

BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT AND MUSICAL CONCEPTS  
OF A TRADITIONAL YIDDISH FOLKSINGER

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# Case Study of a Traditional Yiddish Folksinger

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Note:

There are several problems I have encountered in the course of preparing this study.

Most of them center around the questions involved with translation and transliteration; for instance:

- how many of the ~~terms~~ terms should be left in Yiddish?
- should such terms be glossed as they occur or should there be a glossary at the back of the study?
- should Yiddish terms be ~~transcribed~~ <sup>transcribed</sup> or transliterated?

For the present time, I have not attempted to deal conclusively with these problems, but have concentrated instead ~~on~~ arrangement and analysis of the material. It ~~is~~ might be useful to have a few seminars with other members of the Folksong Project, to work on these problems and others, and perhaps to achieve some uniformity <sup>in the</sup> ~~in~~ form, makeup and ~~style~~ technical aspects of the studies. Other problems that it might be useful to discuss would be: how much ~~to~~ include in the way of references to methodological <sup>theoretical</sup> and other material: Hymes, Goldstein, etc.; how much visual material (charts, photographs, etc.) to include. We might also discuss problems of annotation and <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ song text and repertoire analysis.

## Introduction

This case study is the outgrowth of two courses in connection with the Yiddish Folksong Project at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research:

1. The Anthropology of Ashkenazic Jewry II  
(Yiddish W4303y, Spring 1973)
2. Topics in Yiddish Ethnomusicology  
(Yiddish G6601x, Fall 1974)

The aims of the Yiddish Folksong Project, under the direction of Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, were to explore the role of music and other forms of expressive behavior in East European Jewish life through interviewing individuals who were former members of East European Jewish communities and by then examining the interview data.

Rather than attempt to form generalizations on the basis of this data, the goal was to compose case studies of individual singers. These studies would, ideally, include the researchers' arrangements of and insights into the material; the core of the material would consist of the informants' own words.

The individual upon whom this study is based is Jack (Yitschak) Milstein, a tailor presently living in Brooklyn, New York, who formerly lived in Shidlovtse (Szydlowiec) Poland (pop.<sup>in</sup> 1939, approx. 10,000). Mr. Milstein is an acquaintance of my family - in fact, he and my father had met in concentration camp; Mr. Milstein refers to my father as his lager brider (camp brother).



Although I had known Mr. Milstein only slightly before we began the project, I had noticed (and my parents **pointed** out) that he seemed to have an exceptional memory for detail, a strong nostalgic but not blindly sentimental attachment to his former home town, and a ready supply of songs and anecdotes. I asked Mr. Milstein ~~wh~~ether he would be interested in being interviewed for a YIVO project concerning Jewish songs and Jewish life in Eastern Europe, and he enthusiastically agreed to participate.

The ten interviews that supplied the data for this case study were conducted during the period Feb. 27, 1973 - Sept. 18, 1974. They took place at the home of my parents, Frania and Boris Blum, in Brooklyn, New York. They were usually held in the living room - we each sat in upholstered chairs and the <sup>cassete</sup> ~~tape~~ recorder was placed on a pillow on a table between us. In some of the interviews, a hand-held microphone was used; in others, a condensor microphone. Each interview was recorded on 90-minute cassettes (45 minutes on each side). On two occasions, only one side was recorded. ~~In most of the interviews,~~ only Mr. Milstein and myself participated; people often walked in and out of the room, however, and on several occasions other people participated in the interviews, offering comments, questions, etc.

The first interview was almost entirely unstructured; some of the subsequent interviews were conducted with the help of questionnaires supplied by the YIVO folksong project and in some cases compiled ~~and~~ or adapted by members of the project seminars. My approach was to sometimes direct the interviews so far as general subject-matter was concerned, but to in no way attempt to ask leading questions. Even where broad subject matter was concerned, I often allowed Mr. Milstein to channel the conversation, since one of my aims was to find out what the areas Mr. Milstein considered important were. We often discussed the topic of future interviews ahead of time, <sup>either one of us</sup> suggesting topics, etc. Once an area was mentioned during an interview, I attempted, if it was at all possible without breaking the flow of the conversation, to obtain more specific details - <sup>ie</sup> who sang a particular song, how, what general occasions, what specific occasions, etc. In general, I attempted to direct the conversation from broader to constantly more detailed information.

The case study attempts to apply my own analysis of Mr. Milstein's areas of concern vis-a-vis Shidlovtsse. I have made no attempt to "verify" or "prove" his statement outside of detailed questioning during the interviews themselves. The material is presented as no more and no less than what it purports to be - the remembrances and opinions of a former member of an East European Jewish



community that was destroyed by the Nazis.

The organization of the material into four broad areas of concern; biographical account; musical concepts, attitude, esthetic; transmission, learning and acquisition; and performance settings and occasions, is based upon ideas generated and agreed upon by the members of the YIVO Folksong Project seminars. They have been imposed from without, to lend readability and uniformity to the studies and to lend some manageability to a somewhat amorphous body of data (although some of the interviews were structured, <sup>related</sup> ~~like~~ material often appeared scattered throughout several interviews.) The sub-categories are based upon my understanding of Mr. Milstein's areas of concern, as well as by the limits of the material available; the ten interviews have by no means exhausted Mr. Milstein's repertoire or reminiscences.

I have attempted to clearly differentiate my own analysis from Mr. Milstein's own descriptions; each section contains my analysis and comments; the indented material is my free translation of material from the interviews, which were originally conducted in Yiddish. Although the translation is free rather than literal, it closely conforms to the Yiddish. All the material that was recorded is included in this case study, with the exception of:

- song texts (only first lines have been included here)
- long passages describing the plots of plays of



films (these have been condensed, or, at the least, indicated.)

-repetitious statements.

- my own questions, except where Mr. Milsten's statement or the general topic was clearly prompted by my own question or comment.

- the material from interview #10, which has been incorporated into the chronology and genealogy  
Yiddish terms have been retained in several cases:

-where this terminology is indicative of concepts or categorization.

-when the terminology describes specific East European Jewish items, acts or concepts.

-in the cases of certain idiomatic expressions.

(English glosses will eventually be provided, but for the present time the expressions are left unglossed.)

The following conventions should be noted:

-Yiddish terms have been underlined.

-Mr. Milstein's statements have been indented and single-spaced.

-My analysis has not been indented.

-Comments by myself within the interviews have been included in the indented material, but placed within (parentheses).

-Comments <sup>during the interviews</sup> by people other than Mr. Milstein and myself have been included within the ~~xx~~ indented material, in (parentheses), prefaced by the person's name.

-After each indented passage, I have indicated the tape and side from which it came by giving this information in [square brackets]. ie, tape 1, side 2 = [1-2]

- Any glosses within the indented material have been placed within [square brackets].

For more accurate and more detailed information about the interviews, the Yiddish transcripts or the tapes themselves must be consulted.

Biographical Account

Most of the biographical material obtained during the interviews with Mr. Milstein has been integrated into the three main categories: musical concepts, attitudes and esthetic; transmission, learning and acquisition; and performance settings and occasions. The biographical account in this section will therefore be rather brief. Preceding it will be a geneology and <sup>condensed from material</sup> chronology/collected during the tenth interview, September 18, 1974.



Yitschak Milshteyn

b. Shidlovtse June 10, 1914  
mother - Rokhl Draynodl of Shidlovtse. occupation - kept d' gesheft fun galanterye oyfn mark.  
father - Motek (Mordkhe) Milshtayn of Shidlovtse. occupation - turner - "holts tokazsh."  
siblings - 2 sisters, 2 brothers.

Chronology:

I. Childhood and Schooling in Shidlovtse.

- 1) b. Shidlovtse June 10, 1914. grew up in Shidlovtse.
- 2) Education - in Shidlovtse, kheyder and Foylishe shkole. from age of 4. 1918-1925. one-half day in ~~kheyder~~ shkole and one-half day in kheyder. learned alif-bays, khumehh, etc.
- 3) Talmud-Toyre - 2 years - from age 6 to age 8. (better teaching than in other school. another system.)

Influential people during his childhood:

- Aunt - now in Argentina - Dvore Perl Draynodl. (today Aichenbaum).
- Neighbor - Milke Paris.
- Sister - Tsipore - girls came to sing on Shabes.
- Chazn - Avrum Gerberman.

II. Work as tailor in Shidlovtse and Warsaw.  
(lived in Shidlovtse until Nov. 11, 1942.)

- 1) Began learning tailoring \_\_\_\_\_ in Shidlovtse.
- 2) worked at tailoring \_\_\_\_\_ in Shidlovtse.
- 3) Warsaw - seasonal work in years 1934-1939. Seasons were approx. from Oct-Jan, March - June.
- 4) in Shidlovtse - also took nacht-kursn (ovnt-kursn) instead of high school. 1928-1930  
Influential people in Shidlovtse.

- Leibush Chustecki - friend - professional artist.
- Moyshe-Khiel Shayn - artist (as hobby) (wasn't tailor by profession).



