

## From Shulhoyf to Montparnasse: Cultural Collage in Moshé Vorobeichic's Photography Book *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* (1931)

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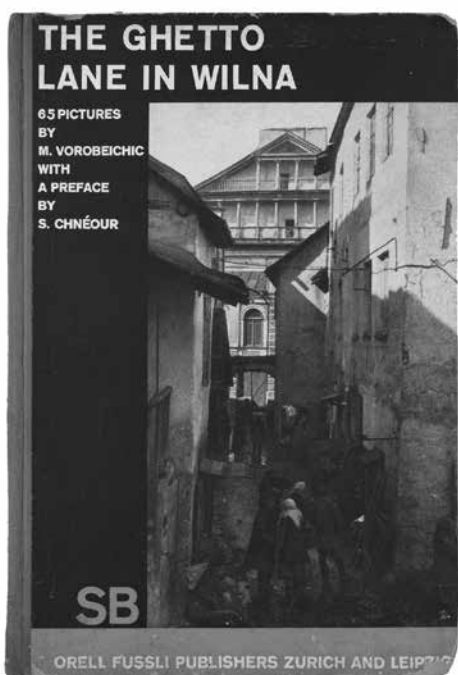
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*Annotation:* This article discusses the artistic genesis of the first avant-garde photography book in Lithuanian art history, *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* (1931) by Moshé Vorobeichic-Moï Ver (Moshe Raviv, 1904–1995), and aims to conduct the first in-depth reconstruction of Vorobeichic's early biographical and creative period in Vilnius in the 1920s in the local Jewish and multicultural milieu. The research is based on archival materials from Lithuanian state archives and the Raviv family archives in Israel. Vorobeichic, who was born in 1904 in Zaskavichy (currently in Belarus), made his artistic debut in Vilnius in 1923, and studied at the Faculty of Fine Art at Stephen Bathory University from 1923 to 1925. He continued his art studies at the Bauhaus school in Dessau (1927 to 1929) and, from 1929 in Paris at the École Technique de Photographie et de Cinématographie. From 1930 onwards, the photographer used the artistic pseudonym Moï Ver, under which his avant-garde photography book *Paris*, hailed as a masterpiece of the genre, was published by Editions Jeanne Walter in 1931. During the same period, Vorobeichic participated in Jewish cultural life in Vilnius, and was involved in the early stages of the formation of Yung Vilne, the acclaimed literary and artistic group of interwar Yiddish Modernism. The article aims to identify the cultural contexts in which Moï Ver's artistic world-view and avant-garde style started to develop. The reconstruction of these contexts makes it possible to identify new semantic aspects in his avant-garde photography book *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna*, and to rethink its artistic concept. In this way, the cross-cultural semantics of Moï Ver's photographic collages of Jewish Vilnius will emerge.

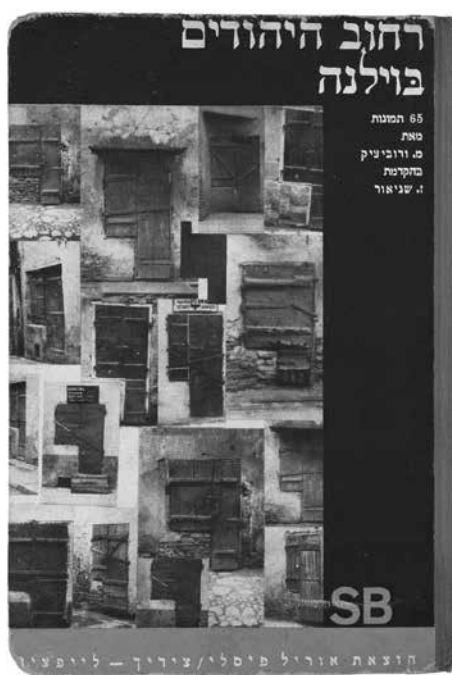
*Keywords:* Moshé Vorobeichic-Moï Ver, avant-garde, photography book, collage, Jewish Vilnius, Yung Vilne.

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## Introduction: Moï Ver's artistic legacy in a European and Lithuanian context



1. The English cover of Moshé Vorobeichic's book *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna / Rehov ha-Yehudim be-Vilna*, Zurich and Leipzig: Orell Füssli, 1931.



2. The Hebrew cover of Moshé Vorobeichic's book *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna / Rehov ha-Yehudim be-Vilna*, Zurich and Leipzig: Orell Füssli, 1931.

*The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* by Moshé Vorobeichic-Moï Ver (1904–1995), a small but aesthetically exceptional publication, is considered to be the first avant-garde photography book in the history of Lithuanian art (Ill. 1, 2). Published in 1931 in Zurich and Leipzig in four languages,<sup>1</sup> the publication was one of the first conceptual avant-garde photography books in all of Central Europe. Its author, who was born in 1904 in present-day Belarus, and spent his youth and started his

1 The publishers Orell Füssli brought out German/Yiddish, German/Hebrew and English/Hebrew versions of the book, in a popular series called 'Schaubücher'. The title of the book in different languages varies as follows: *Ein Ghetto im Osten. Wilna, The Ghetto Lane in Wilna, Yidische gas in Vilne, Rehov ha-Yehudim be-Vilna*.

artistic career in Vilnius, is considered to be an interwar innovator in the annals of modern photography, by contributing to the radical shift in photographic art in Paris during the early 1930s, from the traditions of pictorialism and documentalism to avant-garde techniques. The work of Moï Ver is particularly significant in the history of the photography book genre. His book *Paris* (1931) is hailed as a masterpiece of the genre by contemporary art historians; it is seen as a precursor to many books on urban topics, predating Brassai's famous *Paris de nuit* (1933). The Vilnius native's work is used as a paradigmatic example in the theoretical definition of the photography book genre.<sup>2</sup>

The recognition of Moï Ver's importance in the history of art photography, however, only emerged during the first two decades of the 21st century, after a long period of neglect. This was a result of multiple circumstances: in 1934, the photographer moved from Paris, where he had gained international prominence, to Palestine, where the culture of the future state of Israel was still in its infancy; in his native country, the Jewish community and its cultural life were almost completely decimated during the Holocaust; some of his most valuable works suffered a sad fate in Europe (his third photography book, *Ci-contre*, was prepared for printing in Germany in 1933, but was not published because the Nazis came to power; the pre-print of the book disappeared, was rediscovered in 1968, but was not published until 2004, posthumously). According to Nissan N. Perez, the leading Israeli expert on the photographer's work, when Vorobeichic officially changed his name to the Hebrew Moshe Raviv in 1951, and returned to painting, an activity he had loved so much in his youth, he essentially vanished from his country. 'As a result, he disappeared for a long time from the attention of the international art scene.'<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, Moï Ver's work also remained almost unknown or unappreciated in Lithuania, which started an increasingly thorough reconstruction of its multinational cultural heritage after 1990. For instance, the three-volume *Anthology of 20th-Century Lithuanian Photography*, published between 2011 and 2013, presented the canon of Lithuanian photography, but did not include the name or photographs of

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2 Martin Parr, Gerry Badger, *The Photography Book: A History*, Vol. 1, New York: Phaidon, 2004, p. 7.

