

A Tale as Yet Untold: Salamone Rossi in Venice, 1622

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An attempt will be made to reconstruct Salamone Rossi's Venetian sojourn as it relates, first, to his presumed meetings with two leading Venetian Jews—the rabbi Leon Modena and the poetess Sarra Copia Sulam—and, second, to their influence in shaping his singular collection of Hebrew works, the “Songs of Solomon,” which, ever since their publication in mid-1623, have become the cornerstone of Hebrew art music for the synagogue. By drawing on writings by or about Rossi, Modena, and Sulam, it is possible to sketch out a series of encounters that shed light not only on the composer's circle of acquaintances but also on the evolution of his “Songs.”

I, too, from the time I numbered among his friends, entreated him earnestly and pleaded with him until the enterprise succeeded, thanks to the Creator of all, and he reached that crucial stage I had hoped he would with us here: he came and consented to discharge his vow to print as he had pledged.

—Leon Modena¹

THE PRESENT ESSAY will be concerned with filling one of the major gaps in Salamone Rossi's biography: the immediate circumstances surrounding the publication of his only collection of Hebrew musical works. It will situate Rossi in Venice in 1622, a year that marked the turning point in the ontogeny of the collection. The tale to be told is a historical reconstruction and, as such, has its share of uncertainties.

The major protagonists are three: the Mantuan composer Rossi and, resident in Venice, the poet Sarra Copia Sulam² and the rabbi Leon Modena. All of them were *ebrei* who, beyond achieving renown among their contemporaries, continue to glorify Italian Jewry to this day—witness their current bibliographical efflorescence. They will be treated individually as they appear to have been around 1622 and as they relate to the emergence of Rossi's Hebrew collection, then brought together in various summary comments on the collection as projected in a new light.

¹From Modena's foreword to Salamone Rossi's “Songs of Solomon” [Hashirim asher lishlomo] (Venice: Pietro and Lorenzo Bragadini, 1623), fol. 3r, sentence 22. (The numeration for sentences is editorial; in the continuation all sentences will be signed with §, thus, in the present case, §22.) See the composer's *Complete Works*, 13 vols., ed. Don Harrán (Middleton, WI: American Institute of Musicology, 1995–2003), 13a:175–86, at 180–81 (hereafter CW), for an annotated reading of the Hebrew and its English translation. As here, so below all translations are this writer's.

²Of the variant spellings (Sara/Sarra, Copio/Copia, Sullam/Sulam), Sarra Copia Sulam was her preference (as is clear from her two surviving letters and the sources at large).

SALAMONE ROSSI

Born in or around 1570, Rossi appears to have served the Mantuan court, as instrumentalist and composer, from 1589 until his death around 1628 (there are no firm dates or places for his birth or death, nor are the court records complete).³ He made his way to Venice on at least three occasions, as is clear from the signatures to the dedications of three publications: the first book of his five-voice madrigals, from 1600; a collection of *Madrigaletti*, his last opus, from 1628; and between them, the fourth book of his instrumental works, from 1622.

Rossi dedicated the last of the three to Vincenzo Gonzaga (who became Duke Vincenzo II of Mantua in 1626), signing it “from Venice, 10 September 1622, Your Excellency’s most humble and devoted servant, Salomon Rossi.”⁴ He was there sometime between August and October not only to see the instrumental works through their printing, but also, it will be argued, to set the groundwork for the publication, some eight months later, of his most ambitious and typographically complicated work, his Hebrew songs, the “Songs of Solomon” (*Hashirim asher lishlomo*), without precedent in the literature.⁵ After dillydallying on whether they should or should not be published, he “reached that crucial stage”—to refer to Modena’s words in the epigraph—of having to make a decision one way or another. Rossi was “here”—in Venice—“with us,” his friends: at their insistence perhaps, “he came” to hear them out, after which he “consented” to the publication, as he had earlier “pledged.” But “to discharge his vow” was not just making an affirmative decision, it was also settling the modalities of its implementation.

³For a *vita* within the outlines of his services for the ducal court, see Don Harrán, *Salamone Rossi, Jewish Musician in Late Renaissance Mantua* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 2003), 11–41; and from the perspective of the Jewish and Christian communities in which he moved, see idem, “As Framed, So Perceived: Salamone Rossi *ebreo*, Late Renaissance Musician,” in *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 178–215. For details of the court records, see Susan Parisi, “Musicians at the Court of Mantua during Monteverdi’s Time: Evidence from the Payrolls,” in *Musicologia humana: Studies in Honour of Warren and Ursula Kirkendale*, ed. Siegfried Gmeinwieser, David Hiley, and Jörg Riedlbauer (Florence: Olschki, 1994), 183–208.

⁴“Di Venetia li 10. di Settembre MDCXXII. / Di Vostra Eccell. / Humilissimo, et devotissimo servitore / Salomon Rossi” (the composer’s first name is spelled in all other collections as *Salamon* or *Salamone*); see *CW*, 12:xiv.

⁵The situation with Hebrew printing at large was quite different. Of the nearly four thousand Hebrew books known to have been printed in Europe until 1650, about a third came off the presses in Venice. See, for an overview, Joshua Bloch, “Venetian Printers of Hebrew Books,” *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 26 (1932): 71–92, reprinted in *Hebrew Printing and Bibliography*, ed. Charles Berlin (New York: New York Public Library, 1976), 63–88. On the special problems of their authorization, see Meir Benayahu, *Haskama urshut bidfusei venetsya: Hassefer ha’ivri me’et hava’ato lidfus ve’ad tseto la’or* [Approbation and approval in the Hebrew press in Venice: The Hebrew book from its delivery to the press until its publication] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1971); and on their censorship, Amnon Raz-Krakotskin, *Hatsenzor, ha’orekh vehatekst: Hatsenzura hakkatolit vehaddefus ha’ivri bammea hashesh-’esre* [The censor, the editor, and the text: Catholic censorship and the Hebrew book in the sixteenth century] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005); also Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, “Censura e controllo della stampa ebraica a Venezia nel Cinquecento,” in *Manoscritti, frammenti e libri ebraici nell’Italia dei secoli XV–XVI*, ed. Giuliano Tamani and Angelo Vivian (Rome: Carucci, 1991), 115–27.

The comment is, in its way, a second, albeit circumstantial piece of evidence for the composer's sojourn in Venice in 1622. It enlarges the framework to accommodate the Hebrew works, which, because of the technical difficulties in printing them (music reads in one direction, Hebrew in another), were probably the main reason why Rossi was there in the first place. That the visit coincided with the publication of his fourth book of instrumental works is likely, then, to have been more incidental than intentional.

Rossi produced a repertory of over three hundred compositions published and variously republished in thirteen different collections. Of the thirteen, the "Songs of Solomon" are unique in the annals of sacred music as the first and only printed collection of polyphonic settings of Hebrew texts before the mid-nineteenth century.⁶ In their content and extensive introductory apparatus they reveal that the composer was intent on restoring Hebrew song to the exalted rank it held in biblical times. He had an agenda, which, were it not for the encouragement of his friends, might never have been realized.

