

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Queer Spirit: Theory Generation Toward Directorial Practice in UC San Diego's 2016 *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika* by Tony Kushner

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Directing)

by

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University of California San Diego

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the 2017 MFA graduate class of the Department of Theatre and Dance at UC San Diego. Your comradery and friendship has made this all possible.

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## PUBLICATIONS

- “*Queen of Carthage: Nihilism Haunting an Ocean View.*” TheatreForum 48 (Winter 2016): 4-5.
- “Sight Without Vision: Expanding Sensorial Experience in *OjO* and *Rhodopsin 2.0.*” TheatreForum 48 (Winter 2016): 5-6.
- “Buried in Layers of *Construction*: a review of Sledgehammer Theatre’s adaptation of *Under Construction: An American Masque* by Charles L. Mee.” TheatreForum 52 (Winter 2017): 39.
- “Min Tian. *The Use of Asian Theatre for Modern Western Theatre: The Displaced Mirror.*” Modern Drama 62.4 (Winter 2019): 579-81.

## CONFERENCE PAPERS

- “The Witches That Were: Japan’s Abridged Wicked and the Negotiation of Interculturalism”  
“Opening Doors: The Labor of Musical Theatre Translation in Asia” panel,  
Association of Theatre in Higher Education annual conference, August 2016.
- “Intercultural Theatre Groups of Japan and the History of International Performance  
Collaboration in Tokyo”  
Association for Asian Performance focus group,  
Association of Theatre in Higher Education annual conference, August 2015.

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Queer Spirit: Theory Generation Toward Directorial Practice in UC San Diego's 2016 *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika* by Tony Kushner

by

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Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Directing)

University of California San Diego, 2021

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Proceeding from the perspective that theory can be utilized in practice, this thesis chronicles the making and production of the University of California San Diego production of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika* in 2016, directed by Jon Reimer. Through the examination of queer theory to justify definition of textual ambiguity, the establishment of *queer spirit* as a guiding lens of conceptual perspective provides clarity in the directorial decision-making process, as well as a framework for other collaborators to make

choices within the interpretive parameters. In applying *queer spirit* for understanding vague concepts, the workload on the director actually lessens as the rehearsal process continues, emboldening with confidence the other collaborators to justify their choices at a deeper level. The identification of a unifying theory to address the centralized question of the play -- What is God and the Divine in *Perestroika*? -- demonstrates the efficacy of theory for not only simplifying but also streamlining the tasks of the director in production development.

## Queer Spirit: Theory Generation Toward Directorial Practice in UC San Diego's 2016

### *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika* by Tony Kushner

#### 1. Introduction

Starting the summer of 2016, I began work on directing what started as a studio production of *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika* at UC San Diego, scheduled to open at the beginning of the Fall quarter. Over the course of our planning stages and rehearsal, however, the production grew to the point where Chair of the department at the time, Charles Means, decided that it should be officially added to the season lineup, as the first show of the 2016-17 season. Mounting this production was a massive undertaking due to the summer break and travel schedules, limiting our time together as a company to just three weeks prior to opening. All the advance planning in the world, however, would do no good if everyone on the production was not seeing the world of the play in the same way, and *Perestroika* is arguably a difficult play to wrap your brain around.

Even among the two halves of Kushner's *Angels in America*, *Perestroika* is considered more challenging. It is longer, has more complicated portions of text and stage events, and deals with complex notions of divinity. In fact, it is strange to me how often *Millennium Approaches* appears by itself in the western canon, such as in play anthologies. *Millennium Approaches* is in many ways the expositional prologue to the events that happen in *Perestroika*. Indeed, the deep spiritual questions that I believe *Perestroika* asks in its portion of the story of *Angels in America* are merely alluded to in *Millennium Approaches*, with the Angel only first appearing at the concluding moment of the first half. *Perestroika* is the half of *Angels in America* where

Kushner's characters – and by extension the audience – actually confronts the complex ideas he introduces with this play.

With this belief, that *Perestroika* is the portion of the play where deep philosophical and spiritual questions are actually posed, is how I began the production process in terms of preparation. I began by identifying moments in the play of the divine, specifically pertaining to angels and God, that posed questions to what I see as the key issue that must be made sense of for the rehearsal process. After all, if the whole play centers around Prior and others talking about, coming into contact with, and questioning life in relation to divinity, I should make sense of that component first or so much would be left to vague circumspect.

The centralizing questions about the play for our production thus became: who is God in the world of *Angels in America*? Who are the angels? What is Heaven? How do they all relate to who humans are? By reflecting on this and mining the text for clues that might guide my thinking – both overt statements, patterns, or inconsistencies – I would establish a working (in the truly functional sense) theory for viewing the divine in the context of the play that could provide answers to everyone involved in making the production, guiding our choices when looking through that theoretical lens. In an era when the primacy of hierarchical structure is in question, I still cannot take the stance that a director in the room is no longer necessary. To use the metaphor of a show being like a bus: no matter who is on the bus (the collaborators), someone still has to drive; the director is the bus driver, making sure everyone aboard gets to the destination, i.e. the finished production. By generating and then utilizing a clear, unifying theory – which I have dubbed *queer spirit* – toward first understanding the play text and then making decisions during the production process, the director relieves some of the responsibilities traditionally expected of them. It is the responsibility of the director to generate such a

theoretical lens, though. I will now walk through a detailed explanation of how the theory of *queer spirit* drove my directorial concept, influenced the creative and collaborative process, and led to the production coming together successfully.

