The Representations of New York in Yiddish Songs

Contents

Introduction: Topic and Methodological Elements

In my first thesis, "The Spatial Inscription of an Immigrant Music: Klezmer in New York", I studied the reciprocal relationships between urban dynamics and the evolution of a musical genre, analyzing how the musicians represent the places they experience on the one hand, and how they, on the other hand, also experience a connection between their culture and their music. In exploring the nature of these connections, I found out that something was missing in instrumental music. The musical language embodied in klezmer music, able to express emotions and to have a deep impact on social life, tells in its own way the tribulations of its people and the travels of its musicians. Yet, language – a music in itself, and the ineluctable partner to music in song – narrates explicitly the daily experiences of the Jewish immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe. Their national identity, partly based on Yiddish language, evolved over the course of its increasing encounters with American culture, at times nostalgic

for a fantasized home.

This is why I decided to write my second thesis about how songs act as cultural representations of space, and how in turn they also produce and transform these very representations of space. By proceeding with an inventory of works in the geography of music, I tried to find an appropriate methodology to my topic. The translation of my subject from instrumental music to song already responded to this demand. Indeed, it seems that the study of collective imagination or memory must be performed through the examination of communal self-representations such as poetry and song. They teach us which values and senses are transmitted among a community, following the peregrinations of its populations, and what perspectives this community takes to the spaces it lives in, crosses, and imagines. Therefore I located my work in the field of cultural and social geography, taking a folklorist's approach, exploring song catalogs and sound archives, making interviews in order to find my bearings within this vast repertoire.

I looked for songs that contained the names of places, using computer-aided catalogs which allow search by keyword. The core of the research was centered on the compilation and analysis of songs about New York City, that is, mentioning either a toponym belonging to this space or a subject – such as sweatshops – which is especially associated with the city. I therefore explored diverse catalogs of Jewish music, like the Robert and Molly Freedman Collection catalog from University of Pennsylvania[1], available online, and the YIVO Sound Archives catalog[2], the Judaica Sound Archive of Florida Atlantic University[3], and the catalog of Medem Library[4] in Paris, also including a section devoted to music. I was able to obtain

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1   http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/freedman/
2   Available at location.
3   http://faujsa.fau.edu/jsa/home.php
4   http://www.yiddishweb.com/ – http://www.rachelnet.net/rachelnet/index.htm

digitalized sheet music through the Brown University Library Center for Digital Initiatives[5]. At the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, where I investigated for about four months, I could access the computer catalog of sound archives, as well as paper catalogs, collections of songs (and their index), and recordings, that I could freely use and copy thanks to the Vladimir and Pearl Heifetz Memorial Fellowship from YIVO. I also consulted the I. Heskes' printed catalog of the collection of Library of Congress in Washington[6], which allowed me to find other gems at YIVO, although I couldn't, because of lack of time, get materials from Washington. This exploration of the YIVO Sound Archives, which is not totally cataloged, was made possible by the enlightenment of accurate interlocutors, like Lorin Sklamberg and Eleanor Chana Mlotek, who know the archives well, having partly built it.

The corpus of songs I finally used is not an exhaustive survey of representations of New York in Yiddish song, but rather covers a wide range of topics and diverse experiences of Jewish immigrants in New York, shedding light on certain aspects of their lives and their descendants', especially their mobility in the city – professional, residential or recreational – over the course of their social and cultural evolution, mainly assimilating. The songs varied in their genres and levels of popularity, including topical songs, letter songs, etc. At points I extended the focus slightly beyond the confines of New York, examining letter songs that spoke at times to the broader American-Eastern European interchange. Finally, contextualizing the songs leads to the emergence of strong themes such as everyday tenement life, the streets of the crowded immigrant neighborhoods, pursuit of a better life style in theaters, Luna Parks and summer resorts, set against the background of longing for variously imagined homes and messiahs.

