

find comparative points. But Nevola meets the challenge through painstaking archival work and engaging narrative. In so doing he not only achieves his goal to open up a new field, but also offers us the gratifying experience of an intellectual grand tour across the Italian peninsula.

In treating a Renaissance subject, the book innovatively builds on some influential modern theories in urban studies—for example, Spiro Kostof's definition of the street as both *container* and *content*, and the five key elements used by Kevin Lynch in his analysis of urban form, which Nevola aptly borrows for the framework of the second part of his book. However, not every modern theory can be easily applied to premodern studies; while Henri Lefebvre's idea of the social production of space and Michel de Certeau's concept of practiced space sound straightforward, Lefebvre's specific elaboration on the distinction between *representation of space* and the *representational space* seems to make things more complicated than necessary when applied to Renaissance cases. But all this may remind us that the intrinsic nature and ultimate purpose of urban life has barely changed since the Renaissance, and demonstrates that street life as an area of study has an alluring prospect.

Chen Liu, *Tsinghua University*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2022.383

*Surviving the Ghetto: Toward a Social History of the Jewish Community in 16th-Century Rome.* Serena Di Nepi.

Trans. Paul M. Rosenberg. Studies in Jewish History and Culture 65. Leiden: Brill, 2021. x + 273 pp. €144.

---

Serena Di Nepi's *Surviving the Ghetto* is the highly anticipated English translation of her book *Sopravvivere al ghetto*, originally published in 2013. It is a study of the birth of the Roman ghetto in 1555 and its first fifty years of existence. Why was the ghetto established? How did the local Jews respond? How did the ghetto shape communal, social, and economic structures? Di Nepi approaches those and similar questions from the vantage point of a social historian. Arguing that the founding of the ghetto cannot be attributed solely to anti-Jewish sentiments and told through "lachrymose descriptions" (4), Di Nepi turns to a more nuanced approach and links both local and global processes in her account. To better understand the dynamics and sociocultural developments within the ghetto, one needs to investigate beyond the walls of the ghetto and the Roman city, Di Nepi suggests.

Indeed, the point of departure of her study is neither Rome nor Italy, but fifteenth-century Iberia. The expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula eventually brought some hundreds of refugees to the gates of Rome. Their arrival sparked tension among the local Jews, who were concerned that the influx of Sephardic Jews might

disproportionally affect their own fragile social and civic status. A painful process was set in motion, over the course of which a hesitant but steady acceptance and integration of the Sephardic refugees into the local Jewish society took place, punctuated by obstacles and challenges. Some challenges had both transnational and local dimensions: the Protestant Reformation, the churches' campaign against heretics and infidels, the Sack of Rome (1527), and the burning of the Talmud (1533), as well as the infamous child murder of 1555 in Rome, all directly affected Jewish life. On top of that were the relentless efforts of Paul IV to promote the conversion of Jews through exclusion.

Hoping that Jews would embrace Christianity as soon as social and professional pressures became unbearable, an environment of "inclusive exclusion" (230) was created. Through social, cultural, and economic pressure and discrimination, Jews were further ostracized in the midst of Christian society. It was thus only a small step to the papal bull *Cum nimis absurdum* of 1555, which defined a confined living space for the Jews in Rome, and ultimately excluded them from the urban social fabric while keeping them in the heart of the Eternal City. Jewish life in sixteenth-century Rome oscillated between pragmatic religious tolerance and brutal exclusion, leaving the Roman Jews in a vacuum of constant trauma.

Having laid out the preconditions for the establishment of the ghetto, Di Nepi turns to the main part of her book, an illustrious and intelligent examination of the effect of the ghetto on Jewish society. Over the course of the following five chapters, Di Nepi examines the rise of a new "ruling class" (86), the role of the rabbis as pillars of the Jewish society in the ghetto, and the vital significance of professional diversification and monopolization as demonstrated by the Jewish trade in used textiles. The core of Di Nepi's source material consists of notarial documents that Kenneth Stow previously used for his study of the Roman ghetto in his *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century* (2001). Yet while Stow offers only a limited and sometimes impalpable glimpse into early modern ghetto life, Di Nepi's distinctive social-historical approach tells a much more vivid and tangible story and expands Stow's findings considerably. Her focus transcends the ghetto's primary function of marginalization by producing a compelling examination of the forced "period of powerful change and activity" (25) at length. This ultimately results in a story that goes far beyond the Jewish survival of the Roman ghetto. It offers a nuanced sketch of Roman Jewish society in the sixteenth century in particular, and early modern Jewish life in Italy in general.

As suggested by Rachele Scuro a few years ago, it might be very worthwhile to read Di Nepi's account together with Stow's 2001 study. The two books are a great and rather unique example of the methodical possibilities and diversity in using the same source material.

Andreas Berger, *Yale University*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2022.384