

## The death of Abramo of Montecosaro

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**Abstract.** In this microhistory from 1553, set in Montecosaro, in east-central Italy, local officials, armed with their lord's permission, set out to catch a Jewish banker in sexual traffic with a Christian. To bait their trap, they hire a local woman, who agrees to be found at night in the banker's house. Two years later, the entrappers, arrested, jailed, and tried for high-handed tactics, recount their version of the enterprise, and the lord, also jailed, gives his. The unfortunate banker, meanwhile, has died of prison's rigors, while the lord has pocketed his fat ransom. Though harsh, the state courts aim to punish all those guilty of justice's miscarriage, including the rough handling of a Jewish victim. The article explores the attitudes of small-town Christians to the Jewish banker and strives to re-assemble the dialogue across the religious gap as the trap snaps shut. It also offers a well-furnished narrative from a period for which few extended Jewish tales survive.

### Preface

I often work from criminal trials, documents wonderful for vitality and color, but full of guile and lies. Since every trial was itself a story spooling out in court, and since every trial told stories about earlier events outside the court, such papers invite, among other uses, modern tales. Microhistories. I have for a long decade pursued the tangled epic of a Roman baron, and his restive peasants in several villages, who often loathed him and who at last rebelled. My interests there touch on peasant politics, rhetorics, and ideas about community. As I traced village tumults, I happened upon the story of a small-town Jewish banker who fell victim to this callous lord and his conniving local minions.

This microhistory will, I hope, enrich a sphere of Jewish history, that of early modern Italy, which seems short of stories. It is striking how rare and precious the surviving stories are, and how often scholars return to them, squeezing them hard for news and insight. Several things have conspired against the survival of rich narratives about the Jews of early modern Italy; the shape of their literary traditions, the paucity of papers of their beleaguered institutions, and the many uprootings Jews

suffered, even in the later-sixteenth-century Papal State. Lest scholars protest that, in fact, there are tales aplenty, let me define clearly what I mean here by “story.” Microhistory, famously, holds a magnifying glass to small things. It anatomizes moments, parses the micropolitics of congregations, families, coteries, and neighborhoods, decodes the lilt of conversations, and obsesses over semiotic quirks of minute transactions. Its stories, then, are textured accounts of lapidary moments. They offer microcosmic instances of daily life in which scholars, with their wisdom, might espy large skeins of meaning. We possess vivid Jewish moments in reasonable plenty, but find it hard to link them to sustained narratives. Full-blown stories like the one narrated here, because rare, invite a telling.

That said, I acknowledge the classic objections to microhistory. Readers will recognize them, as raised, for instance, in the debates around Po-chi Hsia’s *Trent 1475*.<sup>1</sup> Against that book, and others, critics have reminded us wisely of the gulf that often lay between what witnesses said in court and what they truly felt or believed, while the facts themselves lay yet further off.<sup>2</sup> All court testimony was performance; no witness was autonomous, and every utterance shared an unequal dialogue, explicit or implicit, between potent tribunal and wary speaker. In that exchange, the power of officialdom, the urgent politics of the moment, and the conventions of the law set tone and content. All true! Microhistory’s reply must be both canny and humble. The canny riposte: we will read skeptically, and carefully, with an eye to stakes and rhetorics. The humble one: our story is a mere try, a hypothesis, an educated guess.

All very well, critics reply, but what is the use of this or any obscure story, even if it borders on the true? Is such work not just antiquarian? I reply that my story here is but an offering to experts who will know better than I how to use it. It may bear witness to the fragility of Jews’ position in their communities, to the insidious pressures they suffered from their Christian neighbors, to their real but finite intimacy with those same neighbors, to Christian talk, thoughts, and feelings about their Jewish fellow townsfolk, or to the Italian law, that, despite politics, in Jewish matters still normally respected equity and due process.<sup>3</sup>

And then comes the second problem. Is this indeed a Jewish tale? For all microhistory’s problems, its glory is that it lets us hear the voice of forgotten commoners. We listen in, avidly. But, as readers soon will see, in our story, our poor Jewish banker is dead already, before the trial begins. We can see and hear him still, thanks to the assorted Christians

who did him in and then, on trial for their misdeed, scrambled to throw dust across their tracks and into the judges' eyes. So our microhistory, in a sense, portrays the doings of a Jewish banker, but only second-hand, and fishily. Have we not instead the tale of a conspiracy, a trap, a persecution? Is this not really, mostly, a Christian story? If so, why offer it in a journal dedicated to the history of the Jews? Because, in the touchy middle of the sixteenth century, the attitudes and actions of a lord, his villagers, his henchmen, and papal justice indeed do matter, and are portentous for the Italian Jewish fate.

### Prologue

By the time the others told their stories, as we have them now, Abramo, a Jewish banker in Montecosaro, had long been dead. Around his mute suffering the tellers circled, drawn toward this silent center not by gravity or grief or felt guilt, but by the double tug of politics and judicial process. Trials for murder or wrongful death are often teasers; historians regret the missing witness and strain their wits to fill the void left by erasure of a person, a point of view, a story. Yet the tale of Abramo's demise is especially baffling. For it is a matryoshka doll of concentric plots – of connivance snuggled under dodge, of scheme wrapped up in subterfuge.

All the other major characters turned up in court: the shady woman, the lord's grasping, thuggish henchmen, the overweening lord himself, and, lurking behind its machine of justice, the papacy itself. A chorus of assorted villagers chimed in. So, with so many witnesses, even without our poor Jew, could we not get the whole story straight? But, in this tale of hapless Abramo, nobody, not even the victim, played fair and square in life, and none spoke plain truth in court. The magistrates observed their ponderous rules, but, behind the scenes, their masters at the papal court hauled on cords and leaned on levers; they had bigger games, where judicial process was the fig leaf for policy, guile, and greed. At the center of our story cowers Abramo of Montecosaro, in his bedroom, half dressed. At the wide circumference lie the Vatican and its entourage, and, on the far horizon – Naples, Valladolid, and Paris.

What were these concentric strategies? At the center sat a banal sexual intrigue that crossed a forbidden religious boundary. Hovering around this illicit congress, a dissembling woman and some thuggish henchmen schemed to snare their Jewish neighbor.<sup>4</sup> And, further out, those henchmen, and their lord, who lived in far-off Rome, hatched a

wider plot, both to shake down the Jew and to cow and rule the village he lived in – Montecosaro. Once the trap snapped shut on Abramo, baronial lord and henchmen between them plotted to steer the judicial outcome of their initial trick. They did splendidly, at first, until a turn of Fortune’s wheel installed a pope hostile to the baron. Large affairs of state then undid the lord and geared up the machine of law that hauled all participants before the Roman court whose papers permit our story. All, that is, except poor Abramo, whose death, alongside many other shabby and contemptuous deeds, gave life to the prosecution that rumbled down upon both lord and entourage.

This story is best peeled from outside in. Abramo’s demise, and its upshot, make best sense if seen against the background of bigger stories: papal statecraft and policies toward Jews, baronial maneuvers in the face of the running Hapsburg-Valois war to master Italy, clan politics in the Roman elite. These large matters were more than backdrop; they bore on mid-sized issues – the relations between Cesarini and his subject towns. Perforce, they set transgression’s pitch and tone, against the unlucky Jewish banker. And finally, they shaped the posthumous justice his case received.

### **Paul IV, the Jews, and politics**

Ironies abound. It was under Italy’s last pre-Ghetto pope, Julius III, that Abramo went under. But it was a tribunal of dire Paul IV that took up the cudgels to set right Abramo’s death.<sup>5</sup> Julius may have burned the Talmud, but Paul was the zealot who had the Roman Ghetto built and who reinvigorated restrictive legislation against Jews. But then Paul IV was a thoroughgoing radical, in religion and foreign policy. Unlike his predecessors, in power politics Paul backed not Spain but France. He let his potent nephews, the Carafa, especially ambitious Cardinal Carlo, plan for war; and armies indeed would march in September 1556, just three months after Abramo’s tormentors’ final trial, held in war’s looming shadow. So, to the stress of Jew and Christian, we must add the clash of states.

### **The lord, Giuliano Cesarini**

The lord of Montecosaro, Giuliano Cesarini was a potentate of no mean stock. His family boasted descent from Caesar.<sup>6</sup> “This house has always reeked of Caesars and of popes,” said his villagers.<sup>7</sup> Reality was

more prosaic – fifteenth-century Roman merchants and curialists, and a splendid Cardinal Giuliano, martyred in 1444 at Varna battling Turks. And then two other cardinals, with the last, Alessandro (1517–1542), uncle, champion, and Maecenas of lord Giuliano.<sup>8</sup> Under the broad brims of three purple hats, the upstart family did splendidly. They had two big Roman palaces and a garden famous for antiques.<sup>9</sup> The family bounced back from staggering losses in the Sack of 1527.<sup>10</sup> Intermarrying with the old baronial elite, especially the powerful Colonna clan, it amassed estates on the grassy flatlands below the Alban hills and in the rugged Sabine mountains.<sup>11</sup> As the Cesarini were Colonna friends and kin, Colonna enemies perforce were their foes too.

This Colonna connection guaranteed bad blood between Giuliano Cesarini and Pope Paul. Giuliano himself had a Colonna wife, Giulia, daughter of Prospero Colonna and cousin of Giovanna d’Aragona; the cousin’s poise, blond curls, and lovely velvet dress grace her celebrated Giulio Romano portrait.<sup>12</sup> At issue, for Paul, was the Imperial connection. For the Colonna were habitual pro-Empire Ghibellines and their estates straddled the border and the strategic inland road to Spanish Naples. So, in 1555, tradition, interest, cross-border fiefs, and plain geography placed the Colonna firmly in the camp of Emperor Charles V, and of his son Philip II, new King of Spain and Naples. Intent on a French alliance, at his nephews’ urging the pope bullied the pro-Spain, pro-Empire Colonna. The Carafa nephews hoped to seize the Colonna lands, and so survive their frail uncle as princes lordling over southern Lazio. As popes were fragile, the nephews’ claws itched to strike.

