Defining "Jewish Art" in Ost und West, 1901–1908
A Study in the Nationalisation of Jewish Culture

BY GAVRIEL D. ROSENFELD

In the historiography of modern German Jewry, the last decade of the nineteenth century has often been seen as a period in which the German-Jewish community began to undergo unprecedented social, cultural and political changes.[1] As Shulamit Volkov and others have pointed out, during the 1890s the assimilationist drive of German Jews – the impulse to become fully accepted and integrated into German society – was for the first time confronted by an opposing disassimilatory trend.[2] Small circles of German Jews were abandoning the old goal of symbiosis and embarking on an attempt to nationalise Jewish identity. In doing so, they became involved in what contemporary scholars of nationalism might describe as "imagining" or "inventing" a Jewish nation.[3] Crucial to this enterprise was the encounter of German Jews with increasing numbers of Jews arriving in Germany from Eastern Europe.[4] Stimulated by mutual political and

[1]See, among others, Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923*, Madison 1982; Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land. The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893–1914*, Ann Arbor 1975; Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers. East European Jews in Imperial Germany*, Oxford 1987; and Stephen M. Poppel, *Zionism in Germany, 1897–1933. The Shaping of a Jewish Identity*, Philadelphia 1977. This article grew out of an essay written in a graduate seminar on twentieth-century German-Jewish culture at UCLA. I would like to extend sincere thanks to Professor David Myers of UCLA for reading several early drafts and suggesting ways in which it could be improved and polished.

[2]Shulamit Volkov, 'The Dynamics of Assimiliation. *Ostjuden* and German Jews', in Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture. From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, Hanover–London 1985, p. 196.

[3]Such a description derives, in large part, from the now generally accepted view that the nation is neither a "natural" nor a "perennial" entity, but is in fact a specifically modern construction – "an imagined political community", as Benedict Anderson has described it. See his *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edn., London 1991, p. 6. Other works on nationalism also stress the fact that nations are, in large part, recent inventions. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca 1983; and Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge 1990. These "modernists" are challenged by "primordialists", such as Edward Shils, who see nations and communities as the natural units of history. Within this group, "perennialists" claim that nations are, if not natural, certainly historically recurring entities. Anthony Smith tries to mediate between the two groups and offers a modified "modernist" view. See his *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford 1986, chap. 1.

[4]In 1880 there were approximately 16,000 East European Jews in Germany. By 1910 the total had risen to around 70,000. See Wertheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

cultural interests, German and Eastern European Jews soon became partners in the attempt to "imagine" a Jewish nation.

Symbolic of this partnership was the creation of a new journal of politics, culture and the arts, *Ost und West*.[5] Founded in Berlin in 1901 by Davis Trietsch,[6] a German Jew, and Leo Winz, a Ukrainian Jew who had come to Germany in the 1890s,[7] the self-described *Illustrierte Monatsschrift für Modernes Judentum* represented one of the most intriguing examples of co-operation between German and Eastern European Jews at the turn of the century. Comprised of a mixture of Zionists and non-Zionists from Central and Eastern Europe, the editorial staff of *Ost und West* saw its primary objective as the uniting of Eastern and Western European Jews through the creation of a national Jewish culture and so entered what Miroslav Hroch has described as the first phase of nationalist movement.[8] Specifically, the founders of *Ost und West* held that Eastern and Western European Jews could be united by promoting and publicising what was then referred to as the Jewish "cultural renaissance" – a term used with increasing frequency in late Wilhelminian Germany to refer to the new signs of Jewish cultural creativity appearing in the work of European Jewish artists, writers, poets, and scholars.[9] The editors of *Ost und West* ultimately hoped that by making both Eastern and Western European Jewish readers of the journal aware of the Jewish cultural renaissance, they would realise the extent of their common bonds and would thereby discover a basis for national unity. To achieve this, each issue of *Ost und West* included extensive features on prominent Jewish cultural figures – painters such as Lesser Ury, Hermann Struck and E. M. Lilien, poets Morris Rosenfeld and Marek Scherlag, essayists such as Ahad Ha'Am and Martin Buber, among others – who were intensely promoted as examples of cultural rebirth.

One of the unique features of *Ost und West* was the attention paid to the fine arts as a component of the Jewish cultural renaissance. From the first appearance of the journal in 1901, the editors of *Ost und West* had identified the existence of a

[5]While passing reference has been made to *Ost und West* in several important works on *fin-de-siècle* German Jewry, no thorough studies of the journal have been written. See Aschheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 117; Wertheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 152; Michael Berkowitz, *Mind, Muscle and Men. The Imagination of a Zionist National Culture for the Jews of Central and Western Europe, 1897–1914*, Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison 1989, p. 24.

[6]Trietsch, born in Dresden, was an ardent Zionist "maximalist" who hoped to create a Jewish state in Palestine, Cyprus and El-Arish. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 15, Jerusalem 1971, cols. 1394–1395.

[7]Aschheim, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

[8]In his important analysis of the social bases of nationalist movements, Miroslav Hroch notes that all such movements have three distinct phases: "Phase A", where small groups of intellectual activists become interested in studying the "nation's" cultural past and prepare the basis for a national culture; "Phase B", where the activists attempt to win popular support for the new nationalist movement; and "Phase C", when the nationalist movement develops mass support. Miroslav Hroch, *Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas. Eine vergleichende Analyse zur gesellschaftlichen Schichtung der patriotischen Gruppen*, Prague 1968, pp. 24–25. As one of the chief demands of nationalist movements, the desire for a "national culture" emerges in the movements' early phases.

[9]The use of the term, most closely associated with Martin Buber, reflected the growing importance of "culture" – specifically Jewish cultural renewal – within Zionist as well as non-Zionist circles. See Berkowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–47, for more on the so-called "Kulturfrage" or "Kulturdebatte" among Zionists in Germany after the turn of the century.

burgeoning Jewish national art and ran numerous features on Jewish painters, sculptors and illustrators, young and old, Eastern and Western. These features were often lavish affairs. Extending at times to up to twenty pages and adorned with numerous black and white reproductions of the featured artists' work, they constituted the most visually striking pieces in the journal. Moreover, given the fact that up to four or five artists were featured per issue, the prominence of Jewish artistic accomplishment in *Ost und West* was hardly coincidental. For the journal's editors, it was clear that Jewish artists were in the vanguard of the Jewish cultural renaissance.

In light of *Ost und West*'s broad national mission, its attention to Jewish art was predictable. Most nationalist movements, in fact, have tended to regard art, among other areas of cultural activity, as a critical element of any "national" culture.[10] In the Jewish case, art was a medium that was traditionally viewed as underdeveloped and thus regarded as a particularly crucial component of the future Jewish national culture.[11] *Ost und West* repeatedly referred to the importance of creating "an art . . . that was not the product of Jews by mere coincidence . . . but one which expresses the soul of the *Volk*".[12] In publicising the work of new Jewish artists, the journal's editors were eager to identify it as "Jewish art". This special designation lent credence to the view that there was a distinctive Jewish culture which was currently in the process of being expanded. The arrival of "Jewish art" would be a clear sign of the continuing progress of the Jewish cultural renaissance.

The attempts of *Ost und West*'s editors and art critics to define a uniquely Jewish art inevitably raise an important set of questions. What exactly was meant by Jewish art? How specifically did the art critics of *Ost und West* conceive of, and define, an art that expressed "the soul of the *Volk*"? Not surprisingly, the identification of Jewish art was a complex task.[13] In the abundant art reviews that appeared in each issue of the journal, the task of labelling the work of Jewish artists, sculptors, and illustrators as authentically "Jewish" often required great intellectual contortions. What, indeed, qualified a painting, an etching, or a work of sculpture for admission to the nascent canon of "Jewish art"? Its subject matter? Its formal qualities? Its distinctiveness from "non-Jewish" art? By looking at how *Ost und West*'s art critics defined, and heralded the arrival of, the new "Jewish art", we can begin to understand the intensity with which

[10]As Anthony Smith notes, artists are among the most important members of the secular "priesthood" or intelligentsia that helps to construct national identity. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

[11]Significantly, both Zionists and disassimilating Jews became interested in Jewish art around the turn of the century. See Joseph Gutmann, *Sacred Images. Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Northampton 1989, pp. 170–172. For more on the Zionist movement's utilisation of art to promote the nationalist cause, see Berkowitz, *op. cit.*, chap. 6. See also Mark H. Gelber, 'The jungjüdische Bewegung – An Unexplored Chapter in German-Jewish Literary and Cultural History', in *LBI Year Book XXXI* (1986), pp. 105–119.

[12]'Ost und West', in *Ost und West. Illustrierte Monatsschrift für Modernes Judentum* (hereafter *O&W*), January 1901, pp. 1–2.

[13]See Berkowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 221; Avram Kampf, *Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century*, South Hadley, MA 1984, pp. 15–16. Philip V. Bohlman points to a similar problem with Jewish music. See his *"The Land Where Two Streams Flow". Music in the German-Jewish Community of Israel*, Urbana, IL 1989, p. 50.

disassimilating German and Eastern European Jews sought to participate in a Jewish cultural renaissance. In so doing, we can also begin to shed new light on the manner in which Jewish identity was nationalised in late Wilhelminian Germany.

While *Ost und West* also took an active position on the important social, political and cultural issues facing the German and European Jewish communities, the journal was, by most accounts, politically moderate and attached to no single political movement.[14] It is clear, however, that the orientation of *Ost und West* was strongly pro-Zionist during the twenty-one years of its existence.[15] This was partially reflected by the presence of numerous Eastern and Western European Zionist luminaries on its editorial board.[16] It was most evident, however, in the strong influence of cultural Zionism on the journal's mission of uniting Eastern and Western European Jews through the creation of a common Jewish national culture.

One of several variants of Zionist ideology extant in Germany at the time,[17] cultural Zionism had begun to pose a significant challenge to the previously dominant brand of political or philanthropic Zionism.[18] Although cultural Zionists did not embrace a single, unified body of ideas,[19] they were generally united in opposing the claims of political Zionists, such as Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau, that the immediate goal of the movement was to negate the Diaspora and to attain a Jewish homeland through political means.[20] Instead, drawing on the ideas of their intellectual leader, Ahad Ha'Am (Asher Ginzburg), cultural Zionists countered what they saw as an exclusive concern for Jewry with

[14]Aschheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 117; Berkowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 172. Wertheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 152, notes that *Ost und West* was founded under the auspices of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, an organisation whose ideological thrust, while difficult to define precisely, was neither Zionist nor assimilationalist. *Ost und West*'s connection with the *Alliance* highlights the spectrum of disassimilation in early twentieth-century Europe.

