Chapter IV

Political Relationships

American writers in the 1930’s appear to be greatly enchanted by Marxist interpretation of society. The era of 1930’s may be termed as the golden period of Marxist influence in American literature:

The American theatre in the 1930s directly reflected the nation’s political and economic crises. Leftist theatre groups proliferated, including the New Playwright’s Theatre (1926), Workers’ Drama League (1929), Workers’ Laboratory Theatre (1930), League of Workers’ Theatres (1932), and THEATRE UNION (1933), among the most active. (Wilmeth 21)

This unprecedented influence of Marxism in American literature started decreasing with the severe implementation of the draconian laws such as the Espionage Act (1917), Sedition Act (1918), Un-American Activities Act (1938), Smith Act (1940), Taft-Hartley Act (1947), and the McCarron Internal Security Act (1950).

For the purpose of political relationships in this study, Miller’s four major plays have been taken up – The Crucible (1953), After the Fall (1964), Incident at Vichy (1964), and The Archbishop’s Ceiling (1977).

Though Miller was greatly influenced by Marxist theory, he is however, generally regarded as a liberal humanist:

Raymond Williams has shown how the ideology of liberal humanism operates in modern liberal tragedy. Williams notes that Arthur Miller’s plays immerse us in the private world of an individual, such as Willy Loman in Death of a
Salesman, Willy embodies the liberal humanist dreams of self-fulfilment, albeit measured mostly in material terms. (In this respect, liberal humanism has cordial relations with capitalism.) Seeking self-fulfilment in a flawed society that he cannot change, the hero ultimately destroys himself. The liberal dream of self-fulfilment inevitably leads to the death of the hero as the last attempt at verifying the self. At this point Williams writes, ‘liberal tragedy has ended in its own deadlock.’ In this liberal humanist vision, ‘we are all victims’. (Zarilli 410)

To be more specific, Miller’s humanism may be defined as democratic humanism. In his plays, he is mainly concerned with the people who are denied a sense of community. National and international events of early twentieth century were of a very complex nature which caught Miller’s attention. The Great Depression of 1929 which affected the whole world for a decade was a traumatic experience for both the rich and the poor. The rise of Nazism and World War II, threat of communism, and McCarthy witch-hunt in America laid the ground for politically oriented plays.

Arthur Miller was, perhaps, the most vocal playwright of the fifties who took up cudgels against the McCarthy tyranny and horror of fifties and came out with flying colours against this aberration in political history of American people. McCarthy trials were a challenge to the liberal values of American society. Freedom of conscience, individual liberty and freedom of expression were at stake:

Arthur Miller, more than any other dramatist wrote a powerful play [The Crucible] on the fifties against McCarthy’s Congressional Committee which made a mockery of the liberal concepts like individualism and freedom. The only other writer to attempt a powerful critique of McCarthy era is E. L.
Doctorow who in *The Book of Daniel* tells the ignominy of Joe McCarthy’s Congressional Committee and what they symbolise in terms of the liberal crisis. Miller is a major playwright who explored the liberal dilemma in post-war Europe. (Venkateswarlu 93)

Throughout his literary career, Miller has been preoccupied with the moral question of right and wrong and he exhibited his preference for morally and ethically right values quite unambiguously and emphatically when he says:

In all my plays and books I try to take settings and dramatic situation from life which involve real questions of right and wrong. Then I set out, rather implacably and in the most realistic situation I can find the moral dilemma and try to point a real though hard, path out. I don’t see how you can write anything decent without using the question of right and wrong as bars. (qtd. in Martin xxi)

In American political history the decade of fifties is marked by betrayals and “naming names”; the House Un-American Activities Committee took “the role of the grand inquisitor” (Meyers 146). This Committee was a direct threat to liberal democratic ideal of individual liberty. And it is also significant to note that the idea of individual liberty finds prominent place in the constitution of the United States. The idea of individual liberty is deep rooted in the psyche of the American people. Interference on the part of state and government in the individual life of citizens to the extent that how one should think and act run counter to the democratic essence of American political ethos. Miller was summoned to appear before the HUAC to explain his position vis-à-vis communism and communists. Quite fearlessly he appeared before the committee and expressed his stand in unequivocal terms so as to highlight the totalitarian, undemocratic and fascist nature of the HUAC hearings. Miller was
a man and artist of integrity. He never compromised with his principled position vis-a-vis HUAC hearing. He neither succumbed to the temptation of remaining silent, nor buckled under the tyrannical and threatening pressure of the HUAC:

He openly criticised the committee itself, whose ‘rather ceaseless investigating of artists was creating a pall for apprehension and fear among all kinds of people.’ His testimony covered a wide range of political topics. He advocated the repeal of the Smith Act; defended his contribution to a fund that supplied vitally needed medicines to Red China; discussed the ideas of his plays; condemned Ezra Pound’s anti-Semitic broadcasts from wartime Italy. (Meyers 143)

Miller’s play, The Crucible begins with Reverend Parris praying for his daughter, Betty’s recovery, who is lying unconscious on her bed. It is revealed through conversation between Reverend Parris and his niece Abigail Williams that the latter and Betty and a number of other girls were engaged in occult activities in the woods. It was Tituba, Parris’ slave servant, who led the girls to occult rituals. Abigail drank chicken blood to kill Elizabeth Proctor. She also warns the girls that if anyone disclosed anything about the occult rituals, she will kill that fellow. As Parris was spying on their activities, he jumped from a bush and the girls were surprised and frightened by his presence. During Parris’ sudden entry into the scene Betty fainted. She was still inert on her bed. There were rumours of witchcraft in the town. Reverend Hale is summoned to examine the incident. He is an expert in occult practices. He questions Abigail who accuses Tituba as being a witch. In order to save herself from hanging, Tituba confesses faith in God and accuses Goody Good and Goody Osborne of witchcraft. Abigail and Betty also confess faith in God. They also admit that they had been bewitched by occult activities. They also name a number of people whom they claim they
saw with the devil. Deputy Governor, Danforth, also comes to Salem to supervise the court proceedings. John Proctor’s wife Elizabeth Proctor tells him that he should visit the court and testify against Abigail and the other girls. Some time ago, John Proctor had an affair with Abigail, but now he wants to forget it. So he does not want to get involved in witchery trial. Mary Warren gives a small rag doll to Elizabeth which she has made in court during her hours in the court that day. Hale enters and questions John Proctor and Elizabeth Proctor about witchery. Giles Corey and Francis Nurse also enter the scene. They have come to seek advice as their wives have been arrested. Next, a marshal arrives to arrest Elizabeth Proctor on the charge of witchery. Elizabeth was accused by Abigail for stabbing with a needle through a doll. John Proctor asks Mary to testify against the girls. Francis Nurse, Giles Corey and John Proctor present their case against the girls to Deputy Governor Danforth and Judge Hathorne. Giles Corey tells that Putnam had incited his daughter to accuse Corey’s wife of witchcraft so that Putnam could grab his land. He tells that he had a witness but he could not disclose his name for fear of his being arrested. Unfortunately, on refusal of Corey to disclose the name of the witness, Danforth orders Corey’s arrest because of contempt of court. Mary Warren tells that she never saw the devil or any spirits. Abigail argues that Mary is telling a lie. As the court seems to be beguiled by Abigail, John Proctor tells everyone that Abigail was a whore. He also tells that he had an affair with Abigail. Elizabeth tells that John Proctor did not have an affair with Abigail. Mary is fickle-minded. She returns to Abigail’s side. The girls accuse John Proctor of witchery. Proctor accuses Danforth of being afraid to take the side of the innocent people. Proctor is arrested. Reverend Hale feels that the court is not serving the interests of justice. He denounces the proceedings. There is rumour that in a nearby town the people have revolted against the similar witch trials. People of Salem also fear the similar uprising in their own town. Now Parris and Hale realise that they should come to the help of the innocent people. They tell them that they should make false
confession in order to save their lives. John Proctor goes by Hale’s advice to save his life by admitting that he is a witch but he refuses to name the others. As the court asks him to name the others and decides to post his confession in public, Proctor tears off his confession. John Proctor listens to the stirrings of his conscience. He does not want that he should be blamed for the death of innocent people. He tells the court that his confession was a lie. He is taken to be hanged with the other accused.

Miller’s play The Crucible was staged in New York on January 22, 1953. It is dubbed as a historical drama. It deals with the Salem witch trials of 1692. Miller has tried to present the details with the accuracy of a historian. Most of the characters in the play are based on real figures of the time. In this play, Miller has discussed the sociological framework of Salem in the late seventeenth century. It was basically a transitional period in which old Puritanical codes were being discarded and a sense of nonconformity and individual freedom was gaining the ground. It is also important to note that political and religious establishment felt threatened due to the fear of losing their control. In this scenario, in order to maintain their authority and control over the people, they resorted to highhanded tactics of punishing those who were raising their voice against the Puritanical establishment. The witch hunt trials were the outcome of this tug of war between the Puritans and the upcoming upholders of individual freedom and individual conscience. Further, some people tried to settle their personal scores in the guise of witch hunt:

The Crucible takes for its point of departure the Salem witch trials of 1692, but it also reflects Miller’s reaction to how the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) operated at the time when the play was written, and the dangers of the McCarthyist fervour that gripped America in the 1950s. It is
typical of his work in its sense of purpose, humanity and the desire to bring society to a better understanding of itself. (Abbotson, Commentary xxiii)

There is contemporary relevance of The Crucible. Brooks Atkinson wrote in the New York Times: “Neither Mr. Miller nor his audiences are unaware of certain similarities between the perversions of justice then and today” (qtd. in Foulkes 95). John Mason Brown says, “the likenesses between the past and present are disquietingly clear” (qtd. in Foulkes 95). The play generated a lot of criticism because of its political overtones in the context of McCarthy trials in 1950s. Thus, almost all the criticism of this play is politically oriented. It was because of the political overtones, the York Little Theatre of Pennsylvania showed reluctance to stage The Crucible. Despite William Bayer’s accusation that the play was “pamphleteering on behalf of today’s political persecutions” (Bayer 185), it may be said that The Crucible was a bold attempt on the part of Miller to challenge the political terror in the form of McCarthyism. As we notice in The Crucible, religious and political authorities of Salem were bent upon scuttling and subduing the voice of dissent, similarly McCarthy trials were also to scuttle the voice of dissent in post World War America. Walcott Gibbs treats The Crucible as “sacrifice of drama to polemics” (Gibbs 39). Actually, the polemics lead us to the regions of man’s conscience. It may be said that individual conscience was the heart of the play’s meaning. In Jerry Tallmer’s opinion the play says, “‘No’, not merely to witch-hunters, but to every betrayal of the self” (492). John H. Ferres argues, “Miller believes a man must be true to himself and to his fellows” (8).

