ENGLISH III
MR. MEGLIN
THE CRUCIBLE AS AN ALLEGORICAL WORK OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Assignment:

1. Read Arthur Miller's article (nine pages of an article he wrote explaining why he wrote *The Crucible*, what America was like in the 40's and 50's during "the Red Scare," and how he couldn't stop thinking about similarities of behavior in the ways that the people in Salem, the leaders, church officials and magistrates were behaving, and the way our government and U.S. citizens were behaving (how both had similar fears, and how there was not a fear of witches, but a fear of communism spreading and the fear of how it could lead to a nuclear war), making Miller's play an allegorical one. (Definition of Allegory shows up below).
2. Use your analytical skills of thinking and recall a lot of what went down in Act One and then, actually again in Act Three. Notice how people were falsely accusing one another and how Deputy Governor Danforth and the town's "important" people treated one another so that you see how they may dislike one another in Act One, and how those dislikes climatically build to events in Act III. Be able to say in your essay, "Remember in The Crucible when……..., well, this moment is similar to what Arthur Miller is noticing in his life in America when he says……." This is what needs to be brought into your essay.
3. Write a well thought out essay. Here's the main essay prompt:

Explain to your reader how Arthur Miller's The Crucible is an allegory.
Feel free to use this statement as your paper's thesis:

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* was written in 1952, yet most of the characters in his play, Puritans living in Salem in 1692, behave quite similarly and experience similar injustices as do many Americans living here 350 years later.

Your paper needs to address some of these guiding questions for its success when I grade them

Site examples from Miller's article of how HUAC questioned people who were accused communists and relate them to moments in Miller's play when similar accusations or interrogations (remember how Danforth treated the accused?)

How was Arthur Miller treated differently than other Americans and why? Was someone "privileged" in The Crucible who got better treatment than others? (Think not just about Abigail, but think about the Putnam family and Parris' family)

How are both settings similar? How does Miller describe the America he is living in during the early 1950s and the strict, church-minded people living in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692?

Speaking of Allegory, have you forgotten about what that is when I went over it in class? Here's the definition and explanation I had on the projector a week or so ago:

Allegory

A story or poem in which characters, settings, and events stand for other people or events, or for abstract ideas or qualities. An allegory can be read on one level for its literal meaning and on a second level of its symbolic or allegorical meaning.
A poem, story, play or even a picture can be interpreted to reveal some kind of hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.
Webster's Dictionary-A literary, dramatic or pictorial device in which each character, object, and event symbolically illustrates (a symbolic representation of something), an idea or religious principle.
You see, even the Puritans were trained to see their own lives as allegories (biblical experiences through God's voice, God's intentions).
So, in effect, one could say that Miller's *The Crucible* was in fact an allegorical play used to reveal how the government and the media were treating the American people at the height of "The Red Scare" in the late 1940s and early 1950s in the United States.
Consider yourselves Crucible experts. Not only did you read all four acts of his play, but you heard the lines being performed and acted by Hollywood stars. Not only did you read the book and answer questions to do a better job at recalling the story, but you also viewed a two hour movie version of the play in class. Feel free to consult with one another in class while I am not here in order to help each other out and brainstorm ideas for the essay assignment described on the next page.

Here's Arthur Miller's article that you need to read completely to make the connections for your paper.

Arthur Miller, "Are You Now Or Were You Ever?" from *The Guardian/The Observer* (on line), Saturday, June 17, 2000

Are you now or were you ever...? The McCarthy-era anti-communist trials destroyed lives and friendships. Arthur Miller describes the paranoia that swept America - and the moment his then wife Marilyn Monroe became a bargaining chip in his own prosecution

Saturday June 17, 2000
It would probably never have occurred to me to write a play about the Salem witch trials of 1692 had I not seen some astonishing correspondences with that calamity in the America of the late 40s and early 50s. My basic need was to respond to a phenomenon which, with only small exaggeration, one could say paralyzed a whole generation and in a short time dried up the habits of trust and toleration in public discourse.

