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Dangerous Liaisons, or Strategies for Family Management in Eighteenth-century Venice

Abstract: In 1745, a lengthy and unusual case was brought before the Venetian

Executors against Blasphemy, a secular court with jurisdiction over a wide range of crimes that violated standards of morality. The parents of two young women from the Venetian mainland state were accused of pimping their two eldest daughters to Jewish men from the Venetian Ghetto in return for financial support, helping them to support their ten children. But the story became much more complicated as the court investigated the young women's relationships; one of the daughters did seem to have a relationship with a married Jew who had promised to convert and marry her, while the other was actually a nobleman's courtesan, supported by the same patrician who served as a guardian to a young Giacomo Casanova. Although to the patricians who served as judges, any exploitation of a young woman's sexuality was deemed criminal, ordinary eighteenth-century Venetians saw things differently.

Large families were difficult to support, and all members contributed as they were able. Typically we think of apprenticeships, domestic service, and piecework as the key strategies for supporting a family and training children for their future lives. For women, historians have long acknowledged that service carried risks of sexual exploitation, as well. But what has not been recognised as a strategy is the encouragement of premarital relations or of sex work as alternatives to domestic service and piecework. Through a microhistorical approach, this article argues that

the case of the Zambelli family shows us a wider range of morally ambiguous options for supporting a large family and setting up daughters to leave the family home, many of which included threats of sexual exploitation, damaged honour, and unwanted pregnancies.

Keywords: family, religion, sex work, female networks, Italy, morality, Venice

Introduction

On August 11, 1745, Father Giuseppe Battistella, parish priest of the village of Perarolo in the Veneto, submitted a formal denunciation to the Venetian Esecutori contro la Bestemmia.ⁱ This court, established by the Venetian Council of Ten in 1537 to police blasphemy and other illicit speech acts, had acquired a wide-ranging jurisdiction in the two centuries since its creation. It now assumed responsibility for policing all sorts of offenses that disturbed the famed (and mythical) serenity of Venice, including gambling, scandal in sacred spaces, printing and selling illicit books, prostitution, minor crimes committed by the nobility, defloration with promise of marriage, clandestine marriages, rape, and interfaith relationships (DeRosas, 1980, pp. 446–447). Battistella, who was clearly no fan of the parishioners in question, had information about this last category to share with the Esecutori.

Battistella had made the trip to Venice, a distance of about thirty-three kilometres which was typically travelled via boat from the nearby village of Stra, to report the perfidious crimes of his parishioners Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli. The

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Zambellis, he alleged, were prostituting their two eldest daughters to two Jewish men from the Venetian Ghetto, named Giuseppe Piccoli and Momolo (Salomon) Todesco. The daughters in question, Elisabetta and Paolina Zambelli, were about twenty and nineteen, respectively, an age at which girls of their social status could certainly get married but might still be working on accumulating a sufficient dowry (Zucca Micheletto, 2011, p. 357).ⁱⁱ Battistella reported that both had become pregnant through their relationships with these men, Elisabetta by Giuseppe and Paolina by Momolo, events scandalous both for the illegitimate births and the faith of their supposed paramours. In return for easy access to their daughters, the Zambellis apparently received money and groceries, which they needed to help support their large family of ten children, six girls and four boys. Battistella claimed that he had attempted to speak to Zuanne and Benetta, to correct their immoral behaviour, as he was their priest, but they had responded with threats and offensive language. Thus, he decided he needed the assistance of the Venetian authorities.ⁱⁱⁱ For the next ten months, the court would attempt to unravel this case and figure out who might bear responsibility for this scandalous situation.

The court’s investigation provides an incomplete and labyrinthine story, of course, but offers tantalizing clues as to a *popolano* family’s strategies and networks. The trial spans more than two hundred folios, and nearly fifty Venetians and more than twenty *contadini* from Perarolo and nearby villages were interviewed,

providing evidence, opinions, and other information about the lives of the family at the centre of this case. They reveal deep and substantial urban networks, as well as animosities between urban and rural people. But what comes through most clearly is the difficulty of raising a large family and helping children to find a productive and stable future. For the families of poorer working Venetians, the support and placement of children was a difficult task replete with complex choices, obstacles, and even moral ambiguity. As the investigation would demonstrate, Zuanne and Benetta were constrained to make some of these choices, whether actively (as accused) or passively, in order to feed, clothe, and set up their ten children for as stable a future as possible. And, although it is doubtful that they ever wanted to come to the attention of the Venetian authorities, in the end their daughters were all settled, removing the heaviest burden from their household.

The Zambelli Family

Zuanne Zambelli, aged fifty at the time of trial, and his wife Benetta, aged about forty-five, had, like many members of the Venetian *popolano* class, lived their lives in one urban neighbourhood (Chojnacka, 2001, pp. 5, 114). In the northern district of Cannaregio, Zuanne had run a butcher shop specialising in veal, and with Benetta had raised an unusually large family. The Zambellis had lived most of their lives in Corte dei Muti in the parish of San Marziale, then spent two years in a house near the remote church of Madonna dell'Orto on the city's northern edge. In 1741 or 1742, Zuanne's shop failed, and the family was forced to leave Venice and move to

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the *terrafirma*, to a village called Perarolo where they owned a farm with ten fields and a small house (Figure 1).^{iv} This was all typical of the Venetian *popolani*; men were a few years older than their wives, marrying often in their twenties, and they tended to stay in the same part of Venice unless forced to move, usually for reasons of poverty (Chojnacka, 2001, pp. 5, 114). It seems that they struggled to provide for their growing family (one final child was born in Perarolo, bringing the total to ten) (Figure 2). At the time of the trial, Elisabetta (age 20), Anzola (age 17), Santina (age 12), Graziosa (age 11), Mattio (age 9), Giovan Pietro (age 7), and the baby Zuan Andrea (age 6 months) lived on the farm with their parents, while Paolina (age 19), Antonia (age 16), and Francesco (age 18) all lived in Venice, the latter two in service in Venetian households.^v Anzola and Graziosa had also previously been in service, contributing to the family income, but in 1745 were at home.

Zuanne and Benetta adopted a variety of methods to support their large family, and to have some chance at providing their children with a future. The fact that they owned property in the *terrafirma* suggests that either Zuanne or a family member had once been successful, but when Zuanne’s fortune changed and he had nothing but that land, he struggled. The fields brought some income, of course, but seemingly not enough. Therefore, when they were old enough, the children were often sent into service, a common solution for poor families. And at home, Benetta and her daughters did piecework, knitting socks and sewing to make extra money,

as women often did (Caracausi, 2014; Simonton, 2002, pp. 48–53).^{vi} These were all common and perfectly acceptable ways to cobble together a living, though sending young girls into service did bear some risk that they would be subject to the sexual advances of their employer or men in his service (Ruggiero, 1985, p. 26).

