In the following essay, Bigsby asserts that The Crucible continues to interest audiences and remains Miller's most-produced play because it dramatizes a universal and human concern: the "breaking of charity" and the bonds of love between individuals that are "the foundations of any society."

Salem in 1692 was in turmoil. The Royal Charter had been revoked. Original land titles had been cancelled and others not yet secured. Neighbour accordingly looked on neighbour with some suspicion for fear their land might be reassigned. It was also a community riven with schisms which centred on the person of the Reverend Parris, whose materialism and self-concern was more than many could stomach, including a landowner and innkeeper called John Proctor.

As Miller observed in his notebook: 'It is Shakespearean. Parties and counter-parties. There must be a counter-party. Proctor and others.' John Proctor quickly emerged as the centre of the story Miller wished to tell, though not of the trials where he was one among many. But to Miller, as he wrote in the notebook: 'It has got to be basically Proctor's story. The important thing--the process whereby a man, feeling guilt for A, sees himself as guilty of B and thus belies himself--accommodates his credo to believe in what he knows is not true.' Before this could become a tragedy for the community it had to be a tragedy for an individual: 'A difficulty. This hanging must be "tragic"--i.e. must [be] result of an opportunity not grasped when it should have been, due to "flaw."

That flaw, as so often in Miller's work, was to be sexual, not least because there seemed a sexual flavour to the language of those who confessed to possession by the Devil and who were accused of dancing naked, in a community in which both dancing and nakedness were themselves seen as signs of corruption. But that hardly seemed possible when Abigail Williams and John Proctor, who were to become the central characters in his drama, were eleven and sixty respectively. Accordingly, at Miller's bidding she becomes seventeen and he thirty-five and so they begin to move towards one another, the gap narrowing until a sexual flame is lit.

Where the girls were, in the historical record, reported as dancing in the woods, Miller has them dancing naked, in part, as he explained, to make it easier for the audience to relate the Puritans' horror at such a thing to their own. But in part he made the change in order to introduce the sexual motif at the very beginning of a play in which sexuality is both the source of Proctor's disabling guilt and, in some way, at the heart both of the hysteria of the accusing girls and of the frisson that made witchcraft simultaneously an abomination and a seductive idea.

Elizabeth Proctor, who had managed an inn, now becomes a solitary farmer's wife, cut off from communion not only with her errant husband, who has strayed from her side, but also in some degree from the society of Salem, a woman whose sexual coldness is both a motivating force in her husband's sin and a quality that lifts her above the frenzy of bad faith which surrounds and eventually engulfs her.

Other changes are made. Giles Corey, a cantankerous old man who carelessly damns his wife by commenting on her fondness for books, was not killed, pressed to death by stones, until 19 September, a month after Proctor's death. Miller brings that death forward so that it can prove exemplary. By the same token John Hale's growing conversion to scepticism did not come to its climax with Proctor's death but only later when his own wife was accused. The event is advanced in order to keep Proctor as the focus.

At the same time the playwright resisted another aspect of the story that would have damaged the parallel to fifties America, though it would have struck a chord with those in many other countries who were later to seize on The Crucible as an account of their own situation. For the fact is that John Proctor's son was tortured. As Proctor wrote in a Petition: 'My son William Proctor, when he was examin'd, because he would not confess that he was Guilty, when he was Innocent, they tied him Neck and Heels till the Blood gushed
out of his Nose.' The effect on the play of including this detail would have been to transform Proctor's motivation and diminish the significance of the sexual guilt that disables him.

Historically, John Proctor did not immediately intervene on learning of the trials and does not do so in the play. The historical account offers no explanation. In the notebooks Miller searched for one: 'Proctor--guilt stays his hand (against what action?)' The guilt derives from his adultery; the action becomes his decision to expose Abigail.

In his original plan Miller toyed with making Proctor a leader of the anti-Parris faction, who backtracks on that role and equivocates in his dealings with Hale. He entertained, too, the notion that Proctor should half wish his wife dead. He abandoned both ideas. If Proctor emerges as a leader it is inadvertently as he fights to defend the wife he has wronged and whose life he has placed in jeopardy because of his affair with Abigail.

What is at stake in *The Crucible* is the survival of Salem, which is to say the survival of a sense of community. On a literal level the village ceased to operate. The trials took precedence over all other activities. They took the farmer from his field and his wife from the milk shed. In an early draft of the screenplay for the film version Miller has the camera observe the depredations of the countryside: unharvested crops, untended animals, houses in disrepair. But, more fundamentally than this, Miller is concerned with the breaking of that social contract which binds a community together, as love and mutual respect bind individuals.

What took him to Salem was not, finally, an obsession with McCarthyism nor even a concern with a bizarre and, at the time, obscure historical incident, but a fascination with 'the most common experience of humanity, the shifts of interest that turned loving husbands and wives into stony enemies, loving parents into indifferent supervisors or even exploiters of their children ... what they called the breaking of charity with one another'. There was evidence for all of these in seventeenth-century Salem but, as Miller implies, the breaking of charity was scarcely restricted to a small New England settlement in a time distant from our own. For him the parallel between Salem in 1692 and America in 1953 was clear:

> people were being torn apart, their loyalty to one another crushed and ... common human decency was going down the drain. It's indescribable, really, because you'd get the feeling that nothing was going to be sacred any more. The situations were so exact it was quite amazing. The ritual was the same. What they were demanding of Proctor was that he expose this conspiracy of witches whose aim was to bring down the rule of the Church, of Christianity. If he gave them a couple of names he could go home. And if he didn't he was going to hang for it. It was quite the same excepting we weren't hanged, but the ritual was exactly the same. You told them anyone you knew had been a left-winger or a Communist and you went home. But I wasn't going to do that.2

Neither was John Proctor.

One dictionary definition of a crucible is that it is a place of extreme heat, 'a severe test'. John Proctor and those others summoned before a court in Salem discovered the meaning of that. Yet such tests, less formal, less judicial, less public, are the small change of daily life. Betrayal, denial, rash judgement, self-justification, are remote neither in time nor place.

*The Crucible*, then, is not merely concerned with reanimating history or implying contemporary analogies for past crimes. It is Arthur Miller's most frequently produced play not because it addresses affairs of state nor even because it offers us the tragic sight of a man who dies to save his conception of himself and the world, but because audiences understand all too well that the breaking of charity is no less a contemporary fact because it is presented in the context of a re-examined history.

There is, then, more than one mystery here. Beyond the question of witchcraft lies the more fundamental question of a human nature for which betrayal seems an ever-present possibility. *The Crucible* reminds us how fragile is our grasp on those shared values that are the foundation of any society. It is a play written not only at a time when America seemed to sanction the abandonment of the normal decencies and
legacies of civilised life but in the shadow of a still greater darkness, for the Holocaust was in Miller's mind, as it had been in the mind of Marion Starkey, whose book on the trials had stirred his imagination. 3

What replaces this sense of natural community in The Crucible, as perhaps in Nazi Germany (a parallel of which he was conscious) and, on a different scale, fifties America, is a sense of participating in a ritual, of conformity to a ruling orthodoxy and hence a shared hostility to those who threaten it. The purity of one's religious principles is confirmed by eliminating those who might 'contaminate' it, as one's Americaness is underscored by the identification of those who could be said to be Un-American. In the film version of his play, Miller, free now to expand and deepen the social context of the drama, chooses, in an early draft, to emphasise this illusory sense of community: 'The Crowd’s urging rises to angry crescendo. Hangman pulls a crude lever and the trap drops and the two fall. The Crowd is delirious with joyful, gratifying unity.'

