

Feminists will be disappointed at the relative dearth of discussions of female writers. Since Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* perfectly fits Campbell's paradigm of myth-making black fiction, it deserves as much discussion as any of the works in chapters 1-5. Hurston powerfully evokes in Nanny, an image of the up-rooted African; in Janie, a personal history and quest for self-definition reflecting the black American past and ethnic identity; and in brutish and ordinary characters, the capacity to achieve heroic stature through Hurston's transforming of personal confession beyond romance to myth.

These weaknesses aside, each chapter contains a carefully articulated, frequently illuminating blend of historical and literary interpretation which underpins the mythologizing process she demonstrates in the works of each era. An original contribution to Afro-American scholarship, Jane Campbell's thoughtful perspective realigns and reinterprets black fiction of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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Sarah Blacher Cohen, ed. *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Jewish-American Stage and Screen*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) 278 pp., \$10.95 paper.

The considerable Jewish American presence on the stage and screen (and now television), has long been marveled at and discussed. Jewish "dominance" in mass media has been a source of pride to Jews and anguish to anti-semites. Nevertheless, it has only been since the 1960s that numbers have been translated into content. *From Hester Street to Hollywood* attempts to analyze the Jewish presence and experience in areas as varied as serious drama and stand-up comedy.

There is an old saw that a camel is a horse designed by a committee. A similar difficulty presents itself to an editor of a diverse group of essays of varying quality. Despite the valiant efforts of Sarah Blacher Cohen in her introductory essay, "Yiddish Origins and American-Jewish Transformations," the reader is left puzzled about what this book is telling us about the Jewish-American role in theater and film. Was Elmer Rice ethnically "bland"? Was Lillian Hellman fleeing "her own Jewishness"? Is Arthur Miller a lesser playwright because Willy Loman, who "seemed to be Jewish," is "purposely" not identified as such? Was Paddy Chayevsky more outstanding because he produced "forthright" Jewish drama? Is Neil Simon popular because he doesn't inject Jewish "middle seriousness" into his plays? (And, if that is so, what would Daniel

Walden have made of Simon's later works like *Biloxi Blues*?) Where does an unsuccessful play by Saul Bellow fit in all of this? Can one really characterize Isaac Bathshevi Singer as an American Jewish author? More important, what does any of this really tell us about the basic topic?

Lawrence Langer, in his essay, "The Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen," makes the persuasive point that the "American vision of the Holocaust" has attempted to insist that the innocent could not have died in vain, and that their sacrifice must lead to an eventual triumph of the good. Clearly, attempts to deal with the supreme event of our time in film and television, like the mini-series *Holocaust*, have suffered from a failure of imagination. What, however, does this tell us about the Jewish American experience? Such connections are never made. Has the mass media dealt more successfully with other crucial events and issues such as slavery and racism?

Two of the essays are first rate. June Sochen's study of Fanny Brice and Sophie Tucker effectively examines the ways in which both of these entertainers utilized their femaleness as well as their Jewishness to make "enduring points" about the human condition and bridge the gap between their two worlds. Alan Spiegel makes some provocative points about the different roles Jews have been asked to play in American films, and what these tell us about America's image of the Jew and the Jewish self-image in "The Vanishing Act: A Typology of the Jew in the Contemporary American Film." He is correct in his assertion that "to broach the character and situation of the Jew in American film is one useful way of broaching the character and situation of the Jew in America and the whole matter of American Jewish identity." What does the recent increase on network television of male Jewish characters created by male Jewish writers tell us about this, particularly since they invariably are romantically involved with non-Jewish females and *never* celebrate Jewish holidays?

Unfortunately, the diffuse approach of *From Hester Street to Hollywood* does not totally succeed in clarifying the "character and situation" of American Jews in either film or stage.

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