

Marina Del Negro Karem

A Conflation of Characters

The Portrayal of Aristotle and Averroës as Jews in a Venetian Incunabulum



Fig. 1: Girolamo da Cremona, *Aristotle lecturing Averroës*, tempera and gold on parchment, 1483, frontispiece of Aristotle's *Physics* (with *Commentary* of Averroës) fol. 1, 40.9 x 27.2 cm, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, in: *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797*, New Haven, 2007, p. 165.

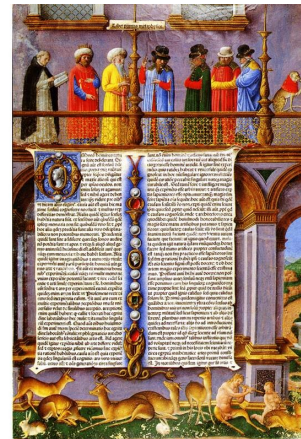


Fig. 2: Girolamo da Cremona, *Turba Philosophorum*, tempera and gold on parchment, 1483, frontispiece of Aristotle's *Works*, fol. 2, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, in: *Venice and the Islamic World 828-1797*, New Haven, 2007, p. 168.

A Latin edition of Aristotle's *Physics* and *Works* with the *Commentary* of Averroës, a two-volume incunabulum, was published in Venice in 1483.[1] The books were compiled by the humanist Nicoletto Vernia, a well-known Averroist from the University of Padua and published by Andreas Torresanus.[2] The work had been commissioned by Peter Ugelheimer, a wealthy German humanist who lived in Venice and was a frequent partner in the Jenson printing and publishing business. Ugelheimer considered the decorated incunabulum a precious collectible.[3] Clearly, he spared no expenses for the decorations of the frontispieces prefacing Aristotle's *Physics* and *Works*, for he engaged Girolamo da Cremona, a well-known artist who had trained at Padua in Mantegna's workshop and had achieved a reputation as the best illuminator working *all'antica*.

The tempera and gold on parchment illumination which portrays Averroës and Aristotle facing one another, opens the text of the *Physics* volume (fig. 1). Girolamo enclosed the figures within a framework in

which he combined for the first time a classical architectural setting with an illusionistic device which he invented known as the "torn parchment leaf."^[4]

Aristotle, seated on the right holds together his thumb and index fingers as if enumerating his points. The rings on his fingers may be symbolically connected to his arguments for a spherical and finite universe centered on the earth.^[5] His left hand is extended towards Averroës. Aristotle wears a blue cape over a red tunic, yellow boots and, on his head, a red close-fitting cap called *scuffia* in Venice.^[6] On top of the *scuffia* he wears a hat with a forward-pointing brim. Both the hat and *scuffia* are adorned with small circular bejeweled brooches. A red shawl covers his stooped shoulders. His long white beard and hair underscore his old age. Averroës sits on the ground slightly below Aristotle, on the opposite side of the composition. He is portrayed with a long flowing beard and his white hair is almost completely covered by a white round turban. The Muslim philosopher wears a yellow coat with a red shawl and red boots.

He gestures towards Aristotle while, pen in hand, he seems ready to write his famous *Commentary*. The Northern alpine setting in which the two philosophers are seated may be a reference to Ugelheimer's German background.

The miniature for the second volume of the incunabulum portrays the *Turba Philosophorum* (fig. 2). Here, a group of seven philosophers stand almost in a straight row near the balustrade of a classical portico. Centrally placed, Averroës, wearing a yellow robe and light, white-yellowish turban, stands next to Aristotle. The Greek, shown standing to Averroës' right, appears as a young, brown-bearded man. He is frontally placed and wears a blue cape and a black, wide-brimmed hat. His right hand points towards a *cartellino* with the title of his book on *Metaphysics* (*Liber Primus Metaphysicae*) while his left hand points to his famous commentator. Aristotle looks back, towards Plato who stands to his right. His old teacher is shown in profile, arms crossed over his chest looking towards Aristotle. Plato wears a green robe with a brown shawl and, like Aristotle, a wide-brimmed hat over a red *scuffia*. The two figures behind Plato have been identified as the ancient commentators of Aristotle, Themistius, with a red robe and brown shawl, and Alexander of Aphrodisias with a blue robe and yellow shawl.^[7] Avicenna, the other Muslim philosopher in this scene, stands next to Averroës. He is dressed in a red robe and his turban is wrapped around a multi-pointed crown. Farthest to the left, almost at the borders of the scene is a Dominican monk. He is reading, head down, eyes on the pages of an open book. On the opposite side of the composition, a monkey with a prominent red shawl sits on the balustrade with his back turned away from the group.

