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Translation, Cosmopolitanism and the Resilience of Yiddish: Wischnitzer's *Milgroym* as a Pathway Towards the Global Museum

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TRANSLATION, COSMOPOLITANISM AND THE RESILIENCE OF YIDDISH: WISCHNITZER'S MILGROYM AS A PATHWAY TOWARDS THE GLOBAL MUSEUM

Susanne Marten-Finnis

Abstract: *Over the past decade, traditional curatorial practices for developing museum collections have increasingly been challenged. Museums that present a Western, Eurocentrist approach to broader global narratives have been charged with having overt hegemonic goals and patriarchal tendencies. As a result, the search for alternative narratives has become a principal task of current practitioners in museum curation. This process has included new approaches to the study of primary sources and the ways in which they are exhibited, along with the promotion of new relationships between art and the public. But it could also involve revisiting past endeavors to communicate global narratives to the public, in particular historical curatorial practices in which notions of inclusivity and diversity served as animating principles.*

One such endeavor was Rachel Wischnitzer's Yiddish journal Milgroym whose narrative started in the East. Launched in Berlin in 1922 as an illustrated Yiddish magazine of art and letters, Milgroym had a cognate Hebrew issue called Rimon. Both translate as "pomegranate," a symbol of hope and abundance. However, what complicated Wischnitzer's choice of Yiddish and Hebrew was that she did not know either language. As such, her project needed to rely, fundamentally, on the involvement of translators.

This article will concentrate on Milgroym's arts section, which occasioned the most creative period of Wischnitzer's extended sojourn in Berlin. It sets out to contextualize Milgroym within two larger historical phenomena: first, the history of interwar European Yiddish modernist publishing, and second, the competing

discourses governing Yiddish translation. A third goal of the article is to introduce Rachel Wischnitzer as a doyenne of Jewish Art History. It will chart Wischnitzer's path to Milgroym and shed light on her role as a pioneering scholar who transformed the relationship between art and the public. In view of the debates on Yiddish translation prevailing during the period under discussion, the article will examine to what extent Milgroym's translations—which were ultimately Wischnitzer's responsibility—contributed to this transformed relationship, and expose her role in theorizing Milgroym as a pathway towards the global museum.

Introduction

Over the past decade, traditional curatorial practices for developing museum collections have increasingly been challenged. Museums that present a Western, Eurocentrist approach to broader global narratives have been charged with having overt hegemonic goals and patriarchal tendencies. As a result, the search for alternative narratives has become a principal task of current practitioners in museum curation,¹ which has included new approaches to the study of primary sources and the ways in which they are exhibited, along with the promotion of new relationships between art and the public. This process could also involve revisiting past endeavors to communicate global narratives to the public, in particular historical curatorial practices in which notions of inclusivity and diversity served as animating principles, as opposed to storytelling strategies that emphasized the exotic and the foreign.

One such endeavor was Rachel Wischnitzer's² Yiddish journal *Milgroym*. It may be strange to think of a journal as a pathway towards a global museum, but on reflection it seems both appropriate and timely as today's museum directors and curators seek out dialogue with artists and intellectuals with diverse perspectives. Crucially, Wischnitzer's museum of Jewish culture is global in scope and its narrative begins in the East rather than finding its origins in the hegemonic West. Instead of domesticating prevailing concepts of the museum—or exhibition space—as a product of Western civilization, Wischnitzer unveiled in her magazine a Jewish artistic heritage that she narrated within the broader context of Christian and Muslim tradition. Seemingly free of hegemonic ambition and partiality, *Milgroym* charts the common socio-political factors that connect the works of Jewish artists across the world and across time, while at the same time acknowledging their divergent cultural and historical backgrounds. The identification of such a network of Jewish cultural activity had previously formed the focus of Wischnitzer's academic studies in the early twentieth century. When *Milgroym* was founded in 1922, Wischnitzer felt the time had come to share the results of her research with the Jewish world, and to make them palatable to a wider audience. Still, *Milgroym's* ambition went far beyond popular enlightenment. Its launch as a global

¹ "The Idea of the Global Museum." Conference held by the Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, 2-3 December 2016.

² In *Milgroym*, she signed some articles as "Rachel Wischnitzer" or "R.W.," and others as "Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein." In this article she will be referred to as Rachel Wischnitzer.

museum of Jewish culture announced a period of transition for the display of Jewish heritage.

Whereas the art magazines launched by other Russians who stayed in Berlin during the early 1920s elevated Russian art to the global stage, Wischnitzer gathered items of Jewish heritage from throughout the Ashkenazi diaspora—in museums and private collections in Paris, London, Oxford, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Washington and Prague³—for display on a new national stage. She sought to address the entire Ashkenazi Jewish community, which at the time was split into two ideological camps—Yiddishists and Hebraists. As a result, she founded a bilingual journal that could potentially meet the ideological demands of both camps, simply by using Hebrew along with Yiddish. The motivation for her commitment to both Yiddish and Hebrew was twofold: on the one hand, she intended to maintain scholarly neutrality in the ongoing battle between the two languages and their representatives;⁴ on the other hand, she wanted to create an integrative relationship between art and the public, and to disseminate her research to the entire Ashkenazi Jewish community, which in her mind included “Jewish groups in America and the growing Jewish community in Palestine”,⁵ as she pointed out later on.

However, what complicated her choice of Yiddish and Hebrew was that she did not know either language. As such, the project needed to rely, fundamentally, on the involvement of impartial translators whose style, together with Wischnitzer’s original analyses, rigorous guidance notes, and detached view of the ideological battles prevailing during this period in the Jewish world became a signature of *Milgroym*’s stance. While Yiddish and Hebrew translation practices had historically tended to be informed by partiality, in the sense of “what is good for the Jewish reader and thus, worth translating,” *Milgroym* translations appear less partisan. They concentrate on presenting the facts rather than commenting on them, thus allowing the readers to make up their own minds as mature and active citizens and enabling them to play their parts in shaping the Jewish future. In that respect, *Milgroym* translations paved the way for a more transparent relationship between the culture surrounding the author of a source text and the reader of a translation into a Jewish language, with a potential to facilitate dialogue between both. It is this dialogue potential that makes *Milgroym* appear as a pathway to the global museum, as will be outlined below.

The present article will concentrate on *Milgroym*’s arts section, which occasioned the most creative period of Wischnitzer’s extended sojourn in Berlin. This article sets out to contextualize *Milgroym* within two larger historical phenomena: first, the history of interwar European Yiddish modernist publishing, and second, the competing discourses governing Yiddish translation. A third goal of the article is to introduce Rachel Wischnitzer as a doyenne of Jewish art history. It will chart Wischnitzer’s path to *Milgroym* and shed light on her role as a pioneering scholar of Jewish Art History who transformed the relationship between art and the public. In view of the debates on Yiddish translation prevailing during the period under discussion, the article will

³ Erich Toeplitz, “Jüdische Museen,” *Der Jude*, 8, 1924, issue 5-6, 339-346.

⁴ Bezalel Narkiss, “Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne of Historians of Jewish Art,” in: Rachel Wischnitzer (ed.), *From Dura to Rembrandt. Studies in the History of Art* (Milwaukee, Vienna, Jerusalem, 1990), 9-25.

⁵ Joseph Gutman, “Introduction: Rachel Wischnitzer,” *artibus et historiae. An Art Anthology*, Institute for Art Historical Research (IRSA) 9, 1988, 11-12.

examine to what extent *Milgroym's* translations—which were ultimately Wischnitzer's responsibility—contributed to this transformed relationship, and expose her role in theorizing *Milgroym* as a pathway towards the global museum.

Rachel Wischnitzer's Path to Milgroym

Milgroym's founder Rachel Wischnitzer, née Bernstein, originated from a well-to-do Jewish family who was acculturated into the Russian language and society of late imperial Russia.⁶ Born in Minsk in 1885 to a Jewish timber merchant, she enjoyed an intensive secular education from a tutor at home. When the timber industry collapsed, the family moved to Warsaw, where she attended the Second Gymnasium for Girls until 1902, followed by a five-year academic training in art history, philosophy, and architecture in Heidelberg, Brussels, and Paris. She was among the first female architects and the first woman to teach Jewish art history at tertiary level.

