

“The Great Work Begins”: Invitation of an Idealized Community in *Angels in America*

Sakura Higuchi

I. Introduction

When gay rights movement progressed in America, it turned into inclusion to exclusion. Gay activists ignored their inner difference in the community such as non-whites, transgender men. Heterosexuals organized many oppositional forces following one another to attack their movement aggressively. Christian conservatives started to have political power in 1979. They associated homosexuals with hedonism. Then in 1981, the New York Times published 'Rare Cancer Seen in 41 homosexuals.' This cancer became first known as Gay Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) because it was regarded as a gay problem, only affecting homosexuals. GRID eventually revised as AIDS in mass media. AIDS epidemic reinforced the public image of homosexuals as dangerous outsiders. It decisively allowed heterosexuals to rise aggressive homophobic oppression. President Reagan didn't do anything to cope with the disease until in 1987, when he first delivered his major speech on AIDS. William Buckley, the conservative writer, even proposed tattooing AIDS patients to make it impossible for them to go out in public unnoticed (Chauncey 38). AIDS put gay men into closet again in a sense because they were afraid of being infected and discriminated, and started to felt ashamed of themselves. Hence, AIDS suggested the limitation of identity politics.

In a reflection of this historical background, in *Angels in America*, Tony Kushner deploys the gay community struggling with AIDS as a national problem. Kushner demonstrates conflict between the nation and the gay community. In *Angels*, the nation persists the image of strong America, and ignores the gay community. In opposition to this nation, Kushner declares his version of an idealized community to the audience.

II. the Nation and the Negative Heritage of Identity Politics

Conflict between the Nation and the gay community is embodied in two contrary opinions of America. The Conservatives have a positive image on Regan's administration. Roy Cohn, a successful New York lawyer, finds that New York State Bar Association tries to disbar him. He offers Joe Pitt, a chief clerk at the court, a job in the Justice Department in Washington, and he can control his enemies to ease their attitude. Because Joe exhibits an attitude of indecisiveness to this, Roy introduces Martin Heller, he's ally in Washington to convince Joe to take a job. In an attempt to do this, Martin induces Joe to be a member of the central figure of a strong nation:

Republican judges like land mines, everywhere they turn. Affirmative action? Take it to court. Boom! Landmine. And we'll get our way in everything: abortion, defense, Central America, family values, a live investment climate. We have the White House locked till 2000 and beyond a permanent fix on the Oval Office? It's possible. It's really the

end of liberalism, Joe. The end of New Deal socialism. The end of ipso facto secular humanism. The dawning of a genuinely American political personality. Modeled on Ronald Wilson Reagan (I: 69).

Although Martin’s optimistic view of the Republican proved incorrect historically and the Democratic won the election in 1993, Reagan’s simple conservative idea and optimistic view produces ardent conservative supporters. Martin insists that conservatives are invincible. People like Martin who are straight, wealthy, and white are guaranteed their benefits primarily. Inequality between a majority and a minority expands, but they’re willing to exclude a minority to sustain the image of ‘Strong America.’

On the other hand, however, Louis Ironson, a Jewish, lower class gay man, has a negative image on Reagan era. After he leaves his boyfriend, Prior Walter, he has a conversation with Prior's best friend, Belize, original name is Norman Ariaga, who is an African-American ex-drag queen. He attempts to figure out why the democracy in America seems to have succeeded comparatively at first, and then he describes the difficulty of being left in America:

. . . these people don’t know what ontologically, freedom is or human rights, like they see these bourgeois property-based Rights-of-Man-type rights but that’s not enfranchisement, not democracy, not what’s implicit, what’s potential within the idea, not the idea with blood in it. That’s just liberalism, the worst kind of liberalism, really bourgeois tolerance, and

what I think is that what AIDS shows us is the limit of tolerance, that it's not enough to be tolerated, because when the shit hits the fan you find out how much tolerance is worth. Nothing. And underneath all the tolerance is intense, passionate hatred (I: 95).

