

From Self-Sacrificing Jewish Mother to Self-Centered Jewish Princess: Is This How Far We've Come?

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The impetus for this paper actually came from a colleague of mine (non-Jewish) who excitedly came by my office one day to tell me of this great book that she had just discovered called *Jewish Grandmothers* (Sydelle Kramer and Jenny Masur [ed.]). She was taken by the stories of ten Jewish immigrant women, all elderly, each with an equally powerful story to tell of their struggles for survival in North America. She plunked a copy of it down on my desk insisting that I must read it as soon as possible. As she was leaving my office, almost as an afterthought, she said to me "How is it, given these stories of these Jewish women, that the older Jewish woman, a.k.a. the Jewish mother, has gotten such bad press?" I did not answer her right away as I had already begun reading the account of Fannie Shapiro, the Rebel, the first woman to appear in this book. However, as I made my way through stories of hunger, grief, heartbreak, despair and the indomitable spirit to overcome hardships of which we cannot even conceive, her question began to haunt me. These ten women lived in situations in Eastern Europe where they could not trust the people around them; they struggled as immigrants in a strange land, starting with no money, no skills and no language. Why do we not hear their stories and thousands more like them when we discuss older Jewish women? Instead, we are all familiar with the stereotype of the older Jewish woman. Although Jews in general have been victims of negative stereotypes, it is the Jewish woman who has been most vilified. The stereotype probably can be found in biblical passages (after all, aren't

the matriarchs often portrayed as overprotective mothers whose focus is largely if not exclusively their husbands and/or children [Priesand, 1975:6]). However, the modern caricature of the Jewish mother is far more heinous. The Jewish mother is now not only overprotective of her children, but also constantly nagging them, feeding them and, in between, making them feel extraordinarily guilty about everything. The origin of this denigrating image of our Jewish mothers is obscure, but its perpetuation has been extremely well accomplished by Jewish writers. In fact, their very success seems to be based on how cleverly they can denigrate Jewish women.

Three works that most dramatically convey this vituperation are Bruce Jay Friedman's *A Mother's Kisses* (1964), Dan Greenburg's *How To Be A Jewish Mother* (1964), and the classic, Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), which raises the debasement of the Jewish mother to a new art form. Roth's portrayal of Sophie, the mother, is an amalgamation of all that was negative about the Eastern European shtetl life and all that is problematic about middle-class suburbia, the absolute worst of both worlds. If one had to isolate a single aspect of Roth's portrayal as most damning of the Jewish mother (certainly not a simple task), we would have to agree with Marie Syrken (1969:64-65) that it is the following:

Roth's chief contribution to the Jewish mother routine is the picture of mamma threatening her son

with a long bread knife to make him eat. To make sure this maniacal bit is viewed as characteristic of the type rather than as an individual aberration, the Jewish ladies who come to play Mah-Jongg applaud this technique in child care.

Roth's Jewish mother Sophie is thus everything that is negative about Jews, about women, and about immigrants. She is caricatured on all three levels. She is a complete stereotype—complaining, cajoling, commanding, and castrating.

What is to be gained by Portnoy (and we can assume Roth as well) by this stereotype? Bruno Bettelheim (1969:9) suggests that:

The long-suffering Jewish mother who suffers herself to be blamed for everything, is willing to thus serve her son. Never will he have to feel guilty about anything he does because he can always blame it on her.

The Jewish mother, then, is portrayed as a woman who smothers her children with devotion ranging from begging them to eat just another morsel to living vicariously through their accomplishments. "She is seen as ubiquitous and eternal from the first diaper change through the last word on the doctoral thesis" (Baum, Hyman and Michel, 1975:236). She also absorbs all blame for the failings of her son. As Baum, Hyman and Michel note in their book *The Jewish Woman in America* (1975:237), Roth even suggests that the Jewish mother problem is so serious and so common:

that it deserves inclusion in the psychoanalytic lexicon. In the novel's epigraph, he [Roth] gives a mock definition of 'Portnoy's Complaint': a 'disorder' many of whose 'symptoms can be traced to the bonds obtaining in the mother-child relationship.'

