

***Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece.*** By Devin E. Naar. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. xxv, 366 pp. Notes. Index. Photographs. Tables. Maps. \$24.95, paper.  
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From among the many publications that have come out in the last decades on Jewish Greece and on Jewish Salonica, there is no doubt that this book carves an independent historical narrative space, bringing that Jewish community into light through its transition from empire to nation-state, as well as towards its sorrowful end. In this scholarly, well-researched, and sympathetic narrative, we trace the history of the community and experience the thoughts, actions, and struggles of its many active members through their own voice. The author relies on the sources of the community, piecing together all of the written documentation produced by the Jews of Salonica. Devin Naar is a masterful storyteller. His work is academic and sober, yet his prose is so compelling that we end up reading the book as if it was a novel that we want to get to the end, even though we know the end. The book is about the struggles of belonging, the craft of identity building, the ability to adapt to novel political circumstances, and the mastery of negotiation as a minority in a fiercely-nationalist, post-imperial nation-state.

In the early chapters, we encounter an organized, educated, and cultured community of successful Jews engaged in the trades and professions of Salonica, at such ease with their place in history that they are willing to contemplate a future for Salonica as “their nation.” The city’s 80,000 Jews in 1910 before the transition to a national Greek state, recalled the name, “Jerusalem of the Balkans.” Though we know that the passage from imperial multireligious and multiethnic diversity to a beleaguered nation-state is never easy. The Jews of Salonica accepted their transition as members of a resourceful community and moved from Ottoman “millet” status to minority status in the Greek nation-state.

The book is the story of this transition. Early chapters describe the community carefully and vigorously negotiating their internal organization, as well as their place in the larger society. Early on, they have to deal with the fire of 1917 and the unfortunate actions of the Greek state seizing the opportunity to relocate them away from the central districts where they had thrived through the centuries of Ottoman rule. In an early indication of what was to come, we read about the care that the Jewish community took to adapt, to define themselves in national and religious terms, to learn Greek, to debate citizenship, and to continue to have a vibrant internal debate that was cultural, national, and political all at once. Throughout these chapters, we see a self-confident, strong community that holds its own as it confronts the Greek state. We see through Naar’s narrative how various factions discussed the choice of a Chief Rabbi, the education of Jewish children, and the politics of belonging. Through the use of newspapers and the work of historians, he tells a story that unfolds as the Jewish community is weakened, through the assault of the Greek state, the loss to emigration, and the sheer exhaustion of fighting an arduous battle against the encroachment of Greek ethnic nationalism.

It is really in the last chapter on the loss of the Jewish cemetery that we read the full extent of the struggle between the Jewish community and the Greek state. Despite the regular assault of the different governments from Eleftherias Venizelos to Ioannes Metaxas, the onslaught of the anti-Semitic press, the Campbell riots and burning of Jewish neighborhoods, it is only in this last chapter that Naar deals with the Greek state in a compelling way. This is partly a loss since Naar is too cautious to take a strong position on the actions of the Greek state, and the effect is to underestimate how devastating Greek nationalism was for the Jewish community of Salonica. This is

because the book is written from the perspective of the Jewish religious and intellectual figures who emphasized their struggles, their particular attempts at constructing a negotiated identity, and an existence acceptable to the Greeks. The Greek state was unavailable for such compromise, however, and by the time of the Nazi invasion in 1941, the state had successfully completed the task of “otherization” of the Jews, the Greek Orthodox Church and the mob having been complicit in this task. This is an important book, especially as it bestows the Jews of Salonica the agency, dignity, and vibrant communal history that they once had.

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***From the Bible to Shakespeare: Pantelejmon Kuliš (1819–1897) and the Formation of Literary Ukrainian.*** By Andrii Danylenko. Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2016. xii, 447 pp. Bibliography. Index.

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Andrii Danylenko’s monograph examines Pantelejmon Kuliš’s Ukrainian translations of the Bible and some works by William Shakespeare, comparing them to other nineteenth and the early twentieth century-translations. According to the cover text, the book traces “the contours of a full and complete picture of the development of literary Ukrainian in the two historical parts of Ukraine—Galicia and Dnieper Ukraine—from the mid-nineteenth century onward.” However, while even an ideal examination of Ukrainian Bible and Shakespeare translations can barely fulfill such an ambitious mission, the present book clearly remains within narrower confines.

In his introduction, Danylenko characterizes Kuliš in such a sketchy way that unprepared readers will feel lost. Particularly, they will not understand that Kuliš had made a considerable contribution to the intellectualization of the Ukrainian language even prior to the Bible translations. At the same time, it comes as a surprise that according to Danylenko’s vision of the history of the Ukrainian language, “the written language in Russian-ruled Ukraine . . . theoretically was the standard language of the entire country” (xx), whereas below he contends—much more correctly—that it was not always “clear whether the Dnieper variety would ultimately serve as the literary language of all Ukrainians” (9).

The first chapter immediately switches to an analysis of Kuliš’s translation of the Book of Psalms. Most problems of this chapter are symptomatic for the entire book: while orthography is a key topic, some texts appear in non-original, adapted versions, without any hint to the reader (7). Several forms are erroneously listed as “obvious Church Slavonicisms,” such as *zlyi* (6); others are labeled as “Kulišisms,” without any further comments; see for example, the comments on *zloreččja* and *zlorika*, without any hint to the Polish *złorzeczyć*, *złorzeczenie* (22). Quite a few “neologisms,” such as *процентувати* (35), can barely be regarded as such; compare the Russian *процентовать* and Polish *procentować*, while other assessments are extremely misleading: Danylenko praises the replacement of “the traditional Church Slavonic form *blažen*” in one of the translations, but the new form *blaho*, is, of course, Church Slavonic as well (33). In light of recent publications, the assessment that “[Pylyp Moračevs’kyj’s] translation of the Bible was never a pretext for launching repression of the Ukrainian language in 1863” (55) is obsolete; the fact that the Ems Ukaze is nowhere discussed in detail is problematic.

The book has some serious mistakes: Danylenko translates *Didyščyna* as “the apéry à la . . . Didyk,” (48) (Bohdan Didyc’kyj, not “Didyk,” was a very prominent