

TIS The Independent Scholar

A peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal

www.ncis.org

ISSN 2381-2400

Volume 4 (December 2018)

'Gender and Society'



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ANOTHER GUEST AT THE WEDDING, OR CONTINUING DILEMMAS: PROBLEMS OF ACCULTURATION IN THREE YIDDISH SERIALIZED NOVELS

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Date submitted: 21 January 2018

Accepted following revisions: 9 December 2018

"But there was another guest at the wedding that nobody noticed. His name was . . . Fate."¹
L. Bertenson, *The Soul of a Woman*

Abstract

This paper examines three serialized novels by L. Bertenson which appeared in a Yiddish-language middle class woman's magazine, Der idisher froyen zhurnal/The Jewish Woman's Home Journal between May 1922 and October 1923. These novels were written for an audience of Eastern European Jewish immigrant women to America, and I concern myself with three elements of immigrant life as they are depicted in the novels: : their "outer world"; their "inner world"; and finally the interaction of immigrants with non-Jews and thus the negotiation of their identities within the context of this New World. The author describes their outer world in terms of where they reside, how they make a living, and how they entertain themselves, while their inner world includes various forms of marital relationships, ranging from arranged marriages to mixed marriages. Through these, the author explores different forms of gender roles; while all saw women as located in the home, the novels demonstrate the varying expectations and values of husbands and wives respectively. Bertenson's novels grapple with the problems of acculturation, referred to in the magazine as "Americanization," and issues concerning the immigrant middle class. Foremost among these were marital arrangements and changing gender roles. In particular, this paper examines the way the issues of women's education, various forms of marriage, and social expectations in the new American environment, are depicted, and explores the use of such literature as historical evidence.

Keywords: *Ethnic press; Yiddish press and literature; interpretation of cultural products; invention of ethnicity; women's studies; cultural products as historical evidence*

INTRODUCTION

"Another guest at the wedding": for Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the early 1920s, the guest's name was "America," with whom these immigrants had entered into a relationship. As with other relationships, it changed both parties. This paper, a case study in the use of literature as historical evidence, investigates how one novelist, L. Bertenson, viewed adjustments made by Jewish immigrants entering the American middle class, as depicted in three serialized novels appearing between May 1922 and October 1923 in *Der idisher froyen zhurnal/The Jewish Woman's Home Journal*, a Yiddish middle-class women's magazine. Bertenson's novels grapple with the problems of acculturation, referred to in the magazine as "Americanization," and issues concerning the immigrant middle class. Foremost among

¹ L. Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy: a roman fun idishen leben in amerika," *Froyen zhurnal/The Jewish Woman's Home Journal* 1, 7 (November 1922): 19; hereafter the magazine will be referred to as "*Froyen zhurnal*."



these were marital arrangements and changing gender roles.

I begin with a discussion of fiction as historical evidence and the methodologies employed in this paper. This is followed by a short introduction to the Yiddish press in America and its role in acculturation, plus an account of the serialized novel's popularity in the Yiddish press. The historical fiction used as this paper's topic - three serialized novels by a totally unknown novelist, L. Bertonson - receive short summaries, as particular areas of concern addressed in those novels are noted: women's education, various forms of marriage, and social expectations in the new American environment.

FICTION AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE FRAME

Over the course of this article, I explore the notion that authors' attitudes to their readers demonstrate that fiction does not "mirror" or "reflect" society; rather, it views society through the prism of the author's world-view, producing a socially-refracted image, providing a terrain upon which an author can discuss problems and express fears, fantasies, anxieties and aspirations.² Starting from the premise that writing, in common with other expressive acts, has an intentional character,³ the scholar's job is to explore the author's intentions in telling a story in a particular manner. If fiction represents an answer, the scholar's task is to find the question.⁴

John Searle's theory of interpretation states that '... all meaning and understanding go on within a network of intentionality and against a background of capacities that are not themselves part of the content that is meant or understood, but which is essential for the functioning of the content.'⁵ This would include unstated grammatical rules as well as cultural assumptions seemingly taken for granted by the author and the author's intended audience. But this "meaning and understanding" can be expanded if we consider the environment of the content. With a nod to sociologist Erving Goffman, this consideration refers to matters inside the frame, that is the content itself and any illustrations it might contain, as well as matters immediately outside the frame, which embeds the content. While matters inside the frame will be the same regardless of the kind of cultural product, matters outside the frame will vary greatly dependent upon the size and complexity of that environment. Thus, matters outside the frame of a book, fiction or nonfiction, might include supplemental material - information about the author, a list of other works, sometimes a 'teaser' chapter from another book, cover art and so forth.

For fiction printed in a magazine, the matters outside the frame multiply: in addition to art and illustrations, there are articles, columns and advertisements which construct a social world for the reader, which may impact to greater or lesser degrees upon the interpretive experience. Matters inside the frame, beside character and plot, might include issues of the fictional milieu, dress and decor. For instance, readers could get a sense (whether accurate or not) of London by reading the Sherlock Holmes mysteries of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and in Yiddish literature, Sholem Aleichem created the *shtetl* of Kasrilevke for many of his stories. Other writers invented different locales, or centered their stories in various cities. For many of these writers, place becomes part of their fiction: for example, Jewish immigrant author Mary Antin embedded *The Promised Land* in the map of Boston. Descriptions of costume likewise set a tone, centering the characters in various classes, groups or communities. Matters outside the frame in a magazine might include advertisements, various features, or photographs: Jewish immigrant author Anzia Yezierska utilized this particular marker of status (and its changes) in her fiction.⁶ Harriet Beecher Stowe had references to the Hungarian national

² R. Gordon Kelly, "Literature and the Historian," *American Quarterly* 26 (1974): 149, 151-152.

³ John R. Searle, "Literary Theory and Its Discontents," *New Literary History* 25 (1994): 640, 643, 645; John R. Searle, "Wittgenstein and the Background," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 48, 2 (April 2011): 120-22; Quentin R. Skinner, "Motives, intentions and interpretation," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, edited by James Tully (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 74-77; John R. Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *New Literary History* 6, 2 (Winter 1975): 332.

⁴ Kelly, "Literature and the Historian," 151-152; David R. Olson, *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 135-136, 157-159.

⁵ Searle, "Literary Theory and Its Discontents," *New Literary History* 25 (1994): 640.

⁶ Meredith Goldsmith, "Dressing, Passing, and Americanizing: Anzia Yezierska's Sartorial Fictions," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 16 (1997): 34-45.



uprising of 1848 in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which appeared as a serialized novel in the free-soil journal *National Era*.⁷ That weekly had discussed the Hungarian Uprising in its pages; another scholar noted, in reference to the death of Little Eva, that the *National Era* carried obituaries of children as well as advertisements for drugs purporting to cure lung ailments.⁸ Readers could draw on information provided outside the frame of the story to interpret or add depth to their understanding.

The interplay between matters on the outside and inside of the frame help establish an "environmental horizon of possibilities," as contrasted to the "literary horizon of expectations" postulated by Hans Robert Jauss.⁹ Jauss's horizon appears on the landscape of prior texts within the same genre as part of reader reception studies. In his "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," Jauss states that "Whenever the writer of a work is unknown, his intent not recorded, or his relationship to sources and models only indirectly accessible, the philological question of how the text is 'properly' to be understood, that is according to its intention and time, can best be answered if the text is considered in contrast to the background of the works which the author could expect his contemporary public to know either explicitly or implicitly."¹⁰ The "environmental horizon of possibilities" can function where a reader reception study is absent, examining matters inside and outside the frame, in conjunction with the "Background" and network proposed by Searle.¹¹

A full and thoroughly contextualized study of a literary work should present the author's world-view, concerns with particular problems, and solutions thereto.¹² Fiction shares the essential attribute of being a cultural object or product from which the scholar can make deductions and can thus be used as historical evidence: evidence not of concrete facts, but of attitudes, moods, mindsets. However, an author's intended meaning does not necessarily coincide with meanings attributed to the same work by its readers. Different groups may well interpret the same words in vastly divergent ways, and readers' meanings cannot be inferred on the basis of the texts alone.¹³ Two examples suffice to demonstrate this proposition. Historical sociologist Ewa Morawska, studying the Jews of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, found that in the 1920s, one-quarter of the town's Jewish households subscribed to the Yiddish socialist daily *Forverts*. Her informants denied that their newspaper choice indicated allegiance to socialism; they read *Forverts* for its coverage of Jewish topics, news and advertisements.¹⁴ The philosopher Morris Raphael Cohen recalled his first encounters with secular literature as a boy in Minsk in the early 1890s. The historical romances of the highly popular Shomer captivated him, opening up new worlds of knowledge.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Yiddish literati reading the same novels, denounced Shomer for writing *shund-romanen* ("trash novels").¹⁶

⁷ Milton S. Van Hoy, "Two Allusions to Hungary in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Phylon* 34, 4 (4th Qtr., 1973): 433-435; Susan Belasco Smith, "Serialization and the Nature of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, edited by Susan Belasco Smith and Kenneth Price (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 69-89.

