



דוכן ירושלים

# KLEZMER'S AFTERLIFE

An Ethnography of the Jewish Music Revival in Poland and Germany



Magdalena Waligórska

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MAGDALENA WALIGÓRSKA

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# Klezmer's Afterlife

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# Introduction

## *"Jews by Profession"*

In his collection of essays *Żydowskie życie* [Jewish Life], the late Jewish historian and writer Henryk Halkowski ponders the phenomenon of what he calls "Jewish life without Jews." Pointing out that Poland has often been described as a land of "anti-Semitism without Jews," he wonders whether non-Jews do not altogether substitute Jews in the Polish public space. For Halkowski, the recent revival of Jewish culture in Poland, unfolding in places where, as in Kraków, the Jewish community is minute, is not a sign of continuity but rather of strenuous and sometimes paradoxical reinvention. Thinking of the irony of performing Jewish heritage in an environment where there is a virtual absence of people who can relate to it in a direct way led Halkowski to note that "being Jewish in today's Poland is not a nationality anymore, nor a religion, but only a profession."<sup>1</sup>

Henryk Halkowski, in 2003, was writing from a place that had become one of the most iconic hubs of the "Jewish revival" in Europe: Kraków's Jewish district of Kazimierz. Exceptionally well preserved and picturesque, Kazimierz started turning into a tourist magnet soon after the fall of Communism in 1989, and today is one of the main European destinations of Jewish heritage travel and Holocaust tourism. But although the quarter buzzes with cultural activity focused on Jewish heritage, the local Jewish community barely exceeds one hundred members. It is not much different elsewhere in Poland. Before World War II, Poland was home to 3.5 million Jews. Today there are four thousand people registered as members of Jewish organizations in Poland, and it is estimated that the population of those who identify themselves as Jewish does not exceed somewhere around ten thousand to thirty thousand.<sup>2</sup> Given the dimensions of loss and absence

<sup>1</sup> Ryszard Löw in Henryk Halkowski, *Żydowskie życie* (Kraków: Austeria, 2003), 152.

<sup>2</sup> Konstanty Gebert, "Jewish Identities in Poland: New, Old, and Imaginary," in *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, ed. Jonathan Webber (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994), 161–67; Stanisław Krajewski, "The Impact of the Shoah on the Thinking of Contemporary Polish Jewry. A Personal Account," in *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 292.

communicated by these statistics, the intensity of Jewish cultural events in Kazimierz might seem paradoxical. The district hosts the biggest European festival of Jewish culture, it has Jewish museums, Jewish cultural centers, Jewish bookstores, tourist agencies offering Jewish heritage trips, and Jewish restaurants holding daily concerts of klezmer music. Most of the people working in these, however, are not Jewish.

Having witnessed this singular revival firsthand, Halkowski muses about the irony involved in the non-Jewish participation in Jewish culture. "Jews have always had it harder in any job," he notes, "but the profession of the Jew in Poland is probably the hardest for a real Jew. . . . How much easier," he speculates, tongue in cheek, "it is to be a professional Jew for someone who is a good Pole and Catholic."<sup>3</sup> Seeing the "real" Jews in Poland still traumatized by the Holocaust and burdened with excessive expectations, he argues that "professional Jews" can be much better at being Jewish.

Halkowski's skeptically humorous concept of "Jews by profession" may be a rhetorical trope, but it brings to the fore an important aspect of what has been termed the "Jewish boom" in Poland. The klezmer scene that emerged in Kraków in the 1990s is probably one of the most striking examples of this non-Jewish involvement in Jewish life. And Henryk Halkowski, a keen observer and critic of the local klezmer microcosm, would have likely considered the non-Jewish klezmer musicians performing in Jewish restaurants "professional Jews" par excellence. To be sure, the epithet is mockingly pejorative, and most klezmer artists would probably find it offensive. Clearly, their job consists in playing Jewish music, not impersonating Jews. And yet klezmer musicians are professionals who make a living from Jewish culture, performing it, often, in lieu of Jews. The role they play has consequences, and this is where Halkowski's category of "Jews by profession" provokes the most interesting questions. Do people who perform Jewish culture in public wish to become Jewish? How does this experience change them? What does their involvement mean to Jews? Even though they might not be Jewish themselves, their engagement with the music of the other gives klezmer revivalists a unique insight into Jewish culture. They play together with Jewish musicians, perform for Jewish audiences, and have Jewish friends. They are even sometimes mistaken for Jews. This proximity to the other not only influences the way they think of their own identity but also has potential for the local Jewish/non-Jewish dialogue. In fact, occupying the position in between Jews and non-Jews, today's klezmer revivalists play a somewhat similar role to that which their historical predecessors held in their local communities.

A Yiddish compound of two Hebrew words: *kley*, meaning a vessel, and *zemer*, meaning a song, klezmer signified initially a musical instrument, later a musician, and finally, also the musical genre. Originally, klezmer was instrumental music of the Yiddish-speaking eastern European Jews, played for private celebrations,

<sup>3</sup> Halkowski, *Żydowskie życie*, 152.

religious holidays, and for dancing.<sup>4</sup> Above all, however, klezmer was played at weddings and not necessarily only Jewish ones. Klezmer musicians—the *klezmerim*—together with a wedding jester, called the *badkhn*, were essential for the Jewish wedding ritual both in its spiritual and social dimensions.<sup>5</sup> Their performance generated a feeling of collective identity and had a symbolic status. Accompanying the central events of a Jewish life cycle, the klezmer musician was also “a special kind of Jew.”<sup>6</sup> As Freedman notes, klezmer musicians were “liminal characters,” “insider/outsidere,” and “part of multiple or overlapping social



Fig. 0.1 Klezmer musicians at a Gentile wedding in the village of Lachwa, Poland, 1927. Courtesy of the YIVO Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Z. Feldman, “Remembrance of Things Past: Klezmer Musicians of Galicia, 1870–1940,” in Polin: *Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 16, *Focusing on Jewish Popular Culture in Poland and its Afterlife*, ed. Michael Steinlauf and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003), 29.