The illustrations for the frontispieces of the two volumes were the last Girolamo completed. Arguably the best miniature painter in the second half of the fifteenth century, he had worked for the Este in Ferrara. Later, he had been active in Mantua, Padua, Siena and Florence before going to Venice, where he worked from 1474 until his death in 1483. Girolamo's prolonged sojourn in Mantua, Ferrara and Venice, cities well known for their high concentration of Jews, would have rendered him familiar with the salient

characteristics of Jewish attire.

Throughout Europe Jews were easily recognizable because since the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, they had been compelled to wear some signs on their clothing to distinguish them from Christians. Most commonly, the required "distinguishing sign" was in the form of a yellow circle or badge. In Italy, these regulations were variously applied. In Venice, starting in the early fifteenth century, when the Venetian authorities discovered that the yellow badge or *ruella* could be easily covered, the Jews were compelled to wear more prominent signs, usually a yellow hat, cap or *scuffia*. The yellow color, however, was almost universally connected to pimps, prostitutes and other negative cultural aspects and the Jews were reluctant to wear it. Therefore, particularly in periods during which the Jewish presence was essential to



Fig. 3: Anonymous Venetian artist, *Transportation of the Ark of the Covenant* (detail), tempera on parchment, after 1475, folios 4 (verso) and 5 (recto), *Psalterium*, Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, in: Ivan Penser and Derek Kalmar (eds.), *Orientalism and the Jews*, Waltham (Mass.) 2005, cover.

the economy of the Venetian Republic, the authorities tended to look the other way when Jews wore a red hat or *scuffia*.^[8] The Venetians were satisfied in that red was still a distinguishing color while Jews found it far more preferable than the abominable yellow. The shape of the Jewish hat varied. Italian and Northern (Ashkenazi) Jews who had established permanent residence in Italy wore the same clothes as the Christian population. The only difference between Christian and Jewish headgear would have been only a matter

of colors. However, traveling merchants who lived in various Italian cities only for brief periods, maintained their native fashion. Thus, Northern Jews typically wore a black wide-brimmed hat with either a flat or domed crown. The hat was worn over a wool or linen *scuffia*. Notably, as we see illustrated in this Venetian *Psalterium* of ca. 1475, Levantine (Eastern) Jews, usually connected to the important silk trade in Venice, maintained their native fashion of wearing long robes and turbans which were in all details similar to the Muslim dress (fig. 3).[9] In Venice, therefore, Levantine Jews would have been virtually indistinguishable from the Muslim merchants in the city. This is noted in various paintings executed towards the end of the Quattrocento.[10] For example, Ashkenazi and Levantine Jews are represented mingling with other foreign merchants in Carpaccio's *Healing of the Possessed Man at Rialto* (fig. 4), a work the artist completed in 1496 for the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista. Like many other narrative paintings executed by various artists for the Venetian Scuole, Carpaccio's work accurately recorded the tiniest details of daily life in the city.[11] In this scene (and indeed in most of the other narrative paintings) I have identified a number of Jews among the crowds at the foot of the Rialto bridge, such as the two Ashkenazi and Levantine merchants standing in a little separate group. The Ashkenazi merchants wear a red *scuffia* under their black wide-brimmed hats while the Levantine wear a robe and white turban. Girolamo da Cremona would have been familiar with both types.

