THE *PERFECT SCRIBE* AND AN EARLY ENGRAVED ESTHER SCROLL

EVA FROJMOVIC

THE origins of the tradition of decorating Esther scrolls for Purim are shrouded in mystery. Esther scrolls, also known by the Hebrew term Megillot (sing.: *Megillah*, 'scroll') are copies of the Biblical book of Esther, transcribed on parchment scrolls to be read publicly on the feast of Purim, the anniversary of the Jews' deliverance from the threat of annihilation by Haman. Thus they are at once Biblical and liturgical texts. Among Hebrew liturgical texts, the Megillah appears to be the only book which was not decorated or illustrated during the Middle Ages or, indeed, until after the mid-sixteenth century. The earliest dated decorated Megillah known, a manuscript with hand-painted decoration, was produced at Castelnuovo in northern Italy in 1567.[1] This late genesis may be explained, at least in part, by the special status of Esther scrolls: like Torah scrolls (Pentateuchal scrolls used for the public reading in synagogue), their execution was governed by ancient rabbinical rules. Thus, the strict aniconism imposed on Torah scrolls was applied to Esther scrolls, too – at least until the end of the Middle Ages. To this day, the Esther scroll used by the cantor in synagogue must remain unadorned. It is, thus, all the more interesting to reconstruct the making of what will be identified in this article as one of the earliest decorated Esther scrolls, a near contemporary of the Castelnuovo Megillah. This specimen, possibly the first Esther scroll decorated in the technique of copperplate engraving, will emerge as a product of 'artistic recycling'.

In 1930, the encyclopaedia *Jüdisches Lexikon* published the photograph of a parchment sheet containing the blessings said before and after reading the Scroll of Esther on Purim (fig. 1).[2] The importance of this sheet lies in its engraved border of mannerist grotesques, enlivened by amusing detail: heroic telamons strain to support scrollwork which hardly seems to require such effort; naughty putti disport themselves among scrolls, fruit swags and masks, while dogs bark furiously at them. In the *Lexikon*, the photograph appears in proximity to the entry 'Ornament' (by B. Kirschner and A. Grotte), but without being mentioned in it. The caption identifies the artist as Andrea Marelli, a minor mannerist painter (?) and printmaker active in Rome *circa* 1567–72, but it does not indicate the leaf's location.[3] We can only assume that it was at the time in a German collection, possibly in Berlin. Its present whereabouts are unknown.[4] Since no signature is legible in the photograph published in the *Lexikon*, the reasons for the

Fig. 1. The blessings of a Megillah with an engraved border by Andrea Marelli. *Jüdisches Lexikon*, vol. iv (Berlin, 1930), p. 607 (detail). BL, YA.1997.b.3184

attribution to Marelli remained elusive, but the origin of this engraved border in sixteenth-century Italy was beyond doubt.

Until now, it has been impossible to establish whether the mysterious sheet of blessings reproduced in the *Lexikon* was indeed part of a similarly illustrated Megillah. This uncertainty can now be resolved. A similar Esther scroll, without blessings, is kept in the Hebrew section of the British Library (Or. 13028).[5] Its eighteen columns of handwritten text, affixed to a simple wooden roller, are arranged in pairs; each pair of text columns is framed by a separate engraved border of grotesques in landscape format.[6] One of these borders features the familiar telamons, and the dogs barking at putti; it is in fact identical with the border framing the Berlin sheet of blessings. In addition, the London scroll is decorated by seven other different borders of the same format. As we roll it from beginning to end, a procession of grotesque figures parades past our eyes: a pageant of fauns, of faunesses suckling their babies, of pagan goddesses bearing shields with coats of arms,[7] and of putti playing with animals real and mythical: cats and dogs, deer, ostriches, unicorns. Putti organize fights between cats and dogs; dogs lick the faces of fallen putti; putti pee in all directions. The scroll is hand-coloured in lively hues of

red, purple, blue, green and ochre. Without illustrating the Esther story (and we shall presently see why not), these coloured engravings seem to embody the frolicking spirit of Purim, the 'Jewish Carnival'.[8] Several plates are signed with the monogram *AM*, the *M* being inscribed in the *A* in imitation of Albrecht Dürer's famous monogram. One plate is signed with the abbreviation *AND MAR*, and one (the border of telamons and barking dogs) spells out almost the full name, *AND MARELLI*. Thus the uncertainty about the artist's identity can be laid to rest (see figs. 2, 3).

What is most striking about this scroll is the lack of repetition. Each engraved border is different, an original design on a separate plate. This diversity stands in marked contrast to later practice, when engraved Megillah borders were designed to form a continuous band generated by repeating one and the same copperplate, with the text written in subsequently. In this case, too, one plate, repeated nine times, would have been quite sufficient to decorate the entire scroll. But cost-effectiveness was apparently of no relevance here. How is this extravagance to be explained? Scholars studying the (reproduction of the) Berlin sheet have mostly assumed that the artist was specifically commissioned to decorate a Megillah.[9] Given the rather eccentrically shaped, oblong borders it would indeed seem unlikely that the plates were reused from another book. But it can be proved that Marelli's borders were not in fact created for a Megillah.

