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The Crucible and the Production of Fear in the Contemporary World: The Future and Persistence in Culture[1]

AAMIR AZIZ
University of the Punjab Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract
Although Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* (1953) was written centuries after ('post') the events in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, it was through this play that we could relate to those events. In this sense, the play was 'before' (pre-) the past itself. The dynamic of preposterousness serves, I argue, to work through the past from the viewpoint of the present. The play, then, does not capture or describe a historical reality, but, in its relation to the past, it serves as an analysis not unlike psychoanalysis, as a 'working through.' Consequently, the things of the past are not 'past.' They are alive in an enacted or dramatized past, and they need to be relived for the purpose of a cure. *The Crucible* is self-consciously 'presentist' or contemporary and not historical in the conventional sense of the term, as Mieke Bal argues. According to the Dutch theorist, the past is present in the present in the form of 'traces,' not 'influences' (Bal, "Memories in the Museum" 179). However, as we saw in the US during the congressional anti-Communist hearings in the 1950s, such a cure does not materialize at the level of the play's contemporaneous present, at least not at a collective level.

Keywords: preposterousness; past; culture; contemporaneous present; cure; fear; crisis

Concerning the times when it was written and performed for the first time in the US, Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible* (1953), serves not only as an

analysis of the society in which it was written and performed, but also as an intervention. In this context, the Salem witch hunt of 1692 in Massachusetts functions as an allegory for Senator Joseph McCarthy's communist hunt during the 1950s in the US. However, due to the nature of allegory, this does not 'resolve' anything. In fact, the play is both an analysis of society and an intervention in it; but, at the time of its first performance, it also contributed to the production of fear because its content literally mirrored the congressional witch-hunts against the communists in America. In its allegorical re-enactment of the past, the play remains partly caught in its topical metaphorical closure. It is as much part of the problem as it is its solution. Yet the trope of metonymy also helps the play to open up history in a battle for hegemony.

In the following discussion, I look at how this play from the past can be used as an analytical tool for our present, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Taking a cue from Mieke Bal's idea of "preposterous history" in her book *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (2001), I argue that every new work of art is inevitably engaged with whatever came before it. This reworking and recycling of past images in present contexts is invariably destined to either obliterate the past images or to produce newer versions of the old. Bal sees similar implications in modern culture vis-à-vis its conception of history and its transaction with historical cultural edifices in present artistic expressions (*Quoting Caravaggio* 1). Reading contemporary artworks in relation to Caravaggio or other Baroque works, Bal demonstrates that there is an active reworking of the predecessor, and this is past, not present, which is conditioned by a perpetual flux (Van Alphen 365-66). I see similar potential in viewing the historical events of the Salem witch-hunts in 1692 through Miller's play written in the 1950s in a likewise preposterous historical sense. Bal's definition of preposterous history reflexively invokes words like 'perverse' and 'ridiculous' in a reader's mind as history is conventionally conceived as mono-directional, moving from past to present and from cause to effect. However, she inverts the logic, stating that by juxtaposing, rewriting, repainting, recycling, reenacting, etc., the chronological first assumes the quality of aftereffect, thus fashioning a preposterous history. She borrows the term

of 'shared time' of coevality from anthropology, as it is formulated in an essay titled "Ethnographic Objectivity Revisited," by Johannes Fabian to further qualify her intellectual position (98). Miller also starts the play with a note on its historical accuracy and an explanation of how different his dramatization of a historical event is from disciplinary history. It also hints that Miller's purpose is not only to provide another account of a historical incident that is interpreted through multiple perspectives. Instead, through multiple prose narratives that intersperse dialogues between dramatic personae, allegorical representation of witch-hunts during those of his own time i.e. 1950s and by creating a Brechtian alienation effect upon the audience through use of epic and theatrical elements, Miller has traversed time, and it is through this play that the audience are able to view history better. Due to its performative nature, the play is anchored in history, and it is always waiting for an event like the Salem processes beyond cultural and geographical bounds to become active and relevant in the future. Hence, the play is doing history by re-enacting it and retrospectively representing anomaly in a culture with a motive to heal it and repair it. This is how Mieke Bal's concept of preposterous history is vital to this play (Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio* 1).

The first quarter of the twenty-first century is arguably beset with several crises in academia and the political culture outside academia, which is marred by the resurgence of non-democratic tendencies and a tacit compromise of civil liberties and artistic freedom as their inevitable outcome. And it is not a coincidence that the birth of all these crises is always an outcome of some monumental events, like the war on terror, the global pandemic and its aftermath, the mobility of people from the global south to the north, and, as its consequence, the rise of right-wing populist politics and xenophobic expressions in the public space, etc. I argue that fear has been produced and consumed with persistence to project politics whenever the United States faced a crisis in history. Miller states in one of the prose vignettes of *The Crucible* that "it is a paradox in whose grip we still live," and he continues by pointing out that "it is still impossible for man to organise his social life without repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom" (8). Since fear has persisted in American culture in different historical moments and there is a palpable

