



# Dancing with the Dead: Possession and Nationalism in the Old-new Film *Der Dybbuk*, 1937-2017

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*Modernity itself might be understood as a new way of handling (and thinking about) the dead. (Joseph Roach)*

## Introduction

“The dead were returned to life, and a culture long vanished, wiped out by the Holocaust, was resurrected on the screen.”<sup>1</sup> Film scholar Ira Konigsberg used this mystical formulation to describe the screening of the restored 1937 Polish-Yiddish film *Der Dybbuk*, directed by Michał Waszyński, when it premiered at the Festival Theater in New York in September 1989. The resurrected but already “immortal classic” (according to its American distributors in the credits of the film) was based on the play by Shloymo Zangvil Rapoport (Sh. An-ski, 1863-1920), which had been staged for the first time in Warsaw by the Vilner troupe in 1920. An-ski’s *Dybbuk* eventually became a canonical play in the Jewish theatre, subject to many critiques, controversies, and studies, all of which show its ability to give rise to new texts and works, as noted by theater scholar Freddie Rokem.<sup>2</sup>

In November 2014, a 20-minute re-edited version of the Yiddish film was screened in the attic of the former Jerusalem leprosarium, today the Hansen House for Art, Design and Technology. Israeli artists and life-

<sup>1</sup> Ira Konigsberg, “The only ‘I’ in the World: Religion, Psychoanalysis and ‘The Dybbuk’”, *Cinema Journal* 36/4 (Summer 1997), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Freddie Rokem, “Haddybuk be-Erets Israel: Hateatron, habikoret, ve-itgabshuta shel hatarbut ha-ivrit”, in *Al na tegarshuni: Yiunim hadashim beHadybbuk*, eds. Dorit Yerushalmi and Shimon Levy (Tel-Aviv: Safra, 2009), 90-107.

partners Adi Kaplan and Shahar Carmel, not only re-edited the film but also replaced the original music composed by Henekh Kohn as well as the cantorial songs performed by Gershon Sirota. The new score, performed live by the Jerusalem Young Symphonic Orchestra, was an adapted version of the *Vltva* (*The Moldau*), the second symphonic poem of *Má vlast* (*My Homeland*) composed by Czech composer Bedřich Smetana in the 1870s. In July 2017, a new and longer version of this new edition of Waszyński's film, this time edited by the Sala-manca group of which I am a member, was screened and performed on the patio of the same leprosarium as part of the Jerusalem Film Festival. The re-edited version of the film with English and Hebrew subtitles was projected onto a big screen hanging on one of the walls. In this version, the entire soundtrack of the film was silent, giving way to a live performance that included a newly composed score based on Smetana's *Má vlast*. This time the score was performed live by 28 musicians from the Jerusalem Street Orchestra, conducted by Ido Shpitalnik, who also contributed adaptations of the new fragments of the music.

Theater scholar Marvin Carlson once characterized theater as “a simulacrum of the cultural and historical process itself [...] The present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the processes of recycling and recollection.”<sup>3</sup> *Der Dybbuk* 1937-2017—based on Waszyński's film, which is based on An-ski's theater piece, which was itself based on folkloric tales of *dybbuk* possession recollected from Jewish communities of the Pale of Settlement—invites us to approach the work as a multilayered ghosted performative experience of “recycling and recollection.” In this article I deal with this re-interpretation, and resignification of Waszyński's film and consequently with An-ski's *Dybbuk*. My interest on the *Dybbuk* arose from an investigation on Shimen Dzigan and Isroel Schumacher's

<sup>3</sup> See Marvin Carlson, *Haunted Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001),



I do not fear you  
חרמות שלך



our oaths and excommunication  
איני מפחד מהשבועות או מהח





▲ Der Dybbuk 1937-2017, Sala-manca, Adi Kaplan, Shahar Carmel, still from performance, 2017

skit “Der Nayer Dybbuk” (The New Dybbuk), staged in 1957 as a parody of Habima’s version of *The Dybbuk*.<sup>4</sup> I developed this interest through the academic course, “The Dybbuk: Between Theater and Ethnography,” which I taught in the department of theatrical studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This course led to the artistic creation discussed in this article where I and Lea Mauas, as Sala-manca, assumed the roles of interpreters, co-editors and directors.

This article itself, in some way, adds a new reflection to the interpretation presented through the film’s performance. In some way, this changing of masks—from creative to scholarly—echoes the dual academic and artistic activity of An-ski, a theme that I develop in the next section of this article. I propose framing the new film-performance of the *Dybbuk* not only as an allegory and as a ghosted performance but also as a collaboration with the dead, the idea of “intermundane collaboration” developed by Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut.<sup>5</sup> I suggest that this process offers one possible way for Yiddish cultural continuity, resurrection, or immortality.

<sup>4</sup> See Diego Rotman, “The ‘Tsadik from Plonsk’ and ‘Goldenyu’: Political Satire in Dzigan and Shumacher’s Israeli Comic Repertoire”, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. XXIX: 154-170, and see as well: Diego Rotman, *The Stage as a Temporary Home: On Dzigan and Shumacher’s Theater (1921-1980)* (Magnes University Press: Jerusalem, 2017), 237-258 (in Hebrew).

<sup>5</sup> Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut, “Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane”, *The Drama Review* 54/1 (Spring 2010): 14-38.

## Sh. An-ski and *Der Dybbuk*: Tsvishn tsvey veltn

Written between 1912 and 1917 in Russian and subsequently in Yiddish, *Der Dybbuk: Tsvishn Tsvey Veltn* (*The Dybbuk: Between Two Worlds*) was inspired by stories about *dybbuk* possessions and folktales that Sh. An-ski (1863-1920) collected when he led the Jewish Ethnographic Expedition in Volhynia and Podolia from 1912 to 1914. As a secular, socialist Jew, An-ski understood folklore as the basis for modern Jewish culture, meant not only to preserve the material culture and folklore of the Jewish people from the Pale of Settlement, but also as a source of inspiration for modern artistic creation.

