Performing Jewish Rituals on Stage: The Case of S. An-sky's *The Dybbuk: or Between Two Worlds*

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בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, *Adonai*, our God, sovereign of time and space, for granting us life, for sustaining us, and for bringing us to this moment.

— The Rabbinical Assembly, *Siddur Lev Shalem*

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Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection between the performance of Jewish religious rituals in real life and their performance in theatre, as exemplified through a case study of S. An-sky's seminal and often adapted play: *The Dybbuk: Or Between Two Worlds*. In addition to An-sky's original text, this thesis takes Tony Kushner's 1997 adaptation *A Dybbuk: or Between Two Worlds* and Soulpepper Theatre's 2015 adaptation *The Dybbuk, Or Between Two Worlds* as its subjects. By utilizing dramaturgical analysis, performance analysis, and historiography, this thesis names, describes, and analyzes the major techniques used to translate the performance of Jewish rituals from the real world onto the stage as well as the dramaturgical and performative effects these rituals enact. This analysis is further contextualized through the theoretical lenses of adaptation, translation, and Jewish Studies. This thesis examines not only how a playwright and/or director translates the performance of Jewish rituals onto the stage and how those rituals impact the construction and performance of the text, but also how this performative practice can both introduce and reinforce Jewish cultural and religious knowledge in contemporary North American society.

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Introduction

Based primarily on the distinct lack of Jewish theatre prior to the nineteenth century and the direct animosity towards theatre found in several Rabbinic texts — such as the Mishnah (redacted circa 200 CE) and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds (compiled around 400 CE and 600 CE respectively) — common knowledge has long since held the idea that Judaism and theatre are in some fashion diametrically opposed, and that, without significant secularization, no such Jewish theatre could exist. However, as Lipshitz recently argues in his book *Theatre and Judaism* (2019), this notion of opposition is derived from the historical denouncement of a *particular* theatrical tradition located in a specific historical context — that of the ancient Roman theatre in what was then Palestine, which the Rabbis or Sages identified as being characterized by idolatry, bloodshed, immorality, and as a distraction from the *mitzvah*, or commandment, of learning Torah. Notably, the Sages do not condemn nor prohibit theatre as a whole. Furthermore, at no point do they suggest that the notions of theatricality and performance are theologically untenable. As such, "it is impossible to infer some inherent, essential opposition between theatre and Jewish religion out of particular historical contingencies" (Lipshitz 27). What is then not only interesting but vital to consider is the question of not only how Judaism can interact with theatre — that is to say, theatre that does not engage in the explicitly banned actions noted above — but also how the transformative power of theatre can in fact be employed by and applied to Jewish religious practice itself. It is within this context that I position this thesis, in which I examine the intersection between the performance of Jewish religious rituals in real life and their performance on stage as an element of a theatrical production. S. An-sky's seminal Yiddish play *The Dybbuk: Or Between Two Worlds* is a perfect example of this intersection.

Despite having its premiere over one hundred years ago in 1920, *The Dybbuk* remains fundamental and urgent in Jewish imagination, and as such has been continually restaged and adapted until today. *The Dybbuk* was truly ground-breaking for a number of reasons, including its authentic portrayal of Jewish rituals and ceremonies. Consequently, this thesis shows that *The Dybbuk*, in its original iteration and in two contemporary adaptations, serves as the perfect case study through which to examine the performance of Jewish rituals on stage. Through dramaturgical analysis, performance analysis, and historiography, this thesis names, describes, and analyzes the major techniques used to translate and adapt Jewish rituals from the 'real world' onto the theatrical stage. Additionally, this analysis is further contextualized through the lenses of adaptation and translation theory, as well as Jewish Studies. Ultimately, this thesis explores not only how a playwright or director translates the performance of Jewish rituals onto the stage, but also how this performative practice can introduce and/or reinforce Jewish cultural and religious knowledge in North America's increasingly secular society. As such, while other adaptations in other locations and languages certainly exist, the contemporary adaptations which this thesis analyzes are North American, English language adaptations of *The Dybbuk* — specifically Tony Kushner's 1997 adaptation *A Dybbuk: or Between Two Worlds* and Anton Piatigorsky's 2015 adaptation *The Dybbuk, Or Between Two Worlds*.

Born originally as Shloyme-Zanvl Rappoport in 1863, in Belarus — then part of the Russian Empire — Semyon Akimovitch An-sky, or S. An-sky for short, was a writer, ethnographer, and cultural and political activist. An-sky began writing *The Dybbuk*, which would become his most famous work, in late 1913 or early 1914 and finally completed it in 1918 — only two years before his death at the age of 57. *The Dybbuk* takes place in the Pale of Settlement at the turn of the 19th century in the shtetl of Brinnitz and the town of Miropol. The

play centres itself around a young Yeshiva student named Channon and Leah, the daughter of a local wealthy man. Prior to either of their births, Leah's father Sender and Channon's father Nissin made an agreement before God that their children would be married one day. By the time the action of the play takes place, Sender has forgotten about this covenant and does not know that Channon is in fact the son of his — now deceased — friend Nissin. Subconsciously and divinely drawn to Leah, but too poor for Sender to consider for Leah's husband, Channon grows increasingly desperate to be with her. He delves deep into progressively esoteric Jewish mysticism — or Kabbalah — and magic spells, until, upon learning that Leah has been betrothed to another man, he suddenly dies. Channon is then transformed into a dybbuk: a malevolent possessing spirit that is trapped between the spirit world and the human world. Channon, now the titular dybbuk, possesses Leah's body on her wedding day, prompting her father Sender to bring her to Rabbi Azriel, a great and powerful *tzaddik*,[1] whom he asks to exorcise the dybbuk from his daughter. Rabbi Azriel agrees to do so, however before the exorcism can be performed, Rabbi Azriel is prompted to hold a trial between Sender and Nissin's spirit, who claims that Sender has murdered his son. At this trial, Nissin and Sender's oath is revealed and Sender is ultimately found to blame for Channon's death and for his daughter's possession by the dybbuk. Following this revelation and despite his self-doubt, Rabbi Azriel ultimately performs the exorcism and the dybbuk is successfully exorcised from Leah. However, with their souls still tied together by their fathers' agreement, Channon reaches out to Leah from beyond the grave one last time, where she — of her own free will — elects to become one with Channon and actively give up her life in the human world to eternally join her soul to his in the spirit world.

[1] A particularly righteous individual and/or the spiritual leader of a Hasidic community.

Jewish rituals such as prayer, the marriage ceremony, the formation of a *Beit Din*[2], and the exorcism of a dybbuk are all at the forefront of *The Dybbuk* — in its original text, as well as in many of its subsequent adaptations. Understanding the function of these rituals on stage is vital to fully unlocking the importance of An-sky's play, which presents favourably the religious practices, ideologies, and folklore of Hasidic Judaism. In her 2012 article "An-sky's *The Dybbuk* through the Eyes of Habima's Rival Studio" Helen Tolstoy suggests that these inclusions are a response to "intellectual antisemitism, which was gaining ground in Russia in the second decade of the century" (Tolstoy 55). Furthermore, Fernando Peñalosa, in the introduction to his Yiddish-English translation of the play, further suggests that beyond being a mere response the undeniably Jewish nature and content of *The Dybbuk* may have been a concerted attempt by An-sky to combat the violent antisemitism of his time, indicating that "[An-sky] believed that the most effective way to combat the virulent antisemitism then prevalent in the Russian Empire would be to present a favourable view of Jews by showcasing their folklore" (Peñalosa 2). This potential effect can also be seen within contemporary adaptations: through the representation of Jewish rituals on stage, both non-Jews and non-religious secular Jews may come to know, understand, and potentially even identify with Jewish culture, theology, and philosophy. In doing so, contemporary performances of *The Dybbuk* may also have the potential to combat antisemitism. Notably, however, the target audiences for these productions are likely *not* antisemites[3] — nor are they practicing religious Jews for that matter. Instead, these performances may speak to those who are out-of-touch with, unfamiliar with, and/or indifferent to Judaism and Jewish culture, and who ideally come to appreciate Jewish culture and religion and in turn take a

[2] A Jewish court of law composed of three rabbinic judges, responsible for matters of religious law and the settlement of civil disputes. See also Chapter Two.
[3] See Chapter Two.

stand against antisemitism in their community. Furthermore, in an increasingly secular society, in which the number of practicing Jews continues to decline, this educational process is additionally vital to the reinvigoration and continuation of contemporary North American Judaism, as it presents the opportunity for more secular Jewish individuals to potentially (re)discover their culture and/or faith. Moreover, it is equally necessary to interrogate the ways in which these rituals are themselves performative and transformative; as well as how their transposition from reality onto the theatrical stage complicates the audience-performer-participant relationship.[4] As such, understanding the form, function, and history of these performed actions is necessary for a deeper analysis of the play and its contemporary adaptations.

To analyze the performance and effect of the Jewish rituals represented within the various versions of *The Dybbuk*, as mentioned above, this thesis primarily employs methodologies of performance analysis, textual analysis, and historiography — making use of a wide range of primary and secondary materials including published and performance scripts, archival footage, playbills, and contemporaneous articles and reviews. Furthermore, the theoretical and epistemological approaches through which this thesis is framed are threefold: beginning with Performance Studies, then Jewish Studies, and lastly Adaptation and Translation Studies.[5]

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In the following chapters, through examination of historical reviews, archival footage, and published and performance scripts this thesis analyzes the performance of Jewish rituals in S. An-sky's *The Dybbuk: or Between Two Worlds* as well as in two English language North

[4] See Chapter One.
[5] See Chapter One.

American adaptations of An-sky's play: Tony Kushner's *A Dybbuk: Or Between Two Worlds*, which opened in New York at the Public Theater in 1997 and Soulpepper Theatre's 2015 production *The Dybbuk, Or Between Two Worlds*, adapted by Anton Piatigorsky.

The first chapter describes the fundamental theoretical and epistemological concepts that shape this thesis, including the nature of rituals, their performativity and transformative power, the audience-performer-participant relationship they engender, and the double-nature of performance and spectatorship inherent in the (re)performance of rituals on stage. Additionally, this chapter introduces key historical and religious concepts that will reappear throughout this thesis, including Hasidism, the Kabbalah, dybbuks, and the nature of Jewish rituals. Finally, this chapter examines the process of adapting rituals from the 'real world' into a theatrical setting.

The second chapter focuses on An-sky's original text, providing the necessary historical context surrounding An-sky's writing of *The Dybbuk*, as well as its staging and adaptation. Additionally, this chapter also introduces the key Jewish rituals, ideologies, and traditions which figure and are examined in each subsequent case study. Finally, this chapter provides a vital base level of dramaturgical analysis of An-sky's play, the way it transforms Jewish rituals on stage, and how notions of possession, intimacy and love, and transition and liminality figure in both the play and the rituals An-sky chooses to include.

The third chapter of this thesis is focused on the analysis of Tony Kushner's adaptation of An-sky's play: *A Dybbuk: Or Between Two Worlds*. Kushner's adaptation is emblematic of the theological struggle of post-Holocaust Judaism and is heavily influenced by both the events of, and the Jewish theological response to, the Holocaust. Kushner's adaptation is distinctly more ritualistic and spiritual than An-sky's original version and introduces actual spoken and sung prayers in both English and Hebrew on the stage — something which is noticeably absent from

An-sky's original. This chapter, through textual analysis of the script, examines the adaptive, dramaturgical, and translative techniques Kushner employs in adapting both An-sky's play, the Jewish rituals therein, and Jewish rituals as a whole. Specifically, it focuses on Kushner's added premonitions of the Holocaust, and the representation of actual Jewish prayers on stage as Kushner's effort to provide an answer to the question: How can we continue practicing Judaism post-Holocaust?

The fourth chapter of this thesis contains the final case study: Anton Piatigorsky's *The Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds*. This chapter analyzes how Piatigorsky's script and director Albert Schultz's production reflects, engages with, and critiques the commonly held fear amongst contemporary North American Jews that modern — that is 20th and 21st century — Judaism is collapsing, and that North American Jewry is facing a deterioration of both the Jewish religion and the Jewish culture. This chapter introduces Piatigorsky, Schultz, and Soulpepper Theatre before ultimately analyzing the ways that both Piatigorsky's text and Schultz's production adapt and perform An-sky's text and the Jewish rituals it contains, with specific attention paid towards the ways that they reconfigure and alter the events of the original play to portray a more pessimistic view of contemporary North American Jewry, reflecting the popular North American Jewish anxiety of religious and cultural deterioration. Furthermore, after examining Ric Knowles' notion of intercultural performance from his book *Performing the Intercultural City* (2017), this chapter argues that Piatigorsky and Schultz not only engage in such a process, but in doing so are also in fact engaging in a process of *tikkun olam*, or "repairing the world."

Finally, this thesis concludes with a summary of its findings through an analysis of the recurrent themes of (re)production, (re)living, and 'again-ness' that are encountered across all

three versions of *The Dybbuk* examined, taking Diana Taylor's "Performance And/as History" as a guide. This conclusion argues that, while each of these adaptations has a different artistic goal than An-sky, through their use and interrogation of Jewish rituals, traditions, and ideologies, they each — intentionally or otherwise — contribute to the religious and cultural education of Jews and non-Jews alike; and in doing so, these adaptations in fact align themselves with An-sky's original artistic goal of combating antisemitism. Additionally, this conclusion identifies areas of further inquiry and analysis which offer an avenue for the continuation of the scholarly conversation furthered by this thesis.

Chapter One: Transformation, Performativity, and Jewish Mysticism

As identified previously, the (re)performance of Jewish rituals and religious doings is a key dramaturgical and theatrical component of *The Dybbuk* in both script and performance. As such, it is vital to examine not only the form, function, and history of those rituals, but also how those rituals are transformed by being (re)produced on stage; as well as what effects this transformation has on a given ritual and on the play into which it has been transposed. This chapter, in addition to outlining and detailing the theoretical and epistemological lenses through which this thesis is framed, seeks to do just that. Thus, this chapter begins with an examination of the nature of rituals. Subsequently, it explores the performativity of rituals as well as the audience-performer-participant relationship and double-nature of performance and spectatorship which they engender. Additionally, taking Erika Fischer-Lichte's *Transformative Power of Performance* and *Transformative Aesthetics* as its guide, this chapter examines the transformative qualities and aesthetics of the (re)performance of these rituals. This chapter then introduces the concepts of Hasidism, the Kabbalah, and dybbuks, as well as the nature of Jewish rituals. Finally, this chapter concludes with an examination of the process of adapting rituals from the 'real world' onto the stage.

Ritual and Performance

Understanding the characteristics of rituals, their (re)performance on stage, and their ability to both transform and be transformed into dramaturgical and theatrical devices — as discussed below — are crucial components to analyzing *The Dybbuk*. As such, before we can explore their transformative potential, we must first examine the nature of rituals themselves. In "Ritual, Myth and Tragedy: Origins of Theatre in Dionysian Rites" Nadja Berberović cites William Morgan and Per Brask's definition of ritual from their article "Towards a Conceptual

Understanding of the Transformation from Ritual to Theatre," (1988) explaining that ritual may be defined generally as "any prescribed, stylized stereotypical way of performing some act. Narrowly, a single act of religious performance" (Berberović 32). In Berberović's understanding the term 'ritual' refers specifically to "culturally structured, repetitive actions with the explicit aim of articulation of those higher forces which are believed to govern the universe" (32). The problem with this definition is that it focuses too narrowly on ritual as an element of religion, leaving little room for ritual as an element of performance and thus also ignores the acts of every day ritual, or the social dramas of which Victor Turner writes.[6] Berberović's final description of ritual however — which focuses mainly on its form — proves most apt when applying the concept to the theatre: "Ritual involves portrayal and performance, a performance space, and performers. It often includes the use of masks, makeup, costumes, dance and music. And finally, it often involves an audience, in ritual a highly participatory one" (32). Additionally, Richard Schechner, in *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (1993), defines rituals as "ambivalent symbolic actions pointing at the real transactions even as they help people avoid too direct a confrontation with these events… Rituals are also bridges — reliable doings carrying people across dangerous waters. It is no accident that many rituals are 'rites of passage.'" (Schechner 230). Thus, something can be said to *be* a ritual if it *behaves* in the way that a ritual behaves — that is to say, it is comprised of symbolic actions which bring about a certain transformation — regardless of whether it follows the standard ritual form laid out above by Berberović. The question then becomes: How does ritual move from its origins in religion into the realm of the theatrical? Broadly, rituals become codified into performance through a process originally credited to Schechner but described by Turner in *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human*

[6] See Turner's *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*, 1982.

Seriousness of Play (1982). The process involves an infinite feedback loop, wherein the overt social drama informs the implicit social process, which manifests as a staged performance. This staged performance then dictates an implicit rhetorical structure, which in turn begins anew the cycle by representing itself as an overt social drama (Turner 73–74).

There are, however, limits to the prominent understandings of ritual, and to the language that they employ. In "Religion, Ritual, and Performance" Roland L. Grimes critiques these elements, specifying that the verbs 'perform' and 'acting' pose problems when applied to the legitimate practice of religious ritual. According to Grimes "when either term… is applied to ritual, especially to religious rites… practitioners hear such usage as impugning their integrity, as if speakers were saying: 'He was *merely* performing the (Roman Catholic) mass' or 'She was *only* acting the part of a *loa (*a Haitian spirit in Vodoun)'" (Grimes 35). To his credit, Schechner does attempt to resolve this issue by "defining performance as the 'showing of a doing', but few ritualists would say their primary intention is to show their doings" (35). Paradoxically, however, this is exactly what one wants to do in recreating the performance of a ritual on stage. Thus, one must make a distinction between performing the ritual for the rituals sake and performing the ritual on stage as a simulacrum of the 'real world' ritual. The question is then: What makes any given performance of a ritual within a theatrical context a mimetic performance and not a literal religious ritual? Schechner suggests that when the "creative and/or subversive function of ritual dominates, spills over its usually well-defined boundaries, that art separates from — and sometimes opposes — religion" (Schechner 258). In other words, Schechner locates this differentiation in the liminal nature of ritual itself, seemingly arguing that a certain degree of *mens rea* or intent towards religion or art is what differentiates the two outwardly identical

performances. This is further supported by the idea that ritual becomes affecting and actualized through its *performance* or *enactment*, not through its success. According to Grimes:

> [Erving] Goffman and Turner tend to build value judgments into their definitions of ritual, in effect, making "ritual" mean "good ritual" or "real ritual", thus using it as a criterion. Turner defined ritual and ceremony in such a way that 'ceremony' merely confirms or consolidates, whereas 'ritual' transforms. Schechner buys into Turnerian "transformationism", the view that ritual necessarily transforms. [Yet,] ritual just as often confirms the status quo or fails, and neither of these facts makes the event "not ritual." (Grimes, 35-36)

However, while Schechner's proposal that it is the intent of the action which defines the action is sound, it is also not entirely sufficient. For in addition to the intent behind the action, what differentiates the performance of a ritual as a moment of religious observance and the performance of a ritual as an artistic or theatrical event is its very placement on a stage or performance space beyond its original 'real world' religious context. When a ritual — or indeed any 'real life' or 'everyday' action — is performed as part of a play, it becomes an element of the dramaturgical construction of that play. In doing so, it becomes a dramaturgical device which may bear any number of dramaturgical effects on the play, such as moving the action or plot forwards, or furthering a given character's arc or journey, in addition to a religious device. The ritual now bears a dual function. This is exactly the case in *The Dybbuk*, in which the performance of rituals — most obviously the exorcism[7] — becomes a device of plot construction which moves the action of the play forward. Moreover, when this move becomes realized on an actual stage as a part of an actual production, rather than simply as a part of a script, the ritual

[7] See Chapter Two.

takes on a further function as an element of production. That is to say, the ritual participates in the creation of the fabric of performance in that it is inherently theatrical in and of itself. While this is true of any production which stages any given ritual, it is especially true of *The Dybbuk*, which not only stages Jewish rituals, but in fact relies on their inclusion for much of its theatricality.

Additionally, one might suggest that the presence of an outside audience who came to see the rituals performed as a part of a play or other theatrical event mark the two modes of performance as distinct from one another. However, the typical role of the audience as a non-participatory observer becomes complicated when they are observing the (re)performance of Jewish rituals on stage; in observing the performance of these rituals, the audience themselves become a kind of performer-participant, akin to the kind of performer-participant role an audience takes on when they attend prayer services or other religious events at a synagogue.[8] As such, the presence of an observing audience is an unreliable means of determining the mode — that is to say: theatrical or religious — of a given (re)performance of Jewish rituals.

Performativity of Rituals: Or How Rituals Transform and are Transformed

In his lecture series "How To Do Things With Words", delivered in 1955 at Harvard University, J. L. Austin introduced the term "performative" and consequently his concept of a performative sentence or utterance. According to Austin, a performative sentence "indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action — it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (Austin 4). In other words, to *say* a thing is to *do* that thing. For example, to say "I name this ship *x*" is to perform the act of naming, or, to quote Austin again, "when I say, before the registrar or altar '…I do', I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it" (4).

[8] See *The Audience-Performer-Participant Relationship* below.

Austin differentiated performative utterances, or speech-acts, or into three parts: the locutionary force, the illocutionary force, and the perlocutionary force. The locutionary force is concerned with determining the literal speech-content of the spoken utterance, the illocutionary force is concerned with determining what the function of saying the given utterance was, and the perlocutionary force is concerned with what effect is done to the receiver through having spoken the utterance. What separates performative utterances from other linguistic statements, is the fact that these utterances, when spoken, effect an actual change in the world. To borrow Erika Fischer-Lichte's concise explanation from her 2008 book *The Transformative Power of Performance*: "Performative utterances are self- referential and constitutive in so far as they bring forth the social reality [to which they refer].… Speech entails a transformative power" (Fischer-Lichte 24). This is especially true in Judaism, in which words are viewed as particularly powerful — regardless of whether they are spoken in a 'religious' context or not. Consider, for instance, this orthodox audience member's experience during a performance of Julie Tepperman's play *YICHUD* in Toronto in 2011:

> During one performance, an orthodox spectator shouted "Amen!" from his seat in response to a blessing recited. The audience laughed, of course, but upon speaking to this individual after the show, it was clear that he did not intend this as a joke. From his perspective, he was legally implicated in… a "performative utterance." [From his perspective,] a blessing was conferred upon an individual and, as an orthodox Jew, he was obligated to respond in order to complete that blessing. For him, the theatre space was sacred, the distinction between a real and fake ceremony erased through the speech act. (Schwartz et al. 22)

It is important to note, however, that speaking a performative utterance aloud is not necessarily enough to enact the utterance's transformative abilities. In order for a performative utterance to indeed perform that which it utters "a number of other, non-linguistic conditions must be satisfied — or else, the utterance will fail" (Fischer-Lichte 24). These performative utterances must be spoken within their respective social, institutional, cultural, or religious contexts. To return to the previous example of a wedding — a particularly apt example given the ritual's presence in the story of *The Dybbuk* — the declaration "I do" bears no transformative ability if it is not spoken by either of the celebrants, nor does "I now pronounce you married" actually transform the marital status of two individuals unless spoken by someone who has been authorized to enact such a transformation. As such, one might conclude that while rituals performed within their intended contexts in the 'real world' bear transformative abilities, they cease to enact transformations once they have been transposed or adapted onto the theatrical stage; becoming instead a type of performed or mimetic performative utterance, neutered of all 'real world' transformational qualities, whose main function is now dramaturgical.

However, while certainly true in some instances, this might not always be the case. If we consider Judith Butler's notion of performativity, which extends beyond Austin's speech act theory to conceive of performative acts as bodily acts, we can conceive of an instance wherein the (re)performance of a ritual on stage maintains the ritual's transformative abilities — in addition to taking on dramaturgical significance. Tepperman once again describes exactly such an instance when she reflects on her experience of performing Jewish rituals as part of *YICHUD*:

> There were certain moments of private ritual that I discovered as [the character of] Rachel—moments between Rachel and *Hashem* (God). For instance, I would kiss my *siddur* each time I opened and closed it… I never enjoyed kissing a prayer book more! It

> was holy. It was sacred. I would *shokel* (ritual swaying) and whisper prayers I knew by heart to myself… the act of reciting those words really resonated with me and [also] allowed me to "drop-in" as an actor to Rachel's heightened emotional state. (Tepperman, qtd in Schwartz et al. 23)

In this instance, Tepperman perfectly exemplifies Butlerian embodied performativity.

