

Enacting Ethnicity: Yiddishkeit Masked and Unmasked on the Contemporary American Stage

Rutgers University has made this article freely available. Please share how this access benefits you.
Your story matters. <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/55165/story/>

This work is an **ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT (AM)**

This is the author's manuscript for a work that has been accepted for publication. Changes resulting from the publishing process, such as copyediting, final layout, and pagination, may not be reflected in this document. The publisher takes permanent responsibility for the work. Content and layout follow publisher's submission requirements.

Citation for this version and the definitive version are shown below.

Citation to Publisher Version: Shandler, Jeffrey. (2018). Enacting Ethnicity: Yiddishkeit Masked and Unmasked on the Contemporary American Stage. *Jewish Social Studies* 23(2), 1-23. <http://doi.org/10.2979/jewisocistud.23.2.01>.

Citation to this Version: Shandler, Jeffrey. (2018). Enacting Ethnicity: Yiddishkeit Masked and Unmasked on the Contemporary American Stage. *Jewish Social Studies* 23(2), 1-23. Retrieved from [doi:10.7282/T3BG2S26](https://doi.org/10.7282/T3BG2S26).

Terms of Use: Copyright for scholarly resources published in RUcore is retained by the copyright holder. By virtue of its appearance in this open access medium, you are free to use this resource, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings. Other uses, such as reproduction or republication, may require the permission of the copyright holder.

Article begins on next page

Enacting Ethnicity: Yiddishkeit Masked and Unmasked on the Contemporary American Stage

Jeffrey Shandler

ABSTRACT

*Two recent productions of American dramas employed provocative strategies for enacting Jewish ethnicity: National Asian American Theatre Company's performance of Clifford Odets's *Awake and Sing!* with an all-Asian American cast and New Yiddish Rep's staging of *Toyt fun a seylsman*, a Yiddish translation of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Each production entails a different approach to performing Jewishness that exemplifies these companies' respective artistic agendas regarding the enactment of ethnicity, resulting in complex performances of masking and unmasking Jewishness. Moreover, their analysis illuminates how ethnicity is conceptualized and realized in the United States in the early decades of the twenty-first century. Yiddish appears strategically, if often obliquely, in the histories of composition, production, and reception for both dramas, emblematic of shifting notions of enacting ethnicity.*

Key words: ethnic performance, American Jews, Asian Americans, Yiddish, theater

Two recent productions of major American dramas, both staged in New York City, employed provocative strategies for performing Jewish ethnicity. In the summer of 2015, the National Asian American Theatre Company (hereafter, NAATCO) presented Clifford Odets's *Awake and Sing!* with an all-Asian American cast.¹ In the fall of that year, New Yiddish Rep (hereafter, NYR) staged *Toyt fun a seylsman*, a Yiddish translation of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.² Each production entails a different approach to enacting Jewishness that exemplifies these companies' respective artistic agendas regarding the performance of ethnicity. At the same time, acting across ethnic boundaries is central to the rationales for both NAATCO's and NYR's productions, resulting in complex performances of masking and unmasking Jewishness that are telling each in its own right as well as in relation to one another. Moreover, their analysis illuminates how ethnicity is

conceptualized and realized in the United States in the early decades of the twenty-first century more generally.

The particular Jewish ethnicity in question originated with the hundreds of thousands of East European Jews who immigrated to the United States between the early 1880s and the mid-1920s. These immigrants and their descendants constitute not only the largest American Jewish ethnic group by dint of demography but also the most publicly available one, as represented in an extensive array of cultural works: dramas, films, broadcasts, sound recordings, works of fiction, memoirs, joke books, songs, foods, advertisements, collectibles, and so on. Sociologist Nathan Glazer regarded these phenomena as part of a distinctive way of being Jewish in America, which he termed *Jewishness* as opposed to *Judaism*—that is, Jews’ religiosity. Writing in the 1950s, Glazer characterized Jewishness as enabling “a new type of Jewish community” that shares in “a variety of activities,” including a “concern with Jewish culture, politics, and communal life characteristic of many Jews who had no particular religious beliefs.”³ Though not necessarily inimical to religion, this ethnic Jewishness is realized in an array of practices that are distinct from religious observance and which these Jews regard as definitional: going to plays and movies, reading novels, listening to comedy albums, donating to philanthropies, patronizing kosher-style restaurants, collecting Judaica, and engaging in political activism, among others.

By terming this phenomenon *Jewishness*, Glazer may have had in mind the Yiddish word *yidishkayt* (Jewishness, usually spelled Yiddishkeit in English-language texts), for a foundational element of this American Jewish ethnicity is Yiddish, the first language of the preponderance of Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe. Yiddish remains significant for this ethnicity, despite the fact that what Glazer terms Jewishness can flourish independent of even the occasional use of the language.

Yiddish figures strategically, if often obliquely, in the histories of composition, production, and reception of both *Awake and Sing!* and *Death of a Salesman*. The dynamic of each play’s relationship with Yiddish is emblematic of shifting notions of performing ethnicity, leading up to the two recent productions under discussion here. Indeed, whether due to its presence or absence, allusions to the language, or discussions of it, Yiddish serves as a central sign of Jewishness in these two plays and their

epiphenomena, though it is never a straightforward signification. Rather, the relationship between Yiddish and Jewishness is elliptical, with the language either masking or unmasking this ethnicity.

Awake and Sing!, first staged at the Belasco Theatre on Broadway by the Group Theatre in February 1935, portrays intergenerational strife and class conflict within a Jewish family, the Bergers, living in the Bronx during the Great Depression. The script merges heightened language and left-wing rhetoric (for example, “life shouldn’t be printed on dollar bills”) with the often-caustic lingo of New York Jews of East European heritage (“a little dope should get such a boy”), as well as the occasional Yiddishism (including the Yinglish hybrid *boychick*) or calque of Yiddish idioms (“drink instead a glass tea”).⁴ Understandings of the plays’ language diverge: Harold Clurman, who directed the first production of *Awake and Sing!*, notes that its dialogue “is the speech of New York . . . [, of] half-educated Jews . . . , transformed into something new-minted. . . . It is not ‘English’; in a sense it is not ‘realistic’ at all.”⁵ Literature scholar R. Baird Schuman, by contrast, characterizes Odets’s dialogue as “an authentic Yiddish-American” idiom and argues that *Awake and Sing!* constitutes a theatrical landmark: “For the first time in American drama, Jews were represented, through an honest recording of their language, in something other than caricature.”⁶

The play’s action is also hybrid, mixing quotidian routines—eating dinner, walking the dog, getting a haircut—with melodramatic plot elements similar to early twentieth-century American Yiddish plays and fiction labeled *shund* (“sensational, low-brow literature”): Hennie’s pregnancy out of wedlock and hastily arranged marriage to a man other than the child’s father; Jacob’s suicide; Bessie’s foiled plot to cheat her son, Ralph, of his inheritance. Unlike many of the era’s Yiddish melodramas, however, the moral center of *Awake and Sing!* is located not among the parents but among their children.

