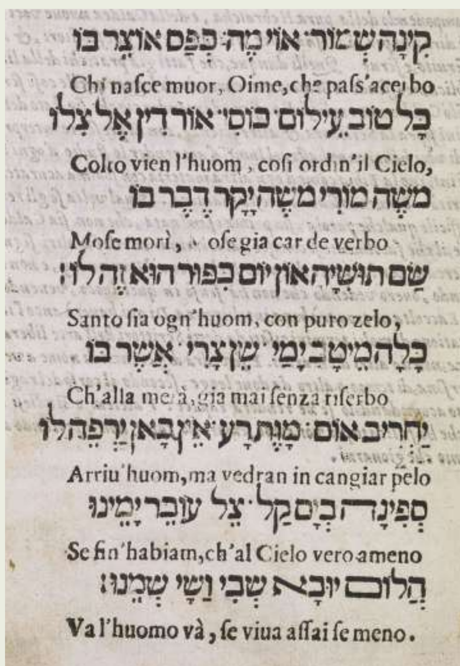
Micha Lazarus

Leon Modena's *Kinah Shemor*



קינה שמור׃ אוי מה׃ כפס אוצר בו

Chi nasce muor, Oime, che pass'acerbo

כל טוב עילום כוסי׃ אור דין אל צלו

Colto vien l'huom, cosi ordin'il Cielo,

משה מורי משה יקר דבר בו

Mose morì, e ose gia car de verbo

שם תושיה און יום כפור הוא זה לו׃

Santo sia ogn'huom, con puro zelo,

כל המיטב ימי שן צרי אשר בו

Ch'alla me[illegible]à, gia mai senza riserbo

יחריב אום׃ מות רע אין זבא און ירפה לו

Arriu'huom, ma vedran in cangiar pelo

ספינה דברם קל׃ צל עובר ימינו

Se fin'habiam, ch'al Cielo vero ameno

הלום יובא שבי ושי שמנו׃

Va l'huomo và, se viua assai se meno.

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Micha Lazarus

Leon Modena's *Kinah Shemor*

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Prologue

In 1584, shortly after his bar-mitzvah, the young Italian Jew Leon Modena (1571-1648) composed an eight-line poem so remarkable that it has never been rivalled in its own genre. Known as *Kinah shemor* in Hebrew, *Chi nasce muor* in Italian, this elegy for Modena's deceased teacher, Rabbi Moshe della Rocca, makes sense simultaneously in both languages. It stands at the head of an exiguous tradition of short poems, fragments, and fragments of memories of short poems, often composed by Jews and operating at the borders between Hebrew and romance vernaculars, Jewish and Christian communities.

Yet for want of a formal name, this tradition has long resisted absorption into the critical canon. To scholars of Hebrew and Italian poetry it is a curiosity more cited than studied; in the Anglophone world, it is all but unheard of. More than merely bilingual or macaronic, for Modena the form seems to have existed somewhere between language and music. Moreover, *Kinah shemor* presents a test case for some unusual problems of composition and editing alike. What constitutes a 'good' reading among variants of a poem whose purpose is to sound like something rather than to mean something, or when the choice between those variants is answerable to a parallel text

in a different language and with a different meaning?

This essay presents the first critical edition of the poem to take into account all three of its primary witnesses; provides an English translation of both the Hebrew and the Italian aspects of the poem; and outlines the poem's critical afterlife over the course of its first century in print. I begin in §1.1 with an account of the poem's composition and significance in the context of Modena's own life and interests. Writing about *Kinah shemor* in a few scattered places, Modena consistently drew attention to two aspects of its innovative form: its virtuosic wordplay, and its interstitial place between languages and ethnic communities. Both bear on the poem's form, genre, and function. In §1.2 I examine Modena's lifelong penchant for wordplay, in particular the acoustic, translingual wordplay of which *Kinah shemor* is the outstanding example. Rather than following previous scholarship and associating this linguistic device with the Hebrew riddle tradition or the genre of funeral poetry — though it was plainly contiguous to both — I argue in §1.3 that Modena focused directly on the acoustic interplay between the Hebrew and Italian languages, which he understood to operate more like music. Moving away from formal considerations, §1.4 then turns to the poem's function as a bridge between Christian and Jewish cultures. Proud of the respect and friendship he enjoyed across the aisle, Modena intended *Kinah shemor* to speak, literally, across languages and religions, uniting Christians and Jews in a brief community of wonder.

Part II presents a critical edition (and simplified transliteration where necessary) of the Hebrew and Italian texts and paratexts of *Kinah shemor*/*Chi nasce muor*, based on the three primary witnesses of the poem that survive. The first is Modena's autograph manuscript, inscribed between

1595 and his death in 1648, now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The second appears in *Midbar Yehudah*, an early collection of Modena's sermons printed in 1602: here the Hebrew and Italian texts of the poem appear whole, one after the other, in Hebrew characters and prefaced by a paragraph in Hebrew. The last version to appear in Modena's lifetime was in *Pi ʾaryeh*, an Italian dictionary of words from rabbinical literature, which appeared in 1640 appended to the second edition of Modena's dictionary of biblical words, *Galut Yehudah*. In this final form the Hebrew and Italian texts are intercalated line-by-line in their respective scripts, and introduced by a paragraph in Italian (the sense of which differs from the Hebrew introduction of 1602).

The present edition is the first to take into account all three primary witnesses, whose variant readings offer clues as to the poem's compositional history. I supply English translation of and commentary on both the Hebrew and Italian aspects of the poem, as well as the paratexts with which Modena published the poem throughout his life. Modena himself recognised that the Hebrew in particular was exceptionally difficult to understand, due to the torsion, indeed distortion, required to twine these languages together. While many ambiguities remain, my translation has been guided by Modena's own lexicographical writings, in particular *Galut Yehudah*, his Hebrew-Italian biblical lexicon, which (I argue in §1.3) was closely related to the poem in his mind. Where multiple senses of Modena's Hebrew are available, *Galut Yehudah* can sometimes clarify the sense in which he was most likely to have understood it. I have thus attempted to resolve conflicting connotations, trace allusions, and render the poem in an English version as close as possible to Modena's intended meaning.

In Part III, finally, I return to the question of genre to explore the poem's critical afterlife in the first century after Modena's death. *Kinah shemor* is in the vanguard of a marginal tradition of similar attempts at homophonic poetry, many of them (in imitation of Modena's original) in Hebrew, but reaching into other languages as well. This tradition is generally thought of as a strictly modern phenomenon, indeed strictly modernist: examples can be found in the homophonic curiosities of Oulipo and jazz vocalese, and avant-garde experiment such as Celia and Louis Zukofsky's translations of Catullus, or David Melnick's *Men in Aida*. Modena's example and others, however, suggest that the tradition reaches back much further than the twentieth century. I have discussed elsewhere, in a study of acoustic imitation in Anglo-Italian Renaissance madrigals, the fact that a critical language to describe, and therefore locate, discuss, and study, instances of this device has only recently become even provisionally available (Lazarus 2021, 681-715). The struggles of early critics and bibliographers of Jewish literature to absorb *Kinah shemor* into the critical canon bear witness to the effect of anonymity on a nascent genre. In the absence of a standard label under which to categorize it, Modena's novel composition and the literary phenomenon it exemplifies have remained obscure outside specialist scholarship.

It should be clear from the foregoing description that, while this essay draws on the details of Modena's life, on relations between Jews and Christians in early modern Venice, on Hebrew literary forms and their reception in Christian scholarship, and on a host of other topics, it is above all a study of *Kinah shemor* itself and not of its many illuminating contexts. The astonishing virtuosity, the sheer brio, of Modena's poem have given it the distinction of

making the most dazzling cameo in any story which has the opportunity to claim it. The poem has been illuminated by those stories in turn: *Kinah shemor* has been studied as an instance of Hebrew funerary poetry, for example, and as an example of the Hebrew riddle tradition. But since the mid-seventeenth century, critical attempts to assimilate Modena's poem to contiguous genres have left the impression of missing the point somewhat, of accounting for the poem's more legible aspects at the expense of leaving its real *differentia* unremarked. Certainly, the semantic content of this lament for Modena's deceased teacher justifies its classification as funeral poetry. Yet Modena himself recognised, as we shall see, that the curiosity of the poem — the *point* of it — has little to do with its semantic content. Something is always left wanting when *Kinah shemor* is treated as an example of anything other than itself. Annexation of this kind has suppressed the poem's renown over the centuries, casting Modena's masterful composition as eccentric to some larger genre rather than as the central exemplar of its own.

My purpose in this essay is not only, therefore, to establish the text of *Kinah shemor*, to make it accessible to English-speaking audiences, and thereby to make more critically legible this largely unknown genre, of which more examples, in a range of languages, surely remain to be found. It is to do so by unfolding the qualities of Modena's poem that *differ* from the better-known frames of literary history into which it has more or less awkwardly been squeezed; to analyse it not as a maverick exemplar of an extant genre, but as a new form that evolved and borrowed from its literary neighbours without being circumscribed by them. I look for the nature of this new form in the thought of its inventor. Yet for all that I begin with Modena's life and times, and the few clues he

left us as to how he thought about his poem, this essay is not primarily an historical study of Hebrew poetry in the Venetian ghetto. Many other scholars would be far more competent to produce such a study. Rather, it is a study of a novel literary object, little understood and less imitated; of what that object is and how it came to be; and of how and why it has struggled to find a place in the ecosystem of poetry as we know it.

All translations herein are my own unless otherwise attributed. I have provided the original Hebrew for texts that have not elsewhere been translated. Where the sound of the Hebrew is relevant I provide transliterations according to the 'somewhat simplified system' set out by the editors of Leon Modena's autobiography: צ is rendered by *tz*, ח and ה by *h*, ב and ו by *v*; ʾ indicates א and ʿ is ע (Modena 1988,[1] xx-xxi).

My transliterations broadly follow modern Hebrew pronunciation, and consequently do not capture the sound of the language as it was spoken in Venice around the turn of the seventeenth century. Cecil Roth observed that 'the correspondence between the Hebrew and Italian texts will become clearer if the reader remembers the variants in the Italian (especially Venetian) pronunciation of Hebrew at this time, when apparently the *sh* sound was pronounced *s*, and *g* pronounced *i* or *y*' (Roth 1959, 307, note 1). One might add that the vowel *ayin* was pronounced with an audible pharyngeal *ng* (as it is still pronounced, and transliterated, in the liturgy of modern-day communities that follow the Western Sephardi *nusach*, such as those in London, Amsterdam, New York, and Philadelphia). As a result, '*colto vien l'huom*' in line 2, and '*ma vedran*' in line 6, would have echoed their Hebrew equivalents, 'כָּל טוֹב עֵילוֹם' (*col tov ʿeylom*) and 'מָוֶת רָע' (*mavet*

[1] Hereafter '*Life of Judah*'.

ra'), even more closely than my transliterations suggest. The same observation holds for the contemporary pronunciation of Italian. In Modena's 1602 printing of the Italian poem in Hebrew characters, the *-c* of *acerbo* (now pronounced 'ch' as in 'church') is transliterated with a צ (*tz*); the word in early seventeenth-century Venetian dialect may have been pronounced '*atzerbo*', again closer to the Hebrew '*otzer bo*' than modern pronunciation captures. Given that the poem hinges on the assonance between Hebrew and Italian as they were spoken at this particular place and time, it is regrettable to add still another acoustic variable in the interest of rendering the text audible to readers without Hebrew in the present day. But attempting to reconstruct the sound of early modern Venetian Hebrew and Italian would be a far more tentative exercise, and would only serve further to estrange the texts in question from their intended modern readership. Pragmatism has won over principle on this occasion.

For help with Hebrew and Italian I am grateful to Ilan Lazarus, Oren Margolis, Yakov Mayer, Ruth Shir, Yonatan Vardi, and above all Shachar Orlinski. Stuart Gillespie's keen eye greatly improved the piece at an early stage, and Nicholas de Lange made invaluable comments on my translation. Roni and Jeremy Tabick were generous with their Talmudic learning. A special debt is owed to Ori Beck, whose patience, expertise, and good humour sustained this project across two countries, three universities, and myriad dinners. My sense of the kaleidoscopic subtleties of multilingualism began, as it has begun for a generation of scholars, with Jennifer Miller. And to my Cambridge *chevreh*, Theodor Dunkelgrün and Aaron Kachuck, I owe, beyond my love and learning, a great debt of gratitude for both introducing me to Modena and shouldering the consequences.

Part 1
The Poem in Context

1.1 Leon Modena and *Kinah Shemor*

Leon Modena was a dazzling presence in Venice at the turn of the seventeenth century. He was born to a wealthy, intellectually distinguished family with distant roots in France, on 23 April 1571, in Venice (the association with the town of Modena derived from his forebears' presence as money lenders there some generations back).[2] Young Leon's family never travelled more than sixty miles from Venice. They moved to Ferrara eight months after his birth, and three or four years after that to Cologna, before finally settling in Montagnana in late summer 1578, where Modena grew up for the next fourteen years until he made his own way back to Venice as a young man in 1592.

Modena was a precocious student. At the age of two and a half, he recited the Haftarah in synagogue; by three, he was able to translate the weekly Torah portion from Hebrew into Italian; by nine, he was delivering whole sermons so impressive that his teacher predicted he would become a preacher (and feasted on that prediction for the next thirty

[2] My account of Modena's life is abstracted from the *Life of Judah* and from Adelman 1988a, in *Life of Judah*, 19-49.

years) (*Life of Judah*, 83, 85-6). In parallel with Torah study, Modena excelled in secular pursuits. He received musical instruction in singing and dancing, studied Latin, and was a favourite student of Rabbi Samuel Archivolti in Padua, from whom he learned the arts of poetry and letter writing as well as Torah (*Life of Judah*, 86). He composed a range of literary curiosities in addition to *Kinah shemor* before the age of fifteen, including a Hebrew version (importing the rules of Italian prosody) of two cantos of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and a dialogue on gambling (Adelman 1988a, 20). Even by the standards of hybridity native to early modern Italian Jewry, Leon Modena was drawn from an early age to the seams between languages and cultures, revelling in his capacity to exceed the expectations of any single audience at once.

The versatility he revelled in as a child, as an adult he relied upon to make ends meet. In Venice and on occasional teaching stints elsewhere, the polymathic Modena embarked on a dizzying range of pursuits in order to make a living. His autobiography lists no fewer than twenty-six sources of earning. These included teaching both Jews and gentiles (i.e. Christians); composing liminary verses and occasional poems for weddings and funerals, as well as more commercial writing ventures such as translating, and writing and directing comedies; delivering his own sermons and composing them for others; supplying 'arcane remedies and amulets'; printing, editing, and proofreading; cantorial work, which included directing the synagogue choir; and eventually, once he was ordained near the requisite age of 40, employment as cantor for the Italian synagogue, having long worked as a legal clerk for the Venice rabbinate (*Life of Judah*, 160-2).

Beyond the Jewish world, Modena's renown spread through an extensive network of Christian students and

correspondents. He was aided in this by the porous boundaries between communities in Venice. Although Jews remained strictly discriminated against and were always vulnerable to changes in the political wind, anti-Jewish policies were enforced less rigidly in Venice than elsewhere, and cultural ties and even friendships sprouted across communities (Ravid 2003, 17-61). On coming to Venice in the 1590s at the start of his career, Modena participated in meetings of Christian scholars, discussing what he guardedly suggests were esoteric issues of religion or mysticism. He records with pride the fact that Christians attended his sermons, and the respect he earned as a preacher across Venice. He maintained relations with a wide range of Christian contacts in Italy and France; one of them, Jean Plantavit de la Pause, later Catholic Bishop of Lodéve, tried to lure him to the University of Paris with a chair in Oriental languages, and in time was responsible for the earliest anthologisation of *Kinah shemor*.

Modena's connection to England was especially strong.[3] In the first decade of the seventeenth century, there was an influx into Venice of English scholars seeking Hebrew instruction to assist in the production of the new Bible translation commissioned by King James in 1604. Thus Modena came to know such luminaries as Henry Wotton, England's ambassador to Venice; William Bedell, later Protestant Bishop of Kilmore in Ireland and provost of Trinity College, Dublin; and John Selden, one of England's foremost Hebraic scholars, and several others. It was probably Wotton who tasked Modena with composing for King James, in 1614-15, the *Historia de' riti Hebraici, vita ed osservanze de gl'Hebrei di questi tempi* — a history (as it was translated in 1650 by

[3] See Adelman 1988b, 271-86; Roth 1924, 206-27.

Edmund Chilmead) of 'the rites, customes, and manner of life, of the present Jews, throughout the world' (Modena 1650). Printed in Italian at Paris in 1637 and in English, French, Dutch, Latin, and Hebrew thereafter, this insider's account of Jewish life aimed to give Christian readers a view at once truer and more favourable than the hostile accounts of Christians, and made Modena's name for centuries.

Modena's politic wooing of the Christian world had consequences for his modern reception. Cecil Roth, the great mid-twentieth century historian of Renaissance Jewry, frowned at Modena for being 'an anticipator of the rabbis of our own time who are more actively interested in the interpretation of Judaism to Christians than in the spread of its knowledge among Jews' (Roth 1959, xi). Nor was this the only mark against him. Modena's love of gambling (with both Jews and Christians, no less) made of him, for Roth, 'the versatile though reprehensible rabbi' of Venice, an 'infant prodigy and hoary prodigal', 'the pride of the Venetian ghetto even though at times its shame'.[4] Yet a more balanced view has held since the 1980s, when Howard Adelman showed that much of the historiography on the 'legendary' Modena could be traced to early nineteenth century controversies over the place of kabbalah in Jewish history. Kabbalah had been used by Christians by turns to mock Judaism as mere superstition, and to justify Christological doctrines and thereby entice Jews to Christianity. Modena had composed and published an anti-kabbalistic defence of rabbinic Judaism, *Ari Nohem* ('The Lion Roars'); but by the nineteenth century his name had also become associated with an anti-rabbinic treatise, *Kol sakhal* ('The Voice of a Fool'). Throughout the nineteenth

[4] Roth 1959, xi, 13; cf. Roth 1924, 206.

and twentieth centuries Jewish historians vied to adopt or to execrate Modena in service of their own ideological affiliations to the traditional and reformed causes, writing about Modena 'as an opportunity to comment on the religious issues of their day'.[5] Adelman's work, however, alongside the collaborative publication of Modena's autobiography in English in 1988, introduced new sources and new methods to the study of Modena's life and times, revealing a complex and fascinating figure at the heart of the literary, cultural, religious, and social history of the Jews in early modern Italy.

I will return to some of the elements of Modena's biography that elucidate *Kinah shemor* in what follows. When Modena conceived the poem at the age of thirteen, however, his illustrious career and controversial afterlife were all before him. News came to Modena's adolescent home of Montagnana, just over fifty miles west of Venice, that his teacher, Rabbi Moshe della Rocca, had died; and the innovative young poet saw in this the opportunity for literary experiment.

> Because my parents wanted to keep me with them at home, God provided us, in Nisan 5342 [March-April 1582] with a young Italian who had just come back from Safed. His name was Moses, the son of Benjamin della Rocca, the son of the daughter of the gaon [great scholar] Rabbi Moses Basola, a man of knowledge and understanding… At the end of two years, in Iyyar 5344 [April-May 1584], the aforementioned Rabbi Moses della Rocca left us and went to Cyprus, where he married. And while he was still in his youthful prime, he was called to the heavenly academy. When the bad

[5] Adelman 1985a, 180; a full account of the historiography is given on 1-184, and briefly summarised in Adelman 1985b, 109-12.

> news reached me I wrote elegies for him, in particular one octet [which makes sense in both] Hebrew and Italian. It is entitled "Kinah shemor," and it is printed in my book *Midbar yehudah*. I was then thirteen years of age. All the poets saw it and praised it; to this day it is a marvel to both Christian and Jewish sages. (*Life of Judah*, 86-7)

Of Moshe ben Binyamin della Rocca we know little more than this (I call him here 'Moshe', rather than 'Moses', both to match the sound of the poem and for purposes of disambiguation). His grandfather, Moses ben Mordecai Basola, was a celebrated kabbalist in Ancona; his uncle, Azriel ben Moses Basola, gave lessons to the infant Modena. Our Moshe was the son of Azriel's sister, and inherited the tutelage of Modena. After teaching Modena for two years, 1582-4, he left for Cyprus and died there.[6] Yet the poem itself may add one detail in line 3, where Modena writes of 'a plague [*dever*] in him'. There is no way to be certain whether Modena means this literally, since the language of the poem is layered with allusion upon figuration upon ambiguity. Certainly the phrase 'the tooth of my sorrow', which occurs two lines later, does not denote an actual tooth. But *dever* is the word Modena uses elsewhere to refer to the plague, and the epidemiological history of the Mediterranean at this time makes plague all too plausible.[7] A 'single wave' of plague

[6] See Cecil Roth and Avraham David, 'Moses Basola (iii)', *s.v.* 'Basola, Moses ben Mordecai', in Berenbaum and Skolnik 2007, III, 204-5; Victor Castiglioni, Baron David von Günzburg, and Richard Gottheil, 'Basilea, Basila, Bassola, Basola, Basla', in Adler and Singer 1901-06, II, 576-8.

