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**Jewish Prostitution and Community Exclusion:
Fissures and Undulations through Testament Writing**

Preface

This article is part of a larger research in relation to Malka Abraham, a Jewish prostitute well known in S. M. de Tucumán. It focuses on an aspect of her will, which allows to glance at the emotional aspects through the manifestation of her voice - yet indirectly since it was re-transcribed by the acting notary.

Killed on October 21, 1957, Malka was found dead at home after the neighbors informed the police. The case had such an impact that the local press devoted to it several pages "probably because the subjects usually preferred over "others" that are made from an "us" who are not responsible for them, are immigration, crime, cultural differences and biases, discrimination and socio-economic problems. And Malka's covered them all" (Cohen de Chervonagura, 2004, 84).

Her will reflects a more private and intimate discourse: that of a very much marginalized subject who attempts, through the donation of his fortune to the Jewish school, to reconnect with her roots and therefore asks to be buried in the Jewish cemetery in the city of Tucumán (Argentina) where the Jewish community as been particularly sensitive in the desire to register its creation and development based on written sources coming from files.

Why was so important for Malka this action? Probably, as John Cooper explained, "Orthodox girls were vulnerable to the wiles of pimps, partly because Jewish education for girls was often sketchy, and partly because their elementary sexual knowledge was so deficient. Many of these girls remained religious or at least traditional, even when they went overseas to the bawdy houses of Argentina and Brazil" (1995: 187)

It is remarkable that the concern for keeping the collective memory has become more intense due to a growing desire to register life-stories.

Indeed, the study of the institutional frames allows for a greater understanding of the happenings because they assemble and express the principles, ideals, and clarifying

insights of every historical moment reflecting the depth of the societies that build them up.

In the specific case, the founding links of the Jewish community of Tucuman are structured around two fundamental institutions – the Kehiláh and the Chevrah Kedisha- because they construct processes that include the life and death of men and women, e.i. they are the organizing axes gestating, structuring and transforming the configuration processes of the Jewish identity. Malka had to struggle with both institutions, as a woman and as a prostitute. Therefore, the study of the evolution of her singular story allows the preservation of the individual history registered in a broader social context.

Additionally, Tucuman is one of the most important communities in the interior of the country, it has the largest Jewish presence in Argentina has created organizations that helped to fulfill the communal needs and many of its members moved to other countries, particularly Israel.

Previous articles have already dealt with other different aspects of Jewish prostitution in Argentina and Malka`s life such the renunciation of the Kehila`s president, Mendel Disenfeld in disagreement with the offer (Cohen de Chervonagura, 2002).

So now, it`s important to show the meaning of the fragments of the testament where she speaks to the society even after her death, because it`s a fascinating and provocative story

The methodology used is based primarily on the theories of enunciation (Bajtín Mijael, Kerbrat Orecchioni, Catherine; Mozejko, Danuta; Searle, John, Brown, Gillian; Levinson, Stephen) and while it is not intended to make a historical or sociological study, but discursive, it is provided some information for understanding the local and national context that surrounded the whole episode (Feierstein, Ricardo; Blumenfeld, Israel; Guy, Donna; Levy, Larry) In the future we will try to study this document in the broader history of Jewish prostitution in Argentina but now is almost impossible to found more original documentation. The secret and the silence about the Zwi Migdal in Argentina has extended many years

Introduction

The purpose of a last will and testament is to allow the testator to declare her final wishes and express the disposition of her material goods. Even though testaments were

originally based on the need to comply with religious precepts,ⁱ the value of this document increased with the modern era, as it allowed for the possibility of overcoming one's own death and determining the lives of the survivors. "A testament can achieve that the determinations of an already deceased individual be respected by others still living, that from his enunciation roles are exchanged and those who remain, like zombies, dance to its rhythm" (Viola 2002, 16).

Where does the power of a testament lie? Probably in its attempt to continue controlling daily life, even when one is no longer part of it, and to obligate others not only to listen to the testator's word, but also, to even behave even against one's own will in exchange for economic retribution. However, the communication between the testator and the inheritors is not always direct. There is an intermediary who functions as the scribe or notary vouching for the speaker's intentions; a difficult position, since authorship of the written word must be relinquished so as not to assume greater risks. Therefore, the most ample parameter of honesty is sought in order to provide certainty of the intermediary's authority in understanding the instructions at hand.

Laconic and forceful, a testament thus becomes a written document which does not easily permit to read between the lines. In this sense, the testament fulfills a double function: on the one hand, like epistolary correspondence, it expresses the inner self and the most intimate sincerity of the speaker; on the other hand, it goes from being a private document to constitute a document of public circulation which passes through several courts, and even undergoes legal ruses such as clauses or contra-amendments.

Let us view a number of examples that will help us interpret Malka's actions:

At the beginning of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe, the Jews endured terrible pogroms and extreme poverty. The Russo-Japanese war and WWI forced the worst and most destitute conditions upon hundreds of Jewish families, many times supported by women who had lost their bread-winning husbands. These miserable families became the birthplace of European prostitutes, who in addition to hunger and political-religious persecution, were unable to marry. In the face of such misery, the journey to Buenos Aires appeared very attractive.