In addition to the more legitimate wage or piecework, it seems that Zuanne and Benetta either encouraged or at least turned a blind eye to the romantic dalliances of their eldest daughters. This too was a feasible solution to the problem of too many mouths to feed, and socially it was not necessarily a problem. A certain level of familiarity among couples who had exchanged promises of marriage was not only tolerated but expected, so long as the match was a suitable one and marriage eventually occurred (Hardwick, 2020, p. 45; Ruggiero, 1985, p. 39). But the accusations brought by the priest suggested more than just a run-of-the-mill seduction case; the men accused of having relationships with the Zambelli daughters were Jews, and one was also already married, meaning they were not suitable matches. This helped to then put the financial assistance the priest claimed the men provided in a different light; rather than the gifts of an accepted fiancé, this was payment, at least in the priest's version of the story.

Elisabetta

According to Zuanne, his need for cash prompted him to do business with a Venetian Jew called Giuseppe Piccoli, who sold second-hand goods, one of the businesses that Jews in Venice were allowed to run (Ravid, 2001, p. 8). Piccoli came to Perarolo three or four times a year to do business with Zuanne, until he too went

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bankrupt in 1744. It was during these sporadic visits that Piccoli became acquainted with the Zambelli’s eldest daughter Elisabetta, and Zambelli admitted to noticing that he seemed to have ‘inclinations’ towards her.^{vii}

Piecing together the story from witness testimonies, it seems that Elisabetta and Giuseppe began courting in 1743, although he had a wife and children in the Venetian Ghetto. The witness testimony is perhaps even less reliable than is typical, given the prevalence of antisemitism in the period and the unpopularity of the Zambelli family in Perarolo, but several witnesses claimed to have seen Elisabetta and Giuseppe out together at taverns, traveling together to Venice and Mirano, and even together in bed (either spied through the window or as hearsay from Elisabetta’s siblings).^{viii} Both Zuanne and Battistella said that Piccoli had wanted to marry her, and the priest supported this match so long as Elisabetta was willing to have him, and Piccoli was willing to convert to Christianity. Piccoli apparently said he was willing, and had he converted he could have divorced his Jewish wife and remarried in the Catholic Church (*Decretum Gratiani*, C. 28 q.1), so perhaps (if Zuanne’s story was true), the family really believed this relationship was a legitimate and acceptable pathway to marriage for their eldest daughter. But when Piccoli continued to hesitate about the conversion, Benetta reportedly declared he was no longer welcome in their house.

By September 1744, Giuseppe was bankrupt and Elisabetta roughly four months pregnant; the plan (if indeed there had been one) had failed. Whether or not Giuseppe knew of the pregnancy, he fled his creditors and went to Ferrara, presumably also leaving his wife and children behind in Venice.^{ix} In February, Elisabetta set out for Venice, staying with her maternal grandmother in the parish of San Lunardo in Cannaregio, where she would remain for about a month before returning home to Perarolo.^x Zuanne and Benetta denied any knowledge of her pregnancy, and during their defence, the midwife who had attended Elisabetta testified that the young woman had begged her grandmother not to say anything to them (though this claim was not made in the initial interrogation).^{xi} Her grandmother also claimed ignorance about Elisabetta's pregnancy, and this was supported by the midwife's testimony, though whether Elisabetta had actually managed to keep this enormous secret or her grandmother was trying to save face is unclear. It was certainly better for the family if the court believed Elisabetta had told no one of her condition.

The court's first move in trying to piece together Elisabetta's story was to find the midwife who had attended her birth, as she would have intimate knowledge of the situation. After first interviewing two midwives in San Geremia, who admitted to knowing Elisabetta's grandmother Paolina Benedetti (known as Pignata), but who denied knowledge of Elisabetta or the baby, the court did manage to find the correct midwife.^{xii} Her name was Giacomina, wife of Andrea Bornati, called Bisi, and she lived in the neighbouring parish of S. Marcuola, only three minutes' walk from

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Paolina Benedetti's house (Figure 3). She testified that in the final week of Carnival (roughly between 22 February and 2 March), about two hours before dawn, a woman and a man banged on her door. They begged her to come examine their granddaughter who was in great pain, fearing she would die. Paolina added that she had also sent for a priest because the young woman wanted to confess.

Understanding the urgency, Giacomina followed the worried grandparents home, and found Elisabetta 'in bed, screaming from pain.'^{xiii} Giacomina examined her and quickly realised she was in labour, and indeed she was soon delivered of a baby boy. Giacomina helped her deliver the afterbirth and set her up to rest in bed.

Whether or not Elisabetta had truly managed to keep her secret, the family was ill-equipped for the baby. Paolina Benedetti, upon seeing her great-grandson, was in despair and angry with her granddaughter for coming to her house in this state, according to Giacomina. Because they had not prepared at all for the infant, they had no swaddling clothes, and Giacomina had to improvise by cutting up a flannel garment to wrap him in. When she composed herself a bit, Paolina asked Giacomina if she knew anyone who could take the infant to the orphanage, as she had no idea who to ask. Giacomina assured her she did; this was a service midwives were usually prepared to provide (Filippini, 2005, p. 174). She took the baby to the woman who usually 'in similar cases brought the baby to the orphanage,' a certain widow Faustina who was her neighbour.^{xiv} Obviously this was a common enough

service, requiring that a midwife have a designated person who could undertake the task. She handed the infant over at the fourteenth hour (approximately seven or eight in the morning) with instructions to take him to the Ospedale della Pietà, Venice's orphanage.

As was customary, Giacomina went back to visit Elisabetta several times and found her in good condition. The young woman would not say who she had first had sex with, nor whose baby it was, but Giacomina did observe something unusual. The evening after the birth, when she visited, she found someone else at Elisabetta's bedside: a relatively large, masked man wearing a red cape. He was seated a bit away from the bed in an armchair and said nothing, simply observing the midwife's visit. Giacomina had no idea who he was, but she spoke the next day to one of Paolina's neighbours, who seemed to have some knowledge of the situation. She reported that he was a Jew who hoped to convert to Christianity and marry Elisabetta.^{xv} Though her information was a bit out of date, it does seem as if the basic outlines of the story about Elisabetta and Giuseppe might have been true. Masking at this time often created a fictive concealment, allowing the mixing of groups who should otherwise be separate (such as Jews and Christians), but could also mask identity (Johnson, 2011, pp. xii, 51). Perhaps Giuseppe was masked in hopes not only of making his presence tolerable to Paolina Benedetti's neighbours, but also to hide his identity from his creditors, yet chose to risk discovery to see his lover after she had given birth to their child.