[7] *Life of Judah*, 134, describing the great Venetian plague of 1630-31; see Modena 1985, 84, and commentary *ad loc.* below (§2.3) for further references.

swept across the Ottoman Empire from 1570 to 1600; 'every outbreak that took place in one part of the empire was carried either to or from' Istanbul along thriving trade routes.[8] No records of plague in Cyprus survive for 1584, but outbreaks in the southern Balkans in summer 1582, in Ankara in late 1583, and Istanbul in 1584, would certainly have made their way there (Varlik 2015, 199). Such outbreaks were commonplace. In October 1563, the Jewish traveller Elijah of Pesaro sent a letter from Cyprus back to Italy describing precautions in Famagusta against plague, 'which is common enough in the neighbouring parts of the Levant'; historical accounts of the siege of Nicosia in summer 1570, the first major victory of the Ottoman invasion, describe western forces crippled by plague; in May 1589, plague was taking 120 souls a day at Tripoli, and in Famagusta 'the plague had long been raging, and its inhabitants and those of the country round were all dead' (Cobham 1908, 73, 90, 175). For all the dense allusive and figurative language of *Kinah shemor*, in this case Modena may be transmitting historical fact quite literally. It could very well have been plague that did for Moshe della Rocca.

Aside from the historical circumstances that led to the poem's composition, this passage of Modena's autobiography echoes the paragraphs in Hebrew and Italian with which he introduced *Kinah shemor* in 1602 and 1640, respectively. In each case, he stresses its extreme difficulty and the precocious age at which he wrote it. He identifies the feature for which the poem became famous: its high-wire Hebrew and Italian wordplay in which both languages, as Dan Pagis has put it, 'function essentially as separate systems

[8] Varlik 2015, 186-9; see in particular Map 5, which depicts Cyprus as a node in the Ottoman plague network.

of bilingual homonyms' (Pagis 1996, 88). And he emphasizes its appeal across religious communities, how it became 'a marvel to both Christian and Jewish sages'. Indeed, the words translated here as 'Hebrew and Italian' are already marked as religious in the original Hebrew: '*ivrit ve-notzrit*', 'Hebrew and Christian' (Modena 1985, 42). The locution was commonplace and unemphatic; 'Christian' was a standard metonym for 'Italian' or 'Latin', the tongues spoken by Christians, just as Modena elsewhere speaks of a letter in Hebrew as one which 'speaks Jewish [*yehudit*]'.[9] Most of the claims in this passage, for that matter, are unremarkable if taken in isolation. But their persistence across different written contexts throughout Modena's life justifies reading them a little more closely. As Modena returned again and again to *Kinah shemor*, each of these claims revealed a facet of his thinking about this novel composition: how it works, what it is for, and — most elusively of all — what it is.

[9] Modena 1984, 152-3 (letter 104), cited and translated below.

1.2 Weddings, bar-mitzvahs, and funerals

Modena's first substantial account of *Kinah shemor* is in a letter of September 1589 to his friend Asher Clerli of Venice, a regular correspondent during Modena's youth in Montagnana. Though the *ottava* was occasioned by the death of his teacher, Modena explains, this was not the only, or even the main, impulse for its composition. In truth, his concerns were more experimental than that:

> יקבל אדו׳ אמרי אלו חברתי בפטירת ר׳ משה באסולה ז״ל, כי יען היה מלמדי להועיל זה לו שתי שנים בביתנו סומך על שלחננו, ראיתי כי חייב אני בהספדו, כי הלומד מחבירו וכו׳. וידע אדו׳, כי השמינית הכתובה תחת הקינה, יצרתיה אף עשיתיה, לא בלבד בסבת הנושא, כי אם ג״כ לחדוש האופן, כי דרך אחד לה ושוה היא הן שתקרא בלשון הקודש או בלשון נוצרי. ועל כן באה מעט בלשון עמוק, כי עמל היה בעיני וכבד הדבר מאד.[10]

> My lord will receive the words I composed on the death of R. Moshe Basula, of blessed memory, since because he 'taught

[10] Modena 1984, 52-3 (letter 9), and note 1 for the date of the letter at the end of Elul 5349. The poem may also have been enclosed in a previous letter (no. 8, 51-52), but the letter itself contains no substantial commentary.

> me for my own benefit'[11] (and for the benefit to him of two years in our house as a guest at our table), I saw that I owed him a eulogy — for 'he who learns from his fellow', etc.[12] And my lord will know that I 'formed and made'[13] the *ottava* written by way of his lament not only for its content, but also for the novelty of its manner [*hidush ha-ʾofen*], for it is to be read equally in the holy tongue and the Christian tongue [*be-lashon ha-kodesh ʾo be-lashon notzri*]. And therefore it came sparingly in unintelligible language,[14] for it was toil to me, and a heavy burden.

Having confessed that the lament, however heartfelt and apt to the moment, also presented an opportunity for technical innovation, Modena proceeds to reflect on the challenge of complying with the exacting form he set himself. He returned to the theme of the poem's difficulty in its 1602 preface, warning that 'it escapes many, for if a word of it is turned around, the beginner will not understand'. Genuinely elegiac though it may be, *Kinah shemor* was above all a literary experiment and a testing ground for Modena's burgeoning powers as he entered adulthood. Indeed, Modena staged the composition of *Kinah shemor* in the autobiography as a climacteric in his own life, after which, he writes, 'I ceased studying with a regular teacher, but rather studied on my own'. Poem, bar-mitzvah, and the end (however sudden) of his pupillary years coincide to mark the threshold of

[11] Isiah 48:17.

[12] Pirkei Avot 6:3.

[13] Isiah 48:17.

[14] Literally 'a little came in deep tongue [*lashon ʿamok*]'. Rashi, the medieval commentator, uses the phrase *lashon ʿamok* to gloss Ezekiel 3:5, 'a people of unintelligible speech and difficult language' ('unintelligible speech' translates עמקי שפה, lit. 'deep language').

Modena's intellectual maturity (*Life of Judah*, 87).

Modena's prodigious talent for the kind of polyglot wordplay that *Kinah shemor* displays had manifested from an early age. His autobiography records an incident that took place sometime between mid-1576 and mid-1578, when he was between four and six years old:

> Around that time a certain Christian named Priamo was severely beaten and injured. A discussion about whether he would die took place in the presence of my revered father and my teacher and some people and guests in our house, and I jumped up and said, 'He will surely die, for there is an explicit scriptural reference to this — "Their fruit (*piryamo*) shalt thou destroy from the earth."' At that, they all had a good laugh and said of me, 'The young pumpkin is known by its young shoot.'[15]

The pun here lies in the fact that the letters *p-r-y-m-o* in the word for 'their fruit', *piryamo*, could be revocalized to produce the name *Priamo*, with the result that the passage appears to prophesy Priamo's demise.

As Modena grew older, such antic wordplay, pivoting on revocalization, recontextualization, and above all hair-trigger recall and redeployment of fragments of Torah, became the hallmark of a virtuosic style, which he described in notes on epistolary composition and implemented throughout his writings.[16] In an early letter, the first and last word of each

[15] *Life of Judah*, 84 and note 7; the reference is to Psalm 21.11.

[16] *Life of Judah*, xviii; Modena 1984, 343-4, for example: 'טוב ללקט פסוקים ומאמרים לפראזי' ('it is good to compile verses and sayings for phrases'); 'כשעושים איזה השתנות כבד צריך לבארו עם הוסיף אצלו כפל ענין מפרש' ('when one makes some heavy alteration, one needs to clarify it with a gloss, an explicit double of the matter at hand'). Boksenboim

line are the same, forming two columns which spell out a biblical verse.[17] The autobiography redeploys Genesis 18.15, '*lo ki tzahakt*' ('no, but you did laugh'), to allude to Modena's gambling problem, since the verb *tzahak* at this time could also mean 'gamble' (*Life of Judah*, 105, note 6). And the titles of his printed works, in particular, play compulsively on his name. *Midbar yehudah* ('The Desert of Judah'), the early collection of twenty-one sermons in which *Kinah shemor* was first published in 1602, can be revocalized either as *mi-devar yehudah* ('from the word of Judah') or *medaber yehudah* ('Judah speaks').[18] *Beit lehem yehudah* ('Bethlehem in Judah'), the autobiography's editors point out, can also be translated 'A Source of Bread for Judah', in reference to his hopes of earning money from its publication.[19] More straightforward puns include *Lev ha-ʾaryeh* ('The Heart of the Lion/Leon'), *Pi ʾaryeh* ('The Mouth of the Lion/Leon'), and *Galut yehudah* ('The Exile of Judah'), which alludes both to the exile that caused the Jewish people to forget their language, and also to Modena's own preparation of the book in exile from Venice.[20]

Two representative instances will demonstrate how this kind of polyglot wordplay operates in *Kinah shemor*. The first is from the dense paragraph introducing the poem in 1602, in

explains that the latter note refers to quotations whose meaning is altered significantly, through wordplay, from their source (344, note 19).

[17] Modena 1984, 43 (letter 1); the effect is pointed out by Adelman 1988a, 21.

[18] *Life of Judah*, 224, note y; see Judges 1.16, Psalms 63.1.

[19] *Life of Judah*, 226, note b; see Judges 19.2.

[20] *Life of Judah*, 225, note a; 228, note h; 225, note z; see Jeremiah 24.5. See further Moseley 2006, 519, note 239; Heller 2011, I, 282-3, 570-1.

which Modena describes the poem with the words 'למנצח על־השמיני' ('*la-menatzeah ʿal ha-shemini*'). The phrase openly alludes to the Psalms, which employ similar formulae in titular position; this particular wording appears, for example, at the start of Psalm 12. I have translated it 'to the vanquisher, in an *ottava*' (see §2.2, below). But no single rendering can preserve the complexity of Modena's wordplay, which turns the cryptic title of Psalm 12 to his own ends. In the Psalms, שמינית (*sheminit*, from *shmoneh*, 'eight') probably denotes an eight-stringed lyre. Modena, however, consistently uses it to refer to an *ottava* (eight-line stanza of poetry): in *Galut yehudah*, his lexicon of biblical terms, he glosses the first appearance of *sheminit* in the Psalms as 'ottaua', and moreover refers to *Kinah shemor* as a *sheminit* throughout his autobiography and letters.[21] More complicated is the case of מנצח (*menatzeah*). In the musical context of the Psalms Modena glosses *menatzeah* as 'vincitore ne' suoni' ('leader/victor in sounds'); modern translations agree, usually translating it as 'conductor' or 'choirmaster'.[22] But at its heart *menatzeah* simply means 'leader/victor', and in the next line of *Midbar yehudah*'s introductory paragraph Modena identifies the 'vincitore' in this particular case as Death, 'המנצח כל נוצר' ('*ha-menatzeah col notzar*', 'the vanquisher of all that is created').

Thus Modena refashions the title of Psalm 12, 'for the choirmaster, on the eight-stringed lyre', into a title for his own poem, 'on Death, in an *ottava*', without changing a

[21] Modena 1640a, 76v, glossing Psalms 6.1. See further Modena 1985, 42; Modena 1984, 52, note 9. *Sheminit* was also used in the period, by similar extrapolation, to connote the musical interval of an eighth, or an octave; see Harrán 2014, 355, *s.v.* '*sheminit*'.

[22] Modena 1640a, 76v, on Psalms 4.1.

single word; and in the process identifies himself with David, the author of the Psalms and the archetype of Hebrew poets. One might even say that this prefatory description, subtly but unmistakably, primes the reader to encounter the engine of the poem as a whole. Where *Kinah shemor* elicits meaning from a single sonic matrix across *multiple* languages, Modena describes the poem by means of a more rudimentary, and indeed more familiar, version of the same device: the pun, which elicits multiple meanings from one set of sounds within a *single* language.

The second example is a translingual shimmer in the third line of the poem, where Modena seems to attribute della Rocca's death to plague: '*Moshe mori, moshe yakar* ***dever bo****…*' ('Moshe, my teacher, my dear Moshe; **a plague in him**…').[23] As we have seen, the root דבר (*d-v-r*) was among Modena's favourite playthings, chiefly for its proximity, given the right vocalisation, to *davar*, 'word' or 'speech'; recall that *Midbar yehudah* could be repointed *mi-devar yehudah*, 'from the word of Yehudah'. Now, the Hebrew vocalisation in both of the poem's printed witnesses leaves no doubt that the key word in line three reads '*dever*' ('plague'), not '*davar*' ('word'). The text as printed allows no possibility that the line could refer to 'speech/words in him'. Yet the parallel Italian reads 'Moshe gia car **de verbo**' ('Moshe, once so dear **of speech**') so that to a polyglot listener the Hebrew '*dever bo*' echoes with its Italian doppelganger, 'de verbo'. Moreover, Hebrew '*yakar*' is echoed in parallel place by Italian 'car',

[23] '*Dever*' is not the only point of contention in this line; I depart from previous editors in taking the second *moshe* as a repetition of della Rocca's name, rather than a verb meaning 'to draw out'. See the commentary for further discussion.

both of them meaning 'dear' — further inflecting the Hebrew line towards a conflated sense something like 'Moshe, my teacher, Moshe, words were dear in him'. If *Kinah shemor* and *Chi nasce muor* were wholly independent, and exerted no acoustic gravity upon one another, the Hebrew poem would refer straightforwardly to 'plague', the Italian to 'word'. But Modena's interweaving of these languages and their sound-strings goes beyond echo alone. At this point in the poem, linguistic and semantic worlds come so close as to haunt one another. Jewish listeners, fluent in Hebrew and Italian and apprehending both at once, could not have heard the Hebrew '*dever bo*' free of a simultaneous, spectral overlay of the Italian 'de verbo'. Without the term *davar* ('word') appearing anywhere at all in the Hebrew poem, Modena contrives to make 'plague' nevertheless sound, untranslatably, like 'word'.

Modena was not the only scholar to be drawn to correspondences — phonetic, etymological, historical, or outright fanciful — between Hebrew and its surrounding vernaculars. Azariah de' Rossi had devoted several paragraphs of *Me'or 'Einayim* (*The Light of the Eyes*) (1573-1575), his enormous work of polymathic historiography, to demonstrating the survival of fragments of the Hebrew language throughout the world's languages in the great dispersal of peoples after Noah.[24] In doing so, he drew on the work of several Jewish and Christian scholars who had preceded him. The Italian author Pierfrancesco Giambullari, for example, had traced the Italian language to Hebrew and Aramaic roots in order to assert its independence from Latin, supplying about one hundred (notional) etymological

[24] De' Rossi 2001, 676-8. All quotations in this paragraph follow Weinberg's translation, and rely on her annotations.

examples. Sebastian Münster, the German scholar of Hebrew and Latin translator of Elijah Levita, hypothesised that linguistic affinities waned the further one receded from the 'scene of the dispersion', in the Levant — hence Aramaic and Arabic had greater similarity to Hebrew than did the languages of 'the more remote countries, such as Germany and the other western regions'. And de' Rossi cites a work by Rabbi David Provenzali entitled *Dor ha-Pelagah*, now lost, which reportedly listed more than two thousand Hebrew words which he believed had been integrated into Latin, Greek, Italian, and other languages.

As with much early modern etymology, the examples de' Rossi supplies are often based on little more than bare echo. The derivation of Latin *paelex* from *pilegesh*, both of them meaning 'concubine', or the muse Calliope from *kol yafeh* ('beautiful voice'), is as close as it gets — although the connection between *accademia* and *bet eked roʿim* ('shearing house of shepherds') is perhaps too good not to be true. But the function of such lists, for us and for Modena alike, is not the validity of their historical or etymological conjectures, but rather the corpus of lexical correspondences, fanciful or not, that they compiled and made available.[25] In Modena's personal copy of de' Rossi's *Meʾor ʿEinayim*, these passages are vigorously underlined.[26]

Modena's childhood talent for plucking out phonetic correspondences between Italian and Hebrew was developing into a lifelong, semi-scholarly obsession. Nor were the fruits

[25] For further discussion of post-Renaissance analysis along these lines, see §3.1, below.

[26] Adelman 1985a, 234-5. Modena's copy survives as Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS 983.

of this obsession plucked for *Kinah shemor* alone. In a letter to his friend Gershon Cohen, in Montagnana, Modena describes in detail how he fashioned a translingual pun that appeared in a poem he was commissioned to write in early 1593, 'On the different kinds of food that were served at the wedding of the *Haham* [wise man] Signor Asher ben Zerah, of blessed memory'.[27] The last of the feast's hot courses was duck (Italian *anitra*, plural *anitre*), but in writing the poem Modena was faced with the challenge that ducks were better represented in Jewish kitchens than in the Hebrew language:

> I will tell you only the verses that I wrote for the ducks… as I didn't know the name of the above birds in Hebrew, I made a pun with the line *Va-ani ana ani ba* (Genesis 37.30) in imitation of their very call.[28]

The line in question concludes '*gam ani (ani ani) bah!*' ('I, I, I, come too!'). As Michela Andreatta explains, there are at least three diglossic operations at work here (Andreatta 2015, 467). The first is the assonance between Italian *anitre* and Hebrew ʾ*ani* (the pronoun 'I'): Modena's Hebrew *ani* directly invokes the word 'duck' in Italian. Second is the three-fold repetition of *ani*, which in addition to stressing the keyword of the stanza also produces an onomatopoeic echo of the duck's cry.[29] And finally, that repetition wittily satisfies the

[27] The poem and relevant sections of the letter are translated and discussed at length by Andreatta 2015, 456-81.

[28] Modena 1984, 65-7 (letter 24), translated in Andreatta 2015, 467. In modern Italian, 'anitra' is reserved for a male duck, or drake, while 'duck' is 'anatra', but John Florio defines both words as 'duck' in *A Worlde of Wordes* (London, 1598).

[29] Birdsong has been associated with onomatopoeic effects over at least two millennia of European poetry across multiple languages,

duck's Italian name, since Modena's line gives us, literally, three *ani*s: *ani-tre*. Modena was never far from wordplay, and experimented with it in multiple kinds of writing throughout his life.

Wordplay is the first signpost to the genre of *Kinah shemor*, and has led to the poem's association with the genre of the literary riddle. Giuseppe Sermoneta traces its mechanics to Modena's interest in the *ars memoria*, on which he wrote a treatise, *Lev ha-ʾaryeh* (1612). Adapting the Latin rhetorical treatise *Rhetorica ad Herennium* for a Jewish audience, Modena's techniques for forming memorable verbal images take full advantage of his talent for polyglot wordplay. 'Mantua' is revocalized '*man-tova*' ('good manna'); 'Plato' is remembered as a 'refugee', '*palit*'; the Greek word 'metaphysics' can be brought to mind by thinking of a bed, '*mittah*'.[30] These technical tools subsequently provided, Sermoneta argues, 'the conceptual root of the birth of the Baroque riddle'.[31] Certainly that is the tradition with which Dan Pagis, one of the great modern Hebrew poets and scholars of Hebrew poetry, seems to associate *Kinah shemor*. A major component of the Hebrew riddle tradition was a form of bilingual pun known as *loʿez*, 'foreign-word' riddles, which pivoted on the interplay of bilingual homonyms. Pagis gives the example of a *loʿez* riddle to which the answer is Spanish *sol*, 'sun'. Such a riddle in Hebrew might read 'in the east *li* ***sol*** *hamesilah* [pave me a road]', smuggling the Spanish keyword into the line disguised as 'another Hebrew

and repetition is a key indicator of the trope: see Lazarus 2021, 682-8.

[30] Sermoneta 1986, 25, quoting from Modena's *Lev ha-ʾaryeh* (Venice, 1612).

[31] Ibid., note 21.

word which happened to sound like it'. Such a riddle may even flaunt the fact that it is a riddle, or confess the kind of riddle it is, by punning metapoetically on the word *lo'ez* itself (Pagis 1996, 82). Seen from this angle, *Kinah shemor* looks like a virtuosic extension of the *lo'ez* across every word of eight whole lines, sitting at a 'Mannerist extreme' of the form in which 'instead of merely juxtaposing two languages, one was actually superimposed on the other' (87).

