CHAPTER 6

The Ethnic and Universal Avante-Garde: Daniel Ozmo's Linocuts

In contrast to Pijade, Baruh, and Rein, Daniel Ozmo—although presented in socialist Yugoslavia as an artist who perished as a communist victim of fascism—did not receive sufficient attention from local researchers, and a retrospective exhibition of his work or a monograph devoted to his art and life are still needed.[1] Stemming from Sarajevo, Ozmo's artistic development during the 1930s was marked by diminished opportunities, mainly due to the problematic political and harsh economic background of his immediate surroundings.[2] In addition to the rise of fascism and the threat from Hitler's Germany, royal Yugoslavia's negligence of Sarajevo and the opposition towards its more autonomous status possibly influenced Ozmo to become, together with a number of other young Sarajevo artists, quite radical. While maintaining some of Daniel Kabiljo's interests in the Sephardic heritage, he turned towards leftist socialist Zionism, social awareness, and—ultimately—the communist worldview which resulted in an avant-garde, primarily expressionistic, artistic language.

1 A Bosnian Sephardic Artist in Belgrade

Daniel Ozmo was born in 1912 in Olovo, a small Bosnian townlet, to Lenka-Lea and Haim Ozmo. He was one of eight children, and although the father earned

1 The main publication dealing with Ozmo's work is a slim catalogue accompanying his one-man show curated by Ognjen Vukelić and exhibited at Sarajevo's Museum of the Revolution in 1970. See *Daniel Ozmo* [catalogue], ed. Moni Finci, with contributions by Vojo Dimitrijević, Nikola Nikolić, and Ivan Focht (Sarajevo: Oslobodjenje, 1970). See also Ognjen Vukelić, "Daniel Ozmo," *Jevrejski almanah 1971–1996* (Belgrade: Savez jevrejskih opština, 2000), 3–16. This article is based upon the author's 1971 unpublished manuscript entitled "Daniel Ozmo, 1912–1942" held by the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade, reg. no. 4114, box no. 15. More recent exhibitions of Ozmo's works were held in 2008, at the Gallery Stari Hram (the Old Temple) in Sarajevo, and in 2012, in his birth-place Olovo, marking 100 years of his birth. See http://archive.li/7CiFI; and http://www.radio.olovo.ba/2012/okrugli-sto-i-izlozba-u-povodu-100-godina-od-rodenja-daniela-ozme/ (last accessed 15 October 2017). In both cases Ozmo's work was briefly introduced by Ibrahim Krzović.

2 About Sarajevo's decline during the interwar period, see Ch. 2, 84.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004408906_010

his living as a merchant, the family was poor.[3] Soon after Daniel's birth, like many other residents of Bosnian villages and provincial towns, they moved to Sarajevo in search of better living conditions. However, such hopes proved to be futile since that city, itself suffering from economic difficulties and poverty could not absorb the large influx of newcomers arriving between 1919 and 1941.[4] Thus, several of the Ozmo children, known to be bright and talented, were helped during their studies in the primary and secondary schools by La Benevolencia, Sarajevo's Sephardic welfare society, which, as noted, also supported Daniel Kabiljo at the onset of his artistic career. Ozmo, who was artistically inclined from an early age, received a stipend that enabled him to travel in 1930 to Belgrade and study there at the well-known Royal Art School, the forerunner of the city's Academy of Arts (fig. 6.1, the artist is standing second from the left).[5] Ozmo studied under Prof. Ljubomir Ivanović, then an established Serbian graphic artist. Ivanović, who had studied at the Munich Academy and was one of the last pupils in Anton Ažbe's studio, had become known at home mainly for his numerous drawings and graphics that lovingly depicted forgotten corners of his homeland, occasionally showing influences of Munich's Jugendstil and Japanese art. His skill elevated graphic art in Serbia to an independent level and Ozmo's later choice of it as his main mode of expression was probably, among others, influenced by his teacher's preferences. While in Belgrade, Ozmo also took classes in sculpting with Sima Roksandić, a known Serbian sculptor of the older generation and a professor at the Royal Art School. In addition, the young Sarajevan artist learned the technique of watercolor.

From the very beginning of his studies Ozmo participated in exhibitions with his graphics—mainly linocuts—and sculptures. Unfortunately, very few of these student works have survived and we know about them mainly through regular reports of his early successes and exhibiting thanks to Sarajevo's Sephardic newspaper *Jevrejski glas*.[6] Thus, already in 1931 Naftali Bata Gedalja

3 Haim Kamhi, in a printed but unpublished short biography of Daniel Ozmo compiled at the request of the Association of the Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia, Sarajevo, 5 Mar. 1952 (Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade, Reg. no. 3571, call no. 1230-1-6/1); see also Vukelić, "Daniel Ozmo, 1912–1942," 3–4.

4 Population figures for 1919 and 1941 were about 58,000 and 90,000 respectively. However, in 1938 the annual budget per inhabitant was 400 dinars, compared to 1,300 in Belgrade, 1,230 in Ljubljana, or 1,118 dinars per capita in Zagreb; Donia, *Sarajevo: a Biography*, 154, 158.

5 At the time Ozmo arrived, a number of well-known Serbian artists taught there. The school became the academy in 1937; Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo*, 447–48.

6 For this paper see Ch. 2, 70.

FIGURE 6.1
Daniel Ozmo in the Art School in Belgrade (standing in the middle), 1933–1934, photograph, K. Jewish Artists, JHM Archives—Jewish Artists in Yugoslavia section. Jewish Historical Museum, Belgrade

introduced the young art student to the paper's readers in an article entitled "Through Belgrade—Jewish Students' Mensa—Daniel Ozmo."

As the Jewish students' mensa was the only public kosher kitchen in Belgrade, situated in the basement of the Ashkenazic synagogue and regularly providing financial help to those in need, a number of young Jewish people who came to study in Belgrade from different parts of Yugoslavia met there, mainly those from southern Serbia, Macedonia, and Bosnia. It is significant that operation of the students' mensa showed a high level of cooperation between Belgrade's Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities, both of which supported it through regular donations. Its president was the Ashkenazi Dr Leo Štajndler, its vice-president and treasurer was Belgrade's well-known Sephardic Jew, Raka N. Levi, while the Ashkenazic community offered the facilities in the spacious basement of their synagogue without charge. The place also served as an academic and book club (Geca Kon, the well-known Belgrade Jewish bookseller mentioned earlier, donated numerous books in science and literature), while students gave weekly lectures and met there to socialize. As we learn from Gedalja's article, due to the very different background and interests of the youth gathering there, the mensa became a truly multicultural society in which diverse topics and discussions could be heard—from reports about life in Palestine, the beginnings of life on earth, to "a walk" conducted by Ozmo through the Prince Paul Museum's art collection. The Baruh brothers, too, were among the mensa's regular visitors. After 1933, heated discussions often erupted between political Zionists and leftists, each promoting their views and solutions concerning the constantly worsening situation of the Jews in Europe.[7]

7 Naftali Bata Gedalja, "Kroz Beograd—Jevrejska akademska menza—Daniel Ozmo," *Jevrejski glas*, no. 8 (20 Feb. 1931): 1–2. See also "Jevrejska akademska menza (Dining Hall for Jewish Students)," in Lebel, *Until "The Final Solution,"* 354–55.

In his article Gedalja gave a sympathetic description of young Ozmo, praising him as a talented painter and sculptor from the very beginning of his studies. As such impressions by contemporaries are rare and indicate Jewish activists' interest in their "own" artists and the "Jewish art" they would like to see them develop, it is worth referring to it at length:

> It is not a rare case that while the *košava* [a strong, cold easterly wind typical of Belgrade's winters] screams angrily and wildly and shakes the mensa's windows, there suddenly bursts in a tall, well-built young man. Maybe his entrance, as anyone else's, will not draw your attention. But you nevertheless show an interest in him. His cheeks are red from wind and cold, and a wisp of the parted hair covers his right eye. His nose is unique and flat. In each arm he carries a package of three or five kilograms of clay, to maintain a balance. This is a young student of the Art School's educational section, Daniel Ozmo. His pleasant, strange, shy behavior and his quiet approaching towards the table bear much modesty.[8]

Gedalja informs us further about Ozmo's knowledge of art in general and his plan to lecture in the future about Yugoslav art. Not only does he draw and sculpt well, but he is also a writer. Gedalja claims that Ozmo is sorry that he does not have enough time to learn about the Jewish artists, and while walking with him despite the windy weather, "we are slowly descending to our area—to Dorćol. In the tangle of winding streets, the remnants of a typical Jewish quarter, Jalija, we talk about art, about ourselves." They are on the way to visit Ozmo's studio situated in a classroom of the old Jewish school, which he shares with Bora Baruh, set aside for their use by Belgrade's Sephardic religious community.[9] While Gedalja tries to arouse Ozmo's interest in the old Jewish quarter through which they walk and its dilapidated houses as motifs for his art, Ozmo smilingly shows him his sketch block in which all of it was already captured. There are also stage designs for Belgrade's Jewish amateur theater group "Max Nordau."[10]

