

Betrayed Hopes, Wounded Bodies:
Whose Reality Matters in David H. Hwang's *M. Butterfly*
and Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*?

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Abstract

Resumen

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Palabras Clave: *fingere, esse*, fictionalizar, ser, salud publica socio-política, Larry Kramer, discurso, *The Tragedy of Today's Gay*, David H. Hwang, *M. Butterfly*, Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*.

*To know, and even happily, that we meet
unblessed; not in the same garden of wax fruit and
painted trees, that lie of Eden, but after, after the
Fall... (Arthur Miller – After the Fall, 2.113)*

There have already been written many essays on David H. Hwang's *M. Butterfly* and Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. Implicitly, there have been suggested many readings for both plays, with discussions ranging from politics to religion, sex, race, and others. My essay explores the role of the imagination in our constructing of (sexual) identities. The main focus is placed on the copula that links a very fragile personal pronoun "I" and the verb "to be." As long as reality cannot satisfy us completely, why is it wrong or unethical to let the "I" migrate from the very restrictive areas of *esse* (to be)

toward the more generous ones of *ingere* (to makeup, to fictionalize)? In other words, how much are we in *esse*, and how much in *ingere*?

In the light of the above remark, I strongly believe that both David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* and Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* are plays structured and assembled on characters' self-imposed lies, deceptions, and the like. Moreover, because the social category--i.e., homosexuality--to which they belong has not certified and legalized their much-needed entry into citizenship, these characters propose to themselves, and to us as well, a deconstruction of the personal pronoun "I." Put differently, as long as they are not entirely accepted by society, they do not have any other choice but to offer us a constructed "I," while retaining for themselves their quintessential, homosexual "I."

Men and Effeminatiⁱ

How and by whom are our sexual identities created? Does the presence of one very specific anatomical organ delimit one person's sexual identity? We have been trained into believing that there are only two genders, male and female, partly because of our binary way of thinking. Needless to say, just as in one color there are degrees of its intensity and saturation, so there are in us verbal, behavioral, and sexual tendencies that could make us look and act more or less masculine or feminine. Still, the borderline between these two is very fragile.

I think it is equally erroneous and politically incorrect to name a man "effeminate." As Richard Dellamora points out, "Nietzsche argues that masculine strength, contrary to theory, produces not progress but stasis—ultimately, death—the end [...]" (77). Does a man choose to be(come) homosexual? Homosexuals have always been a target since, allegedly, they are a menace to the institution of marriage, procreation, and to morality in general. According to Jennifer Terry,

Earlier studies from the 1930s aimed at determining distinct somatic features of homosexuals for the most part failed to produce any such evidence. Most of them focused on the overall physical structure of bodies, measuring skeletal features, pelvic angles and things like muscle density and hair distribution. (144)

In addition, endocrinology has not been able to say with certainty why some people prefer to engage in homosexual rather than heterosexual acts. All these studies only suggest that a human being--mistakenly labeled "deviant"--is a curiosity for those who consider themselves (or believe to be) "normal." Terrifyingly, our attention has shifted to homosexuals; their bodies are unjustly displayed to our avid curiosity, as if our lives did not lack anything. Just as homosexuals are a mystery for us, their own bodies and lifestyle are choices undeniably difficult to explain. They do not act like this because they want to terrorize and plague a society, but rather because this is the most suitable style for their lives. Is that enough to accept them? Since this essay dwells its main argument in the realm of *fingere*, how does literature contribute to this acceptance?

Whose Butterfly Gets Out of the Cocoon?

David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* starts and ends cyclically, namely with the main character, René Gallimard, staging for us the last twenty years of his life as a French diplomat in China, and then back to his own country, this time as a prisoner. At first view, Gallimard is the dreamer *par excellence*. As I hope to demonstrate, by the end of the play Gallimard becomes *the* character: no personal bodily or mental contours of any kind attach to his initial, given "I," but pure, unlimited departure and spectral self-dissolution into fantasy, art, and imagination.

