

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens  
Department of English Language and Literature  
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“[N]od to the fierce apparition, smile, and take a seat beside it”:  
Spectrality and the Protomatter of Ruins in Tony Kushner’s *Angels in  
America* and Christos Tsiolkas’s *Dead Europe*

Student’s Name: Avgerinos Tsalikis  
I.D. number: 7563122300015

Supervisor: Christina Dokou

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Declaration: This submission is my own work. Any quotation from, or description of, the work of others is acknowledged herein by reference to the sources, whether published or unpublished.

Signature:

Committee:

Christina Dokou, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and  
Literature, NKUA

Stamatina Dimakopoulou, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and  
Literature, NKUA

Efterpi Mitsi, Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, NKUA

**Abstract:** This dissertation will engage Tony Kushner’s play *Angels in America* (1991-1992) in juxtaposition to Christos Tsiolkas’s *Dead Europe* (2005). Bringing together their themes of cultural and sociological haunting with imagery of ruinous spatiality, I will follow, mainly, the two protagonists of each text: a young man in 1980s New York, recently diagnosed with AIDS, who is assigned the role of prophet by desperate angelic orders, and a Greek-Australian photographer traveling through a depraved Europe in the early 2000s, unintentionally capturing with his lens otherworldly sights while progressively exhibiting vampiric appetites. Throughout these two stories, the main and secondary characters escape their personal limbos in spite of their treading upon crumbling spaces of the mundane which, however, do not always reflect utter ruination—by means of spectrality and apparitions generated within those spatial realms. With their “astonishing ability to see such things” (Kushner, *Angels in America* 285) in ruins, the subjects manage to mend and reconstitute not only the stories dismissively shoved into the folds of history, but also their own human bodies which fade into phantom-like states: Prior under President Reagan’s AIDS-denying administration and the further marginalization of the queer community, and Isaac under possession of the spectrified and enduring antisemitic hatred which has been haunting his family and the rest of the continent. For the first part of the dissertation, I employ the theoretical framework of hauntology in order to explore the encounters of the characters with apparitions in their everyday life, including the way the protagonists exercise but not exorcise the phantasmal towards a resolution for their respective afflictions. Accordingly, I draw on Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997) as well as Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s psychoanalytic work on the transgenerational phantom and cryponymy in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1987). For the second part, I turn to ruin studies in an attempt to read decayed spatiality as a site of tangible memory, time and frail life, where haunting unfolds. For the ruin, its various forms and its embodiment, I will engage Dylan Trigg’s *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason* (2006) along with various scholarly and theoretical texts about the sociality of the material and historical debris. By the end, it will have become clear how rubble and decay invoke revenants as well as how spectrality evokes decrepitude with an eye to revelation and catharsis.

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Finally, many thanks to my friends and colleagues for the comfort and advice (and memes) we offered each other. I send a bouquet of spectral hugs to my dearest fellow traveler in mischief, and lavender wife, Irene. The text below is a transcript of a voice message I received from her—the day before submission—the realization of which came too late in the entropic progression of this dissertation:

*Basically, to take away είναι ότι όταν η ζωή σου είναι μονόπλευρη, σε οποιαδήποτε κατεύθυνση, δηλαδή όταν είσαι τόσο, εμ, πώς το λένε, invested σε ένα πράγμα, είναι πολύ εύκολο να αισθάνεσαι ότι μετά όλα μπορούν να αναποδογυρίσουνε . . . οπότε πρέπει πραγματικά να είναι η ζωή κάπως— και κάπως multifaceted ρε φίλε, πρέπει να είναι γεμάτη, πρέπει να— όχι μόνο να παράγεις αλλά και να χαίρεσαι ερεθίσματα γύρω σου, να διαβάζεις τα βιβλία σου, να ακούς τη μουσική σου, να πηγαίνεις τις βόλτες σου, να είσαι και λίγο, πώς το λένε, να είσαι απλά και λίγο μια ύπαρξη που δεν χρειάζεται, ε, μονίμως να πετυχαίνει milestones στη ζωή, και απλώς να κοιτάς λίγο γύρω σου, να κάνεις το*

*τσιγάρο σου, οτιδήποτε, να τρως το παγωτάκι σου, και να λες, 'α ωραίος ο ουρανός σήμερα'.*

— Irene Salas, voice message, 06/03/2025

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“What do we mean when we say survivor? Maybe a survivor is the last one to come home, the final monarch that lands on a branch already weighted with ghosts.”

— Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Threshold of revelation.* This is the phrase that started this project, as Tony Kushner presents it in his play *Angels in America* (1991-1992), describing a dreamscape and its power to grant the dreamer or dreamers extraordinary (in)sight, to go beyond what can be known according to reason, and physics. The possibility to experience a revelation seemed greatly enticing, especially during the mountainous task of selecting a dissertation topic, and so the click was instant. When thinking about a threshold of revelation, it became necessary to think of it in spatial terms because of the instantaneity which perception offers. What's more, space became part of the project, considering that someone in need of a revelation is also a dweller of liminality, of a personal limbo—much like the characters of Harper and Prior who share the dreamscape/threshold—with the hope that spatializing one's own limbo-condition will also provide a quicker and clearer understanding on how to exit it. Christos Tsiolkas's *Dead Europe* (2005) came to shatter this conception about an easy way out by having the main character, Isaac, roam endlessly in limbo, not solely of his own self, but the limbo of his ancestors spanning the distance of a whole continent and even an ocean. A limbo, therefore, cannot remain contained within one spatial structure; the structure will yield, the limbo affect will escape and creep around, while the original structure will be left in ruins. Following this imagery, the conceived nexus between Kushner and Tsiolkas was solidified in the imagery of wreckage and the menace escaping it: in magical words, the ghost.

Kushner's two-part play comprises of *Millenium Approaches* and *Perestroika* and follows three intertwined storylines in the mid-1980s New York, their interdependency and inevitable clash. The weight of the play rests on Prior, a young gay man who, after recently being diagnosed with AIDS, is visited regularly by various apparitions and is ultimately haunted by an angel ordering him to become the server of a metaphysical order of "cease and desist" to humankind. The other text, Tsiolkas's *Dead Europe*, is split into two revolving narratives. The first one takes place in the mid-2000s and follows a gay photographer named Isaac Raftis, a third-generation immigrant in Australia, who decides to visit his mother's forlorn mountain village in Greece before traveling through Europe in an attempt to invigorate the purpose of his art. The second storyline unfolds during the Greek Civil War in the 1940s and chronicles his family's crime against a Jewish boy entrusted—with a hefty price—in their care, an event

launching a transgenerational curse, with its phantom possessing Isaac and becoming manifest as a disease of vampiric appetites for human blood, excrement and flesh. The two stories, read side by side, offer the opportunity for a wider understanding of the previous and present century along with its treatment of marginal groups in the two continents, as *Dead Europe*'s dual narratives, in the 1940s and the 2000s, enfold the events of the 1980s which *Angels in America* problematizes its audience about in the 1990s, and also provide a peek into what Kushner, while writing the play, could anticipate in fear for the new millennium and strove to prevent with his work.

Following my research, it seemed proper to take on this project on both texts, especially since most of the criticism on *Dead Europe* and *Angels in America* does not exclusively focus on spectrality in conjunction to ruinous spatiality. For Kushner's play, the closest criticism to the following analysis are the environmentalist readings of Katie Hogan as well as Claudia Barnett who likens AIDS to Purgatory. For Tsiolkas's novel, Liz Shek-Noble engages the psychoanalytic concept of transgenerational haunting by focusing on the crypt effect without, however, expanding in detail on the phantom. In accordance, this dissertation attempts to fill the critical space formed between the three while centering around "the inconceivability of progress and the excruciating condition of the Now" (Savran 210) which Walter Benjamin expounds on with the imagery of an angel—crucial in the conception of Kushner's play, and also playing an ambiguous part in Tsiolkas's gruesome version.

The main analysis begins in Chapter Two, "History is About to Crack Wide Open,"<sup>1</sup> by approaching the two works from a combination of theoretical frameworks attending to the specificities of spectrality and haunting in relation to the cultural, historical and sociological extent on both collective and individual levels. After contextualizing Kushner's and Tsiolkas's spectrality, written or performed, I address the two main apparitions, a sociological spectre and a psychoanalytic phantom, by turning to Avery Gordon's work on hauntology in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997) as well as Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's psychoanalytic work on transgenerational haunting in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1987) and *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (1976). For the second half of the textual analysis in Chapter Three, "Angels Hover,

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<sup>1</sup> Both main chapter titles are quotations from *Angels in America*, while the titles of the subsections are reworked and/or merged lines from both Tsiolkas's and Kushner's texts.

Anxious Fingers Worry the Tattered Edge,” I explore the imagery of contemporary ruins which Tsiolkas and Kushner employ while their protagonists roam about the (queer) margins of society. I begin by establishing the connection between hauntology and ruin studies on the overall theme of entropy resting on architecture, flesh and character, thus marking the societal lived condition and the troubling relationship with its fragments. The entropic bent in this reading of spatiality mainly draws on Dylan Trigg’s *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason* (2006) together with various scholarly and theoretical texts on the sociality and historicity of material or organic debris. The final segment of this dissertation concludes with a short recapitulation of the main analysis as well as a possible takeaway concerning living and becoming with ruins, in the face of mass cultural expunging of such spatial traces by contemporary rationality. It also nods towards the acknowledgement of spectres generated from abrupt cultural disjunctions, becoming manifest in the spiral of decay which, although downward, may suggest what Kushner’s *Great Work* necessitated, and still does, as Tsiolkas reminds us.

## 2. “HISTORY IS ABOUT TO CRACK WIDE OPEN”

### 2.1 A Terribly, Terribly Old World

A gale hurries the winged creature away from the wreckage that is humanity’s own undoing. “The angel [of history] would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed” (257), writes Walter Benjamin in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” What if the angel’s wish was not resurrection and altruistic salvation but instead a selfish pause of cosmic preservation? Alternatively, what of a ghoul of history which in its wake demands more catastrophes, leading us to the recognition of who resides behind this dehumanized *which*? The first chapter of this dissertation concerns ghostly messengers and the knowledge they may offer when attentiveness rises to gaze at the translucent in-between. Appearing in opposing forms, an angel in Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1991-92) and a ghostly ghoul in Christos Tsiolkas’s *Dead Europe* (2005) both torment the main characters who are called to record and interpret a semiotics of spectrality as they struggle to survive under the silencing politics and cultures of their respective continents. As Alfonso Ceballos Muñoz notes, with his play, “Kushner introduces a different optimized concept of history” (3) in an attempt to reach the American audience of the early-mid 1990s amidst the still towering casualties of the AIDS epidemic and the aftermath of the negligent Reagan administration which took action with the AZT medication only in 1987, the same year when the American president finally gave a public speech about the epidemic—six years too late, after the outbreak of the HIV pandemic. The play wrings out the repercussions of homophobia which took on wider dimensions during the first decade when it was believed that the “disease—their disease—could be some form of divine retribution” (Petro 28); when “sometimes the best answers a patient could hear were reassurances that AIDS was not God’s punishment and that God loved them” (28). Next to the queer community, *Angels in America* brings to the forefront other minorities such as the Jewish immigrant, Mormon and African American communities, which are paralleled with the newest enemy of American people, the infectious homosexual. It is essential then to delve into the text through Gordon’s take on a reimagining of sociology which “must seek also to detect how conditions in the past banished certain individuals, things, or ideas, how

circumstances rendered them marginal, excluded, or repressed. Sociology must preoccupy itself with what has been lost” (Radway viii), bring it to the surface, reckon with the haunting and reconstitute the spectres back into the social vein. This requires a receptiveness towards both societal *λόγος* (word) and societal *σιγή* (silence), as well as towards the *sigh* that the latter Greek word mirrors in its written form. On a similar note, concerning exhumation and acknowledgement, *Dead Europe*’s narratives of haunting will be explored through Abraham and Torok’s concepts of the *phantom* and the *crypt* in an attempt to situate the proliferation of Isaac’s family curse within a psychoanalytic framework. Daniel Hourigan, who has also read Tsiolkas’s text in psychoanalytic terms, recognizes the critics’ usual “concentrated, almost fetishistic, interest in the cultural logics of the ideologies refracted by the design and story of the novel: capitalism, globalization, Eurocentrism and anti-Semitism” (62), and the limited scope of these kinds of readings, since they hinder the story’s capacity for a more planetary understanding of the themes and tools it wields. For this reason, drawing on psychoanalysis and antisemitism’s patterns, I hope to further tackle the novel’s exploration of how and why unresolved violence of the past may still harass—or *harrow*, the concept Hourigan founds his analysis on—future generations incognito. Ultimately, by welding together *Angels in America* and *Dead Europe*, I will address how Kushner’s break with reality and insertion of the phantasmal by means of a phantasmagoric stage pandemonium, as well as Tsiolkas’s choice of excessive violence and gruesome imagery, address directly contemporary readers or audiences in order to tease out an ethical response to the conditions of ghost-birth and the need for acknowledgement, not an exorcism, of the haunting and its possible dialogic dimension with the haunted.