During these years, Buenos Aires was considered the capital of sales of European women, not only due to insufficient legislation, but also, because of the city's elevated

index of male inhabitants. Of all the immigrant groups on the continent, the Jews were the most renowned for their staunch opposition to prostitution. However, the community feared that a public denouncement of this internal activity to the police authorities would encourage the re-emergence of xenophobic and nationalistic sentiments, or that the community's great influence and economic power would absorb these unwanted members.

For these reasons, the Jewish community separated from these individuals, and this now segregated group organized its own institutions: cemeteries, theatres, and synagogues. These individuals were known as the "*tmeim*" (impure ones), "*rufianes*," or pimps of mostly Polish origin, who were fond of antiques and the theatre, who made their wives work, but never their daughters, and passed themselves off as furriers - a euphemism with which they masked their trade.

The group's members formed an organization called the Zwi Migdal Society, an organization of pimps who noined it after ensnaring the women who worked for them, officially founded in 1906 as the Warsaw Society, but "they worked in Argentina since 1870"(Feierstein, 2006, 280) when began the phenomenon of the Jewish prostitution

Its first president was Noé Trauman who viewed prostitution as a business like any other. Zwi Migdal exercised its power in its own way, namely with regards to the devaluation of Jewish tradition: individual conduct was regulated through a system of rewards and punishments enabling the members to climb the internal power ladder, unbeknownst to other Jewish community organizations.

The Zwi Migdal Society established itself all over the country, with branches in Comodoro Rivadavia and even Tucumán, setting up whore houses by corrupting the local application of the local law who permitted and supervised prostitution.

Argentina's civil register was ruled by a Church with no centralized offices (especially outside the big cities); therefore, the pimps "married" the women they wished to bring over from Europe, arguing that they were joined according to their religious tradition. These matrimonies without civil unions, were justified before the authorities by explaining that these women were not exploited prostitutes, but rather, wives who worked out of their own accord; in the meantime, these women were forced to obey

their husbands and were not permitted to testify against them, thus reducing their miserable existence to near slavery (Feierstein, 2006, 282)

The problem was that, “Religious Jews of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were shocked and repulsed by the thought and presence of Jewish whores, pimps and brothelkeepers. Secular Jews, particularly Socialist, railed against the vice and evidence of capitalistic exploitation. Jewish feminists decried the sexual double standard and the dehumanization of innocent women.

During the period of Jewish mass migration, prostitution would become more noticeable and more prevalent. It might also be more worthwhile to consider the diverse goals within the reforming movement to uncover the reasons for their failure. Both Jewish and Christian reform groups were divided between those who wanted to abolish prostitution entirely (those who called it white slavery, for example) and those who wanted to regulate it (more Christian than Jewish reformers in this group)... If formal laws were not effective in the fight against prostitution, then community control offered another possibility” (Sochen, 1984,331).

The organization was dismantled in 1930 due to the formal complaint of a prostitute, Raquel Liberman, against the pimp Salomón Korn. The complaint was presented to commissioner Alzogaray who had already accumulated proof of Korn's activities in the country since 1906 and was able to obtain the intervention of the law in the pursuit and incarceration of the organization's members.

Although the city of Buenos Aires banned prostitution in the 1930s, “brothels, some of them managed by Jewish women, continued to operate clandestinely in the capital and interior, and Jewish and other prostitutes still sought clients at cabarets and bars. Yet Jews did not outnumber other prostitutes, nor were they necessarily innocent “white slaves.” Many Jewish women had already engaged in this work in Europe; others turned to it because alternative employment was scarce and poorly paid. While Jews may have constituted a majority of legally registered prostitutes in the early twentieth century, the official statistics did not take into account the prostitutes who had not registered. Among them, the percentage of native-born Catholic women was high. Finally, Jewish participation in the trade declined over time. (Mc Gee Deutsch, 2005)

Some aspects of the Jewish context in Tucumán

How was the immigratory process lived through in Tucumán?

In spite of the fact that the Jewish groups which arrived in Argentina at the end of the 1890s first settled in Buenos Aires, as time went by, they started to move to the provinces inside the country, mainly to Santa Fe, Santiago del Estero and Entre Ríos. In this way, they arrived in Tucumán especially from Ukraine, Podolia, Crimea, Moldavia, Bessarabia, Poland and Lithuania, pursuing religious liberty wishes and encouraged by the hope of being able to live without concrete extermination threats.

There were also farmers from other Argentinian provinces and Sepharadim who came from Turkey, North Africa and other Oriental countries and most of them established small businesses and industries before 1930

Now the community in Tucumán has 1.500 families, most of them Ashkenazim but there are also Sepharadim who have organized their Jewish life around a Jewish school, a cemetery, synagogues and a sport campus (Cohen de Chervonagura, 2010) but at that time, Tucumán had about 80,000 inhabitants, most of them Catholic and the architecture of the city was characterized by its Spanish colonial layout with the prevalence of low houses and some distinguished houses of French or Italian style.(Blumenfeld 1971, 56)

In 1906, about 36 Jews coming from Eastern Europe, Buenos Aires and the Santa Fe colonies lived in Tucumán but, some years later, the community had grown so much that the “Sociedad Unión Israelita Tucumana” (SUIT) was born on 15 th January 1911 and special attention was given to the need for an own cemetery apart from cultural, educational, religious and philanthropic activities.