⁸ Barbara Hochman, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the *National Era*. An Essay in Generic Norms and the Contexts of Reading," *Book History* 7 (2004): 148, 165n.31.

⁹ Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," *New Literary History* 2, 1 (Autumn 1970): 7-37.

¹⁰ Jauss, "Literary History," 19.

¹¹ Searle, "Literary Theory and Its Discontents," 640, 643, 645; Searle, "Wittgenstein and the Background," 120-22; Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," 332.

¹² Kelly, "Literature and the Historian," 151-152; Searle, "Literary Theory and Its Discontents," 640-642.

¹³ John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 41-42, 171-172; Wendy Griswold, "The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies," *American Journal of Sociology* 95, 2 (March 1987); Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, 2d. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984, 1991); Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of DALLAS* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 144.

¹⁵ Morris Raphael Cohen, *A Dreamer's Journey* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949), 48-49.

¹⁶ Elias Schulman, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur in amerike, 1870-1924* (NY: I. W. Biderman, Publisher, 1943), 100-102; Sol Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., 1985), 53-54; Iris Parush, "Readers in Cameo: Women Readers in Jewish Society of Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe," *Prooftexts* 14, 1 (January 1994): 13, 15; Chaim Landau, "*Shomer vert rehabilitirt*," *Lebens-fragn* 513-514 (January-February 1995): 13.



FROYEN ZHURNAL AND 'AMERICANIZATION'

The Yiddish press played a prominent role in the Americanization process.¹⁷ Scholars have depicted "Americanization" as a highly problematic process, ranging from total assimilation to a more nuanced negotiation of identity,¹⁸ and the *Froyen zhurnal* clearly did not equate "Americanization" with assimilation, or use "Americanization" in the anti-immigrant sense of contemporary nativists.¹⁹ Nowhere in its pages does the magazine advocate an abandonment of Jewish identity whether religious, secular or ethnic.

The English-language editorial in *Froyen zhurnal's* first issue declared the magazine an agent for Americanization.²⁰ The magazine's version of Americanization did not call for the disappearance of a Jewish identity: on the contrary, in a 1922 "New Year's Greeting," its publisher and editor announced the publication's program "... to create for the Jewish woman in America a monthly with a Jewish character in the Yiddish language, which should reflect Jewish traditions and at the same time be modern."²¹ These declarations indicated a negotiated view of Americanization, and a taken-for-granted notion of Jewishness more akin to peoplehood than anything more specific.

From the beginning, *Froyen zhurnal* announced to its readers, "Jewish immigrant - you who are anxious to learn what America means and represents, here is your medium for the knowledge you seek."²² *Froyen zhurnal* saw itself as an educational resource, an "advisor and guide," or *vegvayzer*, to its readers,²³ and along with columns on cooking, etiquette, child-rearing, and furniture buying, the magazine contained monthly articles on Jewish holidays, as well as serialized novels. During *Froyen zhurnal's* short life, the publishers printed five serialized novels, three of which were by Bertenson. Bertenson's works portrayed members of the Jewish immigrant middle class in a contemporary American setting, the only *Froyen zhurnal* novelist to do so.

IMMIGRATION AND THE JEWISH PRESS

Froyen zhurnal began publication toward the end of the Jewish immigration wave which began in 1881. In the societies the immigrants had left, authority in communal and religious life reposed in men. Men had the duty of transmitting religious knowledge to their sons; religious educational institutions likewise provided instruction to males.²⁴ Women instructed daughters about domestic religious duties, such as keeping a kosher home and fulfilling "ritual purity" laws.²⁵ But this does not mean that Jewish religious traditions trapped them: the constraints on religious education enabled learning elsewhere. Iris Parush has demonstrated how the marginalization of women in regard to Jewish religious knowledge paradoxically allowed them to learn and read other languages, thus making them agents of modernity

¹⁷ Mordecai Soltes, *The Yiddish Press: An Americanizing Agency* (NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1925); Isadore David Passow, "The Yiddish Press in the Acculturative Process," *Gratz College Annual of Jewish Studies* 5 (1976): 78-80; Sh. Margoshes, "Di role fun der yidishe prese," *Pinkes far der forschung fun der yidisher literatur un prese*, edited by Shlomo Bickel (NY: Congress for Yiddish Culture Inc., 1965), 199-200.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Russell A. Kazal, "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *American Historical Review* 100, 2 (April 1995): 437-471; Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Forum—The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U. S. A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, 1 (Fall 1992): 3-41; Rudolph J. Vecoli, "An Inter-Ethnic Perspective on American Immigration History," *Mid-America* 75, 2 (April-July 1993): 223-235; Eileen H. Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Melvin G. Holli, "E Pluribus Unum: The Assimilation Paradigm Revisited," *Midwest Quarterly* 44, 1 (Autumn 2002): 10-26.

¹⁹ See, e.g., John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 234-263.

²⁰ "The Jewish Woman's Home Journal," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 66.

²¹ Samuel Goldstein and Victor Mirsky, "Nay yor bagrisung," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (October 1922): 62.

²² "The Jewish Woman's Home Journal," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 66 (English-language editorial).

²³ "Di froyen zhurnal," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 3; see, also, the statement by the magazine's second publisher, Jacob Ginsburg, "A vort far der nayer farvaltung," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 2 (August 1923): 5.

²⁴ Paula E. Hyman, "The Other Half: Women in the Jewish Tradition," in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, edited by Elizabeth Koltun (NY: Schocken Books, 1976), 107, 109, 112n.3; Paula E. Hyman, "Seductive Secularization," in *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 50, 54.

²⁵ Hyman, "The Other Half," 106-107; Norma Fain Pratt, "Transitions in Judaism: The Jewish American Woman through the 1930s," *American Quarterly* 30, 5 (Winter 1976): 684-686.



introducing secular literature and ideas to their male kin.²⁶ In New York, many of the earlier immigrants moved from the crowded East Side to Harlem, the Bronx, Williamsburg and Brownsville,²⁷ with social mobility among Jewish immigrants exceeding that of other ethnic groups. Movement into the middle class preceded the entry of Jewish students into high schools; prior to that time, students remained in school only until they could obtain their working papers.²⁸

Eastern European Jewish immigration to America coincided with the emergence of consumption-oriented American middle class women's magazines such as the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, *McCalls*, *Womens Home Companion* and *Pictorial Review*.²⁹ This genre had an essentially prescriptive nature, offering "expert" advice on home decorating, cooking, marital affairs, child-rearing, medical issues, beauty, fashion, news of events in women's organizations, and fiction. These magazines located the woman's world in the home, family, and domestic consumption.³⁰

Two Yiddish-language magazines fitting into this genre appeared within a decade. *Di froyen-velt/Jewish Ladies' Home Journal*, started as a monthly in 1913 and ended as a weekly in 1914. *Froyen zhurnal/The Jewish Women's Home Journal*, appeared in monthly form from May 1922 until October 1923, except for a combined issue in June-July 1923. From May 1922 until February 1923, *Froyen zhurnal* averaged sixty-eight pages per issue, of which five constituted a section in English. From March 1923 to October 1923, the magazine contained fifty-two pages, with three in English.³¹ The English section of *Froyen zhurnal* ostensibly appeared for the benefit of readers' American-born daughters, although authors directed some stories directly to immigrant mothers. The English section had fewer features, carrying articles, poetry, and short fiction. The last three issues had a full-page children's section and children's advice column. The bilingual captions to pictures in the Fashions Department appeared simultaneously with the English-language *Pictorial Review*, enabling mother and daughter to read the fashion pages together, so that ". . . the mother will not longer be a 'greenhorn' in her daughter's eyes."³² The Yiddish section carried a regular cooking column, religious articles, humor and children's sections, health columns, "Famous Women in World History," Yiddish theater columns, an etiquette feature, a column on activities in Jewish women's organizations compiled from reader reports, occasional columns on beauty, home economy and decoration, sheet music, poetry, short fiction, and articles on various topics.

Froyen zhurnal also carried a staple of Yiddish journalism: serialized novels. Yiddish periodicals had begun publishing novels serially in the late 1890s.³³ In 1892, a Jewish businessman entering a German bookstore in New York saw the installments, the *heftn*, or "volumes," of a story entitled *The Secrets of the Russian Tsar's Court - or The Death-Fields of*

²⁶ Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2004).

²⁷ Moore, *At Home in America*, 8.

²⁸ Selma C. Berrol, "Education and Economic Mobility: The Jewish Experience in New York City, 1880-1920," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 65, 3 (March 1976): 259-262; Moore, *At Home in America*, 102-103.

