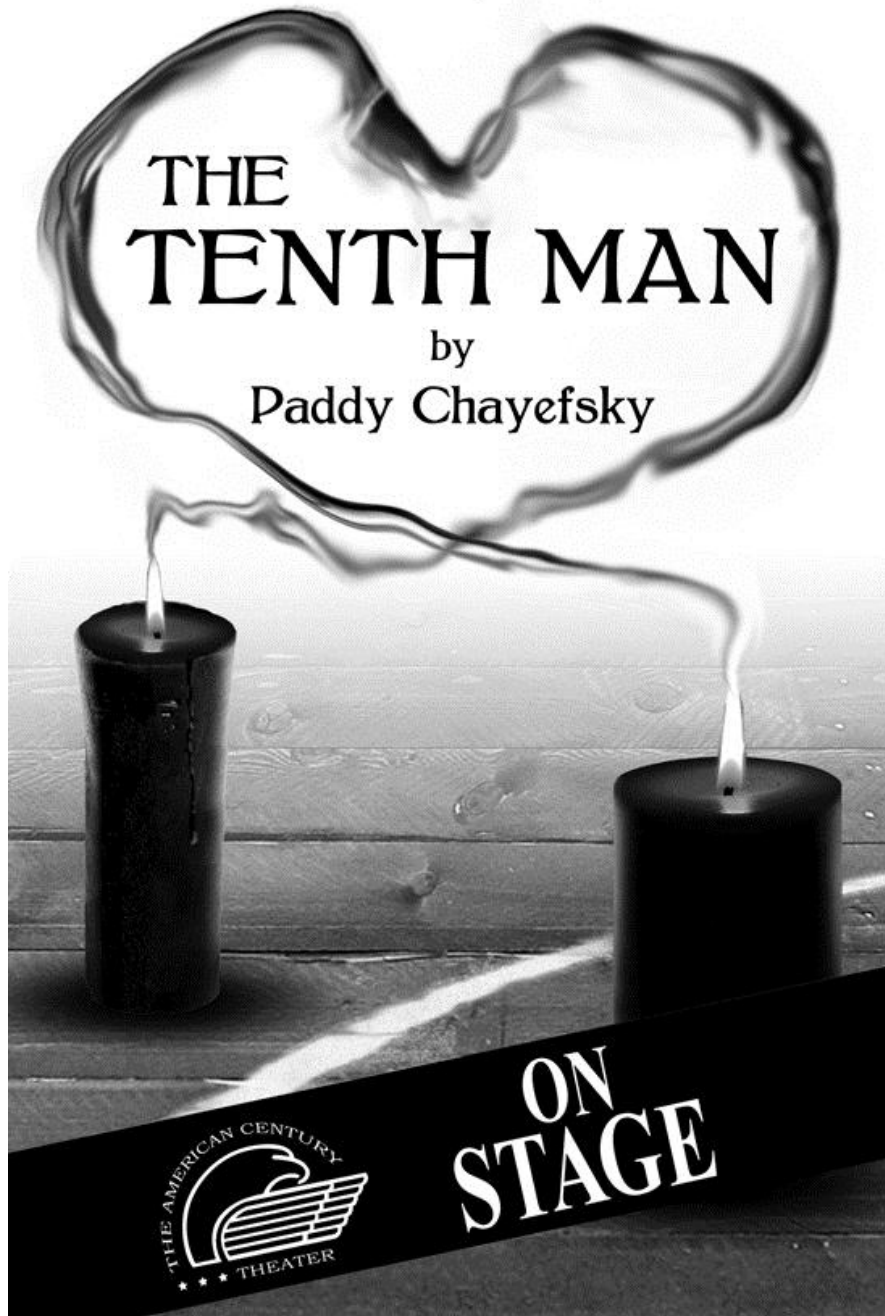


The American Century Theater presents



# Audience Guide

Written and Compiled by Jack Marshall

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Gunston TheatreTwo

## About The American Century Theater

**The American Century Theater** was founded in 1994. We are a professional company dedicated to presenting great, important, and neglected American plays of the Twentieth Century... what Henry Luce called "*the American Century*."

The company's mission is one of rediscovery, enlightenment, and perspective, not nostalgia or preservation. Americans must not lose the extraordinary vision and wisdom of past playwrights, nor can we afford to surrender our moorings to our shared cultural heritage.

Our mission is also driven by a conviction that communities need theater, and theater needs audiences. To those ends, this company is committed to producing plays that challenge and move all Americans, of all ages, origins and points of view. In particular, we strive to create theatrical experiences that entire families can watch, enjoy, and discuss long afterward.

These study guides are part of our effort to enhance the appreciation of these works, so rich in history, content, and grist for debate.

*The American Century Theater is a 501(c)(3) professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to producing significant 20<sup>th</sup> Century American plays and musicals at risk of being forgotten.*

*TACT is funded in part by the Arlington County Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources and the Arlington Commission for the Arts. This arts event is made possible in part by the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as by many generous donors.*



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## **The Playwright: Paddy Chayefsky** (January 29, 1923 – August 1, 1981)

**Jack Marshall**

Sidney “Paddy” Chayefsky was born in the Bronx, New York. He studied at the City College of New York and Fordham University and joined the U.S. Army during World War II, during which he received a Purple Heart and the nickname Paddy. As he explained it, Chayefsky was awakened by his duty officer at 5 AM to report for kitchen duty. He begged to be excused so he could go to Catholic Mass. "What? Yesterday morning you said you were Jewish!" said the amused duty officer. "Yes, but my mother is Irish," said Chayefsky. "Okay, Paddy," said the officer, and Sidney became Paddy for all time.

While recovering from his injuries (from a German land mine) in an Army Hospital in England, Chayefsky fought off boredom by writing the book and lyrics to a musical comedy, *No T.O. for Love*. It wasn't a bad first effort: the show toured European Army bases for two years. The London opening of *No T.O. for Love* in London's West End marked the beginning of Chayefsky's professional writing career. It was during the London production of this musical that Chayefsky met Broadway director and playwright Joshua Logan, a future collaborator, and screenwriter/playwright Garson Kanin, who invited Chayefsky to collaborate with him on a documentary about the Allied invasion.