In Mottram’s opinion Miller in The Crucible “comes as close as he can to supporting the individual against society without crying for revolution” (“Arthur Miller: Development of a Political Dramatist in America,” 35). Mottram highlights the “liberalism it embodies” (“Arthur Miller: Development of a Political Dramatist in America,” 38). Robert Warshow
who strongly attacks *The Crucible* admits that *The Crucible* is relevant to the McCarthyian period of American history, “Mr. Miller has nothing to say about the Salem trials and makes only the flimsiest pretense that he has. *The Crucible* was written to say something about Alger Hiss and Owen Lattimore, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Senator McCarthy . . .” (166).

Miller’s play *The Crucible* (1953) is deeply rooted in the history of (colonial) America. The play refers to the actual incidents, and the trial which took place in the second half of the seventeenth century in Salem. But the play reminds us of the dictum – history repeats itself, in the sense, that it has clear parallels with the contemporary America – post World War II America. It was in February 1950 that senator Joe McCarthy addressed the Ohio County Women’s Republican Club and claimed that he had a list of “two hundred and five” (Nannes 182) communists working in the State Department. McCarthy’s revelation switched on the panic button. Conservatives rallied behind McCarthy. Investigation started. And by 1953 the hurricane of the witch-hunt of communists engulfed the entire nation. Political elements of far Right started baying for the blood of communists. Their propaganda against communists paralysed the mind of the people. Mass hysteria was created against communists who were charged with subversive activities – they were publicised as agent provocateurs, wreckers of constitution, grave threat to American democracy and American interests. It was, indeed, a well planned and calculated attempt to crush the voice of the communists. About McCarthy terror, Miller writes:

> It was the fact that a political objective, knowledgeable campaign from the far Right was capable of creating not only a terror, but a new subjective reality, a veritable mystique which was gradually assuming even a holy resonance. The wonder of it all struck me that . . . such manifestly ridiculous man, should be capable of paralysing thought itself, and worse, causing to billow up such persuasive clouds of “mysterious” feelings within people . . . Astounded, I
watched men pass me without a nod whom I had known rather well for years!
And again . . . that the terror in these people was being knowingly planned and
consciously engineered . . . that so interior and subjective an emotion could
have been so manifestly created from without was a marvel to me. It underlies
every word in The Crucible. (Collected Plays 39-40)

Vested political interests under the garb of McCarthyism and witch-hunt of
communists were out to grab and administer the individual conscience of man: “Above all,
horrors, I saw accepted the notion that conscience was no longer a private matter but one of
state administration. I saw men handing conscience to other men and thanking other men for
the opportunity of doing so” (Miller, Collected Plays 40).

In 1950s and 60s in particular and throughout the cold war in general right radicals
and fundamentalists remained busy in identifying the internal enemies of democracy in
America. In April 1961, Robert Welch, the founder of Birch society dubbed President
Eisenhower “a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy” (qtd. in Westin
239). In January 1961, Welch alleged that “Communist influences are now in almost
complete control of our Federal Government” (qtd. in Westin 243). While delivering his “evil
empire” speech “on March 8, 1983, President Reagan . . . speaking to his political base at the
Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida . . .
charged that the Soviet Union continued to act with the aggressive impulse of an evil empire”
(Donaldson 273). In 1982 President Ronald Reagan of US in an address to the British
Parliament referred to Soviet Union as “totalitarian evil” (Knott 78). In religious terms evil is
equated with Devil. It can easily be inferred that President Reagan considered USSR as
Devil’s empire. Thus, we can safely assume that McCarthyism smacked of Puritanical and
Catholic attitude inherent in the psyche of American society – cruel, rigid in the case of
McCarthy witch-hunt of communists:
[It is] to conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology. Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God and their opposites are of Lucifer. . . . since 1692 a great but superficial change has wiped out God’s beard and the Devil’s horns, but the world is still gripped between two diametrically opposed absolutes. . . . when it is recalled that until the Christian era the underworld was never regarded as a hostile area, that all gods were useful and essentially friendly to man despite occasional lapses; when we see the steady and methodical inculcation into humanity of the idea of man’s worthlessness – until redeemed – the necessity of the Devil may become evidence as a weapon, a weapon designed and used time and again in every age to whip men into a surrender to a particular church for a church-state. (Miller, Collected Plays 248-249)

It is also important to note that we apply religious categories to political action to grind our own axe. During the period of cold war, resistance and opposition of political authority in the U.S. was treated as prompted by U.S.S.R. and vice versa. Dissidence was treated as treason:

In the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to charge of alliance with the Red Hell. Political position, thereby, is given an inhuman overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilised intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congeries of plots and counter plots, and the main role of government changes
from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God. (Miller, *Collected Plays* 249)

Miller visited Salem to study the court records and to get firsthand knowledge of the Salem trials (1692). The “misplaced pride” of State that characterises the attitude of the judges during Salem trials was very much evident and alive in the air in Massachusetts during Miller’s visit. Miller observes:

At the time of my evening walk, no Massachusetts legislature had passed so much as a memoir of regret at the execution of innocent people, rejecting the very suggestion as a slur on the honor of the state even two and a half centuries later. The same misplaced pride that had for so long prevented the original Salem court from admitting the truth before its eyes was still alive here. (*Timebends* 336-337)

In the testimony of Abigail and Parris, Miller found that it was a shameful and reprehensible process of “cleansing through the projection of one’s own vileness onto others in order to wipe it out with their blood. As more than one private letter put it at the time, ‘Now no one is safe’” (Miller, *Timebends* 337). One of the main motives of the Salem witch trials was to terrorise the people to submit to the authoritarian and theological regime of those times; similarly, one can easily infer that the McCarthy trials, mainly, aimed at terrorising the people to submit to the anti-communist policy of the state. Harold Clurman rightly equates McCarthy trials with Salem witch-hunt and rightly avers that both were meant to terrorise the society:

*The Crucible*, written between 1952 and 1953, is still a visible protest against the aberrations of McCarthyism. That the witch-hunt of Salem cannot be equated with the fear of communism is not valid as a criticism of the play.
What *The Crucible* does is to show us a community terrorised into a savagely hysterical fury that is reprehensible whether it is based on fact or on falsehood. The play asks, ‘Is the accuser always holy now?’ A question all together suitable to the situation of the fifties. ‘Vengeance is walking Salem’ had become almost literally exact. (147)

Miller rightly comments on the American attitude in political matters that it is generally guided by theological terms. He opines, “Like Reverend Hale and the others on this stage, we conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology. Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God, and there opposites are of Lucifer . . . to whip men into surrender to a particular church or church-state” (*Collected Plays* 248-249). He exposes the hypocrisy of democratic values of freedom of expression enshrined in the constitution of America. American democracy pays lip service to the freedom of speech because the state power treats the opposite point of view as inimical and treason. When state power in America decides to curb the opposite point of view, it thinks and acts in theological manner:

The Salem tragedy . . . developed from a paradox. It is a paradox in whose grip we still live, and there is no prospect yet that we will discover its resolution. Simply it was this: for good purposes . . . the people of Salem developed a theocracy, a combine of state and religious power whose function was to keep the community together, and to prevent any kind of disunity that might open it to destruction by material or ideological enemies. . . . Evidently the time came in New England when the repressions of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organised. The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among
all classes when the balance began to turn towards greater individual freedom.

(Miller, *Collected Plays* 228)

Thus, Miller treats Salem trials as an attack on individual freedom; and the attack of the same nature one comes across in McCarthy trials. It is also pertinent to note that the court’s attitude in *The Crucible* is quite threatening and authoritarian, dictatorial and biased; and this attitude instils awe in the heart of John Proctor and others. Danforth warns Francis categorically and curtly in a very stern and harsh tone: “you must understand, sir that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 293). To maintain the dignity of man is of utmost importance as far as his relationship with society is concerned. Miller admits that it was the contemporary society and “what was in the air” (*Collected Plays* 11) which motivated him to write the plays. In American history early part of the 1950s was marked by the McCarthy witch-hunt of communists and their sympathisers because the communist party of America and their followers and sympathisers were treated as a serious threat to the security and well-being of the nation. Suspected communists were summoned before the HUAC of the Congress and asked to confess their links with communist party; they were also asked to name others if they wanted to be absolved of the charge of sedition. During the same period Miller happened to read Marion Starkey’s book *The Devil in Massachusetts*. He was surprised to note that the witchery trials conducted almost two and a half century back in Salem paralleled the McCarthy trials of communists in 1950s:

The main point of the hearings, precisely as in seventeenth-century Salem, was that the accused make public confession, damn his confederates as well as his Devil master and guarantee his sterling new allegiance by breaking disgusting old woes – where upon he was let loose to rejoin the society of
extremely decent people. In other words the same spiritual nugget lay folded within both procedures – an act of contrition done not in solemn privacy but out in the public air. The Salem prosecution was actually on more solid legal ground since the defendant, if guilty of familiarity with the Unclean One, had broken a law against the practice of witchcraft, a civil as well as a religious offence; whereas the offender against HUAC could not be accused of any such violation but only of a spiritual crime, subservience to a political enemy’s desires and ideology. He was summoned before the committee to be called a bad name, but one that could destroy his career. In effect, it came down to a governmental decree of moral guilt that could easily be made to disappear by ritual speech: intoning names of fellow sinners and recanting former beliefs. (Miller, Collected Plays 331)

John Hale’s account of witch-hunt trials published in 1702 (Modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft) testifies to the fact of vengeance instead of witchery. Thus, Hale’s testimony exposes the hollowness of the charge of witchery. Similarly one can say that McCarthyian trials were, in fact, the trials of vengeance because due to the Depression in 1929, socialists had criticised capitalism in vehement terms; this criticism of capitalism was not to the liking of political leaders like McCarthy. Hence, McCarthy and his cohorts acted in the manner of vengeance against those who had faith in socialism. Griffin remarks, “In many of these cases there had been antecedent personal quarrels, and so occasions of revenge; for some of those Condemned, had been suspected by their Neighbours several years, because after quarrelling with their Neighbours, evils had befallen those Neighbours” (70-71).