He criticizes liberalism superficially to justify his own guilt. He depends on 'Big Ideas' because he can't deal with reality of his situation. His argument lacks coherence, but by contrast to Martin's opinion, it represents people in a weaker position. The right wings are too concerned about their own wealth, possessions, and respectable behavior. Gay men are left out in a vulnerable position because of them. As Louis says, underneath tolerance of gay rights movements in the past decades, there's awful homophobia and it explodes under the effect of AIDS epidemic. Thus, although he is a gay man, he admits limitations of identity politics. He continues: "Power is the object, not being tolerated. Fuck assimilation" (I: 96). He despairs of useless effort of America forces minority to assimilate in their idealized society. He can't stop talking, and when his subject turns into complexity of oppression, Belize replies: "Oh is that a fact? You know, we black queens have a rather intimate knowledge of the complexity of the lines of . . ." (I: 100). Louis indicates that Belize is ex-black drag queen, while Belize acknowledges he is actually ex-ex. Louis continues: "I think it's sexiest. Well it is. The gay community, I think has to adopt the same attitude towards drag as black women have to take towards black women blues singers" (I: 100).

Louis's and Belize's heated debate indicates the negative heritage of identity politics. Belize's racial background as an African-American is still marginalized in the

gay community. Louis is privileged; therefore, he can declare that what defines Americans ‘isn’t race but politics’ with ‘pale, pale white polemics on behalf of racial insensitivity.’ On the other hand, Belize is powerless. When Belize visits Prior in the hospital, he describes himself: “If I want to spend my whole lonely life looking after white people I can get underpaid to do it” (I: 67). In American’s power hierarchy, Belize is the lowest of the low because he is a combination of an African-American, a gay, and a drag queen. Even though drag queens are discriminated in the gay community, his identification of himself as an ex-ex-drag queen has political implication. He knows that being a drag queen allows especially for colored homosexuals to advocate their marginalized existence. Later in the play, he and Prior visit Joe’s office, and he realizes that the one who visits Roy at the hospital has a relationship with Louis. He criticizes America, which he considers ‘a world of white people’ as he critiques Louis:

Louis and his Big Ideas . . . Big ideas are all you love . . . America is what Louis loves . . . Well I hate America, Louis I hate this country. It’s just big ideas, and stories, and people dying, and people like you . . . Nothing on earth sounds less like freedom to me . . . You come with me to room 1013 over at the hospital, I’ll show you America. Terminal, crazy and mean (II: 228).

Unlike Louis, he has a realistic perspective on America. He understands how empty the idealization of America is. Consequently, Kushner criticizes that the nation only

treats a majority well and ignores a minority. Also, he admits that there's negative heritage of identity politics even among the gay community.

III. Intermediary of a Majority and a Minority

Angels in America invokes their new community to the audience; therefore, the central figure needs to connect the world between a minority and a majority. The character who suggests the community is required to be a combination of a minority and a majority in his social and political identity. Joe, Roy and Prior are the characters who meet this condition. Joe is white, republican, but he is a closeted gay man. Roy has a strong political power in the conservative administration, but he is a Jew gay man with AIDS. Prior is the only main WASP character, but he is also a gay man who has AIDS. The main aim in this section is to figure out why Kushner chooses Prior among them by comparing each character.

Joe is a white, republican Mormon lawyer with a wife, Harper, who is addicted to Valium. Mormons have strict rules, such as prohibition of drinking anything containing caffeine and alcohol, of addiction, and of smoking. Because he grows up in this circumstance, religious instruction is rooted deeply in Joe's life. He visits Roy to tell him that he can't go to Washington, and he explains his moral belief: "I can't do this. Not because I don't believe in you, but because I believe in you so much, in what you stand for at heart, the order, the decency . . . There are laws that I can't break. It's too ingrained" (I: 113). When Louis asks him about his underwear, Joe describes it as a temple garment which he wears for 'protection' and considers as his 'second skin.'

Thus, his behavior is based heavily on his morality constructed by his religion. Being a republican may be particularly important for Joe because he can agree to Reagan’s conservative idea. Reagan himself was not a devout Christian, but he espoused all conservative religions to attract mass support. Mormon is a very confined religion, but Reagan’s administration allows Joe to be in a majority group. Harper doesn’t accept the idea of them going to Washington and talks about her fear of a man with a knife. He tries to remove her delirium:

Change for the good. American has discovered itself. It’s sacred position among nations. And people aren’t ashamed of that like they used to be. This is a great thing. The truth restored. Law restored. That’s what President Reagan’s done Harper. He says “Truth exists and can be spoken proudly. And the country responds to him. We become better. More good, I need to be a part of that (I: 33).

In contrast to her negative perspective for the future about Ozone layer, he finds new potential in the president. He desperately wants to be a member of the nation.

