

Judge Dennis Davis and Professor David Peimer | Descent into Authoritarianism The Crucible, Hamlet, Cabaret, Part 2

- [Wendy] So good morning, good evening everybody. And now let's hand over to Dennis and Davis for what I'm sure will be another fantastic presentation. Looking forward to it. Thanks.

- [Dennis] So Wendy, thanks very much. Thanks again to you. Thanks to Judy for sorting us out, as always. And thanks of course to David, because as I say continuously, I seem to learn more when we discuss this before than when I'm actually doing it. But that's perhaps the joy of teaching. In so many ways when you collaborate with somebody who knows what they're talking about. We canvassed last week parts of The Crucible, Hamlet and Cabaret. But of course, we only scratched the surface in all three, and I'm not sure we can do huge amounts to each of them because they're vitally complex in all sorts of ways. But we are going to dwell a little on all three. We're going to start with The Crucible, as we did last week. And part of the reason that we want to do that is because The Crucible in so many ways contextualises precisely the problematic that we are talking about, which was how art and art form can help to explicate on the conditions which give rise to authoritarian rule; to the rule of authority, as opposed to democracy, and to the construction of a myth which goes to the heart of governance and ultimately eradicates the possibility of democratic rule at the expense of the rule of the mob.

And in order to start this without beating around the bush, we found a clip of Arthur Miller, the playwright of The Crucible. I'm going to just play the first five minutes of the interview, because it seems to us that it gives a wonderful context to what he was doing in The Crucible, and I would want to argue also reinforces some of the reasons why one is using these art forms, deliberately and consciously, to develop an analysis of a political phenomenon that's vexing us in the modern era. Here are the first five minutes. I hope you'll be able to hear it. Quality may not be as good as it should be, but it's worth listening to. If you want to hear the whole thing, if you go onto YouTube and Google, "Arthur Miller discussing on The Crucible," on videos, you'll find the full 10 minutes.

*Video clip plays.*

- [Arthur] You told them anybody you knew had been a left winger or a communist, and you went home. And if you said, "I wasn't going to do that, I didn't know that these people had committed any crimes," and I'd known a lot of them in my days in the '30s, 20 years before, the farce was too much to stomach. So, I had to go through a federal trial and was found guilty of contempt of Congress for refusing to answer some questions. So, I wrote The Crucible. That took place, of course in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. The reason I think that I moved in that direction was that it was simply impossible any longer to discuss what was happening to us in contemporary terms. There had to be some distance given the phenomenon. We were all going slightly crazy trying to be honest and trying to see straight and trying to be safe. The hysteria in Salem had a certain inner procedure, or several, which we were duplicating once again.

And that perhaps by revealing the nature of that procedure, some light could be thrown on what we were doing to ourselves. And that's how that play came to be.

- [Interviewer] Now the characters in *The Crucible* are pressed to not only confess, but to name names, to name other names. And that of course was going on at the time. Indeed, it was going on at the time, and involving some of your closest friends and associates. The writer who you probably admired most in the '30s, as far as I can recall, Clifford Odets, who named names, Kazan named names. The man who played Willie Loman in the initial production of *Death Of A Salesman* named names. Don't I recall that you actually heard Kazan naming names as you drove back from Salem? What was the impact of all of that on you at the time?

- It was rather like a dream, because the people these men were naming were of course all known to the government. And they made a point of saying, "We know who these people are." Then why did we have to name them? You had to name them in order to establish your credibility as a patriot. In other words, it was a ritual that had no practical meaning. It was now purely to feed the endless appetite of certain politicians and to scare people. It just seemed so absurd and maddening that people were being torn apart, their loyalty to one another crushed. And the just common decency was going down a drain. It's indescribable really, because you get the feeling that nothing was going to be sacred anymore.

- The beginning of *The Crucible*, I guess it goes back to the time I was in college when I began to become interested in that phenomenon. But it just seemed like a very weird event in American history. And I didn't do anything about it, I just knew about it. But when the McCarthy period started, so-called McCarthy period, 'cause that's a bit of a misnomer, there were many McCarthys here. It kept recurring to me that what we were going through was a kind of ritual which had almost a religious overtone, even though the idea of religion never entered it as such. And I didn't know how to handle it.

I felt that there would be no response to McCarthyism unless it was on a level that the McCarthyism was; that is to say they were dealing in a mystique. 'Cause the truth of the matter is that the people that they were accusing of being un-American or treasonous either hadn't been, or what they had really believed in was a common belief only seven or eight years before this. In other words, they had managed very adroitly, I must say, to switch around the political poles of this country. So that if a man had perhaps, for example, during the War of War II, passionately believed that the Russians were saving the West by resisting Hitlerism, and taking on by far the bulk of the German army, which was the common belief in 1942, let's say, '43, '44. By six years later, this was a treasonous belief.

*Video clip ends.*

- [Dennis] Judy, I wonder if you could stop there?

- Thanks. I recommend the whole of these two interviews that are in there. But I'm just going to

make a couple of points and hand over to David. I find it absolutely fascinating that Miller says about the writing of this play, "I couldn't take on McCarthyism directly. What was I going to do? Who is going to believe me when you have a myth of this kind?" And he talks in both parts about ritual, and he talks about a ritual which ultimately presents certain people as patriots and others as not. And he goes on to say that they reconstructed reality. So, people who believed that the Russian army was crucial to the crushing of Hitler leave aside all of the Stalinist atrocities, but just simply that proposition. And they were on our side, as it were. All of a sudden, we're now being condemned. A flip of a switch, a ritual, which ultimately reinforced a certain conception of what constituted a patriot.

And it really is about mythmaking, and about the reconstruction of reality in a way that makes people believe that reality that then poses the problem to someone like Miller. How do you confront that? And I think it's absolutely fascinating that what he said was, "The only way I could do that was go back to 17th century Salem, which I had learned about college, and look at the material of Salem and think to myself, "I can construct the play, which will talk to both the past and questioning the present and the future, but which will be a much more constructive way of engagement than were I to involve myself in a direct polemic."" And if anything reinforces the point I've been punting about the way in which arts can do that, they seem to capture it perfectly for me, and be perfectly blunt, who am I to disagree with Arthur Miller? But over to you, David.

