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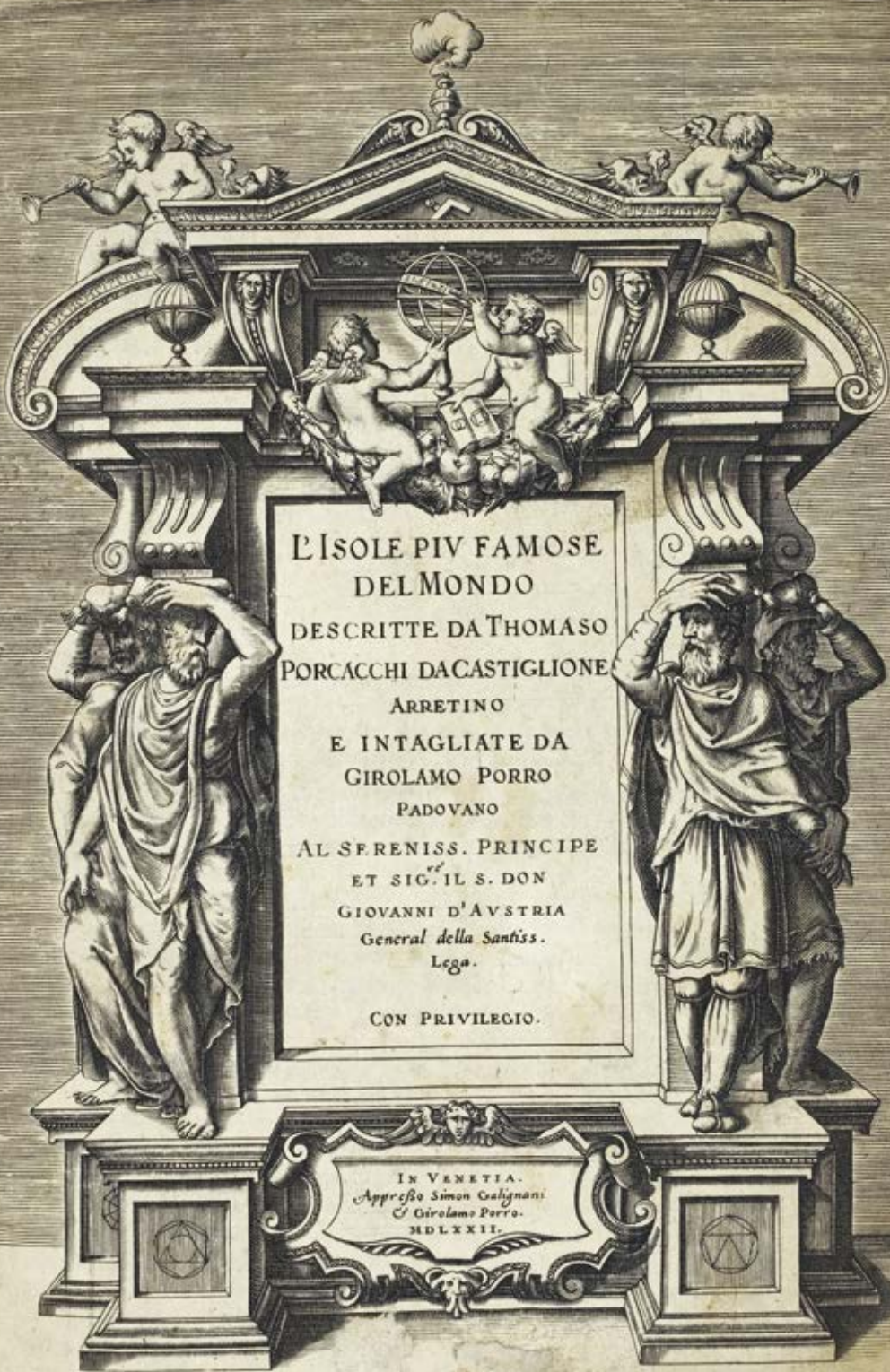
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Front cover George Arkell, detail from 'Jewish East London', 1901 in *The Jew in London*, published by the Toynbee Trust. P.J. Mode Collection of Persuasive Cartography, #8548. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library

1680



L'ISOLE PIV FAMOSE
 DEL MONDO
 DESCRITTE DA THOMASO
 PORCACCHI DACASTIGLIONE
 ARRETINO
 E INTAGLIATE DA
 GIROLAMO PORRO
 PADOVANO
 AL SERENISS. PRINCIPE
 ET SIG.^{to} IL S. DON
 GIOVANNI D'AVSTRIA
 General della Santiss.
 Lega.
 CON PRIVILEGIO.

IN VENETIA.
 Appresso Simon Galignani
 & Girolamo Porro.
 MDLXXII.

