



COMUNE
DI FERRARA

Città Patrimonio dell'Umanità



**FERRARA WITHIN
THE WALLS:
exploring the city
with Giorgio Bassani**

FERRARA

FEELINGS

Corso Martiri della Libertà

Starting point of the itineraries

page 3

Itineraries



1  4 km

In the shadow of the Finzi-Continis

page 7



2  2 km

Behind the Door of the Ghetto

page 17



3  2 km

Beyond the windshield

page 27

Key

-  starting point of the itineraries
-  monument that can be visited
-  detour from main route
-  monument not open to visitors

This book is an invitation to explore the streets of Ferrara and discover them — or rediscover them — through the eyes of the writer Giorgio Bassani.

Born in Bologna in 1916, we know that Bassani spent his childhood and youth in Ferrara, which he later made the star of his narrative oeuvre. The link between the author and the city of the Este family has certainly been controversial yet indissoluble, so much so that he made the capital of the Po Valley a character of choice rather than a mere backdrop. And it was a literary achievement, one which had been long desired and pursued by Bassani; an achievement for which the necessary distance, which led the author having to find a new home in Rome after he was imprisoned for his anti-fascist politics, played a fundamental role.

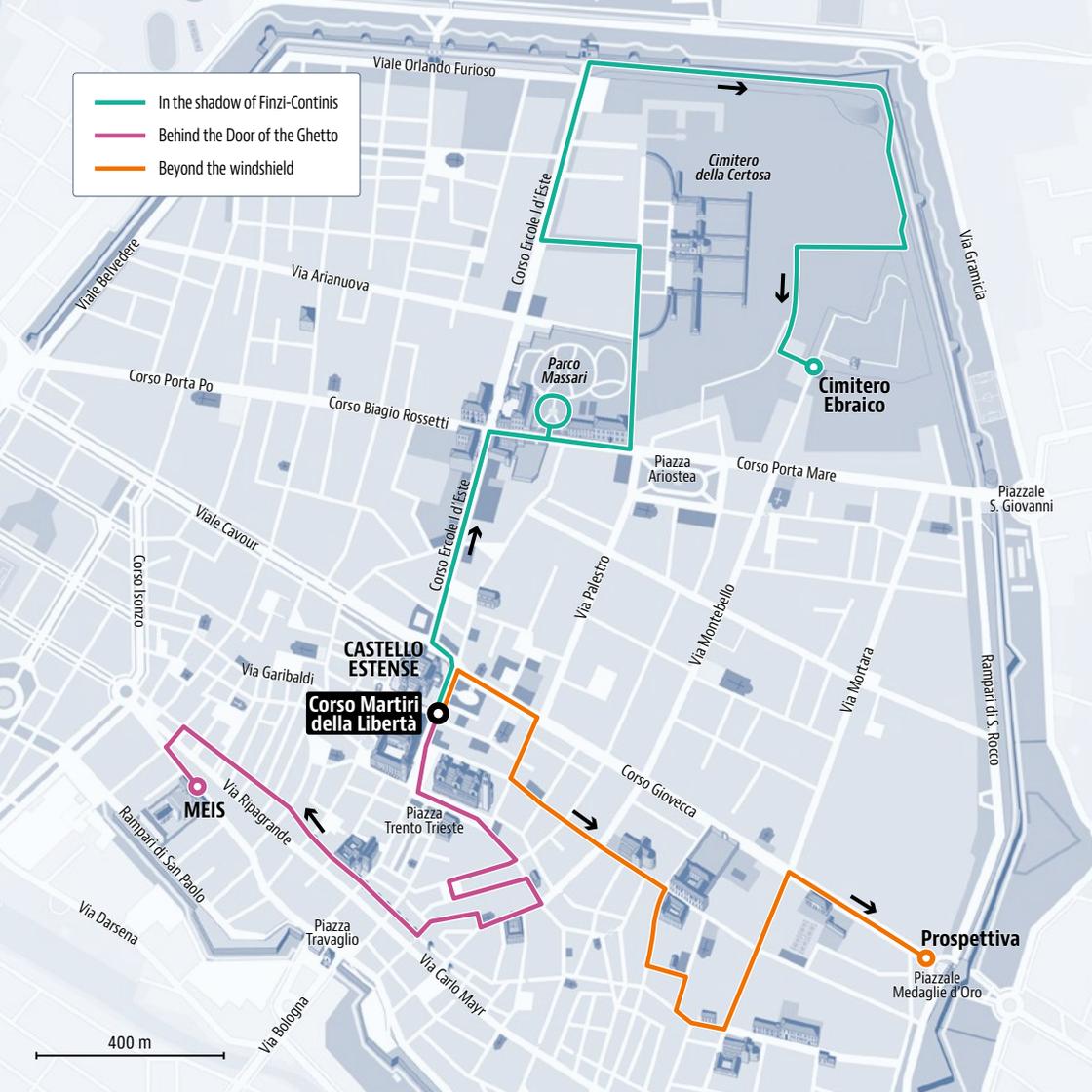
This guide is based on the relationship between the real and the imaginary, on the constant mirroring of the city's streets, views, and gardens as they appear today and those reinvented by Bassani, especially in *The Novel of Ferrara*.

This is how the **three itineraries** found herein were chosen, a bike ride and two walks, ideally mimicking the movement of the writer, who tends to go from the inside outwards, opposing the centripetal force silently imposed by the walls as he does. **Each itinerary starts from the centre of Ferrara and heads in a different direction towards the outside of the city.** However, each one also finds a characteristic destination within the city walls that's uniquely tied to Bassani and his life: the tomb of Giorgio Bassani in the Jewish cemetery in Via delle Vigne, the MEIS - Museum of Judaism and the Holocaust (formerly a prison in Via Piangipane, where the writer was detained in 1943) and the Prospettiva in Corso Giovecca.

Consistent with the profile of Ferrara crafted by the author, they're **sensible itineraries dedicated to spending time outdoors**. Meditated by the selected records and stories, they also lead visitors by suggesting detours and additional stops. These itineraries are designed for those who already love Bassani's work, intended to give substance to the black and white of the pages, as well as for those who, on the other hand, wish to learn about his work quite literally 'through' Ferrara, in both cases concretizing the inevitable and constitutive recursion that binds Bassani to the city where he was born and raised.

Barbara Pizzo

- In the shadow of Finzi-Continis
- Behind the Door of the Ghetto
- Beyond the windshield



Viale Orlando Furioso

Viale Bonvicini

Via Arianuova

Corso Ercole I d'Este

Cimitero della Certosa

Via Garancia

Corso Porta Po

Corso Biagio Rossetti

Parco Massari

Cimitero Ebraico

Piazza Ariostea

Corso Porta Mare

Piazzale S. Giovanni

Viale Cavour

Corso Ercole I d'Este

Via Palestro

Via Montebello

Via Mortara

CASTELLO ESTENSE

Corso Martiri della Libertà

Via Garibaldi

Corso Giovecca

Rampanti di S. Rocco

MEIS

Via Ripagrande

Piazza Trento Trieste

Rampanti di San Paolo

Piazza Travaglio

Via Carlo Mayr

Prospettiva

Piazzale Medaglie d'Oro

400 m

Via Bologna

Corso Martiri della Libertà

Starting point of the itineraries 

The centre of Ferrara is home to what just may be one of the most significant places not only for the city, but also for Giorgio Bassani and his work: the **Estense Castle**. More precisely, the moat wall that runs along **Corso Martiri della Libertà**.

In *The Novel of Ferrara*, Corso Roma was named for the fascist massacre on 15 November 1943 around which *A Night in '43* (the last of the *Five Stories from Ferrara*) takes place. Of that first massacre of the Italian Civil War, today we have not only a street name to remind us of the event, but the crucial place itself, conveyed by Bassani's descriptions even in the aura that seems to be handed down among those who know its history.

