Rothschild's Violin and a Russian Tune

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Abstract: Based on Anton Chekhov's symbolic story *Rothschild's Violin* (*Skripka Rotshilda*, 1894), this article focuses on the generic, functional, ethnic, and expressive transformation of the Melody, which is one of the protagonists of the story, alongside the Violin itself. The tune, a lament, is picked up by Rothschild, a poor Jewish provincial flutist, from the dying Yakov Ivanov, a Russian coffin-maker and fiddler. It is a precious gift to the young man who, upon performing it, grows to be in high demand among the prominent town folk.

The plot of *Rothschild's Violin* is entirely fictional, but its details are typical of a late nineteenth-century Russian province. Very typical too, and even universal for all cultures and times, is the phenomenon of a melody that changes its master, ethnic relationship, genre, and social function. This example is examined here from the perspective of my proposed construct, which defines a complex phenomenon of vernacularity in music, and presents a methodology of analysis of the various changes undergone by many tunes throughout the history of their existence.

This construct differentiates between two sub-kinds of vernacular that encompass the broader concepts of folk and popular music: the *phylo-vernacular* (referring to phylogenesis) and the *onto-vernacular* (referring to ontogenesis). The article seeks to show how the *phylo-vernacular* and the *onto-vernacular* can each transform into the other, and how landless communities, such as Romanies and Ashkenazi diaspora Jews, adopt and adapt to the local repertoires, uniquely combining phylo- and onto-vernacular features.

Keywords: Chekhov, *Rothschild's Violin*, vernacularity in music, music of landless communities, phylo-vernacular, onto-vernacular.

Introduction: Chekhov's Story of the Invented Entity

Rothschild's Violin (or *Rothschild's Fiddle*, as it probably should be read in relation to the context of traditional music) was published in February 1894.[1] Symbolically, the story appeared a few months before the Dreyfus Affair, which Chekhov took to heart and which noticeably changed his views.[2] Displaying "formal elements of the religious parable",[3] *Rothschild's Violin* almost blatantly-ideologically warns of anti-Semitism as an early sign of the fall of the host society. Retrospectively, this purely symbolic "pre-pogrom"[4] story became a kind of testament at the highpoint of Chekhov's development of the Jewish

[1] I thank Esti Sheinberg and Alex Rosenblatt for their valuable comments on the draft of this article, as well as for their lasting support of its main idea.
[2] Donald Rayfield, "What did Jews Mean to Chekhov?" *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 1973/74), pp. 30-36.
[3] Gary Rosenshield, Dostoevskii's "The Funeral of the Universal Man" and "An Isolated Case" and Chekhov's "Rothschild's Fiddle": The Jewish Question. *The Russian Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Oct., 1997), p. 488.
[4] This is Rayfield's term, although also applicable to other Chekhov's stories.

theme.[5] Totaling 3,000 words in Russian (and 4,000 in English)[6], I shall summarize it from the particular aspect of the tune associated with "Rothschild's violin."

The story unfolds in a fictive archetypical town in central Russia, whose urban-anthropological structure is characterized by a multi-ethnic population and a division of labor. While only Russians are implied to be the host society, and only Jews are mentioned as a minority, there could almost certainly be Tartars and Romanies, too, and possibly also Poles (at the time including Byelorussians), people of Malorossia (Little Russia, today Ukraine), Greeks and Finns, if we base our assumption on a model of another fictive Russian town named Preslavl', from the novel *And There Was Evening and There Was Morning* (1987) by Boris Vasiliev (1924-2013), featuring the 1904 pogrom—which had taken place ten years after the publication of Chekhov's story.

Various sectors of society appear: simple folk, the military, clerics, merchants, doctors, and musicians.

Despite Rothschild's name as eponymous in the title, Rothschild is the deuteragonist, while the protagonist of the story is Yakov Ivanov, the gloomy coffin-maker who is known by the childish nickname of "Bronza." Chekhov focuses on the end of Yakov's life, thereby symbolizing the final conclusion towards which the reader should be directed. His lonely death is a key moment of reckoning in his life. It follows Yakov's belated epiphany, when he realized the vanity of his wasted life, with its lost opportunities, irrational and egocentric misanthropy, hatred for his wife, self-hatred and, almost indispensable in this context, his hatred for the neighboring Other—the Jews. The only friend and treasure of this miserable man has been his violin, with which he has shared his vague and unspoken longings. In his deathbed confession to the priest, Yakov bequeaths the violin to Rothschild—the person he had previously treated as his enemy. Hence the title *Rothschild's Violin*, as a reference to Yakov's epiphany and repentance.