However, his hidden homosexuality prevents him from being completely in a majority. Mormons don’t detest homosexuals but deny the existence of homosexuals; therefore, Joe tries so hard to present himself as a strong, heterosexual man. Prior describes his masculine appearance as ‘the Marlboro man’ (II: 223). He wears a cologne called Faberge, which is ‘very butch’ and ‘very heterosexual high school’ (II: 163). Despite of his effort, his homosexuality is gradually revealed. During their first

encounter in the play, Louis is surprised by the fact that Joe is a republican. It isn't hard for him to find out that Joe is a homosexual; Well, oh boy. A Gay Republican . . . Well sometimes you can tell from the way a person sounds that . . . I mean you sound like a . . . (I: 35). Harper begins to suspect that her husband is a homosexual after she comes across Prior in her hallucination. After Joe comes out himself as a homosexual to his Mormon mother, Hannah Pitt, in his confrontation with Harper, he confesses that he has been aware of his homosexuality for a long time: "This is the truth. I knew this when I married you. I've known this I guess for as long as I've known anything" (I: 83). He at first thinks that he can change his homosexuality with enough effort. He thinks that he marries Harper to help her escape from difficulty of her parent's home; "I think I could save you, you at least if not myself" (I: 84).

He gradually can't resist Louis' seduction, and finally starts to have a brief relationship with him. It is his first homosexual experience. He doesn't feel guilty about leaving his unstable wife: "I'm actually happy. Actually" (II: 203). When he and Louis turn into a full-on argument, Louis asks him, "Have you no sense of decency?" (II: 240) for the second time. It is revealed that Joe 'wrote an important bit of legal fag-bashing' (II: 242) to sustain his social position as a chief clerk. His secret discriminatory attitude to Louis, a mere word processor in the federal court appears: "I don't believe this. My opinions are being criticized by the guy who changes the coffee filters in the secretaries' lounge!" (II: 241). After he breaks up with Louis, even though he has never loved Harper as a partner, he tries to get back to her: "I have done things, I'm ashamed. But I have changed. I don't know how yet, but . . . Please, please, don't leave me now. Harper. You're my good heart" (II: 272). Although he thinks that

he marries Harper on behalf of her, he actually has exploited their marriage to keep his public image as a heterosexual man. Thus, He finally starts to have a romantic relationship with a man, but he is still in denial about his homosexuality. He has a connection with a majority as a white, republican; however, his rejection of his homosexuality and hidden discrimination prevents him from playing the role of a guide to the new community.

Kushner puts two distinct AIDS patients in the play, Roy and Prior. Michael Caden notes;

As a rule, when Cohn is subjected to the phenomenon of pinklisting, the performance is not produced by gay writers interested in community pride. The standard pinklisting of Roy Cohn appears in what passes for the liberal press in the United States. Both homophobic and heterosexist, liberal pinklisting usually has far more to do with blacklisting, a genre Cohn understood well, than with celebration of a presence in history (Caden 82).

As Caden suggests, putting an actual person who is notoriously remembered in history is a traditional strategic procedure for heterosexuals to suppress homosexuals, because the person demonstrates negative images of homosexuals. It is convenient for heterosexuals to keep the binary opposition between 'normal' heterosexuals and 'abnormal' homosexuals. Kushner is aware of this effect, and he intentionally puts Roy to highlight difference between him and Prior in their attitude to their

homosexuality and AIDS.

First, he is a Jewish man but he detests his Jewishness. He is hospitalized and meets Belize, who becomes his nurse. He first demands for a white nurse because of his constitutional right. However, he doesn't simply discriminate black people. He explains his political idea:

For instance: Let's be friends. 'We shall overcome . . . ' Jews and coloreds, historical liberal coalition, right? My people being the first to sell retail to your people, your people being the first people my people could afford to hire to sweep out the store Saturday mornings and then we all held hands and rode the bus to SelmaBut the thing about the American Negro is, he never went Communist. Loser Jew did. But you people had Jesus so the reds never got to you. I admire that (II: 158).

He is aware of racial hierarchy between Jews and African-Americans in the past, and he evaluates African-American movement, while he recognizes Jews as losers who turned into communists. He admires the civil rights movement in 1950s to 1960s, because he thinks the blacks demanded the equality that belongs to them as human beings by natural and political right. However, he doesn't tolerate any kind of movements which demand identities, not universal rights, because he knows constitution does not respect for blacks, whites, yellows Catholics, or Jew. It guarantees the protection of the rights of individual human beings. When Joe and Roy have an unsuccessful conversation, Joe refuses to go to Washington. Joe says "it's just

a job” (I: 112). It triggers Roy to become furious. He demonstrates his best accomplishment to teach Joe a lesson on his naive demeanor. Roy was just the Assistant United States Attorney on the Rosenberg case, but he influenced the Judge:

Because during the trial, Joe, I was on the phone every day, talking with the judge . . . Every day, making sure that timid Yid nebbish on the bench did his duty to America, to history. That sweet unprepossessing woman, two kids, boo-hoo-hoo, reminded us all of our little Jewish mamas-she came this close to getting life; I pleaded till I wept to put her in the chair. Me. I did thatWhy? Because I fucking hate traitors. Because I fucking hate communists (I: 114).

