

Madonna Bellina, ‘astounding’ Jewish musician in mid-sixteenth-century Venice

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Io quando dico una bestemmia dico sempre: ‘Madonna bellina!’
Ché così, a dirgli Madonna bellina, Ella c’ha piacere, e ride.
(Primo Vanni, *Ma ogni tanto la debolezza ci prende*)¹

Around 1550, the Venetian playwright and satirist Andrea Calmo (d. 1571) wrote a love letter to a certain Madonna Bellina, a Jewess, commending her for her skills as singer and instrumentalist. There were doubtless other Jewish women who knew how to sing and play instruments in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, probably as amateurs.² Of those who reached a professional standard, however, only two are mentioned by name: Madama Europa, a singer on the payroll of the Mantuan court together with her brother the Jewish composer Salamone Rossi in the late 1580s and early 1590s (she can be traced until 1608); and Rachel, for whom there is some information as a singer – accompanying herself on a guitar perhaps – in Venice during the years 1609–14 (along with her father and brother she entertained Christians upon their invitation).³

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¹ P. Vanni (known as ‘Il Raccino’; 1921–93), *Ma ogni tanto la debolezza ci prende*, (ed.) Fr. Lanza, 3rd edn. (Forlì, 1994), 37 (from Quadro VIII: ‘La religiosità di Raccino’): ‘When I swear, I always say: “Madonna bellina! [Lovely Madonna!]”, for in hearing me say “Madonna bellina” she [the Madonna] is pleased and she laughs’. On the ‘enchanting’ qualities of the epithet *bellina*, see below.

² A point to be developed in the last section.

³ See D. Harrán, ‘Madama Europa, Jewish Singer in Late Renaissance Mantua’, in *Festa musicologica: Essays in Honor of George J. Buelow*, (ed.) Th. J. Mathiesen and B. V. Rivera (Stuyvesant, New York, 1995), 197–231; and, for Rachel, *idem*, ‘Jewish Musical Culture: Leon Modena’, in *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, (ed.) R. C. Davis and B. Ravid (Baltimore, 2001), 211–30, 289–95, esp. 213, also B. Ravid, ‘Curfew Time in the Ghetto of Venice’, in *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, (ed.) E. K. Kittell and Th. F. Madden (Urbana and Chicago, 1999), 237–75, esp. 246–47. The poet Sara Copio (*c.* 1592?–1641) – after marriage known as Sara Copio Sullam – also did some singing and playing, though probably at home for her own enjoyment or to entertain her friends. On her musical talents, see D. 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.) I. Alm, A. McLamore, and C. Reardon (Stuyvesant, New York, 1996), 367–422. For the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century one reads, in the poetry of Leonardo Giustinian (*c.* 1388–1446), of a certain young Jewess, still unidentified, by the name of Rosa as one who captivated its author, in Venice, by her singing. Like Sara, she probably sang as a casual pastime. See D. Harrán, ‘New Variations on *O rosa bella*, Now with a Jewish *Ricerare*’, *Studi musicali*, 27 (1998), 241–86; and for a shorter version, ‘Nouvelles variations sur *O rosa bella*, cette fois avec un *ricercare* juif’, in *Johannes Ockeghem: Actes du XI^e Colloque international d’études humanistes* (Tours, 1997), (ed.) Ph. Vendrix (Paris, 1998), 365–79.

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Preceding them by almost four decades, Madonna Bellina clearly awakens no little historical and musical interest. True, she is not foreign to the secondary literature, where, on the authority of Calmo, her existence as a bona fide Jewish musician was taken for granted.⁴ Yet all we know of her is her name and the extraordinary talents with which she is credited in his report. Was there a real person behind them?

To answer the question, I shall have to address several issues, among them the authorship of the letter and its dating, and what the letter tells us about her age, appearance, character, and musical abilities. How does Calmo relate to her religion and to what extent do his comments reflect his opinion of Jews? Also Bellina as a historical figure: did she actually exist, or was she merely a figment of the author's imagination? If she were *not* real, what would have led Calmo to invent her? For the letter in the original and in translation, see the Appendix. Numbers in parentheses below refer to those assigned there to its separate sentences.

CALMO AND HIS LETTER TO MADONNA BELLINA

There are three sides to Calmo's *oeuvre*: his comedies, of which some simulate the emerging *commedia dell'arte* in their humour and everyday speech, for example, his *Rodiana* (1540), 'a stupendous and most ridiculous comedy full of the shrewdest *bon mots* and recited in various languages';⁵ his poetry, of which the major collection is his 'bizarre, facetious, and clever fishing rhymes, including sonnets, *ottave rime*, *capitoli*, madrigals, epitaphs, *disperate*, and canzoni, along with comments on two sonnets of Petrarch, in the older

⁴ P. Canal seems to be the first to report on her: see his 'Della musica in Mantova', *Memorie del R. Istituto Veneto di Scienza, Lettere ed Arte*, 21 (1879), 655–774, at 702. He spoke of 'a certain Jewess, Madonna Bellina' whom Calmo 'praised to the skies in Venice' for her 'marvelous playing, singing, and composing, whereby she became the delight of the city'. The information then passed into Jewish historical studies: C. Roth, in his *The Jews in the Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 1954, and later editions), 300, mentions Bellina as 'one of several notable Venetian Jewish singers and musicians of this period' – one can only wish he had told us who these 'several notable' persons were! (I know of none for the sixteenth century). Via Canal, the author refers to Calmo, the one difference being that he appears to have examined Calmo's letter first-hand, citing two short remarks from it. Yet, strangely, Bellina is omitted from Roth's *History of the Jews in Venice* (New York, 1975, originally Philadelphia, 1930, under the title *Venice*). From his first study (*The Jews in the Renaissance*) Bellina turned up, as the next stage, in Jewish music surveys, among them A. Sendrey, *The Music of the Jews in the Diaspora (up to 1800): A Contribution to the Social and Cultural History of the Jews* (New York, 1970), 330 (Roth is quoted almost verbatim), and I. Heskes, 'Miriam's Sisters: Jewish Women and Liturgical Music', *Music Library Association Notes*, 48 (1992), 1193–1202, at 1199 (viz., 'Madonna Bellina Hebraea (fl. 16th cent.) was a celebrated musician . . .').

⁵ See *Rodiana, comedia stupenda e ridicolissima piena d'argutissimi moti e in varie lingue recitata*, (ed.) P. Vescovo (Padua, 1985). For Calmo's comedies, see G. Padoan, *La commedia rinascimentale veneta (1433–1565)* (Vicenza, 1982), 154–183; L. Zorzi, 'Tradizione e innovazione nel "repertorio" di Andrea Calmo', in *Studi sul teatro veneto fra Rinascimento ed età barocca*, (ed.) M. T. Muraro (Florence, 1971), 221–240; and J.-Cl. Zancarini, 'Andrea Calmo, auteur-acteur Vénitien (1509–71)', doct. diss., Université de Paris III, 1987.

mother tongue' (that is, Venetian);⁶ and his letters, in four books, which appeared separately or conjointly in various editions and under various titles. The letters, perhaps the most original part of Calmo's writings,⁷ demonstrate the same witty strain of his comedies and poetry. In one edition they are described as 'pleasant and clever discourses contained in many letters and presented in older vernacular speech' (Venetian); in another, as 'caprices . . . including a variety of clever discourses and phantasmal philosophical phantasies contained in many vernacular letters and presented in older speech' (Venetian).⁸ All of this whimsy disappears in the title to their modern redaction, where the editor, calling a spade a spade, calls the letters 'lettere'.⁹

The letter, or *discorso*, to Madonna Bellina appears in Book 2.¹⁰ As preliminaries to its reading, one might ask whether Calmo was the author. The reason for questioning this lies in his habit of signing the letters, at least in their first three books, under others' names. Not only do the letters cover different topics but they were ostensibly composed by different writers. Their names may have been as many pseudonyms for Calmo himself, but one cannot be sure. In the letter to Madonna Bellina the signatory is Ziselo [Xiselo] di Passarotti da Muran (22), who, in another letter, by another signatory (Totulo di Mussoli de Quintavale), appears as an earlier member of Calmo's family, one or two generations back.¹¹ If Book 2 originally came out in 1548,¹² Calmo, born around 1510, would, at the time, have been 38 years old and, moreover, some thirty or more years apart from his ancestor Ziselo, if there were such a one. That would set Ziselo's birth in the later fifteenth century and his encounter with Madonna Bellina in the early sixteenth. If, again, Calmo only pretended to be Ziselo, there would, nevertheless, have been a noticeable age difference between himself and Bellina,

⁶ *Le bizzarre, faconde, et ingeniose rime pescatorie, nelle quali si contengono Sonetti, Stanze, Capitoli, Madrigali, Epitaphij, Disperate, e Canzoni. Et il Commento di due Sonetti del Petrarca, in antiqua materna lingua* (Venice, 1553); as far as known, the first printed anthology of verses in Venetian dialect. See, for a recent edition, the one by G. Belloni (Venice, 2003). An earlier example of 'fishing rhymes', though written in erudite Latin and maintaining a serious tone, is by Jacopo Sannazaro (d. 1530): his five 'eglogae piscatoriae' (printed in Rome, 1526), plus a fragment of a sixth, are modelled on Vergil's Arcadian poetry, with fishermen from Capri and Naples now replacing shepherds. Cf. Sannazaro, *Elegie, odi, epigrammi*, (ed.) G. Castello (Milan, 1928), 19–51 (with Latin and Italian on facing pages), or for their English rendering, *idem, Arcadia and Piscatorial Eclogues*, tr. with introduction by R. Nash (Detroit, 1966).

⁷ Or so they were described by L. Zorzi in his entry on Calmo for the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, (ed.) A. M. Ghisalberto (Rome, 1960– [66 vols. until 2006]), Vol. 16, 775–81, esp. 777.

⁸ *I piacevoli et ingeniosi discorsi in più lettere compresi, e ne la lingua antica volgari [sic] dichiariti* (Venice, 1557); *Cherebizzi di M. Andrea Calmo. Ne' qavali [recte quali] si contengono varij, & ingeniosi discorsi, & fantastiche fantasie Filosofiche, compresi in più lettere volgari, nella lingua antica dichiarati* (Venice, 1576).