In her 1988 essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Judith Butler introduces her notion of the "performative" which is predicated on the idea that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various speech acts proceed; rather, it is… an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler 519). In other words, Butler asserts that gender identity is not constructed through reference to pre-existing categories or references but is continually performed through bodily actions. For Butler, these stylized and repeated actions are necessarily performative, "where 'performative' itself carries the double-meaning of 'dramatic' and non-referential'" (522). Here, Butler uses the term "dramatic" to refer to the idea that "the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities.… the body is always an embodying *of* possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention. In other words, the body *is* a historical situation… and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and *reproducing* a historical situation" (521). Thus, for Butler the body not only embodies a kind of reproduction and performance of possibilities and historical situations, it continually does so, becoming performative through what Fischer-Lichte calls "ritualized, public performances" (Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative Power of Performance* 28).

Given the body's ability to embody and reproduce historical possibilities, and thus make them immediate and actualized, the body is thus similarly capable of recreating or re-performing

rituals on stage; simultaneously giving the actions new theatrical meaning, while maintaining — through the performative actualization of embodying, reminiscent of Austin's performative speech acts — the original transformative power of the ritual. As such, it appears that some rituals, throughout the process of being translated from the real world into the theatrical, retain their transformative power while others do not. Specifically, rituals based around certain prescribed actions maintain their transformative qualities while those centred on performative utterances lose their transformative qualities. An issue arises, however, when the translated rituals contain both prescribed actions and performative utterances: as we will see exemplified in the below introduction to Jewish rituals. Furthermore, it is important to note that in being translated onto the stage, these rituals take on a certain double theatricality. Rituals in and of themselves are theatrical in nature, requiring the performance of certain codified and rehearsed actions by the ritual's participant(s). Thus, when this already once codified performance is transferred onto the stage it undergoes dual codification and achieves double theatricality.

The Audience-Performer-Participant Relationship

According to Fischer-Lichte, a performance "requires two groups of people, one acting and the other observing, to gather at the same time and place for a given period of shared lifetime. Their encounter — interactive and confrontational — produces the event of the performance" (Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative Power of Performance* 38). While recent events concerning the move en masse by theatre-makers to online and virtual performance spaces caused by the Covid-19 pandemic challenge Fischer-Lichte's understanding of what it means to gather in a shared place and time, the notion that performance is predicated on the performer-audience relationship remains tenable. Furthermore, Fischer-Lichte proposes that performance is "generated and determined by a self-referential and ever-changing feedback loop" (38) wherein

the actions of the performer(s) elicit a reaction from the observer(s), which in turn "impacts on the entire performance" (38). Fischer-Lichte also asserts that the "creation of a community out of actors and spectators based on their bodily co-presence plays [an additionally] key role in generating the feedback loop" (51). This appears to be especially true of what Fischer-Lichte termed "ritual theatre" — that is: theatre that (re)performed or otherwise included rituals. Quoting Richard Schechner's *Environmental Theater*, Fischer-Lichte writes:

> [Ritual theatre] radically criticized industrial societies for denying the individual "wholeness, process/organic growth, concreteness, religious, transcendental experience" [(Schechner, *Environmental Theater* 197)] … Through the creation of communities out of actors and spectators, participants were able to reconnect with these heretofore repressed experiences, thus initiating processes of transformation… [C]ommunities emerged when groups collectively performed a ritual. (52-53)

While Fischer-Lichte and the theatre makers she points to as examples — Richard Schechner, Hermann Nitsch, etc. — hold that for a spectator to participate in the performance of a ritual there must be a role reversal between the performers and the observers wherein the observers cease to be spectators and must necessarily become one of the performers of the ritual itself, this is not necessarily the case. Rather, spectatorship is of itself a type of — even sometimes a necessary type of — participation in the performance of a ritual. The presupposition that role reversal is a necessity ignores a key element of Fischer-Lichte's feedback loop: the observers' reactions, which then shape the performance as a whole. In this understanding, observation is not a passive activity, but an active engagement and participatory act of performance construction. As such, audience members who attend a theatrical event which incorporates the performance of one or more rituals and must perform at least part of the ritual

actions themselves are no more or less participants in the ritual performance than those who attend a similar show which does not require any given audience member to do more than simply observe. In both instances experiences of co-presence and community are equally generated through Fischer-Lichte's performance feedback loop. Thus, it can be said that this kind of ritual performance presents a certain doubling of roles and 'thickening' of the audience-performer-participant relationship. The performers have the double role of being both actors and ritual participants, while the observers have the similar double role of being both audience and ritual participants as well. Interestingly, the audience is thus necessarily also doubly observant: as they witness a simultaneous multi-performance of play and ritual. These two performances are at once unique from one another and inextricably implicated within each other.

In the case of An-sky's *The Dybbuk*, through the audience's role as observer-participant, the audience becomes a kind of secular *minyan* — a quorum of ten Jews over the age of 13 required for traditional Jewish public worship. The audience here performs the same function as a *minyan* does in the daily practice of Jewish life: In this case enabling the performers to (re)perform the adapted rituals theatrically. Additionally, for those unfamiliar with Jewish practices, rituals, and/or theology, the similarity to standard theatrical conventions of audience-performer interactions afforded by this understanding of the participatory nature of observance acts as an entry point to these rituals. An audience member is thus able to both observe and participate without being made to feel uncomfortable or forced to perform an unknown ritual or a ritual of a different religion than their own — the result of which places the audience in a potentially educative position of openness.

Furthermore, in her book *Transformative Aesthetics* (2018) Fischer-Lichte interrogates "the transformative potential of artistic performances" (Fischer-Lichte, "Introduction:

Transformative Aesthetics" 2). Here, Fischer-Lichte borrows Victor Turner's concept of liminality from his study of rituals to define transformation as:

> A particular kind of liminal experience [which] is liminal insofar as it presupposes a phase of separation in which the participating subjects leave behind their daily contexts [and enter] a liminal phase…in which they are transferred into an extraordinary state that allows for new and potentially disturbing experiences. (2)

For Fischer-Lichte, this liminal transformative encounter can be experienced by both the performer and the observer, though she specifies that most often it is the observer who "may undergo an aesthetic experience as a liminal experience, resulting in a particular, if only temporary transformation" (2). While Fischer-Lichte conceives of 'the observer' as the theatrical audience member, this is also true of the ritual audience member or observer. As such, given that an observer of a ritual functions simultaneously as a participant of that ritual — as outlined above — an observer of a ritual is doubly positioned for transformation: First in a Turnerian sense as a participant and second as an observer who may enter a liminal phase through Fischer-Lichte's transformative aesthetics. Thus, a play such as *The Dybbuk*, which in performance positions its audience as both theatrical observers and ritual observer-participants, represents a nexus of sorts which enables the observer to be transformed by their participation in the ritual, the transformative aesthetics of the ritual, *and* the transformative aesthetics of the theatrical production.

The Aesthetics of Transformation

Fischer-Lichte posits that the aesthetics of transformation can be delineated into three distinct paradigms: the aesthetics of impact, the aesthetics of autonomy, and the aesthetics of reception. While any given play — or ritual for that matter — can be written or created with a

particular transformative aesthetic in mind, the production and performance of the play is what ultimately determines which transformative aesthetic is employed. The aesthetics of impact originate from Aristotle's *Poetics* and are thus primarily concerned with Aristotle's notions of *eleos* and *phobos* — pity and terror — and their ability to generate catharsis, or a relief through the purgation of the above-mentioned emotions. According to Fischer-Lichte, "while the excitement of affects transfers the spectator/reader into a liminal state, catharsis brings about the actual transformation. That is to say the experience of catharsis constitutes a liminal and transformative experience" (3). While Fischer-Lichte refers here to a theatrical setting, the aesthetics of impact which she describes can also be understood to be a component of the performance of rituals — both on and off stage. In both cases, transformation is achieved through an experience of catharsis in a liminal state.

Conversely, the aesthetics of autonomy — as originated by Immanuel Kant and later reiterated by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe — rejects the aesthetics of impact, instead suggesting that "art is autonomous. It is not to be judged by referring to criteria such as the force of affects felt by the spectator or the degree of empathy it arouses and the moral improvement deriving from it" (5). The aesthetics that followed required a certain degree of separation between the art and the consumer or viewer of the art, and a type of performance that "prevented spectators from identifying and empathizing with them" (6) all in an effort to achieve *Bildung* — or self-cultivation: "The new aesthetics did not impose anything on the spectators; they were not at the mercy of what was happening on stage. Rather, it allowed them a 'disinterested and free pleasure', by which they could contribute to their own *Bildung*" (6). In this aesthetic tradition, the transformative potential comes from the liminal nature of being in a state of "disinterested and free pleasure" (5). According to Fischer-Lichte, "this liminal state served as a precondition

for the transformation into a 'free subject', a restoration of their 'wholeness' that was lost in the process of modernization" (6).

Finally, the aesthetics of reception officially originates from the work of Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser; but can also be identified as beginning to be formulated in the work of Richard Wagner who "by defining the spectator as a 'necessary sharer in the creation of the artwork' and in this sense as a co-creator… sketched a kind of reception aesthetics *avant la lettre*" (7). The aesthetics of reception "is performed as an encounter or even as an interaction between the structure/aesthetics of the work/event and its recipient" (12) and thus, "since performances come into being out of the encounter and interaction between actors/performers and spectators, the act of receiving is a creative and transformative act" (13). According to Fischer-Lichte, Iser's particular focus was on the ways in which a reader or observer can become attuned to markers of a text or performance which "call on the readers [or observers] to connect the experience of the text — as that of the other — to their own history of experience" (13).

The question is, then, given that both theatrical and ritual performances create their own transformative liminalities, how are these transformative aesthetics complicated by plays like *The Dybbuk*, which contain both theatrical *and* ritual performances? To which paradigm do they belong? To answer these questions, we can once again turn to Fischer-Lichte for an example. In analyzing the transformative aesthetics of the *Zentrum für Politische Schönheit*'s (Centre for Political Beauty's) *The Dead Are Coming* (2015) — a show and political demonstration containing the performance of a traditional Muslim burial lead by an Imam — Fischer-Lichte concludes that the performance represented a combination of aesthetic models, and can be accurately described as "the merging of political action, religious ritual and artistic re-enactment, rendering clear demarcation lines between the three impossible. This not only transformed the

three genres of cultural performance involved but also impacted public opinion" (14). While the political content of *The Dybbuk* is not as forthright as *The Dead Are Coming*, this same trifold effect takes place through the performance of the Jewish rituals featured in the play. The demarcating lines that separate the religious from the theatrical are certainly blurred while An-sky's desire to publicly embrace and display Jewish practice and theology through the re-enactment or (re)performance of Jewish rituals in a time and place in which antisemitism was flagrant and pervasive serves as the political statement — thus completing the trifold effect. As such, it can be said that "by representing meaningful liminal situations and states of transition in this way, spectators [of both plays were enabled] to enter such states" (Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative Aesthetics* 15).

While these transformative aesthetics are primarily concerned with the liminality and transformation of the performers and their audience members, it is vitally important also to consider the liminal state that rituals which are adapted into theatrical contexts occupy; and thus the transformative processes those rituals themselves undergo. As discussed above, these rituals can be said to be liminal in that they are both simultaneously preformed in authenticity and re-performed mimetically when they are transported into theatrical or performative contexts. Through this process of transposition, they not only gain their double performance, but in fact take on an additional effect beyond that which was originally intended to follow the performance of the ritual — and in some instances this new effect seems to entirely replace the old effect. Through performing a ritual on stage, the ritual becomes a dramaturgical device or element of dramaturgical construction and is now used to further the plot, provide exposition, or perform any number of dramaturgical duties. This can be seen exemplified in perfectly in *The Dybbuk*, in

which — as mentioned above — the various rituals become dramaturgical devices which bear a variety of effects.

Jewish Rituals, Hasidism, Dybbuks, and the Kabbalah

No analysis of *The Dybbuk* or the performance of Jewish rituals — theatrical or otherwise — can be conducted without the theoretical framework of Jewish Studies. Jewish theology and history are used to explain and contextualize the rituals that are performed across and so deeply characterize all three versions of *The Dybbuk* examined in the following chapters, as well as analyze their authenticity and the conditions of their (re)performance within these works from a Jewish or Halakhic[9] standpoint. According to Louis Finkelstein, Judaism can be summed up as "a way of life that endeavours to transform virtually every human action into a means of communion with God. Through communion with God, the Jew is enabled to make [their] contribution to the establishment of the Kingdom of God and the brotherhood of man on Earth" (Finkelstein, qtd in Klein 2). Finkelstein here refers to the structuring of Jewish daily life through a codified set of rules and laws known as Halakhah which is derived from the *mitzvot*, or "commandments," laid out in the written and oral Torah, the subsequent Talmudic and rabbinic law, and the customs and traditions generated over centuries. There certainly exists a theology in Judaism, but the daily and holiday practices are distinctly marked by adherence to the Halakhic legal system. According to Isaac Klein in his comprehensive *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, "Halakhah, or normative Judaism, is the primary expression of the Jew's relation to God, and the one authentic path to Jewish existence. Normative Judaism expressed itself not in a creed but in a program of conduct" (2). Furthermore, Klein goes on to specify that the crucial aspect or ingredient which gives unique endurance and holiness to the Jewish people is that of

[9] Of or pertaining to Jewish Talmudic law.

the performance of the *mitzvot*. Without these religious commandments "beliefs and opinions are abstract and follow, and touch life very tenuously. The soul of the Jewish people… found its expression in a life lived according to Halakhah" (2). Nearly every Jewish action has its basis in the codified Halakhah, and as such constitutes a prescribed action — each of which is unified in their shared dual purpose, as explained by Dr. Finkelstein, to foster a communion with God and a betterment of the world (2).

However, the story of *The Dybbuk*, as told by An-sky, goes beyond the normative Judaism that Klein describes and is heavily couched in the Hasidic tradition of Judaism, and thus is concerned with the Kabbalah — or Jewish mysticism — in addition to Halakhah. Hasidic Judaism is an Orthodox spiritual revivalist movement that emerged in Eastern Europe in the 18th century. Followers of Hasidic Judaism, known as *Hasidim*, or "pious ones", drew heavily on the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah in seeking a direct experience of God through ecstatic prayer and other rituals conducted under the spiritual direction of a Rebbe, also known as a *tzaddik*, or "righteous man." At the movement's height in the 19th century, it is estimated that roughly half of Eastern European Jews were Hasidic; however, the Hasidic movement was nearly completely decimated by the events of the Holocaust. Despite this tragedy, several Hasidic sects still exist today and are mainly located in Israel, New York City, and Montreal. The Hasidic movement spread mystical thinking and living to the masses of European Jewry by teaching that all people could have an experiential connection with God.

This mystical thinking largely took the form of the most famous type of Jewish mysticism: The Kabbalah. The Kabbalah began in thirteenth century Spain with the writing of the Zohar, which was originally attributed to the second century sage Shimon bar Yohai. The Zohar is a commentary on the Torah, concerned primarily with understanding the divine world

and its relation to the human world. According to the Kabbalah, God in God's true form — also known as *Ein Sof* or "the Infinite" — cannot be comprehended by humans. However, God can be understood and described as revealed in ten mystical attributes, or *sefirot*. Much of all Kabbalah, including the influential sixteenth-century writings of Rabbi Isaac Luria — whose theology of creation describes how God contracted to make room for the world — concerns itself with the *sefirot*. The most important process in the material world, for most of the Kabbalah, is that of creation itself in which God creates the world and brings it into being and humans, in their deepest emulation of God, seek to imitate through reproduction. In the Kabbalistic understanding of the universe, sexuality, reproduction, and birth are considered Godly mysteries and divine powers bestowed upon human beings by God. Additionally, spiritual (re)production is also important to the Kabbalists. A person's deeds are conceived as having the ability to similarly create worlds, provide order to the chaos of the universe, and join with God in the daily destruction and repair conducted throughout the world and the universe at large. In traditional Judaism, Kabbalah practices are contentious, as they engage directly with forbidden behaviours such as the speaking of God's true name(s) or, as the character of Channon theorizes in *The Dybbuk*, discovering holiness within sin.

The Kabbalah explores the nature of the human soul and the life energy that it carries which animates the body. Thus, the question becomes: If every human possesses this life energy, then what happens to that energy when one dies? According to the Kabbalah, the soul goes through a process of transmigration known as *gilgul*, or the reincarnation of the soul in different human bodies over time. This kind of soul transmigration is understood by Kabbalists as the natural order of things. Alternatively, after this process of *gilgul* is complete, the soul may return to its source: God. However, sometimes the process goes wrong. In these cases, a variety of ills

may befall the soul. The most well-known of these is the phenomenon of the dybbuk. A dybbuk is a malevolent spirit that is the dislocated soul of a deceased person that has become stuck in a liminal state between the world of the living and the world of the spirits, and who possesses a living person in order to achieve some kind of goal. This possession is also a form of soul transmigration. The soul of the living person is not destroyed or removed, but rather pushed aside as the two souls occupy the same physical body.

Notably, a dybbuk possession is not the only form of possessive soul transmigration present in Jewish folklore. There is also the notion of *ibbur*, which is a positive, consenting possession — unlike possession by a dybbuk which is typically forced or unwanted — which allows a righteous soul to temporarily possess a body so that the soul can perform a *mitzvah*. The purpose of these possessions is to transform. For both the dybbuk and the righteous soul, they are seeking a transformation through prayer, the performing of a *mitzvah*, or some other act, but have no corporeal body in which to perform these actions. Possession by a dybbuk can happen for a number of reasons. Often the departed soul is sinister or sinful in nature and the living person innocent; however, occasionally the departed soul may have been saintly — or at the very least, not actively sinful — but was wronged by the possessed while they were both living. In such a case, the possession by the dybbuk is typically understood as a divine punishment for a sinful act or improper behaviour. Finally, there are only two instances in which a dybbuk will leave its host body: if the dybbuk is exorcised by a suitably powerful Rabbi or once it has accomplished its goal or has been helped or redeemed in some fashion.

It is important to note here that the exorcism of a dybbuk — and indeed much of the Kabbalah — is something of an outlier or exception to the notion of Jewish rituals as prescribed actions. The Kabbalistic rituals, including the exorcism of a dybbuk, are still grounded in the

laws of Judaism, but they are not accepted by mainstream Judaism as prescribed actions in the same sense. They represent instead a kind of additional or optional ritualistic action; viewed as necessary or beneficial only within the Hasidic tradition. In connection to this exception, it is additionally notworthy that many of the now prescribed actions, such as the specific prayers that occur at specific times, are unique to Jewish practice in a post-Temple, or Rabbinic, world wherein Jews no longer offer animal sacrifices to God at the altar of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Rather, with the invention of the rabbinate, Judaism created the prescribed prayer system as laid out by the Halakhah. This system necessarily once occupied the same liminal space as the Kabbalah, prior to being adopted by mainstream Jewry.

Adapting Rituals

Finally, understanding how exactly the process of adapting rituals to the stage is carried out is vital to examining their place and function within *The Dybbuk.* According to Linda Hutcheon in her foundational book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006)[10], adaptations are necessarily 'palimpsestuous' (Hutcheon 6). To describe a work as an adaptation is to "openly announce its overt relationship to another work or works" (6). Following this notion, Hutcheon defines adaptation as a tri-step phenomenon: As a formal entity or product marked by a transposition or transcoding involving a shift in medium, genre, frame, context, and/or ontology; a process of creation marked by (re)interpretation and (re)creation, or appropriation or salvaging; and a process of reception marked by the unique 'palimpsestuous' intertextuality experienced by the receiving audience of the adaptation (7–8). Put more succinctly, in Hutcheon's summation, adaptation can be defined as "an acknowledged transposition of recognizable other work or

[10] While *A Theory of Adaptation* was originally published in 2006, this thesis cites the book's second edition which was co-written by Siobhan O'Flynn and was published in 2013.

works. A creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging. An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (8, original emphasis).

As comprehensive and foundational as Hutcheon's definition is, there remains room for extension and further examination. For instance, Margherita Laera, in her book *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat* (2014), expands on Hutcheon's definition, noting that some of Hutcheon's terminology concerning intertextual practices of rewriting is contested — namely the distinction between adaptation and appropriation (Laera 5). Laera identifies the need for, and subsequently supplies, "a taxonomy of adaptation as intertextual practice — where 'text' may refer to performance, film, and other non-literary sources" (5). This taxonomy is comprised of a series of comparisons and considerations between intra– and inter– "mediums, genres, cultures, and historical periods that are involved in the act of stage transposition" (6). This includes: intra– and inter–lingual, semiotic, medial, generic, cultural, and temporal adaptations (6). Furthermore, for Laera, the term 'adaptation' extends beyond the bounds laid out by Hutcheon to include more than just the action of the author or playwright — such as "the work of directors and their *mise en scène*, that of actors in performance and rehearsals, that of translators in transferring a text from one language to another, and that of audiences in co-authoring and responding to a piece" (2).

Similarly, Laera understands potential sources for adaptation more broadly and openly than Hutcheon, who admittedly focuses on "modes of engagement rather than on two specific media or on 'sources'" (Hutcheon 31). Whereas Hutcheon's conception of what is adaptable focuses on stories or worlds of stories (which she terms a 'heterocosm'), settings, characters, events, and situations, Laera specifies that adaptation can pertain to the transposition of "a source or *stimulus*" (Laera 4; emphasis added) — though it is worth noting that much of Laera's writing

falls back on the catch-all term ‘works’ which ultimately undercuts the inclusion of ‘stimulus’ in her definition. In connection to Laera, the notion of ‘source’ extends beyond a work, text, or performance as a whole to include individual performed actions or other stimuli that may not have been as formally recognized as potential sources for adaptation — like novels, films, or plays — such as the focus of this thesis: Jewish rituals and ceremonies. By positioning these rituals and ceremonies as adaptive sources, Hutcheon’s three modes of engagement — “telling, showing, and interacting with stories” (Hutcheon 27) — become further complicated and intersectional. Hutcheon positions the relationship between any given two modes of engagement as that of a source mode which is transformed through adaptation into a new mode of engagement. For instance: a novel, which uses the telling mode, is adapted into a film, which uses the showing mode. The transformation is from one mode of engagement to another. However, religious rituals are differentiated from films, plays, novels, and the like in that they are simultaneously presented through the showing *and* interacting modes, as a participant is often positioned as both audience and practitioner. In other words: in their ‘real world’ religious contexts, religious rituals are both shown and interacted with simultaneously. Thus, for playwrights such as An-sky, and his adaptors, to attempt to adapt a religious ritual to the stage — or to any new artistic context for that matter — is to attempt to transform a source with a dual mode of engagement into an adaptation with a single mode of engagement. Such a process, while theoretically possible, may not be entirely practically possible as the unique nature of the performers of rituals as simultaneously practitioner and observer ensures that the interacting mode of engagement is ultimately retained. This results in the equally simultaneous transformation of the ritual itself into a dramaturgical and theatrical element *and* the retention of the ritual’s original transformative qualities, as examined above. The following chapters examine

three specific instances of this adaptive process — namely An-sky's *The Dybbuk*, Tony Kushner's 1997 adaptation, and Anton Piatigorsky's 2015 adaptation — and the transformative effects which those instances do or do not retain, lose, or create.

Additionally, it is worth noting that each of the rituals (re)produced on stage or in script which are examined throughout this thesis are connected to specific performative conditions which, from a religious perspective, must be satisfied to be performed. These rituals could potentially be performed outside of their prescribed time, place, or context under the notion of *l'shem ḥinnukh*, or "for the purpose of education," but they must still be performed accurately and with all the correct components: "In order to satisfy the obligation of *ḥinnukh* [the one who is practicing] must perform the *mizvah* in precisely the same manner in which [one] is required to perform the act in order to discharge his obligation… *Hinnukh*, in its essence, is a 'dress rehearsal' requiring all the accoutrements of an actual performance" (Bleich, par. 5). However, many of these rituals are also forbidden from being performed in certain contexts, settings, or times which may coincide with their performance in a theatrical setting. For instance, it is required to shake a *lulav*[11] and *etrog*[12] on the holiday of Sukkot, but it is forbidden to do so on Shabbat, regardless of if Sukkot falls on a Shabbat or not; thus, even if as the ritual is performed accurately, with all the correct components, and with the intention of *l'shem ḥinnukh*, a theatrical performance involving the *lulav* and *etrog* ritual which is performed on a Friday night or Saturday morning or afternoon — all popular times for theatre — would be halakhically forbidden, and therefore problematic from a religious standpoint. As such, whether a theatrical performance of any given Jewish ritual constitutes as *l'shem ḥinnukh* is entirely determined firstly by whether or not the performance is conducted during a forbidden time, secondly by the

[11] A bundle of branches representing three species: willow, myrtle, and palm.
[12] A citron, or large yellow citrus fruit.

way in which the ritual is reproduced — accurately and correctly or inaccurately and incorrectly — and thirdly by whether or not the production bears the intent to educate. Only if all three of these conditions are met is there the potential for acceptance of the performance of the ritual as being religiously non-problematic.

