

Outdoing Authenticity: Three Postmodern Models of Adapting Folkloric Materials in Current Spiritual Music

ABSTRACT: In the postmodern condition, individuals are flooded with images, symbols, and content from various traditions and cultural contexts. How does tradition change in its postmodern uses? How does folklore fill the contemporary need for “authenticity”? This article presents three models of adapting folkloric materials, reflecting different ways of coping with issues such as identity, community, tradition, multiculturalism, and the desire to fill some of the emptiness experienced by individuals in the complex cultural context of the postmodern condition characterizing contemporary Western culture. The liturgical poem “Im Nin’alu”—referenced and shaped differently by Ofra Haza, Madonna, and Offer Nissim—constitutes a test case for examining a variety of models for adapting traditional material, with varying degrees of postmodernity. The first model seeks to experience authenticity through a restoration of, or return to, “tradition.” The second one, shaped in the context of World Music, springs from a spirituality that yearns for an “authentic” experience as manifested through a tradition that belongs to the culture of the Other. The third model, which we term “remix spirituality,” seeks to generate an ecstatic experience in an ultra-postmodern manner.

Folklore and Tradition in Contemporary Spiritual Music

In the postmodern condition, individuals are flooded with images, symbols, and content from various traditions and cultural contexts.

Journal of Folklore Research, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2017 • doi:10.2979/jfolkrese.54.3.03
Copyright © 2017, Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Indiana University

These are all wrapped in thick superficial coverings and presented at a pace so rapid as to be overwhelming. As a result, concepts such as kitsch, pastiche, appropriation, reification, and simulacra come up for debate in the contexts of art, marketing, and thought. This, in turn, gives rise to questions about the significance of individuals' interest in folklore: What is the reason for this interest and what are its results? What are its modules and conditions of its feasibility? How does tradition change during this process? How does folklore fill the contemporary need for "authenticity"?

We will present three models of adapting folkloric materials that reflect different ways of coping with the common problems of individuals living in the complex cultural context of what Jean-François Lyotard calls "the postmodern condition" (1984). These problems include issues of identity, community, memory, tradition, multiculturalism, the individual's relationship with hegemonic establishments, and the desire to fill some of the emptiness individuals may experience in contemporary Western culture. The liturgical poem "Im Nin'alu" constitutes a test case for examining those models of relating to folkloric materials. The first model is based on an attempt to recreate the material's original meaning and traditional context. In the second, the folkloric component is given new spiritual meaning through its adaptation to a new framework. In the third, a massive mixing of ethnic and mystical components within the context of consumption provides the desired experience.

Current Western spiritual trends

One surprising aspect of Western¹ society's cultural landscape is spirituality's return to center stage (Heelas 1996a). Contemporary Western spirituality emphasizes self-actualization (alongside various "soft" values, such as the expression of emotions and closeness to nature) together with criticism of established institutions, among them mainstream religious traditions, as well as Western values and lifestyle (e.g., rationalism and progress—see Heelas 2008; Inglehart 1977).

The growth of contemporary spiritualities has given rise to public interest and to increasingly wide-scale research. Some studies focus on sociological and philosophical issues about the feasibility of a return to spirituality and religion in a secular world and the significance of such a return (e.g., Heelas, Lash, and Morris 1996). Several

researchers focus on the New Age movement, claiming that it is a quintessential example of general trends taking place in the spiritual field. They perceive this movement as a phenomenon that reflects, in a concentrated and distilled manner, what transpires in society in general, although to a more moderate extent. If that is true, then focusing on the spiritual scene (with the New Age movement at its heart) reveals general cultural trends (e.g., Heelas 2008; Ruah-Midbar 2006). Another direction in research attempts a deeper characterization of the contemporary religious-spiritual scene, differentiating this scene from earlier religious manifestations in Western history (e.g., Hanegraaff 1998).

Other researchers prefer to make significant distinctions between various trends in contemporary spiritualities—fundamentalist spirituality, local folk traditions, New Age spirituality, and so on (e.g., Doktor 2003; Zaidman 2003). This field of research, which deals with the differences between contemporary spiritual trends, is just beginning, and the current study aspires to add to it. While popular and scholarly discourses often tend to lump all contemporary spiritual movements together indiscriminately, it is extremely important to understand the differences between various spiritual movements. The breadth of spiritual phenomena requires careful study, which, in addition to illuminating characteristics held in common, also reveals subtle nuances of difference. The differences between spiritual trends may be understood to be a result of varying responses to contemporary culture. Thus, for example, globalism may lead to radical negative reactions on the one hand, and affirmation and support on the other (see Bauman 1998; Beyer 1998; Heelas, Lash, and Morris 1996).

Current attitudes toward tradition

A study of contemporary spirituality reveals the problems facing contemporary individuals—issues of identity, community, memory, and so on—and the various ways in which we respond to them. Often, differing responses to the present result in differing ways of relating to the past and to tradition (see Rountree 2001; Ruah-Midbar 2007). Westerners have several options when it comes to taking a stance on tradition. They can distance themselves from and criticize it on the one hand, or on the other, they may identify with and adopt it (see Ruah-Midbar and Klin Oron 2010). The three models we present

here reflect different spiritual, social, and ideological attitudes and approaches to folklore and tradition.

When relating to tradition, different spiritual movements must deal with similar problems. These include the tumultuous intersections of the religious sources of many cultures in a global age, the yearning for spiritual experience in a secular society, and the interpretation of traditional cultural sources in new contexts. Contemporary spiritualities cope with these problems in a manner characteristic of the postmodern condition (Huss 2007). Thus, for example, New Age spirituality is designed along hyper-individualistic lines; its theology places special emphasis on the self (Heelas 2008). The eclectic character of contemporary spirituality reflects the postmodern superficial-eclectic spirit, in which individuals “use, recycle, combine, and adapt existing religious ideas and practices” (Hanegraff 2002, 249), and create private religions focused on the Self, known as Self Religions (Heelas 1996b). Sources from different traditions are adapted according to a particular pattern that fits the character of New Age spirituality, which tends toward universalism; it cannot but see “the same message from everywhere” as it gleans—under the influence of globalization—elements from various cultures around the world (Hammer 2001a).

The prevalent criticism of the New Age movement’s attitude toward religious tradition(s) also finds expression in scholarly literature. Such criticism touches upon questions of Western ethnocentrism, the “appropriation” of native cultures, the absence of “authenticity,” and the promotion of capitalistic and other neoliberal values (e.g., Carrette and King 2005; Hamilton 2002; Huss 2014; Rothstein 2001; Ruah-Midbar 2015; Ruah Midbar and Ruah-Midbar 2013; Possamai 2003; York 2001). We will deal, directly or indirectly, with these issues and others in the case study before us.

*The adaptation of folkloric materials and the invention
of tradition in the postmodern condition*

Amid the various spiritual responses to the current cultural condition, attitudes toward folklore and tradition range between innovation and conservatism. Some individuals welcome religious innovation as part of “humanity’s spiritual evolution,” while others, in their protest against rapid innovation and the rise of relativism and globalism, take a radically purist approach to religion. Some wish to preserve traditions and

vernacular religious expressions, while others eagerly adopt a universalist, eclectic approach (see Beyer 1998; Rothstein 2001).

In the postmodern condition, many classic distinctions are being undermined and losing much of their power, including the classic distinctions between folklore and modernism (Hasan-Rokem 1997, 8) and between popular culture and folklore (Narvâez and Laba 1986, 15–17, 311). Likewise, binaries such as authenticity versus inauthenticity and alienation versus disalienation (Jameson 1991, 12) are no longer taken for granted. The undermining of these basic distinctions creates various positions regarding “authenticity” and filiation, “tradition” and “inventing tradition,” and so on.

Tradition is “anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present,” be it a physical object or a cultural construction (Shils 1981, 12). But in the postmodern context, processes of disembedding traditions, namely the “lifting out” of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space, intensify (Giddens 1990, 21). Thus, traditional texts are transmitted in a nontraditional way in that they are transmitted on their own, without the ideational (for example, theological) context in which they were created, and without the cultural context in which they were customarily used. The detaching of a text from its original context and the transmission of it without its accompanying cultural significance are evidence of reification.

It is true that tradition always changes and that it is not nontraditional to make changes. As Edward Shils states, “A tradition is a sequence of variations on received and transmitted themes” (1981, 13). Moreover, a tradition’s core is not the reenactment of elements but rather “the pattern which guides the reenactment” (1981, 31). Practically speaking, a tradition constantly renews itself, and so “even to adhere to previously established patterns, it is necessary to contrive new ones.” In other words, the adhesion to tradition is necessarily bound with its constant reinvention (Shils 1981, 29; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Storey 2003, 3). This is also true in the postmodern context, which offers extreme examples of addressing traditional materials in renewed ways.