(influential people in Shidlovtsse-~~Warsaw~~, continued:)

Leibl Vasershtayn - from Dramatishn Krayz .

Velvl (Volf) Shtark -<sup>YM</sup>/learned shnayderay from him.

Musically  
/Influential people in Warsaw(not personal friends; from theater):

Yosele Kolodne (singer).

Lola Folman (singer).

Kipnes(singer).

III. World War II (Camps)

1)Skarshisk(Hesak). Nov. 11, 1942-Aug.1944.

2)Solyuv - Aug.1944-Oct 1944.

3) Tshenst~~sk~~ khov - Oct.1944-Jan.15,1945.

4) Bukhenvald - Jan.15,1945- m~~id~~.Feb.1945.

5) Laura - (in Tiringen) - Feb.1945- beginning April 1945.

6) Alakh(near Dekhau). two weeks. April 15, 1945 -approx. April 22,1945.

7) transport to Tyrol. 8 days.

8) liberation. last day of April, 1945. "This was my birthday; I was reborn again."

IV. After liberation . (Germany)

1) May 1, 1945 - May. 20,1945. (name of station:)Staltakh}. (name of town:)Heldorf.

2) Feldafink - approx.May 20,1945 - Sept.1945.

3) Shvindegg(?) (near Mildorf) Sept.1945-end of June 1950..

V. USA

- 1) NY . July 3, 1950-July 15 or 16,1950.
- 2) Sanford, Florida (to Uncle). mid-July 1950-Oct<sup>1</sup> 1950.
- 3) Youngstown, Ohio (to Uncle). Oct.1950-summer 1957. worked as tailor.  
also attended USA International Institute to learn English,1950-1957, ~~two~~  
or ~~three~~ times as week after work.  
(lost job?)
- 4) Brooklyn(Lincoln Place) 13 1/2 years. 1957-1971.(beaten up?)
- 5) lived temporarily with friends (in Brooklyn?) for several months.
- 6) Brighton Beach. present address From June 1972.



Before presenting the main body of the case study, it would be fitting to present, as an introduction, material describing Mr. Milstein's concept of his shtetl and of his home-life there. The word shtetl will be used throughout the case study in the sense in which I believe Mr. Milstein uses it - as:

- a diminutive of shtot (city).
- a term of endearment for shtot.
- a term describing an East European <sup>Jewish</sup> community of a certain size, composition, and character - a small (compared to Warsaw), relatively industrialized town (compared to a rural area), neither a <sup>large</sup> city nor a small village.

The shtetl was 90% Jews. The 10% goyim lived inter di shtot; around the shtot. Shefner came to our shtetl to ~~write a~~ give a speech, and wrote a whole article in the Folkstsaytung. He said that Shidlovtsé is such a Yiddish shtetl that ~~if~~ he wants to see a goy, he has to wait until Wednesday, when there is a fair.

[ ]

In our home, almost everyone sang. We liked it; were there better entertainments? Who had a patefon? There was no patefon in the beginning. There was a gramofon, with a big tube.

(Did you have songbooks at home?)

I remember that my father had a liderbikhl. I don't remember the melodyes. It was a whole book ~~with~~ one song ~~about~~ the one-time city girls and farmers' girls.

(In Yiddish?)

In Yiddish. When my father was young he also acted in the dramatishe krayz. In the Kishefmakhern. Later he was religious but he didn't forbid me to arumtorn at the teater too. Because he said it was bayirushe.

interview material; should be indented more.

(Was he also from Shidlovtse?)

Yes. His younger brother also acted in the Kishefmakherin. Either <sup>he</sup> or my father was Hotsmakh; I don't remember. It was before the first world war. My father's younger brother was in Russia; he also loved music very much. He came back in 1918/1919. His son wrote that he brought back a piece of dried bread. He said, "My son, if you knew what a possession this is in Russia; there is hunger there."

(Did your family have records?)

No. We didn't have a record player. In our home we had a mandolin. We all played. My sister, my brothers. Every melodye we knew was oyfgeshpilt on the mandolin.

(How did you learn to play?)

By listening.

(Were there other musical materials in your home?)

Only the mandolin. My uncle played the fiddle and my grandmother's brother gave children fiddle lessons.

(Did you sing when you were with people?)

As I told you, for example, at a kak basket, when I was told to sing, I had to sing, so I wouldn't be untershtelik.

(But especially aroysetretn?)

When I went on the stage, there was nothing to sing; in Got Mentsh Tavl there was no singing.

(Did your family like to sing certain songs?)

I had an uncle who was a chazn. His name was Yosl Ayzenberg; he died in Treblinka. My mother's sister's husband. He lived mostly in Warsaw; shortly before the war they came to us. He was not only a chazn but a badkh also. He had a neighbor who was a badkhn in Warsaw, who said to him, "you have a gute shtime; why don't you come along?" He didn't want to bazingen a kale; just to entertain; he didn't like it. He liked to go [on?] when people

were eating; they liked to be entertained with various lider, naye shlagern, etc. When we had the last Yom Kipur, he still davened in our shtetl; imagine; when we were not allowed to go. Two days after Yom Kipur, ~~we were~~ oysgezidlt, and from then on he was not there.

He had a son who had a laybn-shtime. If he is alive in Russia, he must be playing in a opera somewhere. A tenor; his name is Srulek Ayzenberg. But I don't hear anything of him. Not only ~~did~~ he perish there; also an uncle and a brother of mine [in a jail?]. I thing if he were singing in an opera or somewhere I would have heard of [from?] him today.

[8-2]

Mr. Milstein' description of his home-life in Shidlovtse is of a life in which music was a natural and even necessary vehicle of expression and entertainment. He describes his family as one which gravitated towards music, whether professionally or as enthusiasts.



Musical Concepts, Attitude, Esthetic

The rubric, "musical concepts, attitudes, esthetic," is necessarily linked to that of "performance settings and occasions;" that is, the types of musical behavior cannot - or should not - really be viewed apart from the definitions given to these types of behavior by the members of the culture in question. A culture may have very rigidly-defined categories of performance, linked to specific terminology. While it is probably not possible or in fact desirable to view verbal behavior from an entirely emic point of view, it is useful to examine some of the attitudes associated with a particular culture, as described by a particular individual in retrospect.

It should be noted that Mr. Milstein's statements have in many cases been occasioned by questions on my part. These questions have not, for the most part, been included. However, when the prompting has been direct - so specific, for instance, as to suggest a particular term to him, in this prompting has been included (in parentheses).

The area of musical concepts, attitudes, and esthetic is one that is bound up with an attempt to ~~establish~~ determine an emic scale of values. Without attempting to establish a finely detailed taxonomy, it is useful to note the genres suggested by the informant's use of terminology. The fact that a particular individual from a particular town uses specific terms does not prove that the terms were in general use - or were in use at all - in the town before the war. It does suggest, however, that the town might

have been one of the areas in which the informant lived  
or read  
in which he might have heard such terminology.

Attitudes about creators of music

Collectors of folk/songs may be very conscious of the problems surrounding the area of etymology. Where a song came from, although perhaps not as important as how it functions and who sings it, still presents an often tempting ~~line of~~ inquiry; "scholarly inquiry" and curiosity are, after all, quite closely linked, and it might be assumed that a singer of a song is necessarily curious about where the song originated. However, this is not necessarily the case. In the course of the interviews with Mr. Milstein, I often routinely asked whether he knew where the song came from or who had written it. One of the reasons this question was asked was that the answer might provide information that might be helpful in annotating the song - for instance, ~~if~~ if the song was said to be by Gebirtig, then Gebirtig's works would be a possible starting-point in annotation. In addition, the answer might provide even more valuable information about the accepted or supposed etymology of the song, according to the informant or even according to the consensus of the community, as well as about the values attached to songs of different (supposed) origins. Mr. Milstein understood that I was not looking for the "correct" answers about the origins of songs, but for information about whether singers or listeners were aware of or interested in such origins.



Although now Mr. Milstein is interested in songs as products of specific writers, he notes that his was not always so. Awareness of songs as products of specific creators is something that must be acquired. In answer to the question regarding who wrote \_\_\_\_\_,

Mr. Milstein said:

It was zeyer a shegne lid. I don't know who wrote it. I didn't know then that there were shraybers who hobn geshribn lider; I thought songs were born, nisht vi nisht ver; s'iz du. Az mentson hobn geschafft didn't enter my mind then - I was still too young. Today we know if a song is sung, we should know who is the mekhaber.  
(Were there other shpil-lider?)

[2-2]

The awareness of the creators of songs grows, it seems, as the listener grows up, and also as the community (or group within the community) grows more sophisticated. Many of the answers to my questions about songs' origins reveal that although authorship of a song may now be known, it was not always known.

At that time, I didn't realize that there were writers who wrote songs/shraybers vus shraybn lider/ - I thought that everyone knew fun zayn kop aroys. For instance, I didn't know that Gebirtig's songs were by Gebirtig.

[6-1]

We return to the varshtatn. The tailors sang other songs than Hemerl Hemerl Klap. At the time, Lomir Bayde a Libe Shpiln was already more modern. I don't know who wrote it. We didn't know the names fun shrayber. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ For instance, we sang Kinderyurn and didn't even know it was by Gebirtig. After the war we found out that Gebirtig ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ hot geshribn.