Chapter Two: S. An-sky and The Rituals of *The Dybbuk*

S. An-sky was an enigmatic man. He was a revolutionary, an ethnographer, and a prolific writer; and while he himself was not overly religious, he believed strongly in the importance of researching, archiving, and displaying the culture and folklore of the Jewish shtetls of the Russian Empire. It is through his many attempts to enact this belief that An-sky wrote his most famous work: his seminal 1918 play, *The Dybbuk*. This chapter begins with a biography of An-sky and a history of *The Dybbuk* from its inception to its contemporaneous productions. The latter portion of this chapter is dedicated to the key rituals and ritual elements found in both An-sky's original script, as well as in its adaptations. This chapter introduces these rituals as they appear in the real world and subsequently analyzes their dramaturgical function within An-sky's version of *The Dybbuk* — beginning with the more quotidian and simple rituals and ceremonies that appear in the play, before moving on to the more complex rituals, such as the wedding ceremony and the formation and function of a Beit Din. Finally, this chapter examines the ritual for exorcising a dybbuk — or indeed any possessing spirit — highlighting its three historical iterations, pre-Lurianic, Lurianic, and post-Lurianic, in contrast to An-sky's adapted version. This chapter then concludes with a brief consideration of the above outlined rituals in connection to *The Dybbuk*, specifically around the question of their selection and connection to An-sky's goals and the larger themes of the play.

S. An-sky

The man who would come to be known as S. An-sky and would write *The Dybbuk* was born Shloyme-Zanvl Rappoport on the 27th of October, 1863 in the Jewish shtetl of Chashniki, which was located in the Vitebsk province — itself located within the Pale of Settlement — in what is now Belarus, but was then part of the Russian Empire (Peñalosa, 1). The Pale of

Settlement was the Western provinces of the Russian Empire and was where the Jewish Russian people had historically lived and were, at the time, legally confined. While Jews had a fair amount of mobility within the Pale — certainly exemplifying the 'wandering Jew' as they moved from place to place looking for work and doing business — they were not generally allowed to live permanently outside of the Pale. Rappoport was raised in a Hasidic family, spoke Yiddish as his native tongue, and had a traditional Jewish education at a Yeshiva (1). While he enjoyed great success as a Yeshiva student, "like the hero of his play, he was drawn to forbidden knowledge" (Safran 4) and was ultimately influenced by writings of the Haskalah — or the Jewish enlightenment — which culminated in his breaking with Judaism at 17 years old to "study Slavic peasants and revolutionary theory" (4). The Haskalah was an intellectual movement that originated in Germany in the 18th century which promoted the intellectual and cultural assimilation of European Jews with secular Europe, including engaging with secular philosophy, science, arts, politics, and culture. While certainly not the sole founder of the Haskalah movement, one of the most central originators and proponents of the movement was German-Jewish philosopher and theologian Moses Mendelssohn, whose writings and notions of Jewish religion and identity were crucial to the emergence of the Haskalah movement. Notably, in his writings Mendelssohn represented Judaism as rational and open to both modernity and change. Furthermore, Mendelssohn believed in the importance of secular education, a revival of the Hebrew language and Hebrew literature, the advancement of the Jews' legal rights, and Jewish tolerance and humanity (Schoenberg, "Modern Jewish History: The Haskalah").

In addition to his belief in the Haslakah, Rappoport believed in the "goodwill of poor Russians towards Jews even [later in his life] when many of his friends began to doubt it" (4). The following year, Rappoport left his hometown, travelling to Liozno where he mastered and

then taught Russian to Jewish children. Still heavily influenced by the ideas of the Haskalah, Rappoport used his position to spread the reforming ideas of the Haskalah amongst the youth in the village. When the villagers found out, they ran him out of town. This would mark the beginning of Rappoport's consistently in-consistent life, which he spent the near entirety of wandering, travelling, and sometimes fleeing from place to place.

As a young man "imbued with a sense of social justice" Rappoport became enraptured with the plight of the Russian peasants and workers (Peñalosa, 1). Now working among the Russian peasantry, he changed his name to Semyon Akimovich An-sky — or S. An-sky for short — which was "symbolic for the plight of the people among whom he lived and worked, and whose lifestyle he had adopted" (1). During this time, Rappoport, now An-sky, began collecting Russian folktales and publishing them, alongside articles on the real lives of Russian workers. He was now primarily a journalist and a budding ethnographer. His passion for social justice led him to involvement with the Social Revolutionists, and he would ultimately become a Socialist and Populist — working for various organizations and writing and lecturing on revolutionary topics. An-sky had a knack for being understanding and approachable to both sides of any given issue: "as an ethnographer, he worked to blend in among Russians and Jews. As a journalist, he got interviews from people who disagreed with him. [And] as a revolutionary propagandist, he [displayed] the political engagement inherent in his ethnographic and journalistic work" (Safran, 4).

Now publicly a Social Revolutionist, An-sky was often required to flee from city to city in order to evade Tsarist police. An-sky would continue his revolutionary activities but was also increasingly drawn back to Judaism. Specifically, he became fascinated with Jewish folklore and tradition. While he was a dedicated revolutionary "working for the destruction or radical reform

of old ways of life, he also yearned to find a place for himself inside the traditional structures" (Safran, 4). An-sky's life is characterized by paradoxical, seemingly mutually exclusive desires, interests, and actions, and this dual interest in Russian revolution and Jewish culture perfectly exemplifies that. Similarly, "he wanted both to vanish and to be famous, to be celebrated for his modesty and his mastery of words. These contradictory goals led him to revise not only his writings, but also his literary persona" (6). While it is easy to depict An-sky as someone who first cast aside his Jewishness for Gentile culture and causes, who then ultimately returns to their roots, "his newspaper articles, drafts, letters, and diaries [more accurately] reveal a rebellious and protean figure… [who is] never able to limit himself to a single set of loyalties" (7). Ultimately, these sources fully display An-sky's penchant for self-revising and his ability to draw upon his conflicting emotions and ideologies in order to "produce first one, then another story about who he was, what he had seen, and how he felt about it" (7).

From 1912 to 1914, An-sky was the lead ethnographer for the Jewish Ethnographical Expedition, one of the first expeditions of its kind whose goal was to collect folklore, legends, art, ritual objects, recordings of music, photographs, and other material and nonmaterial markers of traditional Jewish culture in the shtetls of the Ukrainian provinces Podolia and Volhynia; which is where Hasidism was born. Notably, this expedition primarily utilized the methodology established nearly a century earlier by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, which focused on capturing the oral tradition of the peasant class. Additionally, it is worth noting that such a scientific study of Jewish people and culture — known now as Jewish Studies but known then as *Wissenschaft des Judentums* or the "science of Judaism" — was, in An-sky's time, a relatively new academic discipline, having also emerged only a century prior. Originating in Germany in the 1820s, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement claimed for the first time that a scientific study of

Judaism could be undertaken; both for the purpose of understanding orthodoxy rationally and historically, as well as to disseminate this knowledge amongst the larger non-Jewish populace.

His ethnographic work was interrupted, however, by the outbreak of World War I in the summer of 1914, following which An-sky became a devoted war relief worker. He spent the vast majority of his time in war torn Galicia, Austria-Hungary, which, at the time, was the centre of Hasidism and was densely populated by Jews. In Galicia, the Jews were suffering greatly at the hands of both the German and Russian armies. Upon arrival, An-sky found a "landscape of terrifying rumour, apocalyptic legend, and unrelenting violence. There, like everyone he met, he struggled to tell reality from lies and friends from enemies, to understand the meaning of the war's brutality" (228). While in Galicia, An-sky kept a journal of his experiences, which would eventually become a memoir published in Yiddish as *Der yudisher hurbn fun Poylin, Galitsye un Bukovina 1914-1917 fun tog-bukh* (*The Jewish Destruction in Poland, Galicia, and Bukovina, 1914-1917 from a Diary*) usually referred to in English as *the Destruction of Galicia* (Peñalosa 2). His war relief efforts in Galicia marked a change in An-sky's writing. Now, more than he had ever done previously, An-sky wrote about the Russians' antisemitic behaviours. An-sky had always held that Russians were — for the most part — favourable towards the Jews, and that antisemitic violence should be blamed not on the Russian people, but on the Russian governmental policies. However, in Galicia, An-sky began to "step back from that belief" and place more onus on the Russian people (Safran 235). It is worth noting though, that even though An-sky was aware of the extent to which the Russian army was responsible for the devastation of the Jews in Galicia, he maintained — ever the paradox of self-conflict — "the faith of his entire life in the fundamental goodness of the Russian peasant… He tended to see soldiers as

fundamentally innocent peasants, led astray into war, but he also listened sympathetically to the officers" (233).

In 1917, following the February Revolution, An-sky's revolutionary dreams would come closest to being fully realized, as he was elected to the newly formed All-Russian Constituent Assembly as a Social Revolutionary deputy. An-sky was now part of the official Provisional government. However, later that year, after the Bolshevik October Revolution takeover, An-sky was forced to flee to Vilna, Poland — now Vilnius, Lithuania. In Vilna An-sky not only maintained his commitment to the Socialist revolutionary cause, continuing to produce Socialist writings and propaganda, but also continued his literary and ethnographic activities. Vilna was overflowing with Jewish refugees from the war, which was still raging, and as An-sky worked on his own writing, he became "intoxicated by the Jewish cultural and political developments around him," befriending Zionists, Socialists, Hebraists, Yiddishists, doctors, and playwrights (Safran, 281).

However, despite this intellectual revitalization, in the lead up to Vilna's bloody April Days — the conquest of Vilna by the Poles — An-sky's health had worsened. He had diabetes, his legs hurt from gout, and the pains in his chest, which he had felt for nearly a decade by this point, had worsened. Dr. Jakob Wygodzki, a friend of An-sky's, officially diagnosed him with arteriosclerosis and angina pectoris (285). Despite his declining health, An-sky kept going to meetings, helping to resolve the problems caused by the horrible pogrom that accompanied the Polish invasion. An-sky, still fleeing the Bolsheviks, left Vilna and moved to Warsaw, and then Otwock all in 1919. In Otwock, he sought to ensure the future of his writing in addition to continuing his ethnographic and advocacy work. An-sky's will, which — seeing the writing on

the wall — he had begun the same year, provided detailed instructions on what he wanted done with his, at this point, vast number of writings:

> I strongly desire that everything I have written of more or less enduring value be published as my collected works in Hebrew and Yiddish. If I do not complete this during my life, I ask my friends H. N. Bialik and S. Niger to take on the editorial work and to make sure that my desire is fulfilled. (S. An-sky, qtd in Safran 286)

While this was no small feat, a large amount of the An-sky's writings were already in Yiddish, including much of what he wrote in Russian.

The end of An-sky's life was unfortunately grim. He had spent his entire adult life among "utopian ideologues," and had devoted his energies and literary talents to "spreading the notion that some day, come the revolution, a more virtuous life would be possible" (290). However, in 1920, at the end of his life, all that An-sky had believed and hoped for was in jeopardy: "the power of the word had been coopted by the antisemitic [White Army], the pogroms made Jewish-Slavic coexistence hard to imagine, and the Bolsheviks had stolen the revolution" (290). Now he moderated his writing and admiration for utopia and heroism with warnings that they might be fantasies, finally acknowledging the limits of his dreams which had so inspired and motivated him. In spite of the energy he continued to muster for Jewish cultural work, his health continued to decline. On the eighth of November 1920, "at 7:30 p.m. that evening, at the age of fifty-seven, An-sky died suddenly of a heart attack" (291). Ultimately however, just like how Channon lives on after his death as a dybbuk, An-sky too lives on after his death through his large body of writing and through the legacy of his influential and impactful play: *The Dybbuk*.

History of *The Dybbuk*

At the same time as he was leading the Jewish Ethnographical Expedition and providing war relief in Galicia, and as at least a partial reaction to the blood libel trial of Beilis in Kiev, An-sky was working on what would become his masterpiece, *The Dybbuk*, which drew on his ethnographic experiences of the folklore of the Jewish shtetls of the Russian Empire. Indeed, it was An-sky's ethnographic expedition which was likely the essential germinating point for the creation of his play. Throughout his expedition, as he visited the regions of the Russian Empire where Jews had maintained — to an extent — the traditions and folk-knowledge of the past, An-sky would have been confronted with the increasing distance between the religiously orthodox culture of the shtetls which he was now witnessing and the emerging culture of modernity in which the Jews of the cities were abandoning or becoming further estranged from their heritage.

Like the ethnographic museum which he was also in the process of creating, An-sky was keen to capitalize on the popular nature of theatre as a means of disseminating the folklore that he had gathered. Additionally, An-sky seemed to sense the inherent dramatic components of many of the shtetl tales that would be incorporated into *The Dybbuk* and so for him, the theatrical form was a foregone conclusion. An-sky completed its first draft in late 1913, or early 1914, just a few months before the outbreak of World War I. This first version was written in Russian, as An-sky "wanted to reach a Russian-Jewish as well as a liberal non-Jewish audience" (Safran 4). Unfortunately, this first draft of the play has not been preserved, but conclusions can be made about it based on editorial comments made in a letter exchange between An-sky and his friend Horace Gintsburg.

> It was set in a shtetl… the characters were presented positively — even, Gintsburg thought, too positively… Gintsburg had the opposite reaction to the character of the

> tsaddik… Ginstsburg urged An-sky to depict the tsaddik more sympathetically and to imagine that like his followers, he truly believed in his own magic. (213).

Thus, one can deduce that in this first draft An-sky was much more hesitant to include the magic and mystical worldview which so strongly fascinated him. The oldest version of the text which has survived is a 1915 three act draft written in Russian that was submitted to the theatre censor, after which a new second act was added. This draft, not including the new second act which introduced the wedding for the first time, closely resembles the version Gintsburg commented on. Both versions are strongly influenced by An-sky's time as an ethnographer:

> Like each of the team's visits to a shtetl, the first three acts of the 1915 version open with old men telling stories in a synagogue or study room, hoping for a bite to eat and a drink… Throughout the play, characters ask each other to explain customs or landmarks, to perform songs, dances, and rituals… The real plot of the play is, perhaps, the plot of the ethnographic expedition itself. (213).

This heavy imprint of An-sky's ethnographic experiences seems to have survived many rounds of edits and drafting, making its way into the final version — albeit in a slightly reduced amount. This can be seen reflected in the comments made by the Hebrew poet Avraham Shlonsky on the final version of *The Dybbuk*, where he critically refers to it as "an ethnographic museum strewn with bits of folktales, religious rituals, etc. — all devoid of literary or dramatic necessity" (Shlonsky, qtd in Safran, 214). It is clear that An-sky's play, especially in his earlier drafts, places a greater importance on "display over narrative, education over catharsis, genuine artifacts over interpretation… It was meant to appeal not to the Jews of the shtetl but to the assimilated Jews and non-Jews of the capitals" (214). However, according to Gabriella Safran in her comprehensive biography of An-sky, *Wandering Soul: the Dybbuk's Creator, S. An-sky* (2010),

"more than any of his other works, *The Dybbuk* succeeded in doing what An-sky had identified as the goal of the Jewish writer — to create new secular art based on tradition, a new culture that would be as compelling as the old religious culture that Jews were leaving behind" (214–215). In An-sky's summation, "a nation lives not in suffering, but in the ecstasy of the realization of its 'I', in joyful creation, in pride in its culture, in the poetry of its daily life. Only in that. Without that, the Jewish nation would have vanished long ago" (An-sky, qtd in Safran 215).

In keeping with the goal of wide appeal and education, there are, in fact, four canonical version of *The Dybbuk*: the original Russian version, the final Yiddish version, the Hebrew translation by famous Hebrew poet Nachman Bialik and overseen by An-sky, and the shorter Hebrew version produced by the Habima Theatre company based on Bialik's translation (Peñalosa 3). Despite An-sky's efforts to get his play staged, *The Dybbuk* was only first staged in December of 1920 — a month after An-sky's death. This first production was in Yiddish (*Der Dibek*) and was staged in Warsaw Poland by the Vilna Troupe, and "to everyone's surprise, the production was a raging success that played for years and established the company's reputation" (Safran 292). *The Dybbuk* was first staged in Hebrew (*HaDibbuk*) by Habima Theatre in Moscow two years later in December 1922. The Habima production, directed by Evgeny Vakhtangov, "became the company's signature piece during its international tours and after its 1926 move to Palestine" (292). This production is also notable for its "grotesque, ugly, distorted concept of the Jewish environment, which was contrary to the original vision of An-sky" (Tolstoy 68), attributed to the Futurist artist and production designer Natan Altman, in combination with visual aesthetics inspired by the work of Marc Chagall. This design aesthetic was inspired by Altman's "critical attitude toward the theme and the images of the play, repeatedly speaking about the tragic history of the Jewish people, about their religion of

suffering, about reserved and passionate Jewish art, about the mutilated miserable human faces who look at us through the poetic images of legends" (Khersonsky, qtd in Tolstoy 68). Following these initial productions, *The Dybbuk* was adapted into films, operas, and ballets, as well as translated into many different languages. While the full scope of *The Dybbuk*'s proliferation is too great to record here in its entirety, some notable adaptations and productions include the play's American premiere on September 1st, 1921, at the New York Yiddish Art Theatre; its first operatic adaption: Lodovico Rocca's *Il Dibuk*, which was written and performed in Italian in Italy in 1934; its first film adaptation: Michał Waszyński's 1937 Yiddish-language Polish film *Der Dibuk*; and its first balletic adaptation in 1974 by Jerome Robbins with music by Leonard Bernstein, which was performed in New York.

Why *The Dybbuk*?

The question is: Why did An-sky, who was not a very religious man himself, write a play so heavily couched in Orthodox — specifically Hasidic — Jewish practices and the Kabbalah? As cited previously,[13] according to Fernando Peñalosa, an expert on both An-sky and *The Dybbuk*, An-sky believed that "the most effective way to combat the virulent antisemitism then prevalent in the Russian Empire would be to present a favourable view of Jews by showcasing their folklore" (Peñalosa 2). An-sky had identified that the Russian populace of his time had a favourable attitude towards folklore and extremely negative and stereotypical views of Hasidism. An-sky sought to use this interest in folklore to change these negative views; hence why the original version of the play is written in Russian, not An-sky's native Yiddish. Furthermore, the theatrical space, as opposed to the newspaper column which An-sky was more familiar with, offered the perfect medium for presenting this folklore. An-sky rightly identified the theatre as a

[13] See Introduction.

type of liminal or transitional space, which is both public and private all at once — with the illuminated performers sharing a certain co-presence with the audience who watches from the darkness. Thus, the audience is already primed to be transformed, which An-sky sought to capitalize upon. Additionally, and rather subversively, An-sky was also using *The Dybbuk* to promote the Haskalah. In *The Dybbuk,* the Hasidic culture is indeed presented favourably, as Peñalosa identifies, but the extreme adherents — namely those who engage in the Kabbalah — are seemingly punished throughout the play. Here, through making Hasidism seem less extreme than the Kabbalists, An-sky subtly condemns what he sees as religions extremism and supports the more secular Jewish practices proposed in the Haskalah.

Rituals in *The Dybbuk*

Kissing the Torah Scrolls

Having briefly addressed An-sky's goals, let us now turn our attention to the rituals he uses to achieve those goals. While An-sky's play features many instances of Jewish rituals, let us begin with the traditional ritualized action of kissing the Torah scrolls — and indeed other holy items such as *siddurim*[14], *kippot*[15], and *tzitzit*[16] all of which are viewed as extensions of the Torah — as exemplified by Fradde and Leah's first visit to the synagogue. This traditional action is not based in any particular *mitzvah,* but rather on the desire to embrace and be close to God. In his article "Bibliaphilia: A reflection on why Jews kiss Torah books," Michael Chighel explains the concept of God's omniscience and omnipresence, and how God permeates all things — especially the Torah. In other words, "God knows everything because everything is designed on the basis of the Torah. And God knows the Torah because He knows Himself" (Chigel 7). This

[14] Prayer books.
[15] Skullcaps; or head coverings.
[16] The fringes or tassels on a *tallit* or prayer shawl.

notion that God is perceived as being within the Torah is further supported by what Chigel calls "an interpretation of *Anochi,* the 'I' in 'I am the Lord' (Exod. 20:2) [which] says: 'I give My soul in the text'" (7). In other words, to kiss the Torah, or an extension of it such as a *siddur,* is to kiss God. Additionally, Chigel notes that the act of kissing, as opposed to a different form of intimacy such as hugging, is metaphorically important. The mouth is the nexus in which "three spiritual phenomena are braided together… *breath-soul-speech,* or, what amounts to the same, *vitality-identity-intelligence*" (11; original italics). Thus, the act of kissing the Torah not only symbolizes the love that a Jew feels for God and their desire for intimacy with God, but also combines the divine elements of breath, the soul, and the speech together in a human imitation of God.

The purpose for this ritual's inclusion is two-fold: Firstly, as indicated above, the act of kissing the Torah scrolls is representative of the Jewish reverence for God, as well as the desire for intimacy with God. These two concepts are not only crucial to Judaism but are also central themes in An-sky's play. Secondly, this ritual is featured in the beginning of the play, and thus from a dramaturgical standpoint serves as a type of expository action. When this ritual occurs, An-sky is still in the expository or educational portion of his play, in which he must quickly, effectively, and subtly — so as not to distract or bore his audience — provide his audience with information about the characters, the world they inhabit, and their ideologies and world views. Thus, kissing the Torah scrolls not only metaphorically represents the desire for intimacy with God, thereby introducing a key concept of the play, but it also establishes the Torah as a reverential item, imbues it with power, and — in addition to much of the beginning dialogue — conveys the general orthodoxy of the characters who inhabit the play.

The Blowing of the Shofar

The next ritual action to be examined is the act of blowing the *shofar*, or ram's horn. While not exactly quotidian, as the *shofar* tends only to be blown during certain holidays and festivals, the blowing of a *shofar* is not a ceremony of itself, but rather an element or sub-ceremony of other larger ritual events. In *The Dybbuk* we see the *shofar* blown as part of the exorcism ritual. While the method for exorcising a dybbuk will be examined later, for now let us examine the *shofar* itself, its meanings, and its corresponding blasts. The *shofar* has long been a symbol of strength and power; its resounding blasts having a profoundly affective response on a given listener as they seem to invoke the soul to stand before the judgement of God. While there has been nearly endless rumination on the meaning or reason for the sounding of the *shofar*, there are ten generally accepted reasons or interpretations which summarize most of the discourse. Originally laid out by Sa'adiah Gaon in *Abudraham Hashalem*, Isaac Klein neatly summarizes them in his book *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*:

1. The sound of the *Shofar* is analogous to the trumpet blasts which announce the coronation of a king. On Rosh Hashanah God created the world and became its sovereign. By sounding the *Shofar* we acknowledge him as our King.
2. Rosh Hashanah is the first of the ten Days of Penitence, and the *Shofar* is sounded to stir our consciences, inducing us to confront our past errors and return to God, who is always ready to welcome the penitent.
3. The *Shofar* is reminiscent of God's revelation at Sinai, which was accompanied by the sounding of a Shofar. It reminds us of our destiny to be a people of Torah, pursuing the study of torah and practicing its commandments.

4. The sound of the *Shofar* is reminiscent of the exhortations of the prophets, whose voices rang out like a *Shofar* in denouncing their people's wrongdoing, and in calling them to the service of God and man.
5. The *Shofar* reminds us of the destruction of the Temple, and calls upon us to strive for Israel's renewal in freedom and in fellowship with God.
6. The *Shofar*, since it is a ram's horn, is reminiscent of the ram offered as a sacrifice by Abraham in place of his son Isaac. It thus reminds us of the heroic faith of the fathers of our people, who exemplified the highest devotion to God of which man is capable.
7. The *Shofar* urges us to feel humble before God's majesty and might, which are manifested by all things and which constantly surround our lives.
8. The *Shofar* is a reminder of the Day of Final Judgement, calling upon all men and all nations to prepare themselves for God's scrutiny of their deeds.
9. The *Shofar* foreshadows the jubilant proclamation of freedom when the exiled and homeless of Israel return to the Holy Land. It calls upon us to believe, at all times and under all circumstances, in Israel's coming deliverance.
10. The *Shofar* foreshadows the end of the present world order and inauguration of God's reign of righteousness throughout the world, with a regenerated Israel leading all men in acknowledging that God is One. (Klein 191-192)

Throughout the various meanings, we see repeated the themes of judgement, strength, hope, and divine power or will. Turning our attention to the actual practice of blowing the *shofar*: there are three blasting patterns, and one additional special blast, which are then combined to form other larger patterns that vary based on the larger ceremony in which the *shofar* is being blown. A

caller reads out or speaks the name of the given pattern to be blown, and then the *shofar* blower blasts that pattern. The patterns are *tekiah*, a single, unbroken blast that ends abruptly; *shevarim*, a series of three shorter blasts whose total duration is identical to that of *tekiah*; *teruah* a series of nine staccato blasts whose total duration is also equal to that of *tekiah*; and finally, *tekiah gedolah*, which is a single, unbroken blast like *tekiah* but approximately twice the duration.

