

Abschlussarbeit

zur Erlangung des Magister Artium
im Fachbereich Neuere Philologien (FB 10)

der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
Institut für England- und Amerikastudien

Thema:

„We will be citizens.“

**The Notion of Citizenship in
Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and
Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart***

1. Gutachterin: Prof. Dr. Katja Sarkowsky
2. Gutachterin: Prof. Dr. Christa Buschendorf

vorgelegt von: Manuel Dominic Stock
aus: Frankfurt am Main

Einreichungsdatum: 12. Oktober 2009

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. The Notion of Sexual Citizenship	11
2.1 Approaches to Sexual Citizenship.....	14
2.2 AIDS Citizenship	18
2.3 AIDS in ‘America’	23
2.4 Summary and Conclusion	26
3. AIDS and the Reaganite United States of the 1980s	29
4. <i>The Normal Heart: We Must Save Ourselves</i>	35
4.1 Identity: <i>A culture that isn’t just sexual</i>	35
4.2 Making AIDS an Issue and Providing Information	38
4.3 Taking Action.....	40
4.4 Marriage: <i>My lover. My lover. I do.</i>	45
4.5 Summary	46
5. <i>Angels ‘National Themes’ as Sites of Citizenship</i>	47
5.1 The Angel of History.....	49
5.2 AZT, Medical Authority and Health Citizenship.....	53
5.3 <i>Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Homosexuals in the United States Armed Forces</i>	56
5.4 Constituting and Re-Constituting (Sexual) Identities	58
5.5 Roy Cohn.....	61
5.6 Summary	65
6. Conclusion	67
Appendix I – German Summary	76
Appendix II – Angelus Novus.....	80
Appendix III – Bethesda Fountain, Central Park, New York	81
Works Cited.....	82
Erklärung.....	86
Lebenslauf.....	87

I want to thank my partner and friend
Tim Heinemann
for his love, support and inspiration.
I love you.

“We’re living through war, but
where they’re living it’s peacetime,
and we’re all in the same country.”

Ned Weeks in *The Normal Heart*
(Kramer 99)

1. Introduction

The AIDS crisis has had an important impact both on the fight for the recognition and liberation of gay men¹ in the United States and elsewhere in the Western world, and on the notion of sexual citizenship. The AIDS crisis hit the gay community at a time when, as Tony Kushner puts it harshly in the foreword to *The Normal Heart* and *The Destiny of Me*:

an emergent community, laboring to set itself free from centuries of persecution and oppression, was blindsided just at the moment of a political and cultural attainment of some of its most important goals by a biological horror miserably allied to the world’s murderous indifference, its masked and its naked hatred. (vii)

Within this evocative quotation, the ‘biological horror’ represents HIV and AIDS, and the ‘world’s murderous indifference, its masked and its naked hatred’ refers to homophobia. Whilst AIDS affects both heterosexuals and homosexuals, representations of its threat and effects in the Western world have tended to focus on gay men.

The combination of homosexuality and AIDS became fundamental for homosexuals ever since the sickness was assigned to be anti-American (cf. Yingling) and “society was [just] ready to grant that homosexuality is not illness, it is seized with the idea that homosexuality breeds illness” (Krauthammer qtd. in Eisenbach 292). Given that in “the age of AIDS, sexuality cannot be hidden any longer” (Fisher 18), AIDS made the sexual identity of gay men visible in an unwelcome way (cf. Sontag 113; Eisenbach 308). Moreover, it sexualized homosexual identity *per se* (Isin and Wood 88) while heterosexuality is still seen as the norm and not necessarily linked with sexual acts. AIDS then, as Lawrence Howe points out, “has raised the stakes in a social contest over civil rights, sexuality, the economics of health care, and even the authority of the scientific establishment” (396) and thus, for gay

¹ Even though many lesbians took part in fighting the AIDS crisis, the fight for liberation by lesbian women in the United States has had a different agenda. Given that the two plays focus on gay men, this thesis will focus on male homosexuals.

men and women, “oppression has always been there, but AIDS has now magnified its meaning from social discrimination to mortality” (ibid 415). With the favoring of a shadow state during the Reaganite years of the 1980s, both the tremendous influence of the ‘moral majority’ which labeled AIDS as the scourge of God, and the mandatory patriotism – which was not just about anti-Communism but even more so about “a concept of what was or was not ‘acceptable’ behavior for American citizens” (Bottoms 161) and thus the denunciation of gay men – added to the problems that many gay men and people with AIDS (PWA) were facing (cf. Eisenbach). AIDS and the fear of infection also revitalized “the myth of the contagion of homosexuality” (Jones 106).

Moreover, the AIDS crisis has also had a positive effect on the gay community and its fight for full citizenship as it “has revitalized the gay movement, providing it with new structures and new goals” (Jones 117). Jeffrey Weeks sees the “most striking feature of the response to the epidemic from the gay community [... as] the way in which it brought out a new culture of responsibility, for the self and for others” (44). Furthermore, AIDS changed the conception of homosexual identity. David Bell and Jon Binnie argue that “we [must] consider all citizenship to be sexual citizenship, as citizenship is inseparable from identity, and sexuality is central to identity” (*Sexual Citizen* 67).

In this thesis I will examine how, as cultural productions, *The Normal Heart* and *Angels in America. A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*² – first and second generation AIDS plays respectively³ – tell stories about (sexual) citizenship and how it is negotiated. Citizenship is not only to be understood as a political issue, but also as socially and materially constructed (cf. Questio 22) and culturally coded. If we understand culture as the ways of doing things and of organizing society (cf. Hannerz), then the negotiations of citizenship take place, among others ways, through culture.

Approaching the notion of citizenship from the epilogue of *Angels*, where the prophetic character Prior Walter postulates ‘we will be citizens’ – the ‘we’ being presumably gay men

² In the following I will refer to *Angels in America. A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* generally as *Angels*.

³ Fujita defines *The Normal Heart* as a ‘first generation AIDS play’ and lists the following characteristic of this genre: their traditional forms, sentimental and assimilationist tones, and depictions of a revised notion of family values in the times of AIDS. “The second generation plays, which include *Angels*, have both elements of anger and humor, and a message to resist against society without falling into sentimentalism” (Fujita 112f.).

and PWA who demand “*More Life*” (Kushner 280, emphasis in original) – I will address the issues of gay identity, (sexual) citizenship and the nation during the AIDS crisis of 1980s Reaganite America. Plays about AIDS, identity and the nation can and did test the state of America and how it includes – or fails to include – its homosexual citizens since “AIDS is a test of who we are as a people” (Russo qtd. in Brown 196; cf. Scapp). Because of “the way which AIDS has been perceived, conceptualized, imagined, researched and financed”, Dennis Altman argues, this “makes this the most political of diseases” (qtd. in Thompson 22).

As stated above, Bell and Binnie argue that “*all citizenship is sexual citizenship*” (*Sexual Citizen* 10, emphasis in original), which is inevitably true for the case of this thesis as it is about sexual identity and the notion of citizenship. Sexual citizenship can be understood as the ways and means through which a society imagines and organizes social membership, political participation, and societal arrangement (Questio 22, transl.). Consequently, I will focus on the following questions: how do both plays address the notion of citizenship as well as gay identity and the nation? How does the ‘sexual citizen’ enact sexual citizenship, and in what projects is he engaged in?

Even though the word ‘citizen’ is mentioned for the first time on the very last page of *Angels*, the notion of citizenship is constantly addressed throughout the play through various ‘national themes’ which can be understood in terms of their notion of (sexual) citizenship. Therefore, citizenship is central to the play. It is citizenship that binds the different ‘national themes’ together and can help us to think about the (socio)political message of this multileveled play. *The Normal Heart* can be understood as a play “about fund-raising and organizing” (Kushner qtd. in Kramer xiv) and is an example of how radical democracy can take place and how (a part of) New York’s community dealt with the AIDS crisis. Both plays can be read in terms of citizenship as they address issues such as belonging to a nation, the granting of rights and the inclusion and exclusion from society; all of which are fundamental to the notion of citizenship. They end with the inclusion of homosexual citizens in the master narrative of ‘America,’⁴ or at least the promise to be part of it in the future. *Angels* ends with a “fantasy of acknowledging all citizens” (Scapp 93) and *The Normal Heart* with a “classical liberal utopian vision” (Kramer xiv).

⁴ See chapter 2.2 for a discussion of the term ‘America’.

Furthermore, the performing of both plays can be read as part of the citizenship discourse and as enacting citizenship in that they “made news, made a difference, had an effect” by catalyzing society (Kushner in Kramer vvi). *Millennium Approaches*, the first part of *Angels*, won the Tony Award for best play in 1993 as well as the Pulitzer Prize for best drama in the same year. The second part of *Angels*, *Perestroika*, won the Tony Award for best play a year later (Nielsen 1). According to Jacob Juntunen, *Angels* was able to change “the dominant ideology and it was successful precisely because it was a mainstream, for-profit production. Its political work was not in spite of its position in the ‘culture industry,’ but because of it” (40). In his work, Juntunen comes to the conclusion that *The Normal Heart* and *Angels*, as well as Kushner’s more recent play *Homebody/Kabul*, “are capable of supporting emergent ideologies by encouraging their assimilation into the dominant ideology. While this process almost always renders the emergent ideologies less radical, it nevertheless shifts the dominant ideology” (248). Juntunen argues that “because it was received as ‘art’ rather than ‘activism’ in its reviews, *Angels in America* was positioned to change discourse about gay men, AIDS, and the 1980s” (40). It did this “in a way that the off-Broadway production of *The Normal Heart* could not possibly have done eight years earlier” (ibid).

Ken Nielsen names two events in 1985 that changed America’s thinking about AIDS: the production of *The Normal Heart* and the death of the all-American idol Rock Hudson⁵ who admitted that he had AIDS (Nielsen 14) and whose AIDS-related death shocked the nation. When diagnosed with AIDS, the heterosexual icon Rock Hudson came out about his sexual identity and explained that he was homosexual. *The Normal Heart* not only raised public consciousness about AIDS, it also informed the public and brought the topic to a wider audience. It was a call for action, and it also made officials take action. New York’s Mayor, Edward Koch, announced a six million dollar program to provide AIDS patients with home and hospice care, day care for their children, and ten interdisciplinary patient care teams (Juntunen 156) just before the opening of the play. This was presumably due to the fact that Koch was told that an AIDS play was to be put on stage in which he and his administration would be heavily criticized (ibid 137). Up to that point, even though half of the nation’s AIDS caseload was in New York City in the early 1980s, the municipal government had not taken any measures to deal with the AIDS crisis (Eisenbach 294). I will discuss *The Normal Heart* not only as a play about citizenship, but also as a play that in itself and its performance was enacting citizenship.

⁵ For a discussion about Rock Hudson see chapter 4.2

The notion of sexual citizenship seems to be highly theoretical on the one hand, while on the other hand there are many detailed examples of what sexual citizenship is, could be and how it is enacted (cf. Brown). There are multiple meanings and interpretations of citizenship. The lack of a singular agreed definition of citizenship shows the complexity of the concept (Richardson 105) and Chantal Mouffe reminds us that “[t]he way we define citizenship is intimately linked to the kind of society and political community we want” (60). This is true not only for the general citizenship discourse, but also for the debate on sexual citizenship and lesbian and gay rights, as the different approaches on (sexual) citizenship illustrates.

Jeffery Weeks argues that citizenship is ultimately about “a new form of belonging” which arises from the “transformations of everyday life [of the late, or post-, modern world], and the social and political implications that flow from this” (35)⁶. He defines ‘the moment of citizenship’ as follows: “the claim to equal protection of the law, to equal rights in employment, parenting, social status, access to welfare provision, and partnership rights, or even marriage, for same-sex couples” (ibid 37). Isin and Wood understand citizenship as “a set of practices [...] and a bundle of rights and duties [...] that define an individual’s membership in a polity” (4). This approach is very similar to Turner who also specifies citizenship as a set of juridical, political, economic, and cultural practices which define the individual as a “competent member of society” (2). Isin and Wood stress that “the landscapes of sexuality, for heterosexuals and homosexuals, are integral to their identity and the exercise of citizenship rights” (72). Hence it is important to get an understanding of how sexual citizenship is defined. Sexual citizenship is, according to Bell and Binnie, “at once a social, political, legal moral, cultural, and geographical formation” (*Geographies* 870). These ‘formations’, individual and also collective appreciation of citizenship, are shaped through an environment that influences the ways in which citizenship is thought and enacted. Consequently, notions of citizenship are relationally constructed through the power relations between the individual and society.

In the next chapter I shall outline the status quo of the academic debate on the notion of sexual citizenship and will explain how I use this concept in this paper. Furthermore, I will discuss the notion of ‘AIDS citizenship’ (cf. Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen*). The historical context of 1980s America will be outlined in chapter 3. How the plot of *The Normal Heart*

⁶ Cf. Claudia Schippert for a review of Weeks work on citizenship.

and *Angels*' 'national themes' can be understood as sites where sexual citizenship is negotiated and enacted will be elaborated in chapters 4 and 5.

I understand both plays as cultural productions about the AIDS crisis, identity and the nation. As such, they are plays about sexual citizenship. When taking a broad definition of sexual citizenship we can read the plays as texts on citizenship and at the same time can illustrate the concept with examples from the AIDS crisis of the Reaganite 1980s and the reaction of gay men, PWA and others to it. Over the next chapters I will explore the different negotiations and understandings of citizenship in the existing literature, Larry Kramer's play *The Normal Heart* and Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America. A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*.

The second part of this thesis offers first of all an overview of the existing literature on sexual citizenship. Secondly, it describes the limits of the current literature of sexual citizenship and, in so doing, I will broaden the notion and understanding of this concept. In particular, I will argue for a more cultural understanding of citizenship in order to overcome the narrow focus of the existing mainstream discussions. Consequently, I will place citizenship debates in an America that is not just made up by rights and duties, but as a place that has a much broader meaning. Thus, America is not just a nation-state with a specific legal framework. America is a nation that consists of particular cultures and identities, and untangling these cultures and identities is important for discussing the citizenship literature in relation to *The Normal Heart* and *Angels*.

The aim of *AIDS and the Reaganite United States of the 1980s* is to provide an overview of the development of the AIDS crisis in reference to the particular political and cultural context in which it developed. More importantly, I believe that this crisis did not just develop, but that the growth and the severity of the AIDS crisis was shaped by this particular context, the rise of neo-conservatism and the ignorance of the political leadership towards the needs of gay men.

In *The Normal Heart* I will discuss the different ways through which this play addresses the issues of citizenship and how we can understand this play through the arguments made in chapter 2. Firstly, the focus of this chapter is to show how *The Normal Heart* displays the different structures which contributed to the AIDS crisis. Secondly, I will critically evaluate

the content and messages of the play in relation to the literature on citizenship. This will involve understanding the specifics of the different claims made by Larry Kramer. One particular claim which I will discuss in detail is the notion of assimilation whereby individuals become a 'full member' of American society and culture. This allows us to explore the links between the literature and the play in addition to scrutinize the play's message and contribution to the liberation of gay men and PWA.

Chapter 5 discusses *Angels in America* in a similar structure as that employed in chapter 4. I will analyze *Angels* and its arguments in relation to the notions and implications of citizenship. In particular, I will plot the multiple scales through which sexual citizenship in relation to gay men and PWA is negotiated. Hence, I will show that sexual and AIDS citizenship need not be reduced to the individual level, but that we need to take socio-cultural formations into account in order to understand how it works on the individual. Unlike *The Normal Heart*, *Angels* stresses the various scales through which sexual citizenship and identity are negotiated. I will argue that *Angels* is the more radical play, in that it has a clear agenda for queering American society. My discussion of the play's radical elements will be blended together with the utopian vision *Angels* develops through its various stages. Consequently, in relation to the citizenship literature I will argue that this invocation of utopian and revolutionary change is important for developing an agenda to encourage the inclusion of gay men and PWA into American society and culture.

In the conclusion I will bring the three chapters, literature review, *The Normal Heart* and *Angels*, together. As a way to combine these two plays, I will argue that *The Normal Heart* and *Angels* are political reflections and interventions that offer cultural insights into the life of gay men in the Reaganite early- and mid-1980s and of PWA in the first decade of the AIDS crisis. In addition, I will show that these are not just political reflections that illustrate the different responses to the AIDS crisis, but that these responses developed and changed through time. Additionally, I will show that these plays are not just describing the diverse practices of citizenship, but that both plays are themselves enactments of citizenship. In so doing, I will use this final chapter to compare the two plays and discuss their different arguments in relation to the literature on citizenship and my personal understanding. I will finish by arguing that both plays are not only about gay men and PWA and their struggle to be included into American society but that they are traces of American culture and identity politics.

2. The Notion of Sexual Citizenship

In the 1980s, the questions and debates of citizenship re-emerged some 30 years after the publishing of Thomas Humphrey Marshall's *Citizenship and Social Class* in 1950, which can be called the founding document of the notion of citizenship in its modern condition (cf. Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship*: 444; cf. Brown and Knopp). Even though the notion of citizenship dates back as far as the Greek philosopher Aristotle, it was Marshall who introduced the idea of the social rights of citizenship alongside civic and political rights.

Starting in the early 1990s, the term 'sexual citizenship' became part of the agenda of gay and lesbian studies and citizenship studies as well as the new political movements of gay men and lesbians. Writing about the point in time when the notion of sexual citizenship emerged, Claudia Schippert notes that;

parallel to the diversification in feminist/lbgt [lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender] discourse and formation of queer theory as academic discipline, an urgency become noticeable on the part of liberals or left-of liberal thinkers to (re-)claim language and discourse of morality and ethics from conservative and right wing institutions and ideologies. (286f.)

Thus the "most of the influential texts engaging and developing sexual citizenship emerged in reaction to, or in conversation with, the neo-conservative/neo-liberal political debates in the U.S. and U.K. in the 1990s" (ibid 289).

It was David T. Evans who introduced the concept of sexual citizenship with his book *Sexual Citizenship – The Material Construction of Sexuality* in 1993 (cf. Hekma n.p.). However, there is no singular agreed definition of sexual citizenship. Even though Gert Hekma is right to assert that sexual citizenship "is primarily used to draw attention to the political aspects of erotics and the sexual component of politics" (n.p.), the notion of sexual citizenship goes way beyond this.

Due to social norms reinforced by the nation-state, and to some extent even by law, the nation-state does not consider gay men, lesbians and PWA as full citizens yet (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship*). As such, Bell and Binnie discuss citizenship from a critical point of view and argue that "citizenship is an exclusionary concept just as an inclusionary one" and that "battles around citizenship are battles to be recognized and included in the polity" (ibid 444). This fight "for inclusion often means conceding to perform certain duties or responsibilities in a barter for rights" (ibid).

In Western political theory two models of conventional citizenship dominate: liberalism and communitarianism/republicanism. Whereas in liberalism “politics are defined as actions the citizen takes to get the things s/he wants from the state or other citizens, while mitigating the state’s interference in this pursuit of happiness”, in communitarianism “citizenship [...] is about the communal, participatory relationship individuals have with the state or polity” (Brown 6f.). Communitarianism stresses the obligations of a citizen and rallies around the nation-state and national identity (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship* 444). Most theories of citizenship “follow Marshall [...] and concentrate on three particular phases: the civil or legal, the political and the social” (Weeks: 38). In addition to these two perspectives on citizenship, a third approach has emerged: radical democratic citizenship (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship* 444f.), which also strives to broaden the spheres of citizenship “by adding in insights from poststructuralist theory – most notably those that concern the ‘decentring’ of the subject, and which therefore raise questions about *identity* itself” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 7f., emphasis in original). This notion emerged in distinction to “neoconservative discourses around welfare and the family” (ibid 7). It also reflects and speaks to the social change of the last decades when, “[w]ith the advent of new social movements, civil society has been designated by scholars as the most likely new site of politics [...] hold[ing] a potential for radical democratic citizenship” (Brown 57). Since “historically, aspiration to citizenship has encoded a particular version of sexual behaviour and private life into its central discourse” (Weeks qtd. in Schippert 297), gay and lesbian scholarship has needed a different approach of citizenship.

In the radical democratic notion of citizenship which is strongly linked to poststructuralism and whose most famous representative is Chantal Mouffe, what binds the people “together is their common recognition of a set of ethico-political values” (Mouffe 69). Citizenship is therefore “an articulating principle that affects the different subject positions of the social agent [...] while allowing for a plurality of specific allegiances and for the respect of individual liberty” (ibid 69f.). Mouffe “understand[s] citizenship as the political identity that is created through identification with the *respublica*” (69, emphasis in original). As such, citizenship “is not just one identity among others, as in liberalism, or the dominant identity that overrides all others, as in civic republicanism” (ibid 69). What is radical about the radical democratic notion of citizenship is that it “seeks to put forward a conception of democracy as a way of life, a continual commitment not to a community or state but to the political

conceived as a constant challenge to the limits of politics” (Rasmussen and Brown 175). The radical democratic notion wants to redefine

citizenship as the site for subject formation, radical democracy has become a means of talking about identity politics not just as a particularistic struggle for access to the benefits of citizenship but as a shared movement to expand the political sphere and the meaning of citizenship through contingent and ongoing struggles.

(ibid 184)

Mouffe seeks to extend the ‘principles of liberty and equality’, which define liberal democratic societies (65). This, she argues, “implies seeing citizenship not [merely] as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given” (ibid 65f.). Mouffe concludes that

By combining the ideal of rights and pluralism with the ideas of public spiritedness and ethico-political concern, a new modern democratic conception of citizenship could restore dignity to the political and provide the vehicle for the construction of a radical democratic hegemony.