Despite all this, the *use* of traditions or the *reference* to them differs completely from the act of *participation* in them. These insights call attention to the differences between various manifestations of tradition in popular culture, some of which express a desire for preservation and others a wish for innovation. Some are motivated by a desire

for “authenticity,” while others either do not care about this criterion whatsoever or they reinvent the meaning of authenticity. Therefore, as we look at the various ways in which folkloric materials are used in contemporary popular Western spirituality, we will not examine *whether* there is a reinvention of tradition, or whether it is an “authentic” continuation of it, but rather *how* it manifests. We will also analyze various representations of the idea of tradition’s continuity.

In this article, we will present variations (or interpretations) in the contemporary popular music field of the Yemenite-Jewish liturgical poem “Im Nin’alu” (hereinafter: LPIN for “liturgical poem ‘Im Nin’alu”). If as Shils says, “A prayer is not a tradition: it is a set of words addressed to the deity imploring his favor” (1981, 31), then there is room to problematize the classification of LPIN as tradition. Indeed, in the musical works we will be analyzing, the way LPIN functions will shed light on how tradition changes. The poem’s text, which praises God, was written in the distant past in a given ideational cultural context (note the Kabbalistic allusions that occur throughout). In addition, a rich folklore has grown up around LPIN that includes the time, place, and figures connected with its recitation. As we will see later, the words of the poem (and sometimes only a tiny excerpt of them) are quoted in the contemporary musical spiritual interpretations, but the full folkloric context has changed beyond recognition. These changes range from fairly light, as we will show in the first model, to extremely dramatic, which we will show in the third. Therefore, our discussion will focus on clarifying the levels of freedom vis-à-vis tradition in the various processed variations of LPIN.

*Ethnic music and world music in the context
of alternative spiritualities*

Our perspective will focus on several cultural products from the growing field of contemporary spiritual music. Although this field is rapidly gaining many fans (and funds) from all over the world, it has not been fully explored in the context of academic discourse on contemporary spirituality (Ruah Midbar and Ruah-Midbar 2013). The presence of “ethnic music” or “world music” (also known as “worldbeat music”—see Erlmann 1996, 467) is particularly prominent in the field of contemporary spiritual music (Born and Hesmondhalga 2000; Bohlman 2002; Taylor 1997; Taylor 2007). Sometimes the terms “ethnic music,” “world music,” and “worldbeat music” are used

interchangeably. These genres may be seen as pastiche since they document, recreate, imitate, quote, or arrange styles and texts that have been taken from a known tradition. In the postmodern context, when a component that has been taken from a large, major tradition is processed and inserted into a contemporary work, a dialogue is created between the modern Western subject, the creator of the Self-religion, and the religious-traditional metanarrative that has been lost.

The creators of this type of music might be either members of a particular subculture that wish to preserve and glorify it, or Westerners who wish to appropriate the culture of the Other (e.g., Aubert, Seeger, and Ribeiro 2007; Barrett 1996; Turino 2000). Thus, the dominant culture uses these genres to make cultural differences banal by putting all Anglo-American styles under the same rubric (Guilbault 2006). The Western interest in the Other's culture, including its music, leads to creative works that combine contemporary Western traits with traditions from various cultures in a postmodernist spirit. Laurent Aubert, Anthony Seeger, and Carla Ribeiro, with good reason, have termed these phenomena "the invention of folklore" (2007, 47–52).

We find three prevalent characteristics in ethnic music and world music: spirituality (Ruah Midbar and Ruah-Midbar 2013), Westernism (Aubert, Seeger, and Ribeiro 2007; Taylor 2007), and postmodernism (Mitchell 1989). In these types of music, traditions are disembedded from their former contexts and placed into a Western-style framework for romantic-spiritual reasons. New Age spirituality makes up the core of ideas and values that forms the backdrop of these genres (Bohlman 2002; Aubert, Seeger, and Ribeiro 2007, 54).

New Age doctrines display admiration for cultures they perceive as native or ancient, thus continuing other Western Orientalist tendencies—e.g., the Theosophical society (Said 1978; see also Storey 2003, 3). These doctrines reflect mainly perennialistic philosophy—in other words, the view that all cultures stem from an ancient, common kernel of truth. According to this approach, cultures perceived as Other, "native," or "Eastern" have preserved this truth authentically and purely, as compared with the Western established religious traditions (Hanegraaff 1998). This creates an identification between the Other and that which is perceived as ancient (Rountree 2001; Ruah-Midbar 2007). Often, cultures that are seen as Eastern serve as a "significant Other" to this Western spiritual view (Hammer 2001b). Thus, "[w]e celebrate now hybridity, syncretism, transnationalism, and

musical displacement, though, ironically, in the newly reincarnated reductive Euro-Americocentric commercial labels of ‘world beat’ or ‘world music’” (Zheng 2010, 18).

Many New Age practices stem from perennialism, including the creation and consumption of music that reflects, quotes, or imitates these cultures considered native, Eastern, or otherwise Other. Thus, world music, although Western in style, includes fragments or imitations of indigenous traditional texts, sounds, and styles. The perennialistic approach also endows spiritual legitimacy to eclectic works that draw on various traditions (Hammer 2001a). Of course, it has no difficulty at all adopting Other, distant traditions that are not personal traditions of the practitioner. These traditions, whose purpose is to awaken spiritual inspiration in Westerners because of their exoticism, are actually invented (Lewis and Hammer 2007).

We can classify the three works that we will be analyzing below into several genres of spiritual music—ethnic music (Ofra Haza’s 1984 version of “Im Nin’alu”), world music (Haza’s 1988 version of “Im Nin’alu” and “Isaac” by Madonna), and trance music (Nissim’s remix).

A Comparative Analysis of Musical Works Adapting “Im Nin’alu”

The liturgical poem “Im Nin’alu” in context

Written in the seventeenth century by the Yemenite-Jewish mystic Rabbi Shalom Shabbazi, LPIN has a prominent place in Yemenite-Jewish folklore. Yemenite Jews have sung it for centuries to various traditional melodies, particularly at weddings. It is comprised of seven stanzas in alternating Hebrew and Arabic with a precise rhythm and rhyme scheme (Tubi 1987). The poem’s opening sentence, also its best known, reads as follows:²

Even if the doors of the wealthy are locked,
Heaven’s doors will never be locked.

By starting with a conditional statement and repeating the concept of “doors,” the poet creates a contrast between God—who alone can be trusted—and human beings. The message is optimistic and encouraging: when no help can be found on earth, one can always turn to God.

The next lines describe the divine realm and its inhabitants as they praise and glorify God:

The living God is exalted above the *cherubim* [angels].
 All [the supernal beings] are lifted by His spirit
 for they are close to His throne:
 they bless His name and praise Him
 together with *chayot* [the highest angels],
 in constant motion since the day of Creation.

 They bless His name and utter praises.

 and chant pleasant songs.

The poem's remaining stanzas continue the message of the opening stanza: praise of God and an expression of faith, confidence, and reliance upon Him. To this, the poet adds other themes; he addresses the soul several times, calling upon it to love and trust God, using language that contrasts the soul with the body and seeks to rise above earthly limitations. The poem also expresses Jewish particularism—the belief that the Jews were chosen to receive the Torah—mentioning the patriarchs and the location of the Holy Temple. It describes the terrible suffering of the exile, in which the Jews were subjugated to their enemies, and expresses longing for the redemption of the Jewish people and the return to Zion. It also mentions the importance of studying the Torah and its inner secrets. The mystical terms in the poem hint at various Kabbalistic secrets, among the most prominent of which is the metaphor of the wedding feast, alluding to the supernal union (in which the bride is identified with the people of Israel). In the folkloric context, we should note that this poem was sung mainly at weddings of the Yemenite-Jewish community, where we can guess that the stanzas about the supernal wedding feast were given special semantic emphasis.

LPIN became the “trademark” of Yemenite-Jewish folklore and, as we will see, served as a reification of “Eastern” spirituality. During the second half of the twentieth century, LPIN became known beyond this community, in broader Israeli culture, through performances by Israeli Yemenite-Jewish singers, such as Shoshana Damari, Zion Golan, and Aharon Amram. It became world famous thanks to Ofra Haza, an Israeli singer from the Yemenite-Jewish community. Later on, other Israeli and Western singers followed in Haza's footsteps, creating musical works incorporating excerpts of the poem.

