

Alicia R. Korenman. Princesses, Mothers, Heroes, and Superheroes: Images of Jewish Women in Comic Books and Graphic Novels. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. April 2006. 45 pages. Advisor: Barbara B. Moran

This study examines the representations of Jewish women in comic books and graphic novels, starting with a discussion of common stereotypes about Jewish women in American popular culture. The primary sources under investigation include Gilbert Hernandez's *Love and Rockets X*, Aline Kominsky-Crumb's autobiographical works, the X-Men comic books, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!*, Joann Sfar's *The Rabbi's Cat*, and J.T. Waldman's *Megillat Esther*.

The representations of Jewish women in comic books and graphic novels vary widely. And although certain stereotypes about Jewish women—especially the Jewish Mother and the Jewish American Princess—pervade American popular culture, most of the comics featuring Jewish characters do not seem to have been greatly influenced by these images.

Headings:

Comic books, strips, etc. -- United States -- History and Criticism

Popular Culture -- United States -- History -- 20th Century

Jewish Women -- United States -- Social Life and Customs

Jews -- United States -- Identity

PRINCESSES, MOTHERS, HEROES, AND SUPERHEROES: IMAGES OF JEWISH
WOMEN IN COMIC BOOKS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS

by
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Introduction

In the past ten or fifteen years, the scholarly study of comic books and graphic novels has exploded. Despite this large burst of academic interest in the subject, there is much still to be studied and much that has not yet been written. For instance, how are Jewish women represented in comic books and graphic novels, and how do these images relate to stereotypes about Jews that are prevalent in American society? This work will examine several primary sources for this paper, including Gilbert Hernandez's *Love and Rockets X*, Aline Kominsky-Crumb's autobiographical works, the X-Men comic books, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!*, Joann Sfar's *The Rabbi's Cat*, and J.T. Waldman's *Megillat Esther*. Although these works were written at disparate times, an analysis of their representations of Jewish women—and how these representations relate to common stereotypes about Jewish women—is a valuable study, and one that has not been done before.

The terms “comic books” and “graphic novels” are often used interchangeably, and this work will not differ much from that model. Charles Hatfield notes that

The so-called comic book . . . is a small, self-contained magazine or pamphlet (roughly half-tabloid in size) . . . it has come to concentrate on a single character or group of characters and, more often than not, a single story (typically between eighteen and twenty-four pages in length). Since the late 1980s, a [new] way of packaging comics has gained ground in American print culture: the “graphic novel,” which in industry parlance means any book-length comics narrative or compendium of such narratives.¹

NOTES:

¹ Charles Hatfield, *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 4.

Because the term “graphic novel” often is used to refer to collections of individual issues of comic books, the line between the two terms is somewhat blurry, hence their exchangeable nature.

The works under investigation in this study were chosen for a variety of reasons. They have all received critical, and some scholarly, acclaim; they are all fairly well-known among comic books fans, scholars, and Jewish educators; and finally, they are more or less the only graphic novels featuring Jewish women characters in prominent, well-developed roles. Each of these characters is described as Jewish, either in the text, in the illustrations, or in both. Certainly other characterizations of Jewish women do exist—Diane Noomin’s exaggeration of a Jewish American Princess, DiDi Glitz, comes to mind—but the female characters in this discussion are, for the most part, not intended to be caricatures, and come from works that are meant to feature well-developed stories and characters.

Of course, that doesn’t mean these characters don’t display features consistent with the major stereotypes of Jewish women. The most prominent stereotypes are those of the Jewish American Princess—a spoiled, shallow rich girl—and the Jewish mother—an overbearing, guilt-inducing shrew. These stereotypes have been commonly featured in literature and on television and have had a large impact on American and Jewish-American culture.

It seems worth mentioning that the intent of the authors of the works should be considered—is the author a Jew trying to poke fun at these images, discounting them entirely, or accurately representing his or her own experiences? If a non-Jew is the

author, is his or her intent malicious, or are any stereotypes in evidence born from ignorance? What sort of story is the author trying to tell?

These types of matters, and others, have been addressed at length in some of the most outstanding scholarly works from the burgeoning field of graphic novel studies. *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, edited by Robin Varnum and Christina R. Gibbons, explores some of the issues that come into play when art and narrative are merged. This work is especially notable for the variety of subjects it addresses—underground comics, classic comic strips, and even the roadrunner cartoons. A more topical approach is taken by Charles Hatfield in *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*, which concentrates on some of the most groundbreaking and critically acclaimed underground comics, including works by Harvey Pekar, Art Spiegelman, and Gilbert Hernandez. Art Spiegelman, who probably has had more written about him than any other comic book artist ever will, is also the subject of *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's 'Survivor's Tale' of the Holocaust*, edited by Deborah R. Geis, an outstanding group of essays which analyzes *Maus* from a variety of scholarly perspectives. Other influential scholarly works focusing on comic books include Joseph Witek's *Comic Books as History; Superheroes and Philosophy*, edited by Tom Morris and Matt Morris; and Danny Fingeroth's *Superman on the Couch*. The latter two works contemplate more mainstream comic books.

There is also a fairly large number of works dealing with the images and roles of Jewish women in American society. The most renowned is Riv-Ellen Prell's oft-cited *Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation*, which explores the origins and popularity of several stereotypes of Jewish women, American

and otherwise. Paula Hyman's *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* conquers similar territory, but focuses on the distinction between the "Western Model" of Jews in the United States and Western Europe and the different models that sprang up in Eastern Europe. Additionally, Hyman's work looks at a slightly earlier period of time than Prell's.

For works focusing on images of Jews—women and men—in popular culture, there are several high-quality sources from which one can choose. Vincent Brook's *Something Ain't Kosher Here: The Rise of the "Jewish" Sitcom*, as its title notes, examines images of Jews in television sitcoms with Jewish characters. A similar work is Jonathan Pearl and Judith Pearl's *The Chosen Image: Television's Portrayal of Jewish Themes and Characters*. The Pearls cast a wider net than Brook, looking at a huge variety of television programs with individual episodes that featured Jewish themes or plotlines. Finally, *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture*, edited by Joyce Antler, looks not just at television and movies, but at literature, song, and even biblical scholarship.

Nevertheless, there has not yet been an examination of how Jewish women are portrayed in comic books and graphic novels and how these portrayals relate to the most common stereotypes about Jewish women. This paper aims to begin that discussion.