hint of it available between the Salem processes as dramatized in the text and also the vantage point of the moment of genesis of this play, i.e. the 1950s anti-communist paranoia in the US. I will therefore consider the future application of this play, or rather, its future performative powers because I argue that fear is recurrently invoked in the US as a culturally persistent means to political ends. These powers may manifest themselves when crossing historical and cultural borders, as is the nature of 'world literature' (Damrosch, *What Is World Literature* 110). In David Damrosch's view, world literature is characterized by its potential to become more meaningful through its historical and cultural translation. In the context of globalization and the transnational reach of national literature, Damrosch observes that "if world literature is defined as literature of genuinely global scope, whether in authorial intention or in its circulation among readers, then we are only just now seeing the birth of this literary form whose true history lies in the future rather than in the past" ("Toward a History" 483). From a thematic point of view, *The Crucible* embodies indeed a general phenomenon of the production of fear, and it remains cross-culturally relevant (if we keep in mind that 'general' is understood, here, in the sense that the play is not bound to specific situations but transcends them). In some respects, the play may indeed be an example of world literature, and, as such, it is also a play 'waiting for the occasion.' This is to mean that whenever and wherever civil liberties are compromised anywhere in the world in the name of national security, Miller's play would become relevant and active on its own. Here, however, I will examine it more in the context of its participation in a distinct culture that has not remained the same over time but appears to be troubled by recurring patterns. The pattern that I am concerned with is the socio-cultural production of fear in the US, a production that happens for political purposes, fuelled by religiously defined dichotomies of good and evil or a new Manichaeism.

To deal with this, I will first consider what has been a powerful theory to explain cultural persistency and determine how this theory is problematic in relation to works of art. This theory is by famed cultural psychologist, Gerard Hendrik (Geert) Hofstede, who provided a framework for measuring cultural dimensions in a global perspective in

his book *Culture's Consequences* (1980). I will then move to the issue of why, in the last decades, the neo-liberals, or better the neo-conservatives, in the US viewed the German theorist Carl Schmitt as a major source of inspiration. Subsequently, I will concentrate on a model that can explain a culture's persistency in terms of being haunted by ghosts from the past. Here I will follow and divert from a path that has already been described by Erin Graff Zivin in *Figurative Inquisitions*, especially the chapter 'Allegory and Hauntology.' She posits her thesis around finding connections between Salem 1692 and 1950s US and the past speaking to the present through allegory in times of censorship. I, however, steer my argument forward by invoking culture, the persistence of fear in American culture and politics, the spectacular framing of the accused, the theatrical exhibition of guilt and the performative potential of the theatre to challenge all this.

1.1 Long-Term Cultural Patterns in the US Socio-Cultural Environment

In its study of cultural persistency, Geert H. Hofstede's *Culture's Consequences* has profoundly influenced the development of cross-cultural studies in psychology, in organisation studies, and more generally in the social sciences. Hofstede, who was working with the multinational corporation IBM in the sixties as an organisation sociologist and psychologist, researched the cultural differences apparent in its 71 subsidiary locations globally where it had offices and factories (Hofstede and McCrae 61). Using this research that surveyed forty different nations, Hofstede devised five dimensions to characterise cultures: power distance index, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. Hofstede argues that cultures are not superficial or easily changeable entities, but that they are deeply embedded in people's psyches, bodies, practices and organisations, and, apart from certain exceptions, they are strongly resistant to change. People are programmed by their culture in early life, with various elements within a national culture typically serving to sustain and enhance its coherence (G. H. Hofstede qtd. in Smith 119).

Hofstede's observations of the cultural dimensions based upon national data were criticized by scholars such as Rachel Baskerville and Brendan McSweeney. Baskerville reviews the problems in G. H. Hofstede's model on the following points: "(i) the assumption of equating nation with culture; (ii) the difficulties of, and limitations on a quantification of culture represented by cultural dimensions and matrices; and (iii) the status of the observer outside the culture" (1). Baskerville points to the fact that G. H. Hofstede equates national data with the study of such an abstract phenomenon as culture. Secondly, it is problematic for her to imagine a quantification of national cultures through arithmetic data and matrices as Hofstede does. For her, the statistical measure of culture amounts to a limiting analysis of an epic phenomenon called culture. Lastly, Baskerville also finds G. H. Hofstede's approach lacking in its failure to acknowledge the observer's position especially when someone stands outside a culture. I agree with much of this criticism. However, I find Hofstede's model relevant for explaining the persistency in culture. Therefore, I will use his model heuristically, not so much to confirm it as to narrow it down to the issue of where and how cultural persistency, or cultural incoherence, may be involved.

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

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

For my analysis of *The Crucible*, the issues that interest me the most in the above definition are, first of all, the moral aspect of culture, defined in terms of required behaviour, and the difference between the practices that may change over time and a 'hidden core' with 'unconscious values' that changes at a far slower rate but which explains the relative persistency and stability in cultures. Miller spots that hidden core in American cultural history in 1692 Salem, in the first red scare after 1917, the Japanese internment after the Pearl Harbour incident during WWII, and in 1950s cold war US. He argues that in all those epochs of crisis, "political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse" (Miller 33).

