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Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, Ed., *Antisémythes: L'image des juifs entre culture et politique (1848-1939).* Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2005. 465 pp. Figures, notes. 34 Euros (pb). ISBN 2-84736-104-9.

Review by Allan Arkush, Binghamton University.

The playful title of this collection is slightly misleading. Not all of the essays contained in this volume concentrate on antisemitic/mythological depictions of the Jews. Several of them deal with more favorable and objective portrayals of the Jewish people stemming from the pens of Jews or their well-wishers. Still, the bulk of the book is devoted to the description and analysis of manifestations of antisemitism across Europe (and to some extent beyond it) during the century extending from the Revolution of 1848 to the outbreak of World War II. Needless to say, this subject has already received a vast amount of scholarly attention. What distinguishes this volume from much (but far from all) of the existing research is its focus not on the political dimensions of antisemitism but on what the editor, Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, describes in her introduction as more marginal aspects of the phenomenon reflected in "scientific discourse, fictional texts, fixed or animated images, catechisms and juvenile literature, and accounts of pilgrimages to the Holy Land" (p. 16). But as the book's subtitle indicates, it does not lose touch with the political realm.

The outgrowth of a research seminar held several years ago at the University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, this volume includes thirty essays divided into three parts: "L'Image de l'autre en construction," " L'Image de soi," and "Entre figure et caricature." The first part is divided into four sections: "Constructions religieuses," "Constructions scientifiques," "Constructions sociales et politiques," and "Construire un discours positif, les ambiguïtés du philosémitisme." The third part is divided into two sections: Personnages, and Images. The essays vary in length, ranging from ten to thirty pages. For the purposes of this review, I will confine myself to saying a few words about those essays in each part that bear in some way on the history of French Jewry.

Part One "L'Image de l'autre en construction"

In the section entitled "Constructions religieuses," Giovanni Miccoli's essay briefly considers the relationship between the Catholic Church and modern political antisemitism. In it, he underscores the extent to which the Church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries blamed the Jews for the main ills of modernity and lent a least tacit support to antisemitic parties. He also points to the increasing tendency within the Catholic world at that time to regard the Jews as people possessing characteristics that placed them outside of human society. Scrutinizing texts utilized in the Catholic education of French youngsters during this same period, Isabelle Saint-Martin finds some evidence of this very tendency. Pierre Sauvage finds a lot of it in the accounts of French and Belgian pilgrims of their journeys to Palestine between 1850 and 1940. He shows how the authors of these texts accorded ever-growing attention to the physical characteristics of the Jews that supposedly betokened their racial degeneration. Just how far this kind of prejudice might be from racist antisemitism can be seen, however, from the fact that Sauvage's primary example of it, a bishop named Maurice Landrieux, eventually came to regard the advent of Zionism as the prelude to the Jews' ultimate conversion to Christianity in the End of Days. As a good Christian, he could not avoid doing something that a racist could never do.

In the section "Constructions scientifiques," Nicole Edelman places the "medical antisemitism" of two late nineteenth-century neurologists, Jean-Martin Charcot and Henri Meige, within the larger context

of "stigmatization of the Other" and "hierarchization of individuals" characteristic of the *fin-de-siècle*. In an essay devoted mostly to the racial views of Italian demographers in the 1920s and '30s, Sandrine Bertaux also makes some insightful observations concerning the way in which the influential French demographer Georges Mauco ruled the Jews to be an inassimilable group, one that could not participate in the "ethnic harmony" that constituted the basis of the French nation.

In his contribution to "Constructions Sociales et Politiques," Jean-Phillipe Schreiber describes the transition after 1885 from a rather recondite Catholic anti-Masonic discourse in which anti-Jewish references were sparse to a much more popular sort of discourse that highlighted the central role of the Jews in the Masonic conspiracy that supposedly threatened the West, unfortunately adding little to what Jacob Katz has already written on the subject.[1] Schreiber is not surprised by the eventual coalescence of anti-Masonic and anti-Jewish themes, since the Jews provided such a convenient target for conspiracy theorists seeking an identifiable villain to incriminate.

Annette Becker presents striking evidence of French Jews' fervent patriotism during World War I and their acceptance into the *Union sacrée* even by some notorious antisemites, including the veteran anti-Dreyfusard Barrès. Although she cites some French Jewish soldiers' declarations of their sense of absolute oneness with their non-Jewish compatriots, she contends that such utterances were much less common than statements that reflected a feeling on the part of individual Jews that their military service marked the payment of a *dette à la patrie* that had emancipated their forbears. But neither their payment of this debt nor the compilation of detailed evidence that they had done so, she stresses, sufficed to protect them from the false charges of past treachery that reverberated through France in the late 1930s.

