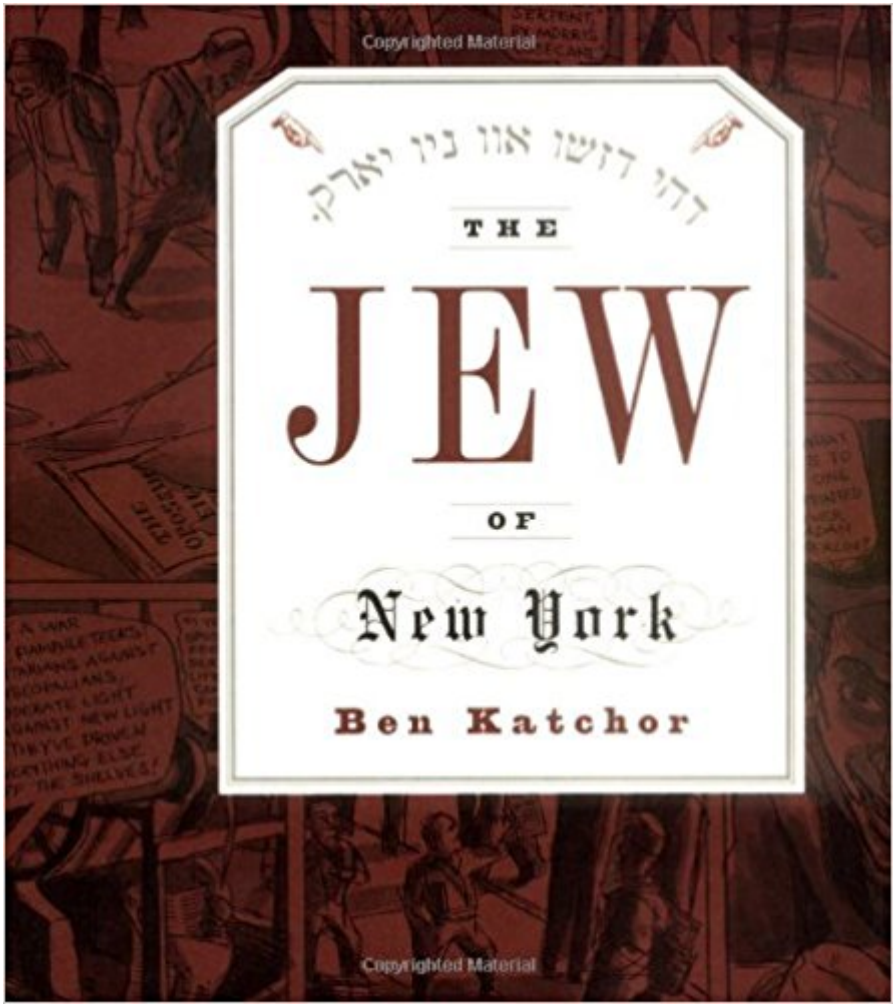
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The Jew Of New York



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Synopsis

In 1825, Mordecai Noah, a New York politician and amateur playwright possessed of a utopian vision, summoned all the lost tribes of Israel to an island near Buffalo in the hope of establishing a Jewish state. His failed plan, a mere footnote in Jewish-American history, is the starting point for Ben Katchor's brilliantly imagined epic that unfolds on the streets of New York a few years later.A disgraced kosher slaughterer, an importer of religious articles and women's hosiery, a pilgrim peddling soil from the Holy Land, a latter-day Kabbalist, a man with plans to carbonate Lake Erie--these are just some of the characters who move through Katchor's universe, their lives interwoven in a common struggle to settle into the New World even as it erupts into a financial frenzy that could as easily leave them bankrupt as carry them into the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Whether chronicling the metropolitan peregrinations of Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer, or weaving together history and fantasy in 19th- century New York, Ben Katchor's comics, filled with scratchy figures moving through gray-washed streets, feel like the relics of a half- forgotten dream. The Jew of New York takes an obscure historical footnote--an attempt in 1825 to establish a Jewish homeland in upstate New York--and spins it into an intricate tale of a rapidly developing city and its diverse inhabitants, from one-legged actresses, to wandering Jews, to masked anti-Semites. The plot wanders from place to place, never predictable, but always fascinating. The result is a like a

story by Paul Auster, rewritten by Charles Dickens, as Katchor gradually draws the reader into his bizarre but precisely imagined world. Weird conspiracies, religious fanaticism, and a plan to carbonate Lake Erie are just three of the threads which Katchor weaves together, creating a version of 1830's New York that captures the spirit of the times in a way that history cannot. The reader is never quite sure what is true, yet this powerfully imagined work is irresistibly compelling. Katchor's disturbing, deeply layered historical palimpsest transforms his collection of misfit characters and the city that they inhabit into something rich and strange. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Much as he does in his acclaimed comic strip Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer, Katchor uses the intricacies of urban social life to create a dense, whimsically inventive portrait-in-comics of New York City, this time at the dawn of the capitalist age. The work opens in 1830 as the New World Theater prepares its production of an anti-Semitic comedy titled The Jew of New York, a "burlesque" of the life of the putative founder of the first Jewish state (very likely, a shady land deal) on an uninhabited island in upstate New York. Katchor's ingeniously meandering tale uses multiple, overlapping story lines to illustrate aspects of urban and frontier life. Characters overlap, pass each other and return in a rich stew of hucksterism, scientific idealism and trashy popular culture that fancifully recreates the advent of a new mercantile age. Katchor's freewheeling imagination conjures a 19th-century utopian community of air worshippers called Free Oxygenators; a Native American named Elim-min-nopee, who orates in perfect Hebrew for 25 cents admission; and a businessman, Francis Oriole, who is obsessed with the medicinal properties of soda water and has a bizarre scheme to carbonate Lake Erie. History, fantasy and Jewish mysticism ferment in this comic social atmosphere, related with Katchor's wry humor, deadpan equilibrium and poetic verisimilitude. His b&w drawings are brisk and expressive but also quite precise, and they work in combination with the text to produce a singularly captivating fictional portrait of 19th-century Americana. Rights: The Wylie Agency. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I feel like a traitor writing this review because I'm huge fan of Ben Katchor's work. This book is series of non sequiturs that never turned into a coherent work of fiction. In the first 30 pages I thought there might be some hope of an interesting idea emerging. But by page 50, out of a hundred pages, I had given up hope. When I got to the end there was nothing positive I could say about the experience. I think Katchor's forte is brief snippets revealing the mystery of urban reality.