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A few days later, the court tracked down the widow Faustina, Giacomina’s neighbour who took unwanted babies to the orphanage. She confirmed what she knew of the story: during the final week of Carnival, Giacomina Bisi woke her up early in the morning at the time of the Ave Maria (around six in the morning). Giacomina was in the company of another woman, and they handed over a very small, just-born infant and asked her to bring the baby to the Pietà. She testified that she had no idea if it was a boy or a girl; clearly she did not feel it necessary (or perhaps prudent) to ask questions. She also added that Giacomina had told her nothing about the baby’s parents nor its birthplace, presumably because this prevented the orphanage from demanding those details in the hope of extracting payment for the infant’s care. Orphanages had meagre resources, and administrators often hoped to get some support for abandoned infants from their parents (Pullan, 2016, pp. 133–134). If Faustina (and women like her) knew nothing about the infants they handed over, the baby would be very difficult to trace. She simply took the baby, as she had done many times over the years, and delivered him to the Pietà. When she returned, she received sixteen soldi as payment.^{xvi}

The basic outlines of the birth story were confirmed by two neighbours who were woken up by the noise, one of whom came up to assist.^{xvii} So it does seem that Elisabetta gave birth to a baby boy while staying in her grandmother’s house, that the baby was left at the Ospedale della Pietà, and that she had a mysterious male

visitor identified by several witnesses as a Jew. Moreover, though it had no significant bearing on the crime under investigation, the court also sought out information on the fate of the baby, perhaps to confirm that part of the story. On 15 September, they received information from the Pietà, in the form of a copy of their admittance book from 14-28 February. The 'Libro Scaffetta,' named for the small window (*scaffetta*) through which infants were passed, contained details of about thirty-five infants received in this two-week period. It is not entirely clear which of these infants might be Elisabetta's given the uncertainty about the date on which she gave birth, but if we assume the women testifying about the birth were both honest and had a reasonable memory of the timing, only two infants received fit the parameters given. Both were recorded as still alive on 15 September, a fate shared by only two other infants received in this two week period.^{xviii} Although this is an incredibly high mortality rate even for orphanages, it is not entirely surprising; between thirty and fifty percent of infants admitted to foundling hospitals died soon after arrival, and many more – up to a third in some places – did not see their first birthday (Pullan, 2016, p. 172). In any case, although the court identified likely infants, they seem not to have tried to find the babies themselves.

Once Elisabetta recovered from childbirth, she returned home to Perarolo; the family's attempt to marry her off (if indeed that is what they had hoped would come of her relationship with Giuseppe) had failed, but at least they had successfully managed the worst of the consequences. By sending Elisabetta to Venice, where she could receive the help of family and neighbourhood resources and avail herself of

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the services of the Pietà, they avoided adding yet another mouth to feed to their already burdensome brood. She would likely struggle to find a marriage partner in Perarolo, as seemingly the whole community knew of her relationship with Giuseppe and her pregnancy, but the immediate fallout had been handled. Unfortunately for the Zambelli family, however, it was soon clear that Paolina was in similar trouble, and thus Elisabetta once again left Perarolo for Venice to see her sister.

Paolina

Although the parish priest of Perarolo accused the Zambellis of prostituting both Elisabetta and Paolina to Jews for financial gain, in reality it seems that Paolina had found an alternative path to financial independence from her parents. In 1745, she was about 19 years old, also unmarried, and sexually active. Though her parents’ parish priest and many neighbours said she was involved in an intimate relationship with Momolo Todesco, the court quickly uncovered evidence leading in a different direction. Unlike Elisabetta, Paolina no longer lived in Perarolo; her current residence was an apartment in Corte Morosina, parish of San Giovanni Grisostomo, near the Rialto in Venice (Figure 4). She lived there with her paternal grandmother, but it was unequivocally *her* apartment. When the trial began in August, Elisabetta was also staying with her, but only as a guest. So how was Paolina Zambelli, the second daughter of a bankrupted former butcher, affording an apartment in the

centre of Venice? Witnesses suggested that her Jewish lover was paying her bills, but the court soon discovered this was not true; someone did pay the bills, but it was not Momolo Todesco. It was his employer, Zuanne Grimani, a member of one of the most wealthy and powerful families in Venice.

Zuanne Grimani and his brother, Alvise Abbate, resided in the handsome Palazzo Grimani in Santa Maria Formosa, just seven minutes' walk from Corte Morosina. They also owned the famous San Samuele theatre, and among other things, they patronised Gaetano Casanova, one of their actors and the father of the infamous Giacomo. On his deathbed, Gaetano commended Giacomo to the Grimani's protection, and they served as his unofficial guardians throughout his youth (Bonomi, 2020, p. 115; Del Negro, 2001). They also, for reasons they did not make entirely clear, patronised young Paolina. Zuanne Grimani testified that he first saw Paolina at a Carnival masquerade that he hosted the previous year, and that soon after he had begun supporting her. Grimani offered no explanation – nor was he asked to provide one – simply saying 'Paolina Zambelli... has depended on me, and I have assisted her,' adding that he had also 'assisted' Zuanne Zambelli by paying his property taxes and sending money on occasion.^{xix} Alvise also testified that Paolina was his brother's dependent and explained that he had made the arrangements for the apartment she lived in, which belonged to Marc'Antonio Morosini and was rented in the name of Zuanne Zambelli, though the Grimani family paid all the bills.^{xx} This made it clear that Zuanne, at least, had to know of his daughter's situation – her apartment was in his name and he had received support

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directly as well. The judges of the Esecutori certainly knew better than to press a fellow patrician on his personal life, but they did not hesitate to interrogate Paolina’s parents about the arrangement. Zuanne and Benetta consistently denied any knowledge of the reason for Grimani’s generosity. The closest Zuanne would come was a vague and unconvincing guess that Grimani was aware of ‘our destitution’ and thus was performing an act of charity.^{xxi}

Although the words ‘*cortigiana*,’ ‘*meretrice*,’ ‘*donna del mondo*,’ or any other word suggesting a woman who sold or otherwise commodified sex and companionship were never mentioned in the trial, the implication that Paolina was being ‘maintained’ by Zuanne Grimani was clear. Venetian noblemen commonly had extramarital sexual liaisons with lower class women; as long as the women did not cause problems and there was never a suggestion of marriage, these dalliances, which might last years and involve cohabitation, were tolerated. They might end when the man finally married (Venetian noblemen married very late, often well into their thirties), but they could continue even past this point (Cowan, 2007; Ferraro, 2020, p. 161; Ruggiero, 1985, p. 46). Grimani himself tossed casually into his testimony that Paolina had once confessed to him that she had been ‘deflowered’ by Giacomo Zanichelli in 1740, and that another nobleman had told him about his own sexual relationship with Paolina, which left him with some ‘discomfort’; in other words, Grimani had not been the one to initiate her into this morally questionable

life.^{xxii} Giacomo Zanichelli's precise identity is a bit of a mystery, but he is listed among the *signori associati* of a 1749 translation of the Royal Academy's encyclopedia of arts and sciences, indicating both erudition and high social standing (Chambers, 1749). This admission also set Paolina on a different level from a different sort of noble concubine. Some women were in an exclusive (at least on their end) relationship with a nobleman and often had been virgins before that relationship began; these conditions allowed for their children to be raised in the nobleman's home like legitimate children. The so-called 'natural' daughters who were products of such relationships could even have the chance to marry into the patriciate (Cowan, 2007, p. chapter 6, esp. pp. 119-120).