I refer to the anti-communist rage that threatened to reach hysterical proportions and sometimes did. I can't remember anyone calling it an ideological war, but I think now that that is what it amounted to. I suppose we rapidly passed over anything like a discussion or debate, and into something quite different, a hunt not just for subversive people, but for ideas and even a suspect language. The object was to destroy the least credibility of any and all ideas associated with socialism and communism, whose proponents were assumed to be either knowing or unwitting agents of Soviet subversion.

An ideological war is like guerrilla war, since the enemy is an idea whose proponents are not in uniform but are disguised as ordinary citizens, a situation that can scare a lot of people to death. To call the atmosphere paranoid is not to say that there was nothing real in the American-Soviet stand-off. But if there was one element that lent the conflict a tone of the inauthentic and the invented, it was the swiftness with which all values were forced in months to reverse themselves. *Death of a Salesman* (another of Miller's plays he is famous for writing) opened in February 1949 and was hailed by nearly every newspaper and magazine. Several movie studios wanted it and finally Columbia Pictures bought it, and engaged a great actor, Frederick March, to play Willy [the central character].

In two years or less, with the picture finished, I was asked by a terrified Columbia to sign an anti-communist declaration to ward off picket lines which the right wing American Legion was threatening to throw across the entrances of theatres showing the film. In the phone calls that followed, the air of panic was heavy. It was the first intimation of what would soon follow. I declined to make any such statement, which I found demeaning; what right had any organization to demand anyone's pledge of loyalty? I was sure the whole thing would soon go away; it was just too outrageous.

But instead of the problem disappearing, the studio actually made another film, a short to be shown with Salesman. This was called *The Life of a Salesman* and consisted of several lectures by City College School of Business professors - which boiled down to selling was a joy, one of the most gratifying and useful professions, and that Willy was simply a nut. Never in show-business history has a studio spent so much good money to prove that its feature film was

pointless. In less than two years Death of a Salesman had gone from being a masterpiece to being a heresy, and a fraudulent one at that.

In 1948-51, I had the sensation of being trapped inside a perverse work of art, one of those Escher constructs in which it is impossible to make out whether a stairway is going up or down. Practically everyone I knew stood within the conventions of the political left of centre; one or two were Communist party members, some were fellow-travelers, and most had had a brush with Marxist ideas or organizations. I have never been able to believe in the reality of these people being actual or putative traitors any more than I could be, yet others like them were being fired from teaching or jobs in government or large corporations. The surrealism of it all never left me. We were living in an art form, a metaphor that had suddenly, incredibly, gripped the country.
In today's terms, the country had been delivered into the hands of the radical right, a ministry of free-floating apprehension toward anything that never happens in the middle of Missouri. It is always with us, this anxiety, sometimes directed towards foreigners, Jews, Catholics, fluoridated water, aliens in space, masturbation, homosexuality, or the Internal Revenue Department. But in the 50s any of these could be validated as real threats by rolling out a map of China. And if this seems crazy now, it seemed just as crazy then, but openly doubting it could cost you.
So in one sense The Crucible was an attempt to make life real again, palpable and structured. One hoped that a work of art might illuminate the tragic absurdities of an anterior work of art that was called reality, but was not. It was the very swiftness of the change that lent it this surrealism. Only three or four years earlier an American movie audience, on seeing a newsreel of Stalin saluting the Red Army, would have applauded, for that army had taken the brunt of the Nazi onslaught, as most people were aware. Now they would look on with fear or at least bewilderment, for the Russians had become the enemy of mankind, a menace to all that was good. It was the Germans who, with amazing rapidity, were turning good. Could this be real?