In the summer of 1555, Colonna barons, fleeing papal pressures, prudently withdrew across the Neapolitan frontier. To keep them harmless, the Carafa faction kept Duchess Giovanna hostage in the family’s Roman palace. Cesarini, anxious too, smuggled bullion to safety, mule by mule, cached under apples, from his great castle at Rocca Sinibalda.<sup>13</sup> On the last evening of 1555, Cesarini paid a mysterious call on Giovanna, his captive cousin-in-law. Hours later, in male garb, in darkness, the duchess and her retainers rode out Porta San Lorenzo and scrambled across the border to her family’s Abruzzi fiefs.<sup>14</sup>

The Vatican was aghast. Its magistrates, scouring the palace, found the maids-in-waiting, who had raided the palace larder, but never discovered who contrived Giovanna’s flight.<sup>15</sup> In frustration, they hanged the hapless captain of the San Lorenzo gate and clapped Cesarini into Castel’ Sant’Angelo.<sup>16</sup> Guilty or not, Cesarini was doomed to molder for twenty-one months, until September 1557, hostage to affairs of state.

While he stayed jailed, the Carafa faction grabbed at his strategic lands.<sup>17</sup> At least for now, they were content to leave the holdings in Church hands; had the war gone better for the pope, Cesarini might have lost them forever to the Carafa clan. In the interim, however, Cesarini strove to hold his own, while the Papal State, pursuing confiscation, sought due process through a trial, starting within days of his arrest, for misrule of his fiefs.<sup>18</sup> Thanks to these legal moves, we learn of poor Abramo; high politics unearthed low skullduggery and private tragedy.

In Rome, Giuliano Cesarini was a man of weight. He was by birth Standard-bearer of the Roman people, a glorious sinecure; he graced processions and other civic rituals, parading for the Carnival games, beast and rider caparisoned in silk, gems, and bullion.<sup>19</sup> He boasted fine stables and good horses and reveled in his hounds.<sup>20</sup> Cesarini was a nobles' nobleman, splendid, proud, and touchy. A sycophantic chronicler conceded: "He was feared by everyone and equally beloved."<sup>21</sup> As a youth, in an infamous quarrel, Cesarini, in honor's name, had cut off Rome's mighty Governor's right hand. But Pope Paul III forgave him, and, under Julius III Cesarini held high state posts – governor in three towns and then commander of the papal infantry.<sup>22</sup>

Giuliano Cesarini's hauteur chilled underlings. He resided seldom in his fiefs, letting his ministers mulct and cow his peasants. He seldom knew his tenants' names or lives, and often forgot his own officials' names.<sup>23</sup> When he toured he seldom granted audiences; when he did, he rankled.

The lord was cruel. We could not have an audience. And, one time, I spoke with him and he rebuffed me as though I were a dog.<sup>24</sup>

The fall of a lord so loathed galvanized his tenants. In three villages, factions of Cesarini's enemies, hearing of his disgrace, staged coups. Rocca Sinibalda, an old fief in the Sabine mountains, had its mini-revolution, with solemn oaths, a riot, and torched houses. There, long hard labor to build the castle, brutal governance, and neofeudal policies that stripped old rights and privileges all stoked revolt.<sup>25</sup> In Cesarini's two fiefs in the Marches (the papal east coast) – Montecosaro and Civitanova, the issues were different – the regime more recent, the complaints less wrought, the rebellion less roiled, more parliamentary. There, townsmen hauled up the tale of Abramo the Jewish banker, one cause among many to damn misrule.

### Montecosaro and Civitanova

Here we are local; the men of Montecosaro and Civitanova had eyes and ears in Rome; when their lord's foes pinioned him, they knew fast, but their politics looked inward, pitching faction against faction and townsmen against officials. The two small towns are pretty, with handsome houses of grey-blond brick. Just a few loud shouts apart, they ride round-topped hills above the Chienti valley. Civitanova, in 1550, looked down on a little port and a quiet beach draped today in a slapdash ribbon of apartments, pizzerie, disco bars, and gaudy beach umbrellas. But, in the sixteenth century, not tourism but grain and grazing fed the towns.<sup>26</sup> To the north lay the great pilgrim church of Loreto, and then Ancona, with its good port and Marrano colony. Thirty miles south, the papal-Spanish frontier met the sea.

The two towns had a tradition of independence from one another and from Rome. They had councils, statutes, town halls, magistrates, customs, and hallowed rites of governance. Like subject towns in much of Italy, they combined self-rule with subjection to an absent lord and his local ministers. Real power had several loci. Almost everyone agreed that, once Cesarini took the towns, things went worse. In court, the revolt, like most rebellions, waxed eloquent about good old times dripping honey.<sup>27</sup>

Cesarini took the towns by stealth. He had sold the pope a great load of grain to feed Bologna, for 14,000 scudi, a massive sum. Lacking cash, Julius proposed a choice of fiefs to govern.<sup>28</sup> Cesarini opted for the two Chienti valley towns. Montecosaro and Civitanova fought back scrappily, with envoys who lobbied Rome, but failed and, in 1551, fell under Cesarini's regime. But he was at first not lord but merely governor. Cesarini set out to firm his grip. To build a local party, he showered jobs, privileges, and easy terms on allies. He soon swayed the local councils to back his bid for a papal grant of outright lordship; in Rome, he won from Pope Julius feudal rights good for four generations. Cesarini then ousted the priors from Montecosaro's town hall and sequestered the town's two palaces – the council's and the podestà's (the judge's) – for his officials' and his own use. In 1553, he took over civic debts and taxes, both towns surrendering their revenues.<sup>29</sup> For urgent funds, the priors thenceforth went hat in hand to his Roman palace. He also resurveyed landholdings, for rural rents. His surveyors measured fields to the very ditches; the extra acreage drove up dues, and the lord then charged his tenants for the survey. All this rankled the lord's many foes. What was worst? In their lawsuit, after Cesarini's fall, the rebels moaned longest about autonomy's decay and democracy's

perversion. At each crucial juncture, the lord's officials and partisans had wrenched rules to pluck his chestnuts from the fire. Gone was the old secret ballot box, replaced by an open bowl that cowed dissent. Cesarini's claque packed the hall, armed and raucous, primed to shout, "Viva Viva Signor Giuliano." In the piazza, armed men swarmed. By such means, growled his enemies, Cesarini won endorsement for his extorted lordship, palaces, and revenues.<sup>30</sup>

After the lord's fall, townsmen lined up to denounce other griefs. The complaints, though biased, probably had a grain of truth. Rocca Sinibalda, in far Sabina, concurred on many points. Cesarini justice was callous and grasping. No use to appeal; Cesarini's governor said: "Pay up or drop dead."<sup>31</sup> Appeal was futile: you had to go to Rome, or Bologna. And what did you bring back? Nothing! "A handful of flies." "A cat in a sack."<sup>32</sup> There were other perversions of justice: the town was full of exiled criminals and local homicides went unpunished. And, atop all that, there was the cruel fate of Abramo, the Jewish banker.

Abramo of Montecosaro – everyone agrees that he was assassinated.

Abramo the Jew – the voice of the people, the voice of God say that a great wrong was done to him.<sup>33</sup>

The towns had further grievances: new fees for shipping grain; the loss of fines for damaged crops; the failure of the lord's officials to fill the granary for the poor. And then, scandalously, the lord's household and garrison baked and ate its contents.<sup>34</sup> Civitanova mourned its ancient trees cut down for Cesarini projects.<sup>35</sup> And then there were the Cesarini henchmen – in Civitanova the Toffini clan, in Montecosaro, Abramo's nemesis, Sante Clarignano and his cronies.

### **Sante Clarignano and his party**

In Montecosaro, Don Sante Clarignano was Cesarini's strong-arm. He was a churchman, with ten benefices from towns throughout the central Marches.<sup>36</sup> Sante was an apostolic protonotary – a prestigious lawyer<sup>37</sup> – and a canon with three incomes from Camerino cathedral. Nevertheless, Sante seldom celebrated mass, for he eschewed the churchly life; his services and spirit were worldly.<sup>38</sup> About his early life we know only that in 1539 he served as a papal judge probing money transfers by Camerino Jews.<sup>39</sup>

Sante Clarignano had jumped nimbly onto Cesarini coat tails. At the outset, he helped lead the opposition. When Cesarini first moved to snag the town, its council appointed him envoy to Rome to fight the lord.<sup>40</sup> But, early on, Sante switched sides. He engineered the council meeting that elevated Cesarini to hereditary lord.<sup>41</sup> Grateful, the feudatory made Don Sante his *depositario*, the fief's economic officer. Don Sante used his office to overawe the town. Sante's detractors would later moan in court that he had held the lord's officials in the palm of his grasping hand.

The officials, aside from what they had to do, did what the Signore wanted, and what Don Sante wanted. Otherwise they chased them off.<sup>42</sup>

The officials often told me that I was right, but that they could not do anything for me, because Don Sante did not want it.<sup>43</sup>

The auditor and the lieutenant [a judge] who were here said in public, "Go to Messer Sante, deal with him. You will get everything you desire."<sup>44</sup>

Sante and his cronies, Don Marcantonio – another cleric, and Ser Justino, built a party, the *affettionati del signore* (the partisans of the lord). The opposition was called *gli ecclesiastici*, the party of the Church. In the fall of 1555, fearing a coup from Rome, Cesarini's anxious backers took arms, tramped Montecosaro's streets, and decreed that *ecclesiastici* could neither arm nor gather in threes or more. In October or November of 1555, Sante, with the lord's nod, fortified a city gate and stocked it with blades and guns. His house held armed men.<sup>45</sup> Townsmen muttered that he smuggled soldiers in.<sup>46</sup> Fearing violence, Church partisans fled.<sup>47</sup> After Cesarini's fall, in the bid for Church rule, townsmen trooped before a papal commissario to bemoan recent subjugation:

The *affettionati* were in heaven, and the *ecclesiastici* were persecuted and exiled. Don Sante and Ser Justino and Don Marcantonio were the masters and ate everything at Montecosaro.<sup>48</sup>

They treated the *ecclesiastici* like serfs, for they even carried wheel-lock guns in church and everywhere.<sup>49</sup>

The *ecclesiastici* saw that Don Sante, Ser Justino and Don Marcantonio were falcons, and that they could not have even the smallest bit of justice.<sup>50</sup>

According to his detractors, Don Sante used his office as *depositario* to rejig the grain trade rules, both to enrich his master and to line his capacious pockets.

