

»Rimon-Milgroim«: Historical Evaluation of a Cultural Phenomenon¹

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»Thy shoots are a park of pomegranates, with precious fruits...«
(Song of Songs 4:13)

Introduction: The Nascence of a Jewish Arts Periodical

In 1994, Katharina Sabine Feil dedicated her dissertation to one of the pioneering scholars in Jewish art, Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein². Her dissertation, entitled »A Scholar's Life: Rachel Wischnitzer and the Development of Jewish Art Scholarship in the 20th Century«, was submitted to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 1994³. In the introduction to her dissertation, Feil stated her main thesis: »More than any other scholar of the Twentieth Century, Wischnitzer was responsible for transforming the study of Jewish art into an accepted – and respected – discipline within the international academic community.« Her persistence and vision on the one hand, and her own studies that highlighted Jewish art on the other, were all the more pioneering in a period

1 This research was carried out during my term as Research Fellow at the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 2009/2010.

2 Minsk, April 14, 1885-New York, November 20, 1989. Rachel Wischnitzer began publishing under the name Wischnizer-Bernstein (Yiddish: Vischnitzer-Bernshtain), her married and maiden name. Later she used her married name only.

3 Katharina Sabine Feil: A Scholar's Life: Rachel Wischnitzer and the Development of Jewish Art Scholarship in the Twentieth Century. Ph.D. Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature in Jewish History to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1994 (CJH Dissertation Collection 7 M).

in which the question was posed time and again: »Y-a-t'il une peinture juive«, or in a broader sense: Does Jewish art exist?⁴

Wischnitzer, the »Doyenne of Historians of Jewish Art« in the eyes of one of her great admirers and followers, the late Bezalel Narkiss,⁵ was a remarkable woman and scholar, who passed away at the age of 104 on November 20, 1989, 20 years ago.

The life of Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein is intimately related to one of the most interesting and challenging enterprises in the academic study of Jewish culture, literature and the visual arts that took place in Berlin in the early 1920s. At the time, Berlin played a significant role as staging post of Jewish émigré culture even though in the early 1920s Berlin had a population of more than 3 million of which a mere 210,000 were Jewish. And yet the small Jewish community was influential enough to shape modern intellectual concepts through its numerous literary and artistic venues.

The local thriving cultural scene attracted many writers in Hebrew and Yiddish, who came to Berlin from Eastern Europe and *Eretz Israel*.⁶ Berlin became home – for a longer or shorter period – for authors

- 4 See, for example, the discourse that evolved from Adolphe Basler's rhetorical question in »Mercur de France« in 1925. Jewish art theory was debated at the time by other art historians as well. See Marina Dmitrieva-Einhorn: *Kunstdiskurs in der jüdischen Presse der Zwischenkriegszeit in Warschau, Kiew und Berlin*. In: Susanne Marten-Finnis, Markus Winkler (Hg.): *Die jüdische Presse im europäischen Kontext 1686–1990*. (Jüdische Presse. Kommunikationsgeschichte im europäischen Raum, 1: Selected papers presented at a conference entitled »The Jewish Press: Research in Progress in a European Perspective«, held at Queen's University, Belfast in May 2003) (Presse und Geschichte, 21). Bremen 2006, pp. 258–259. See further the more detailed article by Eva Frojmovic: *Buber in Basle, Schlosser in Sarajevo, Wischnitzer in Weimar: The Politics of Writing about Medieval Jewish Art*. In: Eva Frojmovic (ed.): *Imaging the Self, Imagining the Other: Visual Representation and Jewish-Christian Dynamics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*. London, Boston 2002, pp. 1–32.
- 5 Bezalel Narkiss: *Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne of Historians of Jewish Art*. In: *Rachel Wischnitzer: From Dura to Rembrandt. Studies in the History of Art*. Jerusalem 1990, pp. 9–25. See also the interview with Rachel Wischnitzer by Claire Richter Sherman: *Rachel Wischnitzer: Pioneer Scholar of Jewish Art*. In: *Woman's Art Journal* 1(2), 1989, pp. 42–46.
- 6 The cultural background of the literary Jewish activity and creativity in Berlin at the dawn of the twentieth century is illustrated in a number of articles by Delphine Bechtel, such as *Les écrivains juifs allemands et la »Volkskunde«: culture, littérature et nationalisme*. In: *Pardès; anthropologie, histoire, philosophie, littérature* 21, 1995,

such as Bialik, Tchernicovsky, David Frishman, Uri Zvi Greenberg, and many more. Others sought a venue there for publishing or contributing their literary production to Hebrew and Yiddish periodicals, all of which made Berlin a short-lived but vibrant microcosm of Jewish, mainly Yiddish literature.⁷

One of these contemporary Jewish publications was dedicated to art and culture. It appeared as a periodical named „Milgroim« in the Yiddish,⁸ and »Rimon« in the Hebrew version. These were published in relatively small editions by the Rimon Publishing House,⁹ established in Berlin and headed by Dr. Mark Wischnitzer.¹⁰ »Rimon-Milgroim« was a magazine devoted to art in all its manifestations: painting, sculpture, music and theater.¹¹ As the colophon states, »special attention is devoted

pp. 105–114; Pardès: *La Haskalah berlinoise*. In: Jean Baumgarten [et al.] (eds.): *Mille ans de cultures ashkénazes*. [Paris] 1994, pp. 354–357; and Baumgarten: *The Russian Jewish Intelligentsia and Modern Yiddish Culture*. In: Michael Berkowitz (ed.): *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond*. Leiden 2004, pp. 213–226. Delphine Bechtel: *The Russian Jewish Intelligentsia and Modern Yiddish Culture*. In: Michael Berkowitz (ed.): *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond*. Leiden 2004, pp. 213–226.

- 7 The profile of the Yiddish literature published in Berlin in and around the 1920s is illustrated by Glenn S. Levine: *Yiddish Publishing in Berlin 1919–1924*. In: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 42, 1997, pp. 85–108, esp. 88–89.
- 8 The spelling, »Milgroim«, was chosen by its editors, although in some studies it is referred to as »Milgroym«.
- 9 Replying to a question on this matter by David G. Roskies in Fall 1971, Rachel Wischnitzer recalled that the volumes of the periodicals were published »Only in the hundreds...Maybe one thousand.« See Francesco Melfi: *A Rhetoric of Image and Word: The Magazine Milgroim/Rimon, 1922–1924 and the Jewish Search for Inclusivity*, Ph.D. Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature in Jewish History to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1996, p. 228.
- 10 Rimon Publishing House was not a prolific publisher, with a total of nine books, many in translation. The full list of these publications, mostly forthcoming, was incorporated in the issues of *Rimon-Milgroim* 1 and 2. See Levine (note 7), p. 96, A, Table 1, for the dates of publication of the books published by Rimon and a comparative list of publications in Yiddish in Berlin during the relevant period.
- 11 It was published by the Rimon Publishing Company – the Rimon-Verlag – established in Berlin and London by the Wischnitzers' and located at Hohenstaufenstraße 43, Berlin W30. A. Kogan, J. Paenson and Dr. M. Wischnitzer are registered as its »Directors« in an insert in the volumes of »Rimon-Milgroim«. The publishing house also issued a series of books on various topics in Jewish culture. These were ad-

to the artistic production of the Jews in the present and the past.« Its literary editors were Mark Vischnitzer and Moshe Kleinman,¹² and the art editor was the art-historian and critic Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein.¹³ It contained contributions by various authors, some of whom were at the beginning of their artistic and literary careers. »Milgroim« and »Rimon« appeared between the years 1922 and 1924, during which only six issues were published. The essays on Jewish art, visual culture, Jewish folk-art and ethnography were ground-breaking, and some contain information on material artifacts that no longer exist. Sadly, this short-lived publication, which was established in 1922 and issued in Berlin, ceased to exist already in 1924, and issued a total of only 6 volumes.¹⁴

The impact of this pioneering endeavor was immense. The time and circumstances of its appearance were ripe; there had been earlier incentives in the work carried out by the Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Society which was inaugurated in St. Petersburg as early as in 1908, in which Marc Bernstein, among others, participated.¹⁵ More specifically,

vertized in that same insert of each volume. For a full summary of the publications of the Rimon Publishing House, see Katharina S. Feil: *Art Under Siege: The Art Scholarship of Rachel Wischnitzer in Berlin, 1921–1938*. In: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 44, 1999, pp. 167–190, and 45, 2000, pp. 122–133, see p. 170, and n. 13.