Portnoy's problem with his Jewish mother is embedded in part with his embarrassment over her Jewish immigrant background. Do we denigrate the Jewish mother because we are ashamed of our heritage? Again, an excerpt from *Portnoy's Complaint* lends credibility to this suggestion. Portnoy says to his father:

Tell her, tell her... 'the way it works, in case you ain't heard, is that I am the man around here, and I call the shots.' And slug her if you have to. Deck her, Jake. Surely that's what a goy would do, would he

not?... Papa, why do we have to have such guilty deference to women, you and me—when we don't.

The strength of the Jewish mother contradicted the larger society's image of female fragility. In Portnoy's attempts to be Americanized he lashes out at his unAmerican mother. Bienstock's (1979) analyses of the Jewish mother in literature suggests similar patterns. He argues that from the 1940s onward, Jewish mothers came to represent all that was wrong with the past and the present. The mothers were now blamed for stunting the son's emotional growth by overbearing protectiveness and overweening social ambition. Their mothers' lives became equated with their shameful ethnic and lower-class roots. It is somewhat ironic that the son's success in the cultural establishment can be attributed in large measure through their mothers' powerful efforts and it is these efforts that have become the object of scorn:

The Jewish son saw in his mother the primary obstacle to his own maturity and freedom. Turning her into a comic figure was a way of reducing her imagined power. In effect, it was also a way of belittling the past, of denying its value and importance (Hunter College Women's Studies Collective:1983, p.311).

This type of hatred against one's cultural roots is not limited to American writers but has Canadian parallels as well. For example, Mordecai Richler's images of the Jewish mother are equally as damning. Interestingly, the mother he creates in *Joshua Then and Now* is juxtaposed to his more stereotyped image. Joshua's mother, Esther, is unlike the other Jewish mothers, for she is neither over-protective nor pushy of young Joshua. However, Esther, the Jewish mother's nemesis, perhaps is even more sinister than the original model. This Jewish mother appears throughout the book as a cold, uncaring, unloving mother. What we remember most about her are the scenes where she does her strip dance with her young son cheering her on. It culminates in the bar-mitzvah party:

The baffled boys sat on the floor, as instructed. Even as they were becoming restless, there was a rap on the door and Joshua started playing 'Snake Hips' again. Then the door opened enough to allow a long black-stockinged leg ending in a spike-heeled shoe to come slithering through. ... The leg, seemingly disembodied, was now being caressed by a feathery pink fan. ... With maddening slowness the door opened to throbbing drums, a pulsating red light, and in glided Joshua's mother, her eyes saying peek-a-boo

behind feathery fans. Silver stars had been pasted to her legs. She wore a see-through scarlet blouse and a black skirt slit to her thighs. ... Hands on knees, she gyrated her upturned ass at them. She straightened up, unzipping her skirt, wiggling out of it. Next she peeled off her blouse, letting it float to the floor. ... Frozen there, reduced to panties, belt and stockings, she suddenly hissed at Joshua: 'Now.'

'What?'

'Now I said.'

Remembering, Joshua slipped two fingers into his mouth to whistle, he stamped his feet, and the boys quickly followed suit (p. 172-173). (For greater impact this scene is re-enacted several times.)

Richler has presented us with a different Jewish mother but one which understandably we are reluctant to endorse as a viable option to Portnoy's Sophie. Here is a woman who is the antithesis to the Jewish mother. She openly expresses her resentment and hatred of Joshua. She wants to be free of him, not live through him. She cares not a whit about his achievements. Indeed, she is like no other Jewish mother. In her middle years she stars in a pornographic movie *Office Party*. This is no typical Jewish mama. Joshua is astounded:

Shit. Shit. Shit. At the age when other Jewish mothers, sprouting moustaches, were past vice-presidents of ORT or delivering meals-on-wheels or convening fashion shows for the Hospital of Hope, his mother was up there on the big screen blowing men half her age (p. 314).

Richler's Esther is the antithesis of everything that is hateful in Portnoy's Sophie and yet we are left with an even uglier picture. Esther was not to be scorned like the other Jewish women in the novel, she is even more vile and hateful.

The blame for the continued existence of this stereotype of the Jewish mother does not lie solely at the feet of Jewish novelists. While they have, perhaps, enhanced the image, we are responsible for continuing to give it life. We perpetuate it in our everyday speech and in the majority of our Jewish mother jokes. While a few of these jokes do portray the Jewish mother in a more positive light, most confirm the image crafted by authors like Philip Roth. The self-sacrificing, guilt provoking image is exemplified in the following, not very funny, classic joke:

How many Jewish mothers does it take to screw in a light bulb? None. They'd rather sit in the dark.

