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**WOMEN CROSSING BOUNDARIES: JEWISH ANXIETY OVER SINGLE YOUNG
JEWISH WOMEN'S MIGRATION, 1880s-1914**

In her essay on the trafficking of Jewish women, published in 1910, Emma Goldman was unable to believe recent dramatic changes in Jewish women's behavior. She wrote, "Until recent years she [the Jewish girl] had never left home, not even so far as the next village or town, except it were [sic] to visit some relative. Is it then credible that Jewish girls would leave their parents or families, travel thousands of miles to strange lands, through the influence and promises of strange forces?"¹

Goldman's reaction to the news depicting young single Jewish women as only leaving home because they had been deceived and trafficked is illustrative for at least two main reasons. First, it is a telling example of the Jewish responses to the international sex trade, which was largely run by Jews and indicates the link between the perceived problem of trafficking with the mobility of young Jewish women. Secondly, it suggests that some changes in young single Jewish women's behavior had indeed taken place, and this shift was reflected in particular by women's increasing physical mobility.

The present study explores both the grounds of this perceived shift in the behavior of Jewish women in Eastern Europe and the anxiety this change provoked among their

¹ Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, (New York, 1910), 12.

contemporaries. The latter associated this transformation with the encompassing crisis of traditional Jewish authorities, Jewish family, and Jewish society as a whole. The extraordinary interest of the contemporaries in Jewish women's behavior, in particular, their physical mobility, stemmed from their association of the condition and the survival of the Jewish nation with the actions of Jewish women.

The present study explores Jewish women's experiences of broadly defined modernization, term that encapsulates a range of processes such as industrialization, urbanization, and increased social mobility. It demonstrates that women participated at least equally as men in the transformations of the Jewish population, yet their experiences were different because of the gendered character of both the society they belonged to and the urban culture they faced. The inclusion of the diverse experiences of women enriches our understanding of urbanization and migration, as well as exposes the paradoxes of modernity that did not benefit all equally and went along not only class but also gender lines.

Previous studies of urbanization and its effects on the Jewish population in Eastern Europe have rarely addressed the gender-conditioned experiences of the dislocation and acclimatization in cities or the influence of urban culture on gender roles and gender dynamics in general.³ As a result, often the experiences of men, whose historical traces are often easier to recover, were presented as the universal Jewish experiences of urbanization. Nevertheless, the gendered character of the labor market created quite different experiences for Jewish women in the new urban environment. Moreover, as historians of Imperial Russia have shown, new urban culture and

³ See for example: Tobias Metzler, *Tales of Three Cities: urban Jewish Cultures in London, Berlin, and Paris (c. 1880-1914)*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014); Gur Alroey, *An Unpromising Land: Jewish Migration to Palestine in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

its reconfiguration of the public sphere shaped the perceptions of women's sexuality and respectability, determining their participation in the urban culture.⁴

In the second half of the nineteenth century, major cities in Eastern Europe grew rapidly due to intensifying industrialization and the subsequent influx of population drawn to the new industrial centers. During last four decades of the century, the population of Warsaw increased fourfold from 156,072 in 1856 to 683,692 in 1897 and the population of Lodz more than twelve times, from 24,655 in 1857 to 309,853 in 1897.⁵ These numbers continued to increase until the outbreak of World War I. As a result of these developments, there emerged what historian Daniel Brower called the 'migrant city,' where the majority of residents were newcomers.⁶ The residential statistics of Warsaw at the beginning of the twentieth century reflect this migratory character of Eastern European cities of that time. In 1905, while there were 305,471 permanent residents in Warsaw, 549,426 Varsovians belonged to the category of "temporary residents," meaning those who themselves had arrived in previous years or were born in Warsaw to immigrant parents.⁷

Among the thousands of newcomers to these growing industrial centers were a substantial number of Jews, who, at the end of the century, constituted 32% and 31.8% of Warsaw and Lodz residents, respectively.⁸ The majority of newcomers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were women and men of productive age between 20 and 35.⁹ In other words, at the turn of the twentieth century,

⁴ Barbara Alpern Engel, „Women and Urban Culture,” in: *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture*, ed. Wendy Rosslyn, Alessandra Tossi, (Open Book Publishers, 2011), 22.

⁵ Bogdan Wasiutynski, *Ludność żydowska w Polsce w wiekach XIX i XX. Studium statystyczne*, (Warsaw, 1930), 37 and 28.

⁶ Daniel Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850-1900*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 75-91.

⁷ Natan, „Telegramot: Warsha, 18 mai,” *Ha-zman*, June 4, 1905, no 108, 4. These categories of “permanent” and “temporary residency” are explained well by Maria Nietyksza. Cf. Maria Nietyksza, *Ludność Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1971), 32-33.

⁸ Natan, 4.

⁹ Jolanta Sikorska-Kulesza, *Zło tolerowane: Prostyucja w Królestwie Polskim w XIX wieku*, (Warsaw: wyd. Mada, 2004), 218

major urban centers such as Warsaw or Lodz were populated by young single people who immigrated from the surrounding and more distant provinces of the region. Moreover, fragmentary data from Warsaw suggest that both the permanent residents as well as the newcomers were predominantly female. Looking at 1905 statistics from Warsaw, one discerns a slight dominance of women among the city's residents – for one man there were 1.16 women – and more significant dominance of women among the newcomers – for one man there were 1.5 women.¹⁰ This data, as fragmentary as it is, suggests that women were more inclined to migrate to the larger urban centers in the region than men who set off for long-distance labor migration, a phenomenon explained by Ravenstein's Laws of Migration,¹¹

Relocation to a big city was not an easy step, as it often created a feeling of alienation due to detachment from the previous traditional community and the anonymity of the new environment. Recent scholarship has thoroughly investigated the emotional distress of Jewish newcomers in the larger urban centers in Eastern Europe. Scott Ury has demonstrated that alienation and despair experienced by young Jewish urban migrants was alleviated by the emergence of new forms of belonging to the imagined urban community that were forged by the modern Jewish press.¹² Sachar Pinsker complemented the picture drawn by Ury, exposing the importance of urban cafes as the places where the new bonds of belonging were formed.¹³ Although they differ on the source of this new sense of belonging, both of the scholars concur that the male bonds of fraternity celebrated in the urban space helped Jewish immigrants in the city to overcome the crisis provoked by the dislocation and alienation from the family and traditional

¹⁰ Natan, 4.

¹¹ Ernst Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Jun., 1885), 167-235.

