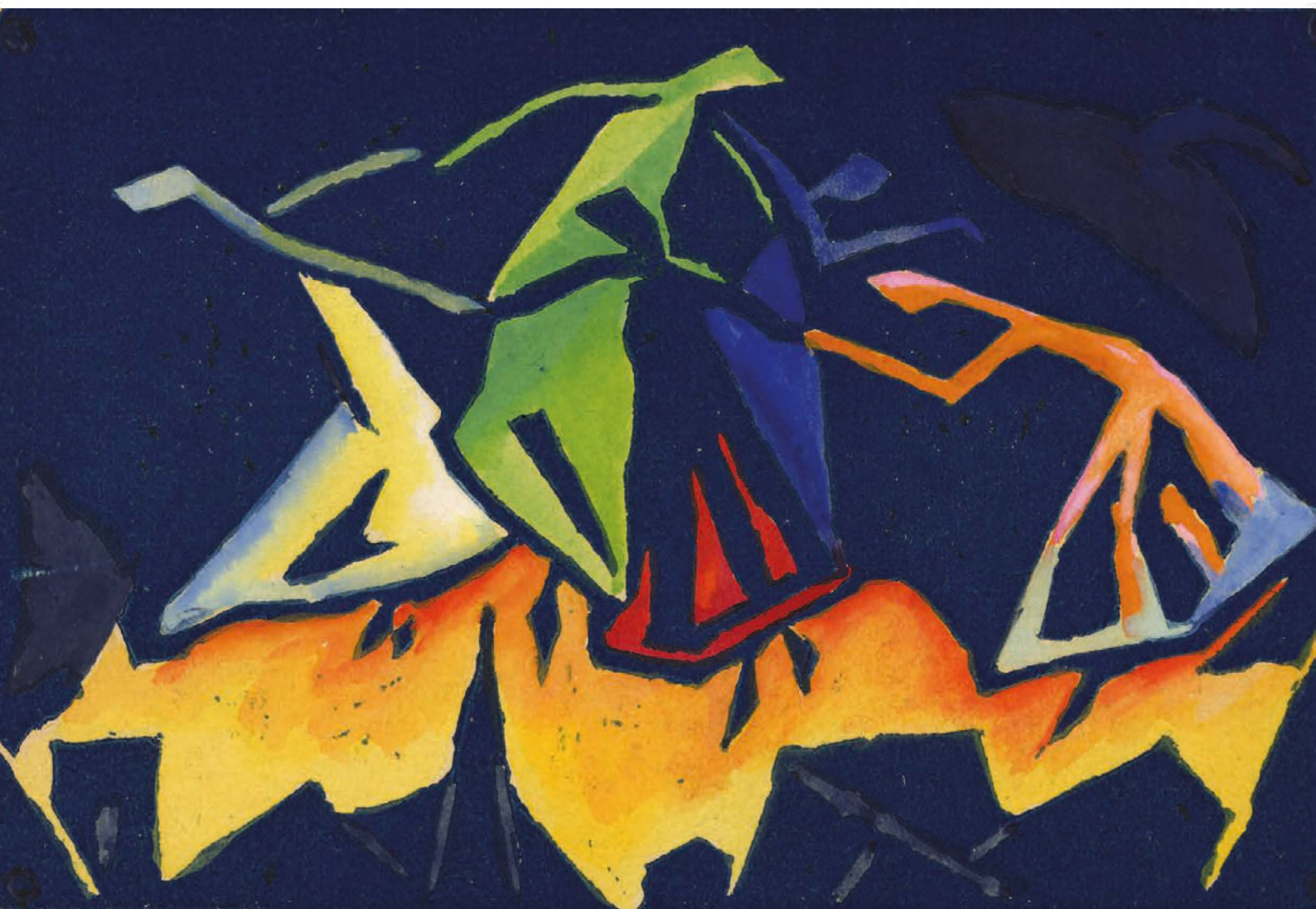


“Enchanted we whirl in the dance of youth”

The Jewish avant-garde in Łódź
and the artist books of Farlag Achrid, 1921

Edited by
Dariusz Dekiert, Irmina Gadowska
and Krystyna Radziszewska

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Foreword

The phenomenon of the interwar avant-garde in Łódź immediately brings to mind the achievements of Władysław Strzemiński: painter, educator, and author of the 1928 book, *Unizm w malarstwie* (Unism in Painting) and co-author (along with Katarzyna Kobro) of the 1931 treatise, *Kompozycja przestrzeni, obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego* (Composing space: calculating space-time rhythms).

Strzemiński's artistic development was influenced by a variety of factors, including his studies at SVOMAS (Svobodniye Gosudarstvenniye Khudozhestvenniye Masterskiye, Free State Art Studios) in Moscow, his acquaintance with Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin, and artists from UNOVIS (Utverditeli Novovo Iskusstva, Champions of the New Art), and his work at the Institute of Fine Arts in Minsk. At the beginning of the 1920s, Strzemiński moved to Wilno (Vilnius), where in 1923, along with Vytautas Kairiūkštis, he organized the Exhibition of New Art, an important catalyst for the development of the Polish constructivist avant-garde. After settling in Łódź in 1931, he brought together a group of painters and sculptors who, though they represented different views and practiced different styles, clearly broke with turn-of-the-cen-

tury naturalism and symbolism, turning instead towards expressionism, futurism, new objectivity or abstractionism.

Contrary to popular belief, Strzemiński's progressive and universalist works do not mark the actual beginnings of the Łódź avant-garde. In 1921, Karol Hiller returned to his hometown from Moscow and Kiev. He was one of the first local promoters of new trends. A friend of Witold Wandur-ski, Przecław Smolik, and a group of Jewish artists, in the interwar period he was an important figure shaping the culture of Łódź. Three years earlier, in the spring and late autumn of 1918, the Association of Artists and Supporters of the Fine Arts (Stowarzyszenie Artystów i Zwolenników Sztuk Pięknych) organized two large-scale exhibitions featuring local artists, most of whom were Jews.¹ We know little about the works on display; only their titles and the names of the painters were given in the press, without detailed descriptions. The anonymous authors of the notes published in Łódź journals observed that the works were innovative, but their attitude to these young artists was ambivalent. Negative statements included that their works were careless, only used a handful of impure colors, or were sloppy and casual.² The fact that one acrimonious critic from

1 Pioneering research on the Łódź Jewish artistic milieu has been carried out by Jerzy Malinowski, whose publications, based on in-depth research into archival and press sources, became the point of departure for successive generations of scholars, see: J. Malinowski, *Grupa „Jung Idysz” i żydowskie środowisko „nowej sztuki” w Polsce 1918–1923*, Warszawa 1987; J. Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów Polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 2000.

2 “Wystawa sztuk pięknych,” *Głos Polski* 1919, no. 16, p. 4.

