Food and Religious Identities in the Venetian Inquisition, ca. 1560–ca. 1640

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Through Venetian Inquisition trials relating to Protestantism, witchcraft, and Judaism, this article illuminates the centrality of food and eating practices to religious identity construction. The Holy Office used food to assert its model of post-Tridentine piety and the boundaries between Catholics and the non-Catholic populations in the city. These trial records concurrently act as access points to the experiences and beliefs—to the lived religion—of ordinary people living and working in Venice from 1560 to 1640. The article therefore offers new insight into the workings and impacts of the Counter-Reformation.

INTRODUCTION

MANY OF THE world's religions enforce dietary codes by which members outwardly express their piety and conformity.[1] In the early modern period, Christian authors repeatedly associated Jewish people with certain foods, like foie gras (the liver of fattened goose), which adhered to the kashrut dietary laws derived from the Torah. As the Italian humanist Giacomo Castelvetro recorded in 1614, in Venice "the Jews fatten up enormous quantities of geese, since they eat them instead of pork, which is forbidden them in the Laws of Moses."[2] Although Saint Paul had abolished the necessity for Christians to adhere to definitive food laws, debates about how, what, and

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[1] Jewish dietary laws have received particular scholarly attention, most notably in the seminal anthropological work of Mary Douglas, first published in 1966; see Douglas, 2002.

[2] Castelvetro, 80–81.

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when to eat were no less important in the history of Christianity.[3] Through the bread and wine of the sacrament of the Eucharist—envisaged as a re-creation of Christ's visceral sacrifice on the cross—eating is at the heart of how Christians connect to God and the spiritual realm. More broadly, as the anthropologists Sidney Mintz and Christine Du Bois put it, "like all culturally defined material substances used in the creation and maintenance of social relationships, food serves both to solidify group membership and to set groups apart."[4] In early modern Europe, splintered by the manifold religious divisions induced by the Protestant Reformation, visible expressions of religious identity—like food practices—were of particular consequence.

In this article I wish to explore the importance of food and eating to religious identities in Counter-Reformation Venice, from ca. 1560 to ca. 1640. As such a significant trading post between the East and West, the city of Venice acts as a particularly rich case study, where traders and settlers of diverse religions necessarily made contact and coexisted. Although Venice was officially a Roman Catholic archdiocese, the early modern state allowed a large community of German Lutheran merchants to live and work in the center of the city at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, and sheltered a large international Jewish community in the ghetto of the Cannaregio district.[5] Scholars have often associated Venice with the toleration of heresy as a result, especially in comparison to the infamous rigor of the Spanish Inquisition. Liberty has long been at the heart of the so-called myth of Venice.[6] Yet, as Antonio Santosuosso argued almost five decades ago, the Venetian authorities were equally concerned with eradicating heresy once the state saw that this charge aligned with its political agenda.[7]

While the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions (established in 1478 and 1536, respectively) were tasked with policing those who had converted to Christianity, the Italian (or Roman) Inquisition was set up in 1542 in response to the threat of Protestantism in the Italian peninsula. In accordance with the ruling from Rome, the Venetian doge officially proclaimed the establishment of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in the Venetian Republic on 22 April 1547.

[3] 1 Tim. 4:4–5.

[4] Mintz and Du Bois, 109. On anthropological advances in the study of food and identity, see Lévi-Strauss; Douglas, 1972.

[5] The Fondaco dei Tedeschi became the obligatory residence of German merchants from 1505, after their initial residence (enforced in 1475) burnt down. The senate required all Jews to live in the Ghetto Nuovo from 29 March 1516. There was also the Fondaco dei Turchi for Muslim merchants from the Ottoman Empire, which was founded in 1621, but which was much more strictly private. Other foreigners did not have to take up imposed residence. For broad literature on religious minorities in Venice, see Ravid, 2013; Zannini.

[6] Zannini, loc. 91 of 1985, Kindle.

[7] Santosuosso, 480–85.

Moreover, the decrees issued by the Council of Trent (1545–63), the other major unifying force of Catholic reformation, were recognized and published on 17 September 1564 for the benefit of the laity in Venice's parish churches, as ordered by the Patriarch Giovanni Trevisan (r. 1560–90).[8] The republic's long-standing resistance to papal authority meant that the Venetian tribunal, unlike most other local Roman Inquisitions that had been established across the Italian peninsula, was made up of lay and clerical members, which included the nuncio, Inquisitor, patriarch (or his representative), and three lay assistants appointed by the Venetian state, known as Savii sopra l'eresia.[9] Their task was to guarantee the supremacy of the Catholic religion—in a city beholden to Saint Mark—in light of this complex economic and political situation.

Recent work on the Spanish Inquisition by Christopher Kissane and Jillian Williams has led the way in establishing trial records as enlightening food-history sources in the early modern period.[10] Focusing on early Inquisition Castile, from where the Jews had been expelled in the 1490s, Kissane gracefully illuminates how food habits like eating meat on Fridays and during Lent could be interpreted as signs of crypto-Judaism by neighbors and Inquisitors alike.[11] Similarly, in sixteenth- century Valencia, Williams argues that Ramadan fasting was frequently included in accusations made to the Inquisition against Moriscos (forcibly converted Muslims), who made up a significant percentage of the local population.[12] The present discussion is based on a sample of cases from the Venetian Holy Office records in the Venetian State Archive.[13] More specifically, this sample includes: those cases cataloged under Lutheranism and Calvinism, as Protestant heresy was initially the most pressing concern of the

[8] Hacke, 11.

[9] The Savii sopra l'eresia were chosen for their devotion. Their role was to authorize arrests and ensure the execution of sentences. The Inquisitor, ultimately chosen by the pope, came from the religious orders, especially the Dominicans. On the relationship between Rome and its peripheral Inquisitions across the Italian peninsula and beyond, see the introduction to *The Roman Inquisition: Centre versus Peripheries*, 1–30; Mayer.

[10] See Kissane; Williams. Kissane's book considers the relationship between food, religion, and community in the three case studies of Castile, Zurich, and Shetland. Jillian Williams's research focuses on the relationship between Christians, Jews, and Muslims (and converts to Christianity from these faiths—respectively conversos and Moriscos) in Valencia.

[11] Kissane, 13–50.

[12] Williams, chap. 5.

[13] The patriarch's archive also contains some Inquisition cases, but a sample from the Archivio di Stato di Venezia (cited as ASV) is sufficient for the present study. Venice is missing trials from the period from around 1595 to 1613, in accordance with the interdict crisis (1605–07). The ASV contains 150 *buste* (files) with a total of 2,910 *processi* (hearings) from 1541 to 1794: Zorattini, 1980–99, 1:61.

Venetian authorities; witchcraft and similar crimes, which became the most significant category after the Protestant threat subsided; and those concerning Judaism, a substantial non-Christian minority in Venice, the records for which have been transcribed and published in a modern edition by Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini. Finally, I have also included the category of *cibi proibiti* (prohibited foods) given its relevance to the topic at hand.[14]

The unique advantage of trial records is that oral responses are recorded by hand without elaborate editing, and so they allow us to hear the voices and stories of the early modern laity, who would have otherwise left no written accounts of their lives and beliefs. As Kissane notes, "few documents can reveal such copious detail about late medieval and early modern people."[15] Although the Inquisitors searched for deviance rather than conformity, which certainly shaped the narratives recorded, in Venice torture was rarely imposed, so testimonies cannot be dismissed as terror-laden responses to threats as may have been the case elsewhere.[16] The questions that Inquisitors chose to ask reveal their concerns, and notarial marginalia highlight remarks or incidents that were of most significance to the tribunal. Inquisition records can therefore both demonstrate how the laity understood their religion, and the forms of religion officially enforced by the Catholic Church. Here, no attempt has been made of a statistical analysis; the aim is rather to illuminate some of the stories hidden in the *buste* (files). Although they together imply wider trends in the lives, and the concerns, of early modern Venetians, cases must be appreciated for their personal and circumstantial nuances.[17] There has been some comprehensive work on the beliefs and experiences of individual groups in Venice based on Inquisition records, most notably Brian Pullan on the Jews, and both Ruth Martin's and Jonathan Seitz's accounts of witchcraft.[18] However, the centrality of food in the practice of their piety has yet to be elucidated.

In embarking on this task, this article contributes to a recent focus in Reformation history on lived religion. This approach, which was first made

[14] A study of food in relation to the Venetian Inquisition's handling of Islamic crimes, or what was called Mohammedanism, would also be expedient, though beyond the remit of the present article. Islam was more concerning for Inquisition tribunals in the south of Italy, including Naples and Sicily, than in Venice and other parts of the north and center of the Italian peninsula: Monter and Tedeschi, 134. On Islam and the Venetian Inquisition, see Plakotos, 2005.

[15] Kissane, 16.

[16] Seitz, 41–42.

[17] Pullan, xiv. Note that quantitative analysis is problematic, given that individuals were often accused of several crimes. For exemplary statistical work on the Italian Inquisitions, see Monter and Tedeschi.

