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## Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema

*Rae Beth Gordon*

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**Rae Beth Gordon : Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Title Belies FocusBy Kindle CustomerIf expecting a leisure read, this is not that. It is an academic thesis in which only a small part concerns Jerry Lewis. Book did arrive in excellent condition and as expected.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Psychiatry and CinemaBy DanieruThat is a carefully documented work where, probably for the first time in such works, is developed the analogy between

cinema and psychiatry, "from Charcot to Charlot" [Charlot is the French nickname of Charlie Chaplin] to Cabaret to Pantomime and early Cinema. One may not have realized it before, but there is a strong analogy between hysterical behavior (more common at the end of the nineteenth century) and the exaggerated gestures frequent in silent movies. The reading is admittedly not as easy as the title may suggest, but it is worth the effort, including going through the many footnotes that should be read when one reaches the place at which they appear.

Vividly bringing to light the tradition of physical comedy in the French cabaret, caf-concert, and early French film comedy, this book answers the perplexing question, Why do the French love Jerry Lewis? The extraordinary emphasis on nervous pathology in the Parisian caf-concert, where the genres of the Epileptic Singer and the Idiot Comic took center stage, and where popular comic monologues and songs included Man with a Tic and Im Neurasthenic, points to a fascinating intersection between medicine and popular culture. The French tradition of comic performance style between 1870 and 1910 nearly exactly duplicates the movements, gestures, tics, grimaces, and speech anomalies found in nineteenth-century hysteria; the characteristics of hysteria became a new aesthetics. Early French film comedy carried on this tradition of frenetic gesture and gait, as most film performers came from these entertainments and from the circus. Even before Chaplins films triumphed in France, film comics were instantly recognizable from their pathological gait, just as Jacques Tati would be a half-century later. Comedy, a genre that dominated French cinema until World War I, has often been linked to a mass public for film; the author elucidates this link by proposing a broadly generalized cultural-medical phenomenon as the explanation for the dominance of the comic genre. Comic performance style drew from a group of nervous disorders characterized by the psychological automatism emanating from the lower faculties: nervous reflex, motor impulses, sensation, and instinct. Building on her previous work on hysteria, the cabaret, and pathologies of movement in the films of Georges Mlis, and drawing on over 400 French films made between 1896 and 1915, the author contributes to a new theory of spectatorship at work in the cabaret, in shows of magnetizers, and in early French film comedy. Jerry Lewis touches a nerve in French cultural memory because, more than any other film comic, he incarnates this tradition of performance style.

"Why the French Love Jerry Lewis invites readers to consider the power of performance and cinematic illusion to tickle the funny-bone and agitate the senses, to produce involuntary laughter and shivers of delight." (Michele Pierson University of Queensland)"Gordon's tome offers insights into German Expressionism, French eccentricity, and why large American audiences were thrilled with the late Marty Feldman, Sam Kinison, and Andy Kaufman."From the Inside FlapVividly bringing to light the tradition of physical comedy in the French cabaret, caf-concert, and early French film comedy, this book answers the perplexing question, Why do the French love Jerry Lewis? The extraordinary emphasis on nervous pathology in the Parisian caf-concert, where the genres of the Epileptic Singer and the Idiot Comic took center stage, and where popular comic monologues and songs included Man with a Tic and Im Neurasthenic, points to a fascinating intersection between medicine and popular culture. The French tradition of comic performance style between 1870 and 1910 nearly exactly duplicates the movements, gestures, tics, grimaces, and speech anomalies found in nineteenth-century hysteria; the characteristics of hysteria became a new aesthetics. Early French film comedy carried on this tradition of frenetic gesture and gait, as most film performers came from these entertainments and from the circus. Even before Chaplins films triumphed in France, film comics were instantly recognizable from their pathological gait, just as Jacques Tati would be a half-century later. Comedy, a genre that dominated French cinema until World War I, has often been linked to a mass public for film; the author elucidates this link by proposing a broadly generalized cultural-medical phenomenon as the explanation for the dominance of the comic genre. Comic performance style drew from a group of nervous disorders characterized by the psychological automatism emanating from the lower faculties: nervous reflex, motor impulses, sensation, and instinct. Building on her previous work on hysteria, the cabaret, and pathologies of movement in the films of Georges Mlis, and drawing on over 400 French films made between 1896 and 1915, the author contributes to a new theory of spectatorship at work in the cabaret, in shows of magnetizers, and in early French film comedy. Jerry Lewis touches a nerve in French cultural memory because, more than any other film comic, he incarnates this tradition of performance style.