If it was Alexis de Tocqueville who identified the pressure towards conformity even in the early years of the Republic, it was a pressure acknowledged equally by Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson and Thoreau. When Sinclair Lewis's Babbitt abandons his momentary rebellion to return to his conformist society he is described as being 'almost tearful with joy'. Miller's alarm, then, is not his alone, nor his sense of the potentially tyrannical power of shared myths which appear to offer absolution to those who accept them. If his faith in individual conscience as a corrective is also not unique, it was, perhaps, harder to sustain in the second half of a century which had seen collective myths exercising a coercive power, in America and Europe.

Beyond anything else, The Crucible is a study in power and the mechanisms by which power is sustained, challenged and lost. Perhaps that is one reason why, as Miller has noted, productions of the play seem to precede and follow revolutions and why what can be seen as a revolt of the young against the old should, on the play's production in Communist China, have been seen as a comment on the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s in which the young Red Guards humiliated, tortured and even killed those who had previously been in authority over them: parents, teachers, members of the cultural elite.

On the one hand stands the Church, which provides the defining language within which all social, political and moral debate is conducted. On the other stand those usually deprived of power--the black slave Tituba and the young children--who suddenly gain access to an authority as absolute as that which had previously subordinated them. Those ignored by history become its motor force. Those socially marginalised move to the very centre of social action. Those whose opinions and perceptions carried neither personal nor political weight suddenly acquire an authority so absolute that they come to feel they can challenge even the representatives of the state. Tituba has a power she has never known in her life.

To be a young girl in Salem was to have no role but obedience, no function but unquestioning faith, no freedom except a willingness to submit to those with power over their lives. Sexuality was proscribed, the imagination distrusted, emotions focused solely on the stirring of the spirit. Rebellion, when it came, was thus likely to take as its target firstly those with least access to power, then those for whom virtue alone was insufficient protection. Next would come those who were themselves regarded as politically vulnerable and finally those who possessed real power. Predictably it was at this final stage that the conspiracy collapsed, just as Senator McCarthy was to thrive on those who possessed no real purchase on the political system and to lose his credibility when he chose to challenge the US Army. The first three witches named were a slave, a labourer's wife, who had become little more than a tramp, and a woman who had absented herself from church and reportedly lived in sin.

The Crucible is a play about the seductive nature of power and for pubescent girls that seductiveness is perhaps not unconnected with a confused sexuality. These were people who chose not to enquire into their own motives. They submitted to the irrational with a kind of perverse pleasure, a pleasure not entirely drained of sexual content. They dealt, after all, with exposure, with stripping souls bare, with provoking and hearing confessions of an erotic forthrightness which no other occasion or circumstance would permit. The judges saw young women cry out in a kind of orgasmic ecstasy. They witnessed men and women of position, intelligence and property rendered into their power by the confessions of those who recalled abuses and assaults revealed to them only in a religiously and therapeutically charged atmosphere.

These were the 'recovered memories' of Puritan New England and the irrational nature of the accusations,
their sexual frisson, the lack of any proof beyond 'spectral evidence' (the dreams and visions of the accusers) was a part of their attraction. When Mary Warren accuses Elizabeth Proctor she says, 'I never knew it before ... and all at once I remembered everything she done to me!' In our own time we are not so remote from this phenomenon as to render it wholly strange. Men and women with no previous memory of assaults, which were apparently barbaric and even demonic, suddenly recall such abuse, more especially when assisted to do so by therapists, social workers or religionists who offer themselves as experts in the spectral world of suppressed memories. Such abuse, recalled in later life, is impossible to verify but the accusations alone have sufficed to destroy entire families. To deny reality to such abuse is itself seen as a dangerous perversion, just as to deny witchcraft was seen as diabolic in Puritan New England.

Did the young girls in Salem, then, see no witches? Were they motivated solely by self-concern or, in Abigail's case, a blend of vengeance and desire? *The Crucible* is not concerned to arbitrate. Tituba plainly does dabble in the black arts, while Mrs Putnam is quite prepared to do so. Abigail seems a more straightforward case. Jealous of Elizabeth Proctor, she sees a way of removing her and marrying John. In the original version of Miller's screenplay, however, in a scene subsequently cut, Abigail does have a vision of Elizabeth's spirit visiting her in her bedroom:

Int. Night Abigail bedroom
She is asleep in bed. She stirs, then suddenly sits up and sees, seated in a nearby chair, a Woman with her back to her. Abigail slides out of bed and approaches the woman, comes around to see her face--it is Elizabeth Proctor.

Abigail:

Elizabeth? I am with God! In Jesus name begone back to Hell! Elizabeth's Face is transformed into that of a Hawk, its beak opening. Abigail steps back in terror.  

Whatever her motives, she plainly sees this phantom even though it is conjured not from the Devil but from guilt and desire, which in Puritan New England were anyway seen as synonymous. In the early screen version Proctor is described as 'Certain now that she's mad'. This takes us beyond the portrait we are offered by the play where she is presented as more clearly calculating, but the essential point is not the nature of her motivation nor even the substantiality or otherwise of witches, but the nature of the real and the manner in which it is determined. Proctor and the others find themselves in court because they deny a reality to which others subscribe and in which, whatever their motives, they in part believe, until, slowly, scepticism begins to infect them with the virus of another reality.

Six months after the play had opened, when Miller restaged it prior to a national tour (the New York run ended on 11 July), he interpolated a new scene to be added to the second act. The *Playbill* for 1 June lists it as Act 1, scene 1. However, since Act 1 was then nominated as the Prologue it appeared in the acting edition as Act 2, scene 2. It features an encounter between Proctor and Abigail, the night before his wife is to appear in court. They meet in the forest, that antinomian world, the place where the whole drama had begun and where the play was originally to have opened had construction costs not led to the elimination of the scene.

Proctor comes to save the life of his wife. He warns Abigail what he intends to do. He has, he explains, documentary proof that she knew that the poppet discovered in their house had no connection with Elizabeth. For her part, Abigail, dressed, significantly, in a nightgown, still hopes that their relationship will flare up again. Why else, after all, has he thrown pebbles against her bedroom window? Most significantly, however, this Abigail has convinced herself that she does indeed do the Lord's work. Accused by Proctor of hypocrisy, she defends herself and it seems not without some inner conviction.

As in the deleted film scenes, she appears to have an imperfect grasp on reality. Her outrage that the victims should be permitted to pray seems genuine enough. She is, we are told, 'Astonished, outraged'. Equally clear, however, is her state of mind. As Proctor talks to her, a stage direction indicates that he sees 'her madness now'. He feels 'uneasiness, as though before an unearthly thing', detects 'a wildness in her'.  
She looks at him as if he were out of his mind, as he warns her that he will confess to adultery if necessary, but the real fear is that she is out of hers. He accuses her of being a 'murderous bitch!' but she
responds by accusing him of hypocrisy, the real terror being that she seems to believe it.