Chayefsky worked in his uncle's print shop after the war, an experience which provided a background for his later teleplay, *A Printer's Measure*. With some nudging from his friend Kanin, producers Mike Gordon and Jerry Bressler gave Chayefsky a junior writer's contract. Unable to get his stories published, he moved out to Hollywood, failed to find employment there either, and moved back to New York.

In the late 1940s, Chayefsky wrote short stories and radio scripts, and even served as a gagwriter for radio host Robert Q. Lewis. One of his scripts was called *The Man Who Made The Mountain Shake*, which attracted the notice of legendary screenwriter and director Elia Kazan. Though Kazan worked

with Chayefsky to get the script perfected and produced, it never was. But Chayefsky's elite contacts finally began to pay off.

Chayefsky was hired to adapt the story *It Happened on the Brooklyn Subway* for The Philco Television Playhouse. The story is about a photographer on a New York subway train whose faith in God is restored when he reunites a concentration camp survivor with his long-lost wife. Chayefsky's 1949 adaptation of Budd Schulberg's "What Makes Sammy Run?" was a high-profile show that began to build his reputation.

He had always wanted to write a script with a synagogue as backdrop, and created *Holiday Song*, broadcast in 1952 and again in 1954. He submitted more work to *Philco*, often based on his life experiences and the New York Jewish community. Chayefsky established himself as major writer in 1953 with the teleplay *Marty*, featuring Rod Steiger and Nancy Marchand (well-remembered today as the newspaper publisher on "Lou Grant" and the unpleasant mother of Tony Soprano on "The Sopranos.") The story of a lonely Bronx butcher who meets a plain woman named Clara, *Marty* was a work that Chayefsky knew was his ticket to bigger things. He insisted on a clause in his *Marty* contract that stated that only he could write the screenplay. He did, and won an Oscar for it; *Marty* also earned Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director (Delbert Mann), and Best Actor (Ernest Borgnine, replacing Steiger).

Chayefsky's next film, *The Goddess*, was inspired by the life of Marilyn Monroe and starred Kim Stanley as Emily Ann Faulkner, a small-town blonde who becomes a Hollywood sex symbol. For the seventh season of *Philco Television Playhouse*, Chayefsky wrote *Middle of the Night*, with E. G. Marshall and Eva Marie Saint. It became a Tony-nominated Broadway success in 1958, and was filmed by Columbia Pictures in 1959.

That year marked Chayefsky's second Broadway theatrical success, *The Tenth Man*, which received Tony nominations in 1960 for Best Play, Best Director (Tyrone Guthrie) and Best Scenic Design. Guthrie received another nomination for Chayefsky's *Gideon*, as did actor Frederic March, although that play was a critical success with no audience to speak of. Chayefsky's final Broadway effort, *The Passion of Josef D*, was a failure.

But Chayefsky's success in screenwriting continued. He wrote the satire *The Americanization of Emily* (1964) with James Garner and Julie Andrews,

and adapted the Lerner and Loewe musical *Paint Your Wagon* for the screen in 1969, one of the strangest movie musicals of all time (Clint Eastwood sings! Lee Marvin sings!). His next movie, *The Hospital* (1971), was one of the best and sharpest satires of all time, earning Chayefsky another Oscar for screenwriting.

Then came *Network* (1976). Peter Finch starred as Howard Beale, an aging network anchorman who snaps during a broadcast one night and who has inspired revelations about saving mankind from television by using television. It also featured Faye Dunaway, Robert Duvall and William Holden. Chayefsky received his third Oscar for screenwriting, substantially because of this iconic speech:

**Howard Beale:** *I don't have to tell you things are bad. Everybody knows things are bad. It's a depression. Everybody's out of work, or scared of losing their jobs. The dollar buys a nickel's worth. Banks are going bust. Shopkeepers keep a gun under the counter. Punks are running wild, and nobody knows what to do. There's no end to it. We know the air is unfit to breathe and our food is unfit to eat. We sit watching our TVs while some local newscaster tells us that today we had homicides and violent crimes, as if that's the way it should be. We know things are bad. Worse than bad. They're crazy. Everything is going crazy, so we don't go out any more. We sit in the house, and the world we live in gets smaller. All we say is "Please, at least leave us alone in our living rooms. Let me have my toaster and my TV and I won't say anything. Just leave us alone."*

*Well, I'm not going to leave you alone. I want you to get mad! I don't want you to protest or riot. I don't want you to write to your congressman. I don't know what to do about the depression, the inflation and the crime. All I know is that first you've got to get mad! You've gotta say "I'm a human being, goddammit! My life has value!"*

*So...I want you to get up now. I want all of you to get up out of your chairs. I want you to get up right now and go to the window, open it and stick your head out and yell, "I'm as mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore!"*

*Then we'll figure out what to do about the depression, inflation, and the oil crisis. But first get up out of your chairs, open the window, stick your head out and yell "I'm as mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore!"*

At the Academy Awards in 1977, Chayefsky won many admirers after Vanessa Redgrave, accepting her award for Best Supporting Actress in "Julia," made a controversial speech denouncing Zionism by the Israeli government. Following Redgrave to the podium, he said, "I would like to suggest to Miss Redgrave that her winning an Academy Award is not a pivotal moment in history, does not require a proclamation, and a simple 'Thank you' would have sufficed."

Paddy Chayefsky's final film, *Altered States* (1980), was based on his novel satirizing the scientific research community and its pretensions. During production, he and director Ken Russell had many disagreements, as Russell wanted the movie to be more of a symbolic, special-effects laden film than a satire. Chayefsky ultimately withdrew his name from the credits and replaced it with Sidney Aaron.