As a memory play, Hwang offers intersections of time and space, from Mao's China of the '60s to France of the '80s. Even more emphatically and closer to the construction of the play, what we should understand from its very beginning is that Gallimard plays various roles: that of the seducer, seduced, actor, and director. He is completely mesmerized by the enchanted space of the theater. As a person, he seems more confident in costumes on stage, than in plain clothes in real life.

When the play begins we realize that Gallimard has often rehearsed and staged in his mind a very personal version of the famous Italian opera *Madame Butterfly*. As he says, “[. . .] I sit night after night, watching our story play through my head, always searching for a new ending, one which redeems my honor [. . .]. And I imagine you—my ideal audience—who come to understand and even, perhaps just a little, to envy me” (1.2.4). This “searching for a new ending” has generated varied readings. For example, Douglas Kerr conceives of Gallimard's technique “as an obsessive re-play” meant to introduce to us “a series of tableaux from his memory...” (126). However, structurally I think that Gallimard is neither Pirandellian nor Proustian. In other words, Gallimard is neither in search of an author, nor *à la recherche de son propre temps perdu*. On the contrary, it seems to me that he has been searching for a character under whom, on the one hand, he could perform his wildest sexual fantasies. On the other hand, he could uncover his identity, and thus preserve a lie as neatly as possible for his colleagues and family.

That he is infatuated with a character more than anything else is obvious since the scene of Gallimard's playing *Madame Butterfly* precedes his meeting of the Chinese actor, who actually performs the role on stage.ⁱⁱ As Robert Skloot suggests, “Gallimard becomes absorbed into his own sexual fantasy, one which originated (for him) in an early 20th-century Italian Opera” (60). Played in his fantasies many a time, Gallimard

envisions a new ending for this opera: “I determined to try an experiment. In *Madame Butterfly*, Cio-Cio-San fears that the Western man who catches a butterfly will pierce its heart with a needle, then leave it to perish” (1.7.32). This is a very sexually charged line. According to Eve Sedgwick, “[. . .] the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know” (3). Deep down ourselves we all know the object of our desire. Whether or not we subject to it publicly is not completely dependent upon us, but rather on how receptive and open-minded to embrace different forms of sexual behaviors is the particular society in which we live.

Gallimard’s extra conjugal affair with the very bold and sexually uninhibited Renée cannot deny what he has known for a very long time, namely that he prefers men in intimacy.ⁱⁱⁱ As David L. Eng points out, “The copula of the shared name immediately marks the presence of an imaginary other, a Lacanian *imago*, so to speak, meant to impute coherence onto Gallimard’s identification” (100). Needless to say, his sexual desires are so deeply encrypted in him that he cannot change them without altering and destroying his fake identity. For him, Renée is not at all the ideal partner he has been searching to complete him sexually.

Undeniably, that role is reserved for Liling Song, the one who performs the part of Cio-Cio-San on stage and fulfills Gallimard’s sexual fantasies behind closed doors. In a way, it is more convenient for the French diplomat to satisfy his sexual needs without letting them interfere with his political agenda (or so he naively believes). *En d’autre terms*, it is convenient for him to have a wife on paper, Helga, with Song as his true lover in barely-lit rooms. There Gallimard’s forbidden fantasies are finally materialized and passionately consummated.

Times change, and along with them so does Gallimard's position at the French Embassy in China. As he recollects, "Mao became very old, and his cult became very strong. [. . .] The doctrine of the Cultural Revolution implied continuous anarchy. Contact between Chinese and foreigners became impossible" (2.9.68). Moreover, Toulon, the French Ambassador, sends Gallimard back home, in part because the latter's political predictions have not become real, as prophesized. That is to say, Gallimard's presence among the staff at the French Embassy in China is no longer needed. Not only have his political predictions not been accurate, but his colleagues fear that he may have himself engaged in "perverse" sexual actions that could indirectly cast a very bad light on the French embassy as an institution. As Toulon tells Gallimard bluntly, "We care about your mind. The quality of your analysis. [. . .] Could I have the number of your mistress? Joke! Joke! Eat a croissant for me" (2.9.69).