Once in the studio, Gedalja views a number of drawings hanging on the wall, including a large, smiling (now lost) self-portrait. The opposite wall is,

8 Ibid., 1.

9 This was Baruh's first studio in Solunska St.; see Ch. 4, 127, 131.

10 The "Max Nordau" amateur theater group was active in Belgrade since 1923. They performed Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* and plays by local Sephardic authors such as Rabbi Shabtai Djean and Estira Ruso, with Zionist and biblical content, as well as by Serbian playwrights; Lebel, *Until "The Final Solution,"* 357–58. It is not clear for which of the plays Ozmo sketched stage designs.

as he sees it, "Oriental" with images of Sarajevo's meandering streets, minarets, and *čardaks* (watchtowers), all in pencil, chalk, and India ink. By terming them "Oriental" the author again stresses the romanticized (and patronizing) attitude towards Bosnia and its Turkish and Muslim heritage as differing from, in this case, Belgrade as the vibrant capital of the new country of the southern Slavs.[11] What is of note is the distinction one feels between the two Sephardic identities: of Gedalja, who saw himself as a modern Serbian Sephardic Jew, and of Ozmo, whom he sees as a Bosnian Sephardic Jew, capable, due to his "Oriental" Bosnian origin, of capturing in his drawings a "more authentic Orient."[12] Ozmo's now lost drawing *My House in Olovo*, noted by Gedalja, apparently showed a wooden cabin with characteristic window shutters offering a glimpse into the young artist's modest, non-urban background. There are also several of Ozmo's sculptures in the studio, mainly busts, and the author of the article expresses his opinion that the young Sarajevan artist is a more talented sculptor than a draughtsman. We learn that Ozmo would like to sculpt a few portraits of La Benevolencia's officials to express his gratitude for enabling him to study art with their stipend.

In what relates to "Jewish art," Gedalja describes an "important work" in progress, a big 30 × 80 cm relief that will depict *The Passage of the Chosen People through the Desert*. His description of it—"in front, bent from tiredness and supporting themselves by canes walk Moses and Aaron, and behind them all the Israelites, the old and the young, with bundles on their backs"—recalls the famous painting *Exile*, more popularly known as *Galut*, created by Polish-Jewish artist Samuel Hirszenberg. This work, which after its completion in 1904 became one of the best known Zionist icons, inspired numerous creators of Jewish visual culture, and seemingly was not unknown to Ozmo as well.[13] Hinting at his own conservative approach towards art, Gedalja concludes by praising Ozmo's modesty and claims that "while not showing any sympathy towards modernism," he positively and securely strides towards success.[14]

In the summer of 1932, still active in Jewish community life and following in the footsteps of Bora Baruh, Ozmo participated in the summer camp of

11 As shown in the previous chapter, Rein saw Belgrade with exactly such a romantic, yet "orientalizing" attitude, as is evident in his letter to Cuca (Ch. 5, 202–3).

12 This is reminiscent of the way in which Artur saw Weiller's ability to capture a true Bosnian "Orientalism" due to his childhood in Bosanski Novi and frequent visits to his family living there. See Ch. 3, 102.

13 About this painting and its reception, see Cohen and Rajner, "Invoking Samuel Hirszenberg's Artistic Legacy."

14 Gedalja, "Kroz Beograd," 2.

FIGURE 6.2
Daniel Ozmo, *Hashomer Hatzair Camp*, 1932, drawing, whereabouts unknown, reproduced in *Hanoar* 1 (October 1932): 23

the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement in Gozd, Slovenia. Apparently Ozmo was part of the "*moshavah bogrim*"—the camp for youth leaders—since in October 1932, the *Hanoar* magazine reproduced his drawings of youngsters involved in the camp's life: sitting on the ground in a circle, involved in a discussion; preparing food in a large cauldron; and sharing food from a portion while sitting outdoors (fig. 6.2).[15] Ozmo's drawings illustrated an article in *Hanoar* that stressed the problem of a growing gap between the ideal of joining a "*hakhsharah*," a framework to prepare persons for "*aliyah*" (emigration) to Palestine, on the one hand, and the diverse orientations and levels of commitment among the Jewish youth coming from different milieus and different parts of Yugoslavia, on the other. As shown, although Hashomer Hatzair's intention was to ideologically unite the campers by developing in them a desire to settle in Palestine, the movement's socialist orientation also enabled its members, involved in a search for social equality, justice, and opposition to the threat of fascism, to join the communist ranks.[16] This will also be the path trodden by Ozmo.

In October of that same year Ozmo exhibited his work in his hometown at the first autumn exhibition of the Drinska banovina artists, organized by Sarajevo's Cvijeta Zuzorić society.[17] Drinska banovina was one of the nine administrative entities, banovinas, formed after the inception of King Alexander's dictatorship. Banovinas were formed in disregard of the former units marked by ethnic and historical boundaries; as a result, they were perceived as purely political entities. Nevertheless, Sarajevo remained the administrative center of

15 For Baruh's participation in and his drawings illustrating the report about the 1931 camp, see Ch. 4, 127–130. Ozmo's illustrations accompanied the report "Omladinske mošvot hakajc u Gvozdu 5692," *Hanoar*, no. 1 (October 1932): 14–25. They appear on pp. 15, 17, and 23 and relate to the article by Nomi Edmonit, "Mošavat bogrim," 22–25.

16 See Ch. 4, 129–130.

17 Begić, *Umjetnost Bosne i Hercegovine, 1924–1945*, 325; "Otvorenje izložbe radova likovnih umjetnika Drinske banovine," *Jevrejski glas*, no. 45 (4 Nov. 1932): 7.

the newly defined region and the exhibition of artists belonging to different ethnic groups was meant to bolster the diverse, yet unitary, structure of the kingdom. Danilus Kabiljo also participated in the exhibition alongside Ozmo, the two serving as representatives of the Jewish ethnic group. Ozmo exhibited three sculptures and two paintings (now lost) with motifs adopted from the life of Sephardic Jews, probably making his benefactors from La Benevolencia very proud.

In contrast, in June 1933, in his art school's student exhibition in Belgrade, Ozmo exhibited non-Jewish works, copies of medieval frescoes from the Serbian monastery Studenica (to which the students were probably taken on an excursion), nude studies, and linocuts depicting the outskirts of Sarajevo and the construction of Zemun bridge, near Belgrade. Today only a pencil sketch of the latter exists, showing young Ozmo's early interest in landscapes depicting scenes of construction and labor.[18] Although of a "non-Jewish" character, Ozmo's achievements shown at this student exhibition were equally proudly reported in Sarajevo's Jewish newspaper.[19] Such duality—Ozmo's exploration of the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds in his art—and the appreciative reports about both kinds of works in Sarajevo's Jewish press would be characteristic of his entire pre-WWII opus. In contrast to the complete lack of interest by Baruh and Rein in Jewish themes, Ozmo's ability to artistically belong to both worlds projects Sarajevo's traditional multiculturalism and tolerance towards diverse ethnicities, a trait supported by both the Ottoman and, later, the Austro-Hungarian empires which for centuries ruled that city and were now superseded by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

2 Discussing "Jewish Art" in the 1930's: Between Racial Traits and Human Values

Aside from creating art and participating in exhibitions, Ozmo, like Pijade and Baruh, also wrote about art, here too displaying this characteristic duality. He expressed a special interest in the works created by artists of Jewish origin, on the one hand, and in modern and avant-garde art, on the other. Among the reviews Ozmo wrote was one relating to Philipp Friedrich Kaufmann (1888–1969), a Viennese Jew whose exhibitions in Belgrade in 1932 and in Sarajevo in 1934 were reported in the Jewish and non-Jewish press. Since the reviews shed

18 The drawing is presently in the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the former Museum of Revolution) in Sarajevo, Inv. No. 278/321.

19 "Na izložbi umetničke škole," *Jevrejski glas*, no. 25 (23 June 1933): 4.

light on the characteristic dichotomy that was part of Ozmo's approach, we shall shortly examine them.

