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**'Gender and Society'**



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[tis@ncis.org](mailto:tis@ncis.org)

Amanda Haste, Ph.D. (Humanities Editor)

[amanda.haste@ncis.org](mailto:amanda.haste@ncis.org)

Joan Cunningham Ph.D. (STEM Editor)

[jcunningham@ncis.org](mailto:jcunningham@ncis.org)

Tula Connell, Ph.D.

[tulaconnell@ncis.org](mailto:tulaconnell@ncis.org)

Laurence Schiller, Ph.D.

[lds307@northwestern.edu](mailto:lds307@northwestern.edu)

Patricia Silver, Ph.D.

[patricia.silver@ncis.org](mailto:patricia.silver@ncis.org)

Tim R. Woolley, Ph.D.

[t.r.woolley.00@cantab.net](mailto:t.r.woolley.00@cantab.net)

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## EDITORIAL BOARD

**Tula Connell** (Ph.D. American History; M.A. European History) is an historian of the United States focusing on 20th century labor and social movements, and author of the monograph *Conservative Counterrevolution: Challenging Liberalism in 1950s Milwaukee* (University of Illinois Press, 2016), in the series, "The Working Class in American History" edited by Nelson Lichtenstein et al. Connell is a writer, editor and media professional with more than 20 years' experience in labor communications. She serves on the board of the Labor and Working Class History Association, where she co-chairs the Committee on Independent Scholars.

**Joan Cunningham** (Ph.D. Public Health: Epidemiology) is a cancer epidemiologist, recently retired from the Medical University of South Carolina. She holds an MSc (Biology: aquatic eco-embryology) from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada and Ph.D. (Public Health: epidemiology) from the University of Texas School of Public Health (Houston). Her work focuses on racial disparities in breast cancer, and non-pharmacological mitigation of cancer treatment side effects. She also gives invited lectures on cancer epidemiology to the graduate program at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas.

**Amanda Haste** (Ph.D. Musicology; Dip.Trans.IoLET) is a British musicologist and academic translator whose research interests include identity construction through music and language. She is a member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists (London, England) and teaches courses in Translation and in English for Specific Purposes as adjunct faculty at Aix-Marseille University, France. Her research has been published in leading journals and books by major editors such as Palgrave MacMillan, Taylor & Francis, and Routledge; she co-authored (with Prof. James Block, DePaul University) *Constructing Identity in an Age of Globalization* (Paris: Ex Modio, 2015); and her awards include the Louise Dyer Award for research into British music, and the Elizabeth Eisenstein Essay Prize (2018).

**Laurence Dana Schiller** (Ph.D. History) is a retired Adjunct Professor from Northwestern University, from which he holds a Ph.D. in African History, and was also the Head Fencing Coach there for 38 seasons. He has authored several papers on East African history, including "Female Royals of the Lake Kingdoms of East Africa: An Examination of Their Power and Status and Their Relationship to the General Position of Women in Their Societies," but is now primarily engaged in writing on the American Civil War. He has produced works on cavalry tactics including the Blue Gray Education Society monograph, *Of Sabres and Carbines: The Emergence of the Federal Dragoon*.

**Shelby Shapiro** (Ph.D. American Studies), the General Editor of *The Independent Scholar*, served for many years as the English-language editor of *Tsum punkt/To the Point*, the magazine of Yiddish of Greater Washington, as well as for its predecessor publication. He is currently Associate Editor of *Records of the State of Connecticut*. His Ph.D. dissertation dealt with acculturation and American Jewish women in the Yiddish press; he is a Yiddish-English translator, and his research interests include Jazz and Blues (having presented jazz radio programs for nine years), the labor movement, the First World War, and immigrant anarchism.

**Patricia Silver** (Ph.D. Anthropology) is a sociocultural anthropologist whose research has centered on Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican American diaspora. Her forthcoming book *Not That Kind of Latino: Difference and Politics in a Sunbelt City* (U Texas Press) is the product of over ten years of ethnographic, oral history, and archival research in Orlando, Florida. Her publications have appeared in *American Ethnologist*, *CENTRO Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, *Op. Cit.: Revista del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas*, *Southern Cultures*, *Memory Studies*, and *Latino Studies*.

**Tim Woolley** (Ph.D. Theology) is a British Methodist minister whose research interests lie in the field of nineteenth-century British Methodism, the Holiness Movement, Revivalism and Nonconformity. He is an adjunct lecturer at Cliff College, tutor in ecclesiology for the Methodist E-Academy, tutor in theology and religious studies for Oxford University Department of Continuing Education, and a research associate of Wesley House, Cambridge. Tim has co-written the courses *Mission Shaped Intro* (2nd ed.) for Fresh Expressions of Church and *Talking of God and Worship: Leading and Preaching* for The Methodist Church in Britain. His articles and reviews appear in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, *The Wesleyan Theological Journal*, *Holiness*, *The Ranters' Digest* and *H-Pietism*.



# ***The Independent Scholar***

## ***Volume 4 (December 2018)***

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S LAPTOP

Welcome to Volume 4 of *The Independent Scholar*, in which our authors explore the theme of 'Gender and Society'. In 1986, historian Joan Wallach Scott famously called for scholars to use gender as an analytic category.<sup>1</sup> Although this was ground-breaking and (to many) controversial at the time, today—more than thirty years later—her proposal has become the norm. As can be seen in the papers contained in this volume of *The Independent Scholar*, gender as a form of analysis has become taken for granted and is now applied to scholarship in many fields.

The papers in this issue span topics from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, and right up to the twenty-first century. Janet Smith's "She fought for the people: Helen Taylor's work for the advancement of socialism and feminism...." examines the life and work of a pioneer English activist in nineteenth-century London; "Another Guest at the Wedding, or Continuing Dilemmas: Problems of Acculturation in Three Yiddish Serialized Novels" is a study of gender roles in three novels serialized in a Yiddish middle-class woman's magazine in the 1920s; and in "Gender, independent scholarship, and the origins of NCIS," NCIS Historian and archivist Susan Breitzer uses hitherto largely unseen primary sources from the NCIS archives (1989-2018), situating the history of NCIS at the center of gender.

In this issue we are also reprinting one of two winning essays of the 2017 Elizabeth Eisenstein Prize, Toni Vogel Carey's "Adam Smith's Invisible Hand: A Brief History," which originally appeared in the *Adam Smith Review* 9 (2017); it appears here with their kind permission as well as that of the author. While the *Adam Smith Review* was willing to let us republish her paper without exacting a fee, sadly that was not the case for Dr. Carey's co-winner, Patricia Silver, whose "Remembering *Abuela*: Memory, authenticity and place in Puerto Rican Orlando" originally appeared in *Latino Studies* 13. While Dr. Silver was willing, the parent publisher of *Latino Studies*, part of the Springer group, would not oblige.

In "Back in the Day," a feature showcasing articles from *The Independent Scholar Quarterly* (TISQ), the non-peer-reviewed predecessor of this journal, the Editor's choice is "Voltairine de Cleyre (1866-1912): Activist Scholar Without Borders," by Dr. Therese B. Dykeman, from *TISQ* March 2008.

As ever, this volume also contains book reviews, which demonstrate the breadth of scholarship and interests of our members. This issue sees publications on the photographic career of Katherine Joseph, authored by her daughter Susanne Hertzberg; on African women by Kathleen Sheldon, and on contemporary Austrian literature, film and culture by Katya Krylova.

With this issue, we also welcome a new Associate Editor to the Editorial Team: Eisenstein Prize co-winner Dr Patricia Silver. We are constantly seeking to expand our TIS team, not only in terms of number, but in representing different fields and disciplines. The peer review process is integral to our journal, with most papers going through one or more rounds of revisions before they are accepted for publication. I should like to thank all our editors, and our anonymous peer reviewers, without whose goodwill, generosity and expertise we could not function.

Once again, if you have a paper that you would like to have appear in *TIS*, please send your it to [tis@ncis.org](mailto:tis@ncis.org), cc [shelby.shapiro@ncis.org](mailto:shelby.shapiro@ncis.org); our submission guidelines are on the website. Likewise, if you would like to offer your services as a peer reviewer or a book reviewer, or if you yourself have a book to review, please let us know.

Shelby Shapiro, Ph.D.  
General Editor, *TIS*

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<sup>1</sup> Scott, J. W. "Gender: A useful category of historical analysis." *American Historical Review* 91.5 (Dec. 1986): 1053-1075.



## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS VOLUME

**Susan Roth Breitzer** (Ph.D., U of Iowa, USA) is currently preparing a book proposal based on her dissertation, "Jewish Labor's Second City: The Formation of a Jewish Working Class in Chicago, 1886-1928," for publication with Wayne State University Press. She has presented papers for the Organization of American Historians, the American Historical Association, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the Labor and Working-Class History Association, and published papers in *History Compass*, *Indiana Magazine of History*, and *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*. She served on the NCIS Board of Directors 2011-2016, and is currently NCIS Historian/Archivist. She has taught United States and world history at Fayetteville State University and Campbell University—Fort Bragg and currently teaches general education for Ashford University.

**Nicole Calian** (PhD, University of Washington, USA) has taught courses including Germanics, and the Comparative History of Ideas at the University of Washington, and has published on Lavanar and Kant (physiological anthropology), Heinrich Heine (towards a cyclical perception of history): and ETA Hoffmann (the hermeneutics of the ocular). Further articles on Kant and the discourse of dreams as well as on Kant and Foucault (liminal experience of dreams) are in press, and Dr Calian is currently revising and editing her dissertation, which centers on Kant's lectures on anthropology.

**Toni Vogel Carey** (Ph.D., Columbia University, USA) writes about philosophy and the history of ideas, and was Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University and State University of New York (Stony Brook) until 1980. She has been published in scholarly journals since 1976, on topics ranging from moral philosophy to the history of scientific method. She is a regular contributor to the British magazine *Philosophy Now*, and serves on its board of U.S. advisors, and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2017 Elizabeth Eisenstein Essay Prize.

**Therese Boos Dykeman** (Ph.D., Union Institute and University in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA) is a former adjunct professor who holds a Ph.D. in Rhetoric as well as degrees from Creighton University and Loyola University Chicago. Her extensive publications include monographs on *American Women Philosophers, 1650-1930*, *The Neglected Canon: Nine Women Philosophers*, *Contributions by Women to Early American Philosophy*, and *Rhetoric at the Non-Substantialistic Turn: The East-West Coin*, and editor with Dorothy Rogers of *Contributions by Women to Nineteenth Century American Philosophy*, the seven-volume *Political and Philosophical Works of Catharine Beecher*.

**Laurence Dana Schiller** (Ph.D. African History, Northwestern University, USA) is a retired Adjunct Professor from Northwestern University, where he was the Head Fencing Coach for 38 seasons. He has authored several papers on East African history, including "Female Royals of the Lake Kingdoms of East Africa: An Examination of Their Power and Status and Their Relationship to the General Position of Women in Their Societies," but is now primarily engaged in writing on the American Civil War. He has produced works on cavalry tactics including the Blue Gray Education Society monograph, *Of Sabres and Carbines: The Emergence of the Federal Dragoon*.

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**Janet Smith** (Ph.D., London Metropolitan University, ENGLAND) specializes in women's and gender history, and her doctoral thesis was entitled "The Feminism and Political Radicalism of Helen Taylor in Victorian Britain and Ireland". She has given papers at university conferences throughout the UK, including the Palace of Westminster, and has contributed articles to peer-reviewed journals including *Women's History*, *Women's History Review* and *Theatre Notebook*. She has also published a chapter in a book on *Legal Firsts for Women*, to be published in November 2018, the year of the centenary of women's admittance to the legal profession in Britain. Dr Smith has worked as a teacher, university administrator and in local government; she is a member of the Royal Historical Society, and is presently cataloguing and creating a database of the collection at the Toy Museum in Brighton, England.



# SHE FOUGHT FOR THE PEOPLE: HELEN TAYLOR'S WORK FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIALISM AND FEMINISM ON THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD, 1876-85

Janet Smith, Ph.D.  
(Brighton, ENGLAND)

Correspondence should be addressed to: [avignon5568@gmail.com](mailto:avignon5568@gmail.com)

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## **Abstract**

*The London School Board has received considered attention with seminal works by Dyhouse, Hollis, Martin and Turnbull. These have focused on the gendered experiences of women and children, both within the administrative Board and the state schools and the methods by which women members negotiated a space for themselves. Helen Taylor's contribution has been examined within this ground-breaking literature concluding, in the main part, that she achieved little, was a political maverick, unable to form alliances or work cooperatively with men. However, in locating the work of Helen Taylor in the context of the struggle for London municipal reform, this article explores her role in furthering the interests of municipal socialism, improving democracy in the rapidly expanding city, and advancing women's rights. Much of the opposition she faced arose from opponents of her socialism, her campaigns for land nationalisation and her support for the Irish tenant in the Irish Land War. Likewise, many of the educational concerns she took up sprang from both her socialism and her feminist upbringing as the daughter of Harriet Taylor and the step-daughter of John Stuart Mill. Taylor strove to achieve sexual equality within the School Board community, both in the schools and in the School Board governing chamber itself, and this paper draws more positive conclusions about her educational work, and her constant challenging of the gendered roles and practices she experienced.*

**Keywords:** *Helen Taylor, London School Board, Victorian education reform, feminism, gendered education, educational endowments, secular education, campaign for abolition of corporal punishment, free schooling*

## INTRODUCTION

The London School Board (LSB) has received considered attention with seminal works by Jane Martin and Patricia Hollis.<sup>1</sup> These have focused on the gendering of the institution and the methods by which women members negotiated a space for themselves. Helen Taylor's contribution has been examined within this ground-breaking framework, concluding that she achieved little, was a political maverick and was unable to form alliances or work cooperatively with men. Hollis concentrates on Taylor's intransigence and inability to compromise, maintaining that she used her position in society mainly for her own advantage.<sup>2</sup> Hollis claims that Taylor was 'parent centred' in her School Board policies, rather than 'child centred,' citing as an example her opposition to corporal punishment as an infringement of parental rather than

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<sup>1</sup> P. Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government* (Oxford, 1989); J. Martin, 'Fighting down the idea that the only place for women was home. Gender and Policy in Elementary Education,' *History of Education*, vol 24, no 4 (1995), 277-292; J. Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England* (London, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Hollis, 92.



children's rights.<sup>3</sup> Hollis concludes that Taylor achieved little in her educational work because of inability to build alliances, comparing her unfavourably with Annie Besant.<sup>4</sup> Besant, however, joined the Board later in the decade, when the policies for which Taylor had fought unsuccessfully, in particular free education, had gained political credibility with the rise of 1880s socialism. Besant had more socialist allies within the LSB. Hollis ignores Taylor's politics when examining her fraught relationship with the official Liberals on the Board, concentrating solely on personality as the cause of the tensions. Martin's study of women members of the LSB offers a more positive assessment of Taylor than Hollis. Martin does recognise, in passing, that Taylor's intransigence on the LSB was a result of her socialism and that Taylor failed to get the credit she deserved because she challenged the male political establishment with her feminist and radical politics.<sup>5</sup> Martin concludes, however, that Taylor's inability to compromise led to her not achieving much during her nine years on the Board for the working class whom she served.<sup>6</sup> The previous literature, therefore, has acknowledged Taylor's socialism in passing but has not fully explored how it informed her work on the LSB. The focus has been on the failure of her campaigns within the methodological framework of case studies of the gendered experiences of the women members.

This article aims to give a more nuanced account of Taylor's contribution by evidencing that Taylor's motivation is revealed by locating her work on the LSB in the wider world of the demand for improved local democracy in the capital. This manifested itself, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as a growing movement for municipal socialism and collectivism which campaigned for a single local government authority, a campaign spearheaded by the London Municipal Reform League and achieved, in 1889, with the creation of the locally elected London County Council. The LSB was the first elected body which administered for the entirety of London's growing population. For socialist members, including Taylor, it was an important step in the struggle for a unitary governing authority for the whole of the capital and a vehicle to further the interests of municipal socialism, improve democracy in the rapidly expanding city and advance women's rights. Much of the opposition she faced arose from opponents of her socialism, her campaigns for land nationalisation and her support for the Irish tenant in the Irish Land War. Likewise, many of the educational concerns she took up sprang from both her socialism and her feminist upbringing as the daughter of Harriet Taylor and the step-daughter of John Stuart Mill. Taylor strove to achieve sexual equality within the LSB community, both in the schools and in the LSB governing chamber itself.

This article therefore begins with an overview of British education provision, the ground-breaking role of the LSB and Taylor's election to the Board in 1876. This is followed by an examination of some of the reforms for which Taylor campaigned: the need for local government reform to alleviate the consequences of the grinding poverty endured by the working classes; the expectations of gender roles in Victorian society and its impact on the highly gendered school curriculum; the abolition of corporal punishment and, by extension, a denormalization of the physical and emotional abuse suffered by many, especially women, in the domestic sphere. Taylor's practical and pragmatic activism is examined through her efforts to secure gender equality through childcare provision and equal pay, as well as her campaign for secular, free education for all, and her successes – and failures – are addressed within the context of the contemporary political climate and the resulting legislative reforms, whether enacted during, after, or long after the lifetime of this formidable woman. By demonstrating the ways in which she constantly challenged the gendered roles and practices she experienced, a more positive conclusion is reached on Taylor's educational work.

#### HELEN TAYLOR

British activist Helen Taylor was born in 1831, the daughter of the women's rights campaigner, Harriet Taylor and John Taylor, a wholesale druggist. Her mother was a member of William Fox's Unitarian reforming circle, where she met the economic philosopher John Stuart Mill in 1830. Mill and Harriet shared an interest in feminism and reform politics and Harriet left her husband for Mill though the relationship remained discreet. They married following the death of John Taylor. After her mother's death in 1858 Taylor worked with her step-father to promote women's suffrage. Mill died in 1873 and Taylor sought out a public role for herself. She was a leading women's suffragist, a founder member, in 1881, of the Democratic Federation (which was renamed the Social Democratic Federation in 1884 after embracing Marxist

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 97

<sup>4</sup> Idem.

<sup>5</sup> Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling*, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 136.





socialism) and a supporter of Home Rule for Ireland. Taylor was also a leading campaigner for land nationalisation in Great Britain and supported the Irish in their struggle for improved tenant rights during the Land War, 1878-1882. Taylor died in 1907 and her grave in Torquay, Devon bears the simple epitaph: 'She fought for the people.' She served three terms (1879-1885) as an elected LSB Member.

Taylor's motivation came from her socialism and collectivism. She was a founder member of the Social Democratic Federation and on the executive of the London Municipal Reform League. When Taylor unsuccessfully tried to stand for Parliament in 1885 her manifesto was essentially that of the Marxist Social Democratic Party and in it can be seen her campaigns within the School Board.

- A fair day's wages for a fair day's work
- 6-hour working day which will give work to men where now there is none
- Local government cooperation and workshops under elected managers
- Restoration of the land
- Direct taxation and graduated income tax none under 300 and rising by degrees to 19 shillings in the pound
- No wars that are not voted for by the people
- Free justice
- Restoration of the endowments for free clothing food and education
- Free education
- Home Rule and legislative independence for Ireland
- Universal suffrage, annual parliaments and payment of members<sup>7</sup>

#### POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Taylor had moved away from the liberal reforming world of her childhood. In 1885 Andrew Reid edited a book in which leading Liberals, both MPs and campaigners expressed why they supported the Liberal party and what it meant to be a Liberal.<sup>8</sup> Time and time again the contributors mention the utilitarian philosophy of it being a means to secure the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.<sup>9</sup> This philosophy, founded by Jeremy Bentham earlier in the century, had been the creed of a number of public figures, includes John Stuart Mill, and his father James. Liberalism also meant, to the Victorian mind, equality and progress in society through greater democracy and an increase in voting and social rights for the working-class.<sup>10</sup> Despite growing support for women's suffrage, not all Liberals supported the demand for sexual equality. In addition, a central tenet of Victorian liberalism lay in the importance attached to the freedom of the individual. The greatest happiness for the greatest number of people should, however, safeguard individual rights.<sup>11</sup> It also meant an adherence to the concept of free trade which had been fiercely fought for by the campaigners against the Corn Laws during Taylor's teenage years in 1846.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, within the School Board chamber both the Tories (socially conservative and supporters of the Voluntary Church schools and the Church of England) and the Liberal School Board Members would be at loggerheads with Taylor's socialist agenda which took Taylor away from the Liberal platform she was first elected on in 1876. It is within the framework of her political ideology that Taylor's work on the LSB will be examined here, and it will be argued that she was no maverick, but always had a political motivation, however unsuccessful that might be.

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<sup>7</sup> Taylor's 1885 Election Hand Bill, Mill Taylor Collection (hereafter M.T.C.), London School of Economics, Box 7. For Taylor's attempt to stand for Parliament, see J. Smith, 'Helen Taylor: The First Woman Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, 1885' in E Rackley & R Auchmuty (eds.), *Women's Legal Landmarks* (Oxford, 1918), chapter 9.

<sup>8</sup> A. Reid (ed.), *Why I am a Liberal* (London, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, Arthur Arnold, MP, 17, Thomas Catling, 38, Rt. Hon Lord Hurlow, 97.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, Joseph Arch, 16, Henry Broadhurst, MP, 35, Millicent Garret Fawcett, 43, Alice Westlake, 107.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*. Amongst those to mention individual liberty as their reason for being a Liberal are Professor J S Blackie, 31, Rev John Hopps, 59 and the Rt Hon James Stansford, MP, 93.

<sup>12</sup> George W E Russell MP declared his adherence to the concept of free trade to be at the heart of his liberal radicalism, p. 81. For a detailed account of the Anti-Corn Law League see Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (London, 1959), pp. 312-25.





## THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD

A rapid increase in population in Victorian Britain led to a growing public demand that the state should legislate to provide the extra necessary school places which the voluntary sector could not provide for the working people. The upper classes attended private boys or girls' schools (called Public Schools) or were taught at home by governesses. Existing schools for the working-classes consisted of Dame Schools (run in a private individuals' home), Ragged Schools (charity schools run for working-class children) and Church of England schools. In 1869 the National Education League was set up by reforming Liberals and Radicals to lobby for free, compulsory secular state education for all children. Factory owners and industrialists also called for more schools to be established which would provide the literate working-class workforce they needed. However, Tory industrialists supported an expansion of the Church of England schools, funded by the state, rather than state-run schools. Britain was the workshop of the world, leading the Industrial Revolution, and a basic education for the working-class was deemed necessary to maintain this world economic dominance. This political pressure on the British Parliament, from both liberal reformers seeking to improve working-class involvement in democracy through mass basic education, and the manufacturers, needing a literate workforce to maintain their industrial success, led to the 1870 Education Act.<sup>13</sup>

The LSB had been created under this Act, which set up a state system of elementary education for children between the ages of five and twelve. A further Act in 1880 made education compulsory up to the age of ten.<sup>14</sup> Forster's intention had been to put education in London under the control of the City Corporation, the Boards of Guardians, the Vestries and the District Board of Works; but a successful amendment by the MP for Finsbury, W.M. Torrens, led to the setting up of an elected School Board for London.<sup>15</sup> Women were eligible both to sit on the Board and to elect its members under the terms of the Municipal Franchise Act of 1869, which gave the local vote to unmarried or widowed women who were ratepayers. The Education Act itself was a compromise between those who wanted a secular state-run elementary school system (most members of the middle classes, the Trades Union Congress and forty Liberal MPs) and the National Education Union (comprising the Anglican Church and the Tory Party), who were defenders of the church school voluntary system. The compromise resulted in an educational system where the voluntary sector was supported financially by the government and existed alongside state-run Board Schools paid for by a levy on local ratepayers and controlled by a locally elected School Board.<sup>16</sup>

Men and women needed no property or residential qualifications in the division in which they stood as candidates and each ratepayer had as many votes as there were seats on the Board for that district. Minority interests were upheld by a system of 'plumping,' whereby a voter could place all his or her votes on one candidate. Voting was by secret ballot (except in the City of London ward).<sup>17</sup> The School Boards have been recognised as the first mass elected public bodies and, thus, advancing English democracy.<sup>18</sup> It was an important step in the state having control and influence over ordinary people's lives through collective ownership and control, in this case of schools and schooling.

