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Zvi Jonathan Kaplan and Nadia Malinovich, eds., *The Jews of Modern France: Images and Identities*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016. xii + 355 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$179.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-9-0043-2418-3.

Review by Meredith Scott-Weaver, York College.

Continuing a conversation that began more than thirty years ago with Frances Malino's and Bernard Wasserstein's edited collection, *The Jews in Modern France*, this new volume highlights some of the most important contributions to the body of French Jewish history in recent years. Editors Zvi Jonathan Kaplan and Nadia Malinovich bring together fourteen case studies that embrace comparative and transnational perspectives to explore "complex and often contradictory" Jewish identities in France from emancipation into the twenty-first century (p. 3). Organized thematically into three principal sections, "Jewish Integration, Jewish Distinctiveness"; "Jews and Politics, Jewish Politics"; and "Imagining Jews, Performing Jewishness," the chapters attend to the position and treatment of Jews in France as well as contested ideas of Jewishness.

Daniella Doron's opening historiographical essay succinctly reacquaints the reader with the critical works of the twentieth-century, from Weinberg and Marrus to Hyman and Wasserstein, that emphasized Jewish assimilation as a result of emancipation and the path to Vichy. French Jewish history owes much to these individuals; their investigations shaped the field and laid the foundation for a new generation of scholars who consider the experiences of Jews in France through a different set of lenses, including religious symbology, post-colonialism, gender, transformations of French Jewish communities after 1962, and Jewish-Muslim interactions. Doron draws attention to how current studies evidence rich communal life, challenging the idea of an endangered French Jewry and any remnants of the assimilationist narrative. It is within this context that the following fourteen chapters should be read.

The four case studies comprising "Jewish Integration, Jewish Distinctiveness" open a window on the ways that French society acted upon Jews and, in turn, how Jews navigated those situations. Ronald Schechter's study of Jacob Benjamin, accused of overcharging the French army for provisions in late 1792 and ultimately found innocent, highlights the existence of Jewish business connections with the government and the nature of "Jewish-Gentile relations" in the wake of emancipation, which were far from uniform (p. 37). Working from court documents, he reveals that Benjamin was hired to supply the army with vital necessities and that antisemitism was not a driving force in his trial, as no revolutionary figure vilified him for being Jewish. Both points are remarkable, especially considering the intense debate over emancipation. In the following chapter, Jennifer Sartori explores the influences of gender and religion on schooling for working-class Jewish girls in Paris during the long nineteenth century. Through a comparison of public and consistorial primary schools, she teases out the effects that French and Jewish expectations bore on their education and how they came together. The curriculum, she asserts, sought to instruct Jewish girls equally well as their non-Jewish peers "while blending nineteenth-century French conceptions of appropriate gender roles into older Jewish customs," affecting the subject taught (p. 65). Notable in this process is that communal leaders came to recognize the

important role Jewish women played in retaining Jewishness while becoming French, a balance of utmost concern.

In the second half of this section, Zvi Jonathan Kaplan and Nadia Malinovich further challenge any temptation to uniformly define how French civil society has shaped Jewish experiences. Kaplan's comparative examination of judicial prerogative and Jewish divorce proceedings in post-separation France investigates restraints that the legal system placed upon Jews. While Judaism allowed for divorce, there was little consensus over normalizing rabbinic and French divorce procedures, so questions of judicial authority arose and courts applied religious, civil, and foreign legal precedents differently depending on the circumstances. Using specific divorce cases, Kaplan argues that courts "struggled to balance the dictates of French law, which promoted secularization of marriage, and foreign law" (p. 82). French civil courts' reticence to secularize divorce and allow conditional marriage put foreign Jews, like those from Russia, in a state of legal uncertainty until the system finally aligned Jewish divorce proceeding with French law in the early twentieth century. Nadia Malinovich's chapter on Jewish youth movements in 1920s France shows a different side of Jewish distinctiveness, one that encouraged a bold and public civic life. She considers various youth organizations across France that, while uniquely Jewish, reflected "integration into French society rather than a rejection of it" (p. 102). Regardless of specific missions and differences amongst them, she confirms, these groups commonly brought together Jewish youth from wide-ranging backgrounds. Many also sought to acculturate Jewish immigrants through a range of activities and influential speakers like Aimé Pallière. Particularly interesting is the material on Chema Israël, the Union Universelle de la Jeunesse Juive, and the Eclaireurs Israélites, including the steps they took to meet their goals through educational or cultural events. Ultimately, this examination underscores the vitality of interwar French Jewish associational life, attesting that French Jewry was not in inevitable decline before the war.

