore but to raise questions about the relationship between reality and fiction. In self-critically assessing its methods of construction, metafictional writings examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction and explore alongside the possibility of the truth of a world outside the literary texts.[136]

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[133] Arthur Miller, 'Arthur Miller: An Interview', interview by Olga Carlisle and Rose Styron, in *The Theatre Essays of Arthur Miller,* ed. by Robert A. Martin (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), p. 290.

[134] Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction: "The Pastime of Past Time"', p. 110.

[135] Linda Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and Intertextuality of History', in *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*, p. 5.

[136] Patricia Waugh, 'What is Metafiction and Why are They Saying Such Awful Things About it?', in *Metafiction,* ed. by Mark Currie (London / New York: Longman, 1995), p. 40.

In *The Crucible*, the dynamic at play is similar when Miller introduces John Proctor through a narrative comment on his dramatic character in relation to historical realities outside the play:

> But as we shall see, the steady manner he 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. These people had no ritual for the washing away of sins. It is another trait that we inherited from them, and it has helped to discipline us as well as to breed hypocrisy among us.[137]

The passage is a good example of historiographic metafiction as John Proctor's dramatic character is narrated with reference to his socio-historical time and also with reference to the sustained cultural practices that 'we', i.e. Miller's contemporaries in the fifties, had inherited. *The Crucible* has therefore a vast postmodern potential as its subject is an historical event whereas, through dramatic performance and theatricality, Miller has established a double relationship between fact and fiction, working through both past and present to unearth new meanings for *both*. Yet what is the nature of this process of working through? For this the notion of parody in historiographic metafiction is of relevance.

When Hutcheon emphasized the importance of parody in postmodern historiography, it was certainly not a pejorative literary device meant to ridicule and imitate history. As Hutcheon explains:

> What I mean by 'parody' here is *not* the ridiculing imitation of the standard theories and definitions that are rooted in eighteenth-century theories of wit. The collective weight of parodic *practice* suggests a redefinition of parody as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity. In historiographic metafiction, in film, in painting, in music, and in architecture, this parody paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity.[138]

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[137] Miller, *The Crucible* p. 21.
[138] Linda Hutcheon, 'The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History', *Cultural Critique* 5, Modernity and Modernism, Postmodernity and Postmodernism (Winter, 1986-87), p. 185.

So, in historiographic metafiction, the parody of history is performed through critical representation of the past with a view to finding difference and continuity in perspectives with respect to the present. Hutcheon sees in this an urge for a public discourse that articulates the 'presentness of the past' through a social placing of art in cultural discourse, thus linking art with what Edward Said calls the 'world'.[139]

In *The Crucible*, for instance, the 'Black slave from Barbados,' Tituba, can be seen as a specific example of parody of double oppression of race and gender patterns in American history. Miller introduces her character to critically revive the ghosts of race relationships from America's past in a new space of modern American multiculturalism.[140] When, for example, Tituba's speaks to Reverend Parris in Act 1 of the play, she says:

> He say Mr. Parris must be kill! Mr. Parris no goodly man, Mr. Parris mean man and no gentleman, and he bid me rise out of my bed and cut your throat! *(They gasp.)* But I tell him 'No! I don't hate that man. I don't want kill that man.' But he say, 'You work for me, Tituba, and I make you free! I give you pretty dress to wear, and put you way high up in the air, and you gone fly back to Barbados!' And I say, 'You lie, Devil, you lie!' And then he come one stormy night to me, and he say, 'Look! I have *white* people belong to me.' And I look - and there was Goody Good.[141]

There is an obvious Caribbean tinge to Tituba's style of speech. Marion Starkey calls it 'slurred southern speech'.[142] In the play, she is presented as a black slave woman who is an expert in traditional folk healing methods and black magic. Her identity and background have certainly played a part in her being accused in first instance of practising Voodoo. In this quote, in citing the Devil's enticing temptations, Tituba subconsciously vents her desire for freedom and emancipation from slavery, which refers to the historic tragedy of the Africans and the Indians in the Caribbean and the Americas. There is tangible evidence that Miller introduces her character as a parody, in Hutcheon's sense, of a past

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[139] Hutcheon, 'The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History', p. 203.

[140] Jane Moss, 'Postmodernizing the Salem Witchcraze: Maryse Condé's I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem', *Colby Quarterly* 35.1 (March 1999), pp. 5-6.

[141] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 45.

[142] Quoted in Chadwick Hansen, 'The Metamorphosis of Tituba, or Why American Intellectuals Can't Tell an Indian Witch from a Negro', *The New England Quarterly* 47.1 (1974), p. 8.

that still lurks in America's present (be it our contemporary present or the 1950s, but more so in the fifties) in the form of problematic race relations between blacks and whites.

Hutcheon defines the function of parody in her study of Robert Coover's *The Public Burning* from 1977.[143] It concerns a fictionalized account of the Rosenberg case, told from Richard Nixon's viewpoint. The novel combines metafictional techniques with a critique of American history and ideology and had a pronounced impact on Hutcheon's views on postmodernism. Hutcheon writes in this respect:

> Postmodernism deliberately confuses the notion that history's problem is verification, while fiction's is veracity (Berthoff 1970, 272). Both forms of narrative are signifying systems in our culture, both are what Doctorow once called modes of 'mediating the world for the purpose of introducing meaning' (1983, 24). And it is the constructed, imposed nature of that meaning (and the seeming necessity for us to make meaning) that historiographic metafiction like Coover's *The Public Burning* reveals.[144]

The important point here is that when both fiction and historiography are signifying systems in cultural space, and postmodern metafiction is meant to mediate the world aesthetically and politically, this is all meant not just to grasp or find meaning but to *make* meaning, as Doctorow would also suggest. The past is given meaning by verifying it through the veracity of the fictional discourse. Likewise, *The Crucible* works on the basis of this confusion of verification with veracity, i.e. historical facts in relation to the truth in their representation. Or, to put this yet differently, the veracity of the play as a truth practice calls for verification, with regard to both the past and the present, in line with Hutcheon's approach: 'It is part of the postmodern stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/the general, and the present/the past'.[145]

The general picture is that postmodern historical novels, like Coover's *The Public Burning,* use metafictional techniques to juxtapose historical facts with fiction, thus not only reminding the readers of historical fiction's

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[143] Robert Coover, *The Public Burning* (New York: Grove Press, 1977).
[144] Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction: "The Pastime of Past Time"', p. 112.
[145] Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction: "The Pastime of Past Time"', p. 106.

limitations as a textual version of history but also of the disturbance created by mixing historical facts through fiction.[146] Yet this disturbance is not just a simple matter of disturbance. In *The Crucible* the normative historical narratives of Salem and the persistent ideology of good and evil in American cultural discourse is problematized and somehow challenged through metafictional drama techniques. The truth is nowhere to be found, it has to emerge through this process. Thus the text creates room for radical political engagement in the sense formulated by French philosopher Alain Badiou: 'it is our encounter with the *emerging* truth that can ultimately force us towards an ethical confrontation or *choice*: the recognition of truth of an event 'compels us to decide a new way of being'.'[147]

Postmodernism's revisiting of the past, in this respect, is not nostalgic; it is a critical revisiting of the past based upon a parodying dialogue of both art and society with the past. In postmodernism, this critical reflection deals with aesthetic and social formations of the past in its relation to the present. To be sure there are those who do see in postmodernism a nostalgic tendency, such as Christian Gutleben in *Nostalgic Postmodernism.*[148] And even in *The Crucible*, as we will see in chapter 5, there might be a perverse nostalgia in the desire to revisit the dark past with its clear-cut forces of good and evil. Such nostalgia, however, was not at issue in the fifties. At that time, *The Crucible* was able to twist the narrativization of Salem, with the aim of finding new possibilities of meaning in the present. It did work, distinctly, as a parody:

> Historiographic metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction. And it is a kind of seriously ironic parody that effects both aims: the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel (though not equal) status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the 'world' and literature.[149]

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[146] Raymond A. Mazurek, 'Metafiction, the Historical Novel and Coover's *The Public Burning*', in *Metafiction,* ed. by Mark Currie (London / New York: Longman, 1995), p. 195.
[147] Badiou, quoted in Amanda Stuart Fisher, 'Developing an Ethics of Practice in Applied Theatre: Badiou and Fidelity to the Truth of the Event', *Research in Drama Education* 10.2 (2005), p. 248.
[148] Christian Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism. The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel*, *Postmodern Studies* (Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi, 2001).
[149] Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History', p. 4.

The key term here is 'reworking'. The pivotal issue is that the past is not finished. In the case of *The Crucible,* there is moreover another, related, problem. Not only is the past not finished, but nor is the making of history in the present. Hutcheon explains that:

> Historiography and fiction, as we saw earlier, *constitute* their objects of attention; in other words they decide which events will become facts. The postmodern problematization points to our unavoidable difficulties with the concreteness of events (in the archive, we can find only their textual traces to make into facts) and their accessibility. (Do we have a full trace or a partial one? What has been absented, discarded as non-fact material?).[150]

The first and last sentence are of particular relevance to Miller's play. Its main concern, again, is not to investigate the Salem case per se, but to provoke investigation into the manipulative making of events by McCarthy and his ilk, and the consciously used partiality of traces. If I read *The Crucible* as a postmodern play, it is firstly as a parody in the sense that the Salem period is used as a parody of McCarthyism. Secondly, it is also a parody of historiographical metafiction itself. It seems to focus chiefly on the past but it is actually interested in the present, in which 'full traces and partial ones' are used politically as a matter of public manipulation. For Hutcheon a parody of the past is used to work on historiographical sources in literary texts, whose self-reflexivity or metafictional nature reveal the possibility of alternative versions of truth that are textually inscribed in historical records. The parody works like this and yet differently in *The Crucible*. Its parody of the past is both aimed at finding different forms of truth in the past and calling for the truth in the present.

When Hutcheon shows that parody is central to postmodernism, her argument is simultaneously formal, strategic and political.[151] Not only does she formally link parody to ironic quotation, pastiche and intertexuality, she also relates it also to appropriation, which is a matter of strategy. Such forms and strategies become political when 'ideological consequences' are involved. The parody of the past in postmodern works of art is not nostalgic or

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[150] Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction: "The Pastime of the Past Time"', p. 122.
[151] Linda Hutcheon, 'The Politics of Parody', in *The Politics of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 93.

commemorative, nor is it based on lamentation of the past; rather it is always critical and seeks new meanings from the past whilst having its feet entrenched in history and fiction at the same time, which in terms of parody boils down to 'installing and ironizing' simultaneously. Miller's *The Crucible* proves the point. The play both claims to install an historical reality whilst ironizing it. Miller's main goal is not to just represent the Salem events correctly but to present them in such a way that they appear as a parody of themselves and of McCarthyism. In strategic terms, he appropriates the Salem events to criticize the contemporary McCarthy events, which are parodied in? the play. There is thus a double parody in play. Considered in this way, *The Crucible* is a theatrical piece that confronts the established narrative of the 1950s US political environment by dramatizing an historical episode, or by *redoing* this episode in the context of the play's contemporaneous present. As a result, its theatricality has the effect of transversing time scales (about which more later).

In this context, Walter Benjamin's reading of Brecht's epic theatre is relevant, in particular when Benjamin mentions that the use of gesture and citability distinguish epic theatre from classical drama. Regarding this gesture and citability, Samuel Weber explains:

> Epic theater, it could be said, turns the traditional claims of drama *inside out.* This is why gesture *as such* is only the 'raw material' of theater, and why Benjamin citing Brecht, singles out the citability of gesture as the defining principle and resource of his theater. For 'gesture' does not merely interrupt some thing external to it: the expressive intentionality of an action, the teleology of a narrative, or the causal necessity or probability of a sequence of events. It does all of this, but it also does something more: insofar as it is citable, it interrupts *itself*, and indeed, only 'is' in its possibility of becoming other, of being transported elsewhere.[152]

The gesture in epic theatre possesses a dialectical dimension in that it interrupts a specific movement towards meaning, comprehension and closure and brings out effects to render these apparent. The point in relation to this quote is, again, that *The Crucible* does not intend to be a classic dramatic piece that tells a closed, yet gripping story that may fascinate us. The relation between Salem and

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[152] Samuel Weber, 'Citability - of Gesture', in *Benjamin's -abilities* (Cambridge, MA / London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 103.

McCarthyism is, indeed, one of citability. In this case, it is not so much the actors working by means of gesturing, but the play itself, as a whole, that functions as gesture. The play itself is 'the raw material' of theatre that interrupts the gripping and dramatic events of the present in which it is brought. As such it is citable as well, as we will see in chapter 5 and in the conclusion.

Sarah Bryant-Bertail states that 'epic theatre rejects the old dichotomy between, on one side, human consciousness as the *interior time of the spirit of history;* and, on the other side, the world, including the human body, as the *exterior space and matter of nature*'.[153] Miller's *The Crucible* uses theatrical gesture much like Brecht's epic theatre because it refuses such a dichotomy, for it would restrict literature and art to the position of *reflecting* on history's internal sense and meaning. Instead *The Crucible* is very much concerned with the world of acting bodies, both political bodies and individual ones. The piece retains this strength to confront the grand narrative of its age by interrupting it and intervening critically. As Sarah Bryant-Bertail says: 'theater can still be used as a forum to stage and critique the crises of our own era, to help us see the images we have constructed of our own historical existence, constructions that have real-life consequences'.[154] The argument in this section is that this does not hold for theatre per se, but for specific forms of theatre, of which *The Crucible* is one example.

In relation to history, the play does not only work by means of parodic gesture and citability, however. Its parodic potential is even more complicated, or doubly doubled, as when Salem becomes the parody of McCarthyism.

2.4 *The Crucible* in the Present: the Preposterousness of McCarthyism Parodying Salem

The Crucible deals with an historical episode and it is because of it being written in the 1950s, i.e. Miller's present, that an anachronistic effect is unavoidably generated. It may be a form of anachronism, however, that doubles the parody of which I spoke in the previous section. When cultural analyst Mieke Bal developed her idea of preposterous history, she meant that the time scales may be reversed by means of works of art. Especially in *Quoting Caravaggio*, in which she examines the way in which postmodern artists reworked the baroque, she explores how works of art can foster a way of

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[153] Sarah Bryant-Bertail, *Space and Time in Epic Theater: The Brechtian Legacy* (New York: Comden House, 2000), p. 214.
[154] Bryant-Bertail, p. 211.

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looking at the past in which the present precedes the past on the chronological scale.[155] Korsten, working on theatre plays from the baroque himself, summarizes Bal's position as follows:

> History seems to be defined chronologically by a *pre* and a *post*. Yet this seemingly natural order of things is not that solid. The point was put forward convincingly by Mieke Bal, who coined the term *preposterous history* in order to indicate how past and present are caught in an embrace that confuses chronological order. In the case of Bal, in her *Quoting Caravaggio,* she considered the way in which many postmodernist artists reworked material of the baroque. On average, this would be seen as a matter of influence, or of chronologically hierarchized intertextuality. Bal's point was that it works the other way as well. We now read baroque works of art also through the pre-position of postmodernist art. In the case of literature I would say that, for instance, we now read *Iliad* as much through Derek Walcott's *Omeros* as that we read *Omeros* through *Iliad.* But as the term preposterous suggests there is more to it than simple reversal. Taking her cue from anthropologist Johannes Fabian, Bal is talking about 'shared time,' of a coevalness between scholar and historical subject.[156]

Almost naturally the chronological order of things seems based on the notion that the past precedes the present which leads to the future. However, as Bal argues in her notion of preposterous history, past and present are caught in a mutual embrace in postmodern works of art, and not just in postmodern works. For instance, the reworking of the historical subjects in the postmodern works of art, as in the case of baroque paintings, has enabled the readers to view the past through these present representations. Hence from this logic, the present preposterously precedes the past in the postmodern works of art to disrupt an apparently solid hierarchy of chronologically ordered things in which the past always leads to the present. Yet there is more to it. This logic also allows for the possibility of a 'shared time,' which is located here in the interstice between the

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[155] Mieke Bal, Introduction, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 7.
[156] Korsten, p. 42.

pieces of art and the studying scholar, but which can be extended to any audience dealing with such works of art.

In postmodernist writings, the present reworking of historical subjects enables the reader to view the past through them. But this is more than a matter of 'viewing'. According to Van Alphen, ' The complex ways in which art acts upon the past - or more specifically its predecessors - and conventional motifs and modes of representation, suggests that it is the past, not the present, that is conditioned by a perpetual flux'.[157] So, it is not only the artists' complex reworking of historical subjects that obliterates the natural order of things from the past to the present. In the postmodernist logic, this constant reworking of history makes the past, through its interpretations and re-workings, conditioned by a continuous process of flux and change. That being said, the opposition suggested by Van Alphen may be more complex in the case of *The Crucible*. A preposterous order of history, in which the present leads to the past's mould-ability, is crucial in assessing *The Crucible*'s political power as a parody.

At first it may seem that the play uses Salem as a parody of McCarthyism. If, however, we take the logic of preposterousness seriously, it reverses that order: McCarthyism becomes the parody of Salem. The play's critical intervention is even more devastating, since McCarthyism itself, in its pompous pretence to make history, becomes the object of history now. McCarthyism becomes the parody of a past event and, as a consequence, it loses its totalitarian grip in and on the present.

It is time now to have a closer look at the intervention of the play in its contemporaneous present.

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[157] Van Alphen, pp. 365-66.

Chapter 3
Using the Past to Intervene in the Present: Spectacular Framing and the Point of Theatre

> No kind of literary gratification is so much within the reach of the multitude as that which is derived from theatrical representations. Neither preparation nor study is required to enjoy them: they lay hold on you in the midst of your prejudices and your ignorance.[158]

In the following two chapters I will not be concerned with arguing in favour of or against other interpretations of *The Crucible,* such as those proposed by scholars like Robert Warshow, Henry Hewes, Walter Kerr, Joseph T. Shipley, Eric Bentley, Penelope Curtis and others.[159] Nor will I elaborate extensively on the literature available about an unsettling period of American history known as the McCarthy era. Instead, I will look at the different ways in which *The Crucible* intervenes in the political circumstances of its times *as a piece of theatre*. Whereas in the previous two chapters the relation between theatre and the representation of history was the focal point, in the following two chapters I will be looking at the play's relation to its present in terms of theatricality. As a piece of theatre or literature, the text cannot intervene directly in the present. Or, at least, it cannot do so in a way that resembles a political decision – or a subpoena, for that matter. Literature and theatre are part and parcel of the present, but the way in which they work on the present will have to relate it in terms of a time lapse, by means of past and future. Or, to put this differently, in the case of *The Crucible,* theatre intervened slowly in light of the speed of the show.

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[158] Alexis De Tocqueville, 'Some Observations on the Drama amongst Democratic Nations', in *Democracy in America,* trans. by Henry Reeve Vol. 3 (London: Sounders and Otley, 1840), p. 163.

[159] Robert Warshow, 'The Liberal Conscience in *The Crucible*', in *The Crucible*: *Text and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Weales (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 210-26; Henry Hewes, 'Arthur Miller and How He Went to the Devil', in *The Crucible*: *Text and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Weales (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 182-88; Walter Kerr, '*The Crucible*', in *The Crucible*: *Text and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Weales (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 189-91; Joseph T. Shipley, 'Arthur Miller's New Melodrama is Not What it Seems to Be', in *The Crucible*: *Text and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Weales (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 201-03; Eric Bentley, 'The Innocence of Arthur Miller', in *The Crucible*: *Text and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Weales (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 204-09; Penelope Curtis, '*The Crucible*', in *The Crucible*: *Text and Criticism*, ed. by Gerald Weales (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 255-71.

In this chapter I will focus on the play's intervention in the present in relation to the immediate past, and in the next chapter on its relation to the future that it appeals to. The pivot between the two will prove to be allegory, either as means to circumvent censorship and use and rework historical rifts, or as a mean to call for a better future. This chapter will address the main problem of how Miller's theatre play intervenes in and subverts the politics of its own times. It concerns, in a sense, a battle between two forms of artifice. Miller, in those days, had the impression of living in an artificial realm, as he indicated in his Massey lecture at Harvard: 'We were living in an art form, a metaphor that had no long history but had suddenly, incredibly enough, gripped the country'.[160] Apparently, the control by the radical Right was reminiscent of the artist's control of language, in its power to juxtapose the real with the unreal.[161] The whole national scene was as surreal like a scripted text. Miller described its scenario as follows:

> That all relationships had become relationships of advantage or disadvantage. That this was what it all came down to anyway and there was nothing new here. That one stayed as long as it was useful to stay, believed as long as it was not too inconvenient, and that we were fish in a tank cruising with upslanted gaze for the descending crumbs that kept us alive.[162]

The situation that Miller describes here concerned the so-called 'red-baiting' trials, initiated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, also known as the McCarthy hearings. These were all mass media campaigns that required famous public figures to first confess their past or current affiliation with Communism and then recant their former political idealism, shunning it as a product of their youthful naïveté.[163] Tema Nason put it simply in her fictional biography of Ethel Rosenberg, when she makes Ethel say: 'It is all clear to me

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[160] Arthur Miller, 'The Crucible in History', The Massey Lecture, Harvard University, in *Arthur Miller's The Crucible: Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations,* ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), p. 86.
[161] Jeffrey Clapp, 'From Signing to Strangling: Arthur Miller and the National Security State', *Textual Practice* 28.3 (2013), pp. 366-67.
[162] Miller, *Timebends,* pp. 333-34.
[163] Jim Finnegan, 'Edwin Rolfe's Historical Witness to the Spectacle of McCarthyism', *College Literature* 33.3 (Summer 2006), p. 138; Walter Kalaidjian, 'Deeds Were Their Last Words: The Return of Edwin Rolfe', *College Literature* 24.3 (Oct. 1997), p. 64.

now, finally at this late hour. They had their script. I had mine. Theirs: "Confess, lie, and you'll live"'.[164]

Obviously, the tropes of official signatures and public testimonies in the 1950s strongly resemblance with the pattern of 'naming names' in Salem in 1692. Likewise there was a strong similarity between the arrogance or pride of the prosecutors both in the Salem period and under McCarthyism. About this similitude, Miller says in his autobiography: 'The same misplaced pride that had for so long prevented the original Salem court from admitting the truth before its eyes was still alive here. And that was good for the play too, it was in the mood'.[165] Miller is hinting here at the play's opponent: The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), which had been preceded by a number of sub-committees since the early twentieth century. These were the Overman Committee (1918-19), the Fish Committee (1930-31) and the Dies Committee (1938).[166] As Caute explains, the Dies Committee was refurbished as HCUA in 1945 and voted by 207 to 86 to become a permanent standing committee with unique powers to investigate and subpoena. This committee had powers to investigate:

> (1) The extent, character and objects of un-American propaganda activities in the United States, (2) the diffusion within the United States of subversive and un-American propaganda that is instigated from foreign countries or of a domestic origin and attacks the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our Constitution, and (3) all other questions in relation thereto that would aid Congress in any remedial legislation.[167]

On 21 June 1956, three years after the Broadway premiere of *The Crucible,* Arthur Miller was subpoenaed by the HCUA while he was under investigation for an allegedly unauthorized passport.[168] The charges against him were: 'Signing CRC statements against anti-Communist legislation and against HCUA

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[164] Tema Nason, *Ethel: The Fictional Autobiography: A Novel of Ethel Rosenberg* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), p. 303.
[165] Miller, *Timebends,* p. 337.
[166] David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), pp. 88-89.
[167] Caute, *The Great Fear,* p. 89.
[168] The sub-committee is often confused with the House Committee on Un-American Activities (better known as HCUA). As a senator, McCarthy was not a member of the House, but the HCUA was deeply involved with the national program of tracing Communists or their sympathizers.

itself; appealing on behalf of Gerhart Eisler and Howard Fast, attending five or six meetings of Communist writers in 1947'.[169]

In this case, Miller only had to respond to the last of the charges. The charge document also detailed his support of the world youth festival in Prague, a *Washington Post* advertisement protesting against punitive measures directed against the Communist party of America, a statement by the Veterans against Discrimination advocating the abolition of the House Committee and certain actions of the Civil Rights Congress.[170] Both organizations were part of the so-called Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations (AGLOSO). It originated through President Harry Truman's executive order 9835 on 21 March 1947.[171] During previous nationwide scares, such as the post-World War I First Red Scare (called the first one, obviously, after McCarthyism proved to be the second one) and the World War II internment of Japanese Americans, the federal government had not widely publicized the list of suspicious organizations and individuals.[172] However, early December 1947, as part of Democratic president Truman's Loyalty and Security Program, the federal government publicized the list on a grand scale and used it to threaten, damage and nearly destroy 300 organizations. These organizations were all listed without any notice, evidence or hearing.

I would like to point out that in this case the list was made public on a massive scale, unlike during previous 'scares'. This is an index of the generally public nature of McCarthy's working method. Make no mistake: there were many hidden machinations and secret actions but, strategically speaking, McCarthyism aimed to bring everything into the open in the form of a national spectacle. His policy was based on reducing the national scene to a frame of American democracy versus pro-Soviet Communism. This frame appeared strong enough inasmuch as failure to defend oneself against incrimination was considered as proof of seditious activities against the state.

On account of his past left wing leanings, Miller was implicated in the process. However, his response to being framed by McCarthy and his affiliates

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[169] Caute, *The Great Fear,* p. 536.

[170] Allen Drury, 'Arthur Miller Admits Helping Communist-Front Groups in '40's', *New York Times,* Books, 22 June 1956 < http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/11/12/specials/miller-front.html > [accessed 15 November 2012].

[171] Robert Justin Goldstein, 'The Grapes of McGrath: The Supreme Court and the Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations in Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee v. McGrath (1951)', *Journal of Supreme Court History* 33.1 (2008), p. 68.

[172] Mari J. Matsuda, 'Foreword: McCarthyism, The Internment and the Contradictions of Power', *Boston College Law Review* 40 (1998-99), p. 9.

was to produce his own frame, namely a theatre play in which he dramatized history for his own present. The play was an artistic intervention in the public show on which the hearings relied. Thus, in *The Crucible,* Miller used a famous Salem ritualistic trial from 1692 to expose the ritualistic nature of the 1950s McCarthy hearings. In this chapter I shall explore the socio-political circumstances that paved the way for congressional investigations and persecutions in the 1950s, and that gave rise to McCarthy's right-wing politics and the role of HCUA in investigating artists, academics and federal government servants. I shall proceed to explain how Miller's play intervened in the politics of his times to confront and expose the trial ritual that resurfaces in American culture at times of emergency. The chapter concludes with the radicalization of the notion of frame when I argue that Miller constructs his own theatrical frame to unhinge the frame created by McCarthy through his spectacular display of patriotic and unpatriotic Americans on the national scene during nationwide televised hearings.

3.1 McCarthy's Response to, and Use of, Forms of Anxiety

From 1950 until 1954, a junior Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, disrupted everyday politics in the US in his attempt to purge government institutions, universities, performing arts hubs like Hollywood as well as organizations which had allegedly suffered communist influence from the Soviet Union. Robert Griffith states that the set of judgments, attitudes and assumptions that gave rise to this brand of politics had its roots in American history and was a natural expression of America's political culture.[173] McCarthy's politics were certainly influenced by American foreign policy, the threat of communism and the Korean War. Yet, as Michael Paul Rogin points out, McCarthyism also 'reflected the specific traumas of conservative Republican activists: internal Communist subversion, the new Deal, centralized government, left-wing intellectuals, and the corrupting influences of a cosmopolitan society',[174] In the context of these experiences in the 1950s, Thomas C. Reeves defines McCarthyism 'as a method, a tactic, an attitude, a tendency, a mood, an hysteria, an ideology, and a philosophy.'[175] Whatever it

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[173] Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), p. 30.
[174] Michael Paul Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1967), p. 216.
[175] Thomas C. Reeves, 'McCarthyism: Interpretations since Hofstadter', *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 60.1 (Autumn 1976), p. 42.

was, it was not entirely new, but tapped into previous attempts to purge American society.

The American post-World War II political landscape, approximately from the late 1940s until the mid 1950s, offers more than just glimpses of a manifest use of fear, enhanced surveillance, blacklisting and repression, all elements used as part of the right-wing ideologues' tactic against government employees, educators, entertainers and trade union activists with left-wing political affiliations. The Cold War antagonism between the capitalist world and communism hastened the need in America to purge society from leftist entities belonging to the Communist party of America who were allegedly on the Kremlin's payroll with a view to violently disrupting the US democratic government for the sake of a global socialist revolution. In Cold War historiography, this is popularly known as the orthodox or traditional view, held by historians like Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, Herbert Feis and Louis J. Halle – and this version, according to Edward Crapol, has remained the official view of the US government.[176] According to the traditional view in the late forties and early fifties, there had been an attempt to safeguard America's national security and democracy against the totalitarian threat from Soviet Russia, which led public and private actors to collaborate with each other to conduct inquisitorial loyalty tests on liberals, socialists, free-thinking intellectuals and labour unionists.[177] The 'new Left' revisionist theorists, amongst them William Appleman Williams, challenged this traditional and orthodox view and reassessed American foreign policy from the 1890s well into the twentieth century, as an expansionist policy that was aimed at building an economic empire.[178] In their view the US bore more responsibility for creating the Cold War than Soviet Russia. The 'post-revisionist' scholar John Lewis Gaddis formulated a synthesis of the two preceding schools of thought, presenting a widely accepted view of the events.[179]

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[176] Edward Crapol, 'Some Reflections on the Historiography of the Cold War', *The History Teacher* 20.2 (1987), p. 252.

[177] Typical of such approaches are found in Herbert Feis, *Churchill-Roosevelt-Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); Feis, *From Trust to Terror: The Onset of the Cold War* (New York: Norton, 1970); and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, 'Origins of the Cold War', *Foreign Affairs* 46.1 (October 1967), pp. 22-52.

[178] William Appleman Williams, 'The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy', *The Pacific Historical Review* (1955): pp. 379-80; also see John Lewis Gaddis, 'The Tragedy of Cold War History: Reflections on Revisionism', *Foreign Affairs* (1994), pp. 142-44.

[179] For the Post-Revisionist interpretations of the Cold War, read John Lewis Gaddis, 'The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War', *Diplomatic History* 7.3 (1983), pp. 171-90.