Paolina, however, had not always been exclusively 'available' to Zuanne Grimani, though given his current financial support he was likely her only lover at this particular period. Other witnesses reiterated this characterisation of her sexual history, some also testifying about Giacomo Zanichelli and various other lovers, including the French ambassador (whose residence was also in Cannaregio), who apparently had to have a doctor sent to Paolina, possibly to treat the *mal francese* or some other sexually transmitted infection.^{xxiii} This activity long predated her residence at Corte Morosina, and in fact went back to the time when her family still lived in Cannaregio. It thus seems quite likely that Paolina was a favoured courtesan of several elite Venetians and foreign guests, contributing to household expenses before her father went bankrupt, and that when her family left for Perarolo, she was missed. Perhaps because he had heard positive stories about her from his friends,

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Zuane Grimani chose her as his concubine, bringing her back to Venice two or three years after her family’s departure and covering all her expenses as was expected (Schutte, 2013, p. 371).

Although the Esecutori never spoke to Paolina herself, they knew that she too was pregnant. Her state likely explained Elisabetta’s return to Venice in August after several months back in Perarolo; she came to help her sister in childbirth. And in fact, Paolina gave birth mere days after the court began investigating. The parish priest of San Giovanni Grisostomo, where she lived, testified that she had left the house on about 18 August, though he did not know where she had gone. This set the court on her trail.

Perhaps in an attempt to hide the pregnancy (or at least allow for doubt about the fate of the infant), Paolina did what many early modern women burdened with an inconvenient or unwanted pregnancy did: she went elsewhere to give birth (Hardwick, 2020, p. 144). The arrangements are not clear, but piecing together testimony from the parish priest and the midwife who attended to her, it seems that Paolina was assisted by a woman called Gasparina, who lived in Rio Terrà in Cannaregio (Figure 4). Gasparina may have been a friend of Paolina’s or perhaps a landlady who accommodated women ready to give birth. However, it is unsurprising that Paolina was assistant by a woman in a more central part of Cannaregio – although she now lived on the far edge of this *sestiere*, her family’s and

her own networks would have been focused in the central and northern areas, the places they had once called home (Chojnacka, 2001, p. 120).

Likely in order to maintain Paolina's privacy, Gasparina arranged for her to give birth in an empty apartment in Calle Colombina, also in this part of Cannaregio. Midwife Laura Saligio testified that at the nineteenth hour (around two in the afternoon) on the 20th of August, one of Gasparina's sons appeared at her house and begged her to come help, which she did reluctantly. She did not explain her reluctance, but perhaps Gasparina had a reputation for helping a certain type of client whom Laura was less keen to assist, whether on grounds of morality or finances (though the latter was not a likely problem for Paolina, given her patron). In any case, midwives were obliged to provide free care to the poor, though of course they preferred clients who could pay (Filippini, 2005, p. 173). The boy led her to the empty building, and she entered a sparsely furnished room with only a bed, an armchair, and three woven chairs, but she was not alone. In the room, according to the midwife, was a 'young, thin, rather badly dressed pregnant woman of about 18 or 19, neither pretty nor ugly,' an old woman who identified herself as the grandmother, another old woman who did not identify herself, and another young woman who said she was the pregnant woman's sister.^{xxiv}

In a scene very reminiscent of Elisabetta's labour six months earlier, Paolina gave birth to a boy and her grandmother asked Laura if she could take the baby to the Pietà. Just like Giacomina Bisi, Laura Saligio had a woman who typically performed this task, a washerwoman named Maria Bianchi. Before bringing the

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baby to Maria, Laura took it upon herself to include half a coin on a ribbon in the baby’s swaddle, known as a *fede* or token, which would allow the mother to identify her child if she changed her mind (Hardwick, 2020, pp. 171–172; Pullan, 2016, p. 128).^{xxv} While this was not uncommon, it does seem more unusual that the midwife made the decision for the mother, and yet this is how Laura explained her actions.

Maria Bianchi picked up the story, explaining that Laura Saligio had asked her to take a ‘lovely, and fairly big baby boy’ to the Pietà at the second hour (roughly ten in the evening) and instructed her to make sure the baby reached the Pietà before the fourth hour.^{xxvi} The urgency is not explained, but perhaps Laura wished to be able to give Paolina both the matching *fede* and an estimated time, in case she had any difficulty claiming the correct child. Maria duly took the infant, placed him in the *scaffetta*, rang the bell, and confirmed with the woman inside that it was not yet the third hour and informed her the infant had a *fede*. Maria then returned home, and when she passed through Campo San Bartolomeo, the bell tower rang three times. She received two lire for her work, and asked no questions about the baby, just like the widow Faustina.^{xxvii} Clearly this was an occasional bit of piecework that certain women undertook for a few coins at a time.

As the court knew the exact date of birth for Paolina’s baby, they were also able to identify him definitively among the Pietà’s records. His arrival was recorded on 20 August at the second hour, and he was baptised the next day as Vendramin.

On 26 August, the Pietà sent a written statement from Stella, the official scribe of the Pietà, certifying his arrival and baptism, and enclosing the *fede* he arrived with, half a coin threaded onto a ribbon.^{xxviii} On 15 September, the Pietà sent a copy of the relevant page of the *Libro della scaffetta* along with the pages for February, and Vendramin was noted as still living at the Ospedale; he had not been sent out to a wetnurse, and thus far had survived.^{xxix}

After the birth, Paolina evidently moved from Calle Colombina to Gasparina's home in Rio Terrà; presumably Gasparina offered post-natal care of some description. From there Paolina wrote to the parish priest of San Giovanni Grisostomo on 24 August, asking him to visit her on a matter 'of great importance,' noting that the fate of people in prison rested on what she had to say.^{xxx} He answered the summons, finding her in bed, and she told him about the events of 20 August, including that the infant had been handed over to the Pietà with a *fede*. He asked whose baby it was, and she told him that 'she had had relations with various noblemen and she did not know whose it could be,' but she denied having any relationships with any Jews.^{xxxi} Again, Paolina's own explanation of her situation made it clear that she was not the exclusive concubine of Zuanne Grimani, at least not long-term; if she was, her son might also have had a different fate and been raised in Palazzo Grimani.

In early September, having recovered from childbirth and successfully rid herself of the burden of an infant, Paolina returned to Corte Morosina.^{xxxii} The court interviewed her neighbour Maria Girarsi on 16 September; Maria testified that

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Paolina had been pregnant, then left the house for a while, and ‘now she has returned, and is without her bump.’^{xxxiii} Though she had no details about the birth or baby, she had heard that Paolina had given birth far from Corte Morosina, that the baby was a boy, and that it was rumoured to be Zuanne Grimani’s.^{xxxiv} In other words, the neighbours had a reasonably good handle on the situation, but this was no serious issue; Paolina was back home, again supported by the Grimani family.

