

TALKING ABOUT JEWISH WOMEN AND COMICS
26 FEBRUARY 2012

Introduction

We are delighted to welcome you to “Talking about Jewish Women and Comics” on February 26th 2012, at Yeshiva University Museum. This one day symposium looks to bring together academics and comic artists to share ideas, research, and artwork. We hope it will be a space for dialogues about the interactions between text and image both on and off the page. What common themes emerge when Jewish women cartoonists represent themselves and others? What are some helpful theoretical modes for reading these works individually and collectively? What is it about sequential art that allows for unique investigations of identity categories like “Jewish,” “woman” or even “artist”?

This symposium was inspired by *Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women*, the first ever museum exhibit to highlight the contributions of Jewish women to the genre of autobiographical comics. We are excited to host a roundtable with many *Graphic Details* artists at the end of the day.

“Talking about Jewish Women and Comics” is sponsored by Yeshiva University Museum, *The Jewish Daily Forward*, McFarland & Co., Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, The Stirling Maxwell Centre at the University of Glasgow, and the PhD program in English at the CUNY Graduate Centre.

We hope you enjoy the day.

Sarah Lightman, Tahneer Oksman, and Dr. Amy Feinstein

Symposium Schedule

9:00 Registration; meet and greet

9:45 Introduction Sarah Lightman (University of Glasgow) and Rachel Lazin (Yeshiva University Museum)

SESSION ONE, 10:00 - 11:30

Panel I: The Sequential and the Scriptural

Chair: Karen Green (Columbia University Libraries)

Rebecca Levi (University of Virginia), "Image as Midrash: Text, Gender, Representation and Interpretation in *The Comic Torah*"

Sharon Rosenzweig (*The Comic Torah*) and Andrea Kantrowitz (Teacher's College, Columbia University), "First We Do, Then We Understand: How God Became a Woman"

Panel II: Picturing the Body

Chair: Sasha Semach (Yeshiva University Museum)

Tahneer Oksman (CUNY Graduate Center), "Self-Creation in the Comics of Vanessa Davis"

Fabio Mourilhe (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro), "The Graphic Memory of Aline Kominsky Crumb"

Jennifer Glaser (University of Cincinnati), "Graphic Inheritances: Jewish Women Comic Artists and the Jewish Body"

Joanne Leonard (University of Michigan), "Miscarriage made visual: Diane Noomin's *Baby Talk* and Joanne Leonard's *Journal*"

11:30 - 11:45 COFFEE BREAK (coffee/tea and light refreshments will be provided)

SESSION TWO, 11:45 - 1:15

Panel III: Drawing in Yiddish: A Schmooze with the Artists

Chair: Alisa Braun (Jewish Theological Seminary)

Leela Corman (*Unterzakhn*)

Liana Fink (Six Points Fellow)

Panel IV: Between Diary and Memoir: Forming Comic Identities

Chair: Michael Green (Hershey Medical Center, Penn State University)

Natalie Pendergast (University of Toronto), "The 'Outlaw' Genre: Erasing the Line Between Form and Content in Ariel Schrag's *Comic Chronicles*"

Heike Bauer (Birbeck College, University of London), "Graphic Lesbian Continuum: Ilana Zeffren"

Judy Batalion (Writer and Performer, NYC and London), "The Comedy of Confession"

Evelyn Tauben (Independent Curator and Writer, Toronto) "*Mi Yimtza?* Finding Jewish Identity Through Women's Autobiographical Art"

1:15 - 2:00 LUNCH (not provided)

SESSION THREE, 2:00 - 3:30

Panel V: Scrutinizing Israel: Travelers, Tourists, and Citizens

Chair: Amy Feinstein (Independent Scholar, New York City)

Maya Balakirsky Katz (Touro College), “Drawing Israel: Friedel Stern on the Sabra”

Maya Barzilai (University of Michigan), “Reframing the Holy Land: The ‘Adventures’ of Jewish Women Cartoonists in Israel”

Panel VI: Trauma, Memory, and the Imaginary, Part I

Chair: Bella Brodzki (Sarah Lawrence College)

Ariela Freedman (Concordia University), “Charlotte Salomon: Graphic Artist”

Maeve Thompson-Starkey (University of Cambridge), “Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*: Autobiographical Hybridity – the Possibilities of the Multinarrative”

Christopher Couch (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), “*American Widow* and Urban Identity: Grief, Memory, and the Fabric of Multicultural New York”

Maya Hajdu (Concordia University), “Fragmented Memories in the Graphic Novel: Works by Miriam Katin, Bernice Eisenstein, and Miriam Libicki”

3:30 – 4:00 Viewing of Graphic Details Exhibition in Gallery

4:00 – 6:00 Artists in Conversation (two artist roundtables open to the public)

Introduction by Dan Friedman (*The Jewish Daily Forward*)

ROUNDTABLE I (4:00 – 5:00)

Trauma, Memory, and the Imaginary, Part II: An Artist Roundtable

Chair: Sarah Lightman (Graphic Details Curator, University of Glasgow)

Sarah Leavitt (*Tangles*)

Caryn Leschen (*Aunt Violet Productions*)

Janice Shapiro (*Bummer*)

ROUNDTABLE II (5:00 – 6:00)

A Conversation with Artists from the Graphic Details Exhibit

Chair: Michael Kaminer (Graphic Details Curator, *The Jewish Daily Forward*)

Sarah Lightman (*Dumped Before Valentine's*)

Miss Lasko Gross (*A Mess Of Everything, Escape From “Special”*)

Diane Noomin (*Twisted Sisters, Glitz-2-Go*)

Corinne Pearlman (*Playing The Jewish Card*)

Ariel Schrag (*Potential, Awkward, Definition, Likewise*)

Lauren Weinstein (*Inside Vineyard, Girl Stories*)

Miriam Katin (*We Are On Our Own*)

Participant Biographies

Maya Barzilai is an assistant professor of Modern Hebrew Literature and Jewish culture at the University of Michigan, where she teaches courses on the Jewish graphic novel, Jewish film, and Jewish immigrant literature. She received her Ph.D. in 2009 from the Department of Comparative Literature at The University of California, Berkeley. She researches Hebrew-German bilingualism and translation in the early twentieth century, and she has published extensively on the German author W. G. Sebald. She also studies photography and film theory, focusing on the use of hybrid, visual-verbal media in aesthetic responses to war and violence (“Reading *Camera Lucida* in Gaza: Ronit Matalon’s Photographic Travels” is forthcoming with *Comparative Literature*). Her current book project, *The Golem and the Genesis of Modern Media: Film, Comics, and Poetics in Post-War Europe and the United States*, examines the proliferation of this story of creation in twentieth century European, Israeli, and American culture. In this period, the book argues, the golem legend became a myth of origins for the nascent mediums of film and comics.

Judy Batalion is a writer, comedian, and art historian. Her work has appeared in publications including *Salon*, *The Washington Post*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, *The Forward*, *Lilith*, and *Nerve*, and she edited the anthology *The Laughing Stalk: Live Comedy and Its Audiences*. She currently holds a Yiddish translation fellowship from the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute.

Heike Bauer is a Senior Lecturer in English and Humanities at Birkbeck, University of London. She has published widely on sexology, nineteenth century literary culture, ‘race,’ and the histories of female and male same-sex sexuality. Her publications include a monograph, *English Literary Sexology: Translations of Inversion 1860-1930* (Palgrave, 2009) and a three-volume anthology of texts, *Women and Cross-Dressing, 1800-1930* (Routledge, 2006). A collection of essays co-edited with Matt Cook, *Queer 1950s: Reshaping Sexuality in the Postwar Years*, is forthcoming with Palgrave in 2012. She is currently writing a book about Magnus Hirschfeld, global travel, and the development of transnational modern sexuality debates, and she is also leading a related collaborative project on sexology and translation, which is sponsored by the Wellcome Trust.