Don Sante, Ser Justino, and Don Marcantonio were the bosses [*padroni*], and they ate everything at Montecosaro.<sup>51</sup>

Sante, they said, fiddled the grain office. He and Marcantonio withheld their own grain, and helped the lord sell stocks outside the district.<sup>52</sup> Sante charged an illicit export tax on grains sent off.<sup>53</sup> He kept the village books badly in arrears and cooked them to exaggerate outlay and to hide income.<sup>54</sup> His partner Marcantonio was deep in merchandising, storing grain, and selling it unfairly.<sup>55</sup> Sante's detractors charged no outright crimes, just high-handed service to a high-handed master. Sante was a man to stretch the rules. That is what he did with Abramo. Marcantonio, as usual, lent a willing hand.

### Lancidonia

With Lancidonia, we go one layer deeper into our story. A woman of modest means, with her husband she worked the village oven. She was no longer young; by 1551 she had married off a daughter.<sup>56</sup> Lancidonia's sphere was the village wives; their snide gossip haunted her imagination. Though magistrates pressed her hard and long to tell her story straight, still, we never know her well, for she larded her talk with allusions, contradictions, and lies. Her testimony shows passivity, envy, greed, faithlessness, cowardice, guile, and habitual falsity. Furthermore, never, in all she said, did she utter a word of sympathy for anyone, not least poor Abramo. Except, of course, when whining for her poor poor self. Yet the woman had a canny streak and the guts to face down the highest court in Rome.

Lancidonia denied it adamantly. But Sante and Cesarini believed that she once was Abramo's mistress.<sup>57</sup> I think it likely. But forbidden sex, in our story, is not central. Watch, rather, how Lancidonia and her allies treated Abramo and what they felt and said, and track the law's response.

### Abramo

About Abramo, it would be good to know more. By 1553, the year before he died, he had relinquished Montecosaro's Jewish bank. He had a male servant, Scarpone, and an associate, Raffaele. Though his mother still lived, we have no sign of wife or children. Odd, for Italian Jewish men wedded young, and, if widowed, remarried readily.<sup>58</sup> Abramo had been banker in Montecosaro for twenty years or more – since 1530 or sooner, and down to 1548; he was middle aged, somewhere over forty, but, with a living mother, probably not yet sixty. He may have been slight of build, or short; villagers sometimes called him “Abrametto.”<sup>59</sup>

Vatican records of Abramo's *condotte*, five-year banking permits, for Civitanova or Montecosaro, for one Michele Abramo Teutonico (Todeschi) da Trevi go back to 1530, and they hint he was in business there earlier. With or without a partner, he renewed his permits down through 1543.<sup>60</sup> One last record, from 1549, places him on a council of five Jews negotiating a communal fine for papal coffers. Like Jewish bankers elsewhere, he had bankrolled communal governments; in 1553, between them the two towns still owed him 700 scudi. When, in 1548, his 1543 *condotta* ran out, Abramo did not renew.

We have a few other clues. Abramo's name, da Trevi points to Umbria and, in Todeschi, nods very remotely to Germany. We also have two hints that our Abramo was a man of substance. The first is that committee of five to raise a fine to pay the pope; the task suggests heft and means. The second is a nobleman's successful plea for him, to Cesarini, up in Ancona, to get Abramo off the hook, gratis, for Christian sex. Lancidonia?<sup>61</sup>

Abramo certainly knew Lancidonia, or someone, carnally, around 1551 or 1552, about when Cesarini took his two new towns, for it was Cesarini who allowed the Ancona pardon.<sup>62</sup> Lancidonia's own evasive testimony suggests an affair, hers or another's, beginning some five years back. Read her account for what it reveals, between the lines, about how and why, in village eyes, a poor Christian, Lancidonia or some other village wife, might pair off with a prosperous Jew.

It's been five years now [she speaks on 30 May, 1556], or so. Having married off my daughter Marcia, I let it be known in the village that I wanted to buy a shawl. Cecco di Tozza came to me, and told me that he wanted to sell me one that would suit me fine. And then he told me that it was in pawn in the house of Abrametto the Jew, so we went together to that house, together with Tozza, his wife – all three of us, and we

were agreed that I would buy that shawl for three and a half florins. I gave him half in cash and half in linen cloth – that is I gave them to the Jew. And, because I was seen coming out, gossip spread among the women that I had slept with the Jew, and that he had given me the shawl. *She added*: For the price of the shawl I gave Abrametto ten carlini in cash and for the rest I left him so many linen cloths in pawn, and I still haven't had them back. And because of this, one day a woman called Biancozza came to see me and she told me in front of Abrametto's house that there was this gossip among the women, and that Abrametto had scolded her about it. And Biancozza said to me, "Oh you poor thing. They carry you, by mouth, in front of the house of the Jew, saying that you were seen coming out with a shawl, and with a cloak." I told her that as for the shawl, I had bought it, as I said, and as for the cape, I had bought it from Ricca, the Jewish woman.

And when I asked who these women were, she said, "Don't use my name but ask Galletta about it and she will tell you." So I went to find Galletta. And she gave me the names of all the women who had had a hand in this hullabaloo. They are called Maria, Cassandra, Biancozza, Cesaria, and I forget the others. So I had these women called before Don Marcantonio Lorenzo, the *vice-vicario*, and, since I had heard that Cesaria, Marcantonio's sister, had said to Crocetta, "See if you can see Lancidonia go into the house of the Jew, that I want to have it [or "her"] burned, and I want to make you rich," the said *vice-vicario* examined all those women, and all of them denied it.<sup>63</sup>

Whatever really happened between Lancidonia and Abramo, for historians, there is always "truth in lies." A good fib always floats on likely details; we scholars can learn even from falsehood's trimmings. So note how, in the eyes of the village women, the Jewish banker's wealth gave him, his house, and his goods, erotic allure.<sup>64</sup> Scandalized gossip readily sprang up, as did female intervention to squelch it. As for what really happened, forever unclear, note that Don Marcantonio, Sante's side-kick, alleging the say-so of Sante and of Bartolomeo Appoggio – another official, did testify in Rome that Lancidonia had been Abramo's mistress.<sup>65</sup>

### Setting the trap

Perhaps Abramo, lulled by his cheap pardon, returned to carnal traffic – with Lancidonia or another – or only seemed to. In either case, Don Sante and Cesarini began to plot to catch him in the act to shake him down. Their alliance broke one Italian pattern; *signori* often shielded the local Jewish banker from the zeal and grudges of their own debt-ridden subjects. To lords, the banker was a source of easy credit, and of fines, fees, and *condotta* payments. Indebted to their masters, townsmen borrowed from the banker, who covered their arrears and thus, in several ways, recharged lordly coffers.<sup>66</sup> Cesarini, however, a largely absent lord with ample income elsewhere, may have found Abramo, who no longer ran a bank, dispensable. As for Sante, it is hard to pry his deep-set malice against Abramo from his avarice and swagger.

To reconstruct how things unfurled, we weave shady testimony of evasive witnesses. What follows is mere best guess. The lord was first cause of a long chain of louche effects. As Cesarini told the court, some months after the Ancona pardon he heard from assorted mouths that Abramo had returned to his carnal practice. “I don’t remember by whom; it was common knowledge in Montecosaro.”<sup>67</sup> Cesarini, in Civitanova, sent his official, Appoggio, to Montecosaro to command Sante, aloud, to catch Abramo without spilling the plan.<sup>68</sup> On November 27 or 28 1553, Appoggio found Sante sick in bed and told him, Sante later claims, that the lord was upset that Sante had not informed him of the banker’s renewed transgression.<sup>69</sup> Back in Rome, Cesarini before Christmas, via a fiscal official heading east, reaffirmed that oral order.<sup>70</sup> In later trials, the nature and exact timing of these two commissions became an urgent question.

Sante then enlisted Lancidonia. From her evasions, feints, and contradictions, we gather the following. Abramo had sent his servant, Scarpone, more than once, just after nightfall, to the woman’s house, inviting her to his house.<sup>71</sup> Lancidonia claims in court that the banker summoned her to discuss Sante’s enmity. “What does he want with me now, when his mother is not there, and the bank is closed, and he no longer lends?” she says she asked Scarpone. “Tell him,” she went on, “to tell you what he wants, and if it is about that money that I have in things in hock, that I haven’t now the money to get them out.”<sup>72</sup> Abramo, she suggests, believed that Sante’s anger stemmed from Sante’s kinship with her.<sup>73</sup> Vague words in court and an unlikely story: why such secrecy about a matter easily aired by daylight? Sante, who had motive, would depose in Lancidonia’s presence, rather, that Lancidonia told him Abramo used to meet her for sex.<sup>74</sup> Whatever the

real intent, Lancidonia told Scarpone no. She would not go to Abramo; he must come to her.<sup>75</sup> But Sante, says Lancidonia, soon heard about the emissary and rendezvous. By accident:

One day I was sewing a chamois shirt in Sante Clarignano's house. My little girl Maria told me, "The servant of the Jew is asking for you." I asked what he wanted, and she told me that he had in mind that business visit. I told her that I would await him at home. Now maybe Don Sante heard this. I went upstairs, where he was, and he asked me, "What does the man want, Lancidonia, that he has called you?" I told him all the things that the servant had told me, and that Abramo was complaining about him. Don Sante answered me, with a curse, "The Jew is a cancer!" or something else . . ."<sup>76</sup>

To set his trap, Sante drew in his partner, the cleric with a finger in every pie, Don Marcantonio. Marcantonio later testifies that Sante summoned him without saying why.

