

Singing as an Israeli Woman: Musical Personae in a Cosmopolitan Society

By

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## Abstract

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Israel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an intensely multicultural society where several types of cosmopolitanism vie with regional and ethnic forms of expression, a phenomenon that plays out in musical life. I propose that such a society offers a variety of possibilities for what a woman is, what she can do, and how she can work. This dissertation is an ethnographic study of four female singer-songwriters that examines the ways they negotiate and sometimes challenge socio-cultural norms in creating their careers and constructing their artistic personae, or the version of themselves that they present as musicians.

The artists I focus on straddle four major rifts in Israeli society, between Arabs and Jews, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, Russian-speaking immigrants and native Israelis, and Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities. In using their ethnic heritage as cultural capital to corner a unique market niche, these artists become enmeshed in social politics that include tensions between ethnic and religious groups, conflicting gender roles, and struggles over belonging. I argue that as they create legible personae to meet the demands of the music industry, their liminality between mainstream society and a minority sector challenges the discourse around those identities. The success of their careers thus depends both on how their particular ethnicity is positioned in relation to more powerful models of Israeliness that are reproduced by public discourses, the state media and the entertainment industry, as well as how they meet commercial criteria for mainstream pop music. In working to satisfy this dual set of demands they engage with the canon of Israeli music, revealing and expanding its boundaries.

To illuminate how the artists define and challenge discourses of Israeliness, I analyze their songs, how they perform them, and what people say about them. The radio airtime their music receives and the venues where they perform further reveal how they are positioned within Israeli culture. Thus while the strategies they use in marking themselves as foreign are common to artists cross-culturally, the challenges they encounter offer a window onto changing social patterns in contemporary Israeli society.

In memory of my mother,  
my inspiration and guide in this project

Dr. Hadassah Ruth Singer

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## Notes on Language

I conducted all the formal and informal interviews in Hebrew so that my interlocutors would be most comfortable, although I made notes to myself in English, to the amusement of those who peered over my shoulder. People I spoke to often used words in English, but I chose not to block these off in quotes, since they were not significant terms or concepts.

The language in which I cite titles of songs, albums, and television shows serves to highlight the point of view of my interlocutors. For titles in Hebrew I use the English translation, in keeping with the interviews and media in Hebrew that I translate into English. Songs that are listed in the liner notes by their Arabic title I keep in Arabic, as the artist has chosen to do.

There are a number of terms I use in Hebrew rather than English, including *lehaqot tsvaiyot*, *shira betsibur*, *kehilot sharot*, *musika mizrahit* and *hazara betshuva*. These key institutions and phenomena are particular to Israeli culture, so that the Hebrew preserves their historical and social implications. Similarly, musical terms such as *silsulim*, *lazima*, and *kvetsch* have specific meanings within their genres that do not translate easily. For Hebrew transliterations I use the modern common informal system of Romanization to reflect the vernacular of my subjects. All translations are my own, except when noted otherwise.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

In April 2008 I attended a conference at the University of Virginia entitled “Hearing Israel: Music, Culture and History at 60.” On Sunday night we were treated to a show by “Israeli superstar” Etti Ankri.<sup>1</sup> I recognized the name from my childhood in Israel, and I was intrigued and excited to see her. As I settled into my seat I noticed a fair number of Israelis around me, surprising for a Southern city. Charlottesville, Virginia is not known as a Jewish metropolis. I turned my attention to the stage, which was scattered with twinkling votive candles. As the audience settled down with hushed anticipation, the drummer and bass player took their places and set up a groove. Soon Ankri herself entered, pacing slowly, strumming a guitar. She was dressed in a dusty pink chiffon kaftan with matching headdress. She was apparently not pleased with the music though, because she signaled the two men to stop, then restarted them in a new tempo before beginning to sing. Despite my tiredness, I was riveted to my seat by the power of her deep alto voice and the sensuousness of the music. How was Ankri able to create such a powerful performance that so clearly projected femininity, ethnic Otherness, and spirituality? I was also intrigued by the incongruity between her demure image and the control she displayed over the male musicians. At the end of the show the audience cheered its approval, calling for another and another of her songs. But as we were filing out of the auditorium, I overheard an audience member grumbling in Hebrew how she isn’t what she used to be. She used to have such gorgeous long hair. What had Ankri done to cause rancor among her fans that so clearly adored her?

### Ethnic Musical Personae

I wanted to find out who Ankri is, what she is trying to do in her music, and what she means to Israelis. I began researching Ankri’s career and music. What makes her music sound “ethnic”? Ankri’s melismatic sections stood out as particularly expressive moments.<sup>2</sup> I wanted to see what musical resources she drew on for those improvisations. I transcribed several songs, graphed the form, and ran recordings through a program that created a visual representation of her vocal timbre. I found that Ankri draws on both Middle Eastern and Indian musical traditions to create a sound that can be read as “ethnic,” in contrast to the mainstream Euro-American sound of Israeli rock. She emulates some aspects of these traditions, using different scales and changing her vocal timbre, but retains the song structure of rock and intonation of Western classical music. These questions and the methodology for answering them formed the basis for my final project.

In this dissertation I analyze the music of four female artists who use markers of ethnicity within a pop music framework. They draw on music from their own ethnic heritage, but in a limited capacity. This is in part because they are pop artists rather than specialists in those

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<sup>1</sup> This is how Ankri was billed in the conference publicity, <http://www.virginia.edu/jewishstudies/music-conference-images> (accessed March 7, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> That these melismatic sections seem to be characteristic of “exotic” singing by women is reaffirmed by a review of the album *Her Song: Exotic Women’s Voices from Around the World* (1996), on which Ankri appears. Adam Greenberg of *All Music Guide* suggests that it “tends to drag on with wordless vocals for extended stretches.”

<http://www.artistdirect.com/nad/store/artist/album/0,,238446,00.html> (accessed November 25, 2008).

musical traditions, but it is also a matter of staying within the genre of Western pop. It also allows them to present their ethnicity in a way that is recognizable and accessible to outsiders. As Jonathan Bellman suggests, “The exotic equation is a balance of familiar and unfamiliar: just enough ‘there’ to spice up the ‘here’ but remain comprehensible in making the point” (1998:xii). These musical gestures in turn allow the artists to create a categorizable persona.

Artists who create such a persona navigate a discursive tension between cosmopolitanism and ethnicity. By cosmopolitanism I mean “the sophistication that results from familiarity with what is different” (Ribeiro 2001:2842). Thomas Turino suggests that, “the term *cosmopolitan* often carries connotations of elite status and sophistication. Although not necessarily so by definition, cosmopolitans generally have tended to be of the economic and/or educated elites of any given society or social group” (2000:10). Although there are non-Western cosmopolitanisms (Grewal 2005), I focus on the discourse that associates it with the West. This plays out in music in a privileging of Euro-American pop, rock, jazz, and classical as modern cosmopolitan in contrast to ethnic musics as traditional. Postcolonial theorists critique the aspiration to belong to a cosmopolitan network as Eurocentric, privileging a narrative where Europe, not in its literal sense, but a perception of it as normative, is ahead and other nations lag behind (Stam and Shohat 2012). For the artist themselves there is no separation of their cosmopolitan from local or national identities, since cosmopolitanism is created through local identities (Feld 2012; Turino 2000). However, the discourse is still evident in the way artists and audiences ignore the racialized history and culture of pop and jazz in America, instead discussing it as unmarked, in contrast to their distinctive ethnic music.

Within this milieu artists can use their ethnic heritage as cultural capital to mark their identities. They are even expected to do so, in a process that bears similarity to the way racial mixing is “a neoliberal methodology that values racialized people according to their ability to produce and consume desirable forms of Otherness” (Haritaworn 2012:25). The artists thus bring out their ethnicity as Other, appealing to domestic cultural tourism. Greg Richards defines cultural tourism as “the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs” (1996:24). Within a multicultural society people enjoy this type of tourism without having to travel, by attending ethnic restaurants, and cultural fares and shows. Furthermore, Robert Wood argues that, “partaking in the ethnic diversity of one’s culture becomes almost a civic responsibility” (1998:230). The distinctive sectors in Israel that resulted from successive waves of immigration from different parts of the world foster an environment for domestic cultural tourism.

Women artists can further mark their ethnicity in ways that are different from those available to their male counterparts, since in popular music sensuality and foreignness tend to work in tandem. For example, Roshanak Kheshti shows how a particular label markets its world beat music in a way “the *other* is gendered female in the fantasy of hybridity” (2005:141). Femininity is particularly effective together with Middle Eastern ethnicities, since it plays on Orientalist discourses that position women as “the creatures of a male power-fantasy” (Said 1994:207). Thus, for example, while male Israeli artist Yair Dalal self-Orientalizes “in a costume that can be read in various ways: as a symbol of humility, purity, or simplicity, perhaps as a loose reference to piety were it not for the lack of head covering, but almost inevitably as ‘Oriental’” (Brinner 2009:314), female artist Natascha Atlas presents a provocative image, with colorful belly dance costumes that complement her buxom figure, long flowing hair, and heavy makeup. The hyper-sexualization in popular music allows women artists to enhance their

performance of ethnicity. Although the singer-songwriters I examine perform more conventional gender than in other genres, as Simon Frith suggests, “women performers in all musical genres have always been conscious of what it means to be spectacularly female” (1996:213). Femininity can also intersect with ethnicity to signal spirituality, like Dalal’s performance, or particular constructions of class and nation (Negra 2001b).

Marking themselves as Other, however, places the artists in a contradictory position of power. On the one hand, they use their ethnicity to carve out a space in mainstream popular music. On the other hand, they become objects for the dominant gaze. As bell hooks critiques, “when race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other” (1992:23). Artists, however, have agency within the dominant gaze, for example in what Dorinne Kondo calls *autoexoticization*, or the mobilization of “fragments of desire, producing an autotexoticism, an incorporation of Western elements and a Western gaze that beats the West at its own game and subverts, as it reinscribes, Orientalist tropes” (1997:84). In doing so the artists reverse the balance of power in Edward Said’s interpretation of Orientalism, whereby Europeans subjugate the Oriental Other (1979).

Initially I planned to study 10-12 women singer-songwriters in Israel to create a broad picture of contemporary Israeli society, placing them in historical perspective through archival work on past singers. In the process of researching, however, I realized that narrowing my focus to fewer artists would be more interesting and productive, because it would allow me to go into greater depth on each one and examine more fully the complexity of her situation. Indeed, one of the goals of this project became to de-essentialize the subjects. In the course of my fieldwork I narrowed down the scope to four subjects, based on a number of criteria.<sup>3</sup> I looked for artists who, like Ankri, were performing their ethnic heritage in their music. This would allow me to explore how they construct their persona through sound. I also wanted artists whose work falls within the realm of popular music rather than the ethnic music scene.<sup>4</sup> An important part of my research problem was examining the feedback loop between the artist and her audience, and artists who are targeting a broader audience offer more opportunity to study reception, since they often garner a larger audience and more media coverage. As I read reviews and talked to people I looked for artists who were eliciting particularly strong reactions from the public. One of the things that had intrigued me about Ankri’s show was the tension I sensed in the audience. This tension, I conjectured, was a key to revealing a significant social or political contention in Israeli society.

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<sup>3</sup> Ankri turned out not to be one of the subjects I write about in this dissertation. This is in part because, although I was able to meet her, she declined to be formally interviewed, but also because as a veteran artist she did not fit the criteria I established.

<sup>4</sup> The ethnic music scene, as defined by the musicians who participate in it, music critics, and record companies, is centered around an aesthetic of traditional Middle Eastern music rather pop-rock (Brinner 2009:182–8). Simona Wasserman further defines the scene in terms of an effort by some musicians to legitimize Mizrahi cultural production within Israeli music by positioning it as art music (2012). As such it caters to a more select audience than the larger Israeli popular music scene.

In planning the project I had posited ethnicity as the primary identity category through which the artists are challenging socio-cultural norms. I was interested in how they navigate expectations with their particular construction of gendered ethnicity. However, I found that while some artists elicited reactions that were centered on their ethnicity, others had ethnic identities that were equally marked but not contentious. For example, Ankri's performance of her Tunisian heritage turned out not to be divisive. Instead it was her religious identification as an Orthodox Jew that was the focus of heated debate. It soon became evident that religion was an important factor to consider for my project, both the artists' affiliation as Jewish or Christian, as well as different identifications within Judaism.

### **Israel: A Boiling Pot**

Israel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an intensely multicultural society. The Zionist founders of the State of Israel envisioned it as a melting pot whereby immigrant groups from all over the world would assimilate into one unified culture. Today, however, it has become a boiling pot.<sup>5</sup> A 2009 report by the Israel Democracy Institute concluded that,

According to objective measurements Israel is a divided country, in which there are sharp social tensions that are expressed in problematic relationships between its constituent groups. It seems that the Israeli public is aware of this situation... The social cleavages are hallmark signs of democracy, and the situation is not expected to improve in the near future (Arian, Philippov, and Knafelman 2009).

Baruch Kimmerling (2001) similarly identifies a fracturing of a hegemonic secular Zionist identity into a number of subcultures defined by ethnic and religious affiliations. However, it is important to note that academic discourse does not necessarily reflect lived reality. While these tensions do exist, they are manifested primarily in political ideology, while in daily encounters members of the different sectors share the space peaceably.

I focus on four major rifts in Israeli society.<sup>6</sup> The first rift is between Jews and Arabs.<sup>7</sup> The continued state of war with the surrounding Arab countries leaves Palestinian Israelis in a difficult position, as Israeli citizens who are not fully accepted into Jewish society, while not necessarily being fully accepted by other Arabs either. The second is between Ashkenazim (Jews from Europe and America) and Mizrahim (Jews from the Middle East and North Africa). This was a major division during the early years of the state, with Mizrahim being subordinate. While the economic disparity between the two groups and the cultural marginalization of Mizrahim is less prominent today, such issues continue to be of concern. The third is between native Israelis and the Russian-speaking community.<sup>8</sup> A large wave of immigration from the former Soviet

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<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Edwin Seroussi for the concept of Israel as a boiling pot. Personal communication, February 28, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Two of these rifts, secular/religious and Israeli/Palestinian, are explored through music in the film *Israel Rocks!* (2000).

<sup>7</sup> There is a range of ways scholars are writing around this conflict (Brinner 2009; Horowitz 2010; McDonald 2013; Regev and Seroussi 2013).

<sup>8</sup> "Russians" is the designation used most widely in both popular and academic discourse to designate immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, functioning as a shortcut and to underscore the group's panethnic identity.

Union in the 1990s has created a community within a community. Within a very short period of time, more than one out of ten Israelis was an immigrant from FSU.<sup>9</sup> The fourth is between non-Orthodox and Orthodox Jewish Israelis. Tensions are rising as the ultra-Orthodox establishment is gaining a larger share of power in the Israeli government and imposing increasing restrictions on the society. The current trend of *hazara betshuva*, a return to traditional Orthodox Judaism, is heightening anxiety among non-Orthodox and more moderate factions of Orthodox Israelis. Each of the artists I write about represents one of these rifts. Mira Awad is Palestinian Israeli, Dikla identifies herself as Mizrahi, Marina Maximilian Blumin immigrated to Israel from the Ukraine, and Din Din Aviv was undergoing *hazara betshuva* during the research period.<sup>10</sup>

Women's bodies are often implicated in the tensions between the two sides of each rift. Different values regarding the role and behavior of women in the minority sectors contribute to misperceptions. The most prominent of these has manifested in clashes between some members of the ultra-Orthodox community and those outside of that community. For example, certain bus lines that run through ultra-Orthodox communities have a policy that women must sit in the rear of the bus, and a woman made national headlines when she refused to do so (Blumenfeld 2011). There have also been violent confrontations over gender segregation in the streets of Beit Shemesh (Bar-Zohar and Rosenberg 2011). The National Religious community, some of which follow some of the norms of Orthodoxy, have also come into conflict with the ultra-Orthodox, as when a group of ultra-Orthodox men spat on a young National Religious girl on her way to school for not dressing modestly enough (Walz 2011). The traditionally patriarchal structure of social and familial institutions in the Arab world has contributed to the alienation of the Arab sector from Jewish Israeli society. Although Arab societies are changing, Western scholarship and the media continue to perpetuate stereotypes of Middle Eastern women, often contrasting them with those of liberated Western women (Sharoni 1995:27). Negative attitudes towards the Russian-speaking community too have focused on women, because of the higher rate of divorce, single motherhood, the use of abortion as a birth control method, and low number of children seen as characteristic of this sector (Remennick 2004).

The artists in this dissertation straddle the rift they represent, and in doing so contend with challenges on both sides. Israeli-Palestinian women occupy a contradictory place, where they have increasing freedom but still face norms of preference for male authority (Sa'ar 2007:50). Those women who leave the Arab sector in favor of the less restrictive Jewish society face a different set of challenges, since they have formal citizenship, but second-class status. Although Christian Israeli Palestinians occupy a higher socioeconomic class than Muslim ones, this status as an elite minority can leave them both empowered and powerless (Amalia Sa'ar 1998).

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<sup>9</sup> During that decade over 800,000 people immigrated from the FSU, when Israel's total population was 4.8 million. "CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel," *Central Bureau of Statistics State of Israel* (September 22, 2014), [https://www1.cbs.gov.il/shnaton65/st04\\_04.pdf](https://www1.cbs.gov.il/shnaton65/st04_04.pdf), and "The Population of Israel 1990-2009," *Central Bureau of Statistics State of Israel* (October 20, 2010), [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/wsd/docs/Israel\\_wsd\\_brochure.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/wsd/docs/Israel_wsd_brochure.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> In this dissertation I do not aim to give a comprehensive portrait of the artists I write about, all of whom have since moved on to new projects and repertoire. Instead I focus on a limited number of performances over the span of approximately one year, with the aim of teasing out strategies that might shed light on the work of professional artists more generally.

Mizrahi women face a similar power imbalance with men and with Ashkenazim. As Galit Saada-Ophir suggests, “in their activities female *Mizrahi* singers are forced to act against Eurocentric views defining them as the carriers of ancient Jewish folklore and at the same time against paternalistic views that see them as inferior to men” (2004:7). Even in academia stereotypes persist, so that Mizrahi women faculty feel disadvantaged and discriminated against (Toren 2009). Furthermore, in pursuing an academic career they have to contend with conflicting pressures between family and work, since they are socialized to be caregivers (ibid.).

Gender norms for women are less restrictive among the immigrants from the FSU, but women from this sector nevertheless face stigmatization in Israel for their different cultural values, as just noted. They are also stigmatized based on class: although in the FSU many had middle- or upper-class education and occupations, in Israel they have been unable to find work and have been relegated to a low economic class. They must also contend with stereotypes associated with the sex trade that was connected to the immigration wave from the FSU.

Professional female musicians who undergo *hazara betshuva* must contend with the proscription in Orthodox Judaism against women singing in front of men, or *kol beisha erva* [which can be variously glossed as arousal caused by a woman’s voice, or a woman’s voice is nakedness or lewdness]. Rabbinical authorities interpret this injunction to different degrees of restriction and applicable only to some contexts (Schreiber 1984), so that many women artists continue performing for mixed audiences. However, in doing so they must navigate expectations and censure of both the ultra-Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities. For those artists who do perform for mixed audiences, their careers are nevertheless curtailed by their primary duties of raising a family.

Each rift is between a dominant group and a minority sector. I posit these dominant identities as defining a mainstream audience for which the artists perform. This group is culturally dominant because of the higher socioeconomic status as well as larger number of consumers. Although, as Alison Huber cautions, ‘mainstream’ is problematic as a metaphor, “if, instead, we think about the *specificity* of mainstream and the particularity of its practices and processes, then mainstream becomes an historically contingent category that usefully refers us to modes of dominant (or dominance-producing) behaviours, discourses, values, identities, and so on” (2013:11). The Israeli mainstream audience I write about is centered on middle-class Jewish, but not ultra-Orthodox, Israelis who have been in the country for several generations. These criteria distinguish it from the distinctive ethnic and religious sectors. As’ad Ghanem argues for a model of center and peripheries, suggesting that Israel is a hegemonic ethnic state run by Ashkenazim, where Palestinian-Arabs, Mizrahim, Russian immigrants, and religious groups “cope with and...resist the diverse ‘ethnic state’ arrangements that affect them” (2010:25). Oren Yiftachel’s (2006) argument that Israel is an ethnocracy suggests a similar framework. However, I find this model to be too simplistic. For example, Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yohanan Peres examine how religious identification shapes the degree to which Mizrahim affiliate with their ethnic group, positing a central core made up of nonreligious Ashkenazim and traditional Mizrahim (2005:212). Including some Mizrahim in the dominant category with Ashkenazim problematizes Ghanem’s model.

Each of the artists belongs to a group that challenges these boundaries. Awad is Christian Palestinian, a population whose Western and higher education bring it closer in values and economic status to Jewish Israelis than to Muslim Palestinians (Tsimhoni 2002). Dikla, while taking pride in her Sephardic lineage, belongs in her lifestyle to the group of “middle-class mobiles” who “identify more closely with the non ethnic ‘all-Israeli’ spirit that prevails in



Israel's middle class secular milieu" (Ben-Rafael and Peres 2005:109). Blumin belongs to the second generation of immigrants from the FSU, who are assimilating into the larger society (Niznik 2012). And Aviv is part of the group of *hozrim betshuva* who are creating their own way of being Jewish and challenging the boundary between Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities (Rotem 2010). From their liminal position, the artists expose how the group boundaries are discursively constructed.

### **Performing Contested Identities**

I wanted to find out why the artists were foregrounding their ethnicity and religion when these identities are so politically charged, and how they make it work. These are all cosmopolitan women living in Tel Aviv, performing pop music and jazz. They look "white," in the sense of belonging to the dominant unmarked racial category, and speak Hebrew with no accent distinguishing them from the majority of native-born Israelis. Why did they start performing their ethnicity when they had already begun establishing a music career without it? How do they manage the stigmas and tensions these identities evoke? How do they transform difference that is perceived as threatening and so elicits aversion, and make it attractive to their audience by presenting it as unfamiliar and exciting?

I explore how the artists perform their identities within a framework of commercial and social constraints. One of the most important demands for succeeding in the popular music market is a distinctive but identifiable persona, and a persona based on ethnicity meets this need. As Turino suggests, "capitalism trades on difference, i.e., the continual need to sell new products that are distinct in some way. Exoticism is simply one source of distinction and novelty" (2003:73). The need for a distinct persona is especially true in Israel. Today there are many more artists competing in the Israeli popular music market than there were fifty years ago, so that it is more challenging to gain the attention of the public and generate an audience. For the artists in this study the platform they share is more unified than their differences, so that marking themselves as different requires even more investment. Too much difference, however, risks alienating them from the mainstream, the dominant institutions of the music industry (Webb 2007). While an ethnicity that is contested works even better as a persona than one that is less charged, because it garners attention in the media, the more problematic the ethnicity, whether because of its political volatility or social stigmatization, the more challenging it is for the artist to promote her career with it. Thus the challenge is a combination of the ethnicity itself that the artist is portraying, together with how she presents it.

I use intersectionality to expose shifting relations of power in the way the artists perform their identities. Theories of intersectionality posit that race, gender, and class cannot be considered separately as identity categories, but that each is constituted through the others in the way that "social identities which serve as organizing features of social relations, mutually constitute, reinforce, and naturalize one another" (Shields 2008:301). Subsequent studies have added consideration of sexuality (Kuntsman 2003; Randolph 2006; Schippers 2000; Yarbo-Bejarano 1997), age (Hill Collins 2006), and disability (Loeser and Crowley 2009). Intersectionality studies on Israel indicate that religion is also an important variable to consider (Halevi 1999; Sztokman 2006). In this dissertation I focus on gender, ethnicity, class, region, and religion as the defining aspects of the artists' personae within Israeli society.

Black feminist scholars introduced the concept of intersectionality to express the specificity of African American women's experience (Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Hill Collins 1990), and to understand the interlocking "matrix of oppression" to which women of color are subject

(Hill Collins 1990:227). Pnina Motzafi-Haller (2001) argues for a similar positioning of Mizrahi women in Israel. In this dissertation, however, I examine a set of subjects that cuts across ethnic groups. The artists I write about, including the Mizrahi one, all have successful careers, so that to focus only their oppression would be inadequate to understanding their experience. Instead I seek to illuminate the multifaceted and contradictory relations of power in each subject's position. With this approach I join European scholars in undertaking the challenge of maintaining the original intent of intersectionality as a political project while adapting it to the socio-cultural realities of a culture outside the U.S. (Lutz, Vivar, and Supik 2011:9).

As middle-class urban women, the artists in my study are members of the dominant group. However, my interest is not so much in the dominant category per se (cf. studies of whiteness or masculinity), but in how it enables them to invoke their ethnicity selectively in ways that enhance their power. For example, at a Tel Aviv café Awad delivered most of her patter in Hebrew, portraying herself as mainstream Israeli, but at a show supporting coexistence she included more Arabic, drawing attention to her Arab ethnicity. She also performed her Arabness as cosmopolitan by setting lyrics in Arabic to Euro-American pop music. Analyzing such use of 'strategic advantages' of multiple identities (Søndergaard 2005) avoids reducing identity to marginalization and vulnerability. In performing their ethnicity the artists work both with and against dominant discourses. For example, while Arab-Israelis and Mizrahim are subordinate groups in Israeli society, Arab music is chic in certain elite Jewish circles. Awad and Dikla thus have cachet as Arab singers and motivation to emphasize the foreignness of their music.

Vivian May argues that intersectionality "aims to identify the many forms of power at work, to show how they constellate, interrelate, and intermingle, and to then address how these intersections maintain subordination and inequality (and also uphold power and privilege)" (2015:79). In my study dominance and subordination intersect and operate on different levels in ways that complicate perceptions of minority sectors. For example, Awad is Arab, a subordinate group, but her Christian affiliation, middle class status, and urban upbringing put her in a privileged position, problematizing stereotypes of Arab women based on rural Muslim Arabs. Blumin, on the other hand, has Russian ethnicity that belongs to a subordinate socioeconomic class in the context of immigration, but is privileged as secular Jewish Ashkenazi, allowing her to perform Otherness in a position of power. Analyzing how these constellations of power operate within Israeli society avoids the danger Chandra Mohanty (1991) warns against, of positing a uniform model of power and struggle across cultures.

Examining how the artists operate within the mainstream also sheds light on that group itself. As Susanne Knudsen (2006) argues, focusing on minority cultures or marginalized groups exposes issues of inclusion and exclusion from the center. For these artists, however, the issue is not normativity in their everyday lives, but how their music is positioned in relation to the Israeli canon. The theme of inclusion and exclusion runs through this dissertation, as I examine how the artists balance their otherness with belonging. In giving prominence to their ethnicity in their music the artists must take care not to limit themselves to a niche. This is especially important in Israel because of its small size.<sup>11</sup> They need to conform to mainstream pop criteria as part of the aesthetics of the genre they have chosen to belong to, but also in order for their songs to be played on the more popular stations on the radio, a key institution for promoting their music. The

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<sup>11</sup> This, for example, is one of the reasons Yasmin Levy, an Israeli singer specializing in Ladino songs, established most of her career abroad.

army station Galgalatz, which has a very large audience, has especially been criticized for being conservative in its playlists (Regev and Seroussi 2013:230).

Being heard on particular radio stations is also important for a sense of belonging. Regev and Seroussi argue that, “popular music in Israel should be understood primarily as a leading area in the symbolic representation of Israeliness” (2004:2). In Israel, the search for a national identity is particularly prominent, not only because it is a relatively young country, but also because the issue was central to Zionist efforts to renew the Jewish people as distinct from their diasporic identities, in which religion and second-class citizenship were prominent components. Thus national belonging is often included in intersectionality literature on Israel (Blumen and Halevi 2005; Jacoby 1999; Peleg 2008). In the process of finding their unique persona and music, the artists expose and sometimes expand the boundaries of Israeliness.

Performance theory offers a lens for examining how the artists perform their gendered and ethnic Otherness in ways that meet expectations of their audience while challenging those expectations as cosmopolitan women. I examine their work in terms of *performative* utterances (Austin 1962), or utterances that change the social reality they are describing. Although all language is citational (Derrida 1982), there is room for agency. Judith Butler argues that gender is “*a corporeal style*, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘*performative*’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (1990:193). The norms are internalized so that performativity “consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s ‘will’ or ‘choice’” (1993:234). However, in the repetition there is room for change. Thus performativity cites discourse, while performance changes it.

Just as gender is performed, flexible, and contested, ethnicity too is performative. Stuart Hall argues that “black is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category” (1996:443). E. Patrick Johnson (2003) adds that ‘blackness’ is a dialogic performance. Ethnicity, however, is different from race and gender in that it is often not written on the body as noticeably, so that there can be more conscious choice in rejecting or reclaiming ethnic heritage and performing it in different ways. The four artists differ in the degree to which they deploy their ethnic heritage. On one end of the spectrum is Dikla, who takes on the entire persona of Egyptian diva through music, appearance, and origin story that naturalizes it. On the other end is Aviv, who adds a couple of Greek folksongs to her repertoire, but is careful to delineate that heritage as her mother’s and not her own.

The particular ethnicities I discuss in my study do not have the same significance as race in Israel. There is, however, an underlying division of the ethnicities into dominant and subordinate categories. Aziza Khazzoom (2008) claims that the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi binary functions the same way as white and black in the U.S. This binary is reinforced in the way Russian-speaking Israelis are aligned with Ashkenazim, while Arabs are aligned with Mizrahim. The structure is complicated, however, in the different ethnicities that get included in each monolithic category. For example Egyptian is considered Ashkenazi in the context of genetics,<sup>12</sup> even though as culturally Middle Eastern it falls under the Mizrahi category.

The difference between race and ethnicity also becomes clear in the context of music. Even though the women I write about grew up with a particular cultural heritage, they only

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<sup>12</sup> The Israeli Ministry of Health recommends that people of Egyptian heritage undergo genetic testing for all the diseases for which Ashkenazim are at risk. <http://www.briuthaisha.co.il/184011> [accessed 5 November, 2015].

learned to perform the music associated with that heritage later in life, from outside sources. For example, Awad learned Arabic music at the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, while Aviv turned to YouTube for her Greek choreography. Their liminality works both to their advantage and disadvantage, exposing shifting relations of power. On one hand, their Otherness gives them a cachet of authenticity amongst domestic cultural tourists. On the other hand, they do not always have the competency to perform the music associated with their ethnic heritage, exposing them to criticism for inauthenticity. Jon McKenzie's (2001) paradigm of discursive performatives and embodied performances illuminates the interaction of who the artists are with what they do on stage.

Expressing gendered ethnicity is a complex interplay of aesthetic and everyday performance. The artists may experience their performance as a spontaneous expression of themselves. Erving Goffman (1959) posits this as part of the belief in the part one is playing. An individual may be taken in by his own act or be cynical about it, and people move from one end of the spectrum to the other. However, as professional musicians there is also a strategic element to their performance. Simon Frith (1996) suggests that the performer in popular music is defined by three layers: the real person (the performer as human being), the performance persona (the performer's self-presentation), and the character (a figure portrayed in a song text). The three layers allow performers to move in and out of personae, shaping themselves to suit different contexts. At times they draw attention to their ethnic identification, panethnic one, politicized identity, or a Western cosmopolitanism. In this way "the vexed and productive relationship between theatricality and performativity offers a structure for understanding the dynamics of identity-based theatre" (Jackson 2004:215).

The interaction between performativity and performance illuminates complex dynamics of choice and power as the artists challenge discourses with their personae. All four artists were initially labeled by their ethnicity in some form, by the public or a colleague. According to Louis Althusser's concept of *interpellation*, they were 'hailed,' or addressed according to a particular ideology. While being hailed was not within their control, they had a choice in their uptake of that hailing, in recognizing or refusing it. Even though the artists resisted the label being imposed on them, either because of social stigma, or because it did not match their self-perception, they proceeded to claim that ethnic identity as part of their artistic persona. By misrecognizing the intention of the hailing they reinterpreted it in ways that were advantageous. This is the tactic of *disidentification* that Jose Muñoz (1999) suggests minoritarians use to resist dominant ideology.

The artists in my study, however, are not necessarily intentionally subverting norms. Their more immediate considerations are promoting their careers while expressing themselves through their music. Gray proposes that, "the sense of conscious agency may be an artifact of conflicts among our impulses... That does not mean we are ruled by instinct or habit. It means we spend our lives coping with what comes along" (2002:70). On one hand, the artists have agency in shaping their careers, since they belong to what Thomas Turino (2000) calls *cosmopolitan formations*, local communities that are connected to other similar communities around the world by a set of ideas rather than location or heritage. In their daily lives they are cosmopolitan subjects living in cities that are cultural centers, while as popular music artists they belong to a transnational network of pop and jazz musicians. This means they can adopt certain values, since, as Inderpal Grewal argues, "appropriation of neoliberal discourses was only possible for particular subjects gendered, classed, and racialized in specific connectivities within which knowledge moved and could be accessed" (2005:3). However, that freedom also compels them to make decisions that promote their public image and music, since they are responsible for

advancing their careers, illustrating how capitalist production produces identity (Joseph 2002). At times they are even driven to act in ways that are not fully aligned with their own sensibilities.

The artists are also less likely to be consciously rebellious because they are working within a mainstream genre. For pop singer-songwriters their performance of gender in particular is likely to be normative, in contrast, for example, to gender crossing in glam rock or eroticism in hip-hop. Saba Mahmood argues that “agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one *inhabits* norms” (2005:15). For these women the choice to adhere to norms is not just a personal or social consideration, but an economic one, too. As Dorinne Kondo (1997) claims, performing in the dominant eye rather than in marginal spaces entails subscribing to dominant images in order to be marketable. These women must also make their gendered ethnicity legible to an audience of outsiders, at times reinforcing stereotypes.

Even as they reproduce dominant discourses with their performance of ethnicity, however, they problematize them in the way those discourses intersect with their gender, class, region, and religion. To mainstream audiences they can sometimes function as representations of ethnic minority sectors for the tourist gaze. The artists in turn respond to these perceptions, illustrating how “performance is a mode through which representation is enacted and negotiated” (Ebron 2002:11). In their role as representative they also fill a particular cultural need. For example, in certain contexts Awad stands in for Jewish-Arab coexistence, or Dikla symbolizes multiculturalism. Building on Philip Auslander’s assertion that, “an audience actively *constructs* the performer’s identity in ways that speak to what it wants and needs that performer to be” (2006:233), a valuable avenue of exploration is the different meanings that are produced through reception (Hirschkind 2006).

I examine this feedback loop in terms of a *discursive formation*, what Michel Foucault (1972) posits as the linguistic and material practices that produce a particular reality. In performing their ethnic or religious identification through their gender, the artists respond to the discourse around those identity categories, and in turn help shape it with their performance. As the artists work to make their music acceptable for mainstream radio, they illuminate the boundaries that define the perceived canon of Israeli music. At the same time, they add sounds, languages, and ideas that challenge those boundaries.

I hypothesize that even as these artists create a persona to meet the demands of the music industry, their liminal positions between mainstream society and particular minority sectors intervenes in the discourse around those ethnicities because it indicates that the boundaries are more fluid than general perception or the media allows. As they advance their careers, the artists continually navigate between the profitable potential of performing a minority identity with the limitations and challenges of being labeled as such. They create a public persona that is streamlined and intelligible, but then find themselves limited in how they can express themselves as complex individuals. Using ethnic heritage as cultural capital also enmeshes them in social politics that include struggles over sense of belonging, tensions between ethnic and religious groups, and conflicting gender roles. How they navigate their careers thus offers a window onto changing social and political dynamics in Israeli society.

## **Gendered Ethnicity and Israeli Popular Music**

Israeli popular music is a lively and complex phenomenon, but as yet the topic has generated a relatively small body of scholarship. My focus on individual musicians, the choices they make, and the repercussions of those choices, affords a level of attention to individual

agency that is unusual in the field of Israeli popular music studies. By following trajectories of particular artists with a variety of backgrounds and sensibilities, but with intersecting paths through a common set of possibilities, I hope to produce a more textured study of Israeli popular music. In integrating the perspective of gender with perspectives that have been the center of attention, such as ethnicity and sense of belonging, I hope that my findings will bring the conversation over Israeli popular music and society in closer alignment with the complex array of socio-cultural forces and formulations in play.

In this study I consider decisions Israeli artists make in performing their ethnicity in their music, foregrounding the commercial aspect. This approach adds a new perspective to studies that have examined ethnicity in terms of larger trends. One is how musicians use their ethnicity to express local identity (Nocke 2009; Regev 1992, 2007). A related view is Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi's paradigm of contestation over defining national identity, where *mizrahiyut* is the ethnic variant of Israeliness (Regev and Seroussi 2004). In the revised Hebrew edition of their book, Regev and Seroussi also mention the trend of returning to pre-Zionist roots (2013:335), though not as part of their analysis.

My study offers an examination of how these trends and social patterns operate on the individual level. In order to understand musical trends we need to look at the people who are producing them. As Joseph Schloss suggests,

No matter how significant the pressures applied by base and superstructure, nationalism, capitalism, and ethnicity, it is still individual human beings (and their friends) who must navigate this course...It is the strategies they use to assimilate the larger concerns into their lives—concerns of politics, class, culture, gender, and morality—that provide the most nuanced pictures of how and why music works (2004:195).

In emphasizing individual agency, I join the growing body of studies on Israeli popular music that examine how particular artists challenge boundaries. Dana International, for example, a highly successful transvestite Mizrahi pop singer, is a favorite subject for deconstructing categories of gender, ethnicity, religion, and nationality (Maurey 2009; Moriel 1998; Raykoff 2007; Swedenburg 1997). By contrast, my study focuses on artists who conform to the most basic norms of gender, which allows them to challenge those norms in relation to other categories.

The consideration of choice within a neoliberal context also underlies my examination of *how* Israelis perform their ethnicity in their music. The predominant literature on Israeli popular music focuses on the use of ethnicity to express ethnic group identity, particularly for Mizrahim in relation to *musika mizrahit* (Cohen and Shiloah 1985; Halper, Seroussi, and Squires-Kidron 1989; Horowitz 1997, 2010; Regev 1996). Instead I look at how individual artists navigate these category boundaries in the way they perform their ethnicity. Rather than rejecting the categories as purely discursive (Lewis 1985; Loeb 1985), my approach accounts for their social reality while realizing that they are a social construction (Goldscheider 1992, 2002). In doing so I join the debate in sociology on the viability of the categories of Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, examining Mizrahiyut as a discourse (Dardashti 2001; Kaplan 2012; Saada-Ophir 2006). My study examines how people strategically invoke not only Mizrahi, but also Ashkenazi ethnicity.

My study further contributes to the literature on Israeli popular music by examining strategic use of identity across different ethnic groups. The predominant scholarship is on Mizrahim, who have historically been considered the “ethnic” element in Israeli. While a growing body of literature focuses on Palestinian musicians (Brinner 2009; Dardashti 2009b),

the music of the Russian-speaking community has only been examined in terms of listening practices (Niznik 2012),<sup>13</sup> and Greek ethnicity and music are only mentioned briefly within Regev and Seroussi's larger study (2004:200–201). I consider all four groups, juxtaposing them to reveal parallels and divergences in the possibilities for artists in Israeli society. Furthermore, considering them in terms of ethnic identities rather than communities exposes the dynamics of the process of self-identification.

My focus on women artists highlights these important voices that are emerging in Israeli popular music. There are few studies on female singers (Flam 1986, 2006; Regev 2004), and none that address issues of gender. The artists I write about are contributing a new perspective to Israeli popular music particularly as singer-songwriters, since in the history of Israeli music women have generally performed songs written by men, particularly Ashkenazi men. Thus it is important to study the intersection of gender and ethnicity not just among Mizrahim (Roginsky 2006; Saada-Ophir 2004), but across ethnic groups. As Seroussi argues, "scholarship of music in Israel needs to be more attentive to and come to terms with [the] plethora of authentic voices which decentralizes the imagined core of musical Israeliness as much as it contributes to it" (2008:27). The artists in my study expand the Israeli canon by singing in languages other than Hebrew, bringing minority identities into dominant definitions of Israeliness through their music.

More broadly, this study contributes to literature on transcultural constructions of femininity and masculinity through ethnicity, what I call gendered ethnicity. Simone de Beauvoir argues that woman "is the essential Other to the male Self" (Lancaster 1997:2). Women of ethnic minorities are doubly Othered for their race and gender, subjected to Orientalist discourses (Kim and Chung 2005; Pyke and Johnson 2003) and oppression (Collins 2004; Hardison 2014). By focusing on mainstream singer-songwriters I expose relations of power in the way women perform normative femininities in a male-dominated field. Of particular interest to me is how minority subjects construct their identity in relation to the dominant group, deploying both dominance and subalterneity. Studies show how men of ethnic minorities construct their masculinities in dialogue with hegemonic culture (Chua and Fujino 1999; Peleg 2008; Walters and Valenzuela 2013). Others focus on how women borrow norms of femininity across races, within their own culture (Reid-Brinkley 2008) and cross-culturally (Turner and Yangwen 2009), to raise their status. I turn this around, examining how subjects construct a gendered ethnicity from their perspective within the dominant culture. They are enabled in this by their liminal position as first-generation Israelis. While scholarship on this population in the U.S. examines how they loosen traditional gender norms (Lee and Zhou 2004; Maira 2002), one must be cautious about assuming such a trend among younger generations across cultures (Sugihara and Katsurada 1999). In my study, Dikla and Blumin self-consciously perform femininities associated with an older generation. However, unlike subjects who must grapple with the gender inequality of traditional gender norms in their everyday lives (Charlebois 2010), these artists have more leeway in performing their identity as a personae.

My study further contributes to scholarship on how religion and nationalism shape constructions of gendered ethnicity. Much of this literature centers on Muslim identities because of their political salience (Archer 2003; Hopkins and Gale 2009; Marable and Aidi 2009). Studies also focus on fundamentalist sectors as marked identities, such as evangelical Christianity (Owenby 2008) and Orthodox Judaism (Sztokman 2006, 2008). However, I aim to

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<sup>13</sup> Similar work has been done on Ethiopian group identity through listening practices (Shabtay 2001, 2003).

show that religion can shape gendered ethnicity even when it is not marked, for example Awad as Christian Arab rather than Muslim Arab, or Blumin belonging to the dominant group through her unmarked Jewish affiliation. In Israel social categorizations are often intertwined with Zionist ideology (Fuchs 2014), so that my study contributes to the literature on how government politics shape constructions of gendered ethnicity (Metzger 2014; Ong and Peletz 1995). In this way it helps counteract the depoliticization and whitening of intersectionality (Bilge 2013).

Music offers a privileged site for examining these issues, since it foregrounds identities as a performance, a dynamic that is particularly true for singers. Artists reinscribe and reshape discourses of gendered ethnicity through particular genres (Emerson 2002; Pemberton 2008; Randolph 2006) or performance contexts (Brunet 2012; Sugarman 2004). I examine how one artist modifies her persona for different contexts within one genre. While in some genres extreme hypersexualization and fetishization of the body underscore this process (Guilbault 2010; Olsen and Gould 2008), applicable to my study is the naturalization of artists' performances (Fox 2009). The apparatus of the music industry further allows artists to mark dominant identity categories that are otherwise unmarked (Eastman and Schrock 2008). I contribute to this literature an examination of this process within commercial and social constraints that are specific to Israeli society.

### **Methodology: Archive and Repertoire**

In order to see how the artists create their persona in dialogue with their audience, I use a combination of ethnography, discourse analysis through the media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and social media), and musical analysis. My approach considers music both as a text and as a performance. In doing so I follow Diana Taylor's suggestion that, "the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)" work in tandem (2003:18). This dual approach informed my analysis of the music itself as well as the social context in which it is performed.

My archive includes interviews with each of the artists, as well as musicians who work with them, intermediaries, and audience members. Formal interviews lasted one to two hours, in a café or the artist's home, though on occasion I also spoke with the artists right before a show.<sup>14</sup> Audience interviews were informal, relying on fieldnotes rather than recording, and targeting a variety of demographics. My archive also includes audio and video recordings of all the shows I attended, as well as hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles, and television shows in which the artists appeared. Social media such as Facebook and My Space provided another site for studying how the artists presented themselves to their audience.

I based my fieldwork on what Hugh Gusterson calls 'polymorphous engagement.' "Given that elites are often geographically dispersed, busy, and difficult to access, we can expect modifications to the traditional ethnographic method as more anthropologists move to multi-sited projects and to supplement participant observation with archival work, interaction in cyberspace,

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<sup>14</sup> Formal interviews include: Mira Awad, March 8, 2011, at Café Bialik in Tel Aviv. Dikla, January 22, 2011 at the Yellow Submarine in Jerusalem, and February 7, 2011 at Tzavta in Tel Aviv. Marina Maximilian Blumin, April 26, 2011 at Café Nechama Vachetzi in Tel Aviv. Din Din Aviv, April 10, 2011 in her home in Hod Hasharon. Yehudit Ravitz, May 5, 2011 in her home in Tel Aviv. Ahuva Ozeri, April 11, 2011 in her home in Neve Tzedek, Tel Aviv. Boaz Cohen, January 16, 2011, at Press Café in Tel Aviv.



and condensed formal interviews with informants met only once” (2001:4419). This approach allowed me to focus on the artists’ public persona. Marion Leonard points out that, “press interviews should not be thought of as an event in which a musician reveals their ‘true self’ but as a site in which the musician performs their public identity.” This was true of the way artists spoke to me as well. What interested me then were the themes they used to explain their lives. For example, their citations of other artists as influences reveal how they position themselves within the cosmopolitan formation of popular music. Since, according to Michael Bakhtin’s dialogic principle, every performance is citational (Todorov 1984), the intertextual aspect of their performance is crucial to interpreting its meaning. Such themes appeared in my own interviews with the artists, as well as interviews in the press and on radio and television talk shows. These themes moved in both directions. Often the artist repeated to me what they had said in a previous interview, but sometimes they would tell me something they seemed to think of at the moment, and then I would read it in a subsequent article. In this way I not only watched their process of creating themselves for their audience, but participated in it too. Informal interviews with audience members and candid remarks I overheard at shows offered further insight into how the artists’ personae are perceived by their audiences.

Media interviews were also helpful in assessing the discourse surrounding these artists, since they reveal as much about the interviewer as the artist being interviewed. The combination of participant observation and archival work illuminated the artists’ position in society. I privileged reviews by music critics and journalists, since these voices are influential,<sup>15</sup> although my analysis took into consideration the author’s background and motivations. Critics are constrained by having to play a particular role, offer insight to their readers. Sometimes they intentionally try to provoke, but they nevertheless reveal what boundaries the artist is pushing. Another source for understanding how the artists are positioned in society was cameos they performed on television shows. Since they are scripted, these appearances reveal the position of the writers more clearly. Satirical moments self-consciously expose social discourse and therefore summarize it particularly succinctly. I want to emphasize that my analysis of the artists’ music and personae is my own interpretation, and that it is only one of many ways their performance could be received. Rather than attempt a reception study, I offer my own analysis based on the materials I gathered.