His anti-Semite characteristic appears in the description of the Judge as ‘Yid.’ Even though enough sufficient evidence was lacked, Ethel was executed because of Roy’s behavior. Although many of communists were Jew, he loathes them. He recognizes them as blemishes who violates sound figure of America as a nation. He describes this image of America, when the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg appears in his hospital room before she leaves for the disbarment committee hearings:

The worst thing about being sick in America, Ethel, is you are booted out of the parade. American have no use for sick. Look at Reagan: He’s so healthy he’s hardly human, he’s a hundred if he’s a day, he takes a slug in his chest and two days later he’s out west riding ponies in his PJ’s. I mean

who does that? That's America. It's just no country for the infirm (II: 192).

This suggests that Reagan presents America as a strong, healthy nation, and Roy has done things based on his belief to protect this American image. However when he contracts AIDS, the disease delivers the emptiness of what he believes in.

He hates not only his Jewishness, but also his gayness. When he consults Henry, his WASP doctor, he is told that he has AIDS: "Roy Cohn, you are . . . You have sex with men, many many times, Roy, and one of them, or any number of them, has made you very sick. You have AIDS" (I: 51). Unlike Prior, he follows the public image of AIDS patients as promiscuous. Henry suggests Cohn's lascivious behavior: "From syphilis to venereal warts. In your rectum. Which you may have gotten from a whore in Dallas, but it wasn't a female whore" (I: 50). However, he resists this diagnosis with his theory on social labels:

Your Problem, Henry, is that you are hung up on words, on labels, that you believe they mean what they seem to mean. AIDS. Homosexual. Gay. Lesbian. You think these are names that tell you who someone sleeps with but they don't tell you that, No. Like all labels they tell you one thing and one thing only: where does an individual so identified fit in food chain, in the pecking order? Not ideology, or sexual taste, but something much simpler: clout (I: 51).

He denies to admit his homosexuality and he insists that he has a liver cancer. His homophobic attitude is clarified when Belize asks him for AZT to help Prior. Even though he distastes Roy, Belize saves him from his doctor trying to frame him, and advises him to gain his own AZT. On the other hand, Roy refuses to give some bottle of the medicine to him: 'WHY?' Because I hate your guts, and your friends' guts, that's why" (II: 190). Roy is not only alienated from heterosexuals, but also from homosexuals because of his twisted discrimination. When Belize tells Louis that Joe is Roy Cohn's buttboy, Louis cannot accept it, and describes Roy Cohn: "he's like the polestar of human evil, he's like the worst human being who ever lived, he isn't human even" (II: 227). Therefore, he is killed off from the play not only because of his denial of Jewishness but also because of his refusal of his homosexuality and of AIDS.

Prior's old WASP lineage is emphasized repeatedly throughout the play. When he is hospitalized for the first time, Louis and Emily, Prior's nurse talk about Prior's unique name. Emily finds his name, Prior Walter weird because the name is like "The Walter before this one" (I: 57). Louis describes Prior's origins have a long history: "Lots of Walters before this one. Prior is an old old family name in an old family. The Walters go back to the Mayflower and beyond. Back to the Norman Conquest. He says there's a Prior Walter stitched into the Bayeux tapestry" (I: 57). His ancestors, Prior I, the ghost from the thirteenth century, a medieval farmer, and Prior II, the ghost from the seventeenth century, a restorian-era sophisticate and bon vivant, appear in front of Prior to herald the emergence of the Angel. They say that Prior is 34th generation of their descendant. It suggests that although they both died of a pestilence, their family line has extended rather than died out. Thus he shares the same racial background with

a majority.

Prior is one of the two characters (the other is Belize) who coherently admits his homosexuality. Prior encounters Harper for the first time in his dream. Although Harper introduces herself as a Mormon, he isn't afraid of saying: "I'm a homosexual" (I: 38). As the Angel approaches, he is frightened and tries to cheer him up declaring: "I am a gay man and I'm used to pressure, to trouble, I am tough and strong and . . ." (I: 123). Later in the play, he begins to have strange interaction with his ex-boyfriend's boyfriend's mother, Hannah. Even though he assumes that she doesn't accept homosexuality but he doesn't hesitate to admit that he is a stereotypical homosexual.

