Jewish Photographers: The Case of E. M. Lilien

Gary Winogrand, the well-known Jewish American photographer, claimed once that to be a great photographer, it was first of all necessary to be Jewish. This somewhat tongue-in-cheek claim has a lot going for it when we consider the very long list of 20th century American photographers of Jewish origin. Such a list would include names such as [[**2.Stieglitz, Siskind**]] Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Aaron Siskind, Weegee, [[**3. Eisenstaedt, Levitt**]] Alfred Eisenstaedt, Helen Levitt, Robert Frank and many others, and, of course, we should not forget Man Ray. Indeed, as evinced by an exhibition shown in New York a few years back, in no other visual art form except cinema over the last 100 years were Jews so prominent, so influential, as in photographic reportage, portraiture, fashion, as well as in art photography and especially street photography. There are numerous reasons for this, most of which have to do with the history of photography as a technology and a business, in particular the fact that photography was a way for Jewish immigrants without social connections to develop a career. Indeed, many photographers now treated as artists came up through the commercial world of magazines.

Such was also the case in Eastern Europe were Jews were also leading figures in developing photography as a tool of documentation, and, at time, as a medium of social criticism. As is well documented in many archives, after the late nineteenth-century, with the mass emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, family photographs, taken by primarily Jewish photographers throughout Eastern Europe, became a popular way for families to keep in touch. As I've learned – and I'm not an expert in this particular field – some of the most important and earliest artists working as photographers in the Russian Empire were Jewish, this again for the simple reason that this vocation did not involve the need to gain admittance into art schools. In Hungary we should mention Andre Kertesz, [[**4. Kertesz**]] one of the most important photographers of the 20th century, who was born in 1894 in Budapest to a Jewish family. He received his first camera in 1912 and immediately began to make studies of the Hungarian countryside, and scenes of daily life. Seeking to make a living through photography, he moved in 1925 to Paris, [[**5. Kertesz**]] where he established a successful career as a photojournalist. He is well known for his series of "distortions." Following the rise of Nazism, he emigrated to the United States in 1936.

We should also mention another Hungarian, [[[[**6. Moholy-Nagy, Ilse Bing**]] László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946)

who was born László Weisz to a Jewish-Hungarian family. And in Germany, names such as Ilse Bing, Herbert Sonnenfeld and Erwin Blumenfeld come to mind, all of them ending up in the US.

In a gross generalization, I would argue that most of the photographers mentioned have not flaunted their Jewish origin – indeed, at times they placed it under heavy cover – and their work is generally secular in content, rarely focusing on identifiably Jewish iconography.

There were, of course, Jewish photographers who placed Jews at the center of their photographs. [[**7. Vishniac, Raviv**]] One thinks, for instance, of Roman Vishniac (1897–1990), perhaps the most famous Jewish photographer of the interwar period. And there are others, such as Moshe Vorobeichic Raviv, the Bauhaus photographer, who documented the life of the Vilna Jews. I wish to focus, however, on the work of one artist, a printmaker and photographer, whose work embodies some of the inner tensions associated with both its Jewish and Zionist affiliation.

[[[**8. souvenir card for the Fifth Zionist Congress (1901)**]]]] Ephraim Moses Lilien has often been described as the first artist of the Zionist Movement, and even at times as the "first Zionist artist."

There is undoubtedly ample justification for referring to Lilien in such terms; he was the foremost contributor to the early visual vocabulary of the Zionist Movement, and some of his images have continued to fire the imagination of later generations. Actively involved for several years with the Zionist Movement, he served as representative to the Sixth Zionist Congress. He was instrumental in establishing the Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem. However, a marked lessening of his commitment to Zionism may be discerned in the years following his first trip to Jerusalem in 1906. This was at the time he started using photography in his work, and when he was working on his Bible illustrations and developing his skills as an etching artist. It is the vacillating nature of his Zionist stance which I shall examine in the following discussion. I shall also consider the place of photography in his work.

There seems to have been, in retrospect, much to commend the conjoining of Lilien and the burgeoning Zionist movement. Lilien's artistic roots lay in the stylistic trend named Art Nouveau. [[**9. Alfons Mucha, Job, poster 1897**]] Art Nouveau, or Jugendstil, to apply in Lilien's case the German term for the Munich-based Art Nouveau center, embodied to a large extent the striving for a new art, a new aesthetic direction free of any allegiance or subservience to the styles of the past.