[15]*Ibid.*

[16]This list included men such as Ahad Ha'Am, Simon Bernfeld, Nathan Birnbaum, Martin Buber, Max Nordau, Nahum Sokolow and Otto Warburg. Importantly, it also included non-Zionists such as Hermann Cohen and Jacob Wassermann. It is clear from this grouping of individuals – political Zionists, cultural Zionists and non-Zionists from Germany and Eastern Europe – that *Ost und West* successfully avoided succumbing to the factionalism of the Zionist movement. For a complete listing of the editorial board, see any front cover of *Ost und West* during 1901. There was, in addition, a notable overlap in the list of frequent contributors to the journal (such as Berthold Feiwel, E.M. Lilien and Alfred Nossig) and the membership of the loosely organised "jungjüdische Bewegung", a group which attempted "to define and organise a new and modern Jewish aesthetic programme" for the larger Zionist movement around the turn of the century. Gelber, *loc. cit.*, p. 106.

[17]Jehuda Reinharz notes that a single, unified Zionist ideology did not exist in Germany or anywhere else prior to the First World War. Instead, German Zionism was influenced by the numerous varieties of Zionist thought available at the time including Herzlian, political/philanthropic Zionism and Russian autonomism, as well as Chaim Weizmann's brand of practical/synthetic Zionism. Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land, op. cit.*, pp. 111, 116.

[18]Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History. The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness*, New York 1987, p. 84.

[19]*Ibid.*, pp. 129, 173–174.

[20]Significantly, this disagreement soon produced an outright split in the movement at the Vth Zionist Congress in 1901 when Chaim Weizmann, Martin Buber and others who were concerned with the inattention of political Zionists to Jewish cultural rebirth, walked out and formed the so-called Democratic Fraction. Reinharz, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–116.

a greater concern for Judaism.[21] They believed that the immediate aim of the nationalist movement should not be the attainment of political sovereignty but the creation of a spiritual centre in Palestine; there, they believed, a genuine Jewish national culture would develop and would serve, as Ahad Ha'Am put it, to "breathe new life into [the communities of the Diaspora] and preserve their unity".[22]

Although cultural Zionists believed that a genuine Jewish national culture would only fully develop in Palestine, they held that *Gegenwartsarbeit* could be done on its behalf in the Diaspora by promoting the nascent Jewish cultural renaissance.[23] For many German Zionists, especially for the more radical "second generation",[24] this required a fundamental transvaluation of previous German-Jewish views towards *Ostjuden*. Increasingly, political Zionists' well-intentioned, but patronising attitudes towards the *Ostjuden* were being challenged by an image of them as equal members in a common Jewish nation, or *Volk*. Reflecting a growing neo-Romantic interest in mysticism, the irrational and the Orient in Germany and Europe after 1900,[25] German cultural Zionists increasingly saw the Eastern European Jew as the source of rejuvenation for European Jewish culture.[26] While looking ahead to its full development in Palestine, cultural Zionists hoped that a Jewish cultural renaissance could at least begin in the Diaspora through a newfound appreciation of Eastern European Jewish culture. This did not entail, however, a simple return to the ghetto. Rather, cultural Zionists held a dialectical view of the Jewish cultural renaissance; it would only arise from a simultaneous return to, and modernisation of, Eastern European Jewish culture.[27] Such a process would only result from the transformation of both halves of European Jewry, East and West. By beginning this cultural *Gegenwartsarbeit* in the Diaspora, the eventual flowering of the Jewish national culture in Palestine would be significantly hastened.

Much of this formula for Jewish cultural rebirth and national revival was fully embraced by the editors of *Ost und West*. One of the clearest indications of this was a lead editorial written for the September 1903 issue by the Russian Zionist, Fabius Schach. In this essay, Schach repeated the tag that the only way to overcome the historic impediments to Jewish unity was through the "reconci-

[21] Aschheim, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[22] Raphael Patai, *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel*, New York 1971, p. 225; Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism. The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, New York 1981, p. 116; Poppel, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

[23] In short, *Gegenwartsarbeit* implied that the immediate settlement of Palestine should be postponed in favour of opting for interim solutions that would improve Jewish political and cultural life in the Diaspora. It was officially adopted as a resolution at the Third All-Russian Zionist Conference in Helsingfors (Helsinki) in December 1906. See Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World. A Documentary History*, Oxford 1980, pp. 344, 443–445.

[24] See Jehuda Reinharz, 'Three Generations of German Zionism', in *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, No. 9 (Fall 1978). See also Aschheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–102.

[25] See Paul Mendes-Flohr, 'Fin-de-Siècle Orientalism, the Ostjuden and the Aesthetics of Jewish Self-Affirmation', in Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry 1*, Bloomington, IN 1984; Aschheim, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

liation of the East with the West".[28] Aware of the vast differences between the two cultures, Schach realised that solving this "inner Jewish question" was no easy task. As he observed:

> "East and West – what monumental contrasts! Here a wild world full of storms and battles, a roaring and heaving sea; there a toned down peace of calm, channelled waters. Here, reefs and chasms, cliffs and crevices, an eternally fermenting nature with primordial passions of unrestrainable force. There a calm, quiet view of life, a disposition gradually and smoothly developed."[29]

While these differences were considerable, Schach believed they could be overcome by the realisation of a shared history. This turn to history, as Shmuel Almog has noted, was one of the primary Zionist strategies for fostering national consciousness during this period.[30] It was certainly so for Schach, himself a Zionist. Defining Jewish history as deeply marked by suffering and persecution, Schach wrote that the collective Jewish experience manifested itself as the "national soul" (*Volksseele*). Both Western and Eastern European Jews, he noted, had maintained ties to the *Volksseele*; despite their differences, both had maintained a consciousness of Jewish history. In short, then, the task of the Jewish cultural renaissance, according to Schach, was to bring both Eastern and Western reservoirs of the national soul together again in an organic, natural whole.[31] This was guaranteed to be a fruitful merger. Eastern and Western European Jews, Schach believed, were sure to exert a mutually positive effect on each other. Since the former possessed the Jewish *Volksseele* "in its primordial force" – as they preserved Jewish culture in its most genuine form – they were sure to revive the latter whose soul was "not dead", but "indifferent" and in need of "a shaking-up".[32] Western Jews, meanwhile, would help "tame" their Eastern brethren by offering them education that would rescue them from the misery and deprivation of ghetto life.[33] There was no alternative to this linkage of reconciliation and renaissance. Noting that "in continued separation, both East and West will continue to suffer", Schach concluded:

> "Without a healthy renaissance, the majority of Western Jewry will soon be totally lost to Judaism, and their Eastern European brothers will fall into darkness and want. Both elements are dependent on one another, both can only convalesce by coming closer together. Both have so much to give to one another and take from one another, that giving is as holy as taking.
>
> Above all, it is necessary to understand one another . . . The slogan should be to study rather than to scorn one another. Through this, the culture and literature of Israel would experience an incomparable enrichment. This is the actual source for a Jewish renaissance."[34]

In short, Schach's editorial reflected *Ost und West*'s general mission. Cultural renaissance and national rebirth could serve as effective counterweights to

[28] 'Ost und West', in *O&W*, September 1903, p. 577.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] As Shmuel Almog writes, in "the absence of more tangible attributes on which to base Jewish nationalism . . . history became the crucible of Zionist thinking". Almog, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–12, 14.
[31] 'Ost und West', in *O&W*, September 1903, p. 579.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 584.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 588.
[34] *Ibid.*

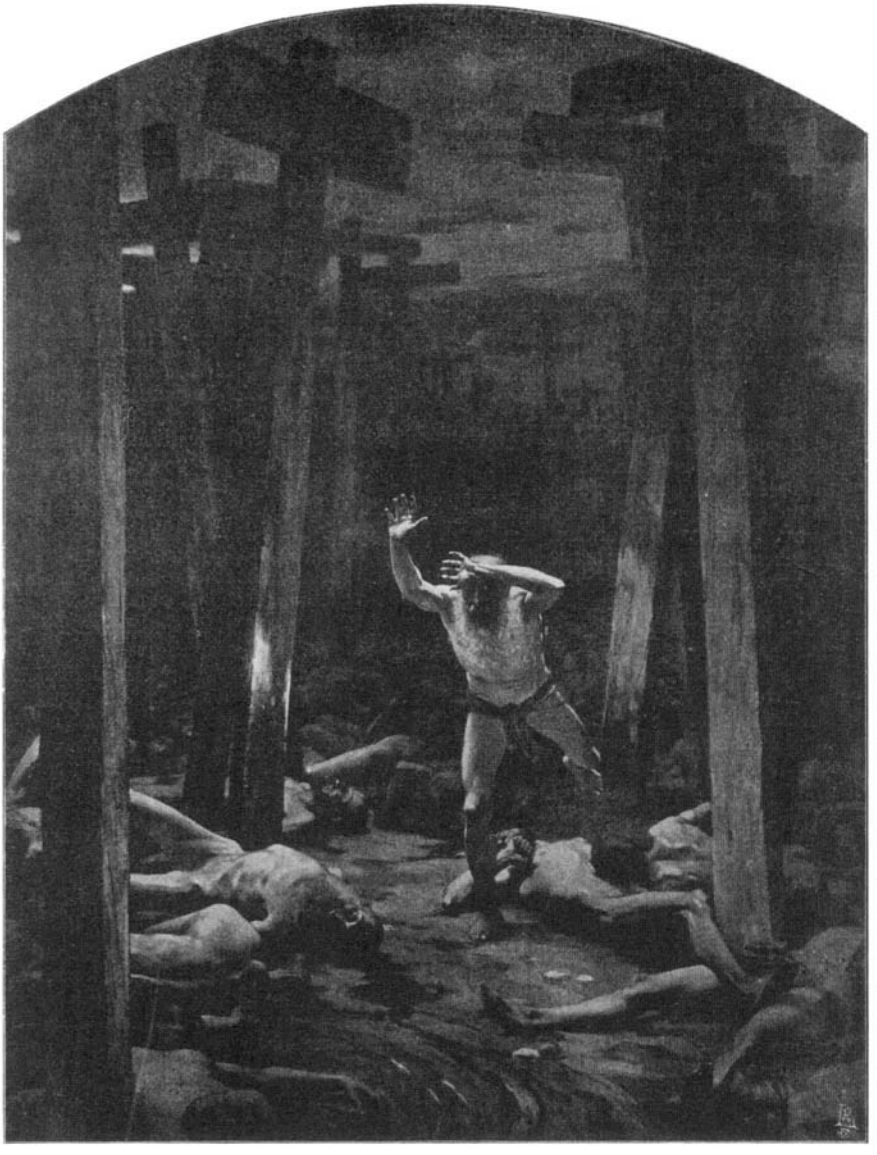
Alfred Nossig 'Der ewige Jude'
'Ost und West', January 1901

From the Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York

Lesser Ury 'Jerusalem'
'Ost und West', February 1901

From the Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York

E.M. Lilien 'Gedenkblatt'
'Ost und West', January 1902



S. Hirszenberg 'Der ewige Jude'
'Ost und West', October 1902

From the Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York

continued Jewish assimilation, but only through the forging of a new, symbiotic relationship between Western and Eastern European Jews.