It was the idea of guilt which was successfully utilised in Salem trial, and again repeated in 1950’s during the witch-hunt of Communists in America. During Salem trials the
idea was that of sexual guilt; during McCarthy witch-hunt to be a Communist was to indulge in political guilt. As regards Salem trials Miller remarks:

Here was guilt, the guilt of illicit sexuality. . . . Had there been no tinder of guilt to set aflame, had the cult and culture of repression not ruled so tightly, no outbreak would have been possible. John Proctor then in being driven to confess not to a metaphoric guilt but to actual sex with an identified teenaged partner, might save the community in the only way possible, by raising to consciousness what had been suppressed and in holy disguise was out to murder them all. (Timebends 341)

Thus, it is the Puritanical attitude of suppression and ruthless implementation of moral and ethical and legal code of conduct which led to all sorts of intrigues in personal and social life of people. Sex outside the domain of marriage was treated as emanating from the ill-effects and communion with the Devil. And this metaphoric introduction of Devil in matters personal and social was figment of perverted imagination. Though at that point of time during Salem trials there were laws against witchcraft – this does not mean that laws emanating from perverted imagination could be treated as laws reasonably good for the welfare of individual and society. As regards witch-hunt of communists in 1950s, Miller finds its parallel with Salem trials the way the syndrome of guilt played dominant role in victimising the communists in America. Communists belonged to the party of the Devil. McCarthy and his chums were holy judges and arbiters to save society from the influence of the Devil and witchcraft of the communists. Miller observes:

Without guilt the 1950s Red-hunt could never have generated such power. Once it was conceded that absolutely any idea remotely similar to a Marxist position was not only politically but morally illicit, the liberal, with his
customary adaptation of Marxist theory and attitudes was effectively paralysed. The former Communist was guilty because he had in fact believed the Soviets were developing the system of the future, without human exploitation and irrational waste. . . . But as in Salem, a point arrived, in the last forties, when the rules of social intercourse quite suddenly changed, or were changed, and attitudes that had merely been anti capitalist – anti establishment were now made unholy, morally repulsive and if not actually treasonous, then implicitly so. America had always been a religious country. 

*(Timebends 341-342)*

In contemporary civilisation and society, it is a matter of great concern that Americans have continued to treat political issues in religious terms. It is something appalling for a democratic secular State to treat the opposition as emanating from Devil. In *The Crucible*, Miller grants topmost priority to individual conscience. He says, “there were moments when the individual conscience was all that could keep a world from falling” *(Timebends 342)*. In *The Crucible* John Proctor listens to the voice of his conscience and “sets aside his guilty feelings of unworthiness to ‘mount the gibbet like a saint’ . . . defies the court by tearing up his confession and brings on his own execution” *(Miller, Timebends 342)*. Thus, political tyranny and nonsense can be resisted, but one has to remain prepared to listen to the voice of one’s conscience. It is man’s conscience which can withstand and challenge the legal authority and political power if it adopts an unreasonable and undemocratic course to punish the right thinking people in society. However, the price of maintaining voice of conscience is, generally, to sacrifice one’s life.

In *The Crucible*, Miller espoused the cause of retaining the individual’s conscience under tough political circumstances; and it will not be out of place to infer that in similar fashion, Miller faced the bullying attitude of McCarthy enquiry without compromising his
conscience – Miller refused to name the friends and acquaintances because his conscience did not allow him to become the informer. Miller endeavours to impress upon the audience that government acting as the arbiter of moral and ethical values is a bad government – such government is a threat to the individual’s conscience and liberty and freedom of expression. Excessive involvement and unwarranted interference of government in the individual life of a person to force him to act and think in the manner the government dictates is dangerous for liberal and democratic norms of government. McCarthy also witch-hunt posed serious threat to human dignity and spirit of tolerance. It was the ugly reality of the liberal crisis which Miller dramatised and hinted at in The Crucible. It is through a parallel in history that Miller disapproves the contemporary witch-hunt of communists. It was reign of terror let loose on the communists; it was a very shocking spectacle of willing participation of the people in naming the names and thus getting release from the murderous clutches of the McCarthy hounds.

Judges are supposed to sift the truth out of the evidence produced before them, but the judges in Salem trials appeared to be biased in favour of those who were falsely implicating the innocent persons for witchcraft. Judiciary is, perhaps, the most important and impartial pillar of any political system. Even judicial system prevailing at that point of time – Salem trials (1692) – failed to protect the innocent; judicial system rather punished the innocent. The evil engulfed the whole society including judicial and political wings of state power and even the testimony of honest and innocent men miserably failed to convince the judiciary of the nonsensical value of the whole affair of the witch-hunt. From the legal and moral point of view, it was the false evidence and from psychological point of view, it was imaginary evidence, that is, simply the figment of imagination of some perverted and distorted minds, and it was simply false accusations which registered the victory of the complainants.
Commonsense could not stand as bulwark against the frantic, fanatic, prejudiced, dogmatic, and revengeful forces in society and state.

The very considerable dramatic power of *The Crucible* derives from its revelation of a mounting tide of evil gaining in an entire society, an ascendancy quite disproportionate to the evil of any individual member of that society. What is so horrifying is to watch the testimony of honest men bouncing like an India rubber ball off the high wall of this belief that other men have built around themselves, not from ingrained evil, but from overzealousness and a purblind confidence in their own judgement. What meaning has proof when men will believe only what they want to believe and interpret evidence only in the light of their prejudice? To watch *The Crucible* is to be overwhelmed by the simple impotence of honest commonsense against fanaticism that is getting out of control and to be painfully reminded that there are situations in which sheer goodness (“mere unaided virtue”, in Melville’s phrase about Starbuck) is just not enough to counter such deviousness.

(Welland 84-85)

In Salem witch-hunt trials, society and state failed to unearth the motives of the accusers and the state authorities were swayed by the mob mentality of society which was out to punish the honest and innocent persons who were in minority. Salem witch-hunt trials draw parallel to the witch-hunt of communists in America in 1950’s which overwhelmed the psyche of American society, and in particular the elite ruling class, to the extent that McCarthy trials brought disgrace to American democracy:

. . . it will remain a more important document of McCarthy’s America than would a more partisan plea. The ugliness of that affair, which caused so much
perplexed anxiety to the friends of the United States, was not the megalomaniac aspirations of a cynical demagogue, but the appalling ease with which his methods achieved results. So far and so wide did the infection spread that it could only be visualised as a force of evil of which ordinary men and women were the unintentional agents and the unrecognising victims. In many ways its moral damage was more serious to those victimised by it and this is what *The Crucible* so splendidly communicates. (Welland 85)

*After the Fall* (1964) introduces “the blasted stone tower of a German concentration camp” (Miller, *After the Fall* 1) in the background. Presence of this tower conveys a number of metaphorical meanings. Stage setting reveals that “The action takes place in the mind, thought, and memory of Quentin” (Miller, *After the Fall* 1). The German concentration camp carries two meanings - personal meaning as well as political meaning. The personal meaning the tower conveys is concerned with the relationships Quentin had with others. This tower conveys political meaning in the sense that it reminds us of the Nazi atrocities on the Jews. It was political decision of the Nazi party to massacre the Jews. In this play, “Miller seems to explain McCarthyism, the Communism of the post-war period, and personal guilt associated with his [Quentin’s] relationship with Maggie, Louise and Felice in terms of the metaphorical use of the concentration camp” (Venkateswarlu 116). Miller visited Linz, Hitler’s Austrian birthplace, notorious for its anti-Semitism. He also visited a concentration camp which was situated just outside the city:

As we drove by the small farms, it seemed strange that none of the people so much as glanced up to see who was passing on this rarely travelled road to a long empty concentration camp. Naturally, I assumed they had been doing precisely what they were doing now when the trucks packed with people wind up this road during the years the camp was in operation. Nor could I blame
them altogether, and that was the troublesome part. I inevitably wondered what I would have done in their place, powerless as they were to intervene – if indeed such a thought had ever entered their heads. (Miller, *Timebends* 523)

Thus, Miller highlights indifference and apathy of the common people towards the victims of the Nazi power of State. It may be the indifference and apathy born of the fear of the Nazi State or it was born of hatred of the Jews? It is pertinent to note that Nazi State power was born of totalitarian ideology of state which didn’t allow the common people to express resentment or resistance against the anti-human, inhuman and undemocratic policies of the State. Nazi government did not grant the people power or right to intervene in the matters of State which were detrimental to the democratic values and principles. Massive concentration camp presents a very horrible look and its inside structure was a highly dirty, nauseating and inexpressibly terrible testimony to the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazis:

Built like a castle fortress, the camp was surrounded by a massive twenty-five-foot-high stone wall instead of the usual barbed wire fence on poles. This place was obviously to be a permanent killing ground for the Thousand-Year Reich. . . . The man, doubtless bored by his watchman’s job, was happy to let us look inside. Not without deference to the thousands who had been murdered here, he was nonetheless lively as he showed us through barrack buildings and courtyards, pausing to explain about the stone slab, with its carved cradle to fit the head at the funnel at one end to let out the blood, on which cadavers shorn of hair and gold teeth knocked out. The living were also worked over here. . . . he was as interested in the horrors he described as he was respectful toward the victims, and clearly blameless in his manly heart. . . . In open alley between two barracks he pointed out a pyramidal stone obelisk
recording that here a Russian general had been forced to stand in below-zero weather while water was poured over him until he froze to death in a column of ice. (Miller, *Timebends* 523)

