Tony Kushner’s *A Bright Room Called Day* is an audacious piece that has had a polarising effect on audiences, praised by some as bold and condemned by many as brash. It is set in an apartment in 1932-1933 Berlin, wherein five friends convene amidst the unexpected yet inevitable rise of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party. As the malice of Nazism dawns over Germany, the five friends’ bonds disintegrate, and for all their anger, none act in resistance, whether due to ambivalence, ambition, anxiety, or fear.

Nevertheless, despite the inaction of its characters, *Bright Room* is fundamentally a call to action at the first sight of evil. It is a play about waking up, listening to our nightmares, and being scared enough to fight them back. Thanks to Kushner’s pointed words, every moment in *Bright Room*, whether thunderous or still, is filled with volume; the aim of this production is to give utmost potency to every line. It is therefore a work that demands a cast that has emotional sensitivity, an impassioned use of language, and an infectious desire to speak angrily against barbarism and brutality. This interpretation of *Bright Room* will be particularly controversial; for whilst Kushner was originally exploring the similarities between Hitler and former United States President Ronald W. Reagan, this run will be asserting the parallels between Hitler and President Donald J. Trump.

*Please find the audition monologues attached. They need not be memorised, although to do so is certainly encouraged. Those auditioning may choose one monologue, though this certainly does not confine him or her to that role in the casting process. He or she may be asked to cold read an alternative instead on the day.*

*Furthermore, although the audition is requested to be performed in the respective actor’s own accent, the production hopes to have the actors adopt relevant accents for the performances. This will be facilitated throughout the rehearsal process. Please audition despite any concerns regarding this, as the accents are ultimately a cherry on top, not the intended cake itself!*
Agnes Eggling: Female, mid- to late 30s. German. A bit player and character actress in the German film industry, and a tentative communist. The host of the apartment in which the play is set. The only one of the five friends to stay in Berlin throughout Nazi rule, and also the least in danger of being persecuted.

Vealtninc Husz: Male, mid-40s. Hungarian. A cinematographer with an impassioned distaste for fascists and their sympathisers. Exiled from his homeland during the 1918 Revolution—when he lost his eye, fighting as a Trotskyite. Maintains a casual but committed relationship with Agnes.

Paulinka Erdnuss: Female, mid-30s (but looks a little younger). German. A featured actress determined to reach at least minor stardom in the German film industry—perhaps at the loss of principles. Agnes’ closest friend.

Gregor “Baz” Bazwald: Male, early to mid-30s. German. An employee of the Berlin Institute for Human Sexuality; a vivacious homosexual outspokenly cynical of the 1930s’ political climate.

Annabella Gotchling: Female, mid-40s. German. A stern communist artist and graphic designer heavily involved in the German Communist Party (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, or KPD). Constantly at odds with the others—and Baz in particular, for his lack of faith in socialism’s potential.

Rosa Malek: Female, mid- to late 20s. German. A minor, amateurish functionary of the KPD overseeing Agnes’ in the Party—a party stunted by interference from Moscow’s Comintern.

Emil Traum: Male, mid- to late 20s. German. Another minor functionary of the KPD, but ranking slightly higher than Malek (a fact he ensures is made clear).

Die Alte (“The Old One”): Female, late 70s to late 80s. German. A ghostly crone visiting Agnes in the night; an emaciated manifestation of the guilt borne by bystanders to the Holocaust.

Herr Gottfried Swetts: Male, looking 30 at his best and 50 at his worst. German. Poster-boy Aryan. The Devil Himself, incarnated as an elegant importer of Spanish novelties. Summoned by Husz to tell him, Agnes, and Paulinka about the nature and evolution of Evil.

Zillah Katz: Female, early 30s. American. A black, Jewish, New Wave feminist with Anarcho-Punk tendencies. Living in the present day in her East Village apartment in New York City. Sits outside of the play’s main action, and interjects passionately throughout the play with her perceptions on the patterns of history, and on the serious bone she has to pick with both Adolf Hitler and a certain Donald J. Trump.
I can see myself living here
through a hurricane or fire—
even if the building was burning
I think I’d stay.
Why?
Do you know how hard it is
to find an apartment in Berlin?
I feel at home.
My friends like it here,
better than their own apartments.
I’m not a fool.
I know that what’s coming
will be bad,
but not unlivable,
and not eternally,
and when it’s over, I will have clung to the least last thing,
which is to say, my lease.
And you have to admit, it’s a terrific apartment.
I could never find anything like it if I moved out now.
You would not believe
how low the rent is.
Vealtninc Husz

Shut up. Listen.
There is something calling, Paulinka.
If you still retain a shred of decency
you can hear it—it’s a dim terrible
voice that’s calling—a bass howl, like
a cow in a slaughterhouse, but
far, far off…
It is calling us to action, calling us
to stand against the calamity,
to spare nothing, not our blood,
nor our happiness, nor our lives
in the struggle to stop the dreadful day
that’s burning now
in oil flames on the horizon.