On the other hand, although few members of the community had died up to that moment, it was necessary to be prepared in case there were further deceases which required the observance of Judaic laws.

So, “in November 1911, the mayor of San Miguel de Tucumán at that time, Eduardo Paz, grants a portion in the Norte Cemetery in favor of “Sociedad Unión Israelita Tucumana” with a capacity for about 105 graves, so that they could bury their dead there. The Jewish necropolis would work there during the following 15 years until 1926 when the Chevrah Kedusha buys a plot of land for the Israelite graveyard which is still kept nowadays” (Cohen de Chervonagura, 2010, 47), association which carried out an

important role because it managed the necropolis, provided a bus service to the cemetery and performed constant improvement works.

Years later, by 1955, the main concern of SUIT was a new building for the institution, but inflation influenced the society finances and building costs. Cash donations, the contribution bonds bought by salespeople from Buenos Aires, the contribution of Israelites from Tucumán who lived in Buenos Aires, some benefit festivals and the support of the community credit cooperatives helped to finish the work.

It was a beautiful building which counted with two floors and a terrace; a wide entrance with a large hall; there was also a secretary and an assembly hall; a ceremony room which held 800 people and a bar. On the first floor the I. L. Peretz Library was settled; as well as an assembly hall room which the local WIZO occupied; and an assembly room where Unidad Sionista Tucumana was located.

The opening ceremony of the new building started on 20th October 1957 with a great meeting in the community's honor and the celebrations finished a week later with the visit of doctor Arie L. Kubovy, Israel ambassador in Argentina, who cut the entrance ribbons and discovered the "mezuzah".

Let's imagine the disturbance that was created when, in the middle of this party in which the Jewish community wanted to show its best image, Malka Abraham was murdered on 20th October and her name was widespread with large headlines in the local press which reminded of the activities of the Zwi Migdal, as one of the darkest times of the Jewish history of the country.

Regarding the case we wish to follow, very little is known about the life of Malka Abraham. According to the details provided in Malka's testament, we may assume or suppose that she arrived in the Tucumán province from Buenos Aires around 1906, since the Zwi Migdal Society brought the young women over at about the age of twenty or much younger.

Much of the society's impact on the Jewish community may provide a semiotic analysis of the Jewish cemetery. In effect, in the same way a city's residences vary in price according to their residents' economic status, cemeteries demonstrate an equal phenomenon with their prestigious and neglected areas. The pitiable plots are a meaningful space where the spatial provides a message of meanings left to the living.

The mortuary space becomes a type of text where the uses of territory are challenged with the agreements, discrepancies, and resistances to institutional and religious power. The left/right opposition then, applied to the Tucumán cemetery but may be in not general in other cemeteries, is neither to be viewed as capricious nor superficial since the two orientations express a moral opposition: the former alludes to stupidity, treason, and dishonor; the latter is one of rectitude, valor, and even martyrdom.

In this manner, for example, the Monument to the Victims of the Shoah in Tucumán's cemetery is set in a prominent location, on the right-hand side of the entrance. This location is considered a cosmic center for its historical and national value. The left-hand side of the cemetery's entrance, in contrast, located near the load bearing wall and the bathrooms, is scorned and looked down upon, and therefore, offers cheaper plots. It is in this area where we find that we desire to forget or negate - the stigmatized zone where those who are married to non-Jews are buried, along with the suicides and the poor.

Malka Abraham is buried in this section. Her grave is set apart from the others, located in the extreme corner of the block. Her gravestone only mentions her name and that of her father ("*bat Zalman Abrahám*"). There are no plaques mentioning friends, family members, or Hebrew phrases; in addition, the tombstone is manufactured with carelessness: her last name is misspelled (written *Abrahán* instead of *Abrahám*), and the date marking her passing, October 21, 1957, is a modification of a previously registered date in 1956 (could this gravestone have been designated for another person?).

At the top of the gravestone appears a very well put together elderly woman; let us note that this is a studio photograph – not a police portrait or anything seeming to allude to her profession. She appears with elegant street clothes, wearing earrings, a necklace, a flower in her lapel, and a nicely-styled hairdo. Such an appearance is not surprising, given the frequency with which prostitutes sought to be photographed as decent women of greater economic means.

The donations of the Zwi Migdal Society's funds to charity generated a heated discussion among Tucumán's Jewish community. For some, funds coming from impure sources should not have been accepted, yet others believed that the will of a person seeking to redeem herself should not be rejected but understood biblically as a process of liberation obtained through a monetary payment.

In reading through the official records of the Sociedad Unión Israelita Tucumana (the Israelite Society of Tucumán), the "*Kehila*," one finds the intervention of Dr. Zelik Gorbán to the judiciary resistance. Gorbán was the executor of Malka's last will and testament and the legal representative of the community who was able to rescue Malka's possessions and carry out her wishes. However, the decision to accept Malka's bequest touched upon deep moral, ethical, and religious principles, to the point where President Mendel Disenfeld renounced his position, because he understood that he was endangering Judaism's foremost symbol: honor and respect.

