Selection Project

- Read the following text and think about how the scenes could be staged
- Create an annotated script by underlining all references to, or suggestions of, production elements (light, sound, set, props, projection and costume). You can use the notes section to provide further thoughts if you wish.
- Consider how the key dramatic moment highlighted in yellow could be staged using production elements (set, lighting, props, costume, sound, etc.).
- Support your ideas with visual materials such as reference images, sketches, etc.
- Make TWO of the following to demonstrate your ideas in more detail:
  - Prompt copy
  - Costume element
  - Prop
  - Scale model of set
  - Costume rendering
  - Stage plan (to scale)
  - Cue synopsis for sound
  - Cue synopsis for Lighting
  - Sound samples
  - Lighting references
Angels in America
Part One: Millennium Approaches (excerpt)
By Tony Kushner

Characters

ROY M. COHN  A successful New York lawyer and unofficial Power broker.
LOUIS IRONSON A word processor working for the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.
PRIOR WALTER Louis’ boyfriend. Occasionally works as a club designer or caterer, mostly lives modestly off a small trust fund.
ANGEL Four divine emanations, Fluor, Phosphor, Lumen and Candle; manifest in One: The Continental Principality of America. She is the angel incorrectly identified by Joseph Smith as the Angel Moroni. She has magnificent grey wings.
ETHEL ROSENBERG
PRIOR 1 A ghost or dead Prior Walter from the thirteenth century. He is a blunt, gloomy medieval farmer with a guttural Yorkshire accent.
PRIOR 2 A ghost of dead Prior Walter from the eighteenth century. He is a Londoner, sophisticated, with a High British accent.

Scene 5

Same day. Joe and Roy in the living room of Roy’s brownstone. Joe has just come in and is still in his coat. Roy wears an elegant bathrobe.

joe: I can’t. The answer’s no. I’m sorry.
roy: Oh, well, apologies.

I can’t see that there’s anyone asking for apologies.

(Pause.)
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joe: I'm sorry, Roy.
roy: Oh, well, apologies.
joe: My wife is missing, Roy. My mother's coming from Salt Lake to ... to help look, I guess. I'm supposed to be at the airport now, picking her up but ... I just spent two days in a hospital, Roy, with a bleeding ulcer, I was spitting up blood.
roy: Blood, huh? Look, I'm very busy here and—
joe: It's just a job.
joe: Roy—
roy: WASHINGTON! When Washington called me I was younger than you, you think I said, "Aw fuck no I can't go I got two fingers up my asshole and a little moral nosebleed to boot!" When Washington calls you my pretty young punk friend you go or you can go fuck yourself sideways 'cause the train has pulled out of the station, and you are out, nowhere, out in the cold. Fuck you, Mary Jane, get outta here.
joe: Just let me—
joe: I love you, Roy.

There's so much that I want, to be ... what you see in me, I want to be a participant in the world, in your world, Roy, I want to be capable of that, I've tried, really I have but ... 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. I would give anything to protect you, but ... There are laws I can't break. It's too ingrained. It's not me. There's enough damage I've already done.

Maybe you were right, maybe I'm dead.
roy: You're not dead, boy, you're a sissy.
    You love me; that's moving, I'm moved. It's nice to be loved. I warned you about her, didn't I, Joe? But you don't listen to me, why, because you say Roy is smart and Roy's a friend but Roy . . . well, he isn't nice, and you wanna be nice. Right? A nice, nice man!
    (Little pause)
    You know what my greatest accomplishment was, Joe, in my life, what I am able to look back on and be proudest of? And I have helped make presidents and unmake them and mayors and more goddamn judges than anyone in NYC ever—AND several million dollars, tax-free—and what do you think means the most to me?
    You ever hear of Ethel Rosenberg? Huh, Joe, huh?

Joe: Well, yeah, I guess I . . . Yes.

roy: Yes. Yes. You have heard of Ethel Rosenberg. Yes. Maybe you even read about her in the history books.
    If it wasn't for me, Joe, Ethel Rosenberg would be alive today, writing some personal-advice column for Ms. magazine. She isn't. Because during the trial, Joe, I was on the phone every day, talking with the judge—

Joe: Roy—

roy: Every day, doing what I do best, talking on the telephone, 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 that. I would have fucking pulled the switch if they'd have let me. Why? Because I fucking hate traitors. Because I fucking hate communists. Was it legal? Fuck legal. Am I a nice man? Fuck nice. They say terrible things about me in the Nation. Fuck the Nation. You
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want to be Nice, or you want to be Effective? Make the law, or subject to it. Choose. Your wife chose. A week from today, she'll be back. SHE knows how to get what SHE wants. Maybe I ought to send her to Washington.