Her father belonged to the tiny, privileged class of Jewish merchants who were exceptionally indulgent towards their daughters and encouraged their pursuit of higher education, even if this meant sending them to European universities. The five years of independent academic study were the basis of Rachel's broad education, giving her strength of character as a scholar and independence as a woman. After further studies in Munich in 1909-10, she started to examine the hitherto neglected fields of synagogue architecture⁷ and cemetery art and symbolism.⁸

She then settled in St. Petersburg and contributed to both the influential Jewish magazine *Novy Voskhod* [*New Dawn*] and the Russian-language *Jewish Encyclopedia*. One of her contributions to *Novy Voskhod* dealt with the stone synagogue of Lutsk in Volhynia, which she discussed in the context of the larger architectural history of the region.⁹ She analyzed its structure and function and compared it with Polish and Italian examples. This article was the first of many contributions to the topic, and a point of departure for her two major books on European (1964)¹⁰ and American (1955)¹¹ synagogue architecture. Her volume on the third-century synagogue of Dura-Europos discovered in 1932 was a major contribution to both Jewish history and the associated iconography of art in general.¹² Her two entries for the *Jewish Encyclopedia* covered synagogue architecture and ritual objects.¹³ During this commission, she met the section

⁶ Fran Markowitz, "Criss-Crossing Identities: The Russian Jewish Diaspora and the Jewish Diaspora in Russia," *Diaspora* 4, no. 2, 1995, 210.

⁷ Rachel Bernstein-Wischnitzer [sic], "Synagogen im ehemaligen Königreich Polen mit acht Abbildungen nach Zeichnungen der Verfasserin," in: S. J. Agnon and Ahron Eliasberg (eds.), *Das Buch von den polnischen Juden* (Berlin 1916), 90-104.

⁸ Rachel Bernstein-Wischnitzer [sic], "Alte Friedhofskunst," *Der Jude*, Jahrgang 2, Berlin, Wien 1917-1918, (Neudruck Topos Verlag AG Vaduz, Liechtenstein) 683-691.

⁹ Rachel Bernstein-Wischnitzer [sic], "Starynnaia Sinagoga v Lutske," *Novy Voskhod* 4, 1913, no. 1, 48-52.

¹⁰ Rachel Wischnitzer, *Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia, 1964).

¹¹ Rachel Wischnitzer, *Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation* (Philadelphia, 1955).

¹² Rachel Wischnitzer, *The Messianic Theme in the Paintings of the Dura Synagogue* (Chicago, 1948).

¹³ Narkiss, 14.

editor, Mark Wischnitzer, whom she married in St. Petersburg in 1912.¹⁴ While in St. Petersburg, Wischnitzer became an adherent of the notion of Jewish art elaborated by Vladimir Stassoff. In his appeal to develop national styles, Stassoff had exhorted Jewish artists to abandon non-Jewish themes and to allow themselves to be inspired by their own heritage.¹⁵

Motivated by her interest in illuminated manuscripts and prompted by her discovery of medieval Jewish illuminated manuscripts held by the St. Petersburg Public Library, Wischnitzer further developed Stassoff's approach by suggesting that there was a Russian, or perhaps even a specifically St. Petersburg understanding of Jewish art, though such particularity was itself embedded within a universal creative process.¹⁶ "I have always seen Jewish art as part of the general creative process moulded inexorably by the times and the artist's personality, rather than by national characteristics," she pointed out later on.¹⁷

In *Milgroyim*, Wischnitzer expanded this understanding by uncovering an architectural genealogy from ancient synagogue art and medieval Jewish illuminated manuscripts to the modern style of the Jewish avant-garde. Besides her editorial oversight, her own contributions to the magazine entailed popularized offshoots of her earlier publications in British and German academic presses. They typically appeared as highly original features: her studies on the "Motif of the Porch in Book Ornamentation"¹⁸ and on "David and Samson Slaying the Lion"¹⁹ in ancient medieval Jewish art were the two most sophisticated art historical contributions to *Milgroyim*. They were fully in line with the magazine's integrative approach, as they merged analytical rigour with iconographical study of Jewish motifs, which were presented within a broader Asia-Europe perspective. Although conceived for a naïve audience in a popular language, they introduced new methods of iconographical study into Jewish art history, and thus complemented iconographical studies of Christian and Renaissance art that had been introduced about a hundred years earlier.²⁰ Stassoff's consideration of Jewish illuminated manuscripts as part of a universal artistic heritage, which he revealed in his album *L'ornement hébreu*²¹ thus forms an important prerequisite to understanding *Milgroyim*'s central mission: the study and contemplation "both retrospective and contemporary, of art in all its manifestations—painting, sculpture, music and theatre,

¹⁴ Ibid. Mark Wischnitzer was born in Rovno, Volhynia, Russia, also the birthplace of his mother. His father originated from Brody in Galicia at the time part of Habsburg Austria, which is why he and his parents carried Austrian citizenship. Rachel acquired Austrian citizenship through her marriage. This enabled her to return to Russia after the Revolution, and leave it again in 1921.

¹⁵ Mirjam Rajner, "The Awakening of Jewish National Art in Russia", *Jewish Art* 11, 1990, 98-121.

¹⁶ Susanne Marten-Finnis, Igor Dukhan, "Dream and Experiment. Time and Style in 1920s Berlin Émigré Magazines: *Zhar Ptitsa* and *Milgroyim*," *East European Jewish Affairs* 35, no. 2, 2005, 225-244.

¹⁷ Wischnitzer, 1990, 166.

¹⁸ R. Wischnitzer, "Der toyer-motiv in der bukh-kunst" [The Motif of the Porch in Book Ornamentation], *Milgroyim* no. 4, 1923, 2-7.

¹⁹ R. Wischnitzer, "Der leyb-batsvinger in der yidisher kunst" [David and Samson Slaying the Lion] *Milgroyim* no. 5, 1923, 1-4.

²⁰ Marten-Finnis, Dukhan, 2005.

²¹ David Ginzburg and Vladimir Stassoff, *L'Ornement Hébreu* (Berlin, St. Petersburg, 1905).

with special attention given to the artistic production of the Jews, present and past.”²²

Milgroym: Context, Mission and Vision

Wischnitzer came to Berlin in 1921 to join her husband, then newly appointed as the Secretary General of the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* [Relief Agency of the German Jews], a post he held until they left Nazi Germany in 1938. Those seventeen years of her sojourn in the German capital are said to be the most creative period of her life.²³ Wischnitzer published scores of articles,²⁴ besides her first monograph on symbols and images of Jewish art, in which she summarized the iconographical studies published in *Milgroym*.²⁵ Her work in Berlin, bringing a new genealogy to Jewish art, coincided not only with the very climax of Jewish and Yiddish modernism in both literary and plastic arts, but also with the period of German inflation, when the city hosted a throbbing microcosm of Yiddish presses and publishing enterprises. Yiddish cultural activists produced beautifully designed books with illustrations by the avant-garde of modernist artists from Russia and Eastern Europe, among them Marc Chagall, El Lissitzky, Issacher Ber Rybak and Joseph Tshaikov. They introduced, for the first time, an aesthetic element to the publishing of Yiddish books and magazines.²⁶

A variety of Yiddish magazines were also established during this period. Some of them were entirely new projects, others were new to Berlin, brought there by members of various Yiddish modernist groups that had crystallized in the centers of creativity in Poland and the former Pale of Settlement. Among them was the Łódź group *Yung-yidish*, which stood for the emergence of Jewish modernist plastic arts and the beginning of Yiddish modernist poetry in Poland; the rebellious Warsaw literary group *Khalyastre* [The Gang], which under Melech Ravitch, Peretz Markish, and Uri Zvi Greenberg adopted innovations of German Expressionism and Russian Futurism; and the *Kiev-grupe* with their late symbolism and revolutionary romanticism represented by Dovid Hofshteyn and Leyb Kvitko.²⁷ Much like Wischnitzer, these writers still faced the same challenge that had occupied their debates before the First World War: how to build a modern, secular, Jewish national culture.

The search for the answers to this question determined the diametrically opposed missions of both Wischnitzer's *Milgroym* on the one hand and the radically modernist

²² Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, “Di naye kunst un mir” [Modern Art and Our Jewish Generation], *Milgroym* no.1, 1922, 2-7.

²³ Bezalel Narkiss, “Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne of Historians of Jewish Art”, in: *From Dura to Rembrandt*, *op cit.* 9-25, 17.

²⁴ Her articles were published in the *Jüdische Rundschau*, the Berlin fortnightly periodical of the Zionist Organisation of Germany, almost up to its last issue in November 1938, and the *Gemeindeblatt*, the monthly journal of the Jewish community in Berlin. Her most important articles were published in the Frankfurt am Main-based monthly *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, as well as the Paris-based quarterly *Revue des Études Juives* and the *Jewish Quarterly Review*.

²⁵ Rahel [sic] Wischnitzer-Bernstein, *Symbole und Gestalten der Jüdischen Kunst* (Berlin, 1935).

²⁶ Leo and Renate Fuks, “Yiddish Publishing Activities in the Weimar Republic, 1920-1933,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 23, 1988, 417-434, 422.