Yet, it was not history alone that *Ost und West*'s editors advocated as the means to encourage the Jewish cultural renaissance. The journal's founders held that Jewish national unity would also be furthered by "concentrating on the contemporary [cultural] . . . achievements of the Jews which, despite all their differences, still display similar inherited traits".[35] Essentially, *Ost und West*'s editors hoped to advance the Jewish cultural renaissance by publicising its achievements to date and thus winning popular support for it. As they explained in a programmatic statement published in the journal's first issue of 1901:

> "In our time, a noteworthy transformation is taking place. Out of the confusion of the external forces that swept through Judaism during the last century, a long-overlooked element, the specifically Jewish *Kulturnuance*, has emerged and has demanded its right to develop. The scorned and belittled Jewish life of old, has risen up, clothed itself in modern garb and has made slow but sure steps towards asserting its primacy (*zum Throne empor*). Individual works that reflect the new creative forces are just now emerging, but every day brings us new signs of its impact on all areas. Our magazine wants to place itself in the service of this new spirit to which the future of Judaism belongs."[36]

Importantly, this involved disseminating news of the cultural renaissance across the entire European Continent. As *Ost und West* was based in Germany and published in German, the journal's editors naturally hoped to appeal to German Jews who, for the most part, lacked any awareness of Eastern European Jewish culture.[37] Still, the journal's editors hoped that *Ost und West* would be read by all European Jews; indeed, their stated goal of making information about "the latest Jewish activity in all areas of Jewish life in all lands . . . [available] to every German-speaking Jew" should by no means be seen as directed only towards German Jews.[38] It should be noted, in fact, that special efforts were made to solicit subscribers in Russia.[39] To attract the widest possible readership, *Ost und West*'s editors published features on Eastern as well as Western European Jewish contributions – artistic, literary, or scholarly – to the cultural renaissance.[40] Moreover, the journal encouraged the submission of articles from Jews all across Europe and the United States – as seen from the datelines on articles from Sofia,

[35] 'Ost und West', in *O&W*, January 1901, pp. 3–4.

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

[37] Wertheimer somewhat narrowly sees *Ost und West*'s mission as "a one-way bridge" – solely to educate German Jews about *Ostjuden* and not *vice versa*; in doing so, he overlooks the reciprocity inherent in the journal's pan-European goals. Wertheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

[38] 'Ost und West', in *O&W*, January 1901, pp. 3–4.

[39] See, for example, the full-page advertisement on pp. 967–968 of the December 1901 issue, entitled "To our Russian Readers!", which offered subscriptions to readers in various Russian cities, including "St. Petersburg, Moskau, Warschau, Odessa, Riga, Wilna, Kiew, Charkhow, Nishny-Nowgorod No. 1, Kasan und Tiflis". It may be surmised that Russian Jews who might have read the German-language journal came from the educated middle classes who had knowledge of the language.

[40] Of course, Western European Jews were clearly the intended audience of occasional features on "exotic" Eastern Jewish communities in places like Yemen (*O&W*, May 1902, pp. 335–342), the Caucasus (*O&W*, September 1901, pp. 657–660) and Buchara (*O&W*, September 1903, pp. 621–632). These articles were published in order to foster a sense of pride in the broad cultural diversity of the Jewish "nation".

Kiev, Elisabethgrad, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London and Chicago. In short, the editors of *Ost und West* attempted to reach Jews across the Continent with news about the Jewish cultural renaissance. This, it was hoped, would reduce the cultural distance that separated Western and Eastern European Jews and promote Jewish national solidarity.

As noted above, an important way in which *Ost und West*'s editors pursued their goals was by publicising the emergence of a new "Jewish art". The appearance of Jewish art would be a clear sign of the strength of the growing Jewish cultural renaissance. Given the importance of this latter goal for *Ost und West*, the journal's editors held that it was imperative to demonstrate that a Jewish art was, in fact, emerging. Even though some at *Ost und West* shared the beliefs of cultural Zionists that Jewish art (like the Jewish national culture) would only achieve full flower in Palestine, the journal's editors maintained that the new efforts of Jewish artists needed to be publicised as indications of the vitality of the cultural renaissance. While the emerging Jewish art might be regarded as cultural *Gegenwartsarbeit* – preparatory sketches for future masterpieces – *Ost und West*'s art critics demonstrated a distinct need to scrutinise the work of new Jewish painters, sculptors and illustrators for its particularly "Jewish" qualities. Indeed, the vast majority of reviews published in the journal invariably made references to the ways in which each featured artist was, in fact, a "Jewish" artist producing "Jewish art". *Ost und West*'s art reviews were, in a word, highly tendentious. The journal tended to celebrate nearly every new Jewish artist as a contributor to the emerging Jewish art, regardless of technique or choice of subject matter. Its critics readily described as Jewish, works of extremely varied formal qualities and content. To achieve this feat, the journal's art reviews often had to be pieces of great imagination, if not sophistication. What emerges by comparing the critical analyses of various Jewish painters, sculptors and illustrators in *Ost und West* is the fact that an elaborate range of values was employed in the reviewing process. Art was defined as Jewish according to several criteria: its content, its form and its distinctiveness from non-Jewish art. *Ost und West*'s art critics identified the existence of a "Jewish" choice and rendering of subject matter as well as a "Jewish" use of colour and line – all of which were distinct from non-Jewish practices.

This sort of approach to art criticism was an empiricist's nightmare. Extremely expansive and highly subjective, the elastic criteria according to which the journal's reviewers defined Jewish art generally obscured, rather than clarified, what Jewish art actually was. One could easily ask, for example, why works by non-Jewish artists that fitted the journal's criteria for defining Jewish art could not, in fact, be considered as "Jewish" art. In time, *Ost und West*'s critics and writers became conscious of the problems associated with defining Jewish art and retreated somewhat from their early, strident attempts to do so. The journal's determined bid to identify "Jewish" art was thus brief in duration. It was, nevertheless, highly revealing in that it demonstrated the intensity with which disassimilating German and Eastern European Jews hoped to usher in the Jewish cultural renaissance and promote the cause of Jewish national revival in early twentieth-century Europe.

Since *Ost und West*'s art critics essentially regarded the emerging Jewish art as a new phenomenon – as a manifestation of cultural rebirth – their first task was to distinguish it from prior Jewish artistic activity. Stressing the discontinuity represented by the recent Jewish achievements in painting and sculpture would clearly help highlight its innovative qualities: it would attest to the reality of the Jewish cultural renaissance and would help, moreover, to build enthusiasm and momentum for it. This impulse to stress discontinuity, however, existed in tension with the urge to stress continuity – specifically, with the simultaneous insistence that the new Jewish artistic revival was also rooted in Jewish cultural traditions. This tension, scholars have noted, was typical of Zionist thinking at the time: on the one hand, Zionists hoped to provide a basis for Jewish unity by stressing the continuity and binding potential of Jewish history; on the other, they also hoped to leave Jewish history behind and create radically new, non-traditional forms of Jewish life.[41] *Ost und West*'s representation of the Jewish artistic resurgence vividly reflected this tension. Appropriately, the journal's writers tended to resolve it by following the Zionists' decision to embrace a dialectical solution; like the general Jewish cultural renaissance, the new Jewish art would emerge not merely by building upon, but in transcending, the past.

In part, the new Jewish art required strong links to the past to affirm its authenticity. According to scholars of nationalism, this need for historical continuity was typical of many emerging nations. Benedict Anderson, for one, notes that various ethnic groups have, upon developing a degree of national self-awareness, tended to conceive of themselves – often ahistorically – as the legatees of a long historical tradition in order to justify their claims to nationhood.[42] A typical expression of this urge is the usage of the trope of "awakening from sleep" by nationalist activists to describe national revival – a practice which Anderson claims "open[s] . . . up an immense antiquity" for the purposes of self-legitimation.[43] In the case of *Ost und West*'s discussions of the Jewish artistic revival, the image of "awakening" was often evident in various metaphorical forms. In a 1904 feature on the painter Elias Jacowlewitsch Guenzburg, the reviewer, Lothar Brieger-Wasservogel wrote passionately, "Jewish art! The sleeping beauty (*Dornröschen*) has slept for a long time, after being placed in a magic sleep of artistic agony by the wicked witch of exile. Now, the time of awakening has come."[44] Using the metaphor somewhat differently, Martin Buber (in a 1901 review of the German-Jewish painter Lesser Ury), compared the Jewish capacity for artistic achievement to "the fire that lives under the ashes".[45] In the same year, meanwhile, an *Ost und West* editorial similarly claimed that "the fire of Jewish art was never extinguished – it continued to glow beneath the ashes over the centuries and, like a phoenix, will soon emerge to a

[41] Almog, *op. cit.*, p. 12; Aschheim, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[42] Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 5. Anderson notes that one of the persistent problems for scholars of nationalism is the gap between the "objective modernity of nations to the historian's eyes vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of the nationalists".

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 195–196; Gellner, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

[44] 'Elias Jacowlewitsch Guenzburg', in *O&W*, March 1904, p. 161.

[45] 'Lesser Ury', in *O&W*, February 1901, p. 114.

new day and to a new beauty".[46] In yet another variation, Adolf Grabowsky noted in a 1903 review of the painter Abraham Neumann's work, that "the artistic creativity of the Jews . . . that for so long has remained hidden from the world, will become visible like a shimmering gem under desolate rubble".[47] Regardless of the metaphor, these remarks hint at the strong need to legitimate the Jewish artistic renaissance by grounding it in Jewish tradition.

This was further demonstrated by *Ost und West*'s occasional publication of features on individuals regarded as the immediate forerunners to the new generation of Jewish artists. These "old masters" of nineteenth-century Jewish art included the German painter Moritz Oppenheim (1800–1882), the Swedish painter Geskel Salomon (1821–1902), the Dutch painter Jozef Israels (1824–1911), the Hungarian painter Leopold Horowitz (1837–1917), and the Russian sculptor Mark Antokolski (1843–1902).[48] By focusing on these important precursors, *Ost und West*'s art critics were implying that the new Jewish art was rooted in the Jewish past. The new Jewish art had to be portrayed as emerging from a long-standing tradition in order to be regarded as truly Jewish. In fact, the older generation of nineteenth-century Jewish artists had rarely painted scenes of Jewish life and had chosen to focus on subjects more commonly depicted by their non-Jewish colleagues. Like most of their Western European Jewish counterparts they were eager to de-emphasise their Jewishness and to assimilate into the general society. Yet, this fact was unimportant for *Ost und West*'s reviewers: for instance, although Geskel Salomon's *oeuvre* was essentially dominated by landscapes, scenes of village life and portraits, the fact that it contained a single work entitled "The Lighting of the Sabbath Candles", was sufficient for the journal to label the painter as a "contributor to the elevation of our national art".[49] Clearly, for *Ost und West*, the necessity of identifying a Jewish artistic tradition prohibited it from being overly selective.