Alisa Braun is the academic director of the Institute for Jewish Learning at The Jewish Theological Seminary. Dr. Braun served as the academic coordinator of the Jewish Studies program at the University of California, Davis, where she taught courses on modern Jewish literature, history, and film. She has a PhD from the Department of English at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on Jewish writers in America and the institution of patronage, with a special focus on Yiddish language literature in the US. She has both studied and taught in the Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture.

Bella Brodzki is the Alice Stone Ilchman Chair in Comparative and International Studies at Sarah Lawrence College, where she teaches Comparative Literature. She is the coeditor of *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* and the author of *Can These Bones Live?: Translation, Survival, and Cultural Memory*. Most recently, she published an essay on Art Spiegelman's earliest work in the collection *Graphic Subjects* and co-edited a special issue of the

journal *Comparative Literature Studies* entitled “Trials of Trauma.” Her current project is a study of translators’ prefaces in theoretical and literary texts.

Leela Corman has illustrated books on subjects ranging from urban gardening to the history of the skirt, and her work has also appeared in the *New York Times*, on WNET/Thirteen, and in the *Boston Phoenix*, *Lilith*, *Bust*, and *Tikkun*. Leela is also a professional belly dancer. Her radio show, "Ecstasy to Frenzy" airs weekly on GROWRadio.

N. C. Christopher Couch is an academic and curator. He is Visiting Associate Professor at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, an affiliated faculty member at University of Massachusetts, and Visiting Lecturer at School of Visual Arts in New York City. He has curated numerous exhibits, including “Will Eisner’s The Plot: The Secret History of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion” (2006) and “Hubert Rogers and the Art of Science Fiction” (2007), both at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, W.E.B. Du Bois Library. His published works on comics include “Jerry Robinson, Ambassador of Comics” (New York: Abrams Books, 2010), “Will Eisner: A Retrospective” (co-author with Peter Myer, New York: Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art – MoCCA, 2005), and “The Will Eisner Companion, The Pioneering Spirit of the Father of the Graphic Novel” (co-author with Stephen Weiner, New York: DC Comics, 2004).

Amy Feinstein teaches English to tenth graders in the South Bronx. Before that she taught at Colgate University and the University of Wisconsin - Madison. She has published in *PMLA*, *James Joyce Quarterly*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, and in the volume *Radical Poetics and Secular Jewish Culture* (Alabama 2010). She is presently beginning a graphic novel and completing a book entitled *Jewish by Association: Gertrude Stein and Modernism*.

Liana Finck is a poet and artist, and an emerging graphic novelist. She attended Cooper Union College in New York on a full scholarship. In 2009, Liana studied at Université de La Cambre in Belgium on a Fulbright Fellowship that sponsored her creation of a graphic novel based on Tintin creator Georges Remi’s bad dreams. Her earlier publications include *The Shul Detective*, a graphic blog for *Lilith Magazine*, in which she explored synagogues in New York city, *Revelations and the Stupid Creatures* (Mark Batty/Random House), in which she collaborated with stuffed animal maker John Murphy on a visual adaptation of the *End of Days*, and *Phèdre: a Comic Tragedy* (Lulu.com), a rhyming graphic novel adapted from her own translation of Racine’s classic play. Liana has served as the artist in residence at Camp Ramah in New York and worked with poet Mark Rudman and artist Maira Kalman.

Ariela Freedman is an Associate Professor at the Liberal Arts College, Concordia University, Montreal. She is the author of *Death, Men and Modernism* (Routledge, 2003), and has published widely on literary modernism. More recently, her work has turned to the exploration of comics and graphic narrative, including “Drawing on Modernism in Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*” (*JML* 32:4) and “Comics, Graphic Novels, Graphic Narrative: A Review” (*Literature Compass* 8:1).

Dan Friedman is the arts and culture editor of the *Forward*. A founding editor of *Zeek*, Dan has a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Yale and an M.A. in English Literature from Cambridge. He has taught poetry, literature, and film at Cambridge and Yale. As well as publishing various

scholarly articles on film, poetry, and photography, he is a qualified soccer coach and certified lifeguard. Dan writes fiction and poetry but is better known for his writing for “Da Ali G Show.”

Jennifer Glaser is an assistant professor of English and Comparative Literature and an affiliate faculty member in Judaic studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality studies at the University of Cincinnati. She researches and teaches in the areas of contemporary American literature, Jewish identity, gender, and comics/ graphic narratives. At present, she is working on a manuscript entitled *Exceptional Differences: Race, Chosenness, and the Postwar Jewish American Literary Imagination*. She has published or has publications forthcoming in venues such as *PMLA*, *Image/ Text*, *MELUS*, *Safundi*, the *New York Times*, *Literature Compass*, and an anthology of essays from Random House.

Karen Green is Columbia University's Librarian for Ancient & Medieval History and Religion and, for the past six years, the Graphic Novels Librarian. She writes a monthly column called “Comic Adventures in Academia” (for ComiXology.com), has curated an exhibition for Columbia’s Butler Library called “Comics in the Curriculum,” and has spoken about comics at several universities as well as on public radio. She is also on the Board of Trustees for the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art. She cherishes a lifelong affection for comics, which she credits to early exposure to *The New Yorker* and *MAD Magazine*.

Michael Green M.D., M.S. is a physician and bioethicist at the Penn State University’s Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. He is Chair of the Hospital Ethics Committee, and Director of the Program in Bioethics. He attended medical school at the University of Illinois and completed residency in internal medicine at Northwestern University. He received fellowship training in clinical medical ethics at the University of Chicago’s Center for Clinical Medical Ethics, and in general internal medicine and medical ethics at the University of Wisconsin. He is currently Professor in the Departments of Humanities and Internal Medicine, where he cares for patients, teaches medical students and residents, and conducts research in bioethics and humanities. He has published numerous articles and received many grant awards for his research, which most recently has focused on helping patients make informed decisions with the help of interactive computer-based decision aids. He has had a life-long interest in comics, and was a co-organizer of two international conferences on Comics and Medicine. For the past several years, he has taught a course on the topic to 4th-year medical students at Hershey, and he is the co-author of a recent paper published in the *BMJ* on Comics and Medicine.

Leonard Greenspoon holds the Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization at Creighton University. On the Creighton faculty since 1995, Greenspoon is also Professor of Classical & Near Eastern Studies and of Theology. From his days at a graduate student at Harvard University (from which he received his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations), Greenspoon has been interested in translations of the Bible. Many of his publications – he has edited or authored more than a dozen books, written more than two hundred articles and book chapters, and penned almost 500 book reviews – deal with aspects of this fascinating subject. He has written on topics ranging from the earliest translation of the Bible, the Septuagint, to versions of the Bible composed as recently as last year. He is recognized internationally as an expert on the history of Jewish Bible translations, and he has been involved in two Bible translation projects as editor or consultant. In recent years, Greenspoon has published in several areas of popular culture,

including Jews (and, more generally, religion) in the comic strips and the use (or misuse) of the Bible in the daily press. He writes a column on the latter for *Bible Review* and incorporated all of these interests in his role as editor of *The FORUM*, published by the Society of Biblical Literature.

Miss Lasko-Gross is the author and illustrator of Fantagraphics Books' *A Mess Of Everything* (named one of *Booklist's* top ten graphic novels of the year), the follow up to the YALSA nominated *Escape From "Special."* Currently, her work is featured in the *Graphic Details* show, at the Cartoon Art Museum, and in *Henni*, a serialized adventure for the Comixology /House of Twelve iPhone app.