In Hofstede's analysis, cultural programming takes place with this hidden core as its engine, and the previously mentioned five dimensions define this programming. One of these dimensions is power distance, which is the "extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede and Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations* 46). Fundamental units such as family, school, places of worship, etc. represent the institutions in society, whereas the community and organisations correspond to people's workplaces. This definition represents inequality (more versus less), as the power distance is defined from below, not from above. It suggests that its followers, as well as its leaders, endorse a society's level of inequality. In an almost Foucauldian sense, leadership and ruling are complemented by a palpable presence of subordination since authority requires subservience and obedience. In Hofstede's findings, the correlations of the PDI (Power Distance Index) with geographic, economic, and demographic country indicators, through comparisons of educational systems and the consideration of historical factors, suggest a lead to a causal chain regarding the origins of national differences. An analysis of political systems, religious life, and philosophical and ideological thinking in various countries shows differences in the PDI, which are interpreted as consequences of power distance norm differences that feed back into the norm and support it (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 92-93).

According to G. H. Hofstede, compared to a global average of 55 on the Power Distance Index, the US score of 40 indicates a greater equality between the social levels, including governments, socio-cultural organizations, and even within the families (104). This orientation, Hofstede observes, reinforces a cooperative interaction, across power levels, creating a more stable cultural environment.

This, however, is not the case with Miller's play, in which a general hierarchical power system orchestrates the stream of events between the girls, the common people, the judiciary, and the church officials. In the play, for instance, Ezekiel Cheever's words to Giles Corey and the Proctors reveal an important power distance: "You know yourself I must do as I'm told. You surely know that, Giles. And I'd as lief [sic] you'd not be sending me to Hell. I like not the sound of it, I tell you; I like not the sound of it. (*He fears* Proctor*, but starts to reach inside his coat.*) Now believe me, Proctor, how heavy be the law, all its tonnage I do carry on my back tonight. (*He takes out a warrant*.) I have a warrant for your wife" (Miller 68). This quotation illustrates how American egalitarianism does not always match the force of a certain form of law. There is a principal difference between 'doing what you are told' by some sort of imperial force, for instance a king or a religious authority, or considering oneself as the subject of law. In this case, Cheever feels entrusted with the responsibility and power to discharge his role as a servant and custodian of the legal system, whose legitimacy is questioned by the people who are subjected to its power, although this does not change things for the better. Likewise, when subordination to power is realised through the force and authority of the law of the land, the phenomenon of McCarthyism does not correspond well with Hofstede's PDI for the US.

Hofstede's second cultural dimension is individualism, which is contrasted with collectivism. It rests on individuals being integrated into groups and is found "in societies where the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede and Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations* 76). Hofstede and Hofstede state that the relationship between the individual and the collective in human society is not only a matter of ways of living together, but it is intimately linked to societal norms (in the sense

of value systems of major groups of the population) (91-92). It therefore affects both people's mental programming and the structure and functioning of many other institutions besides the family: educational, religious, political, and utilitarian. The central element in our mental programming involved in this case is our concept of self. That is why any traditionalist would hardly think of himself as individualistic (118). Hofstede compares the Western style of thinking with, for instance, the Chinese style, while pointing out that the Western concept of individual personality is distinct from the concept of society. By contrast, the Chinese style entails use of the concept of 'human constant,' which includes the person himself/herself in addition to his/her intimate societal and cultural environment which makes his/her existence meaningful. That is why there is a tendency in Chinese culture to modify social and individual views more easily in terms of the environment. Hofstede also compares paradigms of religious and ideological conversion in Western and Chinese societies (H. G. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 211). In the West, conversion is a highly individualistic act, while in modern Chinese society the ideological conversion is collectively defined on account of an overarching communitarian culture (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 215).

Because they are tied to value systems shared by the majority, issues of collectivism versus individualism carry strong moral overtones. The Americans understand their own culture as individualistic, with individualism seen as a major contributor to the greatness and moral superiority of the United States. Accordingly, in Hofstede's view, individual members of its population are self-reliant and look after themselves and their close family members. That is why there is a so-called 'I'-consciousness in American culture, with a tendency towards self-orientation, autonomy, variety, pleasure, and individual financial security (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 213). Yet in terms of values, the standards are desired and expected to apply to everyone. Some trace the philosophic source of this American individualism to Lockean liberalism. In Louis Hartz's opinion, for instance, John Locke's ideas on individualism and the social contract theory anticipated the American liberal experiment, with these liberal ideas put into practice in American

political thought, rhetoric, and culture, reconciling majority rule versus minority rights (128-29). Later, as the political scientist and gender analyst Mark E. Kann observes, this orientation was challenged by those who placed republicanism and American civic virtue centre stage (52). Whichever analysis one chooses, individualism, if we follow Hofstede and Hofstede's analysis, became part of America's 'hidden core.'