On the international scene, Soviet Russia's emergence as a post-war rival of capitalist democracies, the loss of China to Mao's Communist forces in 1949, the end of the American nuclear monopoly following the Soviet nuclear test in 1949 and the start of the Korean War (1950-53) were events that prompted vigilance in American power circles. They became proactive in unravelling elements of the Communist Party of America who were allegedly operating as foreign agents and spies. 'Who lost China' became an instant mantra in the mouth of Republicans.[180] The sweeping and Manichaean response from the leadership as custodians of global peace, freedom and prosperity against Soviet totalitarianism, also offered an opportunity to the Republicans to pit their politics against the Democrats at home. On the face of it, this strategy provided them an overwhelming support from the American people, who, in a state of nationwide paranoia, relinquished their right of free speech in order to give precedence to national security.[181]

As may be clear, it is hard to fully separate the domestic from the international agenda. President Truman's Loyalty and Security Program of 1947 was initiated by an urgent need to safeguard national security but, because of the prevailing Red Scare, it was implemented without due regard towards safeguarding individual rights as guaranteed by the American Bill of Rights. The Justice Department collaborated with the state in giving precedence to national security over individual rights. The right of free speech was ignored on the ground that inflammatory speeches could excite violence and potentially trigger an overthrow of the democratic system.[182] The central premise of President Truman's Loyalty and Security Program was to dismiss federal executive agency employees found guilty of involvement in any indigenous or foreign organization designated by the Attorney General as totalitarian, fascist, Communist or subversive.[183] Yet the arbitrary nature of the Attorney General's list of organizations, the secretive operational process of laying charges of disloyalty, conspiracy, political strikes, sabotage, etc. against a federal employee, and the denial of rights to rebut the charges riddled the process with procedural defects. Moreover, the inclusion of charges based on establishing

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[180] Arthur Miller, 'The Crucible in History', p. 84.

[181] Robert Griffith, 'American Politics and the Origins of McCarthyism', *The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism,* ed. by Robert Griffith and Athan G. Theoharis (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), pp. 8-9.

[182] Ellen W. Schrecker, 'McCarthyism: Political Repression and the Fear of Communism', *Social Research* 71. 4 (2004), pp. 1047-51.

[183] Louise S. Robbins, 'The Library of Congress and Federal Loyalty Programs, 1947-1956: No "Communists or Cocksuckers"', *The Library Quarterly* 64.4 (1994), p. 367.

'guilt by association' with Communist organizations, left little margin of defence for those who belonged to them with genuine ideological zeal and no intent of causing harm to the state.

Thus, state security and state unity were given a holy resonance in the official political discourse, just as Salem's so-called cunning folks were considered a threat to Puritan community unity. Thomas P. Adler also refers to this connection:

> If, in Salem, Miller discerned at work a 'cleansing' through a 'projection of one's own vileness onto others in order to wipe it out with their blood,' in 1950s America he sadly found 'a public rite of contrition . . . an obligatory kowtow before the state, the century's only credible god.'[184]

The quote suggests more than metaphor. If the state has become God, this may indicate how opaque the force of the state was, and how small individuals appeared in front of its committee, and this in turn led to attempts to save one's life by accusing others. For instance, statesman Alger Hiss was convicted on the basis of former Communist party member Whittaker Chamber's accusation that Hiss had been a Communist spy. The latter was found guilty of perjury and was jailed for five years.[185] As for opaqueness, the Jewish couple Julius and Ethel Rosenberg was sentenced to death for sharing nuclear secrets with the Soviets, in a far from transparent legal process. They were convicted of conspiring to pass atom secrets to the Soviet Union, but the administration used circular logic to interpret their crime as the cause of death of fifty-thousand American soldiers who laid down their lives in Korea when the US nuclear monopoly ended.[186]

The exact cause of the international historical confrontation between the US and Soviet Russia, or the Communist forces globally, is not the primary point of concern here. What had happened to the US in the decades preceding the fifties will be more helpful in uncovering the roots of the unfavourable opinion of Communism in America and how this related to various forms of societal fear. Like Miller, I am more interested in a home-bred cultural dynamic.

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[184] Thomas P. Adler, 'Conscience and Community in *An Enemy of the People* and *The Crucible*' in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Arthur Miller's The Crucible*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), p. 75.
[185] Caute, *The Great Fear,* pp. 58-62.
[186] Atossa M. Alavi, 'The Government Against Two: Ethel and Julius Rosenberg's Trial', *Case Western Reserve Law Review* 53.4 (2003), 1064; see also Caute, *The Great Fear,* pp. 62-9.

McCarthyism proved very effective in a political environment structured by a non-violent and quasi-consensual form of repression, specific to America, which was qualitatively different from the abrupt outlawing and banishments by totalitarian regimes elsewhere. Ellen W. Schrecker sums this two-phase process up when she states that 'first, the objectionable groups and individuals were identified – during a committee hearing, for example, or an FBI investigation; then, they were punished, usually by being fired'.[187]

To be sure, the shift in character of the global Communist movement – from national forms of hostile attack against liberal democratic institutions to apparent cooperation with reform organisations transnationally – made the American political elite sceptical about its own liberal Left. On the domestic scene, the status anxieties of Americans were also exploited by McCarthy, who received support from certain sectors of the population such as Catholics, semi-educated people, Republicans, Irish Americans, lower-class and retired people.[188] The educated elite, university professors, students and professional workers affiliated with managerial and clerical jobs were McCarthy's vehement opponents, as they feared a curtailment of their freedom and personal rights by the investigating Committees.[189] And, indeed, McCarthy's principal targets were artists, free thinkers and liberals, including Harvard professors, intellectuals, so-called 'fellow travellers', trade unionists, Jews and American elites in the administration. Especially the latter proved eventually to be his nemesis when his own Republican coteries withheld their support for him after the Army - McCarthy hearings in 1954 during the Eisenhower period.[190]

American historian Richard Hofstadter observes that in the post-industrial environment in which people's economic fortunes were in a state of flux and when the pre-World War II middle and lower middle class immigrant groups were replacing the old rich classes of Americans in their social standing, McCarthy's right-wing campaign against the communists was received like a clarion call by his supporters.[191] These people found in McCarthy's politics an

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[187] Ellen W. Schrecker, introduction, 'McCarthyism: The Anatomy of an Inquisition', in *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 9.

[188] Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and other Essays,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 69.

[189] Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s,* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), p. 286.

[190] Seymour Mandelbaum, *The Social Settings of Intolerance: The Know-Nothings, The Red Scare and McCarthyism* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1964), p. 165.

[191] Richard Hofstadter, 'Pseudoconservatism Revisited: A Postscript (1962)', in *The Radical Right,* ed. by Daniel Bell (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, 1963), p. 100.

expression of their grievances. Robert Griffith characterizes this as the anti-intellectual and anti-establishment mood of McCarthyism, which heavily relied on scorning liberals, diplomats and young men born with good fortunes.[192]

Despite the guarantee of civil liberties and individual rights that the Americans were used to in normal circumstances, in the new political landscape the government deemed that giving free rein to left-wing liberal revolutionaries and their secret associates was a potential threat to security and the very structure of democracy. Civil liberties, although a great American strength and principle in peace time, were now increasingly perceived as a weakness in the system, especially during emergency and war situations – weaknesses that the enemy could exploit for disruptive purposes. As a result, a considerable number of politicians trampled on civil liberties without much hesitation. During the HCUA hearings, the defendants were denied the protection of the First and Fifth Amendment of the American Bill of Rights, which enshrine the right of free speech and protection against self-incrimination respectively. The protection of the First Amendment, guaranteeing the right of freedom of speech, was not granted to the accused because their political ideas were deemed antithetical to the official views on loyal citizenship. Their indictment was often enough to convict them during the hearings. Secondly, those defendants who refused to cooperate with Congress or Senate committees, by invoking the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination, were still considered guilty as the 'Fifth Amendment Communists.' Therefore many absolved themselves by informing the hearing committees of other Communists and former fellow travellers they knew. This is similar to the practice of confessions, accusations and the blaming and naming of others in order to negotiate one's life, as the Salem accused did in front of Danforth and Hale. It is worth noting, as James L. Gibson points out, that safeguarding democracy by non-democratic means of repression was itself illogical, as was the degree of the communist threat as a non-democratic means to disrupt democracy that had to be weighed against the degree of un-democratic repression that was unleashed by American democracy in the 1950s.[193] The threat proved to be exaggerated, according to Gibson, and by fighting it through repressive and non-democratic means, American democracy acted against itself.

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[192] Robert Griffith, 'The Political Context of McCarthyism', *The Review of Politics* 33.01 (1971), p. 24.
[193] James L. Gibson, 'Political Intolerance and Political Repression during the McCarthy Red Scare', *The American Political Science Review* 82.2 (Jun., 1988), p. 516.

Both the Republicans and the conservative Democrats in a virulently anti-Democrat and anti-New Deal congress of 1946 initiated a campaign of far-right Americanism and waged a war of criticism on the Truman administration for being too soft on Communists.[194] Following this uproar, Democrat president Truman's Loyalty and Security Program of 1947 revealed a dual purpose of containing the indigenous left-wing's covert infusion of Soviet-styled revolutionary Socialism and countering criticism of the conservative Republicans for being too lenient on them.[195] According to Robert Griffith, the new political environment offered an opportunity to conservative businessmen, organized veterans and patriotic societies like 'US Chambers of Commerce' and the 'American Legion' to amplify their concerns through the press about the perils of Communism.[196] Various interest groups harped on the string of fear and suspicion at different resonance and pitch, which then spiralled into the phenomenon of McCarthyism. It was not a populist movement, as Schrecker shows: there were different shades of anti-Communism on the American political horizon. Whereas the ultraconservatives were actually against favourable references to internationalism and the UN in textbooks, the liberals supported scrutiny of the Communists if it could be done without rankling non-Communists. Meanwhile, leftist radicals argued against Stalinism on account of the Soviet prime minister's corruption of the global socialist ideal. But, Schrecker continues, the main interest group consisted of conservative Republican men who furthered their political careers by manipulating the national environment of popular myths and stereotypes according to their own partisan concerns. Richard Nixon and Joseph McCarthy are prime examples of this, along with the FBI's J. Edgar Hoover.[197]

Liberal political sentiments flourished in America between 1930 and 1945, ignited by an internationally fuelled anti-rightist stance against Fascism and Nazism in Europe. The thirties saw anti-big business and anticonservatism flourish in America under the aegis of various Congressional committees, such as the Nye Committee, against some Wall Street bankers' involvement in plunging America in World War I in order to maintain their investments; the La Follette Committee against large corporations' secret induction of labour spies to inhibit labour union formations; and the Truman Committee against the big

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[194] Caute, *The Great Fear* p. 33; Louise S. Robbins, 'The Library of Congress', p. 366.
[195] Schrecker, 'McCarthyism: Political Repression', p. 1045.
[196] Griffith, 'American Politics and the Origins of McCarthyism', pp. 10-11.
[197] Schrecker, 'McCarthyism: Political Repression', p. 1043.

business profiteering during World War II.[198] The liberal Left's supremacy offered an opportunity to the Communist Party of America to strengthen its various leftist groups and trade unions in the country. The party however followed a secretive path instead of winning electoral mass support in a democratic way. The secretive nature of the Communist Party organization sparked fears about their engagement in so-called un-American activities that in turn might lead to revolutionary defeatism of the democratic set-up. So, the political rhetoric of the thirties that focused on conservatives, isolationists, business leaders, Catholics, Republican senators and business leaders as traitorous semi-fascists, took a sharp turn in the post-war social and political scene when liberals had to be on the defensive against a far-rightist cult of conservatism banking on support from interest groups let down by the New Deal reform process.[199] From the mid-forties onwards, this process suffered severe setbacks and witnessed a virtual demise in the Cold War era due to the conservatives' discontent with and stance against their social reform domestically, and their thrust towards America's non-interventionist pacifist foreign policy. After all, until the Pearl Harbor attack, isolationism had its strains in both the left- and the right-wing political factions in the US. But as Justus D. Doeneke observes, the country's first pacifist national-socialist group, 'The Keep America Out of War Congress' (KAOWC; 1938-41) was created to oppose Roosevelt's overseas commitments.[200] So, the Left had actually been anti-war and pacifist in its foreign policy agenda. McCarthy challenged their pacifism in the face of an impending Red Scare in the US.

A collaborative anti-Communist inquisition campaign by federal, state and local politicians, bureaucrats, journalists and the so-called 'professional witnesses' and informers set the tone for an environment of fear, suspicion and secrecy in the country which led the way to neglect of due process in loyalty hearings at most venues. Congressional bodies like the House Un-American Activities Committee, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations were assisted by the FBI in identifying Communists at various work venues with the help of ex-Communist witnesses and informers. Small things could bring employers of accused people

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[198] Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 214.

[199] Lipset and Raab, pp. 214-15; the New Deal was a series of reform processes introduced between 1933-36 during the Roosevelt administration in response to the Great Depression.

[200] Justus D. Doenecke, 'Non-Interventionism of the Left: the Keep America Out of the War Congress, 1938-41', *Journal of Contemporary History* 12.2 (1977), p. 221.

to fire them from their jobs.[201] These punitive measures had didactic, educational and deterrent purposes for the population at large, who thus came to know the economic price of having revolutionary utopian ideas, or ideas bordering on these. The fear of infamy, the publicity value and the spectacle of criminal proceedings, the fact that people's patriotism was publicly doubted or that people were directly branded as unpatriotic, made most liberal employers acquiesce to Congress and dismiss many employees, even without sufficient evidence.[202] The hearings functioned like a stage performance, and the entire country watched them, as audience, in a state of paranoia.[203]

In Miller's *The Crucible,* Danforth's statement in Act 4 echoes the role played by the Justice Department in the McCarthy era when he says:

> Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part; reprieve or pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now. While I speak God's law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering. If retaliation is your fear, know this – I should hang ten thousand that dared to rise against the law, and an ocean of salt tears could not melt the resolution of the statutes.[204]

As may be clear from Danforth's statement, the judges and the ministers in Salem who persecuted the people were under the impression that they were defending God's holy law against an attack from the Devil's mercenaries in occult forms. They were thus able to execute any deviant people without impunity. Likewise, McCarthy and his associates launched a national purification initiative in 1950s against the Communist spies, which led Miller to say, as we saw earlier, that the state had by now replaced God. The state then, in the embodiment of McCarthy and his associates, could freely suppress people's liberties through stringent congressional statutes and the politics of legislation

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[201] Caute, *The Great Fear,* pp. 85-138.

[202] Schrecker, 'McCarthyism: Political Repression', 1056-57. To be sure the deterrence here is only a radicalization of the law's operation in general. American law professor and historian Lawrence M. Friedman explains the logic of the use of coercion and proscription in criminal justice proceedings for didactic purposes as follows: 'The teaching function of criminal justice, its boundary making function, is exceedingly important. Criminal justice is a kind of social drama, a living theater; all of us are the audience; we learn morals and morality, right from wrong, wrong from right, through watching, hearing and absorbing', Lawrence M. Friedman, 'Introduction', *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 10.

[203] Caute, *The Great Fear,* p. 140; Robert K. Carr, 'The Un-American Activities Committee and the Courts', *Louisiana Law Review* 11 (1951), p. 282.

[204] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 117.

that gave their investigations a constitutional cover.[205] The Alien Registration Act or Smith Act (1940), the Magnuson Act (1943), the McCarran Internal Security Act (1950), the McCarran-Walter Act (1952) and The Communist Control Act (1954) were part of the legislation process which contributed to a full-fledged anti-Communist rage in the country.[206] The Smith Act made it illegal for any individual or organization to deliberately intend or attempt to disrupt and overthrow the government through violence or force. The McCarran Internal Security Act, which is also known as the Subversive Activities Control Act of 1950, had a clandestine purpose of harassing Communist organizations by making it compulsory for them to register with the U.S Attorney general. The Immigration and Nationality Act or McCarran-Walter Act enabled the government to deport immigrants or naturalized citizens who were found guilty of involvement in revolutionary activities. The Communist Control Act thwarted any claim for legal rights and privileges for Communist organizations. The port security program or Magnuson Act (1950), besides ensuring coastal surveillance of the Navy, gave an opportunity to right-wing labour organizations to settle their scores with the leftist labour unionists who were still strong in that sector.[207]

Sketched like this, it almost seems inconceivable that any one individual would dare to rise against McCarthyism Miller did not operate as an individual however. He acted as an artist with an important public and collective tool: a play. But again, what could a theatre play achieve against in the face of such a massive spectacle? Let me have a closer look at this battle between different genres, with a different generic logic and force.

3.2 Power and the Frame of Spectacle

Against the backdrop of the right wing's supremacy in the US in the 1950s, *The Crucible* is a conscious and purposeful theatrical response to the seemingly theatrical but in essence *spectacular* operations of McCarthy and his men, i.e. spectacular in the sense of the adjective relating to spectacle. Miller illustrates the parallels between Salem and his own times by saying:

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[205] Carr, p. 283.
[206] Caute, *The Great Fear,* pp. 70-81; Schrecker, 'McCarthyism: Political Repression', pp. 1049-50.
[207] William R. Tanner and Robert Griffith, 'Legislative Politics and "McCarthyism": The Internal Security Act of 1950', in *The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism,* ed. by Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), pp. 172-89; Robert Griffith, 'The Political Context of McCarthyism', pp. 26-35.

But gradually, over weeks, a living connection between myself and Salem, and between Salem and Washington, was made in my mind – for whatever else they might be, I saw that the hearings in Washington were profoundly and even avowedly ritualistic. After all, in almost every case the Committee knew in advance what they wanted the witness to give them: the names of his comrades in the Party. The FBI had long since infiltrated the Party, and informers had long ago identified the participants in various meetings. The main point of the hearings, precisely as in seventeenth-century Salem, was that the accused make public confession, damn his confederates as well as his Devil master, and guarantee his sterling new allegiance by breaking disgusting old vows – whereupon he was let loose to rejoin the society of extremely decent people. In other words, the same spiritual nugget lay folded within both procedures – an act of contrition done not in solemn privacy but out in the public air.[208]

The key issues are the theatrical form of ritual and the element of *public* confession, as opposed for instance to the confessions during the inquisition by the Catholic Church, which were often obtained in isolated chambers of interrogation and torture. For Miller, a work of art could illuminate the dark aspects of reality that the political spectacle had masked. He states: 'So I suppose that in one sense *The Crucible* was an attempt to make life real again, palpable and structured. One hoped that a work of art might illuminate the tragic absurdities of an interior work of art that was called reality, but was not'.[209]

Arthur Miller was first inspired by the 1692 Salem episode through Marion Starkey's *The Devil in Massachusetts* from 1949.[210] The subject of witchcraft in a pre-modern theocratic society was initially a challenging subject in the context of the twentieth century and Miller adds that, 'a drama cannot merely describe an emotion, it has to become that emotion'.[211] Miller saw a living connection between the ritualistic scene of the hearings in Washington and the proceedings in Salem. The former were ritualistic in the sense that the Committee had already drawn its conclusions and its sole purpose was to extract confessions from the witnesses according to a pre-formulated verdict. Each

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[208] Miller, *Timebends,* p. 331.
[209] Miller, '*The Crucible* in History', p. 86.
[210] Miller, *Timebends*, p. 330; Miller, 'The Crucible in History', p. 98.
[211] Miller, *Timebends,* p. 331.

hearing was characterised by this notion of purge through confession and the naming of fellow partners. He argues: 'The overwhelmingly significant truth, I thought, as I still do, was the artist-hating brutality of the Committee and its envy of its victims' power to attract public attention and to make big money at it besides'.[212] Miller faced this brutality himself on 21 June 1956, when the House Un-American Activities Committee subpoenaed him. This happened two years after March 1954, when Miller had tried to renew his passport in order to travel to Belgium to attend a production of *The Crucible*. He was charged with contempt of Congress and his application was turned down on account of his so-called support of global communist activities which could undermine and endanger US national security.[213] Miller was now asked, amongst other things, for the names of the communist writers who were present at the meeting of communist authors held in New York City in 1947. Miller testified that he had never been a communist but that he had been associated with a number of communist-front groups in the past. He was present at five or six meetings of the communist writers but he refused to name those who had attended the meeting. The following excerpts from the questioning by Arens, Jackson and Scherer of the Committee illustrate Miller's position:

> Mr. Arens: Can you tell us who was there when you walked into the room?
> Mr. Miller: Mr. Chairman, I understand the philosophy behind this question and I want you to understand mine. When I say this, I want you to understand that I am not protecting the communists or the communist party. I am trying to, and I will, protect my sense of myself. I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him. These are writers, poets, as far as I could see, and the life of a writer, despite what it sometimes seems, is pretty tough. I wouldn't make it any tougher for anybody. I ask you not to ask me that question. . . .
> Mr. Jackson: May I say that moral scruples, however laudable, do not constitute legal reason for refusing to answer the question. . . .

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[212] Miller, *Timebends,* p. 242.
[213] Joseph Loftus, 'Arthur Miller and Dr. Nathan Indicted on Contempt Charges', *New York Times,* 19 February 1957 < http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/11/12/specials/miller-indicted.html> [accessed 14 November 2012].

> Mr. Scherer: We do not accept the reason you gave for refusing to answer the question, and . . . if you do not answer . . . you are placing yourself in contempt.
> Mr. Miller: All I can say, sir, is that my conscience will not permit me to use the name of another person.[214]

The last sentence is clear in its defiance. I should hasten to add that Miller did not recant from his past affiliations but he did express regret about having been a communist sympathizer in the past, after having witnessed the Soviet leadership's persecutions of their own citizens and intellectuals.[215] Nevertheless, he refused to betray others. His defiance was such that he was charged with contempt of congress for refusing to incriminate his past associates. He had to pay $40,000 in lawyer's fees as well as a $500 fine and received a one year suspended sentence for Contempt of Congress. It was a year of creative inanition in his life.[216]

Thus the theatrical aspect of the hearings, with 'theatrical' being used here in its common-sense, derogatory meaning, lay in the fact that the accused were supposed to produce confessions, name their past affiliates and vow to have renewed pacts of allegiance to the state and its official ideas through a public expression of remorse. Those who did so were amicably granted the status of decent citizen whereas the dissidents, in line with the nature of the trials in both historical episodes, were subjected to persecution and public vilification. Yet, although the accused were brought into a situation with theatrical elements and aspects that also play an important role in any legal arena such as a court, the theatricality of the situation was governed by, or better *framed* by, the generic form of the *spectacle*, the modern manifestation of which was addressed by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* in 1967.

Admittedly Debord was not primarily concerned with McCarthyism. He defined the modern spectacle in a broader sense as 'the reigning social organization of a paralyzed history, of a paralyzed memory, of an abandonment of any history founded in historical time, is in effect a *false consciousness of time*'.[217] In Debord's reading, any society where modern conditions of production prevail, in people's lives, which were once lived directly, are now

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[214] James F. Childress, 'Appeals to Conscience', *Ethics* 89.4 (1979), pp. 316-17.
[215] Miller, '*The Crucible* in History', p. 80.
[216] Miller, '*The Crucible* in History', p. 94.
[217] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), p. 114.

represented through an immense accumulation of various *spectacles*.[218] Debord considers that modern spectacle in its essence is the autocratic reign of the market economy that had acceded to an irresponsible sovereignty and totality of new techniques of government which constitute social relationship between people through mediation of images.[219] Debord's analysis is however helpful in shedding light on the spectacle of McCarthyism, as an analogy of the guise of power, which is the topic of the Situationists' radical critique of not only modernist art practice, but also the politics of everyday life under modern capitalism.[220] *The Crucible* in a sense is a precautionary tale of the role of media-power in modern society, that Guy Debord would analyse more than a decade later.

However, the formulation 'society of the spectacle' might be too general a qualification. In this respect, the art critic Jonathan Crary points out:

> One can still well ask if the notion of spectacle is the imposition of an illusory unity onto a more heterogeneous field. Is it a totalizing and monolithic concept that inadequately represents a plurality of incommensurable institutions and events? For some, a troubling aspect about the term *spectacle* is the almost ubiquitous presence of the definite article in front of it, suggesting a single and seamless global system of relations. For others, it is a mystification of the functioning of power, a new opiate-of-the-masses type of explanation, a vague cultural-institutional formation with a suspicious structural autonomy. Or is a concept such as spectacle a necessary tool for the figuration of a radical systemic shift in the way power functions noncoercively within twentieth-century modernity? Is it an indispensable means of revealing as related what would otherwise appear as disparate and unconnected phenomena? Does it not show that a patchwork or mosaic of techniques can still constitute a homogenous effect of power?[221]

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[218] Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* p. 12.

[219] Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Malcolm Imrie (London: Verso, 1998), p. 2.

[220] The Situationist International was a radical international organization operating from 1957 until 1972. It was comprised of avant-guard artists, intellectuals and political theorists who were inspired by anti-authoritarian Marxism and twentieth-century avant-guarde art movements such as Dadaism and Surrealism.

[221] Jonathan Crary, 'Spectacle, Attention, Counter-Memory', *October* 50 (Autumn 1989), p. 96.

The questions are as relevant as they are revealing in terms of what Crary considers to be the key characteristics of the notion of spectacle. To a certain extent Crary is responding to Debord, here, regarding the emphasis on the representation of things in a monolithic and totalized form, when spectacle is used as a generic form by means of which a 'plurality of incommensurable institutions and events' is restricted to singular scope and interpretation. Debord himself says:

> The spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is that sector where all attention, all consciousness, converges. Being isolated – and precisely for that reason – this sector is the locus of illusion and false consciousness; the unity it imposes is merely the official language of generalized separation.[222]

The key sentence is the first one. Spectacle is both the generic form that defines a society, it is a part of that society as something to be watched and enjoyed, and it is a unifying force. Debord observes and predicts that in the modern spectacle society, just about everything we consume – and most of what we do – embodies a mixture of distraction and reinforcement that serves to reproduce the mode of society and economy that has taken the idea of spectacle to its radical extreme. Following a Marxist analysis, Debord states that the sheer production and consumption of commodities in neoliberal economy has divested people of the essence of their labour and brought about alienation and separation. Labour has become abstract. Diverging from the orthodox Marxist analysis, however, Debord proceeds to explain that the spectacle in this scenario is not just a collection of images, rather that it constitutes a social relation between people that is mediated by images. He writes: 'It is the very heart of society's real unreality. In all its aspects, manifestations – news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment – the spectacle epitomizes the prevailing model of social life'.[223] John Harris summarizes Guy Debord's analysis of contemporary society as follows:

> Essentially Debord argues that having recast the idea of 'being into having', what he calls 'the present phase of total occupation of

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[222] Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 12.
[223] Debord, *Society of the Spectacle,* p. 13.

social life by the accumulated results of the economy' has led to 'a generalized sliding from having into *appearing,* from which all actual 'having' must draw its immediate prestige and its ultimate function'.[224]

 The critical two steps are the one from being to having and the one from having to appearing. Under capitalism being has become a function of what people have and what they have can only become socially functional when they know how to appear.

One can relate this notion of spectacle to the McCarthy hearings, which made not only the entire American society hostage to a Red Scare and where the spectacle was not just a part of society but became something through which society appeared to itself *as* itself. Through public trials, fabricated or enforced confessions and televised displays of people's alleged betrayal of and disloyalty to the official national creeds, a spectacle was constructed aimed at not only scaring an entire society but also at dividing it by means of an 'official language of generalized separation' in order, perhaps paradoxically, to make it whole. McCarthy built the spectacle around the issue of American national security and American purity and purgation. Debord's idea of spectacle is useful precisely in the way society appeared to itself in the form of a spectacle, while spectacle was also a dominant part of that society and as such could be a unifying force. The spectacle was not so much something that appeared within a frame, it was the frame itself. Or, to put this differently, the McCarthy hearings were not just taking place in an historical context. They framed context by using a strategy of framing.[225]

Firstly, there was the seemingly undefeatable frame proposed by McCarthy of American democracy against communist totalitarianism. It is in the context of this Manichean frame that McCarthy profiled all communists as traitors and framed them in a nationwide spectacle as the enemies within. This is why, to my mind, Crary's analysis is relevant when he considers the effect of such strategies but I also would like to add an extra argument. This is what Crary describes:

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[224] John Harris, 'Guy Debord Predicted Our Distracted Society', *The Guardian on the Web,* 30 March 2004, < http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/mar/30/guy-debord-society-spectacle > [accessed 4 December 2012].
[225] For a detailed analysis of the notion of framing, see Jonathan D. Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions*, Oklahoma Project for Discourse and Theory (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

Thus, as I will argue, spectacular culture is not founded on the necessity of making a subject see, but rather on strategies in which individuals are isolated, separated and inhabit time as disempowered. Likewise, counter-forms of attention are neither exclusively nor essentially visual but rather constituted as other temporalities and cognitive states, such as those in trance or reverie.[226]

I agree, again, as long as we consider the society of the spectacle in its general sense. McCarthyism was a distinct form of spectacle, however, in that wanted to make its audience see only one thing, in the context of a strategy that framed time itself, as if time could be reduced to the single opposition between historical counterparts. The result was nevertheless similar in that all those confronted with the spectacle were, indeed, disempowered in the sense that they were subject to the spectacle and not the subject of history.

Miller's response was not one of trance or reverie. His theatrical response was, in a distinct sense, *pointed*, in an attempt to historicize the present and to pierce the frame that was set up. Let me describe this pointed-ness in more detail.

3.3 Theatricality, the Spectacle's Veil and Allegory-in-Reverse

Throughout his literary work Miller's artistic sensibilities portrayed the political events of his age, such as the Great Depression, the Nazi invasion of Europe and the Holocaust, the anti-Communist repression of the 1950s, the anti-Vietnam war movement of 1960s and the demise of the Nixon presidency.[227] *The Crucible* not only represents an intersection of the political with Miller's personal life in a dramatic way, it was a dramatic play in itself, that was meant to be staged in the theatre despite the historical nature of its theme and its pointed allegorical relevance. As E. Miller Budick observes, Miller re-created another subjective reality in the form of a theatre play, by bringing history and literature together to confront the apparent subjective reality and the holy resonance of piety and patriotism created by both the political proponents in the

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[226] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Massachussetts Institute of Technology Press, 1999), pp. 2-3.
[227] For a detailed overview of Miller's other plays, see Chrisopher Bigsby (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

1950s and their historical counterparts in seventeenth-century Salem. [228] Miller's play is thus a literary re-articulation of history through the inclusion of memory and imagination to interpret history from the viewpoint of the present, however not only as a play, but as what I would like to call a truth practice. The performance did not just take place in a given present, it was *aimed* at that present, but how can we define this aim?