We shall begin our discussion of contemporary versions of LPIN³ with Ofra Haza's 1984 version, titled simply “Im Nin'alu,” which is

based entirely on traditional Yemenite-Jewish lyrics and melody. This Israeli piece is an example of the model that seeks to experience authenticity through a restoration of, or return to, "tradition." Next, we will discuss another adaptation that Haza created in 1988. This later version will lead us to the second model, as illustrated by Madonna's song "Isaac," in 2005, which includes excerpts of LPIN performed by Yitzhak Sinwani. This American piece, which incorporates several phrases from the liturgical poem, is an example of the type of spirituality that yearns for an "authentic" experience as manifested through a tradition that belongs to the Other. Finally, we will discuss the remix created by the Israeli DJ Offer Nissim in 2006, which is based on several excerpts of the two previously mentioned works. The spiritual model that Nissim's work represents seeks to generate an ecstatic experience. It focuses on the surface level and has no interest in the depth of the material, such as its origins or original meaning. Even though all the approaches presented here can be considered postmodern, we will address the degree of radicalism in the postmodern processing of the folkloric material and the various motives and implications of each choice.

Ofra Haza: "Im Nin'alu" 1984, 1988

In 1984, at the height of her musical career, Ofra Haza released an album entitled *Yemenite Songs*. One of the tracks on this album was "Im Nin'alu."⁴ Released after a succession of successful albums that did very well on the mainstream Israeli pop charts (and had no folkloric character), *Yemenite Songs* expressed Haza's return to her roots and her gratitude to her parents, who raised her in the Yemenite-Jewish tradition (Regev 1996, 282).

On the cover of *Yemenite Songs*, Haza appears wearing a traditional Yemenite-Jewish headdress worn by a bride at her wedding. In the shows during the album tour, Haza and her dancers wore traditional Yemenite costumes and performed traditional Yemenite dances.⁵ Like the other songs on the album, "Im Nin'alu" is based on a traditional Yemenite melody. Haza sings only the first stanza of LPIN, and pronounces the lyrics according to Yemenite tradition, which is vastly different from the Hebrew pronunciation accepted in Israeli society at the time. Acoustic instruments are dominant on the album, endowing her audience with the experience of "ethnic flavor."

Haza's courageous choice to express her Yemenite roots by creating "ethnic" music was a dramatic departure from her previous musical style, which, up to that point, had fit the Israeli mainstream. Haza had gained prominent status as a singer at the price of distancing herself from her Mizrahi (literally "Eastern," referring to immigrants from Arab countries) roots. Israeli audiences of that time found her Yemenite appearance (clothing, jewelry, and dance) and pronunciation bizarre and unattractive. Expressing Haza's return to her roots, *Yemenite Songs* was a kind of cultural protest given that hegemonic powers dictating Israeli cultural fashion had relegated Mizrahi music—including Yemenite music, which was regarded as vulgar—to the cultural fringe (Regev 1996, 282; Shemoelof 2007).⁶

Unlike former ethnomusicological research, which used to assume a direct link between a group's music and its cultural identity, our analysis indicates its essentialist flaws. Instead of depicting music as a reflection of a community, we deal with its role in producing and constituting cultural-political identity (Openheimer 2012, 249–50). The hegemonic Israeli culture at the time of Haza's *Yemenite Songs* had been shaped by Western Jews (immigrants from European Christian countries, known in Hebrew as Ashkenazim) who regarded the culture of Eastern or Mizrahi Jews, as inferior and primitive (Shemoelof 2007). Since the establishment of the State of Israel, the Ashkenazi hegemony had imposed an ideology aimed at creating a common denominator among the Jews who came to Israel from various countries. This forced cultural unification became known as "the melting pot." Mizrahi Jews were expected to conform to the ideal of an Israeli "new Jew" or "tzabar" (*sabra*), who was shaped according to Ashkenazi values (Almog 2000, 96–103).⁷

Beginning in the 1970s, however, an emergent multiculturalism and a multidirectional undermining of Ashkenazi hegemony gave rise to a growing interest in Mizrahi music in the 1980s. Until then, Mizrahi music had been considered Other rather than "Israeli" and was neither broadcast on television nor on radio, which at the time were run by government institutions. Instead, it was distributed by subversive and inexpensive means, which caused it to be labeled "cassette music" or "central station's music." Such degrading labels demonstrated the disdain for this excluded music. Challenging Israeli musical hegemony in the 1980s shattered that period's accepted "Hebrew" (*Ivri*) musical style into a variety of styles—Mizrahi, Mediterranean (*Yam-Tichoni*), and others (Seroussi and Regev 2013, ch. 9–10).

Ofra Haza's Mizrahi music, in its different versions, played a role in many complex processes in Israeli society, which we will not elaborate on here. We should note, however, that Haza was not perceived as a threat to Israeliness, since she had initially earned her success with the conventional popular music style rather than in the subversive Mizrahi scene. Accordingly, mainstream audiences and institutions were more willing to accept Haza's Mizrahi music than that of other singers who were successful in the "local" Mizrahi music scene (Seroussi and Regev 2013, 284–85). Nevertheless, despite Haza's popularity, her Yemenite songs were not played on radio stations or broadcast on television. The Israeli mainstream still found the Yemenite accent, musical style, costumes, and dance unappealing in the early 1980s.

"Mizrahi" served as a homogeneous image for various groups, using this label in order to consolidate its identity in its challenge to hegemony. The "Mizrahi" label gained various political and cultural meanings, replacing many different former labels: *Sfaradim* (literally "Spanish") symbolized religious ethnicity or traditionalism, *Edot HaMizrach* (literally "Eastern denominations") stood for a sectorial perception (unlike European Jews who were perceived as the nation's representatives), "Arab Jews" was used for an anti-nationalistic desire of returning to mutual life with the Arab world. The label *Mizrahiyim* was used to exclude marginal groups, and claim a "common identity of various communities in Israel" originating in Arab states. Thus, Easternness was utilized both in academic and political discourses in Israel, as well as by some "Eastern" artists (Openheimer 2012, 9–10, 171–74).

One of the subgroups of Eastern Judaism, Yemenite-Jewish culture provided a major source of the Eastern Image. Yemeniteness became a synonym for authentic Easternness, even authentic Judaism. Two things fueled this—"Mizrahi" groups' interests on the one hand, and hegemonic discourse purposes on the other. As Edwin Seroussi and Motti Regev note, "The Yemenite Jew was perceived by Ashkenazi Zionist intellectuals as 'the noble savage'. . . that had never left the Middle East, the cradle of ancient Jewish civilization. . . . [Yemenite tradition] may have inspired the creation of new patterns of Hebrew culture" (2013, 250). This Orientalist outlook allowed the Israeli hegemony to avoid seemingly Arab components while forming Jewish Israeli identity during the twentieth century (2013, 249–52). Bracha Tzifira and Shoshana Damari are only two of many Yemenite Israeli

singers who preceded Haza, both in terms of success in local circles of Mizrahi music, and as authentic representations of Judaism's origins for the Israeli mainstream.

While "Im Nin'alu" was shunned locally, it soared on the international charts. In 1987, American rappers Eric B. and Rakim sampled Haza's vocals from "Im Nin'alu" and used them in their remix, "Paid in Full." Seeing the worldwide success of this remix, Bezal'el Aloni, Haza's manager and producer, realized that if Haza were going to reach a wider audience, the song needed to be processed differently. He asked Yizhar Ashdot, a well-known Israeli singer and producer, for help in reworking the song and making it attractive to the non-Israeli Western ear. The result, which preserved some of the song's Yemenite characteristics while presenting them in a Western wrapping, made Haza a worldwide success.

The 1988 version (and its music video), along with "Galbi," another new adaptation of a piece from *Yemenite Songs*, played a part in Haza's international positioning in the late 1980s. Those were followed by the albums *Shaday* (1988) and *Desert Wind* (1989), directed at Western audiences outside of Israel (Seroussi and Regev 2013, 284–85).

The music video for the 1988 version of "Im Nina'lu" retains the Yemenite attributes: accent, clothing and jewelry, musical trills, men with long sidelocks, and traditional musical instruments.⁸ In a few frames, Haza is seen wearing the traditional headdress and riding a horse in the desert. This adaptation is significantly different from her 1984 version: it includes Western and electronic musical instruments, fashionable Western-style movement and facial expressions, and close-ups of Haza's face. The rhythm is Western and the first stanza of LPIN is only partially sung. Moreover, a few lines in the song are in English. This song better fits the category of "world beat/world music," while the 1984 version may be classified as "ethnic music" (Seroussi and Regev 2013). At the time, Haza spoke publicly (in English) about herself as a musical "product of [the] marriage" or "synthesis" of East and West, stressing that she had grown up with those "musical rhythms" at her "Eastern" parents' house.⁹ Thus, this piece represents an imagined ethnicity that is different from the tradition in which she grew up, and to which she sought to pay homage, with the 1984 version of "Im Nin'alu."