Philipp F. Kaufmann was a painter and the son of the well-known Jewish artist Isidor Kaufmann known for his meticulous portraits of Galician Hassidic Jews, rabbis, and synagogue interiors. The elder Kaufmann was, as noted, known both to Kabiljo and Weiller.[20] Philipp, who was initially trained by his father and in his youth accompanied him on trips to the east European Jewish communities in search of an authentic motif, later studied art at the Art Academy in Vienna, in Munich, and in Paris. His show in Belgrade's prestigious art pavilion Cvijeta Zuzorić was reported by major Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers. The Belgrade correspondent for Zagreb's *Židov* informs us that the exhibition's opening received much attention and drew representatives of two very different groups—Jewish community leaders, rabbis (Chief Rabbi Dr Isaac Alcalay and Belgrade's rabbi Dr Ignjat Šlang were present) as well as other prominent Jews of that city, together with a number of Belgrade's non-Jewish art connoisseurs.[21] That same article also included the review of the exhibition by a Serbian art critic, signed only with his initials, in the leading Yugoslav newspaper *Politika* published in Belgrade. The reviewer first critically depicted Kaufmann's work as being highly eclectic, ranging from Flemish art and Munich Academy influences to Cézanne and even the Fauves, concluding that such eclecticism is not a good example for local artists.[22] He further singled out Kaufmann as an artist who, due to the "racial characteristic" of his art, offers an "oriental tone." When viewed as such, the author precisely sees the paintings' eclecticism combined with "luminosity" and the artist's feeling for color as Kaufmann's "spirit of Jewishness" belonging to "the Orient." Although the author's singling out of Kaufmann's "oriental Jewishness" may have been well received by the local Zionists and Sephardic nationalists, the criticism of his eclecticism which "does not serve as a good example to a local artist, but is characteristic of a Jewish one" (at this point the author is reminded of Chagall's poetic imagination) recalls the non-Jewish view of the Jews in general as being cosmopolitan, borrowing from different cultures while not belonging to any. Written in 1932, such a characterization of Kaufmann's art reminds one of the problematic social segregation imposed on the Jews as "rootless others" by

20 See Ch. 2, 81; Ch. 3, 104; *Rabbiner, Bocher, Talmudschüler: Bilder des Wiener Malers Isidor Kaufmann*.

21 "Izložba slika Filipa Kaufmanna," *Židov*, no. 5 (5 Feb. 1932): 8.

22 In the early 1930s Belgrade artists were divided into several clearly defined groups: those following Cézanne influences, "neo-classicistic," and artists creating socially aware art influenced by German expressionism.

increasing racial anti-Semitism, primarily at that time in Germany and Austria, of which the readers of the Yugoslav Jewish newspapers were aware.[23]

From Ozmo's review of the same exhibition written for Sarajevo's *Jevrejski glas* we learn that Kaufmann opened his show, which included twenty-three works, with his own lecture on the spiritual element in the works of the great masters, from Leonardo da Vinci to Édouard Manet, hoping to present his own creations as similar spiritual art. Much less critical than *Politika's* commentator, Ozmo feels that the presence of a "Jewish painter" of his unique race is reflected in the richness of the color, but also in his sensitivity (landscapes) and his search for a human soul (portraits). Most important, Ozmo finds Kaufmann's inspiration towards religiosity and his success in attracting the viewer towards prayer and belief in God as a central expression of his Jewishness. He mentions Kaufmann's painting *The Morning Prayer* as the best example of such endeavors.[24]

Such discussions are clearly indicative of the ongoing search for a definition and understanding of art created by an artist of Jewish origin, discussions which, in view of the latest developments in Europe, became strongly politicized. The next exhibition of Kaufmann's work in Sarajevo, in 1934, underlined this even further. By that time, in the same issue of *Jevrejski glas* that reported on Kaufmann's exhibition held in the great hall of Sarajevo's impressive recently completed Sephardic Temple,[25] one could read disturbing reports from the "Third Reich." Among such accounts, for example, was a quote from one of the speeches of Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels announcing that "we managed to pull out international Jewry from the cultural life, clean out the

23 See, for instance, a report in *Jevrejski glas*, no. 6 (5 Feb. 1932): 2, about the hostile acts at the university in Vienna aimed at its Jewish students and the discussion of the racial student law in Austria.

24 Apparently this phase of Philipp Kaufmann's artistic career and the "Jewish" works he created at the time remained largely unknown. Natter mentions only his post-WWII career when he settled in England, to which he escaped during the Holocaust, and became known there as a society portraitist and landscape painter. Today, among his paintings offered for sale at internet art auctions it is possible to occasionally see depictions of rural interiors devoid of any Jewish element (https://image.invaluable.com/housePhotos/Dorotheum/39/229039/H0436-L10108117.jpg) (last accessed 3 October 2017), yet strongly reminiscent of his father's depictions of east European Jewish homes and their female inhabitants while blessing the candles or resting in anticipation of the Sabbath; see *Rabbiner, Bocher, Talmudschüler: Bilder des Wiener Malers Isidor Kaufmann*, 346; 203, 205. Ozmo's article on Kaufmann appeared in *Jevrejski glas*, no. 6 (5 Feb. 1932): 5; see also *Židov*, no. 3 (22 Jan. 1932): 8; *Jevrejski glas*, no. 11 (16 Mar. 1934): 6.

25 About this synagogue see more below, Ch. 8, 253 and n. 1.

theater and cinema of the Jewish spirit, and lay down the new foundation for the spiritual life of our nation."[26]

It seems that at this exhibition Kaufmann, possibly in response to such anti-Jewish acts or—more probably—aware of the taste of Sarajevo's more conservative Jewish audience, exhibited a larger number of his religious Jewish types (rather than more universal landscapes and portraits, as in Belgrade two years earlier). *Jevrejski glas* put down the choice of this theme to his "Jewish blood and soul" but also as art allowing us "to rediscover ourselves while being thrown in the whirlwind of the turbulent events of our own days." It even mentions that the painter plans to visit Palestine in order to encounter "the new Jewish world and life that will enrich [him] with the new inspirations and impulses."[27] Thus, the Zionist worldview calling for bolstering of Jewish national consciousness in response to the growing threat and danger, and ultimately enriching it in Palestine, clearly influenced the commentator of Sarajevo's Jewish newspaper when writing about Kaufmann. However, when a non-Jewish critic, the eminent Dr Milan Ćurčić, head of Sarajevo's Writers' Organization, wrote about Kaufmann's 1934 Sarajevo exhibition, his opening remarks were that he found it difficult to evaluate any artistic event from the narrow and exclusive point of nationalism, and even less to give it any tribal or religious character.[28] Art, he claimed, "if it is really art," needs to be addressed from a universal point of view. Aware of current developments in Europe, Dr Ćurčić convincingly believes in the universalist and humanist approach "which disregards state borders, geographic positions, passing political situations, social constructions, class divisions" and refers to Kaufmann as an individual artist.[29] Rather than trying to pinpoint Kaufmann's "racial" traits and search for "Jewishness" in his opus (as did the Jewish writers in *Jevrejski glas* and the non-Jewish critic in *Politika*), Ćurčić paid equal attention to all of Kaufmann's exhibited works in Sarajevo, which aside from the "Jewish types" also included some landscapes, portraits, and still lifes. In contrast to his Belgrade colleague, Ćurčić praises such eclecticism on the part of Kaufmann. He sees it as an individual trait that enables Kaufmann, while combining the elements of naturalistic painting, impressionism, and expressionism, to achieve a unique and personal artistic language, a conclusion quite different from that expressed by *Politika*'s art critic who, as we saw, referred to eclecticism

26 *Jevrejski glas*, no. 11 (16 Mar. 1934): 1.

27 Ibid., 6.

28 "'O umjetnosti slikara Filipa Kaufmana': predavanje g. Dr. Milana Ćurčića," *Jevrejski glas*, no. 11 (23 Mar. 1934): 2–3.

29 Ibid., 2.

negatively when thinking of Serbian artists, but did see in it a specifically Jewish characteristic in art. Even when acknowledging the "emphasis upon the religious and racial" in Kaufmann's genre painting, Ćurčić claims that if those paintings would be determined only by "the inherited religious and honestly felt traditions … even with all the nuances and impressiveness of the Jewish type, of the rite and the race," but without "the use of deeply set artistic inventions," the value of those works would not cross "the conventional borders of folklore and picturesque decorativeness." He continues: "But Mr Kaufmann, led by a good instinct and inventiveness, tackled the problem from the purely artistic standpoint and arrived at full expression of the elemental forces of all that is all-human, even when he at the same time marks specific characteristics of one race and one specific type." "And maybe exactly in this synthesis," concludes Dr Ćurčić, "in this merging of that which is … specific to one type and one race … with that which is elementary and all-humanistic, maybe in it we should look for Mr. Kaufmann's real artistic value."[30] Clearly, in 1934 it was possible to form such an all-embracing opinion only in multicultural Sarajevo, traditionally respectful of the confessional and cultural differences in its pluralistic society.

