

'The Jew', widely recognized in recent scholarship as a potent symbol of debates about modernity, became a particularly charged figure during the late-Victorian and Edwardian years, a period that witnessed the mass migration of East European Jews to Britain, the South African War (1899–1902), the proposal to establish a Jewish colony in East Africa (1903), and the introduction of the Aliens Act (1905). In these turbulent years, 'the Jew' was imagined as both black and white, infinitely wealthy and yet abjectly poor, refusing to assimilate and yet assuming a 'false' English identity, ideal colonizer and undesirable immigrant, 'alien' and yet almost overly familiar.

While attempts to account for these contradictions have all but ignored the crucial reference point of the Empire, this innovative and interdisciplinary volume considers the projection of the figure of 'the Jew' onto a vast geographical grid – not only the East/West divide within the British metropolitan centre, but also the much wider colonial context, shifting between Britain, Africa, and Palestine. Exploring links between Zionist culture and the British imperial experience, essays in this collection suggest how the methods of postcolonial criticism may be applied both to modern Jewish perceptions of territory and nation and to the image of 'the Jew' in the British political imagination.

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