Dmitri Shostakovich is victimised here by an applied identity which is based on imaginative interpretation on the part of the musicologist. Firstly, there is an interpretive reference to Beethoven in Shostakovich’s Eighth Quartet. This is followed by an applied narrative on the part of the musicologist, ‘Ostinato-like motivic figures become the inexorable wheels of the Nazi death-factory...’ There are associations of the composer with victims of the Holocaust, the ‘composer-as-Jew’, and the crucified Christ. It seems legitimate to Timothy Jackson, the author, that Shostakovich be identified as both a Jew, and as the resurrected Christ. The narrative that Jackson has constructed here exemplifies problems within Shostakovich scholarship that are rooted in identity, around which the present paper is based.

There is a corpus of works left by who is now arguably the most enigmatic composer of the Twentieth Century, which has many incongruities. Works superficially displaying Socialist Realism and Soviet patriotism such as the symphonies nos. 2, 3, 11, 12, the oratorio Song of the Forests, and cantata The Sun Shines over our Motherland among others, have been composed alongside works which portray him as a dissident: the Eighth Quartet, Thirteenth Symphony, and the satiric operetta Anti-Formalist Rayok. In the West, there have been images of Shostakovich as the great Soviet composer-of-the-people, author of the ‘Leningrad’ Symphony (the Seventh), a work used as allied war propaganda. There is the American reception history of his works and the reception of his appearance in New York as a Soviet delegation at the Cultural and Scientific Congress for World Peace in March 1949. There is also the Yurodivy theory of Solomon Volkov which identifies Shostakovich as a ‘holy-fool’, akin to St.Basil, or Grigori Rasputin. The Yurodivy was traditionally a member of society who pointed out corruption among the higher, aristocratic classes, foretold the future, healed the sick, but simultaneously inspired fear and respect due to his stature as a Holy man. Volkov supposes Shostakovich to have been a modern Yurodivy, holding a critical position, but escaping persecution from Stalin on account of his superficially apolitical stance. There is the biting voice of Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov, bitterly disputed over it’s authenticity since it’s publication in 1979. Finally, there is also the ‘Jewish’ Shostakovich, a topic I will return to later as a case study.

The issue of authenticity of the memoirs was dealt with in great detail by Allen B. Ho and Dmitry Feofanov in their 300-page endorsement of Testimony in Shostakovich Reconsidered. Despite the forensic manner in which their argument was organised, and

it's convincing thesis, it has shown preceding literature to be tarnished by bias. This is not the fault of *Shostakovich Reconsidered*, but of the nineteen year span between that and the publication of *Testimony*. If Ho and Feofanov’s thesis of authenticity were held as an epistemological absolute, much of the literature published before *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (1998) therefore bears a presumptuous judgement on the same issue. The revisionist movement began in 1979 following the publication of *Testimony*, and one can date the anti-revisionist movement to the publication of Laurel E. Fay’s article accusing Volkov of falsifying the memoirs. MacDonald’s monograph *The New Shostakovich*, published in 1990 unflinchingly takes *Testimony* to be a reliable primary source, despite the questioning nature of Shostakovich scholarship. This was a time when the authenticity of the memoirs should have been the focus, not the grounds upon which to base interpretations. There is now a bipolar corpus of scholarship with an ever-growing chasm between the two camps. Subsequently, some interpretations of Shostakovich’s music betray an extra-musicological goal. Many of Jackson’s and MacDonald’s readings are aimed at proving Shostakovich’s dissidence. The result is a political front in Shostakovich scholarship on two accounts: firstly against the so-called ‘Taruskinites’, or non-revisionist camp; and secondly as part of a larger anti-Soviet movement. The musicology involved in the delicate area of authenticity of the memoirs is not divorced from the nature of the memoirs themselves, or their political content. The larger political issue has filtered down, and the branch of scholarship in question is at times dangerously close to a demonisation of the Soviet regime. This in turn has menacingly infested other areas of Shostakovich scholarship, to the extent of accusations of negligence.