3 Nissan N. Perez, 'Moï Ver – A Forgotten Modernist', in Moshé Raviv-Vorobeichic, *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna. Hommage à Moï Ver* (reprint edition), Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2019, p. 19.

this exceptional artist, even though it did present the work of other Lithuanian-Polish and Lithuanian-Jewish photographers.<sup>4</sup> However, in 2016, a book on the history of Lithuanian photography prepared by Margarita Matulytė and Agnė Narušytė devoted a separate chapter to Moï Ver's photographs, and recognised his book *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* as 'a unique phenomenon, the only object of true Western Modernism in Lithuanian photography, unsurpassed and unrepeated'.<sup>5</sup> A study of the history of photography books by Łukasz Gorczyca and Adam Mazur, published in 2019, hailed the book as the dawn of the modern art photography book in the entire Central European region.<sup>6</sup>

In December 2019, the retrospective exhibition 'Moï Ver: Moshé Raviv-Vorobeichic. Montages of Modernity' opened in Vilnius (curated by Nissan N. Perez). It was complemented by a reprint of *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna*, and the accompanying publication *Hommage à Moï Ver*, including scholarly essays on his artistic legacy.<sup>7</sup> These events marked the return of the photographer's work to his native Lithuania 90 years after his previous exhibitions in Vilnius in 1927 to 1930. Still, it is obviously just the beginning. A comprehensive inclusion of Moï Ver's avant-garde art in the history of Lithuanian culture, and in the multicultural narrative of Vilnius, as well as an in-depth examination and reflection, still remains to be done.

Researchers into Yiddish culture in Vilnius recognise Vorobeichic (Moyshe Vorobeychik<sup>8</sup> in Yiddish) as one of the young artists connected to the origins of the interwar Jewish Modernist group Yung Vilne (Young Vilna) who participated

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- 4 S. Žvirgždas (ed.), *XX a. Lietuvos fotografijos antologija*, Vol. 1–3, Vilnius: Draugų studija, 2011–2013.
  - 5 Margarita Matulytė, Agnė Narušytė, *Camera obscura. Lietuvos fotografijos istorija 1839–1945*, Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2016, p. 264.
  - 6 Łukasz Gorczyca, Adam Mazur, *Photobloc. Central Europe in Photobooks*, Kraków: International Cultural Centre in Kraków, 2019, p. 43, 48–51.
  - 7 Moshé Raviv-Vorobeichic, *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna. Hommage à Moï Ver* (reprint edition), designed by Sigutė Chlebinskaitė, essays by Nissan N. Perez, Mindaugas Kvietauskas, Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2019, p. 19.
  - 8 The internationally established spelling of the photographer's name, which is used in encyclopaedias, is Moshé Vorobeichic (based on his French publications). However, an accurate transcription from his native Yiddish language, based on YIVO rules, would be Moyshe Vorobeychik. From 1930 onwards, the photographer used the artistic pseudonym Moï Ver, which was created from the first letters of his Yiddish name and surname. In 1951, he officially changed his name to Moshe Raviv.

in its first collective exhibitions between 1927 and 1930.<sup>9</sup> Cecile E. Kuznitz established that the photographer also collaborated with the famous YIVO in Vilnius during the early 1930s (Moï Ver created photomontages of YIVO images).<sup>10</sup> However, the relationship between the photographer, who gained wide international prominence, and the cultural context of interwar Vilnius, as well as his role in the local cultural sphere, has not been closely examined or considered before. Historians of photography, meanwhile, explore the uniqueness of Moï Ver's artistic perspective, by analysing his German and French creative periods: his studies at the Bauhaus in Dessau (1927–1929), and the Modernist context in Paris of the early 1930s.<sup>11</sup> Vilnius is seen in these writings as primarily *the object* of the photographer's work, as the traditional Litvak world captured by his modern Leica camera, rather than as a specific cultural centre which impacted on his perspective, and as the place where his identity and artistic world-view developed before his studies abroad. So far, the Vilnius side of Moï Ver's life has been presented sporadically. His artistic approach was supposedly that of a displaced person, an East European immigrant who found refuge in a modern interwar metropolis.<sup>12</sup> From the perspective of Paris, the metropolis of Western Modernism, Moï Ver's early activities in Vilnius (and, notably, his late work in Israel) remain buried in the margins of his creative life. Similarly, in the history of Western avant-garde photography, his book *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* is usually overshadowed by his book *Paris*, which also came out in 1931.<sup>13</sup>

By conducting the first in-depth reconstruction of Vorobeichic/Moï Ver's early biographical and creative period in Vilnius, this article aims: (1) to identify the cultural context in which his artistic world-view and avant-garde style began to develop; (2) to discuss his role in the establishment of the Jewish

9 Joanna Lisek, *Jung Wilne – żydowska grupa artystyczna*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2005, p. 33.

10 Cecile E. Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 75, 83.

11 Marina Dmitrieva, 'Die Wilna-Fotocollagen von Moshe Vorobeichic', in: *Jüdische Kultur(en) im Neuen Europa. Wilna 1918–1939*, hrsg. von M. Dmitrieva, H. Petersen, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004; Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, 'Un ghetto à l'est. Wilno, 1931', *Communications*, No 79, 2006.

12 Nissan N. Perez, op. cit., p. 14.

13 Moï Ver, *Paris. 80 Photographies*, Paris: Editions Jeanne Walter, 1931.

Modernist group Yung Vilne; and (3) to follow his ongoing ties with the Yiddish cultural scene in Vilnius, even after entering the modern art world of Paris during the 1930s. By piecing this context together, it will be possible to identify new semantic aspects in the avant-garde photography book *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna*, to rethink its artistic concept, and to regain the perspective of the photographer as ‘an armed version of the solitary walker’, to use Susan Sontag’s felicitous phrase.<sup>14</sup> In this way, we hope to reconstruct the cross-cultural genesis of Moï Ver’s photographic collages, and to make manifest the interactions between Jewish tradition, the various multicultural Vilnius contexts, modern technologies, and trends in the international avant-garde. From the perspective of cross-cultural research, the city’s *flâneur* can be seen ‘as a figure for cross-cultural comparison itself – one that emphasizes the multiple figurations of encounters among places, times, peoples, and languages’.<sup>15</sup> In his photographic art, Moï Ver is revealed to be a *flâneur* of just such cross-cultural encounters.