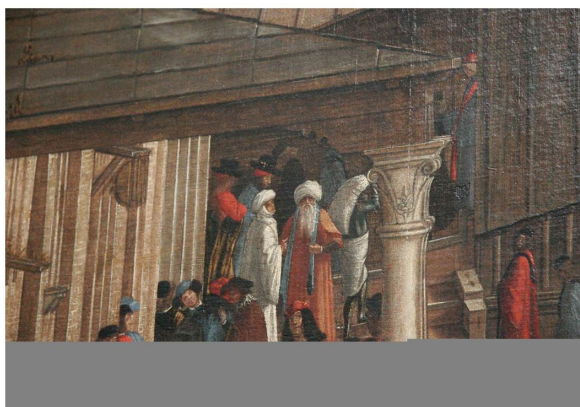


Fig. 4: Vittore Carpaccio, *Healing of the Possessed Man* (detail of group at the base of the Rialto bridge), 1496, Accademia, Venice, in: Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, New Haven 1988, p. 160.



Fig. 5: Anonymous artist, *Italian Jew wearing a hat with forward-pointing brim*, folio 43 (verso) ms. add. 26957, British Library, London, in: Therese Metzger, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, Fribourg 1982, p. 131.

In the frontispiece to the *Physics* (fig. 1) Aristotle wears the distinguishing Jewish red *scuffia* under his hat. However, the hat has a forward-pointing brim which is different from the typical wide-brimmed hat worn by merchants. This is the type of hat typically worn by Jewish scholars in the fifteenth century (fig. 5). Another mark of the “scholarly” Jewish identity can be seen in Aristotle’s red shawl or “Tallit.” The Tallit was a type of prayer shawl worn by Jewish Rabbi and scholars (fig. 6). Interestingly, the Muslim Averroës is represented with the turban which, as noted, could be worn both by Muslims and Levantine Jews. It appears, though, that in order to render Averroës more clearly identifiable as a Jew, Girolamo clothed him in a yellow robe, the color traditionally assigned to Jews to distinguish them from Christians. Yet, despite the conflation of ancient Greek and Muslim personages into Jews, in this representation Girolamo respectfully characterized the philosophers as Jewish scholars and not as common merchants.

However, a distinctly negative view of the Greek and Muslim personages is presented on the frontispiece of *Works* (fig. 2). Here, in the *Turba Philosophorum* Girolamo substituted the forward-pointing brimmed hat of a scholar for the wide-brim hat and red *scuffia* of the Ashkenazi merchants. The turbaned Averroës wears a yellow robe while directly behind him Avicenna has a red robe and a light-colored turban wrapped around a multi-pointed crown. The



Fig. 6: Anonymous Venetian artist, *Maimonides Commentary on the Eight Chapters*, 1469, folio 174 (verso), Correr Library, Venice (author's photograph).

crown may be a reference to the Kabbalistic *Sephira* (an emanation of God), the first of which was known in Italy as the *Somma Corona*. Notably, in Girolamo's time Venice was the most renowned center for Kabbalistic studies.^[12] Indeed, in Girolamo's *Turba* the Greek philosophers do wear the scholarly Tallit, but so does the Monkey sitting on the balustrade. Monkeys symbolized the lust of men entrapped by earthly desires. They also represented the embodiment of stubborn ignorance and folly, since they could imitate or mimic human behavior but never truly understand it. In this guise, the tallit-wearing Monkey is a reference to the "foolishness" of Aristotle and other such philosophers and their inability to understand or accept the "Truth" of Catholic orthodoxy, clearly referenced in the figure of the reading Dominican to the left of the scene. The point was made: the *Turba Philosophorum*, their backs turning away from the Dominican monk in a stubborn refusal or an innate inability to understand the True doctrine were no better than the Monkey sitting on the balustrade.^[13]

Aristotelian philosophy, most of which had survived only in Arab translations in centers such as Toledo and Cordoba, had been a problem for the Church since the time it started trickling back into Christian Europe with the 10th century Reconquista. By the late 12th century, though, Aristotle had been translated into Latin by Muslim and Jewish scholars, like Averrões, Avicenna and Moses Maimonides. But its early adoption in academic centers like the University of Paris produced a rift between the Dominican

