

Venice Center for International Jewish
Studies

**Venice, the Jews,
& Italian Culture**

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I. Venice Surprises



San Marco



Rialto Bridge



The Grand Canal



Map of Venice



Warning for New Christians

This is issued by His most serene Prince and by the Executors Against Blasphemy: (Let it be known) That it is rigorously forbidden for any Jewish man or Jewish woman, after they have become Christians/ to enter into or frequent the ghettos of this city (*nei ghetti di questa citta*)/ (or) to enter into the private houses of any Jews (men) or a Jewish woman under any pretext whatsoever. In the event of transgression,/the legal penalty is ropes, prison, galleys, whip, stocks and other punishments/ to be decided by their Excellencies after having considered the nature of the offense and of the transgressor./

To facilitate information about the transgressors, trials will be initiated by the Inquisition/. Secret denunciations will be received in the usual box (*nella solita cassella*) and, once the truth is verified, the transgressors will be rigorously punished with the above mentioned punishments. The accusers will get an award/bounty of 100 ducats of 6.4 (lire) per ducat to be exacted (taken) from the goods of the offender. The present proclamation is being published and carved in stone in the most frequented spot in the ghettos (*nel luogo piu frequentato dei ghetti*) so that it is clearly understood that every individual, without exception, must scrupulously follow it. Given by the above magistracy, 26 September 1704

Transcribed and translated by Jacqueline Gutwirth, with help from Katherine Jason

IL SERENISSIMO
E S A P E R E, E T E P E R
WILLM ET ECC: SIGNORI ESSECVTORI CONTPO LA BESTEMIA.
PRENCIPE
DELIBERATIONE DECU
CHE SIA RIGOROSAMENTE PROIBITO A QVALVQVE EBREO OD EBREA DOPPO FATTI CHRISTIANI
IL CAPITARE, E PRATICARE SOTTO QVALSIVOGLIA PRETESTO NEI GHETTI DI QVESTA CITTA
DI INTRODVRSI NELLE CASE PARTICOLARI D'ALCUNO, DELLI EBREI O D'EBREE SOTTO PENA IN CASO
DI TRASGRESSIONE DI CODA PRIGIONE, GALERA FRVSTA, BERLINA ET ALTRE MAGGIORI AD
ARBITRIO DI LORO ECCELLENZE, HAVVTO RIGVARDO ALLA QUALITA DEL DELITTO E DEL DELINQVENTE
PER FACILITARE LA NOTITIA DE TRASGRESSORI SI FORMERANNO PROCESSI PER VIA D INQUISITIONE
SI RICEVERANNO DENONCIE SEGRETE NELLA SOLITA CASSELLA, E LIQVIDATA LA VERITA
SIRANNO CON LE PENNE SVDETTE RIGOROSAMENTE PVNITI
CONSECVIRANNO LI ACCVSATORI LA TAGLIA DI DVGATI CENTO DA 7 6: 4 PER DVGATO,
DA ESSERLI DATA DELLI BENI DEL REO.
IL PRESENTE PROCLAMA SIA PVBLICATO E SCOLPITO IN PIETRA NEL LVOCO PIV FREQVENTATO
DEI GHETTI A CHIARA INTELLIGENZA D OGN VNO PER LA SVA PONTVALE ET INVIOVABILE
ESSECVTIONE ESSENDO COSTANTE E RASSOLVTA VOLONTA DI LORO ECCELLENZE, CHE
HABBA AD ESSERE DA CHI SI SIA IN OGNI SVA PARTE VBBIDITO COME SOPRA.

DATA DAL MAG: SVD: LI 20 SETT: 1704

VICENZO DA MVLA ESSEC.
ALVISE PISANI PROC: ESSEC.
LEONARDO DONA PROC: ESSEC.
PIETRO CARZONI ESSEC.

ANTONIO CANAL NODARO
AD 20 SETTEMBRE 1704 PVBLCATO PER DOMENICO GANVCI COMANDE

A Child of the Ghetto

by Israel Zangwill

There were two things in the Ghetto that had a strange attraction for the child: one was a large marble slab on the wall near his house, which he gradually made out to be a decree that Jews converted to Christianity should never return to the Ghetto nor consort with its inhabitants, under penalty of the cord, the gallows, the prison, the scourge, or the pillory; the other was a marble figure of a beautiful girl with falling draperies on the extreme wall of the Ghetto, surveying it with serene eyes.

Relic and emblem of an earlier era, she cooperated with the slab to remind the child of the strange vague world outside, where people of forbidden faith carved forbidden images. But he never went outside; at least never more than a few streets, for what should he do in Venice?