"He wanted my company as a witness. I told him that I was the lord's servant and that I would not let him down."<sup>77</sup>

Marcantonio claims he then went to Cesarini with written word that Sante Clarignano and Bartolomeo Appoggio had a plan.

And I took it to the lord in Civitanova, who gave me no answer, except "Enough!" or some such words, and so I told Don Sante.<sup>78</sup>

Then Bartolomeo and Sante told Marcantonio what was up: the lord wanted Abramo to pay recidivism's penalty.<sup>79</sup>

Don Sante told me, "If she lets me catch him, I have promised to give her 25 scudi." And Messer Bartolomeo added, "I intend to give her 25 more, you understand me!" Bartolomeo, once he'd said it, rode off.<sup>80</sup>

Bartolomeo would break his bargain, but Sante would keep his, with his own money.<sup>81</sup> Sante told Marcantonio to await orders and tell nobody.<sup>82</sup>

Lancidonia herself may have been there when Marcantonio finally learned the details of the trap: it is hard to say, for, to veil her responsibility, her narrative slyly telescopes the plot to a fictitious single day

of planning, and claims she had said that the servant – or, elsewhere, his master – would come.<sup>83</sup> In any case, she insists in court, the two policemen would come just to hear suspicious words.<sup>84</sup>

On the day when all was ready, Lancidonia alerted Sante. Marcantonio found out later, and joined the ambush:

A few days after [Sante roped me in], Don Sante told me that Donna Lancidonia had told him that the Jew was coming to her house. And, on account of that, he and I went to Lancidonia's house, to the side down below, and Don Sante waited a great long time, and so did I, in a cellar near by. And when the Jew did not come, I went to call him [Sante], and we left.<sup>85</sup>

It was two hours after dark, says Sante.<sup>86</sup> “Don Sante and Don Marcantonio came into my house by the door down below and waited in my bedroom, but neither servant nor master came,” says Lancidonia.<sup>87</sup> I doubt her contradiction of Marcantonio, for placing the cops in the bedroom, not the cellar, handily rules out sex.<sup>88</sup>

And where was Abramo that trap-fraught night? Up late, at home, playing cards with a Christian friend.

But in the morning, the servant came very early and told me, “Lancidonia, perhaps you are wondering why we did not come yesterday evening.” And he told me that he had not come because Loreto stayed playing cards with Abramo until midnight.<sup>89</sup>

The trap's failure did not squelch Sante's plot. The very next day, a second chance arose, for in the morning Scarpone went to Lancidonia, telling her to come this time to Abramo's.<sup>90</sup> “I told him I would go, and so he left and after a bit came back and told me he wanted me to come between the second and the third hour of the night so that Raffaella [Abramo's assistant] would not find out.”<sup>91</sup> Scarpone had told her that, “He [Abramo] would be generous, and he would give me a load of grain.”<sup>92</sup> “And as a signal he would leave a window open so that you could see the light, or the stable door would be open.”<sup>93</sup> “If you see the little window open – and then you will see the light, come to the door and knock very softly, and I [Scarpone] will be on watch, and I will open for you. And if it is not open, go to the stables, and wait there.”<sup>94</sup> “In my doorway, I told him I would go.”<sup>95</sup>

Lancidonia, in her court narratives, tries to shift the taint of sexual intrigue from herself onto another village woman, Galletta. We have

already met Galletta among the gossips hissing about Lancidonia's Jewish shawl. Galletta was Sante niece; it was on her account, says Lancidonia, that Sante so loathed Abramo. "The master wants to talk to you because Don Sante is jealous over you on Abramo's account; if he were jealous on account of Galletta, he would be right, for I have given her more than 60 florins."<sup>96</sup> To fit this theme, Lancidonia puts in Scarpone's mouth the gratuitous allusion: "I will give you that sign that we have given Galletta when she comes to sleep with Abramo."<sup>97</sup>

Lancidonia alerted Sante to the second rendezvous.<sup>98</sup> When the two men conferred, Sante told Marcantonio:

"What does it matter if we catch the woman in the deed with the Jew, if they are there!' Don Sante told me twice, 'All we have to do is catch her in the house'."<sup>99</sup>

Sante ordered Marcantonio to wait at home and sent him a servant as reinforcement.<sup>100</sup>

Then, by plan, that evening, Lancidonia too came from her oven to Marcantonio's.<sup>101</sup> As she went in, Scarpone passed by, lantern in hand.<sup>102</sup> Lancidonia, once inside, told Marcantonio that she had learned Abramo's secret sign.<sup>103</sup> And who was that person with the lantern, Marcantonio asked. Lancidonia told him – it was Scarpone.<sup>104</sup> Lancidonia claims in court that she then made supper, for she often tended Marcantonio's bastard daughter.

Marcantonio asked me, "Are you going to hear the Jew?" I answered that I was going, but that I wanted to eat first.<sup>105</sup>

Lancidonia, since, she says, Marcantonio was "of my flesh, for he is my second cousin," then asked,

"Do you want to see the sign that Jews give Christian women? Then come with me!" So we went towards the Jew's house.<sup>106</sup>

Lancidonia's tale, all too casual, minimizes her intent and veils Sante's guiding hand. There is no knowing if these words she reports were ever uttered. Yet the last exchange, real or fictive, is telling; it evokes the erotic buzz around the prosperous small-town Jew. We have already seen this tingle in Lancidonia's shawl story. In both tales, dubious allegations reveal substantial general truths about sixteenth-century Jews and Christians: the taboo on sex, though potent, barred neither fantasy nor sometime trespass.

Around three hours into December's dark, around 8 PM, Lancidonia set out for Abramo's. Marcantonio tailed her, at a distance "at about half again as long as this [court] room," he later said, "to see if she went in."<sup>107</sup> Halfway there, he dropped back.<sup>108</sup> "I went forward, laughing," the woman recalls.<sup>109</sup> At Lancidonia's request, Marcantonio checked the stable door to verify the sign: it was open.<sup>110</sup>

As per plan, Lancidonia knocked softly. Scarpone opened. "I went in and stopped at the foot of the stairs, and Scarpone went to call Abramo, saying, 'Abramo, Abramo, that woman arrived!'"<sup>111</sup> "He answered, 'What woman?'"<sup>112</sup> "Lancidonia!" the servant said. Lancidonia, in court, hewing to her sex-free story, claims the Jew next said,

Thank the Lord, for now I will be able to talk to her!<sup>113</sup>

Abramo came down, the woman says in court. All of them were on the stairs, she claims, and Scarpone held a lamp.<sup>114</sup> Abramo was fully dressed; he wore a shawl, she says. The two self-appointed cops, Marcantonio and Sante, who throughout the trial insist that sex took place, when in court will paint a different picture, no stairs, but an upstairs bedroom, and Abramo half-dressed. According to Lancidonia's version:

And he told me, "Lancidonia, I sent for you. Come up the stairs!" and I replied, "I don't want to go any higher on the stairs. You sent for me! I want to know what you want." So he came halfway down the stairs and sat and said to me, "Lancidonia, I sent for you with good intent. I understand that Don Sante is your good friend, and Don Marcantonio is your kinsman. And Sante tells me that he is in a jealous frame of mind and that I should leave you alone, for you are of his [Marcantonio's] house."<sup>115</sup>

Lancidonia, in the telling, then has Abramo bring up Sante's niece, Galletta, a red herring dragged across the scent of Lancidonia's own impropriety.

Then he told me that if he [Sante] had become jealous on account of Galletta, he would have right to do so, "For I have given her 60 florins in pearls, cloth, coral, and other things." And I answered him that to Don Sante I had not said anything.<sup>116</sup>

In further testimony, Lancidonia would amend this speech: “I have given her more than 60 florins in pawn-goods that she took from my bank.” Here, as in all Lancidonia’s talk, not only the Jew, but his goods as well, waft illicit sexuality. Then, according to Lancidonia, Abramo, in words now hard to parse, exploded:

Abramo said, “This rustic oaf [*villano poltrone*]” – he meant Don Sante – “I have freed myself of obligation to the lord with some sort of cloth, and I have more money than he does, and if I wanted, I could serve in his [the lord’s] house as in don Sante’s house. I want to have you held *da mamma mia* in the palm of my hand.”<sup>117</sup>

This odd expression, apparently invoking the madonna, is startling. Was the expletive really Abramo’s or did Lancidonia supply it later? Lancidonia adds that, at this juncture, she heard Sante, outside, growl that his money was good while Abramo’s was counterfeit.<sup>118</sup>

While Lancidonia and Abramo were together the two conspirators primed their trap. Marcantonio had gone back home and sent Sante’s servant to fetch his master, who came at once.<sup>119</sup> In court, Marcantonio and Sante will insist that between Lancidonia’s entry and their arrival back at Abramo’s, an hour passed, time enough for sex.<sup>120</sup> When the officials arrived, Sante made his servant, Maurizio, knock on Abramo’s door, asking for Raffaele, pretending to have letters from Civitanova for the banker.<sup>121</sup> Scarpone came to the window to say that Raffaele had gone to bed and called out, “Come back tomorrow. Now is not the time to give letters.”<sup>122</sup> According to Lancidonia:

Then Maurizio knocked again, saying, “Open up, in there! Look! It’s Sante and Marcantonio, and we want to talk to you.” And then Abramo said, “Oh dear! Don Sante is jealous about me. If he finds me, look, what he will say!” And he said, “Let me go into my room before you open, and call Raffaele.” And so, once he had gone to his room, Scarpone called Raffaele, and he opened the door, and so in came Don Sante, and then Maurizio and Sante, his servants, and, last, Marcantonio.<sup>123</sup>

In this version, Lancidonia places Abramo in his bedroom just in time to be found there by the cops. Odd! To duck a whiff of sexual scandal would a man not exit private space, rather than climb in? If her version is true, perhaps Abramo just rushed to put space between himself and Lancidonia.