32. Defendente Mazzolani 1680

Fig. 1 Girolamo Porro, engraved title page in Porcacchi's *L'isole piu famose del mondo...* Venice: Simon Galignani, 1572. Copper engraving, plate size: 25.5 x 15.5 cm; sheet size: 27.0 x 19.7 cm. Courtesy of Clive A. Burden Ltd., www.caburdenraremaps.com

DESCRIBING MALTA IN TOMMASO PORCACCHI'S *ISOLARIO*

L'isole piu famose del mondo (1572)

Emanuel Chetcuti

In 1572 the Italian humanist, geographer, translator, polygrapher, bibliophile and scholar Tommaso Porcacchi (1532 (?)–1576) published *L'isole piu famose del mondo descritte da Thomaso Porcacchi da Castiglione Arretino e intagliate da Girolamo Porro Padovano Al Sereniss[imo]. Principe et Sig[no]re. il S[acro]. Don Giovanni D'Austria General della Santiss[ima]. Lega; in Venetia, Appresso Simon Galignani e Girolamo Porro*.¹ It was granted a ten-year printing privilege. As the full title indicates the book was a joint effort between the author Porcacchi, the map engraver Girolamo Porro (1529–1600), and Simon Galignani, the publisher.

Tommaso Porcacchi was a prolific writer. When he settled in Florence, around 1556, he met Lodovico Domenichi (1515–1564), the Italian scholar who was renowned for his editions and translations of classical authors. It was Domenichi who allowed Porcacchi to publish his first works, the life of Virgil and a translation of the fourth book of the Aeneid. It was also Domenichi who introduced Porcacchi in 1557 to the printer Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari (c.1508–1578), who was active in Venice and one of the first major publishers of literature in the vernacular Italian language. In 1559 Porcacchi moved to Venice where he settled for the rest of his life, dedicating himself tirelessly to his work as a writer, translator and editor. During the 1560s Giolito and Porcacchi embarked on a major editorial project to produce *Collana Historica*, a collection of ten volumes about ancient Greece and Roman history translated into vernacular Italian. With the death of Porcacchi in 1576 and Giolito in 1578, their ambitious project was never completed.

Girolamo Porro was born at Padua in 1529 and probably was a student of the Italian engraver, Enea Vico (1523–1567). He commenced his career as an engraver by drawing, in 1567, a map of Europe and Africa. His cartographic output mainly featured in Ruscelli's translation of Ptolemy's *Geographia*, 1574, and in Porcacchi's *L'isole piu famose del mondo*. In 1575 he was granted the privilege as *intagliator di stampe di rame* and in 1584 admitted to the *Accademia dei*

Virtuosi in Rome. However, Porro is better known for his engravings that accompanied works of literature. He died on 20 January 1600 in Venice, where he had spent most of his working life.

An *isolario*, or book of islands, belongs to a unique genre of literature. Containing maps and historical and geographical information, this distinct genre combines the characteristics of regional island atlases, travel literature or primitive tourist guides. *Isolarii* had their origin in Italy, beginning in the fifteenth century and prevailed until the seventeenth century. Florence and Venice were the main centres of production. Initially, they concentrated on the islands of the Mediterranean but over time they expanded further afield.²

The first edition of Porcacchi's *L'isole piu famose del mondo...* contains thirty engraved maps but unlike many earlier *isolarii* does not focus exclusively on the Mediterranean. Porcacchi modelled his on that of Henricus Martellus Germanus's *Insularium illustratum* (c.1486–1490[?]). Martellus had expanded the geographic parameters to include islands and coastal lands far beyond the Mediterranean. In addition to the standard *isolarii* inclusions, Porcacchi added islands in the Atlantic Ocean, creating something closer to a 'world island book'.³

The book was published during the Fourth Ottoman–Venetian War (1570–1573) which may explain why Galignani dedicated it to Don Giovanni D'Austria [Don John of Austria] (1547–1578), the illegitimate son of King Charles V and brother of King Philip II. Don John was praised for his military prowess in protecting the Christian faith against the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto and crushing the uprising of the rebellious Moriscos in the City of Granada.

Porcacchi set out the principles of his *isolario* in the preface. He commences by quoting Theopompus (c. 380 – c. 315 BCE), the ancient Greek historian, who narrated the fable that Europe, Asia and Africa were islands embraced on every side by the ocean, an opinion shared by Pliny and Strabo. However, considering it too arduous a task to describe the whole



DESCRITTIONE DELL'ISOLA DI MALTA.



ERA la Sicilia, & la riuiera dell'una & l'altra seccagna di Barberia son poste due Isole, Melita, & Gaulo: quella detta hoggi Galta: & questa il Gozo, lontane l'una dall'altra cinque miglia: ma discosto da Pachino, o Capo Passero promontorio di Sicilia, alqual guardano, cento miglia: benche alcuni dicono, sessanta & d'Africa cxc. Malta ha di circuito sessanta miglia, & tutta quasi è piana; ma sassosa, & esposta a' uenti. Ha molti & sicurissimi porti: & doue guarda à Tramontana, in tutto è priua d'acque: ma da Ponente ue n'ha di correnti, & produce alberi fruttiferi. La maggior larghezza sua è di dodici miglia, & la lunghezza di uenti: e in tutto il nostro mare non u'ha Isola, cosi lontana da terra ferma, come è questa. In piu di sei luoghi all'intorno è ricauata, & dal mar di Sicilia ui son formati come tanti porti, per ricetto di corsali: ma di uerso Tripoli è tutta piena di balze & di ripe. E' detta Melita in latino dalle
 Api,

Malta
perche eo
si detta.

Fig. 2 Tommaso Porcacchi, 'Descrittione dell'Isola di Malta', 1590. 29.5 x 20 cm. Author's collection.