Joe: I don't believe you.
Roy: Gospel.
Joe: You can't possibly mean what you're saying. Roy, you were the Assistant United States Attorney on the Rosenberg case, ex-parte communication with the judge during the trial would be . . . censurable, at least, probably conspiracy and . . . in a case that resulted in execution, it's . . .
Roy: What? (Challenging) Murder?

(Pause.)

Joe: You're not well is all.
Roy: What do you mean, not well? Who's not well?

(Pause.)

Joe: You said—
Roy: No I didn't. I said what?
Joe: Roy, you have cancer.
Roy: No I don't.

(Pause.)

Joe: You told me you were dying.
Roy: What the fuck are you talking about, Joe? I never said that. I'm in perfect health. There's not a goddamn thing wrong with me.
(He smiles)
Shake?
Millennium Approaches

(joe hesitates. he holds out his hand to roy. roy pulls joe into a close, strong clench.)

roy: It's OK that you hurt me because I love you, baby Joe. That's why I'm so rough on you.

(Roy releases Joe. Joe backs away a step or two.)

roy: Prodigal son. The world will wipe its dirty hands all over you.

joe: It already has, Roy.

roy: Now go.

(Roy shoves Joe, hard. Joe turns to leave. Roy stops him, turns him around. He smooths the lapels on Joe's coat, tenderly.)

roy: I'll always be here, waiting for you . . .

(Then with sudden violence, Roy grabs Joe's lapels and pulls him close, shaking him violently.)

roy: What did you want from me?! What was all this?! What do you want, treacherous ungrateful little—

(joe grabs roy by the front of his robe, and propels him across the length of the room, slamming him against a bookcase. Joe holds Roy at arm's length, the other arm ready to hit.)

roy (Laughing softly, daring Joe): Transgress a little, Joseph.

(Joe releases Roy.)

roy: There are so many laws; find one you can break.
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(Joe hesitates, then turns and hurries out.
Roy doubles over in great pain, which he's been hiding
while Joe was in the room. As he sinks to the floor.)

roy: Ah, Christ . . .
Andy! Andy! Get in here! Andy!

(The door opens, but it isn't Andy. A small Jewish woman
dressed modestly in a fifties hat and coat enters the room. The
room darkens.)

roy: Who the fuck are you? The new nurse?

(The figure in the doorway says nothing. She stares at Roy.
A pause. Roy forces himself to stand, then he crosses to her.
He stares at her closely. Then he crosses back to a chair, and
sits heavily.)

roy: Aw, fuck. Ethel.

Ethel Rosenberg (Her manner is pleasant; her voice is ice-cold):
You don't look good, Roy.
roy: Well, Ethel. I don't feel good.

Ethel Rosenberg: But you lost a lot of weight. That suits
you. You were heavy back then. Zaftig, mit hips.
roy: I haven't been that heavy since 1960. We were all heavier
back then, before the body thing started. Now I look like
a skeleton. They stare.

Ethel Rosenberg: The shit's really hit the fan, huh, Roy?

(Roy nods.)

Ethel Rosenberg: Well the fun's just started.
roy: What is this, Ethel, Halloween? You trying to scare me?
(Ethel says nothing.)

Roy: Well you're wasting your time! I'm scarier than you any day of the week! So beat it, Ethel! BOOO! BETTER DEAD THAN RED! Somebody trying to shake me up? HAH HAH! From the throne of God in Heaven to the belly of Hell, you can all fuck yourselves and then go jump in the lake because I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU OR DEATH OR HELL OR ANYTHING!

Ethel Rosenberg: Be seeing you soon, Roy. Julius sends his regards.

Roy: Yeah, well send this to Julius!

(He flips the bird in her direction, stands and moves toward her, intending to slam the door in her face. Halfway across the room he collapses, in terrible abdominal pain.)

Ethel Rosenberg: You're a very sick man, Roy.

Roy: Oh God... ANDY!

Ethel Rosenberg: Hmmmm. He doesn't hear you, I guess. We should call the ambulance.

(She goes to the phone)

Hah! Buttons! Such things they got now.

What do I dial, Roy?

(Pause. Roy looks at her, then.)

Roy: 911.

Ethel Rosenberg (Dials the phone): It sings!

(Imitating dial tones) La la la...

Huh.

Yes, you should please send an ambulance to the home of Mr. Roy Cohn, the famous lawyer.