Common Stereotypes of Jewish Women

Representations of Jewish women in literature and on television have had a large influence on American culture. Television has especially influenced the way Jewish women are depicted in America; due to the short length and humorous intent of sitcoms,

characters are often simple stereotypes, and Jews are no different. Images of the Jewish American Princess and the Jewish Mother on television are fodder for the continued growth of these stereotypes.

The Jewish mother stereotype, however, was born primarily from literature. Blame for this representation tends to fall at the feet of Philip Roth, but he is far from the only writer to employ this image. The idea of the American Jewish mother seems to derive from the idea of the Yiddishe Mama, the working-class immigrant mother who “was a romanticized model of self-sacrifice for her children and a marvel of domestic wizardry . . . The Yiddishe Mama was also the emotional center of her family.”² Within a generation, as more Jews became middle-class, this loving depiction of a Yiddishe Mama transformed into that of the American Jewish mother, as Paula Hyman notes:

The previously celebrated emotional strength and fierce determination of the Jewish mother of eastern European descent, as seen now by her third-generation sons, pointed to an inversion of conventional notions of male-female relations. According to middle-class Western norms, a docile wife deferred to her dominant husband. Yet the controlling and smothering Jewish mother depicted by Jewish novelists and comedians undermined the masculinity of her sons along with that of her husband.³

The scholarly consensus seems to indicate that, of all the writers and comedians who employed the image, Philip Roth, in his *Portnoy's Complaint*, is one of the major sources of this stereotype. Martha Ravits says that the character of Sophie Portnoy is “the most memorable and fully elaborated caricature of the Jewish mother.”⁴ In that novel, the narrator “laments that his mother has ruined his life by ‘scolding, correcting, reproving, criticizing, faultfinding without end!’”⁵ In fact, in this portrayal, the mother has actually thwarted the son’s sexuality; she “is not merely materialistic and overprotective: in

withdrawing her affections from her husband and lavishing them on her son, she effectively curbs the son's movement toward manhood."⁶

The Jewish mother, as represented by Roth and others, is "overbearing, overprotective, long-suffering, loudly self-sacrificing, and unintentionally funny."⁷ She is "seen as exceeding prescribed boundaries, as being excessive."⁸ She is "an overbearing woman, who lived vicariously through the son she pushed toward material success."⁹ She is "a satirical harpy,"¹⁰ "automatically linked to material concerns,"¹¹ "overly solicitous of her children's welfare (especially her son's health), and . . . anxious for her daughters to marry well (preferably doctors or lawyers) and her sons to become professionals (preferably doctors or lawyers),"¹² "a domineering, castrating, enticing, meddling, and thoroughly maddening monster who refuses her son a life of his own."¹³ This image became so prevalent as to nearly erase previous, sentimental, loving images of Jewish mothers.¹⁴

This domineering Jewish Mother became a common image on television as well, further reinforcing the stereotype in the American mind. For example, while the titular character of *Rhoda* resisted stereotyping, her mother "exemplified the . . . shift from the nurturing Yiddishe momme to the overbearing American Jewish mother stereotype popularized (predominantly by men) in Jewish writing, nightclub acts, and movies."¹⁵

The Jewish mothers on television often exhibit

what are considered traditional Jewish values: pressing their children to be educated, wanting them to succeed, and above all, wanting them to be married. Often these desires are expressed as a source of humor, as in the case of one Jewish mother on *Sister Kate* who encountered an attractive young woman during a game of bingo. She strikes up a conversation with her in the hopes of nabbing a suitable mate for her still-single adult son. Finally, the young woman demurs, saying, "I'm a nun." The ever-hopeful Jewish mother replies beamingly, "So I take it you're *single*?" At times

the intense involvement in their children's lives often attributed to Jewish mothers is portrayed as a none-too-welcome overbearingness in which they wield undue influence in their children's lives and psyches. In some shows, this leads to conflict and family tension or even breakup.¹⁶

Occasionally, Jewish mothers are not the butt of the joke, but hold their own as "mistresses of the insult."¹⁷ On the popular show *Cheers*, Lilith's mother is admired for her "verbal intimidation and nasty tongue . . . in this episode of *Cheers* we get a new twist on the nasty, manipulative, domineering, Jewish mother persona of the big or little screen. She is considered the height of wit and formidability!"¹⁸ A more recent example is Kyle Broflovski's mother on the cartoon television series *South Park*. Her character is so domineering that Kyle's classmates sing a song about her: "Kyle's Mom is a Big Fat Bitch!" In fact, in the *South Park* movie, "it's a fat, overbearing Jewish mother who ushers in the apocalypse."¹⁹ However, as Jonathan and Judith Pearl point out, "Real life has its share of Jewish doctors and mothers; their absence on television would offer a false view and impoverish the TV landscape. Naturally, focusing only on these kinds of characterizations should be avoided in favor of greater diversity and depth, which have been apparent to a significant extent on popular TV."²⁰

Food also plays a part in the image of the Jewish mother. Like the Yiddishe Mama, the American Jewish Mother wants to provide for her children, but in her usual overbearing way: "forcing food down the throats of her children (for reasons of health)."²¹ The excessive offering of food is symbolic of love to the Jewish Mother, and rejection of food "is interpreted as a rejection of the mother's love."²² This equation of food with love also plays into the idea of the Jewish Mother as instigator of guilty feelings in her children; "for example, if food is scarce, the mother unquestionable gives

the child her portion. But, it is not given silently. Inherent in her acts of generosity are the twin guilt-builders of suffering and sacrifice.”²³

Intriguingly, while the idea of the Jewish mother has faded over the years, the idea of the Jewish American Princess is still going strong. Within the Jewish community, attempts to poke fun at or reclaim this stereotype are legion—at least judging by the t-shirts available from companies like Jewish Fashion Conspiracy (jewishfashionconspiracy.com) bearing the slogan “Gelt Digger,” or for the advertisement used by my own cousin’s online store (my cousin, a Jewish-themed performance artist/activist, sells “Matzo Ball Activist Kits,” which are accompaniments to the Passover seder. Some of the proceeds of her sales go to an organization that fights hunger).