²⁷ Seth L. Wolitz, “Between Folk and Freedom: The Failure of the Yiddish Modernist Movement in Poland,” *Yiddish. A Quarterly Journal Devoted to Yiddish and Yiddish Literature* 8, no. 1, 1991, 26-39.

*Albatros*²⁸ on the other.²⁹ Wischnitzer followed the nationalist model she inherited from Stasoff in trying to bring respect for traditional Jewish life into harmony with western civilization. In contrast, the expressionists of *Albatros* largely rejected the idea of Yiddishkayt aesthetics and universalism, and ultimately Yiddish itself, as well as the Jewish condition on European soil.³⁰ Like Greenberg, most *Khalyastre* members shared a pessimistic vision of humanity in general, and of Jewry in particular, in the postwar world. They also polemicized with the members of the Kiev *Kultur-lige*, which occupied a kind of middle ground between the nationalism of *Milgroym* and the radicalism of *Albatros*. This group was headed by such writers as Dovid Bergelson and Der Nister (who would join *Milgroym* but only for its first issue).

Founded in 1918, the *Kultur-lige* functioned for nearly three tumultuous years amidst revolutionary ferment and civil war in Ukraine. Unaffiliated with any political party, its general goal was to foster an international movement for Yiddish culture. It established schools of music, art, drama, a publishing house, and a central library, besides producing literary and pedagogical journals. When the Soviet government gained control of Ukraine in late 1920, it removed from office the non-Bolshevik members of the *Kultur-lige*'s central committee. In 1921, the entire organisation was closed down. Six of its leaders left for Warsaw where they continued the cultural and political work they had begun in Kiev. Others moved on to Berlin.³¹ Still, the radical modernists accused the *Kultur-lige* of having left the original Jewish ranks, first for Moscow, and then for Berlin "to deal in a new Jewish people, a new Jewish culture".³² This sentiment was spelled out by Markish in his poem "Biznes: Moskve–Berlin", the introductory part of which is formulated in terms of the apocalypse and the extermination of the Jewish people.³³

Milgroym thus appeared as a kind of reactionary response to the radical particularism of the literary avant-garde. From *Khalyastre*'s view of a living Yiddish culture, *Milgroym*'s global approach seemed like a retreat, as it displayed popular art from the British Museum, articles on Islamic art,³⁴ and Chinese paintings,³⁵ instead of searching for its "authentic" roots exclusively in the East.³⁶

²⁸ Expressionist Yiddish magazine launched by Uri Zvi Greenberg in Warsaw in 1922. After the first two issues the magazine was prohibited for reasons of blasphemy and therefore re-launched in Berlin where Greenberg published the double number 3 and 4 in 1923. See: Heather Valencia, "The Vision of Zion from the 'Kingdom of the Cross': Uri Tsvi Grinberg's *Albatros* in Berlin (1923)," in: Susanne Marten-Finnis, Matthias Uecker (eds.) *Berlin – Wien – Prag. Modernity, Minorities and Migration in the Inter-War Period* (Bern, 2001) 159-174.

²⁹ Glenn S. Levine, "Yiddish Publishing in Berlin and the Crisis in Eastern European Jewish Culture 1919-1924," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 42, 1997, 85-108.

³⁰ Valencia, 2001, 159-174.

³¹ Hillel (Grygory) Kazovsky, *The Artists of the Kultur-Lige* (Moscow, Jerusalem 2003), 16.

³² Perets Markish, "Biznes: Moskve–Berlin," *Khalyastre*, no. 1, 1922, 62.

³³ Delphine Bechtel, "Les revues modernistes yiddish à Berlin et à Varsovie de 1922 à 1924. La quête d'une nouvelle Jérusalem?" *Etudes Germaniques* 46, 1991, no. 2, 161-177.

³⁴ Erich Toeplitz, "Moslem (sic) Bindings. With a Coloured Plate," *Milgroym* no. 5, 6-7.

³⁵ William Cohn, "Chinese Paintings. With Illustrations," *Milgroym* no. 5, 13-16

³⁶ Delphine Bechtel, "Milgroym, a Yiddish magazine of arts and letters, is founded in Berlin by Mark Wischnitzer," in: Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes (eds.), *Yale Companion to Jewish Writings and Thought in German Culture 1096 – 1996* (New Haven, 1997), 423.

But it was exactly *Milgroym's* panoramic vision of the Jewish artistic experience that made the journal so popular. Wischnitzer's way of bridging the gaps between tradition and progress, between enlightenment and globalization, qualifies *Milgroym* as a timely project in today's search for pathways towards the global museum. Her mode of making her studies palatable to a wider Jewish public eventually turned out to be one decisive factor in transforming the relationship between art and the public. This had been on the agenda for Jewish cultural activists as early as in 1908, when the editors of the Vilna monthly *Literarishe monatsshriftn*, Sh. Niger, Sh. Gorelik, and A. Vayter had pleaded for a widening of the readership of magazines in order to make cultural treasures accessible to a mass Jewish audience.³⁷ In that respect, the approach Wischnitzer embarked upon in *Milgroym* can be seen as a response to their appeal.

Transforming the Relationships between Art and Public

The other factor of the magazine that was meant to draw a wide audience was its attractive physical appearance. *Milgroym* was said to be the most beautifully designed magazine of Jewish art and culture "that had ever appeared and the like of which had never before been published for Jewish readers."³⁸ The journal was launched by the Berlin-based *Rimon* publishing company in 1922 as an illustrated Yiddish magazine of art and letters, and had a cognate Hebrew issue called *Rimon*. Both versions were magnificently designed. And both titles translate as 'Pomegranate', a symbol of fertility, hope and abundance. At the same time, they signify Wischnitzer's ambition to reclaim and elucidate Jewish heritage, and to present it within a broader context of Christian and Islamic heritage.

Before delving into the details of both journals' physical layout, it is important to outline the stakes, politically and culturally, of producing two simultaneous journals in the two "national" languages. By choosing *both* Yiddish and Hebrew for her publishing project, Wischnitzer sent a clear message to the two groups within the Jewish community whose discourses on Jewish identity were based primarily on the use of either Hebrew or Yiddish. In 1908, the Czernowitz Language Conference had recognised both Hebrew and Yiddish as national languages of the Jewish people and thereby established a "ceasefire" between the advocates of Yiddish and Hebrew. But the old conflict resurfaced after the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, when two matters in particular started to fuel the debates between the two ideological camps: first, there was the prospect of acceptance of the Jewish minority as a national group in Poland and in the newly established countries of Central Europe where Jewish languages could be recognized in some official way, at least as part of primary and secondary Jewish education; second, discussions became amplified around the construction of Jewish

³⁷ *Literarishe monatsshriftn* 1, Vilna, 1908, cols. 5-10, quoted in: Tilo A. Alt, "Ambivalence Toward Modernism: The Yiddish Avant-garde and its Manifestoes," *Yiddish. A Quarterly Journal Devoted to Yiddish and Yiddish Literature*, 8, no. 1, 1991, 52-61.

³⁸ Fuks, 1988.

settlements in Palestine, including the linguistic makeup of the *Aliya* movement.³⁹ By producing *Milgroym* and *Rimon* simultaneously, Wischnitzer sought to present her project in an ideology-free zone, outside the inner-Jewish battlefield. Even before its artistic design was established, graphically Wischnitzer attempted to present a unified image of Jewish culture in the very choice of languages. This editorial choice was in contrast, for example, to *Albatros*, the journal edited by Uri Zvi Greenberg. When, in 1924, Grinberg decided to shift from writing in Yiddish to writing in Hebrew, and to move from Europe to Palestine, *Albatros* simply ceased to exist rather than become a multilingual or bilingual journal. Greenberg, in keeping with an avant-garde poetics, preferred a sharp break with Yiddish culture and tradition.⁴⁰

Milgroym and *Rimon* sought instead to highlight connections to tradition, and the design of the journals directly reflected this. In part, this can be attributed to the background of the people behind the scenes: the directorship of the *Rimon* publishers was comprised of Wischnitzer's husband Mark who was an academically trained historian of Jewish history; Elija Paenson, a Jewish benefactor from Russia who admired and promoted Jewish literature and the arts;⁴¹ and Alexander E. Kogan, a member of the Russian publishing elite from St. Petersburg and a distinguished figure in the Russian school of fine art printing.⁴²

Kogan was also the editor-in-chief of *Zhar ptitsa* (The Firebird), an international Russian art magazine in the tradition of the Russian Silver Age,⁴³ luxurious in style and lavish in decoration, which he launched in Berlin in 1921. Kogan supported Wischnitzer's project by providing his expertise as a specialist of typographic design, which explains why *Milgroym*, at first glance, appears so similar to the glamorous Silver Age art magazines, akin to *Zhar ptitsa*. This is particularly obvious from the colourful reproductions displayed on the cover of their first issues [see illustrations 1 and 2].