The role of music and musicality is one of the threads interwoven throughout the story and presenting a certain background to its finale. It starts with the very first open confrontation between Yakov and Rothschild at the klezmer band where Yakov had played as a supplement to his main occupation:

> For no apparent reason Yakov little by little became possessed by hatred and contempt for the Jews, and especially for Rothschild; he began to pick quarrels with him, rail at him in unseemly language and once even tried to strike him…

Rothschild's response was unexpected:

> …and Rothschild was offended and said, looking at him ferociously: "If it were not that I respect you for your talent, I would have sent you flying out of the window.

Rothschild continued to value Yakov's musicality despite the increasingly unpleasant behavior of the latter. His admiration for Yakov's final *lamento*, overcoming his rage, was

[5] Leo Yakovlev, Anton Chekhov, *Roman s Evreyami* [Anton Chekhov: Romance with Jews]. Kharkov, Ra-Caravella, 2000, pp. 65-70. https://ru.bookmate.com/books/lB0nBMTm. (accessed October 8, 2019).
[6] Translated by Constance Garnett and first published in *The Chorus Girl and Other Stories* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1920). Today available at http://www.online-literature.com/anton_chekhov/1272/ (accessed October 8, 2019) and many other e-sources. All the quotations are borrowed from this translation.

thus prepared for in advance by his genuine respect for the latter's talent.

Two links connect the dying Yakov and the beginning of Rothschild's new life. The first is the violin that Yakov bequeaths to Rothschild. The second is the tune of a rare beauty and moving power that Yakov would play for himself whenever he felt that his life was abandoning him, and which Rothschild had listened to without interruption, waiting for a moment when he could fulfil his director's request to ask Yakov to join the klezmer orchestra to play at a wedding. When, after Yakov's death, Rothschild received the violin, it was as if he had inherited Yakov's tune, too. Entranced by the melody, Rothschild was to play it countless times, to the fascination and pleasure of his audience:

> And this new air was so much liked in the town that the merchants and officials used to be continually sending for Rothschild and making him play it over and over again a dozen times.

The Tune

My first ethnomusicological impulse was to determine details about a possible town in which these events unfold, and to try and trace one of the channels of the Russian-Jewish musical connections. The story, however, lacks any clues pertaining to reality, and an ethnographic approach would thus be useless. At the same time, the plot features the specific case of a tune changing its master, which constitutes a clear phenomenon of cultural borrowing (or "cultural appropriation,"[7] as it is often referred to; I prefer to use the more universal—and less hypocritical— *borrowing*). For the reason that cultural borrowings are as widespread as they are natural, it was highly challenging to select this particular episode as a model to which I could apply a different methodological approach: an analysis of its vernacularity as a complex property in which different components and functions of folk and popular music may undergo change in the process of adaptation to their new ethno-socio-cultural context.

The first task was to determine what might have been the kind of melody that Chekhov's Yakov played. The only certain thing that we are told about it is its general character of a profound lament:

> Yakov went out of the hut and sat in the doorway, pressing his fiddle to his bosom. Thinking of his wasted, profitless life, he began to play, he did not know what, but it was plaintive and touching, and tears trickled down his cheeks. And the harder he thought, the more mournfully the fiddle wailed.

The tune's most intriguing aspect is its possible ethnic source. One might assume that, being ethnically Russian, Yakov Ivanov,[8] within the typically Russian town environment,

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[7] On the absurdity of the "cultural appropriation" concept see Adam Gopnik, "A Point of View: When does borrowing from other cultures become 'appropriation'?" *BBC News Magazine,* 11 March 2016. https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35782855 (accessed August 18, 2019).

[8] The Russian surname Ivanov is ironically chosen by Chekhov as an iconic Russian one, corresponding to the ironically chosen Rothschild as unmistakably Jewish. An additional subliminal cultural association, however, is apparent in Ivanov's given name: Yakov. Unlike generic Christian names, such as Peter or Vasily, "Yakov" carries distinct Jewish connotations. The Biblical *Yakov* (*Jacob*) is renamed *Israel* (Genesis 35:10). Chekhov's non-coincidental choice of this name inserts a subtle social criticism, calling for the reader's attention to the prejudicial nature of racial phobias—including Judeophobia.

would resort to some Slavic-sounding folk lament. This is, however, hardly plausible. The only lament type of song in Russian folk music genres are the funereal wails, the wedding song corpus, and the so-called lyrical songs. All of these, however, are traditionally vocal and sung by women, and therefore can hardly be considered as a prototype of Yakov's violin lament.