- 12 Kleinman himself published an article entitled »On Exaggeration in Journalism« in *Rimon* 2, pp. 43–44. He later published three additional papers in *Rimon* 3, 1923, p. 40 and in *Milgroim* 3, 1923, pp. 46–48 and 5, pp. 25–26.
- 13 Rachel Wischnitzer's biography is covered by Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5).
- 14 Two volumes appeared in 1922, three in 1923, and only one in 1924 – far from the initial intention of the editors of the magazine(s) to publish bimonthly. A note appeared, for example, on p. V of volume 2 published in 1922, indicating that »The Magazine is published bimonthly in the format of the present issue.« A study of the historical background of the cultural milieu of the émigré intelligentsia from Eastern Europe – including Jews – residing in Berlin was carried out by Susanne Marten-Finnis, Igor Dukhan: *Dream and Experiment. Time and Style in the 1920s*, Berlin *Émigré Magazines: »Zhar Ptitsa« and »Milgroim«*. In: *East European Jewish Affairs* 35(2), Dec. 2005, pp. 225–244. It remains unclear to what extent Wischnitzer's own acquaintance with Jews involved in other fields of cultural-intellectual activity influenced the inclusion of their works in the volumes of »Rimon-Milgroim«. For example, was it her friendship with Shaul Tchernichovsky, whom she had met during her studies at the University of Heidelberg, which prompted him to contribute to »Rimon«?
- 15 For more on the forerunners of research into Jewish folk-art in Russia and their contribution to a »Jewish Art Renaissance« in the early twentieth century, see Benjamin

the history of »Rimon-Milgroim« must be seen in light of the cultural bloom in Post-World-War-I Berlin with its wealth of journals and publications, 34 of which were in Yiddish.¹⁶

The companion journals »Rimon« and »Milgroim«, which appeared in Hebrew and in Yiddish respectively, were journals dedicated to the arts (plural).¹⁷ It was the emphasis laid on Jewish subject-matter and authorship by Jewish art historians and critics on general art that made »Rimon-Milgroim« unique.¹⁸ The double periodical was similar to publications that emerged in the early twentieth century German Expressionist circles, such as »Der Sturm« or »Der Blaue Reiter«. Certainly well aware of this new trend and following the state-of-the-art model, Rachel Wischnitzer joined her husband,¹⁹ Mark Wischnitzer,²⁰ and Baruch Krupnik (Karu)²¹ as literary editors, with Moshe Kleinmann²²

Nathans: On Russian-Jewish Historiography. In: Thomas Sanders (ed.): *The Historiography of Imperial Russia. The Profession and Writing of History in a Multi-national State*. Armonk, New York 1999, pp. 397–432; as well as Seth Wolitz: *The Jewish National Art Renaissance in Russia*. In: Ruth Apter-Gabriel (ed.): *Tradition and Revolution. The Jewish Renaissance in Russian Avant-Garde Art 1912–1928*. Jerusalem 1987 (exhibition catalogue, The Israel Museum, 285), mainly pp. 24–26. For the Polish scene, see Itzik Nakhmen Gottesman: *Defining the Yiddish Nation: the Jewish Folklorists of Poland*. Detroit, Michigan 2003, pp. 75–110. See also Seth Wolitz: *The Jewish National Art Renaissance in Russia*. In: Ruth Apter-Gabriel (ed.): *Tradition and Revolution*, *ibid.*, mainly pp. 24–26.

16 See Marten-Finnis, Dukhan (note 14), mainly p. 225.

17 The statement by the editors, on p. V of volume 2 of 1922, reads: »Rimon. A Hebrew illustrated magazine of art and letters... It will embrace the study, both retrospective and contemporary, of art in all its manifestations – painting, sculpture, music, theatre. Special attention will be devoted to the artistic production of the Jews in the present and past...«

18 This broad definition of the journals' scope enabled writers such as Franz Landsberger or Julius Meier-Graefe to introduce their scholarly study on topics ranging from Gothic art through Cézanne.

19 Rachel and Mark Wischnitzer had already collaborated on other literary productions while still in Russia. One example is the first issue of the »Istoria evreiskogo naroda«, delineating the history of the Jewish People, that appeared under the editorship of Mark and others, and which was designed by Rachel. See John Bolt: *From the Pale of Settlement to the Reconstruction of the World*. In: Apter-Gabriel (note 15), pp. 43–60.

20 Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5), of course, also refers briefly to the biography of Mark Wischnitzer, especially p. 15.

21 Krupnik, later Karu, (1899–1972), was a Hebrew writer, journalist, editor, and translator, who served on the editorial board of the German »Encyclopaedia Judaica« and

as translator into Hebrew as co-editor and David (or Dovid) Bergelson²³ and Der Nister as collaborative fiction editors, to found the periodical »Rimon-Milgroim« in Berlin²⁴. Rachel Wischnitzer herself served as its art editor, while also contributing seven essays on diverse themes ranging from ancient to contemporary Jewish art.²⁵

the Hebrew encyclopedia »Eshkol«. He joined the editorial board of *Rimon-Milgroim* in 1922 as associate editor with Mark Wischnitzer. See mainly Getzel Kresler: *Leksikon haSifrut haIvrit baDorot haAharonim*, [Merhavyah 1965–67], Vol. 2, 1967, pp. 794–795; Moshe Mevorakh: *Anshei Ruach beYisra'el: Deyokna'ot Soferim*. Tel Aviv 1956, p. 171.

- 22 The co-editor of the Hebrew »Rimon« as of volume 2 was Moshe Kleinman, who also edited »HaOlam« published by the Zionist Organisation.
- 23 On Bergelson (August 12, 1884–August 12, 1952), see mainly Joseph Sherman, Genady Estraiikh (eds.): *David Bergelson: From Modernism to Socialist Realism*. Sixth Mendel Friedman International Conference on Yiddish (Oxford, 2005). London 2007.
- 24 Rachel Wischnitzer had already arrived there in the summer of 1914, at the eve of World War I, while Mark joined her only several years later. She later lived there between 1921 and 1938. See Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5), pp. 16–17. On Rachel Wischnitzer's life in Berlin in the years 1921–1938, see Feil (note 11). See also the brief summary of the publication by Menuha Gilboa: *Rimon-Milgroim: An Unusual Arts Magazine in Hebrew and Yiddish 70 Years Ago*. In: *Qesher* 14, Nov. 1993, p. 102–105.
- 25 Rachel Wischnitzer strove to embrace the entire scope of Jewish art, but also related non-Jewish art. The broad range of Wischnitzer's definition of Jewish art is hinted at in her article *From my Archives*. In: *Journal of Jewish Art* 6, 1979 (rep. in Rachel Wischnitzer [Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5], pp. 166–177), p. 6, where she says: »As art editor of »Rimon« and »Migroim« (Berlin, 1922–1924), I believe that I faithfully recorded the concerns of that time in promoting the discussion of Cézanne and Chagall, synagogue mosaics in Palestine, and a Babylonian cylinder.« Interestingly, illuminated manuscripts and iconography, to which she dedicated numerous publications, are completely absent from this brief statement. Her list of publications on Jewish art, »Jüdische Kunstgeschichtsschreibung«, published in Ismar Elbogen, Josef Meisel, Mark Wischnitzer (Hg.): *Festschrift zu Simon Dubnows siebzigstem Geburtstag*. Berlin 1930, pp. 76–81, covers a broad range of topics in the field. A full bibliography of Wischnitzer's oeuvre was compiled by Rochelle Weinstein: *Rachel Wischnitzer: A Bibliography*. In: Rachel Wischnitzer (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5), pp. 180–187, comprising the remarkable total of 344 scholarly works.