SARRA COPIA SULAM

Sarra Copia Sulam (ca. 1600–1641) reaped praises, in her time, for her person and talents.⁷ She was portrayed as beautiful, sensitive, charming, and inquisitive; as a proud and dedicated Jew; and as an intellectual, reading the philosophers, among them Aristotle, and indulging her passion for literature by writing and commissioning poetry. Copia established a salon in her home where writers and poets, both Jewish and Christian, gathered to read and discuss their compositions.

While in Venice, Rossi was probably Copia's guest, since her husband, Jacob, was the brother of Rossi's patron in Mantua, Moses Sulam. Rossi so admired Sulam, and was so indebted to him, that he eventually dedicated to him his collection of "Songs."⁸ Both brothers were "bankers," a euphemism for moneylenders, and financially comfortable.⁹ It would seem only natural for Rossi, whom Moses

⁶There is another early collection, though in manuscript: Cincinnati, Ohio, Hebrew Union College, MS Birnbaum 101, including Hebrew works for eight voices, of which only one is extant. It seems to have been prepared toward the end of the 1620s for use in Leon Modena's "music academy." Eric Werner originally signaled the manuscript in "The Eduard Birnbaum Collection of Jewish Music," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 18 (1943–44): 397–428, esp. 407–17.

⁷For recent literature on Copia, see Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, "Faith and Fame in the Life and Works of the Venetian Jewish Poet Sara Copio Sullam (1592?–1641)" (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 1999); Umberto Fortis, *La "bella ebrea" Sara Copio Sullam, poetessa nel ghetto di Venezia del '600* (Turin: Silvio Zamorini, 2003); and, in a broader context, Howard Adelman, "Jewish Women and Family Life, Inside and Outside the Ghetto," in *The Jews of Venice: A Unique Renaissance Community*, ed. Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 143–65, esp. 146–49. See also Don Harrán, *Sarra Copia Sulam, Jewish Poet and Intellectual in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁸He described Moses, in the dedication proper, as "[§1] a man of valor and great enterprise, combining wisdom (*tora*) and greatness; ... my exalted leader and ruler; ... highly successful and well known in Mantua; [§9] ... honored and important among Jews"; Rossi, "Songs," fol. 2r; CW 13a:163–69, esp. 163, 166.

⁹For a general survey, see Brian Pullan, "Jewish Moneylending in Venice: From Private Enterprise to Public Service," in *Gli ebrei a Venezia: Secoli XIV–XVIII*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milan: Comunità, 1987), 671–86.

Sulam and his parents took under their wing in Mantua,¹⁰ to stay in Venice at the residence of the brother.

Rossi would have found Copia congenial from the first, because of her being versed in music.¹¹ Her abilities included singing and playing and, to some extent, even composition. It was said of her that “beyond composing songs with every exquisite excellence and performing them in an almost divine manner, she accompanies them in so charming a style of playing on any keyboard instrument that she almost removes souls from bodies and returns them to heaven midst the blest.”¹² Copia seems easily to have switched from speech to song as a second, natural mode of expression: when the Christian aristocrat Ansaldo Cebà, with whom she exchanged letters, sent her, from Genoa, a basket of fruit, she detained the servant who delivered it, taking verses of his master and singing her own melody to them for his entertainment.¹³

Copia's correspondence with the same Cebà (1565–1623), author of an epic poem about Queen Esther, started upon her own initiative in 1618.¹⁴ Though her letters to him are no longer extant, everything she wrote in them, to judge from Cebà's answers, was out of excitement over the content of the poem and in admiration of the author and his other works. Cebà, for his part, responded with the intention of opening Copia's eyes to Christianity. After exchanging forty-five letters, which included the subjects of religion, philosophy, astrology, ethics, and love, Cebà saw he was getting nowhere. He decided, in the last ones (another eight), to step up the pressure. “The road you follow, believe me, is not right for making you eternally blessed. Change it, I beg you, while you still have time.”¹⁵ Before breaking off the correspondence, Cebà laid down an ultimatum: “If you

¹⁰“I am further bound by the ties of the kindnesses and favors with which you and your perfect parents (may their souls know Paradise!) rewarded me—were I to count them, they would be more abundant than sand”; from Rossi's dedication of his “Songs,” §12; CW 13a:167.

¹¹On Copia as “musician,” see Don Harrán, “Doubly Tainted, Doubly Talented: The Jewish Poet Sara Copio (d. 1641) as a Heroic Singer,” in *Musica franca: Essays in Honor of Frank A. D'Accone*, ed. Irene Alm, Alyson McLamore, and Colleen Reardon (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1996), 367–422.

¹²*Avisi di Parnaso* (ca. 1626): Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Codex Cicogna 270 (*olim* 206), fol. 39v (“virtuosissima dama . . . in professione di musica, nella quale oltre il comporre i canti con ogni esquisita eccellenza e recitarli quasi con modo divino, gli accompagna con sì leggiadro stile di suono con qual si sia strumento da tasti, che quasi esanima ai corpi l'alme e le ritorna al cielo tra i beati”). For a transcription of the codex, see Carla Boccato, “Sara Copio Sullam, la poetessa del ghetto di Venezia: Episodi della sua vita in un manoscritto del secolo XVII,” *Italia: Studi e ricerche sulla storia, la cultura e la letteratura degli ebrei d'Italia* 6 (1987): 104–218; and for its translation, Harrán, *Sarra Copia Sulam, Jewish Poet and Intellectual*, 349–498.

¹³Cebà chided Copia for not recognizing the difference between her station and his servant's. “The bearer” of the gift, he says, “was a most ordinary servant of mine; and you turned him into someone so genteel as not to demur at making him hear my verses harmonized by your voice and at honoring him with other displays more suited to the superabundance of your kindness than proportionate to the lowliness of his condition”; *Lettere d'Ansaldo Cebà scritte a Sarra Copia e dedicate a Marc'Antonio Doria* (Genoa: Giuseppe Pavoni, 1623), 25 (from letter 9; 23 February 1619). For an overview of the correspondence, see Enzo Sarot, “Ansaldo Cebà and Sara Copio Sullam,” *Italica* 31 (1954): 138–50.

¹⁴Cebà, *La reina Esther* (Genoa: Giuseppe Pavoni, 1615; Venice: Battista Bidelli, 1616).