In this manner, official record N.187 officiated by Vice-President Jaime Lecman, on November 26, as testified by official record N.189, the Members of the Board gathered and decided that the last will and testament registered by the notary Emilio H. Gauna, clearly consigns the sole and universal heir of Malka's assets to the Baron Hirsh Jewish School, belonging to the Israelite Society of Tucumán, as we can read in the sixth and seventh clauses (see Annex)

Bible, Philanthropy, and Redemption

To continue this paper without developing the figure of the prostitute within the Jewish tradition would lead us to a superficial reductionism, so now we want to remember some interesting aspects of the theme, because her figure within urban patriarchal societies as the surge and maintenance of prostitution was a direct consequence of a change in society's social, cultural, and economic structures.

In this sense, it's not fortuitous that the Hebrew word used to designate a prostitute (*zona*), was used as much when alluding to feminine infidelity, as when an enormous sin occurred such as the adoration of other gods.

Prostitutes were separated from the areas where the political and religious class lived and were found in the marginalized, darkest zones of the cities. Thus, they were the back yard, a type of social conscience which refused to be seen or recognized, "incarnating the same ambivalence of the patriarchal system towards feminine sexuality which fluctuated from excessive control of wives and daughters to the desire for sexual access to other women." (García Bachmann, 2000, 24)

Following a Judaic line, the Bible also demonstrates that the rehabilitation of prostitutes is possible, such as in the story of Tamar or in Rahab's case, where she is redeemed as a

consequence of a heroic act when she risks her life and helps Joshua in the conquest of Canaan; her decisive attitude thus permits her to remain alive.

In other words, this woman ends up being considered an heroine, not only because she protected Jewish spies and contributed to Israel's victory, but also, for having comprehended what, even the kings did not comprehend: the reaffirmation of God's existence as a source of power capable of taking the Jewish people out of Egypt. "Rahab is rehabilitated, or transformed, in rabbinic exegesis from harlot to proselyte and ultimately, to a suitable wife for a hero of a nation" (Bronner, 1994, 35). Texts indicate inclusively that she married Joshua and was a mother to prophets and priests; thus, for the Midrash (rabbinic literature), the sole fact of adopting Jewish laws and customs can be considered an act of atonement and a sufficient means to saving anyone regardless of her past's trajectory. Let us then remember this concept: in the Jewish religion prostitution as an institution is not tolerated, it is a sin, but rabbinic laws teach tolerant attitudes toward women obliged to take this path. There is always the possibility of redemption.

In Argentina, the case of Rabbi Gershenstein is well known. The said rabbi removed a girl from a brothel and married her. According to Judaism, this act is to be considered a gesture of a kindness because in this manner, the young woman was introduced to the study and observance of the laws of the Torah - the best antidote against sin. And what better example for the search for redemption than the carrying out of a great act of charity, or what is known in Judaism as *tzdaka*? In numerous textsⁱⁱ Judaism has incorporated this concept deeply in referring to a form of *tzdaka* that goes beyond an economic donation: *Tzdka* is "to make justice" with one's neighbor, to reattribute through the donation of money the elements the other lacks and justly deserves.

Malka Abraham, the Jewish prostitute being researched, was able to donate her entire fortune to a local Jewish school. Her last wishes were registered in a will miraculously saved and to which we have been able to gain access almost by chance.

Like the Bible, where redemption is understood as a process of the liberation of a person or animal obtained with a monetary payment, the testament concerns an anomalous episode where the donation enables the rejected prostitute to transcend and

even compare herself to respectable women of society who obtained benefits through the already open doors of community institutions.

The central problem with this structure is that this attitude caused a type of fracture within the social imagination's general monolithic that now became woven around a prostitute who acted like respectable high class women, reincorporating herself into the community nucleus. This occurrence, then, mobilized strong social reactions demanding the reconsideration and readjustment of a new attitude which did not fit Malka's insular, judgmental, and derogatory stereotype.

Doubly rejected, by men for her condition as a woman and by women who did not feel she was one of them, Malka becomes an Other, negated by a schematic and deformed image. Let us clarify that there were also cases where women "took advantage of the opportunity to retell the story of prostitution as a story of victimization and sexual seductions and through her story to express her own complaints against men and the authority being established over women" (Walkowitz, 1993,96). In this way, middle class women organized their identity around the figure of a fallen woman, a degraded Other.

The Testament as Passport to Eternity and Respectability

On December 10, 1954, at the age of sixty seven, two years before her assassination in 1957, Malka's final testament is drawn. Its eight pages are written in the offices of notary Emilio Gauna, and is the testament number 2358

Malka is still young and her motivations are unknown, yet like all last wills and testaments, hers is also written fearing the imminence of death. We ask ourselves then, did something change in the political context which made her feel so insecure? Was she the subject of threats of illness? Did her activity as a financer of "*radicalismo's*" political campaigns make her fear some reprisal? Was it common for people of marginalized environments to give donations? Was really Malka interested in supporting a Jewish school?

