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Julie Kalman, *Orientalizing the Jew: Religion, Culture, and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century France*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2017. xi + 122 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$80.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN: 978-0-253-02422-0; \$25.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-253-02427-5; \$24.99 U.S. (e-book). ISBN: 978-0-253-02434-3.

Review by Jeffrey Haus, Kalamazoo College.

In this book, Julie Kalman seeks to further our understanding of the relationship between perceptions of Jews and the reality of their existence in nineteenth-century France. Her investigation yields a study in fluidity, showing that how non-Jews thought about Jews varied depending on the physical, situational, and cultural context of their encounters with them. Within this framework, Jews both literally and conceptually acted as intermediaries between the Hexagon and the “Orient.” The political, economic, and social functions of Jews in Palestine and Algiers brought them into contact with cultural and political figures who subsequently expressed conflicting views about them. Oriental Jews could thus be exotic, inviting, sensual, and essential; the same Jews could also be deceitful, weak, and avaricious. These paradoxical tropes will ring familiar to those who study European Jewish history. Kalman’s research, however, extends the scope of these dialectical views to French encounters with the Orient. Such conflicting portrayals of Jews, she argues, could reflect the writers’ own ambivalence toward features of French society. Located safely abroad, Oriental Jews thus became convenient and effective vessels for criticisms of France, symbols of its virtues and faults, and tools for criticizing or asserting French political power.

Kalman begins by assessing French travel writing focused on nineteenth-century Palestine and, most notably, Jerusalem. This literature outlines the different cultural agendas and political perspectives surrounding pilgrimage to the Holy Land and reveals themes that surface later in writing about Jews in North Africa. French travelers writing about their adventures in Palestine combined a fervent Romanticism, a reawakened religious piety, and a sense of a cultural crusade to retake Jerusalem from the Muslim Ottomans who ruled it. Jews found their way into these accounts through a triumphalist Christian lens, which depicted them as wretched, impoverished deicides living in a decaying Jewish quarter of Jerusalem. In this manner, French travelers reinterpreted French Jewish existence, attaching the undesirable qualities that they identified abroad to their emancipated Jewish fellow citizens back home.

These images from abroad necessitated reconciliation with the reality of French Jewish citizenship and social integration. Kalman tackles this conflict by exploring the work of a French Romanticist writer and critic of the mid-nineteenth century, Théophile Gautier. Gautier, like

other French literary figures of the period, traveled widely in the Near East where he encountered both individual Jews and their communities. Like many of his contemporaries, he published popular accounts of his travels, leaving a record of his impressions of these encounters. In analyzing his portrayal of Jews, Kalman situates Jews as the linchpin between the exotic colonies and the developing nation of France. Jews, in this conception, connected the two different spheres in the minds of those who wrote and read about them. In Jews, Gautier found convenient vehicles for expressing criticisms of French society and its increasing pre-occupation with capitalism. His play, *La Juive du Constantine*, displays his amalgamation of different Jewish types. Gautier, Kalman argues, used Jews as the antithesis that defined his Romantic ideals. At the same time, while Jews could define France, they could also define the Orient. Jews abroad served as guides, sources of support and information upon whom French travelers and officials often needed to rely. They thus acted as French points of reference, even as writers like Gautier projected ambivalent images onto Jews in France. Kalman identifies a fluidity within these writings which rendered Jews simultaneously exotic and familiar, avaricious and noble, rich and poor, trustworthy and deceitful.

Gautier also had personal relationships with Jews in France, notably the actress Rachel Félix and his son-in-law, Catulle Mendès, who figured prominently in his correspondence and, Kalman argues, inspired some of his fictional characters. Rachel, Kalman writes, was important in Gautier's writings, but her Jewishness was not. She became Jewish only when he saw her as linked to the "ancient" or "Oriental" Jewish women he had met abroad (pp. 78-79). Mendès, who had married Gautier's daughter against her father's wishes, was portrayed negatively. Gautier applied the word "Jew" to his son-in-law as an epithet depicting his marital infidelity and general dishonesty. In both instances, Kalman concludes, Gautier used his impressions of Jews from the Orient as a way of interpreting the Jews he encountered in France. Jewish fluidity facilitated this technique.

The book's final chapter explores the way in which this fluidity operated within the political and financial realm through the activities of two Jewish banking houses in pre-colonial Algiers. Examining the intermediary role of the Bacri and Busnach banks, Kalman seeks to link French Oriental ideas and perceptions of Jews with French imperial aspirations. In this example, Kalman again demonstrates the conflicting views of Jews that governed these perceptions. French diplomats portrayed the Bacris and the Busnachs as powerful figures; in some instances, the Jewish bankers appeared more stable and reliable than the Algerian officials they served. In this sense, Jews once again represented a touchstone for French officials seeking to navigate Algiers. Because Jews were familiar, Algiers became familiar. Many of these same Frenchmen, however, also depicted the Bacris and Busnachs as presumptuous and corrupt and in need of reigning in through political and financial means. In recounting several meticulously researched episodes, Kalman aligns the financial and political milieu of Algiers with Gautier's social and artistic impressions. Oriental Jews were both hospitable and deceitful; useful and greedy; a nuisance and necessary.

Kalman's book represents a valuable contribution to the growing historical scholarship of Jews in the French colonies. By focusing on aspects of pre-colonial contact between French travelers and the Jews they encountered, her research deepens our understanding of the multiple levels on which Orientalism operated. Her work also helps to establish a vital context in which later efforts to "civilize" colonial Jews (such as the educational efforts of the Alliance Israélite Universelle) unfolded. Orientalized Jews occupied a malleable cultural and political space between France and

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the colonies, providing an avenue through which French observers could enter. When the French did eventually enter—either at the head of or in the wake of a military invasion—their perceptions of the territory and the people who lived there had been shaped by portrayals of Jews.

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