Looking for possible "purely Russian" sources among the instrumental genres characteristic to a late nineteenth-century Russian province would be even less productive. The unfortunate historical circumstances that occurred in the mid-seventeenth century hindered the development of Russian instrumental music for centuries. Around 1650, due to the coincidence of the Tsar's and the Church's political interests, Russian instrumental folk music almost ceased to exist. Its players, *skomorokhi* (Russian minstrels), were exiled and their instruments publicly destroyed. This can explain why later, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, provincial orchestras playing at local weddings and other festive occasions often comprised Jewish and/or Gypsy musicians who played contemporaneous European dances and local popular songs, which they imbued with their own exotic and sensualized expression.[9] This kind of expression was astutely noticed by Chekhov and is referred to when he describes Rothschild's demeanor:

> As plaintive sounds flow now from his bow, as came once from his flute, but when he tries to repeat what Yakov played, sitting in the doorway, the effect is something so sad and sorrowful that his audience weep, and he himself rolls his eyes and articulates "Vachhh…"

This special Jewish (and Gypsy) expression with which they perform the host society's repertoires is probably that same "deeply internal sense about music" noted by Mark Slobin:

> The mirage of Jewish music evaporates as you gaze at it, replaced by vision of a group of Jews singing whatever they like, from any local source. Yet even while they share musical repertoires, memories, and tastes with non-Jews, they remain a people apart with a deeply internal sense about music.[10]

I get ahead of myself, however, because although the matter of manner/expression can probably explain the success of Rothschild's performance, it does not help to determine the probable ethnic source of Yakov's tune. The tune must have had something that had captivated Rothschild before he added to it his "Jewish" nuances. But what could this have been? Gary Rosenschild, for example, has a simple answer, suggesting that it could be this very "Jewish expression," referring Yakov's tune back to Rothschild's performance, and thus connecting their sorrows from a socio-psychological aspect:

> Once Iakov had been exasperated by Rothschild's music; Rothschild seemed to play everything piteously (*zhalobno*). But now Iakov understands the meaning of Rothschild's music and he reproduces it himself to express the sorrow in his own soul. Iakov, the best of Iakov, will live on in the music played by his once greatest enemy. All that separates Russian and Jew, and Christian and Jew, it seems, is stripped away before death.[11]

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[9] Mussorgsky synthesized such a musical image in his unfinished comic opera *The Fair at Sorochyntsi* (1874-80), in a colorful episode "Tsygane i evrei" [Gypsies and Jews] showing typical musical entertainment in Little Russia.
[10] Mark Slobin, *Learning the Lessons of Studying Jewish Music*, in *Judaism*, 44, 2 (1995), p. 222.
[11] Rosenschield, p. 497.

Perhaps. But it could also have had a more complex combination of ethnic sources than just Yakov's fellow klezmer. It is clearly useless to hypothesize about the possible features of a melody that existed only in Chekhov's imagination when he wrote a completely fictive story. Consequently, the most honest way would be to call it "tune *X*" and to return to the only site of firm ground—its genre, which in the context of the situation could be a lament. We can deduce that the imagined tune should have comprised many *pianto* motives—the blood and flesh of universal lament.[12]

Lament features permeate a great variety of repertoires and can be found in the Russian-Gypsy romance song, or Romanian *doina*, with its Persian/Arabic/Turkish roots and related to the Ukrainian Dorian mode. Many tunes of various origins could have reached that fictional mid-Russian town, indeed through that very Jewish klezmer orchestra as well as through other channels. The harmonic minor and augmented second common for all above-mentioned cultures, as well as for Jewish prayers and specifically for the mourning prayer "El Male Rachamim", which could be heard at every Jewish funeral, are highly probable elements defining an expressive energy.

The influence of popular art music, too, cannot be excluded. Tchaikovsky's melodies like "Chant d'automne" (October from *The Seasons*), or Lensky's pre-duel lament from *Eugene Onegin* based on a Russian romance-song, come to mind, as they—both popular from the mid-1870s—could well have been overheard from the window of some enlightened merchant's house. Whatever the case, similar to the great twentieth-century invented lament "Adagio by Albinoni,"[13] Yakov's lament, too, could have had plenty of sources from within his vernacular environment from which he created his melody, because the topic of lament is a universal, cross-cultural and cross-generational one.[14] To conclude, despite the seemingly logical suggestion and my initial desire to deem the melody played by a provincial Russian coffin-maker as something "authentically" Russian, the source in the given context might nonetheless be quite different.[15] The possible soundscape of a late nineteenth-century provincial Russian town suggests, rather, that this imaginary musician could have synthesized a plaintive (elegiac, mournful, lamenting, sorrowful, and nostalgic) lexicon of topics from a variety of sources far beyond that of Russian rural songs.