The additional scene does throw light on their relationship. Miller also uses it to underscore the extent to which Abigail has gained notoriety and a kind of sexual allure which accompanies her fame. However, it blunts the force of the court scene and, like the rejected film scenes, risks turning Abigail into a pathological case, less evil than herself deluded.

It is the essence of power that it accrues to those with the ability to determine the nature of the real. They authorise the language, the grammar, the vocabulary within which others must live their lives. As Miller observed in his notebook: 'Very important. To say "There be no witches" is to invite charge of trying to conceal the conspiracy and to discredit the highest authorities who alone can save the community!' Proctor and his wife try to step outside the authorised text. They will acknowledge only those things of which they have immediate knowledge. 'I have wondered if there be witches in the world', observes John Proctor incautiously, adding, 'I have no knowledge of it', as his wife, too, insists that 'I cannot believe it' (66).

When Proctor asserts his right to freedom of thought and speech--'I may speak my heart, I think'--he is reminded that this had been the sin of the Quakers and Quakers, of course, had learned the limits of free speech and faith at the end of a hangman's noose on Boston Common.

There is a court which John and Elizabeth Proctor fear. It is one, moreover, which, if it has no power to sentence them to death, does nonetheless command their lives. As Proctor says to his wife: 'I come into a court when I come into this house!' Elizabeth, significantly, replies: 'The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you' (55). Court and magistrate are simply synonyms for guilt. The challenge for John Proctor is to transform guilt into conscience and hence into responsibility. Guilt renders him powerless, as it had Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman; individual conscience restores personal integrity and identity and places him at the centre of social action.

Despite the suspicions of his judges, though, Proctor does not offer himself as social rebel. If he seeks to overthrow the court it is, apparently, for one reason only: to save his wife. But behind that is another motive: to save not himself but his sense of himself. In common with so many other Miller protagonists he is forced to ask the meaning of his own life. As Tom Wilkinson, who played the part of Proctor in a National Theatre production, has said, 'it is rare for people to be asked the question which puts them squarely in front of themselves'. But that is the question which is asked of John Proctor and which, incidentally, was asked of Miller in writing the play and later in appearing before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Jean-Paul Sartre objected to the French production of the play, which opened at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt on 16 December 1954, translated by Marcel Aymée. For Sartre, the play was essentially a battle for possession of the land between the old and the new settlers. He thus found the ending as smacking of what he called a 'disconcerting idealism'. Proctor's death, and the death of his fellow accused, would 'have held meaning if they were shown as an act of revolt based in social conflict'. He blamed the production in which, he said, the social conflict had become 'incomprehensible' and the death of Proctor 'a purely ethical attitude, not like a free act which he commits to unleash the shame, effectively to deny his position, like the only thing he can still do'. The result was that the play became 'insipid' and 'castrated' because 'the political ideas and social bases of the witch-hunt phenomenon do not appear clearly here'.

The argument is presented as though it were a debate with the translator but actually he is arguing with the original text, which he approaches as a Marxist and finds unsatisfactory precisely because it lacks a Marxist perspective. The fact is that Miller did not see the witch-hunts as emerging from a battle between old and new money, there being precious little new money in a colony quite as young. There were, to be sure, arguments over property, and such arguments often lay not too far below the surface as complainants came forward to point the finger, but this is not where the essence of the play lies. Miller is, indeed, careful to expose these to the audience. But, in a time of flux, property rights had been thrown into some disarray and authority was uncertain.

Power, certainly, is an issue in The Crucible but it is not in the hands of the rich landowners. It is in the hands of young girls who contest the order of the world. It is in the hands of those offered a sudden
sanction for their fears and prejudices. Indeed, it begins to contaminate the agencies and procedures of the state and hence of God's order. It is not, then, the politics of the affair that is Miller's primary concern but precisely Proctor's free act, his ethical attitude. He does not die for the landless, for social justice, but for his sense of himself. It is, strangely, given Sartre's engagement with the play, an existential act and, as Sartre was to say, and as Miller certainly believed, individual decisions do have social consequences. That is the connection between the private world, in which a man decides whether to sign his signature to a lie, and the public world, in which conformity is demanded in the name of an ideal. Sartre, however, looked for some more tangible and external evidence of the social dynamics he assumed to lie beneath the events in Salem.

It is not that Miller wished to focus on the dilemma of a single man. Quite the contrary. In fact in an article to mark the 1958 Off-Broadway production, which was to run for 653 performances and, incidentally, to employ a narrator called 'The Reader' to set the scenes and convey the historical background, he expressed his regret at the narrowing focus of much drama. He now believed, he said, that it was no longer possible to contain the truth of the human situation 'within a single man's guts'. The documentation of 'man's loneliness', he insisted, 'is not in and of itself ultimate wisdom'.

In The Crucible, he explained, he wished to explore the tension between a man's actions and his concept of himself, and the question of whether conscience is an organic part of the human sensibility. He wished to examine the consequences of the handing over of that conscience to others. Aware of the degree to which conscience may be a social construct, as of the degree to which public forms and procedures are a product of willed choices, he set himself to stage the dilemma of the individual who comes to acknowledge a responsibility beyond the self.

Proctor begins the play as a man who believes it possible to remain aloof. The betrayal that obsesses him is born out of a private action and instils a private guilt. He debates with himself as history gathers momentum. He finally steps into the courtroom to defend something more than his threatened wife and dies for an idea of community no less than of personal integrity. Asked to concede a lie—not simply the lie of his own supposed actions but the lie of the state which seeks to define the real and consolidate an abstract authority—he declines. It is simultaneously a private and a public act and it is this that Sartre seemed not to understand or, if understand, accept.

When, later, Sartre wrote his own adaptation of the play for a film version, Les Sorcières de Salem, he injected those very qualities he found lacking, concluding not with the sound of drums rattling 'like bones in the morning air', but with the beginnings of revolt. Miller was not amused.

Nor was this the end of Miller's argument with Sartre. In a discussion of Judge Danforth, he confessed he should have made him more irredeemably evil. Danforth, he explained, was something more than an arbiter of the law in this frontier community. He was the rule-bearer. He patrolled the boundary. He, in Miller's phrase, 'is man's limit'. He stands between men and knowledge. Sartre, as it seemed to Miller, 'reduced him to an almost economic policeman'. Sartre's Danforth never comes to the point at which he realises that he has appropriated his faith to serve the interests of the state and consolidate his own power. Miller conceded that he had himself been remiss in this respect, failing clearly to demarcate the moment at which, knowing, finally, the deceptions being practised, Danforth nonetheless decides to proceed. This, as he suggests, is the obverse of Proctor's final decision that he cannot sign his name to a lie. Danforth can. Sartre's version, however, lacks even the ambivalent awareness that is a mark of Miller's text.