Israel Zangwill, Dreamers of the Ghetto, pp. 12

2. The Ghetto

Invented in Venice
March 1516

THE MUSEO ITALOAMERICANO PRESENTS

Il Ghetto

FORGING ITALIAN
JEWISH IDENTITIES
1516 - 1870

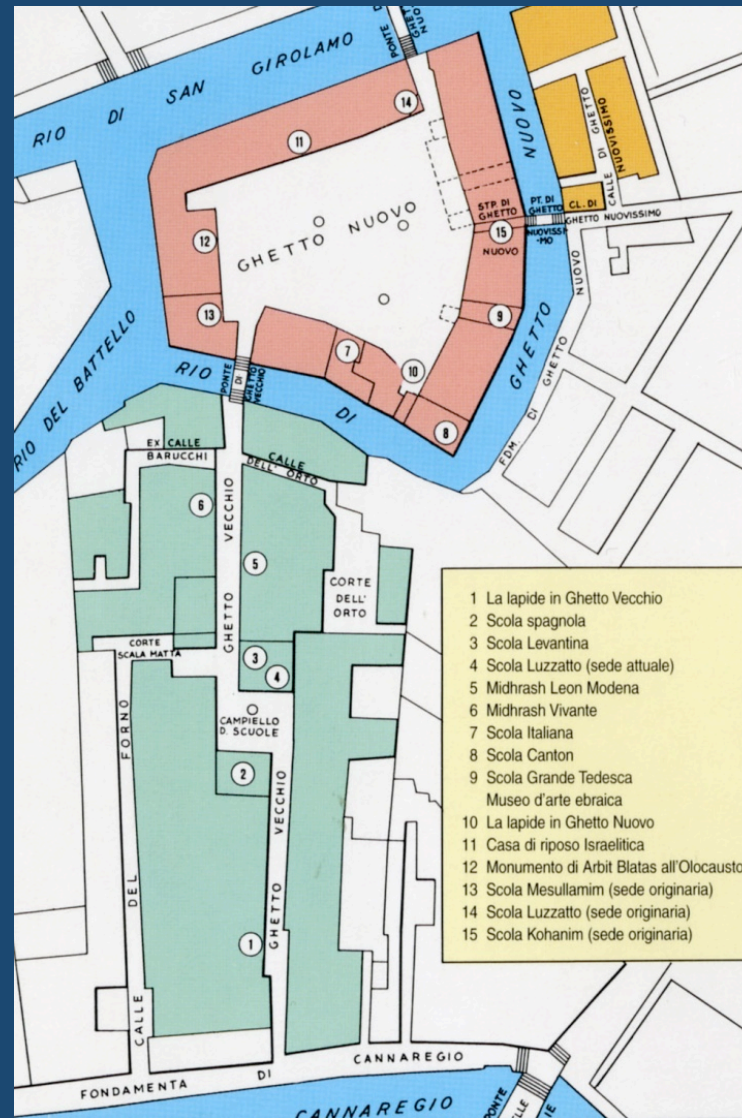


Photo by Alberto Jona Falco, Milan, Italy, Italian Judaica Image Archive

“Italian Jews! Two great names, two enviable glories, two splendid crowns are joined together in you... Who among you, in human and devine glories does not reverently bow before the prodigious names of Moses and Dante?