Before I move to Erin Graff Zivin's contention that *The Crucible* is an example of hauntology, I would like to focus on the play's ability to mark the historicity of its own present.[229] Frederic Jameson defines the relation of historicity to the present in the following terms:

> Historicity, is, in fact, neither a representation of the past nor a representation of the future (although its various forms use such representations): it can first and foremost be defined as a perception of the present as history; that is, as a relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective. It is appropriate in other words, also to insist on the historicity of the operation itself, which is our way of conceiving of historicity in this particular society and mode of production; appropriate also to observe that what is at stake is essentially a process of reification whereby we draw back from our immersion in the here and now (not yet identified as a 'present') and grasp it as a kind of thing - not merely a 'present' but a present that can be dated and called the eighties or the fifties.[230]

The Crucible, as a theatrical representation of a historical subject, is always supposed to be performed in a present, that much is clear. However, something else is at stake. It may be precisely because *The Crucible* deals with a distant historical period at a time that historical novels were not in fashion, that the question arises: Why this play *now*? The consequence of this question is, as

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[228] E. Miller Budick, 'History and Other Spectres in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*', *Modern Drama* 28.4 (1985): p. 536.

[229] See the end of this chapter and chapter 5; Graff Zivin, *Figurative Inquisitions: Conversion, Torture and Truth in the Luso Hispanic Atlantic*, p. 58.

[230] Fredric Jameson quoted in Jim Finnegan, 'Edwin Rolfe's Historical Witness to the Spectacle of McCarthyism', *College Literature* 33.3 (Summer 2006), pp. 135-36.

Jameson would argue, that the perceptions of the past in present contexts define historicity in the first place, as a result of which the present comes into the picture as a moment of history. Despite the fact that the representations of the past and the future would use historicity as a concept to understand history, it is in the perception of the present *as history* that one can discern a certain *distance* from the immediate present and establish a historical perspective. So, in the 1950s, *The Crucible* helped the readers and the audience to create a distance from their immediate present and form an historical perspective of their times by viewing the politics of their present as history. *The Crucible* is an artefact that not only frames the past in the present context, i.e. the 1950s, but it does so in a pointed way, through its performance, and puts the perception of the present at a distance as a result of which it can be had as history. By translating its theme from the past to the present, Miller presents a different historical perspective through theatricality, and I use the term *perspective* in a different meaning than *frame*, here. Perspective is ruled by a *point de distance*, or distance point. This is not to put things at a distance, though, but it is to produce the effect of depth by means of a point of organization that both produces an illusion and is a mathematical starting point from which the illusion can be unravelled.

A good example of this is Danforth's argument in Act 3 of the play, which is only *similar* to the logic of the ritualistic hearings by the congressional committees in 1950s when put in perspective. This is what Danforth says:

> In an ordinary crime, how does one defend the accused? One calls up witnesses to prove his innocence. But witchcraft is *ipso facto*, on its face and by its nature, an invisible crime, is it not? Therefore, who may possibly be witness to it? The witch and the victim. None other. Now we cannot hope the witch will accuse herself; granted? Therefore, we must rely upon her victims - and they do testify, the children certainly do testify. As for the witches, none will deny that we are most eager for all their confessions. Therefore, what is left for a lawyer to bring out?[231]

The passage may function as a 'distance point' that provides the congressional hearings in McCarthy era with a historical resonance or depth, as a result of

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[231] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 91.

which these hearings themselves become historicized.[232] Miller himself defines this historical resonance or depth as follows:

> Three hundred years apart, both prosecutions were alleging membership of a secret disloyal group. Should the accused confess, his honesty could only be proved in precisely the same way – by naming former confederates, nothing less. Thus, the informer became the very axle of the plot's existence and the investigation's necessity.[233]

The way in which things needed to be put in perspective is the more 'pointed' because of the fact that the alleged crimes were *invisible*, be it witchcraft or crimes like espionage and political subversion.

With this in mind, the idea of theatricality is vital to assess the play's disruptive qualities, or its pointed engagement with its times. Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis dwell upon the comprehensive term of theatricality in the context of its relation to the historical ideas of *mimesis*, *theatrum mundi* and performance. They argue that the idea of *theatricality* has historically been demeaned in religious traditions owing to its mimetic inclinations towards representing the world, which Plato also considered an imitation of the real or ideal. Hence theatre and mimesis of the world through performance were discouraged as being conceived twice removed from the real or ideal. However, in other cultures and traditions, *theatricality* has been recognized in more comprehensive ways:

> Although it obviously derives its meanings from the world of theatre, *theatricality* can be abstracted from the theatre itself and then applied to any and all aspects of human life. Even if limited to theatre, its potential meanings are daunting. Thus it can be defined exclusively as a specific type of performance style or inclusively as all the semiotic codes of theatrical representation. Some people claim that it is the definitive condition or attitude for postmodern art and thought; others insist that it already achieved its distinguishing features in the birth of modernism. Within

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[232] A good example that supports this arguments can be found at <http://www.salemwitchmuseum.com/education/index.php>
[233] Miller, '*The Crucible* in History', p. 99.

modernism, it is often identified as the opposite of realism, yet realism is also seen as but one type of theatricality. So, it is a mode of representation or a style of behaviour characterized by histrionic actions, manners and devices, and hence a practice; yet it is also an interpretative model for describing psychological identity, social ceremonies, communal festivities, and public spectacles and hence a theoretical concept.[234]

Theatricality thus clearly derives its name from the world of theatre and despite its derogatory use in common parlance, it can be used as a comprehensive application to all sorts of aspects of human life. The general characteristic, though, is that it involves a specific type of performance which implies all the signs that feature in the semiotics of theatrical representation. When we deal with the pointed-ness of theatre, however, perhaps the most distinguishing element in Postlewait and Davis's passage is the word 'histrionic'. Its acoustic association with historicity is coincidental, although I find it of relevance here. The term histrionic has a distinct etymology from history, going back to the Latin *histrionicus* (meaning: pertaining to an actor), which is said to be derived from *histrio*, the Etruscan term for actor or player. As Wladimir Krysinski states, theatricality has, on the one hand, due to its metalanguage and literariness, the status of a literary object. Yet, due to presence of the physical element of performance and acting, it is ludic and histrionic as well.[235] In relation to 'histrionicity' Postlewait and Davis define theatricality as a *practice* because of its affected style of representation in which actions, devices and manners are enacted and performed in such a way that they cannot be ignored, they attract attention, irritate, or fascinate. As concerns *The Crucible*, the theatricality of the play resides in the fact that it is used in an histrionic way, in that it draws attention by its theatrical or dramatic *gesture*, if only through its historical excessiveness. Thus Miller confronts and disrupts the spectacle of McCarthyism by bringing in his own theatrical perspective, with its distance point, which is a point that has to pierce not so much the frame but the veil of illusion that it supports.

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[234] Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, (eds), 'Theatricality: An Introduction', in *Theatricality: Theatre and Performance Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 1.
[235] Wladimir Krysinski, 'Changed Textual Signs in Modern Theatricality: Gombrowicz and Handke', trans. by Ruby Cohn, *Modern Drama* 25.1 (1982), p. 3.

I would like to reiterate Postlewait and Davis's warning against a too general definition of theatricality in relation to politics. Postlewait and Davis sketch the general use of the term theatricality to politics as follows:

> In this spirit, an expensive idea of theatricality has been enlarged and applied to politics, whereby political behaviour and its defining rhetoric are seen as theatrical (especially in the modern age of media and advertising). In addition, the ideas of national identity and imagined history are constructed as modes of performed identity. The public realm is the performative realm. This idea of the performative nation appeals to many observers, not just because in the US the actor Ronald Reagan was elected to the presidency, but also because political events – all the craftiness of state management – seem to be managed by the essential traits of stagecraft. Perhaps, though, the idea explains too much and too conveniently. The temptation needs to be tempered and the claims particularized.[236]

When Postlewait and Davis apply the concept of theatricality to the political realm in modern contexts, it is ostensibly in line with the origins of politics in the Greek, theatrical city state. They are correct in stating that the political behaviour and the rhetoric of politicians can be called theatrical. Moreover, the realm of politics is similar to the stage where the performative skills of the political actors are on display. Politics exists because of a breach in representation, as Frank Ankersmit called it, as a result of which the political manoeuvring space consists in the fact that there can and must be a difference between what the represented want and what the political actor deems possible or wise.[237] Here, 'the public realm is the performative realm'.

Yet, this is all different from the appeal of the term theatricality that may result in a use that is too general, as a result of which it loses its scholarly and analytic function and power. This happens when 'the craftiness of state management' is also called a form of theatricality, as it is made possible through stagecraft in a so-called political theatre.[238] One could of course argue that 'spinning' uses elements of theatricality. Yet it is not a form of theatricality *per*

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[236] Davis and Postlewait, p. 29.
[237] Frank Ankersmit, 'Political Representation: The Aesthetic State', in *Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 45.
[238] Davis and Postlewait, p. 29.

se.[239] Likewise, advertisements may use elements of theatricality, but this is not to say that advertisement is equivalent to theatricality. It is necessary to *particularize* or specify the claims to theatricality when examining the political acts of some era, or the agential force of theatre plays. The reason is that there are important political implications at stake, as well as different forms of responsibility, when distinguishing, for instance, between the spectacle and the theatrical.

Miller's refusal to testify against his associates as well as his defence of the artists' exemption from the excesses of the Smith Act were a public defence, not so much a theatrical one but one in the context of a spectacle that was performed in the name of preserving national security. As a result, *The Crucible* enforces and embodies a different sort of theatricality from the conventional average political ones in the sense that Miller chose a historical subject and infused it into the practices of HCUA by both linking it to and contrasting it with their own performance techniques. The Salem confessions and court proceedings were *dramatized* as a parallel image of the congressional spectacle of 1950s America. Theatre is presented as an instrument of social change in this way, which is also apparent when Miller expresses his commitment to the task of making societal life 'real,' in opposition to the spectacular political work of manipulation and fabrication, fuelled by the mistrust of the state in its own people.[240] The spectacle could be pierced, however. As Miller states: 'Paranoia breeds paranoia, but below paranoia there lies a bristling, unwelcome truth, so repugnant as to produce fantasies of persecution to conceal its existence.'[241] In order to get to this unwelcome truth, he had to make his point theatrically, and theatrically pointed, to bring the unwelcome truth into the full light of existence.

The theatrical point was made allegorically and the question is how allegory relates to the issue of historicity in the sense of offering a perspective on one's own time in terms of historicity.[242] An obvious criticism from modern viewers and readers about the parallel between witches and communists was that communism and its sympathizers were a palpable presence in America,

[239] Jon Erickson, 'Defining Political Performance with Foucault and Habermas : Strategic and Communicative Action', in *Theatricality: Theatre and Performance Theory,* ed. by Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 162.
[240] Miller, '*The Crucible* in History', p. 86.
[241] Arthur Miller, 'Are you now or were you ever …', *The Guardian,* 17 June 2000. Online at <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/jun/17/books.guardianreview> [accessed 18 August, 2014]. n.p.
[242] Miller, 'Are you now or were you ever ...?; Miller Budick, 'History and Other Spectres in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*', p. 536.

whereas witches and witchcraft were a cognitive error and an optical illusion.[243] Historically speaking, this is a mistake, as we have seen in chapter 1. Given the number of people executed for alleged occult practices in Europe and America in the Middle Ages and afterwards, there is no reason to doubt that the belief in the existence of witches was real. The church and the Bible sanctioned belief in witchcraft and the Bible backed them up: 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live (Exodus 22:17)'.[244] Therefore, in a theocratic society such as Salem, denying the existence of witches could by implication be a denial of the Biblical words. In post-Reformation Europe too, when the Bible became the sole source of religious truth, most people in the European Christian community interpreted the scriptures and the passages pertaining to witchcraft literally.[245] Likewise, being suspected of being disloyal, a traitor or a communist in the 1950s was tantamount to endangering one's life but it was equally dangerous to deny the threat itself.

Put like this, *The Crucible* hardly seems an allegory but rather a simple analogy. This becomes even more apparent when we consider the way Craig Owens sketches allegory's function in relation to history, or the relation between past and present:

> Allegory first emerged in response to a similar sense of estrangement from tradition; throughout its history it has functioned in the gap between a present and a past which, without allegorical reinterpretation, might have remained foreclosed. A conviction of the remoteness of the past, and a desire to redeem it for the present – these are its two most fundamental impulses.[246]

Thus, as Owens states, allegory is a reinterpretation of a past that helps to redeem a remote past, but also a strange past, for the present. The allegorist's main interest is to fill the vacuum between the present and the past, to fill a gap that results from the past's distance, its 'remoteness', and to make a tradition appear as such. Miller did the same, albeit with an interesting twist. His main aim was not to historicize the Salem process so that it could become part of a

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[243] Henry Popkin, 'Arthur Miller's "The Crucible"', *College English* 26.2 (1964), p. 140.
[244] Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe,* 2nd edn (London: Longman, 1995), p. 113.
[245] Levack, p. 113.
[246] Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', *October* 12 (Spring 1980), p. 68.

particular tradition again. Instead, he sought to historicize McCarthyism, to put it at a distance and bring it on a par with what had happened in a far-away past. In this sense his use of allegory is an example of an allegory-in-reverse.

Allegory is pivotal as 'an attitude as well as a technique, a perception as well as a procedure'. [247] All four aspects relate to the distance point of theatre as opposed to the frame of the spectacle. With regard to the frame, *The Crucible* is *procedural* in that it asks people to follow a procedure in translating not so much the situation of Salem to their own time, but rather the other way around. This procedure is facilitated because of a *perception*, namely that the power structures in the McCarthy era were similar to those of the Puritan society in Salem.[248] Miller intended to allegorically juxtapose, as a *technique*, issues of character but, again, in reverse. Proctor's character is not highlighted in an allegorical fashion. Allegorically speaking, the question is which character, in the 1950s, appears before Proctor, as the one who comes to speak out against deliberate villainy and the authorities' institutionalized hysteria. Here, the allegorical *technique* of juxtaposing characters is the consequence of an *attitude*, the attitude of allegoresis, as a mode of reading the times. The allegorical dynamic of the play, taken together as a perception, a procedure, a technique and an attitude, provides it with a theatrical point that consists of the distance point where two historically different times not only converge, but from which both are organized by means of illusion, while, as I showed, making clear what the mathematical point is from which the illusion starts, as a result of which it can also be unravelled. This distance point is needed both to pierce the *frame* of spectacle and the veil that it supported. The point of theatre, made allegorically, also concerns the similarity between the two periods with regard to the unexpectedness of the turn of events, and the way a society based on principles of justice can suddenly turn against itself. The House Committee on Un-American activities, for instance, had been in existence since 1938. It had received no objections against the social economic reforms of the New Deal. Suddenly, however, the post-Second World War scenario prompted an American attitude of empathy with the former German enemy and distinct feelings of antipathy towards the Russians, despite the fact that they had been allies in the war only two years earlier; they were now communist enemies. Miller laments the uncanny speed of this change when he says:

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[247] Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse', p. 68.
[248] Stephen Fender, 'Precision and Pseudo Precision in "The Crucible"', *Journal of American Studies* 1.1 (1967), p. 89.

But as in Salem, a point arrived, in the late forties, when the rules of social intercourse quite suddenly changed, or were changed, and attitudes that had merely been anti-capitalist-anti-establishment were now made unholy, morally repulsive, and if not actually treasonous then implicitly so. America had always been a religious country.[249]

In effect, the so-called free, vibrant and open society that was America faced a strife, backed by the authorities, to achieve monolithic public morality. As a result, America's policies became no different from the practices of the totalitarian regimes which they were discrediting in their public addresses as typically Soviet. Arthur Miller saw a strong similarity between the enforcement of certain political values and the Salem theocracy. Yet, as he points out, there was much more than a *similarity* at stake: 'America had always been a religious country'. In this respect, the allegorical point made by the play could become pointless since there was no real allegory involved, only similarity and continuity. Miller was up against much more than a politically motivated spectacle of fabrication and framing and the play had to be *more*, consequently, than a simple allegory, in order to intervene in its present on a deeper level, not only in relation to a similar past but also to an alternative future. I will return to this in chapter 4. For now I would like to conclude this chapter with the question why the point had to be *theatrical* as opposed to other generic possibilities.

3.4. An In-Between State of the Spectacle and Clairvoyance
I would like to come back to my take on McCarthyism as it ties in to the powerful analysis proposed in first instance by Guy Debord, and subsequently by Jonathan Crary, of modern society as a society of spectacle. There is a marked difference with regard to the media during the specific periods that we are dealing with. Crary's position, for instance, is summarized as follows by Leslie Kan:

Addressing Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* in a more modern context, Jonathan Crary examines the 'totality' or dominance of the television as a spectacular commodity in the 'Eclipse of the Spectacle'. He argues that starting with the mid-1970s, the television ceases to be a medium of representation and undergoes a

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[249] Miller, *Timebends,* pp. 341-42.

structural change in which the television becomes the 'heart of another network,' or a system of mass distribution and regulation (Crary 1984, 284). The 'totalizing response to television' or the pervasiveness of television in the modern everyday lives of people (i.e.: in broadcast news, shows, surveillance) becomes what Crary calls 'the eclipse of spectacle'.[250]

The important point here is that, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, that is during McCarthyism, television was on the threshold of becoming an enormous power to be reckoned with. Yet the so-called eclipse of the spectacle was not yet operative in a society that relied on newspapers, the radio and the cinema as the main instruments of distribution and manipulation and for which nationwide television broadcast was something relatively new. If, for Crary, spectacle as such becomes almost untraceable as spectacle in the era of television, then spectacle was very much traceable and alive in the fifties.

The media spectacle of the hearings was basically a systematic method for injecting organized yet distorted communication nation-wide. The ultimate purpose of the spectacle was to disseminate fear, as Miller points out: 'I said that it was not the Reds who were dispensing our fears now, but the other side, and it could not go on indefinitely, it would someday wear down the national nerve'.[251] The theatricality of the witnesses' performance during the hearings intensified the effect of the nationwide broadcast spectacle and this would ultimately be the measure of their supposed or enforced loyal citizenship.[252] It is also telling that McCarthy's spectacle had its denouement on television, when he picked a fight with the Army and found himself facing lawyer Joseph Welch as his opponent – the same Joseph Welch who eventually caused McCarthy's downfall after saying in a live broadcast: 'Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness […]. You have done enough. Have you no sense of decency?'[253] Surprisingly, this scene is distinctly *theatrical* in terms of what Arendt defines as action and, consequently, actualization. It was an unexpected moment in which the former tyrant was suddenly exposed in a theatrical way for what he was: a petty slanderer.

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[250] Leslie Kan, 'Spectacle', 2004, The University of Chicago: Theories of Media: Keywords Glossary, n.p. < http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/spectacle.htm > [accessed 5 November 2012].

[251] Miller, *The Timebends,* p. 334.

[252] Tony Perucci, 'The Red Mask of Sanity: Paul Robeson, HUAC, and the Sound of Cold War Performance', *TDR/The Drama Review* 53.4 (2009), p. 22.

[253] Timothy Hoff, 'Anatomy of a Murder', *Legal Studies Forum* 24 (2000), p. 664.

Preciously, Joseph McCarthy's focus had shifted from investigating fraud and waste in the executive branch of government to wholeheartedly prosecuting the communists. The impulse to harass political opponents became totalitarian and legal procedural defects abounded. The website of the US Senate reflects on it as follows:

> A dispute over his hiring of staff without consulting other committee members prompted the panel's three Democrats to resign in mid 1953. Republican senators also stopped attending, in part because so many of the hearings were called on short notice or held away from the nation's capital. As a result, McCarthy and his chief counsel Roy Cohn largely ran the show by themselves, relentlessly grilling and insulting witnesses. Harvard law dean Ervin Griswold described McCarthy's role as 'judge, jury, prosecutor, castigator, and press agent, all in one'.[254]

In Ervin Grisworld's qualification, the nature of procedural defects, to put it mildly, may be evident, but there is also a curious ambiguity at play as to how we should read the roles that are brought together *generically*. As the phrase 'running the show' suggests, there was indeed a show. Yet the roles of judge, jury and prosecutor belong to the theatrical setting of the court room. The castigator belongs to the confined spaces of interrogation and punishment, the press agent to public space. All in all, however, the theatrical aspects weigh heavier and form the core of who McCarthy was, publicly. This may explain why he had to be attacked by means of theatre as well.

It is clear that McCarthy could only become who he was through the media. It was only after the end of the hearings that people realized what had happened. Caute argues that 'McCarthy's role was historically healthy because he dramatized intolerance, lent it crude, villainous features, personalized it, stole it away from the low-profiled bureaucrats.'[255] Yet Caute's study is called *The Great Fear* for a reason. During his moment of glory, McCarthy was far from being 'healthy' as defined by Caute. The effect of fear and paranoia that helped to cover the truth and hold an entire nation hostage to a new wave of patriotism

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[254] 'Have you no Sense of Decency?', 9 June 9 1954, *United States Senate,* <http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Have_you_no_sense_of_decency.htm> [accessed 17 April 2014].
[255] Caute, *The Great Fear,* p. 541.

was part and parcel of what Richard Hofstadter calls, following Adorno, pseudo-conservatism. Let me quote him at some length:

> Unlike most of the liberal dissent of the past, the new dissent not only has no respect for non-conformism, but is based upon a relentless demand for conformity. It can most accurately be called pseudo-conservative – I borrow the term from the study of *The Authoritarian Personality* published five years ago by Theodore W. Adorno and his associates – because its exponents, although they believe themselves to be conservatives and usually employ the rhetoric of conservatism, show signs of a serious and restless dissatisfaction with American life, traditions and institutions. They have little in common with the temperate and compromising spirit of true conservatism in the classical sense of the word, and they are far from pleased with the dominant practical conservatism of the moment as it is represented by the Eisenhower Administration. Their political reactions express rather a profound if largely unconscious hatred of our society and its ways – a hatred which one would hesitate to impute to them if one did not have suggestive clinical evidence.[256]

Hofstadter's analysis is accurate with regard to his own times, and may still be today. It testifies to an inability to deal with what Arendt calls democracy's inherent, principal plurality, the plurality of public, unpredictable action. The issue that I would like to emphasize is the fact that this pseudo-conservatism is linked to what the title of Adorno's study hints at: an 'authoritarian personality'. It was this form of personality that was able to deploy its full force by means of spectacle, and it is also this form that distinguishes the McCarthy type of spectacle from the way the society of the spectacle would develop a little later. As Leslie Kan explains:

> For theorists such as Foucault, Crary, Debord, and Baudrillard, the spectacular shifts from its theatrical origins and now carries with it issues of class ideology and modern subjectivity. With the shift into modernity, the traditional notion of spectacle as a visual and

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[256] Richard Hofstadter, 'The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt', in *The Radical Right*, ed. by Daniel Bell (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1963), p. 76.

affective medium begins to delineate a more complex understanding of the spectacle and its relationship to the spectator.[257]

Apparently, in earlier times the spectacle was considered in terms of its theatrical origins but it changed in essence because of modern media technologies which were starting to shape the modern subjectivity of a mass audience. With McCarthyism, I suggest, we are at an in-between point. The theatrical origins were not entirely lost yet and it is significant that Miller explicitly responded to the McCarthyism's modern media spectacle through a theatre play.

As already indicated, the questions raised by Crary earlier in this chapter make it difficult to affix Debord's notion of the spectacle seamlessly to McCarthyism. One reason is that McCarthy's spectacle was so ostensibly used in terms of framing. Framing refers not merely to the unavoidable act of framing that is required in a semiotic sense, but to the conscious social construction of an attack on opponents by mass media, political or social actors, political leaders, or any other powerful public actors or organizations. One can hardly say that this is an example of 'the way power functions noncoercively within twentieth-century modernity'. In fact coercion was evident. In the McCarthy hearings, the monolithic scope of the red scare was used to yoke artists, academics, writers, activists, dissidents etc. together and coerce them into testifying in public hearings in order to subject them. Likewise, it may be equally difficult to see how McCarthy's spectacle functioned as an opiate for the masses that was deliberately constructed to create a false image to beguile the masses and prod their consent for the fulfilment of the ulterior motives that power hides in its wings.[258] Obviously the hearings did not function as an opiate that would be analogous to opiates as provided by, say, the musical industry. They were meant to rouse the audience.

In this environment, Miller's play was an experiment or a wager aimed at destabilizing something that is, as yet, a mixture of generic modes. The obvious historical allegory could not only intervene in the present by piercing through the veil of the spectacle, but also by hinting at the theatrical, fragile origins of the spectacle which could establish that McCarthy was outdated, located 'back in time'. Here again, the allegory used can be seen as an allegory-in-reverse. Let me recall an earlier quote from Avelar in which he asserts that in totalitarian

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[257] Kan, 'Spectacle'.
[258] Jonathan Crary, 'Spectacle, Attention, Counter-Memory', *October* 50 (Autumn 1989), p. 96.

systems allegory may be used 'because the petrified images of ruins, in their immanence, bear the only possibility of narrating the defeat'.[259] It has perhaps not been sufficiently emphasized that *The Crucible*, in terms of a truth practice, has an air of clairvoyance about it. Written and published in 1952, and performed in 1953, it was ahead of McCarthy's demise in 1954. At the time of its publication, few thought that McCarthy was heading for his downfall. Yet he went down, and Miller's history of Salem predicted it. In this respect the play helped to create, performatively, the possibility of an alternative future. This we will explore now.

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[259] Idelber Avelar, *The Untimely Present: Post-Dictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 69.

Chapter 4
Actualizing History: Responsibilities with Regard to the Future

Whereas the previous chapters focused on the play's relation to the past, this chapter will be looking at the play's present in relation to a future. If, as is the case, the play is an intervention in its contemporary circumstances, this is obviously with the aim of moving towards a better future. The question then becomes: how does the play deal with the past in the way that the Salem trials relate, by means of a theatrical intervention, to a future? In the twentieth century the relation of theatre, and of theatricality in general, with the future was paradigmatically explored in the work of Bertolt Brecht. In his view the role of theatre was to produce a distance, not an unreflexive and emotional involvement in a plot. This distance or alienation was necessary to make people see behind the scenes of the socio-political and economic system as a result of which they would start to think and become able to act in order to change the course of history. This appears to be an essential strategy as well if we think about the powers of spectacle, as they have been dealt with in the previous chapter, and a possible theatrical response to them.[260]

Brecht's ideas about the powers of theatre are an aesthetic and political elaboration of Marx's views about the role of philosophy which famously was that philosophy should not reflect on the nature of reality but intervene in it. This should be done by unveiling the true reality of a mode of production that was hidden by the surface of daily social traffic. In this respect, Miller's play is Marxian in that it is not primarily aimed at reflecting reality but at intervening in it in order to change it. Yet its formal elements are not simply aimed at unveiling. The form of allegory is, in first instance, not just aimed at unveiling things, on the contrary. It is aimed at veiling things, which is understandable as we saw previously, in the context of censorship. Since the play is aimed at altering the course of history, hence leading to another future, we can ask how this relates to the allegorical form Miller chose. This implies having a closer look at the play's generic quality of being an allegory in relation to history as the *actualization* of history, not in terms of the representation of an historical past, but in terms of the role of representation with regard to alternative futures. I will be taking my cue especially, in what follows, from Ernesto Laclau's approach to history in discursive terms, more specifically in terms of tropes. In

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[260] Bertolt Brecht, 'Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction', *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 1.

the context of actualization it is also important, however, to ask what kind of a historical actor Miller himself was. What were his opportunities to intervene in his times whilst, as a literary artist, he also was a 'child of his times'?

4.1. Miller as 'Child of his Times'

Although Miller does not draw any direct *political* analogy between the Salem era and the McCarthy era in his mix of dramatic themes in *The Crucible*, the play is explicitly synchronic with the age it was written and staged in, i.e. 1952 or 1953. Miller could hardly have remained indifferent to the fates of Alger Hiss, Owen Lattimore, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and many other professionals in America, including Miller's close associate Elia Kazan.[261] At the same time an almost exact or direct political analogy between witch-hunting and red-hunting was in a sense so unmediated that the allegory did not protect Miller from a bludgeoning by conservative Cold War critics who were not to be convinced by an analogous portrayal of red-hunters and witches. They evidently refused to accept the hallucinatory nature of communist threats. In this context they also rejected the author's sympathy for the liberals' right to a variety of freedoms. In other words, equating the persecution of 'unreal' witches in late seventeenth-century Salem with restrictions on real communist spies in 1950s America was a problematic political allegory to say the least, precisely because it was hardly an allegory, which may be why Graff Zivin remarks on two occasions that the Wikipedia lemma on allegory does not consider *The Crucible* as an allegory (unfortunately Graff Zivin does not mention on what date she accessed the site - the reference to *The Crucible* has now been removed, July 2014).[262] The issue was not only confined to the past or only to the present. The play's intervention clearly concerned the future course of the nation.

In the context of the future to which the play opens up, the main question I would like to address first is: can Miller be called a 'child of his times' and, if so, how? This common phrase refers here to the play's meaning as restricted to its own times, or what I called earlier its own 'occasion'. Clearly Miller's artistic sensibilities were influenced by the socio-political aura of the fifties and the concrete political circumstances of his age. Yet in response to both, he

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[261] Whittaker Chambers, an ex-communist, accused the State Department official Alger Hiss of passing confidential documents to his Russian counterparts. Hiss denied the charges but after two hearings he was convicted of perjury in 1950. Elia Kazan directed Miller's plays, inter alia *Death of a Salesman* and *All my Sons*. He testified in front of Committee of his past affiliation with the Communist party and told them the names of his associates. See Miller, *Timebends,* pp. 333-35.
[262] Graff Zivin, p. 58, p. 65.

anchored his theatrical intervention along the witch-hunting metaphor not only in order to comment on the politics of his age in search of a truth that was submerged in an official environment of fear, but also to change circumstances. As for this conscious response, it is important to assess his status as an artist, and to clarify my position regarding his options to intervene in society by artistic means.

Let me take the circumstances of the times seriously and use a Marxian analysis first, and then twist it. It will help me to see how Miller was the *effect* of his times and circumstances, and how his writing was not. It will also help to prepare for my argument later, in dialogue with Ernesto Laclau.