Maya Hajdu received her B.A. in Art History and Studio Arts from Concordia University. She is currently completing an M.A. in Art History and has been awarded the SSHRC *Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship Award*, the *Harris and Ann Wetstein Foundation Fellowship*, and a *Special Entrance Award*. In 2011, she co-edited and helped to produce the AGAC's (Contemporary Art Galleries Association) Montreal exhibition catalogue, *Papier II: Contemporary Art Fair of Works on Paper*. She was also invited to attend a cultural conference in Vienna, under the auspices of the Austrian government. Maya's work has been published in several academic journals. For her research, she has combined her love of literature and visual art to research autobiographical comics by Jewish women. Specifically, she is interested in how text and image intertwine to create narratives centered on memory, time, and identity. Maya is also currently working as an arts journalist for two online publications, *Shtetl Montreal* and *Vista Art Network*.

Michael Kaminer is a New York based writer and editor. He is co-curator of *Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women*, and wrote the December 2008 *Jewish Daily Forward* story on which the show is based. A lifelong comics fan, Michael also collects original work, mostly by women cartoonists.

Andrea Kantrowitz is an artist, teacher, and doctoral candidate at Teacher's College, Columbia University, and a member of the Drawing Research Network. She holds a B.A in Art and Cognition from Harvard University, an MFA in Painting from Yale, and she is an adjunct professor in the graduate program in art education at the College of New Rochelle. She has also worked for many years as a teaching artist in the New York City public schools. Her research examines the cognitive interactions underlying contemporary artists' drawing practices. Her art work is represented by Kenise Barnes Fine Art.

Miriam Katin. I was born in Budapest in 1942. Among my earliest memories, there is a book my father brought home to me. A hardcover with empty white pages. I started to draw. It is that book I am still trying to fill with stories I was told and memories I have and the life we live now. People and places I loved or hated. In 2000, I discovered comics for myself. I am running out of the empty pages. Before then, in 1957, I immigrated to Israel and between 1981 – 2001 I worked as a background designer for animated films for Ein Gedi films, Israel, and also Jumbo Pictures, MTV, and the Disney Studio in New York. Amongst many comics I have published is my autobiographical Holocaust memoir, *We Are On Our Own* (Drawn and Quarterly).

Maya Balakirsky Katz is Associate Professor of Art History at Touro College and on the faculty of Touro's Graduate School of Jewish Studies. She has written on the intersection of religious identity and media in essay collections, exhibition catalogs, encyclopedias, and journals. Most recently, she authored the book *The Visual Culture of Chabad* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Sarah Leavitt is a Vancouver writer and cartoonist. In September 2010 she published her first book, a graphic memoir – *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother, and Me* (Canada: Freehand Books; UK: Jonathan Cape; US: Skyhorse). *Tangles* was a finalist for the 2010 Writers' Trust of Canada Non-fiction Prize (the first graphic narrative to be a finalist in this category), the 2011 B.C. Book Prizes, the 2011 Alberta Book Publishing Awards, and the 2011 Alberta Readers' Choice Award. *Tangles* was included in the *Globe and Mail's* top 100 books of 2010. Sarah is working on her next book, also a graphic narrative – historical fiction this time. She has just begun teaching about comics in the Creative Writing Department at U.B.C. More at sarahleavitt.com.

Joanne Leonard is a photographer, photo-collage artist, writer, and feminist whose work has contributed to the field of autobiography studies. Her work has been included in The San Francisco Museum of Art's *Women of Photography* (1975), Lippard's *From the Center* (1976), Gardner's *Art Through the Ages* (9th ed., 1991), Marianne Hirsch's *The Familial Gaze* (1996), and Michael Chaney's, *Graphic Subjects* (2011). Her 2008 visual memoir, *Being In Pictures: An Intimate Photo Memoir*, with a foreword by Lucy R. Lippard, was published by The University of Michigan Press. She has taught at the San Francisco Art Institute and Mills College in California. She is Distinguished University Professor Emeritus from the University of Michigan, where she taught for 31 years.

Caryn Leschen started out by drawing her own Maidenform bra ads and illustrating Beatles songs in front of the TV when she was just a wee lass growing up in far eastern Queens. Later, in San Francisco, she joined some of her cartoonist mentors as editor and contributor to *Wimmin's Comix*, issues #8–#17. Her oeuvre expanded to a variety of anthologies and shows, from *Twisted Sisters 1 and 2* to the *She Draws Comics* show, and, now, to *Graphic Details*. She created an “advice comic” for *The SF Weekly*, “Ask Aunt Violet,” in which, among other things, she chronicles her experiences as a new mom. She self-syndicated “Ask Aunt Violet” to alternative weeklies all over North America. But she needed to make a living – well, everyone has their price – and it became practical (and fun) to create various embellishments and copy for the fledgling Internet. As Art Director of Aunt Violet Productions, she draws and designs for web, print, and mobile platforms such as eBooks and iPhone apps. Ms. Leschen is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of San Francisco, where she teaches Digital Design and Writing. Having recently deposited her adorable teenaged son at the paradise that is U.C. Santa Cruz, she's compiling the collected *Ask Aunt Violet*, to be published as an eBook by Puzzled Squirrel Press. She is also working on her first graphic novel, *Miss Internal Revenue*. She teaches and lectures widely on Comics as a Fine Art Medium, and considers comics her purest form of self-expression. Learn more at www.auntviolet.com.

Rebecca Levi is an M.A. in religious studies at the University of Virginia, focusing on ethical issues of gender, sexuality, and ecology in Judaism. She is also interested in graphic narrative

and the graphic essay as a means of academic writing and is herself an amateur cartoonist. Her M.A. research examines uses of empirical evidence in the conservative movement's 2006 decision allowing for the ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis and cantors. She received her B.A. from Oberlin College in 2008.

Sarah Lightman, is an award winning fine artist and co-curator of *Graphic Details*. Sarah has been making and exhibiting "The Book of Sarah" – her ongoing visual autobiography – for over fifteen years. She is researching a Ph.D. in autobiographical comics at The University of Glasgow. Sarah has published her writings on comics in many journals and magazines, including *Studies in Comics*, *International Journal of Comic Art*, and *The Jewish Chronicle*. Sarah was also a contributor to *1001 Comics To Read Before you Die* (Cassell). Sarah chaired the Women in Comics Conferences in Cambridge University (2009), and Leeds Art Gallery (2101). Sarah is a Director of Laydeez Do Comics, the U.K.'s first women's led monthly comics forum.

Fabio Mourilhe is a musician with an M.S. in Design and a longstanding interest in comics. He has published scientific articles about comic books and design, history, semiotics, language, psychology, politics, and philosophy. Mourilhe's most recent works explore the language of comics, speech bubbles, and aesthetics. He is author of "O Quadro Nos Quadrinhos" (2010), "O Grottesco Nos Quadrinhos" (2011), "The Concept of the Rupture in Comic-books" (2011), "O Conceito de Sublime Kantiano a Partir de Cinderalla de Junko Mizuno," and "Denis Kitchen: Artista e Editor de Quadrinhos."

Diane Noomin was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1947 and attended the High School of Music and Art, Brooklyn College, and Pratt Institute. She is the creator of DiDi Glitz and editor of the *Twisted Sisters* anthologies of women cartoonists. One of the early contributors to *Wimmen's Comics*, Noomin created the first issue of *Twisted Sisters Comics* with Aline Kominsky Crumb in 1976. Noomin's work has also been published in a number of books, magazines, and comic books, including *Weirdo*, *Young Lust*, *Arcade: The Comics Review*, *Lemme Outta Here*, *Dangerous Drawings*, *Mind Riot*, *The Comics Journal/Special Editions*, *The New Comics Anthology*, *True Glitz*, *The Nose*, and *The Nation*. An anthology of her collected comics, *Glitz-2-Go*, was published by Fantagraphics Books in February 2012. In 1981, she collaborated on the musical comedy, "I'd Rather Be Doing Something Else: The DiDi Glitz Story," with the San Francisco-based women's theater group Les Nিকেettes. Noomin has been nominated for Harvey and Eisner awards and was given the Ink Pen award in 1994. She has curated and shown work in the *Twisted Sister's Show* at White Columns Gallery in 1996, The Museum of Cartoon Art of San Francisco in 1995, and La Luz de Jesus Gallery in Los Angeles in 1991. In 1994, Noomin had a solo exhibition at the Little Frankenstein Gallery in San Francisco. She lives in Connecticut with her husband, cartoonist Bill Griffith, and three cats.