<sup>5</sup> More information on the social history of the genre and its recent revival in the United States can be found in: Henry Sapoznik, *Klezmer!* (New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 1999); Susan Bauer, *Von der Khupe zum Klezkamp: Klezmer-Musik in New York* (Berlin: Piranha, 1999); Seth Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2000); Mark Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mark Slobin, ed., *American Klezmer: Its Roots and Offshoots* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Yale Strom, *The Book of Klezmer* (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Walter Z. Feldman, “Bulgareasca/Bulgarish/Bulgar: The Transformation of a Klezmer Dance Genre,” *Ethnomusicology* 38, no. 1 (1994): 4.



worlds.”<sup>7</sup> At times composed of both Jewish and non-Jewish musicians, klezmer bands also often played for Gentiles and incorporated in their repertoire elements of many different eastern European folk genres.<sup>8</sup> Klezmer was, therefore, in many ways a platform of intercultural exchange, a space of ethnic overlapping, both denoting the core of Jewish tradition and marking an openness to external influence. The world of klezmer musicians has always been a world of cultural osmosis. And even though it changed beyond recognition, silenced by the Holocaust to resound in entirely new contexts, it definitely retained some of its original character as a space of encounter, a space in between.

## The Return of Music and the Music of Return

“Willingly or unwillingly, Poland will never be able to forget the Jews,” wrote Aleksander Hertz, a sociologist of Polish–Jewish relations, in 1988.<sup>9</sup> Soon afterwards, with the upsurge of scholarly interest in Jewish themes, the renovation of synagogues, and the opening of Jewish cultural institutions, his words appeared prophetic. Jewishness returned to claim the collective memory of post-Communist Poland along with popular culture itself. Jewish souvenirs, Jewish food, and Jewish music turned into marketable goods. And the klezmer revival, introducing Jewish music to clubs, discos, and outdoor festivals, became perhaps the most visible symbol of this return.

Around the same time, in the 1980s and '90s, Germany witnessed not only a similar revival of Jewish heritage but also an actual return of Jews. Since 1990, when the East German government allowed entry to Jews from the former Soviet Union (a policy reconfirmed later by the reunified German state), the local Jewish community has been rapidly growing, becoming the third largest Jewish population in Western Europe. The immigration wave, although it posed a great challenge to the Jewish institutions in Germany, gave a new boost and new visibility to Jewish life. And as the Jewish population in Germany started to grow, Germans also discovered a new fascination for Jewish culture.<sup>10</sup>

Klezmer accompanied both comebacks: the return of Polish memory about Jews, and the return of Jews to Germany. Jewish music became a source of inspiration for those seeking traces of the lost Jewish world, and a space where “Jewishness” could be dreamed, reinvented, and performed anew. Secular in nature and not requiring any background knowledge to enjoy it, klezmer appealed to a wide audience

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Freedman, *Klezmer America: Jewishness, Ethnicity, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 74.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: Mark Slobin, “Klezmer,” in *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Dan Diner (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2012), 377; Sapoznik, *Klezmer!* 6–10; Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer*, 45–49.

<sup>9</sup> Aleksander Hertz, *The Jews in Polish Culture* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Laufer, *Exodus to Berlin: The Return of the Jews to Germany* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003).

and became a product, which satisfied a wide range of different needs. Given that klezmer was also popular among the Jewish musicians coming to Germany from the former Soviet Union, the genre truly became the soundtrack of the “Jewish boom.”

## Klezmer as Simulacrum

Following the American klezmer revival of the 1970s and '80s, klezmer became increasingly popular on the world music scene in Europe and around the globe. But while klezmer bands were appearing in such unexpected places as South Africa, Brazil, New Zealand, and China, it was in Germany and Eastern Europe where the klezmer revival roused the most interest, and also the most voices of indignation.<sup>11</sup> As Polish and German audiences turned out in droves at klezmer concerts, with new klezmer bands mushrooming on both sides of the Oder River, many critics began to perceive the klezmer revival in the hands of non-Jews as suspect. Since a significant majority of the creators and consumers of this revival were non-Jewish, and the spaces of klezmer production were also the sites of the Holocaust, the phenomenon provoked a lot of emotions, polemics, and critical writing, which did not refrain from radical formulations such as “Jew Zoo,”<sup>12</sup> “Jewish Disneyland,”<sup>13</sup> or even “cultural necrophilia.”<sup>14</sup> Many critics accused klezmer musicians of being impostors; they painted an image of the klezmer scene as an epicenter of cultural theft, where non-Jews not only take over part of Jewish heritage but also aspire to a Jewish identity.<sup>15</sup> The notions of

<sup>11</sup> Wiltrud Apfeld, ed., *Klezmer—hejmisch und hip: Musik als kulturelle Ausdrucksform im Wandel der Zeit: Dokumentation zur Ausstellung* (Essen: Klartext, 2004), panel 32.

<sup>12</sup> The filmmaker and Yiddish vocalist Elizabeth Schwartz in Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, 242.

<sup>13</sup> Iris Weiss, “Jewish Disneyland—the Appropriation and Dispossession of ‘Jewishness,’” *Golem: Europäisch-Jüdisches Magazin* (2002), accessed January 13, 2009, <http://www.hagalil.com/golem/diaspora/disneyland-e.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> Wolf Krakowski, Yiddishe Cup Blog, accessed March 7, 2013, <http://www.yiddishecup.com/blog/2009/11/04/over-there/>.

<sup>15</sup> Henryk Broder, “Die Konjunktur des Jüdischen an der Schwelle zum 21. Jahrhundert,” in *Jüdische Musik? Fremdbilder—Eigenbilder*, ed. Eckhard John and Heidy Zimmermann (Köln: Böhlau, 2004), 368; Michael Birnbaum, “Jewish Music, German Musicians: Cultural Appropriation and the Representation of a Minority in the German Klezmer Scene,” *Leo Beck Institute Year Book* 54, no. 1 (2009): 297–320; Rita Ottens, “Die wüste Stadt Berlin: ein Versuch zur Standortbestimmung jüdischer Musik unter den jüdischen Zuwanderern aus der ehemaligen Sowjetunion in Berlin,” in *Jüdische Musik und Ihre Musiker im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Wolfgang Birtel, Joseph Dorfman, and Christoph-Hellmut Mahling (Mainz: Arc Edition, 2006), 73–132; Rita Ottens, “Der Klezmer als ideologischer Arbeiter,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 159, no. 3 (1998): 26–29; Sylke Tempel, “Alan Bern lehrt die Deutschen das mollige Kuscheln mit Klezmer,” *Die Welt*, September 1, 2004, accessed June 20, 2008, [http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article337596/Alan\\_Bern\\_lehrt\\_die\\_Deutschen\\_das\\_mollige\\_Kuscheln\\_mit\\_Klezmer.html](http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article337596/Alan_Bern_lehrt_die_Deutschen_das_mollige_Kuscheln_mit_Klezmer.html); Rita Ottens and Joel E. Rubin, “‘The Sounds of the Vanishing World’: The German Klezmer Movement as a Racial Discourse,” accessed December, 14, 2006, [http://mki.wisc.edu/Resources/Online\\_Papers/MusicConfPapers/Ottens-RubinPaper.pdf](http://mki.wisc.edu/Resources/Online_Papers/MusicConfPapers/Ottens-RubinPaper.pdf).

appropriation, authenticity, and legitimacy as well as the memory of World War II and the Holocaust, limned the core of the discourse on non-Jewish klezmer and turned it into an issue, which concerned far more than just music.