To Miller, therefore, Sartre's conception 'lacks a moral dimension' because it precludes 'a certain aspect of will'. In his version, Danforth remains the same throughout. Lacking self-awareness, he never confronts and rejects the possibility of being other than he is. He is implacable, but the nature of that implacability is different. There is no kinetic morality, no momentary doubt and therefore no decision. He is a representative of unyielding power but his evil is less conscious, seemingly, than a product of historic process. He is a member of a ruling elite, of an unquestioning ideology. He is, in other words, a significant marker in the kind of drama that Sartre preferred to construct from The Crucible rather than the figure Miller created, whatever the playwright's subsequent regrets at his failure to sharpen the issues at stake.
Not that Marcel Aymée, translator-adapter of the first French production, seems to have been any more in tune with Miller's intentions. Having offered something of a travesty of the plot, complete with historical inaccuracies, he observes that 'the sympathy of the American spectator belongs to the seducer' because he is a rugged pioneer and one of a breed of 'New England plowmen who carry in their Puritan round heads the shining promises of the age of skyscrapers and the atom bomb'. The farmer, he concluded, 'is an indisputable hero from the outset. He has only to step on a Broadway stage. It's as if he were wrapped in a Star-Spangled Banner, and the public, its heart swollen with tenderness and pride, eat him up.' This, he suggests, is inadmissible for a Frenchman. No doubt it would be, but the interpretation has a certain ring to it, as does his further suggestion that Abigail is presented as 'little more than a little slut come to sully the glorious dawn of the USA'.

Such, of course, is liable to be the fate of writers who offer their work for translation, as cultural values do not so much clash as annihilate one another. So, with John Proctor cast as the wilful seducer, nonetheless perversely embraced by the American psyche, Abigail becomes the ruined girl to be celebrated by the French translator. Aymée then asks, not unreasonably perhaps, why, in his remorse for his sin, Proctor assumes so little responsibility for the girl he has ruined. For, as Aymée insists, 'he shows no regrets regarding his gravest shortcoming, that of having led astray a little soul who had been entrusted to him', an orphan, to boot, he points out. After all, 'In the eyes of the American today, a Puritan family in Massachusetts in 1690 [sic] is one of those good biblical families in which the master of the house exercises prudent thrift in conjugal patience by screwing the servant girls with God's permission.' This delightful travesty has the virtue of misreading the play, theology and social history simultaneously and within a single sentence. To Aymée, John Proctor is a 'petticoat-rumpler' who 'dreams only of restoring peace in his household'.

So, where Sartre sought to redress the political balance of the play, Aymée set himself to rebalance the scales between seducer and seducee: 'It seemed to me necessary', he explained,

> to bring the pair of lovers back into balance, that is, to blacken the victim and give her a Machiavellianism that she does not have in the Arthur Miller play, in which, in order to save her life and in the sway of group hysteria, she is led to unleash a witch hunt. I wanted to give her full consciousness of the evil in her. Doubtless, in doing that, I greatly falsified the author, and I sincerely regret it.  

The regret did not, however, extend much further than resisting too complete a falsification. 'I am far from taking all the liberties with his text that seemed desirable to me', he insisted, as if this were sufficient by way of moral virtue to purge such alterations as he did make. He would, however, he insisted, abjure from any further adaptations. He did not. In 1958 he adapted A View from the Bridge.

Miller seems to have written The Crucible in a kind of white heat. The enthusiasm and speed with which he went to Salem underlines the urgency with which he regarded the project, as did his later comment, on returning from Salem, that he felt a kind of social responsibility to see it through to production. His achievement was to control and contain that anger without denying it. Linguistically, he achieved that by writing the play, in part, first in verse. Dramatically, he accomplished it by using the structured formality of the court hearings, albeit hearings penetrated by the partly hysterical, partly calculated interventions of the accusing girls.

Much of the achievement of The Crucible lies in his creation of a language that makes the seventeenth century both distant and close, that enables his characters to discover within the limiting vocabulary and grammar of faith-turned-dogma a means to express their own lives. For British dramatist John Arden, who first encountered the play at a time when his own attempts at historical writing had, in his own words, proved 'embarrassingly bad', it 'showed me how it could be done'. In particular, 'it was not just the monosyllabic Anglo-Saxon strength of the words chosen so much as the rhythms that impregnated the speeches', that and 'the sounds of the seventeenth century, not tediously imitated, but ... imaginatively reconstructed to shake hands with the sounds and speech patterns of the twentieth'.  

The language of The Crucible is not authentic, in the sense of reproducing archaisms or reconstructing a seventeenth-century lexis. It is authentic in that it makes fully believable the words of those who speak out of a different
time and place but whose human dilemmas are recognisably our own.

Proctor and his judges were articulate people, even if they were fluent in different languages: he, in that of a common-sense practicality, they in that of a bureaucratic theocracy. He believed what he saw and finally accepted responsibility for his actions. They believed in a shadow world in which visions were substantial and the observable world no more than a delusion, seeing themselves as the agents of an abstract justice and hence freed of personal responsibility. These figures speak to each other across an unbridgeable divide and that gulf is the flaw which fractures their community.

But there is never any sense that those involved in this social and psychological dance of death are rhetoricians, pushing words forward in place of emotions. There may have come a time when the judges ceased defending the faith and began defending themselves, but there is a passion behind their calculation, albeit the passion of those who sacrifice humanity for what they see as an ideal. In that they hardly differ from any other zealot whose hold on the truth depends on a belief that truth must be singular.

These are people, Miller has insisted, who 'regarded themselves as holders of a light. If this light were extinguished, they believed, the world would end.' The effect of this, however, was that if 'you have an ideology which feels itself so pure, it implies an extreme view of the world. Because they are white, opposition is completely black.'

This was the world of Puritan New England but it was also the world of 1950s America and, beyond that, a defining characteristic, perhaps, of the human psyche. 'We have come to a time', he insisted, 'when it seems there must be two sides, and we look back to an ideal state of being, when there was no conflict. Our idea is that conflict can be wiped out of the world. But until man arrives at a point where he realizes that conflict is the essence of life, he will end up knocking himself out.' The crucible is designed to drive out impurities, but impurities are definitional. At the same time a messianic impulse is potentially deadly. What gave a special force to the world of Salem was that he was dealing with people who were very conscious of their ideology, 'special people' who 'could voice the things that were buried deep in them'.

_The Crucible_ is both an intense psychological drama and a play of epic proportions. Its cast is larger than that of almost any of Miller's plays until _The American Clock_ (1980) because this is a drama about an entire community betrayed by a Dionysian surrender to the irrational. Some scenes, therefore, people the stage with characters. It is also, however, a play about the redemption of an individual and through the individual of a society. Some scenes, therefore, show the individual confronted by little more than his own conscience. That oscillation between the public and the private is a part of the structural pattern of the play.

It is a play in which language is a weapon but it is also a physical play, never more so than in Richard Eyre's 2002 Broadway production in which actors sweated in the heat of the day and Proctor, the farmer, enters from the fields and throws water on himself. These are people who seize one another in anger, hope, despair as if they could shake the truth free. Imprisonment leaves Proctor scarred and wrecked. The set itself becomes an actor as an attic room becomes a vaulting courtroom reaching up into an indefinite space, wooden beams swinging ominously up and then down again to compress those committed to jail, their options run out. The play ends, in this production, as abstract shapes seemingly fixed to vertical beams cascade down while Proctor goes to his death, the force which held this community together collapses and we hear the sound of a society crack apart.