## 2. Reason and idea for Theory of the Divine

“I really have come around to believe that *Perestroika* does something that *Millennium*—as good as I think *Millennium* is—doesn’t do.”  
—Tony Kushner, *The World Only Spins Forward* (211)

“There’s a deeper soul in *Perestroika*... The scene in heaven where God has abandoned them, the brilliant monologue the Angel has that’s a description of the world, and Harper’s Night Flight to San Francisco speech—these are things that *live on inside you*.”  
—Tony Taccone, *The World Only Spins Forward* (210-11)

For my interpretation of Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika*, the concept I call *queer spirit* was developed as a theoretical lens through which to view and analyze the text. “*Queer spirit*,” as articulated in my doctoral dissertation, is “the sensation one feels when fleetingly experiencing the sublimity of queer time-space” (Reimer 139). My use of the concept as “theory” to describe *queer spirit* refers to a paradigm of theatrical theory used to define a particular concept of performance, in this case the performativity of queerness in correlation to divinity; “theory is a hypothesis of how a particular performance functions” (Pavis 408). As the theoretical model for the conceptualization of the production, *queer spirit* specifically provided clarity to my dramaturgical conceptualization of the angels, God, and heaven that define the world of Kushner’s play. While I will be expanding upon *queer spirit* as I applied it to *Angels in America* for a deeper understanding of its cultural meaning, I want to articulate my belief that Kushner wrote with his own definition of queerness when writing this

epic play. As such, for this portion of the thesis I will introduce how I utilized the concise-yet-interpretable theory of *queer spirit* to rationalize what I believe to be Kushner's intentions with God, angels, and the divine in *Perestroika*, and how I then harnessed it in my directorial process. This is all in the hope to demonstrate the efficacy of utilizing theory generation in the practice of directing, allowing a theoretical lens to guide logical decision-making and eventually democratize the directorial process throughout the company.

A theoretical lens is necessary for examining angels, God, and Heaven in *Angels in America*, as their being intangible, mythical, and interpretable means they must be contextualized. In terms of individual spirituality: even if someone's belief system includes the numerous divinities that appear in this play, the world of *Angels in America* stands separate, as an "other world" as Elinor Fuchs says in her essay *EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play* (Fuchs 6). Even if it is different from our own reality, Fuchs makes the case that we must assume the reality of that world to be its notion of truth: "We must make the assumption that in the world of the play there are no accidents. Nothing occurs "by chance," not even chance. In that case, nothing in the play is without significance" (6). With this in mind, I paid particular attention in my reading of *Angels in America* to specific patterns and shifts away from those patterns that occurred around moments pertaining to divine elements, because I wanted to analyze the patterns to elicit meaning and make sense of the rules pertaining to fantastical things in the world of Kushner's play.

The most confusing and therefore significant pattern to dramaturgically make sense of emerges in *Perestroika* in relation to how characters refer to and look for a physical manifestation of God. Now face-to-face with each other in *Part Two*, the Angel repeatedly asks Prior to "Look up," a carryover of the line heard by Prior multiple times from the voice of the

Angel in *Part One: Millennium Approaches*. The words in *Part One* seemingly suggest that Prior should look up to the sky in order to witness the coming of the Angel, which finally occurs at the end of that portion of the play when the Angel bursts through Prior's ceiling. Now together in *Part Two*, though, the use once again of the phrase "Look up" now implies gazing upward to see something else. In Act II, the Angel of America utters the phrase "Look up" after recounting to Prior that God has left Heaven, leaving the Angels behind: "He left... And He did not return. We do not know where He has done. He may *never*..." (Kushner 171). Later, the Angel repeats the phrase again once they and Prior have ascended to Heaven, when the Angel tells Prior to look up in order for him to see that God is absent, which the Angel refers to as "Not-to-be Time" (132). By this point, the implication is that "Look up" connects to God and His departure from the Angels in Heaven. Therefore, gazing upward in the hopes of seeing something that could or should be there – the Angel in *Part One*, God in *Part Two* – becomes a central tenant for making sense of this play and its perspective. As Fuchs suggested, "there are no accidents" (Fuchs 6). So, what occurs to me with this dramaturgical examination is that this moment in Act Five, when Prior is told by the Angel to "Look up" one final time, might contain a pertinent and powerful gap of potential that can help make sense of the entire play if it can be made sense of.

Following clues from the text, a hypothesis for the Act Five moment of Prior looking up emerged to me: when Prior goes to Heaven and the Angel of America tells him to "Look up" to see the cosmic void of "Not-to-be Time," what if he sees something different than the angels expect him to see? What if when Prior looks up, he doesn't see nothing? What if instead he sees something? What if what he sees – even if he doesn't realize it at the time – is God? If that were the case, why can Prior see something and the angels not? What could be separating him from the angels? Nothing in the text refutes the standpoint being offered by this series of questions.



So, with such a significant amount of the show centering around Prior and his personal story, in order to better understand the answer to how and why it might be possible for him to see something lies in making sense of the angels in relation to that standpoint.

The angels, in particular the Angel of America, demonstrate the development of ego as the play goes on in curious linguistic patterns that occur when they speak. In the few scenes the Angel of America appears in throughout *Angels in America* – the final scene of *Part One: Millennium Approaches*, and throughout Act Two, Act Five Scene 1, and Act Five Scene 5 of *Part Two: Perestroika* – instead of saying “I” when referring to themselves, they say, “I I I I,” repeating the personal pronoun four times rather than once (Kushner 36). This linguistic habit is not a unique speech habit of the Angel of America, though; in Act Five Scene 5, when Prior meets with all the Continental Principalities, they too use “I I I I” when referring to themselves (128). This would indicate that the repeated pronoun sequence is a shared linguistic component of their angelic language. When considering language as an archive of cultural history, and the fact that quotes supposedly from angels in religious traditions do not utilize this linguistic quirk, a grammatical pattern such as this within the otherwise normal English delivery of the lines must then indicate something significant worth deducing. So, in order to determine what it may be indicating, I explore when the “I I I I” is said to see if at any point the Angel changes this pattern of delivery, and analyze possibilities as to why it would be the grammatical structure of language for the angels.

The first time we hear the Angel use “I I I I” is in Act Two of *Perestroika*, during Prior’s recollection of the first visit by the Angel to him. Every time the Angel refers to themselves throughout this encounter, they use this unique pluralistic pronoun form. The next time Prior meets the Angel is in Act Five Scene I, the scene where he wrestles the Angel like Jacob, as

Hannah suggested he do in the previous scene. It is in this scene, however, where the speech pattern of the Angel changes. Halfway through Prior wrestling them, the Angel goes from their normal vocal delivery of the pluralistic “I I I I” to singular “I”: “I I I I Am the CONTINENTAL PRINCIPALITY OF AMERICA, I I I I AM THE BIRD OF PREY. I Will NOT BE COMPELLED, I...” (Kushner 119). Under duress, it appears that the Angel changes their speech pattern to the individualized pronoun of standard English, dropping their unique pluralistic pronouns of the standard Angel linguistical form. The personal pronoun “I” reflects a singular sense of individual identity, and repeating the pronoun four times, much like the “royal we,” creates a unique sense of multiplicity and achieves an elevated sense of grandeur. Beyond that, saying “I” four times implies a four-sided understanding of the self; in other words, it is as if there are four selves, like directions on a compass of self-identity covering all vantage points. Four selves can indicate that the individual has a multiplicitous understanding of their personal identity, which could further mean that either they have divisions within their identity, which is self-focused, or that they have a sense of identity that is codependent on others, which is more outwardly focused. Shifting in speech from this complex sense of identity with “I I I I” to a more individualized “I” thus indicates a loss of complexity, multiplicity, and collectivism.