As noted above, it is the transformation of a melody that has changed its master and, moreover, also its genre and function—that is at the focus of my consideration. Before I proceed to an analysis of the transformation of this tune in Rothschild's performance, therefore, I first present my approach: the methodology and system of criteria.

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[12] Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music*. Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 66-73.

[13] The so-called "Albinoni's Adagio", allegedly based on two thematic ideas and figured bass by Tomaso Albinoni, was composed by the musicologist Remo Giazotto in 1958.

[14] Margarita Mazo, "Lament and Affective Responses", in *Cultural Sustainabilities: Music, Media, Language, Advocacy,* edited by Timothy Cooley. University of Illinois Press, 2019, pp. 229-46.

[15] Veniamin Fleischmann and/or Dmitry Shostakovich in their opera *Rothschild's violin* did not include the epilogue with Rothschild's performance of Yakov's tune, instead finalizing the story with the act of Yakov's spiritual lustration by his decision to bequeath his violin to Rothschild. Hence there was no need to seek a special musical color for the violin solo, and its style was cathartic, created in romantic colors and developing in the spirit of a Shostakovich symphonic adagio-requiem.

The Two Kinds of Musical Vernacular: Phylo-vernacular and Onto-vernacular

Previously, following a conference dedicated to vernacularity[16] and seeking to relate it to music, I found a crucial functional differentiation within the broad overall concept of the musical vernacular. As in linguistics, the vernacular in music consensually means a local, unpolished, both traditional and eclectic, often randomly collected, conglomerate of elements.[17] Realizing, however, that this term can also be applied sometimes to stable ritualistic musical folklore and sometimes to less stable repertoires with a proclivity to changes following its interaction with popular music, I proposed a subdivision of the concept of musical vernacular: the *phylo-vernacular* (*phylo-* is borrowed from *phylogenesis* and refers to the most ancient layer of folklore), which exists in closed and mostly agrarian communities, sustained for generations and largely attached to ritual; and the *onto-vernacular* (*onto-*, respectively from *ontogenesis*, refers to the process of adaptability throughout life), which relates to the various changes undergone by this repertoire following its transfer to a new environment: from village to town, from country of origin to the diaspora, from one ethnos to another, from a secular genre to a spiritual one, etc. Below I present the signifying elements of both types as I formulated them after twenty years of examining the validity of this construct, and following many productive discussions with my colleagues. It is important to note that the relevance of this construct seems to be limited to pre-21st-century culture; whether it works in the era of the present technological revolution in both the media-sound-communication culture and the social life of agrarian societies is still unclear.

The phylo-vernacular

The phylo-vernacular musical repertoire corresponds to the basic folklore that is usually associated with its most ancient and genuine tribal core. The principal features of the phylo-vernacular are: [18]

- It exists in closed communities, mostly in agrarian societies, attached to the land and to collective work. Its existence depends on the community's socio-cultural context;
- Its repertoire is mostly organized around rituals associated with those remaining pagan beliefs that might continue to be maintained alongside a state's monotheistic religion;

[16] Vernacularity: Policy and Language, the Conference organized by Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson at the University of London, Western Ontario, 4-7 March 1999.

[17] I use here the term vernacular as a commonly accepted concept of local musical environment, including folklore and popular music, and as opposed to art music, in an often quoted formulation by H. Wiley Hitchcock: "By *vernacular tradition* I mean a body of music more plebeian, native, not approached selfconsciously but simply grown into as one grows into one's vernacular tongue, music understood and appreciated simply for its utilitarian or entertainment value." (H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: a Historical Introduction*. Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000, p. 56 (4th ed). See also John O'Flynn, John, "Vernacular music-making and education," in *International Journal of Music Education* 24(2), 2006, pp. 140-47.

[18] Below I quote what I formulated in the chapter "Musical Vernaculars and their Signifying Transformations" for *The Routledge Handbook of Music Signification*. Eds. Esti Sheinberg and Bill Dougherti (Routledge, 2020, pp. 209-22).

- It has formulaic motives and rhythmic patterns, which bestow upon it the quality of crystallized material, recognizable as particular ethnic elements even in further transformations;
- The manner/expression of vocalization is determined by local dialect and tradition;
- The musical material is distinguished by its resistance to external influences and a certain stability. Variation takes place within a stylistic canon;
- The lyrics are in a vernacular language, with references to the local landscape (river, mountain, hill), birds (usually as metaphors for a bride or groom), plants, and history, reflecting the experience of generations that have worked on the land and defended it;
- The existence of double contrafacta: the same tune may receive different lyrics and the same poem may receive different tunes;
- There is usually no separation between performer and listener. Functionally, it is mostly participatory music (according to the taxonomy of Thomas Turino[19]);
- Its entertainment role is peripheral to that of its religious-ritualistic one;
- A commercial aspect is uncharacteristic;
- The tradition is usually oral;
- It survives for many generations;

The onto-vernacular

The onto-vernacular repertoire still exists within a community, but is broader and more open, usually during its transitional period from rural to urban life. It usually survives no longer than the lifetime of two generations, which re-group and form a new socio-historical layer of urbanized people.