Nowy Kurier Łódzki³ applied the hurtful title of “daubers” to the artists may indicate that they were inspired by new currents that had not yet found acclaim among contemporary audiences. The second of the two exhibitions featured works by Yankl Adler from Tuszyn: *The Rabbi’s Last Hour*, *Baal Shem and the Buddha*, and *Real Christianity and the pogrom victim*. These original compositions, attesting to the artist’s fascination with El Greco and alluding to the works of Ludwig Meidner, Jacob Steinhardt, and the German Expressionists whom Adler may have encountered during his stay in Germany, aroused the greatest interest from the public. Adler painted with fluid brushstrokes, employing dark, warm colors which he sometimes juxtaposed with deep blues and greens. When recalling a visit to the artist’s studio, Franz Wilhelm Seiwert wrote: “I remember large canvases with unreal, bizarre people [...]. That whole sparkling blue-gold mystique and infinitely dissolving figures.”⁴ During the course of the autumn-winter exhibition, Moshe Broderzon – “the Don Quixote of romanticism”, a “psalmist foretelling the catastrophic end of the world of the old values”⁵, and an outstanding poet and graphic artist who, like Strzemiński, had been shaped by the revolution and the Russian avant-garde – returned to Łódź from Moscow. In the early 1920s, his poetry, like Adler’s paintings, pointed the way for the emergent “new art” community in Łódź.

In 1919, Moshe Broderzon, Yankl Adler, Yitshak Katzenelson, and Marek Szwarc founded Yung Yidish, the first literary and artistic group bringing together Jewish poets and visual artists whose program emphasized their “clear, specific cultural identity”.⁶

Their work expressed the idea of new Jewish art and poetry, which was an important element in the process of constructing a national culture based on local traditions of the Yiddish language and a specific, original style inspired by the folklore of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. This idea stood in opposition to the previously dominant Zionist concept of returning to the “promised land” of Israel. Hence the name of the group – “Yung Yidish” – referred to terms known from the history of literature and art (e.g., “Młoda Polska” [Young Poland]), expressing the opposition between the generations of the young (*di Junge*) and the “old”, and asserted the domination of Yiddish over the Hebrew language. Liberated from the orthodox religion and life in the ghetto, Jewish artists accepted the vision of the modern world, wanting to join the rapid current of changes that was shaping the European culture of the interwar period. For them, Yiddish became a link between young Jewish artistic circles in Paris (Mark Chagall), Berlin (Ludwig Meidner, Jacob Steinhardt), Moscow (El Lissitzky), Kiev (Issachar Ber Ryback), New York, Warsaw, and Łódź.

In 1919–1920 three issues (no. 1–6) of *Yung-Yidish* magazine were published.⁷ They

3 M. Skielrz, “Sztuka łódzka,” *Nowy Kurier Łódzki* 1918, no. 91, p. 2.

4 F.W. Seiwert, “Do Jankiela Adlera,” in: *Jankel Adler 1895–1949*, exhibition catalog, eds U. Krempel, K. Thomas, Düsseldorf–Tel Aviv–Łódź–Köln 1985, p. 40.

5 M. Kanfer, “M. Broderzon. (W dwudziestolecie twórczości),” *Miesięcznik żydowski* 1934, no. 2, p. 181.

6 P. Słodkowski, “Inne obrazy przeszłości. Uwagi o destabilizacji dyskursu polskiej historii sztuki w najnowszych wystawach muzealnych,” *Widok. Teorie i Praktyki Kultury Wizualnej* 2019, no. 25, <https://www.pismowidok.org/pl/archiwum/2019/25-historia-obecna/inne-obrazy-przeszlosci> (accessed: 07.05.2023).

7 The first two issues (no. 1) and (no. 2–3) were published in the spring of 1919. The last issue (no. 4–6) was probably prepared in 1919, but it was not published until 1920 (with the date 1919)

contained “poems in words and images” by poets Broderzon, Katzenelson, Hershele Danilevich, Hersh Leib Zhitnitski, Yeheskel Moshe Nayman, Elimelekh Shmulevich, Uri Zvi Grinberg, David Zitman, Moshe Nadir, Chaim Leib Fox, Israel Shturm, Chaim Krul, and graphic artists Yankl Adler, Henekh Bartshinski, Yitshak Brauner, Marek Szwarc, Pola Lindenfeld, and Shloyme Blat.⁸ The diversity of texts and images, as well as the sheer number of authors, shows that Yung Yidish was seen more as a platform for discussion, for presenting one’s achievements and exchanging ideas, rather than an ideologically consistent group. Aside from the expressionist poems of Broderzon and Zitman, *Yung-Yidish* published the poetry of Danilevich, which was based on traditional folk motifs, as well as that of Katzenelson, who was involved with the Hebrew renewal movement. The group’s manifesto, printed in the second issue of *Yung-Yidish*, indicated many sources of inspiration for the poetry and the art, emphasizing the significance of truth and spirituality as the supreme artistic categories.⁹ The characteristic trait shared by the artists gathered around Broderzon was the impulse to collaborate with fellow artists representing different branches, as evidenced (aside from the publications mentioned) by initiatives such as the Great Evening of Young Poetry, held on 8 January 1920 in the Grand Hotel in Łódź. The event featured the painters Adler and Szwarc, poets Broderzon and Mieczysław Braunstein (Braun), and writers and journalists Eli Borukhin, Josef Okno, M. Marzyciel, and

others.¹⁰ According to Janusz Zagrodzki, the works of artists belonging to Yung Yidish “combined new art, defined as ‘expressionism,’ with spiritual experience, with a profound reaction to old art, a reverence for the Gothic, the Renaissance masters, El Greco, with reaching beneath the surface of external experiences, with a search – as Broderzon put it – for the ‘sacred breath of eternity.’”¹¹ By 1921, several publications had appeared under the Yung Yidish label, including illustrated volumes of poetry and plays by Broderzon, Krul, and Katzenelson, as well as literary magazines like *Heftn far literatur und kunst* (Literary and Artistic Journal), *S’feld* (The Field) and *Gezangen* (Chants).

The three poetry volumes printed in 1921 by the publishing house Achrid – David Zitman’s *Oyf vaytkaytn krayznde fal ikh* (Upon Revolving Distances I Fall), Chaim Krul’s *Himlen in opgrunt* (Skies in the Abyss) and Rahel Lipstein’s *Zwischen dem Abend- und Morgenrot* (Between Dusk and Dawn) – can also be traced to the Yung Yidish circle. The poems, in German and Yiddish, were given unique illustrations by Ida Brauner, Esther Carp and Dina Matus. Achrid publications also contained the first defiant female voice in avant-garde Polish Jewish poetry and art, a movement previously dominated by men (even in expressionist circles). Several years later, Broderzon himself recalled the period as follows: “The young talents who flocked to Lodz in that period from far-flung nests carried along on their wings fresh breezes of poetry, enthusiasm and youthful zeal. This invasion of young poets and writers created a

8 In 2019 a reprint of three issues of the magazine appeared with a translation into Polish and English and a short introduction as part of the interdisciplinary art project *Ekspresje Wolności. Bunt i Jung Idysz – wystawa której nie było...* at Muzeum Miasta Łodzi (Museum of the City of Łódź), see: יונג-ידיש / *Jung-Idisz / Yung-Yidish / 1919*, eds I. Gadowska, A. Klimczak, T. Śmiechowska, Łódź 2019.

9 *Yung-Yidish* 1919, no. 2–3, p. 2 (np).

10 *Głos Polski* 1920, no. 3, p. 5.