Attending shows allowed me to see how the artist constructed her persona through markers of gender, ethnicity, and religion in her dress, movement, and stage talk. While media appearances are performances, the theatrical dimension of a stage show produced by a team of people spotlights these markers, and so foreground how the artist conforms to sociocultural norms or challenges them. All four artists generally heightened their femininity by wearing dresses or form-fitting pants and often high-heeled shoes (except Aviv who danced barefoot). Their position as singers in itself signifies a particular gendering (Bayton 1998), since it has been a challenge for women to gain acceptance as instrumentalists in popular music. Although it is not

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<sup>15</sup> Regev and Seorussi used a similar methodology of “newspaper articles as sources in order to document, with relative accuracy, current developments on the popular-music scene, as well as reflections of the critical views and perceptions in vogue on a vast array of ideological and aesthetic issues” (2004:39). Like them I focused on the “three daily newspapers [that] have dominated the press in Israel since the 1950s: *Maariv*, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, and *Haaretz*. The first two are wide-circulation newspapers... *Haaretz* is the Israeli ‘thinking people’s’ newspaper, read by intellectuals, academics, and professionals” (2004:38).

true of all popular music, in my study almost all the instrumentalists accompanying these female singers were men. The only exception I saw was Noa Vax, who used to play hand percussion regularly for Dikla's shows. A significant crossing of gender lines is Aviv's djembe drumming, which helps her create a more assertive image of pious femininity.

Dress is the most obvious indication of gendered ethnicity and religion, but movement can suggest it too, such as when in one venue Dikla used choppy movements of a "rock" style, but in another used sinuous ones in ways that evoked her Middle Eastern ethnicity. I also looked for how the artist interacted with the male instrumentalists, how she negotiated conflicting power relations between her position as lead singer and ethnic or religious woman. Dikla, for example, identified with her male musicians by playing air guitar during instrumental solos. Stage talk was a particularly important site where the artist constructed her persona, drawing attention to her ethnicity by using words in a language other than Hebrew, or her Jewish religion by peppering her speech with identifying phrases. Stage talk is also where she naturalized her persona with an origin story, or by breaking frame. Of particular interest were changes the artist made from one performance to another in her dress, stage talk, selection of songs, or musician lineup, since these revealed strategic aspects of her persona.

I recorded and transcribed music from these shows, as well commercial recordings, in order to examine how the artist constructs her persona sonically. The two types of sources allowed me to consider both archive and repertoire in my musical analysis. I found that while markers of gender and religion tended to be more apparent in visual presentation and stage talk, ethnicity was more discernible in sound. I was particularly interested in how the artists use characteristic ethnic instruments or sonorities to make their identities intelligible. For example, a darbuka or *maqsum* drumming pattern can index Middle Easternness, while an augmented second can function as an Orientalist cliché in one context, or stand in opposition to that through its reference to Eastern European music (Shelleg 2014). Thus one must account for variety in the way symbols are taken up by the audience. According to John Shepherd, "the role of symbols in society is to 're-present' the intangible, fluid and dynamic set of social relationships within which we live" (1991:81). This interplay is what allows the artists to shift the discourse around their minority identities. Blumin uses symbols of Russian folk music such as the balalaika to create a Russianness that is foreign and attractive, in turn ameliorating negative attitudes towards the contemporary Israeli Russian-speaking community. Since the meaning of these markers is in how they function in social context, I considered my own understanding of the music together with what audiences and critics said about it. Textualizing the music by transcribing it allowed me to analyze it at a level of detail beyond that of listening alone to find what audiences might be reacting to in their perception of the artist.

I suggest that the music offers another layer of meaning, one that critics and scholars in disciplines such as English sometimes overlook when they focus on the lyrics. Lyrics lend themselves to analysis by audiences and scholars because they are more immediately accessible to non-musicians. The choice of which language to sing in is a particularly powerful marker of ethnicity, since it more clearly fits into one category, while music often combines multiple influences. Religious identification and piety are also readily expressed through words. Relying on lyrics alone to interpret a song, however, can be misleading. Although they have a sense of permanence because they are written down, their actual meaning is created through social discourse. For example, Awad's lyrics are ostensibly personal, but take on a political significance in relation to Arab Palestinian identity. Artists can also change the lyrics in performance, both the language they are in and the words themselves. Awad sings the same

verse in English or Arabic in different shows to foreground her Arab or her European identity and to make a political statement, while Etti Ankri modified the lyrics of her old hits in order to express her piety as *hozeret betshuva*.<sup>16</sup>

I realize that textualizing performance is problematic. However, commercial recordings, which include albums as well as singles released to the radio and Internet,<sup>17</sup> are partially textualized already. Although they are a product of a team of people, of which the artist is only one voice, they still function as the most significant version of the song. Commercial recordings are also a crucial part of the performance. They set up expectations for live shows, which affects how people perceive the show. As music critic Amos Oren suggests, “the album [should] be the preview of the show, the foundation on which it rests and from which it develops” (2010a). It is what people hear in their heads when they see the artist, often filling in the “ethnic” coloring of the additional instruments missing in the show. Recordings also familiarize people with the songs, allowing the artist to create an intimate atmosphere with her audience during a show.

A crucial part of the analysis was the dynamic aspect of the performance. I took into consideration that songs, and particularly recordings, are the product of group effort, as is the crafting of an artist’s public image (Auslander 2006). Although examining studio work was beyond the scope of my research, I did consider the background of the musicians and producers involved, and I spoke with some of the musicians. Focusing on commercial recordings shows how artists create ethnic and gendered bodies through sound (Kheshti 2015; Wong 2004), but I was interested in how the recording functions in social context. I compared earlier and later albums by the same artist to see if any changes in sound corresponded to audience or media reception. I also compared the album version of a song with my own recording of different performances to see how the artist adapted her persona to different venues. This allowed me to see how her persona changed in ways that corresponded to the theme of a show. For example, when Awad appeared in a show that focused on Jewish/Arab coexistence, an extended frame drum solo underscored her Arabness, while at Dikla’s show celebrating a Moroccan holiday, the addition of a darbuka to the rock band enhanced her “ethnic” sound.

#### Four Case Studies

This dissertation explores how these issues unfold in four case studies. The order of the case studies is based on the relationship of the artist’s ethnicity to a particular definition of Israeliness, the historical one proposed by the veteran Ashkenazi elite (Kimmerling 2001), with its attendant myth of the secular Jewish male Sabra (Almog 2000). Although this vision of Israeliness is giving way to a more pluralistic “New Israeliness” (Grinberg 2010), it is still reflected in certain cultural practices and musical repertoires, influencing what each artist can do with her ethnicity. The chapters proceed from the most contentious relationship to the most compatible one, exploring how the latter allows the artist to push religious boundaries instead.

I begin in chapter two with Mira Awad, for whom making a career using her ethnic heritage is particularly challenging. Her Palestinian ethnicity is not only lower class than Jewish Israelis, but it interposes the volatile Arab-Jewish conflict between her and her audience, making

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<sup>16</sup> The fact that Aviv did not change any of her lyrics as she underwent *hazara betshuva* demonstrates the smoothness of her transition from New Age to Orthodoxy.

<sup>17</sup> Blumin relied on singles during the five years between coming to the public’s attention and releasing her debut album.

it impossible to ignore. However, the Bulgarian heritage she received from her mother, considered “European,” aligning her with Ashkenazi Israelis, and her affiliation as Christian rather than Muslim, facilitate her access to Jewish society. There she performs an Arab femininity that is attractive to her Jewish audiences, who in turn position her as a representative of the Israeli Arab minority. Awad’s liminal position allows her to intervene in the discourse about Arabs: her music exposes exclusionary policies, while her body troubles Israeli Jews’ stereotypes and expectations about Arab women.

Dikla, on the other hand, whom I consider in chapter three, works with an ethnicity that is part of Israeliness, albeit historically a marginalized variant of it. Like Awad’s Israeli Arab ethnicity, her Mizrahi ethnicity is associated with a lower socioeconomic class. Although her music itself is close to mainstream Israeli pop and *musika mizrahit*, the genre associated with Mizrahim that is popular but considered lowbrow by some critics, the persona of powerful Egyptian femininity she creates around it casts it as highbrow art. Her expression of spirituality as part of her ethno-religious identity further contributes to her work as “authentic Mizrahi music.” At the same time that she marks herself as foreign through her Egyptian ethnicity, she also invokes her upbringing in the peripheries and the commercial limitations of her music, reinscribing the trope of marginalization associated with her Mizrahi panethnic identity.

Marina Maximilian Blumin, the subject of chapter four, has been able to use her ethnicity, as an Eastern European Jew, with fewer obstacles, since it is geographically and culturally part of the dominant Ashkenazi culture. Her Jewish identification further ensures her sense of belonging, while her secular outlook aligns her with cosmopolitan values. Blumin, however, navigates tensions between native Israelis and the immigrant community from the FSU. Blumin is a second-generation immigrant who did not grow up within this relatively insular community of newcomers. By focusing on the high status of her Ukrainian culture she takes attention away from the low economic class of Israeli Russian-speaking immigrants. In her shows she performs alternative femininities that further distance her from negative stereotypes. By interpreting classic Israeli culture through her Ukrainian ethnicity, Blumin inserts her music into the Israeli canon, broadening the parameters of Israeliness.

Finally, in chapter five, I examine Din Din Aviv’s ethnicity as Israeli. Aviv provides a counter-example in that she was born into the dominant group, through her mixed Greek and Polish ethnic ancestries and middle-class urban upbringing in the center of Israel. Instead of focusing on her Greek Sephardic ethnicity as a marked identity, she presents a multicultural mix that renders the dominant class to which she belongs invisible. From this strong position she challenges religious boundaries. Aviv established her career as part of the New Age scene in the nineties, so that she uses tropes of melting pot and mosaic to cast her combination of Greek, African, and Middle Eastern music as Israeli. The image of wholesome femininity, domestic rather than erotic, which she projects, further renders her as “Old Israel,” and attracts both non-Orthodox and Orthodox audiences. The continuity between her New Age spirituality and her move towards the Breslov Hasidic community (a mystical oriented branch of the ultra-Orthodox camp) allows her to perform a new image of a Jewish Orthodox woman who challenges the boundaries between the Hasidic and non-Orthodox communities.

Although the four artists have challenges and experiences particular to them, they all operate within the same set of possibilities in the field of Israeli popular music. Examining them in relation to each other thus reveals how Israeli society is constantly evolving as a multicultural society. In performing particular forms of gendered ethnicity, these four artists challenge audiences to rethink notions of gender, ethnicity, religion, class, and national identity.

## Chapter Two: Mira Awad

It's Saturday night<sup>1</sup> at Café Bialik, a coffee shop and restaurant located on a small side street across from the outdoor market. By day this is a bustling intersection, by night it is a little seedy. Café Bialik hosts nightly shows by local singer-songwriters, and tonight the artist is Mira Awad. I was surprised to find her here. I would have thought someone who represented Israel at the prestigious Eurovision contest would be performing at larger venues instead of this tiny coffee shop. Inside, the café is illuminated with warm red lights. There is a bar along the back and booths with large red tables along the side. In front of a heavy red velvet curtain, a small stage covered with Persian rugs is set with three chairs, a guitar and nay, and on the far right, a cajón with a high hat, darbuka, and tambourine. The café is filled with lively Tel Avivians enjoying a casual night out. At 10:30 Mira comes on stage, dressed in a low-cut black shirt, the open back strung with cords, black jeans, and black high-heeled leather boots. Her short blond hair is pulled back in a ponytail and backcombed on top into a chic hairdo, her wide face with its striking chiseled features framed by ornate dangly earrings. She is followed by a tall gangly Mizrahi man in his 50s, who sits down at the cajón and takes up the darbuka. "Good evening," she greets the audience in Hebrew, flashing a sparkling smile. "This is Gadi Seri... We'll start with something from home."

She begins singing in Arabic, her strong voice filling the small space. Her voice is resonant, her intonation accurate. It's a Broadway voice with well-trained vibrato. When coupled with the Arabic lyrics, the augmented seconds suggest Middle Easternness, but there is something in her expressiveness that is almost like a Jewish cantor, where the augmented seconds characterize Eastern European Jewish music. She traces the melismatic gestures in the air with her left hand. Holding the nay in her right hand, Mira places it to her lips and begins to play a Middle Eastern sounding melody. The breathy sound is haunting. As she plays, I notice that she does not place her fingers over the holes of the instrument, and there is a subtle buzz to the sound. Gadi Seri comes in on darbuka, as they segue into the song "Daylight and My Heart." She sings in English: "When the sun dives behind the mountains, I dream about you. Darkness starts to fall, it hurts 'cause I am here without you tonight." The naked sound of the voice and darbuka is striking. During Gadi's darbuka solo she remains seated, but punctuates the music with delicate shoulder shrugs, moving her upper torso back and forth in little belly dance moves. In this way Awad performs her Arab ethnicity in a way that captivates audiences despite its fraught political implications in Israeli society.

In this chapter I argue that Mira Awad faces considerable challenges in using her ethnic heritage as part of her persona, pointing to an incompatibility between her Arab identity and Israeliness in Jewish popular discourses. Awad's Bulgarian heritage and Christian affiliation have given her access to Jewish Israeli society and enabled her to perform an Arab femininity that has an allure for that audience. Her multiple ethnicities also allow her to move in and out of identities to suit different needs. Within Jewish society, however, Awad is positioned as a representative of the Arab Israeli minority, so that her liminality problematizes the discourse about Arabs as she maneuvers perceived binaries with her mixed ethnicities. The combination of Arabness and Europeanness she performs in her music and with her body challenges expectations about Arab women. Foregrounding her Palestinian ethnicity, however, embroils her

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<sup>1</sup> December 11, 2010.

in the Arab-Jewish conflict, positioning her as *effigy* (Roach 1996), or a symbol for Arab-Jewish coexistence. Even though there is lucrative potential in this position, Awad turns to a less politically charged environment by targeting a European audience with her music and performing substantially abroad.

### **A Christian Palestinian Woman in Israel**

Awad's career reflects her liminal position as a Christian Palestinian Israeli. Palestinian Christians occupy an ambiguous position in Israeli society. They form ten percent of the Palestinian population, a minority within a minority (McGahern 2011:67). After a 1949 ceasefire following the declaration of Israel as a state, Israel took over a large portion of Palestine, along with its residents. Today Palestinian Arabs comprise about 20 percent of the total population of Israel.<sup>2</sup> They are Israeli citizens, but ethnically, and often politically, they affiliate with the Arab nations, so that they are often regarded with suspicion.<sup>3</sup> Stereotypes and misconceptions are exacerbated by geographical isolation, with only one percent of the Muslim Arab population living in Tel Aviv District,<sup>4</sup> the cosmopolitan milieu in which my fieldwork was based. The stereotype of Palestinians most prevalent in Jewish Israeli society, based in part on demographics, is associated with rural villages, low socioeconomic status, poor education, and large families.<sup>5</sup>

Palestinian Christians are affiliated with Muslim Palestinians, but do not fit that demographic. "Ethnically Arab, Palestinian Christians are clearly on the 'other' side of the Jewish-Arab divide in Israel, which is confirmed by their national designation by the state as Arab rather than Palestinian" (McGahern 2011:56). They share language, culture, and history with Muslim Palestinians, even though their religion is different. On the other hand, their socioeconomic status distinguishes them from the latter. "Due to their Western and higher education than that of the Muslims, their prominence in the white-collar professions and their forming a largely urban middle class group, they have been amalgamated within Israeli society to a greater extent than the Muslims" (Tsimhoni 2002:149). Their presence in Jewish society is thus both invisible in the way they have assimilated, and hyper-visible, since they are marked as Palestinian.

Mira Anwar Awad comes from an educated multicultural background. Her father is a Palestinian physician, and her mother a Bulgarian Slavic languages expert. Mira Awad was born in 1975 in the town of Rameh, a village in northern Israel with a highly educated Christian, Druze, and Muslim population. She grew up with her two brothers and attended a Jewish kindergarten when her family moved to the town of Carmiel, although the family later returned to Rameh. Although she grew up in a family that was liberal and Communist, Awad nevertheless

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<sup>2</sup> "CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel," *Central Bureau of Statistics State of Israel* (accessed September 22, 2014),

[http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ\\_shnaton.html?num\\_tab=st02\\_01&CYear=2014](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ_shnaton.html?num_tab=st02_01&CYear=2014)

<sup>3</sup> Roe Nahamias, "Stop Treating Arab Citizens Like Enemies," *Ynetnews* (July 24, 2007), <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3391545,00.html> (accessed September 6, 2011), and "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel," by The National Committee for the Heads of Arab Local Authorities in Israel (2006).

<sup>4</sup> "CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel," *Central Bureau of Statistics State of Israel* (accessed September 22, 2014),

[http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ\\_shnaton.html?num\\_tab=st02\\_07x&CYear=2014](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ_shnaton.html?num_tab=st02_07x&CYear=2014)

<sup>5</sup> "The Arab Population in Israel," *Central Bureau of Statistics State of Israel* (2008).

felt restricted in what she could do as a woman in the Arab sector. As she told a reporter: “At 17, I had a bald head, a nose piercing and I was in a rock band, which was unusual. I was criticized for the way I looked and behaved, for being ‘out on the loose’, for the people I associated with... The criticism made trouble with my family. People went to my father and said your daughter is smoking cigarettes and drinking beers” (Sherwood 2010).

As an adult Awad decided to move from her Palestinian village to predominantly Jewish cities to pursue an independent career in the arts. She studied English and fine art at the University of Haifa for two years while working in theater, and then transferred to the Rimon School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. In Jewish Israeli society, however, she faced a different set of restrictions. In a speech at Tel Aviv Port in honor of International Women’s Day, she described her precarious situation as an Israeli Arab woman.<sup>6</sup> She began by quoting lyrics from her song “Bahlawan.”

And it’s very autobiographical. About a reality in which I, as an Arab woman, who came from a sector colored by patriarchy that manifests in gender, came out to a sector colored by racism that manifests in nationalism, walking on a very thin wire, stretched over a deep abyss, and you have to somehow keep your balance and survive despite the crazy winds battering me from all sides. A rather dramatic description, but what can you do, I write songs.

But I really do feel that this is the reality of an Arab woman in Israel. She has to walk very fine lines from the moment she is born. It starts at home, from the conventions that concern women in the Arab sector. Now don’t say that I came from some dark house, or some closed family. Really not. I came from a modern academic family, a village in which the percentage of education has always been very high, a village where you wouldn’t really be able to distinguish whether it’s Christian, Muslim, Druze, because there are no clear signs of religion.

But, nevertheless, a girl learns from an early age that there are things her brother is allowed to do that she isn’t. And there is exaltation of the male for who he is. The sister will always be asked to make a sandwich for the brother, even if he is older and is totally capable of spreading chocolate spread on pita. But that’s how it is. “Get up and make it for your brother.” And from there the continuation is very natural. “Get up and make it for your husband.” When an Arab woman kicks at this most basic convention, she runs into, in the best case, imprisonment, and in the worst case, violence and even murder. So is it surprising that our young women hesitate to open their mouths and do something?

On the other hand, those who do dare, those who dare to buy for themselves at a very high social price personal freedom and deciding their own fate, usually find themselves escaping Arab society into the general Israeli society, the Jewish “enlightened” one, which welcomes them with open arms. “Come, we won’t judge you according to your gender. Here you are free from that burden.”<sup>7</sup> And I will tell you from experience.

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<sup>6</sup> The event, called “Hyde Park Women,” took place on March 17, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leSwX0eyWuM> (accessed December 10, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> One political interpretation of Awad’s experience of conflict between multicultural acceptance and racism is its similarity to “pinkwashing,” or the campaign by the government to use gay life as an image of modernity to show its commitment to human rights as a way to conceal such violations against Palestinians (Schulman 2012).

It's pure pleasure, the thought that maybe it is possible to find a society that doesn't judge you according to every movement, every word, every action, every behavior or thought.

However, the village refugee gets to the Promised Land... Arab students with an Oriental appearance or accent aren't able to rent an apartment in Tel Aviv or get certain jobs. Just the other day, a young woman was attacked at the bus station, and a pregnant teacher was attacked by Jewish youths. [Awad goes on to quote hate mail she receives daily through the Internet]. What Promised Land. The representative of "rebellious" women becomes the representative of the terrorists.

Awad reiterates stereotypes of Arab society even as she excludes herself, reflecting the tendency of Christian Palestinians to distance themselves from their Muslim counterparts (Munayer 2000). As Sa'ar argues, the status of Christian Palestinians "leads them to cultivate an attitude of cultural elitism toward Muslims... This ethnocentric orientation can be seen as an attempt to remove themselves from the margins—where the Israeli-Palestinian community as a whole is located—in order to move closer to the (Jewish) center" (1998:216). The tension Awad describes, however, is common to women in the Arab sector, where "increasing freedom of movement and autonomy for females are coterminous with persistent norms of preference for sons and male authority" (Sa'ar 2007:50). Even as she advocates for Arab women as a whole, as a Christian Palestinian she is in a privileged position to pursue her career goals, since "life-changing opportunities come about only for the few, usually women from particular class or ethno-religious backgrounds" (Sa'ar 2007:66).

Awad also has an advantage in operating in Jewish Israeli society, in that, unlike the women she describes who are discriminated against for their Middle Eastern appearance or accent, she looks European and speaks Hebrew with no identifying accent. This allows her to move in and out of identities like a chameleon in everyday life and play with expectations in humorous way. As she described:

With taxi drivers it's a familiar situation. He turns on the radio and there is a little something, and he thinks I'm an Ashkenazi woman from a good home and starts badmouthing Arabs. "Walla, these, we have to throw them out of the country." The continuation depends on my mood that day. Either I feel humorous, then I join in, "That's right! Throw them out!" and let him lay into them, to see what he gets to. Or I pretend to be a Polish humanitarian, "why are you talking like that, not everyone is like that," nonsense in that vein. And sometimes, but only sometimes I say, "Listen, if I tell you now that I'm an Arab?" (Nuriel 2007).

Awad is better suited to playing this trick on the taxi driver than a man would be, because she is less threatening. Her image also subverts the driver's expectations of Israeli Arab women, since as a Christian she does not wear the traditional headscarf that some Muslim women do.

In her acting career, Awad's multiple ethnicities have increased her opportunities for work. Although she is sometimes typecast in Arab roles, she is not limited to them. She has performed both in the Arab-Hebrew Theater in Jaffa and in the Cameri Theater in Tel Aviv. One of the roles she is best known for is Amal, an outspoken Palestinian lawyer on the popular satirical television show *Arab Labor*. But she also received accolades for her portrayal of the European character Liza Doolittle in the 2002 production of *My Fair Lady*. Inderpal Grewal (2005) argues that gendered and racialized subjects are not autonomous projects of resistance, but develop in relation to disciplinary institutions, so that their self-regulation is tied to



institutions of the hegemony. However, they are able to choose different individual and collective identifications at different times in relation to the hegemonic formation. In choosing which roles to play Awad has agency in meeting or thwarting expectations that align her with only one ethnicity, even though her identity is still contingent on those expectations.

This process of navigating identities is evident in her musical career too, but there her negotiation is more complex because she is performing a version of herself rather than a character in a play. Her Palestinian ethnicity is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, its political implications garner her attention from the media. When she participates in theater, television, or public events run by Jewish Israelis, she is singled out as an Arab doing so. On the other hand, this emphasis on her Arab identity limits her career opportunities in Israel. However, separating the impact of discrimination based on political, ethnic, or religious grounds from the effects of style- or genre-driven preferences of presenters and audiences is a complicated matter. Awad's Israeli Arab identity also turns her into a symbol in political debates, often against her desires. As she navigates expectations associated with her persona, her music and persona problematize the discourse that produces Arabs as the Other in Israeli society.

### **Performing Different Forms of Arabness**

The way Awad came to her particular musical style and persona suggests tension between resistance to being reduced to one identity and the draw to capitalize on that label. This interplay exemplifies the interpellation that Althusser posits as the process through which identities emerge. Butler interprets Althusser's concept of *subjection* to argue that identities are constituted through social discourse, rather than stable entities shaped by it. Subjection "carries the double meaning of having submitted to these rules [of the dominant ideology] and becoming constituted within sociality by virtue of this submission" (Butler 1997:116). The subject, however, has agency in the way it responds to the hailing. "Though one might expect submission to consist in yielding to an externally imposed dominant order and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, paradoxically, it is itself marked by mastery" (ibid.).

A significant moment in Awad's interpellation was when she entered the Rimon School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in 1996. There her colleagues typecast — or, to use Althusser's term, 'hailed' her — as Arab. Awad resisted the label because it did not reflect her own experience. As she told reporter Noya Kohavi, "There was a strange expectation that I'll bring my Arab side, but I heard Pink Floyd at home. I didn't have a background of Umm Kulthum and I didn't do *silsulim*" (Kohavi 2009b). The encounter nevertheless gave her the impetus to create her unique music. While she was at Rimon she studied Arab music and nay, and began working on her first album, *Bahlawan* [Acrobat], which she wrote over the next ten years. This tension between resisting being pigeon-holed and inhabiting has continued in her career. As she told a reporter, "I am an Arab singer, stylistically too...But not like anyone else. It accompanies me even without me wanting, and I actually do want it to be there. Lucky I recognize who I am in what I am doing, otherwise I would have no signature at all. In the songs I write you can identify the elements in my character, and also my heritage – Arab...and Bulgarian" (Kohavi 2009b).

I suggest an analysis of Awad's performance as different forms of Arabness, as she performs a persona that is legible, while working to make the label Arab encompass more of her complex identity. I want to be clear that it is my own interpretation of my observations and is not meant as a portrayal of her character or motivations. Awad explained that she was spontaneously

expressing her ethnicity in ways that are natural to her, responding to the energy of the moment.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, she made decisions such as what language to sing in, what solos to play, and with whom to perform based on artistic considerations. One could argue, however, that she internalized certain norms that shaped her decisions, illustrating how aspects of her ethnicity are performative. As part of my paradigm I divide these decisions into categories to illustrate different choices an artist might have within a particular set of possibilities.

### **Cosmopolitan Arabness**

Awad's musical style and image on her debut album *Bahlawan* express her cosmopolitan Arabness. However, the result was problematic to perform and to market, a difficulty that exposed the discourse within the Israeli market that relegates Arab music to the traditional realm, in contrast to the Western pop of modern Israelis. With her multiple ethnicities Awad has a more cosmopolitan orientation than those who have only one ethnic identity (Fozdar and Perkins 2014), so that she pushes against this classifying. This discourse, for example, underlies a question music critic Yossi Harsonski presented to Awad.

YH: I feel like you live in the show in two worlds.

MA: Really? That's interesting. I think it's a question I'll return to you. What worlds?

YH: You live in a very cosmopolitan world in your show, there is Elton John, there is also Sting, there is something Bulgarian.

MA: I bring myself to the stage, and whoever I am is a lot of things (Harsonski 2009).

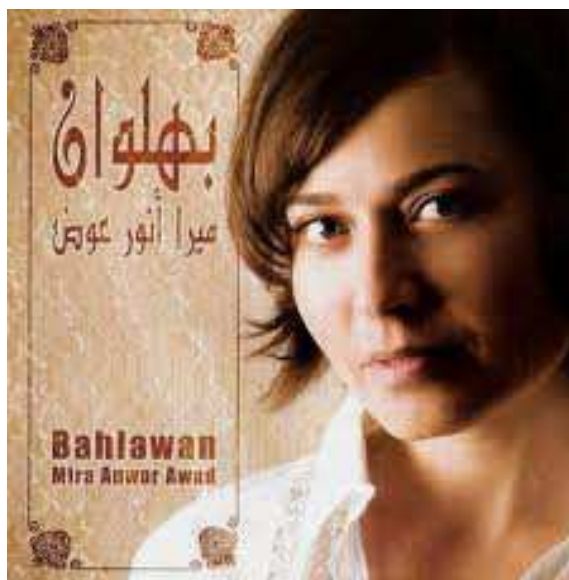
Harsonski implies a dichotomy that contrasts Awad's Arab and Bulgarian ethnicities as traditional or folkloric with Western pop. Awad, however, refuses the way he hails her Arabness as Other, encouraging him to rethink the categorization in terms of a multiplicity of cultural affinities.

With this misrecognition she performs Gloria Anzaldúa's *mestiza*. "The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended" (1999:80). Awad's response seems to aim for what Homi Bhabha (1994) calls a Third Space, an alternative space that transcends East and West. However, the Arab-Jewish conflict makes it difficult to do that, illustrating Nestor García-Canclini's (1989) assertion that cultural hybridity is not just aesthetic, but is implicated in the cultural politics of citizenship. Tim Taylor shows how "hybridity has become a marketing term, a way of identifying, commodifying, and selling what on the surface is a new form of difference, but one that reproduces old prejudices and hegemonies" (2007:143). At the same time, marketing music that crosses borders has its own challenges (Pacini Hernandez 2010).

The album artwork for *Bahlawan* problematizes the discourse surrounding Arabs by overlaying images that suggest traditional Arab culture with sophisticated urbane ones (fig. 2.1). The Arabic script on the front panel is decorated with Arabic lace designs, as is her blouse. Awad herself, however, is sporting a chic hairstyle. The collar on her blouse too suggests Western dress rather than the traditional women's version of the *djellaba*.

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<sup>8</sup> Awad, personal communication, April 11, 2015.



*Fig. 2.1. The cover of Bahlawan combines images of traditional Arab culture with modern ones.*

The photographs inside the CD booklet further emphasize Awad's identity as a cosmopolitan musician, which is shaped by her gender (fig. 2.2). Her urban dress contrasts with a stereotype of Arab women as veiled, based on a misconception of Muslims. Although Haifaa Khalafallah (2005) argues that the narrative of Islamic law as canonic and unchanging is actually an Orientalist construct, in many parts of the Arab Muslim world there continue to be strict dress codes for women, covering arms and legs, and sometimes covering the head and face with a hijab. Christian Arab women, on the other hand, are not subject to these norms, and dress more like secular women do. An anecdotal example shows how important dress is in categorizing ethnicity. In the interview where Awad talks about the taxi driver, the journalist Yehuda Nuriel goads her, reducing her to an Arab. A talkback comment points out how his expectations are based on Muslim norms when Awad is Christian, adding that "at Tel Aviv University it's quite prominent, the Christian women dress more freely than the Muslim women" (Nuriel 2007).

Furthermore, Awad's appearance counters the strong delineation between male and female in the discourse that posits Middle Eastern culture as traditional. This ambiguity also puts the emphasis on Awad's art rather than her body, avoiding the common hypersexualization of female singers, which can devalue artistic merit. In the first photograph there is some femininity with the eyeliner and red lipstick, but it is not a highly sexualized image. The headphones could be read as emphasizing her femininity with a passive consumer image. Alternately, they balance the femininity by portraying Awad as a musician rather than model, an idea that is supported by the second photograph. In this latter image her lack of makeup and the black clothes portray her as an actor, a neutral figure ready to take on different roles. Her appearance can also be read as masculine, or even queer, in its construction, further problematizing gender stereotypes.



Fig. 2.2. The artwork in the CD booklet for *Bahlawan* depicts Awad as a cosmopolitan artist.

In the music for *Bahlawan* many of the tracks are in Arabic set to Euro-American pop music, conveying an Arabness that includes her European identity. That this is the combination for most of the songs on the album suggests that it is the identity with which she identifies most closely. Although Awad’s cosmopolitanism lies in her combining of multiple ethnicities, the Bulgarian and Arab elements in her music all fall under “ethnic” in contrast to Western. In this context, pop music is the unhighlighted genre, removed from its cultural and historic significance in the U.S. to represent cosmopolitanism. One track that exemplifies this dynamic is “After All the Rain.” The song is in E minor, with a harmonic progression typical of pop music (fig. 2.3).

$$\begin{array}{cccc}
 a & & a' & & b & & b' \\
 e: i - VII - V^7 - i \mid i - V^7 - V^7 - i \mid V^7 - i - VII - i \mid V^7 - i - VII \text{ vii}^\circ - i \mid
 \end{array}$$

Fig. 2.3. The harmonic progression of “After All the Rain” is typical of pop music.

Awad overlays this harmonic structure with elements from her ethnic heritages. In particular, she told me that “After All the Rain” is her homage to her Bulgarian roots. Bulgaria is her mother’s home country, and she maintains ties to it, visiting and performing there regularly. Although her Palestinian ethnicity generally eclipses her Bulgarian one in the media, the latter is her primal one. When asked to name the languages she speaks, she listed Bulgarian first (Nuriel 2007). That it is her “mother tongue” reveals how powerful the intersection of gender and ethnicity she shares with her mother is, and the gendered aspect of mixed-ethnic identification (Ali 2003). This is also one of the earliest songs she wrote, the first track on her debut album, and she performs it at every show, demonstrating the primacy of her Bulgarian heritage.

With her multiple ethnicities Awad’s persona does not fit into the black/white race structure. In the U.S. racial theory the concept of a racial binary is most frequently expressed in terms of black and white. In Israel, on the other hand, the fundamental division is not based on race, but on a perceived binary between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim that underlies ethnic categorizations. While there is a relationship of dominant and subaltern between them, the

history and proportion of the groups make it very different from race relations in the U.S. Indeed Awad’s Bulgarian ethnicity is actually Sephardi, since Sephardim are descendants of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula who fled to West Asia and the Balkans. But Sephardi is often subsumed under Mizrahi as the subaltern category. As a musician Awad can pass for subaltern with her Arab ethnicity, or dominant European with her Bulgarian one, or cross boundaries to make new music.

The Bulgarian aspect of “After All the Rain” lends it foreignness. The first sound on the album track is that of a Bulgarian women’s choir, unaccompanied women’s voices singing in close harmony with a distinctive full-throated vocal timbre (fig. 2.4). The abundance of minor seconds that are sung simultaneously creates a dense texture that is very different from Western pop music. For Awad, Bulgarian music feels close to home, unlike Arab music technique, which she learned later in her career. She has an affinity to Bulgarian women’s choirs, since her mother sings in one. As she described, “In my eyes it doesn’t sound like there’s a problem. No it’s a minor second. And I’m like, so? It sounds good, no? And then, you get it, people are like, yes, it sounds good, it’s just compressed. So?”<sup>9</sup> By “compressed” Awad is referring to the density of the vertical harmonies. Although the Bulgarian State Radio and Television Female Vocal Choir is very popular in Israel, Awad foregrounds the unusualness of the sound within her milieu, marking herself as Other by naturalizing it.



Fig. 2.4. Transcription of the opening of “After All the Rain,” spotlighting the sonorities of a Bulgarian women’s choir.

The harmonies sound unusual because they are not readily identifiable as Bulgarian. One of the audience members I spoke to was particularly intrigued by these harmonies,<sup>10</sup> and I myself wasn’t able to place them until I analyzed the song in more detail. Although the combination of harmonies and vocal timbre in this opening is a distinctive marker of Bulgarian music, combined with the Arabic lyrics and pop music it does not readily index that ethnicity. In live shows, with only two of the vocal lines, the harmonies are even harder to identify. I noticed that they were also difficult for her guest artists to sing.

The meter has a similar effect of foreignness. The song is in a complex additive meter, a characteristic of many Bulgarian folk dances. The 7/4 is divided into 3+2+2, analogous to the Lesnoto Oro. Awad also used similar terms in discussing the rhythm as she did the harmonies. “I feel comfortable inside the 7/8 or the 7/4 just like I do in 4/4. For me it’s the same thing. It doesn’t feel for me that I need to count it. Sometimes even it’s hard for me to communicate what I hear to musicians... So because of my Bulgarian background I think that these rhythms live in the blood. And I always come back to there in this thing.”<sup>11</sup> Like the vocal harmonies, the meter is also unclear in the opening *a cappella* section, where it is complicated by pervasive syncopation in Awad’s singing, and only becomes clear when the guitar enters (fig. 2.5).

<sup>9</sup> Awad, interview.

<sup>10</sup> November 25, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Guitar

Teim - ro - e - shi - ta wil - bat tel - fe - ri -  
um tkha - bis - sa - va - ro dīt ak jā wan Teim ro - e - shi - ta - wi bat - el - fi - da  
bab ya - ti - a lel - me - di - ni be - shrach le - kel es bal bas is - se la - tis a - li - wal  
a - tis - tan - je li a an no shams am - tit - rek - li - bek i bas is - sa le - tis - e - li - wa  
la tis tan - je li an - nu - shems on tik nik ni - bek - i

Fig. 2.5. Transcription of vocal and guitar parts in “After All the Rain” in complex meter.

The musicians who accompany Awad further complicate the sound by adding generalized ethnic colors. On the recording, Oren Balaban adds various ethnic percussion instruments to the mix. In live shows I witnessed, Gadi Seri sometimes accompanied Awad on cajón, along with riqq, darbuka, and tambourine, a standard set of Middle Eastern percussion instruments. On the recording, classically trained violinist Sania Kroitor contributes a multiethnic color with his “gypsy”/klezmer playing. Kroitor, who has recorded on the albums of other ethnic bands such as Bustan Abraham, plays fusions of various musics, including Greek, Mizrahi, Hasidic, and klezmer<sup>12</sup> (fig. 2.6).

<sup>12</sup> Kroitor’s website, <http://sania-kroitor.com> (accessed October 21, 2011).



Fig. 2.6. Transcription of Sania Kroitov's violin solo in "After All the Rain" fusing musical traditions.

The combination of Bulgarian sonorities and Arabic lyrics posed a challenge for Awad in recording the song.

Listen, I wanted a Bulgarian choir. But suddenly we got into a kind of difficult situation that I need actually three or four women who will sing a Bulgarian choir, but will sing it in Arabic. Suddenly I discovered the mess I got to myself into. So there wasn't an option other than that I do this *aaah* [nasal sound] and try. I really wanted the sound, really wanted the Bulgarian sound of the open throat, wanted it a lot.<sup>13</sup>

On the album she overdubbed all the parts herself. In live shows, however, she performed the song with other artists who were not necessarily fluent in Arabic, since she was working primarily in Jewish Israeli society. An aspect of the lyrics that facilitated these collaborations was there being only one verse, which could be sung in different languages as it repeats. At Café Bialik, for example, Awad's guests Amiram Eini<sup>14</sup> and Shira Gavrieli<sup>15</sup> sang in English, while she sang the chorus in English with them and a verse in Arabic on her own. Juxtaposing Arabic and English had the effect of accentuating Awad's Arabness, which would be especially compelling for a Tel Aviv audience, where Arab music is becoming fashionable. At the same time, the verses in English gave the song cachet, an aesthetic nod to their preference for Euro-American pop.

One instance that illustrated how unusual it is for Jewish Israeli artists to sing in Arabic was when Awad performed with Shlomi Shaban at the conference "Speaking Art" at the Jerusalem YMCA,<sup>16</sup> an annual conference that brings together Jewish and Arab artists to collaborate in music, theater, and dance. In an article that advertised the show she said that, "it looks like Shlomi will sing in Arabic—if he doesn't chicken out" (Gordon 2010). Awad's joke exemplifies the lighthearted way she manages the challenges she encounters, while exposing the marginalized position of Arabic language in Israeli popular music. At the show, Shaban sang a verse in Arabic on "After All the Rain," and his efforts elicited enthusiastic applause from the audience, further reinforcing this issue.

<sup>13</sup> Awad, interview.

<sup>14</sup> December 11, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> March 8, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> November 25, 2010

Although the combination of Arabic lyrics and ethnic fusion music expressed Awad's identity most faithfully, it was a problem to market. For years Awad was not able to find a record company to produce the album. As she said, "They said it was difficult to market, that it's difficult to categorize it. And it's true that this is not commercial music in the way we understand commercialism today" (Kohavi 2009b). This is not actually the first time a musician has explicitly or implicitly claimed that their music was not accepted by the "industry" because they weren't "commercial" enough. In qualifying her answer, Awad acknowledges that there are many factors that might have contributed to her difficulties, since there are many labels within the Israeli recording industry, each of which has its own goals and criteria. An artist also needs to prove she has a large following, or show potential for one. Joseph Silverstein describes the complexity of political and commercial criteria working against Awad. "Awad began as a professionally trained musician and recorded demos which no Israeli record company wanted to touch with a 10 foot pole because they are petrified of Arab music. Not necessarily petrified in an overtly racist way. Just petrified of its supposed 'alienness' from Israeli pop culture and of their inability to market it to the public" (Silverstein 2008).

The combination of Arabic language and Jewish musicians who recorded on the album encountered obstacles in the Arab sector as well. As she told journalist Tal Peri, "In the past, when I examined an option to distribute my album in the Arab sector, they let me know it wouldn't happen because I chose to record with Israeli musicians" (Peri 2008a). Although Awad is pointing to an explicitly consideration, like the Jewish Israeli recording companies, Arab Palestinian labels have particular commercial criteria that create discrimination not necessarily based on ethnicity or nationality. The larger recording companies in both the Jewish and Arab sectors are more likely to be conservative in their decisions, rather than push political boundaries, since they need an audience for their products. Although Awad had difficulty marketing *Bahlawan*, there was a precedent for her music. Amal Murkus, a Christian Palestinian Israeli singer, produced her debut album *Amal* (1998) under the major Jewish Israeli label NMC, even though the songs were all in Arabic, and she recorded the album with Jewish Israeli rock musicians. However, she was aided by the participation of Alon Olearchik, a major artist in the Israeli rock scene, who may have bolstered her commercial viability.<sup>17</sup> In the same way, *Bahlawan* came out on Helicon the same year that Awad represented Israel with Achinoam Nini at the Eurovision contest, and includes a track they recorded together.

Awad's challenge in crossing the Arab-Jewish divide played out in Israeli radio as well. In their reviews, Silverstein and Peri were responding to a particular incident. When another song from *Bahlawan*, "Our Relationship," was released as a single in 2008, the radio station Reshet Gimmel refused to play it because of the Arabic lyrics, precipitating objection in the media. Peri, in a review entitled "Gimmel is for *Gizanut* [racism]," encapsulates this response.

As you will remember, at the radio station, which 12 years ago etched on its banner the slogan "Only Israeli music," they claim that the station's policy forbids them to broadcast a text that's entirely in Arabic. Never mind the fact that the slogan did not declare "just music in Hebrew," or that "Our Relationship" is a ballad with a completely Western melody and arrangement performed by an Israeli citizen living and working in Israel, who recorded with Israeli musicians (led by the musical arranger and guitarist Amos

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<sup>17</sup> Murkus produced her subsequent two albums, which did not include famous Israeli rock musicians, under the alternative label The 8<sup>th</sup> Note, and has done all her marketing independently (Shalev 2007b).



Hadani) and singing in the official language of more than 1.1 million Israeli citizens (Peri 2008a).

Although there are many possible criteria for rejecting a song, in this case it was the Arabic lyrics. Peri continues:

Linda Bar, a spokeswoman for the Israel Broadcasting Authority, said in response: “When the decision was made to make the Reshet Gimmel of Kol Israel to a station that broadcasts music only in Hebrew, it also set policies that every song played at the station must have at least fifty percent of its words in Hebrew. This is the only reason Mira Awad’s song will not be played on the station, but there is no reason it won’t be broadcast on other stations including Reshet Bet, 88FM, and of course Kol Israel in Arabic” (ibid.).

In the context of radio, Awad’s Palestinian ethnicity is as advantageous as it is problematic, since the very aspect that excludes her also gets her attention in the media, providing the “spikes” she needs in order to get exposure. Murkus described a similar situation when she was supposed to perform in Tamra (an Arab town in Northern Israel), “and at the mosques they called out to people not to go to the concert. But they just gave me publicity, and the concert was packed” (Shalev 2007b).

One downside of Awad’s Arab persona, however, is that everything she does, whether she intends it or not, is interpreted in the context of Arab-Jewish relations. Her Palestinian ethnicity overrides other aspects of her identity because it has a political charge that triggers anxieties. Awad told me that she wrote “Our Relationship” about an intensely personal event in her life, but that it tends to be interpreted on a more metaphysical level. The lyrics are translated into English in the liner notes:

Our relationship has a blood connection  
More likely a bleeding connection  
It’s a philosophical bleeding  
A bleeding with esthetic measures  
Our relationship contains both intimacy and distance  
It contains contradictions  
Contradictions that make me find esthetics in a bleeding...

A review of the single shows how Awad’s work always takes on a political meaning. “‘Olakatona,’ which means in Hebrew ‘our relationship,’ has spoken up about the tangled relationship between him and her. About bleedings and what they signify. The beauty and pain. The text can be read as an allusion to the relations between Arabs and Jews, but not necessarily so. That’s the main beauty of it. There is no actual commitment and there is no escape from it” (Stern 2008). This categorization characterizes Awad’s position in Israeli society, where her Arab identity often supersedes other aspects of her persona. McGahern points to racist undertones underlying the way Palestinian Christians are essentialized as Arab, suggesting that “in certain extreme cases, the term ‘ethnicity’ can be charged with re-processing the now outdated, unscientific and sinister concept of ‘race’ in softer and more acceptable tones” (McGahern 2011:39).

One reason “Our Relationship” may have been singled out as the focus of the debate over racism against Arabs is because, unlike “After All the Rain,” it has fewer references to different ethnic musics to complicate the sound. Instead the simpler texture brings out the juxtaposition of Arabic lyrics and Euro-American music. “Our Relationship” is in standard verse-chorus form, and the chord progression is common in Western pop music (e: i - iv - i - iv - V<sup>7</sup>). The chords are strummed on acoustic guitar, the instrument most often associated with Euro-American singer-songwriters. There is no trap set, but the hand percussion, played on the recording by Gadi Seri, does not index a particular musical tradition. Although it is in minor mode, the melody contains no augmented seconds to suggest Otherness. During the bridge, a rock-style solo on electric guitar together with cello, both distinctively Western instruments, lends the song an unmistakable Western tone (fig. 2.7).

The image shows a musical score for a rock-style solo featuring electric guitar and cello. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the electric guitar part in the treble clef and the cello part in the bass clef. The guitar part includes markings for  $8^{th}$  fret and *loco* technique. The second system continues the guitar part with a  $6$  fret marking and the cello part with triplets. The third system shows the guitar part with  $8^{th}$  fret and *loco* markings, and the cello part with a triplet. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.

Fig. 2.7. Transcription of rock-style electric guitar and cello solo in “Our Relationship” that make the song sound Western.

The reception of “Our Relationship” shows how Awad’s music intervenes in the discourse that Others Arabs in Jewish Israeli society. Although many artists face challenges in getting their songs played on the radio, the Reshet Gimmel incident gave Awad a platform to discuss the political aspect of her struggles.