³⁹ Susanne Marten-Finnis, Markus Winkler, "Location of Memory versus Space of Communication: Presses, Languages & Education among Czernovitz Jews, 1918-1941," *Central Europe* 7, no.1 (May 2009), 30-55 (45-46).

⁴⁰ Susanne Marten-Finnis, Heather Valencia, *Sprachinseln. Jiddische Publizistik in London, Wilna und Berlin 1880-1930* (Köln, Weimar, Wien, 1999), 79-100.

⁴¹ Rachel Wischnitzer, "From my archives" in: *From Dura to Rembrandt*, op. cit. 166.

⁴² Susanne Marten-Finnis, *Der Feuervogel als Kunstzeitschrift. Žar ptica: Russische Bildwelten in Berlin 1921-26* (Wien, 2012), 35-46.

⁴³ The metaphorical characterisation for Russian culture from the 1880s to 1914.



Illustration 1



Illustration 2

Readers familiar with both magazines might have been confused to see the lion-slayer displayed on the cover of *Zhar ptitsa* rather than *Milgroym*. Published in *Zhar ptitsa*'s eighth issue, which was devoted to Russian book art and graphic design, this splendid reproduction by L. Chirikov [illustration 3] would have nicely complemented Wischnitzer's discussion of "David and Samson slaying the lion" published half a year later in *Milgroym*.



Illustration 3

Ultimately, the lion remained in *Zhar ptitsa* and never appeared in *Milgroym*, an indication perhaps that, despite the impressive appearance that both magazines shared in terms of format and cover design, their messages were very different.⁴⁴ *Zhar ptitsa*

⁴⁴ As Wischnitzer recalled, "the production of the first issue of the magazine was in the hands of Alexander Kogan, the publisher of *Jar Ptitsa* [sic] (Firebird), a Russian art magazine. The format and general appearance of our journals showed the influence of *Jar Ptitsa*". See: Rachel Wischnitzer, "From my archives," in: Wischnitzer, 1990, 168. Bezalel Narkiss also confirms the influence of *Zhar ptitsa* on the layout of *Milgroym/Rimon*. See: Narkiss, 1990, 18.

viewed the preservation of the Russian artistic heritage through the lens of nostalgia and embarked on a project of unmediated representation to a global readership, without any further comment or explanation. This display culture had two goals. The works of the St. Petersburg *Mir Iskusstva* (World of Art) group offered Russian émigrés a refuge from the depressing reality of everyday emigrant life [“ . . . and only the muses with their tender harem, like signs of paradise come down to our prison house.”]⁴⁵ More importantly, however, *Zhar ptitsa*’s international supplements had undertaken to raise the visibility of Russian artists now scattered around the globe.⁴⁶ Its growing distribution and readership in France, Belgium, Holland, England, the USA and Argentina were to facilitate the reception of the *Mir Iskusstva* exhibition that had taken place in Paris in 1921.⁴⁷ The artists of this group were the heroes of *Zhar ptitsa*. But rather than commenting on their creations, the editor of *Zhar ptitsa* displayed them for the admiration and delight of audiences across the globe, whose buying power he intended, with the help of Maxim Gorky, to transform into support for the production of books for the Soviet market.⁴⁸ In that respect, *Zhar ptitsa*’s aesthetic dichotomy and its focus on the work of artists whose style had not changed since their departure from Russia, turned out to be its strongest selling point, as it brought together two diverse target groups: Western readers for whom *Zhar ptitsa* was a showcase that should transform their adulation of Russian art into support for the Bolshevik literacy campaigns, and Russian émigrés for whom it offered the comfort of the past as a shelter for the discomfort of the present.

Milgroym, by contrast, set out to discover and construct an enigmatic and “hidden” Jewish style and thus, in retrospect, a new Jewish art. Although chiefly artistic in orientation, the first issue of *Milgroym* also featured literature under the editorship of Dovid Bergelson and Der Nister, Yiddish avant-gardists of the *Kultur-lige* in Kiev. It also contained poems by two fellow members of the original *Kiev-grupe*, Leyb Kvitko and Dovid Hofshiteyn, as well as poems by Moshe Kulbak and Aaron Kushnirov.⁴⁹ However, many of these socialist, and later Soviet, writers did not necessarily share the nationalist outlook of Wischnitzer and her collaborators. Bergelson and Der Nister resigned their post after the first issue due to pressure from fellow leftists. In this way, the literature and arts sections did not always align well with one another, which was typical also for *Zhar ptitsa* and other illustrated Russian journals that appeared in Berlin during the early 1920s.

Merging the particular with the universal was a clear strategy of the arts section.

⁴⁵ Sasha Cherny, “Iskusstvo,” *Zhar ptitsa*, no. 1 (August 1921) 6.

⁴⁶ “Zum Geleit,” *Zhar ptitsa*, no. 1 (August 1921) international part, 1.

⁴⁷ “Enfin, pour l’illustration plus complète de la vie artistique, il sera publié journal ‘Jar Ptitsa’ [sic] (L’Oiseau de Feu) ...”. Without title, in: Alexandre [sic] Kogan, George Loukomsky (eds), *L’art Russes à Paris en 1921. Exposition des Artistes Russes à Paris en 1921*, organisé par les membres et exposants de la société Mir Iskusstva [sic] (Monde artistes) à la Galerie La Boétie (Paris 1921), no pagination.

⁴⁸ Susanne Marten-Finnis, “Outsourcing Culture: Soviet and Émigré Publishing in Berlin, and A. E. Kogan’s Illustrated Magazine *Zhar-Ptitsa*, 1921-26,” in: Susanne Marten-Finnis and Markus Winkler (eds), *Presse und Stadt: Zusammenhänge – Diskurse – Thesen* (Bremen: edition lumière, 2009), 61-82.

⁴⁹ Joseph Sherman, Gennady Estraiikh, eds, *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism* (Oxford: Legenda, 2007); Gennady Estraiikh, Mikhail Krutikov (eds), *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin. At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture* (Oxford: Legenda 2010).

Wischnitzer included contributions on ancient and emerging Jewish art, architecture, and literature. Among them were articles on Leonardo da Vinci, observations on Islamic architecture and Russian Avant-garde, thus putting Jewish art into a wider perspective, yet promoting it as a rediscovered opportunity for individual Jewish self-expression and self-understanding. Perhaps the best article to demonstrate its synthetic character is Henryk Berlewi's essay on emerging Jewish artists in the Russian Avant-garde, in which he presents the oeuvre of Marc Chagall as having sprung from Russian popular print, ancient Jewish mural painting, and Cubism, transcending both national and personal registers, while maintaining a strong individual style. In this way, according to Berlewi, Chagall succeeded in combining "two opposing worlds, the exotic of the Orient, with its strong mystical component, and the severe, monumental Cubism of Europe, into a powerful harmonious chorale."⁵⁰

Milgroym thus emerged as laboratory and showcase for Jewish art, its editor attempting to reconcile the Jewish tradition of the East with the values of western civilization. The model for such integrationalism originated in Kiev with the *Kultur-lige* activists, even if they ultimately did not fully participate in Wischnitzer's project. She drew upon their attempt to foster an international movement for Yiddish culture. In addition, the editors of *Milgroym* emulated the policy of integration and outreach applied by the *Folks-farlag* [Peoples' Publishing House], the main publishing outlet of the *Kultur-lige*, to assist its readers in choice and orientation. Like *Kultur-lige* members, the instigators of the *Folks-farlag* were diaspora autonomist intellectuals,⁵¹ although less radical than Bergelson and Der Nister. Initially affiliated with the *Folks-partay* with the goal of promoting the dissemination of party literature, it quickly became an ambitious venture to promote Yiddish culture,⁵² like many Yiddish publishing enterprises, in which party journalism became a sponsor of Yiddishism. Its publishing portfolio included European and Hebrew literature in translation, besides children's literature, drama, and scholarship on matters of Jewish concern, ranging from history to contemporary economic analysis, and nationalist democratic political theory.⁵³ The *Folks-farlag*'s focus on literature in translation was further developed after its founders had outsourced its production to Berlin, where they relaunched their enterprise as *Klal-farlag* under the continuing directorship of the publicist Latski-Bertoldi, who had been among the founders of the *Folks-farlag*, and subsidized by the renowned German *Ullstein* publishers. Well-known in this respect was the *Klal-Bibliothek*, which published both original Yiddish literature and literature in Yiddish translation.⁵⁴

One of the *Klal* translators, Ezra Korman, was also a translator for *Milgroym*'s

⁵⁰ Henryk Berlewi, "Yidishe kinstler in der hayntiger rusisher kunst. Tsu der rusisher kunst-oysshtelung in Berlin 1922" [Jewish Artists in Russia. About the Russian Art Exhibition in Berlin 1922] *Milgroym* no. 3, 1923, 14-18.