11 J. Zagrodzki, “Grupa Jung Idysz w poszukiwaniu sztuki uniwersalnej,” in: יונג-ידיש / *Jung-Idisz / Yung-Yidish...*, p. 29.

truly warbling bird wedding.”¹² This quote is a great illustration of the subsequent lives of those who published their works with this the publishing house or were associated with the group, whose activity gradually declined after 1920 – the vast majority emigrated from Poland, settling in the United States, Germany, France, or Israel. Only a handful remained behind in Łódź, including Broderzon, Matus, and Katzenelson.

The book that we are bringing the reader is part of the series *Łódzkie Judaica* (Judaica of Łódź) which aims to discover and popularize the work of Jewish artists who lived in Łódź up until the outbreak of World War II. Its publication has been possible thanks to funding from the National Program for the Development of the Humanities via grant *The Łódź Yiddish Avant-Garde: A Critical Edition of the Sources*.

The book includes facsimiles of the original publications together with translations of the poetry into English, essays by Krystyna Radziszewska, Dariusz Dekiert, Irmina Gadowska, Aneta Pawłowska, Piotr Rypson and David Mazower as well as biographies of poets and graphic artists. The reproductions of the books were made on the basis of preserved copies kept in the Library of Congress of the United States and

in private collections.¹³ D. Zitman, I. Brauner, *Oyf vaytkaytn krayznde fal ikh* – no. 86; Ch. Krul, E. Carp, *Himlen in opgrunt* – no. 2; R. Lipstein, D. Matus, *Zwischen dem Abend- und Morgenrot* – no. 34.

The creation of this book would not have been possible without the cooperation and support of many people from Poland and abroad. Thanks are due to Piotr Rypson of the Jewish Historical Institute for his kind, professional comments and help in obtaining scans of the original volumes from the Library of Congress of the United States. Thanks to Ann Brener, Paul Hogroian, Sharon Horowitz, and Michael North representing Library of Congress of the United States; we have obtained the excellent quality reproductions used in this publication. We are also grateful to David Mazower of the Yiddish Book Center in Boston, who inspired us and helped us at all stages of our work. We would like to thank Professor Jerzy Malinowski from the Polish Institute of World Art Studies, an outstanding expert, and popularizer of research on the Jewish avant-garde in Łódź, Fabien Bouglé and Ewa Bobrowska for their reviews and valuable tips. The book would not have been published without the support of the estates of the copyright owners, especially Mr. Eliezer Gilboa – Esther Carp’s nephew.

Łódź, July 2023

Dariusz Dekiert, Irmina Gadowska, Krystyna Radziszewska

12 L. Baumberg, “Mojżesz Broderzon o literackim art. życiu Łodzi,” *Nasza Opinia* 1935, no. 16, p. 5.

13 See the description of all the known copies, in the text by David Mazower, p. 52–54.

Jewish “Young Art” in Łódź

Dariusz Dekiert, Krystyna Radziszewska

The Holocaust and the political situation after World War II caused the rich cultural heritage of the Jews of Łódź to gradually fade from collective memory, just like the Yiddish language in which books and daily newspapers had been published until 1939, and which was spoken by most of the city’s Jewish residents.

Until the end of the 1990s, researchers of the history of Łódź had only, for the most part, looked at the contribution of Jewish entrepreneurs to the city’s economic and social development, marginalizing the significance of culture and art-related issues. Perhaps this was because the dynamic development of “Polish Manchester” was not synonymous with a vibrant artistic life. According to Yehiel Yeshayahu Trunk, Łódź initially did not have a “conscious, declared view on its own cultural activities. As in other areas, it lacked Warsaw’s traditions and its non-judgmental calm. Łódź had always lived both with panache and in a state of lethargy.”¹ The situation changed towards the end of World War I, and the city began to play an increasingly important role in the development of new art and literature created, among others, by members of the Jewish community. The path of the avant-garde was ushered through popular culture. The work of the young artists was born in variety theatres and cinemas, in the bustling streets and

the old town market square. It drew inspiration from the local folklore and gaudy shop signs. In the 1920s, Łódź became a leading centre not only of industry, but also of progressive art.

Only seven decades earlier, Oskar Flatt, a tsarist official and the author of the first monograph devoted to Łódź, described it as a “wretched little town” surrounded on all sides by “virgin forests.”² For more than three hundred years nothing important happened there – nothing that would have spurred a chronicler to pick up his pen. Then the secularisation of bishops’ estates by the Prussian authorities in 1806 made Łódź a government town, with trade and crafts now playing a key role. A decree from 1820 designated several of the government cities – Łódź included – as factory settlements. Through an informed migration policy, skilled craftsmen were brought in from Germany in order to lay the foundations of the textile industry. This fact was crucial for the further development of the city. When, as a result of the third partition of Poland, Łódź came under Russian rule, favourable macro-economic conditions – the availability of a huge market and access to sources of cotton, grown in Central Asia controlled by the tsarist empire – led to rapid development. Thanks to the influx of settlers from the German lands, Jews from the western

1 J. J. Trunk, *Pojłn. Obrazy i wspomnienia z Łodzi*, Łódź 1997, p. 83.

2 O. Flatt, *Opis miasta Łodzi pod względem historycznym, statystycznym i przemysłowym*, Warszawa 1853, quotation from: reprint: Łódź 2002, p. 9.

borderlands of the Kingdom of Poland, and enfranchised Polish peasants, the population grew at an extraordinary pace: from 768 people in 1820 to approximately 670,000 on the eve of World War II. In other words, over the course of a century, the number of inhabitants increased nearly 600-fold, which is an excellent illustration of the pace of industrialization.

In order to properly understand how the Jews co-shaped the literary culture of Łódź, one should keep in mind that the latter developed in a multicultural city, inhabited by Poles, Germans and Russians. When examining participation in the creation and consumption of cultural goods, it is important to keep in mind the differentiation of local society in terms of nationality, class, and occupation. As a thriving industrial city, Łódź had a diverse ethnic structure from the very beginning. But more importantly, the proportion of each nationality in its total population was unique and unusual when compared with other cities in the Kingdom of Poland. The transformation of an area inhabited by Poles and a small number of Jews before 1820 resulted in Germans becoming the dominant group. The largest increase in the German population occurred in 1836. At the time, it numbered 6,500 people, accounting for 70% of all citizens. But in the following years and decades, the share of Germans in the citizenry of Łódź decreased systematically, as the influx of new settlers decelerated; as a matter of fact, from the 1880s the largest immigrant group were Poles, who gradually became the dominant national group. Jews were a very rapidly growing group of settlers, although their immigration was subject to certain administrative restrictions. In 1825, a decree was issued establishing a special quarter in Łódź where followers

of Judaism could legally reside. As of 1 July 1827, all Jews were obligated to move there; only some groups were exempted.³ The new provisions, however, applied only to certain parts of the city, and in particular the environs of its main road – Piotrkowska Street. For example, they did not encompass the district of Bałuty, which was densely populated and formally remained outside the municipal borders until the end of World War I. The quarter, frequently expanded, ceased to exist in 1861, when the tsar issued an ukase abolishing Jewish quarters.