Like Ćurčić's search for a synthesis between the specificity of a single "race" and the universally humanist, Ozmo's art reviews written in 1934 simultaneously explored Jewish worlds and the contemporary artistic language of the avant-garde. The case in point is his review of the opening of an exhibition at the newly established private art gallery in Belgrade owned by Józef Sandel (1894–1962), an east European Jew who lived in Dresden and arrived in Belgrade with the first wave of émigrés escaping Hitler's Germany.[31] Sandel was born in Kolomiya, a Galician town with a large Jewish population, during the period of Austro-Hungarian rule in the area. In 1920, after serving in the Austrian army during World War I, he moved to Dresden where he worked in the textile industry and studied at the Kunstgewerbe Schule. Soon joining the Communist Party, he became a co-founder of a short-lived leftist youth magazine, *MOB*, which was fiercely anti- bourgeois, and in clearly Dadaist tradition praised revolt, impudence, noise, and revolutionary sentiments. Until the Nazi rise to power he operated the Junge Kunst Gallery in Dresden and exhibited there German, French, Jewish, and leftist artists. His Belgrade collection included mainly graphic works (easier to take with him when emigrating) of such well-known European artists as Sigmund Menkes, Marc Chagall, Oskar Kokoschka, Alfred Kubin, and Jules Pascin. The exhibition in his Belgrade gallery also

30 Ibid., 3.

31 Daniel Ozmo, "Umjetnost," *Jevrejski glas*, no. 5 (2 Feb. 1934): 4.

included works by local Yugoslav artists such as Ignjat Job, Jovan Bijelić, and Petar Lubarda. In addition to enriching the modernist scene in Belgrade, Sandel, as reported by Ozmo, was interested in "searching for a Jewish motif."[32]

But when reviewing the exhibition in Sandel's gallery Ozmo was not satisfied only with the synthesis between the Jewish traits and the formal, aesthetic aspects of the exhibited art works (which would have perhaps satisfied Ćurčić), but went further and claimed "that art must have as its purpose to serve man and his goals." Moreover, he praised graphic art as being more suitable to achieve this.[33] The "usefulness" of art and praise of graphic art as the best means of communicating it, point to the additional influences Ozmo absorbed in Belgrade. While he mastered the technique of graphic art in the art school under Ivanović and was impressed by Sandel's interest in Jewish and avant-garde traits in art, the more immediate source of inspiration must have arrived for Ozmo from the local artists who in 1934 formed the leftist group "Life."[34]

Mirko Kujačić, one of the group's founders, initiated its formation by his avant-garde performance two years earlier when he appeared at his exhibition in the Cvijeta Zuzorić art pavilion in blue work clothes, and among his conventional paintings included an actual framed worn-out, heavy, worker's boot "that was removed from a worker's foot." Kujačić also read his manifest which declared his determination to fight for "the poetry of progress; for a healthy, sweaty man; for unlimited collective discipline; for a battle against consecrated ideals, against tradition, against 'eternal beauty', against individualistic thinking, against pure art."[35] This performance, clearly in the spirit of the Berlin Dada movement, encouraged a group of artists who identified with such a statement and considered themselves as impoverished "intellectual

32 Ibid. Sandel's sojourn in Yugoslavia lasted only until 1935 when, since he was a refugee, the local officials forced him to leave, probably due to his undesired leftist activities. He moved to Vilnius and finally in 1936 to Warsaw where he organized exhibitions, published, and cooperated with the local Jewish Society for the Propagation of Fine Arts. See Zofia Borzymińska and Rafał Żebrowski, *Polski Słownik Judaistyczny: Dzieje, kultura, religia, ludzie* (Warsaw: Proszynski i S-ka, 2003), 479–81; *Art History and the Fight for Memory: Józef Sandel (1894–1962) Founder of the Jewish Historical Institute Museum* [catalogue], eds. Mikołaj Getka-Kenig and Jakub Bendkowski (Warsaw: The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, 2016).

33 Ozmo, "Umjetnost," 4.

34 As shown, their ideas eventually also attracted Bora Baruh, see Ch. 4, 145.

35 Sonja Birski Uzelac, "Visual Arts in the Avant-gardes between the Two Wars," in *Impossible Histories, Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, eds. Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 164. For the text of the manifesto, see Mirko Kujačić, *Moj manifest* (Belgrade: Štamparsko izdavačko preduzeće 'Vreme', 1932) http://www.zidne.udruzenjekurs.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/zidne-novine-br-2_web.pdf (last accessed 10 July 2014).

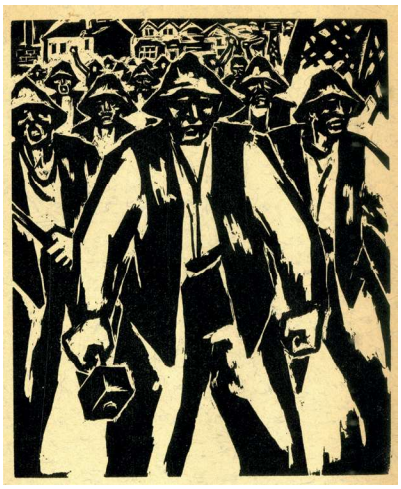

FIGURE 6.3
Đorđe Andrejević Kun, *Bloody Gold*, 1936, woodcut, 23 × 15 cm, in *Bloody Gold: Twenty Eight Original Woodcuts by Đ. Andrejević-Kun* (Stari Bečej: Štamparija Jovan Luks, 1937)

proletarians" fighting the ills of society and suffering from the lack of state support. Eventually supported by the Communist Party, the group did not exhibit together in an organized way, fearing arrests, but its members participated in the established spring and autumn salons in the Cvijeta Zuzorić art pavilion, finally causing a split and the founding of the Salon of the Independent artists. They were also in contact with the group "Earth" (Zemlja) of Zagreb, which was inspired by the Croatian leftist author Miroslav Krleža, and adopted a similar ideology. Although strongly influenced by Soviet and Marxist ideology, the members of "Life" looked for aesthetic inspiration to the art created in the Weimar Republic by leftist artists such as Käthe Kollwitz,[36] George Grosz, Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, and especially Belgian-born Frans Masereel. Striking black-and-white graphic art and social themes became one of the favored ways they expressed themselves (in contrast to the connection of "Earth" to village life and primitive, folk, and naïve art).[37] The graphic albums such as *The Reality of Reality* by Prvoslav Pivo Karamatijević (1933) or *Fishermen* by Mirko Kujačić (1934) must have caught Ozmo's attention. The best known among those often provocative and accusing artistic statements steeped in social criticism was the album named *Bloody Gold* created by Đorđe Andrejević Kun (1934–1936), which will, as will be shown, directly influence Ozmo's later creation (fig. 6.3).[38]

36 As shown, Moša Pijade was influenced by her art as well. See Ch. 1, 49, 51.

37 Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo*, 465–66. See also Miodrag B. Protić, *Slikarstvo i vajarstvo 20.veka*, Projekat Rastko; Istorija srpske kulture, https://www.rastko.rs/isk/isk_22.html (last accessed 20 July 2019).

38 After spending two months in 1934 among the coal miners in the Bor area, Kun created an album of graphics depicting scenes from their miserable life. After the album's publication in 1936, its distribution was immediately forbidden by the police. Still, a

3 Social Content and Expressionist Form

In 1934 Ozmo completed his studies in Belgrade and returned to Sarajevo, hoping to be able to help his family financially by teaching art in a local high school. His return was proudly announced in both the Jewish and non-Jewish Sarajevan press which reported his participation in the annual Christmas exhibition in the Cvijeta Zuzorić gallery, where he exhibited six linocuts and three sculptures. Ozmo is mentioned along with Vojo Dimtrijević, another young Sarajevan artist studying in Belgrade who was to become his close friend. They were both warmly introduced to their hometown audience.[39] At that time Sarajevo's local art scene was very active. The Cvijeta Zuzorić society, through its numerous exhibitions, encouraged local artists to show their work regularly. At the same time the artists were increasingly divided between those leaning towards "art for art's sake" and those who saw art as a means of propagating their engagé ideas, primarily expressing social awareness and criticism of society.[40] Thus, within a year, by the end of December 1935 Ozmo showed his work once again at the premises of the Cvijeta Zuzorić society, this time in an exhibition of young painters and sculptors. Dimitrijević, too, was among the exhibitors, as well as Josip Monsino Levi who, like Ozmo, was a Sarajevo Sephardic artist supported by La Benevolencia. The Jewish and non-Jewish press showed a lively interest in the exhibition and reported about its opening event at which Jovan Kršić, a well-known Sarajevan author, lectured about new directions among the young artists. While praising Levi for his experimental use of colors, Ozmo and Dimitrijević were singled out due to their socially aware art.[41]

In spite of experiencing early success on the artistic scene, Ozmo had a hard time finding work and his financial difficulties affected his art. This was especially evident in regard to his sculpting, as the lack of means affected his ability to acquire the needed material.[42] In addition, Ozmo dreamt of continuing his studies abroad, (probably like Baruh in Paris), but lacking the necessary financial support he was not able to do so. Moreover, between 1934 and

significant number of copies remained in the possession of left-minded intellectuals and students. See *Krvavo zlato, 28 originalnih drvoreza Đ. Andrejevića-Kuna* (Stari Bečej: Jovan Luks, 1937); Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo*, 247–48; Lidija Merenik, "'Krvavo zlato' Đorđa Andrejevića Kuna i njegov prevratnički kontekst," *Acta historiae artis Slovenica* 19, no. 2 (2014): 159–69.

39 *Jevrejski glas*, no. 23 (15 June 1934): 6; *Jugoslovenski list*, 18 Dec. 1934, p. 6.

40 Azra Begić, "Novi duh četvrte decenije: Položaj likovnih umjetnika," in Begić et al., *Umjetnost Bosne i Hercegovine*, 16–18.