Though Odets did not grow up in a Yiddish-speaking family, he had some familiarity with the language as used by Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe.⁷ An earlier version of *Awake and Sing!*, titled “I Got the Blues,” includes some Yiddish

dialogue, especially in Sam Feinschreiber's lines, distinguishing this character from the others as a recent immigrant.⁸ (In *Awake and Sing!*, Sam is disparaged as someone who "[c]an't even speak an English word.") There are also two Yiddish translations of *Awake and Sing!*: *Vakh oyfun zing* (Wake Up and Sing) by Khaver-Paver (the pen name of Gershon Einbinder) and *Shtey oyfun zing* (Rise Up and Sing) by Zishe Vaynper, both left-wing American Yiddish writers. These translations were performed in the late 1930s on stage and radio in New York.¹⁰ Thus, though Odets's script moved away from Yiddish as it moved toward Broadway, parallel versions soon appeared on nearby Yiddish stages or were heard on local airwaves. Rendering *Awake and Sing!* in Yiddish implicitly returned the Bergers to the immigrant milieu that they appear to be striving to leave behind and also resituated the drama in what had been a formative cultural venue for several members of the Group Theatre, including Clurman.¹¹

Death of a Salesman opened on Broadway at the Morosco Theatre in February 1949. The play probes the capitalist "American dream" of financial success that feeds on relentless competitiveness by portraying the psychological deterioration of the eponymous salesman—Willy Loman, a family patriarch living in Brooklyn in the early post-World War II years—culminating in his suicide. The drama alternates between scenes set in the virtual present and enactments of Willy's memories and fantasies of the past. Similarly, the dialogue shifts between mundane conversations and elevated language, exemplified by the oft-cited line "Attention must be paid," spoken by Willy's wife, Linda.¹² *Death of a Salesman* elides the particulars of the Lomans toward the emblematic: as is often noted, what kind of merchandise Willy sells is never specified; moreover, the play avoids discussion of key events of the time—the Great Depression, World War II—which would doubtless have shaped the lives of the Lomans, were they actual people. In addition, the characters' religion or ethnicity is unmarked.

Miller's play is anticipated by a short story that he wrote in 1933 (but published only in 1995) called "In Memoriam." Inspired by an encounter the author had as a young man, the story recounts meeting a salesman named Schoenzeit, who is down on his luck and subsequently commits suicide. *Death of a Salesman* was also informed by Miller's observations of and conversations with members of his family.¹³ In addition, his first play, *No Villain*, written in 1936, dramatizes the conflict between father and son in a Brooklyn

Jewish family during the Depression; this work, too, has been characterized as a forerunner of *Death of a Salesman*.¹⁴ Interest in the play's precedents and autobiographical roots figure in claims for the masked Jewishness of its characters and themes.

Like *Awake and Sing!*, Miller's drama was soon rendered into Yiddish. The translation was the work of actor Joseph Buloff and his wife, Luba Kadison, who first performed the play in Buenos Aires, with Buloff as Willy and Kadison as Linda, in June 1949. This production, presented just four months after the Broadway premiere of *Death of a Salesman*, was staged without Arthur Miller's permission. In 1951, Buloff and Kadison performed the play in Yiddish in Brooklyn, by special arrangement with Miller, and their translation was also staged in Israel.¹⁵

The recent productions under discussion reflect the respective missions of NAATCO and NYR, which each conjoin artistic and ethnic agendas. Established in 1989, NAATCO's mission is to "assert the presence and significance of Asian American theatre in the United States, demonstrating its vital contributions to the fabric of American culture."¹⁶ The company has staged both new plays and "European and American classics as written with all Asian American casts," including works by Chekhov, Molière, O'Neill, Pinter, Shakespeare, Sophocles, Strindberg, Wilder, and Yeats. On its website, NAATCO explains that these plays are performed

with no forced Asian cultural associations. . . . The superimposition of our Asian faces on a non-Asian repertory, interpreted by artists using diverse and truly universal references to serve the text very faithfully, reflects and emphasizes the kinship among disparate cultures. We do not say we are all the same, we say that we have quite large areas of understanding. We also say that affirmations of timeless values and new insights about old works can come from unexpected faces.¹⁷

In NAATCO's production of *Awake and Sing!* actors adopt period dress and local accent, working with a dialect coach. Central to the performance is the actors' physical presence,

which disrupts and complicates assumptions about both the representation of ethnicity and the actualities of ethnic difference in America. Asian Americans' "unexpected faces" deliberately problematize the ethnic Jewishness of the play's main characters and milieu and, in doing so, call attention to ethnicity's skewed presence on the stage. At the same time, this configuration suggests both that the actors' faces are masks imposed upon Jewish characters and that the Jewish-inflected dialogue constitutes a linguistic guise adopted by Asian American performers.

During the performance, this destabilized interrelation of Asianness and Jewishness fluctuates. Sometimes these two ethnicities seem analogous; for example, a friend of mine who attended a performance of the NAATCO production commented that Bessie, the Bergers' formidable matriarch, as performed by Mia Katigbat, seemed like an Asian American "tiger mom." Indeed, the production could be read as a tacit enactment of the recent analogizing of Asian Americans and American Jews, the former sometimes dubbed "the New Jews."¹⁸

But at other times, the production's interrelation of Asians and Jews is dissonant, whether amusing—there were titters in the audience when Alok Tewari, who played Jacob, uttered the occasional Yiddish word—or distressing. As critic Anita Gates noted, Odets's "epithet-dotted language—demeaning African-Americans, Italians and the Japanese, among others—is shocking now."¹⁹ These slurs sometimes clash provocatively with the particular performance context, as when Sanjit DeSilva, in the role of Moe Axelrod, says of Hennie (played by Teresa Avia Lim), "I gotta yen for her, and I don't mean a Chineese coin," or James Saito, as Morty, says, "I don't like Japs so much—sneaky."²⁰ And when Hennie disparages Sam (played by David Shih), the man she is forced to marry, as a "mockie,"²¹ this moment of ethnic self-hatred in the drama's virtual world is complicated by the "unexpected face" that voices this derogatory term for a Jew. The casual racism of Odets's characters controverts the company's larger mission to reach across ethnic and racial boundaries and demonstrate "large areas of understanding." Indeed, staging this play in order to make the case for liberating Asian Americans from the confines of stereotyping, whether on stage or off, situates these performers in a drama that, ironically, portrays the socioeconomic constraints of ethnicity, as it was experienced by many American Jews during the Depression, rather than celebrating either Jews or

Asians as “model minorities.”²²

Established in 2007, NYR “speaks to a 21st century audience” by offering “modern treatments of the Yiddish classics and Yiddish interpretations of modern and postmodern masterpieces . . . with easily readable supertitles.” The company positions itself “on the front line of resistance against the extinction of Eastern European Yiddish theater. We aim to mine the artistic cultural and creative core of Ashkenazic theater and to infuse that essence into the body of present and future theater.” The mission of NYR includes continuing “the tradition of translating and interpreting world theater through the prism of Yiddish language and culture.”²³ To that end, the company also staged Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* in a new Yiddish translation in 2013 and performed Chaver-Paver’s translation of *Awake and Sing!* in 2017.