This lack of selectivity in identifying a tradition of Jewish art can be understood in still other ways, however. Although pointing to an older tradition of Jewish art was certainly intended to legitimate the new Jewish art, it was also intended to serve as a foil that would help to highlight the specifically "Jewish" qualities of the latter. Consistent with the idea that the new Jewish art would be a result of a dialectical transcending of the past, *Ost und West*'s art critics regarded the old masters as a transitional generation – as precursors to the young artists who were viewed as the true vanguard of the new Jewish art. Since the work of this early generation would, in any case, shortly be surpassed by that of the new Jewish artists, it was of little importance to identify the Jewishness of the former. Thus, in order to further accentuate the Jewish quality of the new artists' work, the reviewers tended to hint at the relatively weak Jewish character of the work of the old masters. For example, the journal's favourable retrospective on the paintings of Leopold Horowitz was accompanied by the declaration that "the

[46]'Ein jüdischer Kunstverlag', in *O&W*, December 1901, p. 956.
[47]'Abraham Neumann', in *O&W*, January 1903, p. 19.
[48]See, respectively, *O&W*, December 1902, p. 851; *O&W*, April 1903, p. 245; *O&W*, May 1902, p. 289; *O&W*, August 1903, p. 513; *O&W*, November 1902, p. 729.
[49]'Geskel Salomon', in *O&W*, April 1903, pp. 246, 251–252.

Jewish element [in his work] was generally blurred".[50] This was a way of simultaneously embracing and rebelling against Jewish tradition. In short, while continuity with the past was certainly necessary for the new Jewish art, it brought only limited benefits.

Indeed, as the past also contained the factors that had traditionally stifled Jewish cultural and artistic achievement, *Ost und West*'s art critics recognised that a sharp break with it was necessary. As Martin Buber noted in several essays in *Ost und West*, the Jewish cultural renaissance required not so much a revival, as an overcoming of past traditions.[51] For Buber, the historical conditions of Diaspora Jewry – represented by the twin evils of "Ghetto und Golus" – had adversely affected Jewish culture and had made it "impoverished, sickly, unbalanced, and underdeveloped".[52] Only the elimination of these historical conditions by the Jewish cultural renaissance would ensure "the rebirth of the Jewish *Volk*".[53] With the onset of the renaissance, the traditional Jewish over-emphasis on "pure spirituality" would be returned to its proper balance with an authentic "feeling for life"; The renaissance would, furthermore, "sweep away the dust and cobwebs from the inner ghetto, grant the Jew a look into the heart of nature, and teach him to regard the trees, birds and stars as his siblings".[54] Most importantly, Buber wrote, "our people [will] . . . be granted what it has never possessed – art . . . !"[55]

Displaying even more optimism than Buber, *Ost und West*'s art critics confidently proclaimed that the traditional factors responsible for the generally unimpressive Jewish record of artistic achievement would not be permitted to inhibit future Jewish accomplishments. The journal's writers were well aware that these factors were formidable and extended far back into Jewish history. For instance, one of the explanations most commonly offered for the retarded nature of Jewish artistic development was the biblical prohibition against the creation of graven images. As a result of this prohibition, Leo Winz wrote in February 1901, "we search in vain for works of painting or sculpture that developed the wonderful lightness and perfect harmony of architectonic relations that, in Greece, became a model for all time".[56] Other historical impediments to Jewish cultural freedom were identified by S. Weissenberg in March 1903, who noted that the "life of the perpetually persecuted eternal Jew, wandering from land to land, was understandably unsuited for the creation of a unified . . . [Jewish] style".[57] According to both men, however, these historical disadvantages did not preclude future Jewish artistic achievement. Refuting those antisemites who cited the biblical prohibitions against graven images to claim that the Jews were constitutionally incapable of artistic creativity, Winz argued that the Jews would

[50]'Leopold Horowitz', in *O&W*, August 1903, p. 518.
[51]'Juedische Renaissance', in *O&W*, January 1901, p. 7.
[52]*Ibid.*, pp. 7, 9; 'Ein geistiges Centrum', in *O&W*, October 1902, pp. 669–670.
[53]'Juedische Renaissance', in *O&W*, January 1901, pp. 7, 9.
[54]*Ibid.*, p. 10.
[55]'Ein geistiges Centrum', in *O&W*, October 1902, pp. 669–670; see also 'Juedische Renaissance', in *O&W*, January 1901, p. 10.
[56]'Bildende Kunst und Judentum', in *O&W*, February 1901, p. 92.
[57]'Juedische Kunst und juedisches Kult- und Hausgeraet', in *O&W*, March 1903, p. 201.

"have produced works of perfection in the field of fine arts" had they simply been allowed; moreover, he noted, they would prove capable of doing so in the future.[58] For his part, Weissenberg had already identified the beginnings of a recovery from past deficiencies, observing that "the Jews are beginning to become Jews again; one speaks of a Jewish art . . . We are experiencing a Jewish renaissance."[59]

Indeed, *Ost und West*'s numerous features on new Jewish artists were intended to affirm that the Jewish peoples' creativity had, in fact, not been extinguished by its historical handicaps. In turning our attention to the journal's representation of the contributions of Jewish artists to Jewish cultural rebirth, it is important to note that it was not simply the increasing productivity of Jewish artists that pointed to a Jewish cultural renaissance; it was the fact that Jewish artists were actually producing "Jewish art". This was an important distinction. Only by claiming that Jewish artists were creating art that expressed "the soul of the *Volk*" could *Ost und West*'s art critics prove the existence of a vibrant cultural renaissance and thus effectively promote the journal's nationalist mission. However, *Ost und West*'s method for defining Jewish art was, to say the least, complex and the range of criteria wide.

Most generally, a painting or a work of sculpture was identified as Jewish either by virtue of its content or its form – in other words, by its subject matter or its technical execution. Jewish content and Jewish form, however, were not fixed quantities. Indeed, *Ost und West*'s definition of each strongly reflected the dialectical view of the Jewish cultural and artistic renaissance held by many of its contributing writers. Like the new Jewish national culture, Jewish art had to be rooted in, and yet transcend, tradition; it had to reflect, as well as to move beyond, traditional Jewish artistic practices. Thus, Jewish art was expected to express traditional Jewish uses of content and form: scenes of religious or ghetto life simply and empathetically rendered in muted colours. Yet, as part of the Zionists' demands that Jews abandon their traditional habits and become like other "normal" nations,[60] Jewish art was expected to become more like non-Jewish art. In the realm of content, Jewish artists were to leave the ghetto and depict scenes of strong, vigorous Jews, whether from the pre-exile period or from the renaissance period to come. As to form, Jewish artists needed to move away from a traditional usage of sober line and a muted palette to a new, vivid use of colour. Essentially, the shifts required of Jewish art had to parallel Buber's call for a general shift away from "inner" spirituality to "outer" sensuality; Jewish artists were to move away from their exclusive focus on content and become more conscious of form. Doing so would help restore a desperately needed balance in Jewish culture. However, *Ost und West*'s art critics did not expect this to occur immediately; they recognised that Jewish art was only in the initial stages of making this transition from the old to the new. As they did not expect Jewish artists to have already completely abandoned past artistic practices, these

[58]'Bildende Kunst und Judentum', in *O&W*, February 1901, p. 100.
[59]'Juedische Kunst und juedisches Kult- und Hausgeraet', in *O&W*, March 1903, p. 202.
[60]For a brief discussion of Zionist attitudes towards the question of "normalising" Jewish life, see Almog, *op. cit.*, pp. 157–165.

reviewers maintained that traditional as well as non-traditional Jewish varieties of content and form qualified a work as Jewish. Both were indispensable to *Ost und West*'s unarticulated mission of defining the newly-emergent Jewish art as broadly as possible.

To appreciate this fully, it is necessary to examine first how *Ost und West*'s art critics discerned Jewishness in the content of a work of art. One major defining characteristic of Jewish art which emerges from reviews of new Jewish artists in *Ost und West* was its expression of the "national soul" or *Volksseele*. Already seen in Fabius Schach's editorial, this term, though rarely elaborated upon in any detail, was often used by the journal to refer to the Jewish people's common history of suffering, misery and persecution. The term promoted *Ost und West*'s central mission of bringing Eastern and Western Jews closer together into a nation. This emphasis on a common history was, as Benedict Anderson notes, yet another typical means to encourage the creation of a national identity.[61] Moreover, it was quite typical of contemporaneous Zionist strategies to foster a Jewish national consciousness.[62] Indeed, for both acculturated, relatively secure Western European Jews as well as ghettoised *Ostjuden*, a shared history could serve as a transnational bond *par excellence*; despite living in vastly different environments and developing along separate paths, both shared memories of historic (and current) persecution and suffering. In the pages of *Ost und West*, this history was embodied in the figure of "the eternal Jew" (*der ewige Jude*). Appearing often in the journal (significantly, the very first illustration in the first issue was "The Eternal Jew" by the Jewish sculptor, Alfred Nossig),[63] the very word "eternal" had a nationalistic connotation. It implied an eternally-united Jewish people which had continued to exist in spite of centuries of dispersion, exile and persecution. It followed, then, that those artists who captured either the *Volksseele* or the "eternity" of the Jewish experience were among the ones whom *Ost und West* heralded as the bearers of the new Jewish art.

In the first review of a major Jewish artist in *Ost und West*, Martin Buber took up the figure of Lesser Ury (1861–1938), a German-Jewish Impressionist who, next to Max Liebermann, was the most gifted and famous Jewish painter at the time in Germany. Focusing specifically on Ury's work "Jerusalem" (1896) – a piece depicting exhausted Jewish refugees fleeing from tsarist Russia – Buber noted:

> "On [a] . . . bench, people are seated – Jews. A short rest during a great journey . . . They have been wandering already for many leaden days . . . soon they will rise and wander further, carrying themselves through the desolate misery of pitiless eras and lands . . . But these people are the entire Jewish nation and this one evening is its entire history. This is Ury's long, lonely battle from the sketch to the finished work: he proceeded to paint from Jewish history and discovered Jewish eternity."[64]

For Buber, each individual figure in the composition expressed eternity:

[61] Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 197–203.
[62] Aschheim, *op.cit.*, p. 108.
[63] *O&W*, January 1901, pp. 5–6.
[64] 'Lesser Ury', in *O&W*, February 1901, p. 117.