¹⁵Cebà, *Lettere*, 125 (from letter 50; 17 July 1621): “La via che tenete, credetemi, non è a proposito per farvi eternamente beata: cambiatela, vi priego, mentre c'havete tempo.”

don't intend to convert, stop your pen, for, without this purpose, I don't intend to use mine."¹⁶ Copia desisted from writing and, after April 1622, so did Cebà, who "saw that [his] expectations did not harmonize with [hers]."¹⁷ So he decided to make an example of the correspondence: he went ahead and published his letters, summarizing his futile efforts in the dedication: "After a period of four years," he wrote, "I realized I was making little progress with [saving] hers [i.e., her soul] and gaining nothing for mine."¹⁸

Copia was betrayed, in the same years, by a person who had been accepted into her household with full honors: the scholar and, in time, bishop of Capodistria, Baldassare Bonifaccio (1586–1659). He wrote an essay in which he attacked Copia for denying the doctrine of the soul's immortality.¹⁹ After investing two years of labor, and "nights without sleep," in its preparation,²⁰ and culling a horde of quotations—to flaunt his learning—from ancient Greek and Roman philosophical writings, the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament, he published it, with much ado, in June 1621, to the shock and dismay of the accused. Like Cebà, Bonifaccio went on a crusade to make the Jewess relinquish her Judaism. "Yes, yes," he cries, "you will free yourself from servitude to your most loathsome Synagogue." "Don't believe me," he continues, "believe your greatest prophet [David, who wrote]: 'Blessed is he who crushes his little ones against the rock'" [Psalm 137:9].²¹ Bonifaccio interprets the verse in his own tendentious way: "The rock is Jesus, that cornerstone that makes one of two by combining the Old with the New Testament. Smash your little ones"—Jewish children—"with this rock. Yet do so now, hurry up, because they're growing. Kill them *before* they are born, lest they kill you, *after*

¹⁶Cebà, *Lettere*, 130 (from letter 53; 30 April 1622): "Ma, se non pensate di convertirvi, sospendete la vostra penna; perchè, senza questa cagione, non penso d'adoprar la mia."

¹⁷Cebà, *Lettere*, 127 (from letter 52; 19 March 1622): "veggo, che le mie pretensioni non s'accordano con le vostre."

¹⁸Cebà's dedication to his patron Marc'Antonio Doria, *Lettere*, fol. †2r: "Ma, dopo lo spatio di quattr'anni, mi sono avveduto d'haver avanzato poco per l'una, e guadagnato nulla per l'altra. Ond'ho deliberato di lasciar l'impresa per chi ha più fervido il cuore di charità, ch'io non ho provveduta la lingua d'efficacia."

¹⁹Baldassare Bonifaccio, *Dell'immortalità dell'anima discorso* (Venice: Antonio Pinelli, 1621). For an overview of the controversy between the two, see Boccatto, "Una disputa secentesca sull'immortalità dell'anima—contributi d'archivio," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 54 (1988): 593–614, and Giuseppe Veltri, "Die 'schöne Jüdin' und die Unsterblichkeit der Seele—Ein philosophisch-apologetischer Wettstreit im Venedig des 17. Jahrhunderts," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 32 (2005): 53–71.

²⁰So Copia claims in her *Manifesto*, though nothing of the sort is said in Bonifaccio's *Discorso* itself. Her words are "Instead of submitting to further trials, however, I have set myself to demolishing after two days of meager efforts as much as you machinated against me after almost two years of purposeless nightly vigils"; Sarra Copia Sulam, *Manifesto di Sarra Copia Sulam Hebraea: Nel quale è da lei riprovata, e detestata l'opinione negante l'Immortalità dell'Anima, falsamente attribuitale dal Sig. Baldassare Bonifaccio* (Venice: Antonio Pinelli, 1621), sig. B2r. Copia appears to have heard about his lucubrations by word of mouth. In his "answer to her manifesto," Bonifaccio does indirectly confirm the time and effort he put into his *Discorso*, saying "I practiced skirmishing for two years"; Bonifaccio, *Risposta al manifesto* (Venice: Antonio Pinelli, 1621), sig. A2v.

²¹Bonifaccio, *Discorso*, 58, 60: "Sì, sì vi libererete dalla servitù di costeta abietissima Sinagoga," and "Nol credete a me; credetelo al vostro maggior Profeta: *Beato chi calterisce i suoi pargoletti alla pietra.*"

they are born, as vipers.”²² Only by discarding the past, Bonifaccio explains, “will you ascertain your honored name Sarra”—which in Hebrew means ruler or princess—“and become a Lady and mistress of your own self, a dominion to be preferred to all empires.”²³

Copia prepared a “manifesto,” in which she affirmed her unshakable belief in the “immortality of the soul.” “The soul of man, Mr. Baldassare,” she declares, “is incorruptible, immortal, and divine, and was created by God and infused by him into our body at the very time the fetus in the maternal womb was made fit to receive it. This truth is as certain, infallible, and indisputable for me as it is, I believe, for every Jew and Christian.” She retaliates by criticizing Bonifaccio for not knowing how to think clearly or write correctly. The controversy did not end with the “manifesto.” Bonifaccio responded with a “counter-manifesto,” in which he overturns Copia’s arguments.²⁴

Though the composer Rossi did not arrive in the throes of the turmoil, he did on its heels, one year later: the dispute between Copia and her slanderer must still have been the talk of the town, so to speak. That it left its mark on his “Songs”—and a very significant one at that—is a point to be argued.

Rossi was witness, while in Venice, to still other calamities that Copia’s enemies began to wreak on her. Though less relevant to the “Songs,” they are definitely relevant to her situation during his stay there in 1622. Among the persons whom Copia supported was a poet, Numidio Paluzzi (1567–1625), who came to her with favorable letters of recommendation. She was charmed by “that patina of knowledge that seemed to show in his lively chatter” about literary matters and chose him as her “teacher,” probably to advise her on her writings and edit them.²⁵ Copia took Paluzzi under her aegis,²⁶ but he conspired with her servants and his own shady friend Alessandro Berardelli (active from the 1620s on) to ruin her by steal-

²²Bonifaccio, *Discorso*, 60 (continuation): “La pietra è Giesù; quella pietra angolare, che fa di due uno, congiungendo il vecchio col novo Testamento. Schiacciate i vostri pargoletti con questa pietra; ma tosto, affrettatevi, perchè vanno crescendo, uccideteli prima che nascano, acciò che nascendo, come viperini non uccidano voi.”

²³Bonifaccio, *Discorso*, 58: “e verificherete il vostro honorato nome di Sara, divenendo Signora, e padrona di voi medesima; dominio da preporsi a tutti gli Imperij.”

²⁴Sulam, *Manifesto*: “L’Anima dell’huomo, Signor Baldassare, è incorruttibile, immortale, e divina, creata et infusa da Dio nel nostro corpo, in quel tempo, che l’organizzato è reso habile nel ventre materno a poterla ricevere: e questa verità è così certa, infallibile, et indubitata appresso di me, come credo sia appresso ogn’Hebreo, e Christiano” (sig. B1r); “a mostrare i difetti, et imperfettioni della vostra scrittura, altro volume vi bisognerebbe, che di un breve foglio, non havendo ella altro di buono, che la causa che difende: nel resto è così piena di false intelligenze di termini; di storti, e mal intesi sentimenti di scritture; di false forme di sillogismi; di cattive connessioni, e strani passaggi da una in altra materia; di spropositi citationi di Autori; e finalmente di errori di lingua, che nessuno può continuare a leggerla, senza dar qualche titolo al compositore” (sig. C2r–v). Bonifaccio’s “counter-manifesto,” entitled *Risposta*, is dated 2 August 1621.