⁹ *Le lettere di messer Andrea Calmo riprodotte sulle stampe migliori*, with introduction and notes by V. Rossi (Turin, 1888). For a full listing of editions, see there, cxxvii–cxxx (Calmo's three books of letters were first printed respectively in 1547, 1548, and 1552).

¹⁰ For details, see introductory comments to Appendix.

¹¹ Totulo's letter (to Paruta, abbey of San Gregorio, Venice), with a genealogical survey of the family, is the first of those in Book 3: *Lettere*, (ed.) Rossi, 159–62 (and, for Ziselo's name, 161). For Ziselo among Calmo's ancestors, see the editor's notes, cviii–cix.

¹² See footnote above.

described as 'young' (4): the author indirectly confirms his seniority in his wistful remark that were he to regain his youth, he would take Bellina for his wife (20). In short, it is not clear who the author was; nor is it clear when Bellina lived. Calmo, as will be seen, tended to 'fantasize' about himself and others. In this sense, if not proven, it is at least conceivable that Calmo did in fact write the letter and that Bellina was, or could have been, someone he knew (or 'fantasized' about?) from around the time of its publication.

Secondly, can the letter be dated? The answer connects with the problems, already designated, of identifying Ziselo. Of the other signatories who were Calmo's kin, the oldest are thought to be in Book 3, the most recent ones – of the generation preceding Calmo's – in Book 1, and those between them in Book 2.¹³ If the first edition of Book 1 appeared in 1547 and that of Book 2 in 1548, the signatories would belong, in Book 1, to the 1540s; in Book 2, to the 1520s–30s; and in Book 3, to the 1500s–10s. If, on the other hand, the signatories and their genealogy were imaginary, then Calmo, who composed the letters under different namesakes, was describing what he knew from his own generation, and thus the letter would date from the later 1540s. As in the contents and signatories of the letters, so in their dating; ambiguity seems to be of the essence.

MADONNA BELLINA AS A PERSON

Who was Bellina? The letter will be read, in the present section, for its information about her age, appearance, character, and musical abilities; and, in the following one, for its comments on her Judaism.

As said above, Bellina was young (4). How 'young' is young is not easily decided, but she is likely to have been in her late teens. She must have been beautiful, or so one might infer from *bellina*. Whether the name was authentic or fabricated, to the reader it conveys what it says, loveliness, as enhanced by such other qualities – inherent in the diminutive suffix *ina* – as charm, daintiness, and delicacy.¹⁴ Before we know anything more of Bellina, her name, then, has already set a horizon of expectations. Calmo reinforces them by noting that she beguiles viewers and listeners – 'binding men', 'inflaming hearts', 'enslaving' her audience (7). Perhaps the highest compliment one could pay a woman is that she 'stupefies women': Bellina is said to have done just that (12). Whether it was because women, as Calmo insinuates, are less easily impressed by women than are men is not clear, nor is it important. What is, is that Bellina wielded her personal and musical charms in such a way as to make men and women her undivided admirers.

Her physical attractiveness was heightened by her delightful personality. She is the most 'genteel' (*zental*), that is, refined, polite, or well-bred woman

¹³ Cf. *Lettere*, comments of V. Rossi in his edition, cviii–cix.

¹⁴ To return to the epigraph: the name is so delightful as to blunt any discourtesy – even the 'Madonna' would smile when so addressed.

known, according to Calmo, since the fall of Jerusalem under the Romans (3–4). One might argue for a reading of ‘genteel’ as ‘Gentile’, meaning perhaps that of all Jewish women Bellina was, in her looks and conduct, the most un-Jewish. Yes, the author may have intended such an innuendo,¹⁵ but elsewhere – to anticipate the next section – he reminds us that she was, after all, a Jew (1, 4–5, 20–21).¹⁶ Bellina is said, further, to be kind, loving, and friendly (14). So genuinely concerned was she for others that she appeared to be ‘everyone’s sister and relative’ (15). Generosity in fact was one of her endearing traits: ‘if someone asks you for a finger, you give him two arms’ (16).

There is the question whether, as with other females who displayed their talents in the literary salons of sixteenth-century Venice, this ‘generosity’ was sometimes translated into bodily services. The examples of Gaspara Stampa (c. 1523–54) and Veronica Franco (1546–91) come to mind: to their fetching appearance they added skills in poetry and song, yet in effect plied their trade as courtesans.¹⁷ In short, was Bellina a courtesan? I raised the question in connection with the lovely Jewish girl Rosa described by Leonardo Giustinian in several of his poems from the early fifteenth century¹⁸ and, for contextual reasons, concluded that she was not. In the case of Bellina, the question is complicated by Calmo’s references, in his letters, to known prostitutes. Vittorio Rossi, their editor, says of the famous/infamous ‘Catalogue of all the major, most honoured courtesans of Venice’ (1557–66)¹⁹ that certain women in its listings were familiar to Calmo. ‘It is clear’, he remarks, ‘that when Calmo was writing, there were indeed in Venice courtesans who carried the names [of those in the “Catalogue”]. There is no doubt, moreover, that in Book 4 he addressed his *discorsi* to various courtesans: the content confirms this indisputably.’²⁰ The name Bellina, with its seductive ring, could well have been that of a Venetian courtesan, though it is not attached to any of those in the ‘Catalogue’.²¹ Calmo, who sensed perhaps that his words about her generosity might be construed as indicative of lasciviousness, hastened

¹⁵ For the pun on ‘gentile’, see Harrán, ‘New Variations on *O rosa bella*’, 268–70.

¹⁶ See the epigraph to the last section below.

¹⁷ For two general studies on them, see F. A. Bassanese, *Gaspara Stampa* (Boston, 1982), and M. F. Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago, 1992); and for their musical poetry (and its reflection of their femininity), D. Harrán, ‘Investigation through Interrogation: The Case of Female Poets and Feminist Poetry in the Sixteenth-Century Madrigal’, *Recercare*, 7 (1995), 5–46. On courtesans in the Renaissance, see G. Masson, *Courtesans of the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1975); and for those in Venice (from the fourteenth to eighteenth century), the catalogue of the exhibition *Il Gioco dell’amor: le cortigiane di Venezia dal Trecento al Settecento* (Venezia, 1990) (Milan, 1990), with a section by M. Laini on ‘Le cortigiane e la musica’, 95–98, and *Le cortigiane veneziane nel Cinquecento*, (ed.) R. Casagrande di Villaviera (Milan, 1968).

¹⁸ See ‘New Variations on *O rosa bella*’, as above.

¹⁹ *Catalogo di tutte le principal et più honorate cortigiane di Venetia*: after an eighteenth-century copy in the Museo Correr (MS Cicogna 2039). See *Catalogo*, etc. (Venice, 1984).

²⁰ *Lettere*, (ed.) Rossi, cv–cvi.

²¹ The only Jewess that does is ‘Ipolita Zudia’ (No. 124 on the list).

to add that Bellina kept within the 'bounds of prudence' (17), and we are probably to take him at his word.

Still, Calmo may teasingly have suggested that Bellina, because of her Jewishness, posed a threat. Being on the fringes of society, Jewish women, as treated in the literature, seemed to exude an aura of danger, hence the ambivalent stance of various authors who depicted them as oscillating between the lawful and the illicit.²² When all is said and done, Madonna Bellina, if she were drawn to life, was probably a lovely, likeable, and morally untainted young lady. Yet as a Jewess with such charms that, by no fault of her own, made her into a born seductress, her portrait by Calmo is furrowed by shadows.

Calmo rectifies the balance by focusing on Bellina as a skilled musician. He likens her, to start with, to a 'pillar of music' (1), meaning a person so solidly grounded in the knowledge of the *ars musicae* as to support the weight of its practice. By practice I refer here to the traditional division, in medieval and Renaissance music theory, into composition and performance. Bellina excelled in both of them, so Calmo asserted. Rising on the wings of hyperbole, he described her prowess in composition – which he calls *sol-fa*²³ – as so formidable that she outshone Josquin des Prez and other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century luminaries (about whom more below): they could have been her 'students' (10). He then goes on to signal her achievements in performance. Her voice captivates all those who hear it (7, 15), as one might already expect from her charms. 'You . . . astound [your] listeners' (12), even 'a thousand nightingales would lose out to you' in a contest (8). But to make her song even more effective, Bellina accompanied herself on an instrument. Her playing abilities, whether as her own accompanist or in solo performance, were no less impressive than those of the various instrumentalists to whom she was compared, among them Giulio of Modena (9; see below). As singer and player, Bellina is said to 'gladden festivities' and 'honour comedies' (12). Festivities is a broad term, to be understood as referring to Bellina's participation in concerts and theatrical events ('comedies') for public celebration on the streets (during Carnival?) and private entertainments in homes or academies or palaces. There is even reference to music making in her own chambers (13).

To return to Bellina's name: Calmo could not have known this, but as a point of interest to current readers, *bellina* is close to the Hebrew *belima*, or 'nothingness'. The Venetian rabbi Leon Modena (d. 1648) seems to have been the author of an unsigned echo poem²⁴ in which one of the stanzas

²² The point was made by L. Bitton-Jackson in her *Madonna or Courtesan? The Jewish Woman in Christian Literature* (New York, 1982).

²³ *Sol-fa* would ordinarily refer to solmization, that is, the use of different syllables to denote the pitches of a scale.

²⁴ Cf. D. Magid, 'Shir lo noda' me'et rav yehuda 'arye di modena' [An unknown poem by Rabbi Leon Modena], *Alim le-bibliografya ve-korat yisra'el* [Leaves for bibliography and the annals of Israel], 2 (1935), 103–6. The poem appears in the last work of Salamone Rossi's *Ha-shirim 'asher li-sh'lo mo* [The songs of Solomon] (Venice, 1623), No. 33.

reads ‘the yearning of a wife is, indeed, for her husband, for it is he who makes and forms her from naught (*belima*)’, following which *belima* is repeated as an echo. Liable, by word play, to additional connotations, *belima*, in its echo, could be read, in Hebrew, as *beli ma?* (‘without what?’), or, in Italian, as *belli ma* (‘pretty, but . . .’) or *belli ma* (‘pretty – never!’).²⁵ For ‘nothingness’, see Job 26:7, ‘hangs the earth upon nothing’ (*tole erets ‘al belima*). Had Calmo known as much, his intention, one might think, was to force the truism ‘beauty is skin deep’. He obviously did not, but even so, the truism would seem to hold for his depiction, though now in a perverse sense: as if Calmo were saying that no matter how beautiful Bellina was, as a Jewess the effect of her beauty was ‘nullified’. Such a reading could in fact be extracted from the statement that only through baptism will Bellina have peace of mind (20–21).