According to Jewish tradition, a *dybbuk* is the spirit of a dead person who takes over a living body (generally a man taking over a woman), speaking from her throat with his own voice. Set in the 19th century in a Jewish shtetl in Eastern Europe, An-ski's *Der Dybbuk* tells the story of the unrealized love between Khonen, a young *yeshiva bokher* (Yeshiva student), and Leah, the daughter of a rich merchant named Sender, who has arranged for her to marry a suitable groom against her will. Khonen learns about those intentions and turns to Kabbalistic practice to acquire supernatural power, which ultimately results in his death. On her wedding day, Leah invites Khonen to dance with her at his tombstone, whereupon Khonen's spirit gains control over her. During the exorcism ceremony performed by Rabbi Azriel of Miropol, the audience is informed that the since-deceased fathers of Leah and Khonen had taken an oath in which they swore that their unborn children would marry one another, infusing Leah and Khonen's love with another layer of meaning. This allows us to understand their love not as a consequence of their free willing but as predetermined by their fathers. Rabbi Azriel succeeds in expelling Khonen's spirit from Leah's body, but Leah finally dies, leading to a reencounter with Khonen in the world to

come. In other words, death is the means by which Leah is able to realize her love for Khonen.<sup>6</sup>

An-ski's *Der Dybbuk: Between Two Worlds* also refers to the interactions and tensions between the world of the living and the world of the dead, or, as Naomi Seidman put it, that of the dead who return to the living,<sup>7</sup> referring by extension to the return of the past to the present time. Rachel Elior suggests that in the play, "The breach of boundaries [of time and space] is bound up in contact with the sacred, concealed realm on the one hand, and the monstrous, abnormal realm, on the other."<sup>8</sup> This in-between status characterizing the *dybbuk* phenomenon and the film in question was one trait of the complex identity of An-sky (Rapoport) as a folklorist, playwright, Russian populist, writer, story teller, and activist, and permeated his efforts to explore in life, in his writings, and in his politics the question of how to live in both Russian and Jewish culture.<sup>9</sup> An-ski argued that the Jewish writer, "lives in two streets with three languages. To live on such a 'border' is a misfortune – and has been exactly the way I have had to carry on."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For an English translation of the play, see Joachim Neugroschel and S. An-Ski, *The Dybbuk and the Yiddish Imagination: A Haunted Reader*, 1st ed. Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music, and Art (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Press).

<sup>7</sup> Naomi Seidman, "The Ghost of Queer Loves Past: An-sky's 'Dybbuk' and the Sexual Transformation of Ashkenaz," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, eds. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 228-245.

<sup>8</sup> Rachel Elior, *Dybbuks and Jewish Women in Social History, Mysticism and Folklore* (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2008), 81.

<sup>9</sup> *Der Dybbuk* reflects the cultural hybridity of the Silver Age tsarist empire, as Seth Wolitz indicates: "The work is set among Hasidic Jews, intended for Russians and Jews using an imported aesthetic form: melodrama." See Seth L. Wolitz, "Inscribing An-sky's Dybbuk in Russian and Jewish Letters" in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Gabriella Safran and Steven Zipperstein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 167.

<sup>10</sup> Shalit 1937 in *ibid.*, 167.



The first production of *Der Dybbuk* was performed in Yiddish in December 1920 by the *Vilner trupe* in Warsaw under the direction of Dovid Herman. It symbolically marked An-ski's *shloshim*, the thirtieth day after his death, the day when one may again, according to Jewish ritual law, visit the deceased at the cemetery. The production enjoyed unusual success both among the critics and audiences. During its first year and a half, *Der Dybbuk* was performed more than three hundred times. Since then, many versions of the drama in different languages and adaptations have been staged. One of them is the canonical production staged by Habima Theater in 1922 in Bialik's Hebrew translation, directed by Euvgeny Vakhtangov, with Chana Rovina performing the role of Leah. This production had an enormous influence on both the Hebrew and Yiddish theater. It was preserved—almost mummified—during the first 40 years of Habima's existence, with the aging Chana Rovina perennially reprising the role of Leah. In the process, the play became a mythical symbol of the modern Hebrew Zionist theater.<sup>11</sup>

The film production of *Der Dybbuk* drew on the biggest talents in the contemporary film and theatre industries. In 1937 the Fenix Production Company, owned by film producers Felicja and Leon Fenigstein, decided to create a cinematographic version of An-ski's stage play and selected Michał Waszyński to direct it. The screenplay was written by critic, writer and photographer Alter Kacyzne, and the playwright and theater director Mark Arnshteyn, with the script by A. Stern. The artistic director was Mark Arnshteyn and the historical advisor was the historian Majer Balaban. The cinematography was by one of the leading Polish film photographers, Albert Wywerka; the photography was done by A. Arnold; the camera by Leonard Zajackowski and the set design by Jacek Rotmil and Stefan Norris. Lily (Zielinska) Liliana played Leah, her real-life husband Leon Liebgold

<sup>11</sup> See Dorit Yerushalmi, "Bitzilah shel Chana Rovina," *Zemanim* 99 (Summer 2007): 26-37.

played Khonen, and Avrahm Morevski starred as the Miropoler Tsadik, the same role he had played seventeen years before with the *Vilner Trupe*. The other roles were played by Isaac Samberg (*Meshulakh*/The Messenger), Moyshe Lipman (Sender), Dina Halpern (Frade, Sender's sister), Gershon Lemberger (Nisn), Max Bozyk (Note), Shmuel Landau (Zalmen), Samuel Bronecki (Nakhmen), M. Messinger (Menashe, Nakhmen's son), Zishe Katz (Reb Mendel, Menashe's tutor), Abraham Kurtz (the Gabbai Mikhoe), David Lederman (Meyer, the Shammes), Judith Berg (Dancer of the Death).

Director Michał Waszyński represents an interesting figure in Yiddish film history. Born Moyshe Waks in 1904 in the small town of Kowel, Ukraine, he was raised in a modest Hassidic family and received traditional education in *heyder* and the local *yeshiva* until his expulsion at age fifteen for heresy.<sup>12</sup> Soon afterwards, he left Kowel and adopted a new identity by converting to Christianity and changing his name to Michał Waszyński. According to his own account, he studied theater in Kiev, worked as an assistant to German film director Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau in his film *Nosferatu* and, between 1923 and 1925, was assistant director to Evgeni Vakhtangov, the director of Habima's *Dybbuk*. According to Waszyński's biographer Samuel Blumenfeld, who quotes these stories,<sup>13</sup> these so-called facts were among the many inventions that Waszyński used to tell about himself. What strikes me is the fact that, considering that Vakhtangov had passed away in 1922, Waszyński's own narrative presents him as the assistant of someone deceased.