### Moï Ver’s artistic debut in 1920s Vilnius

Moshé Vorobeichic had his roots in the Litvak shtetls of Belarus. His father Shloyme Vorobeychik was a wealthy businessman, born in Lahoyks, which is half-way between Minsk and Polotsk, and his mother Shifra Vorobeychik (*née* Tsukerman) was from the Ashmyany region. Their eldest son Moshé (in Yiddish, Moyshe) was born in 1904 in the village of Zaskavichy, half-way between Smarhon and Lebedevo. In 1909, the family went to live in Ashmyany, where the Jews from the surrounding areas were concentrating their business at that time. In 1913, the family settled in Naujoji Vilnia, an industrial suburb of Vilnius, and in 1915 they found a home right in the centre of Vilnius. This trajectory testifies to the gradual economic and social success of Shloyme Vorobeychik as an entrepreneur, even though he had his ups and downs, especially during the war and the Russian Revolution.<sup>16</sup> He managed to work his way into the

14 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977, p. 55.

15 Jacob Edmond, *A Common Strangeness. Contemporary Poetry, Cross-Cultural Encounter, Comparative Literature*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2012, p. 18.

16 Shloyme Vorobeychik described his shifting business situation in a letter to his mother Elke Dobe Vorobeychik, Vilnius, 14 May 1923 [?], file ‘Letters to America’, tr. from Yiddish to

wealthy and educated bourgeois layer of early 20th-century Vilnius society, and moved into apartment number 24 in the (current) house number 17 on the prestigious Great Pohulanka (currently Jonas Basanavičius Street). His children were admitted to an upscale Hebrew gymnasium, and later to higher education at Vilnius Stephen Bathory University and abroad, for he always supported them financially. His family letters<sup>17</sup> attest to the atmosphere and the values of upper-class Jewish liberal society in Vilnius. These writings show his approval of the Zionist movement and the Hebrew language, even though he used his native Yiddish in his family correspondence and in everyday communication. They also lay bare his anti-communism: in his letters, Shloyme was not only repelled by the Soviet system, seeing it as a new form of slavery for everyone, but he also made sure his son did not come under the influence of the German socialists while studying at the Bauhaus in Dessau.<sup>18</sup> Another feature of his attitude was his modern secularism: he perceived Judaism as a cultural tradition. For example, in his letters, the father confesses that he is no longer religious, but he can never hear enough of the famous cantors singing, so he buys recordings of them and goes to the synagogues in Vilnius to hear them.<sup>19</sup> Although sceptical about his son's choice of profession, he encouraged Moshé to venture out into the international artistic world, paid for his son's studies in Germany and France, and was proud of every mark of recognition Moshé's work received, in Vilnius, Zurich or Paris.

In 1909, the five-year-old Moshé began his education in Ashmyany, as he writes, in a 'Hebrew school'<sup>20</sup> (this was a *heder*, a Jewish religious elementary school). In 1916, he started to attend the gymnasium that had just been founded by Joseph Epstein in Vilnius, at 4 Pylimas Street, which was a forerunner of modern Hebrew education, and became part of the Tarbut international Zionist educational network during the interwar period. Vilnius, which had experienced the poverty and famine of the First World War, witnessed the boy's earliest

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English by Lilian Falk, in the personal papers of Moshe Raviv (Moï Ver), Raviv family archive, Tel Aviv, p. 35.

17 Shloyme Vorobeychik, 'Letters to America', tr. from Yiddish to English by Lilian Falk, in the personal papers of Moshe Raviv (Moï Ver), Raviv family archive, Tel Aviv.

18 Shloyme Vorobeychik, in a letter to his brother Yosif Vorobeychik (Joseph B. Webber), Vilnius, 16 February 1928, op. cit., p. 28.

19 Shloyme Vorobeychik, in a letter to his brother Yosif Vorobeychik (Joseph B. Webber), Vilnius, 28 July 1929, op. cit., p. 97.

20 Mojżesz Worobęczyk, 'Życiorys', op. cit., p. 395a.

encounters with art. According to Vorobeichic, he would often come across strange German officers and soldiers in the Jewish quarter of the Old Town, drawing or painting synagogues and courtyards, and watched in astonishment, along with the other Jewish children who surrounded them, as works of art were born. It was only years later that he learned that the prominent German artists Hermann Struck, Walter Buhe, Magnus Zeller and others were among these soldiers.<sup>21</sup> A separate theme in the work of these artists, who joined the German army during the war and found themselves in Vilnius, was the traditional life of East European Jews, known as Ostjuden, whom they portrayed controversially, both in admiration of their archaic traditions, and alarmed by their poverty; but also showing a humane empathy.<sup>22</sup> Hence it is possible that the scenes of life in the old Jewish quarter, which he saw on their canvases and in their drawings in his childhood, became the earliest inspiration for Vorobeichic to create artistic images of the same quarter.

In 1921, while he was still studying at the gymnasium, the 17-year-old Moshé took his first step into the art world, by entering the newly opened Drawing School of the Vilnius Artists' Society (*Szkoła Rysunkowa Artystów Plastyków*). The society consisted of Lithuanian-Polish artists who had been scattered by the First World War. Its head was Ludomir Śleńdziński (1889–1980), a neo-Classical painter who had studied in Vilnius and St Petersburg, and who was to become a professor in the Faculty of Fine Art at Stephen Bathory University in Vilnius. The photographer himself mentioned as his first art teacher the Litvak painter Benzion Zukerman (1890–1944), who was educated in Vilnius, Berlin and Paris, and was a master of warm Impressionist and Post-Impressionist landscapes.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the beginning of Moï Ver's artistic career was shaped by former students from the multinational Vilnius Drawing School (*Académie de Vilna*, 1866–1915), who returned home after studying in Russia and the West, and sought to recreate artistic life after the interruptions of the war.

21 Moshe Raviv, 'Fun Vilne biz Tsfas', a conversation in Yiddish, Yidishe Folks-bibliotek in Montreal, 2 November 1974, an audio recording at [https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/archival-recordings/fbr-415\\_4414/moshe-raviv-Wilna-safed-moshe-raviv](https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/archival-recordings/fbr-415_4414/moshe-raviv-Wilna-safed-moshe-raviv), 35:50–36:50 minutes.