(72f.)

Lesbians and gay men lack a significant number of basic rights granted to other citizens and they are constrained by laws and social norms (cf. Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen*). This is due to the fact that the “modern state defines the citizen as a heterosexual person” (Isin and Wood 82). Diane Richardson argues that, according to the radical democratic notion of citizenship, lesbians and gay men still cannot be called full citizens due to the “lack of full and equal rights, lack of full political participation and representation, lack of access of welfare entitlements” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 25). Bell illustrates how sexual dissidents enact sexual citizenship even in everyday life by “challeng[ing] the straightness of our streets” and the modern nation-state and its regulatory system, for example when kissing and holding hands, flirting and winking, and showing any non-heteronormative behavior (448). “Citizenship rights,” Steven Seidman writes, “make it possible for individuals to protect themselves against social threat, to participate in public decision-making, to make claims about national policy and culture, and so on” (qtd. in Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 11). The exclusion of gay men and lesbians from the official narrative of the United States as the ‘promised land’ and ‘city upon the hill’ makes it necessary for sexual dissidents to therefore

fight marginalization, exclusion, and oppression on a variety of fronts, utilizing different strategies and sources of support. In fighting their exclusion, however, these people and social groups are reconstructing the ties that bind residents together and the relationships that define citizenship.

(Marston and Staeheli qtd. in Bell 450)

The aim of this chapter is to first provide an overview of the literature on citizenship. Secondly, I will evaluate how helpful these discussions are for my aim – to review the notion of (sexual) citizenship in *The Normal Heart* and *Angels*. I will execute this task in three ways. Firstly, in *Approaches to Citizenship*, I discuss how citizenship is ‘defined’ in the current literature. However, I do not aim to provide a universally agreed definition, rather I will examine how different definitions of citizenship are contested in current debates. The purpose of *AIDS Citizenship* is to extend the notion of citizenship vis-à-vis the AIDS crisis. In so doing, I will argue that the AIDS crisis brought about new ways of extending and practicing citizenship. In *AIDS in America* I will broaden the notion of the nation-state. By extending the understanding of ‘America,’ I moved beyond mere practices, rights, legal and social norms. Hence, I will embed and contextualize these practices and relation within a cultural framework of ‘national themes’.

2.1 Approaches to Sexual Citizenship

How is sexual citizenship defined? Michael Brown understands sexual citizenship in the tradition of Chantal Mouffe’s radical democratic work as “the relations between political obligation, rights, and inclusion in political community through the concept of citizenship, which is a political identity of entitlements and responsibilities that is (potentially) equally shared in a liberal democratic society” (5). Sexual citizenship and postmodern approaches to citizenship – for example the radical democratic notion – want to overcome the reductionism and exclusivity of the conventional notions of citizenship, especially liberalism: “they reject its typically fixed, a priori identity as an unencumbered, instrumental, heterosexual ‘Liberal Man’” (ibid 8). This ‘liberal man’ is operating in a free market and is “seen abstractly, without sexuality or body” (Hekma n.p.). Moreover, it is important to overcome the conception that the state, civil society, and the family are distinct spheres, and instead see how they are hybrid and interact with each other (cf. Brown 17). This is what sexual citizenship attempts to do: “to remedy the limitations of earlier notions of citizenship, to make the concept more comprehensive” (Weeks 39). It also broadens analytical categories and includes “the impact of the heterosexual/homosexual binarism [...], the institutionalization of heterosexuality [...], and the question of equity and justice for emergent ‘sexual minorities’” (ibid).

Whilst scholars of sexual citizenship agree on the above, there is controversy over how sexual citizenship is to be understood and what aims are embedded in the notion. Jeffrey

Weeks argues that sexual citizenship is the “claim to a new form of belonging” (35) and that for sexual minorities it is about defining “themselves both in terms of personal and collective identities by their sexual attributes, and to claim recognition, rights and respect as a consequence” (ibid 36). The new sexual movements, among them the lesbian and gay movement, have, he argues, had two characteristic elements: “a moment of transgression, and a moment of citizenship” (ibid). Weeks’ definition of the ‘moment of citizenship’ is given in the previous chapter, which is basically defined by rights claims within and to the nation-state. He defines the ‘moment of transgression’ as being “characterized by the constant invention and reinvention of new senses of the self, and new challenges to the inherited institutions and traditions that hitherto had excluded these new subjects” (ibid). In order to highlight the importance of citizenship, he argues “[t]ransgression appears necessary to face the status quo with its inadequacies, to hold a mirror up to its prejudices and fears [...]. But without the claim of full citizenship, difference can never find a proper home” (ibid 37). Weeks argues that “[i]f the discourse of transgression as a road to emancipation or liberation is one pole of recent sexual politics, the discourse of rights is the other, and they are complexly intertwined” (qtd. in Schippert 297). Schippert analyzes the dependency between transgression and citizenship as follows: “citizenship is the more that transgression needs – and indeed here citizenship, and specifically a rights-based conception of citizenship is always already part of, ‘contained’ within, transgressive moments” (301). She sees citizenship as the enabling condition and goal of transgression, the latter “always already framed by citizenship” (ibid 301).

In light of their assertion that “the political articulation of sexual citizenship are marked by compromise” and its demand of “circumscription and ‘acceptable’ modes of being a sexual citizen” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 2f.), David Bell and Jon Binnie stress that the ‘proper home’ can function in very limiting ways. They argue that “this tends to demand a modality of citizenship that is privatized, deradicalized, deeroticized and *confined* in all senses of the work: kept in place, policed, limited” (ibid 3, emphasis in original). This shows how sexual citizenship is approached differently across time and space. Whilst Weeks keeps the ‘proper home’ in perspective, arguing that in claiming full citizenship “[t]he sexual citizen then makes a claim to transcend the limits of the personal sphere by going public, but the going public is, in a necessary but paradoxical move, about protecting the possibilities of private life and private choice in a more inclusive society” (37), Bell and Binnie see this argument as “intensely problematic, not least because it sides with phobic arguments that

grant sexual rights only on the understanding that they will be kept private: that is, invisible” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 4f.). As such, Bell and Binnie assert that Weeks’ favoring of the invisibility of sexual citizens is problematic, since he argues for a ‘more inclusive society’ and sees ‘going public’ as an important step towards full citizenship.

Given that “on the surface at least, the idea of the sexual citizen is a contradiction in terms” (Weeks 36), the ‘public versus private’ is a key arena within which the negotiation of sexual citizenship is played out. Whereas “sexuality is commonly understood to belong to the ‘private’ sphere, but more so in the case of lesbian and gay relationships” (Richardson 120), sexual citizenship “must be about involvement in a wider society” (Weeks 36). Weeks argues that

the [sexual] citizen operates in the public sphere, carrying rights and entitlements but also responsibilities to fellow citizens and to the community which defines citizenship. The sexual citizen, therefore, is a hybrid being, breaching the public/private divide which Western culture has long held to be essential. (ibid 36)

The public/private divide in terms of sexual citizenship and gay men is a contested arena and is very ambivalent. It is plausible that “[s]exual privacy cannot exist without open sexual cultures” (Hekma n.p.) as “[g]oing from the closet to the street means that gay men and lesbians need public space to express their sexual desires, to find partners, to debate politics, to demonstrate – in short, to enact their civic rights” (ibid).

Therefore, I want to argue that the relationship between (public) space and citizenship is crucial, given that “public space is about visibility and access for the citizenry and central to the idea and the *performance* and *practice* of democracy” (Isin and Wood 85, emphasis in original). Jan Pakulski broadens the understanding of citizenship by adding “the right to symbolic presence and visibility, the right to endignifying representation, and the right to define modes of identity and lifestyle” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 20), which is the right to be different. Diane Richardson points out that the “relative exclusion from the public does not only pertain to ‘homosexual practices’, then, but also to ‘homosexuality’ as a public identity and lifestyle” (120). This is why the “ability to be ‘out’ and publicly visible is [...] crucial to the ability to claim rights” (ibid 120) and it is claiming rights which lies at the heart of citizenship. In the case of the sexual citizen, the public/private divide works very paradoxically, because “it is through claiming rights to the *public* sphere that lesbians and gay men have sought to protect the possibilities of having *private* lives of their own choosing” (ibid 121, emphasis added).

Chantal Mouffe proposes that in radical democratic citizenship “[t]he distinction between private (individual liberty) and public (*respublica*) is maintained, as is the distinction between individual and citizen, but they do not correspond to discrete separate spheres” (72, emphasis in original). Yet the public/private divide concerning sexual identities and dissidents is not about the identity the citizen performs. Thus, Mouffe’s argument can be helpful to understand the permanent tension between public and private. For Mouffe, “[t]hose two identities exist in a permanent tension that can never be reconciled. But this is precisely the tension between liberty and equality that characterizes modern democracy” (72).

As pointed out earlier, Questio understand the notion of citizenship as culturally constructed and define it as follows:

Verstehen wir *citizenship* als die Art und Weise, in der eine Gesellschaft soziale Mitgliedschaft, politische Teilhabe und gesellschaftliche Gestaltung denkt und organisiert, [so] läßt sich mit Hilfe dieses Begriffs ein Analyseraster entwickeln, das die Bedingungen von gesellschaftlicher Gestaltung historisierend in den Blick nimmt und in der Lage ist, diese grundsätzlich zu problematisieren.

(22, emphasis in original)

Questio use Bryan Turners concept of citizenship: “Citizenship may be defined as that *set of practices* (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups” (2, emphasis added). He uses the word practices “in order to avoid a state and juridical definition of citizenship as merely a collection of rights and obligations” (ibid 2). This “help[s] us to understand the dynamic social construction of citizenship which changes historically as a consequence of political struggle” (ibid 2). Isin and Wood also use the term practices when defining citizenship, but, importantly, add the rights and duties that a citizen has: “Citizenship can be described as *both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual’s membership in a polity” (4, emphasis in original). Bell and Binnie argue that this description is useful as it brings “together many different domains in which citizenship is enacted” (*Sexual Citizenship* 444).

In *Constructing Sexual Citizenship*, Diane Richardson focuses on sexual citizenship in the terms of sexual rights. Thus, Richardson understands “sexual citizenship as a system of rights, which includes a concern with conduct, identity and relationship-based rights” (128). This understanding of sexual citizenship nonetheless lacks the different domains in which

sexual citizenship is and can be enacted. “Citizenship involves not only juridical enfranchisement but symbolic incorporation into a national community”, as Steven Seidman remarks (323). While Seidman sees the problem of ‘gay purification’ by the civic inclusion of homosexuals, I want to argue that the incorporation into the master narrative of America – as an idealistic construct as well as of the one United States as a nation-state – cannot be underestimated in terms of the citizenship rights of gay men and lesbians. Those incorporated in the master narrative are less likely to be treated as ‘the other’ and are more likely to be granted full citizenship rights. However, the naturalization of gay into the master narrative does not come without a price. Becoming part of mainstream America means giving up on supposedly ‘gay practices’ such as promiscuous behavior and other ‘unnatural’ sexual practices. Therefore, the inclusion into a society is based not just on legal and political rights, but also on cultural inclusion achieved through assimilation and the adaption of uncontroversial heteronormative practices and values, known as ‘homonormativity’. Hence, it is important to broaden the understanding of citizenship.

Since citizenship means a lot more than political and social practices and a legal framework, I will use Questio’s definition of sexual citizenship as the ways and means through which a society imagines and organizes social membership, political participation, and societal arrangement (22, transl.). This approach is most helpful in understanding “our current situation [which] is characterized by an ever-increasing diversity of identities, choices, and values, (Schippert 289f.). Inevitably, discussing citizenship means having to address the tension between the lack of legal rights and social and cultural inclusion. Therefore, I will elaborate on a cultural as well as legal notion of citizenship in order to broaden the discussion and understanding of homosexuality, AIDS and America.

2.2 AIDS Citizenship

Since both plays can be defined as AIDS plays, it is important to consider the notion of ‘AIDS citizenship’ to understand the broader theme of the plays. We can understand AIDS citizenship as the ways in which those affected by HIV and AIDS deal with and response to the AIDS crisis, collectively as well as individually. Rasmussen and Brown define it as “how people are *being* political around AIDS – at various times and places in their daily lives” (175, emphasis in original). In *Angels*, AIDS is one if not the most important ‘national theme’, a theme that took a long time to become nationally acknowledged outside the gay community.

While gay men have always been oppressed in the modern nation-state in various ways, AIDS meant not only social discrimination but also mortality. Even though it seems bizarre to speak of anything good about the AIDS crisis, Lawrence Howe argues that

If there is anything good to come out of the AIDS crisis [...] it's that gay culture now takes itself more seriously and has discovered new ways to define itself – socially, politically, intellectually, historically. The result is a more profound sense of a gay community because AIDS has made community matter more than ever before.

(415)

In *RePlacing Citizenship. AIDS activism & Radical Democracy* Michael Brown, arguing that citizenship “must take place *somewhere* but not just *anywhere*” (15, emphasis in original), and he portrays ways in which the gay community in 1990s Vancouver deals with the AIDS crisis and how the negotiation between incorporation and opposition can be problematic, arguing that “[b]ureaucratization and clientization remain constant threats to the critical potential of radical democratic citizenship” (85). He searches for places where activism and radical democracy take place. Furthermore, he argues that we must broaden our thinking about the places of citizenship, as the ongoing social change results in new or at least hybrid places where social membership, political participation, and societal arrangement are imagined and organized. The places of sexual citizenship are most of the time a hybrid of what were formerly “three more or less distinct spheres in liberal democracies: the state, civil society, and the family” (Brown 17).

Brown introduces the notion of ‘AIDS citizenship’ – the individual and collective modalities of dealing with and responding to the AIDS crisis – and writes on how, among others, the *AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power* (ACT UP) dealt with it in Vancouver by exemplifying Mouffe’s notion of citizenship (ibid 59f.): it used alternative and transgressive approaches to the political, it challenged existing hegemonies around AIDS, it was committed to radical democratic principles, and it used public spaces for its actions. Even though he acknowledges the value of the work, he criticizes ACT UP for its “tendency to hold state and civil society apart from each other” (ibid 82), considering the state as a “singular, whole, and unified institution” (ibid 83). In doing so, ACT UP held on the belief that the state and the civil society are distinct spheres and did not recognize the interdependency that exists within modern liberal societies.

In his book, Brown also illustrates how participating in the AIDS Quilt displays (155ff.) “is about claiming rights, duties, and membership in a political community” (Rasmussen and Brown 175). They were “public spaces of memorial, but also private spaces of family grief” (ibid 180) and, as “a time-space event of citizenship in civil society, the Quilt enabled a group of strangers to come together to practice radical democratic citizenship” (ibid 183). ‘Buddies’, who were AIDS volunteers “who provided a broadly defined ‘support’ for people living with HIV and AIDS” (ibid 178f.), were another form of community reaction to the AIDS crisis and a form of enacting citizenship. Gay Men’s Health Crisis in New York and the Shanti Project in San Francisco were the first organizations to introduce ‘buddying’ in the early 1980s (Brown 125). The “buddies’ roles were impossible to pin down and therefore their citizenship could be theorized across a wide array of social relations: family, charity, social work, even state-client relations” (Rasmussen and Brown 179). Brown interprets buddying through Mouffe’s concept of radical citizenship, as the buddies “compensate for the strained relations between people living with AIDS and their biological families, as well as the state [...] and as they embody a truly de-centered subjectivity, [...] and that buddying defies fixed definition[s]” of identities (129).

In the early years of the epidemic, AIDS was portrayed as a ‘gay disease’ (Richardson 112) and labeled ‘Gay Related Immune Deficiency’ (Brown 42; Eisenbach 292). AIDS, then, “raised the stakes in a social contest over civil rights, sexuality, the economics of health care, and even the authority of the scientific establishment” (Howe 396). It is a visible disease and it “flushes out an identity that might have remained hidden from neighbors, jobmates, family, friends” (Sontag 113). Its presence “may or may not be derived from one’s sexual practices, but the disease necessarily implicates sexuality by virtue of one means by which it may be transmitted” (Isin and Wood 88). Gay men and drug users have been the ‘risk groups’ most effected by AIDS in the United States. “The unsafe behavior [of both groups] that produces AIDS is judged to be more than just weakness,” as Susan Sontag explains (113): “It is indulgence, delinquency – addictions to chemicals that are illegal and to sex regarded as deviant.” AIDS, then, “is understood as a disease not only of sexual excess but of perversity” (ibid 114). This coupling of sexual dissidence and HIV/AIDS was fatal for those suffering from AIDS and for the gay community as a whole. Once again (especially male) homosexuality was linked to sickness and addiction. Despite all the progress made since Stonewall, homosexuality was not widely accepted and homosexuals were still not seen as full citizens. The fact that those parts of the country backing the Reagan administration still

saw homosexuality as deviant and that gay men had no strong public support for their matters, resulted in the slow reaction of the government and the media. Moreover, the mainstream media did not push the issue because they were either ignorant about what happened to gay men and other deviants, or they were frightened to be associated with the deadly virus.

The incorporation of gay men and PWA in the national narrative as full citizens and the granting of full citizenship rights can be seen as one remedy to fight the AIDS crisis. From a citizenship point of view, the nation-state has the key obligation to protect all its citizens. However, practices of ‘othering’ gay men and PWA which took place during the AIDS crisis run counter to the aim of legal, political and social inclusion. Therefore, strategies of othering need to be challenged when gay men and PWA want to be accepted as full citizens. While Bell and Binnie (*Sexual Citizen*) understand ‘citizen’ as a legal, political and sociological category, it is necessary to take a broader definition of citizenship as described by Engin Isin and Patricia Wood: “Citizenship can be described as *both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual’s membership in a polity” (4, emphasis in original). Regarding sexual citizenship, they add later in their book *Citizenship and Identity* that it is “about allowing gay men and women to participate fully in the political, economic, social, cultural and spatial life of the postnational state” (ibid 85). This definition of (sexual) citizenship shows that it is not just about the granting of equal rights but goes beyond this. It also includes social norms, representation, duties and opportunities in a non-heteronormative society. Hereby, the “institutionalized (hetero)sexual norms and practices [are fundamentally important], whereby heterosexuality is established as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’; an ideal form of sexual relations and behaviour by which all forms of sexuality are judged” (Richardson 111). Thus, I agree with Richardson that “the everyday practices of individuals are increasingly becoming the bases of citizenship” (106), as the “issues such as the right to privacy, freedom of control over one’s own body, and – in the age of AIDS – access to effective health care and health promotion” are battles over sexual citizenship (Bell 446).

Even though the concept(s) of citizenship will be discussed as an opportunity for gay men in this thesis, one should not forget that citizenship works not only through inclusionary strategies but also exclusionary ones (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship* 444) and sometimes even works paradoxically. As such, Sarah Benton defines ‘non-citizens’ as “those who have never been admitted, and those who are exiled” (qtd. ibid), meaning that “battles around

citizenship are battles to be recognized and included in the polity” (ibid 444). In *Being Political*, Engin Isin emphasizes that the non-citizen (strangers, outsiders, aliens) is the necessary other to the acknowledged citizen and he studies “citizenship as a generalized form of otherness” (Isin, *Engaging* 381). He stresses the notion of alterity and claims that “[t]he very continuity of citizenship is immanent in its principle of generating alterity” (Isin, *Being Political* 282). The citizen therefore needs the non-citizen. In this context, Isin defines the moment of “[b]ecoming political [...] when the naturalness of the dominant virtues is called into question and their arbitrariness revealed” (ibid 275). Bell and Binnie critically note that “many of the current nodes of citizenship are marked by compromise” and thus “the twinning of rights with responsibilities in the logic of citizenship is another way of expressing compromise – *we will grant you certain rights if (and only if) you match these by taking on certain responsibilities*” (*Sexual Citizen* 2f., emphasis in original). Isin endorses this argument when he argues that “[b]ecoming political is that moment when a rank established between the superior versus inferior, high versus low, black versus white, noble versus base, good versus evil, is reversed, transvalued, and redefined, and the ways of being political are rethought” (276). The radical democratic notion of citizenship emphasizes the political and challenges hegemonic understanding of citizenship by overcoming the reductionism and exclusivity of the conventional notions of citizenship. It thereby makes it more comprehensive.

The AIDS crisis raised and required new ways of being political, as the official institutions did not react responsibly to the crisis and the gay community and PWA had to take the fighting against the AIDS crisis into their own hands. The AIDS crisis demanded rethinking citizenship, because the heteronormative nation-state had neither the capacity nor the resources to meet the new demands of the gay community. Moreover, the nation-state was simply not able to provide the new services and citizenship rights and it was unwilling to establish the facilities required to combat the AIDS pandemic. Thomas Yingling finds harsh words for the governments role in the AIDS crisis, stressing that it’s “charged with criminal neglect of its people, and the invocation of crime seems appropriate given the liberal philosophy that has historically constructed the nation-state as protector of citizen’s rights by law and citizen’s property and health through institutional intervention” (41f.). However, in thus failing to act, the nation-state created the space for activism to develop and to shape the agenda. One response was the formation of radical democratic citizenship in order to claim new rights for the gay community and PWA.