— Rabbi Elia Benamozegh, 1847

The Ghetto



Entering the Ghetto



Entering the Ghetto



Ghetto Campo



Banco Rosso



Holocaust Memorial



Scuola Canton



Schola Grande Tedesca



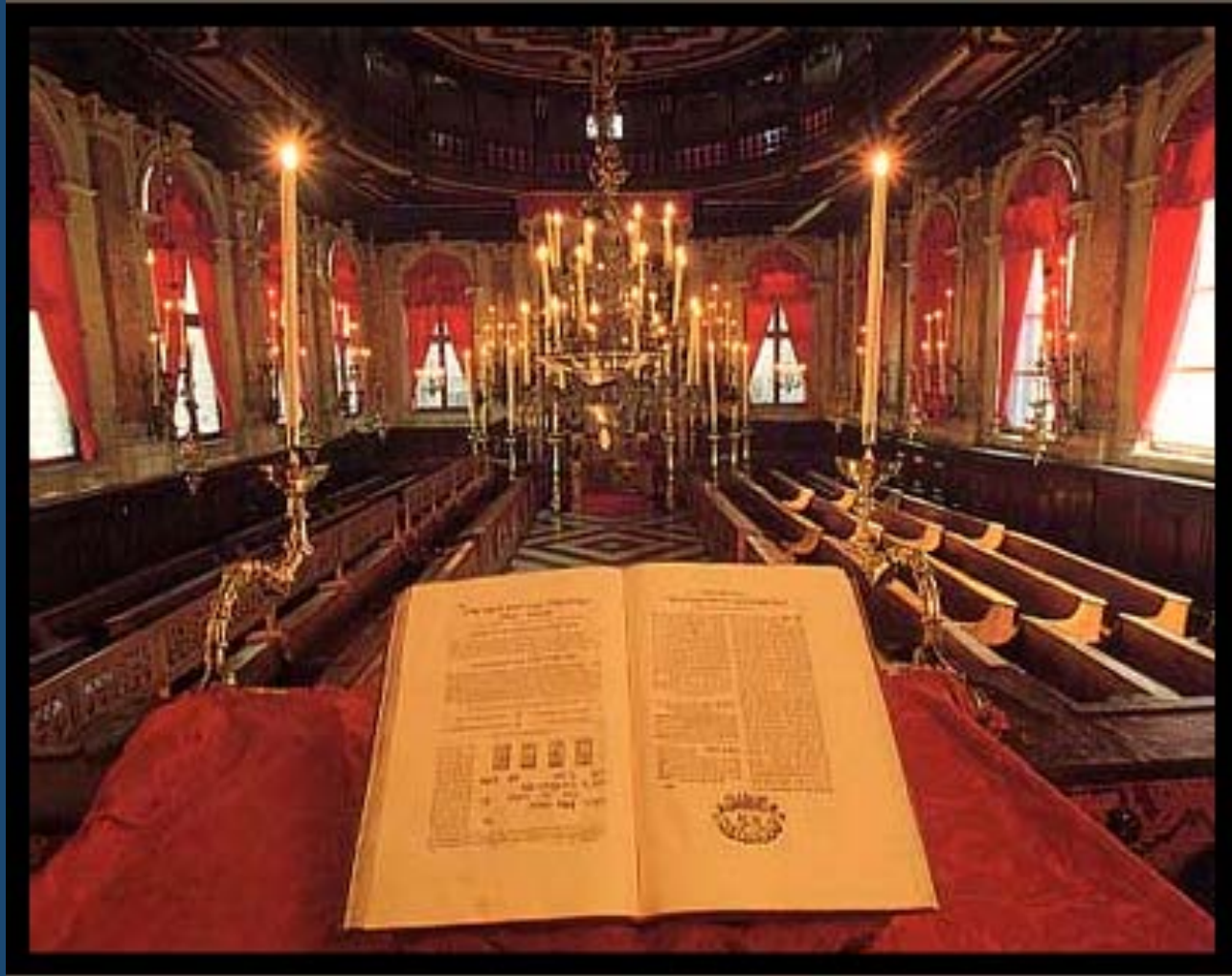
Scuola Italiana



Scuola Levantina



Scuola Spagnola



III. Outsiders as Insiders

Daniel Rodriga 1579 ?



Levantine Jew 1541



Leone Modena



- Leon Modena (1571-1648)-a major Italian Jewish intellectual, rabbi, writer, preacher, musician, poet, teacher, and lecturer, who wrote a description of Jewish practices for King James I of England, *Historia de' Riti Ebraici* (*History of Jewish Customs*, published only in 1637), and an autobiography, *Hayyei Yehuda* (*The Life of Judah*).

Hayyei Yehuda

חיי יהודה

אלה תולדות יהודה אריה בן השוע איש אמונים כמה
יצחק ז"ל בן הנאון הרופא כמהר"ר מרדכי ז"ל בן היתוק
כמי יצחק ז"ל בן הקצין כמה' משה ז"ל ממודינא

מעט ורעים היו ימי שני חיי בעה"ז 1.

באשר דבר מלך שלמון להוציא אנשי מן הארץ כיום המות
ובימים הבאים הכל נשכח, זה לי יותר מעשרים וארבע שנה ברוחי
בקרבי הפצתי להעלות בכתב כל מקרי הזמן אשר עברו עלי מעודי
עד אחרית הימים אשר לא אמות כי אחיה, כי חשבתי יהיה יקר בעיני
בני יוצאי ירכי ורעם אחריהם ולתלמודי הקרויין בני, כאשר הוא לי
עונג נמרץ כאשר איכל לדעת חיי אבותי וקדמוני ורבותי וכל איש רשום
ואהוב, ובפרט חשקתי בזה להניחו ברכה אל בני בכורי מחסר עיני
שורש לבי אשר היה זוי איקונין מדותיו דומה לי בר הכיס ר' מרדכי ז"ל
המכונה אניילו (Angelo) 2 יכל מחשבותי היו עליו, בו הייתי מתפאר ובו
כל שמחת נילי, ולא אסתיעא מלהא מאו כ"ד שנה עד היום לכתוב זאת
זכרון בספר, עתה כי אסף אלקים את שמחתי וזה שני חדשים לקחי
אלקים נתנני שומם כל היום דוח, מאנה הנחם נפשי כי ארד אל בני
אבל שאולה מחכה למות כיום מועד, ואני בן ארבעים ושבע שנים זקן
ישבע רוגז חדש טבת השע"ח הסכמתי להחל ולהשלים א"ח אספר
כל עצמותי ומקרי, או זרעי או זרע זרעי או תלמודי או יודעי שמי
המה ויבטו יראו אוי מה היה לי מאו יצאתי לאויר העולם לא שלותי
ולא שקטתי ולא נחתי ויבא רוגז, רגזו של מרדכי בני ז"ל, טחכה למות
ואינני אח"כ משנהל'שנה בסוף כל ששה חדשים אוסף עליו אשר יתחדש

1 בנראה נקד רואים על הדברים האלה בלי שום כוונה פרטית, אלא ספני
שהסתמש כלשון הכתוב (בראשית ט"ז ט).

2 ע' אורות חיי כס' כתבי הרב יהודה אייה ממודינא חלק עקרו (מוכא
כהצויה בקצור כס', כתבוס') עד 16 הערה 1, 82 סימן פ"ד, 113 ס' קט"ו, 114
ס' ק"ח, וחלק אשכנזי עד 61-62 ושיר מסגנו שם 84 (ב).