- [David] Thank you. Thanks so much Dennis, and for your kind words earlier as well. I always love working with you, and thanks so much to Judy as well, and Wendy. Just to extend on Miller just for a moment, it is fascinating that the artist often is going to need metaphor, and to go back in history or sometimes go forward into imagination. One thinks of Orwell, 1984, et cetera, or go into another kind of imagination with Animal Farm, Orwell. And so through the imagination, I think the artist needs to find stories in order to show, to hold a mirror up to what is actually going on in his or her society at a particular time. And I think the role of metaphor is crucial, and that's partly how we can relate to theatre, literature, art, going back over centuries, over thousands of years and in different cultures all over it. I think it's not only holding up a mirror. Art doesn't only hold up a mirror to society. In our times, we have witnessed a dangerous descent into authoritarianism. What will happen will happen, we'll see.

But it does it through a metaphor, whether imaginative, whether from history, wherever. Shakespeare uses Roman history all the time, he uses Italian history, but obviously Shakespeare's writing about his own Elizabethan times. He can't 'cause he'll have his head chopped off if he's obvious, so he is taking stories from all sorts of other parts of the world. Hamlet, some vague story he must have heard about from Denmark or wherever, he's setting it there. Who knows why, really? But I think these are just important points to make because through that, we can perhaps try to get a few ideas about our own contemporary times, rather than as Miller's saying, how do you take on the immediacy of the hysteria, the fear, the anxiety, and the alternative reality construction and the mythmaking going on in his time the McCarthyism? And in our time, of course, not just the Trump era, but this current time of what's happening in the states and globally, partly in England, partly elsewhere in Europe, and so on.

In essence, a kind of rise of nationalism, which requires a propagandistic mouthpiece to change the mythology, to change the myths by which people believe. A resurrection of the binary of self and others, a demonization of the other and a glorification of the self. A divide and rule policy, which is as ancient as humanity itself, but it comes to the fore. If you can't divide and rule with foreigners, immigrants and outsiders, you can do it from within.

Blacks, Jews, et cetera, whoever. And all of this for me is captured in *The Crucible*. The last point, really, it's a myth. There is no real witchcraft happening there. It's all premised again on the lie and how far you can extend it. So, it's a fantastic example of what Dennis is saying and what Miller hits on, and whether he's conscious or unconsciously aware at the time that he can use this, as Shakespeare and many others, to write about their own times. *Cabaret* the movie and the musical are written decades after the '30s and the '40s but they're used to reflect on our own times, not only as a comment on the '30s and the '40s. And that's, for me, when it becomes a metaphor. That's when art has a power to outlast its immediacy of the moment of when it's made. This speech here, we're going to come to in a moment, this line. "A knavish speech sleeps in a fool's ear." We're going to go on to Hamlet and thanks Judy. If we can do Paul Scofield. As Dennis has often said, one of the most brilliant actors ever. If we could just observe how he does the speech we all know so well. Thank you.

*Video clip plays.*

- [Hamlet] To be or not to be. That is the question. Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep no more. And by a sleep, to say we end the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to? 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. To die. To sleep. To sleep, perchance to dream. Aye, there's the rub; for in that sleep of death, what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil must give us pause. There's the respect that makes calamity of so long life. For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the pangs of despised love, the law's delay, the insolence of office, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes, when he himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin?

Who would fardels bear to grunt and sweat under a weary life, but that the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns, puzzles the will, and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of. Thus, conscience does make cowards of us all, and thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought and enterprises of great pitch and moment. With this regard, their currents turn awry, and lose the name of action.

*Video clip ends.*

- Thanks, Judy.

- [Hamlet] The fair Ophelia.

- Thanks so much. Just a couple comments I wanted to make here, is one of the reasons we're choosing this, not only because it's the equivalent of a Beethoven, a Mozart, a Bob Dylan, whoever is for me, this is a 21 year old university student from Wittenberg who studies philosophy, has come home, his mommy's in bed with his uncle, married him two months after his daddy was dead, who's the king, and uncle is setting up a military dictatorship, a kind of a contemporary mafia state, I would think, like a Putin or something. I'm happy for people to accuse me of being over political, because obviously there's all the metaphysical meanings in the speech and in the play. Remarkable, eternal human nature, metaphysical questions about life, everything. But in our times we are entitled to, with any play. That's the richness and treasure of theatre and all literature and art. We find our own interpretation in these great works, whenever they were written in the past. So, he comes back, he discovers what's happened, he has this crazy dream.

A ghost, his father says, "Look, I was poisoned by your uncle, and your uncle's now in bed with your mommy, and go and get revenge, my son." He's 21, he's a university student, and this is what he comes back to, and he's expected to be the prince and the next leader of Denmark. He doesn't have an army. Claudius has the army. He has a few friends, Horatio. "Give me that man who is not passion's slave," that he can trust. He doesn't know if he can trust his girlfriend Ophelia, because she's the daughter of the prime minister who is under the new dictator's thumb. So, jackboots are marching. Shakespeare, we have to make him alive in his own time, obviously understood what we call today totalitarianism and how quickly it can happen. And through these characters, what is this guy going to do? What is young Hamlet going to do? I don't see it as just a depressive arrangement of the facts of his life. The speech. I see he's really thinking. It's like he's woken up at four in the morning, the way Scofield acts it for me personally. He's woken up at four in the morning, and his mind is thinking calmly.

He's thinking calmly and quite logically. He's not a freaked out little ambivalent, unable to act brat. He's trying to think quite calmly, "What the hell am I going to do? Should I run away? Should I try and take on this new mafia state? But my head can be chopped off at any moment. I ain't the king. My uncle is now. My mommy couldn't care, because she's in bed with him, et cetera. She's the queen to him now, whatever her reasons, and it's a crazy dream that he was poisoned. I can't prove it. How do I prove that it wasn't a rigged takeover? How do I prove that Claudius didn't rig the death and do a takeover, or not? How do I know that my dad didn't just die?" So, one can imagine a 21 year old university kid with all of this, and he doesn't know who to trust anymore. Where's the lie? Where's the myth? And to use Dennis' great phrase from when we spoke during the week, how do we construct a response to autocracy that does not use the same autocratic measures? This for me is Hamlet's dilemma.

