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Ruth Harris, *Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2010. xvii+542 pp. Illust., notes, bibliog., index. \$35.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-312-57298-3; \$28.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN10: 0-312-57298-0

Review by Nadia Malinovich, Université de Picardie-Jules Verne.

Given the plethora of literature on the Dreyfus Affair and its impact on French society, Ruth Harris' decision to write a new in-depth study of the Affair was a bold one. As she explains in her introduction her objective in retelling this story is not to challenge the facts of the historical narrative that her predecessors have so well laid out before her. Rather, she has reread, reorganized and reinterpreted that evidence in a way that effectively calls into question the most basic *idée reçue* about the Affair, that it revealed a divide between "two Frances:" one antisemitic, committed to military honor, and conservative Catholicism, and another, committed to individual human rights, universal Republican values and a secular, progressive, inclusive vision of the French nation. In her masterful exploration of the political, social, emotional, and psychological universes of key figures in both the Dreyfusard and anti-Dreyfusard camps, Harris effectively demonstrates that while the story of "two Frances" locked in inevitable combat makes for a compelling narrative, it has led to a distorted view of the political beliefs, motives, and emotions of actors on both sides of the Affair.

In this review, I will focus on two major contributions of Harris' book to our understanding of French culture, society, and politics in fin-de-siècle France: her debunking of the commonplace image of the Dreyfusards as unequivocal representatives of secularism and "reason" and her discussion of the French Jewish community in France at the time of the Dreyfus Affair.

One of the axiomatic beliefs about the Dreyfusards that Harris challenges is the notion that, whereas the anti-Dreyfusards were swayed by an emotive attachment to a Frenchness rooted in conservative Catholicism and ancestor worship, the Dreyfusards rejected romantic notions of nationalism and human emotions in favor of an unwavering commitment to rationality and reason. In her introduction, Harris points out that the history of the Affair has been written almost exclusively from the Dreyfusard perspective. This, she argues, has reinforced the notion, first put forward by the Dreyfusard camp, that whereas the Dreyfusards came to the cause through an impartial, rational examination of the evidence, the anti-Dreyfusards were swayed by an emotive, irrational attachment to the army as the embodiment of the French nation.

In fact, Harris demonstrates, commitment to the Dreyfusard struggle often stemmed as much from emotion as from reason. Joseph Reinach, for example, admitted that he was not converted to the cause simply by an impartial examination of the evidence; the fact that the Jesuits had declared Dreyfus guilty led Reinach to "the intuition" that Dreyfus was in fact innocent. For Reinach as well for many other Dreyfusards, Harris demonstrates, a hatred of the Church based as much on emotion as on reason proved as powerful a motivator for supporting the Dreyfus cause as did the anti-Dreyfusard's "emotional" commitment to both the military and France's Catholic heritage.

Even more importantly, however, Harris' narrative effectively demonstrates that the Dreyfusards were in no way immune to a fascination with mysticism, romanticism, and the occult: in short, the irrational. Mathieu Dreyfus consulted a Norman mystic in order to see if she could help to uncover any evidence as to secret information that the Army was withholding from the public in order to convict Dreyfus, while Charles Richet, a professor of psychology at the College de France who came to the Dreyfusard camp early on, was well known for his "psychic research." Just as Maurice Barrès' insistence that "nationalist feeling depended on a conversation with the dead" represented a break with positivism, Harris demonstrates, so too did Richet's yearning to connect with a mystical, ethereal sphere of beauty through psychic experiments and hypnosis.

As Harris's discussions of Mathieu Dreyfus, Charles Richet and other Dreyfusards with similar spiritual yearnings demonstrates, they, like their opponents, were part of an emotional universe in which the creeds of positivism and rationalism were increasingly giving way to a fascination with the romantic, the spiritual, and the mystical within French intellectual culture, irrespective of political orientation.

Another important contribution of Harris' book is that she integrates the historical findings and theoretical perspectives of recent scholarship in French Jewish history into her narrative. Historians approaching the Affair from the "French history" perspective have generally limited discussion of the "Jewish aspect" of the Affair to elaborating on the wave of antisemitism that Dreyfus's conviction unleashed in French society. The fact that Dreyfus's Jewishness became a focal point for the anti-Dreyfusard movement, in turn, is often invoked in ironic counterpoint to the Dreyfus family's assumed status as "assimilated" French Jews for whom attachment to France, rather than loyalty to their Jewish origins, was paramount.

Over the last three decades, however, specialists of French Jewish history have problematized this perspective and demonstrated the many ways in which French Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries maintained strong links of community and solidarity even as they became acculturated French citizens. Both the Dreyfus family's Jewishness and the Jewish community's involvement in the Dreyfus Affair have been part of this reassessment. Paula Hyman, for example, has demonstrated that even as Jewish men secularized as they integrated professionally into the middle-class mainstream, their wives, who remained within the private sphere of the home, often remained more religious in orientation. As historians have traditionally concentrated on external markers of assimilation such as professional integration and synagogue attendance, however, the attachment to Judaism of these families, of which the Dreyfuses are a prime example, has been underestimated. For example, Hyman posits, the fact that a decorative cloth depicting the three Jewish pilgrimage holidays of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles hung in the Dreyfus home suggests "a more complex identity as assimilated French Jews than we might have previously imagined."^[1]