The onto-vernacular is open to ethnic diversity. Urban populations are historically established as multi-ethnic, due to the presence of craftsmen, merchants, scholars, diplomats, and aristocrats, not to mention wandering entertainers who cement the common-practice idiom in each epoch and in each large cultural entity.

Newcomers share their cultural background but sift their repertory, selecting what is compatible with the new musical environment. The absorption of new and exogenous influences is also selective and based on natural preferences. Borrowings are drawn upon and new idioms are adopted, mostly from popular music.

The functional criteria of the onto-vernacular are as follows:

- It exists in urbanized communities in which the social contexts may vary and widen;
- Its association with agrarian rituals weakens and disappears, though some songs continue to survive, albeit transformed, for example, into the genre of children's dance games;[20]

[19]Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

[20] From my own experience, I remember the dance/game song "A my proso seyali, seyali" [Ah, we sowed, sowed the millet] as we played it in Leningrad yard-well in the early 1950s.

- Crystallized formulas are preserved selectively;
- Unique vocal manner/expression tends to disappear;
- The music changes, losing some elements and adopting new ones from the local soundscape;
- The texts often remain from the phylo-vernacular;
- Double contrafacta of tunes and lyrics continue to exist;
- The entertainment element grows;
- It often remains as participatory music-making, with collective singing as an important element of communal get-togethers, though to a significantly lesser extent. New forms of social life conduce to its also becoming presentational music-making (to use Turino's dichotomy again), and the separation of performer from audience begins;
- Commercialization and an approach to the genre of popular music emerge;
- The tradition is usually both oral and written or partly written (only lyrics);
- It survives about two generations.

Correlation between the phylo- and the onto-vernacular

As can be seen from all these points, their boundaries are not clear-cut, rather displaying ambivalence and a tendency to either one of the two opposing poles: folk/phylo-vernacular or popular music. The difference lies in the prevalence of particular tendencies within all these functions and in the interaction between the material of a particular song or repertoire and its function. For example, in the onto-vernacular stratum we can find either phylo-vernacular material functioning as popular songs, or—vice versa—popular song material functioning as folk songs attached to certain rituals preserved in the urban community. What is especially important is that both kinds can transform into one another as a result of changes in the ethno-socio-cultural context. Such change of function occurs in different spheres, and it can be clearly seen in popular music: for example, Dolly Parton's tremendously popular song "I Will Always Love You" (1973). Originally composed by Parton as a farewell to Porter Wagoner upon leaving their partnership, to further her career as a soloist, the song's popularity increased exponentially following Whitney Houston's rendition in *The Bodyguard* (1992). Since then, "I Will Always Love You" became a staple in weddings, featuring the newly-wed couple's "first dance," and at funerals and "celebration of life" ceremonies, neither of which was implied in the original. There is, nonetheless, a common denominator in the song's more general function, marking a "rite of passage" event, of which traditional rituals such as weddings and funerals are the most stable ones. Another example is that of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's "You'll Never Walk Alone", composed for the American musical *Carousel* (1945). The song's fascinating journey through generations, countries, and generic transformations included performances by Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, and many other singers recorded in dozens of versions. It was then revitalized and made extremely popular in 1963 by the Liverpool pop band Gerry and the Pacemakers, and eventually—after the 1989 Hillsborough tragedy in the football community—was transformed into an international

soccer anthem. Somewhat closing the circle from comforting first the widow of a poor robber in the musical, then the families suffering during World War II[21]—to commemoration ceremonies for the victims of the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, it was performed by Barbara Streisand. Again, as with Parton's "I Will Always Love You," the different generic transformations of the song have a common denominator; in this case, that of communal support for individuals who have lost their loved ones. Such turns in songs' fate, however, are never predictable, as shown by "You'll Never Walk Alone", sung by Renée Fleming at the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama in 2009.

Vernacularity and Landless Communities

If the phylo-vernacular repertoire is mostly associated with people of rural-agricultural communities, attached to a land, how can the vernacularity in the music of historically-landless communities be explained? After all, Roma music, Klezmer, and in certain ways also Jazz clearly possess specific characteristics and singular musical traits. While the general melodic outline of their tunes yields to transcription, revealing a basic similarity to the music of their host societies, their vocal and instrumental expression—which escapes transcription—has unique and highly attractive properties.

