

a city that grew from 12,500 to 30,000 inhabitants), which responds to the main question: how did they manage to establish strong links with local society under permanent suspicion from the fiscal authorities that they had arrived without license from the king?

The only problem not solved by this study is related to the nature of the sources: there are no genealogies in these documents and the ethnic/religious identification of the individuals selected is not possible in most cases. That many left part of their inheritance to the church does not make them Old Christians; we know that many New Christians were members of confraternities and also wrote pious wills. In any case, this is an excellent study that shows diversity, fluidity, and flexible solutions in daily life, depicting a new vision of the Portuguese community in Lima, certainly not a homogeneous block, contrary to previous assumptions.

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Yudisher Theriak: An Early Modern Yiddish Defense of Judaism.

Morris M. Faienstein, ed. and trans.

Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016. x + 180 pp. \$44.99.

The present volume is the first English translation of the *Yudisher Theriak* (Jewish theriac, or antidote), an important and fascinating work of early modern Ashkenaz. First published in Hanau in 1615, the *Theriak* was a Jewish response to the *Jüdischer abgestreiffter Schlangenbalg* (Jewish stripped-off snakeskin), an anti-Jewish work published in Nürnberg and Augsburg in 1614 by the convert Samuel Friedrich Brenz. In his work, written in German, Brenz accuses the Jews living in the German territories of harboring an indelible hatred against the Christian religion and its adherents. Listing numerous examples of alleged Jewish blasphemies against Jesus and the church, as well as curses and misdeeds allegedly directed by the German Jews against their Christian neighbors, Brenz aimed to “expose” what he believed to be a Jewish “threat” to the religious and social order in the German lands.

The *Schlangenbalg* was only one representative of an entire genre of anti-Jewish literature of this kind, which flourished in the German territories of the early modern period. What was special about Brenz’s work was that it triggered a Jewish apologetic response—the *Yudisher Theriak*—the only one known to us to be written by a German Jew. The author of the *Theriak*, Zalman Zvi of Aufhausen, explains that his work was meant to serve as an antidote to the venomous bite of the anti-Jewish snake: based on Jewish (and occasionally also Christian) sources and authorities, as well as on his own experience as a German Jew, Zalman Zvi attempted to refute Brenz’s accusations against the Jews one by one. His decision to publish the work in Yiddish—the German-Jewish

vernacular of the time—was meant to make it accessible to the broad masses of German Jews, and thus to equip them with refutations and counterarguments when confronted with anti-Jewish polemics of this kind.

The significance of the *Theriak* lies, first and foremost, in its unique position as the only known Jewish apologetic work written in early modern Yiddish. Thus, it is not only valuable for students of Christian-Jewish relations in the German lands or, more broadly, of the social and cultural history of German Jewry, but also for everyone interested in Old Yiddish literature—a fascinating yet today relatively overlooked literary corpus, which flourished in the Ashkenazi communities of early modern Europe. An annotated English translation of the work, as provided by Morris Faienstein, is therefore a very welcome contribution to present-day scholarship, as it will undoubtedly bring this important work to the awareness of scholars and students, and will make it accessible for a much broader readership than the one it has had so far.

In addition to the annotated translation of the *Yudisher Theriak*, the book includes, among other things, an introduction, an appendix detailing the publication history of the *Schlangenberg* and the *Theriak*, and an index of citations in the work (from the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, rabbinic literature, and various early modern works). In the introduction, Faienstein provides information on Zalman Zvi of Aufhausen and Samuel Friedrich Brenz, discusses some aspects of the historical and cultural context in which the *Theriak* was written, and explains the sources Zalman Zvi used for his work and the polemical strategies he employed. Unfortunately, most of the introduction, and especially the discussions concerning the relations between Yiddish and German in the early modern period and the anti-Jewish literature in premodern Germany, is hardly satisfactory. It lacks coherence and a well-organized structure, and includes unnecessary repetitions, digressions into details, and discussions not entirely relevant to the topic, as well as some inaccuracies. On the other hand, the introduction fails to provide a systematic and comprehensive discussion on two highly relevant issues: the social and cultural reality of the Jews in early modern Germany, including the place of Yiddish language and literature in the German-Jewish communities of the time, and the specific genre of anti-Jewish literature, to which Brenz's work belongs. Although Faienstein mentions this genre, it would have been useful to have a proper discussion on the topic: one that includes information on other important, similar works; analyzes prevalent accusations; and makes use of the extant research literature.

Finally, although the potential contribution of an annotated translation of the *Theriak* is indisputable, it is regrettable that the volume does not include the original text in early modern Yiddish. A facsimile edition of the original work with a facing English translation would have been far more useful as a scholarly tool. It is only to be hoped that the present translation will serve as a vantage point for a future bilingual (and somewhat improved) edition of the *Yudisher Theriak*.

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