Director's Notebook

Play: *Angels in America Part One- Millennium Approaches*

Page Count: 20 (excluding title page and table of contents)

Table of Contents

THE PLAY TEXT, ITS CONTEXT, AND THE IDEAS PRESENTED……..3

Theoretical and Cultural Context…….3

Ideas Addressed by the Play Text……...5

ARTISTIC RESPONSES, CREATIVE IDEAS, AND EXPLORATIONS…….7

LIVE THEATRE EXPERIENCES……..10

DIRECTOR'S INTENTIONS AND INTENDED IMPACT……...11

Directorial Intentions for the Entire Play……..11

Intended Impact on Audience……...18

STAGING TWO MOMENTS OF THE PLAY……...19

Moment 1……19

Moment 2…….21

THE PLAY TEXT, ITS CONTEXT, AND THE IDEAS PRESENTED

Theoretical and Cultural Context

Theoretical Context

Angels in America Part One- Millennium Approaches is the first part of a two-part play by Tony Kushner entitled *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes. Millennium Approaches* occurs before the events of *Angels in America Part Two- Perestroika*. The play takes place in 1980's New York City during the AIDS crisis, and employs a mix of the real and the fantastical by following the lives, relationships, and experiences of its eight main characters. While the characters that Kushner develops are all unique and are plausible enough to make the audience believe that they could have been real people (the character of Roy Cohn was even based upon a real New York Lawyer from the 1980s), the show also includes some more fictional elements such as ghosts, an angel crashing through the ceiling, and hallucinations. It is probable that the hallucinations can be partially attributed to illness, making them a combination of reality and fantasy. However, these more magical elements are combined with reality in a way that makes them feel like a part of the show rather than a distraction from an otherwise realistic storyline.

Kushner has been known to tackle difficult and sometimes controversial subjects in his plays, and *Millennium Approaches* is no exception. As an article in *The New Yorker* stated: "[Kushner] takes an almost carnal glee in tackling the most difficult subjects in contemporary history...but his plays, which are invariably political, are rarely polemical. Instead Kushner rejects ideology in favor of what he calls "a dialectically shaped truth," which must be "outrageously funny" and "absolutely agonizing," and must "move us forward." He gives voice to characters who have been rendered powerless by the forces of circumstances – a drag queen dying of AIDS, an uneducated Southern maid, contemporary Afghans – and his attempt to see all sides of their predicament has a sly subversiveness. He forces the audience to identify with the marginalized – a humanizing act of the imagination" (Nast, Condé).

In an NPR interview, Kushner discussed how he felt that there were many things in his youth that lent to the idea that people working together could change the world. He stated that "hope

is not simply a pipe dream…the possibility of change exists" (“Angels In America,' 20 Years Later”). Change is a theme found throughout *Millennium Approaches*, and I found it interesting that Kushner would pull ideas that had resonated with him from such a young age to include in his writing. In the same interview, Kushner also discusses how the experience of Y2K influenced the way that he thought about inevitable change and the uncertainty of the future. He stated that "there was a strong anticipation…that there would be some sort of transformation; that something big was about to happen…[we were] entering a new period where old reliables were going to be overthrown” (“Angels In America,' 20 Years Later”). Although Y2K did not result in the anticipated catastrophe, there were still doubts about what the year 2000 would bring when the play was first produced in 1991, allowing the audience to empathize with the anticipation that the characters were feeling.

Cultural Context

Millennium Approaches was published in 1991, following the devastating AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) crisis in the United States during the 1980s. Initially, the cause of the illness was unknown, though it was recognized that the majority of the ill were homosexual men, intravenous drug users, and blood transfusion patients. This created a stigma around AIDS and it was sometimes referred to as the “gay disease” (“Emergence of the AIDS Crisis”). Discrimination against AIDS patients continued even after the CDC (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) determined that the virus that caused AIDS, HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), could not be spread through caual contact (Kohl, John P.). Despite this, there was still a great deal of fear and uncertainty during this time, because people were unsure of what the illness was or what was causing it. All that they knew was that people around them were dying and there was nothing that they could do to help them except be there for them and attempt to make them comfortable.

During the time of the United States AIDS crisis, Ronald Regan was the American president. Because people often look to the country’s leadership as a model of how to react in new and unfamiliar situations that affect the nation, Regan’s reaction to the AIDS crisis could also have been a contributing factor to the stigma around the HIV virus and the accompanying homophobia of the time. Regan’s senior advisor, Patrick Buchanan, wrote that homosexuals “have declared war upon nature, and now nature is exacting an awful retribution” (qtd. In “Emergence of the AIDS Crisis”). Regan was initially publically silent on the issue and faced

backlash from activists who pushed for increased discussion, treatment options, research, and education regarding AIDS.

The anticipation of the changing calendar with the coming new millenium of the 2000s also contributed to the tumultuous nature of the times. There was a fear that the computer systems that had been designed for two-digit numbers would not be able to recognize the year 2000 and would think it was 1990, potentially leading to many computer-related issues such as stock market confusion, a lack of access to bank accounts, and even nuclear power plant malfunctions (Uenuma, Francine). The anticipation of this potential apocalypse (referred to as Y2K) led some people to stock up on supplies and hunker down for fear of some large and catastrophic day of reckoning.

Ideas Addressed by the Play Text

Anticipation

There is a sense throughout the play that big changes are coming to the characters' lives, though they do not fully know what to expect. Especially with the introduction of the Angel, there are some biblical connotations to events such as the Day of Justice: a great and terrible day where everyone's fates will be decided. These coming transformations seem inevitable and while some fear them and others anticipate them, it seems that no one will be able to resist them once things are set in motion. Because of this, the play almost seems to hint at an approaching apocalypse, and even the title, *Millennium Approaches*, could be linked to the fear and anticipation that accompanied the threat of the Y2K virus and the approaching new millennium.