The *shofar*, in addition to its semiotic function as a prop primarily signifying Jewishness, was included as a visually and aurally affecting — or, in other words, theatrical — component of the exorcism ritual. An-sky's depiction of the exorcism of a dybbuk is intended to be a very overwhelming, overstimulating display. It is the climactic event of the play. As such, it is designed to stimulate both an audience member's visual and aural senses. Visually it is striking: the stoic, imposing nature of the *minyan* of ten Jews is juxtaposed against the passionate Rabbi, who embodies the power of God in this moment and the violent, physical protestations of the Dybbuk as they thrash out with Leah's body. It is equally aurally impactful as well. While Leah and the Dybbuk's screams and the Rabbi's intonations certainly contribute to the hair-raising soundscape, the blowing of the shofar is the centrepiece. The *shofar's* distinct call, which easily rises above the din, followed by a gut-wrenching scream from Leah and the Dybbuk makes for an exceptionally compelling and affective theatrical device. The exorcism is meant to be frightening, and the blowing of the *shofar* is a strong contributor to that effect.

The Jewish Wedding

The next ceremony that will be examined is a Jewish wedding. The Jewish marriage process is, in actuality, a combination of three separate events: engagement, betrothal, and nuptials. In both Talmudic times and modern times, engagement precedes the wedding ceremony and is marked by a proposal and announcement of marriage. The ceremony itself as we know it

today, however, is a combination of the remaining two events: betrothal and nuptials. In Talmudic times these two ceremonies were separated by twelve months, but in modern times they have been combined into one single ceremony, with the only separation between them being the reading of the *ketubah* — or marriage contract. Notably, An-sky does not include the actual marriage ceremony itself, but he does include a large portion of the preceding rituals and traditions. For the purposes of this analysis, let us focus on two aspects of that preamble: the *bedeken*, which is the ritual veiling of the bride; and the visitation of deceased parents by the bride and groom and its associated mourning prayers.

The *bedeken* ceremony originated in eastern Europe and is has its basis in the biblical story of Isaac's wedding with Rebecca. In the *bedeken* "the bridegroom covers his bride's face with a veil after he checks to see her face and verify that she is his intended" (Marcus 133). Immediately following the veiling of the bride, the officiant "pronounces the blessing bestowed upon Rebecca before she left her home, 'O sister! May you grow into thousands of myriad' (Gen. 24:60), and the blessing given to daughters generally, 'may the Lord make you as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah' (*Liquitei Meharih* 3:130)" (Klein 401). This veiling of the bride is meant to be reminiscent of Isaac and Rebecca's wedding, which was the first time a woman was betrothed to a man of Jewish birth, as well as represent modesty — a common theme in Jewish rituals, especially for women (401). The *bedeken* is the element of a Jewish wedding that we see partially performed in *The Dybbuk* until it is ultimately interrupted by the dybbuk's possession of Leah.

An additional aspect of the wedding ceremony that is lesser known than the *Bedeken* which An-sky includes in *The Dybbuk* is the ritual of visiting a deceased parent's grave. According to Kerry M. Olitzky and Ronald H. Isaacs in *The Complete How To Handbook for*

Jewish Living (2004), "if their parents are dead, the bride and groom should visit their graves before the wedding to recite *El Maleh Rachamim* and pray for happiness in their marriage" (Olitzky and Isaacs 197). In *The Dybbuk*, prior to the groom's arrival, Leah visits her mother's grave to do just that. *El Maleh Rachamim* is the memorial prayer for the dead and has a harrowing and affecting melody. According to Ronald L. Eisenberg, in his article "El Maleh Rachamim: A Prayer of Remembrance,"

> At one time this memorial prayer was recited during the wedding service under the *huppah* [(wedding canopy)]. Although a dramatic and effective way to remember the deceased, this practice marred the joy of the wedding. Consequently, the fashion has changed and the memorial prayer is now usually recited (if at all) before the wedding ceremony in the presence of the immediate family, usually in the rabbi's study. (Eisenberg 1).

El Maleh Rahamim serves as a plea to God that the soul of the deceased be granted *menuchah nechonah*, or proper rest, in *Gan Eden*.[17] Through the prayers and good deeds of the living — in this case the bride or groom — they entreat God to have compassion for the departed souls of their loved ones. *El Maleh Rachamim* is also prayed at funerals, and during memorial services.

It is no coincidence that the dybbuk possesses Leah during the *bedeken* ceremony. The *bedeken* is in fact a perfect visual metaphor for the invisible process of possession by a dybbuk. As indicated above, the *bedeken*'s primary action is the ceremonial presentation of the bridegroom before the bride, where he ensures that the bride is in fact his betrothed, before concluding by placing a veil over her head. The dybbuk's possession of Leah is like an inverted or bastardized *bedeken*; it is a mirror image of the actual, intended ritual. As Leah's bridegroom,

[17] Spiritual heaven; literally: "the garden of Eden."

Menashe, approaches her, so too does the Dybbuk. Menashe reaches out to veil Leah, thus confirming her as his intended, however Leah pushes him away, rejects his veil, and in doing so confirms the Dybbuk — formerly Channon — as her intended, not Menashe. With this confirmation, the Dybbuk begins the possession process proper, metaphorically veiling her with his possessing presence, his spirit, and thus claiming her as his own. In both the possession and the *bedeken*, the process is characterized by the covering, so to speak, of the bride. Thus, the *bedeken* serves a dual dramaturgical purpose, functioning as a both a visual and aesthetic metaphor as well as functioning as the inciting incident of the play. This moment comes at the conclusion of Act One and thus concludes the expository section of the play, as well as the act itself, with a suitably suspenseful and dramatic change to the status quo for the characters of the play. The *bedeken* functions as the moment of crises which breaks up the stasis of the play's world and necessitates action.

The dybbuk could not, however, have possessed Leah, had the door from the realm of spirits not been opened into the real world. Thus, An-sky cleverly utilizes the tradition of visiting the graves of deceased parents to pray *El Maleh Rachamim* before one's wedding as a narrative device to create a scenario where Leah can open this door for the Dybbuk. By including this tradition, Leah is forced into the graveyard, and can then succumb to her previously stated desire to *also* pray for Channon and invite his spirit to her wedding, despite Fradde's warnings not to do so. Thus, Leah violates of the practice of praying at *only* one's parent's grave and ultimately knocks down the first domino that directly leads to her possession.

The Gathering and Ruling of a Beit Din

Penultimately, let us briefly examine the gathering and ruling of a *Beit Din*, before finally turning our attention to dybbuk exorcisms. A *Beit Din*, according to *The Oxford Dictionary of*

the Jewish Religion, edited by Adele Berlin, is "a court of law guided by the principles of recognized Halakhah in dealing with matters of civil, criminal, or religious law." In Talmudic times, there were three types of *Battei Din*:[18] the standard *Beit Din*, which consisted of three judges who had authority to rule on civil cases; a higher court called the *Sanhedrin Katan*, which consisted of twenty-three judges and ruled on criminal cases; and the highest court — save for God's judgement — called the *Sanhedrin*, which consisted of seventy or seventy-one judges and was the final authority for the interpretation and establishment of laws. In post-Talmudic times however, the *Beit Din*'s function has shifted. Nowadays, a *Beit Din* refers to the system of courts developed to apply the rules of law found in the Halakhah; a *Beit Din* no longer serves as the source of advances in Jewish law, but rather decides what the law is as it applies to any given case. This formation and ruling are exemplified in *The Dybbuk* through Sender and Nissin's trial.

The inclusion of the *Beit Din* serves several dramaturgical functions. Firstly, it reasserts the underlying message of the play that the will of God supersedes the will of man, as the court's authority is not derived from any given human kingdom or government but stems instead from God's divine provenance. Secondly, it alludes to Judaism's distinctly 'legal' liturgical structure. As examined above, Jewish practice is governed by Halakhah, which is — as discussed previously — a codified set of laws reminiscent of a penal code, as opposed to a certain set of ideologies. Notably, that is not to say that there are no ideologies present in Judaism, far from it, but rather that the laws *create* the ideologies, rather than the ideologies informing the behaviour of the adherent. The showcasing of the enforcement of these laws, through the formation of a *Beit Din*, allows An-sky to highlight this aspect of Jewish life; thereby contributing to his larger goal of education. Thirdly, a *Beit Din* introduces stakes to the conflict between Sender and the

[18] Plural for *Beit Din*.

deceased Nissin. From a dramaturgical standpoint, a court semiotically conveys a sense of tension and of high stakes for the characters present. The court's decision, through its consequences, has a real impact and weight upon the character of Sender's life. In other words, this court scene acts as a point of no return for Sender's character and indeed for the play as a whole. This makes it far more interesting to an audience member. Actions where there are either no consequences, or the consequences do not bear much impact on the life of a character or the on the story — as would have been the case had Sender merely remembered his broken pact, or even if Nissin had appeared in his dreams rather than Rabbi Samson's — makes for uninteresting and disengaging theatre. However, actions where the consequences do matter, and which contain incredibly high stakes, such as a ruling by a court with God's official stamp of approval, creates dramatic tension, and thus interest.

The Exorcism of a Dybbuk

Finally, we arrive at the most crucial ritual to the entirety of the play: the exorcism of a dybbuk. As examined in Chapter One, Dybbuks originate from the folklore of the Hasidic movement and are couched in and heavily connected to the Kabbalah. Within the Kabbalah, there have been several great leaders, known as *rebbes* or *tzaddiks*, including the most famous *tzaddik*: Rabbi Isaac Luria. Luria revolutionized the teachings of the Kabbalah, and as such the various rituals for exorcising a dybbuk can be delineated into three eras: pre-Lurianic, Lurianic, and post-Lurianic.

Pre-Lurianic exorcisms bear much similarity to the 'standard' exorcisms of the time: "hardware requirements are minimal… Holy angels and demonic spirits are abjured by the exorcist, enlisted to assist him by forcing the penetrating demon to disclose his name and the names of his parents" (Chajes 67). Once the spirit's name has been obtained, the exorcist

proceeds to adjure those same angels and demons to compel the spirit to leave the body it has possessed, and to become trapped in a flask, with the exorcist making one final adjuration to ensure they are not susceptible to possession themselves (68). What is notable about the pre-Lurainic exorcism ritual, is that it not only combines adjuration as well as "operations based upon the occult properties of objects," but that it also blends "natural and demonic magic to full effect" (68). Furthermore, this ritual is noticeably theatrical and performative in its execution which, according to Jeffery Chajes in his book *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism* (2003), "made them the miracles par excellence of antiquity" (68).

Conversely, the Lurianic exorcism is distinctly less theatrical, and much more esoteric; requiring a much higher degree of understanding of the Kabbalah to comprehend, let alone perform. The exorcism begins with a diagnosis, taken by the exorcist's measuring of the possessed's pulse — which, according to Luria, could indicate physical *and* spiritual ailments. Following this, "while still gripping the possessed from behind, the exorcist recites Psalm 109, verse 6, into his or her ear… This verse is said forward and then backward — a common magical technique… The verse is also permuted numerically, and its posterior and anterior acrostics contemplated" (76). Thus begins the more esoteric elements of Luria's exorcism. Throughout the exorcism, words are reconfigured and contemplated in increasingly incoherent ways. This process largely involves a mono-alphabetic substitution cipher called Atbash, — in which the first letter of the alphabet becomes the last letter, the second letter becomes the penultimate letter, and so on — which is applied to the second of the seven sestets of the forty-two letter *Shem HaMephorash*, or hidden name of God: *KR'A STN*. This process is derived from the Kabbalistic notion of the contemplation of God's names as a means of spiritual enlightenment. The exorcist is called to contemplate this name "vocalized with the *shva*, the vowel associated in

Kabbalistic sources with severity. Such a vocalization would serve to amplify the power of the already-severe formula *KR'A SaTaN*" (83; original italics). The exorcist then applies the Atbash cypher to not only the *KR'A STN* name. Following this, they are required to contemplate God's seven attributes, and meditate on the names Sagzagiel, Metatron, and "YVAHZZBIRON," as well as on the "quadratic expansion of the tetragrammaton" (83). Finally, "the *satan*-rendering second sestet from the forty-two letter name concludes the meditations, again transformed by letter-exchange techniques and vocalized with the piercing *shva*" (83; original italics). Notably, this form of exorcism is firstly, more personalized to each individual possession — with the above summarized exorcism only being one exemplar — and is significantly less theatrical than the pre-Lurianic ritual: it involves no items or large gestures and is primarily comprised of whispering scripture into the possessed's ear. There is, however, one notable exception to this anti-theatricality. Chajes notes that "in stubborn cases, it is necessary to combine the meditations with a blast from a shofar" (82).

Finally, there is the post-Lurianic exorcisms, the core of which is still based in the Lurianic meditations and contemplations as summarized above. Chajes offers two examples of post-Lurianic exorcism, one a direct permutation of Luria's system, and the other more distinctly different, though still related. Added elements mark both of these exorcisms as different from the Lurianic one — almost functioning as a hybrid of the Lurianic and pre-Lurianic rituals. The first post-Lurianic exorcism requires the convening of a minyan, or group of ten Jewish men — a distinct break from the intimate exorcism of Luria's creation — while the second exorcism involves "the extensive use of sulfurous fumigations, a mainstay of Catholic exorcism and earlier Jewish magic" (90). This exorcism also features the inclusion of an amulet in order to protect the formerly possessed from a second possession. Notably, this second exorcism seems to have been

influenced much more so by the Catholic Church than the previous Lurianic and pre-Lurianic rituals.

An-sky's version of the exorcism of a dybbuk largely draws from the pre-Lurianic and post-Lurianic exorcisms, as opposed to the Lurianic version; featuring the blowing of the *shofar*; adjuration of higher, middle, and lower spirits, as well as to God; threats of anathema and excommunication; the lighting of candles and wearing of ritual clothing; and the gathering of a minyan of Jews. This is likely due primarily to the increased theatricality of the pre- and post-Lurianic exorcisms, as well as their relative simplicity compared to the esoteric complexity of the Lurianic ritual. Regarding its inclusion in the play, the exorcism of the Dybbuk is absolutely vital; especially given its inseparable connection to the dybbuk myth, and thus by extension An-sky's desire to educate and combat antisemitism through the representation of Jewish folklore. The legend of the dybbuk is incomplete without its corresponding exorcism ritual.

However, it is also worth noting that in *The Dybbuk*, the exorcism is only temporarily successful. While it is technically true that the Dybbuk departs Leah's body and does not possess her as a dybbuk again, the exorcism does fail in its larger goal to save Leah by separating her from Channon, as she ultimately willingly leaves the realm of the living to join her soul with Channon's in the realm of the spirits. This failure is emblematic of one of the core themes of An-sky's play: The will of man, well intentioned or otherwise, cannot best the will of God. Despite Sender and Rabbi Azriel's best efforts, Channon and Leah are divinely decreed to be together, and so they shall be.

Additionally, through displaying this triumph of the will of God over the will of man, An-sky criticizes Hasidism and the Kabbalah, which, respectively, believes in and describes rituals and practices in which mere mortals could invoke and even control divine power. It is

important to remember that An-sky was a firm proponent of the Haskalah, which notably called for — in addition to many other changes — religious reforms amongst Ashkenazi Jews. Specifically, advocates of the Haskalah sought the revival of Jewish philosophy as a replacement of the Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism, which had dominated Ashkenazi Judaism since the Italian renaissance. In other words, the Haskalah, and thus An-sky, explicitly rejected the complex, esoteric exegesis of the Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism in favour of a comparatively simpler exegesis and literal understanding of Halakhah and the Torah.

Prayers and Ritual Actions

Looking at the rituals that An-sky includes in *The Dybbuk* more broadly, we can see that in general they do not include actual prayers. Instead, they are mostly comprised of physical actions. When moments of prayer do occur, they are relegated to the off-stage imaginary theatrical space. For instance, the Batlonyim leave the stage in order to recite psalms in Act One, as does Leah in Act Two when she goes to pray *El Maleh Rachamim* at her mother's and presumably Channon's graves. There are two potential reasons that An-sky may have chosen to favour actions over words of prayer. Firstly, by doing so, he limits the degree to which he must engage with the religious implications of performing a legitimate prayer in a theatrical, rather than religiously reverent setting and the performative nature of such actions which was examined in the previous chapter. For the most part, the rituals that we see performed in *The Dybbuk* are either physical simulacra, as is the case with the *bedeken*, or they are rituals of tradition which are much more quotidian, such as the kissing of the Torah scrolls, and do not bear the same spiritual weight as an actual prayer.

Furthermore, not only do these rituals, as represented, not carry the intention of prayer behind them, they also do not include entreatments to God. The exorcism is the notable

exception to this rule, as Rabbi Azriel calls out to God as well as various unnamed angels and spirits. However, compared to the actual performed exorcisms — be it pre-Lurianic, Lurianic, or post-Lurianic — An-sky's exorcism has been significantly stripped of its entreatments to God and heavenly spirits and the focus has been placed much more so on the actions performed, rather than the words. While this seems to force An-sky to engage with the question of religious ethics that he has thus far avoided, that is not actually the case. It is important to remember that An-sky was part of the Haskalah movement which, as described above, called for religious reforms amongst Ashkenazi Jews and the revival of Jewish philosophy as a replacement of the Kabbalah. Thus, for An-sky: Kabbalistic rituals such as exorcisms do not bear the same spiritual implications as other more normative religious doings.

Secondly, by focusing on ritual actions rather than words of prayer, An-sky, who it should be reiterated is writing for a largely Gentile audience at a time where antisemitism was commonplace, avoids making his play too religiously Jewish. An-sky wanted to display Jewish folklore much more so than he wanted to display authentically lived Jewish religious life. In other words, the traditions, actions, and ceremonies were more important than the specific theological or religious content that they carried. This choice reflects An-sky's personal interests, which were largely ethnographic in nature. Additionally, as expressed earlier, this focus on folklore over prayer was made in an effort to appeal to the folklore loving Russian majority population, in a direct effort to combat the aforementioned Russian antisemitism. Notably, however, An-sky does not alienate his — albeit significantly smaller — Jewish audience members either. By requiring a given audience member to fill the invisible off-stage space with their imagination, for those initiated in Judaism and who are knowledgeable on Jewish customs, rituals, and prayers, the play remains authentic in its reproduction of those elements.

Conclusion

Examining An-sky's treatment and inclusion of Jewish rituals more broadly reveals a distinct connective through line: All of these rituals are connected to notions of possession, intimacy and love, and/or transition and liminality — all of which are elements of both dybbuks in general as well as An-sky's story of the dybbuk Channon for which the play is named. We see intimacy and love represented through the ritualized kissing of the Torah scrolls, the visitation of deceased loved ones — and, though it does not figure on the stage, the implied prayer of *El Maleh Rachamim* which corresponds with this visitation — and, although it is ultimately corrupted in the play, the wedding ceremony. The wedding also crucially represents possession and transition from one state of being or stage of life to another. The *Beit Din* similarly represents transition, as the ordeal of a trial forces its subject to occupy a liminal, almost Schrödinger-esque space between guilty and innocent. Finally, transition and liminality are at the heart of the exorcism ritual, which seeks to displace the Dybbuk from its relatively stable position and move it back into a transitory, liminal space.

Chapter Three: Tony Kushner and Adapting *The Dybbuk* Post-Holocaust

As examined previously, An-sky's *The Dybbuk* is couched heavily in the folklore and culture of the 'Old World' Jewish shtetls of Eastern Europe. Jewish rituals, ceremonies, folklore, and the realities of daily shtetl life are vital components of An-sky's play and as such equally characterize contemporary adaptations, such as Tony Kushner's 1997 adaptation *A Dybbuk*, the subject of this chapter, or Anton Piatigorsky's 2015 version *The Dybbuk*, the subject of the following chapter. What complicates their inclusion and representation in contemporary adaptations of the play, however, is the fact that these adaptations are created after the events of the Holocaust, which wrought the near complete annihilation of the shtetl folklore and culture which An-sky found so fascinating and which is so essential to his play. Thus, contemporary adaptations of An-sky's play, like Kushner's *A Dybbuk*, reflect the realities of the world in which they are created. They point to a changed relationship between contemporary Jews and both God and Judaism as a whole, as well as to the increased historical and physical distance from the shtetls of the 'Old World' and their folklore and culture. Bearing these notions in mind — and following a brief introduction to both Kushner and his adaptation — this chapter analyzes the changes made by Kushner to An-sky's script, including added dialogue and an entirely new scene, all of which focus on the then-unanticipated Holocaust and the imminent destruction of the shtetl way of life. Finally, this chapter examines the ritual elements that Kushner includes in his adaptation, how they differ from both reality and from An-sky's representations, their dramaturgical functions, and how they relate to Kushner's conception of post-Holocaust Judaism.

Tony Kushner

Tony Kushner is a renowned American playwright, screenwriter, essayist, and author who first received critical acclaim following the debut of his two-part play *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* in 1991 and 1992. Kushner's work — both artistic and academic — is heavily political and is characterized by his distinctly left-leaning politics. Kushner's oeuvre of writing is rife with socialist ideas which he credits to a Marxian belief in both social *and* economic justice; as opposed to capitalism, which Kushner identifies as having "unleashed tremendous energy in the world and changed the world" but ultimately, in his view, does not address the question of economic justice (Taft-Kaufman 45). In this regard, Kushner aligns himself with a long history of Jewish socialist thought. Indeed, at his own admission, the importance of civil rights and a critical view of capitalism was imbued within him from an early age — specifically through his Jewish upbringing. According to Kushner:

> Our family read from Haggadahs written by a New Deal Reform rabbinate which was unafraid to draw connections between Pharaonic and modern capitalist exploitations; between the exodus of Jews from Goshen and the journey towards civil rights for African-Americans; unafraid to make of the yearning which Jews have repeated for thousands of years a democratic dream of freedom for all peoples. (Kushner, *Slavs!* 5)

Furthermore, in his writings, Kushner often — though not necessarily explicitly — argues against so-called 'armchair' activism. For him, "politics is an inseparable fact of life" (Taft-Kaufman 44) and as such "as citizens of a democracy, when we are not agents, when we're not people who make history as well as people who are made by history, something's wrong inside of us" (51). This notion also derives from Kushner's Jewish upbringing. The importance of political progress, activism, and solidarity characterize the modern American Rabbinical Judaism

in which Kushner was raised and certainly also characterize much of the socialist rhetoric and ideology which Kushner favours. In Kushner's own words: "there's [a] Jewish tradition that is incredibly important to me… If one person is being treated unjustly, there is no justice anywhere" (52). Similarly, Kushner's questioning and criticisms of Judaism and of the State of Israel, while on the surface may seem antithetical to his Jewish identity, in actuality through doing so he in effect publicly reaffirm his Jewishness as he engages in the long held Jewish tradition of "complexity and dissent" (52).

Though he is perhaps most well-known for his original plays, Kushner is no stranger to adaptations. In addition to *The Dybbuk*, his list of adaptations spans a wide historical range and includes Pierre Corneille's *L'Illusion comique*, Goethe's *Stella: A Play for Lovers*, Heinrich von Kleist's *Die Heilige Cäcilie*, the Brothers Grimm's *The Two Journeymen*, Brecht's *The Good Person of Setzuan*, and Ariel Dorfman's novel *Widows*, which he co-adapted for the theatre with Dorfman. Speculating on what draws Kushner specifically to plays of the past, so much so that he would adapt them for a contemporary audience, James Fisher suggests that this attraction "undoubtedly stems, in part, from an appropriation of the thematic sweep and emotional scope they offer, rather like Kushner's own plays" (Fisher, *The Theater of Tony Kushner* 111). Fisher seems to indicate that Kushner sees, to at least a certain degree, a bit of his own artistry and ideas reflected in these works. It is this reflection which provides the foundation on which he builds his adaptations; imbuing them with his trademark poetry and politics or enriching the poetry and politics which were already there. Importantly, "Kushner contemporizes these works by emphasizing their aspects pertinent to modern audiences and, in most cases, he succeeds in making them his own while honoring their individual qualities" (111).