Drama critic Martin Gottfried gives a general description of Chayefsky's personal traits as they may have affected his writings:

*"Chayefsky was a sturdy man of forty-two, compact and burly in the bulky way of a schoolyard athlete, with thick dark hair and a bent nose that could pass for a street fighter's. He was a grown-up with one foot in the boys' clubs of his city youth, a street snob who would not allow the loss of his nostalgia. He was an intellectual competitor, always spoiling for a political argument or a philosophical argument, or any exchange over any issue, changing sides for the fun of the fray. A liberal, he was annoyed by liberals; a proud Jew, he wouldn't let anyone call him a "Jewish writer." In short, the life of the mind was a participant sport for Paddy Chayefsky."*

Chayefsky was married to Susan Sackler during February 1949, and their son Dan was born six years later. Despite an alleged affair with Kim Novak, Paddy and Susan Chayefsky remained married until his death.

Chayefsky died in New York City of cancer during August 1981 at the age of 58, and was interred in Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla, Westchester County, New York. His personal papers are at the Wisconsin Historical Society and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

# **Paddy Chayefsky on the Craft of Writing**

**Excerpts from The Craft of the Screenwriter by John Joseph Brady  
(Simon and Schuster,1987)**

## **ON THE THREE-ACT STRUCTURE**

"The three-act structure is the form that I grew up in the theater with. You generally present a situation in Act I, and by the end of Act I the situation has evolved to a point where something is threatening the situation. In Act II you solve that problem producing a more intense problem by the end of Act II. In Act III you solve that problem, either happily or unhappily, depending on whether you have a comedy or a tragedy or a drama: you work out the final solution accordingly."

## **ON EDITING**

"If it should occur to you to cut, do so. That's the first basic rule of cutting. If you're reading through and stop, something is wrong. Cut it. If something bothers you, then it's bad. Cut it. If you can cut inside the speech, you're really cutting most effectively...It's purifying, it's refining. Making it precise. Precision is one of the basic elements of poetry. My own rules are very simple. First, cut out all the wisdom; then cut out all the adjectives. I've cut some of my favorite stuff. I have no compassion when it comes to cutting. No pity, no sympathy. Some of my dearest and most beloved bits of writing have gone with a very quick slash, slash, slash. Because something was heavy there. Cutting leads to economy, precision, and to a vastly improved script."

## **ON THE WRITING METHOD**

"I always write a prose treatment. I write about half the story in prose to keep order among all the elements of the plot so I don't get stuck when I do the screenplay."



## **ON DIALOGUE**

"My dialogue is precise. And it's true. I think out the truth of what the people are saying and why they're saying it. Dialogue comes because I know what I want my characters to say. I envision the scene; I can imagine them up there on the screen; I try to imagine what they would be saying and how they would be saying it. And I keep it in character. And the dialogue comes out of that."

## **ON THE THEME**

"The best thing that can happen is for the theme to be nice and clear from the beginning. Doesn't always happen. You think you have a theme and you then start telling the story. Pretty soon the characters take over and the story takes over and you realize your theme isn't being executed by the story, so you start changing the theme."

## **ON NAMES**

"Names are fun. In *Hospital* I used a lot of mystery writers. Had a nurse named Christie. A doctor is named Chandler. Sometimes I go to baseball box scores and pick out names. Sometimes I keep characters from one project to another -- Arthur Landau, a lawyer, runs through a variety of things."

# **The Dybbuk: Past and Present**

**–Jack Marshall**

- In 2009, a text detailing a Jewish exorcism has been discovered among a collection of 11,000 manuscript fragments rescued from a 1,000-year-old storeroom in Cairo's Ben Ezra synagogue.

The neatly written 150-word document describes a ceremony to dispel the evil spirit of Nissim Ben Bunya from his widow, Qamar Bat Rahma. Apparently, Qamar had been possessed by the spirit—or dybbuk—of her

late husband while engaged to, or just married with, Joseph Moses Ben Sarah.

Renate Smithuis, the medieval Jewish studies scholar at The University of Manchester who found the text, thinks the Hebrew document was most likely written in the 18th century and probably originated from Egypt or Palestine. Professor Gideon Bohak from Tel Aviv University, who has worked with Smithuis, discovered that the prayer is ascribed to the famous 18th century Kabbalist Rabbi Shalom Shar‘abi.

***From the Jerusalem Post:***

*The fragment contains the second part of a prayer ritual in which the husband—or husband-to-be—of a widow recites an exorcism prayer, to which the other men gathered in the synagogue respond with a similar prayer.*

*Smithuis said that from the second half of the 16th century onwards, there were many stories about exorcisms in Jewish communities across the Mediterranean, primarily in North Africa and Palestine.*

*“But this fragment is so exciting because it’s not a story, but the record of a real event using a prayer which was actually recited in a synagogue,” he said. “The prayer was said in the presence of a minyan—the minimum number of 10 adult Jews required for a communal religious service.*

*“We think it likely to have come from Egypt or Palestine not only because the fragment originates from the Cairo Genizah but also because Qamar (Arabic for ‘Moon’) and Rahma (‘Mercy’) are names of Arabic origin,” Smithuis continued, adding that “we know little more about what happened than what is contained within these 150 or so words - but it does throw some light on this mysterious and little known side of Jewish culture.”*

Although Smithuis and many other Jews consider exorcisms beyond the pale of everyday Jewish practice, if you ask other eminent scholars in Jerusalem’s neighborhoods, you’ll receive another answer altogether.

Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzhak Batzri said that exorcisms, which are known in Jewish parlance as “removing the dybbuk,” are a fairly common practice. “My father has performed several of them in the past few years,” said Batzri on Tuesday, referring to Rabbi David Batzri, head of Yeshivat Hashalom.

A video on the Haredi Internet site Ladaat shows Batzri performing the removal of a dybbuk from a man in America via Internet just two weeks ago. The procedure was “successful,” but it took several hours.

Batzri also performed exorcisms on a woman from Dimona and a woman from South America.

Batzri’s son said that the dybbuk talks “out of the throat” of the person which it inhabits, and that the exorcism ceremony is performed by 10 men with Shofars who read special liturgical texts.

“Basically, the dybbuk is encouraged to leave the body of the person it has entered,” said Batzri. “The dybbuk is in actuality a lost soul who did not merit going to the Garden of Eden but also did not deserve going to Gehinom. He remains in limbo and at some point enters the body of a person,” said Batzri.