Hayyei Yehuda

— 10 —

על, ואחרי זה יבא דבר ציואתי על המתיחס לגופי ונשמתי ועובון מכתבי וחבורי וה' הטוב בעיניו יעשה.

בך מקובלני מאבא מרי ז"ל שקדמונינו מצרפת יצאו, ובכתיי היה אילן מוצא תולדת משפחתנו יותר מת"ק שנים עברו³ נמצא במכתבי הנאון זקני ז"ל, ומיד דודי מהר"ר שלמה ז"ל ממודינא הגיע ליד בן בתו קרובי מהר"ר אהרן, בעל מעבר יבק ומעירי השחר⁴. בכ"ר משה ממודינא (Modena), יצ"ו דר להווה במודינא, ואמר לי שיוצא מידו וחקרתיו מאד ולא וכלתי להביאו לידי עד הנח, אמנם ידעתי כי כן מקבלת זקנים כי תמיד היתה במשפחה זו תורה וגדולה במקום אחר עושר וכבוד הון עתק ועדקה, ואמר לי כי מאז צאת קדמונינו מצרפת שכנו ימים רבים בויתרבו (Viterbo) ואח"כ באו למודינא ויאהזו בה ויפרו וירבו ומהיותם ראשונים בחוקת חנות ההלואה⁵ ובעושר לקחו כינויים מהעיר ההיא, ועד היום ממשלת הבתי חיים משם היא ביד כ"ר משה קרובי הנזכר כי קנו אותו משלהם קדמוניו הראשונים בעיר, והבית הראשון אשר היה להם אחוזה במודינא עורגו ביד כ"ר משה הנ"ל, ואני ראיתי ובמקומות ממנו החותם שלנו אבן שיש והוא צורת נמר⁶ עומד על שתי רגליו ולולב בידו, ואמר לי כמי משה הנ"ל שהוא יותר מת"ק שנה שהוא מבני משפחתנו ויש בידו בכתב רשויות כל אשר מלכו במודינא אפיפוד וקוסר ודוכסים וזולתם שקיימיהו בידם, וכמדומה שבימי כה"ר יצחק זקנו של

³ ע"י 58 הערה פ (ב).
Zunz, Nachtrag zur Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie 36 וכתבים ה"ש

⁴ מעבר יבק נדפס במסופה שע"ו (איצר הספרים אות ס' 1660) ומעירי השחר שם שפ"ב ויש 1730 וזאת א' (1050), וכאן מזכיר ריא"ם גם את הספר השני בשנת שע"ח שהוא עוסק בה? ואולי הוסיף את הרבי הזה בזמן מאוחר או שראה הספר בכתב יד (או אפשר שנאברה הוצגה הראשונה מכל וכל?) (ב).
⁵ ע"ד התעסקות היתורים באיטליא כדורות הבינים בענף ההלואה במשנתאא בבתי הלואה מאושרים לכך מאת שלמונת הערים, קודם שנפתחו במקומות ההם בהשתרלות הכספים מסודות העדקה הנקראים Monte di pietà וגם אח"כ, ועל ערכן התבררתי החשוב, של הנויות ההלואה, שהיו האיטלקים נוקטים להן הריבה, ע' A. Ciscato, Gli ebrei in Padova, Padova 1901, pp. 30-71.
חנות ההלואה במודינא, כל"ו שהם היו בעלי הפריבילגיון שניתן להן מאת השלטון העירוני, שחיה נותן סניף הכנסתו זה בחמורה.
⁶ כפי של ריא"ם היה כתוב מעיקרא, איה"ו ומסעל לתיבה זו נתקן, נכר (מקצועו של ר"ב מאב"י).

Sara Copio Sullam

Sara Copio Sullam (1592-1641)-poet who hosted a literary salon that included both Jews and non-Jews, men and women. In 1621 she wrote a defense against charges in print brought by Baldassare Bonifaccio, who had attended her salon, that she did not believe in the immortality of the soul: *Manifesto di Sara Copio Sulam Hebraea nel quale è de lei riprovata e detestata l'opinione negante l'immortalità dell'anima, falsamente attribuitale dal Signor Baldassare Bonifaccio, de lei dedicato all memoria di Simon Copio suo diletissimo genitore* (Manifesto by Sara Copio Sullam, Jewess, in which she condemns and deprecates the opinion denying the immortality of the soul, falsely attributed to her by Signor Baldassare Bonifaccio, dedicated to the Memory of Simon Coppio, her beloved father).



IV. La Città degli Ebrei

The City of the Jews

Bakers and Jews in Venice

Had I, Marino Sanuto, been a member of the Senate as I was last year, I would have spoken, though not to speak for the Jews, because I could describe many sharp practices of theirs in connexion with their loans.

I would have spoken on the *capitoli* and had them amended, proving that Jews are even more necessary to a city than bakers are (*dimostrando è necessarii più hebrei e pistori in una terra*), and especially to this one, for the sake of the general welfare.