(Advertisement appeared on jewschool.com from March 24th through the month of April)

Like the stereotype of the Jewish Mother, the image of the JAP emerged from literature, but quickly became a prominent theme on television and in movies. Hallmarks of this character include the idea that “in contrast to the pathologically nurturing Jewish mother, the JAP feeds only her own desire to buy things—usually with Daddy’s credit card,”²⁴ that JAPs are “pushy and materialistic,”²⁵ that JAPs are “the stereotypical girl from Long Island’s ‘Five Towns’: great clothes, even better shoes, nose job at 16, dark curls blown straight weekly.”²⁶ JAPs are “shallow, self-involved, whiny, immature, vicarious-living, materialistic, enmeshed, or suffocating”²⁷ and often depicted as being “sexually frigid yet knowledgeable enough to use sex as a tool of manipulation.”²⁸ Alan Dundes points out that “the stereotypical traits [of the JAP] are consistent ones”:

The J.A.P. is spoiled, and spoiled rotten. She is excessively concerned about appearance. She diets. She may have had a nose job . . . She worries about her fingernails. She is interested in money, shopping, and status. Some of these features—wealth and status, for example—she shares with the [Jewish American Mother], but her refusal to cook (and eat) contrasts dramatically with the J.A.M. The J.A.P. is indifferent to sex and she is particularly disinclined to perform fellatio . . . Perhaps the J.A.P.’s obsession with high-style clothing is a reaction to what the J.A.P. perceives as the J.A.M.’s plain, even dowdy hausfrau apparel. The J.A.P.’s refusal to eat (in order to stay slim) may be a direct response to the J.A.M.’s insistence upon eating. The J.A.M. lavishes food to show love; the J.A.P. declines to cook to eat, or to indulge in lovemaking.²⁹

Riv-Ellen Prell actually devotes a chapter to a discussion of this representation in her book *Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation*. She notes that the JAP became an “ubiquitous stereotype” during the 1960s and 70s, and goes on to say, “For much of the 1970s and 1980s, American Jews found this representation of their recent affluence available in multiple forms—including jokes, joke nooks, greeting cards, T-shirts, jewelry, novelty dolls, handbooks, magazine articles,

comedy routines, and novels.”³⁰ Anecdotal evidence supports this claim; circa 1990, during the time Bobby McFerrin had a hit single with “Don’t Worry, Be Happy,” my mother asked a friend of hers for a “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” t-shirt. The friend returned with a “Don’t Worry, Be Jappy” t-shirt instead, featuring the familiar yellow smiley face with makeup, heels, and multiple shopping bags. (My mother was both disgusted and humiliated at receiving this shirt, especially when she then had to explain the concept of the JAP to her three small children.)

Prell also notes that the JAP “is the product of a moment in which Jews had far wider access to American society than previously . . . She developed in response to the experience of Jews’ fully entrenched suburbanization, in the context of significantly decreasing anti-Semitism . . . the JAP stereotype arose in a period not only of unprecedented American Jewish affluence, but one that anticipated the continued success of the stereotypes’ purveyors through advanced education and professionalization.”³¹ This development coincided with the emergence of the JAP in movies and on television.

One of television’s most prominent Jewish Princesses was the character of Fran Fine, as played by Fran Drescher, on the longrunning sitcom *The Nanny*. Fran, of course, has many characteristics of the JAP, especially her blatant consumerism and disinterest in household chores.³² Yet, historically, the JAP was disinterested in sex, and the Nanny is “hyper- rather than desexualized,” managing “to explode the myth of the desexualized modern Jewish woman.”³³ However, Drescher’s character was hardly the only Jewish American Princess in the limelight. In the early episodes of another popular sitcom, *Friends*, the character of Rachel Green (as played by Jennifer Aniston) is a quintessential JAP. She is spoiled, dependent on her father’s money and her fiancé’s, is horrified at the

thought of working for a living and generally inept in her attempts to do so, and is eventually revealed to have had a nose job. Rachel's quest to overcome her incompetence and to earn a living can also be read as Rachel overcoming her Jewish Princess-ness. Certainly these aspects of her personality are not at all evident in later seasons of the show.³⁴

With all of these images in the public eye, it is no doubt difficult for authors in any medium to discount them entirely or to avoid their influence. So, now to begin the discussion of how Jewish women are portrayed in comic books.

X-Men—Kitty Pryde

The X-men comic book series premiered in 1963 as the handiwork of writer and artist Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, both Jewish. Like Stan Lee's first successful series, *The Fantastic Four*, the superhero action stories are generally subservient to the human dramas of the characters. *X-Men* is particularly well known for its sociopolitical themes involving xenophobia and racism—the characters' powers are caused by a mutation which generally leads to non-mutants calling them "freaks" (or worse). One scholar notes, "What revitalized comics after 1961 was Lee's happy inspiration to make superheroes more human. Rather than being the mere vessels of their unusual powers—wooden protagonists engaged in repetitive battles against equally wooden opponents—more fully realized characters such as the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man began addressing unpredictable existential consequences."³⁵ The struggles of the mutants in a world of humans who fear and misunderstand them serve as allegories for similar struggles of numerous minority groups—Jews, African-Americans, and so on.

However, the first character who was intended to be Jewish didn't appear until 1980, under the authorship of Chris Claremont. Claremont—a Jew, despite his name—had once spent two months living on a kibbutz in Israel and modeled the character of Kitty Pryde “after an Israeli teenager wearing a miniskirt and carrying an Uzi whom he’d seen one day while walking down a street in Tel Aviv.”³⁶ Claremont seems to have viewed the character’s religion as vital, saying that he understood “what it’s like to be different, and what it’s like to be Jewish. So that became my window through which I could present the X-Men universe to a broader audience.”³⁷ Indeed, Kitty’s Judaism is evident from the start; in the very first panel in which she can be seen clearly, she is wearing a Star of David around her neck. Every time she’s not in costume in these early stories, in fact, this necklace appears around her neck.



Kitty Pryde's first appearance: Chris Claremont, X-Men 138 (October 1980)

Kitty, actually, in all the years she has been featured in the X-Men comic books, has rarely displayed any characteristics of a Jewish American Princess. Although in her earlier appearances she is giggly, flirty, and a little bit flighty, this is attributed to her youth. At the time of her introduction, she is a mere thirteen years old, significantly younger than the rest of the cast, and it is all too realistic for her to have a crush on a fellow X-Man (in this case, the Russian hunk Colossus). The character Storm, in fact, notes that Kitty is “just a child” and the other X-Men all give Kitty pet names (“Kitten” and “Punkin”).

