

angels in america ii perestroika kushner

angels in america ii perestroika kushner is a pivotal work in American theater, representing the second part of Tony Kushner's acclaimed two-part play, "Angels in America." This installment, titled "Perestroika," continues the exploration of complex themes such as AIDS, politics, identity, and spirituality during the 1980s Reagan era. Kushner's masterful writing delves into the intersecting lives of diverse characters, weaving a narrative that is both deeply personal and broadly political. The play's title, "Perestroika," references the political movement for reform in the Soviet Union, symbolizing the transformative changes the characters undergo. This article provides an in-depth examination of "Angels in America II Perestroika Kushner," covering its plot, themes, characters, historical context, and critical reception. Readers will gain comprehensive insights into the significance of this work within Kushner's oeuvre and its lasting impact on American theater and culture.

- Plot Overview of Angels in America II Perestroika Kushner
- Thematic Exploration in Perestroika
- Character Analysis
- Historical and Political Context
- Production History and Critical Reception

Plot Overview of Angels in America II Perestroika Kushner

The second part of the two-part play, "Angels in America II Perestroika Kushner," continues the story where the first part, "Millennium Approaches," leaves off. The narrative follows a group of characters grappling with personal and societal crises in the midst of the AIDS epidemic. Central to the plot is Prior Walter, who is dealing with the physical and emotional toll of AIDS, while his partner, Louis Ironson, struggles with guilt and abandonment. Simultaneously, the ambitious lawyer Joe Pitt confronts his own identity conflicts and political pressures.

Kushner's storytelling in Perestroika intensifies the spiritual and supernatural elements introduced in the first part. The arrival of the Angel to Prior Walter marks a climactic moment that challenges the characters' beliefs and their understanding of destiny and change. The plot intricately

weaves personal turmoil with broader social commentary, emphasizing transformation and the possibility of redemption.

Key Plot Developments

Several pivotal events shape the progression of *Perestroika*:

- Prior Walter's confrontation with the Angel and his visions of the future.
- Joe Pitt's journey toward self-acceptance and his decision to leave his conservative wife, Harper.
- Roy Cohn's battle with AIDS and his denial of his illness and sexuality.
- Louis's eventual return to Prior, symbolizing forgiveness and reconciliation.
- The blending of reality and fantasy as characters face their fears and hopes.

Thematic Exploration in *Perestroika*

"*Angels in America II Perestroika* Kushner" is rich with themes that reflect the complexity of human experience during a turbulent historical period. The title itself, referencing "Perestroika," suggests themes of political and personal restructuring.

Major Themes

- **AIDS and Mortality:** The play confronts the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic, humanizing the crisis through its characters' stories and highlighting the social stigma and political neglect surrounding the disease.
- **Identity and Sexuality:** Kushner explores the fluidity and struggles of sexual identity, particularly through characters like Joe Pitt and Roy Cohn, who grapple with societal expectations and internal conflicts.
- **Politics and Power:** The Reagan-era political backdrop informs the narrative, critiquing conservative policies and their effects on marginalized communities.
- **Spirituality and Redemption:** The supernatural elements, especially the

Angel's visitation, underscore the quest for meaning, hope, and transformation amid despair.

- **Change and Rebirth:** Echoing the concept of perestroika, characters undergo profound changes, symbolizing the potential for renewal at both personal and societal levels.

Character Analysis

The characters in "Angels in America II Perestroika Kushner" are complex and multifaceted, each representing different facets of American society and the human condition during the 1980s.

Prior Walter

Prior serves as the emotional and spiritual center of the play. His struggle with AIDS and his visionary experiences with the Angel embody themes of suffering and transcendence. Prior's resilience and courage offer a powerful narrative of survival and hope.

Joe Pitt

Joe is a closeted gay Mormon lawyer whose internal conflict about his sexuality and political beliefs reflects broader societal tensions. His character arc involves a painful but liberating journey toward authenticity.

Louis Ironson

Louis represents the complexities of love and guilt. His initial abandonment of Prior contrasts with his later attempts at reconciliation, providing insight into human frailty and the possibility of forgiveness.

Roy Cohn

A real historical figure, Cohn is portrayed as a ruthless, closeted gay man denying his AIDS diagnosis. His character illustrates the destructive consequences of power, denial, and self-hatred.

Harper Pitt

Joe's wife, Harper, struggles with her own psychological issues and addiction, symbolizing the collateral damage of secrecy and repression in

personal relationships.

Historical and Political Context

Understanding "Angels in America II Perestroika Kushner" requires situating it within its historical and political milieu. The play reflects the socio-political climate of the United States during the 1980s, particularly under President Ronald Reagan's administration.

The AIDS Crisis

The AIDS epidemic serves as a central backdrop, with Kushner highlighting the government's inadequate response and the social stigma faced by those affected. The play humanizes the epidemic, presenting it as a catalyst for political activism and social change.

Reagan-Era Politics

The conservative politics of the time, including policies that marginalized LGBTQ+ communities and ignored the AIDS crisis, are critiqued through the characters' experiences. The play's title, "Perestroika," alludes to the broader global context of reform and upheaval, paralleling the need for change in American society.

LGBTQ+ Rights Movement

The play captures the growing visibility and activism of the LGBTQ+ community during the 1980s, portraying both the struggles and the resilience of this marginalized group.

Production History and Critical Reception

"Angels in America II Perestroika Kushner" has been widely celebrated since its premiere, contributing significantly to contemporary American theater and cultural discourse.