The Defences

Shortly after the court began investigating, they issued warrants for the arrests of Giuseppe Piccoli, Momolo Todesco, and Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli. Giuseppe Piccoli, reportedly in Ferrara, could not be found, but Momolo, Zuanne, and Benetta (with her six-month-old infant, still breastfeeding) were arrested and held in the Priggione Novissimo, where they spent months awaiting their fate as the court investigated and unravelled the complicated tales of Elisabetta and Paolina’s affairs.

The easiest defendant to deal with was Giuseppe Piccoli, so the court began with him in January 1746. Any defendant who refused to answer a summons was presumed guilty and condemned automatically *in absentia* to banishment from the Venetian Republic and all of its possessions. Given that Piccoli had supposedly fled due to bankruptcy and seemed to be guilty also of seducing and impregnating Elisabetta under false pretences, it is unsurprising that he did not appear to defend

himself. The grave nature of this crime resulted in a sentence of banishment for fifteen years, or imprisonment for five if he was caught in Venetian territory.^{xxxv}

The case of Momolo Todesco was a bit more difficult to tease out. By September, there was certainly evidence that he was not the guilty party, but the court still chose to lay charges and require him to make a defence, which he started on 29 January. He was not, he (and his witnesses) credibly maintained, Paolina's lover. He was instead Zuanne Grimani's agent, sent to tend to Paolina's needs. He visited her on occasion, but only briefly, to bring her food or other necessities. He had also been to Perarolo once on his way to Padua and had briefly taken shelter from a storm in Zambelli's house, knowing him through Paolina. However, he could prove that he had not regularly travelled outside of Venice, presenting as witnesses the Grimani brothers, other Grimani household employees, and the two Guardians of the gate of the Ghetto Novo, whom he passed each evening to return home before the sunset curfew.^{xxxvi}

Further supporting Todesco's claims of innocence was the testimony of the parish priest of San Giovanni Grisostomo. He told the court that after several parishioners expressed concern about a Jewish man visiting a young Christian woman in Corte Morosina, he investigated. He went to Paolina's apartment and was shown in by an elderly woman in a mask, who led him to a room in which he found a 'young woman of about 18 or 20, thin, relatively short, and pretty,' and advised her that she 'must banish the Jew from her house,' threatening to go to the Esecutori if she did not.^{xxxvii} Paolina explained, however, that Todesco only came to see to her

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needs on behalf of his employer and her patron, who she did not name. The priest investigated further and sought an audience with Zuanne Grimani, who invited him to call at Palazzo Grimani. He confirmed Paolina's story and made it clear to the priest that he should neither worry nor intervene, though the priest could not resist suggesting that Grimani could send another (Christian) servant to tend to Paolina. It is unclear how this advice was received, but the priest reported that he had received no further complaints from the neighbours.^{xxxviii}

Todesco, then, had a good explanation for his dealings with Paolina, and the court likely hesitated to question the Grimani brothers' words. Both men testified that Todesco had worked for their house for a decade, and clearly stated he saw Paolina on Zuanne's orders, so Todesco's defense was strong.^{xxxix} After bringing forward seventeen witnesses, Todesco rested his defence in March 1746. But until the Zambellis made theirs, he would have to remain in prison; the court would render all three verdicts at once.

Finally, Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli began their defence, seven months after their arrest, denying all knowledge of their daughters' sins. They claimed Elisabetta had no inappropriate relationship with Giuseppe Piccoli and had not been pregnant, or at least that they had been unaware of any pregnancy. They likewise denied knowledge of Paolina's pregnancy and dismissed the importance of any connection

with Momolo (though on this count, of course, the court already had heard plenty of plausible evidence).

Having explained their story with regards to their two eldest daughters, they then tried to cast doubt on the parish priest's motives; proving that one's accuser was an enemy could be a successful strategy in a criminal case. Zuanne noted that he was suspicious of the priest's connection with his daughter Antonia (age 16 at the time of trial), having seen him with her at an *osteria* in Padua. He worried, he said, that his neighbours would talk, and he tried to forbid Antonia from having any contact with the priest. He further explained that his concern justified a beating he had given his daughter, which Battistella had ascribed to Antonia standing up to her parents to avoid her sisters' fate.^{xi} Evidently the judges found Zuanne's accusation incredible, as they rejected this and a dozen other *capitoli* presented by the Zambellis in their defence. Other rejected claims included that Zuanne had caught Antonia out behind the house one night with the priest and chased him away (and then again beat her), and that when Antonia was sent off to serve in the house of a certain Signora Bravesi in Venice, Battistella went mad with desire and sought her out, 'acting out the pain of despair, with cries and lamentations,' crying out to her 'poor me, I am in despair.'^{xli} While the trope of the lecherous priest was by no means unheard of, the judges evidently saw no merit in these claims, refusing to even hear the proposed evidence.

Finally, Zuanne and Benetta presented some evidence about their home and family life, defending their own morals and parenting. They cast doubt on

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accusations that their daughters had been sharing a bed with Giuseppe and Momolo by describing the layout of their house and the available accommodation for overnight guests.^{xliii} They also said witnesses could testify that they hosted various friends, all of 'civil condition and honest customs.'^{xliiii} Finally, they protested that they had done everything they could to 'correct [their sons and daughters], to instruct them in the holy fear of God, and to teach them an honourable trade at [their] expense for [the children's] advantage.'^{xliv} This last protestation was perhaps close to the truth; they did seem to try to make sure their children were set up for the future, but not all of them seemed to be learning an 'honourable trade.' Twelve Venetians, three residents of Perarolo, and a doctor who lived in Stra who had treated the family were called to testify on their behalf; the small number of current neighbours perhaps indicates how poorly the Zambellis were integrated in Perarolo, or how disliked they were. At the very least, their key networks were still in Venice, concentrated in Cannaregio.

Most of the witnesses tried to defend the character of the couple, but a few provided some interesting information about the other Zambelli daughters. As a part of their strategy to discredit the parish priest by proving he had a relationship with Antonia, Zuanne and Benetta explained that their daughter had recently left her position as a servant in Francesca Bravesi's house, and that when they learned of this they scolded her and demanded to know why. Her employment, just like

Elisabetta's bid for marriage and Paolina's livelihood as a courtesan, was a necessary part of the family's economic viability. In tears, Antonia told them that she had not been a virgin for a long time; though she provided no explanation, there is a good chance this happened while she was in service in a Venetian household, a vulnerable position for a young female servant. Zuanne and Benetta, however, asserted that the priest was to blame (though this claim, like all the others regarding Battistella, was rejected by the court).^{xlv} In addition to their own testimony about Antonia's tearful appearance at the prison, they called upon their jailers, Zuane Drusi and Gasparo Capular, guards of the Priggione Novissime, who testified that they had overheard the conversation when Antonia came to deliver her news. Unfortunately for the Zambellis, as the court did not believe the priest was having an affair with Antonia, this only served to undermine their claims of good parenting: a third daughter had been insufficiently protected by her parents.