Miller was not unaware of the danger of offering the public such a play in 1953 and thereby writing himself into the wilderness, politically and personally. Three years later, he knew that his refusal to name names would be to invite charges of being unpatriotic. Indeed, appearing before the House Un-American Activities Committee he was stung into insisting on his patriotism while defending his right to challenge the direction of American policy and thought.

In the end, though, the House Un-American Activities Committee lost all credibility, the Red Scare passed, and if the accusers did not stand in a church, as Anne Putnam did in 1706, and listen as the minister read out her public apology and confession ('as I was the instrument of accusing Goodwife Nurse and her two sisters, I desire to lie in the dust and be humbled for it ... I desire to ... earnestly beg forgiveness of all those unto whom I have given just cause of sorrow and offence, whose relations were taken away and
accused'), 17 they quickly lost their power and influence.

Today, compilers of programme notes feel as great a need to explain the history of Senator McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee as they do the events of seventeenth-century Salem. In fact, the play's success now owes little to the political and social context in which it was written. It stands, instead, as a study of the debilitating nature of guilt, the seductions of power, the flawed nature of the individual and of the society to which the individual owes allegiance. It stands as a testimony to the ease with which we betray those very values essential to our survival but also to the courage with which some men and women can challenge what seems to be a ruling orthodoxy.

In Salem, Massachusetts, there was to be a single text, a single language, a single reality. Authority invoked demons from whose grasp it offered to liberate its citizens if they would only surrender their consciences to others and acquiesce in the silencing of those who appeared to threaten order. But The Crucible is full of other texts. At great danger to themselves men and women put their names to depositions, signed testimonials, wrote appeals. There was, it appeared, another language, less absolute, more compassionate. There were those who proposed a reality which differed from that offered to them by the state nor would these signatories deny themselves by denying their fellow citizens. There have been many more such since the 1690s, many more, too, since the 1950s, who have done no less. But The Crucible is not to be taken as merely a celebration of the resister, of the individual who refuses incorporation, for John Proctor had denied himself and others long before Tituba and a group of young girls ventured into the forest which fringed the village of Salem.

Like so many of Miller's other plays it is a study of a man who wishes, above all, to believe that he has invested his life with meaning, but cannot do so if he betrays himself through betraying others. It is the study of a society which believes in its unique virtues and seeks to sustain that dream of perfection by denying all possibility of its imperfection. Evil can only be external, for theirs is a City on a Hill. John Proctor's flaw is his failure, until the last moment, to distinguish guilt from responsibility. America's flaw is to believe that it is at the same time both guilty and without flaw.

In 1991, at Salem, Arthur Miller unveiled the winning design for a monument to those who had died. It was dedicated the following year by the Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, thus forging a connection, no matter how fragile or disproportionate, between those who died in Salem in 1692 and those in Europe, in the 1940s, who had been victims of irrationality solemnised as rational process. Speaking of the dead of Salem, Miller said that he had written of them out of 'a strong desire to raise them out of historic dust': 18 Wiesel had done likewise for the Jews of the camps.

Three hundred years had passed. The final act, it seemed, had been concluded. However, not only do witches still die, in more than one country in the world, but groundless accusations are still granted credence, hysteria still claims its victims, persecution still masquerades as virtue and prejudice as piety. Nor has the need to resist coercive myths, or to assert moral truths, passed with such a final act of absolution. The witchfinder is ever vigilant and who would not rather direct his attention to others than stand, in the heat of the day, and challenge his authority?

Writing more than forty-five years after The Crucible, Miller explained that part of the attraction of the play for him lay in the chance it offered for him to write in a new language, 'one that would require new muscles'. 19 One of the interests in reading the notebooks he kept at the time he was writing the play, indeed, is to see him tensing those muscles, not only choosing the story he wishes to tell, forging the historical record into a dramatic shape, but exploring a language that can simultaneously convey the linguistic rhythms of the age and the heightened prose of a work accommodating itself to a tragic sensibility.

He was responding to a phenomenon which, in the seventeenth century and the contemporary world alike, was not only 'paralyzing a whole generation' but was 'drying up the habits of trust and toleration in public discourse'. 20 Language, indeed, was in part the battleground. God and the Devil, capitalism and communism, constituted the ideological site for a conflict in essence about power but also, therefore, about which legitimising language would prevail. Within America, it was not a true debate since in neither time
frame were there any who spoke out either for evil or a diabolic communism. Victory was to be declared over those whose cunning made them foreswear themselves or invoke ambiguity at a time of absolutes. Yet those who exercised power felt insecure in their possession of it.

The victory of righteousness in seventeenth-century Massachusetts seemed threatened by internal and external powers while, in the twentieth century, the Soviet possession of nuclear weapons and the 'loss' of China to communism made the United States seem physically vulnerable and ideologically insecure. To be an un-American was to move outside a set of presumptions about national values and also outside of a language. Suddenly, the issue was loyalty. In whose book had you signed your name, God's or the Devil's? And the signing of names became an iconic gesture, again in both periods. If The Crucible is full of petitions, warrants, confessions, then before the House Un-American Activities Committee individuals were confronted with their signatures on petitions, Party membership forms, published articles, invoked now as evidence of collusive and public subversion. Miller himself, during his own appearance before the Committee, was repeatedly asked to confirm his signature, the listing of his name on declarations, statements, calls for social justice.

Nor was this only a product of the right. Miller has spoken of the linguistic contortions exercised by left-wing critics desperate to follow a shifting Party line and consequently exchanging one language for another as a work was hailed as progressive one week only to be condemned as reactionary the next, or vice versa. Language was unstable. It was no longer a precise agent of communication, fully transitive. It was a weapon, blunt, coercive, and frequently opaque. It was like a spell, pronounced over those who appeared the source of threat. Open discourse gave way to slogans, jargon, a pseudo-scientific mock precision.

His sense of being trapped in an Escher drawing perfectly reflected the paradox of a Puritan state or modern American society in which confession of guilt resulted in absolution while declarations of innocence were seen as the ultimate proof of guilt. His sense of inhabiting an art form, a metaphor, a system of signs whose meanings were the province of a select priesthood, simultaneously left him with a profound sense of unreality and a determination to capture that feeling in an art of his own, equally arbitrary but a means of laying bare the mechanisms of unreality.

Informing was presented as a duty in the 1950s, professors on students, students on professors, as neighbour was encouraged to inform on neighbour in seventeenth-century Salem. What both societies felt in the face of such sanctioned betrayal was a form of impotence. It was a world in which 'the outrageous had so suddenly become the norm'. And impotence, or, more precisely, paralysis, became a familiar Miller trope as he witnessed and dramatised individuals and societies seemingly in thrall to the idea of their own powerlessness. Proctor stays his hand when he should have intervened but learns that there is no separate peace. The price of living is involvement. His sense of guilt with respect to Abigail momentarily freezes his will to act, as guilt clouds the mind of a number of Miller's other protagonists. The problem, as he saw it, was that 'we had grown detached from any hard reality I knew about. It had become a world of symbols, gestures, loaded symbolic words, and of rites and of rituals.' What was at stake was ideas, by their nature invisible, and a supposed conspiracy aimed at the overthrow of established powers. His problem, as he saw it, was how to 'deal with this mirage world'.