Taylor was first elected to the LSB in 1876, as one of four members for the Southwark Division. It was the suffragist, Eliza Cairns who had suggested to Taylor that she stand for election. Cairns, who had been happy to hear that Taylor had recovered from a period of ill-health, wrote to Taylor indicating that the matter had been discussed amongst leading suffragists.

...it encourages me to hope that you will listen favourably to a proposal I have to make – which is that you will stand for the School Board. I saw Mrs Anderson yesterday and she was talking to me on the subject and wondering if you were properly asked you would consent to stand...Mrs Orme too is of the same opinion and is very anxious that you should become a member of the School Board. She wrote to me about it some time ago.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/aug/28/elitism-in-britain-breakdown-by-profession>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/1870educationact/>.

<sup>15</sup> T. Gautrey, *Lux Mihi Laus. School Board Memories* (London, 1936), 19.

<sup>16</sup> Martin, 'Fighting down the idea that the only place for women was in the home,' 278.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> J. S. Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working-classes 1860 – 1918* (London, 1979), 75.

<sup>19</sup> E. Cairnes to H. Taylor, October 1876, vol. 19, no. 226, M.T.C.



This was not Taylor's first contact with the London School Board. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, having just been elected on to the first London School Board, had written to her in 1870 asking if John Stuart Mill would consider standing for election and accept the Chairmanship but he had declined.<sup>20</sup> The women's suffrage movement had recognised the importance of the creation of the School Boards in extending opportunities for women in the public sphere. *The English Women's Review* had closely followed the first elections in 1870, quoting John Stuart Mill's support for women coming forward to sit on them and the publication had celebrated the election of the first three women to the new authorities, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (London), Emily Davies (London) and Lydia Becker (Manchester).<sup>21</sup> The paper gave much coverage to the triennial elections and pressed the case for more women to come forward and seek election.<sup>22</sup>

#### TAYLOR'S ELECTION TO THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD IN 1876

Taylor, herself, did not expect to be successful in the 1876 LSB election because of her 'advocacy of gratuitous, compulsory and secular education.'<sup>23</sup> Southwark, her constituency, had a large Roman Catholic Irish population who, in later years, due to her support of Home Rule and the Irish Land War, fully supported Taylor. In 1876, however, her fellow Liberal, and election running partner, the Reverend Sinclair had feared that her avowal that her 'chief object in becoming a candidate was to promote secular views' would lead to them both being defeated in the poll. He appealed for her to be more moderate on platforms with him.<sup>24</sup> Taylor refused to compromise and she was elected despite her strident pronouncements supporting secular education. Sinclair, too, was successful though he bought charges of election misconduct against her and she had to defend herself at an official hearing. She had not, he claimed, referred to the fact that he was her official Liberal running partner at an election meeting.<sup>25</sup> Further, it was alleged that she had paid into the Southwark election committee £200 despite Sinclair being on supposedly equal terms as a running partner, that she had issued a handbill in support of her candidature only, that she had arranged a meeting at the Bridge House without official consent and that she had not made clear the official policy on the religious question in schools to reporters.<sup>26</sup> An inquiry found her innocent of the charges. Taylor, however, faced opposition from the Liberal party in each of the subsequent elections in which she stood as an Independent Radical Democrat. Sinclair refused to stand as a candidate in the same borough in 1879, choosing to contest a seat elsewhere.

#### TAYLOR'S SOUTHWARK CONSTITUENCY AND THE NECESSITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

The Southwark to which Taylor was elected was one of the poorest boroughs in London according to Charles Booth's survey, *Inquiry into the Life and Labour of the People in London*. The survey identified 67% of Southwark's population as poor. This was in contrast to Camden (17.8%), South Bermondsey (30.7%), Lambeth (36.5%) and Vauxhall (39.6%).<sup>27</sup> Booth concluded that in Southwark poverty was worst round the banks of the Thames and ameliorated the further you travelled south, away from the river.<sup>28</sup> Between Jamaica Road and the Thames was particularly socially deprived: 'The inhabitants are mostly water-side labourers, many of them Irish and very ignorant.'<sup>29</sup>

The survey made good use of the LSB visitors to collect the information. The visitors' usual duties were visiting the homes of school truants. They took the survey into individual homes and into the Board Schools of Southwark which had some of the worst social problems and poverty in the metropolis. Booth's study identified that '...the Board School in Westcott Street contains some of the poorest children in London.'<sup>30</sup> Booth recorded that, despite school fees being low, non-payment was common as a result of inability to pay.<sup>31</sup> It was concluded that poverty was the main cause of high rates of absence from school and that ten percent of children in London at the Board Schools went to school

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<sup>20</sup> E Garrett Anderson to H. Taylor, 9 December 1870, vol.15, no. 145, M.T.C.

<sup>21</sup> *The English Woman's Review*, January 1871.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* December 1876.

<sup>23</sup> Draft letter, H. Taylor to A. Westlake, 26 September 1876, vol. 16, no.181, M.T.C.

<sup>24</sup> J. Sinclair to H. Taylor, 17 October 1876, vol. 16, no.147, M.T.C.

<sup>25</sup> *Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Advertiser*, 30 December 1876.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 December 1876.

<sup>27</sup> C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, vol. 2 (London, 1891), 29.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.



hungry.<sup>32</sup> Taylors first-hand knowledge of the grinding poverty of her constituency and the need for free education, need to be borne in mind when examining Taylor's educational work.

An 1883 pamphlet detailed the findings of a survey, conducted by a Methodist minister in the South London area of Southwark. This exposed the desperate living conditions of the poor.

Every room in these rotten and reeking tenements houses a family, often two. In one cellar a sanitary inspector reports finding a father, mother and three children... Another apartment contains father, mother and six children, two of whom are ill with scarlet fever.<sup>33</sup>

A survey, conducted by the London Congregational Union in 1885 went out to talk to the homeless in Southwark and found fifty destitute people without even the shelter of a tenement slum. They slept under railway arches. The Union published a pamphlet describing their individual experiences of existing, unseen, on the margins of society within walking distance of wealthier areas of middle-class Victorian suburban villas. This pamphlet also catalogued the hunger of many children attending the state schools of the borough.<sup>34</sup> These were the children Taylor was trying to help.

#### ACTIVISM THROUGH POLITICS

It was recognised by local Christians that the problem of London's poor was too big for the churches in Southwark to alleviate and that government intervention was needed.<sup>35</sup> Taylor was part of the political debate on what this intervention should be and she wanted the working class to be enabled, through education, to take their full part in building a new society which would eliminate this dire poverty. She was part of the movement which saw the solution to the poverty found in Southwark, and throughout London, as laying in socialism. She was a founder executive member, in 1881, of the Democratic Federation: this new political organisation was an attempt, by Henry Hyndman, to unite the London trade societies, radical clubs, working-class organisations and other campaigning groups, including the Land Nationalisation Society, within one reforming organisation. The provisional executive advocated that the manifesto of the party should include a demand for manhood suffrage, triennial parliaments, equal electoral districts and the payment of M.P.s salaries and election expenses by the rate payer. To these long-standing radical chartist demands were added adult suffrage, nationalisation of the land, abolition of the House of Lords, election bribery to be declared a felonious act and legal independence for Ireland.<sup>36</sup> The Democratic Federation did not, at first, demand that the state should own the means of production. This was added in 1884 when it became the first Marxist organisation and renamed itself the Social Democratic Federation; shortly after this, Taylor and many other leading members left the organisation, finding Hyndman's control over it too autocratic.<sup>37</sup> Members of the Social Democratic Federation recognised the importance of local democratic bodies, like the School Boards, for disseminating their socialist ideas. Elected members of the London School Board, who were also Democratic/Social Democratic Federation included Taylor, Edward Aveling and Annie Besant. They brought their socialism into the LSB and tried to achieve the Social Democratic Federation manifesto through influencing educational policy.

Taylor was also a member of The London Municipal Reform League, which was formed in March 1881 and resolved to campaign for one central municipal authority for the whole of London, a London County Council.<sup>38</sup> Sydney Buxton (President of the Municipal Reform League), and League members,<sup>39</sup> Benjamin Lucraft<sup>40</sup> and Florence Fenwick Miller<sup>41</sup>,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 489.

<sup>33</sup> A Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (London 1883), 7.

<sup>34</sup> *Light and Shade, Pictures of London Life*, (A sequel to the *Bitter Cry of Outcast London*) published by the London Congregational Union (London 1885), 18.

<sup>35</sup> Rev. F. Crozier, *Methodism and the Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (London 1885), 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 May 1881.

<sup>37</sup> For a history of the Social Democratic Federation see M. Crick, *The History of the Democratic Federation*, (Keele, 1994).

<sup>38</sup> J. Lloyd, *London Municipal Government History of a Great Reform 1880-1888* (London 1910) 7.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin Lucraft (1809-1897) was the only working-man elected to the LSB during the 1870s. He was a chair maker by trade. Lucraft had been involved in radical politics since his youth. as a supporter of Chartism which campaigned for universal suffrage and parliamentary reform. He was a founder member of the General Council of the First International of the International Workingmen's Association. See George H Dyer *Benjamin Lucraft: a biography* (London 1879), in the British Library.

<sup>41</sup> Florence Fenwick Miller was an English journalist, writer and social reformer. She was elected to the LSB in 1876 at the age of 22



were also members of the London School Board. As political reformers they saw election to the Board as essential to their political aims; they were political activists not educationalists. Taylor and Fenwick Miller were both on the General Council of the League.<sup>42</sup> The rapid growth of London, both in area and population, required a less chaotic control of infrastructure.

The administration of London was, during the time of Taylor's LSB tenure, in the hands of a multitude of autonomous authorities. The Metropolitan Board of Works controlled main drainage, buildings, open spaces, bridges, the Fire Brigade and street improvements, over which there was no public control. There were twenty-three London vestries and fifteen District Boards, composed of two or more vestries. These thirty-eight bodies controlled all street paving, lighting, cleansing, water and drainage. Although elected, very few people voted for them. The members of the Vestries and District Boards elected the Metropolitan Board of Works, resulting in that organisation being distanced from direct democracy by one remove. Added to this water and gas were in the hands of private companies.<sup>43</sup>

The Local Government Bill of 1884 enlarged the City Corporation to include the whole metropolitan area. It legislated for an elected council of 240 members, 45 to be elected by the City Corporation, 45 to be former members of the Metropolitan Board of Works, and 150 from London Divisions. They were elected for a three-year term after which the Board of Work members would become elected. An awareness of all these piecemeal administrative bodies is necessary to understand the importance of the fully elected LSB as an important first step in the democratisation of the capital and state influence over Londoners' daily lives.

Taylor endeavoured to increase the influence of working-class Londoners within these new state-controlled institutions. Later she would attempt to stand for parliament on a manifesto of payment for M.P.s and she brought her political belief, that public office should not be denied to the less well-off, into her School Board work by proposing an unsuccessful motion that the Board should petition Parliament for the power to pay members an annual amount not exceeding £200 each.

It was impossible that those most interested in the Board's work – the working-classes – should be represented upon it unless they were paid...This Board should be a popular Board and should really represent the working-classes and the parents of the children should have a chance of coming upon it.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, she attempted, again unsuccessfully, to have Board meetings moved from 3pm to 7pm to allow working parents to attend them.<sup>45</sup> Her fellow board member and close friend, Elizabeth Surr, praised the tenacity of Taylor. '(She)...did not work for success, she was generally found upon the losing side, fighting like a brave soldier in the cause which she conceived to be true and just.'<sup>46</sup>

#### CHALLENGING GENDER EXPECTATIONS ON THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD

Separate spheres, recognised by historians as 'one of the fundamental organising characteristics of middle-class society in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century England',<sup>47</sup> was undermined by the election of women onto the new School Boards. Separate spheres attempted to confine women's influence to the private world of home and family.<sup>48</sup> Amanda Vickery has challenged the premise that these separate spheres represented 'the overarching constraint for Victorian women.'<sup>49</sup> Vickery asserts that women led more diverse lives than this would allow.<sup>50</sup> It was only a middle-

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and served until 1885. She edited the feminist journal *The Women's Signal* during the 1890s and was one of the founders of the Women's Franchise League in 1889. See R. T. Van Arsdell, *Florence Fenwick Miller. Victorian Feminist, Journalist and Educator* (Aldershot, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> The London Municipal Reform League, *Annual Report 26 January 1882*.

<sup>43</sup> Lloyd, 24.

<sup>44</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 7 March 1885.

<sup>45</sup> *London School Board Minutes*, 5 March 1885.

<sup>46</sup> *Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Advertiser*, 11 March 1882.

<sup>47</sup> C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class* (Cambridge, 1992), 106.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>49</sup> L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 2002), 76.

<sup>50</sup> A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', p. 75, in Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (Abingdon, 2006), chapter 3.



class ideal which a number of privileged women were able to circumnavigate, resist and negotiate, and in general, these women shared a number of social factors which enabled them to do so.<sup>51</sup>

Taylor addressed practically the challenges faced by working class women. For instance, she understood that working-class girls were often hampered in their education because they had to look after younger siblings while their mothers worked, so she attempted to have babies' rooms included in schools to enable girls to attend regularly.<sup>52</sup> Taylor further believed that boys and girls should be taught together in mixed schools under the control of female head teachers. The negative view of Taylor's unpopularity with teachers recorded in the historiography ignores the support she gave to female teaching staff.<sup>53</sup> She passed up no opportunity to improve employment rights for women teachers. She sought equality of pay and conditions for women teachers, and was a staunch defender of their rights; this was before Clementina Black,<sup>54</sup> Secretary of the Women's Trade Union League, successfully secured an equal pay resolution at the Trades Union Congress in 1888,<sup>55</sup> and nearly a hundred years before the successful passing of the Equal Pay Act in 1970. Taylor did have victories in regard to women's rights, in the School Board chamber. Taylor, Surr and Fenwick Miller successfully opposed a recommendation by an internal committee of the LSB not to appoint any woman with young children to the post of headmistress.<sup>56</sup> Taylor regularly attempted to have men and women teachers paid at the same rate, putting forward a heavily defeated motion in 1879, during a debate on the new salary scales, which was seconded by Fenwick Miller and supported by two men, the Revd. Coxhead and Mr Firth.<sup>57</sup> Progressive women members were often supported in their campaigns by the more feminist-minded men.

In 1883 Taylor succeeded in having the joint assessment of married teachers' income referred to the Board's Solicitor on the grounds of possible unlawfulness under the Married Women's Property Act in 1882.<sup>58</sup> Later that year she unsuccessfully attempted to amend a motion on uncertified teachers' salary scales which would have given women pay parity, attracting only ten supporters but showing again that there were male Board members who supported equality for women.<sup>59</sup> Taylor was supported by Miss Hastings, but Miss Davenport Hill, Miss Richardson and Mrs Westlake all voted with the majority against equal pay and continued to do so on future salary motions. For them, politics overrode gender solidarity.

The new salary scales were a long-drawn-out affair, taking over five years. They took up eighteen hours of debate in three sittings in the final month before adoption.<sup>60</sup> When they were finally passed, at the end of December 1883, they gave all teachers a fixed salary, not dependent on results. Head teachers were to be paid according to the number of pupils in the school rather than the success of the pupils in government tests. However, the equal pay for equal work Taylor had tirelessly campaigned for remained an unrealised dream. Historical study shows how social and political change in society is achieved slowly, whether it is the abolition of slavery, the campaign for the universal suffrage or the dismantling of apartheid, change rarely comes without a long struggle and is the result of much work by many over decades.

Taylor also fought against the gendered nature of the School Board administration. In 1877, after Taylor and Fenwick Miller were first elected, the 'lady members' had to insist on going to the Lord Mayor's dinner at the Mansion House to which all School Board members were invited. The women were told that they were invited on the presumption that

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<sup>51</sup> Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England*, 53.

Martin's study of the women members of the London School Board uses Stacey and Price's sociological model charting success in politics. This evidences that nearly all shared similar privileged backgrounds. They came from politically active families, were middle- or upper-class, financial independent or supported by their families and few family commitments.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 14 April 1877.

<sup>53</sup> Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling*, 129.

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.unionhistory.info/> A collaboration between the TUC and London Metropolitan University celebrated Clementina's work to secure equal pay but nowhere in the resources is Taylor's work for equal pay recorded.

<sup>55</sup> *The Women's Time Line*, <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/humanresources/equalities/doc/gender-equality-timeline.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 2 Feb 1878.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 30 April 1879.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 2 July 1883. The Married Women's Property Act of 1870 allowed married women to legally own the money they earned and to inherit property. Previous to the Act, the earnings and inheritance of married women legally belonged to their husbands.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 13 December 1883.

<sup>60</sup> Gautrey, 139 – 41.



they would decline and plead a prior engagement, as women members had in the past. Taylor and Fenwick Miller refused to pretend they were otherwise engaged and attended the banquet.<sup>61</sup> In doing so they had indicated that they would not accept the gendered roles assigned to them as women by patriarchal male members.

The conduct of meetings privileged the male members. Fenwick Miller later recalled the disadvantaged position of the women members in meetings which favoured masculine attributes, such as forwardness in debate. She wrote of how Taylor secretly made a note, for three months, of how long each member spoke and proved that the men were much more talkative. Taylor drew attention to how men controlled the meetings, declaring that Mr Stanley had spoken forty times as long as all the women put together, and describing him as having 'forty women speaking power.' There was a serious point to her observations, as meetings were lengthy affairs. The Board was often accused in the press as wasting London rate payers' money throughout the whole of its thirty-three-year history.<sup>62</sup> Mr Buxton, the Chairman, in his Annual Report in October 1883, revealed that, on average, the weekly Board meetings in the previous twelve months had lasted 4 hours 37 minutes in comparison to 3 hours 15 minutes in 1879–80.<sup>63</sup> Taylor's motivation was always political, in this case a desire to save the taxpayer money. F. W. Soutter, a political colleague recalled that she would tow no party line to win favour within an official caucus, 'for the opinion of "society" as that term is generally understood she cared not a rap.'<sup>64</sup>

#### TAYLOR'S CURRICULUM CAMPAIGNS ON THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD

The school curriculum was gendered: boys and girls were prepared for different lives, boys for the world of work and girls for the private domestic realm.<sup>65</sup> Taylor endeavoured to make changes to the school curriculum, which would give girls equal status. Not only had girls been physically separated from boys by the architecture of the new Board schools with their separate entrances, play grounds and departments, but girls also had a separate curriculum.<sup>66</sup> A Needlework Sub Committee report of 1873 found that girls were spending between five and seven hours a week on sewing, during which time the boys were engaged in extra arithmetic. In 1870 the theory of Domestic Economy had been added to the curriculum code for girls and became compulsory in 1878 and in 1882 cookery in schools became eligible for a government grant. Florence Fenwick Miller and Taylor put forward a number of motions to the Board to reduce the needlework requirement and they were finally successful in achieving a reduction in 1884.<sup>67</sup> They failed, however, to stop the increasing encroachment of domestic subjects for girls within the school curriculum.

As a socialist, Taylor saw the curriculum as a means of social advancement for working-class boys and girls. While Hollis assessed Taylor as parent- rather than child-centred, it is more correct to say she was politically motivated rather than child-centred.<sup>68</sup> By the 1880s a growing movement was calling for a more holistic approach to children's education – a child-centred education. Supporters of the educational theories of Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) argued that children needed to be listened to and would learn best from play in kindergartens staffed by teachers trained in Froebel methods.<sup>69</sup> Froebel's educational theory insisted that children should be respected as people and that neither discipline nor punishment were needed if the child's intellect was engaged in learning through play. The LSB adapted Froebel educational theory in the 'Babies' class' from 1877 although financial constraints restricted a full adoption.<sup>70</sup> *The School Master*, commenting in a leader on the 1885 LSB election, lamented that very few candidates were educationalists, noting that 'for some it was a stepping stone for Parliament, and that many others 'were advocates of women's rights

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<sup>61</sup> Florence Fenwick Miller, *An Uncommon Girlhood*, unpublished manuscript, Wellcome Library, 950.

<sup>62</sup> Gautrey, 31.

<sup>63</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 6 October 1883.

<sup>64</sup> F. W. Soutter, *Recollections of a Labour Pioneer* (London, 1925), 84.

<sup>65</sup> For a comprehensive account of the gendering of the Victorian school curriculum see C. Dyhouse, *Girls growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London 1981).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Also A.M. Turnbull, 'Learning her Womanly Work: The Elementary School Curriculum 1870–1914' in F. Hunt (ed.), *Lessons for Life, The schooling of girls and women 1850-1950* (Oxford, 1987).

<sup>67</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 26 January 1884.

<sup>68</sup> Hollis, 97.

<sup>69</sup> J. Liebschner, *Foundations of Progressive Education: The History of the National Froebel Society*, (Cambridge, 1991).

<sup>70</sup> J. Read, 'Free Play with Froebel: Use and Abuse of Progressive Pedagogy at London's Infants' Schools 1870–1904' in *Paedagogica Historica International Journal of the History of Education*, vol. XLII, June 2006, 299–324, 309.





and other popular fads of the day<sup>71</sup> Taylor fell into both these 'fad' categories through her feminism and socialism. Her curriculum campaigning for girls to receive the same education as boys came from her feminism and a desire to not have their future curtailed through a narrow domestic subject based curriculum.

