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| S. An-sky (1863-1920) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Born Shloyme-Zanvl Rappoport near Vitebsk, Belarus, S. An-sky was a Jewish Russian intellectual, political and social activist, journalist, Yiddish ethnographer, poet, writer, and dramatist, whose life and work championed modernist ideals. He could be best described as ‘the one who looked for new paths’ (*Dybbuk*, Act III) until his death in 1920 in Warsaw, Poland.  Between 1912-1914, An-sky headed the Baron Horace Guenzburg Jewish Ethnographic Expedition in Volhynia and Podolia, which inspired his most famous work, *The Dybbuk (Between Two Worlds,* 1914-1918), arguably the greatest masterpiece of Yiddish literature. Boasting a trilingual genesis (Russian, Yiddish, and Hebrew), the play premiered in Yiddish in Warsaw thirty days after An-sky’s death in 1920, and was an instant success. Using the folk motif of dybbuk possession (a soul of the dead possessing a living body) in this play, An-sky addressed the quintessential modernist experience of transgressions. *The Dybbuk* portrays a passionately tragic love and the crisis of faith juxtaposed with a struggle between the individual and the collective. The background conflict between generations, genders, and classes is accompanied by a difficult transition from tradition to modernity and raises questions of religion, art, and identity. The play has transcended Yiddish literature, becoming a world classic that continues to fascinate artists and audiences around the globe in the twenty-first century. |
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| Further reading:  (Roskies)  (Introduction)  (Safran)  (Zipperstein and Safran) |