

Home-Maker and Mother Representations in Advertisements of Pre-State Israel

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Abstract

This article examines representations of the home-maker and mother in advertisements from dailies, women magazines and manuals of pre-state Israel. It is based on about 150 ads which were divided into topic-oriented groups and then analyzed using content analysis and semiotic models. The ads were investigated as cultural texts reflecting ideologies, concepts and norms of its creators as well as of the audience they were aimed at. The findings show four main ideologies embodied in the ads: the ideology of nationalism, the ideology of domesticity, that of Modernism and the ideology of science. In this article, the first two ideologies are presented, followed by analyzed examples of home-makers and mothers' representations in relation to domestic chores and to family members in the house. Throughout all ideologies, an ambivalent image of the woman is portrayed: a woman exclusively in charge of the household jobs, albeit lacking authority and power.

Key words: advertisements, home-maker, mother, representation, Yishuv, pre-state Israel, gender, semiotic analysis.

Introduction

Advertisements featuring representations of home-maker and/or mother first appeared in the Hebrew press of the 1920s and have continued to be a prominent part of it for many years. These representations have occupied a significant part of the advertising scene in Israeli visual culture. This article will examine these portrayals occurring in ads for home products in this period and it is based on a comprehensive research of about one hundred and fifty ads, which appeared in dailies, in women's magazines and manuals published over the three decades prior to the establishment of the state of Israel, in 1948.¹ The ads will be analyzed with the assumption that extracting meanings and messages inherent in them is the key to understanding the world views prevalent in the Hebrew society in Eretz Israel (known as the Yishuv) both with their creators and with the target audience they were aimed to.²

This premise is based on perceiving the ad as a text aiming for an effective communication with its audience, so as to maximize selling the product by referring to the ideologies then accepted as normative.³ Decoding these ideologies and messages will be done through analyzing the ad text according to the structuralistic approach claiming that cultural meaning is to be found in cultural structures and the human consciousness conceiving these structures.⁴

The period of the New Hebrew settlement in pre-state Israel, beginning with the first immigration in the end of the 19th century to the establishment of Israel, is perceived in modern Jewish history as a time of local Hebrew culture crystallization.⁵ The appearance of ads in the press and in popular literature reflected a process of cultural flourishing, characterized by increasing population and rapid economic growth.⁶

¹Manuals and articles featuring in this research study, prior to 1920s are scarce. 1948 serves as a chronological boundary of this research as it is considered by Hebrew culture researchers as ending the pre-state phase.

²Bartal, 2013: 137-147.

³Agam-Dali, 2010: 41.

⁴Beeri, 2004: 57.

⁵ Even-Zohar, 1980: 165-189; Ben-Porat, 1999:49.

⁶ Between 1920 and 1948 the Yishuv increased tenfold and counted 650,000 people just before the establishment of the state of Israel. The two major immigration waves during the British Mandate were the fourth Aliya (1924-1926) and the fifth Aliya

Immigration waves from central Europe in the 1930s had a crucial contribution to the development of economy, society and culture.⁷ The field of advertising marched along with industry and manufacturing, as suppliers of bourgeois consumerism culture, centering in Tel-Aviv.⁸ At the end of the 1930s there were twenty five advertising agents in Tel-Aviv with one focusing on film. In the 1940s, following World War II, many industrial plants were set up and thus the product and advertising market expanded too.⁹

Until the 1920s Hebrew press ads lacked illustrations almost entirely and contained verbal text specifying the product's virtues.¹⁰ Later in the 1920s the first illustrated ads emerged many of which featuring women's representations. Like the products, the ads too were imported and placed in the Hebrew press with their text translated into Hebrew. The decision to include these in this research corpus was based on the notion that they were verbally adapted for a Hebrew speaking readers albeit visually highly similar, and sometimes identical to the original ads. In addition, this decision was also based on the marketing principle by which ads embody the essence of accepted values of the society where they appear, so as to generate situations with which the target audience can easily identify.¹¹ It seems that the local advertising companies adopted the foreign ads since they considered them suitable for the Hebrew consumers.

