



A Bright Room Called Day

Tony Kushner

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“One of the things that makes Kushner such a vibrant writer is the way he luxuriates in exuberance and sorrow, emotions that these intense Berliners have in spades. His intellectual characters are tremendously passionate and expressive, so it's hard not to care about what they care about, and what happens to them.”
—*Washington Post*

“A juggernaut of a play.” —*San Francisco Weekly*

“Unabashedly political, thought-provoking, a little scary and frequently a good deal of theatrical fun... intoxicatingly visionary.” —*Sid Smith, Chicago Tribune*

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner's powerful portrayal of individual resolution, irresolution and dissolution in the face of political catastrophe, *A Bright Room Called Day* follows a group of artists and political activists struggling to preserve themselves in 1930s Berlin as the Weimar Republic surrenders to the seduction of fascism. Often exquisitely lyrical, always exhilaratingly intelligent, the poetic world of the play moves beyond the bounds of historical reality with the morally outraged outpourings of a contemporary New York woman. Her fury at the Reagan and British presidencies brings into stark relief the discomfiting similarities between then and now, and challenges us to remember that although evil may seem inevitable, it is never irresistible.

Tony Kushner's plays include *Angels in America*; *Hydriotaphia, or the Death of Dr. Brown*; *The Illusion*, adapted from the play by Pierre Cornelle; *Slavs!*; *A Bright Room Called Day*; *Homebody/Kabul*; *Caroline, or Change*, a musical with composer Jeanine Tesori; and *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*. He wrote the screenplays for Mike Nichols's film of *Angels in America* and for Steven Spielberg's *Munich* and *Lincoln*. His books include *The Art of Maurice Sendak: 1980 to the Present*; *Brundibar*, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak; and *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, co-edited with Alisa Solomon.

Among many honors, Kushner is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize, two Tony Awards, three Obie Awards, two Evening Standard Awards, an Olivier Award, an Emmy Award, two Oscar nominations, and the Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2012, he was awarded a National Medal of Arts by President Barack Obama. He lives in Manhattan with his husband, Mark Harris.

A Bright Room Called Day Details

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From Reader Review A Bright Room Called Day for online ebook

Michael says

I am a huge fan of Kushner's Angels in America, and I'm a gigantic nerd when it comes to the politics and culture of Weimar Era and World War II Era Germany. I can't get enough of it. The abrupt and bizarre shift from decadent liberalism to genocidal fascism, I find it all extremely fascinating. So needless to say when I picked up A Bright Room Called Day and read the back I was immediately interested to read it, something that brought Kushner and Hirschfeld's Berlin together.

I find A Bright Room to be an extremely complicated play, even more so than Angels. Angels packs in so much politics into a world of extremely human characters (and angels, and ghosts, and drag queens) and it all works seamlessly. A Bright Room, on the other hand, feels much more metaphorical. The characters, the room, their discussions, their beliefs. They're human, but more abstract than those of Angels. That's not to say I didn't enjoy it, but I feel like it's difficult as a play. I can think of it as a play that can only be read, but at the same time I would love to see it performed (performed well, of course).

I have to say, though, Kushner has to be commended for his presenting an argument about fascism in contemporary society. Reading it, I felt like you could simply replace "Reagan" with "Bush" or "Harper" and it would still feel so true, and so completely sincere. The character of Zillah, the didactic, soapbox preaching (possibly lesbian?) Jewish woman (who, Kushner assures the reader, is not the author) was amazingly written. Another favorite, well written scene was when the devil first arrives in Berlin. I simply adore when Kushner delves into the mystical. Those moments are always my favorites.

Louise Tripp says

Tony Kushner's plays are seamless and perfect. This is no exception.

Mary says

Brilliant production at Swarthmore directed by my daughter Elizabeth Stevens.
Setting is Berlin 1932-33. A group of actors and artists as they are affected by the rise of Hitler. Commentary woven in on Fascism in present day USA.

McKenzie Lynn Tozan says

I am super-madly-in-love with this play. Though I have read quite a few plays in my life, never once can I say that a play absolutely consumed me like a work of fiction or moved me like my favorite poetry. Tony Kushner is a new writer to my life, but "A Bright Room Called Day" will hardly be the last of his works that I will read (unless, of course, that means that I've read so many of his works and returned to this one, again, last and then suddenly died—then, yes, I suppose that would be a possibility). His writing style is extremely poetic, and the characters are realistic while remaining over-the-edge, well-realized and palpable creations.