⁵¹ Among them were the publicist Zeev-Volf Latski-Bertoldi, the teacher and scholar Zelig Kalmanovitsh and the critic and literary historian Nokhem Shtif.

⁵² Kenneth B. Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press, 2009), 53-57.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Fuks, 1988, 417-434.

literary section. He came from Kiev, where he had made a name for himself as a poet and translator, of Heinrich Heine in particular, besides co-founding the avant-garde *Kunst-farlag* [Art Publishing House]. After a short sojourn in Berlin, he moved on in 1923 to Detroit where he was remembered as the “doyen of Yiddish letters”.⁵⁵ Thus, while there was some debate on the direction of *Milgroym’s* literary section, Wischnitzer did view it as an outgrowth of various Kiev projects, which complements the global museum approach applied to the arts section.

Translating Culture: From Instructionalism to Integrationalism

One of the key strategies in achieving this balance between a rediscovered Jewish tradition and the tenets of western civilization was a particular approach to translation. In contrast to the original works published in the literature section, translation was in much higher demand in *Milgroym’s* arts section. Wischnitzer had enjoyed a secular education including tutoring in English, French, and German, besides Russian, which was spoken at home; but she knew neither Yiddish nor Hebrew. There were distinguished authors for the literary sections of *Milgroym* and *Rimon*, but only two Hebrew or Yiddish writers in the field of art:⁵⁶ the Palestinian archaeologist E.L. Sukenik who knew Hebrew, and El Lissitzky who was able to write in Yiddish. This meant that Wischnitzer’s articles and those of the other art contributors had to be translated from the German.⁵⁷

This task was assigned to Baruch (Karu) Krupnik.⁵⁸ In contrast to Wischnitzer, Krupnik had enjoyed a traditional Jewish education in his native region, Bratslav in Russian Podolia (today in Ukraine). He attended yeshiva in his hometown of Chernivtsi (not to be confused with Czernovitz, then part of Habsburg Austria) and neighbouring towns, followed by his studies at the modern yeshiva in Odessa under the guidance of Chaim Tshernowitz (Rav Tsa’ir). The approach of the latter Talmudic scholar and Hebrew writer, who combined rabbinical study and modern scholarship in order to rejuvenate Jewish learning, benefited Krupnik’s future career as a journalist and translator.⁵⁹ Likewise, his sojourn in Odessa, at the time a center of modern Jewish culture and flourishing Hebrew presses, influenced his development of an unusually rigorous and timely approach towards translation, which he refined at the Jewish Academy in St. Petersburg.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ <http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/ezra-korman-detroits-soulful-yiddish-poet>.

⁵⁶ Other writers who contributed to *Milgroym’s* arts section included Max Liebermann, G. Marzynski, Henryk Berlewi, Erich Toeplitz, Olga Pevsner-Schatz, William Cohn and F. Landsberger, but none of them knew Hebrew or Yiddish.

⁵⁷ Rachel Wischnitzer, “From my archives,” in: Wischnitzer, 1990, 166.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁵⁹ <http://www.tidhar.tourolib.org/tidhar/view/4/1942>

⁶⁰ He translated from Russian into Yiddish the introduction to the *History of Hasidism* by Simon Dubnow. Thereafter, he embarked on translations into Hebrew of essays from foreign sources for the Hebrew magazine *ba-Shiloah*. Among his outstanding translations into Hebrew are the eleven-volume set of Dubnow’s *History of the Jews*, Ismar Elbogen’s *A Century of Jewish Life* and part of Israel Zinberg’s *A History of Jewish Literature*. He also translated into Hebrew works of world literature, besides publishing numerous essays on literature and science in Hebrew newspapers and magazines; he served as

Krupnik's underlying attitude to translation displayed an academic rigor that can be ascribed to his familiarity with Hebrew literature and modern scholarship. At the same time, he adhered to Wischnitzer's integrationalist attitude, sharing new teaching with a wide non-expert audience, as a partner in discovery rather than as an instructor, an attitude pointing to a radical change in the way translated knowledge was conveyed and disseminated. Traditionally, translation into Yiddish implied self-directed instructionalism that would allow translators, at their own discretion, to amend or omit entire passages.⁶¹ Krupnik's approach followed the integrationalism of Wischnitzer's magazine: besides adhering to agreed standards and principles of translation, Krupnik aimed for the greatest possible correspondence between original and translated version in terms of both content and tone.

Milgroym's arts section was among the first to assert this new attitude, which Krupnik later summarized in the statement quoted below. Yet at the time of the magazine's launch, the issue was still fiercely debated among Jewish community leaders, publishers, critics, and readers. The following will sketch the development of translation within Jewish literary communities and provide a summary of the issues being debated during the period under discussion. A detailed discussion and ample textual analysis for translation on the basis of sample extracts is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, a flavour of how translation works in *Milgroym* and how such a politics of translation accorded with larger conceptualizations of the project will be given further down, exemplified by two translation fragments, together with a return to a discussion of Wischnitzer's role at the close of the article.

Towards the Resilience of Yiddish

In 1941, when *Milgroym* had long ceased to exist, Krupnik stated that

[...] der Gedanke, dass insbesondere auf Buchübersetzungen moralische Zensur auszuüben sei, ist a priori abzulehnen. [...] Bücher und Meinungen haben nicht bevormundet zu werden. [...] Gerade die hebräischsprachige Literatur – Original wie Übersetzung – darf nicht von gestern oder vorgestern sein und sich vor der Wirklichkeit scheuen. Man muss für eine gute Antwort gut bestückt sein. [...]⁶²

The idea that moral censorship should be applied to literature in translation has to be ruled out. [...]. Books and opinions should not be disparaged. [...] Hebrew literature in particular – both in original and

editorial secretary for the German edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and its Hebrew version *Eshkol* and several Hebrew dictionaries, including a dictionary of abbreviations. See: Shimeon Brisman, *A History and Guide to Judaic Dictionaries and Concordances*, Part 1 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1977), 108.

⁶¹ Yaacov Shavit, "A Duty Too Heavy to Bear: Hebrew in the Berlin Haskalah, 1783-1819: Between Classic, Modern, and Romantic," in Lewis Glinert (ed.), *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: a Language in Exile* (Oxford, 1993), 111-128.

⁶² Quoted in Na'ama Sheffi, *Vom Deutschen ins Hebräische: Übersetzungen aus dem Deutschen im jüdischen Palästina 1882-1948* (Göttingen 2011), 201-202.

translation – should not be governed by the recent or distant past. Neither should it shy away from the present realities. A good answer requires adequate preparation.

What did Krupnik's call to abolish moral censorship entail? The history of printing is generally linked to the history of censorship. With regard to the particular Jewish condition in Imperial Russia, however, the situation was more complex, due to the Russian state (external) censorship⁶³ and the Jewish (internal) self-censorship.⁶⁴ Jewish community leaders considered government censorship to represent the opinion of society, restraining people from acting contrary to public expectations. Any dissenters risked isolation and the burning of their works. In order to ease the relationship with government censorship, Jewish publishers implemented their own filters before state censors even saw a given text. The aims of this pre-censorship were twofold: to avoid annoying the printer, who was empowered to reject anything he disagreed with, and to satisfy the Jewish clergy, the guardians of the religious and moral well-being of the Jewish people. As the generator and conveyor of ideas, the clergy felt responsible *in loco parentis* for their dissemination and interpretation to the Jewish community.⁶⁵ As a result, a standard of translation established itself that implied *fartaytshen* – *farkirtsen* – *farbesern* [to interpret – to shorten – to improve]. This notion, in which didactic principles and moral obligations prevailed over the ambition to work towards equivalence between source text and target text, became a widespread practice in the modernization of Ashkenazi Jewish culture during the period of the *Haskalah*, when the relationship between Jewish communities and society at large became more transparent. Questions of translation thus became a growing concern to Jewish community leaders in their function as lifestyle instructors and moral guardians. They saw as their main task the monitoring of current events and then drawing up criteria for selecting what was worth translating, as well as deciding how to “inject” the selected material into the Jewish environment.⁶⁶

A need for translators as linguistic mediators emerged with the rise of a Russian acculturated Jewish intelligentsia and their growing estrangement from the tight-knit Jewish communities, after they had left the shtetl. A vivid example is in the formative years of the *Jewish Labor Bund*, whose triumphal progression during the 1890s was preceded by the decision to leave the narrow circles of Russian propaganda and start mass agitation in Yiddish. Like Wischnitzer, the few *Bundist* intellectual leaders lived within a Russian language culture. Reaching maturity during the Era of the Great Reforms under the reign of Alexander II, with their Russian and foreign language skills they were well equipped to keep in touch with the international labor movement, but

⁶³ I.P. Foote, “‘In the Belly of the Whale’: Russian Authors and Censorship in the Nineteenth Century,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 68 no. 2 (April 1990), 294-298.