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5   http://dl.lib.brown.edu/sheetmusic/yiddish/
6   HESKES, I. (1992), *Yiddish American Popular Songs, 1895 to 1950. A Catalog Based on the Marwick Roster of Copyright Entries*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
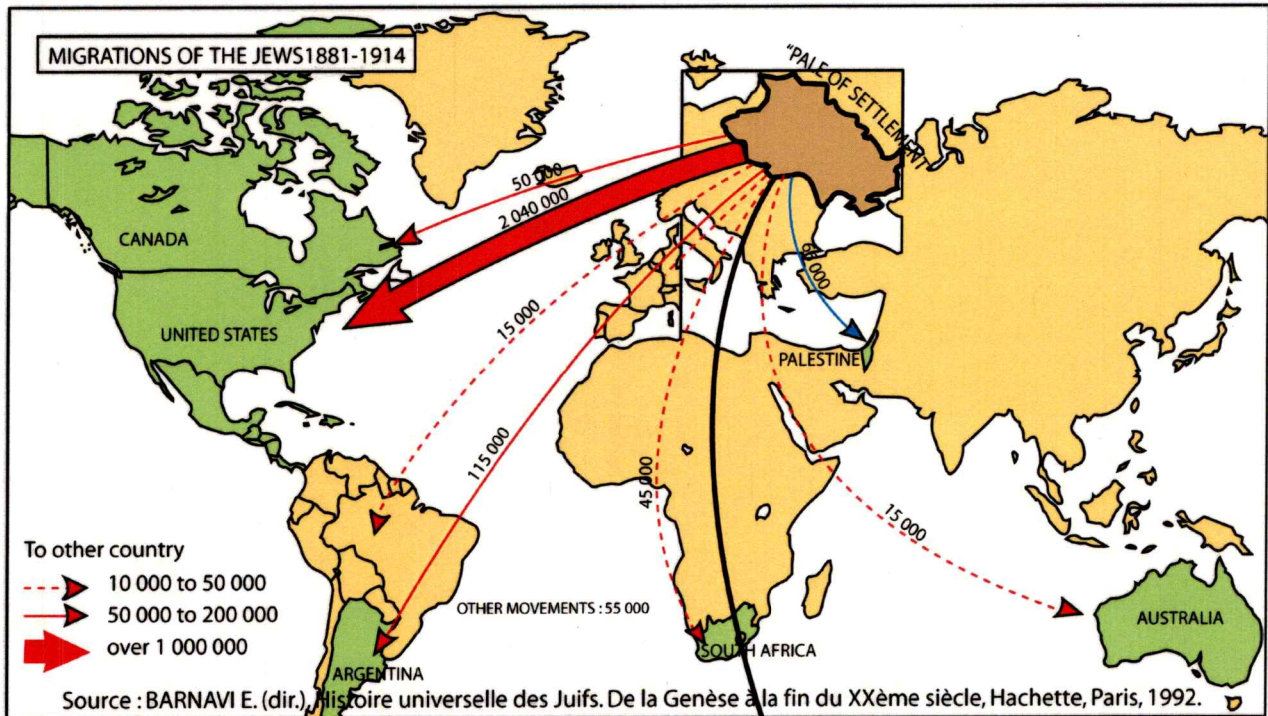
Immigration In Songs

The assassination of Tsar Alexander II by revolutionaries Mars, 1st, 1881, marked the end of moderate liberalism for the Russian government and the beginning of a wave of pogroms. From the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, a little less than 4,900,000 Jews lived in government-mandated Pale of Settlement; they were 94% of Russia Jewish population, and constituted about 12% of the inhabitants of the region. Experiencing an immigration combining at least three kinds of change; physical (from the Eastern European town, often a *shtetl*, to the urban United States), symbolic ("rupture from moral values and cultural support of Jewish tradition[8]"), and social ("sudden enforced proletarianization[9]") – the musical creation, especially through theater, vaudeville and music-hall, became an important container of mixed feelings balancing between two sets of tensions: the tough reality of Eastern European Jewish life at odds with the mythical image of the *shtetl* as "home", and the confrontation between hopes shaped toward the "New World" and the very hard conditions that the immigrants found.
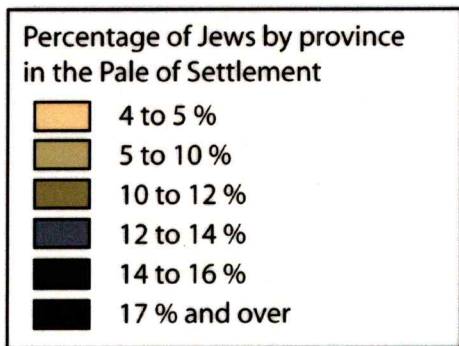
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7 See ERTEL, R. (1982), Le Shtetl. *La Bourgade juive de Pologne*, Payot, Paris.
8 HOWE, I. (1980), *World of our Father. The Journey of the Last European Jews to America and the Life they Found and they Made*, Bantam abridged edition, USA/Canada, p. 121.
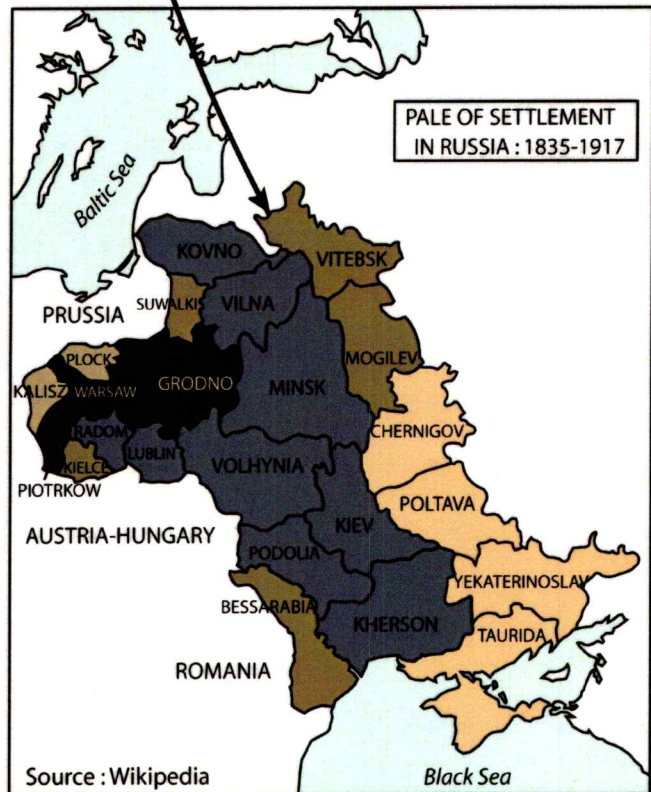9 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