In the unions, communists and their allies, known as intrepid organizers, were to be shorn of membership and turned out as seditious. Harry Bridges, the idol of west coast longshoremen, whom he had all but single-handedly organized, was subjected to trial after trial to drive him back to his native Australia as an un-admitted communist. Academics, some prominent in their fields, were especially targeted, many forced to retire or fired for disloyalty. Some were communists, some were fellow travelers and, inevitably, a certain number were unaffiliated liberals refusing to sign one of the dozens of humiliating anti-communist pledges being required by terrified college administrations.

But it is impossible to convey properly the fears that marked that period. Nobody was shot, to be sure, although some were going to jail, where at least one, William Remington, was murdered by an inmate hoping to shorten his sentence by having killed a communist. Rather than physical fear, it was the sense of impotence, which seemed to deepen with each week, of being unable to

speak accurately of the very recent past when being left wing in America, and for that matter in Europe, was to be alive to the dilemmas of the day.

As for the idea of willingly subjecting my work not only to some party's discipline but to anyone's control, my repugnance was such that, as a young and indigent writer, I had turned down lucrative offers to work for Hollywood studios because of revulsion at the thought of someone owning the paper I was typing on. It was not long, perhaps four or five years, before the fraudulence of Soviet cultural claims was as clear to me as it should have been earlier. But I would never have found it believable, in the 50s or later, that with its thuggish self-righteousness and callous contempt for artists' freedoms, that the Soviet way of controlling culture could be successfully exported to America.

Some greatly talented people were driven out of the US to work in England: screenwriters like Carl Foreman and Donald Ogden Stewart, actors like Charlie Chaplin and Sam Wanamaker. I no longer recall the number of our political exiles, but it was more than too many and disgraceful for a nation prideful of its democracy.

Writing now, almost half a century later, with the Soviet Union in ruins, China rhetorically fending off capitalism even as in reality it adopts a market economy, Cuba wallowing helplessly in the Caribbean, it is not easy to convey the American fear of a masterful communism. The quickness with which Soviet-style regimes had taken over Eastern Europe and China was breathtaking, and I believe it stirred up a fear in Americans of our own ineptitudes, our mystifying inability, despite our military victories, to control the world whose liberties we had so recently won back from the Axis powers.

In 1956, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) subpoenaed me - I was cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to identify writers I had met at one of the two communist writers' meetings I had attended many years before. By then, the tide was going out for HUAC and it was finding it more difficult to make front pages. However, the news of my forthcoming marriage to Marilyn Monroe was too tempting to be passed. That our marriage had some connection with my being subpoenaed was confirmed when Chairman Walters of the HUAC sent word to Joseph Rauh, my lawyer, that he would be inclined to cancel my hearing if Miss Monroe would consent to have a picture taken with him.

The offer having been declined, the good chairman, as my hearing came to an end, entreated me to write less tragically about our country. This lecture cost me $40,000 in lawyer's fees, a year's suspended sentence for contempt of Congress, and a $500 fine. Not to mention about a year of inanition in my creative life.

My fictional view of the period, my sense of its unreality had been, like any impotence, a psychologically painful experience. A similar paralysis descended on Salem. In both places, to keep social unity intact, the authority of leaders had to be hardened and words of skepticism toward them constricted. A new cautionary diction, an uncustomary prudence inflected our way of talking to one another. The word socialism was all but taboo. Words had gotten fearsome. As I learned directly in Ann Arbor on a 1953 visit, university students were avoiding renting rooms in houses run by the housing cooperative for fear of being labelled communist, so darkly suggestive was the word cooperative. The head of orientation at the university told me, in a rather cool, uninvolved manner, that the FBI was enlisting professors to report on students voicing leftwing opinions, and - more comedy - that they had also engaged students to report on professors with the same views.