Madonna Bellina was, in a word, endowed with all the wonders of nature: beauty, charm, kindness, and musical talents. Her only flaw, as will be seen, was her being a Jew.

THE JEWISH QUESTION

As already noted, Calmo regarded Bellina as the first outstanding Jewish woman to appear since the destruction of the Second Temple (3–4), which, in years, amounts to the period from 70 CE to the late 1540s, when the letter was first published. The remark is startling enough, but Calmo raises the stakes, claiming further that Bellina was the first outstanding woman to appear among the Israelites in still earlier times: after the Exodus from Egypt (5). Realizing that the allegation might sound exaggerated, he pledges to debate it, if need be, before scholars and lawyers (5). Indeed, he caught himself in time, recognizing the most obvious exception to Bellina’s uniqueness, namely, Esther, favoured with ‘gallantry, beauty, and ability’ (6). Esther, it would seem, was the model for similar qualities that won Calmo’s praises in Bellina.

In anticipation of his forensic oratory, Calmo argues, all the same, for the special role played by Bellina as separate from Esther. He does so by juxtaposing the concepts of freedom and captivity. Yes, the Hebrews (under Moses) fled from Egypt, to liberty, and Esther, on her own initiative, released her uncle Mordecai from servitude under the wicked Haman, thus saved the Jews and restored the rights once accorded to their ‘scribes, Pharisees, and Levites’ (6). But with Bellina the opposite occurs: whatever freedom her

²⁵ The poem was written for a wedding celebration. For thirty-five authenticated wedding odes by Modena, see his *Divan*, (ed.) S. Bernstein (after Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mich. 528; Philadelphia, 1932), 165–94 (including an echo poem, though different from the one under discussion, 179–80); and thereabout, D. Harrán, ‘Marriage and Music as Metaphor: The Wedding Odes of Leon Modena and Salamone Rossi’, *Musica Judaica*, 17 (5764/2003–4), 1–31. For the verses and their musical setting, see Rossi, *Complete Works*, (ed.) D. Harrán, 13 vols. (Neuhausen, Middleton Wis., 1995–2003), Vol. 13a, 129–31 (poem and commentary), Vol. 13b, 215–28 (music).

listeners or viewers enjoyed is annihilated as soon as she is heard or seen or visited (7). She exercises a captive force upon her audience, enchanting them, as if a female Orpheus, or alluring them, as if a siren, by the force of her singing and playing.

Though few and general, Calmo's historical references are not without accuracy. Nor is there anything new or unexpected about them: they are more or less implicit in the collective Judeo-Christian conscious. The Second Temple, in Calmo's report, was a period of culture and learning – 'Jerusalem, abundant as it was in every variety of cultivated and educated persons' (3). Jews would doubtless concur with Christians on the breach between the glorious Second Temple and the miserable Jewish dispersion. Leon Modena wrote that

the vicissitudes of life in exile were enough to make the Jews forget all knowledge and lose all intellect. The wrath of the Lord was upon the people; and He afflicted and besotted them and made them wander into a pit empty of all understanding. Being in a land not of their own, the wisdom of their sages disappeared.²⁶

But there is a difference: in later times the Jews looked back to the age of David and Solomon not only out of nostalgia, but as a source of encouragement for renewing their own scholarship and culture. Not so the Christians, who clearly had no interest in a Jewish 'Renaissance': they saw the Jews as a wretched remnant of a once splendid period that, with its termination, marked the termination of their culture, beyond all possibility of recovery.

Thus, for Calmo, the Jews he portrayed as exiting from Egypt (around 1350 BCE) were clothed in rags and tatters (5). It would take some three hundred and fifty years before they reached their summit, in Jerusalem, during the First Temple. Their captivity in Persia, under Ahasuerus (486–465 BCE), was no less onerous than their Egyptian sojourn, or so Calmo would have us infer from his mention of Esther as their saviour (6). It would take some time for those who chose to return from exile in Babylon (after 538 BCE) and in Persia (after 332 BCE) to rebuild the Temple, in Jerusalem, in all its splendour. One might ask whether by drawing a parallel between Esther and Bellina the author was not implying that Bellina did for the Jews of her time what Esther did for those of her own. But the idea can be quashed at once: nowhere is Bellina said to have operated on the Jews' behalf, nor does Calmo show any regard for the Jews beyond engaging in their conventional denigration.

So what was Calmo's attitude toward the Jews? It was one that emphasized their otherness. Calmo juxtaposed 'yours' and 'ours', namely, 'your Jewish belief' versus 'our . . . Christian knowledge' (1). We are as 'separated from

²⁶ From his foreword to Rossi's 'Songs of Solomon', fol. 3r; *Complete Works*, Vol. 13a, 175–86, esp. 177.

one another', he writes to Bellina, as Christianity is separated from Judaism. The Christian faith is, for him, the only 'certain' one (1), by which he means its truth and stability, as against the implied *incertezza* of Judaism, that is, its falsity and instability. As long as Bellina clings to her Judaism, she will be blind (21).

With the superiority of Christianity to Judaism as a basic premise, Calmo leads us to infer two things from his argument. The first is that any concern with the welfare of the Jews, on the part of Christians, is to be interpreted as an act of benevolence. Affecting a sanctimonious attitude toward Bellina, Calmo writes that *despite* the difference between them, he as it were has condescended to tell her story – 'though we are . . . separated . . . still . . .' (1–2). The same superior tone is struck at the end of the letter. 'Despite all this', Calmo remarks, 'accept my [show of] good will' (21), or to paraphrase the words: 'Though you are blind, I have deigned, in my charity, to write about you in this letter'.

The second is that Bellina should rightly abandon her Judaism. Once the Lord – here Christ – 'enlightens' her, she will lose her blindness and know the true faith. By converting, she will die 'in his grace as his handmaiden and under the standard of the cross' (21). Calmo himself will see to her baptism (20).

Calmo cunningly fabricates his letter so as to have its first and last sentences (1, 21) accentuate a single theme: the pre-eminence of Christianity over Judaism. In musical terms, what he did was form a seeming *da capo* (a structure in which the ending reverts to the beginning), yet not without introducing a new 'variation on the theme' toward the close.²⁷ In the first sentence, Bellina is a Jew, to her own detriment; in the last, she is encouraged to relinquish her Judaism for Christianity, to her own advantage. If Calmo, at the outset of the letter and in its continuation, acted as a spokesman of the *ecclesia militans*, at the end he announces the victory of the *ecclesia triumphans*: Bellina joins the Church, her soul is saved, Christianity *superior* conquers Judaism *inferior*. The *da capo* is reinforced by related, though evolving vocabulary: the initial salutation speaks of music, in the person of Bellina, as a 'pillar' (1); the signature speaks of a 'key', as both a musical term (for a set of pitches) and a Christological one (22): the key (or keys) ordinarily held – one might presume – by Peter, after *petros*, 'rock'.²⁸ So the pillar that supports music has, as its counterpart, the rock that supports the Church.

Let us turn the 'key' to open the door to what might have been the hidden symbolism behind the letter. The author seems to build the theme of

²⁷ Though introduced in the seventeenth century in reference particularly to the Baroque aria, the designation *da capo* existed as a concept (and was reified in practice) from the earliest times on. If I 'play' with musical vocabulary here and in the continuation, it is because of the pronouncedly musical content of Calmo's letter to Bellina.

²⁸ See, for example, Pietro Perugino's *Delivery of the Keys to Peter* (1481–82; Rome, Cappella Sistina).

Christianity *superior* on various tropes. Peter the Apostle is not mentioned by name, yet he could be implied. 'I will give you [Peter] the keys to the kingdom of heaven', Christ says (Matthew 16:19), and it is no wonder that Peter wields such power, for, one verse earlier, we are told that upon this 'rock' Christ will build his Church. Christianity promises salvation for the faithful: upon death they pass through the portals, unlocked by Peter's keys, to Heaven. It is in relation to Peter, perhaps, that the signatory describes himself, to Bellina, as possessing the 'key to your clavicembalo' (22): key appears twice, first as *chiave*, then as the prefix *clav* in *clavcimbano*, that is, *clavicembalo*, or 'harpsichord'. Were Bellina to heed his words and convert, she would be saved.

Peter would seem to be implied, further, through the author's fishing imagery. The signatory's family name is Passarotti, which John Florio, in his lexicon, translated as 'little flounders or plaice'.²⁹ True, the moniker Passarotti can still be found, albeit infrequently, on the Venetian lagoon. But in the particular context established by Calmo it would appear to be calculated. Calmo's fishing rhymes ('rime pescatorie') have already been mentioned. They make semantic sense when we remember that the author proudly traced his origins to a lowly fishing family. Ziselo di Passarotti da Muran was himself a fisherman, casting his nets in the waters around Murano, one of several locations for Calmo's relatives – real or not – in their various peregrinations.³⁰ He follows in the illustrious footsteps of Peter and his brother Andrew, fishers on the Lake of Galilee. Walking by the lake, Jesus 'saw two brethren, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers' (Matthew 4:18).

It may have been by posturing as Peter that the author of the letter to Bellina identified himself as her saviour: he holds the keys to her redemption. The 'key' word in his exposition is *clavcimbano*, that is, *clavicembalo*, composed of *clave* (Latin *clavis*, Italian *chiave*), 'key', and *cimbano*, or *cembalo*. *Cymbalum* (Latin), or *kúmbalon* (Greek), refers either to a cymbal, an instrument with two hollow plates of brass, which, when struck together, emit a ringing sound, or to a bell. It was likened, in the patristic literature, to a soul yearning for God or a mind contemplating His wonders. Referring to Psalm 150:6, 'May every soul praise the Lord, hallelujah', Pseudo-Origen (third century) wrote that 'the well-sounding cymbal is the active soul, fixed upon the desire for Christ; the clangourous cymbal is the pure mind made live by the salvation of Christ'. Music immediately enters the picture, for the wise man has a soul of 'many strings brought together in harmony'. Deprived of harmony, he speaks 'with the tongues of men and angels, but does not have charity and is not a well-sounding cymbal'.³¹

²⁹ See note to sentence 22 in Appendix.