[18] Pullan; Seitz; R. Martin. For an overview of the Venetian Inquisition see, Calimani, 5–78.

explicit in the 1980s in the work of sociologists as well as historians, concerns the multifaceted experiences and ideas involved in the formation and expression of religious identities, for ordinary lay people.[19] In 2013 historians Alec Ryrie and Judith Pollmann asked "what it meant" to be a Protestant and a Catholic respectively in the early modern period, seeing religious identity as present and formed in everyday life not just within church worship.[20] Food warrants further attention in this light as a primarily domestic activity. Since eating is an embodied and sensory process, a focus on food also contributes to a recent emphasis in Counter-Reformation scholarship on the role of sensation in the experience of Catholic worship.[21] In accordance with this historiographic turn, the very quotidian nature of eating makes it of central importance to how people understood and practiced their faith.

Through Venetian Inquisition cases relating first to Protestantism, second to witchcraft, and finally to Judaism, this article shows how the Holy Office used food to assert its model of post-Tridentine piety and the boundaries between Catholics and the non-Catholic populations in the city. These trial records concurrently act as access points to the experiences and beliefs—to the lived religion—of ordinary people living and working in Venice from 1560 to 1640. Accordingly, this article argues that food and eating practices, as essential and everyday features of peoples' lives, were vital in both defining and experiencing religious identity in the changing Counter-Reformation environment.

PROTESTANTISM

On the second Sunday of Lent 1560 a group of at least eleven people attended a dinner organized by the butcher Gianpiero da Bello. It took place in the house of two courtesans, sisters Anzola and Felicita (referred to in the records as Trevisanelle) near Ca'da Mosto (Santi Apostoli) in the *sestiere* (district) of Cannaregio. On May 22 the Venetian Holy Office questioned the cook. He accused Gianpiero and another butcher, Giacomo dall'Olio, of buying forbidden food, including two pairs of capons, one roasted and the other boiled and both cut into four pieces; roasted and boiled veal meat; and a salted tongue. When asked what fish was bought, the cook listed fried goby ("go"), four

[19] American scholar of religion Robert Orsi pioneered this approach; see Orsi.

[20] Ryrie, 1; Pollmann, 180. *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy*, published in 2018, subsequently drew the reader into the Renaissance household as a site of vivid lay spirituality: Brundin et al.

[21] Boer; Boer and Göttler.

roasted mullet ("barrboni") from the grill, and a gilt-head bream ("ora").[22] The apprentice Gamaria added that they had also bought chicken livers, and Anzola included a pie made with lard, in her testimony.[23] The Inquisitors condemned fraternizing with courtesans at what was seemingly a raucous banquet, but were most concerned about the consumption of meat, which was illicit during the penitential period of Lent. The testimonies of the attendees made clear that they were aware that this was a crime. Anzola claimed that while she and her sister were at the dinner she ate only four pistachio nuts. In fact, she claimed that she had really wished to eat no food at all but to go to bed because she felt unwell; her early retirement, somewhat conveniently, meant that she could not comment on who had broken the fast. Lorenzo di Sensori, however, claimed that the women had eaten meat. His consumption, Lorenzo argued, was legitimate because he had a license from his priest at Santa Maria due to a broken leg.[24] Indeed, for a fee, priests could grant Lenten dispensations to their parishioners on the grounds of infirmity, age, pregnancy, and wet nursing, and to those poor in receipt of charity.[25] Josepo de Antonio dal Purgo also claimed that he was allowed to eat meat, in this case because of a head injury. Marco di Mascari, accountant at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, gave no excuse for his behavior, simply asking for mercy from the Inquisitors. The punishment was a fine of 25 ducats for Gianpiero and Giacomo, 15 ducats for Marco, 5 ducats for Lorenzo and Josepe, and 10 ducats between Felicita and Anzola, money that the holy tribunal would put toward "pious works."[26]

It was, famously, such an instance that ignited the Swiss Reformation. In defense of the printer Christoph Froschauer (ca. 1490–1564), who had eaten sausage at a banquet during the Lent of 1522, prelate Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) argued, as would other Protestant Reformers across Europe, that there was in fact no scriptural authority for food prohibitions of any kind after the creation of the New Testament, and that the church was therefore unjustified in enforcing fasting at set times.[27] To Martin Luther (1483–1546), enforced fasting was also evidence of the corruption of the papacy, since those who

[22] ASV, Santo Uffizio (SU), b. 15, proc. dell'Olio, 22 May 1560. All translations are the author's except where otherwise noted. All dates from the Inquisition trials are given as originally recorded.

[23] ASV, SU, b.15, proc. dell'Olio, 22 May 1560; 13 May 1560.

[24] ASV, SU, b.15, proc. dell'Olio, 22 May 1560; 23 July 1560.

[25] Gentilcore, 111.

[26] ASV, SU, b. 15, proc. dell'Olio, 23 July 1560; 27 July 1560; 27 August 1560: "opere pie."

[27] Albala, 2011, 41; Kissane, 53–75.

could not afford a dispensation on account of having to fast from butter during Lent were forced to use oil of such bad quality that the clerical men of Rome "would not grease their shoes" with it.[28] Similar ideas sometimes emerged in Venetian Inquisition trials. For instance, in 1635 Ventura Amicio reportedly claimed that Lent was not instituted by God but by the pope who wished to sell "barrels of salted sardines."[29] While the case against Gianpiero and his companions appears to have related to an isolated event, listed under the crime of *cibi proibiti*, accusations of the regular consumption of meat on fast days was an almost universal feature in trials in which the defendant was accused of Lutheranism.

In 1571 Guido Antonio Pizzamano was denounced to the Holy Office for having reportedly fathered a child (although he died as a baby) with a nun from the monastery of Santo Spirito, Camilla Rota, whom he had moved into the marital home. According to a worker in the household, Guido's wife Marina slept on a lower half story, while Guido slept with the nun above.[30] Even in this scandalous case, Antonio's dietary habits featured heavily in how others judged his moral character. Both Samaritana di Franceschi and Polonia di Ragni testified that Camilla had told them that she wanted to leave Antonio. This was because he was "a bad man" and a "Lutheran" who "ate meat on Friday and Saturday," and because "on Holy Friday he ate eggs and cheese."[31] As well as Lent, the forty days that preceded Easter Sunday, the Catholic Church instituted the eve of saints' days, ember days (at the start of each season), and Friday and Saturday each week as fasts from all meat products. In his study of women in Renaissance Venice, John Martin has revealed further cases in which wronged wives denounced their husbands to the authorities, often employing similar accusations of fast breaking.[32] The Inquisitors, and Venetian society more broadly, therefore understood failure to adhere to these dietary laws as indicative of Lutheran heresy.

Another staple accusation in Lutheranism trials was the failure to communicate at least once a year, a necessity confirmed by the Council of Trent in its thirteenth session on 11 October 1551.[33] Since not to communicate was a visible rebellion from the church's rules, in almost all cases the Inquisitors asked

[28] Albala, 2003, 200.

[29] ASV, SU, b. 92, proc. Ventura Amicio and Marco Amicio, 12 June 1635, 8^{v}: "barilli di sardelle salate."

[30] ASV, SU, b. 32, proc. Guido Antonio Pizzamano, 11 December 1571, 3^{r}.

[31] Both were workers in the house of Marieta Moresini, whose mother Isabella worked in Guido's house. ASV, SU, b. 32, proc. Guido Antonio Pizzamano, 11 December 1571, 4^{v}–5^{v}: "un' mal homo," "lutherano," "manzaua carne de uenere, et de sabbato," "ha' mangiato il uenere di santo oue, et formaio."

[32] J. Martin, 22–23.

[33] Schroeder, 80 (thirteenth session, 11 October 1551).

witnesses whether they had seen the accused at Mass and how often they had communicated.[34] Moreover, the reliability of the witness was often judged based on this criteria, as it was a sign of moral respectability. Some cases involved more explicit disregard for the sacramental power of the Eucharistic wafer. For example, Marcantonio Soprani, a *specièr* (a pharmacist or seller of spices), came under suspicion of Lutheranism in 1571.[35] After the death of the tailor Bortolo Natatlis's son, Marcantonio reportedly claimed that they would have done better to communicate with a piece of bread rather than with the Eucharist. The main witness, Battista Milanese, was unsure whether Marcantonio had mentioned bread, or "panadella," a kind of bread soup.[36] Similarly, in the case of the Venetian Domenico Lamiter, the Holy Office heard in 1560 that rather than communicating as a Catholic, Domenico "would communicate at home with table bread."[37] These accusations mirrored the central theological divisions between Protestants and Catholics in the Reformation period. All Protestant Reformers rejected the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which maintained that the wafer used at Mass literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ at consecration. This meant that, to varying degrees, Protestant countries allowed the use of ordinary table bread in the sacrament.[38] At the Council of Trent, Catholic authorities had reinforced the doctrine of transubstantiation, so that any disrespect or denial of the sanctity of the Eucharistic wafer, as in the cases above, would be branded as heretical.[39]

In the early part of the period discussed here, Lutheranism was the biggest concern of the Inquisition, making up a significant 800 *processi* (trials) out of the 1,550 surviving from the sixteenth century.[40] While this reflects in part the use of the term to describe all of those accused of Protestant heresy, it also reflects the strong German presence in the city. Alberto Bolognetti (1538–85), Venetian nuncio from 1577 to 1581, reported that one of the two biggest

[34] Noncommunicating could be a "widely recognised sign" of "conscientious objection" in other contexts in Europe—for example, in Protestant England it was practiced by Catholics and brought with it huge recusancy fines: Walsham, 54.