Defining the Scope

In her autobiographical article »From my Archives«, which she wrote in 1979 at the age of 94, Rachel Wischnitzer reflected on Jewish art, declaring: »I have always regarded Jewish art as part of the general creative process molded inexorably by the times and the artist's personality, rather than by national characteristics.«²⁶ Her understanding of the place of Jewish art within the framework of general culture and art history as such evolved at a much earlier stage. Already in 1953, at a celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of »Rimon-Milgroim« organized by the Congress of Jewish Culture and the Jewish Museum of New York, she commented: »All too often Jewish art is dealt with as unique unto itself. We were a people among the peoples, a nation among the nations.«²⁷ The affirmation of this conviction may have been a principle that prompted her to place Jewish art at the focal point of Jewish public interest,²⁸ thereby joining her colleagues in giving birth to »Rimon-Milgroim«.²⁹

The vision of the founding editors of this outstanding publication is remarkable. The history of »Rimon-Milgroim« and the personal biographies of its initiators and editors are closely linked, as are the prevailing circumstances that forged the cultural milieu of the time in general, and of the Jewish intelligentsia in particular.³⁰ It was a time of multinationality. People, ideas, ideals and cultural trends continuously crossed geographic boundaries, constantly re-defining and reshaping themselves,

26 Viewed from a different angle by Feil (note 11), p. 133, »Jewish art, according to Wischnitzer, was part of and yet apart from its surrounding culture, at times borrowing its forms but always filling those forms with distinctly Jewish contents«. See also Rachel Wischnitzer's own observation on the interrelation between art and history, in: *Eine Selbst-Anzeige*. In: *Soncino Blätter*. Beiträge zur Kunde des jüdischen Buches 1, 1925, pp. 95–96.

27 Quoted in Feil (note 11), p. 171.

28 Notably, later in her article (p. 8), she declares: »illuminated Hebrew manuscripts were my chief concern«, although she was universally regarded mainly as an architectural historian and art critic – also by herself. See the compilation of publications on Jewish art, »Jüdische Kunstgeschichtsschreibung« (note 26).

29 Jewish art theory was of interest at the time to other art historians as well. See Dmitrieva-Einhorn (note 4), pp. 247–265, especially her evaluation of »Rimon-Milgroim«, pp. 254–265.

30 As noted by Feil (note 11), p. 168, albeit regarding the general wave of Russians seeking a new (cultural) home in Berlin, »Sociologically, emigration in those years consisted of mainly two groups: the upper class and the intelligentsia«.

examining their old traditions and exploring new terrain. The people who made »Rimon-Milgrom« were no different. They were examining their own identities through modernistic eyes, delineating their horizons.³¹ Yet, while a number of scholars have already tried to place the periodical(s) within the framework of Jewish scholarship and as part of the cultural scene of the Russian émigré society in Berlin of the 1920s,³² our goal is mainly to understand the motivation that led a group of intellectuals to such a daring, innovative venture. Perhaps even more challenging, however, is understanding what led to the ultimate demise of this publication.

Both questions seem to be intimately connected to the intended readership of the magazine(s), and as consequence the choice of the language – or languages – in which it was to be published. As observed by Feil, »Rimon/Milgroim clearly catered to a well-read and highly educated audience... Rimon/Milgroim was created to present high culture to an educated Jewish audience and to bring culture into Jewish homes in their own language.«³³ »We realized – according to Wischnitzer – that German, the language of Goethe, Schiller and Moses Mendelssohn was, after World War I, no longer the unifying cultural vehicle of the Jewish intelligentsia. We wanted to reach out to Jewish groups in America and the growing Jewish community in Palestine. Yiddish and Hebrew seemed to be indicated.«³⁴

31 On the centrality of Yiddish to Eastern Jewry, and explaining the causes for the crisis in the Yiddish-speaking society, see Levine (Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 42).

32 Beginning already in the seventeenth century with the »Dinstage un Fraitagische Kurant«, published in Amsterdam in 1686–1687, Jewish press in various languages was more or less prominent all over Europe, including Holland, Germany, Rumania, Hungary, Russia, and other centers of Jewish cultural activity. Particularly on the local, contemporary level of Berlin in the 1920, »Rimon-Milgroim« was not conceived *ex nihilo*. The thriving Russian-Jewish community residing in Berlin published three daily newspapers and five weeklies, further nurturing its cultural enclave with its own theaters and bookstores. Intellectual interaction took place in the city's literary cafés, notably the »Leon«. On the cultural scene in Jewish-Russian Berlin see Otto Friedrich: *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s*. New York 1972, and – seen over a broader timeline – Robert Williams: *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany, 1881–1941*. Ithaca, London 1972. See also Leo and Renate Fuks: *Yiddish Publishing Activities in the Weimar Republic, 1920–1924*. In: Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 33, 1988, pp. 417–434.

33 Feil (note 11), p. 170.

34 Wischnitzer 1979 (note 25), p. 7; Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5),

Rachel Wischnitzer's first contribution to be published in „Rimon-Milgroim« was interestingly also the opening article in volume 1 of the respective journals.³⁵ Wischnitzer's appraisal of the interaction between traditional, mainly Jewish folk art, nationalism and modern Jewish art is revealed for the first time. Her ideas are already fully developed and confident. It is in the awareness of »unity« of the Jewish people and connection to the Jewish past that she attributes modern and contemporary manifestations of creativity in visual art. »The initial enthusiasm of Chagall, Rybak and others arose from these wall paintings [in the synagogues of Eastern Europe]. What they saw here engendered their entire creation and gave a free rein to their feelings,« she said, in the article entitled »Modern Art and Our Generation.«³⁶

In another article, Wischnitzer addressed the cultural and historical background of the growing importance – or relevance – of manifestations of Jewish art to a larger spectrum of interested Jewish intellectuals. She regarded the contribution of Jewish artists as constructive, or even crucial, to the gradually increasing interest in Jewish visual representational art. In making leading artists aware of the phenomenon of the art of the painted synagogues in Eastern Europe at the dawn of the twentieth century, however, her vantage point may have been too emphatic

- p. 18. Wischnitzer herself did not write in either of these languages. Her contributions to »Rimon-Milgroim« were translated from the original German by Baruch Krupnik to suit the official languages of the publications. On Yiddish periodicals in Berlin in the 1920s as a cultural phenomenon, see Susanne Marten-Finnis, Heather Valencia: Sprachinseln: jiddische Publizistik in London, Wilna und Berlin, 1880–1930 (=Lebenswelten osteuropäischer Juden, 4). Köln 1999. Other presses published in Hebrew and in Russian to serve the broad needs, interests and language preferences of the large émigré community of Russian Jews, as described by Feil (note 11), mainly pp. 168–170. See also Arthur Tilo Alt: The Berlin Milgroim Group and Modernism. In: Yiddish 6, No. 1, 1985, pp. 33–44. The contemporary ideological strife between the Yiddishists and the Hebraicists and the stance taken by the editors of »Rimon-Milgroim« on that issue is described by Feil (note 11), pp. 173–174.
- 35 Altogether Wischnitzer published a total of nine articles in the periodical during its existence, contributing to each volume. In addition to these, she joined other authors in three other publications in vols. 4 and 5.
- 36 Pondering the impact of this »national feeling«, in Rimon 1, p. 4, she expressed her firm belief that only an artist who is part of a living people can create an art that expresses national unity and that is founded on the common past. The article was published also in »Milgroim« of that same year, pp. 2–7.
- 37 Wischnitzer explicitly states that »It is significant, however, that not until artists

and monolithic.³⁷ The interest in Jewish folk art with which Wischnitzer was associated was part of a new interest in Jewish ethnography in all its manifestations, whose main protagonist was S. Ansky.³⁸

A similar view is expressed in the words of Eliezer Lissitzky in his article »The Synagogue of Mohilev. Reminiscences«, published in 1923 in »Rimon« volume 3.³⁹ Calling the emerging Jewish artists of Eastern Europe »pioneers«, he says: »We, holding a pencil and a paintbrush, immediately began analyzing not only the nature surrounding us, but also ourselves. What and who are we? What is our place among the nations? What is our culture? And what should our art be?... Self-searching... we strove to look into the old mirror, to grasp ourselves through what is called »folk culture«.«⁴⁰

Although one should not overestimate the role of figures like Ansky, Struck, Lissitzky, Rybak and Chagall in promoting the awareness of these paintings not as representations of some lesser folk-art, but as worthy works of art in the full sense of the word,⁴¹ their work may by no means be seen as the discovery of Jewish art, but rather as its reappraisal, appropriation, and redefinition.⁴² Thus, by quoting Chagall's probably

such as Lissitzki, Ryback and Chagall had become aware of the old synagogue folk art did it reach wider circles of the Jewish intelligentsia.« In her article *The Wise Men of Worms*. In: *The Reconstructionist* 25(9), June 15, 1959, p. 9.