There can be no doubt that *Kinah shemor*, and Modena's wordplay in general, stands in some familial relation to the riddle tradition. All the more so, since many of the epiphenomena that scholars associate with riddles also seem to cluster around Modena's poem. Just as riddles (*aenigmata*) are often flagged in the classical rhetorical tradition with terms such as *obscurus* (dark, obscure) and *velatus* (veiled, hidden), Modena spoke of his poem in terms of 'unintelligible language' or 'deep tongue' (*lashon 'amok*), as an elusive object which 'the beginner will not understand'.[32] Just as riddles, in an anthropological view, are 'poised on the boundary between domains', so, as we will see, Modena saw his poem as a bridge between linguistic communities, Jewish and Christian.[33] And if Modena did turn to music when he tried to articulate the peculiar innovation of this poem, as I shall shortly argue, he did so in a period that has also been described as 'the heyday of musical riddle culture', in which literary and musical riddles alike were devised to draw attention to 'unknown and "hidden" connections between things and reveal them in an unexpected, subtle and sometimes even humorous way' (Schiltz 2015, 3, 64).

[32] On *obscuritas* in riddles, see Schiltz 2015, 40ff.

[33] Hasan-Rokem, and Shulman 1996, 3.

But as much as it shares with the riddle genre, there is a crucial sense in which *Kinah shemor* does not operate as a riddle at all. A riddle is a puzzle to be solved, as Pagis defines it, reliant on a 'particular balance between lucidity and obscurity' (84). It presents as a game which follows a sequence of concealment (on the part of the riddler) and revelation (on that of the riddlee). But *Kinah shemor* conceals nothing. The poem may be difficult to understand, but the difficulty it presents is linguistic, not conceptual. It does not present itself as a game to be 'solved', only as a trick to be marvelled at. Nor was this distinction lost on Pagis himself, on whose authority the poem has been associated with the riddle genre. Notwithstanding the strong familial connection between bilingual poetry and the *loʿez*, Pagis recognised that Modena's poem in fact differed fundamentally from the literary riddle. 'In riddles, the *loʿez* is founded on the same principle [as *Kinah shemor*], but with a singular variation linked to its function', he explained; 'in a bilingual poem, the device is obvious and continuous; indeed, it is actually meant to impress the audience by its openness' (88). The essence of a literary riddle, for Pagis, was not form but function: 'the moment the riddle is completed, it... ceases to exist'.[34] If *Kinah shemor* were a riddle, it would exist in a state of perpetual self-effacement, a riddle to which the answer was itself. Whatever genre *Kinah shemor* represents, that is, for Pagis it was contiguous but not identical to the literary riddle, and affiliation to that genre is therefore illuminating, but not definitive.

No more definitive is the second signpost to the genre of

[34] Schiltz 2015, 84. For further discussion, see Pagis 1976, 278-88; Pagis and Garribba 1994; Pagis 1986, 263-77.

the poem, its internal label as a '*kinah*': lament, elegy, funeral poem, Latin *epicedium.* In this period, Michela Andreatta has shown, 'the composition of poetic inscriptions for graves became established as a refined literary practice among Italian Hebrew poets' (Andreatta 2016, 261). Modena himself was responsible for more than 150 such epitaphs, which were both inscribed on actual tombstones in the Jewish cemetery in Venice and also circulated and copied widely in manuscript. As a site of poetic competition among Italian Jews in particular, Hebrew epitaphs attracted just the kind of macaronic composition, linguistic hybridity, and 'deliberate bilingualism' that characterise *Kinah shemor* (Arnold 2010, 505-6). Certainly the poem's topical intersection with Hebrew epigraphic and funerary poetry secured its place in the anthologies of Christian scholars, as we will see in Part III, and in the eighteenth century supplied one of the few contexts in which fragmentary imitation was attempted. In an early version of the poem, Modena even used a signpost of the epitaph genre, 'צִיּוּן זֶה', 'this gravestone' (see the textual commentary on lines 5-6 below, §2.3).

Yet as we have already seen in Modena's letter to Asher Clerli, the topic and elegiac occasion of *Kinah shemor* was in his own eyes merely a pretext for literary innovation. When news arrived of Moshe della Rocca's death, young Leon felt that he 'owed' his teacher a eulogy; but he confides privately to his friend that it was 'not only for its content' that the poem was composed, but for 'the novelty of its manner'. That novelty, and the reason the poem was such a difficult task, consisted in the fact that 'it is to be read equally in the holy tongue and the Christian tongue'. Just as was true of its association with the riddle genre, there can be no doubt that *Kinah shemor* was inspired by and shared its origins with the genre of the Hebrew

epitaph. But in Modena's own mind, as well as to its audiences at the time and since, epitaph was the least remarkable thing about it; its funerary occasion marked the beginning, not the end, of its literary interest. What, then, did Modena truly think he was up to with this marvellous composition?

1.3 Words and music

A letter of 1609, composed during a brief stint away from Venice, offers a key to Modena's thinking about the elusive nature of *Kinah shemor*. Passing through Ferrara on the way to Florence just after Passover, Modena finally had the chance to respond to a Christian student he had left behind in Venice. Six weeks ago, this student had sent him a letter in Hebrew, followed by a second letter, presumably in Italian, which had arrived the day before.

> הראשונה מדברת יהודית, הכרתי מן הארבע סבות, היו בה הפועל והצורה של זולתך והחומר והתכלית שלך היו. אשר הנה מה טוב אם תתחנך מעצמך לכתוב טוב או רע, ואח״כ יעבור תחת שבט מוסר מע׳ מלמדך יצ״ו, כי כן לדעתי תלמד להבין. (ואף גם לזאת הנוצרית אשיב, כי אותם התבות המתדמות בשתי הלשונות אסוף אאסוף ואשלחם, כי כעת לא אוכל, מהיותי טרוד מאד, מלבד משא התלמידים והדרשות והעיונים תמידין כסדרן, גם בהשלמת אותו חבור של פתרון כל מלות זרות שבמקרא בלשון איטאליאנו, להדפיסו מהרה בעה״י. אך לכל הקודם אקבצם ואשלחם, גם כי המה מזער לא כביר, ואולי כבר יהיו אצל מעלתך.)[35]

[35] Modena 1984, 152-3 (letter 104).

> Your first letter speaks Jewish [*yehudit*]. I recognized it from the four causes: it had the efficient and formal cause of your fellow, but your own material and final cause.[36] For it is a good thing to teach yourself to write well or poorly, and after that to pass under the correction of your teacher, may he live long, for this, in my view, is how you will learn to understand. (And I will also reply to the Christian one [*notztrit*], for the same measures that are similar in the two tongues [*ʾotam ha-tevot ha-mitdamot be-shtey ha-leshonot*] I will surely gather and send; at the moment I cannot, being much preoccupied — besides the usual load of students and sermons and studies — with completing that composition which translates all the difficult words in the scripture in the Italian tongue, in order to print it quickly with the help of the Lord. But I will gather and send them with all alacrity, for they are a trifle, not huge, and perhaps you have them already to hand.[37]

There is much to say about this letter. Among other things, it establishes that there was a connection in Modena's mind between his Hebrew-Italian biblical lexicon, *Galut yehudah* — alluded to here as the 'composition which translates all the difficult words in the scripture in the Italian tongue' — and the phenomenon of words that interpenetrate those languages acoustically. It has long been clear that the two were linked bibliographically: although *Kinah shemor* was composed in 1584, and the first edition of *Galut yehudah* was published

[36] That is, as Boksenboim explains, the letter was in another's hand, but the content was this student's (Modena 1984, 153, note 10).

[37] Literally 'and perhaps already they will be with your highness', for which Boksenboim suggests this meaning (Modena 1984, 153, note 14).

in 1612, they were united when the final version of *Kinah shemor* to be printed within Modena's lifetime appeared in an appendix to the second edition of *Galut yehudah*, in 1640. This letter demonstrates that the connection between the poem and the bilingual lexicon was not just bibliographical, however, but conceptual, and dates back to at least 1609. When Modena thought about translating semantically between Hebrew and Italian, he was drawn at the same time to think about the non-semantic, acoustic phenomenon on display in *Kinah shemor*; the two endeavours in some sense occupied the same place in his mind. I have relied on this connection in my translation of the poem, below, in which I have used the glossing of Hebrew words in Italian in *Galut yehudah* to narrow the range of potential meanings Modena intended for particular words in *Kinah shemor* — as context, in short, for the sense of this exceptionally difficult poem.

For our present purposes, however, I would like to focus on the terms in which Modena describes his list of linguistic parallels, since nowhere else does he discuss the principle underlying *Kinah shemor* in the abstract.

The phrase Modena uses to describe these corresponding units of sound is 'אותם התבות המתדמות בשתי הלשונות' (*ʾotam ha-tevot ha-mitdamot be-shtey ha-leshonot*), 'the same measures that are similar in the two tongues'. The noun I translate here as 'measures', תבות (*tevot*), would ordinarily be taken simply to mean 'words'. In modern Hebrew it has come to mean 'musical bars', but this sense was not available to Modena in 1609, not only semantically but also because bar-lines were not yet a common presence on the musical stave (see Hiley 2001). Nevertheless, there were far more likely terms for 'word' in Hebrew, such as the common terms מלה (*milah*) and דבר (*davar*). In *Galut yehudah*, for example, Italian *parola*

('word') most commonly glosses *davar*, with occasional sightings alongside *milah*, *mishpat*, or their derivatives.[38] There may be fine semantic distinctions between these terms — *davar* might mean 'word' in the sense of 'a spoken thing', *mishpat* in the sense of 'someone's meaning' — but the essential point is that *tevah* is an outlier in the catalogue of Hebrew nouns for 'word' in ordinary usage. Detailed analysis of the roots of the word, its rabbinic usages, and Modena's own deployment of the term in writing, suggests that there is good reason to think that *tevah* is being deployed here in order to invoke a more technical and altogether stranger sense of the word — one that does indeed border the domain of music, and provides a key to how Modena thought about the formal genre of *Kinah shemor*.

The basic sense of תבה (*tevah*) is 'ark'. The few occurrences of the word in *Galut yehudah* are glossed accordingly: Modena translates Noah's *tevah* as 'arca', and Moses's *tevat gomeh* as 'arca de gionco' ('ark of rushes').[39] Modern lexica agree that this is the fundamental sense of the word.[40] The root denotes a box, a vessel, a bounded space. It registers a formal difference, in whatever medium is appropriate to the context, between inside and out. The secondary sense of *tevah* as 'word' follows from this. A word is a formal linguistic unit that distinguishes what lies within its bounds from what lies without. The beginning and ending of a word subdivide the ambient linguistic field.

This is a very abstract, perhaps even obtuse, way of

[38] For example, Modena 1640a, 32^{v}-33^{r} (Ecclesiastes 8), 40^{r} (1 Samuel 17), 54^{r} (Isaiah 29), 70^{v} (Hosea 14), 77^{v} (Psalms 19).

[39] Modena 1640a, 9^{v} (Genesis 7), 15^{v} (Exodus 2).

[40] Jastrow 1903, *s.v.* תֵּבָה, תֵּיבָה.

thinking about the definition of a 'word'. Yet it is in precisely this technical sense that the primary rabbinic authorities employ the term *tevah* in its secondary sense, as we can see from the citations supplied in Jastrow's *Dictionary* of rabbinic Hebrew. Jastrow gives four citations for the use of *tevah* as 'word'. Two of these have to do with instructions for scribes of sacred texts, in which religious law (*halakhah*) emphasises the need to maintain the physical integrity of whole words. In the Babylonian Talmud, Menachot 30b, the question arises as to what should be done when a scribe runs out of space at the end of a line. If his next word consists of five letters, but the line has space for only three, he may write the first three letters on that line, within the column, and the final two pushing into the margin outside the column. But if his next word is 'a word of two letters' only (*tevah bat shtey ʾotiyot*), he must not split the word in half by writing one letter in the line and one in the column margin, but rather must sacrifice the space remaining in the present line and insert the whole two-letter word at the beginning of the next line.

The next citation is similarly concerned with the integrity of written words. Megillah 1:8 (71c), in the Jerusalem Talmud, takes up the issue of the halakhic status of a word inscribed over a hole in the parchment, such that one of the letters is physically incomplete. If that letter is part of a word (*tevah*) that is the name of God, does it render incomplete, and thereby profane, the holy name? If it appears in one part of a phrase that identifies the name of God, such as אני יהוה אלהיכם (*ʾani adonay ʾeloheichem*, 'I am the Lord your God'), are all three words (*teiviyot*) sacred or are some sacred, some profane? Likewise, if the marred letter appears only in an enclitic prefix to the name of God (e.g. '*for* the Eternal', '*by* the Eternal'), has that letter become a part of God's name

such that it shares in its holiness, or does it remain a severably profane element of the whole word?

The third citation, from tractate Shabbat 104a in the Babylonian Talmud, comes from a discussion of 'open' and 'closed' forms of certain letters (roughly speaking, the 'closed' form of a letter doubles or hardens its value, so מ is *m* but מּ is *mm*; in some cases this can affect pronunciation, so open פ is pronounced *f*, while closed פּ is pronounced *p*). Some say that the open and closed forms were introduced only in the time of the prophets, with the result that they are less significant. The Talmud asserts, on the contrary, that both open and closed forms existed before the revelation at Sinai; the prophets merely clarified the positions in which they appeared, since over the centuries the people had forgotten which form appeared in the middle of a word (*tevah*) and which at the end.

The final citation given by Jastrow appears in the midst of a detailed analysis of the laws concerning kosher and non-kosher eggs in Mishnaic tractate Hullin 64b-65a. The Gemara questions a prohibition against consuming ostrich eggs on the grounds that the prohibiting clause seems to refer to the species both by a single name, יענה (*yaʿanah*), and also a compound name, בת היענה (*bat hayaʿanah*), which literally means 'daughter of the ostrich'. Does this indicate that eggs of the ostrich and of its daughter have a different kosher status? No, the Mishnah answers: the name of the ostrich is different from those of the other animals in that the scribe splits it into two words (*teivot*), but both names denote a single species all the same.

We can triangulate from these disparate citations a consistent sense in which the term *tevah* was used, in preference to *davar* or *milah*, in the lexical corpus available

to Modena. Rabbinic sources use *tevah* when they want to talk about words in subdivision or assemblage at an atomic level — about words as objects whose definition is not to be taken for granted. All the citations above are concerned with testing the nature and the limits of what it is to be a word. The first and third citations are primarily concerned with words as collections of *letters* in particular, and with what independent life those letters retain if the word-unit is dissolved. As such, they are also concerned with writing as opposed to speech. But the second and fourth citations reach to dimensions of 'words' beyond written letters alone. At what degree of subdivision is a word still a word, and how strong are the sinews that hold it together? How much of a word can be taken away or added before it is a new word, or not a word at all? What is the correspondence of words to things, and what happens to those things when the word changes? If you wanted to refer to a word in the ordinary, uncomplicated sense — in the sense active in the phrase 'this sentence contains five words' — *davar* or *milah* would do. But if you wanted to speak of an object of linguistic inquiry, a 'linguistic unit', you would use *tevah*. *Tevah* means 'word' in the estranged sense useful to a linguist or philosopher. It means 'word' only inasmuch as the issue is what 'word' means and what it should be taken to denote.

This was precisely the problem facing Modena in describing *Kinah shemor* and the list of acoustic correspondences to which he alludes in the letter of 1609, for the simple reason that these parallel sound-units cannot be described as 'words' in the ordinary sense. '*Kinah*' is a word, but 'chi na–' is not. Or, to put it more abstractly, in the case of '*kinah*' the orthographical, phonological, and semantic boundaries of the linguistic unit are coterminous; more letters or fewer, more syllables or fewer, would result in a different word

which would mean something other than 'lament'. The same cannot be said of 'chi na–'. In this case, the phonological string represented by 'chi na–' does not map onto a known quantity in Italian. Rather it consists of one orthographical unit, *chi*, which would be meaningful if it stood alone, and a fragment of a second semantic unit, *nasce*, which becomes meaningful when completed by '–sce', but in its present form is meaningless. Delimited by the phonetic span of '*kinah*', 'chi na–' is rendered meaningless in Italian; its only significance (as it were) is that it corresponds to an identical sound string in a parallel language. The same, of course, applies in the other direction: 'verbo' is a word, but '–בֶר בוֹ' ('–*ver bo*') is not. Such pairs of linguistic units are not aptly or accurately described as *milim* or *devarim*. Whatever makes them coterminous may, but does not necessarily, map onto the semantic boundaries observed by words in their native languages. They are *tevot* — linguistic units in which certain characteristics we ordinarily consider definitive of 'words' cede their place to alternative criteria, whether letters, sound, meaning, or something else entirely.

Modena's own uses of the word *tevah* give ample reason to believe that he was sensitive to this estranged sense, and deployed it consciously. For the most part, as I have said, he used the term in its basic sense, *arca*. But wordplay in liminary verses that he composed at the age of fifteen for a Hebrew thesaurus by the Vatican orientalist Marco Marini entitled *Tevat noah* in Hebrew, *Arca noe* in Italian, demonstrates his sensitivity, as early as 1593, to the range of meanings made available by *tevah*: Marini's thesaurus is described as 'תבה לכל תבה מאד טובה', 'a very good [*tovah*]

ark [*tevah*] for every word [*tevah*]'.[41] And at the other end of his life, a rabbinic decision composed by Modena around 1645 'on the lawfulness of repeating one or another of God's names in performing art music' provides corroboration for his use of the word in the particular sense I am proposing.[42] Modena was consulted in connection with a controversy in which a group of singers in a synagogue sang prayers and blessings to polyphonic music, and 'in compliance with the rules of *musika*, sometimes double[d] a word for sweetening the melody'. A number of congregants objected that it was a transgression to double certain words, including the Holy Name, as doing so distorted the liturgy and, worse, may have implied a rejection of God's unity. The congregation sought Modena's ruling, both as to the broad permissibility of using polyphonic music in synagogue, and more narrowly, on whether it was lawful to double sacred terms in this way.

This was one skirmish in a larger conflict unfolding at the time over the use of art music in synagogue services, as well as in the still larger, perennial Jewish question of cultural assimilation.[43] But the particular value of this case for our purposes is the terminology in which Modena rendered his decision. As it was put to him, the question uses only the word *milah*: the singers 'כפלו מלת כתר וגם השם' ('doubled the word [*milah*] *keter* and also the Holy Name'); the rabbis are asked to decide whether it is lawful 'לכפול אלו המלות או לא'

[41] Marini 1593, sig. ††3r. Modena dates the poem in *Autobiography*, 126; the text is reproduced in Modena 1932, 93-4. I am grateful to Michela Andreatta for directing me to this reference.

[42] Discussed, edited, and translated in Harrán 2006, 7-63.

[43] See Harrán 2006, 9-13; Harrán 2014, 131-50; Jacobson 2015, 143-55.

('to double those words [*milot*] or not').[44] Initially, Modena adopts the terms in which the question has been posed. The responses of colleagues he has consulted, quoted in his decision, also use the term *milah*. But as he proceeds to thread his own judgement through and around the authorities, he turns to a different term: 'ואיפליגו אם הוא [באומר] תבה תבה או פסוקא פסוקא וכפלוה' ('but they disagreed as to whether the doubling is in saying a word plus a word [*tevah tevah*] or a verse plus a verse').[45] When Modena brings his own voice to the question of doubled words — when he needs to talk about words as linguistic objects with extra-semantic properties, in their doubling, rather than merely as bearers of meaning — *tevah* is the term to which he turns.

Tevah is the term Modena uses in his letter of 1609, one of the only moments in his oeuvre in which he refers directly to the device that governs *Kinah shemor*. The philological evidence as well as his other uses of the word suggests that he did not simply intend it to mean 'word'. Rather, the *tevot* that make up the poem were in Modena's mind something more experimental, more linguistically unusual; perhaps even, if we follow the evidence of his rabbinic *responsa*, something more musical.

It is no coincidence that Modena should use the term in connection with music. One of the very few known contexts in which the core device of *Kinah shemor* appears in this period is in English contrafacta, new English texts designed to be sung to the music of the Italian madrigals which became

[44] Harrán 2006, 45-6 (§1), 47 (§3).

