Amgels, theater, politics and moles: a never published breakfast talk with Tony Kushner

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Tony Kushner was born in New York City in 1956, and raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana. I believe the American playwright does not need a thorough introduction, but the least. Kushner is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, an Emmy Award, two Tony Awards, three Obie Awards, two Evening Standard Awards, an Olivier Award, two Oscar nominations, an Arts Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a PEN/Laura Pels Award, a Spirit of Justice Award from the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, a Cultural Achievement Award from The National Foundation for Jewish Culture, a Chicago Tribune Literary Prize for lifetime achievement, the 2012 National Medal of Arts, the 2015 Lifetime Achievement in the American Theater Award, the Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award, the 2019 Dramatists Guild Foundation's Madge Evans & Sidney Kingsley Awards, the 2020 Distinguished Achievement Award, and the Chicago Public Library Foundation's 2022 Carl Sandburg Literary Award among many others.

His *Angels in America: a gay fantasia on national themes*, a 1991 two-part play, premiered in London's National Theatre in 1992 while its Broadway opening happened in 1993. The play is a complex, metaphorical, political, philosophical, and at times symbolic examination of homosexuality in the United States in the 1980s. Kushner places on the stage not only ambivalent human characters, but metaphysical ones. Angels, ghosts, and what I have been calling "imaginary intruders" (figures who perform as ghosts or as objects of memory, who haunt the physical spaces of the scene, but are not ghosts per se)

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appear on the scene bringing about remnants of memory that should not be forgotten. Yet, this is not the only play Kushner ever wrote. His other plays include *A bright room called day, Slavs!, Hydriotaphia*, *Homebody/Kabul*, *The intelligent homosexual's guide to capitalism and socialism with a key to the scriptures,* and so many more. He also wrote the musical *Caroline, or Change*, and an opera *A blizzard on Marblehead Neck*, both with composer Jeanine Tesori. Kushner also wrote the screenplays for Mike Nichols' adaptation of *Angels in America*, and Steven Spielberg's *Munich*, *Lincoln*, and *West Side story*. He also co-wrote, along with Stephen Spielberg, the script for *The Fabelmans*, a semi-autobiographical film based on Spielberg's childhood, which was nominated for the 2023 Academy Award for Writing (Original Screenplay). Kushner is currently adapting, along with Chinoye Chukwu, Arthur Miller's *Death of a salesman* for a new film version starring Jeffrey Wright and Octavia Spencer. Kushner has also translated and adapted Pierre Corneille's *The illusion*, S. Ansky's *The dybbuk*, Bertolt Brecht's *The good person of Sezuan* and *Mother Courage and her children*, Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The visit, or The old lady comes to call* and the English-language libretto for the children's opera *Brundibár* by Hans Krasa.

I met Tony Kushner over coffee in early January 2012 at the Luxembourg Café in New York to shed some light on many a question I had concerning some of his earlier plays. The interview[2] turned into a conversation about things that interested us both, and an invitation to see the first days of rehearsal of *Angels in America* at the Court Theater in Chicago. During these almost two hours, we talked about *Angels*, of course, but also his earlier plays which are not so talked about, although they are as meaningful as the famous *Angels*. Interestingly, in Kushner's mind, *Angels* is not and never was a play about AIDS, consequently it is not a play about the gay community. His aim was never to raise public awareness of the epidemic, but to write a play about being alive in times of upheaval, a play about the catastrophe of what Reaganism really was — a terrifying ideological perversion that occurred in the 80s and his fear of history repeating itself. According to the playwright, a play does not set out to teach people how to feel; yet *Angels in America* is a play that is resistant to settling, and probably because there is no happy version of it, it

[2] The interview was recorded using a computer audio app. The permission for publishing was granted by Mr. Kushner´s literary agent, Mr. Quinn Corbin, from Gershny Agency, from his e-mail [gcorbin@gershny.com] on March, 14, 2013 to the interviewer´s e-mail [vcianconi@hotmail.com]. Both the audio and the e-mail belong to the interviewer´s personal collection.

ends up guiding people on how to feel.

This is what we talked about:

Vanessa Cianconi [henceforth *VC*]: Arthur Miller once claimed that the theater needed to be political. To what extent does placing *A bright room called day* in the Weimar Republic, as opposed to *Fear and misery in the Third Reich* – which is after Hitler was elected, bring political hope for the future generations?