Marino Sanuto

(May 22, 1466 – 1536)



I would have referred to the laws, and to what our ancestors have always done, and to the opinion of the Doctors of Alessandro of Imola, Pietro of Ancarano, Baldus and others, who advise us that Jews be kept to lend upon interest. And thus I would have spoken on the question at issue. It is true that I would not have wished them to keep shops dealing in second-hand goods, so as not to deprive Christians of a living, even though if they kept them goods could be sold very profitably (*ancora che a tenirli sia gran beneficio di le robe si vol vender*). Our countrymen have never wanted Jews to keep shops to trade in this city, but to buy and sell and go away again. But there should be none of this humbug in our State about expelling the Jews when there is no Monte di Pietà.

The Guild of Bakers

Monument on Sottoportego Fallier (near the Strada Nuova)

His most serene Prince

Makes it known

And by Orders of the Illustrious and Excellent Inquisitor Over Customs

That nobody, whether man or woman, dare make or commission to make, sell or commission to sell, bread made of wheat flour, whether foreign or home-made (casalino) in any place in the city, nor may they (sell) it from barges nor in the streets of the gate of the ghetto, (per le strade alla porta di Ghetto) or Riva dell'Olio, Santi Apostoli or in other places in the city, under pain of being whipped (corda), prison, galleys and of 25 ducats for each occurrence of those who disobey, the money to be divided so that $\frac{1}{2}$ goes to the ministers who will arrest the culprit and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the bread and 5 ducats to the guild of Bakers.

(The decree goes on in long detail to describe other offenders and their punishments: even minor children, if caught selling, can be put out on public boats (s'intendano in corsi) and those who sent them to sell bread punished as above.



IL SERENISSIMO PRINCIPALE
 RA SPER
 D'ORDINE DELL'ILLUSTRISSIMO ET ECCELLENTISSIMO
 INQUISITOR SOPRA D'ATTE
 CHE ALCUNO COSÌ HVOMO COME D'ALCUNO NON ARDISCA DI ENTRO
 O PAR FABRICAR VENDER O FAR VENDER PANE DI PAINATI FORME
 OVALI SI SIA IVOGO DELLA CITTEVECI POSSIETE COME CANTON
 NELLE CASE NE IN BARCHE NE PER LE STRADE ALLA PORTA DI GLETT
 NAVA DELL'OGGIO SANTI APOSTOLINI NEI CALI SI DVICHI DELLA CITTE
 IN PENA DI CORDA PREGGION G. LEE. E DE DVICATI VINTICINQUE
 PER CADAVNO OGNI VOLTA CHE SCITTA FACCESSERO LA METTA DI
 VENTI SU DEI MINISTRI CHE FACCESSERO LE RETENZIONI DELI REI QUITE
 VANTA DEL PANE E DVICATI CIVETE DALL ARTE DE PISTORI
 POSSINO SVIR DI PREGGIONE LI RETENTI SE NON HAVERANNO VINTI
 DAL GASTALDO SVETI 1770 CHE SO STATA REINTEGRATA
 E DELI DVICATI CINQUE SBORSATE SE SI ROMASERO TRANCO
 LI FORME CA D'NO IN PENA DVPLICATA CIA DECRETATA
 E TUTTI LA ETA NON OTTIMA POSSINO ESSER RETENTI E POSTI
 VIZZI SOPRA LE PVBLICHE NAVI E SINTENDANO INCORSI E SO
 QUANTO VITTE LE PENE SOPRADETTI VIBILI CHE LI HAVESSERO
 VITTI A VENDER DETTO PANE
 CHE OVNO ARDISCE DI TEMERARIAMENTE OSTARE ALI RETENT
 NE O ALL ASPORTO DEL PANE S INTENDI CAPITO E SOCCOMBENTE
 ALLE PENE MEDESIME DE DELINVENTI TOSINO TANTO GL VNI
 TANTO OGNI ALTRO ESSER RETENTI DA OGNI CAPITANIO
 CON LI PREMII SOPRADETTI
 POSSINO PVRE ESSER RETENTI LI MAGAZENIERI OSTI OVVI DELL
 CAMERE LOCANDE CHE TENESSERO PAN FORESTIER O D OGNI ALTRO
 IVOGO FVORI DA VIVI PISTORI CHE SVSSERO OBLIGATI A RICEVERLI
 SEMPRE SEGNA TO E MARGATO CIVITO ALL OBLIGO DELI TESSI
 E NON ESSENDO CON TALI ROVESITI S INTENDI SEMPRE PER CONTR
 BANDO E LI MEDESIMI SOGGETTI ALLE SOPRADETTI PENE
 LI BARCAOLI CHE CONDUCASSERO PANE IN OVESTA CITTA E LI
 PASSERO PERSONE PER NE PARTASSERO CAHIT NELLA PENA DI
 DVICATI VINTICINQUE E D ESSEPI ABBRVIATA LA BARCA E
 INTENDINO BANDITI PER ANNI DVE DA OGNI TRAGHETTO
 OVVI ESERCITASSERO LA LIBERTA
 SIA IL PRESENTE PROCLAMA STAMBATO PUBLICATO E
 MARMO ALLA PORTA DEL GRETO RIVA DELL'OGGIO
 POSTILI SAN MARTIN ET ALTRI IVOGHI IN PREVEN
 CONTRAFABERLI NEI DVICATI PRESENTA LINIERA ORBETI
 LO STESSO PANE NON ESSER ADOTTO PRETESTO DI CA
 PER VENTIEIN DOME DE REL SI ACCET TARANNO DEGETE E
 RIFORMER A PROCCSSO PER VIA D NOVITIONE CONTO VNI
 IVIA D OTTORONDE SI ESTIRE VV DISORDINE SI FERNITIOSE E
 INTERESSE DEL PVBLICO CHE A VVELO DELL ARTE DE PIS
 DAVIAT 17 OT TORRE 1777
 GIO. BATTISTA LIPPOMANO INQUISITOR SOPRA
 CANDIDO QUERINI NOD DELL'INCO
 DI OT TORRE 1777 PUBLICATO SOPRA LE SC
 DI SAN MARCO E DI RI ALTO ET ALTRI LOCHI