Besides the two apparitions associated with the angelic, the God-abandoned Angel of America and the deceitful spirit Angelo, an array of other apparitions and traces roam the two texts, combined with literary or theatrical elements which pierce temporalities and the concrete understanding of linearity. At one point in *Millenium Approaches*, Louis, the four-and-a-half-year partner of the protagonist, who has recently deserted him because it is difficult to live with “Prior and Prior’s disease” (Kushner, *Angels* 81), “is pursuing an idea as he always does, by thinking out loud” (93) his perspective on what America as a nation has come to:

It’s— Look, race, yes, but ultimately race here is a political question, right?

Racists just try to use race here as a tool in a political struggle. It's not really about race. Like the spiritualists try to use that stuff, are you enlightened, are you centered, channeled, whatever, this reaching out for a spiritual past in a country where no indigenous spirits exist—only the Indians, I mean Native American spirits and we killed them off so now, there are no gods here, no ghosts and spirits in America, there are no angels in America, no spiritual past, no racial past, there's only the political, and the decoys and the ploys to maneuver around the inescapable battle of politics, the shifting downwards and outwards of political power to the people— (96)

This passage blurted out by Louis, a liberal Jew, during a long conflict with Belize, Prior's "ex-ex" (98) drag queen friend and the only African American character,<sup>2</sup> is established as the core ideology which the play sets out to dismantle. It does so by bringing in both the spiritual and racial in the semi-corporeal forms of angels and ghosts so as to make the point that it is exactly the hovering of religious and race issues that feed the political and, in turn, how the political produces new spectres of its own out of the two. Louis's sterile mindset with politics as the only possible horizon is also betrayed earlier while spending time with Joe, a closeted married Republican Mormon with whom he will have an affair. Louis comments on the former's dream about an empty Hall of Justice and the subsequent absence of responsibility to "justice, or, love" (75), labeling this dreamed society as "[c]hildren of the new morning, criminal minds. Selfish and greedy and loveless and blind. Reagan's children" (77)—a characterization of his own internalized guilt under which he is doomed to self-loathing after evading his responsibilities to Prior. Although enmeshed in the inner workings of politics, he fails to practice a politics of care to his diseased boyfriend, much like the American public and leaders of the era. In a later scene, when Prior's ancestors conjure Louis for a dance together under the music of "Moon River," the abandoned protagonist asks the latter whether he is a ghost, to which Louis, "an honorary citizen of the *Twilight Zone*" (99), replies "[n]o. Just spectral. Lost to myself. Sitting all day on cold park benches. Wishing I could be with you" (119), thus referring to the reverse spectralization that the political, enmeshed with the personal, engenders. Across the Atlantic Ocean and about

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<sup>2</sup> Belize, or Norman Ariaga, is the only character whose African American identity and heritage is directly addressed in *Angels in America*. According to Kushner's character lists, the same actor is supposed to also play Mr. Lies (6, 130), appearing in both *Millenium Approaches* and *Perestroika*, as well as The Angel Oceania (131) in *Perestroika*.

two decades later, these blind, greedy children identified again as the natives of Tsiolkas's Europe where "[a] decade is a long time ago" (217) and "the darting cars on the narrow streets were the only evidence of the last century" (204) in Prague. During his tour of Greece, Italy, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Holland and England, the traveler Isaac faces the antisemitic history of the continent which is deeply infused into its people and grounds, including his own family line. He, too, gives into the performance of ahistoricism before the family's curse breaks this new but weak spell: "I was strangely elated. I was not home. I was far away, in cold harsh Europe. I breathed in the anonymity" (181) he thinks, before joining into a fit of racist and antisemitic comments with his friend, Sal Mineo. Immersed in the material excess of the continentally-secured free market after the Fall of Communism, Europeans refuse to pause and be held accountable to their still freshly charred history. As a result, Isaac finds out, their racial and spiritual past is still much too alive and conjoined in antisemitism. In short, both works' anti-theses boil down to humanity's propensity towards the erasure of a weighted past and a chosen or imposed interception to an abrupt change which accumulates behind it the historical and cultural debris, out of immediate concern, sight, or spaces. In line with this, Sadeq Rahimi emphasizes in *The Hauntology of Everyday Life* that

[h]aunting is about a nullified possible future that a bygone existence (be it the self or an other) was experienced to promise. What haunts is not that which is gone, it is that which was expected to come but whose condition of arrival has been foreclosed, and the ghost is an advocate of the promised future that was unrightfully canceled when the past was destroyed. (6)

Following this, *Angels in America* employs minor phantasmatic characters in its first part so as to flesh out the American sociohistorical and cultural context in relation to Sadeq's exposition on the failed organic extension *from*. By bringing on stage both the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg as well as Prior's two ancestors, the ground is set for a call to a different approach towards AIDS through a reexamination of past wrongdoings. When dead Ethel appears in front of the closeted and notorious Republican attorney, Roy Cohn—who, like Prior, receives news of his AIDS diagnosis while being disbarred—the readers or audience are pressured into acknowledging retrospectively the nation's previous enemy, the communist traitor (Kushner, *Angels*

113), and the bigoted frenzy of “Red” witch-hunting amidst which Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were convicted and executed as such. After all, Roy, whose character is based on the real-life Cohn, admits that his “greatest accomplishment” (113) was secretly influencing the decision for Ethel’s death sentence by electrocution in 1953. Mark Fisher in *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* takes on a different example of power abuse closely tied to Cohn’s proxy murder (114), that of Jimmy Savile,<sup>3</sup> and concludes in that such cases generate “a cognitive dissonance in the vulnerable” (95) which can only be adequately answered to in the present, after the crime’s confession and the false pretense that power abuse was indeed a thing of the past but not of the now (95). Hence, Kushner shatters any false pretense of innocence and virtue that the audience may harbor concerning their participation in discrimination, while Cohn and the societal consequences of Reagan’s administration hail one another from two different temporalities, from stage to auditorium respectively. Furthermore, Prior 1 and Prior 2, the Angel’s heralds, who were also victims to a previous plague, the Black Death, in the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century, stand as additional physical reminders of the “repetition of history and the necessity of facing together both the disease and the prejudices it entails” (Ceballos Muñoz 5). Accordingly, taking into consideration that “to understand and to transform state power . . . the story must be told in the mode of haunting” (Gordon 131), the revenant Ethel and the double Priors function as an invasion into modern conscience, inviting parallelisms between the previous societal attitudes towards Black Death or Communism and the present alienated gay body of the 1980s and 1990s that their descendant Prior represents. As history repeats itself, prescience rather than retrospection is to be gained and employed when addressing enacted injustices. The playwright summons “a whole world of torment opening up on the dark frontiers of American history” (Miller 67), even further back to the Middle Ages in Europe, as he “prepare[s] the way” (Kushner, *Angels* 35) for the concluding but not teleological reconfiguration that the angelic spectre will lead to in *Perestroika*.

*Dead Europe*’s strain on the past is concentrated around antisemitism which culminated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the Shoah, and is, unfortunately, still-thriving.

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<sup>3</sup> As Fisher succinctly summarizes this case of power abuse: “September 2012, and it all starts to come up. Like a build-up of effluent that could no longer be contained, first seeping, then surging out. Jimmy Savile, the nation’s favourite grotesque, the former DJ and children’s entertainer, is exposed as a serial sex abuser and paedophile” (88).

Moreover, Tsiolkas's two storylines give account of historical events for many European national trajectories—such as the Cold War, the Greek Civil War, and the later Yugoslav Wars, specifically the Kosovo War—which, however, have been confined to museums or the memories of victims and their families. The difference between the reception of the Jewish genocide and these wars is depicted in two interweaved incidents taking place in Greece. In the present, Isaac is introduced to the history of the Greek Civil War in a local museum (Tsiolkas 90) and then, during a flashback, he acquires a glimpse into what his family curse would soon bring out in the open: “phantoms, and [he] had found them in the Jewish History Museum of Thessaloniki” (88). The first experience, while rendering Isaac furious over the atrocities committed between Greeks, loosens its grip on him rapidly after his acquaintance with a living remnant of that war, an old Greek expatriate who had been part of the Resistance. The language barrier as the old man gives account of his war memories in Greek drives Isaac away and leaves him uninterested and distant. He recounts, “I was a foreigner with a stranger's ears and I could not make out a word. But still I kept nodding” (91). However, at the second museum, a “cavernous warehouse, with black partitions dividing the space into a maze” (88), resembling a crypt, the protagonist leaves having sneakily violated the custodian's prohibition about taking photographs of the archive. Even though curious to learn about the local Jewry history, Isaac not only took offense and missed the opportunity to converse with the custodian who would answer to him in English instead of Greek, but also went further to express racial hate later on. His boyfriend Colin—whose raging youth has left him branded with a swastika tattoo—knowingly manages to tease out of Isaac the predisposed reaction to this incident in the sepulchral building:

“What did you say to him?”

“Nothing.”

“Why?”

“I didn't think it was my place.”

“What would you have liked to say to him?”

“I don't know.”

“Come on, what did you want to say to him?”

“I wanted to say, Fuck off, you paranoid Jew, I have nothing to do with this history.” (90)

The archival preservation of the two historical events combined with Isaac's contrasting reactions to each experience provides an insight into the power that antisemitism still holds over the European mind. After all, while born and raised in Australia, Isaac grew up with his Greek mother reading him stories about blood libel, a ritual during which Jews supposedly murdered Christian toddlers and drank their blood (3, 385). On the one hand, the enmity between the Resistance and the anti-communist Right that led to the musealization of the Greek Civil War has evaporated in time into a distant memory that nobody cares to resurrect or connect to anymore. "I turned to share my outrage with Giulia, but I was alone" (91), Isaac contemplates under the influence of his short-lived compassion after seeing the crimes against the Greek communists. Giulia's friend, Andreas, notes after their visit that "it's all in the fucking past, isn't it? There's no exile any more, no civil war, no blood feuds, no more prisons and even the State builds a monument to the Resistance. We are all democrats, now, aren't we? We followed his laughter to the car" (93-94). His ironic comment attests to the unwanted 20<sup>th</sup>-century debris lingering on and quickly brushed off in the name of modernity since "[t]o make peace is to forget. To reconcile, it is necessary that memory be faulty and limited" (Sontag, *Regarding* 115), even if it is a willed oblivion. On the other hand, this shedding of historical awareness "before a new skin is ready" (Kushner, *Angels* 138), also reminiscent of Louis's previous comment on Joe's dream, is juxtaposed to the ever-present haunting of the Shoah. Isaac's sentiments towards the custodian make clear that the hate which once led to the need for that Jewish History Museum still lurks, proliferates in the everyday, and that the "[Jews'] obsession with the past, their moral righteousness" (Tsiolkas 86) stands as the only, albeit unwelcome, guard against repetition. Their fixation is not a "sickness" (86), as Giulia and Andreas profess, but a healthy symbiotic progression with the past—a mode of living attuned to absence. This urgent turn to the omitted is expounded on by Fisher's claim that "[h]auntology is the proper temporal mode for a history made up of gaps, erased names and sudden abductions" (130), while Kushner's directions that the characters and apparitions' exits should incorporate the element of sudden erasure instead of a fade-out stride aim to further enhance the liminal stage that Prior finds himself in—pun intended—but also embodies during the AIDS epidemic which had extended to a "holocaustal scale" (Kushner, "Foreword" xiv). In his notes section titled "Magic," he explains:

Walking offstage is slow, and therefore it lacks one very important aspect of *vanishing*—namely that it’s abrupt. In a world in which young people by their thousands sicken and, with obscene speed, die (in other words, the world of this play), vanishing abruptly is particularly upsetting, even frightening. The magic ought to be fun for the audience, but also disturbing. For Prior, it’s increasingly terrifying. (*Angels* 313)

Spectrality, therefore, on Kushner’s stage or Tsiolkas’s story emerges from the gaps and excised names that Fisher beckons to, the sigh in *σινή*, out of negative spaces morphed from man-made craters; the ruins of *vukojebina*—the middle of nowhere—as the phantasmatic Jewish character Gerry describes his obliterated homeland: “[i]t means the place where the wolves fuck . . . Where I come from doesn’t exist now . . . It has been erased. God has erased its name” (Tsiolkas 292-93),<sup>4</sup> similar to Isaac’s ancestral village, “*Agrio Dassos. The Wild Forest*” (79) where he triggers the dormant curse awake.