22 Laima Laučkaitė, *Vilniaus dailė Didžiojo karo metais*, Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, 2018, p. 84–93.

23 Moshe Raviv, 'Fun Vilne biz Tsfas', op. cit., 34:00 min.; Jolanta Širkaitė, *Vilniaus piešimo mokykla 1866–1915*, Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas, 2018, p. 184.



In April 1922, he visited an art exhibition for the first time in his life, which he was looking forward to very much: it was the first exhibition organised by the Vilnius Artists' Society, featuring works by the Polish and Lithuanian artists Śleńdziński, Jerzy Hoppen (1891–1969), Bronisław Jamontt (1886–1957), Rapolas Jakimavičius (1893–1961), Michał Rouba (1893–1941), and other members of the society.<sup>24</sup> During that time, Vorobeichic also shared his impressions of another exhibition, of work by the Jewish realist Maurycy Minkowski (1881–1930), which opened in Vilnius and consisted mainly of works depicting traditional Jewish life. Although both exhibitions left a strong impression on him, the 18-year-old referred to them already as a critic of traditional forms of art: 'In the Polish painters, on the other hand, you can see that they have mastered the technique, but they do not use it to bring out what they ought to. They paint a portrait as a portrait, without probing deeper, or searching for deeper ideas.'<sup>25</sup> This kind of quest for deeper ideas would take the Vilnius gymnasium student to the international avant-garde art scene of Paris.

A year later, in April 1923, Vorobeichic made his own public debut: his paintings were selected by a special jury for an exhibition of work by Jewish artists in Vilnius organised by the Jewish Society for the Support of Art (*Żydowskie Towarzystwo Popierania Sztuki*), founded in 1922. The exhibition, which took place in the building of the Jewish Community at Eliza Orzeszkowa Street (currently Vincas Kudirka Square), featured works by Ber Zalkind, Jakob Szer, Moshe Leibowski, the later renowned Galician Jewish artist and writer Bruno Schulz, and others.<sup>26</sup> As has already been mentioned, the press noticed, and welcomed the young man's debut. *Unzer tog* ('Our Day'), the main Jewish daily in Vilnius, wrote:

Vorobeichic, who seems to be influenced by the Polish painter Śleńdziński, borrows from the latter only the saturation of colours. We can already see the young painter's talent, which, if properly nurtured, may unfold in a beautiful way.<sup>27</sup>

24 *Pierwsza doroczna wystawa. Wileńskie Towarzystwo Artystów Plastyków, 23 IV MCMXXII*, Wilno, 1922.

25 Moshé Vorobeichic, in a letter to his uncle Yosif Vorobeychik (Joseph B. Webber), Vilnius, 7 May 1922, op. cit., p. 22.

26 [Da.], 'Wystawa obrazów żydowskich art.-malarzy', *Przegląd Wileński*, No 8, 29 April 1923, p. 7.

27 H.G., 'Di bilder-oysshetlung fun di yidishe plastiker', *Unzer tog*, No 1155, 23 April 1923, p. 2.

After graduating from the gymnasium, in the autumn of 1923, Vorobeichic began his studies at Stephen Bathory University in Vilnius, in the Faculty of Fine Art, which was headed by the Symbolist painter Ferdynand Ruszczyc, the leader of Polish artistic life in Vilnius. Scarce though surviving documents are, they reveal how Vorobeichic started to explore new fields in art besides painting. Archival records from 1924 and 1925 show that he chose architecture as his main field, and regularly attended the classes on architectural theory, history and heritage taught by Professor Juliusz Kłos, a graduate of Vienna Polytechnic. Vorobeichic also studied building design and the fundamentals of construction.<sup>28</sup> In his memoirs, the photographer mentions the tremendous impression made on him by Kłos' lectures on the wooden architecture of Jewish synagogues, and the high standard of woodwork.<sup>29</sup> The art photography course (*Fotografja Artystyczna*) taught by the famous photographer Jan Bułhak, the leader of Vilnius pictorialism, was also noted on Vorobeichic's study sheet; however, for some reason, this entry was later deleted. One of the professors who taught him from 1923 to 1924 was Zbigniew Pronaszko, a spokesman for the Polish avant-garde, and a member of the Formalist movement, who provoked heated arguments in Vilnius with his project for a Cubist-Futurist monument to the poet Adam Mickiewicz, of which a model was built on the right bank of the River Neris in 1924. Vorobeichic remembers helping to make this model, and keeping in touch with his lecturer after the latter had left Vilnius:

We, students in the Faculty of Art, helped Professor Pronaszko, a great drunkard, I have to say, but also a great artist, a great person and a friend, to construct the Mickiewicz monument. As you know, the monument has not survived. But *Pan Tadeusz* always will [...]. I later sat down with Pronaszko in Paris, in Montparnasse, and after a drink, or more precisely a few, he opened his heart, and everything he thought of the darkness of those times in Poland.<sup>30</sup>

Vorobeichic would refer to the Faculty of Fine Art as his first multiethnic artistic community: even though a fifth of the students were Jewish, they never

28 Mojżesz Worobejczyk, 'Rok szk. 1924–5, III trymestr', Lithuanian Central State Archive (LCVA), F. 175, ap. 9 (XI)B, b. 45, p. 390.

29 Moshe Raviv, 'Fun Vilne biz Tsfas', op. cit., 26:30 min.

30 Ibid., 31:50–33:00 min.

felt any anti-semitism, and relations between students and professors were friendly.<sup>31</sup> His art studies allowed him to try out different stylistic directions in the culturally hybrid academic environment where Symbolist and neo-Classical trends were still predominant, but avant-garde phenomena were already entering the curriculum and students' horizons. It is almost certain that he visited the avant-garde Exhibition of New Art (*Wystawa Nowej Sztuki*) that opened in Vilnius in May 1923, and that he knew the work of Vytautas Kairiūkštis, who was a pioneer of Lithuanian Constructivism and Cubism, and the main organiser of the exhibition. While studying at the university, Vorobeichic continued to participate in group exhibitions by Jewish artists in Vilnius, in 1924 and 1925. At the second, he exhibited his own avant-garde pieces: illustrations to the biblical *Song of Songs*, carried out in an abstract style, which, in his own words, was not easy for the general public to comprehend ('and so it gave rise to heated debates, things got to be very lively').<sup>32</sup> Thus the first avant-garde experiments by young Vorobeichic originated in the multiethnic context of Vilnius artistic life.