At issue, after all, was not simply a vision of the moral world but a definition of reality in a culture in which those in power sanctioned belief in spirits, embraced a paranoid version of social behaviour. The real was what such people held it to be. In one sense, then, the fictions of art were to be pitched against those of the state as, in another sense, history was to be invoked to redress the balance, though a history seen not from the perspective of those who presumed themselves its primary agencies.

For Miller, one of the curiosities of the Committee hearings was that few if any of the accused chose to stand their ground and defend their supposed faith, instead deploying legalities and appeals to constitutional guarantees. There was, in other words, an absence at the heart of the whole affair. The irony in Salem, in 1692, centred on another absence, that of the witches whom an investigating body sought and was obliged to identify in order to justify its own actions. Indeed, with every new victim it became necessary for its members to announce their belief with ever greater assurance or confront not only responsibility for injustice but a vision of the world that would leave them adrift, with no moral structure to embrace save one which would leave them profoundly culpable.
In the end, he said, the more he worked on *The Crucible* the less concerned he became with analogy, despite the cogency of such: 'More than a political metaphor, more than a moral tale, *The Crucible*, as it developed for me over the period of more than a year, became the awesome evidence of the power of the human imagination inflamed, the poetry of suggestion, and finally the tragedy of heroic resistance to a society possessed to the point of ruin.'22 The choice of words is instructive. It is as if he saw in the events that took place in Salem the elaboration of a human drama that seemed already to have shaped itself into theatre because it drew on the same resources. The witch trials were produced, performed, staged because it is the essence of life seen under pressure to take on the appearance and substance of art. How else to engage it, then, except through the homeopathic agency of the theatre?

What drew him finally, though, as he researched his drama, was less the parallel between the investigation of supposed conspiracies than the rituals developed, rituals by which confession was seen as validating accusation, betrayal was seen as the route to redemption while proof lay in reiterated suspicion rather than in anything so banal as concrete and testable fact. The accusation was that the witches, the communists, the fellow-travellers, had chosen to inhabit another narrative, to perform roles in an alternative drama.

The existence of godless communists necessitated and justified the existence of those who identified, exposed and punished them. So, too, in Puritan New England, with a neat piece of inverted logic, the existence of investigators implied the existence of those they were appointed to investigate.

It is not that Miller himself was free of illusion, or that self-righteous vigour that comes with certainty no matter how shallow the soil in which it sinks its roots. Perhaps something of the force of *The Crucible*, indeed, comes less from the cant of his own subsequent accusers--not, in truth, like many of those who set themselves to track down modern witches, genuine ideologues--than from his own youthful dedication to the fantasies of a Marxism that required no evidence, no reliable witnesses, to validate its assumptions.

His own rejection of those who failed to endorse the orthodoxies of his new faith was no less peremptory, surely, than that of those Puritan judges who believed they saw evidence of unbelief or association with the forces of darkness. In retrospect, his own commitment to Soviet ideals which turned out to be no more than cover for rapacity and ambition could not have seemed so remote from the delusions embraced with such evident enthusiasm by Puritans and fifties conservatives alike.

At stake, he realised, was a language, so easily accommodated to the purposes of power, whether in seventeenth-century Salem or 1950s Washington. In both periods people were ensnared with words, forced to present themselves and interpret their actions in terms of an idiolect precisely designed to create a new ontological matrix. McCarthy's America found itself not only at the interface of two ideologies, with their supporting linguistic systems, but at a moment in American history when New Deal politics, and the utopianism of thirties and wartime America, shattered on the ambition of those who rode a new conservativism, as it did on the paranoia they fostered.

It was the very insecurity of authority that made it implacable, as though it could stabilise a disturbingly fluid world by fiat. Language was policed, inspected for its hidden subversion, revealing nuances. The word 'socialist', Miller recalls, was less a word describing a particular ideology than a marker for the foreign and the menacing.

To speak of 'right' or 'justice', to lay claim to freedom of speech or assembly was to identify yourself as a non-player in the American game, a dissenter from that aggressive conformity that passed for patriotism. Why, after all, would you need to lay claim to American freedoms if you were not using them to conceal subversion? What was needed was confession and there was, as Miller has suggested, a religious tone to the period. Confession was required; absolution was available. The thing was to be in a state of grace. Sinners who repented were welcomed to the fold, especially if, as in seventeenth-century Salem, they traded in a few fellow sinners. In both cases, confession plus informing was the formula for personal security. By the same token, the sanction of excommunication was available, excommunication from the true church that is America. No wonder Miller felt convinced of the authenticity of the parallel between fifties America and the Salem of 1692.
There was, and seemingly not incidentally, the same distrust of intellectuals in both periods. One of the
Salem accusers--like so many of them, young girls--denounced an older woman because she was seen to
read books. Giles Corey directed a similar accusation at his wife, with fatal results. Only the Bible and the
authorised texts of witch-finders are legitimate. McCarthy, himself scarcely an intellectual, made a point of
going after and humiliating Ivy Leaguers, New Dealers, writers and teachers. Books were, indeed, banned.
In the end, *The Crucible* is perhaps about the tendency--never fully resisted--to condemn difference. We
are, after all, constantly reminded--from Salem to the former Yugoslavia--that neighbour can swiftly turn
informer, betrayer, accuser and even assassin. When the Stasi files were opened in Germany, after the fall
of the Berlin Wall, husbands were found to have informed on wives and vice versa. In the pages that
fluttered down from the looted building were the devastating truths of lifelong betrayals. The same was true
in Rumania. In 1690s Salem, Sarah Good was doomed when her three-year-old daughter claimed that her
mother had three familiars--'three birds, one black, one yellow, and that these birds hurt the children and
afflicted persons'--while her husband confessed that he thought her a witch. 23

It is as much that mystery as any that Miller's play explores. As he explained, writing in 1999,

Salem village, that pious devout settlement at the very edge of white civilization, had taught me-
three centuries before the Russo-American rivalry and the issues that it raised--that a kind of
built-in pestilence was nestled in the human mind, a fatality forever awaiting the right conditions
for its always unique, forever unprecedented outbreak of alarm, suspicion and murder. And to
people wherever the play is performed on any of the five continents, there is always a certain
amazement that the same terror that had happened to them had happened before to others. 24

He has observed that there are times when he wishes he had chosen to write an absurd comedy rather
than *The Crucible*, this being closer to his sense of a world in which rational principles were in abeyance.
Indeed, he recalls the fate of two young men from Boston who were arrested when they responded to one
of the more egregious idiocies of the Salem trial by laughing. These two figures, indeed, appear in an early
draft of the film script in a scene subsequently deleted.

In the notebooks Miller tried out a number of possible titles for his play: *The Devil's Handyman, The
Spectral Experience, That Invisible World, The Easiest Room in Hell, Delusion*. He even copyrighted an
earlier version under the title *Those Familiar Spirits*, which has unfortunate overtones of Noel Coward. In
the end, however, *The Crucible* had the advantage of applying to all the characters, not excluding John
Proctor, and the society itself. For this is a play about a testing time, about a moment, repeated throughout
history, in which the true metal of individuals, and the society they have collaborated in creating, is finally
exposed.