> "The old man on the right . . . with the half-closed eyes whose gaze is without direction . . . is one of many . . . [E]ternity emanates from him . . . Next to him is a cloaked female figure . . . she is full of despair . . .
> On the ground is a young lad, only partially visible: thin and lost in his dreams . . .
> From all of them emanates eternity.
> Further in the front . . . is a downtrodden matriarch . . . Her cheeks are sunken . . . her eyes have cried out all their tears . . .
> Eternity . . .
> Eternity . . ."[65]

From his review, it is clear that Buber saw the power of the painting as deriving from the high degree of empathy that Ury brought to, and invested in, his subject matter. Buber highlighted the convergence of Ury's own difficult, personal history and that of his people's. Describing the painter's life as "turbulent, volcanic, restless . . . and saturated with the pain of individualists, loners, artists [and] Jews . . ."[66] he wrote that, "because he experienced it himself and depicted it in this painting", Ury had portrayed not only the Jews' destiny but his own as well.[67] As a result of his ability to identify closely with Jewish suffering, Buber believed that Ury had succeeded in understanding and expressing the Jewish *Volksseele*. As he exclaimed in closing his review, "Ury is . . . the poet of the Jewish soul".[68]

In other reviews that appeared in *Ost und West*, the principle emerged that the artists who expressed the *Volksseele* were those who, like Ury, personally sympathised with Jewish suffering and depicted its historical as well as contemporary manifestations. In a January 1902 review of the work of the German-Jewish artist Hermann Struck (1876–1944), G. Kutna reiterated many of Buber's enthusiastic remarks regarding Ury. Noting Struck's "yearning for soul", Kutna wrote:

> ". . . this twenty-six year old artist almost only paints old people, old in years and weary of life. In these people lies so much of the history of their individual lives and common history. Something from the elegy of the centuries courses through these beings; a sadness, that is softly heard, because time has made it milder and deeper . . . a suffering that belongs to being. It is the Jew who witnessed this and the Jew who explained what he saw."[69]

Once again, the connection between the Jewish historical experience and the artist's ability to both identify with and evoke it emerged as a principle for identifying art as Jewish. Respectful of the fact that "the Jewish spiritual world is so familiar to the artist", Kutna wrote that Struck grew up:

> "in an environment where the morning is begun with psalms . . . [He] has remained loyal to this environment with all its . . . festivals and melancholy; he knows the melodies with which the Jew prays. And he lets these sound when he depicts his Jews."[70]

Among Struck's portraits, one which received great praise in *Ost und West* was his "Polish Rabbi" in September 1901. In an editorial on Polish Jews, the journal passionately exclaimed:

[65] *Ibid.*, pp. 117–119.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 120.
[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 127–128.
[69] 'Hermann Struck', in *O&W*, January 1902, pp. 27–28.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

". . . in viewing the portrait that Struck has presented us, we cannot avoid recognising that the Polish Jew is the archetype of all Jews. The entire fate of the Jewish people in one head! Oppression, perseverance, defiance, patience and an elevated spirituality emanate from his massive features.

It is the genuine and true 'eternal Jew' . . . the epitome of the eternal people that, under torture, nevertheless waits for life and a new Spring."[71]

Struck's work was viewed as expressing the essence of the Jewish historical experience – its eternity and its suffering; in a word, its national soul. Consequently, he was an artist who was expected by *Ost und West*'s art critics to play an important role in the Jewish cultural, and specifically artistic, renaissance.

Another artist who fell into this category was the Polish-Jewish painter, Samuel Hirszenberg (1865–1908). First introduced in the October 1902 issue of *Ost und West*, Hirszenberg was also praised for his depiction of Eastern European Jewish life and suffering. Respectfully noting that Hirszenberg "cannot be denied the status of a Jewish painter", the reviewer singled out for praise his monumental work, "The Eternal Jew". The painting, which required four years of work before it was exhibited in 1900, depicted a half-crazed, desperate Jew running through a darkened field littered with bloody corpses under towering crosses. In commenting on the painting, the reviewer focused on the convergence of the long history of Jewish suffering and Hirszenberg's own history of hardship:

"The strength that . . . [Hirszenberg] had to summon and the difficulties he had to overcome to complete the picture were enormous . . .

Only with great effort did he succeed in collecting the necessary funds. Moreover . . . as the oldest son in a large family, he constantly felt obligations falling on him, because he did not want to leave his father, already old and tired of work, without support. [Yet] . . . with unmatched enthusiasm, in a constant fever . . . he invested his entire soul, all of his suffering and the suffering of his people into this work. This, because, the old man who flees from the crosses . . . is the image of those who have been persecuted for centuries, those who have eternally fled, those who have been eternally hounded and who can find no place to rest.

Oh Zion, the artist thought of you as he created this work in the long, sleepless nights with glowing fever and pulsating heart. It was to you, distant homeland, that he turned . . . when he directed his yearning, anguished gaze to your sunny horizon."[72]

Other examples of Hirszenberg's work were praised for their ability to evoke sympathy for Jewish suffering. "The Poor Jew", for example, was described as a simple but masterfully executed painting, which represented "a being full of suffering and sadness with whom one suffers and cries".[73] Similarly, in describing "The Jewish Cemetery" – a work depicting three women mourners – the reviewer observed:

"an entire drama unfolds in the behaviour of these poor women . . . What pain, what disconsolateness in their wild movements and their powerless hands! Accentuating the melancholy of the place even more is the presence of a fine . . . autumn rain on the graves [which] lends this last resting place of all suffering the expression of never-ending sadness."

Although it was nowhere explicitly stated that Hirszenberg had expressed the Jewish *Volksseele*, it is clear that *Ost und West*'s reviewer regarded him as one of the

[71]'Polnische Juden', in *O&W*, September 1901, pp. 653–654.
[72]'Samuel Hirszenberg' in *O&W*, October 1902, pp. 683–684.
[73]*Ibid.*, pp. 687–688.

brightest young stars of the Jewish artistic resurgence. Celebrating the fact that Hirszenberg's work "has contributed to the pride of the Jewish people", the journal paid him the ultimate compliment by asking, "who understands how to depict Jews better than he?"[74]

In subsequent issues, *Ost und West*'s editors introduced other Jewish painters whose work resembled that of Ury, Struck and Hirszenberg. In 1903, the writer David Frischmann reviewed the work of the Polish-Jewish painter, Leopold Pilichowski (1869–1933), highlighting above all, his attention to the misery of the Eastern European Jew. For Frischmann, Pilichowski's approach to painting was novel since, unlike earlier Jewish artists, his paintings – including such titles as "The Tired Ones" and "By the Wayside" – were not idyllic scenes of Jewish life, but were rather darker versions – "small dramas of great suffering", as Frischmann noted.[75] The work of another Polish Jew, the sculptor Henryk Glicenstein (1870–1943), was similarly reviewed in the March issue of the same year. After discussing many of the sculptor's works – including "Cain and Abel" and "Melancholy" – Rosalie Perles asked, "why is every work by Glicenstein a tragedy? Why does he brood incessantly on the dark side of life? . . . Why is his art never cheerful?"[76] After pointing out that Glicenstein's own creative, artistic impulses had been stifled by the repressive environment of the "*heder*" (where he had received his religious instruction as a youth), Perles concluded that the primary reason was his relationship to "the fate of his own people".[77]

> "As long as he can think and create, it reverberates in his insides and never leaves him, awake or asleep. It looms before him as the first and last, as the highest and only problem . . . It has accompanied him through all stages of his development up to the present. It has assumed the form of a bound Messiah [Glicenstein's latest work]. In him, the tragedy of all tragedies, the entire suffering of Israel, will be embodied in stone."[78]

The enthusiastic reviews of Ury, Struck, Hirszenberg, Pilichowski and Glicenstein demonstrate that an important aspect of *Ost und West*'s definition of Jewish art was the ability of a given work to express the image of the Jew as perpetual victim, oppressed through the centuries. Such an image served one of *Ost und West*'s goals of fostering a greater degree of solidarity among European Jews: it was, after all, an image with which Jews easily identified and it could thus act as a unifying force. And yet, this image was not the only one promoted by the journal.

Indeed, reviews of other artists in *Ost und West* suffice to demonstrate that the image of Jew as victim was one which the journal hoped to relegate to the Jewish past. In a May 1903 review of the work of the Lithuanian sculptor, Boris Schatz (1865–1933), his piece "Maccabee" was heralded as offering a positive vision for the future of the Jewish people. As the reviewer, Marcus Ehrenpreis (the noted Hebrew writer and Chief Rabbi of Sofia), claimed, "[Schatz's work] speaks a new language of the free and upright Jews". Commenting on the representation of

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 680.
[75] 'Leopold Pilichowski', in *O&W*, January 1903, pp. 48–49.
[76] 'Henryk Glicenstein', in *O&W*, March 1903, p. 191.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[78] *Ibid.*

Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees, standing over a fallen enemy soldier, dagger triumphant in hand, Ehrenpreis happily observed:

> "This wonderful statue reminds me of an old, heroic Hebrew hymn; it reminds me that we once were upright, strong people and it announces that the day is approaching when we will once again be upright strong people. Here Schatz has found the way that leads out of exile (*Golus*) to Jewishness."[79]

Essentially, Schatz had created an image of the idealised Jew of the future as conceived by many Zionists: strong, upright, a symbol of what Max Nordau termed "muscular Jewry" (*Muskeljudentum*).[80]

"Maccabee", however, was regarded as an exceptional work in Schatz's overall *oeuvre*. According to Ehrenpreis, despite the great value of "Maccabee", the majority of Schatz's work was essentially "Golus-art". As he wrote, Schatz "is still stuck in the ghetto and has no eye for the emerging Jewish life on the other side of the ghetto – for a Judaism that is healthy, young and optimistic about the future".[81] These comments once again reveal the tension between continuity and discontinuity in defining Jewish art in *Ost und West*. The cultural past to which much of the new Jewish art, such as Schatz's, was linked had, in fact, been shaped by Buber's "twin evils" of ghetto and golus; art that was Jewish, therefore, had to reflect at least partially this historical experience. Thus, he called for Jewish artists to cease depicting "the same grey and hopeless misery of a prison-like existence", and to begin including "pre-exile Jewry and . . . the Jew of today with his new beliefs and his new hopes" in their work.[82] Schatz's *oeuvre* therefore represented the transition being made by Jewish artists from representing the experiences of the past to those of the future. Marking a departure from his generally ghetto-bound work, Schatz's "Maccabee" anticipated the future direction of Jewish art.

An artist who better fitted the mould of what Ehrenpreis imagined as the Jewish artist of the future was the Galician-born illustrator, Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874–1925). Featured in numerous issues of *Ost und West*, Lilien had, early on, acquired the reputation of being "a Jewish artist" for his ability to "creat[e] . . . from deep within the national soul".[83] As a later reviewer, J. Thon, pointed out, it was the content of Lilien's work that made it so effective: "all Lilien's drawings are tendentious. The tendency is clear and speaks to everyone. Lilien, the artist of Zionism, has created symbols that embody the ideas, wishes and yearnings of the Zionist."[84] In fact, many of Lilien's drawings did possess an explicit political message; for example, his drawing – for the Vth Zionist Congress in 1901 – of a bent Jew sitting at the edge of a field being told by an angel to redirect his gaze to the sight of a Jewish farmer, guiding his plough and team of cattle into a brilliant sunrise, was one that offered a ringing endorsement of Zionism's call for Jews to return to physical labour.[85] Significantly, this

[79]'Boris Schatz', in *O&W*, May 1903, pp. 308–309.
[80]See Almog, *op. cit.*, pp. 108–118, for more on "muscular Jewry".
[81]'Boris Schatz', in *O&W*, May 1903, pp. 307–308.
[82]*Ibid.*, p. 308.
[83]'E.M. Lilien', in *O&W*, July 1901, p. 526.
[84]'Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Zeichnenden Kunst', in *O&W*, December 1904, p. 831.
[85]See *O&W*, January 1902, pp. 17–18.

message had apparently been widely disseminated. Referring to Lilien's black and white art nouveau drawings, Thon wrote:

> "However one wishes to evaluate Lilien's art, its greatest significance is undeniable; it has not only demonstrated the reality of a 'Jewish' art, it has, more so than any other Jewish artist, brought this novelty closer to the people . . . and popularised it."