A pattern of repeated pronouns suggest a collective mindset, at least as a linguistic carryover from a past time when a sense of interconnectedness for the angels was profound. Indeed, when the Angel explains to Prior what angels are, they say “Each angel is an infinite aggregate myriad entity,” hermaphroditic with eight vaginas and “a Bouquet of Phalli” (Kushner 48-9). Angels are gender queer, incapable of being sorted by gender into the category of male or female by earthly, human standards; instead, each angel possesses multiple sets of genitalia. The Angel also recalls to Prior a past when angels and God would, in Prior’s summation, “copulate

*ceaselessly*” (49). God in this instance is referred to as the “Aleph Glyph,” the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a “flaming Hebrew letter.” *Aleph* א in Hebrew also symbolizes the number one. Its significance as the first letter and first number in Hebrew has led to its association in Jewish tradition as a philosophical representation of God as a divine origin point and singularity. Singularity is philosophically not multiplicitous, so it exists beyond a binary; this makes this singular notion of א or God fall within the definition of queer as non-binary.

With regards to the angels of *Angels in America*, their linguistic structure demonstrates a multiplicity of identity that understands (or at least understood) the self to be beyond just an individual. When the Angel’s language shifts to a singular “I,” it suggests a development of ego that recognizes the individual self, the “root-cosmos,” separate from the collective, multiplicitous selves, the “radicle-cosmos” (Deleuze and Guattari 6). “Multiplicities are rhizomatic,” as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, and “multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature” (8). By that logic, therefore, the nature of multiplicitous identity changes when the multiplicity is removed; it becomes a subject/object, an individual identity. As such, when the angels are capable of seeing and acknowledging themselves as having individual identity over multiplicitous identity, they no longer exist in queer space. Instead, they now exist within the binary of definition that is subjecthood/objecthood. In contrast, though, God as a divine entity remains singular within queer time-space. So, while directing *Perestroika* at UC San Diego, I used the perspective that the angels were just incapable of seeing God anymore; they no longer existed in queer time-space and therefore were incapable of perceiving God. Prior, however, who speaks throughout the play with Belize of the fluidity of gender and sexuality, is existing in a queer state of readiness. As a result, in my production when the actor

playing Prior looked up when instructed to by the Angel, I directed him to see something: not the destruction of the cosmos, but something else, something powerful and infinite.

Kushner's focus on religious figures and concepts puts angels and God in symbolic conversation with AIDS, and pushes back against religious fanaticism that uses religion to explain the disease as divine retribution for homosexuality. *Angels in America* tries to show in stark relief what it is like to deal with the disease while questioning God's seeming to ignore the sick and bereaved. By having God absent from Heaven in the perspective of the angels, Kushner creates a scenario to confront God's "absence" by making Him only perceptible to a queer person such as Prior. As a director, I saw the potential of that given circumstance, offering *queer spirit*, the sensorial perception of the complexity and hope of queer time-space in which anything can be possible, including a scenario in which actually the characters – and the audience – are the ones to realize that God never left; for a time, not unlike the angels, they just couldn't see Him.

Obviously, the *queer spirit* of God being perceptible to queer folk such as Prior is a complex concept to ask the actors to grapple with, so I had to clarify my meaning; this is where all the components of my above research came into play, especially *queer spirit* as a theoretical lens. I explained to the actors every practical example of *queer spirit* I had at my disposal, particularly the examples from my dissertation: the philosophical concept of *ma* in Japanese art, the energy that exists between two actors doing Meisner acting exercises effectively, the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari as seen in a flock of birds, shamanic practice, and even my own notion of God as it relates to queerness as a divine singularity. This led to some heady conversations as a company, but what these dramaturgical discussions allowed for was a deeper spiritual potency from the actors who were looking for their characters' hope in each moment, which ultimately drives the character through to the end of each scene and the play generally, despite terribly

sickness or abject despair without assurance of survival. Not only that, but as the director this allowed for my cultivating a stronger sense of *queer spirit* in practice to be infused in the process of mounting a production. The play lent itself to this endeavor, though, in ways that spiritually makes me convinced it is not by coincidence.

Take the example of Katherine “Kat” Ko, who portrayed Harper in our production. When it came time to working with Kat on Harper’s “Night Flight to San Francisco” monologue, all the framing for the spiritual world of the play came to a meaningful fruition. The speech has Harper on a plane flying to San Francisco, looking out the window of the plane at the clouds and seeing souls “rising, from the earth far below, souls of the dead” floating upward “in reverse, limbs all akimbo, wheeling and spinning” (Kushner 285). Because of Harper’s journey throughout the play, Kat and myself both knew this moment had to be different from her other scenes of drug-induced hallucinations and astral projection. We both agreed that it made sense that Harper would no longer be relying on drugs, so this moment on the plane had to be a different kind of occurrence than those of her earlier scenes. Using *queer spirit* as a positionality that enables those such as Prior to see what others, even the angels, are unable to, we posited that because of all that Harper has been through she is now able to see into queer time-space, the gray realm between here and there, analog and digital, earthly and divine. So, perhaps when she looks out the window, she actually sees souls floating to the heavens. The most telling and affirming portion of the monologue to help justify this interpretation lies in the closing line: “At least I think that’s so” (285); through all she has been through, Harper now realizes the most important component to self-discover, acceptance, and growth is a queer sensibility. In other words, by letting go of structures – right and wrong in Mormon doctrine, me versus you – one achieves a sense of freedom, of clarity, of *nirvana*. By saying “At least I think that’s so,” Harper is

acknowledging that even if she sees what she describes as being true, she will not push to make others accept it as their truth; she accepts that it is her experience of Truth, and others do not have to see the universe as she does. After all, Harper came to realize the truth of her traumatic circumstances through the use of drugs, which she then invites Joe to try upon handing him two Valium pills as a means of spiritual and intellectual growth: “Sometimes, maybe lost is best. Get lost. Joe. Go exploring. [...] With a big glass of water” (283). Harper’s release from her trauma is demonstrated in the circumstances of this final monologue: a flight to a queer city, much like Heaven, and an acceptance that everyone has the freedom to see things differently, queerly. *Queer spirit* as a theory provides a way of talking about experiencing the perception of queer time-space for Harper and the actor playing her to delve into the sense of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual freedom for a character that before then had none.