[45] Harrán 2006, 58 (§17). The citation provides further evidence that Modena, at least, did not think of '*tevah*' in application to the written word alone.

enormously popular in the last decades of the sixteenth century. Though most English contrafacta simply translated the Italian song-texts sense for sense, a few engaged in the same kind of acoustic imitation as Modena's *Kinah shemor*. In these rare examples of the genre, 'Rapto fui' becomes in English not 'I was ravished', but 'Astrophill'; 'Chiaman Ninfe' not 'the Nymphs call', but 'Come ye come ye'; 'fiameggia'l ciel', not 'the sky blazes' but 'our marriage day'.[46] I am not suggesting that Modena was influenced by this tradition, of which he, and most Italians, were mostly likely unaware. But the device of these Anglo-Italian madrigals and *Kinah shemor* alike is intimate with music, since it foregrounds acoustic qualities even at the expense of sense.

Music was, after all, the daily preoccupation of Modena's mind and working life. His autobiography gives rather short shrift to his musical endeavours, listing only 'cantorial work' and 'music' low down on the list of occupations that supported him. To these spare entries, Don Harrán adds 'writing poetry intended for musical performance or saturated with musical imagery or both; editing music; teaching it; performing it as a singer and possibly an instrumentalist; rehearsing and conducting musicians; and, it is even conceivable, composing music for one or more voice parts'.[47] Modena championed synagogue music throughout his life, supporting perhaps the first musical celebration for the Fifteenth of Av in history during a stint in Ferrara, and authoring a formal rabbinic defence of art music in the synagogue.[48] For almost forty years, from his appointment in 1609 until his death, he sang

[46] Lazarus 2021, 695-703.

[47] *Life of Judah*, 160; Harrán 1998, 19.

[48] Adelman, 1988a, 25; Harrán 2014, 131-74.

daily in synagogue as cantor, and in 1628 he was appointed director of the Accademia degl' Impediti, a music academy in the Ghetto.[49]

At the intersection of words and music, Modena's role as the editor of the first printed book of Hebrew polyphonic music may illuminate how *tevah* operated as a metaphor for his polyglot parallels. In the early 1620s, Modena and his friend Salamone Rossi, a major composer and musician at the court of Mantua, collaborated on preparing a collection of Rossi's polyphonic part songs, styled after Italian madrigals but setting Hebrew psalms, prayer texts, and hymns, for the press. The resulting volume, *Hashirim ʾasher leshlomo* ('Songs by Solomon'), featured paratexts by both Modena and Rossi (all of which may, in fact, have been written by Modena).[50] But when it came to the songs themselves, the novel typographical problem arose of how to print Hebrew lyrics beneath western notation, since the two read in opposite directions. Should the Hebrew be reversed to match the music, or the music be notated right to left? Modena's foreword describes their solution:

> In the eyes of the composer it seemed better for the readers to pronounce the letters backwards and read, in contrary order, the words of the song that are well known to all than to reverse the direction of the notes from what is customary

[49] Adelman 1988a, 27, 31; *Life of Judah*, 160; Chayes 2017, 62-88.

[50] Rossi 1622/3. Though the precise extent of Modena's involvement prior to the printing is uncertain, Harrán conjectures that Modena ghost-wrote Rossi's material ('"Dum Recordaremur Sion"', 45-52). Modena's own preface was the responsum he composed in 1605, defending his introduction of art music into the synagogue (discussed and translated in Harrán 2014, 131-74).

> and have the readers move their eyes, as we Jews are used to write, from right [to left], lest they lose their minds.[51]

Rossi's volume thus struck a compromise whereby whole Hebrew words retained their integrity, but were printed in reverse order as the stave progressed from left to right, 'leaving it to the singers', Harrán explains, 'to break them into syllables' (Harrán 1998, 51).

This pioneering printing venture does not map neatly onto the poetics of *Kinah shemor* — indeed, reading Modena's preface of 1622/3 into a letter of 1609 to illuminate a poem composed in 1584 might look like the chronological equivalent of Rossi's typography. Yet each episode finds Modena worrying at the same problem, of how to measure the fundamental particles of language, and looking for the answer, beyond semantics, to phonetics. Even in Rossi's songs, where the collaborators ultimately stepped back from breaking apart whole words, Modena imagined these *lemmata* in terms of musical measures, as sequences of sound played out across a period of time. Further indication that Rossi's music and the device of *Kinah shemor* occupied the same place in Modena's mind can be found in the final piece of *Hashirim asher leshlomo*, an epithalamium celebrating the wedding of God and the people of Israel. Each stanza of this ode ends with an effect in which, Harrán explains, 'the two or three syllables that are echoes can be construed in either Hebrew or Italian': *alma* (Heb. על מה, 'what for?'; It. *alma*, 'soul'), *lama* (Heb. למה, 'why?', It. *l'ama*, 'he loves her'). On account of such distinctive wordplay the ode was long attributed to Modena, though it is now known to have been

[51] As translated by Harrán 1999, 210; see further Harrán 2002, 171-200. The Hebrew text is edited in Adler 1975, 214-15 (no. 510).

the work of his friend Jacob Segre, and Modena merely its guiding spirit (Harrán 2013, 337-69).

It is important to note that Modena's contemporaries did apply terms of art other than *tevah* to these musical and prosodic phenomena, such as *middah* ('measure') or *mishkal* ('meter') (Harrán 2014, 55, 149, 220). But lexica of this kind were only beginning to take systematic shape in this period. Rossi's own volume of polyphonic music, a Christian genre adapted for the synagogue, was announced as 'an innovation in the land'; 'to describe what they were creating', Joshua Jacobson observes, 'the authors had to borrow or invent words that did not exist in the Hebrew language', such as '*musica*' ('polyphonic music'), '*mishkal*' ('meter'), and '*hohmat ha-shir*' ('music theory') (Jacobson 2015, 147). Likewise, the device of *Kinah shemor* — as we shall see from the difficulties that vexed its early commentators — has always presented as an exotic newcomer to the critical canon.

Modena was aware, in his letter of 1609, that his quarry eluded easy definition, and his use of *tevah* indicates that he was searching for a term to describe it. As he attempted to conceptualize this novel phenomenon, the language Modena reached for shared as much with musical as with verbal art. I have argued elsewhere that the Italian and Hebrew texts of *Kinah shemor* could even be said to function as a kind of music for one another, partly spatial, partly temporal, and partly acoustic in much the same manner as co-ordinate notation (Lazarus 2021, 706-11). We would do well not to be too sceptical of Modena's attempts to name this phenomenon, since we ourselves remain in the same position, searching the vocabulary we have for a term that might describe this oddity of sound and sense.

My point is not that *tevah* meant 'a linguistic unit defined

by parallel sound-strings' when Modena used it. It is rather that since there was, and remains, no term to describe the phenomenon on display in *Kinah shemor*, Modena's letter of 1609 sees him attempting to evolve a new critical term to describe it from within the vocabulary he had at his disposal. Critical taxonomy bends to meet new objects, and Hebrew at this time was developing rapidly to accommodate cultural influences for which it lacked established terminology.[52] I would submit that Modena's use of the word '*tevot*' in 1609 to describe correspondences that are 'similar in the two tongues' is as good as any, and better than most. Its exploratory and provisional sense could well be translated into English as 'measures' — phonetic units, spans of sound-time, something in between 'metrical feet' and the word's sense in modern Hebrew, 'musical bars'. Modena's literary showpiece was associated in his mind less importantly with riddles and with epitaph, than — in an experimental and entirely novel way — with music.

[52] On critical taxonomy across literatures and languages, see Lazarus 2019, 267-85.

1.4 Christian and Jew

So far I have focused on what *Kinah shemor* is, on its generic associations and on the formal nature of this novel literary object. It remains to be asked what function it played. Why, or to what end, did Modena compose the poem?

Poised on the boundary between the Italian and Hebrew languages; demanding new words for the description of novel objects; negotiating hybrid cultural identities; *Kinah shemor*, no less than Rossi and Modena's music book, occupied an interstitial position between Christian and Jewish cultures. In the letter of 1609, Modena adopts a designation of Hebrew and Italian as 'Jewish' ('*yehudit*') and 'Christian' ('*notzrit*') respectively; the same terms appear in the letter to Asher Clerli and the Hebrew preface of 1602, where the poem is to be read 'in the holy tongue and the Christian tongue' ('*lashon ha-kodesh*, *lashon notzri*'). As with the word *tevah*, such terms could well be passed over as entirely commonplace. Yet applied to a composition described by Modena as 'a marvel to both Jewish and Christian sages', the implications of this commonplace bear more intentional weight. As the poem sat on the seams between Hebrew and Italian and between words and music, so it had a role to play in mediating between

different religious and cultural communities.

The binary scheme implied in Modena's terminology, aligning the languages with the communities that spoke them, belies the nuance of what Moritz Steinschneider called the 'sprachliches Amphibienleben', the amphibious linguistic life, of Venetian Jews at this time.[53] Modena captured the strangeness of this life in the preface to his biblical lexicon *Galut yehudah.* Since the Church had reaffirmed its ban on printing vernacular translations of the Bible at the Council of Trent (1545-63), a list of Hebrew words translated into Italian according to the order of their appearance in the biblical text — a crib, as it were — was of evident utility to Christians. Yet *Galut yehudah* was principally conceived as an educational tool for Jews. Modena describes how Jewish children, whose mother tongue was Italian, were taught 'our own scriptures' ('nostre scritture') through word-for-word translation into Italian, 'the language in which we find ourselves pilgrim inhabitants [peregrini habitanti]'.[54] Often this led to the relegation of Hebrew to a purely literary language, as Modena lamented further in the *Historia de' riti hebraici*:

> There are at this time very few among them, that are able to discourse Perfectly in the *Hebrew,* or *Holy Tongue*... which they commonly spake before their Dispersion: because they all generally learn, and are brought up in the Language of

[53] Cited in Guetta 2012, 279-97. See also Arnold 2010, 499: 'Al suo interno, dunque, il ghetto si presentava come un microcosmo plurietnico e, sopratutto, plurilinguistico.'

[54] Modena 1640a, A^{r}: 'Onde hò considerato più volte la maniera che noi tentamo in insegnar l'interpretatione delle nostre scritture a nostri figliuoli, che è per forza d'una pura prattica leggendo e int[e]rpretando parola per parola nel linguaggio oue ne ritrouiamo peregrini habitanti...'

> the Countries, where they are born: So that, in *Italy,* they speak *Italian:* in *Germany, Dutch:* in the *Eastern* Parts, and in *Barbary,* they speak the Language of the *Turks,* and *Moors;* and so of the rest.[55]

Only the learned few could 'maintain a Continued Discourse in Hebrew, Elegantly, and according to the Proprietie of the Language', Modena continues, and even they differed so far in pronunciation that Dutch Jews could hardly be understood by Italians. In this environment, Jews occupied 'two linguistic and therefore cultural worlds', as Alessandro Guetta has put it, and translation offered not merely a literary exercise but a 'linguistic bridge' between them.[56]

Modena took pride in his ability to thrive in both worlds. Among his childhood compositions was a rendering of two cantos of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* into Hebrew, according to the rules of Italian versification; later original works — a *Pastoral of Rachel and Jacob*, a dialogue on gambling, a 'tragedy of *Ester*' — are clearly composed in classical genres as they had developed within the Christian world; and he wrote several poems for Christian dedicatees.[57] Such compositions, as well as many of his other activities, attest Modena's commitment to what Howard Adelman has recently called the 'Renaissance ideal of *translatio studiorum*, i.e., the transfer of culture across both time and space and also among various groups' (Adelman 2019, 1). Even in Venice, where convivial relations between Christians and Jews were not uncommon,

[55] Modena 1650, 56-7 (II.i).

[56] Guetta 2012, 296; see also Arnold 2010, 515, for whom it suggests an interstitial 'territorio semantico' related to Homi Bhaba's notion of the 'third space'.

[57] *Life of Judah*, 124-7; Andreatta 2019, 115-28; Scordari 2020, 53-69.

Modena stood out. On moving to the city, in 1592, he began to join meetings of Christian scholars eager to explore Jewish knowledge, in quiet defiance of the Inquisition:

> בימים האלה אנכי הולך פעמים רבות אל חברת מלומדים, אל דרשו־תיהם, והסיפור הולך ומתגלגל בינינו הרבה על שאלותיהם ותשובותינו ועל כיוצא בזה, כאשר ידעת. והנה כתבתי לך שלישים מהמה, ידעתי ימ־תקו לחכך, לולי כי ידוע לך כי לא נתנו ליכתב, והם דברים שבעל פה.[58]

> These days I go often to societies of learned men, to their sermons, and much discussion rolls along among us concerning their questions and our answers, and what follows from this, as you know. And here I would have written notes for you from these discussions which I knew would be sweet to your palate, except that, as you know, it is not permitted to write them down, being matters which are for speech alone.

As he established himself in Venice, Modena served as a proofreader for Christians in the printing shop, and composed numerous encomia for volumes by Christian scholars. He cultivated personal, even intense relationships with Christians, which he understood in the Ciceronian terms of mutually beneficial 'friendship'. 'In Venice', as Michela Andreatta has put it, 'the ghetto walls never impeded daily interaction' between Jews and the circumambient Christian population (Andreatta 2019, 118).

Above all, Modena gained renown throughout Venice as a preacher. His sermons attracted throngs of Jews and Christians alike, including 'esteemed friars, priests, and noblemen'

[58] Modena 1984, 66 (letter 24). Boksenboim glosses the word 'שלישים' ('notes') by reference to Proverbs 22:20.

(*Life of Judah*, 95). A letter to his teacher Samuel Archivolti describes Modena's pride in the stylistic innovations he introduced into his preaching, infusing Jewish sermons with Christian and classical rhetorical technology:

> The sermons blaze a truly new path, for I have made them a blending of the Christian sermon and the traditional Jewish homily. After the verse from the Torah [*nose*] and the rabbinic statement [*ma'amar*] comes a brief introduction which they [i.e. the Christians] call prologhino. Then comes the first part of the sermon and then the second part, followed by an explanation of the *nose* and *ma'amar*. At the end there is a recapitulation of the entire sermon called *epilogo* and finally, a petitionary prayer in the accustomed manner. This is the structure of every sermon. There is no section without some biblical verse or rabbinic statement and the sermon is developed by means of suitable connections based on the rules of oratory and *retorica*.[59]

This hybrid style was highly effective on both sides of the religious aisle. On one occasion Modena preached before a delegation of French noblemen which included Gaston, duc d'Orléans; on another, he inspired his audience in the Great Synagogue to such charity that Christian preachers long after dangled the episode before their own reluctant congregations (*Life of Judah*, 109, 131). When the Doge of Venice visited the Seminary of San Antonio, he was greeted with an ode and a speech in Hebrew prepared by Modena. Equally extensive were his relations with Christians abroad in England and France; two manuscript pages towards the

[59] Modena 1984, 84 (letter 40), translated and discussed by Weinberg 1992, 109.

end of his autobiography list dedications and praise from leading Christian scholars.[60] According to his grandson, Isaac min Halevim, after Modena's death 'he was better known among the Christians than among us' (Adelman 1988a, 48-9).

Modena's easy engagement with the Christian community, however, was playing out against a backdrop of expulsion and repression throughout Italy. The letter to Gershon Cohen, for all that it reports fruitful relations in Venice, also makes reference to a decree issued by Pope Clement III in February 1593, which was not the first to expel the Jews from the Papal States (Andreatta 2015, 485, note 6). Even in the Venetian republic, famed for tolerating Jewish residence for almost three hundred years from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Benjamin Ravid has shown that 'Jewish contemporaries often perceived that their fate was hanging in the balance' due to decrees of expulsion which were periodically issued throughout the sixteenth-century, albeit not ultimately carried out (Ravid 2003, 60). Prohibition of Jewish printing and publishing, in place since 1548, was a constant threat; on one occasion in 1635 police raided the studio in which Modena's book *Beit yehudah* was being printed, and his grandson Isaac spent two months in prison (*Life of Judah*, 141). Hence, perhaps, the harder edge to an early, densely allusive letter which may have been sent to Moshe della Rocca himself:

> ואף אם התמהמה, חכיתי לשיר אשר שאלתי מאת כבו׳, להקהות שיני רשעים האומרים כי אין אתנו יודע עד מה בשירותיהם, יבינו ויראו כי לא כדעות הנוצריות העבריות, כי ילדי העברים אחזו בזה ובזה, ידם בכל.[61]

[60] *Life of Judah*, 170-4; Adelman 1988b, 272-3.

[61] Modena 1984, 179 (letter 135), containing allusions to Hab-

> Even if it takes a while, I await the poem which I asked of your honour, to blunt the teeth of the evil ones who say that none among us has any notion of what is in their poetry; they will understand and see that the thought [*deʿot*] of the Hebrews is not like that of the Christians, for the children of the Hebrews have grasped both this and that, they can turn their hand to everything.

If the identification of the addressee is correct, the letter has a *terminus ante quem* of 1584, at which point Modena was no older than thirteen. It is a striking record of class resentment, of pubescent swagger, of a young prodigy's anger at the monoglot, monocultural arrogance of Christian contemporaries so much more fortunate and so much less impressive than he was. Cultural fluency makes Modena twice as powerful as his taunters, master of their culture as well as his own. It is in this sense that he wrote to Asher Clerli that *Kinah shemor* was 'to be read equally in the holy tongue and the Christian tongue'. In the cultural contests that presented themselves daily in Modena's youth, poetry was an object of status and an agent of revenge.

Nevertheless, by the time Modena published *Kinah shemor*, first in 1602 and again in 1640, he had come to see poetry, and in particular this kind of linguistic hybridity, as a bridge rather than a sword. One of the few occasions on which he passed up a pun occurs in *Magen ve-herev*, a

bakuk 2.3 ('ואף אם התמהמה'), Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 27.2 ('אחזו בזה ובזה'), and Genesis 16.12 ('ידם בכל'). See note 1 for evidence that this letter was sent to della Rocca, under the rubric 'and he called to Moshe, and he said…' (Leviticus 1). Note that *de'ot* is a capacious word which could mean ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, or wisdom, as well as 'minds'.

notably conciliatory anti-Christian tract: where most Jews played on the Gospels as *aven gilayon* ('sin sheet'), Modena settled respectfully for *Evangelae.*[62] Or perhaps, ever politic when it came to his reputation among Christians, he revealed different faces in private and in print.

Modena's efforts to address both communities, as well as the kind of sacrifices he was forced to make for the integrity of his literary experiment, are suggested by an early version of the poem's last line in the manuscript *Divan*. In both printed witnesses, the last line reads 'הֲלוֹם יוּבָא שְׁבִי וַשָׁי שְׁמֵנוּ' (*halom yuva' shevi vashai shemenu*), which I translate 'Our name is borne hither, a captive and a gift'; the corresponding Italian reads 'Va l'huomo và se viua assai se meno' ('Man goes; he goes whether he has lived enough or not'). In manuscript, however, the Hebrew reads 'הלום ילך שבי ושם שמנו' (*halom yelech shevi vesham shemenu*), and the Italian 'ua l'hom ellett' se uiua assai se meno'. Leaving aside for a moment the dissonance at the end of the line, between Italian 'viva assai' and Hebrew *shevi vesham* (addressed in the textual commentary on line 8 below, §2.3), the variance between *yuvah* and *yelech* in the Hebrew makes little difference to the sense: both are verbs of movement, the former 'will be brought', the latter 'will go'. Yet the selection of *yelech* for the Hebrew enables an Italian variant of far more consequence. That variant, 'ua l'hom ellett' ('man goes, elect'), is aimed squarely at a Christian audience. Like many Hebrew elegies, *Kinah shemor* contains numerous quotations of the Bible and Jewish liturgy: Modena calls della Rocca's death his *yom kippur* ('day of atonement'), and quotes a phrase, '*tzel 'over*

[62] Adelman 1988b, 279. On *Magen veherev* see further Guetta 2000, 296-318; Fishman 2003, 159-94.

yameinu' ('our days are a passing shadow') associated with the memorial service. But Judaism contains no notion of election, or of a binary between heaven and hell, comparable to Christian doctrine. In the Jewish theological context, to say someone has gone to the 'true delightful Heaven' is simply to say that they have died. To a Christian, however, the lines are more theologically pointed: if a man goes to heaven, it is because he is not going to hell. 'Ua l'hom ellett' supplies a reason for man's upwards journey appropriate to the sense of 'heaven' as it would have been understood by the poem's Christian audience. Nevertheless, this was not, in the end, a reading Modena retained. Considering how small an effect the Italian variant has on the Hebrew meaning, it seems unlikely that Modena made the change for phonetic necessity. We can only conjecture why he did. Perhaps this was a case of outreach gone wrong: Modena knew just enough as a precocious youth in Montagnana to dazzle the 'Christian sages' who found the poem so marvellous, but learned, in Venice's scholarly circles, that Calvinism even of the most passing kind was a dangerous thing in counter-reformation Italy.