In view of the Nazi atrocities and Nazi trials, it is very distressing to note that the media in Europe, America, and Britain didn’t show the serious interest in reporting the proceedings of the trials. It is also quite possible that media didn’t exhibit serious interest in the Nazi trials simply because public memory is short and people might have lost interest in the Holocaust! It may also be possible that people in general had decided to forget the horrible past related with Nazi atrocities:

In the new and impressively sedate tan marble court room, we sat down among sparse dozen or so curious onlookers. After only a few minutes a reporter from one of the wire services came over to say that he hoped I’d be writing about the trial since he and his colleagues were having trouble getting their stuff into the European, American, and British press, there being a distinct absence of interest in the Nazi phenomenon now, more than fifteen years after the war. (Miller, *Timebends* 524)

In *After the Fall*, tower stands for oppression and misuse of political authority and state power by the Nazis. They were perhaps the worst example of evil in the garb of a political party which spread racial hatred against the Jews and killed them in millions:

Miller’s stage directions reveal that the tower stands on the site of a German concentration camp, one of those that the Nazi regime established to prosecute the extermination of European Jewry. The reference clarifies that this citadel stood in service of oppression and the abuse of duly constituted authority, an ironic monument to a state that organized perhaps the paramount horror of
twentieth-century Europe. The tower represents not only the worst potential in
the relationship of government to the people but also the battle to overcome
the injustice and cruelty that law and authority can impose. (Mason 1)

The theme of guilt and responsibility is central to After the Fall. Those who remained
silent and did not oppose or condemn the Nazi atrocities on the Jews may be treated as guilty;
on the other hand those who opposed and condemned the Nazi atrocities on the Jews may be
treated as socially and politically responsible ones:

The issue of survivor guilt is central to After the Fall, and the play’s direct
connection to the HOLOCAUST is inescapable. While working on the play
Miller and INGE MORATH had visited Mauthausen concentration camp
together. Miller felt that he had witnessed at first hand people’s dangerous and
irresponsible drive to forget or pretend innocence to deny GUILT AND
RESPONSIBILITY. He objected to such a reaction, believing instead that we
should each accept some responsibility for evil in the world. In Timebends: A
Life, Miller explains After the Fall “was about how we – nations and
individuals – destroy ourselves by denying that this is precisely what we are
doing. (Abbotson, Critical Companion to Arthur Miller 25)

In After the Fall, flowers in the hands of Holga stand for homage to the memory of
the millions of massacred Jews by the Nazi government of Hitler. Holga tells Quentin:
“When I first visited America after the war, I was three days under questioning before they
let me in. How could one be in forced labour for two years if one were not a Communist or a
Jew?” (Miller, After the Fall 17). From Holga’s statement it appears that she is a communist.
She also reminds us of the failed attempt on the part of the Communists to overthrow the
Nazi government. If the communists had succeeded in overthrowing the Nazis, the course of
history would have been different. Quentin’s meeting with Holga also suggests something more than the union of two persons – it suggests the union of political ideas too. The play can also be interpreted as the pain and agony of a liberal person because the values he (Quentin) cherished most and believed in are being razed to the ground. However, despite a past of failures, these idealists convey a message of hope and faith in future. In the play, Miller finds parallel with the McCarthy atrocities perpetrated against the communists:

[He equates] the McCarthy era with the massacre of the camps. Miller re-emphasizes the totalitarian mind behind the witch-hunt which forced many people like Lou to commit suicide in order to be faithful to what they stood for, believing in the good of humanity. To buy security for oneself, one has to name names which eventually hurt many people during the plague years. The tower lights up ominously when Lou commits suicide. (Venkateswarlu 116)

Thus, Miller’s intention is to remind us that McCarthy era was no less heinous than the Nazi era of thirties and forties which sent millions of Jews to the gas chambers and the Nazis earned notoriety unheard in the annals of European history. It also points out that the McCarthy witch-hunt of communists in America was no less dangerous than the totalitarian mind of the Nazis who were incarnation of evil in socio-cultural and political matters.

It is generally found that political masters indulge in the game of suspicion and cruelty towards intellectuals, poets, dramatists, directors, producers, and political activists and sympathisers of a particular party which may pose challenge to their vested political, economic and social interests. These political dictators may go to any length to victimise, intimidate and eliminate their rivals. In After the Fall, Professor of Law and a man of saintly nature Lou is subpoenaed for his communist links and leanings and asked to appear before HUAC. In the opinion of HUAC it was un-American to be a communist; therefore, a
communist must be punished. Lou says that his wife was “shaken . . . terribly – my being subpoenaed and all those damned headlines. Despite everything, it does affect one’s whole relationship” (Miller, After the Fall 34). Quentin rightly remarks, “We only turned left because it seemed the truth was there. You mustn’t be ashamed” (Miller, After the Fall 35).

Truth was certainly there because communism stood for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and American capitalist system stood for the dictatorship of the capitalists; and dictatorship of the capitalists could survive on the exploitation and victimisation of workers, peasants and common masses. McCarthy and his cohorts were political tyrants whose actions affected the social relations among individuals to the extent that weak hearted persons, to save their skin appeared before HUAC, confessed their guilt of being communists, and betrayed their friends by naming them. Sanctity attached to individual’s conscience, cordial family relations and trust inherent in social relationships were crushed under the feet of McCarthy terror. The people were coerced and forced to abandon their moral responsibility of maintaining trust in their social relationships. Kazan who was Miller’s intimate friend and a reputed director appeared before the HUAC and disclosed the names of his friends simply because he felt that his professional career will be ruined if he did not do HUAC’s bidding. Reign of terror was let loose on those who advocated freedom of expression, freedom of thought, and freedom of individual conscience. We are reminded of Kazan when Mickey in After the Fall decides to name his friends including Lou before the HUAC. Lou, in a very poignant and impassioned tone, rightly says:

LOU. Then – what’s your proposal?

MICKEY. That we go back together. Come with me. And answer the questions.

LOU. Name – the names?
MICKEY. Yes. I’ve talked to all the others in the unit. They’ve agreed, excepting for Ward and Harry. They cursed me out, but I expected that.

LOU, dazed. Let me understand – you are asking my permission to name me?

Pause.

You may not mention my name. He begins physically shaking. And if you do it, Mickey, you are selling me for your own prosperity. If you use my name I will be dismissed. You will ruin me. You will destroy my career. (Miller, After the Fall 50)

Lou and Mickey were intimate friends. One can safely assume that it was due to political pressures and environment of terror and victimisation of very dirty and obnoxious nature that intimacy, trust, cordiality, faith, and sanctity inherent in social relationships were turned into deceit and treachery. McCarthy political madness made a mockery of social and human relationships. McCarthy madness had no place for private conscience.

It is pertinent to note that Quentin does not show firm commitment to oppose witch-hunt of communists by McCarthy inquisitors. He makes a very significant observation when he says, “. . . we only turned left because it seemed the truth was there” (Miller, After the Fall 35). But he shows lack of conviction in supporting the “left” when he declares in very plain and unambiguous terms: “I really don’t want to be known as a Red lawyer; and I really don’t want the newspapers to eat me alive; and if it come down to it Lou could defend himself” (Miller, After the Fall 58). This statement of Quentin’s testifies to the fact that political pressure was so horrible that the man who sides with the truth decides to abandon it in case his personal interest and welfare is threatened. This statement also highlights lack of moral
courage to fight evil on the part of Quentin. This statement also amounts to betrayal on the part of Quentin.

In *After the Fall*, this fact also needs serious consideration and attention, that media highlights McCarthy witch-hunt and treason attached to the communists and other fellow travellers to the extent that those who were suspected of their being associated with communist party or any left group in the past or at present, felt miserably and mortally threatened of their survival. As Lou’s name was reported in the newspaper, his wife felt mortally threatened as Lou says, “It’s shaken her terribly – my being subpoenaed and all those damned headlines” (Miller, *After the Fall* 34). It does demonstrate that newspaper reports were biased in favour of McCarthy and HUAC. In other words, it was political power and point of view of the state which was, at that point of time being highlighted and given prominent coverage by the media. Or for the sake of argument if we admit that media was not biased in favour of McCarthy and HUAC, we cannot deny the fact that media coverage of the trials affected the mindset of people to the extent that those who were summoned before the HUAC were treated as untouchables by society. Quentin is a prominent lawyer, but he is also afraid of the role of media. Quentin says, “I really don’t want to be known a Red lawyer. I really don’t want the newspapers to eat me alive” (Miller, *After the Fall* 58).

Lou and Quentin’s terrorised souls and their fear of media raise many serious questions – Was media in league with the state power to create terror among the intellectuals and masses? Was media impartial? If media was impartial, how did it happen that those subpoenaed lost sympathy of their friends and members of their family? Did media not highlight the point of view of the victims of McCarthy era?

Quentin says that he wanted to defend Lou because he (Lou) “never wanted anything but the good of the world” (Miller, *After the Fall* 58); but on the other hand he does not “want
to be known as a Red lawyer and if it comes down to it Lou could defend himself” (Miller, *After the Fall* 58). Quentin’s remarks highlight the fact that media did not play sympathetic role to form public opinion in favour of the victims of McCarthy trials. It is also amply clear that Quentin lacks moral courage and boldness to defend “good.” He is also not able to support the “truth” (Miller, *After the Fall* 35). He is coward and weak-willed person. He should have stood firm as a rock to uphold the cause of “good” and “truth” which he did not. He was cowed down by political pressures and terror associated with the political environment. As a lawyer, he was in a better position to challenge McCarthy witch-hunt but he preferred safe course not to offend the political authority. Quentin also does not show any regard for solidarity with the victims of HUAC. He alienates himself from those whom he had described as “good” people on the side of “truth”. Advocating solitariness, Quentin says, “Yes, I lied. Everyday. We are all separate people. I tried not to be, but finally one is – a separate person. I have to survive too, honey” (Miller, *After the Fall* 149). Quentin separates himself from the cause of “good” and “truth” and lowers his own stature as a genuine lawyer, who never thinks of abandoning his client due to social and political pressures and reign of fear and terror. The play actually seeks to raise “the truth-consciousness of mankind” (Miller, “Family in Modern Drama” 84). Quentin’s alienation and separation from the cause of “good” and “truth” should not be treated as a general statement about human nature because Miller himself, who happened to be the author of the play, did not succumb to the social and political pressures and refrained from indulging in the dirty game of naming names.