And what was women's condition – the target audience – during the period in question? Although this research paper studies representations, it is worthwhile to briefly dwell on the Hebrew Woman's condition in Eretz Israel so as to shed light on the link between reality and its images as shaped in the ads.¹² During the Mandate period the rate of immigrating women was similar to that of men.¹³ Most of them settled in towns,¹⁴ lived within traditional families and were mainly homemakers.¹⁵ Despite many women's aspirations to change life patterns and establish an equalitarian society, the work division within the Hebrew family remained the same and men's expectations were that women would carry on engaging in traditional "feminine" jobs.¹⁶ Their disappointment led them to strive for a better involvement in the Yishuv's life both in the socialistic sector as agricultural workers¹⁷ or as doing welfare educational medical and legal jobs in the civil society. Women of the whole political range got together in order to improve their living conditions including fighting for a right to vote for the political institutions of the Yishuv, which they fully won in 1926. Of all the women's organizations I will only mention two major ones starting in 1920, whose influence was crucial: The council of Women Workers whose aim was to take care of women Histadrut members¹⁸ and Hebrew Women's Organization, which promoted women's status in Eretz Israel and engaged in philanthropic activity.¹⁹ The latter together with Hadassah organization issued the women's magazine *Ha'Isha* during 1926 to 1929 through which feminine ideas were promoted, while the former issued *Dvar Hapoelet*, starting 1934, which served to express the opinions and experiences of Hebrew women workers thus deepening the connection between them and Hebrew culture as well as their general education and their feminist awareness.²⁰

(1933-1936). The latter years significantly changed the image of the Hebrew Yishuv: The domestic product grew 2.5 times, the city of Tel-Aviv grew threefold hosting about 40% of all Jewish immigrants during that period. Helman, 2007: 11.

⁷Gelbar, 1990:385.

⁸ Similar development occurred in advertising in Arab press within the country and also in neighboring Arab countries such as Egypt.

⁹Helman, 2007:23.

¹⁰Marnin-Distelfeld, 2012:306.

¹¹Vestergaard and Schroder, 2004:398.

¹²As this article addresses representations namely the field of prescriptive images rather than the descriptive one, I will not expand on the life reality of women in the Hebrew Yishuv. This will only be discussed briefly.

¹³Alroey, 2010: 91.

¹⁴Ben-Porat, 1999:77.

¹⁵Bernstein, 1993: 92.

¹⁶Bernstein, 2001:116, 121; Shilo, 1992:120-123.

¹⁷Neumann, 2009: 16-18. For further reading on the battle for the right to vote see: Safran, 2006.

¹⁸Margalit-Stern, 2001:294-295.

¹⁹Diskin, 2011:65.

²⁰Schechter, 2011:333-334.

Another major issue regarding Yishuv women was the housewife's professional training and her status. In 1920, Hanna Maisel-Shochat started a women's training project aiming to turn household and yard tasks into a profession.²¹

Parallel to expanding women's options to acquire training and be incorporated as household workers, both in villages and in towns, a new organization – Working Mothers in their Household Organization was founded in 1929, in the hope of equating housewives' status to that of women working outside their homes.²² Hebrew housewives had to cope with distress and scarcity – small crowded apartments and poor household means. In which way did the advertisement for home products reflect the “real” condition of women in the Hebrew Yishuv? This question along with the major research one, concerning the ideologies underlying the advertisements, will be responded in this article.