More important than the poem's theological freight was its social function. In the passages that introduce the poem in print, as well as in his autobiography, Modena consistently emphasizes the wonder provoked on both sides by its linguistic virtuosity. We are told that the joint purpose of *Galut yehudah* and *Kinah shemor*, which were printed together in 1640, was 'expressing sounds [voci] of the Hebrew tongue in Italian'. I translate 'voci' as 'sounds' here, but the word also encompasses 'words' and 'voices', and indeed in the poem it is the *voice* of Hebrew placed into Italian, the commensuration of the two languages, that promises a kind of kinship:

> not translating, but making common these two very different tongues, which on the same subject are pronounced with the same sounds, there came about a notable thing and a delightful *capriccio* to everyone.[63]

Translation leaves one language or the other behind, but 'making common' brings them together on equal footing. These two poems and languages become the same because they sound the same, and the proof of this is that the listeners, who hear the same thing, react to it with the same wonder. 'It is as if,' Harrán writes of similar translingual echoes at the end of Rossi's music book, 'the author were telling us that however deep the chasm between Hebrew and Italian it can be breached through their homonyms' (Harrán 1999, 241).

Similar functions have been attributed to other instances of Hebrew-Italian translation in the period. Exchanges of sonnets maintained a dialogue between Jewish poets and their Christian contemporaries; Judah Sommo, in the words of Alessandro Guetta, made a metrical translation of the psalms in the hope of building 'a bridge between two worlds'.[64] The obscure metaphor that concludes Modena's Hebrew preface to the 1602 printing captures this quality still more forcefully. Since he has been fielding so many requests for the poem, Modena declares, he is printing it here, 'אשה אל אחותה' (*ʾisha ʾel ʾachotah*). The phrase literally means 'a woman to her sister', but in its original contexts it describes either the cloths that covered the tabernacle, or the wings of the cherubim in Ezekiel's vision, reaching 'one to the other'. As the two printed 'wings' of this poem touched pinions on the page, and two linguistic communities converged to hear

[63] Preface to *1640*; see §2.2, below.

[64] Bonfil 1996, 443; Guetta 2012, 296-7.

it, Christians and Jews could only marvel at the fact that the words they heard in their own respective tongues were simultaneously *meaning* — if not the same thing, then at least at the same time — to those of their sister faiths.

Printing his juvenile composition later in life, Modena took advantage of the universal admiration *Kinah shemor* inspired to promote his own reputation, hanging the poem and its accompanying puff over the entrance first of *Midbar yehudah*, to emphasise the cross-cultural reception of his sermons, and then of *Pi ʾaryeh*, displaying the credentials that qualified him to compose a bilingual dictionary. In this respect *Kinah shemor* once again shares much with Modena's musical thinking. In Modena's writings on music, Harrán explains, Hebrew *musica* — Jewish calque of the Christian term for 'art music' — conveys a higher knowledge of the 'order, relation, proportion, beauty… understanding, and wisdom' which constitute God's intentions and the subject of hymns of praise:

> *Musiqa* served Modena as a metaphor in his search for "harmony", the reconciliation of God with His people; for the redemption of the Jews; and for a new era of peace and prosperity. It served him as a metaphor for the "Songs of Zion," which the Jews sadly remembered in their dispersion, and, in expectation of their return, fervently tried to restore.[65]

If these were the objects of Modena's search, *Kinah shemor* and its translingual 'measures' served as a similar metaphor, albeit on a humbler scale. If not return, *Kinah shemor* at least represented a relief from pilgrim habitation; if not reconciliation, at least a momentary community of wonder; if not redemption, at least admiration; if not harmony, at least unison.

[65] Harrán 1998, 61; Harrán 1999, 250-3.

Part 2
Texts

2.1 Textual notes

Kinah Shemor survives in three states from Modena's lifetime. My sigla for these are as follows, using the convention that *Heb.* and *It.* indicate the respective Hebrew or Italian text (i.e., *1640Heb.* denotes the Hebrew text as printed in 1640).

MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mich. 528 (olim 759), fol. 21^{v} (see Figure 1, p. 72)

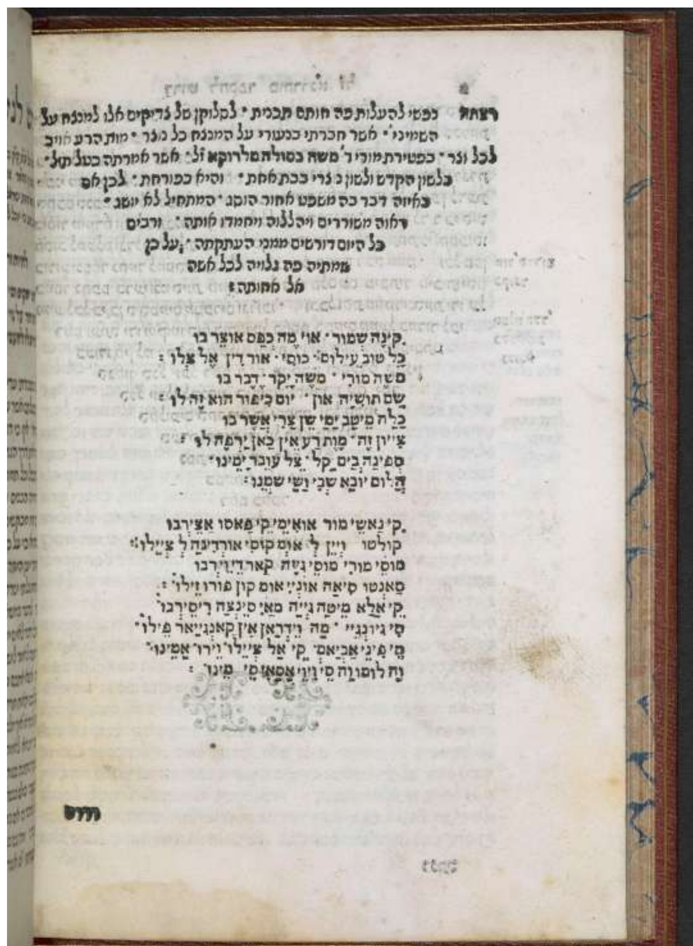
1602 Leon Modena, *חלק ראשון מספר מדבר יהודה* [*Helek rishon mi-sefer Midbar yehudah*] (Venice, 1602), fol. 80^{v} (see Figure 2, p. 73)

1640 Leon Modena, *פי אריה* [*Pi ʾaryeh*], *Raccolta delle voci Rabiniche non Hebraiche ne Caldee in tutto ...* (Venice, 1640), 2^{v}; appended to *גלות יהודה* [*Galut yehudah*] *... Novo dittionario hebraico e italiano* (Padua, 1640) (see Figure 3, p. 74)

MS was begun no earlier than 1595 and composed over many years, but internal evidence suggests that it preserves an early version of the poem (Modena 1932, vi-vii). Significant variants in the two printed witnesses, however, almost certainly record Modena's authorial emendations, with the result that *1640* represents his final version of the text.[66]

[66] For Modena's intimate involvement with the print workshop, see Andreatta 2018, 9-29; Harrán 1998, 51-2.

Figure 1. MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mich. 528, fol. 21v

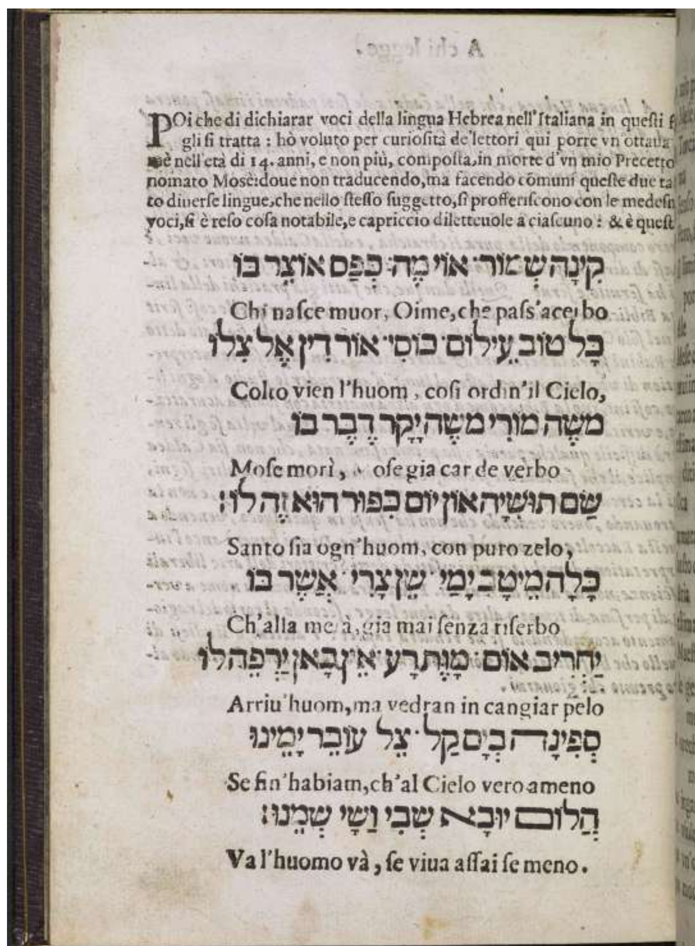


רצתה נפשי להעלות פה חותם תכנית · לבלוקן של צדיקים אלו למנצח על
השמיני · אשר חברתי בנעורי על המנצח כל נגר · מות הרע חויב
לכל ונר · בפטירת מורי ר׳ משה בסולה מלרוקא ז״ל · אשר אמרתה כטל תל ·
בלשון הקדש ולשון כ נרי בבת אחת · והיא כפורחת · לכן אם
באיזה דבר כה משפט אחור הוכג · המתחיל לא יושג ·
דאוה משוררים ויה ללוה ויחמדו אותה · ורבים
כל היום דורשים ממני העתקתה · ועל כן
ממתיה פה גלויה לכל אשה
אל אמותה ׃

קִינָה שְׁמוֹר · אוֹי מָה כְּפַס אוֹצָר בּוֹ
כָּל טוֹב עִילוּם · כּוֹסִי · אוֹר דִּין אֵל צִלּוֹ ׃
סְשֶׁה מוֹרִי · מֹשֶׁה יָקָר דָּבָר בּוֹ
שֵׁם תּוּשִׁיָּה אוֹן · יוֹם כִּיפּוּר הוּא זֶה לוֹ ׃
כָּלַת מֵישַׁב יָמַי שֵׁן צָרַי אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ
צִיּוֹן זֶה · מָוֶת רַע אֵין כָּאן יִרְפַּת לוֹ ׃
סְפִינָה בַּיָּם קַל · צֵל עוֹבֵר יָמֵינוּ ·
הַיּוֹם יוּבָא שְׁבִי וְשַׁי שְׁמֵנוּ ׃

קִי נַאשִׁי מוֹר אוֹאֵימִי קִי פַּאסוֹ אַצִירְבוֹ
קוֹלְטוֹ וְיֵין לִי אוֹם קוֹסִי אוֹרְדִינַה לִ צִייֵלוֹ ׃
מוֹסִי מוֹרִי סוֹסִי גְשַׁת קַאר דֵּיוִירְבוֹ
סַאנְטוֹ סִיאַה אוֹנֵי אוֹם קוֹן פוֹרוֹ זֵילוֹ ׃
קִי אַלַּא מֵיטַה גִייַה מַאי סִינְצַה רִיסֵירְבוֹ
סִי גִיוֹנְגֵיי · מַה וֵידְרַאן אֵין קַאנְגִייַאר פֵּילוֹ ·
מֵי פִּינִי אַבִיאַם קִי אַל צִייֵלוֹ וֵירוֹ אַמֵינוֹ ·
נַה לוֹמוֹנַה סִי וְיֵי אַסְפַּאזִס מֵינוֹ ׃

Figure 2. 1602: London, British Library, 1964.c.10, fol. 80v



A chi legge.

POi che di dichiarar voci della lingua Hebrea nell'Italiana in queſti f[...] gli ſi tratta : hò voluto per curioſità de'lettori qui porre vn'ottaua [...]è nell'età di 14. anni, e non più, compoſta, in morte d'vn mio Precetto[re] nomato Mosè: doue non traducendo, ma facendo cõmuni queſte due ta[n]to diuerſe lingue, che nello ſteſſo ſuggetto, ſi profferiſcono con le medeſi[me] voci, ſi è reſo coſa notabile, e capriccio dilетteuole a ciaſcuno : & è queſt[a]

קינה שמור אוי מה כפס אוצר בו
Chi naſce muor, Oime, che paſs'acerbo
כל טוב עילום כוסי אור דין אל צלו
Colto vien l'huom, coſi ordin'il Cielo,
משה מורי משה יקר דבר בו
Moſe morì, Moſe gia car de verbo
שם תושיה און יום כפור הוא זה לו:
Santo ſia ogn'huom, con puro zelo,
כלה מיטב ימי שן צרי אשר בו
Ch'alla me à, gia mai ſenza riſerbo
יחריב אום: מות רע אין באן ירפה לו
Arriu'huom, ma vedran in cangiar pelo
ספינה הבים קל · צל עובר ימינו
Se fin'habiam, ch'al Cielo vero ameno
הלום יובא שבי ושי שמינו:
Va l'huomo và, ſe viua aſſai ſe meno.

Figure 3. 1640: London, British Library, 1936.b.9, fol. 2v

None of the modern editions or reprintings of the poem takes into account all three witnesses. Simon Bernstein's 1932 edition is a diplomatic transcription of *MS* (Modena 1932, 51-2). In 1959, Cecil Roth reproduced *1602*, albeit in the intercalated format in which it appeared in 1640, and with the Judaeo-Italian of *1602It.* transliterated into Roman characters. In 2010, Rafael Arnold printed the same texts in parallel.[67] Finally, in 2017, Aaron Rubin produced a valuable edition intercalating *1640Heb.*, *1602It.* (which was printed in Hebrew characters), *1640It.*, and a formal phonetic transcription of the Hebrew, which gives non-Hebrew readers access to the consonance between the Hebrew and Italian aspects of the poem (Rubin 2017, 343-5). Each of the foregoing editions is partial in some respect. Bernstein follows *MS* alone and neglects the printed editions, while Rubin follows the printed editions and neglects the manuscript; Roth's and Arnold's editions, meanwhile, are not systematic and introduce errors.

Few translations have been attempted. The Italian can be ambiguous, but poses no great challenge: a Latin version of *1640It.* was produced by the seventeenth-century Vatican Hebraist Giulio Bartolocci (transcribed below, §3.4), and Bernstein's edition includes a translation of *MSIt.* into Hebrew. The Hebrew text, however — elliptical, allusive, and by Modena's own admission extremely difficult — both invites and frustrates translation in equal measure. Adolfo Ottolenghi produced an Italian 'versione libera' in 1929, flexible enough to accommodate Modena's *stilo oscuro*, which 'had to bend to the double purpose that the young poet set himself' (Ottolenghi 1929, 5). In fact Ottolenghi renders the poem with far greater syntactical continuity than Arnold's

[67] Roth 1959, 307; Arnold 2010, 513.

impressionistic Italian version, published in 2010, which treats the poem as a mosaic of imagistic fragments ('ogni bene — arieti — la mia coppa — luce [è] il giudizio di Dio — la sua ombra') (Arnold 2010, 514).

I have taken a different approach here, and attempted to marry translation *ad verbum* and *ad sensum* by crediting the Hebrew poem with as much continuous sense as I could reconcile to a literal reading of the text. My approach to the translation also distinguishes it from what is, to my knowledge, the first English translation of *1640Heb.*, by Jonathan Valk and Aaron Hornkohl.[68] As well as accounting for textual variants, I have endeavoured to resolve ambiguities and difficult readings by reference to Modena's own writings, above all his biblical lexicon, *Galut yehudah*. The poem and the lexicon have several points of contact. Modena was labouring to complete *Galut yehudah* when he alluded, in the letter of 1609, to his list of phonetic 'measures' shared between Hebrew and Italian. The last authorial printing of the poem accompanied the second edition of *Galut yehudah*, in 1640. And I have argued above that *Galut yehudah* and *Kinah shemor* were complementary works, both of them aimed at bridging the linguistic gap between Hebrew and Italian. Using the lexicon assists the translator in adjudicating between competing readings, not least because Modena favours consistency in his glosses throughout the text of the Torah — though I have not refrained from preferring alternative readings where there is strong reason to do so (see, for example, the commentary on line 4). I should be clear that I am not claiming that *Galut yehudah* is a key to *Kinah shemor*, or employing it as such.

[68] In Worthington 2020, 8-10. See further commentary on line 6 of the Hebrew text, below.

Rather, I take it as circumstantial evidence, where a given word in the Hebrew poem may have multiple meanings, that Modena had in mind one or another of those meanings. For example, the word און (line 6) might mean 'vigor' or 'sorrow', and indeed 'sorrow' might make more sense in the context of the poem. But in *Galut yehudah* it is consistently glossed 'vigore', and so I have opted to translate it as 'vigor' on the grounds that that is what the word seems to have meant to Modena most often. *Galut yehudah* is not a translation of *Kinah shemor*, but a window onto the idiolect of its author.

For both the Hebrew and Italian my base text is *1640*, which in addition to bearing the most authorial legitimacy is also the cleanest printed impression. Only substantial lexical variants are recorded in the textual notes, which means I treat as merely accidental any variation of vocalisation and punctuation in the Hebrew, and purely orthographical variants in the Italian (e.g. *huom*/*hom*, *cosi*/*cossi*). The two major variants occur in lines 6 and 8. In line 6, Modena's witnesses are split between *yahriv ʾom* and *tziyun zeh* in the Hebrew, corresponding to *arriu'huom* and סִי גִיוּנְגֵיי (*si giunge*) in the Italian. In line 8, there are authoritative witnesses of *yuvah* and *yelech* in Hebrew, corresponding to *l'huomo và* and *l'hom ellett'* in the Italian. Though *MS* in general differs more from the printed texts than either of the printed texts does from the other, these major variants are evenly distributed: *1602* is the outlier in the first case, *MS* in the second.

It is noteworthy, however, that *MS* records several Hebrew readings phonetically misaligned with the Italian, even though the two were inscribed at the same time and on the same page. In Modena's manuscript, Hebrew *yamav* does not echo Italian *gia mai* (line 5); nor *ʾeyn bo*, *in can-* (line 6); nor *ve-sham*, *-va assai* (line 8). This is a very different matter. The

major variants above can be attributed to Modena's revisions over the course of his life, but misalignment within the single autograph text recorded in Modena's manuscript results in a state of the poem that is imperfect or incomplete. The internal discordances in the text preserved in *MS*, in other words, suggest to me — notwithstanding the composition of the manuscript *Divan* over many years — that it represents an early draft of the poem, before Modena had fully hammered out its consonance. Also noteworthy is that in each of these cases it was the Hebrew text that was eventually altered to echo the Italian. It would strain the evidence too far to deduce from this fact that the Italian text was composed, in a simple sense, 'before' the Hebrew. But it does show that at this late stage of composition, as far as Modena was concerned, the Italian text was fixed, and in these cases at least was the constant and not the variable.

1640Heb. is printed almost entirely without punctuation. *1602Heb.*, on the other hand, contains interpuncts, and *sof pasuq* (full-stop) after each couplet, which clarify that for the most part the poem's sense-units are two lines long. While early modern punctuation is multi-purpose at best and unreliable at worst, in *1602Heb.* the interpunct and *sof pasuq* are helpful as syntactic dividers and have aided my translation. As for the Italian, the punctuation of *1640It.* is more predictable than in the Hebrew, but I have again leaned on it only lightly. In the last three lines I have retained as much of Modena's syntax as I can, whatever difficulties this raises in English.