Harris' chapter entitled "France, Germany, and the Jewish Community" reflects these historiographical concerns. After providing the reader with an overview of the rise of modern antisemitism in fin-de-siècle France, Harris suggests the need to look beyond narratives of "antisemitism" and "assimilation" in our understanding of the French Jewish world from which Dreyfus hailed. While Alfred was secular in orientation, Harris notes, Lucie retained a religious sensibility, and despite their evident success in integrating into French bourgeois society, "the family's private culture was still marked by Jewish practice, no matter how attenuated" (p. 67). This is an important point, which counters an outdated yet still quite pervasive notion that French Jews were following a steady course towards progressively distancing themselves from their Jewish origins over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Harris' chapter on Dreyfusards and the Judeo-Christian tradition also enlarges our understanding of the French Jewish community by pointing out that for French Jews of the day, moving away from traditional religious observance and integrating intellectually and professionally into French Republican

culture was not necessarily synonymous with a lack of interest in Judaism. Here, enlarging on her larger argument that the Dreyfusards were almost as preoccupied with religion as their opponents, Harris elaborates on the Reinach brothers' simultaneous adherence to universal, Republican values and to reinterpreting Judaism in a positive, progressive light.

Another other *idée reçue* about French Jews and the Dreyfus Affair that Harris' account nuances is the issue of the involvement in and reactions to the Affair on the part of the French Jewish community. Noting that the image of an assimilated Jewish community that remained impassive and silent during the Affair for fear of stirring up antisemitism has been exaggerated,^[2] Harris uses the figure of Zadok Kahn, the Chief Rabbi of France, to explore mainstream Jewish reactions to the Affair. Her focus on Zadok Kahn's "multiple identities"--as a Frenchman, an Alsatian, a Jew, a clergyman, and a government functionary--proves a very helpful lens through which to explore the genuine difficulties--both political and emotional--that Kahn faced in responding to the Affair.

Overall, Harris very successfully integrates the findings and historiographical orientations of contemporary scholarship in French Jewish history into her narrative. At several points, however, her analysis in this domain is problematic. She relies too heavily on Michael Marrus' 1971 study, *The Politics of Assimilation*, considered outdated by most contemporary specialists of French Jewish history. At several points, Harris acknowledges the problems with Marrus's study, which stem from his antiquated thesis that French Jewish reactions to the Dreyfus Affair demonstrate the community's unequivocal embrace of assimilation and blindness to antisemitism.^[3] Nonetheless, overuse of this source leads her at several points to portray the French Jewish community of the day as divided between "assimilationists" and "non-assimilationists"--terms that most contemporary specialists would agree are polemical rather than accurate descriptions of the ideological divisions between Jews in France during this time.

In her epilogue, Harris notes briefly that the end of the Affair left some young French Jews "in the strange position of being Dreyfusards but also embracing Barres's cult of soil and ancestry" (p. 379) and elaborates briefly on the case of Paul Loewengard, a Jew who converted to Catholicism and then later returned to Judaism as part of his spiritual quest for a coherent identity. Harris then goes on to make the larger point that Loewengard's effort to reconcile apparently opposite beliefs was representative of a larger sociological phenomenon and invokes the many examples of figures that she has elaborated on in her book who experienced similar spiritual upheavals. The best known of these is undoubtedly Charles Péguy, who embraced a mystical Catholicism in the aftermath of the Affair. Harris' analysis of Loewengard's spiritual quest, as well as her point that it is illustrative of a larger social phenomenon, is well taken. However, it is disappointing that she only touches on the subject of Dreyfusard Jewish intellectuals fascinated by Maurice Barres' "cult of blood and soil" in her epilogue. Including a brief discussion of figures such as Edmond Fleg and André Spire--both of whom experienced "Jewish awakenings" during the Affair triggered in part by their attraction to Barrès--would have further strengthened her convincing central thesis: that the mythic "two Frances" were much more closely intertwined than we have been led to believe.

In conclusion, *Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century* effectively demonstrates that while Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards reached opposing political conclusions, they shared similarly "messy" emotions on a whole range of issues, from the validity of a nationalism rooted in political citizenship versus the ties of blood and history, to the possibility of science and reason to explain human behavior, to the role that religion should play in French society. Harris thus suggests a new paradigm for making sense of both the political and emotional universe of fin-de-siècle France. In so doing, she makes a major contribution not only to our understanding of the Dreyfus Affair, but to contemporary French history more broadly.

NOTES

[1] See Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), p. 23-24.

[2] Contemporary critics agree that both Léon Blum and Charles Péguy, in their memoirs of the Dreyfus Affair, exaggerated the alleged passivity of the Jewish community of the day for polemical purposes. See Pierre Birnbaum, "La citoyenneté en peril: Les Juifs entre integration et resistance" in *La France de l'affaire Dreyfus*, ed. Pierre Birnbaum (Paris: Gallimard, 1994); and Philippe Landau, *L'opinion juive et l'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).

[3] Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation: A Study of the French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971). Harris would have been better served to use Paula Hyman's study, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), which paints a much more accurate and less polemical portrait of French Jewry at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, as her basic source for information on French Jews during this period.

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