Thus, words like "renascence" and "liberation" figured often in writings associated with the movement. The names by which the style was known in its various centers — Art Nouveau, Jugendstil, or "style of youth," Modernista, Modern Style — also convey the sense of a new beginning. [[[**10. Henry van de Velde, Tropon, 1899**]]

It is hardly surprising that the awakening of the Jewish national spirit would also be reflected in this stance of artistic liberation. Art Nouveau, especially in Lilien's Jugendstil version, could, indeed, have suggested a way for incorporating the symbols and iconography of the Jewish cultural tradition within a new and dynamic stylistic framework. This framework, in placing itself under the banner of the "new" – with its floral ornament and its sense of life and energy – formed a strong stylistic correlative to the promise of dynamic awakening inherent in Zionism.

Jugendstil and Zionism began to merge in Lilien's career towards the close of the century. His early works in this style were the drawings done for the literary and artistic journal *Die Jugend*, [[**11. "Nymph and Satyr," Die Jugend, 1897**]] whose Arcadian subjects of nymphs and satyrs and their erotic, almost decadent frivolity, also exemplify some of the ex-libris he designed around that time. [[**12. Ex Libris Dr. Franz Oppenheimer, George Busse-Palma**]]

In 1897, shortly after his drawings began to be published in *Die Jugend*, Lilien commenced his activities as illustrator for various socialist publications, primarily the illustrated magazine *Süddeutscher Postillon*. Beginning with his first drawing in the Süddeutscher Postillon, an illustration for a poem entitled "Am Amboß" (At the Anvil) (September 1897) [[**13**]], the relative sobriety and solemnity of Lilien's illustrations for this magazine exhibit a marked difference from his work for *Die Jugend*. Some of the elements that formally characterize the Jugend works — undulating curves and uninterrupted flowing lines— found its way to the Süddeutscher Postillon illustrations; for instance, the ornamental sparks emitted by the grinding machine in "Das Rad der Zeit" (The Wheel of Time) [[**14**]]. However, contrary to the light and sketchy nature of the *Jugend* illustrations, the latter exhibit stronger lines and simpler decorative schemes. These works already reveal much of what would, a few years later, characterize his work for the Zionist movement, both conceptually and stylistically.

It is, indeed, in such deviations from normative Art Nouveau or Jugendstil that one may locate the promise for his contemporaries of concepts such as Socialist art or, later, Jewish national art. That Zionism seemed for a while to have found a potent vehicle in Jugendstil was largely due to the publication in 1900 of Juda, a book of poems by Börries von

Münchhausen, [[**15. Postscript, JUDA, 1900**]] designed and illustrated by Lilien [[**16. Frontispiece, JUDA**]]. There is, however, no reason to assume that Lilien's work on this book had been prompted by any direct association with Zionist circles, or that he had in this publication consciously proposed a program or a model for a Zionist or Jewish national art. This is not to say that Lilien was wholly oblivious to Zionism at the time. Some of his associates in Munich belonged to Zionist circles. Furthermore, some of the symbols introduced in *Juda*, such as the Magen David [[**17. cover, JUDA**]] and the eight-branch Menorah, were at that time already well-established as new Zionist emblems. However, within the overall thematic and decorative scheme of the book, these seem to have been grafted onto what is generally a Jewish cultural context. Thus they appear more in their capacity of traditional Jewish religious symbols. Steeped on the whole in Jewish and biblical themes [[**18. "Silent Song"**]], the book is certainly quite removed from anything referring to Zionism's "political" aim of creating for the Jewish people a home in Palestine, as proclaimed in the "Basle Declaration" in 1897. As a collaborative effort of von Münchhausen and Lilien, the book is an expression of late 19th century Romantic-nationalist ideas. In what concerns the book's literary context, the name "Juda" indicates its "Judaizing" tendency; that is, the casting of its