In particular, this concept of citizenship caters for the particular circumstances of the gay community and PWA as it challenges the heteronormativity of previous notions and replaces these with a more diverse understanding. It is about enabling the inclusion of gay men and women to participate fully in the political, economic, social, cultural and spatial life of the nation-state. Furthermore, a radical democratic notion of citizenship is about understanding the formation of these entities and the relational constructions of heteronormativity and gayness. In the next chapter I will address the construction of 'America' as this term contains much more than the United States of America as a nation-state and should be kept in mind when thinking about sexual citizenship.

2.3 AIDS in 'America'

Before addressing the United States of the 1980s in the next chapter, it is important to understand that the term 'America' goes beyond the United States of America as a nation-state and these terms are not necessarily to be understood synonymously. This is crucially important when dealing with the 'national themes' of *Angels*.

For Yingling, 'America' is "a Platonic ideal of social consensus, homogeneity, and historical transcendence" (43), which is true especially for the Reagan years when 'America' was referred to as a unique place. In contrast, citizenship is most of the time and in traditional terms linked with the nation-state (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship* 446). The nation-state is the political entity to which the citizen – and those considered non-citizens – can claim their rights. Ronald Reagan wanted to end big government and his "appeal was framed as a return to 'America'" (ibid). Yingling emphasizes that "the term 'America' functions with such slippery teleological power that all critique of the state's overinvested interests ends by only invoking a more ordinary value for the same term" (ibid 446). The rejection by the nation-state added to the problems those affected by the AIDS crisis were facing. The conservatives not only prefer the mythic term of 'America' but, by doing so, they "ignore the need for the nation-state to respond to population groups not visible within 'America' [...] but even cast those needs as anti-American" (ibid 446). The term 'America' intertwines in its conservative coding with the 'myth' of individualism (Kushner 283).

However, since the notion and understanding of 'America' goes beyond the nation-state, we have to broaden our definition of citizenship as well. Consequently, citizenship is not just defining ones rights and responsibilities towards the nation-state; rather it offers an

understanding of ‘national themes’ in general. As I argued above, citizenship is more than just rights and duties: it is about the cultural inclusion of individual into the master narrative of society. Thus, ‘America’ goes beyond the nation-state. America is not just a legal and sovereign entity but a cultural concept that is shaped through peoples’ understandings of what America is supposed to be. Savran argues “that America is in essence a utopian and theological construction, a nation with a divine mission” (31) and, regarding this construction, Patton stresses that “as *Americans*, our most profound object of affection is the nation” (357, emphasis in original) and that this has not changed with AIDS. In *Angels*, America is also not just the United States but rather the idea and master narrative of America, a chosen site for mankind that is constantly moving forward. America is represented as a nation that is in constant progress, but gay men and especially PWA are symbols of the decline and weakness in the dominant discourse of the 1980s United States. Moreover, the “unsafe behavior that produces AIDS” is labeled as indulgent and delinquent (Sontag 113). It comes from deviant sexual practices, which is epitomized by homosexuality and is defined as perverse (ibid 114). Hence the presence of gay men and PWA runs counter to traditional understanding of American society and the intrinsic values that keep this society going. Gay men and PWA are unproductive because of their inability to reproduce themselves through their own children. Thus they are not taking part of the social reproduction of the nation. Furthermore, they weaken the unity from the inside. Similar to AIDS where the body attacks itself, in turning away from the mainstream consensus American gay men are seen as weakening America domestically. As the crisis spread and more and more people were affected, the American body turns in on itself: it weakened the nation from the inside.

In dominant discourse, PWA are not only seen as unproductive in demographics terms by the dominant discourse, they also weaken society as whole because of their illness, their economic burden to society and their inability to work (at least in the final stages of their illness). Therefore, in the eyes of the heterosexual nation-state, these people cannot support the (economic and social) progress of the nation, nor America’s bellicosity and political and imperial authority (Sontag 151). Yingling and Shilts argue that

the history of AIDS ... would have followed a far different trajectory in a world not structured by competitive national economies that had in turn pawned competitive national economies and practices in supposed transnational areas such as scientific research.

(qtd. in Isin and Wood 82)

Yet this is not the way *Angels* portrays those suffering from AIDS.

The constant moving forward is also one of the themes dealt within *Angels*. The “belief in progress however painful and difficult” (Nielsen 8) is taken up by AIDS plays, as Cindy Patton points out for *And the Band Played On*:

political and personal development were homologized to depict the gay community of the 1970s as ‘adolescent’, but now chastened, emerging in the 1980s and 1990s as a mature political force populated by reasonable and duty-conscious homosexual citizens.

(363)

The promise of the inclusion of the homosexual citizen – as in the closing of *Angels* and *The Normal Heart* – could be what follows the steps of painful adolescence.

Thomas Yingling sees this “tension in American political and institutional life between the nation-state as a political entity and ‘America’ as a term that ceases to designate the state and signifies instead a Platonic ideal of social consensus, homogeneity, and historical transcendence” (43). But this ‘grand narrative’ of America “is incongruous with gay culture and the medical crisis AIDS forced upon it” (ibid 45). The promised ‘one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all’ – as stipulated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States – is breaking apart. As both Susan Sontag and Yingling note, diseases – and especially AIDS – are seen as something foreign – ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, ‘the Self’/‘we’ vs. ‘the Other’ – and Yingling argues that the needs of PWA and their existence are considered “as anti-American, as a danger *to* rather than *within* the state” (ibid 43, emphasis in original). Gay men are simply “not recognized as constituents of the [...] ‘general population’” (ibid 45). According to Susan Sontag in her essay *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, AIDS is culturally understood as an ‘invasion’ on the person, while the transmission takes place by an act of ‘pollution’ (105). These metaphors make the AIDS epidemic “an ideal projection for First World political paranoia” (ibid 150). What makes the cultural understanding of AIDS even more problematic for PWA and gay men in general are the two contradictory notions about AIDS: “That it is a punishment for deviant behavior and that it threatens the innocent” (ibid 152). President Reagan pronounced in late 1986 that AIDS is spreading in an insidious way “through the length and breadth of our society” (qtd. in Sontag 154).

During the Reagan years, America witnessed a resurgence in national pride and a refocusing on core national values such as patriotism, the heterosexual nuclear family (Patton 357; cf. next chapter) and religious belief. However, the increasing number of PWA runs counter to these developments. It is a disease that weakens the regained strength and unity of the nation and at the same time it is the visual evidence that some people are engaged in un-

American practices such as gay sexual intercourse. Furthermore, they engage in practices that make them ill and weak whether or not mainstream America is experiencing the opposite in the eyes of the Reagan administration. Because of regained values – “It’s morning again in America” (cf. *Prouder, Stronger, Better*) – America in the 1980s was consolidating its economic strength. PWA however were not considered American since they were still weak and vulnerable compared to mainstream America and hence were seen as un-American. *Angels* uses HIV and AIDS “as a trope to investigate the degree to which homosexuals qualify as ‘the Self’ or ‘the Other’ in the United States” (Odgen 250).

The outbreak of AIDS happened after two decades of improvements for gay men and lesbians. David Eisenbach calls this “a Hegelian turn backward” for the rights of homosexuals, since “the old association of homosexuality with sickness once again flooded the American consciousness in the persistent news reports about the so called ‘gay cancer’” (ix). It was ‘safe sex’ which became “the civic obligation of the gay citizen and the act that distinguishes him from the compassionate citizen” (Patton 363) who in turn did not feel affected by the AIDS crisis and did not have to think about AIDS as something that could change their life or indeed threaten it. Yet, “AIDS is one of the dystopian harbingers of the global village, that future which is already here and always before us, which no one knows how to refuse” (Sontag 181).

The (non-)reaction of the Reagan administration to the AIDS crisis shows how PWA are not considered as citizens and that therefore how the government did not have to take care of them and their needs. It was not until 1985 when President Reagan mentioned AIDS in a press conference and it took another two years for him to give a major policy address on the AIDS crisis (Nielsen 14). In 1987, 36,058 Americans had been diagnosed with AIDS and 20,849 had died (Juntunen 130). It is not only important to understand the concept of ‘America’ but also to situate AIDS in the place and time of the Reaganite United States of the 1980s.

2.4 Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has not just been to provide an overview of the debates on (sexual) citizenship, but also to broaden its notion and understanding. In part 2.1 I examined the literature and demonstrated the myriad ways in which citizenship is defined. Firstly, I drew on the debate about public and private spheres as sites where citizenship is performed,

contested and negotiated in particular in relation to the different notions of sexual citizenship. Secondly, I broadened the notion of citizenship by arguing that we need to think about citizenship beyond legal and political practices. In so doing, I argued for thinking culturally about those practices. Hence I explored the ways in which inclusion of gays is not just based on equal rights but also on acknowledging the cultural diversity of citizenship and considering homosexuality and gay identity as part of societal master narratives. This notion of cultural citizenship was then discussed throughout the two following sections.

In particular, in section 2.2 I deployed the broader notion of citizenship in order to understand the formation of radical democratic citizenship as a response to the AIDS crisis and to frame the response of the gay community to this crisis. Radical democratic citizenship problematizes the deficiencies of previous notions of citizenship, exposing them as heteronormative and therefore insufficient for tackling the social and cultural exclusion of gay men and women. Finally, I explored the different ways in which we can understand radical democratic citizenship as a cultural practice that includes the discourses of AIDS and gayness in a heteronormative society.

In *AIDS in 'America'* I situated the discourse of radical democratic citizenship and AIDS in a particular site. I showed that America and its response to the AIDS crisis was shaped by a particular cultural understanding. For mainstream America, AIDS was the inevitable outcome for people engaging in anti-American practices, e.g. gay sex. Consequently, I moved away from a legal notion of citizenship claims to one of cultural practices. In so doing, I was able to explain the reluctant response of mainstream America towards the AIDS crisis as well as their rationale for excluding gay men and PWA from mainstream American culture.

Above all, I have highlighted how citizenship is claimed and negotiated through the different scales of the nation-state and how it was re-thought with the emergence of the AIDS crisis. More closely, I examined the practices shaping the discourses of citizenship. First, I moved away from a mere legal understanding of citizenship rights to instead stress the complexities and the importance of culture for understanding citizenship debates. Secondly, I showed how identities – of gay man and women, PWA as well as a heterosexual society – are relationally produced. On the flip side, I explored how the ignorance of heterosexual culture

allowed the gay citizenship movement to develop and to create their own responses to the AIDS crisis.

3. AIDS and the Reaganite United States of the 1980s

The plot of *The Normal Heart* takes place between July 1981 and May 1984 in New York City. Meanwhile, the plot of *Angels* takes place between October 1985 and February 1986 in New York City and in the imaginary places of the play; only the epilogue of *Angels* is set in February 1990. The timeframe as well as the themes therefore makes these plays about the 1980s in the United States and “as disease is shaped by its particular social and historical context, [as] will the response” (Brandt qtd. in Franke: 93), I will outline the Reaganite years of the 1980s and its response to HIV and AIDS.

The ‘Long Decade of the 1970s’ ended with the 1980s, an epoch Cindy Patton calls the time between Stonewall in 1968 and about 1985 when HIV-testing reconfigured gay politics and identity (356). Those years “had been a decade of revolutionary ferment in the gay community” (Collins 134) and, in October 1979, 100,000 people took part in the *March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights*. This atmosphere of sexual liberation and political empowerment is illustrated by the Village People’s lyric: “I’m ready for the eighties, ready for the time of my life” in 1980. But the 1980s turned out to be anything but ‘the time of my life’ for gay men in the United States: AIDS hit the gay community at a time when “It seemed to many gays that sexual liberation and political empowerment were ecstatically intertwined” (Collins 134).

It was in 1979 when gay men in San Francisco became sick and nobody knew exactly what they were suffering from. The *New York Native* ran a story in May 1981 about “rumors that an exotic disease had hit the gay community in New York” (qtd. in Collins 134). The next month, the Centers for Disease Control addressed this new development and began altering doctors. On July 3rd, 1981 the *New York Times* ran as the first national newspaper of record the article *Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals* on page 20 about what was later called AIDS: “Doctors in New York and California have diagnosed among homosexual men 41 cases of a rare and often rapidly fatal form of cancer. Eight of the victims died less than 24 months after the diagnosis was made” (qtd. in Eisenbach 292). In April 1984, when 4,177 cases had been reported in the United States, the source of AIDS was identified as a retrovirus labeled human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Governmental reaction to the AIDS crisis was slow. Randy Shilts reminds us:

There had been a time when much of this suffering could have been prevented, but by 1985 that time has passed... The bitter truth was that AIDS did not just happen to America – it was allowed

to happen by an array of institutions, all of which failed to perform their appropriate tasks to safeguard the public health.

(qtd. in Juntunen 128f)

In New York City, with one-half of the nation's AIDS caseload in the early 1980s, the reaction to the disease was especially slowly. It was by the end of 1983 that the city allotted \$24,500 to fight the spread of AIDS. By that time, over 1,042 people had died in New York City already (Juntunen 130).

The fact that both plays are set in New York City is no coincidence. New York has a huge homosexual population and moreover it is the city that "is the prime site both for the materialization of sexual identity, community and politics, and for conflicts and struggles around sexual identity, community and politics" (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 83). Moreover, New York "has a particular symbolic (even mythical) function, linked to Stonewall and thereby to the birth of the lesbian and gay rights movement" (ibid 92).

How was it possible that the officials did not take immediate action to fight the AIDS crisis? As Cindy Patton argues, it was in the mid-1970s, "when a haphazard coalition of pro-gun, anti-abortion, anti-busing, pro-Panama Canal, prayers-in-public-groups decided that the family was, in fact, the foundation of 'American' if not 'Western' culture" (357). This atmosphere had a long lasting effect that shaped the nation. Moreover, it happened at a time when, for civil rights activists, "it seemed impossible that anyone would actually want to *go back*" (ibid) and the community imagined being safe. As a result of the stressing of the heteronormative nuclear family, "a counter-rhetoric of *families* was adopted by feminists, leftists and gay activists who believed it was possible to combat the right by including 'families we choose'" (ibid 358, emphasis in original).

In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States. In the presidential election four years later he was re-elected by winning all states but Minnesota and Washington DC. The probably best-known clip of his television campaign featured the opening line 'It's morning again in America'. It focused among other topics on the traditional, nuclear, heterosexual family and marriage, showing a family consisting of a father, a mother and a boy and a girl. One line read: "This afternoon sixty-five thousand young men and women will be married". The clip claimed that the country is 'prouder, stronger, and better' than before (*Prouder, Stronger, Better*). Reagan invoked "the image of letting America be the

shining city on the hill” (Nielsen 12f.). It was the heydays of Reaganite politics in the United States.

The ‘Reagan Revolution’ was about neoliberal economic politics and it favored a shadow state called ‘Reaganomics’ as well as the “project of restoring America to its former self” (ibid 13). Reagan wanted to restore the pride and optimism the United States had lost during the 1970s due to “the Vietnam War, race riots, oil crisis, international terrorism and the Iran hostage situation” (ibid 13). In his farewell address, Reagan described his presidency as “a rediscovery of our values and our common sense” (Ritter and Henry 181). He stressed the reestablishing of so-called ‘family values’ and those of national pride as well as the focus on individualism and laissez faire capitalism. The Reagan administration “cut social programs by \$700 billion while giving a \$50 billion tax-cuts, and increasing defence spending 27 per cent” (Nielsen 13) and emphasized “issues of morality, religion and family values in social and cultural policies” (ibid 13f.). This “focus on religion and restoring the traditional American nuclear family proved detrimental to his administration’s reaction to AIDS” (ibid 14).

President Reagan was sworn into office the same year the AIDS epidemic broke out in the United States. However, he not only did not mention AIDS in public until 1987 when more than 20,000 had died (Thompson 22), he also did not mention AIDS in his farewell address in 1989. “For many on the conservative and religious Right in the US the emergence of AIDS was seen as evidence of the inherently dangerous (and potentially fatal) nature of homosexuality” (ibid 21). When AIDS became an issue for heterosexuals too, they started “to fulminate against sexual promiscuity in general” (ibid 21). Reaganite celebrity Pat Buchanan – later director of communications of the Reagan administration – orated that “they [the poor homosexuals] have declared war upon nature, and now nature is exacting an awful retribution” (qtd. in ibid) and Jerry Falwell stated that “AIDS is God’s judgment on a society that does not live by His rules” (qtd. in Sontag 149).

In *AIDS and Its Metaphors* Susan Sontag critically examines the statements of the political right and argues that in dominant discourse “plagues are invariably regarded as judgments on society” and sexually transmitted diseases are traditionally “described as punishments not just of individuals but of a group” (142). According to Sontag, AIDS is therefore presented as “a punishment for deviant sex” (151) for those who base their political

agenda on national self-esteem and self-confidence. Thus, AIDS is used by the neo-conservatives as a utility to fight against what they consider to be ‘the 1960s’ (ibid 151). She argues that AIDS is used in this ‘Kulturkampf’ and that “AIDS seems to foster ominous fantasies about a disease that is a marker of both individual and social vulnerabilities. The virus invades the body; the disease [...] is described as invading the whole society” (ibid 153f). This of course threatens Reagan’s ‘prouder, stronger, and better’ America.

With regards to discourses of sickness and identity, it is interesting that Ronald Reagan personally mirrored the dominant cultural understanding of sickness when he declared after his cancer operation: “I didn’t have cancer. I had something inside of me that had cancer in it and it was removed” (qtd. in Sontag 154). This of course reminds us of Roy Cohn, the real one as well as the character in *Angels*. When his doctor tells the fictional Roy that he has AIDS, he replies: “No, Henry, no. AIDS is what homosexuals have. I have liver cancer” (Kushner 52). Next to his sexual identity, Cohn refuses to acknowledge that he has AIDS and claims to have cancer, a comparatively less fatal illness and one not linked to homosexuality.

As we have seen, “AIDS operated in the broader cultural and social domains less as a biological fact than as an opportunity to pass moral judgement” (Thompson 21). Because of this, AIDS has not been perceived as an epidemic that threatened the well-being of the nation but only those who did not fit the moral standards of Reaganite majority: primarily gay men and drug users. Hence, “the early years of AIDS in the US – and elsewhere – were marked by a mixture of ignorance, hysteria and homophobia” (ibid 21). In this context, Reaganite rhetoric and policy deployed “cruel and mundane strategies both to promote shame for non-normative populations and to deny them state, federal, and juridical supports because they are deemed morally incompetent to their own citizenship” (Berlant qtd. in Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 24). Simon Watney stresses that while “there is no *intrinsic* connection between HIV and gay men or their sexual behaviour” (qtd. in Jones 108, emphasis in original), the ongoing connection made between homosexuality and sickness/AIDS as emphasized by the right “protects and strengthens a fantasy of supposedly ‘natural’ heterosexuality, attacked on all sides by sinister perverts” (ibid). Therefore, the homosexuals and PWA were seen as non-citizens.

“Not only does AIDS have the unhappy effect of reinforcing American moralism about sex; it further strengthens the culture of self-interest, which is much of what is usually praised

as ‘individualism’” (Sontag 161), as “capitalism’s *every man for himself*” (Patton 356, emphasis in original). In the afterword of *Angels*, Tony Kushner criticizes the “evils Individualism visits on our culture”:

Americans pay high prices for maintaining the myth of the Individual: We have no system of universal health care, we don’t educate our children, we can’t pass sane gun control laws, we elect presidents like Reagan, we hate and fear inevitable processes like aging and death.

(283f.)

As a nation based on progress and constant modernization –AIDS reminded modern America of weakness – America hates and fears uncontrollable processes like aging and in the terminal consequence death. Hence, “AIDS became an important dimension of life during the 1980s because it tested the capacity of American society to cope with the unknown” (Thompson 25). A test I would argue America failed to pass, as I will show in this thesis.

While both plays are set during the Reagan era of the 1980s, the opening nights took place at very different times. The original production of *The Normal Heart* opened in April 1985, whereas *Angels’* premiere was held in May 1991. This was a time when the Cold War had just ended and when “The whole world is changing! Overnight!” as Louis enthusiastically remarks in the epilogue set in February 1990 (Kushner 277). However, not only the world-order was changing dramatically, times were also changing on the national level when “Reaganism was displaced as Bill Clinton took office and promised a new America in 1993” (Nielsen 4). It was Martin Heller who tells Joe Pitt, while being in a fancy restaurant together with Roy Cohn, that the conservatives “have the White House locked till the year 2000. And beyond” and that this means “really the end of Liberalism. The end of New Deal Socialism. The end of ipso facto secular humanism” (ibid 69). Tony Kushner later says that “at the time I just wrote what I thought was most accurate” (qtd. in Nielsen 5), that Washington would always be in the hands of the Republicans. Thus, the beginning of the 1990s meant not just a restructuring abroad – which is the meaning of *Angels* second part, *Perestroika* – but also in America itself.

Ironically, as Robert Collins remarks, it was “Reagan’s hesitance to play a stronger leadership role on AIDS, if only rhetorically, created a void that invited, indeed forced, the gay community to coalesce politically in novel ways, with a new, desperate energy, to fight the disease on its own” (139). *The Normal Heart* is an early example on how the gay community, or at least a part of the community, reacted to the AIDS crisis and the slow reaction of government.

After having outlined the concept of sexual citizenship and the Reaganite United States of the 1980s, I will outline the “battles around citizenship” (Richardson 444) for the recognition and inclusion of gay men and PWA as it is presented in *The Normal Heart* and *Angels in America* in the following two chapters.