What makes the voice pathetic
is that it doesn’t know
what kind of people it’s reaching.
Us.
No one hears it, except us.
This Age wanted heroes.
It got us instead:
carefully constructed, but
immobile.
Subtle, but
unfit
to take up
the burden of the times.
It happens.
A whole generation of washouts.
History says stand up,
and we totter and collapse,
weeping, moved, but not
sufficient.

The best of us, lacking.
The most decent,
not decent enough.
The kindest,
too cruel,
the most loving
too full of hate,
the wisest,
too stupid,
the fittest
unfit
to take up the burden of the times.
The Enemy
has a voice like seven thunders.
What chance did that dim voice ever have?
Marvel that anyone heard it
instead of wondering why nobody did anything,
marvel that we heard it,
we who have no right to hear it—
NO RIGHT!
And it would be a mercy not to.
But mercy… is a thing… no one remembers its face anymore.

The best thing would be
that time would stop
right now,
in this middling moment of awfulness,
before the very worst arrives.
We’d all be spared more than telling.
That would be best.
Paulinka Erdnuss

I’ve seen Him. Well, not Him, exactly, or…

When I had just started acting I did two seasons at the Municipal Theatre of Karlsruhe. Ever been to Karlsruhe? We were giving *Faust, Part One*, a play I’ve always detested, and I was playing Gretchen, a part I’ve always detested, and I was not happy, not happy at all. There were nights I thought I’d be stuck in the provinces forever, never see Berlin, never see the inside of a film studio, die, go to hell, and it’d be exactly like Karlsruhe. Black nights, you could imagine your whole life gone…

You know the scene in the play where the black poodle turns into the Devil and offers Faust the world? All that demurring, endless, always seemed so coy to me. Just… But so one night I was walking home after a performance and a very strange thing happened. I found myself going down a narrow street, an alley, really, one I’d never been down before, and suddenly…

There was this little black poodle, sitting on a doorstep. Waiting for me. Staring at me with those wet dark dog eyes. And I thought to myself: “It’s Him! He’s come to talk to me!” He’s going to stand up on His little hind legs and say “Paulinka! Fame, films, and unsurpassable genius as an actor in exchange for your immortal soul!”

And that’s when I knew it, and my dears I wish I didn’t know: I’d never resist. I couldn’t. I am constitutionally incapable of resisting anything. A good actress, a good liar, but not in truth a very good person. Just give me Berlin, sixty years of success, and then haul me off to the Lake of Fire! Do business with the Devil.

But the poodle had other things in mind. I guess I must have startled it when I asked it if it wanted to make me an offer. It *leapt* up at me, barking and snarling and obviously out for blood. Chased me for blocks. I escaped by ducking into a bar, where I drank and drank and drank…

Probably just somebody’s nasty black poodle. But I’ve always wondered… what if it really was Him, and He decided I wasn’t worth it?
Yesterday I was on my way to buy oranges. I eat them constantly in the winter, even though they cost so much, because they prevent colds. On my way to the grocer’s I passed a crowd in front of an office building; I asked what was going on and they showed me that a man had jumped from the highest floor and was dead. They had covered the man with tarpaper but his feet were sticking out at angles that told you something was very wrong. There was a pink pool of red blood mixed with white snow. I left.

At the grocer’s I felt guilty and embarrassed buying these fat oranges for myself only minutes after this man had died. I knew why he had jumped. I thought of him opening the window, high up, and the cold air…

On my way home I reimagined the whole thing, because I felt a little sick at heart. The dead man was sitting up in the snow, and now the tarpaper covered his feet. As I passed by I gave him one of my oranges. He took it. He stared at the orange, as though holding it could give him back some of the warmth he’d lost. All day, when I closed my eyes, I could see him that way. Sitting in the snow, holding the orange, and comforted. Still bloody, still dead, but… comforted.
Annabella Gotchling

Listen, Agnes.
I am working-class.
And that really does make a difference. I know what’s useful,
and what isn’t.
I know the price of things,
and I know how to give things up.
I know what it is to struggle—
these tough little lessons
I don’t think you people ever learned.
I hold tight, and I do my work.
I make posters for good causes.
Even if they get torn up, I make them,
even though we live in a country
where theory falls silent in the face of fact,
where progress can be reversed overnight,
where the enemy has stolen everything, our own words from us,
I hold tight, and not to my painting… not only to that.
Pick any era in history, Agnes.
What is really beautiful about that era?
The way the rich lived?
No.
The way the poor lived?
No.
The dreams of the Left
are always beautiful.
The imagining of a better world
the damnation of the present one
This faith,
this luminescent anger,
these alone
are worthy of being called human.
These are the Beautiful
that an age produces.
As an artist I am struck to the heart
by these dreams. These visions.
We progress. But at great cost.
How can anyone stand to live
without understanding that much?
Die Alte

But through it all
I never lost my appetite,
and never ceased to look for food,
just like the rats.
I ate while the bombs fell,
ate while the bodies burned,
ate at the funerals, hurried and undignified,
of people I had loved…
Ate
through the days of pain
and nights of terror;
with cracked teeth
and split lips
I kept eating, digesting,
and looking for meals.