Bursting in, the constables shook down the banker's house. At first they could not see Lancidonia, nor she them; from the door, the stairs were invisible.<sup>124</sup> When the cops found her, Lancidonia was still halfway up (or already halfway down) the stairs.<sup>125</sup> "Lancidonia, what are you doing?" said Marcantonio.<sup>126</sup> Said Sante: "Lancidonia! You, here! What did you come to do?"<sup>127</sup> And I, joking, answered him, "I came to sleep with Abramo."<sup>128</sup>

Lancidonia, aware of Sante's trap, is not too likely to have intended sex that night. On the other hand, she would have known her role as bait and recited words her handlers needed. When she blurted out these words – as she surely did – unless true, they were not a joke but treachery. "Joking" is shame's or treason's fig leaf.

Sante turned thuggish. He went up to the kitchen, roaring, "And so this is how they keep Christian women in their house!" Raffaele snapped back, "What women? You are the one who brought her here!"<sup>129</sup> Sante then drew his dagger to stab Raffaele.<sup>130</sup> Lancidonia tells the court:

"I got in between them, and when he tried to stab Raffaele, he wounded me in both my arms." And she showed the marks on her naked arms, saying: "This is what I got, and I could have had worse, all because of what Galletta, Sante's niece, made public."<sup>131</sup>

Though both Sante and Marcantonio deny in court wounding Lancidonia, the scars vouch for her. As for Galletta, Lancidonia seemingly blames her for putting out the word that she and Abramo are sexual partners, whence her recruitment as bait. Displacement again.

After the kitchen brawl, Sante tracked down Abramo. "Where is Abramo? He will tell us why he called her."<sup>132</sup> Lancidonia called out for the banker, and then one cop knocked on his bedroom door.<sup>133</sup> "And we made him come out half dressed," Marcantonio tells the Roman court.<sup>134</sup> Lancidonia, in court, confirms Abramo's dishabille, and specifies, "He came out in his doublet, without his long gown."<sup>135</sup> Marcantonio, standing fast in court for intercourse that night, has motive to depict Abramo half clad. Lancidonia's own forensic intentions, as we shall see, are contradictory and confused. What she says came next is especially baffling:

Don Sante asked him why he had summoned me there, to the house. The Jew grew angry, and said, "I called her to come sleep with me, just to spite you." At that, they began to laugh, and that is the last I saw them angry.<sup>136</sup>

Her version is discordant for both then and later; this exchange is truly cock-eyed. Marcantonio, on trial in Rome, though he has a vested interest in Abramo's sexual guilt and in all evidence to support it, just offers an anodyne account that gives Lancidonia's the lie:

After he was dressed, Don Sante spoke courteously, without any violence, "I want you to come with me to my house." And so that Jew and a servant called Bonvero [i.e., Scarpone] went without offering any resistance.<sup>137</sup>

The arrest thus consummated, the whole scene moved to Sante's house. Lancidonia, escorted by Sante's servant, first went home to urinate.<sup>138</sup> Then, with the cops' coaching, she went to Sante's to denounce Abramo. In the Roman court, her picture of what she did at Sante's house that night is queasily evasive:

And while I was urinating, everyone came down there – that is Don Sante and his servant Maurizio, Don Marcantonio, Abramo, and Scarpone. And Don Sante told me, "Lancidonia, when you leave, turn to me and say that Abramo commended himself to you, and pay no heed to those words he said to you. And when I was heading off to leave, since I had forgotten to say those words, Don Sante said to me, "Lancidonia, say those words that I told you to." So I turned to Don Sante and I said those words that Don Sante had told me to say in the presence of everyone, and then I went home."<sup>139</sup>

And just what were "those words?" Sante, in court, face to face with Lancidonia, insists they had alleged intercourse.

She confessed in my house that she had slept that night, but not for long, with Abramo. And Abramo wrote down, in his own hand, in her presence, that he had sex with her that night. And she told him, "What to you expect to do? Confess it, and God will help you."<sup>140</sup>

Lancidonia, facing Sante in court, cagily neither confirms nor refutes his claim that she confessed to a sexual act. Marcantonio, in court, suggests that Sante tricked Abramo into his confession. At first the banker had denied the charge, but then:

In the end, when Sante told him that if he confessed he would send him back home, the Jew confessed that on that night he had had sexual dealings one time with that woman.<sup>141</sup>

Both policemen assert that Abramo put his confession in writing. He may well have; without such a paper in its dossiers, the record of his trial, available to the Roman judges, would have deterred the plotters' later avowal.<sup>142</sup>

Then, says Marcantonio, Sante tried to shake Abramo down for a sixty scudi dowry for one of Lancidonia's daughters.<sup>143</sup> The banker replied that he lacked the cash, but offered to ask Raffaele for the money:

And when he made the offer to me, he gave me a page on which were written ten words in Hebrew. So I carried it to Raffaele, who did not want to reopen for me, but dropped down a sheet or cord to which I tied that page. And, having read it, he told me, "Tell him that I don't wish to come." So I reported back to him.<sup>144</sup>

Amidst so many lies and half-truths, it is hard to know exactly what happened that night to poor Abramo. Yet the policemen's malice and Lancidonia's duplicity and greed are manifest, as is the logic of the trap. Logically, had Lancidonia no record of illicit sex – with Abramo or with others, Sante would have picked some more tainted woman to bait his snare. And, for Sante's purposes, a real sexual act that night would have been sturdier in court than a sham more readily denied by either partner. These considerations all put Lancidonia in bed with Abramo. Furthermore, given the risks, the stakes, and Sante's insolence of office, a false confession by Abramo would seem half-mad. On the other hand, Lancidonia's local reputation, however moth-eaten, would have lost still more by actual sex than by mere sex-semblance. In the end, whatever she did with Abramo, in both town and court the woman soon paid dearly for her twenty-five scudi. Just the morning after, Lancidonia began to feel the cost of what she had wrought.

And in the morning, when I was at the bake oven, Maddalena dal Casio told me that the word was going around that Don Sante and Don Marcantonio had taken me to the Jew's house, and that Raffaele was saying from the window that it was they who brought me. So I left the bake oven at once and went to Don Sante's house, and I told him what Maddalena had told me. He answered that I should go on about my business and let them talk, and that, as soon as anyone talked of such a thing, I should demand witnesses, and that he would have his vengeance on whoever said it.<sup>145</sup>

The morning after the arrest, Lancidonia was not the only matter on Sante's plate. For reasons personal or practical, he schemed to jail Abramo at home with him.

Because the case was an important one, and the palace of the *luogotenente* had a weak prison from which others often escaped, on the morning after the arrest of those Jews, when the *luogotenente* came there to my house, I told him that without the lord's permission I did not want to give him [Abramo] to him, especially to avoid any risk of subornation.<sup>146</sup>

Scarpone also ended up in jail, we know not where or when.<sup>147</sup> At first, Sante's project succeeded. Soon he wrote Cesarini in Rome, reporting that he had found the woman, but not telling how she came to be there, and asking for a judge.<sup>148</sup> Sante pleaded for a bit of legal slight of hand; he wanted a proper commission from his master, authorizing retroactively his victim's arrest and detention. Cesarini complied with a fine document, written out by his secretary, but signed by the lord himself.<sup>149</sup>

Where [says Sante] the lord ordered me that, if I found that that Abramo kept on frequenting the said Lancidonia, I should have the authority, alone or in company, with arms or without, to capture him, and to take him to my house and to hold him until advised otherwise.<sup>150</sup>

Probably at Sante's request, Cesarini connived at this charade, back-dating this warrant to before the arrest and giving the place, falsely, as not Rome but Civitanova. Sante, on trial in Rome, speaks as if the court still holds the paper, evidence against both him and Cesarini.<sup>151</sup>

In their trial, Cesarini and his two plotters give different versions about when the pseudo-commission came and why they sought it. Marcantonio and Sante testify that they saw it two or three days after Abramo's arrest.<sup>152</sup> Cesarini himself deposes that Sante sought the official paper later, when pressed by the judge who heard the case.<sup>153</sup> The affair was grave enough that Cesarini, to placate Jewish ire, summoned an outsider to adjudicate.

The Jews came before me saying that the woman had been put into the house of the Jew and asking me to be so good as to commit the case to someone else and to take it out of the hands of Don Sante. And, since they were content with Cirillo, then vicario of Fermo, I assigned it to him.<sup>154</sup>

This new judge, Cirillo, ex-archpriest of Loreto and vicario of nearby Fermo's bishop, was no pliant tool. A stickler for legal form, he arrived about two weeks after Abramo's arrest.<sup>155</sup> Cirillo tried not only Abramo, but Sante too – for keeping the banker in his private prison, for playing policeman though a cleric, and for acting without a proper warrant.<sup>156</sup> To protect his minion, Cesarini lobbied Cirillo's master, the bishop, and then wrote Sante, telling him to show his post-factum warrant.<sup>157</sup> That fraud got Sante off.