The above-described issues filter through in many manifestations of Shostakovich scholarship and cause the following problems:

- Historical contexts are used selectively. *From Jewish Folk Poetry* has been taken to be a statement against anti-Semitism because it was composed in 1948, a time of vicious purges against the Jews. MacDonald neglects to mention that the cycle was composed before September of that year, a critically important date for the interpretation of the cycle. However, localising the historical narrative proves that there is good reason to doubt this hypothesis as Shostakovich's motivation.

- Sensationalism has taken hold of narrative. As can be clearly seen in the quote of Timothy Jackson above, a ‘tabloid musicology’ has been employed. Jackson’s sensationalism has gone as far as to associate Shostakovich with the crucifixion: ‘The tetrachordal motive [of the DSCH monogram] with its connotations of voice-

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7 The term ‘tabloid musicology’ has been borrowed in this instance from HO & FEOFANOV *Shostakovich Reconsidered* p.126. The term is used in a passage accusing Richard Taruskin of ‘engaging in tabloid musicology’, and of ‘spreading...libellous and unsubstantiated gossip’, *ibid.* p.126.
crossing evokes the ‘crucifixion’…”

JACKSON, Shostakovich Reconsidered p.602.

ibid. p.615.


with which I began implicitly betrays a motivation for political commentary. *Testimony* was, in its infancy accused of being a tool of anti-Soviet propaganda, and although this is most likely not a motivation for its publication, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (effective history) of the memoirs manifests itself in anti-Soviet literature published in it’s wake. The iconisation of Shostakovich as a hero of oppression, and the subsequent depersonalisation of him leaves behind a reified Shostakovich, after whose canonical reign is over will be discarded. Undoubtedly, this is not an explicit phenomenon, nor is it the paramount motivation of any scholar, but it is there, implicitly and perhaps unconsciously being perceived by the reader.

The result is, in short, a pluralistic Shostakovich, but not pluralistic from the perspective of either of the two camps. Shostakovich scholarship is seemingly untouched by the ‘New’ musicology, and the cause could well be the dependency of revisionism on objectivity. The composer is presented at once as a Soviet dissident and a ‘loyal son of the Communist party’. In the following section, I would like to localise the issue of there being two, (or more) Shostakovichs. I will put forth a case study of the ‘Jewish’ works, which displays the incongruity described above. The published literature on the ‘Jewish’ works can be divided into three categories on the basis of their hypotheses for Shostakovich’s motivation, and are as follows:

1. That he included it for merely aesthetic value: Judy Kuhn and Laurel Fay argue that Shostakovich used the idiom for its aesthetic qualities. Kuhn has used the implicitly buried uses of the Jewish style to argue this point.\(^{12}\)

2. Shostakovich was identifying himself as a Jew on the grounds of political persecution and oppression: Timothy Jackson has concluded with the hypothesis that the composer’s motivation was to identify himself as a Jew, in order to express his feelings of victimisation of the political regime. Jackson achieves this conclusion from the basis of interpreting relationships to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. He supposes that 'one might be tempted to call Shostakovich a 'Jewish Bach' because he combines *Chazanut* and *Klezmer* in Bachian counterpoint in his preludes and Fugues.'\(^{13}\)

3. That he was making a political statement against anti-Semitism: The idea that Shostakovich was objecting to anti-Semitism is one which is almost ubiquitously accepted. Joachim Braun referred to Shostakovich's motivation as having special meaning, and concludes that 'it is the fate of Soviet Jewry that is symbolised in this corpus of music.'\(^{14}\) In the case of the vocal cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, composed in 1948 against the backdrop of vicious anti-Semitism on the part of the Soviet government, this hypothesis is taken to

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be the motivation. However, it does not explain motivation for all of the co-called ‘Jewish’ works. Rather we need either a new thesis, or a combination of some or all of the above.