#### CAMPAIGN AGAINST CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

In her campaign against corporal punishment in LSB elementary schools Taylor was continuing the work of her mother and step-father, who campaigned against physical and emotional abuse. Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill had written a series of articles for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1850 exposing the physical and emotional abuse of women within marriage, perpetrated by husbands and sanctioned by the law and on physical abuse of children by their parents.<sup>72</sup> They had also anonymously published a pamphlet critiquing Henry Fitzroy's Bill of 1853, *The Bill for the Better Prevention and Punishment of Assaults on Women and Children*, in which they highlighted the importance of education in reducing physical brutality.<sup>73</sup>

Organizations had been established to oppose the use of the birch in schools. Shortly after winning her first election Taylor was in correspondence with the educationalist W.F. Collier, the author of a pamphlet opposing corporal punishment in schools.<sup>74</sup> In 1879 J.W. Bradley wrote to her, requesting that he be allowed to add her name to the list of members of the Council of the Association for the Abolition of Corporal Punishment.<sup>75</sup> Martin asserts that much of the opposition to Taylor, during the 1879 School Board election, came from teachers who most likely paid for the leaflets published opposing her re-election.<sup>76</sup> It should be noted, however, that Taylor also received letters from teachers expressing their gratitude to her for supporting the schools out of her own purse. After leaving the Board she continued to provide such support, negating the idea that she was routinely disliked by teachers.<sup>77</sup> Saxon Street Board School wrote to her in 1889, thanking her for allowing the school's pupils to use her private library<sup>78</sup> and an infant school in Bermondsey wrote expressing thanks 'for your kind help which has never been solicited in vain for the benefit of the children.'<sup>79</sup> Again much of the opposition Taylor faced was political. The official liberals opposed her membership of the Democratic Federation. They opposed her support for the Irish Land League during the Land War of 1879-1882 and her stance against the Coercion Acts of Gladstone which saw imprisonment without trial in Ireland. Her campaigns for land nationalisation also made her political enemies. Taylor wrote to her fellow land campaigner Henry George after the 1882 School Board election, relating how bitter the contest had been in Southwark. Pamphlets and bills (included ones printed by leading landowners the Duke of Westminster and Lord Abereford) had been distributed, attacking her politics although not her personality, in an attempt to turn the voters against her. 'The Liberal Association of the Borough distinctly declared that my conduct in regard to Ireland and Gladstone made it impossible for "liberals" to allow me to be re-elected.'<sup>80</sup>

Taylor was not alone in opposing corporal punishment, and indeed the prevailing myth, that corporal punishment in schools was viewed as a necessity during the nineteenth century, has been recently challenged.<sup>81</sup> There was growing unease about its use in schools following the trial of Thomas Hopley in 1860 for the manslaughter of a pupil at his school. Hopley's trial has been described as a watershed in attitudes to corporal punishment in schools.<sup>82</sup> In 1871 School Board member Professor Huxley had succeeded in setting firm boundaries for the administering of corporal punishment

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<sup>71</sup> *The School Master*, 19 September 1885.

<sup>72</sup> H. Taylor & J.S. Mill, 'The Suicide of Sarah Brown,' 'The Case of Anne Bird,' and 'Wife Murder' in A. Robson and J.E. Robson (eds), *Sexual Equality, Writings by John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill and Helen Taylor* (Toronto 1994), 53-56, 66-70 and 87-91.

<sup>73</sup> H. Taylor and J.S. Mill, 'Remarks on Mr Fitzroy's Bill for the More Effectual Prevention of Assaults on Women and Children' in Robson & Robson (eds.), 91-8.

<sup>74</sup> W.F. Collier to Helen Taylor, 16 September 1877, vol.15, no.39, M.T.C.

<sup>75</sup> J.W. Bradley to Helen Taylor, 12 August 1879, vol. 15, no. 21, M.T.C.

<sup>76</sup> Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling*, 129

<sup>77</sup> Hollis, 97.

<sup>78</sup> R.W. Postage to Helen Taylor, 19 January 1889, vol.16, no.124, M.T.C.

<sup>79</sup> S.A. Long to Helen Taylor, 28 February, 1889, vol.15, no.108, M.T.C.

<sup>80</sup> Helen Taylor to Henry George, 4 January 1883, Henry George Collection (H.G.C.), New York Public Library.

<sup>81</sup> J. Middleton, 'Spare the Rod,' *History Today*, 62, 11 (2012), 5-6.

<sup>82</sup> J. Middleton, 'Thomas Hopley and mid-Victorian attitudes to corporal punishment', in *History of Education*, 34, 6 (2005), 599-615.





in the capital's schools.<sup>83</sup> The LSB had accepted the decision of the First Report of the Scheme of Education Committee's recommendations, headed by Huxley, that it should only be administered by the Head Teacher and recorded in a punishment book.<sup>84</sup> Taylor, therefore, took her seat on a Board which had already set legal boundaries as regards physical punishment in its elementary schools. In 1879 Taylor put forward a motion calling for the abolition of corporal punishment in all London state schools.<sup>85</sup> In 1882 she tabled a second motion for abolition, seconded by Benjamin Lucraft, in which she cited France, Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden as countries ahead of Britain in this matter. She claimed to know of three cases in which a child had lost a finger after being caned.

Industrial schools, relying on private philanthropy and voluntary organizations, had been set up following the Youthful Offenders Act (1854) and received public money for the upkeep of offenders admitted to them by the Magistrates Courts. Further Acts of Parliament in 1857 and 1866 saw the Home Office taking over the supervision of the schools.<sup>86</sup> In 1870 the LSB assumed this responsibility for the industrial schools of the metropolis and the children whom they sent to them. Taylor, Surr and Fenwick Miller campaigned endlessly to expose the mistreatment and abuse of boys at two industrial schools in London, Upton House and St Paul's.<sup>87</sup> Surr first drew the Board's attention to the regime at Upton House after she visited and found the institution to have no fires lit, just plain wooden boards and boys wearing no shoes.<sup>88</sup> Taylor believed that many decent children were in the industrial schools. They were often the children of working widows whose unsupervised children were picked up roaming the streets and sent to reform schools.<sup>89</sup> She argued that ordinary elementary schools should accommodate these children.<sup>90</sup> Surr uncovered such a catalogue of abuse at St Paul's Industrial School that Taylor, Fenwick Miller and herself became determined to do something about it. Surr and Taylor became school visitors for St Paul's in 1879 and Taylor also visited twice in 1882 because children from her constituency, Southwark, had been sent there. Surr resolved to bring abuse at the school to public attention after two boys set fire to it. These boys claimed they had lit the fire in protest at the harsh conditions at the school,<sup>91</sup> and when the case came to court Taylor paid for the successful defence of the boys.<sup>92</sup> Surr gave evidence, collected from boy witnesses, on the appalling conditions at St Paul's. The school was a Church of England school to which the LSB sent remanded boys, in return for which the school received public money. Thomas Scrutton, the Chairman of the London School Board's Industrial Schools Committee, was also manager of this school. That today would be regarded as an unacceptable conflict of interest and many felt uncomfortable about it at the time.<sup>93</sup>

Surr alleged that the children were malnourished and that they were punished by having both hands and feet handcuffed and locked in cold rooms for days at a time. They were forced to carry beds on their heads and endured cold weather without shoes, jackets or bedding.<sup>94</sup> In March 1881 Taylor seconded Surr's unsuccessful motion to remove all the Board's children from St Paul's Industrial School. and the Chairman's 1881 report to the Board stated that, as a result of the two women's campaigning, a committee was to be set up to enquire into the allegations. This committee heard a catalogue of mistreatment and excessive punishment from boy witnesses.<sup>95</sup>

Taylor informed the Board of her intention to put a motion that the Board's Solicitor should begin proceedings against Scrutton for fraud in relation to his having charged the Board for boys who were not at the school on the days the

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<sup>83</sup> *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper*, 25 June 1871.

<sup>84</sup> *The Bury and Norwich Post*, 27 June 1871.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 February 1879.

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/DisplayCatalogueDetails.asp?CATID=7904&CATLN=3&FullDetails=True>.

<sup>87</sup> For an in-depth account see J. Martin, "'Hard-headed and Large-hearted': Women and the Industrial Schools, 1870-1885" *History of Education*, 20, 3 (1991), 187-203.

<sup>88</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 5 April 1879.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 February 1881.

<sup>90</sup> *The School Master*, 30 June 1883, M.T.C., box 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 July 1882.

<sup>92</sup> Surr wrote to the *London Standard*, on 16 November 1881, revealing that Taylor, 'warmly interested in all helpless children,' had paid the legal expenses.

<sup>93</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 22 October 1881.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 November 1881.

<sup>95</sup> *The Minutes of evidence taken before a Special Committee re Upton House Industrial School*, 21 May 1879.



charges pertained to.<sup>96</sup> Taylor had visited the Finance Department of the LSB to check the vouchers for payment of pupils against attendance.<sup>97</sup> Surr called on Scrutton to resign after the Home Office withdrew its certificate from St Paul's, following the School Board enquiry, which resulted in its closure rather than the reform which had been initially intended by the Board. The Home Office concluded that there was not enough evidence for a criminal prosecution. Fenwick Miller wrote to the Home Secretary that the Committee had not heard all the evidence available but to no avail, though a Royal Commission was appointed to enquire into conditions in industrial schools.<sup>98</sup> Scrutton resigned from the Board in May 1882 and his resignation was celebrated by many members who held him totally responsible, as the School Manager, for the mistreatment of the boys.<sup>99</sup> When the Board's Chairman moved to send Scrutton a letter of regret at accepting his resignation Mr Bonnewell called it hypocrisy 'when the majority of the board were glad he had gone.'<sup>100</sup>

Scrutton sued Taylor who had publicly accused him of manslaughter due to the death of a boy following contaminated food being served at St Paul's under his management. In June 1882 Taylor's libel case came to court. Scrutton was claiming damages of £10,000 while Taylor refused to back down and declared privilege. She maintained that the letter which contained her allegation had been official School Board business. She had sent it to a Mr Upton, the promoter of a public meeting in November 1881, held to discuss the industrial school scandal in Tower Hamlets. Taylor had been unable to attend, being in Ireland working for the Ladies' Land League in their campaign against the Irish landlords. She had written the letter from Dublin, an extract from which had been read out to those assembled and the whole text published later in the press. In it she had declared that Scrutton was guilty of the manslaughter of boys in his care at the school, for he had 'supplied some of the miserable adulterated food himself to the school and there can be little doubt in my mind that the children were kept there only to make money by their work.' Scrutton had asked Taylor to publicly withdraw these allegations but she had refused and had repeated them at a Board meeting on 19 January 1882 and on 7 March at a divisional meeting in Bermondsey, where she had accused him of the manslaughter of thirteen boys. During the trial, she continued to maintain that Scrutton had also charged for boys not at the school.<sup>101</sup> She declared in court that, 'every kind of wanton cruelty was carried on year after year in that school by the authority of a man who calls himself a Christian and a philanthropist.'<sup>102</sup>

The trial finished in anti-climax as Taylor's barrister advised her she could not win the case and should settle, which she did, paying Scrutton £1,000, though she would not retract her allegations.<sup>103</sup> On leaving the court, to applause from her supporters in the public gallery, she declared that, 'she had done her public duty to her own electors, to London and to the children of England. She had stated outside the Board that Scrutton was morally guilty of the crime of manslaughter.'<sup>104</sup> Debates about the morality and effectiveness of corporal in British state schools would go on for nearly a century before being finally banned by an Act of Parliament in 1987.

#### CAMPAIGNS FOR SECULAR AND FREE EDUCATION

Secular and free education would also appear on Taylor's socialist parliamentary manifesto of 1885 and she worked relentlessly for 9 years on the LSB to achieve both. During the 1880s the LSB split into progressive (Liberal) and moderate members, the latter strongly opposed to rate increases to pay for London's education and fierce defenders of the church schools.<sup>105</sup> Secular state education, free from any denominational bias, had been a long-time Radical goal and was a Social Democratic Federation election pledge for its candidates. Taylor fought constantly against any watering down of

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<sup>96</sup> *School Board Minutes*, 27 October 1881.

<sup>97</sup> Helen Taylor to Elizabeth Surr, 24 October 1881, M.T.C, vol. 23, no.681, M.T.C.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 November 1881 and 21 January 1882.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 May 1882.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 May 1882.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 July 1882.

<sup>102</sup> *The Times*, 28 June 1882.

<sup>103</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 1 July 1882.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 January 1882.

<sup>105</sup> Gautrey, 100



the compromise reached in the 1870 Education Act which had forbidden denominational teaching in London elementary schools whilst insisting on a daily reading of the Bible.<sup>106</sup>

When the LSB issued a circular on Religious Education in 1878, which called on teachers to teach the children 'the truths upon which their future lives depended',<sup>107</sup> Taylor protested vehemently. She insisted the circular went against the religious compromise of 1871 and opened up the possibility of teachers imposing their own individual belief systems on the children. The following year, Taylor objected to a LSB report, *The Religious Examination of Pupil Teachers*, on the grounds that it threatened the religious liberty of the apprenticed teachers. She argued it would lead to head teachers putting pressure on pupil teachers to sit the Scripture examination because schools that did not put candidates forward would lose grants. She was heavily defeated in her attempt to stop the report being issued to head teachers; but she had made a moral stand against what she regarded as a serious violation of the principle of secular education.

In 1883 a candidate for a teaching post at Jessop Road School, Brixton wrote to the press, complaining that he had been asked inappropriate questions during his interview in an attempt to discover his religious views. He had allegedly been asked by his interviewer: 'Do you love to read the bible as you would a novel? Do you follow teaching for the love of God? Are you a churchman?'<sup>108</sup> Taylor and Edward Aveling, a fellow socialist member of the Democratic Federation, tabled a successful motion to have the matter examined by the Committee of Inquiry of the London School Board. The inquiry cleared the interviewer of misconduct but Taylor and Aveling attempted to get the Board to alter a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the subject and have the word 'completely' removed from before the word 'exonerated' in relation to the accused interviewer. They also requested that the words 'of denominational bias' should be inserted after the words 'the charges,' thus indicating that the Board had only partially cleared the interviewer.<sup>109</sup> This is a further example of men and women working together on the board to promote socialism. Martin maintained that Taylor believed men and women should work separately on the board citing as evidence Taylor's wish to exclude men from suffrage committees in the 1860s.<sup>110</sup> Referencing Taylor's campaigning outside the School Board reveals that she was not the separatist it has been claimed. Taylor's feminism had evolved by the 1880s when she opposed the setting up a separate women's committee in the Democratic Federation:

The time is gone by for Ladies' Committees separate for public work. That is one thing at least we learn on the School Board where men and women work together on public official business and I doubt whether you will find it more easy to induce women to work on a Committee of their own.<sup>111</sup>

In her *Claim of Women to the Suffrage* of 1867, she declared that women only formed a separate class because they were excluded from society's concerns and pursuits. She believed that once the barriers were lifted on their participation in the workplace and social and political institutions women's interests would be incorporated into the class interests of men.<sup>112</sup> The experience of working with women members of the LSB converted some male members to the women's suffrage cause, notably Lord Sandon and William McCullagh Torrens, both in 1871. This has been noted, not as a result of these men being converted to feminism but rather their belief that the opening up of a public role on the board for women had not upset the social order. They felt confident that giving the local vote to women would not result in social change as *local* government was an extension of women's domestic sphere.<sup>113</sup>

There was continuity also in Taylor's support of free education. It was both a contemporary Social Democratic Federation manifesto pledge and a long-term radical goal. John Stuart Mill had moved towards supporting free elementary education towards the end of his life in 1870. He had earlier written to Henry Fawcett in 1869 undecided on the issue and giving it as his reason for not joining the newly established National Education League which was campaigning for

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<sup>106</sup> The 1871 Conscience Clause had allowed parents to withdraw their children from even this reading of the Bible.

<sup>107</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 8 June 1878.

<sup>108</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 January 1883.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 February 1883.

<sup>110</sup> Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling*, 19.

<sup>111</sup> Draft letter from Helen Taylor to Henry Hyndman, undated, vol.18, no.33, M.T.C.

<sup>112</sup> See B. Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain, Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge 2012), 216.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.



free secular elementary schooling for all children, unfettered by denominational control.<sup>114</sup> The issue of whether schooling should be free continued to divide Liberals, many feeling that it would remove parental responsibility, but Taylor campaigned tirelessly for it throughout her nine years on the London School Board. The campaign gained ground and free elementary education was finally achieved in 1891. Taylor regularly supported her Southwark constituents in their applications for relief from fees due to their inability to pay.<sup>115</sup> She always opposed motions to raise the fees at various schools, though usually hers was a minority voice.<sup>116</sup>

In 1882 Taylor put forward an unsuccessful motion that 'the Board petition parliament to be allowed to open all its elementary schools free.'<sup>117</sup> During the debate Taylor appealed for free schools on the grounds of economy. She emphasised the work involved in collecting the fees and enforcing payment. Time was wasted sending home children to collect the money and she claimed that teachers were paying out of their own salaries in order to keep the children in school and thereby earn the government grant. Opposition to her proposal came from the supporters of the voluntary church schools. The Rev. Morse claimed that: 'Free education was a favourite theory with radical politicians and socialist philosophers but that in his mind was simply Communism.'<sup>118</sup> This is evidence of board members opposing her politics not her personality.

Taylor came close to securing free education for London's children in 1885. Her motion was only defeated on the casting vote of the Chairman, thus consigning Taylor's campaign to historical obscurity.<sup>119</sup> The London teacher, Thomas Gautrey, recalled this narrow defeat in his memoirs. He identified Taylor's 'impassioned speech' as a watershed in the fight for free elementary education. 'Free schools became from this time an election cry at both Board and Parliamentary Elections.'<sup>120</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This article, whilst acknowledging the debt owed to previous studies of the women of the London School Board, has illustrated that, rather than being an eccentric maverick, Taylor's socialism and feminist beliefs were at the core of her work as an elected member of the London School Board. It has argued that by putting Taylor in her historical context, rather than as a sociological case study of gender politics, her political motivation is revealed. She was both continuing the educational concerns of her mother, Harriet Taylor and her step-father John Stuart Mill, to which she added the new Marxist socialism of the 1880s. In placing the School Board in the context of her other political campaigning for land nationalisation, Home Rule for Ireland and her membership of the Democratic Federation she is rescued from being merely idiosyncratic. She was blunt and opinionated, traits that are often admired in male politicians. Nevertheless, Taylor had a high moral sense of what was right and wrong and she 'fought for the people,' the poor of London, so that their lives might be improved through educational opportunity.<sup>121</sup>

Taylor had successes on the Board, if success is seen as moving debates along for those who follow to win the battle. She almost succeeded in securing free education in London's board schools and paved the way for its achievement in 1891. She was ahead of her time, but by the late 1880s there were many more socialists, including Annie Besant, elected to the LSB who would have supported her motions. She helped to expose and end cruelty and corruption within the London school system and was a staunch defender of secular education. Taylor's feminism saw her campaigning for better opportunities for women teachers and girl pupils, and she believed that no limits should be set on the advancement of working-class boys and girls. Finally, in becoming the first woman to chair a committee of the London School Board, she broke down a barrier which other women could cross in future, and this was acknowledged in the press as a watershed moment.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> J.S. Mill to Henry Fawcett, 24 October 1869, vol. 1, no.159 M.T.C.

<sup>115</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 17 May 1879.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 November 1879. Taylor unsuccessfully opposed the raising of fees at Blackheath Road School.

<sup>117</sup> *School Board Minutes*, 20 April 1882.

<sup>118</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 2 April 1881.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 July 1885.

<sup>120</sup> Gautrey, 86.

<sup>121</sup> Soutter, *Recollections of a Labour Pioneer*, 85.

<sup>122</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, 10 October 1885.



The historiography has depicted Taylor as merely an imposing personality who was difficult to engage with on a personal level. This, it has been claimed, made her less successful because she failed to make the necessary political alliances through an inability to compromise.<sup>123</sup> This one-dimensional view of Helen has been challenged in this article and Helen's achievements on the School Board evaluated and acknowledged for the first time. The emphasis in the historiography has not been on what she did, but on portraying her as an unlikable personality with whom it was impossible to have a warm relationship. For instance, M.S. Packe, a biographer of John Stuart Mill, felt able to say of Helen:

After Mill's death, she became the jealous guardian of all his thoughts and relics. She grew priggish and overpowering; eventually mean, suspicious truculent and sometimes half beside herself with passion. She became a great light in her various causes, women's suffrage and the London School Board. For the rest she clung on grimly at Avignon.<sup>124</sup>

Taylor has been depicted in the historiography as a woman who attracted controversy by her refusal to compromise. Packe ignores her movement to socialism and her final long illness when she suffered years of dementia and confusion, reducing her illness to 'hanging on.' Yes, she could be uncompromising when compromise might have been the easy way. For example, she refused to withdraw libellous comments against a fellow School Board member and preferred to pay the considerable sum of £1,000 as an out-of-court settlement rather than withdraw one word of her allegations because she believed she was right in her allegations. This article has illustrated, however, that she did work collaboratively to put an end to child cruelty, and campaigned for greater opportunities for working-class children and girls in particular.<sup>125</sup>

Helen had both positive aspects and negative defects in her character, as do all human beings, one weakness of hers being that she saw everything in black and white with no shades in between, which led to conflict with those who *may* have compromised on the School Board or in the women's suffrage groups, though that is not certain due to the socialist agenda behind her campaigns. She was indeed an exacting person to work with, and this must have tried the patience of colleagues many times, but she had a sense of morality based on social justice for ordinary people, men and women. Her friend in the Moral Reform Union, Emily Hill, wrote a candid, honest obituary of her for the *English Women's Review*.

A rare and striking personality. Mentally and morally she was on grand lines...Her love of truth and justice and hatred of oppression amounted to a passion. Compromise she could neither tolerate nor understand. She used to say of herself that she had no tact. What she seemed to fail to recognise was that life could not be lived on principles of pure logic. Everything Miss Taylor, did, said or wrote had an air of distinction and individuality. She was a formidable antagonist.<sup>126</sup>

It is a fitting tribute, revealing the strengths and weaknesses of a remarkable woman. However, although she could drive people to distraction through her rigidity, she can be lauded for a devotion to principle which led her to be truly independent on the School Board rather than blindly party political. Her friend F.W. Soutter assessed her educational career and concluded that it "was marked by earnest attention to the exacting duties of the office, an exceeding plainness of speech and a resolute obliteration of the ordinary party-political bonds".<sup>127</sup>

For her devotion to working ceaselessly for class and gender equality, Taylor deserves to be reassessed in the historiography of Victorian education, both for herself as a woman of political agency but also as a positive example of how the creation of the LSB allowed women to negotiate a political role for themselves. Taylor strove to advance both the feminist and socialist cause as a member of this influential local government organisation on which men and women worked politically together for the first time in an elected British Assembly.

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<sup>123</sup> Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect* p 166. Hollis compared Helen unfavourably with Annie Besant.

<sup>124</sup> M.S. Packe, *The Life of John Stuart Mill*, p. 413.

<sup>125</sup> She worked closely with Elizabeth Surr on this and the two remained friends after their school board careers were over.

<sup>126</sup> Press cutting of Emily Hill's obituary of Helen Taylor taken from *Women and Progress*, 8 February 1907, MTC, box 7.

<sup>127</sup> Soutter, *Recollections of a Labour Pioneer*, p.86.



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

Shelby Shapiro, Ph.D.  
(Bethesda, MD, USA)

Correspondence should be addressed to: [shelby.shapiro@ncis.org](mailto:shelby.shapiro@ncis.org)

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"But there was another guest at the wedding that nobody noticed. His name was . . . Fate."<sup>1</sup>  
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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Starting from the premise that writing, in common with other expressive acts, has an intentional character,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.'<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe had references to the Hungarian national

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

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

<sup>6</sup> 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*.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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."<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

A full and thoroughly contextualized study of a literary work should present the author's world-view, concerns with particular problems, and solutions thereto.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Yiddish literati reading the same novels, denounced Shomer for writing *shund-romanen* ("trash novels").<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

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

<sup>10</sup> Jauss, "Literary History," 19.