[sings] Lomir bayde a libe shpiln -etc-

[7-1]

There are actually two kinds of lack of information being noted here; <sup>by Mr. Milstein</sup> lack of information about the specific creator of a song, and lack of the concept of a specific creator of a song. In the first case, the missing information is something that the listener to a song simply does not always have access to; in the second case, the entire realm of "song" is viewed in a different way, comparable to the romantic view of "folk song" as song without literary origins. If viewed in this way, all song becomes folk song. Since a song does not "belong" to a particular writer, it belongs to everyone:

(Who wrote it?) *[IP song]*  
 I don't know. We didn't know ~~skant~~ ver s'iz a poet. We did know that there was a Byalik... We sang a song ~~there~~; it was only here that we found out that Varshawsky had written it.  
Der Milner's Tern  
*[sings]* Oy vifl yurn zenen farfurn zayt ikh bin a milner du -etc-

[7-1]

I don't know. Today we know that a song had a mekhaber. We didn't know that then. We knew that a song was born somehow, but didn't know from where it came. It's ~~here~~, that's all.

[9-1]



If the creator of a song is known and admired, his songs may take on the prestige of the writer. A writer and his works are linked; a writer, it seems, gains his reputation through the songs he creates, and the attitudes towards ~~his~~ songs are in turn affected by the esteem in which their creators are held. The reasons for a reputation may be linked to personal qualities attributed to its author combined with a special talent for composing songs.

(What were the balibste lider?)

For instance, songs about love...

(Which songs do you, personally, like?)

I like Gebirtig's Tsigale. There came to us [pshiskhe?]; they gave revyes. They sang the shenste lider and we didn't know from whom the songs were.

[sings] Hey, tsigalekh, kint aher tsu mir geshvind -etc-

A song of three strofkes and such a big tragedye in it!

(Do you think it's a true story?)

I don't know. Gebirtig was such a troymer; he put it together so sheyn ~~ix~~ [tsuzamenge-shtelt]; in three strofkes there is a whole lebngeshikhte.

I don't know who brought it to our shtetl.

[8-1]

That a creator of a song gains recognition as a <sup>different kinds of terms</sup> musical specialist is evident in the ~~terminology~~ employed to describe such specialists (shrabers; mekhaber; poet) and the creative process itself (a song may be geshribn rather than geboyrn; fun Gebirtigs rather than fun kop aroys.)



There were other kinds of specialists who were also creators of music; a different value was assigned to their creations, and the terminology employed to describe them reflects this difference.

(Who wrote the words to meyle Eydl?)

There was a bilige poet who lives in Brazil today; he wrote such flakhe lider, but far der shil-gas iz es geveyn gut.

(Another example of his songs?)

[sings frag.] A meyle fin akhtsn yur, mit ire gelokte/?/hur. -etc-

Then we saw that s'hot night gehat kayn shim tam.

(But people sang it. Why?)

There were melomaner who liked to sing lider. Any song ~~akht~~ that came along iz gevorn ~~me~~ gekashert.

(You were not like that?)

No. I liked shayne lider. Not abi gezugt.

(Vus hayst, shayne lider?)

Fun a gutn shrayber. And then melodye... For example, there was in Warsaw the song Zuleyka.

[sings] In yedn oyke shvint a flam -etc-

[1-2]

Not a poet, but a biliger poet; on retrospect, his songs are seen as appropriate for a certain place(shil-gas), time(then, before people knew better), and person(melomaner). However, when the opportunity came to hear better things, "it turned out that he was not a poet at all":



(Were there songs to tease?)

No. In our shtetl there was a shtikl a cheap poet - a baliker poet. For every occasion he farfast a lid. Even about his own brother. His brother was a worker; he fell in love with a Hasidish meyd. Her parent's didn't want this - but they got married. When /she?/ went to learn shnayderay bay a froy, this woman was a shvegern to the farfaser fun di lider.

[sings] Zibetsn yur bin ikh alt gevorn  
Fin ka libe firn ~~hob~~ hob ikh nit gevust -etc-

Then there was a song about a girl ~~haxho~~ who hot tnoyim geshribn with a Hasidish man; she hated him. Shek had another boy who was handsome - haynt veltik. It was a true story. ~~The poet was called Rikhter. Today he lives in Argentina.~~ She refused; her parents gave the couple an expedir to Brasilia. The poet was called Rikhter. Today he lives in Argentina.

[sings. frag.] Oy, vay, khob azoy gevolt  
Avekgevorfn a khusid un genimen a yold -etc-

There was an occurrence; a girl hot zikh geshmadt. He also wrote a song.

[sings frag.] A meyd ~~mit~~ fin akhtsn yur  
Mit ire blonde hur -etc-

I don't remember it, because z'iz night ~~is~~ geven azoy interesant. Later, it turned out that he was not a poet at all...we heard shenere lider, from Varshe.



The song is identified with the creator - not a mekhaber,  
but a farfaser. A biliger poet creates bilige lider,  
yet even among bilike poetn there are gradations.

(What is a biliger poet?)

We had another one...let's say today. Here,  
if a lid is geshafn, as long as it's sung,  
it's sboyn a lid; even if it byg of kapure.  
Like "How Much is that Doggy in the Window?"  
Was this a literarish song? No. Or Saint  
Louis Blues;

[sings frag.]

Does it have any tam? These are lider?  
There were such brukave shraybers in our  
shtetl; they could even write better than  
them. But they weren't thought much of.

(But people sang their songs.)

He sang them hamsel. The other one was  
a bisl a tseydrayter.

[sings. Gives example of "Kale Hayst Brandl"]

Does this have a haft? Is this literarish?  
Like the Saint Louis Blues.

[example - ridicules - frag.]



I don't like such things; it's gurnisht.  
 But the other one =was a little better/.  
 Let's say, A Meydl Fin Akhtsn Yur.  
 It had mer a bisl a besern tsugang.  
 The other one was called Shaya Shvartsfiter;  
 he lives in Israel; the first one lives  
 in Brazil. He did once shayn farfast  
 a lid. Once in our town ~~there~~ a boy fell  
 in love with a girl from a mer chsidishn  
 family. He shot himself; 1925.24. He  
 didn't shoot himself to death; he wasn't  
 such a fool. This shooting led to their  
 marriage; her father relented and they  
 went to Brazil. That Chaym wrote a song  
 about that couple.

[sings] Shoyn tsvelef a zeyger mitogtsayt -etc-

But there were no factories in our town.  
 This was aktuel.  
 His own brother was a worker and fell  
 in love with a chassidic girl; they  
 didn't allow it. But they got married  
 and he hot farfast a lid about his own  
 brother.

[~~zikh~~ sings] Zibitsn yur bin ikh alt gevorn -etc-  
 /song uses real names/

Hot hot zikh geyekt; he didn't speak well;  
 dokh zingen hot er gekent shayn. They say  
 that when he was on the ship deck ~~for~~ on the way to  
 Brazil he made money; he sang the song Titanic.

(Do you know this song?)

It was when the ship Titanic went under.  
 It must be in the archives here, Maybe I  
 remember some.

[hums]

I remember the melody.

[recites some of the words]

When the ship went under, I wasn't born yet.

In those days ~~there~~ all sorts in our shtetl;  
 a meshiginer Layzer; a meshiginer Mendl;  
 which shtetl didn't have a meshiginer?







Those who created tunes were also specialists; when Mr. Milst~~aan~~ knew who the author of a song<sup>-text</sup> was, he didn't always know who wrote the tune. One group held in ~~gx~~ high esteem as musical specialists were the Modzhitser Ehasidim. Their music is described as literally hypnotic.

There are all sorts of smires. At our home smires were sung every Shabbes, Fritig-tsunakhts, Shales-sides. The best were all the niginim of the Modzhitser Chsidim. There was a legend that the Modzhitser Rebbe created such beautiful melodyes, zmires, niginim, that when he needed an operation, he refused farshluf-getrank and instead, when he lay on the operating table, he created a melodye.

✕ [hums] Ya la la la -etc-

Close the machine so we can get a Siderl.

[sings above nign, using Sider and wearing hat]  
Mnikhu ve'simkhu -etc-

This was one smire. A Modzhitser. They had many others - this was the most beautiful.

(Did other people have other melodies to this passage?)

Each one could sing what he wanted.

(Do you remember other niginim?)

You want only religyeze niginim?  
(No. Not only religyeze.)

(How is it that your shtetl had contact with the Modzhitser?)

Modzhitser niginim were sung all over. Here too; even today. This week they had a the Lubovitsher on the radio. They sang unx an umordening. It seemed ...nisht rikhtig. The Lubovitsher are different. The Modzhitser are an osnam. Even if you hear ~~an~~ a record of the Modzhitser, it's still osnam-sheyn. They are the shenstex niginim, vus zay trugn.



The concept of a specialist in creating music is one that carries with it implications of both a special gift and a professionalism that is to be respected and which cannot be assumed by everyone.