Reality vs. Fantasy

Many elements of the play reflect a realistic view of the world. The AIDS crisis and the struggle for gay inclusion are very real occurances and the human experience of finding ones identity, forging connections, and learning how to cope with change are themes that many can relate to. Kushner's choice to add things such as profanity and naturally flowing dialogue contribute to the reality factor of the play. In addition, the supernatural occurrences such as Mr. Lies, Harper and Prior's dream meeting, and the appearance of the Angel are woven into the story in a way that blurs the line between fact and fiction. While it may be assumed that something like the meeting

between Harper and Prior was an illness-induced hallucination (both characters struggle with health issues), the characters gain knowledge from this interaction that they could not possibly have known without actually having a conversation with each other.

Isolation vs. Connection

Fearing the stigma around having AIDS, many characters struggle with the decision of whether or not to tell the people around them about their illness. For example, Roy insists on maintaining the illusion that he has liver cancer, despite the clear indicators that he has AIDS. Prior too struggles with the decision to tell Louis because he is afraid of being abandoned. By hiding their illnesses, the characters often cut themselves off from the people close to them in a time when they are in great need of support. Despite this, the characters are all very interconnected, and many characters who began in different storylines encounter each other and form bonds. The idea of inevitable human interconnectedness is further enhanced by Kushner's decision to have many of the main actors appear onstage as other minor characters throughout the play, giving the audience the impression that they too are beginning to form connections and become familiar with the characters.

Inevitable Migration and Change

The play begins with the funeral of Sara Ironson, an immigrant who travelled to the United States to start a new life. While Sara physically migrated across the ocean, the funeral also represents a form of migration and change from the living to the deceased. This opening scene sets the tone for the rest of the play as many of the characters experience their own transformations, both in the political and personal sense. Politically, Kushner expresses the idea of gays fighting for inclusion and recognition in a society that fails to fully accept them. Additionally, the fear and stigma accompanying the AIDS crisis add to the notion that they are different from everyone else. Individual characters also undergo changes that reshape their lives, even when they are resistant to them.

ARTISTIC RESPONSES, CREATIVE IDEAS, AND EXPLORATIONS

I initially read this play because it was mentioned in *The Laramie Project*, and I was very interested in exploring a play in which political issues were addressed. As I read *Millennium Approaches*, I was captivated by the way that Kushner was able to craft such distinctly different characters but also show the ways in which they were all connected.

One of the first things that I noticed about the play was the number of social, political, and religious, and racial groups that are represented in the text. Roy Cohn, the sucessful conservative lawyer, has achieved his status through the criticizism of homosexuals and liberals, despite being a closeted gay man himself. His partner, Joe Pitt, is a married Morman man who is also closeted. Joe's wife, Harper, struggles with a Valium addiction and frequently hallucinates. Louis Ironson, the grandson of the immigrant Sara Ironson, is a Jewish man in a relationship with Prior Walter. Prior faces struggles as his body begins to deteriorate from AIDS and he experiences visions as a result. There is also Belize, the black drag queen who works as a nurse in the hospital. Although I was initially somewhat shocked and overwhelmed by the wildly diverse backgrounds of the characters, as I grew to understand them better and become familiar with their mannerisms, it became clear to me that they had more in common than I initially realized. AIDS in particular seemed to enter each of their lives in different ways and even a character as seemingly invincible as Roy was not immune to the changes that the disease brought to his life.

This caused me to think about the different ways in which all of the characters were connected. Whether they were meeting each other in real life or through hallucinations, they all had shared experiences and links to one another that formed a complex web of character relationships. This was something that I thought was very important to portray to the audience; the idea that even though they may have all originated from different places, everyone is not as far removed from other people as they may like to think. One idea that I had as a possible way to emphasize this notion was to hold the performance in a smaller theatre for a more intimate experience that would allow the audience to feel physically closer to the actors, as if they are truly getting a glimpse into their lives rather than feeling disconnected from the story.