Edouard Lynch presents evidence of increasing antisemitism in the official organs of French peasant organizations during the post-World War I period and especially after the formation of the Popular Front government. The question of the degree to which this resonated among the peasants themselves is one that requires, in his opinion, a considerable amount of further research. Laurent Martin identifies a certain number of anti-Jewish cartoons in the left-wing French press of the 1930s but is careful to note that they were rather rare and to ascribe to them only a very limited influence. Nonetheless, "(t)hey could have contributed, however feebly, to popularizing and legitimating the symbolic and later physical violence inflicted on this category of the population" (p. 186).

Only two of the five essays in the fourth section of Part One, "Construire un discours positif, Les ambiguïtés du philosémitisme," deal with France. Both of them have to do with cinema. Dmitri Vezyroglou compares two French films of the 1920s that both display a certain measure of philosemitism and philojudaism, while reflecting at the same time a susceptibility to antisemitic clichés (p. 215) Neither *La Terre promise* nor *Le Puits de Jacob*, he writes, seems to visualize any alternative for the Jews other than subjection to persecution in the East, exposure to corruption and corruption of others in the West, or a life of idealism in Palestine. Peaceful integration of the Jews into western society, Vezyroglou concludes, was apparently not on the horizon of filmmakers even at a time when it was, to all appearances, still proceeding successfully in the real world.

Sébastien Dennis' look at the cinematic treatment of the Dreyfus Affair prior to World War II distinguishes between French silent films produced during the first decade of the twentieth century and three foreign films that appeared during the 1930s. The former downplay Dreyfus' Jewishness, push under the rug the antisemitic dimensions of the story, and treat the whole event simply as a travesty of justice. The latter, produced by men of German-Jewish origin either in their homeland, prior to the Nazi takeover, or in British or American exile, place greater emphasis on the extent to which Dreyfus was a victim of antisemitism. All of these foreign films were banned in France in the course of the 1930s, Dennis reports, lest their screening result in civil strife.

Part Two "L'Image de soi"

Catherine Nicault poses the question of whether the Dreyfus Affair constituted a turning point in the life of French Jewry, rendering problematic for the first time its prevailing ideology of assimilation. Judiciously assessing both the traumatic impact of the riots of 1898 and the degree to which the writings of such Zionists as Bernard Lazare and Edmond Fleg were representative of the attitudes of

the community as a whole, she concludes that the Affair effected no decisive change. "A renewal of Israelitism" and increased vigilance in the face of antisemitism strike her as "the traits of the dominant mentality of French Jewry" at the turn of the twentieth century" (p. 259).

Bertrand Tillier explains how the nostalgic, but far from alluring, etchings through which Alphonse Lévy intended to memorialize rural Alsatian Jewish life could be misappropriated for their own purposes by antisemites. Vincent Duclert demonstrates the extent to which many Dreyfusard intellectuals of Jewish origin insisted that they were motivated purely by revulsion against injustice and felt impelled to guard themselves against any suspicion, on the part of themselves or anyone else, that they were engaged in special pleading on behalf of a fellow Jew.

Part Three "Entre figure et caricature"

Part Three is divided into two sections, "Personnages" and Adeline Wrona identifies in Zola's pre-Affair fiction an assimilationist position, one holding that the disappearance of antisemitism is contingent on the disappearance of the Jews through the eradication of their "difference" and their absorption into the general population. After surveying eight rather obscure French novels published during the Dreyfus Affair or shortly after it and having to do with it, in one way or another, Philippe Oriol is struck by the degree to which all of them, including those written by Dreyfusards, "clearly show how deep were the roots of antisemitism" (p. 340). Noëlle Benhamou acknowledges that Maupassant's fiction is replete with antisemitic stereotypes of Jewish prostitutes and financiers but she finds many convincing reasons to exonerate him of antisemitism.

Nadine Giraud's very brief piece on Barrès demonstrates how his depiction of the Jews evolved between the Panama scandal of 1892 and the Dreyfus Affair that took place shortly afterwards. He went from portraying them as disgusting and ridiculous to identifying them as a hideous menace to France. Jean-François Tanguy takes a close look at the early comic work of Jean Drault, a friend and disciple of Drumont who lived long enough to write a proud history of antisemitism during the Vichy years. In his illustrated *Chapuzot* series, published between 1889 and 1911, Drault presented a humorous view of French military life, invariably depicting the Jewish participants in it as alien in their origin and ways, conniving to avoid hazardous service, crooked and ugly.