[35] See Boerio, 685, s.v. "specièr."

[36] ASV, SU, b. 30, proc. Marcantonio Soprani, 13 November 1571. See Boerio, 467, s.v. "panedela."

[37] ASV, SU, b. 15, proc. Domenico Lamiter, October 1560: "comunicasse in casa co'l pan a tauola."

[38] For an exploration of this matter in the English case, see Haigh.

[39] Schroeder, 75 (thirteenth session, 11 October 1551).

[40] Pullan, 8.

threats for Catholicism in Italy was the presence of roughly nine hundred Germans in Venice, only two hundred of whom were not "heretics." They could be divided, he said, into three groups: those who served in private houses who "live well in appearance" but who may in practice be suspect; artisans who, so as not to damage their trade, did not discuss religion, but most likely went to Germany to communicate "in a heretical way" at Easter; and finally there were those more economically significant merchants who lived in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in open contempt of the Catholic Church by, among other things, eating meat together on prohibited days.[41] Concern about this Lutheran influence translated into the management of their food practices; from 1580 Bolognetti made it the task of the Holy Office to take over from the patriarch in inspecting the kitchens of German inns on Fridays, Saturdays, and vigil days. The Holy Office also urged those involved in the preparation of bulk food to observe Lent, although this power was repressed in the 1620s by the government, who wished to limit the expanding powers of the clerical wing of the Inquisition from admonishing those who had not yet offended.[42] Bolognetti complained that the Venetian lords were lenient with foreign Protestants, allowing them to eat prohibited food in their own houses and to avoid taking Communion as long as it did not cause "scandal in public places."[43] Seemingly, the Venetian Inquisition was less concerned with German Lutherans, who had freedom of conscience, than with their influence on the Catholic population; fast breaking was an important indicator of the spread of such heresy. It is perhaps not surprising, then, to learn of the connection between Gianpiero and Giacomo's illicit Lenten feast and the Fondaco dei Tedeschi where Marco di Mascari worked as an accountant.[44]

Although far less common than accusations of Lutheranism, the Venetian tribunal also tried seventy-eight individuals specifically for Calvinism between 1547 and 1720.[45] For example, in accordance with the official religion of his homeland, Englishman Robert Risdon was examined for Calvinism in 1638 at the age of forty. Admitting to the charge, he described how he had lived in Zante for ten years (which was then in the possession of Venice), where he married a Greek woman "who lives as a Latin."[46] Robert freely presented food as central to his own religious identity, saying that he was "living as a Calvinist, but my wife as a Catholic, giving myself to eat every day meat and other things like

[41] Bolognetti, 278–79: "heretici," "vivino bene in apparenza," "a modo de gl'heretici."
[42] Pullan, 13.
[43] Bolognetti, 282: "scandalo ne' luoghi publici."
[44] ASV, SU, b.15, proc. dell'Olio, 27 July 1560.
[45] Monter and Tedeschi, 144.
[46] ASV, SU, b. 95, proc. Robert Risdon, 1 July 1638: "che uiua alla latina."

the English." In Venice, he continued to eat in this way before converting to Catholicism.[47] While the English were not confined to particular quarters, they were increasingly present in Venice at the end of the sixteenth century, as part of the grand tour that was to become a mainstay in the education of young noblemen over the next two centuries. After the papal interdict of 1606, which saw the expulsion of the religious orders from Venice, the Calvinist influence may have posed more of a threat to Catholic hegemony.[48] Published travel narratives suggest that English visitors were expected to adhere to the Catholic Church's fasting laws in Italy. For example, gentleman Fynes Moryson (1566–1630) arrived in Bologna in the Lent of 1594, hiring a chamber for "foure bolinei" (meaning *bolignei*, a coin minted in Bologna) a day. Served by the hostess of the inn, as was common practice in such establishments, Moryson lamented that since it was Lent, they were "forced to eat onely fish, as the Italians did." This meant purchasing an eel, a pike, apples, raisins, "small nuts," and wine.[49] During Lent the next year, crossing the border into the cantons of Switzerland to the north of Venice, Moryson was served meat by the people of the "reformed religion," which he said he was "glad as of a dainty." Likewise, he recorded in his 1617 travel narrative that the Italians visiting Switzerland were "forced to eat flesh without any scruple of conscience," in accordance with the local faith.[50] The Church of England continued to enforce Lenten abstinence from meat in this period, yet for both Robert Risdon and Fynes Moryson, fast breaking was a personal expression of the Protestant faith of England, as it was for other Calvinists and Lutherans across Europe.[51]

Food also played an important role in the religious identity construction of Marcantonio Varetta, who presented a confession of Calvinism to the Holy Office in 1567. The case requires special attention since it is unusual in length and depth and reads more like a travel narrative than a court case. Interestingly, while Marcantonio himself called Geneva "a land where all were Lutherans," the case in fact related to Calvinism, given that Geneva was the center of

[47] ASV, SU, b. 95, proc. Robert Risdon, 1 July 1638: "uiuendo io alla caluinista . . . dando io da mangiare ogni giorno carne et altro all' Inglesi."

[48] Pullan, 23.

[49] Moryson, bk. 2, 93.

[50] Moryson, bk. 2, 176.

[51] On English fasting laws, see Elton; Sgroi; Kaufman. On food and the construction of Protestant identity in the English Reformation, see Barnett. The English were afforded different levels of freedom—including in terms of food consumption—in different Italian states. For the interesting case study of British residents of Livorno, see Villani.

Calvinist Reformation.[52] Curious and eager to see what he thought of as a religious novelty, Marcantonio left his native Venice for Lyon, where he met a man called Gasparo who took him to Geneva. Arriving in the city he was greeted by many Italians who had taken up the Protestant faith, and he was quick to distinguish them through their diet: "that day was Saturday, and in the morning the Minister had been given some meat to eat."[53]

Marcantonio eventually converted to Calvinism, having been convinced by arguments relating to idolatry and the importance of individual Bible study as a means of escaping the misinterpretations of the pope. Once he returned to Italy, living at first in Turin, Marcantonio explained that he continued to eat meat on Fridays as an expression of his Protestant faith. Equally, he refused to hear Mass in the Catholic Church, often waking late in order to miss the service, or leaving the house to pretend that he had been to Mass, each time at a different church. In Mantua, where he tried to convert the wife of his Lutheran host to Protestantism, he made his position on the Mass clear: "they have driven idolatry into it, a piece of bread and they adore it as it were God, and you would sooner believe men than Christ."[54] Marcantonio then returned to Venice, where he felt under great threat from the Inquisition, so subsequently moved to Padua and then to Rome. Here again he expressed his faith through the rejection of Catholic food laws: "I arrived around the middle of Lent, and in the trip I ate meat, eggs, and in Rome [I ate] eggs and fish."[55] Since in Rome he often ate with other Venetians who were not aware of his religious opinions, he said, so as not to arouse suspicion, "I did not eat except Lenten things."[56]

Marcantonio was clearly aware that fast avoidance was a conspicuous means by which to reveal his religious affiliation to others, and so he was careful to share this act only with those of the same religious disposition. While at certain points in his narrative he seems to have expressed some doubts about the Calvinist beliefs to which he had attached himself, his sudden need to reconvert to Catholicism came when he fell ill and began to fear that he had been punished by God, whom he believed would very likely kill him for his betrayal to

[52] ASV SU, b. 22, proc. Marcantonio Varetta, 22 January 1567: "una terra doue erano tutti Luterani."

[53] ASV SU, b. 22, proc. Marcantonio Varetta, 22 January 1567: "quel giorno era sabbato, et la mattina il Ministro ne hauea dato à mangiare della carne."

[54] ASV SU, b. 22, proc. Marcantonio Varetta, 22 January 1567: "et han cacciato dentro l'Idolatria, un pezzo di pane et lo fanno adorare per Idio, et uoi uorete credere piu presto à gl'huomini che à Christo."

[55] ASV SU, b. 22, proc. Marcantonio Varetta, 22 January 1567: "et arriuai circa la mittà di quadragesima, et nel uiaggio mangiauo della Carne, delli oua, et in Roma dell'oua et del pesce."

[56] ASV SU, b. 22, proc. Marcantonio Varetta, 22 January 1567: "non mangiai se non cose quadragesimali."

his native faith. He hoped to be pardoned by God and the Inquisitors by presenting this lengthy confession, in which he offered the names of several other Italians living secretly as Protestants. Importantly, Marcantonio ended his account by recording a benediction that he knew was said at meal times by Calvinists: "Lord God celestial Priest, lay your benediction at your pleasure, on us your poor servants, and sanctify this food, which are gifts from your generosity so that, participating soberly and worthily, we thank you as we are kept by Jesus Christ your son, knowing that one does not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. So as we eat we know everything is from the Lord God."[57] This table grace is a variant of the form of worship written by the recently deceased Reformed leader John Calvin (1509–64).[58] Marcantonio's decision to include the blessing shows both that domestic food culture was understood as a central feature of religious identity, and that the Inquisition was interested in understanding these embodied and everyday aspects of heresy.