Ultimately, what most bothers me is the need to decide who and what I do in terms of “black and white.” Totally Israeli or totally Arab. There is no integration. Whenever I think I’m advancing to a new place, that moment comes in which they put up a barrier in front of me and say: ‘you can progress up to here, beyond this it no longer suits us.’ This disqualification raises anew the question ‘who is an Israeli.’ If I they tell me I’m not Israeli because I chose to sing in Arabic, what does that mean actually? That the language I choose to express myself in will determine who I am? (Peri 2008a).

The music itself intervened in the discourse too with its cosmopolitan Arab sound. As Awad told radio DJ Yoav Kutner, “To the Israeli sector it opens the window to a world that we aren’t exposed to every day” (Barnea 2010a).

Awad’s body also problematizes ethnic categorizations. When Nuriel tries to fit her into a box, she eludes him with light-hearted banter, exposing the problematic construction of the categories.

MA: I was born in this country. My first language is Bulgarian, the other Hebrew, and only later came to Arabic. That’s it, more than that there isn’t. I’m here and the Hebrew language surrounds me on all sides. I act in the Jewish theater and on television, and people around me speak Hebrew. Most of the time I speak Hebrew, certainly.

YN: What happens when you meet your Arabs friends?

MA: We speak Arabic, but sometimes let slip words in Hebrew, out of laziness. This is a language that exists within us equally. So it’s no big deal if I am ‘an Arab’. I am already from here, just like everyone else.

YN: And you do not even have an ‘*ayin* and *het*. You have become Ashkenazi altogether, eh?

MA: I didn’t become Ashkenazi (laughs). I’ve always been Ashkenazi (Nuriel 2007).

‘*Ayin* and *het* are two Hebrew gutturals that mark a speaker’s ethnicity and, to a certain extent, class. Where ‘*ayin* and *het* are both pronounced as gutturals by Arabic speakers, and some Israelis of Middle Eastern descent, the overwhelming majority of Ashkenazi Israelis do not pronounce ‘*ayin* as a guttural but like the letter *aleph*, i.e., as either a glottal stop or simply a vowel carrier with no sound of its own, depending on the context. They do pronounce *het* as a guttural, but do not distinguish it from *khaf*, as Arabic speakers and some Israelis of Middle Eastern descent do. Awad claims the label Ashkenazi even though, as mentioned earlier, her Bulgarian ethnicity is considered Sephardi. Sephardi pronunciation of Hebrew, however, is associated with Oriental ethnicities, as opposed to the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Jews from Eastern and Central Europe. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the Israeli Broadcasting Authority regulations favor a distinction between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi along these lines (Kaplan 2012)<sup>18</sup>. In this context, Ashkenazi is used to represent European as the dominant group, in contrast to Middle Eastern as subaltern.

Another example of how Awad’s body does not fit into established ethnic or racial structures was when she performed with the Idan Raichel project on the album *Out of the Depths* (2005). The Idan Raichel project employs a changing line-up of artists from different ethnic backgrounds, whose “ethnic” music Raichel combines with pop/rock. Awad sang “Azini” in Arabic. Her photograph, however, does not appear in the album artwork. Her European features were probably judged too Western, in contrast to the more exotic images of Ethiopian and Yemenite musicians, who are not named, in the CD booklet. Din Din Aviv, who also appears on the album, is similarly not depicted. This challenges notions of a hierarchy of races or ethnicities (King-O’Riain et al. 2014), since in this case Awad’s European ethnicity, which is aligned with the dominant group, was not as advantageous as her minority Palestinian one.

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<sup>18</sup> The newscasters were instructed for decades to differentiate *het* from *khaf* and *alef* from ‘*ayin*, for a more ‘correct’ Hebrew.

## Legible Arabness

While setting Arabic lyrics to Western pop carries a certain contradiction for Jewish Israeli audiences, Awad's combination of English lyrics and Arabic-sounding music is more readily categorizable, suggesting foreignness within a familiar framework. The way marketing has shaped her music is similar to the process Deborah Pacini Hernandez describes regarding Latin music. "Mass media have 'Latin Americanized' the concept *latinidad* itself—what it means to be Latino/a—by emphasizing Spanish-language and Latin American roots at the expense of the bicultural and bilingual realities of U.S.-born Latinos" (Pacini Hernandez 2010:13). The Israeli media promotes particular stereotypes of Arabs, which Awad has then taken up at the expense of her multiethnic identity.

Awad's visual appearance at "Speaking Art" suggested to me Arabness that was more readily categorizable. She wore a tight black mini dress and stiletto heels. Her hair was pinned back to reveal large dangly earrings, which she mentioned when she bantered with an audience member (fig. 2.8).<sup>19</sup> Wearing vintage jewelry, particularly earrings, is a strategy available particularly to women. It suggests Otherness that is chic, allowing them to signal ethnicity while maintaining a cosmopolitan image. Several of the artists I studied paired "ethnic" necklaces with urban clothes, including Dikla on *Love Music* and Noa on *Jeans and Genes*.



*Fig. 2.8. Awad's legible Arabness at the conference "Speaking Art"*

This process of making her Arabness legible is exemplified in the song "Daylight and My Heart," described in the opening vignette.

When the sun dives between the mountains  
I dream about you  
Darkness starts to fall  
It hurts 'cause I am here without you tonight

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<sup>19</sup> I did not hear the audience member's comment, only Awad's response, "it's the earrings."

The wind that blew through my window  
Brought along my sorrows  
I cried the night away  
While waiting for tomorrow's light

Awad's vocal style was typical of Western pop rather than classical Arab music. The tonality further supports the Middle Eastern aspect by being in Maqam Nakriz, here transposed from C to B, with two augmented seconds, but no quarter-tones, so that it evokes an Arabness that is accessible and legible (fig. 2.9). It is the instrumentation, however, that gives the song its haunting quality, the stark accompaniment of tar and nay. The sound world of hand drumming contrasts dramatically with sticks on a drum set, typical of most popular music. In live performance Seri sometimes extended the percussion solo to bring out the Middle Easternness. At "Speaking Art" Seri's percussion solo was 1'00" as opposed to 44" at Café Bialik. The longer break gave Awad a chance to dance more, which she did with belly dance moves that I had not seen at her do at Café Bialik.<sup>20</sup> During the solo the energy also built up enough that the audience started clapping along, turning it into a highlight of the show.



*Fig. 2.9. Transcription of the opening melody of "Daylight and My Heart" as legible and accessible Arabness.*

The other instrument that accompanies the song is the nay. On the recording Eyal Sela plays this part. Sela belongs to the same network of Jewish ethnic musicians as Seri, adding general ethnic color on different wind instruments, although he is versed in many musical practices. The need for general ethnic sounds is evident in that on the recording of "Daylight" he substituted bansuri, or Indian bamboo flute, for the nay. In the performances I witnessed Awad herself played nay. The way Awad played the instrument demonstrates how she successfully adapted Arab music to work for her. After studying nay the traditional way, she discovered a way to play it by singing into it instead of blowing.

I really like the sound of the nay, I don't play nay. But once in truth out of frustration I got this sound out. Because I tried to learn...and it didn't work for me [mimes blowing into a nay], and then I said "oof" something like that, and the sound in which I made this oof rang. And there was a "tannng," like some bulb came on over my head, and I said wait a minute, and then I started [makes buzzing sound], I started...to blow air into it. And in the end I got the right angle. It took me a lot of time to develop it. Because at the beginning it was a very small range that came out nice... So it took me a long time, I think three years, until I dared go on stage with it. I know that today I can play with it whatever I want. I have a crazy advantage. Because nay players have to go around with

<sup>20</sup> In the smaller space of Café Bialik Awad was seated during more of the show.

about twelve nays in their bag, each one a different scale. I come with some bamboo, I don't need anything, some watering hose.<sup>21</sup>

This is the technique she has been using ever since.

At the beginning I was uncomfortable... with musicians... [Then] all sorts of friends wanted to record things, and I started recording with this thing. Because people didn't believe, what do you mean you aren't playing this thing, it sounds the same! And I'm like, yes, but. And they are, come, come, I have to record you, and all that. I started recording. Today in my album there are recordings of this thing. I play this thing on the new CD. So it became something totally legitimate, and everyone who hears it says to me, yo, I think I have a session to invite you to in a week, I need someone who will play for me something like this.<sup>22</sup>

Awad's initial discomfort may have been due to her adapted nay technique exposing a gap between her actual self and the expectations imposed on her. However, for her audiences, who were not very knowledgeable in Arab music, it was effective. As domestic cultural tourists they only need nay as a marker rather than the full technique of the instrument. The compromise she found between her own sensibilities and what her audience accepted as authentic was so successful that it legitimated it as her unique way of playing the instrument. During my fieldwork she added an introduction on nay to "After All the Rain" at Café Bialik,<sup>23</sup> and played it on two tracks on *All My Faces*.

At "Speaking Art" Awad also sang a longer version of *Mawwal*, 3'15" rather than 2'59" as she did at Café Bialik.<sup>24</sup> A *mawwal* is a genre of Arabic vocal art music in which the artist sings poetic texts while improvising melodically. Awad often paired "Daylight" with a *mawwal* as her first song on the program. Like the nay, she learned to sing *mawwals* partly as a concession to expectations that stereotype her as an Arab performer.

Listen, because I'm an Arab woman, I get a lot of offers from people for work because they want to do something with Arabs and Jews on coexistence, something nice that will show that we can live happily together.... So there are a lot of roles that I haven't been willing to take.... I don't always feel like playing the part of the Arab woman. *Ya 'layli ya 'layli* [she sings mockingly in an Arabic style and we both laugh]. They all want *mawwallim* — [she sings again] *ya layli ya layli*. I don't do *mawwallim* [we both laugh] — what do they want from me? So, only recently I actually learned how to do *mawwallim* since everyone wanted it. I mean if I'm an Arab woman I have to have an Arab sound, right? I mean, what's the point of an Arab woman without an Arab sound? I mean, come on! I'm asking you!... But it's a bit of a problem for me because I'm kind of between East and West. I hope that my time will come as a musician. I feel that it won't because it's such a roots period and my roots are not roots of *layli layli* (Dardashti 2009b:77).

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<sup>21</sup> Mira Awad, interview with author, Tel Aviv, March 8, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> July 9, 2011.

<sup>24</sup> December 11, 2010.

As Galeet Dardashti points out, “Awad uses *mawwal* and *layli* interchangeably, as the colloquial usage of the terms is quite loose in Israel. Technically, the two are distinct. A *layali* is a genre of improvised vocal music in which the singer uses combinations of the words *ya layl*, *layli*, *layali*, and *ya 'ayn*” (ibid.).

Awad’s introduction for “Daylight” is a *mawwal*, since it has a text. Both the text and music are pre-composed, as she explained at Café Bialik:<sup>25</sup> “it’s a combination of one song that I didn’t write, a sort of *mawwal* that someone from my village wrote once, which is joined to a song that I did write.” In doing so she deflects any potential accusations of inauthenticity in performing *mawwals*. The way Awad spoke to me of her *mawwal* singing revealed the slippage between ethnicity as inherited knowledge and learned musical technique.

Quarter-tones is a whole science. Again, it’s something that is very hard to teach. Again it’s like swing. It’s something that is in the ‘feel,’ either you have it or you don’t. Yes you can develop it, certainly. I thought I didn’t know how to hear quarter-tones, and then I was proved wrong and discovered I can... I don’t use them in my music of course. But sometimes in shows, in my last show I did it, sometimes I do a *mawwal* and there are two quarter-tones, twice there is a quarter-tone. Now to the Western ear again it can sound like it’s out of tune. Really like it’s out of tune. It’s too high, too low, why is it there at all. And in Arab music they really insist on, they sit on it.<sup>26</sup>

While she spoke about Bulgarian music as being “in the blood,” Arab music seemed like a foreign language she learned. Awad learned to play Arab music at the Rimmon School rather than at home, so that she did not acquire the competency as part of her ethnic upbringing. She nevertheless claims her ethnic identity by suggesting that she only had to tap into her natural ability to hear quarter-tones. Although she learned to play pop and jazz as well, and this is in fact the music she grew up listening to, they are not part of her marked identities for an Israeli Jewish audience.

### **Political Arabness**

Awad’s legible Arabness is disadvantageous because it can pigeonhole her, but it is also a powerful label for marketing. Yair Dalal and musicians in the Arab-Jewish ensembles Aley Hazayit and Bustan Abraham were in a similarly ambivalent situation. While they emphasized their musical collaboration for its artistic merits, they were well aware of how “the promise of peace can move a musical product” (Brinner 2009:315). This potential is particularly important for European and American shows, where there is a greater source of funding. So, for example, Bustan Abraham added “Abraham” to their name and included a statement of their support for coexistence in return for financial backing from a New York foundation (Brinner 2009:129). Although these musicians all work to different degrees towards coexistence through their music, they are also wary of being perceived as a gimmick. Their expressions of hope for coexistence are no less sincere because of their marketing potential.

Awad must negotiate similar conflicting pressures when she is called on to participate in shows that position her as an Arab in a dialogue of coexistence. Such shows are relatively few, but I focus on two of them here in order to illustrate this aspect of her persona. One of these is

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<sup>25</sup> July 9, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Awad, interview.

her performance with Shlomi Shaban at “Speaking Art.” Although for her it was a collaboration based on its artistic merits, the way the conference organizers set it up had political connotations, so that she had to fight to hold onto her artistic integrity, as she did in an interview promoting the show:

It’s important that it be clear that I’m not collaborating with Shlomi because he’s Jewish and I’m Arab. The collaboration is first of all because Shlomi is one of the huge artists in my eyes and when the idea came to do a show like this, it really interested me to do it with him. The fact that there is the added value of mixing languages and it looks like Shlomi will sing in Arabic – if he doesn’t chicken out – and I sing his materials in Hebrew, then of course it has added value, and it’s always great and always nice this bridge between performance and languages, but there is really a collaboration here that’s first of all musical. In all these collaboration projects I insist on holding onto this thing. I do a lot of collaboration projects of Jews, Arabs, youth, dialogue, but it’s always important to me that the first thing is that it be good musically (Gordon 2010).

Within Jewish Israeli society, however, Awad is often positioned as representing Israeli Arabs, in the sense of Gayatri Spivak’s speaking for the subaltern (1988). This position is problematic, since she does not typify the Israeli Arab majority. Ironically her marginalized Israeli Arab identity has helped Awad build her career in Jewish society.

This process is most evident in her collaboration with Achinoam Nini (who goes by Noa), a veteran Israeli singer and coexistence activist with a prodigious career in Europe. Awad met Noa through the network of graduates of the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music,<sup>27</sup> and the two began working together. They made national and international headlines in 2009 when they represented Israel in the international Eurovision contest with the song “There Must Be Another Way.” Their overt call for Arab-Israeli peace, however, has garnered accusations that their collaboration is a gimmick. The cover for their album *There Must Be Another Way* (2009), with its focus on their faces against black in a typical ebony-ivory marketing strategy, reflects the contrived feel of their work together (fig. 2.10). Within that visual composition, the ‘white’ figure is the Arab, while the ‘black’ one is the Jew. Although Awad had to deal with death threats and censure by her colleagues for representing Israel on the international stage, the exposure she received at Eurovision led to a prestigious contract with Sony to produce her next three albums in Spain, and she continues to tour in Europe with Noa.

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<sup>27</sup> This institution is central to the world of Israeli popular music, and many of its graduates have gone on to become big stars, including Aviv Geffen, Asaf Amdurski, Keren Peles, and Miri Messika, to name only a few.





Fig. 2.10. The album *Awad* produced with Achinoam Nini, *There Must Be Another Way*, portrays her as Israeli Arab representative and symbol of coexistence.

There are a number of factors that have supported the success of this collaboration. The two artists are well matched in their music, vocal timbre, and polished performance style. In addition, the multiple ethnic and religious dichotomies at play in their pairing, with its conflicting power relationships in their dominant and subordinate roles, work to problematize racial stereotypes. Noa's Yemenite heritage makes her look more stereotypically Middle Eastern, while Awad's Bulgarian features highlight her Europeaness. As Noa said, "Some people will see an Arab girl who looks Jewish and a Jewish girl who looks Arab, which is what we are. Maybe it will open some people's minds" (Associated Press 2009). In this context the way Awad's European features expose Arabness as culturally constructed rather than written on the body undermines racist discourses. The two artists also perform this problematization sonically. In general, Noa sings in Hebrew and Awad in Arabic, but sometimes on the song "Will You Dance with Me" Awad sings a line in Hebrew and Noa a line in Arabic. The switch is brief but powerful in foregrounding the performative aspect of the labels. Their performance thus reveals "multiracialization as a specific set of practices, technologies and power relations that is both socially produced and open to change and contestation" (Haritaworn 2012:28).

I saw Awad perform with Noa as part of "White Night" in Tel Aviv,<sup>28</sup> an event that hosts musical shows all over the city throughout the night.<sup>29</sup> As with "Speaking Art," Awad was positioned in a way that highlighted the political significance of her ethnicity. The venue that the organizers chose, Jaffa Port, set the stage for a message of coexistence, since Jaffa is the home of the Arab-Hebrew Theatre Center and the Arab-Jewish Community Center. Awad opened with her own set, followed by Noa's set, and then a set together. Although her participation was motivated by artistic considerations, Awad may have felt constrained to accentuate her Arab identity. She delivered more of her patter in Arabic, saying *shukran* throughout the show, rather than *toda raba* as she did at Café Bialik. She also gave the titles of all the songs in Arabic,

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<sup>28</sup> June 30, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> 'White' refers here to staying up all night.

something she did not do elsewhere. This was notable, since the program included mostly songs from her second album *All My Faces* (2011), all of which are in English.

In her solo work, Awad's song "Bukra" bears some of the characteristics of her collaborative work with Noa. At the end of my fieldwork Awad had begun using "Bukra" as her flagship song. She released it as a single to introduce *All My Faces*, so that when she performed it for audiences that were not familiar with her work, it was the song people recognized. At Jaffa Port the audience members around me were less familiar with Awad's work than with Noa's, but when she began "Bukra," the last song in her set, one man expressed pleasure at recognizing it. At the shows I attended she often sang it as the last piece on the program. It is an energetic and upbeat way to end the show. It might also be analogous to "Faith in the Light," the song she introduced at Café Bialik<sup>30</sup> as her flagship song in her collaboration with Noa. The importance of the song to Awad's marketing is also evident in that it is the only one that has a music video.<sup>31</sup>

Like most of Awad's songs, the lyrics to "Bukra" are not ostensibly political. However, while "Our Relationship" was interpreted as political when Awad did not intend it to be, "Bukra" seemed to me to have more overt political overtones. The lyrics are like the songs Awad sings with Noa, about relationships in general, but could imply Arab-Jewish relations.

Always something in the air,  
I cannot explain  
All the hurt we hold in vain  
All the tears we ever shed  
Promises we made  
Of better times yet to arrive  
Hope that will not fade  
I reach out to you  
I try to hang on tight  
Something tells me we will pull though  
Something tells me we will be alright

Bukra  
Is a brand new day  
Things can still be going our way  
If we make it through the night  
Soon will come the morning light

Shoham Einav, of the band Alei Hazayit, explains their similar preference for songs that are not overtly political. "We speak about interpersonal relations; we speak about love of a man for a woman, of a woman for a man. We speak about things that are beautiful. The very fact that we are together and singing them it's fraternity, it's being together. In my opinion that is the greatest message of peace. [It's] not necessarily to wave it [like a flag]" (Brinner 2009:111).

One of the reasons that Awad would want to keep the rhetoric of her songs to general hopes for peace is that when she does speak out about injustices committed against Palestinians

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<sup>30</sup> March 8, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cRUEI13Oqo> (accessed December 4, 2013).

she comes under fire from all sides. For example, one journalist introduces her thus: “She is the nightmare of any promoter because she is politically outspoken, received curses of ‘sabotager of Israel’ and ‘traitor’ from both sides, doesn’t perform on principle on Independence Day, and knows that men have a problem with her” (Klein 2011). Awad did not mention to me any gender struggles as a musician, the way Dikla did, but journalists zero in on her feistiness as a teenager in a rock band and her political outspokenness because it contrasts with the stereotype of Muslim women as silent and subservient. While offstage Awad is politically outspoken, in her shows she maintains a neutral graciousness and humor that attests to her polish as a performer.

In her music, too, Awad is conservative, maintaining a general optimistic tone. Like “Our Relationship” [Olakatona], “Bukra” is marketed by its Arabic title, but here it takes on additional meaning. The word itself “bukra” is built into the English chorus, and Awad always introduces the song as “Bukra” rather than “Tomorrow.” This is also the only title on the album that is not in English. These things turn the word into a marker that indexes the Arab-Israeli conflict and hopes for peaceful coexistence. The way Awad introduced “Bukra” at Jaffa Port offered sentiments that resonate with a wide audience. “Bukra means maybe we see a reality that’s not easy. We look at it on the news every day, a rather not good reality. But I’m all hope, every day I go to bed, that tomorrow we can take ourselves in our hands, and we can start doing something right. In time everything will improve. Naïve, maybe, I don’t know, but that’s how I am.”

The music for “Bukra” creates a feel of optimism that matches the message of hope. The key is D major, which modulates up a half-step after the second chorus, a gesture that characterizes many Eurovision songs and is designed to raise the energy one more level. The 4/4 meter, played as a marching beat, further enhances the energetic character. The orchestration is a mix of ethnic sounds designed to appeal to consumers of world music. It is the work of Carlos Jean, a sought-after producer in Spain and South America, who produced the album under the auspices of Sony, one of the leading world music record labels. Jean creates what might be labeled a “tribal” feel with Australian didgeridoo, Gregorian chant, and hand percussion. The sound has the timeless and placeless ethnic quality of New Age music, which similarly often offers a message of world peace. Awad’s Bulgarian women’s choir back-up vocals further obfuscate any specific ethnic references through the juxtaposition of incongruous ethnicities. In the bridge between the chorus and the second verse, the electric guitar plays a figure that references a dominant seventh (V<sup>7</sup>) and blues-inflected rock, but in this context the augmented second could also suggest “ethnic” music (fig. 2.11). Jean’s orchestration does not express the cosmopolitan Arabness of Awad’s earlier album, but an “ethnic” Arabness that is inserted into a pop framework.



*Fig. 2.11. Transcription of electric guitar riff in “Bukra,” suggesting blues or Middle Eastern music.*

At Jaffa Port, however, the way the musicians performed “Bukra” brought out the Middle Eastern aspect. On the recording there is a darbuka in the chorus that is discernible in the mix. Gadi Seri plays percussion, decorating the beat with subdivisions. The combination of the drumbeat and didgeridoo syncopation (fig. 2.12) turns into a faster and more energetic rhythm in the chorus (fig. 2.13). At Jaffa Port, Israel Kimhi, the drummer, took advantage of the similarity

of this rhythm to the Middle Eastern drumming pattern ayyuub (D--kD-T-)<sup>32</sup> in the drum break that was added right before the modulation. During this 20-second darbuka solo, Kimhi played four measures of baladi (DD-TD-T-), followed by two measures of ayyuub, and a measure of clave, which pushed the momentum forward into the modulation (fig. 2.14). Awad preceded the solo with a cry in Arabic and performed belly dance moves during the break. Elsewhere she also added a cry of “yulululu,” the *zagharit*, or ululation, that women perform in Middle Eastern celebrations.



Fig. 2.12. Transcription of percussion and didgeridoo in “Bukra.”



Fig. 2.13. Rhythm during the chorus in “Bukra.”



Fig. 2.14. Transcription of Israel Kimhi’s drum solo during “Bukra” at Jaffa Port that brought out the Middle Eastern aspect.

The music video of “Bukra” depicts Awad’s contemporary Israeli Arab identity rather than the timelessness of “Daylight.” There are scenes of children on a basketball court dressed in school uniforms, as cheerleaders, and as a jockey. I interpret these images to represent the future. Similarly, I read as symbols of peace the images of whirling dervishes wearing white, which changes to red, white, and green, the colors of the Palestinian flag.

Whether Awad chooses to participate in coexistence projects or not, she is often positioned as Arab in Jewish Israeli society. Because she is accepted, she is an apt figure to serve as what Joseph Roach calls an *effigy*.

<sup>32</sup> “Ayyub is used extensively in religious songs... It is also popular with dancers when used in drum solos or underneath melodic *taqsims*. This rhythm is often played at varying tempos within the same piece of music, and can create moods ranging from trance-like when played slow to cathartic and frenetic when played fast” (Baklouk and LeCorgne 2011:64).

*Effigy*... fills by means of surrogation a vacancy created by the absence of an original. Beyond ostensibly inanimate effigies fashioned from wood or cloth, there are more elusive but more powerful effigies fashioned from flesh. Such effigies are made by performance. They consist of a set of actions that hold open a place in memory into which many different people may step according to circumstances and occasions. I argue that performed effigies—those fabricated from human bodies and the associations they evoke—provide communities with a method of perpetuating themselves through specially nominated mediums or surrogates (Roach 1996:36).

In some contexts Awad is used as a symbol to show how Israelis support coexistence with Arabs. When she performed with Noa at Eurovision, her detractors accused her of serving as a fig leaf for the Israeli government.

A group of Arabs and Jewish artists and intellectuals turned to Awad in an open letter and urged her not to cooperate with Nini, who seemed aloof after they advised the Palestinians to “remove the cancer of Hamas” among them. They also argued that she is serving as a fig leaf for the Israeli establishment that wants to give a false picture of coexistence in Europe after the operation in Gaza (Kohavi 2009b).

Awad is perhaps more apt for this role than someone like Amal Murkus, who is more outspoken in her criticism of Israel and uses her music to express her political views.

Awad also serves as an effigy in Israeli popular media. Nuriel argues that the sitcom *Arab Labor*, in which Awad appears, contributes to coexistence efforts by depicting Arabs as regular people.

Just showing an Arab man as the most Israeli there is, the most Channel 2 there is, will lead to a change in consciousness. These are the exact things that dismantled the major ideologies. The Chinese fell in love with ping-pong. Coca-Cola toppled the communist wall. The Internet will yet return Iran to civilization. And for us, it's Arab actors as desirable characters... All young, talented, informed, and of course – as befits Channel 2 culture – look great (Nuriel 2007).

Awad's Bulgarian features make her apt for being an effigy, since she symbolizes Arabs while conforming to European norms of beauty. As DJ Boaz Cohen pointed out, “In the case of Mira Anwar Awad she is very pretty. Very pretty. And it helps. It isn't something you can ignore. It helps her. You can market her more easily.”<sup>33</sup>

A cameo appearance on the popular telenovela *Exposed* encapsulates Awad's position in Israeli society as a representative of the Israeli Arab minority, and the way she problematizes that position. The show is about a television newsroom. In this episode (Saar 2008b), Tchia Crystal, a sensationalist reporter, and Malka Lev-Ari, a leftist do-gooder, try to undermine each other, until Merav Ben-Bassat, the hard-nosed producer, intervenes. The scene is the staff meeting to report on possible news items. Tchia puts away her compact.

Tchia: I am bringing today for an exclusive interview, gentlemen, someone who is making a lot of buzz... She is actually our honorable ambassador outside, and...

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<sup>33</sup> Boaz Cohen, interview with author, Tel Aviv, January 16, 2011.

Although she is not Ethiopian, I am very sorry, although from certain angles she actually looks rather dark, so that you might be happy. By the way, her tan is amazing. Gentlemen, I am bringing Mira Awad.

[General murmurs]: Wow, no way. She's really hot right now.

Merav: Excellent, Tchia. I always said we had room here for minorities. Good for ratings, good for us, good for the company in general.

This scene shows the cachet of Awad's Israeli Arab identity gives her, even as it exposes racism. In the next episode (Saar 2008c) Awad herself appears for the broadcast in which she is invited to participate.

Eitan: [announcing] Six years passed since she played Liza Doolittle in the musical *My Fair Lady*, and these days she is stepping into a different woman's shoes. Mira Awad, a Christian Israeli, plays Rebecca Aharonson, the sister of Sara the heroine of *NILI*, in the new film of Stephen Spielberg. Hello to Tchia Crystal, Mira Awad, and hello also to Malka Lev-Ari.

Malka: Not so fast, peace is not yet here.

Tchia: Yes, but when you look at Mira here, you can understand why it's desirable that it arrive quickly, no?

Malka: God gave walnuts to someone who doesn't even have false teeth.

Mira: Do you mean me?

Malka: No, my dear, God forbid. I mean the woman who is sitting next to you, and an item rolled to her that is much too big for her. You, I am dust at your feet. You are intelligent, you are talented, you are homogeneous...

Mira: Thank you.

Malka: And in addition to all this you are also Arab. God put all the eggs in one basket. And the truth, you don't look Arab.

Tchia: The truth, you really don't look racist. "What can you do that she really managed to match the color of the jacket to the skirt? It happens. [To Mira] Tell me, sweetheart, I understand that your brother is a fan of Beitar Yerushalayim.<sup>34</sup>

Mira: It's my cousin, not my brother, but how exactly is it related?

Tchia: Cousin, brother, you know, with you it's all clans.

Malka: Why are you asking her lowbrow and yellow questions like these? She is an intelligent woman, why don't you ask her about the collapse of the peace process...

Tchia: Forgive me my dear, if you weren't living in that bubble that stinks of mothballs, then maybe my cultural world would be closer to you.

Mira: In Yiddish they would say...

Tchia: Excuse me a minute. Instead of going to the backyard to dig around...

Merav takes it to commercials.

In this scene the writers of the show use Awad as a figure to expose and trouble stereotypes about Arabs, in a pointed satirical critique of Jewish Israeli society and its attitudes. The racist

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<sup>34</sup> Beitar Yerushalayim is a Jewish Israeli soccer team whose fans are notorious for loudly expressing anti-Arab sentiments.

remarks lump all Arabs together, invoke stereotypes, and show the patronizing attitude often adopted towards minorities. Awad, on the other hand, does not have typical Arab features. She is plays a Jewish role in an American film, a fictionalization of her status as a celebrity with a European career. Finally, she begins to quote a proverb in Yiddish, the language of Eastern European Jews, unsettling the category boundaries that define Arabs as Other to Israelis.

In other appearances Awad herself calls attention to her role as effigy, with her characteristic lighthearted way of dealing with her situation. When she was a participant on the Israeli version of *Dancing with the Stars* she was showcased as the first Arab contestant on the show.<sup>35</sup> In the promotional video she exposes to this typecasting. The video opens with Achinoam Nini praising Awad's charismatic personality. The music changes to a violin playing Arab music, an abrupt contrast to the pop music, as the camera zooms in on Awad's sinuous wrist and pelvic movements. She says, "I'm very happy, by the way. And if I break someone's stigmas about something, then... Ah, I didn't bring the five-kilo hammer," she says with an Arabic accent, "in order break the stigmas." She laughs, "I've often been the first Arab in many places. I've gotten used to it already, it doesn't get me worked up." And she adds in English, "hit me with something new." The music changes to a song "Love me, hate me, can't you see what I see," and Awad dances around the stage in a style unmarked by any ethnic affiliation. The producers of the show chose to portray her resistance, but at the same time they sanctioned the typecasting by continuing to use it as a method of gaining audience interest.

### **Cosmopolitan Artist**

"Dream Coming True," from *All My Faces*, does not emphasize Awad's Bulgarian or her Palestinian ethnicity, and in some ways Awad has more success that way. The album as a whole focuses on her European persona more prominently than does *Bahlawan*. Nine of the 13 tracks, including a cover of a Joni Mitchell song, have no Arabic lyrics, and the titles are all in English. The artwork depicts Awad as cosmopolitan, that is, belonging to the broader sphere of European influence in a cultural sense (fig. 2.15). The lyrics about her process as a professional artist also support this identity.

If this is a dream coming true  
Then why does it feel so damn hollow?  
So many words unsaid  
Make it hard to swallow

I put on a happy face  
So you don't guess what I'm thinking  
If this is a dream coming true  
Why am I sinking?

I'd like to keep things real  
So you can skip the smiles  
And the fake embrace  
If you have something to tell me  
Why don't you say it to my face?

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhOHm27PG2w> (accessed September 21, 2011).

I've worked so hard to get here  
 I don't see myself backing down  
 If this is a dream coming true  
 Why does it feel I'm gonna drown?

The music is a ballad set to a simple accompaniment of acoustic guitar. There are no ethnic musical markers. The song is in F minor, rather than a mode, and the form is simple and regular (fig. 2.16). Awad wrote the music with Amiram Eini, a Norwegian-born Israeli model and singer-songwriter who performs indie rock.



Fig. 2.15. In her album *All My Faces* Awad emphasizes her European persona.

Intro	vs	vs	chorus	vs	bridge	chorus	coda
7	4 4	4 4	4 4 4 4	4 4	4 4	4 4 4 4	4 4
	A	A	B	A	A	B	½ B

Fig. 2.16. The form of “*Dream Coming True*” on *All My Faces* is regular.

The success of “*Dream Coming True*” shows how Awad’s Israeli Arab persona works as a double-edged sword. When the issue of the Arabic lyrics is removed, her songs can become popular on Israeli mainstream radio. In December 2011 “*Dream Coming True*” was chosen as Song of the Week on 88 FM. I heard the song on the radio while at a party in Tel Aviv, and I noticed how it did not stand out from the rest of the songs that evening. Having too many innocuous songs, however, can mean losing the distinctiveness of the persona, a problem Aviv also encountered. Not performing one’s ethnicity also avoids the issue of authenticity that some artists, such as Dikla, face. “*Dream Coming True*” was one of the tracks that Yossi Harsonski praised in his review of *All My Faces*, critiquing the use of Middle Eastern musical markers in some of the arrangements as artificial and rather forced.



Mira Awad is an excellent singer and actress, open and versatile, trying to direct herself to the big world. Orientalism is a negotiable currency, but it seems to me that instead of going on the orientation of “look how I also sound Eastern,” she must first choose the songs that are the most authentic from her point of view and that least “take into consideration” the purposes of marketing herself to the big world. There are examples here that she can do it (Harsonski 2011a).

He then goes on to discuss “Dream Coming True” as one of these examples. Awad’s performance of her true ethnic identity as Israeli Arab and Bulgarian is illegible, but making it too legible can come across as artificial. Ironically the lyrics of the song talk about these sorts of negotiations that an artist must make between personal fulfillment and professional demands.

### **Palestinian Ethnicity as Incompatible with Jewish Israeliness**

Awad is a respected artist in Israel, making it to the national finals in the Kdam Eurovision contest (2005) and receiving awards from the Israel Cultural Excellence Foundation (IcExcellence) for her work as actress and singer (2008). Her Palestinian ethnicity, however, limits her performance opportunities. She does not participate in the many government-sponsored shows on Independence Day, an important venue for professional exposure as well as establishing belonging. As she put it, “I do not perform on Independence Day. Not because I’m grieving, but because Independence Day still doesn’t include me. I haven’t been invited, as a citizen, to this celebration” (Klein 2011). While these institutions are overtly national, during the time I was in the field Awad also did not perform much at venues such as Zappa, a music club whose four venues cater to mainstream Israeli audiences,<sup>36</sup> where I saw Blumin and Aviv perform a number of shows.<sup>37</sup> At Tzavta, a theater in Jerusalem that professes to collect and preserve Israeli culture,<sup>38</sup> she only appears as a guest or with other artists at special events like the annual Oud Festival or the Culture of Peace Festival.<sup>39</sup> Her Christian affiliation also reduces her performance opportunities at Beit Avi Chai, whose self-declared mission is to promote Jewish-Israeli culture.<sup>40</sup> Awad’s limited appearances at Tzavta are probably due to a combination of political and stylistic factors, however, since Amal Murkus, who is much more political and openly critical of Israel, does have her own shows there.<sup>41</sup> Most of Murkus’s music is closer to

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<sup>36</sup> Zappa has a club in the major cultural centers of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Herzliya, as well as an amphitheater further north in Binyamina.

<sup>37</sup> Awad has been a guest of other artists at Zappa, including Joca Perpignan (November 5, 2012) and Adam Gorlitzky (November 9, 2013), neither of whom is a big name.

<sup>38</sup> On their website they declare their mission of “nature conservation”: “Tzavta undertakes to collect, preserve and display for the Israeli public the cultural values in the performing arts over the years.” <http://www.tzavta.co.il> (accessed June 10, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Awad appeared at the Oud Festival with several artists for the show “Barbeque: Israeli Chillout” (2007) and a guest with Ensemble Naam (2012), and at the Culture of Peace Festival with other artists as well (2010).

<sup>40</sup> As they note on their website, “Beit Avi Chai seeks to collect and publicize the various facets of Israeli-Jewish society, provide them with a forum, and let them influence Israeli society and culture,” <http://www.bac.org.il/ENG> (accessed March 14, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> For example, Murkus performed her own show as part of the Oud Festival (2010).

Arab music, including an album of Palestinian folksongs, while Awad's music is based in Western pop music.

The limitations Awad faces in her career are due to a combination of commercial and political factors. Awad herself summarized succinctly the multifaceted aspect of her challenge in making a career as a popular musician in Israel.

I'm sure I appear much more abroad than here. I perform in New York at my own concert, and then I come here to Café Bialik in Tel Aviv. There are certainly gaps in terms of where this music can get to here in Israel, and you're right that it's...not just racism and discrimination, because there is a lot of discrimination in the music industry for all kinds of music, and whoever is not in the center doesn't get a slice of the playlist and media and everything, and yet to manage to stand out is very hard (Gordon 2010).

As a professional artist she singles out one ethnicity for commercial purposes and in turn becomes labeled by the media. The market demands a legible persona that brings out only one ethnicity so that it is easily consumable. This process of simplification is likely to be even firmer in a politically charged climate where people are forced to take sides. Thus while many Israelis have multiple ethnic allegiances, Awad becomes a symbolic Israeli Arab, defined by the language of her lyrics when she sings in Arabic. Other artists, such as Dudu Tassa and Amir Benayoun, have released albums in which they sing in Arabic. However, these are only individual albums within material that is primarily in Hebrew. More importantly, their national affiliation is not called into question, since they are Jewish Israelis. Dudu Tassa, moreover, is the grandson of one of the most prominent Iraqi Jewish musicians to come to Israel, so that with his album he is performing his heritage, albeit altered stylistically, and so engaging with the politics and popularity of the Mizrahi return to roots.

Awad's Israeli Arab identity keeps her in a liminal position. As she described it, "I moved into Israeli society. Then I understood the complexity of being a Palestinian in Israel, having that very rich Palestinian identity, but also feeling that you belong here. You're part of this country, but also an outsider" (Sherwood 2010). She tries to define her Palestinian identity as part of her national identity, as an ethnicity within it: "I am a Palestinian Israeli. Like a Moroccan Israeli. By heritage I am Palestinian and by citizenship I am Israeli" (Klein 2011). However, it is more complicated than that, since in certain discourses her Palestinian identity functions as her national affiliation, even though her Israeli citizenship does give her rights and possibilities that a Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem, for instance, does not have.

There is a certain separation of people and institutions in Awad's media appearances. Interviewers engage with her as a fellow Israeli and support her as an artist. They express sympathy over the discrimination she faces, and in doing so shift the racism onto disembodied institutions. The difference between people and institutions is also evident in the reception of *Bahlawan*. Even though record companies rejected *Bahlawan*, ultimately the album sold well. As journalist Joseph Silverstein suggested, "as sometimes happens, the mass market may be far more ready to embrace 'the other' than the doyennes of pop taste recognize" (Silverstein 2008). Silverstein's monolithic depiction of the "doyennes of pop taste" is problematic, since Reshet Gimmel is the only radio station that explicitly rejected Awad's songs. As Awad herself pointed out, "regardless of language, this stuff is not mainstream" (Kohavi 2009b). Music critics have also avidly supported Awad in the press. Her style of music, however, did not have wide enough drawing power to become well known through mainstream channels, and it was primarily through her collaboration with Noa that *Bahlawan* got out to the general public.

There are also particular marketing demands that factor into why Awad is part of a trend as an actress but not as a musician. In her acting career she is one of several Arab Israelis on mainstream television. A similar artist is Yousef Sweid, an Arab Israeli who has made his career in Jewish Israeli society. Like Awad, he too works against being typecast as Arab and is continually caught in politics as he pursues his career in Jewish Israeli society (Ginsburg 2012). Sweid, however, is not a singer-songwriter, so he does not have the challenge of needing an identifiable persona. In Israeli popular music, on the other hand, one can find few artists that are analogous to Awad. Mando Jeries, a successful Palestinian singer-songwriter who won *New Star*, the Arab version of *A Star is Born*, chose to develop his career within the Arab sector (Issacharoff 2011). Amal Murkus straddles Jewish and Arab sectors, but her music is not primarily in the realm of Israeli pop music.

Awad's intersectionality puts her in both a challenging and advantaged position. Her Palestinian ethnicity gives her political cachet, while her Bulgarian ethnicity tempers her Otherness, making her less threatening and more normative as European. Similarly, she represents Israeli Arabs to Jewish audiences, but her higher class as Christian aligns her with Jewish society. As an Arab woman she struggles with sociocultural norms, but her liminal position in Jewish society challenges stereotypes of Israeli Arabs that are based on rural Muslim women. Her performance of music in Arabic within a Euro-American pop genre further problematizes discourses. In this way Awad's intersectionality and musical style make her a unique figure in Israeli popular music.

### Chapter Three: Dikla

Levontin 7 is a club named after its address in the southern end of Tel Aviv, in the Bohemian neighborhood of Florentin. Dikla performs here regularly. This Thursday night<sup>1</sup> the basement room is packed solid, mostly young hipsters, but also some middle-aged fans around the edges. It's 9:15, and everyone is standing, crowding up towards the stage. As the lights dim, four handsome young men dressed in black come onstage and take their places at their instruments—piano, bass, drums, and guitar. They set up a funky groove, and the audience claps along. After what seems like an eternity, Dikla appears, in a strappy black lace dress, high-heeled ankle boots, and large earrings. Her eyes are heavily lined with black, and her long black hair is sprayed into a tousled do. As she takes her place at the microphone, the vamp gives way to a chorus in minor mode. The music stops, signaling Dikla's entrance. Cradling the microphone with both hands, she begins to sing in a deep breathy voice, quivering with suppressed emotion. "How much good and how much bad there is here, how much my young soul hoped for good love..." But even as she sings these pained words, an ironic smile dances on her lips, as if to say, "I know what you want, and I know how to give it to you." At the end of the verse, the band winds up for the chorus with an ascending scale in unison, which Dikla accompanies by clapping above her head. At the top of the scale her arms fly out to the sides, cutting them off. In the silence she sings, "I don't know, I can't hear, melo-" and the band comes crashing in on "-dies..." She holds out the final syllable, her pitch rising from forcing her voice. The electric guitar fills in with a riff that sounds like something from *musika mizrahit* with its augmented second and trills. "...I know that tonight we won't be together." The band quiets down for another verse, but by the chorus the music is deafening. This time Dikla pushes "melodies" even further with a chain of *silsulim* [melismatic gestures typical of Arab music]. The musicians rock out in a final instrumental jam, Dikla urging them on with her arms. The audience claps, whoops, and whistles adoringly. Known in Israel as the "diva of Hebrew-Arabic rock," Dikla has found a strong fan base for her unique interpretation of Mizrahiyut.

In this chapter I examine how Dikla maneuvers different forms of an ethnicity that is considered a marginalized variant of Israeliness. She performs Arab-inflected popular music, but the analogy to Umm Kulthum in her powerful Egyptian femininity casts her persona as highbrow, in contrast to lowbrow singers of the popular hybrid genre *musika mizrahit*. This persona holds an allure for Ashkenazi intermediaries, but also limits her to a niche in its foreignness to the Western-oriented musical styles privileged in Jewish Israeli society. The tension plays out in differing interpretations of her unique vocality. From a religiously observant Jewish home, Dikla expresses spirituality in her music, garnering her the title Mizrahi soul singer among her fans. Critics, however, interpret her emotive singing through her Arabness, as highbrow Egyptian or lowbrow Mizrahi. The commercial limitations of Dikla's music reinscribe the trope of marginalization associated with her Mizrahi panethnic identity, which she reaffirms with her unconventional career path.<sup>2</sup> Even as she distances herself from *musika mizrahit*, Dikla broadens her professional opportunities through that genre.

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<sup>1</sup> December 30, 2010

<sup>2</sup> Although Mizrahiyut is prevalent in academic discourse, it is not as evident in everyday lived experience. Dikla nevertheless draws on discourses of marginalization associated with Mizrahiyut in her self-presentation as part of producing her Otherness.

## Mizrahi Woman in Israel

Dikla Douri's mother is from Egypt and her father from Iraq, which places her in the category of *mizrahim*. From 1948 to the 1970s around 900,000 Jews arrived in Israel from Middle Eastern and North African countries. The plethora of ethnic communities did not melt into one European-oriented society, as the Israeli establishment had hoped, but instead an "ethnic gap" formed between Jews from Europe and those from the Middle East and North Africa, with the latter relegated to the lower classes. Although today Israeli society is multicultural, there continues to be a discursive division into Ashkenazim, who formed a majority in the Zionist community prior to Israeli independence and continued to dominate Israeli culture and institutions in the early years of the state, and Mizrahi cultures that are the subordinate group.

In the 1970s members of non-European ethnic Jewish communities coalesced into a panethnic identity, expressed in a Mizrahi pride movement spearheaded by their own Israeli Black Panthers (Cohen and Shemesh 1976). Even as many *mizrahim* assimilated into Israeli society and moved into the middle class, adopting Ashkenazi patterns of behavior and values, the term Mizrahi came to define the panethnic group in terms of their low socioeconomic status. (Ben-Rafael 1985). Some scholars (Shenhav 2006; Shohat 1999) have focused on the discrimination Mizrahim still face because of their cultural heritage, defining them as Arab-Jews who maintain aspects of pan-Arab culture and therefore struggle with a conflict between that part of their identity and the recurring enemy status of Arabs over the decades of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Smadar Lavie argues that these terms are all used for political purposes by academics and activists, since Mizrahim refer to themselves by their particular country of origin (2014:3). The panethnic persona Dikla projects, however, belies Lavie's assertion, so that the term *mizrahi* is useful here in exposing the discursive boundaries of this identity.

The category of *mizrahim* is also applicable in discussions of ethno-religious identity. Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Stephen Sharot assert that "religion...is considered to be one of the most important symbolic foci that provide bases for ethnicity" (Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1991:22). Mizrahim are on the whole more religiously observant than Ashkenazim, which shapes their group identity. As Yaakov Yadgar contends, "the Mizrahi-traditionist emphasis on ethnicity emerges as a subversion of the 'taken for granted', 'white', supposedly 'non-ethnic' secular Israeli identity" (2011b:476). He offers the term 'traditionism' to distinguish it from the binary of Orthodox and secular (Yadgar 2011a). Dikla grew up in such a traditionist home, with a father who is a *paytan*, or composer and performer of Jewish liturgical poetry. This background shapes her music and persona, though it is not readily legible within dominant categories of religious observance.