²⁹ Helen Damon-Moore and Carl F. Kaestle, "Gender, Advertising and Mass-Circulation Magazines," in *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading Since 1880*, edited by Carl F. Kaestle, Helen Damon-Moore, Lawrence C. Stedman, Katherine Tinsley and William Vance Trollinger, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 248-249; Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910* (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 24-25; Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (NY: Routledge, 1995), 12-14.

³⁰ Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 12-13, 15; Daniel Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes Toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1914* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 1985, 1992 reprint), 71; Damon-Moore and Kaestle, "Gender, Advertising and Mass-Circulation Magazines," 248-249.

³¹ For descriptions of *Froyen zhurnal*, see Paula E. Hyman, "America, Freedom, and Assimilation," in *Gender and Assimilation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 120-122; Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America*, Vol. 1, 88; Pratt, "Transitions in Judaism," 691-692.

³² "The *Froyen zhurnal*," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 3.

³³ J. Chaikin, *Yidische bleter in amerike* (NY: Self-published, 1946), 83; Schulman, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*, 84; Ellen Kellman, "Americanization in Leon Gotlib's Formulaic Fiction in the *Jewish Daily Forward*" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association, Washington, D. C., November 19, 1996), 1; A. Glanz-Leyeles, "Di yidische literatur un di yidische prese," in *Finf un zibetsik yor yidische prese in amerike, 1870-1945*, edited by Hillel Rogoff, Sh. Niger and Jacob Glatshteyn (NY: I. L. Peretz Shrayber Farayn, 1945), 87.



Siberia. Purchasing as many installments as possible, he translated them into Yiddish, selling each separately for pennies. Thus began the "heftn-epidemic."³⁴ Immensely popular, *heftn*-publishers moved from translated material to original works, each *heft* ending "to be continued." One such work ran 266 installments.³⁵ By the time the epidemic had run its course, more than ten thousand installments of various works had appeared. A combination of over-production, price-cutting by *heftn*-sellers, and fears of declining circulation led the Yiddish press to print installments of several novels in every issue of their publications. This effectively destroyed the *heftn*-publishers, who turned to printing textbooks. Readers found it more cost-effective to buy a magazine or newspaper containing the installments of several novels rather than purchasing a single installment of individual novels, thus paying less to obtain more.³⁶ *Froyen zhurnal* carried five serialized novels, installments of which appeared as regularly as other columns and features. Of the two not written by L. Bertenson, one was set in pre-Revolutionary France, and the other in Ivan the Terrible's sixteenth-century Russia. The outer frame served to emphasize the "otherness" of those two novels.

L. BERTENSON

Bertenson wrote for a specific audience, Yiddish readers, appearing in a magazine aimed at women in, or aspiring to, the middle class: Bertenson's novels skip over the period in which women worked in garment factories and elsewhere, and are aimed at that (aspiring) middle class category which constituted the target audience of the magazine in which the novels were serialized. L. Bertenson remains an unknown figure - "L." could stand for either a male or female name. "L. Bertenson" cannot be found in any lexicon of Yiddish writers, whether written before, during or after the appearance of these novels. Nor does the name appear in lists of pseudonyms. For all intents and purposes, "L. Bertenson" did not exist outside of the pages of this *Froyen zhurnal*. At no point did the magazine provide any information about this author.

Bertenson's novels, unlike the other two printed in *Froyen zhurnal*, took place among the American Jewish immigrant middle class set in the "here and now." Although the entire magazine served as a forum for Americanization, Bertenson's stories did not address all aspects of acculturation, female roles, and the Jewish experience in America. In fact, Bertenson's novels--like their author-- did not have an existence outside of *Froyen zhurnal*.³⁷ Unlike many serialized works later published in bound form, Bertenson's novels appeared only in the magazine. The Bertenson installments had their own special front compartment on this journalistic train. Beginning on page nineteen, they ran for three to six pages of text and illustration, rarely competing with advertisements on the same page. The other serialized novels always followed the Bertenson installments, as Bertenson's works appeared in every issue.

All of Bertenson's serialized novels contained illustrations by various graphic artists, depicting men and women in contemporary "American" clothing. All of these novels took place in New York, and the author mentions specific streets and neighborhoods. Bertenson describes their outer world in terms of where the characters reside, how they make a living, and how they entertain themselves, while their inner world includes various forms of marital relationships, ranging from arranged marriages to mixed marriages. Through these, Bertenson explores different forms of gender roles; while all located women in the home, the novels demonstrate varying expectations and values of husbands and wives respectively. Against a background of antisemitism, the interactions of Bertenson's Jewish and non-Jewish characters appear fraught with danger to both the characters and their identity - and also preoccupations with social status, as seen through the portrayal of attitudes to the servants of middle-class Jewish immigrants, and thus to relate the Eastern European immigrant experience to the kind of world Bertenson sought to depict.

Bertenson sought to instruct readers on the propriety of behavior and attitudes. The author used a form of association: positive characters do "good" things; negative characters do "bad" things. Philanderers do not appreciate "high Culture," preferring a more hedonistic entertainment, such as cabaret music with "crazy" dancers. Positive characters enjoy Carnegie Hall concerts and love opera. This technique, used throughout Bertenson's novels, acts as the solder welding attitudes, behavior, and propriety, and will be discussed more fully as my argument unfolds. Bertenson's characters not

³⁴ Chaikin, *Yidishe bleter*, 78-80; Glanz-Leyeles, "Di yidishe literatur," 87.

³⁵ Schulman, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*, 88, 102.

³⁶ Chaikin, *Yidishe bleter*, 82-83.

³⁷ Searches at the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library and the YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, Inc. revealed nothing by L. Bertenson; advertisements announcing bound editions of these novels nowhere appeared in the magazine.



only dwell outside identifiably Jewish neighborhoods, they do not partake of immigrant entertainment. They go to theaters on Broadway rather than Second Avenue, the "Jewish Broadway," home of the Yiddish theater. In the same issues carrying Bertenson's novels, the famous actor Bertha Thomashevsky wrote about the Yiddish theater, and the involvement of her and her family within that institution. Rather than Jewish immigrant association balls, they attend Carnegie Hall concerts. By identifying these middle class protagonists with "highbrow" leisure pursuits, the author thus recommends them as proper modes of entertainment. Positive characters attend the "edifying," not the hedonistic.

The first installment of *The Woman Who Dared* demonstrated the difference between proper and improper entertainment for women, in describing a cabaret scene. This example also serves as a method of employing discussions of inner and outer frames in contextualizing fiction. *Froyen zhurnal* carried advertisements for Melodyland Dance Palace on St. Nicholas Avenue, which offered itself as a site for "Jewish Dance Clubs."³⁸ Another venue advertised in the magazine, the "lobster palace," Murray's Roman Gardens, with locations on 42nd Street, west of Broadway, Philadelphia, and Lynbrook, Long Island's Blossom Heath Inn--all establishments managed by that "Epicurean Engineer and Builder of Appetites," Joseph A. Susskind.³⁹ It had a revolving dance floor.⁴⁰ Lobster palaces, which began as turn-of-the-century eateries, later became cabarets in Times Square.⁴¹ In November 1922 it featured Andre Sherry's "new Gigantic Review" and "Dancing from noon till closing to the irresistible strains of Frank Silver's Music Masters."⁴² Bertenson describes a fictional cabaret, noting that Max feels at home, while Helen feels estranged: ". . . Around the little tables covered by snow-white cloths sat very beautiful, elegantly dressed ladies in somewhat faded attire, but not gaudy. True, these women were somewhat made up, but this is now a modern thing, even young women paint themselves . . ." While Max enjoys the atmosphere, the evening continues:

Meanwhile, the waiter served oysters and champagne. The orchestra began playing, the noise in the room got stronger, the cracking of corks heard as waiters extracted them from bottles of wine. The air became suffocating. A dark color appeared on the women's faces, through layers of powder, the spark of passionate desires ignited in the eyes of the men.

Schifrin bent towards Helen and gave her the family names of several men and women . . . in the hall. There were rich manufacturers who were very comfortable in the most exalted Broadway restaurants, former actresses and chorus girls who lived on their former glory, and extremely suspicious women about whom it was said that they formerly had played a large role in the salons of Paris, but the War had brought them to America.

The champagne-drinking Max announces he will return. Then comes the entertainment: "Suddenly three pairs of women dressed in colorful, light, very low-cut tunics ran into the hall. 'They're ballerinas, Mexicans,' Schifrin remarked. 'See their dark brown bodies, their burning black eyes! Look! Look!'" Their initial dance over, the next act took place:

Suddenly a tall thin woman with fire-red hair moved out from a corner of the hall, wearing a bright blue short tunic, with very deep décolletage, and she began dancing around the Mexicans in rhythm with them. Her clear white body, among the dark brown bodies of the Mexican dancers, made a strong contrast.