⁶⁴ Dmitry A. Elyashevich, *Pravitelstvennaia Politika i Evreiskaia Pechat' v Rossii 1797-1917. Ocherki Istorii Tsensury* [Government Policy and Jewish Printing in Russia, 1797-1917. Essays on the History of Censorship], (St. Petersburg, Jerusalem, 1999), 95-124.

⁶⁵ Susanne Marten-Finnis, “In loco parentis: Staatliche Zensur, Selbstzensur und Mehrsprachigkeit in der jüdischen Presse Russlands,” in: Andrzej Katny (ed.), *Sprachkontakte in Zentraleuropa* (Frankfurt, 2014), 151-170.

⁶⁶ Shavit, 1993, 111-128.

unable to convey the Marxist teaching of class struggle and revolution to the Yiddish speaking working class. Therefore, they hired translators for mass agitation of Jewish workers—a move that proved pivotal to the creation of a Jewish labor movement in the Pale of Settlement.⁶⁷

Thirty years on, the professionalization and qualification of translators became a matter of concern. As early as 1916, Gerhard Scholem had harshly reviewed Eliasberg's translations of Peretz, including *Jüdische Geschichten*, *Ostjüdische Erzähler*, and *Sagen polnischer Juden*.⁶⁸ He called them “losgerissene Stücke: Kinder einer ganz innerlichen Sprachverwirrung” [scattered pieces: descendants of an immanent confusion of tongues]. Through amendments and omissions, Scholem argued, the translator had made concessions that caused the Jewish originality of these pieces to collapse into a heap of confusion. Hebrew expressions were dissolved into vagueness, due to the translator's poor command of Hebrew. He accused the translator of having forced the stories into an atmosphere of sentimentality and displaced humour by translating too closely to the original. In so doing, Scholem pointed out, the stories were stripped of their original dignity, which in the German version was replaced by an “insinuated” dignity [“eine erschlichene Würde”] that dissolved their authenticity into thin air. Scholem concluded his critique with the question: how can the European and perhaps assimilated Jewish reader learn to relate to Jewish originality if the translator fails to relate to it?

Scholem's critique refers to translation *from* the Yiddish, focusing on the difficulty of translating a language thick with textual and cultural traditions. Krupnik's plea for more rigor and less paternalism refers to translation *into* Yiddish (and Hebrew). What both scholars seemed to agree upon was their view that translation, whether from or into Yiddish, implied a recourse to Hebrew in search of learned strategies that enabled the translator to maintain originality and local color. This point contrasted with the attitude of translators who had once considered their task as “*ibershafn – nisht bloys ibertzetsn*”⁶⁹ [to improve and explain, rather than just to translate]. While they had resorted to Yiddish in order to elucidate Hebrew religious texts, and later on, secular texts from other languages, Yiddish translators were now encouraged to resort to Hebrew in order to maintain originality. In other words, Yiddish had left its role as modernizer and taken on a new role: that of a vehicle for interaction with European culture. Stripped of its traditional shelter, and exposed to the harsh light of a different culture, Yiddish needed the pillars of Hebrew in order to become resilient.

To be sure, Scholem's critique clashed with the view of Eliasberg and his contemporaries of the Russian acculturated elite who tended to see translation through the prism of Russian literature.⁷⁰ While their multilingualism had endowed translation

⁶⁷ Susanne Marten-Finnis, “Instruction - Exclusion - Polemic. Bundist Journalism, 1897-1907,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 30, no. 1, 2000, 39-59.

⁶⁸ Gerhard Scholem, “Zum Problem der Uebersetzung [sic] aus dem Jiddischen. Auch eine Buchbesprechung,” *Jüdische Rundschau* 1917, no. 2 (12.1.1917), 16.

⁶⁹ M. Neydin, “Velkhe foderungen darf men shteln dem yidishn ibertzetter?” [What can we expect of a Yiddish translator] *Bikhervelt* no. 5 (May 1929), 49-51.

⁷⁰ Hartmut Walravens, *Alexander Eliasberg (1878-1924). Das Werk des fruchtbaren Übersetzers aus dem Russischen und Jiddischen* Berlin 2013, 19-20. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Veröffentlichungen der Osteuropa-Abteilung, Bd. 42, herausgegeben von Olaf Hamann.

with the glow of a leisurely intellectual pleasure, once they found themselves uprooted and resettled in early 1920s Berlin it became their bread and butter. As a result, the qualification (and payment) of translators became a topic of fierce debates. It is no coincidence that the stage of these debates was Warsaw, at the time the chief center of Yiddish publishing and home to the biggest Yiddish speaking community of the world. The initiators were *Kultur-lige* members who had settled there after the new Bolshevik elites had disbanded their organisation in 1921. They disputed how to reconcile the modern standards of literary translation with the heritage of a language that had emerged as a translator *per se*: Yiddish, the vernacular component in the traditional diglossia of Ashkenazi Jewish diasporic culture. The platform for those debates became their newly founded bi-monthly *Bikher-velt*, in which they criticized publishers' programmes, their choice of books for translation, and their random choice of translators.⁷¹ Debates gained momentum during the 1920s and reached their peak in 1928 when the quantity of prose translated into Yiddish exceeded the publication of original Yiddish books.⁷² The focus of their dispute was the poor quality of literature in translation, which they alleged, disoriented the readership. These concerns were important enough for the *Bikher-velt* editors to devote more than a third of their contributions to translation critique, which appealed for innovative practices in translation.⁷³ They maintained that, with the mass production of Yiddish books, the

⁷¹ Yehoshue Rapoport, "Farlagn, iberzetsen, iberzetsungen" [Publishing houses, translators, translations], *Bikher-velt* no. 2 (May 1928), 32-36.

⁷² Kh. Goldberg, "Nokh vegn yidishe iberzetsungen" [Once again about Yiddish translations], rubric "Undzere lezer vegn bikher" [Our readers about books], *Bikher-velt* no. 9 (October 1928), 69.

⁷³ Ilya Erenburg, "Yidn un zayer batsiung tsu eygener un fremder literatur" [Jews and their relationship to their own literature and the literature of others], *Bikher-velt* no. 1 (April 1928), 34-37; Yehoshue Rapoport, "Farlagn, iberzetsen, iberzetsungen" [see above], *Bikher-velt* no. 2 (May 1928), 32-36; Y. Khmurner, "Vegn 'stam-lezer' un 'masn-lezer' un nokh andere zakhn" [About regular readers, mass readers, and other things], *Bikher-velt* no. 2 (May 1928) 62-66; H. Viltshinsky, "Yidishe poylishe iberzetsungen" [Translations from Yiddish into Polish], *Bikher-velt* no. 4 (July 1928), 8-16; Kh. Sh. K. [sic], "Farlagn un zeyer ideisher mehus" [What have the publishers in mind?], *Bikher-velt*, no. 5 (August 1928), 61-62; H. Viltshinsky, "Yidish-poylishe iberzetsungen" [see above], *Bikher-velt*, no. 6 (September 1928), 24-36; D[avid] Tsh[arny], "Vohin yidish shpart on," *Bikher-velt*, no. 6 (September 1928), 64-65; "Dos gesheft fun di Artomonovs" – M. Gorky – Kh. Sh. Kazdan, *Bikher-velt* no. 7 (October 1928), 46-50; P. Kohn, "Vi azoy hot Yunosha ibergezetz Mendeln in poylish?" [How did Yunosha translate Mendel into Polish?], *Bikher-velt* no. 7 (October 1928), 36-38; Kh. Sh. K., "Bikher, leyener un farleger" [Books, readers and publishers], *Bikher-velt* no. 7 (October 1928), 66-68; "Undzer lezer vegn bikher" [Our readers about books], *Bikher-velt* no. 7 (October 1928), 69-70; Kh. Goldberg, "Nokh vegn yidishe iberzetsungen" [see above], *Bikher-velt* no. 7 (October 1928), 69; R. K., "Lev Tolstoy un di literarishe doyres in Ayrope" [Lev Tolstoy and the literary generations in Europe], *Bikher-velt* no. 8 (November 1928), 28-30; M. Silberfarb, "A shedlekhe iluzye" [A damaging illusion], *Bikher-velt* no. 8 (November 1928), 38-43; M. Neydin, "Vegn iberzetsungen" [see above], *Bikher-velt* no. 1 (January 1929), 65-67; Kh. Sh. Kazdan, "Tsu undzer diskusye" [About our discussion], *Bikher-velt* no. 2 (February 1929), 1-9; Y. Khmurner, "Tsum sakhkl fun undzer diskusye" [About the results of our discussion], *Bikher-velt* no. 3 (March 1929), 1-8; Melech Ravitch, "Oyf a oysgedroshener teme" [On a worn-out topic], *Bikher-velt* no. 3 (March 1929), 58-62; Mark Geler, "Di kinstlerish-estetische zayt fun yidishn bukh" [The artistic-aesthetic part of a Jewish book], *Bikher-velt* no. 4 (April 1929), 28-35; Y. Rotenberg, "Vos felt undzeren iberzetsungen?" [What's missing in our translations], *Bikher-velt* no. 4 (April 1929), 65-67; "Oyfn mayrev nishto keyn naves' M.E. [sic] Remark – Y. Rapoport" [All quiet on the Western front – M.E. Remarque – Y. Rapoport], *Bikher-velt* no. 5 (May 1929), 39-41; M. Neydin, "Velkhe foderungen darf men shteln dem yidishn iberzetter?" [see