When they rounded us up,
and brought us to the camps,
and showed us the mass graves and said
“You
are responsible for these.”
I was thinking, “I
wasn’t here,
didn’t know,
didn’t want to know,
never pulled a trigger,
never pulled a switch,
feel nothing for these beds
of sleepers, deep asleep,
but only
look at how thin they are,
and when they let us return to Munich
I wonder what I’ll find for dinner.”
In brief:
I recall a past, nomads, seeming
to them a desert tyrant, with a petty
tyrant’s heart,
cruel, greedy, englistered with fat,
fond of the flesh
of children…
Years pass;
an Agrarian Phase, I am
rougher, reptilian,
a heart of mildew, dung-heap dweller,
fly-merchant, cattle-killer,
friend… of lunatics, Straw
Demon… Excremental
Principle, the Shit King!
Quaint.
Children’s stuff.
Year’s pass, more years,
refinement, Scholasticism,
increasingly metaphysical inclinations
shape me as
a negativity, a void,
the pain of loss, of
irreconcilable separation from Joy, from
God!
My heart
a black nullity, dull cavity
from which no light escapes,
not an “Is” in so much
as an “Isn’t.”
Too ethereal. Lacking bite.
Years pass, years pile up,
the last century
my heart was a piston pump,
my veins copper tubing,
hot black oil coursed through them,
steam turbines roared.
Very strong! Very hungry!
Flesh of children and much, much more…
Heady Days! The best in eons!
Even that grows old.
Even yet, years hurtle by.
And in this century, still new,
when questions of form
are so hotly contested,
my new form seems to be
no form at all.
I am simply
unbelievable. Nonobjective.
Nonexistent. Displaced.
Stateless. A refugee.
The accumulation of so many weary years,
I have at last attained
invisibility.
It’s not the danger that you see
that’s the danger.
I become increasingly diffuse,
like powdered gas taking to air,
not less potent, but more,
spreading myself
around.
You cannot possibly begin to imagine how Grand… the scope of what’s ahead.
I sense great possibilities in the Modern World. The depths… have not been plumbed. Yet.
I haven’t talked so much in years.
Zillah Katz

German lessons. Listen:
“Die Zeit war sehr schlimm.” Times were bad.
“Millionen von Menschen waren tot.” Millions of people were dead.

People try to be so fussy and particular when they look at politics, but what I think an understanding of the second half of the twentieth century calls for is not caution and circumspection but moral exuberance. Overstatement is your friend: use it. Take Evil: The problem is that we have this event—Germany, Hitler, the Holocaust—which we have made into THE standard of absolute Evil—well and good, as standards of Evil go, it’s not bad—but then everyone gets frantic as soon as you try to use the standard, nothing compares, nothing resembles—and the standard becomes unusable and nothing qualifies as Evil with a capital E. I mean how much of a Nazi do you have to be to qualify for membership? Is a twenty-five-percent Nazi a Nazi or not? Ask yourselves this: it’s 1942; the Goerings are having an intimate soiree; if he got an invitation, would Steve Bannon feel out of place? Out of place? Are you kidding? Pig heaven, dust off the old tuxedo, kisses to Eva and Adolf. I mean does a certain mogul-turned-President who shall go nameless merit comparison to a certain fascist-dictator anti-Semitic mass-murdering psychopath who shall also remain nameless? OF COURSE NOT! I mean I ask you—how come the only people who ever say “Evil” anymore are southern cracker televangelists with radioactive blue eyeshadow? None of these bastards look like Hitler, they never will, not exactly, but I say as long as they look like they’re playing in Mr. Hitler’s Neighborhood we got no reason to relax.

I never relax. I can work up a sweat reading the Sunday Times. I read, I gasp, I hit the streets at three a.m. with my can of spray paint:

TRUMP EQUALS HITLER! RESIST! DON’T FORGET, WEIMAR HAD A CONSTITUTION TOO!

Moral exuberance. Hallucination, revelation, gut-flutters in the night—the internal intestinal night bats, their panicky leathery wings—that’s my common sense. I pay attention to that. Don’t put too much stock in a good night’s sleep. During times of reactionary backlash, the only people sleeping soundly are the guys who’re giving the rest of us bad dreams. So eat something indigestible before you go to bed, and listen to your nightmares.