Theatre as Truth Practice: Arthur Miller's The Crucible

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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

[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

[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

[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

[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

[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

[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

[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

[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

[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

[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.

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

[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

[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

[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

[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

[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.

[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,

[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

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

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

[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

[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

[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.