Jewish settlers came from towns and villages in the Kingdom of Poland, and also from Lithuania. The latter, known as Litvaks because of their origin, arrived in especially large numbers following the publication of the ukase of 1882, which forced them to leave the western governorates of the Russian Empire. They were also fleeing the increasingly frequent pogroms. The number of Jewish residents increased from 6,593 in 1865 to 110,178 in 1914, when they accounted for 23.1% of the city's population; by 1939, they accounted for 34.3%.⁴ Such a high growth rate could not have occurred naturally and was in fact the result of the intensification of migrations in the nineteenth century, whereby residents of smaller towns and villages moved to large urban centres.

As regards the professional structure of the inhabitants of Łódź, fundamental changes occurred. Agriculture, so popular in the Kingdom of Poland, quickly became a marginal occupation. Employment in large enterprises increased, and this was closely associated with an increase in the size of the proletariat. According to the census of 1897, 58.2% of salaried employees worked in industry and crafts. But fundamental differences in the percentage of

3 These exemptions have been described at length by O. Flatt, *Opis miasta Łodzi...*, pp. 38–45.

4 See: J.K. Janczak, "Ludność Łodzi przemysłowej 1820–1914," *Acta Universitatis Lodzianensis. Folia Historica* 1982, no. 11, p. 133, table 25.

different nationalities in various occupational sectors were of greater importance. In the case of Jews, viewed as a national group, commerce provided 40.6% of its total means of subsistence, industry and crafts – 37.6%, and work as domestic servants or day labourers – 10.5%. Germans and Jews made up the largest percentage of the richest industrialists and bankers. The Poznańskis, Silbersteins, Rosenblatts, Ossers, Kohns and Jarocińskis were most prominent among the Jewish factory-owning families.

The occupational specificity of Łódź, where the majority of inhabitants toiled in the factories from morning to dusk, the lack of a developed social infrastructure, including institutions of high culture, and the restrictive policies of the Russian partition resulted in a situation where for several decades during the nineteenth century it was mainly popular culture that developed. In workers' houses, courtyards were centres of social and cultural life, where wandering musicians and singers performed operetta arias, songs, and street ballads. The lyrics of these songs and ballads were sometimes printed as brochures and sold during the performances.⁵ Especially during the summer, workers would enjoy themselves and engage in entertainment in the city parks, restaurant gardens, hotels and inns; interestingly, leisure activities would normally be organized by the owners of these facilities. Representatives of the petty bourgeoisie got involved in the activities of amateur theatres, singers' associations, and other cultural and educational institutions. Initially, these functioned in catering establishments, but towards the end of the nineteenth century the majority – for example, the Apollo, Urania, Aquarium, Corso, Colosseum, and

Scala theatres – moved to separate halls and buildings, where audiences could watch cabaret shows. Such performances, comprising satirical and music-hall songs, dances, acrobat feats and juggling acts, normally viewed by the white-collar workers, shop assistants, counting-house clerks and travelling salesmen, were not very popular with the wealthy burghers. Stefan Gorski described the reason for the popularity of the light repertoire thus:

Exhausted by week-long work and tired of having to get up early, the citizen of Łódź has a free evening only on a Saturday or a holiday – so why should he "drudge" at real art, when the light repertoire can provide him with recreation and rest, without having to "think", and laugh with his entire soul. This is a great advantage of entertainment for the residents of Łódź, when, after a lengthy period of nervous intensity, he may for several hours afford not to scheme or calculate, and – most importantly of all – not to exert his mind.⁶

The popularity of cabarets resulted from the demand of viewers for light and care-free amusement. The tastes of more demanding audiences could be satisfied by the Bi-Ba-Bo literary cabaret, established in March 1914 by local writers focused around the satirical weekly *Śmiech*.⁷

The fact that more than half of the residents of Łódź were employed in industry and crafts (more than 60% of Poles, 37.6% of Jews and 73.4% of Germans) had a considerable impact on the consumption of culture. Most forms of entertainment and popular culture were consumed by the upper social strata. Labourers usually worked six days a week from dawn to dusk, and so had little time left for leisure. In the 1880s, the normal working day lasted from 12 to 15 hours. It was only in 1897 that

5 See: W. Pawlak, *Minionych zabaw czar czyli czas wolny i rozrywka w dawnej Łodzi*, Łódź 2001, p. 93.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

7 For more information about Bi-Ba-Bo cabaret and other forms of entertainment, see: J. Dunin, *W Bi-Ba-Bo i gdzie indziej*, Łódź, 1966.

an 11.5 hour working day was introduced, along with regulations protecting children and women from night work.⁸ The situation further improved, albeit slightly, after the Revolution of 1905 – an event of great importance for Łódź – when the working day was shortened to 10 hours. The 8-hour working day was finally introduced by a decree of the Chief of State of newly independent Poland in 1918.

In addition to its typical social achievements, the Revolution of 1905 had a significant impact on the development of the social and cultural awareness of the city's residents, and on how it was perceived by people from outside. Its industrial character and peculiar population structure, based mainly on migrations, made it a sui generis social laboratory, where violent workers' protests focused on issues that were very "modern" – namely, the relationship between labour and capital, the availability and quality of housing and public services, hygiene and living conditions, and the rights of women employed in the factories.⁹ In comparison with the remaining lands of the Kingdom of Poland, which were poorly urbanized and dominated by backward agricultural production, Łódź appeared as a thoroughly progressive city – the scene of immense social change. Although the revolution itself did not bring about significant changes in the living and working conditions of labourers, it served to mould the city as a municipal centre, indeed becoming its "foundational myth". It also marked a turning point in the development of workers' awareness, ultimately leading to the granting of certain civil liberties. Not without significance for the development of culture was the ukase of 24 November 1905, which abolished Rus-

sian preventive censorship. In turn, this brought about major changes in the press market, especially as regarded obtaining permission for the opening of new magazines and newspapers, while the abolition of the ban on performances in Yiddish contributed to the emergence of a Jewish theatre. Significantly, although preventive censorship was replaced by repressive censorship, which consisted in controlling publications after they came out, with the very real threat of confiscation or the imposition of fines, the latter nevertheless significantly facilitated the development of new magazines. Newspapers published in Yiddish made it possible to spread the printed word to the broad masses of the city's Jews. From that moment on, Jewish culture began to develop in earnest.

The Łódź Jewish press at the beginning of the twentieth century

Although Yiddish was the everyday language of the vast majority of Jews living in the Kingdom of Poland, both the authorities and the assimilated strata considered it a contemptible "jargon", which constituted the biggest barrier to the integration of the Jewish community with the rest of society. The literature created in this language was only gaining recognition – internationally and, crucially, among its own users. The attitude towards Yiddish changed after the conference in Czernowitz in 1908, where it was proclaimed one of the national languages of the Jews. From then on, it became the language of artistic expression for successive generations of Jewish artists, and the literature written in Yiddish began to be recognised as a part of world literature. After the death in

8 See: "Przepisy o pracy małoletnich, kobiet i wyrostków w fabrykach i zakładach przemysłowych," *Dziennik Łódzki* 1897, 15 April, p. 1.

9 K. Śmiechowski, "Historyczne dziedzictwo, a tożsamość współczesnej Łodzi. Wyzwania w procesie regeneracji miasta," in: *Przeszłość, teraźniejszość i przyszłość Łodzi*, ed. K. Śmiechowski, vol. 1, Łódź 2022, p. 252.