Similarly, a card produced by The Diploma Mill (and readily available in Canada and the United States) provides a "diploma" that one can send to one's own mother from the "Institute of Gefilte Guilt" to certify the recipient a Jewish Mother who is entitled to "all the rights and privileges of the abused neglected and unappreciated."

Blaming mothers for their children's psychological problems is not exclusively Jewish but has a long and respected history in psychological literature. Since mothering is seen as a primary cause of children's psychopathology, then all psychologists and psychiatrists must do is to determine the brand of bad mothering that is the cause of the specific psychological problem. As Paula Caplan suggests:

Our society usually fails to give mothers credit for the good they do, unless they are dead or described in the abstract as in 'apple pie and motherhood' (Caplan, 1986: 71).

In this respect, Jewish mothers can be considered the quintessential protagonists in the family drama with the caveat that they are even denied the wholesome "mom and apple pie" epitaph.

In the struggle to be free from negative stereotypes perpetuated from outside the Jewish community, Jews have shown little concern for the Jewish mother image. Jews have instead wholeheartedly endorsed it. We are indignant if a non-Jew calls a Jewish businessman a Shylock; we cringe when we hear someone say "he Jewed me" and yet, at the same time, we chuckle over the denigration of older Jewish women. Do we so hate our mothers?

It has been argued that these negative evaluations of Jewish mothers are taken too seriously and have little negative impact, and, perhaps even have positive consequences for Jewish women's lives. Surely, the warm emotions conjured up by "My Yiddishe Mama" must enhance women's status in their son's eyes.¹ Nevertheless, it would appear that not only does this stereotyping have consequences for women's self-esteem as well as for her status in the larger society, but also may have more immediate and dangerous effects. A particular onerous example of the consequence of this stereotyping is currently waiting to be heard by the New York State Rights Commission. Briefly, Eve Lynn Fertig was fired at age 52 from her job as administrative assistant to the Hillel Foundation director at the State University of New York at Buffalo for being "Jewish Mother." Fertig claimed that Hillel director Rabbi Shabsai Wolfe had fired her because of her "Jewish

Mother" image. It was, he felt, detrimental to the Hillel House and a "turn-off," that he did not want an "old lady helping the students when he had a young lady to help them." Wolfe stated that he had used the term "Jewish Mother" to describe someone who is "overbearing, talks a lot, smothers people, overassisting" (Rubenstein, 1987: 9). Fertig who lost her suit on the grounds of age discrimination in April, 1987, is pursuing the case before the New York State Human Rights Commission. (Ms. Fertig was dismissed over ten years ago in August, 1977, and still has not reached a satisfactory conclusion to her grievance.)

This paper, however, focuses not only on the Jewish mother image. The older immigrant Jewish population is dying and, if we simply bide our time there will be no one left at whom to poke fun. Unfortunately out of the ashes of the denigration of the Jewish mother has arisen another, perhaps even a more vile caricature—her daughter, the Jewish American Princess.² For while the Jewish mother is overbearing, overprotective, overanxious, guilt producing, at least one could discern in this caricature some warmth and some love for her. The Jewish American Princess is absolute and complete in its vilification and hatred.

It is most inconceivable that the Jewish American Princess could spring from the womb of the Jewish mother for they are a very unlikely mother-daughter pair. The unbridled self-sacrificing mother-daughter pair. The unbridled self-sacrificing and maniacally, devoted Jewish mother has been transformed into an even more sinister stereotype — a self-centered, Jewish Princess. It is a somewhat bittersweet irony that the totally self-absorbed Jewish son as portrayed by Portnoy in *Portnoy's Complaint* is guiltless for he is the product of his Jewish mother. We now have a caricature of the self-absorbed Jewish daughter but the literature provides no foolproof excuse for her. The image of the Princess does not include the similar privilege of heaping the blame for her evil ways on her Jewish mother. Thus, although the Jewish Princess's male counterpart — the Jewish Prince — is not entirely absent from our stereotypes, he, the poor lad, has had to endure enormous anguish wrought upon him by his overbearing Jewish mother. He bears no guilt because all his guilt has been foisted on his mother. His sister, on the other hand, has not been extended any similar excuse. The portrayal of her in terms of her spoiled, self-centered, materialistic ways are entirely of her own making. Unlike her brother, she is held fully accountable for herself.