That few people seemed to know what a crucible might be was less important when the play opened than
the cold alarm he felt move through the audience as they began to sense that they were becoming
confederate with an attack on the ruling political orthodoxy. A securely remote historical work had
transmuted in front of their eyes and confronted them with the passions of their own times. Half a century
later, *The Crucible* still has the power to disturb. It may have been generated by a particular alignment of
circumstances, but the dilemma at its heart, its concern with betrayal, self-interest, power, a coercive
language, personal and public responsibility, abusive authority, injustice, corrosive myths, remains of central
significance, as does its awareness of the individual's struggle to locate and define him or herself in the
face of forces that seem to leave so little space for a moral being.

In 1703 the General Court of Massachusetts ruled spectral evidence inadmissible. In 1704 the Reverend
Michael Wigglesworth wrote to Increase Mather suggesting that the failure to atone for the killing of the
innocent meant that it was necessary for those who had been 'actors' in that calamity to acknowledge their
guilt. The word was a telling one. For all Puritan hostility to theatre, few were as aware of life as drama.
Miller, then, was not the first to recognise the nature of the inner procedures and central trope of that time.
In his study of the witch-hunts, Charles Upham, in 1867, remarked of the young girls who brought so many
to their deaths that they were better actors than were to be seen in the theatre and clearly there was a drama played out in Salem that was liable to fire the imagination of a playwright.

When, in 1706, Ann Putnam, still living in Salem Village, and now fourteen years older than the young girl who had named twenty-six people as witches, stood as the Reverend Green read her confession, it was less than a fulsome apology. She was, she insists, 'deluded by Satan'. Senator Joseph McCarthy, however, made no such an apology. He, after all, was deluded by nobody and nothing but his own inadequacies and ambition, a self-authenticated witch-hunter in search of significance. For Arthur Miller, such responsibility lay at the heart of The Crucible. John Proctor found himself at the intersecting point of private and public meaning. His decision, in fact and fiction, to confront those who offered him life at the price of capitulation played its role in ending the witch-hunt of 1692, as it simultaneously demonstrated the ability of the individual to challenge power and the language with which it seeks to legitimate itself.

In October 1710, the General Court finally agreed to reverse the convictions and attainders of a number of those who had suffered. Among these was John Proctor, now eighteen years dead. John Hale, meanwhile, stricken with guilt at having collaborated with the general frenzy, declared that the disaster had been a product of 'the darkness of that day' when 'we walked in the clouds, and could not see our way'. The darkness, he implied, had now lifted. The evidence for that, however, as the centuries have passed and other witch-hunts, other acts of betrayal, have been committed, has been far from conclusive. The innocent are still destroyed by those who seek their own immunity or self-interest, by those so certain of their own convictions that they make others the proof of their righteousness, evidence of a faith that requires sacrifices to legitimate its central tenets. How else can you be sure that you live in the City on the Hill unless you can look down on those who thus confirm your own elevation?

In writing The Crucible, Miller saw himself as resisting what seemed to him to be a reductive tendency in modern playwriting and modern thought. As he remarked, 'Today's writers describe man's helplessness and eventual defeat.' In Salem, he conceded, 'you have the story of a defeat because these people were destroyed, and this makes it real to us today because we believe in defeat'. However, he insisted, these were people who 'understood at the same time what was happening to them. They knew why they struggled ... they did not die helplessly.' It was, he said, 'the moral size of these people' that drew him. They did not 'whimper'. In terms reminiscent of William Faulkner's Nobel Prize address, he insisted that 'we should be tired by now of merely documenting the defeat of man. This play', he asserted, 'is a step toward an assertion of a positive kind of value in contemporary plays.'

Somewhat surprisingly, he chose to suggest that since 1920 American drama had been 'a steady, year-by-year documentation of the frustration of man', asserting that 'I do not believe in this ... this is not our fate.' He was thinking, perhaps, of O'Neill but also of those writers who had chosen to document the oppressive details of social life. 'It is not enough', he insisted, 'to tell what is happening; the newspapers do that.' Even so, his observation that 'in our drama the man with convictions has in the past been a figure of comic fun' seems curiously at odds with a decade of committed drama in which the man with convictions had been the central protagonist of plays which presumed the immediate possibility of transforming society. Meanwhile, his assertion that 'he fits in our drama more now' and that he was 'trying to find a way, a form, a method of depicting people who do think' was a statement of intent which, beyond The Crucible, would not find its fulfilment until After the Fall.

Miller has always had an aversion to films. For him, they are incorrigibly trivial, favouring action over ideas and language. The role of the writer in the cinema is that of a hired man who does not own the product of his labour and who is subordinate to those who wield the real power: producer, director, actor. It is a world in which spectacle can replace thought, a world of Dolby Surround Sound, hugely magnified images, a made object, unyielding, unchanging. The theatre, by contrast, deals in danger and vulnerability. Actor confronts audience, words become a primary means of communication. The adaptation of play to film seemed to him necessarily a reductive process, one which rarely benefits either medium.

With The Crucible, however, he was forced to revise a number of these assumptions. Suddenly, it became possible to constitute the community of Salem more directly. He recalled his research, four decades earlier, in which the testimonies of those involved had 'created a marvellously varied tapestry of that seventeenth-
century America still in the earliest stages of defining itself', and found that 'once I had begun thinking about it as a film it became obvious that I had in fact always seen it as a flow of images which had had to be evoked through language for the stage'.

What was previously reported could now be shown, from the sexually charged scene in the forest, as repressions are momentarily abandoned, the disciplined code of the community secretly rejected, to the physical location of that community, clinging to the edge of the continent and slowly subordinating the land to human will in the service of divine intent. Suddenly the wild anarchy of the meeting house, breaking through the carapace of rational process, could be presented in its disturbing reality, as itself a product of a deepening hysteria rooted in private no less than public anxieties and fears.

The fact remained, however, that *The Crucible* was made from language, that much of the notebook he kept when writing it is concerned with capturing a tone, with creating what he has called 'a kind of sculpted language', generating precise rhythms. These, to some degree, would have to take second place to images if it was not to become 'a static photographed play', which was all too often the fate of adapted works.

The script, he has explained, was rejected by at least a dozen directors before it fell into the hands of Nicholas Hytner, whose background at the Royal Shakespeare Company gave him a sympathy both for Miller's dedication to language and the challenge of creating a film based, as he understood, on that 'insistence on the inseparable link between communal chaos and personal trauma' which lies at the heart of *The Crucible* and, indeed, most of Miller's work. Hytner felt, he has explained, 'the ancient stirrings of pity and terror' as he read the screenplay, itself an indication that the director of Shakespearean tragedy registered Miller's intention in a work that had originally been crafted as a modern tragedy. Hytner's account of his approach to the making of *The Crucible* is, in fact, and unsurprisingly, a highly intelligent analysis of the play as well as of the screenplay that emerged in the course of filming.

For him, the essence of theatre is that, in film terms, it 'operates in permanent medium shot', while a film can 'contain a whole society and move in close enough to see into a girl's heart'. In truth, so can a play which, after all, its conventions once accepted, can have a fluidity and shifting perspective capable of matching that of a film. For Hytner, however, the energy that comes from cutting between shots, 'so that the violence of the mob becomes both the consequence and the source of pain and confusion behind the eyes of the girl in the close-up', is different in kind from that produced in the theatre. The cascade of images, each one causally plausible, becomes a correlative for that seemingly unstoppable momentum created out of 'individual betrayals' and 'collective panic'. Certainly one of the achievements of the film version lies in this pulsing between private and public, cause and effect.