For now, before going into more details about working with actors and *queer spirit* together toward realizing the characters in production, I will elaborate first on the theory-driven conversations had with designers in order to better articulate the world the characters inhabit.

### **3. Theory applied to Design**

“...methods are deeply grounded in the substance of critical theory, the wide-ranging standpoints of philosophical argument, and the complexity of intersectional experience.”  
—D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (3)

Having *queer spirit* now at our disposal for contextualizing the potentiality of queer time-space, design conversations could live within a justified contextualization, formulating our methods for actualizing the world of the play for our production around a centralizing philosophical theory. The theoretical lens of *queer spirit* proved useful to the designers and I for

working out the challenging dramaturgical conundrum of the text. There is a significant dramaturgical difference between *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* and *Part Two: Perestroika* in that throughout the entire duration of *Part One* we come to know the characters and their relationships to one another. All the while, we are hearing a mysterious voice calling anticipatorily to Prior with statements such as “Look up” and “Prepare the way,” not to mention Prior’s ancestral heralds telling him of the Angel’s impending arrival. Then, in the final moment of *Part One*, the Angel bursts through Prior’s bedroom ceiling, finally arriving as foreshadowed. Another way of framing this in relation to *queer spirit* for our production of *Perestroika*: if the rupturing of the divide between two worlds – here and there, earthly and divine, corporeally analog and technologically digital – is the event of the play as a whole (meaning *Part One* and *Part Two* combined), then the main instigating event only happens at the conclusion of *Part One*. In other words, the events of *Part Two: Perestroika* pertain to characters introduced thoroughly in *Part One* dealing with the issues happening because of this rupture, striving toward *anagnorisis*, *catharsis*, and *denouement*. Therefore, it is imperative that in production we communicate the climactic rupture of a barrier between two worlds to the audience, so that they can experience the unique positionality of the middle space of rupture, the *queer spirit* of queer time-space. How we ultimately do this primarily comes from the design elements of scenic, projections, costumes, sound, and music communicating the rules of the play’s reality.

It is worth noting that this binary-defined divide follows a posthuman logic for understanding *queer spirit*-infused happenings in the play and ultimately of the stage space, and posthumanism provided a contemporary dramaturgical framework for visualizing the play for this production. N. Katherine Hayles describes posthumanism in her seminal book *How We*

*Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* as follows: "In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (Hayles 3). In other words, the line differentiating a corporeal body and a technological "prosthesis," to use Hayles's phrasing, blurs. One way I have come to understand posthumanism centers around our current relationships with smartphones; when we look around on a bus or train, what it means to be human, the very definition of the word, has changed to mean the symbiotic relationship between people and their phones – the new definition of "human." Using this posthumanistic concept of blurred delineation between the bodies and the technology they interact with as a starting point, design choices can be particularly formulated by identifying the opposing corporeal and technological elements and playing within the meaning of moments when they are either separated or overlapping in order to generate the potential for *queer spirit*.

#### PROJECTIONS / SCENIC

Of utmost importance to my vision for this production was the distinction between the divine world and the earthly realm. Because the end of *Millennium Approaches* signals a rupture through the divide that separates these two worlds – symbolized by an angel crashing through the roof of Prior's apartment – it was crucial to me that we visualize that separating barrier between the two worlds and play with visualizing the rupture, which to me meant blurring their separation, queering the middle. The solution for this came with my introduction to an MFA student in the Visual Arts department at UC San Diego, Stefani Byrd. She was recommended to me as a possible collaborator based on her artistic portfolio, which incorporates bodies with



technology. I went to her art exhibition to see her work, with the possibility in mind of asking her to collaborate on *Perestroika*. Her exhibition blew my mind; it was art that utilizes projections and the manipulation of images and sound to generate a performative effect on the spectator depending on where they stood. In other words, the physical presence of the body in space was necessary for the technology of the artistic event to occur, which read as particularly post-human. I was impressed and subsequently asked Stefani to create projections for the production, to be a part of the scenic element, which she agreed to do.

With Stefani onboard to provide projections, I could next conceptualize the divide between the divine and the earthly more specifically to the scenic designer. It just so happens that Dance Studio 3 in the Molli and Arthur Wagner Dance Building, where we would stage the production, has an enormous white scrim that stretches from ceiling to floor at one end of the room. Using that scrim to project onto would allow for large-scale projections, covering almost the entire breadth of one wall and enhancing the power and potency they could have in the storytelling. With the help of Scenic Design student Anna Robinson, we positioned the audience in an alley configuration, with one end of the stage space being the studio's built-in bleachers and the other side the white scrim. The alley configuration provided a way to visualize the divine realm on a grand scale at one end of the space via the scrim and projections, establishing an almost portal-like effect for the theatre space.

With this spatial configuration now in mind, I identified key moments of the play that I felt – due to their divine nature – should be projected onto the scrim. In addition, using projections for the more complicated visual elements would simplify logistical demands from the text and offer much-needed variance from the otherwise minimalist nature of the production – based on both our limited budget and Kushner's inspiration from Brecht (Kushner 329).

Complicated moments of divinity and stage magic required from the text that could be handled by projections were identified: the angel's wings in Acts Two and Four, the diorama room in Act Three, the moments when Ethel Rosenberg appears in Acts Three-Five, Harper's hallucination in Act One, and the moments in Heaven of Act Five (see Files 9-10). Projections made it possible to establish and then blur the line of separation between the corporeality of the actor bodies with the supernatural elements present in *Perestroika's* scenes and characters. All of these projected solutions would need specific visual interpretations, which I collaborated with Stefani to create.