“plague” of poor translations and careless editions had infected the Jewish literary tradition. The initial huge enthusiasm among readers when Gogol, Hauptmann, Tolstoy, and other European masters were announced in Yiddish translation, was followed by frustration when readers saw the finished book. “Thoughts were misinterpreted, sentences crippled or muddled, the book looks shabby,” complains a letter to the editors of the *Bikher-velt*: “wrong pagination, two kinds of paper in one book, three different fonts. The Jewish reader should be spared such an ‘unhygienic diet’.”⁷⁴

More vitriol was directed at the publishers’ programs and choice of books for translation that “seems to be as random as the choice of their most important tool—the translators.”⁷⁵ A code of conduct was demanded to provide translators with guidelines on method and style. But its implementation was unrealistic, *Bikher-velt* agents argued, as long as commercial interest and speculation of private ownership dominated the Yiddish publishing scene. Jewish institutions should make it a priority to snatch the production of Yiddish books from private hands and put it under public control and to establish a central body for authorization.⁷⁶

The translation practices of *Milgroym* directly reflected this ongoing debate. In comparing Berlin and Warsaw, it becomes clear that each translational culture was part of a sea change in the attempt to make Yiddish resilient. *Milgroym* translations in Berlin deployed learned strategies borrowed from the study of Hebrew, yet heralded an integrationalism that would harmonize modern standards of translation with the heritage of a language that had emerged as a translator *per se*. *Bikher-velt* agents in Warsaw, in contrast, moved towards the reconciliation of an intimate Jewish language heritage and the radical avant-garde, thereby sharpening the tool of translation critique. While *Milgroym*’s global approach and integrationalism enabled its editors to reach out to the entire Ashkenazi Jewish community, *Bikher-velt* agents directed their focus on the local publishing scene of the city that hosted the largest Yiddish speaking community in the world.

Moving beyond this comparison offers the possibility of theorizing *Milgroym* as a pathway towards the global museum. How *Milgroym* sat within contemporary museum practices, including its approach to translation, and how it pioneered innovative approaches, can be understood from the four recommendations made by Erich Toeplitz, an expert in contemporary Jewish museological practice, with regard to his formulation, in 1924, of the “New Jewish Museum.”⁷⁷ Toeplitz, who had also contributed to *Milgroym*,⁷⁸ pointed out that the fear of displaying Jewish culture-specific objects should be overcome (1). The “New Jewish Museum” should promote insights on their

above] *Bikher-velt* no. 5 (May 1929), 49-51; Y. Rapoport, “Vegn Remarks bukh” [About Remarque’s book], *Bikher-velt* no. 6-7 (July 1929), 32-36.

⁷⁴ Kh. Goldberg, “Nokh vegn yidishe iberzetsungen” [see above], rubric “Undzere lezer vegn bikher” [see above], *Bikher-velt*, no. 9 (October 1928), 69.

⁷⁵ Yehoshue Rapoport, “Farlagn, iberzetsen, iberzetsungen” [see above], *Bikher-velt* no. 2 (May 1928), 32-36.

⁷⁶ Neydin, N., “Velkhe foderungen darf men shteln dem yidishn iberzetsen?” [See above], *Bikher-velt* 5 (May 1929), 49-51.

⁷⁷ Toeplitz, 1924, op.cit.

⁷⁸ Erich Toeplitz, “Wall Paintings in Synagogues of the 17th and 18th Century,” *Milgroym* no. 3, 1923, 1-7; ‘Early Jewish Ornamented and Gilded Glasses’, *Milgroym* no. 5, 1923, 8-11.

relevance, as well as understanding and appreciation both within Jewish communities and the wider world. In that respect, it was important to refrain from promoting ostentation (2). Academic and archival ambitions should be complemented by preservation and popular enlightenment as a moral commitment (3). The latter included the willingness and ability to gather Jewish material culture during a period of Jewish community disbandment and departure (4). Toeplitz' last point probably refers to the fact that heritage may travel into different settings, e.g. from the imperial to the national, which is why collections should take into account that audiences tended to become separated by national boundaries, or increasingly scattered due to migration. His recommendations had already become fundamental to the editorial practices of *Milgroyim* during its lifespan over the previous two years, 1922-24; perhaps *Milgroyim* had even served as an inspiration for him to articulate them. Though *Milgroyim* was not an edifice in the traditional sense of a museum, it saw itself in many ways as a traveling, indeed a global, "ark" for Jewish culture.

In another similarity with the modern museum, economic capital played a pivotal role in *Milgroyim*'s vitality in comparison with other journalistic enterprises in Yiddish. While *Milgroyim* relied on entrepreneurial patronage and elitist expertise in art and printing, besides profiting from the favourable conditions foreign publishers enjoyed under German inflation during the years 1922-24, *Bikher-velt* reflected the pauperization of the Warsaw Yiddish publishing scene throughout the 1920s. One may surmise that debates surrounding translation culture will gain momentum whenever periods of migration coincide with economic constraints, as migration intensifies the need for communication between members of different language communities while economic constraints reduce the scope for professional standards of translation, and lower its priority within national institutions. At this point in time, the cosmopolitan creativity of inflowing migrants can make a big difference.

If cosmopolitanism is understood as the essence of a community in which people are linked by the "now" of their social and professional bonds rather than the "where" of their shared age-old attachment to a place or tradition, mobility will challenge stability. Applied to the context of *Milgroyim* and other interwar journals, mobile cultural movers and shakers from Kiev and St. Petersburg, reunited as they were at their outposts in Berlin and Warsaw, became the drivers of change: they abandoned local conservative standards and moved towards academic rigour in translation leading to new codes of conduct, liberating Yiddish from moral guardianship and bias, and elevating it towards a high-culture function. The cosmopolitanism of Wischnitzer and her collaborators enabled them to accomplish a radical transformation in the nature and focus from a sender-oriented directive to a receiver-oriented communication that no longer addressed the reader *in loco parentis*, but as a partner in search of intellectual, rather than moral support. This analysis points to the relevance of understanding transcultural processes together with their agents, then and now, in both the academic and non-academic orbits of global exchange. Moreover, it points to the essential contributions of translators, because every transcultural process can also be conceptualized as a form of translation, ideally including an act of bias-free translation.

In the context of *Milgroyim*, one can look to key-articles translated for its arts section, and ask how they contributed to the magazine's integrationalist approach. How

did Wischnitzer, ultimately responsible for their translation, acknowledge participation in an innovative discourse on art history that was, for the first time, shared between the learned and the layperson?

Wischnitzer's merit here was twofold. Firstly, *Milgroym* could be read as a museum, because its editor freed Jewish heritage items of their sheltered archival custody and explained their relevance to a global public. The *realia* she gathered and publicized in her magazine could potentially anchor among Jewish communities worldwide an understanding and appreciation of their own heritage during an era of social change and mobility. Secondly, she unlocked the rule-based language as it was often applied to the study of religious Judaism, and opened it up to a multitude of innovative approaches in order to reclaim and elucidate Jewish heritage and present it not just from an intra-Jewish perspective, but within a broader context of Christian and Islamic heritage. Hence *Milgroym's* notion of integrationalism embraced more than just the international Jewish audience; Wischnitzer's interpretations transcended religious boundaries, hegemony or hierarchy. The aforementioned article on "The Motif of the Porch"⁷⁹ in *Book Ornamentation* is aptly representative in this respect. In this article, she highlights the motif of the porch as an outstanding element in Jewish art, symbolizing the holistic nature of Jewish culture.⁸⁰ She draws a thread from its earliest manifestations—the stone tablets of Moses—via medieval synagogue and church architecture, to the art of the book. Her porch is a portal not only between the past and the future, but also between the different religions:

"[The Arab people have stylized on the prayer mats of their temples [...] the bold arch motif, the holy niche of the *mihrab*⁸¹ in exactly the same way as the Jews have stylized the Torah shrine. The first Christians, [...] pilfering from Jewish book illustrations [...], also integrated the shrine in their books, particularly when they decorated texts that were displayed in the form of a board."⁸²

Wischnitzer's German originals are not available. Yet, the following two fragments taken from her introductory manifesto may serve as further examples to demonstrate how translations subscribed to *Milgroym's* integrationalism:

"[...] The artists of today are called Expressionists. Unlike Manet, Pissarro and Liebermann—who are commonly referred to as Impressionists—they are not interested in capturing the chance impression made on them by an object at a particular moment in time. They are seeking the internal face, the soul of the object. These modern artists are also known as Ecstatics, because

⁷⁹ This is the English title translation provided in *Milgroym*. The accurate translation for the Yiddish term "toyer" would be "arch".

