



Inspecting Jews: American Jewish Detective Stories

Laurence Roth

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In this volume, Laurence Roth argues that the popular genre of Jewish detective stories offers new insights into the construction of ethnic and religious identity. Roth frames his study with the concept of "kosher hybridity" to look at the complex process of mediation between Jewish and American culture in which Jewish writers voice the desire to be both different from and yet the same as other Americans. He argues that the detective story, located at the intersection of narrative and popular culture in modern America, examines the need for order in a disorderly society, and thus offers a window into the negotiation of Jewish identity differing from that of literary fiction. The writers of these popular cultural texts, which are informed by contradiction and which thrive on intended and unintended ironies, formulate idioms for American-Jewish identities that intentionally and unintentionally create social, ethnic and religious syntheses in American-Jewish life.

Roth examines stories about American Jewish detectives including Harry Kemelman's Rabbi Small, Faye Kellerman's Peter Decker and Rina Lazarus, Stuart Kaminsky's Abe Lieberman and Rochelle Krich's Jessica Drake - not only as a genre of literature but also as a reflection of contemporary acculturation in the American-Jewish popular arts.

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