## 2.2 The Messengers Arrive

Thus far, the creeping remnants of characters and events have been the focus of attention in addressing how and why the abrupt rupture from the past becomes manifest in both selectively amnesiac societies where “the disappeared sustain and convey the traces of the state’s power to determine the meaning of life and death . . . an identity that remains to haunt those marked by its hand and all the others to whom that hand is extended” (Gordon 127). However, a closer examination of the main two disparate apparitions, an angel and a spectral ghoul, the executors themselves instead of the haunting’s underside, is necessary so as to approach the threshold that the protagonists cross during their communion with the otherworldly. Specifically, how do Prior and

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<sup>4</sup> While the word *vukojebina* does not appear in Tsiolkas’s novel, Gerry’s explanation of the meaning led my research to its Serbo-Croatian origins—not Bulgarian as the character claims. It is a compound of the words *vuk* meaning “wolf”, and *jebati* meaning “to fuck.” As Gerry similarly explains, it translates to “‘where the wolves fuck’, an appellation for a village or place forgotten even by God” (Williams 167; see also Butcher 41-41, Merdić 46-47). It is interesting to note that this word, uttered by a Jewish revenant who is eventually revealed to be sharing the same name with Isaac, has further connotations for the cursed protagonist since the Slavic forms of the word “wolf”—*vuk* in Serbian and *vâlk* in Bulgarian—are also the roots for the Bulgarian word *vârkolak*, meaning “werewolf,” which then turned into the Greek work *vrykolakas* with the meaning of “ghoul” and later “vampire.”

Isaac confront or ignore the Angel of America and the ghoulish Angelo respectively? Are these haunted subjects of the queer margins capable of adopting/adapting the foggy lexicon of the phantasmal as a tool to cope and eventually transgress their imposed limitations instead of opting for an exorcism?<sup>5</sup>

The final scene in *Millenium Approaches* concludes with the appearance of the Angel after hovering over Prior throughout as a disembodied “audio-spectre” (Fisher 98). The protagonist confesses “I want the voice; it’s wonderful. It’s all that’s keeping me alive” (Kushner, *Angels* 64), while she slowly lures him and prepares the ground for her corporeal landing inside his bedroom, following the two heralds in December 1985, as though in a reimagining of Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* with her playing the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come—with a twist. Looming between a biblical vision and an HIV-related hallucination, the Angel undoubtedly poses an impossibility both to the audience and Prior, who is now assigned the responsibility of a New Age prophet in preaching a message to humanity and bringing equilibrium back into the firmament. The reason for this mission is revealed in act two of *Perestroika*, “The Anti-Migratory Epistle,” when the Angel chronicles to Prior—who is simultaneously in his bedroom and out on the street narrating the events to Belize three weeks later (160)—how humanity’s progress has absorbed God’s interest to the point of alienating Him from His angels, ultimately leading to His departure from Heaven. According to her discourse uttered in verse, by creating humans, God “Unleashed / Eternal Creation’s Potential for Change” (169), rendering them a superior foil to His first children, the angelic hordes, whose powers are comparatively deficient since they lack “imagination, They can *do* anything but They can’t invent, create, They’re sort of fabulous and dull all at once” (166). Unlike them, His second inception introduced “division” (168) into the universe. In mortals “the Virus of TIME began” (169) due to unceasing migration and movement around the globe, thus generating mutations by means of interconnection and the pursuit of life even under impossible conditions, unimageable for the angels and most puzzling for God. These children exceeded any expectations, proclaiming the force of survival, progress and independence without any intervention from their Father. As a result, God—whose corporeal form is the Hebrew letter Aleph

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<sup>5</sup> A professional exorcism at least. Prior unsuccessfully attempts to cast the ghosts of Prior 1 and Prior 2 out of his house by employing folkloric tools used in defense against evil and vampires: “Look. Garlic. A mirror. Holy Water. (*He squirts water at Prior 1 from a small plastic squirt bottle*) A crucifix. FUCK OFF! Get the fuck out of my room! GO!” (Kushner, *Angels* 118).

(8; 166)—underwent an existential crisis, “*Bored with His Angels, Bewitched by Humanity, in / Mortifying Imitation of [It], His least creation, / He would sail off on Voyages, no knowing where*” (170), before finally deserting the heavenly grounds in 1906 and letting chaos and decay into the orderly city of Paradise. The staging of numerous split scenes, magical or not, further advocates for the rhizomatic and mycelial condition of humankind, with characters walking into others’ dreams or everyday moments, like Harper, Joe’s wife and an agoraphobic Mormon who has made a habit out of Valium overdoses and opts for drug-induced dreams and hallucinations instead of reality, to the point of clairvoyance. Steven F. Kruger elucidates that:

In such scenes even a character’s fantasies and imaginations are conceived of as not solely his or hers. These gather their full meaning only in relation to, even interpenetration with, one another—just as, in Kushner’s stagecraft, the “split scenes” suggest that discrete actions must, if we are to understand them fully, be read together. (154)

In this manner, the otherworldly visitor best embodies interconnection by division. The Angel not only belongs to a whole different realm but, alongside all angels—including the other Principalities of the Third Order: Europa, Africanii, Oceania, Asiatica, Australia and Antarctica—the two species, or siblings, are inextricably bound together in a universe of an absent and irresponsible Creator, comparable to Tsiolkas’s world where an “ancient, spent God” “created this suffering . . . If there is a God” (Tsiolkas 300). The Angel cries out “[w]e are failing, failing / The Earth and the Angels” (Kushner, *Angels* 277) in an attempt to make Prior recognize their supposedly dual collapse. All in all, the Angel and Prior’s interactions, playing out as though in magical-realist split scenes between two separate spheres, and the demand for humanity’s cooperation in divine affairs confess that, after all, Heaven is the one in need of help in meddling with ruination. The lack of this knowledge is indicated in Prior’s final spectral encounter with all the Continental Principalities who leave him and the Earth to look for a new path by themselves:

PRIOR. I haven’t *done* anything yet, I—I want to be healthy again! And this plague, it should stop. In me and everywhere. Make it go away.

AUSTRALIA. Oh We have tried.

We suffer with You but

We do not know. We  
Do not know how. (276)

Evocative of split scenes and their necessary paired reading, Tsiolkas's revolving storylines bring to the forefront familial interconnectedness between two centuries. Instead of the play's complex grid of verbosity and clairvoyant revelation, the Australian novel chronicles intersubjectivity unfolding through silence and a misleading wraith. In the absence of specific words and the preservation of their secret within the family structure, a blind spot is established directly linked to Isaac's possession in the present, therefore "suggesting the existence within an individual of a collective psychology comprised of several generations" (Rand 166). The novel's transgenerational haunting dates back to World War II and the Greek Civil War in the 1940s, when the married but childless couple Michaelis and Lucia Panagis are implored to hide from the Germans a young Jew named Elias. Despite the wife's antisemitic sentiments against their sheltering a "demon Hebrew" (Tsiolkas 24), they agree in exchange for a box containing all of the Jewish family's precious jewelry. One night, Lucia, who was in charge of caring for the boy, has sex with him while feeling compelled by a "spirit evil, or from God" (63) and, after announcing her pregnancy, convinces Michaelis to murder him on the pretense of protecting their forthcoming child because "[t]he Hebrew belongs to the Devil" (118). The ramification of this is that Elias comes back to haunt the family as a disguised ghoul and latches himself onto Lucia whose very name, as Christina Dokou highlights, is the female counterpart of Lucifer (443n27), also known as Lilith, a demonic figure and mother of demons in Jewish mythology (of whom the novel makes mention in its final chapter). As the two narratives converge chapter by chapter, it is revealed that his spirit has endured through decades and has reached Isaac, Lucia's grandson, who is now gradually approaching the final deadly stage of the ghoul's parasitic possession by means of disease and debility. Diving into psychoanalysis and haunting, Michaelis's warning to Lucia before giving into her coercion rings most true: "[t]he crime will be on you, he repeated, still above her; he was speaking to eternity" (Tsiolkas 120). Abraham and Torok took psychoanalysis's "strategies and techniques into more literary territory and cast its genre as either Gothic or horror" (Glazier 8), with the developments of the crypt and the subsequent phantom theory as well as the linguistic masking that binds these two, *cryptonymy*. In line with the duo's writings, Lucia seems to be the family line's crypt-

bearer, the *cryptophore* of the unacknowledged murder as well as Elias's own name—which is never uttered by any family member in the novel—since “[n]o crypt arises without a shared secret's having already split the subject's topography” (Abraham and Torok, “Mourning” 131). What's more,

[w]hen a desire is fulfilled or realized in a drama so shameful that it is both unspeakable and unknowable for the subject, the “solution” is the formation of a crypt. This unmarked tomb serves the double function of sealing “alive” within it the unutterable words constitutive of the secret drama and of denying, because it is unmarked and inaccessible to the dynamic forces of the return of the repressed, the very fact that a secret has been concealed. (Rashkin, *Family Secrets* 175n39)

As a result, Lucia's crypt—which might as well be shared with Michaelis—establishes a heritable linguistic absence, or abscess, rendering it “not exactly complementary to their unstated repressions” (Abraham and Torok, “The Lost Object” 140n1), by sealing within it like pus any mention of the hateful murder as well as the wife's lustful night with the young Jew in a literal crypt. Through the secretive speech of the parents, which is also evident in their parental negligence, Rebecca “receive[s] from them a gap in the unconscious, an unknown, unrecognized knowledge—a *nescience*” (140n1) in the form of a phantom which is the crypt's “mechanism for its strange temporality” (Glazier 3) unraveling in haunting.<sup>6</sup> The psychoanalytic phantom that haunts the subject is the guardian of a crypt built inside an Other and “produces fake traces” (Dragon 264) in order to mislead and strand adrift, to treasure the crypt's semantic core, *Elias*. This phantom's guise, the “uncanny apparitions” (266) he concocts without giving away the shadowed identity within Lucia's sepulchral within the Self, is evident early on in both storylines. Before his murder, the victim is described as a “youth” (Tsiolkas 61) with long matted hair, a beard of “bristles . . . soft, almost a down, and they were fair, not black” (61) and a deep voice that “[i]t was almost a growl” (61). However, when he returns, he is a naked demonic sprite with “chalk-white” skin (160), a “boy's body” (396) and a childish voice (157, 295, 367). The apparition seems to have tricked Lucia into believing he is a heavenly wraith, informing her daughter Rebecca that “[h]is name

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<sup>6</sup> Considering the fact that the demonic spirit was first visible to both Lucia and her seer mother-in-law, Maritha, it is possible to make a case for multiple crypts or shared phantoms in *Dead Europe* but, given the extend of this dissertation, I will focus solely on Lucia's crypt and its contents reaching Isaac.

is Angel . . . he's an angel sent by God to protect us" (315) before her death and the subsequent transference of the ghoul onto the young child. Angel, or Angelo in Greek, became Rebecca's shadow during her childhood, bringing along his "deceits and games" (314) which, like a phantom's art, pushed her further away from questioning the reason of his "heterocryptic" (Derrida, "Fors" xxxi) ghost-birth and "the shameful pleasure that conjured it in the first place" (Glazier 4). After Michaelis and Rebecca's migration to Australia, the New World, the young girl is subjected to an exorcism which does not prove successful in the long term, since Angelo ultimately makes his "phantomatic return" (Rand 169) through/upon her son back in Greece.