In Ladaat’s video Batzri is shown reciting prayers together with nine men and coaxing the dybbuk out of the man’s body.

The goal is to get the dybbuk to leave the body through the small toe of the left foot of the person who was possessed, explained Batzri.

***From the blog “Life in Israel” (<http://lifeinrael.blogspot.com>); Saturday, January 9, 2010***

### *Dybbuk Removal Gone All Wrong*

*In what seems to have been a crazy week for Judaism, that brought us back to the olden days of the stories of the 14th and 15th centuries, the week had both a gilgul being calmed and released, and a second attempt (this one not conducted by the modern invention of Skype) at the exorcism of a dybbuk.*

*The exorcism did not go down well, and again the dybbuk proved to be too powerful for Rav Batzri and his team of kabbalists (ghostbusters? dybbuk removers?), and, according to the reports in the various articles I have read, the dybbuk actually was going to accede to Rav Batzri's exhortations for it to depart from the host body, but was going to do so via the mouth. It seems that an oral extraction is considered dangerous and would have killed the host - reports say that the dybbuk started coming up through the throat, as his voice changed and he started choking, when Rav Batzri screamed at it to*

*go back down and not come out that way but only through his toe.*

*I guess Rav Batzri was able to convince it to not come out via the mouth, but the second half wasn't so convincing. The dybbuk went back down but also chose not to go out through Rav Batzri's preferred doorway. Instead it stayed in the poor Brazilian fellow.*

*The week closed with an announcement that Rav Batzri is now afraid for his life, as he is concerned the dybbuk will now attempt to harm him, for his attempts at removal. To thwart off the dybbuk's possible intentions, Rav Batzri went to the beis din of the Eida Haredi and had them issue an excommunication (needui) on the dybbuk. Rav Shternbuch, heading the beis din, acquiesced and issued the needui and declared a prohibition on the dybbuk from harming Rav Batzri.*

*I don't know why they expect the dybbuk to listen to the needui any more than he refused to listen to the demand for his departure from the host body. Regardless, we are in for another interesting week as Rav Batzri is going to make another attempt at removing the dybbuk in the coming days..*

## **Excerpt: *The Dybbuk*: A Comparative Textual Analysis**

**Joshua Mocle**

**Concordia University, Fall 2008**

**Nominated for Inclusion in the Concordia Religion Student Association Undergraduate Journal**

**[NOTE: *The Tenth Man* is not the only or most famous play about the Jewish exorcism ritual. That would be the 1914 Russian play *The Dybbuk*, by S. Ansky, recently adapted by playwright Tony Kushner. This discussion of that play has considerable insight into the Ansky-Kushner play as well.]**

### **Introduction**

While the most popular concepts of spiritual possession stem largely from the Christian tradition via films like *The Exorcist* and comic books such as Marvel Comics' *Ghost Rider*, established histories of possession and

exorcism exist in other faiths as well. In the Jewish tradition, a wandering spirit that possesses a living human body (as opposed to a dead human body) is called a dybbuk. Much like the well-known fictional tales of possession in popular culture, the most well-known example of Jewish dybbuk possession is also a well-established work of fiction. In 1914, Russian playwright S. Ansky published what would become his most recognized work: *The Dybbuk (or Between Two Worlds)* which chronicles a fictional account of a dybbuk possession in a small Jewish town (or *shtetl*) somewhere between the mid to late 1800s. The tale chronicles the story of a righteous Yeshiva student named Khonon (later anglicized from the original Yiddish to Chonen) in his quest to marry his intended, Leah. The play became wildly successful in Eastern Europe and Russia at the time. In 1995, *The Dybbuk* was adapted by well-known American playwright Tony Kushner (writer of the wildly famous *Angels in America*) based on a translation of Ansky's original play by Joachim Neugroschel.<sup>[11]</sup> Kushner's adaptation, renamed *A Dybbuk (or Between Two Worlds)* has become the most prominent version of the play in North America and has introduced the legend of the dybbuk to countless audiences unaware of the original folklore. However, Kushner makes several crucial amendments to the structure and message of the play, the result of which is, in many ways, a wildly different portrayal of a dybbuk possession than the one presented by Ansky, despite essentially telling the same story. When analyzing these two versions of the play concurrently, we begin to see that both writers use the legend of the dybbuk to represent God's will and presence on Earth and thus we can effectively determine the writers' own perceptions of God based on their own personal religiosity. Taking these opinions into account, we can ultimately formulate not only the writers' point of view, but possibly the point of view of many Jews at the time each play was written.

### **The Dybbuk: A Brief Overview**

The word dybbuk itself is derived from the Hebrew word *d'vook*, which means "attachment." It should be noted that within Christian and Muslim tradition, demonic possession is the most frequently recorded form of possession whereas spiritual possession seems to be a largely Jewish idea.<sup>[12]</sup> Granted, early accounts of possession within Judaism do seem to indicate that the Rabbis once believed in the concept of demonic possession, but around the sixteenth century the established spiritual possession theory had taken precedence within the tradition and the dybbuk legend was born.<sup>[13]</sup>

While there happen to be artifacts related to exorcism that are dated earlier than this time, the earliest texts related to dybbuk possession date back to the 1540's Galilean city of Tzfat in Ancient Israel (which remains one of the four holiest cities in the Jewish world). It's entirely possible there may very well have been cases of possession occurring before the 1540s that were either not recorded or somehow lost to time,<sup>[4]</sup> but by the 1570s recorded accounts of dybbuk possession began to be arise all over Europe and the Middle East, many from within Spain, including cities such as Ferrara, Ancona, Pesaro, Venice, Damascus, Prague, Cairo, Tituan and Turin.<sup>[5]</sup>

However, it is quite difficult to create an overview of dybbuk possession throughout history or to even analyze the phenomenon on the whole with any sort of accuracy due to the simple fact that very few accounts of possession are similar at all. While the need for a Rabbi to exorcise the dybbuk remains constant throughout all of these texts, details that vary from text to text include the reason a soul becomes a dybbuk after its body dies, the ways in which a dybbuk enters a living body – including what people can do to make themselves susceptible to possession, the traits exhibited by a possessed person (which included such social misbehavior as exposing themselves in public, bleating like a sheep, climbing trees at random as well as other erratic and sometimes violent behavior<sup>[6]</sup>), how a dybbuk leaves a body and the process by which the Rabbi can force a dybbuk to leave a body. All of these details are entirely crucial to understanding the phenomenon as a whole. It should be noted that for a nearly hundreds of years, these texts were regarded as completely factual and indeed are still regarded as such in some communities even today. Another important clarification to make is that, while dybbuks themselves may not actually exist, exorcism techniques and attempts like the ones presented below are well documented, which means that the community did, at one point, very much believe in possession.