MIGRATIONS OF THE JEWS 1881-1914

"PALE OF SETTLEMENT"

CANADA

UNITED STATES

50 000

2 040 000

15 000

115 000

45 000

15 000

PALESTINE

To other country
- - - ▷ 10 000 to 50 000
——▷ 50 000 to 200 000
➡ over 1 000 000

OTHER MOVEMENTS : 55 000

SOUTH AFRICA

AUSTRALIA

ARGENTINA

Source : BARNAVI E. (dir.), Histoire universelle des Juifs. De la Genèse à la fin du XXème siècle, Hachette, Paris, 1992.

Movements of Ashkenazi Jews
between 1881 and 1914 and
the Pale of Settlement in Russia

PALE OF SETTLEMENT
IN RUSSIA : 1835-1917

Baltic Sea

PRUSSIA

KOVNO
VITEBSK
SUWALKIS
VILNA
PLOCK
MOGILEV
KALISZ WARSAW GRODNO MINSK
RADOM
CHERNIGOV
KIELCE LUBLIN VOLHYNIA
PIOTRKOW
POLTAVA
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
PODOLIA KIEV
YEKATERINOSLAV
BESSARABIA
KHERSON
TAURIDA
ROMANIA

Percentage of Jews by province
in the Pale of Settlement

	4 to 5 %
	5 to 10 %
	10 to 12 %
	12 to 14 %
	14 to 16 %
	17 % and over

Map designed by Eléonore Biezunski
with Adobe Illustrator©

Source : Wikipedia

Black Sea

Following this idea that "all the turmoil of immigration and adaptation is reflected in the sheet music repertoire[10]", Mark Slobin invite us to consider three facets of the American topic in Yiddish songs; "pro-American and anti-American feeling, the process of immigration, and the woes of the greenhorn's life[11]." In my Masters' thesis, I analyze several songs which describe either the cross-Atlantic trip itself, or the immediate arrival. For example, *"Frayhayt Statue"* ("Statue of Liberty"), is a poem written by Avrom Liessin (1872-1938) set to music by Lazar Wiener (1897-1982), obviously inspired by Emma Lazarus' poem written in 1883 appearing at feet of the statue, in which the statue speaks to welcome the newcomers to American shores. The lyricism of the poem expresses the hope embodied by the sight of the statue, symbolic gate to the country, to the "New World", *"Di Goldene Medineh"*, the "Golden Land". We can find other examples like this one in songs such as *"Kesl Gartn"*, written by M. Rosenfeld (1863-1923), who himself experienced the immigration through Castle Garden, and became the figurehead of the "sweatshop poets". He describes in this song the terrible pain and suffering due to the arrival conditions. Castle Garden was the immigration center between 1830 and 1892, when Ellis Island opened. Other songs mention cases when prospective immigrants were barred entrance because of a disease or judiciary problems. The song *"Tsurikgeshikte Emigrant[12]"*, "The Sentback/deported Immigrant" – copyrighted in 1912 with music and lyrics by Alexander Silberstein and arrangements Henry A Rusotto, published by Solomon Schenker Co. – describes at length such a case, the biggest fear of potential immigrants. The exact same topic can be found in the song *"Elis Ayland"*, "Ellis

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10 SLOBIN, M. (1982, 1996), *Tenement Songs, The Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants*. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, p. 154.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 154
12 HESKES, I. (1992), *Yiddish American Popular Songs, 1895 to 1950. A Catalog Based on the Marwick Roster of Copyright Entries*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C, entry 456.