Tony Kushner [henceforth *TK*]: For me, the hope there is in that version of *A bright room* is… It's my first play, what I was trying to do was to make the case, but sometimes I think I made it too explicitly, but if you situate the holocaust and the horrors of World War II in its historical and political context you understand it as a consequence of political decisions. You understand it as a consequence of causes and facts operating in history as opposed to some almost sort of metaphysical monstrosity that occurred. It shouldn't really be necessary to ever argue for any of the events that occurs in time or anything that has to do with these, because, of course, we exist for them in the flow of history and we are always operating based on one set of political act, but very often the holocaust is seen as something that was visited by evil forces, demons, as if it was prepared and inevitable. Some terrible flaw in the German character that was waiting for this opportunity or some terrible flaw in human character that was sort of waiting for its moment to appear, and I think that's false. I think that the truth of holocaust, and you know once the holocaust begins and is destroyed, it would be an end of the monsters that are guilty of monstrous crimes and they're going to be punished one way or another, because no evil, no matter how horrible, goes on and on forever. But, when it gets to 11 million people sort of pushed to the frontiers of barbarism of unimaginable extremes in World War II as a result of the unattended horrors of the war, you can't really say that the fact that it ended with the good guys basically winning and the bad guys defeated is hopeful. The cost was too high, and it would be almost criminal to take solace from the fact that eventually what Hitler and the Nazis, and the axis powers did before having been destroyed. It was, obviously, something that anyone with a soul, anyone would have avoided it. The hope in all of this, and I'm very much of the school that it's very wrong to look for hope within the holocaust. I think that what mattered to me was, as I was working on *A bright room*, was that you could see the advance of the Reich and the preconditions for the camps being prepared

step by step and a decisive intervention at any point along that way, I believe, absolutely could have prevented it. I don't believe that humans need to participate in some kind of global conflagration every so often, and sort of destroy a significant portion of it. I think that we do blunder into holocausts over and over again and it's always the case, that at least in the modern world, it has always been the case that an intervention at some point in the process could stop it and move history in another direction. Half, for instance, of the German Communist Party and the German Socialist Party manage to heal the rifts between themselves, between the two parties, that were generated by the murder of Rosa Luxemburg, had they managed to form common cause, I mean, Hitler was in fact in the last re-election – this was in the play – before Hindenburg appointed him chancellor and the Nazis were slipping drastically in the popular support and the German were getting ready to get rid of them had this coalition of a ultra-right wing Catholics, and German business men, a coalition that should be frighteningly familiar to people in the USA, for instance. I have never been a fan of the Republican Party in the Twentieth Century, but, at one point in our country's history was, at least, a Party that had some notion of government as a positive good and some sense of responsibility for the proper functioning of a government in a two-party democracy and that was abandoned during the years that *A bright room* was written. I think the hope in *A bright room called day* is trying to, as scrupulously as I could, track the moments when the things could have been averted. But, you know, it's also the case that I was writing about a moment in history that catastrophically wasn't averted and I think for a variety of reasons. I wrote in the introduction that I needed to write about Germany in terms of my identity to Brecht, but it's finally a dark play written during a very dark time. I feel that *Angels* followed right in the heels of *A bright room*, the horror that I was feeling then about Reaganism, I think, has proven to be what I assumedly wasn't the only one feeling it. It has proven to be something that we were feeling frightened about, and it's done incalculable damage not only to the political life of this country, but to the world, and, I think, we're still struggling, I think we will be struggling for some generations to get out from under.

VC: Politically, what is the deal the playwright makes with the audience?

TK: Maybe watching the way the audience reacts when learning to, reading audiences reaction... the idea that you write the play in sort of collaboration with the audience, you

also created productions with the audience, but I don't know about waking them up, I really have come to believe that the greatest truth about theater is what Shakespeare says about it in *A midsummer's night dream* on the top of Act 5 when Theseus and Hippolyta discover the lovers are asleep in the woods and wake them up and the lovers tell them what happened and they leave. There's these three little speeches between Theseus and Hippolyta which, when I was at Columbia and took a Shakespeare class with the great Edward Taylor, Hippolyta said "Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of". And when he's saying it, it is not what they told is an invention, it's a fantasy. It's just make-believe, these are just emotions that carry away and make you see things that aren't there and it's very clean cut. And Hippolyta gives great response, and she says:

> But all the story of the night told over,
> And all their minds transfigured so together, More witnesseth than fancy's images And grows to something of great constancy; But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