With politics entering the scene, the scope of Hwang's play broadens considerably. Now we understand better what is played and staged behind Song's costumes. He is not an ordinary actor, but a spy. When Gallimard is sent home, the Chinese immediately fear that an important source of information between the French man and his lover may be in serious jeopardy. Therefore, Song is forced to leave for France in order to retie a (love) match that is considerably polluted by dirty political schemes. The following passage brilliantly brings on stage the relationship between an individual and his country, as well as the level of submissiveness one must endure for one's country. "CHIN. And you [Song] give us weekly reports! Useful information! [...] Either that, or back to the rehabilitation center! [. . .] Then *you* go to France and be a pervert for Chairman Mao!" (2.11.72-3)

Earlier in this essay, I underlined the importance of the verb "to be" when copulating with the personal pronoun "I." Generalizing the above quotation, the "I" then

is nothing else but alluvial strata of socio-political demands coerced on us more or less visibly. We also infer that when we say “I am . . .,” we inevitably implicate in our epistemological and ontological equation a series of the collectively and culturally accepted manifestations of “to be.” Put differently, the copulative verb “to be” has the penetrative force that always gorges the surface of the delicate pronoun “I.”

Therefore, Song is *not* an actor playing “Madame Butterfly,” but a political prostitute satisfying the needs of his party. Here, we should note not only the illegal commerce of bodies in exchange for political information and favors, but also raise a very problematic question. How much do we need to degrade and/or prostitute ourselves in order to constitute ourselves socio-politically? Overburdened by this role, Song finally strips his political clothes to reveal himself to Gallimard *as he really is*. This climatic moment also interrupts the mental and physical coitus between Gallimard and his precious, yet hidden lover. The sexual copula between the former and Song is thus abruptly broken, and René is expelled from his sexual Paradise that has lasted for twenty years.

SONG. Oh, but you asked me to strip, remember?

GALLIMARD. What? That was years ago! And I took it back!

SONG. No. You postponed it. Postponed the inevitable. Today, the
inevitable has come calling.

GALLIMARD. No! Stop! I don't want to see!

SONG. Then look away.

GALLIMARD. *You are only in my mind! All this is in my mind!* I order
you! To stop! (3.2.87, emphasis added)

This time, however, Song is not going to be obedient and follow anyone's commands. Gallimard's secret is revealed. However, what I believe to be at the core of René's

frustration is not so much the revealing of the truth per se, as shocking as it may sound to others, but his impossibility, if not refusal, to explain his sexual preferences. Most likely Song was just a dummy on whom Gallimard played out his sexual fantasies. When he shouts “You are only in my mind,” I think that what he may suggest is that Song existed in his mind for a long time before the actual encounter with the Chinese actor/spy.

Once this version of the Italian opera is exposed in front of a famished, greedy for scandal audience, Gallimard’s *play* must have an end. The time has finally come for him *to be* Cio-Cio-San. As he says, “I’ve played out the events of my life night after night, always searching for a new ending to my story, one where I leave this cell and return forever to my Butterfly’s arms. Tonight I realize my search is over. That I’ve looked all along *in the wrong place*. And now, to you, I will prove that my love was not in vain—by returning to the world of fantasy where I first met her” (3.3.91, emphasis added). Therefore, he willingly leaves behind the burdens of his physicality, only to become part of a spectacle that never ends. In theatricality, he *is* the enactment of “Madame Butterfly.” As Skloot suggests,

Gallimard escapes prison by escaping from *himself* and getting into *herself* [...] despite his earlier denials of sexual confusion [...]. Hwang describes for Gallimard a journey through time and space made possible for him only through the imagination, and, of course, in the theatre. (63)

It goes without saying that theater implies performance for an audience; the very being of the theater would make no sense without its viewers. According to Kathryn Remen,

If we apply Foucault’s analysis of the prison system from his book *Discipline and Punish*, we begin to see that the theater and the prison

operate in similar fashions with similar purposes: they are both
‘[architectures]... built... to render visible those who are inside...’ (391)