The five chapters in "Jews and Politics, Jewish Politics" shift the historian's gaze to complex political dynamics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The authors collectively move beyond national boundaries to examine how Jewish political engagement changed, and was changed by, the political establishment. Lisa Moses Leff explores how, prompted by the Damascus Affair in 1840, French Jews embraced the secular liberal *mission civilisatrice* to "civilize" foreign coreligionists, most notably in the Ottoman Empire and North Africa. As a means of self-defense, they hoped "to bring the values of the Revolution to the world" and uphold human rights through such methods as education (p. 133). Leff contends that while French Jews took on aspects of liberal politics, they likewise influenced French liberals who, generally anti-religious, embraced Judaism and gained language to "sacralize" their platforms (p. 153). Ari Joskowitz also underlines mutual political relationships in his transnational study of nineteenth-century German anti-Catholicism and French anticlericalism. Although two "deeply divided" nations, he underscores important commonalities between the movements, such as the shared belief that Catholicism was anti-modern, especially in the second half of the 1800s (p. 155). Jews in both countries aligned their platforms with liberal compatriots to confidently take part in public political conversations and shape emerging modern Jewish politics. His cross-border approach furthermore reveals the limits of shared ideology when resurgent antisemitism at the end of the nineteenth century prompted German Jews to back Catholics when they faced exclusionary Protestant candidates.

Illuminating French Jewish political activities after World War II in relation to other populations, whether American coreligionists or Muslims, is central to several chapters in this book, including Laura Hobson Faure's study of the "Jewish Marshall Plan" in France. "Looking both inward and across national lines," she contextualizes American and French Jewish aid organizations' care for child survivors of the Shoah, particularly the OSE and the Joint Distribution Committee (p. 175). She highlights a push-pull dynamic as French Jews recognized their need for financial support but desired autonomy in their endeavors, which also was a goal of the JDC. Yet, the JDC did not simply offer funding; it influenced methods of care and sought the preservation of French Jewish communal life in the wake of the Holocaust, rankling the organizations it helped. As American monies dwindled, she

concludes, French Jewish organizations cooperatively did achieve self-sufficiency. Next in this section, Maud Mandel and Ethan Katz jointly explore Jewish political activism's ability to transform the Jewish community. Their comparative study of two moments during the era of the Algerian crisis and the Lebanese War illustrates how, across a generation, Jewish figures publicly articulated their political concerns as Jews, rather than simply French citizens, and advanced Jewish politics. They suggest that, although dissention over Israel's role in the war of 1967 and the contentious debate surrounding its actions in the Lebanese War did not immediately change Jewish political life, they were vital parts of a decades-long process. As Jewish figures, from René-Samuel Sirat to Claude Katz, continued to publicly wrestle through issues, there was an increasing willingness to include new voices as well as criticize Jewish leadership like CRIF and, important to note, the French state. Mandel and Katz regard these steps as essential for Jews to become "a politically vocal ethno-religious minority willing to challenge their own government in the name of particularist interests" (p. 227).

Closing the section on Jewish politics is Jessica Hammerman's examination of the 1956 Battle of Constantine that takes into account both the Algerian War and dynamics in the Middle East as powers like Egypt and Israel took sides. Constantine, the site of the deadly 1934 anti-Jewish riots, was not new to bloodshed. Hammerman delves into the identities and attitudes motivating the 1956 episode that "ripped apart Jewish-Muslim coexistence," as Algerian Jews exacted violent reprisals for a Muslim attack in the Jewish quarter (p. 248). Among the variables Hammerman investigates are the presence of weapons, Israeli Misgeret agents in the city to protect Jews, the OAS, and references to Algerian Muslims as "Arabs" even though they were Berber. She concludes that pointing to developments in the Middle East may not be the best way to understand the tensions leading to this violence; it is more useful to consider Constantine as a locale torn between metropolitan France and Algeria.