Now, what of Marelli? Since very little is known of him or his œuvre, it may be useful to collate the scant information available. He is said to have worked in Rome between 1567 and 1572, mainly as a printmaker. Among his known engravings are a copy (1567) after Giotto's famous, now lost, mosaic of the *Navicella* and a print commemorating a papal visit to Venice (1572).[10] In addition, mention might be made of an apparently unpublished engraving in the British Museum of the *Coronation of the Virgin*, signed 'A Marelli'.[11]

Marelli was also a book illustrator. He engraved the title-page to *Imagines et elogia virorum illustrium et eruditorum. Ex antiquis lapidibus et numismatibus...in bibliotheca Fulvi Ursini* (Rome: Antoine Lafrery, 1570), a collection of engraved reproductions after ancient portrait statues and coins. Only the title-page is signed by Marelli; it features a mannerist portal borne by telamons and surmounted by a figure of Fame seated on a pile of books, blowing a double trumpet.[12] The remaining illustrations of the book, an important document of sixteenth-century Roman antiquarianism, may also be the work of Marelli, although they are not signed.

THE PERFECT SCRIBE

Andrea Marelli's most significant contribution to mannerist book decoration is the *alfabeto a groppi*, the knot alphabet in G. F. Cresci's *Il perfetto scrittore*.[13] This writing manual was composed by one of the most famous calligraphers of the period, *scriptor* at the Vatican Library and the Sistine Chapel: the Milanese Giovanni Francesco Cresci.[14] Of this work, two editions are known. The first edition was printed 'in Roma, in casa

del proprio autore', between the end of 1570 and the spring of 1571 (see below); copies of this edition contain Marelli's illustrations and an accompanying treatise. A second edition, printed in Venice in 1575, lacks this part. Both editions contain model alphabets and writing samples, designed by the author and cut in wood by the 'eccellente intagliator' Francesco Aureri da Crema.[15] Aureri's plates are framed by woodcut factotum borders of scrollwork and putti; the style of those borders is reminiscent of that of the relief frames common in contemporary commemorative stone inscriptions, tombstones and epitaphs. The book's landscape format makes the illusion of inscription tablets even more compelling.

Even while Francesco Aureri was producing the woodcut alphabets, writing samples and borders, Cresci apparently realized the limitations of the woodcut technique and the potential of copper engraving, then newly being introduced into book illustration. And in Andrea Marelli he found an artist who, using the novel engraving technique, could rival Francesco Aureri. Marelli's extraordinary engraved alphabet was added as a 'Parte seconda' with its own engraved title-page and accompanied by a 'Discorso delle maiuscole cancelleresche a groppi'.[16]

Unlike the rest of the book, which is entirely (alphabets, writing samples and borders) cut in wood, this virtuoso knot alphabet is engraved in copperplate; and so too are the borders framing it.[17] In contrast to the first part of the book, where two relatively simple woodcut passepartout borders are alternated and repeated throughout several alphabets, the knot alphabet of the second part is framed by twenty-six different borders, a unique border for every single letter. The first few follow Aureri's models, but soon become more elaborate and fantastical. It is obvious that Marelli was trying to outdo Aureri, and thanks to the engraving technique he was able to achieve this aim. But the addition of copperplates involved considerable technical difficulties at the printing and binding stage of production: while woodblocks could be printed together with the movable type of the accompanying text, engravings had to be printed separately and had to be joined to the rest of the book at binding. The variants between the various copies of this (very rare) book demonstrate that at this pioneering phase, such technical problems were far from resolved: the relative position of the engraved alphabet within the book varies from copy to copy.

Many of the ornamental frames are signed with Andrea Marelli's first name, full name or monogram. Cresci, who had commissioned them, was fully aware of their novelty in design and technique. This awareness becomes apparent in his 'Discorso delle maiuscole cancelleresche a groppi' ('Treatise on the capital knot alphabet in chancery style'). This 'Discorso' is included even in those copies of the first edition which do not contain the engraved knot alphabet; possibly the alphabet was not ready in time for publication:

And I decided to have it [the alphabet] engraved in copper, to obtain a precise and beautiful result – which has been achieved. And because I believed that this alphabet requires ornament in keeping with the mastery of its capital letters, I decided to have engraved a different border around every single letter, borders consisting not just of scrolls and the like, but of different
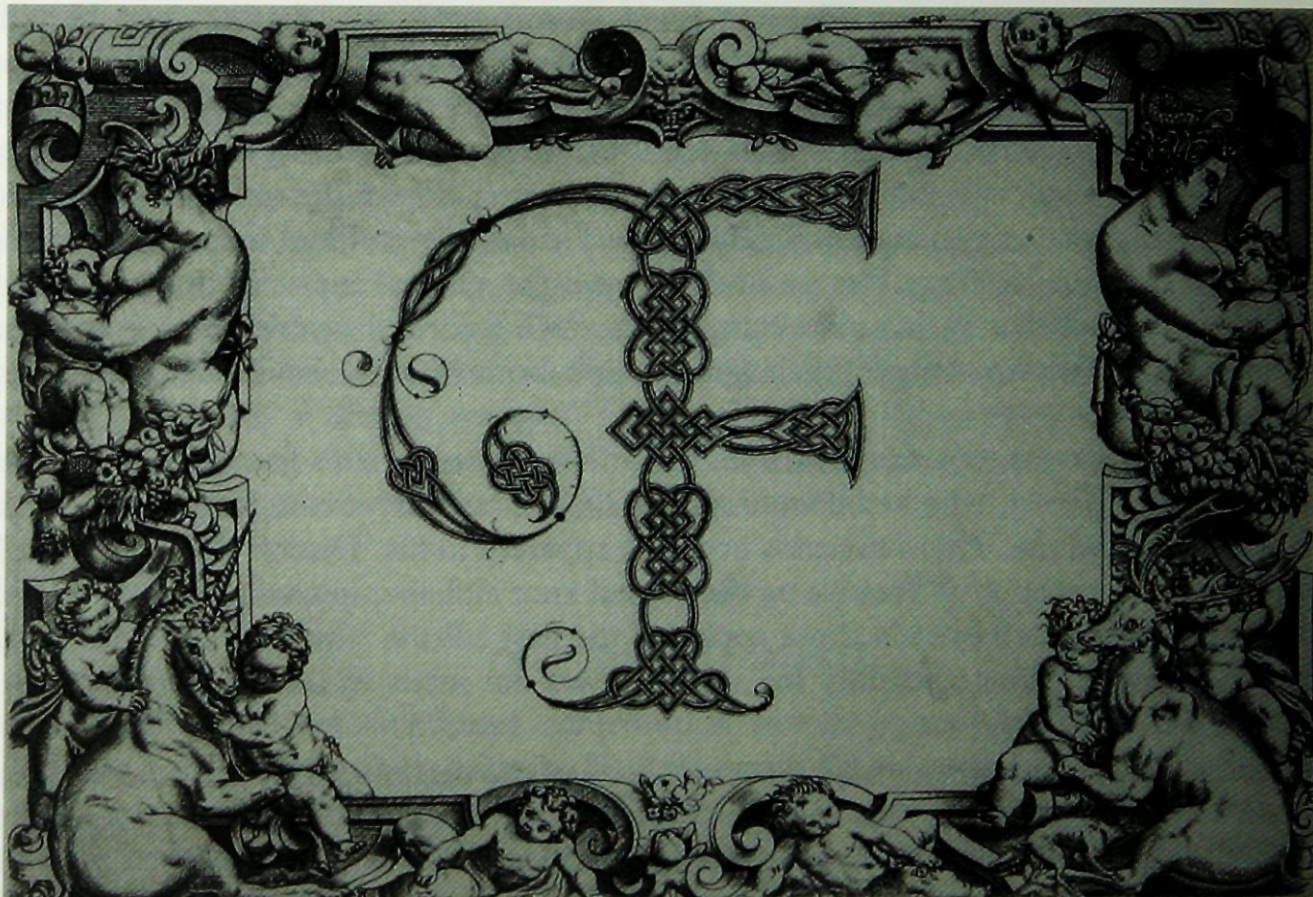
Fig. 2. (upper) A section of an Esther scroll with an engraved border by Andrea Marelli: BL, Or. MS. 13028 (detail); (lower) The original use of the border around the letter F from Marelli's *alfabeto a groppi* in G. F. Cresci's *Il perfetto scrittore* (Rome, 1570–1); Bodleian Library, Douce C 298. *By kind permission of the Bodleian Library*
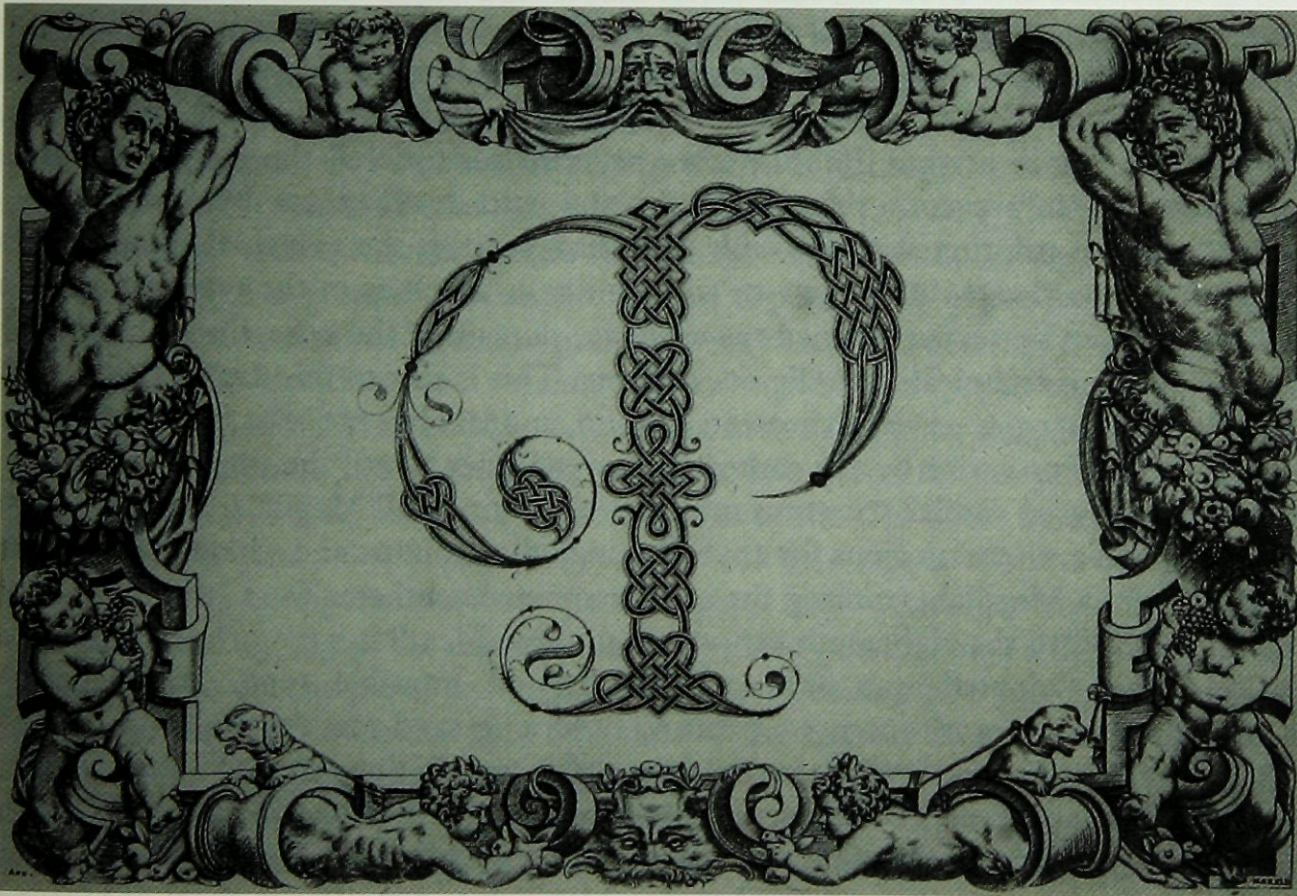
Fig. 3. (upper) A section of an Esther scroll with an engraved border by Andrea Marelli: BL, Or. MS. 13028 (detail); (lower) The original use of the border around the letter P from Marelli's *alfabeto a groppi* in G. F. Cresci's *Il perfetto scrittore* (Rome, 1570–1): Bodleian Library, Douce C 298. *By kind permission of the Bodleian Library*