But what may be the meaning underneath the last words uttered by Gallimard?:
“The love of a Butterfly can withstand many things—unfaithfulness, loss, even abandonment. But how can it face the one sin that implies all others?” (3.3.93) I believe that what Hwang may say through Gallimard is that homosexuality is not officially accepted yet. Therefore, in order to restore his freedom and identity, Gallimard takes a *hara-kiri* knife with which he performs the ancient, honorific ritual of dying with dignity, known as *seppuku*. As Remen argues, “The violent suicide displays the power of punishment. We are accustomed to carefully controlled and hidden forms of punishment that mask the violence against the body” (399). By so doing, he kills not only the man in him that could not father a child and perpetuate his name, but he also kills the second man in him, the one who dared to satisfy his sexual needs, and thus fulfill, complete, and restore him as a person. By killing the two men inside himself--the two wings of *his* butterfly--Gallimard may have finally and ecstatically released the woman in him, and thus he may have created the matrix of perpetuating his dreams. From now on, enacting the character of “Madame Butterfly” he can continue his fantasy of being seduced, loved, and abandoned by men.

Life, More Life, *Lifest!*

This part of my essays begins with a grammatical error. There is no such thing as the superlative of a noun. The reason why I created it is because Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, although touching upon serious matters (e.g., AIDS, drug-addiction, outcasts, drag queens, and degenerate politicians), in the end would want to be a eulogy to living life at all costs. I strongly believe that these characters cry out to have not just life nor more life, but the impossible, “lifest.” Just as there is no eternal physical life for

us, so there is no superlative for a noun. What we are given is life, sometimes more life, but never its infinity, “lifest.”

Tony Kushner’s monumental play is divided into two parts, *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*. For me, the quintessential moment of this theatrical work is Louis’s comment made in the second part of the play:

LOUIS. We have five senses, but only two that go beyond the boundaries ... of ourselves. When we look at someone, it’s just bouncing light, or when you hear them, it’s just waves, vibrating air, or touch *is* just nerve endings tingling. [. . .] Smell is made of molecules of what you’re smelling. [...] Inhale. (*Perestroika*, 1.2.17)

If we deconstruct the copula between “to be” and “I” from the above, we may discover that more than anything else we are chemical structures, nameless in the face of Law, Politics, Religion, and Race. That is to say, despite these categories that bind and put us into hierarchies, underneath it all, *we are the same*. It is the surface, it is the outside that has been for so long the center of our attention, when we should start focusing and improving the means of our common denominator—our body.

It is precisely this body to which Kushner’s *Angels* alludes, with a particular interest to the homosexual body and the one with AIDS. Significantly and highly politically charged, the two characters in this play diagnosed as HIV positive belong to opposite social strata. By juxtaposing Roy Cohn (a successful lawyer) to Prior Walter (club designer or caterer), Kushner may emphasize the *anonymity* of the human body when facing an awful and dreadful disease.

Because Roy Cohn has managed to secure for himself a very comfortable social position, he cannot jeopardize it by admitting he is a homosexual. His definition of himself is equally tautological, disturbing, and self-empowering. What he says between

the lines is that the one empowered could and actually does create new paradigms of thinking, shamelessly violating the already existing ones: “Because *what* I am is defined entirely by *who* I am. Roy Cohn is not a homosexual man. Roy Cohn is a heterosexual man [...] who fucks around with guys” (*Millennium*, 1.9.46). This is not a delirious man talking. If anything, this is a megalomaniac who thinks that he holds absolute power over everything and everyone.

When Roy finds out that his body has been contaminated with HIV, he shouts: “This is *politics*, [. . .], the game of being alive” (*Millennium*, 2.6.68). Face to face with a very traumatic disease, Roy cowardly refuses to admit he has AIDS; instead, he prefers to think that he has cancer. Irrefutably, the former is associated in his mind with how others would react to hearing the “bad news.” His ambivalent structure would be revealed, and that would be a very miscalculating political maneuver on his part. As Daryl Ogden suggests, “Roy recognizes that to be diagnosed with AIDS [. . .] would signify the end of his powerbrokering ability in the high-Reagan era of the mid-eighties” (243).