¹² Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

¹³ Sachar Pinsker, *A Rich Brew: How Cafes Created Modern Jewish Culture*, (New York: New York University, 2018).

community of a small town. As Pinsker has noted, cafes were homosocial masculine spaces where women's presence was unwelcomed and provoked a feeling of unease among the male patrons.¹⁴ Other studies of Russia's urban culture also suggest a widespread hostility among men toward women's presence in public spaces.¹⁵ As such, women were excluded from the spaces and social relationships that eased the emotional distress caused by the migration to the city. Thus, women's emotional experience of dislocation was different than that of men. This assumption can be supported by the studies assessing the urban experiences of Russian peasant women that emphasize that the isolation from the family and community had more far-reaching consequences for women than for men. While men only felt alienated and stranded in a new environment, women were also exposed to sexual harassment and the shame of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.¹⁶

The emotional distress of dislocation was provoked not only by the estrangement in the new environment but also by the other difficulties awaiting newcomers in the major industrial centers of Eastern Europe after their relocation. One of the most substantial hardships for newcomers was finding employment in a new urban environment. Women, in particular, had difficulties entering the labor market due to the industrial revolution. To illustrate, while 93.7% of men between 20 and 39 years old were gainfully employed, only 37.1% of women in the same age were employed in Warsaw at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁷ Unlike men, women arriving at the major industrial centers could rarely count on a stable job in the city. This was partially due to a lack of qualifications and professional experience that limited the employment possibilities of most women. Women coming from the less urbanized areas usually counted on getting a job in a

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Alpern Engel, 22.

¹⁶ Rose Glickman, *The Russian Factory Woman: Workplace and Society: 1880-1914*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); David Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

¹⁷ Maria Nietyksza, "The Vocational Activities of Women in Warsaw at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," in: *Women in Polish Society*, ed. R. Jaworski, B. Pietrow-Ennker, (New York, 1992), 150.

factory, but, as low-qualification workers had to deal with considerable competition and were the most vulnerable during crises at the factories, many of the female newcomers had to settle for a lower paid position of a domestic servant or in a small workshop. Both female factory workers and those employed in workshops were exposed to higher underemployment, low wages, and instability of employment than men.

Although Jewish women might have felt less dislocation in the large cities, as most of them already belonged to the urbanized population, they experienced more difficulties in finding employment in the new city. First of all, they did not have the previous tradition of moving to another town or city to work as a domestic servant. Jewish women rarely worked as domestic servants in the Kingdom of Poland. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only 5% of working Jewish women were employed as domestic servants in Cracow in the 1880s while 27% of working Catholic women worked as domestics.¹⁸ At the same time, 5.7% of all Jews active in the labor market in Warsaw were employed in domestic service, as opposed to 18% of Catholics.¹⁹

Jewish women were also less likely to be employed in larger factories, as they were subject to twofold discrimination. First, until the last decade of the nineteenth century, the working class perceived women's employment in the industry sector negatively.²⁰ As Rose Glickman has shown, work in the factory entailed women's exposure to sexual harassment.²¹ Thus, women's presence in factories was often associated with sexual and moral decay. Secondly, larger factory owners were reluctant to hire Jews, who were considered less skilled and suspected of spreading socialist

¹⁸ Radoslaw Poniak, *Sluzba domowa w miastach na ziemiach polskich od polowy XVIII do konca XIX wieku*, (Warszawa: Wyd. DIG, 2014), 165.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Anna Zarnowska, *Robotnicy Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, (Warsaw, 1985), 29.

²¹ Glickman.

ideas and inciting strikes.²² Moreover, until the organization of the Bund²³ and its unions, the conditions of employment in large factories were less advantageous for Jewish women. As Bina Garntsarska indicates, while Christian women in textile factories worked for 10-11 hours per day, their Jewish counterparts toiled for 12-14 hours.²⁴ As a result of the uneasy realities of the labor market, many Jewish women sought employment in small artisanal workshops or in gastronomy, where wages were meager. The account of Cecilia Bobrovskaya, future revolutionary and Bolshevik, who relocated to Warsaw at the age of 21 from the Pale of Settlement, ably illustrates the alternatives open to Jewish women upon their arrival in a big city of Eastern Europe:

Unemployment in Warsaw was very great at that time. Near the factory gates, there were crowds of other girls willing to work for the most meager wage. Eventually, after jostling with the crowds of unemployed near the gates of lace, tobacco, cigarette, chocolate and other factories, I had to content myself with work in a small shop. My work was very monotonous: I prepared the pieces from which the more skillful workers made elegant ties.²⁵

Even if a Jewish woman was lucky enough to take on a job in a factory, she struggled to make a genuine living. In 1898, in a brush factory in Warsaw, where women constituted one-third of all workers, a female worker's daily wage was between 25 and 92 kopyeyki, depending on her experience or qualifications, while that of male workers ranged from 83 kopyeyki to 2.30 rubles.²⁶ The most experienced and qualified women earned almost the same as a non-qualified or beginner male worker in the same factory. In these circumstances of underemployment and beggary wages,

²² Ezra Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers' Movement in Tsarist Russia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 20-22.

²³ Bund – the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, established in Vilnius in 1897 and by 1914 operating all over the Kingdom of Poland and the Pale of Settlement.

²⁴ Bina Garntsarska, "Ha-matsav ha-khomri ve-ha-khevrat shel yehudei Varsha be-1862-1914," 28.

²⁵ Cecilia Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years in Underground Russia: Memoirs of a Rank-and-File Bolshevik*, (London: Martin Lawrence Limited, 1934), 9.

²⁶ Żarnowska, 166.

Jewish women restored to prostitution, full time or part time, a fact that also Bobrovskaya records in her memoir. She wrote, “The workday, which was not regulated by any laws at that time was very long, and the wages did not exceed eight rubles a month. There were only twenty workers in the shop. Most of the shop girls were obliged to walk the streets in order to earn enough to clothe and feed themselves.” She described this unemotionally as if prostitution had a place in female workers’ daily routine and constituted a familiar part of Jewish life in Warsaw.²⁷ Indeed, sex work appeared to be a likely solution for the difficult situation experienced by women in the labor market, as it promised significantly higher income—2-3 rubles per client’s visit—and less tiresome work conditions than those in a factory or a workshop.²⁸

The sex industry in major urban centers consisted of not only female newcomers who failed to find stable and remunerative employment, but also women already involved in prostitution in the provinces. Women who were engaged in prostitution elsewhere were particularly attracted to cities like Lodz, Warsaw, and Cracow, which already had an expanded sex industry. Not only were the opportunities for employment in prostitution higher, but the conditions of employment were more attractive than those in the surrounding provinces and their main towns. Unlike the brothels elsewhere in the Kingdom of Poland, the brothels in Warsaw gubernia had a separate room for each prostitute. The wage was also substantially higher in both the Warsaw and Lodz brothels than in other areas. A prostitute soliciting in a brothel in Warsaw or Lodz could earn between 2 and 3 rubles per visit, while, in almost all other gubernias, the average income per visit was 1 ruble. The differences in earnings became more obvious when comparing earnings per night. In Warsaw, a woman could earn between 5 and 10 rubles, in Lodz between 3 and 10 rubles, and in other

²⁷ Bobrovskaya, 10.

