

ancient Greek. This was the case, for instance, for David de' Pomis and Abraham Portaleone, who exchanged their biblical knowledge with contemporary Jewish and non-Jewish scientists by taking advantage of the treatises written by erudite Christian scholars that accompanied the publication of Plantin's polyglot Bible.

In the wide selection of texts quoted by the author, some slight errors of transcription from both Latin and Italian occur (especially in names of persons and places), as well as some misunderstandings in the translation of the quoted texts. For example, on p. 69: "the *querza* [oak] ... alludes to the people of a republic, being ornamental and luxurious and filled with divine grace." The Italian original has "La *querza* ... che cosa significa se non il popolo della repubblica essere d'ornamenti e commodi et divina gratia abbandonato ...," which could be translated: "The oak ... alludes to the people of a republic, when deprived of ornaments, comforts and divine grace...." Such minor flaws notwithstanding, Berns's work represents an excellent paradigm of intellectual inquiry in the field of the history of ideas. This volume is a precious tool for better understanding the scholarly relationships between Italian Jews and Christians at the beginning of the modern era.

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Maud Kozodoy. *The Secret Faith of Maestre Honoratus: Profayt Duran and Jewish Identity in Late Medieval Iberia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. 314 pp.

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Until the summer of 1391, when anti-Jewish riots spread across the Iberian Peninsula, the individual later referred to as Honoratus de Bonafide, a Christian physician and astrologer at the court of King Joan I of Aragon, had been Profayt Duran—a Jew from Perpignan. Although the details of Duran's conversion are lost to us, Kozodoy assumes it was a forced conversion (3). Despite the fact that he converted or was forcefully converted, he nevertheless continued to write in Hebrew and, perhaps even more interestingly, wrote anti-Christian polemical treatises. Like many other Conversos, Duran maintained a dual identity based on an inner/outer dialectic. Although to the outside world, that social space wherein he interacted with others, he was a Christian, his private domain seems to have remained Jewish. In this inner world, he reconceptualized his ancestral religion along rationalist lines because this permitted him to emphasize intention and belief over physical acts of worship. Duran is of such interest to the author because, in her own words, he was able to move eloquently "between external conduct and internal orientation, or between an externally constructed and an internally determined identity" (11).

Book Reviews

In *The Secret Faith of Maestre Honoratus* Maud Kozodoy has done a wonderful job not only of describing and analyzing Duran's life and works, but also of situating him within his immediate political, cultural, and intellectual milieu. Since Duran stressed rationalism and the scientific nature of Judaism, Kozodoy makes the larger point that, in Duran's life and times, "we see a rarely examined facet of Iberian science at the transition point between the medieval and early modern periods" (6). To demonstrate this, she divides her impressive study into three distinct yet overlapping parts: an intellectual portrait, a description of his scientific contributions, and an analysis of his contorted relationship to Judaism.

In part 1, subdivided into four chapters, Kozodoy recounts for us Duran's biography and seeks to place him within the later medieval Iberian world. What we know of his life emerges from the registers of notaries, such as those of Bernard Fabre, in addition to small archival documentation from the places where he lived, such as Perpignan, Navarre, Caspe, and Valencia. In addition to such materials, Kozodoy also relies on Duran's marginalia, notes of his students, his writings, and his correspondence with others.

In part 2, Kozodoy, in her own words, "examines a number of stress points where scientific thought reacts to the pressure of polemical interests" (9). Uncovering these stress points involves looking at the mature Duran's scientific works and, more generally, juxtaposing Jewish rationalism and the "problem" of Christianity. This tension illuminates the centrality of rationalism and scientific expertise to Duran's identity, and reveals how this tension shaped the polemic of elite Iberian Jews. It could, of course, take the inverse form, as seen, for example, in a figure such as Duran's near contemporary, Abner of Burgos (ca. 1270–1347), someone who is surely deserving of a rich bibliographic and intellectual study such as the one Kozodoy here provides us.

Part 3 addresses Duran's understanding of Judaism under the pressures of his life as a Converso. It pays especial attention to his 1395 eulogy, wherein he emphasized the principle of inner intention over and above outer observance. Although in the performance of his outward deeds a Converso may appear idolatrous, this is only a surface-level observation, writes Duran, because such deeds are in fact based on a purity grounded in proper intention. As a result, Conversos, like Jews in general, merit redemption. From here, Kozodoy examines Duran's magnum opus, the grammatical work known as *Ma'aseh 'efod*. In this work, praised by both Christians and Jews, Duran argues that the purpose of Judaism is to acquire knowledge of the "wisdom of Torah," which, for him, can refer to literal contact with the Hebrew Bible. This means that reading and study of the sacred text or even vocal recitation or contemplation of the physical text helps Jews to attain God's providence. For Duran, then, even the physical words of the Hebrew Bible offer a power that, Kozodoy argues, is not unlike the ideas and terminology found among contemporaneous (non-Jewish) magical and medical theory. The very act of reading or reciting the Hebrew text becomes a way that a Converso can live a Jewish life, at least internally.

Duran is, of course, part of an elite group. This is why we know about him. How, if at all, would rationalism and scientific expertise play out among all those nonelites who either converted of their own volition or were forcefully converted?

Elite identity, then, is perhaps not the same thing as nonelite identity. On the subject of identity more generally, I would have liked to see a greater analysis of its fluidity in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, especially since the term “Jewish identity” figures highly in the subtitle of the book. Here, and this is less a criticism of the book and perhaps more of a plea to those who work in medieval Jewish thought, it would be wonderful if a group of scholars with such excellent philological and hermeneutical skills would, just occasionally, look to the vast and important theoretical work that examines identity.

Regardless, Kozodoy has gifted us with an exemplary intellectual portrait of a fascinating and complex late medieval thinker.

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Hartley Lachter. *Kabbalistic Revolution: Reimagining Judaism in Medieval Spain*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014. 260 pp.
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Hartley Lachter’s study of Kabbalah in late thirteenth-century Spain has two parts, which accomplish different tasks. The first part places Kabbalah into the historical context of thirteenth-century Spanish Christian religion, culture, and politics. The second part responds to new scholarship concerning the dating and authorship of the Zohar. Lachter succeeds admirably in moving scholarship forward in both directions.

Lachter situates the flowering of Kabbalah in thirteenth-century Spain in the context of the so-called Alfonsine Renaissance, sponsored by King Alfonso the Wise, that is, Alfonso X of Castile (1221–84). Lachter shows that secret knowledge of many kinds was highly esteemed in the Alfonsine court, and that Jewish secrets were not excluded. He quotes a nephew of Alfonso, a certain Don Juan Manuel: “[King Alfonso] had the whole of theology, logic and the seven liberal arts ... translated into Castilian ...[and] also the entire law of the Jews, as well as their Talmud, and another doctrine of theirs, which they keep safely hidden and call *cabbala*” (17).

Royal attention can be a powerful motivation. At the same time, it was also a powerful threat. Juan Manuel was hardly Madonna; he wrote that his uncle’s purpose in bringing the Kabbalah to light was to expose Jewish errors. Kabbalah, like other secret doctrines, enjoyed cultural prestige, but it was also a part of the new polemical debates between Judaism and Christianity.

It need hardly be said that the study of Kabbalah, both within the academy and outside it, has too often been pursued with scant concern for historical context, except in the narrowest sense of the relation of one kabbalistic text to another. Yitzhak Baer’s chapter on Kabbalah in his famous *History of the Jews in Christian Spain* inspired relatively few successors; Scholem’s chapter in *Major Trends in*