Marcantonio's story attests to the transient nature of many of Venice's inhabitants' lives. In a cosmopolitan city, food—what was eaten, how it was eaten, and the theological meanings underlying these dietary decisions—was an important visible indicator of Protestant identity. Fast breaking, disrespecting the Eucharistic bread, or blessing food using unsanctioned formulas could equate to more than momentary lapses, rebellions from, or ignorance of good Catholic orthopraxy. The Venetian tribunal recognized the threat to the hegemony of Catholicism at the dining table, where both food and ideas were exchanged, as it policed the contact between Catholics and non-Catholic Christians.

WITCHCRAFT

While the Venetian tribunal was primarily concerned with Protestant heresy in its first few decades, by the 1580s it turned toward the threats of blasphemy, magic, and superstition from within the Catholic community, a trend mirrored in the wider Roman Inquisition.[59] Witchcraft was a major concern of the Holy

[57] ASV SU, b. 22, proc. Marcantonio Varetta, 22 January 1567: "La benedittione che si fa alla mensa da loro. Sig[no]re Idio Pre[te] celeste, Piaciati stendere la tua benedittione, sop[ra] noi tuoi poueri serui, et sanctificarci questi cibi, li gli sono doni della tua liberalità à fine che participandone sobreamente et degnam[en]te te ingratiamo come siamo tenuto per Iesu Christo tuo figliolo, conoscendo che l'suo' non uiue di pan solo, ma di ogni parola che esce dalla bocca di Dio, Cosi sia Mangiamo di quel che habbiamo tutto dal S. Idio uiconosciamo, la benedittione che fanno doppo l'hauer mangiato."

[58] Calvin, 2:97.

[59] Seitz, 5–6.

Office, taking up one-eighth of the total proceedings in the 1500s but reaching nearly half of cases in the following century.[60] The type of witchcraft encountered, defined, and punished in Venice was distinct to the rural *maleficium* (witchcraft intending harm) that was persecuted in many other places in Europe in the so-called witch craze. Features of such, including incest, cannibalism, and the witches Sabbath, as well as the "milk magic" described by Kissane in seventeenth-century Shetland, were absent in the cases of the urban Venetian tribunal.[61] Moreover, no one person was sentenced to death for witchcraft until the end of the period under discussion.[62] Instead, in Venice, where the Inquisition rather than civil authorities had exclusive authority over witchcraft, the term *stregoneria* (witchcraft) was used to refer to any attempt to manipulate supernatural forces to one's own benefit.[63] As Jonathan Seitz has argued, as a result, to study witchcraft trials in Venice is to explore the boundaries between the natural and supernatural in early modern thought. Contemporary natural magicians like Giambattista della Porta (ca. 1535–1615) were said to legitimately harness the power of natural elements like plants, gems, and planets; and demons were part of the natural order because they were created by God. Yet, these ideas had little impact on Venetians in Inquisition trials who were accused of manipulating these things via supernatural phenomena.[64] As an essential feature of the natural world, food and drink were a routine feature in witchcraft trials. The cases show how lay practices involving foodstuffs often conflicted with official notions of Catholic piety.

I begin this exploration of food and witchcraft with the especially rich case of Splandiana Mariano and her mother Valeria Brugnalesco (a physician's widow), who were both residents of San Polo in Venice. The love interest of Valeria's sister Fulvia, Lucrezio Cilla, denounced Splandiana and Valeria for practicing witchcraft and diabolism on 30 May 1587.[65] Ultimately, after abjuring their actions, the women were publicly whipped from St. Mark's Square until the Rialto, where they were put in the pillory for an hour; they were then banished from Venice and its territories for five years, a relatively severe punishment given to convicted witches by the Venetian tribunal.[66] The conflict started

[60] Pullan, 8.

[61] Kissane, 138–46. There is a huge literature on witchcraft in early modern Europe. For seminal studies, see Cohn; Macfarlane.

[62] Seitz, 38.

[63] R. Martin, 3; Seitz, 2.

[64] Seitz, 12–13.

[65] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 30 May 1587.

[66] Seitz, 40.

when Valeria and Splandiana accused Lucrezio of stealing some jewelry and other expensive objects from them. In order to come to this conclusion, the women admitted that one evening they had gathered in Valeria's darkened kitchen under candlelight and invoked the power of the devil by adding a wedding ring to a vessel of holy water. This was a common divination experiment, known as *inghistera*, which comes from the name of the long-necked glass carafe used. Following a well-known formula, the women conjured diabolical spirits in the name of a "white angel" over the substance,[67] in the presence of two virgins and a pregnant woman (important because of the virginity of the fetus[68]), named Polonia.[69] Moreover, in order to torment someone, they reportedly invoked the devil with certain words said over a boiling potion made up of an orange, holy oil, a bundle of wood, and (in some statements) also earth from the churchyard.[70] Sacramental substances, such as holy water and oil, as well as the wafers of the Eucharist, were significant in such heterodox practices. As Caroline Walker Bynum has demonstrated, medieval piety had involved a widespread recognition that matter, including the most common comestibles of herbs, bread, and water, could be imbued with miraculous power. Outside of church, the laity might invoke this power by sprinkling the crumbs of the Host on their fields, or blessing their foodstuffs.[71] Sacramental power was confirmed by the Tridentine church, which reasserted the transformative properties of the Host, and which even encouraged the laity to take holy water into their houses to aid prayer and piety.[72] It is, therefore, perhaps unsurprising that the power of church sacramentals was subsequently adopted in lay traditions for heterodox purposes. As Splandiana and Valeria admitted in their trial, they had inverted the intended use of sacramentals as tools for worshipping God in order to worship the devil.[73] Although the authorities recognized the play of the devil in the natural world, devil worship was

[67] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 31 July 1587, 30^{r}: "ang[el]lo bianco."

[68] R. Martin, 117.

[69] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 11 January 1587, 16^{r}; 22^{r}–23^{v}.

[70] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano.

[71] Bynum, 2011, 22–25, 153.

[72] Schroeder, 73 (thirteenth session, 11 October 1551); Corry et al., 160. Other holy substances, like Eucharistic wafer, holy oil, holy land, or pieces of altar table, had to be extracted by corrupt means. For example, holy stone and oil were collected by Ulisse, Splandiana's brother, who was a clergyman at the church of San Mattio de Rialto. ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 11 June 1587, 18^{v}; 21^{r}.

[73] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc.Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 31 July 1587, 30^{r}; 31^{r}.

apostasy in the eyes of the church. Valeria asked pardon for her "very grave error" in "apostatizing from the faith," having been led astray from true "reverence" and "worship" of "only one God."[74]

Others, as well as using sacramental substances, believed that they had to pay demons to obtain the intended effect. Payment was often in the form of salt, as in the 1640 case of Isabella Novaglia (known as Zavatina).[75] The use of salt was not incidental but based on a Judeo-Christian tradition in which it was seen as particularly holy. In the book of Leviticus all offerings were commanded to be seasoned with salt in the temple, and in the Catholic Church salt was exorcised and added to holy water.[76] When such women conjured demonic forces, therefore, they made use of established Catholic conceptions of matter—oftentimes foods and drinks—as powerful portals to supernatural power.

Food, in the form of beans, was also a pervasive feature of witchcraft trials in a divinatory practice in which beans (though sometimes other non-comestible substances were used, such as cords) were thrown while the practitioner recited certain formulas. The way in which the beans landed could then be interpreted in order to answer a question. This practice was so commonplace that even those who had not been denounced for bean casting were in many instances sentenced to wear the placard in the pillory that read: "for love magic, witchcraft, and bean-casting."[77] Food and drink were also often reportedly used in so-called love magic, in which the practitioner sought to create or destroy relationships. For example, in 1625, potions (notably containing holy water) were sold by two women called Maria Caena and Zuanna to two nuns called Gradenega and Camilla who wanted to win the affections of Contarina, another nun in the convent.[78] In such instances of love magic or bean casting, as Seitz has argued, the Inquisition was concerned with the heterodox notion that it was possible to use such practices to force another to act against their will or to learn things that were hidden from human knowledge.[79]

As they were in devil worship, sacramental substances were important in the practice of love magic. For example, the wafer of the Eucharist featured in a case from 1588, in which it was offered to the courtesan Paolina di Rossi by her friend, the priest Felice di Bibona, to win back the affections of the nobleman

[74] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 31 July 1587, 30^{r}: "grauissimo error[e]," "apostatando dalla fede," "reuerir[e]," "adorar[e]," "un solo Dio."

[75] ASV, SU, b. 96, proc. Isabella Novaglia, 31 May 1640, 16^{v}. See also R. Martin, 105.

[76] Lev. 2:13: "add salt to all your offerings"; Sodi and Arcas, 150.

[77] "Per herbarie e strigarie e buttar fave": R. Martin, 122. The term *herbarie* was linked to folk remedies but had also come to refer to "love magic": R. Martin, 4.

[78] ASV, SU, b. 81, proc. Maria Caena.