²⁸ *Prostitutsya: po obsledovaniyu 1-go absuda 1889 goda*, (St. Petesburg, 1890), 9.

gubernias around 2 to 3 rubles.²⁹ Similar opportunities for better wages attracted prostitutes to Cracow. As detailed registers of Cracow's prostitutes in late nineteenth century demonstrate, local brothels drew women from all of Galicia, including women already engaged in prostitution in other smaller towns of the region, such as Częstochowa, Rzeszów or Lvov.³⁰ Stories of allegedly trafficked Jewish women that passed to us thanks to the infamous trial of Jewish traffickers in Lvov in 1892 corroborate the claim that women engaged in prostitution calculated the financial opportunities and migrated in search for better options in the same sex business.³¹

According to statistics compiled by the Medical Department of the Russian Ministry of the Interior in 1889, there were 48 brothels in Russian Poland. Most of them were located in the main gubernial towns, but 17 of them were situated in Warsaw.³² These brothels hosted only 302 prostitutes, while the remaining 1716 prostitutes in Russian Poland solicited clients independently, outside of brothels. The majority of women who offered sexual services in brothels were immigrants from smaller towns located in the same or another province: 113 out of 162 (almost 70%) brothel prostitutes in Warsaw gubernia hailed from other gubernias of the Kingdom of Poland. The patterns for women who solicited independently were different. Women born in the same gubernia comprised most of the individual prostitutes soliciting outside of brothels. However, the Warsaw gubernia constitutes an exception, as its sex industry was characterized by a very high percentage of immigrant prostitution and long-distance migration. Almost 50 % of the 1,122 prostitutes in the Warsaw gubernia hailed from other Polish provinces. The remaining half of prostitutes soliciting in Warsaw came from the smaller towns around Warsaw itself.³³ A similar

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ State Archive in Cracow, Department of Police, file 110.

³¹ "Handlarze dziewcząt," *Gazeta Narodowa*, October 20, 1892.

³² Sikorska-Kulesza, 225.

³³ *Prostitutsiya*, 3.

picture emerges from the registers of Cracow prostitution, as the overwhelming majority of women soliciting in Cracow brothels hailed from Galician towns.³⁴

As Russian statistics demonstrate, immigrant women were over-represented in brothel prostitution. Jewish women constituted almost 19% of independent prostitutes in Warsaw and nearly 16% in the entire Kingdom of Poland, but they represented only 17% and ~12% of brothel prostitutes in Russian Poland and Warsaw, respectively.³⁵ Overall, Jewish women accounted for 16% of all prostitutes in the Kingdom of Poland at the time of the 1899 survey. These data suggest that the percentage of Jewish prostitutes was stable, as Jewish women had constituted 17% of all prostitutes in Warsaw in 1872, 27 years earlier.³⁶ However, the share of Jewish women in local prostitution in the Kingdom of Poland and Warsaw might seem relatively small if we compare it with the proportion of Jewish women among registered prostitutes in Galicia in the 1870s. Jewish women represented 27% of sex workers in Lvov and 29% of sex workers in Cracow. The figures for Lithuanian provinces were even higher, reaching 47% in Vilnius.³⁷ Yet, these relative numbers may be misleading and do not reflect adequately the visible high number of Jewish prostitutes that caught the eye of Varsovians. Warsaw was the third largest center of prostitution in Eastern Europe, so even though Jewish women were “only” 17 % of prostitutes in Warsaw, this still equated to 201 women. On the other hand, 47% of prostitutes in Vilna only equaled 71 women. Although the 201 women in Warsaw constituted barely 2% of the female Jewish population of all ages in late nineteenth century Warsaw, they drew the attention of public opinion, raising many concerns, and strengthening the association of Warsaw’s sex industry and Jews.

³⁴ State Archive in Cracow, Department of Police, file 110. There is one curious exception for the regional character of female migration for the purposes of prostitution in Cracow – Toni Kohlberg from Cairo.

³⁵ *Prostitutsiya*, 22-23.

³⁶ Edward Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice. The Jewish Fight against White Slavery 1870-1939*, (New York: Schocken, 1983), 21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

All that being said, we have to bear in mind that these numbers reflect only the scope of legal prostitution supervised by the state. Little confirmed data is available to study the real extent of the sex industry, including both legal and illegal prostitution. The riots against pimps in Warsaw in 1905— the so-called Pimp Pogrom— unearthed the immense scope of the sex industry in the city. Officially there were fewer than 20 brothels in Warsaw at that time, but the police recorded around 150 properties that were allegedly brothels or other places of sex services that had been demolished by the mainly Jewish rioters.³⁸ This high number of sites offering paid sex prompts reconsideration of the “official” number of active prostitutes. Although we cannot rely on the exaggerated calculations of contemporary sources, the most extreme of which estimated the number of all legal and illegal prostitutes in Russian Poland at 50,000, we can easily assume that the number of illegal prostitutes could have been at least equal to that of legal prostitutes.³⁹ All of these Jewish women, irrespective of their actual number or proportion, who were entering prostitution in major urban centers of the region could have followed the footsteps of their coreligionists and relied on the established networks of Jews predominantly working in the sex industry of Eastern Europe.

Migrations for the purposes of prostitution as well as the circulation of prostitutes between brothels were not limited in their scope to certain regions like the Kingdom of Poland or Galicia, but were genuinely international. Testimonies of allegedly trafficked women presented at trial in Lvov in 1892 demonstrate that the international prostitution business was closely connected to the local prostitution market in Eastern Europe and attest to a regular circulation of sex workers.⁴² Betti Kiesler, one of the putative victims of the alleged Jewish trafficker Shaefferstein, testified

³⁸ Natan, „Varsha. 14 mai,” *Ha-zman*, May 30, 1905.

³⁹ „Ha-mehuma be-Varsha,” *Ha-mitspe*, June 2, 1905.