Note that it was the 1988 version of "Im Nin'alu," rather than the original 1984 one, that catapulted Haza to worldwide fame. The

1988 version was intended for an audience whose background was as different from Yemenite tradition as could possibly be imagined. The world music genre “is driven by the fascination with musical difference, but often requires musicians to adapt their sounds to fit what the new audiences are capable of or interested in hearing” (Aubert, Seeger, and Ribeiro 2007, vii). The appeal of such music is created by folkloric materials that sound different to Westerners, yet are musically catchy (after some adaptation)—in other words, still Western. World music makes exotica accessible to Western ears. These artistic/marketing requirements, which appropriate the Other’s culture, may also make the members of this ethnic culture aware of their own Otherness (Mitchell 1989, 290).

Thus, Yemeniteness shifted from being an Other on the Israeli scene, to symbolizing Israeli culture while serving as an Other to Western culture. Not only did Haza eventually “[open] the [Israeli] public’s ears to the sounds of oriental Jewish tradition” (Regev and Seroussi 2004, 227), but ironically, Haza also heightened Israeli “national pride” when she acquired “symbolic status” as “the musical export of Jewish-Israeli ‘ethnicity’” (Regev 1996, 283). But the price Haza paid for her fame was a reduction of some folkloric elements in her music and the adaptation of others to Western audiences (Hall 2000).

Haza’s two pieces represent two different spiritual modes and, respectively, two different attitudes toward traditional materials. In sum, the 1984 version follows Western traditionalist spirituality. People who pursue this spiritual mode are motivated by a desire to express what they feel is lacking in their identity as members of modern Western (and often secular) culture—their ethnic and traditional roots. Their spiritual approach reflects a nostalgic yearning for the tradition with which they grew up (or with its memory), as they remember it fondly from their childhood. They wish to revive this folklore with a modern recreation of the tradition while keeping the modern Western setting in which they live.

This contemporary spiritual approach should not be seen as identical to preserving or continuing the tradition (in contrast to ultra-orthodox or fundamentalist approaches), but as a longing to return to it (Heelas 1996a; Sagi 2003) from a vantage point of some distance. While “those who accept a tradition need not call it a tradition” (Shils 1981, 13), any attempt to *return* to one’s ethnic roots is actually the creation of a new tradition (Hall 1996). Therefore, this

type of spirituality does not express the preservation of the tradition, but rather an attempt and a desire—which can never be completely fulfilled—to return to it. We will call this model of Western spirituality, as illustrated by Haza’s 1984 version of “Im Nin’alu,” the “spirituality of the return to tradition.” Analysis of the next work, by Madonna, will deepen our understanding of the 1988 version of “Im Nin’alu.”

Madonna: “Isaac”

Madonna is one of the most successful singers of all time. Since the 1990s, she has been practicing and studying Kabbalah as taught by Philip Berg’s Kabbalah Centre, and expressing her spiritual outlook in her work, which can be viewed as connected to New Age spirituality (Clifton 2004). Her album *Ray of Light* (1998), which is mostly about motherhood and spirituality, includes the track “Die Another Day,” the video for which is filled with Kabbalistic symbols (Huss 2005).

“Isaac,”¹⁰ the song we will analyze next, is a track from the 2005 album *Confessions on a Dance Floor*. Selling more than ten million copies, it was the highest-selling album of the year in the Dance/Electronic Album category, topped the worldwide musical charts for dozens of weeks, and won many awards for Madonna, including the 2005 MTV award for Best Female Artist of the Year and an Emmy Award.¹¹ Following the album, the highly successful *Confessions Tour* was launched, bringing “Isaac” and other songs to millions of people worldwide.

While Haza’s 1984 version of LPIN represents a spiritual model of returning to “original” tradition and “ethnic” roots by recreating family customs, Madonna’s “Isaac” represents a spiritual model of yearning for the culture of the Other, which is perceived as a symbol of authentic spirituality.¹² Yitzhak (Isaac) Sinwani, a Yemenite Israeli, performs excerpts from LPIN in Madonna’s song, in which Sinwani is presented as Madonna’s yearned-for opposite Other. At the time, Sinwani was a Kabbalah teacher in Israeli branches of the Kabbalah Centre. When Madonna visited Israel, she heard Sinwani’s service as cantor, including his performance of some traditional Yemenite prayer songs. This encounter between the two led to Sinwani’s integration into Madonna’s album and tour. Some even argue the song’s name—“Isaac”—refers to him (Elazri 2009).

In performance, Sinwani himself serves as Madonna’s opposite in various ways. Sinwani, who stands in a corner of the stage, is usually filmed from an indirect angle in unofficial video clips of Madonna’s

shows. The photographs of the desert, which are projected in the live show, add to the Orientalist aspect of the admired “noble savage” (Said 1978). Sinwani is dressed in traditional “Oriental” style, wearing a galabiya (robe) and turban in desert hues, while Madonna is dressed in festive Western clothing in red and black. Sinwani stands motionless, while Madonna and several dancers draw the viewers’ gaze with their Western-style dancing. Although Sinwani represents “authentic” Yemenite culture, his beard is closely trimmed, which is more relatable for Westerners. He does not have the long sidelocks and long, curly beard traditional for Yemenite Jews.¹³

The musical excerpts Sinwani performs are not fully incorporated into the song. He sings them in Hebrew with a Yemenite accent, while Madonna sings in English. As a quotation inside a larger Western context, LPIN is digestible and even pleasant to Madonna’s audience. The shofar (ram’s horn) that Sinwani blows during the song adds an exotic musical effect. In Jewish tradition, the shofar is blown in synagogues on the High Holidays—on the Jewish New Year and at the end of the Day of Atonement. This religious act has been given many interpretations throughout Jewish history. The best known of them are awakening members of the community to return to God, opening the gates of Heaven, and calling to mind God’s testing of Abraham in the binding of Isaac. Thus, although the blowing of the shofar is isolated from its original context in traditional Jewish prayer, its use in a song entitled “Isaac” that calls people to a spiritual awakening and mentions the gates of Heaven is plausible and may lend the song a status similar to that of a prayer. But for most of the audience, the shofar is just another musical instrument symbolizing the admired, exotic Other. In the video, the notes played by the shofar combine with the rhythm of the melody and shouts of encouragement from the audience, while in traditional settings, the congregation is silent when the shofar is blown. Thus, symbols of folklore appear in the song, but are lifted from their context in a process emphasizing disembedding and re-embedding.

Madonna’s textual use of LPIN is significant as well. In order to analyze the use of elements of the liturgical poem in Madonna’s song, we present the complete lyrics of “Isaac” below. The italicized lyrics are sung by Siwani in Hebrew.

*Even if the doors of the wealthy are locked,
Heaven’s doors will never be locked.* [repeat twice]

*The Living God is exalted above the cherubim:
 All [the supernal beings] are lifted by His spirit.
 Staring up into the heavens,
 In this Hell that binds your hands.
 Will you sacrifice your comfort?
 Make your way in a foreign land?
 Wrestle with your darkness,
 Angels call your name.
 Can you hear what they're saying?
 Will you ever be the same?
 Mmm . . . *If they are locked, if they are locked.* [repeat]
 Remember, remember, never forget—
 All of your life has all been a test.
 You will find a gate that's open,
 Even though your spirit's broken.
 Open up my heart,
 And cause my lips to speak.¹⁴
 Bring the heaven and the stars
 Down to earth for me.
Even if the doors of the wealthy are locked . . .
 Mmm . . . *If they are locked, if they are locked.* [repeat three times]
*If they are locked, living God,
 Living God, exalted above the cherubim,
 [All the supernal beings] are lifted in His spirit.*
 (Chorus:) Wrestle with . . .
 Mmm . . . *If they are locked, if they are locked.* [repeat three times]
*If they are locked, living God,
 Living God, exalted above the cherubim,
 [All the supernal beings] are lifted in His spirit.**

Madonna's English lyrics convey a vastly different message than that of LPIN, and the spiritual atmosphere her adaptation evokes is also very different from the original. Madonna's lyrics are directed at the individual's spiritual journey, while LPIN stresses the glorification of God. This expresses the shift from God to the individual, which is typical of New Age spirituality, as opposed to traditional religions. New Agers focus upon the self in a worldly manner, dealing with their personal journeys and earthly matters while looking into the self, examining choices and questions of authenticity, and even deifying the self (Heelas 1996b; Ivakhiv 2003).