At the very end of the speech, the course of action is he knows, the speech is driving him to take some action, not only in a metaphysical sense about life and death, and, "Should I commit suicide? Shouldn't I? Should I run away or whatever?" But, "What am I going to do? I'm on my

own." And what can he do? He's aware of divide and rule. He's aware of a new alternative reality, the propagandistic myth of Claudius that has been set up in Denmark, that everybody buys into and believes. I think that's why he has to come up with the idea of the players, and to act a play in front of Claudius and the Queen Gertrude, and to test their reaction. And in that moment to see if he can find a glimmer of the truth, not the alternative reality set up. That's how he finds a way to outwit the dictatorship. He finds a way to find the guts in himself. He's freaked out, but he's calmly thinking through. And that's his courage.

As he says later, the time is out of joint. "Curse spite I was born to set it right. I mean, I'm a university kid, I don't have an army, I don't have guns, bullets, ballots. I don't have much behind me. What am I going to do?" And I think the irony is that he uses a piece of fiction, a play within a play, to tell the truth. Arthur Miller goes back 500, 400 years to American history, finds the metaphor of *The Crucible*, and the hysterical reaction to the witches to capture the moment of the McCarthy era in the States, or the similar themes. He finds a play to tell the truth and the irony of *Hamlet*. He can't just march in to Claudius and the others and kill, because he has no proof, and he doesn't have an army, police, money, whatever behind him. So he has to outwit. And all of us know when we've been in work situations, let's just use the ordinary every day, with bosses who can't bear it if we are so-called disloyal or we're saying something that we really think and it happens to disagree with they think.

They say, "Wear a green shirt for the next week," and we want to wear orange shirts, whatever it might be. It may be parents, it may be bosses, it may be religion, it may be community at a much bigger national scale. But the ironic brilliance of Shakespeare to find a way to outwit is to use fiction to show the truth. It's a double irony. It's forever an endless source of pleasure to watch, pleasure to perform. That's how he can touch on truth, rule of law, justice, freedom. What is the reality that the fictional piece of theatre, the five minute play that he gets these actors to do? To awaken the sleeping speech in all the fool's ears of all the people who believe the lie of Claudius and what Gertrude has brought into as well. What is the role of education here? Because for me, it's not by chance that Shakespeare chooses that this kid is a university student at Wittenberg University come back. Studying philosophy. They talk about philosophy during the play and all that with Horatio. Education. Education as character building, not as merely memorising a list of facts.

I think this *Hamlet*, even in that to be speech and in the rest of the play with the play within the play, and Shakespeare is trying to say, "What is the point of education? To submit to the tribe? To encourage independent thought? To train men and women to be soldiers for a cause? To obey authority? To question authority? To prepare people to earn a living only?" Or as Hitler said, "Create the new man who must be as tough like leather and hard as crooked steel." Paul Gilroy, the fantastic contemporary post-colonial theorist in England, spoke about education in his experience in England as having achieved a status of groomed ignorance. And I think it's a remarkable phrase, "Education as a state of groomed ignorance." Grooming people to be ignorant. I had classes the other day with my own students. They had no clue that Britain was an empire. They had no clue of a whole lot of playwrights who were just so huge in British

history. Never heard of Pinter, never heard of Mark Ravenhill, never heard of Sarah Kane. Hardly heard ever of Beckett.

Certainly never heard of the classics, Dante, whatever, et cetera, et cetera. Obviously then, there's many other countries, not only England. I'm just saying a couple of my own students from recently. And what is it actually? If there's a groomed ignorance, is it conscious? Is it incompetence? Is it a divide and rule tactic? Because if it is, then into the ear of the groomed ignorant ear one can pour whatever propaganda or myth one wishes. In Arthur Miller's case, five years before, the Russians were saving the world together with the English. Five years later they're the new enemy, and of course we have to have a demonised enemy. So, is it a groomed ignorance where the lie can come in? Is it the Pied Piper yet again? That archetypal myth. Whoever the piper is, whatever the tune is, we march to the tune, whether it's the boss of our factory, the boss at university, the boss in a job, wherever, or the family or the society. The ghost speech is very important for me, because the ghost says to Hamlet, "A serpent stung me, so the whole ear of Denmark is by a forged process of my death rankly abused." It's an extraordinary three lines of Shakespeare's, and it's the ghost. It's his dream or fantasy of his father speaking to him. So, "The whole ear of Denmark is by a forged process of my death rankly abused." It's a forgery, it's a lie, it's a rig.

The ear of Denmark, the propaganda, the media, the noise, it's the chatter, to put it in contemporary language, and it's the ear of Denmark. He doesn't say my ear, the ear of the king or your daddy, Hamlet. It's the country, it's the nation. "It's the national myth which binds us together, my boy." That's, I think, what he's trying to say. He's aware of his role in the bigger picture. So I think that a knavish speech sleeps in a fool's ear," comes back to how often have we heard knavish speeches? Trial by combat. "Let's march down towards the capitol. Apartheid, we will destroy the Swart gevaar, the Black menace. We will destroy the Communist, the red under the bed." Apartheid speeches. Sleeps in a fool's ear. Who are the fools to believe the alternative realities these myths mythically created? These are just some of the thoughts in how an emerging authoritarian group can start to take over quite quickly.

Not by chance, they go first for the radio and the communication studios in whatever city, whenever one's going to organise a revolution. I guess lastly, what I would really try and say is that the groomed ignorance can only not have poison poured in its ear if we recognise that education does have a role, to point out when it is poison in a fool's ear, to point out when it's factual, when it's truth, justice, rule of law, freedom, and when it ain't. And if we are not grooming education in some way towards that, I think it begins possibly a terrifying state to come. So, control the education, control the speech, control the streets, and we can start getting the knavish speech into many fools' ears. Dennis, over to you.