Yet, regarding this dimension, *The Crucible* seems to depict a world that is markedly different in the first instance. Hale, the lone sane voice of the people corroborating with the legal and theological order of Salem, also succumbs to the rule of the majority while giving credence to all the accusations in search of evidence: "*Pleading:* Nurse, though our hearts break, we cannot flinch; these are new times, sir. There is a misty plot afoot so subtle we should be criminal to cling to old respects and ancient friendships. I have seen too many frightful proofs in court – the Devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points!" (Miller 67). Although Hale attempts to break away from the traditional culture of kinship and communal norms since he vowed to serve the law, he fails to use his individual acumen to correctly interpret the motives of the accusing girls and the people he serves. He is trying to be the most modern voice of the community by calling his times 'new times' and offering to divorce himself from the unwritten local norms of favouritism based on kinship and patronage. His stance can hardly be called 'individualistic,' since his observations and assessment of the victims' statements in court are sufficient proof to sustain any evidence that matches the generally required picture.

By contrast, there are certainly highly individualistic voices in the community, like those of Proctor, Rebecca Nurse, and Giles Corey. In this case, *The Crucible* does fit the pattern, and Miller himself observes that the force of the individual can withstand almost anything (Mason 6). That being said, in recent US history as well, individualistic voices of dissent in US political culture have either often been deemed unpatriotic, given scant attention, or have been met with substantial pressure and threats. In a 1969 *New York Times* story, Daniel Ellsberg and 5 of his colleagues at RAND Corporation sent a letter to *Times* and called for a complete withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam. Arendt, for instance, dismayed by

the state suppression of individual responsibilities, as in the case of Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers, considered this to be a fundamental threat to core US principles (Arendt qtd. in Kitrosser 98; 90-91). Accordingly, in *The Crucible*, individual inquiry about phantoms of fear is made virtually impossible.

Hofstede's third dimension in national cultures is masculinity as opposed to femininity. He sees the duality of the sexes as a fundamental fact that differentiates societies. The gender-based role distribution prevailing in a particular society is transferred by socialisation through family, school and peer groups, and through the media. In most contemporary societies, according to Hofstede, the predominant socialisation pattern is for men to be more assertive and for women to be more nurturing (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 297). In Hofstede's study, anthropology, psychology, and political science confirm the male assertiveness/female nurture pattern. In this context, he links his research to David Clarence McClelland's review of US psychological literature (in *Human Motivation* 1985) for evidence of psychological differences between the sexes. In the US data, boys and men universally tend to be more assertive, whereas girls and women are more sensitive to social interdependence (G. H. Hofstede, "National Cultures Revisited" 296). Similarly, Hofstede reveals a strong relationship between sex and achievement ambitions in the US, showing lower ambitions for women as cultural masculinity contains an element of ego boosting (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 325). In Hofstede's analysis, the US scores 62, compared to a world average of 50. This indicates that the country experiences a higher degree of gender role differentiation. Male domination in society and its power structures gives rise to a tendency in the female population to grow more assertive and competitive, thereby emulating the male role model.

Regarding this dimension, Wendy Schissel's feminist reading of Miller's play concludes that the text affirms straightforward gynaecophobia – a fear and distrust of women that is both implicit and explicit in Puritan America. Tituba, the Caribbean woman enslaved by Reverend Parris, is the first scapegoat and simultaneously the victim of both gynaecophobia and xenophobia. Proctor's denigration of Mary

Warren on several occasions alludes to an androcentric morality in Puritan society (Schissel 461). Similarly, the entire clerical regime in Salem is theologically motivated to persecute women because they are convinced that a woman's body is an ideal site for the Devil to colonize and rule. Elizabeth Proctor gives a bold statement to resist this pressure when she says to Reverend Hale, "I cannot think the Devil may own a woman's soul, Mr. Hale, when she keeps an upright way, as I have. I am a good woman, I know it; and if you believe I may do only good work in the world, and yet be secretly bound to Satan, then I must tell you, sir, I do not believe it" (Miller 65). This illustrates an almost one-to-one relationship between the play and Hofstede's cultural dimension of gender.

The fourth dimension in national cultures is 'uncertainty avoidance,' with Hofstede observing that uncertainty about the future is a basic fact of human life. His research findings reveal that tolerance for uncertainty varies considerably among people in different countries. The three indicators that are used in this respect are rule orientation, employment stability, and stress. The three together produce a country's Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) (Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 153). In Hofstede's opinion, knowing that there is life after death is the believers' ultimate certainty, allowing them to face uncertainties in this life. The line separating 'defending against uncertainties' from 'accepting them' is fluid; many of our defences, aimed at creating certainty, just allow us to sleep well (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 146). And the layers of difference exist in modern and traditional societies. Hofstede observes that ways of coping with uncertainty are part of a society's cultural heritage, transferred and reinforced through key institutions such as family, school, and the state (145). They are reflected in the values that are collectively held by members of a given society. Their roots are non-rational, and they may lead to collective behaviour which seems aberrant or incomprehensible to members of other societies. In Hofstede's study, the US scores 46, compared to the world average of 65 (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 151).

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

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

The Salem trials are maybe one of the most clear-cut instances of judicial activism in response to fear and uncertainty that regularly captivated American society, as witnessed during the McCarthy hearings in the 1950s. Litigation can be seen as a persistent pattern in American culture, used to overcome present uncertainties about the future. For now, however, it forces us to think about the explanatory power of Hofstede's model. Does it also deal with America's political culture, or should we consider the dynamic between American culture at large and its political culture in terms of a form of schizophrenia? According to Hofstede, for instance, America should be strong in dealing with uncertainty (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 159).