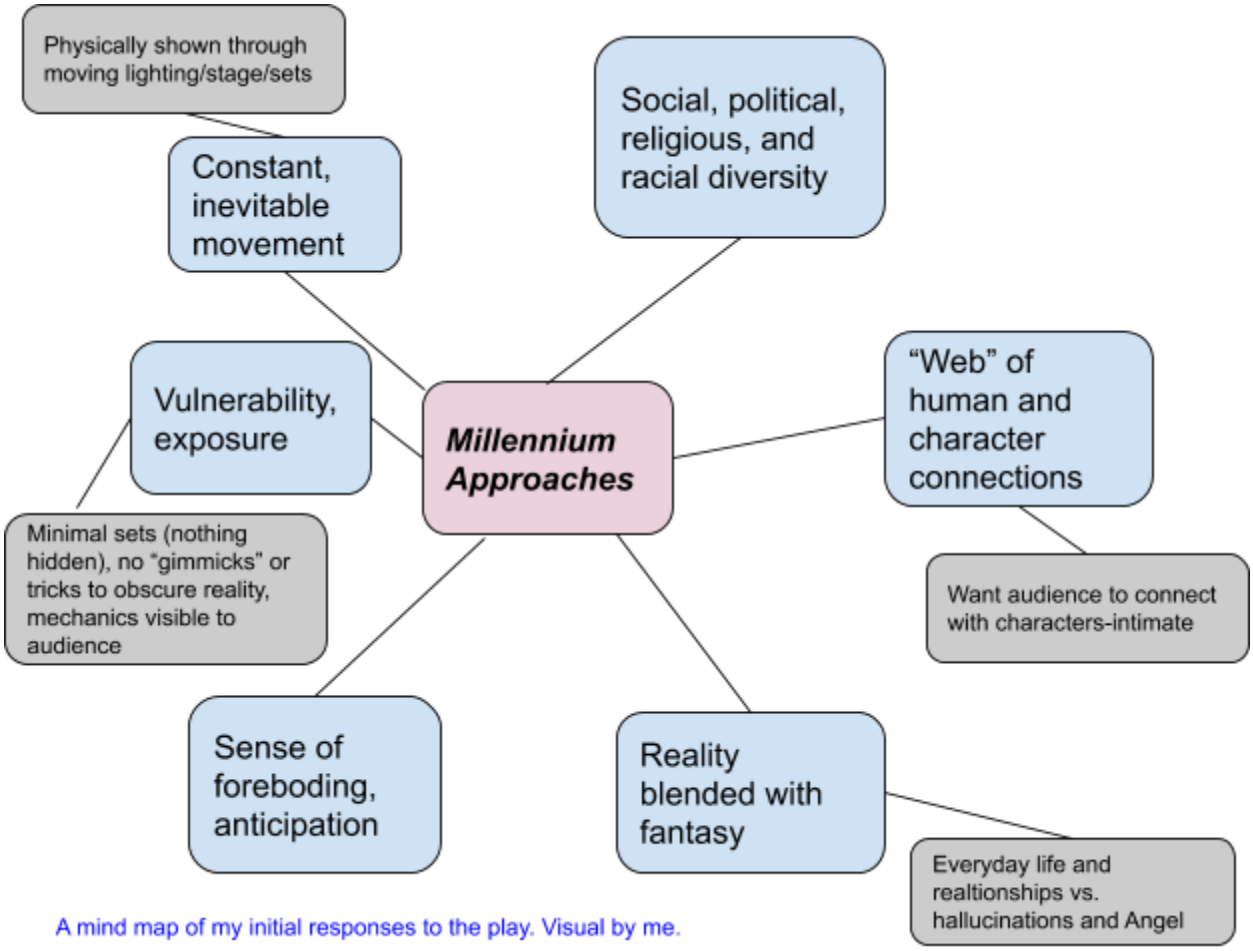
I also wanted to find a way to blend the more fantastical elements of the play (such as the characters' hallucinations or the Angel crashing through the ceiling) with the more realistic

aspects of the AIDS crisis and the people who experienced it. In the Playwrights Notes, Kushner states that:

“The play benefits from a pared-down style of presentation, with minimal scenery and scene shifts done rapidly (no blackouts!), employing the cast as well as stagehands---which makes for an actor-driven event, as this must be. The moments of magic---the appearance and disappearance of Mr. Lies and the ghosts, the Book hallucination, the ending---are to be fully realized, as bits of wonderful *theatrical* illusion---which means it’s OK if the wires show, and maybe it’s good that they do, but the magic should at the same time be thoroughly amazing.”

My initial thought after considering this statement in the context of the play was that the audience should be clued into the mechanics of the show and should not be tricked or have the illusion that the fantastical elements of the show they are seeing are real. However, this should in no way diminish the “wow” factor that theatregoers experience when they see a ghost pop out of nowhere or watch someone fly in from the sky. I think that allowing the audience to experience a brief moment of suspended disbelief when something fantastical happens in the show before the trick is exposed would allow them to appreciate the moment of questioning reality that many of the characters experience as they navigate their changing lifestyles. However, after this moment, the audience would realize the effect and return once again to the knowledge that what they are watching is indeed a piece of theatre.

Without the audience fully realizing that they are watching a play about people rather than effects, the actors become the main focus of the audience. The show becomes more human and a sense of being able to gain inside information about a character in a way that real life would not allow for is felt by the audience. This makes the actors somewhat vulnerable and exposed, especially if they are performing in a small, intimate theatre as I envision. I think that minimal set pieces (as Ksuhner’s note specifies) would help contribute to this feeling. It would also allow for the audience to fill in the gaps in the physical set with their own interpretations of what the character’s environment would look like, contributing to the fantastical and imaginary aspects of the show.



A mind map of my initial responses to the play. Visual by me.

I also feel that my interpretation of and reaction to this play has changed as I read it again. The first time that I read through it, several months ago, I was captivated by the way that the fantastical elements were combined with the realistic elements of the play. I initially thought a lot about the inevitability of change and how the world keeps moving and people keep shifting no matter how much we may try to resist it. However, by the time I picked up the play a second time in preparation to write about it in February 2019, a great deal had changed in the world and it was suddenly not so hard to imagine what it was like to see people you knew become ill and try to be there for them while feeling completely helpless at the same time.

LIVE THEATRE EXPERIENCES

***Dracula*- Falls Theatre, Seattle**

In a production of *Dracula* that I saw, the only sounds apart from the actors' voices were music and vocalizations from a single cello player who was sitting above the actors on an elevated stack of boxes. She was dressed in the same color scheme as the set, but was clearly meant to be seen by the audience. This created an eerie atmosphere because it was almost like the player was narrating the story through the music. It helped to convey the mood of each scene, and transformed the story into something more than a scary vampire story. I was able to pay more attention to the relationships between the characters and sympathize with them (even the vampires) because the focus of the piece was shifted away from blood, gore, and jump-scares, allowing the audience to truly think about what the characters were feeling. I think that this could be applied to my play because I would like for there to be music contributing to the atmosphere of 1980's NYC without having the musicians hidden as they would be if they were in an orchestra pit. It is important to me that the audience can see all of the elements of the production, and I feel that having the musicians in plain sight of the audience would contribute to the idea that the focus of the show is on the people rather than complex special effects.