Methodology

The ads researched have been collected from the three major dailies- *Davar*, *Haaretz* and *Hatzofe*, from women's magazines and manuals published in Hebrew between 1920 and 1948. Choosing these three dailies stemmed from the wish to create an ideologically wide corpus: Each daily belonged to a different political stream: *Davar* – The socialistic sector, *Haaretz* – The liberal sector, and the *Hatzofe* – The religious Zionist sector. The dailies were systematically sampled - three months each year, so that a month reviewed in one year was not scanned the following year so as to create a reliable sample reflecting the seasons, holidays, political events, etc. As to women's magazines – all published during that period were fully reviewed so as to get a wide picture of addressing women from various sectors. Manuals included consisted both of major Yishuv institutions' publications and books published by private authors or commercial publishers. All manuals relevant to the household and woman's topic found in archives of those years were also reviewed. These include a written text and a visual image where the representation of the homemaker and/or mother is central or equivalent in significance to those of others - husband, child, friend or some object. The ads were classified into four major groups fitting the main issues dealt with: representations of the homemaker and the household; of the mother as a caretaker; of the woman as healthy and well-groomed and finally representations of intimate body parts–sexuality, marriage, couple hood and fertility.

After categorizing the ads, a methodology was chosen combining content analysis focusing on semiotic theories and models following Roland Barthes's definition of the ad as a mini-narrative, a kind of a meaningful sign sequence.²³ As such, the ad has three key points of the plot:²⁴ breaking of the balance thus creating instability, the protagonist fighting the forces of evil and resuming the balance by resolving the conflict.²⁵ The narrative ideology exists within the conflict of imbalance and its resolution, and through identifying the values involved in it.²⁶ The point of imbalance, the state of the “minus”, will be fixed by a subject whose job is to reinstall order and reach a state of “plus”. Based on these principles, Algirdas Julien Greimas developed his *Actant Model* which contains six agents: the sender, the object, the subject/hero, the antagonist/enemy, the assistant/friend and the recipient.²⁷ The actants are the elements functioning within the plot and can even be abstract concepts. The narrative plot is motivated by a sender, who appoints a hero who, in turn, through obtaining the object, is supposed to resume order. On his/her way, he/she will meet both helpers and opponents whom he/she will overcome until finally achieving the desired object. There are three axes at the basis of each narrative: the axis of desire – where the hero acts to achieve the object, the axis of power – where the helper and opponent act and finally the axis of knowledge – the one lying between the sender and the recipient.

²¹ Carmel-Hakim, 2007:72.

²² For further reading: Margalit-Stern, 2006: 324-344.

²³ Barthes divides text analysis into syntagm which is a sign system and paradigm which is a system underlying the text which includes a corpus of our beliefs and conceptions as cultured creatures. Barthes, 2006: 71-72.

²⁴ Vladimir Prop created a model for narrative analysis. While analyzing one hundred Russian folk stories he found in them a repeated narrated structure containing 32 functions which he summarized into six: preparation, conflict, change, battle, returning and release. John Fiske argued this model could be executed for every cultural narrative. Fiske, 1987: 136-137.

²⁵ Fiske, 1987: 139.

²⁶ Todorov, 1977: 10-11.

²⁷ Vestergaard and Schroder, 2004: 414-415; Liebes and Talmon, 2004: 331; Hebert, 2006: 1-3; Mishkis-Habber, 2009: 29-30.

At the paradigmatic level, two models will be used: the Griemas model and that of Claude Levi Strauss.²⁸ The latter suggested that there is a universal way of grasping the world by mapping existing values as a system of binary contrasts used as anxiety reducers.²⁹ Contrasting values will be juxtaposed along the narrative sequence where it is the reader/viewer's job s to decode them in order to reveal the ideology underlying the text. Levi-Strauss defined the binary contrast – nature versus culture – as the basic contrast underlying every text.³⁰ Following him, John Fiske expanded the binary model to include metaphoric values conveying contrasting forces – order versus chaos, man versus woman, and good versus evil.³¹

The content analysis is based on a series of questions and indices formulated and inspired by Ervin Goffman, while studying ads from a gender-oriented point of view:³²