Biblical material in a specifically Jewish framework (rather than Christian exegesis). Even the ballad "Passah" (Passover) [[**19**]], with its call for the Jews to return to their homeland and celebrate Passover in the future in Jerusalem, is not necessarily an expression of modern Zionist political rhetoric. In this respect, the material is no more "Zionist" in essence than, say, Byron's "Hebrew Melodies." This could also be said of Lilien's illustration for "Passah," which presents an old Jew, encircled by thorns, viewed against a background of monumental Egyptian architecture, with the distant sun of "Zion" sending forth its rays. The Jew, standing on a high precipice, irrevocably separating him from "Zion," does not even turn directly toward it; the thematic roots of the illustration are thus embedded in the Diaspora rather than in anything associated with a contemporary Zionist sentiment. If we can still see *Juda* as a Zionist creation, it is because it was so enthusiastically adopted by the Zionist movement. It was indeed the book Zionism yearned for; one whose conception, overall design, and stylistic deviations from typical Jugendstil norms, suggested a promising direction for the art to be, a Jewish national art that would fulfill Zionism's ideological and propagandist needs. Furthermore, it would appear that it was the enthusiastic reception accorded the book in Jewish and Zionist circles that helped recruit Lilien and his art to the cause of Zionism.

Once Lilien had harnessed himself to this task, he began his successful pursuit of an artistic idiom that would answer the expectations of his generation. This is well reflected in the persistence of some of the images he created in the collective consciousness of the Jews in the following decades. One example of this is his illustration for the poem "Der Jüdische Mai" ("The Jewish May") in the 1902 book *Lieder des Ghetto* [[**20**]], with its unabashedly emotional depiction of an old Jew who, bound with thorns and guarded by snakes. He stretches out his arms with a tearful and yearning look toward the sun, which is rising over an enchanted dream-vision of a Zion, beneath which flows a meandering river bedecked with lush vegetation and palm trees. For the Diaspora Jew yearning for a Zion he had never seen, few images can equal this one in its direct emotional appeal (in this respect, it is far superior to the "Passah" illustration). A similar image was used around that time for a souvenir card for the Fifth Zionist Congress (1901) [[**21**]], in which a similarly bound Jew is ordered by an angel to look toward a distant Zion where another Jew is seen plowing the land within the orb of a huge and blinding sun. Lilien's art succeeded indeed in synthesizing readymade ingredients with a proven appeal to the Jewish popular imagination ———

mostly those in which the religious and folkloristic motifs remained dominant.

As noted before with regard to *Juda*, the Zionism inherent in Lilien's work was Romantic-nationalist in essence. As an expression of Utopian longing for Zion, tinged with "Biblical" romanticism, it remained an insubstantial vision, quite lacking in anything referring to activist Zionism. Lilien's illustrations were more topical in their implications when he came to express Jewish, or even Jewish-nationalist, themes that were not necessarily related to Zionism. His illustrations for Morris Rosenfeld's *Lieder des Ghetto* are, in this respect, more persuasive as authentic expressions of Lilien's frame of mind vis-à-vis their subjects than those for *Juda*. The son of a poor wood turner in Drohobicz, Lilien witnessed in his childhood the plight of the small craftsman who could hardly provide for his family. This childhood experience is given a memorable expression in the portrait of his father at the lathe [[**22. Title page for "Songs of Labor"**]], a despairing look on his face, framed by the tools of his trade and by the highly stylized shapes of the wood shavings coming off the block. In other illustrations [[**23. "At the Sewing Machine" and "Tear Drops on the Iron"**]], the sinister shapes of a blood-sucking vampire or a spider weaving its web are grafted on to the more realistic depictions of a Jewish tailor and sweatshop worker.

Most of Rosenfeld's poems deal with the fate of Jews in the Diaspora. [[**24. Frontispiece**]] Appropriately, they are accompanied with images such as the bare drooping branches of a tree and a broken harp, [[**25. "Elul" and "Cemetery"**]] roses with extremely long thorny stems, drooping flowers, cobwebs or curling snakes [[**26. Jewish May** again]].

Indeed, the book as a whole is quite removed from the spirit of Zionism as a movement of political renascence and liberation. The illustration for "Storm," [[**27**]] with its two Jews forlornly sitting on the deck of a ship tossing in the storm, is, in its expression of the experience of Jewish immigrants, far more concrete and immediate than the illustration for "Der Jüdische Mai" — the only direct "Zionist" work in the book [[**28. Jewish May** again]] — in which the yearning for Zion is offered from the timeless perspective of the traditional viewpoint of the Diaspora Jew.