Waszyński's film added a late expressionist and popular cinematographic interpretation to An-ski's original theater script. Among the most noteworthy innovations is devoting the first twenty-five minutes of the film to Nisn and

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Blumenfeld, *L'homme qui voulait être prince* (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Sender's relationship and oath, an important fact in the story, which in the play is revealed only in the trial scene in Act 4. Waszyński added many elements from Jewish tradition and folklore that do not appear in the original play such as cantorial singing in the synagogue, blessings, a funeral procession, a Sabbath meal, superstitions, songs, recitations from the *Tsenerene* and more. The overall effect, according to Zehavit Stern, was to construct "yidishkayt as an attraction intended for mass consumption."<sup>14</sup> There are other important changes in the film that allow for a more feminist interpretation: notably, Waszyński decided to leave Leah alone in the synagogue at the end of the exorcism ceremony rather than in the company of Aunt Frede as in the original play, allowing her— a young, modern and brave woman— to stand alone against the scene's dominant male figures.<sup>15</sup>

*Der Dybbuk* drew a great deal of attention and its reception was controversial. According to media reviews after its release, on the one hand, the film was considered a "triumph of national cinematography,"<sup>16</sup> a drama that "has so much depth, so much beauty, and so much poetry."<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, it was dismissed as kitsch, lacking even a single great scene,<sup>18</sup> and "a fantasy minted from the religious-superstitious mind of the nineteenth-century Polish Jew."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Zehavit Stern, *From Jester to Gesture: Eastern European Jewish Culture and the Re-imagination of Folk Performance* (Ph.D. dissertation: University of California, Berkeley, 2011), 138.

<sup>15</sup> See: Agnieszka Legutko, *Possessed by the Other: Dybbuk Possession and Modern Jewish Identity in Twentieth-Century Jewish Literature and Beyond* (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Mieczysław Szytyler, "Na srebrnym ekranie. 'Dybuk' - kino Sfinks," *Film* 28 (1937): 4.

<sup>17</sup> Y. Kissin, "Sh. An-skis groyse folk-drame 'Der dibuk' in a talky," *Forverts*, 29.1.1938.

<sup>18</sup> Stefania Zahorska, "Dybuk", *Wiadomości Literackie* 44 (1937): 6.

<sup>19</sup> Frank S. Nugent, "The Continental Brings In a Film of 'The Dybbuk' New Pictures at the Criterion and the Rialto", *New York Times*, 28.1.1938.

## Der Dybbuk 1937-2017

In 2014, the performance festival *Voice of the Word*, curated by Guy Biran (b. 1964) the artistic director of Hazira Theater in Jerusalem, together with Sala-manca, revisited Sh. An-ski's *Der Dybbuk: Tsvish tsvey veltn*. The festival commissioned a total of eight new works based on fragments and adaptations of An-ski's text in Yiddish and Hebrew translation.<sup>20</sup> One of these was the re-edited version of the film by Kaplan and Carmel, two Israeli visual artists working together as painters, illustrators, and video artists. Their 20-minute film retained most of the original dialogues in Yiddish with their Hebrew and English subtitles but because the artists did not have the means to separate one sound track from another, the Yiddish speaking parts with background music were silenced, leaving only the Hebrew and English subtitles. Still, Yiddish remained the living language of most of the dialogues, underlining that this is a Yiddish film re-edited by non-Yiddish speakers for an audience of mostly non-Yiddish speakers. In this sense, the work is reminiscent of Evgeny Vakhtangov, the Armenian director of the 1922 Habima production of the play, who knew neither the Hebrew nor Yiddish languages.

Carmel and Kaplan's 2014 performance made important changes to the original film. On one hand, they had the freedom to appropriate and intervene in the soundtrack of the film, adding ambiguous political interpretations through Smetana's music in scenes like Leah's dancing with the Death who is also her lover. On the other hand, because of their lack of

<sup>20</sup> The artists participating in the festival were Josef Sprinzak, Victoria Hanna and Noam Enbar, Li Lorian and Adam Yodfat, Shira Borer, Tom Soloveitzik, Alex Drool, Yaara Bar, Carmel Bar. There was as well one night devoted to a music event by Maya Dunietz, Tomer Damsky, Eran Sachs, Alex Drool and Nico Tine conducted by Ilan Volkov. During the event that happened in different rooms of the former Jerusalem leprosarium were reading of fragments of the original play by Eliezer and Ethele Niborski, and a lecture on the music by Michael Lukin.

Yiddish knowledge and time constraints, budgetary limitations as well as aesthetic decisions, they were forced to remove many of Waszyński's additions to An-ski's original play, thereby losing some important elements of the plot. The first 25 minutes of Waszyński's film, devoted to Nisn and Sender's friendship and the oath between them, were completely removed, as were most of the additions of traditional Jewish folkloric elements. Also missing was the story about the bride and groom's tombstone in the middle of the shtetl and its central significance, with its reference to the bride and groom murdered by Khmielnitsky's pogroms in the mid-seventeenth century and its metaphoric association to the impossible love between Leah and Khonen.

Kaplan and Carmel not only re-edited the film but also replaced the original music composed by Henekh Kohn as well as the cantorial songs performed by Gershon Sirota with an adapted version of the *Vltva* (*The Moldau*). The new score was performed live by the Jerusalem Young Symphonic Orchestra and conducted by Michael Klinghoffer. After the screening, the screen was rolled up to reveal the 12-17 years old musicians, adding an unexpected juxtaposition between the age of the musicians and the topics of possession, and death that underlie the film.

In July 2017, a new and longer version of this intervention to Waszyński's film, based on Kaplan and Carmel version, was re-edited by Sala-manca into a 50-minute film from the original 124 minutes. An important change introduced by Sala-manca was the erasure of the entire soundtrack, including all the dialogues, in order to make way for the live performance of the new score, the live dubbing, and live foleys (the film's recorded sound effects). During the performance at the Jerusalem Film Festival, the actors, the performers of the foleys, the singer, and the orchestra performed in front of the screen to stress the importance of the live performance to this project. The score included a new edition

of Smetana's music and fragments from other symphonic poems from Smetana's *Má vlast*.