4. *The Normal Heart: We Must Save Ourselves*

Even though *The Normal Heart* was neither the first AIDS play nor the first cultural response to AIDS, it is considered to be “one of the first important cultural responses to AIDS” (Cohen 199). This was due to “the previous prominence of its author, its appeal to gay and straight audiences alike, its original New York run for over a year, and its subsequent translation and production around the world” (ibid 199).

The title of the play “is a plea for [...] of acceptance [to the mainstream, straight audience] and it is easy to give when similarities between gay and straight communities are being stressed rather than differences” (Juntunen 172). This argument fits the plot of the play, whose title is taken from W.H. Auden’s *September 1, 1939* which appears in the prelude of the play. Here we read that “There is no such thing as the State; And no one exists alone [...] We must love another or die” (qtd. in Kramer 5). Auden’s words are a call to refuse to wait for the government to react to the AIDS crisis, and instead to fight the crisis through collective action. It is Kramer who demands a bottom-up approach to fight the AIDS crisis, an approach that comes from the gay community itself and liberal heterosexuals. This call for action and the way in which gay men respond to the AIDS crisis in the play makes it interesting to study, as it is a political play where citizenship is constantly being negotiated. On the one hand, the nation-state’s ignorance allows gay activism to emerge. The absence of the nation-state offers and forces gay men and PWA to set their own agenda. On the other hand, this ignorance sets clear challenges to overcoming the crisis.

In this chapter I will outline how the play addresses the negotiation of gay identity in the early days of the AIDS crisis; how *The Normal Heart* – the plot itself as well as the performances – helped to make AIDS an issue and to spread information about it and the lack of governmental action; how men were taking action and how the gay community reacted to the AIDS crisis; and, last but not least, I will discuss Kramer’s approach to gay marriage as a solution to AIDS. Finally, I will place *The Normal Heart* in context with regards to the notion of sexual citizenship.

4.1 Identity: *A culture that isn’t just sexual*

The gay community was “overwhelmed by a historical event, by the arrival of the plague, by the political it engenders”, as Tony Kushner remarks (Kramer xiii). This has had consequences on the definition of gay men’s identity, which is central to citizenship

discourses, “as citizenship is inseparable from identity, and sexuality is central to identity” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 67).

After Ned Weeks is removed from the board of directors of the play’s fictional ‘Gay Men’s Health Crisis’ (GMHC), he seeks to create a new definition of gay identity, which is supposed to be “a culture that isn’t just sexual” (Kramer 110). In an article for the *New York Native*, Larry Kramer complained pretty much the same, writing that he was “sick of guys who moan that giving up careless sex until this thing blows over is worse than death. How can they value life so little and cocks and asses so much?” (qtd. in Eisenbach 297). Yet, Ned does not outline what this culture could be (cf. Clum 187). However, the extent to which gay identity is linked to sexual acts is illustrated by the words of Mickey during his argument with Ned in act 2 scene 11:

I’ve spent fifteen years of my life fighting for our right to be free and make love whenever, wherever...And you’re telling me that all those years of what being gay stood for is wrong... and I’m a murderer [...] Can’t you see how important it is for us to love openly, without hiding and without guilt? (Kramer 97f.)

Ned’s call for a redefinition of gay identity “does not deny the importance of sex to gay identity; it merely seeks to remove it from a position of dominance” (Jones 118), which it definitely had as Edmund White recalls in 1987: “ten years ago sex was a main reason for being for many gay men” (qtd. in Howe 414). With AIDS, this ‘main reason for being’ could bring death. Cohen argues that “whether one views Ned as adopting a strictly no-sex stance or merely promoting monogamy, his involvement with Felix comes across as hypocritical” (202). He goes on to claim that “Ned’s violation of his own principles here is that Kramer is using Ned’s hypocrisy to demonstrate how unrealistic the expectation is that gay men can simply take up celibacy as a response to AIDS” (202). However, these cultural shifts were not just limited to the gay community. Because of the AIDS crisis, the libertarian and sex-positive attitude of the 1970s began to be replaced “with a culture of purity and restraint that views sex as necessarily and exclusively tied to intimacy and romance” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 134). The libertarian attitude towards sexual practices changed in favor of a more conservative approach towards intimacy. As the cultural discourse shifted and the gay community confronted with the lethal health crisis, demand for normalization grew.

This cultural shift shows, on the one hand, that the gay community is not separate from mainstream cultural values. On the other hand, these examples show that the demand for normalization grew and that the othering strategy – the demarcation of the gay community

and their unhealthy practices as somewhat different from mainstream America – seemed to work out. Through normalizing – becoming less adventures in their sexual practices – the gay community has a chance not only to naturalize itself vis-à-vis mainstream America, but also to cure itself from the disease. Faced with death, it does not come as a surprise that Ned wants to become more mainstream as well as to establish new role models for the gay community. However, in so doing, he falls into the normalization-trap, as he calls the distinct practices of the gay community into questions.

The culture Ned wants to belong to and to which he wants the gay community to look up to was one:

that includes Proust, Henry James, Tchaikovsky, Cole Porter, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Christopher Marlowe, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Tennessee Williams, Byron, E. M. Forster, Lorca, Auden, Francis Bacon, James Baldwin, Harry Stack Sullivan, John Maynard Keynes, Dag Hammarskjöld.

(Kramer 109)

He then claims: “It’s all there – all through history we’ve been there” (ibid). By listing the names of these important men of history, Ned proposes that gay men have always been part of Western culture and that thus the discourse of mainstream America must recognize them and their citizenry. Furthermore, by picking recognized celebrities this is an act of normalization whereby celebrities are framed as ‘normal’ and therefore the normalization of gayness is claimed to take place through such celebrities. According to Michael Cadden, Ned uses gay and lesbian *pinklisting* that “sees itself as providing role models and suggests, however problematically, the continuity of a gay and lesbian presence (and usually struggle) across the borderlines of time and place” (79).

The wide disapproval of homosexuality added to the problems faced by those men who wanted to get involved in fighting the AIDS crisis. All the characters but Ned have refused to come out to their employees, which limits their involvement when it comes to publicity. Bruce, for example, tells the others that his “boss doesn’t know and he hates gays. He keeps telling me fag jokes and I keep laughing at them” (Kramer 54). Not only is his involvement limited (“I just think we have to stay out of anything political” (ibid); cf. ibid 77), he also actively has to hide his sexual identity because he fears to lose his job. The hiding of ones’ sexual identity shows the complexities and difficulties faced by gay men in modern America. The mainstream heterosexual society is constraining the trajectories of gay men (and women) throughout their immediate and wider environments. Gay men cannot come out

easily to their employers because of the fear that they might lose their job. The example of Bruce shows that everyday practices of hiding gay identities go far beyond veiling sexual preferences. Furthermore it involves denying queer identities by laughing at the gay jokes heterosexual America makes.

These examples show the everyday problems of gay life in America. Being gay in America is a vicious circle of betrayal and denial where the situation for is never changed for the better. First, the lack of legal protection puts gays in the situation of hiding their identity because of the fear of losing their job and the lack of chances to get reemployed because of their sexual preferences. Secondly, in order to gain and finally enjoy the same rights and job protection that heterosexual America enjoys they need to come out and to demand these rights. Breaking out of the cycle seems to be impossible for many gay men like Bruce. However, to break out is of utter importance in order to claim not just citizenship rights but to normalize homosexuality. How can preference be considered normal, without knowing that these preferences are performed and reproduced in society? Nonetheless, the heterosexual structure of American society does not seem be entirely dominant as Ned's coming out and ambitions demonstrate.

These examples show that gay identity and demands for citizenship go hand in hand. Citizenship rights allow identities to emerge and mature, but citizenship rights can only be claimed through identity formation and the visualization of gay America. The AIDS crisis inevitably brought the issue to the political agenda and it "has been a creator of community" for gay men (Sontag 113) due to the ignorance of the nation-state towards these issues.

4.2 Making AIDS an Issue and Providing Information

As an early response to the AIDS crisis, *The Normal Heart* was eager to share information about AIDS, the (non-)reaction of government and the media⁷ and to bring AIDS to public attention. Juntunen argues that the "very act of presenting the play, seeing the play, and informing spectators about ways to take action, gave the actors and spectators an 'agency to fight the powers contributing to the epidemic' in a way beyond what the script offered" (175). Thus, the theater is not just to be understood as a medium of consumption, rather it is a medium of exchange. It is a place where education and information can be distributed.

⁷ For the media coverage of the AIDS crisis cf. Eisenbach 293-299.

Consequently, the theater fills the gap that is left by the state. Hence, it is another symbol of the bottom up approach, the response of the gay community and the negotiation of citizenship rights.

To achieve this, Larry Kramer not only used the plot of the play but also the walls of the set and of the theatre where “facts and figures and names were painted, in black, simple lettering” (13). The latest total number of AIDS cases nationally was given principal place and the latest number was followed by the capitalized words “AND COUNTING” (ibid). As the Centers for Disease Control was updating the figures so did the play by “crossing out old numbers and placing the new figures just beneath it” (ibid 13). The caseload was not only given for the entire United States but also for individual states and major cities. This counting takes place within the plot of the play as well. In the very beginning, David tells Mickey and Ned that he is Dr. Emma Brookner’s twenty-eighth case and sixteen of these are dead already (Kramer 20). Later, in scene 7, Ned says that forty gay men he knew died because of AIDS (ibid 63), while Emma tells him in scene 8 that she has now has 238 cases (ibid 70). This scene takes place in October 1982, fifteen month after the twenty-eighth case. According to Ned, two hundred and fifty-six have died by that month (ibid 81).

Kramer used much more information to denounce the lack of public attention and governmental reaction. The walls show a capitalized quotation from the London *Observer* from April 7th, 1985 which states “TWO MILLION AMERICANS ARE INFECTED – ALMOST 10 TIMES THE OFFICIAL ESTIMATES” (Kramer 14). He hereby questioned the competence of the national agencies and illustrated the need for action. We find this in the play as well. In scene 11, which is set in February 1983, Mickey informs the other organization members that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports “thirty cases a week now nationally” (ibid 91). This does not fit with the figures of the fictional GMHC. Tommy comments on these figures when he says that “[t]he CDC are filthy liars. What’s wrong with those boys? We log forty cases a week in this office alone” (ibid 92). Playing down the numbers of cases marginalizes those suffering even more by making it less urgent to help and treat it as a threat to the entire population of the United States.

Moreover, on one wall it is written that the “two alternative strategies a Jewish organization could adopt to get the American government to initiate action” (Kramer 15), once more emphasizing the AIDS crisis as a modern Holocaust. Kramer also blamed the U.S.

government for the fact that the public education budget of the Department of Health and Human Services for 1985 was only 120,000 U.S. dollar (ibid 16). The fictional GMHC received only \$9,000 from New York City (ibid 99) and were not even “allowed to tell anyone where we got it. If words gets out we’ve told, we won’t get it” (ibid). In contrast, “San Francisco’s major is giving four million dollars to their organization” (ibid 89). Furthermore, New York’s city hall does not even know that it is not illegal to discriminate against homosexuals, when the organization claims that it cannot find any office space because they are a gay organization fighting AIDS (ibid 79).

The Normal Heart performances also covered the total numbers of articles on AIDS in nationally important newspapers and contrasted the current crisis with the *Tylenol* scare in 1982 with its seven cases. In this case *The New York Times* (*NYT*) covered the scare 54 times in just three months, with four articles making it to the front page, whereas the *NYT* wrote only seven articles about the AIDS epidemic during the first nineteen months, July 1981 to February 1983, never making it to the front page. The hesitant media coverage is another sign of how heteronormativity and homophobia added to the problems of the AIDS crisis. When the seventh article appeared in the *NYT Magazine* on February 6, 1983, there were 958 AIDS cases (Kramer 14f.). The audience engages with the information written on the wall in the plot of the play, when Ned argues in favor of boycotting the *NYT*:

Have you been following this Tylenol scare? In three months there have been seven deaths, and the *Times* has written fifty-four articles. The month of October alone they ran one article every single day. Four of them were on the front page. For us – in seventeen months they’ve written seven puny inside articles. And we have a thousand cases! (ibid 75, emphasis in original)

This line of argument was really successful as it made it into the reviews. It was the *Daily News* which wrote that the play “tells us things we don’t want to hear – for instance, the government spent \$20 million investigating the seven Tylenol deaths while it largely ignored AIDS until it was a full-blown health crisis with thousands dead and dying” (qtd. in Juntunen 159). Because of the hesitant coverage on AIDS, Ned calls the *NYT*, along with Mayor Edward Koch, “the biggest enemy gay men and women must contend with in New York” (Kramer 63f.).

4.3 Taking Action

The productions of *The Normal Heart* were highly political by giving this information and blaming the government for its role in the AIDS crisis. This can be understood as

enacting radical democratic citizenship, at a time marked “by a remarkable lack of concern, communication, and cooperation on many fronts, much of that from within federal agencies and among organizations like the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health” (Yingling 41).

Interestingly, the impetus to take action comes from Dr. Emma Brookner and not from inside the gay community. Dr. Brookner pushes protagonist Ned to take action, telling him “Somebody’s got to do something” (Kramer 22) and warning him that he cannot expect help from doctors since they “are extremely conservative; they try to stay out of anything that smells political, and this smells” (ibid 23). Because neither doctors nor the media spread information about AIDS, Emma tells Ned that “Someone’s going to have to tell the gay population fast” (ibid 23). She even tells him to “Tell gay men to stop having sex” (ibid 26), this “only sounds harsh. Wait a few more years, it won’t sound so harsh” (ibid 26). Recalling White who stated that sex used to be that main reason for being for many gay men and furthermore that having sex was strongly linked to gay liberation, to tell gay men to stop having sex was drastic.

This is the start of the negotiation that takes place in the play regarding what kind of reaction within the gay community is appropriate to the AIDS crisis. Moreover, it shows that it was not just the gay community who took action but also parts of the straight majority and especially those who worked with PWA on a professional basis.

It is Mickey who tells us in the first scene that “[t]he city doesn’t exactly show a burning interest in gay health. But at least I’ve still got my job: the Health Department has had a lot of cutbacks” (Kramer 21). Kramer not only addresses the problem of a lack of concern, but also the cutbacks with which the public health programs and institutions had to deal with during the Reaganite 1980s. In the same scene, Ned asks Emma: “Where’s the mayor? Where’s the Health Department?” (ibid 24), when she has just told him that the hospital she works for sent its first report about what is now known as AIDS to the medical journals. Her response is bitter, as she says that both “know about” the AIDS crisis but that the commissioner of the Health Department “got burned with the Swine Flu epidemic, declaring an emergency when there wasn’t one” (ibid), which cost \$150 million. This might be comprehensible from the point of view of the commissioner but, on a wider scale, it shows not only ignorance towards the problems of the gay community, but a crusade against this particular community. However, interestingly, this opens up space for activism. The Mayor,

because he is a bachelor, is “afraid of being perceived as too friendly to anyone gay” (ibid). This once more shows the heteronormativity of society and also how personal choices of forms of intimacy and partnership are coded by it. In fact, there had been rumors that Major Edward Koch is gay. This again shows the power structures of heteronormativity.

Graham Thompson infers that Emma is antagonistic to the “medical community’s inability to confirm what caused AIDS” (Thompson 21) and, at the same time, “she represents medicine and its inability to potently effect a cure for the disease” (Franke 99). At that time, “medical discourse [...] documents AIDS as legible marks on the homosexual body, thus reaffirming ‘a fantasy that marks the underlying homophobia of our culture, in conformity with nineteenth-century characterization of ‘homosexuality’ as ‘criminal deviation’” (Howe 401). This lack of effort regarding researching AIDS is covered in *The Normal Heart*. Ned criticizes the American Medical Association as well as he asks why “the government has not started a single test tube of research” (Kramer 72). Later in the play, Emma tells Felix, who has just been diagnosed with AIDS, that she and colleagues are trying to find a cure but that while “Uncle Sam is the only place these days that can afford the kind of research that’s needed... so far we’ve not even had the courtesy of a reply from our numerous requests to him” (ibid 85).

This example shows not only the growing awareness of the non-gay public about the AIDS crisis but also illustrates how heterosexuals started to take actions to combat the gay crisis. In the absence of a national strategy, a few concerned heterosexuals – in this case Emma and a couple of her colleagues – are trying to find a cure. Once more, this is evidence of the multiple ways in which the gay and non-gay public is able to respond to the AIDS crisis. Hence, taking action should not just be confined to the gay community itself. However, despite the growing awareness and support of some liberal heterosexuals such as Emma, the majority of America – and the Reagan administration in particular – turned a blind eye to the needs of the gay community and PWA.

This missing governmental action stands in sharp contrast to the situation in France (cf. ibid 104) where the fact that idol Rock Hudson received AIDS treatment in France made this public to the general American population (cf. Eisenbach 302). Eisenbach points out that the “revelation that Hudson had to leave the United States to receive state-of-the art AIDS treatment was a major embarrassment for American science and federal government, which

still had not devoted substantial resources to AIDS research and services” (ibid 302f.). Yet, the government gave money for research, which is dated between February and April 1983, in the play. But the money spent in research was just ten percent of the amount requested (Kramer 102) and Emma, whose request was declined, stresses that “[f]ive million dollars doesn’t seem quite right for some two thousand cases. The government spent twenty million investigating seven deaths from Tylenol” (ibid 102).

Larry Kramer not only blames government and the medical institutions for fail fighting the AIDS crisis, but also the gay community itself. This is interesting as the acceleration of the health crisis is not just perceived as the government’s fault but the gay community plays an important role in this failure as well. In the end, “there is not a good word to be said for anybody’s behavior in this whole mess” (Kramer 116). The controversy between Ned and others in the organization portrays the different opinions within the gay community, which in the end slowed the community’s response to the crisis.

In the beginning, the organization set up services for AIDS patients (ibid 48) and a telephone hotline (ibid 53) as well as organizing volunteers (ibid 57) and raising money for their work (ibid 57). The fundraising is portrayed as very successful: “We did raise \$50,000 at our dance last week. That’s more money than any gay organization has ever raised at one time in this city before” (ibid 57). That services for PWA had been an urgent issue is suggested when Bruce talks about a friend who has just died: “The hospital doctors refused to examine him to put a cause of death on his death certificate, and without a death certificate the undertakers wouldn’t take him away, and neither would the police” (ibid 101). This is another example of citizenship rights denied to those Americans suffering from AIDS.

Controversy about the kind of work the fictional GMHC should do and in what ways it should address the crisis soon arose. While the majority of the fictional GMHC wanted to fill the “vacuum created by federal [and local] irresponsibility” (Yingling 41) by helping the sick, Ned Weeks wanted to change the way of life of gay men and to establish “a powerful national organization effecting change” (Kramer 75). These different approaches emerge when the organization has its first meeting in city hall (ibid 74-84) as well as in scene 13 when Ned is removed from the board of directors. Whereas Ned calls for “civil disobedience” (ibid 105), the majority of the organization “want[s] to work from the inside” (ibid 107). However, Ned wants to be defined “as one of the men who fought the war” (ibid 110). These examples

demonstrate that the gay community is not a homogeneous group. Rather, the gay community is a diverse group of individuals who have a variety of ideas about appropriate responses to the AIDS crisis and its consequences. Inevitably, the formation of an appropriate response is a messy process shaped by the heterogeneity of people's aims. Therefore, plays such as *The Normal Heart* not only show the formation of resistance against heterosexual normativity and their marginalization of the health crisis. These plays also show the difficulties of organizing communities, as they simultaneously:

place the character within a gay milieu where he can gather strength and courage. They deal with fears of contagion of continued erotic desire, of death in a way that other work cannot. They build community among the outsiders of society. (Jones 114)

Consequently, gay themes in modern theatre provide the prospect for the formation of national themes through the identification and demarcation of communities through the provision of a universal leitmotiv/identity, e.g. a gay lifestyle and its acceptance and integration into mainstream America. This brings Mouffe into mind, as she argues that “constructing a ‘we’, a chain of equivalence among their [which are new social movements such as the gay movement] demands so as to articulate them through the principle of democratic equivalence” (70). However, community creation also brings difficulties. Jones argues that these communities portrayed in plays and TV series “represent a danger of assigning the gay person with AIDS, and, by extension, all gays, to the category of Other” (Jones 119). Practices like this have the potential to flatten the landscape and erase the diversity of the gay community in public discourse. Unifying the gay community brings the danger of intensifying the othering process through a blunt dualism: the AIDS affected gay community versus the healthy heterosexual population.

As James Jones points out in *The Sick Homosexual*, “Kramer’s work makes the point that everyone, regardless of sexual identity, must cooperate in facing this crisis, for all of us belong to the same tribe” (118). The aim of gay activism should not be to create a binary between sick homosexuals and healthy heterosexuals but to raise awareness of the problem across the nation in order to develop a real resistance and opportunity to develop a remedy. However, this binary was hard to overcome as most heterosexuals did not see the need to help their gay brothers. Hence, the reaction to the AIDS crisis was slow and AIDS was seen as a gay problem and in the beginning even called the ‘gay plague’. This leads to Ned blaming the heterosexual majority for othering gay men and PWA: “The single-minded determination of all you people to forever see us as suck helps keep us sick” (Kramer 60). He reiterates this

assertion in the argument he has with his brother: “I am beginning to think that you and your straight world are our enemy” (ibid 62). What adds to this line of argument is that while Ned’s world is confronted with AIDS, his brother Ben, from whom his law firm asked for help, is busy building a house for his family. This image of the deadly virus and the forward facing building of a house illustrates how AIDS was an issue of deviants while the rest of the nation felt totally unaffected. Jacob Juntunen puts this into context:

To those who fought AIDS since the early-1980s, it felt like they fought a war of which most of the country was unaware, a war during peacetime, and *The Normal Heart* was one of the first major acts that helped combat apathy, homophobia, and ignorance. [...] It helped by making people aware of AIDS and giving spectators the means to become activists.