1. The image of woman as a central figure (the heroin): Is this representation narrative-like or concise? Is the heroin active or passive? The woman's position: standing or seated? Where she is situated – near a table, on a chair, on the floor, in a bed.
2. Job division of man and woman: being displayed next to one another in the same scene, jobs done by the woman or by the man. The relationships among family members: how close is the woman to her children, to her husband? How is the relationship between husband and wife depicted regarding look, touch, etc.
3. Does the body appear whole or partial? Does the woman touch feminine objects or parts of her own body?
4. Interaction between spectator and woman: Does the woman look straight at the spectator or does not look at him/her all? Is she close/far from the spectator?
5. Visual image and written text:³³ in what way does the former illustrate the latter?³⁴
6. The written text's format:³⁵ repetitive terms, the language of address, the manner of address (imperative or second person), the tone of the text (e.g. warning, threatening, etc).

Discussion and Findings

This research is based on 150 representations centered on homemakers and mothers.³⁶ The foreign representations and the local ones share a similar image of the housewife as a well-groomed matron. The former show a more elaborately dressed woman in a dress and apron, high-hill shoes, sometimes with her face made-up. Compared to these, the local representations feature a simple image, drawn with little details only. Evidence of household realities, such as fatigue, dirt or frustration, is shown in few examples alone. The gap between the ads and reality appears in the products themselves: electrical ovens and refrigerators, laundry powders and certain food products which were very rarely in use during the Mandate years. Most families could not afford them.

The correlation between women's representations in the ads and women's condition in the Yishuv society is present in the complex and ambivalent attitude towards them within both worlds. Conflicting messages as to women's status and power conveyed by the ads echoed the way women were treated by the society of the Yishuv. The representations reveal four main Ideologies:³⁷ Nationalism (20%), Domesticity (20%), Modernism (30%) and the Ideology of science (30%). In this article two of the four will be presented: The Ideology of Nationalism and that of Domesticity.

²⁸ Fiske, 1987: 138.

²⁹ Levi- Strauss leaned on de-Saussure's theories as well as on Freud's dream theory while developing the theory of the binary contrasts. Mishkis Haber, 2009: 28.

³⁰ Fiske, 1990: 116-117.

³¹ Liebes and Talmon, 2004:333.

³² For studies based on Goffman's parameters, see: First, 2001; Bell and Milic, 2002; Vestergaard and Schroder, 2004. I would like to stress that not all of Goffman's parameters were relevant to each ad.

³³ Martinec and Salway, 2005: 337-340.

³⁴ Barthes argues that visual images are an un-stable chain of signifiers, enables the viewer to choose some and ignore others. The aim of the written text is to establish the visual image within a category of meaning, and to lead the viewer to a "preferred reading" of the ad. Fiske, 1990: 110-111.

³⁵ Zeevi, 2019: 223-224.

³⁶ Marnin-Distelfeld, 2012: 51-52.

³⁷ The rough division is due to the fact that some representations match more than one ideology.

The National Homemaker

Glorifying women's traditional domestic roles was used as a means of guiding and directing mothers and homemakers about their roles thus constituting a rhetoric framework into which the values of Hebrew nationality were cast, in the Yishuv's discourse of that time.³⁸ Ads for domestic products used this rhetoric as a sales promoter. In a 'Shemen' company ad for 'Meqed' cooking oil, the house wife is depicted as a soldier woman expropriated from her private home in favor of an external territory. (pic. 1). She is portrayed as a young woman neatly dressed, wearing an apron round her waist and a pot-like hat while holding a ladle as if it were some weapon. In the background, a row of similarly looking home-makers is seen, lined up as soldiers, holding their ladles, too. At the front there is a text that reads, "Every home-maker would wish to receive a commendation from her family in the form of praise and admiration for every serving brought to the table...". Fiske explains how an ad functions as a site where two separate syntagmatic systems meet to merge into one image.³⁹ Here, the military and the domestic scenes were juxtaposed so as to generate a newly created situation combined of features belonging to the two distinct worlds.⁴⁰

