
The history of France of the Restoration (1814-1830) and July Monarchy (1830-1848) periods does not immediately bring to mind any major national manifestation of antisemitism. Napoleon's "Infamous" decree, which severely curtailed the activities of Alsatian Jews, had expired by this time, and the great, divisive upheaval of the Dreyfus Affair was still in the distant future. This period is one which has been described as a "tranquil" time to be a Jew. As such it has, until now, received scant attention from historians of antisemitism. A challenge, however, to this assumption of tranquillity has recently appeared in the form of Julie Kalman's *Rethinking Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France*, the drab, grey-brown cover of which belies the elegance, humanity and engaging nature of the content within.

How does Kalman "rethink" antisemitism in nineteenth-century France? She situates the construction of the Jew by the French within the Restoration and July Monarchy periods both by contesting the assumption that it was a tranquil era for the Jew and by resisting the temptation to contextualise the public perceptions of Jews at this time as part of some sort of relentless march towards the inevitable climax of the Holocaust. In fact, this is not a work that Kalman sees as being part of the canon in the discipline of antisemitism. It is first and foremost a history of France and the French, both Jewish and non-Jewish. More specifically, it is about the ambivalence surrounding the French construction of the Jew, and how this process of construction of Jewishness served as a strategy for grappling with broader issues of citizenship and modernity in a rapidly changing world.

During the period under discussion, questions of what France was, what it meant to be French, what the Revolution signified and how nation and Church would interrelate post-ancien regime were all subject to interminable debate. Republicans, Catholics and royalists alike were negotiating the unsteady political landscape, laden with the challenge of defining French citizenship. Not only were politics turbulent, but increasing industrialisation was changing the everyday life of the French people. Kalman demonstrates that all these factors had bearing on the complicated feelings the French had towards their Jewish compatriots. If they could not identify exactly what it meant to be French, then at least they could employ the Jew as a yardstick for non-Frenchness.

Members of Catholic clergy, for example, saw the presence of the Jew in mainstream society as a malevolent legacy of the Revolution, one which threatened the revival of the Catholic church. Nevertheless, they remained divided on how to solve the Jewish "question". Should Jews be encouraged to assimilate culturally into French society or should they maintain their separate identity and continue to be Other (and therefore not French)? Could a Jew who had converted to Catholicism ever truly leave behind their Jewishness? Kalman recounts the fascinating story of Simon Deutz, the Jewish apostate who betrayed the mother of the infant legitimist pretender, the Duchess de Berry, into the hands of the government. The reactions of the French press to this event attest to the notion that even a Jew converted to Catholicism was still inherently Jew, and therefore foreign, in the eyes of many French, political convictions notwithstanding.
Perceptions of Jews were also tinted with the Romantic orientalism of the era. Jewish women in particular were prey to the alienating orientalist gaze of artists and writers. Jewesses were portrayed as fascinating, exotic, beautiful creatures, but ultimately, like their male coreligionists, governed by their carnality. This so-called carnality of the Jewish people, and their lust for material wealth, were alive and well in the minds of the French and informed their reactions to a variety of issues ranging from the Damascus blood libel of 1840 to a fatal accident on a train line owned by James de Rothschild. Murdered Catholic priests and the dangers of modernity alike could be neatly attributed to the Jew.

Kalman's work is a fascinating and above all balanced and measured insight into the uneasy relationship between the French Jews and non-Jews in the early half of the nineteenth century. It is to be recommended to any scholar with a general interest in the insecurities and uncertainties of the French nation since the Revolution.

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