- Yeah, I want to start, pick up a couple of things you've said, David, which are really terribly important. It always seems to me that any play, even a great play like Shakespeare's, so much is framed in those first few words. So, you have referred to the ghost speech, and just if I may repeat it, because it struck me equally as vital, "A serpent stung me," says the ghost. "The

whole ear of Denmark has forged process of my death rankly abused." Effectively, right at the beginning, the ghost is saying that to use the word that comes up later, a phrase, something is rotten in the state of Denmark, meaning the original sin is the attempt to take over by nefarious means, this case by poison, and that it's not just a question of putting somebody in as the ruler. Once that occurs, once there's the original sin or the original ignorance or the eliding over the reality of what that particular leader can do, then the entire society is compromised in a fundamental and foundational way. That framing is important, because when you get on then to the analysis, which I agree with entirely of, "To be or not to be," and what a remarkable rendition that is by Paul Scofield, it's almost saying, when you are confronted with a situation in your society. It's so much ambiguity in this play. One can go on for hours about that, and precisely why it was that Hamlet didn't take over from his father, et cetera.

But let's leave that aside for the purpose of this analysis. But when you say, "To be or not to be," and then you read the speech within the context of the political context, which I concede is not the only one, of course not. But within the context which we are trying to show that it illustrates and elucidates the present condition, then the question is what do you do? Do you turn a blind eye to it? Do you say, "I'm not going to take any action, even though I might be disempowered?" I remember so distinctly during the apartheid period, doing literally hundreds of talks during the 1980s to all sorts of groups, literally there were political talks trying to preserve the rule of law, trying to show that apartheid was a profoundly evil system that eroded any form of accountable governance. And very, very often, people would say to me, "Well, what must I do? What can I do? Must I be or not be?" As it were. "Must I not be by being effectively nothing I can do, so I will ignore the challenge, because it's all too much for me?"

And I would say, you can start with a very small thing. How many of you read the mail-in Guardian, or it was called the Weekly Mail then during the 1980s? And people say, "Well, why?" I say, "Because that's the only newspaper now that is accurately portraying the reality of South Africa." So even if you do that, just a small thing, nothing illegal, go down to your local bookstore and buy it and read it and educate yourself, that's the start. And so, it seems to me that the speech poses the fundamental moral dilemma of our time for all of us. Yes, it's true that Hamlet has greater ambitions than most of us, because from where he was born and the challenges that he faces, because after all it was his father who was killed. But it does seem to me that yes, David's right, where does a 21 year old get the courage for that? But perhaps let's ask a broader question. To what extent does society have the courage to resist this nonsense? And that then brings me to the third point that I wanted to talk about a little bit, which is the point that David makes in relation to Hamlet's strategy.

Remarkable, when you think it through that this short little play within a play, which was designed as the way in which the play's the thing, it's going to actually expose the lies, it's going to out the king. And there are a couple of things about that too, the one that's already been made, but I'd like to reinforce. One of the reasons that I was attracted to the Miller interview was because all those years later, that's exactly what he was trying to do in his own way. I saw on the chatline somebody's saying, "Yes, but during that particular period it was the Cold War," and



I accept that. But we weren't talking about the Cold War here. We aren't talking a bunch of Stalinists. Yes, there were the Rosenbergs and others and perhaps at some point we'll talk about their trial. But the vast majority of people, as Miller said, who ultimately were relatively sympathetic to Russia during the war 'cause they were on the same side as us, then found themselves losing their jobs and completely being eviscerated through a reconstructed myth. And the only way that he could seem to deal with that was actually not shouting out the odds, but writing a play that has lasted. How extraordinary it is that he wrote that play in the 1950s, and here we are in 2020, realising how relevant, and how much that play resonates with us today. Of course, you could say how much more remarkable about Hamlet, which transcends the generations.

But the second thing about it, which is so correct, is what strategy does one employ? Again, coming back to my first two points: if you accept that the play starts with this notion of, "The whole ear of Denmark, is by the forged process of my death rankly abused." "That my death is not about me, it's about ultimately the health of the entire country of which I was once the king." How do you respond to that? You don't have an army. You can't get the national guard out on your side. Sometimes they don't even help you when you're a senator or a congressperson. But the point that I'm trying to make is that what the play is posing is for us to lift our imagination as a society, and to find means to countervail all of the points that we've been making, which cause authoritarian rule to take place, whether it be inequality, whether it be poverty, whether it be the abuse of social media, whether it be Fox News, whether it be a whole range of other myth making that reinforces the authority of the leader, and essentially reproduces the kind of myths that both of us have highlighted over these two lectures we've done, and indeed, were highlighted in some of the other lectures that were delivered in relation to this particular scene. How does one do that?

And that's the challenge of our time. Now, Hamlet found a way. Perhaps the thing about Hamlet for us, when you read that part is to say, "Well, what's our way? We can't attack this head on, but there's got to be a way." Education has been suggested as one, very important, but what other means are there, whereby we can construct the ability to have a plurality of ideas, and a respect for certain values such as dignity of all, dignity of difference? Those are challenges, which essentially we find now. And I suppose the question is, are we going to be or are we not going to be in relation to this? Because let's not kid ourselves. The fact that I know, as Judy reminded me, that our audiences were halved on the great night of the inauguration. Might I say rightly so, that they were halved, not out of disrespect for Patrick or myself, but because it was such an important event. We should not elide over the fact, as I tried to indicate in my own literature, that the danger has passed, that America is now a vibrant democracy, the same is true about Brazil, India, Hungary, and Poland. The dangers are there. The challenge that that poses for me at least as I read it, is what is our strategy? Just as he developed one which was so compelling within the context of the play. But I'll leave it there, David.

- [David] Thanks, Dennis. Just to add one quick thought, is what's fascinating is that Hamlet, given his age and given being a philosophy student, and if we take the purely philosophical

interpretation of an ambivalent kid who doesn't know whether to act or to think, and torn between the two forever, for five acts and watch three hours before he finally acts, as opposed to he realises, and he knows he cannot choose appeasement. He cannot appease his mother. He dies. His last phrase when he looks at his mother after being poisoned, in the final fight scene, he says, "Wretched queen, adieu." He's not fooled. His own mother took a month or two, as I said, is married, et cetera, et cetera, with Claudius and so on, for her own reasons, which we can debate in a separate time. But he's not naive.