In a classical Marxian analysis, Miller, as a literary artist, would have belonged to the superstructure of American society which rested upon its economic base. In an economic structure of society on which the legal and political superstructure is erected, the artist is by necessity shaped by the production relations and Miller's response would be seen in terms of predisposition. In his study on the relation between Marxism and literature, Raymond Williams repeats a much quoted passage from Karl Marx's 1859 preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. According to Williams it is relevant to define the relations between the mode of production and the socio-political and cultural superstructure as Marx defined it:

> In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indefensible and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness.[263]

According to the Marxist critical perspective, a literary artist's sensibilities are, firstly, shaped, triggered and stimulated by the economic circumstances and, secondly, by the entire set of social, cultural, legal and political realities and

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[263] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977), p. 75.

contradictions of his age. For classical Marxists the literature of any age amounts to little more than one of the many other channels of discourse in which the energies of an historical epoch are discharged. That is to say that the same materially defined energy is dissipated by societies through their political movements, religious thought, philosophic speculations, language, moral codes and other symbolic activities, such as art and literature, through forms of cultural expression. In the Marxian view, all these expressions belong to the so-called 'superstructure' of society which is guided and driven by the economic 'base' that consists of its specific modes of production and, as a consequence, the class in which man is born, with its corresponding powers and privileges. In relation to the base, cultural expressions remain asymmetrically interrelated. There is little chance of changing the mode of production, for instance, by means of the superstructure.

Yet the paradox and historical irony, of course, is that Marx's *writings* were the driving force behind extensive material changes and substantial changes in history. In a sense, Marx's writings, or his discursive powers, turned his own material analysis on its head, and proved that discursive material can be as basic and material as the modes of production. Still, a useful aspect of the Marxian analysis remains that the literary thought of an age does not only owe its genesis to any present, discursive scenario of a society; instead, it blossoms and shoots from the preceding currents and cross-currents of thoughts that follow from a material base. Therefore, from the reader's point of view, the literature and the arts of an age *per se* must be read and received in connection with the current socio-economic dynamics of the age. At the same time, Marx's writings have taught us that writing can radically alter the actualization of history because writing is an action, in Arendt's sense of intrinsic political action.

In terms of its action, any literary work also needs to be read in connection with the contemporaneous movements and cross-currents in other areas of cultural life. The findings resulting from this dual determinism of socio-economic history and cultural interdependence and agency reveal the literary artist as both the product of, and an actor in his time who, by virtue of his imagination and individuality, not only tries to rescue his creations from the dominance of a material base, or for that matter from the lethal label of journalistic historical documents, but also seeks to transform his work of art into an active force without whilst, as Arendt emphasizes, being in control of his actions, or the actions of his work. Thus, politically speaking, a literary writer

cannot *make* a literary piece work the way he or she wants, in a specific and particular way, as its action depends on its actualization of a future.

As I already discussed, before introducing the events of Salem in 1692, in the opening of the play Miller first clarifies some issues regarding historical accuracy and unambiguously dissociates the play from historiography in terms used by academic historians. But as an historical drama, it is an artist's attempt to conceptualize history in order not only to ascertain the truth of history but also to reproduce it. As Herbert Lindenberger notes: 'Historical drama, in so far as it reflects upon and interprets past events, can be considered a branch of historical thought, though one which projects hypotheses and individual theories about history more than it does fully worked out philosophies'.[264] Lindenberger rightly points to the particular take adopted by artists here, but in addition hints at the artist's attempt to project a philosophic insight into the customary linear view of history in order to find reversible and synchronic patterns, which Michael J. O'Neal terms as a 'vertical' view of history.[265] This essentially structuralist view of history and culture sees *patterns* of history: history is not considered as causal and sequential in terms of narrative ordering. Or, to put this differently, history becomes punctuated with facts and domains of historical subsets which are vertically projected as recurrent patterns on a model of linearity. In this respect, Miller dramatizes history to intervene in his contemporary times in order to reveal how an artist's imagination can transform and frame politics with a view to opening history up to new things that would not follow the familiar pattern.

Miller's views on the relation between dramatic art, with its moral purpose, and the social reality of its own times with regard to alternative futures, were reflected in his introduction to the *Collected Plays*. He writes:

> These plays in one sense, are my response to what was 'in the air', and they are one man's way of saying to his fellow men, 'This is what you see every day, or think or feel; I will show you what you really know but have not had the time, or the disinterestedness, or the insight, or the information to understand consciously'. Each of these plays, in varying degrees, was begun in the belief that it was

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[264] Herbert Lindenberger, *Historical Drama: The Relation of Literature and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 131.

[265] Michael J. O'Neal, 'History, Myth, and Name Magic in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*', *Clio: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History* 12.2 (Winter 1982), p. 112.

unveiling a truth already known but unrecognized as such. My concept of the audience is of a public each member of which is carrying about with him what he thinks is an anxiety, or a hope or a preoccupation which is his alone and isolates him from mankind; and in this respect at least the function of a play is to reveal him to himself so that he may touch others by virtue of the revelation of his mutuality with them. If only for this reason I regard the theatre as a serious business, one that makes or should make man more human, which is to say less alone.[266]

As Miller's remarks cogently reflect, *The Crucible*, like his other social plays, is an attempt to bring on stage the political and social anomalies which people encounter in their daily lives but which they don't have the time and imagination to see, confront or correct. Moreover, in a Marxian sense, the play is aimed at unveiling the true reality of the social world and, in doing so, making collective action possible. The plays are not meant to touch the individual members of an audience aesthetically but to touch them in order to create a collective on the basis of 'mutuality,' which is to say: to make man more social.

The quote is also explicit as to the plays' function *in* history. The play is historically oriented towards the past in terms of what already 'was in the air'; towards the present in terms of unveiling the truth; and towards the future in terms of a 'revelation', or for the sake of 'making man more human'. With respect to this threefold function the play allegorically relates the Salem witch hunts to the 1950s anti-Communist frenzy. Miller's target is his audience who he believes to be a collective of individuals in which each individual member is a carrier of anxiety and internal disquiet, whom he wants to offer hope of change, change in everyone's individual capacity to become part of a collective. In reviving this hope through the revelation of truth and by offering alternative options on stage from those offered by real life, Miller attempts to lead each viewer to recognize his/her mutuality and shared responsibility in confronting political lies, and to move away from them for the greater benefit of the society. That is why for Miller theatre is a serious platform to energize a society which can easily fall apart at times of political crises, perceived or real. The important task of dramatic art advanced by Miller resonates strongly with Noam

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[266] Arthur Miller, 'Introduction to the Collected Plays', in *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller*, ed. by Robert A. Martin (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), pp. 122-23.

Chomsky's position on the responsibility of intellectuals who says that 'it is the responsibility of the intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies'.[267]

The lies are exposed, here, through allegory, which brings two different historical periods together metaphorically, as two different signifiers which, through the play, relate to one signified. As for this one signified, and the desire expressed through it, one way of dealing with it was endorsed by Donald E. Brown, for whom patterns of human behaviour and human responses to social, economic and political circumstances alike stay the same.[268] According to Brown the most fundamental features of human nature in different historical periods remain consistent despite the paradoxical fact that human nature itself is seen as having historically developed from multiple social circumstances. Yet, as he argues, in actuality there exists a broader uniformity and similarity in human responses to historical settings in different times. This might explain why people tend to seek precedents in history in order to match them with a present crisis at any point in time, as if to reassure themselves that the present is an improvement on the past, or simply to understand the present better. However, the question remains as to how allegory relates to a future that is not predetermined but instead opened up to alternative futures.

4.2 Intervention I: Allegory as a Means to Open Up an Alternative Future

Opening up future alternatives requires, first of all, that we disregard the concepts of teleological or directional historical progression based on the premise of a purposeful and ordained order in the wake of the Enlightenment, and instead consider human agency as the bearer of choices and options, as Hannah Arendt did, within a constraining structure of circumstances defined by thinkers like Althusser in terms of discontinuities, ruptures and various time scales which lead to alternative historical outcomes, including revolutions.[269] These outcomes are neither entirely determined by the cause and effect principle nor are they purely accidental. Taken as a whole, history is devoid of any structured order directing it, on a fixed path and pattern, from a known past to a known future.

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[267] Noam Chomsky, 'The Responsibility of Intellectuals', in *The Dissenting Academy,* ed. by Theodore Roszak (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p. 256.

[268] Donald E. Brown, 'Human Universals, Human Nature & Human Culture', *Daedalus* 133.4 (Fall 2004), p. 48.

[269] Louis Althusser, 'Contradiction and Overdetermination', in *For Marx/Louis Althusser,* trans. by Ben Brewster (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 99.

Again, the formal forces of allegory need to be scrutinised. Allegory may initially aim at concealing, but in the classical sense it should lead the informed to the highest meanings, or to the ultimate meaning of a seemingly universal and preordained frame from which one would have to see things. It is critical in this respect to consider allegory as a discursive form. When periods of history are singled out and studied in relation to established facts, the subsequent narration by historians and interpretation by artists through literary works, with their specific interests and deductive lenses, will eventually construct *meaning* from them. Even myths, legends and oral histories, although unconfirmed with regard to their veracity on critical epistemic weighing scales, are rushed in literary historical representations to stretch and enrich speculative interpretive plot structures. As has often been remarked, the story-telling capacity and narrative propensity of humans thus serves to construct their historical identity. They cannot alienate themselves from such narratives because they, as indicated, *give meaning* to their identity, culture and present circumstances by means of narrative. Yet from this essentially historicist perspective, any current actions of people must be seen as the outcome of their historically produced character. However, theatre and allegory are the vehicles able to dismantle this.

With regard to the future Miller uses the trial ritual allegorically, not merely to highlight the resemblances between past and present but to unveil the patterns which determine the inherent contradictions of the chronologically distinct scenes. These inherent contradictions lead to fissures in the historical continuity. Admittedly, the demons of Salem and the McCarthy era can be discerned right in the heart of the prosecution itself and the power of the past, i.e. the 1692 witch hunting, is seen to reassert itself in the present of the 1950s McCarthy hearings, as if both belonged to a category of guilt forms, historically similar in nature, and as if both were shared by the community and the individual. The point, however, is that discursively speaking allegory can never simply bring together two different historical periods under a single heading. This is where Ernesto Laclau's tropological approach of history comes in.

The Crucible is a political allegory which associates, both metaphorically and metonymically, the Salem episode with the 1950s anti-Communist purge in America. Metonymically, the two events are both contiguous and contingent with each other. They are contiguous through the culture they share within the same political space. They are contingent in remaining historically different and their relation in this sense is ontologically heterogeneous. There is no possibility of conflating things that *border* on one another. Metaphorically, however, as I

already indicated, they appear to be brought under one signified, or one heading. In the discursive context of metaphor and metonymy, Ernesto Laclau, in his response to the work of Paul de Man, considers the possibilities of history's make-ability in terms of a struggle about inevitable forms of hegemony. Metaphor, for Laclau, is the discursive vehicle of hegemony, bringing two different historical periods under a single dominant heading which is then accepted as the correct one, with 'true' meaning. Since any proposition is *metonymic*, it could neither be true nor false when one compares two chronologically distant paradigms of history. Yet their heterogeneity can be reduced by means of metaphorical hegemony in a strict political sense, as is the case when the Salem period is staged and read in the 1950s, for instance.[270]

Laclau's concept of hegemony is based, obviously, on Antonio Gramsci's work on hegemony. In an earlier work Laclau defined hegemony as follows:

> 'Hegemony' will allude to an absent totality, and to the diverse attempts at recomposition and rearticulation which, in overcoming this original absence, made it possible for struggles to be given a meaning and for historical forces to be endowed with full positivity.[271]

The absent totality Laclau refers to effectively opens up the political realm in which any power will have to establish itself *discursively*. In the second edition of *Hegemony and Socialism,* Laclau and Mouffe define hegemony along similar lines, saying that its 'very condition is that a *particular* social force assumes the representation of a *totality* that is radically incommensurable with it'.[272] Representation is no longer the reflection of a socio-economic basis. Instead the social element is conceived as a discursive space.

In going back to Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe struggle with the same problem that I faced earlier: the discrepancy between the material economic forces, on the one hand, and the cultural forces, on the other, or, in the context of my study, discursive forces. For Gramsci there was no necessary coincidence between a society's mode of production and the politico-cultural system. This made it possible to explain how capitalism could manifest itself in culturally and

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[270] Ernesto Laclau, 'The Politics of Rhetoric', in *Material Events: Paul De Man and the Afterlife of Theory,* ed. by Tom Cohn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 237.
[271] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics,* 2nd edn (London: Verso, 2001), p. 7.
[272] Laclau and Mouffe, 'Preface to the second edition', p. x.

politically different societies; it also allowed for a completely different political analysis in which people were not simply the object of dominating modes of production but also able to act upon them. In other words, Gramsci was interested in opening up alternative futures. This is how Laclau looks at it:

> The requirements of 'hegemony' as a central category of political analysis are essentially three. First, that something constitutively heterogeneous to the social system or structure has to be present in the latter from the very beginning, preventing it from constituting itself as a closed or representable totality. If such a closure were achievable, no hegemonic event could be possible and the political, far from being an ontological dimension of the social – an 'existential' of the social – would just be an ontic dimension of the latter. Second, however, the hegemonic suture has to produce a re-totalizing effect, without which no hegemonic articulation would be possible either. But third, this re-totalization cannot have the character of a dialectical reintegration. It has, on the contrary, to maintain alive and visible the original and constitutive heterogeneity from which the hegemonic articulation started.[273]

Laclau maintains that in the political arena, the 'hegemonic' prevents politics from ever becoming a closed system, which could otherwise no longer be political in essence. The reason is that any hegemonic force never completely coincides with the economic system of power. It is, in an ontological sense, different from it. Hence, from the outset, hegemony is indispensable for the political as a qualifier.

In second instance, however, the hegemonic 'suture', its jointing and stitching force in the political field, has to bring into effect a re-totalization of the scene after its intervention. Without this there would be no room for power, or further hegemonic articulation. But unlike the synthesis attainted in the dialectical process to reintegrate things, hegemony also expands the innate heterogeneity in the political after its intervention and this is the beginning of the next hegemonic movement. Laclau's reading helps me to understand Miller's play politically and historically in terms of an intervention with regard to the future. It is clear that Miller associates two episodes of history metonymically and metaphorically in his play. The metonymy relates to

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[273] Laclau, 'The Politics of Rhetoric', pp. 230-31.

heterogeneity, for example when the Salem part is heterogeneous to the political system of the fifties but at the same time present in it 'from the very beginning'. The metaphor relates to a re-totalizing move, from both sides. For McCarthy, the idea is to see communism under the heading of evil, for Miller the idea is to see McCarthy under the heading of a deluded witch hunter. As a result, the play has the potential effect of an hegemonic move to disrupt the hegemony of McCarthy and his associates in American society to reassert both its own hegemony and an alternative future. Hence, through contingency, or heterogeneity, between two events that necessarily border on each other historically, Miller challenges politics metaphorically and allegorically.

Let me deal with this dynamic more specifically in terms of the play itself. Within the framework of the trial ritual, Miller condenses the abstract notion of authority in the personalities of Danforth and Hawthorne to dramatize some parallels with the Congressional Committee hearings and the fear mongering by McCarthy loyalists. In the play, Reverend Parris and judge Hawthorne are so worried about their position that they raise their voices when the lawfulness of the trials is queried, suspecting it as an attempt to defile the respect for a sacred court of law and its proceedings. Like the Manichean split of American society in the McCarthy era between patriots and the alleged enemy battalions of communists and liberals, the Salem court drew a straight line between friends of God and the Devil's obedient lieutenants. This is evident from Danforth's word to Francis Nurse: 'But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between'.[274] Danforth expresses more than once the arrogance of authority in Act 3: 'And do you know that near to four hundred are in the jails from Marblehead to Lynn, and upon my signature?' and he continues to boast without remorse, 'And seventy-two condemned to hang by that signature?'[275] His dedication to confront the so-called anomaly in front of him is unquestionable. He abides by the letter of the legal proceedings while blindly accepting the testimony of the girls, despite Hale and Proctor's insistence that the girls were dissembling.

The discursive relation between Danforth and McCarthy is distinctly metaphorical but, yet again, also metonymic. In terms of metaphor, a *similar* strike against unquestionable authority and a generalized sense of responsibility to the national cause of security reverberate in Joseph McCarthy's use of the

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[274] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 86.
[275] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 79.

fear-prone pool of American national socio-politics, for instance when he thrills the Republican Women's Club in Wheeling, West Virginia, in 1950 with his speech: 'I have here in my hand a list of 205…a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department'.[276] The metaphorical comparison with Danforth when boasting about the numbers is revealing, and is motivated *synecdochically* as if Danforth and McCarthy were both part of the same semi-jurisprudential body of texts and signatures. Metaphorically speaking, McCarthy's was a *similar* attempt to inspire awe and thrill about the seriousness of danger in America, which he, as 'patriotic' and 'knightly' figure, had vowed to affront and unravel. In the first instance, the reception of these claims prompted his political career to rise meteorically for a while, much like the success of the accusing girls in Salem. Yet, the metonymic relations between Salem and McCarthy, their bordering on one another in history and culture, also remain heterogeneous, for example when the hand of the witch hunter Danforth remains a hand that not only enforces McCarthy's agenda by means of similarity, but that could also jeopardise its power.

Miller asserts the metaphorical relation between the two episodes in terms of the second, re-totalizing suture that Laclau refers to, through his analysis of the scene in the 1950s, when he says:

> It was the fact that a political objective, knowledgeable campaign from the far right was capable of creating not only a terror, but a new subjective reality, a veritable mystique which was gradually assuming even a holy resonance. The wonder of it all struck me that so practical and picayune a cause, carried forward by such manifestly ridiculous men, should be capable of paralyzing thought itself, and worse, causing to billow up such persuasive clouds of 'mysterious' feelings within people. It was as though the whole country had been born anew, without a memory even of certain elemental decencies which a year or two earlier no one would have imagined could be altered, let alone forgotten. Astounded, I watched men pass me by without a nod whom I had known rather

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[276] Joseph McCarthy, 'Senator Joseph McCarthy Hunts Communists: Speech delivered in Wheeling, West Virginia, February 9, 1950', in *Reading the American Past,* ed. by Michael P. Johnson, vol. 2 (Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 2012), p. 221.

well for years; and again, the astonishment was produced by my knowledge, which I could not give up, that the terror in these people was being knowingly planned and consciously engineered, and yet that all they knew was terror. That so interior and subjective an emotion could have been so manifestly created from without was a marvel to me. It underlies every word in *The Crucible*.[277]

It is worth noting the way in which Miller talks about the fabrication of fear, saying that the terror 'was knowingly planned and consciously engineered' and that this terror was nevertheless *real*. Miller's explanation also defines the effect of McCarthyism as a country being 'born anew' because McCarthy succeeded in cutting metonymical relations with periods of one or two years earlier, by reconfiguring the other highly metonymically motivated capacity: memory. The fact that the play is an allegory is significant. It is iconic for the McCarthy's re-totalizing strategy which the play highlights as an object of study at a time when thought was 'paralyzed.' In a Brechtian attempt to make people see what was actually taking place, Miller wanted to show the American public's vulnerability to a political rhetoric of suspicion, fear and paranoia; a public that displayed an attitude of uncritical acquiescence to the ingenious narratives of a 'Great Conspiracy' allegedly organized by the enemies of democracy.

The right wing, as A. Peter Foulkes describes it, benefitted from a particular logic of making the sign fit the interpretation rather than the other way around, in a configuration that is metaphorical in two ways: it is similar to the Salem theocracy and fits in the re-totalizing power to read all signs under one heading and one heading only.[278] McCarthy ventured on a twofold path of political prominence and unfairly silencing politics of dissent in America. The manipulation of political facts by the profiteering mass spokespeople in 1950s America, influenced by a general atmosphere of paranoia against communism, served to construct conspiratorial fables of imminent threat from the enemy and his deputies and successfully brought the Americans' deepest instinctive fears to the surface in testing times. This skilful tampering with public sensibilities and fears is a comparable phenomenon, metaphorically speaking, both of the Salem era and the McCarthy era. In response to this, Miller hints at the heterogeneity of metonymy when he says, for instance: 'of course, the paranoid, real or

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[277] Miller, *Timebends,* p. 39.
[278] A. Peter Foulkes, *Literature and Propaganda* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 87.

pretended, always secretes its pearl around a grain of fact'.[279] This is why any response to manipulation must focus on this grain of fact, on the truth. Similarly, as Richard Hofstadter remarks, the spokesperson for the paranoid style in the public realm is a double sufferer as he is afflicted by the vagaries of the real world but also by the fantasies of his own.[280] In terms of my argument, Miller and Hofstadter's assertions amount to what Jonathan Culler described as a metaphor's force, which is its metonymical motivation, indicated here by the 'grain of fact' and 'the real world'. This heterogeneous kernel endangers the very power of the metaphor.

One such kernel of fact or element of the real world was the existence of a strong socialist movement within American Society in earlier decades. During the fifties American democracy no longer appeared to allow any space to socialist political ideology, suspecting it to be totalitarian, unnatural and atheistic, hence as an evil rival to American constitutionalism. Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks give an account of the causes of socialism's downfall and failure in the US: the pivotal role of American political values and institutions in this respect, the splits between American trade unions and the socialist party, the unsettling force of immigration and the fragmentation of the American working class, the secretive nature of the strategic choices of the socialists, and state repression duly aided by the legal mechanism at hand. Nevertheless, the reality of a socialist alternative could not be denied, despite many attempts to vilify it.[281]

Once again, *The Crucible* testifies of a metaphorical re-totalization, through which signs had to fit the already established interpretation. The theocratic jargon of Puritan Salem made the entire community suffer when certain individuals transgressed its tenets, which is evident in the play when Danforth reasons with the girls upon receiving Mary Warren's deposition: 'Now, children, this is a court of law. The law based upon the Bible, and the Bible, writ by Almighty God, forbid the practice of witchcraft, and describe death as the penalty thereof. But likewise, children, the law and Bible damn all bearers of false witness'.[282] Since witchcraft was an invisible crime, it served as an excellent vehicle for fitting the sign to the interpretation and, as a

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[279] Arthur Miller, 'Why I Wrote The Crucible: An Artist's Answer to Politics', *New Yorker,* 21 October 1996, p. 158.
[280] Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 40.
[281] Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York: W.W Norton, 2000), p. 10.
[282] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 93.

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consequence, the guilty girls instantly became bewitched victims to protect themselves from clerical wrath. The court, led by Danforth, although passionately committed to exorcise evil in the community, starts from a point of defeat by confirming witchcraft as a crime and accepting testimonies of 'self-styled' victims and their freakish narratives of the phantasmal wonders of the spirits, without any tangible shred of evidence or proof from the witnesses. This is illustrated by Danforth's attitude towards the accusers' testimony: 'Do you know, Mr. Proctor, that the entire contention of the state in these trials is that the voice of heaven is speaking through the children?'[283] Therefore he is unconcerned whether lives are wasted and people's reputation is soiled. Until the alpha and omega of the legal procedure are met, he assents to every testimony and allegation to establish guilt, even though the testimonies are based on spectral evidence. The contradiction lies in the fact that he publicly vows to entertain only factual details and literal facts during the proceedings, while he is in fact himself a hostage to a whimsical syllogism, which is to disclose the hiding places of the occult.

As William Inboden points out, the McCarthy era is characterised by an identical religious and moral absolutism that underlays the ideological framework of the decision-making apparatus, whose religious world view sufficiently influenced the cold war to take the course it did.[284] The core of twentieth-century American exceptionalism consisted of more than the odd remnant of old Puritan spiritual ideas about the Americans as God's chosen people, or Woodrow Wilson's belief in America's manifest destiny, a concept that long predated him, and the international mission to democratise and remake the world in its own liberal image. Both Truman and Eisenhower set out to contain atheistic communist economics, politics and culture with an unambiguous reach for religious semiotics, which grew organically out of a metaphor from their American spiritual history with predominantly Protestant Christian roots. Likewise President Eisenhower associated God with the country in his public addresses. [285] As Lee Canipe illustrates based on the president's public papers: 'Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first, most basic expression of Americanism. Without God, there could be no American form of

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[283] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 81.

[284] William Inboden, 'Preface and Acknowledgments' in *Religion and American Foreign Policy: 1945-1960. The Soul of Containment* (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. ix.

[285] See Kevin Coe and David Domke, 'Petitioners or Prophets? Presidential Discourse, God, and the Ascendancy of Religious Conservatives', *Journal of Communication* 56.2 (2006), p. 321 about Eisenhower as the 'national pastor' of American civil religion in the 1950s.

government, nor an American way of Life'.[286] Meanwhile, as if to prove the point, in the so-called communist satellite states in Eastern Europe, religious persecutions were carried out with the excuse that the church acted as the enemy's legal organization.

In *The Crucible* as in the McCarthy trials, the trials failed to reach the professed goals of providing justice. They were ruled by a denial of personal responsibility and showed the deliberate wickedness of the legal elites, working towards a monolithic and undemocratic social order without room for plural ideas, without room for politics that is. John Proctor, in the play, tellingly summarises his disgust of church ostentation and Parris's megalomaniac obsession with his ministerial prerogatives as 'Lord's man in the Parish', in his robust disdain for the misuse of authority: 'I mean it solemnly, Rebecca; I like not the smell of this "authority"',[287] When personal truth clashes with the legal version of the predetermined truth of a politically motivated partisan jury, trials tend to disconnect the social and individual sense of justice, thus prompting people with a clear conscience like Proctor – and by implication the many ideologically loyal friends of international socialism in 1950s America – to internalise justice and register their dissent instead of being committed to authorities and abstract theocracy. The antagonists in the play, in the figures of Abigail, Parris and Putnam, insist on strict enforcement of the law for the safeguard of their vested interests, and in so doing disturb the community's balance by creating paranoia about the Devil and its associates, subverting the real function of the law, namely providing justice. The format of the trial, with its theatrical collection of heterogeneous voices, proves to be a disturbing element that will always threaten Laclau's secondary metaphorical, political attempt to re-totalize hegemony. In this respect, Miller's play is not merely an allegory. It introduces the heterogeneous elements of trials in two different historical periods and in both cases the trials serve to open up alternative histories.

Let me turn, finally, to this opening up of alternative histories, especially in relation to the complex issue of justice and the role of literature with regard to it. I will distinguish, in what follows, between two aspects of Miller as an artist. One fits the picture of what can be described as the more classical role of the

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[286] Lee Canipe, 'Under God and Anti-Communist: How the Pledge of Allegiance Got Religion in Cold War America', *Journal of Church and State* 45.2 (2003), p. 310.
[287] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 30.

artist in a democracy, the other is more radical; one is defined in terms of responsibility, the other in terms of irresponsibility.

4.3 Intervention II: Responsibility or Literature's Classical Role in Democracy

The parallel consequences of the Congressional hearings, of loyalty oaths and individual slander in the McCarthy era, raise more general modern questions about the state and the law which, as Alzo David-West illustrates, classical Marxism views as the repressive apparatus of coercion and systemized violence.[288] In this context, by theatrically enacting an historically inglorious trial against the backdrop of McCarthy hearings, Miller seems to question the legitimacy of the state and its power apparatus. This brings him close to Lenin's argument in *State and Revolution* (1917), in which Lenin argues in favour of attaining an ideal of absolute democracy, promised by international Marxism as a result of the state and its institutions, including the law, withering away, in the consecutive phases of capitalism, followed by a dictatorship of the proletariat, and finally the higher stage of communism in a classless and free utopia.[289] Is Miller's play also hinting at such a utopian future, which in the end is necessarily totalitarian, or is it trying to open up history and, if so, how?

As an artist in a democracy, Miller revives and reconstructs, through art and literature, liberal democratic values and morals in the interest of survival of its principal tenets. In doing so, he does not shrink from this duty of raising questions about civil liberties in an environment of legalized and enforced morality by a government that finds itself in a frenzy of safeguarding national security at all costs. In response to this, Miller's play is an attempt to change attitudes. It does not belong, however, to the revolutionary left-wing theatre, which flourished between 1911 and 1939 and called for a revolutionary socialist change in America.[290] Instead it seeks to promote democratic individual rights such as free speech, civil liberties and the independence of the courts in times of internal conflict. This call for political change had only been culturally validated

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[288] Alzo David-West, 'Derrida, Terrorism and Communism: A Comment on "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides"', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 5.2 (2009), 229.

[289] Vladimir Lenin, 'Class Society and the State', in *The State and Revolution: The Marxist Teaching on the State and the Task of the Proletariat in the Revolution* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), pp. 10-12.

[290] Rosemarie K. Bank, review of '*Left-Wing Dramatic Theory in The American Theatre*, by Ira A. Levine, Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985, pp. 183, *Theatre Research International* 14.02 (1989), p. 217.

a decade earlier in a democratic system that granted artists the freedom to express themselves without fear. Yet the times changed and the artist's role became more controversial. Miller said as much in an interview with Phillip Gelb:

> The enemy is the wrong word to me, although I would concede it. The artist is the outcast; he always will be. He is an outcast in the sense that he is to one side of the stream of life and absorbs it and is, in some part of himself, reserved from its implications; that is to say, a man like Vidal says we're out to destroy every thing. I think that you can't see a thing when you are in the middle of it. To some extent, an artist has to step to one side of what is happening, divorce himself from his role as a citizen, and in that sense he becomes the enemy because he does not carry forth in himself and believe what is being believed around him. He is the enemy usually, I suppose, of the way things are, whatever way they are.[291]

Thus Miller implies that the artist cultivates a certain form of socio-cultural estrangement or adopts a rather antagonistic stance in all circumstances towards the doxa of society. In other words he is obliged by his vocation to affront stasis and does not accept reality as it is presented. He is encouraged by his critical genius to be either an outsider of the tradition, or a seer of the unseen, at times an inveterate optimist, and a sworn critic and anything but a eulogist of the status quo. By analogy, Miller applies a similar partial dissociation from the 1950s paranoid American citizenry and confronts it through his work of art. His literary artefact is a blunt statement against the political assassination of democratic values. This artistic crusade was the principal means to safeguard the values of liberty, democracy and truth.

Miller argues in *The Crucible* that it is a misleading to presume that a stable society can only continue to exist through the legal enforcement of morality. The objective reality that qualifies any vibrant and dynamic society is based on each individual's right to freedom, taking the universal values of good and evil as his point of departure. In this context, Miller warns against legal coercion and legal punishment as a means that is not morally justified to preserve collective morality in society. As can be seen in the case of the sublime

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[291] Arthur Miller and Phillip Gelb, 'Morality and Modern Drama', *Educational Theatre Journal* 10.3 (1958), p. 196.

virtue of Salem's martyrs, Miller asserts that a society's morality is best secured through individual norms and virtues that attend to the interests of social order and its vitality but also to the basic right to individual liberty. Miller's position on individual liberty mirrors John Stuart Mill's views in *On Liberty*:

> Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough; there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of the society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the development, and, if possible prevent the formation, of any individuality not in harmony with its ways, and compels all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own.[292]

Two forces appear as a threat to the precious right to individual liberty: state repression but also repression by socio-cultural norms. These norms may lack the ability to enforce things by means of legal punishment but their power is nevertheless considerable. Miller holds the same view, as can be seen from his depiction of the voices of conscience in the Salem trials and from the example of his own testimony before HUAC.