38 On Ansky and the Jewish Ethnographic Society, from an art history perspective, see mainly the exhibition catalogue *Tracing An-Sky: Jewish Collections from the State Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg*. Zwolle 1992–1994. The exhibition was co-organized by the Joods Historisch Museum, Amsterdam, and the State Ethnographic Museum, St. Petersburg.

39 Pp. 9–12, and pp. 9–13 in »Milgroim« of that same year.

40 E. L. [Eliezer Lissitzky]: *The Synagogue of Mohilev. Reminiscences*. In: *Rimon* 3, 1923, p. 9. Later, on the same page Lissitzky uses much different terminology when appraising the artwork of the Mohilev synagogue: »This is the fruit of high art.« The parallel article appeared in *Milgroim* of that same year, pp. 9–13.

41 Lissitzky is, however, also apologetic in his quest to prove Jewish art worthy of acknowledgement. His aforementioned (n. 41) article in *Rimon* and in *Milgroim* 3, p. 35 is, in many ways, an attempt to make his point. To a great extent, his view can be summarized in his own words toward the conclusion of the article: »We are a cultured people. Only elegant pedigree papers are wanting.«

42 Such a view is explicit in the chapter heading »The Discovery of Jewish Folk Art« in: Avram Kampf: *Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century*, South Hadley, Massachusetts 1984, p. 17. Further information on the activities of these early attempts to collect and preserve the Jewish cultural is on pp. 17–23.

fictive affinity with Hayyim Segal of Sluzk, the artist of the Mohilev and Kopys synagogues – his »distant ancestor« in his own words – Wischnitzer, too, legitimized folk as part of the Jewish visual culture: »When Chagall called the painter of the Mohilev synagogue, Hayyim Segal, his ›distant ancestor‹ – and he meant blood relationship – a more than poetic link seemed to be established between folk art and the ›fine arts‹ of the day«. ⁴³ This was to be her ideology as art editor of »Rimon-Milgroim«. ⁴⁴

The Inevitable End

The need to define the scope of the nascent publication, »Rimon-Milgroim«, was one of the stumbling-blocks that led to its demise. Although the persons who were active in creating – and later setting – the editorial tune of the publication were personally engaged in varied fields of Jewish cultural creativity and naturally propagated these specific fields of interest, there must have been undertones that set many opposing forces in motion. Rachel Wischnitzer clearly played a decisive role in the choice of subject-matter for the journal, extending far beyond the traditional role of an art-editor. In her opinion, »Rimon-Milgroim« was to act as catalyst for shaping an »art-educated public«. But what was her definition of »art«?

In an intriguing statement, entitled »Eine Selbst-Anzeige« (»self-indictment«), she sketched what would have been the blueprint of a forthcoming volume, paradoxically published in the first volume of »Soncino-Blätter« that appeared in 1925, after »Rimon-Milgroim« had already ceased to exist. ⁴⁵ Concisely describing the journal, her ideas are crystal clear. Through »Rimon-Milgroim« she hoped to arouse public interest specifically in Jewish painting and sculpture and to educate all lev-

43 Wischnitzer (The Wise Men of Worms, note 37), p. 12.

44 The extent to which the inclusion of some early works by Chagall and other Jewish artists then making their debut within the pages of »Rimon-Milgroim« promoted their respective careers exceeds the scope of this paper. Some relevant remarks can be found in Rachel Wischnitzer, Berlin, the Early 1920s. In: Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5), pp. 164–165.

45 See note 27.

els within Jewish society of its understanding and appreciation.⁴⁶ To be sure, her words made no mention of promoting other fields of art such as literature, music or theater!⁴⁷ In a concluding statement in this same article her ideology becomes even clearer. It was her declared belief that »Rimon-Milgroim« was ideologically conceived primarily as a magazine of Jewish visual art, in which literature would play a secondary role.⁴⁸

Yet the content of the magazines was not confined to Jewish art as such. The editors – mainly Rachel Wischnitzer – were open to contributions from other realms of art history as well. There were themes such as Chinese art,⁴⁹ the art and biography of Leonardo da Vinci,⁵⁰ or Paul Cezanne.⁵¹ The same holds true for other manifestations of Jewish art and culture, mainly literature.⁵² In an interview with David G. Roskies which took place in her home in the Fall of 1971, Rachel Wischnitzer reinforced this stance, saying: »Rimon« was not meant to be just a Jew-

46 Thus, »Bevor aber zu einer systematischen Herausgabe von Faksimile-Ausgaben der kostbaren illuminierten Handschriften und zu anderen großangelegten Untersuchungen geschritten werden kann, muß das künstlerische Interesse des jüdischen Publikums erst geweckt werden. Der Rimon-Verlag wurde zwangsläufig vor die Aufgabe gestellt, eine Kunstzeitschrift zu gründen, die den Boden zur Aufnahme kunstwissenschaftlicher Arbeit bereiten würde. Der Rimon und die jiddische Parallelausgabe, der Milgroim, sollten als Pfadfinder in die Welt hinauswandern, um die verschiedenen Schichten und Lagerungen des jüdischen Volkstums zu erfassen.« Op. cit.

47 In fact, the sole contribution on Jewish music that was published in »Rimon-Milgroim« was by A. Z. Idelson: *Jewish Music in its National Aspect*, published solely in Rimon 5, 1924, pp. 5–30. Notably, the article was never printed in the Yiddish counterpart, »Milgroim«. Interestingly, Melfi has created no category for Jewish music in his Appendix B: Subject Index, although Idelson's article is listed in Appendix A: Author Index, p. 205, under the letter J.

48 »Angesichts der speziell werberischen Aufgabe der Zeitschrift, in recht weit gezogenen Kreisen Kunstinteressen zu erzeugen, schien es nicht angebracht, die kunstwissenschaftliche Betrachtung von anderen Geistesgebieten zu isolieren: so wurde seine Zeitschrift für Kunst an erster Stelle, aber auch für Literatur.« Op. cit. (Soncino Blätter), p. 96.

49 W. Kohn: *Chinese Painting*. In: Rimon 5, 1923, pp. 13–17 and a parallel article in Milgroim, pp. 13–16.

50 O. Pevsner-Schatz: *Leonardo da Vinci. A Biographical Study*. In: Rimon 4, 1923, pp. 20–5 and that same year's Milgroim, pp. 19–26.

51 J. Maier-Graefe: *Cezanne and His Work*. In: Rimon 1, 1922, pp. 7–11, and a parallel article in Milgroim, pp. 8–15.

52 Such as works by Hugo von Hofmansthal (Milgroim 6, 1924, p. 7), or Vladimir Kolenko (Rimon 1, 1922, p. 13).

ish art journal – because we wanted the Jewish public to learn something about art in general. You can't consider Jewish art as something isolated. It had to be assimilated...«⁵³

Things were by no means simple when it came to formulating the goals of »Rimon-Milgroim«. Other protagonists of the periodical – founders and editors – saw in it an opportunity to propagate the arts in the general sense of the term, with a pronounced emphasis on literature. A leading figure who hoped to take part in reshaping a modern Jewish-Yiddish literary expression was the Yiddish prose writer David Bergelson.⁵⁴ Seeking an »autonomous secular culture by which modern Jews, in search of emancipation without assimilation, could define their national identity,« he became a cultural activist in Russia.⁵⁵ Yet history took a different course. Disenchanted by his attempts to create a thriving Yiddish center in Russia,⁵⁶ Bergelson hoped to find a new intellectual life in Weimar Berlin – a cultural Mecca at the time – ⁵⁷ where he hoped to establish a periodical in Yiddish.⁵⁸

53 Cited by Melfi (note 9), Appendix D, p. 226.

54 Okhrimovo/Sarna, 1884–Moscow, 1952.

55 Joseph Sherman: Religious Tradition and Secular Radicalism: David Bergelson in Berlin, 1922. In: *Midstream* 54, 4, July–August 2008, p. 35.

56 Bergelson was very active in Jewish cultural circles and one of the founding directors of the Kultur Lige, established in Kiev immediately after the Russian Revolution. On Bergelson, see Sherman, Estraich (David Bergelson: From Modernism). A similar »renaissance« evolved in other manifestations of culture and the visual art as part of a wider movement that sought to re-define Jewish national art in a modern world. The broad phenomenon was described in various contributions to the exhibition catalogue by Ruth Apter-Gabriel (note 15).