41 *Jevrejski glas*, no. 48 (13 Dec. 1935): 4.

42 Vukelić, "Daniel Ozmo, 1912–1942," 86, n. 9.

FIGURE 6.4 Daniel Ozmo, *Nightlife*, 1934, linocut, reproduced in *D. Ozmo*, prepared and selected by Vojo Dimitrijević (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1951), 2

1935 he was obliged to complete his military service, which he did in Sarajevo. Unexpectedly, this experience seems to have inspired him artistically.

While serving in the army Ozmo met the Slovenian artist Stane Kumar who, influenced by the social ideas of art groups such as the Croatian "Earth" and Belgrade's "Life," eventually started his own group which he named "Soil" (1938). In a letter to Vukelić in the late 1960s, Kumar recalled that Ozmo possessed a collection of catalogues, art books, and reproductions of socially aware, avant-garde German artists such as George Grosz, Otto Dix, and Heinrich Zille, possibly deriving from his connection with Józef Sandel, the former Dresden gallery owner whom Ozmo met in Belgrade. In addition, Ozmo kept up a correspondence with various Yugoslav and foreign intellectuals and exchanged graphics with several artists. As Kumar recalled, during their military service they often walked through the poor areas of Sarajevo, sketching.[43]

In 1934, as the result of his and Kumar's encounters with Sarajevo's poverty, Ozmo created a series of linocuts depicting the city's night life, desolate drunkards sitting in local taverns, and nightly singers and musicians soothing their pain with locally popular, sad, and emotional *sevdalinka* songs (fig. 6.4). Vukelić, himself a Sarajevan, offered an insider's impression: "Lost, stuck-in

43 Vukelić, "Daniel Ozmo," 11.

the-mud, under the influence of alcohol's stupor and bizarre tavern eroticism, the characters in this series are reflections of the depressive atmosphere of a Bosnian *kasbah*, of the bottomless pit of a hollow idleness, of a sensuous, instinctive life."[44] The large black surfaces Ozmo applies to his linocuts are used to construct the scenes and add to their nightly and eerie atmosphere. Unfortunately, most of the sheets comprising this series are lost, but it is clear that in them Ozmo presented a Sarajevo version of Masereel's and German's Neue Sachlickeit involvement with the seamier side of city life, alcoholism, prostitution, and misery. In 1935 Ozmo spent some time in the Bosnian town of Jajce, among the workers and factories, creating another series (also lost) of graphics depicting their life, much as Kun had done after his sojourn among the Bor miners.[45]

Parallel to creating his socially aware art, Ozmo continued his involvement with the Jewish community. Since La Benevolencia had provided him with a stipend to study art in the first place, he was now invited to display his talent and skill by creating a graphic design and illustrating that society's 1935–36 festive publication dedicated to the 800th anniversary of the birth of Maimonides.[46] The memorial volume includes Ozmo's linocut image of Maimonides that follows the traditional portraits of this famous rabbi, showing his head covered by a characteristic turban. Still, Ozmo's black-and-white expressive rendering adds a modern flavor to the customary image (fig. 6.5). Among the decorative designs appearing in this *Spomenica*'s pages there is also one that at first seems to be Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock, an image that would befittingly recall the Temple Mount. However, the design of an edifice that Ozmo included in the book echoes the original plans prepared for the Hebrew University, the new "Temple of Knowledge" that was to rise on Jerusalem's Mt Scopus. In 1935, the year in which the publication Ozmo illustrated celebrated the merits of the great Maimonides, the modern Jewish world was celebrating the tenth anniversary of the university. Although this ambitious architectural plan was never executed, its design was widely known already in 1925, when it was also published in Sarajevo's Zionist periodical, *Narodna židovska svijest*, which dedicated its February issue to the planned opening of the first Jewish university

44 Ibid., 12.

45 Ibid., 12–13. See also his manuscript, 84. Two Yugoslav papers shortly commented on these cycles; see "Izložbe mlađih slikara," *Jugoslovenski list*, 8 Dec. 1935; "Dve izložbe," *Brazda*, Feb. 1936, p. 59.

46 *Maimonides Rambam: spomenica povodom osamstogodišnjice od njegovog rođenja 1135–1935* (Sarajevo: Jevrejsko kulturno-prosvjetno društvo "La Benevolencija," 1935); "Spomenica Maimonidesa," *Jevrejski glas*, no. 1 (3 Jan. 1936): 4; "Spomenica u čast i slavu Maimonidesa," ibid., no. 7 (14 Feb. 1936): 5.

FIGURE 6.5
Daniel Ozmo, *Maimonides*, 1935, linocut, reproduced on the cover and inside *Maimonides Rambam: spomenica …* (Sarajevo: Jevrejsko kulturno-prosvjetno društvo "La Benevolencija," 1935)

in Palestine, presenting it as a major cultural and national event in the contemporary Jewish world.[47]

Ozmo's dual orientation and interest in leftist ideologies and Jewish nationalism, that clearly responded to the conditions of his time—the deep political and economic crisis in Yugoslavia coupled by the rise of Nazism and fascism—were also encouraged by the Jewish Zionist youth organizations, especially Matatja, the Sarajevo-based Jewish Working Youth Society. In contrast to the mostly middle-class background of the Jewish youngsters who joined the Zionist youth movements in Zagreb and Belgrade, those in Sarajevo came primarily from working-class families. Matatja was the most popular Jewish youth movement in that city, strongly influenced by Hashomer Hatzair and the Yugoslav Communist Party, on the one hand, and the Sephardic movement, on the other. Mihailović points out that members of Matatja were often arrested by the police for their leftist views and makes the point that their influence upon the cultural, artistic, and social life of Sarajevo's Jews was very significant. Aside from its leftist ideology, the society especially gained popularity due to the theater performances it often staged. Alongside works by contemporary authors, they performed as well plays and folkloristic pieces written by

47 For the announcement of the opening of the Hebrew University on 1 April 1925 and the photograph of the proposed design of the main, mosque-like building, see *Narodna židovska svijest*, no. 45 (6 Feb. 1925): 2–3.

FIGURE 6.6
Daniel Ozmo, *From Jewish Mahala in Bitola* (Monastir), Macedonia, 1936, drawing, whereabouts unknown, reproduced in *Omanut* 1, 1 (September 1936): 121

Sarajevo's well-known dramatist Laura Papo Bohoreta.[48] Ozmo participated in some of their activities.

It seems that Ozmo's involvement with the Yugoslav Zionist movement and his social awareness led him at this time to also visit the old, poverty-stricken Sephardic community of Bitola (Monastir) in Macedonia. Upon his return he published a drawing of its *mahala* in *Omanut*, the Jewish journal dedicated to art and literature, published in Zagreb (fig. 6.6), a work that still recalls the drawings of his teacher Ivanović. His black-and-white linocut *A Porter from Bitola*, rendered in bold expressionist style and published in *Jevrejski glas* in September 1937, continued this concern for the poor Jewish brethren—the hunched Jewish porters, *hamali*, were among the most deprived members of the community. At the same time, Ozmo did not forget his attraction to Kun's work either. *Woodcutter*, a linocut of 1936 (fig. 6.7), rendered in a softer, even painterly manner when compared to the harsh lines of Kun's woodcut (fig. 6.3), initiates the theme connected to the surrounding Bosnian woods and the men working in them, one that will preoccupy Ozmo in the following few years. Ozmo's 1936 work being inspired by that of Kun seemed to parallel his further turn to the political left: in the following year he was dismissed from his post as art teacher due to the quarrels he apparently had with more conservative staff members and on the pretext that he was a communist whose ideas would be detrimental to the students.[49] His highly expressive *Self-portrait*

48 Milica Mihailović, "Jewish Youth Societies in Yugoslavia 1919–1926," in *Jewish Youth Societies in Yugoslavia, 1919–1941*, 57. For Laura Papo Bohoreta's life and writings, see Eliezer Papo, "The Life and Literary Opus of Laura Papo, 'Bohoreta,' the First Female Dramatist Who Wrote in Judeo-Spanish" [in Hebrew], *Mi-kan* 8 (2007): 61–89.

49 Vukelić, "Daniel Ozmo, 1912–1942," 89.

FIGURE 6.7 Daniel Ozmo, *Woodcutter*, 1936, linocut, 21.5 × 16.5 cm, Art Collection-Inv. No. 1052. Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

(fig. 6.8) created in linocut technique and recalling German expressionists, probably dates from this year.