And the other final phrase of Hamlet is, "Readiness is all." I think that just Shakespeare saying, "When we are ready, we will know which way to act." Whether it's a play within a play, which is obviously a theatrical device, within the metaphor. Arthur Miller going back quite a few decades, finding the metaphor of *The Crucible*, *Cabaret*, which will show as well, and many, many other things, whether it's in fiction or theatre or in writing or in teaching or just in our daily lives. As soon as the slowness of authoritarianism creeps on stage in our national psyche, I think it's a warning for us to become aware. I think interpreting it politically, that's what Hamlet is grappling with, until he finds the method in the madness. He finds it, as we all need to, to outwit not necessarily try and find a cavalry to charge you the front door. Should we show the Michael York from *Cabaret*, if we could?

- [Dennis] Yeah, yeah,

- [David] Thanks.

*Video clip plays.*

- Your paper and your party are pure crap, sir.

- What something, sir?

- And so are you.

*Video clip ends.*

- That's just to show us from *Cabaret*, where Michael York is looking like a young Hamlet, far more handsome than I could ever have looked. He's looking like a young Hamlet almost. All he does is he takes the piece of paper, hurls it in the Nazi's face, gives him a bit of vitriol, and then kicks the Nazi flag. And obviously we know that that could lead to death or to imprisonment, but even that is a little act, and I'm stretching the idea here, but a little Hamlet giving a reaction in his own little way just walking down the street. I don't know how many of us would've had the guts at that age, even during apartheid to kick the apartheid police or the soldier or the Casspirls that used to prowl the streets wherever during apartheid. So, I just throw it, because these are little minutia, but they're acts of courage and guts, and I think to try and humanise this great myth of Hamlet and the great character, take Shakespeare down to our human level of living.

This is another little act in our own tiny way, in one minute to try and outwit a system. Succeed or not. But it shows a psychology of not appeasing. I guess that's what I'm trying to get at, ultimately, because if there's one thing we have to learn, I think from the 20th century is appease at your peril. Dennis, anything you want to-

- Thing about that clip as well, obviously Cabaret was based on Christopher Isherwood's book, which was reflecting on the period up to '39. What I found remarkable about the way in which Bob Fosse did this was just to interpose the illusion with the reality. By which I mean the Kit Kat Club, they're all having a wonderful time there, and to some extent Michael York comes over to Germany, he's having a pretty reasonable time too. And that's really the illusion, because this is all taking place under the banner of an increasingly totalitarian regime in which Hitler is consolidating his power. And in a way, this particular scene is interesting to me, because York doesn't for quite some while play a particularly politically aware person. In fact, he seems to be perfectly happy with Sally Bowles and the rest of them. And then, as there is in so much through the whole film, we get Fosse trying to say, "Hang on a moment. There's a reality here. There's a real reality here, which totally and utterly must be counterposed to the warm, fuzzy, wonderful songs being sung at the Kit Kat Club."

And one of the other clips I was trying to find, but couldn't, is a wonderful clip in the film where, when you start and you look at the audience and there are very few people in Nazi uniforms, but as the film rolls on, it's brilliant the way Fosse basically takes this camera and you see an increasing audience of people with Nazi uniforms in the club, showing the way in which Nazism has expanded from the exception to the rule. This particular scene to me is, again, precisely that. David's right to some extent. It may be a small act of resistance, but what it is as well is a dawning on somebody just to the sheer horror of where that person's living. And even if it's a small way, "I've got to do something if I'm going to be a moral person, if I'm actually going to exist."

- [David] Thanks Dennis. And also to add one little point, if I may, which Dennis reminded me of, and we spoke about during the week, is in Hamlet, when Claudius gets the two lackeys, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to take Hamlet off to England, basically send him in exile, I suppose like Putin poisoning and Navalny going to Germany to get him away. The second he comes back, what does he do? He puts the guy in prison. One guy is going to threaten the whole of Russia. Extraordinary if you think about it. Anyway, Hamlet gets sent off. Why? Because Claudius realises this kid is a real threat to him. One kid. And there's no cold evidence that Claudius did kill his daddy. Claudius is ensconced in power, he's got the queen, he's got the army behind him, he's got the industrialists, he's got everybody behind him. Why should he bother with this one little kid who happens to be his nephew?

But the last king is gone. Why should he bother? It shows the level of paranoia inside the authoritarian leader. And there are ways to outwit, there are ways to take on and to put some fear in the ear of the emerging authoritarian leader. 'Cause Claudius is learning authoritarianism. He hasn't learned it yet. He's nowhere near as horrifically and ruthlessly skilled as Hitler and

Mussolini and Stalin and the others, but he's learning it, Claudius, and he instinctively knows, ironically he can kill the father, real king, but he can't kill the kid. That's a little bit too dicey. So, send him off to England, and let the English kill him there, or at least send him into exile away from Denmark. But when Hamlet learns the truth, what does he choose? He comes straight back to Denmark. He will not go off to England. He knows his previous friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, have been lying. Is he going to take him off so he can have a kind of sabbatical or gap year, whatever in England, and then come back. He knows it's bullshit. He's got to come back and face the truth. The call to action, as he says at the end of the to be speech. Got to find the guts, and then later to find the strategy, the way to outwit, not necessarily march straight in with another army onto Claudius.

And how did the ANC outwit in South Africa? The whole Mandela generation, Sisulu generation? Outwit the sheer arrogance and evil of the PWB and the leaders of those times? And in many, many other times. So in a way, for me it's almost like a little parable of trying to find ways, and that Hamlet is trying to inspire himself to find the guts, to find a strategy. And readiness is all. And once he's found it, then he is on an intellectual path. As Euripides said, "You put on the harness of necessity, once you make the right decision." "You ride the horse of necessity once the decision has been made and is in place." Michael York, as Dennis is saying, does that in Cabaret. He realises he cannot live under this amoral illusion of truth. Just in a few seconds in a scene is trying to show, "This is what I'm seeing, this is what's really going on. What do I do? Kick a flag? Maybe it's better than nothing." We each have to choose, I guess. Dennis, do you want to add anything or should we show the last-

- [Dennis] No, no. Let's go onto the last clip, which I think encapsulates everything for us, because what we were talking about to a large degree, as I indicated, was the politics of us and them. And here is a clip from Cabaret, which just loom illustrates everything we've said.