~~ידד~~ (Did you ever write a song yourself [farfast]?)

No. I knew I had no talent for it.

(Not even for yourself?)

No. I'll tell you why. I didn't like it when, for instance, I told you there was a treger who liked to farfasn lider. I saw how such a nebekhl looks. I myself wouldn't even like it [the songs]. His name was Shiye Shvartsfiter.

(What kind of songs?)

He wrote <sup>farfast</sup> a song about his kale.

(Sing it.)

No. The words are very bilik. For example, people liked it when a shtikl shlager came. [hums example of balik lid.]

They liked to sing along with the melody. There was a song sung in Warsaw. [so Shiye Shvartsfiter took the melody]. His kale was named Brandl and she was from Rudem.

[sings] Az rayshn raysht men in a randl, taderisabom  
Mayn kale hayst Brandl, taderisabom -etc-

Nu, does it have a bedoytung?  
Or, he would sing such a sentimentale lid.  
I don't even think it was his.

[sings] Ikh hob mayn kale baglayt in shpitul arayn -etc-

What kind of badoytung does it have?

In those days there was a song; the hoyfzingers came...  
But this had a mer a gresere badoytung.  
It was about the first world war.

[sings] A shnay un a vint un shoremvint -etc-



(Did people like the bilike lider?)

No. They made fun of them.

(Where did they sing them?)

We met him in concentration camp. He sang his bilike lider to himself. [farkoyft] He lives in Israel today.

(Do you think he sings the songs today?)

Who knows.

[8-2]

The other/?/shenere lider. They had more in halt and at least he gave them a good melodye.

(In which lager?)

Yaneshev/?/near the Vasl.

(Did people want to hear the songs?)

They made fun of them.

(In what year?)

1940.

[8-2]

(You say you didn't write songs yourself. Did you ever add, change a song to improve it?)

No. I liked songs by gite shrabers. If I [can't], why should I attempt it?

[8-2]

(Are there any songs that are "your" songs - that people associate with you?)

No - not with me. If I would [=have?] baganen something that became a hit, that people talked about, it would be something else - but [like this?] why?

[9-1]

Attitudes about performers of music

Songs may be identified with a particular performer as well as , or instead of , with a particular creator.. The creator and the performer may be the same person; a specialist in song creation may ~~be~~ also be a specialist in performing - a hoyfzinger, a chazn, a Modzhitser Ghosid, even a biliger poet, may sing the songs that he or she has written. At other times, the performer may be admired not only for the performance or creation , but for the interpretation of what someone else has created. What might in other cases be viewed as doing violence to a song's integrity, becomes, in the hands of a skilled adapter, something to be admired.

Performers are also transmitters, and while certain performer/transmitters, such as hoyfzingers, will be dealt with separately in the section on transmission, it should be noted that all performers are transmitters, all instances of performance-transmission provide examples of performance settings, and all the descriptions by ~~the~~ an informant provide examples of musical concepts and attitudes. The divisions are for purpose of manageability , and the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Performing specialists might be described according to their degree of talent and according to their professional status. While the two are to some extent related, it seems that this is not as definitely so as it is the case of the creating specialist. While a non-professional of the



shtetl who attempts to farfasn lider may be seen as a chutspenik<sup>or/</sup> a biliger poet, the ordinary person who has a shteyne shtime and enjoys singing before an audience does not seem to receive such censure. The difference between specialist and professional may tentatively be assumed to be the fact that the professional has a title (even if this title is only a description) that designates him as such. Thus: a professional might be a hoyfzinger or a chazn; a specialist might be a mayster in the varshtat who liked to sing. The economic factor should also be considered, but the issue is complex; a hoyfzinger, who doesn't earn much, may be considered just as much a professional as the Warsaw teater-zinger. The Purimshpilners were not professionals, although they did earn money through their performances.

There are certain criteria that can be applied to a singer - criteria that evaluate not only the voice but the performance. In fact, it is not merely a gute shtime that is required to sing well; there are other qualitæes - including the ability to carry a tune (nisht gayn falsh ~~arup~~ arup fun vegn) and a degree of ~~kaxise~~ taste and musical judgement - that make someone a performing specialist.

(were there people who had a special talent?)  
Yes. There was someone who died recently. His name was Shmuel Laks. When he hot gegeben a kim aroyf, <sup>for a banker</sup> ~~everyone~~ everyone saw that he shpilt der grester/=check/ there were others.  
[sings/Nor zi halt in ayn klern -etc-

[7-1]

(Were there those who had better talent for singing and playing?)  
Yes. Some were ~~gebentsit~~ mit talent. For instance, those who belonged to the dramatishn krayz; from them one could hear besere zakhn. For instance, retsitatsye.

[7-1]

(Did some know how to sing better than others?)  
Yes. Some had good voices. The most important thing about singing is, you didn't have to be able to sing so shayn, but you shouldn't sing falsh; s'zol sayn origineyl; azoy vi s'darf tsu sayn. We couldn't read notes.

[8-1]



(Was this also sung by a particular singer?)  
 It was sung in a play, but I don't remember where.  
Belts was sung a lot.

I [sings ~~xxxx~~ Ven ki, ikh derman zikh mayne  
 kinder yurn -etc-

But you have to know how to sing it. I don't  
 have a voice to sing.

(In your opinion, are there people who have  
 a special feyikayt tsu zingen? What kind  
 of people have a feyikayt tsu zingen?)

There are two kinds of singers: There  
 are singers who have a gute shtime. And  
 there are singers who don't have a gute  
 shtime, but z'ebn nisht gayn falsh arup  
 fun veg. They are mavinim. If someone  
 sings shlekht, kritst es in oyer; he may  
 have a good voice, but he has to know how  
 to sing, too. This is she tsober of the  
 whole song and of everything.

(Are there people who don't have a  
~~feix~~ feyikayt tsu zingen?)

Oh, yes. Not at all. I have a friend who  
 can't even open her mouth to sing; if she  
 says something its so mixed-up that nothing  
 comes out, not even a tuen. [tune?]

[9-1]

Although the interviews did not elicit much discussion about what it actually means to have a gute shtime, there were several instances in which Mr. Milstein noted that women sing shener than do men.

(Did fathers also vig the child or just mothers?)

~~XXXXX~~ When he had to , he did.

(Did he also sing the same songs as the mother?)

But not as nice as a mother. Children liked it better when a mother sings.

(Why?)

A woman sings shener. Der kind is shoyv gevezn a mayvn.

[2-2]

(In Mkhires Yosef did only adults take part? Only men?)

Only adults. Yosef was about 28. Only men. Maybe if there were women it would have had an ander punim; maybe it would have ~~xxx~~ been with shenere shtimen.

(Do you think women have shenere shtimen?)

Always. Of course. In our shtetl, a chazn said: "Why does a woman have a shenere shtime? If you strike the kamiturn on the floor you don't hear anything;" he means the man; the was made of earth." But it you strike ~~the~~ it on the table, you hear it well. That's why a ~~xx~~ woman has a shenere shtime." He was a guter chazn. But on Purim the chazn didn't participate.

[4-1]



A specialist may become so not only through innate talent, but also with the help of the proper atmosphere. ~~Maxim~~ Mr. Milsten specifically uses the term spetyalist to describe his friend Yankele Zilberman, in whose home songs were sung:

(When Yankele Zilberman and I were in kheyder, Yankele was a spetsyalist of lider-zingen. In Yankele's home they used to sing all sorts of songs. For instance, lider about shaydim.

[sings frag.] Sheyn zenen di maysim b'sholem  
in di kvurim gekumen -etc-

(Did the children sing it to ~~maxx...~~ themselves?)

The older ones; dervaksene; sang it.

[1-1]

Not ~~in~~ only individuals , but groups or nations, can be musical specialists.

(In your opinion, do certain folk sing better or have more feyikayt tsu zingen than other folk?)

Yes. They ~~may~~ say that Italians can sing zeyer sheyn.

(Do you agree?)

You can see that ver;y many singers come from there.

(Why?)

I see that among our Jews there are plenty, plenty of singers. Like for example the Chasidim; their dynasties! We had a shoykhet-

[9-1]



There are interesting types who seem to fit into an indistinct area between that of "legitimate" specialist - that is, one who is competent within a certain limited performance-sphere - and true professional, whose competence in performance for a larger public seems to define his role.

(In the varshtatn, how did the singing go?  
Did one person lead?)

No. We had a mayster who liked to sing. Mendl Shtarker. 1935/36. He was a women's tailor. There was another tailor; among musicians he was a good tailor and among tailors he was a good musician. Moyshe Paya. He was very poor. He played at weddings. His shver was a <sup>musician</sup> ~~musician~~ a barber who liked to sing. He went to weddings; so ~~he~~ Moyshe went along. When he went to a wedding he came home full. He was poor...because ~~he~~ he was neither here nor there...neither a tailor nor a ~~musician~~ musician. He didn't have talent; ~~he~~ just tsigebumblt with the fiddle.