The public space contributes its status and prestige by rendering the commanding officer's authoritative image while the domestic one – through the woman's ability to feed her family. An additional signifier relates to the historic consequences, namely the recruiting of women to the army during World War II, when this ad was created. The 'Shemen' company did not call on women to join the army but fused the value of serving in the army into the homemaker representation thus equating the two subject matters.⁴¹ Levi-Struss claimed that the process of understanding a text passes through revealing its binary contrasts.⁴² The male cook versus the woman homemaker, the male cook as an officer in command – versus the woman as his junior, the private space versus the public one – all these portray the home-maker as subjected to male authority and to the public space laws embodied by this authority. The text tells about her subordination to her family. Her excelling at making the food (while the oil serves as her 'helper') is conditioned by her accepting the military laws, which are pure representatives of the establishment, mainly the culture. This juxtaposes another pair of binary contrasts: nature versus culture, as the need to eat and the woman as provider of food are linked to the sphere of nature while the food to be prepared via the processed product and the way to prepare it are linked to the sphere of culture.⁴³ Cooking is depicted as a victory of culture over nature and is linked to the national ideology suggesting that appropriate feeding is the basis of a healthy nation.⁴⁴

³⁸ On the national discourse in the context of homemakers see: Marnin-Distelfeld, 2012: 77-95.

³⁹ Fiske, 1990: 103-104.

⁴⁰ Avivit Agam Dali analyses ads from the 1950s pointing at the woman in her domestic space described as a soldier in a battle field. She claims that the war situation in reality led to the creation of images taken from the world of war. See: Agam-Dali, 2005.

⁴¹ During World War II, 3200 Yishuv Jewish women soldiers served in the British army, starting 1942, which is the year of this ad. Cohen, 2005: 12.

⁴² Fiske, 1990: 116-117.

⁴³ The concept by which women is inherently closer to nature and men to culture is widely discussed in Ortner's article. Ortner, 2007: 25-45.

⁴⁴ Bromberg, 1941: 3.



pic. 1: ad for ‘Meged’ cooking oil. From the magazine *Olam Haisha* (The Woman’s World) (14.1.1942)

Many local plants and industries during the Yishuv period picked Biblical names for their products. In a laundry soap ad ‘Menora’ of ‘Shemen’ company (fig. 2), a home-maker is displayed hanging laundry while a friend approaches her and embarrasses her in front of the viewer saying: “Didn’t you really know, Mrs. Levi?” This direct question followed by a question and exclamation mark (meaning “What? Are you out of your mind?”) Along with the woman’s panicking face shown as a separate image at the bottom of the scene, serves as connotative means for the structuring of the home maker’s inferior status. The imbalance point of the narrative is having used detergent, which is not ‘Menora’, thus ignoring all the positive virtues embodies by this detergent. According to the actant model, this woman is the protagonist whose journey for achieving the balance in the plot is ahead of her.

The relationship between the text and the images are extremely interesting. This ad has three parts: the upper one with the woman’s conversation, the middle one where the soap virtues are specified and the lower part with the ‘Shemen’ logo and the ‘Menora’ symbol appear together. The ad is laid out with the upper part describing the imbalanced narrative scene since the friend reprimands Mrs. Levi for her wrong behavior. In the middle part the written and visual texts appear combined while tiny illustrations emphasize the words. The information is supposed to pave and guide the heroine’s way like within a maze. What will finally be achieved is using the ‘Menora’ detergent who’s virtues are reliability in the long run, scientific quality, its being Kosher and harmless for clothing or skin. By the actant model the company acts as the helper representing the sender – the advertising company, and actually the whole Yishuv society. Additional helpers are the chemist responsible for the soap quality and the physician measuring the child’s height. It is interesting to know that ‘Shemen’ picked the Menora as a logo because actually there is no associative connection between them. The connotation aroused in the audience was probably that of the temple Menora – a historic and ritual symbol of the Jewish people. The Menora burned using olive oil, an ingredient used to make ‘Shemen’s soaps. This is, no doubt, an attempt to establish a national link between the homemaker and the soap she uses.