For NYR’s production of *Toyt fun a seytsman*, director Moshe Yassur and dramaturg Beate Hein worked with cast members to revise the Buloff-Kadison translation of Miller’s play. In addition to making cuts in the script, NYR added translations of some lines in *Death of a Salesman* that the Buloff-Kadison rendering omits. The company also decided to incorporate some dialogue in English, including selected exchanges between Biff and Happy and all the lines spoken by The Woman, Miss Forsythe, and Letta (thereby situating these women, with whom the Loman men have dalliances, as non-Jews). Daniel Kahn, who played Biff, reports that NYR chose to make these emendations so that the production would address issues of “immigrant culture [and] language hegemony” and would “situate the language barrier [of Yiddish speakers in an Anglophone milieu] as an agent of Willy’s isolation.” At the same time that NYR chose to incorporate some suggestion of the social reality of the Lomans, conceived as a family of Yiddish-speaking Jews in post-World War II America, the company also endeavored to “keep the poetry” of the Buloff-Kadison translation.²⁴

The NYR production foregrounded the actors’ speech by performing the play on a bare stage, furnished with only a table and four chairs. Throughout the performance, English-language supertitles translating the Yiddish dialogue were projected onto the set’s blank walls. Kahn reports that projecting the supertitles onto the set, relatively close to the performers (rather than on a screen suspended above the stage, as is the more common practice), was done in order to make the English text an integral part of the

performance. Audience members with limited or no knowledge of Yiddish engaged the production by simultaneously reading English and hearing Yiddish, Kahn notes, the former providing semantic information, the latter perceived as the enactment of affect.²⁵

The juxtaposition of Yiddish dialogue and English supertitles in NYR's revival of *Toyt fun a seylsman* would seem to be an inversion of the usual practice of titling a film or live performance, in which the spoken language is the work's original and the supertitles are the translation. In fact, the English supertitles were translated from the company's Yiddish script by Kahn. He reports that, though he consulted Miller's play while preparing them, the supertitles diverge considerably from the original dialogue in *Death of a Salesman*.²⁶ Audience members might have assumed the dialogue projected onto the set's walls to be Miller's writing but this was, in fact, a new English-language text, the result of a series of shifts: from Miller's drama to the Buloff-Kadison translation, then to its revision by NYR, and ultimately rendered into English by Kahn. The production's interrelation of spoken Yiddish and visualized English both masks this series of shifts and unmasks the interdependence of the two languages in *Toyt fun a seylsman*, thereby destabilizing what words are to be perceived as "original."

Moreover, the use of projected titles during NYR's performances silently testifies to the disparity between the present and the heyday of Yiddish theater, lasting from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, which assumed an audience of native Yiddish speakers. Many, if not most, people attending NYR's revival of *Toyt fun a seylsman* depended on the supertitles in order to understand the dialogue—even as hearing it performed in Yiddish was the production's distinctive attraction. This configuration marks NYR's use of Yiddish as what I have termed *postvernacular*. Postvernacularity is characterized by a distinctive consciousness about language, in which its secondary, symbolic level of significance is privileged over its primary level of meaning as an instrument of communication. In postvernacular Yiddish, "the very fact that something is said (or written or sung) in Yiddish is at least as meaningful as the meaning of the words being uttered—if not more so."²⁷ NYR's use of Yiddish in the postvernacular mode is also performative, as defined by the philosopher J. L. Austin: "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not . . . just saying something." In the performative mode of speech, language is operative; "saying" can

“make it so.”²⁸ In this and other NYR presentations, the very act of speaking Yiddish effects an intervention in the abandonment or ossification of Yiddish culture.

The respective strategies of NAATCO and NYR for performing Jewishness exemplify diverging notions of enacting ethnicity, situating Yiddishkeit within artistic missions that construe ethnic performance either synchronically or diachronically. In Odets’s introduction to *Awake and Sing!*, Jacob is described as “an old Jew”; the Jewishness of the Bergers, Sam, and Moe is both nominal and implicit. (The janitor, Schlosser, is identified as a German in the introduction, and, unlike the other characters, his lines in the script are rendered in phonological dialect, for example, “I verk very hard.”²⁹) The Bergers’ Jewishness is signified intermittently in the dialogue, by either an occasional cultural reference, such as going to hear Belle Baker sing “Eli, Eli” at a Bronx variety theater, or the isolated Yiddishism. Some Jews in the audience of the play’s first Broadway production experienced an extraordinary sense of ethnic solidarity with the Bergers. Critic Alfred Kazin, for example, described how compelling it was to sit “in the Belasco, watching my mother and father and uncles and aunts occupying the stage in *Awake and Sing* by as much right as if they were Hamlet and Lear.”³⁰

When *Awake and Sing!* debuted on Broadway, the characters’ ethnicity was also embodied by its cast, most of whom were New York Jews. Like the roles they played, these actors were either immigrants or children of immigrants from eastern Europe. Two cast members, Luther Adler (who played Moe) and Stella Adler (who played Bessie), both children of Yiddish actor-impresario Jacob P. Adler, had begun their careers performing in Yiddish. Alluding to the homology of actors and characters, *New York Times* drama critic Brooks Atkinson mentioned in his review of *Awake and Sing!* that “[t]he Group Theatre plays as if they feel at home in Mr. Odets’s Bronx saga.”³¹

The NAATCO cast is not, of course, similarly “at home” in the milieu of Depression-era Bronx Jews, for the ethnic and racial disparity between the actors and the roles they play is central to NAATCO’s mission. By staging this and other “classic” works of Western drama, the company pursues an agenda that is primarily horizontal, challenging contemporary American assumptions about the limitations of Asian

performers in a synchronous multicultural and multiracial milieu. In NAATCO's production of *Awake and Sing!*, the actors use speech to simulate ethnic Jewishness while tacitly presenting it as inherently alien to their bodies, especially their "unexpected faces." This deliberately heterologous performance strategy prompts audiences to interrogate notions of ethnic essence versus appearance, recalling literature scholar Werner Sollors's distinction of ethnicity "by descent" versus "by consent."³² The NAATCO actors address the tension between ethnicity understood as an inherent, embodied phenomenon and as something virtual and performative by flouting—and flaunting—the disparity between the racialized body, assumed to be intractable, and the histrionic voice, understood as transformative. The company's embrace of this disparity energizes the performance by enacting an implicit polemic about identity and artistry.