In the early 50s, along with Elia Kazan, who had directed *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, I submitted a script to Harry Cohn, head of Columbia Pictures. It described the murderous corruption in the gangster-ridden Brooklyn longshoremen's union. Cohn read the script and called us to Hollywood, where he casually informed us that he had had the script vetted by the FBI, and that they had seen nothing subversive in it. But the head of the AFL motion picture unions in Hollywood, Roy Brewer, had condemned it as untrue communist propaganda, since there were no gangsters on the Brooklyn waterfront. Cohn, no stranger to gangsterism, having survived an upbringing in the tough Five Points area of Manhattan, opined that Brewer was only trying to protect Joe Ryan, head of the Brooklyn longshoremen (who, incidentally, would go to Sing Sing prison for gangsterism).

Brewer threatened to call a strike of projectionists in any theatre daring to show the film. Cohn offered his solution to the problem: he would produce the film if I would make one change - the gangsters in the union were to be changed to communists. This would not be easy; I knew all the communists on the waterfront- there were two of them (both of whom in the following decade became millionaire businessmen). So I had to withdraw the script, which prompted an indignant telegram from Cohn: "As soon as we try to make the script pro-American you pull out." One understood not only the threat but also the cynicism: he knew the mafia controlled waterfront labor. Had I been a movie writer, my career would have ended. But the theatre had no such complications, no blacklist - not yet - and I longed to respond to this climate of fear, if only to protect my sanity. But where to find a transcendent concept?

The heart of the darkness was the belief that a massive, profoundly organized conspiracy was in place and carried forward mainly by a concealed phalanx of intellectuals, including labor activists, teachers, professionals, sworn to undermine the American government. And it was precisely the invisibility of ideas that was frightening so many people. How could a play deal with this mirage world?

Paranoia breeds paranoia, but below paranoia there lies a bristling, unwelcome truth, so repugnant as to produce fantasies of persecution to conceal its existence. The unwelcome truth denied by the right was that the Hollywood writers accused of subversion were not a menace to the country, or even bearers of meaningful change. They wrote not propaganda but entertainment, some of it of a mildly liberal cast, but most of it mindless, or when it was political, as with Preston Sturges or Frank Capra, entirely and exuberantly un-Marxist.

As for the left, its unacknowledged truth was more important for me. If nobody was being shot in our ideological war but merely vivisected by a headline, it struck me as odd, if understandable, that the accused were unable to cry out passionately their faith in the ideals of socialism. There were attacks on the HUAC's right to demand that a citizen reveal his political beliefs; but on the idealistic canon of their own convictions, the defendants were mute. The rare exception, like Paul Robeson's declaration of faith in socialism as a cure for racism, was a rocket that lit up the sky.

On a lucky afternoon I happened upon The Devil in Massachusetts, by Marion Starkey, a narrative of the Salem witch-hunt of 1692. I knew this story from my college reading, but in this darkened America it turned a completely new aspect toward me: the poetry of the hunt. Poetry may seem an odd word for a witch-hunt but I saw there was something of the marvelous in the spectacle of a whole village, if not an entire province, whose imagination was captured by a vision of something that wasn't there.

In time to come, the notion of equating the red-hunt with the witch-hunt would be condemned as a deception. There were communists and there never were witches. The deeper I moved into the 1690s, the further away drifted the America of the 50s, and, rather than the appeal of analogy, I found something different to draw my curiosity and excitement.
Anyone standing up in the Salem of 1692 and denying that witches existed would have faced immediate arrest, the hardest interrogation and possibly the rope. Every authority not only confirmed the existence of witches but never questioned the necessity of executing them. It became obvious that to dismiss witchcraft was to forgo any understanding of how it came to pass that tens of thousands had been murdered as witches in Europe. To dismiss any relation between that episode and the hunt for subversives was to shut down an insight into not only the similar emotions but also the identical practices of both officials and victims.

There were witches, if not to most of us then certainly to everyone in Salem; and there were communists, but what was the content of their menace? That to me became the issue. Having been deeply influenced as a student by a Marxist approach to society, and having known Marxists and sympathizers, I could simply not accept that these people were spies or even prepared to do the will of the Soviets in some future crisis. That such people had thought to find

hope of a higher ethic in the Soviet was not simply an American, but a worldwide, irony of catastrophic moral proportions, for their like could be found all over the world.

