

Composers' representations of the complex relationship between people and politics are often a criticism of their contemporary context, reflecting political motivations as well as the ramifications on individuals and society. The manipulation of power is evident in Arthur Miller's play 'The Crucible' (1953) and George Orwell's 1949 novel 'Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984)', where the composers present their insights of dystopian societies and the corrupt actions of individuals to achieve ultimate control over society. While both texts show different representations of people and politics, political and social injustices are a feature of all human interaction and drives individuals to pursue their own goals.

'The Crucible' is a political play that explores the corruptive force of absolute control to pursue personal and political agendas, reflecting the socio-political milieu of McCarthyism in 1950s America. Miller parallels the 1692 Salem Witch Trials to the McCarthy tribunals and the widespread fear of communist regimes, heavily influencing his representation of the dangers of political authority. The manipulation of mass hysteria for political gain is clearly shown in the play through Abigail's metaphorical outburst that "[Elizabeth Proctor] is a bitter woman, a lying, cold, snivelling woman". Here, Miller emphasises Abigail's true motives, which is to seek reconciliation with John Proctor after he repeatedly rejects her affections. Her resentment of Goody Proctor and the accusations that occur reflects McCarthy's blacklisting, where the 'Red Scare' paranoia resulted in innocent victims being made scapegoats of political agendas. Furthermore, the characterisation of Danforth in Act III establishes that he is a "weighty judge", connotating his power and authority over the trials. His reputation and integrity therefore concerns him more than the implications of the court's actions, claiming that a postponement "speaks a floundering on [his] part". Evidently, Danforth alludes to McCarthy in that they both fear the loss political power, which can be an influence on one's abuse of power. Miller therefore heightens awareness of the unjust actions taken by HUAC and stresses the problematic nature of people and politics in fulfilling personal agendas.

Likewise, the Oceanian government in '1984' strongly resembles Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Nazi Germany, warning modern society of the damage that can come from embracing totalitarian regimes. As with 'The Crucible', political authorities attempt to psychologically manipulate individuals to secure their own interests, but this time, through the Inner Party's mass propaganda, as seen in the repetition of Oceania's paradoxical national slogan "war is peace/freedom is slavery/ignorance is strength". Clearly, the Party utilises doublethink to force its subjects to accept anything it proclaims, cementing the power of the authoritarian regime through this motif. A similar pattern emerged in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, as Stalin and Hitler were determined to gain control over their respective nations by using propaganda to undermine their nemeses. Moreover, Orwell introduces the concept of Newspeak, which plays an important role in Oceanian society and in the Party's control over its population. Through Syme's statement "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?", the use of rhetorical question asserts how language can be used by people in power to prevent the occurrence of thoughtcrime and to gain absolute control of history and memory. Thus, Orwell reminds individuals of the complex nature of political systems that is echoed throughout history, by portraying how the manipulation of language and history deprives individual thought and liberty.

Through selectively representing the actions of individuals as ultimate responses to morally corrupt goals, Miller demonstrates how the manipulation of fear and the truth fragments society. As a representation of his own context, Miller criticises the actions and consequences of moral disintegration to maintain or gain power. The use of hyperbole in Danforth's exclamation "I shall hang ten thousand that dare to rise against the law!" epitomises the extent to which theocracy acts and causes fear and injustice to society. Here, Miller manipulates responders to harshly critique these political acts, and continues to use dramatic flow to heighten the tension and paranoia within the text as Abigail and the girls gain control and dominance through their manipulation of power. Moreover, the corruption of the truth causes John Proctor to fight with his conscience over whether to confess to witchcraft and thereby save himself. Although he initially signs the confession, the denouement reveals Proctor's preservation of his moral integrity as "[he] tears the confession and crumples it...weeping in fury, but erect". The stage directions confirm his adherence to moral virtues, despite his pain and inner conflict, and that he has come to a true understanding of what a good reputation means. Hence, Miller portrays that the creation of fear and corruption of truth as tools for political acts can consequently result in injustice for individuals and the broader society.

Comparably, Orwell's '1984' emphasises the use fear as a mechanism for controlling individuals who do not conform to prevailing political norms, shaping the way they act and think. In the novel, Orwell attempts to educate the reader about the consequences of certain political philosophies, by depicting characters who are overcome by fear. Similarly, in 'The Crucible', Miller exposes human vulnerability through conveying how the manifestation of fear controls civilisation. Through the Party's psychological manipulation tactics, the citizens of Oceania are constantly scrutinised by authorities, especially by means of the omnipresent signs reading "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU". While nobody is certain whether Big Brother exists or not, readers are undeniably positioned to accept the heightening terror which Orwell attempts to induce through the visual imagery of his "enormous face, more than a metre wide". Further, Orwell characterises Winston as an individual who undergoes a sense of fatalism due to the Party's corrupt actions, triggering his rebellion and eventual downfall. Unlike Proctor in 'The Crucible', Winston succumbs to physical torture, allowing the Party to control reality by brainwashing him to find adoration for the Party. This change is evident in him as he recognises that "He loved Big Brother". Consequently, through the ultimate loss of individual thought and behaviour, Orwell cautions against embracing totalitarian rule, where propaganda induced fear is used as a method to exert authority over the individual.

In summary, composers are inevitably influenced by their social and political contexts, subjectively representing the adversarial conflict between people and politics. Arthur Miller's theatrical allegory and George Orwell's political novel explore the power of political and social injustices in driving individuals to pursue their own agendas at the cost of others. Ultimately, the complex relationship between people and politics is evident, shaping our understanding of events, human interaction, and situations.