2.2 Prefaces

1602

רצתה נפשי להעלות פה חותם תכנית · לסלוקן של צדיקים אלו למנצח
על השמיני׳ · אשר חברתי בנעורי על המנצח כל נוצר · מות הרע אויב
לכל וצר · בפטירת מורי ר׳ משה בסולה מלרוקא ז״ל · אשר אמרתה
כטל תזל · בלשון הקדש ולשון נוצרי בבת אחת · והיא כפורחת · לכן אם
באיזה דבר בה משפט אחור הוסג · המתחיל לא יושג · ראוה משוררים
ויהללוה ויחמדו אותה · ורבים כל היום דורשים ממני העתקתה · על כן
שמתיה פה גלויה לכל אשה אל אחותה :

I wanted to raise here a seal of the sum[69] on the death of

[69] Modena glosses the one scriptural incidence of the phrase חותם תכנית (*hotam tokhnit*) as *sigilli la somma* (*Galut yehudah*, p. 97[v], on Ezekiel 28.12; note that this passage reiterates the poem's exhortation to take up a *kinah* or lament). '*Somma*' has as many valencies as 'sum' does in English, as Florio makes clear in *A Worlde of Wordes*, s.v. 'somma': 'a summe of any thing, the end of an accompt, the whole, the principall or totall summe. Also an end, a conclusion, a consummation, a perfection, an issue, or accomplishing of any thing. Also the height, the top or fulnesse of any thing, the principall or chiese point of a matter, a collection of things or words'. Modena's

the righteous, 'to the vanquisher, in an *ottava*',[70] which I composed in my youth on the vanquisher of all that is created: Death, the evil one, an enemy to all and a foe. I composed it on the passing of my teacher R. Moshe Basola della Rocca, of blessed memory (may his utterance distil as the dew),[71] in the holy tongue and the Christian tongue in one go. But as it flourishes, so it escapes many,[72] for if a word of it is turned around,[73] the beginner will not understand. Poets hailed this showpiece and coveted it,[74] and every day many ask it of me to copy; thus I place it here, revealed to all, each wing touching the other.[75]

poem might 'seal the sum' of Moshe della Rocca's life in several of these senses. Equally, the phrase might cast this short preface as the seal upon Modena's poem itself, since *tokhnit* ('sum') at root means 'measurement' or 'proportion', both of which were common metaphors in this period for verse (i.e. metrical or 'measured' language).

[70] Psalm 12, 'למנצח על־השמינית' ('for the choirmaster, on the *sheminith*' in modern translations); see discussion above.

[71] Deuteronomy 32.2, 'תזל כטל אמרתי' ('may my speech distil as the dew'), from *Ha'azinu*, the poem which Moses recites to the Israelites before he climbs Mount Nevo and they cross into the Holy Land.

[72] Modena collocates the two senses of פרח: 'flower/bloom', and also 'escape/fly away'. My translation renders both senses in sequence.

[73] Isaiah 59.14, 'והסג אחור משפט' ('and justice was turned back'), but משפט here takes the sense of 'sentence/meaning'. I am grateful to Shachar Orlinski for explaining the point, that reversing the words '*kinah shemor*' (i.e. '*shemor kinah*') would still make sense, but would destroy the correspondence of the poem between languages.

[74] Song of Songs 6.9, 'ראוה בנות ויאשרוה מלכות ופילגשים ויהללוה' ('the daughters saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines praised her'); see *Life of Judah*, 87.

[75] 'אשה אל אחותה' (literally 'a woman/wife to her sister') appears in Exodus 26.3, describing the cloths of the tabernacle joined 'one to the

1640

Poi che dichiarar voci della lingua Hebrea nell'Italiana in questi fogli si tratta: hò voluto per curiosità de'lettori qui porre vn ottaua da mè nell'età di 14. anni, e non piu, composta, in morte d'vn mio Precettore nomato Mosè: doue non traducendo, ma facendo communi queste due tanto diuerse lingue, che nello stesso suggetto, si profferiscono con le medesmo voci, si è reso cosa notabile, e capriccio diletteuole a ciascuno: & è questa.

Since expressing sounds of the Hebrew tongue in Italian is the subject of these pages, I wanted for the curiosity of the readers to place here an *ottava*, composed by me at the age of fourteen years and no more, on the death of my teacher, named Moshe; where not translating, but making common these two very different tongues, which on the same subject are pronounced with the same sounds, there came about a notable thing and a delightful *capriccio* to everyone: and it is as follows.

other', and Ezekiel 1.23, describing how the wings of the cherubim in Ezekiel's vision stretch 'one to the other'. Modena could be drawing on either metaphor here, comparing his poem to two pieces of fabric joined at the seam, or, with a glance back at how the poem 'escaped' (lit. 'flew away from') its readers, to the two printed 'wings' of the poem, Hebrew and Italian, as it appeared in *1602*, the version prefaced by this passage (see Figure 2, p. 73).

2.3 *Kinah Shemor*

קִינָה שְׁמוֹר · אוֹי מֶה · כְּפַס אוֹצֵר בּוֹ
כָּל טוֹב עֵילוֹם · כוֹסִי · אוֹר דִין אֶל צִלוֹ
מֹשֶׁה מוֹרִי מֹשֶׁה יָקָר דֶּבֶר בּוֹ
שַׂם תוּשִׁיָּה אוֹן יוֹם כִּפּוּר הוּא זֶה לוֹ:
כָּלָה מֵיטָב יָמַי · שֵׁן צָרִי · אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ
יַחֲרִיב אוֹם · מָוֶת רָע · אֵין כָּאן יַרְפֵּה לוֹ
סְפִינָה בְּיָם קַל · צֵל עוֹבֵר יָמֵינוּ
הֲלוֹם יוּבָא שְׁבִי וַשָּׁי שְׁמֵנוּ:

Kinah shemor · ʾoy meh · ce-fas ʾotzer bo
Col tov ʿeylom · cosi · ʾor din el tzilo
Moshe mori moshe yakar dever bo
Sam tushiyah ʾon yom kippur hu zeh lo.
Calah meitav yamai · shen tzari · asher bo
Yahriv ʾom · mavet rʿa · ein can yarpeh lo
Sfinah be-yam kal · tzel ʿover yameinu
Halom yuvah shevi vashai shemenu.

Remember this lament! Alas, for gone is he who treasures within him
all the world's goodness. My fate! The light of judgement is upon his shadow.
Moshe, my teacher, my dear Moshe; a plague in him

turned his learning, his vigor, into this, his day of atonement.
The best of my days are consumed. The tooth of my foe, now in him,
will destroy nations. Cruel death will spare none here.
A boat in calm seas, our days are a passing shadow;
Our name is borne hither, a captive and a gift.

Textual notes

1. כְּפַס *1640, 1602*] כי פס *MS*
5. יָמַי *1640, 1602*] ימיו *MS*
6. אוֹם יַחֲרִיב *1640, MS*] צִייון זֶה *1602*
6. אֵין כַּאן *1640, 1602*] אין בא *MS*
8. יובַא *1640, 1602*] ילך *MS*
8. וַשָׁי *1640, 1602*] ושם *MS*

Commentary

1. שְׁמוֹר

Modena opens his poem with an allusion to the trope *shamor–zachor* ('keep' and 'remember'). The commandment to observe the Sabbath day appears in Exodus 20.8 as *zachor* ('remember') the Sabbath day, and in Deuteronomy 5.12-14 as *shamor* ('keep') it; the Talmud resolves the difference by teaching that both were pronounced by God in a single utterance. By opening the poem with this resonant term, Modena solemnises it as a ritual observance, and at the same time silently invokes *zachor* as a parallel injunction to 'remember' the deceased, R. Moshe della Rocca.

1. אוֹי מֶה

Like its Italian parallel, *oime*, this phrase is an expostulation of woe.

1. אוֹצֵר
The vocalisation identifies *ʾotzer* (‘gather, contain, store’) as a verb, which takes כָּל טוֹב (*kol tov*, ‘all goodness’) as its object. I have preserved in the translation Modena’s strong sense of the verb as ‘treasure’ (compare *Galut yehudah*, p. 49v on II Kings 20.17, ‘tesororono’).

2. עֵילוֹם
The sole occasion on which *ʿeylom* appears in this form in scripture (II Chronicles 33.7) is not glossed in *Galut yehudah*, but Modena translates its synonym עולם (*ʿolam*) in the figurative sense, ‘forever’ (*sempre*/*sempiterno*/*eterno*). It is possible that a hint of the verb עלם (‘conceal/vanish’) enters the line on its coat-tails, since the sense is that ‘the light of judgement’ is vanished into, or concealed by, ‘his shadow’.

2. כוֹסִי
Cos literally means ‘cup’ (glossed *calice*, e.g. *Galut yehudah*, p. 82v on Psalms 75.9). The metaphor equating it to ‘fate’ is biblical.

2. אוֹר דִין אֶל צִלוֹ
I have taken the liberty of translating the particle *el* (or *l-*) as ‘upon’, though its literal sense is ‘to’. There is precedent in Daniel 7.22, ‘ודינא יהב לקדישי עליונין’, for judgement to be given ‘to’ or ‘in favour of’ the holy ones of the Highest, though in that case the particle *l-* may attach to the verb ‘give’ rather than to ‘judgement’ proper. Modena has no verb here. Yet both judgement and light are often characterised in English in terms of descent from above, and the image of judgement coming to the soul of Modena’s deceased teacher as light falls upon a shadow is concrete enough, I think, to justify the reading.

3. מִשֶׁה יָקָר
I do not see a strong argument for following Bernstein (*Divan*,

p. 52, note 8) in taking the second *Moshe* not as a proper name but as a verb from *limshot*, 'to draw', resulting in: 'Moshe, my teacher, who draws out honour'. Recommending this reading is scriptural precedent in Exodus 2.10, where Pharaoh's daughter names the child she rescued 'Moshe', saying 'כי מן המים משיתהו', 'I drew him out [*meshitihu*] of the water'. Yet the vowels in both the early witnesses that have them clearly read *yakar* (the adjective 'dear') and not *yekar* (the noun 'honour, dignity'), and repetition seems to me — Modena's taste for puns notwithstanding — at least as likely to be a stylistic choice.

3. דֶבֶר

Modena loved above all to pun on the root *d-v-r*. The vowels in both printed witnesses (*1602*, *1640*), however, as well as the parallel sound of the Italian *de verbo*, leave no doubt that what is written is *dever bo*, and Modena's word for *dever* is 'peste' (*Galut yehudah*, 15v on Exodus 5.3; 16r on Exodus 9.3). Nonetheless, *davar* is spectrally present through the Italian echo 'verbo', which itself refers to words or speech.

4. שַׂם תוּשִׁיָה אוֹן

Modena translates *sam* in its root form as 'ponere' (*Galut yehudah*, p. 103v), *tushiyah* as 'erudimento' (*Galut yehudah*, 90r on Proverbs 18.1, 95r on Job 5:12) and sometimes 'dottrina' (*Galut yehudah*, p. 54r on Isaiah 28.29). More challenging is *ʾon*, due to the fact that its two possible meanings — 'vigour, strength', or 'sorrow, gloom, mourning' — are semantically at odds. In *Galut yehudah*, Modena consistently glosses the word *ʿon* as 'vigore' (14v on Genesis 49.3, 55v on Isaiah 40.26). Nowhere does he gloss the word 'sorrow' (or similar). I have kept faith with *Galut yehudah* in this case, although I am not sure that 'sorrow' is not the more plausible meaning, both in the elegiac context of this poem, and also due to the regular

caesura that tends to segregate the first half of Modena's verses from the second. In that case the line might read: 'a plague in him / turned his learning into sorrow. This is his day of atonement'.

5. צָרִי

Tzar can mean either 'sorrow' or 'foe'. Modena feels it strongly as the former, consistently glossing the word *angustia* in *Galut yehudah*. He even goes so far as to gloss a case such as Amos 3.11, where the word most patently means 'enemy', as 'angustiatore' (p. 97[r]), preserving the etymological link by making an enemy one who causes pain. Despite the evidence of *Galut yehudah*, however, in this case there are good local reasons to prefer 'foe'. מָוֶת רָע (*mavet rʿa*) in the following line seems to be placed in apposition to *tzari*, identifying 'cruel death' as the poet's 'foe'; and Modena himself prefaced the poem in 1602 by explaining, in almost identical terms, that its subject was 'Death, the evil one [*mavet ha-rʿa*], an enemy to all and a foe [*tzar*]'.

5-6. שֵׁן צָרִי · אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ יַחְרִיב אוֹם

I have translated the relative *ʾasher bo* (literally: 'that is in him') in a temporal sense, 'now in him', in order to clarify how the (present) death of one man is related to the destruction of whole nations in the future.

6. אֵין כָּאן

MS reads *ʾeyn bo*, yielding instead 'no one comes' instead of 'no one is here'; both phrases essentially mean 'there is no one', i.e. on earth or in the mortal realm.

6. יַרְפֵּה

Not to be confused with רפא (*r-f-ʾ*, 'heal'), the root רפה (*r-f-h*) means 'sink/loosen/relax'; in its causative form, as it is here, it can mean 'abandon/forsake', i.e. 'cause to be released'. Yet even when it most clearly has that sense, Modena glosses

it with Italian 'allentare' (e.g. *Galut yehudah*, p. 26[r] on Deuteronomy 4.31, 'forsake you' is translated 'allentarà te'). Florio translates *allentare* as 'to slacke, to relent, to slow'; 'abandon/forsake' is reserved for *abbandonare*, which is never used by Modena to gloss *r-f-h*. I have opted for 'spare' in this context, though no English word will quite do. Note that I have taken 'cruel death' as the subject, in order to conserve grammatical sense wherever possible; if it is merely an interjection, the line could read 'there is none who will release him', i.e. from death.

5-6. צִיּוּן זֶה

(*tziyun zeh*), the variant reading in *1602*, makes explicit the relationship of *Kinah shemor* to the Hebrew epitaph tradition, through which it was later anthologized.[76] In II Kings 23.17 *tziyun* means 'gravestone' (though Modena glosses this as *segno*, *Galut yehudah*, p. 49[v], in accordance with the word's basic meaning, 'marker'). The clause could then perhaps read: 'the tooth of my sorrow that is in him is this epitaph'.

7. סְפִינָה

The only attested use of *sfinah* in the Torah is Jonah 1.5 (glossed 'barca' in *Galut yehudah*, p. 68[r]): as the sailors panic and jettison cargo amid the tempest, Jonah falls asleep in the hold of the 'boat' (*sfinah*). Modena's selection of this term for his 'boat in calm seas' is in tension with the word's origins in a scene of tempest, emphasising the poem's fatalism — the course of our lives, stormy or calm, is determined by God — and perhaps also conjures the familiar knowledge that Jonah was not long for that boat.

[76] On epigraphic uses of *tziyun* in a later period, see Malkiel 2014, 61-2.

7. צֵל עוֹבֵר יָמֵינוּ

The metaphor ‘days are a passing shadow’ appears frequently in scripture, e.g. in Ecclesiastes 6.12 and 8.13, Job 8.9, Wisdom of Solomon 2.5, and most resonantly in Psalm 144: ‘אדם להבל דמה ימיו כצל עובר’ (‘man is as a breath; his days are a passing shadow’). From there the phrase migrated into the Yom Kippur liturgy and, most aptly for Leon’s poem, into the memorial service *Yizkor*, sung throughout the year as well as for Yom Kippur.

8. שְׁבִי וַשָׁי

Shevi (‘captive’) is well attested in the Torah; *shai* (‘gift/ tribute’) appears only in Isaiah 18.7, which Modena glosses as *dono* (*Galut yehudah*, p. 52[v]).

8. שְׁמֵנוּ

Shem (‘name’) appears with this pronominal suffix uniquely in Joshua 7.9, ‘והכריתו את-שמנו מן-הארץ’ (‘and they shall cut off our name from the earth’). Though the word is too commonplace to evoke this passage in particular, the metaphorical sense of race/line/people is clear.

8. This line differs significantly in *MS*. The resulting sense — ‘Our name goes captive, here and there’ — is simpler than the print versions, perhaps even preferable. *Shai* (‘gift’) is rare and produces an obscure meaning, while *halom* and *sham* set up a neat chiasmus, ‘here’ (or ‘hither’) and ‘there’. The problem with *MS* is that *shevi ve-sham* does not echo the Italian as it appears in every version of the poem (including *MS* itself): ‘se viva assai’. From this and other evidence I suspect *MS* represents an earlier draft in which Modena had not yet solved every problem. Though the printed phrase *shevi vashai* is odd enough to look like a quotation, therefore, that oddness may rather reflect Modena’s compulsion, for phonetic necessity, to depart from the more elegant Hebrew reading in *MS*.

2.4 *Chi nasce muor*

Chi nasce muor, Oime, che pass'acerbo
Colto vien l'huom, cosi ordin'il Cielo,
Mose morì, Mose gia car de verbo
Santo sia ogn'huom, con puro zelo,
Ch'alla metà, gia mai senza riserbo
Arriu'huom, ma vedran in cangiar pelo
Se fin'habiam, ch'al Cielo vero ameno
Va l'huomo và se viua assai se meno.

Whoever is born, dies. Alas! What a bitter step!
Man is gathered in, as Heaven ordains;
Moshe died, Moshe, once so dear of speech.
Let every man be holy, with pure zeal:
For man never reaches the peak without reserves,
But in his changing hair it will appear,
If we have an end, that to the true delightful Heaven
Man goes; he goes whether he has lived enough or not.

Textual notes

3. de verbo *1640*, *1602*] al uerbo *MS*
5. Ch'alla metà *1640*, *1602*] colla metta *MS*
6. Arriu'huom *1640*, *MS*] סִי גִיונְגֵיי (*si giunge*) *1602*
6. vedran *1640*, *1602*] uedrai *MS*
7. fin'habiam *1640*, *1602*] fin ch'habiam *MS*
8. l'huomo và *1640*, *1602*] l'hom ellett' *MS*

Commentary

3. 'Dear of speech' paraphrases 'car de verbo'; the textual variant in manuscript — 'al uerbo' (*MS*) — perhaps better brings out the sense, 'dear to the word', a fitting elegy for a teacher.

5. The textual variant 'colla' (*MS*) might be instead translated 'who meets with his end'.

5. metà
meta can mean 'midpoint' (a metaphor for 'middle age' in Italian since Dante) or 'boundary/limit/end' — the variant spellings 'metà' and 'metta' are immaterial.[77] In the context of Moshe della Rocca's early death, however, this is a distinction without a difference: for a man who dies in middle age, midpoint and end are coterminous. I have chosen English 'peak' as a word that can indicate both senses.

[77] See Florio 1598, *s.v.* 'meta': '… a Beacon. Also a land or sea-marke. Also a marke, an ayme or But to shoot or leuell at, a marke or gole in the field whereunte men or herses run, a staffe or stake set at the end of a race. Aso a bound, a confine, a limite, a Mearestone. … Also the size of any thing or limitation.'

5. riserbo
Florio glosses *riseruo* as ‘any remainder or leaving laid up and kept for another time’.[78] Again, the sense depends on the knowledge that Moshe della Rocca died young, and is completed by the final line of the poem: a man reaching his death in middle age (his *meta*) has longer to live, but dies regardless. I do not believe the sense in which Bartolocci took ‘riserbo’ (see §3.4, below) is available: *Nam ad medietatem aliquando, haud quicquam reseruans* (‘for when [a man comes] to middle age, he reserves nothing at all’).

6. The variants in line 6 weigh heavier in the Hebrew text than the Italian. ‘Arriu’huom’ (‘the man comes’: *1640*, *MS*) and ‘si giunge’ (‘he arrives’: *1602*) barely differ in sense, while ‘vedran’ (‘they will see’: *1640*, *1602*), is in manuscript ‘uedrai’ (‘you will see’: *MS*). In the absence of a corresponding third-person plural subject, I have taken ‘uedran’ here in an impersonal sense.

8. The substantial textual variant in *MS* — ‘ua l’hom ellett’ (‘Goes that man, elect’) — extends the theological dimension of the elegy in a surprising direction. Jewish doctrine does not contain a ‘heaven’ in the Christian sense, nor a comparable notion of ‘election’; these words would carry special weight to Christians alone. See §1.4, above.

[78] Florio 1598, *s.v.* ‘riseruo’. Compare *s.v.* ‘riserba’, ‘riserbanza’: ‘a reservation, a reserving, a keeping or hoarding up of some thing apart for another time.’

Part 3
Afterlife

3.1 Criticism and anonymity

Bilingual poetry in the form of macaronic verse, which switches languages each stanza, line, or word, had long been popular in Hebrew. The most famous (and lucrative) of Modena's own compositions was a poem composed in Hebrew and Italian in 1601 in celebration of the birth of a son, the dauphin Louis, to Maria de' Medici and Henry IV of France, which co-ordinated the two languages to pun on the keywords *Henrico*, *Luigi*, and *Delphino*.[79] Literary riddles and funerary inscriptions in particular, the two genres to which *Kinah shemor* has most often been assimilated, proved especially accommodating to a wide range of ludic verse forms, including macaronic and echoic composition.[80] Modena's poem, however, set the bar higher. *Kinah shemor* is not properly macaronic, or is described as such only in the very loosest sense. Definitive of the macaronic mode is the notion of mixture; a classic example would be a Latin poem

[79] Adelman 1988a, 22; Modena 1932, 103-4 (no. 56).