57 Berlin of the 1920s was somewhat similar to St. Petersburg of the 1910s, serving as a center for the Jewish intelligentsia. The cultural background of Berlin in the 1920s is extensively discussed by Marten-Finnis, Dukhan (note 14), pp. 225–244. See also Delphine Bechtel: *Babylon or Jerusalem: Berlin as Center of Jewish Modernism in the 1920s*. In: Dagmar C.G. Lorenz, Gabriele Weinberger (eds.): *Insiders and Outsiders; Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria, Detroit 1994*, pp. 116–123; and Bechtel: *Jiddische Literatur und Kultur in Berlin im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*. In: Michael Brenner (Hg.): *Jüdische Sprachen in deutscher Umwelt; Hebräisch und Jiddisch von der Aufklärung bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen 2002, pp. 85–95.

58 Sherman further discusses Bergelson's activities as a writer and his stance vis-à-vis the political atmosphere in Bolshevik Russia (Religious Tradition and Secular Religious).

Resonating to the initiative of the Jewish cultural elite in Berlin, yet perhaps to a no lesser degree in quest for an organ in which to publish his own writings, Bergelson joined the editorial board of the nascent »Rimon-Milgroim« both as one of its literary editors and contributor of his own literature and art.⁵⁹ Shortly after the first issue was published, Bergelson, along with his friend and co-editor, Der Nister (Pinchas Kahanovitsch, 1884–1950), resigned from their official roles in »Rimon-Milgroim«. According to Joseph Sherman, they were »alarmed by the fierceness with which they were assailed for having joined what were denounced as »the forces of reaction«, unable to reconcile their own sense of personal displacement with the Wischnitzers' conservative insistence on Jewish national unity, and unwilling to sever ties with colleagues in Soviet Yiddish centers...«⁶⁰ Dissociating themselves from their former literary haven, they publicly proclaimed their contacts with »Milgroim« and its editors severed in the third volume of »Strom 3«, published in 1922, in a short note addressed mainly to their pro-Soviet colleagues.⁶¹

Personal and ideological disagreements among the editors of »Rimon-Milgroim« were only one factor that rendered it such a briefly flickering episode in the history of Jewish cultural creativity. Printed on high-quality paper with superb color reproductions and masterly captions and embellishments, it was an outstanding work of art in itself. Yet post-war Germany was experiencing financial hardships that were a factor in the discontinuation of the publication. Reflecting on the course of events, with no outspoken anguish or poignancy, Rachel Wischnizer writes much later in retrospect: »The 6th issue of »Rimon-Milgroim« (1924) was to be the last. The inflation in Germany had stopped, and with the dollars we received for copies sold in the U.S. losing their astronomical value, the magazines had to be discontinued.«⁶² Summarizing the short-lived episode of »Rimon-Milgroim« in writing, the editors ap-

59 See his contribution *At the Beginning of November 1919. A Sketch*. In: *Milgroim* 1, 1922, pp. 25–26, and his illustration *Onheyb Kislev 5769* in that same issue. The article did not appear in Hebrew in *Rimon*.

60 *Loc. cit.* The ideological clash between Bergelson and Der Nister and the editors of »Rimon-Milgroim« and the cultural atmosphere that hovered in the background are discussed by Melfi (note 9), pp. 79–94.

61 *Strom* 3, 1922, appended to p. 83. The translated text of their one-line message is included in Sherman (note 55), p. 8.

62 Wischnitzer (*Soncino Blätter. Beiträge*), p. 10.

pended a list of the articles that had appeared in its respective volumes at the end of volume 6. In a sense, this served as the magazine's own necrology. The impact of the inflation in Germany was not the only negative financial factor. Initially supported – in more ways than one – by Ilya Paenson,⁶³ the periodicals ceased to have a sponsor when he withdrew his support after the second volume of »Rimon-Milgroim« appeared.⁶⁴

To be sure, the message was written on the wall from the start, if not explicitly inscribed on it. A note to the potential readers of the Hebrew »Rimon« reads as follows: »The issues of »Rimon« and »Milgroim« are being sold to individuals in all the large Hebrew bookstores. Due to the daily fluctuating rates of exchange no subscription can be made in countries with a low value [currency]. Whoever wishes to receive the issues regularly is requested to send a certain amount [of money] and we will deduct upon each dispatch the fee of the volume from it, or they should please send us a message in writing that they wish to receive the issue by means of deferred payment.«⁶⁵

On a more practical level, correspondence between various leading persons in the cultural scene reveals mismanagement and disorder in issues of maintaining »Rimon-Milgroim«. On September 25, 1922, the poet and journalist Elyohu-Khaim Sheps, alias A. Almi, sent a letter addressed to Dr. Mark Wischnitzer on a letterhead of »The Eagle Publishing Company, Limited,« of Canada, »publishers of the first and largest Jewish daily in the Dominion.«⁶⁶ After complimenting the edito-

63 Paenson, known also by his Hebrew given names Isaak Iosif, was born in Riga in 1898 and was in 1938 by the Stalinist Regime. On his role in the nascence of »Rimon-Milgroim« see Wischnitzer 1979 (note 25), p. 6.

64 Whether or not this had to do with the fact that as of issue 3 of »Rimon-Milgroim« the covers tended to be less elaborate and polychromatic remains a conjecture. See, however, Melfi (note 9), pp. 162–172.

65 Vols. 1 and 2 contain the following inscription in full on p. II Later, this inscription appeared in a shortened version in vol. 3, and ceased to appear subsequently. The parallel inscription in English appeared on p. V of the same volume and bears a slightly modified text: »...Copies of the RIMON and MILGROIM are obtainable at the principal bookshops and in all Jewish bookstores. Remittances should be sent by cheque or postal order and made out to the order of THE RIMON PUBLISHING COMPANY...« Ensuing volumes of »Rimon-Milgroim« did not include this inscription.

66 The letter is kept in the Mark Wischnitzer archive of the Institute for Jewish Research at the Center for Jewish History in New York, file no. 676, box 1.

rial board for the superb new publication of »Milgroim«, Almi requests to be sent the first issue as well as ensuing future issues of the journal as »honorarium« for some poems from his own pen that he is offering for inclusion in a forthcoming volume.

One should also carefully consider the appraisal of Joseph Sherman of the cultural »Rimon-Milgroim« venture. To use his own words, »This was a highbrow, lavishly illustrated Yiddish periodical,⁶⁷ with a Hebrew counterpart entitled »Rimon«, edited and published in Berlin that aimed to heal the breach created by divisive Yiddish-Hebrew language politics in the process of drawing Jews towards an appreciation of Western high culture.«⁶⁸

Sherman is pointing his finger to some of the major factors that may well have led to the downfall and discontinuation of what at the onset could have been not only an inspiring promise but also a great success on the cultural stage of the Jewish intelligentsia in respect to target readership, content, language, and visual format.

Let us consider the target readership of the joint venture, »Rimon-Milgroim«. Apparently the editors of the periodical(s) aimed at a broad readership of Jewish intellectuals in the newly formed Bolshevik Soviet Union and other communities in Eastern Europe, whose culture was deeply embedded in traditional »shtettel« traditions on the one hand and in current trends of a search for a new Jewish identity within the local society on the other. To quote Narkiss, »At the time, the »enlightened« Jews were divided among three opposing groups: the first were the supporters of the more nationalistic aspect of the Enlightenment, namely the revival of the Hebrew language and the ensuing Zionist movement; the second were those who became entirely assimilated into the Euro-

67 Rachel Wischnitzer herself was influential in creating the visual appearance of the Hebrew titles used throughout the periodical by providing samples of script from medieval Hebrew illuminated manuscripts for the graphic artist Franciska Baruch, who was responsible for the Hebrew lettering of »Rimon-Milgroim«. See Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5), p. 18. According to Rachel Wischnitzer, p. 8, the actual layout and format of the volumes were influenced by the Russian art magazine »Jar Ptitsa«, and, in fact, the first volumes of »Rimon-Milgroim« were published by Alexander Kagan, who was the producer of »Jar Ptitsa«.