Some of the illustrations of *Lieder des Ghetto* convey a hidden sense of uneasiness. It is not just a matter of sinister bats and vampires, or snakes rearing their heads in the border decoration. A bizarre, even perverse quality can be discerned, for instance, in the illustration for the poem "The Creation of Men." [[**29. "The Creation of Man"**]] Here, it is not so much that the image of Herzl, as one of the angels present at the creation of man, is shown practically naked, although this does

have a somewhat bizarre effect; rather, this quality is derived from the contrast perceived between Herzl's strong and masculine figure, that dominates the left-hand page in this double-page illustration, and the boyish, vulnerable and somewhat feminized figure of the newly-created man seen on the right. As suggested in the poem, the newly-created man also represents the poet or artist, and one might be tempted to see this vulnerable poet as Lilien's oblique reference to himself as an artist dominated by the bigger-than-life figure of Herzl. A certain ambivalence regarding Herzl, that may have been only hinted at in 1902, became much more pronounced by 1908, when a Herzl figure again appeared in Lilien's art in several of his illustrations for the first volume of the Westermann edition of *Die Bücher der Bibel*. The juxtaposition one can perceive in the illustration for "The Creation of Men" is featured once more in the depiction of Jacob's struggle with the angel [[**30**]], in which, in a strange reversal of roles, Jacob, a strong black-bearded figure (indeed, with pronounced Herzlian features) struggles with a young vulnerable angel whose own twisted thigh is more prominently displayed than Jacob's. I suspect there is some homoerotic quality to this pair; or it may refer to some hidden current of a love-hate relationship with Herzl.

I won't go into the psychological implications of such illustrations but rather consider the implications insofar as

Lilien's commitment to the cause of Zionism is concerned. These are brought into high relief in the representation of "The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden," [[**31. Die Bücher der Bibel, Vol. 1, 1908**]] in which an angel holding the "flaming sword which turned every way" bears Herzl's features, while Adam's appearance somewhat resembles that of the vulnerable angel struggling with Jacob. The angel, whose sword held upright against his body hides his nakedness, refers back to Lilien's earlier **"Rahab"** illustration in *Juda*, [[**32**]], in which the naked Rahab is lying prostrate below the figure of an angel with huge dark wings and whose long phallic sword appears to be plunged into her body. I suspect that the erotic-sadistic scene in the "Rahab" illustration was on Lilien's mind, perhaps quite unconsciously, when he created the later illustration [[**33. Expulsion from the Garden of Eden" again**]] The question is, why has Herzl been assigned such a role in Lilien's work? The desert-like seashore, with its desert vegetation might be seen as a reflection of the Land of Israel, as Lilien saw it during his first trip to Palestine. The border of the Garden of Eden, on the other hand, seems to consist of papyri or bulrushes, and these are associated with Egypt. Thus, the illustration also has as a subtext the Exodus from Egypt, with Herzl-Moses ordering the Jews to leave the fleshpots of Egypt-Europe in order to settle in the desert-land of Israel.

Does Lilien's picture imply a perception on his part, however unconscious, of his own inability or unwillingness to leave Europe for the desert land of Zion? The drooping heads of the lilies (Lilien in German) seen at the feet of the angel, next to Lilien's signature, seem to offer further substantiation for such an interpretation.

Can we discern in these pictures hints of a disenchantment with his role as a Zionist artist or a lessening of his Zionist commitment? In the most extensive biographical source, Lilien's collected letters to his wife, *Briefe an seine Frau: 1905-1925* (1985), there is no specific indication warranting such a conclusion. However, whereas the early letters are full of enthusiastic pronouncements concerning Zionism, letters written during or after his first trip to Palestine appear to be quite low key in this respect. Alongside his enthusiastic reactions to sites offering remnants of the Biblical past, the letters also seem to express some disappointment with the present-day reality he found there. This disenchantment may have been enhanced by a weakening of his ties, following Herzl's death, with the new leadership of the Zionist Movement. It may also be argued that, whereas his Jewish national feelings and his Zionism were nurtured by his Eastern-European background, and grew as a response to the hardships and pogroms experienced by the Jews there, his marriage in

1906 to Helena Magnus, daughter of a respectable and fully assimilated Jewish family in Brunswick, may have brought about a lessening of his Jewish and Zionist commitment.