At the front stage on the right side, behind a table with props (sand, small doors, bells, clothes, water, etc.), Kaplan and Carmel together with Ashelen Rotman Mauas (b. 2006, daughter of Mauas and Rotman) performed the foleys live. From a balcony, guest singer Ann Elizabet Nudelman sang the *Shir haShirim*. On the left side of the front stage, the Sala-manca group (Lea Mauas and myself) performed live dubbings of all the voices of the characters, sometimes changing the voice register between male and female. An excerpt of the totality of the performance soundtrack thus appeared as follows:

פֶּאָלֵיז Foleys (Sound effects)			טעקסט Text
Sound Effect	Shahar Carmel	Adi Kaplan	
Steps on wood	Sender's steps on wooden floor	Leah's steps on wooden floor	סענדערס הויז <b>Sender's House</b>
			[ כאַראַקטער   אַקטיאָר   קול ] [Character   Actor   Live Voice]
			סענדער   משה ליפמאַן   דייעגאָ רֹאָטמאַן <b>Sender   Moyshe Lipman   Diego Rotman</b>



פֶּאָלִיז Foleys (Sound effects)			טעקסט Text
Steps on a piece of wood. Friction two fabrics together. Smooching lips.	Sender's steps on wooden floor. Kiss.	Frade's steps on wooden floor	ווי געזינט טעכטערל, ווי געזינט שוועסטער, וויט געזינט! Goodbye daughter! Goodbye sister... Goodbye!
			פֶּראַדע   דינא האַלפערן   לאה מאַואַס Frade   Dina Halpern   Lea Mauas
Opening a small door of a box on the table. Steps on a piece of wood.	Sender's steps on wooden floor.	Opening of door. Note's steps on wooden floor	פֶּאַרט געזינט, אין אַ גיטער אין אַ מולדיקער שעה! Have a safe journey! Good luck!
			נוטע   מאַקס באָזשיק   דיעגאָ Nute   Max Bozyk   Diego
Steps on a piece of wood	Sender's steps on wooden floor.	Nute's steps on wooden floor.	אַ גיטן. Goodbye! Goodbye!
			פֶּראַדע   דינא האַלפערן   לאה מאַואַס Frade   Dina Halpern   Lea Mauas

פֶּאָלִיז Foleys (Sound effects)			טעקסט Text
Steps on a piece of wood. Smooching lips. A small door slammed on the table.	Kiss to the mezuzah.	Nute's steps on wooden floor	אַ גוטן. Good luck!
			לאה   לילי ליליאנא   לאה מאואס <b>Leah   Lili Liliana   Lea Mauas</b>
Petting cloth bag.	Frade's steps on wooden floor.	Sound caressing hair.	דער טאטע האָט מיר אפילו נישט געזאגט ווי אַהין ער פֿורט Daddy didn't even tell me where he's going
			פֿראַדע   דינה האַלפערן   דיעגאָ ראָטמאַן <b>Frade   Dina Halpern   Diego Rotman</b>
A tiny metal chain ring. Steps on a piece of wood.	A slight stamping on the foot.	Tinkling earrings.	אָוודאי פֿאַרגעסן אין גרויס איילעניש, חה... עס איז קיין סוד נישט. דער טאטע פֿאַרט אין קלימאָווקע אָנקיקן פֿאַר דיר אַ חותן... He must have forgotten in the rush. It's no secret. He went to Klimovka to decide on a bridegroom for you.

פֶּאָלִיז Foleys (Sound effects)			טעקסט Text
			לאה   לילי ליליאנא   לאה מאואס Leah   Lili Liliana   Lea Mauas
			אָ חָגָה... A bridegroom...
			פֶּראַדע   דינא האַלפערן   דיעגא ראָטמאַן Frade   Dina Halpern   Diego Rotman
Tap on a canvas bag filled with fabrics. Friction 2 fabrics in each other. Steps on a wooden board. Squeeze of plastic bag filled with fabrics.	The sound of a thud between two bodies, the sound of a rustle of clothes. Khonen's foot-stamping sound. One step of Khonen. The sound of a rustle of clothes (Khonen lifts Leah). The sound of heavy footsteps (Khonen carrying Leah).	The sound of a thud between two bodies. The rustle of clothes. The sound of Frade's footsteps.	לאהלע, לאהלע, גאָט איז מיט דיר, וואָס איז! לאהלע, וואָס איז מיט דיר! חנן, חנן! העלף! אין חדר! אין חדר! צי אין חדר, וויי איזמיר וואָסער, וויי איזמיר! Leyele, what's wrong with you? What's happen? Khonen, Khonen help! Into the bedroom! Water!

פֶּאָלִיז Foleys (Sound effects)			טעקסט Text
Squeeze of plastic bag and cloth bag	The rustle of clothes and bedding.	The rustle of clothes and bedding	חנן   לײַאָן ליבגאָלד   דיעגאָ ראַטמאַן <b>Khonen   Leon Liebgold   Diego Rotman</b>
			...לאה... לײַע Leye... Leye...
Steps on a wooden board. Squeeze of plastic bag	Khonen's running steps. The sound of Frade sitting on a bed.	Frade's steps on wooden floor.	פֿראַדע   דינא האַלפערן   דיעגאָ ראַטמאַן <b>Frade   Dina Halpern   Diego Rotman</b>
Friction 2 fabrics in each other.	The rustle of clothes and bedding.	The rustle of clothes and bedding.	לאהלע, דאָנקען גאָט, דאָנקען גאָט... לאה Leye, thanks God..., thanks God, Leye
Squeeze of plastic bag filled with fabrics.	The sound of sitting up straight in the bed.		לאה   לילי ליליאַנאַ   לאה מאַאַס <b>Leah   Lili Liliana   Lea Mauas</b>
			ווי'ז האָנאָן? <b>Where's Khonen?</b>
			פֿראַדע   דינא האַלפערן   דיעגאָ ראַטמאַן <b>Frade   Dina Halpern   Diego Rotman</b>