Il Serenissimo Principe Ra Sper

Guild of Bakers

Innkeepers, hotel keepers are likewise cited. They may only sell bread stamped and marked by the guild of bakers; any other bread is contraband. Barcaroli – those who sell from boats will pay a fine and have their boats burned).

And again to the words of the decree:

The present proclamation being publicly printed and engraved in marble at the gate of the ghetto (alla porta del ghetto), riva del oglio, santi apoltoli, san Martin and other of the places most frequented by counterfeiters so that they can't have any pretext of ignorance (of the law).

Secret denunciations will be accepted and a trial by Inquisition will be held in order “to eradicate this (disordine) chaos so pernicious both of the public interest as well as to the guild of the bakers.”

Dated, 27 October 1727

Gio Battista Lippoman, Inquisitor of Customs

PUBLISHED on the steps of San Marco and of the Rialto and other places on the 31 October 1727.

Transcribed and translated by Jacqueline Gutwirth, with help from Benjamin Ravid

What Coryat Observed

For travelers like Thomas Coryat, perhaps the most important of these early-modern visitors to Venice, and a contemporary of Shakespeare's, the Jews were not people but (almost) extra-terrestrial aliens, even of the human species.

The accounts of these travelers echo the pre-modern visual representations of Jews, including the horned Moses of Renaissance sculpture and painting. For these observers, the Jews looked almost human and yet, not being Christians, could not be members of their community or even of the human species. In Venetian administrative documents when Jews are referred to, the theological term “accursed” that brands them as refusers of Christianity’s mission is invariably included as a matter of course.

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Let the 1611 account of Thomas Coryat speak for those who follow in his foot-steps. “I was at a place where the whole fraternity of the Jews dwelleth together, which is called the Ghetto, being an Island,” he notes, “for it is inclosed round about with water.” He then goes on to record the visual identifying marks which Venetian Jews are required to wear, especially when venturing outside the Ghetto.

He does not mention that the same markings were required of Jews and prostitutes.

Even as he responds to its complexity, Coryat engages the central Jewish stereotypes promulgated by the politics of isolation that generated the Ghetto. He focuses on the beauty of the Jewish women he sees in the synagogue.

“In the roome wherein they celebrate their divine service, no women sit, but have a loft or gallery proper to themselves only, where I saw many Jewish women, whereof some were as beautiful as ever I saw, and so gorgeous in their apparel, jewels, chaines of gold, and rings adorned with precious stones, that some of our English Countesses do scarce exceede them. “