⁸⁰ Marina Dmitrieva, "Die Wilna-Fotocollagen von Moshe Vorobeichic," in: Marina Dmitrieva, Heidemarie Petersen (eds), *Jüdische Kultur(en) im Neuen Europa. Wilna 1918-1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2004), 69-84, 83.

⁸¹ The mihrab imitated a niche in the wall of a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca and hence the direction that a person should face when praying.

⁸² R. Wischnitzer, "Der toyer-motiv in der bukh-kunst," *Milgroym* no. 4, 1923, 5.

they need to immerse themselves in an object with heart and soul, to lose themselves completely in it, in order to grasp the essence of the object itself. Or is it maybe the essence of the artist himself? This ecstatic aptitude, which we find also in the Middle Ages and during the times of Counter-Reformation, has now affected many artists as a result of the war and the turbulent events of recent years. There are those who hope that a religious art will grow out of this new Holy Spirit, that religious pathos will blossom in the arts. Once again man and his innermost struggles are considered worthy as an object of art, after the Impressionists had reduced him to the level of mere still life. Once again the artist's horizon is filled with figures from myths, folkloristic legends and holy stories. The apocalyptic atmosphere of the destruction of the world, the holy *dybbuk* of the prophets—those are the main themes of contemporary artistic creation. We are standing under the flag of Dante, of Rembrandt, of Moses.”⁸³

Besides its appellative character, this fragment vividly brings home a variety of rhetorical devices that will resonate with many a Jewish reader. Borrowed from Jewish religious and folkloristic templates, they are applied here as didactic constructs in order to prepare the reader to digest a new type of knowledge. Such rhetorical devices result from the didactic ambition of many Jewish texts. They may include allegories in the sense of using personification or symbolism to assist the reader's grasp of knowledge and imagination (e.g. in the above example: “the internal face, the soul of the object”), or similes alluding to the tradition (e.g. “that a religious pathos will blossom in the arts, the holy *dybbuk* of the prophets”). The latter often entail an element of repetition; they are successively applied, the second appearing as an elaboration of the first.

Other types of repetition may help the reader to memorize knowledge, typically assisted by a list of three (e.g. “Manet, Pissarro and Liebermann”; “myths, folkloristic legends, and holy stories”; “of Dante, of Rembrandt, of Moses”). On a syntactical level, repetitions often showed up in the form of an anaphora, i.e. the repetition of a phrase at the beginning of successive clauses—also known as syntactic parallelism (e.g. “Once again . . .” “Once again . . .”). They had an explanatory effect, too. In addition, anaphors lent many texts a declamatory and sometimes even pathetic tone. Question and answer sequences (e.g. “Or is it maybe the essence of the artist himself?”) usually serve to advertise a new idea; they create a closer relationship with the reader. Naturally, the author assumes that the reader does not know the answer, so the question serves as a device for presenting information, rather than for eliciting it. The dialogical situation created that way has its origins in Hebrew sermons and commentaries upon commentaries of earlier texts.⁸⁴ Such discursive practice is radically different from the monologue forms of English essay tradition and lecture courses that characterised texts of German philosophy.

The latter is more obvious in the following extract. In contrast to the flowery phrases cited above, the language used in Georg Marzynski's article “On the Modern

⁸³ Rachel Wischnitzer, “Di naye kunst un mir” [manifesto], *Milgroyim* no. 1, 1922, 2-7.

⁸⁴ Benjamin Harshav, *The meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1990), 18-19.

Portrait”⁸⁵ appears rather blunt:

“[...] The woman’s portrait by Berlewi, which is included here (page 16), is an example of such a construction, but in a slightly more subdued and refined form: in the face and body, there is no trace of the voluble and impressionistic individuality that is expressed in Liebermann’s portrait of Baron Berger. In fact, there is no intention at all here of rendering any individuality. The tendency to construct a body out of architectural volumes as it were has been pushed to the limit in Cubism, where the natural, organic forms are turned into the mathematical forms of stone [...]”.

The focus here is clearly on *information*, while the stress of Wischnitzer’s manifesto is on *education*. Both types of discourse alternate in *Milgroym*’s arts section, as those who composed its contributions were rooted in different textual traditions. Among them were a number of local artists, art critics and museologists, such as Franz Landsberger, Erich Toeplitz, Eugen Täubler, Max Liebermann, Georg Marzynski and Hermann Struck, besides non-local and newly arrived contributors, such as E.L. Sukenik, El Lissitzky, Henryk Berlewi, William Cohen and Wischnitzer herself. Yet, the translations of their articles appear balanced, as no cultural hierarchy appears. By refraining from bias and paternalism they retain impartiality and reverie.

Editor and translator thus negotiated between education and information and accommodated patterns of both Jewish and Western discourses. It is this communicative balancing act between two different textual traditions in an ideology-free zone that makes *Milgroym* a literary museum.

Like most ventures of the Yiddish press in Berlin, *Milgroym* ceased to exist in 1924. During the two previous years, journals for dissemination abroad were exempted from the export taxes normally imposed on printed matter and books, which could be up to 100 per cent of the retail price.⁸⁶ But after the end of the German hyperinflation in 1923, the favourable conditions for investors from countries with a “strong currency” had ended. The year 1924 saw the termination of low cost printing and postage, and the rise of prices for paper and printing. Salaries in the printing business doubled, and postage fees increased ten- to fifteen-fold.⁸⁷ While in 1922, shipment of fifty books would cost the equivalent of 1.5 to 2 dollars, in 1924, it rose to 26 dollars,⁸⁸ preventing Yiddish as well as Russian publishers from distributing their products among their scattered communities.

Nevertheless, the consequences of *Milgroym*’s integrationalism during its two-year lifespan were considerable. Wischnitzer’s principle of inclusivity had two particular implications: firstly, *Milgroym* popularized a new code of conduct in

⁸⁵ Georg Marzynski, “Der portret in der hayntiger kunst” [The Modern Portrait], *Milgroym* no. 2, 1922, 10-14.

⁸⁶ “Usloviia eksporta knig iz Germanii,” *Novaia Russkaia Kniga* (Berlin), no. 5 (May 1922), 26.

⁸⁷ D. [sic], “Krizis russkogo knizhnogo dela v Germanii,” *Vremennik Obshchestva Druzei Russkoi Knigi* (Paris 1925), 84-86.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

translation, enabled by the integrity and Hebrew scholarship of translators like Krupnik who adhered to Wischnitzer's brief to make the reader a partner in discovery, rather than instructing and guarding the reader's moral health. This contributed to the resilience of Yiddish, after the language had left the shelter of the *shtetl*. Secondly, Wischnitzer popularized in *Milgroym* the new discipline of Jewish art history, bringing it to a global audience. Her reclamation and curation of Jewish artistic heritage, together with the way she narrated its history within a broader context of Asia and Europe, Christian and Muslim traditions, presupposed the collaboration and dialogue with art historians and intellectuals across cultures. Such cosmopolitan principles had previously been applied by only one other transient publishing project in Berlin: *Veshch–Gegenstand–Objet* – an international journal of avant-garde art, which had been launched in Russian, German and French by Ilya Ehrenburg and El Lissitzky in Berlin in spring 1922,⁸⁹ and like *Milgroym* was short-lived. *Milgroym*'s more populist vision engaged in dialogue with intellectuals across the world, and facilitated dialogue with, and between, its broad target groups, while raising an awareness of translation. These principles will be essential to curators of today's global museum, and particularly those of the ethnological museum. Though it appeared on paper only briefly, and nearly a century ago, *Milgroym* offers a model with which contemporary museum-makers can engage, and even follow.

⁸⁹ Igor Dukhan, "El Lissitzky – Jewish as Universal. From Jewish Style to Pangeometry," *Ars Judaica. The Bar-Ilan Journal of Jewish Art* Vol.3 2007, 53-72.