and Franciscan professors of theology and the independent and more liberally inclined teachers. While the theologians (paid by the Church) struggled to preserve Catholic orthodoxy (the foundation of its power), the independent professors were more interested in preserving their academic freedom. The Church, the ultimate authority, wavered back and forth, at times allowing the teachings of some forms of Aristotelian philosophy, at other times forbidding it in an effort to establish the intellectual supremacy of Catholic orthodoxy.^[14] Both the Dominican and Observant Franciscan orders were heavily vested in teaching. They were, indeed, at the forefront of the intellectual struggle, a veritable battle at times, between Faith and Reason. Their champion, Thomas Aquinas, had proposed a two-fold solution, essentially a blending of Faith and Reason known as Scholasticism, which was ultimately approved by the Church as a viable blend of doctrinal Truth and Aristotelian logic. However, pure, unaltered Aristotelian philosophy was growing in popularity and by the fifteenth century the University of Padua (noted for its Medical school) had, in fact, adopted an exclusively Aristotelian curriculum.

For the Church, the struggle for the preservation of orthodoxy and the continuation of clerical power was ongoing. Therefore, even during the Renaissance period, Aristotelian philosophy was an uncomfortable reality and the Dominicans (though not exclusively) continued as true "Domini Canes" (the Lord's Hounds) in their role of enforcers of Catholic orthodoxy, ferreting out all doctrines, not just Aristotle's but those of the "accursed Pagans" which were seen as contradictory to the teachings of the Church.^[15]

The Dominicans' opposition to Aristotle and his followers is visible in a number of decorative programs in Italy, but is perhaps best expressed by Andrea da Firenze in the monumental fresco program he executed in 1366 for the Chapter House of the Dominican Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. The *Triumph of the Church* (fig. 7) is a visually-compelling fresco whose theme underscored the Dominicans' efforts to maintain the superiority of the Church. The fate of those who failed to listen to the Dominicans' message was depicted in frightening and realistic details.^[16]



Fig. 7: Andrea da Firenze, *Triumph of the Church* (frescoes detail), 1366-1368, Chapter House of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, in: Frederick Hartt, *History of Italian Renaissance Art*, New York 2003, p. 36.

Throughout their history the Venetians had struggled to maintain some independence from the Popes. Therefore, the Dominicans (and other preaching orders) were not as free in Venice as in other Italian cities. But even in the Serenissima the Friars took every opportunity vociferously to condemn the presence of Jews in the city. Jews were blamed for every affliction that befell the city. The city's misfortunes were taken as an indication of God's displeasure with the Christians' toleration of Jews.[17] In times of stress Jews were even blamed for spreading Plagues and disease.[18] But in Venice the Jewish contribution was essential to the economy of the city and their presence unavoidable. Their government regulated lending activities were meant to help the Venetian poor, avoiding, therefore the potential for uprising and government overthrow. In time of war, the Venetian government also expected interest-fixed loans. Money lending was certainly the most important reason for the Venetians toleration of Jews in the city but their contribution was not confined to the economy. Jews were useful to the Venetian Republic because of their linguistic skills. Many Jews were employed as translators, travelling in the retinue of Venetian ambassadors. Their knowledge of medicine was superior to that of Christian doctors and, therefore, Jewish physicians were often asked to treat the Venetian nobility. More importantly, perhaps, their knowledge and experience of trading in far-away Oriental markets rendered them invaluable in a city such as Venice, known for its lux-

ury goods.[19] The Jews were allowed to trade in used-clothing and furniture, supplying the population with affordable merchandise and were also employed as dancing and music teachers.[20] Therefore, while in other cities Jews were frequently subjected to the capricious whims of the ruler *du jour*, in Venice they were protected by Venetian laws. In fact, given the traditional Christian intolerance toward the Jews, their status in Venice was far better than in any other place in Europe.[21] Venice was a multi-national city. The Venetians were used to the presence of a great number of both Northern and Levantine Jews.[22] Their activities, particularly as doctors, merchants and printers would have rendered them conspicuous and clearly recognizable, even before their confinement to the Ghetto in 1516.[23]

By the late Quattrocento, Venetians and Jews had developed a sufficiently comfortable relationship, one that allowed even for occasional friendships. The celebrated humanist and publisher Aldus Manutius had many Jewish friends. In collaboration with the Jewish printer Gershon da Soncino, the Aldine presses produced the first Hebrew grammar (intended for Christian students) in 1501. The Soncinos had worked throughout Italy, from Naples to Brescia to Venice between the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento. In fact, it would have been most likely that Girolamo da Cremona would have met Gershon da Soncino while working in Venice.