Unfortunately, many of these questions remain unanswered, but the fact remains that this text is one of the few legal documents where the subject can talk at length with the clear conscience that it is her final opportunity to direct herself to those still living.

We therefore face a judicial act informing us of the testator's property dispositions as well as her sentiments, attitudes, and shared collective representations. "The testament is a solemn act of the manifestation of the will of a woman regarding the destiny of her property and rights as much as the obligations and dispositions after her death" (González, 1995, 338).

For his part, the notary catalogues and classifies the objects and properties alternating between the past and the future. Consequently, thanks to this testament where Malka bequeathed all of her properties to the local Jewish school (providing a well-rounded education), she was able to save part of her patrimony because at her death, many valuables disappeared from her home when the police authorities intervened.

In reading the testament one is surprised by the quantity of properties, jewels, and commodities listed, showing that while she kept strict control of her finances, information divulged by a relative informant corroborated that following her retirement, Malka financed political campaigns (including the Radical Party), and worked as a money lender. Evidently, she followed the teachings of the Migdal society's white slave trade, whose members controlled elections, gave enormous sums for the protection of their interests to be supervised by the Buenos Aires police investigation unit, and predominated in commercial markets far more beneficial than prostitution (Ielpi, and Zinni, 1992, 221).

Thus, schooled in the world of commerce, since her past in prostitution trained her to use sexuality as a means of subsistence, Malka could have chosen a holographic testament written and signed by hand or one which would have been put away until her death, but precisely as a businesswoman, she sought out an open and public text choosing to express herself in a secure and formal public act (protocol of the state), so that there would be no doubt regarding her wishes. If she had ever dreamt of the reciprocal gratitude, respect, and amiability of those who rejected her, the moment when the text was conceived could certainly turn her dreamlike wakefulness into reality.

In effect, this act safeguarded the presence of a notary who would guarantee the text's preservation and the impossibility of a declaration of nullity directing her goods to another destiny, as well as the assistance and signature of qualified and socially respectable witnesses such as the president of *Jevrah Kedishe* (the community's burial

society), Tevie Kusevitzky, and the friends whom she trusted to fulfill her wishes (Juan Tabaschnik and Isaias Haskel), and others who don't appear but are mentioned often such as Aaron Mizrahi, David and León Holzman, Alejandro Azar or Marcus Grimberg. In writing the testament Malka must have thought that by entering the public space she would be able to avoid the patriarchic systems of dominance; she had exercised her right to determine her final place of rest. In doing this, she rebelled against the degradation of other posthumous or hazardous decisions that may have been forced upon her.

Besides, by choosing the Jewish cemetery, she demonstrated respect for one of the highest maxims of Judaic life, that is, not to separate yourself from the community. For only within the community is the Jew an individual; while society overcrowds and codifies the individual, community personifies and individualizes, as it implies the existence of a previous dialogue and the establishment of an I-you relationship which Malka must have maintained, albeit abnormally. Thus, if only at the moment of her death could Malka know what she was and what was expected from her, the testament became an attempt to exercise an identification with the chosen community, reintroducing herself as she manifested the will of a shared destiny.

A testament is then a truly praiseworthy strategy aspiring to update and impact collective memory. Because Malka doubts that someone will think about her in the future, she attempts to praise herself through a donation that invalidates the possibility of a negative trajectory. She knows that there are other discursive strategies absolutely negated to women in her condition, for example, the impossibility of inspiring an obituary in a newspaper, but she skillfully recurs to another type of text with which she attains an identical objective: the attribution of honor and social recognition.

This document allots elements which permit us to know Malka's relations with society and the ways in which she inscribes herself in the context of an immediate emission. But there is also a temporal split: she speculates how her image may be perceived in a future hypothetical context by the recipients of her will, namely, her opponents, her allies, and those children whom she wishes to benefit.

As in autobiographic texts where one aims to give a moralizing impulse or to exemplify a life, Malka here manifests an instructive attitude which lacks a personal exemplary

trajectory. She shields her image, binding her suffering with sin and economic generosity in order to redeem herself sufficiently to imagine the possibility of collective, contemporary, and future forgiveness.

Expressed Discourses, Whispered Discourses

For all the above mentioned reasons, this testament deserves to be examined as a global strategy which presupposes the concatenation of certain steps: the resources of its structure, the mode in which it is articulated and organized, and the interpretation of these elements in considering the possible significations on a discursive level.

The following sequence can thus be determinedⁱⁱⁱ:

- 1- A comparison where the spatial and temporal placement is proportioned and where the absolute identification of the clerk, testator, and witnesses is presented.
- 2- A description of the property and debts, identification of the beneficiary, and the testament executor who will take charge in fulfilling the testament.
- 3- Assignments in relation to burial and funeral.

Formal and meticulous, the testament's text begins devoid of religious invocations, as was the custom in other historical eras where God or saints were mentioned.