1915 of the last of the “fathers” of Yiddish literature, Yitshak Leib Peretz, a highly respected and influential personage, who had helped raise the jargon to international status, there followed a period of generational upheaval. The sense of the end of an era, amplified by the events of World War II, caused the writers of the next generation to emphasize their newness and modernity; in consequence, they were soon being described with the adjective “young”. In fact, this trend was the lot not only of Jewish literature, but of most of the world’s literatures – to name but a few the French, German, Polish and Russian – which experienced something more or less similar at the time. A city without tradition, fresh, different from all others – with an emphasis on “youngness” – was eminently suited for all sorts of modernist declarations.

Due to its working-class nature and the associated demand for mass culture, Łódź was not an important centre of printing for quite some time. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, calendars, catalogues, and the reports of various institutions, associations and industrial enterprises were published there. This is how the greatest Łódź printer of the era, Emanuel Hamburski, started his business. He initially engaged in job-printing and the production of exercise books, while at the beginning of the twentieth century he switched to publishing books and the first of the city’s Yiddish newspapers, *Lodzer Togblat*.¹⁰ Even at the start of the twentieth century, the publications of local authors or concerning Łódź were mainly issued in Warsaw, such as the aforementioned work by Oskar Flatt or the books of Jakub

Kaczka (pen name Yankl Morgenstern, Yankl Lerer) – one of the first authors in the city to publish in Yiddish. In the nineteenth century, one of the most important Jewish publishing centres was the nearby township of Piotrków.¹¹ It was there that Moshe Broderzon, the future founder of the avant-garde Yung Yidish group, published his first volume of poetry, titled *Shvartse fliterlekh* (Black spangles), in 1913. Over time Piotrków lost its importance in favour of the capital. In the 1920s, Łódź and Warsaw made up a literary duopoly, with numerous publishing projects carried out jointly, while authors from Łódź had their works published in the magazines of Warsaw and vice versa.

The Yiddish press played a huge role in the development of Jewish literature.¹² Lazar Kahan was a figure of considerable importance on the Łódź publishing market. A participant of the aforementioned conference in Czernowitz, he was an active propagator of Yiddish and a publisher and editor-in-chief of numerous local Jewish press titles which played an important role in the evolution of modern Jewish culture by teaching new concepts and ideas. At the same time, the daily Yiddish press adapted to the tastes of the masses, used a simple and understandable language, and was addressed primarily to middle- and lower-class readers. It was also a commercial project in which proven solutions were utilized, such as attracting readers by means of serialised novels. Improvements in printing technology, mainly the introduction of monotype and linotype, made it possible to publish quality reproductions and to increase the attractiveness of graphic design.¹³

10 L. Olejnik, “Z dziejów prasy żydowskiej w Łodzi w latach 1904–1918,” in: *Dzieje Żydów w Łodzi 1820–1944. Wybrane problemy*, eds W. Puś, S. Liszewski, Łódź 1991, p. 146.

11 D. Warzocha, *Piotrkowskie Judaika*, Łódź 2017, pp. 79–96.

12 Regarding the Łódź Yiddish press, see: K. Radziszewska, “Prasa łódzka w języku jidysz,” in: *Słownik kultury literackiej Łodzi do 1939 r.*, eds K. Badowska et al., Łódź 2022, pp. 286–293.

13 See P. Rypson’s article in the present collection, p. 37.

The first Łódź Jewish newspaper to be published in Yiddish was the satirical *Lodzer Witsblat*. Other titles – *Lodzer Nakhrichten*, *Lodzer Morgnblat*, *Lodzer Folksblat*, *Nayer Folksblat* and *Lodzer Togblat* – appeared successively over the years, and involved nearly all the local authors who wrote in Hebrew and Yiddish. We should stress the special connection between the press and literature. Most of the great creators of Jewish literature, also from outside Łódź, cooperated with the Yiddish papers, and especially with *Lodzer Togblat* which became a “veritable platform for Jewish writers”.¹⁴ In his memoirs, Chaim Leib Fox, a journalist, poet and writer, emphasized that “it will not be a great exaggeration to call *Lodzer Togblat* the breeding ground for Jewish literature and journalism in Łódź. At various times, the newspaper was the place of work – permanent or casual – of almost all of the city’s writers, old and young, and beginners”.¹⁵

Among the authors who cooperated with the Jewish press were both beginners, literally making their first steps, and writers who were already known in the literary milieu. For most of them, publishing their stories, poems and essays in the press was the only way of reaching their readers because book publications were seldom printed then. For example, the first Yiddish poems and prose works of Yitshak Katzenelson – who gained considerable popularity among his contemporaries – can be found in the press. Similarly, Moshe Broderzon, who at the time worked as an accountant at the Grawe silk factory, printed his first texts (among them humorous poems written under the pen name Broder Zinger) in *Lodzer Togblat*. Theatre critics and painters, too, contrib-

uted to the newspaper. Notably, it was the first to publish caricatures by one of the most famous local artists, Arthur Szyk, titled *Lodzer tipn*. Whereas other Jewish artists, such as Miriam Ulinover, Simkha Bunem Shayevich, Yeshayahu Spiegel, Israel Rabon and Josef Zelkowicz, published their works in *Nayer Folksblat*.

The Art Press

The war had a significant impact on the development of Jewish “young art” in Łódź. As a result of the “Battle of Łódź” – one of the largest and bloodiest clashes of the entire conflict, fought between the German and Russian armies at the end of 1914,¹⁶ the former seized control of the city. Locally, the turbulent initial skirmishes were followed by a phase of relative peace, which made the big city a natural migratory destination for people fleeing the turmoil of war. Among them were young artists, such as Shoshana Czestochowska from Częstochowa.

This short period of just over three years was extremely important for the development of both Jewish daily newspapers and the more ambitious literary magazines. By contrast with Nazi policy during World War II, the approach of the Prussian authorities to Jews was very liberal. And while a military censorship was in force, its primary focus were Polish independence movements, and so it did not interfere in Yiddish texts.¹⁷ The aforementioned Lazar Kahan, who as the publisher of *Lodzer Togblat* enjoyed great trust on the part of the censors, played an extremely important role. It was the group of writers gathered around this very newspaper, who, with the permission of the mil-

14 G. Rozier, *Mojżesz Broderson. Od Jung Idysz do Araratu*, transl. J. Ritt, Łódź [2008], p. 12.

15 Ch. L. Fuks [Fox], “Łódź na wysokościach,” in: *Wśród łódzkich Żydów. Wspomnienia z miasta młodości*, eds D. Dekiert, K. Radziszewska, E. Wiatr, Łódź 2023, p. 268.