Geneviève Dermenjian's study of anti-Jewish caricatures in European antisemitic discourse in Algeria shows how the Jews of that land were damned if they did and damned if they didn't. Nineteenth-century caricatures mocked the Jews' "indigenous" ways; twentieth-century caricatures mocked their attempts to pass as Frenchmen. Valeria Galimi notes that *Je Suis Partout*, the fascist journal of foreign affairs founded in the 1930s, borrowed heavily from Streicher's *Der Stürmer*, but tastefully refrained from reproducing its images of sexually depraved Jews.

Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, under whose direction this entire volume was prepared, concludes it with the essay accompanied by the largest number of colorful and unsettling illustrations. All of them depict the figure of the *juif-monde* as portrayed by antisemitic publications across Europe. One of the interesting differences among them, she notes, is that the depictions of this figure in Germany, unlike those in France, tended to represent him as a monstrous creature closer to the animal world than to the human(p. 446).

The essays on which I have briefly commented here, together with seven others that are not concerned with France at all are, for the most part, rather brief--more exploratory than definitive. Even so, they collectively constitute a valuable contribution to the field of study outlined by Matard-Bonucci in her introduction and provide much food for thought.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Pierre Birnbaum, "Préface"

Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, "L'image et la représentation des juifs entre culture et politique (1848-1939)"

Giovanni Miccoli, "Racines chrétiennes et contribution catholique à l'essor de l'antisémitisme politique"

Isabelle Saint-Martin, "La représentation des juifs dans la première éducation religieuse (1848-1939)"

Pierre Sauvage, "Pèlerins belges et français en Terre sainte (1850-1940) : témoignages de la montée de l'antisémitisme racial"

Nicole Edelman, "Pathologisation du juif et antisémitisme à la Salpétrière à la fin du XIXe siècle"

Jean-Yves Frétigné, "Entre fascination et répulsion: la place du discours sur les juifs dans les débats autour de l'anthropologie criminelle italienne (1880-1900)"

Sandrine Bertaux, "Démographes français et italiens: la construction du concept de « race juive» des années vingt aux années quarante"

Jean-Philippe Schreiber, "L'image des juifs et du judaïsme dans le discours antimaçonnique au XIXe siècle"

Annette Becker, "Du philosémitisme d'Union sacrée à l'antisémitisme ordinaire : l'effet de la Grande Guerre"

Edouard Lynch, "Ruralisme, paysannerie et antisémitisme en France (1890-1940)"

Laurent Martin, "L'image du Juif et du Bourgeois dans la presse de gauche des années trente"

Livia Parnes, "Le "nouveau-juif" du romantisme pourtugaise au XIX siècle: Un héros tragique"

Dmitri Vezyroglou, "Un chose et son contraire. Le cinéma français et les ambiguïtés du philosémitisme en 1925"

Jonathan Dekel-Chen, "Du colporteur au fermier: images des juifs en Union soviétique (1924-1939)"

Sébastien Denis, "'Du traître juif' au capitaine héroïque: l'affaire Dreyfus à l'écran jusqu'à la Seconde

Guerre mondiale"

Christian Delage, "La fierté juive: l'ultime apparition de Charlot dans *The Great Dictator* (1940)"

Catherine Nicault, "L'israélitisme au tournant du siècle. Remise en cause ou reaffirmation?"

Silvia Cresti, "Images réciproques des juifs allemands et italiens (1871-1914)"

Bertrand Tillier, "L'ambiguïté de la mise en image: le dessinateur Alphonse Levy"

Vincent Duclert, "La 'question juive' chez les intellectuels juifs dreyfusards"

Jacques Ehrenfreund, "Le juif nié: Les representations du juif dans la pensée sioniste en

Adeline Wrona, "Philosémitisme et préjugés dans l'œuvre de Zola et de Balzac"

Philippe Oriol, "L'image des juifs dans les romans contemporains de l'affaire"

Noëlle Benhamou, "La fille et le cupide : stéréotypes antisémites dans l'œuvre de Maupassant"

Nadine Giraud, "Evolution de la figure du juif dans l'œuvre littéraire de Barrès"

Riccardo Bonavita, "L'image des juifs dans la littérature italienne du romantisme au fascisme"

Jean-François Tanguy, "L'image du juif dans l'œuvre comique de Jean Drault"

Geneviève Dermenjian, "La caricature comme élément du discours européen en Algérie (1830-1939)"

Ursula E. Koch, "Les images des juifs dans la presse satirique illustrée et les cartes postales allemandes (1848-1914)"

Valeria Galimi, "Une internationale antisémite des images? *Je suis partout* et le cas des caricatures"

Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, "La caricature témoin et vecteur d'internationalisation de l'antisémitisme : la figure du «juif-monde»"

NOTES

[1] See Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe (1723-1939)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

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