²⁵“Indi, da quella superficie di sapere che una gagliarda chiacchiara in lui faceva apparire, adescata la donna, si compiacque di farselo maestro”; *Avisi di Parnaso* (in condemnation of Paluzzi and his cohort Alessandro Berardelli), fol. 5r. On Paluzzi as editor, possibly even ghost writer, see fols. 25r, 31v, 51v, 72v.

²⁶As variously recounted in *Avisi*, fols. 5v–7v.

ing whatever they could lay their hands on. Starting in 1622,²⁷ the year of Rossi's visit to Venice, "the thieveries continued without end," we are told, "nor did they let up as long as something was left to plunder."²⁸ It was Berardelli who, in his malice, and with the assistance of a Moorish scullery maid, "cut off the [golden clasp on the] Jewess's belt, ... stole from her so many pieces of gold both minted as coins and worked in several shapes [as jewels], ... [looted] so many pieces of furniture, ... despoiled her house," and so on.²⁹

Everything was done in absolute secrecy, at night, and from July 1622 on Copia was at her wit's end to account for what she knew was going on behind her back until the thieves were finally identified two years later, on 9 July 1624. She threw Paluzzi and his accomplice out of the house, denouncing them to the authorities as criminals. Rossi, who was there at the early stages of their machinations, must have known about the disappearance of household goods and valuables.³⁰

LEON MODENA

Leon Modena (1571–1648) revealed his wisdom and learning in writings on a wide range of topics, from Hebrew language and grammar, Jewish rites and customs, and Kabbalah to alchemy, gambling, and many others, including music. His interest in music was not casual; rather, he was seriously involved with it in theory (how can art music be defended for use in the synagogue?) and practice (how should Jewish musicians compose and perform it?).³¹ Modena earned his main livelihood as cantor in the *sinagoga grande* of the Italiani (as distinct from Ashkenazi or Sephardi) Jewish rite in Venice—the synagogue stands in that portion of the Venetian Ghetto known as the Ghetto Nuovo—from the year 1610 until his death nearly four decades later.³² He encouraged Jewish art music by forming a

²⁷As may be determined by a reference to Berardelli's having perpetrated his crimes, when eventually found out in July 1624, over the course of twenty-three consecutive months, which, counted back, would set the beginnings around July 1622; *Avisi*, fols. 43v–44r.

²⁸"i latrocinij andarono in infinito, nè si cessò sino che ci fu che rubare"; *Avisi*, fol. 9v.

²⁹"troncò il cinto alla hebrea ... gli involò tanti ori e coniatì in moneta e lavorati in più forme ... tante mobilie ... le spogliò la casa ...": *Avisi*, fol. 20v.

³⁰See *Avisi*, fols. 8r, 43v–45v, 48r–49r. No sooner did the thieveries begin in July 1622 than Copia became aware of them; Rossi came in September, or perhaps earlier.

³¹Major studies on Modena are Howard Adelman, "Success and Failure in the Seventeenth-Century Ghetto of Venice: The Life and Thought of Leon Modena" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1985), and David Malkiel, ed., "*The Lion Shall Roar*": *Leon Modena and His World* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003). For Modena in relation to music, see Don Harrán, "'Dum recordaremur Sion': Music in the Life and Thought of the Venetian Rabbi Leon Modena (1571–1648)," *American Jewish Studies Review* 23 (1998): 17–61; idem, "Jewish Musical Culture: Leon Modena," in *The Jews of Venice*, 211–30, 289–95; idem, "Was Rabbi Leon Modena a Composer?" in "*The Lion Shall Roar*," 195–248; and idem, "*Nomina numina*: Final Thoughts of Rabbi Leon Modena on the Essence of Sacred Music," *Italia: Studi e ricerche* 18 (2006): 7–63.

³²To supplement his income he was heavily engaged in teaching and Hebrew publishing, did proofreading, wrote dedicatory poems, drew up contracts, among other activities, as is clear from the summary report in his autobiography; Leon Modena, *Sefer chayyei yehuda* [The book of the "life of Judah," Judah being Modena's Hebrew name], ed. Daniel Carpi (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1985), 104–5; though the Hebrew edition was consulted, the reader is also referred to the translation

“music academy” in the Ghetto at the end of the 1620s and appears to have conceived the idea of preparing a collection of Hebrew songs, recruiting Rossi, sometime after 1612, for its realization.³³ The collection grew in size over the years until its publication, in 1623, as the “Songs of Solomon.”³⁴ Modena wrote a foreword and one of the three dedicatory poems³⁵ to it and appears to have been the author of the verses to which Rossi composed the closing work.

Rossi met with Modena in order presumably to solve the technical problems connected with the notation and printing of polyphonic music to Hebrew texts. He considered the “Songs” the culmination of his musical endeavors,³⁶ but hesitated to publish them. What deterred him may have been his own insecurity about their form and content: he had no earlier experience in composing music to Hebrew and there were no written examples as precedents.³⁷ Being meticulous, he kept searching for adequate solutions—“how many times . . . did I toil until I was satisfied?”³⁸ Principally, he appears to have feared criticism from the rabbis, the congregants, or the singers, not knowing how they would react to his newfangled and, from the

by Mark R. Cohen in *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena's 'Life of Judah'*, with historical notes by Howard Adelman and Benjamin Ravid (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 160–62. On problems of “making ends meet,” see Robert Bonfil, “Outside Sources of Rabbinic Income,” in *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 187–206; originally published as Robert Bonfil, *Harabanut be'italya* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979).

³³On the “music academy,” see Harrán, “Was Rabbi Leon Modena a Composer?” 209–11, 224–41; and on Modena's interest in reviving Hebrew art music, see his foreword to Rossi's “Songs,” *CW*, 13a:175–86.

³⁴Modena telescopes the overall development of the collection into the statement that “day by day he [Rossi] would enter into his notebook a certain psalm of David or a formula for prayer or praise, reverence, and divine song until he succeeded in gathering some of them into a collection, making several available”; Modena, foreword, §18; *CW*, 13a:179. “Day by day” is probably a synecdoche for “year by year”: there were no new publications of the composer between the years 1613 (his book 3 of instrumental works in its first edition, no longer extant) and 1622 (his book 4 of instrumental works). Though issued in 1614, his four-voice madrigals appear to have been written around 1607–8; see *CW*, 7:vii–vii, “problems of dating.”

³⁵If not all three of the dedicatory poems (only one is identified) and other portions of the introduction as well; see Harrán, “Was Leon Modena a Composer?” 197 and n9; also idem, “Dum recordamur Sion,” 50–51.