³⁰ *Lettere* (Book 3, No. 1), (ed.) Rossi, 160. The family was on the move 'de Aquileia, Grao, Equilio, Caurle, Iesolo, Buran, Mazorbo, Torcello, Muran, Oricenta, Costanciago', etc.

³¹ Pseudo-Origen, *Selecta in psalmos*, 150.3–5 (*Patrologia graeca*, Vol. 12, 1684–85); after translation by J. McKinnon in *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge, 1987), 39.

For Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215) the cymbal stands for the tongue of the mouth that praises God. He says of Psalm 150:5, 'Praise Him upon the loud cymbals', that it refers to 'the tongue of the cymbal of the mouth which sounds as the lips are moved' and of 150:6, which he understands differently from Pseudo-Origen, namely, as 'Let every "breath" praise the Lord', that it was pronounced, therefore, 'because He watches over every breathing thing He has made'.³²

The allegorical content of the exposition would seem to be buttressed by the sonic connection between *cymbalum* and *symbolum* as near homonyms.³³ A symbol is a sign for something beyond the signified; a cymbal, by affinity, points to a deeper theological sense, as understood by the Church fathers. When the author of the letter asserted that he holds the key to Bellina's already 'keyed' *cembalo* ('clavicembalo'), he might have been saying that he could improve its harmony, removing the dissonance of its Judaism, or its wrongly tuned 'keys', to create Christian consonance. Once the tuning of the 'keys' on Bellina's instrument is adjusted, once, that is, Bellina converts, she will properly yearn for God in her soul, applying her mind to His precepts, as a Christian who sings and plays a New Song.³⁴

FACT OR FICTION

PRINCE JOHN: '... yonder Jewess [Rebecca of York] must be the very model of . . . perfection whose charms drove frantic the wisest king that ever lived!' . . . PRIOR AYMAN: '... but your Grace must remember she is still but a Jewess'.
(Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, 1819)

The major question to be asked about Calmo's letter is its credibility. To answer it one must, to start with, engage with at least two attendant questions, of a biographical and intentional order: what kind of image of himself is Calmo trying to project? What did he wish to achieve by writing about Bellina?

As was said, Calmo places himself in a straight line of descent from earlier generations of fishermen. The truthfulness of his claims was taken for granted in the early literature.³⁵ Yet it has been questioned recently by Ludovico Zorzi,

³² Clement of Alexandria, from *Paedagogus*, 2.4 (*Patologia graeca*, Vol. 8, 441); after McKinnon, *Music*, etc., 32–33.

³³ 'Near', for though they sound alike, they are etymologically different: *kymbolum*, from *kymbé*, *kymbos*, 'vessel'; *symbolum*, from *syn*, 'together', and *ballein*, 'to throw'.

³⁴ Under which conditions one might read the word *chiave*, or 'key', for its erotic implications, which, though skirted till now, are no less evident: were Bellina to become a Christian, Calmo could insert his 'key', i.e., sexual organ, into her body to consummate their union.

³⁵ In particular, in an early biography by A. Zilioli (d. 1650), included in his *Vite dei poeti italiani*, for example: 'He [Calmo] was born in Venice in the most lowly condition, having, for his father, a boatman [*barcaruolo*] while his mother was herself of hardly any higher rank' ('Costui nacque a Venezia di umilissima condizione, avendo avuto il padre barcaruolo e la madre anch'ella di poco differente nobiltà'); after Rossi, who, in his edition of the *Lettere*, v, quotes from an eighteenth-century manuscript copy of the *vite* in Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, cod. Marc. Ital. X. 1 (for a later printed edition, which I did not consult, see *Vite di gentiluomini veneziani del secolo XVI tratte dalle Vite dei poeti italiani de Alessandro Zilioli ed ora per la prima volta pubblicate* [Venice, 1848]).

who, in his entry on Calmo for the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, cites the scarcity of information on his life – few documentary records survive – and, therefore, the difficulty of sorting out fact from fiction. On his fishing origins, he writes rather decisively:

In some of these letters the author delights in describing himself, analogously to his imaginary signatories, as belonging by birth to the world of fishers and boatmen on the estuary, therefore to the most humble and peripheral class of those who constituted the fabric of the ancient citizenship on the [Venetian] lagoon. . . . But in reality nothing, except a certain familiarity with ichthyologic³⁶ and marine terminology apparent from some works and possibly derivative from another venue, would suggest that he came from a family of fishers and *batelanti* [boat people].³⁷

For Zorzi, then, Calmo is striking a pose. But why? One reason, according to Rossi, may have been to establish an overall consistency for the letters. Though Calmo failed to mention dates for the various members of his family, he 'succeeded, nevertheless, in giving his work a certain unity of, if nothing else, "ambience", especially by means of that quasi-marine colouring that accompanies the reader from beginning to end'.³⁸ Another possible reason would have been more egoistic. In boasting his fishing origins, Calmo attempted perhaps – as I see it – to actualize, in his person, the Christian virtue of humility. Christ, it will be remembered, described himself as 'meek and lowly in heart' (Matthew 11:29). Contrasting the meek and the mighty, he warned his followers that 'whoever exalts himself shall be abased and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted' (Luke 14:11).

Saint Peter was originally a 'meek, lowly' fisherman, yet the Church solidly rests on him as a 'rock' (Matthew 16:18). By feigning humility, however, Calmo would not only have exhibited his Christianity but also have performed an act of self-aggrandizement, in the sense of the words 'whoever humbles himself shall be exalted'. The more humble he appeared the more attention he would have called to himself, thus 'solidifying' his person as a 'rock' on which to place the 'letters' for their appreciation.

Calmo's motivation for assembling the letters was not so much to reproduce actual ones that were sent but rather to provide samples of letter writing as accommodated to differing subject matter. On this point Rossi was quite emphatic, noting that 'the letters collected in this volume [of my edition] were to be sure never dispatched as such to the persons whose names they bear up front. Rather, for this reason, they appear to belong to that class of letters written only for distribution in print, as examples of epistolary style or for delighting

³⁶ Ichthyology is the systematic study of fishes.

³⁷ *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Vol. 16, 776. Zorzi writes that Calmo's biography 'remains almost totally to be reconstructed' (*ibid.*, 775).

³⁸ *Lettere*, (ed.) Rossi, cix.

the readers'.³⁹ The desire to entertain was not uncommon: Parabosco, to whom Calmo dedicated one of his letters (see below), was himself the author of *Lettere amorose*, about which he wrote that 'the larger part were dictated by my own passion; yet I composed others for the pleasure of my friends'.⁴⁰

Calmo wrote his letters, as he did his comedies and poems, not just to demonstrate their varying styles and convey their sundry messages, but even more conspicuously to entertain his readers. He continues the already existing tradition of the theatrical *intermedio* in his concern with the clever, the delightful, and the wondrous. He borrows from burlesque poetry – as, for example, that of Francesco Berni (d. 1536) – and extemporized comedy in his cultivation of the ridiculous, the vulgar, and the absurd; in his use of dialects and standard character types; and in his choice of simple, if not vapid themes. I shall refer to some of these traits, as delineated mainly in the titles to his works, under various headings, namely: the pleasant, the contrived, the macaronic, the satiric, the jocose, and the incongruous. Though they work together, for purposes of demonstration they have been separated.

The pleasant: *Il Saltuzza* (1551) was meant to be 'a pleasant . . . comedy', as was *Il travaglia* (1556), 'a very pleasant . . . comedy'. Similarly, the letters were designated, in various editions, as 'pleasant . . . speeches (*discorsi*)' (1557, etc.).⁴¹

The contrived: *Il travaglia* was constructed 'with the finest invention'; *Rodiana* (1540) was a 'comedy . . . full of the shrewdest remarks'.⁴² Calmo's poems (1553) are said to be 'clever rhymes'; his letters, in various editions (1559, 1572, etc.), to be "cherebizzi" . . . various clever speeches (*discorsi*).⁴³ Though derived from *cherubo* or *cherubino*, 'cherub', 'cherubic', *cherebizzi* also relates to *cerebro*, 'brain', hence, again, shrewd or clever, even capricious – Boerio described *cherebizzo* as 'an ancient word that corresponds to the Italian *ghiribizzo*, with the meaning of *fantasia*, *bizzarria*'.⁴⁴ Using the verb *legare*, Calmo 'contrives' the analogy between Bellina who 'binds' (*lighe*) anyone who 'hears, sees, and visits' her (7) and himself who, by snatching her for his wife, would also 'bind' (*lioghe*) her (19). Nothing could be more 'contrived' than the name 'flounders' (*passarotti*) borne by the signatory of the letter to underscore his fishing pedigree (23).⁴⁵

³⁹ *Ibid.*, civ. On letters as stylistic models in the sixteenth century, see *Le 'Carte messaggere': retorica e modelli di comunicazione epistolare: per un indice dei libri di lettere nel Cinquecento*, (ed.) A. Quondam (Rome, 1981); also Cl. Ortner-Buchberger, *Briefe schreiben im 16. Jahrhundert. Formen und Funktionen des epistolaren Diskurses in den italienischen libri di lettere* (Munich, 2003).

⁴⁰ Parabosco, *Le lettere amorose* (Venice, 1545), from the author's dedication to Gottardo Occagna ('la maggior parte dalla propria passione dettate sono, le altre poi a piacere di diversi miei amici composti'; *a piacere di* might also possibly be construed as 'in compliance with the request of').

⁴¹ *Il Saltuzza*: 'la piacevole . . . comedia'; *Il travaglia*: 'comedia . . . molto piacevole'; letters: 'I piacevoli . . . discorsi in più lettere compesi'.

⁴² *Il travaglia*: 'comedia . . . sotto bellissima invenzione'; *Rodiana*: 'comedia . . . piena d'argutissimi moti'.

⁴³ 'Le . . . ingeniose rime'; 'Cherebizzi . . . varij, & ingeniosi discorsi'.

⁴⁴ G. Boerio, *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano*, 2nd rev. and exp. edn. (Venice, 1856), 162.

⁴⁵ As already said, the name can be found among Venetians. Still, it is by having deliberately chosen it for self-designation that Calmo, in his letter to Bellina, reinforced its semantic implications.