(165f.)

4.4 Marriage: *My lover. My lover. I do.*

The Normal Heart ends with the wedding of Ned Weeks and his partner Felix Turner, which brings up the question of same-sex marriages. Within this context, marriage has an extended meaning. First of all, allowing same-sex marriages equips gay men and women with the missing rights and equates heterosexuals with homosexuals. Secondly, it changes the cultural meaning of marriage. By allowing gay men and women to marry, marriage is no longer defined as a solely heterosexual institution but is open to a redefinition of its heterosexual and eternal meaning and value. Whereas in real life this is still a highly controversial topic, the ceremony in the play takes place without asking the legal status of the action. It is Dr. Emma Brookner who marries the two men: “This is my hospital, my church” (Kramer 117). The play therefore “affirms gay marriage as the model for relationships and as a counter to deadly promiscuity” (Clum 187). In so doing, the heterosexual marriage becomes idealized as well the gay lifestyle being othered. The heterosexual marriage as a monogamous relationship is portrayed as the only way the gay community can escape death. Imitating a heterosexual lifestyle is the only way for gays to weather the AIDS storm. Consequently, Larry Kramer falls into the heterosexual trap, which envisaged gay relationships as adventurous, promiscuous and fickle and heterosexuals as stable and monogamous.

Richard Goldstein, for example, stresses that “this utopian gesture is central to Kramer’s social – and sexual – ideology. Throughout his work, devotion is the ideal poised against the twin realities of promiscuity and hostility from the world at large” (308). The right to marry is not only highly controversial in state politics, but also within the homosexual movement (cf.

Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship* 449-453; Bell and Binne, *Sexual Citizen* 53-61). For those who stress the right to marry for same-sex couples this act “is conceived [...] as the cornerstone for attaining full citizenship, given the centrality of marriage and the family to the notion of citizenship itself” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 54f.). Even though Kramer sees marriage as somewhat of an alternative to challenge AIDS – “Why didn’t you guys fight for the right to get married instead of the right to legitimize promiscuity?” Ned asks (78) – the marriage takes place without expounding the problem that gay men and women do not have the right to marry. To place marriage as alternative to AIDS is also problematic since it is reinforcing the simple imitating of a ‘heterosexual lifestyle’.

Yet it is the assimilationist tone and the call for a redefinition of what it means to be a gay man that made Kramer, according to John Clum, a “voice to his gay audience [...] of an Old Testament patriarch. To the straight audience he is the representative gay man, the good fairy who will speak for what being gay should mean” (qtd. in Juntunen 142). With regards to Mouffe’s approach on citizenship, this picture is highly problematic, given that citizenship and activism are about radical democracy, whereas Kramer acts like a patriarch.

4.5 Summary

The Normal Heart effectively presents the various structures contributing to the AIDS crisis and tells the story of the fictional *Gay Men Health Crisis* as a response to it. Even though it shows the horror of AIDS and Ned’s lover Felix dies just after the two have married, the play ends with a “classical liberal utopian vision” (Kramer xiv):

Why didn’t I fight harder? Why didn’t I picket the White House, all by myself if nobody would come. Or go on a hunger strike. I forgot to tell him something. Felix, when they invited me to Gay Week at Yale, they had a dance... In my old college dining hall, just across the campus from that tiny freshman room where I wanted to kill myself because I thought I was the only gay man in the world – they had a dance. Felix, there were six hundred young men and women there. Smart, exceptional young men and women. Thank you, Felix. (ibid 118)

This vision includes gay men within the national narrative. Peter Cohn emphasizes that “the fact that these men and women are in college is significant [...], for as such, they represent the next generation of political activists, the ‘exceptional’ men and women who will pick up the struggle when Ned’s generation has tired or died” (206).

5. *Angels* ‘National Themes’ as Sites of Citizenship

In terms of genre, Jonathan Freedman calls *Angels in America* an ‘epic-comic-tragic-fantastic drama’ (91) and Tony Kushner himself defines it as ‘The Theatre of the Fabulous’ (cf. Fujita 123). Kushner’s “concept of the ‘fabulous’ [...] includes deconstructive analyses of historical contexts and incorporates practical politics after the AIDS crisis” (ibid 112).

The ‘national themes’ discussed in *Angels* are numerous. The most prominent ones and those which are important for an understanding of the play as a site of citizenship include national identity, migration, religion, race, sickness and medical authority, (sexual) identity, and, of course, AIDS. These themes link into a “mediation on the state of the nation since AIDS” (Bottoms 157) and the notion of citizenship helps us to analyze what the present state of the nation is worth for its homosexual citizens and PWA. The plot of the play is set between 1985 and 1986 when the United States was approaching the millennium, ‘the gay plague’ had become the ‘Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome’ (AIDS), thousands had died of AIDS⁸, and Reaganism was in its heyday. The ‘national themes’ go significantly beyond those mentioned above and are not exclusively about the 1980s. For example, *Angels*

is full of references to current and historical events: the medieval plague, the Mayflower, the founding of America and the philosophy of radical individualism, the visions of Joseph Smith, early Jewish immigration to the US, the Mormon migration West, and people such as McCarthy, Reagan and a wealth of others. (Nielsen 11).

Angels starts with the funeral service for Louis Ironson’s grandmother. In his funeral eulogy – which can be considered as a prologue (Nielsen 11) – the Rabbi contextualizes her life and death with regards to America and the search for home and identity. He denies the *e pluribus unum*-motto of the United States, stating that America is “the melting pot where nothing melted”, that the place ‘America’ does not exist as such and concludes that in every person is “that great crossing that she made” from Eastern Europe to America: “In you that journey is” (Kushner 16f). This prologue by the Rabbi “introduces the central relationship between migration and roots, fixed and fluid identities, stasis and change” (Nielsen 19) and the utopia of the unity of the American nation. Freedman analyses the words of the Rabbi as “the archetype for transformation of identity, which is the mark of queer experience and survival in the play, is the wandering, rootless, shape-shifting Jew who never finds a home” (92).

⁸ The Center for Disease Control estimated that by June 1985, this is about the time *Angels* starts 11,010 Americans had contracted AIDS and 5,441 had died (Nielsen 14).

While starting with the search for identity – the identity of the individual, but even more importantly the identity of America as a nation and/or concept – *Angels* then tells the interwoven story of the characters and loses the explicit focus on the nation. The re-nationalization of *Angels* takes place in the last lines of the epilogue, which takes place in February 1990 at Bethesda Fountain in New York’s Central Park, four years after the end of the last act. Prior to this, Louis, Belize and Hannah are sitting on Bethesda Fountain in New York’s Central Park talking about world politics and the emerging ‘Perestroika’. At the very end of the epilogue Prior proclaims:

This disease will be the end of many of us, but not nearly all, and the dead will be commemorated and will struggle on with living, and we are not going away. We won’t die secret deaths any more. The world only spins forward. We will be citizens. The time has come. Bye now. You are fabulous, each and every one. And I bless you: *More Life*. The Great Work Begins.

(Kushner 280)

Ron Scapp sees this as “a moment of hope and prediction, of death, overcoming and contradiction” (92) while Peter Cohen emphasizes that the “epilogue solidifies the play’s move [...] toward a vision of community, collective struggle, and change” (213) and we see the “evocation of the queer family” (Freedman 99). It is a promise for every citizen “of being a member of the state” in the future (Scapp 93) – no matter if heterosexual or homosexual, healthy or ill – and a Hegelian moment “while the world continues to spin only forward, toward the future, toward a state that has yet to come” (ibid 92). Stephen Bottoms remarks that “the expression of hope here relies not on the discovery of any final solution for the national and relational crisis [...], but simply in the liberating potential of open change. [Believing] that something new and better might emerge” (183).

The use of Bethesda Fountain as the location for the closing scene brings together the major themes of *Angels* and the fountain is to be read as a trope. The fountain has multiple meanings. Firstly, it is “a representation of the biblical Angel of Bethesda, featured in the Gospel of John as a place of healing in Jerusalem” (Long 148). Belize explains that those suffering “walked through the waters of the fountain of Bethesda, they would be healed, washed clean of pain” (Kushner 279). Secondly, the fountain in Central Park “is a memorial to the Union naval dead of the Civil War, America’s most thematically apocalyptic conflict” (Long 148), a war ‘among brothers’ and over civil rights. Last but not least the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are placed in Bethesda, Maryland. The NIH was one of the federal agencies blamed for not responding appropriately to the AIDS crisis. This reference to

American history, to the promise of healing and for a better future and Prior's epilogue is to be seen in the context of Walter Benjamin 'angel of history' – on top of Bethesda Fountain is an angel as well (cf. Fig. I).

The four characters left in this scene are, as Cadden argues, an “image of four individuals who, despite their very real differences, have chosen, based on their collective experience, to think about themselves as a community working for change” (88). However, they cannot just be seen as a community, but also as “a newly created family” (Fisher 25), a ‘queer family’ (cf. Freedman), or as one of the ‘families we choose’ (cf. Brown 26). Brown describes these as “self-consciously constructed kinships” which were emerging as a reaction to the AIDS crisis (ibid).

5.1 The Angel of History

Prior's words ‘The world only spins forward’ is the most prominent reference to the ‘angel of history’ because “his speech alludes to the moment [...] when Benjamin defines his own utopian vision through the image of a Klee painting” (Freedman 100). Throughout the play Kushner makes many references to Benjamin's ‘angel of history’. It is “one of Kushner's inspirations” (ibid 92) and “Benjamin is everywhere in Kushner's play, from its imagery of apocalypse to its angelic iconography” (ibid 100). In his *On the Concept of History*, Benjamin wrote (cf. appendix II):

There is a painting by Klee called *Angelus Novus*. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where *we* see the appearance of a chain of events, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair [...], to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is *this* storm.

(n.p., emphasis in original)

Benjamin's “doggedly well-intentioned angel of history embodies both the inconceivability of progress and the excruciating condition of the Now” and it is central to the understanding of history that *Angels* is based on (Savran 17) and is the idea for *Angels'* angel (cf. Nielsen 9).

It is in the very first act of *Millennium Approaches*, after Prior tells Louis that he has AIDS and Louis is at the cemetery with the Rabbi, that Louis refers to Benjamin's concept of history: "Maybe because this person's sense of the world, that it will change for the better with struggle, maybe a person who has this neo-Hegelian positivist sense of constant historical progress towards happiness or perfection or something" (Kushner 31). Louis admits that he has to leave Prior because he cannot "incorporate sickness into his sense of how things are supposed to go" (ibid). Yet, his 'neo-Hegelian positivist sense of constant historical progress towards happiness or perfection or something' can be understood as the interpretation of history in *Angels* and that of its author Tony Kushner. Kushner refers directly to Walter Benjamin in the afterword of *Angels*, thanking him for the "introduction into these 'scientific' disciplines a Kabbalist-inflected mysticism and a dark, apocalyptic spirituality" (286). He also said in an interview that "you have to be constantly looking back at the rubble of history" (qtd. in Fujita 123), this is directly Benjamin's angel: "His face is turned towards the past" (ibid).

The angels in the play echo Benjamin's 'angel of history'. In act 2 ("The Epistle") scene 1, the angel 'visits' Prior, whom he calls the 'prophet', and tells him that "YOU MUST STOP MOVING", because mankind's progress is about to destroy the world (Kushner 178, capitals in original), thereby hoping "that immobility will once again prompt the return of God and the forward movement of time" (Savran 20). Prior tells Belize – who has been right next to Prior in this fabulous scene – that "Maybe I am a prophet. Not just me, all of us who are dying now. Maybe we've caught the virus of prophecy. Be still. Toil no more. Maybe the world has driven God from Heaven, incurred the angel's wrath" (ibid 182). With these apocalyptic words Prior takes over Benjamin's understanding of history and 'sees one single catastrophe' that is AIDS. Savran stresses that "Kushner's Angel (and her/his Heaven) serve as a constant reminder both of catastrophe (AIDS, racism, homophobia, and the pathologization of queer and female bodies [...]) and of the perpetual possibility of millennium's approach" (17).

This shows that *Angels* is a representation of Benjamin's theory of history. Juntunen argues that "the historical catastrophe [of AIDS] that befell gay men in the U.S. in the 1980s and Kushner's representation of that decade-old history *include* gay men in the dominant ideology in a new way" (203, emphasis in original). For gay men this inclusion is absolutely necessary as the status quo excludes them from the master narrative of America and harbinger of death in form of HIV/AIDS.

America as a unique place has the potential to include gay men into its master narrative, as Louis emphasizes, since America is not yet fixed. Rather, America is a nation that is constantly progressing and this openness shapes and allows the re-negotiation of American culture and society and holds the potential to include gay men, despite the present state being very harmful. Embedded within this process of flux is, as Louis illustrates, the potential for radical democracy as it bares the potential to change America heteronormativity.

As a leftist and anti-Reaganite, Louis brings up the question “Why has democracy succeeded in America? [...] I mean comparatively, not literally, not in the present, but what makes for the prospect of some sort of radical democracy spreading outward and growing up?” (Kushner 95). Ron Scapp suggests that “the fantasy of democracy throughout America’s history is the actual vehicle of democracy” (96) and that *Angels* is “a fantasy about and beyond the present state (of things)” (93). This, Scapp argues, is part of the myth of America: that it is future bound and therefore that “America fantasizes about *what it someday will be*” (ibid 97, emphasis in original).

Louis does not answer the question why democracy has comparatively succeeded in America and will do so in the future in his monologue-like dialog with Belize in act 3 scene 2 of *Millennium Approaches*, but shows a very ambivalent view on America. On the one hand, America is “different from every other nation on earth”, by which he means somewhat better. However, on the other, he only experiences “bourgeois tolerance” and states that “what AIDS shows us is the limits of tolerance” with tolerance being worth nothing (Kushner 96). As explained earlier, gay and lesbian rights made some progress until the outbreak of AIDS in the 1980s. It was evidence of bourgeois tolerance or ignorance of ‘white straight male America’ which did not experience any threat from the gay and lesbian community. However, that changed with the outbreak since gay sexual intercourse became the symbolic abjection of weakening America. For Louis, this is proof that America is still a “White Straight Male America” (ibid 96) and it is still a time where “there are no angels in America” (ibid 98). Here the angel is the symbol for a better America, one that welcomes diversity, in which gay men as well as PWA are granted full citizenship and where the AIDS crisis is consequently combated and the principle of tolerance is a lived reality. Yet, we are left with the status quo and the promise “We will be citizens” is still to be realized in the future. The ‘great work’ has yet to begin.

In *AIDS in America*, Thomas Yingling writes that “AIDS functions as the demonic counterpart to the beneficent ‘end of history’ coded myths of America” (44), while at the same time AIDS reinforces an ‘end-of-era-feeling’, stimulating a return to cultural ‘conventions’ (Sontag 166). In order for a homosexual and/or PWA to become a full member (or, more precisely, ‘citizen’) of the state and to reach the promise of America, ‘more life’ – the quasi-motto of *Perestroika* – is needed. No wonder that Prior, while being in heaven, tells the angel that he has “The addiction to being alive” and that “We live past hope”, concluding: “Bless me anyway. I want more life”⁹ (Kushner 267). The theme ‘more life’ is a call for the granting of full rights and inclusion into mainstream America. Moreover, it makes demands for medical treatment as shown in the next chapter. Even though he has to live through terrible times, Prior wants to survive, seeing a brighter future ahead.

The American rhetoric of a promising future, as well as apocalypse, can also be found in Susan Sontag’s *AIDS and Its Metaphors*:

The sense of cultural distress or failure gives rise to the desire for a clean sweep, a tabula rasa. No one wants a plague [that is AIDS], of course. But, yes, it would be a chance to begin again. And beginning again – that is very modern, very American, too. (175)

Because AIDS “seems [to represent] the very model of all the catastrophes privileged populations feel await them” (ibid 172), the apocalyptic tenor in the rhetoric around AIDS is very popular. The religious and political right in the United States, defining themselves as the *Moral Majority*, perceived AIDS as a revenge of God: “When you violate moral, health, and hygiene laws, you reap the whirlwind. You cannot shake your fist in God’s face and get away with it” (Jerry Falwell qtd. in Collins 135). The religious right feared that “this awful disease [would] break out among the innocent American public” (ibid 135). To understand the perception of AIDS it is important to note that

AIDS is understood in a premodern way, as a disease incurred by people both as individuals and as members of a ‘risk group’ – that neutral-sounding, bureaucratic, category which also revives the archaic idea of a tainted community that illness has judged. (Sontag 134)

The reluctant response of the Reagan administration can be explained through this discourse of AIDS as a revenge of God. For them, AIDS was a consequence of the various sins which homosexuals commit and is therefore the appropriate punishment. Thus, the Reagan administration felt obliged not to take any action to treat and cure PWA. However, the spread of the AIDS crisis forced the religious right to re-think their strategy, as they feared

⁹ Interestingly, Kushner tells us that a translation of the Hebrew word for ‘blessing’ is ‘more life’.

contagion. Hence, AIDS slowly became a national issue rather than a problem just of sexual deviants.

5.2 AZT, Medical Authority and Health Citizenship

The issues of sickness, medical authority and most of all AIDS appear throughout the play and they are closely linked to sexual citizenship. In times of HIV/AIDS, the availability of medical treatment and health care is crucial. It can be understood as one of the rights a citizen has and in liberalism the government is thought to protect its citizens. Because of this, “for Kushner AIDS, while retaining a gay-specific identity, is about the fate of the country” (Cadden 84). It is about the fate of the country as it tests if the nation will deal with the AIDS crisis adequately and protect its citizens who are infected or at risk. The very citizens who are most of the time considered being the “other”.

The AIDS medication ‘azidothymidine’ (AZT) is one topic in *Angels* where citizenship of health is negotiated. It problematizes the unequal distribution of the available medicine to fight AIDS, it highlights the research behind AIDS medication in general, and it illustrates how the nurse Belize questions who is a medical expert regarding AIDS and how he acts as a radical citizen when trying to reallocate the medicine.

As early as at the end of scene 1 of *Millennium Approaches* we are introduced to AZT, when Roy Cohn’s doctor Henry tells him about it. Henry points out that “the NIH in Bethesda has a new drug called AZT with a two-year waiting list” (Kushner 52) and that Roy should use his connections to get it.¹⁰ The fact that Roy needs to use his clout to get the medication implies that many people suffering from AIDS in the United States – and indeed elsewhere – are not be able to get the treatment that is presumably best for them. Furthermore, though the Department of Health and Human Services asked for increases in funding to conduct research and undertake prevention measures, they did not get any more money from the government (Nielsen 14f.). What Reagan’s administration did was cut the funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by 50 percent and reduce the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by \$127 million (Eisenbach 292). Kushner described the ‘official policy of ignorance’ (cf. Nielsen) and the representation of AIDS in *Angels* thus:

I really was astonished in the 80s at the extent to which people believed – and it wasn’t only Reagan, though he’s culpable because he was elected to be a leader – the way in which society as a

¹⁰ The real Roy Cohn also got AZT through his ‘connections’ (Eisenbach 304).

whole believed for a long time – believed that we deserved to die because we had sex with each other (qtd. in Nielsen 15).

When in act 1 scene 5 of *Perestroika* Roy is hospitalized in New York Hospital he makes a call to order AZT, his “own private dash” (Kushner 161) – the dash that most people were not able to get. He tells Martin Heller, who proclaimed “the end of Liberalism” (Kushner 69) in *Millennium Approaches* and works at the NIH: “Tomorrow [...] a nice big box of drugs for Uncle Roy. Or there’ll be seven different kinds of hell to pay” (ibid 161f.). He can make this demand as a person with clout but not as a citizen who suffers from AIDS. The latter is a status he does not claim, because he believes in clout and not in the undeniable rights that a citizen has. He strongly believes in individualism: that everyone is responsible for his own good. In *Millennium Approaches* he tells Joe how to get through life: “Love; that’s a trap. Responsibility; that’s a trap too. Like a father to a son I tell you this: Life is full of horror; nobody escapes, nobody; save yourself [...] don’t be afraid to live in the raw wind, naked, alone [...] Let nothing stand in your way” (Kushner 64).

In act 3 scene 2 former drag queen Belize, who works at the ward where the AIDS patients are being treated, finds out that Roy has a large amount of AZT for his own use and that Roy is self-medicating (Kushner 188f.). Belize tells Roy that there are only about 30 people who are getting the drug despite a hundred thousand needing it and therefore goes on to say: “It’s not fair, is it?” Roy replies: “No, but as Jimmy Carter said, neither is life. [...] I am not moved by an unequal distribution of goods on this earth. It’s history, I didn’t write though I flatter myself that I am a footnote. And you are a nurse, so minister and skedaddle” (ibid 189). After a hard argument Roy admits Belize to take one bottle of AZT, but Belize takes three. In this moment Belize starts to act as a radical citizen. He not only sees the unequal distribution of AZT and the fact that one needs clout to get the best treatment available at the moment, but tries to redistribute the medicine and through doing this tries to extend the other PWA life. This scene also teaches the reader – or viewer in the theater – about the unequal distribution of medicine and makes him or her aware of how unfair the medical system is and how citizens are treated very different.