Island", by Solomon Smulewitz-Small (1868-1943), in which Ellis Island, presented as "the gate to the land of liberty" becomes a space of rejection, all the more cruel because it dashes the high hopes of the aspiring immigrant.

Songs about migration flourished until the Immigration Act of 1924, which limited the arrival of new immigrants according to a quota by state of origin. The song *"Fermakhte Toyren[13]"*, "Closed Doors", by E. Barkan is a lamentation about restricted immigration quotas. It was published in 1927. The Jewish immigrations to the U.S.A. was in general more final (94,8% stayed, according to I. Howe[14], whose figures should be taken with a grain of salt) than for the general mass of immigrants, among which about only two-thirds settled for good. In 1908, only 2% of the Jews returned to their country. Those who decided to go back to Europe also have their songs. Aaron Lebedeff (1873-1960) sings "Goodbye, New York", written by Jacob Jacobs and recorded January, 9th, 1928 in New York with Alexander Olshanetsky's (1892-1946) Orchestra. He plays a young man who has decided to head back to his *shtetl* Baryshevka[15], where his grand-mother will be thrilled to see him again, because he didn't find his luck in New York. Another song *"Ikh Vil Tsurik Aheym"* ("I Want To Go Home") comes from the play *Der Litvisher Yankee[16]* ("The Litvak Yankee") performed by Yitskhok Lesh in December 1928, also written by Jacob Jacobs and composed by A. Olshanetsky. This last song evoke the same disappointment of a young man. The theme of the mother left behind in the "old country" appear once more in this song. Here, the distance from the mother's grave emphasize the nostalgia to an idealized *shtetl* where, ultimately, one

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13 *Ibid.*, entry 2091.

14 HOWE, I. (1980), *World of our Father. The Journey of the Last European Jews to America and the Life they Found and they Made*, Bantam abridged edition, USA/Canada, p. 56.

15 On JewishGen, we learn that this place has several orthographies. In 1897, 462 Jews inhabited the village and in 1939 under the Soviet Regime, 134 on a total population of 2401. "Germans took the town on August 17th, 1941 and murdered the Jews shortly." (SPECTOR, S., et WIGODER, G., *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust*, N. Y. University Press, New York, 2001).

16 LAIRD, R. (2001), *Brunswick Records: A Discography of Recordings, 1916-1931*, Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company, Brunswick Radio Corporation, Greenwood Publishing Group.

is unavoidably rooted. Mark Slobin notes that the epithet *goldn land,* or *goldene medine,* ("Golden Land") is rarely used in a positive sense, "rather, it is the standard vehicle for feelings of anti-Americanism. (...) This negative attitude toward the new homeland is in itself a complex emotion whose various facets are revealed in diverse song texts[17]."

Another genre, the "letter song", reflecting the constant back-and-forth not just people but also communication between U.S.A. and Eastern Europe, flourished commercially and circulated in both directions, reflecting the strength of the feelings of separations for the immigrants and those they left behind[18]. Among the many which became popular as folksongs are *"A Brivele der Mamen"* ("A Letter to the Mother), *"A Brivele der Tatn"*, ("A Letter to the Father"), and other letters written as songs, to the bride, to the groom, to the child, to the soldier, to the friend, to the rabbi, to the hometown perceived as home, and even to Russia itself[19].