### **Conflicting Reports**

Before delving into Ansky's original tale and its more modern adaptation by Kushner, let us first look into a few of the ancient accounts of dybbuk possession throughout history. While there are many religious texts dating back to the 1540s that deal with dybbuk possession and exorcism, what is important to remember is that at the time Ansky's play was written it was more or less clear that these early accounts of dybbuk possession were little more than fictional pieces; a product of a very specific time period that had

long since lost the cultural significance that turned the idea of the dybbuk into a cultural phenomenon. Granted, while tales of spiritual possession still maintain a certain cultural significance, they only do so in the realm of fiction as opposed to the earlier texts which proclaimed to document true events and were accepted as such. As stated above, many of the details of these accounts differ from one another and make it impossible to reach any kind of consensus on the subject of dybbuk possession. However, they ultimately provide not only a cultural basis for both plays, but also a textual precedent.

One of the earliest reports of dybbuk possession is the tale of the spirit of Joseph Della Reina, which is known through an account by Rabbi Judah Hallewa confirmed by two unnamed witnesses.<sup>171</sup> Della Reina was a well-known Kabbalist in pre-expulsion Spain and as the account goes he became a dybbuk following his death and proceeded to possess the body of a gentile maidservant. A pious Jew (known as a *tzadik*) was then summoned to convene with the spirit and to have it reveal its history. While the story does not reveal how the gentile woman made herself open to possession, or recall how it was that the spirit left the woman's body, it was revealed that Della Reina was barred access to the world to come due to his heretical dabbling with Kabbalist mysticism, specifically his repeated use of holy names (the utterance of which was incredibly powerful) for his own benefit and not the benefit of heaven. It is because of this that the holy tribunal would not allow his soul to enter Paradise and was thus forced to wander in the nothingness that exists between worlds. It is because of this that he took refuge in the body of the living maidservant since it would effectively bring him back into the living world. These are all the details provided in this particular account, so the outcome and nature of the exorcism (if there even was one) is unknown.

Another early story of dybbuk possession as well as one of the earliest exorcism accounts involved the famous Rabbi Joseph Caro and a spirit who possessed a young boy in Tzfat in the Hebrew year 5305 (or 1545 Common Era). When Rabbi Caro questioned the spirit, it was revealed that it had possessed many living creatures prior to the boy, but had originally been a Jew. When asked why he was not allowed entry into paradise, he admitted to being a relatively non-practicing Jew while alive: only studying Torah and not Talmud, only praying on the Sabbath and festivals and never putting on phylacteries (or *Tefillin*). Caro then determined that this is why the man was rejected from heaven. As for why he took over the body of the boy, the

spirit admitted that he was angered by the boy's father killing the dog that the spirit had inhabited, and so in revenge the spirit entered the man's son in order to take the boy's life. As, indeed, the boy's health continued to fail, Caro succeeded in removing the spirit by reciting a specific holy prayer seven times both forward and backward. Following this, he placed a *niddui* (or excommunication) on the soul wherein it was forbidden to enter the Galilee. Subsequently, the boy returned to health.<sup>[8]</sup>

One of the most well-known early accounts of dybbuk possession also occurred in Tzfat on the eleventh day of the Hebrew month of Adar in the year 5331 (or February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1571, approximately).<sup>[9]</sup> This tale involves the spirit of a man named Samuel Zarfati possessing the wife of a holy and pious man. Evidently, Zarfati had been barred from the world to come by proclaiming that all religions were equal. Two pious men were summoned to convene with the spirit and Zarfati claimed he was able to enter woman's home due to their being no mezuzah (holy parchment) on the basement door and was able to enter her body since she allowed a small amount of mud to fall upon her head. The two pious men then agreed to pray for the redemption of Zarfati's soul as well as blow the shofar (ceremonial ram's horn) for him if he agreed to leave the woman's body, which he initially did. The next day however, Zarfati's soul returned to the body of the woman, once again being displeased with his existence in the limbo between the living world and the Paradise of the world to come. Since no one had seen fit to adorn the woman with amulets or place a mezuzah on the basement door, he was once again allowed access to her. When ordered to exit the woman's body a second time, Zarfati refused, at which point the two pious men lit fires and forced the woman to breathe in smoke and sulfur in order to exorcise Zarfati's soul. In response to this, Zarfati forced the woman to throw off the blanket that covered her, exposing her nakedness to all present and shaming the woman for life. After much deliberation and smoke inhalation, Zarfati once again left the body through the woman's vagina, drawing blood on his way out. Following this, they laid amulets on the woman, believing the trouble to be passed. However, it is believed that when the woman died eight days later that the spirit had re-entered her (since the amulets were not engraved with her name), choked her to death and left with her soul.