Not only does he acknowledge his homosexuality but he chooses to accept AIDS virus in him. Prior isn't infected as a result of indulgence in promiscuous sexual relations. Belize who has seen many AIDS patients, and is supposed to know Prior's past well even thinks "Why they have to pick on you?" (I: 68). Prior is diagnosed with AIDS indiscriminately. After he and Louis attend Louis' grandmother's funeral, he tells Louis that he finds a sign of Kaposi's Sarcoma, which is often a first recognizable symptom of AIDS. He assumes that he is going to die. He describes that he becomes threat to sound America even more when he gets AIDS: "I'm a leisonnaire. The Foreign Lesion. The American Lesion. Lesionnaire's disease" (I: 27). His condition gradually gets worse. He shits blood, has a high fever and his lesions increase. After he is hospitalized, Louis leaves him because he is scared to see his boyfriend getting worse. When Louis comes back to the hospital again to explain his limitation of his tolerance, they have a heated exchange. After he asks Louis to leave the room, he feels detached, and "I hurt all over. I wish I was dead" (I: 87). Later in the play, he is

terrified by the Angel and his symptoms. Because he doesn't stay in bed, his condition gets worse again. He tells Hannah to call the ambulance, and he explains his condition: "I'm sick. I'm sick. It's expensive" (II: 231). Thus, like many AIDS patients in the era, he is not only scared to die but also to live because of great medical expense. In the end, he fights the Angel to reject the prophecy. He visits heaven and at first, he asks "I want to be healthy again. And this plague, it should stop. In me and everywhere. Make it go away" (II: 264). Realizing that angels cannot remove his disease completely, he chooses to live with AIDS: "I still want . . . My blessing. Even sick. I want to be alive" (II: 265). He is capable of making a decision to live with AIDS which leaves him visible sign of a minority after all these struggles. Therefore, he assigns to be the central figure of the new union.

IV. the Evocation of the New Community

Kushner evokes the utopian union with difference at the end of perestroika. Kushner deploys Prior, Louis, Belize and Hannah in front of the Bethesda fountain in 1990. All of couples in the beginning end up breaking up. Kushner excludes romantic and kin relationship to emphasize the connection of a group of people with diversity in race, age, sexual preference, and religion.

Joe ends up completely alone and is excluded from this union because of his failure to accept his sexuality. Another reason of this consequence is that his idea of the rhythm of history is completely opposite to Prior's which encourages progress and change. He explains his theory to Louis, because Louis has a hard time to deal with

Joe's conservatism: "The rhythm of history is conservative. You have to accept that. And accept as rightfully yours the happiness that comes your way" (II: 204).

In contrast, Hannah is allowed to join them because of her change. She is capable of dealing with a gap between her faith and her view on homosexuality. When she first appears, Joe calls her, and he first asks her if his dad had loved him. He comes out as a homosexual right after. Despite of his courage, she is awfully hard on him: "You're old enough to understand that your father didn't love you without being ridiculous about it" (I: 82). However, she doesn't accuse him of his homosexuality but drinking: "Drinking is a sin! A sin! I raised you better than that" (I: 83). Even though she blames Joe, her depth of faith is ambiguous. After the phone call, she decides to move to New York from Salt Lake City. She and Sister Ella Chapter, a real-estate saleswoman, Hannah's closest friend have their final conversation before she moves to sell her house. Sister Ella Chapter says that the reason why Hannah is the only friend to her is she is 'the only unfriendly Mormon I ever met' (I: 88). She asks Ella to give her a puff of a cigarette but she immediately asks Ella to put it away so nobody will know they're smoking. It gives the idea that she is not a conventional Mormon, and she tries hard to pretend to be a devout Mormon. She attempts to take care of Harper when Harper is arrested for chewing down a pine tree in central park. She gives Harper advice: "At first it can be very hard to accept it. With faith and time and hard work you reach a point . . . where the disappointment doesn't hurt as much, and then it gets actually easy to live with" (II: 184). She is philosophical about disappointment, and it indicates that she may have been dissatisfied with her life in a strict, small community. She and Prior start to have a strange interaction later in the

play, although they're complete stranger in the first place. Prior is her first experience to see a gay man in person. Right after their first meeting, she needs to take him to the hospital. He imagines that she has negative evaluation to homosexuals, but she denies his assumption: "No you can't. Imagine. The things in my head. You don't make assumptions about me, mister; I won't make them about you" (II: 235). Her move from Salt Lake City to New York corresponds with her significant changes from tough Mormon mother without understanding to a good friend for homosexuals.