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

High Long Term	Low Long Term (i.e. Short Term)
emphasis on persistence	emphasis on quick results
relationships ordered by status	status not a major issue in relationships
personal adaptability important	personal steadfastness and stability important
face considerations common but seen as a weakness	protection of one's face is important

leisure time not too important	leisure time important
save, be thrifty	spend
invest in real estate	invest in mutual funds
relationships and market position important	bottom line important
good or evil depends on circumstances	belief in absolutes about good and evil

(G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 359-60)

Both the positively and the negatively rated values of this dimension can be found in the teachings of the most influential Chinese philosopher Confucius, who articulated values that apply also to other countries without a Confucian heritage. The US scored among the countries that had the lowest Long-Term Orientation (LTO), that is 29 compared to the world average of 45 (G. H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* 356). This low LTO ranking indicates, for instance, society's belief that spending is better than saving. Without much explanation, Hofstede links this characteristic to a strong belief in the absolutes of good and evil. Regarding this dimension, *The Crucible* shows a normative society that has a fascination with establishing the truth and a belief in absolute good and evil.

As noted at the beginning of this article, Hofstede's observations about cultural dimensions have been criticised by scholars such as Baskerville. In response to Baskerville and others, Hofstede addressed what he listed as five standard criticisms of his work:

> Baskerville's comments deal primarily with point 2: Nations are not the best units for studying cultures, to which my answer was: True, but they are usually the only kind of units available for comparison and better than nothing. Nation states cannot be equated with national cultures, but does this render conclusions about cultural differences based on nation-level data invalid? Could it be that 90% of such conclusions still hold? And isn't differences between nations precisely what accounting and business research are usually concerned with? (G. H. Hofstede, "What is Culture?" 812)

Hofstede thus admits that nation, or rather the nation-state, and culture cannot be equated, but, since at a global level the nation-state still exists as a unit to distinguish people from different geographies and cultures, it remains a convenient and available unit to study different cultures.

Geographic boundaries do not finely demarcate cultures across the globe, but Hofstede observes that, despite local differences, the national culture of a specific nation-state under study is always different from other states. In addition, his five cultural dimensions play a definitive role in defining a nation's culture when compared with that of another. Hofstede further contends that most of his research and conclusions about cultures still hold true because the nation-state is the only valid and strong unit that allows him to observe variable cultural dimensions *statistically* (G. H. Hofstede, "What is Culture?" 812).

As my analysis with *The Crucible* has shown, there is no one-to-one relation between this play, or art in general, and a nation-state's culture. The reason is that art is never simply the expression of a culture. On the other hand, it resonates strongly on several points with Hofstede's analysis, especially with the absolutes of good and evil and cultural practices, like exercise of executive power, gender relations, individual dissent, risk taking, uncertainty avoidance, etc.

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

In *The Crucible,* Danforth, the main lawyer in the Salem witch trials, asserts his authority when he invokes the binary difference between the leagues of good and evil: "But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. This is a sharp time, now a precise time – we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up, and them that fear not light will surely praise it. I hope you will be one of those" (Miller 86). In this oft-quoted passage, seen to epitomize the US worldview, Danforth's worldview comprises two finely partitioned leagues of deific benevolence and diabolical evil (Ronner 217). This may explain why the quote from *The Crucible* is strikingly similar to President George W. Bush's address to the Joint Session of Congress after the 9/11 attacks, calling on every nation to take sides with either good or evil in the ensuing global war on terror: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (xvii). This

resemblance between the political rhetoric of the US president in the post-911 scenario is strikingly similar with the cultural ethos of the anti-communist frenzy in the 1950s US when this play was written and produced and also with the paranoia of the literal witch-hunts in 1692 Salem. I argue that the executive has paradigmatically invoked fear in the US public domain during intermittent historical moments to draw a radical distinction between friends and enemies, patriots and traitors, and the legions of good and evil, etc.

This political discourse serves the function of a prequel to future acts of control, legal activism and compromise on civil liberties. At the end of the play, for instance, this conflict between the forces of good and evil goes deep enough to legitimize violent legal verdicts for the sake of safeguarding the community's unity and purity. The climax occurs when Danforth, in the name of absolute morality, triumphantly executes John Proctor, Rebecca Nurse, and other innocent people. The persistence of cultural practices like the production of fear and the Manichean politics in America in those times is a good reflection of Roberto Esposito's theory, namely, that the desire of modern societies to be healthy and pure must lead to a thanatopolitics. This politics works on the principle that life develops and defends itself only through progressive expansion of the circle of death (Esposito 110). Stuart J. Murray, building upon Michel Foucault's famous postmodern concept of biopolitics which describes the social and political power of modern societies over life, further clarifies it:

> Foucault marks the important shift from classical biopower to modern biopolitics. Classical biopower is summed up as the sovereign decision 'to take life or let live,' whereas modern biopolitics is conceived as 'the power to "make" live and "let" die.' The decision to kill and let live is replaced with a productive biopolitics that is twofold, that 'makes live' *and* 'lets die'. Death becomes a consequence ─ a necessary part ─ of living. Such death is too easily elided and dismissed. Nobody is killed, at least not directly, and nobody's hands are bloodied, at least not that we can see; the crimes are outsourced to penal colonies through 'extraordinary rendition' become ordinary, obfuscated by state bureaucracy, and covered up by one media spectacle after another. These deaths are never caused as such; officially, they are merely 'allowed,' a passive event, collateral damage. But biopolitical logic requires them. In order that 'we' may live, live well and live fully, 'they' must die, the distinction between the virtuous citizen and the other excluded as bare life, disposable life. (204-5)

As Murray expounds, Foucault analyses the remarkable shift in the concept of biopower to biopolitics since antiquity in Western culture. In antiquity, political power rested with the family patriarch to grant life to newborns. Later, in European societies, after the revival of the Roman law, the sovereign or the monarch was entitled to take the lives of his subjects or to let them live (Foucault 240-41). The sovereign, as Foucault argues, was granted the right to rule over the masses to ensure protection and continuity of their lives; hence, preservation and protection of life were the essence and guarantee of the social contract between the classical sovereign and the people (241). Yet, Foucault observes that, over time, sovereign power has undergone gradual transformations in terms of the sophistication of mechanisms, techniques, and technologies for controlling the life and death of populations page number. He argues, for instance, that, in the seventeenth century, the nature of the exercise of power was disciplinary, intended for a cost-effective use of labour through disciplinary control of the human body (242). It required the spatial distribution of individual bodies, involving individuals' separation, alignment, and serialisation, but also surveillance, in a hierarchical system. In the second half of the eighteenth century, this disciplinary power underwent transformation and was no longer applied to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being or man-as-species (Foucault 241-42). In short, modern Western culture has seen governments exercise biopolitical techniques to maintain classical sovereign powers, to 'make live' and 'let die' without any apparent sense of accountability for their apathy regarding the dead. These techniques are used for the subjugation of bodies and for controlling populations.

However, there is a reversal of sorts in modernity when political power promises to be protective, to preserve, control, prolong, and strengthen life at the expense of permitting death elsewhere. Through this intensive conflict, which has to ensure an optimal and secure life in modern Western societies, death is outsourced and 'allowed' to occur through co-opted violence abroad, even if it entails arbitrary arrests and the extrajudicial transfer of suspects to far-off localities to be tortured. Death is allowed to take place in those places without any formal legal

accountability because it guarantees the continuation of life in other places. In a sense, biopolitical logic requires these deaths, as the deaths of 'others' are a guarantee for 'us' living.

In contrast with Geert Hofstede's assertion that the US culture would be able to cope with a high degree of uncertainty, I consider uncertainty avoidance to be an important cultural dimension in the context of the United States' modern adaptive warfare strategies that focus on a more proactive approach. Donald Rumsfeld, for instance, stated in a 2002 speech: "We must transform not only our armed forces but also the Department that serves them by encouraging a culture of creativity and intelligent risk-taking. We must promote a more entrepreneurial approach to developing military capabilities, one that encourages people, all people, to be proactive and not reactive, to behave somewhat less like bureaucrats and more like venture capitalists" (qtd. in O'Malley 501).

In the twenty-first century, modern Western warfare is more sophisticated and conducted with an idea of risk and casualty aversion, not unlike the liberal way of governance that is constantly changing and adapting (O'Malley 502). The media and information networks work to the advantage of this biopolitics to cover these deaths up with illusory spectacles and discourses about the 'other' party's collateral damage for preserving the lives of their own 'worthy of living' citizens. Thus, modern biopolitics marks a shift away from the sovereign's biopower of old: from 'taking life' to 'making live' and from 'letting live' to 'letting die.' In modernity, there is a radical difference in the value of life for different people.

In the context of *The Crucible,* this is comparable to the distinction between the good that is supposed to be protected and made to live and the evil that must die elsewhere, because it curbs the sovereigns' hold on power. For instance, Danforth's statement in Act 4 that he would hang a thousand people to uphold Biblical law, but not stumble in the face of retaliation, is an equivalent form of cognitive conviction to sustain good and eradicate evil (Miller 117). And his verdict at the climax of the play further confirms his dedication to preserving good and eradicating evil: "Hang them high over the town! Who weeps for them, weeps for corruption!" (Miller 130). The right-wing projected the communists and

left-leaning artists, scholars, and intellectuals in the US during the 1950s in a similarly inhuman overlay, invoking the binary of patriot versus the traitor to demonize them. Post-911 paranoia against Muslims in the US and the vulnerable position of immigrants, women, Jews, homosexuals, and people of colour during the rise of Donald Trump reflect a persistent invocation of fear as a response to crises in American society. In accord with Foucault's concept of biopolitics, this play anticipates how the value of people's lives changes with time.