[7-1]

On the other hand, there are "legitimate" specialists - perhaps they should be described as "semi-professionals" - such as the bal-tfile. It should be noted that the use here of the terms "professional" and "semi-professional", etc, ~~xxx~~ is my own, and represents my own attempt ~~xx~~ at naming musical behavior. However, the statement below, that the melamed "was a good bal-tfile; kayn khazn hot er nisht gekent zayn," indicates that criteria for differentiating between specialists and professionals did exist in the community under discussion.



In our shtetl there was a melamed; he was also a hoyker. He was from another town. He was so mean; he hit the children, and threw them in the cellar. He punished them badly; a mishkante; he put them ~~on~~ across the table; counted ~~the~~ blows?/. Or he made the child stand in the corner; this was a light punishment. But the worst threat was that he would throw the child in the cellar. Children were afraid of falling into his hands. /-of being in his kheyder/

He was a bayzer, but he had a good voice; er iz geven a guter bal-tfile. He davened with my father in ayn khevre. On Simkhes-Toyre, he farvaylt everyone.

(Do you remember any of his songs?)

[sings] Yishmakh Moyshe Vematna Kheloy etc-

It was called Yismakh Moyshey. In Shabbesdikn davenen.

(Was this his own nign?)

I don't know where he brought it from. He was a good bal-tfile, kayn khazn hot er night gekent zayn.

In our shtetl there were many good bal-tfiles. Each could davn oyf an andern noysekh. Each had his ~~tsugang~~ tsugang. Some davend only Fratik-tsu=nakht; others only Shabbes-ba-tug.

There was one that liked zikh titsukhaphn tsum bretl. In order er zol oysnemen bayn oylem, he sang Lakhu Doydu with the tune of a shlager - a hit. In shil. For example, at that time there was modern a song in Polish, Ali Baba.

[Sings frag. in Polish] Oy oy oy Ali Baba -etc-

[sings frag. in Hebrew] Alu dona kol ha maasim -etc

I don't remember the rest. Sometimes he would weave in /arange flokhtn/ a shegnem nign. For example, Volga, Volga.

X [hums frag.]



My friend's grandfather was a baker ~~and~~ and he liked to daven shakhres. He had a nice nign. Not like that other vitsler. He sang it shoner.

[sings frag.] Aylu doy alkol a maasim -etc-

This was for Shaves-bay-tug.

When people came home from shul, they brought a ~~wh~~ulent, made a side. In America you can't enjoy this like that.

There was a bal-tfile who had served under the Russian tsar, and he davened to tunes of Russian marshn. They were ~~seyer~~ shayn.

[hums]

Rosh ha-shone was different; Yom Kiper was ~~different~~ troyerik, but Simkhes-Toyre people sang all kinds of songs.

In every home, Shaves-bay-tug, about 11 or 12 o'clock, you could hear the shenste smires. Here, they don't know about it.

[2-1]

Just as one's opinion of who is a gute poet can change, so can one's opinion of who is a gute zinger change by exposure to epes besers; to Warsaw; to films; to the world at large.

(Which singer that you've heard did you like the best?)

It depends. There were good chazunim in our shtetl. There was a groyser Chazn Sharote. He was zer a groyser zinger; a groyser guter chazn.

[9-1] (7-1?)

(Who was the best singer you ever heard?)

~~ZHAKKXMX~~ In our shtetl we believed that our chazn was the best singer. Avumtshl Gerberman. His son helped him; he was very good; he also went away to Russia and nothing ~~is~~ heard of him. Even my friend Yankl also sang. /=for the chazn?/

Later we went to Warsaw to the opera and we saw that ~~there was something better~~ s'iz du epes besers. Then pictures ~~came~~ with Caruso came. This is an osnam. And later we heard Ben-Tzion Vitler. When he came to Warsaw he brought his songs; everyone sang his songs. 1933/34, and later too. He ofgefirt a sheyne opereta; Das Tsigaynerin. And he sang a song then about Warsaw; about Di Krokmalnye Gas.

[sings] Krokmalnye gas, du bist mir lib, ikh bin in dir geboyrn ~~mit~~ -etc-

This song was popular then because it was about Warsaw. He sang a song which I don't remember; Geselekh. Mit Geselekh hot er genimen n'oylem. I remember a little bit.

[sings] Das leben hot nish yegena

[9-2]



Films had an important impact on Milstein's concepts about music and on the growth of his repertoire (this will be discussed further in the section dealing with transmission). Films were performance occasions, and as such they were opportunities for hearing and seeing performances with whom one would otherwise not have come in contact. One's standards were affected by exposure to these new performances.

(Who else were good singers?)

Later there came films from America; we were entsikt. I still remember, when Jeanette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy played in Rosemarie, we said, "o, dus iz epes!" Or there was Yan Kapura, A Polish singer. There were many singers. There was a Yosef Shmit from Germany, also on a film. Before there were silent films we didn't know so much, but later, when the ~~best~~ best singers from America came... We were antsikt un...what's his name-

-end side two-

[8-2]

(Could you choose 1 or 2 singers?)

As long as we didn't have sound films, we weren't influenced and didn't know who, where, what. Later when sound films began to come from America and we had such a tayern zinger as Moyshe Oysher, everyone was bagaystert. He became, as they say, dus beste fun ale. He sang in his films. ie, later there was a sound film of his; I think it had two names; Dem Chazn's Zindl or Mayn Shtetele Belts; And later in Dem Chazn's Zindl, he left his wife and became an apera singer and sang a Polish opera, Halka; dressed as a gural. Hot er oysgenimen; hot er gezingen in azan tayern Polish zayne aryes!

[sings]

[tells plot; sad ending; things title is Der Vilner Balabaysl; saw in Shidlovtse approx. 1933/35.

In Shtetele Belts things were better; it had a good ending.

When a Yiddish film came it was a yontif in shtetl.

(Who is your favorite singer now?)

I have a record collection. I like Ben-Zion Citler; I like Sidor Belarsky. Of Chazunim, Laybale Volfman was one of my favorites. Also Yosele Rosenblatt; I have all his records; he was very good. Even today, his songs are also good. He has chazunishe and he even sings concerts too.

(Are there any particular non-Jewish singers you like?)

There were non-Jewish too. One of my favorites was Nelson Eddy. Er hot zikh koyne-shem gevezn. Rosemarie played for months in our kino. This was an oysnam. It didn't play in our little shtetl, but in Warsaw. It ran for months and months. approx. 1936/37. Polish subtitles. But they later sang Rosemarie in all languages.

[sings frag. of Rozmari in Yiddish]

mostay <sup>people</sup> sang along [in Eng.?] ]

[sings frag. "I'm calling you." ]

Everyone sang along.



Although hoyfzingers did not ~~xxx~~ earn much - and, indeed, appeared to have occupied a position on the fringes of society - they are described by Milstein in the most admiring terms:

(Were they hoyfzingers women? men?)

Yes, women, too. There was one who sang better than ~~an~~ the ~~xxx~~ theater.

[sings] Oy a troyerik lid vel ikh aykh yetst zingen -etc-

This was zeyer sheyn and everyone wanted to sing it. She sang about a gasnfroy.

[sings] Ven di hele zun gayt untor un es falt nor tsi di nakht -etc-

This is a trorike ~~ix~~ zakh.

(Was it a gute fakh to be a hoyfzinger?)

No, you couldn't make a living. The best musicians played on the hoyg. But they were already arungeloste.../or/ geshikert. They had no position. Or others who were groyse kintstlers that ~~x~~ couldn't get jobs. ~~xxx~~ Here, everyone has a chance - but not in Poland.

(Did people play instruments in the gas?)

The hoyfzinger could have several fidders, an accordianist, even a/jazz?/

As noted, ~~fr~~ hoyfzingers will be treated more fully in the section on transmission. Chazunim and theater singers will be dealt with in the section on performance settings and occasions since, as perhaps the most "professional" performers in their respective spheres of ritual music and secular public entertainment, they are identified with specific occasions which have more or less rigidly defined times/~~places~~/participants/structures. It should be noted ~~xxxx~~ here that both well-known chzunim and theater singers sang in large cities and also made quest appearances; both had enthusiastic fans:

There was a song/about a hoyfzingerin?/  
 [sings/Di noyt traybt mir fin shtib aroys  
 yedn frimorgn -etc-

At Lola Folman sang it in Varshe on the stage; they threw money from all sides. She also sang in in our shtetl. [1-2]

Professionals performed the roles of transmitters-to-the-masses. While most non-professionals, and certainly most non-specialists, could transmit to only a limited audience, professionals could transmit to ~~km~~ many people at a time. It should be noted that in the following ~~xxxx~~ exchange it is I who first use the specific term profetsyonele.

Who sang them? Profetsyonele artistn?  
 Tsi pushete mentshn?)

First profetsyonele artistn when they came to us. Then it went fin moyl tsu moyl, tsi amkhu. When tailors or shoemakers worked, they liked to sing a song.