Venice was the leading center in the publication of classical sources in the second part of the Quattrocento.[24] Yet, the humanists Nicoletto Vernia and Andreas Torresanus, who were responsible for the iconographical content of Girolamo's decorations, clearly subordinated Philosophy to Theology in the *Turba Philosophorum*. The idea of the Church's superiority over any ancient or medieval philosophies was further emphasized in Girolamo's conflation of ancient philosophers into contemporary Jews. In Venice Jews were ambivalently viewed. As Biblical personages from ancient Israel and as contemporary Levantine merchants, Jews were regarded as Oriental people. However, as Italian or Ashkenazi merchants and bankers moving freely throughout contemporary Europe in a manner that was virtually undistinguished (except for the yellow or red hat) from Christians, they

were seen as western people.^[25] In fifteenth-century Venice, Jews were prominent in both guises. Their superior level of education, their daily interaction with Christians and their constant exposure to the homilies of the Friars propounding the Catholic doctrine had given the Jews ample opportunities to convert to the “true” faith. In the eyes of the Christian population, therefore, the Jews’ obstinate refusal to convert had come to represent the epitome of stubborn foolishness and, more so than even Muslims or heretics, they were transformed into a personification of pure evil.

Endnotes

1. An *incunabulum* was an early type of printed book (a “cradle” version). Incunabula were produced between 1455 (such as the *Gutenberg Bible*) and 1501. The illustrations were usually done through woodcuts but sometimes (as in the case of the Venetian 1483 incunabulum for the German Ugelheimer) these books were individually decorated with hand-painted scenes. See: Kristian Jensen, *Incunabula and their Readers: Printing, Selling and Using Books in the Fifteenth Century*, London 2003; Lotte Hellinga, *Incunabula: The Printing Revolution in Europe 1455-1500*, Woodbridge 2007; Federica Toniolo, *Girolamo da Cremona*, in: *Dizionario Bibliografico dei Miniatori Italiani*, ed. by Milvia Bollati, Milan 2004, pp. 310-315. The frontispieces of the two volumes are now in the Pierpont Morgan Library collection in New York City.
2. Andreas Torresanus collaborated with the humanist publisher Aldus Manutius in the first Aldine press in Venice in 1493. See: Annaclara Cataldi Palau, *Gian Francesco d'Asola e la Tipografia Aldina: La Vita, le Edizioni, la Biblioteca dell'Asolano*, Genoa 1998; Domenico Bernoni, *Dei Torresani, Blado e Ragazzoni Celebri Stampatori a Venezia e Roma nel XV e XVI Secolo*, Milan 1890; Edward Mahoney, *Two Aristotelian of the Italian Renaissance: Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo*, Vermont 2000.
3. Ugelheimer was clearly very proud of his collection. His copy of *Justinian's Digest*, printed in 1477 in the Jenson's publishing firm in Venice was inscribed with the phrase: “Peter Ugelheimer of Frankfurt, of good birth, bequeaths this book to his posterity.” See: Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance*, London 1996, pp. 148-149; Martin Lowry, *Nicolas Jenson e le Origini dell'Editoria Veneziana nell'Europa del Rinascimento*, Rome 2002.
4. See: Mirella Levi d'Ancona, *Postille a Girolamo da Cremona*, in: *Studi di Bibliografia e di Storia in Onore di Tammaro de Marinis*, 4 vols., Verona 1964, vol. 3, pp. 49-53.
5. On Aristotle's *Philosophy of Nature and Psychology* see: Frederick Coplestone, *A History of Philosophy*, New York 1986, p. 326.
6. For a detailed study of Italian fashion see: Rosita Levy Pisetzkzy, *Storia del Costume in Italia*, 4 vols., Milan 1964. On the *scuffia* and other distinguishing signs worn by Jews in Venice see: Benjamin Ravid, *From Yellow to Red: On the Distinguishing Head-Covering of the Jews in Venice*, in: *Jewish History*, 6, 1992, pp. 179-210.
7. Levi d'Ancona 1964, *Postille*, vol. 2, p. 504.
8. In the seventeenth century Venetian Jews were finally allowed to wear a red hat. Ravid 1992, *From Yellow to Red*, p. 188. Also: Giulio Rezasco, *Del Segno degli Ebrei*, in: *Giornale Linguistico di Archeologia, Storia e Letteratura*, 15, 1888, pp. 241-267 and 321-351; 16, 1889, pp. 31-61 and 259-284. While dated, Rezasco's work is still the most comprehensive source on the distinguishing signs worn by the Jews in Italy. For Venetian regulations and their fluctuations, in addition to the Venetian State Archive (*Cattaveri*, Buste, chronologically arranged) see: Giulio Bistorot, *Il Magistrato alle Pompe nella Repubblica di Venezia*, Venice 1916.