This configuration of diverging conceptualizations of body/race and voice/speech is not inevitable. The NAATCO production of *Awake and Sing!* is the inverse of, say, the Yiddish Art Theater's 1925 staging of *Der krayd-tsirkel*, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern's translation of *Huilan ji* (The Chalk Circle), a fourteenth-century Chinese drama by Li Qianfu. For this production, the actors were costumed and made up (for example, with slanted eyebrows) to look "Chinese."³³ In the vernacular Yiddish theater of early twentieth-century America, which also staged works of world literature ranging from a dramatization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Lope de Vega's *El perro del hortelano*, the voice was the constant, while the body was mutable; race was performative, and speech was fixed.

As noted above, there is no indication of religious or ethnic identity for the characters in *Death of a Salesman*, whether in dialogue or stage directions. (The surname Loman might be understood as Jewish or German, in addition to signifying an emblematic "low man"; Miller explains in his 1987 memoir *Timebends* that he recalled the name from a character, Inspector Lohmann, in Fritz Lang's 1933 film *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*.³⁴) The playwright's elision of the characters' religion or ethnicity appears to extend to the play's initial reception by New York drama critics reviewing the Broadway premiere of *Death of a Salesman*; in a sampling of their reviews, none note this absence.³⁵ Rather, Miller's characters are presented—and, at least at first, accepted—as what literature scholar Michael Warner terms the "public subject," which entails a

“disincorporation” of the self, addressing “an abstract audience” that is the public. Such an approach to engaging the public sphere, pioneered in the print culture of eighteenth-century western Europe, facilitated “a utopian universality that would allow people to transcend the given realities of their bodies and their status.” The public subject realized by this rhetorical strategy has, Warner argues, “a logic of abstraction that provides a privilege for unmarked identities: the white, the male, the middle class, the normal”³⁶—to which one could add the gentile.

The notion that Miller deliberately obscured the Lomans’ actual Jewishness eventually emerged as a subject of critical discussion. Mary McCarthy made an early reference to this idea in 1959, asserting that Willy “seemed to be Jewish, to judge by his speech cadences, but there was no mention of this on the stage.” Rather, she argued, “He could not be Jewish because he had to be ‘America.’”³⁷ The issue has been addressed more frequently over the decades, especially by American Jewish writers and literary critics, among them Harold Bloom, Leslie Fiedler, and David Mamet.³⁸ Like McCarthy, they argue that Willy, or all the Lomans as well as other characters (Bernard, Charley, Howard), are Jews disguised as gentiles. This critical discourse attributes to Miller various motives for masking the characters’ ethnicity: the playwright’s ambiguity about his own Jewishness; his desire to create emblematic characters addressing universal issues; his calculation that Jewish characters would have limited appeal for American audiences; his concern about creating characters that might be seen as conforming to unflattering Jewish stereotypes; or his offering a deliberate, if unstated, dramatization of American Jews’ deracination.³⁹

Underlying much of this discourse is a problematic but nonetheless telling assumption that Willy and the other characters in question, rather than being literary creations, are like actual people having a “real” ethnic identity. Extending this muddling of the distinction between literature and actuality, these discussions often cite Miller’s autobiographical sources for *Death of a Salesman* and sometimes comment on the playwright’s own life—for example, asserting that his relationship with Jewishness was ambivalent, as evinced by his marriages to three non-Jewish women.⁴⁰ But claiming Willy Loman or all of *Death of a Salesman* as “Jewish” is not an instance of ethnocentric decoding—that is, what theater historian Henry Bial characterizes as a Jewish response to

“presenting Jewishness in a way that is only recognizable to those who know the codes.”⁴¹ Rather, doing so constitutes an act of striving to “recover” what is perceived as Jewish cultural property that has been displaced.

Miller appears to have responded to these claims slowly and reluctantly. In his preface to the fiftieth-anniversary edition of *Death of a Salesman*, he acknowledged that the Lomans are Jews but described them as “light-years away from religion or a community that might have fostered a Jewish identity.” In effect, their Jewishness is a signifier without significance. Moreover, this lack of meaningfulness, Miller argued, is not specific to Jews but is emblematic: the Lomans “exist in a spot that probably most Americans feel they inhabit—on the sidewalk side of the glass looking in at a well-lit place.”⁴² Miller also extolled the play’s universality by noting its effect on audiences in various countries in which he had seen *Death of a Salesman* performed, including productions he directed in China and Sweden.⁴³

However, others engaged in this critical discourse cite performances that refute Miller’s claim. Playwright August Wilson argued against staging *Death of a Salesman* with an African American cast, as was done at Yale Repertory Theatre in 2009. John Lahr’s review of this production cites Wilson, who had addressed the issue in 1996:

To mount an all-black production of a “Death of a Salesman” or any other play conceived for white actors as an investigation of the human condition through the specifics of white culture is to deny us our own humanity, our own history, and the need to make our own investigations from the cultural ground on which we stand as black Americans. . . . It is an assault on our presence, and our difficult but honorable history in America; and it is an insult to our intelligence, our playwrights, and our many and varied contributions to the society and the world at large.⁴⁴

Lahr concurs with Wilson, though he offers a different characterization of Yale’s production as misbegotten: “To replace the Jewish Willy Loman with an African-American is to change something elemental in the nature of the play’s lament”⁴⁵—that is, masking the play’s presumed Jewishness with “unexpected faces” that yield results deemed untenable rather than productively provocative. (It should be noted, though, that

the play was performed with an “all-black” cast as early as 1972; the production, authorized by Miller, was directed for Center Stage in Baltimore by Lee Sankowich and starred Richard Ward as Willy.⁴⁶)

McCarthy’s observation that Willy’s masked Jewishness is revealed through the play’s dialogue figures prominently in the discourse claiming the Lomans as Jews, with critics and scholars citing phrases that they assert are calques of Yiddish—most frequently, Linda’s line “Attention must be paid.”⁴⁷ Literature scholar Debra Caplan recently posited that *Toyt fun a seylsman* is a subversive “counter-adaptation” of Miller’s drama that constitutes a “Yiddish homecoming” for the Lomans.⁴⁸ Caplan’s argument is not new; when Buloff and Kadison first performed *Toyt fun a seylsman* in Brooklyn, their Yiddish version was perceived as a disguised original unmasked. In a 1951 essay in *Commentary*, actor George Ross argued that, while watching the production, he felt that “this Yiddish play is really the original, and the Broadway production [of *Death of a Salesman*] was merely—Arthur Miller’s translation into English.”⁴⁹