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

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

<sup>13</sup> 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).

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

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

<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> Scholars have depicted "Americanization" as a highly problematic process, ranging from total assimilation to a more nuanced negotiation of identity,<sup>18</sup> and the *Froyen zhurnal* clearly did not equate "Americanization" with assimilation, or use "Americanization" in the anti-immigrant sense of contemporary nativists.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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."<sup>21</sup> 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."<sup>22</sup> *Froyen zhurnal* saw itself as an educational resource, an "advisor and guide," or *vegvayzer*, to its readers,<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> Women instructed daughters about domestic religious duties, such as keeping a kosher home and fulfilling "ritual purity" laws.<sup>25</sup> 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

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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 Revisted," *Midwest Quarterly* 44, 1 (Autumn 2002): 10-26.

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

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

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

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

<sup>23</sup> "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.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> In New York, many of the earlier immigrants moved from the crowded East Side to Harlem, the Bronx, Williamsburg and Brownsville,<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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*.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>31</sup> 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."<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> 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*

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

<sup>27</sup> Moore, *At Home in America*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> 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.

<sup>32</sup> "The *Froyen zhurnal*," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 1 (May 1922): 3.

<sup>33</sup> J. Chaikin, *Yidishe 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-Leyeses, "Di yidishe literatur un di yidishe prese," in *Finf un zibetsik yor yidishe 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."<sup>34</sup> Immensely popular, *heftn*-publishers moved from translated material to original works, each *heft* ending "to be continued." One such work ran 266 installments.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> *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*.<sup>37</sup> 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

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

<sup>35</sup> Schulman, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur*, 88, 102.

<sup>36</sup> Chaikin, *Yidishe bleter*, 82-83.

<sup>37</sup> 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."<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> It had a revolving dance floor.<sup>40</sup> Lobster palaces, which began as turn-of-the-century eateries, later became cabarets in Times Square.<sup>41</sup> 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."<sup>42</sup> 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

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

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

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

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

<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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."<sup>44</sup>

The first two, *Di froy vos hat gevagt* (*The Woman Who Dared: A Novel of Jewish Life in America*)<sup>45</sup> and *Di neshome fun a froy* (*The Soul of a Woman: A Novel of Jewish Life in America*)<sup>46</sup> 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,<sup>47</sup> 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

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

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

<sup>45</sup> 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.

<sup>46</sup> 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.

<sup>47</sup> Bertenson, "Di veg fun ihr 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."<sup>48</sup> 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."<sup>49</sup> 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?"<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

**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.<sup>52</sup> 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

<sup>48</sup> Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 2 (June 1922): 14.

<sup>49</sup> Bertenson, "Di froy vos hat gevagt," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 2 (June 1922): 58.

<sup>50</sup> L. Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 1, 6 (September 1922): 44.

<sup>51</sup> Bertenson, "Di neshome fun a froy," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 1 (May 1923): 13.

<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> Heroines do not realize "... full potential and identity as the partner of a man and as the implied mother of a child."<sup>54</sup> 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.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup> They live off Central Park West;<sup>57</sup> Helen and Max reside in the Bronx;<sup>58</sup> Max has a "country place near Chicago,"<sup>59</sup> and Helen's parents live on a farm near Boston.<sup>60</sup> 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,<sup>61</sup> and Central Park at 67th Street,<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup>

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

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<sup>53</sup> 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.

<sup>54</sup> 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>63</sup> 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.

<sup>64</sup> 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, 138-144-145



member of the middle class."<sup>65</sup> From 1890 to 1920, the percentage of female domestic workers decreased markedly, rising during the 1920s.<sup>66</sup> The accuracy of Bertenson's depictions does not alter the status indicator nature of employing servants, since Jews held domestic labor in low esteem.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup>

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 school<sup>69</sup> and Sonya hopes to become a chemistry teacher,<sup>70</sup> although the author notes Sonya is a "lazy student."<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> 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?"<sup>74</sup>

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

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<sup>65</sup> 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.

<sup>66</sup> 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup> Professional matchmakers, although never disappearing, fell on hard times;<sup>76</sup> 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 . . ." <sup>77</sup>

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." <sup>78</sup>

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." <sup>79</sup> 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. <sup>80</sup>

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." <sup>81</sup> 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

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<sup>75</sup> 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.

<sup>76</sup> Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America*, Vol. 1, 75-80.

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

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

<sup>79</sup> Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 10.

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

<sup>81</sup> 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,<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup>

Personified as the 1920s “flapper,” such women stereotypically smoked, swore and drank in speakeasies,<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup> 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.”<sup>87</sup> *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.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> Since male education had a higher cultural value, daughters often sacrificed their education for that of their brothers.<sup>90</sup> The longer a family lived in America, the more likely younger children would receive equal access to schooling.<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> *Froyen zhurnal* carried advertisements from vocational schools in every issue. As more families

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<sup>82</sup> Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 124-125.

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

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

<sup>85</sup> 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.

<sup>86</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>89</sup> Berroll, “Education and Social Mobility,” 63.

<sup>90</sup> 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.

<sup>91</sup> 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.

<sup>92</sup> 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,<sup>93</sup> or "because of old-world fears that it would discourage prospective suitors."<sup>94</sup>

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.<sup>95</sup> Misha, in a proprietary relationship, considers Rosa's college studies "unnecessary."<sup>96</sup> Rosa on the other hand swore at age fifteen never to be another's slave or have less education than an intelligent man;<sup>97</sup> only Hershel, proponent of a more equal kind of marriage, encourages her to study.<sup>98</sup> 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.<sup>99</sup> Thus, Misha calls Rosa "Reyzele," and "Reyzke,"<sup>100</sup> affectionate Yiddish diminutives for "Reyzel," the Yiddish equivalent of "Rosa." Misha has another name for Hershel, neither diminutive nor affectionate: "German Jew,"<sup>101</sup> and at one point "loathsome German Jew."<sup>102</sup> Meeting Rosa on the street, Misha taunts her, saying: "... I wish you happiness German-style, since your lover comes from Germany. True?"<sup>103</sup>

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.<sup>104</sup> "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!"<sup>105</sup> One historian's father considered his small-town origins as something shameful,<sup>106</sup> while others felt the same way about growing up in poverty-stricken Jewish quarters.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Markowitz, *My Daughter, the Teacher*, 13.

<sup>94</sup> Weinberg, "Longing to Learn," 115.

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

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

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

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

<sup>99</sup> 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.

<sup>100</sup> 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.

<sup>101</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>104</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>107</sup> 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!”<sup>108</sup>

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.<sup>109</sup> 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*.<sup>110</sup> 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.”<sup>111</sup> 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.”<sup>112</sup> 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.<sup>113</sup> 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.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>113</sup> 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.<sup>114</sup>

The same issue of *Froyen zhurnal* also carried Y. Roytberg's "The Jewish Woman and the Conversion Movement," concerning the conversion question.<sup>115</sup> 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"<sup>116</sup> - 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."<sup>117</sup>

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.<sup>118</sup> This changed in Western Europe and America as Jews adapted to prevailing patterns in their host societies,<sup>119</sup> 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.<sup>120</sup>

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

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

<sup>115</sup> T. Roytberg, "Di idische froy un di shmad bavegung," *Froyen zhurnal* 3, 4 (September 1923): 12.

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

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

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

<sup>119</sup> 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.

<sup>120</sup> 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.<sup>121</sup> "Our Children's Page," appearing in the last three issues, dealt solely with religious matters.<sup>122</sup> The Yiddish section included compilations culled from the Talmud, traditionally studied only by men, concerning women, children, and children's education.<sup>123</sup>

*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.<sup>124</sup> But as Carolyn Forrey noted, fiction gives insight into "those most elusive yet important realities of human existence: feeling and fantasy."<sup>125</sup> 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.<sup>126</sup> 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.<sup>127</sup> 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.

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

<sup>122</sup> 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.

<sup>123</sup> 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.

<sup>124</sup> 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.

<sup>125</sup> Forrey, "The new woman revisited," 37.

<sup>126</sup> 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.

<sup>127</sup> 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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# GENDER, INDEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIP, AND THE ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL COALITION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

Susan Roth Breitzer, Ph.D.

(Fayetteville, NC, USA)

Correspondence should be addressed to: [susanbreitzer@ncis.org](mailto:susanbreitzer@ncis.org)

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## **Abstract**

*Independent scholars and scholarship have in the last quarter century become increasingly recognized as worthy subjects of scholarship in themselves, yet this recent attention has included relatively little attention to the often-gendered nature of independent scholarship. Yet this gendered approach to the study of independent scholars and their scholarship is essential to understanding the origins of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars and its regional predecessors. The National Coalition of Scholars, founded in 1986 is a growing, and in recent years, rebuilding scholarly organization that has changed in response to the changing needs and demographics of its membership. In telling the story of NCIS, however, what has remained relatively constant has been its predominantly female leadership and membership, yet the gendered aspects of this organization and its predecessors has remained largely unaddressed in its histories. The purpose of this scholarly history of NCIS, therefore, is to go beyond the "official history" to examine the roles of gender and the place of women in the academy in the mid to late twentieth century.*

*This essay, which grows out of my work as NCIS historian/archivist, will be a study of the key scholars who had long dealt with the lack of tenure-stream employment, and banded together to organize learned societies dedicated to mutual support. It will then focus on the origins of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (which belatedly celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a conference hosted by Yale University in the summer of 2015) from the coalescence of a several regional, university community-centered independent scholar societies. Making use of NCIS's archives, official histories and literature, available secondary studies on women and the academy, and when possible oral histories, this paper will bring gender more firmly into the growing scholarship on the nexus between independent scholarship and the adjunctification of the academy, and place the history of NCIS and its predecessors in the context of this larger history.*

**Keywords:** *Gender, independent scholar, academia, adjunct faculty*

## INTRODUCTION

The National Coalition of Independent Scholars, a uniquely multidisciplinary learned society was founded in 1989 to serve the needs of scholars working outside the traditional academic structure, which functionally has meant working outside of the tenure stream. NCIS belatedly celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with a conference hosted by Yale University in the summer of 2015; the conference, themed "Traditions and Transitions," was the first to be mounted by the organization after a hiatus of several years. By many accounts, including the author's, the conference was not only a success, but in many ways a time of both celebration and reflection. Amid the varied sessions, many of which focused on the subtheme of Independent Scholars and the digital landscape, there were many occasions for informal



conversation among the attendees, who included some of the organization's founders<sup>1</sup>. The direction of some of these conversations uncovered the need to tell the story of NCIS in a way that went beyond the "official history," and furthermore placed it in the context of gender and the place of women in the academy in the mid- to late twentieth century.

The National Coalition of Independent Scholars is a growing and, in recent years, rebuilding organization, and has over the years evolved in response to the changing needs and demographics of its membership. What has remained relatively constant, however, has been its predominantly female leadership and membership, yet the gendered aspects of this organization and its predecessors have remained largely unaddressed in its histories. As public recognition of the legitimacy of independent scholars (self-identified or not) has increased, independent scholarship itself has become recognized as a legitimate area of study.<sup>2</sup> Yet this recent scholarship has included relatively little attention to the often-gendered nature of independent scholarship, notwithstanding recent paeans of praise to those scholars such as the late Elisabeth Eisenstein who mostly worked on the margins of or outside the academy.<sup>3</sup> But this gendered approach to the study of independent scholars and their scholarship is essential to understanding the origins of NCIS and its regional predecessors. Yes, you read this right. Despite the current affiliate status (recently changed to "Partner" status) of regional organizations such as the Princeton Research Forum with NCIS, most of these groups not only preceded NCIS, but were instrumental in its founding. It is furthermore no accident that nearly all of these regional organizations were founded in major research university communities.<sup>4</sup>

This had only partially to do with proximity to scholarly resources for which NCIS and other organizations would be struggling for equitable access, or to an automatic intellectual community. Rather, university communities were home to what was in some ways the natural constituency for an organization of marginally affiliated or unaffiliated scholars—professors' wives. By the 1970s, the traditional "faculty wife" whose role was assumed to be taking care of the domestic side of life and assume the social and secretarial duties that advanced her husband's career had been largely displaced by the unequal half of an academic couple who had met in graduate school and both achieved advanced degrees, but whose subsequent lives had largely been shaped around the husband's career path, with the wife limited by anti-nepotism policies and other factors to at best adjunct faculty status.<sup>5</sup> While in many ways this early corps of adjunct faculty enjoyed a better situation in a number of ways than the growing numbers of adjuncts in recent times whose economic situation has been far more precarious, their secondary status as practicing scholars was at the time the more visible disadvantage.

It was for this reason that the independent scholar societies founded in these university communities provided a vital source of scholarly and professional support for these scholars, creating networks of similarly-situated colleagues, as well as regular opportunities to share and present research. These early societies varied in form, focus, and membership, with differences ranging from whether they included tenure-stream faculty to whether their work, membership, and activities reflected an essentially feminist outlook. Geography and radius of membership would also play a role in these organizations, forms and focuses.<sup>6</sup> On the face of things, these societies that emerged, primarily in the 1970s, were the result of a feminism that raised consciousness even when it was too late to create substantive change for many older female scholars. In practice, however, their role in developing both the identity of independent scholars and the contemporary independent scholar movement received competition from a more voluntary, less academically-focused, and initially male model of independent scholarship that both predated and paralleled the decline of the academy, and in recent times has benefitted from the growing acceptance of independent scholars and scholarship as well as the rise of digital scholarship. Yet the regional origins of NCIS have gone largely unremembered as some of the earlier societies have gone into decline or folded altogether, and those remaining have only recently been redefined as "partners" rather

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Cunningham, "Conference Summary: National Coalition of Independent Scholars, June 18-21, 2015."

<sup>2</sup> Susan Breitzer, "From the Margins to the Center: Independent Historians and the Reshaping of History," conference paper, American Historical Association, Chicago. January 5-8, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Margalit Fox, Elisabeth Eisenstein, Trailblazing Historian of Moveable Type, Dies at 92," *New York Times* February 24, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> "NCIS Mission & History," <https://www.ncis.org/mission-history> (Accessed September 23, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Breitzer, "Naming the Problem: Changing the Conversation about the Humanities Jobs Crisis," unpublished paper.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Gross, *The Independent Scholar's Handbook*. (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1992) 262-63.



than “affiliates,” to reflect that these apparent offshoots of NCIS were and remain more than that, as in their heyday, these local scholarly forums would prove to have a national impact.<sup>7</sup>

This impact began with their roles as intellectual forums and support networks for history and historians of women and other feminist scholarship and scholars. One of the earliest to make an impact was the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession (later the Coordinating Council for Women in History), founded in December 1969, during the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, with the initial purpose of “the encouragement and recruitment of women into the profession, the monitoring of discrimination against women, and the development of Women’s History as a branch of historical study.” With the growing awareness of a dearth of academic jobs even then, the CCWHP also became the first to go where the American Historical Association and similar learned societies were unwilling to go—encouraging independent scholarship—partially as a component of the organization’s primary purposes of carving out a place for women in both history and the history profession.<sup>8</sup> It is for this reason, along with the gender makeup of NCIS and its founders, that the gendered nature of NCIS’s establishment needs to be emphasized.

This begins with the founders of the national organization who, with few exceptions, were primarily Founding Mothers. Literature scholar Barbara Currier Bell, who first brought up the subject of NCIS’s gendered history to me at the most recent national conference, was among the principal founders of NCIS as well as the first President of the recently disbanded Yale-based Center for Independent Study.<sup>9</sup> Another was Margaret Eisenstein DeLacy, a historian whose specialties included Contagionism and who led the Northwest Independent Scholars Association, and chaired the Study Committee on a National Association of Independent Scholars.<sup>10</sup> DeLacy is, additionally, the daughter of Elizabeth Eisenstein, the pioneering European historian of the printing press who spent most of her career as an independent scholar and contingent faculty member before finally being appointed the Alice Palmer Freeman Professor of History at the University of Michigan. Other “founding mothers” of note included Paula Gilette and Francesca Miller the latter being an adjunct faculty member and pioneering scholar of Latin American women’s history, whose monograph, *Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice*, was one of the first studies of its kind.<sup>11</sup> While these women fitted the pattern of the kind of independent scholars who sought respectability and equality, the minority of “founding fathers,” notably Ronald Gross, the author of *The Independent Scholars’ Handbook*, which emphasized the more “voluntary” model of independent scholarship, and James Bennett, one of the early scholars of independent scholarship, promoted a distinctly different model for would-be independent scholars. Their model tended to emphasize the self-made individualist approach to scholarship that cared less about the approval of the academy, perhaps reflecting a comparative *lack* of struggle for legitimacy among male scholars (affiliated or not), compared to their female counterparts (and his rare examples that acknowledged the struggle for legitimacy, such as Emily Taitz, co-author *Written Out of History*, one of the earliest pieces of scholarship on women in Jewish history). Reconciling these gendered modes of independent scholarship would therefore feature in the founding of regional organizations and, in turn, the founding of NCIS.<sup>12</sup>

Regional independent scholar organization began with the establishment of the now-defunct Institute for Research in History (IRH) in New York City in the mid-seventies, which created the basic form of the regional independent scholar society. These emphasized research and scholarly professional activities, though notably also included “projects designed for non-scholarly audiences,” especially in the then emerging field of women’s studies.<sup>13</sup> The IRH’s founding

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<sup>7</sup> “NCIS Partners,” <https://www.ncis.org/ncis-partners> (Accessed 11 October 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Marjorie Lightman, “The Emergence of an Independent Scholarly Sector: History as a Case Study,” *Outside Academe: New Ways of Working in the Humanities. A Report on the Conference “Independent Research Institutions and Scholarly Life in the 1980s”*: 10-21; and Hilda Smith, “CCWHP—The First Decade,” in *A History of the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession—Conference Group on Women’s History*, (n.p: CCWHP-CGWH, 1994) 7-20.

<sup>9</sup> “CIS Celebrates its 12<sup>th</sup> Year,” *September 1989 Newsletter*, Center for Independent Study. Center for Independent Study Archives, Box I. National Coalition of Independent Scholars.

<sup>10</sup> “Margaret Delacy,” <https://www.ncis.org/members/Margaret-delacy> (Accessed September 23, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> K. Lynn Stoner, Review, Francesca Miller, *Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice*. *The American Historical Review*, Vol.98, no.2 (April 1993): 12.

<sup>12</sup> Gross, 3-42, 224-7. 261-67; and Ronald Gross, “Scholarship Beyond the Academy,” *Academe*, Vol.71, No.1 (January-February 1985) 32-6.

<sup>13</sup> Lightman, “The Emergence of an Independent Scholarly Sector,” 22-3.



was followed by the establishment of a handful of similar organizations throughout the United States, the majority in university communities, and most (though not all), on the East or West Coast. One of the most important of these was the Institute for Historical Study in San Francisco, which sought to bridge the divide between independent and university-affiliated scholars, by emphasizing scholarship and professionalism among its members, with an emphasis on multiple research groups and regular local scholarly events.<sup>14</sup> The oldest continuous organization that maintains a similar emphasis and offers grants and other research support to its members is the Princeton Research Forum, founded in 1980, whose “founding mothers” from the beginning sought to make it a multidisciplinary organization.<sup>15</sup> The Princeton Research Forum and San Francisco’s Institute for Historical Study inspired the formation of the San Diego Independent Scholars Group (SDISG) in 1982 by Joy Frieman, a former George Washington University professor, who, with Mary Stroll, sought to create a forum for scholars and those interested in serious research to gather outside the academy. The SDISG, which shifted in form and membership requirements over the years, eventually creating a Works in Progress subgroup, would go on to play a key role in the founding of NCIS.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, the Yale-based Center for Independent Study (CIS), founded in 1977 by a group of professors’ wives with advanced degrees who were nevertheless barred from being hired by anti-nepotism rules, was eventually unable to sustain itself on an aging membership, and folded in 2017. As Teri Dykeman, the organization’s last President, wrote in its closing newsletter, “CIS was created for a different time; members are aging: attracting new members is an ongoing challenge.”<sup>17</sup>

Amid the emergence of these societies, founded predominantly by female scholars as sources of intellectual support, Ronald Gross, a traditional academic who was reported to have been happiest when he wrote for the general public rather than the academy, published his *Independent Scholars Handbook* in 1982, only partially a guidebook and “how-to” manual. It also doubled as a call to arms for all active and aspiring independent scholars, with encouragement to follow one’s scholarly passions, whatever they may be and wherever they might lead. Gross’s book in many ways introduced and promoted what became the increasingly common practice of independent scholars to look beyond the “low-hanging fruit” of popular and/or fashionable topics in their fields (presumably because there would be no concern for what would help with academic employment and/or tenure). More controversially, Gross promoted something close to an “anyone can do it” approach to scholarship, that was entrepreneurial in its essence, and gave comparatively little weight to the degrees and credentials that most considered necessary in order to be taken seriously as an independent scholar among an academically-affiliated majority. The book’s individualist/entrepreneurial emphasis notwithstanding, Gross did allow for the necessity of at least some informal organization and collaboration, and included a history of some of the early independent scholar organizations that ranged from informal discussion groups to serious attempts to create substitutes for university departments. In its essence, though, the approach to independent scholarship promoted in the *Independent Scholars’ Handbook* for the most part de-emphasized either the role of gender, or gender-specific conditions under which one might choose the path of independent scholarship. The few exceptions for individual cases include that of Taitz, a longtime independent scholar in Jewish women’s history who for a time taught at Adelphi University, and her periodic collaborator Sondra Henry, a lawyer and independent historian whose other work with Taitz includes the *JPS Guide to Jewish Women*.<sup>18</sup> It was against this essentially entrepreneurial approach and lack of attention to the conditions of the female majority of independent scholars that the regional independent scholar organizations—and eventually NCIS --pushed (though not without some pushback in return), beginning with the institution of membership requirements, with its emphasis on degrees (and allowable equivalents) and records of publication, which has more recently included discussion of the admissibility of nontraditional forms of publication/knowledge dissemination, such as blogs.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Evolution of SDIS,” <http://www.sdscholars.org/history> (accessed September 16, 2018)

<sup>15</sup> Gross, 266-7.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Teri Dykeman, “CIS: The Last Official Gathering: President’s Report from the Spring Luncheon, 15 May 2016,” and Ruth Hein Schmidt, “CIS: The Origin Story,” *News from CIS*, Center for Independent Study, Spring 2017, 1.3.

<sup>18</sup> Jewish Women’s Archive, “Emily Taitz,” <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/authors/taitz-emily> (Accessed 26 November 2018); Jewish Publication Society, “Sondra Henry,” <https://jps.org/authors/sondra-henry> (Accessed 26 November 2018); and Gross, 15-19.

<sup>19</sup> “Membership Levels & Qualifications,” <https://ncis.org/membership-levels-qualifications> (Accessed 15 October 2018) “Quarterly Board Report, January-March 2017,” National Coalition of Independent Scholars, Board of Directors Records.