Compared to Schatz, Lilien was clearly the more laudable, both politically and culturally; his work was further along in the task of escaping from the limitations of the ghetto past. Still, while Lilien's reputation overshadowed Schatz's, *Ost und West*'s evaluation of both men's work demonstrated that the new Jewish art was to be based on images of Jewish strength as well as of Jewish victimisation.

Interestingly, although *Ost und West* generally defined Jewish art as that which possessed Jewish content, the absence of explicit Jewish content did not always prevent a painting from being classified as Jewish. In a June 1902 review of the Russian-Jewish painter, Leonid Pasternak (1862–1945), Alexander Hausmann admitted that, in light of his avoidance of Jewish themes, "[t]he Jewishness in Pasternak's work is not too obvious".[86] Yet, Hausmann continued, Pasternak's Jewishness surfaced in an unexpected way. Referring to Pasternak's portraits of women and children and his scenes of urban interiors, Hausmann claimed:

> "The attentive observer can hardly overlook several marked racial characteristics in his *oeuvre*. Is this inner, heartfelt sense of family, reflected in so many of his drawings and paintings, not genuinely Jewish? One must have the feeling for the warm intimacy of family life strongly in one's blood in order to represent the nourishing mother [and] the groups of children at play with such . . . accuracy and love. In this way, Pasternak expresses one of the sympathetic sides of Jewish life."[87]

Similar reasoning was used in an August 1901 review of the Russian-Jewish painter, S. J. Kischinewsky (b. 1863). Rarely depicting Jews in his work, Kischinewsky was, according to his reviewer, J. Sacker, a painter more interested in painting the outcasts and the downtrodden of Russian society, with no particular eye to their religion.[88] This was a sore point for Sacker who, though praising Kischinewsky for his humanity, admonished him for his inattention to the sufferings of his Jewish brethren. As he wrote:

> "However high we rate the beautiful talent of the painter, we cannot avoid accusing him of something that pertains to him more as a person than an artist. This would be his total indifference to Judaism. Strangely, as a Jew himself, he has no eye for Jewish suffering. And yet, no land is as suitable as Russia for representing the various gradations and shades of our martyrdom. Could not Kischinewsky have found among the Russian Jews an analogous example to his [representations of the] spiritually and morally crippled . . . ?"[89]

Despite his disappointment at this failing of Kischinewsky's character, however, Sacker found reasons to claim him for the ranks of the Jewish artists. Speculating on the reason why Kischinewsky was drawn to the world of the dispossessed, Sacker wrote: "[d]oes it not lie . . . in the intimate drive of Jews to direct their

[86]'L. Pasternak', in *O&W*, June 1902, p. 380.
[87]*Ibid.*, pp. 380–381.
[88]'S.J. Kischinewsky', in *O&W*, August 1901, p. 578.
[89]*Ibid.*, pp. 582–583.

sympathies towards the world of the downtrodden?"[90] This was the first step towards defining Kischinewsky as a Jewish artist: Jewish artists, to a degree, were those who found themselves depicting the world of the homeless and destitute. A second reason why the artist could be defined as Jewish, Sacker noted, was Kischinewsky's focus on the subjectivity, the interiority and the individuality of his subjects.

> "Is it not because of the inborn tendency of Jews to favour the spiritual over the material that Kischinewsky always handles only the subjective side of his subjects, their feelings and mood, in other words, their inner world . . . ?
>
> It is a definite trait of Jewish artists – wherever they may have directed their activity – that the content of a particular question, that is to say, the soul, totally overwhelms the form, that the interior dominates the exterior . . . The focus of Jewish artistic ability lies in its faithful reproduction of the feelings and thoughts of the individual."[91]

From Sacker's review of Kischinewsky's work, a certain consistency of thought emerges regarding the process of identifying Jewish art. For Sacker, as for the reviewers of Ury, Struck and Hirszenberg, there was a direct relationship between the painter's focus on the inner mood and feelings of his subjects and his sympathy for them. According to him, both Kischinewsky's attraction to the downtrodden and his particular focus on their subjective feelings were a result of the artist's latent Jewishness. To be sure, this was based on syllogistic reasoning. As long as Sacker posited "an inborn quality of the Jews to favour the spiritual over the material" and "an intimate drive of the Jews to direct their sympathies towards the world of the downtrodden", he could claim that Kischinewsky's spiritual depiction of the world of the distressed made him a Jewish artist. What this reflects is an impulse (characteristic of those involved with *Ost und West*) to define the emerging Jewish art as broadly as possible. As many at the journal probably believed, the new Jewish art would gain strength in numbers – that is, if more new representatives of it could be found. This may explain why Pasternak and Kischinewsky were eventually claimed as Jewish artists. Although *Ost und West*'s editors would no doubt have preferred that their work include explicit Jewish content, the journal found it imprudent to discard Pasternak and Kischinewsky from the ranks of the new generation of Jewish artists.

Our examination so far has revealed that in *Ost und West*, "Jewish" content in a work of art was broadly defined. The fact that artists could be defined as Jewish 1) because of their focus on a theme such as Jewish suffering, 2) because of their focus on a theme such as Jewish strength, or 3) as we have just seen, in spite of their inattention to Jewish themes, reveals that there was no fixed principle by which content could be identified as Jewish. Nevertheless, it appears that one common factor was, in fact, shared by the three general groups. In the features on all the aforementioned painters and sculptors, *Ost und West*'s art critics came to the conclusion that a work was Jewish if it had been infused with the soul of the

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 579.
[91] *Ibid.*

artist.[92] Reviewers repeatedly emphasised the convergence of the artist's personal experience and the Jewish historical experience. To some degree, this focus on subjectivity betrays the influence of the late-nineteenth-century symbolist movement in Europe, which placed value on the artist's expression of his or her own inner spirit, or subjectivity.[93] It also certainly points to the upsurge in neo-Romanticism in Germany at the time. A consequence of this, no doubt, was that *Ost und West*'s art critics were highly conscious of the role of personal feeling and emotion in the work of new Jewish artists. The journal's reviewers noted that the personal histories of the new Jewish painters had caused them to identify so fully with the life of their people that they could not help but express the *Volksseele* in their art. Jewish artists, therefore, were the ones whose (suffering) souls brought them in touch with, and allowed them to express, the (suffering) Jewish *Volksseele*. As we have seen, however, *Ost und West*'s art critics also regarded as Jewish those artists who – while not expressing it by depicting Jewish themes – appeared to have preserved linkages to certain aspects of the Jewish soul, whether through sympathy for the downtrodden (Kischinewsky) or sensitivity to the family (Pasternak). The common denominator here, it appears, was an empathetic outlook towards the other, whoever he or she might be. For the editors of *Ost und West*, artists who approached their subjects with understanding and empathy born from personal experience were Jewish – regardless apparently, of what they painted.

This notion is further supported by examining examples of art which *Ost und West* did *not* find to be Jewish. Several reviews revealed that if a work of art lacked the necessary degree of soul or sympathy, even the presence of a Jewish theme did not qualify it as Jewish. In a retrospective on the Polish-Jewish sculptor, Elias Jacowlewitsch Guenzberg (b. 1858), for example, Lothar Brieger-Wasservogel identified him as a sculptor of merely fleeting importance. For Wasservogel, it was the tentative, hesitant quality of Guenzberg's work that diminished not only its quality, but its Jewishness. Commenting on the sculptor's *oeuvre* (which, like Pasternak's or Kischinewsky's, included little by way of Jewish themes), Wasservogel wrote:

> "Guenzberg is one of those artists who never offends the layman, because he himself – I hope I will be understood correctly – is a spiritual layman. His art always carefully avoids confrontation with technical or spiritual problems . . . A careful avoidance of everything extreme, everything passionate that stirs up the soul characterises his work . . . Everything is nice. Guenzberg is neither a classicist nor a modernist. In no way can one call him a Jewish artist; at most, an artist of Jewish descent."[94]

According to Wasservogel, Guenzberg's main problem was a lack of soul; "his technique is completely . . . academic. Absolutely impersonal, it is most suitable

[92] At times, *Ost und West*'s reviewers went a little far in describing the Jewish connection to the soul. In one issue, Georg Hermann made a point of noting that the Russian-Jewish landscape painter, Isaak Lewithan, had – as a Jew – "depicted the uniqueness of the Russian soul" better than any other Russian painter before him! 'Isaak Lewithan', in *O&W*, April 1907, p. 246.

[93] As Robert Goldwater has observed, the aims of the symbolist movement were, as the French art critic Gustave Kahn noted, to "objectify the subjective" and to "exteriorise the idea". Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism*, New York 1979, p. 1.

[94] 'Elias Jacowlewitsch Guenzberg', in *O&W*, March 1904, p. 164.

for the production of objectively-viewed items."[95] In view of the oft-cited importance of subjectivity to Jewish art, the charge of sculpting objectively was a severe one. For Wasservogel, a true Jewish artist was one who invested his entire soul passionately in his work. This, in turn, affirmed *Ost und West*'s criteria for defining art as Jewish.

Another artist accused of painting objectively was the German painter Ismael Gentz. Although a non-Jew, Gentz had often painted Jewish themes and had thus attracted the attention of *Ost und West*. Not surprisingly, Nathanjah Sahuwi's review of the painter in the January 1903 issue focused on the reasons why Gentz's work could not be viewed as Jewish. For Sahuwi, the painting "Nothing to Do" – an interior scene featuring an introspective Jewish beggar – was fundamentally problematic.