[79] Seitz, 61.

Gian Battista Giustinian. Although the priest claimed he had not actually consecrated the Host, he admitted that he had written on it the words of consecration: *Hoc est enim corpus meum*. Paolina declared that the magical power of the bread had frightened her so much that she hid it in a sewing basket, believing it too dangerous to use. Yet others testified that she had in fact given it to a servant to be placed in Gian Battista's soup.[80] In a similar form of love magic, Splandiana was also accused of adding human semen and her own vaginal fluids (collected on a tissue) to a cup of white wine. Over this she had said certain formulaic words, so that whoever drank it would fall in love with her. Her mother reportedly ruined the experiment since, returning home, she unknowingly drank the potion, which had been intended to win the affections of another Gian Battista, whose surname was Marascotto.[81] Unlike in Paolina's case, the ingredients in Splandiana's love magic potion contained no sacramental substances, but the power of the drink seemed to be at least in part reliant on the intimacy of the bodily substances used, which were obviously sexually significant. This was not uncommon. Paolina, too, was asked if she had added her menstrual blood to a glass of wine for Gian Battista to drink to the same effect.[82] The necessity that these potions were drunk or eaten, that they were taken into the body in order to emit this potency, feasibly reflected the bodily union that both Splandiana and Paolina desired.

Finally, potions used for love magic were often intertwined with medicinal remedies. Having first explored the case against the two aforementioned nuns, Gradenega and Camilla, the Holy Office sought evidence against Zuanna, the mysterious healer who had accompanied Maria Caena to the convent to sell her wares. They found that a certain Catterina had paid Zuanna 12 lire for an unguent used to cure her daughter Orsetta from a suspected supernatural curse. This medicinal remedy was combined with accepted religious formulas. For example, Zuanna applied the unguent to Orsetta's body in the shape of the cross, while invoking the Madonna and the Holy Trinity.[83] When she was finally located by the Inquisitors, Zuanna recounted to them the words that she routinely used to heal her patients: "In the name of God and of the Virgin Mary, the church made the *P*[*ate*]*r n*[*oste*]*r* and the Angel Gabriel made the Ave maria; and the church accomplished in the name of God, and of the Virgin Mary, and of the most holy rosary, this illness rises from this

[80] Ruggiero, 90–94.

[81] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 11 June 1587, 17^{v}–18^{r}.

[82] Ruggiero, 92.

[83] ASV, SU, b. 81, proc. Maria Caena, 28 November 1625, 13^{r}.

creature, and from this darkness, in the name of God and of the Virgin Mary."[84] When Orsetta ate, Zuanna also urged her to make the sign of the cross, as protection against tampering, decay, and evil forces in the food.[85]

The Catholic population would have been used to this practice. Silvio Antoniano (1540–1603), priest and secretary of the College of Cardinals, was one of many post-Tridentine authorities to publish a lay guide to piety, in which he encouraged the consumer to make the sign of the cross repeatedly throughout the day, including at the table.[86] The pairing of officially recognized religious incantations with oils and herbs was not an uncommon part of lay religiosity, especially for local female healers or medicine women, like Zuanna. It is a commonplace feature of the remedies described in detail by the well-known healer Helena (known as "la Draga"), whose *processo* of 1571 reads much like a recipe book.[87] Indeed, Zuanna's defense rested on the assumption that these cures were ingrained in normal life. She presented herself as elderly (she was fifty years old), ignorant of the workings of the Holy Office, and unaware of her deviance from the Catholic Church.[88] The Counter-Reformation authorities, however, maintained that these material remedies should work based on their own natural qualities, rather than by evoking supernatural forces.[89] In fact, across Europe female healers were increasingly regulated and excluded from the professionalized practice of medicine, especially in the early seventeenth century.[90] As Christopher Black argued to be the case for lay methods of coping with demonic possession that competed with the church's authorized exorcists and meticulous guidelines,[91] the remedies that many sought when dealing with life's manifold problems (both mental and physical) conflicted

[84] ASV, SU, b. 81, proc. Maria Caena, 2 August 1626, 17^{r}: "In nome de dio et della verzene maria, la Giesia hà fatto il P[ate]r n[oste]r, et l'Angelo Gabriel hà fatto l'Aue maria; et la Giesia l'hà compia, in nome de dio, et della Verzene maria, et del s[antissi]mo Rosario, questo mal se lieua da questa creatura, et da questa tenebria, in nome de dio et della verzene maria."

[85] ASV, SU, b. 81, proc. Maria Caena, 28 November 1625, 13^{v}.

[86] Antoniano, 55.

[87] ASV, SU, b. 30, proc. Elena Draga.

[88] When asked, Zuanna said that she didn't know what the Inquisition did, to which she got this handy summary in response: "the tribunal of the Holy Office proceeds against the violators of religion, like heretics, suspects of heresy, against spells, heretical blasphemers, witchcraft, and similar things" ("il tribunale del s[an]to off[izi]o uuol procedere contra li uiolatori di Religione, come heretici sospetti di heresia, contra malie, biastematori hereticali, strigorie, et cose simili"): ASV, SU, b. 81, proc. Maria Caena, 2 April 1626, 16^{v}.

[89] Seitz, 14.

[90] Whaley, 26–31.

[91] Black, 190.

with the church's own set of rules and formulas for the harnessing of supernatural powers.

The cases discussed above illuminate a predominantly female network of lay religiosity. When Valeria was robbed, she relied on the experience of other women, testifying that her stepdaughter Helena knew of two virgins who had practiced the *inghistera* before.[92] When Zuanna first came to administer cures to Orsetta, she reportedly left when she saw that Orsetta's husband was at home, which perhaps suggests that it was a private female practice.[93] Women were also more generally associated with food production. Despite the fact that the masters of a household in Venice would often visit the market to purchase food (a practice that aroused comment in English travel narratives), women more often prepared meals.[94] This is clear in the case of Silvestro Gallo, boatman at the *traghetto* (ferry) of S. Felice, who was taken to the Inquisition in 1632 by his wife, sister-in-law, and brother-in-law for eating prohibited chops and sausages on Christmas Eve. Silvestro had reportedly demanded that his wife cook the food, as well as eat it, and when she refused, he had violently threatened her.[95] Many other women who came before the tribunal claimed that they had been forced to break fasts themselves under the direction of their husbands, a claim that reflected domestic gender norms.[96] Women were also able to physically produce food in the form of breast milk, which could legitimately excuse them from fasting, but could also be used as evidence in witchcraft trials. When Isabella Novaglia was accused of witchcraft in 1640, one of her suspect behaviors was eating meat during Lent without a license to do so. The defense was that it was necessary to eat meat to feed her daughter, who had been ill for ten months and could not get nourishment elsewhere.[97] As Caroline Walker Bynum eminently demonstrated in her study of medieval holy women, such connections to the production of food and to nourishment made food a particularly female-gendered tool for expressing piety.[98] Likewise, in Venetian Inquisition trials the typically close connection between women and the acts of cooking and feeding related to distinct forms of female piety. When such culinary practices were manipulated in ways that went counter to

[92] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 11 June 1587, 22^{v}.

[93] ASV, SU, b. 81, proc. Maria Caena, 4 December 1625, 15^{v}.

[94] For example, "It is the fashion of *Italy,* that onely men, and the Masters of the family, goe into the market and buy victuals, for seruants are neuer sent to that purpose, much lesse women, which if they be chast, rather are locked vp at home, as it were in prison": Moryson, bk. 1, 70.

[95] ASV, SU, b. 88, proc. Silvestro Gallo, 12 February 1632.

[96] J. Martin, 23–24.

[97] ASV, SU, b. 96, proc. Isabella Novaglia, 23 August 1640, 39^{r}.

[98] Bynum, 1987.

the established church, women were likely to be accused of witchcraft. This was of course not the only reason that witchcraft was a female-gendered crime. For example, according to Daniela Hacke's work on women and sex in early modern Venice, men could accuse women of love magic in order to deal with their own feelings of "jealousy and emotional frustration."[99] The reforms relating to the sacrament of marriage meant that the post-Tridentine church was more concerned with managing sexual relations. Nor, indeed, was the incorrect use of comestible substances the only means by which women accused of witchcraft erred in the eyes of the church. Women often, for example, reportedly made use of adulterated formulaic invocations that were legitimately used in the Catholic Church. Splandiana was accused of having a rosary without the cross and of having said Paternosters (the Lord's Prayer) without saying amen, for instance.[100] Others sought to harness the power of objects covertly blessed by priests, including papers marked with magical symbols.[101] However, many of the features of Venetian witchcraft trials—the use of beans and salt, the making of potions and remedies on the hearth, feeding others (mainly men) love potions—belonged within the female realm of the production of food and drink.