## Diva of Hebrew-Arabic Rock

Dikla was born in 1973 in Beer Sheva, a town in the south of Israel that is geographically and culturally peripheral to the larger cities of Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem. As a teenager she waitressed and sang in Beer Sheva pubs until she moved to Tel Aviv, where she attended the Beit Tzvi acting school for one year before leaving to pursue a career in music. Her breakthrough came when she teamed up with Ran Shem-Tov, a respected producer who worked with veteran artists such as Yehudit Ravitz. Shem-Tov is also the lead singer and guitarist of Izabo, a band that combines rock with Middle Eastern music, and represented Israel in the Eurovision contest in 2012. Shem-Tov capitalized on Dikla's Egyptian heritage to create a musical style and persona that was very successful. The process of interpellation by which Dikla came to her

persona as ‘Diva of Hebrew-Arabic rock’ was thus a strategic suggestion, rather than the result of being typecast out of ignorance as Awad was. Dikla describes her ‘hailing’ thus:

Ran [Shem-Tov] and I started to work and tried jazz, rock, blues and pop and it didn’t work for us. The music simply didn’t stick. I was 24 when one morning Ran called me and told me, “listen, Dikla.” In the background I heard Umm Kulthum. Ran made a bit of Arab music and threaded her singing into it live.<sup>3</sup> I really loved the combination that was made in his music. One day he called me and told me that we have to succeed like Eyal Golan.<sup>4</sup> He argued that we don’t need big music companies in order to succeed. He said he would bring the money for production and we won’t need to rely on the support of production companies. He asked me to bring him all the Arab music I love and to write as many songs as possible. Funny, years we looked for the wrong music that would join us and in the end this music waited for us under our noses. At first I objected and said that I’m not Mizrahit and I can’t do what Eyal Golan does. I informed him that I wouldn’t do *musika mizrahit* like others did. But he said that we’d make music the way we want (Shmuelof, Shem-Tov, and Baram 2007).

Dikla was hesitant to perform Arab music because it would categorize her a Mizrahi singer and associate her with *musika mizrahit* and its characterization as lowbrow art. Her objection “I’m not Mizrahit” refers to a singer of *musika mizrahit*, rather than her ethnicity. However, she takes for granted the musical knowledge and access she has to jazz, rock, blues, and pop through her cosmopolitan formation, positioning them as “non-ethnic,” divorced from their racialized history in the U.S., in contrast to the highly charged Mizrahi aspect.

*Musika mizrahit* is a hybrid popular music genre that emerged in the 1970s along with the Mizrahi pride movement, and was “generally associated with low-status Middle Eastern and North African ethnic groups occupying an ambivalent position on the margins of the dominant, European-based Israeli culture” (Halper et al. 1989:131). From the early 1980s to the late 1990s *musika mizrahit* entered and then came to dominate the mainstream, where today it takes up a vast majority of radio play lists. With its mass appeal *musika mizrahit* is a trap for Mizrahi singers. Although it is a path to fame and sometimes to commercial success, it limits the artist by confining her to a particular genre based on her ethnicity. Ofra Haza, one of the most famous Yemenite singers of the 1980s, moved her career to Europe in order to avoid this trap. Dikla evaded being labeled a Mizrahi singer by singing rock and jazz.

By creating music that was based on Middle Eastern traditions, but different from the established style *musika mizrahit*, Dikla and Shem-Tov were at the vanguard of an emerging trend called “authentic Mizrahi music” [*musika mizrahit otentit*] (Suissa 2009).<sup>5</sup> The “authentic” aspect of this genre refers to the Arab musical traditions it draws on, in contrast to the Greek, Persian, and other circum-Mediterranean and West-Asian elements prevalent in *musika mizrahit*. In subsequent years prominent Mizrahi artists followed this trend, including Dudu Tassa, who

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<sup>3</sup> Dikla’s description is a little unclear, but I would assume Shem-Tov overlaid a recording of Umm Kulthum with a rock accompaniment.

<sup>4</sup> Golan is one of the most popular male singers of *musika mizrahit*.

<sup>5</sup> The idea of an emerging expression of “authentic” Mizrahiyut as alternative to hegemonic Ashkenazi is appearing in literature too, in such volumes as Yochai Oppenheimer’s *Diasporic Mizrahi Poetry in Israel* (2012). The title in Hebrew translates as “What It Means to Be Authentic: Mizrahi Poetry in Israel.”

released *Dudu Tassa and the Kuwaitis* (2011), a tribute to his Iraqi lineage,<sup>6</sup> and Amir Benayoun, who released an album in Arabic, *Zini* (2011). Both these artists had established careers as mainstream pop and rock performers before they released these albums.

The result of Dikla's collaboration with Shem-Tov was her debut album *Love Music*, which blended classical Egyptian music with rock in Hebrew. This hybridization created a form of Arabic rock, mirroring a trend in the Arab world where producers are remixing classic songs of Umm Kulthum and Abdel Halim Hafez with techno music. In the Arab world, however, such music sparks controversy, as critics accuse artists of "polluting the naturally rich Arab music" (Abdel-Nabi et al. 2004:235). This issue was not an obstacle for Dikla, however, and her album enjoyed great success in Israel. It was named by *Yediot Aharonot* as one of the top five albums of 2001. One of the songs, "Good Morning," even became a radio hit.

The album established Dikla's persona as the "diva of Hebrew-Arabic rock." In 2003 she mounted a show with belly dancer Urit Mafzir in which she performed classical Egyptian music. The show was called "Ya Jamil," after a song by Farid Al-Atrash. Throughout her career Dikla has maintained her persona as "diva of Hebrew-Arabic rock," even as she has experimented with different sounds. In 2004 she released her second album *World*, in which she made her music more suitable for radio, with shorter songs and more of a pop style. The album, however, was less successful than her first. In 2010 she released her third album, *Arlozorov 38*, in which she experimented with a cosmopolitan image and less Arabic music, garnering even more polarized reception. Dikla's persona and music elicit strong reactions, with a marked division between fans and detractors. I suggest that this division is because the two personae she performs, Egyptian diva and Mizrahi soul singer, are incongruous. They exist in tension even though they are two facets of the same person, and each is constituted through the other.

### **Egyptian Diva**

Dikla is distinctive, differing from the other artists in this study, in that she built her career around the persona of Egyptian diva. As a woman she was able to capitalize on the link to Umm Kulthum in a way that male artists cannot. Other artists, including Zehava Ben and Ilana Eliya, performed and recorded songs of Umm Kulthum as a single project. Dikla, on the other hand, focused her persona around this image, naturalizing it through her mother's Egyptian heritage. At Beit Avi Chai she discussed her art by linking her Egyptian identity with her mother and her Jewish identity with her father.

I...grew up with *tamsileot*...all day programs on TV, Arabic women, height of drama... My home is typical Egyptian. There is no such thing as sitting and watching TV... not bothering anyone...suddenly there is drama. You're not allowed to say a word. Nothing. Someone says a word, everything explodes. So when I sat and thought...why is it like this? It's Egypt, it's my mother...wherever she goes she throws fire. It's positive and negative, and it's the love of my life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Tassa's grandfather, Daoud al-Kuwaiti, was one of the leading composers and performers of Iraqi and pan-Arab music in Israel for decades, a prominent member of the Israel Broadcasting Authority's Arab orchestra. Yair Dalal helped release an album of the grandfather's music.

<sup>7</sup> November 27, 2010.

Even though she also heard Iraqi music that her father listened to,<sup>8</sup> she highlights the Egyptian part to explain the music she makes. The intersectionality of gender and ethnicity that she shares with her mother makes the performance even stronger.

Dikla draws on discourses of gender to offer an Egyptian femininity that is read as a source of power, analogous to her role model Umm Kulthum. As Virginia Danielson argues, “Umm Kulthum brought to the socially marginal role of musician the dignity and demeanor familiar to Egyptian women generally. Like many other Arab women, she understood the power she had and used it to advance her causes. She is often credited with having raised the level of respect for singers” (1997:196). In shows Dikla creates a dignified image by wearing long dresses (fig. 3.1). Her evening gowns in particular garnered attention, as one music critic wrote, “with a shining stage presence, not little thanks to her dress” (Bar-El 2005). For less formal shows Dikla wears pants, but when she does wear a dress it is long. She explained her preference to me thus: “I like long dresses. It’s the most feminine. I can’t stand minis. It’s the most unfeminine... Femininity doesn’t really come out in Israel. It’s not like in Egypt where you feel like a woman...[when you] sing you really feel female.”<sup>9</sup> Dikla characterizes her femininity as particularly Egyptian, not Israeli, marking herself as foreign.



Fig. 3.1. A video of Dikla’s album release show for Arlozorov 38<sup>10</sup> (left) captures the similarity of her hairstyle, dress, and mannerisms to those of Umm Kulthum (right).<sup>11</sup>

“Obsession,” from the album *World* (2004), epitomizes Dikla’s persona as Egyptian diva. When I asked her, Dikla chose this song to represent herself as an artist to me. Since she wrote

<sup>8</sup> Dikla mentions this in her chapter in *Echoing Identities: A Young Mizrahi Anthology* (2007), in which the editors seek to document a resurgence of ethnic pride among third generation Mizrahim.

<sup>9</sup> Dikla Douri, interview with author, Tel Aviv, February 8, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> The show on June 1, 2010 was filmed and edited by Asaf Gottenu for Musica Neto, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cVk3MKm-g8> (accessed July 11, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> c. 1968.



the melody and lyrics herself, rather than collaborating with others as she did on many of her songs, it likely represents her own artistic sensibilities most faithfully. While I was in the field, Dikla was experimenting with a more cosmopolitan style, incorporating less Arabic music and more songs in English, and performing with a rock band rather than her previous ensemble of Middle Eastern instruments, so that she did not actually perform “Obsession” at any of the shows I attended. Nevertheless, by choosing this song she reinforced the persona as the diva of Hebrew-Arabic rock that had brought her to the public’s attention. She also told me that she was returning to Ran Shem-Tov, the producer who helped her create this persona.

“Obsession” illustrates how in drawing on her Egyptian heritage Dikla creates music that is unfamiliar yet accessible, connecting with her audience through shared Israeli symbols of Arab music. One way is by using common melodic and rhythmic elements from classical Egyptian music to index Arab music. In this sense Dikla uses stereotypical markers of Egyptianness in much the same way that singers of *musika mizrahit* use ethnic substyles as colorings.

While there are many substyles of *musica mizrahit*, performers and composers speak of two general mainstream styles: “Greek” and “Yemenite”. Onto these basic styles are grafted the many ethnic substyles such as Persian, Kurdish, Turkish, Indian, Georgian, Moroccan, Arabic, Spanish or Italian. They comprise the “ethnic colorings” of a singer’s repertoire, stereotypical musical elements which are immediately recognizable to an audience from a particular ethnic background, and which create the excitement of the performance and the bond between the performer and his or her audience (Halper et al. 1989:136).

Dikla’s bond with her audience is created not through her Egyptian ethnicity, but through the place of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian music in their shared Israeli culture. Her music registers as Arab for her Israeli audiences, since from the 1930s classical Egyptian music came to dominate Arab music in general and broadcasts of Arab music in Israel, in particular.

The instrumentation of “Obsession” is that of a *firqa*, the larger of the two ensembles that are typical of Egyptian music. It includes qanun, darbuka, and riqq, and a violin section that most readily identifies it as Egyptian. The texture, too, is typical of classical Egyptian music, all the melody instruments playing together in heterophony, including the voice on a wordless syllable. *Lazimas*, short responses inserted between the phrases, round out the texture, beginning with one on qanun (fig. 3.2). The rhythmic cycle is maqsum (DT-TD-T-), the most common in Arabic popular music. The melody is in maqam Hijaz, one of the most common modes (*maqamat*), transposed from the normative D to start on B (fig. 3.3). This mode includes an augmented second, which indexes Middle Eastern music as a whole in the world of Israeli popular music.



Fig. 3.2. Transcription of qanun lazima in “Obsession,” providing the color of Egyptian music.



Fig. 3.3. Maqam Hijaz on B.

Adapting and combining these elements that index Arab music with Western pop music helps make Dikla’s music popular with a wider audience. It is the same sort of hybridity that worked for Awad, presenting otherness within a familiar frame. The sixth degree of the scale in maqam Hijaz is three quarters of a tone above the fifth degree, but in Dikla’s song, it is only half a tone above the fifth degree in order to conform to the chromatic scale. This change eliminates the quarter-tones that might sit uncomfortably on ears not accustomed to Arab music and are awkward or impossible to produce on Western instruments. The *firqa* instrumentation is filled out with an electric guitar and drum set from rock music, creating a more Euro-American sound. The form of “Obsession” includes some aspects of Arab music, such as the instrumental rendition of the entire melody preceding the singer’s entrance (fig. 3.4). The phrases of the instrumental section are also found in Arab music, small units combined into irregular phrases. An example is motive c (fig. 3.5). When the voice enters, however, the phrases become more uniform. For example, motive C returns at the end of the song with the same texture, but with a simplified melody, acting as a sort of refrain (fig. 3.6).

Instrumental	vocal
4 4   4 4 4   4 2 4 3 4 4 2   8	4 4   1 4 4 4 2   : 2 (x7) :
a a a b a c c' c c'	a a d d' d ½d c c c c

Fig. 3.4. Form of “Obsession” with irregular phrases.

Fig. 3.5. Transcription of instrumental section “Obsession” with motive C.

Fig. 3.6. Transcription of final section of “Obsession” with motive C in regular phrasing.

The melody is in regular four-bar phrases, common in Euro-American pop music, but also frequent enough in Arab music. The repetition and predictability do not present obstacles to following the music. Throughout this refrain section, both times it appears, the trap set continues the maqsum rhythm, while the electric guitar adds *lazimas*, reinforcing the predictability, as does the use of melodic sequence (fig. 3.7). The instrumental coloring of the electric guitar would be especially familiar to the audience, since it is prevalent in *musika mizrahit*.



Fig. 3.7. Transcription of *lazimas* played by electric guitar in “Obsession” evoking *musika mizrahit*

Another way Dikla’s music diverges from classical Egyptian music is in the way she recreates the dramatic excitement that characterizes that repertoire. Whereas singers of Arab music create tension through repetition that often involves improvisatory change of minor details and sometimes modulation, Dikla does it through repetition but does not vary her vocal line. The climax of “Obsession” comes with the second line of the text, which is in Hebrew: “The sky is blue / until you come out of my voice.” This second part of this line is repeated seven times, with an addition of an echo after the fifth iteration (fig. 3.8). Dikla’s music is thus accessible to audiences that do not have the knowledge of maqam modulation that audiences of Arab music have. Instead, her use of repetition here indexes one of the most intense moments in Jewish liturgy, the closing service for the Day of Atonement, a day of fasting and prayer. The congregation chants “Adonai is God” seven times, a final plea for divine forgiveness as the gates of heaven close. I interpret this reference as reflecting Dikla’s background in an observant Jewish home, which I will discuss in relation to another song.



Fig. 3.8. Transcription of climactic moment in “Obsession” building intensity through repetition.

Dikla’s diva persona and analogy to Umm Kulthum captured the imaginations of her Israeli audience. Her success illustrates bell hooks’ assertion that, “The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture” (1992:21). The idea of spice even appears in a literal sense in Dikla’s work. The first track on her debut album was called “Spices,” which was taken up in a review praising the album, “Dikla Douri: Wild, Full of Longing and Spices” (Gabai 2000).

## Authentic Arab Singer

Dikla's music and persona tapped into a new fad for Arab music. As Harsonski put it, "Arabic is not a language spoken in our country (even if formally it is the second language, not English, as many mistakenly think), but Arab music is advancing in giant steps. Which the arranger Ran Shem Tov, who caught a wave and good sense with all the Umm Kulthumism of Dikla, will admit" (Harsonski 2011b). The fad is among elite circles, confirming the way domestic cultural tourists look for foreign highbrow art. Timora Lessinger alludes to these arbiters of taste (Bourdieu 1984) when she cites "the always-fashionable combination of rock and Arab music and electronica" (Lessinger 2010a). "Always-fashionable" is actually very recent, since historically Arab music was absent from Israeli Hebrew radio (Regev 1995). Similarly, Amos Oren suggests that, "Maybe it's a bon ton fashion edict to love the Other and the different, the strange and the Arab" (Oren 2010a). These elite circles are able to present Arab music as strange because they exclude Arab Israelis, including Jews who arrived, or whose parents arrived, from Arab countries. In this way "the discourse of 'mixed-race ambiguity' reinscribes the relations which entitle some to gaze at others" (Haritaworn 2012:28).

I encountered the Arab music vogue when after Dikla's show at Levontin, I joined Fanny, a radio DJ, at Joz and Loz, an upscale trendy café frequented by actors and stars. The place was packed, and the waitresses all but ignored us. There was Arabic pop music playing in the background. Fanny was excited about the music. "In fancy Ashkenazi joints and gay clubs they play Mizrahi music—not Eyal Golan, higher class." Mizrahi here refers to the Arab origins of the music, as opposed to the hybrid genre of *musika mizrahit* that Golan represents. Dikla herself arrived at the café a bit later, showing how she belongs to this higher-class set of artists.

Dikla's own songs are in Hebrew, but the Arab popular songs she adds to her repertoire enhance her foreignness. The songs on her first two albums included a little Arabic. On *Love Music*, "Bastanna" is in Egyptian Arabic, as she points out in the liner notes, and on the album *World* she sings one verse in Arabic on the songs "World" and "End of the Sabbath." On *Arlozorov 38*, however, she does not sing in Arabic at all, but her shows around the release of this third album, when she was performing with only a rock band onstage, included the well-known song "Habaitak Bisaif" by Lebanese singer Fairuz. During our interview in the green room at the Yellow Submarine, when the band began playing the intro Dikla sighed, "I haven't heard this one in a while," suggesting that she used to perform it, but stopped, perhaps when she was trying out a different style. The song works for Dikla because it is Arabic pop music, in E minor rather than modal, and in verse-chorus form, so that it suits her rock band lineup while foregrounding her ethnic Otherness. It also blends into her repertoire because she sings it in her characteristic impassioned style, rather than evoking the soft vocal timbre of Fairuz, who is known for her physical restraint.

Fairuz represents a very different style than Umm Kulthum, but she is so famous in the Arab world that she has the same power as Umm Kulthum to evoke Arabness for Israeli audiences who are not already fans of Arab music. In the Arab world Fairuz's music, composed by the Rahbani brothers (her husband and brother-in-law), is strongly identified by Arab audiences as Lebanese, in distinction to Umm Kulthum's Egyptian music. However, at Beit Avi Chai, Dikla was able to introduce "Habaitak" with the origin story about her Egyptian mother because of a discourse in Jewish Israeli society that lumps all the Middle East together. In this way her liminal status was advantageous. Her understanding of Arab music from her background allowed her to choose a song that worked well for her, while her familiarity with her outsider audience through her dominant lifestyle helped her present it convincingly as part of her persona.

At the Yellow Submarine Dikla introduced the song only by saying with a wink, “Do you want a little Arabic?” In doing so she offered a meta-performance that commented on her position singing Arab music to a Jewish Israeli audience. Her words exposed how she was capitulating to commercial pressure, but she did it productively by cleverly teasing her audience in a way that actually created a stronger bond with them. Awad similarly offered a meta-performance in response to criticism that she does not sing in Hebrew. At Café Bialik<sup>12</sup> she introduced a song she wrote in Hebrew with, “So in order to prove that I also write in Hebrew...” At this point the audience laughed at a mishap onstage, but mistaking it for a response to what she said, she added, “I know I’m with an admiring audience where I don’t need to prove anything.” Awad’s awkward performance confirmed for me just how effective Dikla is in creating rapport with her audience.

Dikla’s performance called attention to the way domestic cultural tourism thrives on the authenticity of foreignness. The more foreign an artist seems, the more authentic her music is taken to be. For Dikla, this discourse conflates emotional expression, ethnic heritage, and technical facility. The mixing of emotional and ethnic authenticity plays out, for example, in a review by Oren Bar-El.

Dikla sounds like she is trying to take credit for authenticity, thanks to a deliberate lowering of the texts she writes, and adopting rather exaggerated vocal mannerism. The first time Dikla managed to catch my attention was the song “World,” the first song from her second album. Suddenly, I believed her. Suddenly I got excited by her screams, and when she turned to sing in Arabic, it sounded like that is truly her most basic way to express pain (Bar-El 2005).

Bar-El critiques Dikla’s Mizrahi persona, but lauds her Egyptian one, a topic I will explore in more detail further on.

The way Dikla’s persona satisfies the desire for an authentic experience of a foreign culture among domestic cultural tourists demonstrates how critics sometimes equate ethnic authenticity with technical ability. Boaz Cohen praised Dikla as,

A very authentic singer, very connected to her roots, to the place where she comes from, and it comes out particularly when she sings actually in Arabic. And then she is simply a great Egyptian singer, that is you wouldn’t call her Dikla—she could be a wonderful Egyptian singer. Her persona is very foreign to what is happening here. And that’s why she is really a *mizrahi* singer... She isn’t a pop singer who sings silsulim. She is really a *mizrahi* singer, because she comes from some place that is very deep inside the music of the area, of the Levant.<sup>13</sup>

Cohen uses the term *mizrahi* here to refer to Middle Eastern, rather than a singer of *musika mizrahit*. This conflation of ethnic authenticity with technical proficiency is common in the ethnic music scene in Israel.

Included in their self-presentation, performers’ personal roots shape audience perceptions of authenticity... A discourse constructed around roots is also evident when musicians

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<sup>12</sup> December 11, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, interview.

critique others engaged in combining musical idioms for lacking deep understanding of a given musical practice. This roots discourse privileges Middle Eastern musical idioms over the other styles performed in this scene (Brinner 2009:302).

Even though Dikla is associated with a popular music genre, her Egyptian roots nevertheless satisfy the Middle Eastern criteria for authenticity.

Dikla's authenticity is thus a construct created by her audience. Sarah Weiss (2014) argues that listeners value hybridized world music according to its "perceived authenticity," and that the way they construct this authenticity depends on their aesthetic preferences and expectations. When critics reinforce Dikla's similarity to Umm Kulthum it aligns with elitist tendencies. This phenomenon was so prominent with her debut album that critic Natalie Artman wrote an article, entitled "Authenticity de la Rubbish," in which she exposed Dikla's authenticity as the Emperor's new clothes. "This record is not directed towards the Mediterranean music market, but to the 'enlightened' layer, for those not familiar with Arab music and the half- and quarter-tones it requires singers to produce, which are completely absent in Dikla... If you send Dikla to sing at a tribute to Umm Kulthum in Egypt, it would end in a diplomatic incident" (Artman 2000). In her discussion of tonality, however, Artman reveals her own unfamiliarity with Arab music.

Artman aimed her critique not at Dikla, but at elitist critics for touting her authenticity. This attitude nevertheless persisted, as a review by critic Amos Oren attests. "Although she takes off easily to powerful and high singing, her starting point is actually low, heavy, deep tones (and quarter-tones, as is required in Mizrahi singing) that build using phrasing and punctuation that is other, different, unfamiliar, and even alien to the Hebrew language, which is why she is so exotic, intriguing and fascinating" (Oren 2010a). Dikla does not actually sing quarter-tones. Israelis, however, often invoke them to convey Arabness as Other. Attributing them to Dikla demonstrates the effectiveness of her persona.

Likening Dikla to Umm Kulthum raised the status of her music, but it also set up expectations that were beyond her intentions or abilities to fulfill. While some critics' preference for art music helped legitimize the work of Mizrahi musicians in the ethnic music scene, it worked against Dikla, since she does not have the training in Arabic music nor the technical facility from Western classical training that those musicians do (Wasserman 2012). As Dikla put it, "I do everything the best as an Israeli singer who sings in Arabic, and I don't forget the limitation that I'm not an Arab singer. To me, it's like they want Umm Kulthum singing 'The Eucalyptus Grove'"<sup>14</sup> (Matia 2009).

### **Authentic Mizrahi Singer**

In focusing on Dikla's foreign Egyptian persona, critics overlook how she constitutes her Mizrahiyut through it, instead seeing the two as incongruous. They expect her to be like Umm Kulthum and are disappointed when she falls short. Oren disparages Dikla's performance when it fails to meet the standards he associates with an Umm Kulthum concert. "Her musical genre, the intensity of her expressiveness, the class, as it were, of the performance, are all potential for the concert hall, and indeed worthy of classic Arabic and a Diva. Certainly not the nightclub, with all due respect, to which Dikla and her committee of admirers, caused Zappa to deteriorate" (Oren

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<sup>14</sup> "Eucalyptus Grove," by iconic Israeli songwriter Naomi Shemer, is one of the better known Songs of the Land of Israel, the Israeli national folk music repertoire (Regev and Seroussi 2004).

2010a). He goes on to criticize Dikla for drinking during the show, forgetting lyrics, chuckling, and dropping out to leave her fans to sing long portions without her. One of the things Oren was reacting to, which I noticed as well, was Dikla's tendency to address a small group of friends, making inside jokes with them that exclude the rest of the audience. While this is not appropriate for large formal concerts, it is typical of a *haflah*, the community celebrations out of which *musika mizrahit* emerged. Ahuva Ozeri displayed this same ease and intimacy at her show at Beit Avi Chai.<sup>15</sup> This sort of banter reflects the value of *amkha*, or common people, that originally characterized *musika mizrahit* (Halper et al. 1989). Although it undermines the higher tone Dikla attempts to set by invoking Umm Kulthum, it creates a strong rapport with her fans and contributes to her success.

Dikla's Mizrahi performance of *amkha* is also evident in her unpolished stage manner. Although she spent a year at an acting school, she did not matriculate from a school like the Rimon School, which trains its students to be professional performers.<sup>16</sup> This lack of artifice is one of her attractions. As Boaz Cohen suggested, "She isn't fake, she doesn't do something that isn't her. The singer and the songs are the same thing. It sits very much one on top of the other. There isn't anything that is stuck, artificial, [in order] to be very popular. And that is actually in a paradoxical way what makes her so loved—because people believe her."<sup>17</sup> One of the ways this genuineness manifests is the way she often breaks the frame in shows, greeting her fans, and teasing her audience.<sup>18</sup>

Dikla's more natural appearance is also attractive to her fans as authentic. In photographs and videos she offers a more sensual image, following her role model Natascha Atlas, yet she retains the dignity of her Egyptian femininity. On her second album she is depicted in nothing but henna tattoos (fig. 3.9), but her nakedness is classy. Singers of *musika mizrahit*, both men and women, generally have a stylized image that conforms to commercial standards of beauty. This image objectifies them and suggests a lower artistic worth in the way they are perceived. Dikla's appearance, on the other hand, is consistent with gender images one encounters in everyday life, which is equated with higher artistic worth. These images are not about her sexual behavior, but are part of a discourse through which she, as a woman, is read in a particular way. As one reviewer of her debut album suggests, "The photographers didn't bother to spread Vaseline on the lens, but presented her as a creative sensitive and powerful woman" (Gabai 2000). Ohayon similarly lauds Dikla's unpolished image.

Above all, Dikla is a quality Mizrahi singer, who refuses to become a Mizrahi caricature in the style of Maya Bouskilla with her bursting breasts that don't leave anything to the

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<sup>15</sup> April 2, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> This institution is central to the world of Israeli popular music. The many graduates who have become big stars include Aviv Geffen, Achinoam Nini, Asaf Amdurski, Keren Peles, and Miri Messika.

<sup>17</sup> Cohen, interview.

<sup>18</sup> One moment in particular stood out for me at Beit Avi Chai. Dikla was in the middle of singing "Good Morning," when she suddenly stopped and looked straight at me. "Excuse me, what are you writing here?...I'm so curious." I cowered down in my seat, mortified, but her fans saw nothing unusual in this and proudly explained that I was conducting research about her. I had already introduced myself to Dikla, but she might have forgotten, or she may have been highlighting my presence because it lent her prestige. Alternately, it could be seen as an attempt to establish power over me.

imagination... With Dikla all the sexiness drains into her delicate fingers that strum the tune in the air, and in her long arms that conduct the orchestra, cutting in precise movements. Her golden dress, classic sheer. The fabric forms in a stream on her sculpted body that is so feminine, her breasts soft and delicate lay naturally in her dress. Without a push-up, thank God she has a lot more to offer the audience, a lot of inner beauty that beams out, the same beauty that is also in the cover photos of her new album, in her naked decorated body, in nakedness that is not pornographic, that has the same perfumed softness [as she has on stage], snakelike coiling (Ohayon 2005).

In this way Dikla's performance raises the status of her art through a gendered ethnicity that is read as sensuous but higher class than that of some *musika mizrahit* singers. In terms of Kondo's theory, Dikla autoexoticizes herself, offering a "wish-image" that satisfies her audience's desire for exotic femininity, while altering those images. On the one hand it is an advantage she has as a Mizrahi woman, but on the other it is a dilemma she has to deal with that is not an issue for male singer-songwriters like Benayoun and Tassa. They are depicted on their album covers as cosmopolitan pop/rock musicians dressed in everyday clothes. Even on their roots albums they do not use an "ethnic" image. The cover of *Dudu Tassa and the Kuwaitis* displays an archival photograph of the Kuwaiti Brothers, Tassa's grandfather and great uncle, while the cover of *Zini* is an abstract design. The artwork draws attention to the project itself rather than the artists.



Fig. 3.9. Images of Dikla's gendered ethnicity on her albums *Love Music* and *World*.

Dikla's position as a Mizrahi woman also underscores a power differential with her male colleagues. Pop music in general is a male-dominated field, and in *musika mizrahit* this is even more so. In a critique of a new television show where a panel of judges chooses the next female *musika mizrahit* singing star, the author suggests that male chauvinism is still rampant in that field.

It isn't easy being a female Mizrahi singer. They don't get all the breaks that male singers get... When a female singer invests everything in her career, they say she is destroying



the home. When [Kobi] Peretz<sup>19</sup> does it they say “hats off to you.” Male hegemony has not disappeared completely from any field, but it seems that when we come to Mediterranean music, the situation is getting worse according to some. Also the few female singers who are appropriately represented in the Mizrahi play list, are represented and managed by a dominant male figure who sets the rules (Gamzo 2011).

Dikla expressed frustration in working with her male colleagues, protesting being equated with dominant constructions of women as passive.

Often I feel like a woman where I shouldn't have to... There are a lot of men around me... the recording engineers, technicians, instrumentalists, company managers... And so often this makes me feel like a woman... There are a lot of musicians who find it hard to work with me, because I really know what I want. I hear the music. I arrange a lot in my head. I produce more than anything, you know. I know where to put each line... And often people balk at it a little, because it's suddenly coming from a woman, what do you mean a woman.<sup>20</sup>

Dikla is unusual for writing many of her own songs, as well as songs for other artists and film soundtracks. She also takes an active part in arranging her songs and in the editing process for recordings (Gordon 2005). Mizrahi music in general does not have a tradition of singer-songwriters. Although a new wave of singer-songwriters in Mediterranean music is emerging (Shoshan 2009), very few women are included in it. Ahuva Ozeri is the only well-known Mizrahi woman songwriter and she, like Dikla, talked of the constant power struggle with her male musicians.<sup>21</sup> This contrasts with the equality in a collaboration that Marina Maximilian Blumin and Yehudit Ravitz described.<sup>22</sup>

Dikla's assertiveness has earned her the title of diva. During her shows Dikla exercises control over the band as well as the audience. At the beginning of every show the band played a very long introduction to “Melodies” (it lasted 2.5 minutes at Zappa), making the audience wait for her entrance. During the song she cut off the band with a gesture at the beginning of every chorus and gave directions to the lighting and sound engineers throughout the show.<sup>23</sup> Dikla's degree of explicit direction was particularly high, even for the leader of a band. Many of the other artists whose shows I attended set the lights and sound before the show and then left them that way, and they were not as conspicuous in leading the musicians. Dikla's performance further signaled her equality with the male musicians in her body language. Her movements were often choppy, suggesting masculinity rather than the sinuous feminine movements that characterize female singers of *musika mizrahit*. At Levontin she also played air guitar and drums during instrumental breaks, playfully inhabiting both vocal and instrumental roles.

Dikla connects to Umm Kulthum through her gender struggles, but the analogy is problematic. She told me that it is not Umm Kulthum's singing but her persona that primarily

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<sup>19</sup> A popular singer of *musika mizrahit*.

<sup>20</sup> Dikla Douri, interview with author, Jerusalem, January 22, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Ahuva Ozeri, interview with author, Tel Aviv, April 11, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Blumin, interview; Ravitz, interview.

<sup>23</sup> Ozeri similarly gave instructions to the lighting and sound engineers and directed the musicians during her show at Beit Avi Chai.

influences her, “the place where she was in a group of men.”<sup>24</sup> Lisa Lohman, however, suggests that later in her career Umm Kulthum deliberately cultivated “sympathy and admiration by demonstrating [her] perseverance in overcoming the many obstacles she faced as a female performer” (2010:67). Umm Kulthum’s dominating persona was nevertheless remarkable in the Arab world. As Danielson suggests, “the careers of Umm Kulthum and her female contemporaries fly in the face of popular conceptions of Arab women as submissive, sheltered, silent, and veiled” (Danielson 1997:20). While Umm Kulthum’s image contradicted misperceptions of Arab women as a monolithic group, she actually conformed to characterizations of particular ethnic groups.

In many contexts Umm Kulthum appeared to be a demanding and opinionated woman with a biting sense of humor. Her character softened only slightly over the years, and, along with stories about her generosity, the people who worked with her consistently told stories that portrayed her as demanding, sometimes unreasonably so. She simply insisted that her preferences be ascertained in each and every instance. This behavior amounted to use of personal power in a manner familiar among Egyptian women and frequently associated with *fallahiin* (Danielson 1997:191).

Dikla’s challenges are exacerbated by her lack of formal training, which she experiences as part of her gender struggles. “They have a technical language that is hard for women, you know, to get it out. They are technicians. And music a lot of times is technique. Like all the chords... They have a memory store in the brain, and there is nothing to do, you know, it’s a world run by men, music is.”<sup>25</sup> Dikla genders technical knowledge that is not inherently gendered as a way to legitimate her difficulties. In doing so she undercuts her expressions of power as part of her Egyptian persona, exposing the incongruity between her affinity with Umm Kulthum as a social figure and as an artist.

Dikla often emphasizes the struggles she overcame in creating her career. As she told me, “I am a woman who came from nothing... Not a connected family, not a family with money. I came to Tel Aviv completely alone. And I even had to sleep in the streets for this.”<sup>26</sup> Umm Kulthum similarly emphasized her humble beginnings and struggle to fulfill her commitment to singing. Lohman suggests that she did this to draw in a younger audience and shape how she would be remembered (2010:66). For Dikla, on the other hand, class is one way for her to mark an identity that is otherwise unmarked. An analogous situation pertains to singers of country music in the United States who create personae as “white trash” (Eastman and Schrock 2008; Fox 2009). Constituting this subset of the members of the dominant race through low class marks it a semi-racialized minority position (Wray 2006).

Dikla experiences her struggle as personal, but it positions her as a symbol, reinforcing the boundaries of Mizrahim as an “ethnoclass” (Ben-Rafael 1985). On the online Mizrahi forum *Kedma*,<sup>27</sup> one of her fans, Shira Ohayon, writes: “She rose up from the sewers of Tel Aviv

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<sup>24</sup> Dikla, interview, January 22, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Dikla, interview, February 8, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Dikla, interview, January 22, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> <http://kedma.co.il/block> (accessed August 28, 2011). The website is run by poet and Mizrahi activist Sami Shalom Chetrit, one of the founders of Kedma, an alternative school system that advocated equal opportunities for all students and a multi-cultural curriculum. The current title is “The Mizrahi Block,” which underscores the essentialist underpinning of the site.

through hard waitress work, from the margins, and she is still connected to them, all those same young people with talent from the peripheries, the ones for whom life in this country hasn't yet completely squashed and dried out the well of their talents" (Ohayon 2005). This shows how panethnic groups are "products of political and social processes, rather than of cultural bonds" (Espiritu 1992:13). Dikla's narrative of Mizrahi struggle, however, worked against her too. Critics pointed out that she comes from a middle-class family and had support for an education (Artman 2000; Kohavi 2009a). She subsequently amended her story for the press to reflect her parents' support (Gordon 2005), but continues holds onto it in personal interactions.

The controversy around Dikla's Cinderella story reveals a discourse that posits her ethnic and panethnic identities as incongruous. Haritaworn discusses hybridity in terms of 'multiraciality' in order to keep open "the possibility of multiple allegiances and membership contestations with more than one imagined community [and] resist a notion of a fragmented body as the product of an unnatural union between hierarchically conceived and incommensurable 'races'" (2012:10). Although Dikla is not multiracial in the sense of incongruous ethnicities, she faces similar issues due to competing interpretations of her ethnic allegiances.

This tension between Dikla's affiliations plays out in different interpretations of her dramatic singing through her Egyptian or Mizrahi personae, eliding ethnic and emotional authenticity. One aspect that makes Dikla's persona distinctive is its darkness. One fan at Levantin<sup>28</sup> described her as "the queen of the night and the stars." Onstage, her black dress, darkly lined eyes, and long black hair visually enhance the darkness of her lyrics and intense vocality. This serious tone is what creates the emotional authenticity of "authentic Mizrahi music," in contrast to *musika mizrahit*, where sentiments are understood to be formulaic. An audience member, a young boy I spoke to at one of Din Din Aviv's shows,<sup>29</sup> summed up the general perception of *musika mizrahit* as shallow. "You should interview children. Because a lot of kids today listen to Mizrahit [lists singers of *musika mizrahit*]... When this is published I hope kids will understand that Mizrahit isn't everything, that it's nonsense... Today it's 'I love you, you love me... Music is an amazing thing. You need to listen and connect to it... Mizrahit is just *haflah* [party]." In contrast, the lyrics of "authentic Mizrahi music" deal with more serious sentiments, sometimes with a religious or spiritual bent. Some examples are Amir Benayoun's album *Standing at the Gate* (2008) and Sarit Hadad's "My Father Who Art in Heaven" from *Days of Joy* (2013).

The depth in Dikla's music comes from yearning that expresses both sadness and spirituality. Interviewers often ask Dikla about the sadness of her lyrics, since it is unusual within mainstream popular music. In her responses she performs herself alternately as Egyptian and Mizrahi. She contributed an origin story to *Echoing Identities*, an anthology of writings by Mizrahi artists, which interpreted the sadness of her music as Arab.

One Shabbat in Beersheba, during one of the moments of my childhood growing up, I went home, which was surprisingly empty. The Beer Sheva heat stuck the cutting sounds to my ears. These were the sounds of the great Egyptian singer Abdel Halim al-Hafez, my mother's favorite singer. I can remember going round and round, looking for an escape. The task was difficult, because our house was small, but yet at the same time, I

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<sup>28</sup> December 30, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> January 28, 2011.

remember I listened to the song's endless sadness. I asked myself, what is it? What makes me feel this way? (Shmuelof et al. 2007).

Onstage she offered a humorous meta-performance that exposed her audience's expectations of Arab music as sad. "When someone during the encore shouted to her 'a sad song,' she replied, 'mami, if you haven't noticed, all my songs are sad. Also the happy ones'" (Gerstein 2006). In this way she exercises power against what Rey Chow calls 'coercive mimeticism,' or "the level at which the ethnic person is expected to come to resemble what is recognizably ethnic" (Haritaworn 2012:131). In interviews, however, interprets the sadness as part of her spirituality. "I'm very soothed when people sing sad songs. There's something very comforting in it in my opinion. As if to realize that I'm not alone in it. In my experience texts and wording has a very heavy meaning. I really pray in texts. Really" (Gordon 2005).

This ambiguity of sadness and spirituality plays out in the song "Kites" from *Arlozorov* 38. In the last verse Dikla expresses her spirituality through a dialogue with God, although this is rarely mentioned in interviews.

Big songs  
Fly, cutting the sky  
Small songs  
Strike, breaking my heart  
The glamorous avenue, the fancy woman,  
Light my eyes  
Everything could have been different

Days, days  
Kites into the water  
Days, days  
Passed without a reason  
The great one in the sky, the tears in my eyes  
Raise my face  
Only this is left in the meantime

I have nothing more to give than this  
Stay, I am different, maybe you will find in me comfort  
I have nothing more to give than this  
Overcome it, I am yours, maybe you will find in me some joy

God, repair everything I've ruined  
My memories are betraying me without end  
I want you to forgive me  
I'd be happy if you'd forgive me,  
Sometimes it's hard  
But this is left in the meantime

I have nothing more to give than this...

In her shows Dikla reinforced the spiritual interpretation of her music with her origin story. “Kites” is the song she chose at Beit Avi Chai to represent the religious Jewish heritage she received from her father, the *paytan*, complementing the Egyptian heritage she received from her mother. In introducing the song at Beit Avi Chai she quoted the last line.

“God repair everything I’ve ruined”... There is no chance that God will repair everything I’ve ruined, it’s only I who can fix everything I’ve ruined. But it’s a partnership, a partnership that I very much hope will work out in the end. My relationship with God is a rather complex relationship, very beautiful, because I learned from the head of the family, from my dad, what is partnership with God. I learned that God comes with modesty into the relationship... And this is a song that I feel... [is] part of seclusion that I am doing.

As a woman, Dikla’s performance of this kind of communicating with God could be seen as subversive, since the role of *paytan*, a singer of liturgical poetry, has traditionally been reserved for men. However, presenting it as emulating her father as the head of the family is a way of preserving the traditional gender roles. Furthermore, this tradition is changing, and women *paytanot* are becoming more prevalent.<sup>30</sup> Another phenomenon that moved this practice out of its sacred context is the project by Beit Avi Chai to bring *piyutim* to a wide audience through classes and *kehilot sharot*, or singing communities that study and sing these liturgical poems (Dardashti 2009a).

Dikla’s dialogue with God also draws a connection to artists who have undergone *hazara betshuva*, since this is a device that characterizes their songs (Erlich 2011). While this reference could be potentially dangerous commercially, it does not have that significance for Dikla, who comes from an Orthodox background and so is moving in the opposite direction from those joining that community. Instead, she draws on the same power of religious lyrics to bring depth to the music. As one critic writes of the *hazara betshuva* trend, “From Shuli Rand to Erez Lev Ari, the artists who are strengthening [becoming Orthodox] through the “Song of Songs” provide the most interesting and moving music and being created here – the kind that doesn’t cut them off from the rockers they once were, just adds new layers. Maybe because they are *hozrim betshuva*, the texts have a kick and give a true expression to the distortion in their lives” (Lahav 2014). Dikla’s expression of spirituality is not so much wrestling with Orthodox Judaism as drawing strength from it.

The way Dikla performed “Kites” illustrates how she experiences her singing as a way of speaking with God. As she described it to me, “I need to break the barriers as much as possible... with ‘reality’, with the earth, with singing. To go higher as much as possible. It’s always my conversation with God. It’s a sort of place of seclusion... A sort of prayer, a conversation. And this is the place... I bring the audience. Because when they hear me then we do a wider retreat, which is a bigger call” (interview 2011). An expression of this communion is the way she constantly pushed the limits of her expressiveness, heightening the dramatic tension throughout the song. The chorus begins with a three-note figure that winds up the tension on the words “I have nothing left to give” (fig. 3.10). The figure includes an augmented second, which is common in Arab music and in most Jewish musical practices, but here creates a dark ominous feeling, since it is coupled with a low register and ponderous quarter-note rhythm. The wind-up

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<sup>30</sup> The Israeli Andalusian Orchestra, which programs traditional Sephardic music and poetry and hosts many *paytanim*, programmed its first female singer in 2011, despite some objection from subscribers (Damari 2011).

explodes with a large leap in the vocal part, with a dramatic pause before the octave displacement, on “...more than this.”

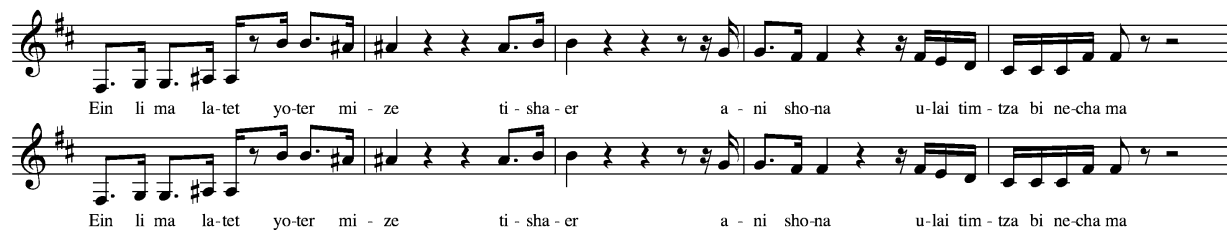


Fig. 3.10. Transcription of the chorus melody of “Kite,” with the large leap.

In performance Dikla played with the dramatic potential of this moment, pushing it to greater and greater heights, to the delight of her audience. This was possible in part due to the extended form of the song, with a third chorus added to the two on the recorded version. The heightened drama was also created through volume. On the recording the two final choruses are relatively uniform in volume. In live performance, however, there was much greater contrast (fig. 3.11). After the instrumental break, the band played the three-note wind-up, but instead of the vocal line they played an instrumental chorus. On the recording they maintain a steady dynamic level in this section. At Levontin, however, the three-note wind-up drove towards the anticipated explosion, but suddenly the bottom dropped out, leaving us suspended on high arpeggiated chords. When Dikla did come in she did so softly, all her energy spent.

<i>Arlozorov 38:</i>	break	chorus	chorus	
		inst. <i>f</i>	<i>f</i> <i>f</i>	
Levontin: <sup>31</sup>	break	chorus	chorus	chorus
		inst. <i>p</i>	<i>p</i> < <i>ff</i>	<i>fff</i> > <i>p</i>

Fig. 3.11. A comparison of Dikla’s performance of “Kites” on Arlozorov 38 and at Levontin shows how she increased the drama.

At the Yellow Submarine,<sup>32</sup> one month later, the form was extended even more. This time there was a very long pause before Yiftach Shahaf played his electric guitar solo during the instrumental break. Halfway through the final loud repetition of the chorus, Dikla stopped, repeated the line “maybe you will find in me,” and froze with her arm raised up in the air as the band cut out so that all that was audible was the long echo delay. She whispered in the silence “a little joy.” The audience thought the song was over and started to applaud, but she was not quite finished yet. The band came in again on the final chord, and she repeated one more time, “maybe you will find in me a little joy...maybe.”

Creating tension through repetition and volume is also part of how Dikla performs the emotional excitement of Arab music. Singers of Arab music strive for tarab, or emotional evocation. They use musical inspiration and creativity to modulate between maqams, striving for saltanah. Saltanah “is the ‘magic’ that momentarily lifts the artist to a higher ecstatic plateau and

<sup>31</sup> December 30, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> January 22, 2011.

empowers him or her to engender Tarab most effectively...saltanah is creative ecstasy” (Racy 2003:120). However, Israeli audiences unversed in Arab music only see the drama in the same way they perceive the music as sad. Critic Timora Lessinger summed up this perception of Dikla’s music as sad and dramatic when she called her a *mekonenet*, or ritual mourner.

