



Kvetching and Shpritzing: Jewish Humor in American Popular Culture

Joseph Dorinson

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Jewish humor, with its rational skepticism and cutting social criticism, permeates American popular culture. Scholars of humor--from Sigmund Freud to Woody Allen--have studied the essence of the Jewish joke, at once a defense mechanism against a hostile world and a means of cultural affirmation.

Where did this wit originate? Why do Jewish humorists work at the margins of so many diverse cultures? What accounts for the longevity of the Jewish joke? Do oppressed people, as African American author Ralph Ellison suggested, slip their yoke when they change the joke? Citing examples from prominent humorists and stand-up comics, this book examines the phenomenon of Jewish humor from its biblical origins to its prevalence in the modern diaspora, revealing a mother lode of wit in language, literature, folklore, music and history.

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