To convict, Sante needed Lancidonia to accuse Abramo. Accordingly, to ward off second thoughts prompted by bribes, pressures, sympathy, remorse, or shame, for the duration he cloistered her at home. Lancidonia says:

So [after the accusation at Sante's] I went home. In the morning, Don Sante came there and asked me to stay at home for 30 or 40 days. I told him I could not leave the bake oven. He told me, "I will have the loads of grain ground for you and I will settle the account with your husband, who is a servant there." And he kept me like that, and he sent me wood, and three or four pitchers of oil.<sup>158</sup>

Marcantonio and Sante's brother, Cola, stood bail for her confinement.<sup>159</sup> With Lancidonia safely quarantined, Sante controlled her testimony. He leaned on Marcantonio too, who later testified:

I cannot say if the woman was instigated to say anything but the truth, but I certainly do know that when Cirillo, vicario of Fermo, commissario in this case of Signor Giuliano's, came to interrogate, Sante told me, "The vicario will examine us. Let's be sure that we are all at one. But be careful not to say that you went to see Lancidonia enter the house of the Jew, or that I promised her 25 scudi to keep our stories lined up."<sup>160</sup>

Don Sante did not confine his surveillance to his witnesses; he also worked to straiten Abramo's confinement. When Cirillo stripped him of his prisoner and stashed Abramo in the public jail, the priest-policeman hovered on the premises. Hearing that Abramo moved freely about the building and went down himself to reattach his irons, Sante had words with the turnkey: he should show more "diligence."<sup>161</sup> And, to assure "good guard," he regaled the *luogotenente* who ran the jail with lengths of velvet cloth.<sup>162</sup> Sante and his allies also tried to steer the trial. When a citizen of Montecosaro offered to represent the prisoner, they stripped him of his rights to plead in court.<sup>163</sup>

Before Cirillo, Lancidonia deposed as Sante wished. She said that she and Abramo had lain together on raid night and also “many times.”<sup>164</sup> When asked why, she alleged “the need for bread”.<sup>165</sup> At some point, probably at the prison, Cirillo put Abramo and Lancidonia face to face, and both of them confessed to sex that December night.<sup>166</sup> The case wound on; lacking the first trial’s papers, we miss the procedure’s twists. But something dissuaded Cirillo from carrying through. Cesarini, on trial himself, warily reports: “Cirillo let me know that criminal cases were not too much his profession. So I decided to make the trial come to Rome.”<sup>167</sup> Consulting Silvestro Aldobrandini, a high functionary, Cesarini had a new judge, one Ciano, sent from Rome to finish off the case.<sup>168</sup> Under the prosecutor’s questioning, Cesarini concedes that the whole case looked fishy.<sup>169</sup> Clearly, Ciano came quickly, for Lancidonia was still cloistered in her house. Sante, to assure she stay compliant, visited her once more “while jailed at home.”<sup>170</sup>

During her house arrest, Lancidonia later says, she berated Sante: this was all on account of his niece Galletta: he was covering for her, for the pearls, coral and other things she had from Abramo. Sante, face to face with her in the Roman court, denies it hotly.<sup>171</sup> Before Ciano, Abramo confessed, “without the rope of torture.” Bartolomeo Appoggio, Sante’s co-plotter, prosecuted.<sup>172</sup> Cesarini himself, during Abramo’s whole trial, stayed in Rome; he had the transcripts sent him, and the sentence. Prudently, he checked the verdict with Aldobrandini – the galleys.

Abramo’s penalty, though harsh, fit sixteenth-century practice. Sexual traffic between Jews and Christians certainly did occur. It was a misdeed at once persecuted and prosecuted, and also, like many other early modern crimes and misdemeanors, exploited by greedy authorities. So, for instance, the terms of a *condotta* contract might let a Jewish banker commute the harsher penalties, often for cash.<sup>173</sup> Thus, one might hit a wealthy Jew with a heavy punishment and then, in “composition,” sell a pardon.<sup>174</sup> Thus, though Jewish-Christian sexual traffic was a classic offense, with harsh punishments sometimes carried out, it could also invite the kind of shakedown to which Jews in Italy and elsewhere were thoroughly inured. Fines, confiscations, and banishment were common sentences; very occasionally, the galleys figured.<sup>175</sup> Poor Jews got off much lighter. In Montecosaro itself, in 1536, one Jew had escaped with a single-ducat fine for sex with a married Christian; he could pay no more. But the lad was only fourteen.<sup>176</sup> So, given these usual bargains, what happened next between Cesarini and Abramo’s community was normal.

There appeared before me some Jews to compose and commute the galley-penalty to which he had been condemned into a pecuniary one. I was asked by Messer Pompeo da Leonessa, on behalf of the Treasurer of His Holiness of the time, who was Francesco d'Aspra. I was content to commute the galley-penalty to 1200 scudi.<sup>177</sup>

Nothing in the record tells us who Abramo's rescuers were, or how they scraped together funds to save their brother. We do know that Abramo's mother joined the campaign.<sup>178</sup> Perhaps the *Università degli ebrei delle Marche* joined the effort.<sup>179</sup> Such entities were useful in crises like this one. Jewish communities had, however, shallow pockets; in a crunch, they asked for help.<sup>180</sup> We can imagine the chagrin and resignation – one more Jew to ransom! And we can imagine too the alarm at what happened next. Before they handed over their ransom money, Abramo tottered from jail, went home, and died.<sup>181</sup>

When the commutation was done, from galley to money, I didn't know anything about the death. It was concluded by word of mouth with the Jews.<sup>182</sup>

So claims Cesarini. And what did the lord do when he found out? He forced the Jews to pay regardless, and he kept his loot.<sup>183</sup> Only 500 scudi went into Cesarini's coffers, paid him in the Marches. The other 700 went to the dependent towns, for Montecosaro had owed Abramo 200 scudi and Civitanova 500, presumably since his banker days. This debt vanished.<sup>184</sup> The lord received his cash in the unsettled days of Vacant See, in March or April 1555, after Julius III expired.<sup>185</sup>

However, soon after Abramo died, probably in 1554, the tables turned on his tormentors. In 1555, with Paul IV in power, all summer long Cesarini's underlings heard dire rumblings from Rome. The Apostolic Chamber – the papal treasury, wanted to see Sante's wayward financial books. Fearing that a papal commissario might try to seize the fiefs, the Cesarini party in both towns took up arms and forced the townsmen, in meetings packed with claques with swords, to swear loyalty to the lord. Then, with the New Year, with Cesarini in jail, out came more commissari to impound the towns. Their arrival unleashed the pent-up rancor of the exultant *ecclesiastici* who, angling for reattachment to Church lordship, queued up to attest to woes under the defunct regime.<sup>186</sup>

At the anti-Cesarini inquest in Montecosaro, male heads of solid families, councilors, opined, inter alia, on Abramo's sad fate. Their

remarks, not spontaneous, were primed by the words of the town's own anti-Cesarini suit. Nevertheless, their rhetoric did vary.

The poor Jew, that they made him die, and then condemned him to the galleys, and made him pay 1200 scudi for a trifling affair. Now we can see the high-handed justice that they did him.<sup>187</sup>

Abramo the Jew was in jail because they charged him with intending to have sex with a Christian, and it wasn't true.<sup>188</sup>

Making him pay 1200 scudi, and fetching him out of jail half dead, without a justice in the world, as you see has now been discovered!<sup>189</sup>

What does this litany of sympathy for Abramo tell us about the place of Jews in a provincial town, in the fluid first year of the new, long wave of repression? The answer is not easy. These town worthies, with their sympathy, had a heavy axe to grind, and poor Abramo was just one handy whetstone. In deposing, they did cite a second Jew exorbitantly fined for "a stupid affair".<sup>190</sup> But the witnesses also bemoaned Cesarini's failure to whip the Jews into line as the new pope decreed – to impose the yellow hat and sweep them from their houses on the best street in town. Thus, town thinking took aim at law's failures, whether they hurt or helped the Jews.

As Cesarini lost the running of his fiefs, the law's hand came down too on Lancidonia, Marcantonio, and Sante.

Fourteen horses and many men on foot with a world of pikes came, and they took me to jail in Macerata.<sup>191</sup>

We cannot date this Macerata trial; its papers seem lost. The commissario who checked the books in August 1555 also had a hand in it, so it may have taken place in autumn, even before Cesarini's arrest.<sup>192</sup> We know from Roman testimony, given later, that Sante, though confessing to paying Lancidonia, stuck to his other claims, denying perjury by her.<sup>193</sup> He lied about the date on his commission to arrest Abramo.<sup>194</sup> Marcantonio, deserting Sante, conceded that too little time had passed that night for sex.<sup>195</sup> He reported Appoggio's offer to double Lancidonia's bribe and admitted that Sante had coached his testimony against Abramo.<sup>196</sup> Lancidonia dodged and wavered, endlessly:

Messer Tullio and Messer Michelangelo wanted me to tell the story, and when I told it they told me that I did not speak well, and they made me tell it so many times.<sup>197</sup>

[Tullio] so broke my head, saying, “Tell it! Tell it!” that he made me go out of my mind.<sup>198</sup>

Why such pressure? Because, once out from under Sante, Lancidonia retracted: there had been no sex.<sup>199</sup> If true, this claim pulled the legal rug out from under Sante and Marcantonio; the issue was grave. So, in winter or spring, 1556, during other anti-Cesarini inquiries in the sequestered fiefs, Sante, Marcantonio, and Lancidonia came to Rome.<sup>200</sup> There were precautions: “On the trip, there were always cops mixed in with us, and, when sleeping, we stayed separately.”<sup>201</sup> In mid-May, the judges who had sifted Cesarini’s fiefs helped try him, in his prison, Castel’ Sant’Angelo.<sup>202</sup> Cesarini, a haughty, mulish witness, barely masked his scorn for the court, his trial, and a trumped up prosecution. Still, he let slip evidence against his minions and Lancidonia.