Whereas in *Dead Europe* the soon-to-be possessed protagonist travels from Australia to the origin grounds of the phantom, *Angels in America*'s angelic invasion into the realm of the addressee would benefit from a reading parallel to the figure of the spectre in hauntology; as a personification of "social and relational" (Kruger 154) aspects concerning justice, a rather ambiguous territorial spirit, the nation's overseer, "the Bird of America, the Bald Eagle / Continental Principality" (Kushner, *Angels* 160). With a "wrath [which] is as fearsome as [her] countenance is splendid" (162), she ranges from an incorporeal and "*incredibly beautiful voice*" (64) like "a viola, like a perfectly tuned, tight string, balanced, the truth" (65) to a winged creature with a "*tremendous, unearthly voice*" (162) and a sickly cat's cough who not merely pays a biblical visit but insistently hunts down the recipient, informing him "[y]ou can't Outrun your / Occupation, Jonah. / Hiding from Me one place you will find me in another" (173). The polarity of her mannerisms is only the peak of the dual condition that spectres pin their addressees to, namely the "force that combines the injurious and the Utopian" (Gordon 135). Following Gordon's writings on haunting in sociology, this character is a "highly symbolized" (50) spectre reflecting Prior's fear of vanishing as a symptom of socially inflicted violence. In more detail, the Angel mirrors the marginalization of his homosexual body, doubled by the disease, in that the queer community's volatile stand in society runs parallel to the delicate nature of the angelic species who, "Made for His Pleasure, [They] can only ADORE" (168) and, equipped with a "queer" set of sexual organs (165), they "copulate, *ceaselessly*" (166) with "Deus Erectus" (166)—who is no more, depriving them of the copulating energy that fuel Heaven. She admits this to Prior in a fit of fury and fear for her species' evanescence in the shadow of humanity's progress as ensuing geological changes threaten their heavenly dome: "Paradise itself Shivers and Splits— / . . . / Each Day when *You*

Awake— / . . . / As though / WE are only / The dream of *YOU*” (169). Since the angels are rendered timeworn in this way, her visitation is to be found in the very notion of the spectre, that is, a reinstatement of the rough spots of history which have been swept under the carpet with a faulty eye toward oblivion and revision—like Europeans’ relationship to the Shoah and anti-semitism, and Reaganite Americans’ revulsion towards the AIDS epidemic—and an offer of a possible path to redemption, if properly listened to and addressed. Accordingly, Heaven’s spokesangel demands of humankind “paralysis, illness, an end to change and progress” (“Tony Kushner Speaks” 21), a return to the past that will supposedly elicit God’s homecoming, through cultural stasis. This is her proposed path to atonement and justice, the ghost’s “utopian grace” (Gordon 57), which is nonetheless bound to authoritarian principles conflicting with Prior’s notions about life and perseverance. Looking into the sociality of haunting, a spectre

may reside elsewhere in an otherworldly domain but it is never intrinsically Other. It has a life world, in the strongest sense of the term, of its own. And it carries this life world with all its sweet things, its nastiness, and its yearnings into ours . . . The ghost has an agency on the people it is haunting and we can call that agency desire, motivation, or standpoint. And so its desires must be broached and we have to talk to it. (179)

With this in mind, the Angel operates as Prior’s half Self within “a variety of other selves” (Kruger 154) on stage; and her utopian desire for stasis does not belong solely to Kushner’s fictional Heaven, but corresponds partially to Prior’s world as well. While the psychoanalytic phantom points to but also conceals “the objectal correlative of the loss [which] is buried alive in the crypt as a full-fledged person, complete with its own topography” (Abraham and Torok, “Mourning” 131), here the spectre’s articulated commands, which express “the whole complicated sociality of a determining formation that seems inoperative (like slavery) or invisible (like racially gendered capitalism)” (Gordon 183), reverberate Reaganite Right’s sly attempts to exterminate the homosexual deviant by withholding means of healthcare until it is too late. The Epistle, also known as the “Tome of Immobility, of respite, of cessation” (Kushner, *Angels* 276), which prophet Prior is called to incorporate and preach, holds the “awe-inspiring reification of dominant ideology” (Harris Ramsby 414), the discourse of what the diseased protagonist fears as a probable future for AIDS patients and the queer

community in general: their vanishing “as a system of terror and repression is the other door, being thrust across a menacing threshold and into a somewhere whose whereabouts and coordinates are unknown and threatening” (Gordon 113). Defying Heaven, Prior resists his downthrow into static death and counteracts it later on with a mortal version of the utopian grace which will offer justice not solely to the haunting figure, but also to the haunted subject.

On a similar note, regarding ghostly individuality, the ghoul in *Dead Europe* reflects the genealogical symptom of the phantom’s distinct subjectivity as delineated in Abraham’s “Notes on the Phantom.” Once Isaac accidentally conjures the “phantom’s periodic and compulsive return” (173), it slowly becomes evident that Elias is still behind the guise of Rebecca’s exorcised childhood companion, Angelo. While the protagonist roams from city to city, the projected ghost unleashes his heightened vengeful drive in full effect by producing a verbatim version of the crime’s first and last determinant, antisemitism. Abraham explains that, contrary to the return of the repressed, the phantom “works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject’s own mental topography” (173) and “create[s] the impression of surrealistic flights of fancy or *ouliipo*-like verbal feats” (173). Accordingly, Isaac’s extraneous paroxysms that “not one Jew had ever walked on the face of this earth” (Tsiolkas 158) as well as the dream-like sequences whenever he indulges in his ventriloquistic vampirism, denote the active possession of the ghoul, much like Prior’s startling penile erections stand as an “infallible barometer of Her proximity” (Kushner, *Angels* 257). When Isaac first utters an antisemitic slur, he confesses “[a] rush of power surged through every particle of me. It was as if I had been yearning to utter that curse since the beginning of time” (Tsiolkas 154). In this way he subconsciously extends the family curse to a primordial origin, implicating the millennia-old degradation of Jewry and establishing himself as the archetypal antisemite who, as his boyfriend Colin confessed about himself, “hated the very word. Jew . . . the very sound of the word” (252) without questioning the nexus of that racism as irrational and injudicious. Furthermore, Angelo’s ventriloquism poses “an impediment to the subject’s instinctual life” (Torok, “Story” 181), making Isaac go out of his way to seduce victims, act savageries on their bodies, or even search for a used bandage in a bathroom wastebin to satiate the bursts of bloodlust, the “living organism within [him]” (Tsiolkas 353). The ghoul’s mere existence but, specifically, the vampiric possession, mirrors in irony the fictitious Jewish ritual of blood libel and the dehumanization of Elias into a “betrayers, a Judas . . . a demon, like all of his filthy

kind” (167), a staple trope in Antisemitic discourse. Lucia, upon looking at him for the first time, recognizes their shared humanity (21), yet later strips him off of it by burying the proper name behind words related to the demonic and anything but the trace of a human.<sup>7</sup> Michaelis too, having received a kiss from Elias after tricking him into believing that he was walking towards his freedom and the end of war instead of his murder, answers to this gesture of affection by telling the boy “[y]ou are the Devil” (126) and further immures the name alongside his own conscience before the violent act. Regarding the arabesque semantics of the core-utterance encased inside Lucia’s subsequent crypt and the alternatives etched in its place in speech, the two psychoanalysts explicate that:

The key word, no doubt unutterable for some reason, and unknown for the moment, would have to be polysemic, expressing multiple meanings through a single phonetic structure. One of these would remain shrouded, but the other, or several other meanings now equivalent, would be stated through distinct phonetic structures, that is, through synonyms. To make our conversations about this easier, we would call them *cryptonyms* (words that hide) because of their allusion to a foreign and arcane meaning. (*The Wolf Man* 18)

The racist discourse the Panagis family indulges in is established with these words of guise which defer by cloaking the acknowledgment of the boy’s humanity, but also point further back and further onward, to past atrocities against Jewish communities on European soil—not exclusively—as well as anticipated violence passed down by “the law of *another generation*” (Derrida, “Fors” xxxi). As Glazier explains, “[w]hen the secreted words have become established socially or begin to be circulated in epistemology they become *staged words* that may be picked-up and used by a family or social group and handed-down historically” (5-6). Akin to antisemitic words, cryptonyms nourish the phantom’s invasion and are re-membered back from the unconscious into spoken word (Abraham, “Notes” 176), comparable to how earlier family members disturb descendants with a phantom pain in Tsiolkas’s undead Europe, from Lucia to Rebecca and then Isaac; from hundreds of years ago to World War II and

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<sup>7</sup> Unhuman and demonic characterizations are attributed to Elias for his being Jew throughout the novel, before and after his murder. He is called a “Christ killer” (60) and a “betrayor of Christ” (167) “belong[ing] to the Devil” (118), with a “demonic shape” (64); he is a “beast” (173) speaking the language of Satan (62), while his burning flesh emitted a “satanic odour” (173).

the Shoah, and now the 21<sup>st</sup> century with still-ongoing genocides and their linguistic traces which “neatly draw division around racial lines through identity politics” (Glazier 8). The ghoul, thus, takes on the hate of the family as a microcosm/synecdoche of Europe, and manifests it as compulsive vampirism channeled through detailed gruesome sequences which pierce the pages and aim directly at the readers so as to “provoke our response—not to the disgusting figure alone, but more productively, to ourselves” (Gildersleeve qtd. in Doolan 47), when our brutality is hauntingly transferred back into us or diffused all around. The readers are transformed into spectators as they watch brutality unfold when a fellow human becomes possessed by an unhuman creature. Yet, upon shedding light onto the cryptic architecture housing Elias, “the body [that] had once housed a human soul” (Tsiolkas 127), they are called to question not only Angelo’s and Isaac’s humanity, but also their own.

“The ghostly haunt says . . . Do something about the wavering present the haunting is creating” (Gordon 178-79); and so Prior responds with his gaze not toward the past, where a negligent God with abandonment issues still resides, or where the state can still enfeeble the communities of the margins, but by reconciling “with unfulfilled possibility, with the something to be done that the wavering present is demanding . . . a reckoning with that which we have lost, but never had” (183). He does so after physically wrestling with the Angel—the personified demand for, and submission to, Earth’s inevitable decay and self-destruction—upon guidance by Hannah, Joe’s Mormon mother. She, too, does not pass unnoticed by the messenger, even though she insists “[y]ou’ve got no business with me, I didn’t call you, you’re his fever dream not mine” (261), before sharing a sensual kiss with her and inevitably reaching an “enormous orgasm, as the Angel flies away to the accompanying glissando of a baroque piccolo trumpet” (261). The unescapable proliferation of the transgenerational haunting in the Panagis-Raftis family echoes the sociality of this angelic spectre’s reconfiguration which leaves no one unaffected—though surely not as ecstatically as it did Hannah. No attentive observer bears to refuse “the absolute hospitality, the ‘yes’ to the *arrivant(e)*, the ‘come’ to the future that cannot be anticipated” (Derrida, *Specters* 211); especially this Mormon mother who by the end of the play is the only one “noticeably different” (Kushner, *Angels* 287), marking her inherent inclination for a necessary change hailed by the Angel. After being granted entrance to Heaven, the protagonist demands a blessing from the seven Principalities who, instead, warn him of impending apocalyptic events and suggest that he, and any others with similar options,

“[c]reep away to Death / Before that last dreadful daybreak” (278). Undaunted by the discomfort and terror that the phantasmal brings, he works through the bilateral effects of haunting and emerges on the other side with his utopian grace of “liv[ing] past hope” (279) as mortals do, uttering “[b]ut still. Still. Bless me anyway. I want more life. I can’t help myself. I do” (278), before being sent back to his hospital bed. What’s more, with the alternative utopian grace, he poses to the angels the unimageable possibility of grasping justice for themselves: “Sue the bastard for walking out” (276) he advises and leaves them pondering on a possible revolt against God (which, by the end of the two plays, specifically, in the second omitted scene of *Perestroika*, we see they have done); their emancipation out of their own spectralization while awaiting His return, together with the admission of arable contingency which trails behind accounted-for decay and disorganization:

*(All stand, frozen, then the Angels exchange glances. Then:)*

ANGEL. Thus spake the Prophet. (276)

### **2.3 Choosing Lilith, the Demons and the Universe of Wounds**

In contrast to America’s Angel, the Jewish apparition never receives justice inside the narratological perimeter of the novel, although it is alluded that the events will eventually lead there. After Isaac returns hospitalized in Australia and suffers what seems to be the last stage of Angelo’s possession before death, Rebecca decides to perform a ritual in order to transfer the ghoul out of her son’s body and instead admit the “‘diseased’ form of the dual unity” (Rashkin, *Family Secrets* 27) with the parent back into herself. Like the exorcism performed on her when she was young, this ritual is centered around proper names; however, the intention for its outcome differs fundamentally. During a revelatory sequence at a Jewish cemetery, she scrapes off with a rock the real but undisclosed tombstone name of Gerry, the family friend and namesake of Isaac, while also burying the remaining jewelry which her parents received in exchange for sheltering Elias. Derrida explains that “a proper name is already never just one single simple vocable, if it always describes, beneath the articulation of a sentence and a scene, a multiple economy of places, instances, and safes” (“Fors” xlvi).

Taking this into consideration, similar to Elias and his representing the diachronic victims of antisemitism, Rebecca attempts to cut Isaac off the lineage of violence and transgenerational haunting by erasing the inscription on the tombstone and therefore any relations of her son with the core-word *Elias* but also with the enunciation of *Isaac* and its always-already spilled blood drawing the phantom in. The explicit planetary kinship that Lucia shunned with cryptonyms is iterated in the now with Gerry's presence in the Raftis family. The protagonist confesses about him, "I don't ever remember him having a name. He was always the Hebrew, that was how the Greeks always referred to him. That's what Dad had called him. The definite article was important. Back then I thought he was the only Hebrew in the entire world" (Tsiolkas 267). Yet, it turns out that his name overlaps with the protagonist's, binding both sides to one shared origin leading to Judaism, as does Elias whose name is more ancient than "the names of saints, then the names of the Trinity, then the names of the prophets" (327). Along these lines, the nucleus of the grandmother's crypt dilates into "not even a noun but a verb, a whole collapsed sentence, the operation of a sentence and the sentence of an operation engaging several subjects, several instances, several name bearers, several places" (Derrida, "Fors" xlv) and Rebecca chooses to sentence herself under this collapsed sentence of her lineage, the anathematized foe in her blood-libel stories whom she dreads "more than the death of her own child" (Tsiolkas 392), rather than let it propagate ceaselessly to posterity and eternity with "[n]o judgment, no guilt or responsibility" (Kushner, *Angels* 43).