The macaronic: by mixing languages to create 'macaronic' texts, Calmo doubtless amused his audience. *Il travaglia* is described as 'adorned by various languages', *La potionne* (1552) as 'contrived in diverse languages', and *Rodiana* as 'recited in various languages'.⁴⁶ The clash between elegant and pedestrian speech always caused a smile, as did the clash between Tuscan and dialect.⁴⁷

The satiric: in *Il travaglia*, which translates as 'distress' or 'torment', Calmo awakened expectations of sobriety, then purposely reversed them, in the content and action of the play, by engaging in parody.

The jocose: 'jocose' is another variety of 'pleasant', yet now more in the sense of waggish and entertaining. *Il Saltuzza* was meant to be a 'jovial comedy', *La potionne* a 'most whimsical comedy', and *Rodiana* a 'most ridiculous comedy'.⁴⁸

The incongruous: with 'incongruous' we come full circle to account for Calmo's credibility. It would seem to be vitiated by the anomaly of his alleged fishing origins or of his often outlandish modes of presentation. Not only did he write 'fishing rhymes', but they are described as 'bizarre', that is, unusual or alien.⁴⁹ Not only did he write letters, but, as already mentioned, they are described, in one edition, as 'phantasmal philosophical phantasies', a qualifier so calculated in its alliteration as to cast serious doubts on the reliability of their content and the integrity of their author. To return to the letter to Bellina, can one honestly believe that a lowly fisherman would write to an accomplished female musician? or that a young Jewish lass would have been so 'professionally' knowledgeable about music? or that she ran musical entertainments in her home? (13) or that she was 'the toast of the town' in Venetian circles, captivating her listeners by her music and her viewers by her good looks? The more far-fetched the story becomes, the more it loses in plausibility. Rather than state things as they are, Calmo tends to inflate them: can Madonna Bellina have really been all that Calmo said she was? If his letters were written by fictitious authors, were their contents no less fictitious?

The questions lead us to the brink of an epistemological quandary. They resolve to two basic ones. Firstly, was Madonna Bellina real or imaginary? Zorzi summarizes the dilemma in his terse description of the letters as written 'by presumed fishermen . . . to illustrious or illusory dedicatees'.⁵⁰ Yes, some of the dedicatees were illustrious, for example, among the musicians, Adrian Willaert (see below). Yet others appear to have been the work of a sometimes

⁴⁶ *Il travaglia*: 'di varie lingue adornata'; *La potionne*: 'in diverse lingue ridotta'; *Rodiana*: 'in varie lingue recitata'.

⁴⁷ On polyglot comedy in the sixteenth century, with particular reference to Calmo, see L. Lazzarini, 'Il "gregesco" a Venezia tra realtà e ludus. Saggio sulla commedia poliglotta del Cinquecento', *Studi di filologia italiana*, 35 (1977), 29–95.

⁴⁸ *Il Saltuzza*: 'giocosa commedia'; *La potionne*: 'comedia facetissima'; *Rodiana*: 'comedia . . . ridicolossissima'.

⁴⁹ 'Le bizzarre . . . rime pescatorie'.

⁵⁰ *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Vol. 16, 777.

overactive imagination (among them Bellina?). One way to answer the question would be to review the identity of the musicians to whom Calmo refers in his letters at large and, in particular, the one to Bellina. Can they be traced? There are, in the collection as a whole, three letters directed to musicians, Bellina's included. One of them carries the name of Gerolamo Parabosco, the other that of Willaert: both were Calmo's contemporaries. Of Parabosco (1524–55), a composer of madrigals and versatile author of comedies, Calmo says:

But aren't you as knowledgeable about literature and don't you cultivate as fine a style in your musical works as any other [writer and composer]? And don't you play an instrument as fully in one or another *fantasia* as you do in improvising *ricercars* and *motets*? And thus – I don't need to tell you – express your ideas? You are something! . . . How do you manage to play a Credo in G at the semitone and in D in a sober mode, holding a pedal on the key of B flat?⁵¹ Should someone give you a bass, does it not suffice for you as a stimulus for providing all other parts as counterpoint without otherwise overly engaging in their excogitation? . . .⁵²

Willaert, the addressee of the second letter,⁵³ needs little introduction: as chapelmaster at Saint Mark's from 1517 to 1562; he was the leading figure in Venetian musical life and in fact was epitomized, in the massive treatise of his student Gioseffo Zarlino, as the chief exponent of mid-sixteenth-century counterpoint.⁵⁴ Calmo praises him for being a musician from head to toe – music is deep in his bosom and brains:

But the true, profound, valuable, lofty, and fully natural music is impressed, infused, ingrained, implicit, and implanted within your bowels and around your guts and inside the frame of your spirits. It is kept intact in the lovely box [of your body] under your intellectual protection.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Though he piles up musical terms, Calmo appears to be speaking gibberish.

⁵² Book 2, No. 22: ' . . . ma vu savé de bone letere, havé bel stil in le vostre composition de musica tanto quanto un altro, e può sonar un istrumento da pena de fantasia de fantasia, a l'improviso recercari e moteti? no ve digo; de esprimer el vostro conceto? varda la gamba . . . co fassue a sonar un credo in sol per semiton, e in re per natura grave, e col pedal su la chiave del b-molle? chi ve desse un basso ve basterave l'anemo de contrapontizar tutte le altre parte senza studiarle altramente? . . .' (*Lettere*, (ed.) Rossi, 116–18, esp. 117; the words 'varda la gamba', ordinarily 'watch your step', though translated above as 'you are something', are described in the editor's notes as an expression of admiration).

⁵³ Book 3, No. 19; *Lettere*, (ed.) Rossi, 198–200.

⁵⁴ Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche* (Venice, 1558 [fac. repr. New York, 1965], and five later editions until 1589), specifically Part 3 on composition as exemplified, for him, by the works of Adrian Willaert (c. 1490–1562) and his contemporaries – the same part has been translated by G. A. Marco and Cl. Palisca as G. Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint* (New Haven, 1968).

⁵⁵ ' . . . ma la vera, profonda, imbegosa, alta e sora natural musica è imprimesta, infusa, inarpesà, revoltà e incolà in mezo de le vostre viscere e attorno le buele e infra le commesure d'i spiriti e conservà intel scrigno cordial, soto la vostra custodia intelletiva' (Calmo, *Lettere*, (ed.) Rossi, 198).

He sees him as a great teacher, whose influence on 'composers and singing teachers' is as potent in the present as it was in the past (on those since deceased) and will be in the future (on those yet to be born).⁵⁶ His compositions represent the height of elegance – they were 'distilled in seven refineries and purified in nine waters and cleansed in four fires, to make them meet the condition of *aurum potabile* [the alchemists' drinkable gold]'.⁵⁷ With his psalms, hymns, and other sacred works he achieved 'the glory that befits an eminent musician'.⁵⁸

Of the six musicians mentioned in the letter to Bellina (9–10), five can be authenticated. The roster includes the composers Iusquin – Josquin des Prez (c. 1440–1521), as great a composer in his own generation as was Willaert in his; and Verdelotto – Philippe Verdelot (c. 1475–before 1552), among the earliest composers of the Italian madrigal. Josquin and Verdelot are mentioned by Calmo's contemporary Cosimo Bartoli (1503–72) in his *Ragionamenti accademici* (1567), as are the other three: Giulio of Modena, Jachet of Ferrara, and Jachet of Mantua (whom Calmo calls 'that fellow' from Mantua).⁵⁹

Giulio of Modena (Iulio da Modena) may be identified as Giulio Segni (1498–1561), acclaimed in his time as a keyboard instrumentalist and a composer. Bartoli said of his playing that it is 'singular – no doubt about it – and lovely';⁶⁰ his skills on the harpsichord were hailed by Ortensio Landi⁶¹ and those on the organ by Anton Francesco Doni.⁶² Of his keyboard works, thirteen ricercars appeared in the premier collection *Musica nova* (1540).⁶³

Jachet of Ferrara (Iachet de Ferrara) played the viol or lute. Bartoli quotes a report in which he is said 'to play with more charm, more art, and more musicality than any other, no matter who'.⁶⁴

Jachet of Mantua ('quel' de Mantoa) is less easily identified. Bartoli remarked on the composer Giachetto da Mantova that 'his music, in my opinion, delights me considerably and seems to me to be of the same constitution as

⁵⁶ '... e' so che havé mostrao le fighe a quanti compositori e maistri de cantar se trova al presente e i preteriti e, perdoneme, anche quei che diè vegnir' (*ibid.*, 199).

⁵⁷ 'La vostra componitura... è destilà a sete lambichi e purgà in nuove aque e afinà quatro fuoghi, proprio a la condition de l'aurum potabilem' (*ibid.*, 199).

⁵⁸ '... eo maxime stantiando in sagrao e praticando con i salmi e consultando con inni, talmente che tutta la gloria conveniente a un gran musico ve se dà a la maiestae vostra' (*ibid.*, 199).

⁵⁹ *Ragionamenti accademici... sopra alcuni luoghi difficili di Dante* (Venice, 1567). On musicians, see particularly the *Ragionamento terzo*, available in *Due scritti intorno alla musica nel principato mediceo di Cosimo I e Francesco I*, (ed.) F. Perruccio (Naples, 1989), 63–81; and, for a detailed study, including a transcription of the same *ragionamento*, J. Haar, 'Cosimo Bartoli on Music', *Early Music History*, 8 (1988), 37–79.

⁶⁰ 'Raro certo et vago è il sonare di Iulio' (Haar, 'Cosimo Bartoli on Music', 79).

⁶¹ Ortensio Landi, *Sette libri di cataloghi* (Venice, 1552), 510.

⁶² Anton Francesco Doni, *Lettere* (Venice, 1544), fol. 33r.

⁶³ *Musica nova*, (ed.) Colin Slim (Chicago, 1964).

⁶⁴ Haar, 'Cosimo Bartoli', 65: 'a tempi suoi non ha sentito sonatore alcuno che gli piaccia piu di lui, parendoli che gli suoni con piu legiaddria, con piu arte, & piu musicalmente che alcuno altro, & sia qual si voglia'; in the continuation Bartoli said that his playing 'is so marvelous that nothing more need be said' ('... perché costui veramente è tanto meraviglioso che non si può dir più').

the compositions of Adriano [Willaert]'.⁶⁵ Jachet/Giachetto, to all appearances Jachet [Jachet] de Ferrara (c. 1495–c. 1559), though not to be confused with the one above, was a Frenchman who, after residing in Ferrara,⁶⁶ became *maestro di cappella*, in 1539, at the Mantuan Cathedral of Saint Peter's, for which he wrote sacred music.⁶⁷ He is sometimes mistaken, in the sources, for Jachet de Berchem (c. 1505–c. 1565),⁶⁸ a Flemish-born composer of considerable renown, though connected not with Ferrara or Mantua but with Verona, where from 1540 to about 1550 he was *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral.