Her youth also contributes to her fearfulness in these early stories; she feels awkward around Nightcrawler because he’s “different” (i.e., blue, with a tail), but she also worries about getting in trouble, indicating her low comfort level in this new situation (after all, it must be at least a little stressful to be the youngest and newest member of a superhero team). Nightcrawler’s different-ness is just one more element of a new situation she must adjust to, and doesn’t indicate any bigotry or snobbery on her part. In fact, the tension between the two dissipates after the “Days of Future Passed” storyline, Kitty’s first major starring role, where the Kitty of the future’s psyche time-travels into the Kitty of the past to try and prevent an anti-mutant uprising. The Kitty of the future is thrilled to see Nightcrawler again (he has been killed in her reality) because in the intervening years they had become close friends.

The fact that Kitty of the future is willing to risk losing her life and brain activity to try and prevent her terrible future is indicative of her selfless nature. Kitty is nearly the anti-JAP as presented in these comics; her decision to join a superhero team to help people highlights her kindness and her altruistic nature. After all, her superpower isn’t

one that's really helpful in fights—she can phase through solid objects. And yet she uses this power and works hard to gain other skills so that she can be a valuable member of the team.

Kitty is also presented as extremely intelligent—she enrolls in university at the age of 15³⁸ and is apparently something of a computer genius, with the ability to program robots.³⁹ Her hard work and diligence as both a member of the X-men team and as a student highlight her divergence from the JAP stereotype; in one issue, she laments her exhaustion after staying up all night on schoolwork.⁴⁰ She also is one of the more sensitive, caring members of her team, comforting scared children⁴¹ and worrying about Professor Xavier, the team's mentor.⁴²

Kitty's Judaism is mentioned during the X-Men Christmas story of her first year as a member of the team, as she celebrates her first Hannukah away from her family. For her, Hanukkah is obviously not about presents or being spoiled, but is about family, and she misses hers. Her Judaism became a larger plot point later in the 1980s, when Kitty accompanied the sometimes-villain Magneto to a Holocaust memorial, where they each attempt to find information about their families. Of course, Kitty is a secondary character during this story arc, where Magneto is forced to reveal his mutant nature in front of long-lost friends, and then is captured by a team of villainous mutants. Nevertheless, she does display both her usual ability to think on her feet and her willingness to help others as she rescues innocent bystanders from the melee.

In more recent stories, the *Astonishing X-Men* series penned by Joss Whedon, Kitty's positive attributes are once again in evidence. Despite having a power described as “protective”⁴³ by another member of her team, she is perfectly willing and able to join

in the team's battles. In addition, her kindness and rapport with other people serve her well, as she has now become a teacher at Professor Xavier's School for the Gifted, which teaches and trains young mutants. Team Leader Cyclops tells her that "Your power isn't aggressive, it's protective. That's good to show. And people *like* you."⁴⁴ Kitty's optimism and kindness are once again in evidence in this new series, although now her inspirational comment that "Mutants are a community. We're a *people* and there's no way anybody can make us be what they want. We stick together and don't panic or overreact... You'll see. We're stronger than this" is met with some cynicism by the younger generation.⁴⁵ When tragedy strikes, however, her common sense and take-charge attitude kick in, and she is still able to display kindness to those who need it:



Joss Whedon, *Astonishing X-Men Volume 2: Dangerous* (2005)

Throughout her twenty-plus years as a character in the X-Men series, Kitty has always been a kind, capable, and willing member of the superhero team, and bears absolutely no resemblance to any sort of Jewish stereotype. Even when she's babbling to a guy she likes, it's not out of the stereotypical Jewish neuroticism, but because he's the great love of her life and she has just rescued him from a genetic testing lab—after believing him to be dead for several years.⁴⁶

Aline Kominsky-Crumb

Interestingly, much of the literature on Jewish mothers to date focuses on their relationship with their sons⁴⁷ and often ignores how this stereotypical figure relates to her daughters. Yet, this theme is a centerpiece of many of Aline Kominsky-Crumb's comics.

Kominsky first came to prominence in the underground comics world of the 1970s, publishing her first story in 1971, in the premiere issue of *Wimmen's Comix*.⁴⁸ As Ana Merino points out, "women's underground comics are quite different from men's, since their expressive coordinates were developed with respect to other problems . . . Many explicitly feminine topics are discussed, including menstruation, a female autobiographical concern over pregnancy, the desire to attain a perfect body" and so on.⁴⁹ Kominsky-Crumb, with her tales of growing up on Long Island with an overbearing mother and possibly abusive father, corresponds fully to this model of underground comics. From a "nouveau riche"⁵⁰ family, Kominsky-Crumb began drawing and working on other art projects at an early age, and became well-known in the underground comics world for her autobiographical stories. Her mother, unflatteringly called "Blabette" in these pieces, is a central figure in Kominsky's work.

Blabette seems to straddle the line between Jewish American Princess and Jewish Mother. From a well-off family, she has obviously been spoiled by her parents and expects the best. She is frequently portrayed as being interested in materialistic things—she wants a bigger wedding ring, bigger houses, better neighborhoods, new cars, clothes, and so on. Examples of this characterization are too numerous to list in full.

However, it is as the Jewish Mother that she really shines. She nags everyone, especially her husband and her daughter. She especially nags Aline about her weight, sending her to diet camp instead of art camp (when attending diet camp is really unnecessary for Aline) and makes her feel guilty for gaining weight while away. Later in Aline's life, she nags her about getting married and then about having a baby.



Aline Kominsky-Crumb, "Ze Bunche de Paree Turns 40," *Love That Bunch*, 125.

Aline herself is occasionally presented as a Jewish American Princess, worrying about what she's wearing and how she looks. For the most part, though, she rejects the Jewish American Princess image—she wants to be “an exotic hippie.”⁵¹ She mocks her Princess-y peers when they all get identical nose jobs and resists her parents' urging that she get a nose job as well.⁵²

mother.⁵³ However, Blabette's waxing influence is evident in another recent issue of *The New Yorker* as Aline undergoes plastic surgery (much to her husband's chagrin).⁵⁴



Aline & R. Crumb, "Saving Face," *The New Yorker* 28 Nov. 2005, 164.