With the birth of the Jewish Princess, it is now no longer our mothers that we are vilifying, but ourselves. As

Baum, Hyman and Michel note (1975:238) we have created:

a picture of a young woman who manipulates the world for her own selfish ends. She belongs, through the perspective of those who wrote about her, to nouveau-riche, middle-class parents. (Either the Jewish poor had ceased to exist, or they had ceased having children, to judge by the dominance of this sort of literature of the Princess model.) Accustomed to being treated like royalty in her family, she expects the same sort of consideration from the world-at-large. She is condemned as being sexually exploitative, but probably her most offensive characteristic is her refusal to defer easily to male authority, an unforgivable sin in the American pantheon of feminine virtues. The stereotype of the Jewish American Princess is intrinsically critical: it regards her as demanding everything and giving nothing; her assertiveness is viewed as an instrument of emasculation.

The Jewish Princess jokes exacerbate this materialistic, demanding image of the Jewish woman. Again consider the following classic not very funny Princess joke:

Jewish Man: This may be a small diamond but it hasn't one rough flaw.

Jewish Princess: In that diamond there's no room for a flaw.

This analysis of the Jewish Princess stereotype has been given immediacy by the documentation provided in the Fall, 1987, issue of *Lilith*, a Jewish feminist journal. It is quite apparent that "JAP-Baiting" has reached epidemic proportions on American college campuses.³ In 1977, the second issue of *Lilith* magazine featured on its cover the arm of a woman dropping "Princess" tee-shirt (with a Jewish star dotting the "i") into a garbage can. In the 1987 edition, the editors reluctantly admit that this was unbridled optimism on their part (the Editors, 1987: 2). As they conclude:

At that time, we optimistically believed that the changing reality of Jewish women's lives would consign these negative images to the garbage can of history. Instead, what has happened is the opposite: they have gotten a new lease on life. And, even more frightening, reports from college campuses reveal an increasing incidence of stereotyping—moving from nasty jokes and insulting tee-shirts to violent

anti-Semitic and misogynist graffiti and verbal violence against women.

On college campuses the caricature has not only been given new life but, in fact, appears to have blossomed forth in ways that were not even conceived of ten or twenty years ago. Sherry Chayat in her article on "JAP-Baiting on the College Scene" (1987:6-7), gives us many examples of the extent of the problem today. A few of these will suffice to illustrate the enormity of the problem:

1. At American University in Washington, D.C., two Jewish male student disc jockeys sponsored a "Biggest JAP on Campus" contest. One of the Jewish sororities there, SDT, is known as "Spend Daddy's Tuition." One of the most popular tee-shirts reads "Slap a JAP."

2. At Cornell University, two years ago, a fraternity set up two booths one with a life-size doll bearing the sign "Slap a JAP." Sponges were offered to all those who cared to hurl them. The second booth featured a female head with a large mouth with a sign which read "Make her prove she's not a JAP—Make her swallow."

3. The desks and walls of the carrels at Syracuse University's Bird Library are covered with anti-JAP graffiti. Everywhere on campus students wear JAP-buster tee-shirts. In Syracuse University's Dome, during lulls in the basketball games, the university pep band (rated as number one in the country) would chant "JAP, JAP" every time a trendy clad female would walk by the student section of the stands, and soon the fans would join in.

4. A greeting card company, Noble Works, manufactures greeting cards with what they call the "Ten Best Legendary JAP Jokes," all of which serve to reinforce the negative caricature of Jewish women.

Are These Stereotypes Real?

Are Jewish mothers really the matriarchal tyrants the literature and jokes suggest? In the book *Jewish Grandmothers* (1976), the ten women portrayed do not at all resemble the stereotype. As the authors note in their introduction (XIV-XV):

the resemblance of the women in this book to the prevailing stereotypes is faint. They are not ignorant—they all know several languages and are well-read, besides having learned well from experience. They are not weak—they have lived through the traumas of immigration, culture shock, the Depression, the

deaths (sometimes murders) of members of their families, poverty, Anti-Semitism and more. They are not passive.