## THE FOUNDING OF NCIS

This growing awareness of the necessity of a more professional approach as well as the limits of local organization was behind the convening of the first national conference of Independent Scholars in the United States in 1986, which led to the founding of NCIS. The idea to found a nationwide society of independent scholars was first raised in a panel discussion that focused on the struggles individual independent scholars experienced when dealing with institutions ranging from archives and libraries to, notably, professional and scholarly organizations, all of which assumed institutional affiliation as the norm and, to varying degrees, awarded access to their services accordingly. During this history-changing panel, participants also acknowledged that, firstly, Independent scholars did not always live within easy reach of regional groups, and secondly, ironically, without a national organization, it would be much harder for individuals to find and connect with local groups. Not long after the conference, a formal committee convened to investigate the possibilities of a national organization, with the resulting decision to form one. The first conference of what would become NCIS was held later that year, and by 1988, the new organization's first board had been elected. By 1989, the National Coalition of Independent Scholars was established and registered as a nonprofit organization.<sup>20</sup> Since that time, NCIS has functioned with a twofold purpose: as a support network for scholars without a traditional academic affiliation, and as an advocacy organization for said scholars. NCIS was founded specifically to reach and provide services to scholars who did not have access to the regional organizations, but did not seek to replace them. Even with the recognition of the ways that a national organization could not replicate the face-to-face collegiality of a local organization NCIS's founders were, from the beginning aware of and cultivated the possibility for NCIS to be much more, focusing on the advocacy power of a national organization to gain more equitable access to resources and recognition for its members. And in the last few years, this potential is being increasingly fulfilled in ways that I will describe a little further on in this essay.

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR LANDSCAPE

But to make this more than a list of NCIS's recent accomplishments, it is necessary to look at the further changes in the kind of independent scholar population NCIS was intended to serve, and how the changes in the academy have created a new and larger class of unaffiliated or marginally affiliated scholars. These are likely to shape their careers using both traditional measures of scholarly accomplishment and the individualist, entrepreneurial ethos, and see relatively little contradiction between the two. To begin with, the "golden age" of the American Academy was almost never particularly golden for female scholars, who were usually either expected to forego marriage and family, or if married to other scholars, accept secondary employment or none at all. Furthermore, this period was actually something of an aberration in the history of the American academy that reflected a massive postwar expansion in higher education. It would become the origin of the much-discussed "Ph.D. glut" that followed, based on what proved to be faulty assumptions about the ongoing needs of and trends in the academy, as well as administrative responses to them. Cycles of rising and declining student populations in the 1970s and 1980s ended up masking the real causes of the decline in tenure-stream faculty employment, including the conscious decision of administrations to shift to greater use of part-time faculty for multiple reasons.<sup>21</sup> But the most significant effect of these trends for NCIS was not so much the growing number of scholars who did not necessarily choose the 'independent track' due to lack of affiliation, but the shift over the last thirty years from a majority full-time to a majority part-time faculty who lacked support for research, as knowledge creation became an increasingly deemphasized component of many universities' missions.

The gendered aspect of this shift has been reflected in not only the existing female majority of part time faculty at American colleges and universities, but by the fact that these changes took place just as doors previously closed to female scholars were beginning to seriously open. The trend was further accelerated by attacks on higher education, and on the humanities in particular. The deterioration of the university and its faculty working conditions has shifted the meaning of what it means to be an independent scholar, and has also reflected the employment situation of a growing number of members of NCIS. The practice of scholarship that is not supported by an institution of higher education is in many ways central to the identity of the independent scholar. In practice, however, the assumption of independent equating unaffiliated, while never absolute, has recently become increasingly malleable. In recent years, as

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<sup>20</sup> "NCIS Mission and History," and *Ibid*, 261-2.

<sup>21</sup> Breitzer, "Naming the Problem."



NCIS has regrouped and regrown, it has done so against the backdrop of a growing number of scholars whose contingent faculty appointments provide them with the once more desirable “fig leaf” affiliation, but not necessarily the same scholarship-supporting benefits, ranging from research and conference travel funds to sometimes equitable library access, essentially creating a new group of independent scholars who are in, but not of their universities.<sup>22</sup> As a result, in the last few years, NCIS has made a concerted effort to redefine membership criteria to reflect the new reality of this “semi-independent” majority of scholars in the academy, and devote at least some the organization’s focuses to addressing adjunct issues. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of NCIS of 2015 featured an Adjunct Issues Forum that in turn showcased some of the latest scholarship on the new adjunct activism, as well as a discussion of why the growing (and still very gendered) adjunct situation should be a priority for NCIS. This forum, which featured panelists (including the author) who both worked outside the tenure stream and have had past or present affiliations with the labor movement has become one call to action that has borne fruit, in the form of growing collaboration between NCIS and the Labor and Working-Class History Association, a process that has involved the recognition of contingent faculty and independent scholars as overlapping, but not necessarily identical categories.<sup>23</sup>

Although the situation of adjuncts continues to vary when it comes to scholarly support, which is one issue of many that has sometimes been addressed by other means, including by unionization, NCIS has in recent years advocated for equal, or at least prioritized, more equitable access to research resources and grants. In the case of the former, databases of “Indy-friendly” university libraries and major public libraries have become one of the simpler but more valued member benefits. But when it has come to electronic resources, at least the kind that are likely to have scholarly legitimacy, the situation has been more complicated. In recent years, the NCIS board has devoted significant time and effort to finding a (legal) way around the institutional lock on so many digital resources that have severely limited access for unaffiliated scholars, with a major victory achieved in the JSTOR deal creating an individual JPASS arrangement for NCIS members that is less expensive than that available to just any individual, or comparable to other scholarly societies, including the American Historical Association, whose JPASS had served as a model. The latter benefit, grant support and assistance has been particularly pertinent in light of the reality that firstly, there are independent scholars in the STEM fields and social sciences as well as the humanities, and that secondly, scholars from all disciplines who can benefit from grant support have too often been excluded from many grants for lack of a sponsoring institution. Therefore, one of the other singularly valuable member benefits of NCIS has been its evolved role as a grant administrator for large outside grants, that supplements its own small grants program. All of these developments have continued to foster and encourage a climate of professionalism for NCIS members, regardless of how they came to independent scholarship.<sup>24</sup>

NCIS has in recent years continued to evolve in scope and priorities and, since 2015, has increased its international reach, with growing numbers of members from outside the United States. However, one thing that has remained constant has been the emphasis on this organization functioning (and being seen) as a “real” learned society, comparable to disciplinary-based societies of similar sizes. One way has been through the evolution of NCIS’s print and/or digital publications. Since 2015, *The Independent Scholar* (for a time, *The Independent Scholar Quarterly*) has been transformed from a newsletter with book reviews, to a peer-reviewed journal whose inaugural issue featured a selection of revised papers from the 2015 conference, while the informative role of the newsletter has been supplanted by NCIS’s social media presence.<sup>25</sup> NCIS’s functions as a learned society are also becoming reestablished with the recent revival of the conference. NCIS as an organization not only began with a conference, but for years held an annual conference in rotation locations, whose functions included an annual opportunity for a meeting of the NCIS Board of Directors. Between the late 1980s and 2008, the frequency of conferences dwindled to biennially, and then after 2008, none until the 2015 Conference. There are many reasons from this hiatus, ranging from the general economic recession

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<sup>22</sup> Yvonne Grosseil, “A Future for Adjuncts: From Plight to Fight,” *The Independent Scholar*, Vol I 1 (December 2015), 47.49; and Shelby Shapiro, “Quarterly Board Report July-December 2015, National Coalition of Independent Scholar Board of Directors.

<sup>23</sup> Cunningham, “Conference Summary, p.10; LAWCHA Ad Hoc Committee Report on Independent Scholars, “Report and Motions,” April 2018.

<sup>24</sup> “Member Benefit Spotlight: JPASS.” <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2014/member-benefit-spotlight-jpass/>, (14 May 2014; Accessed 15 October 2018) “NCIS Mission & History,” and “Research Resources,” <https://www.ncis.org/members-only/research-resources> (Accessed 15 October 2018).

<sup>25</sup> “Quarterly Board Report, July-December 2015,” and “Quarterly Board Report, January-March 2017,” National Coalition of Independent Scholars, Board of Directors Records.



with its profound impact on the job market within and beyond academia, to a period of profound decline in membership, which had its own effects on NCIS programming including conferences, given that member dues are the organization's main source of income.<sup>26</sup> The 2015 conference at Yale signaled the post-recession upturn in membership, and brought together scholars from the US, Canada, Europe, Asia and the Middle East for a variety of scholarly sessions and workshops that included the Adjunct Issues Forum dedicated to acknowledging NCIS's changing membership; increasingly, this includes scholars who, as contingent faculty, are likely to be both technically affiliated and functionally independent. Although the conference was declared a success, and visibly signaled a renaissance for NCIS, the question of whether to continue holding physical conferences was initially uncertain, given the time and costs involved. The Board discussed teleconferences as a possible time- and cost-effective alternative, but ultimately concluded that the value of face-to-face scholarly interchange cannot be underestimated, especially in light of the recent decline and in some cases demise of regional scholarly organizations. In many ways, this answered the question posed by one of the last members of the Center for Independent Study as to whether independent scholar organizations themselves were necessary in the increasingly internet-connected age.<sup>27</sup> The question has been settled, at least for the immediate future, in favor of in-person conferences, with the announcement of a forthcoming conference celebrating the thirtieth birthday of NCIS, hosted by the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and scheduled for June 2019 on the theme "[Making Connections. Meeting Challenges.](#)"<sup>28</sup>

As genuinely enjoyable and educational as the NCIS conference was, the diverse program whose academic sessions alone ranged in topic from a history of the marginal social status of fishermen in Puritan New England to an anthropological study defending female circumcision, by itself underscores the challenge of NCIS as a unique learned society—one that meets the needs of independent scholars in all fields as an organization that by numbers is historian-dominated. NCIS's other challenge is more typical to discipline-specific learned societies of being a national and even international organization with a widely dispersed membership. The latter challenge comes down to acknowledging the reality that, while virtual communication and social media can help break the isolation of scholars who do not belong to traditional academic departments, a virtual-based organization cannot stand in for a department when it comes to regular colleague interaction. For all of the truth there may be to the stereotype of the scholar as introvert who prefers to work alone, collaboration even in the humanities is a feature of many "independent" scholarly works, especially those that follow in the area of public and digital history. As just one example of such collaboration, I can cite Barbara Williams Ellertson and Janet Seiz's *Books as Symbols in Renaissance Art Project (BASIRA)*, a digital database of the changing images of books in Renaissance-era paintings.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Practically speaking, therefore, the future of NCIS depends in part on its ability to be welcoming of independent scholars whose diversity ranges from independent research scientists to scholar/practitioners in the performing arts, while still maintaining the standards that give NCIS its legitimacy as a learned society. This disciplinary diversity, in turn is one issue that has shaped the dilemma of recent years of hosting NCIS conferences versus supporting members' participation in disciplinary conferences (which raises the question of how it can be both/and, rather than either/or). The Adjunct Issues Forum of the 2015 Conference now represents just the first shot across the bow when it comes to the challenge of incorporating adjunct/contingent faculty concerns into NCIS's mission, including scholarly and activist collaboration with the Labor and Working Class History Association, that seeks to address the common issues contingent faculty and independent scholars face, even while recognizing differences between the two groups.<sup>30</sup> Building bridges between independent scholars and contingent faculty, will in any case, remain important, given the continued growth of the contingent faculty population.

NCIS's additional challenge, ironically as a female-majority and predominantly woman-led organization, is addressing and acknowledging the role of gender in independent scholarly paths that manages to still allow male NCIS members

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<sup>26</sup> "Mission and History," and Cunningham, "Conference Summary."

<sup>27</sup> "Independent Scholarship in the Digital Age," *News from CIS*, Center for Independent Study, Spring 2017, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Isabelle Fleming, "Quarterly Board Report: January-March 2018," NCIS Board of Directors Records.

<sup>29</sup> <https://basiraproject.wordpress.com>; and Barbara Williams Ellertson and Janet Seiz, "The Painted Page: Books as Symbols in Renaissance Art," *The Independent Scholar* Vol. (December 2015), 22-34.

<sup>30</sup> LAWCHA, "Report and Motions."



a "seat at the table."<sup>31</sup> For the historical reasons cited above, NCIS has traditionally had a 70:30 gender balance in favor of women, although this is now changing. The last two years have witnessed a shift from 71% female and 29% male in 2016 to 62% female and 38% male in December 2018, with a round 60:40 split in May 2018. Even more importantly, NCIS' recently confirmed commitment to diversity also includes making the organization founded by older white female scholars hospitable to younger colleagues who increasingly include scholars of color. This combination of challenges is additionally pertinent to the changing realities of the academy both in the U.S. and beyond, as contingent faculty in the U.S., Europe and Asia, whose numbers are increasing in NCIS ranks, are not only predominantly female but increasingly likely to be women of color. Also, even though the official barriers to hiring family members that have disproportionately affected women have fallen since the days of the founding of the first regional independent scholar societies, women still face significant obstacles and discrimination when it comes to pursuing academic careers. Even if the barriers are now less structural and more informal, they are no less real. As a result, the choice to pursue a career of independent scholarship is still likely to fall along a spectrum that ranges from genuine choice to choices necessitated by a variety of family, personal, and structural circumstances. Therefore, the recognition of the gendered nature of independent scholarship, along with that of new realities regarding devolution of the academy, will be vital to helping ensure that NCIS remains a viable and useful professional organization into the future.

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<sup>31</sup> NCIS, "Gender Stats," October 2018, National Coalition of Independent Scholars.



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## THE ELIZABETH EISENSTEIN ESSAY PRIZE 2017

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The Elizabeth Eisenstein Prize is open to all NCIS members and recognizes excellence in independent scholarship. The Prize is awarded annually for the best peer-reviewed published article submitted by a member of NCIS, and brings the winner an honorarium, which this year is \$350. The Eisenstein Prize was established in April 1993 and is named for Elizabeth Lewisohn Eisenstein (1923-2016), Professor of History at American University (1959–1979) and the University of Michigan (1975–1985), and mother of Margaret DeLacy, one of NCIS's founders, in recognition of Professor Eisenstein's long-standing support of NCIS. After 2012 the Prize lapsed due to lack of funding, but was revived this year following Professor Eisenstein's passing in January 2016, with funding from NCIS and Margaret DeLacy.

Elizabeth Eisenstein Prize is awarded annually in memory of Professor Elizabeth Eisenstein for the best academic journal article or book chapter published by a member of NCIS. The article must have been published in a peer reviewed journal or edited academic book within the last two years, and all authors must be members of NCIS, whether the authorship is single or multiple. Details at <https://www.ncis.org/grants>

In 2017 the Eisenstein Prize again drew a strong field, and Committee Chair Dr Joan Cunningham reported that there were some exceptional papers, of which two were neck and neck in the scoring. Rather than name one as winner and the other as runner-up, the Executive Committee, in consultation with Professor Eisenstein's daughter Margaret DeLacy, agreed to split the prize money—and kudos—between two winners:

- 1) **Patricia Silver** for "Remembering Abuela: Memory, Authenticity and Place in Puerto Rican Orlando," *Latino Studies* 13.3: 376–401;
- 2) **Toni Vogel Carey** for "Adam Smith's Invisible Hand: A Brief History," *Adam Smith Review* 9 (2017): 88-104.

Although the publishers of *Latino Studies* have not responded to our requests to reprint Dr Silver's article, we are delighted to be able to reprint Dr Carey's winning essay here.

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## ADAM SMITH'S INVISIBLE HAND: A BRIEF HISTORY

Toni Vogel Carey, Ph.D.  
(Gwynedd, PA, USA)

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Correspondence should be addressed to: [toni.vogel.carey@gmail.com](mailto:toni.vogel.carey@gmail.com)

Few terms in the lexicon are less explanatory than Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'. So we should not really be surprised that it appears only three times in the Smith corpus, and in places so hidden they too are almost invisible: in 'The Principles which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries; Illustrated by the History of Astronomy' (AST) (III.2; 1980: 49); in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS) (IV.i.10; 1976a: 184); and in *Wealth of Nations* (WN) (IV.ii; 1976b: 456).<sup>1</sup> Why, then, is it *this* for which he is best known?

Oddly, that question is seldom asked, although the answer lies close to hand. For while the *term* doesn't amount to much, the *idea* – that much in human life is the product of human action but not of human design – 'permeates all his social and moral theories', as Karen Vaughn notes in the *New Palgrave* (1987: 998). I count at least nine appearances of the idea in WN (II.iii: 343; II.v.37: 374; III.iv.17: 422; IV.ii.4: 454; IV.ii.9: 456; IV.v.b.3: 525; IV.vii.c.88: 630; IV.ix.28: 674; V.i.g.25: 803-4) and two in TMS (II.i.v.10: 77-8; IV.i.10: 83-5). It lies at the foundation of 'Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages' in Smith's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (LRBL) (1983: 201-26), his four-stage theory of socio-economic development (hunting-shepherding-agriculture-commerce) presented in the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (LJA i.27-35; 1978: 14-16), and the four-stage development of science in the 'Astronomy' essay.<sup>2</sup>

We now have good historical research on the term (Rothschild 2001: 118-21; Samuels 2011: 219), but far less toward a history of the idea, which is the subject of this paper. What I can offer here, though, is only a brief overview of this very large topic. I will say something about its roots in the concept of *laissez faire*, both ancient and in early modern medicine and the law; its transitional place within Scottish 'sociological evolutionism' (Forbes 1954: 645-6) between seventeenth-century physics and nineteenth-century biology; its kinship with the nineteenth-century concept of 'consilience'; and its recent rebirth in the contemporary science of 'selforganization'. My purpose is to bring out important developments in the history of the invisible hand concept, both before and particularly since Smith's time, which have received little notice to date in the scholarly Smith literature.

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<sup>1</sup> As Emma Rothschild points out (2001: 118), Dugald Stewart and others gave its treatment by Smith little notice – although as she also notes (122), Stewart did use the term in his own work.

<sup>2</sup> That is, from a primitive pre-scientific appeal to 'the invisible hand of Jupiter' (III.2: 49) to Aristotelian essentialist explanation of each species separately (LRBL ii.133: 145), to Descartes, the first to posit an 'invisible chain' of conceptual connections (IV.61: 92), to Newtonian gravity, the 'most admirable improvement that was ever made in philosophy' (IV.67: 98).





## 1. TWO INVISIBLE HANDS

First, though, some clarification of the concept, because commentators have claimed to see as many as four (Ahmad 1990) – ten (Grampp 2000) – even forty-eight invisible hands in Smith's writings.<sup>3</sup> I think two will suffice, the one that gets the lion's share of attention, and the one that quietly does more of the real work.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the attention, of course, has gone to the idea presented in the invisible-hand statement in WN (IV.ii.9: 456), that individuals, in pursuing solely their own private gain, are led by an invisible hand to promote the interest of society, sometimes more effectively than when they really *try* to promote it. This idea poses the kind of paradox dear to Smith's heart, for it goes against the well-entrenched assumption that commerce is a zero-sum (win-lose) game, and presents the free market as basically a win-win phenomenon (Vivenza 2001: 63; Fleischacker 2004: 91). People usually associate unintended consequences with surprises to the downside, and Smith certainly recognizes that there can be invisible 'backhands' as well as 'forehands'.<sup>5</sup> He does not mince words, for example, that the monotony caused by the division of labor can render factory workers 'as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become' (WN V.i.f.50: 782). Still, Smith's theory turns on the premise that invisible-hand surprises are predominantly to the upside.

That is one invisible hand principle, which I will call IH-1. The *other*, IH-2, concerns what is known as 'spontaneous order'.<sup>6</sup> IH-2 is also paradoxical, for it goes against the well-entrenched assumption that social order must be the product of deliberate design. IH-2 does not appear in *any* of the three invisible hand statements.<sup>7</sup> Yet it is 'perhaps the single most significant sociological contribution' of the Scottish Enlightenment (Hamowy 1987: 3). Consider David Hume's remark, for example, in the *Dialogues of Natural Religion* ([1779] VII; 1935: 221).<sup>8</sup>

A tree bestows order and organization on that tree which springs from it, without knowing the order: an animal, in the same manner, on its offspring: a bird, on its nest. And instances of this kind are even more frequent in the world, than those of order which arise from reason and contrivance.

In the *Treatise of Human Nature* Hume combines both invisible hands in a single sentence ([1739] III.ii.6; 1978: 529), asserting that 'self-love' is 'the real origin' of moral rules [IH-2], a system that is 'advantageous to the public, tho' it be not intended for that purpose by the inventors' [IH-1].<sup>9</sup>

The *locus classicus* of the idea of spontaneous order, though, is arguably Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. 'Nations stumble upon establishments', he wrote in 1767 (1819: 222), as 'the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design'.

The artifices of the beaver, the ant, and the bee are ascribed to the wisdom of nature. Those of polished nations are ascribed to themselves, and are supposed to indicate a capacity superior to that of rude

<sup>3</sup> Warren Samuels, according to Montes (2004: 152, n.42). Grampp may not subscribe to all ten.

<sup>4</sup> On two invisible hands, see Forget 2001: 193. Rosenberg's 1988 title is a bit misleading, since one of the two hands is Darwin's. Ullmann-Margalit's treatment (1978) is also misleading, because while she delineates two invisible hands, both Smith's, she then effectively discredits one of them; on this, see Carey 1998: 432-4.

<sup>5</sup> I take these terms from Pettit 1993: 270 & passim. The invisible hand sometimes produces mixed results, advantaging those who could be expected to lose and disadvantaging (or doing nothing for) those we would expect to win. In WN (V.i.g.25: 803-4) 'the inferior ranks of people' are advantaged at the expense of their overlords. In TMS (IV.i.10: 184-5) the invisible hand does nothing for the landlord who orders his table set with far more food than he can eat (after all, his stomach is no bigger than anyone else's), but it enables his servants to dine almost as well as he does from the leavings of his table. Also see Nozick 1994: 314.

<sup>6</sup> On the history of 'spontaneous order', see Hamowy 1987 (Intro. 6-10); Smith 2006: 4-7.

<sup>7</sup> It does precede the invisible hand statement in TMS (IV.i.10: 183), where nature's 'deception' is said to have led people, from a misguided desire for 'wealth and greatness', to 'cultivate the ground... found cities...to invent and improve all the sciences and arts...[things] which have 'entirely changed the whole face of the globe'.

<sup>8</sup> This work was begun and largely completed in the 1750s (Ross 1995: 338).

<sup>9</sup> Hume does say these rules are not of 'a natural origin, but...of artifice and contrivance'. But by 'contrivance' here I take him to mean merely that individuals act for what they perceive is their own advantage, not that anything like central planning is involved.



minds. But the establishments of men, like those of every animal, are suggested by nature, and are the result of instinct. [They] arose from successive improvements...made without any sense of their general effect. (ibid. 327-8)

These 'establishments' include the very foundations of human society: language and law, money and morality. 'No single genius, however vast', Ferguson says in the *Principles of Moral and Political Science* ([1792] I.i.4; 1973: 42), 'is equal to the invention of a language such as even the vulgar speak'. Ferguson's social science rests on IH-2, and it is doubtless for this that Gibbon and others have identified him as the father of the field (Trevor-Roper 1967: 1657; Lehmann 1930: 238-40).