³⁶Modena wrote that Rossi's “intention was to culminate his reputation by proving it among those who bless the Lord,” that is, in a sacred realm; Modena, foreword, §17; *CW*, 13a:179.

³⁷On sporadic earlier attempts at polyphony, as indicated in various writings from 1605 on, see Israel Adler, “The Rise of Art Music in the Italian Ghetto,” in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 321–64. But of these attempts there is not a single musical remnant, hence Rossi's “Songs” are historically and typographically the first concrete examples of their kind. The situation with Italian music printing at large is quite different: starting from the early sixteenth century, hundreds of collections went through the presses. See, for a general study, Jane Bernstein, *Print Culture and Music in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), and for an inventory of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century collections listed by their composers, *Bibliografia della musica italiana vocale profana pubblicata dal 1500 al 1700*, 3 vols., comp. Emil Vogel et al. (Pomezia: Staderini, 1977).

³⁸From the composer's dedication to his “Songs,” fol. 2r.

standpoint of Jewish liturgical tradition, thoroughly heterodox works,³⁹ which were meant not to supplant the existing tradition, but to supplement it:

יהי מוצא / תמיד / אנוש רוצה / *[Tamid / enosh rotse / yehi motse]*
 Whenever / anyone wishes, / he will find
 מזומנים / שירות / ותשבחות / *[shiroi / vetishbachot / mezumanim]*
 songs / and praises / ready
 כאראלם / לכבוד / אדון עולם / *[likhvod / adon 'olam / ke'ar'alam]*
 to honor / the Lord of the Universe, / as do angels
 כעל מינים / לפצות / כעל עוגב / *[liftsot / ke'al 'ugav / ke'al minim]*
 who open their mouths / to the sound of pipes / and strings.⁴⁰

Even so, the “Songs” were different, and the last thing Rossi needed was to be chastised for them by the community or have them banished from its prayer services for seeming to challenge the established ritual.

One can only speculate on what Modena—who was anxious to push forward with the publication—said to the composer to ease his apprehensions over the notation of the Hebrew pieces, their preparation for printing, and the chances of their approval. Beyond the general controversy over whether art music should be performed in the synagogue,⁴¹ one problem over which the composer must have lost sleep was how to arrange the words under the notes: can the discrepancy between Hebrew, written from right to left, and music, from left to right, be reconciled? After weighing the options available, it was decided not to reverse the order of the notes “lest the singers lose their minds.”⁴² Encouraged by Modena and

³⁹Rossi's concerns over the suitability of the “Songs” explain the various portions of the introduction in their defense and justification. On rabbinical opposition to art music in the early synagogue, see Shlomo Simonsohn, “Some Disputes on Music in the Synagogue in Pre-Reform Days,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 34 (1966): 99–110.

⁴⁰From a dedicatory poem by Modena in the introductory matter to Rossi, “Songs,” fol. 4r; *CW*, 13a:187–92, specifically 190 (eleventh and twelfth distichs). The poem also appears in a collection of Modena's verses in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mich. 528, *olim* 759, fol. 63r; see Leon Modena, *Divan lerabbi yehuda arye mimmodena* [The divan of Leon Modena], ed. Simon Bernstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1932), 82–83.

⁴¹About which Modena wrote a *responsum* in 1605. See Leon Modena, *She'elot utshuvot ziknei yehuda* [Questions and answers: “The Elders of Judah”] (London: British Library, MS Add. 27148), ed. Shlomo Simonsohn (Jerusalem: Rabbi Kook Institute, 1955), 15–20 (including five rabbinical endorsements). The point of the *responsum* was that singing art music in the synagogue is legitimate; hence Modena republished it in the introductory matter of the “Songs,” with the explanation in his foreword to the collection: “It could be that among the exiled there is one of those sanctimonious persons who eliminate anything new or any example of learning in which they have no part.... In order to remove any resentment from a stubborn heart, I decided to reproduce [the *responsum* here] ... with the intent of sealing the mouth of someone speaking nonsense about this matter”; *CW*, 13a:184–85, and for the *responsum*, 193–219.

⁴²Cf. Modena's foreword, §28: “He who looks will see that, in the eyes of the composer, it seemed better to have the readers pronounce the letters backwards, yet read the words (with which all are familiar) in reverse order, than to invert the musical symbols from what is customary and have their eyes move with the notes from right [to left], as we sons of the Covenant [Jews] write [Hebrew], lest they lose their minds”; *CW*, 13a:183. On Rossi's solutions to this problem, see Harrán, “Salamone Rossi as a Composer of ‘Hebrew’ Music,” in *Studies in Honour of Israel Adler*, ed. Eliyahu Schleifer and Edwin Seroussi (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2002), 171–200, esp. 179–89.

others who had an interest in the collection, Rossi finally “consented” to publish it, especially since Modena, at the composer’s behest, pledged to oversee its printing and do the proofreading.⁴³

Until now we have observed Modena at his best, resolute in his advice and optimistic in his outlook. But, in real life, during the years that impinge on Rossi’s stay in Venice, his situation hardly awakened confidence: he was oppressed by worries and sorrows. From 1618 on he gradually became impoverished, having squandered his money on gambling. In 1622 he announced, “I am stripped of everything and many debts weigh upon me.” He had his share of family troubles: his wife was frail and moody; his sons caused endless anxiety. Isaac, his second-born, returned home without a farthing after twelve years of wandering in the Levant.⁴⁴

Troubles were accompanied by tragedies. In 1617 Modena’s beloved firstborn son, Mordecai, died, and not a day passed that Modena did not painfully remember him.⁴⁵ He confessed that the words “the dead one is destined to be forgotten by the heart”⁴⁶ did not apply to him—on 28 March 1622, coinciding with the Feast of Passover, his son Zebulun was killed by a band of Jewish hooligans in the Ghetto, in the sight of the father.

Though Modena must have committed himself, in his meeting with Rossi in September 1622, to prepare the “Songs of Solomon” for publication,⁴⁷ it is not surprising that, in his affliction, he asked how he could possibly accomplish the task. “My lyre has turned to mourning and I am a spring of tears, having on my heart the death of my lovely son Zebulun (may his soul be in Paradise! may the Lord avenge his blood!)”⁴⁸ Modena “refuses to be comforted,” he no longer has any inclination “to hear the voices of male and female singers” (a trope for art music).⁴⁹ Nevertheless, he harnessed himself to the undertaking, thinking that as a reward for his labors perhaps “the Lord will take mercy on [Zebulun’s] soul and the rest of the Jews will know light and happiness.”⁵⁰ But “it was no easy thing,” lest it be thought otherwise, and Modena, intent on arousing sympathy, made sure that nobody underestimate his sacrifice. He proclaimed: “there was no beginning like this any time before.”⁵¹

⁴³See Modena’s foreword, §24, *CW*, 13a:181.