And what it says is that "the story of the night told over" is the play, "and all their minds transfigured so together" is the actors and the audience, "more witnesseth than fancy's images" something more than fancy images and fantasy "and grows to something of great constancy", - it's more than fantasy, it's something real, however strange that reality is. That senses what theater does, it's a developing of critical consciousness, but the deal is, and this is where I have in part company with Brecht, even though Brecht would find this disgusting, is that the deal that we make with the audience is the deal the unconscious makes with the conscious mind when you sleep and dream. You'll be able to watch things, and see things, and have things move to some levels of consciousness that are intolerable and actually what possibly be even dangerous, at least your ego and super-ego feel that they might threaten your ability to function in waking life. The unconscious submits this, usually it's an immensely clever constructed thing for you, and you decide what to do with it, and that's the deal I think we make with the audience, it feels to me that all attempts to change that, even the sum of them, I've seen some of them create, involve the audience directly, breaking that barrier, magnificent things can result but, I think, fundamentally, if the audience isn't protected by the dark and their fundamental lack of participation in what's unfolding before them, something else is happening that isn't the kind of theater I believe I'm trying to do. I want very much to have a direct effect on the world, but the only way I will really do that is through political activism, and therefore, I

must be politically active. I think it would be a great mistake to believe that theater is an effective tool of direct action. I think it has power, but it's a weak power. There is a special kind of power in theater, but weak power, the most direct, immediate force is not always the strongest, but it's a very complicated and necessarily tragic history. I think this is what Benjamin was writing about when he calls the earthworm action in history, and the power of accident in history, but I think there is a certain degree of surrendering to that idea and letting go of the fantasy of complete affectivity and agency that is a necessary part of my profession. One thing that can be said about Brecht, I mean, *Mother Courage*, for all of its lecturing of the audience. It's a slogan, she doesn't lecture, it presents this sort of fortune cookies sayings if you want the war to work for you, you have to give to the war too. And there is in Brecht this heartbreaking belief that if you just sense that what's obviously true, that if you're making a living off the war, you're going to have to pay, but that's not Mother Courage, that's that little statement. *Mother Courage* is a terrifying dark forest-ocean-mountain range of a play when it's done properly, which almost never is, I think you experience every conceivable human emotion and you leave shattered. Courage does not understand her own terrible mistakes, but as people have noted, you know, what are her mistakes? She's a woman with only a wagon to keep her daughter from prostitution and her sons from the army, so she follows the army because they buy her goods and it's the 17th century and it's the peasant wars. She was born in a world of war and what could she do differently is the question, and Brecht sort of feels the anger at her that she makes these choices and also never stops in a way forgiving him, loves her and grieves for her, so the play is as great as tragedy as any ever written and he would be theoretically at least horrified to hear me say that, but the play's a nightmare, its effect on the audience is not all that different from the effect of Sophocles.

VC: Benjamin's "Thesis of History "has been an inspiration for most of your plays. In his thesis Benjamin argues "there has not been a monument of history that has not been a moment of barbarism". How does this idea play out in *Hydriotaphia*?

TK: It's present in *A bright room* and the old lady and the little penny man, it's right out of Benjamin, the line of the hunchback when Benjamin, the guy playing chess in various Benjamin's texts; there's a figure that he was fighting off as a child, this little hunchback, it's a kind of a figure of misfortune that shows up and destroy everything. In *Hydriotaphia*,

I mean, it's certainly about catastrophe, progress, a period of transformation in British society, primitive capital, as Marx said primitive capital accumulation, and savaging not only of the land, but the relationship of people to their environment, their land, and, in that regard it ends in apocalypse, it ends completely in the collapsing of the quarry. I think, in that sense, I think probably the figure of death, not the character of death necessarily, but there's something about the violence of that figure that's interesting to me but I think Brecht … one of the meeting places for Brecht and Benjamin is in a sense of Marxism, a reading of Marx that privileges the tragic as opposed to the positive. Benjamin fusing of Marxism and Jewish mysticism, I mean, of the fundamental theological system with Marx's notion of transformation, material transformation of history and the dialectic of progress being the accumulation of destruction and ruination. The famous image in the "Thesis on History", the image of the angel being blown backwards out of paradise. It's a frightening, bloody tragic idea, a messianic idea of history and revolution, which transformation is immensely powerful in Benjamin, and in Brecht. I think Benjamin, in the Brechtian/Benjaminian section, is someone who can't, as he said in a scene with the gravedigger, when he finally comes out, he says: "I can't die", when I die the world ends, we all need gravediggers. I think those are the best scenes in the play. I forgot which act it is, the scene when his sister comes, his wife comes, and the gravedigger comes and then death. I was reading James Joyce's *Ulysses* for the first time when I was writing *Hydriotaphia*, and I think *Hydriotaphia* was sort of an experiment between *A bright room* and writing of *Millenium*, so I always lie when I say that *Millenium* is my second play. There's a reason why an epic farce doesn't work, this is certainly a sort of cruelty and savagery, I think, it's necessary to write a really great farce and I don't think I have that, and so I think I am way lacking in one of the elements of it, but I think that *Hydriotaphia* and *The illusion*, which I wrote in between the second and the third act of *Millenium*, both helped me write jokes. In *A bright room*, I really didn't know how to do it, there's some funny things in it, but I hadn't learned how to, – the fundamental lesson of comedy is you will always risk failure if you're not clearly asking for a laugh, and there are many ways to ask for a laugh, so I don't think it has to be obvious. If a joke isn't recognizable as a failed joke it will not be a successful joke. You have to put yourself at risk by asking the audience to laugh, by telling them to laugh and I think you can't be self-protective at all in writing comedy, and, of course, when it fails, as jokes often will, it's a horrible feeling. Audiences are mad, they

