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Heather Belnap, Corry Cropper, and Daryl Lee. *Marianne Meets the Mormons: Representations of Mormonism in Nineteenth-Century France*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022. xii + 304 pp. Figures, chronology, notes, bibliography, and index. \$30.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9780252086762; \$125.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9780252044670; \$19.95 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9780252053696.

Review by Andrea Goulet, University of Pennsylvania.

Just as Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* turned an exoticizing mirror back onto France's own societal mores, the nineteenth-century novels, vaudevilles, and visual texts analyzed in *Marianne Meets the Mormons* end up being less about a niche American religion than about the French nation itself. By 1830, when Joseph Smith founded the Church of Latter-day Saints, the United States had already emerged as a site of projected fantasies about primitivism, religious (in)tolerance, and the democratic experiment.^[1] To these were added the spiritualist and polygamous practices of Mormonism that became fodder for French reflection and parody, all in the service of post-Revolutionary national redefinitions explored in depth by *Marianne Meets the Mormons*. Because this innovative and impeccably researched book teaches us so much about France—its Romantic socialist movements, its Second Empire popular press and theatrical culture, its Third Republic political debates—it could only have been written by the expert *dix-neuviémistes* that are Belnap, Cropper, and Lee. The three authors bring complementary areas of specialization to the table. Cropper has published on the fantastic genre and (separately) the cultural history of sports and leisure in France. Lee's work ranges from the aesthetics and politics of the Commune to post-war heist films, and art historian Belnap studies post-Revolutionary French painting, fashion, and gender. Brought together, their takes on representations of Mormonism in nineteenth-century France meld into a surprisingly coherent voice.

The book's useful "Chronology of Key Publications and Events" begins with the 1825 death of the Comte de Saint-Simon, an event that only seems unrelated to Mormonism until the authors explain the many affinities between Joseph Smith's radical social experiment and French Utopian movements. Like Fourier's phalansteries, for example, The Latter-day Saints' "New Jerusalem" reimagined communitarian alternatives to existing family structures and systems of wealth distribution. By drawing parallels between Mormon leaders and reformists like Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Cabet, French commentators on the Social Question could refine discussion of anti-clerical religious modes of Christianity across a range of ideological stances. Some praised the charismatic idealism underpinning Romantic Socialism, while others vilified Mormon fanatics as a way to raise alarm about the *spectre rouge* in a conservative backlash to 1848. Either way, the American sect was made to map onto French historical, religious, and political histories with Joseph Smith even appearing at one point as an empire-building double for Napoleon III!

Many readers of nineteenth-century French literature remember the comically long-winded Mormon preacher in Jules Verne's *Tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours* (1872). Fewer will be familiar with the trove of periodical sources, comic vaudevilles, caricatures, and popular fictions that Belnap, Cropper, and Lee have unearthed for this project. Their extensive bibliography ranges from an 1832 mention of the "Mormonites" in *Le Protestant* through Paul Duplessis's 1859 five-volume novel *Les Mormons*, to the 1874 operetta *Les Mormons à Paris* and Aimé van Rod's 1908 erotic novel *La Revanche du Mormon*, with legal codes, sociological treatises, astrological almanacs, and Salon paintings as part of the mix. Visual culture is central to the analyses in the book, and the paperback volume provides good-quality reproductions, many in color, of the authors' iconographic finds. As silly as they may initially seem to us, images like Édouard Coppin's lithographs for *La Femme chez les Mormons* (1856), Cham's satirical illustrations for the Second Republic popular press, and Robida's fanciful caricatures in *Saturnin Farandoul* (1879) contributed to complex, nuanced attitudes about gender, power, and society. It is by pulling together high and low genres that the book succeeds in tracing cultural shifts along a number of fault lines and topics, some less expected than others: marriage and women's rights, yes, but also occultism, race, and colonial expansion.