Theatrical collaboration was a new realm for Stefani, as was working with projection design software, but she embraced the learning curves with enthusiasm and a true spirit of interdisciplinary collaboration. Through many conversations about my vision for both the play as a whole and projections specifically, Stefani was able to feel that her contributions to the success of the show were vital and that what she generated in the end was achieving our shared vision. This did not come without its costs, as some of the visuals we gravitated to cost money to purchase as high-quality video projections that could cover the entire scrim. In the end, though, with little money spent elsewhere, what little budget we had was ultimately allotted to Stefani so she could provide projections that would work best. In the end, we were all very satisfied with the results, and I feel that a digitally-rendered divine realm was clearly articulated in contrast to a quotidian analog world enough for the audience to understand and resonate with. Positioning the audience in a middle space for witnessing both the digital/divine and analog/earthly was to situate them in a queer time-space for experiencing the *queer spirit* of the production.

## COSTUMES

MFA Costume Design student Junior Bergman was Costume Designer on the project. They and I spoke a great deal on the merits of wedding time periods and styles in the pursuit of logistical ease and time-space complexity. One of our most successful moments was discovering an appropriate costume for Belize, played by Terrance White. Although no specificity for Belize's nursing uniform is explicitly stated in the script, the doctor comments to Belize that he believes nurses "are supposed to wear white," pointing to a space of potentiality for finding the appropriate non-white garment to elicit such a response from the doctor (Kushner 149). In rummaging through costume storage, Junior came across the shirt of a nursing uniform covered in recognizable Keith Haring figures. The garment excited us; Haring was an up-and-coming queer artist in the 1980s, so the fun and fascinating possibility of warm and gregarious Belize befriending a young Keith Haring and seeing the promise of his artistry to the point of asking him to draw on his nursing uniform added a beautifully specific layer of queer positionality to the character. Not only that, but the Haring drawings on the uniform would certainly justify the comment from the doctor about it not being appropriate coloration for a nurse's otherwise white uniform. Again, was this specific solution for the costume at all suggested in the script? No. However, identifying the gaps – in this case, what the non-whiteness of the uniform could be – provided us the potentiality for queerness to seep in, allowing us to not only embrace the fun but also the dramaturgical usefulness of Haring-graffitied clothes in telling an even richer story of the characters' gay lives.

#### SOUND

Steven Leffue was one of the Sound Design MFA students that started at UC San Diego at the same time I did. While Steven and his cohort Grady Kestler both worked on our class

project *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* in Spring 2015, Grady chose not to work on the sequel. So, Steven and I began to meet and discuss how *Part Two* would be a continuation of the first part, but also how the second part was going to do different things from *Part One*.

Steven had a complicated and specific vision for the soundscape of the show, a carryover from the conceptual groundwork laid by him and Grady in *Millennium Approaches*. This included sound that was imperceptible to the human ear but still perceptible with its vibration in the body. Steven wanted once again to teeter on the line between audible and inaudible, perceptible and imperceptible sound, as a way of manipulating the mood of the audience in subtle but compelling ways. This coincided with my vision of the world of this play, because it carried meaning over from our conceptualizing *Millennium Approaches* previously. Unlike *Millennium Approaches*, however, where the world of the play had not yet ruptured from the earthly plain into the divine world, in *Perestroika* the divide between the two worlds has ruptured. As such, it was imperative for the soundscape of *Part Two* to teeter more drastically and dramatically on that line between the two worlds. Part of what would make this work most effectively, especially when some of the digitized soundscapes Steven was creating were impossible for the audience to immediately identify, was counter to Steven's representation of the divine world. This came from live, analog sound production in the form of a percussionist.

## MUSIC

When Producer Zora Howard approached me on behalf of her class to direct *Perestroika*, she informed me that one new collaborator had already been approached to contribute music to the project: our friend who had worked on the department production of *The Cherry Orchard*

with us, Music Ph.D. student Fiona Digney. Zora admitted that she didn't know exactly how music was to play a role in the show, but she liked Fiona and offered her to be a part of the project as a chance for her and our class to work together. Now, of course, I was under no obligation to work with Fiona, or to feel compelled to incorporate music into the production, but I embraced the unique opportunity to work with such a talented percussionist whom I also liked as a person and was interested in collaborating with.

As with the other designers, I began to meet with Fiona several months in advance of our rehearsal period. In that time, she and I would also touch base with Steven Leffue, to discuss how in this world of the play both rich, complicated digital audio could live alongside analog percussion. This duality of sound actually began to serve the purpose of clarifying the duality of the worlds, which I feel to be inherent in *Angels in America*. Because the worlds of the earthly and the divine are ruptured at the end of *Millennium Approaches*, it was important for us to demonstrate to the audience the difference between the pre-ruptured and post-ruptured. So, the earthly realm became the soundscape of live percussion played by Fiona, and the divine realm would be signaled with the digital sound – audible and inaudible – generated by Steven.

Both sound artists would have their location in the space: Steven was positioned hidden amidst the audience to ensure in live time that the sound was appropriate and effective, and Fiona we ended up creating a station for on the stadium bleachers in Dance Studio 3 of the Molli Wagner Dance Building, where she could be seen playing throughout the show. This position in the space was located across the space from the projection scrim, which symbolizes the digital, divine world. So, Fiona's position with her instruments took on the symbolic meaning of the analog, earthly world (see File 1). It was only later, during the rehearsal process, that I realized that Fiona could therefore become the embodiment of the Statue of Bethesda, which appears and

is talked about at certain points throughout the play. It was simple to convey this idea: I asked Fiona to freeze in a statuesque pose during those scenes in which the statue appears (see File 2), and every other moment of the show she could feel free to play or sit (which rendered her unseen to the audience) as needed. As such, through the use of a concept that arose from her involvement as a collaborator, I discovered a new, unspecified character for Fiona to play throughout the show that helped communicate the concept, add interesting music throughout the show, and provide a completely unique take on the Angel of Bethesda statue in the story.

#### 4. Working with actors

“We are always inseparable from the theory we create. And the theory we create allows us to live in new and more just ways.” Aimee Marie Carrillo Rowe, "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation" (17)

With the design needs of the play being addressed by the design team, it was time to fold the actors into the process, to embody the characters and bring the storytelling to life. As mentioned above, the dramaturgical establishment of the theory and its logic for the actors was gradually done before coming together over the three weeks of in-person rehearsal. Upon entering the rehearsal room, *queer spirit* and its significance for making sense of the play’s world guided decision-making, speeding up the process and freeing up more time for other matters. I will now provide some specific examples of how *queer spirit* theory was used when working with the actors to specify details of character in context and provide a safe space for complicated issues of intimacy in the play.