[80] See, for example: Kaufmann 1896, 144-7; Pagis 1994, 20-1; De Benedetti-Stow 1982, 7-64; Jaffe-Berg, 2008, 105-28. Many further examples of macaronic and transliterated poems are cited in Rubin 2017.

with vernacular words interspersed.[81] But *Kinah shemor* never actually mixes languages, nor at any point features the code-switching characteristic of macaronic composition.[82] Rather, the poem exists, wholly and simultaneously, in both of its constituent languages.

Where the history of Hebrew poetry abounds with instances of macaronic composition, therefore, instances of Modena's more challenging genre are self-consciously rare. Two examples were composed in the first half of the seventeenth century by Moshe Hayyim Catalan of Padua (d. 1661): 'אוזן הטות איינו' (*ʾOzen hatot ʾiyinu*)/'Hoggi in atto divino', an epithalamium of ten lines on the marriage of his sister, was printed in 1622; '*Giadi temol ticanti*'/'Già di te molti canti', composed for a graduation at Padua in 1643,

[81] Etymological notes in the *OED s.v.* 'macaronic', 'macaroni', indicate the word's origins in a jumbled or mixed dish of pasta (corresponding, as it happens, to gnocchi rather than modern macaroni), perhaps descended from Greek μακάριος ('blessed') since something like this dish was prepared for funeral or charitable occasions — which would furnish a fascinating point of contact with the funerary occasion of Modena's poem were it not that, as I argue here, *Kinah shemor* is not properly macaronic. 'Macaronic' thus bears comparison to 'satire', whose classical and Renaissance etymologies featured connections to mixed bodies (satyrs, or goat-men), a mixed dish of sacred fruits (*lanx satura*), mixed laws (*lex satura*), and, according to Varro, a certain kind of sausage of mixed meats. On the connection between 'satire' and hybrid or mixed forms, see Lazarus 2016, 170.

[82] Thus I cannot follow Adelman in describing *Kinah shemor* as 'a macaronic poem that translates itself because it reads equally in Hebrew or Italian' (2019, 3). Not only is the poem not accurately described as macaronic, but it does not 'translate itself', since neither poem in fact 'translates' the other in the ordinary sense of the word.

survives only in title (Tamani 2006, 687-90). One R. Judah, ‘Doctor Medicus’ in Austria before the expulsion of 1669, is named in Johann Christoph Wagenseil’s *Sota* as the author of an epithalamium ‘sounding at once in Hebrew and German’, of which Wagenseil can (suspiciously, perhaps) recall only the first line: ‘יַעֲקוֹב אִישׁ יוֹשֵׁב אֹהָלִים אֶבֶן הָרֹאשׁ וּפִנָּה’ (*Yaakov ʾish yoshev ʾohalim ʾeven ha-rosh u-finah*)/‘Jaacob is jo so wol im eben heraus auf eina’.[83] In the eighteenth century, the London-based Italian physician and poet Ephraim Luzzato (1729-92), of a renowned scholarly family, composed an epitaph beginning ‘הלום מי זה רואה’ (*Halom mi zeh roʾeh*)/‘Ah! l’uom misero è’, which recycles Modena’s conjunction of ‘*halom*’ and ‘ah l’uom’ as well as the phrase ‘*kinah shemor*’/‘chi nasce muor’ itself, openly enough to suggest quotation, rather than plagiarism.[84] The manuscript *Zikhronot* (‘Memoranda’) of Isaac Samuel Reggio (1784-1855) reproduces from the tombstone of David ben Moshe Luzzatto in Gorizia an eight-line epitaph that begins ‘הא כל אורה מול תבא נא’ (*Hʾe col ʾora mul tova na*)/‘Ecco l’ora molto buona’.[85]

Few of these poems are longer than a few lines, and few of those lines, apart from the fragment anecdotally attributed to R. Judah, are more than two or three words in length. Though many of them cite *Kinah shemor* as inspiration, Modena’s genre was too demanding to allow for many followers. It might be seen as an extreme case of the fate suffered by other exotic forms, whose rules, as Don Paterson says of the rondeau, are too complicated to make them much more

[83] See §3.3, below.

[84] Luzzatto 1766, 38 (no. 25). See Roth 1959, 307, note 1; Tamani 2006, 690.

[85] Copenhagen, Royal Library, Cod. Sim. Heb. 10, vol. 1, fol. 2^{r}.

than a curiosity (Paterson 1999, xx). A handful of poets in the present day, however, have found in the poem the source of a native Hebrew tradition that anticipates the modernist experiments with homophonic poetry that flourished in the twentieth century.[86] Two impressive instances have been published in the avant-garde Israeli journal *Ho!*: Ghil'ad Zuckermann's 'לבי דואב, האש עדה' (*Libi do'ev, ha-'esh 'edah*)/'Libido, Eva, esce da...', and Dory Manor's 'לא עבר, לא כלה' (*Lo 'avar, lo kilah*)/'L'eau avare, l'eau qui l'a' (Manor 2006, 254-8). And recent work by Jan Kühne on Dan Pagis's own poetry has brought to light short bursts of Hebrew-German homophony in which the poet attempts, in Kühne's phrase, 'a synchronization of the present with a traumatic past'.[87]

Whether such experiments have flourished in Hebrew because of Modena's influence, or because of some accommodating property of the Hebrew language simply exemplified by *Kinah shemor*, remains an open question.[88] Kühne suggests that bilingualism of this kind witnesses 'a multilingual and cosmopolitan trait inherent in Jewish tradition' (Kühne 2022, 217). A similar position was taken by Philip Sarchi (born Samuel Morpurgo) — linguist, jurist, and professor at Vienna in the early nineteenth century — in *An Essay on Hebrew Poetry, Ancient and Modern* (1824). Surveying the long history of Hebrew poetry and tracing its prosodic conventions back to biblical sources, Sarchi expresses particular pride at having made 'proper remarks on the analogy between the Hebrew and the Italian' (Sarchi

[86] On these experiments, see Lazarus 2021, 701-2.

[87] Kühne 2022, 217. For further reflections on Hebrew-German homophony, see Vardi 2016, 825-6, 830.

[88] For thorough discussion, see Zuckermann 2003.

1824, vii-viii). To this analogy he traces the efflorescence of Hebrew poetry in Italy: ‘alike smooth and harmonious, the two languages seem to sympathize, by their common fondness for metaphors and all other kinds of figures, by similar terminations, and still more by particular accidents with regard to the syntax, as well as by a great number both of words pertaining exclusively to poetry, and of particular verbs’ (88-9). He lists various macaronic devices, such as echo, which sometimes resound across languages: so an echo of Hebrew תִּסְגּוֹדִי (*tisgodi*, translated ‘thou shalt fall down’ by Sarchi) might be Italian *godi* (‘rejoice’), and Hebrew יָקָרָה (*yakarah*, ‘she was precious’) or קָרָא־ (*kara*, ‘he called’) might be echoed by Italian *cara* (‘dear’) (112). And when Sarchi cites *Kinah shemor* as ‘still greater evidence’ of the sympathy of the two languages, it gives him the opportunity to narrow his thesis:

> This sympathy consists… principally in a striking similitude of sounds, either in word, or in their terminations; as,
>
> | *amarti*, אָמַרְתִּי | *badi*, בָּאתִי | *cara*, קָרָא־ | *domi*, דּוֹמִי |
> |---|---|---|---|
> | *elle*, אֵלֶּה | *felle*, פֶּלֶא | *gola*, גּוֹלָה | *havvi*, הָבִי |
> | *ho*, הוֹ | *ira*, אִירָא | *lama*, לָמָּה | *matta*,מַטָּה |
> | *nudi*, נוּדִי | *ori*, אוֹרִי | *pur*, פּוּר | *rama*, רָמָה |
> | *salma*, שַׁלְמָה | *tele*, תֶּלֶא | *uva*, וּבָא | *zelo*, זֶה־לוֹ |
>
> Besides a large quantity of like terminations: as, *ada*, *ala*, *amo*, *ava*, *ema*, *emo*, *ere*, *godi*, *ima*, *ini*, *iri*, *izza*, *ona*, *osi*, *uma*, *una*, *uzza*, &c. (129, note b)

We see here a list of the kind that Modena must have compiled in 1609, a corpus of correspondences that is the necessary foundation for experiment in this area of poetry. Yet it should not escape notice just how many of the instances quoted by Sarchi reach back to Modena’s own writings, to

Azariah de' Rossi's before him, and perhaps to similar lists composed as long as Jews have lived amphibious linguistic lives. At a certain point it becomes impossible to say whether the linguistic 'sympathy' identified by scholars from Sarchi to Kühne should be attributed to the natural properties of the language, to a history of linguistic cosmopolitanism, or to generations of curious scholars setting their minds to the problem. Impossible even to say, perhaps, that those are not all the same thing.

For all the attention the poem has been given in the field of Hebrew linguistics, however, another reason — beside its difficulty — that Modena's genre has remained marginal to the wider poetic ecosystem is that it lacks a fixed name under which individual instances may be categorized, studied, and cited. A survey of five critical notices from the poem's first century in print illustrates the problem. One of the reasons *Kinah shemor* was anthologised was the zeal of Christian Hebraists for Hebrew epitaphs, reflecting, on one hand, philological interest in attestations of the Hebrew language beyond the Bible, and on the other, growing antiquarian interest in inscriptions beyond the book.[89] Modena himself refers to the poem as a *kinah*, or 'lament'. Yet *Kinah shemor* was no ordinary epitaph, and I have argued above that for Modena and literary history alike, the topic of the poem has always been its least important feature. Even as Christian scholars encountered the poem through its topical affiliation to funerary poetry, they also recognised that this was not the true *differentia* that a generic designation hoped to isolate, and strove, mostly without success, to articulate the quality that marked it apart.

[89] As shown in Andreatta 2016.

The critical problem faced by early anthologists of *Kinah shemor* persists to this day. Recent attempts to discuss this quality in linguistics, musicology, and translation theory have included ‘phonetic matching’, ‘songfulness’, and ‘virtual polyphony’; in contemporary poetry it is known as ‘homophonic translation’, and I have elsewhere suggested, with an eye to Renaissance madrigals and translation theory, ‘acoustic imitation’ or *translatio ad sonum* (Lazarus 2021, 698-9). Yet even these modern terms seem provisional. They reflect the fact that critical taxonomy, which tends to classify its objects by topic or occasion, is maladapted to a poem notable for how it sounds.

3.2 Jean Plantavit de la Pause, *Bibliotheca rabbinica* (Lodève, 1645)

Jean Plantavit de la Pause (1576-1651), a French Protestant convert to Catholicism who became the Catholic Bishop of Lodève, studied Hebrew and rabbinics under Modena in Florence and Venice, and in 1610 offered him the chair of oriental languages in Paris (presumably on condition of conversion) (Adelman 1988b, 276-7). He retained a deep respect for his teacher. After Plantavit disclosed his plans to compile the *Bibliotheca rabbinica* (1645), a major bibliography of Hebrew and Jewish writings such as was then emerging as 'a genre of humanist scholarship in its own right', Modena sent him a list of about 300 Jewish authors and many books, including a copy of *Galut yehudah*, which had recently been reprinted and now contained the final authorial edition of *Kinah shemor*.[90] It is this edition that Plantavit in fact reproduced in the *Bibliotheca rabbinica* under the heading for *Midbar yehudah*, where his preamble set the pattern for future critical notices.

[90] Dunkelgrün 2017, 340. See Heller 2011, I, 282-3; Burnett 2012, 153-60.

Liber Concionu*m* est R. Iudae Leonis Mutinatis, su*m*mae inter hodiernos Italiae Rabbinos auctoritatis, quem primum Florentiae, anno 1609. deinde biennio post Venetiis praeceptorem habuimus in Rabbinicis, à quo exemplar quod penes nos est, dono accepimus. Atque is ille est, cuius maximè cura & studio Bibliothecam nostram Rabbinica*m* instruere coepimus. Post conciones autem, praesertim lugubres, adiiciuntur saepe קינות *Kinoth*, id est, *naenia seu epicedia*, inter quae eminet illud, quod Auctor composuit in obitum cuiusda*m* Mosis Hebraei, magistri quondam sui, & extat fol. 70. tanto ingenij acumine, vt iisdem verbis Hebraicè & Italicè legi & exponi possit: vt liquet ex eius exemplari, quod hîc apponere non pigebit in gratiam benigni Lectoris.

This is a book of sermons of R. Judah Leon of Modena, the highest authority among Italian Rabbis today, whom I had as a teacher in rabbinics first in Florence, in 1609, and then two years later in Venice, and from whom I accepted as a gift a copy which is in our possession. And he is the man with whose greatest care and encouragement I began to construct my *Bibliotheca rabbinica.* After the sermons — chiefly mournful — are often added קינות *Kinoth*, that is, dirges or funeral songs, among which that one stands out which the Author composed on the death of a certain Moses the Hebrew, once his teacher… with such brilliance of mind, that by the same words it is able to be read and expounded in Hebrew and in Italian. In order to prove this from his exemplar, it will not test the good reader's forbearance to append it here.[91]

[91] Jean Plantavit de la Pause, *Bibliotheca rabbinica* (Lodève, 1645), 588-9 (no. 323).

[*1640Heb.* and *1640It.* follow, in sequence.]

Though Plantavit recognizes that the quality that makes the poem stand out ('eminet') is its bilingualism, he places the poem under the category of *kinoth*, 'that is, dirges or funeral songs'. The genre to which *Kinah shemor* truly belongs is then set out in long hand — informative, but taxonomically useless. *Epicedium* was the term that stuck.

3.3 Johann Christoph Wagenseil, *Sota. Hoc est: Liber Mischnicus de uxore adulterii suspecta* (Altdorf, 1674)

Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1633-1705) was a German polymath whose illustrious academic career unfolded mostly at Altdorf, where, on publishing his Latin translation of the Talmudic tractate *Sotah* in 1674, he was appointed professor of oriental languages.[92] *Sotah* details the judicial ordeals prescribed in Numbers for women suspected of adultery. Glossing his translation of 'קושרו' as *praecingebat*, in a passage which describes how the woman's penitent vestments are 'girdled' by a rope, Wagenseil turns to Exodus 12:11, 'מתניכם חגרים' ('let your loins be girded'). Rendered in the Aramaic of Targum Onkelos as 'חרציכון יהון אסירין', however, this phrase could be taken out of context to mean 'your cheeses will be prohibited'. Tickled, Wagenseil declares:

[92] On Wagenseil see Piet van Boxel, 'Johann Christoph Wagenseil: From Scholar to Missionary', in *The Mishnaic Moment: Jewish Law among Jews and Christians in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Piet van Boxel, Kirsten Macfarlane, and Joanna Weinberg (London and Oxford, 2022); on his interest in Hebrew epitaphs see Andreatta 2016, 266-70.

Crediderim, ex ista re, occasionem sumsisse alios, ultra progrediendi acumine suo, & carmina quoque integra, quae eâdem opera, toto genere diversas linguas, simul exprimerent, meditandi. Non habeo satis exploratum, an quisquam usquam gentium, tale quid, praeter Judaeos ausus sit, scio tamen, Junilium, Episcopum Africanum, l. I. de part. Div. Leg. c. 9. Pro re impossibili id habuisse, cum scriberet: *Nulla dictio, Metrum in alia lingua conservat, si vim verborum, ordinemq*ue *non mutat.* Quando igitur, digna admiratione res est, hujus quoque dabimus exemplum, ut ii qui inter nos, otio, & ingenio, abundant, ac Musis, & Apolline faventibus, nati sunt, periclitentur, num quid simile, possint dare effectum. Enim vero, primus solertiae istius, indicium mihi fecit, R. Judas, Doctor Medicus, qui, in laudata modo Austriae metropoli, ante hanch nuperam gentis expulsionem, medendi artem exercebat; isque Epithalamium, amico cuidam, se scripsisse, testabatur, juxta Hebraice sonans, & Germanice. Sed, non recordari poterat, nisi solius primi versus, quem quidem, meae ego memoriae, sedulo impressi.

יַעֲקוֹב אִישׁ יוֹשֵׁב אֹהָלִים אֶבֶן הָרֹאשׁ וּפִנָּה:

Jaacob is jo so wol im eben heraus auf eina.

Reliquorum, uti dixi, non amplius meminit. Ex interjecto postea tempore, cum in Italia peregrinarer, incidi in librum גלות יהודה in quo *R. Leo Mutinensis*, difficiliora quaeque Sacrarum Literarum vocabula Hebraica, secundum seriem Capitum, in Itala [*sic*] lingua exposuit. Illio subjungitur, mantissae loco, simile Epicedium ἀμφοτερόγλωσσον, quod idem, & Hebraicum est, & Italicum. Ergo, hoc, prout expressum est, transcribam, una cum iis, qu*a*e ipse Poëta, in laudem, sui ἀθεσφάτου ὕμνου, praemisit. [...] Patet hinc, non destitui Judaeos, omni, quod quidam existimant, mentis acumine: Sed, utinam eodem, ad serias magis res, & imprimis, sanae Philosophiae studia discenda, uterentur!

I believe others have taken the opportunity of progressing beyond even the cunning of this matter, and devising whole poems, which in the same work, and in every genre, express different tongues at the same time when they are performed. I do not consider that it has been sufficiently explored whether at any time any race other than the Jews has dared such a thing as this; although I know that Junilius, Bishop of Africa, in book 1 of *On the Parts of the Divine Laws*, chapter 9, considered it an impossible thing, for he wrote: 'No statement preserves its metre in another tongue without changing the meaning and order of its words'. When, therefore, a thing is worthy of admiration (of which we will give an example), those who abound among us in otium and wit, and are born in the favour of the Muses and Apollo, put to the test whether it is possible that they are able to achieve this effect. So, for instance, the first to give me proof of that skill was R. Judah, Doctor of Medicine, who lately, before the recent expulsion of his people, practiced the art of healing in a well-known city in Austria. He attested that he wrote an Epithalamium to a certain friend, sounding at once in Hebrew and German. But it was unable to be recorded save the first line alone, which I have carefully printed from memory:

יַעֲקוֹב אִישׁ יוֹשֵׁב אֹהָלִים אֶבֶן הָרֹאשׁ וּפִנָּה׃

[*Yaakov ʾish yoshev ʾohalim ʾeven harosh u-finah*]

Jaacob is jo so wol im eben heraus auf eina.

Of the rest, as I have said, I remember no further. Some time later, while I was roaming around Italy, I came upon a book, *Galut yehudah*, in which R. Leo Mutinensis explained those more difficult Hebrew words of Sacred Scriptures, according to the sequence of Chapters, in the Italian tongue. To this was appended, in the place of a knapsack [i.e. at the back], something like an ἀμφοτερόγλωσσον ['double-tongued']

Epicedium, which is the same both in Hebrew and Italian. Therefore I have transcribed it exactly as it is printed, together with the remarks that the same Poet sent out in praise of his ἀθεσφάτου ὕμνου ['ineffable hymn'].

[Preface and poem follow, as they appear in *1640*]

It is clear from this that the Jews are not bereft, as certain men think they are, of all sharpness of mind. If only they would set themselves in the same way to more serious matters, and above all to discussing the study of sound philosophy![93]

Wagenseil's high spirits and zeal for digression confirm the claim, in the passage he quotes, that *Kinah shemor* became 'a notable thing, and a delightful *capriccio* to everyone'. His praise of Jewish acuity, for that matter, backhandedly vindicates Modena's hope that the reputation of the Jewish people would be burnished by means of his poem.

Though Wagenseil recognizes this genre as predominantly or exclusively Jewish, he also relates it to the broader poetics of verse translation. Junilius, or Junillus, was an official at the court of Justinian in the sixth century. He supplied the quoted passage as an answer to the question of why the metrical books of the Bible, such as the Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes, and sections of the Prophets, did not preserve their metres in Latin translation.[94] Dante made a similar point in the *Convivio*: 'everyone should know that nothing

[93] Wagenseil 1674, 49-51 (glossing *Sotah*, I.vi in Wagenseil, 7a-7b in modern editions). Wagenseil's commentary, including *Kinah shemor*, was reprinted in the third volume of the Latin translation of the Mishnah by Surenhuis 1700, 196.