At first you might not be aware of it. But once you've been seated for a few minutes at one of the small outside tables of Caffè della Borsa, with the sheer crag of the clock tower before you and, a bit to the right, the crenellated terrace of the Orangery, the whole thing dawns on you. This is what happens. In summer or winter, rain or shine, it's very unusual for whoever crosses that stretch of Corso Roma to prefer keeping to the opposite pavement that runs along the dark-brown back of the Castle moat. If anyone does so, then it's sure to be a tourist, finger wedged between the pages of the Touring Guide, gaze tilted upward; or a travelling salesman who, with his leather bag under his arm, is hurrying toward the station; or a farm worker from the Po delta who has come to the city for the market who, waiting to take the local afternoon bus back to Comacchio or Codigoro, with evident embarrassment lugs his body weighed down with the food and wine he consumed a little after midday in a dive in San Romano. In short, it could be anyone, except someone from Ferrara.

Eight anti-fascists were murdered in retaliation on this street, close to the abutment of the castle, though there were eleven in Bassani's work of fiction: This is where the author gathers the remains of all the victims of that night, two of whom were actually shot dead on the city walls near Viale Alfonso d'Este, while another, a witness, was killed in Via Boldini, as the plaques on the wall of the Castle and in Via Boldini remind us. Not far from the **Municipal Theatre**, from Piazza Savonarola, **Palazzo Ducale** and Palazzo Arcivescovile, from the **Duomo** and the city's main squares — (Piazza Trento e Trieste and Piazza Municipale, connected to



View of Corso Martiri della Libertà from the Estense Castle

each other by the *Vòlto del Cavallo*) the reader of *A Night in '43* will find the pharmacy, he will imagine the eyes of Pino Barilari hidden in the shadows, beyond the window facing the pavement of the massacre and he will remember the massacre and its victims.

According to recent studies, on the night of 14 November 1943, they also went looking for Giorgio Bassani, who had fled in the meantime. With his short story, Bassani has honoured his comrades who had not left the city: a very painful work, almost one of catharsis. The heart of that story cannot fail to be the same as that of this guide.

Estense Castle 📍 | tel. +39 0532 419180 | www.castelloestense.it

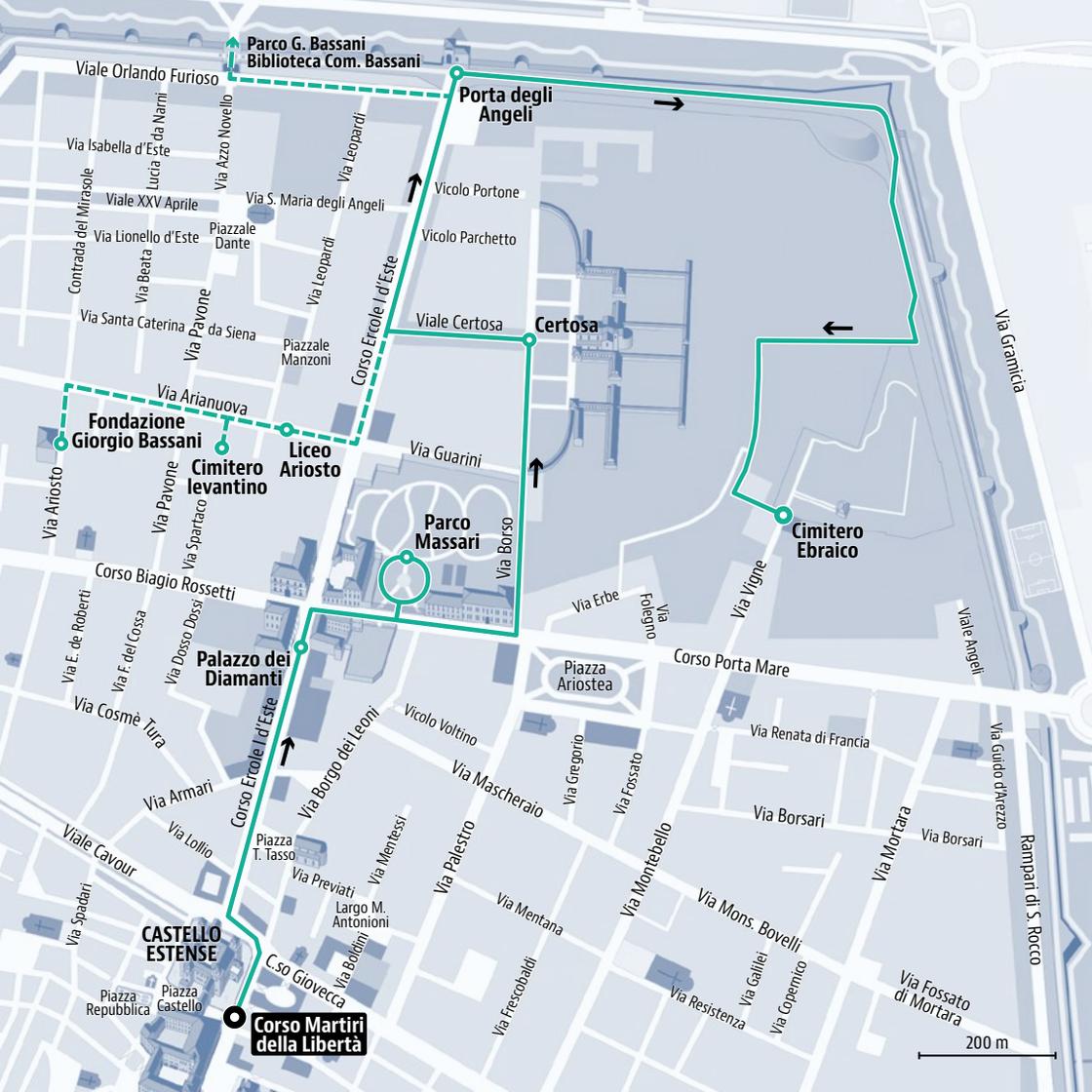
C. Abbado Municipal Theatre | tel. +39 0532 202675 | www.teatrocomunaleferrara.it

A Night in '43: from book to film

The film version of *Long Night in 1943*, which was the famous directorial debut of Florestano Vancini was released in cinemas, four years after the publication of *Five Stories of Ferrara*, in 1960. Even if he kept tabs on the progress of the film, the writer deliberately did not take part in writing the screenplay, which was entrusted to Ennio De Concini and Pier Paolo Pasolini, who was already a friend of Bassani at the time. 'Vancini, also from Ferrara, was seventeen years old at the time of the events described: the memory helps him to reconstruct the story with a *truthfulness* that Bassani himself acknowledges', recalls the timeline published on the Bassani Foundation's website. 'Even if, compared to the literary version, it makes some significant changes, especially in the characters. The only change that Bassani will never amicably forgive him for is the change of the title [...]'

Wall of the Castle – Commemorative plaque





Parco G. Bassani
Biblioteca Com. Bassani

Porta degli Angeli

Certosa

Cimitero Ebraico

Parco Massari

Palazzo dei Diamanti

Liceo Ariosto
Cimitero levantino

Fondazione Giorgio Bassani

CASTELLO ESTENSE

Corso Martiri della Libertà

200 m

Viale Orlando Furioso

Via Azzo Novello

Lucia da Narni

Via Isabella d'Este

Viale XXV Aprile

Contrada del Mirasole

Via Beata

Via Lionello d'Este

Via Pavone

Via Santa Caterina da Siena

Via Arianuova

Via Ariosto

Via Pavone

Via Spartaco

Corso Biagio Rossetti

Via E. de Roberti

Via F. de' Cosca

Via Dosso Dossi

Via Cosmè Tura

Via Armari

Via Lollo

Viale Cavour

Via Spadari

Piazza Repubblica

Piazza Castello

Piazzale Dante

Piazzale Manzoni

Via Leopardi

Vicolo Portone

Vicolo Parchetto

Viale Certosa

Via Guarini

Via Borso

Via Erbe

Via Fagnano

Via Vigne

Corso Porta Mare

Piazza Ariostea

Via Gregorio

Via Fossato

Via Renata di Francia

Via Borsari

Via Borsari

Via Mortara

Via Mortara

Via Mons. Bovelli

Via Gallei

Via Copernico

Via Resistenza

Via Fossato di Mortara

Via Guido d'Arezzo

Ramparti di S. Rocco

Via Graniccia

Viale Angelli

1

THE SHADOW OF THE FINZI-CONTINIS

Corso Ercole I d'Este

A Renaissance street connecting the **Estense Castle** and **Porta degli Angeli**, Corso Ercole I d'Este is renowned for being home to palaces and museums, cornerstones of the area known as the Erculean Addition, the revolutionary urban development project conceived of by Duke Ercole I d'Este and his architect Biagio Rossetti between the late fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century. About halfway down, at the Quadrivio degli Angeli (the Crossroads of Angels), some of the most famous and prestigious buildings look out onto it: **Palazzo dei Diamanti**, home to the Civic Gallery of Art and the National Picture Gallery of Ferrara; Palazzo Turchi di Bagno and Palazzo Prosperi Sacrati with its beautiful portal. In the second half of the street (📍 Liceo Ariosto, House of Ludovico Ariosto) you can admire several university buildings and the Palazzina degli Angeli, built on the site of the old convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli; the avenue ends with Porta degli Angeli, a gate of honour that led into Belfiore Park, now a city park named after Giorgio Bassani.