What scholars have yet overlooked is a distinction between the obviously intended ‘Jewish’ works and those which implicitly contain the use of the Jewish idiom. Despite Shostakovich being a Gentile, and not quoting any known Jewish music, but using only fragments of Jewish-sounding music, we still can investigate his adoption of the Jewish style. In order to examine the motivations as to why Shostakovich used the Jewish idiom, I propose a dichotomy within the body of works. On one hand there are the works which betray explicit use of the idiom, and therefore signal intent. These include the Second Piano Trio, the vocal cycle op.79, and the Fourth and Eighth Quartets. I will also include the Babi Yar Symphony in this group on account not of its technical compositional method, as it contains none of the idiosyncrasies of the other ‘Jewish’ works, but on account of its textual content, that is Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poem of the same name. The Babi Yar symphony is the only such exception. On the other hand, there are the implicit ‘Jewish’ works, which do not immediately strike the ear as using Jewish folk material, and include the idiom in a more integrated and buried compositional sense. These pieces generally need some form of analysis in order to determine their Jewish character, and are an important body when examining the intention of the composer. Implicit works include both the Violin and Cello Concerti, and the Second Quartet. A division of the ‘Jewish’ works on the basis of style will be likely to lead to a division of works on the basis of the composer's intention, and will perhaps show a changing philo-Semitism over a period of time. For present purposes, however, only the explicit works will be examined.

I have identified four main features, some of which have also been mentioned by Kuhn and Braun, that appear in Shostakovich's ‘Jewish’ works.

1) **Use of modes or Shtayger:** The works under discussion are questionable as regards how Jewish in fact they are. On a modal level, one would expect to find the Jewish modes or Shtayger used in his works, but they are generally not to be found. Five of the most commonly found Shtayger in Jewish music are as follows:

- **Ahavah Rabbah** or more commonly known as Freygish, a Phrygian mode with a raised third and occasionally a raised sixth;
- **Mi Shebberakh** or Ukrainian-Dorian, a Dorian mode with a raised fourth;
- **Adonai Malakh,** which corresponds to the Western Mixolydian, but is arranged in tetrachords comprising of a tone-tone-semitone structure;
- **Magen Avot,** corresponding to the Aeolian mode;
*Yistabbakh*, also corresponding to Aeolian, but with frequent use of lowered second and fifth degrees.

![Musical notation](image)

**Fig. 1**

Only one of these modes, the *Ahava Rabbah* can be found verbatim, in ninth the song of the vocal cycle, leading one to question in fact how ‘Jewish’ is this music. The most frequently found modes within Shostakovich’s Jewish music are not Jewish *Shtayger*, but altered forms of Phrygian and Locrian. The latter corresponds closely with what Alexander Dolzhansky called the maximally lowered mode, an eight-note set including the flattened tonic. As well as the final song in the vocal cycle, it features in the violin concerto, and the finale of the fourth quartet. However, Dolzhansky maintains that the composer invented new modes from putting personal inflections on the Western church modes, thus making them all exclusive to Shostakovich.\(^{15}\) The most frequently used articulation is the intervallic series of an augmented second followed by a semi-tone, a distinctly exotic sounding idiom.

Iambic Rhythm: The second recognisable feature of Jewish music is the use of iambic motifs. This fragment of a rhythmic figure consists of a note sounded on a weak beat and repeated on a strong beat. More often than not it is in a descending chain. Although this is not an idiom exclusive to Jewish music, it is a strong characteristic, and is manifest in Shostakovich's 'Jewish' works. The descending iamb is possibly the most commonly found of the features in this area of Shostakovich's music, and can be found in the vocal cycle op.79, numbers 3, 5, 9, and 11, and also in the Fourth Quartet, and Second Piano Trio, among others.

Semitonal movement in parallel fourths: The melodic movement entirely in semitones is usually harmonised in parallel perfect fourths, and conveys a distinct texture. Apart from the Fourth quartet, where it is used frequently in the finale, it can be found in the vocal cycle, song number 2.

Klezmer style accompaniment: The final example of style is the adopted use of the Klezmer style accompaniment. Commonly known as 'oom-pah' accompaniment, this consists of a strong pulse in the bass instruments playing at a dance tempo on and off the beat, usually in two voices. The most striking example is in the finale of the Piano Trio, and it also appears in songs 3 and 11 of the vocal cycle.