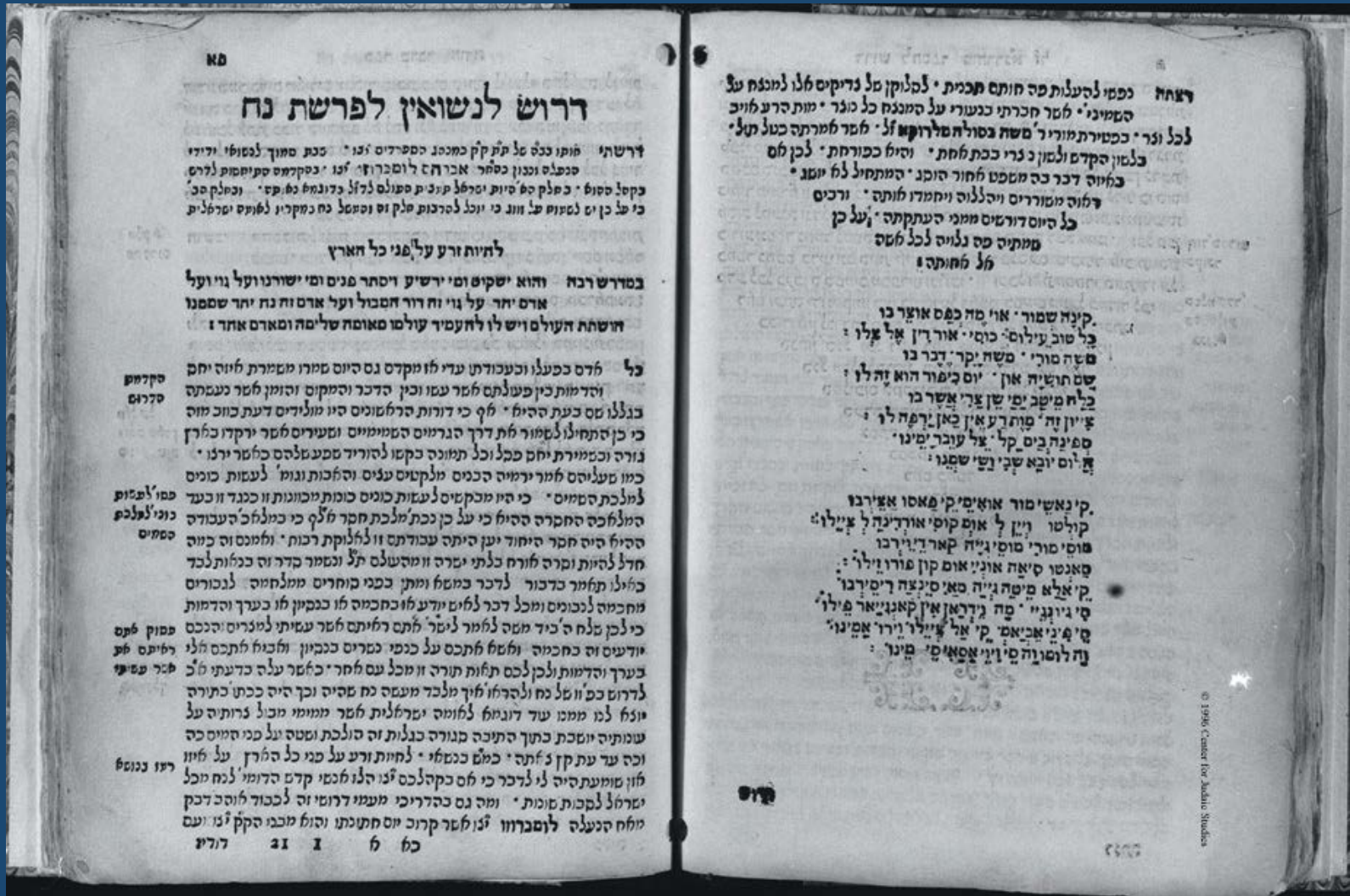
V. Citizens and Virtuosos

ונציאה עיר של חכמים וסופרים

Responsa of Binyamin Zeev, Venice, 1539. Published by Daniel Bomberg
Quoted by Paul Hamburg, "*The Biblia Rabbinica: Printing Hebrew Books in the Venice Ghetto*,"

Italian Jewish Culture in the Age of the Ghetto
Sunday, Jan. 25th, at the Museo ItaloAmericano

Modena Sermon



Sara Copio Sonnet #1

The lovely Jew whose devout dialect
Evoked grace from the most sublime hearts
Now in the holy fires of heaven's firmament
Sweetly delights the greatest intellects

With strains that grant souls release from great
torments,
Ansaldo, and by which you gain the same respect,
Expressing her most chaste love in your account
That holds the worlds, upon your rhymes, intent.

Thus, the immortal God born on Delos
Lends to your glory his glory's content
That can be quenched by neither fire nor ice.

She again who has already made you poet,
Ruling that craft from the Heavenly skies,
Will always give purpose to the poems you write.

Sara Copio Sullam
Translated by Will Wells

Sara Copio Sonnet #1

La bella Ebreia che con devoti accenti
Grazia impetrò da più sublimi cori,
Si che fra stelle in ciel ne i sacri ardori
Felice gode le superne menti, 4

Al suon che l'alme da i maggior tormenti
Sottragge, Ansaldo, onde te stesso onori,
Spiegar sentendo i suoi più casti amori
I mondi tiene alle tue rime intenti. 8

Quindi l'immortal Dio, che nacque in Delo,
A la tua gloria la sua gloria acqueta,
Né la consumerà caldo né gelo. 11

Colei ancor, che già ti fe' Poeta,
Reggendo questa, da l'empireo Cielo
Darà per sempre a i carmi tuoi la mèta. 14

VI. Modern Visitors

Joseph Brodsky

“When at the age of thirty-two I all of a sudden found myself in the bowels of a different continent, in the middle of America, I used my first university salary to enact the better part of that dream and bought a round-trip ticket, Detroit-Milano-Detroit. The plane was jammed with Italians employed by Ford and Chrysler and going home for Christmas. When the duty-free opened midflight, all of them rushed to the plane’s rear, and for a moment I had a vision of a good old 707 flying over the Atlantic crucifix-like: wings outstretched, tail down. Then there was the train-ride with the only person I knew in the city at its end. The end was cold, damp, black-and-white. The city came into focus. “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” to quote an author who visited here before. Then there was that next morning. It was Sunday, and all the bells were chiming.” Watermark, pp.41 – 44.

For Brodsky, the visit to Venice was a homecoming. He chose to be buried in Venice.