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One of the most famous portrayals of Corso Ercole I d'Este is found in the famous novel *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*.

*Immortalized by Giosuè Carducci and Gabriele D'Annunzio, this Ferrara street is so well known to lovers of art and poetry the world over that any description of it would only be superfluous. As is well known, it is in the very heart of that northern area of the city which the Renaissance added to the cramped medieval quarters, and which for that reason is called the Erculean Addition (Addizione Erculea). Broad, straight as a sword from the Castle to the Mura degli Angeli, flanked its whole length by the sepia bulk of upper-class residences, with its distant, sublime backdrop of red bricks, green vegetation, and sky, which really seems to lead you towards the infinite.*

[G. Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*]

**Palazzo dei Diamanti - Exhibition Space** 📍 | +39 0532 244949 | [www.palazzodiamanti.it](http://www.palazzodiamanti.it)  
**National Picture Gallery** 📍 | +39 0532 205844 | [www.gallerie-estensi.beniculturali.it/pinacoteca-nazionale/](http://www.gallerie-estensi.beniculturali.it/pinacoteca-nazionale/)

# Massari Park

Massari Park, which takes its name from the adjacent late-16th-century building, is the largest public garden within the city walls. Designed in 1780 by Ferrara architect Luigi Bertelli for Marquis Camillo Bevilacqua (1745-1821), this important garden was known for the many sculptures that decorated it and the variety of citrus trees and flowering plants. The layout of the flowerbeds dates back to the 19th century, and many of the trees are hundreds of years old: in addition to the two Lebanese cedars at the entrance, there are a few yews, a large ginkgo, and a giant English oak.

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Massari Park is also known for having inspired Giorgio Bassani in his description of the legendary garden of the Finzi-Contini family, a non-existent place that is the fruit of the writer's imagination, largely based on the Gardens of Ninfa, owned by the Caetani princes, near Rome, as recalled by his daughter, Paola Bassani.

*My father was deeply struck and fascinated by the Gardens of Ninfa, to the point that he internalized them for many years, then dropped them in Ferrara, or I should say, he had the courage to drop them in Ferrara.*

[P. Bassani, *Se avessi una piccola casa mia*. Giorgio Bassani, *il racconto di una figlia*]





## Certosa (cemetery)

This large complex was originally founded as a Carthusian monastery by Borso d'Este between 1452 and 1461, when the area was outside the city walls. In 1813, Ferdinando Canonici transformed the then-abandoned monastery into a municipal cemetery, creating a harmonious balance between the **Church of San Cristoforo** and the open spaces, through large curved portico-walkways, in marble and terracotta, and the new cloisters.

*To have an idea of what the Piazza della Certosa is like, one should think of an open, nearly empty meadow, scattered as it is in the distance with some occasional funerary monuments for illustrious nineteenth-century lay-persons: a kind of parade ground, in short. To the right, the rugged, unfinished façade of the church of San Cristoforo, and also, curving in a wide semi-circle until it reaches the city walls, a red, early-sixteenth-century portico on which some afternoons the sun beats down to magnificent effect; to the left, only small, semi-rustic houses, only the low boundary walls of the big vegetable gardens and orchards of which even now in this most northerly zone of the city there is an abundance. [...] It may be because of [...] its almost perfect and perpetual solitude, the fact is that the Piazza della Certosa has always been the destination for lovers' trysts.*

[G. Bassani, *Clelia Trotti's Last Days*]

**Church of San Cristoforo, Certosa Cemetery** 📍 | +39 0532 232933 | [www.artecultura.fe.it/index.phtml?id=390](http://www.artecultura.fe.it/index.phtml?id=390)  
**Certosa Cemetery** 📍 | +39 0532 230110 | [www.certosadiferrara.it](http://www.certosadiferrara.it)

## ◉ DETOUR

From Corso Ercole I d'Este, turning onto Via Arianuova, you will come across Ariosto Secondary School, adjacent to the **Levantine Cemetery** (Via G. Rossi). A bit further along is the House of Ludovico Ariosto.

### **Ariosto Secondary School** (Via Arianuova, 19)

The current building dates back to a project from the early 1970s, which was later renovated in 2002. The grounds are very large and include a huge garden that extends as far as Corso Biagio Rossetti and Corso Ercole I d'Este. Designed by C. Melograni and M.L. Martines, the architecture is Brutalist in style and the materials and structure are a clear reference to industrial buildings: the concrete, the flue of the central heating plant, and even the finishes of the classrooms characterize this secondary school as a **factory of knowledge**. Today it is home to three permanent museum collections: *Historica*, *Naturalia* and *Strumentaria*. The institute has also named a classroom and an atrium after the writer, and the latter even has a display case containing original documents relating to Bassani as a student and a memorial plaque.

**Bassani attended Ariosto** Secondary School while it was at 60 Via Borgoleoni, during the years in which the Fascist regime was relatively accepted by the public, before the promulgation of Italy's racial laws (1926-1934). He stood out for the quality of his work, so much so that he was included in numerous educational projects reserved for deserving students. His daughter Paola remembers that it was at the desks of the secondary school when he first experimented with metre, wanting to imitate a classmate who wrote poetry. Regarding his secondary school years, it is also worth mentioning the moment he met his Latin and Greek teacher, **Francesco Viviani**, who was esteemed by Bassani and reinvented as the character Professor Guzzo.

*Guzzo was famous for his nastiness, a nastiness bordering on sadism. About fifty years old, tall, Herculean, with big, blazing, greenish reptilian eyes beneath an enormous Wagnerian forehead, and with two long grey sideburns which grew halfway down his bony cheeks [...]. He wasn't enrolled in the Fascist party and because of this, and only because of this, everybody said, he hadn't been granted the university chair, which various examples of his philological writings, published in Germany, would otherwise surely have warranted.*

[G. Bassani, *Behind the Door*]

Classical secondary school diploma  
given to Giorgio Bassani in 1934



## House of Ludovico Ariosto (Via L. Ariosto, 67) Giorgio Bassani Foundation

Purchased by the poet in 1526, the house (along with its land and vegetable garden) was Ariosto's home in the latter part of his life, up to 1533, the year of his death. In 1815, it was taken over by the Municipality and became a civic museum.

Since 2018, the House of Ludovico Ariosto has been home to the **Giorgio Bassani Foundation**, established in 2002 with the mission of honouring the famous writer and keeping his memory alive in Italy and abroad, after it was transferred from the Municipal Library of Codigoro, the city and setting of Bassani's novel *The Heron*. The death of the author's widow Valeria Sinigallia Bassani in 2013 made it necessary to find a larger location for the numerous volumes of the Bassani Library. Three rooms on the ground floor of the House of Ludovico Ariosto have been allocated to the Foundation for this purpose: Ferrara therefore is now the Foundation's operational headquarters, while its registered office remains in Codigoro.

At the House of Ariosto, you can admire a **reconstruction of Bassani's studio in Rome**, with his typewriter and personal and professional memorabilia; a portrait of the writer completed by **Franco Gentilini** in 1947; a copy of *Paesaggio di Spina* by **Mimì Quilici Buzzacchi**; the author's personal library with over 4,000 books, some of which had been passed down to him from his maternal grandfather Cesare Minerbi; literary archives and documents relating to his activities as president of Italia Nostra; and awards, honours, letters, photographs and a family album.