As in Isabella Novaglia's case, denunciations of witchcraft were further connected to food since they frequently included the familiar charge of fast breaking. Valeria Brugnalesco, for instance, was accused of eating eggs and other prohibited foods during Lent and on vigil days, which supposedly reflected her belief that all days were equal.[102] This idea was commonplace in Protestant criticism of Catholic fasting days, whereas the Catholic Church continued to assert that some days were more divine than others. Another time Valeria was accused of eating an omelet, which contained eggs and possibly cheese, on the vigil of the Madonna festival (perhaps meaning the feast day of Madonna della Salute, celebrated on November 21 in Venice).[103] While those accused of witchcraft or magic most often came from within the Catholic population, the association with non-Catholic dietary practice further enforced their break with the church. Valeria's illicit consumption habits were, in fact, specifically associated with a lurid connection to the Jewish community. Lucrezio Cilla testified that Valeria actually lived in the ghetto, "eating Fridays,

[99] Hacke, 174. See also Ruggiero, 28–29.
[100] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano.
[101] Black, 190.
[102] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano.
[103] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano, 33^{r}.

and Saturdays that which the Jews eat."[104] Valeria subsequently admitted that she had indeed lived in the ghetto for a couple of years, working as a teacher, where she consumed some fruit, fried fish, and matzo (indicative of the unleavened bread eaten during Passover), although she denied having eaten any Jewish meat.

Rebecca Earle's work on the colonial encounter in Spanish America has shown that diet underpinned early modern European discourses of racial difference. As she highlights, colonial writers worried that what they ate would alter both their character and their body, leaving them less Spanish and perhaps, then, less Christian.[105] Jewish people were also seen as physically distinct from Christians on account of their diet; Englishman Henry Buttes reasoned in his dietary that as "great Goose-eaters" Jewish people were melancholic and "their colour swort."[106] By consuming Jewish food, the implication was that Valeria was in danger of becoming (at least in part) Jewish, almost other, an alienation from the Christian church that was somehow corporeal and essential rather than simply intellectual. It is to food and the Jewish population in Venice that I now turn.

JUDAISM

The papal bull *Cum Nimis Absurdum* (Since it is absurd), issued by Pope Paul IV on 14 July 1555, laid down several restrictions on Jews in the Papal States, since it argued that their "own guilt has consigned them to perpetual servitude."[107] Pertinent to the present purposes is the order that forbade Jews from working in public on Sundays and other Christian feast days, and from fraternizing with Christians—specifically, from eating together.[108] In 1573, Venice's Council of Ten and the Zonta offered safe conduct to Spanish and Portuguese Jews so long as they moved into the ghetto in Cannaregio. So-called new Christians, ex-Jews from the Iberian Peninsula who had converted (normally by force) to Catholicism, were also welcomed in Venice, despite concern from the then nuncio Giambattista Castagna (1521–90) that the presence of Marranos (a term more specifically referring to those who continued to

[104] ASV, SU, b. 59, proc. Valeria Brugnalesco and Splandiana Mariano: "magnando il uenere, et Sabb[at]o di quel che magnauano loro ebrei."

[105] Earle.

[106] Buttes, 64. *Swort*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is a variation of *sward*, referring to a darker color, and perhaps also to the skin of a pig. This means that the use of the word was likely a racist quip based on the Jewish association with pork. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "sward."

[107] For this quotation, see Stow, 294.

[108] The full text can be found in an English translation in Stow, 291–98. For a discussion on its impact in Venice, see Ravid, 2012.

secretly practice Judaism, and who had been banished from Venice in 1497 and again in 1550) would threaten the religious life of Venice.[109] Notwithstanding this comparative toleration, the Venetian Holy Office, in accordance with the papal bull, was concerned that Jews and Christians did not mix in intimate ways, like by sharing of food, that might lead to conversions and accordingly threaten the supremacy of the Catholic faith. This was another reason that Splandiana's and Valeria's supposed connection to Jewish people was problematic to the Inquisition. Similarly, one Giorgio Moretto, for instance, was regularly seen in the ghetto, and admitted to having regularly eaten and partied with Jews, although he denied accusations of having broken Lent by eating a capon off a spit and other forbidden foods.[110] In the same way, in the cases made against New Christians, which will make up the majority of those discussed here, eating with Jews in the ghetto was used as evidence of apostasy, of lapsing back into Judaism (dubbed *il giudaizzare* or, roughly translated, Judaizing). As Giorgos Plakotos has noted, the Venetian authorities were concerned with policing those who blurred the boundaries between different religious groups, who appeared to be neither entirely Jewish nor entirely Christian.[111]

The case against the Portuguese merchant Gaspar Ribiera and his son Giovanni was the biggest concerned with Judaism undertaken by the Venetian Holy Office in the Cinquecento.[112] It was connected to the Portuguese Inquisition too, since Giovanni and Gaspar's first wife Isabel de Medina had both first been tried in Lisbon as Marranos. All three then moved to Venice to escape the Portuguese Inquisition around 1560. However, Giovanni later secretly married a Jewish woman named Alumbra in the ghetto and was brought in front of the Venetian tribunal. When Giovanni died in 1579, Gaspar, at eighty years old, was accused of apostasy for having known and approved of the union.[113] Food played heavily in Gaspar's narrative when he was first questioned in regard to this crime, in March 1580. He was asked whether the Jewish woman in whom his son Giovanni was interested had visited his house, and Gaspar was happy to admit that she had come round to see Giovanni when he himself was in bed (perhaps therefore stressing his lack of participation), and that he had visited

[109] Zorattini, 1980–99, 4:9; Pullan, 170. Marranos were officially banned from Venice two times (1497 and 1550), but in 1589 it was made clear that those who converted back to Judaism and lived in the ghetto would be tolerated. Zorattini, 2001, 106.

[110] Zorattini, 1980–99, 8:81–97.

[111] Plakotos, 2018, 277.

[112] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:8. The case is also discussed at length in Pullan, 230–42.

[113] Gaspar also died before his sentencing but was posthumously condemned of Judaizing.

her house in the ghetto so as to retrieve his son. Asked whether Alumbra had ever eaten in his house, Gaspar's response was impassioned: "Never, never!" He then admitted, somewhat reluctantly, that he had eaten at Alumbra's house in the ghetto, saying, "It could be that I had a pear, a cherry, a little bit of marzipan, a little bit of malvasia [wine]."[114] This exchange demonstrates the importance placed on the sharing of food as evidence of alliance in early modern Venice, a conception shared by modern-day sociologists. According to Claude Grignon, for example, "commensality is a result and a manifestation of a preexisting social group."[115] When pushed, Gaspar also added that Alumbra had given him "pignocata," small confectionary made with sugar and pine nuts, along with other fried treats.[116] Aaron de Civitate Castelli, a servant in Alumbra's house in the ghetto, confirmed that Gaspar had spent much time there with his "daughter-in-law," who gave him many sugared gifts, as well as "rafioli" (ravioli stuffed with herbs, cheese, eggs, and other ingredients) and "fritole" (fried doughnuts, perhaps also filled), especially when he was ill or during Carnival time.[117] The giving of food gifts was a common way of asserting friendship in the early modern period, especially during religious festivals, and from an anthropological perspective food is an important part of the continual reciprocal exchange that solidifies social groups.[118] The Inquisition interpreted this exchange of gifts as evidence of Gaspar's close relationship with Alumbra, and his complicity in his son's illicit marriage.

The Inquisition was also concerned with Gaspar and Giovanni's dietary practices, bringing one of the workers from the family house in Santa Maria Formosa, Mattea da Rippasicca, in for questioning. The Inquisitors first asked her to confirm that she cooked for Gaspar. She was then asked whether she cooked meat for him on prohibited days, which she denied, but she said that during Lent he sometimes ate eggs with lard, and flat bread with lard, claiming that he had a license from the pope to do so.[119] Similarly, Francesco Gomes, who worked in the Ribiera's house as a bookkeeper, reported on 18 October 1569 that: "While I was in their house, they sometimes did not eat in the morning but dined at the end of the evening. And I later understood that this was a custom of the Jews that they fast and don't eat if it isn't the evening. And I, either the day or the vigil last past of Saint Matthew, half an hour after the

[114] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:69: "Mai, mai! . . . Potria esser che io havesse tolto un pero, una ceriesa, un pocho de marzapan, un pocho de malvasia."

[115] Grignon, 24.

[116] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:70.

[117] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:84–85.

[118] For a summary of anthropological work on the giving of food as gifts, see Counihan, 13–14.

[119] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:99.

hour of dining, went to their house to speak with them and a young boy that was in their house said that they had gone to dine outside of the house. And knowing that they didn't go to eat outside, I became suspicious and I asked a Jew if it was a fast day for them and he said yes."[120] Francesco also reported that for four years, on the Christian "sittimana di Lazaro" (a reference to the raising of Lazarus as a foreshadowing of Christ's resurrection) and on Palm Sunday ("la festa delli Ulivi") that follows it, the family wore special clothing from the ghetto and ate "capons and meat," which was unlawful during Lent, along with "unleavened focaccia."[121] Adherence to the conflicting Jewish calendar of festivities visibly broke with the fasting laws of the Catholic Church.