Unfortunately, the autumn of 1925 crushed the artist's plans: he was conscripted into the Polish army, even though his father had tried various means to protect him.<sup>33</sup> For almost two years until April 1927, Vorobeichic was largely cut off from the art scene, and his studies at the university stopped. It was probably this interruption that forced his father to finally decide that his son's artistic path should take him abroad. The Bauhaus art school in Dessau was chosen over Paris (Moshé's first choice), because of his father's 'greater faith in the German way of doing things, in their workmanlike ability'.<sup>34</sup> However, this decision did not cut Vorobeichic off from local Jewish artistic life.

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31 Ibid., 25:40 min.

32 Moshé Vorobeichic, in a letter to his uncle Yosif Vorobeychik (Joseph B. Webber), Vilnius, 4 May 1925, op. cit., p. 55.

33 Shloyme Vorobeychik, in a letter to his brother Yosif Vorobeychik (Joseph B. Webber), Vilnius, 29 November 1925, op. cit., p. 64.

34 Shloyme Vorobeychik, in a letter to his brother Yosif Vorobeychik (Joseph B. Webber), Vilnius, 24 October 1927, op. cit., p. 77.

## Origins of the Ghetto Lane project: the dawn of Yung Vilne

Before leaving on the international path of his career, Vorobeichic organised an art exhibition which was important in the history of Jewish Modernism in Vilnius. As is mentioned in his letters, he had been planning the event since August 1927, and focused all his efforts on it. On 11 October, the exhibition of the works by eight young painters 'From the Synagogue Courtyard to Glazier Street'<sup>35</sup> (*Fun Shulhoif biz Glezer-gas*) opened in the hall of the Jewish Students' Union (the Krengel Hall) at 4 Ludwisarska (now Liejyklos) Street. This exhibition is considered to be the genesis of the activities of the famous interwar Yiddish Modernist group Yung Vilne.<sup>36</sup> It seems that Vorobeichic's central role in the exhibition was unfairly belittled in later postwar memoirs.<sup>37</sup> The main idea of the exhibition was the connection between the old tradition of the Jerusalem of Lithuania and the Modernist experiments of the young avant-garde generation. The exhibition invited viewers to take a modern look at the heart of Jewish Vilna, including the traditional quarter around the Great Synagogue, drawing inspiration for an artistic quest for a Modernist style. The catalogue of the exhibition and the press announcements indicate clearly that its main artistic leader was Vorobeichic (*Kinstlerishe leytung: M. Vorobeychik*).<sup>38</sup> His concept served as the basis for the entire visual plan of the exhibition: 'The walls on which the works are hung are not grey; the background of each painting is a different colour and a different shape.'<sup>39</sup> Vorobeichic himself exhibited 11 works: landscapes, portraits and compositions. Of the other seven young exhibitors, who included Fanya Olkenitska, Moyshe Bahelfer, Yitskhok Butkov, Yerakhmiel

35 Currently Stiklių Street.

36 Justin Cammy, 'Tsevorfene bleter: The Emergence of Yung Vilne', *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 14, 2001, p. 178; Joanna Lisek, op. cit., p. 33. *Katalog fun der oysshtelung 'Fun Shulhoif biz Glezer gas'*, Vilne, 1927, the personal papers of Moshe Raviv (Moï Ver), Tel Aviv.

37 The poet and literary critic Shloyme Beylis, the author of the main memoirs about the beginning of Yung Vilne, fails to mention Vorobeichic in his account of the ground-breaking 1927 exhibition. According to Beylis, he himself was the sole author of the exhibition's 'lucky idea'. However, the documentary evidence about Vorobeichic's contribution contradicts this claim. See Shloyme Beylis, 'Bay di onheybn fun Yung Vilne', *Di goldene keyt*, 1980, No 101, p. 22.

38 *Katalog fun der oysshtelung 'Fun Shulhoif biz Glezer gas'*, Vilne, 1927, in the personal papers of Moshe Raviv (Moï Ver), Raviv family archive, Tel Aviv.

39 Naftali Vaynig, 'Fun Shulhoif biz Glezer-gas', *Vilner Tog*, No 244, 27 October 1927, p. 3.

Getsels, Yankev Tankhum, Bentsion Mikhtom and Bentsion Rabinovich (later Benn), the painter and graphic artist Mikhtom later became the leading creator of avant-garde design and illustrations for Yung Vilne publications. Yerakhmiel (or Milka) Getsels also took part in subsequent Yung Vilne exhibitions in 1929 and 1930. According to the writer Shloyme Beylis, one of the founders of the group: ‘That group exhibition was a sensation and a new chapter in the history of Jewish art in Vilnius, as well as the beginning of subsequent series of exhibitions.’<sup>40</sup> This ground-breaking event inspired Mikhtom to create the emblem of the Yung Vilne group, an arch in a street of the Old Town in Vilnius with a young tree sprouting from it, while young literary figures came up with the idea of starting regular meetings for readings of their creative work, which two years later grew into the group manifesto entitled ‘The March of Yung Vilne into Jewish Literature’ (*Der araynmarsh fun Yung Vilne in der yidisher literatur*, 1929). The key idea of the 1927 exhibition, as Justin Cammy has written, the junction of radical modernisation and local Jewish tradition, became the core of the Yung Vilne group identity, despite the wide spectrum of stylistic variations in the literary and artistic work by its members; or, in his words, ‘The exhibition presented a holistic portrait of Vilna as a community that prided itself on both its tradition and its modernity.’<sup>41</sup> It is important to realise that Vorobeichic, the curator of the exhibition, stood at the very beginning of a long chain of Yung Vilne’s artistic and literary activities, and contributed to the crystallisation of its collective identity.

The art critic Naftali Vaynig, who published a review of the exhibition, highlighted the abstract compositions among Vorobeichic’s works, indicating that the artist had ventured the furthest into avant-garde Constructivism:

The best examples of pure figurative value are the colour compositions by Moyshe Vorobeychik [...]. They are, of course, carried out in quite an abstract way, with only the dynamics of a line or a set of colours dominating in them, but that purportedly pure technique expresses so much mood (ugh ... what an outdated word!).<sup>42</sup>

Starting on 15 October 1927, with financial support from his father and his American relatives, Moï Ver began studying at the Bauhaus, where

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40 Shloyme Beylis, op. cit., p. 22.