Placed within historical context, one can see that the presence of the Jewish style diminishes towards the composer's later years. The explicit pieces which bear the heavier Jewish influences, being the Trio, vocal cycle, and the Fourth Quartet were all composed between 1944 and 1949. There are, however, two more explicit works composed in the 1960’s: the Eighth Quartet, and the Symphony no.13. The Eighth Quartet, commonly thought to be an autobiographical work, contains a quote from the Trio of 1944, and so
uses the idiom only in a retrospective manner.\footnote{The Eighth Quartet is the only strong candidate for the second self-identification category described above because of its autobiographical nature, but will not be dealt with in the present paper.}

The Symphony is an exceptionable case of explicit ‘Jewishness’, because due to text and title only, it is a work of explicit intention. If the purpose of the Jewish idiom in the works of the 1940’s was to make a statement against anti-Semitism, then it follows that if it was intended to be a similar statement would have been used in the \textit{Babi Yar} Symphony. The process of decoding the Jewish elements in Shostakovich’s music in such a two-dimensional way as by constructing a narrative proves redundant. The lack of the idiom poses problems when interpreting the \textit{Babi Yar}. Obviously the problem is on the part of the interpretation, and the context of interpretation leaves the listener expecting Jewish ‘sounding’ music. The ossified status of Shostakovich as a hero of the Romantic ideals discussed earlier is a barrier to a complete understanding of the ‘Jewish’ works. The notions of change of view and understanding throughout his lifetime do not connect well with a depersonalised hero. If we conclude that the composer had only an aesthetic motivation to use elements of Jewish music (or Jewish-sounding music) in the 1940s which subsequently diminished, it disappoints the post Cold-war stature of an oppressed genius. Because the symphony is explicitly relating to the issues of anti-Semitism in Soviet Russia after the Holocaust in its text and title, it causes questioning of previous use of the idiom. For the remainder of this paper, I will offer a contextual comparison of the only two ‘Jewish’ works which contain text, therefore explicating the composer’s intention: the vocal cycle \textit{From Jewish Folk Poetry} op.79, and the \textit{Babi Yar} symphony.

The vocal cycle was composed against a background of official policies which operated on a level of Orwellian complexity. Just before what is now known as the 'Black Years' of Soviet anti-Semitism, Shostakovich composed the first eight songs of the cycle, to texts from a contemporary publication entitled \textit{Jewish Folk Songs}. It was premiered on the 25th of September, the composer's birthday, to a private audience, after which three new songs were added. These songs have been referred to as the 'happiness' songs on account of their relatively uplifting character. The cycle was shelved until 1955.

The Soviet Union had an official policy towards the establishment of the state of Israel which contradicted its domestic policy towards Jews. Andrei Gromyko, the deputy foreign minister strongly supported the plan to partition Palestine into two separate states, but also insisted that the new state had nothing to do with Soviet Jewry, nor had they any intention to emigrate there. There had been from the early years of the revolution, a campaign against Zionism, and Stalin had his designs on the Far East as a substitute for Zion, a domestic emigration project in which Jews were encouraged to move to Birobidzhan, officially known as the Jewish Autonomous State.

As the state of Israel disclosed alliance with America, the official policy towards Israel began to change around the autumn of 1948, when several articles appeared in \textit{Pravda} defaming Israel as being bourgeois, nationalist, and an instrument of Anglo-American imperialism. The mouthpiece of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, the paper \textit{Eynikyat}, began publishing articles of very similar nature to the larger official newspapers, a sign of external control over the publication.

There followed a campaign against what were called ‘bourgeois nationalism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’. Originally intended to liquidate foreign influences, these campaigns soon turned their principal focus to the Jews. Many leaders of Jewish culture, and
intelligentsia were murdered as in the case of Solomon Mikhoels, director of the Moscow State Yiddish Theatre, and head of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, which was subsequently liquidated in November 1948. It appears that Stalin intended for the Jews to be a scapegoat for post-war economic failings, aside from his own personal xenophobia, and anti-Semitism. The Jews, being a body of people ubiquitous throughout Russia, a country already rife with anti-Semitism, united by a foreign nationalist idea, now being realised in Israel, provided the ideal target for the dictator. This was the strongest of the purges, and lasted until Stalin's death on the 5th March 1953, after which the Jewish National Awakening began.