But as the 50s dawned, they were stuck with the past. Part of the surrealistic of the anti-left sweep was that it picked up people for disgrace who had already turned away from a pro-Soviet past but had no stomach for naming others who had merely shared their illusions. But the hunt had captured some significant part of the American imagination and its power demanded respect.

Turning to Salem was like looking into a Petri dish, an embalmed stasis with its principal moving forces caught in stillness. One had to wonder what the human imagination fed on that could inspire neighbors and old friends to emerge overnight as furies secretly bent on the torture and destruction of Christians. More than a political metaphor, more than a moral tale, The Crucible, as it developed over more than a year, became the awesome evidence of the power of human imagination inflamed, the poetry of suggestion, and the tragedy of heroic resistance to a society possessed to the point of ruin.

In the stillness of the Salem courthouse, surrounded by the images of the 1950s but with my head in 1692, what the two eras had in common gradually gained definition. Both had the menace of concealed plots, but most startling were the similarities in the rituals of defense, the investigative routines; 300 years apart, both prosecutions alleged membership of a secret, disloyal group. Should the accused confess, his honesty could only be proved by naming former confederates. The informer became the axle of the plot's existence and the investigation's necessity.
The witch-hunt in 1692 had a not dissimilar problem, but a far more poetic solution. Most suspected people named by others as members of the Devil's conspiracy had not been shown to have done anything, neither poisoning wells, setting barns on fire, sickening cattle, aborting babies, nor undermining the virtue of wives (the Devil having two phenomenally active penises, one above the other).

To the rescue came a piece of poetry, smacking of both legalistic and religious validity, called Spectral Evidence. All the prosecution needs do was produce a witness who claimed to have seen, not an accused person, but his familiar spirit - his living ghost - in the act of throwing a burning brand into a barn full of hay. You could be at home asleep in your bed, but your spirit could be crawling through your neighbor's window to feel up his wife. The owner of the wandering spirit was obliged to account to the court for his crime. With Spectral Evidence, the air filled with the malign spirits of those identified by good Christians as confederates of the Beast, and the Devil himself danced happily into Salem village and took the place apart.

I spent 10 days in Salem courthouse reading the crudely recorded trials of the 1692 outbreak, and it was striking how totally absent was any sense of irony, let alone humor. I can't recall if it was the provincial governor's nephew or son who, with a college friend, came from Boston to watch the strange proceedings. Both boys burst out laughing at some absurd testimony: they were promptly jailed, and faced possible hanging.

Irony and humor were not conspicuous in the 1950s either. I was in my lawyer's office to sign some contract and a lawyer in the next office was asked to come in and notarize my signature. While he was stamping pages, I continued a discussion with my lawyer about the Broadway theatre, which I said was corrupt; the art of theatre had been totally displaced by the bottom line, all that mattered any more. Looking up at me, the notarizing lawyer said, "That's a communist position, you know." I started to laugh until I saw the constraint in my lawyer's face, and I quickly sobered up.

I am glad that I managed to write The Crucible, but looking back I have often wished I'd had the temperament to do an absurd comedy, which is what the situation deserved. Now, after more than three-quarters of a century of fascination with the great snake of political and social developments, I can see more than a few occasions when we were confronted by the same sensation of having stepped into another age.

A young film producer asked me to write a script about what was then called juvenile delinquency. A mystifying, unprecedented outbreak of gang violence had exploded all over New York. The city, in return for a good percentage of profits, had contracted with this producer to open police stations and schools to his camera. I spent the summer of 1955 in Brooklyn streets with two gangs and wrote an outline. I was ready to proceed with the script when an attack on me as a disloyal lefty opened in the New York World Telegram. The cry went up that the city must cancel its contract with the producer so long as I was the screenwriter. A hearing was arranged, attended by 22 city commissioners, including the police, fire, welfare and sanitation departments, as well as two judges.