41 Justin Cammy, op. cit., p. 178.

42 Naftali Vaynig, op. cit., p. 3.

his teachers were leaders of the international avant-garde, of its abstract and Constructivist trends: Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Josef Albers, and László Moholy-Nagy, the author of the conceptual study on modern visual techniques *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (1925) and the founder of the Bauhaus photography department, who had 'a significant and long standing influence on Vorobeichic and his visual thinking'.<sup>43</sup> Presumably impressed by the developments of avant-garde photography at the Bauhaus, Vorobeichic bought his Leica I camera, and chose photography as his main medium in around 1928. However, during this period, his ties with artistic life in Vilnius remained active. While studying in Dessau, and from late 1929 in Paris, he would travel back to Vilnius on a regular basis, participating in the exhibitions of the local Jewish Artists' Union, which led to the formation of the Yung Vilne group.

Returning for a few months in the spring and summer of 1929, Moï Ver was already hard at work on his large series of photographs of the old Jewish quarter, using his Leica camera and modern photographic techniques acquired at the Bauhaus. 'Moshele is staying in Wilna until the end of the summer. He is preparing a collection of photographs of the life in the ghetto, which he will take with him to Paris. I'm sure it will be a serious piece of work. I can see that he has formed a plan, which he is trying hard to accomplish,' the photographer's father wrote in June 1929.<sup>44</sup> Moï Ver first showed these photographs in Vilnius in an exhibition that opened on 1 May 1929 at the Jewish Artists' Union at 18 Great Pohulanka (currently 20–22 Jonas Basanavičius Street), just in front of the Vorobeychiks' house. At that time, house number 18 was commonly called the Jewish Culture House; for a period of time, it housed the Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO) and other cultural organisations, and also meetings and literary evenings with members of Yung Vilne.<sup>45</sup> Hence, the photographs for *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* had their first public showing at the very centre of Yiddish culture, to a local audience. Other participants in the exhibition were older artists from Vilnius, Ber Zalkind and Jakob Szer, and younger ones, Benzion Mikhtom and Rafael Chwoles, who would soon become members of

43 Nissan N. Perez, op. cit., p. 17.

44 Shloyme Vorobeychik, in a letter to his brother Yosif Vorobeychik (Joseph B. Webber), Vilnius, 10 June 1929, op. cit., p. 95.

45 Ирина Гузенберг, Генрих Аграновский, *Вильнюс: по следам Литовского Иерусалима. Памятные места еврейской истории и культуры*, Вильнюс: Pavilniai, 2016, p. 528–531.

the Yung Vilne group, which was officially established in October 1929. The next time, Moï Ver's work appeared in an exhibition together with three other artists from this group (Mikhtom, Rachel Sutzkever and Milka Getsels) on 21 December 1930 at the Syrkins Library (currently 38 Pilies Street),<sup>46</sup> although he himself probably did not attend it: his great photography book *Paris* was at the printers at the time. The photographer also kept in touch with Zalmen Reyzen, a prominent Yiddish literary critic, a long-time editor of *Vilner tog* ('Vilna Day'), one of the principal figures at the YIVO, and the ideological patron of Yung Vilne, who was a neighbour of the Vorobeychiks in the same house at 17 Great Pohulanka, and in 1930 met Moï Ver in Paris as well.<sup>47</sup> In 1931, Moï Ver spent his summer vacation in Vilnius, and at Lake Naroch with a group of friends, including the charismatic composer, children's choir leader and music teacher Jacob Gerstein, and Elijah and Roza Rudashevski, the young parents of Yitskhok Rudashevski, the future author of *The Vilna Ghetto Diary*. The artistic result of this trip was a hand-made Yiddish photography album, playfully composed in an experimental Bauhaus manner, and called 'Slippers by Naroch' (*Shlyures oyf Narotsh*).<sup>48</sup> In 1934, Moï Ver cooperated directly with the YIVO on a series of photomontages representing the newly constructed YIVO building and the institute's activities.<sup>49</sup> Hence, until leaving for Palestine in 1934, he retained his personal links with the Vilnius Jewish intelligentsia, and participated in its Yiddish cultural life, even after becoming an internationally renowned photographer.

The question of Moï Ver's relationship with Yung Vilne and with its individual artists still requires thorough archival research. Although Vorobeichic contributed to the group's initial formation, and undoubtedly knew its early members, he did not associate with it after the group exhibition in late 1930. One obvious reason for this was his intense artistic life in Paris, but there may have been additional social and ideological reasons. Among Yung Vilne artists, most

46 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

47 Moshé Vorobeichic, in a letter to his uncle Yosif Vorobeychik (Joseph B. Webber), Vilnius, 17 March 1930, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

48 Moshé Vorobeichic, *Shlyures oyf Narotsh*, in the personal papers of Moshe Raviv (Moï Ver), Raviv family archive, Tel Aviv.

49 Moshé Vorobeichic, postcard to YIVO staff on the progress of preparing his photomontages, Warsaw, 10 February 1934, Judaica Department of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

of whom came from poor backgrounds of the Yiddish-speaking masses, Moï Ver was distinguished by his bourgeois social status, his fluent Hebrew, German and French, his university education, and his financial opportunities. Most of his early Yung Vilne colleagues could not even dream of getting financial support from their parents to study art in West European cities. The sharp differences between the two social worlds might have affected their relationship with Moï Ver. Moreover, the Yung Vilne cultural circle was strongly Yiddishist, anti-Zionist, and mostly leftist. Political radicalism, including communist influences, grew especially in the group from 1934.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, the Vorobeychik family had different views, characteristic of the upper-middle-class Jewish bourgeoisie: right-wing Zionism, Hebrew linguistic patriotism, and support for the Jewish settlement project in Palestine. Perhaps these differences in mentality and social milieu may explain why Moï Ver's relationship with Yung Vilne was sporadic: the initial inspiration and incidental collaboration did not lead him into active engagement. Nevertheless, it is possible that some communication between Moï Ver and the Yung Vilne circle remained even after the 1930 exhibition, while he was still in Europe, and occasionally in Vilnius. The Yiddish Modernism of early Yung Vilne was one of the cultural contexts in which *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* matured as an artistic project.

### **The cultural collage of Vorobeichic's photography book**

Based on this and previous research, several stages can be identified in the realisation of Vorobeichic's photography book as an artistic concept. Its origins and its first exhibition in Vilnius in May 1929 were both directly related to the circle of the Yung Vilne group, to the local context of Jewish and multinational Modernism, and to the artistic experiments that Vorobeichic combined with the stylistics of Bauhaus and avant-garde photography techniques, which were introduced to him by his main teacher in Dessau, Moholy-Nagy.