Such issues, however, remain to be explored by a future biographer. My concern here is with the evidence provided by Lilien's two central activities in the years following his first trip to Jerusalem — the Bible illustrations and the etchings — and this mostly in relation to his use of photography and the development of his conception of landscape. In most of his early illustrations, figures, symbols and emblematic forms act in a non-realistically determined space. The flatness and stylization of setting in his early work often resulted in the placement of figure and landscape in two distinct and separate spatial configurations as, for instance, in "Isaiah" (JUDA) [[**34**]] or in "Der Jüdische Mai."[[**35**]]. We can view, indeed, the gradual change in his art following his first visit to the Middle East in 1906 as one in which the landscape lost its emblematic character and began to become more realistic. This development is easily discernible in the illustrations for the three volumes of the Westermann edition of *Die Bücher der Bibel* which came out in 1908, 1909, and 1912. In the first Bible volumes Lilien tended to choose the kind of motif that required a non-realistic, symbolic, or allegorical treatment, such as his treatment of Moses with the Tablets of

the Law [[**36**]] with its stylized clouds seen against a fantastic landscape. In the 1912 volume, the presence of human figures is often quite inconsequential. Lilien introduces some identifiable locations, either as settings for a Biblical theme (for example, the Damascus Gate as an illustration for Ruth) [[**37**]] or with no narrative pretext whatsoever. Landscapes of this type appear in great preponderance in the single-volume Bible editions published in 1912 and 1915, which make use of all the illustrations included in the three volumes of the uncompleted early edition.

Lilien started making etchings around 1908, and after 1912 etching became his exclusive mode of artistic creation. No great discernment is needed to perceive the direct relationship between the Bible illustrations and Lilien's etchings, where a similar development might be discerned. Among the early etchings in 1908 and 1909 there are some, like *Plowing Jew* [[**38**]] and *The Wall of Lamentation in Jerusalem*, [[**39**]] which reveal, in their fantastic quality and linear or decorative character, some persistence of older forms and motifs. From 1910 on, most of the prints depict authentic locations and "ethnic" types such as the Jew of Bockara [[**40**]] or a Yemenite Jew [[**41**]]. Lilien appears to have begun looking for a means of conveying more effectively his newly awakened perceptions of the reality of the Land of the Bible, and he found in etching a

medium most suitable to this end. This is where Lilien's photography becomes an important factor in his artistic development. After is first visit to Palestine, photography became a dominant aesthetic factor in his work, serving as an aide-mémoire and helping him upon his return home to recapture accurately the detail and flavor of types and places.

[[[42. Old Man Studying the Torah + Beggar

[[[43. Psalms + Young Samaritan

[[[44. Model in Head Ornament + Rahab

[[[45. Young Samaritan ++

[[[46. Jewish woman from Bokhara + Girl in scarf

[[[47. Holiday in Jerusalem ++

[[[48. Damascus Gate, photograph

[[[49. Damascus Gate, etching

[[[50. The two together

Lilien's continued reliance on photography in his work in the etching medium is, indeed, highly apparent in his illustrations for the third Bible volume and for the later New Testament section (included in the 1912 and 1915 editions), in which the character of the landscape and, at times, the textural quality reflect those of the photographs and etchings (for instance, View of the Temple Mount, New Testament, 1915 [[**51**]] and the etching *Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives*, 1911 [[**52**]]). [[[**53. the two together**]] [[[**54. Al Aqsa ++**

The preponderance of Palestinian subjects in his work as an etcher and photographer begs the question whether this fact suffices to vindicate the viewpoint that argues for a Zionist continuity in Lilien's work.

____ ________ [[possibly, skip to p. 22]]]]]

We can consider this question in the light of the importance assigned by Lilien to topographic and ethnographic accuracy, in which he follows a tradition rooted in the eighteenth or early nineteenth-century penchant for accurate representation of subjects of interest for the historian or scientist. The Middle East was one of the preferred areas of exploration for scientists and pilgrims alike, and the publications documenting such expeditions offered sufficient scope for topographical artists, as did the guidebooks for tourists or other pictorial surveys. I should mention, in this respect, David Roberts' volumes of lithographs published in the 1850s; Finden's *Landscape Illustrations of the Bible*, some of which were drawn by Turner, published in 1836; and Charles Wilson's famous *Picturesque Palestine*, with illustrations by anonymous artists, published in the 1880s.