Original Productions

The play debuted in 1993 as the second part of the two-part series following "Millennium Approaches." It was originally staged at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles before moving to Broadway, where it received critical acclaim for its ambitious scope and emotional depth.

Awards and Honors

The play and its predecessor collectively won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and several Tony Awards. These accolades recognize Kushner's groundbreaking contribution to theater and his courageous engagement with difficult social issues.

Legacy and Influence

"Perestroika" remains influential in theatrical and academic circles, studied for its innovative narrative structure, rich symbolism, and social commentary. It has been adapted into various formats, including the acclaimed HBO miniseries, further cementing its place in American cultural history.

Notable Productions

- 1993 Mark Taper Forum premiere
- 1994 Broadway production
- 2017 National Theatre London revival
- 2003 HBO miniseries adaptation

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'Angels in America: Perestroika' about?

'Angels in America: Perestroika' is the second part of Tony Kushner's two-part play 'Angels in America,' which explores the AIDS crisis in 1980s America through interconnected stories involving politics, religion, and identity.

Who wrote 'Angels in America: Perestroika'?

Tony Kushner is the playwright who wrote 'Angels in America: Perestroika' as the continuation of his acclaimed work 'Angels in America: Millennium Approaches.'

How does 'Perestroika' relate to the first part, 'Millennium Approaches'?

'Perestroika' serves as the sequel to 'Millennium Approaches,' continuing the

narrative of characters dealing with the impact of AIDS, social change, and personal transformation during the Reagan era.

What themes are explored in 'Angels in America: Perestroika'?

The play explores themes such as illness and mortality, political and social change, spirituality, identity, and the search for hope amid crisis.

Why is the title 'Perestroika' significant in Kushner's play?

'Perestroika,' meaning restructuring in Russian, reflects the play's focus on transformation and change, both personally for the characters and politically in America during the 1980s.

Has 'Angels in America: Perestroika' been adapted into other media?

Yes, 'Angels in America' including 'Perestroika' was adapted into an acclaimed HBO miniseries in 2003, which helped bring wider recognition to Kushner's work.

Additional Resources

1. Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, Part Two: Perestroika - Tony Kushner

This is the second part of Tony Kushner's groundbreaking two-part play, continuing the story of several interconnected characters grappling with AIDS, politics, and identity in 1980s America. The play blends realism with fantastical elements, including angelic visitations, to explore themes of redemption, change, and hope. "Perestroika" deepens the narrative established in "Millennium Approaches," offering a powerful examination of personal and societal transformation.

2. Angels in America: Millennium Approaches - Tony Kushner

The first part of Kushner's monumental work that introduces the primary characters and conflicts later expanded in "Perestroika." It addresses the AIDS crisis, homosexuality, and the Reagan era's political climate with a mix of humor, tragedy, and surrealism. This volume sets the stage for the profound questions about America's identity and morality explored in the sequel.

3. Death of a Salesman - Arthur Miller

While not directly about angels, Miller's classic play shares thematic concerns with Kushner's work, including American identity, disillusionment, and the search for meaning. Like "Angels in America," it blends personal

tragedy with broader social critique. Its exploration of dreams and failure complements the existential questions posed in "Perestroika."

4. *Rent* - Jonathan Larson

This rock musical, inspired by Puccini's "La Bohème," touches on similar issues as "Angels in America," such as AIDS, LGBTQ+ struggles, and community in the 1980s and 1990s. It captures the urgency and resilience of a generation facing the HIV epidemic, making it a culturally relevant companion piece. "Rent" emphasizes themes of love, loss, and activism.

5. *How to Write About Angels* - Tony Kushner

A collection of essays and reflections by Kushner that offers insight into his creative process and the themes underlying "Angels in America." Readers gain a deeper understanding of the play's symbolic imagery, political context, and character development. This book enriches appreciation for Kushner's artistic vision and social commentary.

6. *Faggots* - Larry Kramer

An influential novel that, like "Angels in America," confronts gay life and the AIDS crisis with candidness and urgency. Kramer's work is notable for its unapologetic critique of the gay community's response to AIDS in the early years of the epidemic. The book's raw portrayal of sexuality and activism complements Kushner's dramatic exploration.

7. *The Normal Heart* - Larry Kramer

A powerful play dramatizing the early days of the AIDS crisis in New York City, focusing on the struggle for recognition and action. It shares with "Angels in America" a commitment to social justice and a call to activism. Kramer's work is a seminal piece in LGBTQ+ theatre, highlighting personal and political battles during the epidemic.

8. *Angels in America: The Complete Text* - Tony Kushner

This edition compiles both "Millennium Approaches" and "Perestroika," providing the full scope of Kushner's epic commentary on America during the AIDS crisis. The combined text allows readers to experience the full narrative arc and thematic depth of Kushner's vision. It is essential for understanding the interplay between the play's characters and its historical context.

9. *Queer Theatre and the Legacy of Angels in America* - Edited by Various Authors

A scholarly collection examining the impact of "Angels in America" on queer theatre and contemporary drama. Essays explore the play's innovations in narrative structure, representation, and political engagement. This book situates Kushner's work within a broader theatrical and cultural discourse, highlighting its ongoing influence.

Angels In America Ii Perestroika Kushner

Angels In America Ii Perestroika Kushner

Related Articles

- [anatomy and physiology exam 1](#)
- [an atomic assault case answer key](#)
- [answer key for wordly wise book 8](#)

[Back to Home](#)