Roy does see neither the necessity of everybody having access to the same medical treatment he needs nor the nation state having to guarantee it: a stand which Reaganite politics also took. Additionally, he also constantly questions Belize’s medical authority. This starts when he calls for a white nurse (ibid 156) and climaxes when Roy says: “You’re just a

fucking nurse. Why should I listen to you over my very qualified, very expensive WASP doctor?" (ibid 160) After Belize tells him more about AZT, Roy seems to consider him somewhat of an expert. Belize makes it clear why he helps Roy even though he is constantly insulted by him and he had called Roy "The Killer Queen Herself" (ibid 156): "Consider it solidarity. One faggot to another" (ibid 161). This emerging coalition can be seen as an example of the notion of AIDS citizenship discussed by Brown. The solidarity between Belize and Roy is a symbol for the solidarity of radical democratic principles, which goes beyond class and race, to overcome the threat of AIDS and to challenge the heteronormative nation-states and its institutions. From now on Roy more or less accepts Belize's care. Belize goes on to force upon Roy the sexual identity of homosexuality that he earlier rejected from his WASP physician.

After Roy's death, Belize sneaks in to his hospital room to steal his AZT. He calls Louis in order to thank Roy for the medication by praying the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead (ibid 254f.). Even though Belize considers Roy to be "a terrible person" (ibid 256) he asks for forgiveness and solidarity ("A queen can forgive her vanquished foe" (ibid)), placing Roy into the context of homosexual America – something Roy never wanted to belong and related to. After Roy's death, Belize steals the left over AZT and supplying it to PWA. Belize one again acts as a radical citizen, acting against the unjust distribution of much needed state-of-the-art medicine. Moreover, by redistributing the AZT and by asking for forgiveness for Roy (cf. ibid 256) we can imagine Belize as a good angel.

The fictional role that AZT plays as a site of the negotiation of citizenship in *Angels* can be found in literature about the AIDS crisis and citizenship. In *RePlacing Citizenship* Michael Brown covers ACT UP's most well known actions in the 1980s, among them the protest against the high price of AZT and the correlating high profits of Burroughs Wellcome. On April 25 1989 activists dressed as businessmen entered the company's headquarters and sealed themselves in the building in order to make their call for a reduction in the price of AZT. A few month later on September 14 at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) activists dressed as traders unfurled a large banner reading "Sell Wellcome" which interrupted global trading for five minutes and produced nation-wide media coverage (cf. Brown 63; Eisenbach 304f.). Brown argues that reducing the price of AZT was "a goal that ACT UP eventually won" (Brown 63). ACT UP won when it forced Northwest Airlines to allow AIDS patients on flights by launching a 'phone zap' campaign which "flooded the company's switchboard with

prank calls” (Eisenbach 305). Even though it is neither an action at the NYSE nor a ‘phone zap’, *Angels* addresses the issue of AZT and illustrates the unequal distribution of the drug as well as the radical democratic actions of one of its characters.

The responsibilities a citizen has for society as a whole as well as for herself or himself has always been part of the debate about citizenship. Regarding AIDS, this question becomes even more important. The question of one’s own responsibility and of being a ‘good citizen’ or a ‘bad citizen’ is explored in act 2 scene 4 of *Millennium Approaches*. In this scene, Louis is cruising for sex in Central Park wanting to be punished for leaving his sick lover. He decides to have unsafe sex, telling the stranger “Infect me. I don’t care” (Kushner 63). The stranger then ends the sexual intercourse. The topic of the responsible citizen is only brought up briefly. However, it is important in the discourse of citizenship since in liberal democracies “safer sex is one of the responsibilities incumbent upon responsible and self-governing citizens” (Richardson 106) as citizens have an “individual responsibility for *acts*” (Patton 362f., emphasis in original). For homosexuals within the mainstream citizenship discourse this meant that they “finally got to be citizens, but only if they were responsible homosexuals who, while they might not be able to reorient their (mostly, his) filthy desires, could take active steps (abstinence or, failing that, condoms and the resistance of bisexuality) to avoid polluting the nation” (ibid 363). In this scene the psychological discourse (Louis wanting to be punished for leaving the sick Prior) meets the discourse of responsible citizenship (practicing at least safer sex) and illustrates self-care as the responsibility of a ‘good citizen’.

As the gay community accepts its responsibilities, heterosexuals should also make an effort to include gay men and women into their concept of citizenship. Hence the integration of gay men and women is not a one-way street, but a relational process between heterosexuals re-thinking and broadening their concept of the nation and homosexuals taking care of themselves and the wider community. Consequently, citizenship is not only about accepting ones rights and duties but also about offering new possibilities and opportunities such as joining the armed forces or other ways of serving the nation as a gay man or woman.

5.3 *Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Homosexuals in the United States Armed Forces*

Another important site of sexual citizenship is brought up when the two lovers Joe and Louis get into in argument about their disparate political views. Leftist Louis blames the

Reaganite Joe for the work he did and still does as a chief clerk for Justice Theodore Wilson of the Federal Courts of Appeals. He brings up the case “Stephens versus the United States: the army guy who got a dishonorable discharge – for being gay” (Kushner 241).

The exclusion of homosexuals from the military in the United States is a prominent example of how paradoxically citizenship is sometimes constructed and how the nation-state defines homosexuality as weakness and as a danger for the nation’s security. It is “emblematic of the tensions between sexual and national identity” (Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship* 446). The ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy of the Clinton administration allowed lesbians and gay men to join the U.S. Armed Forces under the condition of withholding their sexual identity¹¹. However, the so-called ‘passing’ had also been used for dismissal. In *Steffan v. Cheney* the defendant was accused of not informing the Navy that he was gay at a time when it was still prohibited for homosexuals to join the U.S. armed forces. Bell and Binnie argue that Steffan’s presence “threatened to destabilize [...] the distinction between a sanctioned homosociality and an outlawed homosexuality” (ibid 454), the U.S. Navy’s fear being ‘contagion’. This was “backed up by arguments upholding Steffan’s expulsion centred on the ‘threat’ of HIV and AIDS impacting on the ‘healthy’ military’s ability to defend the nation” (ibid 454). In *Angels’* case Louis tells Joe that even though Stephens won the case, the court ruled: “it’s [not] unconstitutional to discriminate against homosexuals. Because homosexuals, they write, are *not* entitled to equal protection under the law” (Kushner 242, emphasis in original).

The accusation made in *Steffan v. Cheney* shows how paradoxical the arguments made by the nation-state can be when trying to exclude homosexuals – at least those who are not willing ‘not to tell’ – from the armed forces. More generally, the fact that citizens are not allowed to ‘serve’ the country means that they can never act as ‘good citizens’ since defending ones nation is often defined as a ‘duty’. Bell and Binnie argue, “that denying homosexuals the right to fight for their country denies them full citizenship, given the continuing durability of the relationship between the citizen and the nation-state” (*Sexual Citizenship* 456). Furthermore, with “opening up one of the most heteronormative state institutions to homosexuals begins the task of undermining heteronormativity itself” (ibid 456). Even though being critical about the importance of the goal to join the armed forces, Carl

¹¹ Judith Butler described the way homosexuals have to act in the US military thus: “I am a homosexual and I intend not to act on my desire” (qtd. in Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizenship* 454; cf. Judith Butler. *Excitable speech: a politics of the performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.).

Stychin sees this as a chance “to reimagine these central national institutions” (qtd. in *ibid* 455).

Almost two service members are fired every day from the U.S Armed Forces and, by August 2009, some 13,000 servicemen and women have been dismissed from the U.S. army, navy and air force under the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy (cf. DeMiglio). This shows that gay men and women are still not granted full citizenships rights and illustrates how much sexual identity still matters to the nation-state. The fear of contagion of the heterosexual population is still widely present and actively enforced by the government.

5.4 Constituting and Re-Constituting (Sexual) Identities

With the scope of characters' sexual, class and religious affiliations, *Angels* opens up the possibility to discuss the construction of American identity and sexual identities in the mid-1980s, a “Time of Crisis and Confusion” (Kushner 173). “Sexual identities”, Brown and Knopp observe, “are now most fruitfully seen as culturally and ideologically constructed subjectivities and significations that serve and resist dominant forms of power” (313). I will not deal with every character in *Angels*, but outline how a number of them work (or not work) within American identity.

Brown states that today “Identities of the citizen remain open, socially produced, often contradictory, and in flux” (9) and this is even more true for the characters in *Angels*. Identities are also ‘cultural creations’ with Weeks arguing that they constitute “fictions, individual and collective narratives” (46). Louis, for example, demonstrates how identities are contradictory: “If with Belize he takes a comparatively rightist (and racist) stance, with Joe he takes an explicitly leftist (and antihomophobic) one” (Savran 29). This is to show how ambivalent an individual acts. He tries to convince Belize about the greatness of the United States and America as an idea, but fails to take the problems he is facing as a black American seriously. While Louis blames Joe to work for the homophobic legal system he admits his wrongs to the Rabbi in the beginning of *Angels*: “maybe that person [Louis] can’t, um, incorporate sickness into his sense of how things are supposed to go” (Kushner 31). This statement reflects Yingling’s assertion that sickness, and especially AIDS, is seen as anti-American. Moreover, Yingling emphasizes that AIDS means culturally “a collapse of identity”, since “the material effects of AIDS deplete so many of our cultural assumptions about identity, justice, desire, and knowledge that it seems at times able to threaten the entire

system of Western thought” (39). He also argues that, “[b]ecause it provides only negative structures of identification, AIDS is most notable for its capacity to produce *non-identity or internalized abjection*” (39, emphasis added).

Like mainstream America, Louis has a clear mindset of how things are supposed to progress, and sickness is not part of this mindset. Sickness is a symbol of the unnatural and is a key element that hinders America from moving forward and progressing into the future. It is an obstacle because it threatens the unity of the supposedly healthy nation. In his first appearance, Prior informs Louis that as a PWA he does not belong to America anymore: “I’m a lesionnaire. The Foreign Lesion. The American Lesion. Lesionnaire’s disease” (Kushner 27). He identifies himself as a lone wolf and his body as a battleground. Roy Cohn too recounts how sickness is considered to be un-American: “The worst thing about being sick in America [...] is you are booted out of the parade. Americans have no use for sick. [...] It’s just no country for the infirm” (ibid 192; cf. Yingling).

Interestingly, it took the all-American idol Rock Hudson, who had maintained to have liver cancer just like Roy Cohn, to open the eyes of the public to the AIDS crisis. It was “Rock Hudson going public with his disease, though not his sexuality, [which] created an early watershed moment in the history of AIDS from which point on AIDS could not longer be kept a secret ‘gay’ disease” (Nielsen 14; cf. Thompson). Further to this, Hudson “provided [a] handle. He gave the disease a familiar human face and in so doing both raised public awareness of the epidemic and engendered greater sympathy for its victims” (Collins 136). Until this time, the “lack of governmental support for AIDS services [...] was largely due to the absence of a popular demand for action” (Eisenbach 293). The 11,871 counted cases of AIDS in the United States and the 5,917 deaths by the time of Hudson’s announcement (ibid 302) did not arouse the interest of the American imagination. What was needed was the revelation from such a prominent all-American figure. It is about the importance of public solidarity and the limits of the gay community to achieve the aim of full citizenship rights. Joe’s mother Hannah is symbolic of this public solidarity in *Angels*. Even though she was unable to deal with her son telling her that he is homosexual (“You’re being ridiculous [...] We will just forget this phone call [...] Drinking is a sin! A sin! I raised you better than that” (Kushner: 82)), she later takes care of Harper and also Prior. She “has lost her son Joe as a result of her rigidity, but visiting Prior in the hospital teaches her tolerance for the ‘otherness’ of homosexuality” (Fisher 25). Through the course of *Angels*, the rigidly Mormon Hannah

makes this transformation, in the end not being a stranger to herself (cf. *ibid*). It is Hannah and Belize who therefore take over the role of caretakers (cf. Savran 22).

Belize, on the one hand, is the nurse who offers pain relief and gives medical advice to Prior but especially to Roy Cohen. Furthermore, Belize is Prior's best friend to whom he offers comfort. Unlike Louis, Belize does not leave Prior during his times of greatest need. Hannah, on the other hand, is the non-gay support and hence is the link to the 'general population'. Despite her deep religious background as a Mormon she learns to accept Prior as the person he is, as a gay who has AIDS:

Hannah: It's not polite to call other people's beliefs preposterous. [...]

Prior: I don't. And I'm sorry but it's repellent to me. So much of what you believe.

Hannah: What do I believe?

Prior: I'm a homosexual. With AIDS. I can just imagine what you ...

Hannah: 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.

(Kushner 235)

Hannah as a religious, white, middle class and heterosexual woman accepts Prior as he is. However, at the same time she demands him to be approached in the same way – without any prejudices. Moreover, she does not just accept Prior's identity and disease; she offers her support by taking him to the hospital and by normalizing his illness. "It's cancer. Nothing more. Nothing more human than that" (Kushner 237). For her, PWA are no different from people with cancer. Her approach is very different from Roy Cohen's approach to AIDS. Roy neglects his disease and therefore chooses to call it liver cancer in order to cover up his gay identity. Furthermore, Hannah is not just normalizing Prior's illness; she normalizes his status as a gay man suffering from a 'gay disease'. For her, his disease and his homosexuality are nothing special or alien but are fundamentally human.

Hannah's approach to Prior and how she deals with his gayness and illness is a symbol of public solidarity and illustrates the necessity of a broader engagement with the issues of sexual/AIDS citizenship. As discussed above, the notion of sexual/AIDS citizenship goes beyond one's identity and is not limited to homosexuals. It is therefore necessary, that not only those who are gay, or who are suffering from AIDS act, but that the general public is included in the process of renegotiating citizenship.

However, fighting the AIDS crisis is not just about public support but also about challenging the ignorance of some parts of the gay community. By and large, all parts of the

gay community shared the need to react to the AIDS crisis. However, many gay men did not even associate themselves with the gay community. Despite their sexual orientation, they acted like heterosexuals who just prefer to have sex with men. The most prominent example of this homo-/heterosexual performance is Roy Cohen. Despite his sexual desires and his illness he refused both to accept his identity and his disease and to use his connections in Washington, DC for the wider good of the gay community. This ambivalent relationship makes Roy Cohen one of the most contradictory characters in *Angels* and requires us to explore his performances further.

5.5 Roy Cohn

The character Roy Cohn, based on the real Roy M. Cohn (Kushner: Playwright's notes for *Angels*), combines many inconsistencies and is ambivalent in what he does, who he is assigned to be or who he wants to be: lawyer, secular Jew, closeted homosexual, PWA, Republican or McCarthyist – just to name a few. Kushner sees him “as a figure who can be valuably deployed to raise important questions about definitions of gay identity and gay community” (Cadden 82). Moreover, as Atsushi Fujita stresses, “Kushner's depiction of Roy exposes what McCarthyism did; it is connected to a criticism against the Reagan Administration for having failed to take action soon enough against the AIDS epidemic” (114). Thus, Roy Cohn is a central character.

In act 4 of *Perestroika* Roy tells Belize that “Lawyers are... the High Priests of America” and that ‘the law’ is “the only club I ever wanted to belong to” (221). According to John Quinn, law is “a nerve running through nearly every organ and extremity of the body” of *Angels* (79) and that “law acquires the salient characteristics of a secular religion on the America that Kushner brings to stage” (ibid 80). Law, and the character of Roy, therefore mediates the issue of power relations. In act 1 scene 2 of *Millennium Approaches*, Roy is “showing off his power to his protégé, Joe”. In their conversation, which is perhaps more accurately described as Roy's monologue, Roy “single handedly represents the disingenuous nature of politics and functions as a symbol of American Republicanism” (Nielsen 12). Roy “functions as a link to, or the embodiment of, what Kushner sees as the corrupted power structure of America” (ibid 44). While (heterosexual) law was the club Roy wanted to belong to, he didn't want to belong to the homosexual America.

Roy Cohn rejects both his homosexuality and the fact that he is suffering from AIDS, calling them ‘labels’ (Kushner 51). He doesn’t identify with these ‘labels’ because “AIDS is what homosexuals have. I have liver cancer” (ibid 52). For him, homosexuality and AIDS are closely linked together and he perceives both as markers of weakness. While the other characters represent themselves as people with AIDS who happen to be gay, Cohn reestablishes the link between homosexuality and AIDS.

It is worth taking a closer look at how Roy reacts when his doctor tells him that he has AIDS:

Henry: You have had sex with men, many many times, Roy, and one of them, or any number of them, has made you very sick. You have AIDS.

[...]

Roy: Homosexuals are not men who sleep with other men. Homosexuals are men who in fifteen years of trying cannot get a pissant antidiscrimination bill through City Council. Homosexuals are men who know nobody and who nobody knows. Who have zero clout. Does this sound like me, Henry?

Henry: No

[...]

Roy: Because *what* I am is defined entirely by *who* I am. Roy Cohn is not a homosexual. Roy Cohn is a heterosexual man, Henry, who fucks around with guys.

Henry: OK, Roy.

Roy: And what is my diagnosis, Henry?

Henry: You have AIDS, Roy.

Roy: No, Henry, no. AIDS is what homosexuals have. I have liver cancer.

(Kushner 51f., emphasis in original)

Cohn’s reaction and denial of his homosexuality mirror the linkage of homosexuality and sickness as well as showing the hypocrisy of Reaganite America. To prove that he has clout, Roy claims that his influence reaches up to the White House: “But unlike nearly every other man of whom this is true, I bring the guy I’m screwing to the White House and President Reagan smiles at us and shakes his hand” (ibid).

Cohn’s statements in *Angels* concerning his homosexuality and his gender definition are covered by interviews with the real Cohn:

Anybody who knows me and knows anything about me or who knows the way my mind works or knows the way I function... would have an awfully hard time reconciling ah, ah, reconciling that with ah, ah , any kind of homosexuality. Every facet of my personality, of my, ah, aggressiveness, of my toughness, of everything along those line, is just totally, I suppose, incompatible with anything like that. (qtd. in Eisenbach 6)

The fact that the fictional and real Roy Cohn are so much alike and that we can find ‘proof’ of his statements in the play infers that Tony Kushner sees this character as central to the messages of *Angels*. He portrays him as one of the ‘lavender lads’ (Bottoms 168) in government and wants to prove the duplicity of the Reaganite years as well as McCarthyism. Furthermore, “by presenting Roy in this context, as a man who *still* has the willing ear of Congressmen, the Justice Department and even the President himself, Kushner implies that very little has actually changed” (Bottoms 162, emphasis in original).

Howe explains Cohn’s statements in *Angels* as follows, and it is true for the real Cohn as well: “Cohn’s distinction between heterosexual and homosexual rests on one’s inclusion within or exclusion from a hierarchy of power [and therefore citizenship]. As an influential figure of the dominant class, Cohn is *de jure* a heterosexual” (415, emphasis in the original). Despite the fact that Cohn “rejects his sexual identity [...] and claims his political identity” (Fujita 117), he finds himself as an AIDS sufferer and an unwilling member of the gay community.

The real Cohn knew only too well the importance of not being known as a gay man ever since he was Senator McCarthy’s assistant during the 1950s and was – as a closeted young man – part of the crusade against communists and homosexuals. Along with communists, homosexuals in the federal government were the other principal targets of McCarthyism. McCarthy himself summed it up thus: “If you want to be against McCarthy, boys, you’ve got to be a communist or a cocksucker” (qtd. in Eisenbach 3). In this statement, ‘McCarthy’ represents America or at least the ruling class at that time. Since 1953, federal employees could be dismissed due to ‘sexual perversion’ and, in the heydays of the Cold War, the State Department fired more homosexuals than communists (ibid 5).

Roy Cohn also represents the “crucial importance of (closeted) gay men in twentieth-century American politics” (Savran 35), among them J. Edgar Hoover¹² and Joseph McCarthy. Therefore, Roy Cohn’s figure stands for the already queer status of American politics, because of his hidden homosexuality as well as his constant and repetitive denunciation of political sexual dissidence. Moreover, his figure is a symbol of those cold war generals - J. Edgar Hoover and Joseph McCarthy - who helped to create and reproduce the notion of a heterosexual and capitalist nation, America. In doing so, American cold war

¹² For Hoover see: Potter, Claire B. „Queer Hoover: Sex, Lies, and Political History.“ *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15.3 (2006): 355-381.

politics and rhetoric, embodied in Roy Cohen and the cold war generals, is not just about denouncing political and sexual dissidence. It denies these people full citizenship rights.

Roy Cohn has two antagonists in many respects: Prior Walter and Joe Pitt. Roy and Prior are the two characters suffering from AIDS but they deal with their sickness and sexual identity in entirely different ways. Whereas liberal Prior Walter lives openly gay and, in the end, accepts that he has AIDS, Roy refuses denies both. In *Angels*, remaining closeted costs Roy his life and closeted Joe also suffers from an ulcer and simply disappears from the play. Through this, Kushner takes the stance that “it is not homosexuality that is pathological but, rather, its *denial*” (Savran 35, emphasis in original).