The nineteenth century saw some significant developments in the methods of attaining a faithful representation of the oriental setting. In this, the work of the

artist was greatly assisted by photography, which simply offered an easier, faster and more accurate way of sketching a landscape or, even better, a street scene, in preparation for a painting. Whereas the reliance of the artist on specific photographs taken by others may have bordered at times on slavish imitation, such an imitation was, of course, precisely what was demanded from an engraving artist converting a photograph into an engraving. This was the only viable way to publish photographs prior to the introduction of photo-mechanical printing later in the century. Indeed, it was a far more efficient method of reproduction than the pasting of separately developed photographs into a book. See for example a photograph by Giacomo Brogi, *Encampment in Hebron*, 1868 [[**55**]], and *Abraham Oak, Hebron*, engraving from *Picturesque Palestine*, Charles Wilson, 1880 [[**56**]]. [[**57. the two together**]] .

In the case of landscapes, in particular, the engravings were often modified slightly; an imaginary reality was introduced to accommodate some pictorial convention that was not necessarily commensurable with the original photograph. In the far more independent context of painting, such modifications, either of the photograph or the actual scene as experienced by the artist, are certainly the rule. Topographical artists were influenced, in this respect, by a

tradition of landscape painting that was based on patterns derived from the ideal landscapes of Poussin or Claude and from the somewhat later schemes of the picturesque ------------ a term which, among other things, signifies seeing nature in terms of other pictures. [[**58. Claude**]] The Claudian structure usually suggested a closed scene, framed by trees, buildings or hills—an artful "framing" of nature—in which the foreground was occupied, for example, by figures or ruins and the background suggested some misty distant vista, often a mountain, while the main subject lay in-between the two. The Claudian scheme retained its strength in European art well into the 19th century, and it persevered even later in topographical art.

The deviations from strict topographical accuracy in 19th century paintings or engravings of Holy Land landscapes were often intended to bring the bare, and at times featureless and desolate landscape closer to this convention. Photographers too often chose their perspective to accommodate such a scheme, as exemplified, for instance, by a 1900 photograph (by an American Colony photographer) [[**59**]] of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives in which trees serve as a framing device – in a manner quite similar, in fact, to Lilien's depiction of the same motif in a New Testament illustration [[**60. Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives**]]. It should be

added, however, that alongside such or similar efforts to bend the photograph to obey the conventions of the picturesque, there were other photographers who remained on the whole quite faithful to the special character of the landscapes of the Holy Land. Indeed, some of their photographs may appear to us today quite monotonous in their dull and somber textures.

Lilien's etchings largely reflect the two diverging approaches noted above. Some offer artistic embellishments of the landscape that conform with the demands of the conventions of the picturesque, while others appear closer to the more objective approach. Lilien's famous 1911 etching, to which I have referred before [[**61**]], of the view of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, with its olive trees and Arab tent, closely resembles, for example, a view [[**62**]] found in Charles Wilson's *Picturesque Palestine* (1880-84), [[**63, the two together**]] in which trees or a small ruin frame the subject. Lilien's etching also bears some resemblance to Francis Frith's 1862 photograph [[**64. Lilien and Frith together**]], with its olive trees jutting into the city, its figures and its small oriental edifice; this contrasts sharply with the stark view offered by a 1855 photograph by James Graham [[**65. Lilien and Graham**]]. Some of Lilien's photographs and etchings, for example, *The Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (1919) [[**66**]], on the other hand,

represent quite a bare landscape too, and are also similar in this respect to some of his New Testament views.