Adapting *The Dybbuk*

It is not difficult, then, to see how Kushner would initially be drawn to An-sky's *The Dybbuk* and to creating his own adaptation — which he retitles as *A Dybbuk: Or Between Two Worlds*. Furthermore, according to Fisher, adapting *The Dybbuk* allowed Kushner "to grapple with his own questions of religious faith and to… incorporate issues of the dawning of a technologically based, capitalistic world in conflict with the Old World Judaic traditions and the simple, pious ways of a small rural community trying to survive in the face of breathtaking material and social changes" (140). The questioning and ultimate understanding of one's faith and personal identity — be it Jewish, Queer, or otherwise — in direct response to the threat of modernity, capitalism, and technology is a theme in much of Kushner's writing. Speaking specifically about how contemplating the loss of the 'Old World' shtetl life inspired him to adapt *The Dybbuk*, Kushner explains:

> The play drew me, because it's not this little fairy tale. It's actually more complicated than that. I think very much about a very insular, premodern shtetl world, but one that's already being impacted upon by modernity and the arrival of the nineteenth century, and everything that would come after that. So, I was very drawn to it for that reason. (Vorlicky 224)

This certainly seems to align with the observation made by Stephen Wade in his book, *Jewish American Literature Since 1945: an Introduction* (1999), that "the protagonists [who reflect the playwrights] of so much Jewish-American drama have been individuals with feelings of insignificance and helplessness in an amoral world. The receding past of Jewish experience is their only way into self-revision and a clear look into their being" (Wade 96).

Additionally, when considering Kushner's decision to adapt *The Dybbuk*, one cannot ignore the parallels between his life and that of An-sky: Firstly, in addition to the play's pre-existing fantastical elements which Kushner himself is so fond of and so often writes, he was "certainly drawn to [*The Dybbuk*'s] exploration of religious history, myth, and mysticism" (Fisher, *The Theatre of Tony Kushner* 140) as well — which An-sky had originally included because they too had fascinated him. Secondly, Kushner and An-sky share a similar position and view on Judaism. According to Fisher, Kushner and An-sky share an "insider-outsider attitude" (145) about their faith, as they both admire "its mystical beauty, its moral imperatives and questions, and its otherworldliness, while also finding themselves at a distance from its rigidities and more primitive aspects" (145). In Kushner's own words, he describes how "the more [he] read about [An-sky] the more [he] felt that [they] had very similar backgrounds. [An-sky] was somebody… who went toward Judaism, but who was always inhibited in his thinking about Judaism by his political convictions" (Vorlicky 224). Speaking specifically on his own relationship to Judaism, Kushner described himself as "Hebrew-and-Yiddish-illiterate, [he] barely know[s] how to pray. Riddled with ambivalence... [he] now approach[s] Judaism as Jews once approached the splendid strangeness of *Goyishe Velt*" — or the Gentile world (Kushner, qtd in Fisher, *The Theatre of Tony Kushner* 145). In comparing these two quotes against one another it becomes very much clear how Kushner could see himself reflected in An-sky and in *The Dybbuk*. Kushner's religious skepticism and his politics are deeply entwined; much in the way that An-sky's own relationship to Judaism shaped his political leanings throughout his life. Kushner places strong emphasis on the importance of spirituality but also does not shy away from questioning and doubting his faith, going so far as to describe himself as an "agnostic Jew" (Fisher, *The Theatre of Tony Kushner* 145), embracing the kind of paradoxical 'between-ness' in

which An-sky lived and wrote about. As such, Kushner finds a kind of kindred spirit in An-sky, as he "senses that An-sky 'went toward Judaism by his political convictions,' and that his 'sense of himself as a political revolutionary was very much at odds with this sort of emotional tie that he had with Judaism" (145).

To create his adaptation, Kushner worked from a literal English translation of An-sky's Yiddish version of the text created by Joachim Neugroschel. The final version of Kushner's *A Dybbuk* was produced at the Public Theater in New York in 1997 and was directed by Brian Kulick. This production followed on the heels of two earlier versions of the adaptation, one of which was produced by the Hartford Stage Company in Hartford, Connecticut in 1995 and directed by Mark Lamos. Writing for The New York Times, Ben Brantley describes the original 1995 production as "an illuminating adaptation" which can "indeed be the stuff of supremely affecting drama" and praised the script for its "pulsing core that humanizes both the play's obvious sensationalism and its drier academic elements" (Brantley C9). However, he also points out that the Hartford production "was by no means perfect" and that "there were discernible pockets of uncertainty in the performances, and the climactic scenes of exorcism seemed oddly slack" (C9). Brantley also points out the seemingly intentional references this production made to the famous Habima Theatre production directed by Evgeny Vakhtangov:[19] He describes the set as "a study in expressionist angles and somber colours, suggesting the compositional field of Chagall recast in stark shadows" (C9). Finally, like other critics of other productions of Kushner's adaptation, Brantley identifies Kushner's distinct infusion of sexuality and erotism into the script, describing the play as "persistently and tellingly physical" (C9). Notably, each of the examples that Brantley provides to illustrate this erotic quality — namely, Channon's ritual

[19] See previous chapter.

ablutions and Leah's kissing of the Torah scrolls — are instances of the performance of Jewish ritual. The relationship between sensuality and rituals in *A Dybbuk* is discussed later in this chapter.

The 1997 production in New York, however, was not as well received as the first production in 1995. Writing for Variety, Charles Isherwood notes that while *The Dybbuk* "is a play almost perfectly suited to Tony Kushner's tastes and talents" which "has intriguing correspondences with Kushner's own metaphysical epic *Angels in America*," (Isherwood 72) he critiques this particular production, noting that this "staging of Kushner's text lack[ed] the cohesive mood that's necessary to draw us into its fantastic world, where spirit and flesh commingle and clash across the blurred divide of death" (72). Isherwood concludes that this production "impress[ed] on an intellectual level without engaging the emotions" (72). Writing on the same production for Back Stage, Robert Simonson is more critical of both Kushner and Kulick, finding particular issue with the ending of the play in which "Kulick brings on a locomotive set piece (designed by Mark Wendland), meant to telegraph the coming century… and Kushner tacks on an atrocious epitaphic poem imparting the horrors and Holocaust of the coming years" (Simonson 44). For Simonson, the inclusion of these elements "[bespoke] an underlying lack of understanding and regard for this story of ardent belief and archaic ritual and the people who populate it" (44). Notably, in his review Simonson seems to understand a 'successful' adaptation as one which remains close to its source text: he is certain to point out that both Kulick and Kushner "are faithful to the spirit of the piece" and that if one were to "ignore [the] hubristic touches [at the end]… something of the essence of An-sky's monumental fable may reach you" (44).

However, it is important to note that, despite what Simonson suggests, an adaptation need not necessarily be a direct recreation in order to be considered a 'good' adaptation — or indeed an adaptation at all. As Jozefina Komporaly states in her book *Radical Revival as Adaptation: Theatre, Politics, Society* (2017) "adaptations of predecessor material may choose to remain loyal to structure, characters, location and politics; however… what matters is reappropriating the precursor for the needs of the present through the latter's own aesthetic means and establishing an intertextual continuum with the adapted work" (Komporaly 4). In other words, the goal of an adaptation is not necessarily total fidelity. This notion is reiterated and neatly summarized by Catherine Rees in her book *Adaptation and Nation: Theatrical Contexts for Contemporary English and Irish Drama* (2017):

> In order for something to be considered a true adaptation, it must be more than an intertextual reference, it must be a sustained and conscious engagement over the entirety of the new work. This is not a question of fidelity, as adaptations can diverge from their source text in numerous ways, shifting time period and national context, as we have seen, but the intention should always be a continuous engagement with the source material. (Rees 149)

A Dybbuk: Or Between the Old and the New World

While Kushner follows the general structure of An-sky's text, he "substantially restructures [the play] and makes use of the cinematic, episodic style demonstrated in his [other] major plays" (Fisher, "Between Two Worlds" 27). The largest and most immediately obvious changes made by Kushner involve breaking up the first three acts of An-sky's four act play into two scenes each. Kushner adds a prologue scene of sorts to each of the first three acts, leaving the second scene in each act to carry the bulk of the narrative. The first two prologue scenes are

created primarily by repurposing other sections of An-sky's text. For instance, An-sky's version of the play begins with the lines "Why, from highest height, / To deepest depth below, / Has the soul fallen? / Within itself, the Fall Contains the Resurrection" (An-sky 25). In An-sky's script these lines are sung in complete darkness before the set for the first act, the interior of the Brinnitz synagogue, is revealed. Kushner's version, on the other hand, adds a visual element to this chanting; the lines are sung instead as Channon bathes in the *mikvah*, or ritual bath — something An-sky refers to through dialogue but does not actually depict. Additionally, Kushner imbues his version of the play with his trademark tendency towards poetry and song. Thus, in Kushner's version the lines are rendered as "Why did the soul, / Oh tell me this, / Tumble from Heaven / To the Great Abyss? / The most profound descents contain / Ascensions to the heights again" (Kushner, *A Dybbuk* 1). Kushner's second prologue scene — act two, scene one — also involves bathing in the *mikvah*, although this time it is Leah who ritually washes herself. In this scene, Fradde sings to Leah. In this case, Fradde's song is a repurposing of a story that the Messenger tells a group of Hasids at the beginning of Act Three in An-sky's version. The story tells of how all living beings are connected together through "threads of fire" and that "He of Holy Wisdom draws all the threads together. From the fiery threads is woven time, and thus new days are made… And so the world continues, until the world is gone" (39). This conversion of monologue into song is again indicative of Kushner's tendency towards the poetic.

The final added scene, however, is completely of Kushner's own creation — and thus points most directly to Kushner's own ideologies and the ultimate message he seeks to convey. This scene, Act Three Scene One, is dense with dramatic irony. In the scene the Messenger, along with several other Jews, arrives by train to the city of Miropol. As they disembark, the Jewish passengers discuss the wonders of the modern age — commenting on the speed of the

train, their luck at being allowed to ride it despite being Jewish, and on the new electric light, with one passenger going so far as to say "When *Moshiach* [(Messiah)] comes He will arrive by train, with a first class ticket" (63; italics added). Shortly thereafter another passenger comments: "Soon we won't need candles anymore. In a world without candles, there will be no more dybbuks… I hate the smell of candle smoke. Give me electric light. In a world of electric light, even Jews can ride the trains." (63–64). Kushner's allusions here to the mass transportation of Jews to concentration and extermination camps during the Holocaust, and the fates which they would face there, are impossible to miss. The optimism exhibited by the Jewish passengers of the train — though notably not by the Messenger, who seems to have knowledge beyond his time — is juxtaposed against our knowledge of history. We know that the utopian picture of the modern age ushering in the complete emancipation and assimilation of Jews into Russian society, of which these passengers fantasize, is exactly that: nothing but a utopian fantasy. Here Kushner is in most direct dialogue with An-sky, who himself dreamed of a secular Jewish culture, based on shtetl folklore, that was fully integrated into Russian society. Indeed, An-sky believed the key to combatting the prevalent antisemitism of his time was to favourably and publicly showcase Jewish folklore, life, and cultural customs.

Upon examining Kushner's text, one may conclude that Kushner is in fact criticizing An-sky and his ideologies. Through his allusions to the terrible and tragic events of the Holocaust, it appears as though he is reaching backwards through time to warn An-sky that he was wrong, that his efforts are in vain, and that the folklore and culture on which An-sky built his dreams are about to be near completely destroyed by the coming of the modern age and the violence it brings; that "in a world without candles, there will be no more dybbuks" (63). In other words: In a world post-Holocaust, there can be no Jewish culture. Ultimately however, this is *not* what this

scene — and indeed the whole of the play — is about. Instead, this scene serves as both an, admittedly chilling, acknowledgement of the historical realities which the Jews of Eastern Europe would face, and to present the counterpoint in the post-Holocaust Jewish theological and cultural struggle against which it appears that Kushner ultimately argues. Importantly, while Kushner's version of the play does feature these grim prophesies which his contemporary audiences, armed with the knowledge of history, know will come true, Kushner does not allow the characters to become defeated by them. Instead, he allows his characters to dwell in the liminal space 'between worlds' provided by the tension between skepticism and faith — between justice and forgiveness.

We can see this tension between religious doubt and belief in the necessity of the spiritual as well as the tension between forgiveness and accountability exemplified through the latter half of the play, specifically in the character of Rabbi Azriel. In An-sky's version of the play, Rabbi Azriel is a great and powerful *Tzaddik*, who momentarily has doubts about his worthiness, describing himself as "a blind shepherd" herding blind sheep (An-sky 102). However, he quickly regains his self-confidence and is ultimately able to confidently conduct not only a trial between Sender and the deceased Nissin, but also the exorcism of the Dybbuk from Leah. As rendered by An-sky, Rabbi Azriel's crises of faith is not in God himself, but in Rabbi Azriel's own lack of strength and ability. In Kushner's adaptation, this is not the case; Rabbi Azriel is significantly more troubled. Struck with the enormity of the tasks asked of him — to summon a dead man to court and to exorcise a dybbuk — Rabbi Azriel admits to his beadle Mikhl his feelings of inadequacy, just has he does in An-sky's text, however this time he additionally discloses feelings of being strongly disconnected from God, saying:

> I am very weary, and I'm very weak, and older than my days, I have been Rebbe for more than forty years and there are many days when the almighty hides from me, and I pray to a void, to a fear. I want to seek after my elusive God in silence and contemplation, but there are always petitioners at my door, even on the bad days when I am abandoned and empty. Many generations have passed since the Temple fell, and I am as many miles from the source of Life, and I wither and pale… (Kushner, *A Dybbuk* 85)

Shortly after this, in a personal prayer directed to his deceased grandfather, Rabbi Azriel is even more candid about his crisis of faith, saying:

> In Lublin, in Zlotchov, pogroms. The people talk idly of traveling and scientific marvels and don't pray. I'm older than my years, I don't sleep at night. Under my robe, my knees knock together in fear sometimes. *(Softly)* And sometimes, Grandfather, I do not entirely trust God. (86)

Thus, it appears Rabbi Azriel is meant to embody the crisis of faith undergone by many Jews post-Holocaust, for whom the statement "I do not entirely trust God" (86) is all too familiar. What is most important about Rabbi Azriel, however, is not his doubt, but rather what he chooses to do and to believe *despite* his doubt. It is Rabbi Azriel's words and actions in act four, the climax and conclusion of the play, through which Kushner ultimately offers a partial solution to the question of God's accountability in regard to the Holocaust.

Despite his personal doubts and fears, Rabbi Azriel proceeds with the trial and with the exorcism. It is at the very conclusion of the exorcism when Rabbi Azriel's scribe — who had been recording the whole ordeal — turns the page in his book to discover a message which has seemingly written itself. The scribe reads aloud the message to Rabbi Azriel:

> Rabbi, only turn the page:

the wonders of the coming age
will dwarf your shtetl magic so—
dybbuks, golems, all you know,
your writings and the words you say,
like oven ashes, swept away.
At some not-very-distant date
the martyred dead accumulate;
books of history will contain
mountain-piles of the slain. (Kushner 102-103)

Here Kushner's repeated allusions to the threat of modernity and to the Holocaust are rendered most clearly — with the metaphor of the shtetl folklore, culture, and tradition as oven ashes in particular conjuring up specific images of Nazi atrocities. Notably, this prophesy is an addition to the play by Kushner. While its striking metaphors are surely designed to evoke an immediate emotional response from his audience, the primary dramaturgical function of this poem is to create a moment of crisis, of decision for Rabbi Azriel, who has suddenly been confronted with the fact that perhaps he is right not to trust God. Through this moment Kushner most directly asks the question: How do we continue to practice Judaism with the knowledge that God let the Holocaust happen. Kushner finally provides his answer to this burning question at the heart of his adaptation through Rabbi Azriel's response: After a moment of consideration, Rabbi Azriel says to the Messenger, thereby acknowledging his other-worldliness, and says "what must be will be" (103). Then, a short time later, after Channon and Leah have been reunited, Kushner provides a more direct answer, as Rabbi Azriel speaks once again to the Messenger saying:

> It doesn't matter. Tell Him that. The more cause He gives to doubt Him. Tell Him that. The deeper delves faith. Though His love become only abrasion, derision, excoriation, tell Him, I cling. We cling. He made us, He can never shake us off. We will always find Him out. Promise Him that. We will always find Him, no matter how few there are, tell Him we will find Him. To deliver our complaint. (107)

The message of this speech appears then to be that the Jewish people should not and cannot give up on God and on Judaism, despite the events of the Holocaust, and despite their own individual doubts, but must instead hold strong to their religion, their traditions, their culture, and their folklore so that they may hold God accountable for the Holocaust and demand an answer from God. Here Kushner has Rabbi Azriel embody Deuteronomy's commandment that "Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive" (*Etz Hayim*, Deuteronomy 16:20). As the Dybbuk is exorcised and begins to die once again, he demands that Mourner's Kaddish — a prayer for honouring and remembering the dead — be chanted for him by those who killed him. Through Rabbi Azriel, Kushner positions all the Jews in the world as dybbuks, demanding God chant the Mourner's Kaddish for them; and thus, not only hold God accountable, but also — importantly — offer God forgiveness. As Fisher rightly identifies, in Kushner's *A Dybbuk* "sinning can and must be forgiven… and faith in a brighter future is essential, despite the harrowing spectres of fear and doubt" (Fisher, "Between Two Worlds" 29). This attitude is what Rabbi Azriel exemplifies in the final moments of the play, and what Kushner appears to argue his audience(s) should do as well.

According to Ranen Omer-Sherman, "for Kushner, it seems clear that the Jew's role as morally and spiritually sensitive outsider and victim has largely been supplanted by other

vulnerable identities, but that centuries of oppression place a special sense of obligation on Jews in this regard" (Omer-Sherman 81). In Kushner's own words:

> The only thing that we can actively do to speak to the Holocaust now is to make sure no other holocaust happens, and if we do make sure that no holocaust happens — of course they're happening all the time — but if we struggle against that, every time we're successful, in some way I believe the dead are comforted. (Kushner, qtd in Omer-Sherman 81)

In light of this position, Kushner's *A Dybbuk* becomes a kind of extended Mourner's Kaddish for not only the six million Jews who were victims of the Holocaust and whom the memories of which possess the global Jewish population like a collective dybbuk, but of all victims of all types of genocides.

Jewish Rituals in *A Dybbuk*

It is worth noting that Kushner himself embodies this notion through the very act of creating his adaptation of *The Dybbuk*. In creating *A Dybbuk* Kushner "sets his face against the proposition that after Auschwitz poetry is no longer possible" despite the knowledge "that 'even after the Holocaust the monsters are still among us'" (Bigsby 120). In doing so, Kushner employs the same strategy An-sky used 70 years prior: the adaption and prominent inclusion of Jewish religious rituals. Notably, in his treatment of Jewish rituals, Kushner does not simply reproduce the rituals and their treatments found in An-sky's original script, but rather he continues to introduce new components in his adaptation and make changes to An-sky's existing components. Kushner's *A Dybbuk* bears a distinctly heavier presence of Jewish rituals — and indeed Jewish religious practice at large — than An-sky's *The Dybbuk*; most notably in Kushner's inclusion of the actual text of Jewish prayers, in both Hebrew and English translation.

As previously noted, in An-sky's version of the play, all instances of actual prayer beyond the adjurations made by Rabbi Azriel during the exorcism — which are certainly not representative of more quotidian Jewish religious life — are relegated to the off-stage space, whereas Kushner includes prayer directly on the stage and in full view of his audience. In An-sky's text the prayers are implied more than they are explicitly showcased. This difference in approach to the inclusion and treatment of prayers within the play is indicative of the difference in each version of the text's ideological purpose or goal. An-sky very explicitly sought to highlight Jewish culture, tradition, and folklore in order to create a new secular Jewish identity centred around these elements rather than around a shared religion. As such, his text seeks to capture and display much of the shtetl culture which he so obsessively studied, rather than the specific religious content from which these cultural elements emerged; notably, in his stage directions An-sky tends to refer to the Hasidic melodies which carry the words of the prayers, but not to the specific text of the prayers themselves.

Conversely, Kushner increases the representation of Jewish religious content in the play through the increased presence of rituals as well as through the inclusion of both the Hebrew text and English translation of key prayers —the added portrayal of bathing in the *mikvah* is an example of the former while the aforementioned Mourner's Kaddish is an example of the latter. Notably, the scribe's prayers during Leah's exorcism represents both approaches simultaneously, as both the scribe and his prayers are new additions to the text created by Kushner. Thus, one might conclude that for Kushner these specific religious doings contain additional interest or meaning for both himself and his audience — especially within the context of post-Holocaust Jewish theology. At his own admission, Kushner believes that "you [should not] write what you are absolutely certain of" nor should you underestimate the intelligence of your audience

(Kushner, Taft-Kaufman 47). Instead, Kushner suggests that one should focus on what one is questioning:

> What I have to assume is everybody from the get-go understands what I understand… What else can we talk about? What else is on our minds? … You want to start out saying, "Like you, I have a lot of questions and a lot of uncertainties,"… Faith is a very complicated issue. Belief is a very complicated issue. Identity is. So, it's a great place to start, with your own confusion. (Kushner, qtd in Taft-Kaufman 47)

Bearing this idea in mind, one can conclude that for Kushner, it is these issues of faith, spirituality, and of religious rituals and doings which he brings so much so to the forefront of his play that are crucial questions for both him and his audience. In this regard, he firmly positions his play amongst the canon of American Jewish theatre and literature which Wade describes as consisting of "pre-occupations with the Holocaust — the era and the aftermath; the description of duality in third-generation urban Jews in a material world; and a specific mediation of a new secular Jewish attitude to identity and to modernity" (Wade 94).

One such ritual which Kushner chooses to highlight is the ritual of bathing in the *mikvah*. Beyond its truncating and restructuring dramaturgical function mentioned above, Kushner's inclusion of the ritual of bathing in the *mikvah* is additionally significant. Firstly, the two scenes of ritual bathing typify the deep sense of sensuality and eroticism which Kushner imbues not only within this adaptation, but within his larger body of work as a whole. According to Fisher,

> It is of central significance that Kushner identifies himself as a gay dramatist. In attempting to deal with his conflicted feelings about his Jewishness, Kushner finds "a deep ambivalence, because there is a fantastically powerful homophobic tradition within

> Judaism." This undercurrent supplies the play with considerable sensuality. (Fisher, "Between Two Worlds" 29)

By means of example, Fisher rightly suggests the "orgiastic dance in the synagogue," (29) Channon's deeply passionate recital of the *Song of Songs* and, most obviously, the penetration of Leah's body by the dybbuk "in ways that are simultaneously both spiritual and sexual" (29). However, each of these examples and the sensuality they contain can also be found in An-sky's text as representative of the existing sense of sensuality predicated on the longing for an as of yet unfulfilled connection or oneness with God which underscores so much of Kabbalistic thought. However, Kushner's versions of these moments certainly embrace their eroticism more completely.

Furthermore, given their nature as additions to the text, the scenes involving bathing in the *mikvah* most directly point to the kind of unique sensuality described earlier by Fisher that Kushner brings to his adaptation. While "first Channon and then Leah are seen supposedly purifying themselves as is required by their religion… they are [in truth] bathing themselves in the sensuality of unformed and unutterable longings" (Fink 516). These longings represent the longings of the Kabbalists for connection with God, but they also take on the function of representing the types of unformed and unutterable longings created by the homophobic tradition within Judaism of which Fisher speaks and which Kushner is intimately acquainted. Secondly, the inclusion of the *mikvah* scenes bears an additional dramaturgical function. By adding these scenes to the play, Kushner makes even more clear, through the use of visual metaphor, the themes of purity and impurity, of holiness and unholiness and the subjectivity of those designations found within the play. Even to those who are unfamiliar with the specific practice of

bathing in a *mikvah*, the image of bathing is sure to semiotically communicate notions of cleansing and purification.

Kushner does not only rely on visual metaphors to increase the presence of religious doings within his adaptation. As mentioned above, he makes distinct use of spoken/sung prayers in both Hebrew and English to additionally achieve this effect — something An-sky shied away from. Take for instance the difference in the portrayal of the Mourner's Kaddish at the conclusion of the exorcism. As examined above, the Mourner's Kaddish, which is typically spoken collectively, serves as an affirmation of both Jewish faith and as a reminder that the mourner(s) is (are) not alone in their grief. In An-sky's version of the play, as the dybbuk is being expelled from Leah, he asks that they say the Mourner's Kaddish for him, as he has no one left living to remember him, and at Rabbi Azriel's prompting Sender begins the kaddish, saying: "*Yisgadal—ve yiskadesh—shmeh raboh*![20]" (An-sky 138; italics added). However, Sender never finishes the full prayer. Contrastingly in Kushner's version much more of the prayer is ultimately recited, beginning in Hebrew before transitioning to English:

> *Yisgadal ve-yiskadash shmey rabo b'olma di b'ra chirusey*… magnified and Sanctified be His Great Name throughout the World that He has created according to his Will. May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of all the House of Israel, soon, with speed. And say Amen. (Kushner, *A Dybbuk* 101; italics added)

While neither playwright includes the full text of the prayer the fact that Kushner felt the need to expand on its inclusion and that his expanded version comes to much more of a conclusion than An-sky's is certainly significant. In this case, it appears that Kushner felt it dramaturgically

[20] "Magnified and sanctified be His mighty Name!" (This translation is included as a footnote in the Alsberg and Katzin translation).

important that the Dybbuk receive a sense of real closure in this moment. By allowing Sender to conclude his prayer, the Dybbuk begins his first steps towards peace, and begins to move from the liminal space between worlds into occupying a final resting place — a process which is only concluded with Leah's willing death, uniting their souls once again and allowing the Dybbuk to finally come to rest. Sender's commitment to concluding the Mourner's Kaddish leaves the Dybbuk and Leah's fates far less ambiguous. As such, Kushner's audience may be more confident that Sender would continue to recite the kaddish yearly and continue to reaffirm the Dybbuk's place amongst the dead. Whereas in An-sky's version, Sender's commitment to repentance, and thus the peace that the Dybbuk achieves, is left more ambiguous at best and dubious at worst.