In other eras or circumstances, Dikla Douri...would certainly succeed as a professional mourner. Her rich and deep voice, by its nature incites constant crying that yearns to explode, and she indeed lets it, with great sincerity, erupt with unbounded and stirring drama... [On] the song ‘Kites,’ her melody...is beautiful in its sadness, and her dramatic shouting can be chilling (Lessinger 2010a).

Lessinger titled her review “A Professional Mourner,” underscoring her misperception of Arab singing as *kina*, or lamentation. Tarab is very different from the keening of professional women mourners in ancient Egyptian culture and its practice by Awlad ‘Ali Bedouin women today (Abu-Lughod 2008:197).



*Fig. 3.12. Dikla’s emotive singing is her trademark.*<sup>33</sup>

While Dikla’s lack of training in Arab music might limit her in some ways, she sees it as contributing to her spiritual experience, allowing her voice to be unmediated by the demands of technical refinement. “Everything is from subconscious. I also write, I compose, from subconscious... It’s the most ‘weirdo’... Today I also sing from the subconscious. I don’t sing right, I don’t sing nice. They aren’t the places from which I work, or need... My soul doesn’t need it. I need something else.”<sup>34</sup> Her raw vocality in particular is part of her self-image as a spiritual singer. “I always say the way you sing is how you are. What you sing is what you are. There is no... That’s why the art of singing is something very high and very exposed. It’s more exposed than any other art in my opinion. There are no walls, no walls, the soul has no walls

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<sup>33</sup> Photograph by Tomer Appelbaum.

<sup>34</sup> Dikla, interview, January 22, 2011.

between your voice and, especially how you bring it in sound. Your sound is your soul.”<sup>35</sup> Dikla’s spirituality is attractive to her fans because it lends her emotional authenticity and depth, legitimizing it as high-class art, in contrast to the perceived shallowness of *musika mizrahit*.

Dikla’s fans interpret her raw vocality through her Mizrahiyut as a quality of *amkha*, the common people, which contributes to the emotional authenticity of her singing in the same way that her image and stage manner do. “The voice of Dikla isn’t the voice of chiming bells, it penetrates deeply inwards. In my eyes, Dikla is a Mizrahi soul singer. A real diva. Her voice is the voice of the margins, a thick voice, that comes from the warm dark depths of the feminine belly” (Ohayon 2005). Dikla thus becomes a symbol in the reaffirming of Mizrahi panethnic identity. Avi Shoshan, in his column called “Looking Eastward,” responded to Lessinger’s negative review of *Arlozorov 38* with, “Dikla has soul, in amounts that I am doubtful how many singers like her there are in Israel today” (2010). Like Ohayon, Shoshan reaffirms panethnic boundaries as a political alliance in response to perceived oppression (Mengel 2001:103).

Dikla’s dramatic singing has garnered divergent opinions, reflecting the tension between her Egyptian and Mizrahi personae. One factor responsible for this difference is that she does not perform her spirituality in a way that is legible. As a woman it is more problematic for her to mark her spirituality on her body than it is for male artists. For example, Amir Benayoun, a singer of “authentic Mizrahi music” who underwent *hazara betshuva*, wears a *kippa*, or traditional men’s headcovering. The women’s equivalent is a *mitpachat*, but whereas even non-Orthodox men wear *kippot* for certain occasions, only more traditional Jewish Orthodox women wear the *mitpachat*. Dikla’s spirituality is not as defined as that of *hozrim betshuva*, because rather than discovering Orthodox Judaism, she came from that background. Thus her Orthodox background is evident in the way she punctuates her speech with *baruch hashem* [blessed be God], but she does not display her religious affiliation as a dominant part of her identity. Instead her religion is broader. “I believe in God, first of all, and my experience of religion is a framework that keeps you a person. Religion for me is manners, morals, conscience, ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’ It is also a synagogue, but the synagogue is another dimension. My religion is something much wider. To make love is also religion. Everything is religion for me” (Gordon 2005).

Without the defining markers of Jewish religion, Dikla’s dramatic music gets interpreted through her Egyptian persona. Highly emotional singing fits stereotypes of Arab music, making it more readily legible for Jewish audiences. It also satisfies criteria of domestic cultural tourism because it is different from popular music and categorizes her music as highbrow. As Richards points out, “A number of studies of cultural tourism have argued that tourists are seeking more ‘authentic’ or ‘deeper’ experiences than other types of tourists... These authentic experiences are also usually seen as encompassing high culture, or traditional local culture, while specifically avoiding popular and contemporary culture” (Richards 2007:4).

This preference for high art particularly aligns with the elite tendencies of music critics. Critics who like Dikla’s emotive singing as part of her Arab music disparage it as inauthentic outside of that framework. For example Ben Shalev writes:

In too many songs she abandons her clean natural tone and moves between two extremes: on one end breathy speaking-whispering, and on the other end bombastic screaming. The doubt about Dikla’s new delivery style dissolves, or at least retreat to the background, when the song itself is magnificent, and there are three such songs, one after the other, on

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



the first half of the album: “Melodies,” “Kites,” and “Lovesick”...After the glorious Arab brigade Dikla moves to a different film: From El-Arish she hops to San Remo. “Crying” is one of the most bombastic and shameless kitsch songs that have been heard here recently (Shalev 2010).

Both “Shalom” and “Crying” have no Egyptian violins or *lazimas*. Shalev is one of the mediators who helped legitimize Arab music by Mizrahi musicians by presenting it as art music (Wasserman 2012:xvi), so that he privileges Dikla’s Arab music. But Lessinger too, who hailed Dikla as an authentic Egyptian *mekonenet*, criticizes her emoting as artificial in the songs that do not incorporate Egyptian music. “Already in the first song, “Shalom,” with the tango electro-Arabic opening, her voice comes out in gloomy theatricality. Admirers, who are automatically attached to her, will continue to derive pleasure from her. But all the rest may be stricken by cynicism, and also become tired in the presence of the intense vocality, which is experienced sometimes as hysterical” (Lessinger 2010a).

As a Mizrahi singer, Dikla is sometimes dismissed as melodramatic and unrefined. Singers of *musika mizrahit* on the whole are more emotive in their performance than Ashkenazi singers in mainstream pop, and some critics connect this passionate singing to lowbrow art. For example, Fleschenberg contrasts the restraint of Ashkenazi singers Rona Kenan and Shlomi Shaban to singers of *musika mizrahit*, whom he labels as ‘folk’ singers, whose “main characteristics...are the exact opposite of ‘quality’ singers—contempt for sophisticated lyrics, poetry in simple language, passionate bursts, and a festive mood in each song” (2011). Lessinger goes further in her essentialism, leveling her critique at Mizrahi singers in mainstream pop.

Israel is not lacking in great singers who have presence. Rita, Maya Bouskila and Miri Messika are criticized, and rightly so, for their exaggerated expressiveness... Dikla was different from them and got credit for the combination of being a songwriter and for her rise in the domain of Arab rock, which suits her. But like any credit, even she might suffer from overdrawing if she doesn’t discover and apply the secret of greatness in moderation (Lessinger 2010a).

Dikla’s Egyptian persona thus advanced her career, but it also confined her to a niche, which became evident when she tried to move away from it.

### **Cosmopolitan Artist**

In *Arlozorov 38* Dikla’s image and sound is more urban cosmopolitan, a style that can reach a wider audience while maintaining the ethnic aspect of her persona. As a musician working in such a small country, Dikla cannot afford to limit her audience. As she put it, “I would want there to be a lot more audience, you know. It’s not easy in Israel.”<sup>36</sup> She also told me that she was working on another single that she hoped would be a radio hit, a challenge, since her Hebrew-Arab rock is not compatible with Israeli mainstream radio. She expressed this disparity thus: “I try to find the common ground between quality that I bring, between what I want, what I’m used to, what I feel good and at home with, and what the radio demands.”<sup>37</sup> This tension exposes ethnic prejudice. In this case the Western-oriented Israeli music and Euro-American pop

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<sup>36</sup> Dikla, interview, January 22, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

represent “universalist progressive” culture, while the Arab music of Mizrahi artists is “particularist primitive,” so that it is confined to a niche.<sup>38</sup>

The shift from “ethnic” to urban sophistication is evident in several aspects of *Arlozorov 38*. While the titles of her first two albums, *Love Music* and *World*, suggest an abstract timelessness, *Arlozorov 38* refers to a specific address. The album artwork also reflects this change. In the first two albums the images of Dikla’s gendered ethnicity reinforce stereotypical notions of Middle Easternness. In *Love Music* she is dressed in a décolletage black dress that frames a heavy jeweled “ethnic” necklace (although it looks Moroccan rather than Egyptian), surrounded by fabric that suggests a Middle Eastern bazaar. On the cover of *World*, as I mentioned, she is depicted naked, her body covered in henna designs, allowing her body to be displayed as an object of art. She may have been influenced by the returning popularity of henna rituals in Israel at that time (Kanon 2003). In contrast, in *Arlozorov 38* Dikla’s pose suggests a powerful liberated woman (fig. 3.13). Her dress is less revealing, with a fur scarf and gloves. This is a vaguely European costume, supporting the general theme of the album.



Fig. 3.13. The album cover of *Arlozorov 38* offers a more cosmopolitan image of Dikla compared to her first two albums.

The setting for her portrait depicts her as a woman of the world. While in the first two albums the background is nondescript, in this photograph Dikla is standing on Arlozorov Street in Tel Aviv. Considered the cultural capital of Israel, Tel Aviv is particularly apt for suggesting urban sophistication. It also makes her more Israeli, connecting her to a particular neighborhood. However, there is still some mystique to her persona, since there is no number 38 on Arlozorov Street. The urban setting reflects the theme of the album, which is not local Tel Aviv, but a wider cosmopolitanism. As Dikla described it, “You know, the whole album is an experience that is very, how shall we call it? Streets in the world” (Rotman 2010). Dikla plays up the notion of

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<sup>38</sup> *Musika mizrahit* is heard on mainstream stations, but as a distinctive genre from Israeli rock. It is also “*Mizrahi lite*,” adapted to fit the format of Adult Contemporary and presented as Mediterranean rather than Mizrahi (Kaplan 2012).

cities around the world by singing in French and English in addition to the Hebrew. Unlike her first two albums, this one contains no Arabic, a language that indexes “ethnicity.”

Part of this move to a new sound was due to Dikla’s change in record labels from Hed Artzi, one of the veteran Israeli companies, to Phonokol, an independent label that specializes in trance, dance and club music. She also changed producers, Ran Shem-Tov, the lead singer and guitarist of Izabo, a band that combines rock, punk, and Middle Eastern music to Alon Ohana, a programmer and mixer who writes for television and movies, and Gil Marom. This new production team also changed the quality of the ethnic sounds. On the first two albums, the ethnic sounds were produced by live musicians, including Felix Mizrahi, a violinist from Egypt who is one of the older musicians within the ethnic music scene. On *Arlozorov 38*, on the other hand, most of the ethnic sounds are sampled, losing the distinctiveness of live performance on acoustic instruments. The musicians with whom Dikla collaborated also contributed to the mainstream sound. On *World* she worked with Yasmin Levy, who sings primarily Spanish and Ladino songs, while on *Arlozorov 38* she co-wrote “Mazal” with Keren Peles, a well-known songwriter in mainstream pop.

This shift in sound was more pronounced in live shows, where Dikla had fewer musicians at her disposal. During the period when she released her first two albums she supported her Egyptian persona by performing with violins, and sometimes an entire ensemble of Middle Eastern instruments, on stage, as well as electric guitar and keyboard. However, in the shows I attended, Dikla performed with a rock band—piano, electric guitar, bass, and drums—played by musicians who specialize in jazz and rock.<sup>39</sup> Unlike Felix Mizrahi, these musicians were in the process of learning how to play Arab music. When I met the band, Yiftach Shahaf, the guitarist, was taking lessons with Ahuva Ozeri, a renowned teacher of Mizrahi music.

The way Dikla maintains her persona as diva of Hebrew-Arabic rock within this new sound is illustrated in the song “Melodies.” Dikla used this song, described in the opening vignette, to introduce herself at every show I attended. It was also the only song she performed as a guest of the band Tzlilei Ha’ud at Tzavta. Unlike “Obsession,” “Melodies” is entirely in verse-chorus form, with regular phrase lengths (fig. 3.14). The meter is 4/4 and there is no Arabic drumming pattern. The lyrics are also all in Hebrew.

Intro inst ch vs vs chorus vs vs chorus bridge chorus inst chorus  
 8 | 8 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 8 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 8 | 8 | 8 8 | 8 8 8 ||

Fig. 3.14. Form of “Melodies” with regular phrase lengths.

The tonality is typical of mid-twentieth century urban Arab music, using maqams that are similar to Western scales. A scale leading into each chorus outlines maqam Kurd (roughly equivalent to Phrygian mode) on G (fig. 3.15). The chords that harmonize this passage are

<sup>39</sup> The group she settled on by the end of my fieldwork was: Shaul Besser, piano, who graduated from the New York New School of Jazz and is active in the New York jazz scene (Nevo 2009); Yiftach Shahaf, electric guitar, who played with the rock band Hayehudim and other rock musicians (Rona 2005); Yair Tzabari, drums, who specializes in reggae and plays with the band Canaanite Groove; and Ran Levy, a jazz bassist who played with pop singers Erez Lev Ari and jazz musician Shai Chen. At the beginning of my fieldwork she performed with bassist Shai Hamani, also a jazz musician who played with the band Funkenstein, and guitarist Yaakov Hoter, from the band Swing de Gitanes.

congruent with maqam Nahawand, whose scale is closest to the ‘natural minor’ in Western music. This figure stands out of the texture because the instruments play it in unison. In performance, it is even more dramatic as Dikla cuts off the band and extends the silence before her entrance. There are other figures that suggests Middle Easternness with an augmented second (fig. 3.16). The key, however, sounds more like C minor when it modulates up a half-step to C# minor, a gesture typical of pop music not Middle Eastern music (fig. 3.17). The moment is thrown into relief by a grand pause in the accompaniment two measures before the key change. The key change is followed by an instrumental break in which the electric guitar plays a rock-style solo. In performance this section included an additional eight measures to allow Yiftach Shahaf to develop his solo. His solo was in a Western rock idiom, so that by this point the song sounded almost entirely Euro-American.

♩ = 112

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and a violin line. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 112. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor). The lyrics are: "Lo yo - da'at lo sho - ma'at man-gi not a-ni yo da-at she ha lay-la ya-a vor ve-lo nihi-ye ya-chad Lo yo - da'at lo sho - ma'at man-gi not a-ni yo".

Fig. 3.15. Transcription of the chorus of “Melodies” showing the ambiguous tonality.

The musical score consists of two systems, each with a vocal line and a violin line. The key signature is three flats. The lyrics are: "da-at she ha lay-la ya-a vor ve-lo nihi-ye ya chad Rak she-lo rak she-lo yiz".

Fig. 3.16. Transcription of the transition into the third verse of “Melodies” maintaining the ambiguous tonality.



Fig. 3.17. Transcription of Euro-American pop style modulation in “Melodies.”

The aspect that most readily identifies “Melodies” as Middle Eastern on the recording is the instrumentation: darbuka, riqq, qanun, and violins. In live performance, however, there are no ethnic instruments, so her music sounds like Western rock. As one critic suggests, “If we strip the songs of their arrangements, they could easily have become mainstream Israeli hits, but would also lack some distinctiveness and charm” (Katri 2010). The presence of Middle Eastern instruments onstage is a powerful visual cue in indexing an ethnic tradition, more so than sound alone. Indeed, when I first saw Dikla at Levontin I wondered why she was called the diva of Hebrew-Arabic rock.

*Arlozorov 38* was not as successful as Dikla’s more “ethnic” albums, as the reviews by Shalev and Lessinger attest. Shalev lauds her Umm Kulthum persona on *World*: “Before us stood a diva, there was no doubt about it: Dikla’s appearance, her clothes, the way she held herself, and of course her deep affinity for the great Arab singers” (Shalev 2010). But he goes on to critique her less Arab songs on *Arlozorov 38*: “Paris’ you can’t like even if you really try. Again tearful kitsch, this time in a whispering chansonier atmosphere, with an accordion and a croissant.” The limited success of Dikla’s cosmopolitan persona and music could be explained as prejudice in that she is confined to her ethnic persona. However, there is also a purely commercial aspect. Part of the dilemma for artists in general is that when they have a successful persona, song, or style, audiences expect and want it, so that they have to keep singing the same hits for the rest of their career.

Dikla made some modifications in her shows that could be seen as accommodating the demand for her ethnic persona. I noted a heightened performance of ethnicity in some of her shows. At Beit Avi Chai, a cajón, cymbals, and ethnic percussion replaced the trap set. The musician who played them was Noa Vax, who performed with Dikla in all her shows from the first and second albums.<sup>40</sup> At Zappa,<sup>41</sup> Yair Tzabari added a darbuka to his trap set, and Eyal Sela lent a distinctive Middle Eastern color with his zurna, nay, and other wind instruments. At this show Dikla also did much more belly dancing than I had seen her do elsewhere. She opened her song “Romantica” with a *mawwal* in Arabic, and improvised on the words “inta omri,” referencing the title of one of Umm Kulthum’s most famous songs, composed by Mohamad Abdel Wahhab. In one place where she usually teases the audience with her opening words, she added an Arabic interjection: “I, *wallak*, I...” In this way the show revealed the performative aspect of Dikla’s ethnicity.

### Pan-Mizrahi Artist

Dikla’s ability to perform her Mizrahi identity by choice is evident in the way she writes

<sup>40</sup> Noa Vax, phone interview with author, January 11, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> April 25, 2011.

*musika mizrahit* hits. Even though Dikla performs herself as Egyptian, this is only one persona among several. Perhaps she feels most comfortable expressing this persona as a performer even though she is more versatile as a songwriter. Ironically, her fans often praise her music and persona by contrasting them to *musika mizrahit*, but Dikla has actually written numerous songs for top artists of *musika mizrahit*, including Sarit Hadad, Etti Biton, and Maya Bouskill. Her biggest hit, however, was for Shlomi Saranga, a singer of traditional Greek music. “Mono” was the most played song on the radio in 2009 (Anon 2009). The lyrics, which are by Yossi Gispan, bridge the upbeat music of *musika mizrahit* with the darkness of Dikla’s persona.

Mono, mono  
I’m escaping from love

To wake up and embrace the coldest loneliness  
Just to walk my dog on the avenue  
And mumble quietly to myself how good it is that everything is bad  
During the day I’m busy just stretching time  
And at night in clubs full of smoke  
I lose myself and lose interest

Mono, mono, I’m all alone and I like it, mono  
All my life is mono  
I’m escaping from love, and no one is happier than I am

I’m one of those who sadness clings to easily  
And I have no one else aside from myself  
That’s why I don’t mind lying again

Mono, mono...

Dikla’s setting of the text similarly combines the simplicity of *musika mizrahit* with the sophistication of her Hebrew-Arabic rock songs. In keeping with the style of *musika mizrahit*, “Mono” has short phrases and repetition that make it accessible (fig. 3.18). The melody for both the verse and the chorus is made up of a sequence that descends by step, creating predictability. Each section ends on the dominant that leads the ear into the next section. However, Dikla modifies this simple structure with subtle irregularity, adding an extra two beats at the beginning of the verse and composing seven bars for the chorus instead of eight. It is this sort of refinement that sets Dikla’s music apart from typical *musika mizrahit* and led critic Dudu Cohen to comment on her contribution to Saranga’s album as a “quality singer and songwriter” (Cohen 2009). Dikla’s song is arranged in the Greek substyle of *musika mizrahit*, with an upbeat tempo (126 beats per minute), synthesizer and *lazimas* on the bouzouki. The rhythm, however, is the same as in Awad’s song “Bukra,” similar to the Middle Eastern drumming pattern *ayyub*.

♩ = 126

F#m Bm

Le-hit - o - rer u - le - cha - bek et ha - bdi - dut ha - chi ka - ra stam le - ta -

E F#m D C#

yel li im ha - ke - lev ba - sde - ra ve - le - mal - mel be - she - ket ka - ma tov she - ra Bein ha - ya in - yan -

F#m E Bm

Mo - no - - - - - mo - no - - - - - a - ni le - vad ve tov li mo - no - - - - - kol ha - cha - yim she - li hem mo - no - - - - -

C#

me - a - ha va a - ni nim - lat ein me - u - shar mi - me - ni

Fig. 3.18. Transcription of the melody of “Mono” as recorded by Shlomi Saranga.

That Dikla can write a mega-hit in the style of Greek music demonstrates how “Mizrahi” functions as an encompassing category that allows artists to perform different ethnicities within it. These dynamics allowed Saranga to make a spectacular career by singing traditional Greek songs even though he is not actually Greek (his father is from Spain and his mother was born in Israel to Turkish parents). Likewise, Sarit Hadad, the best-known singer of *musika mizrahit*, is not technically Mizrahi but Georgian. Dikla too capitalizes on the flexibility of the Mizrahi category, but she does so with a meta-performance.

The only show where I saw Dikla perform “Mono” was one that celebrated Moroccan heritage. At this show she was representing all Mizrahim. Interestingly, Dikla is actually mistaken for Moroccan by quite a few sources, including audience members I interviewed. This could either be interpreted as Israeli discourse erasing differences amongst Mizrahim, or as Mizrahi ethnicity not being significant enough to mark difference in everyday encounters. The show was at Zappa,<sup>42</sup> in honor of Maimuna. Maimuna, held on the last day of Passover, is celebrated by many Middle Eastern Jewish communities, though in Israel it is particularly Jews of Moroccan heritage who celebrate it the day after Passover with communal outings. One of the reasons Dikla may have included “Mono” is that it is more upbeat than the songs associated with her Egyptian persona, so that it matched the festive mood of the show. She also added to her regular repertoire a medley of three Moroccan songs, interjecting “*Alle Maimuna!*” in the middle. However, at the end of the Moroccan medley Dikla asked the audience, “How am I singing Moroccan? I usually sing Egyptian. I’m not Moroccan.” Her fans of course responded with reassurance that she sang it well, demonstrating the effectiveness of this strategy in reaffirming the bond between them. In this way “panethnic boundaries are shaped and reshaped in the continuing interaction between both external and internal forces” (Espiritu 1992:7).

### Mizrahi Ethnicity as Marginalized Variant of Israeliness

Dikla’s music has an allure for Jewish audiences because of its Arabness, but it is rarely heard on mainstream radio. She performs primarily in small clubs, rather than the larger concert halls and amphitheatres that are accessible to more prominent mainstream artists. She is Israeli

<sup>42</sup> April 25, 2011.

enough to perform at venues such as Zappa and Tzavta, but I only saw her there for specialized occasions like Maimuna, or as the guest of another artist, like the band Tzlilei Ha'ud. With her marginalized status, however, Dikla has found a niche representing marginalized communities more broadly as an icon for the gay community. She often performs in gay clubs, and had her own series of shows at the club Lima Lima. A more prominent appearance occurred when she wrote and performed "Deep in My Heart" as the official anthem for Tel Aviv Pride 2012, a major annual event that draws enormous crowds, including tens of thousands of gay tourists. The LGBT community champions diversity and equality, so that Dikla's music takes on additional layers of meaning in its marginalization. These venues, however, generally cater to middle-class Ashkenazi and Mizrahi gay men, so that she is showcased for her theatrical diva persona rather than as a champion of minority rights.

The otherwise limited market for Dikla's music allows her to reinscribe the trope of marginalization that characterized *musika mizrahit* when it first appeared. With its shift into the mainstream came a diminishing of identity of *musika mizrahit* as "the authentic and rebellious expression of mizrahiyut against its marginalization and inferiority within Israeli culture" and a loss of authenticity (Seroussi 2003:192). Mizrahi musicians have thus moved the line, so that now "authentic Mizrahi music" is the marginalized genre contending for legitimacy.

In legitimizing their music, Mizrahi artists deploy many of the same strategies musicians and mediators in the ethnic music scene did to create a new "Oriental art music." Cultural mediators of Oriental art music presented it as "demanding and thought-provoking, instead of treating it as...an easy-listening genre" (Wasserman 2012:xvii). Similarly, singers of "authentic Mizrahi music" distance themselves from *musika mizrahit* and cast their work as elite music. Whereas *musika mizrahit* was shunned at first because it was considered too Arab, today it is not Arab enough, so that the Arab sounds of "authentic Mizrahi music" legitimize it. Rather than being too foreign, the Arab aspect is now too sophisticated for mainstream audiences. As one of Dikla's fans claimed, "They don't open their ears, don't try... They think she is a singer of depressing songs, which is very Arab."<sup>43</sup>

Musicians in both genres also portray their music as subversive. In Oriental art music they borrowed ideology from rock, positioning their music as new, authentic, and anti-establishment, even as they worked to legitimize it within dominant culture (Wasserman 2012:123). This process is also evident in "authentic Mizrahi music." For example, Amir Benayoun accused the Ashkenazi gatekeepers of creating the lowbrow character of Mizrahi music by privileging poor quality songs (Ben Nun 2011), and fought the industry by turning down the ACUM prize and producing his albums independently. Dikla too plays up her rebellion against the mainstream. As she said, "I do not ingratiate the mainstream, as you surely know... I am very fixed in my artistic love. I am not a good girl who pleases the 'high windows' of Israeli music" (Ben-David 2010). Dikla does actually cater to the mainstream with her *musika mizrahit* hits, but she keeps them separate from her own repertoire, maintaining the authentic Mizrahiyut of her persona. Like Benayoun, Dikla rails against the Ashkenazi-dominated establishment.

I'm sorry for the wider audience that isn't exposed to the album because of the need for mediation by the radio, which isn't treating the album favorably... They have, the radio people, narrow-mindedness, which is why they don't support a singer who works hard, and instead of supporting me they are in a sort of closed and narrow-minded clique.

There is always a trend and a certain group of a style that the radio is drawn after, and

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<sup>43</sup> November 27, 2010.



there isn't real favorable treatment for things that are a little different, things that are outside the box. It disappoints me as an artist, but most of all as a citizen (Shoshan 2010).

Dikla's music, like Awad's, exposes the gap between the Israeli canon as a commercial institution and as sense of belonging. However, she has the opposite challenge from Awad. Whereas Awad's music is appropriate for mainstream radio, but the Arabic lyrics keep it excluded, Dikla's music is Israeli because she sings in Hebrew, but it does not fit the musical style for mainstream pop songs. The conflation of market demands with sense of belonging doubly reinforces the trope of marginalization that defines Dikla's Mizrahi identity.

The strands of Dikla's identity influence how she navigates tension between her ethnic and panethnic affiliations in the different ways they intersect. The high-class foreignness of her Egyptian music raises the status of her Mizrahi music. The powerful Egyptian femininity she performs further compensates for the disadvantages she experiences as a Mizrahi woman. At the same time, her struggles reinscribe Mizrahiyut as a socioeconomic group associated with low class and geographical peripheries. Dikla's work also reveals tension in the characterization of Mizrahim as Arab-Jews, since her performance of spirituality, which is based on her Orthodox Jewish background, does not register as such in combination with her Egyptian persona. In this way Dikla constitutes her Mizrahiyut through her Egyptian ethnicity, creating "authentic Mizrahi music."

## Chapter Four: Marina Maximilian Blumin

It's Thursday night,<sup>44</sup> the beginning of the Israeli weekend. I am at Tzavta, a venerated old theater in the heart of Tel Aviv, whose mission is to present Israeli culture through theater, music, and film. Its name means togetherness, indexing the national-collective ideology on which Israel was founded. I am here to see Marina Maximilian Blumin, the young artist who had burst into public consciousness three years ago as a contestant on the popular reality show *A Star is Born*. The stage is set with a grand piano in front of a sheer purple curtain studded with twinkling lights. The hall is full to capacity. People are getting impatient, clapping to encourage the show to begin. Finally the lights are dimmed, and Marina sashays onto the stage. She is very tall. She is dressed in an outlandish outfit: the skirt is a patchwork quilt, floor length in back and above the knee in front to reveal fishnet stockings and six-inch clear plastic platform shoes. She is swathed in a puffy brown-and-white striped wrap. Her hair is piled up in a nest, on top of which perches at a precarious angle a flamboyant headpiece with pink and white antennae swinging out in all directions. Her face is made up in garish rouge and bright pink lipstick. The audience applauds and whoops enthusiastically. Marina sits down at the piano and plays a short classical piece. "Good evening," she says in a surprisingly deep voice as she undoes a clip and loosens the massive wrap. "That was a composition of Aram Khachaturian," a 20<sup>th</sup>-century Soviet composer.

"And now the words of Yona Wallach<sup>45</sup>... Hi!" Marina smiles sweetly to an audience member, like a kid in a school play shyly acknowledging her parents "...called 'Theoretical Song.'" She begins arpeggiating a ninth chord in open fifths, the sound floating timelessly with no harmonic direction. Over this accompaniment she sings a melody that leaps around in strange intervals. There is no memorable or even hummable tune. What draws the ear from one passage to the next are the interesting vocal timbres she uses to express the rather archaic Hebrew lyrics: from very high bell tones on a haunting "oooh" to a full-throated pop voice, an airy "la la la" to a toneless whisper. Her vocal control is impressive. As she sings she always faces the audience, away from the piano, making sure to look to different areas of the hall. The audience sits politely, as they would at a classical music concert, but applauds enthusiastically. At the end of the song Marina takes off the wrap to reveal a bodice in multiple shades of grey, studded with sequins. The audience whoops and whistles. She laughs, "at this rate the stripping would take two hours." With her charm and humor Blumin captivates her audience, transforming perceptions of her Ukrainian ethnicity.

Marina Maximilian Blumin navigates tensions between native Israelis and the immigrant community from the Former Soviet Union. In her shows Blumin performs her Ukrainian heritage as foreign, so that it satisfies inclinations of Israelis as domestic cultural tourists while distancing her from the low class associated with the Russian-speaking community in Israel. The innocent playful femininities she performs also counteract negative stereotypes of Russian-speaking women. Blumin capitalizes on the connection of her ethnicity to dominant Ashkenazi culture to reinterpret classic Israeli songs through her Ukrainian identity, in turn widening the parameters of the Israeli canon.

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<sup>44</sup> January 20, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Wollach was a provocative feminist poet active from the 1960s until her death in 1985.

## Russian-Speaking Israeli Woman

Marina Maximilian Blumin was born in 1987 in Dnipropetrovsk in the Ukraine, and immigrated to Israel with her family at the age of three, which aligns her with the Russian-speaking community in Israel. In popular perception this Russian-speaking community presents a threat to national identity by forming a nation within a nation. A product of one of the largest waves of immigration in Israel's history, immigrants from the FSU have not assimilated into Israeli society in the way that other groups have. They were motivated by the political, economic, and social crisis that followed the collapse of Communism, rather than the Zionist ideal, and so did not deny or distance themselves from their past (Al-Haj 2003; Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2007). With a particularly high level of education and employment in the Soviet Union<sup>46</sup> but unable to find jobs in Israel at a commensurate level, "they remained at a low socioeconomic level, thereby reinforcing their sense of alienation and their inability and lack of desire to assimilate into Israeli society" (Schafferman 2008). This, coupled with the large neighborhoods of immigrants created by the size of the immigration wave, as well as a sense of superiority regarding their Russian culture in relation to Israelis, influenced them to maintain that home culture (Siegel 1998). The weakening of the Zionist melting pot ideology among Israelis allowed for tolerance of this preservation of difference, together creating the conditions of possibility for a distinct community within Israeli society.

Native Israelis have found this insularity threatening. Larissa Remennick attributes it to the refusal of the newcomers to follow the established pattern for immigrants, particularly those from Middle Eastern or African countries. Unlike those immigrants, the ones from the FSU are seen as a white ethnic population and so were expected to assimilate.

By contrast to mass Mizrahi Aliya of the 1950s, Russian immigrants of the 1990s proved ready to resist the demands of instant absorption and were able to set their own terms of entry into Israeli mainstream. Despite the language gap and limited economic opportunity that awaited them in the new country, they refused to settle in the geographic and social periphery of Israel and boldly claimed their place in the Ashkenazi middle class (2012:2).

The anxiety manifested in a number of negative attitudes towards these immigrants. Their Jewishness, and therefore their belonging to Israel as a Jewish state, came into question, since they are mostly secular, often unfamiliar with Judaism, and some are not considered Jewish according to traditional Jewish law.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the last wave of immigration also coincided with an influx of illegal sex workers from the FSU, which affected the way all Russian-speaking women were viewed. The fact that they kept their own culture and language further bred suspicion.

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<sup>46</sup> "55% of CIS immigrants had at least 13 years of education; some 41% of the 1989–1990 arrivals engaged in academic professions in their country of origin; and 34% were technicians or members of other free professions" (Schafferman 2008).

<sup>47</sup> In order to receive Israeli citizenship, immigrants have to show that one grandparent is Jewish. On the other hand, according to Jewish *halakha*, in order to be Jewish one's mother must be Jewish. Due to high rates of intermarriage and the repression of religious identification in the Soviet Union, this wave of immigrants included many who were only marginally Jewish, if at all (Remennick 2004:92).

Mass media facilitate the dissemination of popular stereotypes, invoking the series of unappealing images of “Russians” – frauds, bullies and gang members, sex workers, welfare-dependent single mothers, extreme right-wing voters, goyim who entered Israel on false pretenses, unemployed professionals sweeping the streets, youths reluctant to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and so forth (Remennick 2012:2).

While some sources maintain that the low socioeconomic status of immigrants from the FSU has not improved with the second generation (Arian et al. 2009), others contend that Russian-speaking youth are acquiring the skills to become upwardly mobile and blending in with secular educated Ashkenazi Jews (Remennick 2007).

In contrast to many immigrants from the FSU, Blumin and her family made an effort to acculturate into Israeli society. They do not live in one of the immigrant neighborhoods, and Blumin speaks Hebrew with everyone but her immediate family.<sup>48</sup> Several of the people I talked to during my fieldwork were not aware that Blumin is originally from the FSU. Nevertheless, her cultural heritage is evident in her background and achievement in highbrow music genres. She studied piano with her mother, Ella Blumin, and continued at the conservatory where her mother taught, an experience she said isolated her from her peers.<sup>49</sup> Blumin attended Ironi Aleph, a high school for the arts, and already in her teens was performing at jazz clubs and festivals. At the Acre Jazz Festival she won first prize as a singer in 2005, at the age of 18, and honorable mention as a songwriter a year later. Even though she was gaining respect as a jazz singer, her audience was limited because it is not a mainstream genre.

In 2007 Blumin entered as a contestant on *A Star is Born*, the Israeli equivalent of *American Idol*. The show is one of the most watched programs on Israeli television, and has catapulted artists to fame overnight. Blumin won second place, which gave her the media attention she sought. However, her classical- and jazz-influenced interpretations of Israeli standards, together with her polished style, separated her from the other contestants and garnered accusations of elitism. As Stanley Waterman suggests,

Art music in general and the Western classical tradition in particular are elitist. The very essence of any art music is to take simple melodies or rhythms and weave more complex sonorities, harmonies and rhythms around them in infinite combinations, thereby removing it from the mundane. Not only is the training and performance of musicians in this genre very demanding, just appreciating it is too, and this enhances sensitivities to it as an elitist enterprise (2010:114).

Jazz too has become a highbrow genre, propelled to that status in the 1940s by “jazz connoisseurs who could appreciate jazz as a serious American art form” (Lopes 2002:174).

Viewers of the show, however, mapped this elitism onto her ‘Russian’ identity. Detractors positioned her “as a representative of the cool and arrogant Russian culture” (Halutz 2009), with talkback comments such as, “She sings in an antiquated boring and pretentious style, in my opinion. We want stars and not stars of a nursing home in Russia” (Suissa 2007a). Fans equally positioned her as a symbol, with statements such as “Russian immigration is an honor to Israel” (Suissa 2007b), and “Russian women all over the world unite” (Suissa 2007a). In the final round, Blumin competed against Boaz Mauda, of Yemenite heritage, so that the debate became

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<sup>48</sup> Marina Maximilian Blumin, interview with author, Tel Aviv, April 26, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

even more essentialist, as critiques of her arrogance were met with accusations of xenophobia (Stern 2007). As Blumin later described it, “I...symbolized a kind of bourgeois intelligentsia, they put elitism onto me, but I am so not that” (Halutz 2009). These debates illustrate “processes through which place becomes race, nationality becomes territorialized, and bodies become racialized as out of place” (Haritaworn 2012:9). Both Blumin and Mauda are racialized as Other to Israeliness.

Blumin’s highbrow interpretation of popular music, however, found an audience. Music critics lauded her sophisticated artistry, defending her against those who derided her theatricality as artificial, and in doing so revealed their own elitist stance. In response to a judge’s repeated suggestions to her to “sing simply,” one critic wrote,

Marina comes from a very structured artistic place. She is very aware of what she is doing. Marina controls. She is intelligent. And she is also an actress. She delivers the text as a story. She knows where she wants to move. A great singer knows where she wants to move. All the great female singers know where they want to give the *kvetch*.<sup>50</sup> Tzedi Tzarfati comes from the theater so he sees and understands that she is a colorful actress... But the forces that the lowly mainstream recruited, both on sarcastic blogs and forums on the Internet and in the disparaging media, want authentic. Like Ninet. In the finals in Nitzanim, Ninet screamed “Ocean of Tears,” but she was not in control. She sprayed emotion. She gave them a very vulgar performance, but it was authentic. This they know how to deal with (Shapira 2007).

Music critics who praised Blumin equally attributed her musical style to her ethnic heritage. “‘Regular’ songs are a new and exciting field for her. Not that she did not like pop as a teenager - she was simply unaware it existed... Perhaps this is the main thing that differentiates her from the other contestants, even more so than her classical-Russian background” (Shalev 2007a). Shalev’s argument is supported by scholarship, in that, “Russian language maintenance and cultural continuity belong to the core values of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia living in Israel. The pursuit of intellectualism, high educational standards, and upward social mobility cause Russian parents to oppose the influence of mass culture transmitted to the youth via Israeli media” (Remennick 2007:108). However, Shalev also reveals the elite connotations of Blumin’s performance through his own preference for art music as avant-garde. In her shows following *A Star is Born* Blumin focused on this audience whose preference is for an approach to popular music that is coherent with or tinged by the aesthetics of highbrow art.

Blumin began integrating Russian and Ukrainian folksongs into her repertoire, further satisfying this audience’s desire for Otherness. In this way her persona emerged from this moment of hailing. The process, however, illustrates how subjects can be oppressed by internalizing a construction of identity (Yuval-Davis 2006:203).

All my life I had hostility... There are a lot of Russians who live here in a ghetto. It’s a reflection that I don’t want on myself... I’m not connected to the Russian communities so much. I am now, I recognize in this part of me as a part that’s not negative for the first time. Like all the things, all the aggressiveness, the inflexibility like that, that comes from

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<sup>50</sup> Shapira is probably referring to the *krekhits*, or ornamental ‘sobs’ in klezmer music that imitate cantorial singing.

Russia. That I brought from my culture. I didn't see beautiful things that came from them.<sup>51</sup>

Blumin's process shows how subjection "is the way the subject deals with an other who calls it from without and to which it responds by constituting itself as subject. But this is also how it deals with itself, responding to itself and even turning back on and against itself" (Macherey 2004:12). Blumin nevertheless found ways to connect with her heritage and make it part of her persona.

I saw Blumin's most vivid performance of her ethnicity in her show "Deep in the Dew." This was a solo piano show that she mounted in November 2010, as a preview to her debut album.<sup>52</sup> The theme was her return to her childhood, revisiting her training as a classical pianist and her Ukrainian heritage. Unlike Awad and Dikla, who perform mostly in clubs, Blumin creates theatrical productions, with a theme and elaborate costumes, and performs them in concert halls. These shows include "Watching" (2008), produced by the *A Star is Born* judge Tzedi Tzarfati, "Experimental" (2009), a circus-like production with experimental jazz, and "*Dolce Vivace*" (2011), in which she teamed up with composer Gil Shohat for a show that combined classical music and pop. The main production she was performing during the time I was in the field was "Deep in the Dew."

In this show Blumin performed her Ukrainian ethnicity as playful and foreign, offering a positive image of Russian-speaking women and intervening in discourses of Israeliness. In accentuating her sensuality she conforms to images of Russian-speaking women in wider Israeli society, and to paternalistic images for women more broadly. However, her persona is rendered nonthreatening in the way she performs it as innocent and guileless, contrasting with perceptions of such women as sexually dangerous and operating on the fringes of society. One of the main ways Blumin performs this alternate femininity is through her costume. In many of her shows she wears outlandish costumes, which serve multiple purposes. They are good journalistic material, so that her photograph appears in numerous places, helping her publicity. They also accommodate her audience's Eurocentric cosmopolitanism by indexing European and American artists such as the flamboyant Lady Gaga, or Elizaveta, another singer-songwriter who was born in New York and raised in Russia.<sup>53</sup>

Blumin's costume for "Deep in the Dew" portrays her Ukrainian heritage (fig. 4.1). The two designers, Barak Avia and Shira Wise, had her bring in photographs of women in her family and her favorite haut couture. It is a process they use with bridal gowns, so that the wearer, as Blumin described, "undergoes a process with all the female role models in her family, and then suddenly... you're not alone, you're together with all the women in the family."<sup>54</sup> In connecting to her ancestors Blumin's performance places her Russianness in a distant time and place, in what Johannes Fabian calls a denial of coevalness: "a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse" (1983:31). It allows her to display a particular version of Russianness that is frozen in time, separate from contemporary society. Blumin's fanciful costume evokes a romantic vision of the past, deflecting anxieties around the Israeli Russian-speaking community.

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<sup>51</sup> Blumin, interview.

<sup>52</sup> The album she did finally release, *Step into My World* (2013), was not the one anticipated at the time of the show.

<sup>53</sup> <http://elizaveta.typepad.com> (accessed June 11, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> Blumin, interview.

As one reviewer described, “she took the stage dressed in a quilt. Proud and amused as a matron from the 18<sup>th</sup> century” (Oren 2010b). The reviewer interprets Blumin’s pride as whimsical, in contrast to the arrogance attributed to the Russian-speaking community. The costume is also modern art rather than everyday dress, further removing it from contemporary culture.



*Fig. 4.1. Blumin’s fanciful costume for “Deep in the Dew” suggests historic Russia through childlike playfulness.<sup>55</sup>*

Presenting her Russianness as a circumscribed object allows Blumin to shed it at will. As one reviewer described, “Blumin’s theatrical opening begins when she walks onstage in a cumbersome patchwork dress and huge hat that looks like a chandelier, a mirror which recalls the old Russian culture (and indeed, at one point she unravels the dress and says, ‘Mother Russia is too heavy for me,’ a symbolic act that connects to the rest of the show)” (Dvir 2010). By casting off Mother Russia, Blumin demonstrated that she does not preserve Russian culture in the way many immigrants from the FSU do, thereby aligning herself with native Israelis. In this way she deployed this circumscribed version of the past to serve her current identity.

Blumin’s persona further bridges the gap between the community of immigrants from the FSU and wider Israeli society by countering negative stereotypes of Russian-speaking women. According to Remennick, “the image of a Russian woman as an alien and exotic Other, stressing her sex appeal as a threat to local male mores, emerged as a key element in the popular discourse on the post-1989 immigration wave” (2007:135). Blumin’s femininity, on the other hand, is maternal and comforting. An audience member at Zappa, a woman in her forties, appreciated this aspect of her persona in particular. “She is very feminine. Feminine not like what our culture usually is, like all the models... It is not a new feminine image, it’s old. If you ask men, they don’t like skinny images. The skinny image is new... Even though she’s young, she has a sort of Big Mama. She’s called Marina... I was just thinking about my Russian grandmother.” Blumin’s image is sympathetic to an older audience, in contrast to the thin glamorous singers and trendy fashions that target teenagers. For this particular audience member, it elicited personal nostalgia

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<sup>55</sup> Photograph by Noa Magar.

in memories of her own grandmother. Thus the Russianness Blumin evokes is one of roots and familiarity counteracting the foreignness of the contemporary Russian-speaking community.

Blumin's femininity is removed from contemporary Israeli society as a whole. I noticed in Tel Aviv a widespread effort to conform to standards of beauty set by the fashion industry, an urban phenomenon intensified by the city's location on the shoreline, with its many beaches. Pop culture journalists single out Blumin for her nonconformity to these standards. One journalist wrote: "Marina, who was crowned in first place on the shock list last year, is a continuing style accident: a combination of choosing clothes that don't flatter her healthy body proportions (we love it, regardless), and the taste of a tree hugger at Shantipi.<sup>56</sup> Her choices range from trashy, in tight clothing and too strong colorfulness, to aunt-grandmotherly in natural slippers" (Abramovitch 2010).

Blumin's eccentricity, however, becomes acceptable as part of her ethnicity. In an interview for *Vogue Italia*, while explaining the difference between "elite" Russian and "flashy" Ukrainian culture, she realizes she is wearing leopard print. She laughs, "hm, the Ukrainian women they wear a lot of tiger. I guess it's my DNA, it's my genetics" (Marini 2011). Her spontaneous self-ethnicization illustrates how narratives of belonging, with their identifications and emotional attachments, are performative (Yuval-Davis 2006:203). The short Israeli write-up of this article pointed out this particular moment: "About the style that is unique to her, she says emphatically that 'Ukrainian women love to wear leopard print'" (Bilu 2011b). In this way Israelis can celebrate Blumin as an international fashion icon.

Blumin's costume for "Deep in the Dew" also suggested a 'Russian' femininity that is innocent and childlike. In its larger-than-life dimensions the dress is reminiscent of a little girl playing dress-up, particularly with the bold makeup she wears. At Tzavta her behavior accentuated this effect. She twirled when she came on stage and curtsied when she left. Similarly, when she invited her mother to join her onstage, she was charmingly petulant. "I refuse to bring mom her own chair because I want her to be as close to me as possible. Yay." As she prepared for the encore she laughed to herself, holding up a small photo that was sitting on the piano. "This is little Marina. And I sing to her in my latest shows. She reminds me that all this won't go anywhere, and that we deserve to be pirates. Arrr." The way Blumin emphasized her young age, both through her little-girl behavior and by talking about her birthday, seemed particularly to resonate with the more mature audience who were supporting her as a young promising talent.<sup>57</sup> The photograph released with the single "Deep in the Dew" reinforced this image, portraying her in a white dress with a full skirt and puff sleeves, playing oversized piano keys carved in the sand (fig. 4.2). Blumin also expresses the idea of the little girl sonically, using a soft childlike voice whenever she sings in Russian.