The most revealing aspect of Miller's cautious stance on individual liberty is reflected in the famous Hart-Devlin debate on the subject of legal enforcement of morality.[293] In this debate, Miller took sides with Hart about refraining from legal coercion for attaining social conformity and stability because the human moral instinct and liberty instinct are entrenched side by side and society cannot attain one at the expense of the other through legal pressings. In fact, such pressings constitute moral negatives by maintaining an overt monopoly.[294] Basically, a democratic society has to honestly accommodate individual freedom and dissolve the seamless web that the Salem theocracy misunderstood, or was not willing to accept.[295] In such a theocracy, any deviation from mainstream thought and practices, no matter how well-intentioned, was likely to be seen as an attack on the fabric of society. In this respect, any individual would in all likelihood face suffering and disregard for

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[292] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty,* ed. by David Spitz (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 6.

[293] David R. Samuelson, 'Hart Devlin and Arthur Miller on the Legal Enforcement of Morality', *Denver University Law Review* 76 (1998-99), p. 189.

[294] Samuelson, p. 197.

[295] Samuelson, pp. 198-99.

his freedom, if his individualistic transgressions from the accepted norms and values were equated with treason, vice and sedition and would be retributed with the violence of law. Paradoxically, this would receive the stamp of approval from a scared public. In this perspective, Miller's stance as an artist testifies of respect for democracy and its future in more or less classical, humanist terms. In other words: in terms of responsibility.

The Crucible, as a dramatization of history in the context of contemporary circumstances in 1950s is, in one sense, a reflection of its age, as I already indicated. Yet, through his literary intervention, Miller radicalises this reflection into an call for change by initiating a debate in a society that approved the production of fear at recurrent historical moments without much protest. Miller engages the moral legislators of his times (in this case the American government and judiciary) in a dialogue through his literary art which contains a truth that was not always universally beautiful and digestible. His position on the effect of literature on society is not dissimilar to the stance of liberal democratic theorists such as Martha Nussbaum or Richard Rorty who postulate?, as Simon Stow observes, that reading literary writings can promote liberal democratic values and edify people by making them morally good.[296]

The ability of literature to arouse feelings of empathy in the reader's heart and mind makes it republican in its appeal, which to Rorty is essentially instrumental in cultivating the two democratic values of contingency and solidarity in society.[297] These two values induce sympathy amongst readers for the personae of the characters in the text and their real social counterparts in life. Secondly, through a tentative approach – hovering in the orbits of probability and staying remote from orthodoxy and fanaticism – the reader adopts a democratic way of assessing things, which shows him the fluid, relative and contingent nature of facts. In the same vein, Arthur Miller targets his audiences while keeping faith in literature's capacity to generate in its readers 'a rigorous scrutiny of everything they believe in and live by'.[298] He thus suggests that reading literature initiates a dialectical, democratic and responsible process between the text and the readers.

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[296] Simon Stow, 'Reading Our Way to Democracy? Literature and Public Ethics', *Philosophy and Literature* 30.2 (October 2006), p. 410.

[297] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[298] Stanley E. Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 1.

Literature's function, however, is not limited to turning us all into decent, responsible citizens, certainly not when it helps us to think about alternative futures. This I will address in my conclusion. If *The Crucible* is a play waiting for the occasion, such an occasion could be slightly bigger, or much bigger, than any political situation within a region or nation state.

4.4 Intervention III: Irresponsibility, or Literature as Democracy

When Jacques Derrida reflected on the relation between literature and democracy, it almost seemed to be a direct echo of *The Crucible*:

> Literature is a modern invention inscribed in conventions and institutions which, to hold on to just this trait, secure in principle its right to say everything. Literature thus ties its destiny to certain non-censure, to the space of democratic freedom (freedom of the press, freedom of speech, etc.). No democracy without literature; no literature without democracy. One can always want neither one nor the other, and there is no shortage of doing without them under all regimes; it is quite possible to consider neither of them to be unconditional goods and indispensable rights. But in no case can one dissociate one from the other. No analysis would be equal to it. And each time that a literary work is censured, democracy is in danger, as everyone agrees.[299]

Obviously there are many ways *in* which, and political regimes *under* which, literature can flourish. But the modern version of literature is intrinsically related to democracy. Through *The Crucible,* Miller addresses the dangers of censorship. He also shows that a paranoid democracy will destroy its very fundaments when it is ruled by a fear of being targeted by enemies, real or imagined. This thought is akin to Derrida's idea of auto-immunity of democracies in times of risk and threat when they, in a self-contradictory process of survival, put a partial end to themselves, just like when in a biological context the human body works against a part of itself to survive.[300] Democracies will still appear in this context as sovereign forces, embodying a

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[299] Jacques Derrida, 'Passions: An Oblique Offering', in *Derrida: A Critical Reader,* ed. by David Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 23.
[300] Samir Haddad, 'Derrida and Democracy at Risk', *Contretemps: An Online Journal of Philosophy* 4 (September 2004), pp. 29-30.

supreme power, whereas they are supposed to empower the people, individually and collectively.

As for the role of literature in this regard, Derrida's thinking about democratic responsibility is key. One form of responsibility can be defined as the basis of deconstruction, as becomes clear when he argues:

> For a deconstruction [of the state] to be as effective as possible, it should not in my view, oppose the state head on and in a unilateral fashion. In many contexts, the state might be the best protection against certain forces and dangers. And it can secure the citizenship of which we have been seeking. The responsibilities to be taken with regard to the state thus differ according to the context, and there is no relativism in this. But, ultimately, these necessary transactions must not obstruct a deconstruction of the state form, which should, one day, no longer be the last word of the political. This movement of 'deconstruction' did not wait for us to begin speaking about 'deconstruction'; it has been underway for a long time, and it will continue for a long time. It will not take the form of suppression of the sovereign state at one particular moment in time but will pass through a long series of still unforeseeable convulsions and transformations, through as yet unheard-of forms of shared and limited sovereignty. [...] The deconstruction of sovereignty has thus already begun, and it will have no end, for we neither can nor should renounce purely and simply the values of autonomy and freedom, or those of power or force, which are inseparable from the very idea of law.[301]

What Derrida proposes here, is a slow and by implication *responsible* transformation through deconstruction, a process that would transform the current form of the representative democracy and the sovereign state into 'a new international law, a new international force'; a democracy that would function in the shape of new institutions, and that would embody a new concrete and equitable form of shared sovereignty. What Derrida envisions is a more

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[301] Jacques Derrida, 'Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides - A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida', in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 131.

democratic society of the future, which he names 'democracy to come', one that will be legal in nature.[302]

A second form of responsibility comes into play when Derrida considers that the democracy to come will no longer be limited to isolated states or nation states. The future democracy should be considered in radically different terms than what is now commonly perceived as a global village, or an international democratic order. He explains this in an interview with Richard Beardsworth:

> Second, in the determination or behavior of each citizen or singularity, there should be present, in some form or other, the call to a world of democracy to come, each singularity should determine itself with the sense of the stakes of a democracy which can no longer be contained within frontiers, which can no longer be localized, which can no longer depend on the decisions of a specific group of citizens, a nation or even of a continent. This determination means that one must both think, and think democracy, globally. This may be something completely new, something that has never been done, for we're here talking of something much more complex, much more modest and yet much more ambitious than any notion of the universal, cosmopolitan or human. I realize that there is so much rhetoric today - obvious, conventional, reassuring, determined in the sense of without risk which resembles what I'm saying. When, for example, one speaks of the United Nations, when one speaks in the name of a politics that transcends national borders, one can always do so in the name of democracy.[303]

Derrida proposes a delocalized and global version of democracy, one that is not confined to the national borders of certain states and groups of people. A global battle for democracy is desirable. As a 'democracy to come', it will by necessity be a broad and all-encompassing model of democracy. It is distinctly different from the conventional forms of democracy that we currently have, e.g. the United Nations. The democracy to come will not depend on national and ideological borders of different cultures or the institutions associated with them.

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[302] Derrida, 'Autoimmunity', p. 119.
[303] Jacques Derrida and Richard Beardsworth, 'Nietzsche and the Machine', interview with Jacques Derrida by Richard Beardsworth', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 7 (Spring 1994), p. 56.

It will not be based on one particular constituency. And whilst we have to work towards it humbly, and by implication responsibly, the endeavour is not without risk. Today the rhetoric of an international order always reassuringly falls back on existing democracies. The democracy to come cannot be realized without risk, however.

Derrida further highlights the radical difference between contemporary forms of democracy and the democracy to come:

> One has to make the difference clear, then, between democracy in this rhetorical sense and what I'm calling 'democracy to come.' The difference shows, for example, that all decisions made in the name of Rights of Man are at the same time alibis for the continued inequalities between singularities, and that we need to invent other concepts than state, super state, citizen, and so forth for this new international. The democracy to come obliges one to challenge instituted law in the name of an indefinitely unsatisfied justice, thereby revealing the injustice of calculating justice whether this be in the name of a particular form of democracy or of the concept of humanity. This democracy to come is marked in the movement that has always carried a present beyond itself, makes it inadequate to itself, 'out of joint' (Hamlet); as I argue in *Specters of Marx*, it obliges us to work with the spectrality in any moment of apparent presence. This spectrality is very weak; it is the weakness of the powerless, who, in being powerless, resist the greatest strength.[304]

The pith of Derrida's thoughts on a 'democracy to come' resides in the contrast with the concept of sovereignty, which is enshrined not only in the prevalent concept of the nation state but in law and ethics as well. This 'democracy to come' is beyond borders, universal and non-reductive, unlike the prevalent model of the nation state with its fixed boundaries and finite domain of sovereign powers, and its ultimate aim is the realisation of autonomy and true freedom of the individual. As potential, moreover, it is not entirely something of the future. It is already present, in the shape of a spectrality.

As concerns the issue of opening up a new future it is, I think, of relevance to read *The Crucible* in the light of Derrida's democracy to come. The actors involved in the play or addressed by the play are no longer haunted by

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[304] Derrida, 'Nietzsche and the Machine', pp. 60-61.

ghosts from the past, but they may sense the play's potential for the future. In this respect, Arthur Miller's The *Crucible*, as a piece of literature, is a source and a medium to represent a historical experience through theatricality. The medium equips him with the means to confess everything, to say everything and reveal all secrets and truths about the disrupting forces in paranoid societies. As a piece of literature, in Derrida's definition, it stands opposed to those works which lack such candour and robust interplay of past and present, and through allegory it not only relates past with present metaphorically and metonymically but also presents us with the ghost of an alternative future. It is of importance to emphasize that this future itself has not been clearly outlined. In fact, it works the other way around. Literature always starts with the present but cannot be reduced to that very present, as Derrida states:

> Experience of being, nothing less, nothing more, on the stage of metaphysics, literature perhaps stands on the edge of everything, almost beyond everything, including itself. It is the most interesting thing in the world, maybe more interesting than the world, and this is why, if it has no definition, what is heralded and refused under the name of literature cannot be identified with any other discourse. It will never be scientific, philosophical, conversational.[305]

So, what Derrida hints at is not just that literature is the domain that cannot be grasped, in the end, by political forces. It allows us to experience being on the edge of things, not within the domain of ideology but on its borders. This is not to romanticize literature in terms of its superior essence in comparison with other modes of discourse. Instead, as Jonathan Culler observes, 'Derrida gives great importance to literary discourse due to its experience during its engagement with all the aspects the world, on the edge of the world and the engagement that it calls forth in the readers'.[306] Literature, in its capacity of a historical institution, with its conventions and rules, produces the space that Derrida calls instituted *fiction* and a *fictive* institution.[307] It operates in a way to defy all moral or legal sanctions, institutions, rules and prohibitions, whilst subscribing to its own law. It also exceeds the actual while simultaneously

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[305] Jacques Derrida, 'This Strange Institution Called Literature', in *Acts of Literature,* ed. by Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 47.
[306] Jonathan Culler, 'The Most Interesting Thing in the World', *Diacritics* 38.1-2 (Spring Summer 2008), p. 10.
[307] Derrida, 'Nietzsche and the Machine', p. 36.

including its possibilities by giving due attention to various conditions of possibility.[308] This allows a literary artist to say everything, in the sense of Derrida's *tout dire*, and this is where it predominantly relates to alternative futures.

In this respect, Arthur Miller's belief in literary art and its richness and efficacy seems similar to Derrida's. Let me recall what he said about *The Crucible*, in particular its effect on the audience: 'This is what you see every day, or think or feel; I will show you what you really know but have not had the time, or the disinterestedness, or the insight, or the information to understand consciously'. Again, the aim, here, is not to redirect people to the present and the present only. Miller works on an historical event in order to make something happen historically. He attempts to change people's sensibilities in the present, by means of the 'presented', through fiction, which carries both ghosts from the past and the future. The play is written and aimed at a democratic goal in the Western legal and political sense, which is of saying everything and communicating the full truth. This is the epic feature of the democracy to come, in fact.

In light of the democracy to come, literature's role cannot be one of responsibility only. The excerpt from Derrida at the beginning of this section continues as follows:

> The possibility of literature, the legitimation that a society gives it, the allaying of suspicion or terror with regard to it, all that goes together – politically - with the unlimited right to ask any question, to suspect all dogmatism, to analyze every presupposition, even those of the ethics or the politics of responsibility.[309]

Thus there is a direct link between the freedom to say anything via the institution of literature and the political ideal of democracy, an ideal that may be negatively influenced by the imposition of censorship by political, legal or religious elites. Not only does Derrida see democracy and literature as necessarily existing together in a free world, but literature as an institution also holds a certain sense of seditious irresponsibility within itself, in its prerogative to say everything, question any dogmatism and analyse any presupposition.

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[308] Culler, 'The Most Interesting Thing', p. 9.
[309] Jacques Derrida, 'Passions: An Oblique Offering', in *Derrida: A Critical Reader,* ed. by David Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 23.

This irresponsibility, in terms of the discretionary powers the literary artist derives from his vocation, is tantamount to his refusal to be accountable and establish responsibility before socio-political or ideological bodies. Derrida would welcome this as the highest form of responsibility: 'this duty of irresponsibility, of refusing to reply for one's thought or writing to constituted powers, is perhaps the highest form of responsibility'.[310] The duty of irresponsibility is the highest responsibility function within the frame of the ideal of democracy, which is not the current democracy or an achievable democracy, but a democracy *à venir*, to come. In this context I want to read *The Crucible* and Miller's expostulations against the practices of the United States government and the HUAC hearings of artists and academics as a distinct response in one sense. In another sense, *The Crucible,* as a messianic call for strengthening democratic ideals per se, for a democracy to come, is also a non-response. Derrida continues:

> This non-response is more original and more secret than the modalities of power and duty because it is fundamentally heterogeneous to them. We find there a hyperbolic condition of democracy which seems to contradict a certain determined and historically limited concept of such a democracy, a concept which links it to the concept of a subject that is calculable, accountable, imputable and responsible, one that has-to-respond, has-to-tell [*devant-répondre, devant-dire*] the truth ('the whole truth, nothing but the truth') before the law, having to reveal the secret, with the exception of certain situations that are determinable and regulated by law (confession, the professional secrets of the doctor, the psychoanalyst, or the lawyer, secrets of national defence or state secrets in general, manufacturing secrets, etc.). This contradiction also indicated the task (task of thought, also theoretico-practical task) for any democracy to come.[311]

The argument is complex and the tropical figure governing this complexity is hyperbole. There is something in literature that will exceed any limit imposed on it, and it is precisely this aspect that makes it suspect in current democracies and that makes it the vehicle for a democracy to come. It could be argued that

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[310] Derrida, 'Nietzsche and the Machine', p. 38.
[311] Derrida, 'Passions: An Oblique Offering', p. 23.

Miller's *The Crucible* is, indeed, hyperbolic. Some saw the hyperbole in the comparison between witch-hunts and the fight against communism. In Derrida's approach, however, the element of hyperbole is more abstract. Here the argument would have to be that *The Crucible* is hyperbolic whenever an occasion gives rise to its being performed. Earlier I stated that the re-totalizing effect of metaphor demands a motivated response. In one sense Miller's play provides such a response. At the same time, given the circumstances, the play is also distinctly irresponsible. That is to say: it is not a response to McCarthyism nor to the pertaining system of democracy. It has to be, and will have to be, irresponsible for the sake of an alternative future.

Chapter 5
The Crucible and the Production of Fear in the Contemporary World: The Future and Persistency in Culture

As indicated in the introduction, for the purposes of our study, I consider a work of art to be both an analytical and a productive tool that organizes, afflicts or feeds a certain culture. In chapters 1 and 2, I used Miller's play to analyse the relations between a present and an historical past. There I used the term, coined by Mieke Bal, of preposterousness. Although the play was clearly written centuries after ('post') the events in Salem, it was through the play that we could connect to those events. In this sense the play was 'before' (pre-) the past itself. The dynamic of preposterousness served, I argued there, to work through the past from the viewpoint of the present. The play, then, does not capture or describe an historical reality but, in its relation to the past, it serves as an analysis in the sense of a psychoanalysis, as a 'working through.' The things of the past are not 'past' as a consequence. They are alive in an enacted or dramatized past, and need to be relived for the purpose of a cure. In chapters 3 and 4, we saw that such a cure does not really materialise on the level of the play's contemporaneous present, at least not on a collective level.

With respect to its own contemporaneous present, the play serves not only as an analysis of the society in which it was written and performed, it also serves as an intervention. In this context, the Salem witch hunt functions as an allegory for McCarthy's communist hunt. However, due to the nature of allegory, this does not 'resolve' anything. In fact, as we saw, the play is both an analysis of the society and an intervention in it, but it also contributed to the production of fear that troubled it. In its allegorical re-enactment of the past, the play remains partly caught in its tropical metaphorical closure. As I argued, it is as much part of the problem as it is its solution. Yet the trope of metonymy also helps the play to open up history in a battle for hegemony.

In the following chapter and conclusion, I will take a look at how this play from the past can be used as an analytical tool for our present, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. From the vantage point of its moment of genesis, I will therefore consider its future application, or rather: its future performative powers. These powers may manifest themselves when crossing historical and cultural borders, as is the nature of 'world literature' according to

Damrosch.[312] In his view, world literature is characterized by its potential to become more meaningful through its historical and cultural translation. In the context of globalization and the transnational reach of national literature, Damrosch observes: 'if world literature is defined as literature of genuinely global scope, whether in authorial intention or in its circulation among readers, then we are only just now seeing the birth of this literary form whose true history lies in the future rather than in the past'.[313] From a thematic point of view, *The Crucible* embodies indeed a general phenomenon of the production of fear and it remains cross-culturally of relevance (if we keep in mind that 'general' is understood, here, in the sense that the play is not bound to particular situations but transcends them). In some aspects the play may indeed be an example of world literature, and as such it is also a play 'waiting for the occasion'. Here, however, I will examine it more in the context of its participation in a distinct culture that certainly did not and does not remain the same over time but that appears to be troubled by recurring patterns. The pattern that I am concerned with, as may be clear by now, is the socio-cultural production of fear in the US, a production that happens for political purposes, fuelled by religiously defined dichotomies of good and evil.

In order to deal with this, I will first consider what has been a powerful theory to explain cultural persistency, and determine how this theory is problematic in relation to works of art. I will then move to the issue of why in the last decades the neo-liberal, or better neo-conservatives, in the US found the German lawyer Carl Schmitt to be a major source of inspiration and which persistent cultural dynamic underpinned this revival. Subsequently, I will concentrate on a model that can explain a culture's persistency in terms of being haunted by ghosts from the past. Here I will follow and divert from a path was already described by Erin Graff Zivin in *Figurative Inquisitions: Conversion, Torture and Truth in the Luso-Hispanic Atlantic*, especially the chapter 'Allegory and Hauntology'.

5.1 Long-Term Cultural Patterns in the US Socio-Cultural Environment
In its study of persistency in culture, Geert Hofstede's *Culture's Consequences* has had profound influence on the development of cross-cultural studies within psychology, in organisation studies and in the social sciences more generally.

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[312] David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2003), p. 110.
[313] David Damrosch, 'Toward a History of World Literature', *New Literary History* 39.3 (2008), p. 483.

Hofstede, who was working with the multinational corporation IBM in the sixties as an organisation sociologist and psychologist, researched the cultural differences that were apparent in its 71 subsidiary locations globally where it had offices and factories.[314] The outcome of this research, after a survey of forty different nations, was that Hofstede devised five dimensions that can characterise a culture. They include: the so-called power distance index, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Hofstede's takes the view, as Peter B. Smith remarks, that cultures are not superficial or easily changeable entities but that they are deeply embedded in people's psyches, bodies, practices and organisations and, apart from certain exceptions, they are strongly resistant to change. According to him, we are programmed by our culture in early life and the various elements within a national culture typically serve to sustain and enhance its coherence.[315]

Hofstede's observations of cultural dimensions based upon national data were criticized by scholars like Rachel Baskerville and Brendan McSweeney. Baskerville reviews the problems in Hofstede's model on the following points: '(i) the assumption of equating nation with culture (ii) the difficulties of, and limitations on a quantification of culture represented by cultural dimensions and matrices; and (iii) the status of the observer outside the culture'.[316] Baskerville points at Hofstede's equating national data with the study of such an abstract phenomenon as culture. Secondly it is problematic for her to imagine a quantification of national cultures through arithmetic data and matrices as Hofstede does. For her, the statistical measure of culture amounts to a limiting analysis of an epic phenomenon called culture. Lastly, Baskerville also finds Hofstede's approach lacking in the positioning of the observer, as someone who appears to stand outside a culture. I agree with much of this criticism, and yet find Hofstede's model relevant in order to explain the persistency in culture. I will use his model heuristically then, not so much to confirm it as to narrow it down to the issue where and how cultural persistency, or cultural incoherence, may be involved.

Since his retirement Hofstede's work has been continued by his son, Gert Jan Hofstede, and this is how, together, they define culture on their website:

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[314] Geert Hofstede and Robert R. McCrae, 'Personality and Culture Revisited: Linking Traits and Dimensions of Culture', *Cross-Cultural Research* 38.1 (2004), p. 61.

[315] Peter B. Smith, 'Culture's Consequences: Something Old and Something New', *Human Relations*: 55.1 (2002), p. 122.

[316] Rachel F. Baskerville, 'Hofstede Never Studied Culture', *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 28.1 (2003), p. 1.

Our shared human nature is intensely social: we are group animals. We use language and empathy, and practice collaboration and intergroup competition. But the unwritten rules of how we do these things differ from one human group to another. 'Culture' is how we call these unwritten rules about how to be a good member of the group. Culture provides moral standards about how to be an upstanding group member; it defines the group as a 'moral circle'. It inspires symbols, heroes, rituals, laws, religions, taboos, and all kinds of practices – but its core is hidden in unconscious values that change at a far slower rate than the practices. We tend to classify groups other than our own as inferior or (rarely) superior. This applies to groups based on national, religious, or ethnic boundaries, but also on occupation or academic discipline, on club membership, adored idol, or dress style. In our globalized world most of us can belong to many groups at the same time.[317]

For my analysis of *The Crucible* the issues that interest me the most in the above definition are, first of all, the moral aspect of culture, defined in terms of required behaviour, and the difference between the practices that may change over time and a 'hidden core' with 'unconscious values' that changes at a far slower rate but which explains the relative persistency and stability in cultures.

In Hofstede's analysis, cultural programming takes place with this hidden core as its engine, and the previously mentioned five dimensions define this programming. One of these dimensions is power distance, which is the 'extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally'.[318] Fundamental units such as family, school, places of worship, etc. represent the institutions in society whereas the community and organisations correspond to people's work places. This definition represents inequality (more versus less), as the power distance is defined from below, not from above. It suggests that its followers as much as its leaders endorse a society's level of inequality. This is to say, in an almost Foucauldian sense, that leadership is complemented by a palpable presence of subordination by the ruled since authority requires subservience and obedience to be matched with it to actualise a scene of power. In Hofstede's

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[317] Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, <http://www.geerthofstede.nl//>. [accessed 4 March 2014].
[318] Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind,* revised 2nd edn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), p. 46.

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findings, the correlations of the PDI (Power Distance Index) with geographic, economic and demographic country indicators, through comparisons of educational systems and the consideration of historical factors, lead to the suggestion of some sort of causal chain regarding the origins of national differences. An analysis of political systems, religious life, and philosophical and ideological thinking in various countries shows differences in the PDI which are interpreted as consequences of power distance norm differences that feed back into the norm and support it.[319]

Compared to a global average of 55, US scores 40 on the Power Distance Index, which indicates a greater equality between the social levels, including governments, socio-cultural organizations, and even within the families.[320] This orientation, as Hofstede observes, reinforces a cooperative interaction, across power levels, and creates a more stable cultural environment. This does not immediately accord well, however, with *The Crucible*, in which a general hierarchical power system orchestrates the stream of events between the girls, the common people, the judiciary and the church officials. In the play, for instance, Ezekiel Cheever's words to Giles Corey and the Proctors reveal an important power distance:

> You know yourself I must do as I'm told. You surely know that, Giles. And I'd as lief [sic] you'd not be sending me to Hell. I like not the sound of it, I tell you; I like not the sound of it. (*He fears* Proctor*, but starts to reach inside his coat.*) Now believe me, Proctor, how heavy be the law, all its tonnage I do carry on my back tonight. (*He takes out a warrant.*) I have a warrant for your wife.[321]

The quote may illustrate how American egalitarianism not always accords well with the force of a certain form of law. There is a principal difference between 'doing what you are told' by some sort of imperial force, say a king or a religious authority, or considering oneself as the subject of law. In this case, Cheever feels entrusted with responsibility and power to discharge his role as a servant and custodian of the legal system, whose legitimacy is of course questioned by the people who are subjected to its power, although this does not

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[319] Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (London: SAGE Publications, 1980), pp. 92-93.
[320] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences,* p. 104.
[321] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 68.

change things for the better. When subordination to power is realised through the force and authority of the law of the land, the phenomenon of McCarthyism does not correspond well with Hofstede's PDI index for the US.

Hofstede's second cultural dimension is individualism, which is contrasted with collectivism. It rests on individuals being integrated into groups and is found 'in societies where the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family'.[322] Hofstede states that the relationship between the individual and the collective in human society is not only a matter of ways of living together, but it is intimately linked to societal norms (in the sense of value systems of major groups of the population). It therefore affects both people's mental programming and the structure and functioning of many other institutions besides the family: educational, religious, political and utilitarian. The central element in our mental programming involved in this case is our concept of self. That is why any traditionalist would hardly think of himself as individualistic. Hofstede compares the Western style of thinking with, for instance, the Chinese style whilst pointing out that the Western concept of individual personality is distinct from the concept of society. In contrast, the Chinese style entails the use the concept of 'human constant' which includes the person himself in addition to his intimate societal and cultural environment which makes his existence meaningful. That is why there is tendency in Chinese culture to modify social and individual views more easily in terms of the environment.[323] Or, to give another example, Hofstede also compares paradigms of religious and ideological conversion, generally, in Western and Chinese societies. In the West conversion is a highly individualistic act. According to Hofstede, in modern Chinese society, the ideological conversion is collectively defined on account of an overarching communitarian culture.

Because they are tied to value systems shared by the majority, issues of collectivism versus individualism carry strong moral overtones. Americans tend to see their own culture as individualistic and this individualism is interpreted as a major contributor to the greatness and moral superiority of the United States. Accordingly, in Hofstede's view, individual members of its population are self-reliant and look after themselves and their close family members. That is why, generally speaking, there is a so-called 'I'-consciousness in American culture, with a tendency towards self-orientation, autonomy, variety, pleasure and

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[322] Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations,* p. 76.
[323] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences,* p. 215.

individual financial security. Yet in terms of values, the standards are desired and expected to apply to all, i.e. across the board. Some trace the philosophic source of this American individualism to Lockean liberalism. In Luis Hartz's opinion, for instance, John Locke's ideas on individualism and the social contract theory anticipated the American liberal experiment and these liberal ideas were put into practice in American political thought, rhetoric and culture with reference to reconciling majority rule versus minority rights.[324] Later this vision encountered competition from those who placed republicanism and American civic virtue centre stage such as, for instance, Mark E. Kann, a political scientist (and an expert in gender-based analysis of American society).[325] Whichever analysis one chooses, individualism, if we follow Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede's analysis, became part of America's 'hidden core.'

Yet, with regard to this dimension as well, *The Crucible* seems to depict a world that is markedly different in first instance. Hale, the lone sane voice of the people corroborating with the legal and theological order of Salem, also succumbs to the rule of majority while giving credence to all the accusations in search of evidence:

> *Pleading:* Nurse, though our hearts break, we cannot flinch; these are new times, sir. There is a misty plot afoot so subtle we should be criminal to cling to old respects and ancient friendships. I have seen too many frightful proofs in court – the Devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points![326]

Although Hale attempts to break away from the traditional culture of kinship and communal norms since he vowed to serve the law, he fails to use his individual acumen to correctly interpret the motives of the accusing girls and the people he serves. He is trying to be the most modern voice of the community by calling his times 'new times' and offering to divorce himself from the unwritten local norms of favouritism based on kinship and patronage. His stance can hardly be called 'individualistic,' however, since his personal observations and

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[324] Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World,, 1955), pp. 128-29.
[325] Mark E. Kann, 'Individualism, Civic Virtue, and Gender in America', *Studies in American Political Development* 4 (1990), p. 52.
[326] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 67.

assessment of the victims' statements in court are sufficient proof in his eyes to give full credence to any evidence that matches the generally required picture.

In contrast, there certainly are highly individualistic voices in the community like those of Proctor, Rebecca Nurse and Giles Corey. Here, *The Crucible* does fit the pattern, and Miller himself observes that the force of the individual can withstand almost anything.[327] That being said, in modern times as well, individualistic voices of dissent in US political culture have either been deemed unpatriotic, given scant attention, or have been met with substantial pressure and threats. In fact, Hannah Arendt, displeased with state suppression of individual responsibilities in the 1960s in the States, for instance in the case of Daniel Ellsberg, considered this to be a fundamental threat to what the United States stood for.[328] Accordingly, in *The Crucible*, any individual enquiry about phantoms of fear is made virtually impossible.