The second exhibition in this photographic series took place at the 16th Zionist Congress in Zurich, during July and August 1929. Its audience was completely different, Western and Zionist. The reception was different as well.

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<sup>50</sup> Joanna Lisek, op. cit., p. 56, 102–108.



It is likely that the audience saw the photographs as a representation of typical East European Jewish (Ostjuden) life, and their primary value was that of documentary 'ethnographic material'. In Zionist circles, they were first and foremost proof of the difficult status and poverty of the Diaspora, and the significance of their experimental form was probably secondary.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, Zurich was where Vorobeichic's photography found its first international recognition, and received the attention of the art critic Dr Emil Schaeffer, as well as a proposal from the Orell Füssli publishing company.

The third stage was the creation of *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* in the autumn of 1929 in Paris, where Vorobeichic had already started the French period of his career: he was being taught by the avant-garde artist Fernand Léger, and lived in Montparnasse.<sup>52</sup> This was the transformation of Vorobeichic's early artistic project into an international best-selling publication, and an example of a Modernist photography book. The book's publication and printing in Zurich and Leipzig was delayed until 1931. However, once it appeared, as the 27th in the 'Schaubücher' series, it became its best-selling book (12,500 total copies), even though it was quite radical in terms of its avant-garde style.

The exceptional success of this photography book is attributed to a combination of several factors. Vorobeichic's imagery met the expectations of different audiences (Jewish communities in Western and Eastern Europe, emigrés and the Diaspora, Zionists and Yiddishists), it combined different cultural codes, and it reached readers in the United States and Palestine. For this very reason, the book was published in three versions and four languages: German/Yiddish, German/Hebrew, and English/Hebrew. Its success also coincided with the modern photography book riding a wave of popularity during the late 1920s and early 1930s: 'This flowering of photography book publications at the end of the 1920s, especially in Germany, was encouraged by the fact that there was a market for such volumes, an extension of the public's demand for photographically illustrated magazines.'<sup>53</sup>

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51 Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, op. cit., p. 156.

52 The author's contract with Orell Füssli publishers was signed on 20 August 1929. The author's address was specified in the contract: Paris-Montparnasse, 20 rue de l'Arrivée (*Hommage à Moi Ver*, op. cit., p. 56). The date of the introduction by Zalman Shneour was October 1929.

53 Martin Parr, Gerry Badger, op. cit., p. 86.



3. The Old Synagogue (Fig. 1).



4. The Jewish Smile (Fig. 64).

It is therefore possible to identify several semantic layers that are combined in Vorobeichic's book in a visual and textual experiment. One of the layers is the discourse of authentic modernisation of the Lithuanian Jerusalem, which can be called simply the Yung Vilne discourse. It is a visual narrative about the emancipation of the old, centuries-long Litvak tradition, which suffered poverty and humiliation, but was nonetheless transformed into a modern culture that was confident and open to the future. A love for Vilnius' historic spaces and local patriotism were inseparable from exposure of the poverty in the Jewish quarter, sharp social criticism, and the pain of human existence, all of which also characterised Yung Vilne poetry, prose and fine art. However, the significance of the poverty depends on the perspective: the poverty of Vilnius' Jewish quarter may also entail the beginnings of a creative rebirth. In Vorobeichic's book, this hope is especially emphasised by its semantic framing, the first and last photomontages, in which we see the same portrait of an elderly Litvak. In the first montage, the man's face seems old and sombre alongside the walls of the synagogue; while at the end of the book, it seems to be smiling in a pool of light (Ill. 3, 4). These meanings,

and the book's interpretation based on them, were also supported by the famous Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich, the director of the YIVO, who published a review of Vorobeichic's just-released photography book in 1931.<sup>54</sup>

Another semantic layer is the depiction of the East European Jewish (Ostjuden) world from a Western perspective, which the author himself perceived after launching his international career. This perspective is embodied particularly sharply by the German title of the book: *Ein Ghetto im Osten* ('A Ghetto in the East'). The Ostjuden discourse, typical of literature and art in the first half of the 20th century, including photography (photographs by Roman Vishniac, Tim Gidal), combined the ethnography of the traditional East European Jewish world, its archaic exoticism, marginalisation and discrimination against Jews, with nostalgia and the humanist sympathy of an observer (a cosmopolitan or an emigré). This discourse was particularly similar and useful to Western Zionist ideology, because it emphasised the difficult situation of the traditional Diaspora, and the necessity for overcoming it.<sup>55</sup> Vorobeichic's book, especially his photographs of 'Jewish types' and the introduction by the poet Zalman Shneour, continued this discourse as a mode of representation of East European Jews, which was recognisable, popular, and acceptable to a Western audience.

One more semantic field of the book is the interwar avant-garde language, which can be described simply as 'Bauhaus discourse'. Its design and graphic expression alone are clearly related to the artistic style of Bauhaus books.<sup>56</sup> The book is characterised by conceptual logic, its collages and double-spreads follow a certain rhythm, with recurrent motifs and metaphors. Certain Jewish spaces (such as the courtyard of the Great Synagogue) are exposed from multiple perspectives, and each perspective is laid on top of another. Parallels are examined between human figures and natural, architectural or geometric shapes; these similarities emerge as existential parables (such as the compositions 'The Comforts of the Coal-Pan and Man and Architecture', (Ill. 5, 6). The double-spread 'In Strashun Library/The Golden Treasury of the Strashun Library' (Ill. 7)

54 Maks Vaynraykh, 'A bilder-bukh fun der yidisher Vilne', *Forverts*, 20 September, Vol. XXXV, No 12355, Section 2, p. 4.

55 Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Modernity as Anti-Nostalgia. The Photographic Books of Tim Gidal and Moshe Vorobeichic and the Eastern European Shtetl', *Ars Judaica*, No 7, 2011, p. 77–78.

56 'La couverture cartonnée est typiquement Bauhaus (typographie, jeu des titres et des bandes rouges associées au noir et blanc des photographies).' Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, op. cit., p. 159.



5. The Comforts of the Coal-Pan (Fig. 47).



6. Man and Architecture (Fig. 58).



7. In Strashun Library. The Golden Treasury of the Strashun Library (Fig. 12, 13).

is an exceptional avant-garde composition in which photographs of antique books are paralleled with a black rectangle reminiscent of the abstract paintings by Kazimir Malevich. Associative links are created between portraits of Vilnius Jews: it seems as though the characters are conversing with one another; we hear their dialogue and the lively clamour of the streets. A portrait of one person becomes a collage which has multiple meanings and is open to interpretation: such is the image of the cantor Gedalke, the famous beggar from the courtyard of the Great Synagogue, who is described in the prose of Chaim Grade and Avrom Karpinovich (Ill. 8). A collage which simultaneously combines multiple perspectives is the fundamental avant-garde principle of the book. This internal dynamic of *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna* is reminiscent of the aesthetics of silent avant-garde films from the early 20th century.