Indeed, what the philo-Semitic (or, perhaps more correctly, the fairly-minded) Chekhov— and before him the anti-Semitic Wagner—had noted, was that the Diaspora Jews do not own their original musical folklore. Scholars are familiar with this fact, not only in regard to Jews, but also to Romanies. Both communities have traditionally been landless, even when sedentary within their host societies. This landlessness can probably explain the absence of a phylo-vernacular musical folklore corpus that usually emerged in agrarian communities. Nonetheless, their essentially hybrid music, with its lion's share of onto-vernacular properties, incorporates some important phylo-vernacular elements. Table 1 summarizes features of the phylo- and onto-vernacular and marks in bold those features that are typical of landless communities.

Table 1 Correlation between phylo- and onto-vernacular properties in the music of landless communities

Phylo-vernacular	Onto-vernacular
Exists in closed communities, mostly in agrarian societies, where it is attached to the land and collective work. Stable socio-cultural context.	**Exists in open urbanized communities detached from an agrarian way of life. Socio-cultural contexts may vary and widen**
Repertoire is mostly organized around rituals associated with remaining pagan beliefs.	**Its association with agrarian ritual weakens and disappears.**
It demonstrates formulaic motives and rhythmic patterns, endowing it with the quality of crystallized material, recognizable in further transformations as particular ethnic elements.	Crystallized formulas are preserved selectively

[21] See Aliette de Laleu, The History of the Football Anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone." December 23, 2017 https://www.francemusique.com/songs/history-football-anthem-you-ll-never-walk-alone-15602 (accessed September 21, 2019).

Manner/expression of vocalization is determined by local dialect and tradition.	Unique vocal manners/expression tend to disappear.
Musical material is distinguished by its resistance to external influences and shows a certain stability.	Music combines some of the basic elements with the new features adopted from the environment.
Texts are in the vernacular language, with references to the local landscape and history.	**Texts basically remain from the phylo-vernacular phase.**
Double contrafacta exist, and it is for future research to determine whether there is a difference in their quality and quantity between the phylo- and onto-vernacular spheres.	
Its entertainment role is peripheral compared to the religious-ritualistic one.	**The entertainment element grows, and prevails in landless communities.**
Functionally, it is participatory music. There is no clear tendency to separation between performer and audience for entertainment purposes.	**Music-making often remains as participatory music. New forms of social life make it possible also to become a presentational music, and separation of performer from audience begins.**
A commercial aspect is uncharacteristic.	**Commercialization and an approach to the genre of popular music emerge.**
Usually oral tradition	Usually both oral and written tradition
Lasts for many generations	Lasts for about two generations

As can be seen from Table 1 in relation to the vernacularity in music of landless communities, the ratio between the phylo- and onto-vernacular properties is almost equal—5:6. All the social functions of the vernacular associated with commercial entertainment belong to the onto-vernacular, with its high contiguity to popular music. What remains on the phylo-vernacular side are highly important features: a traditionally stable repertoire, steadiness of their unique expression, and general longevity.

From Ivanov's to Rothschild's Tune: Transformation of Vernacularity

Whatever the onto-vernacular sources of Yakov's melody might have been, functionally it was phylo-vernacular due to the following signs:

- The genre of a lament is ritualistic;
- The context was also ritualistic: Yakov played a requiem to himself upon sensing his impending death;
- It was participatory music: Yakov played it for himself, no audience whatsoever was implied, and Rothschild happened to witness the event purely by chance;
- Seen retrospectively, Yakov's melody possessed the quality of crystallized material because it had stood the test of time and remained as itself, while also serving as a basis for further transformation/s;
- The ethnic origin of the tune is (even if only just having become) Russian, irrespective of its stylistic sources.

As a representative of a landless community, Rothschild transformed the original tune in many ways according to his own hybridized vernacularity, with an overwhelming tendency to the onto-vernacular functions:

- The genre of lament remained intact, but it became detached from the ritualistic context;
- The context became that of entertainment;
- It became a presentational music: Rothschild played the tune for an audience, and there was a clear separation between performer and audience;
- Rothschild preserved what would otherwise have been a lost tune (the effect known from Gypsy repertoires that sometimes preserved the music of vanished local communities), although conferring upon it his new expression and changing its social functions;[22]
- Its new ethnic association with a minority of the Other matches and highlights its exotic, expressive traits. Reborn in Rothschild's repertoire, the audience would most probably perceive the tune as "Jewish music."