פֶּאָלִיז Foleys (Sound effects)			טעקסט Text
Friction 2 fabrics in each other.		The rustle of clothes and bedding.	צי וואָס דאַרפֿסטו אים? What do you need from him?
			לאה   לילי ליליאַנאַ   לאה מאַאַס <b>Leah   Lili Liliana   Lea Mauas</b>
			...ריף אים אַרײַן מימעניו Please call him in auntie...
			פֿראַדע   דינאַ האַלפּערן   דיגענאַ רֶאָטמאַן <b>Frade   Dina Halpern   Diego Rotman</b>
			ער איז נישט דאָ חאַנאַן... ער איז אַוועק He is not here. He left
			לאה   לילי ליליאַנאַ   לאה מאַאַס <b>Leah   Lili Liliaa   Lea Mauas</b>
Friction 2 fabrics in each other.  Squeeze of plastic bag filled with fabrics.	Slight thud between Leah and Frade.	The rustle of clothes.	אַוועק? ... חאַנאַן! חאַנאַן! אַוועק... אַוועק...[בכי'] מימעניו, אַוועק Left? Khonen! Khonen! Left...left...auntie...left

The production also introduced a few major changes. It recovered some of the scenes lost in Kaplan and Carmel's short version. Further, the plot was re-edited; for example, the exorcism ceremony was re-edited. But the most important change in the plot, first proposed by Kaplan and Carmel, was the fact that Leah rebels not only against her filial duty as in An-ski's version, but also against the author of the play himself: at the end of the exorcism Leah does not die.

## Hatikva

*The two fundamental laws of detournement are the loss of importance of each detourned autonomous element... and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect.” (Ken Kab on the Situationist International)*

A recurring feature of experimental cinema is the new relations between image and sound in order to find new, complex or unexpected relationships between both forms. James Benning's *Landscape/Suicide* (1986), *Utopia* (1998), or Jean-Luc Godard *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1998) offer just few examples.<sup>21</sup> The use of new scores and live music performance for silent films is also a well-known approach; a new, current trend is to perform the original score of new movies live.<sup>22</sup> *Der Dybbuk 1937-2017* provides a combination of both: the use of an alternative score that does not belong to the original film, and its live performance as part of a film that was completely silenced for decades until it was rediscovered and rereleased in the 1980s, including its dialogues and foleys.

<sup>21</sup> See Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Spectres, Shards – Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota University Press, 2005), 103.

<sup>22</sup> See for example the film-concerts done by Wordless Music ([wordlessmusic.org](http://wordlessmusic.org)).



Our original score created new meaning for the performance. The use of Smetana's *Moldau* as the score of *Der Dybbuk* as a clear reference to Israel's national anthem—resonating like it but sounding different, reminiscent of it without being it. This musical choice creates a liminal sonic soundscape that cannot be defined in terms of place or ideology. The use of Smetana's *Moldau* is a sonic manipulation capable of stressing the connections and the interferences among different worlds and traditions: European romanticism and the nationalism inherent in Smetana's *Ma Vlast*, the Zionist "Hatikva", and the East European Jewish *Dybbuk*.

The journey into the source of origin or inspiration for the melody of "Hatikva" has inspired an extensive scholarly literature, as discussed in a study by Edwin Seroussi on the grass-roots energies that generated "Hatikva" from its inception until its legislation as the Israeli national anthem, which only happened in 2004.<sup>23</sup> Seroussi addresses the circumstances that shaped Naphtali Herz Imber's original poem (originally named "Tikvatenu" [Our Hope]) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the musical contrafactum in the adaption of a preexisting melody to a new text, which together created "Hatikva." According to Seroussi, Imber's inspiration seems to have been the news of the founding of the Jewish settlement Petah Tikvah [Gate of Hope] in Palestine. Among other possible inspirations for Imber's text Seroussi refers to its intercultural connection with "Mazurek Dąbrowskiego," a famous Polish patriotic song written in 1797 by Józef Wybicki. Modified to become the national anthem of the Republic of Poland in 1926, it includes the line: "Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła, Kiedy my żyjemy": "Poland is not yet lost, while we still live," which is comparable to the line of Hatikva, "Our hope is not yet lost."

<sup>23</sup> Edwin Seroussi, "Hatikvah: Conceptions, Receptions and Reflections", *Yuval Online* 9 (2015), [www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il](http://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il) (accessed 10.9.2017).

Hatikva's melody was adapted by Samuel Cohen in 1887, who borrowed it from the Moldavian-Rumanian song "Carul cu Boi" [Cart with Oxen]. This song is actually a variant of a melodic pattern circulating in Rumania/Moldavia among Jews and non-Jews alike. The same melody was adapted to several texts in Rumanian. Many scholars and musicologists have looked for the origins of the melody in Spanish, Polish, Czech, Rumanian, Ukrainian and Armenian source and even in Jewish liturgy. Others attribute its origins to a folk melody from north-east Italy known as "La Mantovana", apparently the source for "Caul cu Boi." However, the historiographic and popular version that attracted Kaplan and Carmel was the one that relates to the first melodic phrase of "Hatikva," the first main theme of the *Moldau*, the second symphonic poem of *Má vlast (My Homeland)* composed by Smetana between 1874 and 1879, with the ideals of romantic and nationalistic music that characterized the late nineteenth century. What makes the connection between "Hatikva" and the *Moldau* so strong is perhaps the fact that Smetana's piece was played as a subterfuge substitute for "Hatikva" by the Hebrew section of the Palestine Broadcasting Service during the British Mandate of Palestine, when it was forbidden to perform any national anthem beside the British one. When Jewish inhabitants of Palestine heard the *Moldau* they were in fact hearing or imagining "Hatikva." Although there is no direct relationship between these pieces, the close musical patterns are capable of provoking in those spectators knowing the Hatikva a powerful and confusing effect in the unexpected musical and ideological connection between the canonic Jewish film and the homeland of others. A Czech nationalist musical composition comes not only in place of the original Jewish music of the film, but also in place of the Israeli national anthem, replacing the sonic representation of the Promised Land with a nationalist composition devoted to a distant European river.