What's the address, Roy?
Angels in America

roy (A beat, then): 244 East 87th.
ethel rosenberg: 244 East 87th Street. No apartment number, he's got the whole building.
   My name? (A beat) Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg.
   (Small smile) Me? No I'm not related to Mr. Cohn.
   An old friend.
   (She hangs up)
   They said a minute.
roy: I have all the time in the world.
ethel rosenberg: You're immortal.
roy: I'm immortal. Ethel. (He wills himself to his feet)
   I have forced my way into history. I ain't never gonna die.
ethel rosenberg: History is about to crack wide open.
   Millennium approaches.

Scene 6

That night, Prior's bedroom. Prior, in bed, even more frightened than before. Prior 1 stands before him, wearing a weird hat and robes ornamented with strange signs over his coarse farmer's tunic. He carries a long palm-leaf bundle.

prior 1: Tonight's the night! Aren't you excited? Tonight She arrives! Right through the roof! Ha-adam, ha-gadol . . .

prior 2 (Appearing, similarly attired): Lumen! Phosphor!
   Fluor! Candle! An unending billowing of scarlet and—
   (Prior flings off his covers. He's prepared.)

   FUCK OFF! Get the fuck out of my room! GO!
Millennium Approaches

Prior 1 (leaving a little to Prior 2): Hard as a hickory knob, I’ll bet.

Prior 2: We all tunesce when they approach. We wax full, like moons.

Prior 1 (A barked command): Dance.

Prior: Dance?

Prior 1: Stand up, damnit, give us your hands, dance!

Prior 2: Listen...

(A lone oboe begins to play a little dance tune.)

Prior 2: Delightful sound. Care to dance?

Prior: Please leave me alone, please just let me sleep.

Prior 2: Ah, he wants someone familiar. A partner who knows his steps. (To Prior) Close your eyes. Imagine...

Prior: I don’t—

Prior 2: Hush. Close your eyes.

(Prior does.)

Prior 2: Now open them.

(Prior does.
Louis appears. He looks gorgeous. The dance tune transitions into a lovely instrumental version of “Moon River.”)

Prior: Lou.

Louis: Dance with me.

Prior: I can’t, my leg, it hurts at night.

Are you... a ghost, Lou?

Louis: No. Just spectral. Lost to my self. Sitting all day on cold park benches. Wishing I could be with you. Dance with me, babe...
Angels in America

(Prior stands, gingerly putting weight on his bad leg. He’s surprised there’s no pain. He walks to Louis.
They begin to dance. The music is beautiful.)

Prior 1 (To Prior 2): Hah. Now I see why he’s got no children.
He’s a sodomite.
Prior 2: Oh be quiet, you medieval gnome, and let them dance.
Prior 1: I’m not interfering, I’ve done my bit. Hooray, hooray,
the messenger’s come, now I’m blowing off. I don’t like it here.

(Prior 1 vanishes. Prior 2 watches Louis and Prior dance.)

Prior 2: The twentieth century. Oh dear, the world has gotten
so terribly, terribly old.

(Prior 2 vanishes. Louis and Prior dance.
Louis vanishes.
Prior dances alone, his arms holding empty air, as if not
realizing that Louis has gone.
The lights return to normal.
Then suddenly, the sound of the beating of enormous wings.
Prior opens his eyes. The pain in his leg returns.)

Scene 7

Same night, continuous with Scene 6. Split scene: Prior alone in his
apartment; Louis alone in the park.
Again, the sound of beating wings.

Prior (Looking up in terror at the ceiling): Oh don’t come in
here don’t come in—
(Limping back to his bed. Scarred, broken, he calls out)
Louis!

(Summoning defiance) No! My name is Prior Walter, I am . . . the scion of an ancient line, I am . . . abandoned I— NO. My name is . . . is . . . Prior and I live . . . here and now, and—

(The lights in the room intensify slightly as, to Prior’s horror, an inhuman voice comes out of his mouth;)

PRIOR: —in the dark, in the dark, the Recording Angel opens its hundred eyes and snaps the spine of the Book of Life and—

(Prior clamps his hand over his mouth; the lights return to normal.)

PRIOR: Hush! Hush! I’m talking nonsense, I—

(Trying to calm himself) No more mad scene, hush, hush . . .

(Louis is on a bench in Central Park. Joe approaches, stands at a distance. They stare at each other. Louis stands.)

LOUIS: Do you know the story of Lazarus?
JOE: Lazarus?
LOUIS: Lazarus. I can’t remember what happens, exactly.
JOE: I don’t . . . Well, he was dead, Lazarus, and Jesus breathed life into him. He brought him back from death.
LOUIS: Come here often?
JOE: No. Yes. Yes.
LOUIS: Back from the dead. You believe that really happened?
JOE: I don’t know anymore what I believe.
LOUIS: This is quite a coincidence. Us meeting.
Angels in America

joe: I followed you.
    From work. I . . . followed you here.