figures and putti. And if I am not mistaken, I trust the draftsman who supplied me with these borders will be praised for his extraordinary imagination and inventiveness...[18]

Now, among Marelli's twenty-six ornamental inventions for Cresci's *Perfect Scribe* are to be found the eight borders of our Megillah. In the British Library Megillah, they are printed (without their alphabet) on vellum instead of paper, and are hand-coloured in bright hues to give some semblance of an illuminated manuscript. It is a curious irony that these nine frames of *Il perfetto scrittore*, originally intended for a printed scribe's manual of Latin alphabets, now serve to decorate a handwritten specimen of Hebrew scribal art – the art of the *sofer* (figs. 2, 3).

The resulting Megillah is a curious compromise between manuscript and print, between tradition and innovation in Hebrew booklore. A few years earlier, in 1560, the rabbinical scholar and printer Joseph Ottolenghi, then working at Riva di Trento, had printed sixteen Esther scrolls on parchment. The printed scrolls appeared to be equal in all respects to manuscript scrolls. And this is exactly where the problem lay in terms of Jewish law. The rabbinical prohibition against the printing of Biblical scrolls to be used in synagogue services also applied to Megillot, just as it applied and still applies to Torah (Pentateuch) scrolls, Mezuzot (*mezuzah*, 'doorpost': small piece of parchment inscribed with Deut. 6:4–9 and 11:13–21, rolled up in a case and affixed to the doorpost of Jewish houses) and Tefillin (from *tefillah*, 'prayer': parchment strips inscribed with Biblical passages inserted into leather phylacteries tied around arms and head by Jewish men during morning prayers).[19] Legal opinion on their use was solicited from one of the great rabbinical authorities of the time, Moses Provenzal of Mantua. His responsum banned the use of printed Esther scrolls in the synagogue. And although nothing could be said against their use in private, Rabbi Moses nevertheless ordered the destruction of the entire edition – to prevent a printed scroll being used in synagogue by mistake.[20]

By that time printing with movable type had become the principal means for the diffusion of knowledge, in the Jewish community as much as in the republic of letters at large. But certain texts remained the exclusive domain of the *sofer*, the Hebrew scribe with his rigorous technical and religious training. This is true to this day of Torah scrolls used in the synagogue service, Mezuzot, Tefillin, and last but not least for Megillot used during the Purim service by the cantor or prayer leader. Until the nineteenth century, the rabbis imposed similar strictures on the production of all Megillot. Although it was permitted and even meritorious for anybody (including minors and women), not just the *sofer*, to write a Megillah, printing the scroll remained anathema for a long time. It was not until well into the eighteenth century that a few Megillot were printed. Even then the technique adopted was not normally that of movable type, but rather the incomparably more work-intensive printing of an engraved text from a copperplate.[21]

While printed Esther scrolls were anathema, this prohibition referred only to the text. Nothing could apparently be said against printed decoration of handwritten scrolls. This is the only possible explanation for the presence of Marelli's engraved and printed borders in the otherwise manuscript London Megillah and the Berlin sheet of blessings.

In any case, a decorated Esther scroll would not have been used for the communal reading of the Megillah in synagogue and certainly not by the cantor. Rather, such a decorated scroll would have been intended for private use, possibly in the home, while also representing a status symbol.

It is unlikely that the whole Megillah would have been produced in a Jewish workshop. The borders were almost certainly printed for its Jewish patron(s) by a non-Jewish printer, because there were no Jewish printers in Rome at the time. No Hebrew book appeared here between 1547/8, when Antonio Blado's Hebrew press closed, and 1578, when Francesco Zanetti published an edition of Genesis as well as Cardinal Robert Bellarmino's *Institutiones linguae Hebraicae*.[22] That the borders were printed specifically for use in a Megillah is suggested by the use of thick parchment instead of thin vellum or paper: thick, leather-like parchment, while the preferred material of Esther scrolls, would not have been used in other kinds of printed books.