One of the most essential questions that the controversy around the klezmer revival in Poland and Germany put into relief concerned, in more universal terms, the status of art originating as an ethnic genre and undergoing cultural appropriation. In particular terms, it is also related to the problem of whether, in post-Holocaust Europe, the borrowing, replication, and consumption of Jewish culture by non-Jews is a morally legitimate endeavor at all. Many scholars commenting on the klezmer revival in places such as Poland and Germany have classified the phenomenon as a simulacrum—a representation, which, within the dichotomy of true/false or real/imaginary, occupies the position of the untrue and unreal. Ruth E. Gruber, for example, identified the klezmer scene as part of “virtual Jewishness,” a “parallel universe,” which threatens to substitute and eclipse the “authentic” Jewish culture in Europe.<sup>16</sup> Journalists, likewise, frequently decried non-Jewish klezmer as a “simulation,”<sup>17</sup> or a “Potemkin village,”<sup>18</sup> a fake place created with the intention to deceive and mask the truth. Framed in these terms, the klezmer revival has predominantly been seen as misrepresenting the reality.

In his *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard traces how humans have been growing increasingly suspicious of the power of images, ascribing representations the corruptive capacity to “mask and denature a profound reality” or to “mask the *absence* of a profound reality.”<sup>19</sup> This interpretation of simulation as an “evil,” distortive force has inspired iconoclasts and continues to determine the discourse of cultural critics today. Thus, many observers of the klezmer revival, especially within the German Jewish community, believe that klezmer “denatures” the image of Jewish heritage, in that it brings to the fore only its folkloristic aspects, neglecting elements of high culture produced by Jews.<sup>20</sup> Other critics fear, too, that klezmer “masks the absence” of Jews. Treated as a token of a vivacious revival of Jewish life, klezmer may actually obfuscate the fact that the local Jewish communities might be small or plagued with serious problems.<sup>21</sup>

Understood as a simulacrum, the klezmer revival is thus seen both as detrimental and as a symptom of more wide-ranging deficiencies in how the German and Polish societies approach their Jewish minority. Connoting “low culture” and

<sup>16</sup> Ruth E. Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 50.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Bax, “Berliner Simulation,” *Die Tageszeitung*, November 19, 1999, 15.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>20</sup> Weiss, “Jewish Disneyland.”

<sup>21</sup> Sandra Lustig and Ian Leveson, introduction to *Turning the Kaleidoscope: Perspectives on European Jewry*, ed. Sandra Lustig and Ian Leveson (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 1–23; Konstanty Gebert, “Nieautentyczność?” introduction to *Odrodzenie kultury żydowskiej w Europie* by Ruth E. Gruber (Sejny: Pogranicze, 2004), 13.

political correctness, “klezmer” has become a metaphor for an excessive interest in Jewish culture gone wrong. Thus, for example, the editor in chief of a major German public TV station warned the German media of clichéd representations of Jewish life, referring to them as “klezmer music and bagel culture.”<sup>22</sup> The Jewish journalist Henryk Broder, in turn, in many of his often sarcastic commentaries on current affairs in Germany, used phrases such as “friends of bagels and klezmer music”<sup>23</sup> as a euphemism for philo-Semites who, in his view, cherish Jews “as long as they play klezmer music, eat gefilte fish, and otherwise behave inconspicuously.”<sup>24</sup> Listening to klezmer music is also, according to Broder, one of the main characteristics of the German Babbitt, who succumbs to the fashion for Jewish music just as fatuously as he “subscribes to the *Zeit*, without necessarily reading it.”<sup>25</sup> These metaphors clearly suggest that “klezmer” has become a synecdoche of oppressive fascination with the other, perhaps even unconscious prejudice.

This rhetorical use of klezmer demonstrates how much the klezmer revival, together with other forms of non-Jewish participation in Jewish culture, has been interpreted as undesirable and illegitimate. Indeed, most of the scholarly debate on the Jewish heritage revival in Germany and in Poland has been dominated by the paradigm of cultural appropriation, which frames phenomena such as non-Jewish klezmer as simulacra and a potential threat to the Jewish community.<sup>26</sup> Scholars adopting this perspective view klezmer within a bipolar system, in which “real” Jewish heritage is understood as made by Jews and for Jews, and simulated Jewishness as produced by non-Jews for non-Jews. Demarcating the realms of authenticity and simulacrum, however, they overlook the fact that the categories that they were taking for granted, such as “Jewish” and “non-Jewish,” “authentic” and “inauthentic,” are also constructed entities with unstable boundaries. What is more, in the context of the contemporary Jewish heritage boom, these are precisely the categories undergoing the most intensive negotiation and redefinition.