This is quite a turn-around from Aline's previous attitudes toward plastic surgery and it is more than a little bizarre to see her welcoming her mother's outlook. Perhaps the old saying that eventually every woman turns into her mother is not so wrong after all.

Art Spiegelman

Much has been written about Art Spiegelman and his ground-breaking graphic novel *Maus*, the first volume of which (*My Father Bleeds History*) garnered a special Pulitzer Prize when it was published in 1986. The second volume of the work, *And Here My Troubles Began*, appeared in 1991, and eventually the two volumes were gathered into one, *The Complete Maus*. *Maus* "is not exactly a comic book, nor is it exactly a novel, a biography (or autobiography), or a work of oral history—and yet it is all of these things."⁵⁵ The teacher's guide to *Maus*, assembled by its publisher Random House, writes:

In *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* Art Spiegelman has simultaneously expanded the boundaries of a literary form and found a new way of imagining the Holocaust, an event that is commonly described as unimaginable. The form is the comic book, once dismissed as an entertainment for children and regarded as suited only for slapstick comedy, action-adventure, or graphic horror. And although *Maus* includes elements of humor and suspense, the horror it envisions is far worse than anything encountered in the pages of Stephen King: it is horror that happened; horror perpetrated by real people against millions of other real people; horror whose contemplation inevitably forces us to ask what human beings are capable of perpetrating—and surviving.⁵⁶

And as the National Foundation of Jewish Culture notes, “In expressing the horrors of the Holocaust and its aftermath through words and pictures, he forced critics to acknowledge the power of comics as art. Starting out in the Bay Area underground scene in the early Seventies, Spiegelman is now the foremost comics historian, a ubiquitous presence for nearly thirty years in the field's avant garde.”⁵⁷

Maus recounts Spiegelman's attempts to collect and chronicle his father's experiences during the Holocaust, while also examining the troubled relationship between the two men: the book “represents an unerringly earnest attempt at an oral history of the 1930s and 1940s in Poland as experienced by Vladek Spiegelman, a survivor of Auschwitz and the author's father . . . The second story in *Maus* (and it is no less central) concerns Art Spiegelman's own life as he seeks to come to terms with his relationship with Vladek, a story tragically tied to the suicide in 1968 of Art's mother Anja, survivor of Birkenau.”⁵⁸ Joseph Witek writes that the book “makes Vladek's Holocaust story and Art's psychological quest into a single narrative which blends public and private history.”⁵⁹

Because the story at hand is narrated entirely by both father and son, Art's mother Anja, who killed herself more than ten years before Art began his work, is

“conspicuously absent from the scene of narration.”⁶⁰ Yet she is a constant presence in the story, both through Vladek’s recitation of their experiences during the Holocaust, and through both the father and the son’s longing for her in the present—despite Vladek’s remarriage.



Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History*, 104.

One of the most vivid sections of the work is the insertion of a comic Art published in 1973—a friend of his stepmother has passed it on and Vladek, seeing a photo of a young Art with his mother which appears in the title bar of the comic, has read it. The comic, entitled “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” is a deeply personal reaction to his mother’s suicide, and is the foremost instance in the story where the reader sees Anja from Art’s perspective instead of Vladek’s. Witek comments that “the presence of this story in *Maus* is perhaps Spiegelman’s boldest and most brilliant stroke; it breaks the narrative flow of the Holocaust story and explains the emotional stake Art has in

understanding his parents' lives."⁶¹ This story also illustrates how her life experiences—and her apparent lifelong struggle with depression⁶²—have come to a breaking point for Anja. Here, for the only time in either volume of work, there is a hint of the Jewish Mother stereotype:



Art Spiegelman, "Prisoner on the Hell Planet," *Maus I*, 103.

Anja is smothering and needy in this scene, and Art obviously feels that his rejection of her played some part in her suicide. Later in the story, he notes that if he had come home when expected, he would have been the one to discover her body.⁶³

Intriguingly, Michael Levine points out that “the pages of *Maus* are haunted not merely by the tragic loss of the mother but by the specter of her *repeated killing*. Not only does she die more than once, each time in a different way, but she herself is cast as certain moments as a murderer.”⁶⁴ This motif of her repeated killing refers to just to her suicide, but to the fate of her diaries. In the first volume of *Maus*, Vladek (perhaps inadvertently) divulges that Anja had written her story in multiple notebooks after the war. Art, of course, becomes excited: “Ohmigod! Where are they? I need those for this book?”⁶⁵ It is later revealed that Vladek had burned the diaries on “a very bad day,” spurring Art to call him a murderer.⁶⁶ Art is especially incensed because Anja had intended for him to someday read the diaries.⁶⁷



Art Spiegelman, *Maus I*, 159.

It is noteworthy that throughout the story, there is an implication that Art was closer to his mother, and that she understood him more than his father did, yet the inclusion of “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” shows that this wasn’t really the case.⁶⁸

However, Anja and Art really do display some similarities, especially in terms of their personalities—both are anxious and neurotic throughout the text. This view of Anja is correlated by a more recent work by Spiegelman. He is currently in progress on another autobiographical work, entitled “Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!” which is being serialized in *Virginia Quarterly Review*. His mother features prominently in part one, and again, there is only the barest hint that she bears any resemblance to the stereotype of the Jewish Mother. Frankly, Art himself appears to be quite the little brat, and his mother is something of a pushover.⁶⁹ In two separate scenes, he throws a tantrum until she buys him what he wants—in the first case, a copy of *MAD Magazine*, and in the second, a cartooning kit. His mother, supportive of his artistic bent, relents, saying “I’ll tell you what—if you can *prove* you learned from it...Then *I’ll* pay! Otherwise it comes from your allowance!” Art apparently ascribes his future career to this moment, noting that “Despite my modest drawing skills, I *had* to become a cartoonist. Anything else would have set me back a month’s allowance!”⁷⁰ And she does encourage him throughout the story, as the first scene shows:



Art Spiegelman, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young%&*" *Virginia Quarterly Review* 81 no. 4, 14.

Still, the dark, neurotic, smothering side of her personality is evident in this work; she worries when his father isn't home yet, her face drawn as gray⁷¹, and more cuttingly, she tells him "You know, Artie... Maybe it's better to not be a genius . . . After all, geniuses lead such troubled lives!"⁷² She is again drawn primarily in grays in this scene.