## Intermundane Collaboration

*[Maria Callas's] record company has succeeded in making people think she is still alive... It's a little bit like conversations with the other world (Manuela Helterhoff, Cinderella & Company)*

The first decades of the twentieth century were an era of fascination with new technologies, machinery and the supernatural during a time when many inventors and scientists like Thomas Edison and Konstantin Raudive imagined technologies for receiving spectral messages from the open air. In 1920—the same year of An-ski's death and the premier of the Vilner trupe's production of *Der Dybbuk: Tsvishn tsvey veltn in Warsaw*—Edison, in an interview with *American Magazine*, revealed his intentions to communicate with the dead:

I am building an apparatus to see if it possible for personalities which have left this earth to communicate with us [...] If our personality dies, what's the use of a hereafter? [...] If there is a hereafter which is to do us any good, we want our personality to survive, don't we?<sup>24</sup>

With the belief that the human thought structure remains the same after death, Edison expresses a hope that he can, in Jeffrey Sconce's words, “reconcile fears of discorporative anonymity with a reassuring survival of the autonomous individual.”<sup>25</sup> Sconce interprets this longing and search of communication with the dead as a reflection of the hope that those technological innovations would:

<sup>24</sup> B.C. Forbes, “Edison Working on How to Communicate with the Next World,” *American Magazine*, October 1920, 10.

<https://atlantisrisingmagazine.com/article/machines-to-talk-to-the-dead/>

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 81.

[...] overcome the trauma of a profound loss. They sought to repair a decisive moment of separation – either in the founding moment of psychic repression or the final moment of bodily death – that left “conscious” subjects abandoned and alone.<sup>26</sup>

The connection with the dead, a central topic in the *dybbuk* phenomenon, allows a new intellectual and technological approach to this necessity of communication with the *other world* one hundred years after Edison’s argument. In this section I propose to read the new 2017 version of Waszyński’s film as a contemporary practice of “intermundane collaboration.” It follows Stanyek and Piekut’s research on collaborations that “enroll, enlist, and manage deadness, not from the grave itself, but from another dead space: the recording studio [...]”.<sup>27</sup>

Stanyek and Piekut provide conceptual tools for researching those intermundane collaborations in music, its economy and ethics. They view the recording of Enrico Caruso’s “Vesti la Giubba” in 1932 as the first joint recording ever of a dead performer who had passed away 11 years before this recording session with live musicians. They conclude their research with a case study of Natalie Cole and Nat King Cole’s 1991 recording of “Unforgettable,” done 26 years after Nat King Cole’s death. Of her experience of singing with her dead father, Natalie Cole said she felt “as if he was more communicating with me, that he was kind of leading me in all the right things. And we were kind of holding hands.”<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Sterne argues that sound recording in the nineteenth century “preserve[d] the bodies of the dead so that they could continue to perform a social function after life.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Sconce, *Haunted Media*, 91.

<sup>27</sup> Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut. “Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane”, 27.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press 2003), 292.



▲ Der Dybbuk 1937-2017, Sala-manca, Adi Kaplan, Shahar Carmel, still from performance, 2017.



▲ Der Dybbuk 1937-2017, Sala-manca, Adi Kaplan, Shahar Carmel, still from performance, 2017



Stanyek and Piekut affirm: “Through recording itself, these live persons sign on to future networks where they will play a decidedly different role. They are the becoming dead.”<sup>30</sup>

Intermundane collaborations are a phenomenon among popular Israeli musicians, with Kobi Oz, Yehuda Poliker, and Ilana Eliyah among those who have incorporated the archival voices of their parents and grandparents into their recordings. Edwin Seroussi has written about this phenomenon and defined it as a kind of cyclical return to the soundscape of the past. It is, affirms Seroussi, “a strategy to subvert both the secular and colonial Zionism that attempted to marginalize the religious-oriented culture of Mizrahi Jews”<sup>31</sup> in the case of Oz, and “a tactic that allows the regeneration of the contemporary Israeli soundscape through the sentiment of nostalgia using a parent’s voice,”<sup>32</sup> in the case of Poliker. Nostalgia, argues Seroussi, is “an escape from the present time and/or place [...] [as] a reactionary political force [...]”<sup>33</sup> Unlike Oz or Poliker who worked with archival material from their own family, Kaplan, Carmel, and Sala-manca’s *Dybbuk* project worked with recorded and filmed bodies and voices of a culture that belong to them in a non-familiar way and without a sentiment of nostalgia.

For the 2014 version of the *Dybbuk*, the artists did not request permissions from the film’s owners, actors, or director’s descendants, and made use of a pirated version found online. However, for the second version that was to be presented at an international film festival, the artists sought access to a high-quality copy. They approached the company that created the most recent restoration of the film and owns the rights; the company’s answer,

<sup>30</sup> Stanyek and Piekut, “Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane”, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Edwin Seroussi, “Nostalgic Soundscapes: The Future of Israel’s Sonic”, *Israel Studies* 19/2 (Summer 2014): 41.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 36.

sent to the person in charge at the Israel Film Archives—which was not expected—expressed a profound disagreement with the idea of altering the original. However, the news that the film has “no copyright owner” for the non-restored version of the film allowed the artists to approach the cinematic *Dybbuk* as an open source archive with a creative commons license as a piece of folklore. The artists made a new digital copy of the non-restored film, re-edited it, and erased the original soundtrack in order to allow the creation of a living soundtrack to be added to this specific and symbolic cultural body.

Engaging with dead characters through technological manipulation as a means of Yiddish cultural continuity is one possible path indirectly suggested by the artists,<sup>34</sup> who, in the spirit of *Der Dybbuk*, visit the archive instead of the cemetery and invite the dead to dance again with the living. The contemporary artists thus turn the fallen stars of the Yiddish theater into active agents in the co-creation of new content and meaning, and offer them a new role in life and in death.<sup>35</sup> In an act of sonic resistance, or in an intellectual act of sonic possession, the artists’ act raises many ethical and economic questions regarding the politics and poetics in the use of archival material that merit further discussion beyond the scope of this present study.

<sup>34</sup> This idea was suggested in an artist’s talk following their presentation in YMCA-Jerusalem on November 22, 2017. The talk was organized by the department of Theater Studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, it was chaired by Dr. Olga Levitan and took place in the theater hall itself.