By the end of the play, five years after his trip to Paradise (288), Prior still stands: a survivor whose fight against stasis ended up being his truest vocation. His health condition is attributed either to deceased Roy Cohn's private supply of AZT, confiscated by Belize and Louis, or to the probability of his acquiring the blessing for more life, known in Hebrew as *l'chaim* (Bielik-Robson 5),<sup>8</sup> when "*the Angels silently ma[d]e mystical signs*" (Kushner, *Angels* 279) upon his departure from Heaven—provided that all these were not hallucinations or dementia caused by the HIV virus. As Claudia Barnett notes, "Kushner presents impossible combinations so that his audience can conceive of impossible results; his fantasies are lessons in reality" (480). So, during

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<sup>8</sup> This blessing and its specific translation by Harold Bloom, "more life," is borrowed by Kushner according to his Acknowledgments section (*Angels* 297). Bielik-Ronson states in detail that "this 'Hebrew vitalism,' as Bloom calls it himself in *The Book of J*, is manifest most of all in the ubiquitous blessing of more life, *l'chaim*, and offers a peculiar vision of life in constant quarrel with itself: *life against life*" (5).

the play's epilogue, Prior breaks the fourth wall and communicates with the audience who have been silently looming across his story as spect(r)ators in anticipation of haunting's dialogic dimension and the revelation for a "world we could have instead" (Gordon 127). Prior, having assimilated his experience with the Angel, mediates this world where the spectralized communities of the margins will be included in the center: "We won't die secret deaths anymore. The world only spins forward. We will be citizens" (290), he asserts before the curtain closes, and reminds the audience of the inevitability of haunting through which "the dead will be commemorated and will struggle on with the living" (290). The "Great Work" (290) he announces at the very end concerns this struggle between the trace of those perished, silenced, vanished, and those breathing amidst ruins who must recognize that "[t]o withstand and to defy its haunting power requires speaking to it directly, not paralyzed with fear, out of a concern for justice" (Gordon 113) for both sides.

This is a revelation that the readers of *Dead Europe* are called to search for on their own when Tsiolkas pushes them in a state of spect(r)atorship and stains them with accountability in sickening scenes of hatred, violence and bodily fluids. Echoing Prior's receptiveness to the endurance of haunting, Rebecca's option for her repossession contests the two psychoanalysts' main question and goal, that is, how to unearth the heterocryptic phantom and return subjectivity back to the haunted Self (Torok, "Story" 180). But where would a ghost go after its haunting has met "the wall of hard scientific fact" (Kushner, *Angels* 21)? Rahimi in his exposition on the two strands of hauntology—one aiming for exorcism, such as cryptonymy and the phantom, and the other for a symbiosis, like Derrida's spectre—elucidates "that no act of exorcism can ever be completely successful" (5), just like the cryptophore's "'I' is always-already 'ghosted' by the 'we' and 'you' . . . subjectivity is as much an inheritance as it is socially-constructed" (Shek-Noble 10). Performing the ritual hauntologically and carrying Angelo "for all of eternity" (Tsiolkas 411), Rebecca embodies the impossibility of ever being able to offer release to an apparition or, in turn, concrete justice for the victimized departed of history and their living descendants. Rahimi clarifies that:

Hauntology does not seek to exorcise, extract, expel, or heal the ghosts of everyday life, and nor does it promise a utopian justice, yet once we awake to the spectral nature of such notions as healing or justice, it becomes impossible

to imagine any effective action toward either without a deep understanding of the hauntological nature of our truth or, more importantly, without roadmaps for healing and for justice that lead to nowhere. (71)

That being so, Gordon's utopian grace which Prior employs against and for the angelic spectre, calling the audience to action, is to be constantly put into question, reexamining, always in dialogue with an active haunting. As of this month, February 2025, Donald Trump serves his second term as President of the United States and has recently called for the halt of PEPFAR—U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief—and consequently the distribution of HIV medication in foreign countries “even if the drugs have already been obtained and are sitting in local clinics” (Mandavilli). Trump, like a true disciple of Cohn who denied his having AIDS to the very end of his life, is targeting in a similar fashion to Reagan's administration a variety of minorities and especially the queer community which is once again on the verge of societal spectralization: trans people, following the HIV medication freeze, have already been erased from federal government websites (Nava), as per order of the recent memorandum demanding “to close/end all initiatives, offices, and programs that inculcate or promote gender ideology” (United States 1). Lucia and Michaelis's murder, the ramifications of the crypt and the realization that “words even travel across the bloody ocean” (Tsiolkas 39) in spectral mode mirror Cohn's teachings which are now felt in all continents, especially Africa, due to its wide need of antiretroviral drugs. Narratives of hauntings signal that “[t]he ‘new articulations,’ the somethings to be done, are always discovered in material practices” (Gordon 202); however, Kushner's Great Work should remain perpetual and shapeshifting, especially attuned to the underworld and devastation, set to “Bleeding Life in the Universe of Wounds” (Kushner, *Angels* 172), even if that means siding with Colin's declaration: “I choose Lilith and the demons, I choose Lucifer, who too knew love . . . if God is the righteous prick from the Bible, I choose Hell” (Tsiolkas 390).

### 3. “ANGELS HOVER, ANXIOUS FINGERS WORRY THE TATTERED EDGE”

#### 3.1 The Slow Dissolving of Great Designs

“Silence in Heaven” (Kushner, *Angels* 273): the Continental Principalities are at a loss how to stop the epidemic on Earth while earthquakes shake their ordered heavenly home. The cracks and settling dust counteract their very existence since, when fornicating with the now-absent God, the “Hermaphroditically Equipped” (165) entities used to release reproductive essence: “When Angels cum They make . . . plasma orgasmata which makes protomatter. Right. Which is what makes...Everything else . . . Creation” (166). Befittingly characterizing their state, Barnett notes that “these angels wait for a prophet to grant their desires. They await salvation like souls in Purgatory” (483), and in this liminal part of the dissertation, transitioning from Chapter Two to Chapter Three, the purgatorial betwixt will be employed in order to bring together spectrality with ruinous spatiality and, finally, the embodiment of the ruin. During her exploration of haunting in the sociological imagination, Gordon repeatedly calls attention to the material aspect of the ghostly affect which imbues the addressee. To be more precise, it is important to keep in mind that “the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place . . . a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life” (8); and that this social grid employs “tactile materiality” (197). It behooves us, then, to sport with Gordon’s phrasing and infer that, when haunting *takes place*, it unfolds *someplace*, haunting *some place*; a place or space is literally taken, seized. When taking (a) place, haunting may impel at its fullest, temporalities fold on each other and a spectre may be encountered. Fisher goes on to add that “‘haunt’ signifies both the dwelling-place, the domestic scene and that which invades or disturbs it. The OED lists one of the earliest meanings of the word ‘haunt’ as ‘to provide with a home, house’” (125). Situating haunting in spatial terms, we are led to the ruin as the mark of history, meaning the “site of struggle and contradiction between the living and the ghostly, a struggle whose resolution has to remain partial to the living, even when the living can only partially grasp the source of the ghost's power” (Gordon 184). Encapsulating this condition of the undead in a split-scene of spatialized spectrality—

loci informing one another between past and present, pointing to the future as final act—putrescence resembles purgatorial suspension *in situ*. Multiple forms of this state are prominent in *Dead Europe* and *Angels in America*, calling for a closer reading of ruins and decay since, much like the spectre, rubble demands confrontation with an eye to catharsis. Tapping on historicity, spectrality and spatiality, Michael Bell explicates:

Ghosts also help constitute the specificity of historical sites, of the places where we feel we belong and do not belong, of the boundaries of possession by which we assign ownership and nativeness. Ghosts of the living and dead alike, of both individual and collective spirits, of both other selves and our own selves, haunt the places of our lives. Places are, in a word, personed—even when there is no one there. I offer this observation as a contribution to a young but growing scholarly endeavor: the sociology of place. (813-14)

Following this ghostly sociology of place, I will narrow down its depth of field onto the acute sociology of ruin.

Throughout *Dead Europe*, Isaac explores various cities on the continent and inevitably ends up in the innermost trenches of urban life which are simultaneously the ones on the periphery of the center. There, the backbone of modern life lays bare, like a crypt cracked open, too disturbing for the progressive and amnesiac mind of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, to which “the space for malleability automatically assumes a deviant quality” (Trigg xxv), opposite to the conventions of rationality and the fear of collective, or individual, reform through mayhem. Walking through the refurbished streets of post-communist Europe “in a never-ending transition (‘an improvised waiting room ... for many an exceptionally exciting time of (criminal) freedom’)” (Williams 3), the possessed photographer catches glimpses of the past seeping through the atemporal disguise of capitalism, as dilapidated buildings, human filth and decay gradually take up most of his experiences in the cities. Isaac reaches the peak of his continental cruising when, hand in hand with the phantom and his ventriloquistic vampirism, he tears flesh and consumes bodily excrement before finally reaching a new point of understanding the nexus between humanity, ruination and the frailty of life. In *Angels in America*, the decipherment of ruin-condition is undertaken not solely by Prior, because of his enfeeblement and the ramifications of sociopolitical exclusion rooted in homophobia, but also by other characters, queer or not, such as Belize, Harper, the

angels, and even the hospitalized Cohn. The American play inspects the im/materiality of rubble while attending less to the individual experience, as is the case in *Dead Europe*, and more to the collective level amidst planetary wreckage—architectural and environmental, literal and figurative—foregrounding the new millennium, the perpetuation of injustices done to minorities, and the call for Great Work to commence. Hence, the aptness of moving from hauntology to ruin studies rests on the overall theme of entropy visiting upon architecture, flesh and character alike, branding the societal lived condition and the troubling relationship with its fragments. Moving away from discourses on ancient or classical ruins and/as monuments, I will focus on the role of contemporary and, for the most part, urban ruins. In contrast to preserved or restored sites of history, modernity’s ruins are still covered by the active agent of decomposition which destabilizes the gazer’s notions on mortality, linear temporality, permanency, and modernity’s claim on ubiquitous rational progress. Contrastingly, monuments and preserved ancient ruins establish a “narrative upon history” (Trigg 225) rooted in the “insistence on temporal continuity” (224) through ethical inertia towards the historical trajectory of the structure. This way the monument encases and protects the perpetuation of a glorious past (235) from present revisions which may taint its content and the petrified moral treatment by society. So, “[t]he monument is instrumental in divorcing the present from the past, because it is a backward-looking object” (235) while the moldering zone is where “space and time coincide” (235) and “[t]hings can converge and dissolve without a preservative agenda” (220); it is where history may be subjectively experienced in its raw form with an impact on the future, in that way complementing the temporal decentering which spectres bring along. The element of decay disrupts the glass case of the sterilized and preserved historical consciousness mirrored on the monument. Corrosion invites a renewed treatment of sites of memory, beyond nostalgia and idealization of a past era or a mere absorption by the senses without an active dialogic engagement, known as *ruin lust*—or *Ruinenlust*, “an eighteenth-century German term” (Murray 25)—meaning “aestheticized and dehistoricized landscapes that find their locus of fascination in the beautiful and melancholic struggle between nature and culture” (Apel 12), prominently explored by Rose Macaulay in her book *Pleasure of Ruins* (1953).