Considering that the main body of the work describes Art's mindset as he created "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" (which appears as a fold-out insert between two pages), it's hard not to see this as an echo of the scene in "Prisoner" where she "tightens the umbilical cord," especially since she once again appears in a bathrobe.



Art Spiegelman, "Portrait," 25.

As in both "Prisoner" and *Maus*, family photographs are used to great effect in "Portrait." Whereas the photo in "Prisoner" seems to symbolize his mother's protection and repression of Art⁷³—the very things he is rebelling against when he rejects her—the photo in "Portrait" perhaps represents a happier memory for Art—here, he and his mother smile as they look at an issue of *MAD Magazine*, together.⁷⁴

Gilbert Hernandez—*Love and Rockets X*

First, a few words to put Gilbert “Beto” Hernandez and *Love and Rockets X* in their proper context. *Love and Rockets* (and its affiliated/spin-off books) is a long-running (1982-the present) comic book series written by Los Bros Hernandez (primarily Beto and his brother Jaime, with occasional contributions from their brother Mario). For the most part, there are two major stories, the Maggie and Hokey stories by Jaime, which revolve around two punk-rock girls in California, and the Palomar stories by Beto, which center on a small town in Mexico (Palomar) and which are often compared to the writing of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.⁷⁵ The series has been collected in multiple graphic novels; the early ones contain both brothers’ works, chronologically, and the later volumes contain discrete stories by one brother or the other (in addition, the majority of each storyline has been collected in two huge graphic novels, entitled *Palomar* and *Locas*). *Love and Rockets X* is the tenth volume of the collected series, and features a story by Beto. However, it does mark a breaking-away point for his work—although it does include characters from the Palomar stories, it takes place in Los Angeles in the late 1980s and centers on the racial and class tensions of the period.

One of the central figures of this ensemble piece is Kris Nesnick, a half-Jewish, half-Iraqi teenager who undergoes an identity crisis during the story. For most of the story, she identifies as a Jew, as evidenced by the Jewish star necklace she wears prominently at the party that serves as the culmination of the piece. Additionally, she displays several traits that align with the image of the Jewish American Princess. She lives with her father, an openly gay Hollywood producer, and does appear to be spoiled by him.

In Kris' first scene, in fact, she boasts, "I got my daddy's car!" in an effort to convince another character to take her to meet what she thinks is a famous band. What is most interesting about this scene, however, is the way she is drawn. Whereas in later scenes her face is quite detailed and full of expressions, here she is barely more than a sketch, running around in bike shorts. This does seem to indicate her stereotypical nature; as the story delves more deeply into her psyche, her face becomes more vividly drawn.

Besides her role as the spoiled daughter, Kris also displays another characteristic of the JAP—she is obsessed with her appearance. In fact, she is shown throughout the work to be bulimic—twice she is shown in the act of vomiting, and in another scene a classmate mocks her about it. She obviously has a distorted body image, as illustrated on page 17:



Gilbert Hernandez. Love and Rockets X 17.

Despite these characteristics which align her with the image of the JAP, Kris' part of the story revolves around her identity crisis. During the course of the story, her heart is broken by the boy she has a crush on, and she finds herself attracted to a Mexican woman, Maricela (a refugee from the Palomar stories. In the previous volume, "Human

Diastrophism,” collected as *Blood of Palomar*—arguably Beto’s most powerful work—Maricela and her girlfriend have run away to California). Her resolve is finally broken when she sees her father in the pool with another man, and she determines to go live with her mother in Iraq. In rejecting her father, she actually gives up her identity as a Jew, as her father’s daughter, by giving up her Star of David necklace, the physical representation of her identity.



Gilbert Hernandez, *Love and Rockets X* 58.

In doing so, she also gives up her role as a JAP—she willingly forsakes her luxurious lifestyle (and the decadence it embodies) to live with her mother in soon-to-be war-torn Iraq.

Her decision is interwoven with the resolutions of all the other plotlines in the story, in a technique that Beto also used in the conclusion of “Human Diastrophism.” Charles Hatfield writes of this sort of filmic montage, “Disconnected as the images are, they reveal what we need to know about each character and the town as a whole . . . Here

transitioning from image to image (that is, resolving the tension between single image and image-series) requires divining a pattern from a string of apparent non-sequiturs, silent and open to interpretation.”⁷⁶

The Rabbi's Cat and Megillat Esther

The two works under discussion in this section represent a departure from the other four; neither of the authors of these works is American, so they are drawing from a very different idea of Jewish women. In fact, *Megillat Esther* is an ancient biblical text whose author is unknown—this version, a graphic novel by J.T. Waldman, lushly and lavishly presents the biblical story of Esther, Hebrew text intact and accurate. *The Rabbi's Cat*, on the other hand, is a much more recent work by a French Jew which appeared in English translation in 2005. Still, they are worth mentioning here because Jewish women do play such a prominent role in each story, and because their major female characters bear some resemblance to one another, discussing them together seems suitable.

The story of Esther is no doubt a familiar one, so a brief summary should suffice. The story, set in Persia, features a king who banishes his wife and thus seeks a new queen. He eventually chooses the beautiful Jewish Esther, who is advised by her guardian/cousin not to reveal her heritage. When that same guardian/cousin, Mordechai, refuses to bow to the king's advisor, the advisor becomes livid and convinces the king to write a decree encouraging local citizens to massacre the Jews. Mordechai asks Esther to intervene, and despite the king's rule that no one can appear before him unsummoned on penalty of death, she concocts a plan, approaches the king, gets permission to write a

decree canceling the first one, and eventually has Haman and his sons killed (and hundreds of other Persians), saving the Jews.

Like many great midrashists⁷⁷, Waldman extrapolates a good deal from the biblical text and highlights the strengths of Esther's character in his version of the tale. He highlights her resourcefulness in one early scene; where the biblical texts says that Esther pleased one of the king's servants and found his favor, Waldman draws Esther providing him with a handkerchief in his time of need.⁷⁸ This is the same resourcefulness that later serves her so well in quashing Haman's plans against the Jews.



J.T. Waldman. Megillat Esther 41.