<sup>35</sup> With the unexpected death of Carrie Fisher, the actress that played the role of princess Leia in Star Wars, the producers started to plan her comeback in the next chapters of the series utilizing digital manipulation. See: Borys Kit, “Star Wars’ Braintrust Sets Meeting to Plot Leia’s Life After Carrie Fisher’s Death”, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 5.1.2017 (accessed 10.9.2017: <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/carrie-fisher-episode-viii-how-star-wars-will-handle-leias-future-960849>) and Ben Child, “Disney’s dilemma: digitally resurrect Carrie Fisher or write her out of Star Wars?”, *The Guardian*, 6.1.2017 (accessed 10.9.2017: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2017/jan/06/carrie-fisher-star-wars-princess-leia-episodes-viii-ix-disney>)

## From Vernacular to Post-Vernacular

Similar work to the one discussed here exists in the tradition of avant-garde films, in which artists make active and creative use of cinematic materials from older films to provide a new meaning for the present. One example is the already-mentioned *Histoire(s) du Cinema* by J.L. Godard (1998), in which fragments of old films are re-edited to become fragments of Godard's personal and subjective film on the historiography of the cinema.<sup>36</sup> Jeffrey Skoller approaches his study on avant-garde films following Walter Benjamin's notion of history, which "creates a distinction between traditional historicism as the construction of an eternal image of the past ... 'the way it really was' and a notion of historical materialism in which the experience of the past is produced as something unique by the conditions of the present."<sup>37</sup> Skoller approaches those films as allegories where the conditions of the present are central to the reading of the events and objects from the past, allowing a co-existence of two different "present times" instead of a chronology in the history of the object and the viewing of it.<sup>38</sup>

In the *Der Dybbuk 1937-2017* film-performance, when the film characters are live-dubbed by performers, there is a process of "re-writing" into an "erased text," writing with a new voice, a new accent, and a new meaning. Live dubbing, synchronizing the live voice with the movements of the actor's lips in the screen, assumes the qualities of a palimpsest, as suggested by Hakim

<sup>36</sup> See Godard *Histoire(s) du Cinema*; and Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards – Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin in Skoller *ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>38</sup> Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards*, xviii.

Bey.<sup>39</sup> Live dubbing stresses the process of erasing in order to write or actually pronounce the same “old” and “original” text in the same place creating at the same time a new and different text. The aim of this act is not to make the text clearer but to reflect on the act of speech in the post-Holocaust era, to retell the story reflecting the new and specific historical context in which the film is being screened and performed. A new meaning is created not only through the context of the process of watching a Yiddish-Polish film from 1937 in Israel in 2017, but through the live performance and live possession of the film’s soundtrack, including the dialogues of the characters. In an act of profound subversion, the young performer give a new life to the film.

In the decision to dub live the film in the same language and with the same texts as the original offers an inverted mirror of the *dybbuk* phenomenon: instead of the spirit of a dead person taking over a living body speaking from her/his throat with his/her own voice, there are the voices of living bodies who possess the archived bodies of the dead actors and their eternalized characters. Central to this translation from recorded to live Yiddish—and the deliberate copying of the original into a new original—is the decision to abandon the vernacular recorded Yiddish of the actors in the film in favor of the “live” academic Yiddish of the two Argentinian-born performers. This act reflects and underlines that symbolic dimension added to Yiddish beyond that of a language of communication, as formulated by Jeffrey Shandler in his definition of post-vernacular Yiddish:<sup>40</sup>

The term postvernacular related to Yiddish in a manner that both is

<sup>39</sup> Bey argues that an ancient manuscript written on parchment still bearing semi-erased traces of earlier manuscripts, preserving a chain of absent-present texts and carrying different layers of history, meaning and ideologies. Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonoedia, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey Shandler, *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language & Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 31-58, 126-153.

other than its use as a language of daily life and is responsive to the language having once been a widely used Jewish vernacular [...] in the postvernacular mode the language's secondary, symbolic level of meanings is always privileged over its primary level.<sup>41</sup>

The superimposition of Mauas and Rotman's "post-vernacular Yiddish", a language used by them not in their everyday life but as a symbolic gesture, to the characters of the *Dybbuk*, originally performed on screen by Liliana and Liebgold and others, gives the recorded performance new meaning. It can be said that Lili Liliana and Leon Liebgold's "lively" and documental vernacular Yiddish is being possessed by the *dead-live-Yiddish* of the post-vernacular performers. Here the Yiddish actors are given a second life much akin to a puppet theater, or perhaps, as Jean-Pierre Naugrette notes: "if a transformed body constitutes the surface of a symptom, the altered voice is its depth and completes the incorporation of the 'monster' into its alienation"?<sup>42</sup> Maybe, as expected by the performers, the actors and characters of Lili Liliana and Leon Liebgold are being resurrected or re-incarnated in real-time and becoming participants in a new collaborative project of reviving an eternal Jewish ghost, the *Dybbuk* ghost, and the ghost of the actors who staged it in the past.

## Gender

*Más de un espectador se pregunta: Ya que hay usurpación de voces, ¿por qué no también de figuras? ¿Cuándo será perfecto el sistema? ¿Cuándo veremos directamente a Juana González en el papel de Greta Garbo, en el papel de*

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>42</sup> Jean-Pierre Naugrette. «Discours du corps, ordre du discours: De Stevenson á Kafka» *Les Figures du corps dans la littérature et la peinture anglaises et américaines de la Renaissance á nos jours*, ed. Bernard Brugiere (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991), 144-145.

*la Reina Cristina de Suecia?* (Jorge Luis Borges, “Sobre el Doblaje”, *Sur*, 128, June, 1945).