Admittedly, being hurt is a *sine qua non* condition of our passing through this life. There is blood for life and flesh growing old. There is a lot of blood, infected or otherwise. After all, as the Angel shouts to Prior, and by extension to us all, “In YOU the virus of TIME began!” (*Perestroika*, 2.2.48) Not only the virus of time began in us, but also our slowly and inexorably descending into decay and eventually death.

En conséquence, when one is caught in continuous and agonizing pains, what matters the most? Is it the comfort brought by friends? Is it the soothing effect of a tranquilizer? Is it the thought of an afterlife? Or is it the plain truth of our dying? It seems to me that Roy chooses mentally the last “option,” while physically being helped by some very efficient tranquilizers. Belieze (former drag queen) is the one who bluntly

informs Roy about the latter's current physical condition. As a nurse, Belieze has the benefit of circulating knowledge to others, just as blood circulates inside to keep us alive.

BELIEZE. Watch out for the double blind. They'll want you to sign something that says they can give you M&M's instead of the real drug. You'll die, but they'll get the kind of statistics they can publish in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. And you can't sue 'cause you signed. And if you don't sign, no pills. (*Perestroika*, 1.6.31)

Either way, this time there is no escape for an otherwise very powerful and conniving Roy Cohn. Once again AIDS has struck not a specific person, but a nameless body. The only thing left for him to do is to control pain through his connections.

ROY. Oh hi Martin. Yeah I know what time it is, I couldn't sleep, *I'm busy dying*. Listen Martin, this drug they got me on, azido-methalato-molamoca-what- chamacallit. Yeah. AZT. *I want my own private stash*, Martin. (*Perestroika*, 1.6.31, emphasis added)

AIDS has a different meaning for Prior Walter. He is the one to whom the Angel comes to allow, open his body *be* the new book of dark prophecy. But he refuses this apocalyptic embodiment, even though it could finally place him in a position of power and control. Having a body visibly deteriorated by the Kaposi sarcoma lesions, nonetheless he rejects embodying the book of prophesy because, more than anything else, he wants to *be alive*. As he says, "I believe I've seen the end of things. And having seen, I'm going blind, as prophets do. It makes a certain sense to me" (*Perestroika*, 2.2.56). According to Deborah R. Geis, "[...] Prior has been insisting repeatedly that his eyes are failing him: like dementia, the failing eyesight is linked both with HIV

infection (CMV retinitis) and with the blindness/insight that is the traditional trope of prophecy” (206).

However, I would suggest another reading to Prior’s “And having *seen*....” In pronunciation, the third principal part of the verb “to see” could be easily mistaken for the noun and verb “(to) sin.” My equating “seen” to “sin” has nothing to do with conceiving of homosexuality as immoral. On the contrary, I believe that for all of us the ontological and epistemological conditions *are* a bundle of sins. We come into this wounded, bleeding world with an already encoded history of ancestral sins. Without them we would be of no value to a Divinity that asks of us constant repentance, and endless stages of various degrees of remorse.

Under these circumstances, of particular importance is the misconception of AIDS. When this disease was discovered, many thought that homosexuals were the only ones responsible for generating it. Not only that, but also

[. . .] those men diagnosed as HIV positive in the early 1980s, many of whom must have held responsible the indifferent response of the Reagan administration for the accelerating crisis, must have felt exactly like expandable cells within what was widely perceived as an otherwise healthy body politic” (Ogden 247).

As mentioned earlier, two exponents of a not-so-healthy-body-politic in Kushner’s play are Roy and Prior. Like in a cruel experiment, the former dies, while the latter is left to live in a very debilitated physical condition. I believe that the final message Kushner transmits to us is that, no matter how life is, it is still the best existing alternative for us. While for many critics, Prior is the prophetic voice in the play, I think that Harper plays this role more efficiently. Valium-addicted and having discovered that her husband prefers homosexual relations to heterosexual, she admits that life is full of pain and

sorrow. What is remarkable about her is that, even though she has a mockery for a husband and a life that could be tolerated only via drugs, she does have the dignity not to beg for anything. She is a choral figure who appears in key moments in Kushner's play; in one of those moments she says with lucidity and dignity that "Heaven is depressing, full of dead people and all, but life" (*Perestroika*, 5.2.122).^{iv}