A NOTE ON THE PRINTING HISTORY OF CRESCI'S *IL PERFETTO SCRITTORE* AND ANDREA MARELLI'S KNOT ALPHABET

The printing history of *Il perfetto scrittore* still requires clarification, and the present remarks can only serve as a very preliminary contribution. The Roman *editio princeps*, printed in the author's house, bears no date. Only the dedicatory epistles are dated: 1 October and 1 November 1570. This would imply that the work was published in late 1570. But while this edition contains the 'Discourse on the knot alphabet', not all copies of it include the engraved knot alphabet by Marelli.[23] How can this inconsistency be explained?

The second edition, G. F. Cresci, *Il perfetto scrittore*, 'In venetia, nella Stamperia dei Rampazetti / Ad instantia di Gio. Antonio degli Antonii', [*circa* 1575], sheds some light on this question.[24] Here, Marelli's engraved alphabet and his borders were omitted. The engraved 'alfabeto a groppi' was apparently an expensive showpiece of very limited usefulness, and Cresci or his Venetian publisher may have decided that it was not worth including.[25] This decision was reached notwithstanding a papal copyright issued previously by Pope Pius V on 10 March 1571 and included among the prefatory material of the Venetian edition (not in the *editio princeps*). It protects for ten years not only the copyright of Cresci's text, but also the 'decorations of the said book, both in copper and in wood'.[26] The date of this papal copyright indicates that a delay occurred in the publication of the *editio princeps*. Probably, its typeset and woodcut parts were completed before the end of 1570, but the engraved knot alphabet possibly took a little longer than expected, and so did the papal privilege. The complex final product probably appeared sometime between 1 November 1570 (the date of the later of the two dedications) and 10 March 1571 (the date of the papal privilege). Cresci had left Rome already in the summer of 1570, before the publication was completed.[27] Since Marelli's engraved 'alfabeto a groppi' of the Roman edition does not reappear in the Venetian edition, it is probable that Cresci arranged to sell off some of his graphic material upon leaving Rome.

Such a sale may have included permission to reprint the knot alphabet, thus cancelling the effect of the papal privilege for this part of the book. At this time, an enterprising Jewish bookseller may have seen the borders and had the idea of having them printed as a Megillah. He could have provided the (presumably non-Jewish) printshop with special parchment sheets and subsequently had the text copied by a *sofer*.[28] We do not know the success of this enterprise, but decorated Megillot became very popular later. Eventually, most of Marelli's knot alphabet reached Naples: there, twenty-two of the original set of copperplates were reused in another calligraphy manual, Sempronio Lancione's *Idea universale delle cancelleresche corsive et bastarde...Libro IV* of 1613.[29] All the borders used in the Megillah are also used there.

PURIM IN THE ROMAN GHETTO

The Marelli Megillah was probably produced soon after the publication of the first edition of Cresci's *Il perfetto scrittore* early in 1571 and before the second, Venetian, edition of *circa* 1575, which appeared without the engraved knot alphabet. Any reconstruction of the historical circumstances must remain hypothetical, but it is tempting to view the Marelli Megillah in the light of the history of the Roman ghetto during the latter half of the sixteenth century.[30]

During the Counter-Reformation, the Jews in the Papal States, their numbers swollen by refugees from Iberia, were subjected to increasing economic and religious pressures. In 1555 the Roman ghetto was instituted and, subsequently, periods of repression alternated with short intervals of relative tolerance, creating an atmosphere of insecurity.

Purim had always been a time of rejoicing at narrowly escaped disasters. So-called Special Purims were celebrated by individuals and by entire communities to commemorate miraculous escapes.[31] Conversely, persecutors (among them some popes) were represented in Jewish writings as successors of the evil Haman, the Biblical oppressor of the Jews. For example, Paul IV, who instituted the Roman ghetto in 1555, was likened to Haman.[32] Pope Pius V Ghislieri, who died in May 1572, was universally regarded as the true successor of the dreaded Paul IV. The Jewish historian Joseph Ha-Kohen referred to Pius V, in a grim pun, as 'the Impious'.[33] Even before becoming Pope, the then Cardinal Ghislieri, in his capacity as Inquisitor General, had zealously persecuted Hebrew presses and books.[34] The Jews' worst fears were fulfilled after his accession to the papal throne. With the exception of Rome and Ancona, Pope Pius V expelled all Jewish communities from the Papal States in 1569.[35] While Christendom regarded him as a saintly man,[36] the Jews had reason to fear him.

Little wonder then that his successor Gregory XIII, an undogmatic cardinal known for his benevolent attitude to the Jews, was greeted with enthusiasm. In due course, this enthusiasm was to be dampened: Pope Gregory instituted compulsory missionary sermons and other restrictive measures.[37] But during the early years of his reign, all of that lay hidden in the future, and the Jews of Rome and Ancona had high hopes for the

new Pope. This atmosphere of anticipation of renewed tolerance may have well been the context for the creation of the Marelli Megillah.