The dance got wilder. A storm of applause resounded through the hall. Several excited young people ordered a bottle of champagne for each dancer. Spirits grew and gradually people liberated themselves from bashfulness. . .

Stories and laughter drifted from all of the tables. Under one table, an elderly man pinched his companion, whose face, layered with powder and paint, spoke of her stormy past. Her laugh was too high and not pretty.

[...] the entire hall began spinning. People danced crazy dances, completely losing all sense of shame and

³⁸ Advertisements in *Froyen zhurnal* (December 1922): 62; (January 1923): 61; (February 1923): 54 (English).

³⁹ Advertisements in *Froyen zhurnal* (October 1922): 77; (November 1922): 62 (English).

⁴⁰ Lewis I. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981): 40.

⁴¹ Kathy J. Ogren, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 67.

⁴² Advertisement in *Froyen zhurnal* (November 1922): 62 (English).



disgrace. A tumult grew in the hall, a fog of cigarette smoke, an aroma of wine and female bodies. The woman with fire-red hair, considerably intoxicated, quarreled with almost everyone present, making crazy gestures. The Mexicans loosened their long, black glossy hair and swayed in a circular dance.

While Helen is very uncomfortable, for Max it is another story: "Max Feld looked at the dancers in total rapture, his nostrils quivering. He had not taken his eyes off the tall, beautiful, gracious brunette with the large buoyant bust-line. Helen noticed this and was somewhat annoyed . . ." When a fight breaks out, Helen demands they leave.⁴³ Bertenson's unsympathetic portrait of Max in this first installment is carried throughout the novel. Instead of preaching directly, Bertenson associated "bad" activities and attitudes with "negative" characters. Moral weakness in one area signifies moral weakness elsewhere. By having a "negative" character enjoy the hedonistic atmosphere of the cabaret, Bertenson registered disapproval of such entertainment. Further, Max had champagne, not Helen. Bertenson associated drinking with negative characters such as Max in *The Woman Who Dared* and Misha in *The Soul of a Woman*, both of whom become philanderers. Max scoffs at Prohibition. Misha enjoys wine, women and song, often coming home drunk, thus compounding his moral weakness. Misha cannot control his passions. By contrast, Hershel, polite, correct and the epitome of self-discipline, tells Rosa as they begin dining "You will surely forgive me, Rosa, there is no wine and beer on the table . . . I am a Prohibitionist. I only drink coffee."⁴⁴

The first two, *Di froy vos hat gevagt* (*The Woman Who Dared: A Novel of Jewish Life in America*)⁴⁵ and *Di neshome fun a froy* (*The Soul of a Woman: A Novel of Jewish Life in America*)⁴⁶ mention Prohibition, then the law of the land. *The Soul of a Woman* had a character who fled Soviet Russia after her husband died. The third novel, *Di veg fun ir shikzal* (*The Path of Her Fate: A Novel of American and Jewish Life*), unfinished when the magazine ceased publication in October 1923,⁴⁷ contained no such references. In all three novels, the author mentioned automobiles, and contained illustrations of people in contemporary clothing. While the serialized novel about pre-Revolutionary France contained photographs, perhaps stills from a moving picture, the other serialized novels, including those of Bertenson, used graphic artists to draw illustrations fitting the particulars of each installment.

The plots, summarized below, play a minor role in this analysis. Conceiving of these works as a combined mural enclosed in a contextualizing frame, it is the interaction between various parts of the canvas and the frame which interest the historian, not each canvas standing alone. I make no aesthetic judgments. It is the brushstrokes of intention, rather than the fineness of the line, which guide the inquiry. The analysis concerns three general areas: the immigrants' "outer world," where they reside, how they make a living and entertain themselves; their "inner world," including marital relationships and ethno-religious identity; and finally the interaction of immigrants with non-Jews.

THE STORYLINES OF BERTENSON'S NOVELS

The Woman Who Dared appeared in six monthly installments, beginning in May 1922. The main characters consist of four friends: Max; Helen, his wife; Varshavsky, a bachelor; and Kugin, the story's moralist. The double standard of sexual morality, female guilt and male jealousy dominate the plot, with material from this work illustrating all aspects of both "inner" and "outer" worlds of the immigrant characters. The novel opens outside "one of the greatest cabarets on Broadway," and the reaction to this strange new environment sets the stage for the rest of the story: Max entranced by hedonism, Kugin disapproving, Helen discomfited and Varshavsky assuaging Helen's discomfort. Varshavsky provides solace for Helen's loneliness outside the cabaret as well. Max, either absorbed in work or visiting other women, ignores his wife, while Kugin warns him about the growing attachment between Helen and Varshavsky, and lectures Max about his double standards and his treatment of his wife.

Helen knows about Max's affair, and also begins fantasizing about Varshavsky. Her fantasies materialize during a

⁴³ Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 13-15.

⁴⁴ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 9 (January 1923): 21.

⁴⁵ Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt: a roman fun idishen leben in amerika," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922) - *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (October 1922), inclusive.

⁴⁶ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy: a roman fun idishen leben in amerika," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (October 1922) - *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 1 (May 1923), inclusive.

⁴⁷ Bertenson, "Di veg fun ihhr shikzal: a roman fun amerikanishen un idishen leben," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 1 (May 1923) - *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 5 (October 1923).



nighttime visit which becomes “an hour of sin and of love.”⁴⁸ When Varshavsky returns the next day, Helen, torn by guilt and desire, orders him out. After learning that Varshavsky has committed suicide, she confesses to Max, who leaves, accusing her of “destroying our nest.”⁴⁹ A turbulent relationship culminates in a child, but Max, already suspicious, becomes obsessed with the idea that he is not his son’s father. When Max starts to strike the child, Helen realizes she can take no more. The novel ends with Max leaving at her insistence.

The Soul of a Woman appeared in eight monthly installments, starting in October 1922. An advertisement announced the story’s central theme: “Is love necessary to be happy in family life? Can one marry without love and be happy?”⁵⁰ This novel illustrates not only aspects of different marital relationships but also the issue of higher education for women. The main characters consist of Rosa, a wealthy businessman’s daughter; Misha, a law student; and his friend Hershel, an attorney, with Rosa’s perspective dominating the narrative.

Rosa’s one goal in life is college. Her father opposes education for women and has arranged a marriage for her, forcing Rosa into marriage by cutting off her funds. Sonya, a classmate, invites Rosa to move into her household, earning money by tutoring Sonya’s brothers, Misha and Willie, in foreign languages. A reluctant student fond of music and carousing, Misha becomes infatuated with Rosa. When his father dies, Misha goes into decline, drinking heavily, not sleeping, feeling guilty about his father’s death. Out of pity, Rosa agrees to marry him, but with the promise of continuing her education. After the wedding, Misha changes. He finishes law school, developing a busy practice. His infatuation, meanwhile, transforms into possessiveness; he objects to Rosa studying. He starts demanding an heir to make his life complete. This leads to mutual resentment, drunkenness, and seeking comfort elsewhere.

When Rosa discovers Misha embracing another woman, she goes to Hershel for legal advice; he drops his mask of reserve and asks her to marry him. This offer puts Rosa in a quandary: although she doesn’t love him, Hershel believes in Prohibition and in education for women. Meanwhile, Misha, continually drinking, plays melancholy melodies on the piano. Ultimately he quits law to become a pianist. After divorcing Rosa, he marries his mistress, who bears him an heir. Rosa’s affection for Hershel grows, and a wealthy friend, Madam Feyerberg, contends that a woman obtains deep love only through family life; even women of passive, cold natures can make good wives. Rosa marries Hershel and they have a daughter. To her surprise, she enjoys the child, and quits college. Becoming a mother changes Rosa. She tells a friend she now feels sexual desire; a passive woman prefers having a man “take” her, saying “it’s tough to be a woman.” She muses how, if not for her daughter, she might run away. But no matter what she does, she declares, everything remains in the hands of Fate.⁵¹

The Path of Her Fate: A Novel of American and Jewish Life ran for six installments, beginning in May 1923, still incomplete when the magazine ceased publication in October 1923.⁵² The work focuses primarily on the interaction between immigrants and non-Jews, tackling intermarriage and antisemitism. The main characters consist of three Christians and two Jews. The Christians are Theodore Blair, an attorney; his wife, Helen; and an attorney and friend, Harris Carmen. The Jews are Israel Stolberg, a banker; and his daughter, Miriam. Both Theodore and Harris fall in love with Helen; she chooses Theodore, while Harris, still deeply in love, becomes Helen’s *confidant*. Harris refers to Israel as “that Jewish usurer” who prospers, while Theodore adds he wouldn’t want any Jews in his house.