The treatment of Mourner's Kaddish by Kushner is only one example of a larger trend exhibited by him towards the expansion of the presence of prayer within the play. By increasing the presence of prayer in the text, Kushner further contributes to the overall feeling of magic and other-worldly divine power that An-sky created with the initial inclusion of Jewish rituals and folklore. The fear — either of God or of the unknown — that these rituals impart onto the text in the scenes in which they are included greatly enhances the play's potential for emotional affectation. This is made even more effective when the rituals are placed within the most climactic moments of the play — such as Channon's death, Leah's possession, the exorcism, and so on. This effect is especially well produced and exemplified during the trial between Sender and Nissin. Throughout the scene, as the spirit of Nissin appears to grow more agitated, the scribe chants an increasingly frantic and fearful prayer, the effect of which is to make the audience feel as though Nissin is just barely being kept from escaping his bounds and enacting a harmful revenge on those present.

Furthermore, Kushner's general inclusion of prayers in both Hebrew and English, as opposed to An-sky's Hebrew only, is significant in that it provides insight into the degree to which both playwrights valued, in both a dramaturgical and ideological sense, the semantic content of the prayers included. While both men were writing for largely non-knowledgeable audiences — that is to say audiences who were not Jewish, did not speak Hebrew or Yiddish, or were not knowledgeable about Jewish religion or culture — Kushner evidently places much greater importance on his audience(s) understanding the semantic content of the prayers, not just the semiotic content, since he at least partially translates them into English: the majority language of his primarily North American audiences. For An-sky, the emotionally affecting functions described above were enough, and the specific semantic content being conveyed was not entirely necessary. This difference of approach again points to the playwrights' fundamentally differing ideas as to the basis of global Jewish identity and culture.

This is not to say, however, that Kushner always prioritizes the semantic content of the prayers he includes. For example, the prayers chanted by the scribe during the trial scene are rendered only in Hebrew. Thus, one can make a distinction in Kushner's text between prayers which have been included for certain dramaturgical effects and those that have been included to convey certain semantic — or indeed ideological — content. The intended function of each instance of prayer is made even more clear when one examines the semantic content of the Hebrew only prayers. In actuality, the prayer chanted by the scribe does not exist in Jewish liturgy. Instead, this 'prayer' appears to be a mostly random combination of fragments and phrases of other prayers. When combined and chanted with traditional prayer melodies the effect on stage is that of praying, though for any audience member who speaks Hebrew fluently, or is familiar with the prayers Kushner amalgamates, the emotional affection Kushner seeks to create

in this scene would in fact be diminished by the strange construction of this prayer of non-sequiturs. In this instance, where the semiotic information outweighs the semantic, An-sky and Kushner are united in their approach to staging prayer.

The two playwrights are similarly united in their approach to the exorcism. In his adaptation, Kushner largely does not stray from An-sky's depiction of the exorcism of the dybbuk. While he certainly imbues the text with his trademark poetic language, the portrayal of the actual ritual itself is nearly identical. In both texts it begins with the calling in of fourteen men, half of which carry *shofars* and half of which hold a black candle. This is then followed by adjurations made to the higher spirits to force the dybbuk to depart Leah's body, then the middle spirits, and then to God Himself; with each adjuration being punctuated by the blowing of the *shofar*. Finally, when the dybbuk concedes defeat, Rabbi Azriel calls on God once again; this time to implore God to forgive the dybbuk and to reverse his excommunication from the people Israel. Rather than making significant changes to the exorcism, which is surely the climax of the play, Kushner chooses instead to leave his mark on the moments immediately following the exorcism. For Kushner, it is the denouement in which he locates some of his largest changes — including the previously discussed premonition of the Holocaust and Rabbi Azriel's ultimate message for God — and indeed his strongest ideological argument towards the nature of post-Holocaust Judaism.

It is additionally important to note that, unlike An-sky, Kushner is engaging in a kind of double adaptation. He is engaging in what Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation* calls a showing ← → showing adaptation by adapting An-sky's text, but he is also engaging in the same kind of adaptive practices as An-sky in that he is also adapting rituals directly from real life, and thus also engages in a kind of interacting/showing ← → showing adaptive practice. For Kushner, the

process of adapting An-sky's play is relatively simple, as he is adapting a work which already exists in the same performance medium in which his new work is performed — that is: he is adapting a play into another play. Additionally, Kushner benefits from a shared inclusion of the fantastical in their plays with An-sky, and thus he does not need to choose between sacrificing realism for "self-reflexivity" or "naturalizing" the artifice (Hutcheon 46). As such, the processes of creation and the effects and affects which the performance medium —in this case live theatre — engenders remain the same for both An-sky and Kushner. Kushner must, however, engage with questions of originality and fidelity. In creating his adaptation, he had to determine what degree of fidelity to the 'original' was necessary for this adaptation to remain an adaptation and not a new work entirely. As mentioned above, while scholars such as Komporaly and Rees continue to debate the importance of fidelity, its scope, and whether any degree of fidelity is necessary at all for an adaptation to be an adaptation, in this adaptation, Kushner seems to take a 'reasonable' middle road. Neither abandoning An-sky's text, nor taking it as unalterable gospel. In this sense, he aligns himself with Shannon Brownlee who writes that "the prejudice that a text ought to be faithful to its progenitor has been unpopular with adaptation theorists for decades. Nonetheless… Casie Hermansson makes a compelling case for its ongoing utility as one tool among many… Looking only to unfaithful adaptations for adventurous or interesting ideas can be limiting, especially in discussions of identity" (Brownlee 157).

The process of adapting the additional rituals which Kushner includes in his version of the play is, however, more complicated. This is because, as discussed in Chapter One, a participant who is performing a religious ritual is often positioned as both audience and practitioner. In other words: in their 'real world' religious contexts, religious rituals are both shown and interacted with simultaneously. Thus, to adapt a religious ritual to the stage — or to

any new artistic context for that matter — is to transform a source with a dual mode of engagement into an adaptation with a single mode of engagement. In this sense, during the adaptation process these rituals are subjected to the same showing ← → showing processes as described above, but also take on the additional processes and effects of the interacting ← → showing model. Unfortunately, while Hutcheon does describe the adaptive practice of moving from telling or showing → interacting, Hutcheon does not describe the reverse process, which is what both Kushner and An-sky have done. However, her showing → interacting model can still be of use in determining the process and effects of its inverse. Hutcheon stresses that in an interacting mode, "as with the various forms of hypermedia, it is process, not final or finished product, that is important" (50). It is within the process of 'doing' that affect is generated in the participant through the participant's responses to various tensions and stimuli — such as the positive tension which arises when the participant is now responsible for the success of the 'protagonist's' actions and no longer has the security of success which a play, film, or novel would contain. Similarly, the participant's visceral response to the immersive experience of the adapted heterocosm, which may or may not be drastically different from their own day to day 'real world,' allows for a "more intense form of 'vicarious kinesthesia'" than a showing mode might generate. Thus, if these are the effects which can be attributed to texts or works which have been adapted to the interacting mode — or indeed can be ascribed to those works which are in the interacting mode in their original form — it is reasonable to assume that in the process of adapting an interactive work into a showing medium these unique characteristics become lost or replaced by those of the showing mode. For example, the actor who recites the Mourner's Kaddish on stage does not undergo the same spiritual catharsis expected of the mourner who chants the prayer at their parent's funeral or on the yearly anniversary of their death, but does

create, through their performance, an emotional affect within their audience for theatrical purposes. However, it is not quite so simple. Since a ritual performance consists of both the interaction mode and the showing mode in its original form, while the prayers and rituals may, upon their adaptation to the showing mode, lose their effects on the participant which they engender in the 'real world' they can however retain their affective and transformative effects on their observers.[21] To return to the previous example, is more accurate to say that the actor *retains* the emotional affection in their performance which additionally characterizes the recitation of the prayer in its original context, while simultaneously taking on the *additional* theatrical context.

Conclusion

Tony Kushner's adaptation *A Dybbuk* is rich with poetry, sensuality, and a sense of the looming threats of modernity and the Holocaust, as well as the impacts they would both have upon global Jewish culture and religion. Whether intentional by An-sky or otherwise, *The Dybbuk* has always been a play about the tension and interplay between human agency and divine will; however, in writing *The Dybbuk* An-sky could not have anticipated how the events of the Holocaust would complicate this relationship. As such, Kushner's adaptation, which is so heavily influenced by post-Holocaust theological debate, brings a new dimension to the battle for control that plays out in the plot of the play. In Kushner's version, neither human agency nor divine agency seems to win out over the other. For instance, Rabbi Azriel successfully exorcises the dybbuk from Leah, but his actions are ultimately in vain as the two are reunited once more. Similarly, God's message is delivered through the Messenger to Rabbi Azriel, but he in turn sends a message back. In each case, both humans and God are seen to be able to enact their will. Or in other words, there is perhaps power and agency available to both humans and to God. This

[21] For more on transformation and on the role of the observer, see chapter one.

then complicates the question ‘how could God have allowed the Holocaust to happen?’ for indeed, if human agency and divine agency are placed on near equal footing, one may just as easily ask ‘how could *we* have allowed the Holocaust to happen?’ To quote John Fischer: “we still await God’s explanation of why even one innocent child had to perish in Auschwitz. What is often forgotten, however, is that God may be asking man the identical question and awaiting his response” (Fischer 320).

Chapter Four: Anton Piatigorsky, Soulpepper, and *The Dybbuk* in Contemporary Canada

Written for Soulpepper Theatre, Anton Piatigorsky's adaptation of *The Dybbuk*, titled *The Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds*, is the most recent production examined by this thesis. Produced in 2015, this adaptation debuted almost twenty years after Kushner's version, seventy years after the events of the Holocaust, and nearly one hundred years after An-sky's original version of the play. Notably, unlike his predecessors, in his version of *The Dybbuk* Piatigorsky seems less so interested in commenting on the *past* than he is in holding a mirror up to the *present*. While he certainly engages with the relationship between past and present, Piatigorsky's focus appears to be much more so on the nature of twenty-first century North American Jews and Judaism, presenting a much more critical view than An-sky or Kushner. More specifically, Piatigorsky and director Albert Schultz seem to suggest through Soulpepper's adaptation of *The Dybbuk* that modern North American Jewry is characterized by a popular fear of losing, or indeed that it has already lost, its connection to a perceived more pious cultural past and as a result, "we are growing weaker and weaker. Our sins are growing stronger and stronger. And there are no more righteous men" (Piatigorsky 23). However, despite such a critical reflection, in producing *The Dybbuk* both Piatigorsky and Schultz actively take steps to not only combat this negative self-perception through strengthening *intra*-cultural connections within Toronto's Jewish community, but by building *cross*-cultural connections as well, and in doing so engage in a kind of artistic enactment of the Jewish ideal of *tikkun olam* or "repairing the world."

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to Piatigorsky, Schultz, and Soulpepper before analyzing the ways in which both Piatigorksy's script and Schultz's production adapt and perform An-sky's text — with specific attention towards new additions to the script or performance and the ways in which the events of the original play are reconfigured and altered to

reflect a more critical view of modern North American Jewry based on anxiety surrounding the perceived deterioration of the Jewish culture and religion. Additionally, this chapter examines how Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* engages with the intercultural theatrical ecosystem of Toronto presented by Ric Knowles in his book *Performing the Intercultural City* (2017), as well as how the production navigates producing Jewish theatre and theatrically performing Jewish rituals in Toronto specifically. Finally, this chapter concludes with an analysis of the performance of Jewish rituals in *The Dybbuk*, their accuracy, how they impact the dramaturgical construction of this adaptation, and how they function as not only an instance of the intercultural performance process which Knowles describes, but also as a *tikkun olam* practice.

Anton Piatigorsky, Albert Schultz, and Soulpepper Theatre

Anton Piatigorsky

Anton Piatigorsky is a multiple Dora Mavor Moore award winning playwright, Juno award winning librettist, fiction author, and professor of Research and Creative Writing at McMaster University. Born to a Jewish family, Piatigorsky grew up in the Washington DC area before studying religion and theatre at Brown University in Rhode Island, earning his BA in Religious Studies. He has since moved to Toronto, where he currently resides, and has received commissions and productions from The Stratford Festival and Toronto based theatres including Soulpepper Theatre, Crow's Theatre, and Factory Theatre. Piatigorsky seems to be fascinated by the combination of fact and fiction, of historical research and creative invention, and with exploring psychological ideas through the actions of his characters. For Piatigorsky, creative fiction and research-based writing are not mediums at odds with one another but are in fact complimentary. In discussing his Research and Creative Writing course at McMaster University Piatigorsky is keen to note that "fiction is too often opposed to non-fiction — people are quick to

think that it's about emotions, imaginations, and stories, and not necessarily about knowledge, facts, or information. But I really don't think that's true. I don't think any of the good works of fiction in the world are devoid of real knowledge" (Piatigosky, qtd in "Research & Creative Writing Intersect").

He also appears to be interested in Judaism; an interest which resulted in the writing of two original plays in 2001, *The Kabbalistic Psychoanalysis of Adam R. Tzaddik* and *The Offering*, as well as the subject of this chapter: his adaptation of *The Dybbuk* in 2015. In *The Kabbalistic Psychoanalysis of Adam R. Tzaddik*, a play about a young man's obsession with a sacred Jewish text, "psychic conflicts take on mythological significance" (cover copy, *Two Plays*). The play "chronicles the psychoanalysis of Adam Tzaddik as he and his doctor uncover the root of Adam`s denials and desires" (cover copy, *Two Plays*). Similarly, "drawing on the classic tales of biblical patriarchs, *The Offering* explores timeless problems of communication between fathers and sons. In a trio of episodes, the play follows four generations of a single family as it struggles towards an ambiguous triumph" (cover copy, *Two Plays*). In examining the subject matter of *The Kabbalistic Psychoanalysis of Adam R. Tzaddik* and *The Offering*, it is not hard to see how Piatigorsky's interest in Judaism influenced his artistic practice, nor how he might have been drawn to *The Dybbuk* specifically. In fact, in his artist's note in the Soulpepper production's playbill he writes: "I've always loved the profound mythological aspects of Judaism, and I've also always loved — and strived to write — plays that are baroque and dense, that encourage you to think about them for days, that won't let your mind or emotions go so easily. *The Dybbuk* brings together these two loves of mine" (Piatigorsky, "Artist Note" 1).

Piatigorsky may have additionally been drawn to *The Dybbuk* by a shared set of interests and writing approaches with An-sky — most obviously their shared valuation of a fact-based or

research-based approach to creative writing. Indeed, Piatigorsky's perspective on the relationships between fact and fiction makes him especially suited to adapting *The Dybbuk* as the 'real world' history — that is to say, the ethnographic data collected by An-sky — is absolutely vital to the fiction of *The Dybbuk*. Without its connection to reality the play would not be nearly as impactful or affecting. Furthermore, in an interview for Novella Magazine in 2017, Piatigorsky spoke about how he perceives the relationships between theatre, religion, and ritual:

> Both theatre and religion need ritual to exist. Both use ritual to impress their foundational (or sacred) myths and insights into their spectators and participants, so that there is no longer any separation between ideas and the people living with those ideas. I've long found that ritual process fascinating. Both religion and theatre are kind of like 'applied philosophy', which is my real interest. How do people use ideas to build world-views for themselves and their communities? ("A Conversation with Anton Piatigorsky")

Piatigorsky's background in Religious Studies and his perspective on both the combination of theatre and religion, as well as their individual and shared relationship to ritual, further solidifies his aptitude for *The Dybbuk*. Finally, Piatigorsky — similarly to both An-sky and Kushner — appears to be interested in examining his personal religious identity. In Piatigorsky's own words, "part of this cultural baggage about rediscovering my identity was a sense of shame — over time I realized that this could very well be a product of coming from a Jewish family in the United States, feeling like there's something to prove, that there is a bit of embarrassment about your origins" (Piatigorsky, qtd in Manning 27). While he himself does not use this term, in this quote Piatigorsky describes his Jewish upbringing as a kind of dybbuk, clinging to him as he searches for a sense of purgation or redemption — in this case through ownership of both one's abilities and one's past.

Albert Schultz and Soulpepper Theatre

Albert Schultz is an award-winning actor, director, producer, and one of the co-founders of the Toronto-based theatre company Soulpepper Theatre. Schultz was Soulpepper's artistic director from the company's inception in 1998 until 2018 when he resigned amidst allegations against him of sexual assault and harassment. Born and raised in Port Hope, Ontario, Schultz studied briefly at York University before transferring to the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, after which he joined Robin Phillips's Young Company at the Stratford Festival. Following a brief foray into television, Schultz returned to acting and directing for the stage in the late 1990s and co-founded Soulpepper Theatre along with 11 other actors with whom he had worked in the Stratford Festival's Young Company.

While Soulpepper was not the first, nor the last, Canadian theatre company founded by actors, it is, according to Canadian author and theatre critic Keith Garebian, "the most widely celebrated and successful" one (Garebian). Soulpepper was founded with the objectives to present the great classics of world theatre but from a uniquely Canadian perspective or interpretation, to train the next generation of actors and theatre artists, and to provide mentorship for youth through programming and theatre access. In its inaugural year, Soulpepper found immediate success with both critics and the general public alike with its short, two-show — Schiller's *Don Carlos* and Molière's *The Misanthrope* — season. While the company's first season was small, through a combination of governmental and corporate grants, both the size of Soulpepper's repertoire and their season has only grown since. Staying true to its founding principles, Soulpepper "presented a range of Shakespearean, European and American drama… [and gave] theatregoers opportunities to see works rarely performed in Canada" (Garebian). Following the company's move to The Young Centre for The Performing Arts in 2006,

Soulpepper added a winter season and expanded its repertoire to include more productions of classic *and* contemporary Canadian theatre. Nearly a decade later, in 2015 — the same year Soulpepper produced *The Dybbuk* — the company announced an ambitious five-year initiative to build a National Civic Theatre which Schultz described at the time as a theatre which "should create seasons that listen to the world while focusing on our national voices, including the voices of our First Nations and the myriad cultures that have collectively defined the vibrant artistic life of this country" (Schultz, qtd in Garebian). Two years later, in 2017, Soulpepper, carried out another ambitious campaign, led again by Schultz, called Soulpepper on 42nd Street, which brought 12 Soulpepper productions, united by the theme of Canada 150, to the Pershing Square Signature Centre — three off-Broadway performance centres — in New York. Following Schultz's resignation, Emma Stenning, the former chief executive of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre in England, took over as artistic director. A year later, in 2019, Soulpepper's current artistic director, Vancouver born and previously Los Angeles-based Weyni Mengesha, replaced Stenning.

The Dybbuk: A Modern Dybbuk for a Modern World

Like Kushner before him, in adapting *The Dybbuk* Piatigorsky makes many changes to the script — ranging from large changes such as scene restructuring, reordering, or the addition of an entirely new scene, to small changes like the rewording or modernizing of much of the dialogue or the occasional added line or two — all in an attempt to modernize the play for a contemporary, and in this case, Canadian audience. In his direction, Schultz also has a hand in adapting *The Dybbuk* as he interprets and edits Piatigorsky's script. It is within these changes that one can most clearly see Piatigorsky and Schultz's ideological approach or message of the play, namely that they appear to critique modern Judaism by claiming that there are no more

righteous individuals left in the world. Given Piatigorsky's fact-based approach to fiction writing and interest in psychology, this is not necessarily his personal view, but rather Piatigorsky is tapping into popular Jewish opinion and is holding a mirror up to North American Jewry in order to reflect the commonly found anxiety that the Jewish people are a disappearing people. This anxiety can be seen to be reflected in a conversation between Henekh and Channon in Act One in an added line in where Channon says:

> There is too much sin in this world. We're tainted, all of us. We are like the father who hunts for gold instead of virtue for his daughter's bridegroom… When one soul is purged of sin, another takes its place. A still more tainted soul. With sins far worse. One generation repents, another comes along that's far more sinful. *We are growing weaker and weaker. Our sins are growing stronger and stronger. And there are no more righteous men.* (Piatigorsky, *The Dybbuk* 23; emphasis added)

As such, through his adaptation of *The Dybbuk*, and in keeping with his interest in psychology and religion, Piatigorsky is attempting to, at least partially, psychologize the collective experience of North American Jews — an experience he is personally familiar with.

One of the more striking changes to An-sky's script made by Piatigorsky is the inclusion of a prologue. This prologue is set an unspecified time in the past before the events of the rest of the play — though the mention of "a stranger in the square" (1) which could be The Messenger suggests that the scene could take place the same day as the rest of Act One — and dramatizes one of the shabbat dinners at Sender's house where Channon and Leah are both in attendance. While such an occurrence is mentioned in An-sky's version, it is not seen played out on the stage like how it is in Piatigorsky's version. This prologue serves three purposes. Firstly, it introduces the audience to Channon and Leah's star-crossed and unspoken mutual longing for one another.

Secondly, it — along with the other scenes in the first half of Act One — serves to introduce the audience to the cultural and religious setting of the play, as well as set its mystical and mysterious tone. Thirdly, and finally, this is the scene which first introduces the thesis of Piatigorsky's play: that contemporary North American Jewry is gripped with fear of religious and cultural deterioration. During the bulk of the scene, Asher — a character created by Piatigorsky — confesses to Sender a deep-felt fear that "[the Jewish people] have sinned and now we're damned" and posits the question "what if we've turned our back on one of the only righteous men?" (3). While Sender brushes him off, Asher ultimately answers his own question by suggesting that "the demons surround us. Waiting for our errors… Waiting for us to sin!" (3–4). While Asher's fears seem unnecessarily magnified to Sender in that moment, by the end of the play Sender will have come to see that Asher's — and Channon's — fears and warnings of spiritual deterioration were in fact justified. The nature of this scene implies its necessity not for the original story, but for Piatigorsky's vision of a version relevant to modern Canadian Jewry and the broader Canadian society. Furthermore, what is additionally notable about this scene is that it takes place during shabbat: a time of rest and peace. Despite Sender's best efforts, that restfulness and peacefulness are interrupted and usurped by fear and the threat of potential physical and spiritual suffering. Notably, this schism is what leads into the final moments of the prologue in which the audience is introduced to Channon and Leah's relationship. This introduction takes place just as the spirit of Shabbat has entered the room,[22] denoting the liminal transition space between the rest of the week and the day of rest, as if to say that Channon and Leah's personal sense of peace — derived from a connection with one another — is not only

[22] The spirit of Shabbat is often visualized as a bride who descends on one's home as one conducts the Shabbat prayers.

bound to remain in this liminal space between worlds, but is also already marred from the beginning by Asher's despair which punctures the sanctity of Shabbat.

Additionally, like Kushner before him, Piatigorsky also reconfigures Rabbi Azriel's character arc to further suggest and explore the anxiety which he is attempting to reflect. Notably, unlike An-sky's version, in Piatigorsky's adaptation Mikhl fails to reassure Rabbi Azriel of his own righteousness and abilities. In An-sky's text, after Mikhl reminds Rabbi Azriel not to "forget the generations of righteous and holy men of God from whom you are descended," (An-sky 104) Rabbi Azriel lists off incredible feats of holiness achieved by his forefathers before concluding that his forefathers sustain him and that specifically his grandfather "will not forsake [him] now" (105). Conversely, however, in Piatigorsky's text, when Mikhl reminds Rabbi Azriel of the same thing, he responds by saying: "Every generation is a little bit weaker and further from God. My holy father was visited by the Prophet Elijah. My uncle, Rabbi Meyer Ber, would rise to heaven each time he whispered the *Sh'ma*. They say my grandfather, Rabbi Velvele, could resurrect the dead… I am no one." (Piatigorsky, *The Dybbuk* 67; italics added). Here, in this added line and reconfigured scene Piatigorsky yet again reflects the common North American Jewish anxiety that nature of Jewish observance has changed, and now in the 21st century, we cannot be sure that it has changed for the better. Also, that we are haunted by the vision — true or otherwise — of a more holy or righteous cultural and religious past more intimately connected with God. Or, put simply: "every generation is a little bit weaker and further from God" (67).

