



# You Never Call! You Never Write!: A History of the Jewish Mother

*Joyce Antler*

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## **You Never Call! You Never Write!: A History of the Jewish Mother** Joyce Antler

In *You Never Call, You Never Write*, Joyce Antler provides an illuminating and often amusing history of one of the best-known figures in popular culture--the Jewish Mother.

Antler traces the odyssey of this compelling personality through decades of American culture. She reminds us of a time when Jewish mothers were admired for their tenacity and nurturance, as in the early twentieth-century image of the "Yiddishe Mama," a sentimental figure popularized by entertainers such as George Jessel, Al Jolson, and Sophie Tucker, and especially by Gertrude Berg, whose amazingly successful "Molly Goldberg" ruled American radio and television for over 25 years. Antler explains the transformation of this Jewish Mother into a "brassy-voiced, smothering, and shrewish" scourge (in Irving Howe's words), detailing many variations on this negative theme, from Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* and Woody Allen's *Oedipus Wrecks* to television shows such as "The Nanny" and Larry David's "Curb Your Enthusiasm." But she also uncovers a new counter-narrative, leading feminist scholars and stand-up comediennees to see the Jewish Mother in positive terms.

A joy to read, *You Never Call, You Never Write* will delight anyone who has ever known or been nurtured by a "Jewish Mother," and it will be a special source of insight for modern parents. As Antler suggests, in many ways, "we are all Jewish Mothers" today.

"After reading this, you'll call, you'll write, and you'll say thank you!"

--Judy Gold, comedian

"More than a history of Jewish motherhood, this book offers a fresh perspective on Jewish history, women's history, and the history of popular culture that is both informative and entertaining.... Readers will finish the book with a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the history of the Jewish mother--and mothers in general."

--*Library Journal*

"As educational as it is riotous...go buy this book and call your mom."

--*The Jewish Magazine*

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