Despite their claims of stellar household management, Zuanne and Benetta also told the court that 'zealous priests are interested in putting [their daughters] in cloistered places... respectively [putting] Antonia in the Penitenti and Santina the virgin... in the Zitelle.'^{xlvi} These institutions sheltered women who had already lost or were considered in danger of losing their honour. The Penitenti, established in Cannaregio in 1701, accepted poor non-virginal women, complementing the older, more formal, and wealthier Convertite. Whereas women in the Convertite took vows, entering the religious life, women at the Penitenti did not and could leave if they chose. Entry to the latter was also far cheaper. The Zitelle (located in a remote

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location on the Giudecca), on the other hand, sheltered young virgins who – by virtue of both poverty and beauty – were seen as being at risk of falling into prostitution. All three were part of the city’s official response to rising syphilis rates.

In practice, the Convertite became a convenient place for noblemen to put their former lovers, while artisan families often tried to get their daughters into the Zitelle, because there they would receive an education and a dowry. The Penitenti was established in 1701 to accept repentant prostitutes for the very low entry fee of 1 ducat, in comparison to the 200-400 ducats required for the Convertite (McGough, 2010).

Although there is no evidence that the Zambelli family had ever considered religious institutions as solutions to their problems, these various locations would solve the issue of how to support and ultimately set up their daughters for the future. Antonia could theoretically remain in the Penitenti forever; this was perhaps not the life she wished for, but she would not starve. The younger daughter, Santina, would live in a strict environment, but would receive an education and a dowry; entrance to the Zitelle was sought after by many families, and was very competitive (Chojnacka, 1998).

Moreover, there were potential solutions for the other Zambelli girls as well. Two priests, a Jesuit and an Oratorian, testified that they were working on getting *all* of the Zambelli daughters into religious institutions. Father Bernardino Antonio

Bastivi, S.J., testified on 2 May that Antonia would enter the Penitenti that very week, having already been accepted. Santina was already in the Zitelle, and he hoped that Graziosa would also be accepted there. This was a bit more of a triumph, as it was quite difficult to get a coveted place at the Zitelle; Santina must have been beautiful, and the priests must have made a compelling case to the governors that her virtue was in grave danger, the official requirements for acceptance (Chojnacka, 2001, p. 126). Elisabetta, he said, was in a 'safe house in good custody,' and he was searching for a place to put her.^{xlvii} Anzoletta was also 'in a secure place,' and as she had expressed a desire to be a nun he was seeking a convent for her.^{xlviii} Finally, he was not sure where Paolina was but hoped to help her too. His account was backed up two days later by Father Francesco Rossi of the Oratorians.^{xlix} Evidently these two priests and two venerable charitable organisations of Venice believed that the Zambelli house was not a suitable place for any of these girls or women, and felt they needed to be removed for their own good.

In the end, it is unsurprising that Zuanne and Benetta's protestations of innocence were not taken seriously. They formally concluded their defence on 6 May and made a last-ditch effort to shrug off culpability. If they could not prove they had been good parents, they would cast doubt on their responsibility for their children's behaviour. In a plea almost certainly composed by their defence lawyer, they protested that

Chastity is theirs, the will is theirs, the enthusiasm of age is theirs, if these produce in them the dangerous effect of uniting freedom and desire; desire and dishonesty; the refuge is dispatched, the precipice is open, they

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are lost not only with the guilt of their parents, but also with their deceit, without which [their parents] would know they had in their house a detestable whore when they believed they had a virgin.¹

In spite of their attempt to lay blame on their 'detestable' daughters, the court found them guilty by unanimous vote, sentencing each to one year in prison or three years banishment if they escaped.ⁱⁱ At the same time, Momolo Todesco was absolved, though not unanimously; one judge voted to convict while the other two voted to acquit. He returned to the Ghetto on 28 June 1746, 315 days after he was first arrested in the Ghetto Novo.

Conclusion

More than just a good story, this case provides a snapshot of one *popolano* family's varied strategies for supporting a family and providing for their children's future. Although the Esecutori was not impressed by their choices, elements of the story and the way witnesses spoke about the case demonstrate that there was a level of acceptance of the more morally ambiguous strategies attempted alongside the more traditional. For women, sexuality was an available resource, which could be exploited as needed either as a sole source of income or alongside other types of labour (Ferrante, 1985). Young women's dalliances were accepted so long as marriage was on the horizon; if the intended was of another faith this was certainly seen as more dangerous, but if he was willing to convert to Christianity the relationship could be tolerated. Beautiful, charming young women might also seek

support from elite Venetian men and live as their courtesans. At the very least these arrangements helped to support the young woman in question, but her family might also derive support, whether she shared the money she received, or her lovers helped her family directly, as when Zuanne Grimani paid Zuanne Zambelli's taxes. When young, unmarried women became pregnant, that pregnancy might lead to marriage or at least a dowry (in the case of engaged couples), but if not, the Pietà provided a way to avoid adding another mouth to feed.ⁱⁱⁱ Daughters and sons could be sent into service, where they received room and board in addition to pay, which could help the family or be saved for a dowry or a future in another line of work. Children living at home could instead contribute to the family income by helping their mother with piecework or their father with his trade. And when all else failed, religious refuges provided an alternative life to women deemed 'at risk' by the clergy and the elites.

In the case of the Zambelli family, Zuanne and Benetta either arranged or tolerated a combination of all of these strategies, with at least some undesirable results. Elisabetta's relationship with Giuseppe Piccoli ended with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy and with him bankrupt and fleeing, which certainly did not make him a desirable son-in-law. Paolina's relationship shared the complication of pregnancy, though it likely continued after the trial; the Esecutori may not have approved, but they were not going to meddle in a fellow patrician's personal life. Antonia had been sent on a more 'honourable' path in service, but had come out 'dishonoured' like her older sisters. Anzola and Santina had seemingly emerged

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from service unharmed and still virginal, Graziosa apparently had never left home, and no mention was made of any threat to the sons (who were far less vulnerable than their sisters). But even when their strategies backfired, the Zambellis were managing to stay afloat, and strategized to recover. Elisabetta either left in the final stages of pregnancy so that no one in Perarolo would know for sure what had happened, and the baby could be legitimately handed off. Paolina presumably moved from her apartment for similar reasons. And while the Zambellis did highlight their poverty to explain some things, such as Zuanne Grimani's largesse, no one presented any evidence to suggest the children were poorly fed or clothed; they may not have had much, and they likely had no way to provide their daughters with dowries, but they weren't destitute. And in the end, their daughters were all at least temporarily settled, though likely not how they had planned. Paolina likely continued to be supported by Zuanne Grimani; statistically it was likely that he would eventually provide her with a dowry and find her a husband or send her to the Convertite (McGough, 2010, p. 107). We can assume Antonia (and perhaps Elisabetta) entered the Penitenti, where they could remain for the rest of their lives unless they found another means to support themselves. Santina, and perhaps Graziosa, when she/they reached the age of maturity, would have had the option to stay at the Zitelles as a teacher, join a convent, or take a dowry and have a suitable marriage arranged (Chojnacka, 1998, pp. 76, 81). Finally, with any luck Anzola had

entered a convent, assuming the priest's story of her vocation was true. The Zambelli sons, who were less of a burden than daughters, were likely sent into service or temporarily cared for by their grandparents until the release of Zuanne and Benetta; in any case their futures were less perilous than their sisters'. Overall, then, while more than a year and a half in the damp prisons of Venice is a steep price to pay, the Zambelli children were likely provided for in the end.