(Formal) Conclusion

The generic, functional, and ethnic transformations of song tunes constitute the most widespread inter- and intracultural phenomenon not only in the folk onto-vernacular sphere, but also in popular and paraliturgical music repertoires. It can be seen in the centuries-old absorption of secular songs into the paraliturgical repertoires of many Judeo-Christian congregations,[23] as well as in the cross-cultural wandering melodies that inevitably undergo a change in either their expression, or genre, or functions, or all of them. Technological developments facilitate all kinds of diffusion and hybridization. The contemporary phenomenon of song cover versions is conducive to such transformations.

Taking *Rothschild's Violin* as a model whose vernacular characteristics underwent change: theoretically and practically it could have been a Gypsy violinist, instead of Rothschild, who had happened to hear Yakov's lament, and who would later play the tune under similar circumstances of entertainment as that of Rothschild. His expression would then be perceived as one hundred percent Gypsy, just as Rothschild's could have been perceived as Jewish. The same would apply to an Afro-American jazz musician, who would make it sound like blues. Those who would like to provide further examples or to quixotically oppose those who condemn "cultural appropriations", can find dozens if not hundreds of Hava Nagilas—performed as differently as from a Georgian ten-minute profound spiritual ecumenical act by Tamara Gvertsiteli,[24] or a country-spiritual hybrid in a Texas choir,[25] to, least expected of all, its surrealistic use by the Russian Orthodox choir of the Odessa monastery singing *Mnogaya leta* (Perennial).[26]

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[22] Irén Kertész Wilkinson, 'Gypsy' [Roma-Sinti-Traveller] music, § 3. Adaptation and conservation. In *Grove Music Online*, 2001. https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.41427 (accessed October 2, 2019).

[23] On paraliturgical and—rarer—liturgical music borrowing tunes from secular repertoires in different cultures, see Marina Ritzarev, "King David and the Frog". In *Musicological annual L* proceedings (University of Ljubljana, L. 50, Št. 2 (2014), pp. 31-42; also available in http://revije.ff.uni-lj.si/MuzikoloskiZbornik/article/view/2990/2645 (accessed October 9, 2019).

[24] Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IThUK2-1vls (accessed August 18, 2019).

[25] Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WF6irnzAiI (accessed August 17, 2019).

[26] Watch https://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news/14398-xor-odesskogo-monastyrya-upc-mp-spel-mnogaya-leta-na-evrejskuyu-melodiyu-video.html (accessed September 21, 2019)

Afterthought: "A Thief Stole a Club from a Thief"

Intriguing stories about tunes changing their masters and repertoires when migrating from culture to culture come from different sources and directions. One of these presents a certain inversion of the Yakov-Rothschild story; and, remarkably, again within the klezmer culture.

In her book *Klezmer's Afterlife: An Ethnography of the Jewish Music Revival in Poland and Germany*,[27] Magdalena Waligórska offers a complex socio-cultural analysis of a relatively recent phenomenon: gentile klezmer ensembles in Poland and Germany. In both countries, following the Holocaust, there are only small Jewish communities, whose own music representation in the host cultures is almost nil, as are their chances of reviving their own music tradition. The new, gentile, klezmer movement arose in these, and other West-European countries, during the late 1980s and had reached its peak by the turn of the millennium. The first groups emerged in Krakow and Berlin, albeit with different motivations. In Krakow—as a tourist attraction, triggered by Spielberg's setting of the location for *Schindler's List*, and in Berlin—as one of the forms of national repentance following the Holocaust. While this new genre is currently enjoying success, its survival is hard to predict in the quickly changing European demography and atmosphere. Nonetheless, even now it has already crystallized into a certain historical and generic trend.

One of the public reactions to this phenomenon has been a bitter outcry from Jewish circles, for whom klezmer music is inseparable from the history and suffering of European Jewry. They perceive its adoption and adaptation by gentiles as a sacrilege, thus expressing emotions against which rational arguments fail to withstand. Such reactions are understandable and, in fact, very similar to that of some black musicians toward their white counterparts' adoption of jazz, feeling that their music is being usurped.[28] That the very concept of theft cannot be applied in the context of traditional music, which is, and has always been, at the very core of "the public domain," can never console those who feel robbed and are inclined to self-victimization.

