

Cosmina-Iulia Valent

Representations of Immigrant Life on New York's Lower East Side

in Leela Corman's *Unterzakhn*

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Abstract: Leela Corman's graphic novel *Unterzakhn* illustrates the difficulty of life at the turn of the century in New York's Lower East Side as seen through the eyes of Jewish twins Fanya and Esther. Although the novel does not solely follow the story of the sisters, it is mainly focused on their fascinating passage from childhood to adulthood. The purpose of my paper is to analyze Corman's graphic novel in order to illustrate how New York's Lower East Side shaped the life of Jewish immigrants. On the one hand, I will examine the historical development of the Jewish migration and its causes. Consequently, I will explore whether Leela Corman follows the pattern of the factual past or not. On the other hand, I will focus on Corman's graphic depiction of the streets of the Lower East Side and on her portrayal of Jewish family life. The critical sources used include Hasia R. Diner's *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* and Joyce Antler's "My Yiddishe Mama': The Multiple Faces of the Immigrant Jewish Mother." *You Never Call! You Never Write! A History of the Jewish Mother.*