An important event of 1948 for Shostakovich was Zhdanov's resolution of 10th February, entitled 'On the opera Velikaya Druzhba by Muradeli' in which Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Miaskovsky, and Khachaturian among others, were accused of formalism. The resolution was a stance against complex instrumental music. Music with either programmatic content or text was preferred. The party expressed the view that 'music that is unintelligible to the people is unwanted by the people. Let the composers not blame the people; let them blame themselves'. Despite Zhdanov's death on 31st August 1948, his policies were nevertheless carried out with the same force by the newly elected general secretary of the composers union, Tikhon Khrennikov for about five years, before easing, and ten years later some of the accusations were withdrawn, but not the accusation of formalism.

The vocal cycle was composed shortly after this Resolution, also in close proximity to the composition of the Fourth Quartet and Violin Concerto. All three works were shelved until after Stalin's death. It is unlikely that Shostakovich had a political motivation to write the vocal cycle. Indeed if he had intended to make such a statement, it would not have undergone the private premiere that it did, nor would the three final songs, glorifying the Jews' position in the USSR as one of privilege, and praising Soviet agriculture, education and beauty of the countryside, have been added. Rather, the composition of a cycle of folk songs is comfortably within the Socialist Realist line, being a simple subject, understandable by all people, set to text relating mainly familial episodes. This would appear to be what was wanted by Zhdanov, and was also in line with Soviet foreign policy at the time. The shelving of the cycle was probably due to the following purge of the Jews which began towards the end of 1948. As it is an apolitical, simple piece, it follows that Shostakovich used the idiom on aesthetic grounds, probably ignorant of the potential danger due to the following Soviet foreign policy.

After the death of Stalin, there came an absence of official policy towards the Jews of the Soviet Union. By 1957, when Khrushchev came to power many Jews were re-instated at work, and liberated from Siberian concentration camps. Many of the released prisoners became leaders in a Zionist cause to educate the Russian Jews about Israel, and to encourage nationalist sentiments. Many samizdat publications were made, copied, and distributed, among them a secret translation of Leon Uris' Exodus. Riga became a center for the Jewish National Awakening, and included a Jewish choir led by Israel Abramis, which lasted for several years, and the erection of a monument in 1963 at Rumbali, a site of mass execution during the War. In line with the post-Stalin ‘thaw’, Khrushchev’s blatant personal anti-Semitism did not filter down into his politics, and so

18 Cf. KUHN, pp.181-182.
he remained politically indifferent towards the Jewish people. Jews wanting to emigrate to Israel could now obtain exit visas. The Jewish community grew strong enough to demand a monument for Babi Yar, a ravine in the Ukraine in which up to 90,000 Jews were massacred by the Nazis in September 1941. It was left as an unmarked mass grave, and the Soviet authorities never gave Babi Yar the recognition that it deserved. Nevertheless, it took ten years from when the demand was made, in 1966, until the government announced that a monument would be erected.

Despite Khrushchev’s indifference, anti-Semitism continued, but in relative terms it was not as aggressive, and active. As Benjamin Pinkus has expressed it: ‘Khrushchev’s anti-Semitism was very different from that of Stalin in his last years. It was not pseudo-scientific, rational, or ideological anti-Semitism; it was not even political anti-Semitism inspired by particular interests. It was really ‘popular anti-Semitism’, based on traditional prejudice against the Jew as one who evokes suspicion, envy and hatred.’

This period of the thaw was short lived. After the first contraction of the thaw, which came subsequent to the Hungarian uprising of 1956, there was a return to the Stalin style oppression, which finally dilated again in 1961. At the 22nd Party Congress, during that year, Khrushchev attacked Stalin’s policies, and made public his crimes. There followed a wave of publications reminiscent of the Gulag labour camps in journals. This culminated in Khrushchev’s being pressurised to pass Solzhenitsyn’s novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* for publication in *Novy Mir* in November 1962. Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s poem, ‘Babi Yar’ was published in 1961, and caused the poet to rise to world fame and a wave of interest in the possibility of a monument to be built there. Shostakovich was at this time enjoying an easing of his own oppression. The Fourth Symphony, after being banned since 1936, was finally premiered in 1961, and a re-working of *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk District* was performed one week after the Babi Yar Symphony. As a precautionary measure, the Stanislavsky theatre advertised a performance of Rossini’s *Barber of Seville*, and changed the program on the day of the performance.