68 Op. cit., 35. A similar readership was aimed at for another contemporary Russian-language periodical »Zhar Ptista« issued in Berlin. Both »Zhar Ptista« and the Hebrew-Yiddish »Rimon-Milgroim« were launched by Aleksander Eduardovich Kogan, resulting in a similarity in layout and visual preferences.

pean way of life, retaining only some traditional Jewish cultural traits, such as the use of some religious festival customs; while the third were Yiddishists, who saw Yiddish as an East European *lingua franca* and the focus of Jewish life.«⁶⁹

While it was probably not the second group mentioned by Narkiss which »Rimon-Milgroim« targeted, the two other components of East European Jewry most definitely were. The schism between these two groups can best be exemplified by the personal involvement of Bergelson and Der Nister with »Rimon-Milgroim«. The Jews in that part of the world were not a uniform group of intellectuals sharing the same goals, interests, and understanding of their Jewishness (much less ideology) in their religious and national identity. Neither were the American Jews, many of whom were émigrés from Eastern Europe, members of both the blue- and – to a lesser extent – white-collars. Once again, their feelings towards their respective homelands and the traditions they left behind in the East were ambivalent to say the least. »Rimon-Milgroim« struck this very chord, and reminded some of their past, from which they had tried to detach themselves, attempting to become an integral part of American society, while others had created a physical and mental »shtettel« of past times in the »New World«. And then there was the Jewish community in Palestine, exploring a sense of collectivity with other ethnic groups of Jews from Oriental and Sephardi cultures while struggling with a climate too hot and harsh to leave room for any intellectual inspiration, and while coming to terms with the Ottoman ruler and Arab fraction of the local dwellers of the land. One would naturally seek a common denominator in these very diverse societies, defined by Rachel Wischnitzer as the target readership of »Rimon-Milgroim«. ⁷⁰ Apparently, the editors with their attempt to inaugurate a literary organ encompassing Jewish arts at large was doomed to failure from the start.

Limiting their scope to the eastern and western Ashkenazi intelligentsia, it seems that the schism between the Yiddishists and the Hebraists, the leaders of the Jewish cultural *avant-garde*, was too deep to

69 Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5), p. 10. The battle went far beyond the technical question of language. It was all about culture of the Jews in a »new era«. See further Malgorzata Maksymiak-Fugmann: Zionistische Identitäten um 1900: Ein „Kulturkampf« zwischen Ost und West. In: Marten-Finnis, Winkler (note 4), pp. 167–178.

70 Wischnitzer 1979 (note 25), p. 7.

overcome.⁷¹ Aiming to placate both worlds, they opted not to take an active stand where it may have been imperative to make a clear cultural – perhaps also political – statement, or to attempt an open dialogue on the language issue. »Neither the Hebrew »Rimon« nor the Yiddish »Milgroim« are party or clique organs«, stated Wischnitzer.⁷² However, in the turbulence of the Jewish quest for a modernist self-definition, the result was markedly different from the original intention: the editors of »Rimon-Milgroim« ultimately alienated both opposing parties, thereby undermining their own success.⁷³ »Without proclaiming a political manifesto, »Rimon/Milgroim« was meant to redefine Jewish identity and widen the view of Jewish culture by providing scholarly essays along with poetry and decorative graphics... the Wischnitzers specifically tried to address a Jewish audience by using the language of aestheticism and academia rather than the rhetoric of political radicalism.« This proclaimed low-key neutrality was premature or – at best – irrelevant in the cultural scene of Berlin in the 1920s. As a matter of fact, from the beginning the leading protagonists of »Rimon-Milgroim«, the Wischnitzers, did not create two identical journals. The content of the respective publications were adjusted to fit their target audience especially in respect to the literary content.

A Literary Post-Mortem of a Journal

»Rimon-Milgrom« did not enjoy the longevity it deserved. Its editors had high aspirations that could not under the circumstances come to fruition and sustain high standards for the long term. The subtitle of »Rimon« in its English rendering reads »A Hebrew Illustrated Magazine of Art

71 Note especially the grave opposition to »Rimon-Milgroim« expressed by the editors and supporters of the Yiddish periodical »Khalyastre«, as described by Seth Wolitz: *Die Khalyastre: The Yiddish Modernist Movement in Poland. An Overview*. In: *Yiddish* 4(3), 1981, pp. 5–19.

72 »Weder der hebräische Rimon, noch der jiddische Milgroim sind Partei- oder Cliquenorgane.« Wischnitzer (*Eine Selbst-Anzeige*, note 26), p. 96.

73 The course of events proved radicalism, too, to be wrong. The stern ideology of the propagators of »Khalyastre«, to mention one example, was inapt for its time, as described by Seth L. Wolitz: *Between Folk and Freedom: the Failure of the Yiddish Modernist Movement in Poland*. In: *Yiddish* 8(1), 1991, pp. 25–51.

and Letters«, further stating that »The Magazine is published bimonthly in the format of the present issue. It will embrace the study, both retrospective and contemporary, of art in all its manifestations – painting, sculpture, music, theatre. Special attention will be devoted to the artistic production of the Jews in the present and past. Each number will contain some 25–30 colored and black and white illustrations. The literary section includes fiction, poetry, and critical and philosophical essays«. ⁷⁴ The subtitle of »Milgroim« is »A Yiddish Illustrated Magazine of Arts and Letters.« Written below the subtitle, the following inscription is found: »The Magazine is of the same size and character as RIMON, but differs in literary content.«

These two inscriptions, too often overlooked, represent the standards that the editors aspired to maintain, and the scope and range of unfulfilled promises that hampered the publication from the beginning. While it was the stated intention of its editors to publish it on a bimonthly basis, alone the paucity of material submitted for publication must have doomed both »Rimon« and »Milgroim« to a mere six issues between 1922 and 1924. ⁷⁵

The existing correspondence in the archive of Mark Wischnitzer can hardly be considered conclusively instructive simply because it represents only a fraction of the vast material that once existed. Hardships and relocations from St. Petersburg to London, Berlin, Paris, and New York via Portugal took their toll on a large part of the documents. Moreover, the Mark Wischnitzer archive, presently kept at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research at the Center for Jewish History in New York, ⁷⁶ contains almost exclusively letters that were addressed to him, and not those that he wrote himself. Moreover, despite his position within the hierarchy of the editorial board of the magazine, potential contributors to »Rimon-Milgroim« often did not approach him, but rather either Rachel

74 A similar text appeared in Hebrew and Yiddish, with slight variations.

75 See also Melfi (note 9), pp. 6–8.

76 File no. 676, box 1. It is not clear what fate befell the archive that was formerly kept by Rachel Wischnitzer in her home in New York. Some of the documents referred to in 1971 by Shlomo Eidelberg: *Zikhronot Nishkakhim* (Forgotten Memories. From the Archive of Dr. Mordekhai Wischnitzer z«l). In: Charles Berlin (ed.): *Studies in Jewish Bibliography History and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev*, New York 1971, pp. 9–11 – Hebrew section are apparently missing from the archive in its present location, at YIVO, New York.

Wischnitzer in her capacity of art editor, or other co-editors whose archives are no longer traceable. Nevertheless, from what we have it is clear that writers, poets, and artists offered contributions for publication to what seemed to them a distinguished, leading *avant-garde* periodical of Jewish arts. While some were already well established in their careers and were acknowledged and acclaimed, others were seeking to make a *début* in their respective careers on its pages. One interesting instance is seen in a letter sent in February of 1925 to the editors of »Rimon« by Simha (Alter) Ben-Zion Gutman – a Hebrew writer and educator who wrote under the pen name *S. Ben Zion*. Already a well known figure in the Hebrew literary scene, he is submitting six of his sonnets for publication instead of the requested novel, while adding a *post scriptum*, in which he introduces his son, the emerging artist Nahum Gutman, adding: »If you permit a father to speak for his own son, I testify that he has a real talent.«⁷⁷ The young artist was then known mainly as a children's illustrator. Making his art known through its inclusion in »Rimon-Milgroim« could have gained him international exposure. This plea is especially surprising in light of the fact that Nahum Gutman himself had already assumed his own contacts with Dr. Wischnitzer earlier on. Paving his way as an artist of Biblical themes he appended two different photos of his sculpture »Job and his Three Friends« for publication, adding that he would like to discuss the possibility to publish additional material with Wischnitzer at his forthcoming visit to Berlin.⁷⁸

Other (potential) contributors needed to promote their cause and insist on having their materials published as per agreement between them and the editors of »Rimon-Milgroim«. Such was the case, for example, with Ari Ibn Zahav (formerly Leo Goldstein), known mainly as a writer and playwright. In a letter addressed to Dr. Wischnitzer from the fall of 1923 he complains that he had sent his own painting entitled »The Last Day« for the third volume of »Rimon«. Disappointed that the painting

77 The letter is found in the archive of Mark Wischnitzer at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research at the Center for Jewish History in New York, file no. 676, box 1, mentioned above.