Helen is Christian but has Sephardic Jewish ancestry. While her secret lies in the distant past, Harris’s secret is in the immediate present: having squandered his inheritance, he owes a considerable sum to Israel, who has never pressed him for payment, considering Harris a friend. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to Israel, his daughter Miriam has fallen in love with Harris. Although he doesn’t love her, he agrees to marry her in secret, knowing Israel will disapprove. Living separately, Harris continues to visit Helen. Miriam becomes pregnant, so he decides to ask Israel’s permission to marry her. Israel will not countenance such a marriage, and when Harris states his poverty would naturally rule out such a union, Israel reacts with fury, Harris having stereotyped Jews as money-grubbers. Israel tells Harris that marriage to a

⁴⁸ Bertenson, “*Di froy vos hat gevagt*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 2 (June 1922): 14.

⁴⁹ Bertenson, “*Di froy vos hat gevagt*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 2 (June 1922): 58.

⁵⁰ L. Bertenson, “*Di neshome fun a froy*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (September 1922): 44.

⁵¹ Bertenson, “*Di neshome fun a froy*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 1 (May 1923): 13.

⁵² L. Bertenson, “*Di veg fun ihr shikzal: a roman fun amerikanishen un idishen leben*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 1 (May 1923) to *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 5 (October 1923).



non-Jew will result in his daughter losing a two million-dollar inheritance, and an enraged Miriam demands they immediately cease considering themselves husband and wife. They both swear never to reveal their marriage, granting each other complete freedom, promising never to interfere in each other's lives. Later that night, someone murders Israel; the police discover Harris's considerable debt to Israel and he is arrested for murder. Who killed the banker remains an open question, as does the resolution of the various male-female relationships. The solution to these mysteries never appeared in print.

DISCUSSION

Bertenson's novels defy easy categorization. None resemble the sensationalist *heftn*. They fall outside the various definitions of the romance genre. Heroines do not overcome obstacles and difficulties to achieve victory, nor do these novels have happy endings.⁵³ Heroines do not realize "... full potential and identity as the partner of a man and as the implied mother of a child."⁵⁴ Leon Gotlib, who wrote formulaic serialized fiction for the *Forverts* from 1909 and into the 1930s, utilized tolerant non-Jews or "enlightened" Reform Jews to bring about happy endings, his characters mixing with non-Jews in a way Bertenson's do not.⁵⁵ Although Bertenson's characters live in America, dress like Americans, and engage in middle class American activities, they tend to stay with other Jews; the depiction of non-Jewish characters and the kinds of relationships entered into between Jews and non-Jews suggest an uneasiness about America. What is important is the commonalities in all three works. All three dealt with Jewish women in an immigrant middle class context, and addressed themselves to gender-related issues of acculturation. Should Jewish women marry non-Jews? What sort of a relationship should women seek? Should women strive for higher education? These last questions relate to changing gender roles for Jewish women within the context of contemporaneous middle-class American society. By showing the results of actions taken upon various choices, Bertenson provided answers to these questions.

Bertenson's fictional world had solidly middle-class contours. Geographically, the protagonists lived mostly in New York City, in the more comfortable Jewish neighborhoods. New York's East Side receives only one mention, as where Miriam's mother, an immigrant, married Israel.⁵⁶ They live off Central Park West;⁵⁷ Helen and Max reside in the Bronx;⁵⁸ Max has a "country place near Chicago;"⁵⁹ and Helen's parents live on a farm near Boston.⁶⁰ Everyone in *The Soul of a Woman* resides in New York City, with mention of specific addresses such as the theater district at Broadway and 42nd Street,⁶¹ and Central Park at 67th Street,⁶² which situate the novels in the here and now and in an identifiable, factual milieu rather than one of fantasy. In fact, prior to the Great Depression, the Times Square area had developed into a space for middle- and upper-class entertainment, while the working class had Greenwich Village and Harlem.⁶³ By contrast, Yiddish writer Abraham Cahan embedded his stories in New York's East Side, just as Jewish immigrant author Mary Antin centered hers in Boston's Jewish ghetto while referring to landmarks outside the ghetto.⁶⁴

Most characters in Bertenson novels have household help, a status indicator. One historian noted that during the nineteenth century employing household servants represented "... virtually the only sure way of defining who was a

⁵³ See, e.g., John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 41-42.

⁵⁴ Radway, *Reading the Romance*, 134; see, also, Kay Mussell, *Women's Gothic Fiction and Romantic Fiction: A Reference Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); Kay Mussell, *Fantasy and Reconciliation: Contemporary Formulas of Women's Romance Fiction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 29-61; Russell Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America* (NY: The Dial Press, 1970), 26-28.

⁵⁵ Kellman, "Americanization in Leon Gotlib's Formulaic Fiction," 1, 3, 4, 8.

⁵⁶ Bertenson, "Der veg fun ihr shikzal," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 2 (June-July 1923): 20.

⁵⁷ Bertenson, "Der veg fun ihr shikzal," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 2 (June-July 1923): 19.

⁵⁸ Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 15.

⁵⁹ Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 3 (July 1922): 20.

⁶⁰ Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 4 (August 1922): 20.

⁶¹ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 9 (January 1923): 22.

⁶² Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 12 (April 1923): 20.

⁶³ Themis Chronopoulos, "Morality, Social Disorder, and the Working Class in Times Square, 1892-1954," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 30, 1 (July 2011): 5-6.

⁶⁴ Maria Karafilis, "The Jewish Ghetto and the Americanization of Space in Mary Antin and Her Contemporaries," *American Literary Realism* 42, 2 (Winter 2010): 134-135, 6138-144-145



member of the middle class.⁶⁵ From 1890 to 1920, the percentage of female domestic workers decreased markedly, rising during the 1920s.⁶⁶ The accuracy of Bertenson's depictions does not alter the status indicator nature of employing servants, since Jews held domestic labor in low esteem.⁶⁷ Historically, the only European (Eastern or Western) ethnic group who did not stigmatize domestic work were the Irish. Italians saw such work as being dangerous to the virtue of young women. Jews preferred sweatshop labor to domestic work, for a combination of reasons including cultural values, a lack of autonomy and issues having to do with free time.⁶⁸

In Bertenson's novels, none of the married women have a job or career outside the home, and only two seek one. Rosa wishes to go to medical school⁶⁹ and Sonya hopes to become a chemistry teacher,⁷⁰ although the author notes Sonya is a "lazy student."⁷¹ In Bertenson's fictional world, men move between the spheres of work and home, while married women live only in the latter. Wives don't ask, and husbands don't tell, what happens in the world of work. Males make all "business" decisions. When Max and Helen separate, he talks about the attorney her father will choose for her.⁷² Nobody questions why her father, a farmer, should make such a decision: it is taken for granted.

Bertenson posed three types of marital relationships, all placing wives in the domestic arena: arranged, proprietary, and more equal marriages. The fathers in *The Soul of a Woman* and *The Path of Her Fate* wish their daughters to enter into a *shidekh*, or arranged marriage. Both daughters refuse. Rosa's father has an idea of a good husband, a wealthy businessman, preferably elderly, who can provide his daughter with her " . . . own house, a cottage, an automobile." The husband need not be well-educated. In an effort to force his preferred match, he withdraws funding for Rosa's college education.⁷³ Miriam argues with her father about a proposed *shidekh* after reading her suitor's proposal, saying "Please write and tell him I will not marry because of wealth. I am not a poor girl, blood flows in my veins, not gold . . ." Israel protests that finding a suitable husband is his duty. Miriam, of course, has not told him about her secret marriage to Harris. After praising the suitor as rich, respectable, honorable and honest, Miriam says,

"This is impossible, Papa. Let's not talk about it. The time will come when I'll marry. I am not one of those girls upon whose star it is inscribed that I will remain single. I certainly will not do that."

"Good," her father answered, "I won't force you. But consider that you're a girl for whom it's very difficult to find a suitable person in the Jewish circles we move in."

"Why should I find my destined one just in Jewish circles?" she replied, as she started to exit.

Israel Stolberg quickly turned in his large chair and gave her a severe look. She could not endure his gaze and felt lost.

"Daughter of mine," he said in a strict manner, "remember you are a Jewish child. Such words I don't ever want to hear from you, even in jest! Do you hear me?"⁷⁴

For Israel, arranged marriages insure Jewish continuity. Unlike Rosa's father, Israel doesn't insist on a particular match. Nevertheless, approval of a husband remains his prerogative. The Eastern European custom of arranged marriages had largely fallen into disrepute by the time *Froyen zhurnal* began publication. Dowry-based arranged marriages served the

⁶⁵ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (NY: Basic Books 1983), 42, 121.