From now on, Ozmo's artistic activity was connected to the radicalization of the city's cultural life led by a group of young Sarajevan intellectuals who, nevertheless, all recurrently exhibited their works in Belgrade's prestigious Cvijeta Zuzorić art pavilion. Thus Ozmo's works were regularly included until the end of 1940 in group exhibitions of Sarajevo's artists that included Roman Petrović, Vojislav Dimitrijević, Mica Todorović, Ismet Mujezinović, and others. Especially important for Ozmo was the exhibition held in Belgrade between 22 December 1937 and 6 January 1938, when Prince Paul visited the show and bought Ozmo's *The Mahala's Bride* for his museum.[50] This honor led other political dignitaries, as well as the Jewish community of Belgrade and the Sephardic organization, to acquire Ozmo's graphics. The success was noted in leading Serbian and Yugoslav newspapers such as *Politika* and *Jugoslovenski*

50 The whereabouts of this work are nowadays unknown.

FIGURE 6.8 Daniel Ozmo, *Self-portrait*, 1937, linocut, 21 × 17 cm, Art Collection-Inv. No. 892. Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

list. When Pjer Križanić, a well-known caricaturist and writer then on the staff of *Politika*, related to Ozmo's series of drawings and linocuts exhibited at the exhibition, he recalled the influence of Masereel and Grosz.[51]

4 Sarajevo's Avant-Garde: Collegium Artisticum

The years 1938 and early 1939 were marked by several important changes in Sarajevo's art scene. The threat of war led a number of young intellectuals studying abroad to return to their hometown. The University of Prague was especially popular in the interwar period and several hundred Yugoslav students

51 Pjer Križanić, "Sarajevska umetnost u Beogradu," *Politika* (5 January 1938): 10. The review of the exhibition and Križanić's high evaluation of Ozmo was given also in *Jevrejski glas*, no. 2 (14 Jan. 1938): 6, 8.

studied there, many of them originally from Sarajevo, as that city still lacked university level education. Compared to their backwater hometown, the capital of Czechoslovakia, "golden Prague," meant Europe—culture, democracy, and individual freedom. Among those returning were several Sarajevo Jewish youngsters who were studying mainly technical subjects, engineering, and architecture, in Prague. An exception was Oskar Danon who, as the son of an affluent Sephardic family of merchants, was allowed to pursue his talents and to study music and humanities at the Prague conservatory and the city's Faculty of Philosophy.[52] As a member of Prague University's Yugoslav students' club, Danon organized a student choir with the objective of fostering the brotherhood of the Czech and Yugoslav peoples and celebrating their common Slavic roots, stressed through the national folk songs they jointly performed. This enterprise, encouraged by a number of events as Danon recalled many years later, had clear political overtones characteristic of this period. One of them was an early encounter with Nazi brutality. In 1933 a Yugoslav students' group led by another Sarajevan, Emerik Blum—an engineering student, friend of Danon, and by origin an Ashkenazic Hungarian Jew—made an excursion to Berlin. Shocked by the Nazis marching through the streets and by their open Jew-baiting, the group hastily left the city. Soon afterwards, the Yugoslav students witnessed Prague's lively, avant-garde, and artistic atmosphere being even further intensified by the presence of the leftist émigré artists and writers who were fleeing Nazism en masse. Thus, Danon's choir was meant to boost anti-fascist sentiments and express readiness to stand up against the threat of the imminent German occupation of Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, as known, the tragic outcome of the Czechoslovakia crisis heralded the approaching war. Forced to leave Prague and travel back to Yugoslavia, on his way Danon passed through Vienna and once again witnessed the threatening atmosphere, this time in Austria on the eve of the Anschluss. Once back in Sarajevo, radicalization and alignment with the left was a natural path for some of those returning students.

In addition to Danon and Blum, among the returnees were also the architect Yechiel Finci, the choreographer and ballerina Ana Rajs, and Blum's pianist wife Matusja. They were soon joined by artists already active in Sarajevo, among whom were Daniel Ozmo, Vojo Dimitrijević, and Ismet Mujezinović. The idea of combining their efforts to awaken the city's cultural life while

52 Oskar Danon (1913–2009), who in Federative Socialist Yugoslavia was a famous conductor, educator, and director of Belgrade's Opera, wrote an extensive autobiography in the last years of his life with the help of a young journalist, Svjetlana Hribar. His memoirs are a valuable source for the period of his and his friends' artistic life examined in this chapter; see Oskar Danon, *Ritmovi nemira*, ed. Svjetlana Hribar (Belgrade: Beogradska filharmonija, 2005), 31–46.

developing a clear anti-war and anti-fascist message was born and soon put into practice. Danon and other former Prague students decided that a total or "synthetic" theater which would weave together music, pantomime, architecture, painting, film, drama, and poetry would best serve this purpose.

The idea for such a multimedia venture followed the European avant-garde interest in transcending traditional forms of art in order to redefine the very means of communication. Although the names of Russian and German avant-garde theater directors such as Yevgeny Vakhtangov, Vsevolod Meyerkhold, and Erwin Piscator are often mentioned as sources, direct inspiration came from "D38 (divadlo 1938)," a Prague avant-garde theater founded in 1933 (as "D33") and directed by the Czech poet, journalist, musician, and actor Emil František Burian. Burian's ideas had grown out of the Czech avant-garde movement called Devětsil which, especially in the 1920s, developed an art form called "picture-poems," a playful creation that combined poetism (a Czech contribution to European avant-garde) with constructivist aesthetics, or—as its main protagonist Karel Teige called it—"poetry for the five senses."[53] The "postcards from utopia" by Teige and Jindřich Štyrský were imaginative collages symbolizing metaphoric travel. They were intended to transcend boundaries and suggest the overcoming of local conditions, traditions, and limitations. Burian also collaborated with such Prague avant-garde theaters as Transitional Theater and Da-Da Theater, combining Marinetti's futurist and Dadaist traditions. Finally, in 1927 he founded his own musical and elocutionary vocal-band ensemble, which developed a unique art of choral recitation.

All these advanced avant-garde ideas were now transferred by Oskar Danon and his friends to their own cultural and political environment. Justly fearing that the establishment of a leftist avant-garde theater would not be allowed by the local police, Danon, who upon his return had organized Sarajevo's philharmonic orchestra, received permission to establish within its framework a separate group, which they named Collegium Artisticum, giving it a traditional Latin name so as not to arouse the suspicion of the authorities.[54]

53 On Devětsil and its protagonists, see Mansbach, in his all-encompassing *Modern Art in Eastern Europe: from the Baltic to the Balkans*, 61–72. See also *Devětsil: Češka likovna avangarda dvadesetih godina*, [exhibition catalogue] eds. František Šmejkal et al. (Zagreb: Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, 1989).

54 Sarajevo's Collegium Artisticum still remains an under-researched avant-garde venture which has not received due attention, neither in histories of the European avant-garde movement, such as Mansbach, *Modern art in Eastern Europe*, nor in the histories of the Yugoslav avant-gardes, such as *Impossible Histories*, ed. Djurić and Šuvaković. The reason is probably twofold: internationally, the usual consensus is that all European avant-garde activities stopped with the outbreak of WWII in 1939, and to the extent they were recorded during the war itself they are classified as anti-Nazi, anti-fascist, or Holocaust art. Since

The group's first activity, even prior to their formal registration, bore a true avant-garde and revolutionary spirit. In summer 1938 Ratko Dugonjić, a young Sarajevo lawyer and leftist activist, rented an old boat and sailed with a group of pupils and students from island to island in the Adriatic Sea, the tour prominently turning the "utopian postcards" of Teige and Štyrský into reality. While touring they gave choral performances of poetry written by well-known Yugoslav modernist poets to the island's inhabitants (probably to their utter dismay!). Such recitals, clearly inspired by Burian's elocutionary voice-band ensemble, included poems and prose texts by such prominent Serbian and Croatian poets and authors as Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević, Aleksa Šantić, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, and Miroslav Krleža. In addition, the youngsters also performed the anti-war drama *Mother*, written by Karel Čapek as a response to the Spanish Civil War.

A watercolor by Daniel Ozmo depicting a little marina with boats and a cluster of stone Dalmatian houses against the background of dry, stony hills (fig. 6.9) may have been painted during such an artistic and educational excursion to the Adriatic Sea islands. He exhibited it in the following year, during Collegium Artisticum's first organized activity. However, Ozmo may have also been inspired by another event, further underlining the duality of his experience as a leftist artist and as a Jew. It is possible that he captured this maritime landscape while still connected to the Yugoslav Jewish community's Zionist activities. Maritime Zionist camps operated along the Adriatic coast in the late 1930s, first in Sušak and on the island of Krk in the north, and later in Vela Luka, on the island of Korčula in the south (fig. 6.10). Organized and run by Jewish instructors from Palestine, the camps were intended to train future *halutzim*, Jewish youngsters planning to immigrate to Palestine, who, once there, were to make a living from the sea as fishermen. In the maritime Zionist training

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the war in Yugoslavia began a year-and-a-half later (April 1941), the activities of Collegium Artisticum were local and remained unnoticed. The history of the Yugoslav avant-garde movements also did not pay due attention to this group due to the fact that after WWII all its surviving members became "mainstream" citizens of socialist Yugoslavia and participated in its communist regime, belittling the avant-garde character of their youthful artistic activities and presenting them exclusively as anti-fascist and anti-royalist. Although the name of the group was not entirely forgotten and since 1975 serves as the name of a modern art gallery in Sarajevo, an attempt to critically examine the group's activities was made only in 1989 (for its fiftieth anniversary) and again in 1992 when a catalogue containing memoirs of the still-living members of the original group accompanied by a number of articles about it by local art critics and art historians was published in Sarajevo. See *Collegium Artisticum*, ed. Neđo Šipovac (Sarajevo: Sarajevska zima, 1992); see also the revised and enlarged article from that original publication: Azra Begić, "Antifašizam na djelu: Collegium Artisticum (1939–1941)," *Izraz*, no. 47–48 (Jan.–June 2010): 114–23.