> "I must openly admit that I view the painting with mixed feelings. From a purely technical perspective it is masterful – in arrangement, manipulation of the light effects, its use of colour and shading. Face, gesture and composure are not superficially rendered, but are strikingly true as a projection of the entire insides of the person. But . . .
>
> Yes! This But! . . . The hope for a Jewish art pervades us entirely; it gives us . . . the courage to create or at least to risk. In anxious hours, the question besets us: Is there a Jewish art? Is it only a . . . lie that we use to console ourselves? I believe that pictures such as Gentz's 'Nothing to Do' are not merely valuable artistically. They are instructive. For us. I see the poor . . . Jewish personages created by Hirszenberg and Pilichowsky. Worlds lie in between. How lacking in sympathy Gentz's picture appears. Here the man has been painted objectively – his existence has been fixed (*der Gewordene!*) But the Jewish personages of Jewish artists . . . we see them becoming, we see their destiny, their history of suffering . . .
>
> For the Christian-Aryan painters Jewish personages are merely interesting models and motifs. For the Jewish [ones], they are the brothers of same blood, same history, and the bearers of our own soul, our own suffering and our own hope.
>
> In this selflessness – not individual, but according to race and national kind – lie the seeds for the specificity of Jewish art."[96]

Here, once again, the presence or absence of Jewish content alone did not qualify a painting for admission into the new canon of Jewish art. In the case of Gentz, as in that of Guenzberg, a certain relationship between the painter and the subject – one of great empathy – had to be present for it to be regarded as Jewish. The claim that Gentz lacked empathy was another way of saying he lacked the soul necessary to identify with the Jewish experience – a shortcoming which prevented the Jewish themes in his work from expressing the Jewish *Volksseele*. As the editors of *Ost und West* seemed to maintain, Jewish art began with the artist. If one sympathised or felt personally involved with the fate of the Jewish people, one had a chance to transmit those feelings into art – subjectivity had replaced objectivity as Jewish art's essential element. Without this quality of emotional identification, no truly Jewish art could emerge.

An important implication of Nathanjah Sahuwi's review of Ismael Gentz's work was that only Jews were capable of producing Jewish art. This did not mean, however, that Jewish art was the inevitable result of Jewish artistic effort. Displaying a consistent logic, *Ost und West*'s editors, while denying that Christians could produce Jewish art, allowed that Jews might be capable of

[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 165–166.
[96] 'Ismael Gentz' in *O&W*, January 1903, p. 98

producing Christian art. To a great extent, this claim was arrived at by default; those Jews who failed to produce Jewish art had essentially ended up producing Christian art.

In the very first issue of *Ost und West*, Leo Winz outlined the differences between Jewish and Christian art. Arguing that art stemmed from the same reaches of the soul as religion, Winz compared the differences in Jewish and Christian attitudes towards art by returning to their origins in antiquity. The ancient Jewish prohibition against creating and worshipping graven images, he maintained, was a reflection of the historical differences between Jews and "heathens". The latter, working from the premise that God was not visible, concluded: "we therefore need to make a tangible representation of him in order to visualise him". Working from the same premise, the Jews concluded: "therefore he cannot be represented by any image".[97] The difference could be reduced to a fundamental distinction between Jewish "spirituality" and heathen "sensuality".[98] According to Winz:

> "Here as well as there, it was agreed that man was created in the image of God; the basic difference, however, consisted [in the fact] that there, divinity was soberly recognised and understood as a purely spiritual essence, while here it was taken to be sensual . . .
>
> In Judaism, one believed that if truth could only be found in God, the realm of sensuality was totally alien; and only by distancing oneself from that one realm could one approach the other. The freer one became from the bonds of sensuality, the closer one hoped to come into the full possession of truth."[99]

The result of these differences, Winz wrote, was that the Jews "turned their backs on sensuality", while the heathens, choosing the most elaborate and beautiful forms to represent the divine presence, proceeded to develop a highly sophisticated aesthetic sense.[100] Consequently, from ancient times, Jewish art was inwardly-directed and spiritually, rather than sensually, focused.

Winz's definition of Jewish art as more concerned with content than form fitted in well with the manner in which *Ost und West*'s reviewers generally defined art and artists as Jewish. In light of the perceived ancient Jewish practice of focusing on spirituality and interiority, any painter who could be seen by the journal's art critics as exhibiting those traits could be defined as a Jewish artist. This definition also included those who possessed no conscious desire to focus on Jewish topics. Thus, for *Ost und West*'s reviewers, artistic intentionality did not play the only role in determining whether a work was Jewish or not. This naturally facilitated the journal's task of determining who could enter the nascent pantheon of emerging Jewish artists. In short, the effort to trace the distinctive qualities of Jewish art back to antiquity did not merely serve an esoteric, antiquarian interest, but established a standard for defining the new Jewish art.

Despite the traditional Jewish preference for content over form, *Ost und West* nevertheless proceeded to identify artists as Jewish by virtue of their work's

[97] 'Bildende Kunst und Judentum', in *O&W*, February 1901, p. 96.
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[99] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[100] *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

formal qualities. Here was yet another reflection of the journal's desire to see Jewish art move beyond its prior limitations. While primarily still rooted in artistic content, Jewish art was beginning to appear in artistic form (a parallel to the Jewish shift from spirituality to sensuality). Most often, *Ost und West*'s reviewers defined Jewish form in its traditional manifestation: as a Jewish tendency to embrace a simple, plain style of painting. As Georg Hermann noted in his June 1903 review of the great German-Jewish Impressionist, Max Liebermann: "the . . . strongest trait of the race . . . is its love for, and tendency to depict artistically, a great, poetic plainness, a truly Old Testament simplicity . . . [and] a holy seriousness that loves life in its simplest forms".[101] These traits were also found in Leonid Pasternak, whose work was defined as Jewish not only for its attention to the family, but for its "almost total . . . absen[ce of] decorative elements".[102] Similarly, in reviewing the great French-Jewish Impressionist, Camille Pissarro, Georg Hermann identified the painter's Jewishness in the plainness of his work. Although admitting that "the Jewish note never surfaced externally in his work", Hermann did observe that Pissarro's landscapes were known for their "plainness [and] expansiveness" – qualities which Hermann elsewhere saw embodied in Pissarro's "strong, plain sense of nature".[103] In short, a traditional tendency to paint simply and plainly was seen to be a basic trait of Jewish form.

As mentioned above, Jewish form, moreover, could also be manifested in a characteristically Jewish sense of colour. In Martin Buber's 1901 review of Lesser Ury, for example, it was not only the painter's Jewish themes that qualified him as a Jewish artist. Asking the question, "How is Ury a Jewish artist?" Buber answered:

> "First, in his style of painting, in his use of colour. By this I do not merely mean his preference for sparkling, light-intoxicated colours . . . a preference that some have traced back to oriental influences . . . More than this, I mean the form in which Ury depicts colour. His use of colour does not reveal the outlines of the object but depicts its nuances as it is affected by light and air. The stress is placed on the fine interaction between the object and the forces that affect it, not on its external emergence. The softening of its outer boundaries . . . occurs to be benefit of an inner individualisation. This manner of seeing the world is genuinely Jewish . . . Everywhere in our art, a more surface-orientated style dominates that is focused on the total mood, and the relationship of the objects to one another rather than simply to their forms."[104]

According to Buber, the direct representation of an object was apparently not Jewish; Jewish artistic expression was, rather, found in the more contingent, relational dimensions of an object in its environmental setting. In colour, this would manifest itself in a muted, subtle manner of representation. This point was also pursued by Hermann who observed that "a . . . characteristic of the Jewish temperament in painting is . . . an acute sense of tone and colour. [Jewish artists] are not exponents of using strong colour . . . In all of [Jozef] Israels's works [for example], twilight tones predominate."[105] Essentially, it seems that a Jewish

[101]'Max Liebermann', in *O&W*, June 1903, p. 380.
[102]'L. Pasternak', in *O&W*, June 1902, pp. 381–382.
[103]'Camille Pissarro', in *O&W*, January 1904, pp. 16, 18.
[104]'Lesser Ury', in *O&W*, February 1901, pp. 125–126.
[105]'Max Liebermann', in *O&W*, June 1903, p. 380.

sense of colour was shaped by the Jewish tendency towards simplicity of form. Although the connection was never explicitly drawn in *Ost und West*, both seem to have had roots in the ancient prohibition against the heathen practice of direct representation.

At times, however, it was not the subtlety of colour, but its total absence which was seen as Jewish. This was evident in a particular Jewish preference for line over colour – a preference that Lothar Brieger-Wasservogel identified in his May 1904 review of the German-Jewish artist, Käthe Münzer. For Wasservogel, the strong linear quality of Münzer's drawings reflected the fact that the Jews had traditionally been "a people ill-disposed towards colour".[106] This, he claimed, was due to the fact that, over the centuries, the Jews had been "brooders" and had allowed "thinking [to] weigh . . . too heavily upon [them]". Wasservogel clarified this observation with the following equation: "[Thought] corresponds to line, whereas colour appears to correspond to the expression of feeling."[107] In other words, the (oft-cited) inwardly-orientated spirituality and introspectiveness of the Jews was unsuited for expression in joyful colour, and had thus emerged as sober line. This, in many ways, was an argument to explain why Jewish artistic production had traditionally featured works such as *Haggadot* which, as elaborately-scripted works, possessed a strong linear quality.[108]

This Jewish artistic tradition, however, was on the wane according to Wasservogel. More precisely, it was being replaced by a new one. Münzer's recent turn away from drawing towards painting – from a traditional use of line to non-traditional use of colour – was seen by Wasservogel as a reflection of the major changes occurring within Jewish culture. As he happily observed:

> "Modern Judaism has just discovered colour. Zionism, if it means what I think it does artistically, will be an exultation of colour that our descendents will marvel at.
>
> And here, Käthe Münzer – completely a Jewess of our time – is a typical, if seldom-seen, figure in light of her progression from line to colour. What is occurring within her [work] reflects the transformation of an entire race."[109]

Wasservogel eagerly greeted signs of progressive, non-traditional Jewish creativity; his remarks reflected the general Zionist desire to reinvent the modern Jew by eliminating all the products of traditional Jewish disabilities. Indeed, it echoed Martin Buber's call, made in his article 'Juedische Renaissance', for Jews to fight "pure spirituality" and restore "our feeling for life".[110] Münzer's move from line to colour paralleled Jewish artists' growing turn away from spirituality to sensuality and from content to form. Thus, the tension between the old and the new in Jewish art resurfaced once again, this time in the discussion of Jewish form. Reflecting the dialectical nature of the Jewish artistic renaissance, Jewish art was increasingly exhibiting new traits: Jewish content now included images

[106]'Käthe Münzer', in *O&W*, May 1904, p. 309.
[107]*Ibid.*
[108]While not referring specifically to *Haggadot*, Brieger-Wasservogel noted that Jewish thought found wonderful expression in our "written books", *ibid. Haggadot*, however, were often featured in *Ost und West*. See, for example, *O&W*, April 1901, pp. 258–312, *passim*.
[109]'Käthe Münzer', in *O&W*, May 1904, pp. 309–310.
[110]'Juedische Renaissance', in *O&W*, January 1901, p. 9.

of Jewish strength in addition to Jewish misery; Jewish form now displayed bold, in addition to muted, displays of colour. In general, Jewish art was developing a feeling for the sensual in addition to one for the spiritual. All of these traits, traditional and novel, demonstrated that a new Jewish art was truly emerging.