At the conference table there also sat a lady who produced a thick folder of petitions and statements I had signed, going back to my college years, provided to her by the Huac. I defended myself; I thought I was making sense when the lady began screaming that I was killing the boys in Korea [this was during the Korean war]. She meant me personally, as I could tell from the froth at the corners of her mouth, the fury in her eyes, and her finger pointing straight into my face.

The vote was taken and came up one short of continuing the city's collaboration, and the film was killed that afternoon. I always wondered whether the crucial vote against me came from the sanitation department. But it was not a total loss; the suffocating sensation of helplessness before the spectacle of the impossible coming to pass would soon help in writing The Crucible.

That impossible coming to pass was not an observation made at a comfortable distance but a blade cutting directly into my life. This was especially the case with Elia Kazan's decision to cooperate with the Huac. The surrounding fears felt even by those with the most fleeting of contacts with any communist-supported organization were enough to break through long associations and friendships.

Kazan had been a member of the Communist party only a matter of months, and even that link had ended years before. And the party had never been illegal, nor was membership in it. Yet this great director, left undefended by 20th Century Fox executives, his longtime employers, was told that if he refused to name people whom he had known in the party - actors, directors and writers - he would never be allowed to direct another picture in Hollywood, meaning the end of his career.

These names were already known to the committee through other testifiers and FBI informants, but exactly as in Salem - or Russia under the Czar and the Chairman, and Inquisition Spain, Revolutionary France or any other place of revolution or counter-revolution - conspiracy was the name for all opposition. And the reformation of the accused could only be believed when he gave up the names of his co-conspirators. Only this ritual of humiliation, the breaking of pride and independence, could win the accused readmission into the community. The process inevitably did produce in the accused a new set of political, social and even moral convictions more acceptable to the state whose fist had been shoved into his face, with his utter ruin promised should he resist.

I had stopped by Kazan's house in the country in 1952 after he had called me to come and talk, an unusual invitation - he had never been inclined to indulge in talk unless it concerned work. I had suspected from his dark tone that it must have to do with the Huac, which was rampaging through the Hollywood ranks .

Since I was on my way up to Salem for research on a play that I was still unsure I would write, I called at his house, which was on my route. As he laid out his dilemma and his decision to comply with the Huac (which he had already done) it was impossible not to feel his anguish, old friends that we were. But the crunch came when I felt fear, that great teacher, that cruel revealer. For it swept over me that, had I been one of his comrades, he would have spent my name as part of the guarantee of his reform. Even so, oddly enough, I was not filling up with hatred or

contempt for him; his suffering was too palpable. The whole hateful procedure had brought him to this, and I believe made the writing of The Crucible all but inevitable. Even if one could grant Kazan sincerity in his new-found anti-communism, the concept of an America where such self-discoveries were pressed out of people was outrageous, and a contradiction of any concept of personal liberty.

Is all this of some objective importance in our history, this destruction of bonds between people? I think it may be, however personal it may appear. Kazan's testimony created a far greater shock than anyone else's. Lee J Cobb's similar testimony and Jerome Robbins's cooperation seemed hardly to matter. It may be that Kazan had been loved more than any other, that he had attracted far greater affection from writers and actors with whom he had worked, and so what was overtly a political act was sensed as a betrayal of love.

It is very significant that in the uproar set off by last year's award to Kazan of an Oscar for life achievement, one heard no mention of the name of any member of the HUAC. One doubted whether the thought occurred to many people that the studio heads had ignominiously collapsed before the HUAC's insistence that they institute a blacklist of artists, something they had once insisted was dishonorable and a violation of democratic norms. Half a century had passed since his testimony, but Kazan bore very nearly the whole onus of the era, as though he had manufactured its horrors - when he was surely its victim.