16 See G. K. Korolkow, *Operacja łódzka 1914. Najciekawsza batalia pierwszej wojny światowej*, Oświęcim 2014.

17 Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussisches Staatsbesitz, VI. HA Nl. Georg Cleinow no. 102.

itary censorship, in April 1918 published the first literary anthology, edited by Zvi Kohn, under the famous title *Jugend* (The Young).¹⁸ It was devoted to “literature and free thought”. The introduction to the volume was a sui generis literary manifesto, calling for a change of the old order:

The name is not accidental. We want to shake off the mould from our new world. May the dew of youth, the spring air, the smell of freshness, of young life spread over our Jewish youth. [...] All our institutions give off the smell of old age and rot, of dying. We want to revive them. Youngness should be cut off from elderliness, it should not reside with it under one roof.¹⁹

The anthology was a typical literary project, with an extremely modest graphic design. Most of the subsequent members of the Yung Yidish group, first and foremost Yitshak Katzenelson, Hershele Danilevich, Yoel Mastboim and Yeheskel Moshe Nayman, published their texts in the work. Importantly, one entire chapter of the anthology, titled “Froyen motivn” (Women’s motifs), was devoted exclusively to the writings and poems of women – Miriam Ulinover, Shoshana Czestochowska and Mirl Erdberg, to name but a few. By the early 1920s, Poland’s new-won independence and the resulting complete removal of censorship had resulted in the emergence of various artistic initiatives aimed at promoting “new” progressive art. The most important of these was the Yung Yidish artistic group which was active from 1918 to 1921 and brought together numerous Jewish writers and artists. Its most important figure was Moshe Broderzon, who returned to Łódź from Moscow, where he became personally acquainted with the output of the Russian Futurists, among others. Between 1919 and 1920,

the group published an artistic magazine titled *Yung-Yidish* whose subtitle was *Lider in vort un tseykhenung* (Poems in words and drawings). In addition to the writers mentioned above, it promoted the works of Chaim Krul, Hersh Zhitnitski, David Zitman, Melekh Ravitch, Uri Zvi Grinberg, and of the visual artists Yankl Adler, Henekh Bartshinski (Henryk Barczyński) and Marek Szwarc. The aim of the group was to redefine Yiddish literature and Jewish art by connecting it with the tradition and culture of Judaism on the one hand, and with modern art trends on the other. The authors focused on a visual literary experiment, at once referring to Jewish motifs – ornamentation and calligraphy, and to Christianity and other religions, including those of the Far East, which was being rediscovered at the time. Among their literary fascinations they mentioned the Bible, Greek mythology, Lord Byron, E. A. Poe, French writers, and C. K. Norwid, while their artistic fascinations included classical painting, Egyptian, Greek and Roman sculpture, as well as Titian, Rembrandt, El Greco, Van Gogh and Cézanne.²⁰ A holistic view of art as a whole was typical of their approach, and thus their fascinations further included the music of Beethoven, Wagner, Grieg, Chopin and Debussy. The sense of artistic mission was conducive to establishing contacts with other, similar groupings – both Jewish, like the Warsaw-based Khaliastre, and Polish (the Polish Expressionists, Bunt), Russian, or German (Das Junge Rheinland, Die Aktion, Novembergruppe). In order to disseminate its output, and especially the work of its leader, Moshe Broderzon, Yung Yidish also established a publishing house under its own name. By these means six volumes of his poems were published, as well as a se-

18 Z. Kohn, *Jugend*, Łódź 1918.

19 Ibid., p. 3.

20 M. Broderzon, “Manifesto,” *Yung-Yidish* 1919, nos 2–3, p. 2.

lection of Chaim Krul's poetry and a play written by Yitshak Katzenelson.

Another artistic publishing house was Achrid, whose three art books were the culmination of the development of Jewish "young art" in Łódź. The graphical inspirations and avant-garde, indeed revolutionary content of the poems which it issued – duly described in Piotr Rypson's article²¹ – were the result of a combination of numerous historical, artistic and cultural factors. It would be safe to say that they could not have been created anywhere else, and this underlines the uniqueness of Łódź on the map of Jewish artistic activity in Poland.

Despite clear personal links with the Yung Yidish group and common artistic inspirations, Achrid was a separate initiative, probably established exclusively in order to issue these three books. The clear predominance of women among its published authors is noteworthy and is particularly visible in its graphic design, which was created exclusively by female artists. It was no longer just a small "women's column" in a magazine dominated by men, but a strong voice of modern Jewish women artists who created and published their works on an equal footing with men.

The interest in art in all its aspects led naturally to the development of theatre, which naturally combined words, music and images. In 1922, the Chad gadya (Yiddish for "Goatling") puppet theatre was established by the writers M. Broderzon and Y. M. Nayman, the composer Henekh Kon, and the painter Yitshak (Wincenty) Brauner. While it played mainly skits and popular songs, more ambitious works were also part of the repertoire. The artists were sensitive to topical issues, and their biting satire touched upon issues of Jewish life around the world. Its first-ever performance was held on 16 May 1922 in Warsaw at 13 Tłomackie Street, at the seat

of the Association of Jewish Writers and Journalists. In 1922, the theatre went on a tour and performed in Wilno and Białystok as well as other locations. It opened in Łódź at the Philharmonic Hall at 20 Dzielna Street (present-day Narutowicza Street) on 1 December 1922.

The artistic community had the opportunity of meeting and integrating in the literary salons and cafés. Accordingly, one of the main meeting places of Jewish writers, painters, sculptors and actors was the Cafe Astoria at 27 Piotrkowska Street. The premises were modelled after the artistic cafés of Paris, in which the *bohème* congregated. In the evenings, all the tables were occupied by writers, painters, and members of various political parties. Actors would come in the later hours, especially after theatre premieres. The location was ideal, because east of Piotrkowska Street, at Cegielniana Street (present-day Jaracza Street), was the Teatr Miejski, while to the west, at Nowocegielniana Street (present-day Więckowskiego Street), was the Scala theatre, where both Jewish and Polish artists performed. The Astoria hosted M. Broderzon, Y. Katzenelson, Y. Adler, I. Brauner, the composer David Beigelman, and Moshe Pulaver, an actor and director from the Ararat theatre. Nearby, at 29 Piotrkowska Street, was the Caprice café, in which the Chad gadya theatre performed. The Jewish *bohème* also met at Brudny Szmul (Dirty Shmul) restaurant at 4 Zawadzka Street and at Pod Szklanką café (The Glass café) at 8 Południowa Street (present-day Rewolucji 1905 roku Street).

Another important place on the artistic map of Łódź was Y. Katzenelson's literary salon. The Jewish intelligentsia gathered at his house: Yiddish writers, painters, musicians, as well as teachers and senior secondary school students, many of whom went on to become writers and social activists. Whereas the palace at 38 Dłu-

21 See P. Rypson's article in the present collection, p. 46–50.

ga Street (present-day Gdańska Street), which belonged to Max and Felicia Szydłowski, was the meeting place of the local Yung Yidish avant-garde. Max Szydłowski, the owner of a textile factory, financed the magazine published by the group, while his wife Felicia helped with editorial work. The Szydłowskis were regularly visited by Broderzon and Brauner, as well as by Adler, who even lived at their residence for a while. The walls of the living room were adorned with a rich collection of works by local painters. The apartment and studio of the siblings Ida, Eugenia and Yitshak Brauner at 29 Kościuszki Avenue also served as an artistic salon.²²

Following the group's break-up in 1921, its members continued their individual artistic careers. Some emigrated, while others moved to Warsaw. Only a handful remained in Łódź, among them Broderzon, who became involved with the theatre.