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Giorgio Bassani absolutely loved Ariosto, who surely was one of his main literary role models. It was from Ariosto that he learned to process the subject matter of his tales with the right amount of irony, contemplating it from afar [...]. But there's more: Ludovico Ariosto and his house became the protagonist of a story by Bassani: a quick, powerful tale, written in 1950, entitled Ludovico Ariosto and Alessandra Benucci.

[From Paola Bassani's speech, given at the inauguration of the new headquarters of the Giorgio Bassani Foundation at the House of Ludovico Ariosto, 13 April 2018]

House of Ludovico Ariosto 📍 | +39 0532 244949 | www.artecultura.fe.it/73/casa-di-ludovico-ariosto

The City Walls and Giorgio Bassani Park

Added to the **Unesco** World Heritage List in 1995, the historical centre of Ferrara is bordered by one of the largest rings of fortified walls in Italy. This defensive system has been entirely restored thanks to a complex and impressive ten-year project that began in 1988. Approximately nine kilometres long, eight of which are walkable, the present-day city walls deeply reflect the evolution of military architecture over more than two centuries: the southern curtain walls near the old course of the Po were renovated by Borso d'Este in the mid 15th century, the northern and north-eastern front was commissioned by his brother, Ercole I, in the late fifteenth century and is linked to the name of Biagio Rossetti. The south-eastern section, with the arrow-shaped bastions, was commissioned by his successor, Alfonso I. The monumental *spade-shaped* bastions along the entire southern perimeter are from the late 16th century, while the two remaining bastions of the pentagonal fortress and **Porta Paola** in the current Piazza Travaglio date back to when Ferrara was under Papal rule.



Porta degli Angeli, the only city gate to the north, remained usable until the end of the seventeenth century and underwent numerous transformations. The restoration work has brought ancient structures to light, such as the flooring, the arrow-shaped ravelin in the restored rampart, the guardhouse and the possibility of climbing to the top of the tower, which offers a complete view of the park named after Bassani in 2003. It extends for more than 1200 hectares and occupies the area that was once the Barco, a hunting reserve belonging to the Este family. A protected area, called the *Green Addition*, includes five zones, each with different purposes that extend to the banks of the Po.

It is also thanks to the efforts of Bassani, president of **Italia Nostra** at the time, that the city walls have been restored, contributing to the inclusion of Ferrara in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

I suppose that no one would ever guess that I'm speaking as a writer. It's true that I've sung of the city walls of Ferrara in almost all my books, in prose and verse, but today I'm here first and foremost as the President of Italia Nostra, to indicate, by being here, the important role that the association places on the repair, restoration, and saving of the city walls of Ferrara.

I am here not just to express my hope that the walls of my city will be saved, but to reinforce the fact that we believe they, the walls, are a symbolic asset. [...] The Ferrara city walls belong to the old town of the city, or rather, within a certain limit, they are the heart of the city itself. [...] Today [...] they make up part of the old town of an immense city that, in some way, extends out to the sea (Bruno Zevi was the one to say it, and I agree with him). [...] They aren't on the outskirts of the city, but rather within it, they are the city.

[G. Bassani, *Ferrara and its Walls*]

🕒 DETOUR

Giorgio Bassani Public Library

Via G. Grosoli, 42 | +39 0532 797414

Located outside the walls, about five km from the old town and two km from the Po, this library was named after Bassani in 2002, becoming a cultural point of reference for the entire Barco district, on the northern outskirts of Ferrara. At the entrance, there is a bronze bust of the writer crafted by Mirrella Guidetti Giacomelli and donated on the occasion of the inauguration. It quickly became the second most important library, after the prestigious Ariosteia Library: 'After Ariosto, then, there is Bassani, both now inextricably linked to the two most important municipal libraries [...], old and new [...]; two mirrored faces that can be traced back to synthesis [...].'

[E. Spinelli, *Da Angelica a Micol*]



The Jewish Cemetery

Memorial to Giorgio Bassani

Still in use today, the Jewish Cemetery in Via delle Vigne is the oldest in Emilia Romagna. It's located just behind a section of the city's walls in the Erculean Addition. According to most historiography, it dates back to 1626, although the oldest tomb is from 1549. Often in rhyme and metre, the Hebrew-language epitaphs on the tablets, as well as being valuable historical sources, can be considered a literary genre in their own right in the history of Jewish-Italian literature. The white granite entrance portal was built in 1911, based on a design by the Jewish architect **Ciro Contini**, from Ferrara. Inside, there are tombs from the 18th century onwards. The tomb of Giorgio Bassani and the monument dedicated to him, created by the sculptor **Arnaldo Pomodoro** and architect **Piero Sartogo** in 2003, are found in a secluded area. The tombstone seems to rise upwards from the horizontal base, which is also in bronze; the engravings recall the typographical characters of a typewriter or Bassani's minuscule handwriting.

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The writer skilfully guides the reader to discover the 'Jewish cemetery located at the end of Via Montebello', recalling 'the large meadows scattered with trees, the gravestones and trunks of columns bunched up more densely along the surrounding and dividing walls', including 'the monumental tomb of the Finzi-Continis: an ugly tomb, true [...], but still imposing, and full of significance [...]'.  
[G. Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*]

The Jewish Cemetery 📍 | +39 0532 751337





'The sculpture [...] isn't placed above my father, who is buried next to it and thus, as he wanted, nothing stands between him and the sky.' [Paola Bassani, *The Remembrance of Bassani at the Tomb of the Finzi-Continis*]



# 2

## BEHIND THE DOOR OF THE GHETTO

### Via Mazzini

At the end of Piazza Trento Trieste is the start of Via Mazzini, originally called Via dei Sabioni, so named after the sand with which it was sprinkled to make it less slippery in the wet seasons or during public games.

Starting in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it became the main street of the area where the Jewish Community lived, which is concentrated within the quadrilateral formed by Via Mazzini, Via Vignatagliata and Via della Vittoria. While the latter are mainly residential areas, the shops and businesses of the Jews of Ferrara overlook Via Mazzini. Even today, the buildings are close to each other, forming a single, long façade, while inside there are courtyards that allow access to other buildings that do not overlook the main street. At number 95 is the **Synagogue** complex, which is still the seat of the Jewish Community.

As a place of historical settlement for the Jews of Ferrara, the area was chosen by the papal government as the location of the city's ghetto between 1624 and 1627. A few notable events regarding the Jewish **ghetto** took place between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, mainly that the gates were torn down twice and then put back at the expense of the Jewish Community. They were finally dismantled permanently when Ferrara became part of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, marking the beginning of the era of emancipation.

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The name of this important road in the old town and the Jewish ghetto appears multiple times in the work of Bassani. It is even part of the title of the third novella in *Five Stories of Ferrara*, '**A Memorial Tablet in Via Mazzini**', the pages of which contain a literary description that offers insight as to its appearance and atmosphere.

Synagogues 🚧 (closed for renovation) | +39 0532 247004

Via Vignatagliata

Via Vignatagliata is one of the oldest streets in the city and, together with Via della Vittoria, forms the residential area of the Jewish ghetto, with small buildings, internal courtyards and beautiful balconies. At the intersections with present-day Via Contrari and Via San Romano, stood the gates to the ghetto. They were closed at night to separate the Jewish community from the rest of the population.

Rabbi **Isaac Lampronti**, doctor and scholar of the Talmud, lived at number 33.

From 1938 to 1943, at number 79, classes were held at the Jewish Community's nursery school following the expulsion of young people from public schools due to the issuing of racial laws.



Via Vignatagliata, on the corner of the intersection with Via Mazzini, is the setting for one of the most emotionally intense scenes of *Five Stories of Ferrara*. In it, the protagonist, **Geo Josz** returns to his home town as the sole survivor among the members of the local Jewish community who had been deported to Buchenwald. On this corner, Josz publicly slaps Count Lionello Scocca, who had been an informer for OVRA (Organization for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism - Italy's secret police under the Fascist regime from 1926 to 1943 and during the Italian Social Republic from 1943 to 1945).