***A Doll's House*- Young Vic Theatre, London (Digital Theatre Plus)**

In a production of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* that I saw, the entire set was placed on a turntable that spun as the actress playing Nora ran through the house. Rather than being solid, the walls were mostly constructed of windows, allowing the audience to see the characters as they moved between rooms in the house. This contributed to the eventual emotional arc of the character because when you are first introduced to Nora she acts like she is a doll in a doll house, scurrying between rooms to put things in their places. The spinning set added to the illusion that although Nora may have been racing through the house, she was actually staying in one place (both mentally and physically) as the stage turned underneath her. Because a major theme in *Millennium Approaches* is the inevitable movement and change of humans, I feel that having moving elements on stage such as a turntable would help to physically portray the movement and changes happening in the characters' lives.

***Romeo and Juliet*- Allen theatre, Seattle**

In a production that I saw of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, sections of chain-link fences on wheels were used to create rooms and barriers. This greatly contributed to the meaning of the play because although the characters were able to see through the fences, they were unable to reach what was on the other side. A major theme of the play was Romeo and Juliet being unable to be together even though they live in the same town for most of the play. At one point, the characters were on either side of a section of fence and they spun around the stage so that the audience got to experience being on both sides of the fence even though the actors remained separated. In *Millennium Approaches*, I feel that a similar idea could be used to show how the characters are often physically close but emotionally distant. Additionally, wheeling the fences around could create a sense of movement, another major theme in the play.

DIRECTOR'S INTENTIONS AND INTENDED IMPACT

Directorial Intentions for the Entire Play

Space

To accommodate the intimate feel that I wanted the play to have and for the audience to get an inside look on the lives of the characters, I would like to set this show in the round. I feel that the Allen theatre at the ACT theatre in Seattle, Washington would work very well for this production because it is a small space that allows even the back row of the audience to feel like they are almost within the world of the characters. Additionally, it would contribute to the idea that everything in the play is accessible to the sight of the audience, leaving the actors exposed and making it difficult to hide anything. Even the exits from the stage seem to run through the audience, making it seem that the characters never really leave and are only moving to different areas of the setting.

The Allen theatre stage at the ACT theatre.
Source:https://www.facebook.com/ACTtheatre/photos/paul-g-allen-was-a-cherished-friend-of-act-theatre-he-was-a-longtime-season-subs/10156600771865833/

Setting

Although I wanted to keep the set minimal, both to accommodate the fact that it was being performed in the round and view obstruction was an issue and because of the previously mentioned desire for the actors to be the focus of the production, I also wanted to incorporate the diversity and color that was found in the people of 1980's New York City. An idea I had was to paint graffiti on the stage and glue posters showing political, racial, and religious issues of the time period to the stage floor. This would allow the audience to get a sense of the atmosphere of the time and place without extensive sets. I would also love to have the stage set on one large turntable in order to physicalize the movement and change occuring in the characters' lives throughout the play. Turning the stage would also allow the audience to view every part of the stage from multiple angles, furthuring the idea that nothing is hidden and everything onstage is exposed to them.

Photos of a subway car with grafitti and a protest in 1980's NYC.
Source:https://www.thevintagenews.com/2015/06/15/nostalgic-photographs-of-new-york-in-1980s/

I also wanted to show a contrast between when the characters were inside and outside because there are several different locations in the play. To accomplish this, I wanted to have a simple lit-up square suspended from the ceiling that would resemble the ceiling of a building without obstructing the view of the audience. It could be turned on when the scene is inside and off if it is outside. It could also resemble the neon lights found on shop fronts in the city.

Example of a possible ceiling. Source: https://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/bushgreen/fizzes-flashes-purrs-fck-the-polar-bears-photo-gallery/

Chain-link fence on wheels.
Source: https://acttheatre.org/season/2019-2/romeo-juliet/

Additionally, I liked the idea of having a physical barrier for the split scenes that take place in two different places. Chain-link fence sections on wheels like the ones that I saw in *Romeo and Juliet* would work very well and would also be easy to move so as not to create extensive transition periods when they needed to be taken away.

Costumes

I wanted the costumes to be very realistic and true to the styles of the 1980's. In addition, I wanted them to reflect the professions and lifestyles of the characters. Because the play has so many fantastical elements, I felt that realistic costumes would be a good way to ground the characters in the setting of 1980's New York while also cluing the audience into the backgrounds and personalities of the characters. The exceptions would be characters such as the Angel, Mr. Lies, the ghosts, and the characters in hallucinations whose costumes would reflect the time period or place that they come from. I have included costume ideas for the eight major characters.

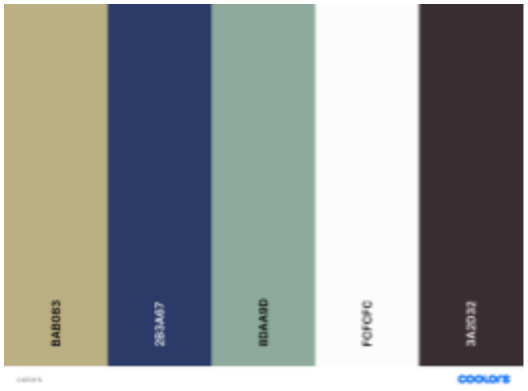
Roy: The pictures that I found of the real Roy Cohn showed him in suits. This makes sense because he was a lawyer and would need to look professional. The suit material would be darker-colored, and he would always look freshly washed and put-together (shirt pressed, straight tie, buttoned jacket) when he is working.