“I always adhered to the idea that God is time, or at least that his spirit is. Perhaps this idea was even of my own manufacture, but now I don’t remember. In any case, I always thought that if the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water, the water was bound to reflect it. Hence my sentiment for water, for its folds, wrinkles, and ripples, and — as I am a Northerner — for its grayness. I simply think that water is the image of time, and every New Year’s Eve, in somewhat pagan fashion, I try to find myself near water, preferably near a sea or an ocean, to watch the emergence of a new helping, a new cupful of time from it. I am not looking for a naked maiden riding on a shell; I am looking for either a cloud or the crest of a wave hitting the shore at midnight. That, to me, is time coming out of water, and I stare at the lace-like pattern it puts on the shore, not with a gypsy-like knowing, but with tenderness and with gratitude.” Joseph Brodsky, Watermark, pp.41 – 44.

“This is the way, and in my case the why, I set my eyes on this city. There is nothing Freudian in this fantasy, or specifically chordate, although some evolutionary — if not plainly atavistic — or autobiographical connection could no doubt be established between the pattern a wave leaves upon the sand and its scrutiny by a descendant of the ichthyosaur, and a monster himself. The upright lace of Venetian facades is the best line time-alias-water has left on terra firma anywhere. Plus, there is no doubt a correspondence between — if not an outright dependence on — the rectangular nature of that lace’s displays — i.e. local buildings — and the anarchy of water that spurns the notion of shape. It is as though space, cognizant here more than anyplace else of its inferiority to time, answers it with the only property time doesn’t possess: with beauty. And that’s why water takes this answer, twists it, wallops and shreds it, but ultimately carries it by and large intact off into the Adriatic.” Joseph Brodsky, Watermark, pp.41 – 44.

Venice by Dan Pagis

As the stage sets on an olden play
The palaces will slowly sway
-pale greens, blues and scarlet –
In the black waters, and bowing
To their own bubbles
Wispy boats and chiseled bows,
The necks of birds. At the top of
A pillar a golden lion will doze, he is The axis around whom, with
many props Like a stage the entire city moves With paper masks. And
the foreign audience, In the thrall of the scene Of a magnificent
city glowing once again, Hurrahs!
And from all the balconies
The actors will acknowledge, with hands on heart,
And with graceful bow, flourish their caps.
But with the silent closing of the evening
On the face of all these,
suddenly the city rises
Toward the skies, flowering for a third time
In onyx and marble clouds.

translated by Paul Hamburg

Yehuda Amichai from Jerusalem 1967

כא

ירושלים עיר נמל על שפת הנצח.
הר־הבית אַנְיָה גדולה, ספינת שעשועים
מפארת. מאֲשַׁנְבֵי כְתֻלָה המַעֲרָבִי מסתַּכְלִים קדושים
על־יזים, נוסעים. חֲסִידִים בְּרָצִיף מְנַפְנְפִים
לשֵׁלום, צוֹעֲקִים הַיָּד לְהַתְרָאוֹת. היא
תמיד מגיעה, תמיד מפליגה. והגדרות והרציפים
והשוטרים והדגלים והתננים הגבהים של כְּנִסְיוֹת
ומסגדים והארבות של בתי הכנסת והסירות
של הלל וגלי הרים. קול שופר נשמע: עוד
אחת הפליגה. מלחי יום-כפור במדים לבנים
מטפסים בין סלמות וחבלים של תפלות בדוקות.

והמשא ומתן והשערים וכפות הזֶהָב:
ירושלים היא ונציה של אלהים.

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Jerusalem is a port city on the shore of eternity.
The Temple Mount is a huge ship, a magnificent
luxury liner. From the portholes of her Western Wall
cheerful saints look out, travelers. Hasidim on the pier
wave goodbye, shout hooray, hooray, bon voyage! She is
always arriving, always sailing away. And the fences and the
piers
and the policemen and the flags and the high masts of churches
and mosques and the smokestacks of synagogues and the boats
of psalms of praise and the mountain-waves. The shofar
blows: another one
has just left. Yom Kippur sailors in white uniforms
climb among ladders and ropes of well-tested prayers.

And the commerce and the gates and the golden domes:
Jerusalem is the Venice of God.

<http://jewishstudies.ucsc.edu/Venetian> Jewish Anthology

The Venetian Jewish Anthology

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Welcome!

The Venetian Jewish Anthology is a scholarly resource for teaching and research that explores the cultural, intellectual, and historic experience of Venetian Jewry. The Anthology carries forward the work of an institute on "Venice, the Jews, and Italian Culture: Historical Eras and Cultural Representations" that took place June 19-July 21, 2006. This five-week interdisciplinary institute was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and culminated in a three-day conference on "Venice, the Jews, and Italian Culture," sponsored by the Gladys Kriebler Delmas Foundation, and attended by twenty-eight scholars representing universities in the United States, Canada, and Italy.

Our primary focus in both the conference and the Institute was the Ghetto of Venice, which gave its name to all such subsequent ethnic enclosures. We explored the history of the Ghetto of Venice as built environment, cultural text, and symbolic site. Together we examined various artistic materials representing Italian and Venetian Jewish life, including literary, artistic, and dramatic works. That made it possible for us to reinhabit the Ghetto through the eras of its existence. The Institute began with the Renaissance, while emphasizing the modern experience of Venetian Jewry, a paradigmatic Italian Jewish community.