<sup>22</sup> Petra Lidschreiber cited in Michael Meyer, “Klezmer und Bagel,” *Berliner Zeitung*, June 18, 2001, accessed January 13, 2009, <http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2001/0618/none/0056/index.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Henryk Broder, “Der ewige Gute,” *Spiegel*, January 19, 2006, accessed January 14, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/0,1518,396116,00.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Henryk Broder cited in “Wir sind alle traumatisiert,” *tachles: Das jüdische Wochenmagazin*, July 14, 2006, accessed January 13, 2009, <http://www.hagalil.com/archiv/2006/07/selbsthass.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Henryk Broder, “Bildungsbürger als Bla-Bla-Blockwarte,” *Spiegel*, January 19, 2008, accessed January 13, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,529487,00.html>.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example: Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*; Rita Ottens and Joel Rubin, *Klezmer-Musik* (München: Bärenreiter, 2003); Birnbaum, “Jewish Music, German Musicians”; Leveson and Lustig, *Turning the Kaleidoscope*, 187–204; Ariane Handrock, “Klischees als Verkaufsschlager: die jüdische Musikszene in Deutschland,” in *Music Netz Werke, Konturen der neuen Musikkultur*, ed. Lydia Grün and Frank Wiegand (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2002). One of the few exceptions to this paradigm is Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, “Goje w żydowskim interesie: Wkład etnicznych Polaków w życie polskich Żydów,” in *Polacy i Żydzi. Kwestia Otwarta*, ed. Robert Cherry and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska (Warszawa: Więź, 2008), 223–41.

The paradigm of cultural appropriation thus offered static dichotomies to describe a phenomenon in motion. But by concentrating on ascribing legitimacy to the klezmer revival (when performed by Jews), and denying it (especially if staged by non-Jews), the critique of the new klezmer scene in Europe has so far failed to explain the dynamics of encounter, learning, and identification inherent in this cultural phenomenon. Dismissing the non-Jewish klezmer revival as meaningless, driven by exclusively economic motivations, and detrimental to the “real” Jewish culture, many critics thus have thrown the baby out with the bath water. Disapproving of klezmer as a simulacrum, they have not addressed the question of how the klezmer revival has challenged the very definition of Jewish culture and Jewishness, and how borrowing the art of the other can also breed respect and understanding.

## Klezmer as Translation

By contesting the paradigm of appropriation, I am not suggesting the klezmer revival is not a form of cross-ethnic borrowing. Cultural appropriation, however, is a natural process, which takes place at any juncture of cultures. In the case of klezmer, which has always relied on incorporating various folk influences, it was also one that shaped the genre in a decisive way. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that klezmer was born of cultural appropriation. What this book proposes, therefore, is an alternative reading of the klezmer revival not as an impoverishment of the culture of origin but as a site of cultural translation, which enables new modes of encountering the other and expressing the self.

Understanding the klezmer revival, and the Jewish heritage boom more generally, as a *translation* rather than a *theft* opens up possibilities of seeing cultural appropriation in terms of enrichment and not just deprivation. Still, approximation and at least a partial loss of original meaning are side effects of every appropriation process. Klezmer performed by non-Jews today does not have the same form, significance, or function as klezmer played by Jewish musicians in pre-Holocaust Europe. But instead of interpreting this as a misrepresentation of the “original,” the klezmer being played today should also be acknowledged as a catalyst of new forms, functions, and meanings, all of which make up the significance of this music in contemporary Polish and German society.

The paradigm of translation, concentrating not on *who* is making use of a cultural text but on *how* they are doing it, helps us to understand better what happens in the process of cultural appropriation. First of all, it acknowledges the “translators” as active agents who contribute to the cultural end product, and it brings into relief the fact that cultural appropriation takes place within a condition of intergroup contact. Secondly, it frames cross-cultural borrowing as a procedure of selective and creative adaptation, rather than uncritical and unreflective taking.

One of the ideas that deeply influenced the way this book conceptualizes the klezmer revival was Mary Louise Pratt's concept of a "contact zone."<sup>27</sup> Writing about the way the contact between the colonizers and the colonized enabled new art forms based on creative appropriation, Pratt defined these artistic acts as outcomes of dynamic "contact zones." These spaces of encounter had a dual potential: they were both meeting platforms and sites of violent culture clashes. Pratt's contact zone is one of colonial hegemony, in which a subordinate group creates its own art, selecting and adapting elements of the dominant culture. This process, however, does not entail merely imitation and reproduction but rather reinvention. In the course of absorbing a "borrowed" culture, the other is symbolically "eaten" to nourish a new vernacular art form. The Brazilian modernist Oswald de Andrade, in his 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago*, was probably the first to turn the metaphor of "cultural anthropophagy" into a program.<sup>28</sup> A metaphorical devouring of the other had a concrete function for de Andrade. Writing at the time of the rise of Brazilian nationalism and a collective yearning for a Brazilian vernacular culture, de Andrade paradoxically indicated European heritage as the raw material with which to build the new Brazilian identity. Only by absorbing and digesting the culture of the other, he argued, are we ultimately able to articulate the self. In other words, we need appropriation in order to find our own genuine voice.<sup>29</sup>

Pratt's and de Andrade's visions of turning the culture of the other into a medium for expressing the self are relevant for thinking about today's appropriation of Jewish culture in Poland and Germany, even though they both refer to a historical context so far removed from the klezmer revival. The vector of cultural borrowing in the case of the contemporary non-Jewish klezmer scene is not the same as in the colonial context. It is the ethnic majority, the host society, that adapts elements of a minority heritage here. The process, however, entails similar dynamics. The translation of the Jewish element for Polish and German audiences involves just as much domestication, distortion, and amalgamation as the art emerging in the throes of colonialism and its aftermath. What is more, it also generates an added value and yields a new product, which bears some features of both the source and the target culture but does not really belong to any of them.

However, there is more to the "art of the contact zone" than creative hybridity. As Pratt and de Andrade make clear, appropriation is often directly connected to an identity-building project. The subaltern groups, adopting elements of the dominant culture, seek to express themselves in relation to the hegemonic other.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 91 (1991): 34.

<sup>28</sup> Oswald de Andrade, "Cannibalist Manifesto" translated by Leslie Bary, *Latin American Literary Review* 19, no. 38 (1991): 38–47.

<sup>29</sup> Rodica Ilie, "Cultural Anthropophagy: A Poetic Counter-Ideology: Pau Modernism—Futurism's Re-signification," *Caiețele Echinox* 14 (2008): 68–78.

An incursion into the cultural territory of the other is here a way of constructing the boundary between “us” and “them.” The klezmer revival, located on the fault line between the Jewish and the non-Jewish realms, is not just generating new art, but it is also a space breeding hybrid identities and allowing unconventional patterns of belonging.