However, reading selected lines in *Death of a Salesman* as calques from Yiddish does not necessarily conform to how such sentiments are articulated in idiomatic Yiddish. Rather, these readings attest more to what some listeners wish to hear: an encrypted Jewish voice. These phrases do stand out because they are not idiomatic English. Miller explained that he strove to liberate the Lomans’ language “from an enslavement to ‘the way people speak.’”⁵⁰ But where Miller sought to create a denatured, elevated parlance, some listeners find a thinly veiled ethnic dialect. Thus, critic Terry Teachout wrote of the script performed by NYR, “Instead of the inflated pseudo-poetry of Miller’s original text, you get the guttural lilt of a homely tongue that comes naturally to such beleaguered souls.”⁵¹ Rather than being freed from any incipient trace of ethnicity, the Lomans are perceived as being exposed—and trapped—by the “hidden language of the Jews,” which cultural historian Sander Gilman identifies as the emblem of Jewish self-hatred.⁵²

Caplan further maintains that *Toyt fun a seylsman* is not simply a translation but a Judaization of the text.⁵³ This reflects both a desire to claim Miller’s play as Jewish cultural property and a widely held assumption that “inherent in Yiddish is a distinctive cultural sensibility that cannot help but Judaize whatever enters its semiotic field.”⁵⁴ Rather, what performing Miller’s play in Yiddish does provide to both performers and

audiences is a demonstrative vehicle for imagining the play in Jewish terms. Thus, Avi Hoffman, who played Willy in NYR's production, explains in a video interview that he conceived the character as a Jewish immigrant who came to America from eastern Europe around 1910. After starting out as a peddler on the Lower East Side, Hoffman suggests, Willy worked his way up to being a salesman. This explanation runs counter to Miller's text, which describes Willy's father as an itinerant salesman in America, selling flutes that he also played (though this could be understood as one of Willy's fantasies). Hoffman's reconfiguring of *Death of a Salesman* not only imbues Willy with an archetypal East European Jewish profile but also transforms the trajectory of the play's plot from recounting the downfall of a middle-class "American" (that is, white, Christian) family to tracking the disappointments of ambitious Jewish immigrants—a different American dream shattered. However, in performance Hoffman's biography for Willy remains the actor's internal work (and is, in fact, somewhat autobiographical; Hoffman notes that he is himself the son of immigrants from eastern Europe).⁵⁵

Compared to the horizontal agenda of NAATCO, the mission of NYR is primarily vertical, challenging the diachronic breach in Yiddish performance as an ongoing practice. The company's production of *Toyt fun a seylsman* strives not merely—or even primarily—to (re)claim Willy Loman's story as a Jewish drama but rather to recover the heyday of Yiddish theater, including its "tradition of translating" into Yiddish dramas originally written in other languages. NYR's efforts to reanimate a bygone era of Yiddish culture exemplify folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's characterization of heritage as a "mode of cultural production" that creates "something new" from the practices of the past, transforming their value and giving them "a second life"—a second life that is, inevitably, never the same as the first life of the phenomena in question.⁵⁶ This difference is exemplified by the English-language supertitles projected during NYR's revival of *Toyt fun a seylsman*, which endow a new, "second life" to both the Buloff-Kadison translation and Miller's original play in an enactment of postvernacular Yiddish.

The two productions in question posed distinct challenges to theater critics, who grappled with the implications of these unusual approaches to staging "classics" of American

drama. Reviewers' responses to NAATCO's *Awake and Sing!* tend to elide the complexities of its performance of race and ethnicity by lauding the production for surmounting the confines of both the drama's and the cast's ethnic specificity. Anita Gates writes of the company's 2013 production of the play that it "easily makes the point that ethnicity is transcended by the humanity of frightened, imperfect people facing unpleasant realities."⁵⁷ Of the 2015 revival, Laura Collins-Hughes concurs: "What might seem the most noteworthy thing about this staging . . . is, in practice, unremarkable. It's a classic American story, and that means that it belongs to all of us."⁵⁸

Conversely, some critics praise NYR's *Toyot fun a seylsman* for revealing the added value of rooting the emblematic quality of Miller's drama in a culturally specific context, even as they differ over the significance of presenting the Lomans as Yiddish speakers. Reminiscent of Ross's discussion in *Commentary* of the 1951 Buloff production, Paulanne Simmons comments that, after seeing NYR's revival of *Toyot fun a seylsman*, "it's not hard to speculate on how much better even this great classic might have been if Miller had been more in touch with his roots."⁵⁹ Victor Gluck similarly opines, "The use of Yiddish gives the play an intimacy that it doesn't ordinarily have. . . . While not ostensibly written as a Jewish family, this version makes absolutely clear the universality of the play while at the same time placing it in the milieu that Miller was obviously writing about."⁶⁰ Thomas Burns Scully posits that performing the drama in Yiddish "increases the feelings of isolation and societal pressure in Willie and his family in a way that seems both inherent, yet also novel." However, Scully also wonders, as someone who does not know Yiddish and has "watched the whole thing," whether "in a way, I still haven't seen it. Yiddish speakers in the audience saw a completely different show to the one I did."⁶¹

In fact, other reviews of NYR's *Toyot fun a seylsman* question the value of performing Miller's play in Yiddish. Seth Rogovoy acclaims the production as providing the opportunity simply to "thrill at the sound of a classic translated into Yiddish, with or without regard to its interpretive power of suggestion."⁶² And Ezra Gliner argues that "the use of Yiddish here doesn't add much to the play. . . . [T]his production, excellent as it is, would have been just as good in English. Or maybe not," he wonders, and opines that "rather than infusing 'Salesman' with Jewishness," *Toyot fun a seylsman* "takes the

Jewishness out of Yiddish.”⁶³

The elisions and uncertainties expressed by these critics respond, if obliquely, to unresolved tensions and paradoxes in the productions. To some extent, these are issues that both productions have in common and that are intrinsic to the dramas themselves. Both Odets’s and Miller’s scripts straddle mundane speech and elevated language. This is paralleled by the disparity in each play between its characters’ ethnic particularism, whether forthright or obscured, and the drama’s striving for thematic universalism. Building on these tensions, both NAATCO and NYR employ the performance of ethnicity to enact cultural advocacy in tandem with the revival of “classic” plays. Yet in both cases the advocacy—decrying the ethnic stereotyping of Asian Americans, championing a revitalized secular Yiddish culture—is extrinsic, if not inimical, to the arguments of the plays themselves.