From the beginning, what happened seemed impossible. No one could believe it. They just couldn't imagine a scene in which Geo, who entered with his usual padded steps into Count Scocca's field of vision as he stood at the corner of Via Vignatagliata, then, with a sudden bestial fury, delivered to the parchimentary cheeks of that old, resuscitated carrion two dry, really hard slaps, more worthy of a Fascist trooper of Balbo and his companions' times [...].

[G. Bassani, *A Memorial Tablet in Via Mazzini*]

Via Vittoria



This street is in the medieval centre that was part of the Jewish ghetto area. At the intersection with Via Ragno, once stood gates which were closed to mark the division from the rest of the city. Prior to 1860, it was called Via Gattamarca ('rotten cat') due to the local habit of throwing dead animals onto the street, especially cats.

The **Spanish Synagogue** (Sephardic rite) or Spanish School was located at number 41. Destroyed by the Nazi-allied Fascists in 1944, its furnishings are now largely housed in the Lampronti Oratory in Livorno. An external plaque commemorates the construction of the Synagogue and the arrival of Sephardic Jews invited to settle in Ferrara by Duke Ercole I d'Este.

Via Vittoria is mentioned repeatedly in Bassani's work.

'The Via Vittoria bunch' [...]. This phrase usually referred to the members of the four or five families who had the right to attend the small, separate Levantine synagogue, also known as the 'Fanese', located on the third floor of an old Via Vittoria house [...]: all of them anyway people who were slightly odd, always a shade ambiguous and evasive for whom religion [...] had remained essentially a cult to be practised by the few, in semi-secret oratories at which it was opportune to arrive by night, slinking down the darkest and least-known alleys of the Ghetto.

[G. Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*]

Giorgio Bassani

Ariostea Public Library

The Ariostea Library, which is housed in **Palazzo Paradiso**, has become a hub of cultural life in Ferrara. On 7 June 1801, the first room of the Library was dedicated to Ludovico Ariosto. The urn containing the poet's ashes was taken from the church of San Benedetto to Palazzo Paradiso, where it was entombed in the funerary monument designed by architect **Giovan Battista Aleotti** (Argenta, 1546 - Ferrara, 1636), embellished with marble from Verona and allegorical decorations. The library holds over 650 editions of Ariosto's works, including the *editio princeps* of *Orlando Furioso*.



Funerary monument of Ludovico Ariosto

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Among the autograph works kept in the Ariostea Library, the most famous of Bassani's literary oeuvre stands out: *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. The manuscript was donated by a lawyer named Ferigo Foscari during the festivities held to mark the centennial of the writer's birth. Foscari had received it from his grandmother, Teresa Foscolo Foscari, who in turn had received it from the author himself.

The novel had 'a very long incubation period', as Bassani once said.

*A few weeks ago, tidying up some old papers, I happened to find this draft of the story, which I had completely forgotten about [Frammento 1942]. They are words set to paper around 1942, I think, a reaction to the emotions I felt about a real event: the death of a friend. They are undoubtedly the first attempt at writing The Garden of the Finzi-Continis. Although written between 1958 and 1961, the novel therefore had a very long incubation period: twenty years.*

[G. Bassani, *Frammento 1942*]



The novel was first published in 1962 by Giulio Einaudi Editore. That same year, it won the Viareggio Prize, though it was not the definitive version. Changes were made for the publication of *The Novel of Ferrara*, into which *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* was incorporated. Further modifications were made for subsequent editions, in 1976 and 1980.

The Ariosteia Library was an important place for Bassani during his childhood. He was a regular visitor until Italy's racial laws came into force, which forbade him and other Jews from accessing its services and even the building. This expulsion was re-lived by Bassani's literary *alter ego*, **Bruno Lattes**, in *Clelia Trotti's Last Days*.

That wound was symbolically healed in the 1990s, when the writer's library card was given back to him during a public ceremony.

## ***The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*: from book to film**

In 1970, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* was released in cinemas, directed by Vittorio De Sica and produced by Documento Film. The idea of making it into a film arose a year after its publication, but it then took eight whole years before the novel became a film: a considerable time and in itself a symptom of a tiring journey. The culmination was decreed by Bassani clearly distancing himself from the outcome, a position taken despite its public success and the numerous awards won by the film, which had also divided the critics.

Bassani, who had already rejected the project by director Valerio Zurlini (started in 1963 and abandoned in 1966), had been involved in De Sica's project by the screenwriter, Vittorio Bonicelli, in the revision of the dialogue and then in the final drafting of the adaptation, to which, however, unbeknown to the author, Ugo Pirro made the final changes to. Bassani's opinion on the matter is clear: 'That it is somehow derived from my novel is not disputable, nor had I ever dreamed of contesting that. But that he had betrayed it, my novel, in substance and above all in spirit, no one, I believe, can deny.'

In that same year, 1970, the writer took legal action to have his name removed from the list of screenwriters of De Sica's film. The garden has been betrayed, the case is won.

## 🚫 DETOUR

### Casa Minerbi-Dal Sale (Via Giuoco del Pallone, 15-17)

#### Bassani Research Centre

A group of buildings that once belonged to the Del Sale (or Dal Sale) family in the 14th century, Casa Minerbi - Dal Sale has both 14th-century and contemporary elements. The decorative frescoes of the Salone dei Vizi e delle Virtù (Hall of Vices and Virtues) and the Sala degli Stemmi (Hall of Coats of Arms) are striking: attributed to the 'Maestro di Casa Minerbi' and dated between 1360 and 1370, they were probably also known to Ludovico Ariosto, who seems to mention them in *Orlando Furioso*. Following the purchase of several structures overlooking Via Giuoco del Pallone by the Minerbi family, the complex took on its name after 1870. Thanks to the donation made by Portia Anne Prebys to the Municipality of Ferrara, Casa Minerbi - Dal Sale has been the headquarters of the Bassani Research Centre since 4 March 2016, which was the 100th anniversary of the birth of Giorgio Bassani. The substantial collection contains documents and items which shed light on a significant part of the life and work of the writer. Curator of the Centre, Prebys herself was the one to present it on 31 January 2015, when it included 'about 7,500 folders containing writings about Bassani, in eighteen languages, from 1935 up to today; about 1,000 folders containing Bassani's writings from various sources; about 1,000 various editions of Bassani's works in Italian and other languages; and about 5,000 books on Italian 20th century literature, history and art [...]. The living room of our house in Rome, in Lungotevere Ripa, where Giorgio lived the last years of his life [...]. Since then, the collection, which includes the original manuscripts of *The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles*, *The Heron*, *Epitaph*, and *The Great Secret* (just to name a few), has been constantly evolving.

The relationship between the writer, Casa Minerbi and the Minerbi family is outlined by co-curator Gianni Venturi in his presentation of the Centre: 'the history of the family and the relationship that united Giorgio Bassani to the last owner, Giuseppe Minerbi, is told by cultural events in Ferrara, but even more so by the dedication of *The Heron* [...]. It was here that the Ferrara branch of Italia Nostra, the important association founded by Bassani along with the daughter of Benedetto Croce, was started and expanded.'

On 28 February 2023, the Centre was given the prestigious 'Homes and Offices of Illustrious People of Emilia-Romagna' label.

**Casa Minerbi-Dal Sale** 📍 | [www.ferraraterraacqua.it/it/ferrara/scopri-il-territorio/arte-e-cultura/ville-dimore-teatri-storici/casa-minerbi-dal-sale](http://www.ferraraterraacqua.it/it/ferrara/scopri-il-territorio/arte-e-cultura/ville-dimore-teatri-storici/casa-minerbi-dal-sale)

**Bassani Study Centre** 📍 | +39 0532 768208 | [archibiblio.comune.fe.it/2521/centro-studi-bassaniani-ferrara](http://archibiblio.comune.fe.it/2521/centro-studi-bassaniani-ferrara)

## Via della Ghiara

Via della Ghiara or Ghiaria is the old name of the present-day Via XX Settembre. Its original name refers to the riverbed of the ancient Po di Primaro, which deposited gravel there, raising and lowering the riverbed. The main building on this street is Palazzo Tassoni, built by the Este family and the current seat of the Faculty of Architecture. On the same street, a building for educational use, originally named after the local poet Alfonso Varano, was built in 1913. The building has been home to various institutes over the years.