He also emphasizes her womanly wiles, so to speak—thanks to her beauty and the king's subsequent love for her, he goes along with her and allows her to save her people. In one scene, as she explains that her people are to be exterminated, Waldman draws her as the center of a flower.⁷⁹ Besides stressing her beauty, Waldman also draws attention to Esther's strength, actually drawing her in a warrior's stance at one point.⁸⁰ Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this illustration is that in one hand she grasps a sword, but in the other she cradles a flower, showing both of her methods in saving her people.



J.T. Waldman, *Megillat Esther* 147.

The central female figure of Joann Sfar's *The Rabbi's Cat* is also presented as a lush, beautiful girl, but she doesn't have the same kind of strength as the biblical Esther. Zlabya, the titular Rabbi's daughter (and object of affection of the titular cat), seems at

first to be a somewhat sheltered and naïve young girl—when the cat gains the power to speak, the rabbi forbids it to speak to her. The cat comments that “He is afraid that I will put bad ideas into her head” in the same panel that features Zlabya reading Stendhal’s *La Rouge et la Noir*, indicating that she is perhaps not quite as sheltered from the outside world as her father thinks.⁸¹ She also feels free to engage in discussion with her father’s students and displays a great deal of curiosity and slyness, begging the cat to speak to her and petting him until he reveals what she wants to know.⁸²

Zlabya is frequently shown as being affectionate toward her cat—in multiple panels, she sensually lounges around, lavishing her pet with caresses—and is protective of her father and his honor. When a young rabbi from Paris mistakenly gives her father the impression he’s being replaced, she hisses at him in fury and refuses to be hospitable.⁸³



Joann Sfar. *The Rabbi's Cat* 80.

Later, after discovering the error, she ends up marrying the young Parisian, and here a new aspect of her personality emerges. On a trip to Paris to meet her husband’s family,

she becomes insecure about her appearance and her clothing, as discussed in multiple panels. She even breaks the Sabbath to go shopping for a new Parisian wardrobe, much to her new husband's chagrin.⁸⁴ This could conceivably be a form of revenge against her husband, who refused to have intercourse with her the night before, despite her point that the great sage Maimonides says that sex on Shabbat is an obligation.⁸⁵ However, due to her increasingly frequent concern with her appearance, that is probably not her major motivation for the shopping spree.

Like Esther, her beauty and sensuality are one of the driving forces of the story. With them, she convinces the cat to do as she asks, and later does the same to her husband.



Joann Sfar. *The Rabbi's Cat* 135.

Interestingly, this corresponds with a particular European notion of Jewish beauty and sexuality—Jewish women were some of the most ubiquitous models in France in the 1820s-1850s, due to “their exotic beauty and supposedly inherent shamelessness.”⁸⁶ This image of the “Jewess” was common throughout Europe; Sander Gilman discusses the

physiognomy which is “overtly that of the *belle juive*—the dark hair and black eyes are the salient markers of this beautiful Jewess in European, but especially in 19th-century German-language drama.”⁸⁷ Although she was just as sensual while in Algeria, Zlabya suddenly seems aware of her appearance and her sexuality and seems on the verge of transforming into the exotic *belle juive*.

Conclusion

The representations of Jewish women in comic books and graphic novels vary widely, as this small sample illustrates. And although certain stereotypes about Jewish women—especially the Jewish Mother and the Jewish American Princess—pervade American popular culture, most of the comics featuring Jewish characters do not seem to have been greatly influenced by these images. In the case of Gilbert Hernandez, his character’s spoiled nature and obsession with her appearance are used for dramatic purposes to highlight her later transformation and rejection of her (Jewish) identity. In the case of Aline Kominsky-Crumb, her characters do reflect her life experiences—though perhaps filtered through the veils of memory and humor. But for the most part, the depictions of Jewish women in comic books and graphic novels don’t bear much resemblance to these common stereotypes. These characters are fleshed-out, vividly-drawn, true-to-life characters, with all the usual quirks and foibles. And as Art Spiegelman has said, “Comics are a narrative art form, a form that combines two other forms of expression: words and pictures. Like any other medium, it’s ‘value-neutral.’ There’ve been lots of rotten novels and paintings, and zillions of rotten comics. But in the

hands of someone who knows how to use their medium, great things can happen. Good comics make an impression that lasts forever.”⁸⁸

² Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 126.

³ Ibid, 159.

⁴ Martha Ravits, “The Jewish Mother: Comedy and Controversy in American Popular Culture,” *MELUS* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 6.

⁵ Ibid, 12.

⁶ Beverly Gray Bienstock, “The Changing Image of the American Jewish Mother,” in *Changing Images of the Family*, eds. Virginia Tufte and Barbara Myerhoff (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 186.

⁷ Alan Dundes, “The J.A.P. and the J.A.M. in American Jokelore,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 98, no. 390 (Oct-Dec 1985), 456.

⁸ Ravits, 4.

⁹ Ibid, 5.

¹⁰ Ibid, 7.

¹¹ Bienstock, 183.

¹² Dundes, 457.

¹³ Bienstock, 188.

¹⁴ Ravits, 9.

¹⁵ Vincent Brook, *Something Ain’t Kosher Here: The Rise of the “Jewish” Sitcom* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 57.

¹⁶ Jonathan Pearl and Judith Pearl, *The Chosen Image: Television’s Portrayal of Jewish Themes and Characters* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999), 87.

¹⁷ Elliot B. Gertel, *Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends in the Depiction of Jewish Beliefs and Observances in Film and Television* (New York: University Press of America, 2003), 15.

¹⁸ Ibid, 14-15.

¹⁹ David Edelstein, “Triumph of the Swill,” *Slate* 9 July 1999. Available at <http://www.slate.com/id/31728> (last accessed 10 April 2006).

²⁰ Pearl, 100.

²¹ Dundes 457.

²² Myrna Hant, “TV Jewish Mothers: The Creation of a Multiethnic Antiheroine,” (December 1, 2003), *UCLA Center for the Study of Women*. Available at <http://repositories.cdlib.org/csw/Hant1> (last accessed 10 April 2006), 3-4.

²³ Ibid, 4.

²⁴ Laura Brahm, “From Ghetto Girls to American Princesses: A Scholar Examines a Century of Stereotypes of Jewish Women,” *Forward*, CIII no. 31,237 (21 May 1999), 11.

²⁵ Alex Lazarus, “Millennium, Shlemennium: Jewish Men, Women Will Still be the Same; He Said...,” *Jewish Exponent* 206 no. 27 (30 December 1999), 40.