love laughing and they really don't like you when you're trying to make them, you know, you're trying to make sex with somebody and he doesn't want to have sex with you, and he's like "get away from me". I learned to just go for it with *Hydriotaphia* and *The illusion*. There's a reason why I can't think of a single really great play or a good playwright who doesn't know how to make people laugh, and I think I sort of understood I was going to need to harness those skills, and in a way, *Hydriotaphia* is a way to do that. Edward Bond's play *Bingo* is a play about Shakespeare, and I think that *Hydriotaphia* is in many ways very embarrassingly indebted to this, it's also about this enclosure act of the seizing of public land, which I had read about originally in reading Marx's early journalism.

VC: Speaking of which, when I was reading the play Dr. Browne keeps on having visions and dreams that the moles are eating up his quarry, which eventually they do, that is, if you do not have a very strong basis, whatever is on top will eventually crumble. It reminds me of Marx's aphorism "all that is solid melts into air". In fact, a lot of what happens throughout the play brings out the same idea. Is it possible to say that this is a manifesto such as Marx's? A way of criticizing American capitalism or I'm reading too much into it?

TK: Very good. There is a sense of an immense muscularity and force and power that disappears in an eye blink as Marx's says in the *Manifesto*. The actions of history, the moment of revolution, what Benjamin calls the messianic moment, I mean, Marxism in the *Manifesto* is pointing out to the radicalism of capitalism that undermines and transforms instantly ancient human institutions and practices and everything that seemed solid is out for grabs and gone. We live at that time when Marx and Engels prophesized in the *Manifesto* 150 years ago, and that process now accelerated to a shocking degree. The origin of it is probably what Benjamin describes as the earthworm action in history and these things tunneling underneath the surface that you can't see that will undo you. And Hamlet, when the ghost speaks, when the ghost's second appearance speaks from the ground, Hamlet says, "well said, old mole", the idea, Shakespeare is playing a game with the medieval notion that hell is under the earth, that there's a fire into the earth, you know, that heaven is above and hell is below, sort of Dante's schematization of this. The idea that the devil was a kind of mole that is burrowing underneath.

VC: And it's something that he really values, all of his money, his property...