Towards the end of the 1920s and throughout the next decade, the nature of the city's Jewish culture and literature un-

derwent a redefinition. The emergence of a plethora of modern political parties, dedicated to resistance and changing the existing order, partially channelled artistic rebellion. Party newspapers and magazines readily made their pages available to socially engaged texts which promoted the same ideas. The traditional patronage of art, which could still be observed in the case of Yung Yidish, gave way to political patronage. Obviously, there were also independent magazines, however the influence of parties became more and more pronounced. Paradoxically, the working-class nature of the city, which had initially given rise to young Jewish art and endowed it with its unique, original character, also led to the perception of universal art. This strove to answer the basic questions of human existence as something anachronistic and was perceived as connected with the capitalist system. Its universalism made it an unsuitable tool for the class struggle and was not understood by the average, poorly educated Łódź labourer.

22 Ch. L. Fuks [Fox], "Łódź na wysokościach...", pp. 296–300.

“A Warbling Wedding”: Jewish Artists in Łódź, 1910–1923

Irmina Gadowska

The end of World War I and the establishment of independence in 1918 opened up new prospects for the development of modern Jewish culture in Poland. Jews who were previously subjects of the three partitioning powers and lived under distinct economic and legal systems became citizens of a single state and the latter's second largest ethnic minority (after Ukrainians). Regardless of their political preferences, degree of assimilation or religiosity, they now needed to define their place in the new country which reappeared on the map of Europe after 123 years. Some Jews identified as Poles, others strove for socio-cultural autonomy in the diaspora, while others yet supported emigration to Palestine. The discussions and political debates of the period, to which fuel was added by Polish and Jewish nationalists, did not dampen the dynamic development of Jewish culture. Throughout the interwar period, Jews founded numerous organisations, associations, and institutions in Poland. There were Jewish theatres, publishing houses, a Jewish press, libraries, a thriving literary and art scene. The origins of these developments can be traced to an earlier time, however, and they should be seen as the outcome of a process of emancipation and acculturation that had been gaining momentum in Europe since the late nineteenth century. It was around that time that the Zionists

launched a debate on secular Jewish culture. At the fifth Zionist Congress in Basel in December 1901 Martin Buber stated that a national style requires a homogeneous society that gives birth to and sustains a culture. His proposals were ideological above all else. In the opinion of this philosopher and scholar of tradition, to achieve a renaissance of Jewish culture it would be necessary to reinvigorate the Hebrew language which could then act as a binding agent connecting the scattered Jewish diaspora. In Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in the Polish lands, Folkism and its emphasis on *doykayt* (hereness) – the striving for socio-cultural autonomy within the diaspora, grounded in Yiddish (the *mame-loshn*) and folk traditions, had more subscribers. In 1908, Nathan Birnbaum organised the first World Yiddish Language Conference in Czernowitz (today Chernivtsi), whose participants reflected on how to awaken a Jewish national awareness. The discussions on culture that began there also made direct reference to art. Folkist ideas also informed the output of Jewish artists in Russia just before the revolution and in the immediate post-revolutionary period. In 1909, S. An-ski proposed an ethnographic expedition to the Pale of Settlement, including Volhynia and Podolia.¹ Seeing the gradual extinction of archaic Jewish folk traditions and culture, and concerned that future generations

¹ A. Rechtman, *Żydowska etnografia i folklor. Wspomnienia o ekspedycji etnograficznej prowadzonej przez Sz. An-skiego*, transl. M. Siek, M. Kordowicz, Warszawa 2017; M. Tuszewicki, “Badania nad etnografią

would be deprived if they did not get to know them, he wanted to preserve a record of what was still left. The expedition, financed by Vladimir Ginzburg, took place in several stages from July 1912 to the early weeks of the Great War. It delivered new knowledge about Jewish motifs and contributed to their dissemination in twentieth-century painting and literature. After 1916, the painters Issachar Ryback and El Lissitzky embarked on a similar expedition. Travelling along the Dnipro, they documented synagogue architecture and interiors, noticing, as Tamara Sztyma has stated, “analogies between Jewish folk art and Expressionism, Cubism, and the Constructivist experiments of Russian artists”.² Ryback, Lissitzky, Nathan Altman, Lasar Segall and Marc Chagall combined Jewish folklore with avant-garde approaches (particularly expressionism) in an original way. Disseminated through multiple periodicals, books, art and literary publications, their works became a reference for artists in other countries. In Poland, there emerged a group of young painters, sculptors and writers who wanted to embark on creating modern Jewish culture. In 1918–1921, Łódź – an industrial city south-west of Warsaw, a third of whose inhabitants were Jews – was at the epicentre of this “new art”.

Jewish Artists in Łódź Before 1918

Although Łódź’s fast-paced economic and urban development began in the early nineteenth century, it was only in the 1890s

that an artistic milieu came into existence there. It included several artists – Poles, Germans, and Jews – and was spearheaded by painters Samuel Hirszenberg, Leopold Pilichowski, Maurycy Trębacz, David Modenstein, and Abraham (Adolf) Berman, and sculptor Henryk Glicenstein.³ Most of these artists enjoyed the patronage of local industrialists; they took part in exhibitions organised in the city and were involved in charitable undertakings. Some alluded to Jewish themes in their work, but it should be emphasised that all of them were part of the Polish artistic milieu at the time. Educated in Warsaw, Kraków, Munich or Paris, they produced conventional, academic, realistic compositions depicting historical events and genre scenes, which appealed to the tastes of their conservative audiences. They were rarely influenced by post-Impressionism or Symbolism. The above-mentioned artists, part of the same familial and social circles, were a group of mutually supportive friends rather than a formal group with a programme and manifesto. Some of them, however, like Hirszenberg and Pilichowski, had a lively interest in defining an idiom for Jewish art. The Łódź community of artists disintegrated after the Revolution of 1905. The revolution’s chilling effect on the art scene and the art market, as well as the lack of a permanent salon and an art academy were factors that led to the departure of many artists. It was only a few years before World War I that the local art market experienced a revival, with a new generation of artists emerg-

Żydów aszkenazyjskich i ich znaczenie dla historiografii,” in: *Żydzi polscy w oczach historyków*, eds A. Kaźmierczyk, A. Maślak-Maciejewska, Kraków 2018, p. 89.

2 T. Sztyma, “Nowa sztuka żydowska jako wyraz nowych postaw ideologicznych i przemian tożsamości polskich Żydów w pierwszych dekadach XX wieku,” in: *Każdą iskrą rozpaleni... Żydowscy artyści w kręgu nowej sztuki. Idee – postawy – relacje*, eds I. Gadowska, K. Radziszewska, A. Świętosławska, Łódź 2022, p. 31.