Roy Cohn in a suit.
Source:https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/09/19/roy-cohn-donald-trump-documentary-228144

Business suit silhouette.
Source:https://www.pinterest.com/pin/608760074605724567/

Joe, Louis, and Prior: Because they are not at work for most of the play, I feel that these characters would dress somewhat casually while still paying attention to their style. It is also specifically mentioned in the character descriptions that Prior in particular “lives very modestly but with great style off a small trust fund”. I would keep their clothing somewhat neutral-colored with darker blues, greens, and browns, and lighter whites, and tans to keep the focus more on the actors than their clothing. However, splashes of color (such as ties) would help to show the uniqueness of each character. Additionally, each character could have a signature part of their style (such as a hat, a jacket, or a pair of shoes) that they constantly have throughout the play.

Various 1980s clothing styles.
Source:https://gigazine.net/gsc_news/en/20150713-100-years-mens-fashion/



General color scheme for Louis, Prior, and Joe. Source: https://coolors.co/bab083-2b3a67-8daa9d-fcfcfc-3a2d32

Belize: Although it is mentioned that Belize is a drag queen, he works as a nurse in a hospital in many of his scenes, meaning he would probably be in a nurse's uniform.

Male and female nurse uniforms. Source: https://allnurses.com/early-fashion-remember-t541598/?page=4

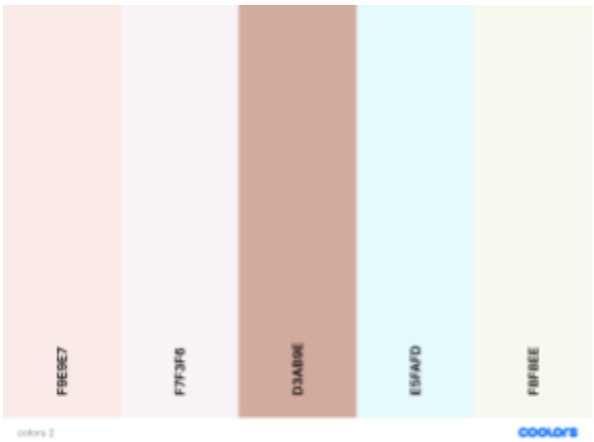
Hannah: Because she does not work, Hanna's clothing would not be professional. However, she is still modest and put together because she cares about her image as a good Mormon and a good mother. Because she is often serious, I would dress her in darker, heavier fabrics. Additionally, because she is an older character, her style may be more old-fashioned than other characters.

Modest women's dresses. Source: https://vintagedancer.com/vintage/modest-vintage-style-dresses/

Women's overcoat. Source: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/258112622378375439/

Harper: Because she does not leave the house except for in her hallucinations, Harper would wear a modest nightgown. She is somewhat vulnerable and afraid of the world around her, so I would dress her in lighter, innocent colors such as whites, cremes, light blues, and pinks. Additionally, the fabric would be light and flowy (though not sheer) to match Harper's fleeting thoughts.

Possible nightgown styles. Source: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/512073420131713983/

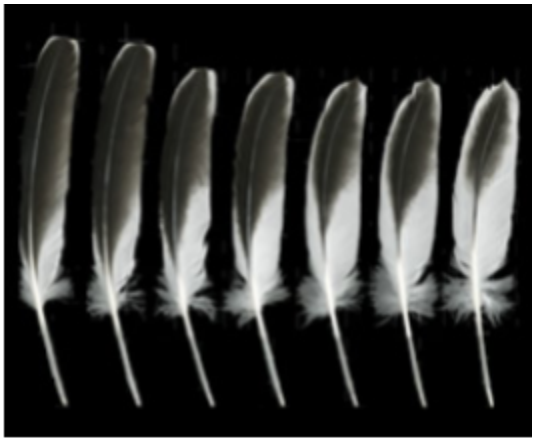


Harper's nightgown shades. Source: https://coolors.co/f9e9e7-f7f3f6-d3ab9e-e5fafd-f8f8ee

The Angel: The Angel comes from somewhere other than earth, meaning that they would not be dressed the same as the other characters. I would have it dressed in slightly flowy robes with a color scheme similar to that of the wings. Wings are an important aspect of this costume, but I do not envision this angel like the pristine, white, glowing angels in cartoons. This is emphasized by the fact that it crashes through the ceiling instead of gracefully touching down. Although the Angel would still have classic angelic aspects, such as feathers (the script specifies that a feather drops from the sky earlier in the show), I would have the emphasis of the costume be on the disproportionately large wings. Although the Angel is from Heaven, its presence should still be imposing, and though the costume would be mainly white, shades of darker colors such as greys and silvers should be streaked in, as specified in the script. Finally, I would like the wings to be outstretched, as if the Angel is flying.

Outstretched angel wing shape reference. Source: https://imgbin.com/png/Za2VESCd/angel-wings-png

Wing feathers. Source:
https://www.pinterest.es/pin/507499451743661662/



Wing feather coloration. Source:
https://www.fws.gov/lab/featheratlas/idtool.php

Lighting

Cooler lighting with blues to reflect the serious and somber mood of subject matter. However, brighter whites could be used during hallucinations or fantastical moments to provide a contrast between the real world and the more imagined one. When Harper is in Antarctica, the lights should be very bright white. Some shadowing can be used to add drama to darker scenes but should be thoughtfully placed so as not to obscure too much onstage. It is important that the actors remain exposed to the eyes of the audience as much as possible. Lights should crossfade subtly from scene to scene as colors change and blackouts should not be used. However, in the final scene, the lights should change from flickering, to harsh pale blue, to rich warm gold, to hot green, to royal purple, as Kushner notes in the script. When the Angel crashes through the ceiling, lights should strobe initially, then return to steady beams to reveal the Angel and the mechanics behind it's entrance.