LPIN expresses interest in the heavenly realm—thanksgiving and praise to God, trust in God, the contrast with human beings who cannot be trusted, and salvation from Heaven. Madonna's theme is the

individual's spiritual test. It calls for transformation by means of spiritual awakening and alludes to the struggle between comfort and effort, or between light and darkness. She combines the stress on the self and worldliness in the words pleading God to "bring the heaven . . . down to earth for me." LPIN's gravity toward Heaven's doors turns here back to earth. Thus, although Madonna uses excerpts from LPIN and even alludes to its themes in her lyrics (Heaven, the heavenly entourage, God, angels, open gates), these themes are woven into new contexts and assigned different meanings.

For example, in Madonna's version, the theme of doors or gates in the song symbolizes a spiritual quest for freedom. In the performance, a female figure wrapped in fabric stands onstage dancing inside a large cage as if pleading for release. During the song, the cage opens and the dancer goes free, lets the fabric fall, and begins to dance. Photographs of the desert and a bird are projected onto a screen behind her, and we can see that the interpretation given to the idea of "doors that are not locked" has to do with the liberation of this figure—probably symbolizing the soul—and of the bird, which is shown in flight. Thus, while the word "doors" in LPIN serves to contrast the heavenly realm with the social one, in Madonna's lyrics the "gates"—in the sentence "You will find a gate that's open"—represent setting the soul free, or embarking on a spiritual quest.

The disembedding of Kabbalistic traditions reflects the theological contrast between contemporary spirituality (Western-eclectic, focused on the individual) and the type of spirituality that LPIN reflects (Kabbalistic, focused on God). For instance, while the angels call out the name of God in the poem, Madonna addresses the listener when she sings, "Angels call *your* name." Moreover, the song does not fit well with Kabbalistic tradition. While Madonna describes the angels sitting together with God, it is well known in Jewish sources that only God sits while the angels stand around him.¹⁵

Another difference is found in the linguistic form. While LPIN is written in formal Hebrew and Arabic with a specific meter and rhyme scheme, filled with esoteric allusions from Kabbalistic sources, Madonna's popular song is written in colloquial English (although at times its message is vague, such as in the sentence "Will you ever be the same?"). It is likely that Madonna's audience does not notice these fine differences because the quotes from LPIN serve as mere signifiers with no concrete signified marker. It is not the meaning of the specific words that is relevant to the song's message, but their

symbolic value as reflecting pure, authentic spirituality. Madonna's use of LPIN does not allude to the metaphysical world of traditional Kabbalah, but to an imaginary spiritual world that LPIN symbolizes.

The reification of the poem becomes strongly evident in the use of incomplete quotes from LPIN, such as the line beginning with the phrase "If [they] were locked" without completing the sentence, and going on to the phrase "living God." The tension caused by the unfinished conditional sentence goes undetected, since the excerpt is there only as a kind of decoration, to give the song an aura of spirituality, rather than for its exact semantics.

As mentioned above, LPIN in Madonna's song seeks to fulfill a spiritual desire completely different from Haza's 1984 piece—a search for what one perceives as the Other's tradition rather than one's own heritage. (Haza's 1988 piece is directed at providing a similar purpose for Westerners.) This is typical of New Age practitioners, for whom the "East" serves as a symbol of real spirituality and a provider of exotic terminology even as it allows the preservation of the Western paradigm (Hanegraaff 1998, 517; Ruah-Midbar 2015). Thus, New Agers express supposedly Eastern ideas that are actually Western. They selectively appropriate Eastern ideas that fill Western needs. East Asian thought systems that can be termed "Self religions" (Heelas 1996b) fuel those efforts, but occasionally New Age spokespersons suffice with mere Eastern *terminology* without its full ideational context (Hanegraaff 1998). This terminology serves to satisfy the Western need for self-criticism, directed at mainline Judeo-Christian tradition as well as at modern science (e.g., regarding God's image or Self-authority).

The use of quotations from other works is widespread in today's popular music. World music borrows from ethnic music as a matter of course, while preserving common features to suit the Western ear. Postcolonial scholars such as Gayatri Spivak have shown that colonized cultures can only give voice to positions permitted by the colonizer (Young 1990, 165). Thus, the musical-ethnic Other can express itself only through narrow Western stylistic constraints that allow its Otherness to be perceived as aesthetic and appealing. This may explain why some critics describe Madonna as "colonialist" (Hooks 1993, 77).¹⁶ Although Madonna's song portrays the Other as an ideal, it is actually an affirmation of the West. Against the clearly Western backdrop, ethnicity functions as an exotic decoration that gives the West a stamp of approval. On the one hand, indigenous

cultures (here, Yemenite-Jewish tradition) use resources available to them through world music in order to gain presence, but at the price of adopting features of the culture from which they try to differ. On the other hand, the hegemonic dominant culture (here, American) makes cultural differences and nuances banal by appropriating and reformatting their materials, inevitably changing these materials in the process (Guilbault 2006). The case of Madonna and Sinwani is no different.

One might say, cynically, that the main reason Western music appropriates Eastern or Kabbalistic symbols has more to do with the profitable Western music industry than a search for spiritual fulfillment (Barrett 1996, 245–46), but this would be too simplistic. Even as the ethnic component serves as an agent of Westernization, and even as Madonna's piece inevitably demonstrates a belief in the superiority of Western culture, the piece still gives the ethnic component a great deal of exposure in Western popular culture that it would not receive otherwise. By including Sinwani in her show, Madonna gives him a prestigious performing venue, although his place in the show renders him marginal compared with her. As representatives of "East" and "West," this reflects the putative balance of power between them. Madonna's inclusion of Kabbalistic, Yemenite-Jewish folklore in her song lends that tradition some of her own prestige. But because the song is a Western work, the original composition is adapted to the dominant Western setting. The Other ethnicity loses somewhat in the interaction. Yet, without this interaction, the Other ethnicity would have no voice at all in Western popular culture.

As a representative of Western culture, Madonna uses her song to examine Otherness without assimilating into it, and maintains the tension between "East" and "West." This reflects Western individuals' need for some distance from what they consider non-Western. It allows them to preserve their Westernness while having a tourist-like experience provided by exotic images. Stereotypical as such images may be, they provide an object for Westerners' spiritual yearning. Although Westerners see their own culture as superior, they perceive it as unable to provide a sense of pure, authentic spirituality. Madonna's spiritual model expresses an honest desire to flee Western culture yet at the same time an explicit refusal to abandon it completely—an inherent paradox in New Age spirituality.

While the works of Madonna and Haza exemplify a dialectic between the West and what the West perceives as Other, the work of Offer Nissim, which we will analyze next, illustrates a desire to blur

all differences between the original/home-base culture and the culture of an Other, as well as between the original or authentic, and an image or reproduction of it.

Offer Nissim: Remix

Offer Nissim, an Israeli Yemenite-Jewish musician who began his career in the 1980s, is a DJ and a successful producer. He has won several awards for his work: *DJ Mag* ranked him forty-third of the world's top one hundred DJs for the year 2009 (see *DJ Mag* 2009), and the song "Diva" (performed by the singer Dana International, another Israeli Yemenite-Jewish and queer musician), for which he was the producer, won first place in the 1998 Eurovision competition. His remix of "Isaac," which he created at Madonna's request, was a significant milestone in his career. It combines musical materials from Haza's and Madonna's songs, resulting in a new creation representing a third spiritual approach.

Nissim's remix belongs to the genre of Trance music, which is well-developed in Israel. In the Rave scene, Trance music, with its musical structure of ups and downs and strong percussive rhythm, serves as one of several methods for achieving ecstasy (St. John 2004, 153). Ecstasy in the Rave scene is also achieved by crowding hundreds of people on the dance floor, the movement of the dancing itself, darkness, effects of light, and the use of mind-altering drugs. Practitioners in the Rave scene advocate losing the Self as a means of finding it. Nissim's blurring of the boundaries between various types of music in the remix suits the rave's blurring of the individual's boundaries in order to trigger a mystical, oceanic experience.