About the instrumentalist Vittorio d'Urbino I have no information, and unless he was a minor figure whose traces are still to be uncovered one can only wonder whether he was fictitious.

No firm conclusions can be drawn: Bellina may or may not have been real. If she were, she certainly did not attain the stature of the persons to whom she is compared, otherwise her name would not be glaringly absent from the sources. Who knows? Bellina could have been a young amateur musician: Jewish girls were sometimes taught how to sing and play instruments; in fact they craved such instruction. In a letter that a dutiful Jewish daughter wrote her father in the 1570s, we read:

I knew . . . that your heart was set . . . on having me make a name for myself [as skilled] in the sciences . . . and for my part, as your hand-
maiden, the knowledge of any science is far more worthwhile and pleasant
than having pearls. Find me someone who knows how to play and who
practices song; bring him to me and let him teach and train me in the
fundamentals of those [musical] sciences.⁶⁹

She dared to make the request for music lessons because she knew that her father, anxious about her education, would accede to it. Musical literacy was probably considered an asset for young Jewish girls, as it was for those of them – usually orphans – employed as servants in Jewish homes (according to a contract dated 1577–78 they were expected to be taught 'all the household needs suitable for knowledge by every enlightened woman', including dancing and playing music).⁷⁰

⁶⁵ '. . . et quanto a me la Musica sua mi diletta grandemente et mi pare ch'ella habbia di quello andare delle composizioni di Adriano'; *ibid.*, 55.

⁶⁶ I. Fenlon, *Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1980–82), Vol. 1, 69; also L. Lockwood, 'Jean Mouton and Jean Michel: French Music and Musicians in Italy, 1505–1520', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 22 (1979), 191–246, esp. 224–34.

⁶⁷ Cf. Fenlon, *ibid.*, Vol. 1, 68–78. For music, see Jachet de Mantua, *Opera omnia*, (ed.) Ph. Jackson and G. Nugent, 6 vols. (n.p., 1971–86).

⁶⁸ On the confusion between both Jachets in the sources, see G. Nugent, 'The Jacquet Motets and their Authors', Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 1973), also Fenlon, *Music and Patronage*, 74.

⁶⁹ 'Igot beit carmi [Letters of the Carmi family] (*Cremona, 1570–77*), (ed.) J. Boksenboim (Tel Aviv, 1983), 104 (letter 74).

⁷⁰ See, for the example, H. Adelman, 'Servants and Sexuality: Seduction, Surrogacy, and Rape: Some Observations concerning Class, Gender, and Race in Early Modern Italian Jewish Families', in *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition*, (ed.) T. M. Rudavsky (New York, 1994), 81–97, esp. 81–82.

Or as another possibility, more mundane: Bellina could – hypothetically – have been a simple young, musically untrained Jewish maid who, going about her chores, innocently sang a tune that Calmo heard, by chance, while passing through the Venetian ghetto. The experience might have been enough perhaps to fire his imagination, leading him to turn a 'nobody' into a professional.⁷¹

Calmo's declaration, at the outset of his letter to Bellina, to 'give a real, authentic, and solid account [of her]' for all time (2) sounds suspect – 'the lady', said Hamlet, 'doth protest too much, methinks' (3.2.242). One is inclined to read Calmo's words in an inverse sense; hence 'real' is false, 'authentic' counterfeit, and 'solid' unreliable. The more Calmo pleads accuracy the more dubious his assertions become, as when he refers, for their substantiation, to the authority of those with more 'elevated, seasoned, and mature minds' than his (3). How many of Calmo's women were fictitious? It was Piermario Vescovo's opinion that just as his letters were often fictitious, so were his *signore*, said (by Vescovo) to form a gallery of portraits 'inexistent beyond their literary variation'.⁷²

If in effect Bellina were not real, then, as a second question, one would probably ask: why would Calmo want to make her up?

He might have done so – from what one knows of his methods and motives – under the conviction that the character he delineated was bound to be entertaining. The idea of a Jewish female musician would have been doubly intriguing: it was usually Christian women who were described in the literature, not Jewish ones; it was usually Christian female musicians, not Jewish ones. That Bellina deviated from the norm would have made her a piquant subject, the more so since the writer goes out of his way to register his astonishment at her winning appearance and fabulous skills. He catches and keeps our attention.⁷³

In writing to Bellina, the author strove to demonstrate how, if need be, one might compose a letter of praise to a Jewess. But, beyond being instructive,

⁷¹ Jokingly one might add: as an unsuspected variation on the verse quoted above about the husband 'who makes and forms [his wife] from naught (*belima* = *bellina*)'.

⁷² Vescovo, *Da Ruzante a Calmo: tra 'Signore Comedie' e 'onorandissime stampe'* (Padua, 1996), in particular Ch. 5 ('Le "Lettere" del Calmo: allusività accademica e fabulazione burlesca', 179–209, and for comments on women, 181, 184).

⁷³ As does another (late nineteenth-century) writer describing the Venetian Jewess Sara Copio (d. 1641), a poet – already mentioned above – with some probably modest musical abilities: I refer to Ernest David, who said of her that 'her enchanting voice ravished all those who had the joy of hearing her and when, in the fire of inspiration, she sang the stanzas of her verses that she herself set to music, while accompanying herself on the lute or the keyboard, she dazzled her listeners who could not decide what to admire more in her: her beauty or her prestigious talent? . . . Of an incomparable beauty, . . . a penetrating and superior intelligence and [a versatility that made her] beloved of the Muses, Sara enchanted all persons of her sex and all men of her time, young or old . . .'; 'Sara Copia [*sic*] Sullam, une héroïne juive au XVII^e siècle', *Archives israélites*, 37 (1876), 377–81, 407–11, 440–43, 471–74 (and several other instalments), esp. 440. If one did not know otherwise, one would think that David was quoting directly from Calmo's report on Bellina (especially its sentences 7–10, 12). On Sara as 'musician', see D. Harrán, 'Doubly Tainted, Doubly Talented: The Jewish Poet Sara Copio (d. 1641) as a Heroic Singer' (as above).

his paean to Bellina reveals other layers of content and intent: like Parabosco, the author speaks as ‘dictated by [his] own passion’, indeed he writes a love letter, in which, moreover, he argues for the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. His love of Bellina is so strong, he says, that if he were to enjoy a second youth he would go to the end of the earth – his exact words were ‘to Colchis’, where, in Greek mythology, Jason sought, and found, the prize of his endeavours, the Golden Fleece – to take her for his lawful wedded wife (19–20). But, he warns, there would be no marriage until Bellina converted and was baptized into the Church (20).

Even if Madonna Bellina were not a real person, her being described in such detail might suggest two possibilities: either Calmo was acquainted with one or another Jewish female musician; or, if he was not, by the very act of conceiving Bellina he acknowledged and legitimated her as a ‘species’.⁷⁴ What this means remains to be seen. One thought is that he invented her as a complement to the already existing ‘species’ of Jewish male musicians (and music teachers). In 1443, legislation was enacted in Venice to prevent Jews, presumably males, from running schools in which they taught games, *arte*, *dottrine*, dancing, singing, and playing instruments.⁷⁵ It was renewed in 1644, though now also prohibiting Jews from entering Christian homes for such instruction,⁷⁶ from which one might infer that Jews taught music, publicly and privately, in the interim.⁷⁷ The same Jews who taught Christians were probably hired, by Jewish fathers, to give music lessons, in private, to their daughters.

We know nothing of Madonna Bellina beyond what we read of her in Calmo’s letter. But as shadowy as she is, she emerges as the first of her kind, if not in historical fact then at least as a literary ‘invention’.⁷⁸ At some point, the two questions of whether or not Bellina existed and why Calmo would have cogitated her, if she did not, diminish in importance. What we have for her is the author’s report, unique and no less entertaining in its content and presentation than he intended it to be. To be sure, there is the challenge of

⁷⁴ In line with Vescovo’s contention that Calmo, in treating women, created a series of character types (*ibid.*, 181).

⁷⁵ See B. Ravid, ‘The Legal Status of the Jews in Venice to 1509’, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 54 (1987), 169–202, esp. 186.

⁷⁶ See Ravid, ‘Curfew Time in the Ghetto of Venice’ (as above), 249.

⁷⁷ For music taught in Rome, in the mid-1630s, in a Jewish grammar school in the ghetto, see G. L. Massetti, ‘Una scuola ebraica di grammatica e di musica a Roma (1635–1636)’, *Studi secenteschi*, 14 (1973), 53–77. Of its twelve or thirteen Jewish students, at least three learned how to play the Spanish guitar (63, 68).