Tahneer Oksman is a PhD candidate at CUNY's Graduate Center, as well as the co-coordinator of the Writing Across the Curriculum program at Brooklyn College. Her dissertation, "'How Come Boys Get to Keep Their Noses?': Jewish American Women and Comics," explores the works of contemporary cartoonists. She is a recipient of a 2011 Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Research Award, and her essays have been published in *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies* and *Studies in Comics*.

Ranen Omer-Sherman is Professor of English and Jewish Studies at the University of Miami. His essays on Israeli and Jewish writers have appeared in the *Journal of Jewish Identities*, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, *MELUS*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Modernism/Modernity*, *Prooftexts*, *Religion & Literature*, *Shofar*, and *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*. His books include *Diaspora and Zionism in Jewish American Literature: Lazarus, Syrkin, Reznikoff, Roth*; *Israel in Exile: Jewish Writing and the Desert*; and two co-edited volumes, *The Jewish Graphic Novel: Critical Approaches*, and *Israeli Cultural Narratives of War* (due out in 2012).

Corinne Pearlman first “Played the Jewish Card” when asked to contribute a strip to the UK’s *Jewish Quarterly* in 1992. Between 2002 and 2011, she drew regular strips for the magazine, exploring her role as a “non-Jewish Jew” by tackling subjects close to the heart of assimilated Jews such as third homes, funerals, Christmas, and Wagner. She is Commissioning Editor for Myriad Editions’ graphic novel list in the UK, and a partner with health education publishers Comic Company. She lives in London and Brighton.

Natalie Pendergast is currently researching a Ph.D. in contemporary French and North American “autobiocomics” and *Bande Dessinée* at the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. Her main focus of interest is on the formal differences in the graphic novel autobiography in contrast to the conventional literary autobiography. In addition to formalism, she often explores themes of sexual subjectivity, queer and “coming out” stories and depictions of the female body in graphic novels. She has been published in student journals such as *Revue LitArtCo*, *Revue Dire*, and *Le Panoptique*, and is the editor-in-chief of the student journal *Transverse* at the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. Her creative writing has been published in *Broken Pencil Magazine*, and she has directed three Holocaust survivor videos for WhoWeAre.ca.

Sharon Rosenzweig is a Jewish cartoonist and co-creator, with her husband, Aaron Freeman, of the controversial re-imagining of the Hebrew bible, *The Comic Torah*. After a decade of teaching painting and printmaking at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Sharon abandoned the title “fine artist” for “comics creator.” Her cartoons have appeared in *Harper’s Magazine* and *The Huffington Post*. Sharon also makes comic challah each week, themed to the Torah portion.

Ariel Schrag is the author of the graphic novels *Awkward*, *Definition*, *Potential*, and *Likewise*, all published by Simon & Schuster. She is the editor of the comics anthology, *Stuck in the Middle: 17 Comics from an Unpleasant Age*, published by Viking. She is a writer on the HBO series *How To Make It In America* and was a writer on the Showtime series *The L Word*.

Sasha Semach is currently a Yeshiva University Presidential Fellow in the Yeshiva University Museum. He is also a graduate student at Yeshiva University’s Bernard Revel Graduate School for Jewish Studies, pursuing a degree in Medieval Jewish history. As an undergraduate, Sasha received a Bachelor of Arts in History, as well as an Associate of Arts in Jewish Studies. Sasha recently co-authored an article with Professor Steven Fine for the *Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, published by Wiley-Blackwell.

Janice Shapiro is the author of *Bummer and Other Stories* (Soft Skull Press, 2010). Her stories and comics have been or will be published in *The North American Review*, *The Santa Monica Review*, *Fifty-Two Stories*, *Storyville*, *Devil's Lake*, *Post Road*, *The Seattle Review*, *New California Writing*, and *Gargoyle*. She won The Samuel Goldwyn Screenwriting Award and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Janice teaches a Graphic Memoir class at Politics and Prose in Washington DC. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and dog.

Evelyn Tauben is based in Toronto as an independent curator, writer, and artistic producer with a deep commitment to new Jewish arts and culture. Previously, she was the head of Programs and Exhibitions at the Koffler Centre of the Arts, where she was integral to the Koffler Gallery presentation in Toronto of the travelling *Graphic Details* exhibition. Her participation in this project helped her form a keen interest in this particular form of artistic expression and its relationship to contemporary Jewish identity. She has an M.A. in Art History from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, Philadelphia, and she has worked at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the National Museum of American History.

Maeve Thompson-Starkey is a graduate student at the University of Cambridge, currently reading for her Masters in Jewish-Christian Relations. Her Bachelor's dissertation, *The Legacy of Maus in Graphic Novels of the Holocaust*, looked at the reactions, implications, and importance of *Maus* and compared issues raised with two other works, Joe Kubert's *Yossel*, and Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*. In these two latter works, Maeve explored the concepts of postmemory, prosthetic memory, and allohistory as elements of second-generation survivor narratives. Prior to university, Maeve worked in the public and private sectors, later as a photographer, and finally in the non-profit sector. Her research interests are in visual-literary crossovers, narrative in the comics medium, Jewish-Christian relations, and anthropomorphism in the Bible.

Lauren R. Weinstein, an Xeric and Ignatz winning cartoonist, is still recovering from having a baby and moving to the suburbs of New Jersey (it's been two years). Her comic books include *Girl Stories* and *The Goddess of War*, and her work has been published in *Kramer's Ergot*, *The Ganzfeld*, *An Anthology of Graphic Fiction*, and *The Best American Comics of 2007 and 2010*. She is currently working on a sequel to *Girl Stories* and looking on Facebook. To keep herself amused during her child's naps, she draws comics about motherhood and stuff, which can be seen at <http://www.laurenweinstein.com>.

Abstracts

Maya Barzilai

Reframing the Holy Land: The “Adventures” of Jewish Women Cartoonist in Israel

Miriam Libicki’s *Jobnik! An American Girl’s Adventures in the Israeli Army* and Sarah Glidden’s *How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less* are semi-autobiographical graphic narratives, drawn from the perspective of American women visiting Israel. The geopolitical setting of Israel enables Libicki and Glidden to experiment with the medium and develop their style of personal reportage. These works enact the encounter between the American “outsider” and the local population and culture through the very use of comics, a medium developed in Europe and the United States. My paper concerns the different ways in which these two cartoonists deconstruct the identities of their Jewish American protagonists and call into question the possibility of demarcating the personal from the political sphere. Both artists use a naïve cartoony style – Libicki draws with pencil and Glidden uses watercolors– to disarm their readers and position their protagonists as the uninitiated Americans who have come to “experience” Israel at first hand. Their autobiographical protagonists participate, furthermore, in markedly Zionist projects, volunteering in the army and touring Israel with the Birthright organization.

Within this general common framework, Libicki and Glidden diverge in their narrative trajectories and their use of the political-social context. Through her experiential, rather than abstract, confrontation with political issues, Glidden’s leftist-liberal protagonist “matures” and attains a more complex view of Israeli society (Birthright accomplished). Libicki’s narrative is, by contrast, far more dark and pessimistic. Her female protagonist does not *identify* with the Palestinian others, but becomes in a sense *like* them, used and abused both sexually and emotionally by the Israeli male soldier she encounters. Libicki’s drawings make clear that rather than escaping the daily news of the Intifada through her sexual “adventures,” the protagonist internalizes and repeats, not necessarily self-consciously, the political violence in her personal life. Both of these comics, I argue, capitalize on the American fascination with Israel, and especially with the Israeli army, to present complex feminist counterpoints to certain (male) Israeli positions. Libicki’s self-published work confronts the reader, nonetheless, with the bleak, mutual paralysis of Americans and Israelis, whereas Glidden’s colorful *DC Comics* publication ultimately fulfills the role of an alternative “Lonely Planet” to Israel.