Bassani with his mother  
in his grandfather's garden

The street was very dear to Bassani: the house of his maternal grandparents was here, as he mentions in the poem *La Cuginetta Cattolica* (My Little Catholic Cousin).

[...] *My life took place in that era / – in the era of war – / in the house of my grandparents in Via / della Ghiara / with my grandfather Cesare who, towards evening / returned from the clinic or hospital on his bicycle [...].*

Given this, it is not by chance that the Jewish doctor and main character in *The Stroll Before Dinner*, lives on this street.

Thanks to his skills, Corcos became the head physician at the local hospital and personal doctor to Duchess Costabili, nevertheless paying for the provincialism of the city. Creating a 'cosy nest' of a house in Via Ghiara, the character lived there with his family: his wife, Gemma Brondi, their sons Jacopo and Ruben (the latter died in 1902 of meningitis at eight years old), and his sister-in-law Ausilia, who was secretly in love with him.

Behind the literary imagery, therefore, is the fictional doctor based on Bassani's maternal grandfather, **Cesare Minerbi**, who was the long-standing head physician of Arcispedale Sant'Anna hospital. Even the inscription on Minerbi's headstone, written by Bassani himself, mentions this important role. It can be admired today in the Jewish cemetery in Via delle Vigne.

# MEIS National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Holocaust

The National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Holocaust was established by Parliament in order to offer the public the first organic presentation of the heritage and legacy of Italian Judaism, as well as an opportunity for sharing knowledge, history, identity and cultural tourism. The subject of his story is the vital and uninterrupted presence of Jews in Italy, dating back 2,200 years. The site chosen for the MEIS was the **former local prison complex in Via Piangi-pane**, built in 1912 and decommissioned in 1992. This choice was driven by the desire to recover a place of segregation and exclusion for the city and to make a space of marginalization open and well used, located a short distance from the former Jewish ghetto of Ferrara. Many anti-fascists, including Bassani, were imprisoned there in July 1943 and after 8 September 1943, as were members of the resistance and Jewish citizens active in the anti-fascist struggle.

~~~~~

Dear Mother, I received your letters, which made be very happy. Valeria also told me that you are getting your strength back, and this is the best gift you could possibly give me. Thank you for the delicious dishes you send me. Everything is perfect, and your masterful hand is felt everywhere. I've just reread War and Peace, and who knows why I often thought of you as I turned the pages. Of course, something in the familiar scenes of that great book remind me of you. Moreover, Tolstoy's way of ridiculing his gloomy Napoleon is a bit like yours, down-to-earth and enthusiastic, a style that gets on father's nerves so much, who instead aims at historical objectivity. In short, you are a great woman of immense quality.

[G. Bassani, *Letters from Prison (May-July 1943)*, in Bassani. *Racconti, diari, cronache 1935-1956*]



Fake ID of Giorgio Bassani, made in Florence in 1943



MEIS National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Holocaust

3

BEYOND THE
WINDSHIELD

Corso della Giovecca

The name of this main road could be connected to an ancient place called Zudeca dei Torresini which stood near the city ditch, later converted into a wide street, or to the Provençal Juveç, meaning Game, in reference to the games that were held here in the Middle Ages to celebrate the feast of Saint George. Another hypothesis is connected to tanning, a profession carried out by a group of Jews: the term *giudecca* could possibly allude to the activity itself, indicating a tannery, regardless of who operated it. The present-day Corso della Giovecca runs along the line that corresponded to the outer moat of the medieval fortifications, before the Erculean Addition was built—that is, the extension of the city of Ferrara towards the north which began in 1492. It now is a main road linking the medieval city to the south and the Renaissance one to the north. As you head down it, you can admire many important buildings, such as the façade of the **Church of San Carlo**, opposite an entrance to the Rotonda Foschini, and **Palazzo Roverella**.

The beginning of the second of the *Five Stories of Ferrara* literally introduces the reader to this street.

Even today, rummaging through some small second-hand stores in Ferrara, it's not unlikely that you could turn up postcards almost a hundred years old. They show views that are yellowed, stained and sometimes, to tell the truth, barely decipherable... One of the many shows Corso Giovecca, the main city thoroughfare, as it was then, in the second half of the 19th century. To the right and in shadow, in the wings, looms the buttress of the City Theatre, while the light, typical of a golden springtime dusk of Emilia Romagna, congregates entirely on the left-hand side of the image. There the houses are low, having for the most part only a single floor, with their roofs covered with thick russet tiles, and below them some little shops, a grocer's store, the entrance to a coal merchant's, a horsemeat butcher and so on: all of which were razed to the ground when, in 1930, the eighth year of the Fascist Era, almost opposite the City Theatre, the decision was made to build the enormous structure of the General Insurance in white Roman travertine.

[G. Bassani, *The Stroll Before Dinner*]

Church of San Carlo, Palazzo Roverella 📍; Parco Pareschi | public park

🕒 DETOUR

Via Adelardi

This small road is found to the left of the Cathedral. It extends from Piazza della Cattedrale and continues, passing through a small vaulted archway, to the intersection with Via Bersaglieri del Po, Via Voltapaletto and Via Canonica. In ancient times, it was called Via Gorgadello in reference to the whirlpools or eddies that formed in the city before the construction of drainage pipes and canals. The area behind the Cathedral's apse was bombed and destroyed. There, towards Via Adelardi, the new **Sacristy of the Cathedral**, designed by architects Carlo Bassi, Massimo Dalla Torre and Sabina Boselli, was erected at the end of the 20th century. The sacristy is enriched with *The History of Salvation*, a ceiling painting by Paolo Baratella, and flanked by a wing used as a lapidary. A tomb containing the remains of six bodies was found in the basement, perhaps evidence of the Cortilazzo cemetery that once stood in that area, also mentioned by Melchiorri. Here there is a small Marian shrine. A plaque at number 5 shows evidence of the first restoration of those structures, in 1937, while at number 9 a plaque reminds us of the origins of what is considered the oldest tavern in the world, originally called the **Hostaria del Chiucciolino**. Still in operation today under a different name, it has opened in 1435, when it was only accessible by boat. It was mentioned by Ludovico Ariosto in *Satire* and in *La Lena*, and its fame has been handed down over the centuries, attracting many famous people as customers.

~~~~~  
Bassani locates the home of one of his most famous characters on this street: **Dr. Fadigati**, the protagonist in *The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles*.

*He never seemed to stay at home in the evening Around eight o'clock, or a quarter past, on Via Gorgadello, it was easy to catch sight of him just as he was leaving. He would linger a moment on the threshold, looking up, looking right, then left, as if uncertain of the time or of which direction to take. At last, he would set off, merging into the stream of people who at that hour, in summer just as in winter, unhurriedly passed by the lit-up windows of Via Bersaglieri del Po, much as they would along the Mercerie in Venice. Where was he off to? He was taking a turn, strolling about, here and there, apparently without any particular end in view.*

## ***The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles: from book to film***

The third and last film adapted from a work by Bassani to date, the *Gold-Rimmed Glasses* directed by Giuliano Montaldo was released in 1987. Unlike what happened in relation to the cinematographic adaptation of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, Bassani was less severe in his reaction to it, and there was no recourse to justice. However, while appreciating the quality of the film itself, once again he was unable to recognize his own work in that of the director. As he himself explained, he found 'the film, from a formal point of view, very clear, very beautiful. But it is the substance of the book, which was basically avoided in the film. There are two main characters in the book: there is Dr. Fadigati, who is homosexual, and therefore a dead man, that is, far from life. The other is a young man of letters, the future writer of the *Gold Rimmed Spectacles*. The two find meet, spend time together and understand why they are different, yet similar. There is none of that in the film. The union of these two marginalized people, who derive the strength to form a bond precisely because of their marginalization, and who actually feel that they are the same because they are being per-

secuted for different reasons, has been carefully avoided in the film.'