⁴² More on Lvov’s trial see: Keely Stauter-Halsted, “‘A Generation of Monsters:’ Jews, Prostitution, and Racial Purity in the 1892 L’viv White Slavery Trial,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 38 (2007), 25-35.

that, after her second divorce, she had entered a brothel in Żółkiew, where she was later introduced to Schaefferstein.⁴³ Another woman, Chana Weinberg, who traveled to Constantinople together with Schaefferstein and Kiesler, admitted that she also had experience in prostitution before she met Schaefferstein in Galicia.⁴⁴

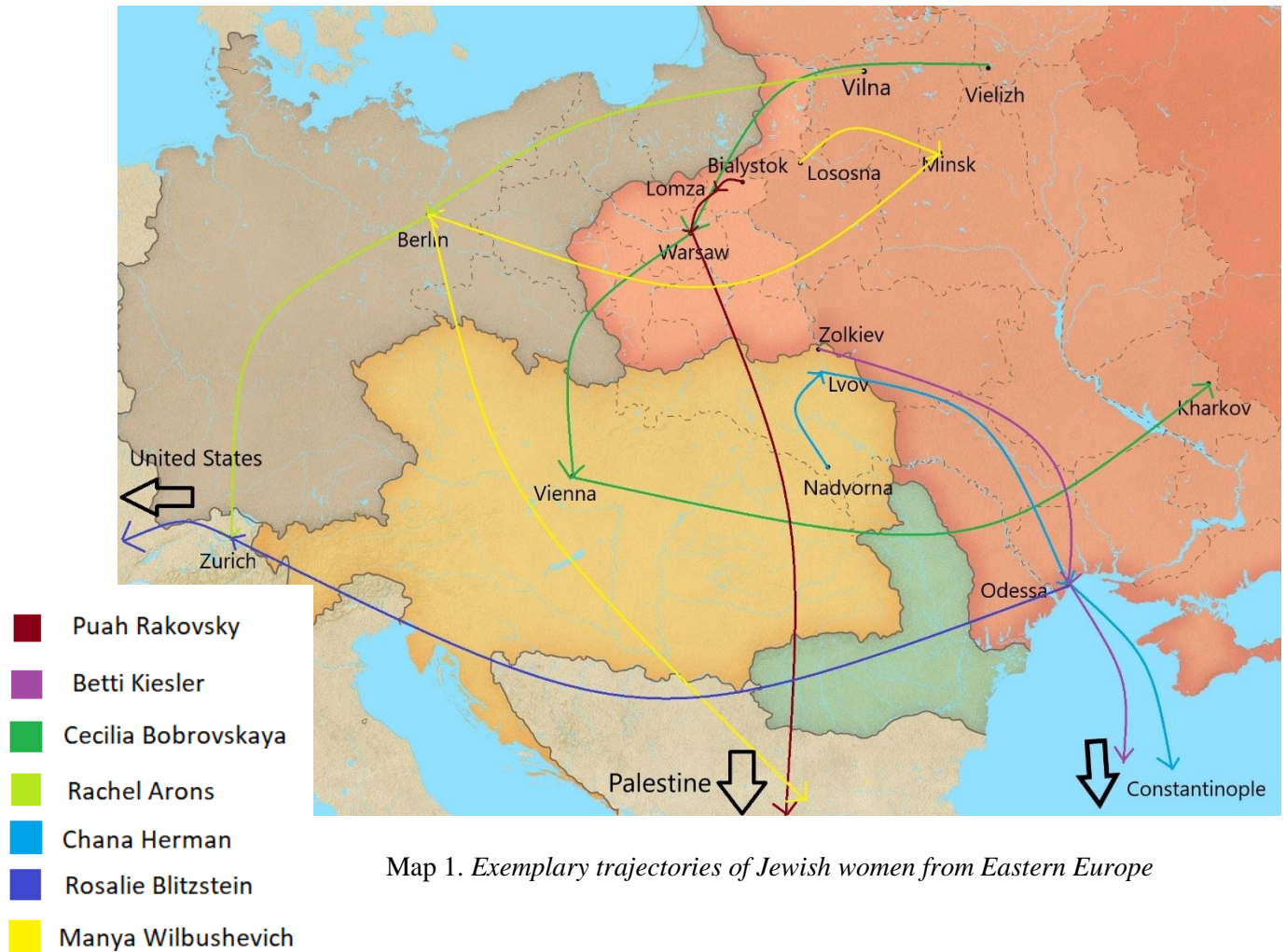
Women like Betti Kiesler or Chana Herman willingly left Eastern Europe for cities like Constantinople or Buenos Aires, where they could count on higher pay for the same work in the sex business. Some Eastern European Jewish prostitutes made enough money abroad to be able to leave prostitution. After a few years of working as a prostitute in Buenos Aires, Esther Cohn saved enough money to become a brothel owner herself.⁴⁵ Raquel Liberman, known for her fight against the Jewish pimps' organization Zvi Migdal, succeeded in leaving prostitution within four years of her arrival to Buenos Aires and, using the money she had earned as a sex worker, opened an antique shop in Argentina.⁴⁶ These stories of successful Eastern European Jewish prostitutes in Argentina, combined with the evidence of other Jewish women who considered working as a prostitute in a foreign brothel as financially beneficial, suggest the need to revise the scholarly assumptions about the passiveness of women who ended up in foreign brothels and the need to reconsider their stories in the framework of migration studies.

⁴³ "Handlarze dziewcząt." State Archive in Cracow holds police information on Schaefferstein, which suggests that he had been travelling with women through Odessa. It is fair to assume that he recruited more women in Odessa itself, before departing for Constantinople. Cf. State Archive in Cracow, Police Department, f. 110.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Julio Alsogaray, *Trilogía de la trata de blancas: rufianes, policía, municipalidad*, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tor, 1933), 125.

⁴⁶ Nora Glickman, *The Jewish White Slave Trade and the Untold Story of Raquel Liberman*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2000), 2.



Map 1. *Exemplary trajectories of Jewish women from Eastern Europe*

Betti Kiesler and Chana Herman were only a few of the many young Jewish women who left their homes and relocated to larger industrial centers in Eastern Europe or abroad. However, the urbanization of the Jewish population in Eastern Europe, and its labor conditions that pushed women into prostitution, were only some of the many manifestations of the increased mobility of young Jewish women in this period. Jewish observers frequently addressed the increased mobility of Jewish women, and the visible transformation of women's demeanor was undeniable. The stories of Galician prostitutes in the Ottoman Empire, such as Betti Kiesler and Chana Herman, reveal that physical mobility became an inherent part of Jewish women's lives, especially of those who engaged in prostitution. However, prostitution was not the only driver of mobility. When we

search for signs of physical mobility among Jewish women, we find that mobility was actually a common characteristic of modern Jewish women. To illustrate, before her Aliyah to Palestine at the age of twenty-four, at the very tender age of 15 future Zionist Manya Wilbushewich left her hometown Lasosna for Minsk, the closest large city, three hundred kilometers away. After working in one of Minsk's factories, Wilbushewich moved temporarily to Berlin from which she departed to Palestine two years later.⁴⁷ Another Zionist and educator, Puah Rakovsky, was also on the move – after growing up in Bialystok and living some time in Lomza and Vilna, she settled in Warsaw before moving to Palestine.⁴⁸