The wise late-eighteenth-century Rabbi Schneur Zalman had maintained that tunes belong to nobody. The doctrine is based on an elaborated argumentation, including philosophical paradigms, stories metaphorizing the process of a tune's absorption, the techniques of its re-contextualization, and so on. As Ellen Koskoff summarizes:

> Lubavitchers see music, in general, as existing at a both higher and deeper spiritual plane than words, so theoretically, any melody can be used as a vehicle for spiritual communication. <…> Further, its composer, presumably a non-Lubavitcher, is also elevated to a more appropriate spiritual level by losing his/her association to the music. Although this sort of appropriation is a general compositional practice among many Jewish groups, it has especial value in Lubavitcher life...[29]

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[27] Magdalena Waligórska, *Klezmer's Afterlife: An Ethnography of the Jewish Music Revival in Poland and Germany* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[28] ETHAN, *6th or 7th*, blog posted on February 11, 2010. https://6thor7th.blogspot.com/2010/02/on-white-people-stealing-black-music.html (accessed September 29, 2019).

[29] Ellen Koskoff, "The Sound of a Woman's Voice: Gender and Music in a New York Hasidic Community." In Ellen Koskoff (ed.), *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989, p. 214. See also Ellen Koskoff, *Music in Lubavitcher Life*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

Klezmer repertories are even more eclectic, preceding modern DJ's practices. They intentionally follow various tastes and various stages of ceremonies. The prominent klezmer musician Eyal Shiloah, when asked about his definition of what klezmer is, said: "Each one understands by klezmer different things… Klezmer is world music."[30] Although it is not common as yet to relate klezmer to the genre of world music, probably due to its venerable age as a traditional art, klezmer music indeed meets the criteria of world music, being both traditional and open to interaction with various other and ever-changing kinds of popular music. Moreover, speaking from today's perspective, we can notice that following the new folklore wave of the 1960s, both world music as a generic concept and the klezmer revival in Europe gained momentum in the late 1980s and flourished from the 1990s on. More important for the present discourse is the first part of Shiloah's statement: "Each one understands by klezmer different things," which is both true and easily manifested in the variety of approaches to this genre and studies in this field.

Remarkably, attempts to understand what a real klezmer *is*, usually refer to what a real klezmer *was but ceased to exist* after WWII and the destruction of East-European Jewish culture in the Holocaust. The klezmer tradition did survive in the United States, but it had arrived there at the beginning of the twentieth century and followed the rules of any traditional art transplanted to another culture: it was either ghettoized within the concept of pure, genuine klezmer (which contradicts its interactive nature), or became open to interaction with the local soundscape—which was American (with all its complexity) and not East-European. The American klezmers did their best, and thanks to their efforts a fruitful discussion and professional exchange with their European counterparts became possible.

How do new European klezmers correlate with the destroyed East-European Jewish tradition? The answer is that they correlate much in the way that the afterlife correlates with life. Waligórska's book title, *Klezmer's Afterlife*, is thus bold but precise, even if it was meant as a metaphor. While it is always fascinating—and reinsuring of the positive force of Nature—to see fresh green shoots spring to life after a devastating wildfire, we should realize that a "phoenix" generation, finding itself in a changed (and therefore different) environment, might be different, too. The East-European—mainly Polish and German—klezmer movement, differs from the pre-WWII tradition in so many ways that it is really hard to settle on any other definition than that of a "klezmer afterlife." Even if the repertoire is the same or just similar, it is performed by other musicians and for a different audience. Whereas during "klezmer's life" it was mostly local communities of *shtetl* Jews or gentile audiences who consumed this music at festive occasions, in the "klezmer's afterlife" we find mostly gentile musicians (sometimes academics) playing for the entertainment of mostly gentile audiences in large tourist centers or as a symbolic component at events commemorating the Holocaust in Catholic churches, synagogues, and at state civil ceremonies. Clearly, klezmer's life and klezmer's afterlife have little in common.

The entire phenomenon of klezmer music is further complicated by the initial contradiction of its musical substance. The landless Diaspora Jewry, very much like the Romani people, by definition cannot have their own phylo-vernacular folklore and so they

[30] Radio-interview about the 2016 Sefad Klezmer festival (in Hebrew, Israeli radio station "Moreshet", August 17, 2016).

create their particular version of a co-territorial musical reality, a priori entertainment-oriented and including a strong component of contemporaneous international popular music. Hence it should be understood that playing klezmer in a gentile social environment will appear much less controversial if we recognize the hybrid nature of klezmer music itself, which fused different ethnic sources so long ago and so organically, that all the different groups are equally correct in considering it theirs.

The contextual meaning of music, particularly instrumental music, can instantly change in cultural interactions. What is familiar to one group in a certain context, can become equally familiar to another group (generational, ethnic, social) under entirely different circumstantial associations. Nothing prevents Yakov's tune, disseminated by Rothschild, from becoming, again, a lament for another Yakov, just to be picked up again by another Rothschild, to circulate it even further in its eternal phylo- and onto-vernacular cycle of life.

About the Author

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