Hofstede's third dimension in national cultures is masculinity as opposed to femininity. He sees the duality of the sexes as a fundamental fact that different societies deal with in different ways. The gender-based role distribution prevailing in a particular society is transferred by socialisation through family, school and peer groups, and through the media. Generally speaking, in most contemporaneous societies, according to Hofstede, the predominant socialisation pattern is for men to be more assertive and for women to be more nurturing. In Hofstede's study, anthropology, psychology and political science confirm the male assertiveness/female nurture pattern. In this context, he links his research to the McClelland's review of U.S psychological literature for evidence of psychological differences between the sexes. In the US data, boys and men universally tend to be more assertive, whereas girls and women are more sensitive to social interdependence. Similarly, in his review of Spenner and Featherman's study of US sociological literature, Hofstede reveals a strong relationship between sex and achievement ambitions and shows lower ambitions for women.[329] In Hofstede's analysis, the US scores 62, compared to a world average of 50. This indicates that the country experiences a higher degree of gender role differentiation. Male domination in society and its power

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[327] Jeffrey D. Mason, *Stone Tower: The Political Theater of Arthur Miller* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), p. 6.
[328] Daniel Ellsberg is a former American military analyst who, whilst employed by the RAND corporation in 1971, publicized top-secret Pentagon papers by giving them to *The New York Times* and other papers to disclose American policy decisions in Vietnam. For a detailed account, see Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic: Lying in Politics; Civil Disobedience; on Violence; Thoughts on Politics and Revolution* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1972), pp. 3-47.
[329] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences,* p. 263.

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structure require a tendency in female population to grow more assertive and competitive in emulating the male role model.

Regarding this dimension, Wendy Schissel has studied Miller's depiction of gender in her feminist reading of the play, and she concludes that the text testifies of straightforward *gynecophobia* – a fear and distrust of women that is both implicit and explicit in Puritan America. Tituba, the Caribbean woman enslaved by Reverend Parris, is the first scapegoat and is simultaneously the victim of complicated gynecophobia and xenophobia. Proctor's denigrating of Mary Warren on a number of occasions testifies to an androcentric morality in Puritan society and the household.[330] Here we can see an almost one-to-one relationship between the play and Hofstede's cultural dimension of gender.

The fourth dimension in national cultures is 'uncertainty avoidance' and Hofstede observes that uncertainty about the future is a basic fact of human life. His research findings reveal that tolerance for uncertainty varies considerably among people in subsidiaries in different countries. The three indicators that are used in this respect are rule orientation, employment stability and stress. The three together produce a country's Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI).[331] In Hofstede's opinion, knowing that there is life after death is the believer's ultimate certainty which allows him to face uncertainties in this life. The line separating 'defending against uncertainties' from 'accepting them' is fluid; many of our defences aimed at creating certainty are not really doing that in an objective sense, but they allow us to sleep peacefully. That is why different societies adapt to uncertainty in different ways. The layers of difference do not simply alternate between traditional and modern societies but they exist in modern societies too. Hofstede observes that the ways of coping with uncertainty are part of a society's cultural heritage and are transferred and reinforced through key institutions such family, school and the state. They are reflected in the values that are collectively held by members of a given society. Their roots are non-rational, and they may lead to collective behaviour which may seem aberrant and incomprehensible to members of other societies. In Hofstede's study, US scores 46, compared to the world average of 64.

Puritan society in 1692 was beset with uncertainty and did not merely tend towards control but demanded it. The best remedy to fight uncertainty, embodied in the threats of evil spirits, consisted in relying on the institutions of

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[330] Wendy Schissel, 'Re (dis)covering the Witches in Arthur Miller's The Crucible: A Feminist Reading', *Modern Drama* 37.3 (1994), pp. 461-69.

[331] Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences,* p. 153.

the judiciary and the executive. The cultural dynamic of this New England society was different from that of its cultural 'ancestor' in England. To avoid the uncertainties of nature or of conflicts of faith and religion, a communitarian lifestyle was encouraged, dissent was discouraged and full trust was required in the sovereignty of law. Whereas in the history of continental Europe the concept of sovereignty was derived from a divine source and was institutionally supported as such by the Roman Catholic church, the absence of feudal nobility and king, or an established church, in America required the sovereignty of the law. Therefore maintaining the rule of law was a priority for any authority or statesman.[332]

The Salem trials are maybe one of the most clear-cut instances of judicial activism in response to the agency of fear and uncertainty that would take American society hostage on a regular basis in the future, as described in the previous chapter on McCarthyism. Litigation can be seen as a persistent pattern in American culture, and is used to overcome uncertainties in the present for the future. For now, however, it forces us to think about the explanatory power of Hofstede's model. Does it also deal with America's political culture, or should we consider the dynamic between American culture at large and its political culture in terms of a form of schizophrenia? According to Hofstede, for instance, America should be strong in dealing with uncertainty.

Let me try to answer this question on the basis of the fifth and the final dimension: a culture's long-term orientation versus short-term orientation. This was the outcome of a study carried out among students in twenty-three countries around the world with the help of Chinese scholars who designed a questionnaire to this end. The core value proved to be 'virtue' in the context of so-called long-term versus short-term orientation.[333] These orientations are characterised by:

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[332] According to *The Cambridge History of Law in America*, 'in America law is king'. See Michael Grossberg and Christopher Tomlins (eds), Editors' Preface, *The Cambridge History of Law in America: Volume 3, The Twentieth Century and After (1920-)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. xi.

[333] In a later work entitled *Exploring Culture. Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Exercises* (Yarmouth, MA: Intercultural Press, 2002), Gert Jan Hofstede explains that this virtue aspect was based on questionnaires designed by Asians and that 'Western minds typically find the virtue aspect harder to grasp than they do the other aspects', p. 109.

High Long Term	Low Long Term (i.e. Short Term)
emphasis on persistence	emphasis on quick results
relationships ordered by status	status not a major issue in relationships
personal adaptability important	personal steadfastness and stability important
face considerations common but seen as a weakness	protection of one's face is important
leisure time not too important	leisure time important
save, be thrifty	spend
invest in real estate	invest in mutual funds
relationships and market position important	bottom line important
good or evil depends on circumstances	belief in absolutes about good and evil

(Source: http://www.andrews.edu/~tidwell/HofstedeLongTerm.html[334])

Both the positively and the negatively rated values of this dimension can be found in the teachings of the most influential Chinese philosopher Confucius, who lived in 500 BC. And these values also apply to countries without a Confucian heritage. The United States was included by Hofstede in the group of countries that had the lowest Long Term Orientation (LTO) for the US at 29, compared to the world average of 45. This low LTO ranking indicates, for instance, society's belief that spending is better than saving. Hofstede links this characteristic, surprisingly without much explanation, to a strong belief in the absolutes of good and evil. Regarding this dimension *The Crucible* evidently testifies of a normative society that has a fascination with establishing the truth and a belief in absolutes about good and evil.

As noted at the beginning of this section, Hofstede's observations about cultural dimensions were criticised by scholars, such as like Rachel Baskerville. However, Hofstede did not respond to Baskerville's critique in isolation. In a more general way and taking into consideration five standard criticisms of his work, which he listed in his 2001 edition of *Culture's Consequences*, he explains:

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[334] Geert Hofstede, 'Hofstede: Long Term/Short Term', <http://www.andrews.edu/~tidwell/HofstedeLongTerm.html>, [accessed 12 June 2014].

Baskerville's comments deal primarily with point 2: Nations are not the best units for studying cultures, to which my answer was: True, but they are usually the only kind of units available for comparison and better than nothing. Nation states cannot be equated with national cultures, but does this render conclusions about cultural differences based on nation-level data invalid? Could it be that 90% of such conclusions still hold? And isn't differences between nations precisely what accounting and business research are usually concerned with?[335]

Hofstede thus admits that nation, or rather: nation-state, and culture cannot be equated but since at global level nation-state still exists as a unit to distinguish people from different geographies and cultures, it remains a most convenient and available unit to study different cultures. Geographic boundaries, of course, do not finely demarcate cultures across the globe but Hofstede observes that, in spite of local differences, the national culture of a specific nation state under study is always different from other states. In addition, his five cultural dimensions play a definitive role in defining a nation's culture when compared with another nation. Hofstede further contends that most of his research and conclusions about cultures still hold true because the nation-state is the only valid and strong unit which allows him to observe the variable cultural dimensions *statistically.*

As my comparison with *The Crucible* has shown, there is definitely no one-to-one relation between this play, or art in general, and a nation-state's culture. The reason is that art is never simply the expression of a culture. On the other hand, on a number of points it resonated rather strongly with Hofstede's analysis and, amongst these, I consider the absolutes of good and evil to be pivotal. They will help to see why Carl Schmitt could so easily be transposed to the US context between the 1990s and 2010, at a time when the production of fear resurfaced.

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[335] Geert Hofstede, 'What is Culture? A Reply to Baskerville', *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 28 (2003), p. 812.

5.2 *The Crucible* as a Work of Art Operating Through Time: Pre-diction and the Schmittean Revival

In *The Crucible,* Danforth, the main lawyer in the Salem witch trials, asserts his authority when he invokes the binary difference between the leagues of good and evil:

> But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. This is a sharp time, now a precise time – we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up, and them that fear not light will surely praise it. I hope you will be one of those.[336]

It is an often quoted passage, and rightly so.[337] It is often quoted precisely because what is being said sounds, in the cultural worldview of the US, somehow logical, almost natural, which is the hallmark of ideology. It is evident from Danforth's remarks that his worldview comprises two finely partitioned leagues of deific benevolence and diabolical evil.[338] They may explain why the quote from *The Crucible* is similar, almost to the detail, to what George W. Bush said in his address to the Joint Session of Congress in 2001. After the 9/11 attacks, he called on every nation in every region of the world to take sides with either good or evil in the ensuing global war on terror: 'Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists'.[339]

At the end of the play, this sharp wedge between the forces of good and evil goes deep enough to even legitimize violent legal verdicts for the sake of safeguarding community unity and purity in Salem. The climax occurs when Danforth, in the name of absolute morality, triumphantly executes John Proctor, Rebecca Nurse and other innocent people. The persistence of cultural practices like the production of fear and the Manichean politics in America in those times, is a fine paradigm of Roberto Esposito's theory, namely that the desire of modern societies to be healthy and pure must lead to a thanatopolitics. This

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[336] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 86.

[337] See, for instance, Albert Wertheim, 'The McCarthy Era and the American Theatre', *Theatre Journal* 34.2 (1982), p. 219; Fender, p. 96.

[338] Amy D. Ronner, '*The Crucible*, Harvard's Secret Court, and Homophobic Witch Hunts', *Brook Law Review* 73 (2007-08), p. 217.

[339] George W. Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 25 (2001-02), p. xxii.

politics works on the principle that life defends itself and develops only through progressive enlargement and expansion of the circle of death.[340] Stuart J. Murray who, with reference to Michel Foucault's famous postmodern concept of biopolitics that denotes modern societies' social and political power over life[341], further clarifies it:

> Foucault marks the important shift from classical biopower to modern biopolitics. Classical biopower is summed up as the sovereign decision 'to take life or let live,' whereas modern biopolitics is conceived as 'the power to "make" live and "let" die.' The decision to kill and let live is replaced with a productive biopolitics that is twofold, that 'makes live' *and* 'lets die'. Death becomes a consequence — a necessary part — of living. Such death is too easily elided and dismissed. Nobody is killed, at least not directly, and nobody's hands are bloodied, at least not that we can see; the crimes are outsourced to penal colonies through 'extraordinary rendition' become ordinary, obfuscated by state bureaucracy, and covered up by one media spectacle after another. These deaths are never caused as such; officially, they are merely 'allowed,' a passive event, collateral damage. But biopolitical logic requires them. In order that 'we' may live, live well and live fully, 'they' must die, the distinction between the virtuous citizen and the other excluded as bare life, disposable life.[342]

As Murray expounds, Foucault analyses a remarkable shift in the concept of biopower to biopolitics since antiquity in Western culture. In antiquity, political power rested with the patriarch in the family to grant life to newborns. Later in European societies, after the revival of Roman law, the sovereign or the monarch was entitled to take the life of his subjects or to let them live. The sovereign, as Foucault argues, was granted the right to rule over the masses in order to ensure protection and continuity of their lives. Hence preservation and protection of life was the essence and guarantee of the social contract between

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[340] Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, Posthumanities Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 110.

[341] Michel Foucault refers to biopolitics as the modern societies' social and political control over life.

[342] Stuart J. Murray, 'Thanatopolitics: Reading in Agamben a Rejoinder to Biopolitical Life', *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5.2 (2008), pp. 204-5.

the classical sovereign and the people. Yet, while navigating through history, Foucault observes that over time sovereign power has undergone gradual transformations in terms of sophistication of mechanisms, techniques and technologies for controlling life and death of populations. He argues, for instance, that in the seventeenth century the nature of the exercise of power was disciplinary and was intended for a cost-effective use of labour through disciplinary control of the human body. It required spatial distribution of individual bodies, involving the individuals' separation, alignment, serialisation but also surveillance in a hierarchical system. In the second half of the eighteenth century, according to Foucault, this disciplinary power underwent transformation and was no longer applied to man-as-body but to living man, to man-as-living-being or man-as-species.[343] In short, modern Western culture has seen governments exercise biopolitical techniques in order to maintain classical sovereign powers to 'make live' and 'let die' without any apparent sense of accountability for their apathy regarding the dead. These techniques are used for the subjugation of bodies and for controlling populations.

However, there is a reversal of sorts in modernity when political power promises to be protective, to preserve, control, prolong and strengthen life at the expense of permitting death elsewhere, as its consequence. Through this intensive conflict, which has to ensure an optimum and secure life in modern western societies, death is outsourced and wilfully 'allowed' to occur through co-opted violence abroad, even if it means, for instance, arbitrary arrests and the extrajudicial transfer of suspects to far-off localities where torture happens as a matter of course. Death is allowed to take place in those places without any formal legal accountability because it guarantees the continuation of life in other places. In a sense, biopolitical logic requires these deaths, as the deaths of 'others' are a guarantee for 'us' living.

In contrast with Geert Hofstede's analysis that US culture would be able to cope with a high degree of uncertainty, I see uncertainty avoidance as a key cultural dimension in the context of the United States' adaptive warfare strategies in modern times, that focus on a more proactive approach. Donald Rumsfeld, for instance, stated in a 2002 speech:

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[343] Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College de France 1975-76,* trans. by David Macey*,* ed. by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (London: Allen Lane, 2003), pp. 241-42.

> We must transform not only our armed forces but also the
> Department that serves them by encouraging a culture of creativity
> and intelligent risk-taking. We must promote a more
> entrepreneurial approach to developing military capabilities, one
> that encourages people, all people, to be proactive and not reactive,
> to behave somewhat less like bureaucrats and more like venture
> capitalists.[344]

In the twenty-first century, modern Western warfare is more sophisticated and is conducted with an idea of risk and casualty aversion, not unlike the liberal way of governance that is constantly changing and adapting in the face of the complexity discourses, networks and information as a result of a change in the concept of life itself.[345] The media and information networks work to the advantage of this biopolitics to cover these deaths up with discourse and illusory spectacles as the 'other' party's collateral damage for preserving the lives of their own 'worthy of living' citizens. Thus modern biopolitics indeed marks a shift away from the sovereign's biopower of old: from 'taking life' to 'making live' and from 'letting live' to 'letting die.' On this count, in modernity there is a corresponding radical difference in the value of life of different people.

In the context of *The Crucible,* this is comparable to the distinction between the good that is supposed to be protected and made to live and the evil that has to die elsewhere, because it curbs the sovereigns' hold on power. For instance, Danforth's statement in Act 4 that he would hang a thousand people to uphold Biblical law but would not stumble in front of retaliation is an equivalent form of cognitive conviction to sustain good and eradicate evil.[346] As to the play's future applicability, this work of art almost predicts how the value of people's lives will change with time, as Foucault's concept of biopolitics made clear.

The paradigmatic nature of *The Crucible* becomes chillingly evident in relation to the rebirth of Carl Schmitt's thoughts on the political in neo-conservative circles in the US. In essence, the collaboration between the judiciary and the executive in Salem, fuelled by a Manichean dichotomy of good and evil with the aim of strengthening their political grip on power, is theoretically reflected in the writings of Carl Schmitt, a legal scholar during the

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[344] Rumsfeld quoted by Pat O'Malley, 'Resilient Subjects: Uncertainty, Warfare and Liberalism', *Economy and Society* 39.4 (2010), p. 501.
[345] O'Malley, p. 502.
[346] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 117.

Weimar Republic. In relation to Miller's play, it is relevant to examine how Schmitt's idea of the political, as Andrew Norris observes, is based on an emphasis on the conceptual autonomy of the political.[347] Schmitt categorically distinguishes the political from the economic, the technological and the legal and also criticizes liberalism for muddying and obscuring these distinctions. He states:

> The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions. The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transaction. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specifically intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgment of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party.[348]

In Carl Schmitt's seminal work *The Concept of the Political*, this friend/enemy distinction in political decision-making and affiliations is crucial. Schmitt famously stated that every realm of human endeavours is structured by an irreducible duality. Morality rests on the dualism of good and evil, aesthetics reveal the antithesis between the beautiful and the ugly, and economics has a concern with the profitable and the unprofitable.[349] In politics, he argues that the core distinction is one between friend and enemy. This distinguishes politics from any other social realm. He states that the often quoted Biblical statement 'love your enemies' is perfectly appropriate for religion, but is incompatible with the life-or-death stakes that politics always involves as, for instance, in the thousand-year conflict between Christians and Muslims, the Christians never

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[347] Andrew Norris, 'Carl Schmitt on Friends, Enemies and the Political', *Telos* 198.112 (Summer 1998), p. 68.
[348] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. by George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 26-27.
[349] Schmitt, p. 26.

surrendered Europe out of love for the Saracens or the Turks.[350] Schmitt argues that, unlike moral philosophy, ethics and religion, the realm of the political is exempt from any objective to make the world just and fair for the multitude. It involves stakes of life and death: 'the political is the most intense and extreme antagonism'.[351] As a consequence, war is the most violent form that politics takes but, even without war, politics still requires that one's opponent be considered antagonistic to everything one believes in. It is not a personal antagonism, there is no hatred towards the opponent or desire for bloodshed. The rules of the political game simply demand that one should be prepared to vanquish the other if necessary. Salem's judicial-clerical political set-up obviously fits Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction in letter and spirit, as is evident from Governor Danforth's point of view quoted earlier.

In *The Concept of the Political,* Schmitt insists on the fundamental non-rationality of politics on account of the decision-makers' vulnerability to the fluid and flamboyant nature of events. This is why he defines the critical moments of politics as the time when the sovereign decision of identifying the enemy is taken. These critical moments relate to the state of exception in which the decisions taken by the sovereign power are singular, absolute and final. Schmitt emphasises enmity between political entities as a trigger of war and maintains that enmity in politics makes war a real possibility in which the existential negation of the enemy through his physical annihilation is always a possibility.[352] On the global political scene from recent history, liberal democracies rarely engage in wars with each other. The enmity between the cultural and ideological antagonists of liberal democracy, amongst them communism and fascism and other types of totalitarian political regimes, has nevertheless led to full-fledged wars. Schmitt's definition of the political arguably explains the political nature of these conflicts in which it is mandatory for each party to clearly define its friends and enemies and fight them. Schmitt claims that being guided by a friend-enemy distinction allows 'us' as a collectivity to be clear about what 'we' are and what is most rational for 'us' to do.[353]

It is in the public nature of the political categorisation of groups as 'our friends' and 'our enemies' that Schmitt sees an escape from the misinterpretation of the idea of universalism and the sweeping trust in

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[350] Schmitt, p. 29.
[351] Schmitt, p. 29.
[352] Schmitt, p. 33.
[353] Schmitt, p. 35.

humanism. This is because all attempts to resolve political conflicts in the name of universal principles and humanity may unleash unprecedented acts of violence. The concept of humanity, for instance, is a useful ideological instrument for imperial expansionism and, when used in the form of ethical-humanitarian, it becomes a vehicle of economic imperialism.[354] Since wars in those circumstances may transcend the limits of political framework, Schmitt argues that opponents can degrade the enemy into moral and other categories and reduce it to the status of a monster that must not only be defeated but utterly destroyed.[355] Tracy B. Strong observes that the rational action in politics, steered and informed by the happening of events without a clear distinction between friend and enemy, can have two repercussions for Schmitt. The first is that one assumes that one shares universal qualities with others, which must then 'naturally' lead to an ultimate convergence of interests attainable through negotiation and compromise. In this scenario, the events are most likely not only to prove one wrong but also to destroy a group that acts on such a false belief. The examples Schmitt cites are those of the 'doomed' Russian classes and the aristocratic society of pre-revolution France. The second and more relevant repercussion in the contemporary world is that one claims to speak in the name of universal humanity. In that case, which is similar to the Salem theocracy, those one is opposed to must perforce be viewed as speaking and acting against humanity and deserve extermination through the use of force or legal sanctions.

Schmitt dwells on the relation of the concept of the enemy as a disturber or a destroyer with, as he calls it, the 'asymmetrical counter-concept' of humanity. He unravels the connotations of the term humanity as that which constitutes a single collectivity in ideal circumstances. As everyone belongs to humanity, there are no enemies of humanity as such. But it is the political difference within humanity that proves divisive and an enemy figure emerges, dehumanised to the extent of being declared an un-person and eligible to be destroyed.[356] As soon as discriminations take hold amongst humanity and one person or one social group starts hating another on account of differences between them, destroying the other can become justified, both rhetorically and through action, in the greater interest of humanity with the excuse of destroying the destroyer. This is why the concept of humanity is flexible enough to be misused in politics. Similarly, the Salem theocracy proceeded to persecute dissidents as social pariahs by

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[354] Schmitt, p. 54.
[355] Schmitt, p. 36.
[356] Schmitt, p. 54.

considering them as pathogenic to community cohesion, thereby denying them the right to live. Thus they acted like a political entity, while subjecting certain people from their own society to the enemy status, in line with Schmitt's ideas about the dangers of the concept of humanity. This is why Schmitt finds potentially great inequalities in the concept of human being, as 'the human' is a highly asymmetrical term, which can be manipulated for repulsive ends. In this respect, Schmitt no longer calls the adversary an enemy, as Tracy B. Strong observes. He calls him a disturber of peace, thereby designating him as an outlaw of humanity. He wants to remove from politics, and especially from international politics or internal politics of an ideological kind, any possibility of justifying one's actions by invoking universal moral principles. He does so because he fears that otherwise any such claim will not accept any limitation of its scope.[357]

In terms of the relation of war in the friend/enemy distinction, Schmitt implies that war has its own strategic, tactical and other rules and points of view, but that they all presuppose that the political decision has already been made as to who the enemy is. Therefore, Clausewitz's familiar saying that 'war is politics continued with other means' is irrelevant in this context.[358] On the other hand, Schmitt declares:

> A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics. It is conceivable that such a world might contain many very interesting antitheses and contrasts, competitions and intrigues of every kind, but there would not be a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed blood, and kill other human beings. For the definition of the political, it is here even irrelevant whether such a world without politics is desirable as an ideal situation. The phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever present possibility of the friend-and-enemy groupings, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics and economics.[359]

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[357] Tracy B. Strong, 'Foreword: Dimensions of the New Debate around Carl Schmitt', in Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political,* trans. by George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. xxii.
[358] Schmitt, p. 34.
[359] Schmitt, p. 35.

Schmitt then juxtaposes the non-political with the political and asserts that every religious, moral, economic, ethical or other antithesis can be used to be transformed into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively into friend and enemy categories. The political does not reside in the battle itself, as Clausewitz claims. Battle possesses its own technical, psychological and military laws. The political resides in a mode of behaviour which clearly determines the concrete situation to distinguish between a real friend and a real enemy.[360] He illustrates this with an example of a religious community. If, for instance, this community wages war against members of other religious communities or engages in other wars, it is already more than a religious community, it is a political entity. It is a political entity when it possesses the capacity of promoting the decisive step of declaring its adversary as its enemy or when, in other circumstances, it restrains its members from indulging in a war. Hence the power to declare war or to settle for peace requires a political decision of a concrete definition of one's friend and enemy.[361] In this sense the conservative factions of theocracy in Salem behaved as a *political* entity by waging a legal offensive against all those who questioned conventional norms.

In relation to Hofstede's analysis, there is a parallel between the absolutes of good and evil, which in Hofstede's eyes are typically American, and the Schmittean absolutes of friend and enemy. Seen from the viewpoint of the 1950s, Miller's play can be seen as mirroring the Schmittean dichotomy proposed in the interbellum period that preceded it. Yet from this same viewpoint, it also *pre-dicts* the Schmittean revival that was manifest in the theories and politics of the neo-conservatives in the US in the last two decades. With *pre-dict* I mean to propose a counter-concept to preposterousness. In this case, my aim is not to argue that either Miller or the play was in some sense clairvoyant. They *pre-dicted* something in the sense that a script will *pre-dict*. This genre is designed to be 'filled in,' executed, performed, worked out. In a similar way, Miller's play is a *pre-diction* in the socio-cultural domain.

Pre-diction is not the only way in which the play relates to the future, however. There are two other ways of defining the play's relation with the future in the context of persistency in culture. One way is that the play participates in the future, or that it depicts a culture's persistency from the

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[360] Schmitt, p. 37.
[361] Schmitt, p. 37.

vantage point of the future. The other way shows that it is chased by ghosts, or rather spectres, that speak both from the past and the future. This we will explore in our final two sections.

5.3 *The Crucible* as a Work of Art Operating Through Time: Depicting the Future

Although Miller's play concerns a tragedy that occurred in seventeenth-century Salem, it is also intended to be a critique of the repressive policies of Miller's contemporaries, as discussed in the previous chapter on McCarthyism in 1950s America. Amy D. Ronner explains that during this time of collective panic and hysteria, the US government hunted down innocent people, branded them disloyal, and denounced them as traitors. These people not only lost their friends and jobs, they became social outcasts. During that era, thousands of people were fired from positions in federal, state and local government as well as from private employment, including artists, university professors with leftist sympathies, fellow travellers and intellectuals.[362] Geoffrey R. Stone is right in correlating Salem with the 1950s anti-Communist prosecutions in the US when he says: 'like the Puritans in the Salem witch trials, the red hunters demanded public denunciation, purgation, humiliation and betrayal'.[363] Miller himself felt it: he was one of the blacklisted writers who wrote a play with explicit political parallels between Salem and the 1950s US.

　　Miller's historical play remains a work of art of its own times, on account of ongoing cultural patterns, such as prosecuting people on charges of 'guilt by association', and the US government's formulaic official response of 'producing fear' in Miller's present. And, with so many interpretations possible in our present, the play also embodies an historical paradigm that supports a recurring cultural pattern. This paradigm can be described as a recurrent, familiar culture of fear, which reappears at times of national political crises like the 1950s red hunts or the post-9/11 antiterrorism legislation, aimed at limiting and stifling the basic civil liberties that US democracy takes such pride in. The post-9/11 reality-shaping war rhetoric of president George W. Bush, in which he set apart certain regimes as the 'axis of evil,' also testifies to Carl Schmitt's theory of the concept of the political in which he emphasises the sovereign's power to define

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[362] Amy D. Ronner, '*The Crucible*, Harvard's Secret Court, and Homophobic Witch Hunts', *Brooklyn Law Review* 73 (2007), pp. 217-18.
[363] Geoffrey R. Stone, 'Free Speech in the Age of McCarthy: A Cautionary Tale', *California Law Review* 93.5 (2005), p. 1400.

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the enemy on the basis of the state of exception.[364] Thus this work of art echoes and resonates in the post-9/11 world, in which a politics of fear rules American democracy, and detention and torture at the behest of political oligarchs who are helped by modern surveillance technologies are outsourced.

This is what Kym Thorne and Alexander Kouzmin address as a synchronic legislative isomorphism in response to the incidents of 9/11 in the US.[365] US society had to forgo its cherished civil liberties in the aftermath of 9/11 when the state responded with legislative measures such as the USA PATRIOT Acts 2001 and 2006, the Homeland Security Act 2002, the Detainee Treatment Act 2005, and the Military Commissions Act 2006.[366] Frank Furedi sees the origin of these policy responses as a vulnerability that prevails in the technologically advanced democracies of the Western world at large. Their ultimate purpose is to reinforce resilience in these societies. However, as Furedi argues, paradoxically they also expose a powerful mood of insecurity in the face of uncertainty.[367] As Gabe Mythen and Sandra Walklate argue, the security threats' global character effectively democratises the distribution of risk everywhere. They remark that, as a consequence, the overall focus of Western capitalist societies has shifted from a positive impulse towards acquiring 'goods' such as income, health care, housing, to avoiding 'bad things' such as environmental despoliation, AIDS and terrorism. Hence the preferred option in all political conflicts has now also shifted from further possession of goods and resources to avoidance of risk.[368]

More in general, the concept of risk in modern times has ushered in an era of increased control, as Ulrich Beck observes:

> 'Risk' inherently contains the concept of control. Pre-modern dangers were attributed to nature, gods and demons. Risk is a modern concept. It presumes decision-making. As soon as we speak

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[364] James Maggio, 'The Presidential Rhetoric of Terror: The (Re)creation of Reality Immediately after 9/11', *Politics & Policy* 35.4 (2007), p. 812.

[365] Kym Thorne and Alexander Kouzmin, 'The USA PATRIOT Acts (et al.): Convergent Legislation and Oligarchic Isomorphism in the "Politics of Fear" and State Crime (s) Against Democracy (SCADs)', *American Behavioral Scientist* 53.6 (2010), p. 885.

[366] Kym Thorne and Alexander Kouzmin, p. 887.

[367] Frank Furedi, 'Fear and Security: A Vulnerability-led Policy Response', *Social Policy & Administration* 42.6 (2008), pp. 645-46.

[368] Gabe Mythen and Sandra Walklate, 'Terrorism, Risk and International Security: The Perils of Asking "What if?"', *Security Dialogue* 39.2-3 (2008), p. 224.

in terms of 'risk', we are talking about calculating the incalculable, colonizing the future.[369]

As Beck shows, the concept of risk is a modern one. In pre-modern societies such as Salem, dangers were attributed to the wilderness, the supernatural and natural calamities. However the network societies of the modern era are always on the move to calculate the 'risk', which is an incalculable concept. This requires pre-emptive decision-making and a prompt and synchronic response to the 'risk' the magnitude of which is unknown. This, in other ways, is an attempt to change the course of history by controlling and colonising the future.