In *After the Fall*, Miller seems to suggest that the biblical fall of Adam is testimony to the fact that evil is integral part of man’s nature and nobody can call himself innocent after the Fall of Man. It is simply generalisation of evil to the extent that it is a dominant factor of man’s thinking, actions and behaviour. But it may also be argued that it is simply an attempt to belittle the importance of moral and ethical values, and rational faculties of human mind
which are, in fact, the very basis of constructive and creative urge and work of man and society.

As we notice in most of Miller’s plays, he again takes up the theme of betrayal in *After the Fall*. It is the coercive power of state which compels its citizens to indulge in the dirty game of betrayal and “naming names”. Due to this coercive power of state victims of political witch hunt commit suicide. In *After the Fall*, Lou commits suicide as a result of betrayal on the part of his friend Mickey. It is absolutely dangerous to hold political views contrary to the views of the government and the state in which one lives: “In the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with Red Hell” (Miller, *The Crucible* 249).

Hitler and his Nazis represented the loss of liberal human values such as spirit of tolerance, broad-mindedness, love of humanity and brotherhood of man. There is no place for racial discrimination and hatred in liberal humanism. Nazis were a slur on the part of liberal tradition of Western culture.

Unfortunately, there is nothing else into which we can fit our experience – traditions are broken and culture is unavailable. Our culture is an empty form, standing for a continuity of experience which is now discontinued, for the reality and inviolability of human values that are everywhere violated and denied . . . Today the cultured man is isolated . . . the cultural form that conveyed humanity and assured the transaction from one man to the next has been destroyed. (Rosenfeld 133)

Before the World War II, contemporary atmosphere which lacked communication between man and man, between the writer and the reader and decadence of moral and ethical
values in matters of economic, social and political importance; all pervasive evil, loss of liberal tradition and lack of culture – in brief, the said atmosphere was the precursor of Holocaust. Diabolical forces of death, destruction and doom played havoc with the welfare and peace and prosperity of human society. Human values of brotherhood and solidarity were set at naught. Holocaust writers may be divided into three categories:

The survivor who writes about the Holocaust; the creative writer who was never there and yet visualises it and translates his vision into creative writing; and, the gentile writer who tries to get into the essence of the horror and gives his own interpretation. All of them have a moral responsibility of creating the structure of imagination in order to communicate it to the reader. The reader or the audience, in the case of drama has a responsibility of familiarising himself with the history to participate in the creative experience. With regard to the survivors, they have to reach into their memory and sort out the reality, put it into an organised system and look for the strategy of communication. There are the inevitable problems and any failure can give the lie to the horror the death camps perpetuated . . . however difficult and insurmountable the task may be, one has to make an attempt to tell it, lest posterity forget that there was one such realm of experience called the Holocaust. Although it is a challenge to the literary imagination, the writers should be conscious of the perils of such an act. (Venkateswarlu 102)

To portray most horrible phenomenon of Holocaust which was a challenge to the liberal conscience of human society is, no doubt, a task which preconditions a highly perceptive imagination trained in liberal values and traditions of human society. To portray the most heinous act of the enemies of liberal values and tradition and to express in words the
pain and suffering and tragedy which befell the Jews during Second World War, a writer must be gifted with a unique sense of integrity of mind and purity of soul:

How should art – how can art? – represent the inexpressibly inhuman suffering of the victims without doing an injustice to that suffering? If art, as Adorno concedes, is perhaps the last remaining sanctuary where the suffering can be paid honest homage, enshrining it permanently in the imagination of the living as the essential horror that it was, the danger also exists of the noble intention sliding into abyss of its opposite. (Langer 1).

The theatre is, no doubt, the most significant medium of art because its audio visual form and various techniques of performance lend live credibility to the horrors of Holocaust:

The theatre with the multiple channels of communication and multiplicity of techniques that can profitably be used to tackle enigmatic realities, is undoubtedly an effective medium for the Holocaust writers. . . . The successful playwright did make use of *avant garde* techniques to unravel the mystery of evil, while some use the straight forward well-made play structure, for their tale needed such a method. (Venkateswarlu 103)

It is the fact of history that perhaps the most unwarranted, uncalled for, and ignoble event that shook the foundations of liberal thought and humanistic approach towards life, was the deliberate attempt on the part of the Nazi party to massacre the innocent Jews. Miller was certainly very critical of the madness of Nazis. He dealt with the horror of Holocaust at the level of art, human values and politics: “His [Miller’s] plays, where the World War is used as a background, make use of the theme of Jewish persecution but conclude with some general questions like art and its relation to human ethics and, together, their relation to politics” (Venkaeteswarlu 115).
It can be said that “since Miller’s themes and conclusions are essentially based on Jewish experience, it can still be called a Jewish point of view, for one cannot exist without the ethos” (Venkateswarlu 115). There is no denying the fact that Miller was a Jew. However, we can also assume that even if Miller were not a Jew, he would have treated the Holocaust in no other manner than the one we find in his plays. Miller was, essentially a humanist who was the votary of human values and liberal traditions, and thus, his vision was not confined to any creed or race. It goes to Miller’s credit that until his last breath, Miller exhibited exemplary courage in his fight against political tyranny. He was a noble and restless soul who maintained intellectual integrity and sincerity, and never compromised with the political forces which were out to destroy individual liberty and democratic principles, and he consistently fought for freedom of speech. In 1985, Miller accompanied by Harold Pinter, visited Istanbul as a gesture of solidarity with the Turkish writers, and political prisoners. As democracy was in peril due to military take over of state power in Turkey, Miller, in a speech at US embassy fearlessly stated that “he saw no signs of Western democracy in Turkey” (Schlueter, 155).

Miller’s play, *Incident at Vichy*, too, deals with the problem of holocaust in a poignant and convincing manner. It is the ninth play in the sequence of plays written by Miller since his first play on Broadway *The Man Who Had All the Luck* in 1944. The play presents graphic portrayal of Nazi atrocities against the Jews unparalleled in the history of modern industrial civilisation. As regards the source of the play, *Incident at Vichy*, from real life, Miller says:

The root of *Vichy* came from my friend and former psycho-analyst Dr. Rudolph Loewensteins, who had hidden out in Vichy France during the war, before the Nazis occupied the country. But all I recalled was the bare outline of his story: a Jewish analyst picked up with false papers and saved by a man
he had never seen before. This unknown man, a gentile had substituted himself in a line of suspects waiting to have their papers and penises inspected in a hunt for Jews posing as French men.

There was second root in an old friend of Inge’s, Prince Josef von Schwarzenberg, senior surviving member of a very ancient Austrian noble line, who had “declined” to cooperate with the Nazis and had suffered for it during the war. He was a source for Von Berg, the Prince in my play who steps in to take the place of a condemned analyst. It was not altogether a romantic idealisation, for in some absurd yet logical way Josef von Schwarzenberg embodied an elemental resistance to the fascist spirit, which is fundamentally enforced vulgarity in all its forms. . . . Having denied the Nazi Movement the glory of his name, he never considered any other course; there had simply been no choice, and he could not imagine deserving the remotest sort of credit for his dangerous refusal. That he had spent much of the war doing menial work in France he hardly regarded as a punishment. What I found fascinating in Josef was a mixture of worldly discernment and a naive, almost thoughtlessly pure moral code that perhaps only so protected in youth could possess, and that measured the corruption the world took for granted.

(Timebends 538-539)

Thus, it was against the evil and inhuman nature of political power that Von Berg exhibited real moral courage as an individual. He refused to become a party to the Nazi persecution of the Jews by the Nazi government. Miller’s telling the origin of play in real incidents adds to the effect and imparts authenticity to the theme of the play.
In *Incident at Vichy*, Lebeau, a painter; Bayard, an electrician; Monceau, an actor; Marchand, a merchant; and a boy “six men and a boy of fifteen” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 1) have been brought to “a place of detention which suggests a warehouse, perhaps, an armory, are part of a railroad station not used by the public” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 1). They are not sure why they have been picked up by the detectives. Marchand, a merchant feels that it is the routine check to identify the strangers:

MARCHAND. It’s perfectly obvious they’re making a routine identity check.

LEBEAU. Oh.

MARCHAND. With so many strangers pouring into Vichy this past year there’re probably a lot of spies and God knows what. It’s just a document check, that’s all. (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 6)

On the other hand, Lebeau fears “some racial . . . implications?” Marchand opines that there is nothing “to fear if your papers are all right” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 7). Bayard is votary of Marxist ideology and talks of control of Germany by monopolies. Bayard says, “The monopolies got control of Germany. Big business is out to make slaves of everyone, that’s why you’re here” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 9). He further tells, “I heard they’re working Jews to death in the Polish camps” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 29).

There are three main arguments in the play. Monceau argues, “. . . After all, they were picking up Jews in Germany for years before the war; they have been doing in Paris since they came in – are you telling me all those people are dead? . . . War is war, but you will have to keep a certain sense of proportion. I mean Germans are still people” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 31). Thus, Monceau thinks that it is a routine feature with the German government to pick up the Jews which they continued with even before war, but this does not mean that all
those Jews are put to death. He avers, “Germans are still people” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 31). He does not consider the Germans as merchants of death. Bayard argues that the Germans are fascists; it is these fascists who are doing such dirty and criminal things. Thus, it is the fascists among the Germans who are out to eliminate the Jews. Leduc seems to argue that evil is inherent in human nature, Germans or no Germans, and fascists or no fascists:

LEDUCE. I don’t speak this way because they’re Germans.

BAYARD. It’s that they’re Fascists.

LEDUCE. Excuse me, no. It’s exactly because they are people that I speak this way.

BAYARD. I don’t agree with that. (Miller, Incident at Vichy 31)

Von Berg hails from “one of the oldest houses in Austria” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 33). Nobility in Austria, in general, did not support the political line of the Nazis. The Nazis were not happy with this attitude of the nobility. Bayard says, “Political or something” might be the reason of bringing Von Berg to detention camp, to which Von Berg replies:

VON BERG. No, no, I never had any interests in that direction. Slight pause. Of course there is this resentment towards the nobility. That might explain it.