FIGURE 6.9 Daniel Ozmo, *Boats*, 1938–1939, watercolor, 38 × 29 cm, Inv. No. 23
PHOTO ©ANA ĐIKOLI. NATIONAL GALLERY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, SARAJEVO

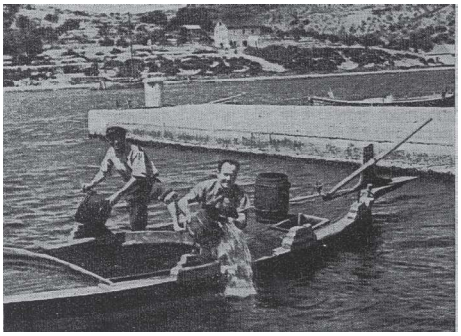

FIGURE 6.10
Members of the Zionist maritime camp "Migdal Or" [Light Tower], Vela Luka 1940, photograph, reproduced in *Afikim b'mahaẓit yovlah* [Afikim at Half a Jubilee], ed. Arye Ofir (Afikim: Kibbuẓ Afikim, 1951), 205

camps on the Adriatic Coast, they hoped to acquire a useful profession which they would be able to apply in their new homeland where, as it was hoped, the sea would play a major role in economic and social development. Forty years later, Leo Sandel, one of the instructors, wrote about these events with nostalgia and affection in Tel Aviv's *Bilten*, a monthly published by the Organization of Immigrants from former Yugoslavia: the Jewish youth, assembled mainly from inland urban centers, were warmly received by the locals of Vela Luka and taught the secrets of the trade by "barba Šime," the well-known Korčula fisherman at the time.[55]

In October 1939 Collegium Artisticum published a manifesto declaring that their major aim was to elevate culture in their city and to actively participate in arousing the consciousness of its residents, regardless of their national or religious affiliation. Describing themselves as a group of young artists not interested in their "own selfish entertainment (l'art-pour-l'art), but prepared to act and commit themselves for the good of the people," they maintained that the way to reach the people was through a union between their own artistic creation and folk poetry, in which young Sarajevo intellectuals saw a reflection of "collective tendencies and the struggle towards the great ideal of national freedom."[56] Once again, Danon's experience with the student choir he operated in Prague and its repertoire of Czech and Yugoslav folksongs played an important role. Wishing to descend from the "ivory tower" and address the people directly, Collegium Artisticum's members were aware of the power of folk poetry and folksongs.[57] As a primarily agrarian land, the history and traditions of Yugoslavia's diverse nations were preserved in the heroic and tragic folk poetry. Thus, the first such daring unification of avant-garde form with folk content was an evening of music, dance, and visual effects (fig. 6.11) in which members of the group performed well-known folk poems and songs from various parts of Yugoslavia and diverse national and confessional affiliations. These ranged from the tragic, such as "Smrt Majke Jugovića" (The Death of Jugović's Mother), to the humorous such as "Kos obosio radi djevojaka" (A Blackbird Became Barefoot because of the Girls) and the romantic "Smrt Omera i Merime" (The Death of Omer and Merima). The performance included such novelties as a

55 Leo Sandel, "Korčula—Vela Luka, septembar 1939," *Bilten* (Tel Aviv) (31 August 1979): 4–5. For maritime Zionist camps and the youth movement Thelet-lavan (Blue-White) involved in their organization, see Zheni Lebl, "Blue-White: Zionist Youth Pioneers," in *Jewish Youth Movements in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1919–1941*, ed. Zvi Loker [Hebrew with English abstract] (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Hitahdut Olei Yugoslavia L'she'avar, 1997), 58–60.

56 Neđo Šipovac, "Collegium Artisticum—tako blizu i tako daleko (mit—utopija—realnost)," in *Collegium Artisticum* (Sarajevo: Sarajevska zima, 1992), 8–9.

57 David Pijade, as shown, was aware of it already in 1907 (see Ch. 1, 41).

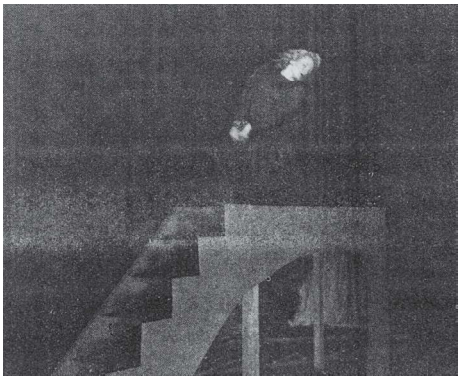

FIGURE 6.11
Collegium Artisticum, "The Evening of Music, Movement and Folk Poetry," Sarajevo, October 1939, photograph of the performance reproduced in the program (Sarajevo: Collegium artisticum, 1939)

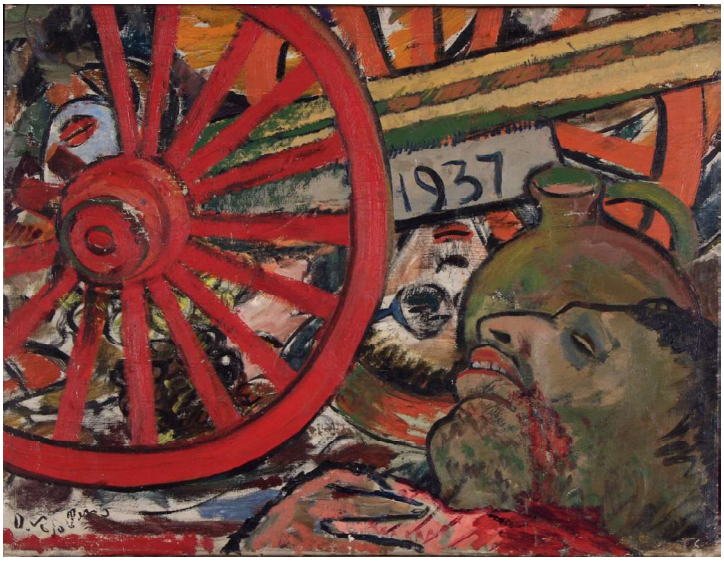

FIGURE 6.12 Vojo Dimitrijević, *Spain 1937*, 1938, oil on canvas, 50 × 65 cm, Inv. No. 462. National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

transparent screen that separated the audience from the stage on which images and colored lights were projected, a musical recital by the choir in the background, and dancers whose movements silently acted out the strong emotions expressed in the poems and songs. The stage was bare and constructivist, and the costumes minimalist and modern. The Collegium Artisticum's members also held public lectures, such as that by Vojo Dimitrijević on Pablo Picasso and his *Guernica* painting, which included a discussion of the Spanish Civil War, a subject tackled by one of Dimitrijević's own paintings entitled *Spain 1937* (fig. 6.12).

The group's second event was an exhibition held in autumn 1940 under the title "The Bosnian Village" at which were shown works by Vojo Dimitrijević, Ismet Mujezinović, Daniel Ozmo, and Rizah Štetić. The accompanying lectures praised the village as a source of health and vitality, and called for the preservation of the local Bosnian building tradition while examining its potential influence on contemporary architecture. Ozmo, himself born in Bosnia's highland townlet of Olovo, seems to have now been especially active. Already a year earlier, in the spirit of avant-garde art and social awareness he created a unique series of images combining the local Bosnian atmosphere with expressionist style and published an impressive album of twenty linocuts, *From the Bosnian Woods*. The woodcutter theme, that once paralleled Kun's miners in the Bor mines (fig. 6.7), was now developed in a series of graphic prints depicting various types of hard physical labor performed by the Bosnian woodcutters and sawmill workers (fig. 6.13). Compared to Kun's class-conscious and socially critical works, Ozmo's linocuts once again appear as more artistic, turning the woodcutters' hard work into an expressionistic aesthetic experience. In 1940 Ozmo also gave a lecture on "Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Painterly Motif," accompanied by his own oil paintings depicting mountain and village landscapes shown at the exhibition and recalling his birthplace Olovo and the surrounding area. He delivered the lecture on the premises of Lira Sarajevo's Sephardic musical society, and reviews of the exhibition were published in several of that city's newspapers, including *Jevrejski glas*.[58] Ozmo's Jewish and leftist worlds were now fully merged, as exemplified by the motifs appearing in two of his additional works—the image of an old Sephardic woman (fig. 6.14) and a rural Bosnian hut. Such integration of his two worlds also led to a joint exhibition with Vojislav Dimitrijević in the prestigious Belgrade art pavilion Cvijeta Zuzorić, planned for the end of April 1940. For this occasion the two friends prepared fifty works: Ozmo exhibited watercolors and drawings, while Dimitrijević showed watercolors and oils.[59]

This "return to nature" and folk roots in 1940 seems to have been a reaction to doubts that the Bosnian, especially Muslim, population began to have about the so-called Cvetković-Maček Agreement, the last attempt of the royal government (before World War II also engulfed Yugoslavia) to improve the shaky coalition by granting more independence to the Croats. The painful sensing that Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided between Serbs and Croats, without regard to the local population, was coupled by extreme poverty in the region and the sharp economic decline that Sarajevo's citizens had experienced during

58 *Jevrejski glas*, no. 30 (2 Oct. 1940): 7.
59 *Jevrejski glas*, no. 16–17 (22 Apr. 1940): 8.