The famous interwar avant-garde cinema director and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein, whose films had a visual influence on Moï Ver's photography,<sup>57</sup> claimed that the 'third element' which emerges from the juxtaposition of different shots is highly important to the successful technique of montage: 'In such cases the whole emerges perfectly as a "third something". A full picture of the whole, as determined both by the shot and by montage, also emerges, vivifying and distinguishing both the content of the shot and the content of the montage.'<sup>58</sup> The entire trilogy of Moï Ver's avant-garde photography books (*The Ghetto Lane in Wilna*, *Paris* and *Ci-contre*) shares a similar artistic approach: separate photographs, montages and collages, the precise design of the book, graphics and text, and materials, are combined conceptually, so that they generate additional meanings that arise from the combination of all the elements. When examining the cultural discourses that merge in the book, it appears that this principle of montage or collage applies to them as well. The meanings of the Litvak and Western identities, Diaspora patriotism and Zionism, the Jewish tradition and the Modernist rebellion, social criticism and cultural nostalgia, are compared in a manner that results in an unexpected vision and a unique meaning. The poverty of the Jewish street in Vilnius, when seen through different cultural lenses, reveals an unexpected richness: new creative forms emerge from it.

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57 Nissan N. Perez, op. cit., p. 25.

58 Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, New York: Meridian Books, 1957, p. 10.



8. Cantor Gedalke (Fig. 63).

## Conclusions

There is no doubt that Vorobeichic's innovative photography book *The Ghetto Lane in Wilna*, which was highly popular both in the 1930s and later (after the Holocaust), had an impact on the popularisation of the cultural myth of the Lithuanian Jerusalem in Europe and worldwide, which was no less considerable than the impact of the most famous Jewish literary writings. Individual photographs from this book were used to build the image of Jewish Vilnius as early as between the wars, and especially after the Second World War, in various publications in Europe, the USA and Israel. They became part of the international iconography of Vilnius; sometimes the author or the source were not credited. However, the image of Jewish Vilnius created by Moï Ver is unique and still impressive, because it was unconventional, and avoided the domination of a single perspective or discourse. It had multiple meanings, and was open to

interpretation. In a sense, the first avant-garde photography book in Lithuania remains avant-garde to this day. This unique visual and cultural collage was the result of Moï Ver's artistic professionalism, and the distance he acquired in his studies and creative experience in Western Europe, at the Bauhaus and in Montparnasse. However, the rich meanings of this collage also include Moï Ver's early attitudes, and his experience of taking his first artistic steps in Vilnius, in its specifically Jewish and multicultural milieu.

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## Nuo Šulhoifo iki Monparnaso: kultūrinis koliažas Moišės Vorobeičiko fotoknygoje *Vilniaus žydų gatvė* (1931)

### *Santrauka*

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Nedidelio formato, tačiau išskirtinės estetikos knyga *Vilniaus žydų gatvė* („The Ghetto Lane in Wilna“), pasirodžiusi 1931 m. Ciuriche ir Leipcige keturiomis kalbomis, laikoma pirmąja avangardine fotoknyga Lietuvoje. Tai viena pirmųjų konceptualių avangardinių fotoknygų ir visos Vidurio Europos mastu. Jos autorius vilnietis Moišė Vorobeičikas (Moshé Vorobeichic-Moï Ver, taip pat Moshe Raviv, 1904–1995) šiuolaikinėje fotografijos istorijoje vertinamas kaip tarpukario novatorius, XX a. ketvirtojo dešimtmečio pradžios Paryžiuje prisidėjęs prie radikalaus fotomeno lūžio vaduojantis iš piktorializmo ir dokumentalizmo tradicijų. Neabejotina, kad XX a. ketvirtajame dešimtmetyje ir vėliau – po Holokausto – itin populiaru ir naujoviška Vorobeičiko fotoknyga *Vilniaus žydų gatvė* prisidėjo prie Lietuvos Jeruzalės kultūrinio mito sklaidos Europoje ir pasaulyje ne mažiau nei žymiausi žydų literatūros kūriniai. Kai kurios šios knygos nuotraukos bei koliažai jau tarpukariu, o ypač – po Antrojo pasaulinio karo buvo naudojamos žydiškojo Vilniaus įvaizdžiui kurti įvairiuose leidiniuose Europoje, JAV ir Izraelyje, jos tapo tarptautinės Vilniaus ikonografijos dalimi, kartais nė nenurodant autoriaus ar šaltinio. Tačiau Moï Vero sukurtas žydiškojo Vilniaus vaizdinys itin savitas ir iki šiol paveikus todėl, kad jis buvo nekonvenciona-

lus, daugiareikšmis, išvengiantis vienos perspektyvos ar vieno diskurso vyravimo, atviras interpretacijoms.

Straipsnyje, remiantis Lietuvos archyvų ir Ravivų šeimos archyvo Izraelyje medžiaga, siekiama pirmą kartą nuodugniai rekonstruoti Vorobeičiko-Moï Vero ankstyvosios biografijos ir kūrybos laikotarpį Vilniuje, identifikuoti tuos kultūrinius kontekstus, kuriuose pradėjo formuotis jo meninė pasaulėvoka ir avangardinis stilius, aptarti jo vaidmenį formuojantis žydų modernizmo grupei *Yung Vilne* („Jaunasis Vilnius“) ir ryšius su Vilniaus kultūrine aplinka, išlikusius dalyvaujant Paryžiaus moderniojo meno scenoje XX a. ketvirtajame dešimtmetyje. Šio konteksto rekonstravimas leidžia įžvelgti naujus aspektus analizuojant avangardinę fotoknygą *Vilniaus žydų gatvė*, interpretuojant jos meninę koncepciją. Taip siekiama atskleisti ir tarpkultūrinę Moï Vero fotokoliažų genezę, jų įkūnijamą sąveiką tarp litvakiškos Vilniaus žydų tradicijos, modernių vakarietiško tapatybės diskursų bei tarptautinės avangardinės meno technikos.

*Raktažodžiai:* Moshé Vorobeichic, Moï Ver, avangardas, fotoknyga, koliažas, žydiškasis Vilnius, *Yung Vilne*.

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