pic. 2: ad for 'Menora' soup of 'Shemen', from *Olam Haisha* (May, 1941)

Consumerism was perceived in ads as a feminine scene and women discussing their shopping habits with one another were turned into an image supposed to promote proper feminine behavior. Out of all the ads featuring home maker representations, about fifteen show two or more women engaged in an intimate scene which I call "women's talk".⁴⁵ In those samples there is a close encounter between a home maker engaged in one of the typical household chores (laundry, shopping, cooking, storing in the fridge) and her counterpart performing the same action of a friend who dropped by for a visit and a small talk. This portrayal is based on domesticity and mostly focuses on situations taking place in the domestic space when women talk of some domestic practice.

In a 'Kessem' powder ad two women are shown folding underwear (pic 3, right). One is asking the other, "Have you bought any new underwear items?" and her friend answers, "No! I have washed the old ones with Kessem". Instead of one satisfied home maker using the product, the viewer gets two. The accompanied text unfolds the virtues of the product stressing the fact that 'Kessem' powder prolongs the underwear lifetime thus indicating its quality and its being economical. In another ad for the same powder dating for world war II (pic. 3, left), the advertiser used the general public atmosphere in the Hebrew Yishuv at that time which preached for austerity due to shortages of basic food supplies. Here an element of tension is added to the women's conversation as one of them suspect her friend of purchasing luxury goods (curtains) while all the home makers were called on to consume less during the war. The word "luxury" gets a negative connotation here being unsuitable to the socialistic ethos of austerity which was a crucial issue of the public discourse. When the friend explains that she has not bought new curtains but washed the old ones using 'Kessem', the powder is immediately associated with properly consuming ethos. In that way not only the Hebrew home maker is identified as behaving nationally properly but the product seems to fit this ethos and as such gains credit with those women who wish to be identified with austerity so as to support the Yishuv national strength.

⁴⁵Vestergaard and Schroder call these situations "gossip ad". They present several types of ads using close and friendly relationships among women. Vestergaard and Schroder, 2004: 416-417.



Pic.3: ad for ‘Kessem’ laundry powder. Right: from *Davar* (29.7.1938), p. 6. Left: from *Davar* (6.10.1942) , p. 3.

The inscription “Just between the two of us” enhances the intimate connotation. The women’s conversation is intimate and open at the same time. It is allegedly concealing but also informative providing objective information about the product and subjective information on its and its users’ values. Vestergaard and Schroder claim that this kind of ad leans on the gossip principle which by nature invite a third and fourth woman into its scene of feminine solidarity.⁴⁶ Just as gossip has a dimension of surprise, revelation or provocation, in these ads the heroine surprises her friend. In a narrative where the home-maker, the heroine strives to obtain clean laundry (often in days of war and need) she encounters a woman helper whose help derives its significance from the national ideology. The women’s talk is conducted in such a way that the friend suspecting the heroine of spending her money in days of shortage is proven wrong; her friend did not behave in an inconsiderate way but found a magic solution embodying proper frugality and household management as well. The friend functions here as a helper, confirming the home-maker’s national identity.

The Home-Maker and the Domestic Mother

The ideology of domesticity has joined that of the Hebrew nationality as the infrastructure for ads. Home-maker and mother’s representations feature in about half of home product ads together with an additional figure: husband, friend, child or as interacting with other figures such as a shopkeeper, a cook, a lady judge, a doctor. What these ads have in common is that the home-maker does not share the housework with that figure. Where the home-maker appears next to her husband, she is depicted as subjected to him.