LEDUCE. In the Nazis? Resentment?

VON BERG Surprised. Yes, certainly. (Miller, Incident at Vichy 34)

Relationship between nobility and reactionary Nazi regime is generally not cordial:

LEDUCE. . . . I suppose I have taken for granted that the aristocracy is . . . always behind a reactionary regime.
VON BERG. Oh, there are some, certainly. But for the most part they never took responsibility, in any case. (Miller, Incident at Vichy 35)

Nobility is very critical of Nazism because it “is an outburst of vulgarity? An ocean of vulgarity?” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 37). Von Berg tells, “Nothing angers them more than a sign of any . . . refinement” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 37). Von Berg is also very critical of “their adoration of dreadful art; and grocery clerks in uniform telling the orchestra what music it may not play. Vulgarity can be enough to send a man out of his country . . .” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 37). Von Berg is of the opinion that people who are respectful to art cannot think of eliminating the Jews. Von Berg says, “Can people with respect for art go about hounding Jews? Making a prison of Europe, pushing themselves forward as a race of policemen and brutes? Is that possible for artistic people?” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 38).

However Monceau, an actor disagrees with Von Berg and says, “. . . the German audiences – I’ve played there – no audience is as sensitive to the smallest nuance of a performance; they sit in the theater with respect . . . and nobody listens to music like a German” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 38). Thus, we can safely infer that the fascists and racists among the Germans were vulgar and brute. It was not proper to call all the Germans vulgar and brute. Actually, political power of the state was in the hands of the Nazis, who were sending the Jews to gas chambers. Thus, they are committing crimes against humanity. The Nazis brought shame to the German people. Political ideology of the Nazis was based on the superiority of the German race. They considered the Jews as the other; and this other, in the eyes of the Nazis, was the enemy of the Germans; hence this other should be eliminated. In the opinion of the Nazis, the Jews were guilty simply because they were the Jews. And those who were not Jews were innocent, simply because they were not Jews. Leduc hints at the vulgarity of the Nazi politics when he laments that he should not have been born to experience the Nazi tyranny; he should have been born prior to the Nazi regime. Leduc says,
“I am only angry that I should have been born before the day when man has accepted his own nature; that he is not reasonable, that he is full of murder, that his ideals are only the little tax he pays for the right to hate and kill with a clear conscience” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 104).

Von Berg does not agree with Leduc. He is the epitome of ideal and moral values which have sustained faith in the goodness of man, in the service of man. Political class may be corrupt and cruel but it is not proper to apply the same yard stick to the people. Von Berg opines, “There are ideals . . . . There are people who would find it easier to die than stain one finger with this murder. They exist. I swear it to you. People for whom everything is not permitted, foolish people and ineffectual but they do exist and will not dishonour their tradition” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 104). Von Berg remains loyal to what he says to Leduc; he gives his pass to Leduc and joins the condemned; he sacrifices his life to register his protest against the political philosophy of the Nazis. It is a sacrifice to uphold the ideal of human solidarity in the face of evil practised by the Nazi state power. Miller, through Leduc suggests that “each man has his Jew; it is the other. And the Jews have their Jews” (Miller, *Incident at Vichy* 105). This exhibits that all men are guided and governed by evil. There is no place for good in human nature, in human society. Miller laid stress on this all pervasive evil in *After the Fall*. However, he touched upon this element of evil in *Incident at Vichy* too. Miller, in all probability, felt that if evil was not combated through moral and rational principle of good, it will degrade humanity to irrational state of murder and violence which good art could not recommend and appreciate. It is to treat both the Nazis and the Jews as incarnation of evil; both killer and killed as evil. Hence, it is through the sacrifice of the Austrian Prince that Miller endeavours to establish moral order in society and suggests that it is the diabolically evil racial philosophy of the Nazi political power which violates all the basic norms of good governance of protecting the life and property of the ruled and in Jews case the minority irrespective of their caste, creed or class. Brustein says, “It has become
obvious that Mr. Miller has given us not so much a play as another solemn sermon on Human Responsibility” (260). Human responsibility means our behaviour with others in society ought to be guided by human values of compassion, charity and solidarity.

The play, Incident at Vichy set in World War II, refers to the horrors of holocaust, that is, the murder of millions of Jews at unprecedented scale. The play concentrates on the politics of evil which all of us are part of by virtue of the Fall of Man in Biblical terms. Miller unveils the face of evil which was present in the past and is present today also. He tells Barbara Gelb in 1964: “The occasion of the play is the occupation of France, but it’s about today. It concerns the question of insight – of seeing in oneself the capacity for collaboration with the evil one condemns. It’s a question that exists for all of us” (“Question: Am I My Brother’s Keeper?” 80). It is surprising and intriguing that Miller seems to condone the political evil of which Hitler was the most ignoble example during World War II who sent millions of Jews to gas chambers and concentration camps to die. If we stop evaluating politicians’ and dictators’ social and political behaviour and actions in moral and ethical terms, we are going to open the floodgates of barbarism. To pass a sweeping judgment that we are all accomplice of evil is to devalue the moral concerns of man in favour of good. Miller’s pessimistic statement in favour of evil inherent in man’s nature relegates all of us to the level of murderers:

When we live in a time of great murders, we are inhabiting a world of murder for which we share the guilt. . . . We have an investment in evils that we manage to escape, that sometimes these evils that we oppose are done in our interest. . . . By virtue of the circumstances, a man is faced with his own complicity with what he despises. (Evan 74)
Miller points to the fact that man is basically an animal like other animals inhabiting the earth and is busy in the game of murdering and killing and devouring his own kind. Thus, man is worse than other animals because they do not kill and devour their own kind. However, man has also evolved moral and ethical code of conduct to remain away and aloof from evil. Miller seems to have ignored the fact that man is man because he is morally bound not to succumb to evil. Hence, evil act of any type on the part of individual or society should not be treated as justified on psychological or any other ground. To justify the inevitable presence of evil in human nature and human affairs amounts to saying good bye to moral and ethical values and standards of conducting and regulating social orders and political affairs.

The play highlights the inhuman and evil actions of Hitler and his cohorts. As regards investigation of the Jews in the Nazi camp, Nazi Major is perhaps, at a loss to understand the genocide of the Jews when he tells Leduc: “I would only like to say that . . . this is all as inconceivable to me as it is to you” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 85). He also points to the fact that all that was good in man’s nature has been lost forever: “. . . how can there be persons anymore. I have you at the end of this revolver – indicates the Professor – he has me – and somebody has him – and somebody has somebody else” (Miller, Incident at Vichy 88). It is through the Nazi Major that Miller refers to the evil political decisions and policies of the Nazis. This statement also implies that Nazi regime and those regimes which are similar to it pose a serious threat to the survival of humanity. Nazi regime was the enemy of mankind. It was the manifestation of the evil and a threat to democratic and secular forces which work for the good of the people.

Von Berg hands over his pass to Leduc to save his life, but by doing so he risks his own life. Thus, we may treat and evaluate Von Berg as bulwark against evil designs and policies of the Nazis. Von Berg also reminds us that evil cannot defeat good provided the
man representing good is bold enough to risk his life. It is Von Berg who exhorts us to retain firm faith in the goodness of man.

State power and political authority – fascist or non-fascist – just don’t bother about the murderous role played by evil in society and state policy. France and USSR refused to stage the play due to political reasons. It is the political considerations which matter, not good or evil. Miller says:

The first of my works (Incident at Vichy) to be banned in the Soviet Union during one of its anti-Jewish convulsions in the late sixties, it was optioned in France by three different producers, each of whom decided to relinquish the rights for fear of resentment at the implication of French collaboration with Nazi anti-Semitism. Finally, in the early eighties, Pierre Cardin produced it in Paris, but the defensive bitterness of the reviews was unmistakable.

It was not until 1987 and the Gorbachev liberalisation that Vichy finally made it on to a Soviet stage, produced by the same Galina Volchek whose 1968 Maly Theatre production had been shut down the night before the premiere, after six vastly successful previews. (Timebends 540)

State power, generally, does not care for moral and ethical principles. It simply cares for its political interests. State power acts out of expediency, not principles.

Miller’s play, Incident at Vichy, is concerned with the theme of guilt and responsibility. It enumerates the tactics and tricks adopted by the Nazis to eliminate the Jews. The German Nazis were guilty of the genocide of the Jews. However, to keep the flag of love and solidarity aloft in the face of hatred generated against the Jews, an Austrian Prince, Von Berg, saved the life of a Jewish doctor by giving his papers to him. The Austrian Prince is the
embodiment of self sacrifice for the sake of fellow human beings. Jenet N. Balakian rightly remarks, “Miller was fascinated by Josef Von Schwarzenberg because he embodied a self sacrificing moral integrity in the face of fascism.” (125). It is also pertinent to note that Incident at Vichy celebrates the validity of existential choice in the face of political determinism of the Nazis:

In his Sartrean reading of the play Lawrence Lowenthel discounts Robert Brustein’s argument that Miller’s characters are simply “types” or “public speakers with a symbolic role.” He sees them rather as dynamic, fluid, undetermined beings, “freedom caught in a trap.” We know nothing about them, aside from their professions, until they reveal themselves through their choices, which often prove to be surprising. They are all faced with undeniable limits, but within these limits they are always free to act. The Jew can resist or submit; the German can murder or rebel. Indeed, the structural movement of the play is existential in that the pressure to choose – to defy or cooperate with the Nazis – becomes inevitable. (Balakian 125)

As regards the theme of Holocaust, the individual must resort to freewill to combat the evil prevalent in state or society: “The only solution to the plague that Miller depicts is responsible and free human action: Incident at Vichy affirms that we cannot flee from commitment and responsibility into determinism” (Balakian 125). Thematic concern of the play implies universal overtones in the sense that atrocities committed by the Nazis may be treated as part and parcel of a ubiquitous social and political injustice being meted out to the minorities anywhere and everywhere on this earth. In Incident at Vichy we watch a very reprehensible spectacle of a cross section of people who have been brought to a Nazi detention centre for verification of their papers and identity. To be a Jew is an anathema to the Nazis. The Nazis won’t tolerate the presence of the Jews. The Jews will be executed. It is
a state policy of the Nazis. The group of people comprises an electrician whose name is Bayard. He is a committed Marxist and believes that the capitalist class exploits the working class. Lebeau, the painter is an artist. He prefers imagination to terrifying and absurd world of reality. Monceau is an actor who believes that virtual confidence will sustain them. Prince Von Berg hails from princely class. He exhibits rare courage in saving the life of a Jew doctor, Leduc. Leduc is a psychologist who has no faith in Von Berg’s idealism. He is cynic. He believes that evil is inherent in human nature. According to Leduc people are basically evil and amoral. But Von Berg did not approve of the amoral attitude and policy of the Nazis, and his example inspires the individual to act against evil and nefarious designs of a group or state or society.