Another relevant dybbuk text is one by Ansky himself. While it is ultimately a variation on the ancient texts already mentioned, it provides not only an important variation on dybbuk possession but also further illustrates



Ansky's connection to the dybbuk folklore. It involves a cantor in the Ukrainian town of Vishnevitza who also happens to be a follower of the great Rabbi Duvidl of Talne.<sup>[101]</sup> The cantor was getting on in years and could no longer sing as beautifully as he once could. Eventually, the members of the congregation stepped in and relieved the cantor of his job and replaced him with a younger cantor with a more pleasing vocal style. The old cantor began to resent the new cantor and his resentment eventually grew so great that the old cantor died on the eve of Rosh Hashana (the New Year on the Hebrew calendar). However, when the new Cantor went to sing the Rosh Hashana prayers the next day, he could not remember a note of his tune. It was then that the spirit of the old cantor entered the body of the new cantor. When the new cantor sang, the voice and tune of the old cantor came out of his mouth. The new cantor then collapsed and as he was being carried out of the synagogue, tore away from those carrying him and ran back to lectern and the old cantors voice screamed out of the mouth of the new cantor, proclaiming that he was still the cantor of that town, that that was still his lectern and that he would sing his own version of the prayers in his own melody. The new cantor was then brought to Rabbi Duvidl, who addressed both the new cantor and the spirit of the old cantor declaring that the people must have a cantor whose voice is pleasing to the congregation. He implored the spirit of the old cantor to leave the body of the new one and return to his eternal rest. Rabbi Duvidl proceeded to pray to God for strength and then powerfully sing the Rosh Hashana prayers with a new, third melody, which appeared to drive the spirit out of the new cantor's body. After that day, the community always sang that third melody and it came to be known as "the Dybbuk Melody."

### **Conclusion**

Both versions of *Between Two Worlds* have been established as fiction. As mentioned above, there is very little evidence to prove that the ancient Rabbinic texts relating to dybbuks are non-fictional, though they do have very specific points to convey. If one looks at all of these accounts together one begins to see a definite list of approved behavior take shape. According to the ancient texts, dybbuk possession is not something to be viewed in a positive light and is should be avoided at all cost. Therefore, people must avoid doing things that would cause their souls to become dybbuks (like use holy names in vain, break one's agreements with others, study Kabbalah, only pray on the Sabbath and holidays, etc.) but they must also avoid doing things that would make them susceptible to dybbuk possession. It's no

coincidence that all of the reasons given for why a person became possessed are also contained in Rabbinic mandates for how one should or should not live one's life. Effectively, this makes dybbuks invisible, haunting policemen, conjured into existence in the minds of all Jews in order to keep them observant to the holy laws and the laws of the Rabbinate. The texts that contain these ancient accounts are, in that sense, no different than the texts that explicitly state Rabbinic Law openly; these just do it via the instillation of what we would see as supernatural fear into the hearts and minds of the people. However, since God created all of existence, which would include dybbuks, they were ultimately viewed as a natural part of life. Much like all modern folktales, these stories also carry a message; it just happens to be the same message already imparted by the Rabbinate time and time again.

Unlike the authors of the earlier Rabbinic texts, neither Ansky nor Kushner wished to impart any sort of religious indoctrination through their work. Rather, their goal was to explore spirituality using a universally accepted type of event within the Jewish community. Had Ansky written about a pogrom rather than a possession, he may very well have been able to get his own sense of religiosity across, and had Kushner then adapted THAT play, his own stance on God could have easily been presented as well. Make no mistake, though: the choice of using a dybbuk possession has more relevance to it than simply being the "disaster of the week." By choosing that specific type of event, Ansky (and later Kushner) managed to connect his own thoughts on spirituality to a common theme that existed within the Jewish community for hundreds of years, effectively connecting the past to the present in an incredible and entirely unique way and in so doing provided a template for Kushner to do the same decades later. As it stands, both plays serve as compelling pieces of Judaic literature that provide unique portraits of Jewish life and the attitudes contained therein during two very different stages in the history of the Jewish people. Should the play be adapted again in the future, it is incredibly likely that it will continue to chronicle the challenges faced by the Jewish community over the years (both religiously and historically), but also provide an unbreakable connection to the rich history of the people as a whole that can be observed for generations to come.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Fisher at 146.

<sup>[2]</sup> Chajes at 4.

<sup>[3]</sup> Id.

<sup>[4]</sup> Id. at 3

<sup>[5]</sup> Id. at 1.

<sup>[6]</sup> Id.

<sup>[7]</sup> Id. at 26-27.

<sup>[8]</sup> Id. at 141-142.

<sup>[9]</sup> Id. at 39-41.

<sup>[10]</sup> Kushner at 117 – 119.

## **The "Golden Age" of Television Drama**

**Anna Everett, from the Museum of Broadcast Communications**

*[Paddy Chayefsky was perhaps the most notable writing talent forged by the period now commonly called "The Golden Age of Television." Before the need for ratings drove TV executives to seek lowest common denominators, before television itself had wounded the theater, crippling its ability to provide a training ground for aspiring writers, before television developed its own, minimalist style of acting that in turn infected movies and the stage, and before intolerance for the uncertainty of life performance caused TV*

*executives to ban live drama, emerging talents like Chayefsky, Rod Serling, Abby Mann, Reginald Rose and others not only produced an astounding volume of quality drama tailored to the small screen and hour-long format, but also, as in Chayefsky's case, prepared themselves for even greater triumphs. It is fair to say that the "Golden Age" shares credit for The Tenth Man, Network, and his other lasting contributions to 20<sup>th</sup> Century American entertainment, thought and culture.]*

The "golden age" of American television generally refers to the proliferation of original and classic dramas produced for live television during America's postwar years. From 1949 to approximately 1960, these live dramas became the fitting programmatic complements to the game shows, westerns, soap operas and vaudeo shows (vaudeville and variety acts on TV) that dominated network television's prime time schedule. As the nation's economy grew and the population expanded, television and advertising executives turned to dramatic shows as a programming strategy to elevate the status of television and to attract the growing and increasingly important suburban family audience. "Golden age" dramas quickly became the ideal marketing vehicle for major U.S. corporations seeking to display their products favorably before a national audience.

In the early years, "golden age" drama programs such as *The Actors' Studio* (ABC/CBS, 1948-1950) originated from primitive but innovative two-camera television studios located primarily in New York City, although some broadcasts, such as *Mr. Black* (ABC, 1949), a half-hour mystery anthology series, were produced in Chicago as well. Ranging in duration from thirty minutes to an hour, these live dramas were generic hybrids uniquely suited to the evolving video technology. Borrowing specific elements from the legitimate stage, network radio, and the Hollywood film, the newly constructed dramas on television (teledramas) fashioned a dynamic entertainment form that effectively fused these high and low cultural expressions.