The little girl character that Blumin played in the show is not necessarily a strategic act, but a particular expression of how she perceives her ethnicity. It is performative in that she experiences her ethnic identity through her memories as a child, but it is also a performance in the way she accentuates it through her costume, patter, and vocal technique. She is not performing her ethnicity per se, but a character based on her self. When I asked her how singing

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<sup>56</sup> Shantipi is a 'hippie' festival, first organized in 1997, modeled on the "rainbow" gatherings that were popular in the U.S. in the 1970s and spread to Europe in the 1980s.

<sup>57</sup> Although the ages of the audience at Tzavta and Zappa spanned 20s through 50s, the average age was higher than at Abraxas and Chadar Ochel, two venues where Blumin performed her cosmopolitan persona.



in different languages feels to her, she replied, “In Russian there is something childlike and feminine and soft. Like something not touched actually. Because...I didn’t mature as a woman in Russian... There is something very innocent in Russian. I really feel my girl, and the hidden feminine potential, the unrealized. And it’s a very soft link.”<sup>58</sup>



Fig. 4.2. The publicity photograph for the single “Deep in the Dew” depicts Blumin as an innocent little girl.

Blumin’s “charm of passivity” (Beauvoir 1989:337), however, is a powerful tool in rendering her nonthreatening. In the 1920s, for example, cinema adult actresses created childlike characters to counter changes in society that were provoking anxiety. Gaylyn Studlar argues that for actresses such as Mary Pickford, this “masquerade of childishness crucially undercut any potential for sexual subjectivity,” offsetting a threatening adult femininity that was emerging at the end of the flapper era (Negra 2001a:6). There is question, however, whether such a performance is empowering or not. In particular, *shōjo*, the extreme cuteness performed by young Japanese women, has generated scholarly debate between those who interpret it as giving women agency to maneuver restrictive gender roles (Maynard and Taylor 1999; Monden 2014; Wakeling 2011), and those who argue that it is not transgressive, since it still functions within patriarchal norms (Barancovaitė--Skindaravičienė 2009).

Blumin’s girlishness does not transgress patriarchal norms, but instead it disrupts a different discourse, one of national identity. Her performance counters a definition of Israeliness based on the Zionist image of the new Hebrew masculinity that was a reaction to common anti-Semitic images of Jews as weak, passive, and effeminate (Peleg 2008:132). As Oz Almog suggests, the Sabras, the pioneers who established the State of Israel, “admired strong, beautiful bodies, especially male ones, modeling themselves on both Biblical heroes such as David and Hollywood heroes such as Gary Cooper” (2009). In contrast, Blumin offers a childish, feminine, soft Russianness, in a body that does not conform to dominant Israeli norms of beauty for the body. In this sense she is performing the same intervention as women artists in the alternative

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<sup>58</sup> Blumin, interview.

rock scene in the 90s who performed a girlish femininity “as a means of...constructing narratives that disrupt patriarchal discourse within traditionally male rock subcultures” (Wald 1998:588). But just as for those rockers it could be interpreted as a strategy of commerce, “staged...within the very corporate institutions that are agents of dominant discourses that divest women of cultural power” (1998:589), so Blumin’s character was also shaped by a team of managers who might have found it less alienating to her audience to market her Russianness in this way.

The innocent playfulness in Blumin’s show was particularly important in counteracting her persona offstage. In real life she supports her music with an international modeling career, working for O’Not, a fashion line for plus sizes, and for *Vogue Italia*. As a model she is often depicted as more sophisticated than her age through images of sensual femininity. With her large curvy body, Blumin is a sex symbol and a favorite subject for the tabloids, with such references as: “The most luscious babe in the neighborhood hopped over to Greece this weekend and felt comfortable enough to bake on the beach totally naked, without anyone noticing. Yeah, right... Stomach, back, and everything in between, Marina returned to Israel with her hot body tanned in all the necessary places” (Levine 2009). Despite the prevalence of such lurid characterization in the media, in her shows Blumin presented a dignified persona worthy of Israeli high culture.

### **Israeli Russianness**

The way Blumin performed her Ukrainian heritage in “Deep in the Dew” integrated it into classic Israeli culture, into the repertoire that espouses Hebrewism.

Hebrewism is a set of cultural practices and works in various fields of art invented during the formative years of Israeli society. It was mainly created by the first generations of locally born or educated Jews, with the manifest purpose of comprising the cultural material through which the new Jewish entity in Israel would be experienced and practiced... In the 1950s, during the first decade of statehood, Hebrewism became the major component of the official, state-supported culture. The educational system, the army, all types of state ceremonies, the tourist industry, and the public media all worked to present and impose Hebrewism as the “One Israeli Culture.” Hebrewist works of art—high and popular—as well as the vocabulary of everyday cultural practices became the dominant national cultural capital and habitus (Regev and Seroussi 2004:17–18).

From the 1970s Hebrewism became less central to Israeli culture, but it is still an important part of the way people define Israeliness. The venues where Blumin performed “Deep in the Dew” helped establish her as part of dominant Israeli culture. She played to sold-out houses at the Suzanne Dellal Center as part of the annual Piano Festival, as well as at Zappa. Performing at these important venues not only strengthens her sense of belonging, but it is also lucrative, since they are pricier than the smaller nightclubs, and can lead to shows at high-profile events. The first time I saw Blumin’s show was at Tzavta. The year I was in the field Yehudit Ravitz performed several sold-out Tzavta shows of her album *Songs from Home* (2010), acoustic covers of classic Israeli songs. Tzavta also hosts tributes to Israeli poets and singers, such as the one to iconic singer Shoshana Damari.<sup>59</sup> By performing in this venue, Blumin aligned herself with veteran Israeliness from which she is excluded as an immigrant.

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<sup>59</sup> The tribute performance was on February 14, 2011.

The importance of the venue became evident when I asked two well-kempt Ashkenazi women in their fifties why they came to the show.

Woman 1: We like her vocal range, she is talented, multifaceted—she plays, sings. We need to honor young Israeli talent. Not that we don't also go to Shlomo Artzi<sup>60</sup>...

Woman 2: There is something that bothers me—she didn't serve in the army.

Woman 1: It bothers me too, but today it doesn't have just one meaning like it used to.<sup>61</sup>

The venue drew people who define Israeliness through their preference for Israeli music from a certain period. Blumin's exemption from mandatory service in the IDF became a focus of attention when she reached the finals on *A Star is Born*, exacerbating negative perceptions (Asheri 2007). Since serving in the IDF is the highest form of patriotism, she could not serve as a national symbol without it. Although many people are granted exceptions from serving with few repercussions in everyday life, at the institutional level she could not be a figurehead representing the country. The issue continued to plague her: in 2008 her nomination for the international Eurovision contest was withdrawn when it was discovered she had not served. The conversation at Tzavta, however, suggests that Blumin's carefully crafted persona may be encouraging people to rethink their concept of Israeliness.

For her first album, Blumin planned to include original settings of several Hebrew poems by well-known poets (*shirei meshorerim*).<sup>62</sup> The best known of the songs she released, "Deep in the Dew," is a setting of a poem by Leah Goldberg (1911-1970). One critic suggests that Goldberg is "a national, if not *the* national poet of Israel" (A. Oren 2011). He wrote this in his review of a concert that paid tribute to her, marking 100 years to her birth. At this concert, notable singers, including Nurit Galron, Achinoam Nini, Yehudit Ravitz, and Ilanit, performed their own songs based on Goldberg's poems.<sup>63</sup> Although Blumin did not participate in the show, her name is mentioned in the review, demonstrating how her choice of text linked her to these eminent Israeli singers.

The poem "Night," from Goldberg's collection *Little Poems* (1947), sets the highbrow tone of the song.

A basket full of stars  
The smell of murmuring grasses  
Deep in the dew  
My heart beats

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<sup>60</sup> Shlomo Artzi is one of Israel's most popular veteran singers.

<sup>61</sup> Completing mandatory service in the Israel Defence Force has historically been a way to show national pride, though today more people are avoiding this service, particularly women, so that its symbolic value is weakening (Grinberg 2009). [It was a moral and social obligation, not just a matter of pride! And it is to that moral obligation that those women almost certainly referred.]

<sup>62</sup> Natan Zach, Rachel Halfi, Leah Goldberg, Natan Yonatan, and Yona Wollach.

<sup>63</sup> A radio show dedicated to Goldberg's anniversary played 48 songs based on her poems (27 May 2011). <http://www.icast.co.il/default.aspx?p=podcast&ID=385390> (accessed December 3, 2011). There are also two collections of these: *Singing Leah Goldberg* (2004) and *I am Going towards Myself* (2008).

Here your footsteps approach  
They shook a myriad droplets  
Deep in the dew  
My heart beats

The Hebrew is somewhat archaic and difficult to understand. I heard audience members wonder at its meaning, and there is a thread on an online forum discussing the poem.<sup>64</sup> The Hebrew poets were not members of an elite minority (although certain poets such as Yona Wollach, whose texts Blumin includes in her show, could be considered elite due to their avant-garde style). However, in contemporary Israeli society Hebrew poetry is considered highbrow art, in contrast, for example, to the “low culture” texts of *musika mizrahit* (Halper et al. 1989).

The practice of setting Hebrew poetry has historically been an important part of building national identity through popular music (Calderon 2009). However, it fell out of practice for a while and is only now returning, so that its use by young artists today seems anachronistic, and their music highbrow. Two prominent artists within this trend are Shlomi Shaban and Rona Kenan (Bilu 2011a). Fleschenberg contrasts these two artists “whose entire fame is built on pretentious sophistication” to singers of *musika mizrahit*, as evidence of the gap between “high quality and folk art that exists in our cultural field” (2011). Although Blumin is one of several young artists setting Hebrew poems for their debut album, the way she spoke about her choice made it part of her immigrant identity.

If with everything that’s tied to English I’m pop, the way I relate to texts in Hebrew sounds like it’s tied to the old Land of Israel—as if I’m a new immigrant again who is excited about the language... Hebrew is not something I take for granted, even though I came to this country at the age of three. It’s not the language I hear at home. I feel that because of the show, my being drawn to Hebrew poetry, I am undergoing a sort of second acculturation process (Anon 2011).

Setting Hebrew poetry strengthens Blumin’s national belonging even as she portrays herself as foreign. Her double acculturation further counteracts resentment towards immigrants from the FSU for their reluctance to assimilate.

Blumin’s music for “Deep in the Dew” similarly references Hebrewist culture. A prominent sound is the snare drum, which plays a distinctive motif throughout (fig. 4.3). The motif is an example of word painting, a common device in classical music, suggesting a train moving through the countryside. Blumin placed this train in the Ukraine, creating an idyllic scene, far from the Israeli Russian-speaking community: “It’s another way I’m going back for the first time, this time to my roots and to the exotic scents from Ukraine. My music has shades of villagers and farmers” (Anon 2011).



Fig. 4.3. The train motif played by the snare drum throughout “Deep in the Dew.”

<sup>64</sup> <http://sf.tapuz.co.il/shirshur-1086-118814058.htm> (accessed December 3, 2011).

At the same time, the train could also be a reference to the SLI “Song of the Valley,” which describes the train that once traveled through Jezreel Valley. There is a textual link between the two songs as well, with the reference to dew and a myriad of droplets.

Pale night covers  
the fields of Jezreel Valley.  
Dew underneath and moonlight above,  
from Beit Alpha to Nahalal.

Although Tamir Muskat, who produced the song, might have been responsible for this instrumental coloring, Blumin herself drew a connection between her writing and that of the early Russian immigrant composers. “The music I wrote it sounds a bit like old Israeli songs, and it has like a Russian flavor, because those Israeli songs were written by people who came here from Europe and fell in love with the exotics, even if they have a hint of ethnics” (Marini 2011). Inflecting her music with references to SLI inserts it into the narrative of Israeli national culture.

The addition of a verse in Russian further enhances Blumin’s performance of her ethnicity as foreign. This verse is particularly striking in the middle of a Hebrew poem, and was often mentioned in reviews of the show. The orchestration spotlights the vocal entrance on this verse with two beats of silence, the only place when the snare drum stops, drawing attention to this moment of Russianness. On the recording Blumin also speaks in Russian over the music, part of Goldberg’s poem loosely translated by her mother.

Stars and darkness above me  
Quiet peaceful evening  
Only the foliage rustles a bit  
Don’t forget me, my love  
Don’t forget

The effect for me is like listening to her inner thoughts. In her shows she omitted the speaking part, but kept the verse, supporting the Russian by returning to it in the final two lines.

The music is foreign yet accessible and Israeli by indexing Russian folksongs and the SLI modeled on them. After the grand pause, the first instrument to enter is the balalaika, showcasing it as the only non-Western instrument in the orchestration. Its status as a marker of Russian folk music is evidenced in the lyrics of “The Birch Tree,” a folksong that Blumin also performed: “From another birch I will make now / I will make a tingling balalaika.”<sup>65</sup> The form and melody of “Deep in the Dew” are relatively straightforward. The form is made up of six repetitions of a chord progression, each of which also has internal repetition, with the second half (b b’) forming a kind of refrain (fig 4.4). The repetition makes the song easy to learn and lends it a satisfying predictability. The melody is easy to sing, remaining within the range of an octave (fig. 4.5), ideal for audience participation, a feature built in with call and response (fig. 4.6). On the recording a male chorus sings the response only in the final section. In shows I witnessed, however, Blumin invited the audience to sing it throughout. Since the verses are short and the refrain repeats multiple times, there was much opportunity to sing. In teaching the audience their

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<sup>65</sup> [http://makingmusicfun.net/html/f\\_mmf\\_music\\_library\\_songbook/the-birch-tree-lyrics.htm](http://makingmusicfun.net/html/f_mmf_music_library_songbook/the-birch-tree-lyrics.htm) (accessed July 20, 2015).

part, Blumin also introduced the musical term *canon*, letting them share in her knowledge of highbrow art. Throughout the song she gestured to the audience with her arm every time they were to sing, inviting them to join the camaraderie (fig. 4.7).

Intro	counter-Melody	first stanza	second stanza	counter-melody	Russian	first stanza	coda
2	2	8	8	8	8	8	12
	a	b	b'	a	b	b'	a
							b
							b'
							b
							b'
							½b'
							b'

Fig. 4.4. The form of “Deep in the Dew” is simple and repetitive.

♩ = 69

Te ne ma ko cha - vim re - ach de sha im do ve - vim a - mok a - mok ba - tal a -

mok a - mok ba - tal po - em le - va - vi Hi - ne pe - a - me - cha kre - vim her - i - du ri - bo re - vi -

vim a - mok a - mok ba - tal a - mok a - mok ba - tal po - em le - va - vi

Fig. 4.5. Transcription of the melody of “Deep in the Dew” that is easy to sing.

A mok a - mok ba - tal a mok amokba - talpo - em le - va - vi

A - mok amokba - tal po - em le - va - vi

Fig. 4.6. Transcription of the refrain in “Deep in the Dew” with call and response.

This call and response referenced *shira betzibur*, the practice of collective singing that was institutionalized as an important signifier of Hebrewism during the founding of the state (Regev and Seroussi 2004:17). An “invented tradition” used in nation building (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), today it evokes nostalgia for people who experienced those years, and is enjoying a revival among a younger generation (Nocke 2006). It also helps bond an artist with her audience. Etti Ankri broke frame during her show at Zappa Amphi Shoni<sup>66</sup> to poke fun at this practice: “This is the stage of *shira betzibur*. Every ‘professional’ singer (she emphasized the title with comic arrogance) owes herself the moment when she lets the audience go home saying ‘how beautiful I sang. I was great’” (Lessinger 2010b). At the shows of veteran artists Chava Alberstein<sup>67</sup> and Yehudit Ravitz<sup>68</sup> the audience sang almost continuously. Their music is

<sup>66</sup> September 15, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Tel Aviv Museum, December 3, 2010 and March 25, 2011.

established as part of the Israeli canon, so that when they perform their hits they create a sense of community and nation. Blumin, however, had not yet released an album, so few people knew her work. Instead she reproduced this institution by building audience participation into the song.<sup>69</sup>



*Fig. 4.7. During her show at Tzavta, throughout the song “Deep in the Dew” Blumin motioned the audience to join her in the refrain.*

“Deep in the Dew” was very successful, making it into the radio charts.<sup>70</sup> It was Blumin’s flagship song (A. Oren 2011), and the soundtrack for her website.<sup>71</sup> Although there are other settings of the poem by Goldberg,<sup>72</sup> an Internet search of the title reveals almost all references to Blumin. Its success can be measured not only in commercial terms, but also in the way it is perceived as Israeli. In a periodical dedicated to Hebrew literary language, published by the Israeli Ministry of Education, Tamar Sovran mentions all three settings of the poem, but focuses on Blumin’s, noting that even though she links Goldberg to Russian language, it is “a very Israeli song” (2013:144).

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<sup>68</sup> Tzavta, March 23, 2011 and Zappa, April 22, 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Blumin encouraged audience participation in her other shows. In “Experimental” she handed out whistles, instructing, “When I signal, you whistle and that way you’ll feel so together” (Barel 2009), with the same kind of irony Ankri used.

<sup>70</sup> On Radio Darom “Deep in the Dew” was number 24 on the weekly chart (January 22, 2011), <http://www.charts.co.il/charts.asp?id=15>; on Radio Mount Scopus it was number 2, 1, and 4 in three consecutive weeks (December 22, 2010 – January 19, 2011), <http://www.icast.co.il/default.aspx?p=podcast&ID=354678>; and on Radio Kol Yisrael it was number 18 on the annual chart (2010-11), [http://www.radio106.co.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=638:----q&catid=52:2010-02-09-12-51-05](http://www.radio106.co.il/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=638:----q&catid=52:2010-02-09-12-51-05) (accessed December 17, 2011).

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.marinamaximilian.com> (accessed June 13, 2012).

<sup>72</sup> Music by Yair Miller, sung by Michal Tal (1967), and music by Yair Rosenblum, sung by Ronit Ofir (2007).

A significant moment was when Blumin performed the song at the annual ceremony marking the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.<sup>73</sup> The ceremony constructed Israeliness as an imagined community even more overtly than the private shows of veteran artists. It is unusual to hear anything but Hebrew at these patriotic events, so that the verse in Russian was particularly striking. The way Blumin accentuated her femininity was also noteworthy. She leaned forward over the keyboard, swaying suggestively, and sang more passionately than in her shows, referencing her role model Marilyn Monroe (Bashan 2009). It was incongruous with the event, enough that my companion, who had never seen Blumin perform, noted how she was flirting with the audience. This heightened sensuality could have reinforced dominant notions of Russian femininity, but the Israeliness of the song and the context outweighed this Otherness her performance.

### **Eastern Russianness**

In the show “Deep in the Dew,” Blumin’s Otherness was further enhanced by the way she interwove the Russian folksong “The Birch Tree” with the SLI “What Your Eyes Say.” This duet with her mother amalgamated the Easternness of her Ukrainian heritage with the exoticism of Yemenite culture. Russia occupies an ambivalent position in relation to Europe. Richard Taruskin (1998) argues that in the nineteenth century Russian composers presented their culture as Eastern for French audiences. In literature, too, Russia serves “as the West for the East and as the East for the West” (Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2007:189). In Israel, Blumin’s Ukrainian heritage aligns her with Ashkenazim, and her classical music is considered Western, in contrast to Middle Eastern ethnic music. However, she interpreted it as Eastern: “Since [I immigrated] I haven’t been [to the Ukraine], and I want to do it sometime, because I am actually really connected to the East. In general I feel half Yemenite” (Shemesh-Kritz 2008). Blumin slides from talking about her Russianness as Eastern to a different type of Easternness, Yemenite culture, which has been central to Israeli culture since before the founding of the state.

Her connection to Yemenite culture seems far-fetched in light of the phenotypic and geographical differences between Russians and Yemenites. When I saw her sing Yemenite-inspired songs and vocal ornaments, her large build and fair complexion seemed incongruous with the typical diminutive build and dark features of Yemenites. However, she was drawing on the historic Orientalization of Yemenite Jews in Israeli society. “Arab Jews, especially Yemenites, were presented as the exotic community that has preserved ancient Jewish customs and aesthetics, which the Zionist movement wished to revive” (Saada-Ophir 2006:210). Since her own ethnicity is too Western, Blumin borrowed the exoticism of Yemenite music. As the “aboriginal” Jews (Seroussi 2002), Yemenites signify part of the roots of Israeli culture, so that reference also reinforces Blumin’s Israeliness.

Blumin began with “The Birch Tree,” using the full-throated nasal vocal timbre and close harmonies associated with Bulgarian women’s choirs. Both Awad and Blumin used this distinctive sonority that contrasts mainstream pop music. For Awad, however, it offered an otherness that was less politically charged than her dominant Arab ethnicity, while complicating the sound by juxtaposing the two. For Blumin, on the other hand, it enhanced the appeal of her Ukrainian ethnicity by heightening its foreignness. Blumin and her mother sang the folksong as a canon, first over an unmetered drone in the piano and then *a capella*. As they wound down, the drone turned into a metered rhythm (fig. 4.8). The pattern in the bass formed the transition to

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<sup>73</sup> November 13, 2011.



“What Your Eyes Say” (fig. 4.9). When Blumin began to sing “What Your Eyes Say” at Tzavta, an audience member sighed, and there was a smattering of appreciative applause. She did not give the names of either of the songs in her introduction, which added to the pleasurable surprise of hearing a familiar tune. Blumin sang the verses in a full, bordering on hoarse, voice, occasionally using a guttural ‘*ayin*. Her boisterous delivery recalled the singing style of Yemenite singer Shoshana Damari, in contrast, for example, to the slow restrained version of the song by Ashkenazi singer Esther Ofarim. For the chorus she switched to a softer more inviting voice and accompaniment, welcoming the audience to join in.

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system features Marina and Alla singing verses, with a piano accompaniment. The second system features Marina and Alla singing a chorus, with a piano accompaniment. The third system features Marina and Alla singing a chorus, with a piano accompaniment.

**System 1:**

Marina: Pai-du ya vlyes — pa - gul - ya - yu bye-lu-yu byer - yo zu za - lo - ma - yu — lyu - li, lyu-li pa gu - lya - yu, lyu - li,

Alla: Pai-du ya vlyes — pa gul ya - yu bye-lu-yu byer yo zu za - lo - ma - yu lyu - li, lyu-li pa-gu lya - yu,

**System 2:**

Marina: lyu-li, za-lo - ma - yu — lu lu lu lu lu — lu lu lu lu

Alla: lyu - li, lyu li, za-lo - ma - tu —

**System 3:**

Marina: oo oo — oo — ee ee — ee —

Alla: Vo po - lye buy-ryo - za sta -

Fig. 4.8. Transcription of “The Birch Tree” from Blumin’s performance at Tzavta.

Marina

Mi cho - lem cho - lem a - la - yich

im a - rov im a - rov ha - yom. Shnei o - rot ba - la - yil ba -

la - yil ba - la - yil li rom - zim rom - zim pit - om

Ma om - rot ei - na - yich ei - na - yich ei - na - yich bli lo - mar ad tom ad tom.

Fig. 4.9. Transcription of the opening of “What Your Eyes Say,” layered with “The Birch Tree” through the piano accompaniment.

Blumin used the distinctive rhythmic accompaniment figure to transition between the Russian folksong and the SLI. She accompanied the last chorus of “What Your Eyes Say” with the open fifth drone (fig. 4.10), and introduced the arpeggiated accompaniment of the SLI chorus during the Russian folksong to return to that song. One of the reasons the two songs work together so well is that “What Your Eyes Say” is modeled on Russian folk music. Two artists

who immigrated to Israel in the 1920s, Yitzhak Shenhar (1902-1957), a Ukrainian poet, and Mordechai Zaire (1905-1968) a Russian composer, wrote the song in 1928. They used Russian music as the foundation and added ethnic touches based on their perception of the Yemenite culture they found in Israel. The combination of Russian and ‘Yemenite’ folk music makes this SLI a potent symbol of Israeliness in strengthening Blumin’s sense of belonging.

The image shows a musical score for two songs. The first system is for 'The Birch Tree' (Marina) and the second system is for 'What Your Eyes Say' (Alla). Both systems include vocal lines for the singer and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal lines.

**Marina**  
 Ma om - rot ei - na - yich ei - na - yich ei - na - yich bli lo - mar ad tom ad tom.

**Alla**  
 Shnei o - rot ba - la - yil ba - la - yil ba - la - yil li rom - zim rom - zim pit - om  
 Vo - po - lye buy-ryo - za sta - ya - la, vo po - lye ku - drya - va - ya sta - ya - la, lyu - li, lyu - li, sta

Fig. 4.10. Transcription showing the layering of “The Birch Tree” and “What Your Eyes Say.”

Blumin’s success in being foreign and yet Israeli is evident in a review by Assaf Nevo in which he lauds her performance as a synthesis of multicultural Israeliness.

The third peak was recorded with “What Your Eyes Say,” which began as a Russian canon with mama Blumin, from there to a painful lament, which seemed like a groove, and before you knew what was happening winked to Mizrahi in a husky mawwal with a Russian accent and Yemenite melody, Shoshana Damari from Leningrad. The crowd began to clap to the beat, and the piano beat like a tin drum from the nearby vineyard, the Russian suddenly sounded like Amharic, and everything joined into one great number – Argov and Ofarim, Gronich and Ingedashet, Raichel and Damari – world music at its best, which is actually simultaneously the perfect Israeli ingathering of the exiles... Marina Maximilian Blumin is a national cultural asset of first-class quality (Nevo 2010).

“Ingathering of the exiles” [*kibbutz galuyot*] refers to the Zionist vision of the State of Israel as a home for Jews from all over the world, whereby different cultures would meld into one unified culture. Nevo maps Blumin’s Otherness onto minority cultures in Israel as a whole by invoking

collaborations of Israeli pop musicians with “ethnic” artists: Sasha Argov is Mizrahi to Esther Ofarim’s Ashkenazi, Ethiopian Ayala Ingedashet represents the Ethiopian Girls’ Choir with whom Shlomo Gronich works,<sup>74</sup> and Shoshana Damari is one of the “ethnic” artists featured on the Idan Raichel Project (but also an Israeli icon). Blumin encourages such an analogy by keeping her ethnicity vague. In her shows she did not give the title of “The Birch Tree,” and on her album *Step into My World* (2013) she listed it only as “Russian Canon.” In this way her Otherness helps her access the discourse of Israeliness as multiculturalism.

### **Romantic Russianness**

When I spoke to Blumin she was still hesitant to write songs in Russian, but did include her own setting of a 1915 poem by Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva. In this song the romantic Russian femininity she offers contradicts negative images of the Israeli Russian-speaking community. Blumin’s choice of a 100-year-old poem in a foreign language connotes highbrow art, much like the Hebrew poetry she uses. However, the way she drew a personal connection to the poet counteracted implications of elitism. At Zappa<sup>75</sup> she introduced the song thus:

Now a song fresh from the oven, from a Russian poet called Marina Tsvetaeva. She wrote the song when she was my age, 23, in 1915. This is the first time I wrote a whole song in Russian... So I will do a sort of free translation here. Are there any Russian speakers here? [one whoop. She says something in Russian] Ok, so you will simply hear a song in a language you don’t understand. And you will be very enchanted.

Blumin teased her audience in the same way Dikla does, exposing their desire for foreignness. At Tzavta she further collapsed the spatiotemporal distance by pointing out how Tsvetaeva has the same name as herself, concluding with, “1915: a 23-year-old girl in love.”

Although Blumin performed the song as innocently romantic, the text is actually quite grim and sophisticated in its painful irony.<sup>76</sup>

I’m glad your sickness is not caused by me.  
Mine is not caused by you. I’m glad to know  
the heavy earth will never flow away  
from us, beneath our feet, and so  
we can relax together, and not watch  
our words. When our sleeves touch  
we shall not drown in waves of rising blush.

I’m glad to see you calmly now embrace  
another girl in front of me, without  
any wish to cause me pain, as you  
don’t burn if I kiss someone else.  
I know you never use my tender name,

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<sup>74</sup> Gronich has not worked with Ingedashet, who sings rhythm and blues.

<sup>75</sup> February 24, 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Translation by Elaine Feinstein

<http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/marina%20tsvetaeva?before=41> (accessed March 9, 2013).

my tender spirit, day or night. And  
no one in the silence of a church  
will sing their Hallelujahs over us.

Thank you for loving me like this,  
for you feel love, although you do not know it.  
Thank you for the nights I've spent in quiet.  
Thank you for the walks under the moon  
you've spared me and those sunset meetings unshared.  
Thank you. The sun will never bless our heads.  
Take my sad thanks for this: you do not cause  
my sickness. And I don't cause yours."

Tsvetaeva (1892–1941) herself led a tumultuous and tragic life, with several affairs, including one around the time she wrote this poem.<sup>77</sup> Blumin's interpretation of the song, however, interpreted it as naïve, in keeping with her girlish persona. This girlish innocence renders her persona appealing by removing it from any political associations or societal tensions that might provoke anxiety. As bel hooks (1992) would argue, it is also positions her as powerless, allowing the audience to better consume her as the Other.

Blumin's musical setting suggests this romantic foreignness, counterbalancing unfamiliarity with accessibility. The piece is in Dorian mode, also called "Russian minor" (Taruskin 1986:33). It is a diatonic scale on the white keys of the piano, using the same notes as a major scale, so that it is familiar to the Western ear. The minor third between D and F gives it a minor quality, which suits the pained irony of the lyrics. The simplicity and repetition of the music make it predictable and comforting (fig. 4.11). The piano accompaniment is sparse, alternating two chords throughout much of the song with a gentle rocking quarter-notes. There is also repetition in the melody, with three verses set to the same music, but modulating up a whole-step to add direction to the otherwise static accompaniment. Each verse is in five phrases (a' a b a), reminiscent of "Deep in the Dew" in its strophic structure. Blumin's soft vocal timbre and high register accentuate the intimacy of the music, and the dramatic intensity increases only slightly at the climax.

The image shows a musical score for voice and piano. The voice part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It begins with several measures of rest, followed by a short melodic phrase. The piano part consists of two staves, treble and bass clefs, with a common time signature. The piano accompaniment features a simple, repetitive pattern of chords and quarter notes. The piano part is divided into two sections by a double bar line with repeat dots. The first section has four measures, and the second section has two measures.

<sup>77</sup> In 1914, while married to Sergei Efron, she had an affair with the poetess Sofia Parnok.



Fig. 4.11. Transcription of Blumin's simple setting of a poem by Marina Tsvetaeva that she performed at Tzavta.

Blumin consciously performed her ethnicity in a way that contradicts negative images of the Israeli Russian-speaking community. She explained it to me as protecting the innocent child in her from the harsh surroundings. "Many Israelis know swear words in Russian. A lot of people swear in the streets in Russian. And I can't listen to it. It's like knives in my ears. Because it's to mix the home, the pure, the holy, with the outside." I interpret Blumin's use of religious descriptors as elevating her culture to an untouchable realm, invoking Heaven or the Biblical Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle, which contrasts with her unmarked religious affiliation in everyday life. This positions Russian culture as morally superior to Israeli culture, reversing impressions of the Russian-speaking community as morally dubious.

### Immigrant Russianness

Another way Blumin's performance helped insert her into the narrative of Israeli culture was in her interpretation of classic Israeli pop songs through her 'Russian' identity. This is exemplified in "There are Girls," an Israeli pop song from the 1960s. The two authors of the song, Yoram Taharlev (b. 1938) and Yair Rosenblum (1944-1996), are both Israeli born, in contrast to composers of SLI. They wrote it for *Lehaqat Hanachal*, one of the best-known army entertainment ensembles (*lehaqot tzvaiyot*). During the first two decades of statehood these ensembles "became the dominant phenomenon in Israeli popular music. Their main function was to serve as a framework for the creation and dissemination of new songs in the ideological vein of *shirei erez Israel*" (Regev 2000:230). Although they continue to exist today, *lehaqot tzvaiyot* do not have the same influence on Israeli popular music that they had, since they perform well-known songs rather than original material written for them (Regev and Seroussi 2004:93). However, archives of the early *lehaqot tzvaiyot* (1950s-1970s) are still an important source of cultural humor, both with their satirical songs and as material for jokes.

"There are Girls" is a satire on Israeli socio-cultural mores. The narrator self-righteously

condemns loose girls, revealing her own jealousy of them. The song reflects a debate in Israeli society at the time.

Israeli youth in the mid-1960s were divided between those who participated in youth movement activities, following the 'proper' cultural path of the sabra stereotype; and those stigmatized as 'salon' society (because of the private dance parties, held in the living room, known as the 'salon' in vernacular Hebrew... who were viewed by teachers and youth movement leaders as egotistical and socially irresponsible (Regev and Seroussi 2004:139).

Since then other artists have used the song to express different issues contemporaneous to their time. For example, Dana International, one of Israel's biggest international stars, performs a cover in which she satirizes Israeli culture through her transsexualism (Moriel 1998). In Blumin's version, on the other hand, she talks about her childhood as a classically trained pianist in a Ukrainian family. She sings only the verses most relevant to her own experience. The song dissolves into a tirade against the piano that she screams while hammering chords.

Lehaqat Hanachal

There are girls, there are girls  
Who go out with anyone  
If they see a nice guy  
They are ready to fly immediately  
With him even as far as Eilat.

But I'm not like that  
But I'm not, I'm not like that  
With whomever I don't feel comfortable  
I won't even go as far as the Yarkon.

There are girls, there are girls  
Who dress like in the magazines  
The skirt goes way up  
And the shirt is full of slits  
So that everyone can choose one.

But I'm not like that  
But I, I'm not like that  
I'm usually modest  
And no one pounces on me.

There are girls, there are girls  
Who go crazy about Cliff<sup>79</sup>  
And don't want any substitute for Cliff

Blumin<sup>78</sup>

There are girls, there are girls  
Who go out with anyone  
If they see a nice guy  
They are ready to fly immediately  
With him even as far as Eilat.

There are girls, there are girls  
Who read with no shame  
The nonsense in *For the Woman*  
And if you ask me  
That's their whole cultural world.

But I'm not like that  
But I'm not, I'm not like that  
I read it to the end  
But know it's fake.

There are girls, there are girls  
Who dress like in the magazines  
The skirt goes way up  
And the shirt is full of slits  
So that everyone can choose one.

But I'm not like that  
But I'm not, I'm not like that

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<sup>78</sup> Zappa, February 24, 2011.

<sup>79</sup> U.K. rock idol Cliff Richard.

Only Cliff during the day and Cliff at night  
And Cliff is the King of Israel.

But I'm not like that  
But I'm not, I'm not like that  
I have always loved  
Johan Bach Sebastian jazz.

There are girls, there are girls  
Who read with no shame  
The nonsense in *For the Woman*  
And if you ask me  
That's their whole cultural world.

But I'm not like that  
But I'm not, I'm not like that  
I read it to the end  
But know it's fake.

There are girls, there are girls  
Who only think about guys  
They don't care what people say  
Catch whomever they can  
And for the good ones nothing is left.

If nothing is left for the good ones  
Then they do the exact same thing  
And the men say thus:  
All the girls are the same.

I'm usually modest  
And no one pounces on me.

There are girls, there are girls  
Who only think about guys  
They don't care what people say  
Catch whomever they can  
And for the good ones nothing is left.  
Not even one  
Nothing, nothing, not even a bit  
Nothing, nothing

But I'm a good girl  
I'm a good girl from a good home  
Mom educated me  
Dad never let me wander the streets  
I'm a good girl  
They told me, sit at the piano  
Be a good girl  
He will come to you to the piano  
Play another composition  
Be beautiful on the piano  
Only be at the piano  
Play another tune  
And I'm a good girl  
A good girl from a good home  
All day long at the piano  
All day long  
But I'm a good girl  
And no one came  
A good girl the piano  
And I'm alone all day  
And I'm a good girl, good girl, good girl  
And not even one  
Not even  
I'm trying  
There isn't even one  
Sitting with the piano  
The piano and I  
Playing the piano  
And feel like a good girl  
Life isn't the piano  
People aren't the piano  
Only me and the piano  
God isn't the piano  
He didn't come.



In the original lyrics the narrator is self-righteous, using irony to poke fun sexist values that laud female modesty as virtuous. Critic Amos Oren, however, mapped the self-righteousness onto Blumin's ethnicity. "She turns 'There are Girls' (Tahar Lev/Rosenblum) into a chanson, and sings it with the contempt and condescension of a Russian immigrant" (Oren 2010b). In reiterating the stereotype of the Russian-speaking community, Oren overlooked Blumin's performance of a frustrated little girl. At Zappa her patter right after the song supported this interpretation, as she plunked at the piano irreverently. "*Psanteri* [little piano], now that we've made up I can do to you all the things they didn't let me do," she chuckles and plunks a discordant chord. "Wow, I haven't done this in years." Blumin's girlishness made her more accessible to her audience. At the premier at the Piano Festival<sup>80</sup> she drew attention to her ethnicity by adding lines during the final catharsis.

I came from the Ukraine  
 Sit at the piano  
 [?] to the Ukraine  
 Play another composition  
 And you will be a good girl

Performing her tirade as a rebellion against her Ukrainian heritage aligned Blumin with her native Israeli audience.

Musically Blumin's version of the song is more complex than the original one by Lehaqat Hanachal. The latter is in the popular music vein, emphasizing its satirical nature with a fast rhythmical accompaniment (168 beats per minute) played on the accordion (fig. 4.12). Blumin's version, on the other hand, is closer to art music in its sophistication. It is heavier and more dramatic (although the tempo is the same), with a complex rhythmic pattern in the bass (fig. 4.13). While the original keeps the same rhythm throughout, Blumin's accompaniment changes to reflect the text. The chorus has a dramatically different texture that illustrates the way Blumin is mocking the narrator's self-righteousness (fig. 4.14). Blumin's sophisticated cover of a popular song offered her audience highbrow art and classic Israeli culture, while the way she over-dramatized the lyrics and poked fun at her own culture downplayed the elitist overtones.



Fig. 4.12. Transcription of opening of "There Are Girls" by Lehaqat Hanachal.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> November 19, 2010. The performance was posted on YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwbk-UtgePo> (accessed June 10, 2012).

<sup>81</sup> The version on the compilation *Songs in Chaki* (2003) is included with the lyrics on Shironet,

Yesh - nan ba-not yesh-nan ba-not \_\_\_\_\_ a - sher yotz-ot im kol e- chad \_\_\_\_\_ im

hen ro-ot ba - chur nech-mad \_\_\_\_\_ hen mu-cha not la - tus mi-iad \_\_\_\_\_ i - to a-fi-lu ad Ei-

lat. Yesh - nan ba -not yesh-nan ba - not \_\_\_\_\_

Fig. 4.13. Transcription of Blumin's version of "There are Girls" at Tzavta, with a more complex accompaniment.

<http://shironet.mako.co.il/artist?type=lyrics&lang=1&prfid=578&wrkid=1643> (accessed July 31, 2014).

*Fig. 4.14. Transcription of Blumin’s version of “There are Girls” with accompaniment that reflects the text.*

### **Cosmopolitan Artist**

In “Deep in the Dew” Blumin included a cabaret song that was pleasing to her audience as accessible highbrow art, cosmopolitan, and Israeli. “I’m Going” is the single Blumin released after “Deep in the Dew.” By cabaret I mean the style developed by Yvette Guilbert (1867-1944).

For this highly intensive, melodramatic type of recitation, Guilbert developed a rhythmical freedom, which has become a commonplace element of cabaret singing in our time, [called]... “suspended rhythm.” It consists of temporarily abandoning the underlying meter of a poem or song for the sake of expression, rushing ahead or slowing down the words in favor of a “gestic rhythm,” as Brecht later liked to say (Rutkowski 2001:46).

Brechtian song uses rhythm to convey a particular emotion conveyed in the text (Pavis 1998:164). The following transcription does not capture the rhythmic flexibility of Blumin’s delivery, but it demonstrates the typical chordal accompaniment that allows this style of singing (fig. 4.15).



closely matches her artistic sensibilities and training. Her online profile even lists cabaret along with jazz and pop as her genres.<sup>82</sup> The skillfulness needed to perform cabaret is evident in that,

Only a thoroughly musical artist can afford this style without “losing track.” She has to function on two levels, so to speak: while she is freeing herself from the “musical rhythm” she must never allow it to slip “out of ear’s reach.” Otherwise, she could not find her way back to it at decisive moments and the listeners would gain a sensation of “drifting.” What applies here to the rhythmic quality of a song has an analogy in the freedom a jazz vocalist (like Ella Fitzgerald) would claim for the harmonic quality. Even in her most daring improvisations (“scatting”) the latter must “hear” and rely on the basic sequence of chords, which she is improvising on (Ruttkowski 2001:47).

When cabaret originally emerged it was considered highbrow art, though ‘popular’ rather than appropriate for the concert hall. “The first cabarets consisted of ‘bohemians’ and ‘decadents’ of the fin de siècle, cosmopolitans who appreciated refinement” (Ruttkowski 2001:51). Although cabaret became lowbrow in relation to art music, in the context of popular music today it has highbrow connotations. Blumin’s cabaret repertoire led Amos Oren to call her “the female equivalent to Shlomi Shaban” (2010b), the artist who represented the elite faction of Israeli society in Fleischenberg’s article. Shaban, who studied piano at the Royal College of Music in London, has a more established career than Blumin, with awards from IcExcellence and ACUM, so that the association raises Blumin’s status.

Blumin, however, is not a social satirist like Shaban.<sup>83</sup> The original cabaret songs contained many inside jokes and references to pop culture, which could potentially provide Blumin with an opportunity to strengthen her belonging. However, in “I’m Going” she does not offer social commentary, but only pokes fun at herself.

I’m going.  
I’ve already written countless farewell songs about us.  
I’m going  
and when you go,  
there is no turning back.  
I’ve slammed the door!  
I think about it for a minute,  
flush  
and come back.  
Do you know how many times a day I break up with you?!  
But I’m –  
a magician.  
Every time you return my gaze,  
I come back with it.  
You come over  
and give me a kiss,  
Oh, I’m so wooed ...

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<sup>82</sup> <http://www.marinamaximilian.com> (accessed August 9, 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Shaban was a guest on the panel for the social satire television show *State of the Nation* (2009).

Stupid...  
Then a photograph of a woman  
On the chest of drawers  
reminds me  
that I  
am a cheater.  
This is the first time I dare use that word,  
but everything has a name  
and this is called  
a lover.  
Tell me,  
do you really think that you're my one and only?  
And I am your one and only?  
Because if not,  
this is a really weird game  
and anyway  
I'm  
on my way to the door!  
Well,  
Did you notice I left?  
Do you miss me?  
In front of the TV?  
That I left everything  
and forgot everything  
and disconnected myself from all the strings  
and I will disappear in front of your eyes.  
I'm the best at saying I'm going  
as I stand.  
No,  
actually from the couch  
it sounds the most final,  
fatal,  
no turning back,  
I'm going!  
I lie down for a minute...  
No,  
I'm going!  
I love for a minute...  
I'm going!

The text contains no particular references to Israeli culture, but it is nevertheless Israeli by being in Hebrew. This is another example of how the language of a song is more powerful than its content and music. Just as Mira Awad's songs were banned from the radio for being in Arabic despite their Euro-American music, Blumin is embraced as an Israeli artist because of songs like this in Hebrew, which attests to the strength of Hebrew as a symbol of Israeliness.

Blumin's performance of Israeliness seemed to me to be tailored to her audience for

“Deep in the Dew.” In her shows for a younger Bohemian crowd she did not adhere to Hebrew, supporting Nira Yuval-Davis’s assertion that belonging is situational (2006:199). Blumin has always been interested in experimental jazz and various fusions. Earlier in her career she sang with Common Band, an ethnic-fusion-rock-jazz band. In her show “Experimental” she brought experimental jazz to wider audiences, making it accessible through a circus theme. She has also been a regular participant at Chadar Ochel [the collective dining room on a kibbutz], a monthly jam session in the Bohemian Florentine neighborhood in Tel Aviv. At the show I attended<sup>84</sup> she made a brief but glamorous appearance at midnight, dressed in a bright red silk mini dress, oversized sunglasses, and a wig (fig. 4.16). She sang for about fifteen minutes, improvising words and phrases in English over the band’s funk groove, before disappearing again.



*Fig. 4.16. Blumin at Chadar Ochel in her Bohemian persona.*<sup>85</sup>

At Abraxas,<sup>86</sup> a yuppy bar on trendy Rothchild Avenue in Tel Aviv, Blumin performed a whole evening of electronic experimental jazz/rock in English with her own band. There she was dressed in a leopard print cat suit and gold jacket, and on her gold-painted face wore enormous heart-shaped sparkly gold sunglasses (fig. 4.17). I recognized the leopard print suit from her interview for *Vogue Italia*, where she referred to it as part of her Ukrainian heritage. In this context, however, her costume reflected her eccentric cosmopolitan persona. The music was the antithesis of “Deep in the Dew.” In contrast to the stark piano and vocal arrangements that underscored the unaffected aspect of her persona, here she used a mixing box to create electronic

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<sup>84</sup> May 20, 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Photograph by Roy Fridman.

<sup>86</sup> June 12, 2011.

beats and a voice modulator to add delay and manipulate her voice in unusual timbres. Unlike the quasi folksongs that had simple, clear structures and harmonies, here songs and genres melted one into another, moving between funk, disco, and jazz. Not confined to a piano bench, throughout the show she moved and danced freely with sinuous motions from belly dancing to disco, as she let loose in extended vocal improvisations. At one point I did hear her quote a snippet of the “The Birch Tree,” but like the leopard print cat suit, it blended into the general exuberance.



*Fig. 4.17. Blumin at Abraxas, dressed in the leopard suit she characterized as part of her Ukrainian heritage.*

### **‘Russian’ Ethnicity as Part of Dominant Israeliness**

Blumin has a phenomenally successful career in Israel. Unlike Awad and Dikla, her identification with a marginalized ethnic group has not been an obstacle, only an advantage. Her Russianness is European rather than Middle Eastern, so that it is far more easily linked to the dominant group. In this sense it is like Awad’s Bulgarian ethnicity, but it is even more powerful because it is readily categorizable and has direct connection to the Russian poets and composers that created Hebrewist culture. Blumin performs in concert halls, including the amphitheater Zappa Amphi Shuni, and often appears with major Israeli artists, both veteran and younger stars.<sup>87</sup> The accusations of elitism leveled at her on *A Star is Born* are no longer evident in the media and did not come up in any of my interviews with audience members. Instead Blumin’s highbrow art has found an audience in an older generation, while her vivacious personality and children’s songs make her popular with a young generation too. A colorful figure, she is also a favorite topic of entertainment magazines and gossip columns, and was awarded first place on the list of “The 50 Most Beautiful and True People” in the magazine *Pnai Plus* in 2009. One journalist described her career thus:

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<sup>87</sup> From 2009-2011 Blumin appeared with Rami Fortis, Alon Olearchik, Mosh Ben-Ari, Shlomi Shaban, Mooki, and Ninette Tayeb, among others.