Sound

Minimal sound effects should be used (eg. the sound of the ocean in Antarctica), but some instrumental music should be played at appropriate times during the show and during transitions. The musicians should be visible to the audience, though not directly involved in the play. I would have them walk around to different places throughout the show in the aisle area

just above the audience seating area. This would put them far enough away that they would not drown out the actors' voices, but close enough to the audience that they would feel like a part of the story. However, they should be dressed in period clothing and it could be implied that they are buskers. This will create more natural transitions between scenes without obscuring where the music is coming from. Because buskers are common in NYC, it would be plausible that busker music could be heard throughout the show, adding to the sense of reality that the play offers. When the angel crashes through the ceiling, the noise should be very chaotic and loud, as if the building is tumbling down.

SFX

The effects should be mostly visible to the audience. For example, the sudden appearances of the ghosts and Mr. Lies could be achieved through having the actors hiding in various set pieces such as in a bed that opens, and popping out at the appropriate time. Although this would obscure them, it would be very obvious when they emerged how they entered the scene. In addition, when the Angel comes down, the wires of the flying rig should be visible and apparent. Although there will be no physical ceiling for the Angel to crash through, I would have ceiling material (plaster, ducts, wire, etc.) to be dropped from above as if there was a ceiling there all along. With the light frame that would represent the ceiling, I feel that this effect would help to combine the realistic and fantastical parts of the play, as if the ceiling that was implied to be there was truly there all along.

<u>Intended Impact on Audience</u>

I want to create a sense of tension and anticipation for the audience without obscuring what is going on onstage or making the audience feel like they have been tricked by the theatrical nature of the play. The play is very much about human emotion and I want to show the vulnerability of the characters and allow the audience to almost feel as though they are experiencing life along with the characters. I will accomplish this by having minimalistic sets and staging the show in the round so that the audience will be able to see every part of the characters' world when they are on stage.

I also want the audience to leave with the impression that people can be both isolated and connected at the same time. I feel that by staging the production in the round in a small theatre,

they will not only be able to connect with the characters, but also with the other audience members because they will be sharing an experience in the same space in a close proximity to one another and will be able to see each other from across the theatre. In addition, the realistic costumes and exposing lighting will allow them to further put themselves into the world of the characters. To facilitate the idea of isolation, the fences will be used to cut the characters off from each other and show how they are close and far at the same time. In addition, the fences could be placed between the audience and the actors to further demonstrate the characters not only cutting themselves off from people they know, but also from the world around them.

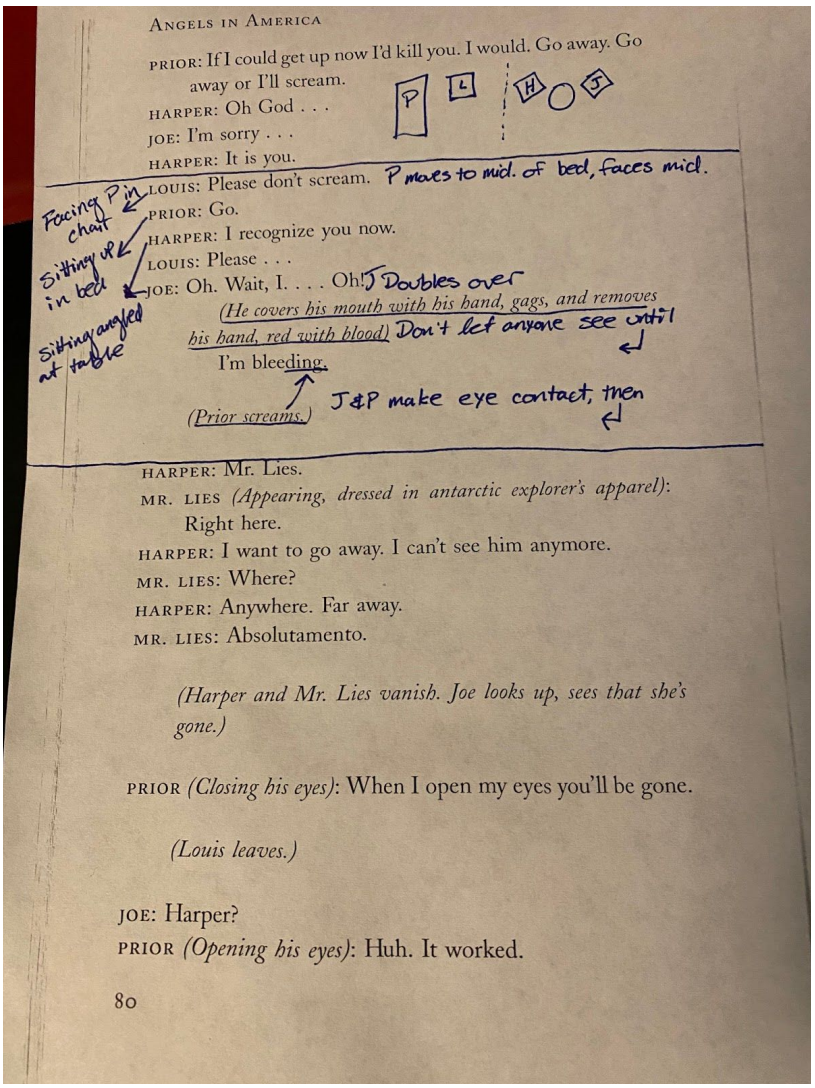
Finally, I want the audience to experience and remember the inevitability of human movement. No matter how much some of the characters may try to resist movement and change, it is a part of life that simply can't be stopped. Through the moving turntable, and the rolling fences, these ideas can be physicalized in the set. Additionally, the constant music from the musicians will keep the story moving, even though scene changes, to allow the audience to experience the sensation that the characters are never afforded a break or a stopping point and must continue to roll along as the music relentlessly moves them from scene to scene.