This book is the story of people inhabiting this Jewish/non-Jewish contact zone: the “Jews by profession,” the Jewish stand-ins, the substitute Jews—klezmer musicians. It is about the voyage into the culture of the other and its sometimes far-reaching consequences for the travelers. Telling the story of one of the most paradoxical musical revivals in recent history, this book is also about narratives of a life in between. Placed at the junction of cultures, klezmer musicians often play the role of middlemen, ambassadors, and commuters across borders. They not only maneuver between different heritages but also exist within the overlapping space between them—not merely translating from one language to another but speaking a creole stemming from both. Indeed, the relation of klezmer professionals to Jewishness often challenges the simplistic dichotomy of Jewish and non-Jewish. The klezmer scene fosters new patterns of Jewish identification, embracing both religious and secular Jews and those who claim to be partially Jewish, temporarily Jewish, conditionally Jewish, or, to paraphrase Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jonathan Karp, “subjunctively Jewish” people.<sup>30</sup>

Based on in-depth interviews with klezmer musicians and cultural organizers promoting klezmer, this book shows the consequences that the so-called “Jewish boom” brings for its non-Jewish participants. Dealing with a very specific case of cultural appropriation, however, it also addresses the broader concern of what happens to people who work creatively in a cultural realm not their own, and how crossing cultural boundaries affects the way individuals come to think of themselves as group members. What this book researches, therefore, is also the possibility that consuming the other, or “cultural anthropophagy,” can be an introspective tool for examining the self.

The case of non-Jewish klezmer musicians is also a starting point for investigating how Poles and Germans make sense of their “significant others” via music. Looking at music from the perspective of a cultural historian and sociologist, I am particularly interested in how it offers unique modes of coming to terms with a difficult past. Approaching music as a multitextual cultural product, which signifies not only via sound and notations but also by “visual forms, by the practices and sociality of performance, by social institutions and socioeconomic arrangements [and] by language in different guises,”<sup>31</sup> I see klezmer as a contact zone for

<sup>30</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jonathan Karp, eds., *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>31</sup> Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, introduction to *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 37.

Jews and non-Jews. It is, therefore, through the prism of encounter that I look at the discourses concerning the klezmer scene and its actual products, examining both the social spaces and representations that it generates.

The story of klezmer in Kraków and Berlin is also part of a larger narrative about the appropriation of Jewish culture in post-Holocaust Europe. Turning the spotlight onto klezmer, which has become the icon of the commercial Jewish heritage boom, might also help us understand the mechanisms behind the return of Jews into the consciousness of Europeans. Many authors have noted the resurgence of things Jewish, particularly in Germany, heralding “a Jewish renaissance,”<sup>32</sup> a rise of a “non-Jewish Jewish culture,”<sup>33</sup> or the emergence of a “Jewish Space,” where Europeans engage themselves with Jewish culture.<sup>34</sup> Klezmer has, undoubtedly, become a sonic metaphor of this return, which can also serve as a key to comprehending the way this return functions on a micro scale and what the long-term consequences are for those who participate in it.

Jonathan Freedman, in his recent *Klezmer America*, argues that the klezmer revival, with its hybridity and revisionism, can serve as a paradigm of cultural criticism. For Freedman, klezmer typifies an “antinormative, [and] antigenetic model of cultural reproduction,” which draws on the Jewish migratory experience, assimilation, accession to whiteness, and a redefinition of Jewish gendered identity. Considering the art of the klezmer virtuosos in America and their “successors in the klezmer revival,” Freedman states that “by its relentless and systematic syncretism,” their work “challenges simple, reductive predications of national, ethnic, racial, or religious identity across the board (including but not limited to Jewish identity) even or especially because it composes itself out of their raw material.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, klezmer stands for a mode of self-expression, which feeds itself on the “raw material” of Jewish culture to transform it in ways that question essentialist categories of collective belonging.

This book argues that klezmer serves as such an “antinormative model of cultural reproduction” not only on the New Continent, where it is deeply rooted within the Jewish community, but also in Europe, where many of its artists are non-Jewish. The klezmer scene in Poland and Germany offers challenges to the ways we think of Jewish culture or Jewish identity, even though it might do it in different ways than its counterpart in the United States. While migration and the diasporic experience of Jews in America defined the klezmer movement across the ocean, the key aspects feeding into the klezmer scene in Germany and Poland

<sup>32</sup> Y. Michal Bodemann, *Gedächtnistheater: die jüdische Gemeinschaft und ihre deutsche Erfindung* (Hamburg: Rotbuch Verlag, 1996), 42.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Brenner, “The Transformation of the German-Jewish Community,” in *Unlikely History: The Changing German-Jewish Symbiosis 1945–2000*, ed. Leslie Morris and Jack Zipes (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 54.

<sup>34</sup> Diana Pinto, “The Third Pillar? Toward a European Jewish Identity,” 1999, accessed June 2, 2006, [http://www.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/01\\_pinto.pdf](http://www.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/01_pinto.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Freedman, *Klezmer America*, 93.



are “encounter,” “adaptation” and, to borrow a term from Eric Lott, “ventriloquial self-expression through the art forms of someone else’s.”<sup>36</sup>

Unlike many of the critics of the klezmer revival who have concentrated mostly on the material aspects of appropriation (cultural products that change hands), I prefer to frame the revival as a space of interaction, which enables Jews and non-Jews to engage in particular modes of mediation, including critique, cooperation, and what I call “standing-in.” The klezmer scene is a contact zone where Jews and non-Jews enter into conversation about the painful Polish Jewish or German Jewish past, exchange ideas, and work together, but also challenge each other, compete, and articulate their (sometimes conflicting) interests.

Nonetheless, this present book is also about the new “translated” art that they produce. The klezmer revival does not merely resuscitate a historic genre; it adapts it, filtering it through the sensitivities of Polish and German audiences. As a result, the revival generates a vernacular musical language, which follows a new cultural grammar and fulfills new social functions. It is not a simulacrum of the old but a new idiom to express the demands of the present.

Finally, klezmer is a site, which inspires alternative ways of living Jewish identities. As a realm of secular Jewish culture, the klezmer scene attracts people who identify themselves with Jewishness in various, often unorthodox, ways. But the experience of participating in Jewish culture leaves marks on non-Jews as well, and klezmer music has the potential of becoming their medium of self-expression. I argue, therefore, that klezmer, allowing negotiation and contestation of cultural boundaries, has become a realm of shifting categories and risky identity quests, where the very borders of Jewish culture are being constantly defined, questioned, and redrawn.