Heike Bauer

Graphic Lesbian Continuum: Ilana Zeffren

This paper examines the work of Tel Aviv based cartoonist and graphic artist Ilana Zeffren, which features moments from her life, mostly based in and around the home she shares with her girlfriend and their two speaking cats, Rafi and Spageti. The autobiographical and metacritical aspects of Zeffren’s work reflect the recent graphic turn in the telling of life

narratives which has led to the emergence of new kinds of memoir, biography, and documentary. A common focus of this work is its concern with extreme and traumatic experience. Zeffren makes a different intervention, as the autobiographical avatar of her work chronicles everyday life. By combining word and image, Zeffren attempts to work through the lesbian, normalizing her, I argue, not to make essentialist claims but to construct a new norm against which other stories may be told. The paper will explore some of the representational strategies that underpin this work and its translations, developing the notion of the “graphic lesbian continuum” as a framework for thinking afresh gender, genre, and (im)possibilities of representation.

N. C. Christopher Couch ***American Widow and Urban Identity: Grief, Memory, and the Fabric of Multicultural New York***

In *American Widow*, writer Alissa Rosenberg Torres and artist Sungyoon Choi created one of the most emotionally complex and cross-culturally eloquent works dealing with the 9/11 tragedy. Rosenberg Torres lost her husband Eddie, a new employee of Cantor Fitzgerald, in the attack on the World Trade Center. Told in a chronologically complex mix of narrative, flashbacks, and commentary on the events, Rosenberg Torres’s work achieves a compelling portrait of her marriage to a witty and resourceful Colombian-American, the challenges of their life together in New York, and the loss and its aftermath. Echoing the humor and coping of her married life, Rosenberg Torres employs dark humor to trace the strange path she follows in the days and months after her loss, dealing with nonprofits and government agencies, the demands of strangers and the media, and the depths of grief. *American Widow* depicts the relationship of a Jewish woman and Catholic Latin American man with depth and humor, and a positive embrace of the two traditions. Rosenberg Torres returns to this issue after the birth of her son, as she negotiates the path to bringing both her religious and cultural traditions into his life. Rosenberg Torres’s work depicts a multiethnic New York, where cultural traditions are negotiated and borders are crossed. The work itself demonstrates this process in its composition and creation. The elegant work of Korean artist Sung Yoon Choi, inflected with both manga styles and American independent comics, as well as some of the restraint and beauty of traditional scroll and religious painting, serves as an echo of the cultural negotiation depicted in Rosenberg Torres’s work. The issues of family, cross-cultural relationships, Jewish identity, and modern urban life, as well as tragedy, are at the heart of Rosenberg Torres’s work.

Liana Finck **In Conversation**

Liana Finck is working on a comic book about the “Bintel Brief,” a Yiddish advice column, for a Six Points Fellowship in New York. It will be serialized in *The Forward* starting in April, shown at the Eldridge St. Synagogue and the Sixth and I in Washington, DC, and form part of teaching workshops at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the Eldridge St. Synagogue, and the Limmud Conference, UK. Finck will talk about the experience of writing her book: figuring out how to make the structure and style reflect Yiddish culture and newspaper culture and the difficulty of translating a literary tradition into a visual work. She will talk about creating a vernacular comics voice that is the female equivalent of Superman or Batman, since most of the “Bintel Brief” letters were written by women. The feature was mostly read by women, too—it was pulp—and so she will discuss the topic of female audiences as well.

Ariela Freedman **Charlotte Salomon, Graphic Artist**

Charlotte Salomon’s *Leben? Oder Theater? Ein Singenspiel* might be the most powerful Jewish women’s graphic narrative ever drawn and written. But it is almost entirely absent in

critical discourse on comics and on graphic narrative. Part of the reason for this obscurity is that it isn't, strictly speaking, a comic: it was not drawn to be mass-produced, which is so often part of the definition of contemporary comics, and was created largely in isolation from a comics tradition. *Life? Or Theatre?* is instead something richer and stranger: a graphic narrative of an ambition and scale that has not yet been replicated, that in many ways anticipates the conventions and preoccupations of contemporary graphic memoirs.

Charlotte Salomon was a young Jewish artist from Berlin who fled Germany after Kristallnacht and hid in the South of France. From 1940 to 1942, she created over thirteen hundred small gouaches and sketches that together comprised a fictionalized autobiography. She rejected a number of these, leaving a narrative sequence of nearly eight hundred paintings. The paintings combine text and image; early in the sequence, she wrote the textual element of the story on separate, semi-transparent pieces of paper, which she taped as an overlay above the paintings; later on, she increasingly incorporated text into the images themselves. She tells the loosely veiled story of her own life and family history, beginning with her aunt's suicide in 1913 and ending with her own exile to France in 1933 and her decision to begin this work of art. She balances autobiography and testimony, personal history and the history of German Jewish culture in Weimar Berlin, thus anticipating the dual focus on personal and historical narrative that has characterized so many significant works of contemporary comics.

Salomon's work has received some outstanding attention from art historians, including Griselda Pollock and Michael P. Steinberg; Pollock calls it "one of our century's most challenging art works – but I for one am not sure that I can fully know what I am looking at." I want to bring the new discipline of comics scholarship to the study of Salomon's provocative, extended narrative exploration of word and image in order to explore her elaboration of identity, legacy, gender, and Judaism. Charlotte Salomon's work, I will argue, is both an important piece of the lineage of Jewish women's graphic narrative, its under-explored past, and also anticipates its future. While occasionally brought into juxtaposition with contemporary graphic memoir – notably, by Bernice Eisenstein, whose own memoir invokes Salomon as predecessor, and who has more recently produced a series of drawings in response to Salomon's work – *Leben? Oder Theatre?* deserves to be more prominently brought into the conversation about Jewish women's graphic narrative. *Leben? Oder Theatre?* is both of and beyond its time, and anticipates narrative strategies and preoccupations which are unmistakably contemporary. Salomon's work has the potential to be a strong source of inspiration for comics artists today, and her legacy needs to be part of the critical history of graphic memoir.

Jennifer Glaser

Graphic Inheritances: Jewish Women Comics Artists and the Jewish Body

In *The Jewish Body*, Sander Gilman argues that artists and illustrators have long figured Jewish difference as absolute and located in the body – a difference eminently representable in pictorial form. Contemporary Jewish comics artists have had to contend with this lengthy history of anti-Semitic caricature. The complexity of representing the Jewish body is even more acute for Jewish women who create comics because of the particular hatred leveled at the purportedly excessive Jewish woman's body and its exaggerated physiognomy by many artists and illustrators. I will argue that confessional Jewish women comics artists, such as Aline Kominsky Crumb and Diane Noomin, are preoccupied with the Jewish woman's body precisely because it has for so long been the repository for anxiety about acculturation, economics, and

racial difference. By borrowing from and challenging the archive of anti-Semitic caricature, they rewrite their own relationship to the Jewish body.

Leonard Greenspoon

Mothers, Daughters, and...: Jewish Women in Today's Comic Strips

My presentation looks at the portrayal of Jewish women in today's mainstream comic strips. Among these strips, which are quite widely circulated online and in print, are two, both produced by Jewish cartoonists, that feature Jewish families. They are "Edge City" and "Pajama Diaries." In addition, women identified as Jewish show up on occasion in other comic strips. It is my thesis that an analysis of these graphic presentations opens up a window to popular culture, through which well-known images, such as the "Jewish mother" or the "Jewish American Princess," are both reinforced and subverted.