Craig Smith (2006: 7) identifies the invisible hand of societal betterment (IH-1) with the American libertarian tradition, and the hand of spontaneous order (IH-2) with British classical liberalism. I do not disagree at all with this distinction, but I want to suggest a comparison that is particularly useful for our purposes: that between mixtures and compounds in chemistry. IH-1 is like a mixture; it is additive, involving merely changes in *degree*. IH-2 is like a compound; it is transformative, involving differences in *kind* that are difficult, if not impossible to reverse.

Emma Rothschild has dismissed Smith's invisible hand as little more than 'a mildly ironic joke' (2001: 116, 153 and passim). Her acknowledgment that her evidence for this reading is only indirect (ibid. 117) goes largely unnoticed, as does her suggestion that the *term* describes an *idea* 'of profound importance to his theoretical system' (121). Twice on one page (135) she calls 'the metaphor of the invisible hand... serious, and unironic in its intimation that there can be order without design'. I don't consider one meaning silly and the other serious; but I do consider one *more* serious than the other; and we agree which one this is.

## 2. LAISSEZ FAIRE LA NATURE

*Laissez faire* encompasses both IH-1 and IH-2. It goes back to the ancient premise of Taoism, that the Tao does nothing, yet it is the Way by which all things are done.<sup>10</sup> Calling on a distinction going back to Aristotle's *Physics* (254b12-255a7) that Smith mentions in AST (IV.38: 78), Dugald Stewart glosses Hume's position that 'the policy of ancient times was VIOLENT, and contrary to the NATURAL course of things' ('Life of Smith' [1795] IV.11; 1980: 314):

I presume he means that it aimed too much at modifying, by the force of positive institutions, the order of society...without trusting sufficiently to those principles of the human constitution, which, wherever they are allowed free scope, not only conduct mankind to happiness, but lay the foundation of a progressive improvement in their condition and in their character. The advantages which modern policy possesses over the ancient arose principally from its conformity, in some of the most important articles of political economy, to an order of things recommended by nature.

Stewart also quotes from a Smith manuscript of 1755 (ibid. IV.26: 322) that directly addresses the superiority of nature to the designs of 'projectors' in bringing the wealth of nations.

[Rather than] disturb nature in the course of her operations in human affairs...it requires no more than to let her alone, and give her fair play in the pursuit of her ends, that she may establish her own designs... Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism, but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice; all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things.

In later antiquity the *laissez faire* basis of the invisible hand goes back to Stoic ideas prominent in TMS: that everyone is 'first and principally recommended to his own care' (VI.ii.1.1: 219),<sup>11</sup> the 'eternal art which educes good from ill' (I.ii.3.4: 36), and the like.

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<sup>10</sup> I have seen this idea traced to the sixth century B.C.; Hamowy (1987: 6) traces it to the fourth.

<sup>11</sup> Smith has no use for Stoic doctrine where it goes against this idea and requires individuals to subordinate their own interests and concerns to the good of the universe as a whole; that is 'altogether different', Smith says, from what 'Nature has sketched out for our conduct' (TMS VII.ii.1.43: 292).



Political economics has roots in both law and medicine (the two professional degrees other than theology awarded in medieval European universities). In early modern history its dominant philosophy was mercantilism, based on economic regulation in order to protect a state's markets and power. The 'cameralist' school in Germany (from the medieval Latin *camera*, meaning 'treasury') similarly promoted central planning and regulation of socio-economic affairs. *Laissez faire* economics developed largely in reaction to mercantilism, and by the mid-eighteenth century it largely prevailed. The phrase '*laissez-faire, laissez-passer*' is associated with the Physiocrat Quesnay, whose position, according to the Original Index for WN (1976b: 1064), Smith 'generally subscribed to', but whom he also criticized (see below).

Similar to the split in political economics is that between statute law, which is a product of conscious human design, and *natural* law, which harks back to the Stoic trust in nature (Wollheim 1967: 451). Smith says explicitly in the last sentence of LJ that he has covered 'both the laws of nature and the laws of nations'. Common law is a cross between the two. Like statute law, it is man-made; like natural law, it lacks any deliberate plan or end-in-view. Thus it is a product of human action but not of human design. And its proponents hold that its invisible-hand character makes common law more stable than statute law, being less easily subverted by special interest groups and the shenanigans of individual legislators (Barry 1988: 52).

Medicine shows a parallel bifurcation between a *laissez faire* and a cameralist school, the latter, again, centered in Germany. Cameralists followed Paracelsus (1493-1541) in holding that physicians should 'improve on Nature by proactively intervening in the life of a patient', overseeing things such as diet, sanitation and working conditions (Olson 2003: 452). By contrast, men like John Locke (who served as Lord Shaftesbury's physician and also wrote treatises on economics) followed Galen and Hippocrates in considering illness a pathological interference with otherwise self-regulating natural processes. According to this *laissez faire* school of medicine, the job of a physician is simply to remove the impediment, and then let nature take its course. Think of Smith's 'unknown principle of animal life', which 'frequently restores health and vigour to the constitution, in spite, not only of the disease, but of the absurd prescriptions of the doctor' (WN II.iii.31: 343).

In his *Elements of Commerce* of 1755 Josiah Tucker connected the dots between the physical and the political body:

The physician to the body politic may learn to imitate the conduct of the physician to the body natural, in removing those disorders which a bad habit, or a wrong treatment hath brought upon the constitution; and then to leave the rest to nature, who best can do her own work. For after the constitution is restored to the use and exercise of its proper faculties and natural powers, it would be wrong to multiply laws relating to commerce as it would be to be forever prescribing physic. (Quoted in Olson 2003: 452-3)

Smith too connects these dots, in the process chiding Quesnay ('who was himself a physician') for thinking the political body 'would thrive only under...the exact regimen of perfect liberty and perfect justice'. If a nation could not prosper except under these ideal conditions,

there is not in the world a nation which could ever have prospered. In the political body, however, the wisdom of nature has fortunately made ample provision for remedying many of the bad effects of the folly and injustice of man; in the same manner as it has done in the natural body for remedying those of his sloth and intemperance. (WN IV.ix.28: 674)

### 3. SOCIOLOGICAL EVOLUTIONISM

Well before 1700, Samuel Pufendorf was grounding moral tenets not in biblical texts, but in 'the nature of things and the circumstances of human life' (Moore and Silverthorne 1983: 76). The final Query 31 of Newton's *Opticks* contains the pregnant suggestion, 'If Natural Philosophy, in all its Parts, by pursuing this Method, shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will also be enlarged'.<sup>12</sup> The title page of George Turnbull's *Principles of Moral Philosophy* of 1740 quotes both Newton's Query 31 and Alexander Pope's *mot* in the *Essay on Man*: 'account for moral,

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<sup>12</sup> The first edition of the *Opticks* appeared in 1704, but the final Query 31 did not appear until the second edition of 1718.



as for nat'ral things'. David Fordyce asks in his *Elements of Moral Philosophy* of 1748 (2003: 24), 'To what Conduct are we obliged?' and answers: 'Attend to Nature, and Nature will tell with a Voice irresistibly audible and commanding'.

But what did the Scottish philosophers mean by 'Nature'? One thing they did not mean is mere mechanical matter-in-motion. We hear a lot about Smith's allusions to mechanics – society as 'an immense machine' (TMS VII.iii.1.2: 316), a philosophical system as 'an imaginary machine invented to connect together in the fancy those different movements and effects which are already in reality performed' (AST IV.19: 66), and so on. We hear a good deal less about his biological images, although they are at least as significant. It can hardly be just a coincidence, for example, that at least four times in TMS (II.i.5.10: 77; II.ii.3.5: 87; III.iii.13: 142; IV.i.10: 185) – including the only appearance of the term 'invisible hand' in this work – Smith refers to the 'propagation' or 'multiplication of the species'. In contrast to the Cartesian split between humans as *res cogitans* and everything else, including animals, as merely *res extensa*, The Scottish thinkers considered humans more like than unlike (other) animals. 'Every animal', Smith declares, citing 'the founder of the Stoical doctrine', was 'endowed with the principle of selflove' (TMS VII.ii.1.15: 272).

Boerhaave's mechanistic physiology in Leiden had dominated medicine for more than a century. But at the Edinburgh medical school (the first in Britain, founded in 1726), Robert Whytt and others 'reintroduced the soul into the body' with the idea of *sympathy*, a mutuality of feeling among different bodily parts transmitted through the nervous system. That put 'sensibility and its special case "sympathy"' at the basis of morality and physiology alike, which puts a 'new' cast on sympathy as the central sentiment in TMS that commentaries need to take into account. (Lawrence 1979: 20-8; Carey 2011: 227-8)

In light of these developments it is not enough merely to note Smith's outsized admiration for Newton's principle of gravity as 'the greatest discovery that ever was made by man' (AST IV.76: 105). Nor is it enough to note Dugald Stewart's comment (1829, 2: 240) that the Scottish philosophers did not preclude a 'still happier system in time to come' in natural philosophy, or Ferguson's (1973, 1:194) that 'as Newton did not acquiesce in what was observed by Kepler and Galileo, no more have successive astronomers restricted their view to what Newton has demonstrated'. These remarks show the Scots' admirable openness to new ideas, and their enlightened view of science as an inherently open-ended process (Montes 2006; Schliesser 2005b). But in light of scientific developments well underway in Scotland by mid-century, we need to understand 'the science of the connecting principles of nature' (AST II.11: 45) as embracing an increasingly broad range of connections. In the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (LJB 114: 443), for example, Smith declares that 'the laws of nature are the same everywhere, the laws of gravity and attraction the same, and why not the laws of generation[?]' Even as the Scots extolled scientific achievements of the seventeenth century, they were making advances toward developments to come in the nineteenth.

This Janus-like position is particularly striking because seventeenth-century mechanics and nineteenth-century biology do not go together like love and marriage. I mentioned the difference between mixtures and compounds in chemistry. In classical economics, society is like a mixture, merely the sum of its individuals. But organisms, as Stephen Jay Gould points out (2003b: 227), must be explained 'as organisms, and not as a summation of genes', even if all we have to work with are the genes and their interactions. There is a difference in *type*, that is, between the antecedent or cause (the dispersed activity of individuals/genes) and the consequent or effect (the origin of language/species). And if you're looking for a path from the one to the other, some say 'you can't get there from here' (Hands 1997: S112-13).<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. SMITH AND DARWIN

Yet Scottish physiologists were well on their way 'there', having crossed over from a mechanistic to an organic view of animal life, and unified humans and other living creatures through sub-rational functions like sentiment and instinct, which they considered more foundational even in human affairs than full-blown reason (Bryson 1945: 56; Carey 2011).

In this light it is noteworthy that the historian of biology Sylvan Schweber points to 'the Scottish view of trying to understand the whole in terms of the individual parts and their interactions'. And he goes on to suggest that Darwin's

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<sup>13</sup> Also see Olson 2003: 439.



reading of Smith and Dugald Stewart in the summer of 1838 – just before he read Thomas Malthus and hit upon the idea of natural selection – led him to dispense with the idea that the struggle for survival occurs between *species*, as he had formerly assumed, and accept that it occurs between *individuals* within the same species (1977: 277-80).

We know from his journals that Darwin at least ‘skimmed’ parts of TMS, and noted that it ‘ought to be studied for comparison of man & animals’ (Vorzimmer 1977: 129). In the *Descent of Man* he mentions Smith by name, referring specifically to the notion of sympathy in ‘the first and striking chapter’ of TMS (1981: 81& n.17). Later in this work (164) he expressly says that sympathy ‘was originally acquired, like all the other social instincts, through natural selection’.

IH-2 gives rise to new social institutions; natural selection, to new species. Both posit the emergence of complex structures that we would normally attribute to conscious design, human or divine. Both explain these developments as unplanned and unintended products of dispersed individual activity. And both suppose that the tendency over time will be ‘the multiplication of the species’, to quote – not Darwin, but Smith.

TMS was published in 1759, the *Origin of Species* in 1859. I don’t mean to imply, though, that Scottish sociological evolutionists were the only ‘Darwinians before Darwin’ (Hayek 1973: 23 and n.33), nor either that they believed they were. Smith’s library contained sophisticated biological evolutionary theories advanced in France by Diderot (1754), Buffon (1750) and Maupertuis (1756).<sup>14</sup> There was also an idea mentioned in passing by Rousseau, that *homo sapiens* and the ‘orang-outang’ belong to the same species. Lord Monboddo made much of this, leading one nineteenth-century Scot to wax poetic (Lovejoy 1948: 41,45,61):

Though Darwin now proclaims the law...  
The man that first the secret saw  
Was honest old Monboddo.

The ‘origin of new species’ goes to the idea of spontaneous order (IH-2). But what about the idea of overall progress or improvement (IH-1)? Biologists typically refuse to countenance anything beyond ‘local progress’, that is, superior adaptation of an organism to its immediate ecological environment. The philosopher and historian of biology Michael Ruse once described Darwin’s view of evolution as ‘a directionless process, going nowhere rather slowly’. However, even the most die-hard opponents of ‘global progress’ have a hard time denying that ‘by almost any standard man represents a higher level than primeval mud’ (Dobzhansky 1974: 310). And Ruse has changed his mind, for a reason worth quoting: ‘People who deny that Darwin was a progressionist – and I was one of them – are just plain wrong’, he says. ‘After all, he was the heir of the eighteenth-century British Enlightenment – David Hume, Adam Smith, and...Erasmus Darwin and his circle’ (1988: 97, 104; 1996: 169).<sup>15</sup> Darwin himself was very reluctant to talk about one organism being ‘higher’ than another in the scale of being, and ‘global’ progress was hardly an important theme in the *Origin of Species* (Bowler 1975: 101). But it is there; and note the language of economics in which it is couched:

[Through] Natural Selection...each creature tends to become more and more improved in relation to its conditions. This [local] improvement inevitably leads to the gradual advancement of the organisation of the greater number of living beings throughout the world. But here we enter on a very intricate subject, for naturalists have not defined to each other’s satisfaction what is meant by an advance in organization...Von Baer’s standard seems the most widely applicable and the best, namely, the amount of differentiation of the parts of the same organic being...and their specialisation for different functions; or, as Milne Edwards would express it, the completeness of the division of physiological labour.<sup>16</sup> (Darwin 1991: 92-3)

<sup>14</sup> Bonar 1932: 37, 56; Mizuta 1967: 39; and see Zirkle 1941: 89-91, 93; Bryson 1945: 53.

<sup>15</sup> None of this, I should make clear, has to do with Social Darwinism, the position that biological ‘survival of the fittest’ explains and justifies dog-eat-dog economic competition. This idea comes neither from Smith nor from Darwin, but from Herbert Spencer, and even he did not coin the term. Its notoriety is quite recent, dating mostly from Richard Hofstadter’s book *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944).

<sup>16</sup> As Schweber explains (1980: 256), Milne-Edwards was a highly respected name in biology, and therefore better situated than Smith to ‘license’ Darwin’s use of the ‘metaphor of the industrial economy and its driving force – competition and division of labor – in a biological context’.



Finally, Darwin was of one mind with the Scottish thinkers about the *laissez faire* idea that nature's handiwork is far superior to that of conscious human design (1991: 62):

How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! how short his time! and consequently how poor will be his results, compared with those accumulated by Nature during whole geological periods! Can we wonder, then, that Nature's productions should...bear the stamp of far higher workmanship?

## 5. CONSILIENCE

Smith extolled Newton's principle of gravity for at least two reasons: that the parts of his system were 'more strictly connected together than those of any other philosophical hypothesis', but also that these connections emerged out of what had formerly seemed just 'disjointed appearances' (AST IV.76: 104). That order emerges out of apparent chaos in this way is surprising, which means that for Smith surprise triggers not only the *beginning* of the scientific process, but sometimes also the end (AST 4.33: 75).<sup>17</sup>

In 1830 the astronomer John Herschel legitimized surprise as a mainstream scientific criterion of confirmation in his *Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy*.

The surest and best characteristic of a well-founded and extensive induction... is when verifications of it spring up, as it were, spontaneously, into notice, from quarters where they might be least expected, or even among instances of that very kind which were at first considered hostile to them. Evidence of this kind is irresistible, and compels assent with a weight which scarcely any other possesses.<sup>18</sup> (Herschel 1830: sec.180)

Herschel developed this idea concurrently, if not collaboratively, with a lifelong friend from their Cambridge undergraduate days William Whewell, who sketched it out in an unpublished manuscript in the late 1820s, even listing it among his 'Rules of Philosophizing' (Laudan 1971: 381). In 1840 Whewell coined the term 'consilience of inductions', from the Latin *salire* (to jump), and *con* (together). His favorite example of consilience was universal gravitation, for Newton had found that different kinds of phenomena all 'leapt to' the inverse-square law of attraction (Snyder 2011: 333).

By 1843 J.S. Mill was using the term in his *System of Logic*. This work is also of interest to us for its early use of the term 'spontaneous order'. Scottish Enlightenment scholars seldom trace this term back further than Michael Polanyi in 1941 or 1951; and these may be the first uses of it in the sense we have in mind (Smith 2006: 10). But consilience is a close conceptual relative of spontaneous order, so it is worth noting that both terms go back to the 1840s.<sup>19</sup>

Whewell believed consilience would lead to 'a constant Convergence...towards Simplicity and Unity' (1967 [1840]: 74). Neither he nor Smith put much stock in the mere accumulation of data; and these two stand out in the history of philosophy of science for putting connectivity and simplicity above even conformity to fact.<sup>20</sup> What interested them was

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<sup>17</sup> According to Schliesser (2005a: 710), 'Smith is claiming that it is a mark of a successful theory that it is unexpected, even surprising'.

<sup>18</sup> Note the term 'spontaneous' here. And note Herschel's ultimate appeal to an inner psychological criterion, much like Smith's belief that discovering 'the invisible chains which bind together all these disjointed objects' brings 'repose and tranquility to the imagination', which for Smith is 'the ultimate end of philosophy' (AST IV.13: 61). According to Richard Olson (1975: 253), 'Herschel's ideas were so similar to those of the Scottish school that there is little doubt of a direct relation'. Unfortunately Olson gives scant direct evidence for this claim.

<sup>19</sup> 'It would evidently be a great assistance if...one element in the complex existence of social man is preeminent over all others... For we could then take the progress of that one element as the central chain...each successive link of which...would by this alone be presented in a kind of spontaneous order, far more nearly approaching to the real order of their filiation than could be obtained by any other merely empirical process' (Mill 1974, 2: 925). This passage wins no prizes for lucidity, but it is interesting in calling to mind the conceptual chains emphasized in Smith's 'Astronomy' essay. Mill used the term again in 1873 in *Three Essays on Religion* (Forget 2001, 194).

<sup>20</sup> Dugald Stewart too declared that 'the probability of a hypothesis increases in proportion to the number of phenomena for which it accounts, and to the simplicity of the theory by which it explains them; and...this probability may amount to a moral certainty'





what Whewell called a 'colligation', an act of imagination uniting disparate-seeming facts in 'a new point of view' (Whewell 1967, 2: 469). Thus both men emphasized the elements of imagination and surprise.<sup>21</sup>

We begin to wonder, given the distinctive similarities in their thinking, if Smith may have influenced Whewell. And it turns out that the question is not so much *whether*, as *how much*, for in 1822 Whewell wrote to a friend: 'I still meditate doing something about the History of the Metaphysics of Mechanics though as yet it is only intention. Something like Smith's History of Astronomy but with more historical facts'.<sup>22</sup>

The idea of consilience, as a criterion both of discovery and confirmation, has continued to be embraced by important philosophers of science, although it has never quite risen to predominance. Polanyi describes scientific discovery as 'a process of spontaneous mental reorganization uncontrolled by conscious effort' (1946: 34). Karl Popper singles out as '*the main task of the theoretical social sciences... to trace the unintended social repercussions of intentional human actions*' (1962: 342; italics original). Popper 'required a "good" hypothesis to do precisely what Whewell expected it to do' (Laudan 1981: 196), which, of course, is also what Smith wanted it to do. And Gould sounds for all the world like Smith in describing consilience as a 'highly salutary simplicity of explanation [for] a previously chaotic system of unconnected facts' (2003a: 257).

Of those who have made central use of the criterion of consilience, few have done so because of its association with Herschel and Whewell; but Darwin is one who did. Reading the *Preliminary Discourse* as a Cambridge undergraduate gave him 'a burning zeal to add even the most humble contribution to...Natural Science' (Darwin 1958: 67-8), and there was no one whose good opinion he craved more for his theory of descent than Herschel's. Unfortunately he did not succeed in getting it, or Whewell's either<sup>23</sup> – despite the fact that he rested his case for natural selection heavily on consilience.<sup>24</sup> He wrote to Asa Gray in 1859, as the *Origin of Species* was just coming out: 'I cannot possibly believe that a false theory would explain so many classes of facts; [and] on these grounds I drop my anchor, and believe that the difficulties will slowly disappear' (Darwin 1994, 7: 369). He wrote something similar in a letter to Herschel in 1861 (ibid. 9: 135-6), and in 1860 he incorporated the point in the *Origin* itself (1991: 401).

Gould asserts that 'Darwin constructed the *Origin of Species* as a brief for evolution by consilience', indeed 'the most instructive case for consilience in all of science' (2003a: 211). So it is understandable that scholars in a number of different domains have recognized a close conceptual connection between natural selection and the invisible hand,<sup>25</sup> although once again probably none go as far as Gould, who calls the two concepts 'isomorphic – that is, structurally similar point for point, even though the subject matter differs' (1990: 14).

## 6. SELF-ORGANIZATION

During the last century the invisible hand became the central idea in WN for economists, who also increasingly analyzed this work in terms of equilibrium theory, Pareto optimality and perfectly rational agents acting on purely self-interested

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(Stewart 1829, 2: 299-300; italics original). But unlike Smith, Stewart was not of one mind about this, since he was strongly drawn to his mentor Thomas Reid's Baconian inductivism.

<sup>21</sup> It is unfortunate that in his 1998 book *Consilience*, as Gould points out in a long critique (2003a), E.O. Wilson makes 'consilience' the name for 'a program that directly contradicts' Whewell's (ibid. 203). Wilson advocates a 'deliberate, systematic linkage... across the disciplines' (1998: 27), whereas what Herschel and Whewell – and Smith – had in mind was the serendipitous discovery of interconnections. So it may create more confusion than clarity to call Whewell's concept and Wilson's by the same name.

<sup>22</sup> My source for the Whewell letter is Schliesser 2005b: 70, n.131. Jonathan Smith, archivist at the Trinity College Library, Cambridge, tells me that the library did not acquire a copy of the *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* until 1969; so evidently Whewell, who spent his life at Trinity, as student, professor and then Master, found AST on his own.

<sup>23</sup> On Herschel, see Darwin to Lyell (Darwin 1994, 7: 392, 423); on Whewell, see Carey 2009.