The anthropophagic framework, adopted as a lens for looking at klezmer, also offers a more holistic approach to cultural appropriation, regarding it simultaneously as a site of artistic creativity, interpersonal dialogue, and consumption. The commodification of klezmer has been one of the main concerns of critics who view the klezmer revival as a source of profit for the tourist industry. But while the economic aspect of the klezmer boom is an important question, the phenomenon should not be reduced merely to consumption, as even economically motivated interest in Jewish heritage does not exclude the possibility that klezmer revivalists identify in meaningful ways with the genre they appropriate and market. Thus, the advantage of using the paradigm of cultural anthropophagy is that it frames cultural borrowing as a unique condition for intercultural dialogue and a legitimate mode of producing new art while it also focuses the lens on instrumentalization and exploitation.

It is the comparative dimension of this book, however, that best puts into relief the fact that cultural appropriation has the potential of enabling interethnic

<sup>36</sup> Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy, and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 92.

encounters within one society and across borders. The story of the klezmer revival in Poland and Germany is also the story of how heritage music helps us visualize both the internal and the external other. The comparison between the two countries is interesting for several reasons. Both in Poland and Germany, where klezmer has reached widespread popularity, the revival of Jewish heritage is viewed with particular interest and, sometimes, distrust. Poland and Germany are places meaningful for Jews and for each other. Just as Poles often frame their relationship with Jews by relating to Germans as the perpetrators of the Holocaust, Germans closely follow reports of anti-Semitism in Poland, viewing with a critical eye the engagement of Poles in wartime anti-Jewish violence.

The two places that this book takes us to, Kraków and Berlin, have become the centers of the European klezmer revival. Both cities are important for Jewish history and Jewish art, and are highly symbolic for the Polish and the German national narratives. Kraków and Berlin may differ in size and importance; they have different ethnic and religious composition, and the dynamics of the local Jewish life is hardly comparable. And yet, in the last twenty years, these two very different cities have become not only the two most important strongholds of klezmer on the Old Continent but also crucial destinations of Holocaust tourism. Kraków, as the former seat of the Polish monarchy, and Berlin, as the city whose division and reunification epitomized the history of post-1945 Germany, might be unique for their heritage and not necessarily representative of the whole of Poland or Germany. Still, with their local efforts to pay tribute to the Jewish past, they have provided national models of preserving and memorializing Jewish heritage. Berlin is the central Holocaust commemoration site in Germany, and home to the biggest and most dynamic Jewish community in the country. It is not surprising, therefore, that the local klezmer revival has been concerned both with the troubled past of Jews and Germans and with hopes for a new Jewish future. In Kraków, with its vicinity to Auschwitz and an intact historic Jewish Old Town, klezmer has been a medium between the past and the present, but, more than anywhere else, entangled in the wheels of the Jewish heritage industry. With their specific local character, Kraków and Berlin are also exponents of a larger international klezmer network and two of its crucial junctures, generating creative impulses for the European klezmer scene and beyond. Understanding how klezmer has conquered Kraków and Berlin is therefore also a key to comprehending the mystery of klezmer's return to Europe.

Because the question of how the music of ethnic others becomes significant for those who appropriate it is central for this book, interviews with klezmer musicians from Kraków and Berlin constitute its most important raw material. Between 2004 and 2008, I conducted over eighty in-depth, guided interviews with musicians, cultural organizers promoting klezmer, and representatives of the local Jewish communities. During my fieldwork, I was periodically living in Berlin and visiting Kraków for a series of shorter research stays, documenting the development of the local klezmer scenes, attending concerts, workshops, informal jam

sessions, and various events that featured klezmer, from theater productions to Holocaust commemoration events.

My conversations often directly followed these performances and were commentaries on the events I had the privilege of witnessing. I reached virtually all of the klezmer ensembles performing in Kraków at the time of my research and a large number of those working in Berlin. The interviews took place in three different languages: English, Polish, and German. Translations of the transcripts are all mine. I arranged most of the interviews with one interviewee at a time, but when that was not possible, I also met with an entire band at the same time. I met five of the respondents (or groups of respondents) more than once over the course of my research.

Apart from the interviews recorded in Kraków and Berlin, I additionally interviewed several American klezmer musicians at the KlezKanada festival near Montreal. Most of my interviewees from Kraków and Berlin were Poles or Germans, but I also interviewed a few American and Ukrainian musicians who were living and/or performing in Berlin and Kraków. The principle that I followed in selecting my interviewees was to reach as large a group of performers as possible, embracing both Jews and non-Jews, professional and amateur musicians, those who earned their living from klezmer, and those who performed it only as a hobby. Apart from musicians, I talked to producers, organizers of Jewish festivals, and members of Jewish cultural institutions who were, in one way or another, dealing with klezmer music. The artists and cultural organizers that I portray in the book are usually quoted with their full names when speaking of their ensembles and creative endeavors. The exceptions are chapters 6 and 7, and several passages in chapters 2 and 4, which address the more sensitive issues of how my interviewees identify themselves vis-à-vis Jewishness. As their narratives in this part of the book mostly concern their private lives, their names are not disclosed.

I began to explore behind the scenes of the klezmer revival in 2004, but it was not the first time that I had been exposed to this music. Living in Kraków between 1999 and 2003, some of this time in Kazimierz itself, I had the privilege to witness firsthand the rapid changes that the Jewish district was undergoing. As the Jewish quarter, which at that time was still partly a desolate working-class neighborhood, began to attract a steadily increasing number of tourists and face unavoidable gentrification, the klezmer scene turned into a crucible focalizing different, sometimes conflicting, interests, desires, and demands. Klezmer in Kraków, crowning the biggest annual Jewish festival in Europe and defining the soundscape of the historic Jewish quarter for the rest of the year, became for many Poles and foreigners alike the most attractive and accessible way of approaching Jewish heritage. The potential of the klezmer scene as a gateway to the culture of the other fascinated me both as a sociologist and as a Pole who, like many of my compatriots at that time, was only beginning to discover the importance of Jewish culture for Polish history as well as the extent of the Polish complicity in anti-Jewish violence.