⁶⁶ Faye E. Dudden, "Experts and Servants: The National Council on Household Employment and the Decline of Domestic Service in the Twentieth Century," in *History of Women in the United States; Historical Articles on Women's Lives and Activities*, Vol. 4, Part 2: *Domestic Ideology and Domestic Work*, edited by Nancy F. Cott (NY: K. G. Saur, 1992), 443, 445-456n.5

⁶⁷ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1982), 127-128.

⁶⁸ Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 82-83.

⁶⁹ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (October 1922): 20.

⁷⁰ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (October 1922): 21.

⁷¹ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (October 1922): 21.

⁷² Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 3 (July 1922): 20.

⁷³ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (October 1922): 20, 21.

⁷⁴ Bertenson, "Der veg fun ihr shikzal," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 3 (August 1923): 19-20.



economic interests of fathers, husbands, and professional matchmakers. Such marriages did not comport with modern ideas of individualism, choice and romantic love, or with the new possibilities opening up to Jewish women in America.⁷⁵ Professional matchmakers, although never disappearing, fell on hard times;⁷⁶ not a single advertisement for a traditional professional matchmaker appeared in the pages of *Froyen zhurnal*. By posing arranged marriage as an alternative, Bertenson could discuss other marital relationships, not based on monetary considerations or imposed upon reluctant daughters by old-fashioned fathers. These new forms of marriage related directly to American conditions. These conditions included the breakdown of tradition and authority which predated immigration, but came to fruition in America; increased economic opportunities for Jews generally and women particularly; and expanded educational opportunities further enabling advancement into the American middle class.

The proprietary relationship conceived of the husband as breadwinner and the wife as child-bearer and pleasure-provider for her husband. "Pleasure" included being a social ornament and sexual partner. This relationship did not require the husband to provide pleasure to his wife. Bertenson painted this kind of picture with the relationships of Max and Helen, Misha and Rosa, and Harris and Carmen. In arranged marriages, men acquired property in the form of a dowry; in a proprietary relationship, the husband acquired a wife, often treating her as chattel. What mattered was what the wife could do for her husband. Since property has no right except for use by its owner, Max (in *The Woman Who Dared*) feels no compunction about seeing other women. When Kugin points out the evils of the double standard, Max invokes an ideology of domestic purity, maintaining that Helen's status as a mother means her duty lies with child and husband: "She must hold the flag of family life higher than men, because Fate has ordained her to be a mother, a breeder. A woman will never kiss a man she doesn't love. A man, however, is by nature a pig . . ."⁷⁷

In *The Soul of a Woman*, Misha resents the time Rosa spends in college, even though he is at work. He cannot control her "free" time. Hershel, meanwhile, idolizes Rosa, and when she comes to him about divorcing Misha, Hershel observes that "You understand he never loved you as a person, he only needed your body, and when your body was away, he acted scandalously, like a drunk deprived of whiskey."⁷⁸

The third type of relationship, while maintaining the dominant position of men and unquestioned belief in the concept of separate spheres, embodied more freedom for women, a greater sense of equality and mutual respect. Both parties had the expectation of mutual pleasure-providing. Varshavsky and Helen had the promise of such a relationship, as does Harris's wish to marry Helen. Hershel and Rosa represented the possibility of such an outcome, except for Rosa's "inarticulate longings."⁷⁹ After marrying Hershel, she reflects on how the two men differ:

Hershel was a very sensitive and refined person. He understood. He felt Rosa's moods . . . Misha didn't have such a feeling. He had a difficult character, he wasn't considerate of Rosa's moods and feelings. And Rosa understood excellently the difference between Hershel's and Misha's characters. Rosa herself was a courteous person, and loved courteous people. And that's what she found in Hershel and what had actually attracted her to him.⁸⁰

Yet even with Hershel, Rosa realizes she cannot become truly equal. She has no income. When he offers to pay a debt she owes Misha, ". . . a thought occurred to her: again slavery, again dependence, something a woman will never be able to escape."⁸¹ Rosa's "inarticulate longing" consists of knowing her dependent state, but having no idea of how things could exist otherwise. Hence, right to the very end of the novel, she and Bertenson, as narrator, invoke "Fate."

Bertenson's concept of American middle-class Jewish womanhood combined the traditional Jewish gender role ideal of married women not working outside the home with the idea of a marriage based on greater equality and mutual

⁷⁵ Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America*, Vol. 1, 73-74, 78; Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream, 1920-1945*, Vol. 4 of *The Jewish People in America*, edited by Henry L. Feingold (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, in association with the American Jewish Historical Society, 1992), 40-41.

⁷⁶ Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America*, Vol. 1, 75-80.

⁷⁷ Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 17.

⁷⁸ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 9 (January 1923): 19.

⁷⁹ Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 10.

⁸⁰ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 11 (March 1923): 21.

⁸¹ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 11 (March 1923): 20.



respect. Notions of the “New Woman” do not appear in this fiction. Commonly seen as emerging after World War One,⁸² the term dates from the 1890s. Scholar Carolyn Forrey summarized the many definitions of the “New Woman” ideal type:

The keynote . . . was independence. The New Woman was self-reliant. She was determined to live her own life and to make her own decisions. She was eager for direct contact with the world outside her home. She held independent views. Often she managed to be financially independent as well, earning her own living and perhaps committing herself to a lifelong career. She was well educated. She was physically vigorous and energetic. Above all, she wanted to stand in a new relation to man, seeing herself as a companion - an equal - rather than as a subordinate or dependent.⁸³

Personified as the 1920s “flapper,” such women stereotypically smoked, swore and drank in speakeasies,⁸⁴ but none of Bertenson’s protagonists approached the kind of independence encapsulated in this definition or stereotype. The New Woman ideal developed in the context of increased employment for women, both single and married.⁸⁵ The wish to establish personal autonomy and egalitarian relationships with men characterized the “New Woman” fiction of the 1920s appearing in American middle-class women’s magazines.⁸⁶ In Bertenson’s stories, however, female characters seek less dependence, rather than independence. The most crucial difference between Bertenson and “New Woman” authors concerned the career issue. A staple of New Woman fiction centered around a protagonist struggling to make an autonomous life for herself in the world outside of home and family. In short, these characters seek to escape or expand American middle-class gender roles, whereas Bertenson’s characters seek to establish presence in those roles. The only working women in Bertenson’s novels toil as domestic servants; Rosa works as a tutor, but only until marriage, while Madam Feyerberg lives on inherited wealth. The concept of a woman seeking financial independence and a career, living away from a family circle, simply did not find itself in Bertenson’s prose.

In fact, Jewish women at that time actually moved in “New Woman” directions. One historian noted that “in 1920, Jewish women comprised 26 percent of the new teachers in New York City’s public schools.”⁸⁷ *Froyen zhurnal* regularly reported on the professional attainments of women in the United States and abroad, both Jewish and non-Jewish, with a great deal of pride.⁸⁸ Bertenson did not condemn female employment in the professions; it simply received no mention. Higher education for women, however, was another matter.

While Jewish culture esteemed education, economic necessity meant children left school at the minimum age necessary to obtain working papers.⁸⁹ Since male education had a higher cultural value, daughters often sacrificed their education for that of their brothers.⁹⁰ The longer a family lived in America, the more likely younger children would receive equal access to schooling.⁹¹ The family’s economic situation likewise enabled or constrained the kind of education sought: women in less comfortable circumstances often opted for vocational courses, such as bookkeeping, secretarial work, and stenography.⁹² *Froyen zhurnal* carried advertisements from vocational schools in every issue. As more families

⁸² Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 124-125.

⁸³ Carolyn Forrey, “The new woman revisited,” *Women’s Studies* 2, 1 (1974): 38-39.

⁸⁴ Kenneth A. Yellis, “Prosperity’s Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper,” *American Quarterly* 21, 1 (Spring 1969): 51.

⁸⁵ Yellis, “Prosperity’s Child,” 46; see, also, Rachel B. Muravchick, “*Di fleper*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 5 (September 1922): 45, for an ambivalent, though ultimately negative, view of the Flapper.

⁸⁶ Maureen Honey (ed.), *Breaking the Ties that Bind: Popular Stories of the New Woman, 1915-1930* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 8, 10, 27; Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 143.

⁸⁷ Ruth Jacknow Markowitz, *My Daughter, the Teacher: Jewish Teachers in the New York City Schools* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 2.

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Bertha Broido, “*In der froyen velt*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 2 (June 1922): 6, a regular column.

⁸⁹ Berroll, “Education and Social Mobility,” 63.

⁹⁰ Markowitz, *My Daughter, the Teacher*, 6; Sidney Stahl Weinberg, “Jewish Mothers and Immigrant Daughters: Positive and Negative Role Models,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 6, 2 (Spring 1987): 43; Hyman, “Gender and the Immigrant Jewish Experience,” 231-232.

⁹¹ Weinberg, “Jewish Mothers and Immigrant Daughters,” 43; Sidney Stahl Weinberg, “Longing to Learn: The Education of Jewish Immigrant Women in New York City, 1900-1934,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 8, 2 (Spring 1989): 116.