[94] Junillus, *Instituta regularia divinae legis*, I.9, 'De modis scripturarum'.

harmonized according to the rules of poetry can be translated from its native tongue into another without destroying all its sweetness and harmony'.[95]

Furthermore, despite following Plantavit in labelling the poem primarily an *epicedium*, Wagenseil also adapts critical terminology from Greek. 'Ineffable hymn' is little more than a stylistic flourish (if anything, the poem is twice as effable as most). But ἀμφοτερόγλωσσον, 'double-tongued', is remarkably apt, since *Kinah shemor* not only exists in two tongues simultaneously, but could be said to multiply the speech of a single physical tongue into two linguistic tongues. Traditionally an epithet for Zeno, the inventor of dialectic, ἀμφοτερόγλωσσον was applied in Eustathius of Thessalonica's commentaries on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to cases in which Homer has his characters express opposing opinions, thereby staging arguments *in utramque partem*; John Tzetzes associates it with words such as εὔστομος ('eloquent') and περιδέξιος ('dextrous', in a verbal sense).[96] Wagenseil may not have been thinking of these attestations, since the compound 'double-tongued' is an easy one to form in Greek. Either way, the term is metaphorically suggestive enough to have been more than fit for purpose had it caught on.

[95] Dante, *Convivio*, I.7.

[96] For example, Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem*, on 12.241; John Tzetzes, *Scholia in Aristophanem*, on *Nubes* 1160. I am grateful to Baukje van den Berg for her help with these sources.

3.4 Giulio Bartolocci, *Bibliotheca magna rabbinica* (Rome, 1675-84)

The Cistercian Giulio Bartolocci (1613-87) was a Hebraist scholar at the Vatican. His massive *Bibliotheca magna rabbinica* was published in four volumes between 1675 and 1684. In the third volume Bartolocci includes an entry on Modena, whom he claims to have met in Venice in 1646. He not only transcribes the 1640 edition of the poem — perhaps from Wagenseil, whom he cites — but further intercalates a Latin rendering of the Italian poem, with the result that each line of the poem cycles from Hebrew, to Italian, to Latin, before proceeding to the next line. I transcribe here only his Latin version so as not to duplicate the editions I have provided above (§2.3-4).

> R. IVDAS ARIÈ, vulgo dictus *Leo de Modena Ben R. Isaac*, nostrae aetatis celebris Rabbinus, & Ràu Vnetus, vbi quamplurimis annis Iudaicam Synagogam rexit. In conscribendis libellis in vtraque lingua Hebraica & Italica facilis. Fuit elegans Poëta Hebraicus, vt testantur Hebraica carmina ab eo composita in laudem quamplurium [*sic*] librorum & Auctorum; quae in principio eorundem librorum cernuntur... Italica Poësi etiam delectabatur, & cùm adhuc

adolescens esset annorum tantùm quatuordecim; curiosum Carmen composuit, de quo paulò infra... In haec secunda editione, ante Dictionariolum פי אריה, & post Praefationem ad Lectorem exscribit Carmen à se compositum cùm esset annorum quatuordecim (vt ipse ibidem ait) in laudem R. Mosis sui Praeceptoris defuncti, vbi non interpretando, sed ijsdem vocibus, & eodem sono in vtraque lingua vtendo, easdem tam inter se diuersas linguas vnam ferè communem facit, hoc modo...

> Qui nascitur, moritur (Vae mihi) quàm passus acerbus:
> Colligitur (id est demetitur, abscinditur) homo, sic statuit caelum.
> Moses mortuus est, Moses olim carus eloquio.
> Sanctus sit omnis homo: cum puro zelo.
> Nam ad medietatem aliquando, haud quicquam reseruans,
> Pertingit homo. Sed cùm pili mutantur, apparet
> Quem finem habeamus, quippè ad Caelum verum amoenum
> Vadit homo, siue multum, siuè parum, viuat.

Huius tamquam praestantissimi Epicedij meminit, & transcribit Wagenselius in Sotà Miscnae [*sic*] cap. 1 num. 6... Viuebat anno Domini 1646. Venetijs, vbi eum agnoui, & allocutus sum...

Rabbi Yehudah Arie, commonly called *Leo de Modena, ben R. Isaac*: a celebrated Rabbi of our time, and a Rabbi in Venice, where he governed the Jewish Synagogue for many years. He was skilled in writing books in both languages, Hebrew and Italian. He was an elegant Hebrew poet, as attested by Hebrew poems composed by him in praise of a great many books and Authors...

He also took delight in Italian poetry, and when he was just a boy of barely fourteen years he composed a curious poem,

> of which more below…
> In the second edition [of *Galut yehudah*], prior to the dictionary *Pi ʾaryeh*, and after the Preface to the Reader, he wrote out a poem composed by him when he was fourteen years old (as he himself says), in praise of his deceased teacher R. Moses, where not by translating, but by using the same words and the same sound in both languages, he made these same tongues, so diverse among themselves, almost common, in this way:
>
> [*1640Heb.* and *1640It.* follow, with Latin translation of the latter as above]
>
> Wagenseil recalls this most outstanding Epicedium, and transcribes it, in his Sotà Mishnae chapter 1, number 6… He was still living in the year 1646, in Venice, where I knew him and spoke with him.[97]

Bartolocci notes *Kinah shemor* as a 'curious poem' ('curiosum Carmen'), but otherwise simply classifies the poem according to its subject and not its technique. His longhand description of that technique, however, lacks Wagenseil's curiosity and broader literary context. It is merely a Latin rendering of Modena's Italian preface, which he probably also found in Wagenseil.

Bartolocci's critical intervention lay rather in his Latin translation of Modena's Italian, which was often reprinted with *Kinah shemor* thereafter, most influentially in Wolf's *Bibliotheca hebraea* (§3.6, below). In effect it became a third 'wing' of the poem, even though its function — to

[97] Bartolocci, 1675-84, III, 33-6 (no. 608). 1646 was in fact the year of Modena's death, which Bartolocci misdates, apparently from hearsay, to 1654.

conserve the sense, and not the sound, of the Italian — is fundamentally opposed to that of Modena's poem. It is unclear why Bartolocci did not attempt a translation of the Hebrew. But to an audience accustomed to interlinear translations that navigated between Romance morphemes in Roman characters, Bartolocci's inclusion of the Latin text led to the disorientating visual implication that all three were merely renderings of one another — that as the Latin was to the Italian, so the Italian must be to the Hebrew, sense for sense for sense. Since no satisfactory translation of Modena's cryptic Hebrew existed, there was little to disabuse readers of this notion. In short, Bartolocci's Latin may have clarified the sense of Modena's Italian, but that clarity came at the cost of flattening the strangeness of the genre, and pulling it away from what made it noteworthy in the first place.

3.5 Johann Konrad Schwartz, *De plagio litterario liber unus* (Leipzig, 1706)

Johann Konrad Schwartz (1677-1747) was a German polymath whose notice of Modena occurs in an early quasi-medical tract on literary plagiarism. According to Schwartz, plagiarism was symptomatic of humoral imbalances which were caused by undue interest in fables, enigmas, and other fruitless 'mind-games' ('ingenii lusus') rather than wholesome disciplines such as physics, mathematics, moral philosophy, and theology.[98] It is as one of those mind-games that *Kinah shemor* is adduced, again from Wagenseil, with grudging admiration, as the kind of trifle that exacerbates melancholy, and tempts the Choleric to still further acts of plagiarism in order to impress his learned friends.

[98] Schwartz's arguments first appeared in the form of a dissertation submitted for examination at Halle, *Tentaminis de plagio litterario dissertatio I* (Halle, 1701); Modena appears in the second, greatly expanded edition. For a brief summary, see Sokolov 2019, 151-2.

Caput VII. Vitiositas plagii quanta sit, si plagium cum aliis vitiis comparetur. Et, unde vitiositas illa augeatur.

§ IX. Cogitationes vel fructuosae sunt humano generi vel infructuosae. Et infructuosae quidem vel difficiles sunt, vel intellectu facile. Comparabimus igitur singulas cum humana natura, ut, quid ad eam corrigendam conducant, appareat. Ita demum emerget, utrum ipsae rebus corporeis praestent, necne.

§ X. Cogitationes subtiles infructuosae, id est, a vera sapientia remotiores, pravo isti hominum statui nequaquam medentur. Fabulae & earum subtiles interpretationes, aenigmata & eorum explicandorum conatus, versus, omnesque ingenii lusus, Anagrammata puta, picturae loquentes similesque lepores politissima arte conficti quibus voluptuarius diem absumit, statum illum corrigere non possunt. Vehementer sane dubito, an vel corpore vel animo melior factus sit Judaeus, qui mirabile carmen fecit hocce… Huic carmini quanquam fortassis nihil par aut secundum reperiatur, quia iisdem verbis Hebraicum & Italicum sensum fundit; tamen tanta non est excellentia, ut rebus corporeis praeferri possit. Linguarum subtilior & supervacanea consideratio, notitia plerarumque inscriptionum, antiquitates & historiolae quaedam, Geomantiae & Astrologiae defensiones vaferrimae, similesque artes solivagae augent miserias Melancholicorum, non auferunt. Acria judicia & novarum opinionum ostentatio, quibus Cholericus admirationem sui doctis hominibus injicere conatur, ejus miserias non levant. Quare hujusmodi rerum inventio possessioni divitiarum aut abundantiae pretiosarum dapum praeferenda non est.

Cap. VII. How vicious is plagiarism compared to other vices. And, what causes that viciousness to increase.

§ IX. Cogitations are either fruitful or fruitless for the human race. And fruitless cogitations are either difficult, or easy, for the intellect. We will therefore compare each respectively with human nature, so that what is conducive to correcting it may become clear. At length it will emerge whether these things are good for bodily matters, or not.
§ X. Subtle and unfruitful cogitations — that is, those further away from true wisdom — in no way heal that depraved state of men. Fables and their subtler interpretations, enigmas and attempts to explain them, verses and mental games, unadulterated Anagrams, speaking pictures, and witty similes confected with the most polished art, with which the sybarite consumes his day, are not able to correct that state. Case in point, I very much doubt whether the Jew who made the following marvellous poem could have been better in body or in mind:

[The poem follows, as it appears in *1640*]

Perhaps nothing might be found equal to or even second to this poem, for it pours out sense in Hebrew and Italian in the very same words; nevertheless it is not so excellent that it might be preferred to bodily matters.[99] The subtle and vacuous consideration of tongues, acquaintance with the majority of inscriptions, antiquities, and certain little histories, the craftiest defences of Geomancy and Astrology,

[99] 'Vid. Wagenseilius in Comment. ad tractatum Talmud. Sota, cap. I. n. 6. 196. edit. Surenhus' (Schwartz's note); see note 93 for the edition indicated.

> and similar solitary arts, increase the miseries of the Melancholic rather than removing them. Sharp judgements and the ostentation of new opinions, with which the Choleric attempts to inspire the admiration of his learned friends, do not alleviate his miseries. Wherefore discovering matters of this sort is not to be preferred to the possession of wealth or to an abundance of costly banquets. (Schwartz 1706, 85-7)

It may be that the category of literary phenomena in which Schwartz places *Kinah shemor* is *ad hoc*, with little application beyond the conceit of his thesis about plagiarism. Nevertheless, the relationship between those phenomena and the critical language Schwartz feels is available, or makes available, to describe them, is telling. As we have seen in previous cases, Schwartz recognizes that the distinguishing quality of *Kinah shemor* lies in its technique, and its proximity to language games of various kinds, rather than its topic. The list of which it is a part consists of what might be thought of as 'ingenuities': ends-in-themselves, objects whose ostensible topic is merely a pretext for the display of 'polished art'. *Kinah shemor* is the outstanding member of this list, sufficiently marvellous not only to redeem a Jew from obloquy, but to pose a challenge to Schwartz's argument that no one engaged in such pursuits could possibly be sound in mind and body.

So fully does *Kinah shemor* exemplify this genre that Schwartz does not even cite the topical label, *epicedium*, by which the poem was typically identified in his sources. Yet even though it is instinctively obvious that the poem bears a familial resemblance to the other items on Schwartz's list, that resemblance nonetheless operates outside critical taxonomies: those other items have names of their own, and none of them — allegory, enigma, anagram, emblem, simile — could reasonably describe *Kinah shemor*. *Lusus ingenii* is closest, but so broad as

to be of little categorical use. (Imagine, by analogy, labelling the *editio princeps* of the Greek Aristophanes a 'book': the label is true enough, as it goes, but doesn't provide much help finding the item in an index.) And so, again, Schwartz is limited to describing the poem's distinguishing feature in long-hand. *Kinah shemor* sits at the top of a pile of recognisably similar objects but benefits neither from broad generic affiliation to that pile, nor from a specific title of its own. It is as though the finest of all the animals remained obscure because it showed up after Adam had handed out all the names.

3.6 Johann Christoph Wolf, *Bibliotheca hebraea* (Hamburg, Leipzig, 1715-33)

Our final example established the canonical form of *Kinah shemor* for subsequent centuries. Johann Christoph Wolf's (1683-1739) compendious *Bibliotheca hebraea*, published in Hamburg between 1715 and 1733, was perhaps the most influential of the great bibliographies of Jewish literature to be produced in the early modern period.[100] Surveying Modena's life and works in the third volume, Wolf refers the reader to the entry on Moshe della Rocca for 'the *epicedium* which we recall surviving in this volume [*Midbar yehudah*]'.[101] Almost the whole of della Rocca's entry is taken up with the several texts of *Kinah shemor*; Wolf was the first to note textual variants between multiple early witnesses and the anthologized texts that had appeared since.

> Ille fuit praeceptor R. *Jehuda Arje Mutinensis*, qui epicedium in eum scripsit, ea arte compositum, ut & Hebraice &

[100] On Wolf and his interest in Hebrew epitaphs see Andreatta 2016, 276-81.

[101] Wolf 1715-33, III, 296-300 (no. 692). Wolf confused Basola's identity with that of his grandfather: see Andreatta 2016, 281, note 61.

italice iisdem literis legi possit, & utrinque commodum sensum fundat. Exstat illud in libro R. Jehudae מדבר יהודה pag. 80.b. ubi noster vocatur R. Mosche Basula מלרוקה. Dignum illud putamus, quod hic adscribatur ex libro *Midbar Jehuda*, quod ipsum ex alio ejus libro *Geluth Jehuda* exhibuerunt *Bartoloccius* Tom. III. p. 34 & *Wagenseilius* ad Sota p. 50. Epitaphium Hebraicum ita habet: [*1602Heb.*]. Illud Jehuda ipse punctis ibidem instruxit, ut Italicas voces phrasesque referat, hoc modo: [*1602It.*]. Subjungam textum *Italicum* cum versione Latine, prout Bartoloccius utrumque exhibuit: [*1640It.*; Bartolocci's Latin]. Ex his patet, in versu antepenultimo varietatem occurrere inter lectionem Bartolocci, quam is ex libro *Geluth Jehuda* attulit, & nostram, quam ex ejusdem *Midbar Jehuda* descripsimus. Initium enim illius apud Bartoloccium est: יַחְרִיב אוֹם pro quo ego scripsi צִיּון זֶה. Itaque ipse Jehuda postliminio in carmine suo aliquid mutasse censendus est.

He was the teacher of R. *Yehudah Arie Mutinensis*, who wrote a funeral ode [*epicedium*] about him, composed with such art that in the same characters it may be read in Hebrew and Italian, and makes sense in both at the same time. It survives in R. Jehuda's book *Midbar yehudah* pag. 80[v], where our R. Moshe Basula is called *me-La Rocca*.
I think it worth writing out here from the book *Midbar yehudah*, for *Bartolocci* Tom. III. p. 34, & Wagenseil in his *Sota* p. 50, display it from another book of his, *Galut yehudah*. The Hebrew Epitaph is as follows:

[*1602Heb.*]

Yehudah himself kitted this out in the same place with vowels, so as to relate the Italian voices and phrases, in this way:

[*1602It.*]

> Below I supply the *Italian* text with a Latin version as Bartoloccius displayed each of them:
>
> [*1640It.*, followed by Bartolocci's Latin translation]
>
> From this it is clear that a variant occurs in the antepenultimate verse between the reading of Bartolocci, which he took from the book *Galut yehudah*, and our own, which we have described from the *Midbar yehudah* of the same author. In Bartolocci it begins יַחְרִיב אוֹם [*yahriv 'om*], in place of which I have written צִיּוּן זֶה [*tziyun zeh*]. And so Yehudah himself must be supposed to have altered, by right of authorship, something in his own poem.[102]

Reproducing all known printed texts of the poem and drawing attention towards one of their more consequential variants, Wolf returned to the sources to provide, in effect, the first scholarly edition of *Kinah shemor*. These important editorial advances were not matched, however, in his critical treatment of the poem. The poem is again labelled an *epicedium*, according to its topic. And while Wolf's description of its technique is accurate, his citation of the poem in the section devoted to Moshe della Rocca further subordinates the technical interest of the poem to its ostensible subject.

Categorised in this way, Wolf represents *Kinah shemor* as valuable and interesting to Hebrew bibliography principally for the ancillary detail it contributes to the biography of a very minor scholar best known for the student he briefly taught. Plainly this was not the case. But even in so careful an edition as Wolf's, criticism did not yet possess either the linguistic or the conceptual taxonomy to canonize the poem for what it was — whatever that is.

[102] Wolf, III, 745-6 (no. 1530).

Epilogue

Anonymity is one of the hazards of novelty, but to a literary genre it means oblivion. At the fountainhead of literary criticism, Aristotle's designation of the subject of the *Poetics* as 'anonymous' led to centuries of hair-splitting before it became known as 'literature' (Lazarus 2019). Yet all those centuries later, criticism still struggles to absorb new objects. The fact that 'of all the major genres only the novel is younger than writing and the book', as Bakhtin framed it, has made the novel perennially vexatious to systematic criticism (Bakhtin 1981, 3).

Kinah shemor occupies a generic space more circumscribed than these, but the same forces have determined its critical fate. Such forces are only compounded when literary taxonomies cross the borders of linguistic cultures, to have their delicate linguistic packaging rifled by rough guards; and *Kinah shemor* has never existed in fewer than two languages at once. Modena himself was under no illusion that the closest generic analogue, 'elegy' or 'epitaph', identified the true *differentia* of the poem. While it borrows much from the antic wordplay of the riddle tradition, Dan Pagis acknowledged that it did not truly function as a riddle; and even if it did, Pagis made the case that riddles themselves

remained an ‘unknown genre’, overlooked or misunderstood in literary scholarship (Pagis 1986). *Kinah shemor* is the foremost example of a phenomenon which, for as long as it lacks a name, can only be encountered as novel.

Making phenomena less novel is the opening move of criticism. ‘Terms of art’, David Timmerman and Edward Schiappa have observed, ‘have the effect in practice of stabilizing the meaning of that portion of human experience being named’ (Timmerman and Schiappa 2010, 6-7). I have suggested elsewhere that the device of *Kinah shemor* be labelled ‘acoustic imitation’, because the work of naming must start somewhere. But even that label does not make a genre. Only further study will do, and I am quite sure that more examples — beyond Modena’s immediate influence, in languages other than Hebrew — remain unclassified where such things are always to be found, in old books on dusty shelves. If the most we can say at present about Modena’s polyglot, consonant, musical, ludic genre is that we know it when we see it, this essay hopes at least to ensure that we are better prepared to see it.

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6. Micha Lazarus, *Leon Modena's Kinah Shemor*, 2023 (pp. 140)

In 1584, shortly after his bar-mitzvah, the young Italian Jew Leon Modena (1571-1648) composed an eight-line poem so remarkable that it has never been rivalled in its own genre. Known as *Kinah Shemor* in Hebrew, *Chi nasce muor* in Italian, this elegy makes sense simultaneously in both languages. It stands at the head of a little-known tradition of short poems, fragments, and fragments of memories of short poems, often composed by Jews and operating at the borders between Hebrew and romance vernaculars, Jewish and Christian communities. More than merely bilingual or macaronic, for Modena the form seems to have existed somewhere between language and music. Yet for want of a formal name, this tradition has long slipped through the cracks of the critical canon.

Leon Modena's Kinah Shemor publishes the first critical edition and English translation of the poem to take into account all three of its primary witnesses. It places *Kinah Shemor* in Modena's thought as a bridge between poetry and music and between Jewish and Christian religious communities, and describes the poem's afterlife in relation to broader questions of genre theory, critical taxonomy, and the Christian study of Jewish literature in early modern Europe.

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Leon Modena, פי אריה (Venice, 1640),
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