In the last two decades, ruin lust has been heavily featured in modern artistic media and especially photography through the movement of urban exploration—known as *urbex*. Unintentionally, Tsiolkas’s Australian protagonist becomes part of *urbex* by

coming to Europe only to discover it well in the process of covert disintegration. During his first stop, Greece, he visits Rebecca's homeplace, the mountain village Agrio Dassos (Wild Forest) where, opposing the artificiality of the Athenian center at the beginning of the new millennium, he confronts "a dying Greece" (Tsiolkas 106). These are the very grounds where the family's transgenerational curse began with the murder of Elias and where the phantom, Angelo, makes his corporeal comeback when Isaac inspects the village's architectural and populational deterioration. Before their first encounter, Isaac gets caught up in a rural landscape between overgrown nature and the old Christian-Orthodox church, in the property of which Elias was first buried and later exhumed. What's more, Lucia and Michaelis kept the young Jew in the crypt under this church during his hiding. Like a true urbexer in province, the protagonist chooses to concentrate on the building and narrates:

The path, full of wild nettles . . . Tall yellowed grass ran wild across the greying cement crucifixes and the cracking white stone. I began to take pictures. I focused on the weather-beaten carvings on the stone. I took photographs of the church wall. I was framing the small bell tower, hoping to catch a shot of the white stone against the blue sky, when I heard a laugh behind me. (106)

Unable, at first, to take a photograph of this stranger, Isaac senses haunting taking (a) place and admits that "for the first time in years, as I walked out of the church grounds I found my hand had flown to my forehead and to my heart. I had made the sign of the Cross. And again I heard laughter" (106). Unlike Andreas's remark about there being no available accommodation for visitors, denoting the inhospitality of the village, the protagonist is munificently given entrance into the unruly temporality of the nearly-dead community to the point that the heterocryptic phantom is reached and awakened. As it seems, the worn-out spaces of Agrio Dassos are not inhospitable but, instead, offer a much too abrupt, extreme hospitality, if one dares to cross their threshold, reminiscent of Derrida's *hostipitalité*, a portmanteau of hostility and hospitality, engaging notions on "the demand made by hospitality as well as the violence that is constitutive of it" (Anijdar 356); something that Andreas, an antisemitic cosmopolitan journalist, does not wish to consider even though "coppery dust" (Tsiolkas 107) has already started to cover his white BMW up on the mountain: "[w]e cannot stay here. There are no hotels or pensiones or anything like that here, Isaac . . . Take your photographs; when you come

back next time all of this will be gone” (105). Following Greece, Isaac goes to Venice and takes photographs of the Jewish ghetto and its memorials in an “attempt to replicate the ghetto, and hope to move people in a way that [he] found [he] could not be moved at the site” (Tsiolkas 150) until he is led by an old Jewish man to a different, less sanitized part of the ghetto marked with swastika graffiti and fascist phrases, “the crude symbols of continuing racism” (151). Then, in Prague, he “walked until the beautiful medieval buildings gave way to draughty, corroded apartment buildings . . . garbage through the bleak streets” (193), before reaching Paris, where Sula, a war refugee, takes him for a stroll away from “that safe, contained, delightful city” (277) and shatters his idealization of the City of Light by introducing him to “a harsh place, a tough, crumbling, decaying, stinking, dirty city. The city beyond the Metro” (277). His inquisitive photographic eye leads him away from Europe’s tourist traps as well as common everyday spaces of heteronormativity and into the crawlways of marginal life, which burrow their way in urban centers as reminders of the inevitability of—and prevailing foils opposite to—the already crumbling structure of new political reconfigurations and architectural renewals after the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These new artificial forms and sites, witnessed by Isaac, attempt to force new memories and superimpose them on the cracks, therefore providing the contemporary solution to a collective deficiency detected by Fisher, namely that “[i]t might seem strange to describe a culture that is so dominated by past forms as being amnesiac, but the kind of nostalgia that is now so pervasive may best be characterized not as a longing for the past so much as an inability to make new memories” (113). What’s more, urban exploration seems to defy the notion of architectural renewal functioning as antidote to Fisher’s cultural amnesia, in that contemporary urbex takes on the “arduous task of deconstructing myths and fallacies diffused by dominant groups and power institutions which insist on spreading a homogeneous, sterile image of cities” (Souza and Pinheiro 199). Urbex movement finds its proper disseminator in photography which, then, “unveils the real, plural city, constituted by diverse, fragmented spaces, among which are ruined spaces” (199), contrary to the “temporally clean” (Trigg 125) structures of capitalist modernity. However, thanks to the ghoul, Isaac evades the fate of his work being diminished to mere *ruin porn photography*—which coincides, if not identified, with urbex practices—whose “phenomenological reading of ruin goes astray” (Trigg 191) towards reduction to civil insubordination. In detail, Trigg highlights urbex’s comedown by its inevitable self-betrayal and explicates that the constant push for the

thrill it provides will progressively lead the community to “explore decayed, hidden, or forgotten places, not for the sake of overturning rational order, but for the pleasure of audacity” (191) without the necessary, subjective or collective, alternative for reconstitution of the fragments. In Isaac’s case, his possession proves pivotal because he is pushed to an enhanced relationship to decay and historical progression—by means of spectrality—beyond the urbex potential. With his vampiric appetite slowly building up and leading him olfactorily towards excrement, he shuns “the bloated opulence of the inner city” (Tsiolkas 301) and actively looks for the negative urban space while simultaneously unlocking a higher level of photographic tirade against capitalistic refinement: “I care nothing for the prim and pretty façades and ornaments of architecture; what excites me is the darkness and the shadows” (301).

Varying from *Dead Europe*’s imagery of a multi-national territory already existing in a ramshackle state, Kushner’s characters are the ones inducing or fantasizing about material wreckage so as to encourage new configurations of critical thinking towards change during the existential, political and cultural insecurities of the 1990s. Prior’s quest for More Life commences with his ceiling being torn down by the Angel. According to the stage directions, the razing entrance slowly progresses, in the span of two pages, from “*a fine rain of plaster dust*” (Kushner, *Angels* 124) overhead to “*a terrifying CRASH as something immense strikes earth. The bedroom shudders and pieces of the ceiling’s plaster, lathe and wiring rain down on and around Prior’s bed; as the room is plunged into absolute darkness, we hear the whole ceiling give way*” (125). This impossible encounter happens in a split-scene at the very end of *Millennium Approaches* while Joe follows Louis to a cruising park, marking the beginning of their affair. Before his abandonment by Louis, Prior stated that “[w]hile time is running out I find myself drawn to anything that’s suspended, that lacks an ending. But it seems to me that it lets you off scot-free” (42-43), expressing reluctance to acknowledge his illness early in the play or discuss it in depth with his squeamish boyfriend. While lying in the same bed as he did with Louis when communicating his desire for suspension, he now receives not only a visiting “thing in the air” (160) but also a dangling roof as well as a feeling of suspense during the phantasmagoric light show, with exultant music, announcing the Angel’s descent on Earth: “*(An awestruck whisper): God almighty. Very Steven Spielberg*” (125). The havoc wreaked by the angelic messenger in the bedroom, and later the kitchen floor and refrigerator, spatially frames the existential worry he will soon experience while listening to her Anti-Migratory Epistle which he

will eventually harness: her sermon expresses Heaven's demand for humans to stop progressing, meaning the constant renewal of the living condition; the ways in which humanity succeeds in eclipsing the power of a rigid God and his angelic "bureaucrats" (166) who, like Tsiolkas's Europe, evade sociocultural/theocratic change and strive for structure, fixity, subordination. In line with Prior's destroyed apartment, "displacement from place results in temporal and spatial disorientation. No longer being in place . . . reveals ontological insecurity, since ontology is rooted in the central place of being" (Trigg 120) and, indeed, Prior screams at her "[o]h, shoo! You're scaring the shit out me, get the fuck out of my room" (Kushner, *Angels* 161) before settling into conversation and surety of his ontological claim rather than a hauntological one on the queer periphery of American society, as Reaganites would have him occupy. Additionally, the broken ceiling is part of the motif of "systems of defense giving way" (16), appearing in both Earth and Heaven. Harper consistently worries about the environmental crisis concerning the holes in the ozone layer over Antarctica, visualizing it in a dream as "ragged and torn, patches of it threadbare as old cheesecloth" (284). The wilting of the planet's protective shell foregrounds the eschatological disarray condensed inside the city of Paradise while "Kushner raises the question, 'Whose world is really coming to an end?'" (Hogan, "Green" 11) amidst a public health crisis which pushes the American nation to confront the emerging kernel of stigmatized homosexuality; for the angels, the answer to this question would be more egotistical. "*Heaven looks like San Francisco after the Great Quake: deserted streets, beautiful buildings in ruins, toppled telegraph poles, downed electrical cables, rubble strewn everywhere*" (262). The angelic hordes, fixed and silent awaiting God's return, have monumentalized their half-destroyed realm in an attempt to retain its "[s]tasis [which] establishes a center, a space from which the erosion of things can be viewed" (Trigg 103), selfishly trying to save their cosmology to humanity's detriment. In negation to the need for a reconstitution of their city and its inner workings, "the horrors below, including nuclear explosions and AIDS, are reflected above, as Heaven devolves into a kind of Purgatory, a waiting room for regressive angels and weary revenants" (Barnett 471). In memory of His absence, self-absorbed Heaven retains its "state of disrepair [which] establishes a constant reminder of an event which is grounded in the assumption that the act of destruction imparted a trace upon the building" (Trigg 60), beyond the ambition for reinvention, even though the divine dome is more than capable to revise, or decree new, Laws. This is inferred during the Angel's acquaintance with

the newly-assigned prophet, when she describes the firmament as “Undulant Landscape over which / The Threat of Seismic Catastrophe hangs: / More beautiful because imperiled. / POTENT: yet DORMANT: The Fault Lines of Creation!” (Kushner, *Angels* 167). Following this description, the betrayal by “Father-Lover” (169)—resembling Louis and Prior’s separation; as Belize notes about the extraterrestrial drama, “[a]bandoned. I smell a motif” (171)—renders the angels “bitter, cast-off . . . bewildered” (171) until the end of the play when Prior, still asking for their blessing, helps them realize that, amidst celestial or earthly rubble, “[t]he reconfiguration of memory becomes possible when place is exposed to variability and alteration, debunking the monumental and antiquated version of history” (Trigg 63). The spatial dimension of Heaven’s outdated narrative is given in extensive stage directions with broken, old or defective mise-en-scène making up the very equipment of the “Council Room of the Hall of the Continental Principalities” (Kushner, *Angels* 270) in *Perestroika*’s last act:

occasional surges and wavers . . . unsteady lights . . . cracked clay tablets, dulled styli, dried inkpots, split quill pens, disintegrating piles of parchment, and old derelict typewriters. On the table and all around the room are heaps and heaps and heaps of books, bundles of yellowing newspapers and dusty teetery stacks of neglected and abandoned files. (271)

Enmeshing the audience in ruins of stagnant ideologies and theologies, Kushner materializes the “confirmation that place attachment limits itself in temporal gradients. Thus, the other side of place attachment is the exposure of that place’s disintegration. The object of attachment is not fluctuating place, but the abstracted and static idea of an (ideal) past, since dispersed” (Trigg 134). By having this one and only scene of bureaucratic Paradise at the end of the play, onlookers are challenged to reconfigure their attitude towards resistance to change, perhaps by hearkening back to an earlier scene when a new, challenging version of Heaven was offered by Belize, replacing (Reaganite) order with the pandemonium of the margins.

For Isaac, an Australian on European soil, place attachment connected to a glorious past, as mentioned by Trigg, cannot apply subjectively. In contrast to the angelic fixation on an outdated version of Paradise, here, the connection to a dispersed past is mitigated by the ghoul and the now spectral camera lens exposing the practice

of ontological erasure. Similar to Prior's exhortation concerning regeneration amidst ruins, war-wrecked Europeans seem to have reshaped their memory by forgetting instead of re-membering with the past in shambles; they gentrified and exorcised so as to not let haunting take (a) place and replace the "nationalist rhetoric that implies we can wipe the slate clean, that we can start again and form new communities unburdened by the past" (Ng 125). The curse's reactivation, decades after Rebecca's exorcism when she was a child in Australia, proves a double-edged sword for her son, since his phantasmal travel companion offers a peak into the insistent stains of European history and overlooked atrocities: Angelo upgrades the protagonist's camera lens, allowing it to capture ghosts occupying the continental spaces of everyday life as well as the hidden material, organic and moral corrosion unwinding behind the globalizing facades of "[m]arket Incentives? American Cheeseburgers? Watered-down Bukharinite stopgap makeshift Capitalism!" (Kushner, *Angels* 138). Modernity's annals, hastily "consigned to irrelevance" (Edensor 153), silently photobomb Isaac's frames and epistemologically enrich the deviant zones of active decomposition as well as the aseptic "modern streets of Europe: Alexanderplatz, Rue d'Alsace, Kalverstraat. The streets were modern and sleek but the bodies in these cityscapes seemed ancient and damaged and broken" (Tsiolkas 336). Beginning his journey in a refurbished Athens where the "five rings of the Olympic movement were everywhere, as were the red and orange circles of MasterCard" (30), he is then transformed from an urbexer into what Justin Armstrong calls "spectral ethnographer" (244); a practitioner "that sees beyond the boundaries of actually spoken language and direct human contact to the interplay between space, place, objects, and temporality" (249). It follows, then, that a spectral ethnographer is an urbexer-in-reverse who, like Isaac, does not seek "escapism from city norms . . . from the unpleasant perspectives and views on everyday life" (Souza and Pinheiro 201), but instead steps into the negative spectrum of the escapism promoted by the overt commodification of urbanism on top of the past era's markers. Isaac addresses his detest to urban and capitalistic escapism in all the cities he visits, most notably in Prague, where "[b]illboards for soft drink and a Hugh Grant movie were ludicrous plastered across the stark Soviet-era design of the platform" (Tsiolkas 207), while picturesque Paris is described as vacant and devoid of charm, "a flat-blasted concrete shithole as far as the eye could see" (269) in which the only elements confessing a somewhat French flare were translated "banners for Pepsi and Nike flying across the shopping mall exterior" (269). Contrastingly to this artificiality, flowing into Isaac's upgraded lens,