Previously mentioned future revolutionist Cecilia Bobrovskaya did not settle down in Warsaw, where, as we learned, she had encountered difficulties in finding employment. After a short time, she set off to Vienna to take midwifery courses. Relying on her revolutionary connections, upon her arrival she established contacts with a local revolutionary circle, finding herself at home again. Bobrovskaya could share her experiences of mobility with her circle of friends and other Jewish women on the move, such as her first acquaintance in Vienna, Vera Axelrod, the daughter of Menshevik Pavel Axelrod.⁴⁹ Vera Axelrod belonged to a relatively large group of young Jewish women from the Russian Empire who attended classes in the Medical Department at the University of Zurich, which had opened its doors to women in 1867. The University of Zurich was one of several universities in German lands that had begun to accept female students in the second half of the nineteenth century. Since Jewish women from Russia had

⁴⁷ Shulamit Reinharz, "Manya Wilbushewitz-Shohat and the Winding Road to Sejera," in: *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel*, ed. Deborah Bernstein, (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), 96-97.

⁴⁸ Paula Hyman, "Discovering Puah Rakovsky," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, no 7, (Spring 5764/2004), 99.

⁴⁹ Bobrovskaya, 26.

limited educational opportunities in their homeland, they flocked to universities in Vienna, Berlin, and Bern between the early 1870s and 1914, usually choosing medical studies.

Portraits of Jewish female graduates of Zurich University provide genuinely fascinating insights into the trajectories of young Jewish women from the Russian Empire. Among the colleagues of Vera Axelrod was Rachel Arons from Vilna. Before entering stomatology courses at the University of Zurich in 1900, Arons, who was barely twenty years old, had studied at the University of Berlin. Many other Jewish girls from Russia who joined the medical department of the University of Zurich in their early twenties had studied or audited courses in Bern University (which had accepted female students since 1874). Some of the female Jewish students relocated at an even earlier age, before beginning higher education, if their hometowns did not offer high school education for girls or a proper curriculum that would permit admission to a German-language university.⁵⁰ The trajectories of female Jewish students at Zurich at the turn of the twentieth century demonstrate that a visible group of single Jewish women lived on their own from their late teens and early twenties. These young Jewish women not only independently settled in unfamiliar cities and foreign countries but also made physical mobility part of their lives.

University education abroad opened more opportunities for not only socio-economic but also physical mobility. Cecilia Bobrovskaya considered her midwifery courses in Vienna in a very practical manner, acknowledging in her memoir the importance of the rights that were coupled with a university diploma. She wrote, “my getting the right to live in any part of Russia depended on my finishing the term. I would then have that peculiar right of being without rights which was the lot of the common people in the Russian empire at that time.”⁵¹ While married Jewish women

⁵⁰ Source for the study of Jewish female students at University of Zurich: <http://www.matrikel.uzh.ch/active/static/531.htm> access date: 11/2/2018

⁵¹ Bobrovskaya, 31.

could obtain a right to reside outside of the Pale of Settlement thanks to their marriage to a man having this privilege, single Jewish women had limited possibilities to gain this right for themselves— one was prostitution and second was higher education. The urban legend of Jewish women from the Pale who registered as prostitutes only to gain the right of residence in Moscow or Saint Petersburg so they could take courses at an institution of higher education has resulted in the distorted perception of this phenomenon. The prostitution census of 1899, discussed previously, recorded merely 12 Jewish prostitutes in Saint Petersburg. Moreover, it has to be noted that before 1905 all Russian state universities and most of the higher education institutions were closed to women.⁵² Women were accepted to open courses, which did not grant the same rights as the diploma from recognized institutions of higher education. One set of these women's classes were the so-called Bestuzhev courses, in law, history, and sciences, open to women in Saint Petersburg from 1878. The certification received from these institutions was considered an equivalent to the university diploma, which granted rights of residence only after 1910. Seeing these educational opportunities in the cities in Russia's interior and the limited benefits they offered, one can assume that they attracted a limited number of Jewish women interested in attaining social mobility through education.

Not all of the Jewish female students at universities in German lands embarked on an arduous path of medical or medical-related studies to attain socio-economic and physical mobility in their homelands. For some of them, the move abroad to pursue a university degree constituted only a step toward migration further westward. Twenty-three-year-old Rosalie Blitzstein from Odessa began to study medicine in Zurich in 1895, but, after a year, she moved to the United States

⁵² Ruth Dudgeon, "The Forgotten Minority: Women Students in Imperial Russia, 1872-1917," *Russian History* 9, no 1 (1982), 2.

and enrolled into medicine at the Women's Medical College in Pennsylvania. Eventually, her parents Moshe and Chana joined her.

As these migratory lives of female Jewish students, prostitutes, and labor migrants from the Eastern Europe have been largely disregarded in the studies of modern Jewish migration and urbanization, so have been the stories of young Jewish women who left Eastern Europe on their own and crossed the Atlantic to settle in the Americas. The historiography of Jewish migration tends to highlight the family character of Jewish mass migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, obscuring other forms of migratory movements among Jews in this period. Among 1.2 million Jewish emigrants who left the Russian Empire to the United States between 1899 and 1914 adult women made up 45%, while adult men 40%. These “hundreds of thousands of women,” it is widely assumed, were “leaving to join their husbands and fathers who awaited them in the destination countries.”⁵³ Although scholars have recently begun to underscore the importance of women in the migration process, starting from their decision making process and ending with their acclimatization in the receiving society, they still tend to consider women and their role within a family unit rather than independent actors.⁵⁴

Although single young women were a relatively small proportion of all migrants, they received a great deal of attention from their contemporaries. In her study of international prostitution in the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century, Liat Kozma has noted that “It was the official concern, almost obsession, for this particular category of migrants that makes their mobility so visible to the historian – more visible, in fact, than more “legitimate” forms of

⁵³ Gur Alroey, “‘And I Remained Alone in a Vast Land’: Women in the Jewish Migration from Eastern Europe,” *Jewish Social Studies*, no 3 (Spring/Summer 2006), 40.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

female migration.”⁵⁵ Indeed, the reports of the organizations set up to combat what was considered trafficking of women provide historians with abundant information about the profile and trajectories of female migrants who were their main focus. These unusual traces of women’s mobile lives were recorded by their contemporaries only because they caused extreme anxiety among the patriarchal establishment of their society.