(Little pause.)

louis: You followed me.
    You probably saw me that day in the washroom and
    thought: there's a sweet guy, sensitive, cries for friends
    in trouble.

joe: Yes.
louis: You thought maybe I'll cry for you.
joe: Yes.
louis: Well I fooled you. Crocodile tears. (He touches his heart,
    shrugs, then harshly) Nothing.

(Joe reaches tentatively to touch Louis's face. Louis pulls back.)

louis: What are you doing? Don't do that.

(Joe withdraws his hand and takes several steps back, ready
    to run.)

joe: Sorry. I'm sorry.
louis: I'm . . . just not—(Warning him away) I think, if you
    touch me, your hand might fall off or something. Worse
    things have happened to people who have touched me.
joe: Please.

(Joe walks up to Louis.)

joe: Oh, boy . . .
    Can I . . .
I . . . want . . . to touch you. Can I please just touch you . . . um, here?

*(He puts his hand on one side of Louis's face. He holds it there.)*

**J oe:** I'm going to Hell for doing this.

**Louis:** Big deal. You think it could be any worse than New York City?

*(Louis takes Joe's hand away from his face and holds it, then.)*

**Louis:** Come on.

**Joe:** Where?

**Louis:** Home. With me.

**Joe:** This makes no sense. I mean I don't know you.

**Louis:** Likewise.

**Joe:** And what do you know about me you don't like.

**Louis:** The Republican stuff?

**Joe:** Yeah, well for starters.

**Louis (Meaning it):** I don't not like that. I *hate* that.

**Joe:** So why on earth should we—

*(Louis kisses Joe.)*

**Louis:** Strange bedfellows. I don't know. I never made it with one of the damned before.

I would really rather not have to spend tonight alone.

**Joe:** I'm a pretty terrible person, Louis.

**Louis:** Lou.

*(Joe steps back from Louis.)*

**Joe:** No, I really really am. I don't think I deserve being loved.
Angels in America

louis (A nod): There? See? We already have a lot in common.

(Louis begins to walk away. He turns, looks back at Joe. Joe follows. They exit.

Prior listens. At first he hears nothing, then all at once, the sound of beating wings again, now frighteningly near. Prior stares up at the ceiling, terrified.)

Prior: That sound, that sound, it . . . What is that, like birds or something, like a really big bird, I'm frightened, I . . .
No! No fear, find the anger, find the . . . anger! (Standing on the bed, fierce, up at the ceiling) My blood is clean, my brain is fine, I can handle pressure, I am a gay man and I am used to pressure, to trouble, I am tough and strong and . . . Oh. Oh my goodness. I . . . (He is washed over by an intense sexual feeling) Ooohhh . . . I'm hot, I'm . . . so . . . (He sinks to his knees) Aw Jeez what is going on here I . . . must have a fever, I—

(The bedside lamp flickers wildly! Prior screams. Then the bed begins to lurch violently back and forth. The room is filled with a deep bass creaking and groaning, like the timbers of a ship under immense stress, coming from the ceiling. The bed stops moving as the creaking and groaning sounds intensify; the bedside lamp grows brighter and brighter as, from the ceiling, there's a fine rain of plaster dust.)

Prior: OH! PLEASE, OH PLEASE! Something's coming in here, I'm scared, I don't like this at all, something's approaching and I—

(There is a great blaze of triumphal music, heralding.)
Prior: OH!

(Four thunderous chords sound, and with each chord the bedroom is saturated with colored light: first, extraordinary, harsh, cold, pale blue; then, rich, brilliant, warm gold; then, hot, billious green; and finally, spectacular royal purple. Then there’s silence for several beats. Prior stares wildly around the purple-colored room.)

Prior (An accented whisper): God almighty.

Very Steven Spielberg.

(A sound, like a plummeting meteor, tears down from very, very far above the earth, hurtling at an incredible velocity toward the bedroom. The light seems to be sucked out of the room as the projectile approaches. Right before the light is completely extinguished, there’s a terrifying CRASH as something immense strikes earth. The bedroom shudders and pieces of the ceiling’s plaster, lathe and wiring rain down on and around Prior’s bed; as the room is plunged into absolute darkness, we hear the whole ceiling give way.

A beat, and then, in a shower of unearthly white light, spreading great opalescent gray-silver wings, the Angel descends through the ceiling into the room and floats above the bed.)

Angel: Greetings, Prophet;

The Great Work begins:

The Messenger has arrived.

(Blackout.)