The trial record in Salem courthouse had been written by ministers in primitive shorthand. This condensation gave emphasis to a gnarled, densely packed language which suggested the country accents of a hard people. To lose oneself day after day in that record of human delusion was to know a fear, not for one's safety, but of the spectacle of intelligent people giving themselves over to a rapture of murderous credulity. It was as though the absence of real evidence was itself a release from the burdens of this world; in love with the invisible, they moved behind their priests, closer to that mystical communion which is anarchy and is called God.

Evidence, in contrast, is effort; leaping to conclusions is a wonderful pleasure, and for a while there was a highly charged joy in Salem, for now that they could see through everything to the frightful plot that was daily being laid bare in court sessions, their days, formerly so eventless and long, were swallowed up in hourly revelations, news, surprises. The Crucible is less a polemic than it might have been had it not been filled with wonder at the protean imagination of man.

The Crucible straddles two different worlds to make them one, but it is not history in the usual sense of the word, but a moral, political and psychological construct that floats on the fluid emotions of both eras. As a commercial entertainment the play failed [it opened in 1953]. To start with there was the title: nobody knew what a crucible was. Most of the critics, as sometimes does happen, never caught on to the play's ironical substructure, and the ones who did were nervous about validating a work that was so unkind to the same sanctified procedural principles as underlay the hunt for reds. Some old acquaintances gave me distant nods in the theatre lobby on opening night, and even without air-conditioning the house was cool. There was also a problem with the temperature of the production.

The director, Jed Harris, a great name in the theatre of the 20s, 30s and 40s, had decided that the play, which he believed a classic, should be staged like a Dutch painting. In Dutch paintings of groups, everyone is always looking front. Unfortunately, on a stage such rigidity can only lead an audience to the exits. Several years after, a gang of young actors, setting up chairs in the ballroom of the McAlpin Hotel, fired up the audience, convinced the critics, and the play at last took off and soon found its place. There were cheering reviews but by then Senator McCarthy was dead. The public fever on whose heat waves he had spread his wings had subsided.

The Crucible is my most-produced play. It seems to be one of the few surviving shards of the so-called McCarthy period. And it is part of the play's history that, to people in so many parts of the world, its story seems to be their own. I used to think, half seriously, that you could tell when a dictator was about to take power, or had been overthrown, in a Latin American country, if The Crucible was suddenly being produced in that country.

The result of it all is that I have come, rather reluctantly, to respect delusion, not least of all my own. There are no passions quite as hot and pleasurable as those of the deluded. Compared to the bliss of delusion, its vivid colors, blazing lights, explosions, whistles and liberating joys, the search for evidence is a deadly bore. My heart was with the left. if only because the right hated me enough to want to kill me, as the Germans amply proved. And now, the most blatant and most foul anti-Semitism is in Russia, leaving people like me filled not so much with surprise as a kind of wonder at the incredible amount of hope there once was, and how it disappeared and whether in time it will ever come again, attached, no doubt, to some new illusion.

There is hardly a week that passes when I don't ask the unanswerable question: what am I now convinced of that will turn out to be ridiculous? And yet one can't forever stand on the shore; at some point, filled with indecision, skepticism, reservation and doubt, you either jump in or concede that life is forever elsewhere, which, I dare say, was one of the major impulses behind the decision to attempt The Crucible.

Salem village, that pious, devout settlement at the edge of white civilization, had displayed - three centuries before the Russo-American rivalry and the issues it raised - what can only be called a built-in pestilence in the human mind; a fatality forever awaiting the right conditions for its always unique, forever unprecedented outbreak of distrust, alarm, suspicion and murder. And for people wherever the play is performed on any of the five continents, there is always a certain amazement that the same terror that is happening to them or that is threatening them, has happened before to others. It is all very strange. But then, the Devil is known to lure people into forgetting what it is vital for them to remember - how else could his endless reappearances always come as such a marvelous surprise?

The end ------*2000 Arthur Miller The crucible in history and Other Essays by Arthur Miller is published by Methuen on 13 July 2000*