TK: Yes, and that's also, in a sense, what's killing him. When I wrote *Hydriotaphia*, I had not written *Angels*, but I've written *A bright room called day*, and Stephen played Baz. I wanted to write Stephen a big part. I always had weight issues and Stephen, for most of his life, could eat six cheeseburgers and not get an ounce, he was always terribly thin, when he played Prior everybody thought he had AIDS, he didn't, but he was so skeletonly thin, when he took his clothes off it shocked people, but he was a great actor. When I directed *Hydriotaphia* and put him in a fat suit, I wanted him to be fat, I made a body stocking, there was this little genitalia I made out of foam and rubber, and this enormous belly and he was fat. This is why I love him so much, he couldn't find a character, he couldn't figure out how to play Dr. Browne, he couldn't figure out how the humor worked and then, he came in one day and said "I solved it, let me show you", and then he did it, and he was brilliant, he was incredibly funny. And I said: "What did you figure out?" He said: "I went home and a friend of mine came over and I watched *All about Eve*, and it's Betty Davis." And he just did Betty Davis in *All about Eve.* When we did the show, he had just bobbed his hair, – you couldn't tell it was Betty Davis, but it was what he was channeling. The company that did *Hydriotaphia*, first it was a Really Wonderful Group people that I've gone to school with, and we did it in a tiny theater with no money during a heat wave in the summer; there was no air-conditioning in the theater, I think it was 90F, 100F in the theater, and they were all in full costume and heavy heavy make-up... it was a great experience, we had a good time. *Faust* too and *Peer Gynt* were both obviously influences on the shape of both of those plays, it clearly had no effect on *Angels*, but the figure of Faust in the second part and his degeneration of the devil himself, which Berman writes about beautifully, and, in a way, the degeneration of Peer Gynt in the second part of the Ibsen play, I think, had an impact on *Hydriotaphia* as well. The ambition to dramatize the central processing in capitalism, I have always been fascinated by the notion of primitive capital accumulation, that underneath, sort of a smooth world of commodity fetishism that capitalism strives and mostly succeeds in creating is this horrendous violence… Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*, what I find extremely moving is in the end he shows you the view of NYC with the Twin Towers still standing there, what you realize you've been watching is the ghastly, sort of barbarism that is just under the surface of what seems a kind of less creepily organic world of infinitely desirable objects and

beneath all of these is the terrible violence. The idea that the world has so successfully, the industrialized world is so successfully inwards itself, within the commodity form, and the pseudo organicity of the commodity form that disappears all traces of its origins; and the way that wealth is accumulated and wealth begins, something that with *Hydriotaphia* I wanted to return to.

VC: Capitalism and the action of accumulation…

TK: In the earlier stages, the earlier arrangements of its means of production and the hierarchization of a great deal of actual physical violence is a requirement, you know, Marx's discovery of capitalism, that in a certain sense begins when he starts working for the newspaper, and is asked to go out as a journey man journalist and cover these phenomena of peasants who won't stop going in the land belonging to various yonkers and barrons, of the newly formed Germany. This aristocracy that is completely bogus, and these people who would now, it was like the Enclosure Act, the peasants would go since the dawn of time, they would go into the land of whatever feud or lord they were serviced, belonging to, and one of their rights, since time memorial, was to pick up twigs and gather them. On the other end, it became an important source of fuel and building materials, and it was absolutely an essential part of the survival and the starvation economy these people lived in. And when property rights became solidified, as Germany began to lurch in the 19th century towards real industrialization, and one of the first things that have to happen; you have to get the titles to property, so the medieval forms of sort of loosey-goosey property ownership became a huge problem for these guys, and they began to say that their land was their land, and then, the idea of trespassing was invented, and peasants who used to go into their land and gather twigs were suddenly getting arrested for gathering twigs. And Marx is fascinated by this, why did these people believe they have the rights to this, and why did the right they were certain they had disappeared, and he applies Hegel and begins to understand. There is a passage in history that is being enacted here, into some new form of social organization. It's a simplified version, but it's a part of it. It's the same thing with the Enclosure Act, suddenly people are living on land… it's incredibly moving when you walk across England that the notion of the easement, England preserved a notion that land could not be completely shut off. It shows you how this immense idea of common land was, you should theoretically be able to walk clear

across the country, even today. Thatcher strategy destroyed this, but you can still sort of do this. I spent a lot of time in the Midlands and in the north, and you can still go across many fields and farms. There are fences, but there are turnstiles and ways to get past, because the land is both private and collective at the same time, which is one of the ways in which the monarchy is not simply a kind of entirely figuratively thing in England. It is still the medieval notion of "corpus mysticum", the mystical body of Christ, that we're all elements of this vast familial entity that survives and lives in a kind of a weird dialectic with capitalism, which, of course, completely shatters the mystical body of Christ and creates a world of contrast. That transition is what Marx cares about, what William Blake is clear about, the achieving of this is violence, terrible violence. There's a great line in Blake, in this poem, the "Auguries of innocence" that says "A dog starv'd at this master's gate, predicts the ruin of the state"; the violence that we visit on the animals as being a warning bell of how corrupted we become. What Blake writes about in "New Jerusalem", "And was Jerusalem builded here, /Among these dark Satanic Mills?"; he sees what's coming and what's changing, and Bonz telling of Shakespeare, there's one of the things that Shakespeare apparently took some of his profits from the theater, invested in property purchasing. And to return to Brecht, it's also what Brecht is grappling with the surrender of… you can see it in Lenin, he had this immense admiration for the haute bourgeoisie, for captains and industries, for Henry Ford and Taylor, his efficiency expert. It was just not ruthlessness that was a lot of that in Lenin, but there's also when you read about him at the Winter Palace in the days after the Bolsheviks have completely taken over this great interest he took, and sort of delight that he took, he expressed admiration for captains of industry, he was a great admirer of human ingenuity and human inventiveness and human genius. He never fully successfully theorized, I don't think Lenin was ever a great thinker, but he was grappling at moments with … all important Marxist thinking has the individual, and the collective, and how we live as an individual, and as individuals within a collective, the most vulgar forms of Marxism completely reject the idea of the individual, I think, in the afterwords of *Perestroika*, Marx's statement that the smallest reducible unity of humanity is not one person, but two, it doesn't mean that he negates the existence of the individual or the dialectics that we are both completely permeated in collective. Both Marx and Cohn have to be taken in consideration.