<sup>24</sup> On this, see Ruse 1989: 9-17.

<sup>25</sup> In addition to all those mentioned elsewhere in this paper, others would include Thomson 1965; Ylikoski 1995; Hull 1988; Marciano and Pellissier 2000.



motives. Leonidas Montes is surely right that none of this is what Smith had in mind (2006: 255-8).<sup>26</sup> These ideas seem off the mark with regard to IH-1, and irrelevant with regard to IH-2.

That is particularly unfortunate since there are other contemporary concepts that closely resemble spontaneous order (IH-2). Consider 'self-organization' and 'emergence', terms now used in all the sciences, physical, biological and social. 'Self-organization' entered the lexicon in the mid-twentieth century in cybernetics, then became identified with Ilya Prigogine (1984), 1977 Nobel laureate in chemistry, and later gravitated to Stuart Kauffman and the Santa Fe Institute.<sup>27</sup> Its association with Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment is clear from a book just out as I write, *Invisible Hands: Self-organization in the Eighteenth Century* (Sheehan and Wahrman 2015), and another recent title, *Sync: The Emerging Science of Spontaneous Order* (Strogatz 2003). Unfortunately the Scottish thinkers do not figure prominently in these books; nor either in a 1996 book *The Self-Organizing Economy* by Paul Krugman, who won the Nobel prize in economics in 1998 for his elegant, highly mathematical theoretical work (work that bears little resemblance to the op-ed pieces and television commentary he is known for today). Krugman cites Smith only once briefly in this book (p.3); but what little he says is worth noting:

When Adam Smith wrote of the way that markets lead their participants 'as if by an invisible hand' to outcomes that nobody intended, what was he describing but an emergent property? And examples of emergence abound in economic theory.

Krugman talks about emergent self-organizing systems like embryos and hurricanes, and describes a growing city as 'a lot like a developing embryo' (1996: 1).

Which brings me to the physicist Lee Smolin's 1997 book *The Life of the Cosmos*. Smolin's cosmological theory is based on the combined processes of natural selection and selforganization (ibid. 138); and his conclusion is that the whole universe has simply *made itself*. He cites William Paley's argument from design, that just as a clock must have a clock maker, so too, the world must have had a world maker, and this is God. Smolin argues differently. 'There is a clock maker', he says, but there is 'no city-maker'; and 'if a city can make itself, without a maker, why can the same not be true of the universe?' (1997: 299)

Rothschild does not discuss natural selection or self-organization in *Economic Sentiments* (2001),<sup>28</sup> but she grazes Smolin's point in discussing what she calls 'the modern version' of the 'argument about design': 'If the world, or the economy, is [naturally] so orderly that it *could* have been designed by a sovereign (or a planning commission)', she says, 'then there is no need for *actual* designs (or commissions)...Why therefore should we have a planner?' (2001: 139; italics original) Robert Nozick makes a similar point in saying simply (1974: 19) that invisiblehand explanations are 'more satisfying' than those in terms of conscious human design. He does think there may be times when 'something that can arise by an invisible-hand process might better arise or be maintained through conscious intervention' (1994: 314). Still, there may be no need to posit an either-or dichotomy between the two; perhaps, as Lee Cronk suggests (1988: 302, n.5), both spontaneous and planned orders fall along a 'continuum'.

Not having access to natural selection or self-organization, Smith could only point to some 'unknown principle', as he does at least twice in WN (II.iii.31: 343, IV.ix.28: 674). He seems to have sensed that a real explanation would have to await later developments, and that his term 'invisible hand' was merely a placeholder for such an explanation (Carey 2011: 231). That said, his work on the invisible hand idea helped pave the way for later developments of the first importance, and Whewell, Darwin and recent self-organization theorists have acknowledged his contribution to their

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<sup>26</sup> Montes (2004; 2006) traces the association of Smith with equilibrium theory to Joseph Schumpeter, who credited Leon Walras (1834-1910) with the discovery.

<sup>27</sup> Darwin expressly left room for other evolutionary processes, saying at the conclusion of the *Introduction to the Origin* (1991: 4), 'I am convinced that Natural Selection has been the most important but not the exclusive means of modification'.

<sup>28</sup> Rothschild discusses 'evolved orders' (2001: 146-53) in terms of 'the equilibrium version of the modern invisible hand'; her only mention of Darwin (248) concerns Engels' evolutionary view of class struggle. And with regard to Hayek as representing 'the evolutionary version of the invisible hand', she dismisses his view of the emergence of 'rules and conventions whose significance and importance we largely do not understand' as somehow 'very far, here, from Adam Smith' (147).



own thinking. This recognition may be scantier than we would like, but scientists do not often give much credit, understandably, to non-scientists.

The editors of TMS say 'commentators have laid too much stress on the term "invisible hand"' (Intro. 7); and they have a point, considering how little it tells us. But when you think about it, how informative is 'natural selection' or 'spontaneous order' or 'self-organization'? As I said at the outset, it is not the terms, but the ideas they represent, that is important.

One thing I have tried to show here is that Smith's most celebrated idea – whether we label it 'invisible hand' or 'spontaneous order' or 'self-organization', etc. – has a bona fide place in the history of science and scientific method. And given the importance he placed on 'the connecting principles of nature' (AST II.12: 45), and what A.L. Macfie identifies as his overarching goal (1971: 598-9), a 'comprehensive, interrelated system of thought – his interpretation of the "great system of nature"', I can hardly think of anything that would have pleased Adam Smith more.

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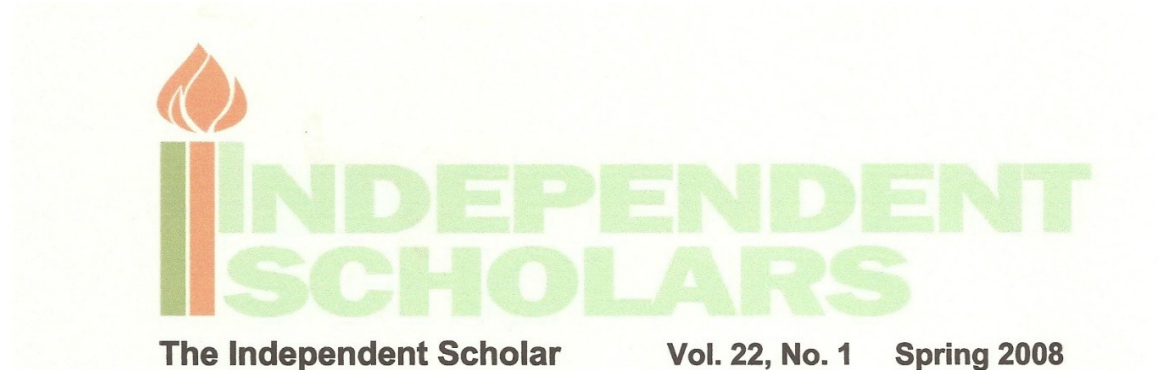


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## BACK IN THE DAY

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*This feature extracts articles from The Independent Scholar, which became The Independent Scholar Quarterly (TISQ); these publications preceded the current peer-reviewed journal The Independent Scholar (TIS) which first appeared in 2015.. Papers that appeared in TISQ did not undergo the same peer review process as those critical papers appearing in the main body of TIS; there is nevertheless much of value to be gleaned from the earlier work in TISQ.*



*For this volume I have selected Therese B. Dykeman's "Voltairine de Cleyre (1866-1912): Activist Scholar Without Borders," TISQ 22, 1 (Spring 2008): 8-11. In keeping with the theme of this number, Dr. Dykeman's paper, concerns a pioneering American radical, the anarchist and feminist Voltairine de Cleyre. De Cleyre, a comrade of Emma Goldman, turned to Anarchism after the execution of the Haymarket Anarchists in 1886, an event as influential in changing political minds as the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti would be in 1927. The deaths of the Haymarket Anarchists continued to haunt her for the rest of her life, and on the anniversary of their deaths she would make an annual address. Dr. Dykeman demonstrates the breadth and depth of her philosophy; for de Cleyre, freedom included political rights as well as the right to make reproductive decisions by using birth control. She spoke to the concerns of men and women, without granting priority to one over the other.*

*This paper appears with the kind permission of Dr. Dykeman.*

SHELBY SHAPIRO

General Editor





## VOLTAIRINE DE CLEYRE (1866-1912): ACTIVIST SCHOLAR WITHOUT BORDERS

Therese B. Dykeman, Ph.D.  
New York, NY, USA)

Correspondence should be addressed to: [tbdykeman@yahoo.com](mailto:tbdykeman@yahoo.com)

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Tis ever the same—the celebration of the breaking of bonds

De Cleyre, The Case of Woman Versus Orthodoxy

The greatest of all human benefits, that at least without which no other benefit can be truly enjoyed, is independence.

Wm. Godwin *The Enquirer* 1797

I prefer dangerous liberty to quiet servitude.

Thos. Jefferson 1787 [ltr. Jan 20.]

It has been said, "Nature has a habit of now and then producing a type of human being far in advance of the times.... Such a being was Voltairine de Cleyre."<sup>1</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre was a radical. She was an anarchist but not a Communist, a freethinker but not a libertine, a feminist and scholar of the human condition who espoused unique theories of economics, freedom, and pacifism. Her honest insight and sincere passion led her to advance the borders of thought and action and at times push beyond them. Portraits of de Cleyre prove her to have been attractive, and a reading of her lectures and essays prove her eloquence, singular fervor, and fearless inquiry and judgment.

One critic has concluded that few men "were her equal in the development of a libertarian social philosophy," for she demonstrated "a breadth of vision and an ability to think outside of predetermined philosophical lines."<sup>2</sup> Her works may never be read in mainstream political science or philosophy books; nevertheless, her ideas are necessary for the full assessment of this country's past and for its preparation for the future.

### Life

Born in 1866 in Leslie, Michigan, to parents who separated the following year, Voltairine was sent to live with her father at age twelve and to a convent school in Ontario at age fourteen where she was very homesick for her mother and sister Addie and unhappy in the authoritarian Catholic atmosphere. Graduating at age seventeen, she began her first lecture tour the next year as a freethinker, quickly becoming editor of the free thought *Progressive Age* and publishing her first volume of poems. After the Haymarket hangings in Chicago, 1886, she became an anarchist and later began friendships with Emma Goldman and many other anarchists here and abroad. Though she championed birth control, from a short-lived relationship she bore a son Harry but did not raise him thinking herself unsuitable to do so.

She eked out a living by teaching English and piano in the Russian Jewish ghetto in Philadelphia, continuing to write and lecture. The many periodicals she contributed included *Open Court* (1891-1896), *Rebel* (1895-1896), and *Mother*

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Fox in his eulogy, "Voltairine de Cleyre," *Agitator* (July 15, 1912).

<sup>2</sup> William O. Reichart, *Partisans of Freedom: A Study in American Anarchism* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1979), 338.



Earth (1907-1911). Eventually, for a brief time, she lectured in Great Britain, Paris, Scotland, and Norway as well as in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Kansas. Each anniversary of the Haymarket affair she journeyed to Chicago to give speeches.<sup>3</sup> It was there that she died at age forty-six of complications from a gunshot wound and sinus infection. It is there in the Waldheim Cemetery that her monument stands, still today drawing admiring visitors.

This short biography does not tell the story of Voltairine de Cleyre fully or well, because her real story is that of her soul and its intense and elegant expression through her essays, speeches, and poetry. Perhaps it was her continuing poverty that motivated de Cleyre, or perhaps it was the pain and ill health that plagued her throughout her life that prodded her, or possibly, it was bearing the name of Voltaire and reading philosophy. Whatever the cause, from an early age de Cleyre had strong ideas about social conditions and was a rebel against authority and establishments that promoted inequality and injustice.

### Writings and Speeches

The essay that first turned my attention to Voltairine de Cleyre, was her 1910 essay "The Dominant Idea" in which she views civilizations as dominated by ideas: "Everywhere in the shells of dead societies, as in the shells of the sea-slime, we shall see the force of purposive action, of intent within holding its purpose against obstacles without."<sup>4</sup> In the medieval civilizations, for example, the idea was "greatening of God, lessening of man" who, however, wrought their aspiring spirit "into cathedral stones."<sup>5</sup> She saw the 20th century, barely a decade old, with unusual clairvoyance. The dominant idea stretching into the future before her she conceived as "The Much Making of Things" - seeing it producing "heaps and heaps of things" not caring why or to what end, but "possessed with the idea that he must do it."<sup>6</sup> Goldman judged this essay to have been the leitmotif of her life.<sup>7</sup>

De Cleyre's courage and radical thinking follow in the singular tradition of the early 19th century's Frances Wright, who lectured publicly against the immorality of religious leaders who condoned slave ownership and of male educators who denied female teachers and students.<sup>8</sup> De Cleyre particularized Wright's principle of "human improvement" concerning the violence and abuse in marriage and more strongly railed against their economic inequality. Many New England women who led in demanding abolition and voting rights by less radical means were aging. Other women leaders, for example in St. Louis, kept to more traditional subjects, pushing the boundaries to gain serious positions in educational institutions. De Cleyre, in first lecturing in a white toga, imitated Wright. Both committed their thoughts to writing throughout their lives. Both were too nontraditional to be held generally and publicly as models by other women; yet, both broke new ground beyond traditional boundaries in their writings and speeches. Wright died in 1852, de Cleyre in 1912; neither witnessed women's franchise but both led in articulating inequalities and injustices not convincingly addressed by this country until the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

### Anarchism

De Cleyre's anarchism was not as close to the center of political philosophy as was Wright's pre-Mill utilitarianism. By its very definition, anarchism edges a border of political philosophy. In developing a consistent philosophy of anarchism, de Cleyre defined it in terms of freedom, plenty and peace. In her 1901 essay "Anarchism" she outlines four kinds of anarchism. She claims two spirits in the world, caution and dare, and society "a quivering balance, eternally struck afresh" between them. The guide of an anarchist is the Spirit of Dare, the aim is free play for the Spirit of Change, for it is that which gives freedom to the soul as to the body: "Once and forever to realize that one is not a bundle of well-regulated

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<sup>3</sup> Only eight of the speeches she delivered were located by Paul Avrich and reprinted in Voltairine de Cleyre, introd., notes and bibliography Paul Avrich, *The First Mayday: The Haymarket Speeches, 1875-1910* (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1980).

<sup>4</sup> Sharon Presley and Crispin Sartwell, eds. *The Exquisite Rebel: The Essays of Voltairine de Cleyre - Anarchist, Feminist, Genius* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 109.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>7</sup> Goldman also finds the "key" to de Cleyre's power in her essay "The Dominant Idea" from which she quotes: "In everything that lives...is limned to the shadow-line of an idea," Emma Goldman, *Voltairine de Cleyre* (Berkeley Heights, NJ: Oriole Press, 1932), 7, 8.

<sup>8</sup> In her conclusion of "The Case of Woman Versus Orthodoxy," de Cleyre mentions other women who challenged the status quo besides Frances Wright: Hypatia, Mary Wollstonecraft, Ernestine L. Rose, Harriet Martineau, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth and Lucy N. Coleman, Presley and Sartwell, 207.



little reasons bound up in the front room of the brain to be sermonized ... and stopped by a syllogism, but a bottomless, bottomless depth of all strange sensations, a rocking sea of feeling."<sup>9</sup>

She explained her revulsion at economic repression in her essay "Why I am an Anarchist?" in which she argues from emotion and politics of personality. In her essay "Our Present Attitude," she argues the necessity for "total disintegration and dissolution of the principle and practice of authority" in order that peace might triumph over injustice and violence.<sup>10</sup> In "Open Your Eyes," she distinguishes anarchism from law: the one preaching peace, the other violence. Her most popular essay, her 1908-1909 "Anarchism and American Traditions," links the early ideas of equality and liberty in the words of Jefferson with anarchism, quoting him as saying that the nation would go downhill from the Revolution.<sup>11</sup> Finally, "In a Lance for Anarchy," (1891) she asserts the superiority of anarchist morality.<sup>12</sup>

De Cleyre defines anarchism as a philosophy of freedom. The rejection of authority - authority being the root problem of poverty - makes possible just distribution of wealth, morality, women's equality, and peace. Shaped from the thinking of Adam Smith, William Godwin,<sup>13</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, and Frances Wright, and finding guidance from Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, from the legacy of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, as well as her contemporary anarchists Peter Kropotkin and Johann Most, de Cleyre's anarchism becomes "virtually unique in the history of American anarchism."<sup>14</sup>

Some have found de Cleyre's definition of anarchism to be less a matter of politics than of ethics, an ethics of "self-responsibility," a philosophy that bore "good news for the individual."<sup>15</sup> However, de Cleyre argued that anarchism was a matter of political freedom, making "the greatest sin of our fathers that they did not trust liberty wholly."<sup>16</sup> Hers was an individualist anarchism which opposed any fetters on the "soul and mind and heart," its higher principle being that "every man must be a law unto himself," and so affirming the "highest morality."<sup>17</sup> Thus, De Cleyre's anarchism does not focus on the abolition of social restraint so much as it promotes an ethics to evolve from individual thought, actions and passions.

Probably unbeknownst to de Cleyre, her insistence upon political freedom and individual responsibility had been the keystone of 18th century American historian Mercy Otis Warren's political philosophy as well. Warren's greatest fears had been the loss of freedom in a federalist government for the individual and loss of personal and national morals from power and greed. De Cleyre found Warren's fears to have been realized, and she gave her life to urge no government in the face of the one she lived under.

### **Economics**

Witnessing the immorality of government and industrial greed, Voltairine de Cleyre believed that the individual should be allowed decent earning power, but rejected the theory of economics that communist Emma Goldman held. De Cleyre's study of political economy began after hearing Clarence Darrow speak on socialism in 1887, the year she became involved with labor issues, especially as related to the Haymarket affair. The day after police fired into a crowd of strikers from the Chicago McCormick Reaper Works, anarchists met in the rain at Haymarket Square to protest. That day, May 4, 1886, police marched in killing four anarchists, and a bomb was thrown, it was believed, by an anarchist.

<sup>9</sup> "Anarchism," *Free Society*, (October 13, 1901) 1.

<sup>10</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre*, ed. Alexander Berkman (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1914), 79-80. The *Selected Works* includes thirty-three poems, eighteen essays, and eleven stories and sketches.

<sup>11</sup> Here de Cleyre notes that Jefferson thought no government was best, but that it was also impractical.

<sup>12</sup> Surprisingly, Adam Smith, who concluded that of the extremes of the political spectrum, anarchy was "less destructive of security and leisure" than despotism, would have leaned in de Cleyre's direction, Adam Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* [1795], (New York: Garland Publishing, 1971), 56. Smith is most noted for his *Wealth of Nations*.

<sup>13</sup> In 1797, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft's companion, argued that "a servile spirit cannot feel what it is to be a man. Still, a man not provided for tomorrow cannot enjoy today," sentiments reflected in de Cleyre's works, William Godwin, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1971), 240. In 1792, Wollstonecraft argued for national education, making the point that without it women cannot "participate in the inherent rights of mankind," Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Hamondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), 88.

<sup>14</sup> Terry Perlin, "Anarchism and Idealism: Voltairine de Cleyre (1866- 1912)," *Labor History* 14 (Fall 1973): 506.

<sup>15</sup> Reichart, 342, 344.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>17</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, "A Lance for Anarchy," *The Open Court* (September 24, 1891), 2963-4.



Eight men were brought to trial (six of whom had never been there) and four were hanged, on November 11, 1887. Of the four remaining, one committed suicide, and the last three were not pardoned until 1893. It was proved later that the bomb thrower was not one of the eight after all. Still, the incident, having sent the erroneous message that anarchists engaged in violence, indelibly sealed the two together in the public's mind. The message of the Haymarket affair for de Cleyre was that with such sacrifice in moral revolution, "real justice and real liberty might come on earth."<sup>18</sup>

From her childhood and throughout her life, de Cleyre took on the causes of factory workers. Her two concerns were one, that life has higher appeals which deem a fair distribution of wealth, and two, the necessity for economic equality in marriage as opposed to economic slavery. She critiqued the modern consumer culture, believing that three hours a day of labor would satisfy all human economic needs, and favoring a "decentralized economic system according to the principle of worker's self management achieved by education and propaganda."<sup>19</sup> Economics must be related to greater individualism, greater equality, and greater freedom. Living in harmony with nature rather than in industrial diminution of the individual laborer was de Cleyre's ideal, an ideal that demanded individual austerity in practice. She lived that ideal to a punishing extent.

### **Freedom**

In de Cleyre's philosophy, freedom is the great principle. Without freedom the individual may be denied his wants to eat, breathe, sleep, love, dream and create, and become a "crippled creature."<sup>20</sup> "A hungry man," she says, "has the social right to bread."<sup>21</sup> Hence, freedom must allow man to exist. Secondly, freedom must allow the individual not only to exist, but also to exist in equality. This means that women must be as independent and equal as men, for "without the independence of woman there can be no equality, and without equality no true adjustment of sex relations."<sup>22</sup> Thirdly, freedom must allow man to be free from oppression. By this, de Cleyre means that there can be no essential difference between those who live lives of vice and crime and those who live lives of virtue. Crime is in each of us and in the world, so she bids us: "Ask yourselves, each of you, whether you are quite sure that you have feeling enough, understanding enough, and have you suffered enough, to be able to weigh and measure out another man's life or liberty, no matter what he has done?"<sup>23</sup>

The great commandments of Jesus, Buddha, and Tolstoy to forgive and judge not come not from laws but only from "accumulated wisdom of man."<sup>24</sup> To allow freedom to ourselves and others and to grow in wisdom is the responsibility of the individual, for "every ethical advance must be wrought out in the individual."<sup>25</sup> In this sense of anarchist freedom, de Cleyre can say, "Liberty... is the mother of order."<sup>26</sup> It is lack of freedom that encourages inequality, injustice, chaos, and war.

### **Feminism**

Often referred to as an anarchist-feminist, de Cleyre based her feminist position as well as her economics on the philosophical principle of liberty. She lists Hypatia with Socrates and Christ and personifies liberty as a woman in her poem, "O Mother Liberty!"<sup>27</sup> She believes it is freedom in education, marriage, and economics that will end the crippling of women's minds, sexual abuse, and slavery within marriage and promote financial independence for women. She blames government and churches or states and priests for fostering unequal freedoms with their unhappy consequences for women. She sees justice as an evolving issue. What was once considered just may no longer be, e.g.,

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Avrich, *An American Anarchist*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 17; "Our Martyred Comrades" delivered in Philadelphia, November 17, 1900; published in *Free Society* (San Francisco), December 16, 1900; reprinted (abridged) in *The Firebrand* (Mount Juliet, Tennessee), November 13, 1909.

<sup>19</sup> Dave Baxter, "Voltairine de Cleyre," in *Women in World History. A Biographical Encyclopedia*, Anne Commire and Deborah Klezmer, eds. (Waterford, CT: Yorkin Publications, 2002), vol. 4, 438.

<sup>20</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, *Crime and Punishment*, Philadelphia (March 15, 1903): 17.

<sup>21</sup> Idem.

<sup>22</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, "The Economic Relations of Sex," *The Open Court* (May 7, 1891): 2963.