⁴⁴See Modena, *Sefer chayyei yehuda*, 68–70 (Cohen, *Autobiography*, 115–17).

⁴⁵Modena, *Sefer chayyei yehuda*, 65, 67 (Cohen, *Autobiography*, 111–12).

⁴⁶Talmud, *Pesachim*, fol. 54b.

⁴⁷Modena is likely to have offered his services at a much earlier stage, to judge from the gradual gestation of the collection that appears to have been Modena’s brainchild.

⁴⁸From Modena’s foreword, §25; *CW*, 13a:175–86, esp. 181–82 (the opening combines words from Job 30:31 and Jeremiah 8:23).

⁴⁹There, continuation, with the first quote in reference to Psalms 77:3 and the second to 2 Samuel 19:26.

⁵⁰Modena, foreword, §26, with the portion “the Jews ... happiness” drawn from Esther 8:16.

⁵¹Modena, foreword, §27, the last portion a conflation of 2 Kings 23:22 and Proverbs 8:22.

ROSSI'S HEBREW COLLECTION PROJECTED IN A NEW LIGHT

The “Songs of Solomon” oscillate between the extremes of sorrow (in their origins) and joy (in their contents). “In sorrow you shall bear sons” (Genesis 3:17). Indeed, the collection was born in the midst of trepidation on Rossi’s part and tribulation on Modena’s. Copia may not have been directly involved in its preparation, but she is likely to have heard some of the “Songs” when Rossi was in Venice, where they might have been tried out in the synagogue or in Copia’s house with Copia herself, perhaps, participating in the ensemble.⁵² Otherwise, it is hard to understand Modena’s statement that “when people sang them, they were delighted with their many good qualities; the listeners too were radiant, each of them finding it pleasant to hear them and wishing to hear the remainder.”⁵³ Copia, who had her own worries, may have been privy to Rossi’s. Numbering no doubt among those who were “delighted” with the “Songs,” she would, as did his other “friends,” have praised the composer, thereby mitigating his uncertainty about whether they should be published.

If the genesis of the collection was painful, its music, at the other extreme, was gladsome. The title describes the “Songs” as suitable “for thanking God and singing to his exalted name on all sacred occasions.”⁵⁴ Modena says of Rossi, in a dedicatory poem, that the music he composed was

יחדו / לגיל ריון / פני ארון [Yachdav / legil varon / penei aron]
 To be jointly performed, / in joy and song, / before the ark
 שבת / וכל יום טוב / והזמנים [shabbat / vekhol yom tov / vehazemanim]
 on the Sabbath, / all feast days, / and the festivals;
 ולכל / דבר מצוה / ועוז חדוה [ulekhol / devar mitsva / ve’oz chedva]
 for all / religious observances / and for the strength and gladness
 חתן / וכלתו / ואב בנים [chatan / vekhalato / ve’av banim]
 of the bridegroom / and the bride / and the father of sons.⁵⁵

Twenty of the thirty-three works in the collection are from the book of Psalms, of which David, as tradition would have it, was responsible for the lion’s share: David occupies an important place in Rossi’s and Modena’s explanations. “Not restraining my lips,” Rossi remarks, “I constantly multiplied and strove evermore to multiply the psalms of David, king of Israel, and to magnify them”—as songs of praise—“until I had set due bounds for many of them, according to the conventions of *musika* [art music], in order for them to exert greater power over the ears

⁵²Women would not have sung in the synagogue services, but there was no prohibition on their performing sacred music under nonritual circumstances in the privacy of the home (or even in paraliturgical celebrations in the synagogue, as is clear from a report by Giulio Morosini in *Via della fede mostrata agli ebrei*, 3 vols. [Rome: Sacra Cong. de Prof. Fide, 1683], 2:789–90).

⁵³From Modena, foreword, §19, a combination of various passages from Psalms 37:11, Daniel 12:3, and others.

⁵⁴Rossi, “Songs,” CW, 13a:161–62.

⁵⁵From the dedicatory poem by Modena in the introductory matter to Rossi, “Songs,” fol. 4r; CW, 13a:187–92, specifically 189–90 (ninth and tenth distichs). “Jointly performed” means by different voices.

of whoever tests words [that is, discriminating listeners].”⁵⁶ Modena, in the same poem from which two distichs were already quoted, addresses the king as *spiritus rector*, hoping that the “rejoicing” via words and “cheerful music” would reach “the depths of [David’s] heart” for him to take more pleasure in them than “in any precious objects and treasures.”⁵⁷

Of the joyful pieces, the one that most closely ties in with the present discussion is the last, a wedding ode.⁵⁸ It brings together three protagonists: Rossi, as composer; Modena, as poet; and if not Sarra Copia, her sister Diana, as bride. Modena alludes to her, in the poem, under her Hebrew name Rachel (here “ewe”):

שכל ואשה בת שכל	[<i>Ve’isha bat sekhel</i>]	A woman of understanding
בלחמו היא תאכל	[<i>belachmo hi tokhel</i>]	will of his [her husband’s] bread partake
ותדמה אל רחל	[<i>vetidme el rachel</i>]	and resemble a ewe:
לגוזזים נאלמה	[<i>legozzim ne’elama</i>]	facing her shearers, she is silent.

The wedding took place in Mantua, to which Modena accompanied the bride from Venice (with adventures along the way) on 18 May 1623, and it was around that time that the “Songs” were published.⁵⁹ In the wedding ode the poet—Modena—asks, at the end, for “God Almighty to bless [his] friends forever, without cease, without end, and for eternity.” His friends, of course, were the composer, the newlyweds, and their families. The blessing was meant not only for them, but, by insinuation, for all those who supported Rossi, namely, the “friends” to whom Modena referred in his foreword to the collection and still others who, in the future, would gain from his achievement (see figure 1).

What of the wedding ode and Sarra Copia? Not only does it contain verses that seem to have been intended for her via references to Esther, a figure with whom she is known to have identified,⁶⁰ but, more significantly, it declares *urbi et orbi* that the soul is immortal. The presence of an epithalamium as the concluding

⁵⁶Rossi, “Songs,” dedication, fol. 2r, §6; CW, 13a:167.

⁵⁷Poem, third distich, in Rossi, “Songs,” fol. 4r.

⁵⁸See, for its discussion, Harrán, “Marriage and Music as Metaphor: The Wedding Odes of Leon Modena and Salamone Rossi,” *Musica Judaica* 17 (5764/2003–4): 1–31, esp. 15–21. For Modena as the author, see David Magid, “Shir lo noda’ me’et rav yehuda arye di modena” [An unknown poem by Rabbi Leon Modena], *’Alim lebibliografya vekorot yisra’el* [Leaves for bibliography and the annals of Israel] 2 (1935): 103–6.