Joe “is the non-corrupted, non-infected version of Cohn” (Quinn 86), who also denies his sexual identity. Being asked by his wife Harper if he is homosexual he replies: “That I might be one thing deep within, no matter how wrong or ugly that thing is, so long as I have fought, with everything I have, to kill it” (Kushner 46). He articulates his homoerotic desire by telling Harper about his dream of Jacob which he had when he was a child, telling her how he looked at the story’s picture “twenty times every day” (ibid 55). This image of Jacob wrestling the angel is “an image both of male-male desire and of the struggle between prophetic vocation and queer identity” (Freedman 92). But Joe wants to be ‘decent’ and ‘correct’ and considers his sexual identity to be his fault, wanting to ‘cure’ it, whatever it costs: “I pray for God to crush me, break me up into little pieces and start over again” (Kushner 55). As such, he accepts what society and the church tell him is right in order to be a good citizen. In doing so, he tries to sustain the Platonic ideal of social consensus and homogeneity through his heterosexual lifestyle and in denying his own identity. Though he comes out during the play and everybody knows about his sexual orientation, his case is more one of ‘orientation’ than ‘identity’. He never adopts an identity of a proud gay man and thus he is not challenging mainstream American values. Hence, he is not only the non-corrupted version of Roy Cohen. Like Roy, he prefers to have sex with men, but he is unable to accept his desires and to come out like other characters. Additionally, and again like Roy, he denies his sexual identity and prefers to live a secret gay life. This makes Joe’s performance very distinct from other characters such as Louis, Prior and Belize who are openly gay and therefore contribute to the renegotiation of citizenship.

Belize is certainly the character most contrary to the mainstream of the ‘silent majority’ of the Reagan years and thus also most different from Roy Cohn who calls him “The Negro night nurse, my negation” (Kushner 208). Savran even labels him “the play’s guarantee of diversity” (Savran 30). Belize is openly gay, a former drag queen, and works at the hospital with HIV/AIDS patients but, most significantly, as a black man, he stands for the issue of race.

Louis and Belize discuss the ‘white straight monolith’ of America very controversially. “The white cracker who wrote the national anthem knew what he was doing. He set the word ‘free’ to a note so high nobody can reach it [...] I’ll show you America. Terminal, crazy and mean” (Kushner 228). As a black gay man, Belize considers himself neither as part of America nor of the better tomorrow. Scapp reminds us of Malcolm X’s words negating “the temporality of the future possibility of America”: “No, I am not an American. I am of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism” (Scapp 97). Like Malcolm X, Belize stresses that African Americans are not yet full citizens. Therefore, Belize has two major identities that prevent him from being granted full citizenship: his sexual identity and his race.

Discussing the very different performances of identity in *Angels* raises the following question: have individuals the right to be out about their sexual identity or to stay in the closet? Inevitably, this links to the right of privacy, which has been raised by Diane Richardson (120f.). In the case of Roy Cohn, it is definitely a tough question to answer when the individual in question is a proud part of the system that suppresses gay men. Unfortunately, Kushner’s *Angels* does not cover this issue but, in a program note, he indicated what the case of Roy Cohn might mean:

AIDS is what finally outed Roy Cohn. The ironies surrounding his death engendered a great deal of homophobic commentary, and among gay men and lesbians considerable introspection. How broad, how embracing was our sense of community? Did it encompass an implacable foe like Roy? Was he one of us? (Kushner qtd. in Cadden 83)

5.6 Summary

Unlike *The Normal Heart*, *Angels* touches on many different national themes: national identity, migration, religion, race, sickness and medical authority, (sexual) identity, and, of course, AIDS. Hence, *Angles* addresses the multiple scales through which sexual citizenship

in relation to gay men and PWA is negotiated. Moreover, as Juntunen argues, sexual citizenship and identity can only be understood by taking these multiple cultural contexts into account:

First, the play in conjunction with postmodern theory instructs scholars that the lack of historical representation is something that should be mined for potential rewritings of history. Second, Kushner's sophisticated understanding of identity politics produces multi-dimensional characters that are not demarcated solely by sexuality. As a result, the play is able to re-imagine homosexuality as one among many defining traits. Third, *Angels*, is in many ways, an assimilationist project, which, despite its severe limitations and drawbacks, allows for a redefinition and expansion of the body politic. Fourth, while the work's hopeful invocation of "utopia" and "revolution" may reveal its status as a commodity, it is precisely because of its position inside the culture industry that *Angels* was able to re-imagine who was included inside the official history of the United States.

(204)

6. Conclusion

The Normal Heart and *Angels* are political reflections and interventions and, as political dramas, they offer cultural perceptions of the life of gay men in the Reaganite early- and mid-1980s and of PWA in the first decade of the AIDS crisis. They address the AIDS crisis from the view of two authors who are committed to the struggle for gay rights and for those who suffer from AIDS. Both plays “raise audience consciousness as to the complicity of government players in the spread of the epidemic, as well as to the political struggles that will be necessary if the epidemic is to end” (Cohen 197). Due to the lack of governmental action to fight the AIDS crisis, gay men themselves and others started to fight - or at least to contain - the crisis. The various ways of dealing with and fighting the AIDS crisis can be understood as enacting citizenship (cf. Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 17ff.; cf. Brown). The authors are exponents of the politicized gay theatre and Kushner truly believes in its power: “America watching the spectacle of itself being able to accept homosexuality is good for America” (qtd. in Fisher 17).

As “[t]he AIDS epidemic had, in essence, pushed gay dramatists toward a more politicized view – even more than had been [it] had been inspired by the Stonewall era” (Fisher 17), the two plays address the issues of gay identity, sexual citizenship, and the nation differently and focus on different themes. One is written in the early days of AIDS, the other a decade after the outbreak began. As I pointed out above, both plays can be understood as a negotiation of the notion of sexual citizenship and as the moment of being a member of the state, of being part of the Self of the body America. This includes the actual policies of the United States as well as more imaginary and idealistic notions of America. For example, on the one hand the rights and duties a citizen has – or is being denied – in the nation-state, and, on the other hand, the imagination of gay men and PWA in the master narrative of the idealistically constructed America.

The Normal Heart addresses the issues raised very directly by condensing them in an “exigent, functional speech, the speech of crisis, emergency, danger” as Tony Kushner writes it in the plays foreword (ix). Whereas *The Normal Heart* is a prompt response to the first years of the AIDS crisis, *Angels in America* is a multi-layered narrative that focuses on many ‘national themes’. In light of this, the chapter on *The Normal Heart* is less comprehensive as the one on *Angels*. Yet this does not reduce the significance of the first, because it addresses

the questions raised by the AIDS crisis (e.g. gay male identity, the perception of gay men and PWA within society, making the public aware of AIDS and giving information, taking action to fight the crisis) in a concise and direct way. Both plays, as elaborated throughout this thesis, address various themes of sexual citizenship such as: how AIDS is culturally perceived; (non-) citizens' (sexual) identity, the response of gay men and others as individuals or as a group to the AIDS crisis and how the AIDS crisis was fought as a set of practices; the questions of same-sex marriages as well as homosexuals in the military; the availability of treatment and medicine as well as the founding of research; the heteronormative power-structure; and, last but not least, how and if gay men and PWA are incorporated into the nation's master narrative and therefore the extent to which they belong to America. As a next step towards concluding this study I will compare the two plays.

Despite the fact that one is considered to be a first and the other a second generation AIDS play, *The Normal Heart* and *Angels* show many similarities. Both Larry Kramer and Tony Kushner were AIDS activists and wanted to reach out to a mainstream audience (Cohen 197). *The Normal Heart's* protagonist Jeff Weeks and the plot of the entire play is closely linked to Kramer's life and work, an individual who was the most prominent founder of *Gay Men's Health Crisis*. Even though *Angels* is not significantly autobiographical, "knowing a writer's background can help put the work in perspective" (Nielsen: 5). Indeed, Kushner once said about *Angels*: "I think it's my best play because I started writing about my world" (qtd. in *ibid*) and many argue that we can find indication for Kushner's beliefs and thoughts within the script. He lives in New York where *Angels* is set, he is a gay man as five of its characters are and he is Jewish as several characters are, too. Even though "critics disagree on which character, if anyone in particular, represents Kushner's own views" (*ibid* 6), it is "Louis [who] is an ardent believer in some form of socialism, radical democracy and American liberalism, as is Kushner" (*ibid* 5). Ken Nielsen argues that it is "the combination of the personal with the political" where much of *Angels'* strength comes from (*ibid* 6). I argue that the same can be said about *The Normal Heart*, as Larry Kramer's role in founding the GMHC and the fictional Ned Weeks' work to start the very similar organization in the play most significantly link the work of the author with the plot of the play. Here, again, the personal becomes political. Kushner even acknowledges that he feels "very proud that *Angels* is identified as a gay play. I want it to be thought of as being part of gay culture" (qtd. in Fisher 7).

Both plays “raise audience consciousness as to the complicity of government players in the spread of the epidemic, as well as to the political struggles that will be necessary of the epidemic is to end” (Cohen 197).

Yet, the plays also show differences. Opening “days before President Clinton’s election, critics received *Angels in America* with a sense of hope that the 1990s would be a decade marked by gains in civil rights for gays and increased attention to the AIDS epidemic” (Juntunen 185). The ideas and messages portrayed in *Angels* were developed at the end of the neo-conservative administration. American society has progressed since the early 1980s of *The Normal Heart*. People knew a lot more about the disease and new drugs were developed. Furthermore, with the majority of Americans moving in a more liberal direction, the gay community believed it was finally able to achieve more rights. There was certainly more hope about the future than during the early 1980s when the AIDS crisis emerged and gay men and PWA experienced little solidarity. Consequently, *Angels’* main protagonist Prior Walter incorporates this hope: “The fountain’s not flowing now, they turn it off in the winter, ice in the pipes. But in the summer it’s a sight to see. I want to be around to see it. I plan to be. I hope to be” (Kushner 280). Unlike Felix Turner in *The Normal Heart*, Prior Walter does not die. He learns to live with the virus and the medication helps him and other PWA: “This disease will be the end of many of us, but not nearly all” (ibid 280). AIDS is no longer perceived and understood as a disease that inevitably brings death for all, but that the life of PWA can be partially restored and extended.

Comparing both plays and their different attitudes Stephen Bottoms noted that:

Angels stands in marked contrast to some plays of the 1970s and 1980s, which appear to attempt a kind of apologia to straight audiences by trying to persuade them that gay people are ‘normal’ like them. [...] *The Normal Heart*, as its title suggests, is in many ways the epitome of this approach. Kushner takes exactly the opposite stance, he repeatedly implying that the sexual orientation of all his characters, whether primarily gay or straight, is to some extent fluid; that everyone, in other words, is a little bit queer. [...] *Angels* takes it as read that Louis, Prior, and Belize have the inalienable right to be as unconventional as they choose.

(177f.)

This shift – from a more assimilationist approach to one of diversity and every citizen’s right acknowledged by society and the nation-state – has been elaborated throughout this thesis.

It is this stance that Louis takes in a discussion with Belize: “*Power* is the object, not being tolerated. Fuck assimilation” (Kushner 96, emphasis in original). This is an important difference between the two generations of AIDS plays. While *The Normal Heart* shows

strong assimilationist tendencies, wanting gay men not only to fight the spread of HIV and AIDS but also to be accepted by mainstream society, *Angels* calls for accepting the diversity of America and is to be understood as resisting hegemonic moral values of the Reagan years. Hence, *Angels* is demanding a concrete response to the AIDS crisis. To claim one's rights is not just about achieving equality and becoming part of mainstream America. Moreover, it is about questioning and changing the values of mainstream America. Citizenship in *Angels* is discussed as one possible way in which "things could be different" (Weeks qtd. in Schippert 297). Thus, *Angels* is a call to take action in order to change American society. It is not about assimilation, it is about change and the way to achieve this change. Consequently, Peter Cohen argues that the epilogue of *Angels* can:

be read as a call for activism: having offered audiences both a denunciation of Reaganism and a vision of community and collective action, Kushner instructs them that the process of social change he envisions is not an imaginative process, but rather one that can only 'begin' once the play itself has ended. (215)

According to Tony Kushner, this social change has to "fight for justice, for a better world, for civil rights or access to medicine, [which] is a never-ending fight, at least as far as we have sight to see" (qtd. in Kramer xvii). Hence I argue that *Angels* is much more radical than *The Normal Heart*. "You can't live in the world without an idea of the world, but it's living that makes the ideas. You can't wait for a theory, but you have to have a theory", says Hannah Pitt in *Angels* (Kushner 278). The play is not just about being 'accepted' into mainstream America, it is about changing and queering America in order to become part of America and its citizenry. *Angels* is less a call for assimilation as is *The Normal Heart*, but it demands that society changes. The integration of homosexual Americans and PWA into the American mainstream is not understood as gay men and women giving up their identity and lifestyle for a more heterosexual way of life. Integrating these individuals into American culture and society is about making America amenable to diverse practices. Therefore, it is about changing heterosexual America and making it more open towards the lifestyles of gay fellow citizens. This is the social foundation which is required if gay men and women want to enjoy full integration. This radical call makes *Angels* very distinct from *The Normal Heart*, which is less bold in its demands and strategies regarding including gay men and women into American society and culture. This distinctiveness can be partially explained by the different context in which both stories were written and the plots are set.

Thus, *Angels'* radical and encouraging message – as opposed to the milder notion of assimilation in *The Normal Heart* – can be appreciated by taking the distinct time and place of each play into account. *The Normal Heart* premiered in April 1985 in the heyday of Reaganism when the mainstream media and public had just begun to notice the epidemic and when it was exclusively linked to homosexuality, drug users and prostitutes. Furthermore, the play was written at time of great uncertainty, not just about the disease and its consequence for a gay lifestyle, but about the future of gay men, women and their acceptance into mainstream America. During the 1980s, America experienced a conservative rollback. These changes made it increasingly difficult to defend alternative lifestyles, particularly in relation to family values. These great uncertainties are reflected in the play and the different performances of the characters. Unlike *Angels*, *The Normal Heart* calls on gay men to adopt a less promiscuous lifestyle and to reinvent what it means to be gay in order to be accepted into American society and to be cured from the deadly disease. By doing so, the play is trapped in heteronormativity. While the play's protagonist Ned Weeks adopts this very assimilationist tone, it is about taking action at the same time and thus trying to change American society as well.

The Normal Heart illustrates the “bureaucratic indifference and ineptitude” (Yingling 41) of the government and medical institutions and calls for “new ethics of sexuality” (Kushner in Kramer xxii) within the gay community. Tony Kushner argues that the message of *The Normal Heart* is “that we save ourselves, that we take responsibility of ourselves, is historically, communally based” (qtd. in Kramer xxiii).

Angels assigns Prior the role of a prophet and holds the promise of a better future. The last words of *The Normal Heart* hold the same promise: of a better and a more just future for gay men and PWA. Muñoz argues that queer politics “needs a real dose of utopianism” since “utopia offers us a critique of the present, of what is, by casting a picture of what can and perhaps will be” (qtd. in Bell and Binnie, *Sexual Citizen* 50). Discussing the need for homosexuals to become full citizens Kushner stated that: “To be tolerated is worth nothing. Because if you're merely tolerated and you get in trouble, you're going to die. Only by having the status of full citizen, guaranteed by law, are you protected” (qtd. in Fujita 124). The content of this quotation is to be understood as closely linked to the AIDS crisis, since ‘you're going to die’ (ibid 124) if you do not have full citizen rights. Therefore it is necessary to be incorporated into the national narrative and to change – that is to queer – society.

Even though he asserts that *Angels* demonstrates that America is “a utopian and theological construction”, Savran argues: “Politics is by no means banished insofar as it provides a crucial way in which the nation is imagined” (31). We understand the status quo and imagination of a nation best when we look at individuals and their status, which is citizenship. Ron Scapp analyses *Angels* as “an attempt to extend the political imagination of Americans through fantasy, that is to say, to broaden the fantasy of democracy through a ‘gay fantasia on national themes’” (93). I want argue that *Angels* calls for a Perestroika for America to include homosexuals and PWA into “We the People” and therefore to let them officially be a part of the ‘promised land’ and thus become full citizens. Harper portrays the negative and stagnated state of America when she talks about Washington, DC: “It’s a giant cemetery, huge white graves and mausoleums everywhere” (Kushner 29). The U.S. capital seems to symbolize the ruins of San Francisco, a city that was once a simulacrum of heaven as the angel tells Prior in *Perestroika* (cf. Kushner 176) but as God has left mankind a major earthquake struck this heavenly city in 1906. “Absence follows Absence” (ibid 177), the angel tells Prior. To achieve a better future change is badly needed. The agenda for change is embedded in challenging mainstream notions of citizenship and by gay men and others fighting for full citizenry. Kushner, as Howe, seems to see the AIDS crisis as a chance to politicize the gay community in order to claim their rights as citizens of the United States.

Even though Kushner wrote a *gay fantasia*, he is not utopian about the chances of the inclusion of gays, lesbians and PWA into the American master narrative. The political opinion of Kushner and the character Louis are linked closely, since “Louis is an ardent believer in some form of socialism, radical democracy and American liberalism, as is Kushner” (Nielsen 5). In act 3 scene 2, Louis begins a long monologue on why democracy has been successful in the United States. He argues “that radical democracy has the possibility to grow and spread uniquely in America” and that this symbolizes progress due to its “unique constellation of race, immigration and optimistic belief in progress” (Nielsen 23). But Louis is contradicting himself, saying that “was AIDS shows us is the limits of tolerance”, admitting that “there’s the monolith of White America. White Straight Male America” and that the United States are a “really incredibly racist country” (Kushner 96).

Yet Savran argues that “*Angels* queers the America of Joseph Smith – and Ronald Reagan – by placing this oppressed class at the very center of American history” (35) and, as such, it makes it a play about sexual citizenship. The master narrative of America is one of a

constant forward movement, which sees its destiny in a more perfect future. Walt Whitman – who, because of his homosexuality, belongs to the same culture as Ned Weeks of *The Normal Heart* (Kramer 109) – commented on the fantasy of America: “For our New World I consider far less important for what it has done, or what it is, than for results to come” (qtd. in Scapp 97).

Harper concludes in the airplane to San Francisco – the gay heaven (Kushner 176) and haven whose seal shows a phoenix rising out of ash – that “In this world, there is a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we’ve left behind, and dreaming ahead” (ibid 275). Here we are once again reminded of Walter Benjamin’s forward-facing *angel of history*. In other words, “*Angels* finally sets forth a liberal pluralist vision of America in which all, not in spite but because of their diversity, will be welcomed to the new Jerusalem” (Savran 29, emphasis in original). ‘We will be citizens’ and the blessing for ‘more life’ is a queer “hope for the future” (Scapp 91f.), which is the promise of a better future for every citizen. While homosexuals and PWA suffer in the present time, they can hope for the promise of a better tomorrow. It was the ignorance of the nation-state and its institutions that opened up space for individuals and especially groups to take action in order to fight the AIDS crisis. The Reaganite shadow state and its deadly ignorance towards AIDS allowed (radical) action of gay men, PWA and others to emerge.

The Normal Heart “was able to bring information about HIV/AIDS to the U.S. and to raise money and volunteers for various philanthropic organizations dedicated to fighting the spread of AIDS” (Juntunen 38). Raising consciousness was a very important achievement of the play as it gave those who were affected by the AIDS crisis a voice that they had not had before. Through this, the performances themselves were enacting citizenship.

Bell and Binnie have argued that identity is central to citizenship and that the most controversial and least changing character of *Angels* is Roy Cohn, who is also the representative of Reaganite America, as he does not want to adopt a homosexual sexual identity. As noted in the previous chapter, Kushner asks in *Angels* if Roy Cohn “was one of us?” (Kushner qtd. in Cadden 83). Michael Cadden takes the play’s answers “to be an uncomfortable yes” (ibid.). He then argues that this, at first, may be a surprising answer as it:

is precisely the distance between a first-generation AIDS play like *The Normal Heart* and a second-generation work like *Angels in America*. If Kramer’s play is about how the health problems of a relatively homogeneous minority have been ignored or dismissed by American

majoritarian culture, Kushner's play reflects a new gay self-recognition about the ways in which the oppression of gay men and lesbians, like the oppression of other minority groups, has been integral to majoritarian self-recognition, especially during the Reaganite 1980s, when antihomosexuality served many of the same purposes that anticommunism did in the 1950s.

(ibid 83f.)

John Clum called *Angels* "the most talked about, written about, and awarded, play of the past decade or more", describing it as "a turning point in the history of gay drama, the history of American drama, and of American literary culture" (qtd. in Nielsen 3). The representation of gay men and PWA in American culture is crucial to the incorporation of these individuals in the master narrative of the nation. In terms of AIDS plays, Tony Kushner argues for the same: "The plays are now part of our history, beyond forgetting" (qtd. in Kramer vii). Moreover, in *Angels* "gay men are counted as members of the nation, a key step in the promotion of gay citizenry" (Juntunen 197), as illustrated by the declaration that "we will be citizens" in the play's epilogue.

In this thesis I have tried to define sexual citizenship and to show how citizenship is negotiated in the two plays. Jeffrey Weeks leaves us in *The Sexual Citizen* with the statement that "The idea of sexual [...] citizenship is simply an index of the political space that needs to be developed rather than a conclusive answer to it" (48). Yet I would argue that it is important to analyze how sexual citizenship is imagined and enacted, whether it is in theoretical texts or in plays. For Weeks, it is the sexual citizen who "represents that spirit of searching and of adventure" (ibid).