The girl with cropped hair, plump figure, heavenly voice and mature soul was first revealed to us at age 20 in the fifth season of the reality TV program *A Star is Born*. At that time Marina Maximilian Blumin was seen as a strange bird with an especially long name, who entertained herself with jazz-style songs and gave them a theatrical and unusual interpretation.

The fact that the immigrant from the Ukraine did not serve in the army, “starred” in 2008 in a campaign against army evasion, and previously encountered a conflict between the IDF leadership and the organizers of an event in memory of the late Lior Vishinski due to her participation in the event - once again reminded us that this is clearly not a mainstream figure, who may not last long in the belligerent and demanding swamp of Israeli culture.

But something happened in recent years, especially in 2011: Suddenly wherever you go, whatever type of entertainment you consume, you will encounter Blumin’s winning smile. She appeared on stage last year with an intimate piano show “Deep in the Dew,” and last month launched a prestigious musical show with composer and conductor Gil Shohat, “Dolce Vivace.”

In addition, at the latest rally in memory of Yitzhak Rabin Blumin was the only *A Star is Born* refugee, appearing alongside icons like Danny Sanderson and Maor Cohen, and singing a song she composed herself. On TV you can see her these days in the second season of the series *Smoke Signals*, and she also sang the theme song for the second season. Blumin will also appear in the second season of *The Prime Minister’s Children*, another series she acted in recently.

On billboards and in newspapers one runs into her as a model for the fashion company O’Not, and in recent months she is mentioned often in the gossip columns and entertainment magazines, whether as an ex of the basketball player Gil Mossinson, or just as a fashion icon and sex symbol. In short, as we said already – she is everywhere (L. L. Oren 2011).

Part of Blumin’s success in becoming more mainstream, aside from good publicity and strategic use of the media, is the way she engages with the perceived canon of Israeli music. As the success of her show and single “Deep in the Dew” reveal, the older canon of Israeli songs, SLI and pop songs of the 1960s and 70s, is still a powerful force in defining Israeliness today.

Blumin is also successful within the non-Hebrewist canon. Her singles “Maurin” and “I’m Going” were both played on Galgalatz and other mainstream stations. Although the title and all the songs on her debut album *Step into My World* (2013) are in English, the liner notes are in Hebrew, maintaining her Israeliness. This is significant in light of her unstable position as immigrant and the controversy over not serving in the military. It is also perhaps in response to the ongoing debate over the use of English by Israeli pop/rock singers and bands, although there has been a shift to greater acceptance in recent years since an article appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* (Lemor 2001). Emphasizing her Israeliness also counteracts the sense of abandonment that some of my interlocutors expressed in speaking about artists who focused their careers on the international market.

Blumin’s performance opens up opportunities for imagining the nation in new ways. Despite her acculturation into Israeli society, her immigrant status keeps her from fully belonging. As one audience member at Tzavta put it, “She doesn’t symbolize Israeliness. How

with a name like Marina can you be Israeli? She is Israeli because of the aliya. Everyone here is Israeli. She doesn't seem like an Israeli flag." Ironically Blumin accesses this definition of Israeliness that privileges veteran status by performing herself as an immigrant in her music. However, rather than creating a Third Space (Bhabha 1994), as hip hop artist Vulkan does by rapping in Russian, or in Hebrew with an intentionally heavy Russian accent, about the plight of the Israeli Russian-speaking community, Blumin works within dominant culture to reconfigure definitions of Israeliness. In this sense she is analogous to veteran singer-songwriter Arkadi Duchin, whose album *I Want and It will Happen* (1989) dedicated to the poet Vladimir Vysotsky achieved gold status. However, Blumin's intervention is impactful in that all the poems on Duchin's album were translated into Hebrew, while Blumin's song spotlights Russian language. The success of Blumin's music thus supports a pluralistic model for shaping national identity (Brückner 1999; Schulten 2001).

Blumin's performance of ethnicity further intervenes in discourses of Israeliness with its gendered quality. Zionism was conceived as Ashkenazi male (Jacoby 1999; Sztokman 2006), so that Blumin's gender positions her on what Gayatri Spivak (1992) calls the margins of the nation. Spivak, however, suggests that nationalist agendas ultimately cannot accommodate the female body that has been left out, while Blumin seems to achieve this. Her heightened sensuousness, which is very different from that of Alberstein's folk image or Ravitz's rocker one, is built into her interpretation of Russianness that she presents as Israeli. In performing Hebrewism through her sensuous 'Russian' femininity, Blumin inserts a new voice into the historical narrative of Israeliness.

Blumin was able to use her ethnic heritage productively because of the dual status of the different strands of her intersectional identity and the way she performed them. Her evocation of distant rural landscapes suggested a Russianness that is foreign, while her connection to Russian immigrant composers reinforced her Israeliness. At the same time, her mainstream Israeli persona distanced her from the Russian-speaking community that is clustered in the peripheries, increasing her status. Blumin's performance also played up the high cultural class rather than the low economic class of her ethnic community. Accentuating her young age in the show "Deep in the Dew" communicated a gendered ethnicity that was innocent and so morally superior to Israelis, counteracting stereotypes of Russian-speaking women that reflect an oppressive intersection of gender, ethnicity, and class. Her Jewish affiliation was unmarked in the context of the shows on which I focused, though in our conversation and in her debut album it manifested as New Age spirituality, whose advantage as non-sectarian, gender egalitarian, and popular I will discuss in more detail in relation to Din Din Aviv in the next chapter.

## Chapter Five: Din Din Aviv

It is Friday afternoon in early spring.<sup>1</sup> I am at the Zappa club, one of the swankier music venues in Tel Aviv, catering to a middle-class urban clientele, with gourmet food and a musical lineup of established Israeli singers. This is a matinee though, and the audience includes a fair number of children, a fact that will no doubt warm the heart of Din Din Aviv, the star of today's show. The show is called "A World within a World," encapsulating the multiplicity of her ethnic and religious identities. It is produced by the dance troupe Mayumana, an Israeli spinoff of Stomp.<sup>2</sup> At an uncharacteristically sharp 2:30 (the show has to finish in time for Aviv to prepare for the Sabbath at sundown) the lights dim, the smoke machine starts up, and two men take their places onstage. Din Din follows close behind. A short, stocky woman in her 30s, she is barefoot, dressed in a sky-blue sixties print satin kimono that covers her arms and legs. Her hair is piled high on her head, wrapped in a blue scarf reminiscent of the *mitpachat* that modern Jewish Orthodox women wear. An ornate sparkling curlicue adorns one temple. She takes her place center stage and begins plucking a kalimba,<sup>3</sup> joining in with her rich, deep, soulful voice. "He whispers my secrets, hears my prayers, sees me in my eyes, knows..." Her lugubrious singing and undulating body movements are hypnotic. The electric guitar joins in, strumming gently. In the meantime a lithe young dancer dressed in black has quietly entered, and she adds her vocal harmony. Another musician takes over with a jazz-inflected solo on the nay, which leads into an extended vocables improvisation by Din Din, as the dancer performs snaky modern dance movements. At the end of the song Din Din acknowledges the enthusiastic applause with unaffected graciousness. Her sweet and sincere demeanor dispels any antipathy the audience might feel towards her expressions of Orthodox Jewish religion.

In this chapter I argue that Din Din Aviv's Israeliness allows her to challenge boundaries between the non-Orthodox and Hasidic communities. With her mixed Greek and Polish ethnic ancestries and middle-class urban upbringing in the center of Israel, as well as the jazz and pop music she performs, she belongs to the dominant culture. She nevertheless marks herself ethnically. She established her career within the New Age scene in the nineties, so that she draws on her Greek heritage, her training in drumming and dance from African countries, and the Middle Eastern music of the Jewish ethnic musicians network to create world music that she casts as Israeli through the tropes of melting pot and mosaic. As she now undergoes *hazara betshuva*, she risks alienating non-Orthodox audiences. However, her Shanti persona has paved the way for her move towards Orthodox Judaism. Her New Age spirituality renders it nonthreatening, while her wholesome femininity conforms to non-Orthodox and Orthodox values, allowing her to perform an image of a Jewish Orthodox woman who challenges stereotypical perceptions among non-Orthodox Israelis.

### Israeli Artist

Din Din Aviv has the advantages for creating her career that Dikla lacks. She was born in 1974 in Tel Aviv, the cultural center of Israel. Both her parents are professional entertainers. Her

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<sup>1</sup> January 28, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Stomp is a high-energy contemporary dance troupe that combines dance, music, and theater.

<sup>3</sup> The kalimba is a simplified modern version of the mbira, a lamellaphone widespread in Zimbabwe and neighboring areas of Southern Africa.

father, Moshe Yaakovovitch, or Motzi, is a jazz musician, and her mother, Aliza, is a singer. At age six Aviv performed with her parents on Shirovision, the Children's Song Contest. She attended the Alliance High School, part of the prestigious network of schools operated by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*. She studied at the Israel School of Ballet, sang in the Air Force Entertainment Ensemble, and studied piano, voice, and drums at the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music. Both the *lehaqot tsvaiyot* and the Rimon School have been powerful catalysts for the careers of their graduates, producing networks of musicians who dominate Israeli popular music.

Aviv's ethnicity, class, and region align her with the dominant group, a privileged position that suggests parallels with whiteness in the United States. Ruth Frankenberg defines whiteness as having structural advantage, a standpoint, and being unmarked (1993:1). These criteria are evident in the way Smadar Lavie defines the Ashkenazi hegemony in Israel:

Even as a demographic minority, they control the division of power and privilege in the state... Their correct Social Science name is AHUSALIM (plural). AHUSAL (singular) is a Hebrew acronym for Ashkenazi, *hiloni* (secular), *vatik* (old timer) socialist, and liberal (Kimmerling 2001). In colloquial Hebrew when Israelis say 'Ashkenazi,' they mean AHUSAL. AHUSALIM reject both terms, preferring to call themselves 'Israelis' (2014:2).

In identifying with their national identity instead of an ethnic one Ahusalim take their belonging for granted, similar to the way whiteness, "as a set of normative cultural practices, is visible most clearly to those it definitively excludes and those to whom it does violence. Those who are securely housed within its borders usually do not examine it. The same is true of 'Americanness' in relation to those whom it marginalizes or excludes, and of privileged class attitudes in relation to those who are not privileged" (Frankenberg 1993:228).

I depart from Lavie's definition of the Ashkenazi hegemony as Ahusalim, by focusing on a broader group that includes people of mixed ethnicity who privilege their Ashkenazi heritage. Yehudit Ravitz, for example, represents Israeliness for many people as a member of the "elite" of Israeli rock (Regev 2004). At Blumin's show at Tzavta, an audience member invoked her as "the most Israeli there is" to contrast Blumin's outsider status. Ravitz's father is from Poland, which is Ashkenazi, but her mother is from Egypt, like Dikla's, so that she "can connect to Shai Agnon,<sup>4</sup> and to Yiddishkeit in general, to the Ashkenazi side, and...to Um Kulthum and to get excited by the depth of Arab music and Arab culture."<sup>5</sup> She does not ethnicize herself as Mizrahi, but focuses on her Israeliness, performing it through Euro-American rock music.

Like Ravitz, Aviv has a combination of ethnic heritages that allows her to perform herself as unmarked Ashkenazi. Her father is from Poland and her mother from Greece, and she has a grandmother from Morocco.<sup>6</sup> She was able to perform what Haritaworn (2012) calls the 'happy narrative' of multiracial subjects because she has the privilege of one 'white' parent. Aviv performed jazz and funk with no marked ethnicity. She grew up singing Balkan folksongs with her mother, but did not consider this her own music. While there was no stigma attached to her Greek heritage, as a young musician the folk music aspect of her mother's work may not have

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<sup>4</sup> Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970) was a central figure of modern Hebrew fiction.

<sup>5</sup> Yehudit Ravitz, interview with author, Tel Aviv, May 5, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> At Zappa Aviv was excited to discover that one of the audience members was also named Dina after her Moroccan maternal grandmother.

coincided with her cosmopolitan identity. She also wanted to distinguish herself as an artist, find her own voice: “I wanted to do it alone, you know, I wanted my way. I didn’t feel that I could mix, not just with her, with every person.”<sup>7</sup> Aviv recorded two albums with her mother, including covers of Balkan folksongs on *Alidin* (2000) (an amalgamation of Aliza and Din Din), but kept that music separate from her studies of jazz and funk at Rimon.

### **New Age Jewish Orthodox**

When Aviv did ethnicize her music, she did so through a mix of musics that reinforced her Israeliness, rather than building a persona around her own ethnicity, as the other three artists did. Her interpellation came through her work with Gaya, a world music band that formed in 1997.

I did jazz and funk for many years, and that’s what interested me, and I didn’t think at all that I was ethnic... And suddenly when Gaya opened, and the ethnic opened, it opened. And suddenly I realize that I’m singing, and it’s going up, it’s going up well, and it’s going up interesting, and it’s going up special, because I’m combining the world of jazz and funk with the world of ethnic music.<sup>8</sup>

The way Aviv did not see herself as ethnic reveals her standpoint of whiteness. In Frankenburg’s study of white women in the United States, “cultures were conceived as discrete, bounded spaces, culture was viewed as separate from material life, and some groups of people were considered more ‘cultural’ than others. Hence, many of the women said that they ‘did not have a culture.’” (1993:191). In positioning herself as “non-ethnic,” Aviv situates jazz and funk in opposition to “ethnic” music, ignoring their African American roots and culture.

Gaya, like many world music bands of that time, including Sheva and Shotei Hanevua, combined musics from around the world with pop music.

Gaya’s dynamic expressive sound has its origins in a distinctive blend of the musical cultures of North Africa, Turkey, various Western nations, and the Middle East. Vocals and instrumentation, harmonies and melodies, have all been appropriated from their parent cultures and merged together in a surprisingly powerful and resonant sound that is uniquely moving, and uniquely Gaya.<sup>9</sup>

In this context the band members, many of whom had mixed ethnicities, emphasized their non-Ashkenazi side as their roots. On Sheva’s website, for example, they wrote, “our playing and poetry styles are the fruits of our varied roots. Our parents immigrated to Israel from European and Arab countries, from North Africa and from the Middle East.”<sup>10</sup> They interpreted this mix, including musics unrelated to their heritage, as a fusion of East and West that is Israeli, drawing on the Zionist vision of Israel as a melting pot. The trope of East and West continues to dominate the ethnic music scene despite its problematic simplification. As Brinner suggests, “the binary

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<sup>7</sup> Din Din Aviv, interview with author, Hod Hasharon, April 10, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.israstage.com/Gaya> (accessed May 27, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.sheva.net> (accessed November 6, 2006).

opposition reproduces a trope fundamental to Orientalist perspectives that must still resonate widely given its ubiquity” (2009:221).

Aviv continued to combine ethnic music and pop in her solo work, using a variety of musics for the East part in addition to her own heritage. She explained it through the trope of melting pot, downplaying ethnic specificity. “In another two or three generations we will no longer ask one another where are you from. Where are your parents from, what *eda* are you. What would they say, I’m Greek, Polish, Moroccan, Litvak, Bulgarian, what would he say?... I’m Israeli... I’m from here.”<sup>11</sup> Aviv names the ethnicities of her parents and grandparents, but she does not see her Jewish or middle-class privilege as what allows her to be fully Israeli. This is similar to the way “white American individuals are most able to name those parts of themselves and their daily practices that are least close to the center of power, least included in that which is normative” (Frankenberg 1993:228). It is the opposite of how Dikla reinforces her marginalization through the association of Mizrahim with low class and peripheries. John Hartigan (1999) argues that class is a defining characteristic of how race is understood and experienced, so that Aviv’s privileged class enables her to dismiss ethnicity as irrelevant. In this way whiteness is what Shannon Sullivan (2006) calls an unconscious habit, where its privilege is constitutive of the self, whatever race a particular self may be.

Aviv’s work with Gaya also offered a cultural-spiritual hybridity that worked to create appeal among listeners by promising happiness and wellbeing simply through listening to the music. This was typical of the Israeli New Age scene as a whole, made all the more powerful through a discourse of roots. The scene emerged from new religious movements in the 1970s<sup>12</sup> and proliferated in the 1990s. Communities that combined New Age sensitivities with classic Jewish themes and environmentalism sprang up in the desert (Kaplan 2005). Israeli New Age combines practices such as Buddhist meditation, yoga, tai chi, neo-shamanism, neo-paganism with Judaism,<sup>13</sup> so that it is considered spiritual but not religious (Ruah-Midbar and Klin Oron 2012). The New Age scene in the 1990s was also fueled by the widespread phenomenon of Israelis traveling to India and Thailand for long periods, six months to a year or two, after their army service (Simhai 2000). The phenomenon was so prevalent it formed a subculture in Israel (Halevi 1998).

Part of this subculture was the New Age festivals modeled on the “rainbow” gatherings in the U.S. and Europe that mushroomed throughout the country. Musicians in this scene combined musics from around the world with New Age ideas. They drew on tropes of Jewish and geographical roots, emphasizing a connection to the Land of Israel through the Bible. The musicians were part of the ethnic music scene, but their music was characterized by a popular music aesthetic (Wasserman 2012:xv). “Jamming ‘dance bands’ such as Sheva, Esta, and Gaya, for instance, sound quite different from the instrumental virtuosity and refined orchestration of Bustan Abraham or the love songs of Alei Hazayit” (Brinner 2009:184).

Aviv established her persona as “Shanti princess” within this music scene (Peri 2008b).

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<sup>11</sup> Aviv, interview.

<sup>12</sup> These include scientology, anthroposophy, theosophy, and Jehovah’s Witnesses, as well as Jewish movements such as Baal Teshuva and settlers’ movements, and Christian-Jewish ones such as Messianic Jews (Huss and Werczberger 2014:6).

<sup>13</sup> Some examples are the Jewish Renewal Movement, New Age festivals that take place during Jewish holidays, a Jewish form of Reiki, Hebrew shamanism, Jewish yoga, and neo-kabbalistic groups (Huss and Werczberger 2014).

The term ‘shanti’, which means “peace” or “bliss” in Sanskrit, is often used deridingly by Israelis to describe the New Age movement. It betrays Orientalist leanings in representing Eastern religions as exotic but inferior to Judeo-Christian ones or to secularism. However, many musicians have emerged from that scene to become central figures in Israeli popular music (Hapstein 2013). And while the “hippie” festival phenomenon has died down, New Age culture continues to proliferate and has gradually permeated into mainstream Israeli culture (Ruah-Midbar and Zaidman 2013). The combination of tropes of Israeliness and spirituality that characterize the music from the New Age scene is allowing Aviv today to perform Hasidic Judaism on the secular stage.

While Aviv’s ethnicity is not divisive, she straddles a contentious boundary with her religious identification. In 2008 her husband, drummer and producer Alon Yoffe, underwent *hazara betshuva*, joining the Breslov community, and when I saw her she was moving in that direction as well.<sup>14</sup> Joining the Hasidic community has several implications for her career. The religious dictum *kol beisha erva* means that an ultra-Orthodox woman cannot sing in front of men who are not members of her immediate family, severely restricting her performance opportunities. She is also expected to prioritize raising a family over pursuing a career, and to produce more children than the average for a non-Orthodox family. This means she cannot dedicate her time to recording, promoting, and performing in a way that will continue to advance her career. Aviv delayed the promotion of her second album because of the birth of her second son, and when I saw her she was pregnant with her third child.

These limitations mean that the experience of female artists who undergo *hazara betshuva* is significantly different from that of male artists who become Orthodox. While male artists might stop performing on the Sabbath, their careers are not as strongly impacted by their conversion as women’s are. For example, in an interview with the Banai brothers the focus is on their spiritual journey rather than the logistics of their career. “When Meir and Eviatar Banai talk about Orthodoxy and about their Jewishness they do not think about how it will work out with their music. They understand...[that] the religious world and artistic creation don’t need to compete for dominance, but can make a person more whole” (Orbach 2008a). They assume a continuity to their work, which is very different from the way Naava Bergis describes her experience. “It’s frustrating to be a woman singer in the ultra-Orthodox sector, but it is a price I have to pay. I won’t say it’s easy and that I don’t wish I could put out a disc, but I’m doing it for God. When I stand today on the stage and sing, it’s a stronger feeling. Perhaps things will change. Maybe in five years we will hear women on the radio. In live shows it will never happen” (Ravid 2005). For Bergis her religious commitment comes at the expense of her career.

A female artist who undergoes *hazara betshuva* also faces pressure from the non-Orthodox community. Friction between the ultra-Orthodox community and the non-Orthodox one has been part of Israeli history since the founding of the State, but tensions are increasing as the ultra-Orthodox establishment gains a larger share of power in the Israeli government and imposes increasing restrictions on the society (Efron 2003). In recent years the Orthodox sector has been gaining new strength through a rapidly increasing number of non-Orthodox Israelis undergoing *hazara betshuva*, as well as through immigration and high birth rate. With the growing rift between non-Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox, signs of *hitchazkut* [religious strengthening] on the part of these musicians elicit suspicion and anxiety among non-Orthodox

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<sup>14</sup> By 2014 Aviv underwent *hazara betshuva* fully, joining the Breslov Hasidic sect.

audiences. Interviews often focus on this aspect of their lives. They are particularly apprehensive at losing the women artists, as in this review of Etti Ankri:

Now I find myself wondering: What's going to happen with Etti Ankri? If she is going around like this with her head covered, is it just a matter of time till she stops singing in front of men, or will she stop singing altogether? And then what? We won't have Etti Ankri the singer anymore? Does this slow-but-sure process mean that she too will withdraw into the Orthodox-Haredi world of restrictions and prohibitions and disappear and become mute? (Orbach 2008b).

Another review of Ankri shows how artists who undergo *hazara betshuva* lose some of their non-Orthodox audiences.

Between the songs Ankri didn't get immediate feedback from the audience, every interaction was rather embarrassing. As difficult as it is for me to admit this, I have a feeling that the years did not do too well for Etti Ankri. I'm not alluding to her work itself, but to the fact that the woman mumbled a rather substantial amount of nonsense while she stood on the stage (Shtreimer 2008).

With her Israeliness and Shanti spirituality, Aviv is able to perform Hasidic Judaism without alienating her non-Orthodox audience. Her husband Alon's *hazara betshuva* and Aviv's movement towards it are well known. The topic is raised in most interviews with her after 2008, and several audience members made a point of telling me about it. However, it has not elicited the kind of controversy that Etti Ankri's *hazara betshuva* has. At Aviv's show at Beit Avi Chai a woman said pointedly, "I would never go see Etti Ankri—she has undergone *hazara betshuva*." She was turned off by Ankri's performance of spirituality, but did not seem to regard Aviv's similar performance as problematic. Both Ankri and Aviv affiliate with the Breslovers, a Hasidic sect that emphasizes spirituality through music and dancing. However, Ankri's conversion was more dramatic than Aviv's. After establishing a prominent career as a rock star, she disappeared for a number of years and reemerged with a covered head and religious rhetoric. Aviv's transition, on the other hand, has been smoothed by her Shanti persona.

Through Israeli New age tropes of multiculturalism, roots, and Oneness, Aviv creates Hasidic Judaism that is attractive to non-Orthodox audiences. She invokes these themes in her album *Free Between Worlds* (2008) and the show she mounted to publicize it, "A World within a World," where she presented her ethnic identity as a combination of East and West, and her religious identity as bridging secular and Orthodox worlds. The song that best exemplifies these themes is "My Forefathers," the last track on *My Secrets*. Aviv chose it to represent herself as an artist. She wrote it in 1993, at the beginning of her career, and she wrote the lyrics and music herself, unlike many of her songs that are collaborative efforts. That Aviv was able to use one of her earliest songs as her theme for a show almost 20 years later demonstrates how smooth her transition has been from New Age to *hazara betshuva*.

"My Forefathers" fuses jazz with a mix of ethnic musics, which Aviv explained as her father's jazz and her mother's ethnic music combined in her as a melting pot. At Zappa she introduced it thus:

I...come from a home that is full of colors and hues... My mother comes from the area of world music, my father comes from the area of theater and violin. He played a lot of jazz



for me. From one side I hear [syllables in a foreign language<sup>15</sup>], from the other side I hear [imitates jazz singer]... I have to find something in the middle. And [it's] like Israel, ingathering of the exiles... a treasure of colors and hues. I understand that at some point I have to turn to my forefathers and ask for a prayer.

For her albums and shows Aviv worked with musicians from the Jewish ethnic music network who provide the Middle Eastern color for pop musicians. Her choice of musicians suggests superficiality in the ethnic coloring in her music and its generalized quality. These musicians are also adept at providing music that signals otherness that is palatable to Western ears. Aviv recorded *My Secrets* with Zohar Fresco and Eyal Sela, two central figures in this network (cf. Brinner 2009:185), and Moshe Dabul, who is also the album's producer and is known for his fusion of rock with Middle Eastern music. The 5/8 meter creates a sense of foreignness, while the funk bass line anchors it in Western popular music (fig. 5.1). The underlying repetitive harmonic figure (A - A<sup>+</sup> - A<sup>6</sup> - A<sup>+</sup>) serves as an ostinato for the vocal line, giving Aviv the rhythmic freedom of jazz instead of the rigid formula of a melody line that lines up exactly with the chord changes.<sup>16</sup> The song opens with acoustic guitar and percussion instruments that add ethnic color. Zohar Fresco plays darbuka, frame drum, riqq, and ocean drum, and Alon Yoffe plays drums, djembe, and shakers. These instruments are widespread in the Middle East and Western and Southern Africa, except for ocean drum, which is a contemporary double-sided frame drum with pellets inside.

The figure shows a musical transcription of the opening of the song "My Forefathers" from the album "My Secrets". It is written in 5/8 time. The transcription consists of three staves: percussion, guitar, and bass. The percussion staff shows a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes. The guitar staff features a repetitive harmonic figure consisting of chords in the key of A major. The bass staff provides a steady, rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes.

Fig. 5.1. Transcription of the opening of "My Forefathers" on *My Secrets*, with its mix of ethnic and jazz sounds.

<sup>15</sup> This sounded like her Persian snippet when she told me this same origin story.

<sup>16</sup> I am indebted to Doron Kima for this analysis.

The tonality of the song similarly suggests ethnicity without committing to a particular nationality. The verse is in Mixolydian mode on A (fig. 5.2), a mode common in Israeli popular music as well as pop music in general, distinguished by its unusual minor quality created by a major scale with a lowered seventh degree. Mixolydian is also identical to the Moloch scale used in klezmer music, reflecting Aviv's affinity to Eastern-European Jewish music. The F-natural in the second measure, however, suggests Mixolydian flat 6, a scale used in jazz. The opening chords play with the fifth scale degree in a way that links the two modes (E-F-F#). Raising and lowering a scale degree in half-steps characterizes jazz, akin to blues notes. Aviv uses this same flexibility as a jazz singer when the melody returns in the second verse. In the fifth measure of the melody she sings an A, but in the analogous place in the second verse she changes it to a Bb, heightening the ethnic feel (fig. 5.3).



Fig. 5.2 Mixolydian mode and Mixolydian flat 6 mode on A



Fig. 5.3. Transcription of the verse melody of “My Forefathers” combining jazz and Middle Eastern music

The tonality of the bridge indexes Middle Eastern music more specifically (fig. 5.4). In this situation Middle Eastern music represents roots, rather than Otherness, as it does for Awad and Dikla. The first phrase could be in maqam Hijaz on A, the second Nahawand on A, and the third Kurd on A (fig. 5.5). The way the melody moves through them, however, is not the modulation of Arab music, pivoting and combining tetrachords, but instead Aviv plays with the second and third degrees of the scale like a jazz musician, in the same way she combined the two forms of Mixolydian mode. The coda in Hijaz on A foregrounds the Middle Easternness, enhanced by Sela's zurna, a distinctive loud Turkish reed instrument.

percussion

voice

zurna

bass

Si-ma - ma-ne sa-me-ni - na ma - e - na-yo si-ma na-  
e ni-a - sa ma na na-e - o si - a - ma ne na-e no me-a-na - se

Fig. 5.4. Transcription of the bridge in “My Forefathers” combining jazz and Middle Eastern music.

Fig. 5.5. Maqams Hijaz, Nahawand, and Kurd on A.

The reed sound together with hand percussion suggests Israeliness that has roots in the distant past. Musicians in the New Age music scene interpreted their music as uniquely Israeli through a discourse of roots. The need to connect to the land can be traced back to Zionism. “The Zionists needed to justify their call to lead the Jewish people from the different countries and communities in which they had lived, in some cases, for centuries to a distant and desolate land: the justification was the history and historicity of the Jewish people” (Kaplan 2005:145). The narrative of the Bible is closely tied to place (Hiebert 1996), so that it connects Jews to the Middle East, a Zionist construction that Nur Masalha (2006) critiques as an invented tradition. The trope also appears within the current ethnic music scene, where musicians draw on geographical routes and desert imagery and on ancient Biblical roots as a way to minimize political borders and “play on the longing for the sounds of elsewhere in a non-confrontational manner” (Brinner 2009:294). As Brinner suggests, “these representations of place and time should be understood in the context of various efforts to make sense of the past and exploit it while staking claims in the present” (2009:303).

Aviv drew on the trope of Biblical roots when she explained to me her longtime interest in African drumming and dance.

Listen, we are in Africa... Sinai is Africa... We got the Torah on the continent of Africa... So, listen, when I heard for the first time in my life African music I felt that there is a possibility that in a previous life I was African... I'm crazy about it... I also feel that it really talks to us. It's the desert... It's very close. I think that 'and the people shall go forth' was in Africa... We crossed the Red Sea, still Africa. Like it strengthens me even more, like it is ours, it is us. It does belong... I surprised myself when I got it lately. I didn't get it until now.<sup>17</sup>

Aviv's reply reflects the way she approaches the music, invoking an Africa that is an imagined construct, not accounting for West Africa or Sub-Saharan Africa that are remote from the Sinai or the desert. Her version of Africa, however, reflects a discourse of Israeliness within the ethnic music scene, where musicians as well as publicists and critics explain the mixing of musical traditions in terms of "Israel's location at the intersection of Asia, Africa, and Europe... with expressions such as 'crossroads of the Middle East,' 'navel of the world,' and 'cradle of civilization' that point to the ancient roots of local culture and to earlier configurations of space and cultural identity" (Brinner 2009:298). In this way musicians invoke a vision of the past that is circumscribed, in the sense that Fabian (1983) describes, in order to create their current identity. Aviv also used the metaphor of roots to make the transition from New Age to Hasidic Judaism: "At the moment, from my point of view, coming closer to the root is in Judaism." The Bible offers a way to link the two kinds of roots. New Age musicians, such as the members of Sheva, drew on this as well: "Many of the texts of the group are drawn from Jewish sources in an attempt to find and renew the tie between the current reality and the rich Jewish tradition and heritage."<sup>18</sup>

The power of the trope of Biblical roots to establish Israeliness is evident in the wording of the award Aviv received from the Minister of Culture as Singer of the Year in the category of Hebrew songs. The members of the prize committee wrote:

Din Din Aviv is a singer with a very special ethnic Israeli color that comes across in the songs she sings, some of which she also wrote. Her skills as a performer and the colorfulness of her voice evoke in the listener local aromas with a Canaanite and Biblical feel, yet she also naturally belongs to artists in the category of world music, and this quality of her performance comes across in her stage shows as well (Yodilovitch 2007).

A review of *Free between Worlds* similarly shows Aviv's status as Israeli folk hero.

If Din Din Aviv never sang again, she'd still own a potent slice of Israeli folklore. That's her dulcet tones filling the joyous choruses of the original version of "Yachad (Shir l'ahava)," the country's feel-good, new age anthem she recorded as a member of Gaya in the late 1990s. A staple of end-of-year school assemblies, as well as Jewish federation fundraising drives and Birthright mega-events, the song has become a national standard, combining Kumbaya-friendly ethnic music, where East meets West on a sandy shoreline filled with love and coexistence (Brinn 2010).

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<sup>17</sup> Aviv, interview.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.sheva.net> (accessed November 6, 2006).

This feel-good aspect of Aviv's music and persona has smoothed her way as she ventures into the contentious territory of religion.

Aviv's move to Hasidic Judaism was also paved by her New Age spirituality, particularly her eco-spirituality. An important component of New Age thinking is harmonizing with nature (Clark 1992). As Amir Pais, of the band Sheva said, "prayer and nature are strong and fundamental elements of our creative life."<sup>19</sup> This eco-spirituality is evident in the cover art of many New Age music albums, most of which depict water, sky or outer space. Many include 'cosmic orbs' such as the sun and moon (Garneau 1987:63). The artwork on Aviv's albums draws on this imagery of nature. In *My Secrets* she is depicted in a field (fig. 5.6). The CD booklet is illustrated with pictures of tree branches, wood chips, and birds. Aviv's connection to nature is heightened by her femininity, recalling Wiccan religion and fertility goddesses, a reference to neo-Paganism that is strengthened by her drumming. The link is clearer when compared to the album covers of Mosh Ben-Ari — the lead singer of Sheva who went on to have a successful solo career and has performed with Aviv — which depict stark desert scenes and towns. In contrast, the Israeliness Aviv imagines in describing her music suggests lushness: "we merge, we connect the worlds, both the Land of Israel, and the pop music, and also the ethnicity and the authenticity and the ballad, the earth, the smell and the taste of the earth."<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 5.6. The artwork on *My Secrets* employs the nature imagery of New Age discourse.

In the artwork for *Free Between Worlds* Aviv is also posed in nature, but here her symbolism can be interpreted both through New Age eco-spirituality and Hasidic Judaism. Instead of green fields, she is posed next to, or bathing in, water, symbolizing her rebirth (fig. 5.7). In Jewish mystical interpretation of the Bible water symbolizes the presence of God and is a feminine representation connected to birth and life (Milgram 2005). The picture is also a reference to the *mikveh*, or ritual bath that is central to Orthodox Jewish practice and is used in purification rituals and conversion. Aviv's positioning on the edge of the water illustrates her

<sup>19</sup> Amir Paiss, e-mail message to author, October 20, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Aviv, interview.

liminality. The full moon is another such symbol. It is prominent in the photographs, and the CD itself is printed with a photograph to look like a full moon. Moons and orbs are common in New Age imagery. It also signifies the lunar calendar on which Judaism is based. In Judaism the moon is significant for women, who are forbidden to work on the new moon of each month, or Rosh Chodesh (Kosofsky 2004). The night setting is also linked to the Orthodox Jewish custom that women immerse in the *mikveh* only after nightfall.



Fig. 5.7. The album artwork for *Free Between Worlds* combines New Age nature imagery and symbols of Jewish spirituality.

The artwork also plays with the metaphor of roots that connects nature and spirituality. Inside the booklet and on the back of the CD is a photograph of the base of a tree, focusing on its roots. One audience member summed up the significance of roots to Aviv's persona: "I like that she has roots... closeness to nature and earth. She goes from underneath, not from above." In both *My Secrets* and *Free Between Worlds* the artwork is overlaid with symbols of sacred geometry that also connect New Age thinking and Hasidic Judaism. The Seed of Life has interlocking circles that the New Age community interpreted as representing the six days of creation in Judeo-Christian belief, while the Star Tetrahedron is made up of interlocking triangles symbolizing spirit and matter, and is also the Star of David in Judaism.

The lyrics to "My Forefathers" show the same kind of connection of New Age and Hasidic Judaism. Rather than address an earth mother or goddess typical of New Age eco-spirituality, Aviv addresses her forefathers, the Biblical figures of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are often invoked in Jewish prayers. As a woman she has to negotiate tradition with change in order to find a place for herself within Judaism as a patriarchal religion.

Oh my forefathers reveal to me my melodies  
Oh my forefathers reveal to me my melodies  
Reveal to me my melodies  
Reveal to me my names  
Reveal to me my children, forefathers.

Oh my forefathers  
Bless me in my children  
Oh my children  
God who hears my prayers  
The one who hears my prayers  
The one who sees my children  
Bless my loved ones  
My forefathers  
Bless me in my children  
Bless my lands  
Play my melodies my forefathers

Oh my forefathers reveal to me my melodies  
Oh my forefathers reveal to me my melodies

When the body flies  
Wants to look at the world  
As from the view of a bird  
To smell every flower  
Every tree  
To sit on every branch  
Not to interfere in anything  
Just to feel the going around  
The magic, the rustling

“And now if I have found favor in your eyes  
Let me know your ways.”<sup>21</sup>

“Lord heal me.”<sup>22</sup>

“May God make you at the head and may you be only at the top.”<sup>23</sup>

At the end of the song she quotes three verses from the Bible. However, she recites them in rapid speech, so that they do not come across as preaching, in contrast to Etti Ankri’s sermons during her shows, which were as long as 15 minutes. Aviv’s references to Jewish prayer and Bible quotations means that she can use her old repertoire to express her new religious affiliation, while Ankri had to add words to her previous hits so that she could continue to perform them.

The way Aviv performed “My Forefathers” also illustrates how she constitutes her Hasidic Judaism through her New Age persona. At Zappa she expanded the form to allow for more improvisation, extending it from 4’35” on the recording (fig. 5.8) to 6’25” (fig. 5.9) by

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<sup>21</sup> “Moses to God: If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you” (Exodus 33:13).

<sup>22</sup> So Moses cried out to the Lord, “Please, God, heal her!” (Numbers 12:13).

<sup>23</sup> “The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom” (Deuteronomy 28:13).

adding an extra instrumental bridge section and solos. After the clarinet solo she put down her djembe and recited the last verse as if speaking to God in prayer: “I want to look at the world as from a bird’s eye view, to smell every flower, to sit on every leaf, not to get involved in anything. Just to feel the magic, the fluttering. And I haven’t yet found grace in your eyes.” She bent her body forwards and backwards, a gesture reminiscent of the *davening*, or fervent prayer of men in the synagogue. The movement potentially transgresses gender boundaries, but at a secular venue like Zappa it could equally be read as rocking out and therefore deemed acceptable. She ended the last “avotai” looking upwards, a theatrical gesture of spirituality that was nevertheless subtle enough to appear genuine.

Intro            verse            scat            verse            bridge            verse speech            coda  
 4 4 4 4 | 8 8 8 8 | 8 8 | 8 8 8 8 ||: 7 7 7 :|| 4 | 8 8 | 8 8 | 8 8 8 6 10 10 ||  
                   a a b b                    a a b b            c c' c"                    a a

Fig. 5.8. Form of “My Forefathers” on My Secrets

Intro            verse            bridge            verse            scat                    verse            bridge            solos  
 4 4 4 | 8 8 ||: 7 7 7 :|| 4 | 8 8 | 8 8 | 8 8 | 8 8 8 8 ||: 7 7 7 :||: 8 (x8) :||  
                   a a            c c' c"                    a a b b                    a a b b            c c' c"  
  
 speech            coda  
 ||: 8 (x5) :|| 8 8 8 8 10 ||

Fig. 5.9. Form of “My Forefathers” at Zappa, extended for improvisation.

In introducing “My Forefathers” at Beit Avi Chai,<sup>24</sup> Aviv applied the trope of melting pot to her dilemma of religious divisions.

I spoke about my parents, but I didn’t speak about how in my eyes it’s a lot like the Land of Israel. How we here are actually a country of *kibbutz galuyot*... How many colors there are here, and how many cultures, and how many strands of Orthodox, seculars, Haredim, Breslov, Habad, whatever you want... And go and build a nation. And go and build a way. And I always say, wait a minute, when the Messiah comes, will they believe him at all? I hope so. I think that when he comes they will believe him because there is no other option.

Aviv rarely proselytized onstage, and generally kept patter to a minimum in the shows I attended. However, this show was part of the “Coming Home” series, where she was encouraged to talk about herself. As part of Beit Avi Chai’s mission to promote Jewish-Israeli culture, the “Coming Home” series presents artists returning to their roots. The program reads: “The best artists of Israeli music return to the source of their inspiration from their childhood through stories, songs, and music the music that accompanied them in different periods in their lives and influenced their work.” Through the idea of Oneness Aviv put a feel-good spin on both ethnic and religious multiculturalism.

<sup>24</sup> December 18, 2010.



## Generalized Ethnicity

Aviv's music expresses multicultural Oneness through generalizing and blending of musical traditions. While Awad and Dikla emphasize hybridity as their selling point, Aviv uses the discourse of melting pot. She glorifies the mixing of her ethnicities in such a way that "the embrace of the mixed body as the icon of the future enables a forgetting of those features of 'the past'" (Haritaworn 2012:113). The melting pot metaphor, however, does not capture what her music is doing. Popularized by Israel Zangwill's early 20<sup>th</sup>-century play *The Melting-Pot*, the concept was influential in shaping American discourse on immigration and ethnicity, even as it was contested. "What emerged in these debates were flexible definitions and redefinitions of melting-pot America and attacks from the outside which challenged the term while frequently reaffirming the imagery" (Sollors 1986:74). Some critics today contend that the melting pot became a project of homogenization. "Despite its idyllic image, the melting pot concept was rooted in a strong fear and distrust of cultural pluralism, a belief in the supremacy of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant American culture, and an investment in the attainment of cultural homogeneity through processes of coerced assimilation" (Montuori and Stephenson 2013:186). It could be argued that a similar process took place in Israel by Ashkenazi Zionists (Herzog 1988:141).

However, in Israel, as in the U.S. immigrants did not lose their identity. "As the groups were transformed by influences in American society, stripped of their original attributes, they were recreated as something new, but still as identifiable groups" (Glazer and Moynihan 1963:13). Just as in the U.S. artists are challenging the melting pot model of assimilation through hybridity (Kuo 2005:40), so the artists in this dissertation are reimagining Israeliness to accommodate difference. Aviv too stresses diversity, but as a mosaic of ethnicities. The trope of mosaic is often used interchangeably with melting pot, but its effect is actually the opposite. "As a metaphor for cultural diversity, the mosaic contradicts the various types of homogeneity that the state has encouraged with its melting pot approach to the absorption of immigrants, its policy of Europeanization of immigrants from 'non-Western' countries, and its ongoing disregard for the Israeli Arab minority as a source of difference" (Brinner 2009:310).

On *My Secrets* there are Afro-Brazilian congas, log drum, and agogô bells, South Indian frame kanjira, bansour flute, and sitar, Moroccan zills, Greek bouzouki, Bedouin rabab, Irish penny whistle, Tibetan bowls, and pantam.<sup>25</sup> The combination creates an ethnic sound that does not index any particular tradition, much as the Indian kurtu and vest Aviv wears in the album artwork does not affiliate her with India. In playing such a wide variety of instruments, the musicians do not focus on learning and recreating a particular musical tradition, but rather learn the instrument superficially. Aviv's signature drumming and dance suggest this same approach to non-Western musical traditions by drawing from different regions in Africa. This music has the advantage of being more exotic for some than her Greek heritage, as attested by the experience of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel, particularly musicians (Ben-Eliezer 2008).

Aviv's choice of music also reflects New Age fascination with "tribal" cultures. Musicians in the Israeli New Age scene often use this term to describe their use of certain instruments and sounds. Members of the band Sheva described their music as "world music that combines Mediterranean rhythms from the Jewish and Arab tradition together with rhythms from

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<sup>25</sup> Pantam is the name under which the Hang is marketed in Israel. Felix Rohner and Sabina Schärer invented it for PANArt in 2000. It is an idiophone, like a steel drum or 'pan,' modeled on that instrument as well as gongs, gamelan, ghatam, drums and bells.

tribal cultures, combined with a contemporary sound.”<sup>26</sup> Scholarship on New Agers’ fascination with indigenous societies points out how they romanticize them, especially their environmental ethics (Prince and Riches 2000:216), evident in rhetoric that emphasizes “the tribal, the primal, the primitive—on the regaining of the lost” (St. John 2004:295). While some scholars focus on parallels between tribal cultures and New Age communities (Aldred 2000; Prince and Riches 2000), others critique New Agers’ appropriation (Welch 2002) and fetishization (Aldred 2000) of indigenous culture.

Aviv’s performance of “African” music is a generalized reference rather than an attempt at authentic reproduction of a musical tradition. It does not index the immigrant communities from Ethiopia or Sudan in Israel as the music of Idan Raichel and Shlomo Gronich does when they work specifically with Ethiopian musicians. Instead Aviv’s general “Africanness” reflects her background in the New Age scene and the world music scene more generally. Part of this generalization is her playing of two instruments associated with very distinct regions, the djembe from Western Africa, and the kalimba based on Southern African instruments. Aviv’s djembe playing further reflects the globalization of the instrument. “The *djembé* can be seen/heard played in a host of musical genres from Irish fiddle music (jigs and reels) to American rock and pop bands. The reason that it is so versatile is that it contains, within one instrument, the sonic capabilities of many drums combined” (Flaig 2010:4). “The combination of bare handed playing technique and a tight drumhead contributes to a mystique that has surrounded the *djembé* outside of Africa” (Charry 2000:195).

Within the globalized study of the instrument too, Aviv is removed from the source. Although there are communities of Western students studying with Guinean djembefolas, who strive for “authentic” repertoire, history, and culture (Flaig 2010), Aviv did not learn djembe through them. Instead she studied djembe with Ori Naveh, an Israeli musician who plays a wide variety of percussion instruments in world music ensembles, removing her one step further from the original culture of the instrument. She also did not mention that both her djembe and dancing are from Guinea. She studied dance with Guinean teacher Aisha Diallo, who worked in the African national ballet troupes that were instrumental in making Guinea the “central locus for the launch of the *djembé* into the world of professional music” (Flaig 2010:6). Unlike djembefolas who specialize in one instrument, Aviv studied several percussion instruments, reflecting Naveh’s teaching.

Aviv’s playing of the kalimba is similarly a Westernized version of a musical tradition, this time from Southern Africa. The kalimba is a modern instrument whose diatonic tuning made it particularly adaptable for Western music, so that in the 1960s it enjoyed worldwide popularity and was used by pop bands. In opening her show “A World within a World” with this instrument, Aviv invokes Africanness as it is circulated in Western pop and art music.

This same approach of generalizing and mixing musical traditions is evident in Aviv’s trademark dancing. She choreographed “A World within a World” together with Yael Muller of the dance troupe Mayumana. As she described, “I gave Yael only directions, and she really took it and finalized them... It’s modern, it’s African mostly, it’s Greek... African a bit of belly like that, you know, nothing much. We combined. Because it’s a world within a world, and you can. In world music everything is possible. It’s like jazz in ethnic scales.”<sup>27</sup> This mixing was exemplified in the song “Meanings,” where an added instrumental break allowed her to

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.sheva.net> (accessed November 6, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Aviv, interview.

incorporate more dancing into the show (fig. 5.10). The choreographed moves she danced with Muller included her African dance steps. The music for the break was also a combination of African and non-African elements. The meter shifts from the 4/4 of the original song into a complex meter and fast tempo common in West African music, while the melody suggests an Irish jig. The riff on a blues scale, together with the instrumentation of saxophone and electric guitar, further render the component parts unidentifiable.