3 For more on the Jewish artistic milieu in Łódź before 1918, see: J. Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów Polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 39–63; I. Gadowska, *Żydowscy malarze w Łodzi w latach 1880–1919*, Warszawa 2010.

ing on the scene, including Arthur Szyk, David Haltrecht, Maurice (Moshe) Mendjizky, Yitshak Brauner, Marek Szwarc, Henryk Epstein, and Zygmunt Landau. Most of them, however, eventually left Łódź to continue their careers abroad. The end of 1916 gave birth to the idea of establishing an institution for the promotion of culture in Łódź. Plans were laid down for the Polish Artistic Club, whose tasks were to include; “the cultivation of artistic culture in Polish society, bringing together those who love art, whether professionals or not”, the mobilisation and support (including financial) of artists as well as educating and fostering young talents. The Club’s Organising Committee included Arthur Szyk and sculptor Julia Mendelsohn.⁴ As there is no information on any further activities, it is to be assumed that for some reason the Club did not come into being. Its aims were picked up by the Association of Artists and Supporters of the Fine Arts,⁵ founded around the same time and headed by architect Henryk Lewinsohn.⁶ The Association’s board included painters A. Berman and A. Szyk, Mieczysław Oley, Ignacy Śpiewak, the writer Henryk Cynamon (librarian) as well as Ignacy Weinstein (as artistic director).⁷ The members were artists as well as those interested in developing and actively supporting culture in the city.

The Association welcomed people from different backgrounds and of different political stripes. Aside from integrating the local art community, its programme included cultural education and action to promote culture. To mark its two-year anniversary, the Association organised two large exhibitions.⁸ The first one, opened in April 1918, featured close to 496 works,⁹ including by recognised Łódź artists like Adolf (Abraham) Berman, Maurycy (Moshe) Trębacz, Henryk Monat, and the young generation – Henryk Bartshinski, Yitshak Brauner, Henryk Glasstein, Lasar Goldberg, Zygmunt Landau, Leonia Lichtenstein, Dina Matus, Shmuel Obodowski, Mieczysław Oley, Roman Rozental, Ignacy Śpiewak, Nathan Spiegel, Marek Szwarc, Leontyna Semmel, G. Gurwicz, and M. Daum.¹⁰ The second, organised in December 1918, featured around 400 works – paintings, sculptures, and drawings. Its participants included Trębacz, Berman, Obodowski, Oley, Śpiewak, Max Schapiro, Spiegel, Goldberg, Rosenberg, Landau, Barciński, Brauner, Glasstein, Szyk, Stanisław Dobrzynski, Glicenstein, Shlomo Mayzner, and female artists D. Matus, L. Semmel, Leah Rosenberg, and Jadwiga Kempinska.¹¹ Attracting the most attention were the Expressionistic paintings of Yankl Adler, who, after his return

4 “Z Polskiego Klubu Artystycznego w Łodzi,” *Nowy Kurier Łódzki* 1916, no. 347, p. 2.

5 Marek Bartelik dates the founding of the Association of Artists and Supporters of the Fine Arts to 1918. However, mentions in the press would indicate that it formed as early as 1917 or even in late 1916. Cf. M. Bartelik, *Early Polish Modern Art. Unity in Multiplicity*, Manchester–New York 2005, p.125

6 Henryk Lewinsohn (1883 – ?) – architect, engineer, graduate of the Darmstadt Polytechnic and the Frankfurt Academy of Fine Arts. Involved in public and cultural activity; co-owner of the company Lewinsohn & Levy; designer of a number of modernist tenements in Łódź.

7 *Informator miasta Łodzi na rok 1919*, Łódź 1920, p. 191; “W Stowarzyszeniu artystów i zwolenników sztuk pięknych,” *Głos Polski* 1918, no. 38, p. 4

8 For more on the exhibitions, see: J. Strzałkowski, *Artyści, obrazy i zbieracze w Łodzi*, Łódź 1991; J. Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów Polskich...*, pp. 153–154.

9 According to M. Skielrz, the exhibition featured 498 paintings and sculptures, including 487 by Jewish artists. See: *Nowy Kurier Łódzki* 1918, no. 91, p. 2

10 H. Z. [Heinrich Zimmermann], “Fruhjahrsausstellung in Lodz,” supplement to no. 96 *Neue Lodzer Zeitung* 1918, p. 1

11 H. Z. “Zweite Kunstaussstellung des Lodzer Künstlerheims,” *Neue Lodzer Zeitung* 1919, no. 6, p. 3

from Germany, exhibited compositions with Chassidic and Christian motifs. The author of a review in *Głos Poranny* wrote of the youthful freshness emanating from Adler's works: "the power of expression he presents is so direct that many face Adler's canvases as they would a riddle. The depth of the colours corresponds to the vibrancy of the composition."¹² Heinrich Zimmermann compared Adler's works to those of the German Expressionists: Wassily Kandinsky, Franc Marc and Ludwik Meidner, the "Futurist" George Grosz, and the Cubist Jean Metzinger.¹³

Both exhibitions were of seminal importance to the Łódź art community. Their chief aim was to present the achievements of local artists. Unlike the other collective exhibitions in the city since 1918 they were not accompanied by charity fundraising. Press reviews highlighted the participation of young artists representing the generation born in 1890–1900. The dominant role of Jewish artists, who made up a strong, albeit varied, group, was also highlighted. This was the context the avant-garde poet Moshe Broderzon encountered upon his return to Łódź from Moscow at the end of 1918. He would go on to become the most important figure in Jewish new art in Łódź during the inter-war period.

Yung-Yidish

Three booklets (6 issues) of the literary-artistic magazine *Yung-Yidish* came out in 1919–1920, financed by Max and Felicia Szydłowski, featuring poetry in Yiddish illustrated with expressionist linocuts. The authors included poets and painters who, inspired by Expressionism and

Cubism, were attempting to express their Jewish identity in a new way.¹⁴ The idea for the magazine probably came from Broderzon, who can be credited with the authorship of two manifestos published in *Yung-Yidish* which expressed hopes for a better tomorrow and faith in the strength and truth of new Jewish art and poetry. Defining a "national style" and their own identity remained one of the priorities for those contributing to *Yung-Yidish*. Taking their cue from Ryback, Lissitzky, and Chagall – Jewish painters from Russia – they turned towards tradition, crafts, and folklore in search of sources of "Jewishness". However, Jerzy Malinowski has rightly noted the cognitive dissonance pervading the declarations of the *Yung-Yidish* circle, who were torn between their need to promote Jewish motifs and the appealing universalism of international art.¹⁵ The group took shape when Poland was just setting itself up as an independent state, and maintained contacts with the Polish avant-garde. It functioned within Polish modern art, partly as a sort of antinomy. Its members drew inspiration from Jewish folklore while clashing their vision of national art (in the diaspora) with the notion of Polish art. Their strategy, consisting in a pivot towards their national tradition, was analogous to the pursuits of Polish right-leaning milieus which tried to inform the official direction in which Polish art would develop. The latter group, however, rejected cosmopolitanism, believing in the power of what they considered to be native, primordial, and free of foreign influence. To bring "Jewish Expressionism" to the awareness of non-Jewish audiences, it was necessary – aside from using new formal solutions – to introduce a new ico-

12 "Wystawa Sztuk pięknych," *Głos Polski* 1919, no. 16, p. 3.

13 H.Z., "Zweite Kunstausstellung" ..., p. 3.

14 About *Yung Yidish* see more: J. Malinowski, *Grupa „Jung Idysz” i żydowskie środowisko „nowej sztuki” w Polsce, 1918–1923*, Warszawa 1987.

15 J. Malinowski, *Malarstwo i rzeźba Żydów Polskich...*, p. 216.