I have chosen *The Normal Heart* and *Angels in America* because they are first of all cultural responses to the AIDS crisis and illustrate the reaction of the gay community to it. Dennis Altman noted that AIDS is the most political of diseases and this makes AIDS and the stories around it an ideal projection of the negotiation of citizenship. It allows us to question the ideas of identity in America, how gay men and other sexual deviants were perceived by mainstream America, how the homophobic attitude of the government and its agencies fostered the crisis and how this non-reaction allowed radical democratic action and concepts of citizenship to emerge. The two plays also show the shift that took place during the 1980s in the perception of AIDS and the reaction to it. Furthermore, both plays illustrate aptly the changing understanding of AIDS as well as the possibilities of enacting citizenship. In so doing, *The Normal Heart* and *Angels in America* show in very different ways how an

integration of the gay community and PWA into mainstream America can be achieved. By comparing these two plays we therefore get an idea of how these imaginations developed over time.

Moreover, both plays are not only about gay men and PWAs and their struggle to be included into American society, but they are also about American culture and identity politics in general and, in the case of *Angels*, about various 'national themes'. These are national themes, which are central to American Studies in general, such as American national identity, the identity of the individual within society, migration, religion, and race.

Appendix I – German Summary

Meine Magisterarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Konzept der *Citizenship* – dem Konzept der Staatsbürgerschaft im weitesten Sinne – und wie dieses in den beiden Theaterstücken *The Normal Heart* von Larry Kramer und *Angels in America. A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* von Tony Kushner be- und verhandelt wird. Beide Theaterstücke beschäftigen sich mit der Reaktion der Gay Community in New York City und ihrem Umfeld während der AIDS-Krise in den 1980er-Jahren. Sie haben, und insbesondere *Angels in America* durch seine Popularität, Homosexualität und den Kampf für gleiche Rechte sichtbar und auch für heterosexuelles Publikum zugänglich gemacht.

Die AIDS-Krise hatte enorme Auswirkungen auf den Kampf für Anerkennung und gleiche Rechte von schwulen Männern in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und in anderen Staaten der westlichen Welt. Daher begreife ich beide Theaterstücke als kulturelle Produktionen über *Citizenship* und im speziellen *Sexual Citizenship* – also dem Konzept der Staatsbürgerschaft in Verbindung mit der sexuellen Orientierung und/oder Identität des Individuums oder einer Gruppe. Ich orientiere mich an David Bell und Jon Binnie, die argumentieren, dass jegliche Form von *Citizenship* immer auch *Sexual Citizenship* ist, da Staatsbürgerschaft untrennbar von Identität ist und umgekehrt. In meinem Verständnis von *Citizenship* geht das Konzept über gesetzgeberische und politische Praktiken hinaus, denn es ist ebenso sozial und materiell konstruiert und kulturell kodiert.

Ausgehend vom Ausruf des prophetischen Protagonisten Prior Walter „We will be citizens“ befasse mich mit den Themen von schwuler Identität, *Sexual Citizenship* und der Nation in Zeiten der AIDS-Krise in den USA. Ich übernehme in dieser Arbeit nach einer Diskussion über den Status quo der Debatte über *Citizenship* die radikal-demokratische Definition und das kulturelle Verständnis von *Citizenship* des Schreiberkollektivs Questio:

Verstehen wir *citizenship* als die Art und Weise, in der eine Gesellschaft soziale Mitgliedschaft, politische Teilhabe und gesellschaftliche Gestaltung denkt und organisiert, [so] läßt sich mit Hilfe dieses Begriffs ein Analyseraster entwickeln, das die Bedingungen von gesellschaftlicher Gestaltung historisierend in den Blick nimmt und in der Lage ist, diese grundsätzlich zu problematisieren. (22)

Citizenship bezieht sich demnach nicht nur auf Rechte und Pflichten des Individuums, sondern geht darüber hinaus. Aufgrund der weit gefassten Definition von *Sexual Citizenship*

ist es möglich, die beiden Theaterstücke als Texte über *Citizenship* zu verstehen und gleichzeitig das Konzept von *Sexual Citizenship* mit Beispielen zu füllen.

Die AIDS-Krise hat das schwule Amerika zu einer Zeit getroffen, als es einerseits so viele Freiheiten genoss und Anerkennung besaß wie niemals zuvor in der Moderne. Andererseits waren die 1980er-Jahre die Hochzeit der Neo-Konservativen um den zu Beginn der Dekade gewählten Präsidenten Ronald Reagan. Dieser Konservatismus war geprägt durch einen sich zurückziehenden Staat, Patriotismus und ein Besinnen auf vermeintliche Familienwerte (*family values*). Für schwule Männer war die Verbindung von Homosexualität und AIDS sprichwörtlich tödlich. Es war noch nicht lange her, dass die Verbindung zwischen Homosexualität und Krankheit erfolgreich bekämpft worden war, da wurde Homosexualität mit dem Hervorbringen einer unbekannteren und tödlichen Krankheit in Verbindung gebracht. Diese wurde zu Beginn auch bezeichnender Weise *Gay Related Immune Deficiency* genannt. Darüber hinaus hat AIDS die sexuelle Identität von schwulen Männern unfreiwillig sichtbar gemacht.

Die Identität von schwulen Männern, die insbesondere in den 1970er-Jahren stark durch eine offene Sexualität geprägt war, musste aufgrund der AIDS-Krise neu ausgehandelt werden. Ned Weeks als Protagonist von *The Normal Heart* beschreibt es damit, dass er zu einer schwulen Kultur gehören möchte, die über Sexualität hinausgeht. In *Angels in America* ist Roy Cohn der Charakter, bei dem die Auseinandersetzung mit der sexuellen Identität am deutlichsten dargestellt wird. Er ist Teil des (neo-) konservativen Machtapparates und der von ihm praktizierte Sex mit Männern passt nicht in ein Bild eines mächtigen Mannes. Daher verneint er sowohl seine Homosexualität als auch die Tatsache, dass er AIDS hat, da dies für ihn – wie auch für einen Großteil der Gesellschaft – unweigerlich mit Homosexualität verbunden ist.

Die langsame Reaktion der Regierung und der staatlichen Organisationen ist mit der tief in der Gesellschaft verankerten Homophobie zu erklären. Schwule Männer und Menschen mit HIV/AIDS wurden als un-amerikanisch angesehen und wurden als Distinktion zum Konstrukt von *America* als Konstrukt des sozialen Konsens, von Homogenität und historischer Transzendenz gesehen. Dieses *America* ist nicht mit dem Nationalstaat als Träger der Bürgerrechte und -pflichten gleichzusetzen. Es ist nicht nur ein legales und kulturelles Gebilde, sondern auch ein kulturelles Konzept, das durch Verständnis der Bevölkerung

was Amerika sein sollte, geprägt ist. *America* wird als eine Idee mit einer göttlichen Mission verstanden.

The Normal Heart ist eine der ersten kulturellen Produktionen als Reaktion auf AIDS. Das Theaterstück ist geprägt durch viele Rufe nach der Assimilation von Schwulen in die amerikanische Mehrheitsgesellschaft und die Übernahme von vermeintlich heterosexuellen Verhaltensweisen. Es beschreibt wie eine Gruppe von schwulen Männern eine Hilfsorganisation aufbaut und Geldmittel einwirbt. Die Diskussion um schwule Identität, die Problematisierung von AIDS, die Verbreitung von Informationen, das Aktivwerden als Gruppe und Einzelperson macht dies zu einem Stück über *Citizenship*. Darüber hinaus behandelt *The Normal Heart* das Thema der Ehe für gleichgeschlechtliche Paare – ein wichtiges Thema in der Frage der Gleichstellung von Lesben und Schwulen.

Angels in America wird ebenso in Bezug auf die Auffassung und Beispiele von *Sexual Citizenship* analysiert und wie das Konzept verhandelt wird. Die „nationalen Themen“, die das Theaterstück diskutiert – insbesondere nationale Identität, Migration, Religion, ethnische Herkunft, Krankheit und medizinische Kompetenz, (sexuelle) Identität und AIDS – werden als Orte untersucht, anhand derer *Sexual Citizenship* verhandelt wird. *Angels in America* ist im Vergleich zu *The Normal Heart* das eindeutig radikalere Theaterstück, das auf das Recht auf Verschiedenheit pocht und zum Ziel hat, die amerikanische Gesellschaft zu ‚queeren‘.

So unterschiedlich beide Theaterstücke sind, so enden sie doch sehr ähnlich: *The Normal Heart* mit einer klassisch-liberalen utopistischen Vision („classical liberal utopian vision“ (Kramer xiv)) und *Angels in America* mit einer Imagination einer Gesellschaft, die alle Bürgerinnen und Bürger als gleichberechtigt anerkennt („fantasy of acknowledging all citizens“ (Scapp 93)).

Meine Magisterarbeit versucht aufzuzeigen, dass beide Theaterstücke als kulturelle Produktionen über AIDS, (sexuelle) Identität und die Nation die amerikanische Gesellschaft dahingehend testen können, ob sie bereit ist, Homosexuelle und Menschen mit HIV/AIDS als Teil der Gesellschaft begreifen und inkludieren und damit Text über *Sexual Citizenship* sind. Sie sind politische Reflektionen und Interventionen und ermöglichen ein kulturelles Verständnis des Lebens von schwulen Männern während der ersten Dekade der AIDS-Krise. Die verschiedenen Herangehensweisen der beiden Theaterstücke zeigen auf, wie sich die Reaktionen auf die AIDS-Krise über die Zeit ge- und verändert haben.

Beide Stücke beschreiben aber nicht nur die verschiedenen Praktiken von *Citizenship*, sondern sind als solche Akte von *Citizenship*. Sie sind nicht ausschließlich Texte über schwule Männer und Menschen mit HIV/AIDS und ihren Kampf um Anerkennung und Inklusion in die amerikanische Gesellschaft, sondern beschreiben darüber hinaus die amerikanische Kultur und *Identity Politics* insgesamt.

Appendix II – Angelus Novus



Figure I: Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus* (<http://media.photobucket.com/image/angelus%20novus/multitudes/AngelusNovusKlee.jpg>, 22.06.2009)

Es gibt ein Bild von Klee, das *Angelus Novus* heißt. Ein Engel ist darauf dargestellt, der aussieht, als wäre er im Begriff, sich von etwas zu entfernen, worauf er starrt. Seine Augen sind aufgerissen, sein Mund steht offen und seine Flügel sind ausgespannt. Der Engel der Geschichte muß so aussehen. Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor *uns* erscheint, da sieht *er* eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist *dieser* Sturm.

(Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* 697f., emphasis in original)

Appendix III – Bethesda Fountain, Central Park, New York



Figure II: Bethesda Fountain, New York City (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7f/Bethesda_Fountain-atp_tyreseus.jpg, 28.06.2009)

Works Cited

- Benjamin, Walter. "Über den Begriff der Geschichte". *Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften I:2*. Ed Tiedemann, Rolf and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991. 691-704.
- . "On the Concept of History". Walter Benjamin Archive.
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>, 28.06.2009.
- Bell, David. "In Bed with the State: Political Geography and Sexual Politics". *Geoforum* 25.4 (1994): 445-452.
- Bell, David and Jon Binnie. "Geographies of sexual citizenship". *Political Geography* 25.8 (2006): 869-873.
- . "Sexual Citizenship. Marriage, the Market and the Military". *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. Ed. Richardson, Diane and Steven Seidman. London: Sage, 2002. 443-457.
- . *The Sexual Citizen. Queer Politics and Beyond*. Cambridge: Polity, 2000.
- Bottoms, Stephen J. "Re-staging Roy: Citizen Cohn and the Search for Xanadu." *Theatre Journal* 48.2 (1996): 157-184.
- Brown, Michael and Larry Knopp. "Queer Cultural Geographies – We're Here! We're Queer! We're Over There, Too!" *Handbook of Cultural Geography*. Ed. Anderson, Kay; Domosh, Mona; Pile, Steve and Nigel Thrift. London: Sage, 2003.
- Brown, Michael P. *RePlacing Citizenship. AIDS activism and Radical Democracy*. New York: Guilford, 1997.
- Cadden, Michael. "Strange Angel: The Pinklisting of Roy Cohn." *Approaching the Millennium. Essays on Angels in America*. Ed. Geis, Deborah R. and Steven F. Kruger. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. 78-89.
- Clum, John M. "'A Culture That Isn't Just Sexual': Dramatizing Gay Male History". *Theatre Journal* 41.2 (1989): 169-189.
- Cohen, Peter F. "Strange Bedfellows: Writing Love and Politics in *Angels in America* and *The Normal Heart*." *Journal of Medical Humanities* 19.2/3 (1998): 197-219.
- Collins, Robert M. *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007.
- Eisenbach, David. *Gay Power. An American Revolution*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006.
- DeMiglio, Paul. "Frontlines, the SLDN Blog: The Clock is Ticking on DADT".

- Servicemembers Legal Defense Network*. www.sldn.org/blog/archives/the-clock-is-ticking-on-dadt. 10. August 2009.
- Fisher, James. "'The Angels of Fructification'. Tennessee Williams, Tony Kushner, and Images of Homosexuality on the American Stage". Tony Kushner. *New Essays on the Art of Politics of the Play*. Ed. James Fisher. Jefferson: McFarland, 2006. 5-27.
- Franke, Robert G. "Beyond Good Doctor, Bad Doctor: AIDS Fiction and Biography as a Developing Genre". *Journal of Popular Culture* 27.3 (1993): 93-101.
- Freedman, Jonathan. "Angels, Monsters, and Jews: Intersections of Queer and Jewish Identity in Kushner's *Angels in America*". *PMLA* 113.1 (1998): 90-102.
- Fujita, Atsushi. "Queer Politics to Fabulous Politics in *Angels in America*. Pinklisting and Forgiving Roy Cohn". Tony Kushner. *New Essays on the Art of Politics of the Play*. Ed. James Fischer. Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2006. 112-126.
- Goldstein, Richard. "The Implicated and the Immune: Cultural Responses to AIDS". *The Milbank Quarterly* 68.2 (1990): 295-319.
- Hannerz, Ulf. *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*. New York: Columbia UP, 1993.
- Hekma, Gert. "Sexual Citizenship". *glbtq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*. www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/sexual_citizenship.html. 15. May 2007.
- Howe, Lawrence. „Critical Anthologies of the Plague Years: Responding to AIDS Literature“. *Contemporary Literature* 35.2 (1994): 395-416.
- Isin, Engin F. *Being Political. Genealogies of Citizenship*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2002.
- . "Engaging, being, political". *Political Geography* 24.3 (2005): 373-387.
- Isin, Engin F. and Patricia K. Wood. *Citizenship and Identity*. London: Sage, 1999.
- Jones, James W. "The Sick Homosexual: AIDS and Gays on the American Stage and Screen". *Confronting AIDS through Literature: The Responsibilities of Representation*. Ed. Judith L. Pastore. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993. 103-123.
- Juntunen, Jacob M. *Profitable Dissents: The Mainstream Theatre of Larry Kramer and Tony Kushner as a Negotiating Force Between Emergent and Dominant Ideologies*. Diss. Northwestern University, 2007.
- Kramer, Larry. *The Normal Heart and The Destiny of Me*. New York: Grove, 2000.
- Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America. A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*. New York: TCG, 1995.

- Long, Thomas L. *AIDS and American Apocalypticism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2005.
- Mouffe, Chantal. "Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community". *The Return of the Political*. London, New York: Verso, 1993. 60-73.
- Nielsen, Ken. *Tony Kushner's Angels in America*. London and New York: Continuum, 2008.
- Patton, Cindy. "'On Me, Not in Me': Locating Affect in Nationalism after AIDS". *Love and Eroticism*. Ed. Mike Featherstone. London: Sage, 1999. 355-373.
- Prouder, Stronger, Better*. "The Living Room Candidate. Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2008." Museum of the Moving Image.
<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1984/prouder-stronger-better>,
 27.04.2009.
- Questio. "Sexuelle Politiken. Politische Rechte und gesellschaftliche Teilhabe". *Queering Demokratie. Sexuelle Politiken*. Ed. questio. Berlin: Querverlag, 2000. 9-27.
- Quinn, John R. "Corpus Juris Tertium: Redemptive Jurisprudence in *Angels in America*". *Theatre Journal* 48.1. (1996): 79-90.
- Rasmussen, Claire and Michael Brown. "Radical Democratic Citizenship: Amidst Political Theory and Geography". *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*. Ed. Isin, Engin F. and Bryan S. Turner. London: Sage, 2003. 175-188.
- Richardson, Diane. "Constructing sexual citizenship: theorizing sexual rights." *Critical Social Policy* 20.1 (2000): 105-135.
- Ritter, Kurt and David Henry. *Ronald Reagan. The Great Communicator*. New York: Greenwood, 1992.
- Savran, David. "Ambivalence, Utopia, and a Queer Sort of Materialism: How *Angels in America* Reconstructs the Nation." *Approaching the Millennium. Essays on Angels in America*. Ed. Geis, Deborah R. and Steven F. Kruger. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. 13-39.
- Scapp, Ron. "The Vehicle of Democracy: Fantasies toward a (Queer) Nation. Utopia, and a Queer Sort of Materialism: How *Angels in America* Reconstructs the Nation." *Approaching the Millennium. Essays on Angels in America*. Ed. Geis, Deborah R. and Steven F. Kruger. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. 90-100.
- Schippert, Claudia. "Containing Uncertainty: Sexual Values and Citizenship." *LGBT Studies and Queer Theory: New Conflicts, Collaborations, and Contested Terrain*. Ed. Lovaas, Karen E., John P. Elia and Gust A. Yep. Binghamton: Harrington, 2007. 285-307.

- Seidmann, Steven. "From Identity to Queer Politics: Shifts in Normative Heterosexuality and the Meaning of Citizenship." *Citizenship Studies* 5.3 (2001): 321-328.
- Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*. New York: Picador, 2001.
- Thompson, Graham. *American Culture in the 1980s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007.
- Turner, Bryan S. *Citizenship and Social Theory*. London: Sage, 1993.
- Weeks, Jeffrey. "The Sexual Citizen". *Love and Eroticism*. Ed. Mike Featherstone. London: Sage, 1999. 35-52.
- Yingling, Thomas E. "AIDS in America: Postmodern Governance, Identity, and Experience". *AIDS and the National Body*. Ed. Robyn Wiegman. Durham: Duke UP, 1997. 37-56.

Erklärung

Ich versichere hiermit, dass vorliegende Arbeit selbständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt sowie die Stellen der Arbeit, die anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen sind, durch Angabe der Quellen kenntlich gemacht wurden.

Frankfurt am Main, 12. Oktober 2009

Manuel Dominic Stock

Lebenslauf

Persönliche Daten

Name: Manuel Dominic Stock
 Anschrift: Gleimstraße 16
 60318 Frankfurt am Main
 Geburtsdatum, Ort: 22. Februar 1982, Frankfurt am Main
 Staatsangehörigkeit: deutsch
 Familienstand: ledig

Berufliches

seit 10/2006 Leiter des Regionalbüros von Landtagsvizepräsidentin Sarah Sorge
 09/2008 - 03/2008 BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Landtagsfraktion Hessen,
 Sachbearbeitung Umwelt, Landwirtschaft, Forsten, Naturschutz und
 Justiz

Hochschulausbildung

SoSe 2007 Zwischenprüfung in Geographie mit 2,0 (Thema: Creative Industries
 und allgemeine Wirtschaftsgeographie)
 WS 2005/06 Zwischenprüfung in Amerikanistik mit 1,7 (Thema: Indian-White
 Relations in America)
 WS 2003/04 Studium der Amerikanistik mit den Nebenfächern Politologie und
 Geographie auf Magister Atrium an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-
 Universität Frankfurt am Main

Zivildienst

07/2002 - 04/2003 Sozialabteilung Jüdische Gemeinde Frankfurt, K.d.ö.R.

Schulbildung

1999 - 2002 Anna-Schmidt-Schule, staatlich anerkanntes privates Gymnasium,
 Frankfurt am Main, Abschluss: Allgemeine Hochschulreife (Abitur),
 Note: 1,8
 1998 - 1999 Johnstown High School, Johnstown, New York, USA
 1992 - 1998 Ernst-Reuter-Schule II, Integrierte Gesamtschule der Stadt Frankfurt

1988 - 1992 Integrative Schule (Grundschule), Frankfurt am Main

Praktika

03/1996 Peter Meyer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, Kartographie-Abteilung

Fremdsprachen

Englisch ab Klasse 5, verhandlungssicher

Latein Klasse 7 bis 11, Latinum

Spanisch Klasse 9 bis 10

Ehrenämter

seit 09/2009 Aufsichtsrat Wirtschaftsförderung Frankfurt GmbH

seit 07/2008 Aufsichtsrat Tourismus- und Congress GmbH

seit 09/2007 Mitglied des Landesvorstands von BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN
Hessen

seit 09/2006 Aufsichtsrat BäderBetriebe Frankfurt GmbH

10/2005 - 07/2007 Stellvertretender Vorsitzender des Rings politischer Jugend Hessen

04/2005 - 07/2007 Landesschatzmeister der Grünen Jugend Hessen

seit 12/2002 Mitglied der Betriebskommission der Volkshochschule Frankfurt als
Ehrenbeamter der Stadt Frankfurt am Main

seit 09/2002 Mitglied der Stadtverordnetenversammlung der Stadt Frankfurt am
Main

Frankfurt am Main, den 12. Oktober 2009