These stories, and countless others like them, clearly illustrate that the Jewish mother caricature should be laid to rest once and for all. These women, immigrants to a new land, were extraordinarily brave and daring. Their struggles are at times agonizingly painful to read, but all have emerged unvanquished by the hardships of life. Their strength, their courage, and their spirit allowed their sons and daughters to take advantage of the opportunities in the new world. This is not to suggest that they be put on a pedestal for worship for such an image also robs them of their essential humanness. They are full and equal partners in Jewish history and they shared equally the burdens of life in North America. In fact, it can be argued that they shared more than equally the struggle for survival and without them the backbone of Jewish life would have collapsed. In their book *The Jewish Wife* (1969), Schwartz and Wyden suggest that Jewish women recognize their marriages as full partnerships. It is these stories that should be heard. We must learn to realize what our mothers' lives were like. We cannot understand our own biography without understanding the history of our Jewish women. We must learn to appreciate and to take pride in those who made us what we are.

This discussion is not to suggest that motherhood is not an extremely important aspect of Jewish women's lives for, indeed, all studies suggest that it is highly valued. However, the attributes of motherhood are caricatured and mocked rather than positively valued. Zena Blau Smith (1967) argues that Jewish mothers are more apt to foster intellectual independence and creativity. The attributes of the Jewish mother include: "Creative boldness, free expression of emotion including love and anger, interference in children's problems and concern about their difficulties, high expectations for children, pride in their abilities, respect for originality and reward for their achievements (Baum, Hyman and Michel, 1975:244). Is there anything wrong with this list? As stated, they are all positive attributes. It is only in their extreme that they are problematic. These strengths of the Jewish mother helped not only their families to survive but also the Jewish community. Unfortunately, the "bowls of chicken soup have become philters of hemlock" (Baum et al., p. 251).

The Jewish Princess image is equally erroneous. While self-centered women exist, they are not quintessentially

Jewish. Any rich, spoiled, materialistic person has been converted permanently and exclusively to Judaism. Data indicate the Princess stereotype to be largely inaccurate. For example, in a study of Jews of Atlantic Canada (Medjuck, 1986), it was noted that Jewish women were more likely to pursue an education than their non-Jewish counterparts (68.5 percent had gone beyond high school, while 43.5 percent had university degrees or similar). The notion that Jewish women stay at home all day, presumably doing nothing, is clearly disconfirmed by data on Atlantic Canadian women. Jewish women in Atlantic Canada are well represented in the paid labour force. Over three-fifths of female respondents are employed outside the home. While married women are more likely to be in the home than single women, nevertheless, over half of the married female respondents work outside the home. The dual-career family seems to be the norm among Jews of Atlantic Canada. Married women in the region contribute directly to the economic well-being of the family. Almost one-quarter of these women are professionals (23.1 percent).

For those women who work exclusively in the home, to suggest that their days are filled with their own self-centeredness, contradicts everything we have come to recognize about work in the home. The daily routine of making the meals, washing the dishes, doing the laundry, cleaning the floors, dusting the furniture, vacuuming the carpets, buying the groceries, fixing the clothes, tending the sick, etc., to say nothing of the constant demands of child care, does not allow a great deal of time for self-absorption. In fact, few jobs have such unattractive working conditions—you are on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week; you are required to do an unspecified number of tasks, often simultaneously; you are to be cheerful and understanding through every crisis whether it be a child's sore finger or a teenager's date; you are not to expect praise (for you rarely get it); you receive no pay, no fringe benefits, no vacations, no sick leave. In addition, Jewish women are also very likely to participate in both Jewish and secular voluntary organizations. This is how the Jewish woman spends her day. Does this sound like a Princess life-style?

The problematic aspects of the Jewish Princess image can best be summed up by a sixteen-year-old. In 1974, the *New York Times* published a letter from Diana Bletter who wrote to voice her displeasure at the image of young Jewish women. Diana had just seen the movie *The Heartbreak Kid* and felt it to contain a series of "anti-Jewish-women jokes." She wrote:

They are making fun of me, my mother, my sister, and all Jewish women. ... The 'jokes' are brainwash-

ing Jewish men to believe that Jewish women are not good enough for them and that the ideal wife is a gentile one from North Dakota.

Since the film includes many Jews, from the director to the actresses, she felt it was an example of self-hatred. It is encouraging that a sixteen-year-old young woman can recognize the problem so clearly. Unfortunately, her elders continued to buy necklaces for their daughters which proclaim "JAP in training."