1 The origin of Megillah decoration is generally assumed to be North Italy. On the 'Castelnuovo Megillah' of 1567 (Jerusalem, Jewish National and University Library [hereafter JNUL] MS. Hebr. 4. 19720), whose hand-drawn decoration consists of arcades on columns and balustrades, see I. Yoel, 'Catalogue of the Megilloth in the Jewish National Library, Jerusalem', *Kiryath Sepher*, xxxii (1956–7), p. 238, No. 19 (Hebr.); cf. M. Metzger, 'The John Rylands Megillah and some other illustrated Megilloth of the XVth to XVIIth centuries', *John Rylands Library Bulletin* [hereafter *JRLB*], xlv (1962–3), p. 165f (transl. of colophon) and plate IIc. The book of Esther was occasionally illustrated in medieval Bibles (codices, not scrolls) which were not used in communal liturgy.

2 *Jüdisches Lexikon*, vol. iv (Berlin, 1930), p. 607 (reproduced without indication of location). The photograph was also reproduced in P. Goodman (ed.), *The Purim Anthology* (Philadelphia, 1949, and several later editions), p. 430, fig. 54. Cf. R. Wischnitzer, 'The Esther Story in Art', *The Purim Anthology*, p. 231; M. Metzger, 'The earliest engraved Italian Megilloth', *JRLB*, xlviii (1966), pp. 383–6. The blessings are written in an Italian hand in square (or rabbinic) characters in two columns of text. The initial words of each blessing are accentuated in very large square letters. The instructions to the reader, in a typical Italian cursive hand, occupy the bottom of each column.

3 Thieme-Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler*, vol. xxiv (Leipzig, 1930), p. 85; G. K. Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon* (Leipzig, 1835–52), vol. ix, p. 327; idem (ed.), *Die Monogrammisten und diejenigen bekannten und unbekannten Künstler aller Schulen...* (Munich, 1877–1920), vol. i, pp. 18–19 (no. 31); A. Bartsch, *Le Peintre Graveur* (Leipzig, 1866), vol. ix, p. 239.

4 On the fate of the pre-war Berlin Jewish Museum, see S. W. Baron (ed.), *A Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries* (New York, 1946) [Suppl. to *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. viii, no. 1], p. 13, and Ch. Kapralik, *Reclaiming the Nazi Loot: the History*

of the Jewish Trust Corporation for Germany (London, 1962), p. 111.

5 It is unpublished, having entered that collection only in 1966 (long after the completion of the *Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum*). The only catalogue record appears to be an unpublished accession card which describes the scroll as follows: 'Esther scroll written on vellum in an Italian hand, probably of the 17th century, with marginal engraved and coloured ornamentations. Wooden roller. 187.5 × 16.5 cm. Transferred from the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities [British Museum], November, 1966.' The scroll was presented to the Museum in 1893 by Hyman Montagu, together with several other objects. The state of conservation is fair except for the first sheet, which is worn and damaged. No case. I owe the knowledge of this scroll to Brad Sabin Hill, former Head of the Hebrew Section of the British Library, to whom I am grateful also for his kind editorial advice. I further wish to thank Virginia Smithson of the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities, British Museum, for her help in researching the provenance of the scroll.

6 Such an arrangement in pairs is customary in later decorated Megillot.

7 One of the coats of arms features a castle of three towers surmounted by a rising eagle; the other a hissing dragon. The latter is the coat of arms of the Borghese family.

8 Cf. P. Goodmann (ed.), *The Purim Anthology* (as in n. 2); and Sh. Epstein (ed.), *Purim: the Face and the Mask* (New York: Yeshiva University, 1979).

9 Rachel Wischnitzer even dicussed (and discarded) the possibility of Marelli being Jewish; cf. *The Purim Anthology*, p. 231, and Metzger (1966), pp. 385–6.

10 These are listed, without location, in Nagler, *Monogrammisten*, vol. i, pp. 18–19.

11 Department of Prints and Drawings, C. 56* (signed but undated; large folio).

12 Mentioned in Nagler, *Monogrammisten*, vol. i, p. 18.

13 Giovanni Francesco Cresci, *Il perfetto scrittore*

(Rome: in casa del proprio autore [1570/71], and Venice: Rampazetti [1575]). Cf. Nagler, *Monogrammisten*, vol. i, p. 18; L. Samek Ludovici, *Arte del libro* (Milan, 1966), pp. 17, 28 n. 78; E. Casamassima, *Trattati di scrittura del Cinquecento italiano* (Milan, 1966), p. 93; S. Morison, *Early Italian Writing-Books* (Verona and London, 1990), p. 106. Since Marelli's work as book illustrator has not been studied systematically, no other works by him are known at present.

14 For his biography, see F. Petrucci, 'Cresci, G. F.', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. xxx (Rome, 1984), pp. 668–71.

15 According to the colophon in the shorter version. 'Intagliatore' here specifically refers to woodcutting. Cf. D. M. Anderson, *A Renaissance Alphabet. Il perfetto scrittore, Parte seconda* (Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1971). Anderson asserts that *Il perfetto scrittore* is 'in effect two books bound together' (ibid., p. v): the first a book of writing samples, the second a book of Roman capitals. Anderson was not aware of the engraved alphabet by Marelli. I examined Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce C 298 (with Marelli's alphabet) and Johnson P 170 (which contains only the woodcut parts of the book).