New York as a Threshold

In her book *Recovering "Yiddishland" - Threshold Moments in American Literature*, Merle L. Bachman uses the concept of space ("both real and imagined[20]") to "treat the cultural construction of Yiddishland" as a part of a discourse which describes the "third space, the liminal position" of the writer when he choses to write in Yiddish as a new American immigrant, "in which dual or multiple identity affiliations play out, a space that deconstructs

17 SLOBIN, M. (1996), *Tenement Songs, The Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants*. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, p. 157.
18 RUBIN, R. (1963), *Voices of a People, the Story of Yiddish Folksongs*, A. S. Barnes, New York, p. 347.
19 HESKES, I. (1992), *Yiddish American Popular Songs, 1895 to 1950. A Catalog Based on the Marwick Roster of Copyright Entries*, Library of Congress, Washington, p. XXIX.
20 BACHMAN, M. (2008), *Recovering "Yiddishland". Threshold moments in American Literature*, Syracuse University Press, New York, p. XXII.

binaries, opens new possibilities, and allows margins and center to trade place[21]." The interpenetration of multiple identities, the permeability between margins and center and the tension between acculturation and tradition among the new immigrants will, a few generations later, turn this "Yiddishland" into what Jeffrey Shandler calls *postvernacular* culture[22], with Yiddish, its focal (if not necessarily spoken) language, remaining an "object of affection[23]". "Postvernacular Yiddish" is a "distinctive mode of engagement with the language[24]" where the symbolic value of the language becomes privileged above its functional value as a basic means of communication.

As soon as 1943, the date of copyright of "*Ikh Benk Nokh der East Side*", ("I Miss the East Side of Old"), written by Jacob Jacobs and composed by Alexandre Olshanetsky (1892-1946), the Lower East Side in the popular American Jewish imagination becomes overrun by nostalgia for a time when the neighborhood was densely populated by Yiddish-speaking Jews: "Those who came spoke Yiddish / Taking delight at each word / It was like in Erets Yisroel". This rapprochement between Yiddish language and Land of Israel deserves a comment; the competition between diasporic vernacular Yiddish and Hebrew, traditionally the sacred, written language and more recently a central Zionist project for transformation into a spoken tongue, has been the cause of passionate discussion (and occasional violence) from the birth of Zionism through the first half of 20th century. Distant from this ideological debate, this song expresses an ideal in which one could feel at home in Erets Yisroel because there one speaks the Yiddish of home (Eastern Europe), sharply breaking from a more typical vision of opposition between Israel and diaspora and evoking in its place a sort of warm and

21 *Ibid*, p. XXII.
22 SHANDLER J. (2006), *Adventures in Yiddishland : postvernacular language & culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
23 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
24 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

uniting *entre nous*, an ideal of mutual comprehension through Yiddish as the common language.

The song *"Hello New York"* dramatizes the relationships between the most freshly arrived immigrants, *"di grine"*, the "greenhorns", and those who had already experienced a certain degree of acculturation. Interpreted and recorded by Anna Hoffman and Jacob Jacobs in 1917, the song was composed by Arnold Perlmutter (1859–1953) and Herman Wohl (1877–1936) for the play *"Hello New York: a Musical Drama in Four Acts"*, written in 1916 by Boris Thomashefsky (1881–1939) and produced by the National Theater in the Fall of 1916[25].

It consists of a bilingual dialogue between a man who has arrived a while ago and a woman who has debarked more recently. They recount their New York and Lower East Side experiences in a Polish Yiddish dialect blended with English, showing off that they're not "greens" anymore: "I'm not a 'green' anymore in New York / Hello ! Hello ! I know perfectly well what I have to do / Hello ! Hello !". Mostly in Yiddish, the song is riddled with English words that are in fact Yiddish expressions literally translated into English. The most striking example is repeated as a *leitmotiv* in the song: "Hello New York, how do you do ? / By mir's alright, hey ! How is by you ?". This expression, not uncommon in popular New York spoken language is constructed with the preposition by (or *bay*, in Yiddish). There would be much to say here on the relationships between language and space in the midst of a process of acculturation, notably in a neighborhood where immigrants are in contact with many languages, accents and dialects. This topic, already explored in the context of a postvernacular Yiddish culture by J. Shandler[26], is another potential field to explore in a further

25 BAKER, M. Z. (2004), *The Lawrence Marwick Collection of Copyrighted Yiddish Plays at The Library of Congress: An Annotated Bibliography*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C..
26 SHANDLER J. (2006), *Adventures in Yiddishland : postvernacular language & culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

research.

New York as "Promised Land"

As the songs narrate the immigrants' lives, they also express the newcomers' will to climb the social ladder. The passage from a society of general want and poverty to a society of abundance[27] combined with the religious belief that improving one's standards of living can bring a better world[28] led the Jewish immigrants to tend to look and act more and more like "Americans", or what they perceived as being American, in material culture like dress, and in lingual and performance culture in music.