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Figures:

Figure 1:



Figure 2:

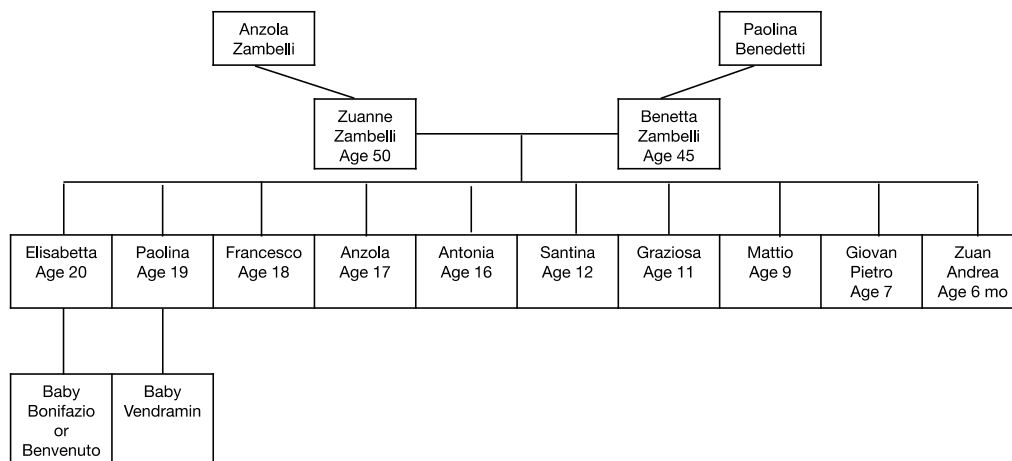


Figure 3:



Figure 4:



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Figure Captions:

Figure 1: Zambelli family homes. Celeste McNamara, 2021. (Created using *Tableau Desktop*, version 2021.2. Seattle: Tableau Software, Inc., 2021).

Figure 2: Zambelli family tree

Figure 3: Birth of Elisabetta’s child. Celeste McNamara, 2021. (Created using *Tableau Desktop*)

Figure 4: Paolina. Celeste McNamara, 2021. (Created using *Tableau Desktop*.)

*N.B. Venetian documents of this period still used the *More Veneto* style of dating, in which the year changed over on March 1. To avoid confusion, I have rendered dates according to the modern system; i.e. the new year begins January 1.

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ⁱ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Esecutori contro la bestemmia*, b. 17, ‘Contro Zuanne e Benetta Zambelli, Momolo Todesco, e Giuseppe Piccoli,’ Denunciation, 11 August 1745, fol. 2. [NB: the folio numbering of this trial is inconsistent – some folios are not numbered, and on several occasions the numbering restarts. All elements of the trial will thus be labeled/dated and folio numbers indicated where available. All archival material is taken from this trial; therefore further citations will include only the label, date, and, where available, folio number(s).]

ⁱⁱ In 18th century Turin, the average age of marriage for women was 24; the average was higher for women working in retail/trade (26) and higher still for servants (28). Similar patterns are evident for *popolano* women based on cases in the *Esecutori contro la bestemmia* court for seduction under pretense of marriage, in which most of the women bringing suit against their lovers were in their twenties, and were described by the court as ‘nubile.’ Cases found in ASVe, *Esecutori contro la bestemmia*, bb. 1-53.

ⁱⁱⁱ Denunciation written by Giuseppe Battistella, 11 August 1745, fol. 2.

^{iv} Testimony of Zuanne Zambelli, 2 September 1745, fol. 25r.

^v Testimony of Benetta Zambelli, 21 August 1745, n.p.

^{vi} Defense of Zuanne and Benetta, *capitolo* 9, submitted in late March 1746, n.p.

^{vii} ‘Aveva della inclinazione a detta putta.’ Testimony of Zuanne Zambelli, 2 September 1745, fol. 26v-27r.

