Kushner's Political Theatre

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Summary/Abstract: This paper explores Tony Kushner's epic play "Angels in America" within the tradition of American drama. Though gay themes prevail in the play, Tony Kushner's work foregrounds and critically examines issues crucial to the American identity. Like other playwrights before him - Miller, Williams, Albee, Mamet, Shepard, who challenged and exposed the presumptive myths of American society, a society which has seen the collapse of moral, religious, political and social structures and in which power, sex and material fulfillment have replaced love, compassion and authentic living, Kushner continues this strain of social criticism from the viewpoint of his characters.
most of whom are gay, who, as symbols of marginality, voice or witness or exhibit the moral decay, spiritual depletion and self-destructiveness found at the very core of American society. Kushner's apocalyptic view of America, one of a country rushing headlong towards a catastrophic end, and his tragic vision is relieved by his hope in man, who as a social being, can have an impact on the historical process, mainly through political engagement and activism. Though the threat of catastrophe, annihilation and despair looms large in his work, in man lies the hope and the potential for change, and therefore, salvation.