Kushner tags the play as a 'gay fantasia on national themes,' and portrays a small group of people including gay men, but attempts to draw attention from a larger society, a nation. However, he chooses "We will be citizens" (II: 280), instead of "We will be nations." To clarify his intention of doing this, it is required to devise the difference between citizen, nation, and identity. First of all, we want to examine the difference between identity and citizenship. The political idea of citizenship is based on liberalism, and the main part of the group who involves citizenship is individual. Diversity in the group is evaluated. Everyone allows to criticize discrimination to people who fights for citizenship. Citizenship encourages to assimilate. On the other hand, political idea of identity is derived from democracy. The group who advocates their identity works as a group not as individual. In a relationship with other groups of different political idea, identity requires differentiation. Within the group of identity, homogeneity is demanded. When the political group of identity encounters discrimination, the only attacked group can criticize discrimination. Second, we discuss the difference between nation and citizenship. In general, to be a nation is to be a member of a state. Nationality is acquired by birth or adoption, marriage, or

descent. Citizenship is a specific legal relationship between a state and a person. It gives the person certain rights and responsibilities. It does not have to accompany nationality. Therefore, citizenship encourages liberalism, and evaluates difference of individual, and no matter what nationality of the person is, allows him to assimilate as equal.

The play ends with Prior's address:

This disease will be the end of many of us, but not nearly all, and dead will be commemorated and will struggle on with the living, and we are not going away. We don't die secret deaths anymore. The world only spins forward. We will be citizens. The time has come.

Bye now.

You are fabulous creatures, each and every one.

And I bless you: More life.

The Great Work Begins (II: 280).

This suggests that the circumstances of AIDS patients become better than 1985, or 1986 but Prior wears thick glasses and walks with a cane, so he may have a little time left to live. He personifies the limitation of identity politics. His acknowledgement of his homosexuality is influenced by gay rights movements in the past, but his AIDS virus causes discrimination and the end of identity politics. Therefore, Prior's address of "We will be citizens." (II: 280) has an important political message. As a gay man, he admits failure of identity politics which ignores inner difference and causes hatred

among them. However, it is not the answer to be accepted as minority in the nation. He declares citizenship, which encourages diversity, and which includes gay and straight, black and white, Mormon, and Christian and Jew as equal. He speaks a Jewish blessing, “More Life.” He also leaves uniqueness of gay people in the word ‘fabulous.’ In his interview with Michael Cunningham, February 1994, Kushner says:

I think there is a way in which people take hatred and transform it into some kind of a style that is profoundly moving to me because it shows people’s enormous capacity, or the enormous power of the imagination to transform suffering into something powerful and great. For Jews, it’s called *menschlikeit* and for African American it used to be called soul and now I think for younger African American, it’s called badness, and for gay people it’s fabulousness.

Consequently, Kushner evolves a new community that celebrates difference of individual in opposition to the nation which excludes rather than includes as a result of seeking empty, idealized freedom.

There’s still a deficiency in Kushner’s utopian image of community. The characters are still marginalized in Prior’s Christian thematic. It is too convenient that Prior calls Belize, Louis, Hannah to complete the story of biblical pool of Bethesda. Louis’ ethnic background is ignored in a sense:

The story of Bethesda that Louis tells has distinctly anti- Jewish overtones

in the Book of John, where it precedes Christ's healing of a lame man (Prior walks with a cane as a result of his disease). The miracle increases the prosecutorial furor of the Jews, already aroused by Christ's performing such miracles as bringing back the dead (Belize mentions Lazarus earlier in the play) (Freedman 114).

In addition, Kushner includes Hannah, but it is problematic that her attitude toward Mormon is unclear. She is described as 'noticeably different' but only as 'She looks like a New Yorker,' and reads the New York Times. Indeed, her move from Salt Lake City to New York is a huge achievement for her. However, to emphasize broadness of the community, he should portray how she deals with her faith. Joe's absence has a point to emphasize Kushner's rejection of conservative ideals, but it is impossible to exclude difference to achieve an ultimate goal of an idealized society, even there's aversion within it. What Kushner does here is far from ideal, and that's similar to what the nation have done. Kushner is successful to declare a utopian community with all kinds of collective identity against the nation, but it still has a limit because in the truest sense, the community doesn't accept difference.

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