STAGING TWO MOMENTS OF THE PLAY

Moment 1- Act 2, Scene 9

This moment is a part of a larger split scene and is set early in the morning. On one side of the stage, Louis and Prior are talking in Prior's hospital room, and on the other side, Joe and Harper are talking at home. The two scenes should be separated by two fence segments and the lighting should be steady, cool blues. Although the scene is clearly two different conversations, the characters' dialogue is intermingled and the lines are said rapidly, bouncing back and forth between rooms and people. This will allow the audience to experience the theme of isolation vs. connection because the characters clearly lead different lives with different relationships and are not physically close to each other in the world of the story. However, there are parts of the conversation where it almost sounds like all of the characters are talking to each other, even though they are clearly having separate conversations.

Prior should be sitting up in bed, with Louis sitting facing him in a chair. Louis is looking at Prior, but Prior is staring straight ahead. Harper and Joe are sitting angled on either end of a small table. Joe is looking at Harper, but Harper only occasionally glances at Joe and stares straight ahead otherwise. After Louis says “Please don’t scream ", Prior should move to the middle of the bed and turn to face towards the middle of the stage as he says “Go”. Then, Harper says “I recognise you now” and Louis says “Please”. When Joe says “Oh. Wait, I….Oh!”, he should double over and cough into his hand, then look at it without letting anyone else (including the audience) see. He should slowly pull it away from his face, and look up towards the center of the stage as he says “I’m bleeding”. On the second syllable of “bleeding”, Joe and Prior should make eye contact and Prior should scream.



ANGELS IN AMERICA

PRIOR: If I could get up now I'd kill you. I would. Go away. Go away or I'll scream.
HARPER: Oh God . . .
JOE: I'm sorry . . .
HARPER: It is you.
LOUIS: Please don't scream.
PRIOR: Go.
HARPER: I recognize you now.
LOUIS: Please . . .
JOE: Oh. Wait, I. . . . Oh!

(He covers his mouth with his hand, gags, and removes his hand, red with blood)

I'm bleeding.

(Prior screams.)

HARPER: Mr. Lies.
MR. LIES *(Appearing, dressed in antarctic explorer's apparel)*: Right here.
HARPER: I want to go away. I can't see him anymore.
MR. LIES: Where?
HARPER: Anywhere. Far away.
MR. LIES: Absolutamento.

(Harper and Mr. Lies vanish. Joe looks up, sees that she's gone.)

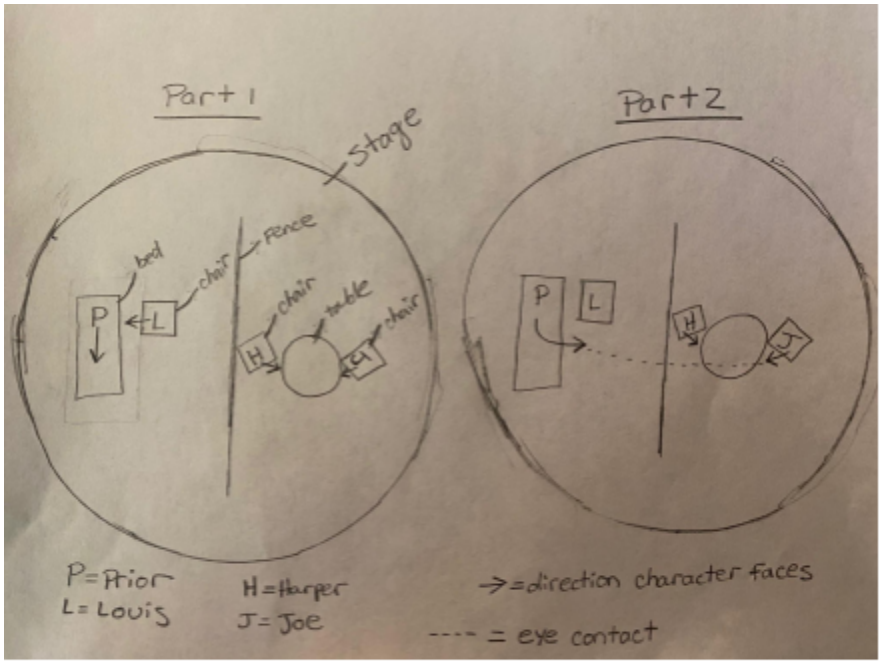
PRIOR *(Closing his eyes)*: When I open my eyes you'll be gone.

(Louis leaves.)

JOE: Harper?
PRIOR *(Opening his eyes)*: Huh. It worked.

80

Notes in my script. Photo by me.