CLARIFYING CHARACTER

Prior is the prophet of the play, and I believe it is precisely because he lives, breathes, and sees with queer understanding, sensitive to the sensation of *queer spirit*, that he is the prophet. For Kyle Hester, who came into the role of Prior for this production, the theory of *queer spirit* gave unique perspective on God and the divine in the play, especially for the two moments we identified of Prior actually looking up, after having been instructed to repeatedly by the Angel. The first instance was when Prior is in Heaven in Act Five, before the Angel says that it is “Not-To-Be Time” (Kushner 277). Once again, the Angel tells Prior to “Look up, look up,” which the script indicates they do (277). The script does not indicate, however, whether or not he or the angels see anything. So, a question arose once again in the gaps of potentiality, from the impulse infused with *queer spirit*: what if Prior does see something? Within the concept of God existing within queer time-space, I framed the moment differently for Kyle’s Prior. I discussed with Kyle that Prior being a prophet perhaps has something to do with his being queer and understanding/seeing queerness. The Angels, however, have lost their queer perception, as discussed above in “2. Reason and Idea for Theory.” Therefore, when the angels look up they see nothing, but when Prior looks up it would make sense for him to see something. Now, it doesn’t necessarily indicate that he knows what he is looking for – meaning that he could see what he sees and not fully understand it to be God, although he might – but he definitely sees nothing. This stands opposite of the angels, which indicate while looking up that they see “Not-to-be Time,” which I interpret to mean nothing, i.e., time of not being (277). With the act of looking up and seeing something, a moment of specificity emerges for the character at a climactic point in the story. We are provided not only a significant opportunity for revelation in the character, but we also establish a motivation for his rejection of the Angel’s requests in the scene and the hope that takes him back to earth despite his ill body. This pivotal decision also

then justifies the finding of other moments throughout the play where Prior could look up, to not only establish that physical pattern but also to allow the character to question whether or not he sees something in the air above him (see File 3). This culminated for us in the ending button of the production, a choreographed moment for Kyle as Prior after saying the final line of the show, “The Great Work Begins,” in which I asked him to look up (Kushner 290). Upon making the request, he indicated he completely understood why and the motivation for such a gesture: in the Epilogue, Prior is communicating his hope for “*More Life*,” and we established in our world of the play that part of his hope is from seeing the Divine above him, existing in queer time-space. In this, hope springs from *queer spirit*, felt by both the character and the actor. Working with an actor like Kyle, who embraced the conceptual framework of the theory for understanding the play, made directing the piece easier and enjoyable.

*Queer spirit* as pertains to the divine realm also played a major role in how Mary Glen Fredrick and I established the character of Ethel Rosenberg in our vision of *Perestroika*. As a ghost of someone Roy Cohn famously helped send to the electric chair, Rosenberg is no longer of the earthly realm. That being said, she does interact very specifically with Cohn in the play. However, in her appearing in scenes with Roy, there is no indication of where she is in relation to him. Since she is of the heavenly realm and he is in the earthly realm, based on our scenic layout for the space they would be on opposite ends of the space: Ethel closer to the scrim and Roy closer to the bleachers. Visually this worked well, as it allowed Roy’s hospital room and all its necessary elements to stay stationary against the bleachers on one side of the room (reinforcing its analog-ness by its proximity to Fiona as the Angel of Bethesda) while Rosenberg could be overlaid with projections nearer to the scrim, showing her connection to the digital/divine (see File 8). This overlaying of projection onto character to establish their



existence in the heavenly realm would later be used for other characters when encountering, nearing, or sensing the divine (see Files 5-7). One pattern I established with Mary Glenn in the blocking to further communicate this concept to the audience was to have Ethel Rosenberg linger in the background at a distance from Cohn, at least in the beginning portion of the play. Later, as Roy nears death, she would come closer to him, symbolically bringing the straddle of Earth and Heaven closer to him. As the line separating them and their worlds began to blur, so too did the blocking. Again, this was all based on understanding the stage space through specific language for queering the bifurcated time-space of the worlds – *queer spirit* – and justifying the reason for blocking the spatial dynamics between characters as it was done.

Theory framed our understanding of how characters should use the theatrical space for the play, but other issues would have to be addressed when developing the character of Belize for our production. Because of the racial requirements for Belize to be an African-American male, the queer character had to be portrayed by a straight cis male actor, Terrence White. Terrence is an exceptional actor that I knew would be able to transform into the character, so transformation is what we strove for in working on the character. Terrence's natural physicality is rigid and linear, which reads as heteronormative. To help him better embody a more queer-presenting physicality, time in the first week was spent with Terrence to create a physical specificity for the character of Belize. This concept relates to methodologies I have encountered over the years that look at the distinction between linearity and non-linearity in the body as articulating social meaning, particularly in cases of the male body and its communication of gender and sexual norms. As such, it was important to me that Belize's stature embody an embrace of queer non-linearity, to not only distinguish Terrence from Belize but also offer a celebratory presentation of queer male effemininity on the UCSD stage. This was not a benign

request, however, as it required a great deal of discussion and physical rehearsal for Terrence to actualize this embodied vocabulary. However, Terrence was not only game to portray Belize with authenticity, he was also willing to put in the extra work, knowing full well that the queer people in the room would point out to him inconsistencies or nuanced differences in the physicality that could read either inappropriate or stereotypical. All his work made a tremendous difference, though, to the point where even his Acting teachers were impressed to see Terrence physicalize a character so bodily different from himself.