Three of the book's chapters focus primarily on gender. In "Mormonism, Masculinity, and the Woman Question in Second Empire France," the authors find nascent themes of gender subversion in textual and visual depictions of Mormon wives that link them, believe it or not, to the *bas-bleus* and *amazones* in France. Readers today may indeed be surprised to learn that some early feminists, like the journalist Olympe Audouard, championed polygamy as an emancipatory practice. Not only did the minority American model of multiple wives avoid the Gallic hypocrisy of men taking on hidden lovers, but its division of household labor also provided many women with the free time to pursue intellectual or professional pursuits outside of the home. (Such claims of female agency within a restrictive religious system are not without parallels to debates on the wearing of the Muslim veil today.) Alternate models for marriage are given a more playful treatment in the farcical *comédies-vaudevilles* studied in the chapters titled "From Page to Stage: Mormonism and the Woman Question in the Early Third Republic" and "'Ces mœurs sont bien les nôtres!': Mormons, Marriage, and the Divorce Debate." Through role reversals, gender-bending, and farcical scenes of misogyny and prurient polygamy, popular plays and operettas of the period projected French attitudes toward prostitution and bourgeois mating rituals onto the Mormon "other."^[2] But the battle of the sexes was, ultimately, their own. With French society debating divorce before its legalization in 1884, representations of Mormon marriage served as exaggerated foils for self-critiques of gender relations in an age of increasing commodification.

Intercalated between the chapters on women's rights and marriage are others that expand the social and political stakes that grew out of Mormonism's association with religious utopian movements in France. A fascinating chapter on the fashionable practices of spiritism and the occult posits that French alternatives to Catholicism, such as Freemasonry and Spiritualism, share with the Church of Latter-day Saints a common origin in a technological landscape that Bernard Geoghegan has called the "infrastructural uncanny."^[3] The authors convincingly connect the Erie Canal, the site of the Fox sisters' summonings of the dead, to Kardec and Éliphas Lévi via popular fictions like Paul Duplessis's *Les Mormons*, which features a traveling Mormon mesmerist named Hiram Harris. More than that, they link such shaman stories and clusters of apostolic diabolisms to national anxieties about modernization and the emasculation of the French aristocracy in the 1850s. In another chapter, Mormonism's role in a secularizing society

moves beyond its Protestant identity to become a way to reflect on French colonialism and “other” Others like Muslims and Jews. With the Church of Latter-day Saints expanding into the American West while France was making imperial forays into Algeria, fantasies that conflated polygamous households with harems inspired laughter, outrage, and art. By placing Delacroix’s and Ingres’s seraglio paintings with, for example, Robida’s images of multi-racial Mormon wives, the authors track a spectrum between exotification and identification that marks shifting French attitudes toward minority religions.

The title *Marianne Meets the Mormons* emphasizes a two-directional encounter. And while we learn much about how the American sect served to refract French anxieties and social dilemmas, we also discover some differences between how American contemporaries of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young saw the Church of Latter-day Saints and how the French did: it seems that Mormons were generally treated with more hostility in their own land than across the Atlantic. The French took Mormons as kindred spirits as often as they vilified these exotic strangers. The resulting ambiguities, deftly and intelligently untangled by Belnap, Cropper, and Lee, make this book an important, richly fascinating contribution to nineteenth-century French studies.

NOTES

[1] See, for example, the special issue on “America” of *Le Magasin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: SERD, 2015). Other works on French representations of the United States include: Simon Jeune, *De F.T. Graindorge à A.O. Barnabooth: Les Types américains dans le Roman et le Théâtre français 1861-1917* (Paris: Didier, 1963); René Rémond, *Les États-Unis devant l’opinion française 1815-1852* (Paris: Colin, 1962); Jacques Portes, *Une fascination réticente: les Etats-Unis dans l’opinion française 1870-1914* (Nancy: Presse Universitaire de Nancy, 1990); Jean-Philippe Mathy, *Extrême-Occident: French Intellectuals and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Philippe Roger, *L’Ennemi américain. Généalogie de l’antiaméricanisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); William Cloonan, *Frères Ennemis: The French in American Literature, Americans in French Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018); Fabien Dubosson and Philippe Geinoz, *L’Amérique au tournant: La place des Etats-Unis dans la littérature française (1890-1920)* (Paris: Garnier, 2020); and Tom Sancton, *Sweet Land of Liberty: America in the Mind of the French Left, 1848-1871* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2020).

[2] Four of the musical comedies discussed in these chapters have been translated for a critical edition, Corry Cropper and Christopher M. Flood’s *Mormons in Paris: Polygamy on the French Stage, 1874-1892* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2020), which can be taken as a companion piece to *Marianne Meets the Mormons*; they are *Mormons in Paris* (1874), *Berthelier Meets the Mormons* (1875), *Japheth’s Twelve Wives* (1890), and *Stephana’s Jewel* (1892).

[3] Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, “Mind the Gap: Spiritualism and the Infrastructural Uncanny.” *Critical Inquiry* 42 (Summer 2016): 899-922.

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