After the formal identifications, the enunciator presents himself and names Malka Abraham as the testator, and so that there remain no doubt of her identity, the text reaffirms that she is known as Malcie (Malkie) an approximate transcription in Spanish of the diminutive of her name in Hebrew, Malka (Queen). A nickname, family, or intimate name reduces the possibility of the existence of a double, but is also a maneuver very much used in the brothel setting where women take on other pseudonyms in order to hide their true identity (in civil records, witnesses confirmed that she was known as Carmen). By screening her real identity, Malka guaranteed that she would eventually help the other prostitutes form another life in the future and not embarrass their families with their activities.

As Bajtin's ideas express, every discourse is dialogic however monologist the enunciation may be because it always responds to something that was said previously about the same problem. The speaker expresses herself through more than one voice and her enunciations bear the continuations that the interlocutor can give. For this reason,

dialogic shades appear because our thought is formed as an interaction and struggle with the thoughts of others, all of which are reflected in the verbal expression.

The testament adopts a composition which permits us to infer how Malka may have imagined her recipients and the power she assigned to her enunciation, which must be understood according to the context in which it is emitted, implying the consideration of previous and posterior enunciations and scenarios since the discourse establishes and constructs its own coordinates, reveals its context, and constructs its spatial-temporal dimension. Intelligent and knowledgeable of the mentality agreed upon by the era, the testator imagines the polemics which the place of her final destiny would generate. The language of others resounds within her and she tries to avoid the imposition of parallel codes even in her absence. For this reason, she insists that her promise be kept, including her death in another city, and she requests an inventory of her valuables because she fears irresponsibility in the fulfillment of her wishes that might lead to the theft of her most prized personal effects.

She responds to possible objections and makes a clear indication that she wishes to be buried in a central location of the cemetery. In the second line of this clause, she recognizes that her burial space may be different due to her life's trajectory, thus she agrees to be laid in an available^{iv} plot, accepting "the best way which her executor thinks convenient or in his absence the Sociedad Unión Israelita deems correct" (clause 8).

In this way, she becomes a humble and obedient pilgrim who seeks social vindication through the respect of institutional authority. As Searle very aptly emphasizes (1994), courtesy is a regulative rule which though doesn't constitute social relations, influences them, and each culture has its own codes. Malka is perfectly aware of these codes and respects them. However, in the production of this discourse, the speaker presents herself through such deictic strategies as personal pronouns, vocabulary, adverbs of time and place, which in referring to indirect discourse are determinate verbal tenses where the true voice of Malka surfaces.

In no way is the testament naïve, neutral, or innocent. Like every discourse, it seeks power, taking advantage of the testator's last opportunity to give a message to posterity. Esther Diaz and Mario Heler say it clearly:

“I speak for those who love me. I speak that I may be obeyed. I speak that I may be considered, although I may be no more. I speak to be heard. There is not a discourse without desire, but in desire there is ambiguity, thus it is there that the strength of an institution appears because it lets us see that our discourse is in legal order, according to the rules and norms guiding it”. (1999,26)

For the tranquility of her soul she asks the executor that this, her final request be fulfilled and thus she begs that the benefit to the school be real and effective, to whose effect she amply facilitates the executor and she begs him to observe and guard the fulfillment of her commands that immediately upon the executor’s notification of her death she insists that he be facilitated to take the keys of the mortuary house and carry out a corresponding inventory. (clause 8)

These are moving fragments in which the speaker regains control of the text calling upon such emotional verbs as *rogar* (to beg) for the execution of her will, not a fortuitous task since it concerns a subjective verb denoting a verbal behavior which seeks the agent’s favorable disposition to the process before the subject, product of a previous positive evaluation.

By means of this verbal form, which serves as a vehicle for an imposed exhortative act formulated with an act of indirect speech produced in benefit of the speaker, two fields of significance are polarized: the formal and legal aspects belonging to the voice of the notary versus the intromission of her own voice and sentiments through an expression appealing to the mercy and charity all human beings deserve.

As we can see, a verbal form of attenuation is being used, understood as a linguistic recourse which promotes the phatic function triggering the emotional contact roused in dialogue. This attenuation serves to persuade, befriend, obtain cooperation, and maintain an encounter concerning a theme which otherwise may be difficult to breach – hence, a clear strategy of positive courtesy driven by the desire to be understood, approved, and admired (Brown and Levinson. 1978,107).

We witness, then, a passage of a relation of interpersonal and institutional symmetry of the *Kehilá* upon Malka, evidenced in the first two parts of the testament in complementation of the third part, in which the behaviors of both are integrated in an

exchange where not only is information controlled, but directly partakes in the control of actions revealing an appropriate dose of emotional intelligence.

In this way, Malka momentarily shapes her voice to the scheme organized meticulously through testament writing. She doesn't propose that being buried in a cemetery be seen as a just retribution to her economic legacy, but rather, insists that her wishes be fulfilled so her soul may rest in peace. Who could refuse to fulfill her final desire for eternal rest? How could the recipients not feel directly compromised? How could her oral and written desires not be respected?

Yet, her insistence is also a reflection of her insecurity, because like all stigmatized individuals, Malka's uncertainty arises from the fear of being defined in function of her stigma. She wants to ensure that all aspects relating to her property are regulated meticulously in order to avoid problems and dutifully organize the destiny of her body and soul.