In Israel, the Rave community was persecuted during the 1990s by the police, and their events denounced as "acid parties" due to the use of drugs characteristic to the scene. Just as in the case of Eastern music in the 1970s, institutional hostility eventually served as a catalyst for identity formation by the excluded group. This time, the construction of identity was based on the global Trance community on the one hand and on New Age spirituality on the other, creating a transnational spiritual identification. The practitioners of this group embarked on a search for self, community, and freedom, while defying hegemony (Meadan 2001; Nahumzon 2003).

At raves, the DJ, acting as both a "pastor" of sorts and a technological-musical artist, becomes a "technoshaman." Trance parties are seen as

the current incarnation of ancient tribal religious rituals, with the DJ serving as a postmodern shaman who uses electronic music to lead his congregation into a trance state (Larkin 2003, 8; Martínková 2008, 43). In video clips of Nissim's performances of the remix of "Im Nin'alu," his technoshamanistic role is obvious; he adapts his hand movements, dancing, and facial expressions to the music, shaping the music in real-time into a sensual and moving work.¹⁷ A strong percussive rhythm throughout the piece serves as a base for adapted excerpts of Haza's, Madonna's, and Sinwani's vocals. Nissim takes many liberties with his adaptations, artificially lengthening the vocals and adding various effects. The remix expresses no desire to be true to its original sources.

All the musical pieces we have analyzed, and the three spiritual models they represent, wear a postmodern guise both musically (Mitchell 1989) and in terms of their spiritual character (Huss 2007). But it is in the third model that these postmodern characteristics are expressed in a bold, demonstrative manner. Thus, this spiritual model, which we term "remix spirituality," is *ultra*-postmodern. For instance, the postmodern attribute of undermining originality and authenticity reaches its peak in Nissim's remix, where it is impossible to distinguish between a quote, an adaptation, or an original invention, between pre-existing and new material, between a copy of the original and a processed reproduction. Also, sticking to sources is hardly Nissim's way of expressing authenticity, as evidenced by both his simultaneous playing of various materials and by his musical morphing, thus blurring the differences between the original sources. This represents one big step beyond world music's elimination of the Other's cultural differences. The remix's creativity and experiential effect derive not from the originality of its materials but from the weaving together of old and new compositions. Ultra-postmodern spirituality has no interest in the quest for original materials or tradition, but rather in consciously and creatively inventing them (Ivakhiv 2003; Huss 2007). Artificially creating the self or the mystical experience does not threaten authenticity in this model; every means is legitimate in the creation of a surface-level experience of authenticity engaged in the search for self. Namely, the experiential effect of authenticity is authenticity. Obviously, this is very different from Haza's desire for own-ethnic authenticity and Madonna's appreciation of the Other's tradition.

Nissim's piece expresses blurred boundaries in various ways, two of which have been addressed above: first, boundaries of musical

sources, and second, boundaries of the Self in the mystical state created in the Trance scene. Another dimension to the boundary blurring is Nissim's queer identity. A queer perspective is valuable in the analysis of many issues that go beyond gender and sexuality (Sedgwick 1993). In our case, it is relevant for discussing queer identity's capacity for undermining borders—challenging a suppressive hegemonic discourse and ideas such as a stable solid self and binary categories perceived as natural (Butler 1990). As a declared queer (Kedar 1997), Nissim's remix embodies queerness by blurring borders as part of a conscious construction of identity and mystical experience. This stance expresses an ultra-postmodern authenticity by designing an experience that focuses only on the surface level rather than searching for "depth." The preference for the surface level over depth is another prominent postmodern attribute. Focusing on the surface enables a boundary-blurring experience seen as preferable to searching for authenticity in the depth of a given tradition. It offers a superficial experience and identity (a moment experienced as mystical, an identity experienced as authentic) rather than a deep one (a truly mystical experience, a really authentic identity). When individual experience is sanctified (Heelas 1996b), even if artificially generated, it becomes the criterion for authenticity.

The musical expression of superficiality (in the sense discussed above) is evident in Nissim's creation of a stylistic common denominator for the musical materials he quotes, using Trance-style percussive rhythm throughout, and adaptation of the original material. Although Nissim uses music belonging to traditional Yemenite-Jewish culture, it loses its uniqueness when it is immersed in Nissim's pot-pourri of technological effects and the Trance rhythm.

The artistic design of Nissim's rendition seems no different from any other work in the Rave scene. The merging of materials makes LPIN equal to anything else that might help the technoshaman lead his congregation to a spiritual experience of merging. Thus, Nissim's use of various musical sources to create something completely new is an example of eclecticism. The remix genre is in line with other cultural phenomena that reflect the same type of logic and aesthetic characteristic of the postmodern condition. This can also be put in other relevant perspectives: "the present-day crossroads of old paradigms and new theories, . . . globalization, . . . musical construction . . . , the form of music transnationalism can provide an intriguing site of mediation between . . . authenticity and hybridity" (Zheng 2010, 18).

The extent of Nissim's eclecticism is much higher than that of his predecessors. Haza's 1984 piece relies heavily on Yemenite tradition and the original text, and may be seen as the least eclectic one we have examined. Her 1988 piece takes a step away from the original texts, using only a few parts of LPIN and adding an English stanza. Madonna's "Isaac" is intermediate, combining LPIN with Western traits (language, dance, and costume), thus placing LPIN into a new interpretive context. These characteristics also find expression in postmodern spirituality (Huss 2007), which combines materials from various ancient traditions without insisting on any particular source or culture from which spiritual truth is supposed to come. On the contrary, New Age spiritual teachers create eclectic texts on the basis of various sources that are supposedly identical to one another, according to the tenets of perennialistic philosophy. As a result of the massive rendering of materials by spiritual New Age spokespeople, we hear "the same message from everywhere" (Hammer 2001a). Moreover, adherents of postmodern spirituality create individual "mix-and-match" religions, drawing from various sources and cultures and endowing them with new and personal meaning (e.g., Hanegraaff 2002, 249–50).

For many contemporary Westerners dealing with those postmodern challenges, eclectic, superficial, and artificial constructions of spiritual experience (or of identity) are far from inauthentic; they are rather the inevitable way of outdoing authenticity. Keeping in mind that culture and identity are constantly reinvented, we should go beyond binaries and judgment of true and authentic identities (Bruner 1994). Currently, for many practitioners, authenticity can no longer be found in a deep search for true origins; nevertheless, profound, true experiences are still available in this new postmodern context, in renewed forms. Thus, one should not dismiss the artistic efforts analyzed above as improper or a valueless, but as a continuation of the everlasting invention of tradition.

In sum, while the songs of Madonna and Haza exemplify a dialogue with traditional materials—whether these materials are their own or come from the culture of the Other—and strive for the authenticity that LPIN represents for them, the ultra-postmodern techniques and logic of Nissim's remix make such efforts superfluous. Nissim's work challenges the very existence of Otherness in its quest for merging and blending. It subverts an entire system of values, practices, and ideals, from issues of musical and cultural hierarchies to questions of truth and power.

Conclusion: Spirituality and Discontent

An examination of the different uses of LPIN in the works analyzed above shows a steady decrease in the use of the original lyrics and increasing reification of them. In the first, traditionalist model, exemplified by Ofra Haza's 1984 recording, the lyrics are transformed from symbols that function in the context of the language and culture in which they were created to symbols of folkloric roots. In this model, the content of the text is less significant than it is in its traditional context, and it symbolizes Yemenite-Jewish culture with its distinctive beliefs and practices.

In the second model, seen in Haza's 1988 recording and to a greater extent in Madonna's song "Isaac," the lyrics become a symbol of "authentic spirituality" for a Western audience with Orientalist–New Age leanings yearning for the culture of the Other. The content of the text retains some significance, although sometimes its original context is disrupted or lost. The words no longer represent the cultural context from which they came, but rather an imagined world of pure New Age–style spirituality. This recursive process renders LPIN a symbol of a symbol, a simulacrum (see Baudrillard 1994).

Finally, in the third model represented by Offer Nissim's remix, the words become one effect among many, all of which are a means toward an ecstatic experience. In its arbitrariness, the text symbolizes at most a vague universal spiritual urge that could also be attributed to the songs of Haza and Madonna. In this model, however, any text could serve the purpose of the technoshaman, since no special value is assigned to this text or any other. It is here that the arbitrary nature of the signifier (see De Saussure 2010) reaches its peak.

