

This talk tells the story of someone you have most certainly never heard of. Her history has left no mark on scholarship; the physical traces of the business she ran over the course of over two decades have similarly disappeared. Even her tombstone no longer exists. Yet in her own day, Madame Luna was among the most important figures to constitute—and sustain—the diasporic Mediterranean networks then taking shape in fin-de-siècle Paris. Madame Luna's was a place people wrote home about—a place that showed up in discussions of philanthropic and political events, in journalists' reports and in the books of famous authors. In the inn and restaurant she ran in the heart of the French capital, this Ottoman Jewish woman hosted visitors from all over the globe—but most of all people from the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. It was there, in an unassuming building on a small side street, that she fed them familiar foods, connected them, and corresponded with them after they had returned to their homes, or moved on to new locales. Bringing together people from the Ottoman Levant, colonial North Africa, Western Europe and beyond, Madame Luna's enterprise was both a microcosm and epicenter of a dynamic modern Mediterranean diaspora.