At the end of May came the testimony of the three conspirators. In Rome, the layers of our story slop out of their neat, concentric huddle, for the underlings from Montecosaro faced the pope’s most potent legal officers: *procuratore fiscale* (chief prosecutor) Pallantieri, and two high magistrates – the Senator and the Governor of Rome. Why such lumbering artillery to bombard such mice? Because the quality of Cesarini justice bore on his lands’ fates and on Carafa dynastic plans. So, the state’s chief magistrates needled paltry Lancidonia for the truth about her greed and treachery.

Lancidonia first appears on 30 May, grilled in Tor di Nona jail, five days after her fellow conspirators. Anselmo Canuto presides, a judge with sharp wits and real decency.<sup>203</sup> Lancidonia minimizes her plotting and claims to have attested to sex because suborned by Sante on the lord’s behalf.<sup>204</sup> The next day, Marcantonio, asked if Galletta had a liaison with Abramo, replies that only Lancidonia ever said so. Sante had told him that the woman of the first scandal and the pardon was Lancidonia.<sup>205</sup> That same day, Sante defends his conduct, denies Lancidonia’s escort to Abramo’s, and admits to his drawn dagger but denies cutting her. Told that Malatesta, the lord’s secretary, confessed to ordering Sante to cook the books, he puns: the man is a *malus testis* (a bad witness). Finally, the court brings Lancidonia to confront him about his priming her testimony against Abramo, she affirming, he denying.<sup>206</sup> The court then raises the initial motive for Abramo’s aborted visit to her house: was it for words, as she says, or for sex?

At the end, Lancidonia rages at Sante, “You have controlled me like a kitten wrapped in ribbon.”<sup>207</sup>

More than two weeks later, on 17 June, Lancidonia finally returns, this time to face the highest magistrates: governor, senator, and fiscale. It is all too much; she feels trapped. Swearing in, she collapses, blubbering.

Before she could be interrogated she began in tears to say, “I don’t know any longer what to say on my behalf. I’ve said it so many times that I no longer have my head. See those old examinations. I don’t want to begin once more from the beginning. There are so many examinations. See them! You want to begin, every time, from the beginning! I don’t want to begin any more, and I don’t want to say any more!” She kept on crying, and dripping tears, saying, “See the old examinations!”<sup>208</sup>

What Lancidonia desires the court refuses. She has contradicted herself, confessing to sex in Montecosaro, denying it in Macerata. She cannot have it both ways. There follows a long, wearying exchange, harrowing for her, as they try to pin her to one version. “Could she please plant her feet and tell which thing she said is true.”<sup>209</sup> She cries, wriggles, and expostulates: “It is not true that he had sex with me. He slept with me as much as did your Lordships.”<sup>210</sup>

Lancidonia then molders for four weeks. On 11 July, the same high magistrates grill Cesarini himself on many things, among them Abramo’s affair.<sup>211</sup> Two days later, the court, this time just the Senator and ex-commissario Desiderio Guidone, hear Sante once more. Lancidonia, he says implausibly, dreamt up the trap; Appoggio wanted it. Marcantonio was innocent of plans.

Then back comes Lancidonia for one final session. She is trapped, and knows it, as do the judges, for there is no middle ground between yes and no. The prosecutor leads off, lunging at her with the horns of her dilemma:

Without a penalty – given your depositions, you cannot get off without a penalty, for, on the one hand, there is the inference of the crime of commission with the Jew, and on the other there is perjury.<sup>212</sup>

Still, the woman tries to tiptoe onto the imaginary sand spit between yes and no.

She answered: The depositions made in Montecosaro are true, and the truth is that I had to do with him in the way that I said then.

She was asked whether they are true?

She answered: In substance, I tell You what I said in my depositions in Montecosaro, and I don't want to say that I had to do with the Jew, but that what I said in those examinations. I am certain that I am dead for this. Do with me what pleases you.

And his lordship insisted that she must answer and say if she was known carnally by that Jew or not.

She answered: I say that I don't remember if he had sex with me or not. See what is written in my examinations.

She was warned and with many kindly words exhorted by the lordships that, giving up so many variations and contrarities and contrary answers, she resolve to say the pure and mere truth, and to avoid its contrary.

She answered: I have told the truth when I was examined the first time by the court of Signore Giuliano Cesarini, and note that I went to confession thereafter and took communion two times, and I have always told the truth as I did then, at the time of Signore Giuliano.

And the lordships said that she should tell what are those words that, in that time, she deposed and said:

Go see what I said and read it to me for what I said then is true.

And when the lordships said that she should answer precisely, and not by saying "I do not remember."

She answered: But note that I am deliberate, for I told those officials at Montecosaro that I would not say it again in Rome. And the lordships asked whether she slept with the said Jew, and the said Jew knew her carnally.

She answered: I said it then. Read it.

And when the lordships said that there it was not written that she slept with the said Jew.

The said witness at once answered: I don't know word for word what I said then.

And the lordships asked what she said in that examination of hers made in Montecosaro.

She answered: Read it to me. And she added of her own accord: I said many times to Messer Tullio when he examined

me in Macerata that I had told the truth the first time and he broke my head so much, saying, "Tell it! Tell it!" that he knocked me out of my mind. And I pray you that you not make me tell it so many times.<sup>213</sup>

At that, the court sent her off, only to bring her back later in the day to go around the same prickly pear of questions. Had she slept with the Jew? Not that she remembers. But she confessed to many times of sex. "If you find that I confessed it, punish me." "If it is found out that I confessed, what I said then is true."<sup>214</sup> And what did she tell Sante? More evasions. The court brings Sante in. He alleges she confessed to sex; in reply, she dodges and refers to old examinations. The judge sends them off.

### Epilogue

With that, the record expires, irresolute. We have no sentence and no inkling of the culprits' fates. They likely paid a penalty. Nor have we a sentence for Cesarini, though he lost the case and stayed in jail another fourteen months. In September 1557, his captors finally let him off when, thrashed in their Spanish war, they eased off on Imperials. Though restored to freedom, Cesarini did not regain his errant fiefs until 1560, when Pius IV restored them and revoked his condemnation. The villagers' ire and legal strivings thus came to naught. Their lord not only came back; he shouldered a new title trumpeting their subjugation. In 1560, the Cesarini became Marchesi di Montecosaro with newly perpetual tenure, and, in 1585, Duchi di Civitanova.<sup>215</sup> The family remained rich and prominent until the late seventeenth century, when a sudden dynastic failure merged it with the Roman Sforza. The Civitanova fief, most populous baronial holding in all the papal state, stayed in the family until quashed by Napoleonic abolitions in 1808, ratified after the Congress of Vienna.<sup>216</sup> Cesarini's good luck owed to the deep bad luck of his enemies, the Carafa nephews, literally decapitated in 1560–1561 by a famous political trial at the hands of Pius IV and his prosecutor, the same grim Pallantieri who in 1556 interrogated Lancidonia. Fifteen years later, the wheel of fortune turned, putting Pallantieri himself on the scaffold. By then, a papal order had again driven the Jews from Montecosaro and most other papal towns into the ghettos of Ancona and Rome.

Amidst big stories, what are the lessons of this little tale of Abramo, Lancidonia, Don Sante, and sidekick Marcantonio? It shows us at once

the tensions and the intimacy of relations between Jews and Christians, just when the papacy made congress of any sort – sexual, emotional, and social – all the harder. And, ironically, Abramo’s posthumous avenger was the very state that meanwhile ground its heel into his co-religionists. The men of law, by grace of training and long tradition, still saw Abramo as a legal person, albeit Jewish, worthy of due process and fair treatment.<sup>217</sup>

## Notes

1. Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475. Stories of a Ritual Murder* (New Haven, 1992). For lack of space, I omit the original Latin and Italian of quoted passages. For full texts, scholars can consult a version of these notes posted on my web site at York University.
2. Diego Quaglioni, “‘Both as villain and victim.’ L’ebreo in giudizio. Considerazioni introduttive,” *Quaderni storici* 99, 33, no. 3 (December, 1998), 517–532, especially 527.
3. A Jewish/Christian story like this will obviously bear on wide debates over the otherness or integration of Italian Jews, where Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994) stresses the “total diversity” of Jews (p. 219) and their “silence” among Christians (p. 224). Ariel Toaff, *Love, Work, and Death: Jewish Life in Medieval Umbria* (London, 1996), at the other extreme, stresses varieties of integration, notably for our story here in the zone of sex (5–13). See also Anna Esposito, “Notai, medici, convertiti. Figure di intermediari nella società romana del tardo quattrocento,” in Michele Luzzati, Michele Olivari and Alessandra Veronese, eds., *Ebrei e cristiani nell’Italia medioevale e moderna. Conversioni, scambi, contrasti. Atti del VI congresso internazionale dell’ASG. San Miniato 4–6 novembre 1986* (Rome, 1988), 113–121. Meanwhile, Kenneth Stow, *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the 16th Century* (Seattle, 2001), as his title itself suggests, stresses at once “commonality” and “subtle difference” (45), and stakes out a middle position, as do various other scholars, myself included. See Thomas V. Cohen, “The Case of the Mysterious Coil of Rome: Street Life and Jewish Persona in Rome in the Middle of the Sixteenth Century,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19, no. 2 (Summer, 1988), 209–221.
4. Throughout the trials, witnesses and the court consistently call Abramo *l’ebreo*, strictly, “the Hebrew.” But to write “the Hebrew” is awkward in English, and circumlocutions such as “Jewish person,” when one quotes the Italian of 1555, soon pale. They also misrepresent the original. Admittedly, the more direct “the Jew” conjures up the sneering “*il giudio*.” But sometimes we will have no recourse but to use it. Then again, does not this paper, and a whole large literature on Jewish history, deal with the ticklish question of how much respect, affection, solicitude, condescension, wariness, scorn and loathing mingled in the sorely untranslatable “*ebreo*?”
5. Kenneth R. Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge MA and London, 1992) gives a useful overview.