*Video clip plays.*

- Schoen. ♪ I know what you're thinking ♪ ♪ You wonder why I chose her ♪ ♪ Out of all the ladies in the world ♪ ♪ It's just a first impression ♪ ♪ What good's a first impression? ♪ ♪ If you knew her like I do ♪ ♪ It would change your point of view ♪ ♪ If you could see her through my eyes ♪ ♪ You wouldn't wonder at all ♪ ♪ If you could see her through my eyes ♪ ♪ I guarantee you would fall like I did ♪ ♪ When we are in public together ♪ ♪ I hear society mourn ♪ ♪ But if they could see her through my eyes ♪ ♪ Maybe they'd leave us alone ♪ ♪ How can I speak of her virtues? ♪ ♪ I don't know where to begin ♪ ♪ She's clever, she's smart ♪ ♪ She reads music ♪ ♪ She doesn't smoke or drink gin like I do ♪ ♪ Yet when we are walking together ♪ ♪ They sneer if I'm holding her hand ♪ ♪ But if they could see us through my eyes ♪ ♪ Maybe they'd all understand ♪ ♪ Why don't they leave us alone? ♪

- Meine Damen und Herren, mesdames et messieurs, ladies, gentlemen, I ask you, is it a crime to fall in love? Can one ever choose where the heart leads us? All we ask is a little verstanden, a little understanding. Why can't the world leben und leben lassen? Live and let live. ♪ Oh, I

understand your objection ♪ ♪ I grant you the problem's not small ♪ ♪ But if you could see her through my eyes ♪ ♪ She wouldn't look Jewish at all ♪

*Video clip ends.*

- I think that summarises everything we've been talking about.

- If you don't of the dignity of difference, if you don't actually accept that not everybody has to conform to your template of how to live, and if you can't have an overlapping consensus, whereby you recognise that all sorts of people have different views, but you respect them, not withstanding their differences, you cannot have constitutional democracy, you cannot have the rule of law. I really don't have anything more to say, 'cause if I was going to give one clip to illustrate everything over these five lectures, it would be that one.

- And to add onto that, if there was one clip from art, literature, film to show all these ideas we've been saying exactly about demonising the other or just a little bit of understanding or, as Kafka said, "Art is an axe which we can use to cut the frozen heart." Let it bleed just a little bit, please. That's it. Thank you.

- Thank you. That was amazing. I just want to add that if the leadership, president or the prime minister does not speak to his people with respect, it doesn't matter how much education you have. Leadership comes from the top, the tone comes from the top, the energy comes from the top. Let's leave it at that. Right, over to you. I'm sure you have many, many questions. Thank you.

- Yeah, I can see them all right. I'll try answer some, and then I'll hand over to David for ones.

Q&A and Comments;

"David Wolf, these are the '50s that some foolish people today are looking back to as some golden age." Absolutely. Point made. And that's an extraordinary way in which myth making is created, David, I agree. It's a shameful period. And it's amazing to think that significant number of politicians hanker back to that, and have inculcated that myth in others. "Joe, you do not account for the emerging Cold War." No, I'm happy to accept that. I'm not suggesting, one, that there wasn't a Cold war that didn't create a propitious set of consequences for Joe McCarthy.

Not at all. But if you read the material in that period, which I found quite fascinating, it is incredible how many people who are certainly not Stalinists, they're not Communists, but people who had gone out of the way during the war to assist Russia because they were part of the Allies, then found themselves receiving him because of the mythmaking of McCarthy, who by the way, had got his own comeuppance in 1957 when there was still the Cold War, with the famous saying of the lawyer for the union, "Have you no shame, sir?" It's a phrase that has come to my mind many, many times in recent times about politicians. "Have you no shame?"

Denny, what I said about Mary Warren in my last lecture was at some particular point, she makes a speech in which she acknowledges that it all started off i.e. the idea of the witches, almost in a frolic-y way. And then before you knew it, it was like a tsunami that had taken over the entire narrative. And that the myth now, as it were, and captured everybody within the thing. David, you may want to talk a little about Clifford Odets.

- Sure. The mention of, "Clifford Odets showed similar interest in his work. How about a lecture on him?" Okay, thank you Monty. It's a great idea. Very interesting playwright. And then from Linda-

- Yours too.

- Sorry?

- Linda, is your point.

- Linda, your point about the power of metaphor in the arts. "To record or challenge the present is well taken. Thank you. That is why it's part of descent into authoritarianism. We frequently find the control of the arts is a feature." Absolutely, Linda. As I've said a few times in some of these lectures, some of the first individuals to be banned or to be sent to prison or exiled are the artists, the writers, the painters, musicians, and often the satirists first. One doesn't have to go back to the ancient Greeks, but in our own times, it's so clear, and it's extraordinary, because it's usually such a small percentage of any population in the country, a few thousand, 10, 20, 30,000 if that, who are expressing some challenge or questioning of the status quo. They're the first to be hit, because they're trying to find images and metaphors which will resonate in the imagination and the unconscious, I believe of a society in its current time. I think Shakespeare is trying to do the same with his own time.

- So the next question, webinar 8973, blah, blah, blah. It's about, "One does not have to look to metaphor history. Look at Poland, a democratic country as part of the EU, whole attacks against famous historians, against the judges." Absolutely, as one of the points I've been making throughout is that Poland was a country which held out possibilities after '89 of being a constitutional democracy. And it's now in the grips an anti-Semitic myth, a racist myth, an authoritarian myth, which has meant that it's a joke to consider it a democratic country at this particular point in time. And of course, I do understand that they're people who didn't want to be part of the EU, precisely because of countries like this. But Poland is a textbook case of how fragile democracy is. Yes, Isherwood did write Cabaret, was a personal book.