9. The mention of turbans in the context of Levantine merchants in Venice is found frequently in the inventories and last wills and testaments even down to the seventeenth and eighteenth century. For example, in the inventory of Abram Abaeff, a Levantine Jew, were found three “old turbans.” See: Giudici di Petizion, *Inventari*, Busta 343, n. 15, 1605, Archivio di Stato di Venezia.
10. My most recent studies (yet unpublished) support the visual evidence found in the paintings executed in the late Quattrocento by artists like Gentile Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio, Giovanni Mansueti and others who recorded detailed snippets of contemporary life in Venice. The scenes, painted for Scuole Grandi (but also by Carpaccio for the Scuola di Sant'Orsola) as a record of the various miracles performed by the Scuole's holy relics, contain a large number of turbaned individuals. Most published studies have interpreted the heavy Oriental presence in terms of a new trend, the so-called “Orientalizing fashion” popular in Venice in the second part of the Quattrocento. My evidence, both visual and documentary, shows that a preponderant number of people, such as Levantine Jews, Armenian, Persian, Coptic Christians, Syrian and Turkish living in Venice in the late Quattrocento, would have worn an Oriental costume. Already in the 15th century a type of Oriental hat called “ala Turchesca” was being manufactured in Venice. Bartolomeo Cecchetti, *Vita dei Veneziani del 1300: Le Vesti*, Venice 1886, p. 60; Silvyo Ovadya, *Osmanli'da Yahudi Kiyafetleri (Jewish Costumes of the Ottoman Empire)*, Istanbul 1999.
11. For an excellent analysis of the works by Gentile Bellini and other contemporary artists working for the various Scuole see: Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, New Haven 1988. The author demonstrates that maintaining historical accuracy in every detail was a prerequisite for these narrative paintings.
12. Robert Davis and Benjamin Ravid, *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, Baltimore 2001, pp. 170-190.
13. Richard Rubenstein, *Aristotle's Children*, New York 2003; Mirella Levi d'Ancona, *Lo Zoo del Rinascimento: Il Significato degli Animali nella Pittura Italiana dal XIV al XVI secolo*, Lucca 2001.
14. The statement is found in a 1277 letter written by Bishop Steven Tempier. He had been asked by Pope John XXI (who had been himself a Theology professor at the University of Paris) to investigate charges that the teachings at the University of Paris were “prejudicial to the Faith.” The letter resulted in the banning of 219 propositions which were a part of the “manifest and execrable errors introduced by some of the more radical masters teaching the writings of the ‘accursed pagans’.” Rubenstein 2003, *Aristotle's Children*, p. 232. Notably, the label of “accursed Pagans” was applied not only to Aristotle's teachings but to the writings of his Arab and Jewish commentators and translators. Rubenstein 2003, *Aristotle's Children*, pp. 168-224.
15. Michael Tavuzzi, *Renaissance Inquisitors: Dominican Inquisitors and Inquisitorial Districts in Northern Italy, 1474-1527*, Boston 2007.
16. The preaching of the Dominicans was difficult to control even in relatively independent Venice. In the early fifteenth century, the charismatic friar Giovanni Dominici (1356-1420), founder of the convent of Corpus Domini preached homilies that called for the expulsion of all Jews, a polluting presence among Christians, according to him. His homilies contributed to much social upheaval throughout Italy. See: Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, *Jews and Judaism in the Rhetoric of Preachers: the Florentine Sermons of Giovanni Dominici (1356-1419) and Bernardino da Siena (1380-1444)*, Dordrecht 2000; John Aberth, *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350*, New York 2005; Dana Katz, *The Jews in the Art of Italian Renaissance*, Philadelphia 2008.
17. Carlo Varischi, *Usurarij et fautores receptores Judeorum fano venir Pestem sicut dixit Sanctus Bernardinus, Vincentie: Sermoni del Beato Bernardino Tomitano da Feltre*, Milan 1964, vol. 3, p. 271.
18. In the case of both doctors and merchants, the Venetian sumptuary regulations were often overlooked in order to avoid the harassment to which Jews were frequently subjected to. See: David Jacoby, *Venice and Venetian Jews in the Eastern Mediterranean*,