16 The title-page to the second part runs: *Il perfetto scrittore di M. Gio. Francesco Cresci cittadino Milanese. Dove si contengono le vere forme delle Maiuscole antiche Romane, necessarie all'arte del perfetto scrivere* [i.e. Roman capitals]. *Co'l suo discorso* [in fact, the treatise is in Part I]. *Con un vaghissimo capriccio di molti groppi accomodati sopra la forma d'un Alfabeto Maiuscolo Cancelleresco, da lui ritrovato* [i.e. Marelli's interlaced alphabet]. *Et insieme l'aviso di quello, che deve osservare lo scrittore nel far capricci alle sorti di lettere. Opera nuovamente, à comune utilità, data in luce. Parte seconda.* This text is surrounded by an engraved border. In the BL copy of the later Venice edition (lacking Marelli's alphabet), the engraved title-page is printed separately and pasted onto the first blank leaf. Conversely, Bodl. Johnson P. 170, which lacks both title-pages and Marelli's engraved 'alfabeto a groppi', nevertheless contains the 'Discorso delle Maiusc. a Groppi' (see next note).

17 Engraved book illustration was only then coming into use. Marelli's 'alfabeto a groppi' was apparently the first application of the new technique in a calligrapher's manual. From the late sixteenth century on, engraving became the preferred technique for this genre, since it allowed for larger plates and greater virtuosity. Cf. U. Finke, *Zierschrift und Initiale* (Berlin: Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1965), pp. 23ff.

18 '& l'ho voluto fare intagliare in rame, acciò riuscisse netto e vago, si come e riuscito. Et perchè mi pareva che questo alfabeto richiedesse un' ornamento conforme al magistero della maiuscola, ho voluto a maiuscola per maiuscola farle intagliar d'intorno una cartella variata l'una dall'altra, non solo di cartocci, & altri lavoretti, ma di diverse figure e puttini. Et s'io non m'inganno, l'inventore che di queste cartelle mi ha servito, credo sarà tenuto molto bizarro, & valente d'inventioni...'. Cresci, *Il perfetto scrittore* (Rome, 1570), 'Discorso delle maiuscole cancelleresche a groppi', not paginated.

19 The first printed Megillot – which were not to be used in synagogue – were not printed before the eighteenth century.

20 Cf. G. Tamani, M. L. Crosina, *La comunità ebraica di Riva del Garda, sec. XV-XVIII/ La Tipografia di Marcaria (1557–1563)* (Riva del Garda, 1991), p. 244 (Cat. No. 39); A. Marx, 'Ein verschollener Pergamentdruck Riva di Trento 1560 (Aus den Responsen des R. Moses Provenzale)', in A. Marx and H. Meyer (eds.), *Festschrift für Aron Freimann zum 60. Geburtstage* (Berlin, 1935), pp. 81–8. The fear of mistaking the printed scrolls for kosher manuscripts indicates that Ottolenghi's scrolls were not decorated. The status of printed Biblical texts was problematic in the early period of Hebrew printing. See S. Freehof, *The Responsa Literature* (Philadelphia, 1955), pp. 229–33, 288; M. S. Goodblatt, *Turkish Life in Turkey in the XVIth Century, as Reflected in the Legal Writings of Samuel de Medina* (New York, 1952), p. 159; I. Sonne, 'Druckwesen', *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Berlin, 1930), vol. iv, col. 39–40.

21 Examples of this technique are rare: Judaica Jerusalem, *Exhibition and Auction II*, 31 Oct.– 1 Nov. 1989 (Jerusalem, 1989), No. 695 (Nehemiah Cohen Mokher Sefarim of Pressburg, Megillah printed on Vellum, Vienna 1791; text and decoration engraved); E. Namenyi, 'Ein ungarisch-jüdischer Kupferstecher der Biedermeierzeit (Markus Donath)', in *Jubilee Volume in Honor of Professor Bernhard Heller* (Budapest, 1941), pp. 252–7; S.

Silberstein, *Eine in Kupfer gestochene Estherrolle aus der Universitätsbibliothek zu Rostock* (Rostock, 1930), (undated, but eighteenth century). M. Metzger, 'The earliest Italian engraved meghillot', pp. 381–432, lists only the latter two. Apparently text printed from an engraved copperplate could exceptionally qualify as manuscript. This is indicated by the colophons of Markus Donath and Nehemia Cohen Mokher Sefarim. All eighteenth-century printed Esther scrolls are of extreme rarity.

22 On Hebrew printing in Rome, cf. H. Vogelstein and P. Rieger, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom*, vol. ii (Berlin, 1895), pp. 114–16; A. Freimann, 'Die hebräischen Drucke in Rom im 16. Jahrhundert', in *Festschrift für Jacob Freimann*, pp. 53–67, esp. pp. 65–7; M. Marx, *History and Annals of Hebrew Printing in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1982; microfilm), under 'Italian Towns: Rome'.

23 Thus, for example, Oxford, Bodl. Johnson P 170.

24 I quote from BL, C.119.c.7.

25 Such practical reasons for omitting the engraved alphabet from the Venetian edition are alluded to by the Venetian printer Ramazotti's prologue (Cresci, *Il perfetto scrittore* (Venice, [1575]), fol. Aiii: '...havendolo ridotto in manco volume per averne tratto fuori alcune cose non ponto [*sic*] necessarie & di molta spesa...'. Engravings could be typeset together with text only with difficulty; production costs were thus increased. In the BL copy of the Venetian edition, the engraved frontispiece is printed separately and pasted onto the first leaf.