⁵⁹The “adventures” are recounted in Modena, *Sefer chayyei yehuda*, 78–79 (Cohen, *Autobiography*, 128). On the problem of setting a date for the wedding, Modena wrote a *responsum* (*She’elot utshuvot ziknei yehuda*, 64–65). See, on both the “adventures” and the *responsum*, Adelman, “Success and Failure in the Seventeenth-Century Ghetto,” 618–21. The date 18 May 1623 coincides, in the Hebrew calendar, with Lag ba’omer, that is, the thirty-third day of the Counting of the Omer (sheaf of corn). Extending from Passover to Pentecost, the days of the Counting constitute a period of semi-mourning over the death, in the second century, of Rabbi Akiba and his disciples. On Lag ba’omer the bereavement is temporarily lifted and weddings are permitted. *Lag*, an acronym for *lamed* (30) and *gimel* (3), would explain the thirty-three “Songs,” of which the wedding ode, “To whom would I desire to pay tribute?” is the last; CW, 13a:117–30. On the date of publication, see CW, 13a, under “Source,” esp. 7–9.

⁶⁰Knowing Copia’s “passion” for the story of Queen Esther, as she read it in Ceba’s epic (1615) and in Modena’s play *Ester* (1619; full title below), Modena may purposely have alluded to Esther, in

Chorus 1

163 Ve - 'at - ta 'el shad - dai te - va - rekḥ li - di - dai le - 'o -

Chorus 2

172 lam liv - li dai le - 'ein ketṣ ul - 'al - - - - ma

Figure 1. Salamone Rossi, *Songs of Solomon* [Hashirim asher lishlomo].
 Venice: Pietro and Lorenzo Bragadini, 1623.
 No. 33, wedding ode, measures 163–79. Reprinted by permission.

Translation

[163–66] May You, God Almighty,
 [167–70] bless my friends forever,
 [171–74] without cease,
 [175–79] without end, and for eternity.

item in a collection of what otherwise were standard liturgical pieces is incongruous enough. Clearly, Modena and Rossi intended to relay a message (the wedding as an *unio mystica*)?⁶¹ the more so since the ode is set up as an echo poem with repeats, in each of its eleven stanzas, of their final word in one or more syllables (*ma* of *chokhma*, *huma* of *umhuma*, etc.).⁶² Echo in Hebrew is *bat kol*, roughly “reflection of sound”: it has a long tradition in Talmud and rabbinical writings as a voice sent from heaven to reveal to us the will of God.⁶³ Thus the first stanza reads:

למי אחפוץ לעשות	To whom would I desire to pay
יקר? הן לנפשות	tribute? Certainly to souls
בזווג נכסות	that enter into wedlock
כגבר בעלמה	as a man with a maid. ⁶⁴

the wedding ode, in stanzas 1 (“To whom would I desire to pay tribute?”; Esther 6:6) and 4 (“Great is the wealth of him who sells everything he has in order to take her [Esther] unto himself as a daughter”; Esther 2:7, 2:15). Modena dedicated his play to Copia as his “most respected patroness” and mentioned their discussions of Cebà’s poem; *L’Ester tragedia tratta dalla Sacra Scrittura* (Venice: Giacomo Sarzina, 1619), 3–4. For Esther as a thematic link between Modena and Cebà with Copia as an intermediary, see Marina Arbib, “The Queen Esther Triangle: Leon Modena, Ansaldo Cebà, and Sara Copio Sullam,” in Malkiel, “*The Lion Shall Roar*,” 103–35.

⁶¹As early as the first century, the Song of Songs was given an allegorical interpretation according to which God was the bridegroom and Israel his bride. In kabbalist exegesis, the collective allegory gave way to an individual one, whereby the bride and bridegroom symbolized the human soul and its divine beloved (*shekhina*). It was thus that the Song of Songs was read in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hebrew commentaries (by, among others, Solomon Alkabez, 1552; Elisha Gallico, 1587; and Abraham Laniado, 1619). Though Modena took his distance from kabbalist doctrine, he was not impervious to some of its broader ideas. See Moshe Idel, “Unio Mystica in Jewish Mysticism,” in his *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 59–73, and on Jewish mysticism in a Venetian context, Robert Bonfil, “Cultura e mistica a Venezia nel Cinquecento,” 469–506.

⁶²On echo poetry in Hebrew literature, see the seminal work by David Kaufmann, “Echogedichte,” *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie* 1 (1896): 22–25, 61–64, 114–17, and, in relation to the sonnet, Dvora Bregman, *Shevil hazzahav: Hassonet ha’ivri bitkufat harenensans vhabbarok* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1995), 127–29, 177; translated as *The Golden Way: The Hebrew Sonnet during the Renaissance and the Baroque* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, 2006) (“gold,” in Hebrew, has the numerical value of fourteen, or as many lines as a sonnet). There are some forty echo poems, in Hebrew, from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They include an earlier example by Modena, who celebrates the nuptials of Juliani ben Jochanan Alatrini (before 1600) in a sonnet that engages the poet and God in dialogue. Of its seven distichs, the first two read:

1. [Poet] Who is he and where is he who shouts / all these praises to Juliani?
[God, in echo] Ani [Hebrew for ‘I’].
2. [Poet] Who answers, who responds to the words of the humble man [the poet], / who loves his [the bridegroom’s] purity of heart so *kolel* [completely]?
[God, in echo]: Kol el [the voice of God].”

See Modena, *Divan lerabbi yehuda arye mimmodena*, 179–80; also an anthology of sonnets edited by Dvora Bregman, *Tseror zehuvim: sonettim ’ivriyim mitkufat harenensans vhabbarok* [A bundle of gold: Hebrew sonnets from the Renaissance and Baroque] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1997), 165.

⁶³See Peter Kuhn, *Offenbarungsstimmen im Antiken Judentum: Untersuchungen zur Bat Qol und verwandten Phänomenen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989).

⁶⁴Final line after Proverbs 30:19 (*vederekh gever be’alma*).

Then follows directly by the echo *‘al ma* (as separate syllables), which can be read in Hebrew playfully as “what for?” or in Italian (when the syllables are recombined) as “soul” (*alma* alias *anima*), in confirmation of the “souls” (*n[e]fashot*) in line 2. The final word, *be’alma*, can itself be doubly read (in Hebrew) as “with a maid” and “for eternity.”⁶⁵ In the last stanza, as quoted in the music example (up to though not including the echo, another three measures), the final word is, deliberately, *ul’alma* (“and for eternity”), a slight variation on the previous *be’alma*: God is beseeched to bless the poet’s and composer’s friends “for eternity,” a concept reinforced by “forever,” “without cease,” and “without end.” Now the echo is *ul’alma* in all three syllables, meaning one thing only in Hebrew: “for eternity,” while in Italian, again, the last two syllables suggest “soul.”⁶⁶

What Modena and Rossi are doing is, to all intents, corroborating the “immortality of the soul” as a tenet fundamental to Jewish doctrine, thus responding unequivocally to the vitriolic discourse by Bonifaccio, who accused Copia of its denial, and, at the same time, exonerating Copia, in verse and song, as blameless. Copia, then, seems to have been the moving spirit behind the ode. God’s (implied) “heavenly voice” (*bat kol*), as it permeates the echo portions of the various stanzas in substantiation as it were of the soul’s afterlife (or its betrothal with God?), reminds one of a talmudic passage in which the same voice announced, after Akiba’s execution around 135 CE, that the saintly rabbi was “destined for the world to come.”⁶⁷ One can spin metaphors and metaphors on the cryptic implications of the ode and its echo repeats, going beyond Copia’s eschatological convictions to perhaps the declaration that humans confront their Maker in the Holy of Holies: there they learn the secrets of Torah.⁶⁸ It is certain that, in this final wedding ode, Rossi, Modena, and, as a referent, Copia come together not only in one of the most remarkable pieces in the literature but also in a sweeping statement of the soul’s immortality.