Comparatively, I am not very comfortable with the way in which Kushner rounded up Prior as a character. Much to my disappointment, he turns out to be a caricatured prophet. He begs for life and its benediction, and implicitly for absolving his sins so pathetically that he loses his initial force of an otherwise well-developed character. He even makes the following remark, which I think is exaggerated and highly disrespectful toward all of those who have been in abominable pains: "When they're more spirit than body, more sores than skin, when they're burned and in agony, [...], they live. [...] The addiction to being alive" (*Perestroika*, 5.6.136). The key to tolerate pain is to remain mentally and physically conscious of it. Most likely, once the one in pain has slipped into unconsciousness, they are not alive but in a very disruptive and unnatural state of being. Thus, for me this "addiction to being alive" is not a sine qua non condition for begging for life, as Prior pathetically begs of the Angel. His former and extremely motivated anger toward God--and by extension to society with its *unequal rights*--unfortunately proves to have been just a temporary diction (most likely now alleviated by drugs): "[...] if He returned to see ... how much suffering His abandonment had created if He did come back you should *sue* the bastard" (*Perestroika*, 133).

Kushner begins his *Angels* by juxtaposing two homosexuals afflicted by AIDS, and so I was hoping to see developed more effectively how this disease did not take into account Roy and Prior's different social status, and how it implicated more rhetorically

charged political discourses, and, even more importantly, scientific support from medical narratives. Instead, Kushner chose to address the last lines of his play from a very secular religious point of view, thus undermining considerably the originality and power of the play up to that moment. Following an inexplicably submissive path, Kushner *begged* for forgiveness and life, which I strongly believe is an undeserved offence to the memory of those who actually did die because of AIDS, as well as wrongly keeping homosexuals in the closet, where they should continue to be submissive. This type of self-serving attitude seems to me to disempower rather than empower homosexuals in their long movement toward being acknowledged as citizens, something that Kushner's *Angels* does not deliver in the end.

Esse Est Sanguinem Do

In a *mot à mot* translation, what is written above reads, "To be is to give blood." Or, as Joe says in Kushner's *Angels*, "Freedom is where we bleed into one another" (*Perestroika*, 1.7.37). Set from the '60s to the '80s (Hwang's) or mid-eighties (Kushner's), both plays focalize on homosexuality that is still not legally accepted. *En passant* and very inefficiently, Kushner also touches upon Gorbachev's Revolution, known as Perestroika, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the removal from power of the Ceausescus (in Communist Romania), and the Ukrainian catastrophe at Chernobyl. I think his intention is to place homosexuality as the next urgent revolution. As argued in the previous section of my essay, he does not do a very exquisite job in persuading us why, from his point of view, homosexuality should stopped being labeled as "deviant."

As Geis argues, "[...] theatricality is not a means to escape the ordinary or everyday in the traditional sense, but rather, a way to re-encounter it and transform it into something [...] fabulous" (207). Moreover, if these two plays are Brechtian in structure, then how committed are we as viewers? Reproaching Louis (his partner) that

he did not behave ethically when hearing about Prior's infection with AIDS, the latter makes a remarkable comment: "A person can, maybe an editorial "you" can love, Louis, but not *you*, specifically you, I don't know, I think you are excluded from the general category" (*Millennium*, 2.9.78-9). How about us? Are we in this general category of loving, compassionate people? Or are we "editorial," in a loose translation, devoid of empathy, afraid to approach homosexuals and their problems for fear we may be contaminated with an infected blood (literally or figuratively speaking)? Or, if we do not get infected, then we may be placed among a derisive category known as "homosexuals sympathizers." Homosexuals are not physically persecuted, but they are not fully accepted either. According to Remen, "Punishment in time is, as Foucault explains, a matter of observation. We do not expect any torture or inscription on the body of the condemned, only confinement and observation" (395).