In the process of reification, the spiritual entity referenced gradually changes from the particular to the universal and metacultural. LPIN thus changes from a transparent symbol reflecting a specific tradition into an "opaque" symbol of mere "spirituality." The vaguer the referent becomes, the more it loses depth in favor of superficiality, and the more constricted the signifier becomes. At first, the opening stanza of LPIN was enough as a spiritual symbol. Gradually, it was reduced to a sentence or two, until in the end, only the two words "Im nin'alu" ("if [they] were locked") became an object symbolizing the entire liturgical poem. The grammatical error was no problem because the semantic meaning was gone. The absence of other folkloric elements, such as costume, accent, and musical instruments,

also demonstrates the loss of the specific traditional context. It should be obvious that, in this brief historical process, the main content of the liturgical poem, the theological doctrine it reflects, and other components of Yemenite folk tradition have been lost—or reified—as well. We are witnesses to a living example of the invention of tradition (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983); we see how a spiritual urge that expresses itself in a work that yearns for a specific tradition actually leads to a dramatic change in that work, since—as already stated—a tradition must change in order to be preserved. Just like identity, tradition is unstable, multifaceted, fragmented, and constantly changing and being constructed in the course of negotiation between groups of interest. Accordingly, various methods have served to adopt, consume, and appropriate the past (Outka 2009).

The first spiritual model, which is characterized by a traditionalist tendency, expresses an attempt to return to the sources—the traditional customs and characteristics of the individual's ethnic group or family—a particularistic choice. As a contemporary Western phenomenon, the restoration of “authentic” tradition is destined never to be completely fulfilled. The second spiritual model seeks not one's own roots, but rather yearns for the Other—an exotic, distant culture that supposedly preserves the spiritual truths once known in the far past. While the first model is available to those who perceive their roots as culturally rich, the second one allows the wider population to reach spiritual contentment. Paradoxically, as a culture Westerners imagine in order to fulfill their yearning for authenticity, the exotic culture must be designed in a way that will be attractive to Westerners interested in traditional symbolism without being overly burdened by the tradition's minutiae. It must echo a perennialistic call (which is typical of New Age spirituality) that will fulfill the needs that have pushed Westerners so far in their quest.

The search for what is perceived as authentic and original shared by the first two models distinguishes them from the third model, that of the remix. This spiritual model seeks neither truth nor depth, but contents itself with the surface level, a prominent postmodern attribute. All means—technological effects and symbols of any sort—are legitimate in order to achieve the end: an ecstatic experience. The main attribute of this model is the carousel of elements drawn from any tradition available; the only criterion is to make the desired effect more powerful. Therefore, the symbols do not represent any particular thing. Instead, their purpose is to create a kind of confusion or

intentional illusion (augmented by the use of psychoactive drugs) that leads to a mystical fusion. This approach—although it does not annul the tradition of the past—has no obligation to it. It focuses on the present. Instead of revelation or discovery, it strives for invention. Instead of striving for truth, it strives for an experience.

The common denominator of the various models is the paradoxical attitude they express toward Western culture. They retain elements of Western culture even as they express their dissatisfaction with it. From restoration to remix, it seems that everyone wants to have something unusual and unconventional—something from the distant past, from the East, or from the Rave scene—to allay their feelings of discontent at the loss of authenticity in the postmodern condition. Exploration of one's heritage, reaching out for a more authentic other, or even undermining the very notion of authenticity are all expressions of Western discontent, responding to this perceived loss of authenticity.

Zefat Academic College and the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies

(Marianna Ruah-Midbar Shapiro)

Zefat Academic College (Omri Ruah Midbar)

Safed, Israel

Notes

1. We wish to differentiate our standpoint as researchers from the positions of other cultural-political practitioners and creators as well as other scholars. When referring to the apparently binary tensions between “West” and “East,” we address nothing but their common images and their fetishized use by various interest groups. In order to avoid encumbrance, we problematize those terms only occasionally by using quotation marks, whereas it might be more accurate to use them all along. Thus, we use such terms in the pragmatic and contingent context of their popular usage. For the sake of further discussion, we should note that Israeli society is considered Western, but also includes various “Eastern” groups in its multicultural framework. For more about the Easternization of the West thesis and its faults, see Ruah-Midbar 2015.

2. The translation of “Im Nin’alu” that appears in this paper is our own. For the liturgical poem in its entirety and a primary interpretation in Hebrew, see <http://old.piyut.org.il/textual/english/139.html>. (All URLs in this paper were retrieved on June 11, 2017).

3. While there are more contemporary musical versions of LPIN, we chose these works in order to show the various cultural-spiritual models they represent.

4. This variation may be heard at the following link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkrlV9RZpi8.

5. Regarding the reinvention of traditional Yemenite costumes, see Guilat 2001. As mentioned previously, we do not claim that Haza represents authentic tradition but rather describe her efforts to embody authenticity.

6. Several other Israeli singers, including David Broza and Yehuda Poliker, dared to challenge the Ashkenazic hegemony by expressing their Mediterranean cultural roots in their music. They mixed elements of folk and ethnic music with Western influences to create “ethnic rock” (Regev 1992, 8). Their albums—which, like Haza’s, were released in the 1980s—heralded a change in the Israeli musical consensus.

7. Being fluid and heterogenous rather than solid and homogeneous, “Eastern identity” is not referred to here from an external hegemonic, ethnocentric gaze nor by Western universalistic standards ignoring cultural diversity. Accordingly, we delve into differences and transformations in the complex and multifaceted “Eastern identity,” acknowledging identity’s creative role in self-representation (Openheimer 2012, 12–14).

8. Available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcffo5-jTLM.

9. A clip of her speaking about this is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ye65Wr6Z0iY.

10. A video is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9mys-bj4Jk.

11. See Wikipedia, “Confessions on a Dance Floor.” Available at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessions_on_a_Dance_Floor#Charts; see also the Billboard report for 2006 at www.billboard.com/charts/2006/year-end.

12. It is not our intention to dismiss this spirituality (or any other kind) as fabricated. In our view, “true” authenticity is unattainable and tradition is constantly reinvented (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). We see the spiritual yearning for authenticity represented by symbolic Others as no less “authentic” than attempts to reconstruct one’s family tradition. It is a legitimate and fascinating path available to contemporary Westerners.

13. It is worth noting that in a notorious episode in Israeli history, secular Ashkenazi Jews cut off the sidelocks of Yemenite immigrants upon their arrival in Israel, because they found them strange and unbecoming the “new Jew” (Almog 2003, 90).

14. These lines are probably a variation of “Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will praise your glory. You do not desire sacrifice. . . . My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Pss. 51).

15. Based on Ezekiel 1:7: “Their feet were straight feet.”

16. Alongside the criticism of Madonna’s treatment of Other cultures, some note her parodies and satires of Western culture and her play with Western identities. See Hoesterey 2001, 114; Georges-Claude 2002, 188; Fouz-Hernández and Jarman-Ivens 2004, xvii, 27, 127.

17. For examples of Nissim’s performances see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=tW6VhNBTNW8 (which is blocked in the United States on copyright grounds), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eB7fjoyxaUA>, or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdgmAXUzH-U>.

References

- Almog, Oz. 2000. *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2003. “From Blorit to Ponytail: Israeli Culture Reflected in Popular Hairstyles.” *Israel Studies* 8 (2): 82–117.

- Aubert, Laurent, Anthony Seeger, and Carla Ribeiro. 2007. *The Music of the Other: New Challenges for Ethnomusicology in a Global Age*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Barrett, James. 1996. "World Music, Nation, and Postcolonialism." *Cultural Studies* 10 (2): 237–47.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 1998. "Postmodern Religion?" In *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, edited by Paul Heelas, with the assistance of David Martin and Paul Morris, 55–78. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Beyer, Peter. 1998. "Globalisation and the Religion of Nature." In *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, edited by Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel, 11–21. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bohlman, Philip Vilas. 2002. *World Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Born, Georgina, and David Hesmondhalgh. 2000. *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bruner, Edward M. 1994. "Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism." *American Anthropologist* 96 (2): 397–415.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Clifton, Keith E. 2004. "Queer Hearing and the Madonna Queen." In *Madonna's Drowned Worlds: New Approaches to Her Cultural Transformations, 1983–2003*, edited by Santiago Fouz-Hernández and Freya Jarman-Ivens, 55–67. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- De Saussure, Ferdinand. 2010. "Arbitrary Social Values and the Linguistic Sign." In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, edited by Charles Lemert, 152–60. Philadelphia, PA: Westview.
- DJ Mag. 2009. "Top 100 DJs—43: Offer Nissim." Accessed June 11, 2017. <https://djmag.com/node/9461>.
- Doktòr, Tadeusz. 2003. "New Age and Fundamentalism." Paper presented at the Center for Studies of New Religions Conference, Vilnius, Lithuania, April 9–12. http://www.cesnur.org/2003/vil2003_doktor_1.htm.
- Elazri, Jeni. 2009. "Isaac Sinwani's Tour with Madonna" [in Hebrew]. *Mynet*, December 11. <http://www.mynetherzliya.co.il/article/143089>.
- Erlmann, Veit. 1996. "The Aesthetics of the Global Imagination: Reflections on World Music in the 1990s." In *Public Culture* 8 (3): 467–87.
- Fouz-Hernández, Santiago, and Freya Jarman-Ivens, eds. 2004. *Madonna's Drowned Worlds: New Approaches to Her Cultural Transformations, 1983–2003*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Georges-Claude, Guilbert. 2002. *Madonna as Postmodern Myth: How One Star's Self-Construction Rewrites Sex, Gender, Hollywood, and the American Dream*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Guilat, Yael. 2001. "The Yemeni Ideal in Israeli Culture and Arts." *Israel Studies* 6 (3): 26–53.