In Isabel's trial back in Portugal, the continual adherence to Jewish periods of fasting and feasting also played an important role. She first came under suspicion in 1559 when another *conversa* (New Christian), Maria Fernandez, was questioned by the Inquisition in Lisbon. Maria said that four years ago Isabel had asked when the most important Jewish fast of "Quyppur," or Yom Kippur, would fall. When she was brought into questioning, Isabel claimed to be a good Christian, reciting, albeit with errors, the Paternoster, the Ave Maria, and so on. She then admitted, however, to having adopted advice from Joanna Lopez, an old *conversa*, seven or eight years ago, to follow an old Jewish custom of fasting on Monday and on Saturday when in difficulty. Isabel also reportedly celebrated a few Jewish festivals.[122] Some New Christians in Venice likewise continued to follow the Jewish calendar. In January 1579 the aforementioned Antonio Saldagna, an ex-friar from Setúbal in Portugal, accused Portuguese New Christians Michele Vas and Giorgio Lopes of secretly living as Jews in Venice. During Lent of 1577, for instance, he said, "all the aforesaid gathered with their family in the house of Girogio Lopes of San Polo and all night they got drunk and they danced and sang to make this night the festival of Purim, ordinary festival of the Jews."[123] Purim commemorates a story told in the book

[120] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:37: "Stando io in casa loro, non mangiavano la mattina <spesse> alcune volte ma dezunavano fin alla sera. Et io ho poi inteso che questo era talle costume delli Hebrei che ne loro degiuni non mangiano si non la sera. Et io o il giorno o la vigilia prossime passata di Santo Matteo, dopo meza hora l'hora di desinare, andai a casa loro per parlargli e un putto che sta in casa loro mi disse che erano andati a disinare fuori de casa. Et io che sapevo che non vano a mangiar fuori entrai in suspetto e domandai a un hebreo si quel dì era giorno de loro digiuno e mi disse de sì."

[121] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:38: "sittimana di Lazaro," "la festa delli Ulivi," "caponi e carne," "fugacci azzimi."

[122] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:13–14.

[123] Zorattini, 1980–99, 1:19: "si radunarono tutti li sopradetti con tutta la sua familia in casa di Giorgio Lopes a San Polo et tutta la notte si sono imbriagati et han ballato e sonato per esser questa notte la festa del Porin, festa ordinaria degli Hebrei."

of Esther, in which Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai saved the Jewish people of Persia from the slaughter ordered by Haman. It was celebrated with the exchange of foodstuffs and general feasting and festivity; the Venetian rabbi and scholar Leon of Modena (1571–1648) described how on the second night of Purim, "every one tries to have a lavish meal, as much as he can, and to eat and drink more than usual."[124] This celebration was particularly jarring for the Venetian authorities because it almost always fell during the Christian period of Lent, when Catholics were expected to fast and atone.

Outside of these periods of religiously significant consumption, lapsing Jews could also be identified by adherence to the Old Testament dietary laws. According to David Gentilcore, "goose-eating was as sure a sign as circumcision" to the Inquisitors across Catholic Europe. It appears in a Venetian case from 1558, when a suspected Judaizer from the town of Montagnana was accused of routinely eating kosher meat and goose.[125] Kosher meat comes only from animals that chew the cud and have split hooves, and therefore adhering to Jewish dietary law involved the visible rejection of a large number of dishes. This was clear in the case of the Spanish merchant Odoardo Gomez, who was accused of "Marranesimo," and defended himself in 1555 by declaring that he "and all of my house eat of the things that the Catholic Christians do, and that are prohibited to the Jews, that is the meat of pork, rabbits, hares and thigh meat and fish of every sort without any difference."[126] Furthermore, kashrut rules require all blood to be removed from the animal in one swift cut to the throat, in a practice known as *shechita*. A witness in the Ribiera case testified that whenever chicken was served Gaspar would indeed often use a special knife to cut its throat himself, though they were careful to add, "I do not know whether he did this to make it tastier or to perform the rites of the Jews."[127] By contrast, Christians believed that Saint Paul had dissolved the necessity to adhere to Old Testament dietary laws, instead teaching his followers that "every creature of God is good, & nothing ought to be refused, if it be received with thanks giving."[128] Diet was, therefore, a key marker of the difference between Jewish and Christian identity in Inquisition trials.

[124] Zorattini, 1980–99, 1:19: "ogn'uno si sforza far un pasto lauto il più che può e mangiar e bere più del solito."

[125] Gentilcore, 108–09.

[126] Zorattini, 1980–99, 2:90: "che io et tutti di casa mia mangiamo di tutte le cose che mangiano li catholici Christiani et sono prohibite alli Ebrei, cioè carne di porco, conigli, lepore et carne di cossa et pisces d'ogni sorte senza alchuna differentia."

[127] Translated in Pullan, 235.

[128] 1 Tim. 4:4.

Inquiries into what people ate were also paired with evidence of how people ate. As part of the Ribiera case, Stefano Noghera (whose real name was reportedly Feles del Castello), the son of an Inquisitor from Portugal, infiltrated the world of the New Christians in Venice, exposing a group of Portuguese merchants as apostates, including the aforementioned Giovanni Ribiera, Giorgio Lopes, Andrea Paz, Diego Vas, and his father Michele Vas. The first evidence of their crime was that "they blessed the table in Hebrew," or in a "Jewish way" but in Portuguese.[129] Table blessings were significant not just because of the social function that they performed, but because they connected the participants to the spiritual realm, a meaningful enactment of religious belief.[130] Isabel also admitted to throwing a pinch of dough into the fire when baking bread, according to the Jewish challah-making ritual.[131] This special braided bread was made for holy days, like the weekly Shabbat, and ritualistic words or blessings were said over it. These table rituals were clearly not sanctioned in the Catholic religion, providing Inquisitors with evidence of apostasy. It is also clear that food practices could allow New Christians to continue to connect to their native religion and culture. As Kissane observes in regard to New Christians living in fifteenth-century Castile, even if a conversion to Christianity was sincere, traditional or "cultural" kitchen habits were hard to break, or even to separate from the definitively "religious."[132] This, again, may have been particularly significant for women, like Isabel, who made the food for the household.[133]

Nonconforming New Christians were problematic to the Inquisition, which sought to divide Jewish and Christian spaces and interactions. Jews were tolerated so long as they lived in the ghetto, which was locked and guarded from sunset to sunrise. Yet, there were a number of reasons why New Christians might wish to move between the two faiths and spaces, notably trade with the Ottoman Empire, where Turks favored Jewish connections.[134] It was said of Gaspar Ribiera, for example, that he lived only as a Christian "in order to live comfortably and securely here in Venice and to attend to the business of a merchant, which he could not have done had he declared himself openly to be a Jew."[135] In addition to the fluid presence of dissenting New

[129] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:43: "benedicevano la mensa in hebreo," "al modo di Hebrei."

[130] Mintz and Du Bois, 107.

[131] Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:14. This practice was also a common feature of Inquisition trials against Jewish *conversas* in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Castile. See Kissane, 40–41.

[132] Kissane, 17–18.

[133] According to Isabel's stepmother, she "was always in her heart Jewish" ("sempre era stata hebrea in tel suo cuor"). Zorattini, 1980–99, 5:333.

[134] Black, 190.

[135] Pullan, 185.

Christians, the ghetto did not always equate to a homogenous and closed Jewish society, as the authorities would have liked. This is certainly clear in the autobiography of the rabbi Leon of Modena, who routinely left the Venetian ghetto during the day for a whole host of activities, including book shopping, gambling, and visiting Christian friends, and who recorded the frequent presence of Christians in the ghetto, some of whom even came to hear Jewish sermons.[136] As Brian Pullan notes, quite apart from religious beliefs, food, in the form of the alternative Jewish calendar of feast days, could be alluring to Christians. For example, the aforementioned Giorgio Moretto, a sailor and peddler, found himself repeatedly in trouble with the Inquisition on account of his persistent pursuit of a Jewish love interest, named Rachel, and in Jewish feasting (perhaps Purim) that offered relief from the trials of Lent. He was sentenced to three years of galley service.[137] Furthermore, the ghetto housed a number of poor foreign young men who carried out small menial tasks on the margins of society and who were problematic to the Inquisition. They had converted to Christianity but were ignorant of ecclesiastical law and so had come to dress as Jews and, importantly, they "eat and drink with Jews and who eat meat on Friday and Saturday like Jews."[138]

Practicing Christians and Jews could also come into conflict in the ghetto, as one unusual case demonstrates. On 19 April 1571 Bettin Bergametti, an Old Christian porter from Bergamo in Lombardy who lived in the parish of San Leonardo and worked in the nearby parish of San Geremia in Cannaregio, reported to the Holy Office that he had been attacked by "Jewish boys, youth, and women" in the ghetto when delivering a basket of bread to the residents two days previously.[139] As Bettin and the two bakers' assistants entered the ghetto, the crowd cried "Bread, bread, *scovoli, scovoli!*" and chased them, throwing the bread at them, along with stones and mud.[140] *Scovoli* appear to have been a kind of ball or brush of fodder and sticks, which Lunardo Ceteli, one of the two bakers' journeymen who accompanied Bettin, claimed had been ordered especially to contain almonds in preparation for the attack.[141] This, Bettin reported, had developed into a kind of annual ritual to mark the end of the Jewish festival of Passover; he knew of two other porters, Giacomo

[136] Modena, 5–6.

[137] Pullan, 61–62; Zorattini, 1980–99, 8:81–97.

