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Autore	Goffman Ethan <1961->
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Imagining Each Other explores Black-Jewish relations by examining the complex ways they have portrayed each other in recent American literature. It illuminates their dramatic alliances and conflicts and their dilemmas of identity and assimilation, and addresses the persistent questions of ethnic division and economic inequality that have so encompassed the Black-Jewish narrative in America. Focusing primarily on the 1960s and its aftermath, the book reveals how Jewish and African Americans view each other through a complex dialectic of identification and difference, channeled by ever-shifting positions within American society. Through the works of Richard Wright, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Amiri Baraka, Paule Marshall, Grace Paley, and others, Goffman unfolds a story of two peoples with powerful biblical and mythic connections that replay themselves in contemporary circumstances. In doing so, he uncovers layers of meaning in works that dramatize this turbulent, paradoxical relationship, and reveals how this relationship is paradigmatic of multicultural American self-invention.