Moreover, the conversation between Rabbi Azriel and The Messenger about the various degrees of holiness serves to further reflect these modern diasporic Jewish anxieties. In An-sky's version of the play, Rabbi Azriel presents the degrees of holiness in the world as a teaching to a group of Hasids and the Messenger during the first half of Act Three before Sender arrives in

Miropol. However, in Piatigorsky's version, this conversation happens only between Rabbi Azriel and The Messenger and takes place not only after Sender arrives, but after the first conversation between Rabbi Azriel and the dybbuk. In placing the conversation here, Piatigorsky ensures that it takes on a much more pessimistic tone. Rabbi Azriel has just been shaken by his encounter with the dybbuk, and his discussion of the holiest people, places, times, and words in the world only serves to reinforce the fact that the majority of these most holy of things no longer exist or can no longer be accessed. This is a distinct departure from An-sky's original text, in which this teaching is positioned as much more optimistic — it is a nostalgic look back at the past and a hopeful idea for the messianic future. This departure is further solidified by additional text written by Piatigorsky not found in An-sky's version where Piatigorsky makes clear all that has been lost: "Now the great Temple is gone. Ruined and dismantled. The priests are dispersed. The Holy Land is idle. The Jewish people have been banished to wander in the desert for two thousand years… When the world is broken, stranger, there are infinite moments of peril. There is nothing but danger. In this broken world… I am terrified" (77). Here Piatigorsky has yet again described the anxieties of modern North American Jews. Whereas the original text of this scene is cautionary but ultimately optimistic, here it is a prophesy of doom — a prophesy which is confirmed by The Messenger almost immediately when Rabbi Azriel asks, "so, you are a messenger. *Nu*? Tell me. What's your message?" to which The Messenger responds: "That you will fail" (77).

In performance however, Rabbi Azriel's relationship to Piatigorsky's core thesis is not quite so clear cut. In his direction, Schultz has complicated Piatigorsky's message by adding his own commentary through his blocking and through edits, additions, and cuts to Piatigorsky's script. Unlike the corresponding scene in the script, in the production when Rabbi Azriel first

speaks with the dybbuk, he is nearly able to compel the dybbuk to leave Leah's body by merely shouting — just like he claims his grandfather was able to do. As Rabbi Azriel yells "Dybbuk!" the dybbuk's hiding place under the table at which Leah was sat is revealed and he is pushed away from Leah's body by the power of Rabbi Azriel's voice, at which point Leah quickly crawls to him and the two are once again physically bonded together (Schultz, *Act Two* 0:9:33–0:10:00). While this separation is brief, it is deeply significant. Here, contrary to the image of Rabbi Azriel that Piatigorsky has painted, Schultz suggests that Rabbi Azriel can in fact wield the same holy power as his forefathers, but he is ultimately too racked with his own fear and anxiety to allow himself to even recognize, let alone use, his power. Thus, Schultz builds on Piatigorsky's image of North American Jewry as fearful of religious and cultural deterioration by suggesting that this fear is perhaps something of a self-fulfilling prophecy or self-imposed suffering. Through this change in blocking, Schultz challenges those who see themselves and their fears reflected in *The Dybbuk* to, in turn, challenge their own fears and, unlike Rabbi Azriel, try to recognize their own potential ability.

Adapting *The Dybbuk* and Performing Jewish Rituals on Stage in Toronto

Why The Dybbuk*?*

Given Soulpepper's interests in producing world theatre classics, it was only a matter of time before the company would produce An-sky's *The Dybbuk*. In Schultz's own words, *The Dybbuk* is "the central piece of Yiddish literature. It has been performed many many many many times all around the world, it's the centre piece of every Yiddish theatre; but it's been done very few times in Toronto" ("The Dybbuk - In Rehearsal" 0:36–0:49). Beyond being selected simply by virtue of being the crown jewel of Yiddish theatre, *The Dybbuk* is also easily molded to reflect the uniquely Canadian perspective that Soulpepper imbues into all its classic productions

— a goal explicitly stated in the company's founding mandate and restated by Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk*'s set designer Lorenzo Savioni: "What we wanted very much is this piece to have a contemporary voice. Even though we're looking back, we're trying to tell a story that feels relevant now or connects to our audience now" ("The Dybbuk - In Rehearsal" 1:24–1:36). Piatigorsky credits *The Dybbuk*'s ability to feel just as relevant to Soulpepper's audience in Toronto in 2015 as it did to An-sky's original Russian audience nearly one hundred years prior to the universal emotions which the play brings out through specific — or non-universal — experiences. In his view, "like so many things that are theatres [*sic*] or plays or stories that are extremely specific, [like *The Dybbuk*,] in that specificity you can get to the general very quickly. And so, it does tap into these stories and these emotions that are really universal" ("The Dybbuk - In Rehearsal" 2:15–2:31). This same phenomenon was also experienced by Julie Tepperman, Co-Artistic Leader at Convergence Theatre, when staging her play *YICHUD* in 2010. Speaking in 2013 of her experience with creating universality through the specificity of Jewish culture and ritual, Tepperman, like Piatigorsky, notes that "the more specific the cultural and religious references in [a play] are, the more the play's universal appeal grows. Very often, secular Jews and non-Jews reacted… as follows: 'This is like a window into a world I was always curious about'" (Tepperman, qtd in Benabu and Freeman 9).

Additionally, Schultz may have also been interested in producing *The Dybbuk* because of the sizeable Jewish population in Toronto and the opportunity for increased ticket or subscriber sales that such a group offers. According to The Berman Jewish DataBank, in 2015 "the Toronto metropolitan area [was] home to 188,710 Jews, and [included] about half (48.2%) of Canada's Jewish population" (Shahar 266). While plenty of Jews who lived in Toronto were certainly already going to theatre in the city — and, indeed, were likely to be attending Soulpepper shows

given the company's prevalence and reputation in the city's theatrical and cultural milieu — by producing distinctly Jewish content, Soulpepper could potentially entice a larger percentage of Toronto's Jewish population to buy tickets to that particular production and, in turn, perhaps retain some of those new audience members as repeat buyers or even season subscribers. However, simply producing Jewish content does not necessarily guarantee any given theatre will attract any — let alone all — Jews living within that theatre's service area. Indeed, as Avery Saltzman, Co-Artistic Director of the Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company said in 2013: "Jewish content, so to speak, is not enough to draw audiences to the theatre. We tell Jewish stories, but our audience members have to be theatre lovers first in order to appreciate our shows fully" (Saltzman, qtd in Benabu and Freeman 9). Soulpepper seems to have discovered that this was true in their experience as well. While Soulpepper did see an increase in performance revenue in 2016 from 2015, the increase was comparatively small, with performance revenue in 2016 increasing by only $231 to $3,888 from 2015's $3,657 (*2016 Annual Report* 4). Thus, it appears that, while it certainly received positive reviews, *The Dybbuk* did not have any particularly strong positive or negative impact on Soulpepper's audience or subscriber base in terms of sales growth.

Toronto's Inter- and Multicultural Theatre Scene

What is also vital to consider is how both Soulpepper and this production of *The Dybbuk* fit into the larger ecology of the Toronto theatre scene in the mid-2010s, and, in particular, its distinct multicultural makeup. According to Ric Knowles in his book *Performing the Intercultural City* (2017), published only two years after *The Dybbuk*'s run at Soulpepper:

> Cities around the world, particularly major theater centers, have become increasingly heterogeneous in their cultural makeup. Amsterdam, Delhi, Dublin, London, New York,

> Rio, Stuttgart, Sydney, Toronto, Yokohama, and many other cities have become sites of both contestation and exchange, as well as key locations for the intercultural performance-into-being of new, diasporic — or hyphenated… — subjectivities. (Knowles 2)

Knowles finds this to be especially true of Toronto, the so-called "world's most multicultural city" (2) and "the largest city in the first country in the world to legislate, however problematically, a policy of official multiculturalism" (2). *Performing the Intercultural City* offers an analysis of the performance ecology of Toronto and "models an approach to intercultural performance analysis [that] considers the work of culturally specific and intercultural theater companies less as cultural texts than as cultural production" (3). More specifically, *Performing the Intercultural City* examines, through the lens of Toronto's then contemporary theatre ecology, "the larger issues surrounding intercultural theater, multiculturalism, the performative constitution of social identities and intercultural memories, the development of diasporic cultural forms, performative cultural mediation, and the emergent circulation of performance networks" (4). Furthermore, Knowles suggests that Toronto's intercultural performance ecology constitutes "a heterotopic space, where new 'ideas and practices' can come into being" (10). More specifically, he claims that "the city of Toronto functions as a *heterotopic ecosystem* in which *reassembling the social* can happen *relationally* and *rhizomatically*" (10, original emphasis), suggesting that when the artists and companies which he examines perform official texts differently, constitute new intracultural memories, refigure cultural texts in new way, or find innovative ways of (re)mediating across cultural difference, "they are reassembling the social in ways that are at once relational, nonhierarchical, and heterotopic [and] are constituting the intercultural city as… 'a space of alternate ordering'"

(10). In this case, the heterotopic space to which Knowles refers "can be understood to be 'a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live'" and in which we perform (9). Furthermore, the term 'Rhizomatically,' is used here as a metaphor for the intercultural connections forged throughout the city through these culturally specific performers and performances which Knowles examines. It refers to rhizomes, which are "subterranean stem systems, assemblages rather than vertical structures [and] consist of bulbs and tubors [*sic*] rather than roots and branches… rhizomatic systems are decentered, 'finite networks . . . in which communication runs from any neighbour to any other, the stems or channels do not pre-exist'" (7–8).

Notably, Knowles credits this performance of interculturality primarily to the smaller, more 'indie' theatre companies in the Toronto theatrical ecosystem: "My attention here is squarely on the networks of professional, culturally specific, racialized, and explicitly intercultural theater companies that populate the city's small-to-medium-sized stages and occasional or one-off performance spaces and focus primarily on the work of people of color" (17). Moreover, Knowles clarifies that he is "not much concerned here with the occasional tokenistic forays into multiculturalism undertaken by the city's larger theaters… in order to gain coveted multicultural funding" (16–17). He explains further that he is "even less interested in [Toronto's] commercial theaters, its mainstream 'Regional' theater, Canadian Stage, or its classical theater, Soulpepper" (17). However, regardless of whether the intentions behind the inclusion of a multicultural performance in any given theatrical season are 'legitimate' or 'honourable,' to broadly discount these performances as 'too commercial' or 'inauthentic' denies the reality of the intercultural performative work being done by the individual artists involved in their creation. Indeed, the multicultural endeavours of commercial theatres, such as Soulpepper's

The Dybbuk, can and do engage with exactly the intercultural performance ecology which Knowles describes. In the case of *The Dybbuk*, this comes through especially in the performance of Jewish religion, rituals, and culture. To deny that such performances reflect Toronto's multiculturism and contribute to the rhizomatic web of intercultural connections throughout the city's performance ecosystem is to deliberately ignore reality. Importantly, while he intentionally does not explore this idea in *Performing the Intercultural City*, Knowles does recognize its occurance: "some of this work is appearing more and more often in the regular subscription seasons of resident companies such as Tarragon Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Buddies in Bad Times, even the 'mainstream' Soulpepper and Canadian Stage, and, particularly since 2013, Factory Theatre." (18).

Performing Judaism and Jewish Rituals in Toronto

While, as mentioned above, Piatigorsky and Soulpepper strove for a certain universality through the specificity of Jewish — or in this case specifically Ashkenazi — culture and ritual, in enacting and performing this specificity on stage in Toronto, a city with a large and mostly religiously knowledgeable Jewish population Soulpepper was forced to navigate between two competing ideals. Firstly, total accuracy in their representation of rituals, prayers, and religious paraphernalia in order to appease knowledgeable and vocal audience members who would take issue with misrepresentation; and secondly the censoring or removing of certain rituals or elements of rituals in order to appease the equally vocal religious community who consider the reproduction of those certain rituals or elements of rituals on stage as inappropriate or even blasphemous. For example, to borrow again from Tepperman's experiences with *YICHUD*: "the choice of using the word *Adonai* [(a sacred term for God)] vs. *Hashem* [(a colloquial term for God)] became contentious because in religious circles one is prohibited from using the former

unless spoken in actual prayer. In the end, we decided to go with *Adonai* because we felt that citing the prayer accurately was important in this specific case" (Tepperman, qtd in Benabu and Freeman 10). Saltzman has also encountered a similar situation when he produced *To Life*, a play about a Bar Mitzvah:

> An orthodox member of our board… insisted that such a sacred term should never be pronounced in the theatre… We discussed the matter and decided to go with the colloquial *Hashem*, so as not to offend our board member as well as our orthodox playgoers… We are concerned about alienating our audiences because we get letters from subscribers about similar issues all the time. In treating religious material on stage, one has to be as careful and accurate as possible. And even then, you will get comments from board members or playgoers that a particular issue was misrepresented. (Saltzman, qtd in Benabu and Freeman 10)

Thus, having a knowledgeable audience becomes a sort of double-edged sword, or — not unlike *The Dybbuk*'s original author — a seemingly impossible paradox which simultaneously demands total accurate representation and intentional misrepresentation.

This debate over the representation of rituals, such as the use of *Adonai* versus *Hashem* on stage, becomes even more salient when discussing the performance of entire prayers on stage — something Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* and renown Jewish-Canadian playwright Hannah Moscovitch's *East of Berlin* have in common in their shared inclusion of the Mourner's Kaddish and in *The Dybbuk*'s additional performance of the shabbat blessings over candles, wine, and *challah*.[23] According to Moscovitch, when a staged reading of *East of Berlin* was performed in Baltimore in front of an audience of 300 Jewish spectators, "the talkback centred not on the

[23] A braided egg-bread eaten on ceremonial occasions such as Shabbat and most major Jewish holidays.

motifs or action of the play, but the specific words of the Kaddish [Moscovitch] chose to use, the particular version of the prayer, and the book from which the prayer was taken" (Moscovitch, qtd in Benabu and Freeman 11). She goes on to specify that:

> There is something about these rituals… When the Kaddish is spoken within the context of the play, its words hold such total power over many members of the audience. So, I want to capture and honour that experience. Also, I want to do something on the stage that is actually real… Otherwise, the audience is likely to watch an empty ritual rather than connect with the [performer] reciting the prayer. I want the audience to mourn with the [performer] on stage. (Moscovitch, qtd in Benabu and Freeman 11)

In examining the representation of prayers and rituals in both the script and the performance of Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* Piatigorsky and Schultz appear to agree with Moscovitch that the importance of accurately representing of the prayers and rituals trumps potentially offending a certain subset of one's audience. Notably, Piatigorsky's script includes more accurate representations of prayers than An-sky's — Piatigorsky introduces the blessing over the shabbat candles to the script in the newly added prologue and includes the *full* text of the Mourner's Kaddish. Schultz's production goes even further by adding the remaining shabbat evening prayers that are missing from Piatigorsky's script.

In a rather fitting connection to the past, An-sky may very well have enjoyed navigating these competing requirements which Jewish theatrical productions — or at least, productions which include Jewish components — in Toronto must navigate as he, much like a dybbuk, not only thrived in the liminal spaces between ideals but also in that his early drafts were critiqued for bearing too much ethnographic material and being too bogged down by, presumably accurate, representations of the shtetl world he studied. Perhaps, had An-sky been writing his

play for a twenty-first century audience in Toronto, his final version of *The Dybbuk* may have been closer to what he first envisioned.

Jewish Rituals and *Tikkun Olam* in Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk*

As briefly discussed above, Piatigorsky's script and Schultz's production both place an emphasis on not only accurately representing Jewish rituals themselves and the individual elements and paraphernalia which make up these rituals, but additionally place an importance on their very inclusion. Both Piatigorsky and Schultz expand on those rituals originally included by An-sky, as well as introduce additional rituals not found in the original version of the play. While not a component of Piatigorsky's or An-sky's script, nor an actual Jewish ritual, it is beneficial to begin this examination of the rituals in Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* by looking at the brief opening scene added by Schultz to the very beginning of the show. This scene — which precedes the prologue examined above — is primarily a movement piece, with its only dialogue being Channon counting from one to eighteen twice. While The Messenger 'discovers' the town square of Brinnitz in the centre of the stage and various characters move busily about, Channon traces the four 'walls' of the main playing space that will, in the following scene, become Sender's house. As he walks the boundaries of the playing space, he counts each step he takes: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine!" (Schultz, *Act One* 0:00:38–0:00:50). At the conclusion of the second set and fourth set of nine, rather than saying "nine" he exclaims "*chai*!" — the Hebrew word for 'life' whose letters correspond to the numbers ten and eight, and which sums to eighteen (0:01:01 and 0:01:21). At the conclusion of his fourth set of nine, the scene immediately transitions into the prologue. This brief vignette at the beginning of the play sets the reverent, mystical, and ritualistic tone of the whole performance. In it, we see Channon take slow, measured movements as he demarcates the almost sacred playing space in which the show will

play out. Much like how Rabbi Azriel marks out a space in which Nissin's ghost is contained, here the performers mark out a space in which the dybbuk that the production will conjure through their performance is to remain. Additionally, the inclusion of counting is deeply and likely intentionally reminiscent of *gematria* — a Kabbalistic method of interpreting the Hebrew scriptures by computing the numerical value of words, based on those of their corresponding letters — which we see Channon do with his and Leah's names in the play:

> Nine is a magical number. The sum of the letters in the word for truth. And each of the nine [Torah] scrolls has four wooden handles. Thirty-six handles. I run into that number countless times every day. What does it mean? The number thirty-six. Double *Chai*. The sum of the letters in the name Leah. *Lamed, aleph, hey*. Thirty, five, and one… And thirty-six times three [which is the number of letters in Leah's name] is one hundred eight. Which is the sum of the letters of my own name. Channon. So does that mean I am destined for her? (Piatigorsky, *The Dybbuk* 17)

Thus, this counting of thirty-six in order to demarcate the playing space serves as a kind of subtle thematic foreshadowing as well as a visual and auditory metaphor for some of the events and ideas of the play.

The play's prologue, which involves the singing of not only the shabbat evening prayers — that is to say, the blessing over candles, wine, and *challah* — but also the singing of *zmirot* or shabbat table songs and hymns, in this case the much beloved *Shalom Aleichem*, follows this vignette. Unlike An-sky's script which does not feature the singing of any prayers beyond the first line of the Mourner's Kaddish, these prayers are sung in their entirety and accurately in Hebrew — including the word '*Adonai*' rather than '*Hashem*.' This clearly sets the expectation for the duration of the performance that this production will be committed to accurately

reproducing Jewish rituals on stage. Moreover, the singing of *Shalom Aleichem* serves a distinct dramaturgical function, in addition to being an accurate component of the ritual of welcoming in Shabbat. *Shalom* Aleichem, whose title comes from the first line of the song and translates to 'peace be upon you' is a song exclusively about peace: the lyrics wish for and wish peace upon messengers and angels of peace, wishing that those angels would come in peace, bring about peace, and go back to God in peace. However, this peaceful and calming song is interrupted by *The Dybbuk*'s piercing and sorrowful opening and closing poem — in this case sung on stage by Channon and Leah. As *Shalom Aleichem* fades away and the poem replaces it, so too does its optimism and idealism become replaced by the realistic and the tragic. For Channon and Leah, the peace which they ask for in *Shalom Aleichem* is achieved only through suffering and through death: "Because the greatest fall / Into blackest night / Contains within / A rise to the light" (4).

Similarly to the treatment of the Shabbat evening prayers, in both Piatigorsky's script and in Schultz's production the Mourner's Kaddish which Sender says for the dybbuk is spoken in its entirety in Hebrew, rather than being truncated like it is in An-sky's text or truncated and spoken mainly in English like it is in Kushner's text. By taking the time to fully and accurately have Sender *actually* say the full Mourner's Kaddish, in combination with actress Hailey Gillis' heart wrenching wails as Leah loses her connection to Channon, Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* achieves an effect similar to that which Moscovitch describes as occurring when it was performed in its entirety as part of *East of Berlin*, making this moment in the play so much more emotionally affecting and heightening the tragedy of the scene. This is especially true for any audience members who are familiar with the Mourner's Kaddish, for whom Leah and Channon's loss is made all the more real. That is not to say that the meaning of the moment is lost on those who do not speak Hebrew or who lack any prior knowledge about the Mourner's Kaddish, as the non-

verbal information being conveyed during the scene makes clear the gravity of the moment. Much like Tepperman with her production of *YICHUD*, Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* is "able to communicate effectively with the audience even if they didn't fully understand the complexities of Jewish ritual or a specific word in Hebrew" (Tepperman, qtd in Benubu and Freeman 9).

Additionally, when examining the rituals included in this adaptation of *The Dybbuk*, the inclusion of the *badchan* — or wedding jester — is of particular note. A *badchan* is traditionally a clown or jester of sorts whose main job is to entertain the bride and groom. According to Anita Diamont in her book *The Jewish Wedding Now* (2017), "it has long been customary to entertain couples [at their wedding] with jokes, magic, tricks, acrobatics, and ukulele solos: in other words, *badchanut*, 'silliness,' the art of the *badchan* — a joker" (Diamant 96). These *badchanim*[24] were professional performers who "sang, rhymed, posed riddles, dispensed compliments, and acted as masters of ceremonies" at Jewish weddings (96). Diamant goes on to note that "*badchanim* were supposed to be learned enough to cite biblical verses and sentimental enough to elicit tears, but their primary function was to make people laugh… The flowering of Yiddish theatre and literature in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries is indebted to *badchanut*" (96).

The *badchan*'s poem is a new addition to this version of the play by Piatigorsky and supplements the beggars' dance scene with an additional 'comedic' poem by the *badchan*.[25] In this case, the poem is much more unnerving and disconcerting than it is comedic:

[24] The plural of *badchan*.
[25] It is worth noting that this scene seemingly makes a direct allusion to the famous porter scene from *MacBeth* and evokes memories of other 'porter' characters across western theatre history.

The father produces a very rich daughter,

Who's come to the square, ready for slaughter.

If her groom can't perform on their wedding night,

We'll show you how, Leah! We'll show you the light! (Piatigorsky, *The Dybbuk* 43)

The overt threats of physical and sexual violence against Leah perfectly aligns with the unnerving and threatening beggars' dance scene which immediately follows this introduction. This discomforting monologue also in part replaces some of the beggars' dance sequence, which is ultimately shortened in this version of the play as, in this case, it is individual poor people who dance with Leah, rather than the group choreography so associated with Evgeny Vakhtangov's iconic beggars' dance from Habima Theatre's 1922 production. Though this rendering of the *badchan* is certainly far less joyous than the *badchanim* of reality, given the script and the production's commitment to accuracy in their portrayal of Jewish rituals, this change was likely made in order to better reflect the reality of a Jewish wedding, since in reality it is a custom to invite the poor to partake in the wedding meal, rather than to invite them to dance with the bride.

Notably, Piatigorsky and Schultz's commitment to accurate representations of Jewish rituals seems to extend only to those rituals with which modern day Jews would be familiar. Both Piatigorsky's and Schultz's rendering of the dybbuk's exorcism remains largely unchanged from how it is depicted in An-sky's version of the text. It remains a rough amalgamation of pre– and post–Lurianic exorcism practices and relies heavily on the notion of the power of paraphernalia such as candles, Torah scrolls, *tallitot*[26], and *shofars*. It is worth noting here that attention is paid by the production to the *shofar* patterns which are blown as part of this amalgam exorcism as each of these different patterns appears to be blown mostly correctly. Given that the

[26] Prayer shawls.

blowing of the *shofar* remains a consistent component of modern Jewish ritual life many of the knowledgeable members of Soulpepper's audience would be familiar with the proper sound of the various *shofar* patterns, and thus there is greater attention paid to the accuracy of that element of the exorcism than any other given element.