²⁶ Alana Newhouse, “The JAP; Reclaim Her or Reject Her?” *Lilith* 30 no. 2 (Summer 2005), 28.

²⁷ Susan Schnur, “Let us now praise Big-Mouthed Jewish Women,” *Lilith* 23 no 3 (September 1998), 18.

²⁸ Newhouse, 28.

²⁹ Dundes, 461-462.

³⁰ Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 178.

³¹ Ibid, 188-89.

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- ³² Vincent Brook, "The Fallacy of Falsity: Un-'Dresch'-ing Masquerade, Fashion, and Postfeminist Jewish Princesses in *The Nanny*," *Television & New Media* 1 no. 3 (August 2000), 293-4.
- ³³ Ibid, 292-3.
- ³⁴ Brook, *Kosher*, 123.
- ³⁵ Jeff Brenzel, "Why are Superheroes Good? Comics and the Ring of Gyges," in *Superheroes and Philosophy: Truth, Justice, and the Socratic Way*, eds. Tom Morris and Matt Morris (Chicago: Open Court, 2005), 151.
- ³⁶ Arie Kaplan, "Kings of Comics: How Jews Transformed the Comic Book Industry. Part II: The Silver Age (1956-1978)," *Reform Judaism* 32 no. 2 (Winter 2003), 13.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Issue 196 (August 1985), 15.
- ³⁹ Issue 197 (September 1985), 19.
- ⁴⁰ Issue 195 (July 1985), 10.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, 13.
- ⁴² Issue 196, 12.
- ⁴³ Astonishing X-Men Volume 1: Gifted (2004).
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Astonishing X-Men Issue 13 (April 2006).
- ⁴⁷ This is perhaps due to the fact that the stereotype emerged into the mainstream primarily from male authors like Philip Roth, as discussed in articles like "The Jewish Mother: Comedy and Controversy in American Popular Culture" by Martha Ravits, which appeared in *MELUS* (the Journal of The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States) in v. 25 no. 1, Spring 2000.
- ⁴⁸ As noted in the introduction to a selection of her works which appeared in Diane Noomin, ed. *Twisted Sisters: A Collection of Bad Girl Art*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.
- ⁴⁹ Ana Merino, "Women in Comics: a Space for Recognizing Other Voices," trans. Derek Petrey, *The Comics Journal* 237 (September 2001), 47-48.
- ⁵⁰ Harvey Pekar, "Introduction," *Love That Bunch* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1990).
- ⁵¹ Aline Kominsky-Crumb, "The Young Bunch," *Love That Bunch* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1990), 9.
- ⁵² Aline Kominsky-Crumb, "Nose Job," in *Twisted Sisters: An Anthology of Bad Girl Art*, ed. Diane Noomin (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 156.
- ⁵³ Aline & R. Crumb, "Winta Wunda Land," *The New Yorker*, 13 February 2006.
- ⁵⁴ Aline & R. Crumb, "Saving Face," *The New Yorker*, 28 November 2005, 164-166.
- ⁵⁵ Deborah R. Geis, "Introduction," *Considering Maus*, ed. Deborah R. Geis (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 1.
- ⁵⁶ Available at <http://www.randomhouse.com/highschool/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780394747231&view=tg> (last accessed 04/07/2006)
- ⁵⁷ "Jews in Pen and Ink," available at http://www2.jewishculture.org/publications/cc/publications_cult_curr_9812.html (last accessed 04/07/2006)
- ⁵⁸ Michael E. Staub, "The Shoah Goes On and On: Remembrance and Representation in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," *MELUS* 20 no 3 (Fall 1995).
- ⁵⁹ Joseph Witek, *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1989), 115.
- ⁶⁰ Michael G. Levine, "Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and the Bleeding of History," *Considering Maus*, ed. Deborah R. Geis (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 78.
- ⁶¹ Witek, 99-100/
- ⁶² In the first volume of *Maus*, Vladek discovers that Anja is on medication because she is "so skinny and nervous" (19). She is also committed to a sanitarium of sorts (Vladek accompanies her) for a few months after the birth of her first son (31).
- ⁶³ *Maus* v. 1, 100.
- ⁶⁴ Levine, 84.
- ⁶⁵ *Maus* v. 1, 84.
- ⁶⁶ *Maus* v. 1, 158-9.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 159.

⁶⁸ This idea is discussed in more detail in Hamida Bosmajian, "The Orphaned Voice in *Maus*," , " *Considering Maus*, ed. Deborah R. Geis (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 39.

⁶⁹ Besides the following example, Anja is also portrayed as passive when a young boy bullying Art spits on her, and she doesn't react. She actually has what seem to be lines indicating fear projecting from her, perhaps indicating that she's recalling a time in her life when spitting on Jews would have been acceptable.

⁷⁰ Art Spiegelman, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!", *Virginia Quarterly Review* 81 no. 4 (Fall 2005), 23.

⁷¹ Ibid, 14-15.

⁷² Ibid, 25.

⁷³ Bosmajian, 38.

⁷⁴ "Portrait," 18.

⁷⁵ As in Mila Bongco, *Reading Comics: Language, Culture, and the Concept of the Superhero in Comic Books* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 133-4.

⁷⁶ Charles Hatfield. "A Broader Canvas: Gilbert Hernandez's *Heartbreak Soup*." *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature* (Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2005), 76.

⁷⁷ The term "midrash" generally refers to exegesis, interpretation, and sometimes expansion of biblical texts.

⁷⁸ J.T. Waldman, *Megillat Esther* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2005), 41.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 109.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 147.

⁸¹ Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi's Cat* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005), 9.

⁸² Ibid, 52.

⁸³ Ibid, 80.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 135.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 125. This also indicates that she's well-educated, which is often seen as unusual for girls from religious families in that period.

⁸⁶ Marie Lathers, "Posing the 'Belle Juive': Jewish Models in 19th-Century Paris," *Women's Art Journal* 21 no 1 (Spring/Summer 2000), 27.

⁸⁷ Sander Gilman, "Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the 'Modern Jewess'," *German Quarterly* 66 no. 2 (Spring 1993), 202.

⁸⁸ Booksense.com, "Art Spiegelman: Interview by Christopher Monte Smith. Available at <http://www.booksense.com/people/archive/spiegelmanart.jsp> (last accessed 10 April 2006).

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