Here, as well, we can cite Canadian examples of the same phenomenon. In Mordecai Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, who is Duddy's idealized girlfriend? Is it some neighborhood Jewish woman? Duddy rejects Jewish women and falls in love with Yvette, the classic gentile with blue eyes and blond hair. Not for Duddy, who wants to succeed so badly, some curly-haired, dark Semitic-looking girlfriend. Success in the world means that Yvette is the consummate girlfriend. As a consequence of these images, thousands of Jewish women feel they must straighten their hair and fix their noses in order to conform to this image — to pass. They must not be too smart or too loud or too verbal or too aggressive in order not to give their Jewishness away.

While much of the above analysis has focussed on literary works by Jewish authors, these comments are not to be construed as literary criticism but rather as social commentary. Regardless of their literary merit, these authors serve to endorse a fraudulent stereotype of the Jewish mother and Jewish daughter. Schwartz and Wyden's comment on *Portnoy's Complaint* is equally applicable to all these literary works:

As social commentators, we leave Mr. Roth's *Complaint* to the literary critics except for one caveat. We believed that his artistry served further to popularize a stereotype that was already outrageously out of focus before he set to work to make it more bizarre (1969: 2).

It is interesting to note that in the last little while considerable furor has arisen in Ontario over the teaching of *The Merchant of Venice* in the schools. Numerous parents have reported that their children are subjected to anti-semitic comments because of the Jewish character of Shylock, the money-lender. Parents and school authorities have attempted to resolve these problems rationally, not by simply banning this particular work from the school curriculum, but rather by suggesting that it be taught to older students who can better appreciate the context and be

taught with great sensitivity to its potential anti-semitic implications. Basically, the same sensitivity should be applied to literary works which caricature Jewish women. If we evaluate these books of sufficient literary merit that they should be read, it is imperative that we do not then assume these images accurately describe all Jewish women. We must be vigilant that we ourselves do not begin to harbour such anti-Jewish women stereotypes. (One cannot help but wonder if there would have been such a furor in Ontario schools if Shakespeare had written about a female Jewish mother rather than a male Jewish money-lender.)

Finally, although they differ in numerous ways, the attribute that is common to both the Jewish Mother and the Princess in all these images is their assertiveness and, particularly, that this assertiveness has negative consequences for Jewish men. This characteristic predominates in their vilification, whether it be Portnoy's pleading with his father to be a man and deck his mother, or the belief that the Jewish Princess's assertiveness is emasculating. These portrayals suggest that man's strength is enhanced by female frailty and diminished by women's equality. Somehow independent women are perceived as a serious threat and these stereotypes of the Jewish Mother or the Jewish Princess serve to discredit their independence and trivialize their experiences. As a Black student in Susan Schnur's class on "Contemporary Issues of Jewish Existence" wrote in her journal:

Jewish women like their Black counterparts, are encouraged to be extremely competent, but then are double-bound with the message that their competence must *only* be used for frivolous purposes. Minority women are warned not to be a real threat to anyone—That's how JAPS evolve (1987:10).

Jewish women's achievement can thus be easily dismissed as irrelevant by suggesting that her motives are only for the acquisition of material goods. This is a way of dismissing her achievements—simply label her a Princess—and all accomplishments dissipate. Her ambition, her strength, her achievements are not only not valued, but also seen as negative attributes.

The tendency to negatively value women's strength has very ancient roots. The legend of Lilith as described in the Alphabet of Ben-Sira (23A-B) provides an excellent example of this myth. Briefly, it suggests that after God created Adam from the earth, God felt that Adam should not be alone and thus created a woman, Lilith, also out of the earth. They quarreled immediately. As they both came from the earth she considered herself his equal and refused

to obey him. Neither listened to the other. When Lilith realized what was happening she pronounced the ineffable name of God and flew off into the air. Adam complained to God that the wife God had given him had deserted him. God sent three angels to bring her back. The angels found her in the Red Sea, in the very spot the Jews later passed in their Exodus from Egypt. The angels tried to make her return, threatening if she would not, hundreds of her demon children would die daily. Lilith preferred this punishment to returning to Adam, although for this punishment she takes revenge. Her purpose in life becomes injuring babies unless the babies are protected by the names of the three angels.

This banishment of Lilith and her subsequent portrayal as a demon was severe punishment for her independence and desire to be equal. Lilith lost her potential place in official Jewish history to Eve, over whom God commanded Adam to rule. Unfortunately her later crimes condemn Lilith to being witch or demon, usurping her more important role as a rebel against tyranny.