This remarkably elaborate system of defining the traits of Jewish art served a specific aim. Indeed, the expansive definition of Jewish art offered by *Ost und West*'s art critics revealed the journal's tendentious approach to art criticism. A broad definition of Jewish art served to enlarge the canon of the new Jewish art – a goal which *Ost und West*'s editors hoped would promote enthusiasm for the Jewish cultural renaissance. In light of this aim, we can better understand the emphasis on defining a Jewish form. If form were a criterion, the new Jewish art would benefit tremendously by being able to include such luminaries as Max Liebermann and Camille Pissarro in its ranks. Since neither focused on Jewish themes in their work, this was the only means of inclusion. In truth, of course, it was impossible to identify a painter as Jewish simply based on his or her use of line, tone or colour. If confronted with two Impressionist paintings – one produced by a non-Jew, the other by a Jew – *Ost und West*'s art critics would have been hard-pressed to distinguish between them simply by analysing their formal qualities. Nevertheless, this was an objection that – if ever raised – did not impede the journal's editors from pursuing their larger aims.

Ost und West's enthusiastic broadening of the definition of Jewish art should not obscure the tensions that existed within the journal. In truth, its editors faced a genuine dilemma in trying to build support for the Jewish cultural renaissance. According to the premise of the journal, publicising the achievements of the new, pan-European Jewish artistic resurgence (as one branch of the cultural renaissance) would result in creating a stronger sense of Jewish solidarity. This, in turn, would promote the cause of Jewish national rebirth. And yet, not all accepted this as the proper sequence. Some writers for *Ost und West* never seemed to make up their minds whether, in fact, the promotion of the new Jewish art could lead to Jewish unity. Indeed, many claimed the inverse, that only the emergence of Jewish unity would produce a genuine Jewish art. As Martin Buber wrote in his review of Lesser Ury, a Jewish national art required as prerequisites both "a unified community" and "a homeland"; only with the advent of the two would a Jewish art develop. Asking himself "Is a Jewish art possible today?" Buber replied:

> "To this, there is only one answer, a clear, hard: No.
>
> A national art requires earth out of which it can grow, and a sky, against which it can bloom. We Jews have neither . . . We possess no homeland that would carry our hopes in its womb and would give firmness to the steps of our feet.
>
> A national art requires a unified community, out of which it emerges and for which it stands. We, however, merely have pieces of a community, and it is only now, quietly, that it is, in parts, becoming a whole."[111]

Clearly, for Buber, the attainment of national unity in a national homeland preceded the creation of a national art.

[111] 'Lesser Ury', in *O&W*, February 1901, p. 113.

Significantly, though, Buber did allow for the existence of Jewish artists in the Diaspora. Reflecting the influence of the new idea of *Gegenwartsarbeit*, Buber offered a two-stage formulation of how Jewish art would ultimately arise. Jewish artists now active in Europe – men and women who expressed the "inherited qualities of the nation" – were proof that the Jewish nation possessed the potential for creating an authentic national art in the future.[112] Indeed, their efforts in the Diaspora had already yielded results; new Jewish artistic traits were beginning to appear. In general, Buber saw Europe as a necessary *in vitro* nurturing environment for Jewish artists, in preparation for their eventual *in vivo* transplant into the Jewish homeland. There, the budding characteristics of Jewish art now appearing in Europe would achieve full bloom. The promotion of young Jewish artists in the Diaspora, therefore, was an interim measure to serve the long-term interests of Jewish art, which, for Zionists, would inevitably develop in Palestine.

That a genuine Jewish art would not develop in Europe seems to have been generally recognised by *Ost und West*'s editors. Of course, some exceptions existed. Anxious to build enthusiasm for the Jewish cultural renaissance, some reviewers failed to distinguish between Jewish artists and a Jewish art and over-eagerly proclaimed the arrival of the latter. On balance, however, *Ost und West*'s contributors maintained an admirable sense of perspective during the heady days after its appearance. Indeed, at times, the journal explicitly pointed out that a Jewish art had not yet arrived. In summarising the first year of the journal's existence in the January issue of 1902, the editors of *Ost und West* opined:

> "The Jewish art about which we have spoken still does not exist – but who of those who have seen our journal has not seen the promising beginnings – beginnings that are more beautiful, stronger, and more varied than most could imagine . . . *The Jewish art has not yet reached its peak*, but there are many more artists of Jewish background than we ourselves believed, who have turned to Jewish themes . . . The works of art that one could say only a Jewish artist could have produced are multiplying . . ."[113]

Although enthusiastic about future prospects, the editors of *Ost und West* were not yet prepared to proclaim the full arrival of a Jewish art.

This was further demonstrated by the journal's constant imploring of German Jews to support the emerging Jewish art. Quoted in the February 1901 issue, the painter, Lesser Ury, noted that a serious problem was the fact that:

> "Jewish artists find support sooner among Christians than Jews. The rich Jew shies away from documenting his heritage . . . and therefore places art of all kinds on his walls, only no Jewish art; many non-Jews, meanwhile, appreciate and marvel at the new blossoming of the three thousand-year-old tribe."[114]

This was an ironic and unacceptable situation for many at *Ost und West*. As Lilien wrote in an opinion piece in the February 1902 issue, the result of German-Jewish neglect of rising Jewish artists was quite often despair and failure. Replying to those who assumed Jewish artists benefited from Jewish patronage, Lilien angrily wrote:

[112] *Ibid.*, pp. 113–114.
[113] 'Ost und West', in *O&W*, January 1902, pp. 3–4.
[114] 'Lesser Ury. Gedanken über jüdische Kunst', in *O&W*, February 1901, pp. 145–146.

> "Do you really believe that rich Jews bother with Jewish artists? Have you ever seen a work by a Jewish artist – say a Hirszenberg, a Struck, or even a Lesser Ury – on the walls of a Jewish salon? . . . Do you think the big newspapers that are often called 'Jews-papers' (*Judenblätter*) make one line available for a known Jewish talent? . . . As long as the principle dominates among rich Jews . . . that they promote only non-Jewish art and science . . . Jewish artists will have to rely on themselves. Few will be able . . . to win the attention of non-Jewish circles and thereby support themselves. Many, the unknown, nameless, less-resilient die along the way.
>
> I myself have seen many gifted people die along the way. How much Jewish tragedy was present there, how much idealism, how much hope was buried there!"[115]

It was against this prevailing attitude of neglect that much of *Ost und West*'s efforts were directed. By promoting and publicising the achievements of deserving Jewish artists, the journal hoped to overcome the apathy of many German Jews, and spark an interest in the artistic accomplishments of their brethren. For the editors of *Ost und West*, Jewish art was a newborn infant in need of nourishment.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the urgent call for support had faded somewhat. Indeed, a greater sense of sobriety had begun to characterise *Ost und West*'s reviews of Jewish artists. Although features on new painters and sculptors continued to appear regularly, few were described as Jewish as in the early days of the journal. The reasons for this were several. It was increasingly being realised that the attempts to define art at the beginning of the decade had been too hasty. Previewing a major exhibition of Jewish artists in Berlin in 1907, G. Kutna wrote in the January 1908 issue:

> "Lately, the question has been keenly debated: if, and in what sense and capacity, a national art exists. On the one side, it is simply denied, on the other, it is emphasised with great insistence . . . [T]he discussion has acquired an agitated, hostile tone. Those who wish to deny a national art, have been accused of being dependent on a foreign culture in their art or artistic ideals . . . [and] have no sense of national spirit . . . The opponents of a national art have been accused of merely having an interest in their theories and, moreover, of not being free from foreign influences either."[116]

Pointing to the tendentiousness of the debate, Kutna indicated that political interests had distorted the process of art criticism:

> "There have been people who have mechanically been heralded as Jewish artists simply because they depict Jewish subjects . . . Much of this is wishful thinking. As the emergence of Zionism led to the yearning for a recreation of the Jewish people, so too has it led to a yearning for a Jewish art . . .
>
> Then the scepticism developed. It emerged that the art of significant masters could not be unconditionally defined as Jewish, and that one could only speak of [Jewish] notes or elements. What advertised itself as Jewish art was of little meaning and was distorted through hasty intentionality. The young people who achieved fame so quickly have now perished. Although they are still stars among the public . . . their little talent has long since dried up. The 'Exhibition of Jewish Artists' aims to lend clarity to this confusion . . . Already by the fact that it is not proclaiming a Jewish art and has simply brought together a show of Jewish artists, it has lent an objective view to the artistic spirit of Jewish artists."[117]

Thus, it emerges that while the existence of Jewish art was not being denied, there was a new impetus to define it carefully and objectively in *Ost und West*. While this reconsideration undoubtedly reflected the escalating cultural and

[115] 'Ein offener Brief', in *O&W*, February 1902, pp. 109–112.
[116] 'Zur Ausstellung juedischer Kuenstler', in *O&W*, January 1908, p. 17.
[117] *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

political warfare between Zionists and their opponents, it may also have been fostered by an increased sense of sombreness and concern among German Jews following the waves of pogroms in Russia, beginning with Kishinev in 1903 and lasting until 1906. This was evidenced by the increased attention of *Ost und West*'s editors after 1903 to political issues – especially those which concerned Eastern European Jewish persecution and suffering. More and more, articles on Russian antisemitism and features on the new waves of Jewish emigration to the United States and South America were vying for space in the journal with cultural topics. Increasingly, the editors of *Ost und West* devoted their attention to the ways – political and economic – in which tangible aid could be given to suffering Eastern European Jews. A sober sense of realism had replaced the more naive idealism of the journal's early years. Given the immediate needs of Eastern European Jews, the earlier promise held out for a new Jewish art seemed a distant and less relevant aim for many at *Ost und West*. Thus, while the journal continued to feature Jewish artists up until its demise in 1921, they were no longer reviewed with the same optimistic enthusiasm that characterised the journal's early years; no longer was the work of Jewish artists scoured for its "Jewish" traits.

Nevertheless, for the first half of the first decade of the twentieth century, a serious attempt was made by the founders of *Ost und West* to define and build support for a Jewish art as part of a Jewish cultural renaissance. This goal, in part, reflected the desire of the journal's editors to offer new options to a German-Jewish community experiencing the first symptoms of disassimilation. The battle that the staff of *Ost und West* faced in trying to convince German Jews to support the new Jewish art explains much of the journal's partisan approach to art criticism. In order to alert them – and, ultimately, all European Jews – to the larger cultural awakening in their midst, *Ost und West*'s editors set about to package Jewish art in the most attractive manner possible. Limiting the journal's pages to scenes of Eastern European ghettos was not, in itself, sufficient. Rather, the journal's editors aimed to include Jewish artists who rarely depicted such typically "Jewish" scenes in their work. By doing so, *Ost und West*'s art critics were forced to rely on very expansive criteria of selection regarding "Jewish" content and form. This strategy, as we have seen, was ultimately abandoned; towards the end of the journal's tenure, *Ost und West*'s reviewers focused less on the instrumental value of art and more on its aesthetic aspects. This, however, should not obscure the fact that the journal's early efforts to define "Jewish art" – if somewhat naive and idealistic – reflected the great enthusiasm with which Jews, inside and outside Germany, set out to construct a Jewish national culture.