In addition, when AIDS introduces itself into the equation, things get even more complicated. Then heterosexuals bitterly *judge, label, and condemn* homosexuals. As John O'Neill argues,

[...] in an industrial society the social bond may be rendered in terms of the medicalized icon of the gift of blood. [...] For as long as our medical system fails to find a prevention or cure for HIV, we are abandoned to *horror autotoxicus*—the catastrophe of lethal fluids (blood or semen), [...] where the gift of blood has been polluted and now death rather than life and love to its trusting recipients. (180-2)

We should stop being indifferent, assuming that only medicine should try to find a cure for AIDS. We should also find a cure for our perpetual indifference. In theatrical parlance, we should not feel like Lady Macbeth, imagining that our hands have been soiled by awful and cruel crimes; in our case, the crime is that we have been indifferent

to a disease such as AIDS, and to homosexuals in general. Another bias that I find in Kushner's play is that he made of AIDS an American problem, when in fact this is a pandemic phenomenon.^v

In previous discourses, when someone was diagnosed with cancer or AIDS, it was thought that the whole society was contaminated with cancer or AIDS, and thus society graciously partook in the pain of other. Needless to say, those were not discourses to last simply because they were based on empty analogies and false hopes. Even more importantly, we should take care of our bodies so that we may not affect the social equilibrium: "...if people choose to ignore health risks they are placing themselves in danger of illnesses, disability and disease, which removes them from a useful role in society and incurs costs upon the public purse" (Lupton 90). Of this important aspect also speaks Larry Kramer in a public speech, *The Tragedy of Today's Gay*—delivered on November, 7, 2004, five days following the reelection of President George W. Bush. While Deborah Lupton's quotation aimed a general audience in which, for the sake of public health, issues related to sexual orientation did not matter, Kramer's goes to the specifics. He speaks very directly and with not much compassion for his *fellow* and younger gay generation. He admits that no genuine and constant research has been conducting *vis-à-vis* AIDS because "The continuing existence of HIV is essential for the functioning of the totalitarianism under which gay people now live. It works like this: HIV allows 'them' to sell us as sick. And that kills off our usefulness, both in our minds—their thinking we are sick—and in the eyes of the world—everyone thinking we are sick" (65). He thus infers that homosexuals are a tragic community because, even though refined and educated, they have not been able to permanently exit the closet. They are in the closed, and for that matter still in *fingere* than in *esse*.

Notes

ⁱ By writing this paper, I claim no profound knowledge of homosexuality. Nonetheless, as a heterosexual, I challenge myself to break this cultural barrier according to which a heterosexual could not understand a homosexual, and vice versa. Thus, I de-politicize the human body that does not know a specific name, religion, political affiliation, et cetera. On the other hand, I open doors toward a better, more effective communication between myself and gay people.

ⁱⁱ As Gallimard explains to us, “In the preceding scene, I played Pinkerton, the womanizing cad, and my friend Marc from school ... [...] played Sharpless, the sensitive soul of reason” (1.4.7).

ⁱⁱⁱ To strengthen my point, of a relevant importance is when Gallimard admits, “Other people, I’ve been told, have dreams where angels appear. Or dragons, or Sophia Loren in a towel. In my dream, Marc, from high school appears” (1.9.23).

^{iv} Paralleling Harper’s vision, *even* Roy, the very pragmatic and cynical character, seems to have found a very solid epiphany (in the end) of (his) life. As he admits, “[...] I have looked, I have searched all my life for absolute bottom, and I found it, *believe* me: *Stygian*. How tragic, how brutal life is” (*Perestroika*, 4.1.82)

^v Kushner wrongly believes that only in America are people diagnosed as HIV positive, or people with a disease of any kind, completely ignored by their society. Whether or not premeditated on Kushner’s account, by making the Americans indifferent to diseases, this inevitably triggers national hysteria and paranoia. Partly, I rely for my argument on Roy’s comment, “The worst sick of being sick in America [...] is that you are booted out of the parade. Americans have no use for the sick. [...] It’s just no country for the infirm” (*Perestroika*, 3.1.62). If Kushner really knew about the medical treatment (or should I say the lack of treatment?) in third-world countries, he would not make such disrespectful comments in a society such as the American, where sick people *do* get treatment. Admittedly, there are things to be drastically improved. But that is a different matter altogether.

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