However, Khrushchev soon withdrew his permissiveness on seeing an exhibition of Eli Belyutin’s abstract art. The chief of the Ideological Commission, Leonid Ilyichev was also skeptical of the flood of dissident publications across the arts, and complained that it was beginning to drown the propaganda of Soviet achievements. A meeting took place one day before the premiere of the Thirteenth Symphony, and Khrushchev prevented the planned televising of the performance. After the second performance two days later, the symphony was withdrawn on account of its text, revised, and the new version was performed the following spring. The fault was that Yevtushenko depicted the victims of the events at Babi Yar to be Jews only, and was forced to include Russians and Ukrainians as victims. Solzhenitsyn's novel was also withdrawn. This signaled the end of the second Thaw.

We can now see that Shostakovich’s use of Yevtushenko’s text was not as heroic an act as some would interpret it to be. Many other articles criticising the Soviet system and its policies were being published at the same time, and Klebanov had composed his *Babi Yar* Symphony ten years earlier. The censorship of the symphony was due to its unfortunate timing only, as the poem was already a celebrated one. This act of

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Shostakovich’s was obviously in sympathy with Soviet Jewry, an act of solidarity, and perhaps a buttressing of Yevtushenko’s call for a monument to be built at Babi Yar, and therefore a politically motivated use of the Jewish subject, unlike the op.79, as Shostakovich was taking part in a movement of social awakening. The absence of the Jewish musical rhetoric supposes that it was now seen as a pan-Russian issue, and not a problem exclusive to one national group within the Union, as can be seen from the implication of the final lines of the poem:

I myself am one massive, soundless scream above the thousand thousand buried here.
I am each old man here shot dead.
I am every child here shot dead.
Nothing in me shall ever forget!
The “Internationale”, let it thunder when the last anti-Semite on earth is buried forever.
In my blood there is no Jewish blood.
In their callous rage, all anti-Semites must hate me now as a Jew.
For that reason I am a true Russian!\(^{20}\)

The use of the Jewish idiom in the works of Shostakovich display a gradual shift in emphasis, firstly from a more superficially explicit manifestation in the 1940's, to an implicit expression in the 1950s in works like the Cello Concerto, and the Four Monologues to words by Alexander Pushkin, to the absence of Jewish musical rhetoric in the thirteenth symphony of 1962. This tapering of the Jewish idiom would suggest that the composer’s initial use of the idiom was one motivated by aesthetics, and subsequently diminished. By the 1960s, his adoption of the Jewish subject was one motivated by his reaction to anti-Semitism, and thus a political act. The change of Shostakovich’s Philo-Semitism is one easy to see, as his general style did not change greatly since the mid-30’s. Nevertheless we are left with two contrasting works, both embracing a common subject, but by different means, and for different reasons.

However, there is no need to reconstruct a pluralistic Shostakovich as discussed earlier. This is only necessary if one is victimised by heroism and reification. The figure of Shostakovich must be seen not as an impenetrable and depersonalised genius. The heroic stature must be discarded since it’s iconic quality produces the representation of a man who’s attitudes never changed over his lifespan, and who’s raison d’être was uniformed throughout that life-span. It is responsible for presumptuous analyses and interpretations, as exhibited in Jackson’s of the Eighth Quartet, with which I began. These analyses and interpretations harden into the unchanging icon, upon which, after taken as absolute, are built further interpretations. I do not intend to contribute to the debate, nor to argue that Shostakovich was not a Soviet dissident, but to contribute suspicion of those who maintain his dissidence by connecting expectation with imagination. Ultimately, the naively constructed narrative exhibited in Jackson’s rhetoric is built on a questionable and rocky foundation. In the case of the ‘Jewish’ works discussed above, plurality can simply exist within the domain of time, but providing we rid ourselves of a frozen, iconised, and romanticised hero.

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