This politics or fear, propaganda and antiterrorism hubris in a democracy is not similar to, but to a certain extent reminiscent of the repressive policies of Stalin in Russia or the politics of fear in the 1950s McCarthy era or, for that matter, in the US internment of Japanese citizens in the 1940s. David L. Altheide argues that a politics of fear rests on a discourse of fear and that this brand of politics mainly serves as a conceptual linkage of power, propaganda, news and popular culture, and intimidating symbols and experiences such as crime and terrorism. In order to prevent further victimisation of the social order, this newly defined and realised symbolic order invites protection policies and new interventions such as surveillance and arbitrary arrests during investigations.[370] News media and other public information sources nourish a discourse that contains elements of victimisation, of heroes and villains, unpredictability, vulnerability and melodrama, which sustain this policy of fear. Beck calls it an explosion of silence after the implosion of the Twin towers.[371] Peter Stearns observes that wretched calculators of real risk now perform American policy because they are so easily misled and manipulated by the media outlets and the politicians who profit from their anxieties.[372] In the context of the events of 9/11, the media images and the reporters' plotlines conveyed the first experience of the attacks to the viewers in America and the rest of the world. Elizabeth Anker argues that the media reinforced the victim image of the country as a morally powerful victim by creating a sense of

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[369] Ulrich Beck, 'The Terrorist Threat: World Risk Society Revisited', *Theory, Culture & Society* 19.4 (2002), p. 40.

[370] David L. Altheide, 'Terrorism and the Politics of Fear', *Cultural Studies↔ Critical Methodologies* 6.4 (2006), p. 423.

[371] Beck, 'The Terrorist Threat', p. 39.

[372] Peter N. Stearns, 'Fear and Contemporary History: a Review Essay', *Journal of Social History* 40.2 (2006), p. 479.

countrywide empathy to revive American national identity, ideals and moral virtues to transform victimisation into heroic retributive action.[373]

With respect to the above, Amy Ronner observes that Arthur Miller would in all likelihood not argue with the notion that the post-9/11 paranoia, along with the executive's passion for debilitating the American Constitution and augmenting state power to investigate, detain and interrogate, mirrors the Salem hysteria and McCarthy's project[374] However, as a theatre play, *The Crucible* wants to be more than just a bland comparison between three different historical periods marred by the same cultural anomaly. Miller asserts that there is a general potential threat of violence and loss of life when irrational terror leads to an official sanction of moral goodness. He elaborates: 'No man lives who has not got a panic button and when it is pressed by the clean white hand of moral duty, a certain murderous train is set in motion'.[375] In addition, because of this general characteristic of fear, the play has survived after the Cold War, in countries facing imminent coups but also in countries such as Britain where political hysteria such as McCarthy's has not infected society. Hence, as Jeffrey D. Mason argues, through his literary writing Miller exercised his right to advocate a contentious discursive battle in which writing would be an act of 'speaking out' for an engaged public scrutiny.[376]

In this respect, Miller poignantly suggests that *The Crucible* is a work of art with some sort of universal force, in the sense that it transcends time and space. This is particularly evident, as Robert Warshow observes, from the prevalence of witch hunts throughout history and from Miller's almost contemptuous lack of interest in proving the reality of the Salem episode in the simple plot of the play and also by his refusal to limit the play's subject to the timeliness of McCarthy era politics.[377] Miller expands on this point as follows:

> I was drawn to write *The Crucible* not merely as a response to McCarthyism. It is not any more an attempt to cure witch hunts than *Salesman* is a plea for the improvement of conditions for travelling men, *All My Sons* a plea for better inspection of airplane parts, or *A View from the Bridge* an attack upon the Immigration

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[373] Elisabeth Anker, 'Villains, Victims and Heroes: Melodrama, Media, and September 11', *Journal of Communication* 55.1 (2005), pp. 22-23.

[374] Ronner, p. 220.

[375] Arthur Miller, 'It Could Happen Here ─ And Did', *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller,* ed. by Robert A. Martin (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), p. 295.

[376] Jeffrey D Mason, 'Arthur Miller's Ironic Resurrection', *Theatre Journal* 55.4 (2003), p. 660.

[377] Warshow, p. 213.

Bureau. *The Crucible* is, internally, *Salesman's* blood brother. It is examining the questions I was absorbed with before — the conflict between a man's raw deeds and his conception of himself; the question of whether conscience is in fact an organic part of the human being, and what happens when it is handed over not merely to the state or the mores of the time but to one's friend or wife.[378]

Miller's comments quite cogently reflect that the anti-Communist witch hunts were not the only stimulus behind the writing of this play, with an historical incident as its subject. Rather, as he explains, it would be highly reductive and parochial if this play was read and performed only in relation to its present, as an allegory of its times. As a work of art, the universal subject of this play involves its future application. The subject of public and private guilt was first unearthed from history and applied to its present, when the play was written, to be translated to the future by means of its predictive powers, through the performative force of the play, predictive in a culture that has produced recurrent spells of politically induced fear through times.

As Miller's quote highlights, *The Crucible* seeks to include a higher degree of consciousness than just being limited to the walled-in interpretations of a work of art as another political allegory of its times. Miller celebrates people's heightened awareness in his own times in the mid-twentieth century, compared to the generations before him when he says: 'We are aware as no generation was before of the larger units that help make us and destroy us. The city, the nation, the world, and now the universe are never far beyond our most intimate sense of life'.[379] Through his play Miller offers an implicit alternative to the paranoid politics in the shape of law and good faith, examples which he finds in the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights. These, he argues, 'de-symbolize the individual and consider him as the sum of his acts rather than his hidden thoughts and propensities for plotting evil'.[380] Still, according to Miller, we as a species also inevitably 'plot evil' and engage in witch hunts, for instance, that bring us pain, death and destruction. Yet in order to confront systematised panic in society, even when they thrive on a grain of fact, individuals have to wage a battle for truth by speaking up or confronting it through other means like art, as Miller himself did by writing this play.

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[378] Arthur Miller, 'Brewed in *The Crucible*', *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller,* ed. by Robert A. Martin (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), pp. 172-73.
[379] Miller, 'Brewed in *The Crucible*', p. 173.
[380] Miller, 'It Could Happen Here', p. 299.

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Proctor's outburst at the end of Act 3 refers to this impulse, when he addresses Danforth and Hale:

> A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer; I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth! For them that quail to bring men out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in all your black hearts that this be fraud ─ God damns our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together![381]

Proctor's vehement expostulation, although in the end not heeded by the inflexible Danforth in the play, is in tune with Miller's who advocates speaking the truth to power, especially when power is affixed to irrationality, when it is prone to disseminating prodigious fear and tempting mistrust of every individual in his or her fellow citizens.

That said, the question remains whether the play is 'universal' with regard to its future operation, or whether it is also specifically American. Miller's thesis may concern the ubiquitous nature of the witch hunts *generally* in suggesting that they can break out at any time and in any place. The malevolent forces that propel witch hunts can be considered to be omnipresent, as Miller seems to imply. His views on the metaphysical dualism of all times are evident from his comments on the play:

> Like Reverend Hale and the others on this stage, we conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology. Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God, and their opposites are of Lucifer. It is as impossible for most men to conceive of a morality without sin as of an earth without 'sky.' Since 1692, a great but superficial change has wiped out God's beard and the Devil's horns, but the world is still gripped between two diametrically opposed absolutes. The concept of unity, in which positive and negative are attributes of the same force, in which good and evil are relative, ever-changing, and always joined to the same phenomenon – such a concept is still

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[381] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 108.

reserved to the physical sciences and to the few who have grasped the history of ideas.[382]

According to Miller, in contrast to the dispassionate approach followed in the physical sciences for the understanding of positive and negative aspects as relative and inalienable from each other in the whole of one cosmic force, the world and its political affairs are still defined by the absolutism of good and evil, and a quasi dualist perspective that is perilously synonymous with metaphysical worldviews.

In his analysis of the religiously charged rhetoric of American presidents such as Andrew Jackson (1829), Ronald Reagan (1984) and George W. Bush (2003) Paul Fletcher has analysed how all three explicitly echo Puritan moralism and America's providential mission for the sake of global justice and fulfilment of the divine will. This conscious mixing of piety with polity in US global liberal governance policies has a transcendental scope with a sacralised temporality and historicisation of eschatology.[383] Joshua Gunn also observes this diabolical rhetoric in American political culture with reference to the Red Scare when he states:

> Unlike the Catholic stress on the necessity of evidence of demonic invasion (the dialogic character), the exorcism common in US political discourse is more self-sealing, evangelical, and Protestant, stressing the unseen and silent character itself as evidence for mandating a war-like intervention.[384]

Thus, as Gunn states, a monster-creating spiritual warfare mission is embedded in the US political lexicon, in which good and evil are predefined to vilify and dehumanise the adversary. In this respect, Miller partakes in a culture as much as he analyses it. In other words, he reflects himself, implicitly, in the mirror of persistency of a specific culture. This persistency does not just relate to a past, it incorporates a future.

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[382] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 32.

[383] Paul Fletcher, 'The Political Theology of the Empire to Come', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17.1 (2004), pp. 49-51.

[384] Joshua Gunn, 'The Rhetoric of Exorcism: George W. Bush and the Return of Political Demonology', *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)* 68.1 (2004), p. 10.

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In the context of today's policies, Immanuel Kant's ideas of just and unjust enemies in the context of a future perpetual peace are relevant. To Kant, pre-emptive wars are illegitimate because they imply that, in a natural state, adversaries are bent on annihilating each other. However, his idea of an unjust enemy in a lawless culture is important for wars that are necessary to escape the violent state of nature and establish a legal order in society. Kant's ideas are fleshed out by Philip Crone, who reads Kant through Fabio Vander:

> An unjust enemy for Kant is one who resists going from 'the state of nature' to 'the juridical state'. At first sight even this is problematic, even redundant because 'the state of nature is itself an unjust state' and all subjects in it (including the friends and the enemies alike) are unjust. But the redundancy disappears when one considers that here Kant is dealing with another 'border situation' . . . because it is not a situation of two enemies in the 'state of nature' . . . but of one who tries to overcome this condition, while the other opposes the restoration of legality and politics.[385]

Fabio Vander is quoted here to support Crone's argument that the precise point of difference between Schmitt and Kant is that of the conceptualisation of a just and unjust enemy. Schmitt takes a radical stance on the definition of friend and enemy whereas Kant goes further and sees a war between the two factions as a war between a primitive state of nature and the progressive political forces that strive for ultimate peace and legal order. Schmitt, as Fabio Vander observes, wrongly understands Kant's concept of the unjust enemy as discriminatory because of the presupposition that one state is superior to the other. It is precisely because of this misunderstanding and the confusion around the concept of just and unjust enemy that Schmitt dismisses Kant's idea of limits in military action by proposing a homogenisation of all subjects, thus cancelling all differences.

However, in modern contexts the concept of a punitive, pre-emptive and exterminating war is increasingly considered as just on account of certain states which are seen as not complying with international law, the so-called 'rogue

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[385] Philip Crone, 'Kant, Schmitt and Spinoza Confront the War on Terror', *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, 13 October 2009. < http://www.telospress.com/kant-schmitt-and-spinozaconfront-the-war-on-terrorism/ > [accessed 6 January 2014]; Fabio Vander, 'Kant and Schmitt on Preemptive War', *Telos* 2002.125 (Fall 2002), pp. 152-66.

states.' Robert Bernasconi's argument in relation to Kant's idea of culmination of human history is relevant here when he says:

> The Kantian belief in peace as the culmination of human history does not so much search for points of agreement that might allow nations to live together; it is capable of inventing enemies where none previously existed. Hence, today, the United States of America sometimes considers as its enemies nations that are not seen as democratic or committed to free trade: they are judged to have refused the future in which peace will be secured. The United States can do so because it constitutes itself as at the vanguard of history. It is the representative of the future in the present; it is tomorrow today. By declaring itself the embodiment of the future, this one country claims for itself the right to exercise the jurisdiction of history: It, thus, claims the right to judge other peoples and governments by what they have done to promote or impair cosmopolitanism; the right to impose that judgment by force, if necessary; and the right to be free of the judgment of others because it alone represents this future. This may be a long way from what Kant intended when he declared future generations will judge peoples and governments according to what they have done to promote or to hinder the objectives of cosmopolitanism.[386]

Robert Bernasconi too finds in the political culture of the US adrift from Kant's liberal goals of perpetual peace because amongst Western nations there is an ubiquitous propensity to invent new enemies in their political interactions with nations that do not conform with their cherished liberal democratic goals (including peace). Certainly, in liberalism, which has hardly leaned towards pacifism throughout Western history, war is seen with suspicion for fear of its arbitrariness in terms of power and force. Yet the compulsion to go to war to establish perpetual peace in the spirit of Kant's liberal assumptions simultaneously becomes a reason for further violence. As Nicholas Rengger states, it 'is hardly surprising that the origins of liberal thinking in modern Europe are closely related to a rise in more general opposition both to war and,

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[386] Robert Bernasconi, 'Perpetual Peace and the Invention of Total War', in *Philosophy and the Return of Violence: Studies from this Widening Gyre,* ed. by Nathan Eckstrand and Christopher Yates (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), pp. 48-49.

as a consequence, to those assumptions that appear to make war more likely',[387] Ulrich Beck defines the characteristics of post-national war in a similar way when he states:

> By contrast, what characterizes post-national war? The liquefaction and evaporation of the basic distinction that constitutes nation-state wars. In the place of 'either-or' appears 'both-and': both war and peace, both police and military, both crime and war, both civilian and soldier.[388]

Thus, in post-national warfare, the classical distinction prevalent in international law between war and peace, enemy and criminal, soldier and civilian has been blurred and an ambivalent style of warfare has taken its place in which peace and negotiations are interspersed with brutality and bloodshed.

In this context, the United States is imposing its democratic values unilaterally on states that wish to follow their own cultural and ideological modes of governance. And post-national warfare is her principal instrument. Kant's concept of perpetual peace and his idea of a universal history with cosmopolitan purpose were seen as inventive means for creating peace at all costs, including war. Yet if peace is defined as 'the good' or 'the just', then, here again, 'evil' needs to be destroyed, not so much with an eye on the present, but from the vantage point of the future. This brings me back to the absolutes defined by Miller as elements that are not so much universal as culture-specific and that may be embodied in ghosts, or rather spectres, that chase the subjects participating in a culture from both the past and the future.

5.4 The Persistency of Spectres: From the Past and the Future

The Crucible, in a paradoxical sense, can be considered as having contributed to the pool of fear that McCarthy and his affiliates created in the 1950s, by representing the seventeenth-century witch-craze. Through a reductive lens, the play may be viewed as somehow participating in the production of fear. Admittedly, for Miller the implicit and desired potential of the play lies in its power to open up history by revealing the trajectory of a culture. In *The*

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[387] Nicholas Rengger, 'On the Just War Tradition in the Twenty-First Century', *International Affairs* 78.2 (2002), p. 357.
[388] Ulrich Beck, 'War is Peace: On Post-National War', *Security Dialogue* 36.1 (2005), p. 8.

Crucible, Miller elaborates on this cultural trajectory of diabolism in the US political space as follows:

> At this writing, only England has held back before the temptations of contemporary diabolism. In the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell. Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhuman overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congerie of plots and counterplots, and the main role of government changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God.[389]

Thus, Miller considers that the rhetoric of demonology and exorcism in the American political arena is intentionally floated, not only to fulfil America's interests all over the world but also to control its population at home. Robert L. Ivie shares similar insights when he says that a trope of savagery, analogous to diabolism, though not unique to America, is certainly indigenous to the country. He argues that this discourse of savagery versus civilization in US war rhetoric has been used to quell dissent, to rally the nation along state policy and inoculate the public against alternative perspectives. For instance, during the 1812 war against Britain, the colonial rulers were framed as haughty pirates, beasts of prey, ruthless murderers and crazed tyrants. Likewise, in the 1846 expansionist war against Mexico, the campaign was portrayed by President Polk as a responsible act of national defence against an irresponsible Mexican aggressor and foe who was as unstable as a storm. During the late nineteenth-century imperial campaign in the Philippines, President McKinley justified the act to uplift, civilise and Christianise the locals who, as he proclaimed, were unable to govern themselves.[390] Thus this trope of savagery has literally and metaphorically worked in a culture to engender patriotism reflexively rather than thoughtfully.

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[389] Miller, *The Crucible,* p. 33.
[390] Robert L. Ivie, 'Savagery in Democracy's Empire', *Third World Quarterly* 26.1 (2005), p. 56.

Democracy's political lexicon, in the US, contains religious under- and overtones of a dichotomous rhetoric of good and evil which is intermittently used to define its 'self' against the 'other' in an expanding empire, waging wars or doing interventions abroad. Language and rhetoric play a pivotal role, within a democracy. Dissent must also come from within this framework, and Ivie maintains that 'language is not ideologically neutral, but it is subject to rhetorical critique from within. Otherwise language rigidifies and devolves into violence, spawning self-sustaining rituals of vilification and victimization'.[391] The political antagonism in Soviet Russia and the United States made labelling their political opponents as simply either capitalist or 'red' ineffectual in their respective societies. The point was to frame them as being in alliance with the Devil. Both societies were finely divided between the entirely good or the entirely wicked during the Cold War era thanks to the power of the propaganda machinery at work in each country. In this context, Ivie explains the metaphorical equation of Soviet Russia as a savage 'other' in America's public consciousness as follows:

> Americans traditionally have exonerated themselves of any guilt for war, hot or cold, by decivilizing the image of their adversaries. This 'victimage ritual,' enacted with generic regularity, has sanctified the ideals of peace, freedom and democracy. It has legitimized total victory over a foe caricatured as irrational, coercive and aggressive, i.e., a foe who is totally uncivilized and therefore perfectly evil.[392]

This type of antagonism, which is derived from popular notions such as American exceptionalism and self-veneration, appear to haunt US political culture and this lies at the core of Miller's play as well. In terms of its artistic merit, but also of its political and ethical powers, there is much more to *The Crucible* than seventeenth-century hysteria or the 1950s ousting of Communists from government and the ranks of the American artistic and intellectual elite. It is primarily its predictive potential that makes the play in today's post-9/11 world as probing as it was in the 1950s. In the play, Miller transcends time and place, introducing us to the forces behind all irrational persecutions. As Ronner

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[391] Ivie, 'Savagery in Democracy's Empire', p. 63.
[392] Robert L. Ivie, 'Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War "Idealists"', *Communications Monographs* 54.2 (1987), p. 178.

states, he not only depicts the warped psyches of those who pursue such campaigns of terror in historically specific circumstances, but also discloses the results of witch hunts: death, destroyed lives, blighted communities, illegitimate legal systems and deified lies shrouded in patriotic rhetoric and propaganda.[393] The play works through time in terms of haunting ghosts, as spectres that will not disappear.

My argument was inspired by the work of Graff Zivin, in a chapter called 'Allegory and Hauntology', in which she also deals with *The Crucible*. Her idea is as follows:

> The present chapter builds upon my argument in previous work that just as the historical conversion of Jews, which violently assimilated the Jewish other into the imperialism of the same, left *remainders* of Jewish difference, contemporary artistic works that seek to figuratively absorb the other of history into the present are similarly disrupted by an element of alterity that makes total incorporation impossible … This traumatic kernel that stands at the heart of the aesthetic work behaves as a specter in the sense discussed by Derrida, a spirit-become-flesh that is neither spirit nor flesh.[394]

In her dealing with *The Crucible*, as the odd one out in relation to South American works of art in particular, Graff Zivin defines the traumatic kernel, here, as a form of inquisition. The question, however, is whether this is truly the spectral point if, in the contemporary situation, forms of inquisition and torture are decisively *real*. In contrast, the spectre belongs to the metaphysical jargon, as Jacques Derrida defined it, when elaborating on the spectre of Marx in the post-Cold War age:

> The specter, as its name indicates, is the frequency of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible. And visibility, by its essence, is not seen, which is why it remains *epekiena tes ousias,* beyond the phenomenon or beyond being. The specter is also, among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks, one sees and which one projects – on an imaginary screen where there is

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[393] Ronner, p. 221.
[394] Graff Zivin, p. 59.

nothing to see. Not even the screen sometimes, and a screen always has, at bottom, in the bottom or background that it is, a structure of disappearing apparition. But now, one can no longer get any shut-eye, being so intent to watch out for the return [...] the specter first of all sees us. From the other side of the eye, *visor effect*, it looks at us even before we see it or even before we see period. We feel ourselves observed, sometimes under surveillance by it even before any apparition. Especially – and this is the event, for the specter is of the event — it sees us during a visit. It (re) pays us a visit [...] The latter does not always mark the moment of a generous apparition or a friendly vision; it can signify strict inspection or violent search, consequent persecution, implacable *concatenation.* The social mode of haunting, its original style could also be called, taking into account this repetition, *frequentation.*[395]

Derrida, in the first part of this quote, indicates that the word 'specter' belongs to the world of charm and incantation and its meaning corresponds to the recurrence of a certain phenomenon which is not corporeal. Yet its visibility is acknowledged despite the fact that it does not exist in physical form. It can be an illusion, a product of one's mind, an imaginary idea which is projected in the realm of the real world. This can be a hallucination, including the unknown apparitions and ghostly images which one's mind can craft. One can convince, for instance, the crowds with one's fervent rhetoric and intent only for a spectre to reappear as a result of which an entire society can be obsessed or haunted by its fear. This is precisely how Salem's 'possessed' girls invoked spirits, witches and diabolism in 1692, and also how Joseph McCarthy ventured to demonise the communists in the US in the 1950s.

Derrida's argument, however, does more than allowing us to analyse things from the past. In a basic sense, the spectre is a force from the vantage point of the future in that it looks at us first, before we see it. Here, Derrida speaks of the spectre's origin and birth when he says that it belongs to the 'event,' and it first of all sees us in a concrete form. This means that there is an untoward prior event associated with the spectre that accounts for its feared recurrence and reception during its reappearance in different guises and this reappearance is something of the future. The spectre looks at us in the course of

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[395] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 125-26.

a visit. Later it repays us a visit, which is the process of social haunting due to apparitions of the event that may infest memory with a trauma effect. It is the most disagreeable scenario, which brings in its wake persecution, violence and, as in case of the contemporary scenario, rendition and just wars. Derrida calls this repetitive social haunting by the spectre of the event frequentation. We are being frequented, with a certain frequency, i.e. repetition. In the very word 'frequented' past and future are operative as well.

When Derrida states that the spectre appears to manifest itself in a visitation, it is not present in a concrete and tangible form but becomes known through its representation by those who are haunted by it. Derrida thus speaks of the spectre's non-presence and demands that its time and history be taken into consideration. He calls it the singularity of its temporality or of its historicity.[396] In the case of the spectre of fear, the production and reproduction of fear in different historical periods of the United States' social history, it is necessary for these specific political events and cultural circumstances be known first, which in turn resurrect this spectre to haunt the people in almost isomorphic patterns. Derrida quotes from *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

> Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.[397]

In one sense, Derrida states that the ghost of tradition and of the past always lurks among the new generations. In the case of US history, US society prides itself on, and the country has enormously benefitted from, its democratic tradition and the sacrifices of its founding fathers. But equally the ghosts of its past have persistently frequented its society, as they belong to their collective memory. As such, however, in their frequenting they embody the future. The 'evil' of Salem, for instance, has burdened the following generations through its phantom-like reappearance in the 1950s and also in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Of course, the spectres as such do not exist independently, they have to be made, time and again, especially in moments of crisis, as Derrida writes:

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[396] Derrida, *Specters of Marx,* p. 126.
[397] Derrida, *Specters of Marx,* p. 134.

And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.[398]

Derrida illustrates the phenomenon of conjuring up the spirits from the past when there is an impulse for change and transformation on a revolutionary scale. The spirits of evil were a convenient source, for instance, to equate with the red menace in the United States during the early years of the Cold War and to fight communism globally. This is why, as Derrida rightly points out, familiar tactics were applied in confronting the enemy. The post-9/11 scenario, likewise, promises to make history by arousing the same old spectres, ghosts and spirits. There is an emphasis on the positive conjuring up of the past but, Derrida adds, it is not clear whether the ghost or the spirit from the past will only be making a friendly visit. There is always a likelihood that this conjuring up is only seemingly welcoming and hospitable, since it arouses the dead, makes or lets them come alive, and is never free from anxiety and trauma. Therefore, as Derrida maintains, it automatically becomes a moment of repulsion but also of restriction.[399]

The Crucible clearly plays with the frequent recurrence of ghosts, and projects a spectre-like power itself, as if it were lying in wait for the moment to frequent its audience. Yet this is not all that can be said about the play's role with regard to cultural persistency. I would like to bring my argument to an end by moving to my conclusion in which I will examine whether there is more than a culture's future persistency, or whether there is space for renewal in the future. For this I will return to my initial question: Why did Miller choose a *play* to respond to the politics of McCarthyism in the 1950s. I will expand this question into: Why does Miller's text, as a play, still work, and why will it still be *working*?

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[398] Derrida, *Specters of Marx,* p. 135.
[399] Derrida, *Specters of Marx,* p. 135.

Conclusion: Written for an Occasion

Since the 1970s art's subversive potential has been the hobbyhorse of many academics in the humanities and social sciences. This political potential of art, one that has proved to be relevant and important in many cases, especially in countries subjected to a totalitarian or dictatorial regime, has been propagated by numerous movements such as Communism, feminism, operaism, autonomism and through a variety of approaches such as deconstruction, gender theory, queer theory and postcolonial theory. Subversion has often been addressed in relation to post-structuralism, and the name that would pop up most often in that context is Michel Foucault. He is one of the major theorists on the relation between state, culture, art and power.[400] And, although at some point in his work subversion seemed to be nigh impossible since any subversion would rapidly be taken up by a power system that transcended and organised society, it later became a dominant theme.[401] In this respect, it would be quite easy to argue that *The Crucible* 'subverted' McCarthyism. Still, the play has started to travel through time, and we will have to see whether it has passed the test of time.[402] Its subversive potential is no longer predominant. In my reading, its potential for the present and the future lies in the fact that it speaks the truth, a dominant theme in Foucault's later work.[403] Instead of subverting powers that be, it confronts them, albeit not all powers. In fact, it is a play waiting for a specific situation.

In the history of drama and theatre, many pre-eighteenth-century plays were occasion plays. Most of Shakespeare's plays were occasion plays. Lope de Vega wrote hundreds of them (it is said that he wrote 1800 comedies). The irony is that they lost this 'occasional' quality and became masterpieces that have been considered as near universal. The occasion play as a genre was not deemed worthy of serious, sustained academic attention. Shakespeare has become an academic industry, but the genre of the occasion play is central to a single cause

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[400] Such as in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. and introduction by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 133; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 149*;* Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', in *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*, ed. and introduction by Robert Young (Boston / London / Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 48-78.

[401] See Fabio Vighi and Heiko Feldner, 'Ideology Critique or Discourse Analysis? Žižek against Foucault', *European Journal of Political Theory* 6.2 (2007), pp. 142-45.

[402] On literature and the test of time, see Richard A. Posner, 'Law and Literature: A Relation Reargued', *Virginia Law Review* 72 (1986), pp. 1355-56.

[403] See Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*

here and there. Yet in a sense *The Crucible* is an occasion play, be it in reverse. It was written for the occasion of McCarthyism. Since then the play has survived, as performances in the last decade show. As a result, we could consider it as 'universal,' much like *Hamlet*, which has been performed for centuries, in many different circumstances and in many different circles and countries. Yet, *The Crucible* is different. It is a specific play in that it needs an occasion and has been written for an occasion where its potential can be fully realised. The situation it is written for is one in which a hegemonic power produces an atmosphere of fear and paranoia and uses this atmosphere to hunt down real or imagined opponents, appearing to be almost invincible, while it can only exist on the basis of fanatic belief. It is this type of situation *The Crucible* was aimed at and is now waiting for, an 'appropriate time' when it will become an 'opportunity', the two etymological roots of the term 'occasion'. This is not to say, of course, that the play cannot be performed at any given time. It can be performed at will and, in fact, has been performed in many places, and on many 'occasions'. However, if it is just a performance like any other, it will probably be experienced as any other play. Yet in my reading, it is a play that waits for not just any occasion but for the occasion, in its potential to speak the truth or to facilitate a truth practice.

If we come back to the issue of subversion, the play is not really subversive. The kind of tyrannical or totalitarian power that I have just sketched is not really vulnerable in terms of subversion. It will remove subversion with the sweep of a hand, a knock on the door, an asylum that is able to keep all forms of mentally deranged within its walls. Again, the power of *The Crucible* does not lie in the fact that it is subversive. It resides in speaking the truth. Such truth-speaking was central in Foucault's later work and it was highly theatrical in structure.

As if to emphasize the theatrical structure of truth-speaking, Foucault calls it at some point a *game*, on the ground that the participants in the conversation must be willing to take on their role. Those in power will have to adopt the role of those willing to listen. This is to say that the one speaking the truth does not speak in poetic addresses. He or she does not possess truth, he or she speaks it, even if it is an uncomfortable truth, in some form of public space, or in an enclosed space where people gather (like the ecclesia). In speaking, the one speaking the truth takes a risk. Speaking the truth may cost him his life. The game is therefore not just a game. Speaking the truth can be a matter of life and death. This fact is sign for the fact that truth speech isn't being a matter of

subversion but of confrontation. In this sense it is also useful to consider the situation in terms of conversation, or even dialogue. Speaking the truth does not resemble the Socratic dialogue, nor is truth an issue of conversation for that matter. The listeners' reaction, whether they agree or not, does not concern the speaker of the truth. Her truth confronts. Those in power will act as they see fit. They may change their mind, their ways of acting, or they may kill the one speaking the truth.[404]

The Crucible acts, as a whole, in terms of speaking the truth, regardless of the consequences. As a theatre play it does need a theatrical situation, however, in which it can come forward to confront the powers that be with its truth. Obviously, one can imagine situations where any play that has not been sanctioned beforehand is forbidden. In such situations, however, and where it is allowed to come forward on its own terms, *The Crucible* can act as a confrontation. This would not hold, admittedly, when the political system is functioning properly. However, in the circumstances that I described earlier, *The Crucible* works as a confrontation. Those willing to speak in such a situation will know what they are doing, and will have to accept the rules of the game governing speaking the truth. They have to be willing to risk their lives.