In the song "The Millionaire of Delancey Street" recorded in 1951, the star of Yiddish cinema and theater Leo Fuchs (1911-1994) claims the pride of a man doing it his way in the Lower East Side. His transformation starts from changing his outfit, for only 25 dollars. "*Ikh hob gebitn zikh in gantsn un itster bin ikh raykh / vayl in Amerike hot zikh gechanget do mayn life*" ("I'm not the same at all now, I'm rich / Because in America my life has *changed*"). His attachment to Delancey Street gives away his modest social background, and shows the gap that stays between his aspiration to social ascension and his harsh living conditions. The notion of bilingualism and acculturation is brought up again. The pun on "*gebitn*" which means at the same time change, change one's clothes, and transform, while "*gechanget*" is a neologism built from the combination of the English word "change" and the Yiddish regular

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27 HEINZE, A. (1990), *Adapting to Abundance : Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity*, Columbia University Press, New York.
28 The Talmud's Sanhedrin states that the Messiah will come when the world will be either totally good, or totally bad. (WIGODER G. (1996), *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du Judaïsme, coll. Bouquins*, Ed.Robert Laffont, Paris, p. 661).

past tense form "ge- -t" (which is also to be found in German) and "life" is borrowed straight from the English.

This acculturation is not only remarkable in these lyrics, but also in the music. Indeed, the use of jazz in a song involving social upward mobility underlines that jazz was then a symbol of American music, and thus of potential assimilation.

Entertainment and performance became a way of succeeding in life. At a very local scale of analysis, the parlor – already well anchored in a bourgeois American ideal – was a room designed for entertainment inside the home. It was the first step out of the sweatshop, and soon out of the tenements, in some famous cases, which became paradigmatic, thanks to the piano which became a wide-possessed item in Jewish homes, as an ideal of social mobility and equity: "The piano figured in the cultural assimilation of Jews not only by being the crowning piece of the American-style parlor but also by making home, as well as the theater and the music-hall, a forum for reconciling new and old attitudes. It became a private stage for the articulation of American Jewish identity[29]. (...) A means of entertainment, an instrument for expressing feelings about America, a sign of refinement and status, the piano also emerged as a symbol of domestic tranquility. (...) In the Jewish parlor, which was perceived as a secular sanctuary, the piano held out the promise of family unity amid the strains of immigrant life in urban America. (...) The piano could evince a sense of security and serenity that contrasted sharply with the insecurity and anxiety of city life[30]."

This expectation of a better life was infused in songs about vacationing (Catskills, Brownsville), day trips to Coney Island, about changing address (from Downtown to Uptown),

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29 *Ibid.*, p. 141-142.
30 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

in a purely local, spatial – and social – terms but also in messianic or revolutionary songs. American forms of entertainment gave a shape to the hopes of Promised Land expressed in the Jewish religious and secular imaginations. The songs convey, often with humor, multiple – sometimes combined – representations of the perfect place, *"fray land"* ("free land"), *"goldene land"* ("golden land"), *"Erets Yisroel"* ("Land of Israel"), or *"Gan Eydn"* ("Garden of Eden"), in a sweeping, continuous longing for the Messiah. For example, the song "*When the Messiah Comes to New York*" interpreted by Molly Picon in 1940 for the theater, is representative of the *"topique"* of Jewish projections of New York City as a messianic space. It's in line with an abundant tradition of songs about the coming of Messiah, first in the songs sang at the table of Shabbos (*zmires*), then in the folk songs. In the famous song *"Shnirele, Perele[31]"*, the Messiah's modes of transportation for his triumphant arrival is what is at stake, although they're still not motorized...

Az meshiakh vet kumen tsu geyn,	When Messiah will eventually come,
nit oyf a ferd, nokh oyf an aeroplen	not on a horse, just by plane
vet ayeder yid in an automobil	will every Jew/ everyone in his car
im bagegn oyf La Guardia field	welcome him on Laguaria field
Mashiakh vet zikh forn in an ofene *car,*	Messiah will be driven in an opened *car,*
oyf Broadway forn vi a Hollywood star	on Broadway, driving like a Hollywood star
From City Hall vet der Mayor tsu geyn	From City Hall will the Mayor come especially
un bagrisn mashiekh aleyn	to greet himself Messiah

31 MLOTEK, E. G. et J. (2004), *Songs of Generations: New Pearls of Yiddish Song,* Jewish Book Center of the Workmen's Circle, New York.

"Topiques", Heterotopia and Chronotopes

A. Merriam, in his book *The Anthropology of Music*, devotes a chapter to the study of song texts: "One of the most obvious sources for the understanding of human behavior in connection with music is the song text. Texts, of course, are language behavior rather than music sound, but they are an integral part of music and there is clear-cut evidence that the language used in connection differs from that of ordinary discourse[32]."