⁷⁸ Another Jewish female literary invention is Giustina Levi-Perotti. In a study on Petrarch, G. F. Tomasini identified her as a Jewess who, corresponding with the poet, sent him a sonnet (‘Io vorrei pur drizzar queste mie piume’) to which he is said (by Tomasini) to have replied in a sonnet of his own (‘La gola, il sonno e l’oziose piume’; *Canzoniere*, No. 7); see his *Petrarcha redivivus* (Padua, 1635), 111. Her status as a famed, fourteenth-century Jewish poetess was reiterated in subsequent literature until, and even beyond, M. Morici, who qualified the sonnet as a sixteenth-century forgery and charged Tomasini with perpetrating a hoax: cf. Morici, ‘Giustina Levi-Perotti e le petrarchiste marchigiane: contributo alla storia delle falsificazioni letterarie nei sec. XVI e XVII’, *La rassegna nazionale*, 108 (1899), 662–95.

confirming or denying its veracity. But even if it cannot be met, few would dispute that like other letters by Calmo, so the *lettera* to Bellina, as the various titles to the collection promised, was 'pleasant' (*piacevole*) and 'clever' (*ingeniosa*) and 'fanciful' (*fantastica*). For the time being, that is – unfortunately – the only certain thing one can say about it.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

APPENDIX

Calmo's letter to Madonna Bellina

- | <i>Sigla</i> | <i>Sources and bibliographical aids</i> |
|--------------|---|
| 1548 | Andrea Calmo, <i>Il rimanente de le piacevole [sic] et ingeniose littere indirizzate a diversi con bellissime argutie. Sotto varii et sottilissimi discorsi dechiariti</i> (Venice), fols. 38v–39r (yet absent from idem, <i>I piacevoli et ingegnosi discorsi</i> , etc., as under 1550 below; Venice, 1548). |
| 1550 | — <i>I piacevoli et ingegnosi discorsi in più lettere compresi, e ne la lingua antica volgari [sic] dechiariti</i> (Venice, 1550), fols. 38v–39r. Served Vittorio Rossi as the source for his modern edition (1888; see below). |
| 1557 | — <i>I piacevoli et ingegnosi discorsi in più lettere compresi, e ne la lingua antica volgari [sic] dechiariti</i> (Venice, 1557). In this edition, where, as above, there is still no division into books, the letter occurs in a section entitled 'Il rimanente de le piacevole [sic], et ingeniose littere', on fol. 31r–v. |
| 1560 | — <i>Il secondo libro delli piacevoli et ingegnosi discorsi in più lettere compresi, e nella lingua antica volgare dechiariti</i> (Venice, 1560), 91–93. |
| 1576 | — <i>Cheribizzi di M. Andrea Calmo. Ne' qavali [recte quali] si contengono varij, & ingegnosi discorsi, & fantastiche fantasie Filosofiche, compresi in più lettere volgari, nella lingua antica dechiarati</i> (Venice, 1576), in Book 3, fols. 32v–34r. (Earlier edition: 1559) |
| 1888 | — <i>Le lettere di messer Andrea Calmo riprodotte sulle stampe migliori</i> , ed. V. Rossi (Turin, 1888), 91–92, and for editorial comments, 123–24. |
| Boerio | G. Boerio, <i>Dizionario del dialetto veneziano</i> , 2 nd rev. and exp. edn. (Venice, 1856; repr. Turin, 1960). |
| Florio | J. (John olim Giovanni) Florio, <i>Vocabolario Italiano & Inglese: A Dictionary Italian & English. Formerly Compiled by John Florio, and since his last Edition, Anno 1611. Augmented by himselfe in His life time, with many thousand Words, and Thuscan Phrases. Now Most diligently Revised, Corrected, and Compared, with La Crusca, and other approved Dictionaries extant since his Death; and enriched with very considerable Additions. Whereunto is added a Dictionary English & Italian, with severall Proverbs and Instructions for the speedy attaining to the Italian Tongue. Never before Published</i> (London, 1659). |

The reading of the letter as presented below is after the 1560 edition. Variants have been signalled for the 1557 and 1888 editions (the latter based on the 1550 edition, as noted above). Numerals – this editor’s addition – identify the various sentences (or portions of sentences) into which the letter, for immediate reference, has been divided. Calmo’s vocabulary is often antiquated: Boerio said of the letters that they contain ‘many ancient vernacular terms unknown to our times’ (under the vocable *cherebizzo*, 162).

- 1: [Page 91] Alla collona de la Musica M. Bellina Hebraea Anchora che semo desferenciai,⁷⁹ dal vostro creder zudaico, al nostro saver certo Christian,
*To the pillar of music, the Jewess M.[adonna] Bellina:
 Even though we are separated from one another by [the distance from] your Jewish belief to our certain Christian knowledge,⁸⁰*
- 2: pur e⁸¹ no posso far, spento⁸² da quelle bone parte,⁸³ che se trovat⁸⁴ vu, che non⁸⁵ daga real, a⁸⁶ autinticha e salda rellation, a tutti i seculi,
still I, impelled by those good qualities to be found in you, cannot help but give a real, authentic, and solid account [of you] for all centuries [to come].
- 3: perche e⁸⁷ no m’inganno che lo⁸⁸ anche per piu d’una bocca d’ellevai, sasonai,⁸⁹ e mauri cervelli, cha⁹⁰ non se⁹¹ el mio, che da la presa de Hierusalem, che giera⁹² copiosa d’ogni qualita e⁹³ de brigenti,⁹⁴ e de vertudiosi,⁹⁵

⁷⁹ 1888: desferentiai. For the verb *desferenziar* Boerio has ‘differenziare o disferenziare, esser diferente, variare’. *Desferenciai* (or *desferentiai*) is an adjectival past participle (masculine plural).

⁸⁰ ‘Certain’ in the sense of true, the implication being that Judaism is untrue. The difference between the two religions is emphasized by the formulation ‘your belief’ versus ‘our knowledge’, as if ‘belief’ is what the Jews *think* (or *are led to believe*) they know whereas ‘knowledge’ is what the Christians can *rightly be sure* they know (see above). Conflictual use of first person plural: while ‘we’ refers to Calmo and Bellina, ‘our’ refers to Calmo’s coreligionists.

⁸¹ 1888 [1550]: e’ (in the sense of *io*, ‘I’; see 1888, glossary).

⁸² For *spento* Boerio has ‘spinto; incitato; mosso; provocato’.

⁸³ *Parte*, ordinarily singular, though here obviously meant to be read in the plural. J. Florio (*Vocabolario Italiano & Inglese* [London, 1659]; full entry at beginning of Appendix) has for *parte*: ‘sub. a part, a partage, a share, or a division of a thing’, etc.

⁸⁴ 1557, 1888 [1550]: trova in.

⁸⁵ 1888 [1550]: no.

⁸⁶ 1557, 1888 [1550]: not *a*, but *e*.

⁸⁷ 1888 [1550]: e’ (in the sense of *io*; see above).

⁸⁸ 1888 [1550]: l’ho.

⁸⁹ From Venetian *saxonà* (Tuscan, *stagionato*).

⁹⁰ Venetian *cha* or *ka* (Tuscan, *che*).

⁹¹ 1888 [1550]: ca no xe.

⁹² 1888, glossary, *giera*: era.

⁹³ 1888 [1550] has the two words combined as *qualitae*.

⁹⁴ 1888 [1550]: brigenti. In the glossary to 1888, *brighente* is defined as ‘compagno’; likewise Boerio: ‘compagnone, uomo sociale, piacevole di buon tempo’.

⁹⁵ For *vertudioso* Boerio has ‘versato negli studii’.

Nor am I mistaken in having heard it said by more than one mouth of [those with more] elevated, seasoned, and mature minds than mine that ever since the capture of Jerusalem, abundant as it was in every variety of both civilized and educated persons,

- 4: no e⁹⁶ vegnuo in Iuse⁹⁷ in tutta la descendentia del populo hebreo, una piu zentil zovene de vu,
no young woman has been more genteel (gentile) than you among all those born in the descent of the Jewish people.
- 5: e si argumentero davanti quanti abachisti, e latinaori, e legisti, zapa la terra,⁹⁸ che no ge sta⁹⁹ etiam un'altra per el tempo preterito quando Israel conduceva le so tattare¹⁰⁰ fuora d'Egitto,¹⁰¹
If I argue this before any mathematicians, Latinists, and lawyers, it will be a waste of energy, for not even in times long past, when Israel led its tattered folk out of Egypt, was there any other [of your kind].
- 6: e si Hester con la so gallantaria, bellezza, e sufficientia, fese donar, la libertae a Mardocheo captivo, e per donar¹⁰² e restituir¹⁰³ el dominar a i Scribi, Pha- [92] risei, e leviti¹⁰⁴
If Esther with her gallantry, beauty, and ability saw to it that captive Mordecai be freed and that the scribes, Pharisees, and Levites be spared and their dominion restored,
- 7: vu pro converso¹⁰⁵ lighe¹⁰⁶ i homeni, infoge¹⁰⁷ i cuori, e tegni schiavi¹⁰⁸ quanti, ve alde, ve vede, e ve pratica¹⁰⁹
you, on the contrary, bind men, inflame hearts, and enslave whoever hears, sees, and visits you.
- 8: e si volemo dir de la vose, e ge¹¹⁰ perderave mille rosignoli,¹¹¹
Were we to say something about your voice, it would be that a thousand nightingales would lose out to you;

⁹⁶ 1888 [1550]: è.

⁹⁷ 1557, 1888 [1550]: luse (or in Tuscan, *luce*).

⁹⁸ For the idiom *zappare la terra* De Mauro (*Il dizionario della lingua italiana*) has, as one explanation, 'fare una cosa inutile, darsi da fare inutilmente' (www.demauroparavia.it).

⁹⁹ 1888 [1550]: gh'è stà.

¹⁰⁰ 1888 [1550]: tatara. For *tatara* Boerio has 'taccola; zacchera; tattera; arme; arnesi'; for *tattera*, *tattere* Florio has 'tatters, rags, clouts, shreds, also trash or luggage, also the disease Creste'.

¹⁰¹ See Exodus 14:21–29.

¹⁰² 1557: p(er)donar; 1888 [1550]: perdonar.

¹⁰³ 1557, 1888 [1550]: restituir.

¹⁰⁴ 1888 [1550] has *Leviti* followed not by a question mark but by a comma. For the deliverance of the Jews from annihilation, see Esther 8–9.

¹⁰⁵ Though Boerio said of *de converso* that it is an 'old adverbial form used by Calmo, in his letters, for "mutually" (*reciprocamente*)', in the present context it can only mean 'on the contrary', as translated.

¹⁰⁶ 1888 [1550]: lighè ('bound').

¹⁰⁷ 1888 [1550]: infoghè ('inflamed').

¹⁰⁸ 1888 [1550]: tegni schiavi ('enslaved').

¹⁰⁹ 1888 [1550]: semicolon after *pratica*.

¹¹⁰ 1888 [1550]: e' ghe.

¹¹¹ 1888 [1550] has a semicolon here. Though the verbs in this and the next two sentences are in future tense, they have been translated in the subjunctive (for the *si* clauses) and the conditional (for the main clauses).