- Dennis, can I just add there: one does not have to look into a metaphor of history. It's a great point. But also, not to underestimate the power of metaphor. The most powerful anti-apartheid play written in the 20, 30 years when theatre was so extraordinary in South Africa, it was called Protest Theatre, as we know, protesting against apartheid, was a play called Was Albert, which

had a simple premise. What if Jesus Christ had come to apartheid South Africa? What would happen, and would he have the past laws? Would he be racially determined, allowed to do this, allowed to do that, live here, work there, jobs, et cetera? What would happen if Christ came to apartheid South Africa? A simple, seemingly very ordinary, perhaps even banal question, but a extraordinary piece of theatre came out of it, which travelled the world, and helped entertain and educate and inspire people globally. And that idea is never forgotten, because it's a touch of imagination with metaphor, together with reality. I think as human beings, we love it, which is what Arthur Miller is doing as well. Sorry.

- Yes, I agree. "By using historical events to comment, to criticise the action of current leaders. Writers show that people haven't changed much. History repeats itself." It does repeat itself, but as I've indicated, I think we are facing quite unique challenges. I think we need to come to grips with the impact to the digital technology, social media, et cetera, mass media of a kind that wasn't around even in the '30s, when there was just the radio. I do think we are facing very significant challenges of inequality of a kind that certainly confront us, of an egregious nature, which hasn't really occurred for almost 100 years. These are important differences, but yes, sadly enough, you're right. To a large degree, the fact that history does repeat itself just shows the fragility of the democratic experiment. Thank you very much, and I agree with you entirely about Paul Scofield.

Q: Sandra, "Was totalitarian autocracy not the default?"

A: Yes, the divine right of kings. Absolutely. We had hoped that we were going to transcend that. I did indicate on Thursday, whenever it was, that Fukuyama had written a famous piece called the End of History, in which we believed that in fact, we were going to move away from that to the default position of being democracy. That has not been shown to be entirely accurate. And he himself says so. So you're right. Whether in fact autocracy is our default position is an interesting debate. I would like to hope it isn't. I would like to hope that we can still get through this into a more constitutional democratic phase, but maybe that's my inherent optimism here. David, I think the next one is for you.

- From the trial of Adolf. In the book of Samuel, "Nathan used the parable to enlighten David about his guilt regarding Bathsheba and Uriah." Yeah, great. I'm sure you know about it more than me. But for me it's part of the function. When I first read the Bible, I was struck. It felt like a history of war after war. It felt like endless family history and family trees. But it also had endless parables. And it struck me that the way of thinking was a mythical and literal way of thinking that was used in the Bible in Old Testament, New Testament and many of the other religious texts, not only of the West but of the East, where parable and metaphor are very effectively used because I think they outlast the immediacy of the moment and they are in a sense almost eternal, if I can use that word, which is a tricky word to use in the postmodernist era, but still.

They are parables and they're stories, which I think stories is what express myths, is how we tell our lives, how we capture identity, and story and parable. Require a mobilisation of imagination,

and I think it's part of the pleasure of being human. But also a way of giving us ideas to live by.

- Next one's for you.

- "Love the presentation." Thank you. "And the connections." Thank you. "As a teacher, we said schooling, as we know is antidote to thinking." I couldn't agree more. Certainly schooling I had. And I'm sure Dennis and Wendy and Judy. The schooling in South Africa was absolutely just ram your head full of facts. I knew more about 1000 years of kings and queens and every battle in an island called England than I knew of what happened five miles down the road from me in Durban and Zululand, which I had very little knowledge of at all in my whole of my schooling. But I could tell you, and I could still rattle off the 1000 year history of another country 14,000 miles away. It's no judgement on either, it's just a fact of what schooling intended in me.

Q: "The reaction of the public to Hamlet when it was first produced?"

A: That's a fun question. I know that what we know is that Titus Andronicus was one of his most popular. Full of revenge, tragedy, blood, guts and gore. More characters are killed there than I think anywhere else. Was one of his huge commercial hits. Midsummer Night's Dream was a commercial hit. I don't know. I'm not sure. We'd have to try and find through looking at the receipts of how much money he made and how many saw Hamlet. I don't know. But isn't more specific reaction out there. There can be-

- Okay, Betty, I agree with you. Joe, I think we've had this debate before about education being hijacked by the left, cancel culture, cancelling Shakespeare, BLM, Antifa, the anti-Semitism, political correctness on steroids. Let me make two points. One is I have written about the dangers of cancel culture. It's totally subversive to any principle of the dignity of difference. It's subversive to universities which are supposed to search for the truth. And it worries me greatly. But I would like to say, secondly, that when it comes to BLM and an Antifa, et cetera, that you only have to read now what the FBI and the CIA are saying, that the greatest single threat to American democracy comes from the right, not the left; from the right. That's what they're really worried about. I think you need to watch this space, 'cause their report's going to come out quite soon about that. Yeah.

- [Wendy] Dennis, I'd like to just jump in and say, I don't think that the extreme left and the extreme right are that far off the mark.

- No, I'm just talking about where the greatest danger to democracy lies at the moment.

- [Wendy] Yeah.

- Don't agree with either side, of course not. It's just a question of where would our greatest concern be? Of course we should be concerned with Antifa, anti-Semitism, political correctness. Absolutely. I made that point clear. But I always think that when these questions are asked, take



the eye off the fundamental ball.

- [Wendy] 100%.

- "What do you think, anonymous, about the ANC taking of the government and within a few years Mbeki creates a myth around the treatment of AIDS, leading to the death of an estimated 350,000 people?" I cannot agree with you more. It was a monstrous conduct. I think it's a crime against humanity what occurred there. I think it's an utter disgrace, of the worst kind. And many of us have spoken out about that. It's terrible that it had occurred, I have to say-

- Can I as well? Exactly that. I think it's one of the most horrifically evil. The other thing that we've been mentioning is like Arthur Miller said in that interview, look how quickly it happened. Look how quickly Mbeki took this alternative fact, if you like, or this fiction, and what started as fringe propaganda, and how quickly it becomes policy. And so many people are susceptible to believing that AIDS is a western disease, that it's not an African, all the phrases Mbeki used, absolutely, as Dennis is saying, crime against humanity, total evil.

But what fascinates me looking at it is how it's repeated yet again what Miller was saying, the Russians in the '40s, and then five or six years later. I understand the context of the Cold War, obviously. But it's again, to go back to Harare's point, he who controls the myth can often control the people, and therefore the medium of pouring the myth into the ear becomes vital.