*The Gold-Rimmed Glasses*,  
directed by Giuliano Montaldo,  
1987

# Via Savonarola

The present-day name of this street dates back to 7 February 1860, arising from the building that was the childhood home of Girolamo Savonarola, the Dominican friar and preacher known for his political activities. Savonarola was ultimately hanged and his body burned in Florence, memorialized by a statue located in the square near the Castle in Ferrara. Number 10, on the other hand, was the house of the painter Giovanni Boldini. Heading down the road towards Via Cisterna del Follo, you will come to the **Church of San Francesco**, Palazzo di Renata di Francia, **Casa Romei**, a wonderful example of a stately home with a courtyard of honour built between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and the Church of San Girolamo.

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A snapshot of the street is offered by Bassani in *The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles*.

I descended Via Savonarola in the sunny quietness of one o'clock in the afternoon. A few people were scattered along the pavements; from open windows came snatches of radio music and cooking smells. [...] Still wet with the rain, the roofs around the small square of the church of San Girolamo seemed more brown than red, almost black.



Church of San Francesco



Casa Romei

House of Girolamo Savonarola, House of Giovanni Boldini, Palazzo Renata di Francia 📍
Church of San Francesco, Church of San Girolamo, Museum of Casa Romei | tel. +39 0532 234130 📞

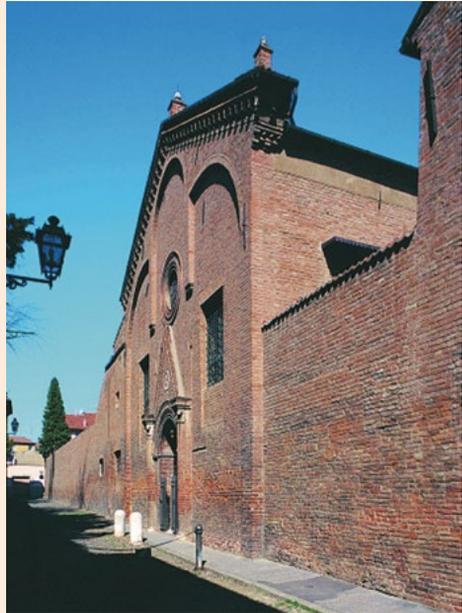
Via Campofranco

The name of this narrow street arose from the fact that, in 1360 Marquis Aldobrandino d'Este legalized duels in Ferrara, excluding to those participating in them from prosecution, as if in a *field of honour*. Here you can discover the Poor Clares Church of **Corpus Domini** and part of the convent where Saint Catherine Vegri once lived, both built in 1415. Dukes Alfonso I, Ercole II, Alfonso II d'Este and the duchesses Lucrezia Borgia and Lucrezia d'Este are buried in the church. The convent was almost entirely reclaimed by the state and turned into technical schools.

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In Bassani's fictional description of the real city, this street is the location of the home of the protagonist of *A Memorial Tablet in Via Mazzini*: Geo Josz, loosely based on Eugenio (Gegio) Ravenna, the author's second cousin.

Victims and survivors of the Holocaust, the fictional Geo Josz and the real-life Eugenio Ravenna found someone with their same name among those mentioned on the plaque installed in 1949 in memory of the Jews of Ferrara who didn't return from the concentration camps.

*During the wait for the Via Campofranco establishment to return effectively and entirely into his possession, Geo Josz seemed happy to occupy a single room. [...] More than a room, in effect it was a kind of granary built at the top of the crenellated tower [...]. From that height, however, through a wide window, it was soon apparent that Geo Josz could follow everything that happened not only in the garden, but also in Via Campofranco.*



**Monastery of Corpus Domini** ☎ | tel. +39 0532 207825

## 🕒 DETOUR

### Via Salinguerra

The name of this street comes from the Ghibelline-allied Torelli Salinguerra family, who fought in Ferrara against the Guelphs between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Salinguerra family held on to power for a few decades, alternating with the Este family, who obtained definitive rule in 1264.

The palace of the Salinguerra family, which was destroyed by the Guelphs in August 1221, was located here. The building was re-constructed, only to be destroyed again: partially in 1676 and the remaining part in the 19th century. The plaque installed by Ferrariae Decus at Via Carlo Mayr at number 191 mentions a veritable castle, with defensive walls, a moat and towers.



~~~~~  
Bassani provides a detailed description of the route at the opening of the third chapter of *Lida Mantovani*, the first of the *Five Stories of Ferrara*, a collection that earned the writer the Strega Prize in 1956. The author places the protagonist's humble home there.

Rather irregular in shape and with its cobblestones partly overgrown with grass, Via Salinguerra is a small secondary street that begins with a vast, lopsided square, the result of an old demolition, and ends at the foot of the city walls close to Porta San Giorgio. This places it within the city and not that far from the medieval centre: to confirm this impression, you only need to look at the appearance of the houses which flank both its sides, all of them very poor and of modest proportions, and some old and decrepit, undoubtedly among the oldest in Ferrara. And yet, strolling down Via Salinguerra, even today, the kind of silence that surrounds it (heard from here, the city's church bells have a different timbre, as though muffled and lost) and especially the smell of manure, of ploughed earth, of cowsheds, which reveal the proximity of large hidden vegetable gardens, all contribute to the impression of already being outside the circle of the city walls, on the edge of the open countryside.

Via Scandiana

Even if its current name does not hint at it, unlike the ancient Via di Schivanoia, the most famous *delizia* built by the Este family, complete with magnificent frescoes, is located on this street: **Palazzo Schifanoia**. Here, according to Girolamo Melchiorri, 'Weddings, parties, banquets and dancing were held, and ambassadors, princes, cardinals and bishops were welcomed'. It is possible to visit the Palace at number 23, through a recently created museum exhibition, comprising about 250 works spread across 21 rooms, including the magnificent Salone dei Mesi, an illustrious example of what is known as the Ferrarese school. For a short time, it was rented by the Count of Scandiano, to whom the name of this street is linked.

Another defining element of Via Scandiana is the secondary side of the **Basilica of San Maria in Vado**, restored in 2000, and just a little further on, the de-consecrated Church of San Vito, the annex of a former Augustinian Monastery built in 1256. It was possessed by the government in 1909 and then turned into military barracks.

~~~~~  
The vanishing point the street heading east corresponds to a crucial element for Bassani's vision and imagination, as Pugla's question to the narrator of *Behind the Door* underlines: "We had almost arrived. We left Via Madama by Piazza Santa Maria in Vado and turned down Via Scandiana. 'What was that kind of barrier down there at the end of the street?' – Pulga asked me, as we carried on walking -. And with his raised arm he pointed to the mist-blurred prow of the Montagnone, against which Via Scandiana seemed to come to an end'. It is there that the walls delimit the city of Ferrara, while the senses can feel the countryside, the Po delta and the salty sea air beyond.

The intimate familiarity of this street and the Montagnone are also found in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, confirmed by the actual proximity of the writer's house, in Via Cisterna del Follo.



Palazzo Schifanoia, Salone dei Giochi  
Detail from the Month of April

**Palazzo Schifanoia** | tel. +39 0532 244949  **Church of Santa Maria in Vado** 

## Via Cisterna del Follo - Casa Bassani

Giorgio Bassani spent his childhood and adolescence in an old noble residence, together with his father Enrico, his mother Dora Minerbi and his younger siblings Paolo and Jenny. He led a comfortable life between public school, classical high school, private lessons in music or drawing, tennis at the Marfisa tennis club, skiing, fencing, attending Temple in Via Mazzini and, after the Concordat of 1929, being exempt from studying religion.

The writer left the house in May 1943, when he was arrested for his anti-fascist activities. After his release, on 26 July, he went into hiding and moved first to Florence, then to Rome.

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A description of the building, between reality and fantasy, appears in the novel *Behind the Door*, although in the story, the house is located in Via Scandiana. In the novel, the building has about fifty rooms, divided over two floors, the second of which is occupied by the family of someone who says 'I', the *alias* Bassani. The house is dominated by the presence of his mother, to whom the writer, like the autodiegetic narrator himself, is bound by a deep affection. It is no coincidence that in *Behind the Door* it is the protagonist's mother who opens the door for him as he returns with his friend Pulga, enthralled by the building.

The magnolia tree, with great symbolic meaning, whose praises are sung in the poem *Le Leggi Razziali (The Racial Laws)* still stands in the inner garden.