Janet Fiki as the Angel was another unique case among the actors in terms of putting in extra work for the payoff. The role of the Angel was originally played by Zora Howard, who decided not to play the role for *Part Two* in order to focus on being Producer. As such, we asked Janet to play the Angel, because she was an incoming graduate actor, was available, and seemed interesting for the part. Janet moved to La Jolla early from New York in order to begin working on the role from the first week of rehearsals. Possibly because she was new to the program, or possibly because of the difficulty of the role, Janet ended up requesting twice the amount of rehearsal time as her fellow actors. In particular, Janet asked for more practice for the physical requirements of the role, mainly working with the microphone and its cable. Because our concept for the Angel dealt heavily with their proximity to the breach between the earthly and the divine, the character concept focused heavily on that combination of analogue and digital sound. To achieve this in sound, Steven Leffue and I came up with the idea of the Angel – in fact, all the angels – would speak through microphones. This concept was most apparent in Act Five when Prior goes to Heaven and encounters all of the Continental Principalities (Kushner 270-279). For Janet, as the Angel of America, she would appear and speak far more often using the microphone. For example, in Act Two when Prior is reminiscing about his first encounter with

the Angel, Janet stood on a table against the white scrim with a microphone on a stand (see File 4). As she moved away from the table to approach Prior and give him the book, she removed the microphone from the stand and took it with her. We wanted the microphone to have a cable so that it would tether the Angel to the digital/divine world, and it could give Janet more to play with. However, it also made more for the actor to learn to deal with in the truncated rehearsal schedule. I gave Janet as much time as she asked for and that the schedule could spare, and in the end we were happy with the results. Not only that, but one profoundly interesting discovery was made in the room: when Prior and the Angel wrestle like Jacob with his angel in Act Five Scene 1, in this production Prior overpowered the Angel by wrapping them in the microphone cable. The moment was authentic, justifiable, and fully within the Brechtian aesthetic that Kushner asks for with the play. Janet's work ethic and creativity was influential in discovering that moment, and it serves as a microcosmic example of how Janet patiently and passionately worked with *queer spirit* to bring our vision of the Angel to life.

## INTIMACY

While the trend for intimacy coaching was gaining ground around this time, we did not seek to employ the assistance of an intimacy coach for this production, despite the play having a plethora of intimacy issues to address: several moments of nudity, kissing, romantic touching, and physicalized violence. How then did I approach directing these moments?

The answer: all of the intimate moments were entrusted to the actors who would have to do them, with me acting merely as an intimacy doula of their creative needs. In other words, if it was Hunter Spangler as Joe Pitt who would have to get naked for the moment described in the play, then Hunter decided if and when that would be encountered; I followed his lead,

encouraged every choice he made regarding the nudity along the way, and cheered him on no matter what his decisions. This might seem like an overly-simple idea, but according to the actors at the time, this type of agency regarding their vulnerability was seldom, if ever, afforded to them. That is not to say that I did not engage them in conversations around what the intimate moments meant dramaturgically, in the world of the play as well as for the actor and audience experiences in the moment. However, because of our limited time constraint and my tremendous trust in them all as my artistic collaborators in telling this story, I let the decisions up to them and followed their lead.

Perhaps the best example of this working out perfectly can be seen in the instance of Kat Ko as Harper Pitt. In the script, at one point in an act of desperation to try and elicit a response from her closeted husband Joe, Harper removes her robe and stands before him naked. Kat, a Korean-American actress, expressed early on that she was not interested in perpetuating the image of the sexualized Asian female body onstage by appearing naked in the production. Out of respect for her, I assured her that we would work around it and find a way to make the moment work to the best of our ability without the nudity. That, of course, didn't end the conversation, though, because of course she, I, and the rest of the company would have conversations around that moment in the play and how it might best work without her appearing nude. Each time it would be brought up, it was always reassured that I didn't care what we did as long as (1) Kat felt comfortable, and (2) that it could be made sense of in the dramaturgy of the storytelling. After some time and deliberation, Kat came to rehearsal one day and told me that she had changed her mind; she would be willing to work up to removing the robe, but to appear in her underwear instead of nude. It was agreed by everyone that that was a very strong alternative, still allowing her body to serve Harper as a jolt to Joe without Kat feeling that she compromised her

beliefs. This was her decision, and I supported it. What I am proud of, though, is that she knew from the beginning that I would work around whatever she felt comfortable or not comfortable doing.

In fact, all the actors knew this was my stance, based on my trust of them and each other. I would impose nothing on them in terms of intimate moments. They were responsible, as graduate students and professionals, to decide how they felt in approaching the intimacy, and to communicate that to me. I also knew we all were a close group of friends already, and in their course work the actors had been working on dealing with intimacy and agency in rehearsal. So, I knew I could entrust them to decide for themselves while also reassuring them that I supported any decisions they would make, even if their decisions changed as time passed. And again, I have to point out that this fluid acquiescence to whatever choices were needed which I proceeded from was in solidarity with *queer spirit*, as our driving theoretical lens and philosophical perspective. In the end, I do not feel the storytelling suffered from any of these actor-agency-driven decisions. If anything, the moments always felt more authentic and powerful because they had been driven from the actor's motivations for their character.

## **5. Conclusion**

### FREEDOM WITHIN STRUCTURE

The usual dialogue around directing seems to suggest that the more restrictive the atmosphere or rehearsal process is from the director's parameters, the less freedom and creativity in the rehearsal process there will be. I feel that this production of *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika* and its utilization of theory in practice proves precisely the opposite to be true. That

is to say, some clear parameters for understanding and viewing the play – a theoretical lens such as *queer spirit* – actually allows for structured play. This harkens to Priya Parker’s *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters*, in which she says the following: “Rules can create an imaginary, transient world that is actually more playful than your everyday gathering” (Parker 120). The same principle applies for the act of playing in a rehearsal process. By providing the parameters in which to play, clearly defining the limits for playing, the entire production team is able to make decisions freely within the conditions laid out by the concept, checking the logic of their choices based on dramaturgy of the play within the theoretical lens.

But regardless of the playful and generative nature of *queer spirit*, a sad fact of the times remained: we were still living in Roy Cohn’s America. As documented in several articles on the matter, including Marie Brenner’s article from the August 2017 issue of *Vanity Fair*, “How Donald Trump and Roy Cohn’s Ruthless Symbiosis Changed America,” Donald Trump was an intern/mentee of Roy Cohn when he was alive, and remains “one of the last and most enduring beneficiaries of Cohn’s power” (Brenner). Cohn’s unapologetic nature and reliance on litigation in courts to bully others into submission are characteristics that Trump continues to model in his own endeavors. While we discussed the connection of Cohn and Trump during the rehearsal process, it was coincidentally two months before Trump would be elected President. As such, Cohn’s legacy lives on in those callus actions, making *Angels in America*’s depiction of Cohn more relevant and important than ever to showcase and contextualize where, or rather who, the tactics used by Trump logically stem from.