<sup>23</sup> De Cleyre, *Crime and Punishment*, 21.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>25</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, "American Progress," *Open Court* (December 3, 1891): 3041.

<sup>26</sup> Emma Goldman, *Voltairine de Cleyre*, (Berkeley Heights, NJ: Oriole Press, 1932), 17.

<sup>27</sup> "In Memoriam: to Gen. M.M. Trumbull," *Open Court* 8 (19 July 19, 1894): 158.



monarchies that contributed to “antiquated sexual codes of the Victorian era” and feudalism that left women in “serfhood” rather than “selfhood.”<sup>28</sup> The remedy, she states emphatically, lies in “LIBERTY!”<sup>29</sup> In liberty lies morality and future. The new code of ethics founded on the law of equal freedom will allow women what she finds to be most important - complete individuality.

De Cleyre, still a part of the Victorian era herself, fearlessly brought into the forefront issues of birth control, rape and abuse, of women who as heads of families could not support their children. By speaking about these issues, she gave voice to the prison of silence to which they were condemned. Although de Cleyre admired Thomas Paine, friend of Mary Wollstonecraft and hero of Frances Wright, she asked why he had been given so much recognition while no other woman had been. Thus, in addressing these issues in public forum with power and eloquence, Voltairine de Cleyre was much in advance of her time. One observer claimed that she formulated “the most complete articulation of the anarchist-feminist position to appear in the nineteenth century.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Pacifism**

De Cleyre’s pacifism is related to her feminism. She judges that while most women “regard war as a barbarism ... [n]evertheless if it comes to that ... it is skill, not numbers, not muscular strength, which counts.... A single figure in the darkness, a flash, a blast -the work of an army is done! Was the figure man or woman?”<sup>31</sup> Against wars, she yet praises the individual who assassinates tyrannical leaders. She found prisons to be engaged not in reforming but in punishment, to be violent and without redemption. Her pacifism is not simple. The seeming inconsistencies in condoning both pacifist and non-pacifist acts are derived from the distinction between individual acts with their responsibilities and those acts commanded by authority.

### **Conclusion**

By the time she died, Voltairine de Cleyre, in pain and depression, harbored doubts about her thinking and direction of action. She had more or less reconciled with her son, and had come to appreciate the preparation in writing and speaking, music and poetry, the constant companions given to her in her convent education in spite of bitter feelings toward that experience. Giving herself, beyond the borders of benevolence, to the ignorant, the poor and the unjustly slain, she became a saint, but one from no organized religion, a secular saint. In addition to her legacy of writings, in Stelton, New Jersey, a street was named after her, as were many daughters. Emma Goldman requested that she be buried near de Cleyre’s grave.

Outside the borders of the mainstream, her life and her thinking challenged her contemporaries, and continue to challenge us to question our own lives and our own thinking and our political choices. Why are we so preoccupied with things, that we eliminate jobs and proper wages to get more and more things cheaply? Why do we punish? For justice, revenge? Why do we condone government in events that take away from the individual?

The borders of law and order that Voltairine de Cleyre came to and crossed over with her notion of anarchism, made clear the hypocrisy and unreasonableness, if not stupidity, of the status quo, of certain laws and order condoned and enforced at the turn of the century. Her thinking at the political edge elucidated for others the inappropriate, even transgressive and harmful political rules and habits. Its benefit continues to be in making us rethink the way we live. In what was, perhaps, her overreach, she established a different center or middle ground by which to measure political human progress.

In view of her experiences in witnessing the politically voiceless, de Cleyre would perhaps applaud women’s and minorities’ increased power, social security help for the elderly and disabled and better and safer working conditions that in the main eliminates child labor but would despise its coming from the state. Yet, she would continue to question the role of the individual in all this, the role of individual responsibility, the legalistic atmosphere, and the cumbersome weight and authority of government. And, were she alive today, she would decry the CEO salaries that selfishly denigrate

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<sup>28</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, “Sex Slavery,” Berkman, 350.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>30</sup> Baxter, 346-440.

<sup>31</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, “The Gates of Freedom,” *Lucifer The Light-Bearer* (May 15, 1891): 4. See Carol I. Winkleman, *The Language of Battered Women: A rhetorical analysis of personal theologies*, (New York: SUNY Press, 2004).



the dignity of their workers and condemn them to unlivable wages, and decry the power of religions. In all she would still attempt to convince us that our main sin is the sin against freedom.

Perhaps Voltairine de Cleyre will eventually be in history the way Emma Goldman saw her, the “most gifted and brilliant anarchist woman America ever produced”<sup>32</sup> and in the eyes of her more recent biographer Paul Avrich, “one of the most interesting if neglected figures in the history of American radicalism.”<sup>33</sup> I would add that her soul survives the consummation of her own life through its immolation in the fires of her exquisite passion for a better life for others.

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<sup>32</sup> Goldman, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Avrich, x

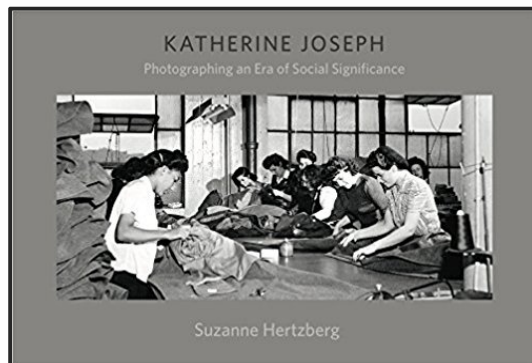




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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### ***Katherine Joseph: Photographing an Era of Social Significance.***

**Suzanne Hertzberg**

(Washington, D.C.: Bergamont Press, 2016)

133 pp + maps, photographs, index, bibliography, notes.

ISBN 978-0-692-70118-8. \$25.00.

<https://www.amazon.com/Katherine-Joseph-Photographing-Social-Significance/dp/0692701184>

In *Katherine Joseph: Photographing an Era of Social Significance*, historian Suzanne Hertzberg has written a fascinating account of her mother's short career as a professional photographer. The subtitle alludes to "Sing Me a Song of Social Significance," one of the hits of the musical revue *Pins & Needles* written by composer/lyricist Harold Rome. Staged by the Education Department of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), the revue debuted in 1937 and ran for a record-breaking three years in the depth of the Great Depression. Its cast was composed entirely of ILGWU members. For a taste of the revue, Harold Rome, singing and playing piano, assembled a recording for Columbia Records on its 25th anniversary (Stereo LP OS 2210; CD CK 57380). At his insistence, a young singer who had debuted in his musical about the garment industry, *I Can Get It for You Wholesale*, was included: Barbara Streisand.

The author was faced with a daunting task, due to the fact that her mother fabricated much of her past and obscured the rest. In the course of her research, Suzanne Herzberg has had to tease details out of daily schedules and interviews to fill in the blanks, more than once noting that what occurred within a given period remains unknown. In the course of research and writing, Hertzberg has tracked down details of her mother's life – including when she was born and when her family emigrated to the United States from Tsarist Russia. She has however had to overcome major discrepancies in her mother's reported history: for instance, not only was her mother older than she claimed, but certain events could not have been part of her experience.

Hertzberg follows the family from Russia to various cities in the United States, giving an account of family businesses and activities. While the sons took managerial roles in these enterprises, Katherine's sister did not. Katherine did not follow the same path: she



was a modern woman, one of those whose career paths and personal choices predated the post-World War 2 women's movement. But she had a short photographic career – which *a priori* started and ended during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's time in office. Once she married radio engineer Arthur Hertzberg, her photographic career ended. Only after her children were grown did she re-enter the world of work, going into the travel business.

Katherine's photographic career began after quitting college, when she got a job with the ILGWU. Somehow – nobody knows how she became interested or who interested her – she became a photographer for the union's publication, *Justice*. It was in that capacity that she met the union's main photographer, Harry Rubenstein. The two of them attended the *Pins and Needles* command performance at the White House. That led to the last photograph for which she and Rubenstein shared credit: after that, her name appeared alone in the credits.

She then went to northern Mexico on assignment for *Mexico Speaks: Mexico's Magazine of Distinction* (1941), as well as being part of a promotional tour for the Americar, an auto manufactured by Willys-Overland Motor Company, which later gained fame with the Jeep. She and two other women, one a labor organizer, the other a French *émigrée* interested in photography. Together they travelled through northern Mexico and Mexico City, into the mountains where there were silver mines, including a secret one owned by William Randolph Hearst.

Hertzberg introduces the reader to the complicated geopolitics of 1930s Mexico. A major center of espionage, Nazi agents had infiltrated the Mexican government and economy as moles. Soviet spies also were present, along with Americans and others. How the Mexican government dealt with these conflicting international pressures is dealt with by Hertzberg, and she notes that many of those Katherine and her companions suspected of being Nazi spies in fact were spies.

She also includes a photograph of Hearst and actress Marion Davies. While in Mexico, the three women saw American movies stars who were there as part of a

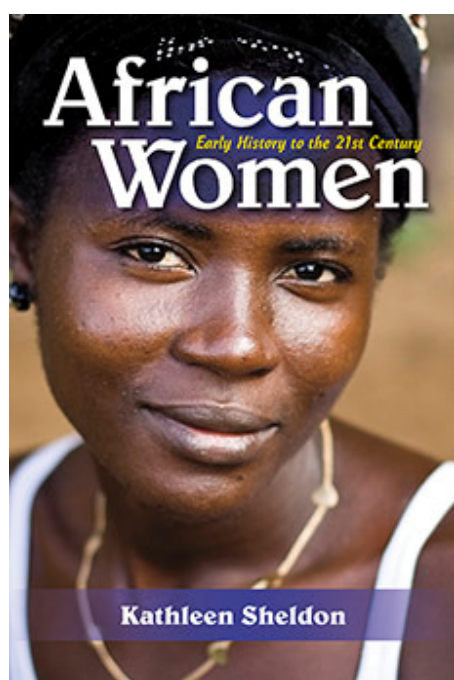
goodwill tour meant to change the hearts and minds of Mexican authorities and people towards the U. S.; these included Norma Shearer, Wallace Beery, Joe E. Brown, Frank Sinatra, Johnny Weissmuller, and Mickey Rooney. While in Mexico, she also covered a devastating earthquake, a May Day parade, and a convention of the Confederation of Mexican Workers.

Rather than present a collection of photographs preceded by an extended essay, Hertzberg integrates photographs and biography, putting both into context. The production values for the book are excellent. Most photographs appear on a single page: where there is more than one photograph, there are not so many as to detract from any particular image.

Hertzberg's attention to detail is such that she tracked down the identity of an ILGWU cartoonist Lola - Leon Israel - even though he played no part in the story, except for the appearance of two *Justice* cartoons.

Suzanne Hertzberg has done an excellent job in this account of a relatively unknown photographer - her life, times and achievements. Since most of the publications in which her work appeared did not have mass circulation, discovering these photographs opens a window on a photographer and her hitherto unknown world. Hertzberg proves that, given strength, tenacity and the proper historical tools, you can squeeze biographical blood from celluloid. Highly recommended!

**Shelby Shapiro** is an Independent Scholar who obtained his Ph.D. in American Studies with a dissertation on the Yiddish press and how various publications of differing political and religious viewpoints sought to construct different identities for Jewish immigrant women. He has written about Jazz, Anarchism, and the labour movement, and presently is Associate Editor of *Records of the State of Connecticut*.



## ***African Women: Early History to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

***Kathleen Sheldon***

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017

341 pp., intro, map, illustrations, bibliography, index.

ISBN 978-0-253-02722-1 (paperback). \$40

[http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=808583](http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/product_info.php?products_id=808583)

**Review by Laurence Schiller**

There has not been a new textbook focusing specifically on the history of African women in a couple of decades, so Kathleen Sheldon's work is a welcome addition to the literature. Her two goals were firstly, to present a comprehensive, chronological, narrative of African women's history, understanding, of course, that it cannot be entirely inclusive; and secondly, to demonstrate that an understanding of women's contributions, not only to their families, but also to their societies, is critical to a proper understanding of the history of that continent. Her well researched work is important as a counterbalance to conventional histories of Africa which tend to be male centered and have often, except for the mention of an occasional female leader, treated women as simply an oppressed, victimized group, immobilized by poverty. Sheldon addresses this by presenting an excellent collection of cases and examples conclusively demonstrating the

centrality of women in Africa throughout the African history.

Unfortunately, her work is flawed in several important ways. First, in her introduction, she states that she has drawn examples 'with sections on all regions of the continent' but, in fact, this is a work on Sub-Saharan Africa only, something that should have been made clear in the title. Second, and more seriously, the first three chapters suffer from the chronological framework that she has imposed on the book. Important influences, such as the introduction of agriculture, iron working, Islam, and the arrival of Europeans, impacted different areas of the continent at very different times, over a span of several thousand years, and she would have been better served to focus on the nature of the impact of these events on indigenous societies, where there are great historical similarities, regardless of time frame. 'When' is more



the concern of a general study, rather than this, which is more narrowly focused on the impact of these events on women, which is what she is trying to bring out in her narrative, not a chronological history, an especially difficult task for the pre-modern period.

Moreover, while she touches on women in Islamic societies, she does not really examine in depth how women's roles change when a society becomes Islamic, nor about the significant changes that occur in areas where there were radical Islamic movements, such as the nineteenth century West African jihad. She also uses creation myths more uncritically than she should to demonstrate women's power in early African societies. The result is a somewhat jumbled narrative as she jumps around the continent working her way to the modern period, where she is clearly more comfortable.

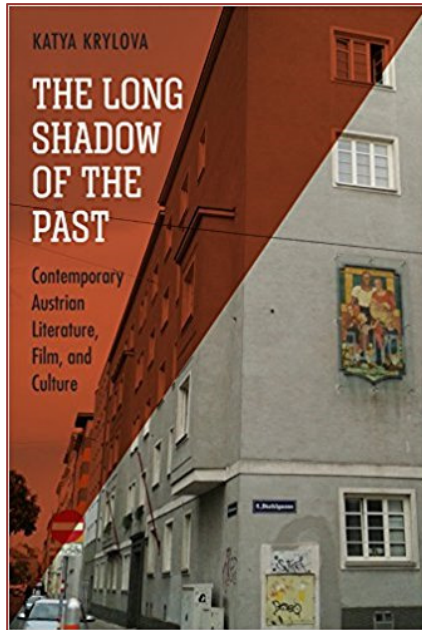
Her later chapters are distinctly stronger and reflect, I suspect, her area of primary research and knowledge. There, she has several excellent case studies and insightful discussions of topics related to women. Unfortunately, while Sheldon clearly has excellent command of African women's history, her command of African history as a whole is not as strong, most particularly in the pre-modern period. She comments, for example, that foraging societies are found in areas not suited for agriculture. That is not entirely true, for example, in the case of Tanzania's Hadza. Moreover, it fails to account for the fact that most surviving foraging societies were pushed into marginal areas by migrating or expanding agricultural and pastoral societies, as well as European settlers, which skews our view of how these societies existed in the past, as is clearly the case in southern Africa.

Another problem is her statement that matrilineal societies tend to be small scale agricultural societies, which is questionable considering the Asante Kingdom in West Africa and several large matrilineal states, such as Luba, in the Congo basin. Moreover, while she has presented a number of excellent case examples to demonstrate how women contributed to their society or exhibited power, she does not always link these examples up into a deeper narrative, leaving the reader to wonder, at times, why a specific example was included in a chapter. Instead, while the cases and discussion of issues are generally well done, the chapters often seem to be just a cluster of examples, separately good, but together, sometimes puzzling.

Finally, the book is marred by some inaccuracies; although virtually none of these particularly impact the narrative, they should have been caught before publication. For example, the author cites cotton as a major fact in the growth of slavery in the United States by 1780, when tobacco and rice were the major southern crops at that time (29); *Rwoth* is translated as 'king' but that is a European perception and *Rwoths* could be chiefs or simply influential elders; another error is that patrilineal succession implies primogeniture in the East African Inter-lacustrine states, which it assuredly does not (56). She misunderstands the difference between those who use Kiswahili as their first language and those who use it as a *lingua franca* (66); Moshoeshoe does not play an equivalent role to Shaka in creating the Mfecane (80) nor is the Mahdi simply 'a divinely guided member of the Prophet's family who would lead Muslims out of oppression' (122); Baganda is the term for the people of Buganda, not their language, which is Luganda (109); nor is Kisii 1000 miles from the coast of Kenya – it is only just over 400 (137).

It is not an easy task to write a general history text, and Sheldon's work will be useful for the teacher who wants to assign an updated text that brings most of the research on women's roles, power, and influence in African history into one volume. The bibliography will be especially helpful. On the other hand, it will be important for an instructor to use the work in conjunction with other texts to provide a deeper understanding of African history so their students can get the most out of a text that has only partially fulfilled its potential.

**Laurence (Laurie) D. Schiller** is a retired Adjunct Professor from Northwestern University, from which he holds a Ph.D. in African History, and was the Head Fencing Coach there for 38 seasons. He has authored several papers on East African history, including "*Female Royals of the Lake Kingdoms of East Africa: An Examination of Their Power and Status and Their Relationship to the General Position of Women in Their Societies*," but is now primarily engaged in writing on the American Civil War. He has produced works on cavalry tactics including the Blue Gray Education Society monograph, *Of Sabres and Carbines: The Emergence of the Federal Dragoon*.



## ***The Long Shadow of the Past: Contemporary Austrian Literature, Film and Culture.***

***Katya Krylova***

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<https://boydellandbrewer.com/the-long-shadow-of-the-past-hb.html>

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**Review by Nicole Calian**

Accounting for and acknowledging one's national history in crimes committed against humanity is a process often thwarted by resistance from politically and socially influential institutions. Such was, until recently, the case in Austria, a country that had held on to an idea of itself as first victim of the Nazi regime. This notion was radically altered by events following the Waldheim Affair of 1986-1988. Former Austrian president and UN Secretary General, Kurt Waldheim, had repeatedly lied about his Nazi past and then – once revealed as a former member of the SA, – excused his involvement in the Nazi party as having only answered "the call to duty". The subsequent process of acknowledging "Mitschuld", i.e. complicity (7), in the Holocaust is painstakingly slow, subversive and on-going as it colors political, cultural and social negotiations in Austria to this day.

Katya Krylova's new book, *The Long Shadow of the Past: Contemporary Austrian Literature, Film and Culture* sheds light on the films, memorials and literary works produced

by contemporary Austrian artists whose work confronts the fall-out of an unfinished national engagement with Austrian Nazi history and anti-Semitism. Krylova draws a connection between the very recent and indeed, current, political situation in Austria, which saw repeated shifts towards extremist right-wing parties (FPÖ) and leadership (among them Joseph Haider; Norbert Hofer), and its correlation to the events preceding WWII, and the events following the Waldheim Affair thirty years ago. Krylova argues that a focus on visual works of art, among them memorials and memorial projects, showcases a particularly dynamic field of cultural production, and one that has been neglected. In her analysis, Krylova peruses theories of memory-studies, as well as melancholy- and nostalgia-studies to show that in the context of a changed topography confrontations with the past by Austrian artists of the second and third generation of survivors often bear the stamp of an "imaginative investment...to reconstruct and forge a connection to an irretrievable family past" (19).





Chapter 1, *Melancholy journeys to the Past: The Films of Ruth Beckermann*, as well as chapter 2, *Reconstructing a Home: Nostalgia in Anna Mitgutsch's Haus der Kindheit*, focuses on a sense of a family past from which one has been severed. Krylova argues that Beckermann's use of black and white photographs in her film, *Wien retour*, are exemplary of the power of nostalgia which lies in "its doubling up of two different times, an inadequate present and an idealized past." (19) The photographs feature spaces and places almost exclusively from the pre-war years in Vienna; they are juxtaposed with images of the places and spaces where political developments of the years prior to the annexation took place. This type of nostalgia, which is critical and reflective, acknowledges the longing for a past not as it was but as it "could have been" (34). Similarly, Mitgutsch's novel features a protagonist, Max, who, growing up in New York, is transfixed by a photograph of the lost family home in Vienna. Once possession of the house is regained, a shift from restorative to reflective nostalgia takes place in Max: He learns that a sense of home cannot be created if the "point of origin" (62) is lost. The actions of featured protagonists of the films and novel are interpreted in the vein of psychoanalytical terminology, and this reviewer wonders whether the fine line between re-victimizing by way of psychologizing is at times crossed.

Chapter 3 assuages such concerns in that it veers from the personal attempts at retrieving family history by focusing on the unresolved nature of mass extermination in March of 1945, of Jewish slave laborers near the Austrian-Hungarian border in Rechnitz. The documentary, *The Wall of Silence*, by M. Heinrich and E. Erne as well as the play, *Rechnitz: The Exterminating Angel*, by E. Jelinek are read side-to-side for their genre-defying confrontations with present-day negotiations of the massacre. Krylova highlights the filmic and literary techniques that make these works so effective: the documentary lacks an all-knowing narrator, and does not present an analytical argument to underscore the on-going but ultimately thwarted efforts in bringing truth to the events of 1945. Jelinek's play peruses the power of language itself, rather than plot or protagonists, and thus makes her audience an active and participatory witness in the continued national effort towards "obfuscation, repression and falsity which characterize the discourse" about the Nazi past. (73)

In chapter 4, Krylova draws the attention to an aesthetic treatment of the Waldheim affair in R. Schindel's novel,

*Der Kalte*. She shows that Schindel re-inscribes the politically charged negotiations of the affair into the staging of his novel while at the same time permitting poetic license to envision an altered, idealized ending to an on-going, flawed national reckoning with this history. In Chapter 5, Krylova advocates for a nuanced analysis of what constitutes a memorial, a counter-memorial, a combimemorial and a "mnemorial" (101) in the context of the victims of the Holocaust, in the context of a persistent myth of national victimhood, and in the context of modern-day political sentiment. On-going memorial projects in Vienna draw on new media, international involvement and the repurposing of public space with an emphasis on disrupting the quotidian. Krylova makes explicit the interconnectedness of aesthetic production, social and political dynamics, and psychopathological repression on a national level. At times her readings of these interactive memorial projects and their intent can sound slightly too optimistic (examples: 114, 122, 132) given the national and international unwillingness to confront pain and disruption.

Conclusion: Krylova's book is a timely and welcome addition to various fields of study, among them, memory studies, Holocaust studies and Austrian cultural studies. Krylova's analyses demonstrate what happens when trauma and repressed national history continue unresolved. One wishes that, in her next book, Krylova will follow up on the question she raises in her introduction: Most of the artists of her study are Jewish Austrian, which begs the question: "Who is carrying out the task of working through Austria's past in contemporary Austria?" (p. 21) This is a politically charged question, but one that deserves answers.

**Nicole Calian** (Berlin, Germany) received her Ph.D. from the Department of Germanics at the University of Washington in 2008. She has since lectured in Germanics and the History of Ideas at the University of Washington, and was the academic director for an intensive study abroad course in Berlin, Germany. Dr Calian's publications include articles on Lavater and Kant, Heinrich Heine, and ETA Hoffmann, and she is currently working on publishing her doctoral research which centers on Kant's lectures on anthropology 1772-1798.





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