⁹² Hyman, “Gender and the Immigrant Jewish Experience,” 232; Weinberg, “Longing to Learn,” 109; Feingold, *A Time for Searching*, 144.



entered the middle class, an increasing number of daughters entered colleges, although some traditionalist fathers objected, either because women destined for marriage and motherhood had no need for a college education,⁹³ or "because of old-world fears that it would discourage prospective suitors."⁹⁴

Both *Froyen zhurnal* and Bertenson valued education. The magazine not only contained paeans to female education, but numerous advertisements for educational institutions. The stance of Bertenson's male characters towards higher education for women correlated directly with the three different types of relationships. The father wishing his daughter to enter a *shidekh* opposes education for women.⁹⁵ Misha, in a proprietary relationship, considers Rosa's college studies "unnecessary."⁹⁶ Rosa on the other hand swore at age fifteen never to be another's slave or have less education than an intelligent man;⁹⁷ only Hershel, proponent of a more equal kind of marriage, encourages her to study.⁹⁸ Bertenson presented a more equally-based marriage as the best possible choice, albeit imperfect. Bertenson depicted arranged marriages as old-fashioned, and proprietary marriages as cruel to women and ultimately soul-destroying to men.

Questions of higher education and different marital arrangements went beyond Jewish circles. What made these novels "Jewish" in general, and about Eastern European Jews in particular? The answer did not lie in the language of the novels, since Yiddish magazines often printed translations of works by non-Jews. The answer lay in Bertenson's writing strategies. Names provided an immediate clue to the ethnic identity of various characters. Bertenson used obviously Jewish last and first names for Jewish characters, as well as another strategy, tying a number of words and phrases directly to Eastern European Jewish ethnicity.⁹⁹ Thus, Misha calls Rosa "Reyzele," and "Reyzke,"¹⁰⁰ affectionate Yiddish diminutives for "Reyzel," the Yiddish equivalent of "Rosa." Misha has another name for Hershel, neither diminutive nor affectionate: "German Jew,"¹⁰¹ and at one point "loathsome German Jew."¹⁰² Meeting Rosa on the street, Misha taunts her, saying: ". . . I wish you happiness German-style, since your lover comes from Germany. True?"¹⁰³

The words "German Jew" conjured up images of wealth, assimilation, and bourgeois respectability, as well as contempt towards Eastern European Jews. Although this view of "German" Jews did not bear up well under scrutiny, the image, especially prevalent during the immigration period, remained part of popular mythology.¹⁰⁴ "German" Jews arrived before their Eastern European cousins, and thus had a head start in the acculturation process. Bertenson utilized the issue of origins as a means for negative characters to belittle their wives. At one point Misha asks Rosa "Why, in the theater or when you're on a visit, do you act like a countess? You, who grew up in a small town, act like a countess!"¹⁰⁵ One historian's father considered his small-town origins as something shameful,¹⁰⁶ while others felt the same way about growing up in poverty-stricken Jewish quarters.¹⁰⁷

⁹³ Markowitz, *My Daughter, the Teacher*, 13.

⁹⁴ Weinberg, "Longing to Learn," 115.

⁹⁵ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (October 1922): 20.

⁹⁶ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 7 (November 1922): 21.

⁹⁷ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 9 (January 1923): 20.

⁹⁸ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 10 (February 1923): 21.

⁹⁹ For the significance of cultural symbols, see, Wendy Griswold, *Renaissance Revivals: City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy in the London Theatre, 1576-1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 5.

¹⁰⁰ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 7 (November 1922): 21, 22, 53; Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 8 (December 1922): 20, 21; Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 12 (April 1923): 22.

¹⁰¹ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 7 (November 1922): 21; Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 11 (March 1923): 19.

¹⁰² Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 8 (December 1922): 22.

¹⁰³ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 11 (March 1923): 19.

¹⁰⁴ See, Zosa Szajkowski, "The *Yahudi* and the Immigrant: A Reappraisal," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 63, 1 (September 1973): 13; Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880*, Vol. 2 of *The Jewish People in America*, edited by Henry L. Feingold (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, in cooperation with the American Jewish Historical Society, 1992), xv, 2, 231-232. Both historians confessed sharing the same animosity prior to their research.

¹⁰⁵ Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 7 (November 1922): 21.

¹⁰⁶ Ruth Gay, *Unfinished People: Eastern European Jews Encounter America* (NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996), 8, 43, 45.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1977), 152.



Bertenson employed a range of devices to “fix” ethnicity, including geographical, religious and cultural references, as in the following exchange on Helen’s apprehensions about entering a cabaret:

“Helen! Don’t be a ‘greenhorn.’ People will really think you came from a village. Totally respectable people coming here and nothing evil, God forbid, sticks to them.”

“But what will all of you do there?” she answered, with a loving smile. “Prohibition . . . You still have to show a note from a doctor, otherwise they won’t give you a drop . . . Come home.”

“NEVER MIND PROHIBITION [in transliterated English],” Mr. Feld answered. “In Russia there is no lack of samovars, and in America, no lack of wine.”

Kugin, a young man with a poet’s voice responded:

“And perhaps it really would be better to go home? I’m afraid that during a time of Prohibition, a cabaret would be as gloomy as a chapter of Ecclesiastes.”

“Don’t be a nudnik, my poet. I guarantee you that you’ll find twenty Song of Songs here. Come on!”¹⁰⁸

Referring to Russian samovars located the speakers geographically. Kugin’s ironic reference to Ecclesiastes, implying that “there is a season for Prohibition,” prompted Max to invoke the *Shir HaShirim*, the “Song of Songs,” in an equally ironic manner. By having characters lace their conversations about secular matters with religious allusions, Bertenson indicated that the speakers shared a common cultural background, including knowledge of Jewish religious texts. Eastern European Jews, especially those living in environments where traditional learning held sway, used such allusions in everyday speech.¹⁰⁹ Occasionally Bertenson placed references to Yiddish proverbs or folk-sayings into the speech and thoughts of characters. Speaking to Madam Feyerberg about the situation of women, she says “it’s tough to be a woman,” a reference to the popular “it’s tough to be a Jew,” *s’iz shver tsu zayn a yid*.¹¹⁰ Another Yiddish proverb was placed directly into the thoughts of an antisemitic Christian attorney, as he considers how all his hopes seem dashed: “a person plans - God laughs.”¹¹¹ We cannot know whether Bertenson meant this ironically or took it for granted as a universal viewpoint.

Intermarriage, or marrying outside the Jewish faith represents the ultimate danger of social mixing, and stands at the core of *The Path of Her Fate*. Prior to their nuptials, Harris reacts to the prospect of marrying Miriam: “He, the Yankee, will marry the daughter of a Jewish banker he considers a usurer? That was unthinkable.”¹¹² By demonstrating antisemitism on the part of “true Yankees,” so well-bred, polite and intelligent, Bertenson warns readers of the dangers inherent in entering into personal relationships with non-Jews.

In reality, intermarriage between Eastern European Jews and non-Jews was relatively infrequent, though hardly unknown.¹¹³ So why make it the core issue of a novel? Doing so enabled Bertenson to demonstrate that forbidden fruit tasted bitter, not better. Further, warnings against intermarriage could conceivably act as a deterrent. Finally, by mixing in the theme of anti-Jewish prejudice, intermarriage served as a stalking horse for antisemitism. The following occurs when Harris asks Israel permission to marry Miriam:

... An indescribable change came over Stolberg’s face . . . His eyes flared, his figure became prouder. One could see the Jew that one thousand years of persecution had not been able to conquer. He looked furious, proud, with distrust upon the man from an enemy camp who would take his daughter from him, his only daughter.

¹⁰⁸ Bertenson, “*Di froy vos hat gevagt*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 13.

¹⁰⁹ Maurice Samuel, *In Praise of Yiddish* (Chicago: Cowles Book Company, Inc., 1971), 4-6, 205-206; see, also, Josef Cherniak, “*Loshn-koydesh in yidische vertlekh*,” *Yidische shprakh* 37, 3 (December 1967): 79-80.

¹¹⁰ Bertenson, “*Di neshome fun a froy*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 1 (May 1923): 13.

¹¹¹ Bertenson, “*Der veg fun ihr shikzal*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 5 (October 1923): 21.

¹¹² Bertenson, “*Di veg fun ihr shikzal*,” *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 1 (May 1923): 21.

¹¹³ Moshe Davis, “Mixed Marriage in Western Jewry: Historical Background to the Jewish Response,” *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 10, 2 (December 1968): 181; Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America*, Vol. 1, 80-81.



Carmen cannot understand Stolberg's reaction:

"Do you know what you're asking of me?"

"Yes," Carmen answered. "You comprehend this request as follows: 'I'm poor, she's rich; I also owe money and have not paid it, therefore give me your daughter . . .' That's how you understand this, Mr. Stolberg."