- Guilbault, Jocelyne. 2006. "On Redefining the 'Local' through World Music." In *Ethnomusicology: A Contemporary Reader*, edited by Jennifer Post, 137–46. New York: Routledge.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. "New Ethnicities." In *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 441–49. London: Taylor and Francis Books.
- . 2000. "Who Needs 'Identity'?" In *Identity: A Reader*, edited by Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans, and Peter Redman, 15–30. London: SAGE Publications in association with the Open University.
- Hamilton, Malcolm. 2002. "The Easternisation Thesis: Critical Reflections." *Religion* 32 (3): 243–58.
- Hammer, Olav. 2001a. "Same Message from Everywhere: The Sources of Modern Revelation." In *New Age Religion and Globalization*, edited by Mikael Rothstein, 42–56. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.
- . 2001b. *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*. Leiden, Netherlands; Boston, MA; Köln, Germany: Brill.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1998. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- . 2002. "New Age Religion." In *Religions in the Modern World*, edited by Linda Woodhead, Paul Fletcher, Hiroko Kawanami, and David Smith, 249–63. New York: Routledge.
- Hasan-Rokem, Galit. 1997. "Studying Folk Culture and Popular Culture" [in Hebrew]. *Theory and Criticism* 10: 5–13.
- Heelas, Paul. 1996a. "Introduction: Detraditionalization and its Rivals." In *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, edited by Paul Heelas, Scot Lash, and Paul Morris, 1–20. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- . 1996b. *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- . 2008. *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Heelas, Paul, Scot Lash, and Paul Morris, eds. 1996. *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoesterer, Ingeborg. 2001. *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hooks, Bell. 1993. "Power to the Pussy: We Don't Want to be Dicks in Drag." In *Madonnarama: Essays on Sex and Popular Culture*, edited by Lisa Frank and Paul Smith, 65–80. Pittsburgh, PA: Cleis.
- Huss, Boaz. 2005. "All You Need Is LAV: Madonna and Postmodern Kabbalah." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95 (4): 611–24.
- . 2007. "The New Age of Kabbalah: Contemporary Kabbalah, the New Age, and Postmodern Spirituality." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 6 (2): 107–25.
- . 2014. "Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29 (1): 47–60.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1977. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Ivakhiv, Adrian. 2003. "Nature and Self in New Age Pilgrimage." *Culture and Religion* 4 (1): 93–118.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1991. *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kedar, Yair. 1997. "Thank You for the Music" [in Hebrew]. *The Pink Time* 12 (Sept.): 5–7.
- Larkin, Christopher B. 2003. "Turn On, Tune In, and Trance Out: The Exploration ofentheogens and the Emergence of a Global Techno-Shamanic Ritual." MA thesis, Lewis and Clark College.
- Lewis, James R., and Olav Hammer, eds. 2007. *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Martínková, Libuše. 2008. "Computer Mediated Religious Life of Technoshamans and Cybershamans." *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 3 (1): 43–60.
- Meadan, Bryan. 2001. "Trancensional Alienation: Moral Panics, Trance Music Culture, and Transnational Identity in Israel." MA thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Mitchell, Tony. 1989. "Performance and the Postmodern in Pop Music." *Theatre Journal* 41 (3): 273–93.
- Nahumzon, Eyal. 2003. "Dancing the New Age: Trance Culture in Israel as New Age Spirituality" [in Hebrew]. MA thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Narváez, Peter, and Martin Laba. 1986. *Media Sense: The Folklore-Popular Culture Continuum*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Openhaimer, Yoḥai. 2012. *What Is Being Authentic? Eastern Poetry in Israel* [in Hebrew]. Tel-Aviv, Israel: Resling.
- Outka, Elizabeth. 2009. *Consuming Traditions: Modernity, Modernism, and the Commodified Authentic*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Possamai, Adam. 2003. "Alternative Spiritualities and the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *Culture and Religion* 4 (1): 31–45.
- Regev, Motti. 1992. "Israeli Rock; or, A Study in the Politics of Local Authenticity." *Popular Music* 11 (1): 1–14.
- . 1996. "Musica Mizrakhit, Israeli Rock, and National Culture in Israel." *Popular Music* 15 (3): 275–84.
- Regev, Motti, and Edwin Seroussi. 2004. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rothstein, Mikael, ed. 2001. *New Age Religion and Globalization*. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.
- Rountree, Kathryn. 2001. "The Past is a Foreigners' Country: Goddess Feminists, Archaeologists, and the Appropriation of Prehistory." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16 (1): 5–27.
- Ruah-Midbar, Marianna. 2006. "The New Age Culture in Israel: A Methodological Introduction and the 'Conceptual Network'" [in Hebrew]. PhD diss., Bar Ilan University.
- . 2007. "'Back to Paradise' in New Age Thought: Images of an Ideal Past in the History of the Jewish People." In *Dancing in a Fallow Land: The New*

- Age in Israel* [in Hebrew], edited by Iddo Tavory, 28–59. Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuchad (Red Line).
- . 2015. “‘India, Thank G-d for He is Good’: A View on Jewish Israelis in Light of the Easternization of the West Thesis” [in Hebrew]. *Theory and Criticism* 44 (Summer): 311–25.
- Ruah-Midbar, Marianna, and Adam Klin Oron. 2010. “Jew Age: Jewish Praxis in Israeli New Age Discourse.” *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies* 5: 33–63.
- Ruah Midbar, Omri, and Marianna Ruah-Midbar. 2013. “The Dynamics of a Cultural Struggle in Academia: The Case of New Age Music Research.” *Cultural Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular Culture* 1: 67–90. <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum//volume11//pdf//Midbar.pdf>.
- Sagi, Avi. 2003. *A Challenge: Returning to Tradition* [in Hebrew]. Tel Aviv, Israel: Bar-Ilan University; Shalom Hartman Institute; HaKibbutz HaMeuchad.
- Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 1993. *Tendencies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Seroussi, Edwin, and Motti Regev. 2013. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* [in Hebrew]. Ra’anana, Israel: The Open University.
- Shemoelof, Mati. 2007. “Reflections of Musica Mizrahit” [in Hebrew]. *Tav+ Music, Arts, and Society* 7: 44–53. <http://www.e-mago.co.il/Editor/calt-1614.htm>.
- Shils, Edward. 1981. *Tradition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- St. John, Graham. 2004. *Rave Culture and Religion*. London: Routledge.
- Storey, John. 2003. *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Taylor, Timothy Dean. 1997. *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2007. *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Tubi, Yosef. 1987. “Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic in Yemenite Jews’ Poetry: Especially in Rabbi Shalom Shabbazi’s Poetry” [in Hebrew]. *Pe’amim* 30: 3–22.
- Turino, Thomas. 2000. *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- York, Michael. 2001. “New Age Commodification and Appropriation of Spirituality.” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16 (3): 361–72.
- Young, Robert. 1990. *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Zaidman, Nurit. 2003. “Commercialization of Religious Objects: A Comparison between Traditional and New Age Religions.” *Social Compass* 50 (3): 345–60.
- Zheng, Su. 2010. *Claiming Diaspora: Music, Transnationalism, and Cultural Politics in Asian/Chinese America*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

MARIANNA RUAH-MIDBAR SHAPIRO is the founder and head of the Department of Mysticism and Spiritualities and a senior lecturer at Zefat Academic College, as well as the founder and head of the Spirituality MA Program at the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies.

She is a researcher of contemporary alternative culture and spiritualities. (M.RuahMidbar@gmail.com)

OMRI RUAH MIDBAR is a researcher of popular music and digital culture. He is a lecturer at Zefat Academic College. (o.ruahmidbar@outlook.com)