In my Master thesis II ("Experienced and Represented Places in Yiddish Songs : the Example of New York", 2008), symbolic places ("*Erets Yisroel*", *goles/galout* (exile, dispersion, diaspora) have appeared to express cultural settings. I defined them as "*topiques*", as spatial thematics that, although presenting constant aspects, are inflected depending on migrations and time periods. The word "*topique*" in French has the triple meaning of subject or matter (as in English), of a literary *topoï*, as well as a psychological topography.

Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" precisely designates the global organization of locations into territories – or "*territoires*" – as G. Di Méo distinguishes it from the place, "*le lieu*": "Le lieu, à la différence du territoire, abolit la distance, réalité sensible et palpable qui surgit de sa clôture. Alors que le territoire géographique répugne au bornage, le lieu en tire une bonne part de sa substance[33]" – revealing their real social meaning. Thus, a territory differs from a location, a place, because it doesn't have other boundaries than the ones that are socially and mentally built. "L'hétérotopie a le pouvoir de juxtaposer en un seul lieu réel

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32 MERRIAM, A. (1964), "The Study of Song Texts", in *The Anthropology of Music*, Northwestern University Press, Illinois, p. 187.
33 DI MÉO, G., (dir.), *La géographie en fêtes*, Ophrys, Paris, Gap, 2001, chapitre 2 : "Fête et construction symbolique du territoire".

plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles[34]." Thus, theater, particularly crucial space in the study of Yiddish songs, as a crystallizer of aspirations, representations and their expressions, is a form of heterotopia, as well as the cemetery or the garden, all given as examples by Foucault:

> Les cimetières constituent alors non plus le vent sacré et immortel de la cité, mais l'"autre ville", où chaque famille possède sa noire demeure. (...) Le théâtre fait succéder sur le rectangle de la scène toute une série de lieux qui sont étrangers les uns aux autres ; c'est ainsi que le cinéma est une très curieuse salle rectangulaire, au fond de laquelle, sur un écran à deux dimensions, on voit se projeter un espace à trois dimensions; mais peut-être est-ce que l'exemple le plus ancien de ces hétérotopies, en forme d'emplacements contradictoires, l'exemple le plus ancien, c'est peut-être le jardin[35].

All these heterotopia could be analyzed one by one in the context of a further study of Yiddish songs in their relationship to urban life and mental landscapes.

We could also bridge this notion with Batkhine's "chronotope": "Nous appellerons chronotope, ce qui se traduit, littéralement, par "temps espace"; la corrélation des rapports spatiaux-temporels, telle qu'elle a été assimilée par la littérature[36]." Batkhine analyzes here how nature of an action, conception of time and consistence given to space are connected and form a system; "un chronotope spécifie un sens du temps et de l'espace fusionnant, et c'est au chronotope qu'appartient la signification qui forme la narration[37]". Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines the "musical chronotope" as "la mise en relation intrinsèque de rapports spatiaux-temporels exprimés de manière artistique[38]". Mark Slobin also connects