VC: In an interview to David Savran you said that all that Brecht has done was "historicizing his particular moment". And this is exactly what you do, for it is important to historicize a particular moment. Do you think it's possible to let characters like Roy Cohn die? Do you think it's possible to forget or forgive?

TK: Certainly not forgetting, I would never have intended to... As Marx says history happens first time as tragedy and then farce, and one might argue that one would rather be in a farce than in a tragedy because the resolution is not in blood or death, so I would say there is one kind of learning. I think people do learn from history, I mean, the interesting question for me is what Benjamin is saying that is inescapably true, we learn from calamity and catastrophe and holocaust, and that's one reason why. Benjamin says it's not the hope for a better life for our grandchildren that propels us forward, it's the memory of our murdered ancestors, the dead demands justice from us, and they demand that we are solving crimes or addressing crimes that have happened in the past, the dead ever claim on us, which is in a way a sort of operative principle of Greek tragedy. When the House of Atreus Cycle is ended, and it's ended in a kind of unsatisfying way, and I have always compared it to the truth. The reconciliation commissions in Chile or in South Africa, for life to go forward without being an endless repetition there is a sort of letting go or forgetting, and what finally happens in the Atreus Cycle is: Apollo broke the deal between Orestes and Hera and her sort of attack dogs, he builds a nice temple to one of the female deities, and that Eumenides can lie on the temple, and sleep and stop chasing him, and that's what ends the cycle of law that starts with the murder of Iphigenia, and it's the satisfaction of seeing Agamemnon slaughtered from murdering his daughter, and then seeing Clytemnestra slaughtered and, I guess, the slaughter from murdering Agamemnon is nowhere in this last play, it's an anticlimax. And the ghost of Clytemnestra can hardly be said to be appeased by sort of this legal deal. Justice has disappeared in Chile, and many millions murdered in the apartheid, or in Ruanda and that horror has happened. How you bring justice to the dead? Remembering is important, never forgetting. I don't advocate forgetting, but on some level, there is a letting go that has to happen, and it isn't a satisfying thing, it has to happen but it lacks the tragic, the power … in some sense it's Nietzsche when he talks about tragedy, it's two great opposites that cannot co-exist; they must, in a sense, destroy each other but out of that mutual destruction. Arthur Miller, at the end, and in the way which I see *Death of a salesman* as a tragedy, is that Willy is

destroyed at the end, and there's a sense that Biff is destroyed, and that when he screams at his father in that heartbreaking last scene: "we're nothing, we're nothing, we're nothing". He's asking for acceptance in this fundamental tragedy of their lives, out of that Biff is free and out of destruction something new will emerge, living without that kind of obliteration is a kind of agony in itself, and it would be foolish to believe that just because you had your truth, in the reconciliation committees everything is ok, it's not ok. It's not ok in Chile right now, it's not ok in South Africa right now, the crimes of slavery and segregation have been in some ways spectacularly addressed in the US and in another ways not, the dead are constantly demanding justice. And the tension of living with that in the way the revolution is a great release what Trotsky describes as the streets of Moscow after the Romanov's disappear, a 900-year vampiric thing disappearing, there's an almost insane sense of freedom the bloodiness that follow it in a way has just disappeared, so, now what? Now what happens, is the murder of the Kulaks, and the slaughter of those animals, millions of cows, it's an erratic world out of a Greek myth and the whole terror. It's the same thing with the French Revolution, you decapitate the king, you decapitate the queen, and it turned out that it was just like this to knock over that corrupt, and that comes the terror, which is this giant purgation of all of that. So, the question is, can we live without that purgation? I think it's a huge terrifying question.

VC: Thank you.

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