In this longer work, staged in post-colonial America, Katchor seems out of his element. Some might presume that perhaps I don't understand the social and political milieu of this era. Such is not the case and I still found this narrative indecipherable. I understood the significance of the isolated incidents and characters but it never solidified into a meaningful narrative. But I do understand the fine line between mysterious and indecipherable. Perhaps others won't have my difficulty.The author did bring up many idiosyncratic and strange moments in American history. But I had little sense of what was tweaked reality and what was pure invention. In small doses that can be quite mysterious, but at some point the author has to give clues as to his intent. I love hisÃ Â Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer. I think Katchor is one of America's most intriguing cartoonists and comic book writers. He just couldn't pull this one off.

Ridiculous book that had me cracking up at the first page. If you like Katchor, then this will delight you. If you're unfamilar with him, then this may get you interested in his other work. Especially effective if you are 'of the faith'.

All of Ben Katchor's work is incredible and a joy to read and look at. This book, the Julius Knipl books, Cheap Novelties, etc are no exceptions. But this book, and like, everything else that Katchor is involved with.

fun read!

The Jew of New York, a graphic novel set in the 1830s (a period where results of the Enlightenment were newly evident), is IMO a vision of the crisis of Jewish identity in the modern world. It is equal to the work of humorists such as I B Singer, Steve Stern, and Nathan Englander, as well as the great graphic artist Wil Eisner (A Contract with God, Wil EisnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s New York).Katchor weaves together various stories of Jews involved in entertainment, the preparation of food and drink, the importation of buttons and beaver pelts, and a scheme to found a utopian community of Jews and native Americans, the lost 10 tribes of Israel. Many of these stories are about the purveying of sacred materials to secular consumers. Illusion is as important as money. There is an undercurrent of ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“lascivious dream[ing]ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and voyeurism. The most bizarre character is an obsessed devotee of an aging stage actress, whose pictures he has posted on trees in his private grove, a parody of a religious sanctuary, implying secularization, and eroticization, of religious sacrifice. Another character is an anti-Semitic writer who wishes to put into

a popular play (The Jew of New York) his beliefs about Jewish venality. Yet he has a symbiotic relationship with the Jewish people, and says that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“without the Judeo-Christian ethos,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• his own work would be ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“cheap burlesque.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•The remote setting is perfect for lending a detached point of view to the events, which Katchor undercuts with both irony and sympathy. The book is far too complex to be characterized as a conservative art form such as satire.Katchor is very original, historically acute, and wry. The faces he draws are revealing in their frozen-featured shapes and outsized noses and mouths, with intense eyes interestingly contrasting to facial expressions and postures.

Well, first of all, I have to say I'm really surprised by the people who don't like this book. Certainly I don't expect it to be universally loved, but I really disagree with the reasons I've read below. For example, one reviewer criticized it by calling it a "book of ideas." Yes, exactly! And not your run-of-the-mill ideas either. I found it very inventive, original, thought-provoking, and culturally/historically accurate. That's a lot to pull off in less than 100 pages--pages that are largely taken up by drawings. Pictures do say 1,000 words. Second, I completely disagree with the reviewer who noted that you have to know something about Jewish stereotypes. I'm a black African female living in 21st century America, and I had no difficulty understanding the stereotypes or warped values behind them. Maybe it would be safer to say that you need to understand or have been exposed to some type of stereotype in your lifetime. But I have to think that most people who would even pick up this sort of book, would be literate enough to know that the stereotypes depicted, are exactly that. I even disagree that the page layouts were difficult to read. I think if you have ever read sequential art, it's pretty straight-forward. And if you haven't, the process of figuring it out--and it really does become intuitive very quickly--adds to the telling. You *do* find the significance of certain details by kind of puzzling over the images and layout. So I guess if you need hand-holding narratives, then this probably isn't the book for you. But this is the first work by Katchor that I've read, and I am very impressed by his ability to say so much in so few words about capitalism, nature conservancy, race relations, religiosity, sexuality, theatre, etc. and how these things comprise /conflict with "progress" and the belief every age has that it is the epitomy of advanced human development.I first heard of Katchtor when reading The Narrative Corpse, a story told by 69 artists and edited by Art Spiegelman. Unsurprisingly, a lot of people who had a negative reaction to it, had similar comments as can be found here. That the "story," as such, wasn't linear, etc. But again, I feel like those readers really missed the point. Anyway, I'll save that review for that book, but if you're not so hung up on context, The Narrative Corpse is another that you might enjoy, though the

two books couldn’t be more dissimilar.

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