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34 FOUCAULT, M. (1984), Dits et écrits 1984, *Des espaces autres* (conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967), in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, n°5, pp. 46-49.
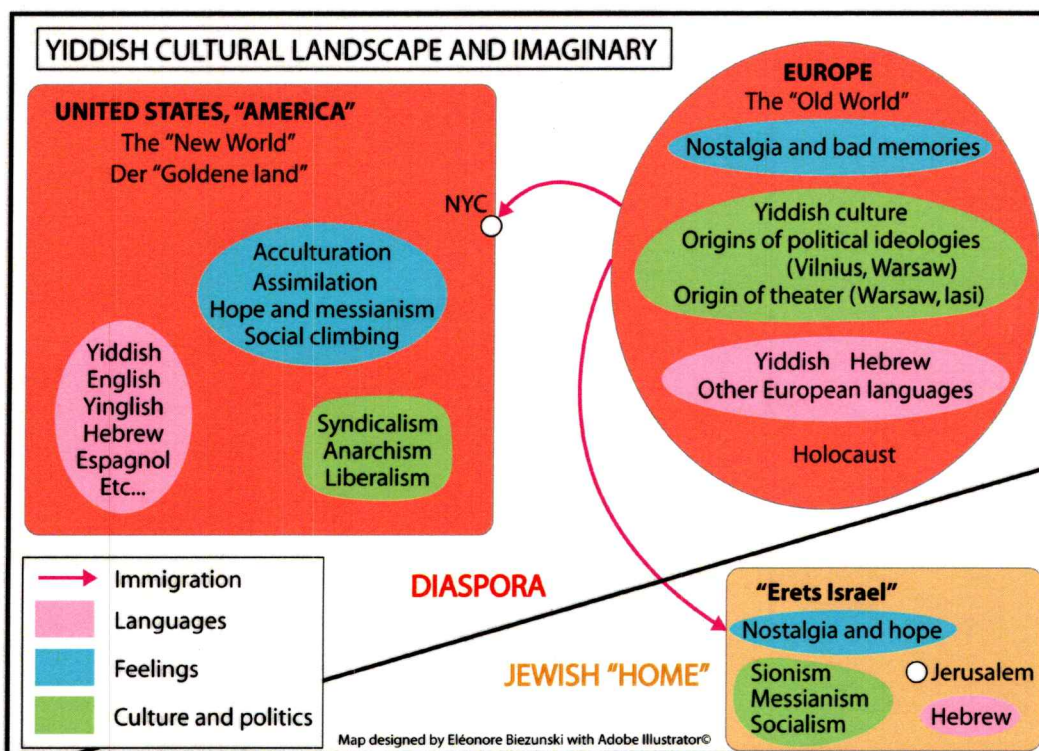35 *Ibid.*, pp. 46-49.
36 BAKHTINE, M. (1978), *Esthétique et théorie du roman*, Paris, Gallimard.
37 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
38 KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT B. (1998), "La Renaissance du klezmer : réflexion sur un chronotope musical", dans les *Cahiers de littérature orale*, numéro 44, pp. 229-230.

Batkhine's notion with an ethnomusicological approach, studying performances as creating "communities of listeners by trapping them in a web of songs, sound colors, and the simple ritual of gathering together for a common purpose that often combines music with dance[39]".

As we can observe in Yiddish songs and on the map below, Jews transport their imagined places to their new homes. Indeed, all the places the immigrants once lived, left, and had to adjust to, are invested with similar values and familiar notions. In spite of immigration's disruption of their society and their economy, forcing them adapt to alien

YIDDISH CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AND IMAGINARY

UNITED STATES, "AMERICA"
The "New World"
Der "Goldene land"

NYC

Acculturation
Assimilation
Hope and messianism
Social climbing

Yiddish
English
Yinglish
Hebrew
Espagnol
Etc...

Syndicalism
Anarchism
Liberalism

EUROPE
The "Old World"

Nostalgia and bad memories

Yiddish culture
Origins of political ideologies
(Vilnius, Warsaw)
Origin of theater (Warsaw, Iasi)

Yiddish   Hebrew
Other European languages

Holocaust

→ Immigration
Languages
Feelings
Culture and politics

DIASPORA

JEWISH "HOME"

"Erets Israel"
Nostalgia and hope

Sionism
Messianism
Socialism

Jerusalem

Hebrew

Map designed by Eléonore Biezunski with Adobe Illustrator©

societies, they carry a whole world with them to negotiate and interact with their new one. The role of the songs is crucial in the transmission of maintained values like the longing for a better world – articulated as messianism in religious terms, or through political utopia – especially in the midst of a new culture which encourages the expression of their feelings, and where intense upheaval lead to intense artistic creativity. Places change, but *topiques*

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39 SLOBIN M. (2000), *Klezmer on the Move, Exploring the Klezmer World*, Oxford University Press, New York, p. 72.

stay. The concept of *topique*, with the multiple meanings that it bears in French, is interesting because it gives to the notion it designates a spatial dimension embedded within a network of cultural meanings.

Jewish messianism seems to follow the migrant or the exiled everywhere he goes or settles, transforming the content of its signification without stepping back from folk expression, particularly song, an essential vehicle of transmission in modern times. The *topique* of messianism, as well as the *topique* of nostalgia, are characterized by their plasticity. Thus, our three main *topiques* – messianism, nostalgia and social climbing – overlap, move along, mutually influencing each other. They grow richer and eventually organize differently, combining without disappearing. Because of their plasticity, *topiques* assure their vitality – or their simple survival – through loss and renewal.

There is still much to explore on the relationship between a culture and perceptions of space. In Hebrew, the word for place, location, "*makom*" is also one of the names of God. Does it shadow and reflect the obligation to assemble ten men – but not in any specific place – for collective prayer, liturgy itself emerging from song ?