- in: *Gli Ebrei a Venezia Secoli XIV-XVIII*, Milan 1987, pp. 29-58; Donatella Calabi, *La Città degli Ebrei*, Venice 1991, pp. 156-159; Maria Pia Pedani, *Venezia Porta d'Oriente*, Bologna 2010, pp. 212-215.
19. David Jacoby 1987, *Venice and Venetian Jews*, p. 35.
 20. Benjamin Ravid, *How "Other" Really was the Jewish Other? The Evidence from Venice*, in: *Acculturation and its Discontents: The Italian Jewish Experience between Exclusion and Inclusion*, Toronto 2008, pp. 19-55; Benjamin Arbel, *Jews in International Trade: The Emergence of the Levantine and Ponentine*, in: *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, Baltimore 2001, pp. 73-97.
 21. By 1469 Jews owned their own printing presses. Near Rome (Subbiaco), for example, the Jewess Estellina Conat (wife of Abraham Conat) printed a large number of Biblical and Liturgical texts as well as Talmudic commentaries. She was followed by the Soncino family who had worked in Constantinople before establishing their printing presses near Rome, Pesaro and Venice. The Soncinos were credited for having produced the Latin, Greek and Hebrew types used in the Venetian Aldine presses. Even though in Venice the Jews were not allowed to have their own presses, their contribution to the dissemination of culture in the early Renaissance was extremely significant. Avraham Rosenthal, *Daniel Bomberg and His Talmud Editions*, in: *Gli Ebrei a Venezia Secoli XIV-XVIII*, Milan 1987, pp. 375-416; Calabi 1991, *La Città degli Ebrei*, p. 169.
 22. Calabi 1991, *La Città degli Ebrei*, pp. 152-155.
 23. Martin Lowry, *The World of Aldous Manutius*, Ithaca N.Y. 1979.
 24. Ivan Penslar and Derek Kalmar (eds.), *Orientalism and the Jews*, Waltham Mass 2005, pp. 13-16.

Figures

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Summary

This article examines the illustrations on the frontispieces of a two-volume incunabulum printed in Venice in 1483 in which the artist Girolamo da Cremona represented Averroës, Aristotle and other philosophers as Jews. Girolamo had trained in Andrea Mantegna's shop and by the late Quattrocento had achieved the reputation as the best illustrator working *all'antica*. Stylistically, Girolamo's miniatures are a clear indication of the level of interest towards classical art of its patron and, indeed, of all well-educated Venetian society. However, while visually expressing the latest Renaissance trends, Girolamo's scenes contain also evidence of the opposition towards Aristotelian philosophy on the part of the Dominican and Observant Franciscans. By conflating Classical Greek and other philosophers (despicable pagans according to the Dominicans) into Jews, Girolamo clearly expressed both the common perceptual ambivalence towards classical philosophy as well as the ongoing struggle for supremacy between faith and reason. The artist's residence in cities with a numerous Jewish population and, particularly, his experience in Venice where Jews were essential participants in the early publishing enterprises would have rendered him familiar with their appearance. For Girolamo and, indeed, even for most well educated Christians, Jews (like the Muslim and Greek philosophers) represented both the epitome of scholarship as well as the error of denying the "true" faith.

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