78 The letter, also kept at YIVO, *loc. cit.*, is dated 29 April 1922. Gutman further mentioned that he has made illustrations for the »Book of Job«, the »Passover Haggadah« and parts of the Bible, and has just finished printing some sketches from Eretz Israel, obviously meant to arouse the interest of the editors of »Rimon-Milgroim« in his artistic achievements.

was not reproduced, he demanded that it be returned to him immediately.

The letters of the Czech-Austrian poet Jiří Mordecai Dov Langer,⁷⁹ show a similar dissatisfaction in light of vague promises made by Mark Wischnitzer regarding the publication of Langer's poetry in »Rimon-Milgroim«. His growing impatience with Wischnitzer's conduct is apparent from his letters, dating between spring of 1922 and winter 1923.⁸⁰ It seems that the two could not come to terms on the nature of their collaboration. Wischnitzer was probably interested in promoting the journal in Prague by taking advantage of Langer's good offices and connections, while Langer wanted his poetry to be acknowledged and published. After being informed about the paucity of Hebrew readers in Prague, Wischnitzer's inclination to publish Langer's work may very well have diminished.

Was it mere mismanagement on the part of the editor(s) of »Rimon-Milgroim«, or was it the failure to balance purely artistic and literary evaluation with a more basic need to publish material that would benefit the Rimon Publishing House? Based on still visible stones in the mosaic, it seems that it was a combination of the two.

The circumstances surrounding the writings by Israel Vaxer, who passed away in 1919, are exemplary. In a series of letters, his brother Menashe Vaxer, then serving as Director of the Hebrew High School »Tarbut« in Rishkani, Region of Belz (Bessarabia), attempted to have some tales and other material published from the bequest of the late author in »Rimon-Milgroim«. In his first letter, dated October 12, 1922 and addressed to the editors Wischnitzer and Krupnik, he refers »our poet Bialik« as promoter of Vaxer's literary contribution – an implication that is reinforced in later correspondence from August 28, 1923, in which he refers to Bialik as »custodian« or »trustee« of Israel Vaxer's writings.⁸¹ Finally, two of Vaxer's works were published in »Rimon«

79 Prague, 1894–Tel Aviv 1943.

80 The correspondence was published by Eidelberg (Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook, 42), p. 10. Other letters discussed in this article have no bearing upon the issue of this paper.

81 טפירטופא in the Hebrew original. YIVO, loc. cit. Bialik valued the work of the young writer greatly and dedicated an essay in his memory to volume 3 of Rimon: On the Posthumous Work of Israel Wachser. In: Rimon 3, 1923, pp. 33–34, with two tales by Vaxer in Hebrew translation, 35–38, appended to it.

volume 3 through the good offices of Bialik, who wrote an obituary and appraisal of the work entitled »The martyr Yisrael Vaxer. A Letter to the Editorial Board«. ⁸²

On the technical-financial level, Menashe Vaxer requested in his letter of October 12, 1922, four copies of each issue of »Rimon-Milgroim« that would include his brother's works for his siblings in Russia and Ukraine. When he subsequently learned that 2 legends by his late brother were printed in volume 3 of the magazine, he addressed a further letter on April 10, 1923, to the editors demanding that this agreement be honored, further inquiring about a honorarium that was still owed to him. In his last extant letter to Dr. Wischnitzer, dated September 6, 1923, Menashe Vaxer gave his permission to have additional writings of his late brother published in Yiddish by the Rimon Publishing House, stipulating that it be printed in »a beautiful illustrated edition« to be published as soon as possible, and that 15% of the revenue of the book be sent to him. ⁸³

Regarding art history »Rimon-Milgrom« suffered from quite a different problem, namely technical language issues. Even though Jewish art was making its hesitant debut as a field of academic research, »there were no Hebrew or Yiddish writers in the field of art«. ⁸⁴ While this statement was not fully accurate, as Lissitzky, Berlewi and Sukenik submitted their papers in Yiddish, it was true for Rachel Wischnitzer herself, who did not write in either Hebrew or Yiddish but German. Hers and other contributions had to be translated from either Russian or German, thereby adding cost to the production of each volume of the journal.

Other issues may have also been regarded as problematic in the eyes of at least one segment of the readership of »Rimon-Milgroim«. While generally appreciating contemporary creators of Jewish visual art, it was Wischnitzer who determined the artistic value of the artists represented. In a survey of the themes highlighted by »Rimon-Milgroim«, she mentions a handful of artists whose works are represented in it. Naming »Israels, Liebermann, Struck, H. Glicenstein, Emanuele Glicenstein, Marc Chagall, Altmann, Rybak, Band, Ludwig Meidner, Lisicki, Rahel Szalit-Marcus«, one is struck by the total omission of the artistic scene

82 This appeared on pp. 34–35, with Vaxer's posthumous contributions, selected by Bialik and possibly also in his translation into Hebrew, on pp. 35–36 and 37–38.

83 YIVO, loc. cit. Regarding the publication of a translation of some works into Hebrew, he once again proposed that Wischnitzer approach Bialik.

84 Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5), p. 7.

outside the central- and east-European realm, such as the United States or *Eretz Israel*.⁸⁵ By then, Hermann Struck had already immigrated to Palestine and was to become one of the teachers at the Bezalel School in Jerusalem.⁸⁶ The emerging scene of Jewish arts and crafts in *Eretz Israel* was also totally overlooked, even though Wischnitzer herself was an avid advocate of folk art. True, neither the »Old Yishuv« in *Eretz Israel* nor leaders of the Zionist movement agreed as to the importance and contribution of the Bezalel School for arts and crafts, established by Boris Schatz in Jerusalem in 1906, but it certainly deserved public discussion within »Rimon-Milgroim«. Was it, once again, a deliberate decision not to take a stand on controversial issues, as was choosing both Yiddish and Hebrew for the publication? Were those who regarded the attempt to re-invent Jewish art and the quest for creating Jewish folk-art in *Eretz Israel*, promoted by the Zionist Movement, offended by the total lack of regard of this phenomenon? Although this may well have been an editorial consideration, Wischnitzer, the art-historian, expressed downright contempt for the outdated art of Boris Schatz. »We did not publish Boris Schatz. He was of the Antokolski generation, and he did not even have real talent.«⁸⁷ In a patronizing, severely critical tone, she commented on the new scene of Jewish art reborn in *Eretz Israel* as inapt and »provincial«, still in the shadows of the past century: »It was no art for the twentieth century... We were so much more advanced.«⁸⁸

Indeed, the art-historical profile of »Rimon-Milgroim« was not only subjective – as might be expected in any case – but also too diverse to be of serious significance. Once again, as in the language dispute, trying to please almost everybody's artistic understanding was doomed to failure. It was clear from the onset that the editors' wish to cater to all artistic preferences, – not to mention a myriad of ideologies – would be met with severe criticism. Already the first issue of *Milgroim* provoked fierce protest for focusing on an elitist, alienated representation of Jewish art of the past rather than the authentic, indigenous living art of Eastern Europe.⁸⁹

85 Wischnitzer (Eine Selbst-Anzeige, note 26), p. 95.

86 Gylia Gerda Schmidt: *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress 1901. Heralds of a New Age*. Syracuse, NY 2003, pp. 85–119.

87 Wischnitzer 1979 (note 25), p. 7.

88 Interview with David G. Roskies, Fall 1997, quoted by Melfi (note 9), p. 228.

89 Marten-Finnis, Dukhan (note 14), p. 231. The authors go as far as to evaluate »Milgroim« as »a rupture in the evolution of ›organic‹ shtetl-based Jewish culture«.