"Money? What does this have to do with money?! That's just how you Christians understand us Jews. You think that outside of money I possess nothing! You have made a mistake sir. Even if you had an income of a million dollars a year and I was a poor man, it would be the same."

Stolberg opines that ninety-five percent of Christians hate Jews. But it goes beyond that:

. . . I wish to remain true to the traditions of my elders. I want my future generations to be Jews. And you certainly also wish your future generations to be Christian, for them to be true to the traditions of your elders. . .

Pointing to provisions in his will whereby marriage to a non-Jew would disinherit her, Stolberg notes as follows:

I will not allow my religion to be violated. I know my daughter is not a strong supporter of my people and my religion. That hurts me, but I can't help it. However, in regard to marriage, she must marry a son of my people, otherwise she cannot inherit my property.¹¹⁴

The same issue of *Froyen zhurnal* also carried Y. Roytberg's "The Jewish Woman and the Conversion Movement," concerning the conversion question.¹¹⁵ Miriam Stolberg tells Carmen she is not about to convert - ". . . even if I did change my religion, would the Christians forgive my ancestry? Certainly not"¹¹⁶ - pragmatically noting that if she can't "pass," why bother pretending? Nowhere does she attempt to pretend. Miriam accepts her identity as a given attribute, unlike Helen who celebrates a secret identity as a matter of choice. Miriam's attitude of acceptance without a sense of connection to other Jews lies in her upbringing, Stolberg having brought his sister Leah into the household when Miriam's mother died. Pious and elderly, Leah tried to inject religiosity into the household; prior to that time, ". . . Miriam knew nothing of Jewishness and did not observe the Jewish religion." Without any other example, and because her father was concerned more with business, ". . . there was nobody to implant in her even a bit of love for Jews. In general she did not like getting friendly with simple people."¹¹⁷

Miriam's ignorance of things Jewish and lack of feelings towards Jews resulted directly from the operation of traditional Jewish gender roles whereby adult males transmitted religious knowledge to sons, not daughters.¹¹⁸ This changed in Western Europe and America as Jews adapted to prevailing patterns in their host societies,¹¹⁹ and the consequences of devaluing female religious education manifested itself in the twentieth-century: during the period between the two World Wars, Jewish leaders blamed women for abandoning traditional practices, which now included the transmission of religious knowledge to children, reprising similar accusations made in Western Europe beginning in the mid-nineteenth century.¹²⁰

Intermarriage was one possible consequence of this weakened connection with Jewish traditions and practice. In *The Path of Her Fate*, Bertenson mentions more than once Miriam's ignorance of things Jewish and consequent lack of love for the Jewish people. In effect, Bertenson implies that Miriam's feelings resulted from the way her father raised her. Despite a less than attractive portrayal of Miriam, Bertenson recognizes that Miriam alone should not bear the blame for 'marrying out': had she received proper instruction, she would not have strayed. Articles interpreting religious ideas

¹¹⁴ Bertenson, "Di veg fun ihr shikzal," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 4 (September 1923): 20-21.

¹¹⁵ T. Roytberg, "Di idishe froy un di shmad bavegung," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 4 (September 1923): 12.

¹¹⁶ Bertenson, "Di veg fun ihr shikzal," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 2 (June-July 1923): 21.

¹¹⁷ Bertenson, "Di veg fun ihr shikzal," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 2 (June-July 1923): 21.

¹¹⁸ Hyman, "Paradoxes of Assimilation," in *Gender and Assimilation*, 47; Hyman, "America, Freedom, and Assimilation," in *Gender and Assimilation*, 116, 119, 120.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1991); Hyman, "Paradoxes of Assimilation," in *Gender and Assimilation*, 24-25.

¹²⁰ Hyman, "Paradoxes of Assimilation," in *Gender and Assimilation*, 44-45, 49.



and activities appeared throughout *Froyen zhurnal*. The English-language pages contained pieces by Reform Rabbi Stephen S. Wise.¹²¹ "Our Children's Page," appearing in the last three issues, dealt solely with religious matters.¹²² The Yiddish section included compilations culled from the Talmud, traditionally studied only by men, concerning women, children, and children's education.¹²³

Froyen zhurnal did not stop with opening windows into texts customarily viewed by male eyes. Its authors promoted a perspective focusing on women as central religious figures, the touchstone of Jewish religious history and practices. In the Yiddish section Ella Blum stood as the main exponent of this perspective, and she did this while preserving traditional gender roles. Thus, in seventeen editorials, Blum mentioned going to *shul*, the traditional Jewish place of worship, only once, in connection with Yom Kippur; women's activities took place in the home and with the family, not in the *shul*, domain of the male.

CONCLUSIONS

Historian Ruth Schwartz Cowan has criticized the use of fiction as historical evidence, contending that fiction does not represent reality.¹²⁴ But as Carolyn Forrey noted, fiction gives insight into "those most elusive yet important realities of human existence: feeling and fantasy."¹²⁵ Fiction also represents a terrain for depicting ideal forms and action, "ideal" in the sense of deliberately constructed depictions with definite aims in mind: to express approval, disapproval, placing before the reader object lessons.

Bertenson portrayed a thoroughly middle-class world. Paying attention to the details of the pictures presented - whether in print or tint - somewhat analogous to the "social tableaux" discussed by advertising historian Roland Marchand, aspirational portrayals often involving bundles of symbolic luxuries.¹²⁶ The magazine itself contained multiple "aspirational portrayals" through special features such as its furniture and clothing sections plus advertisements; walking into the frames of these pictures and their fictional equivalents demonstrates what their characters are about, how the author wishes readers to perceive them. Outwardly they are comfortable; inwardly other emotions are at work. A middle-class character has a piano (a middle class signifier, and thus positive), but plays gloomy music, signifying his inner state. Other signifiers are the servants and the automobiles: the reader need not know the details of vehicles or valets, it is sufficient to know their presence.

In addition to Forrey's "feeling and fantasy" we can add "fear" as anxieties met aspirations.¹²⁷ The anxieties felt by the characters did not stem from worries about falling back into the working class; indeed, readers have no clue as to the origins of the protagonists. They do not express nostalgia for the Old World, or present themselves as suffering from the agonies of being thrust into the New World. Rather tensions arise from gender-prescribed duties, obligations and roles - should women be educated? Should they be content to be wives and mothers, or was there more to which they should or could aspire? How should men and women relate to one another: what form of marital relationship was preferable? By example readers are shown various alternatives that presumably are part of their New World existence.

¹²¹ See, e.g., Dr. Stephen S. Wise, "Intermarriage," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 9 (January 1923): 65.

¹²² Cousin Henrietta, "Our Children's Page," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 3 (August 1923): 48; *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 4 (September 1923): 48; *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 5 (October 1923): 48.

¹²³ Josef Margoshes (compiler), "Gemore-vertlakh vegen froyen," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 9 (January 1923): 16; Josef Margoshes (compiler), "Gemore-vertlakh vegen kinder," *Froyen zhurnal* 2, 12 (April 1923): 18; [Josef Margoshes (compiler)?], "Vegen kinder un kinder ertsihung," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 2 (June-July 1923): 34.

¹²⁴ Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "Two washes in the morning and a bridge party at night: The American housewife between the wars," *Women's Studies* 3, 2 (1976): 147-148.

¹²⁵ Forrey, "The new woman revisited," 37.

¹²⁶ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 166; on symbolic luxuries, see Grant McCracken, "The Evocative Power of Goods: Consumer Goods and the Preservation of Hopes and Ideals" in *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 111; Andrew R. Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1990), 14.

¹²⁷ Forrey, "The new woman revisited," 37.



Froyen zhurnal engaged in the process of betterment, mostly speaking with confidence, yet Bertenson's voice registered anxiety. Without advocating a return to the past, and nowhere exhibiting nostalgia for the Old World, Bertenson's consistently unhappy endings gave pause to the most optimistic. In a sense the Bertenson novels held up a dark mirror to the sun-filled remainder of the rest of the magazine. Even the positive presentation of more egalitarian relationships between the sexes did not act as a magical elixir for the problems presented. While Bertenson presented education for women as desirable, it, too, created problems. Not the least, those problems consisted of uncomfortable males, presenting possible new rifts in family life. Bertenson explored the various tensions occurring when Old attitudes grated against New ideas, be they in education, or the arena of equality in gender relationships, the perceived and actual chasms between Jews and Gentiles, or hedonism.

Bertenson's world was one of tension, anxiety and dread: "fate" represented the state of uncertainty and the sense of being controlled by unseen exterior forces, of whatever derivation. The project of combining tradition and modernity meant that dilemmas between an old Jewish and a new American identity needed resolution: only then could the wedding endure as a happy marriage.

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