26 G. F. Cresci, *Il perfetto scrittore* (Venice: Rampazetti, [1575]), fol. Aii: 'Nos...ne praefatum opus hactenus non impressum, vel alium librum ad imitationem tam characterum quam ornamentorum dicti libri, tam in aere, quam in ligno, per decem annos post eiusdem operis impressionem, a quocunque sine eius licentia imprimi...concedimus & indulgemus. Inhibentes omnibus & singulis Christefidelibus, ...praesertim Bibliopolis & librorum impressoribus sub excommunicationis latae sententiae ...etiam 500 ducatorum auri camere apostolicae applicandorum, & insuper amissionis librorum poenis, toties ipso facto, & absque alia declaratione incurrendis, quoties contraventum fuerit, ne intra decem annos ab impressione dicti operis respective computandos, dictum opus hactenus non impressum, & per ipsum Jo. Franciscum imprimendum, vel alium librum ad imitationem tam characterum quam ornamentorum dicti libri, tam in ligno tam in aere, sine eiusdem Jo. Franc. expressa licentia, dictis decem annis durantibus, imprimi facere, aut componere, seu ab ipsis vel aliis praeterquam a dicto Jo. Francisco impressa, & imprimenda vendere, seu venalia habere, vel proponere, & ad nundinas, seu (ut vulgo dicitur) ferias transmittere, vel id, ut supra, habere audeant, seu presumant. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, septimo idus Martii, anno sexto.'

27 Thus the colophon in the copy, Oxford, Bodl. Johnson P 170.

28 Until a survey of Megillot gives us the material basis for quantitative research, we do not know whether the Marelli Megillah was a unicum or whether it was part of an edition.

29 *Idea universale delle cancelleresche corsive et bastarde di Sempronio Lancione romano Libro quarto* (Naples, 1613); cf. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, *Katalog der Ornamentstichsammlung der staatlichen Kunstbibliothek* (Berlin, 1939), p. 625 (no. 5201). According to information kindly supplied by Ulrike Boskamp (Kunstbibliothek, Berlin), two Berlin copies (OS 5201 and 5187) both contain the letters ABCDEFGHIKLM-NOPRSTVXYZ within Marelli's borders. Among them are all the borders used for the London Megillah and the ex-Berlin sheet of blessings. The copy of Lancione's *Idea* in the Bodleian, Johnson P 181, lacks this part.

30 Unfortunately, information about Esther scrolls from Rome is scant. Cf. Sotheby's, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts and Miniatures* (London, 1 Dec. 1980), lots 121 and 122 (described by Ch. Abramsky), esp. p. 103, lot 122: Colophon: 'Acquisition of Elieser the son of Benjamin di Castro, written by Joab di Tivoli 5412 [1651/ 52]'. Both are typical Roman Jewish names. On the ghetto of Rome, cf. A. Milano, *Il Ghetto di Roma* (Rome, 1964); D. Carpi, 'The Expulsion of the Jews from the Papal State in the Time of Pius V', in *Scritti in Memoria di Enzo Sereni* (Jerusalem, 1971), pp. 145–65 (Hebr.); K. R. Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy, 1555–93* (New York, 1977).

31 Special Purims became popular in the 16th century, when alone six new Purims where instituted, most of them in the countries of the

Sephardi diaspora. Cf. C. Roth, 'Purims, Special', in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1972), vol. xiii, cols. 1396–1400; and Sh. Epstein, *Purim: the Face and the Mask*, p. 47.

32 Joseph Ha-Kohen likened Paul IV, the 'evil Theatine', to the 'evil Haman': 'And all the thoughts of this evil Theatine were bent on doing ill and not well to the Jews, and that was always his principle.' A marginal gloss comments: 'In Gematria [kabbalistic letter and number mysticism], the [numerical value of the word] Theatine means [equals the numerical value of the name] Haman.' Joseph Ha-Kohen, *Emek ha-Bakhah*, ed. M. Letteris (Vienna, 1852), p. 117; cf. *Emek haBacha*, ed. M. Wiener (Leipzig, 1858), p. 95 and n. 288 (note Wiener's unwillingness to comprehend Gematria); Joseph Hacohen and the anonymous corrector, *The Vale of Tears (Emek Habacha)*, ed. and transl. H. S. May (The Hague, 1971), p. 104.

33 Joseph ha-Kohen, *Emek haBacha*, ed. Wiener, p. 106.

34 On the persecution of the Talmud in Cremona, cf. D. Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy* (London, 1963), pp. 308ff, and K. R. Stow, 'The Burning of the Talmud in 1553', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, xxxiv (1972), pp. 433–58. The documents are collected in M. Stern, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Stellung der Päpste zu den Juden* (Kiel, 1893), pp. 117–35 (nos. 112–27). Cf. B. S. Hill, *Hebraica from the Valmadonna Trust* (London, 1989), no. 38.

35 D. Carpi, 'The Expulsion...' (as in n. 30); K. R. Stow, *Catholic Thought* (as in n. 30).

36 Pope Sixtus V initiated the canonization process of Pius V (completed in 1712). Cf. the uncritical A. Fernandez *et al.* (eds.), *San Pio V e la problematica del suo tempo* (Alessandria, 1972), pp. 19, 109, and Nicole Lemaitre, *Saint Pie V* (Paris, 1994), pp. 241–56.

37 *Bullarum...Romanarum Taurensis editio* (Turin, 1860), vol. viii, pp. 88–91 ('Vices eius', 1 Sept. 1577), and 487–89 ('Sancta Mater ecclesia', 1 Sept. 1584). Cf. K. R. Stow, 'Conversion, Christian Hebraism, and Hebrew Prayer in the Sixteenth Century', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, xlvii (1976), pp. 217–36.