Again, we return to her origins: "Although one mocks respectability with derision, the prostitute is extremely sensitive in a well educated society and looks to hide herself in her free hours in the company of artists, writers, actors and pseudo bohemian intellectuals where she is accepted as a marginalized personality and not as a curiosity" (Goffman, 1998,41). And yet, acceptance by other socially excluded individuals did not succeed in removing her fear of the reaction of society in general.

Conclusion

Malka responded to the social whisperings surrounding her personality with a concrete and surprising act: the donation of her personal property and a last will and testament which secured her volitions in face of the possibly of an imminent death. The testament was the form chosen to manifest an agreement and demonstrated respect for community values. Malka wanted to be heard, to be "normalized," and especially, to receive the Jewish community's social acceptance within the funerary traditions.

The cemetery is the most immediate place of transmission and of identity acceptance. Moreover, it is not capricious to go to cremation statistics in Jewish cemeteries as a parameter to estimate the amount of Jews living in a country like Argentina, where a citizen's religion does not appear in the archived data of the Civil Registry. For this

reason, during many years, it was enough to multiply the number of inhabitants of the country by those buried in Jewish cemeteries and divide the product obtained by the total amount of dead in the country in order to obtain an approximate idea of the number of Jews at the time. Thus, every Jew, however estranged from his roots, reaffirms his identity at two crucial moments: at birth with the Brit Mila, or circumcision, and at the end of his life with a burial that must be performed in a Jewish cemetery.

Repeatedly, it is affirmed that identity is constructed from the representations and social consciousness circulating in a community. These representations may not always coincide with the inner self of a subject, but rather, be an object of challenge, marginalization, and separation. Malka intelligently appealed to a direct action to neutralize negative representations and to transmit her voice; if identity is constructed from discourse, then this is a good test proposing an alternative to the circulating concepts, through a text that speaks to an immediate context and to posterity.

Although prostitution is a metaphor for the exploitation of women and a palpable proof of the rupture of the sexual contract between man and woman as mediated by money, this document allows Malka to bring the future into the present, connect with her own expectations, and propose another meaning through her project in relating to heterogeneous experiences and aiming at displacing her image from a condemned and stigmatized place.

Without a doubt, this final text allows Malka to construct a frieze through her words. She becomes a social experiment. In an active variable, a mirror, which like Goya, deforms and recomposes. She seeks the indulgence and comprehension of women, men, and especially children – all those who will become recipients of her legacy. She is not a monster, she does not seek vengeance, but rather, pity for her soul and respect in her final destiny. Who can't understand that suffering has been excessive payment for the lack of moderation?

And the result is that exclusion was mitigated through a desire and a gesture that though she didn't equal during her life, she did so without a doubt, at the moment of her death.

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ⁱ In the middle Ages the Church penalized those who died without leaving a testament by the absence of a burial in temples or cemeteries and condemned the soul to roam freely without receiving a pardon for its sins. In that document, however, one had to consign one`s willingness to receive a good mausoleum and prayers anticipating such an end with a determinate tithe. Recently, towards the XVIII century with the appearance of notaries who organized the transfer of property, clauses having to do with mortuary rites and the penalties due to their infraction disappeared.

ⁱⁱ *Tzdaka* saves one from death (Proverbs 10:2). *Tzdaka* is as important as all the other commandments together (Babylonian Talmud - *Bava bathra* 9a).

ⁱⁱⁱ I would like to especially thank the notary Héctor Colombres for his assessment of the characteristics of testamentary writing.

^{iv} Rabbi Daniel Levy emphasizes “Evil people must be buried separately, but there are different types of evil people: a suicide is not the same as a prostitute but they should not be mixed with the rest of the people. For that reason, the measurement of 2.40 cm. must separate the distance between tomb of a *tame* (impure person), and the rest of the people. I believe that more than her redemption, she sought to recover her identity as a Jew and for that reason she preferred to be buried among the Jews though separated.” (interview, March, 3, 2008, Tucumán)

Annex

Last will and Testament of Malka Abraham (iiii)