European “light is the light of the sun, and the time is the time of all history ever expanding and simultaneously expiring through the process of entropy” (Wiblin 127). This light re-writes onto film negatives and back into existence the ignored ramifications of violence, such as Gerry’s displacement which took on further ontological dimensions with the eradication of his Jewish name and homeplace into vukojebina: “[i]t does not exist anymore. It has disappeared with the land in which the wolves fuck. Let my name be erased” (Tsiolkas 301). The novel’s revolving storylines reveal that the modern European habit of cleansing a place’s history is also integral to the transgenerational curse, considering that Michaelis, Elias’s murderer, “tried to eradicate all evidence of the Hebrew. He had scraped away the evil hieroglyphics the boy had carved into the rock, then he set a fire and cleansed the cave” (173) located beneath the church where Angelo appeared to the protagonist. This echoes the incineration of human bodies after the gas chambers, during World War II, as well as the failed efforts of the Nazi to hide the fact that concentration camps were even built in the first place in Europe, by demolishing the structures and cleansing the sites of any traces, including the erasure of mass graves—*Aktion 1005*. Although tortured by the ghoul, Isaac is offered the “lens of spectral ethnography” (Armstrong 247) with which to scour into view “layers of *ghost texts*: the accumulated cultural resonance of human presence in spaces or objects that inhabit specific cultural locations and temporalities” (246). As a homosexual, and therefore a spectralized social figure, Isaac manages to decenter the dominant rhetoric with his camera and be more receptive to these ghost texts which he too inscribes, in return, by frequenting Europe’s cruising scenes or gay hubs in liminal parts of the cities, where alterity resides. Trigg notes that the urban “focal point suggests its own margins by being magnetic. In the center, things converge. Particular place becomes absolute . . . . When removed from the center, estrangement occurs. As the city takes in what the margins are unable to attain, motion is missed out” (210). The intent to bleach the sociology of place—as attempted by capitalist rationalization and racial hatred in the previous examples, or even homophobia during the AIDS epidemic in Kushner’s play—falls short, much like the exorcism of Angelo in Australia. Regarding the practice of spatial erasure, Trigg emphasizes the inescapable scarring of place during this process in that “[t]he destruction of place creates a mutation reconstituted by the fragments of a past now emptied of its contents. Now, shadows and replicas mark a presence once occupied. A site is thus affected” (125), constituting rational progress detached from temporal and historical anchors. However, even though architectural

decay, the mark of lived-in spatial time, may be ignored or regulated by establishing fresh sites in its place, Isaac's vampirism forces him to contemplate physical decay and consume bodily fluids and waste which, after all, constitutes the very soil of Europe, "thick with layers of sediment. Layers and layers of shit. History, manure, blood and bone under my feet" (Tsiolkas 374).

Europe's revenants and blood-stained landscapes, relayed through the medium of photography, are juxtaposed to Kushner's America where characters employ imagined ruination, fragmentation and decline in an attempt to acknowledge and reassemble the scatters of Self. Harper, under Valium overdose in a shared dreamscape with Prior, goes on to explain the limitations of imagination, claiming that the mind cannot produce anything deceptively novel without already having experienced it. In her words, imagination

only recycles bits and pieces from the world and reassembles them into visions . . . So when we think we've escaped the unbearable ordinariness and, well, untruthfulness of our lives, it's really only the same old ordinariness and falseness rearranged into the appearance of novelty and truth. Nothing unknown is knowable. Don't you think it's depressing? (Kushner, *Angels* 34)

In a later scene, amidst her agoraphobia, environmental anxieties and realization that her Mormon husband is homosexual and unfaithful, she enters a long hallucination with the help of her imaginary friend, Mr. Lies, member of "the International Order of Travel Agents" (17), who takes her to Antarctica; the "cold shelter for the shattered. No sorrow here, tears freeze" (106). Reverberating the suspension in crumbling Heaven as well as Tsiolkas's artificial Europe above the macabre terrain, Harper's Antarctica is suffused with "some current of blood in the wind, how strange, it has that iron taste" (106) which is nothing more but the fissured membrane above her: "Ozone! Wow!" (106). Unable yet to face her fears about Joe's sexual escapades and their white marriage, "the resolution of fragments is deferred. A protracted wait takes place, which is secured by faith" (Trigg 85), and conducted in "a mode of rational thought which predicates itself on the principal of linearity and temporal reconstitution" (85). Ironically, Harper exercises her own hallucinatory version of rational thought—formed in the image of meaningful companionship, lacking in her life with Joe—by manifesting herself pregnant (Kushner, *Angels* 107) as well as imagining into existence a partner, the first

ever “Antarctic Eskimo” (107) played by the same actor as her husband. Her assumption that she can “mend” (108) by removing herself from present’s turmoil within “a retreat, a vacuum” (107) soon melts when she realizes that this “semblance of order, even when cracked, synthetic, and distinct from its origin” (Trigg 85) is too weak against the unruliness of memory: Joe invades “the delicate ecology of [her] delusions” (Kushner, *Angels* 107) and interacts with her in his Antarctic Eskimo role before she comes back to consciousness. Merging her environmental and existential anxieties, Harper faces the decline of reason, of the safe life she led on top of the now deteriorating planet, thus slowly foregrounding the play’s entropic bent, expressed by Trigg in the following proposal concerning a reexamination of premises and promises by imaginary reason—such as the capitalistic callousness asserted as progress in *Dead Europe*—and a new approach towards decay, conceptual or material:

Can we aspire toward illusion if that illusion is already known in advance? With a trust in what the fallout of rationality discloses, the possibility of thinking *after* reason by salvaging what it suppressed emerges. The final interment of absolute reason begins when we have recognized the decline that reason, by means of vouchsafing the illusive, sought to subdue. (85)

Trigg’s words better match the staged version of the play where spatiality and sound effects visually nurture the epistemological doubt of order that Harper and other characters undergo. Interestingly, the 2003 miniseries adaptation of *Angels in America*, features Harper (played by Mary-Louise Parker) entering the preservatory vacuum of her hallucination by stepping inside her refrigerator with Mr. Lies before reaching Antarctica (“Millenium” 00:47:27–00:49:52). On the same chilly note and slowly moving towards a closer examination of decomposition, the Angel sets an explosion in Prior’s kitchen after he refuses to “dislodg[e] tile and, and grout and unearth the Sacred Implements” (162) necessary for the prophecy of stasis. The blast fractures his refrigerator (162), a machine providing preservation against decay, and while the angelic messenger thinks she is signaling him to remain grounded via the Epistle and her imposing will on his surroundings, she only triggers a different kind of progress sourcing from the acknowledgment of decline and displacement. The possibility of the Angel’s appearance as part of hallucinatory side effects caused by AIDS supports Harper’s claim on the limits of imagination, and therefore reveals Prior as sole

conductor of his approach to the ruin-condition, now in negation of desire for suspension and evasion of disaster. Mirrored on this readjustment toward the ruin is also the trajectory of Harper's fear about "beautiful systems dying, old fixed orders spiraling apart" (16), in anticipation of a worldly perestroika before the year 2000,<sup>9</sup> before ultimately witnessing, in a dream, the souls of the dead joining their limbs and finally repairing the ozone layer (285). "As long as it lasts. Ice has a way of melting" (106).

### 3.2. The Ruin is the Garden of the Soul

Amidst the architectural deterioration of urban margins, Isaac ends up in organic decay, detected also in his ghostly photographs as well as the acts he has to commit in order to satiate his bloodlust, prompted by the ghoul. By turning into a spectral ethnographer and questioning whether his family is indeed cursed, he witnesses the inevitability of history to remain forever suppressed below modern life. Before leaving Agrio Dassos, he rejects the possibility of the family curse and is determined to counteract the idea with the help of his photographic tools. He narrates:

I walked away from her, my camera swinging alongside me, determined to bring this place to clear rational modern life with my flash and camera, through film and chemical. Cursed? What the fuck did that mean? That wasn't in my language, that wasn't part of my world. Fucking peasant shit. Not my world, not my clean rational world. (134)

The story progresses and he fails to do so as he keeps detecting fissures of the modern, post-communist, European condition. His films and chemicals develop flesh and blood on the prints, while the ghoul's imprint leads him to a reexamination of the above

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<sup>9</sup> The Russian word *perestroika*, meaning "reconstructing," is a political term for the political reconfiguration of the Soviet Union after the fall of communism, and it appears as the title of *Angels in America*'s second part. As Louis better conceptualizes the term, not without his ideological short-sightedness and forgetfulness permeating Tsiolkas's *Dead Europe*:

LOUIS. Yeah but. Remember back four years ago? The whole time we were feeling everything everywhere was stuck, while in Russia! Look! Perestroika! The Thaw! It's the end of the Cold War! The whole world is changing! Overnight!  
 HANNAH. I wonder what'll happen now in places like Yugoslavia.  
 LOUIS. Yugoslavia? (Kushner, *Angels* 287-88)

statement concerning “[f]airytales” (134) and the impenetrability of the secular present by the past. In addition, the phantom drives the protagonist to commit violent acts as the only way to keep in check his disease/possession, mirroring his ancestor’s antisemitic crime. All the while Tsiolkas’s descriptions about hungry Isaac’s irresistibility to bodily fluids aim at threatening the readers’ own sense of rational structures and attitudes towards mortality, flesh and decomposition in a world where artificial, hygienic and ordered societal systems function as weak bandages atop the past. Isaac’s introduction to organic decay begins in Athens, before the possession and, thus, before the lure of bodily waste manifests—adjacent to phantomogenic insight. On a peripheral street in Athens, which “wound back towards Sygrou and the turmoil of the city” (45), having already met undead fragments of Greek history: a migrant family from Russia. In his description of the apartment’s bathroom, he admits the following:

The toilet bowl was filthy with the stains of shit. Mould caked the walls and the porcelain of the basin . . . There was a yellow syringe hiding among the shit-stained paper. It was uncapped and it was this more than anything that unnerved me. Not the basket of soiled paper, that reminder of waste and human excretion: so confronting for a visitor such as myself whose whole life had been cushioned from exactly such evidence of human need. (49)

Isaac’s estrangement to uncleanliness converges with his ignorance about his family’s crime and, therefore, about Europe’s history being rooted in racial hatred. His innocence is predicated on his being raised in Australia, meaning the false conception that many Greeks have, throughout *Dead Europe*, of Australia being the New World due to its recent—white—history and the pretense that the continent is “pure, in contrast to the blood-stained earth of Europe” (Ng 122-23) dismissing all the while England’s colonial attempts to erase the Aborigenes. As Isaac also notes, “[i]n the New World we had no layers of history to our architecture, no beauty in our concrete, steel and cement. Beauty was only in our skies and horizons” (179). This stillness is mentioned in relation to his previous artistic work in Australia, where his photographs appeared “lifeless. Dead photographs . . . Death in a photograph . . . is, of course, simply the absence of life, of the heart and the blood and the soul. The absence of fluid and flesh . . . All my subjects were muted and still. Not calm, but inert. The absence of motion” (46). Tsiolkas’s phantom comes to shatter this misconception by reenforcing Isaac’s

involvement in organic waste, highlighting the inescapability from unaddressed guilt as well as the perpetuation of violence, both of which Angelo embodies. As Ng also notes, the “family curse has the ability to transcend temporal and national borders” (123) similar to decay which dissolves sureties on absolution by means of cleansing places and memorial traces. Isaac’s photographs reveal “damaged, bent, misshapen bodies . . . charred, blackened as if from fire and plague . . . bodies are limp, entwined, slumped. They are carcasses, they are meat” (Tsiolkas 303). The ruination of those spectral bodies of history parallels Isaac’s own diseased body on the societal periphery, but is also a reminder of modern humanity’s mortality on which he will feast; “[t]he whole human species exudes a foul, bitter stench” (261), no matter how artificially and externally humans might try to dress their condition so as to separate themselves from the teleological trajectory leading to sweeping decay for all. “Instead of false motion determining centrality, in the ruin, the dynamic between the absence of presence and the lingering resonance of violence . . . becomes the center of things” (Trigg 221). Isaac himself will ultimately succumb to this present-absent decay so as to be granted his personal revelation, in which the immateriality of ruin-condition becomes manifest in its own materiality, spatial or bodily.