FIGURE 6.13 Daniel Ozmo, *Pulling the Lumber Wood*, 1939, linocut, 21 × 17 cm, in *From Bosnian Woods: Twenty Original Linocuts by Daniel Ozmo*, 1939, Art Collection-Inv. No. 595. Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

the late thirties. The simplicity of village life and connection to local roots must have offered a feeling of reassurance and been soothing.[60]

In contrast to the series of woodcutters, it is possible to sense the growing feeling of doom and danger in an additional theme that captured Ozmo's imagination in the following year, when he created two striking watercolors showing the slaughtering of cattle (fig. 6.15). This theme, which interested

60 Donia, *Sarajevo: a Biography*, 165–67.

FIGURE 6.14
Daniel Ozmo, *Old Sephardic Woman*, 1939, ink on paper, 25 × 22 cm, Inv. No. 3036.
PHOTO © ANA ĐIKOLI. NATIONAL GALLERY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, SARAJEVO

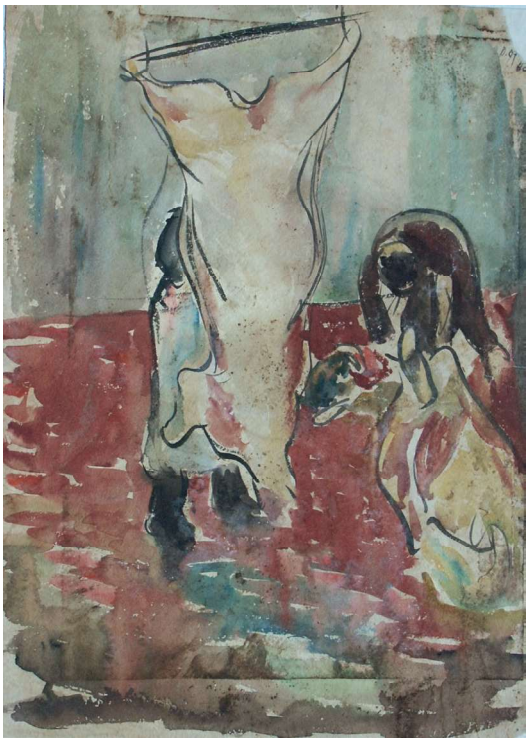

FIGURE 6.15
Daniel Ozmo, *In the Slaughterhouse*, 1940, watercolor, 51 × 36.5 cm, Art Collection-Inv. No. 852. Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

FIGURE 6.16
Collegium Artisticum, photograph of the performers, reproduced in the program (Sarajevo: Collegium artisticum, 1939), n.p.

also Ivan Rein, has often been interpreted, as noted earlier, as an expression of tragedy—from Rembrandt and Chaim Soutine to Marc Chagall.[61] While Petar Dobrović, a Serbian modernist painter, could have still been thinking of butchers and their hard work or color arrangements of a hanging ox's carcass,[62] Ozmo's watercolors stress the act of slaughtering for itself. By 1940, the year Ozmo worked on his slaughterhouse watercolors, World War II was already being waged in Europe and the theme he developed clearly reacted to the grim reality around him.

In the early months of 1941, before the invasion of Yugoslavia in April of that year, Collegium Artisticum staged what proved to be its last and most avant-garde performance: "Why is Ema Crying?" (fig. 6.16). Comprised of five one-act sketches, it was based upon a children's book published in Prague in 1937 by the leftist Czech Jewish author Norbert (under the pseudonym Nora) Fried (since 1946, Frýd) when he was twenty-four and at the very beginning of his writing career. Involved since the mid-30s with the "Leftist Front," Frýd closely collaborated with theater director Frantishek Burian and befriended a number of Jewish artists and composers.[63] Moving in the same intellectual and political circles, Sarajevo's students in Prague must have known him and brought his book, originally entitled *Let the Contrabass into the Radio*, to Sarajevo. They translated it and Ozmo prepared its design using the original illustrations—photomontages created by J. Rothe and V. Schlosser that recalled the Czech

61 See Ch. 5, 169. Chagall used this motif in his *Flayed Ox*, painted in 1947, in the aftermath of WWII and the Holocaust.

62 See his *Slaughterhouse I*, 1935, and *Quartered Ox* I, 1935, http://www.bms.ns.ac.rs/izlozbe/izlozba242.pdf, 53–54 (last accessed 15 October 2017).

63 On Norbert Frýd (Fried) (1913–76) see *Dictionary of Czech Literature since 1945* online: http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=324 (last accessed 7 July 2015).

FIGURE 6.17 Nora Fried, *Why is Ema Crying? 5 Stories*, (Sarajevo: Collegium artisticum, 1941), illustration by J. Rothe and V. Schlosser, n.p.

avant-garde "picture-poems" (fig. 6.17).[64] The five stories in the book promoted unity, sharing, and equality as the only way towards the successful achievement of joint goals. Collegium Artisticum's performance centered on the story about the letter E (standing for little Ema) which escaped from the typewriter, but in the end realized that only together with other letters could it create words and stories. The choreography by Ana Rajs featured numerous children who, step dancing, created the sound of typing. During the performance, which included almost one hundred performers, a song based on one of the

64 For the first edition of this book written in Czech, see Nora Fried (Norbert Frýd), *Pust'te basu do rozhlasu a jine pohadky o novych vecech* (Prague: Karel Synek, 1937); for its translation into Serbo-Croatian, see Nora Fried, *Zašto plače Ema? 5 pripovjetki* (Sarajevo: Collegium Artisticum, 1941).

story's lyrics and performed by a team of football-playing boys, was sung as the Collegium Artisticum anthem:

> We lead the attack, storming the entire world! /And who dares to stand in front of us?/ Our motto: with joined powers / to fight and win! / Strong willpower is not a sham, / From it a strange power beats! / We lead the attack, storming the entire world! / With us goes the flower of youth!

At that moment in history, these words had the power to elevate and prepare to fight, although—in true Dadaist spirit—there was an immediate anti-climax, as, after concluding the song, the entire group of boys went to a pastry shop and ate a huge amount of ice cream. The last sketch, however, about birds trying to understand humans, bore a clear anti-war message and expressed hope for a future world of love, peace, and happiness.

Supported by his stipend from the Sarajevo La Benevolencia, Ozmo was thus at first (during his art studies in Belgrade) praised as a "Jewish" artist who successfully combined the Zionist dream of a new distinctive Jewish secular culture with a renewal of Sephardic identity. Yet, his interest in graphic art brought him into contact with the interwar European, primarily German, avante-garde art and with the progressive, critical, political worldview. His artistic development, under the influence of Józef Sandel and his little-known Belgrade gallery, on the one hand, and the leftist "Life" group's art on the other, resulted on his return to Sarajevo in a series of expressive linocuts dedicated to the hardships of the local Bosnian population. Moreover, in contrast to Baruh and Rein, he continued to successfully intertwine such artistic activity with works dedicated to the Zionist and Sephardic causes. Ozmo, who had not yet experienced expulsion and incarceration as had Baruh and Rein, did not express through his art and writing the feeling of non-belonging and "otherness" that they did. In contrast, his involvement in the Collegium Artisticum projects contributed to this unique avante-garde group's forceful creativity, originality, and critical stance present in multi-ethnic Sarajevo until the last moments preceding the outbreak of WWII in Yugoslavia.

The third part of this book is devoted to the period of WWII and the Holocaust, as it unfolded on the territory of Yugoslavia. While investigating the lives (and deaths) of the artists discussed so far, this section also indirectly tells the story of the destruction and survival of the Yugoslav Jewish community. The artists, having been "marked" as Jews destined for extinction, now—willingly or

not—became part of this community. Their persecution as Jews, incarceration in prisons, labor and death camps, on the one hand, and their attempts to flee and their status as refugees, on the other, will be analyzed through the art works they left behind. Moreover, some additional artists will be considered, since their destiny and works illuminate different aspects of this ordeal. Because visual evidence is sometimes scarce, it will be occasionally supplemented by written records—diaries, letters, and fiction. Finally, in this part how the artists expressed themselves will be considered according to the place and circumstances in which they found themselves.