



Theatrical Liberalism: Jews and Popular Entertainment in America

Andrea Most

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Finalist for the 2013 National Jewish Book Award, American Jewish Studies

For centuries, Jews were one of the few European cultures without any official public theatrical tradition. Yet in the modern era, Jews were among the most important creators of popular theater and film—especially in America. Why?

In *Theatrical Liberalism*, Andrea Most illustrates how American Jews used the theatre and other media to navigate their encounters with modern culture, politics, religion, and identity, negotiating a position for themselves within and alongside Protestant American liberalism by reimagining key aspects of traditional Judaism as theatrical. Discussing works as diverse as the Hebrew Bible, *The Jazz Singer*, and *Death of a Salesman*—among many others—Most situates American popular culture in the multiple religious traditions that informed the worldviews of its practitioners.

Offering a comprehensive history of the role of Judaism in the creation of American entertainment, *Theatrical Liberalism* re-examines the distinction between the secular and the religious in both Jewish and American contexts, providing a new way of understanding Jewish liberalism and its place in a pluralist society. With extensive scholarship and compelling evidence, *Theatrical Liberalism* shows how the Jewish worldview that permeates American culture has reached far beyond the Jews who created it.

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