Part of what makes the *Jews of Modern France* so valuable is its scope of methodology and avenues of inquiry; it does not restrict itself to social or political spheres. The fourth and final section, "Imagining Jews, Performing Jewishness," reveals contested cultural representations of Jewishness on screen, on paper, and in public. Emphasis on inward and outward-focused processes illustrates fluid yet disputed identities, beginning with Julia Kalman's study of Rachel, a nineteenth-century ingénue whose acting thrust her into the theatre scene's spotlight. Kalman handily argues that Rachel's importance is her challenge to assimilation, as she "defiantly performed her Jewishness in the public sphere" (p. 269). Rachel's success, she observes, prompted a fierce debate over her place in French culture that, at its core, drew on concepts of citizenship, Jewishness, and womanhood. Detractors obsessed over her wealth and influence, referring to "Jewish power," or alleged that, as a Jewess, she could only mimic French culture, while supporters remarked on her vulnerability, strength, and authenticity (p. 258). Striking in Kalman's study is how the cultural debate over Rachel so closely mirrored arguments regarding Jews' place in French society.

Jews in France were not strangers to mediating cultural and religious influences, as Jeffrey Haus and Saskia Coenen Snyder remind us in their respective chapters on funerals and synagogues in nineteenth-century Paris. In his analysis of Jewish funeral practices, Haus demonstrates how Jews new to the French middle class adopted aspects of bourgeois culture. Embrace of middle-class death customs that reflected conspicuous consumption and brought mourning into the public were purposefully "out-directed" and asserted Jewish belonging (p. 273). Although the Jewish press, including the *Archives Israélite de France*, furthered the concept of "'good' death" with idealized depictions of funerals and death notices, Haus contends that this cultural adaptation was not a linear progression (p. 282). As anxiety grew over class divides within the Jewish community and loss of religious tradition, the simplicity and religiosity of old did persist. Saskia Coenen Snyder's case study of synagogue building, particularly on rue de Victoire and rue des Tournelles in Paris, similarly asserts that acculturation did not mean abandonment of Judaism (p. 301). The Parisian Jewish community, unlike those in other European capitals, did not have ownership over new synagogue construction because French law entailed the involvement of municipal and state officials. Walking through the various phases of the costly and

protracted process, Snyder highlights differing, at times clashing, concerns over style, requirements, and constraints. She reveals that Baron Haussmann not only was concerned about architectural uniformity but also did not want synagogues to rival the Christian cultural landscape of Paris, although the Victoire temple's completed façade was quite grand. Even so, figures within the Consistory like Gustave de Rothschild made themselves heard on points of contention regarding the government's agenda. This uneven process, she concludes, tells us "as much about Christian perceptions of Jews and state power...as about Jewish self-representation" (p. 301).

In the final chapters of *Jews of Modern France*, Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall and Kimberly Arkin examine Jewish imagery and identity articulated through the mediums of film and paper. Goldstein Sepinwall presents recent French-Jewish filmmakers' portrayals of Muslims and Jews that humanize both parties and hold out hope for peace between Israel and Palestine. *Cinéastes*, from Zilbermann to Clavel, explore diverse scenarios inside and outside of France that tackle such themes as Muslim pluralism, Israel, hardship for Palestinians, and Zionism. Particularly intriguing are her analyses of *The Other Son* and *Bottle in the Gaza Sea* and the idea that Israelis and Palestinians "have been tied together by forces beyond their control" (p. 320). The films in this study, she posits, illuminate the enduring importance of Israel to French Jews, a source of both anxiety and hope. Kimberly Arkin's closing essay turns attention to the writings of Shmuel Trigano and Alain Finkielkraut. Both intellectuals expressed significant shifts in their views on Jewishness, nationalism, and French society, resulting in positions, she argues, that illuminate how "minority groups can help reinforce exclusionary concepts of political community" (p. 349). Finkielkraut initially rejected "Jewish 'tribalism'" only to later embrace a nationalism that excluded his prior belief in a multicultural France (p. 334). Trigano, on the other hand, long embraced Jewishness but eventually turned his attention to the French nation, arguing that its "Christian-inflected, French speaking secularism" leaves no room for outsiders, particularly Arab Muslims (p. 344). After comparing their ideas with Austrian Jews' Zionism and changing conceptions of nationhood, she leaves us with the thought that recent Jewish anxieties in France have motivated a nationalism that pushes integration over particularism and opened Jews to political views that historically have not protected them (p. 348).

The importance of a collection like *Jews of Modern France* cannot be overstated; it offers new avenues of inquiry that enrich our understanding of how Jews and France have interacted for more than two centuries. It challenges enduring conceptions of how emancipation shaped the path for French Jewry and casts a long gaze that transcends national confines. The essays are thoughtful, provocative, and set the pace for the future of French Jewish history.

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