Furthermore, there are two additional instances where rituals are intentionally misrepresented in Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk*: when Channon speaks God's true name and when Leah kisses the Torah scroll in the Brinnitz synagogue. While within the world of the play, Channon does indeed speak God's true name, in both the script and the performance the name is not actually rendered or spoken, instead a stage direction describes the action: "*Channon speaks the unspeakable name twice. Two loud and unearthly blasts of a trumpet*" (35). In the production, these trumpet blasts and an accompanying flash of light drown out Channon's voice, allowing the actor to simply remain silent. This act of self-censorship, which contradicts the reasoning behind the production's decision on the inclusion of the word '*Adonai*,' is likely done in light of the fact that speaking aloud the Tetragrammaton or the true four-letter name of God consisting of the Hebrew letters *yod, hay, vav,* and *hay* is strictly forbidden and is regarded as being a much more severe transgression and thus carries the potential to be much more inflammatory — something such a 'mainstream' or 'commercial' theatre would likely wish to avoid. In the second example, Leah kisses the Torah scroll far more passionately and sensually than one should or would normally (Schultz, *Act One* 0:25:00–0:25:08). While, as previously examined in Chapter Two, kissing the Torah scrolls is indeed a ritual action, to so with such passion and sensuality is certainly an extremely uncommon occurrence and is thus an inaccurate representation. However, this intentional misrepresentation serves to convey dramatic information about Leah and her relationship to Channon. In this case, the Torah scroll becomes a

stand-in for Channon in her mind — made clear by Channon's singing of the *Song of Songs* during this moment, a hymn known for its unique sense of sensuality — which leads her to behave inappropriately and for the other characters in the scene to react appropriately to her ultimately transgressive action. In demonstrating what is unacceptable, Piatigorsky and Schultz in effect highlight a priori that which *is* acceptable and thus maintain, for the most part, their commitment to the accurate representation of both the rituals originally found within *The Dybbuk* as well as those which have been added specifically for this adaptation.

As examined above, Piatigorsky and Schultz's general commitment to the accuracy of the (re)performance of Jewish rituals within *The Dybbuk* aligns Soulpepper with other producers of Jewish theatre in Toronto such as Tepperman and Moscovitch; however, this attention to accuracy also aligns Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* with Knowles as the inclusion and accurate portrayal of Jewish cultural actions, religious rituals, and other cultural or religious markers constitutes instances of the intercultural performance he describes — despite his disavowal of Soulpepper and other 'commercial theatres.' As above, Knowles describes an intercultural performance as a performance which does any number of the following: performs official texts differently, constitutes new intracultural memories, refigures cultural texts in a new way, or finds innovative ways of (re)mediating across cultural difference (Knowles 10). While *The Dybbuk* does not necessarily perform differently any official texts, it does certainly strive to constitute new intracultural memories and to mediate across cultural differences; and, in both instances, doing so reflects An-sky's original intentions in writing the play. In the case of the former, *The Dybbuk* serves as an ethnographic museum or snapshot of the culture of the Jewish people of a particular time and place — in this case the Ashkenazi shtetl Judaism in the late 19th century — which, when presented in a different place and time, facilitates an intracultural connection

between Jews across space and time. Given the strong influence Ashkenazi culture had on Canadian Jewish culture, contemporary Canadian Jews who watched this production may have seen themselves and their culture reflected in that of their ancestors and may have then (re)discovered a connection to a shared cultural past which, in turn, brings about further connection intraculturally in the present. In the case of the latter, just as An-sky sought to foster connection between Jews and Russian gentiles through folklore, Soulpepper's performance of Jewish culture, folklore, and rituals similarly presents the opportunity to mediate across the cultural divide and as such bring about a greater interculturality. Despite Knowles' admittedly apt critique of commercial or 'mainstream' theatre, the potential for cross-cultural connection is perhaps greater at these theatres than at the smaller theatres which Knowles examines based on the size and cultural scope of their audiences alone. Additionally, this production of *The Dybbuk* in particular also refigures a cultural text in a new way by nature of being an *adaptation* of *The Dybbuk* — a cultural text in its own right. As such, just like the case studies examined by Knowles in his book, Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* engages in a process of "reassembling the social in ways that are at once relational, nonhierarchical, and heterotopic [and thus] constituting the intercultural city as… 'a space of alternate ordering'" (10).

Furthermore, it is through this participation in the performance of Toronto's inter- and multiculturality that Piatigorsky and Schultz in effect perform an act of *tikkun olam* or "repairing the world." According to Jill Jacobs, while the term *tikkun olam* has existed for over 2000 years, it did not "become a de facto pillar of progressive Judaism [until] its incarnation as a phrase interchangeable with 'social justice' or 'social action,' [which] began in the 1950s or later" (Jacobs 25). The term *tikkun olam* gained popularity as a stand in for "social justice" in the 1970s and 1980s, "as the progressive Jewish world began to emerge as an entity separate from the so-

called mainstream organizational world" and now refers to anything from working in a soup kitchen, to political engagement, to philanthropy (37). The everchanging nature of the meaning of *tikkun olam* relates, at least partially, to its ability to defy easy translation:

> The Hebrew verd *l'taken* (root: t-k-n) is generally translated as "to fix" in the sense of "to repair," but it can also mean "to establish."… The word *olam*, usually rendered as "world," also signifies eternity, especially in biblical and other very early texts. Thus, *l'olam*, common in biblical, liturgical, and modern Hebrew, means "forever" (for an eternity). Even when referring to the physical world, the term *olam* also carries with it a sense of permanence… Taken together, the two words form a phrase whose ambiguity and rich complexity make it tempting to overuse. (25)

The "best-known" (34) use of the term *tikkun olam*, however, comes from the Lurianic Kabbalists:[27] According to Jacobs, in the Lurianic conception of the creation story, God imbued the world with ten *sefirot* or "aspects of the divine presence" which God placed within certain vessels (34). However, some of these vessels were not strong enough and ultimately shattered, "resulting in the mixture of divine light with the *k'lipot* (shells, or shards) of the vessels themselves. This process resulted in the introduction of evil into the world" (34). As such, the Kabbalah conceives of the world as a damaged creation in need of repair. Furthermore, since Adam, the first human being, could have repaired the world but lost the chance to do so when he and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, the Lurianic Kabbalists believe "the responsibility for restoring divine perfection fell to later generations" (35). The attempts to repair the *k'lipot* became known as *tikkun* and are achieved mainly through the performance of *mitzvot* as well as through Torah study (35). What is so notable about the Lurianic conception of *tikkun*

[27] For more on Rabbi Isaac Luria and the Kabbalists Chapters One and Two.

olam is that it "introduces into Jewish thought for the first time the idea that human actions can have an effect on the cosmos" (35). While earlier writings conceive of God demanding or mandating certain behaviours which humans are then rewarded or punished for enacting or not enacting, "the innovation of [K]abbalah was the idea that God's being changes in response to human behaviour" (35).

Given the fact that *The Dybbuk* is heavily influenced by and prominently features Kabbalistic ideas, it is no surprise that one can see this sense of human agency throughout the play.[28] Additionally, Jacobs is sure to warn that "applying the kabbalistic notion of *tikkun* to contemporary ethical behaviour is tricky. Contemporary social justice activists who make *tikkun olam* the focus of Jewish expression should be aware that, at least in the Lurianic perspective, *tikkun olam* cannot be divorced from ritual and other kinds of traditional observance" (36). Thus, the connection between the Lurianic conception of *tikkun olam* and *The Dybbuk* can be seen exemplified yet again by the shared sense of importance placed upon the (re)performance of rituals.

However, while the Lurianic conception of *tikkun olam* may have shaped the content of the play and some aspects of its performance, Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* additionally aligns with another notion of *tikkun olam*: the rabbinic understanding. In the rabbinic conception of *tikkun olam* the term "constitutes the repair of systems that make the social order workable. *Tikkun olam*, for the Rabbis, refers to the closing of legal loopholes that lead to large societal problems. In this spirit, we might define *tikkun olam* as a mandate to correct the systems that make our own society dysfunctional" (39). While the Rabbis and Jacobs are more so referring to the legal code of the Halakhah, this understanding of *tikkun olam* as a requirement to correct that which is

[28] For more on human agency in *The Dybbuk* see Chapter Three.

dysfunctional and causes societal problems can extend beyond a specifically legal context. Indeed, the performing of the interculturality of Toronto and the formation and participation in the rhizomatically shaped network of connectivity which Knowles describes can be conceived of as a process of repairing the systems that make the social order workable and of directly combating dysfunctionality with connectiveness. In other words: a process of rabbinic *tikkun olam*.

Additionally, as Belarie Zatzman and Laura Levin explain in their introduction to the special issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* on Jewish Theatre in 2013, intercultural initiatives such as this are vital to contemporary Canadian Jews: "according to sociologists Steven M. Cohen and Ari Kelman, [contemporary Jews] 'are drawn to events that promise to cross boundaries between Jews and non-Jews, Jews and Jews, Jewish space and non-Jewish space, and distinctively Jewish culture with non-Jewish culture, effecting a 'cultural hybridity.'" (Zatzman and Levin 6). The system which Knowles describes, and in which Soulpepper's *The Dybbuk* participates, encourages the strengthening of both intra- and intercultural connections; which in the case of the former contributes to the strengthening of a religion and culture which many consider to be in a precarious position — a feeling Piatigorsky reflects in his adaptation — and, in the case of the later, forges cross-cultural bonds between people. In doing so, this system heals or potentially even prevents division and fragmentation. Thus, in participating in this system, Piatigorsky and Schultz align themselves once again with An-sky, who sought to combat the antisemitism of his time using that very same strategy.

Furthermore, the intracultural strengthening described above is especially important for contemporary Canadian Jewry given the largely diasporic nature of modern Judaism. As such, this production and performance of *The Dybbuk* serves as a means of maintaining Jewish cultural

and religious knowledge across not only generations but also great physical and cultural distance. As Knowles explains:

> 'If there is such a thing as social memory' it is performative, operating through commemorative ceremonies, bodily practices, and habit… If this is so, then cultural memories can be transferred, not only generationally within a family or community…but also across other kinds of difference. In diaspora this transference crosses both generations and geographies, and it involves the intercultural transformation of the very performance practices it employs. (Knowles 46)

Conclusion

While at first glance, Soulpepper Theatre's adaptation of *The Dybbuk*, written by Anton Piatigorsky and directed by Albert Schultz, may appear to be a play about the past it is, in actuality, a play about the present. Through their adaptation of An-sky's classic Yiddish drama, Piatigorsky and Schultz work together to hold a mirror up to twenty-first century North American Jewry to reflect their audiences' fear that with every passing generation, the Jewish people become less and less connected to God, to Jewish culture, and to Jewish history. Regardless of whether or not Piatigorsky or Schultz share this fear and believe this cultural and religious deterioration to be true, the mere creation and performance of *The Dybbuk* serves to combat both the effects which the fear causes and the fear itself. As Tepperman describes it, "from a purely Jewish perspective, theatre can become an integral part of *tikkun olam* … it offers the possibility of transformation, of connection, of convergence" (Tepperman, qtd in Benubu and Freeman 9). This process of *tikkun olam* which Tepperman describes can be seen enacted through the intercultural performance process which Knowles so keenly describes, and which is predicated on the performance of official texts differently, the constitution of new intracultural

memories, the refiguring of cultural texts in a new way, and the discovering of innovative ways of (re)mediating across cultural difference (Knowles 10). By highlighting Jewish stories of the past that are relevant to today and that point out and engage with the problems both within and being faced by contemporary North American Jews, Piatigorsky and Schultz are in fact engaging in a process of *tikkun olam*. They seek to offer a moment of convergence and transformation in the liminal space of the popular theatre to heal the world just a little bit and in doing so to forge an intercultural connection not only between contemporary Jews and non-Jews, but perhaps also between the Jews of today and the Jews of yesterday.

Conclusion

While all art is created in connection and in dialogue with its historic, cultural, geographic, and political contexts, an adaptation bears the unique responsibility of maintaining this connection to both its own contemporaneous contexts, as well as the original work or text and its own contexts in which it was generated. Additionally, when the work being adapted is itself an adaptation — or at least partially bears elements of adaptation — then this multi-layered connectivity becomes exponential and begins to resemble Diana Taylor's notion of verticality and 'again-ness.' In her article, "Performance And/as History" (2006), Taylor asserts that history and performance, especially the performance *of* history, should be conceptualized not horizontally as a time-line, nor cyclically — which, it is worth noting, is not mutually exclusive with notions of horizontality — but rather as a "multilayered sedimentation, [or] a form of vertical density rather than a horizontal sweep… not an either/or but a both/and" (Taylor 83). Taylor argues that this verticality lends itself to a simultaneous present-ness and 'again-ness ' within history: "Its iterative, recurrent quality functions through repeats, yet breaks out of them — it is always alive, now" (83). In other words, the performance of history and memory intentionally situates itself within an apparent paradox of historicization and immediacy. It is both old, and new all at once. This is true of both the history in general, which is made new in its retelling — in this case the history is the adapted text and the retelling is the adaptation — but also of history as a *theatrical performance*. The nature of theatre is to rehearse and to repeat; to be both old and new simultaneously; to dwell in verticality and 'again-ness.'

The same can also be said of performing rituals, whose very function is predicated on the *re*doing of a prescribed word, action, or series of words or actions. Without this sense of 'again-ness,' these words and actions cease to be rituals, and become something else entirely. Thus,

performances of ritual, of history, or indeed of adaptation are both old and new in their content, as well as in their form. This is especially true of the performance of an adaptation of a play such as *The Dybbuk*, which is intentionally designed to be a kind of museum-like snapshot of a particular culture and moment in history. As such, according to Taylor, this verticality and 'again-ness' of performance, which allows for a simultaneous experience of past and present, has a compound effect on the performance of adaptations and of rituals: "The bearers of performance, those who engage in it, are also the bearers of history who link the layers past-present-future through practice" (83). This is true of both the performance of rituals in their original contexts as well as — and indeed especially in — their performance within a theatrical setting. In both cases, the act of performance is the key to reactivating and re-accessing history. Indeed, Taylor further connects performance with history and memory as she posits that:

> If we think about the past not only as chronological and as what is gone, but also vertical, as a different form of storage of what's already here, then performance is deeply historical… Thus, the performance event, like the historical event, both affirms and breaks with the cyclical Hegelian pattern of again-ness. Therein lies its transformative power. (83)

As such, Taylor notes that the question then becomes: "what conditions in the present trigger performance practices to reactivate past behaviors and attitudes that will interrupt the status quo?" (83).

For An-sky, the answer to this question appears to be the prevalent and violent antisemitism of his time. As examined in Chapter Two of this thesis, An-sky believed that, in order to combat the antisemitism he found all around him in the Russian Empire, the Jewish people needed to "present a favourable view of Jews by showcasing their folklore" (Peñalosa 2).

In addition to his pre-existing penchant for and interest in ethnography and the recording of Jewish shtetl life An-sky believed that the Russian populace of his time had a favourable attitude towards folklore and that by showcasing Jewish folklore, common ground between Russians and Jews may be found. More to the point however, given the looming threat of antisemitic violence which would bring about the destruction of shtetl Jewry, An-sky felt it was absolutely vital that he and his contemporaries fulfilled what he felt was the ultimate goal of the Jewish writer: "to create new secular art based on tradition, a new culture that would be as compelling as the old religious culture" (Safran 215). Or, in An-sky's own words, "a nation lives not in suffering, but in the ecstasy of the realization of its 'I', in joyful creation, in pride in its culture, in the poetry of its daily life. Only in that. Without that, the Jewish nation would have vanished long ago" (An-sky, qtd in Safran 215). For An-sky, *The Dybbuk* was a means of returning to a — comparatively not-so-distant — past and reactivating it in a new, modern setting. While he did not have the words yet to describe such an experience, what An-sky is describing in the above quotes is essentially Taylor's notion of the (re)performance of history and of memory; of verticality and 'again-ness.' Through creating *The Dybbuk*, An-sky ultimately sought to "link the layers past-present-future through practice" (Taylor 83) and performance, and in doing so, create anew and strengthen existing Jewish identity.

Importantly, An-sky is not alone in this endeavour. Kushner too, in creating his adaptation of *The Dybbuk*, was engaging with a verticality of performance and the recreation and reactivation of the past as a means of addressing and interrupting his status quo. For Kushner, the (re)performance of history through adapting *The Dybbuk* allowed him "to grapple with his own questions of religious faith and to… incorporate issues of the dawning of a technologically based, capitalistic world in conflict with the Old World Judaic traditions and the simple, pious

ways of a small rural community trying to survive in the face of breathtaking material and social changes" (Fisher 140). This feeling which he sought to capture was also likely shared by Kushner who was writing his adaptation in the mid to late 1990s, which was characterized by the rapid and explosive advancement of digital, internet-based technology. By reactivating the past through performance, like An-sky before him, Kushner is engaging with the linking of the past, present, and future in order to, in this case, not only uncover his own feelings surrounding his personal faith, but to also, in the face of threatening global change, create a sense of community strengthened by a shared cultural past that is united in their ability to not only survive calamity but to thrive in spite of it. In this case, the (re)performance of the past serves to strengthen the present.

Similarly, Piatigorsky and Schultz utilize the verticality and 'again-ness' present in adapting *The Dybbuk* to react to and to interrupt their own status quo — namely, the popular fear that knowledge of and participation in Jewish culture and religion in Canada and elsewhere across the diaspora is on the decline. As such, the creation and performance of this adaptation of *The Dybbuk* serves a function that is ultimately quite similar to both the intended effect of An-sky's original version of the play and his notion of what a Jewish writer should do: By adapting *The Dybbuk* and (re)performing and reactivating the — at this point — densely layered sediments of history, both theatrical and 'real world,' which it contains, Piatigorsky and Schultz engage in not only a process of *tikkun olam* but also a process of intra- and intercultural connection making.[29] While this process is described by Knowles, it is certainly predicated on the (re)performance and 'again-ness' which Taylor describes. Ultimately, this adaptation and the intraculturally strengthening process of its performance is an attempt to assuage some of this

[29] For more on *tikkun olam* and intra- and intercultural performance processes, see previous chapter.

popular fear of the deterioration of Jewish culture, tradition, and religion by demonstrating the potential for an immediate and visceral or embodied connection to the past and the cultural and religious aspects it reactivates and revitalizes. Furthermore, in doing so they contribute to the "new secular art based on tradition" which An-sky so passionately strove for and so highly valued (Safran 215).

Ultimately, what each of these productions share is an emphasis on the importance of the reproduction and reperformance of ritual as a means of engaging with the past through Taylor's verticality of performance. In each of these cases, the past is reactivated not through disembodied visual markers or out-dated dialogue and references, but rather through the embodied practice of (re)performing ritual actions. These rituals transcend time and space and carry with them — as discussed above — their own unique again-ness in each reoccurrence. As a result, they represent the focal point through which any given audience, or indeed any given performer, may come to experience the past and present in simultaneity. While it is true that there exists a through line of verticality which one can follow between adaptations of *The Dybbuk*, predicated on a shared history of theatricality and theatrical production generated by a shared source text — just as there exists such a through line for any work with multiple palimpsestual adaptations, — by engaging with rituals, however, these adaptations introduce a secondary vertical connection which bonds each production together not just by shared theatrical history, but also by a shared 'real world' history. It is the rituals contained within these productions that connect these performances most directly with the actual history experienced by the 'real world' historical actors[30] which An-sky first sought to capture and the memory of this history which was retained by those who came

[30] The term 'actors' is used here not in a theatrical sense but in its definition as a participant of an event or moment in time.

afterwards. Furthermore, it is this very connection with history which is so vitally important for An-sky, Kushner, Piatigorsky, and Schultz.

Given the position of ritual within these productions as the primary means of reactivating the past, what is then important to note is that, as time increases between the original 'capturing' of the history by An-sky and its (re)performance in a given production of *The Dybbuk*, there appears to be a greater importance placed on the function of ritual as the connection point between the past and present, with a larger amount of attention being paid to the accuracy of the performance of those rituals. The question remains: why? Is this perhaps indicative of a greater willingness to perform these rituals outside of a religious context due to a relaxing of religious adherence amongst the artists creating and performing in these productions? Or is it perhaps instead a reflection of a growing understanding of the importance of representation of identity in art and media and in fact indicates a certain shedding of fear by the Jewish people of performing their Jewishness publicly and an embracing of Jewish culture, history, and religion in the public sphere? Or could it even simply be an expression of the popular artistic and theatrical trends of the times in which these productions were created, with various degrees of realism seeing a return to popularity in the last thirty years? Only further research may tell. However, regardless of which of these options — if any — may or may not be the case, they are united in that they are all answers to Taylor's question which seems to drive at the core of the issue of adaptation: "what conditions in the present trigger performance practices to reactivate past behaviors and attitudes that will interrupt the status quo?" (83).

Just as this question defines past adaptations of *The Dybbuk*, so too will it continue to define future adaptations. While Soulpepper's production of *The Dybbuk* is the most recent

adaptation examined by this thesis, it was produced seven years ago[31] and the cultural and sociopolitical landscapes in both Canada and the rest of the world have certainly shifted since: Division and fragmentation along ideological and party lines dominate global politics, a lethal global pandemic has affected the physical and mental health of billions of people all across the world, and antisemitism, war, and civil unrest in Eastern Europe is on the rise once again. While one cannot accurately predict what the future will hold, these factors are sure to influence when, where, and how new adaptations of *The Dybbuk* arise; and each of these new adaptations will bear a unique relationship to the reactivation of the past through the performance of the rituals within *The Dybbuk* and the simultaneous experience of past and the present which they engender.

One such example, from beyond the geographic setting of North America which this thesis is focused on, is Almeida Theatre's 2021 staged reading of Golda Werman's translation of the *The Dybbuk*. Directed by Audrey Sheffield, this staged reading was part of Almeida's *Six Artists in Search of a Play* series which presented "seminal plays and new works from across the globe that have often been overlooked by British theatre" ("Announcing Six Artists"). Each of the six plays presented were accompanied by a curated "programme of live music, dance and panel discussions exploring theatrical traditions from around the world" ("Announcing Six Artists"). According to Sheffield herself, she chose *The Dybbuk* as her entry in *Six Artists* because:

> There's a view that through Yiddish theatre Jewish culture entered into dialogue with the outside world — both by putting itself on display and by importing theatrical pieces from other cultures. And *The Dybbuk…* stands out for its rich universality and as one of the

[31] At the time of writing.

> most original and powerful plays in the genre. [She has] always been fascinated by its evocation and exploration of the spiritual and mystical world of shtetl Hasidism coexisting with — and ultimately transcending — the world of the physical and the material. ("Sheffield Presents: The Dybbuk")

This is in keeping with both Almeida's mission statement to make "new work that asks big questions: of plays, of theatre and of the world around us [and to] bring together the most exciting artists to take risks; to provoke, inspire and surprise our audiences; to interrogate the present, dig up the past and imagine the future" ("Who We Are") and with Taylor's question surrounding the interrogating of the present through the reactivation of the past. Though it is worth noting that the staged reading performance mode — in contrast to a full-fledged production — in combination with COVID-19 physical distancing requirements presents a unique challenge for the (re)production of some rituals and ritual actions within the text, thus complicating the experiencing of 'again-ness' which usually typifies the text. Perhaps future researchers may wish to examine the effect of minimizing or removing the (re)performance of rituals within *The Dybbuk* in regards Taylor's notions of verticality and 'again-ness.'

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Since its premier more than one hundred years ago, S. An-sky's *The Dybbuk: Or Between Two Worlds* has been the crown jewel of the Yiddish Theatre canon. It has seen many productions and adaptations in many different languages across many different countries and continues to captivate the imagination of both Jews and non-Jews alike, owing its popularity to its unique blend of mysticism, romance, horror, and spirituality. While there may be nothing else like it, *The Dybbuk* is certainly not the only Yiddish play worth studying and performing. Nor is it the only Yiddish play through which the past can be reactivated through the (re)performance

described above. A new five-year research project, which began in October of 2021, titled "DYBBUK" — an homage to An-sky's legacy — is being undertaken by Ruthie Abeliovich at the University of Haifa which "sets out to uncover and explore the popular theatre that made up the daily cultural reality of the Jewish masses at the turn of the 20th century" ("Home" *DYBBUK*). In addition to building an open-access, interactive online database of information about Yiddish popular theatre and archival materials such as manuscripts and sound recordings, as well as relevant scholarship, DYBBUK aims to restore the "neglected yet highly influential corpus of Yiddish popular theatre (1880-1920) and make it available for our appreciation" by engaging in "integrative typological, embodied, and theoretical analysis of theatrical themes, dramatic forms, and performative practices" ("About" *DYBBUK*). As evidenced by its title, in an echoing of the past, DYBBUK follows in An-sky's footsteps by creating and *re*creating theatre through ethnographic inquiry and, in doing so, illuminating a moment in history. Much like the dybbuks of folktales and of An-sky's play, both those Yiddish plays which are world famous and those that are yet-to-be-recovered rely on our bodies in the here and now to bring them back to life and to offer them a certain purgation through their (re)performance and reactivation. In a way, to experience the past and the present simultaneously through the (re)performance of history, as Taylor describes, is to be briefly possessed by a dybbuk of sorts, wherein one may, even if just for a moment, experience what it is like to exist in between two worlds.

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