What it was not was a work that required the historical context of the 1950s to appreciate. The parallels were closer to hand and Hytner, and those involved, felt their pressure as they prepared to shoot the film: 'it spoke directly about the bigotry of religious fundamentalists across the globe, about communities torn apart by accusations of child abuse, about the rigid intellectual orthodoxies of college campuses'. Nonetheless, as Hytner recognised, its power as paradigm depended on the very specificity of location, the details of a life simultaneously lived symbolically, and with a tangible facticity.

He was also concerned to capture another aspect of the play and, incidentally, one of Miller's own thematic concerns throughout his career. Salem was a utopia whose own utopian presumptions opened the way for corruption. In Hytner's words, 'The light gives birth to the dark.' This, after all, was to be a new Eden and it became necessary to patrol its boundaries to prevent evil entering and to extirpate it should it appear. Violence, in other words, was imminent, a kinetic force ready to discharge itself in action. The location of his Salem, then, with the sea to one side and the forest to another, was to create a kind of *cordon sanitaire*. In both directions lay risks: the religious corruptions they had fled in Europe and the antinomian world of the frontier. That double threat left the community and the human heart open for the Devil's work. Hytner, accordingly, chose an idyllic setting, a paradise on the edge of the ocean whose equivocal location, whose tenuous hold on the continent, was in part an explanation for the hysteria which could fan from a spark to a fire.
In fact, as Hytner acknowledges, Salem is more than a mile inland, a harbour town, but for his purposes he wanted the sea in vision, as a reminder of their exposed location, of the world from which they had fled. In particular, he wanted to play the final scene here, on the edge of a continent, to dramatise the fact that the fate of a continent, as well as that of a single man, was at stake. In this he had Miller's support, as he did in his requests for amendments to the script that would adjust to new possibilities and new visual ideas, though much of the original dialogue remained. Interestingly, every one of the scenes quoted earlier from the original screenplay was excised as part of this process.

The first two acts, as Hytner has explained, were substantially revised. The camera was able to move swiftly around the community with news of Betty's sickness, not merely thereby establishing the extent of the town and its interconnecting relationships, but recreating the process whereby stories, rumours, insinuations, accusations were to move around the same social space, gathering momentum as they went, heightening tension, creating an emotional vortex. This swirl of movement, meanwhile, was to be played against the static, withdrawn, contained world of John Proctor whose 'passivity is matched by the camera's'.

This is that paralysis that lies at the heart of *The Golden Years* and *Broken Glass*, a failure of will that is ultimately a failure of morality and individual responsibility. Through guilt, Proctor hesitates to involve himself and thereby becomes culpable. Not to act, therefore, is to become guilty. Not to speak is to become complicit, which is perhaps why *The Crucible* exists, why Miller did not withdraw from so public a confrontation with powers whose authority was growing daily.

For Hytner, the camera was to be an agent, an active player, static when observing moral stasis, swooping down as an embodiment of imagined evils, racing through the town as time accelerates and emotions run ahead of thought. It observes and participates in the sensuality of the opening sequence. This is no longer a report of the young girls' dancing in the forest but their actual and hesitant performance, their shedding of inhibitions and, indeed, clothes, their playful abandonment of repressions which anticipates the more lethal abandonment of repressions that follows and which makes the girls offer evidence of supposed depravities that will lead to the execution of their elders. Miller had, in fact, anticipated such a scene in his early notebook in which, in free-verse form, he has Abigail seek a genuine potion to render Proctor into her hands:

O Tituba. I can't wait.
I am of age, my blood, my blood.
My blood is thrashing in my hips,
My skin revels at every breeze
I never sleep but dreams come itching
Up my back like little cats
With silky tails! You promised
When I came of age you'd work a charm
No man can break outside my love
Then let's pretend; let's believe
I do, but that he never touches me
Like some I've heard don't touch a wife
But once a year. My husband's there,
Tituba, inside that tree. Now what
Shall I do to bring him out?
What shall I do to turn his face to me?

Miller's original film script had begun with a collage of shots, including fishermen returning with their catch, a blacksmith shoeing a horse, two men sawing a log, a house being raised, its beams tennoned and pegged, a man squaring a log with an axe, the normality, in other words, to be disturbed by the events that will follow. This segues into a further series of shots which introduce some of the principal characters, from the Putnam to Martha and Giles Corey to the Proctors. These scenes were to have their parallel at the end of the film as we see the fields in a state of decay and revisit fishermen, blacksmith and sawyer in order to register the general collapse of social order provoked by the witch-hunters. Looters are at large. This framing was abandoned in favour of entering the film through the young girls who leave their houses...
for the rendezvous in the forest which will provoke what follows, and leaving it through the climactic death of John Proctor.

The film ends with the intoning of the Lord's Prayer by one of those about to be hanged, a supposedly impossible feat for witches. In fact, when the historical John Proctor was killed, Sheriff Corwin hurried to his home and, in a reminder of the suspect motives of the witch-finders, illegally seized his property:

The sheriff come to his house and seized all the goods, provisions, and cattle that he could come at, and sold some of the cattle at half price, and killed others, and put them up for the West Indies; threw out the beer out of a barrel, and carried away the barrel; emptied a pot of broth, and took away the pot, and left nothing in the house for the support of the children.37

It was one last cruel action, one last evidence of tainted motives, of the fact that a campaign to defend the good requires its defining victims.

John Proctor was not the only one to lose his life and his property, but in Miller's hands he became the crucial figure. It was, after all, as he had reminded himself in his notebook that it should be, 'basically Proctor's story.' There is, indeed, a causal link between his affair with Abigail and the death of his neighbours. Her revels in the forest were her attempt to lure him back into a relationship to which he had once committed himself. His sense of guilt does stay his hand when he might have intervened. In an early version of the film script, as Abigail visits Proctor in his prison cell to urge him to escape with her, and the Rev Hale tries to salve his own conscience by convincing him to confess to untruth, Miller indicates that 'Proctor looks into Hale's eyes and understands his guilt. Now he looks to this 'whore', who bears the same message as the Minister. The guilt is now upon all of them, and it creates a kind of communion for this moment.' 'A strange matter, isn't it' he says, 'that you ... and she ... and I ... be all of us guilty?'

For the first time in his career, Miller was happy with the film version of one of his plays. Perhaps, in part, this was because his son Robert was its producer, and anxious to protect his father's work. But it was also because in Hytner he found someone, trained in theatre, with a respect for language but who brought to the production a strong sense of how film could be used to relate the private to the public. It seemed to him that film could add depth to certain aspects of the drama and the camera move through the community whose tragedy this ultimately was. The film also had one other long-lasting effect. It was while it was being shot that Miller's daughter Rebecca met Daniel Day Lewis whom she was to marry. In 1953, though, this lay well over forty years in the future.

Notes

1. The Crucible notebook held at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.


5. All quotations from the original screenplay are from a typescript in the author's possession.


9. Ibid.

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