One of these organizations, the Board of Guardians, cooperating with the London-based Jewish Association for the Protection of Women, regularly noted in their records the arrivals of “unprotected girls,” which in the organization’s terminology meant young women traveling without male companionship. The protection of these organizations that were outwardly combating trafficking of women was directed not only to the female international migrants but also to those who relocated from the provinces to the urban centers of the regions. In their eyes, women who functioned outside of their familiar household were in particular danger of moral corruption. This belief in women’s exceptional vulnerability was explicitly expressed in the Warsaw Jewish Association for the Protection of Women’s report:

Especially women need protection from the society. The women who are completely young, inexperienced and the girls who do not have parents need this protection in particular. [...] Remember what kind of dangers loomed over a young woman who does not know how to work and she does not have instilled rules of virtue and purity – disgrace and debasement threaten her!⁵⁶

The perception of young single women as being exposed to sexual and moral dangers was widely shared not only among institutions engaged in the anti-trafficking campaign, but was also widespread among their contemporaries. A telling example of this notion are the words of a correspondent from Warsaw of Hebrew newspaper *Ha-modiya*, who similarly defined

⁵⁵ Liat Kozma, *Global Women, Colonial Ports: Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 99.

⁵⁶ *Sprawozdanie Warszawskiego Żydowskiego Towarzystwa Ochrony Kobiet za rok 1908*, (Warszawa, 1909), 3.

“unprotected girls,” asserting that women’s integrity could be protected only by the companionship of male kin or married female kin:

Thus, it is a duty of each rabbi and every God-fearing Jew [...] to prevent each girl from traveling alone, neither to here [Warsaw] nor to other big cities of trade and crafts. Some member of the family, father, mother, brother or married sister, should accompany her until the moment the girl is placed in a respectable Jewish house, where they eat kosher and keep Shabbat. Because many fell into the trap, by trying to keep kosher but not the rest of the rules of Jews laws. [...] Then they are lost.⁵⁷

While the Jewish Associations for the Protection of Women operating in Eastern Europe aimed at female migrants from the provinces relocating to big cities such as Warsaw or Lodz, the counterpart organizations focused their activities on female newcomers from East and Central Europe arriving in the ports of London, New York or Buenos Aires. This focus is reflected in their regular reports on the arrival of such women. The Board of Guardians’ inspections of several ships arriving in London from Germany revealed the presence of 210 solo Jewish women travelers in 1890, 348 in 1895, and 757 in 1900. However, these women never made more than 5% of all passengers. Unaccompanied Jewish girls came in more substantial numbers to the United States, which can be explained by the scope of the Jewish migration to the United States. The National Council of Jewish Women, a parallel American organization that, like the Jewish Association for the Protection of Women, launched anti-trafficking campaigns reported the arrival of more than seven thousands of unaccompanied Jewish women between 1912 and 1913. That number almost doubled in the two following years.⁵⁸ That a significant number of single Jewish women who embarked on an independent journey to the Americas is corroborated by data from a hospital in

⁵⁷ “Shmirat al bnot-Israel,” *Ha-modiya*, 27 April, 1910, 3.

⁵⁸ *Yearbook of the New York Section of the Council of Jewish Women for the years 1912-13*, (New York, 1914), 40. *Yearbook of the New York Section of the Council of Jewish Women for the years 1914-15*, (New York, 1916), 50.

Gomel that treated eye illnesses of prospective Jewish migrants to the United States. Less than 37% of all Jewish female patients planned to emigrate to join a husband or a father. The remaining part, therefore, represents an independent migration of single women, unrelated to the economy of a Jewish household.⁵⁹

Der yudisher emigrant, a newspaper established at the beginning of the twentieth century as a response to the needs of a growing group of Jewish migrants, repeatedly reported on young Jewish women traveling on their own from Eastern Europe to America. The independent migrations of young Jewish women were far from unusual.⁶⁰ The public's attention was particularly focused on the sexual dangers awaiting unaccompanied young women on their way to America.⁶¹ Women and girls were portrayed as most vulnerable sort of migrants who were exposed to more traps than male migrants or "protected" women in the company of male kin. *Der yudisher emigrant* clearly painted a picture of an exploited young female migrant who lost her chastity and money on her way from Galicia to the United States:

In a small town Lanckorona, not far away from Kamenec [Podolski], the agents carried through the border a young 16 years old girl, who was traveling from Proskurov to New York. Having in Lanckorona, her brother-in-law, the girl was sure, that she would be taken care of and she could travel in peace. Unfortunately, one cannot be saved from the swindle-agents, especially when one's relative is an agent himself. After falling into the hands of Lanckorona's agents, [...], the girl was robbed not only of her entire property but also of her pride – the agents, together with the peasants who carried her [through the border], raped her on the way.⁶²

⁵⁹ Lloyd Gartner, "Women in the Great Jewish Migration," *Jewish Historical Studies* 40 (2005), 133.

⁶⁰ *Der yudisher emigrant*, July 1, 1910. After: Gartner, "Women," 130.

⁶¹ See for example: "Oyf der grenets," *Der yudisher emigrant*, August 8, 1911; *Der yudisher emigrant*, July 1, 1910; "Me-arei ha-medina," *Ha-zman*, August 8, 1907. For more information on obstacles and dangers encountered by female Jewish migrants cf. Gur Alroey, "And I Remained Alone in a Vast Land': Women in the Jewish Migration from Eastern Europe," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture Society* 12, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2006), 39-72.

⁶² "Oyf der grenets," *Der yudisher emigrant*, the 8th of August 1911, 17.

While the journalist of *Der yudisher emigrant* did not explicitly blame the naïve girl for exposing herself to these risks by traveling alone, a religious reader of *Ha-melits*, in turn, clearly pointed to the women's agency and blamed it on the success of traffickers of women among Jews. One of the signatories of an open letter to *Ha-melits* described how Jewish women's strong desire to leave Russia had pushed them into the hands of evil traffickers. Moreover, the letter writer suggested women's false belief in their strength and independence worsened the situation.⁶³ The contemporary observers accused women and girls who articulated independence and resolved to emigrate on their own of causing many troubles to the Jewish society.

These fears about the sexual dangers awaiting single Jewish women and girls leaving home, on the one hand, reflected reality in which women were particularly vulnerable. Scholars indicate that an increased sexual vulnerability of women has been one of the main consequences of industrialization and urbanization. Moreover, they note that, although the ideas of Victorian respectability found less ground in Eastern Europe, women entering into urban public space risked sexual harassment and loss of reputation.⁶⁴ On the one hand, these fears about women's mobility played a part in the broader anxieties of the contemporaries about the presence of women in the public spaces. Christine Worobec has shown that the new consumer culture of individualism was unsettling for the newcomers who had used to see themselves as part of family and community rather than individuals. Thus, they subordinated their needs to those of community or family.⁶⁵ The single women who relocated to the regional urban centers or abroad in a search for

⁶³ "Herimu mikhsol mi-derekh ami," *Ha-melits*, the 9th of December 1898, 6.