From radio these teledramas inherited the CBS and NBC network distribution system, sound effects, music, theme songs and the omniscient narrator, who provided continuity after commercial message breaks. From film, teledramas borrowed aging stars and emerging personalities, camera stylistics, mobility and flexibility. Imported from the theater were Broadway-inspired set designs, contemporary stage (i.e., realist and "method") acting techniques that imparted a sense of immediacy and reality

to small-screen performances, and finally, teleplay adaptations of classic and middle-brow literature. In a statement that clearly expresses television drama's debt to the stage, Fred Coe, producer of the weekly *NBC Television Playhouse* (1948-55), remarked that "all of us were convinced it was our mission to bring Broadway to America via the television set."

Ironically, however, it was live teledramas that helped television to displace radio, the stage and film as the favorite leisure-time activities for the nation's burgeoning suburban families in the late forties to the mid-fifties. This postwar demographic shift from urban to suburban centers is often credited with creating the new mass audience and the subsequent demand for the home-theater mode of entertainment that network television, boosted by the high quality drama programs, was uniquely capable of satisfying.

The first so-called "golden age" drama program to appear was the *Kraft Television Theater*, which premiered on 7 May 1947, on the NBC network. *The Ford Theater* (CBS/NBC/ABC, 1948-57), *Philco* and *Goodyear Television Playhouses* (NBC, 1948-55), *Studio One* (CBS, 1948-58), *Tele-Theatre* (NBC, 1948-50) and *Actors Studio* (ABC/CBS, 1948-49) followed the very next year. In 1951 network television was linked coast to coast and in 1950 *Hollywood Theater Time* (ABC) became one of the first dramatic anthology shows to originate from the West coast (although transmitted to the East via kinescopes--inferior copies of shows filmed directly from the television screen).

Several important factors contributed to the rise of "golden age" dramas by the mid-1950s. First, the U.S. Congress issued more station licenses and allocated more air time and frequencies to the nation's four networks: NBC, CBS, ABC and DuMont. Consequently, this major expansion of the television industry necessitated a rapid increase for new shows. Because this early video era preceded the advent of telefilm and videotape, the live television schedule was a programming vortex with an inexhaustible demand for new shows, 90% of which were broadcast live. The remaining dramas were transmitted (usually from the East Coast to the West) via kinescopes. Location on the television schedule was also a key element in the success of anthology dramas during this early phase. Because the sponsors rather than the networks generally controlled the programs, teledramas were not restricted to a particular network or time schedule. As a result of this programming flexibility, it was not unusual for shows either to rotate around the dial or to remain firmly entrenched, all in search of the best possible

ratings. In 1953, the *Kraft Television Theater* aired at 9:00 PM on Wednesdays over the NBC network and aired a second hour under the same series title on Thursdays at 9:30 PM on ABC. The venerable *Ford Television Theater* appeared on all three networks during its nine-year run. The anthology format itself, which demanded a constant supply of actors, writers, directors and producers, and was quite different from the episodic series structure featuring a stable cast, always offered something new to viewers. And since anthology dramas provided plenty of work to go around, many actors got their first starring roles in live dramas, while others gained national exposure that was not possible on the stage or that eluded them on the big screen.

This rotating system of anthology drama production resulted in a creative firmament for television that many television historians consider as yet unsurpassed. The fact that these shows dramatized many high quality original works as well as adaptations of high and middle-brow literature gave advertisers cost-effective reasons for underwriting the relatively high production values that characterized many of the topnotch anthology programs. Many, in fact, were consistent Emmy Award winners. *The Texaco Star Theater* won the 1949 Emmy for "Best Kinescope Show." *U.S. Steel Hour* won two Emmys in 1953, its debut year, and *Studio One* received three Emmys for the 1955 season for its production of "Twelve Angry Men."

As the genre matured and traded its amateur sets for professionally designed studios, it looked good, and by extension, so did its sponsors. Accordingly, the growing prestige of live dramas enabled established and fading stars from the Broadway stage and Hollywood films to be less reticent about performing on television, and many flocked to the new medium. In fact, some even lent their famous names to these anthology drama programs. *Robert Montgomery Presents* (ABC, 1950-57) is one of the first anthology series to rely on Hollywood talent. His star-driven program was later joined by the *Charles Boyer Theater* (1953), and in 1955 silent film star Conrad Nagel hosted his own syndicated anthology drama entitled *The Conrad Nagel Theater*. Bing Crosby Enterprises produced *The Gloria Swanson Show* in 1954, with Swanson as host and occasional star in teleplays produced for this dramatic anthology series. More commonly, however, it was the sponsor's name that appeared in the show titles, with stars serving as narrators or hosts. For example, from 1954 to 1962 Ronald Reagan hosted CBS' *General Electric Theater*.

As crucial as these elements were, perhaps the most important reason leading to the success of this nascent television art form was the high caliber of talent on both sides of the video camera. Whereas many well-known actors from the stage and screen participated in live television dramas as the 1950s progressed, it was the obscure but professionally trained theater personnel from summer stock and university theater programs like Yale's Drama School who launched the innovative teletheater broadcasts that we now refer to as television's "golden age."

In 1949, 24-year-old Marlon Brando starred in "I'm No Hero," produced by the *Actors' Studio*. Other young actors, such as Susan Strasberg (1953), Paul Newman (1954), and Steve McQueen, made noteworthy appearances on the *Goodyear Playhouse*. Among some of the most prominent writers of "golden age" dramas were Rod Serling, Paddy Chayefsky, Gore Vidal, Reginald Rose and Tad Mosel. Rod Serling stands out for special consideration here because in addition to winning the 1955 Emmy for "Best Original Teleplay Writing" ("Patterns" on *Kraft Television Theater*), Serling also won two teleplay Emmys for *Playhouse 90* (1956 & 1957), and two "Outstanding Writing Achievement in Drama" Emmys for *Twilight Zone* (1959 and 1960) and for *Chrysler Theater* in 1963. Serling's six Emmys for four separate anthology programs over two networks unquestionably secures his position at the top of the "golden age" pantheon. For television, it was writers like Serling and Chayefsky who became the auteurs of its "golden-age." Gore Vidal sums up the opportunity that writing for television dramas represented in this way: "One can find better work oftener on the small grey screen than on Broadway." Chayefsky was more sanguine when he stated that television presented "the drama of introspection," and that "television, the scorned stepchild of drama, may well be the basic theater of our century."