[1-2]



In addition to creator-specialists and performer-specialists, there are listener-and-transmitter-specialists; that is, some people are interested in and can remember and transmit songs. It is in this category that Milstein seems to ~~fall~~ feel he belongs. In a non-interview situation I once asked Mr. Milstein how he would like me to introduce him (for a YIVO radio program), and he replied that he was a libhaber fun gezang. Perhaps more than an ~~enthusiast~~ and not really a performing-specialist.

Attitudes about music

Criteria such as inhalt, literarishkayt, place and time, seem to combine to create categories of songs. Although no attempt will be made here to create a typology of the categories mentioned by Mr. Milstein, it should be noted that evaluations such as sheyne lider, bilige lider, folkslider, klasike lider, geto lider, etc, seem to be more or less based upon the above criteria of content, style, text/tune relationship, appropriateness to the situation, etc.

Mr. Milstein's song-categories, although they take into account antiquity, appropriateness, "truth", all seem to have a subjective emphasis; that is, not only are the choices of which songs fit which categories subjective (as they must be), but the categories seem to be viewed as being related to each other in specific, value-laden ways. Thus: klasik is opposed to bilig . ; ~~literarishkayt~~ literarish to primitiv, etc. Sheyne lider may vary greatly from each other, but they must, it seems, have a certain inner relationship of form to content, and of text to tune.



Another criterion which seems to influence the category assigned to a song, is language. Polish-language songs, for instance, or mixed-language songs, constitute categories which, while they may encompass other types of categories within them - a Polish song may also be a libeslid, for example - are rather clearly defined, it seems.

But in Poylish I knew very many songs, but who needs these?

(Sing at least one, for example.)

Who will understand them there?}

(Me.)

There was a song just for the dāristmedlekh. In Warsaw.

[explains song: A girl on Sunday has no more work to do; she is getting ready for a rendezvous with her sheygets. She is trying to get dressed up like her balebuste./

[sings] Proshe paynstvo raz natidgen -etc-

(Did Jews sing Polish songs among themselves?)

Yes, a lot. Just like here they sing American songs. After all, we were in Poland.

(Were there songs that were partly in Polish and partly in Yiddish?)

Don't they have gemishte lider, English mit Iydish, in America? For example, A Kiss of Chaye.

[sings] I went to see a pretty girl, her name was Chaye -etc-

[mostly English with Yiddish accent, intonation, words and phrases. About a man who accepts Chaye's offer of a matse-bray, is lured into marriage, is ~~mk~~ tormented by her goribile family./

(Where did you hear it? In a theater?}, or ina home? In California.

(Where in California?)

check

Songs may also be categorized according to form.

For instance:

The shênste lid I liked was a ~~nyzyyxxxxx~~ vyonzanke/?  
; a mishmash.

(B. Blum adds; a krants)

It began with a sad song and ended happily.  
One song is arangehakt in the other. One  
is begun and not ended.

[sings] Dus kind ligt in vigl  
Mit oysgevaynte oym -etc-

I heard it in our shtetl; for instance,  
when we gathered for a banquet.

[7-1]

Or -

We sang the song Chanele un Nucheml. It wasn't  
rikhtik.

(Why?)

It wasn't gut gezungen because the words  
hobn nisht gepast. The song is by Gebirtig.  
About a couple. She wants to live a kapetske  
and she falls in love with a tailor.

[sings] Chanele mayn lâbn, Chanele du mayns -etc-

This is a komplet. She is hayntveltig; she  
doesn't understand love. I heard it at a  
revue/ in profetsyonein farayn.

It was sung by an uncle of mine who ~~was~~ died  
in Russia. Srolik Draynudl. The girl  
lives today in Argentina; Lea Shvartsfiter [=finkl?].

(When was it?)

He left Shiddovtse in 1928.

[9-1]



The terms used to describe songs - bilige lidery,  
teater lid, kheyder lid, geto lid, shlager, etc., seem  
not to be mutually exclusive categories, but rather concepts  
concerning form, content, place, persons and esthetic,  
whose areas of concern often coincide.

The complexity of the relationship of tune-to-text was hinted at several times during the interviews. The following discussion illustrates <sup>the concept of</sup> this complexity and hints also that the tune can be <sup>felt to be</sup> more important than the text. It ~~also~~ also serves as an excellent example of the identification of a song with a particular person. It is so closely identified with this person, that, in a sense, she becomes it - she is called by the name of the song.

For example, in our shtetl it was modern... a girl sang a song whose melody was beautiful but somehow s'hot epes nisht getoygt; I don't know why. It was called Dus Kiyale. The girl was the sister of that farfaser of those songs.

(Did she write it?)  
 No. I don't know who . It was sung not only in our shtetl, but later in lager, too. That girl sang the song in lager, in Skkarzhisk, 1942/43. She was called Leah Esther <sup>?</sup> but because she always sang Dus Kiyale she was called S'Kiyale , too.

[sings] Hot zikh a zin a heler tseshprayt -etc.-  
 There is a refrain which a whole group has to sing.

She sang this song inlager and made it famous; and because of it she suffered such a mapele that she was called Dus Kiyale. Is it a shayn lid?

(Zeyer shayn. Do you think it's shayn?)

It is shayn. It's not so literarish, but the main thing for a song is, if its not so good and if the melody is shayn, fardekt es ales. \*

[3-1]



If the above discussion hints that a beautiful melody can make up for the defects of a text, the following discussion indicates that the integrity of a song is very important to Milstein; adding a new melody to a text violates this integrity.

*When sailors worked, they liked to sing a song.*  
 (Did they ever change it?)

No. I think that when you take away ba a shraber di melodye and you put in another one, the song loses all its khayn. I don't like this. The Israelis don't do this. If someone shaft a melodye, it's better to take out a few psikim fun davenen, and ~~that~~ s'iz shoy'n du a lid. Here, when ~~if~~ someone has a new melody, bezatikt men they take something from another writer and the song krigt anander punim and doesn't have the same khayn. For example: there is a song:

[sings frag.] Oysgetoysht a finif-un-tsvantsiker -etc

They made another melodye for it and ungeshotn it. Or if they took Der Milner's Trern and took away the melody...ikh halt night...men tur dus nisht tan. If there are melodye-shafers, let people shaf verter dertsit.

(They gave new words to Di Grine Kuzine.)

There were many songs to this tune.

(Who wrote these new words?)

[1-2]

Categories of songs (and indeed, the distinctions between music/non-music, lid, etc.) may, it seems, be derived from a combination of attitudes about the creators, performers, audience, and esthetic qualities of the item of music. For instance, the combination of creator (biliger poet), performers (melomaner), audience (servant girls), and other factors result in the designation biliger lider.

In the first interview, there is already established the concept of a shtetl in which everyone liked songs, and in which there were various kinds of people who liked, created, and sang various kinds of songs. The attitudes and concepts expressed must be viewed as the statements in retrospect of a particular individual about a particular time and place. Only with care may some of them be broadened to the extent that they can be assumed to express the views of other members of the same or other communities.



(So you were always interested in such things?)

Yes. In our shtetl everyone hot lib  
gehab lider. Far lider zenen ze geganen  
vi vat.

(You said that the servant girls sang such  
so-called "bilige lider." And others?)

They called them "lider fin shil-gas,"  
"fin di koze-gas." There were also klasike  
lider. For example there were 2 faraynen in  
our shtetl; a profetsyonele farayn and a  
bundishe farayn. Each had a dramatishn  
krazz. For example, Goldfaden's Di  
Kishefmakherin was ~~agafint~~ osgefirt.  
There were many songs. These songs were  
sung liberal. For example, Elent fun a  
Klayn Yisoyemele was zeyer a shayn lid.

[sings] Ikh elent fin ale vi a ying boymale -etc-

I was the dekorater and the grimarer. Many  
songs were sung; not just this one. Goldfaden's  
ale zakhn zenen geveyn fil mat gezang.

[plot: birthday party. Daughter is sad  
because her mother is not there.]

[sings] Mayn getraye muter, a vintsh hot zi gehat -etc-

[sings chorus part] Zoh zay gayn, di troyerike teg -etc.

People in the shtetl performed it. ~~Mham~~ Mirele  
hot batsobert the audience. She was pretty  
and could sing like a nightingale.

[1-1]

There is also some indication that "old" songs - that is, songs so old that their origins may be unknown - carry prestige - as much or perhaps more prestige than even those songs whose writers are considered poetn. Certainly, Mr. Milstein seemed, at least in the first interview, to feel that the interviewer would find such songs more valuable than others

*But these are ghetto-songs; you would never have the old songs.*  
(Yes, the old songs; but they all are important.)

I had a girlfriend whose mother used to sing lider that they sang in her day. One lid was full of benkshaft.

[sings] Trayb di fales, tifer taykh -etc-

She sang it to her meydale when zi hot ax zi angevigt shlufn. Maybe she felt benkshaft nukh a nisht-dergangene libe or something. Dus iz aroysgedrikte sentimenta.

There were also bilige lider. We laughed at them - dinstmedlekh sang them.

(But other people knew them too?)

But it was upgekhozikt. For example:

[sings] A libe fangt zikh un mit a shmaykhl un  
*a lakh -etc-*

[1-1]

At another point, Milstein begins to sing a song, then adds that the song can be heard here, too; the implicit equation is: it is less rare, therefore less valuable.