Trying to understand the klezmer scene as a cultural space where non-Jews co-create and co-perform Jewish culture, and investigating into the consequences that such an involvement has for non-Jews, I found myself in a position very similar to that which I was researching. Teaching and writing about Jewish history and Jewish heritage, I was confronted with many of the issues that I saw my interviewees struggling with. I strongly believe, therefore, that the position of Polish and German klezmer musicians is also the position of many more “Jews by profession” who, despite being non-Jewish, find themselves in situations in which they perform, impart, and present Jewish culture to others, act as intermediaries between Jews and non-Jews, and venture into a space “in between,” where, while approaching the other, they actually have to confront the self.

## Organization of the Book

Chapters 1 and 2 set the scene, giving an idea of how the Polish and German klezmer scenes have developed and been perceived by critics. Chapter 1 offers a general introduction to the traditions of klezmer music in Kraków and Berlin, placing the recent Jewish heritage boom in a historical context. Chapter 2 introduces the polyphonic debate on the klezmer revival in Poland and Germany, providing a synthesis of the discussions about the legitimacy of the non-Jewish klezmer revival. It also presents in more detail what I have called here the paradigm of appropriation, pinpointing the most important arguments of writers, journalists, and members of the Jewish community who have been skeptical of the non-Jewish appropriation of Jewish heritage. But, while giving voice to the opponents of the klezmer scene, it also presents the responses of klezmer musicians who counter the accusations and narrate their own part of the story.

If chapter 2 presents the current state of the debate and shows how the klezmer revival has been framed as cultural theft threatening the development of “authentic” Jewish culture, chapter 3 offers a counterparadigm, shifting attention to aspects of the klezmer phenomenon that have been so far neglected by scholars and critics alike. This chapter develops the claim that klezmer, as an easily accessible and enjoyable medium, is one of the most intensive contact zones in Europe, opening a space where Jews and non-Jews have the chance to meet, discuss, and create art together. This section of the book illustrates the modes of what I will call “meeting” and “eating” the other—the exchange and negotiation that includes, apart from learning and communication, also consumption and commercialization. Chapter 3 concentrates on this dual nature of the klezmer revival by investigating the relations between the klezmer scene and local Jewish communities, the connections within the transnational klezmer networks, and the interaction of Jewish and non-Jewish musicians in the scene, viewing these within the context of the commercial success of klezmer.

The remaining chapters present the outcomes of these klezmer encounters. Chapter 4 gives us an overview of the images of Jews that populate the klezmer scene. However, revisiting the most persistent clichés about Jews that the klezmer scene recycles, it also describes the novel ways in which klezmer artists strive to challenge them. Cataloging images and discourses that surround the musical production of the klezmer scene, this section analyzes the strategies of cultural translation that musicians and their managers apply in order to adapt a historic Jewish genre to the needs of its new consumers. It maps out the new language of klezmer that, drawing on its historic sources, melds elements of Jewish heritage with other ethnic legacies. Showing the heterogeneous end product of this creative process of “digesting” the culture of the other, it also demonstrates how the klezmer scene aims to meet the demands of the contemporary world music market and heritage tourism. Chapter 5 shows how klezmer has become instrumentalized and politicized in Poland and Germany, both as a soundtrack to Holocaust commemoration events and a symbol of successful politics of multiculturalism.

But by describing the ways klezmer revivalists remodel Jewish music into a new form of art that has become meaningful to Polish and German society in sometimes unexpected ways, this book also sets out to investigate what the music means to those who make it. Non-Jewish klezmer musicians, whose involvement with Jewish heritage is especially intensive and often long-term, face particular challenges to their identity as Poles or Germans. Scrutinized and often criticized by their Jewish audiences and critics, they seek ways in which they can frame their contribution to the klezmer scene as legitimate. Chapter 6 speaks about the challenge that playing the music of the other poses to the identity of non-Jewish klezmer musicians, presenting their often intimate accounts of how they have come to terms with the dark chapters of the German and Polish past. Chapter 7, in turn, by applying theories of social identity, addresses the question of what kind of identity processes take place in the situation of cultural appropriation, looking at how non-Jewish musicians define themselves vis-à-vis Jewish heritage that they perform.

This book is not a history of the klezmer revival. Instead, it tells the story of how a music revival can become a site of difficult debates on troubled intergroup relations in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Drawing on critical theories from sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, and ethnomusicology, this book offers an interdisciplinary perspective on an example of heritage appropriation, which has had far-reaching implications for the way many Poles and Germans have come to recall their past and imagine their future as multi-ethnic societies. It is a book about how music has become the language with which to speak about a difficult past. It is also a book about individuals who, by confronting the legacy of the other, find ways to rethink their own heritage.

# The Genealogies

## *Klezmer Music and Its Traditions in Kraków and Berlin*

As a small boy, Frederic Chopin spent his summers in the Polish countryside at the manor of the Dzieżanowski family in Szafarnia. It was there that one summer, as the anecdote goes, the young prodigy gave an improvised concert for a group of Jewish corn traders who had come on business from a neighboring town. The medley of wedding dances that he played is said to have been so rousing that the flabbergasted Jews could not resist dancing and, complimenting Chopin by saying that he played like a “born Jew,” invited him to perform at a Jewish wedding in a nearby village. Although the musicologist Józef Reiss, who recounts this story, never mentions whether the composer accepted the invitation, evidently klezmer must have been in the air of that nineteenth-century Polish countryside, as Chopin’s later *Mazurka a-moll*, also known as “Żydek” (“Little Jew”), is clearly inspired by Jewish dances.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Chopin playing in the Jewish idiom should not be surprising. Poland was for many centuries a home to klezmer music, which left a firm mark on the Polish musical tradition. Jewish instrumental music arrived in Poland with the first Jewish settlers. The first known use of the word “klezmer” occurs in a document of the Jewish community in Kraków dating from 1595.<sup>2</sup> *Klezmorim* played not only for Jewish and non-Jewish weddings but also at inns, markets, and sometimes in the houses of nobility.

Many genres of Jewish music came into being and developed in Polish lands. Poland, considered the birthplace of cantorial music, was home to many excellent cantors who influenced the art of synagogal singing in Europe and beyond. It was also an important center of Yiddish theater, which created its own musical forms accompanying, for example, the *Purim-spiln*, or popular folk plays performed for

<sup>1</sup> Józef Reiss, “Dusza żydostwa w muzyce,” *Muzyk wojskowy*, July 1, 1928, 2; Marian Fuks, *Muzyka ocalona: Judaica polskie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Radia i Telewizji, 1989), 23–34.