This conjoining of well-known dramas and polemical interventions through provocative performance strategies resembles drag and parody, double-edged practices that problematize established cultural categories even as they acknowledge them. Like a drag performance, NAATCO’s *Awake and Sing!* is animated by transgressing conventionalized boundaries, as the actors simultaneously manifest Asian Americanness and Yiddishkeit. Gender theorist Judith Butler argues that drag exposes conceptualizations of gender as “naturalized knowledge” that is “based on a series of cultural inferences”; by challenging them, drag reveals gender categories to be “a changeable and revisable reality.” Just as drag performances problematize the presumed natural distinction between male and female genders by interrogating not merely what one sees but also “the categories through which one sees,”⁶⁴ NAATCO’s staging of *Awake and Sing!* troubles the notion of ethnicity as integral and biologically inherent through the spectacle of “unexpected faces” voicing ethnic Jewishness. Some observers regard *Toyt fun a seylsman* as being, in effect, a Judaized parody of Miller’s play by dint of its translation into Yiddish. Judaizing parodies may be more readily familiar in comic Yiddish or Yiddish-inflected spoofs by the likes of Milt Gross or Mickey Katz, which had their heyday in American Jewish popular culture during the 1930s and 1940s. Though not at all humorous, NYR’s production nonetheless fits the definition of parody, per literature scholar Simon Dentith, as a “polemically motivated act of imitation.”⁶⁵ The

Yiddish version of *Death of a Salesman* may appear to contest its deracinated character and even to reveal an embedded ethnic particularism as the fountainhead of Miller's drama. But the polemic of *Toyt fun a seylsman* centers on demonstrating the value of Yiddish as a compatible vehicle for the elevated, universal reach of *Death of a Salesman* rather than being ill-suited to it.

At the same time that these productions advocate rethinking the interrelation of identity and culture, their double-edged performance strategies complicate each company's respective artistic agenda. The performance of Jewishness in NAATCO's production seems to exemplify "postethnicity," as defined by historian David Hollinger: a "perspective [that] favors voluntary over involuntary affiliations, balances an appreciation for communities of descent with a determination to make room for new communities, and promotes solidarities of wide scope that incorporate people with different ethnic and racial backgrounds."⁶⁶ But by also enacting Asian Americanness, the company unites performers of diverse backgrounds—including Chinese American, Japanese American, Filipino American, Sri Lankan American, and Indian American—and conflates these differences (each of which, in turn, subsumes ethnic diversity within a national identity) under a synthetic umbrella category of American demographic taxonomy. In effect, NAATCO's performances instantiate a new model of racial identity as they transgress others.

NYR problematizes the interrelation of identity and culture differently; the company includes both native speakers of Yiddish and actors who learned the language later in life. Among the latter, most conspicuous is Shane Baker (who played Charlie), who bills himself on NYR's website as "[t]he foremost Episcopalian on the Yiddish stage today," explaining that he "did not grow up with Yiddish, but plans on growing old with it."⁶⁷ Baker's turn to Yiddish is the inverse of actors who began their careers in Yiddish theater and then proceeded to the English-language stage. Among these performers was Joseph Buloff, who, after appearing as a member of the Vilna Troupe and the Yiddish Art Theatre, went on to originate the role of Ali Hakim in Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 musical *Oklahoma!* and, among other Anglophone performances, was acclaimed for his portrayal of Gregory Solomon in the 1979 Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's *The Price*. Baker's and Buloff's respective artistic trajectories intersect in NYR's staging of

Toyt fun a seylsman. And while Buloff's translation can be imagined as Miller's disguised original revealed, Baker's adopted commitment to Yiddish complicates claims as to what constitutes the "original" in this revival—and this, in turn, problematizes the significance of performing a play about (ostensibly) deracinated Jews in a Jewish vernacular.

In both of these recent productions, the significance of language as a marker of Jewish ethnicity is refracted by dint of each company's respective performance strategy. The NAATCO production enacts a breach between the sounds of Jewish dialect and the Asian faces from which these sounds emanate; NYR splits dialogue into English semantics and Yiddish histrionics. In fact, this undoing of vernacular Yiddishkeit—in which language, people, and culture are understood as tautological—is incipient in Odets's and Miller's scripts. Especially when read in relation to one another as touchstones of Jewish family life, these two plays evince American Yiddishkeit's uncertain future in the wake of the end of mass emigration from Europe and World War II. Several scholars discuss *Death of a Salesman* in relation to *Awake and Sing!*, noting that Miller both admired Odets and, at the same time, sought to supersede the older playwright's achievements.⁶⁸ Both plays employ intergenerational strife within a family to address broad social concerns; both works even use the same plot device of suicide, and the bequest of life insurance, as means for elders' self-sacrifice on behalf of the next generation. With these unnatural deaths and familial dislocations (both Hennie and Biff escape to places far from New York), each play troubles conventional notions of family continuity as emblematic of ethnic communal endurance. The Bergers, mired in the Great Depression, appear to chafe at the constraints of ethnicity, whether yearning for bourgeois comforts or dreaming of class revolution. A little more than a decade later, the Lomans, in the midst of a postwar economic boom that has left them behind, seem culturally adrift as well, when they are identified as Jews "light-years away" from religion or ethnicity. The reading of these two plays as sociological landmarks of an unsettled American Jewry, as this population "became white folks,"⁶⁹ is historicized with the passage of time, as the generations of actual Jews whom the Bergers exemplify and whom the Lomans are taken to represent have become figures of the past.

The respective disparities between the actors and the Yiddishkeit they portray in

these two recent productions are both animating and disquieting, for they take place at increasing distance from this Jewish ethnicity in its prime. The NAATCO staging of *Awake and Sing!* demonstrates how remote is the automatic ethnic cohesiveness of the play's original productions in the 1930s, whether in English or in Yiddish, from any performance today. The NYR revival of *Toyt fun a seylsman* reveals how different a contemporary Yiddish stage production is from the era of vernacular Yiddish theater, including Buloff and Kadison's mid-twentieth-century performances of their translation.

The vernacular Yiddishkeit of *Awake and Sing!* or of *Toyt fun a seylsman* cannot be revived, but it can be conjured. To do so, both NAATCO and NYR rely on prior mediations of this bygone immigrant ethnic culture as sources for its enactment. These efforts pose challenges of their own, entailing diverging anxieties about the cultural original. NAATCO's actors turned to a dialect coach to master the accent of Bronx Jews of the 1930s, a task that raised concerns for the company about the propriety of ethnic authenticity. A profile of the production in the *New York Times* reports, "The actors knew they would have to be scrupulous about representing the American Jewish experience to avoid charges of cultural appropriation. 'If we did not pay great attention to the specifics of character and culture, we would run the risk of caricature,' said the play's associate producer, Peter Kim."⁷⁰ Moshe Yassur, director of NYR's *Toyt fun a seylsman*, first saw the play in Israel, where he grew up, as staged by Buloff in Yiddish. In a television interview at the time of the NYR production, the director recalled the impact of that performance: "I could not see another Willy Loman for many years, this was so imprinted in my memory."⁷¹ Though America's vernacular Yiddishkeit may have seemed daunting in its remoteness for NAATCO's actors, it may have been too immanent for NYR's director of *Toyt fun a seylsman*.