The paradigmatic nature of *The Crucible* becomes chillingly evident with the re-emergence of Schmitt's ideas about "the political" in neo-conservative and other circles. In essence, the collaboration between the judiciary and the executive in Salem, fuelled by a Manichean dichotomy of good and evil aiming to strengthen their grip on power, is theoretically reflected in the writings of Schmitt, a Weimar Republic-era legal scholar and political theorist. As Andrew Norris observes, Schmitt's idea of the political emphasizes the conceptual autonomy of the political (68). Schmitt categorically distinguishes the political from the economic, the technological, and the legal, criticizing liberalism for obscuring these distinctions. In his seminal book, *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt states:

> The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions. The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transaction. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specifically intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgment of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party. (26-27)

This friend/enemy distinction in political decision-making and affiliations is crucial. Schmitt famously stated that every realm of human endeavours was structured by an irreducible duality. Morality rests on the dualism of good and evil, aesthetics reveals the antithesis between the beautiful and

the ugly, and economics deal with the profitable and the unprofitable (26). In politics, he argues, the core distinction is one between friend and enemy, which distinguishes politics from other social realms (26). The often-quoted Biblical statement 'love your enemies' is perfectly appropriate for religion, but incompatible with the life-or-death stakes of politics; in the thousand-year conflict between Christians and Muslims, for instance, Christians never surrendered Europe "out of love toward the Saracens or Turks" (Schmitt 29). Schmitt argues that the realm of the political – unlike moral philosophy, ethics, and religion – is exempt from any objective to make the world just and fair for the multitude. It involves, instead, life and death calculations: "the political is the most intense and extreme antagonism" (29). Schmitt further states that war is the most violent form that politics takes, but, even without war, politics requires that one's opponents be deemed antagonistic to everything one believes in. Unlike personal antagonism, there is no hatred towards the opponent or desire for bloodshed. The rules of the political game simply demand that one should be prepared to vanquish the other (Schmitt 33). Salem's judicial-clerical political arrangement fits Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction in letter and spirit, as it is evident from Governor Danforth's point of view quoted earlier.

In *The Concept of the Political,* Schmitt insists on the fundamental non-rationality of politics on account of the decision-makers' vulnerability to the fluid and spectacular nature of events. This is why he defines the critical moments of politics as those when the sovereign identifies the enemy. These critical moments relate to the state of exception in which the decisions taken by the sovereign power are singular, absolute, and final. Schmitt emphasises enmity between political entities as a trigger of war. Enmity in politics makes war, the existential negation of the enemy through his physical annihilation, a real possibility (33). On the global political scene in recent history, liberal democracies rarely engage in wars with each other. However, the enmity between the cultural and ideological antagonists of liberal democracy, such as communism and fascism, or other types of totalitarian political regimes, has nevertheless led to full-fledged wars. Schmitt's definition of the political arguably explains the political nature of these conflicts, with each party clearly defining its

friends and enemies and fighting their enemies. Schmitt claims that being guided by a friend-enemy distinction allows 'us' as a collectivity to be clear about what 'we' are and what is rational for 'us' to do (35).

It is in the public nature of the political categorisation of groups as 'our friends' or 'our enemies' that Schmitt sees an escape from misinterpretations fostered by the idea of universalism and from sweeping trust in humanism (91-92). As Schmitt states, attempts to resolve political conflicts in the name of universal principles and humanity might unleash unprecedented acts of violence. The concept of humanity, for instance, is a useful ideological instrument for imperial expansionism, and, when used in the form of ethical-humanitarian justifications, becomes a vehicle of economic imperialism (Schmitt 44; 54). Since wars in those circumstances may transcend the limits of a political framework, Schmitt argues that opponents can degrade the enemy into moral and other categories, reducing it to the status of a monster that must not only be defeated but destroyed completely (36). Tracy B. Strong in her foreword of *Carl Schmitt's Concept of the Political* states that rational action in politics, without a clear distinction between friend and enemy, can have two repercussions. In the first, as Strong illustrates, one assumes shared universal qualities with others, which must then 'naturally' lead to an ultimate convergence of interests attainable through negotiation and compromise. In this scenario, the events most likely not only prove one to be wrong but also destroy a group that acts on such false beliefs (Schmitt qtd. in Strong xv). Strong explains that Carl Schmitt points to the 'doomed' Russian classes and the aristocratic society of pre-revolution France as examples of this dynamic (qtd. in Strong xxi). The second, and more relevant repercussion for the contemporary world, is the one that claims to speak in the name of universal humanity (Strong xxiii). And in this case, which is similar to Salem's theocracy, all those life choices and ideological positions which contradict and challenge the mainstream practices and beliefs are considered a threat to humanity and hence are an excuse for their extermination through the use of force or legal sanctions.