In *Angels in America*, the ramifications of rigid, American, sociopolitical structures are detected in the physical deterioration of earthly and heavenly characters. In Kushner’s universe, humanity’s flux and its inexhaustive capacity for endurance and animate spirit becomes manifest not solely as earthquakes, but as a cough invading the Angel’s immortal body. The constant cough throughout the Angel’s scenes is directly linked to the havoc in Heaven as its systematic diligence experiences unpredictability, which is first depicted in the miscalculations regarding the dreams Prior was meant to be sent in anticipation of the messenger: “(*A flash of anger*): Quiet. Prophet. A moment, please, I— (*Looking up, addressing unseen forces; severe*) The disorganization is— (*She coughs, looks up, rises higher in the air*)” (Kushner, *Angels* 161). The angelic cough attests to the planetary disorder and destruction which, however, brings about a worldly reordering, summoned by Kushner as guidelines for the real-life American society: “Skin burns, birds go blind, icebergs melt. The world’s coming to an end” (28), and the guiding line for the audience of 1990s is the degeneration of flesh which, similar to *Dead Europe*, evokes the inevitable annihilation of the material by the “Virus of TIME” (169), dismantling all systems and designs, Reagan and his Cohns, even the angelic realm. Reagan’s administration attempted to render the queer community a dead

realm by allowing the AIDS epidemic to spread for six years, in addition to the social stigma it carried due to misinformation concerning its transmission. Before the AZT medication in 1987, even until the public's access to it, "AIDS [did] equal death" (Barnett 479), overlapping with the linguistic tactics employed by Joseph McCarthy, Reagan's predecessor on ethics, during the Red Scare and Lavender Scare in "the 1950s [when] immunological metaphors relied largely on a Cold War discourse of Self and Other that targeted the Other—figured as leftists, communists, and homosexuals in American political terminology—for exclusion from the body politic" (Ogden 255). Ogden goes on to add that Kushner's "repeated references to blood and bleeding (fluid vehicles of transmission and infection) are intended to function as a metonymy of the devastation wreaked upon the entire American homosexual community by AIDS" (251). Simultaneously, Cohn further politicizes bodily fluids and waste, in tune with Isaac's hindsight: "this is gastric juices churning, this is enzymes and acids, this is intestinal is what this is, bowel movement and blood-red meat! This stinks, this is *politics*, Joe, the game of being alive" (Kushner, *Angels* 71). Thus, the (diseased) homosexual body of the 1980s is confined on the periphery in double negation by sociopolitical criteria, occupying an in-between state like spectres and contemporary ruins—confronting crypts of the American society. Even ruthless Cohn—Kushner's version—during his hospitalization for AIDS, admits "[w]hat am I? A dead man! . . . I'm a goddamn dead man" (87). His conservative rigidness and internalized homophobia prevent him from accepting what was thought to be the gay illness as a part of his narrative, without it falling completely apart. As he declares earlier, "I'm immortal. Ethel. (*He wills himself to his feet*) I have *forced* my way into history. I ain't never gonna die" (118); and yet he does, after Belize subverts his idea of an afterlife—through the imagery of a timeless structure like a queer Heaven in shambles—and reminds him, as the spectre of Ethel also does, that "[h]istory is about to crack wide open" (118), fall into ruins, and become subject to reappropriation by those who were locked out. Ultimately, the Angel's words, "[t]he Body is the Garden of the Soul" (165, 261), communicated to Prior and Hannah, may best be rephrased into *the Ruin is the Garden of the Soul* in an attempt to conceive how Kushner's Great Work may be approached by way of decline, engagement with wreckage or fragments, and most importantly, with a critical mind towards what decay—architectural or organic—may have to offer in terms of catharsis and forward release. Trigg points to "the region of decay as a place of ontological worth" (222) where "all that will cease to exist is the

drive toward permanency, rational progress, and static remembrance” (249). So, looking back to decaying spatiality and its embodiment, the sociality of the ruin and its transgressive capacity to generate protomatter—or More Life—may be best grasped and wielded by turning to im/materiality and the counterpart acknowledgment of *I'm materiality*.

#### 4. CONCLUSION: COLLAPSING THRESHOLDS OF REVELATIONS

Throughout this thesis, the elements of spectrality and ruins were closely examined in relation to both *Dead Europe* and *Angels in America*. In Chapter Two, “History is about to Crack Wide Open,” I began with the sociohistorical and cultural context of each story so as to lay out the mechanisms of hauntology in respect to its era and events. Bringing together minor spectral figures together with Tsiolkas’s and Kushner’s literary or theatrical elements, I propose a closer understanding of spectrality in order to foreground the theoretical framework employed for the two main apparitions, a sociological spectre and a psychoanalytic phantom. Kushner’s Angel is read parallel to Avery Gordon’s work, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, which provides an insight into how Prior’s haunting is a censure to Reagan’s attempts to exterminate homosexuals by withholding means of healthcare amidst the AIDS epidemic. Tsiolkas’s phantom is examined closely to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s psychoanalytic work on transgenerational haunting in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1987) and *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (1976). Specifically, I draw on the crypt effect and its extension, the phantom effect, and look into the ghoul’s antisemitic origins, focused on language which then manifests in Isaac’s ventriloquistic vampirism. Following the examination of haunting agents, in Chapter Three, “Angels Hover, Anxious Fingers Worry the Tattered Edge,” I then engage both texts’ imagery of contemporary ruins and their connection to spatial haunting. I incorporate Dylan Trigg’s *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason* in an attempt to dissect the entropic bent of *Angels in America* and *Dead Europe* with an eye on understanding how architectural or bodily deterioration may affect the living condition and, most importantly, provide insight on how to approach progressive change by means of decline.

Closing this dissertation, I would like to call attention to a scene from *Angels in America* which, even though it was mentioned in two different sections, was not examined in detail, as I chose to look into it at the very end. During Cohn’s hospitalization, in one of his peaceful moments with Belize, he asks what follows after “[t]his misery ends” (Kushner, *Angels* 222). Belize goes on to describe a Heaven where history seems to have indeed cracked open, filling the place with rubble and disorder. While Roy tries to propose a garden as the setting, Belize—having already been told

by Prior how Heaven looks according to the Angel, or his hallucination—counteracts the garden with a city. However, instead of the Angel and Prior’s description of a static, uninteresting Heaven, Belize’s Heaven is a

[b]ig city, overgrown with weeds, but flowering weeds . . . On every corner a wrecking crew and something new and crooked going up catty-corner to that. Windows missing in every edifice like broken teeth, fierce gusts of gritty wind, and a gray, high sky full of ravens . . . Prophet birds, Roy. Piles of trash, but lapidary like rubies and obsidian, and diamond-colored cow-spit streamers in the wind. And voting booths . . . And everyone in Balenciaga gowns with red corsages, and big dance palaces full of music and lights and racial impurity and gender confusion . . . And all the deities are Creole, mulatto, brown as the mouths of rivers . . . Race, taste and history finally overcome. And you ain’t there. (222-23)

Belize employs disorder and spatial decline intermingled with vibrant carnivalesque life as the truest form of what Paradise should be—exactly what the Angel was warning humanity against: “[i]n *YOU* the Virus of TIME began! *YOU Think*. And You *IMAGINE!* / *Migrate! Explore—* / . . . / And when you do: / . . . / Paradise itself Shivers and Splits” (169). Belize’s description sounds as if he has not only brought Heaven down on Earth but also transformed into a more chaotic and livable place where history—having been cracked, confronted and overcome—drowns everything into its decay and urges us to face the question of how we can manage to go on with life, progress—whatever that may entail—instead of opting for a piling-up or museumification of hushed histories and silences. The decaying but still emerging city, in a spatial manifestation of history and its fragments, is what I hope that hauntology in conjunction to ruin studies can bring out in the open through the visions of Kushner and Tsiolkas.<sup>10</sup> A reimagining alongside a past incarnate, a dialogic relationship with the data acquired around decay, ruins and the ghosts they conjure; a possibility of constantly reaching for—if not always existing with—the spectral; an empirical workshop in how to “nod to the fierce apparition, smile, and take a seat beside it”

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<sup>10</sup> However, this approach also generates a lot of questions concerning war-torn places where life amidst rubble does not equal progress through decline. Earlier this month, March 2025, I stumbled upon photographs of Gaza and Damascus in rubble, with their dilapidated buildings decorated with colorful lights in celebration of this year’s Ramadan, and I was left with more doubts than answers on how this dissertation should conclude.

(Tsiolkas 160).

BELIZE: . . . All day today it's felt like Thanksgiving. Soon, this...ruination will be blanketed white. You can smell it—can you smell it?

LOUIS: Smell what?

BELIZE: Softness, compliance, forgiveness, grace.

LOUIS: No...

BELIZE: I can't help you learn that. I can't help you, Louis. You're not my business. *(He exits)*

*(Louis puts his head in his hands, inadvertently touching his cut forehead.)*

LOUIS: Ow FUCK! *(He stands slowly, looks toward where Belize exited)* Smell what? *(He looks both ways to be sure no one is watching, then inhales deeply, and is surprised)* Huh. Snow.

(Kushner, *Angels* 105)

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**Περίληψη:** Η παρούσα διατριβή ασχολείται με το θεατρικό έργο του Tony Kushner *Angels in America* (1991-1992) σε σύγκριση με το μυθιστόρημα του Χρήστου Τσιόλκα, *Dead Europe* (2005). Συνδυάζοντας τη θεματική του πολιτισμικού και κοινωνιολογικού στοιχειώματος με εικόνες ερειπωμένης χωρικότητας, θα ακολουθήσω κατά κύριο λόγο τους δύο πρωταγωνιστές του κάθε κειμένου: έναν νεαρό άνδρα στη Νέα Υόρκη της δεκαετίας του 1980, πρόσφατα διαγνωσμένο με AIDS και σύντομα επιστρατευμένο στο ρόλο του προφήτη από τα απελπισμένα αγγελικά τάγματα, και έναν Ελληνοαυστραλό φωτογράφο που ταξιδεύει μέσα σε μια διεφθαρμένη Ευρώπη στις αρχές της δεκαετίας του 2000, αποτυπώνοντας ακούσια με τον φακό του απόκοσμες σκηνές, ενώ σταδιακά παρουσιάζει βαμπυρικές ορέξεις. Σε αυτές τις δύο ιστορίες, κύριοι και δευτερεύοντες χαρακτήρες βρίσκουν διεξόδους στα τα προσωπικά τους αδιέξοδα, παρά το γεγονός ότι βαδίζουν σε ετοιμόρροπους χώρους του εγκόσμιου—οι οποίοι, ωστόσο, δεν αντανακλούν πάντα τον απόλυτο όλεθρο—μέσω της φασματικότητας και των φαντασμάτων που, αντίστοιχα, παράγονται μέσα σε αυτά τα πεδία χωρικότητας. Με την δική τους “εκπληκτική ικανότητα να βλέπουν κάτι” (Kushner, *Angels in America* 285) μέσα σε ερείπια, οι πρωταγωνιστές καταφέρνουν να μπαλώσουν και να ανασυγκροτήσουν, όχι μόνο τις ιστορίες που έχουν καταχωνιαστεί στις πτυχές της ιστορίας, αλλά και τα δικά τους ανθρώπινα σώματα που εξασθενίζουν σε φασματικές προεκτάσεις—ο Prior υπό την άρνηση της προεδρίας Reagan να αναγνωρίσει την πανδημία του AIDS και την περαιτέρω περιθωριοποίηση της κοινή κοινότητας, και ο Isaac υπό την δαιμονοληψία του προσωποποιημένου αντισημιτικού μίσους που στοιχειώνει διαχρονικά την οικογένειά του και την υπόλοιπη ήπειρο. Για το πρώτο μέρος της διατριβής, χρησιμοποιώ το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο της στοιχειοντολογίας προκειμένου να διερευνήσω τις συμπλοκές των χαρακτήρων με φαντάσματα στην καθημερινή τους ζωή, συμπεριλαμβανομένου του τρόπου με τον οποίο οι πρωταγωνιστές ασκούν αλλά δεν εξορκίζουν το φασματικό προς την επίλυση των αντίστοιχων δεινών τους. Συνεπώς, αντλώ στοιχεία από το βιβλίο της Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997), καθώς και από το ψυχαναλυτικό έργο των Nicolas Abraham και Maria Torok για το διαγενεακό στοίχειωμα και την κρυπτογράφιση στο *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1987). Για το δεύτερο μέρος, στρέφομαι προς την μελέτη των ερειπίων σε μια προσπάθεια να διαβάσω τη παρακμάζουσα χωρικότητα ως τόπο απτής μνήμης, χρόνου και ευάλωτης ζωής, όπου εκτυλίσσεται το στοίχειωμα. Για το ερείπιο, τις διάφορες μορφές του και την ενσάρκωσή του, ανατρέχω στο βιβλίο του

Dylan Trigg, *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason* (2006) σε συνδυασμό με διάφορα επιστημονικά και θεωρητικά κείμενα περί κοινωνικότητας των υλικών και ιστορικών θραυσμάτων. Στο τέλος, γίνεται σαφές πώς τα συντρίμια και η αποσύνθεση καλούν φαντάσματα, καθώς και πώς η φασματικότητα επικαλείται τη φθορά με απώτερο σκοπό τη γνώση και την κάθαρση.