<sup>2</sup> Feldman, “Remembrance of Things Past,” 29.

the holiday of Purim.<sup>3</sup> The Ashkenazi Jews, who started arriving in Poland from German-speaking lands in the second half of the twelfth century, also created a large repertoire of folk songs. Yiddish songs written and composed in Polish lands included love songs, lullabies, and humorous pieces commenting on Jewish everyday life, as well as more politically charged Jewish workers' and revolutionary songs, or songs about war and being a soldier. The Hasidic communities, the followers of the great Ba'al Shem Tov (ca. 1700–1760), also created their own music. The Hasidim, a Jewish sect that believes music is heavenly inspired and provides a unique mode of prayer, composed the *nigunim*, wordless songs, performed collectively a *cappella* as a form of ecstatic prayer, often accompanied by dancing.<sup>4</sup> Their holy songs, usually composed by the *tzadikim*, or the Hasidic spiritual leaders, were believed to be able to “purify the fallen soul, heal the sick, and perform all sorts of miracles.”<sup>5</sup> Hasidic courts, such as the ones in Sadogóra or Bobowa in Galicia, would often employ their own klezmer ensembles, which played for their gatherings.

Musical genres developed by Jews, although they had different functions and were often bound to specific ritual or social contexts, influenced each other and drew from other folk traditions. Klezmer has been, in this respect, a particularly receptive genre. An instrumental music most commonly performed at weddings, klezmer had the crucial function as the “organizer” of the whole Jewish wedding ceremony.<sup>6</sup> Klezmer *kapelyes*, usually made up of three to five members, would accompany both the nuptials and the pre-wedding preparations, which could extend over many days. The basic repertoire of klezmer musicians included dance music and music for listening, which accompanied various wedding rituals such as greeting the guests, the “seating” of the bride, and the street procession.<sup>7</sup> The *klezmorim* were usually accompanied by a *badkhn*, a performer who improvised special wedding verses, told jokes, and sang songs of a moralistic character.<sup>8</sup>

The ensemble was hired first for an engagement party and would then play for the family during the four months preceding the wedding. Seven days before the wedding, when the bride and groom were not supposed to leave their houses, the *klezmorim* would play at their homes each night. They would also accompany

<sup>3</sup> In the seminal five-volume “Jewish Musical Folklore” by Moshe Beregovski (1892–1961), the major ethnomusicologist of Eastern European Jewish music in the Soviet Union, Jewish folk music is divided into five major fields: (1) workers' and revolutionary songs, (2) love and family songs, (3) klezmer, (4) textless songs, and (5) music for the *Purimspil*.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the *nigunim* do have lyrics in Hebrew, Yiddish, or other languages such as Ukrainian. It is the wordless melodies, however, that are given the greatest significance in the Hasidic tradition.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 414.

<sup>6</sup> Moshe Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music: The Collections and Writings of Moshe Beregovski*, trans. and ed. Mark Slobin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 301.

<sup>7</sup> Moshe Beregovski, *Jewish Instrumental Folk Music: The Collections and Writings of Moshe Beregovski* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

a special meal in honor of the groom before the wedding and the bride's visit to the *mikveh* (ritual bath).<sup>9</sup> Music was, in fact, especially important for the rituals involving the bride. The *kale bazetsn*, (seating of the bride) was a part of the wedding when female guests gathered around the bride and cut her long hair. The women were accompanied by the band and the *badkhn*, who recited melancholy couplets about the difficulties and pain awaiting the bride in married life. This first part of the ceremony, called in Yiddish *kale baveynen*, (crying with the bride) is meant to bring the woman and her guests to tears. Soon after this highly emotional moment, the musicians swiftly move to the more joyful *bazingen*, or "singing for the bride," with a set of tunes and recitations by the *badkhn*, which extol the happiness awaiting the newlyweds.<sup>10</sup> Later, the musicians would lead the couple to the *khupe*, the wedding canopy where the actual wedding ceremony took place, and then perform at the ensuing banquet.<sup>11</sup>

The klezmer "core repertoire," as identified by musicologist Walter Z. Feldman, embraced tunes composed by the *klezmerim* themselves and performed only for Jewish wedding ceremonies.<sup>12</sup> An obligatory number on their playlist was the *freylakh*, considered to be the Jewish folk dance par excellence and, as such, readily adopted into Moldavian and Ukrainian folk music. The *klezmerim* had more to offer than just dance music, though. Their repertoire also included nondance wedding melodies as well as paraliturgical pieces for such Jewish holidays as Hanukkah and Purim. Klezmer was therefore a multifunctional music, which drew inspiration from many sources. It incorporated not only the Hasidic nigunim, transformed in the klezmer repertoire into the *khosidl* dance<sup>13</sup> or Yiddish folk songs, but it was also influenced by the folk traditions of other eastern European ethnic groups. A part of their repertoire had what Feldman identified as an "Orientalizing" character. In particular, dances such as the *hora*, *sirba*, and *bulgarish* drew on the music of Gypsies from Moldova, the Balkans, and the Crimea. The *klezmerim* were also familiar with "co-territorial" genres such as the Polish *mazurka* or Ruthenian *kolomeyka*, and even the "cosmopolitan" repertoire of western and central European dances, such as the quadrille, polka, and waltz.<sup>14</sup>

Even though musicologists admit that it is not possible to individuate the klezmer style as a genre entirely distinct from other musical folk traditions of eastern Europe,<sup>15</sup> they point out several specific characteristics, which give the klezmer

<sup>9</sup> Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, 86–87.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 28; Beregovski, *Jewish Instrumental Folk Music*, 11–12.

<sup>11</sup> Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, 29.

<sup>12</sup> Feldman, "Bulgareasca/Bulgarish/Bulgar," 3.

<sup>13</sup> Slobin, *Fiddler on the Move*, 102.

<sup>14</sup> Feldman, "Bulgareasca/Bulgarish/Bulgar," 7–10. Details on the particular klezmer dances are given by Strom, *The Book of Klezmer*, 55–58 and 61–66; Beregovski, *Jewish Instrumental Folk Music*, 10–11.

<sup>15</sup> Joel Rubin and Rita Ottens, "Klezmer-Forschung in Osteuropa: damals und heute," in *Juden und Antisemitismus in östlichen Europa*, ed. Mariana Hausleitner and Monika Katz (Berlin: Harassovitz Verlag, 1995), 184–85.