It is important to affirm that the comic strips I look at are not "underground" or "religious," but aimed at the general reader. Such readers, at least in the view of the cartoonists, are equipped to understand Jewish women in "traditional" roles, such as Seder meal planners and Chanukah party organizers, and in less "traditional" roles, such as psychologists and protest supporters.

Sometimes, images of Jewish women play a significant role in a comic strip even when no "actual" Jewish women appear. This is the case, for example, in a storyline that ran for approximately a week in the comic strip "The Meaning of Lila." The eponymous heroine of this strip, a rather vacuous young lady who works at a call center, decides she wants to date a Jewish doctor. Naturally, she goes on J-Date. Her "outing" as a non-Jew by the first Jewish male she encounters depends on his, and our (as readers), explicit recognition (if not acceptance) of some fairly negative features stereotypically associated with younger Jewish women. In another instance, a female character in "For Better or For Worse" was assumed to be Jewish by many readers. In seeking to determine the reasons for this identification – How she looked? Her name? Personal characteristics? – we are again confronted with the issue of stereotypes on the part of readers and perhaps also on the part of the cartoonist.

Maya Hajdu

Fragmented Memories in the Graphic Novel

After attending a trailblazing international exhibition at Toronto's Koffler Arts Centre titled *Graphic Details: Confessional Comics by Jewish Women*, and interviewing one of the show's curators, New York journalist Michael Kaminer, I became enthralled with women's autobiographical comics. Of the eighteen artists whose original drawings and sketches were on display, three in particular stood out in my mind: Miriam Katin (United States), Bernice Eisenstein (Canada), and Miriam Libicki (Canada).

My paper analyzes one graphic novel by each of these artists. Katin's *We Are on Our Own: A Memoir* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2006) is a graphic autobiography that details the artist's childhood during the Second World War, her escape from Hungary, and her subsequent encounters with these traumatic memories as an adult in the United States. Eisenstein's award-winning *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (McClelland & Stewart, 2006) explores the Holocaust through the eyes of the artist who, as the child of survivors, navigates the experiences and remembrances of an older generation. Finally, Libicki's *Jobnik!* (Real Gone Girl Studios, 2008) delves into the artist's experience of army life in Israel and the emergence of contemporary Jewish identity.

My theoretical basis for examining these works will center on the question of memory, and how it is represented both visually and through narrativity. What is the significance of time in sequential art? The answer lies in the idea of autobiographical memory, which is often referred to as a form of mental time-travel. In order to explore the representation of memory in these graphic memoirs, I have decided to organize them chronologically, moving from Katin's first-hand account of the Holocaust, to Eisenstein's second-generation reflection on what her parents endured, to Libicki's more contemporary life experience in Israel. I am exploring the following concepts: the formal qualities and aesthetic of the work in relation to plot, issues of self-representation from both visual and textual perspectives, the manifestation of time in the graphic novel, and lastly how the artist chose to represent her memories.

Memory is a rich and complex phenomenon, which many historic thinkers have tried to define. And yet, easy definition escapes the concept of memory because it encapsulates so many aspects of Being. I will therefore approach it primarily from a philosophical perspective, but I will also include references to psychological concepts that are directly linked to my discussion. I hope to bring these intricate art books into a dialogue with ideas articulated by contemporary memory studies theorists Paul Ricoeur, Allan Megill, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Anita Kazabova, Robyn Fivush, and John Campbell, among others.

Maya Balakirsky Katz Drawing Israel: Friedel Stern on the Sabra

Described as "Israel's first woman caricaturist," German émigré Friedel Stern (1917 - 2006) was also the only woman active in the largely Hungarian male field of Israeli caricature for decades after the establishment of the State of Israel. Stern contributed hundreds of freelance cartoons for a number of daily papers, including *Davar*, *LaIsha*, and *Maariv*, often losing her place when these papers hired full-time salaried male artists. At *Maariv*, Stern regularly contributed cartoons from the point of view of Israel's female population to a column titled "Pinat Isha" (Woman's Corner) until Hungarian émigré Kariel Gardosh (known as Dosh) took a regular position at the paper and introduced his beloved school boy character known as Srulik. Outfitted in short shorts, sandalim, khaki shorts, and the distinctive pointy sun hat popular among kibbutzniks in the 1930s, known as the *kova tembel*, Srulik came to be seen as the national mascot along the lines of America's Uncle Sam or France's Marianne. So popular was this nation-boy, instrumental in the development of the image of the Israeli *sabra*, that by the end of the 1950s, Stern already lampooned his cultural hold. In her cartoon, Stern depicts a diverse sampling of Israeli "types" diving into the wide end of a funnel in a Seussical machine that homogenizes men and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds to produce the single version of Srulik. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Stern published caricatures in the IDF weekly *Bamahaneh* on the subject of inequality in a macho Israeli culture. This paper explores Stern's criticism of formation of the *sabra* persona and her shaping of alternative Israeli identities through her female tourist characters.

Judy Batalion Comedy of Confession

"People with self-respect take their feelings to a therapist... but I like to share my negative emotions!" Corinne Perlman's narrator explains at a mental health fair as she tries to sell a set of anxiety bookmarks. Full of self-mockery, parody, and punch, the works in the *Graphic Details* exhibition are funny. I will consider the ways in which humor is used in the exhibited pieces, reflecting upon humor's role in Jewish women's art and literature from Judy Chicago to Miranda July, and Erica Jong to Sloane Crosley. These comic pieces use satire,

caricature, logical and linguistic twists, plays on classical Jewish jokes, obsessive observation, role reversal, self-deprecation, and the merger of text and image in order to be funny, and in turn, manage hypersensitivity, deal with trauma, attack, avoid and assuage anxiety. I will reflect upon differences in works produced in different decades, and between nationalities when these come into play.

Ephrat Huss

Israeli Impoverished Bedouin Women's Drawings: Using Humor as Indirect Subversion from the Margins

Gayatri Spivak, a prominent researcher of third world impoverished women, claims that the place where women's "speech acts" can be heard are not in verbal speeches, or in historical and political writings (that are male dominated), but in the areas of symbolic self-expression where resistance is removed from reality, and thus does not threaten the central male discourse. Similarly, feminist art therapist Susan Hogan states that: "For women, in contrast to the linguistic tradition, art offers a means of expression which is less readily male in its vocabulary, and is therefore more readily open to and able to reference the true experience of the women... The image may speak for itself, reducing the possibility of the artist client being spoken over." The aim of this presentation is to show how a group of marginalized and impoverished Bedouin women utilize drawings and humor within their drawings to express the interconnected circles of oppression from Bedouin males and Jewish females, such as social workers, that they experience.

Joanne Leonard

Miscarriage Made Visual: Diane Noomin's *Baby Talk* and Joanne Leonard's *Journal*

My presentation traces the cultural, historical, and social forces that prompted and supported, hindered, and undermined the development of the body of frank and often sexually graphic works of which Diane Noomin's "Baby Talk" and my own *Journal of a Miscarriage* are a part. Works about miscarriage are a special subset of autobiography, especially interesting since they represent a common event of loss and trauma in women's lives around which there is virtually no literature, whether visual or textual. Having parts of one's own experience barred or erased from shared culture is painful; on the other hand, joining works so that they become a communality, a focus of attention within culture, is exhilarating.

My *Journal* and Noomin's "Baby Talk" are not precisely comparable. The two works come from different eras (the 70s, the 90s) and different genres (fine arts, underground comics). They also have different "centers." "Baby Talk," set against the background of an ongoing relationship, is the story of one pregnancy loss after another and the discovery, after the roller coaster journey of "baby, no baby, baby, no baby" ("Baby Talk" 6), of the end to a "fetal attraction." *Journal* is the story of one miscarriage against the background of romantic loss, and the regaining of hope along with the reimagining of a future with or without a partner and a child. I'll present overviews of both "Baby Talk" and *Journal* and address various additional points of comparison between the two works.