[sings frag.] Az ~~der~~ Rebe shtayt oyf fun tish -etc-

But this is here in America; this is not such a novina; everyone has the record. Mir darfn oystsuzikh azelkhe zakhn vus zaynen du nishtu.

But  
(Even if they are here; it's important for us to know that they were sung in Poland too.)

[1-2]



The value of songs from the alte tsatn seemed to lie in their antiquity as much as in other factors.

(Were there other songs?)

When my oldest<sup>est</sup> sister got married, I was still in cheyder. Her shvuger's mother sang songs from the alte tsatn. Dus hot zikh angekritst in zikhurn. She sang a song about Khave.

[sings fagg.] In Khave ~~mit~~ mit'n shlang  
Dus epele tit ir bang -etc-

She sang a song about a couple who can't have children. An akure.

[sings] K'hob aringerayzt di gantse velt -etc-

-tape ends in middle of song-

-end side 1-

[continues with song from side 1/ [starts from beginning/

It's a little daytshmerish - they say "mund" instead of "malekhl." It's a gemish.

[2-1]

This placing of value on oldness ~~perse~~ can be compared to the antiquarian emphasis in folkloristics - if something is old, rare, and obscure, it qualifies as a folksong. A discussion of the term folkslid was engaged in in the first interview. (Unfortunately, most of this discussion concerning the term folkslid was lost because of faulty batteries).

[sings]/[first line indistinct/Nemt a vayb  
a iydele, nemt a iyd a vaybele -etc-

[says its an old song - a folkslid.  
discussion of what is a "folkslid."  
rest of tape too faint to understand./

[1-2]

Prestige may be conferred upon a song by newness as well as by antiquity. Theater songs and film songs often belonged to a category that was based not on form or content but on newness and popularity - that of shlager - hit.

A woman came from Warsaw to our shtetl.  
~~She~~ When she vigt her child, iz geven vus tsu hern. She sang Bublitchki, hot dekh farrish der ~~gas~~ gas. I don't remember her name. She lived not far from us.

[Sings] Ikh hays Menashele  
A fayg in tashale -etc-

It was a duet. This was the letste shlager /shtager?/fin Varshe, Bublitchki. Bublitchki hot men gedrayt oyf farshidene oyfanim. Zi hot es gezingen in /fol?/fun a meydl mit a yingl - a duet. Bublitchki - baygelekh - it came from Varshe. Later it became a hit in all of Poland, and here too.

(From where did it start?)

Theater. I didn't see it - it ~~was~~ was too soon for me to go to the theater.

[2-2]

The terminology employed in the descriptions of a songs reveals that inhalt-content - is frequently cited as a criteria for evaluation of the song and as a reason for holding a song in high or low regard. This does not mean, however, that there is a simple division between the esthetic qualities of a song <sup>the style</sup> and the content. The evaluation of a song's inhalt is an evaluation that encompasses the story a song tells, the "truth" of this story(not necessarily the same as belief-status), and the specific way in which the story has been made into a song - that is , the appropriateness of the style and technique to the story.



The inhalt of a song may quality it to be termed a drame.  
 When applied to the song Zishe Braytbart, for instance,  
 it is unclear whether the term drame carries any implications  
 about the historic truth of the ~~XXXX~~ event described  
 in the song, or whether it simply refers to a somber, moving  
 tale. It does seem, however, to differentiate a "true"  
 lid like Zishe Braytbart from a "true" but bilig lid like  
 the one about the shtetl couple who ~~XXXXXX~~ fled to Brazil.

There was a big event with Zishe Braytbart.  
 A gantse drame, efsher fin 12 strofkes a lid.

[sings] In a klaynem engn shtibā  
 Nisht bay raykhe tate-mame -etc-

(Who wrote it?)

I don't know. People sang it when  
 the inglik of Zishe Braytbart occurred. I  
 had heard of Zishe Braytbart, but he didn't  
 come to us. He was a Lodzer. There were  
 two brothers and a sister; all three were  
 very strong. He could wrap around a piece  
 of iron like tfillin. Tore chains with  
 his teeth. The tragedy happened in a shtetl  
 not far from us - Rudem. This was a drame.  
 Then his brother Garshn played, but he was  
 not the same a Zishe - Zishe was more Giber.

This happened in about 1930, 1929 or even  
 earlier; your daddy must know. He was famous  
 in all Poland; a Jew; he even went to kheyder.

[2-2]

(Do you know a song about a true event that you yourself saw?)

I told you about an event in our shtetl; a man shot himself, but not to death, because he wanted to marry a girl whose parents didn't allow . But I remember it like a dream; I was a child at the time. The Brazilian farfast a lid. Then they all went away, the singer and those sung about. They all lived [ =after the war?] approx. 1926/27. I don't remember so exactly.

[sings] Shoy'n tsv'elef a zayger mit'gtsayt -etc.

But she didn't go to a factory because she was rich; he was rich too. [ =song mentions that girl goes to work in factory] It was not such a vazhne lid. We sang it then, but today I see that it had no inhalt. A song needs an inhalt. It was ~~really~~ a real event, but it isn't literarish. Today we are more mevinim.

[9-1]

Here then is a clear indication that for Milstein, inhalt is not synonymous with a basis in a real event. The song was about a "true" event, but it was not literarish because it lacked a certain combination of style and content. What such a combination might be is indicated in a discussion of a "true" song about the shtetl Tomshuv, and about Reyzele dem Shoychets, whose "truth" was enhanced by the author's skill.



There was another occurrence; I just remember a little. A girl fell in love with a boy. He was from a very khasidish family. She /he?/died.

[sings] In a klaynem shtetl Tamtshuv -etc@

There was an idylle ; not an idilye - a poeme. Rayzele is the daughter of a shoykhet; she is very pretty; she falls in love with the son of a sandovnik. The father doesn't want this. The father cut off /gaxher?/hair. She drowned herself in the Vasl. It was a tragedye.

[sings frag.] Vi sheyn iz Reyzele dem shoykhets -etc-

Zeyer a sheyne zakh. A groyse poet wrote this; Shnayer, I think.

(Do you think it's based on a real occurrence?)

Yes. Epes hot gemizt zan. Der shraber hot es zeyer sheyn aroysgebrengt. The other song is 100% true, from Tomashev. The song about Zishe Braytbart is 100% true. Everything is ibergeshribn, like a biography.

When I was young, they sang Zibn Gite Yur. It was geshafn in America.

[sings] Far ayekh mentshn vel ikh zekh farklugn/?/ -e

-tape ends before song is finished -  
- end of side 2 -

[2-2]

The value of a "true" song seems to have as much to do with the way in which the writer utilizes the story as with the story itself.

The concept of inhalt, then, is bound with the relationship of a style to content. The "truth" of the content means something more than mere historical "truth." Virklekhkayt is a reality that is more than the simple recounting of "true" events.

ie, Moyshel and un Shloymele and Hulyet  
Kinderlekh vi lang ir zent nokh ying.  
o This is so tsugepast to life. There is  
Shpilt Klezmurim Mir a Lidl.

(That is, it's important for you that a song have something to do with real life?)

With reality/virklekhkayt/. It should have an inhalt. ~~in~~

In our shtetl there was the farfaser of songs which were so cheap/bilik/~~khakixke~~ ...they had no...they just rhymed... rhyming is not everything.

(When you say that it should have to do with life, do you mean with true events, or something else?)

Not~~x~~ with true events. For instance Hulyet, ~~hulyet~~ kinderlekh vi lang ir ~~zent~~~~ixkixx~~ nokh ying, ~~xixxxixx~~ vayl fin dem friling biz tsim vinter iz a katsnshpring.- (end of side 2)

[6-2]



They sang another song.

[sings]Oyf di vayte vilde velder velder oy vay -etc-frag?

These were primitive lider; no literarishn inhalt. There are various kinds of songs: those that are abi geshribn, and there are lider with literarishn ~~\*/~~=inhalt/. For instance, Der Vaser-Treger is not a prost lid. ~~/~~=neither are?/those which Kippes sang.

There are klasische lider and abi tsuzamengeshtelte.

(What is a klasike lide?)

A klasik lid is by a klasik shrayber like Gebirtig; his songs were literarish, not only abi gezingen. Or - a ~~famous~~ bavuster shrayber - Papiernikov. He wrote a ~~kan~~ libeslid vus hot gurnisht gepast az er zol es shraybn. I didn't like it so much.

[sings]Papir iz dokh vays un tint iz dokh shvarts -etc-

What is so shayn about this lid?

(Why?)

It seems so - vokhedik.

(Why?\*) What is more important - the words or the melody?)

The melody is, as a matter of fact, a very nice one, but - epes vokhedike verter.

(When you hear a song, which is more impprtant, the words or the melody?)

The words and the melody. For instance, Gebirtig gives songs with sheyne inhalt and sheyne verter. For instance, Kinderyurn.