⁶⁴ Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 29, 31-32, 37, 80, 104, 114, 124-25, 228.

⁶⁵ Christine Worobec, "Russian Peasant's Women Culture: Three Voices," in: *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture*, ed. W. Rosslyn, A. Tosi, (OpenBook Publishers, 2011): 41-62.

employment were often not participating in the household economy, which gave the impression of unsettling the established order of subordinated individualism.

Jewish elites' concern with the transformation of Jewish women also encapsulated society's fears of women's unlimited freedom and power. Independent Jewish women threatened the existence of Jewish society as a whole. As such, the increasing independence of Jewish women was constantly undermined and women's desire for independence denigrated. Critics alleged that women thirsted for independence out of materialist desires which also alienated them from Jewish culture. One scoffed at the "bright, happy, careless pleasure-loving girls" were those who dared to leave their parental home in search of a better life in the city or overseas.⁶⁶ Because the modern girls were materialistic and reckless, their purity and chastity needed to be guarded and, thus, the girls had to remain under social control.

The imperiled reputation of Jewish women symbolized the endangered honor of the entire Jewish nation. Jewish women, as the core of the Jewish family and Jewish society, symbolized the Jewish nation as a whole. "[A Jewish woman] selling her spirit and honor will be in fact selling the honor of the entire nation [...]," claimed a journalist of *Ha-melits*, stressing the importance of the control over the mobility of Jewish women.⁶⁷ Arthur Moro, the representative of London JAPWG, also explicitly linked the dangers of Jewish women's moral ruin for the entire Jewish nation: "We feel that the pride and the honor and the security of our race are at stake, that we cannot allow our maidens to be debased and bought and sold as merchandise."⁶⁸ Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were very uncertain about their society, its values, and self-image, so tarnished were they by the social transformations in that period. The dissonance between

⁶⁶*Official Report of the Jewish International Conference on the Suppression of the Traffic in Girls and Women*, (London, 1910), 129.

⁶⁷ "Herimu mikhshol mi derekh ami," 6.

⁶⁸ *Official Report of the Jewish International Conference*, 25.

the reality and the Jewish self-image of a highly moral nation whose core was a family centered around pure a woman contributed to considerable confusion and instability.⁶⁹ Jewish women's desire for freedom, expressed in their independent migrations, employment not contributing to the household economy, and participation in the urban culture, put their purity at risk, which was considered of national importance. "No effort can be too great to secure the raising of the whole standard of womankind, enabling girls to rightly take their privileges and self-respect, and to fit them to become good wives and wise mothers," wrote Arthur Moro as he explained the importance of the mission of the organizations for the protection of women.⁷⁰

Moro's statement indicates the critical social role ascribed to Jewish mothers in transmitting the moral and religious values to children, which was precisely at the crux of the larger concerns about the declining moral condition of Jews. Yuval-Davis has ably explained why women are usually at the center of societies' anxieties in the times of distress: "Women especially are often required to carry this 'burden of representation', as they are constructed as the symbolic bearers of collectivities' identity and honor, both personally and collectively [...] Women, in their 'proper' behavior, their 'proper' clothing, embody the line which signifies the collectivities' boundaries."⁷¹ The concerns over the pernicious influence of uncontrollable women on the society/nation as a whole were by no means unique to Jewish society in Europe. As Keely Stauter-Halsted has demonstrated, these anxieties were shared by many Poles and echoed in the discourse of the Polish anti-trafficking movement that fostered the connection between the conduct of women and the future of the nation and saw its mission in national terms.⁷² Its Warsaw branch

⁶⁹ Gil Ribak, "'The Jew Usually Left Those Crimes to Esau': The Jewish Responses to Accusations about Jewish Criminality in New York, 1908-1913," *AJS Review* 38 (April 2014), 14.

⁷⁰ *Official Report of the Jewish International Conference*, 172.

⁷¹ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 45-46.

⁷² Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain: Prostitution and Social Control in Partitioned Poland*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

expressed that connection explicitly, asserting that “the protection over the moral health of women is the protection of future mothers – it is the future of Polish society.”⁷³ The Poles who struggled for the preservation of their national identity under foreign rule in Europe, or far afield in young nations like Argentina, expressed their deep preoccupation with female independence expressed their deep preoccupation with female independence and linked the worrisome transformations of family structures to their national identity and its survival.⁷⁴

Trafficking narratives that focused on exposing the omnipresent threat to the purity of Jewish women when they stepped outside the family realm strongly resonated with Jewish society, especially as the desire for independence expressed by modern Jewish women threatened the fundamental pillar of Jewish society, the Jewish family. The integrity of the family and chastity of women remained at the core of Jewish identity at the turn of the twentieth century. Herman Bernstein⁷⁵ explicitly expressed the importance ascribed to the purity and integrity of a Jewish family and Jewish women in his commentary on the Pimp Pogrom in Warsaw 1905: “The Bundists of Warsaw who belong to the common people have demonstrated how precious is to us [the Jews] the chastity of Jewish family and the purity of our Jewish name [...] But [it has to be said that] the immorality was never as great among us as among other nations. That is why we have always been proud of the Jewish women and we have always valued the holiness of the Jewish family.”⁷⁶ Similar ideas were shared by Jewish women. In 1901, prior to her first visit to Galicia, Bertha Pappenheim, the leader of the German-Jewish anti-trafficking movement, explicitly made the

⁷³ “Sprawozdanie z działalności Chrześcijańskiego Towarzystwa Ochrony Kobiet za rok 1906,” *Czystość*, 1907, July 1, 201.

⁷⁴ On Polish preoccupation about national identity and its connection to women and migration cf. K. Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain*. On similar fears in Argentina cf. D. Guy, *Sex and Danger*.

⁷⁵ Herman Bernstein (1876-1935) poet, writer, translator, journalist, and activists for the Jewish rights in the United States. He emigrated from the Pale of Settlement to the United States in 1893 and contributed to several Jewish newspapers in New York.