It is true on the other hand, as Susanne Marten-Finnis and Igor Dukhan have observed, that »Milgroym« followed up on the developments of nineteenth and twentieth century European art, thereby establishing a broad context for a new Jewish art.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Rimon-Milgroim's emphasis on the subjective definition of a »new Jewish Art«, led by Rachel Wischnitzer's editorial appraisals and preferences, were vague, to say the least, and surely not adequately in accord with contemporary trends in art historical criticism. Offering contributions on medieval illuminated manuscripts and Jewish iconography did not serve the purpose of advancing a new vocabulary of the modern Jewish artist or promoting it. True *avant-garde* was scant, if at all present: the emphasis was on conventional contemporary Jewish art.⁹¹ Past and present – perhaps even the boundaries – of Jewish visual representation were treated in a hesitating rather than conceptual manner that would have fully complied with a consistently formulated ideological theory.⁹² The revolution in creation of Jewish art in a modern cultural environment, and even more so – the intellectual evaluation of the new phenomena occurring in Jewish visual expression – required more time and reflection. Once the turbulent waters were calmed, new paths could be sought and found.

Competition for potential customers of Jewish magazines in the one language or the other may have been more pronounced in Berlin than elsewhere, further threatening the success and survival of »Rimon-Milgroim«.⁹³ In the second and third decades of the twentieth century, nearly 30 Yiddish journals were published in Berlin on a regular basis, seven

90 Marten-Finnis and Dukhan (note 14), p. 236.

91 This observation is critically summarized in the words of Arthur Tilo Alt: Ambivalence toward Modernism: The Yiddish Avant-Garde and Its Manifestoes. In: Yiddish 8(1), 1991, p. 33, namely: »To call Milgroim modern is safe, to call it truly avant-gardistic is problematic«.

92 Regarding Rachel Wischnitzer's book: *Symbole und Gestalten der jüdischen Kunst*, published in Berlin in 1935, Eja Frojmovic correctly articulates: »*Gestalten und Symbole* (sic!) is in my view colored by the traditionalist and authenticist aspects of the expressionist aesthetic, with its paradoxical modernist rejection of modernity.« The same can be said about the earlier editorial choices Wischnitzer made as art editor of »Rimon-Milgroim«. See Frojmovic (note 4), p. 30.

93 Notably, 107 publications were issued in Yiddish in Berlin in that period in the field of Belles lettres, 65 translations, and 19 on art and music, with an additional range of other themes represented as well. See Levine (note 7), Appendix A. Table 2, p. 97.

94 Marion Neiss: *Presse im Transit. Jiddische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften in Berlin*

of which had literary and artistic supplements.⁹⁴ Still one more required originality and a clear message to survive. It may well be that by trying to reach out to an audience that was perhaps too large, of both Hebraicists and Yiddishists, and by disregarding the differences in their cultural goals and interests vis-à-vis the strife over the revival of the Hebrew language in Cultural Zionist ideology, was instrumental in the failure of »Rimon-Milgroim«. This was not only about language;⁹⁵ it was about Jewish culture and the separate cultural heritages of the »Western Jews« (*Westjuden*) and the »Eastern Jews« (*Ostjuden*), about tradition versus the *moderna* (or assimilation), and about self-awareness of the Jews in a new, emancipated and enlightened world, and about the definition of new horizons of the Jewish cultural creativity.⁹⁶

Final Remarks

In the history of Jewish periodicals, »Rimon-Milgroim« was, indeed, a »historically futuristic«,⁹⁷ albeit short-lived venture. Perhaps the best summary of its shortcomings came from the stylus of one of its main propagators, Rachel Wischnitzer herself. »What remains is the remembrance of things past, of a lost art, its mysticism and its humor, and its power to inspire.«⁹⁸ She did not, however, dwell emotionally on this destruction of a dream she was part of; she immediately returned to her occupations as a scholar of architectural history and her involvement in the field of Jewish art. Surprisingly so, since conceiving such a daring venture and making »Rimon-Milgroim« a reality as well as contributing so constructively and in so many ways to its success would have sorely dis-

von 1919–1925 (=Dokumente, Texte, Materialien, 44). Berlin 2002, p. 14.

95 See further Delphine Bechtel: *La guerre des langues entre l'hébreu et le yiddish: l'exclusion de la langue yiddish de la haskalah à l'État d'Israël*. In: *Plurielles* 7, 1998–1999, pp. 26–46

96 The dichotomy between the parties involved in this cultural debate was described by Delphine Bechtel: *Transferts culturels entre »Ostjuden« et »Westjuden«: les intellectuels juifs allemands et la culture yiddish 1897–1930*. In: Esther Benbassa (ed.): *Transmission et passages en monde juif*. Paris 1997, pp. 451–469.

97 To use Marten-Finnis and Dukhan's definition (note 14), p. 225.

98 Wischnitzer (*The Wise Men of Worms*, note 37), p. 12.

99 Narkiss (*Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne*, note 5), p. 19.

appointed her. A partial explanation might have to do with the personal circumstances of the Wischnitzers in those years. As Narkiss states, »The end of the publication of »Rimon« did not affect them financially, since Mark was Secretary General of the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*; [and] Rachel did not have to work in an office, or do housework... and could pursue her research, which resulted in many articles.«⁹⁹ It seems, though, that such a statement, in which the financial takes precedence over the emotional, is unjust and probably misleading. Rachel Wischnitzer was deeply saddened by the discontinuation of »Rimon-Milgroim«, which she and Mark had cherished.¹⁰⁰

In the title of an essay on Rachel Wischnitzer, published in »The New York Jewish Week« in 1981, Steven Schnur seems to portray Rachel Wischnitzer as a pioneer in Jewish art scholarship. The essay, entitled »Rachel Wischnitzer, 96, Has Widened Definition of Jewish Art Enormously«, starts with the following statement: »Rachel Wischnitzer was born at a time when virtually no art historian considered Jewish art a legitimate field of study.« Schnur states further: »Largely responsible for this transformation, Prof. Wischnitzer elevated the study of Jewish art through her seminal works on synagogue architecture, and illuminated Hebrew manuscripts and ancient Jewish synagogue frescoes.« »Yet, he continues, after nearly a century of scholarly work she insists that there is no such thing as Jewish art.«¹⁰¹

100 As reported by Narkiss (Rachel Wischnitzer, Doyenne, note 5), pp. 23, the 30th anniversary of »Rimon-Milgroim« was celebrated in the present of Rachel and Mark Wischnitzer in an event organized by Stephen Kayser.

101 Steven Schnur: Rachel Wischnitzer, 96, has widened definition of Jewish art enormously. In: The New York Jewish Week (Manhattan edition), 194(10), Aug. 2, 1981, p. 14.

Naomi Feuchtwanger, Den Samen des Granatapfels säen:
Die Zeitschrift »Rimon-Milgroim« und ihre Rolle in der
jüdischen Kunstgeschichte

In den frühen 1920er Jahren spielte Berlin eine wichtige Rolle als Bühne jüdischer Emigrantenkultur. Die florierende lokale Kulturszene lockte viele hebräisch- und jiddischsprachige Autoren an, die aus Osteuropa und Israel nach Berlin kamen. Berlin wurde für kürzer oder länger Heimat für Autoren wie Bialik, Tchernicovsky, David Frishman, Uri Zvi Greenberg und viele mehr. Andere suchten in Berlin einen Ort, um hebräische und jiddische Zeitschriften zu publizieren und machten die Stadt zu einem kurzlebigen aber pulsierenden Mikrokosmos jiddischer wie russischer Verlagstätigkeit.

Eine dieser Publikationen beschäftigte sich mit jüdischer Kunst und Kultur. Die Zeitschrift, die unter dem Namen »Milgroim« in einer jiddischen und »Rimon« in einer hebräischen Version erschien, widmete sich der Kunst in allen ihren Ausdrucksformen: Malerei, Bildhauerei, Musik und Theater. »Besondere Aufmerksamkeit soll von Juden produzierten Kunstwerken in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart gewidmet werden«, so die ausdrückliche Zielsetzung des Periodikums, dessen Herausgeber Mark Vischnitzer and M. Kleinman sowie die Kunsthistorikerin Rachel Vishnitzer-Bernshṭain für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichneten. Die Zeitschrift enthielt Beiträge verschiedener Autoren, von denen einige erst am Anfang ihrer künstlerischen und literarischen Karriere standen, wie El Lissitzky, Natan Altman, Marc Chagall und andere.

»Milgroim« und »Rimon« erschien von 1922 bis 1924 in nur sechs Nummern. Vor allem ihre Beiträge zur jüdischen Kunst waren wegweisend, manche verweisen zudem auf Material, das heute nicht mehr existiert. Der Beitrag untersucht den ideologischen Hintergrund, der zur Gründung der Zeitschrift führte und die Ursachen für ihre Einstellung.