Fig. 5.10. Transcription of instrumental break added to “Meanings” in the show “A World within a World,” allowing for more dancing

Aviv’s generalizing and blending means that her music and dance can be interpreted in different ways. As Kheshti (2015) suggests, consumers of world music configure the othered bodies they imagine through sound in ways that are meaningful to them, as part of constituting themselves as listening subjects. One example of this process is Aviv’s signature move of spinning. In the artwork for *My Secrets* there is a picture of her whirling, seen from above, with her hair and full skirt swirling around. In this context it could be a reference to Sufi religion and whirling Dervishes, i.e., as part of her New Age spirituality. When I saw Aviv perform this move at her mother’s show at Café Yaffo,<sup>28</sup> it became part of her Balkan heritage. Aviv introduced the song in which she performed it as Georgian, and the two women sprinkled confetti as they twirled around. They also referred to the confetti as “the Georgian” while they were setting up for the show. In “A World within a World,” the move took the guise of a Greek dance step when Aviv used it for her dance solo during the Greek folksong “Ay de Tomolono.”

The same multiplicity of interpretations is evident in Aviv’s scat singing as well. Trained as a jazz singer, she loves to improvise vocally, which distinguishes her from other singers of pop music. One audience member at Zappa singled out this aspect of her persona in talking about her: “We also liked the gibberish, the language she created. Her vocables on ‘how good I will feel’... it’s in Amharic?” The audience member is referring to the vocables in the chorus of “My Secrets,” the song described in the opening vignette: “Sekinamo, aliade, yamaya diodioay.” Amharic is the language Israelis generally attribute to all Ethiopians living in Israel, considering them the most exotic of the immigrants. Amharic, however, is actually a Semitic language, much

<sup>28</sup> April 28, 2011.

closer to Hebrew than most ‘African languages’. The way the audience member draws a connection between gibberish and Amharic reveals a wider discourse of exoticization and even racism towards immigrants from Ethiopia and Sudan.

I suggest, however, that Aviv’s scatting reflects her background in New Age world music, drawing on generalized markers of Native American culture. An example is the song “Meanings,” which Aviv wrote together with Yael Naim and Dona Ben-Yehuda. The subject of the lyrics, the difficulty of trying to express oneself, gives Aviv an opportunity to incorporate her scatting.

My words don’t always come out [m.]<sup>29</sup>  
A bit scrambled.  
My words don’t always come out [f.]  
A bit scrambled.  
With mistakes [f.] and also with mistakes [m.]  
With errors [f.] and also with errors [m.]  
My words don’t come at all.  
Only nonsense murmurs trickles.  
Talalo amalo alelu  
Alaley amalo aliyay  
What do you care, so talk nonsense!  
You do it beautifully, sing for me!

Meanings are hidden inside you.  
Meanings  
Meanings trickle into the sounds.  
They fall in between my words.

All of me, what I am is  
Amaloalay yamama leliyoay  
Anyone can understand what I am  
Or what he is  
Yamalo alay yamamalea yamay  
Everyone wants to be understood  
Sounds can explain by themselves  
Without words, without words

Meanings are hidden inside you.  
Meanings  
Meanings trickle into the sounds.  
They fall in between my words.  
Meanings are hidden inside you.

Meanings, meanings  
If you look, want,

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<sup>29</sup> In Hebrew all nouns have a gender. There is no particular logic to this, so that one of the challenges of learning the language is memorizing the correct gender for each noun.

Maybe you'll find and bring to them [meaning].

At Zappa she expanded this opportunity to scat with an additional chorus of improvised vocables after the second dance break.

Omayomay, omayomay, omayomay  
Heyaleya, heyyaleya  
Sinemama hoaleya  
Sinemamame loa loaleya  
Seyaleya, seyaleya  
Saptiba siba badea nana  
Sinemoma loalaya loaleya  
Heyaleya, heyaleya

The line “Saptiba siba badea nana” sounds like bebop scat. However, “heyaleya” sound more like the vocables used in Native American songs, reflecting Aviv’s New Age background, with the shift in the nineties towards shamanism and American Indian spirituality (Lewis and Melton 1992:10). Critics, however, rarely mention Native American references when discussing Otherness in music, instead focusing on traditions that are more culturally prominent in Israel, such as Yemenite, Ethiopian, or Arab.

Aviv’s scatting also invites a Jewish interpretation. Within traditional Judaism, Hasidic Jews use wordless tunes, or *nigunim*, to reach spiritual ecstasy. Etti Ankri uses nonsense syllables in her shows as part of her sermons. At the Confederation House in Jerusalem<sup>30</sup> she gave a sermon about how this sort of speech is a way to resolve or avoid domestic arguments. Aviv performs the connection less explicitly, but her singing does reach a climax in intensity when she scats together with the band during instrumental breaks.

In “A World within a World” Aviv used her scatting to talk about her ethnic identity, portraying herself as a microcosm of the Israeli melting pot. At Beit Avi Chai she explained it as her own adaptation of her mother’s work, a native Israeli amalgamating immigrant cultures as part of the process of *kibbutz galuyot*. Aviv spoke about how she grew up watching her mother perform folksongs for weddings and parties.

My mother used to sing a lot in Turkish, in Persian, in Bukharan, in Greek. And as a girl I remember myself trying to imitate her. And in Persian I hear “*abeda naichka kuri kachko leka anyo*,” all sorts of things like this. Or *arkadash* in Turkish “*yubizana ben gelezini softu*,” like these. In Polish it’s “*a Yiddishe mamme*”... like more Hasidic... Or “*in Salonike mume gali ftocho mana*,” this is in Greek. In short, I can go on for an hour to give you examples, someone says something, Georgia, whatever he wants, Bukhara, I have all the range inside me. But as a girl I didn’t understand and I didn’t know how to pronounce these things. And as a girl there became for me this sort of world of gibberish<sup>31</sup> actually. Because I used to imitate mom in gibberish, just in shapes... I didn’t understand the meanings, I didn’t understand anything. And suddenly I discovered actually that from this came a world for me, so sweet, of everything mixed together there.

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<sup>30</sup> March 10, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Aviv used the English word “gibberish” to describe what she heard.

While Aliza recreated each song faithfully in order to please the different audiences, Din Din lumps them all together. As she described to me, “In her weddings they would think she was Persian, the Georgians thought she was Bukharan or Georgian, she sounds Bukharan when she sings Bukharan... So every time she would change. Now she would learn the accents. She would learn the stories behind the songs. And she would know the dances of the dancer.”<sup>32</sup> Although she knows many of the folksongs her mother sings and regularly performed them with her, Aviv emphasizes the mixing of the languages and cultures. Doing so allows her to distinguish her own persona as a pop artist from that of her mother as a folk singer. With the story Aviv also presents her ethnic heritage through her experience as an Israeli-born child processing the polyethnic market that her mother needed to serve.

On the one hand, Aviv’s identity as a product of the Israeli melting pot is similar to that of people of mixed race who have unique patterns of identity formation that are distinct from their parents (Mengel 2001). Mosh Ben-Ari expressed a view similar to Aviv’s: “all the beauty is in the mix...I’m a quarter Russian, a quarter Yemenite and half Iraqi. I can’t suppress my grandmother and emphasize my grandfather” (Kohavi 2009c). Unlike Asian-Americans, however, they do not create a panethnic identity as a political alliance, since there is no tension around her mixedness. They are not contending with the color line that underlies discourses of mixed race in the U.S. (Small 2001). This contradicts Khazzoom’s assertion that the Ashkenazi/Mizrahi division operates like the white/black one in the U.S., which would suggest Ahusalim versus Mizrahim. Instead, Aviv supports the paradigm of mixed Ashkenazi/Mizrahi subjects belonging to the dominant group through their middle-class status. They are most like middle-class metropolitan subjects in Britain, where “increasingly inclusive and race-neutral nationality, as British, is a central part of [their] experiences” (Aspinall and Song 2013:185). In this way their mixedness reinforces their Israeliness.

### **Wholesome Femininity**

With her Shanti persona and normative image, Aviv represents a version of Israeliness that is wholesome. As a woman at Zappa described her, “She is ‘old-school Israeli,’ represents old Israel, simpler, respected.” Aviv’s cameo on *Exposed* (Saar 2008a) demonstrates this image. During a special broadcast for Independence Day she performs at an army base in the south for border patrol soldiers to raise their morale. Pregnant, dressed in a flowing colorful top, she sits playing a small frame drum, accompanied by Yoni Embar on guitar, singing “Only Life Takes Me” by Leah Shabat, a veteran singer. This scene contrasts with the one of Mira Awad on *Exposed*. Both women portray heteronormative femininity, as read through the same discourse of gender, but Aviv’s image foregrounds her domesticity, while Awad’s appearance highlights issues of racism.

Aviv’s performance of gender is attractive for non-Orthodox audiences while conforming to Orthodox Jewish norms. Male artists who undergo *hazara betshuva* do not have to change their dress significantly. Female artists, on the other hand, must negotiate the competing demands of sexiness in pop music and modesty in Orthodox Judaism. Aviv, however, could easily adapt her loose fitting Shanti costumes to the Orthodox Jewish requirement of women to cover shoulders, arms and legs. They also accommodate the multiple pregnancies she has had over the course of her career. She told me that the flowing sleeves are particularly important to her as part of the movement she creates in her dancing, showing how she uses her body as an

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<sup>32</sup> Aviv, interview.

instrument of spirituality rather than an object for the male gaze. Her costume is not typical of Hasidic women, but instead reflects the multicultural appropriation in her music in its resemblance to a Japanese kimono, adapted through a distinctly non-Japanese, almost 1960s psychedelic print.

Although Aviv avoids seductiveness in her own dress and manner, in “A World within a World” she provided the element of sex appeal by flanking herself with two young, thin women, Yael Muller and Mina Mari (fig. 5.11). With their chic disheveled hairdos, figure-hugging black clothes, and leather jewelry, they present a Bohemian image that speaks to a young, hip audience. In including the two women she subscribed to dominant images of beauty, using other women’s bodies to achieve it. The two women, however, also play musical instruments, Muller on cajón and Mari on accordion, which mitigates their objectification by according them the status of artists.



*Fig. 5.11. This publicity photo for “A World within a World” shows how Aviv maintains modesty while supplying sex appeal with two backup artists.*

Aviv’s use of head covering is symbolically significant, since in some forms of Orthodox Judaism women must keep their hair covered, though the degree and style differs among sects. While men keep their head covered too, it does not contrast as sharply with non-Orthodox dress. For example, Amir Benayoun sometimes wears a baseball cap over his *kippa*, blurring that visual marker. In contrast, when Etti Ankri donned a headscarf it was a particular source of discontent for her fans. The audience member I overheard at her show at the University of Virginia was bemoaning the disappearance of the long wild locks that were her trademark and that are no longer visible.<sup>33</sup> Aviv, on the other hand, creates a gradual transition with her head covering, sometimes wearing her hair wrapped in a scarf, and at other times wearing it loose (fig. 5.12). Performing this symbolic gesture of liminality in her everyday life garnered mention in an interview (Giladi 2011), and it is significant on stage too. In “A World within a World” she

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<sup>33</sup> In a 2015 interview Aviv talked about how hard it was for her to walk on stage with the full head covering, the ultimate symbol of joining the Breslovers (Cohen 2015).

began with her hair tied up in a scarf that resembled the traditional *mitpachat* [scarf or kerchief] but did not cover her hair entirely. Halfway through the show she removed the scarf, letting her long hair swirl around her dramatically as she danced, enhancing her signature whirling image.



*Fig. 5.12. In this publicity photo for her single “The White Dove” Aviv wears her hair loose, identifying with the non-Hasidic world.*

One song that exemplifies how Aviv’s gendered performance of religion attracts different audiences is “Not a Word.” The lyrics, written by Hadar Galron, describe the intimacy of a romantic relationship, a topic that is appropriate for pop music more broadly.

Not a word  
Because when I am with you I no longer need words  
Not a word  
Because in your embrace I will hear all the stories  
Give me your shoulder, I will lay my head down and wrap myself  
In your endless tranquility  
Not another word please  
Not another word

Not another word  
Because when I am with you I no longer need words  
Not another word  
Because in your look all secrets are revealed  
Give me your shoulder, I will lay my head  
In your tranquility  
I will find my place  
Not another word please  
Not another word



And if I am sad, don't ask questions  
 There isn't always an answer, and words betray  
 Kiss me through the tears and don't let go  
 Because in your touch, in your soul, I will find healing

The text is about a relationship between two people, where I interpret the man as the empathetic one. But Aviv characterized the intimacy as something particularly feminine, describing it as “This place of...the woman, the place of warmth, the place of understanding, of softness.”<sup>34</sup> Attributing the softness to a woman's sphere echoes the defined gender roles in Orthodox Judaism.

The music reinforces this softness and intimacy. The texture of the opening phrase is open and quiet, piano chords in slow half-notes. Ethnic percussion (jug, pantam, kashishi, and tambourine) is mixed into the sound so that it is barely discernible, but adds softness to the rock band sound. The form is simple and repetitive (A A B A B B A), enhancing the intimacy by making it accessible. Within the sections there is considerable repetition too, each one divided into four similar phrases (fig. 5.13). This simplicity of form also makes the song fitting for mainstream radio, unlike the more complex form of the songs Aviv wrote, which reflect her training in jazz.

Fig. 5.13. Transcription of the A section of “Not a Word,” with its repetitive melodic cells.

“Not a Word” contains no references to spirituality or religion, so that it was popular enough to make it to the top ten on the radio charts, in contrast to the limited exposure of her overtly spiritual songs. The music video similarly works for a broad audience.<sup>35</sup> It shows Aviv and her husband working together in the studio, portraying the intimacy of their relationship in their relaxed poses and natural appearance. By portraying herself in a way that is not seductive, Aviv can continue to make this video available to audiences, unlike Ankri, most of whose images have been removed from the Internet.

The video also includes images of domestic bliss, with vignettes of Din Din and Alon at home with their children. Although these images speak to heteronormativity within a dominant discourse of gender that values that, such scenes of home life are unusual for a music video. They are attractive because they portray the value placed on family and children in Israeli society. Many women in Israel stay home to raise a family rather than pursue a career, and they are

<sup>34</sup> Aviv, interview.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mX68pT4tmBg> (accessed July 11, 2012).

expected to have multiple children. The average number of children for Israeli women in 2014 was three, compared to 1.7 among developed nations, or the world average of 2.5.<sup>36</sup> The norm of raising families is more pronounced in the ultra-Orthodox community, where it is part of the belief system, reaching a peak of 7.5 children per woman in 2002-2005. Although women in the ultra-Orthodox community work to support the family, the old hierarchies of women as homemakers and men as religious scholars are still reinforced by public representations and interpretations (Blumen 2007).

Pregnancy has been part of Aviv's persona for much of her solo career, contributing to her wholesome femininity. Journalists have singled it out as a source of inspiration: "Giving birth and being completely responsible for someone else's life has helped Aviv along her path to self-discovery" (Davis 2006). Aviv expressed the same sentiment when asked about her second album: "The pregnancy seeped into the work on the album. When I'm pregnant I have self-confidence in the good sense, I am more open, and the singing gets to a different place and it's good" (Rubin 2008). Rock critic Kutner summed it up in the title of his article about her fourth album: "Din Din Aviv: brings out an album for each child" (Kutner 2012).

While her portrayal of family and intimacy in "Not a Word" is attractive to non-Orthodox audiences, for Aviv it is strongly linked to her religious observance, representing how she negotiates between her non-Hasidic lifestyle and her husband's Hasidic one. "It's a personal and complex daily reality that is not black and white. You have to decide that whatever happens, you find a way to continue onwards together and not for a minute lose the feeling of mutual respect, and it seems Alon and I are managing to do this" (Peri 2008b). At Beit Avi Chai she used "Not a Word" to talk about her *hazara betshuva*. "My husband underwent *hazara betshuva*—fully. And I, you can see, am on the way. I'm still asking. I'm still afraid to get answers, or to hear them in their fullness, and to follow the laws and scriptures. It's still too big for me. But with God's help, if He wants, maybe it will happen." In this way Aviv uses an entirely secular song to talk about one of the most important themes in *Free Between Worlds*, her movement from the non-Orthodox world to the Hasidic one. In undertaking this journey as a woman she inevitably pushes boundaries. She does this, however, not only by virtue of being who she is, but intentionally as well.

### **New Jewish Orthodox Femininity**

Aviv actively tries to bridge the non-Orthodox and Hasidic communities through her music, as demonstrated by the title *Free between Worlds*. *Hozrim betshuva* are creating their own kind of Judaism separate from established Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox groups. As Erez Lev-Ari, a male singer-songwriter, described himself, "I keep mitzvot, I am kind of *hozer betshuva*, but not in the usual way. I think I am simply a Jew" (Gordon 2008). Creating a place for herself is more challenging for Aviv. She faces pressure to join the Orthodox community that her husband did, as she quotes him, "Choose already! You are not free between worlds, you are imprisoned between them" (Giladi 2011). She also has to circumvent the injunction *kol beisha erva*.

Our job is to create another interpretation of Judaism. To give another expression, another dimension, another color, another hue, another shape. If this counts as sinning for

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<sup>36</sup> Liora Bowers, "Family Structure and Well-Being across Israel's Diverse Population," Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel (August 2014).

someone, if it hurts someone, then he can choose not to listen, not to watch. He can choose not to come [to the show], and that's fine... Judaism is all about working on proportions... Each person at his own level... One person can hear a woman sing, another can't. He knows he is sinning. One says, I have [spiritual] tools [to resist temptation], I can face a woman's voice.<sup>37</sup>

Aviv sees it as her mission to continue singing for mixed audiences. "I still believe I am a bridge. I don't know if I'll leave mixed audiences so quickly. It's important to me, because I feel that I might have the ability to move something there" (Giladi 2011). Aviv draws on a metaphor from hybridity discourse to foreground her liminal identity. Her goal is particularly important because of the growing rift between the ultra-Orthodox sect and the rest of Israeli society, as her husband's words suggest. In a situation fraught with tension, boundaries tend to be even more strongly delineated.

Aviv also bridges the communities through her New Age femininity. She told a reporter, "Our sound is full of women's voices and harmonies; it's joyous" (Brinn 2010). She choreographed "A World with in a World" for three women singing and dancing center stage. At Zappa Aviv's mother took the place of Mina Mari. Yael, Din Din, and Aliza sat in a row, drumming energetically on cajón, djembe, and darbuka, and then danced coordinated choreography together (fig. 5.14). It was a powerful image, very different from the lone woman singer surrounded by a back-up band of men.



*Fig. 5.14. Aviv with her mother Aliza and Yael Muller at Zappa, presenting a strong feminine image with their drumming and dancing.*

Aviv's drumming is particularly notable, since most of the cultures from which she draws drums and styles have a traditional discouragement, or outright prohibition, of women drumming. Although women often play frame drum as an instrument of folk and popular music (Doubleday 1999:116), larger drums more commonly fall in the domain of men. Ellen Koskoff

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<sup>37</sup> Aviv, interview.

notes that, “the drum is almost universally performed by males. Aside from passing references to all-female drumming groups in Africa the shaman tradition was the only context where I found consistent references to women drumming” (1995:119 n16). Even when there is no prohibition against women playing drums, such as in a drumming community in Ghana, it is nevertheless socially delineated as a male domain (Burns 2009:54). Virginia Doubleday argues that in the Middle East men have excluded women from playing drums through both religious and social means. “The desire to control female sexuality is intimately linked with restrictions on women’s use of musical instruments in the Middle East (and the stigmatization of those who defy those restrictions)” (1999:128). The djembe in particular is strongly associated in West Africa with men. In the U.S. there are a number of professional women djembe players, but they are the exception and work outside the larger network of male dominated ensembles (Flaig 2010:270). Aviv’s djembe is also symbolically powerful cross-culturally. Taiko, for example, empowers Asian-American women (Izumi 2001; Wong 2004), though female Taiko drummers in Japan are criticized as erotic or unconventional if their bodies are too muscular from training (Bender 2012:163).

I suggest, however, that Aviv’s djembe playing is analogous to the all-female drumming circles in neoshamanic communities (Bužeková 2012). The connection to neoshamanism, practices centered on healing and contact with spirits, resonates with her New Age background. In this context there is no contradiction between femininity and drumming, since “the New Age movement opposes established religious systems and conventional gender roles” (ibid.). Aviv suggested this same image of strong femininity in describing her musical goals.

I’m crazy about it. Listen, in the Torah it’s written, “And the women came out with drums and dances”...In my vision, it’s to take it a lot further...As far as I’m concerned there can be 20 women on the stage, and they can all sing. And my name won’t even be there at all. I will just lead a sort of frequency, some channel. I know that I can lead some sort of very strong channel that is tied to women’s singing, to women’s strength. To that place of woman according to Judaism, according to tradition... What is a woman really? ... Woman is home...I want to bring it with me to the stage. It’s home, it’s family, it’s warmth, it’s love.<sup>38</sup>

In justifying her work Aviv invokes Biblical references to Miriam and other women playing frame drum (Meyers 1995), but elides it with her own djembe drumming that crosses traditional boundaries.

I experienced Aviv’s exuberant Orthodox femininity at the show “The Great Night of Piyut.”<sup>39</sup> Held at Mann auditorium, a 2,700-seat hall in the Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center, the show was an extravaganza that brought together the many artists who have started to combine traditional Jewish liturgical poems with their rock music. Judging by their dress, the audience included members of both non-Orthodox and national Orthodox affiliations. The first hour of the show presented all male soloists, although there were some women musicians in the Andalusian Orchestra. Then the lights went down to pitch black. Suddenly in the dark there was drumming, and the lights came up on Aviv and two other women center stage. It was a dramatic contrast to everything that came before.

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<sup>38</sup> Aviv, interview.

<sup>39</sup> December 22, 2010.

The song was an arrangement of Psalm 26, “A Psalm for David.” The first verse featured the three women’s voices singing in parallel thirds and fourths, accompanied only by Aviv’s drumming (fig. 5.15). The stark arrangement created a very different sound from the rock music on the rest of the program. On the second verse a rock band took over, in what sounded almost like heavy metal. During this break the three women danced around the stage freely as the audience clapped rhythmically, swept up by the infectious energy. Aviv performed her ‘African’ dance steps and Georgian twirling. Although for her the whirling was a dance move, it indexed the meditation practice of Sufi Dervishes of the Mevlevi order, so that in this context it created the impression of spiritual ecstasy. The hand percussion, dancing, and rock music invoked the way “drumming defines festival space at Neo-Pagan events, inspiring festal dance and movement as techno music does during raves” (St. John 2004:295).

♩ = 144

Ha - vu la - do - nai bnei e - lim

Ha - vu la - do - nai ka - vod she - mo Kol A - do - nai al ha ma - yim

el ha - ka - vod hir im Kol A - do - nai ba - ko - ach kol A - do - nai sho - ver a - ra - zim

Fig. 5.15. Transcription of “A Psalm for David” as Aviv performed it at “The Great Night of Piyut.”

I suggest that Aviv’s performance of spirituality does not distance non-Orthodox audiences because she does it with her body rather than words, reaching people on a visceral level. Spectators might take offense to words more readily, since they engage their logical side and could reference political and social debates. Visual appearance and movement, on the other hand, are less easily parsed and more likely to be accepted as part of the theatricality of the show. Aviv described her movement as an integral part of her persona: “My body is very expressive. I’m always moving. I can’t manage to stand still to sing.”<sup>40</sup> Her constant movement is very different from Etti Ankri, who stands completely still when she sings, reaching inwards for her spirituality and focusing the attention on her words. The contrast was highlighted for me at “The Great Night of Piyut.” A few numbers after “Psalm for David” the stage again went dark. This time the lights came up on Ankri sitting at the piano on the far left of the stage. She was dressed in a purple kaftan and headscarf, a costume that seemed theatrical next to the other musicians. She sang a quiet duet with a violinist, powerful in its subdued energy. At the end she slowly walked over to center stage where she joined the other seven women in her own setting of Psalm 67. Even while singing in the group, Ankri kept her eyes closed in a performance of introverted spirituality that Aviv does not do. As the women sang together, arms around each other, they performed Aviv’s vision of strong women’s voices within Hasidic Judaism.

This show also reinforced Aviv’s Israeliness. It linked Jewish religion with Israeli national identity through a heightened sense of camaraderie and community, a feel-good

<sup>40</sup> Aviv, interview.

atmosphere that celebrated diversity, even though the audience was predominantly Jewish Ashkenazi/Mizrahi. For example, after their duet on flute and ney, Dudy Levy and Shem-Tov Levy walked off stage with their arms around each other. Right before “Psalm for David” Daniel Zamir played a rock version of the Israeli national anthem “Hatikva” on soprano saxophone, linking religion with nationalism, linking religion with nationalism. During Leah Shabat and Tamar Giladi’s rendition of “Yedid Nefesh,” a liturgical text used in the SLI repertoire, the audience joined in, drawing on the nostalgia of SLI and *shira betzibur*, and linking Jewish religion with national folklore. The three-and-a-half-hour show closed with a rousing encore of “A Great Joy Tonight,” for which all the artists came back onstage. The audience was on their feet, every last person. The women on stage were dancing, and behind them upstage Aviv twirled around in her multicultural mix of Georgian dance steps and whirling Dervish.

### **Folkloric Greek**

Aviv’s exuberant femininity also works well with her Greek heritage because of the way Israelis perceive Greek music as party music. Greek ethnicity is Sephardic and therefore belongs to the East part of the East-West equation, but it does not have political and social baggage like the ethnicities of the other three artists. It is not politicized like Mizrahiyut, nor part of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and there has been no significant wave of immigrants from Greece to threaten national identity,<sup>41</sup> so that Aviv’s ethnicity has not elicited any debates in the press or talkback comments. Her Greek heritage is also compatible with her urban sophistication, since there is no discourse associating it with low class or rural region.

Furthermore, Greek ethnicity provides foreignness and Israeliness at the same time. Greek music has been part of Israeli popular music since the 1950s. Hybrid nightclub music called *laika* was a favorite of Mizrahi Jews, so that the “Greek sound” became one of the main stylistic inspirations of *musika mizrahit* (Regev and Seroussi 2004:200). In the 1980s Yehuda Poliker released a number of albums that combined Greek music with rock, which were well received and ushered in the “ethnicization” of Israeli rock (Regev and Seroussi 2004:186). Today there is still a thriving scene for Greek music in Israel, from restaurants to concert halls. An effective performance of Greek and Israeliness occurred in an episode of *A Star is Born* (Tzafir 2011). A young Orthodox girl from Petach Tikva expressed her heritage with an expressive rendition of the SLI “The Eucalyptus Grove” in Greek. The judges were enchanted and called out “yasou!” [your health], used as a greeting, for toasting, or as a response to performers. The contestant offered the performance that Dikla refused to do, with the very song she used as an example.

Aviv includes some Greek music in her shows, but does not take it on as her persona or affiliate with the Greek scene. “If I sing in Greek I sing with my mother. It doesn’t work for me to sing with anyone else in Greek... it doesn’t seem really tied to me.”<sup>42</sup> Originally she shied away from it because she wanted to establish herself as a jazz singer, but later it became part of her *hazara betshuva*. “It’s a kind of root. But the root that’s more connected is the Jewish root... and Greek songs is not a Jewish root, it’s Greek songs.” She nevertheless incorporated the Greek folksong “Ay de Tomolono” into her show “A World within a World.” Its allure is evident in that although it was the only Greek song on the program, it represented the show. An article

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<sup>41</sup> Relations between Greece and Israel have been strained, with little interaction for 45 years, although they have been improving since the 1990s (Nomikos 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Aviv, interview.

promoting the show included a video of Aviv performing “Ay de Tomolono” on Yoav Kutner’s program *The Little Man from the Radio*, with the title “Yasou, Din Din!” (Barnea 2010b).

On Kutner’s show Aviv introduced the song as her mother’s heritage rather than her own ethnic identity.

The next song is one my mother used to sing for me when I was little, and her mother sang it to her when she was young, and her mother, it’s something like 100 years. Think that it passed through mother and daughter, mother and daughter, mother and daughter, and it got to me, and now it gets to you. And actually it’s a very primitive song. I asked my mother, because I didn’t know the words, [and] I said, I’m coming to the radio, at least I can say a bit about the words. It talks about a wife of the husband in the villages, think the villages 100 years ago in Greece. She sewed him a sort of man’s shirt, and she pricked her finger with a pin, and blood splashed on all the lower part of the shirt, which was white... And she curses him, the shirt, and the blood together... So that’s the song, primitive, and full of love, but with some annoyance too. Something primitive sweet like that, and here it is for you (Barnea 2010b).

Aviv’s claim to the song as her heritage is evident in the way she describes the chain of transmission and emphasizes the matrilineal aspect reinforced by the female narrator. However, in confessing that she did not know the words, she separates herself from the tradition and establishes herself as a native Israeli. Her introduction further highlights the song’s cachet as folklore through the discourse of folk music as traditional in opposition to modern. Denying coevalness (Fabian 1983) allows Aviv to present the song as something she can pass on to her non-Greek audience, as opposed to knowledge that is transmitted genetically. The sense of arrogance evident in calling it ‘primitive’ also reinforces her Israeliness. Her heritage becomes an object for her audience’s gaze exhibiting the commodification of Otherness as “a contemporary revival of interest in the ‘primitive,’ with a distinctly postmodern slant” (hooks 1992:22).

Aviv’s performance supports this denial of coevalness by leaving the melody and words intact, which creates an idyllic folk setting while keeping her outside of it. The instrumentation gives it a world music flavor, with electric guitar, bass, and trap set, and congas. The choreography reflects a similar approach. While for other songs Aviv incorporated African and Middle Eastern steps into her choreography, she attempted to choreograph “Ay de Tomolono” as Greek. As she said, “We dance only the Greek [songs] Greek.”<sup>43</sup> The way she went about it, however, undermined her intent. She choreographed the song together with Yael Muller. “The Greek part we learned from YouTube. We went around with the iPhone with YouTube and, wait a minute, let’s do like this... [Yael] researched it and she brought it.” This approach produced an eclectic mix of folkdance steps: virtuosic dance steps traditionally done by men, belly dance moves that are influenced by Turkish dancing, leg slaps popular in Hungarian dancing, and loose arm movements characteristic of Pontian Greek dance style.<sup>44</sup> Aviv also incorporated her Georgian whirling into her solo. Aviv’s Greek dancing is even more removed from the source than her Guinean dancing, but she naturalizes it to herself. “You know, the place of this [snaps her fingers above her head]...it comes from home... But really, you come to dance a Greek dance,

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<sup>43</sup> Aviv, interview.

<sup>44</sup> I am indebted to Craig Paul of the Lawrence International Folk Dance Club for his assistance parsing the choreography.

you have to understand that the lower body doesn't move. There isn't any of this [points to her waist]." Aviv reveals the same tension between musical aptitude and ethnic authenticity that the other artists do in having to learn a musical tradition that is part of her own ethnic heritage.

In not committing to a Greek persona Aviv misses out on its marketing power. Shlomi Saranga, for example, built a spectacular career on Greek music. The fact that he is not actually Greek perhaps made it less fraught for him to perform that music. The shortcoming of Aviv's normative persona is that she has a low profile as a performer. As Boaz Cohen suggested,

She is in fact more niche, more Eretz Israel, more center, more mainstream. She also is someone an audience, traditional or Orthodox, can connect to easily... I think that whoever knows her songs and likes that genre—it's a genre that doesn't have spikes so much, it's very round. It's very central... I don't think she goes to extremes, she isn't very distinctive. It's not like I tell you something and right away you tell me a song of hers. For most people a song of hers won't leap into their heads right away. Which is a kind of a problem, not being very distinctive. You don't know exactly what this person does... She isn't really ethnic. She doesn't let's say go just with a Greek genre or something. Not that she has to. But that's why I'm saying that it characterizes the person less, and so it's harder to categorize him afterwards.<sup>45</sup>

Cohen's assertion that "she isn't really ethnic" reveals the discourse Norma Alarcón (2003) critiques, whereby the way members of the dominant group do not see themselves as other than neutral. Aviv was aware of her relative anonymity and released a compilation album to connect her persona with her well-known songs, *The Compilation* (2012). By focusing on her repertoire, including all the songs by other songwriters, she continued to downplay her ethnicity as a lucrative source for marketing.

### **Melting Pot Ethnicity as Israeli**

Aviv has enjoyed a successful career as an Israeli pop singer. She was the chosen artist for the Israel Cultural Excellence Foundation (IcExcellence) award (2004), and received the ACUM prize for Best New Artist (2007). Her first solo album, *My Secrets* (2006), made gold status with over 20,000 copies sold. She performs frequently at Zappa, as well as Tzavta and Beit Avi Chai, and when I was in the field she had two shows on Independence Day. She is often found in shows that are particularly Israeli, such as one at Tzavta<sup>46</sup> that focused on women singer-songwriters as part of the Tel Aviv Music Festival. The title of the show was "All the Week for You," a song by Arik Einstein and Shmuel Krauss, of the band the High Windows, together with Josie Katz, which belonged to the 'elite' group of Israeli rock (Regev and Seroussi 2004).

Aviv's feel-good Israeli hits are a ubiquitous part of the Israeli soundscape. She is a regular guest at national ceremonies. I saw her on Yom Hazikaron [Day of Remembrance] at a ceremony commemorating fallen soldiers.<sup>47</sup> The atmosphere was solemn, many of the crowd dressed in white. Aviv sang a song that everyone knew, and people sang along with her, creating a powerful moment of unity. At the very end of the ceremony there was a video honoring a fallen

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<sup>45</sup> Cohen, interview.

<sup>46</sup> October 23, 2010.

<sup>47</sup> May 8, 2011.



soldier, and included on the soundtrack was “If You Go,” the hit she recorded with Idan Raichel that was one of the most-played songs of that year. One of the ways Aviv has come to represent Israeliness so strongly is through her collaborations with leading musicians such as Idan Raichel and Mosh Ben-Ari. She has benefited from their large following, as well as their successful formula for world music that is still Israeli.

Aviv’s music belongs to the canon because she participates in multiple trends. The first of these is the ethnic roots trend. While Awad protests that she has the “wrong roots,” Aviv has the right ones for the mainstream Israeli music market. However, it is not so much her actual ethnic heritage that makes her persona work, as the way she presents it. Awad says that her roots are problematic because they are not ethnic enough, not “Umm Kulthum.” Aviv also did not grow up within an ethnic tradition. The ethnic music she heard was a mix of many cultures that her mother learned as an outsider. However, she presents this mixing of musics as uniquely Israeli through the metaphors of melting pot and multicultural mosaic.

That Aviv’s “mosaic” ethnicity is perceived as Israeli is evident in a review by Yoav Kutner: “She creates with her performance a broadening of the definition of ‘Israeli music.’ A melting pot of world music that easily combines gypsy and Oriental music, African and Balkan, Georgian and Greek, touches of jazz and rock and (almost) all of it Israeli music” (Kutner 2010). A crucial part of the Israeliness of Aviv’s music is that the lyrics are always in Hebrew. Idan Raichel uses the same strategy of blending world musics, but keeping the core Hebrew, earning the following review: “Idan Raichel is a great Israeli musician, with an emphasis on Israeli. From album to album he is indeed opening up to more and more styles, languages and effects, and seemingly becoming more and more global, but the base camp from which he leaves for his travels around the world is...the base of Land of Israel [SLI] composers” (Baharir-Pearl 2013).

Aviv’s strength is in fact in her collaborations with such artists as Raichel, who performed with Aviv and her mother in the *Alidin* band for two years before inviting her to sing with the Idan Raichel Project. Her songs that have made it into the canon are not ones she wrote herself. “Song for Love” is by Ayelet Zionid Gili Liber of Gaya, “If You Go” is by Idan Raichel, and “Not a Word” is by Alon Yoffe and Hadar. Unlike Aviv’s own songs, the hits from her collaborations all fit the formula of catchy melodies, simple forms with repetition, and lyrics that are not overtly religious. Thus Aviv belongs to the canon as a singer but not as a songwriter. Although she gets prominent credit as the lead singer,<sup>48</sup> it isn’t enough to sustain her career as an independent singer-songwriter.

Aviv also participates in the trend of returning to religious roots, manifested in the phenomena of *hazara betshuva* and *piyyut* singing. In the New Age scene of the nineties musicians connected ethnic and religious roots in their Israeli identity. Although critics have marginalized that scene, deriding it as spiritually and culturally shallow, today it is becoming legitimized as part of mainstream Israeli culture. This shift is evident in a review of Mosh Ben-Ari, who came out of that scene.

Our natural tendency is to examine the changes that Jewish music, in its many forms, has undergone following the latest wave that has swept it in recent years. Shuli Rand, Meir Banai, Udi Davidi or ensembles like Between the Windowpanes and Moshav Band all occupy a prominent place in the new lineage tree that is growing. It will be interesting to

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<sup>48</sup> On Shironet, the artist for “Song for Love” is listed as “Gaya and Din Din Aviv.” <http://shironet.mako.co.il/artist?type=lyrics&lang=1&prfid=2723&wrkid=2998> (accessed June 8, 2014).

see if in retrospect, in say about thirty years from now, all this New Age wave that flooded Israel in the late nineties, and in one way or another continues this very day, and took shape in bands like Sheva and Gaia, and festivals like Boombamela, will also receive recognition in this lineage tree. Beyond the disheveled Shanti image full of sharwallim that was well photographed in many entertainment programs from *Wonderful Country* to *Latma*, the musical spiritual scene (as it were) was one of the hottest homes for many artists who underwent *hazara betshuva*, or for those who came out of the [Orthodox] sector and sought refuge in non-judgmental spaces (Hapstein 2013).

One of the things legitimizing musicians and spiritual practices from the New Age scene is the connection with traditional Judaism. Critics view the music of artists who have undergone *hazara betshuva* as deeper and more spiritually authentic (Lahav 2014). At the same time, Aviv's more overtly religious songs are too extreme for the non-Orthodox market. As she said, "The media...is rather distant... There is no doubt that as long as the media is secular, it is only interested, not excited" (Giladi 2011). Thus although Aviv's Israeliness is secure, she still walks a fine line in relation to mainstream Israeli society as far as her religious affiliation is concerned.

## Chapter Six: Concluding Thoughts

In this dissertation I have examined how four women artists negotiate sociocultural norms in creating their music and personae, and how their performances reflect or challenge discourses surrounding ethnicity and religion in Israeli society today. I hypothesized that performing their ethnic heritage, as it intersects with their gender, religion, class, and region, affords them certain opportunities to advance their career while stretching discursive boundaries of Israeliness. Dikla draws on her Egyptian ethnicity to redefine Mizrahiyut, Awad uses her Palestinian and Bulgarian ethnicities as well as her fluency in Hebrew and ability to ‘pass’ to problematize the discourse around Arabs, Blumin capitalizes on the Russian roots of Ashkenazi culture to bring her Ukrainian heritage into the dominant culture, and Aviv’s Israeli persona allows her to perform Hasidic Judaism for non-Orthodox audiences, while the public also picks up on her use of her Greek heritage, however minimal.

The challenges and successes these artists have encountered help shed light on definitions of Israeliness through music. Seroussi argues that, “We need to circumvent rigid typologies and binary oppositions by addressing various levels of tension between individualized expressions of musical creativity (styles, genres, contexts, etc.) and the powerful, pervasive, unattainable and yet ever-present idea of a core repertoire” (2008:27). As I have shown, these tensions are a combination of commercial and political factors, since, as Regev and Seroussi point out, in the field of rock the goal is to succeed financially and be acknowledged by the media industry, which exercises influence over a supposedly unified national identity (2013:344).

The effectiveness of the artists is as much a product of the strategies they use in constituting their musical personae, as of the discourse around the sectors they represent. The careers of Dikla and Awad illustrate how Arab ethnicity is symbolically prized yet still marginalized within definitions of Israeliness that privilege Jewish affiliation. They are both celebrated as symbols, but their actual performance opportunities are limited. Dikla is called an Israeli Umm Kulthum, but she continues to perform primarily in small clubs. Her status as icon of the gay community strengthens her position as the voice of marginalized groups. Awad too is celebrated for representing Israel on the international stage, but her career within Israel is limited because of its political ramifications. Blumin, on the other hand, has been able to harness the power of the canon. Its strength as a symbol of Israeliness is evident in the way Blumin uses the old canon of SLI and classic pop songs to establish her belonging to Israeli society, reinforcing and enriching it with her own voice. She was able to do this in part because her Ukrainian ethnicity is an integral part of it, but also because of her strategic approach, as evident in the way she successfully references Yemenite culture, an even more powerful index of Israeliness. Aviv provides a counterexample, because she was already established within the Israeli canon. Her gendered performance of religion, which includes, for example her drumming and dancing onstage, does challenge stereotypes, but because she does it in a way that is not controversial, she does not benefit from the attention it could bring her.

The careers of these artists thus offer a window onto how institutions in Israeli popular music are changing. Each of the artists in this dissertation went through a different institution in establishing her career. Aviv used the powerful network of the *lehaqot tzvaiyot*, an older institution that is not as central to making it in the popular music world today as it was forty years ago. Awad came from the Rimon School, the hub of a network that continues to dominate mainstream popular music. Both the *lehaqot tzvaiyot* and Rimon are training institutions, so that artists who go through them are also better equipped technically to pursue a career in music. This

leaves Dikla, who did not go through an established institution, at a double disadvantage, a point she emphasizes. Blumin, on the other hand, was able to create her career on the basis of a different training institution, the conservatory. Of the four women I have discussed, she was most successful in her use of institutions. She participated in *A Star is Born* for the purpose of getting attention, and she has created songs that meet all the criteria for the popular army radio station Galgalatz. Considerably younger than the other three artists in this study, Blumin grew up within this new social reality and knows how to navigate it. She uses social networking media like Facebook aggressively, and adapts herself adroitly to public expectations.

These artists also shed light on Israeli popular music by revealing the field of possibilities that has allowed them to create careers by performing their ethnic identities. One trend is the rise of women singer-songwriters, which normalizes their performance as independent women. The women rockers who were popular in the 1980s and 1990s (including Yehudit Ravitz, Corinne Alal, Sharon Lipsitz, Ricki Gal, Dana Berger, Nurit Galron, Ronit Shahar, Mika Karni), some of whom began their careers in the 1970s, paved the way for the significant rise of women singer-songwriters today (Regev and Seroussi 2004:163–5), particularly in alternative music, but also across genres. Regev and Seroussi list a number of relevant trends (2013:315–337). One is the move from an emphasis on national culture to individual interests. The increased multiculturalism of Israeli society has opened up a wider arena for national belonging. As Matras maintains, the decanonization of SLI has “liberated the thought, identities, and expression of older and younger generations alike” (2010:2). The weakening of Hebrew as a central symbol of national identity means that these artists can highlight their Otherness by singing in the language of their ethnic heritage and still be included in Israeliness. However, I found that including Hebrew in their repertoire is crucial in order for them to be part of the dominant cultural identity. A return to pre-Zionist roots has made ethnic identities not only popular, but even expected. New media has also facilitated the rise of individual voices by providing alternative channels for producing and marketing music. Regev and Seroussi cite the decreasing influence of the record industry and rise of the Internet, and I add social networking as a way for musicians to promote themselves independently.

The way artists mark themselves as Other using local forms, and the effects of their performances, can be used to illuminate how Israeliness has been defined through music at any given time. A study comparing the current era to previous ones, as I had originally planned for this dissertation, would reveal the trends that are particular to each one. For example, some of the first artists to ethnicize themselves in the 1940s were Bracha Zefira (1910–1990), Esther Gamlielit (b. 1919), and Shoshana Damari (1923–2006). They had an advantage in that they were all Yemenite, a group that was perceived as the bearers of authentic Jewish traditions, both folk and religious. They sang in Hebrew, which was consistent with the emphasis on establishing a unified national identity. Archival study of films and recordings of these artists, as well as newspapers of the time, would reveal the strategies they used in Othering themselves. Ofra Haza is an important younger female Yemenite singer who rose to fame considerably later (in the 1980s), but the transnational dimension of her work is more central, since she performed her Yemenite persona primarily on the international stage.

Another group is veteran artists, those who established their careers several decades ago and are active today. Each has foregrounded her ethnic Otherness after establishing herself in or near the mainstream of Israeli popular music. Achinoam Nini continued in the tradition of Yemenite singers with *Genes and Jeans* (2008), Etti Ankri highlighted her Tunisian heritage in *Live Show* (1998) and *Sea* (2001), Chava Alberstein performed her Polish heritage by singing in

Yiddish on *The Well* (2001) and *Lemele* (2006), and Rita released an album of Persian songs, *My Celebrations* (2011). The timing and reception of their ethnic albums reveal the discourse around the ethnicities they performed. In comparison to the women at the center of this study, these artists face different issues, since they incorporated their ethnicity once they had successful careers in pop music, and did so with only one or two albums. While their prominent careers provided security as they expressed another facet of their identity, they also had to negotiate their audience's resistance to changes in the personae they established.

Research on newer immigrant groups would reveal how these ethnicities are being integrated into definitions of Israeliness. Ethiopian artists gaining attention include Ayala Ingedashet and Hagit Yasou (winner of *A Star is Born* in 2010), but children born in Israel to East Asian parents are starting to make their appearance too, on the popular show *Music School*, the spinoff of *A Star is Born* for junior contestants. Such a study would have to take into consideration an additional racial dimension. The phenotypical marking Othering such singers exposes them to racism based on biological differences, while their status as newer immigrant subjects them to cultural racism, that is stigmatization of a different lifestyle from the dominant group (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991).

Finally, this study lends insight to world popular music transnationally. The music I have discussed here is disseminated via cosmopolitan networks, so that there are aspects of it that cut across cultures. In particular, some of the strategies, such as setting ethnicity in a distant time and place to render it appealing while keeping it legible, are common to artists more broadly. However, finding the balance between otherness and belonging plays out differently in each socio-cultural setting, exposing dynamics that are particular to that setting. A cross-cultural analysis would take into account the aptitude and training of the artists, since it affects how dependent they are on the otherness of their persona. I propose that the more technically proficient they are, the more flexibility they have in coloring their persona as needed. A more polished stage manner also opens up transnational performance opportunities, although at the expense of some of the intimacy created through an unaffected demeanor. Thus the study of selective performance of ethnicity also sheds light on issues of authenticity as judged through technical, ethnic, and emotional criteria.

These issues in turn contribute to scholarship on intersectionality in pointing to a gap between intersectional identities as discourse and as lived experience. In their everyday lives the artists do not necessarily experience the "matrix of oppression" that is discursively associated with women of their minority sector. Instead, as members of the dominant middle-class urban society they are in a position of power to selectively emphasize different strands of their intersectional identities. Furthermore, they make those decisions as professional artists, so that they work strategically with discourses that posit stereotypical intersectionalities of gender, ethnicity, class, region, and religion. In this way their intersectional positions allow them to reinforce or subvert sociocultural norms as they work to advance their careers.

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