[Sings]Kinderyurn ~~may~~ zise kinderyurn -etc-

[6-2]



The effect of a song upon an audience is related to the ability of the performer to interpret the creator's intent. In a discussion of Di Kishefmakherin, the shaynkayt of several of the play's songs are evaluated by Milstein.

[YM wishes TBD happy birthday in words of Goldfaden]

[As Goldfaden said in the play Di Kishefmakherin, "a fraylekh'n geburtstag."

The song I liked best from ~~the~~ <sup>Di</sup> Kishefmakherin was Hayse Bobalekh. [dus shenste lid vus iz mir demuls geioin]

[sings] Nishtu kayn mentsh oyf der velt  
vus lebt up zayne yurn -etc-

[=says he didn't remember it genoy last time; did he look up words ~~in~~ meanwhile?]

There was another song about Hotsmakh, bt it's not as ~~like~~ <sup>shayn</sup> as the other one. It's from the same play.

[sings] A meyde a yings hot gur an altn man -etc-

This was already a komishe zakh.

(What makes a lid shayn?)

It [=Hayse Bobalekh?] made a groysn royshn on the oylem. The ~~singer~~ sang it ~~was~~ zeyer sheyn and it had a sheynem inhalt. [the second song/was about a lets...he had to give the audience something comical; epes letsoynes. But she sang it ~~quite~~ gants ernst. Everyone hot es zeyer gut endzhoyet [=enjoyed]..the situatsye.

(Is that why you like it?)

There are sheyne verter. Goldfaden ~~was~~ hot geshribn zeyer shayne lider.

[1-1]



Concepts about the sheynkayt of lider are based upon a consideration of qualities such as text and tune - inhalt and melodye. The two songs discussed in the passage below are given ~~xi~~ high ratings by Mr. Milstein because of a combination of text/tune qualities. Both ~~deal with~~ what must at the time have seemed like exotic subject matter and both have, it seems, according to Mr. Milstein, as "truth" that seems to be of a higher order than that of the biliger lider.

(Which of the songs you know do you like the best, and why?)

I like a song that has a shayne melodye and a gutn inhalt. I like all of Gebirtig's lider. I like Avrumale Marvikher.  
[sings] Un a hyam bin ikh geblibn -etc-

This is also by Gebirtig and was also sung in di Varshever Bande. This became so balibt

in Warsaw that it was sung everywhere; on the hayf; and even the marvikhes also sang it.

(Did you hear them sing it?)

No; I wasn't among them.

(Give me an example of one of the best songs you know.)

There was another good song shortly before the war; who knows who wrote it? It was a song about American life. It was very popular in our shtetl. I didn't hear it in Warsaw, but in our shtetl. It was about a white girl and a black boy. Who ever dreamed of it at that time? We didn't understand it, but we just sang it.

(Do you think it came from America?)

According to the words, the <sup>inhalt</sup> content, it seems to me today that it must have come from America. It was called Der Neger Dzhim. Before the war; in 1938 approx. Summertime; when it was hot; we went bathing and everyone like to brum it. Because it was so hartsik; there was another atmosfere entirely; not European.

[sings] Oyf a [dantsing?] tantst a neger Dzhim -etc.

When we heard this song, there was no one to ask, who wrote it, where does it come from?

(Who brought it to your group?)

I don't know; we heard it in our shtetl very soon before the war.



Just as text must be appropriate to melodye, so the inhalt must be appropriate to the setting in which the song is performed. The category ~~is~~ proletarish lid for the following song is tied to the song's content, its performers, and the performance setting.

Many songs which were sung here came to us in Europe. For instance, Rayzen's lider. We all sang ~~in~~ it in shtetl because it had a very good inhalt. A boy ~~of~~ ten or twelve went to ~~work~~ be a shoemaker, hot er oyfgezungen zayn troyer. This is by Avrom Rayzen.

[sings] O hemerl hemerl klap -etc-

I heard it in Shidlovtse. In every varshtat the children - the workers - the haripashnikes - would sing it. This could be heard from almost every shusterl. Not only ~~shoemakers~~ ~~the~~ shusters; the shnayders also liked it. I sang it at the machine. This was an emes proletarish lid. We also knew ~~praktikish~~ fraylekh lidlekh. Workers brought songs from Warsaw, for instance, Shvartse Karshелеkh.

[sings] Di shvartse karshелеkh rayst men -et  
 /imitates Warsaw accent/

[7-1]

The setting for a song can be viewed ~~as~~ not only as a physical setting, but as the atmosphere of a particular time and place. Milstein's description of Vi Ahin Zol Ikh Geyn points out the importance he believed setting to have in the effect of a song.

( The title is Vi Ahin Zol Ikh Geyn.

[sings/Iyd, er vert geyugt un geplugt -etc-  
and recites/

He <sup>check</sup> should sing it the way he sang it then. It had such an erfolg. It was before the war ; people knew what was happening. That's why it was ~~as~~ such a groyser hit. He played with the Bande. I heard it in the Teater Narostshi/? / where dzhigan and Shumakher and Rakhel Holtzner and Dina Halpern and Margina Refel/? / and Lola Folman sang shayne lider. They had a @groysn groysn derfolg.

[7-2]



What, then, characterizes and defines flakhe lider?  
 Not so much anything particularly shocking in the style  
 or content, it seems, but a lack, somehow, of the qualities  
 of tunefulness, appropriateness, cohesion, that ~~characterizes~~  
sheyne lider. Flakhe lider don't impress one; they lack  
 sense:

/Boris Blum is in room:

\* B: There were songs, do you remember, Dos  
iz Dokh Gote Kozak...? They were such  
 mayses, me gayt mit a zak...~~ki x x x x i g~~  
 nisht heymlikhe lidlekh; azelkhe unheymlikhe.../

That's what I said - they were zeyer troyrike lider.

/B: They ysed to go in the hayf and sing.  
 When there was a srayfe or a suicade;  
/hums//

/M joins in humming/

These were yayere flakhe lider.

/B: she's not looking for high-class songs./

They sang Margaritkelekh then. Everyone  
 knows this.

In our town someone also shot himself and  
 they sagg:

/sings/ Shoyn tselv a zayger mitik tsayt -etc-

In our shtetl a boy and girl were in love;  
 she was from a higher yikhus; her parents  
 wouldn't allow it. He shot himself but  
 not to death. Then people saw it was a  
 serious thing. They were married and the  
 couple went to live in Brazil.

(When did they start to sing this?)

There was someone from our town vus hot  
 lider farfast. He wasn't a poet; gants  
 bilige literaturx. There was a similar  
 situation in which a girl hot zikh geshmadt.  
 They also farfast a lid; "Yenteles miter  
 iz gegangen koyfn piter..." I don't  
 remember it. These kinds of songs hobn  
 mir nisht immonirt. Zav hobn nisht gehat kayn zinen.



Sheynkayt and popularity bear an interesting , somewhat ambiguous relationship. There were songs like the bilige/ider of the shtetl farfaster, which Milstein does not hold in high regard, <sup>he says,</sup> but admits were popular. However, popularity does seem to be positively related to sheynkayt - community consensus, Milstein feels, is an important criteria in measuring a song's worth A "hit" is a positive description of a song.

Yosele Kolodne was oysgetsaykhnt at this <sup>[Der Vortoyt]</sup> song. It was his favorite song/feverit/.  
 It was a hit/dus lid hot oysgenumen; vi me zugt du - a hit/It expressed the need and elent of a Jew in those days in the small towns and everyone empathized/mitgefilt//..

/description of a good song; a hit/It was sung well and the words were sheyne.

(What makes a song popular? good?)

The same as here. For instance, Fiddler on the Roof - it appeals to people's hearts, and if many people say it is good, it must be good.

~~It~~ I liked Fiddler on the Roof but it's much much different from the way Tevye der Milkher was by us. Tevye was played by a popular artist - Moris Lampert. When he played Tevye, they wrote that if Sholem Aleychem were to see him he would say that that was Tevye. The was that well suited for the role and he played it that well.

/describes performance of Tevye der Milkhiker in Shildlovtse/

I saw Yoshe Kalb here. I saw it at home too- in Warsaw. They sang a nign there that they didn't have here.

~~xxxxxx~~

The Tevye was as Sholem-Aleykhem wrote it.

/back to Yoshe Kalb/

/hums nign from Yoshe Kalb/



The role of the community in providing consensus for a song's sheynkayt is strengthened if that community is one to whom music is seen as being very important. The Shidlovtse described by Mr. Milstein is one in which music served as diversion, solace, communication, and inspiration.

(Did people like music more?)

By us, everyone liked music. Everyone liked it when people sang. Now, in America there is other entertainments. When I came to America, I heard that years ago the Yiddish Theater was very popular here. Now, theater plays and no one comes; because everyone has his television at home.

(Which is Better?)

In those days, I think. People read a lot. Those who didn't have the opportunity to go to school were self-educated ~~xxx~~ ...they were thirsty for knowledge. Es iz geven a tayer yugnt. There were no murders. Today we live in a crazy world. Although it was primitive, it was better than today; poorer but happier.

[7-1]



Xerox for marks

DISPOSABLE AND MUSICAL CONCEPTS