This, indeed, brings me to my last point. My concern now is with the manner in which the conceptions underlying his etchings evince a basic ambivalence on his part regarding his commitment to the Zionist cause. His vision of the Holy Land, it seems, had no place in it for modern Zionism, for the actual manifestations of the Zionist effort. Nowhere in his work do we find any perception of the new. His vision was quite selective in this respect. His many portraits of Arabs, Yemenite Jews, Samaritans and other ethnic groups are authentic representations of "types," but these were chosen precisely because they were types; the streets of Jerusalem in his graphic work are faithful representations of Jerusalem of his day, but he does not let his gaze stray beyond them. In fact, no indications of the modern world ever encroach on his vision of the Holy Land, unlike his depictions of European subjects. In his *Wool Market in Brunswick* (1922), for instance, we find a bicycle rider. Furthermore, when it comes to "agricultural" subjects — *The Milker* (1914) or *The Reapers* (1914) [[**67**]], for instance— these are strictly European. The Palestine landscapes, on the other hand – both in etchings and

photographs – are populated by pastoral shepherds or local types [[[[**68. Women water jugs**]]. There are no images of the new Jewish settlements, not even of the Jews living outside the Walls of Jerusalem. He does mention, in a letter dated the 20th of April, 1906, that he has returned from the "Jewish colonies," but he does not elaborate. This indifference seems quite odd in view of his ecstatic reference, a few months earlier (significantly enough, before his trip to Palestine), to "64 flourishing colonies" and the way Jewish labor had transformed the swamps and deserts into splendid plantations and fertile fields." He also wrote then about "wretched" Arab villages that had become transformed into "vivacious" colonies. Indeed, nothing of this is present in his graphic work, and this at a time — even before the 1920s — when one could already find in various publications, postcards and newspapers attempts to present more objectively and realistically the Jewish settlement efforts, and to evoke a vision of a newly built land filled with images of the modern chalutzim (pioneers) or even of a new town such as Tel-Aviv.

This consistent obliviousness to the concrete manifestations of Zionism can be considered in terms of the landscape conventions employed in his etchings. Lilien, it would appear, had been emotionally captured by the picturesque sensibility, with its ruins and the sense of timeless antiquity

that, obviously, had no place in it for the new. The introduction of Arab figures with their pronounced Biblical aura into many of these landscapes (**69. Approach to the Place of the Temple, Jerusalem, 1911**]] evinces a kind of Zionist vision which, while not admitting any mark of active Zionism, entails a perception of Jewish continuity in the Holy Land as part of an ever present reality. The other landscape scheme adopted by Lilien, based on a more faithful, topographically accurate representation of the special character of the land, epitomizes the religious thought underlying the tradition of scientific pilgrimages to the Holy Land— expeditions intent upon developing the scope of Biblical archeology and finding or, rather, reconstructing a Christian truth based on the observable reality of Biblical sites. In this respect, the locals were embraced by visiting Westerners, for they could also be considered as "evidence" of a continuing "scriptural" way of life. Such an approach required that 19th-Century Arabs and Jews remain safely within the religious past, on the other side of a distancing buffer zone of time. This approach effectively filtered out the disconcerting implications of contemporaneous inhabitants, whose very presence asserted an implicit challenge to Western attempts of possession and control.

Michael Bartram similarly suggests that British photographers and artists, "in laying a visually all-encompassing hold on the terrain and reducing or banishing the native inhabitants . . . seemed to be claiming it as theirs, feeling deep down that it belonged to them." Bartram argues that this feeling arose from a sense of racial superiority: "The decay of the town and the villages, which illustrated the unfitness of the inhabitants, strengthened the British Protestant sense of propriety." One may ask whether a similar reasoning could be applied to Lilien, in whose works — those that are not strictly figure compositions — human figures are generally very small or entirely lacking; whose Palestine, while retaining traces of Jewish continuity, is largely abandoned by its other inhabitants; and whose landscapes are often suffused with a sense of abandonment and dilapidation. Could we, then, view Lilien's Zionism as constituting such or similar attitudes? While perhaps one should not imply that Lilien consciously adopted such an outlook, we might well note the quite explicit presence of a sense of Western superiority in a 1913 etching ironically entitled *Masters of the Holy Land*, [[**70**]] which depicts two Arabs lazily smoking a Nargileh. These considerations, however, do not suffice to answer all the questions raised here; at best, they serve to color somewhat our perception of the basic ambivalence informing Lilien's Zionist stance, and thus

they shed light not only on his later work but also on what concerns his early association with the Zionist movement.