In addition to actors and writers, some of the most renowned Hollywood directors got their big breaks on television's anthology dramas. John Frankenheimer directed for the *Kraft Television Theater*, Robert Altman for *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, Yul Brynner and Sidney Lumet for *Studio One*, Sidney Pollack for *The Chrysler Theater* (1965 Emmy for "Directorial Achievement in Drama") and Delbert Mann for *NBC Television Playhouse*. These are but a few major directors who honed their skills during television's "golden age."

By 1955 "golden age" dramas had proven so popular with national audiences that they became important staples of the network television schedule. Some of the anthologies were now produced on film, but they maintained the aesthetic and psychological premises of the live productions that tutored their creators and their audiences. These drama series aired on the networks each day except Saturdays and on some days there were up to four separate anthology shows airing on one evening's prime-time schedule. One instance of such a programming pattern occurred on Thursday nights during the 1954-55, TV season. Here, in one single evening viewers could choose between *Kraft Television Theater* (ABC, 1953-55), *Four Star Playhouse* (CBS, 1952-56), *Ford Theater* (NBC, 1952-56) and *Lux Video Theater* (NBC, 1954-57). Dramatic anthologies came in various generic formats as well. The other genres were, for example, suspense: *Kraft Suspense Theater* (NBC, 1963-65) and *The Clock* (NBC/ABC, 1949-51); mystery: *Mr. Arsenic* (ABC, 1952) and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (CBS/NBC, 1955-65); psychological: *Theater of the Mind* (NBC, 1949); legal: *They Stand Accused* (DuMont 1949-54); science fiction: *Twilight Zone* (CBS, 1959-64); military: *Citizen Soldier* (Syndicated, 1956); and reenactments: *Armstrong Circle Theater* (NBC/CBS, 1950-63).

As these various titles suggest, the dramas staged on these anthology programs were remarkably diverse, at least in form if not in substance. In this regard, critics of the so-called "golden age" dramas have noted what they consider to be major problems inherent in the staging of plays for the commercial television medium.

Much of the criticism of these live television dramas concerned the power sponsors often exerted over program content. Specifically, the complaints concerned the mandate by sponsors that programs adhere to a "dead-centerism." In other words, sponsored shows were to avoid completely socially and politically controversial themes. Only those dramas that supported and reflected positive middle-class values, which likewise reflected favorably the image of the advertisers, were broadcast. Critics charge the networks with pandering to Southern viewer expectations in order not to offend regional sensibilities. Scripts exploring problems at the societal level (i.e., racial discrimination, structural poverty, and other social ills) were systematically ignored. Instead, critics complain, too many "golden age" dramas were little more than simplistic morality tales focusing on the everyday problems and conflicts of weak individuals confronted by personal shortcomings such as alcoholism, greed, impotence, and divorce,



for example. While there is no doubt that teleplays dealing with serious social issues were not what most network or advertising executives considered appropriate subject matter for predisposing viewers to consume their products, it is important to note that the "golden age" did coincide with the cold-war era and McCarthyism, and that cold-war references, such as avoiding communism and loving America, were frequently incorporated in teleplays of the mid to late 1950s.

Most of the scripts in the live television dramas, however, were original teleplays or works adapted from the stage, ranging from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* to such high-brow and classic literary adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, among many others. This menu of live television dramas, especially when compared with popular Hollywood films, the elite theater, or commercial radio, presented American audiences with an extraordinary breadth of viewing experiences in a solitary entertainment medium. Moreover, this cultural explosion was occurring in the comfort of the new mass audiences' brand new suburban living rooms. While the classics and some contemporary popular writers provided material for the teleplays, they were not enough for the networks' demanding weekly program schedules. Moreover, the television programmers were often thwarted by Hollywood's practice of buying the rights to popular works and refusing to grant a rival medium access to them, thereby foreclosing the television networks' ability to dramatize some of the most popular and classic plays. In response, the networks began cultivating original scripts from young writers. Thus, the majority of the dramas appearing on these anthology shows were original works.

Perhaps the quintessential "golden age" drama is Paddy Chayefsky's "Marty." On 24 May 1953, Delbert Mann directed Chayefsky's most renowned teleplay for NBC's *Philco Television Playhouse*. Starring Rod Steiger and Nancy Marchand as the principals, "Marty" is a love story about two ordinary characters and the mundane world they inhabit. "Marty" is important because its uncomplicated and sympathetic treatment of Marty, the butcher, and his ability to achieve independence from his demanding mother and embrace his uncertain future resonated with many new suburban viewers, who were, themselves, facing similar social and political changes in post-war American society. "Marty" was an ideal drama for the times, leading one reviewer to write that it represented "the unadorned glimpse of the American middle-class milieu." The suburban viewers, like the fictional

"Marty" they welcomed into their living rooms, had become willing participants in an emerging national culture no longer distinguishable by inter-generational and inter-ethnic differences. What further distinguishes "Marty" is the fact that it signaled a trend in the entertainment industry whereby teleplays were increasingly adapted for film. Shortly after its phenomenal television success, "Marty" became a successful feature film.

Some of the most successful and critically acclaimed dramatic anthology programs of the "golden age" were: *Armstrong Circle Theater* (thirteen seasons), *Kraft Television Theater* (eleven seasons), *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (ten seasons), *Studio One* (ten seasons), *The U.S. Steel Hour* (ten seasons), *General Electric Theater* (nine seasons), *Philco Television Playhouse* (seven seasons), *Goodyear Playhouse* (six seasons), *Playhouse 90* (four seasons), and *Twilight Zone* (four seasons, revived in 1985-88). In present times, only the *Hallmark Hall of Fame* (1951-present) survives from the heyday of television's "golden age." With the advent of videotape, telefilm and the shift to Hollywood studios as sites of program production, and the social upheavals of the 1960s, live anthology dramas fell victim to poor ratings and changing social tastes.





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