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Announcement: Ramzi Fawaz gives lecture on queer artistic responses to the AIDS crisis

by

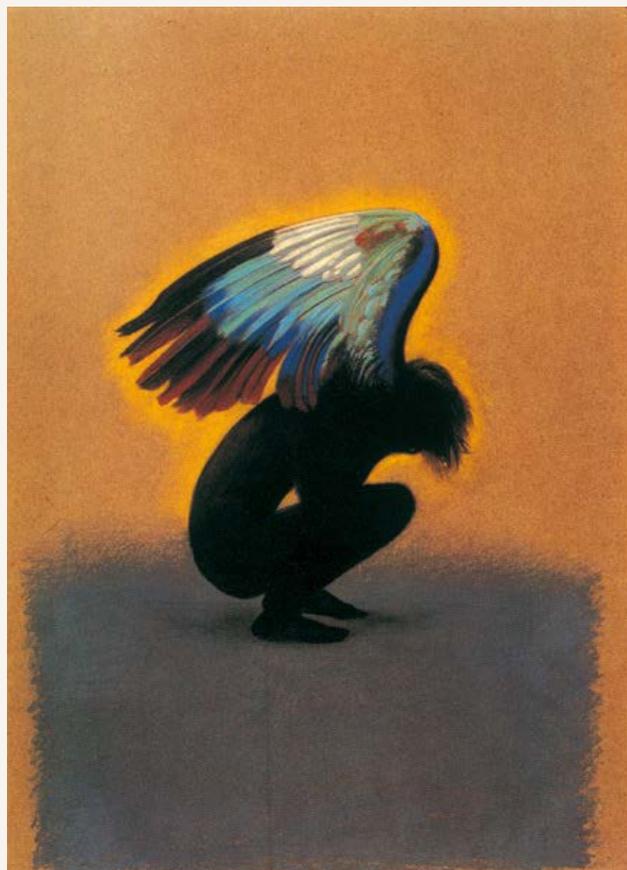
American Studies

This coming Monday, Ramzi Fawaz will give a talk called, “The Visceral States of America: Queer Cultural Production and the Digestive Life of AIDS.” Fawaz visited UT last year and we sat down and **interviewed** him right here on AMS::ATX. Fawaz is Assistant Professor in the

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Department of English at The University of Wisconsin in Madison. The talk will take place at **4:30pm on Monday, February 16, in Burdine 436A.**



Fawaz sent us the following description of his talk:

This talk explores how queer cultural producers in the late 1980s deployed viscerally charged language around the digestive dysfunctions of AIDS to galvanize a political response to the disease and its social effects. I coin the phrase “the digestive politics and poetics of AIDS” to describe



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writers' and artists' use of metaphors that linked the digestive dysfunctions associated with HIV/AIDS to a political aversion, or disgust, for the state of American politics at the height of the AIDS epidemic. Specifically, I develop a close reading of Tony Kushner's Angels in America that examines how the play's linguistic and performative engagement with alimentary processes (ingestion, defecation, and excretion) worked to rearticulate public culture's disgust with the dying bodies of AIDS victims to a disgust with government neglect. I argue that the play's affective investment in the gut as a site for intuiting one's response to American political life helped imagine a new form of liberal politics attuned to bodily vulnerability, disease, and disability as the wellspring for new kinds of ethical responses to both the biomedical and social consequences of AIDS. Ultimately, I show how this project resonated with an array of contemporaneous queer literary, artistic, and visual responses to the AIDS crisis that collectively forged a

Contributors



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*powerful visceral rhetoric
intended to have political
results.*

*“I cherish my bile duct almost as
much as any other organ. I
take good care of it. I make
sure it gets its daily vitamins
and antioxidants and
invigorating exposure to news
of ... everyone working for the
Bush family.”*

*– Tony Kushner, speech to the
graduating class of Bard
College (2005)*

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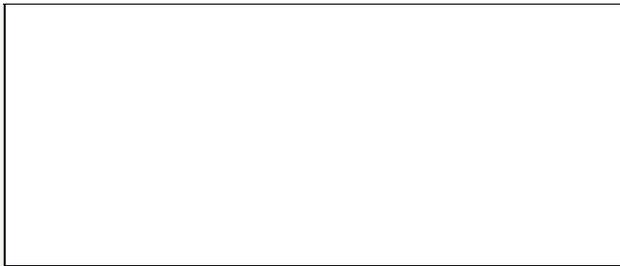
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