⁴⁶Vestergaard and Schroder, 2004: 413.



pic.4: ad for 'Meged' cooking oil of 'Shemen', from *Olam Haisha* (1941)

In a 'Meged' oil ad (pic.4) a home-maker is buying a bottle of oil, brings it home, uses it to make food and finds it to be of bad quality. By the actant model the sender is 'Shemen' company, the subject/heroine is the home-maker whose job is to provide a nutritious meal ('object') by buying the bottle of oil. The two males in the ad – the shopkeeper and the husband – are the 'opponent' and 'helper', respectively. Both challenge the woman doing her job. The actant model could fit into the semiotic square model to achieve a complexity of meaning.⁴⁷ Greimas notes four square corners representing situations related to the figures and narrative functioning on four different axes: the axis of truth, the axis of lie, the axis of secret and the axis of fake. Among these four, there are three types of relations: those of contrast, contrasting and those of complement. According to the semiotic square, the home-maker and her husband are contrast to one another, as she is a woman and he is a man. They are located on the axis of truth for their relationships are based on a system of truth, marriage. The woman and the oil bottle are in a relationship of complement because it is her helper. They are located on the axis of secret since its being the right oil for her is a kind of secret until she finds out having bought the wrong oil.

The oil and the shopkeeper are contrasted on the axis of lie, as the former sells her the cheap and fake oil, rather than 'Meged', namely he basis his action on a lie thus failing the home-maker. He and the husband complement each other, both being men dominating the woman's actions, but they also contrast as the shopkeeper is an opponent while the husband is a helper. They are located on the axis of faith for the shopkeeper is responsible for the forgery revealed by the husband. The home-maker and the shopkeeper also contrast, as he is portrayed as someone failing her in the act of buying. The woman and her husband's axis of truth is based on the value of marriage on bourgeois-patriarchal ideology according to which the woman, even while acting within her home, is subjected to male authority.

This ideology is so strongly reflected in the ad that the husband's act, which at first reading seems as the generator of the conflict, turns out to be the crucial act motivating the plot. Had he not felt angry with his wife she would not have gone shopping for the right oil – 'Meged', worth eating. The value of a healthy family fed on the right oil is the object to be achieved, juxtaposed against the axis of lie where the shopkeeper and the 'Meged' oil container are positioned. The fact that the shopkeeper preferred to sell another oil rather the 'Meged' oil is perceived as analogical to treason on the axis of truth.

⁴⁷Greimas and Courtes, 1989: 570.

This lie is the major motive in the plot while the forgery and the secret are used as means of preventing it from being revealed. Facing the patriarchal ideology and the marriage establishment leaning on healthy nutritious meals, there stands the fake product industry which flourished in that period.⁴⁸

Two contradicting images helped create the contrast between the axis of truth and the axis of lie: the sealed bottle bearing the 'Megeed' blue label versus the open oil can. The word 'Megeed' is Biblical, meaning the best of produce. Choosing to buy 'Megeed' is actually choosing a quality product manufactured in Eretz Israel. Underlying this choice the national ideology exists at both the connotative and mythological levels. These two ideologies – the patriarchal and the national one – are intertwined so as to resist the forgery industry threatening to deteriorate the Hebrew family. Paradoxically what is supposed to help the home-maker choose the desirable oil next time is being subjected to good taste and to her husband discretion after he disliked the meal prepared using the fake oil. The legitimacy used by the advertiser to convey the husband's reproaching tone towards his wife as a way of restoring the order, is fascinating; it is based on the norm of the husband being superior to his wife accompanied by negative attitude.

The ad features serial episodes which emphasizes the realistic dimension and at the same time enhancing the viewer's identification with the heroine. The husband and wife are characterized by wearing outfits defining the two distinct spheres they represent: she is wearing a dress and an apron and he – a business suit. The central scene displays an imbalance as the husband is angry with his reprimanded wife, but there is also a hint of restoring that balance. The point of breaking the balance exists here not at the beginning of the narrative but in its center. The word "tomorrow" implies the near future when the domestic order will be restored. It is important to note that the home-maker willingly and submissively accepts her husband authority as it is her recounting her incident to the viewers. At the cross sections of the relationships between the four elements, contrasting values are confronted, thus causing the plot to be in a state of imbalance: man and woman, authority and submissiveness, authenticity and forgery, 'Megeed' oil and an open can, appropriate nutrition and inappropriate nutrition, marriage and betrayal. Domestic balance will be restored when the woman will comply with the man's advice, being subjected to him and will choose the sealed and appropriate product instead of being tempted to buy irrationally a cheap product from an empty can.