[More than one moviegoer will wonder: Given that there is already usurpation of voices, why not also of figures? When will we see Juana González in the role of Greta Garbo, in the role of Queen Christina of Sweden? (Jorge Luis Borges, *On Dubbing Movies*, translated by Frank Thomas Smith)]

Agnieszka Lugetko refers to Leah in Waszyński’s *Dybbuk* as crossing gender boundaries, staging a “transgender performance,” taking control to her own life and performing an act of resistance against the established woman’s role in Jewish traditional society.<sup>43</sup> Parker Tyler refers to a complete penetration of Khonen in Leah, “having achieved complete immersion in his beloved, an absolute transvestism.”<sup>44</sup> In the sonic live translation of *Der Dybbuk 1937-2017* there is a change of voice register between male and female in unexpected characters: Nisn is performed by Lea Mauas; Aunt Frede is performed by Diego Rotman; the *messenger* is performed by both, as reflected in the quoted fragment of the script above. Borrowing the term from music theory, this entails a process of “voice-crossing” (instead of cross-dressing). Voice-crossing occurs “when two voices exchange position – when the alto moves tenor, for instance – the voices are said to cross.”<sup>45</sup> That crossing can cause registral confusion and reduce the independence of the voices. When listening to the human voice, we tend to identify the gender of the speaker. The performers’ decision to make an indistinctive use of male

<sup>43</sup> Agnieszka Lugetko, *Possessed by the Other: Dybbuk Possession and Modern Jewish Identity in Twentieth-Century Jewish Literature and Beyond* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2012), 198

<sup>44</sup> Parker Tyler, *Screening in the Sexes: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Reinhart & Winston, 1972).

<sup>45</sup> Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading* (San Diego, Calif: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College, 1989), 102.





▲ Der Dybbuk 1937-2017, Sala-manca, Adi Kaplan, Shahar Carmel, still from performance, 2017.

and female voices to recreate the voice of male and female characters served not only utilitarian means when there was, for example, no other way for the two performers to recreate a two-man dialogue. In addition, in Israel 2017, it resulted in a humorous technique as a consequence of the unexpected changes of roles, being sometimes the same role performed indistinctly by the two live performers. More importantly, however, it challenged pre-established categories in the sonic representation of a specific gender in a film where gender transformation forms a core theme of *Der Dybbuk*.

## Leah

The most important plot change to the film itself is the fact that in the revived 2017 version, Leah does not die at the end of the exorcism. The last words in the film mark the only textual change to the original script, replacing the dialogue between Leah and Khonen that consists of the promise to unite in love their love in the world to come. Quite literally following Roland Barthes's assertion in *Image, Music, Text* that "The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture,"<sup>46</sup> Leah suddenly says the line in Yiddish translation:

אין איינעם אַ טאָג וועלן זיך די בלומען צעבונטעווען און אָפּשניידן  
די קעפּ ביי די גערטנערס, אין איינעם אַ טאָג וועלן די אינדיאַנער  
אויפֿשטיין און אַנטדעקן אַמעריקע.<sup>47</sup>

[One day the flowers will rise up and cut off the heads  
of the gardeners, one day the Indians will stand up and  
discover America].

Leah is citing the Argentinian poet João Delgado, a literary figure created

<sup>46</sup> Barthers, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 146.

<sup>47</sup> João Delgado, "One Day...", *Hearat Shulaym* 1 (2001), 1. The Yiddish translation is by Yitshok Niborski.

by Sala-manca, which appears quoted in many of the artist collective's projects. The quotation contextualizes Leah's individual struggle for her own freedom of speech and autonomy as a Jewish woman as part of a larger revolutionary discourse on freedom and social justice, incorporating this way the artists' voice and discourse into Leah's speech. "In the absence of any other way to resist the forces of the hegemonic power structure," writes Rachel Elior regarding the phenomenon of *dybbuk* possession in Jewish culture, "the *dybbuk* allowed for the expression of such resistance [...]". Next Leah repeats and appropriates with her own voice the statement from Act 3 originally spoken by the *dybbuk*:

"נישטאָ אַזא העכסטע הויך, זאָל זיך גלייכן צו מיין איצטיקן  
רו-אַרט!"

[There is no more exalted height than my present  
refuge!]

Thus Leah reclaims her place in this world, defining her body, her individuality – or perhaps the diaspora itself, or the other's nation, the other's body – as her last possible refuge.

"Even in death," argues Joseph Roach, "actors' roles tend to stay with them. They gather in the memory of audiences, like ghosts, as each new interpretation of a role sustains or upsets expectations derived from the previous ones."<sup>48</sup> Leah's place in this 21<sup>st</sup> century Israeli version of the film cannot be considered without reference to Chana Rovina's original performance of Leah in Habima's version of *The Dybbuk*. Dorit Yerushalmi suggests in her reading of Habima's Hebrew version of the *Dybbuk*, following the interpretation of Khonen and Leah's re-union in the "world to come" as a reunion in the Land of Israel. Leah as performed by Rovina "became a

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 78.

national-Zionist myth [...] She symbolizes the Land and the Nation, and they are equivalent to her.”<sup>49</sup> If Leah/Rovina is the mother of the Hebrew nation, the symbol of the Israeli national theater, in this film Leah/Liliana/Lea (Mauas) is an alternative to her, by opposition she translates back the canonic play and Leah’s character into a living Yiddish symbol, she becomes the mother of exile.

The last image we have of Chana Rovina performing Leah is that of a 68-year old actress wearing a wedding dress in the 1,000th performance of Habima’s *Dybbuk*, unable to resist the passage of the time.<sup>50</sup> By contrast, Liliana’s Leah remains on screen eternally young, alive (in this new version) and revolutionary woman. Leah/Liliana/Lea (Mauas) represents the irresistible myth of the Jewish exile, a post-human body, emerging from the celluloid to digitally reclaim her body, her love, her voice, her life and her culture. With all the pathos in the sonic background of the *Moldau* and its melodic reference to the Israeli national anthem, Leah/Liliana/Lea (Mauas) deconstructs in Yiddish Leah/Rovina’s Zionist Hebrew myth. Lea/Liliana/Lea (Mauas) refuses in 2017 to perform her death in exchange for any ideal, for any love, for any Land. Through the performance, Leah refuses to enter the archive. Leah comes back from the past to remain present, to dance with the living.

<sup>49</sup> Dorit Yerushalmi, “Bitzilah shel Chana Rovina,” *Zemanim* 99 (Summer 2007): 32. See also the definition of Leah/Rovina as the “symbol of the Hebrew Woman, the Mother” in L.F. “Prasei Israel lesifrut ve-omanut: Chana Rovina,” *Lamerchav*, 27.4.1956.

<sup>50</sup> See the picture here: <http://blog.nli.org.il/rovina/> (accessed 19.11.2018).



▲ Der Dybbuk 1937-2017, Sala-manca, Adi Kaplan, Shahar Carmel, still from performance, 2017