Yiddishkeit stands at the crossroads of these two strategies of synchronic and diachronic performance of ethnicity. This intersection also marks a threshold for the ethnicity defined by Jewish immigration to the United States from eastern Europe over a century ago, as the vestiges of Yiddishkeit yield to new ways of being Jewish in America. They include various practices of mediating this ethnicity that rely, increasingly, on precedent mediations.⁷² At this moment, the mediation of Yiddishkeit is especially compelling when realized on stage. The transformative nature of live performance is both

self-aware of its artifice and, at the same time, energized by it. Beyond acts of masking and unmasking an increasingly elusive Jewish ethnicity, these productions are part of a larger, self-conscious grappling with the interrelation of identity and culture in America, in which Yiddishkeit seems both readily available for performance and, at the same time, enigmatic in its significance.

Notes

I thank Andrew Parker, who invited me to present an early version of this essay to the Program in Comparative Literatures at Rutgers University in April 2016, as well as my colleagues who attended the presentation and Elin Diamond, all of whom offered thoughtful insights into the topic. I also thank Daniel Kahn for kindly providing me with information about the translation of *Toyt fun a seylsman* for New Yiddish Rep.

¹ NAATCO performed *Awake and Sing!*, under the direction of Stephen Brown-Fried, at the Public Theater from July 6 to August 9, 2015. I attended the performance on July 25. The production was a revival of the company's presentation of the play at Walkerspace from August 16 to September 8, 2013, with most of the same cast.

² NYR performed *Toyt fun a seylsman*, under the direction of Moshe Yassur, at the Castillo Theatre from October 8 to November 22, 2015. I attended the performance on November 7. Under the direction of Avi Hoffman, *Toyt fun a seylsman* was subsequently performed, with some of the same cast members, at the Ashkenaz Festival, Toronto, in association with the Joseph Papp Yiddish Theatre, from August 31 to September 10, 2016.

³ Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago, 1989), 91, 105.

⁴ Clifford Odets, "Awake and Sing!," in *Six Plays of Clifford Odets* (New York, 1979), 48, 44, 74, 78.

⁵ Harold Clurman, introduction to Odets, *Six Plays of Clifford Odets*, xi.

⁶ R. Baird Schuman, "Clifford Odets and the Jewish Context," in *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Jewish-American Stage and Screen*, ed. Sarah Blacher Cohen (Bloomington, Ind., 1983), 100.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁸ Clifford Odets, “I Got the Blues,” typescript, 1933–34, Performing Arts Research Collections—Theatre, New York Public Library.

⁹ Odets, “Awake and Sing!,” 55.

¹⁰ Khaver-Paver (Gershon Einbinder), *Vakh oyf un zing*, typescript, 1938?, Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library. The New York Public Library catalogue lists Federal Theatre Project (New York, N.Y.). Radio Division as “additional author” of *Vakh oyf un zing*. Zishe Vaynper, *Shtey oyf un zing*, typescript, 1938?, Dorot Jewish Division.

¹¹ See Margaret Brenman-Gibson, *Clifford Odets, American Playwright: The Years from 1906 to 1940* (New York, 198), 156.

¹² Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman: Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem* (New York, 1999), 39.

¹³ Arthur Miller, “In Memoriam,” *New Yorker*, Dec. 25, 1995, pp. 110–11. See also John Lahr, “Making Willy Loman,” *New Yorker*, Jan. 25, 1999, pp. 42–49.

¹⁴ See Christopher D. Shea, “Arthur Miller’s ‘Lost’ Play: His First,” *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 2015, accessed Dec. 12, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/1Q2BFG1>.

¹⁵ See Debra Caplan, “‘Attention Must Be Paid’: *Death of a Salesman*’s Counter-Adapted Yiddish Homecoming,” *Modern Drama* 58, no. 2 (2015): 194–217. Caplan mentions a second Yiddish translation of *Death of a Salesman* by Jacob Mestel, which was performed in South Africa (197).

¹⁶ “About Us,” *National Asian American Theatre Company*, accessed Mar. 30, 2016, <http://naatco.org/about/>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See Jonathan Freedman, *Klezmer America: Jewishness, Ethnicity, Modernity* (New York, 2008), 251–321.

¹⁹ Anita Gates, “Have You Met the Bergers? Of Course, You Have,” *New York Times*, Aug. 30, 2013, accessed Feb. 25, 2016 <http://nyti.ms/17sls2P>.

²⁰ Odets, “Awake and Sing!,” 57, 63.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

²² See Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, *Modeling Citizenship: Jewish and Asian American Writing* (Philadelphia, 2011).

- ²³ “Our Mission,” *New Yiddish Rep*, accessed Mar. 30, 2016, <http://www.newyiddishrep.org/Mission.html>.
- ²⁴ Daniel Kahn, telephone interview with the author, Aug. 13, 2016.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Jeffrey Shandler, *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture* (Berkeley, 2006), 22.
- ²⁸ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), 6–7.
- ²⁹ Odets, “Awake and Sing!,” 38, 46.
- ³⁰ Alfred Kazin, *Starting Out in the Thirties* (Boston, 1965), 82.
- ³¹ Brooks Atkinson, “Two New Dramas Open: ‘Awake and Sing!’ by the Group Theatre, and ‘Cross Ruff,’” *New York Times*, Feb. 20, 1935, p. 23.
- ³² Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York, 1986).
- ³³ See “The Chalk Circle,” *Museum of the Yiddish Theatre*, accessed Aug. 13, 2016, <http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/moyt/pih/chalk-circle.htm>. Halpern’s translation was based on a German adaptation of the original play by Klabund, né Alfred Henschke.
- ³⁴ Arthur Miller, *Timebends: A Life* (New York, 1987), 177–79.
- ³⁵ See, e.g., Brooks Atkinson, “At the Theater,” *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 1949, p. 27; Howard Barnes, “A Great Play Is Born,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, Feb. 11, 1949, p. 14; Wolcott Gibbs, “Well Worth Waiting For,” *New Yorker*, Feb. 19, 1949, pp. 58–62; and William Hawkins, “‘Death of Salesman’ Powerful Tragedy,” *New York World-Telegram*, Feb. 11, 1949, p. 24.
- ³⁶ Michael Warner, “The Mass Public and the Mass Subject,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 377–401.
- ³⁷ Mary McCarthy, *Sights and Spectacles: 1937–1958* (London, 1959), xxiii.
- ³⁸ Harold Bloom, ed., *Bloom’s Major Literary Characters: Willy Loman* (Philadelphia, 2005); Leslie A. Fiedler, *Waiting for the End: The American Literary Scene from Hemingway to Baldwin* (New York, 1964), 91; David Mamet, “The Human Stain,”

Guardian, May 7, 2005, accessed Sept. 5, 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/may/07/theatre.davidmamet>.