Despite the subsequent long days and logistical quagmires, in the face of all the play’s political and emotional relevance, and in large part from most of us having bonded as a class and from having done *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* together in our first

year, my collaborators and I cultivated tremendous respect and trust in our ability to work together. Nevertheless, to rehearse a play of such magnitude with so little time took careful planning and as much advanced preparation as could be done in order to make sure the show would be ready in time for an audience. I must give tremendous credit to my astounding Stage Manager, Kasson Marroquin, who helped to organize and implement the logistics that made all the elements come together, as well as Zora Howard and Martin Meccouri as Producers; I could not have done it without their exceptional dedication and brilliance. For my role as Director, however, I stand firm in my belief that coming up with the unifying concept of *queer spirit* as a space for understanding queerness, God, and other divine elements of the story allowed us to move faster in our decision making and mount this production successfully in far less time than would be typically provided.

#### CARRYING IT FORWARD

With all that I have gained from my experience working on *Perestroika*, and with the ongoing curiosity I have with my research regarding queer time-space and *queer spirit* on stage as a device of generative experience for all involved, there are several shows that I am planning to direct in the coming years to further this research in practice.

The top production on my list of shows to work on next using *queer spirit* is *Lilies*, the English translation of *Les Feluettes* by Michel Marc Bouchard. In this play, a death row inmate with the help of his fellow inmates recreate for a particular priest the events and memories of their shared past in order to confront old issues and act as an opportunity of confession. In an on-stage blurring of time/place in both legibility and lived truth for both the audience and performers alike, this play calls for very similar stage elements and magic that I utilized for

*Perestroika*: projections, benches and only necessary properties and scenic elements, and hovering hauntings of the space by actor bodies that are both literal and symbolic at any given moment, simultaneously representational and de facto. Unlike *Perstroika*, where queer time-space is truly captured in certain scenes and moments of the play, a much greater proportion of *Lilies* lies in the blurred contextuality of *queer spirit*. I am fascinated by and want to have the chance to further explore how living for greater periods of time in queer time-space affects the performers and the audience in the lived/witnessed experience. Not only that, but *Lilies* – like *Angels in America* – is one of the most sympathetic, heartfelt depictions of gay love and affection that I’ve ever come across for the stage. While I lament that this story too contains elements of homophobia and queer suffering, I look forward to finding how to honestly and sensitively work through such pain with actors and audience members and find hope. Interesting: there is also a Japanese translation of this play, which opens up the avenue for possibly a production in Japan using my theatre connections in Tokyo.

Another piece I hope to direct in the near future based on all I have learned from working on *Perestroika* is *Tideline*, the English translation of *Littoral* by Wajdi Mouawad. An analysis of which was part of my doctoral dissertation, *Tideline* revolves around the death and grieving of Wilfred for his recently-deceased father. In a queering of time-space through a truly absurdist turn, Wilfred is transporting his father’s corpse to his ancestral homeland, and periodically the corpse turns and speaks to him or the audience, in a balance of actor as prop and character. In fact, this play offers an opportunity for an actor to be the arbiter of *queer-spirit* positionality similar to Prior. However, once again, the amount of that arbitration is significantly greater than the moments provided to Prior in *Angels in America*, so I feel this play would be a logical next step in engaging this curation of queer time-space for greater durations in performance.



A third and final play on my list to direct is *If We Were Birds* by Erin Shields, a reimagining of the Greek myth of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela. In the myth, after the brutal rape and mutilation of her beloved sister Philomela at the hands of her husband, Procne kills and feeds their son to Tereus in an act of revenge, before being turned into birds by the gods. In Shields's adaptation, the lines of the Chorus are composed of quotes from women in recent history who have articulated the atrocities they endured in times of war. This wedding of ancient and modern, both in language and context, is doing fascinating things in terms of *queer spirit*, to bring alive the potentiality of Greek mythology in what I believe to be in line with Greek theatre in its original context as hypothetical scenarios posed to the society for grappling with its collective sense of morality and ethics. Not only that, but the play seems to require use of an open space with paired-down scenic elements, focusing instead on the definition of space and time by the actors as they seem to ebb and flow between character and actor, truly searching in *queer spirit* for sensational possibilities.

Lastly, in addition to plays, I have begun work on theorizing a new methodology for teaching acting that utilizes *queer spirit* as a pedagogical framing device. Still in its early stages and based on so much of what I learned while working with the actors on *Perestroika*, the concept of this new form of actor training – preliminarily called queer acting method, or QAM for short – hopes to push the limits of how we understand and utilize queer theory in practice within performance time-space. If the goal is to strive for and harness *queer spirit* by generating opportunities to queer everything within theatrical space, then nothing is off limits. For example, what if the actor is queered from the character; in other words, what if the actor body does not represent the character, but instead a costume piece or an object does instead? Then the character's storytelling exists not within the actor or the text, but in a middle space shared by

multiple actors and objects in constant flux and formation, i.e., rhizomatic, to use Deleuze and Guattari. Then a character can be passed around, shared, or become multiplicitous in nature as it morphs and takes shape *between* the actors giving the character life within queered time-space. This would be different from puppetry; it is queering acting in relation to the actor body and object, striving to generate *queer spirit* to create character in a between queer time-space of infinite potential. There is more to be studied and unpacked with this fledgling idea, but I am optimistic enough about its potentiality to want to include it here.

TO CLOSE

The potential uses of *queer spirit* for me as a director, scholar, and educator seems limitless, as does its applicability for theatre at large, and I have its development as a concept during my time directing *Angels in America, Part Two: Perestroika*, this thesis project, to thank for its initial testing and proof of concept. I am grateful that its theoretical lens provided me, a proud queer artist, so much needed contextualization in the rehearsal process to make directing the production with non-queer-identifying collaborators palatable and precise, expanding all of our comprehensions of queerness as an idea and actions in practice. Therein lies *queer spirit*'s true potential: to be a tool to bridge gaps between different individuals, to generate consensus within a collective, to encourage empathy and understanding, and to open up the infinite potentiality of queer time-space through the art of collaboration.

I know I have only just begun to skim the surface of what *queer spirit* conceptually can do and offer, and I look forward to the journey of further exploration and discovery that lies ahead for me with it. In the words of Kushner at the end of *Perestroika*: “The Great Work Begins” (290).

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