[138] Zorattini, 1980–99, 2:19: "che manzano et beveno con Hebrei et che manzavano carne el venere et sabbo come Hebrei."

[139] Zorattini, 1980–99, 4:43: "putti [et] zoveni et donne hebrei."

[140] Zorattini, 1980–99, 4:43: "Pan, pan, scovoli, scovoli!" With thanks to Stefan Hanß for suggesting this case to me.

[141] See Boerio, 635, s.v. "scovolo"; 391, s.v. "mandola." Zorattini, 1980–99, 4:45.

and Frison, to whom the same thing had happened. Lunardo also claimed to have experienced this a year previously, but the second time was much more extreme. He explained that the ritual had a religious significance, because it was when "they start to eat bread," by which he meant specifically leavened bread that had been banned during Passover in imitation of the Israelites who fled from the Pharaoh.[142] The Inquisition classed this practice as a nuisance toward Christians, rather than as a heresy worthy of punishment. Indeed, one might place this event in the context of other ritualized battles between rival groups in early modern Venice, such as the yearly conflict between the Nicolotti (the fish sellers from San Nicolò di Mendicoli) and the Castellani (who lived in the east of the city), which took place on the subsequently named bridge Ponte dei Pugni (Bridge of the fists) in Dorsoduro.[143] The Inquisition case shows how food was used in a ritualized way to express the tension, and assert the difference, between Jews and Christians.

CONCLUSIONS

In the changed religious climate of the Catholic Reformation, we have seen how family, friends, neighbors, employees, and religious and medical authorities could all report suspicious beliefs and behaviors to the Inquisitors. The narrow and densely populated Venetian *calli* made others' actions easier to sense and to police. Indeed, even the smell of food could lead to denunciations. The brother- and sister-in-law of Silvestro Gallo, who ate meat on Christmas Eve while they were in bed in the room above, both mentioned the smell of cooked meat when they awoke the next day when reporting Silvestro to the Inquisition.[144] In the witchcraft trial against Maria and Zuanna, the Inquisition was interested in the "bad smell" of a powder, perhaps because it related to its supernatural power.[145] The senses were equally apparent in the testimony of Aaron di Grassin from Udine, who described an elaborate party in the ghetto thrown by the German Jewish innkeeper, called Lieberman, on a Saturday during Lent. He was accused of enticing four Christians present (two men and two women) to eat meat, chicken, salami, and cakes, among other things. The violin was then brought out and the group danced, and Lieberman served further treats, including "crostoli" (carnival pastries) and focaccia with butter and egg. Asked how he knew all this, Aaron claimed to have rented a room in the same house and to have been ill in bed. Because there was little space between his bed and

[142] Zorattini, 1980–99, 4:45: "cominciano a mangiar il pan."
[143] See Davis.
[144] ASV, SU, b. 88, proc. Silvestro Gallo, 12 February 1632.
[145] ASV, SU, b. 81, proc. Maria Caena, 4 December 1625, 15^{v}: "odor cattiuo."

the banqueting table he "could see and hear what they did."[146] It follows that when theological declarations were sparse, food emerged as a sensory and embodied language that all could understand as indicative of a person's relationship to the Catholic Church.

The cases recounted in this article from Venice's Santo Uffizio tribunal have demonstrated how the Catholic Church and its members used food to define the boundaries of the faith and community. Sometimes the Holy Office seemed to recognize that otherwise conforming Catholics could give in to the temptation to break fasting laws or be ignorant of expectations. In one such case, a teacher named Ambrosio Mazzoria served his student cheese on the vigil of Pentecost in 1589, arguing that "being late the vigil had past," while the student maintained that they could only eat after midnight.[147] The distinct category of *cibi proibiti* in the records suggests that some could break dietary rules while belonging to the church. Very often, however, fast breaking was interpreted as evidence of the heresies of Lutheranism or Calvinism, apostasy to Judaism, or witchcraft and diabolism. In the first circumstance, this reflected the Protestant rejection of Catholic fasting practices; Protestant Reformers argued that fasts should be initiated by individuals rather than the church and that they should not be defined solely in terms of abstinence from meat. Those following the Jewish religion rejected the Catholic fasts in favor of Jewish periods of prescribed abstinence. The crime of eating prohibited foods also fit with those who practiced witchcraft's rejection or misinterpretation of the correct form of Catholic religiosity. Such eating habits were sometimes built on relationships with Lutherans and Jews, adding to the supposed heterodoxy of those who practiced witchcraft, and the danger that they posed within the Catholic community. Indeed, not only the types of foods, but also the act of dining or sharing food with people of other faiths, could lead to denunciations. While the presence of Lutherans and Jews was tolerated in Venice for economic purposes, the Inquisition was concerned with segregating these communities, and sought to suppress those whose behavior did not fit with the faith that they professed, since this threatened the unity of the Catholic population. As I have shown, Catholics were technically banned from eating with Jews, and banquets with German Lutherans could be suspicious. These divisions were difficult to enforce in a population as transient as that of early modern Venice, where travelers and merchants came and went and where, despite regulations, enclosed spaces like the ghetto and the Fondaco dei Tedeschi were relatively open during the day.

[146] Zorattini, 1980–99, 9:95: "potevo a vedere e sentire quello che facevano."

[147] ASV, SU, b. 63, proc. Ambrogio Mazzoria, 6 January 1589: "essendo tardi era passata la vigilia."

Each type of charge that I have explored here was also linked to divergent ways of understanding food in terms of its connection to the immaterial realm. As in the examples above, Calvinists and Jews blessed foods with formulas that dissented from those enforced by the Catholic Church. It was common, too, in cases of Lutheranism for the perpetrator to admit to having rejected the holy power of the Eucharistic bread, and therefore to having failed to communicate, since they opposed the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Those accused of witchcraft, by contrast, often adapted established Catholic formulas—such as the use of holy water, Paternosters, and other prayers—to evoke supernatural powers in ways seemingly quite conventional within the lay Catholic community. Yet these practices were no longer acceptable to the post-Tridentine church, which set boundaries on supernatural power and its manipulation. Food practices were therefore a tool used both by the Inquisition and the Catholic populace to define the other.

Turning this vantage point on its head, this article has also highlighted the importance of food in how individuals experienced their faith—that is, in the creation or maintenance of embodied religious identities. Within the Catholic religion, local healers like Maria and Zuanna expressed their religiosity by evoking supernatural powers through foods to heal and harm. New Christians, like Isabel from Portugal, baked the blessed challah bread to enact their native Jewish faith transferred to Venice. Meanwhile, Venetian Marcantonio Varetta expressed his Calvinist faith in his travels across Europe through the consumption of meat during Lent with likeminded individuals. A recent scholarly interest in the religious experience of the laity, and in the role of sensation in post-Tridentine worship, would be enriched through a greater appreciation of the role of food and drink in religious identity construction.

It is also notable that these identities were governed by gender. When women were accused of witchcraft, it was often linked to their closeness to food production in the home and in the creation of healing remedies, in which matter was transformed. Female bodies were also more readily seen as porous and corruptible to the external threats of demonic possession. Women could explain fast breaking in this way, and were more often presented as ignorant or passive in regard to their dietary crimes than men. These provisional findings through a focus on food add to the work of Gretchen Starr-LeBeau, who has shown through an analysis of the language used in Roman Inquisition trials that men were more likely to defend their actions as "youthful indiscretions." In accordance with expected gender norms, women instead defined themselves in relation to others, as dutiful family members whose actions were often beyond their control.[148]

[148] Starr-LeBeau, 365.

Finally, Inquisition trials show that Catholic authorities seeking to enforce uniformity in Venice were faced with myriad versions of piety both from within the lay Catholic population and from discernible foreign groups who regularly interacted with them. This complicates the traditional focus of Reformation studies on the simple division between Protestantism and Catholicism, and suggests that official as well as heterodox Christian concepts might well have been more reliant on the interaction with, and the understanding of, other faiths than is usually allowed. As Rosa Salzberg has recently claimed in relation to Venetian lodging houses (as sites where interfaith encounters were necessarily concentrated): "Eating, sleeping, practicing devotion and recreation are deeply personal issues closely tied to one's sense of identity. Carrying them out in close proximity with relative strangers could trigger encounters, conflicts, and exchanges."[149] These encounters offer promising areas of scholarly exploration as Reformation historians increasingly look toward more integrated and global approaches to the study of early modern religious change.[150]

The fervor of the Inquisition in Venice was not static, as the Protestant threat had seemingly rescinded by the 1620s. Under Patriarch Giovanni Tiepolo (r. 1619–31) the council was primarily concerned with the internal threat of sorcery, and it met twice a week instead of the thrice-weekly meetings of the mid-sixteenth century.[151] Meanwhile, prosecutions for Jewish crimes had declined by the start of the seventeenth century.[152] Yet, in this changing environment, food and eating practices endured as vital to the many religious identities of those living and working in Counter-Reformation Venice after the Council of Trent.

[149] Salzberg, 411.

[150] See the introduction to *The Ashgate Research Companion*, 1–11; for a fascinating example of the direction of scholarship in this area, see Terpstra.

[151] Pullan, 11.

[152] Zorattini, 2001, 108.

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