The magnolia that stands right in the middle / of the garden of our house in Ferrara is the exact one / that appears in almost all / of my books / / We planted it in 1939 / a few months after the promulgation / of the racial laws, with the ceremony / that was half-solemn and half-comical [...]

Tennis Club Marfisa d'Este

Eager to open a tennis club in Ferrara, a group of local sportsmen met in 1929 to look for a suitable location: the municipality offered them the gardens behind the Marfisa d'Este building. The engineer **Carlo Savonuzzi** designed four tennis courts with the entrance on Corso Giovecca. The club became a gathering place for Ferrara's middle class. As well as Bassani, the partners include the film director **Michelangelo Antonioni** and the art historian **Roberto Longhi**.



Casa Bassani: view of the internal garden

Corso della Giovecca - Prospettiva

At the end of the street is **Palazzina Marfisa d'Este**, a frescoed residence, built around 1559 by Francesco d'Este, the son of Duke Alfonso I and Lucrezia Borgia. The residence was inherited by Princess Marfisa d'Este — portrayed in a medallion located in the Loggetta dei Ritratti — a patron of the arts and protector of Torquato Tasso. After Marfisa's death and various changes of ownership, it was furnished and inaugurated as a museum in 1935. The façade of the building on Corso Giovecca is made of exposed brick, broken up by large rectangular windows. The large rear garden is now enclosed by a loggia with internal decoration of grapevines and is used as a theatre.

In front of the palace is the entrance to the former Sant'Anna Hospital, designed by Giacomo Diegoli in 1927 and now the San Rocco Healthcare Clinic.

Palazzina Marfisa d'Este  | tel. +39 0532 244949

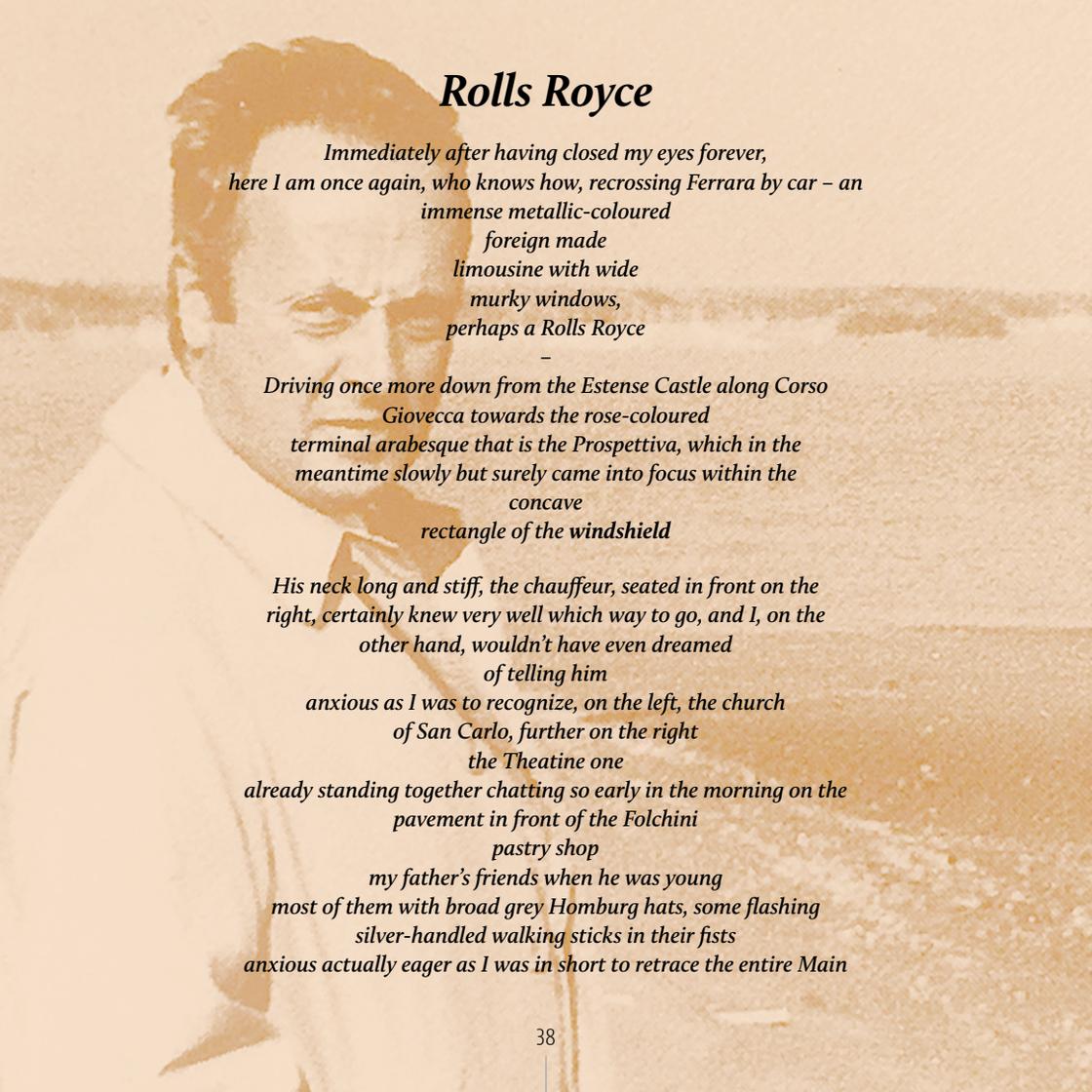


Corso della Giovecca ends with the **Prospettiva**, a monumental arch built with a scenic function by **Francesco Mazzarelli** between 1703 and 1704 at the behest of the Maestrate dei Savi. It was intended to be a sign of thanks and gratitude to Pope Clement XI, who managed to ensure Ferrara discreet tranquillity and neutrality in relation to a few battles and wars. It originally had three arches and was decorated by marble coats of arms. It was modified over the years until it took on its present-day appearance, which is mainly due to the widening of the road and the creation of Piazza Medaglie d'Oro in the late 1930s. This work included the addition of two lateral openings, for pedestrian use, each topped with their own pinnacles.



The triumphal arch appears in one of Bassani's poems, with the gate that seems to get larger heading to and coming from the Castle.

The poem is in fact **Rolls Royce**, one of Bassani's most admired lyric poems for its effectiveness in conveying the feeling of exile. The intimate setting evoked in verse clearly refers to the autobiographical experience of the author.



Rolls Royce

*Immediately after having closed my eyes forever,
here I am once again, who knows how, recrossing Ferrara by car – an
immense metallic-coloured
foreign made
limousine with wide
murky windows,
perhaps a Rolls Royce*

–

*Driving once more down from the Estense Castle along Corso
Giovecca towards the rose-coloured
terminal arabesque that is the Prospettiva, which in the
meantime slowly but surely came into focus within the
concave
rectangle of the windshield*

*His neck long and stiff, the chauffeur, seated in front on the
right, certainly knew very well which way to go, and I, on the
other hand, wouldn't have even dreamed
of telling him
anxious as I was to recognize, on the left, the church
of San Carlo, further on the right
the Theatine one
already standing together chatting so early in the morning on the
pavement in front of the Folchini
pastry shop
my father's friends when he was young
most of them with broad grey Homburg hats, some flashing
silver-handled walking sticks in their fists
anxious actually eager as I was in short to retrace the entire Main*

*Street of my city in any day of almost May-June around the mid-
Twenties a quarter of an hour before
nine in the morning*

*Almost pushed by its own luxurious murmur finally the Rolls turned
down Via Madama and just after down Via
Cisterna del Follo
and at that point I was no more than ten
cheeks burning for fear of being late to school, leaving
at that precise moment with books under arm from
door number*

one

*it was I who, while continuing to run, was turning back
at my mother leaning out the upstairs window reminding me of
something*

*it was I, really me, who, an instant before
disappearing around the corner, from my
young mother's sight, waved my left hand in
a gesture
of both impatience and
goodbye*

*I would have liked to have cried
'halt' to the stiff chauffeur and
to have gotten out, but the Rolls
Royce,
lurching gently, was already passing the
Montagnone, was even beyond, already
outside
the gate, already down wide deserted
streets, completely void of roofs on either
side and completely unknown*

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