- viii Testimony of Angelo Schievano, 27 September 1745, fol. 4r; Testimony of Angelo Lutato, 27 September 1745, fol. 7v; Testimony of Domenica Peghin, 13 November 1745, fol. 38r; Testimony of Zuanne Feverero, 29 September 1745, fol. 19v.
- ix Defense of Momolo Todesco, n.p.
- x Testimony of Giuseppe Battistella, 12 August 1745, 3v.
- xi Testimony of Giacomina Bisi, 2 May 1746, n.p.
- xii The court followed a lead provided by Battistella, who gave them the name Perina Colloredo. They did not find a Perina Colloredo, but they did find a Laura Giordani, whose husband was Zorzi Colloredo; this also led them to Laura's daughter Francesca, who also practiced midwifery though she was unlicensed. Testimony of Laura Giordani, 18 August 1745, fol. 8r; Testimony of Francesca Colloredo, 18 August 1745, fol. 9r.
- xiii '...ritrovai...Elisabetta in letto... gridava da dolori.' Testimony of Giacomina Bornati, 19 August 1745, fol. 11r.
- xiv 'L'avrei consegnata alla mia solita donna perché giusto in casi simili la portasse al pio luogo, e subito partita mi portai da donna Faustina vedova che abita in Calle del Liomparado all'Ancoretta.' Testimony of Giacomina Bornati, 19 August 1745, fol. 11r.
- xv Testimony of Giacomina Bornati, 19 August 1745, fol. 11v-12r.
- xvi Testimony of Faustina Naduri, 23 August 1745, fol. 17r.
- xvii Testimony of Catta, 18 August 1745, fols. 9r-10v; Testimony of Laura Maruti, 25 August 1745, fols. 17v-18v.
- xviii Copia tratta dal libro scaffetta, records 4588 and 4593. The first baby was brought in on 23 February at the sixteenth hour, baptized as Bonifazio, and given to a wet nurse in San Zanipolo (Santi Giovanni e Paolo) parish. The second was brought in on 25 February at the thirteenth hour, baptized Benvenuto, and sent out to a wet nurse in a small rural village nearly a hundred kilometers from Venice. The details of these arrangements would have been recorded in two different registers, one which kept records of babies sent out within the city and another which recorded those sent outside the city. The women in each case would have received 7 lire to care for the baby for the first year; if the babies survived they received 3 lire 10 soldi through age 6, and then 10 lire 10 soldi after age six; in all cases they also received cloth and shoes each year as well. Testimony of Domenico Fasoi, chancellor of the Pietà, 9 September 1745, fol. 29r.
- xix 'Paolina Zambelli... dipendeva da me, et io l'assistivo.' Testimony of NH Zuanne Grimani, 25 February 1746, n.p.
- xx Testimony of NH Alvisè Abbate Grimani, 25 February 1746, np. The details of this deal were also confirmed by the Grimani's lawyer, Antonio Dantini, in his testimony on the same date.
- xxi 'Conobbe le nostre indigenze.' Testimony of Zuanne Zambelli, 2 September 1745, fol. 25v.
- xxii 'Incomodi.' Testimony of NH Zuanne Grimani, 25 February 1746, n.p.
- xxiii Testimony of Luigi Ferro, doctor, 25 February 1746; Testimony of Nicolò Prepiani, tailor, 25 February 1746; Testimony of Angelo Soravia, shoemaker, 25 February 1746; Testimony of Anzola Filippi, seamstress, 2 May 1746.
- xxiv 'Viddi una creatura giovane scarpa piuttosto malvestita ne bella ne brutta, quale mostrava anni 18 in 19 gravida.' Testimony of Laura Saligio, 28 August 1745, fol. 20r. Presumably Paolina was attended by Elisabetta and her paternal grandmother; perhaps the second old woman was her maternal grandmother, but she is not identified anywhere.
- xxv Testimony of Laura Saligio, 28 August 1745, fol. 20r.
- xxvi 'Mi consegnò una creatura maschio bello, e piuttosto grande.' Testimony of Maria Bianchi, 30 August 1745, fol. 21r.
- xxvii Testimony of Maria Bianchi, 30 August 1745, fols. 20v-21r.
- xxviii *Fede* of Stella, scrivana del Pio Ospedale della Pietà, 26 August 1745.
- xxix Copy of the *Libro Scaffetta* for 20-21 August 1745, fol. 35r.
- xxx 'Affare di grande importanza.' Letter from Paolina Zambelli to Giuseppe Zuliani, 24 August 1745, n.p.

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^{xxx} ‘Mi rispose che aveva avuto commercio con diversi NH e che non sapeva di chi potesse esser, con Ebrei mi disse di no.’ Testimony of Giuseppe Zuliani, 26 August 1745, fol. 19v. Wanting more information, the priest also visited the Pietà and examined their record books. He apparently found a record of a baby handed over at the correct time, but saw no note of a *fede*, because this was not recorded in the *Libro scaffetta* but was presumably kept in a different register and set aside for safekeeping.

^{xxxii} One neighbor said she was gone about 20 days and had returned sometime around 3-8 September. Testimony of Maria Campi, 23 September 1745, fol. 37r.

^{xxxiii} ‘Ora è tornata, et è senza pancia.’ Testimony of Maria Girarsi, 16 September 1745, fol. 36v.

^{xxxiv} Testimony of Maria Girarsi, 16 September 1745, fol. 36v. Calle Colombina is only about fifteen minutes from Corte Morosina on foot, so it is not clear if this statement says something about Venetian concepts of distance or Maria’s imprecise knowledge.

^{xxxv} The unanimous vote to convict occurred on 3 January 1746, and the sentence was publicly announced in Perarolo on 9 January 1746 and in Rialto and San Marco on 15 January 1746.

^{xxxvi} Defense of Momolo Todesco, 29 January 1746, n.p.

^{xxxvii} ‘Questa era una giovine di anni 18 in 20 in circa scarma piuttosto bassa bella a cui io le dissi qual era il mio dovere, quali erano le mie notizie della pratica di detto Ebreo, la necessità di doverlo licenziar di sua casa, et il mio debito di riferirlo a questo Eccellentissimo Magistrato in caso differente.’ Testimony of Rev. Giuseppe Zuliani, 21 August 1745, fol. 12v.

^{xxxviii} Testimony of Rev. Giuseppe Zuliani, 21 August 1745, fol. 13r.

^{xxxix} Testimony of NH Zuane Grimani, 25 February 1745, n.p.; Testimony of NH Alvise Abbate Grimani, 25 February 1745, n.p.

^{xl} Testimony of Zuanne Zambelli, 2 September 1745, fol. 27v.

^{xli} ‘Mostrò atti di dolore da disperato, e con gridi, e con pianti disse: poveretto mi son disperato.’ Defense of Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli, capitolo 35.

^{xlii} Defense of Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli, capitoli 43-44.

^{xliii} ‘Che alla nostra visita in Perarolo capitavano diverse persone nostri amici, di civil condizione, e di onesti costumi.’ Defense of Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli, capitolo 45.

^{xliiv} ‘Che nell’educazione delle nostre figliole e figli abbiamo avute tutte le applicazioni per correggerli, per istruirli nel santo timor di Dio, e di farle insegnare a nostre spese qualche onorato mestiere per loro vantaggio.’ Defense of Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli, capitolo 41.

^{xliv} Defense of Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli, capitoli 36-39.

^{xlvi} ‘Che zelanti sacerdoti si sono interessati di locar in Claustrauli chiostrì delle Penitenti e Zitelle, il che seguirà con brevità rispettivamente di Antonia fra le Penitenti, e di Santina vergine, nostre figlie, nelle Zitelle.’ Defense of Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli, capitolo 40.

^{xlvii} ‘Elisabetta è in casa sicura et in buona custodia.’ Testimony of Padre Bernardino Antonio Bastivi, 2 May 1746, n.p.

^{xlviii} ‘Anzoletta è in luogo sicuro.’ Testimony of Padre Bernardino Antonio Bastivi, 2 May 1746, n.p.

^{xlix} Testimony of Padre Francesco Rossi, 4 May 1746, n.p.

^l ‘La castità è sua, il volere è suo, gl’empiti dell’età son suoi, se questi producono in loro il dannoso effetto d’unirle insieme libertà e volere; volere e disonestà, il riparo è spedito, il precipizio è aperto, son perduti non solo con colpa de genitori, ma anche con loro inganno, senza che sappino d’aver in casa una detestabile meretrice quando si credono d’aver una vergine.’ Closing statement Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli, not dated (on or after 6 May 1746), n.p.

^{li} Sentences of Zuanne and Benetta Zambelli, 28 June 1746, n.p.

^{liii} Young women who had been 'seduced under pretense of marriage' frequently brought suit against their lovers if community interventions failed, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, the Esecutori found in favour of the women. Men were sentenced to prison or banishment, which could be avoided through prompt marriage or payment of a dowry. There are 88 such cases in the ASVe, *Esecutori contro la bestemmia*, bb. 1-53.