It may be said that McCarthyism was a variant of Holocaust. Holocaust represents racial discrimination and hatred. McCarthy mania represented ideological hatred. History repeats itself. Past repeats and asserts itself in our present. McCarthy mania is the same mania which engendered and propped up the Holocaust during World War II. In 1945 came Miller’s novel Focus. In this novel he told “us that racial discrimination stems from ignorance and was placing moral responsibility on the individual” (Balakian 127). It does demonstrate that individual must remain alert so as not to be trapped and overwhelmed by the evil. Individual must show moral courage to fight against the evil forces such as the Nazis. On the lack of solidarity and loss of moral concerns, Miller says:

That faceless unknown man would pop up in my mind when I read about the people in Queen’s refusing to call the police while a woman was being stabbed to death on the street outside their windows. He would form himself in the air when I listened to delinquent boys whose many different distortions of character seemed to spring from a common want of human solidarity. Friends troubled by having to do things they disapproved of brought him to mind,
people for whom the very concept of choosing their actions was a long forgotten thing. Wherever I felt the seemingly implacable tide of human drift and the withering of will, in myself and in others, this faceless person came to my mind. And he appears most clearly and imperatively amid the jumble of emotions surrounding the Negro in this country, and the whole unsettled moral problem of the destruction of the Jews in Europe. (qtd. in Balakian 126)

Thus, we can safely assume that in case society and state authorities behave in a totalitarian manner, and discriminate and punish on the basis of race, and if we extend the point further, on the basis of caste, creed, colour or gender, it is the moral duty of the individual not to submit to the evil designs of society and state. Von Berg in *Incident at Vichy* and John Proctor in *The Crucible* did the same – they refused to submit to the evil designs of the political, constitutional and legal authorities of the State. In an interview with Barbara Gelb in *The New York Times* in 1964, Miller dwelt on the all time significance of the play. State is the projection and reflection of society. And society consists of individuals. Miller raises a moral question when as individual we collaborate with evil. In the guise of charities we actually grind our own axe and help in perpetuating evil designs of state. It is we who are responsible for slums, all sorts of exploitation and disparities because as individuals we do not raise our voice against the sorry state of affairs in our society. We collaborate with the evil designs of the state:

The occasion of the play [*Incident at Vichy*] is the occupation of France but it’s about today. It concerns the question of insight – of seeing in ourselves the capacity for collaboration with the evil one condemns. It is a question that exists for all of us – but, for example, is the responsibility of each of us for allowing the slums of Harlem to exist? Some perfectly exemplary citizens, considerate of their families and friends, contributing to charity and so forth
are directly profiting from conditions like that. (Gelb “Question: Am I My
Brother’s Keeper?” 80)

In 1967, Miller consented to become the President of PEN – an organisation of
writers – for the propagation of world peace. It also goes to Miller’s credit that he was
acceptable to both East and West:

PEN stood stuck in the concrete of what I would soon learn were its traditional
cold war anti-Soviet position, but like the Western governments at this point, it
was now trying to blend and acknowledge Eastern Europe as a stable group of
society whose writes might well be permitted new contacts with the West,
from which they had for so long been cut off. Thus after some forty years
PEN’s original peace-preserving impulse might have a chance to exert itself in
the real world. (Timebends 568)

Politically, world peace was very dear to the heart and mind of Arthur Miller and he
earnestly believed “that if PEN could penetrate Soviet isolation it could only be to the good.”
(Timebends 572)

As regards PEN, it was established after First World War to stop further World Wars;
and writers of repute and world stature took initiative to establish an organisation which
would work for world peace. It was active intervention on the part of the writers to challenge
the politics of war, discord, and conflict in world affairs:

PEN . . . was established after the War – the First [World] War – by such
people as John Galsworthy, Bernard Shaw, G. K. Chesterton, H. G. Wells,
John Masefield, Arnold Bennett, Henri Barburse, and a number of like minded
others in England an Europe who thought that an international writers’
organisation might help prevent another war by combating censorship and nationalist pressures on writers. . . . Despite its valuable work, PEN had not made a bridge to the generation now in its twenties and thirties and had come to be regarded as tame and largely irrelevant. . . . A fresh start was needed now, and it was me. (Miller, Timebends 565-566)

About his experience of Czechoslovakia during his visit in 1969, Miller tells that the spies of communist regime kept watch on his movements. A couple of dozen writers interviewed him for a literary magazine Listy. Office of the magazine was bugged. Writers had to express their views in a very cautious manner. However, the interview offended the communist state. And the magazine was closed forever:

Some eight years later I would write The Archbishop’s Ceiling out of this maze of relationship I found in Prague, but true to form, it took a decade more to establish itself in the 1986 Royal Shakespeare Company production at the Barbican. It is a play of shading meaning and splintered implications of double and triple repercussions not altogether unknown in the political rooms of Washington, Paris, and London but more blatantly and brutally evident among writers the farther East one moves . . . by 1986 people could see that the play was not about the East alone; we were all secretly talking to power, to the bugged ceiling of the mind, whether knowingly or not in the West; even unconsciously we had forgone the notion of a person totally free of deforming inner obeisance to power or shibboleth. (Timebends 572-573)

Thus, the surveillance of writers’ community by the communist regime in Czechoslovakia (Prague) was gross violation of the right to express one’s views. State authorities in Prague had created psychological terror and fear in the mind of the writers.
Miller also makes a very significant observation that the tendency to bug and keep watch on what intelligentsia thinks or speaks, and to browbeat and terrorise the enlightened sections of society is a common feature of political powers all over the world, that is, all over the East and West. It is this ignoble tendency of political masters of surveillance and spreading terror among the thinking segment of society which Miller endeavoured to expose in *The Archbishop’s Ceiling*.

Historically speaking, Arthur Miller wrote his play *The Archbishop’s Ceiling* at a time when the hurricane of the cold war was awfully spitting fury against liberal humanism and liberty. Communism had flourished dreadfully in USSR and countries of Eastern Europe and swallowed up the privacy of its citizens. On the other side, communism’s rival and enemy US also did not lag behind in crushing the individual liberty of its citizens. Totalitarian element of crushing the individual conscience of the citizens was in vogue during the cold war – this is what Arthur Miller had endeavoured to point out in *The Archbishop’s Ceiling*. Metaphorically speaking, in *The Archbishop’s Ceiling* Miller points to the horrible fact that not only communist countries of Eastern Europe and USSR, but the capitalist America is also in the Satanic grip of evil – omnipotent and omnipresent Luciferian eye of state power is there to watch one’s thoughts and actions. State power has made mockery of the principle of inviolability of private conscience. It was, unfortunately, a dark period in the history of contemporary world society:

The seventies was also the era of listening device, government’s hidden bugs set in place to police the private conversation of its citizens – and not in Soviet areas alone. The White House was bugged, businesses were bugging competitors to deceit the strategies, and Watergate and the publication of the Pentagon Papers (which polls showed a majority of American disapproved) demonstrated that the Soviets had little to teach American Presidents about
domestic espionage. The burgling of psychiatrists’ offices to spy out a
government official’s private life, the wide spread bugging by political parties
of each other’s offices, all testified to the fact that the visible motions of
political life were too often merely distractions, while the reality was what was
happening in the dark. (Miller, “Condition of Freedom: Two plays of the
Seventies,” viii)

In *The Archbishop’s Ceiling*, Miller unveils the dark and awesome reality that state
power acted in a disgraceful manner so as to show no regard for private conscience of man.
State with its overseeing power of its intelligence agencies had let loose a reign of terror on
its citizens. It was the state policy to tame the individuals to the totalitarian power of state.
One may say that there was a conspiracy on the part of the government to reduce the human
psyche to the level of a slave who had neither individuality nor identity; a slave’s business
was to worship his master; a slave could never dream of criticising or disagreeing with his
master; he has to think, speak and act in a theatrical manner to please the master. Miller refers
to his visit to Russia in 1986:

Late in 1986, when glasnost was a brand-new ideal scarcely taken seriously as
the main thrust of the new administration, a Russian writer expressing the pre-
glasnost view said to me, “What you people in the West don’t understand that
we are not a competitive society and we don’t wish to be. We want the
government to protect us, that is worthy government is far. (“Condition of
Freedom: Two plays of the Seventies,” xi)

Miller points out that curbs on personal initiative and creative urge, lack of
competition, loss of personal responsibility in success or failure, curbs on open minded
inquiry and independence of thought – in religious terms role of state is that of all powerful,
omnipresent, invisible God in the form of bugging. Bug is a machine. It has no sense of good or evil. Man is at the mercy of the amoral bug. Man is at the mercy of the evil. In the disguise of protecting the citizen, it devours man’s conscience, man’s liberty:

The ostensible enemy becomes the protector; lines of resistance between good and evil becomes almost irreparably blurred because what we gain often appears an equitable trade-off for what we lose. The result is that we become a life where live in an amoral world bereft of personal responsibility for our actions and even for our well-being. Miller’s play lowers us into this seemingly alien world only to have us realise that in many ways it is our world, a world our naive idealism leaves us ill equipped to cope with even as we resist the charge that we are in that world. We have grown so used to the multiple invasions – forcing us to perform for the government, our employer, even our friends and lovers – that we have lost its destructive grind on our beings. (Demastes 146)