Rebecca J. Levi

Image as Midrash: Text, Gender Representation, and Interpretation in *The Comic Torah*

While graphic interpretations of Scripture (e.g. paintings and illustrated Bibles) have been around for centuries, the phenomenon of wholly sequential Bibles is more recent. How do such treatments fit into the tradition of Biblical translation and interpretation? More specifically,

how do they fit into the Jewish Scriptural tradition? My paper examines the place of one such treatment, Sharon Rosenzweig and Aaron Freeman's *The Comic Torah*, in this tradition. *The Comic Torah* attempts something different than pure explication or even straight interpretation. Rosenzweig and Freeman consciously place their interpretation into the context of Jewish ritual and practice. I argue that their use of image as interpretive device in the context of Jewish practice may be interpreted as a practice and development of the technique of Rabbinic Midrash.

In "Two Introductions to Midrash," James L. Kugel writes that "midrash's precise focus is most often on what one would call 'surface irregularities' in the text: a good deal of the time it is concerned with (in the broadest sense) *problems*." Daniel Boyarin, in *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, writes that these problems are generated not only from the lemma or base text itself, but also from the interaction between the lemma and the prooftexts used to support an interpretation: "So-called 'prooftexts' are to be read as intertexts and cotexts of the Torah's narrative, as subtexts of the midrashic interpretation. There is a tension between the meaning(s) of the quoted text in its 'original' context and in its present context."

In *The Comic Torah*, irritants occur intertextually – both among Biblical texts and between a Biblical text and its midrash – but they also occur in the interaction between a text and contemporary Jewish practice and lived reality. Both the Torah and the writers' experiences become troubling texts requiring mitigating interpretation.

This interpretation appears in the drawing of *The Comic Torah* perhaps even more so than in the writing, and the renderings of the characters themselves are a striking example. Rosenzweig and Freeman – a woman and a person of color, respectively – are outsiders to the Rabbinic tradition; their very presence and interaction with the Biblical texts create irritants that must be addressed. They do so by literally writing themselves into the text – the renderings of YHWH and Moses bear an uncanny resemblance to Rosenzweig and Freeman, respectively. The writers see an immediate problem – no one in these stories looks like me! – and, because of their medium, can rectify it literally. Yet they support their solution with references to the tradition itself: in the introduction, Rosenzweig and Freeman, in explaining their decisions to YHWH, note that, Rabbinically, "the 'divine presence' is widely recognized as feminine." As Kugel writes, "literalists of the imagination turn fanciful exegesis into would-be history...[midrash], by its exegesis becomes part of the [interpreted] text itself." The very title of *The Comic Torah* affirms Kugel's statement: it is the Torah, but with a critical twist. It is the canon told through the eyes of its practitioners: the truth, but told slant.

Fabio Mourilhe

The Graphic Memory of Aline Kominsky Crumb

This talk will analyze Aline Kominsky Crumb's *Need More Love: A Graphic Memoir*, in relation Eugene Ionesco's ideas of the concept of memory, presented in his book *Present Past, Past Present: a Personal Memoir*. According to Ionesco, we all lose our memory – a total loss of memory would equal death – yet even those that want to remember everything seem to have lost more memory than others. Ionesco suggests that the need for the reconstruction of memory indicates a certain nostalgia for a past that does not exist anymore. We cannot bear the idea that nothing is left but Ionesco stresses that nothing disappears, it is all one whole and everything becomes something else. "Like a man going about with a lantern in the shadows, lighting only a tiny space around him as he advances. The luminous circle moves along with him and all the rest is in the deepest night or goes back into it again. The one ray of light comes from the consciousness of a present, of an instant of wakefulness." The light of memory, the light that memory lends to things, is the palest light of all. Something that is remembered seems to emerge

from a night of forgetfulness. Ionesco fails to differentiate dream from memory, because, just as dreams do, memory makes him profoundly aware of the unreality: “the evanescence of the world,” “a fleeting image in the moving water,” or “colored smoke.”

For Ionesco, however, it is not memories or conscious continuity of memories that constitutes and maintains the identity of the person, of the consciousness, because we remain the same, with the same ideas, the same feelings, the same reactions. We can think of Aline’s book as an attempt of reconstructing memory with graphic resources that have developed over years. With her autobiographical comics, it might seem difficult for the artist to forget all of her memory. Yet Aline seems to be preoccupied with the recording of these memories as well as simultaneously wanting to forget some, including the visual culture of the 1950s.

Different from Ionesco’s concept of memory, as something that can be thought as a dream, Aline’s memory is much more objective, composed with real facts that occurred in the past. Nonetheless, we can think of Ionesco’s metaphor of a “lantern in the shadows” in each moment of Aine’s memory, as very specific memories. In accordance with Ionesco’s concept, we can also think of Aline’s identity as an essence that passes through all the periods represented in her works and remains the same, and the continuous conscience of memory as something that can be forgotten or put in the shadows in order to light a moment of wakefulness with the lantern.

Ranen Omer-Sherman Sivan Hurvitz’s Prophecies of Israeli Dissent and Repression

When it comes to the world of comix and graphic novels, Israel has a very long tradition of illustrated political commentary (there is even an historical Israeli Comics and Caricature Museum in Holon); the contemporary work of graphic novelists such as Rutu Modan, Yirmi Pinkus, Itzik Rennert, Asaf Hanuka, and others have attracted international raves, and the recent scene is filled with even younger emerging talent. Among these, the young artist Sivan Hurvitz surely stands out for her highly controversial series titled *Turn Right at the End*. Originally envisioned as her senior project to complete her degree in Visual Communication Studies at the Holon Institute of Technology, Hurvitz imaginatively critiques what she and many others on the left perceive as alarmingly anti-democratic and intolerant tendencies fostered by the Netanyahu administration. Her scenes may repel some and provoke a sense of sadness, recognition, or unease in others but nobody will likely emerge from her unsparing exploration of present/future Israel’s unprovoked. Hurvitz’ imagery is visceral, heart-tugging, but always intellectually stimulating. Her Zion is at a turning point in its history, rendered as both familiar and unknown, where things are falling apart. Born and raised on a kibbutz, Hurvitz feels she was educated to be acutely vigilant regarding social injustices (“I was always opinionated and critical”) but traces her recent disenchantment to the Gaza military campaign and has also been struck by an unresolved tension that has anguished countless other artists and intellectuals. In a recent interview, she observed that “there is a huge paradox that lies at the heart of the Israeli state, its designation as ‘Jewish and democratic.’ Which is paramount? Judaism or democracy? Before I am a woman, or Jewish, or Israeli, I am human. And I believe that rights should be based on our humanity, not on whether we are Jewish or not, or how Jewish we are or aren’t.” In each of her timely and searing illustrations of a future totalitarian regime, Hurvitz begins with the raw data of contemporary Israeli life and gazes a little further down the road at the dire consequences that might unfold if the public does not remain vigilant about democratic institutions and human rights. Based entirely on events that transpired in recent months, her highly provocative visual narratives (subtitled “The Future of a Country that Gave Up On Democracy”) are essentially

illustrated prophecies which Hurvitz hopes will inspire discussion and raise more critical citizenship among other Israelis. Each is linked to a caption that meticulously documents the developments that stirred the artist's moral outrage. Hurvitz grapples with controversies concerning the so-called "Loyalty Law," a legislative bill endorsed by the rightwing "Israel Beiteinu" (Israel Our Home) party, homophobia, the anti-democratic tendencies of Avigdor Lieberman, and Jewish demographic anxieties regarding Israel's Arab citizens. Whatever her subject, each of Hurvitz' vignettes (always featuring quotidian spaces such as classrooms, cafes, and public squares), are drawn with piercing simplicity, acts of mourning for a society failing to live up to its own values. Still, when asked what she most admires about her society, Hurvitz fiercely defends its enduring capacity for intense self-scrutiny (she warmly praises the demonstrators at Sheikh Jarrar but prefers to express her dissent through her art), as well as the vibrant role of its writers and artists, Israel's critical and sometimes heartbroken lovers.