- 9: si rasonaremo del sonar, e parre¹¹² fia de Iachet de Ferrara, e de Iulio da Modena, e Vittorio d'Urbin,¹¹³
were we to speak of your playing, it would be that it resembles that of Jachet of Ferrara, Giulio of Modena, and Vittorio of Urbino;
- 10: si faveleremo puo¹¹⁴ de la solfa,¹¹⁵ dirò¹¹⁶ che Verdelot¹¹⁷ Iusquin, e quel de Mantua,¹¹⁸ porave esser vostri scolari,¹¹⁹
and were we afterwards to talk of solmization, I myself would say that Verdelot, Josquin, and that fellow from Mantua could well be your students.
- 11: mo¹²⁰ che tanto menarve per la longa,¹²¹ e gratarve la schena, con simularve¹²² quel che e¹²³ spanto¹²⁴ per tutto¹²⁵ e notus inter hominibus,¹²⁶
But rather than weary you so much and pat you on the back by repeating something spread about everywhere and notus inter hominibus [‘well known to everyone’],
- 12: (cho dise la canzon)¹²⁷ vu alegre¹²⁸ le feste, honore¹²⁹ le comedie, fe maraveiar i auditori, stupefar le donne¹³⁰
[let me say] (as was said in the song [we all know]): you gladden festivities, honour comedies, astound listeners, and stupefy women.
- 13: e si¹³¹ de¹³² utele,¹³³ a casa vostra, puo¹³⁴ atirando in resto¹³⁵ tutte ste cosse no valerave un bagatin,¹³⁶

¹¹² 1888 [1550]: e' parè.

¹¹³ 1888 [1550] has colon. For identification of two of these figures, see study.

¹¹⁴ 1888 [1550]: può; equivalent to Tuscan *poi* or *dopo*.

¹¹⁵ Literally solmization, though used here in the sense of composition (see study).

¹¹⁶ 1888 [1550]: dirò.

¹¹⁷ 1888 [1550] has comma here.

¹¹⁸ Iachet de Mantua. For identification of these three figures, see study.

¹¹⁹ 1888 [1550] has a full stop here and the next word, *mo*, capitalized to start a new sentence. The translation follows suit.

¹²⁰ For *mo* Boerio has *ma*, ‘but’ (while Florio defines it as ‘now, at this very instant’).

¹²¹ Or in its Tuscan equivalent: *menare per le lunghe*.

¹²² *Simular*, literally simulate, though used here in the sense of reproduce (or, as translated, repeat).

¹²³ 1888 [1550]: è.

¹²⁴ For *spanto* Boerio has ‘sparso; disteso’.

¹²⁵ 1888 [1550] omits *per tutto*, used here in the sense of *dappertutto*.

¹²⁶ *Recte* inter homines (a slip of the pen against which Augustine cautioned in his *Confessions* 1.18.29).

¹²⁷ 1888 [1550]: *hominibus, co dise la canzon?* In the glossary *co* appears as an apocope for *come*, ‘as’, yet the question mark might suggest *che*, or ‘what’ (‘what did the song say?’). The portion that follows would seem to be a quotation from a popular song.

¹²⁸ 1888 [1550]: *alegrè* (‘gladdened’).

¹²⁹ 1888 [1550]: *honore* (‘honoured’).

¹³⁰ 1888 [1550]: *fè*, etc. (‘astounded’, ‘stupefied’).

¹³¹ The verb *faveleremo* seems to be implied (as in sentence 10).

¹³² 1888 [1550]: *dè*. It suggests another reading (‘If you offered benefits’, etc.).

¹³³ 1888 [1550] has no comma here.

¹³⁴ 1888 [1550]: può.

¹³⁵ 1888 [1550] has comma after *resto*. The words *attirare in resto* have been taken to be analogous to *tirare in lungo*, ‘to draw out or prolong’ the speech.

¹³⁶ Boerio writes for *bagatin*: ‘bagattino, baghero; frazione di moneta ch’equivala alla duodecima parte del già soldo Veneto, e che una volta . . . era moneta reale’ and for the expression *No valer un bagatin*: ‘non valere un lupino o una buccia di porro’.

Were we to speak of the benefits [to be gained] in your house, and be long-winded thereabout, [I'd say that] all these things would be worthless

- 14: e si¹³⁷ sarave senza saor,¹³⁸ e da no fargene¹³⁹ conto, si le no fosse accompagnae,¹⁴⁰ da un amor cordial, da una cortesia zeneral, e da una amicitia universal,
and so senseless¹⁴¹ and not to be reported unless accompanied by the cordial love, general kindness, and widespread friendship
- 15: che tota gens, a poder¹⁴² con vu,¹⁴³ de receiver di¹⁴⁴ vostri canti,¹⁴⁵ e soni,¹⁴⁶ parlando familiarmente, co si fosse¹⁴⁷ sorella, e consanguinea d'ogni homo,
that you empower all people, [whenever they're] with you, to receive from your songs and your playing, as if, to speak familiarly, you were everyone's sister and relative.
- 16: e chi vegende¹⁴⁸ domanda un deo, e vu ghedene done¹⁴⁹ do brazza,
And if someone asks you for a finger, you give him two arms,
- 17: e tutta volta col dever, no se partando da i termini de prudentia,¹⁵⁰
yet do so with respect, not departing from the bounds of prudence.
- 18: de sorte che al corpo de chi me ha spuaò fuora de i ventre- [93] sini¹⁵¹ in mia¹⁵² specialitae, e¹⁵³ ve son tanto amigo,
In such a way [do you act] that I am as greatly devoted to you as I am to the body of the one¹⁵⁴ who spit me forth from her belly in all my innumerable particulars.
- 19: e si ve voio¹⁵⁵ cusi¹⁵⁶ ben amoredei,¹⁵⁷ che¹⁵⁸ si fosse¹⁵⁹ garzon con assae facultae,¹⁶⁰ liogeve¹⁶¹ pur, e scondeve,¹⁶²

¹³⁷ Here *si* seems to be used not as *se* ('if') but as *così* or *sì* ('so').

¹³⁸ For *saor* Boerio has 'sapore'.

¹³⁹ 1888 [1550]: farghene.

¹⁴⁰ 1888 [1550] has no comma.

¹⁴¹ Literally, 'tasteless'.

¹⁴² Boerio has for *poder* 'potere, aver possanza; possanza'.

¹⁴³ 1888 [1550] omits the commas after *gens* and *vu* and spells *a* as *ha*.

¹⁴⁴ 1888 [1550]: d'i.

¹⁴⁵ 1888 [1550]: no comma.

¹⁴⁶ 1888 [1550]: not a comma, but a semicolon.

¹⁴⁷ 1888 [1550]: fossè.

¹⁴⁸ 1888 [1550]: ve ghende.

¹⁴⁹ 1888 [1550]: ghedene donè ('gave' or 'would give').

¹⁵⁰ 1888 [1550]: semicolon.

¹⁵¹ For *ventresini* Boerio has 'ventresca, cioè la pancia', namely the fatty innards of pork. G. Piccio enlarges the meaning to include rows of tunny ('corrisponderebbe alla ventresca ossia alla pancia del tonno, nella parte più grassa o più morbida'): *Dizionario veneziano-italiano*, 2nd edn. (Venice, 1928), 145.

¹⁵² Here *mia* is to be read as *miglia*, 'thousands', or more modestly, 'innumerable' (see translation).

¹⁵³ 1888 [1550]: e'; seems to mean 'io' (see above), as translated.

¹⁵⁴ Namely, his mother. Said otherwise: he loves Bellina as much as he does his mother. When applied to Bellina, the word *body* should also be understood for its sexual innuendo.

¹⁵⁵ 1888 [1550]: voggio.

¹⁵⁶ 1888 [1550]: cusi.

¹⁵⁷ 1888 [1550]: ben, amore dei. For *amoredei* Boerio has 'per amor di Dio; a grato; per grazia'.

¹⁵⁸ 1888 [1550]: not *che* but *co*, where *co si* reads 'as if'. In the various prints the syntax of this sentence is garbled, hence the editorial interpolations.

¹⁵⁹ 1888 [1550]: fossè.

¹⁶⁰ 1888 [1550] has a full stop after *facultae* and starts a new sentence with *Liogeve*, spelled *Liogheve*.

¹⁶¹ The reading in the imperative is after *ameme* in sentence 21.

¹⁶² 1888 [1550]: semicolon. For *sconder* Boerio has 'nascondere; ascondere; coprire'.

*And if I love you so much and, with the grace of God, were a young man with many [youthful] faculties, bind and hide yourself,*¹⁶³

20: si andasse de la Colocut,¹⁶⁴ che e¹⁶⁵ ve vorave rapir, e tiorve¹⁶⁶ per mia legitima sposa, fagandove in prima batizar, intende?¹⁶⁷

[for] should I go as far as Colchis, I'd want to abduct and take you for my legitimate wife, first having you baptized; you understand?

21: con¹⁶⁸ questo accette¹⁶⁹ el bon voler, e ameme come debitamente comanda la rason, e reste¹⁷⁰ in pase chel¹⁷¹ Signor ve inlumina, a morir in la so gratia, come so ancilla, e sotto el stendardo de la Crose.

Despite all this, accept my good will and love me as reason dutifully commands and live in peace until the Lord¹⁷² enlightens you to die in his grace as his handmaiden and under the standard of the Cross.

22: Xiselo di passarotti¹⁷³ da Muran¹⁷⁴ chiave del vostro clavicimbano Ziselo, [a member] of the Passarotti family from Murano, [and] the key to your clavicembalo [‘harpsichord’]

¹⁶³ When filled out, the meaning is perhaps ‘bind yourself to keep me from abducting you’ (see next sentence) ‘and hide yourself to keep me from finding you’.

¹⁶⁴ 1557, 1888 [1550]: andasse de la da Colocut (with no comma, in 1588, after Colocut). The reference is to Colchis, on the Black Sea: there Jason and the Argonauts found and seized the Golden Fleece (as reported by Homer, Hesiod, Apollonius of Rhodes, Ovid, etc.).

¹⁶⁵ 1888 [1550] omits *e*.

¹⁶⁶ 1888 [1550]: for *tior* the glossary has ‘togliere’.

¹⁶⁷ 1888 [1550]: intendè?

¹⁶⁸ 1888 [1550] has, before *con*, the conjunctive *e*.

¹⁶⁹ 1557: accete; 1888 [1550]: acetè.

¹⁷⁰ 1888 [1550]: restè.

¹⁷¹ 1888 [1550]: pase, che ‘l.

¹⁷² Here Christ.

¹⁷³ 1888 [1550]: Ziselo d’i Passarotti. For *passaretti*, *passarini* Florio has ‘little flounders or plaice’.

¹⁷⁴ 1888 [1550] has comma after *Muran*.