Totalitarian tendency on the part of the state power breeds a sense of fear in the minds of its citizens. Friends, comrades, neighbours, acquaintances and even members of family cannot talk with each other freely and truly. They cannot utter a word against the government lest the government should punish them. Ceilings, walls of the rooms are bugged by the intelligence agencies of the government. Whatever one talks is reported to the government through the bugs. When we are in conversation with our friends, we are also simultaneously addressing the government. People in the room, talking to each other are mindful of the presence of government in the form of the bugs. Thus, in their conversation with each other people do not express their true and real intentions because the room is bugged and they are talking to each other with full knowledge of the fact that their conversation is being listened to by spy bugs. They cannot offend the intelligence agencies of the government. They cannot
dare criticise the government fearing that they may be imprisoned or exiled. Thus, they are performing their role in a theatre. People in such situations are afraid of revealing their innermost feelings and thoughts, that is, their inner-self. Miller rightly remarks:

We’re all impersonators in a way. We are all impersonating something, including ourselves . . . Everybody feels he is really playing. We have all become actors. The actor becomes the most significant figure, culturally speaking. He’s doing professionally what we are all doing amateurs. (qtd. in Bigsby, *Arthur Miller a Critical Study* 308)

In *The Archbishop’s Ceiling*, Sigmund is a dissident writer whose manuscript has been confiscated by the government. But his transformation into a popular dissident writer is because of the willing acceptance of the government of his dissidence. It is the same government which lifts ban on his manuscript; it is a warning to the writer that symbiotic relationship may not continue further if he does not mend his ways. It is dissidence controlled and sanctioned by the government. Authenticity of the dissident writer is disguised in ambiguity. In the play, Miller tells that knowledge is power. In a communist country knowledge resides in the state power; and as regards ordinary people or intellectuals, “they must all plug in or their lights go out, regardless of what they think or their personality” (Miller, *Archbishop’s Ceiling* 11). It is this state power which is repository of all knowledge. There is no individual liberty to think or speak or act against the knowledge of the state power. In a communist country you must move closer to the government and support them to gain power. Adrian rightly remarks, “The government makes it very clear that you must snuggle up to power or you will never be happy” (Miller, *Archbishop’s Ceiling* 11). Hypocritical nature of writers is also revealed in very eloquent terms in *The Archbishop’s*
Ceiling. Generally, the writers wish to retain for themselves what they condemn in others.

This amounts to duplicity in the behaviour of the writers:

MAYA... I have known intimately so many writers; they all write books condemning people who wish to be successful and praised, who desire some power in life. But I have never met one writer who does not wish to be praised and successful... (she is smiling)... and even powerful. Why do they condemn others who wish the same for themselves? (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 12)

Intelligence agencies in communist countries browbeat, pester, harass, and hound the intellectuals. It is a serious invasion of individual liberty. Sigmund and Otto take American writer Adrian to a restaurant for a dinner. Intelligence police chase them in a shameless manner. Adrian explains, “We sit down to dinner last night in a restaurant and two plainclothesmen take the next table. It was blatant. Not the slightest attempt to disguise that they were there to intimidate Sigmund and Otto. They kept staring straight at them” (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 18). But Maya contends that intelligence agencies in capitalist America, too, keep watch on the writers. It is not writer’s business to enter into argument with the government on this point. Thus, there is no difference between a capitalist country and a communist country as far as intelligence is concerned. Maya says, “But that is their business. But it is not Sigmund’s business to be taunting the government. Do you go about trying to infuriate your CIA, your FBI? He [Adrian] is silent. Of course not. You stay home and write your books. Just as the Russian writers stay home and write theirs” (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 19).

About “sixteenth century” (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 23) residence where once the Archbishop lived and now occupied by Marcus, Adrian opines that in sixteenth century the
house represented theological power and now it represents communist power. Theological state and communist state represent absolute power in the hands of state. Adrian observes sarcastically, “This density with angels hovering overhead. Like power always with you in a room. Like God, in a way” (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 23). Thus, one has to live in a perpetual state of fear of absolute state power. And this absolute power is akin to absolute power of God. Government in a communist country is rigid, dogmatic and fanatic akin to the rigid, dogmatic and fanatic power of Church State. The Archbishop’s residence was built in sixteenth century and “this city was the cultural capital of Europe – the world, really, this side of China. A lot of art, science, philosophy poured from this place” (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 39). At that point of time, there was no communism, but the present government “spends a lot keeping these in repair” (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 39). Sigmund unfolds the reality of communist angels who are slaves of God, that is, of communist government when he says, “That is true. They are repairing all the angels. It is very good to be an angel in this country” (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 39). It is quite apparent that these angels are the spies of the government. They are puppets in the hands of the government, and those who like Sigmund refuse to play the role of puppets, are victimised and threatened and spied. The character of Sigmund was partly based on Vaclav Havel and partly on Miller himself:

Miller admits that he based Sigmund on VACLAV HAVEL, the dissident writer who later became president of the Czech Republic, a man whom he deeply admired and whom he wished the audience also to respect. Havel was noted for his humanistic administration that became a model of DEMOCRACY in the Eastern bloc. But there are also elements of Miller himself in Sigmund, as the playwright who felt he was being silenced in his native land though lionized abroad, but who refused to leave. (Abbotson Critical Companion to Arthur Miller 74)
Miller also brings out difference between the attitude of a provincial writer and a cosmopolitan writer. Sigmund is a provincial writer and he finds it difficult to immigrate to a cosmopolitan city like New York. He wants to remain limited to his provincial environment:

SIGMUND. . . . I think I will not be able to write in some other country.

ADRIAN. Oh, that’s impossible . . .

SIGMUND. I am not cosmopolitan writer, I am provincial writer. I believe I must hear my language everyday, I must walk in these particular streets. I think in New York I will have only some terrible silence. Is like old tree – it is difficult to moving old tree, they most probable die. (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 96)

It is perhaps because of this limiting effect of and attachment to the provincial environment that Sigmund decides not to immigrate to US. However, he is bold enough to face imprisonment in his country. Thus, Sigmund’s provincial attachment does not debar him from the fate of a hero which he is willing to embrace:

ADRIAN. But if they lock you up.

SIGMUND. Yes, but that is my fate; I must accept my fate. But to run away because of some sort of rumor – I have only some rumor, no? How will I support this silence that I have brought on myself? This is terrible idea, no? How I can accept to be so ridiculous? Therefore, is reasonable, I believe that I must absolutely understand who is speaking to me. (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 96)

Thus, Sigmund is prepared to face dire consequences of his criticism of the government; but he does not want to immigrate to US on the basis of rumours only. He wants
to be sure that the government actually wants him to leave the country. He appears to be morally superior to Marcus, who is suspected to be in league with the government. It is also important to note that Sigmund’s moral superiority and high moral stature is due to the presence of the state power which he opposes. It is through the hatred and criticism of state power that he has attained the stature of a brave and bold and outspoken critic of state authority. If he goes to US, he will be deprived of his target of criticism – the target is the communist government of his country. Towards the end of the action of the play, Maya rightly remarks:

... you will not have them in America to hate! And if you cannot hate you cannot write and you will not be Sigmund anymore, but another lousy refugee ordering is chicken soup in broken English – and where is the profit in that? They are your theme, your life, your partner in this dance that cannot stop or you will die of silence! (She moves toward him. Tenderly:) They are in you, darling and if you stay ... it is also for your profit ... as it is for ours to tell you to go. Who can speak for himself alone? (Archbishop’s Ceiling 101)

Finally, Sigmund decides not to leave for US. Sigmund says, “I will never leave. Never” (Miller, Archbishop’s Ceiling 101). One can draw a number of conclusions from Sigmund’s decision not to immigrate. He is a dissident writer. He wants to remain a dissident writer in his own country. He is prepared to face his fate, that is, imprisonment or any other harsh punishment. True, he is a dissident writer but the government has not arrested him simply because in the eyes of the government he is not a grave and serious threat to the state. If it were so, the government would have arrested him. It shows that Sigmund is quite aware of the limits of dissidence and he has not violated the limits. Further, he wants to remain in a provincial environment of his country and does not want to immigrate to cosmopolitan
environment of US. He wants to remain limited to provincial environment. However, he is a whole man in the sense that he exhibits moral courage to criticise the state power, and is also prepared to face his fate, that is, imprisonment or whatever the harsh punishment the government decides.

In the plays discussed in this chapter, it has been the endeavour to highlight the significance of the individual’s conscience and freedom of expression, which are threatened by state machinery. Protagonists in these plays retain their individual conscience and freedom of expression against heavy odds and if necessary even at the cost of their lives. Contemporary industrial society has evolved democratic ethos which grant freedom of individual conscience, freedom of expression and if these principles are violated by state and the individual succumbs to the coercion by the state; under such circumstances individual is reduced to the level of subhuman being and society and state too degrade themselves to the subhuman barbaric level. Thus, the thematic concern is to probe and highlight and to restore individual’s conscience and freedom of expression for the benefit and welfare of both individual and society.

In brief, Proctor in The Crucible preserves his conscience in the face of brutal assault on the part of state machinery; Von Berg in Incident at Vichy is the epitome of challenge to barbaric state power of the Nazis; in The Archbishop’s Ceiling, Sigmund represents dissidence against the communist state power; and Quentin in After the Fall exhibits signs of weakness when he tells that he would not defend Lou if he is labelled as “Red lawyer” (Miller, After the Fall 58). In The Archbishop’s Ceiling, when we are being overheard, is there “some essence in man that is simply unadaptable, ultimate, immutable as the horizon?” (Miller, “Conditions of Freedom: Two Plays of the Seventies,” ix-x). We cannot exist as “unadaptable” and “immutable” under the circumstances when our conversation is being
overheard by the spy agencies of the state. It is the unpardonable interference on the part of the state in the private affairs of individual. It amounts to denying freedom of expression and speech – thus, this denial is, actually violation of human rights. It may be said that John Proctor, Von Berg, and Sigmund act in a morally appreciable way towards others in society, but Quentin shies away from his moral and social obligation; more so, being a lawyer, it does not behove Quentin to be afraid of being labelled as “Red lawyer” (Miller, After the Fall 58) if he defends Lou and other people of communist leanings from the wrath of the State power.
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