En la ciudad de San Miguel de Tucumán, República Argentina, a diez de Diciembre de mil novecientos cincuenta y cuatro, ante mí el Escribano autorizante y testigos al cual firmados comparece Doña Malke Abraham, que acostumbra llamarse Malcie Abraham, persona de mi conocimiento, cédula de identidad número trece mil quinientos cincuenta y seis, expedida por la Policía de esta Capital doy fe, quien me manifiesta su resolución de testar por acto público, y hallándose a mi juicio en su pleno goce de sus facultades intelectuales, procedió ante los testigos que también se encontraban allí presentes y que al cual se expresaran, quienes vieron y oyeron a la testadora dictarme sus disposiciones en voz clara, las que son redactadas por mí en la forma siguiente: Primera: Que se llama Malke Abraham, nacida el tres de Abril de mil ochocientos ochenta y siete en Sadugora, Provincia de Bucovina, Estado de Rumania y domiciliada actualmente en esta ciudad, calle Marcos Paz número ciento once. Segunda: Que es hija legítima de los cónyuges Salomón o Salman Abraham y Chancie Abraham ya fallecidos. Tercera: Que es de estado soltera y que no tiene hijos naturales. Cuarta: Que sus bienes consisten en *(a continuación, en la cláusula quinta, se enumeran diez casas en la ciudad de Tucumán con sus correspondientes domicilios, un terreno en Huerta Grande (Córdoba)* Cláusula sexta: Que no teniendo herederos forzosos, instituye y nombre por su único y universal heredero de todos sus bienes a la Escuela “Barón Hirsh” que funciona en calle Ayacucho cuatrocientos cincuenta y cinco de esta ciudad y que sostiene la Sociedad Unión Israelita Tucumana, sociedad con personería jurídica con domicilio en la calle Las Piedras novecientos ochenta de esta ciudad. Cláusula séptima. Que también deja a beneficio de la citada Escuela los ahorros que tiene en las compañías “La Continental” y “Buenos Aires” a las cuales comunicará la testadora por separado su última voluntad. Que también deja para la Escuela el dinero en efectivo, cuentas a cobrar, cheques y demás papeles y créditos que tiene o tuviera a la fecha de su fallecimiento Cláusula

octava: Que nombra por su albacea testamentario al Señor Zeilik Gorbán, casado, argentino naturalizado, domiciliado en calle veinticinco de Mayo trescientos nueve de esta ciudad, actual Presidente de la Sociedad Unión Israelita Tucumana o la persona que ejerza la Presidencia de la misma a la fecha de su fallecimiento. Que es su voluntad que el Albacea efectúe a su fallecimiento su entierro en el Cementerio Israelita de esta Capital de acuerdo a la prescripciones del rito mosaico, en un lugar céntrico del mismo si ello fuere posible, sino por el mejor medio o la mejor forma que lo crea conveniente su Albacea o en su defecto la Sociedad Unión Israelita. Solicita al Albacea que si llegara a fallecer fuera de esta Ciudad, sus restos sean traídos para dar cumplimiento a lo estipulado en el parágrafo anterior. Que para tranquilidad de su alma, pide al Albacea que ésta, su última voluntad sea cumplida y así lo ruega. Que dispone que el lote de su sepultura sea pagado con parte de los bienes que deja, como así también una lápida a construir, los gastos funerarios y los rezos por su alma a cuyo efecto faculta al Albacea para que haga los gastos necesarios. Que dispone que el resto de sus bienes sean dispuestos por su Albacea, entregándolos a beneficio de la Escuela ya mencionada, dejando a criterio del Albacea el modo más conveniente, ya sea para su mantenimiento simple o para invertir los fondos para emprendimientos o para construir edificios para la Escuela o entregando los inmuebles o bienes a fin de que la Sociedad Unión Israelita Tucumana disponga de la mejor forma, para que el beneficio a la Escuela sea real y efectivo, a cuyo efecto faculta ampliamente al Albacea y le ruega que observe y vigile que sus mandos se cumplan. Que pide a su Albacea que sus bienes muebles, alhajas, ropas y demás efectos que quedaran sean vendidos en remate inglés y que su producto sea también ingresado en beneficio de la Escuela. Que inmediatamente que el Albacea se noticie de su fallecimiento, le ruega y lo faculta para que tome las llaves de la casa mortuoria y proceda al inventario de sus bienes. Que pide al Albacea que de noticias de

su fallecimiento a parientes, para lo cual deja en el lugar donde se encontraran sus valores y efectivo, un sobre con las direcciones de aquellos. Noveno: Que este testamento expresa su última voluntad y en consecuencia revoca cualquier otro testamento que hubiere dictado con anterioridad al presente. Y no teniendo más que disponer, procedo a leer este testamento que oyen todos los circundantes también la testadora que ratificó su contenido, pues estaba la otorgante reunida ante mí con los testigos (*se nombra a los testigos con sus datos personales*) quienes además manifiestan conocer a la testadora, quien firma juntamente con los testigos, que son hábiles, personas de mi conocimiento, doy fe

(iiii) Sucesión testamentaria archivada en el expediente civil del Juzgado de la II Nominación; Secretaría IV: Juez S. Gallo Cainzo, Secretario José Marcelo Arce. Expediente I, Caja 4810, 2 cuerpos. Archivo General de la Provincia de Tucumán, Sección Judicial, Tucumán, Argentina

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Summary

We reconstruct some aspects which integrate the chiaroscuro of a provincial collective memory, generated around the figure of Malka Abraham, a prostitute brought to the country by the Tzwi Migdal Society at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Jewish community of Tucumán (Argentina), brought upon her figure a unusual collective construction to such a point that her posthumous destiny, leads us to analyze what significance Malka acquires today because it supports a fundamental type of prohibition: the taboo of the object, constituted around the sexuality and politics.

We attempt then to trace the social significance which a phenomenon like the death of Malka and the donation of her economic legacy to the community had. That is to say, we seek to analyze through the study of a case, how the social production of meaning was manifested within a network of socio-semiotic references since the system of references is located in the collective memory.