³⁹ See Robert Cardullo, “*Death of a Salesman* and Arthur Miller’s Religious Identity,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 11, no. 1 (2012): 127–30; Leah Garrett, “Just One of the Goys: Salinger’s, Miller’s, and Malamud’s Hidden Jewish Heroes,” *AJS Review* 34, no. 2 (2010): 171–94; Julius Novick, “*Death of a Salesman*: Deracination and Its Discontents,” *American Jewish History* 91, no. 1 (2003): 97–107; and Joel Shatzky, “Arthur Miller’s ‘Jewish’ Salesman,” *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 2, no. 2 (1976): 1–9.

⁴⁰ Cardullo, “*Death of a Salesman*,” 128.

⁴¹ Henry Bial, *Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2005), 49.

⁴² Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, xi.

⁴³ See Arthur Miller, “*Salesman*” in *Beijing* (New York, 1984).

⁴⁴ John Lahr, “Hard Sell,” *New Yorker*, May 25, 2009, accessed Sept. 19, 2015.

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/05/25/hard-sell>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ See Susan Haedicke, “Chronology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*, ed. Christopher Bigsby (New York, 2010), xiii, and Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, 138.

⁴⁷ In fact, the construction “Attention must be paid” is not a calque of the Yiddish *Akhtung muz men gebn*. The placement of the direct object *attention/akhtung* at the beginning of the sentence is similarly distinctive in Yiddish and English; in the former, a more idiomatic word order would be *Me(n) muz gebn akhtung*. (In the script performed by the Joseph Papp Yiddish Theater at the Ashkenaz Festival in 2016, the line is rendered “Men muz akhtung gebn”; Arthur Miller, “*Death of a Salesman/Toyt fun a seylsman*,” typescript, p. 28; courtesy of Daniel Kahn.) However, placing “attention” at the beginning of the sentence in English forces a passive verb construction (versus, say, “We have to pay attention”), whereas in Yiddish reordering the sentence does not change the subject or verb form.

⁴⁸ Caplan, “Attention Must Be Paid,” 194.

- ⁴⁹ George Ross, “‘Death of a Salesman’ in the Original,” *Commentary* 11, no. 2 (1951): 184.
- ⁵⁰ Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, xi.
- ⁵¹ Terry Teachout, “Gained in Translation?,” *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 22, 2015, accessed Nov. 7, 2015 <http://www.wsj.com/articles/gained-in-translation-1445548836>.
- ⁵² Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore, Md., 1986).
- ⁵³ Caplan, “Attention Must Be Paid,” 204–8.
- ⁵⁴ Shandler, *Adventures in Yiddishland*, 21.
- ⁵⁵ “A Guest at the ‘Forverts’: A Talk with Avi Hoffman and Daniel Kahn,” YouTube video, Nov. 3, 2015, accessed Sept. 5, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt-ucBeUNzk>.
- ⁵⁶ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley, 1998), 149.
- ⁵⁷ Gates, “Have You Met the Bergers?”
- ⁵⁸ Laura Collins-Hughes, “Review: ‘Awake and Sing!,’ a Depression-Era Family Drama,” *New York Times*, July 20, 2015, accessed June 8, 2016. <http://nyti.ms/1Sy0dTr>
- ⁵⁹ Paulanne Simmons, “Death of a Salesman in Yiddish,” *CurtainUp*, Oct. 18, 2015, accessed Aug. 3, 2016 <http://www.curtainup.com/salesmanyiddish.html>.
- ⁶⁰ Victor Gluck, “Death of a Salesman in Yiddish,” *TheaterScene.net*, Oct. 19, 2015, accessed Aug. 3, 2016 <http://www.theaterscene.net/plays/death-of-a-salesman-in-yiddish/victor-gluck/>.
- ⁶¹ Thomas Burns Scully, “Review: ‘Death of a Salesman’ . . . in Yiddish; At the New Yiddish Rep,” *Onstage*, Oct. 15, 2015, accessed Aug. 3, 2016 <http://www.onstageblog.com/reviews/2015/10/15/review-death-of-a-salesman-in-yiddish-at-the-new-yiddish-rep>.
- ⁶² Seth Rogovoy, “‘Death of a Salesman’ in Yiddish by New Yiddish Rep,” *Rogovoy Report*, Nov. 3, 2015, accessed Aug. 3, 2016 <http://rogovoyreport.com/2015/11/03/new-yiddish-rep-death-of-a-salesman-review-seth-rogovoy/>.
- ⁶³ Ezra Gliner, “Yiddish Breathes New Life Into ‘Death of a Salesman,’” *Forward*, Oct.

16, 2015, accessed Aug. 3, 2016 <http://forward.com/culture/yiddish-culture/322723/yiddish-breathes-new-life-into-death/>.

⁶⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York, 2007), xxiii–xxiv.

⁶⁵ Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London, 2000), 9.

⁶⁶ David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America* (New York, 1995), 3.

⁶⁷ “The Company,” *New Yiddish Rep*, accessed Aug. 28, 2016, <http://www.newyiddishrep.org/The%20Company.html>.

⁶⁸ See Enoch Brater, “Ethics and Ethnicity in the Plays of Arthur Miller,” in Cohen, *From Hester Street to Hollywood*, 123–36; Garrett, “Just One of the Goys”; Novick, “*Death of a Salesman*”; and Shatzky, “Arthur Miller’s ‘Jewish’ Salesman.” Miller discusses Odets’s work in several places in his memoir; see, e.g., Miller, *Timebends*, 227–34.

⁶⁹ See Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1998).

⁷⁰ Alexis Soloski, “She’ll Play the Jewish Mother, and Wants Other Asian-Americans to Get the Best Parts, Too,” *New York Times*, June 25, 2015, accessed Feb. 18, 2016 <http://nyti.ms/1GJUXX>.

⁷¹ “NY1 On Stage Interview with Avi Hoffman and Moshe Yassur,” YouTube video, Nov. 5, 2015, accessed June 20, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMH4a4wjKdM>.

⁷² A case in point is the “revival” of klezmer music—and with it, the performance of Yiddish vocal music—beginning in the 1970s; see, e.g., Mark Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World* (New York, 2000).