One prominent characteristic of the Hebrew home-maker in the Hebrew Yishuv was rational consumerism. Like the middle class American housewife, consumerism was a shaping factor in Hebrew texts and a dominant feature of the ideal home-maker. Sara Bavli claimed that "It is up to the woman whether the hard earned money will be spent on practical or impractical things..." The home-maker's challenge was to purchase the best with the smallest budget and her managing to do so was described as both a personal achievement and a national one. Going shopping regularly was the only outdoor act performed by her outside the domestic space. Contemporary texts recommended she made a shopping list well ahead so that she would not be tempted to make spontaneous decisions.

Domesticity as a meaningful component representing the home-maker is manifested by her dominance in all ads for food and health products for the whole family and especially for children. Most food health and clothing products are mainly advertised featuring a mother figure rather than the father as the care giver in charge.⁴⁹ The gendered job position in the domestic space reveals the repetitive pattern of an active mother, versus a passive father. For example, in an 'Instant Postum' ad (pic. 5) which is divided into four sections describes how the mother sets out to solve her son's irritability problem: In the upper section she presents the problem to her husband, sitting in an armchair reading a newspaper. In the second section the mother is actively talking with her friend while serving tea. This section is actually the core of the ad as their conversation brings up a solution. The lady friend tells about her son's bad condition due to drinking coffee, stressing the fact that he got better while switching to 'Instant Postum'. The father appears again in the lower episode, featuring a balanced composition of a family meal. The text above the father image, "a smart mother you are" poses him as a patronizing authority approving her practice. She has the domestic responsibility, while he has the supervising authority.

⁴⁸ Rosin, 2002: 200.

⁴⁹ Several examples of a motherly representation without a father present: the mother in a Colgate ad (*Haaretz*, 14.11.1930), p. 3; the mother in a Kellogs ad (*Davar*, 5.12.1933), p. 6; the mother in a Kessem ad (*Haaretz* 17.9.1942), p. 4.



Pic.5: ‘Instant Postum’ Ad. From: *Davar* (2.8.1937), p. 3.

Conclusion

Gender meanings of women’s representations in domestic products ads of that time, were based on four ideologies which were very often intertwined: the national, domestic, modern and scientific ones. In this article the first two were presented. Analyzing the combined content by means of semiotic tools helped decode these meanings which were embodied in the visual text itself and/or in the combination between this text and the verbal one in advertisements. The national ideology emerged through the structuring of female representations treating household chores as a national task focusing on nourishing the family as a guaranty for creating a strong and healthy nation. The domestic ideology was manifested through women’s commitment to serve their family and particularly to satisfying their husbands’ needs. Domesticity was highlighted by advertisers as a scene where women meet and share useful knowledge regarding the appropriate behavior around the house.

The ideal Hebrew home-maker image was always rendered as ambivalent; on the one hand, advertisers assigned women with the responsibility for managing the domestic space properly, and portrayed them as dominant in the domestic space. On the other hand, they were denied both the authority and the capability to appropriately carry out their tasks. The woman’s figure remained fragile and indecisive and at times even scorned and humiliated compared to male images – husband, cook, and shopkeeper. This ambivalence reflected a similar attitude towards women within society: Hebrew women in the Yishuv have not gained equality and were forced to struggle for their status. The ads adopted and followed a conservative approach, which reinforced gender boundaries. This paper therefore, aims at a systematic study of contemporary rhetoric and understanding the way in which women’s representations were trendily used for expressing and spreading those ideologies held by the social cultural economic leadership in pre-state Israel.

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