- Another anonymous. "I think democracy today is the authoritarian censorship going from both in the UK and big tech companies crushing alternative voices." I happen to agree with you there. I think the idea that big tech private companies can exercise a public function of actually deciding what speech is viable and what speech is not viable, it's unacceptable. As much as we may like to quash certain voices, next thing is our own voices will be quashed. I do think however, that a democratically elected government is entitled as happened in many parts of the democratic world to circumscribe certain forms of speech.

So, hatred against any ethnic group, anti-Semitic speech such as proscribed in Germany, for example. I think that's utterly legitimate. Speech which basically goes to egregious forms of sexism. But in those cases, it is done by the government and you have a deliberative process. The idea that private companies can assume the role of government is a deeply disturbing phenomenon. I agree entirely. David, there's one by Ratner in relation to Hamlet.

- Yes, thanks. "Hamlet took to arms his sword and only in reaction is that the solution." As I'm saying, first Hamlet's strategy is to outwit and use a play within a play to test, "Is it the truth or is it just a ridiculous dream I've had about my daddy and the ghost?" But then also let's remember that it's Claudius the king who sets up the sword fight between Hamlet and Laertes in the play. Claudius the king makes sure that the sword are poisoned, and the cup of wine is poisoned, so that no matter what, Hamlet's going to be whacked. So, it's Claudius setting it up. Hamlet doesn't have much of a choice.

- Kepperman. Yeah. "Some journalists and democratic members of congress is suggesting there's any kind of social republic party be reprogrammed." I haven't heard that, but I don't want anybody reprogrammed. Just say the following: I do think that there's a broader question that we have to all face, which is how do we actually reconstruct our discourse? And let me make the point, I accept that on the left and on the right. I'm not suggesting the extent to which cancel culture, and a lot of what is going on in campuses at the moment is acceptable. To the contrary; it is entirely unacceptable, and it is pernicious and dangerous, and destructive of free speech. And then of course, you've got it on the right. I just think perhaps that's more dangerous at this particular point in time, particularly people running around saying, "Camp Auschwitz," et cetera. That's what worries me. I want some balance here. I want people to acknowledge that too. And then, we can really have a debate. But the big debate is, again, when we talk about education, how do we reconstruct a public discourse where we can talk to each other?

I know that there are people on this call who disagree profoundly with what I've said, and that's fine, I'm happy about that, because even a normal place, I would invite you for a cup of tea or a Schnapps, and we could have an argument. And in fact, that's what we should do on arguments. Arguments in favour of heaven. And as long as we respect each other's views, that's the stuff which actually society is made of. What I'm anxious about is when you get a situation that we've come through, where we've had a discourse, which is totally antithetical, and I accept that nobody is totally innocent and that all sorts of different parties across the aisle are to blame. I think that's what Biden was trying to say, and I support his point that it doesn't have to be a fight to the death in that way. Linda, "Our ability to act effectively while the worthy goal seems fruitless to acknowledge our powerless ." Now I agree with you. One of the reasons, I might add, that I'm an antitrust lawyer, a competition lawyer, is precisely because you can't be one unless you actually realise the abuse of dominance which is perpetrated on a daily basis by huge corporations.

One only hopes that under the Biden administration as a signal to the rest of the world, will get more aggressive control of multinational corporations, which balance their rights to make profit against their absolute, as it were, obligation not to abuse their dominance and to perpetrate the kind of rent-seeking that they've done for a very long time. Peter, "Surveillance is one prop of the authoritarian state. The other is the militant regulation. Claudius threatens the court into mute complicity with his theft of both the throne and his dead brother's wife. Do you see this today in social media's narrow broadcasting?" Yeah, I do. I know there'd be other questions about the fact that BBC and CNN aren't particularly perfect, and there are many people in this call who feel that they have been particularly anti-Israel. Not just anti-Israeli government, but anti the state of Israel, and that is true. We really have a problem. We have a problem across the board, and it's one we should debate.

- Just to add in there if I can Dennis, to add as well, I remember in 2016, during the election times, and I remember Corey Lewandowski in an interview being asked about his contract, 'cause he was often on CNN, and he was honest and he said, "Well, I've got a contract with

CNN and my contract stipulates that I have to oppose everything said by the others." So, in the interest of coming back to the idea of profit and the role of the media, it's not as if it's cowboys and Indians or anything, goodies and baddies. It's within that, let's have no illusions of how the media itself is manipulating itself and so on. Obviously the ratings and profit, et cetera.

- David, there's a question for you about the film.

- Josie, "It seems right to include references to Hamlet who says, "Oh Ubbe, take this cup from me, and I'm fond of this thy stubborn project. Any life is not a walk across the field."" Yeah, absolutely. I think so many artists from everywhere and always, we will find endless resident meanings, not only in Hamlet, but in many of the other remarkable pieces of Shakespeare and other writers. Miller and many others. But I agree. I think our task is in each generation to find what we want and to take these players, and borrow on our own terms what we want, and the next generation will borrow what they want on their own terms, whether in India or China or or the West, wherever from Shakespeare or whoever. I think that's part of the richness of art. "What about the movie Mephisto?" from Yolandi.

- Quickly.

- Brilliant. Love to get into it. It's the myth of Faust, et cetera, the Faustian bargain, for another series of lectures.

- Maybe you can pick it up.

- Yeah.

- You can pick it up.

- Amazing piece of work.

- Fantastic.

- I agree with you.

- I'm going to just jump in now, because you guys have been going now for almost one and a half hours. I want to give you a break. But I want to remind our audience, first of all, once again, a huge thank you to my wonderful team. I just want to remind everybody that tomorrow after Patrick's lecture, the later lecture, John Bleschek and Christopher Hugh, a Democrat and a Republican who became firm friends, wrote a book called Union, and they are going to be on lockdown tomorrow talking about their book and a search for common ground. So I think it's really apt that we can be moving forward in this direction. Let's try and build the bridges and find common ground. So guys, I want to say thank you so, so much once again. Lovely to see you.

- Thank you.
- Thank you to Judy.
- Thank you Wendy. Take care everybody. Stay safe.
- Thanks everybody. Thanks Wendy. Dennis.
- Thanks a million.
- Take care.
- Thanks so much everyone.
- Take care. Thanks. Bye.
- Stay safe.