Schmitt, as Tracy B. Strong cites, dwells on the relation of the enemy as a disturber or a destroyer with the 'asymmetrical counter-concept' of humanity. He unravels the connotations of the term humanity

as that which constitutes an idealized single collectivity (xxiii). As everyone belongs to humanity, there are no enemies of humanity as such. But it is the political difference within humanity that proves divisive, and an enemy figure emerges, dehumanised and declared an un-person, eligible to be destroyed (Schmitt 44). As soon as such discriminations take hold, and one person or social group starts hating another on account of differences, destroying the other becomes justified, both rhetorically and through action, and it becomes a justification of destroying the destroyer to protect humanity. This is why the flexible concept of humanity can be misused in politics. Similarly, the Salem theocracy proceeded to persecute dissidents as social pariahs by judging them as pathogenic to community cohesion, thereby denying them the right to live. Thus, they acted like a political entity, while subjecting certain people from their own society to the enemy status, in line with Schmitt's ideas about the dangers of the concept of humanity. This is why Schmitt finds potentially great inequalities in the concept of human being, as 'the human' is a highly asymmetrical term that can be manipulated for repellent ends (Schmitt qtd. in Strong xxiii). In *The Crucible,* John Proctor at the end of Act III is addressed by Danforth in a similar tone: "What are you? (*Proctor is beyond speech in his anger*.) You are combined with antichrist, are you not?" (Miller 108). Proctor retorts in a rage: "A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth! For them that quail to bring men out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in all your black hearts that this be fraud . . . we will burn together!" (108). One can clearly see that Danforth represents the executive and he is doing his job to purge his community of supposedly occult practices. Proctor on the other hand, is perturbed by the inversion of the whole legal process, and he vents himself without compromising his stance.

Strong observes that Schmitt no longer calls the adversary an enemy (xxii). She points out that Schmitt calls the enemy a disturber of peace, thereby designating him as an outlaw of humanity. He wants to remove from politics, and especially from ideologically-driven international or internal politics, any possibility of justifying one's actions by invoking universal moral principles. Schmitt does so because he fears that

otherwise any such claim will not accept a limitation of its scope (qtd. in Strong xxii).

According to Schmitt, war has its own strategic and tactical rules, as well as points of view, but all of these presuppose that the political decision about defining the enemy has already been made. Therefore, General Carl von Clausewitz's familiar saying that 'war is politics continued with other means' is irrelevant in this context (qtd. in Schmitt 34). On the other hand, Schmitt declares:

> A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics. It is conceivable that such a world might contain many very interesting antitheses and contrasts, competitions, and intrigues of every kind, but there would not be a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed blood, and kill other human beings. For the definition of the political, it is here even irrelevant whether such a world without politics is desirable as an ideal situation. The phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever-present possibility of the friend-and-enemy groupings, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics and economics. (35)

Schmitt then juxtaposes the non-political with the political, asserting that every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis can be transformed into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively into friend and enemy categories (36). According to Schmitt, the political does not reside in the battle itself, since the latter possesses its own technical, psychological, and military laws. The political resides in a mode of behaviour which distinguishes sharply between a real friend and a real enemy (Schmitt 36). Schmitt illustrates this with an example of a religious community. If, for instance, this community wages war against members of other religious communities or engages in other wars, it is already more than a religious community, it is a political entity which possesses the capacity to promote the decisive step of declaring its adversary an enemy, or when, in other circumstances, it restrains its members from indulging in a war. Hence, the power to declare war or to settle for peace requires a political decision of concretely defining one's friend and enemy (Schmitt 37). In this sense, the

conservative factions of theocracy in Salem behaved as a *political* entity by waging a legal offensive against all those who questioned conventional norms. Pertinent evidence is found in *The Crucible* when deputy governor Danforth addresses Francis Nurse: ". . . But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. This is a sharp time, now a precise time – we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world" (86). Danforth concretely defined his friends and enemies here by imagining two leagues of people who are with or against his court to project his politics through well-defined antagonism.

A parallel can be observed between the absolutes of good and evil, which in Hofstede's eyes are typically American, and the Schmittean absolutes of friend and enemy. From the viewpoint of the 1950s, Miller's play mirrors the Schmittean dichotomy proposed in the interbellum period that preceded it. Yet it also *pre-dicts* the Schmittean revival that manifested itself in the theories and politics of the US neo-conservatives in the first decades of the twenty-first century. With *pre-dict*, I mean to propose a counter-concept to preposterousness. In this case, my aim is not to argue that either Miller or the play was in some sense clairvoyant. They *pre-dicted* something in the sense that a script will *pre-dict*. This genre is designed to be 'filled in,' executed, performed, worked out. Similarly, Miller's play is a *pre-diction* in the socio-cultural domain.

Pre-diction is not the only way in which the play relates to the future, however. There are two other ways of defining the play's relation with the future in the context of persistency in culture. One way is that the play participates in the future, or that it depicts a culture's persistency from the vantage point of the future. The other way shows that it is chased by ghosts, or rather spectres, that speak from both the past and the future. The play is at the cross section of past, present, and future, and it highlights how the US cultural hard core has retained its dynamics despite embracing modernity, and that includes frequent resurgence of the politics of fear in phases of crisis like the Cold War and 911. This play offers a cure by performing the intimate and the familiar for critical self-reflection. It cogently showcases radical binaries between the legions of God and devil, chastity and profanity, patriots and traitors, etc., to revive Schmitt's

erstwhile concept of the political and the friend/enemy distinction which thrive in a heterogeneous and antagonistic cultural space. Hence, it is a play that opens up multiple gates to examine a culture.

Note:

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