Like Lilith, Jewish women today through literature, humour and the like are also told that independence, aggression, self-assertion, and strength are not admirable qualities for women to possess. It is better to be submissive, weak, and frail like Eve. The characteristic that we most mock in the Jewish Mother and the Jewish Princess is their assertiveness. Like Lilith, Jewish women who are strong are regarded as demons.

Despite the similarities between the two stereotypes, the new wave of JAP-baiting with its accompanying negative imagery, poses new dilemmas both for feminists and for Jews. The Jewish mother, with her old world values and her inability (in her children's eyes) to understand the new world, fought the battle that many immigrants fight. She was caught between two worlds, wedded to the values of Eastern Europe and yet determined that her children would be successful by the standards of the new world. Her sons, in fact, succeeded, but rather than recognizing the contribution that their mothers may have made to their success, rejected all that she represented—the struggles, the tenements, the scrimping and saving, the bargaining in the market all that would identify them with her class position. In rejecting their lower-class beginnings, they also reject everything that might identify them as poor immigrant working-class Jews, even if this includes not only a rejection, but also a vilification of their mothers.

The "Jewish American Princess" caricature, on the other hand, is one of an upwardly mobile, highly successful, achiever. Instead of being abhorred, she could instead be touted as an example of the American dream of rags to

riches. In only a generation or two, she has emerged from the poor urban ghettos, to the wealthy suburbs. The characteristics for which she is so detested parallel the attributes of the successful young upwardly mobile American or Canadian. Susan Schnur summarizes this phenomenon with the observation that the:

characterizations of JAPS and Yuppies are often identical—the difference being, of course, that a Yuppie designation is still generally taken as neutral or even positive, whereas there is hardly one of us left—I don't think—who would compete for the label of JAP(1987: 11).

The JAP stereotype may also be more problematic in that it seems to have achieved wide-spread proportions and reached a far more hostile level. Not only is the JAP caricature misogynist but also virulently anti-semitic. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, a visiting associate professor in the Women's Studies Department at the University of Michigan suggests that "People no longer feel the need to hide an anti-semitic comment behind a JAP joke." What this suggests is that JAP jokes have achieved a high degree of acceptability and as such can serve as a vehicle for more generalized anti-semitic hate propaganda. Gary Spencer of the Sociology Department of Syracuse University examined the graffiti at the library of Syracuse University. He suggests that the graffiti includes ethnic slurs (e.g. "Solution to the JAP question: when they go for their nose jobs, have their doctors tie their tubes as well"); sexual harassment (e.g. "All JAPs are sluts"); anti-semitic (e.g. "I hate Jews"); racist (e.g. "I hate all White people—JAPS and WASPS the most"); and annihilationist (e.g. "Kill Jews. Give Hitler another chance") (Rubenstein, 1987: 8-9). These examples would suggest that the perceived legitimacy of JAP jokes serves as a mechanism for introducing violent anti-semitic and annihilationist propaganda. Thus JAP humour, acceptable even in the most refined and polite company, suggests that variations of a more virulent kind may also achieve a degree of acceptability. It is necessary to recognize JAP humour for both its anti-semitic and misogynist character.

Jewish women in Canada, like their sisters elsewhere, have played an essential role in their society. Their activity, whether in the home itself, in traditional Jewish communal organizations, or in the larger professional and corporate world, has not only been unrecognized, but also

often denigrated. The stereotypes serve to devalue and to debase the role of women. It is necessary, once and for all, to destroy the Jewish Mother and the Jewish Princess image. It is totally within our power to rid ourselves of these stereotypes. We must recognize them for what they are—a form of anti-semitism directed against ourselves. Surely, we cannot hate Jewish women so much to so degrade them.

NOTES

1. Interestingly enough, the Jewish mother image seems to be one perpetuated by sons rather than daughters. For example, it would seem inappropriate for daughters to extol the virtues of their "Yiddishe Mama" or to deprecate her overbearing qualities.
2. The label of JAP is obviously very offensive not only to Jews but also to Japanese.
3. Canadian campuses are clearly not far behind. *MacLean's* magazine (a Canadian news magazine) chose to print a short opinion article by Fred Bruning in its October 5, 1987 issue entitled, "The Perils of the Good Life" in which he discusses JAP humour.

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