



Gentile New York: The Images of Non-Jews among Jewish Immigrants

Gil Ribak

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The very question of “what do Jews think about the goyim” has fascinated Jews and Gentiles, anti-Semites and philo-Semites alike. Much has been written about immigrant Jews in nineteenth- and twentieth-century New York City, but Gil Ribak’s critical look at the origins of Jewish liberalism in America provides a more complicated and nuanced picture of the Americanization process.

Gentile New York examines these newcomers’ evolving feelings toward non-Jews through four critical decades in the American Jewish experience. Ribak considers how they perceived Gentiles in general as well as such different groups as “Yankees” (a common term for WASPs in many Yiddish sources), Germans, Irish, Italians, Poles, and African Americans. As they discovered the complexity of America’s racial relations, the immigrants found themselves at odds with “white” American values or behavior and were drawn instead into cooperative relationships with other minorities. Sparked with many previously unknown anecdotes, quotations, and events, Ribak’s research relies on an impressive number of memoirs, autobiographies, novels, newspapers, and journals culled from both sides of the Atlantic.

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