They contain real problems within an age of infinite problems—the Holocaust, choosing a side, emigration, the list goes on—while continuing to be shockingly human and, well, self-absorbed at times, narcissistic and defeatist in a way I've rarely seen in a set of characters. And to be contained entirely in one room, while bringing so much of the outside IN—the war, the historical events, the images used, the descriptions and conversations of outer-goings-on—contains this constant sense of movement and life and living and fear. It's unrealistically beautiful, and it's about death and dying and loss, and yet... it really IS beautiful. It's layered. And while I've heard such things about Kushner's other plays, and while I cannot verify that truth in those plays, I CAN verify it in this one. And I will. And I do. And I'm going to read this again, for as many times as it takes to stop being real and breathing, and breathtaking and surprising—and, quite frankly, I highly doubt that's ever going to happen.

Thorne Clark says

Political fiction/theater is very, very rarely enjoyable for me. But this is gorgeous.

Leigh says

"I mean just because a certain ex-actor-turned-President who shall go nameless sat *idly* by and watched tens of thousands die of a plague and he couldn't even bother to say he felt *bad* about it, much less try to *help*, does this mean he merits comparison to a certain fascist-dictator anti-Semitic mass-murdering psychopath who shall also remain nameless? OF COURSE NOT!"

[. . .]

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 who are 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."

Richie Loria says

Quite simply - the most terrifying play I've read.

Kamela says

Kushner...I am ever humbled.

Rose Anderson says

Kushner thinks Reagan was evil, not nearly to the degree of Hitler, but still evil.

Stephen Fife says

Tony Kushner is a brilliant person, but this is a very boring play with tedious scenes that make the same point over and over again. Simply too didactic and not dramatically compelling. It is a much better "read" than it is as a play. A play exists in time and space, and this work fails to hold the stage. But as an exploration of ideas and themes, it works much better and is worth checking out. For me it functions like Milton's "Samson Agonistes," which is compelling on the page but works only as a cure for insomnia on the stage.

Bronwyn says

I am a huge theatre person and this is honestly the best play I have ever read. It made me cry, something no other play, book, or movie has ever done. After about a minute of just sinking in the brilliance that I had just read, I wanted to reread it again (and plan to do so soon).

Brian says

A great ensemble play filled with increasingly powerful ensemble themes. He is one of the few playwrights out there who blends realism with poetic lyricism in a way that I both buy and am moved by.

Oh yeah, and he's a self-proclaimed immature person, for writing a play that attempts to parallel Reagan with Hitler... I love immature people.

Kaysy Ostrom says

GREAT play. I really enjoyed the premise, the dialogue, and the obvious passion that was behind the words. My favorite parts were Zillah's interruptions. I didn't really know who she was but her words were sooo powerful and I liked the slow discovery of her character's place in the story.

p.s. my reviews are all very ambiguous. if you want to know the plot of a book I assume you can visit that book's page.

Carac Allison says

I used to have a rule when I argued with my political friends. It was simple enough: the first person to make

a comparison to the Nazis generally or Hitler specifically lost the argument.

I refer to it as a "rule". I had no clout to enforce it. But you get the idea. People are so quick to make those comparisons and they are almost always ridiculous.

In "A Bright Room Called Day" Tony Kushner juxtaposes a group of friends living in Germany as the Weimar Republic falls with a Long IIsander in the 80s who doesn't care for Ronald Reagan.

Yet this title is far more subtle than Reagan = Hitler. I don't agree with most of Kushner's politics but this is a wonderful drama about the despair of individuals in the face of an unstoppable zeitgeist. There's magical realism, warm humor and a cameo by the Devil himself. It's an interesting read and I suspect it would make an engaging evening if you're lucky enough to live in a city where it receives one of its rare productions. And because it's Kushner the theatricality is mesmerizing.

Carac

Chelsea says

It must be nice to be Tony Kushner and have something this amazing look kind of eh because you also wrote Angels in America.

stephanie says

my good friend's sister played zillah in an off broadway production.

brilliantly creepy play. i need to read it, and i want to read it, and that means something.

Amanda says

ok so I know its a play but I LOVE this one. sharp political edgy and such intense charecters

Greg Heaton says

It's really easy
to quickly finish a book
when half of it
is written in blank verse

and is also almost
entirely dialogue.

So much white space on every page.

Mark Mezdourian says

I directed this play in 1996. It is a deeply passionate and smart play, full of beautiful language.

Morgan says

It was interesting. I enjoyed the parallels between Zillah and Agnes and the really old lady, whatshername . . . anyway. Kushner really amazes me with his language, how he jumps from poetry to prose in dialogue, and can then throw in songs and other rhymes and children's poems. Unbelievable. And though I think it would've interested me more, storywise at any rate, I felt a little too distanced, as if the characters were little more than paper dolls. I would like to see this one performed, see it come alive. I'd really like to like it more.