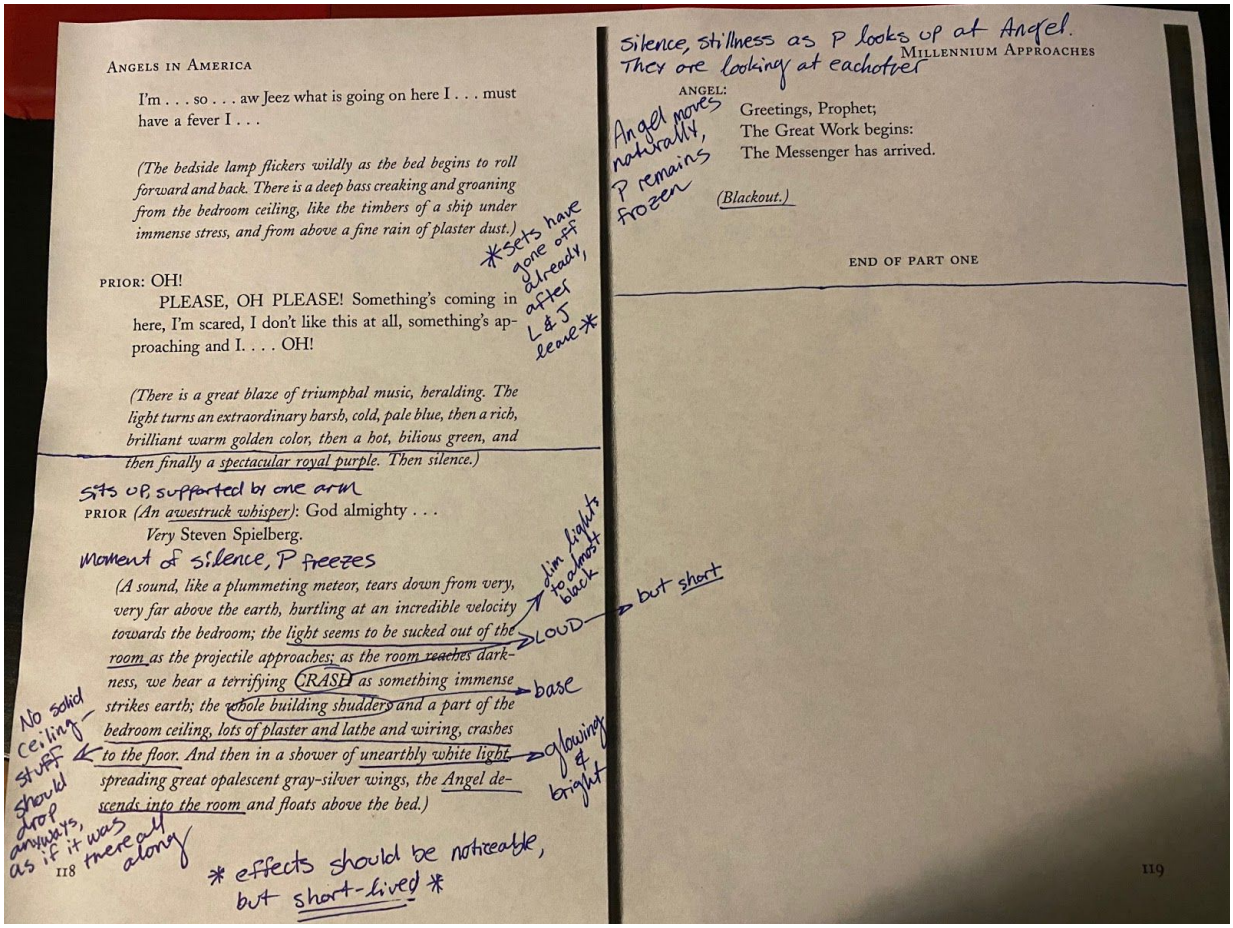
Visual depiction of character placing and movement within scene. Drawing and photo by me.

Moment 2- Act 3, Scene 7

This is the moment where the Angel crashes through the ceiling of Prior's room. Throughout the play, the audience will have watched Prior become sicker and sicker and will have anticipated that something big is about to happen. Additionally, the Voice that has been speaking and the feather that drops earlier in the play foreshadow the Angel's arrival. Even within the scene itself, anticipation is built as the lights change colors, furniture moves around, and Prior reacts to the sudden changes that he is experiencing. Although the rest of the special effects and lighting in the play are somewhat subdued and realistic, I would like this moment to be an outlier and for everything to be thrown into uncontrollable chaos for a few seconds before returning to a new version of reality.

After Louis and Joe exit earlier in the scene, I would like to have all other set pieces taken off so that it is just Prior in his bed with the glowing ceiling frame above him. In the blocking, it states that the lighting will be royal purple and there will be silence right before the Angel comes down. I would also like Prior to be in his bed and sit up halfway, supported by one arm, as he says "God almighty...*Very* Steven Spielberg". During the following moment of silence, he should freeze so that everything is still for a split second. This will build anticipation in the audience as

they wait for whatever is coming next. When the crash of the Angel comes, I would like it to be as loud as possible without proving unbearable for the audience and for it to be underscored by a great deal of base so as to reverberate through the theatre. I would also like ceiling material (plaster, ducts, wire, etc.) to drop from the ceiling, even though there was only a ceiling frame there before. This will add to the effect of the imagined suddenly becoming real as the Angel descends from the ceiling. When the Angel comes down, I would like for the lights to dim to almost darkness, then strobe for a couple of seconds (as the echoes of the crash are fading) before focusing with bright, glowing white light, on the Angel and Prior below it. It is vital that these big effects only last for a couple of seconds, just long enough to let the audience know that they did not imagine it. There should be silence and stillness as Prior looks at the Angel and the angel stares back, broken only when the Angel says its line. As the Angel is speaking, they should move in small, flowy, natural movements as if they are flying/hovering. Prior remains frozen in complete shock. The Angel's line is followed by a blackout.



Notes in my script. Photo by me.