Natalie Pendergast The 'Outlaw' Genre: Erasing the Line Between Form and Content in Ariel Schrag's Comic Chronicles

Stemming from the overtly confessional, counter-cultural American underground comics of the 1960s, '70s and '80s (Crumb, Bordeaux), Ariel Schrag's high school chronicles document her personal coming of age story by way of graphic narrative. The four graphic novels, *Awkward*, *Definition*, *Potential* and *Likewise*, make up the series that dramatizes, in quasi-real-time narration, each year of Schrag's high schooling in succession from 1995-1998. Experimenting with genre, Schrag stretches the limits of the comic book form in order to fashion an autobiography that reflects her own performative re-enactments of her adolescent experiences and relationships. She does this by using visual devices such as melodramatic body language, self-caricaturization and animated speech balloons, as well as oscillating generic spaces between the diarist's first-person narration and the memoirist's retrospective "I." Her alternative, diachronic methodology reflects the rather candid and unconventional subject matter in her detailed accounts of straight and gay sexual encounters, her parents' divorce, and surviving high school. This chapter presentation explores how Schrag's graphic novels subvert the limitations of the memoir as a literary genre by removing the distance between sign and referent, by embodying the author/artist's physical performance of storytelling and conceptual art-making process.

**Sharon Rosenzweig and First We Do, Then We Understand: How God Became a Woman
Andrea Kantrowitz**

In this presentation, Sharon Rosenzweig, the comic artist behind *The Comic Torah*, and Andrea Kantrowitz, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, researching the cognitive psychology of drawing, will discuss the relationship between the biblical concept: *Na'aseh v'nishma* (first we do, then we understand) and the creative process. In Exodus, *na'aseh v'nishma* meant that the Jews would first obey the laws of the Torah, and study them later. In the creative process, action also often precedes understanding. It is only through the act of making that artists can discover why and what they are making.

In Exodus, the freed Hebrews gather at Sinai to receive the Torah. They accept this gift without knowing what lies within. We will do and we will hear, they say. This seems backwards, but it is what Judaism requires and how art gets made. We start with a hunch, proceed to a draft, scribble and smear, stay alert and aware, make decisions. What emerges can be embarrassing and enlightening. It is inevitably surprising. We could never have known

without doing. The end result emerges from the process, whether it's observing mitzvot or making comics.

Sharon will describe the way in which, to her surprise, while drawing the burning bush, God showed up as a woman. And not just any woman, but as her own alter ego, flirting with Moses, who was looking a lot like her husband and *The Comic Torah* collaborator, Aaron Freeman. The deity, YHWH Elohim, the bloodthirsty bully, the petty, jealous, vindictive, ill-tempered tyrant, became Sharon. She understood her as an artist, embodied her behaviors as a creator when she drew and erased, dissatisfied with her first try, shredding the page and starting again, taking her frustrations out on her co-creator, unwilling to share the blame.

Andrea will discuss Sharon's example of the process of creation and discovery in the context of her research on cognition and drawing. New methodologies and technologies of cognitive science are shedding light on how and why we draw. Older models of the brain as a computational machine are being replaced by a more organic conception of cognition as an emergent complex system. The externalization of the thinking process through mark-making allows us to re-imagine our own thoughts, reconfiguring our own drawings in an ongoing dialogue between self and work.

First you do, then you hear. Or see. Or obey. The translation varies, but it always starts with the act.

Evelyn Tauben

Mi Yimtza? Finding Jewish Identity Through Women's Autobiographical Art

In her drawn essay "Jewish Memoir Goes Pow! Zap! Oy!," Miriam Libicki defines the literary nature of her particular genre of comic art, explaining:

Literary, because the discussed autobiographies and semi-autobiographies are not confessions for confession's sake, but aim to reach out to the larger cultural conversation about the human condition, using tools from literature and high art, as well as creating techniques unique to comicking.

This presentation will bring the revealing autobiographical work of Jewish women comic artists into dialogue with that of their contemporaries more often identified with the realm of "high art." Through powerful, compelling, painfully honest work that draws upon their lived experiences, graphic artists such as Bernice Eisenstein, Liana Finck, Sarah Glidden, Miriam Katin, and Miriam Libicki prod their relationships to their Jewishness. This manifests by varyingly questioning and engaging with tradition, ritual, faith, community, and connections to Israel while reflecting on shapers of identity ranging from family to female sexuality. By considering the artistic output by other Jewish women visual artists who pull heavily from their own life and depictions of the self in their work while probing Jewish experience, we will explore both shared and divergent notions of Jewish identity as expressed through women's art while also highlighting what, as Libicki suggests, is particular to comics. The title of this presentation borrows from the first line of "*Eshet Chayil*" (Proverbs 31:10-31). While many women today have difficulty relating to the preceding description of an idealized woman gracefully attending to her household, we will focus on the opening question: "Who can find a woman of strength?" The answer is scrawled on the pages of graphic novels, captured in searing images, and portrayed in piercing video art.

Maeve Thompson-Starkey

Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*: Autobiographical Hybridity – the Possibilities of the Multinarrative

Bernice Eisenstein's *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* (henceforth *Child*) is set apart amongst graphic narratives. First, this is because it is a hybrid, rather than a 'true' graphic novel. We see part prose, part illustration, part comics medium, and part reproduced handwriting. Since the groundbreaking work of Scott McCloud, elucidating the potential benefits of the comics medium for its many qualities, there have been many fantastic works. However, Eisenstein, in *Child*, mixes media to achieve not only the benefits of the comics medium, but the benefits of regular prose, and the epistolary style is impressed upon the reader by her use of reproduced handwriting.

In *The Aesthetics of Comics*, David Carrier writes: "To reduce the comic to mere words -- or, conversely, to treat it as merely a sequence of images -- leaves aside what defines this art form, the integration of words with picture." Eisenstein's work leaves no room for this to occur. To the uninitiated, a graphic novel has the potential to alienate. Conversely, a reader largely of graphic novels may find a prose novel difficult to stick to. The fusion of media in *Child* allows access to a broader range of readers, but the true potential is not only in this *widening participation*, but in *widening communication*.

I call this the "possibilities of the multinarrative." Difficult material can be expressed in a variety of ways, and needs to be in order for the human brain to cope. This is essentially what Eisenstein has done through *Child* – expressed traumatic and/or troubling memories through her hybrid novel. The troubling memories are imagined and illustrated throughout and the keen reader may notice how one is easily brought into the world of Eisenstein's confusion. To an outsider of Yiddish and/or of Jewish culture, this is a significant achievement, since what Eisenstein essentially does is make it easy for readers to see from her perspective via her multi-narrative style.

But whose troubling memories are being described? As the title shows, Eisenstein is a child of Holocaust survivors; she is not a survivor herself. In Marianne Hirsch's analysis of *Maus*, she coined the term *postmemory*, which "characterizes the experience of those who grew up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth" – thus *Child* partially represents this aspect of traumatic experience. Eisenstein's parents' and family friends' experiences dominate her own early experiences and memories. Eisenstein also shows *prosthetic memory* in *Child*, since she views the Holocaust through a range of other media and these experiences become part of her own. The fascinating thing about *Child* is that it fuses post- and prosthetic memory of traumatic experience with the imaginary into this multi-narrative work in such a cohesive and engaging manner. Unlike *Maus*, it is impossible to call *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* comic, irreverent, or inappropriate.