Rossi’s “Songs of Solomon,” in their way, provide a bridge between the same sorrow and joy noted at the beginning of this section. In time, Modena observed,

there will be songs in the house of the Lord and in the whole congregation with greater gladness and exultation from so much goodness. Not

⁶⁵The latter, more exactly, an Aramaic word borrowed into Hebrew.

⁶⁶Modena’s partiality to word games, from early years on, may further be illustrated by his macaronic poetry. Upon the death of Moses della Rocca, his teacher, in 1587, Modena wrote, at the precocious age of thirteen, an *ottava rima*, in which each of the eight Hebrew verses was duplicated by an Italian verse—for a total of sixteen—with similar sounds and meanings (e.g., “Kina shemor: oi me kefas otser bo,” becomes, in verse 2, “Chi nasce muor: oimè, che pass’acerbo”); his *Midbar yehuda* [The Judean Desert] (Venice: Daniel Zanetti, 1602), fol. 80b. In 1616 Modena wrote a sonnet with alternating Italian and Hebrew lines that, semantically, complete each other (first couplet: Rapito hai, morte cruda et homicida [You snatched, cruel and murderous death], / Chemdat vesod haddat asher hechbi’a [The treasure and hidden secret]); Modena, *Divan*, 212; also Bregman, *Tseror zehuvim*, 187. On riddles and puns, see Dan Pagis, “Baroque Trends in Italian Hebrew Poetry as Reflected in One Unknown Genre,” in *Italia judaica: Gli ebrei in Italia tra Rinascimento ed età barocca* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1987), 263–77.

⁶⁷Talmud, Ta’anit, fol. 29a.

⁶⁸Jerusalem Talmud, chap. 2, halakha 1.

like today when every one of us sings songs with a bitter heart from breathlessness, hard work, and the troubles of exile, singing the song in his mouth though his heart be mournful. Later, in the congregation of the Lord, there will be no singer who will not have reason to rejoice.⁶⁹

For our purposes, the “bridge” is as that, analogically, between the painful birth of the collection and its joyous contents. But the collection also presupposes the existence of an invisible bridge between synagogue song, in which readings from scripture were intoned monophonically according to oral tradition, and the new art of polyphonic song for two or more voices so devised as for the voices to coordinate in their pitches and rhythms. For want of an indigenous term in Hebrew, the “new art” was called *musika*.⁷⁰ To cross over the bridge was not to deny tradition; rather, the bridge might be conceived as a thoroughfare for moving back and forth between alternative practices of ritual celebration in music.

Rossi inaugurated the trend, or at least was the first to do so in a carefully composed and, thanks to Modena, no less carefully edited printed collection of works.⁷¹ The rabbi predicted their impact on the future. Turning to the “congregation of believers,” he remarked that they are “blessed” to have witnessed, “in [their] day,” this “peaceful beginning” established by “that wise man who writes and prints these praises in song.”⁷² It is incumbent on them to “teach them to [their] children for them to understand the science of music, with the knowledgeable man passing it on to the student, as was said of the Levites.”⁷³ Modena was “convinced that from the day this composition is published, those who learn it [the science of music] will multiply in Israel [that is, among the Jews] in order to sing to the magnificence of the Lord by using [the ‘Songs’] and others like them.”⁷⁴

The “Songs of Solomon” were exactly what Modena said they were: the first written and printed specimens of their kind. But his prediction of their immediate influence was overly optimistic: it was not until the nineteenth century that polyphonic song was regularly incorporated into the prayer services of the synagogue (in its revised rituals in Vienna, Berlin, and Paris). The “Songs” provided the model in their construction (formally, stylistically) and their sanguine content—they continued to be known, copied, studied, and annotated in the eighteenth and

⁶⁹Modena, foreword, §36; *CW*, 13a:185–86.

⁷⁰See, for example, Abraham Portaleone, *Shiltei haggibborim* [Shields of heroes] (Mantua, 1611/12), fol. 179r: “*chokhmat hashir* [learned song], or in Italian *musika*.”

⁷¹After years of its neglect while in exile: thus Modena in the foreword, §7–9; *CW*, 13a:177. He compares Rossi to “many famous persons, in yesteryear, among the families of the earth”; *ibid.*, §12; *CW*, 13a:178. In the dedicatory poem he continues in this vein, saying [distich 6:1] “After / the glory of the people / was dimmed / [6:2] completely / for many days / and many years, / [7:1] He [Rossi] restored / its [music’s] crown / to its original state / [7:2] as in the days / of Levi’s sons / on the platforms”; *CW*, 13a:189.

⁷²Modena, foreword, §32; *CW*, 13a:184.

⁷³Who trained singers and instrumentalists in the ancient temple; Modena, foreword, §32; *CW*, 13a:184.

⁷⁴Modena, foreword, §33; *CW*, 13a:184.

nineteenth centuries.⁷⁵ Finishing touches were put on the “Songs” in the fateful meetings, in Venice, in later 1622, between Rossi, Modena, and other “friends,” among them—ostensibly—Copia. There, after discussing the “Songs” and trying them out, to everyone’s satisfaction, the composer “consented to discharge his vow to print [them] as he had pledged,” to the greater glory of Jewish art music thereafter. Recognizing the implications of the decision, Modena remarked that “by agreeing to give them to the press,” the composer assured “his fame for generations to come”; truly “he is beginning something that will not be outdone and that did not exist as such in Israel.”⁷⁶ Had Rossi withheld the “Songs” from publication, the beginnings of Jewish art music and its future would probably have been quite different. But that is a tale that, without any basis in fact, can—fortunately—remain untold. ❧

⁷⁵See, for one example, the inscriptions, from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, in a part book for the quinto (fifth voice) of the “Songs” (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. 4^o 1119), on p. 26 (Psalm 112, “Haleluyah ashrei ish”), with a signature (in Hebrew) by the Moravian or Bohemian cantor Moses ben Abraham (illustration 17 in *CW*, 13a, facing 161).

⁷⁶From Modena, foreword, §21; *CW*, 13a:180. The portion about “his fame” reads there as “leaving behind a name better than sons” (whom the composer seems not to have had).