However, as I just pointed out, it would seem that people have to decide to speak the truth first and then use *The Crucible* for that purpose. It also works the other way around, however. Practising the play may help individuals and collectives dare to speak the truth. In this respect, the play is not just a play that can be performed; it also has a performative quality in the sense of speech act theory. Its power resides not only in its ability to be performed but also in its theatrical potential when it is read.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, *The Crucible*'s truth does not lie in the fact that it takes a particular stand and shows it to be the right one. The play mimics, represents and criticises a recurrent cultural pattern in US society. By working through the different positions involved, the play's truth, in showing the complexity of the situation instead of simplifying it, essentially confronts people with the ugly truth. And it is through performativity that this confrontation can become much more than a simple confrontation of speaking the truth. On this subject, let me turn to Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech.*

In *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler is both concerned with cultural persistency and renewal, both in relation to the subject's formation and to power. At some point, she wonders how it is possible that norms produced by

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[404] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth,* pp. 13-14.

human beings and aimed at regulation start to react with the embodied lives of human 'selves' in such a way that a 'normative embodiment of norms' comes into being. In order to explain this, Butler first considers Pierre Bourdieu's option in his counter-reading of Austin's idea of performativity. For Austin, as is well-known, the performative speech act is either felicitous or not. Yet, what determines a felicitous or infelicitous outcome? According to Bourdieu, the determining factor is the person who is legally empowered to speak. This of course creates the problem of how something new can ever come into being. Butler explains this with the help of Bourdieu's example of the ritual. Rituals need to be performed on the basis of the correct rules and so-called prescriptions, otherwise they become invalid, or infelicitous. However, as Butler argues, the ritual that interrupts another, valid, ritual can also be the ritual of the future. Bourdieu's analysis is ultimately unsatisfactory since he cannot explain how the non-conventional repetition of a conventional formula can nevertheless have formative powers. The issue of repetition, or iterability, is critical in this respect. Butler is clearly not dealing with 'new' acts that can be new as such. In fact she is dealing with the logic of repetition, of iterability.[405]

It is this logic of iteration that is paradigmatically embodied by any theatrical text, since the text aims at its own repetition, in a double sense: by means of rehearsals and by means of a repeated performance. Moreover, on a level that is both more concrete and more abstract, the text is a matter of the performative as opposed to the theatrical performance. On a textual level, *The Crucible* demands to be carried out not merely as a theatrical performance but as a performative search for a context. This is where Derrida comes in with his reading of Austin. Derrida reckons that the power of the performative is not so much dependent on the context as on its breaking with previous contexts and abilities to work again in new contexts. Inasmuch as any performative is conventional and ritualistic, it is consistent repetition that keeps its power alive. In other words, the performative is not solely linked to one context but to contexts to come. Performative speech acts have the same power here as the written word, or any written sign. These carry a power of their own that is able to break a given context, not as a performative aside but as a structural element.[406]

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[405] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York / London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 146-47.
[406] Butler, pp. 147-49.

Although Butler considers this to be an important improvement on Bourdieu's reading of Austin, the question of historicity nevertheless puzzles her. If breaking the context and the subsequent possibility of reversal is structural, why does it only work sometimes? Derrida, in his approach of this question, appears to lack a social analysis of felicitous or infelicitous performatives. For such an analysis, Butler turns to the principal embodiedness of speech acts. Even when things are written down, codified or made into law, there has to be a body, in the end, that expresses them. The body is the place of social history and the instrument of the production of an almost self-evident realisation of this social history.[407] By analogy, performative speech acts are not just the expression of already existing conventions and societal bodies, they also produce them. As such they are never self-evidently 'covered'. On the contrary they may give rise to 'renewed appropriations'.[408] This is why I would like to consider *The Crucible* as a form of a *scenario*. A scenario is finished but needs to be carried out and in being done will lead to something new. Its Latin etymology is, literally, 'of stage scenes' and it is on these scenes that the text, from its status as sketch, needs to be actualised.

This also the stage where speaking the truth, in this case through *The Crucible*, is confrontational. It is not saying something new, it is saying something that people, whether in power or not, already know. The power of *The Crucible* lies in its search for a context which it can open up, not because it is realising an alternative but because it repeats the language of the powers that defined this context in the first place. The text works paradigmatically here as a *theatrical* text. The performative, in Butler and Austin's sense, demands that we do what we say, or rather that expression and action coincide. A performance of *The Crucible* in any shape and on any scale can only become a performative when it is brought in the open and made public, in terms of speaking the truth. In this context, it extends beyond the realm of mere rehearsal of the text. It demands a sequence of performances.

Happy are the times that do not call for a play such as *The Crucible*. If the times are such that they engender a play by creating the occasion the play is waiting for, its performance would not merely be a matter of going through the motions, even if only as a ritual. The play's performative powers demand that it be enacted with the courage of truth defined by Foucault. The game at stake, as Foucault calls it, comes with its own risks. As long as the ruling powers accept

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[407] Butler, pp. 152-53.
[408] Butler, pp. 158-60.

to be told the truth, the actors enacting the play will be relatively safe. But it is their acting that may also provoke violent, ruthless responses. Such is the game of truth, such is the risk of truth-practices. In this respect, truth-practices cannot be a simple matter of individual responsibility. According to Foucault, the factors involved in truth-practices can be defined as follows:

> What is involved, rather, is the analysis of complex relations between three distinct elements none of which can be reduced to or absorbed by the others, but whose relations are constitutive of each other. These three elements are: forms of knowledge *(saviors)*, studied in terms of their specific modes of veridiction; relations of power, not studied as an emanation of a substantial and invasive power, but in the procedures by which people's conduct is governed; and finally the modes of formation of the subject through practices of self. It seems to me that by carrying out this triple theoretical shift – from the theme of acquired knowledge to that of veridiction, from the theme of domination to that of governmentality, and from the theme of the individual to that of the practices of self – we can study the relations between truth, power, and subject without ever reducing each of them to the others.[409]

As may be clear from this quote, a play such as *The Crucible*, when not simply performed like any other play at any given time but on the occasion that it has been waiting for, will not merely involve individuals acting, although it will certainly always require individual courage. The actions they are engaged in, however, relate to the three elements mentioned above of subjectivity and power, of the individual and collective self. When acted out as such, performing the play becomes an action, in Arendt's sense: a public, political act, in what Hannah Arendt called a space of appearance, a theatrical space that is, in which the audience takes as much part as the actors – and with unpredictable outcomes.

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[409] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth,* p. 9.

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Samenvatting

Theater als waarheidspraktijk: Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* – een stuk wachtend op de gelegenheid

In de geschiedenis van de literatuur en het theater zijn veel werken geschreven voor een gelegenheid. Misschien zijn er zelfs heel veel meer stukken geschreven voor een gelegenheid dan dat ze 'autonoom' geschreven zijn, aangezien de autonome productie van literatuur (voor zover die werkelijk bestaat) een redelijk modern fenomeen is. Alle klassieke stukken uit de Griekse oudheid die nu nog worden gelezen en opgevoerd zijn inderdaad niet geschreven 'voor de eeuwigheid', maar voor een specifieke, feestelijke, deels ook rituele gelegenheid. Ovidius boude uitspraak dat hij met zijn *Metamorfosen* een werk zou hebben geschapen dat de eeuwen ging trotseren, is een vreemde, bijna Romantische oprisping in een veel groter koor van stemmen dat zegt een werk te hebben gemaakt omdat er voor werd betaald, omdat iemand er om had gevraagd, omdat de gelegenheid zich voordeed. Als *genre* heeft het gelegenheidswerk bijna geen onafhankelijke aandacht gekregen. Meestal worden bijvoorbeeld gelegenheidsgedichten bestudeerd in de marge van de literatuur, omdat ze cultureel interessant zijn (maar niet literair), of omdat ze relevante informatie bevatten in een biografische context. Centraal in dit proefschrift staat niet een regulier gelegenheidsstuk, ofschoon het wel werd gemaakt in en voor een specifieke situatie. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* werd geschreven in 1952 en voor het eerst opgevoerd in 1953 als rechtstreeks antwoord op het zogeheten McCarthyisme, de vanuit het congres georkestreerde nationale jacht op communisten in de VS. Mijn vraag aangaande dit stuk is of het niet afwijkt van reguliere toneelstukken doordat het alleen werkelijk actief kan worden bij een speciale gelegenheid.

Met *The Crucible* neemt Miller ons mee terug in de tijd, naar gebeurtenissen die plaatsvonden in 1692, in het dorpje Salem, iets ten westen van het stadje met dezelfde naam. Meerdere meisjes in het huis van een dominee leden opeens aan merkwaardige kwalen, werden onderzocht door de dokter die verklaarde dat ze van de duivel bezeten waren. De meisjes en hun ouders raakten nu overtuigd van het feit dat ze behekst waren. Dat bracht een expert binnen op het gebied van de demonologie die de beschuldiging van de meisjes onderzocht in hoeverre sommigen in het dorp bezig waren met zwarte magie. Meer mensen kregen last van de duivel, de beschuldigingen namen toe, van eerst 49 naar de 150 die uiteindelijk werden gedaagd en van wie het

merendeel vrijkwam (onder andere na te hebben bekend). Dertien vrouwen, zes mannen en twee honden werden gehangen; twee mensen stierven er in het gevang; een beklaagde die weigerde zich te verdedigen werd dood gedrukt met een enorme lading stenen. Maar de scepsis nam toe en de gouverneur greep in. Het proces werd verdaagd en toen het werd hervat, werd iedereen die nog op de lijst stond vrijgesproken.

Het stuk werd in het Nederlands (niet geheel adequaat) vertaald als 'De vuurproef' en meer recent, door Kristien Hemmerechts in 2007, als 'Heksenjacht' (naar aanleiding van een Duitse vertaling) voor een opvoering door Het Nationale Toneel. Een van de recensenten merkte toen op:

> Maar om het stuk, zoals het gezelschap doet, 'een moderne klassieker' te noemen 'die in deze tijd van oplevend religieus fanatisme en angst voor terrorisme niets aan zeggingskracht heeft verloren', vind ik nog veel raarder. Worden we hiermee voorbereid op de komst van een (islamitische) theocratie waarin we allemaal het haasje zijn?
> Hans Oranje, 'Nieuwe 'Heksenjacht' is in ieder geval stijlvast', *Trouw* 06-03-2007.

Allereerst lijkt de recensent te twijfelen aan de bestempeling van dit stuk als 'klassieker', wat al veelzeggend genoeg is. Is het soms een gelegenheidsstuk? Wellicht in dat kader vindt hij de reden om het stuk op te voeren niet voldoende gemotiveerd. 'We' leven, in Nederland althans, immers niet in een theocratie. Dat geeft aan dat de recensent eigenlijk vindt dat het stuk alleen goed kan functioneren, of met reden kan worden opgevoerd, in een situatie die vergelijkbaar is met een theocratie.

Is het inderdaad zo dat het stuk geschreven is voor zo'n specifieke situatie dat het alleen weer goed tot leven kan komen als een vergelijkbare situatie zich weer voordoet? In dat geval is het een soort omgekeerd gelegenheidsstuk; dan is het is niet zozeer, of niet alleen, gemaakt voor een gelegenheid maar *wacht* het sindsdien op een gelegenheid. Mijn studie aangaande *The Crucible* neemt dit als uitgangspunt en bestudeert *hoe* het stuk actief was en weer kan worden bij een gelegenheid, namelijk als een vorm van waarheidspraktijk. Mijn onderzoeksvragen zijn dienaangaande de volgende:

1. Waarom koos Miller een toneelstuk als medium om te reageren op het McCarthyism van de jaren 50 in de 20^e eeuw; had eenzelfde resultaat niet kunnen zijn bereikt met een roman, een gedicht of een essay?
2. Hoe heeft de manier gefunctioneerd waarop geschiedenis wordt gerepresenteerd in het stuk, direct en indirect; en hoe kan die dramatisch functioneren om geschiedenis te actualiseren (en deze term 'actualiseren' zal van belang zijn in tegenstelling tot het 'maken' van geschiedenis)?
3. Hoe verhoudt zich dit alles tot verschillende vormen van waarheid?
4. En tot slot, en meest centraal: hoe kunnen we daardoor het stuk zien als een stuk dat wacht op de juiste gelegenheid om waarlijk actief te worden, dat wil zeggen als waarheidspraktijk?

Wat vraag 1 aangaat: Toneel is misschien niet de meest voor de hand liggende kunstvorm om als waarheidspraktijk te behandelen. Toneel staat van oudsher bekend vanwege het spel met illusie, met maskers, schijn en valse waarheden. Ons woord hypocriet is niet voor niets afkomstig van het Griekse *hypokritès* dat via het Latijnse *hypocrita* (een soort van mimespeler) via de Romaanse talen en het middeleeuwse Latijn eens steeds negatievere klank ging krijgen. Maar mijn behandeling van het theater als waarheidspraktijk vindt zijn grond in twee denkers die hebben nagedacht over de theatrale aard van politiek en van het menselijke zelf: Hannah Arendt en Michel Foucault.

In Arendt's *Human Condition* zit een frase verstopt die desalniettemin cruciaal is voor Arendts filosofie. Met betrekking tot theater stelt zij dat het de politieke kunst *par excellence* is 'for only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art'.[410] Klaarblijkelijk beschouwt Arendt het theater als politieke kunstvorm bij uitstek omdat in deze kunstvorm de wezenlijke aard van de politiek wordt belichaamd. De aard van de politiek wordt immers bepaald door wat Arendt noemt een 'space of appearance', een publieke plaats waar het politieke handelen niet alleen zichtbaar wordt maar ook wordt voorgelegd, ter toetsing, aan een publiek. Dat 'voorleggen' gebeurt in handeling en in taal, of in wat Arendt noemt 'fragiele' vormen van spraak en handeling in de context van een publiek debat.[411] Met dat fragiele geeft ze niet alleen aan dat politiek iets anders is dan uitvoering van de macht met geweld, maar ook dat politiek zich kenmerkt door een intrinsieke kwetsbaarheid. Wie verschijnt voor een publiek

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[410] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 188.
[411] Richard Halpern, 'Theatre and Democratic Thought: Arendt to Rancière', *Critical Inquiry* 37.3 (Spring 2011), p. 548.

kan ook worden weggejouwd. Bij implicatie betekent het ook dat iemand die alsnog politiek wil opereren in totalitaire of quasi-totalitaire omstandigheden, een groot risico loopt. Totalitaire machten accepteren geen publieke toetsing maar gaan daar juist tegen tekeer. Arthur Miller handelde politiek door zijn toneelstuk voor te leggen in het publieke domein. Er zijn daarmee twee vormen van dramatisch handelen (*dran* = doen) in het spel. Het toneelstuk zelf bestaat uit dramatische handeling en met de introductie van juist dit toneelstuk in het publieke domein handelde Miller dramatisch. Hij maakte zich daarmee kwetsbaar, en dat was politiek gezien noodzakelijk.

Die kwetsbaarheid van Millers actie met dit toneelstuk is, ten tweede, intrinsiek gerelateerd aan een waarheidspraktijk in de zin van Foucault wat politiek gezien op een andere manier van belang is, namelijk in relatie tot wat Foucault noemde het 'zelf', zowel individueel als collectief. Hij behandelde dat thema vooral in de latere fase van zijn werk en leven, en vooral in *The Courage of Truth*.[412] In dat werk onderscheidde hij, naar aanleiding van een studie van de klassieken, hoe het waarheid-spreken vorm kreeg in vier varianten: profetie, wijsheid, onderricht en *parrhêsia*. Elke variant kende een figuur die daarmee samen hing, alsmede een wijze van spreken, en kon alleen functioneren in een politieke cultuur met een democratische praktijk, die in de woorden van Kerry Burch, functioneerde als een 'leveller' tussen de macht van de elite en het gewone volk.[413] In dat kader kreeg het waarheid-spreken een zekere status, die afweek van de eer die viel te behalen met heroïsche daden. Vertaald naar de situatie van het McCarthyisme, waarin democratische principes met voeten werden getreden in een sfeer van collectieve angst, was *The Crucible* een poging het waarheid-spreken te herstellen. Miller deed dat niet als profeet, want hij sprak niet in de naam van een ander; hij was geen leraar, want hij was niet bezig een traditie te consolideren; hij was geen wijze, want hij beriep zich niet op superieur begrip; hij was, inderdaad, een *parrhêsiast*, die zijn leven en werk in de waagschaal gooide om te benoemen wat hij zag als de waarheid van wat aan het gebeuren was.

Met het voorgaande is meteen een indicatie gegeven van de situatie waar het stuk op is gemaakt en sindsdien op wacht. Het stuk bestudeert een situatie waarin op basis van een manicheïs principe van goed en kwaad een algehele

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[412] Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (the Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège De France, 1983-1984,* ed. by Frédéric Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK / New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[413] Kerry Burch, 'Parrhesia as a Principle of Democratic Pedagogy', *Philosophical Studies in Education* 40 (2009), pp. 72-73.

sfeer van angst wordt gecreëerd door machthebbers die het zoeken of uiten van de waarheid onmogelijk maken. Het stuk is in dat kader niet universeel maar cultureel specifiek. Toen Ronald Reagan zijn 'rijk van het kwaad'-rede hield in 1983 was dat cultureel gezien een herkenbare repetitie, en tegelijk een prefiguratie van wat George Bush jr. zou zeggen in zijn State of the Union Address op 29 januari 2002, waarin hij het had over een 'axis of evil'.

Dit brengt me bij vraag 2 van mijn onderzoek. Wanneer het stuk niet zomaar universeel is maar cultureel en historisch specifiek, hoe zet het geschiedenis dan in, theatraal gezien of dramatisch gezien? De beantwoording van deze vraag zal een belangrijk element zijn in alle hoofdstukken. In hoofdstuk 1 zal de vraag worden beantwoord of Miller met zijn stuk aan geschiedschrijving deed in de zin van waarheidsvinding. Het antwoord daarop is 'ja'. Ofschoon het stuk natuurlijk niet reguliere geschiedschrijving is, verhoudt het zich daar wel toe. Daardoor slaagt het stuk er in zowel een historische situatie te *beschrijven*, als die historische situatie te actualiseren alsof die opnieuw werkelijk is, dramatisch. En het doet dat mede door een analyse te geven van de manier waarop bewijs kan worden 'gefabriceerd' door het beroep op 'geesten' die kwaadaardig aan het werk zouden zijn. Historisch onderzoek is, in de kern, gekant tegen dergelijke fabricatie of neemt die fabricatie als object van onderzoek. Dat is precies wat Miller, deels, deed.

In hoofdstuk 2 voer ik een postmoderne lezing uit van het stuk. Dat is niet omdat het stuk zelf een postmodern werk is maar omdat het zich verhoudt tot een centrale vraag in de postmoderne literatuur die historiografisch van aard is. De klemmende vraag is in hoeverre historische representatie alleen mogelijk is door een 'spectral illusion' – de term is van historicus Frank Ankersmit.[414] Dergelijke fictieve, 'geest'-achtige kracht is door het stuk op twee manieren aan het werk. Enerzijds werkt het stuk door zijn narratieve onderbouwing met de 'spectral illusion' waar Ankersmit het over heeft en waardoor het stuk 'werkelijk' lijkt. Anderzijds heeft het stuk dramatisch gezien een zekere archivalische kracht, alsof lichamen uit het verleden via de personages opnieuw tot leven komen, als spectrale, levende 'documenten'. Aangaande het laatste verwerpt het stuk een strikt epistemologische houding, alsof het voldoende zou zijn te weten wat er toen is gebeurd. In plaats daarvan werkt het performatief: wat 'daar', 'toen' is gebeurd moet opnieuw worden gedaan. Alleen op die manier kan het stuk werken als een postmoderne parodie, die niet zeer grappig

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[414] Frank Ankersmit, 'Hayden White's Appeal to the Historians', *History and Theory* 37.2 (1998), p. 187.

is bedoeld, maar ernstig, zoals Linda Hutcheon beargumenteerde.[415] Maar in postmodern opzicht werkt het stuk zelfs nog radicaler. Uitgaande van Mieke Bals idee van 'preposterousness' stel ik een lezing voor van het stuk die het McCarthyisme anachronistisch als eerste aanwezig stelt, en Salem als tweede.[416] De parodie werkt dan andersom: het is alsof McCarthyisme een parodie is geworden van wat er in Salem gebeurde, wat het kritisch potentieel van het stuk nog vergroot.

Met hoofdstuk 1 en 2 heb ik gekeken hoe het stuk zich verhoudt tot het verleden. In hoofdstuk 3 en 4 bestudeer ik hoe het zich verhoudt tot het heden waarin het ingreep, in de jaren vijftig van de vorige eeuw, aldus een geschiedenis actualiserend.

In hoofdstuk 3 bestudeer ik allereerst hoe senator Joe McCarthy gebruik maakte van levende angsten in de naoorlogse Verenigde Staten als een basis waarop meer angst kon worden gefabriceerd. Hij deed dat in de vorm van een media-spektakel, een vorm die ik serieus neem als *generieke* vorm in relatie tot de vraag waarom Miller daartegenin een toneelstuk schreef. Wat ik in dit hoofdstuk benoem als 'the point of theatre' is een figuurlijk perspectivisch punt. Waar het spektakel werkt door middel van een frame, waarin eenieder wordt ingevangen, en een versluiering waardoor niemand nog kan zien waar het werkelijk om draait, werkt het theater eerder door een perspectivische diepte. In dat verband werkte de allegorie die door Miller werd ingezet, op specifiek theatrale wijze. Waar allegorie in de geschiedenis van het Westen vooral is ingezet om breuken in de geschiedenis te repareren (als bijvoorbeeld tussen klassieke Oudheid en Christendom), om de geschiedenis zo continu te maken, zette Miller zijn allegorie in om juist het McCarthyisme te historiseren. Hij creëerde een theatraal perspectief waarmee de sluier van het spektakel kan worden doorbroken en het kader daarvan kon worden gezien als de projectie van een illusie.

In hoofdstuk 4 ga ik nader in op wat de historische relatie is tussen de Salem-periode en het McCarthyisme, en hoe Miller zich daartoe verhield als toch 'een kind van zijn tijd'. Hoe intervenieerde hij in zijn eigen tijd? Ik onderscheid daar drie vormen van interveniëntie. Ik lees de allegorie hier anders, niet om een geschiedenis continu te maken of daar juist een breuk in te forceren, maar als een manier om een alternatieve toekomst te kunnen

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[415] Linda Hutcheon, 'Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and Intertextuality of History', in *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*, p. 5.
[416] Mieke Bal, Introduction, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

verbeelden. De allegorie werkt door een metaforische dynamiek, maar ik gebruik Ernesto Laclau's tropologische analyse van geschiedenis om die metaforiek anders in te zetten.[417] De Salem periode en McCarthyisme zijn niet zomaar twee verschillende periodes die door het stuk in vergelijking worden gebracht omwille van een *gelijkenis* ('eigenlijk zijn ze hetzelfde'). De periodes grenzen ook aan elkaar in tijd en ruimte, en kunnen als metoniem voor elkander gelden, waarbij het niet gaat om een gelijkenis en de dominantie van één betekenis maar om een principiële heterogeniteit ('de twee vallen onder een noemer maar blijven verschillend'). Voor Laclau is de metafoor een machtsgreep waarmee we een periode moet begrijpen in een ander licht. De metoniem daarentegen werkt op basis van verschil en hegemonie. Door het stuk eerder als metoniem in te zetten, benadrukte Miller heterogeniteit en het gevecht om hegemonie. De Salem-geschiedenis was immers geëindigd in een bevrijding. Door dit verschil in te brengen suggereerde hij ook het alternatief van een andere toekomst. Een tweede vorm van interventie bestond in de rol die Miller op zich nam als publieke intellectueel, een rol die als klassiek kan worden bestempeld in relatie tot democratie en dan vooral wordt ingevuld in termen van 'verantwoordelijkheid'. Maar zo klassiek was of is die democratie niet meer. Jacques Derrida volgend in wat de rol is geworden van moderne literatuur in relatie tot de moderne democratie, benadruk ik tot slot in een derde vorm van interventie in termen van 'onverantwoordelijkheid'.[418] In dit kader ging het Miller niet zozeer om het redden van een bestaande democratie, maar ging het principiëler om wat Derrida noemt een 'toekomende democratie'. Voor het voortdurend openhouden daarvan moet een auteur 'alles' durven zeggen, ook het onverantwoordelijke. Daarmee zijn we terug bij het thema van de *parrhêsia*: het waarheid-spreken onder alle omstandigheden.

In hoofdstuk 5 bezie ik de werking van het stuk richting de toekomst en ga ik feitelijk in op de verschillende waarheden die in het spel zijn (vraag 3 uit mijn onderzoek). Die waarheden betreffen de cultuur waaraan *The Crucible* bijdraagt en waar het in ingrijpt tegelijkertijd, en die de kracht van het stuk naar de toekomst bepalen. Miller heeft aangaande de cultuur waartoe hij behoort geen standpunt van 'buiten'. De eerste vraag die moet worden beantwoord is in hoeverre *The Crucible* wellicht niet zozeer een analyse is van een Amerikaanse cultuur maar daar aan bijdraagt. Om dat te bezien confronteer ik Miller's stuk

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[417] Ernesto Laclau, 'The Politics of Rhetoric', in *Material Events: Paul De Man and the Afterlife of Theory,* ed. by Tom Cohn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001)
[418] Jacques Derrida, 'Passions: An Oblique Offering', in *Derrida: A Critical Reader,* ed. by David Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

met de cultuuranalyse van Geert en Gert-Jan Hofstede, die tot op heden het meest geschikt is om persistentie in culturen in beeld te brengen.[419] Naar blijkt is *The Crucible* niet zomaar de reflectie van de Amerikaanse cultuur, maar is in het licht van *The Crucible* de analyse van de Hofstedes er ook niet zomaar een van 'de' Amerikaanse cultuur. Er is wel een opvallend punt van resonantie tussen beide: het absolute onderscheid tussen goed en kwaad dat blijkbaar een persistente factor is in de Amerikaanse cultuur en geschiedenis. Ik bezie het stuk dit aangaande in relatie tot de neo-conservatieve herlezing van het werk van Carl Schmitt in de jaren negentig van de 20[e] eeuw en het eerste decennium van de 21[e]. Het absolute onderscheid tussen goed en kwaad, wat een moreel onderscheid is, is via het werk van Schmitt gerelateerd aan de politieke categorieën van vriend en vijand, waarmee goed en kwaad dan gaan samenvallen. *The Crucible* kent feitelijk al dezelfde samensmelting van morele en politieke tegenstellingen en is daarmee niet alleen werkzaam naar verleden en het heden van de jaren vijftig van de vorige eeuw maar voor-spelt in dat opzicht de toekomst. Of, het *beschrijft* in zekere zin wat de toekomstige staat zal zijn waarin het stuk weer actief kan of zal worden. In dit verband heeft het stuk een spectrale kracht, of vormt het een voorbeeld van wat 'hauntologie' is gaan heten.[420] Geschiedenis is zeker geen voorspelbaar geheel maar wordt wel gekenmerkt door geesten uit het verleden, die als geest zich juist onaangekondigd aandienen vanuit de toekomst. Millers stuk is in dit kader een voorbeeld van en studie naar de persistentie van krachten in een cultuur.

Dat betekent niet dat *The Crucible* geen verschil kan maken. Op het maken van een verschil richt ik me in de conclusie, uitwerkend hoe *The Crucible* gelezen kan worden vanuit Judith Butler's werk over performativiteit (wat een antwoord moet geven op vraag 4).[421] Om goed te kunnen begrijpen hoe het stuk in het licht van Butlers analyse kan werken, is het wel noodzakelijk een verschil te maken tussen willekeurige opvoeringen van het stuk, en opvoeringen van het stuk als waarheidspraktijk. Natuurlijk kan het stuk overal worden opgevoerd, door allerlei groepen, in allerlei situaties en culturen. Dat is in feite het geval geweest in de afgelopen decennia. Elk publiek kan er, afhankelijk van de geslaagdheid van de voorstelling, van 'genieten'. Maar dat is iets anders dan

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[419] Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind,* revised 2nd edn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005).
[420] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994.
[421] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York / London: Routledge, 1997).

dat het stuk werkt als waarheidspraktijk, in omstandigheden waarin het zoeken naar waarheid wordt bemoeilijkt of onmogelijk gemaakt in een door machthebbers aangejaagde sfeer van angst die alleen werkelijk kan zijn doordat er ook werkelijke bedreiging bestaat van de waarheidspreker. Het is die gelegenheid waar het stuk op wacht, en waarin het kan worden gebruikt om een verschil te maken. Het stuk moet dan, in die situatie, worden opgevoerd als een repetitie van de sfeer van angst die, als repetitie, wellicht opening kan bieden naar iets nieuws. In dergelijke situaties vraagt het stuk om moed, zoals Foucault benadrukte: de moed tot spreken. Het is een spreken dat niet zomaar het uiten van een mening betreft, maar dat in dienst staat van de zorg om het individuele en collectieve zelf in het licht van waarheid.

Acknowledgments

Curriculum Vitae

Aamir Aziz was born and raised in Faisalabad (20 December, 1983), Pakistan. After finishing his school and college education from Divisional Public School and Government College in his home town, he went to Islamabad to do a masters in English Language and Literature (2004) at the International Islamic University, with cumulative grade point average of 3.5/4.0. After his graduation, he served in Bahria College Naval Headquarter Islamabad as a lecturer in English for 17 months. During this time he won a fellowship from the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan to pursue his PhD in English Literature in The Netherlands. He got admitted at Leiden University where Prof. Richard Todd supervised his course work from 2006 till the end of 2008. After Mr. Todd's illness and unexpected retirement, Professor Frans-Willem Korsten supervised Aziz's research project from 2009 to 2014.

Aziz has been writing English poems since 2004 and he had his first book, *Poetic Palpitations from Pakistan: A Lyrical Document of Protest Against a Society,* published on 9 September, 2014 by United P.C, Austria. He is a regular blog writer for the Huffington Post UK and a contributor to EMAJ magazine of the Euro Mediterranean Academy for Young Journalists. He also writes for *International Policy Digest, Daily Times, The Sydney Globalist, The London Globalist and The Postcolonialist.* He has written prose features that appeared in various international magazines, newspapers and electronic journals. He also served as an assistant fiction editor for the UK based literary magazine *The Missing Slate.* He has been working as a freelance translator for the last 4 years as well. After his PhD, he is supposed to serve as an Assistant Professor in English Literature at the department of Humanities in the COMSATS (Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South) Institute of Information Technology Lahore Pakistan.