⁷⁶ D.M. Hermalin, “Di bundisten in Varshe,” *Der teglikher herald*, May 28, 1905.

connection between the morality, and thus the purity, of Jewish girls and the future condition of the Jewish society as a whole. She asserted that “The morality of Jewish women and girls, these pillars, on which the indelible perseverance and regenerative power of our people is based, is in fact threatened.”⁷⁷ Therefore, women’s desire for an independence that endangered their purity constituted a national issue. Furthermore, the critical social role of Jewish mothers in transmitting the moral and religious values to children was at the heart of the concern about the spread of immorality among Jews. Jewish anti-trafficking activists blamed the disintegrating family and independent materialist women for Jewish prostitution and white slavery.⁷⁸

The connection between the purity of women and the moral condition of the nation was not merely an expression of the larger anxieties about the transformations unsettling the established societal and gender order, but also it served as a justification for reestablishing social control over women. As Frederick Grittner and Brian Donovan have argued, white slavery was a cultural myth that “had symbolic explanations for sexuality, gender roles, and morality” that helped “to reaffirm the symbolic boundaries” unsettled by dislocations of the population in early twentieth-century America.⁸⁶ Similar to these American reformers, the Jewish secular and religious leadership promoted the trafficking narrative of “unprotected” vulnerable women to reaffirm the boundaries disturbed by the Jewish migrations and industrialization. Reestablishing these symbolic boundaries was part of a broader project of extending social control over Jewish urban population, in particular, women.

⁷⁷ Bertha Pappenheim, *Die Immoralität der Galizianerinnen*, in: *Sisyphus: gegen den Mädchenhandel*, (Freiburg, 1992), 19.

⁷⁸ *Official Report of the Jewish International Conference*, 178.

⁸⁶ Grittner, 5, 64, 129; Brian Donovan, *Respectability on Trial: Sex Crimes in New York City, 1900-1918*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 107-109.

These endeavors were particularly evident in Western Jewish Diasporas in the United States, England, and Argentina, where Jewish communities sought to control the influx of Jewish immigrants and shape the behavior of the newcomers. Organizations committed to the fight against white slavery assumed the role of watching over the moral strictures of the newly admitted members of their communities. JAPWG sought to police the moral conduct of female immigrants from Eastern Europe to secure the position of Anglo-Jewish elites.⁸⁷ An Argentinian local branch of JAPWG, *Ezrat Nashim*, played an important role in the system of community policing too. The organization was committed to the fight against trafficking and controlled the boundaries of the local Jewish community by issuing morality certificates for prospective immigrants. This certification allowed for limiting or even eliminating the influx of women whose moral standards raised suspicion and could have a pernicious influence on the future of Jewish society. As Mir Yarfitz demonstrates, these efforts reflected the perceived connection between moral condition of a woman and the survival and condition of the Jewish nation.⁸⁸

At the same time, Jewish anti-trafficking organizations attempted to limit the influx of Jewish immigrants at all. The immigration of “unprotected girls” who were leaving their homelands unprepared and inexperienced was believed to be the main reason for the girls’ troubles, as well as the core source of white slavery. Trafficking narratives of entrapped girls and other accounts of difficulties faced by female newcomers bolstered the ultimate goal of these anti-trafficking organizations in England, Argentina and the United States, which was to restrain the influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. According to JAPWG’s annual report for 1903,

⁸⁷ Rachel Attwood, “‘Looking Beyond ‘White Slavery’: Trafficking, the Jewish Association, and the Dangerous Politics of Migration Control in England, 1890-1910,” *Anti-Trafficking Review* 7, (2016), 119 and 124.

⁸⁸ Mir Yarfitz, “Uprooting the Seeds of Evil: Ezras Noschim and Jewish Marriage Regulation, Morality Certificates, and Degenerate Prostitute Mothers in 1930s Buenos Aires,” in: *The New Jewish Argentina: Facets of Jewish Experiences in the Southern Cone*, ed. R. Rein and A. Brodsky, vol. 2, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 56.

“Owing to the dangers they [the girls] encounter, we desire to discourage and not to facilitate the emigration of unprotected females.”⁸⁹ Similar voices were heard among the members of the Council of Jewish Women who hoped that the stories of the terrible plight of Jewish immigrant women would terrify the Jewish population in their homelands and discourage the remaining Jews from emigrating in large numbers.⁹⁰

Philanthropic organizations established by the Jewish elites served as the primary agencies of social control over the local urban lower-class population as well as newcomers. Lowe and Sperber have demonstrated that modern Jewish philanthropic ventures were designed to transform the character of lower-class Jews and turn them into a productive population by instilling in them bourgeois values.⁹¹ While practically all of the newcomers from the east in Western Europe were perceived as a threat to the position of Jewish elites in the Christian areas, in Eastern Europe the lower-class women who gained social and physical mobility as a result of industrialization and urbanization posed one of the main challenges to the Jewish elites. Thus the latter perceived the organizations aiming at this particular group of female newcomers and lower-class women as possibly the most effective agencies of social control.

The Jewish Associations for the Protection of Women were established in response to allegedly widespread trafficking of Jewish women, but it also responded to the needs of the elites seeking ways to reclaim their control over the Jewish masses. Similar to other philanthropic ventures examined by Sperber and Lowe, Jewish Associations for the Protection of Women in Eastern Europe centered their activities on vocational training. Jewish women received training in

⁸⁹ *Report of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Women and Girls for the year 1902*, (London, 1903), 18.

⁹⁰ Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 138.

⁹¹ Haim Sperber, “Philanthropy and Social Control in the Anglo-Jewish Community During the Mid-Nineteenth Century, (1850-1880),” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 11:1 (2012), 90-92; Heinrich-Dietrich. Lowe, „From Charity to Social Policy: the Emergence of Jewish ‘Self-Help’ Organizations in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914,” *Eastern European Jewish Affairs* 27:2 (1997), 67-68.

sewing and dressmaking. Those in need obtained loans for opening their businesses or for purchasing a sewing machine. In addition to professional instruction, women from the lower classes were taught how to read and write. The Associations for the Protection of Women also provided moral instruction to their female pupils, fashioning their behavior according to bourgeois norms professed by the assimilated elites who established these organizations. Combined with the previously discussed narratives that aimed at dissuading the women from traveling alone, these forms of professional, financial, and moral support offered by the Jewish Associations for the Protection of Women sought to shape the conduct of lower-class women and newcomers in the major urban center of Eastern Europe.

The operations of the Jewish Associations for the Protection of Women reflected the larger anxieties of contemporaries over the unprecedented physical mobility of Jewish women. Physical mobility became an inherent part of the lives of young Jewish women in Eastern Europe who migrated to larger urban centers in the region and abroad in the quest for employment opportunities or education. Their gender-conditioned experiences of urbanization, as well as the strong responses from their contemporaries, suggest the necessity of including the women's story in the history of Jewish migrations, in particular, and in the broader history of modern Jewry, in general. The young women's individualism and the quest for freedom, including the freedom of movement, enrich our understanding of modernity as experienced by Jews in Eastern Europe. Moreover, the almost unanimous responses of Jewish elites, either secular or religious, pointing to the threat posed by the behavior of a modern Jewish woman, testifies to the existence of shared ideas about gender roles and the prominence of women in the Jewish national imagery.

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