6. Archivio di Stato di Roma (henceforth ASR), Sforza Cesarini I, busta 89 (or old listing: AA 62), document 12: Alfonso Ceccarelli, "Della Historia di Casa Cesarina libri due" (1579), ff. 4v, 14v, 15v.
7. ASR, Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Processi (sixteenth century), busta 52 (1556) (henceforth b. 52), f. 137v. Citizens of Civitanova attribute these words to a Cesarini minion.
8. Christoph Weber, *Legati e governatori dello Stato Pontificio (1550–1809)* (Rome, 1994), 572.
9. David R. Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton, 1991), 24–25. Giuliano's son Giovanni Giorgio claimed to have laid out the sculpture collection in the garden in the decade after his father's death but the Cesarini already had a good hoard.
10. Judith Hook, *The Sack of Rome* (London, 1962), 170, for the stupendous 200,000 ducats the sack allegedly cost Cardinal Alessandro.
11. Cecarelli, "Historia di Casa Cesarina," f. 23v.
12. Giuliano's mother was from the Santa Fiore Sforza, another prominent Imperialist family in the politics of 1555.
13. ASR, Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Processi (sixteenth century), busta 26, case 5 (1556), (henceforth b. 26.5).
14. ASR, Governatore, Processi (sixteenth century), busta 24, case 4 (1556) (henceforth b. 24.4) (1556); Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (henceforth BAV), Urbinat. Lat. 1038, Avvisi di Roma, f. 119r (4 January 1556).
15. b. 24.4, entire. (The case is very short.)
16. BAV, Urbinat. Lat. 1038, Avvisi di Roma: f. 119r (4 January 1556); f. 121r (11 January 1556); also Rawdon Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers: Venetian*, vol. 6, part 1 (London, 1877), 312.
17. BAV, Urbinat. Lat. 1038, Avvisi di Roma: f. 121r (11 January 1556); f. 124v (circa 12 January 1556).
18. BAV, Urbinat. Lat. 1038, Avvisi di Roma: f. 129r (1 February 1556), for a trace of the trial; f. 133r (11 April 1556), for the end of the trial and its "more than 600 witnesses."
19. BAV, Capponiano 63, "Festa di Testaccio et Agone," f. 136v; N. Ratti, *Della Famiglia Sforza*, vol. II (Rome, 1795), 261–262, 285–288, for the parade and the high value of the gems. See also Vincenzo Forcella, *Feste in Roma nel Pontificato di Paolo III* (Rome, 1885), 25–26. For Cesarini's prominence in the jousts for the papal coronation in 1534, see *Ibid.*, 15.
20. Cecarelli, "Historia della Casa Cesarina," ff. 57v–58r.
21. Cecarelli, "Historia della Casa Cesarina," f. 56r.
22. Ceccarelli, "Historia della Casa Cesarina," f. 57v.
23. ASR, Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Processi (sixteenth century), busta 29, case 7 (1556) (henceforth b. 29.7), ff. 6v, 16v.
24. ASR, Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Processi (sixteenth century), busta 27 (henceforth b. 27) (1556), f. 105v.
25. Thomas V. Cohen, "Social Memory as Therapy and as Village Politics," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* xxix: 58 (1997), 291–309.

26. Jean Delumeau, *Vie économique et sociale de Rome dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1975), vol. 2, 626–630, for grain in the economy of the Marches.
27. Dante Cecchi, “Civitanova, feudo della nobile famiglia Cesarini,” *Convegno XVI di studi maceratesi: La fascia costiera della Marca* (sometimes cited as *Studi maceratesi*, XVI) (Civitanova Marche, 1980), 215–245, for relations between the Cesarini and the town.
28. b. 29.7, f. 1r-v, Cesarini. Here, and below I offer the name of the witness, as accounts depended on who spoke.
29. Cecchi, “Feudo,” 220–221, for these events. See also the townsmen’s testimony in b. 27, *passim*.
30. b. 27, for Montecosaro; b. 52, for Civitanova, for these stories. The tales all recur *passim*.
31. b. 27, f. 19r.
32. *Ibid.*, f. 81r-v.
33. *Ibid.*, f. 82r.
34. *Ibid.*, f. 144v. There are many testimonies to eating the bread of the Abbondanza. One witness remarks pithily: “I know because I baked the bread.”
35. *Ibid.*, f. 74r.
36. b. 29.6, ff. 16v–17r, where Sante lists his benefices and their substantial income, a little cash and mostly grain and wine.
37. b. 29.7, f. 20v, Cesarini.
38. *Ibid.*, f. 20v, Cesarini told the court he never knew Sante was a priest.
39. Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews* (Toronto, 1988–1991) vol. 5, 2129, doc. 1931 (23 June 1539).
40. Sante Clarignano must have had roots in Montecosaro. He had a brother there who stood as surety for a witness in Abramo’s trial: b. 29.6, f. 16r, Marcantonio. There was also a nephew, town unknown, to whom Sante passed a Camerino benefice: *Ibid.*, ff. 20v–21r, Sante.
41. *Ibid.*, ff. 20v–21r, Sante; b. 27, f. 83v, for instance, for the meeting that surrendered the town.
42. *Ibid.*, f. 122r-v.
43. *Ibid.*, f. 78r.
44. *Ibid.*, f. 81v.
45. *Ibid.*, f. 59v, for the gate and arms. For Cesarini’s permission: *Ibid.*, f. 76v.
46. *Ibid.*, ff. 74v–75r, for rumors of smuggled soldiers.
47. b. 29.7, f. 35r, Cesarini, for the flight of partisans of the Church.
48. b. 27, f. 64r.
49. *Ibid.*, f. 92r. These wheel-lock guns, quick to fire, were more menacing than common matchlocks.
50. *Ibid.*, f. 96v.
51. *Ibid.*, f. 62r.
52. *Ibid.*, ff. 60v–61r, for withholding grain.
53. *Ibid.*, f. 60v, for grain cheats.
54. b. 29.6, f. 21r.
55. b. 27, f. 11v, the town’s formal complaint.

56. b. 29.6, f. 6r.
57. Ibid., ff. 1v–2r, quoting Marcantonio.
58. Stow, *Alienated Minority*, 198.
59. 29.6, ff. 6r–9v, Lancidonia calls him by that name.
60. Simonsohn, *Apostolic See*, vol. 4, 1792, doc. 1486 (15 May 1530): a 5-year *condotta* to partners Abraam de Mastr Teutonico and Angelus Vitalis of Camerino, in Civitanova, Recanati and Osimo; Ibid., vol. 4, 1843, doc. 1572 (year 1532): *mandato* to the town government of Civitanova “to refrain from demanding unsecured loans from the partners Angelus Vitalis of Camerino and Michael Abrae Theutonici, money lenders there;” vol. 4, 1884, doc. 1633 (year 1533): tolerance to Joseph magistri Viviani and Michel Abraam, in Montecosaro, their families and associates, to operate a loan bank and trade; Ibid., vol. 4, 1905–1906, doc. 1668 (year 1534): declaration to Michael Habram Theotonicus, banker in Montecosaro and Civitanova, his brother-in-law Joseph, and partner Angelus Vitalis, allowing interest on unpaid loans by them; vol. 4, 1963, doc. 1734 (year 1535): Tolerance valid for 5 years for Angelus Vitalis and partner Michael Habraam Theotonicus of Trevi, their family and associates, to operate a bank in Civitanova Marche and in the March of Ancona, with *condotta* attached; vol. 5, 2366, doc. 2292 (year 1543): Tolerance for 5 years to Michael Habraam Theotonicus to operate a loan bank with brother-in-law Joseph and associates in Montecosaro; Ibid., vol. 6, 2853 (10 May 1549): for the committee to pay the fine. Simonsohn here records “Michael Todosii” for Michael Todesci (misreading “esc” as “osi”); For the earliest, but less certain trace, note also Ibid., vol. 4, 1746, doc. 1395 (year 1528): cancellation of Christian debts to Jewish bankers Michal and Jacob, of Montecosaro and Civitanova. Milano, *Storia degli ebrei*, 126, lists Civitanova among 19 Marchigiana towns with Jewish banks already in the fourteenth century. But Michele Luzzati, “Banchi e insediamenti nell’Italia centro-settentrionale fra tardo Medioevo e inizi dell’Età moderna,” in *Storia d’Italia. Annali*, vol. 11 *Gli ebrei in Italia*, Corrado Vivanti, ed. (Turin, 1996), 191–192, is willing to list Jewish banks as there only from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, but concedes they may go back earlier.
61. b. 29.6, f. 1v, Marcantonio, for an assertion, perhaps false, that the woman in question was Lancidonia. The literature on the frequency, meaning, and legal consequences of sexual relations between Jewish men and Christian women is rich and controverted. For examples, see for instance Renata Segre, *The Jews in Piedmont* (Tel Aviv, 1986), vol. 1, 315, 354–357, 361–362. For discussion, see Stow, *Alienated Minority*, 236, 248; Poliakov, *Banchieri juifs*, 183; Pullan, *Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice*, 164–167; Davis and Ravid, *Jews of Early Modern Venice*, 6; Toaff, *Love, Work and Death*, 6–13. Toaff, a social historian, inclines to see sexual exchanges across the boundary with Christian women as fairly common and often casual. For a sharp critique of that position, see Robert Bonfil, “Società cristiana e società ebraica nell’Italia medioevale e rinascimentale: riflessioni sul significato e sui limiti di una convergenza,” in M. Luzzati, M. Olivari, A. Veronese, eds., *Ebrei e cristiani nell’Italia medioevale e moderna – conversioni, scambi, contrasti: Atti del VI.o congresso internazionale S. Miniato (Pisa), 4–6 Novembre, 1986* (Rome, 1988), 231–260, especially 244–251. Bonfil denies, on the grounds of religious difference,

- not the sexual contacts themselves, but any intimacy, reciprocity, or large meaning. Likewise, David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1996), 127–165, studies interreligious strife in Aragon, where sex produced explosive legal vengeance. On 133, n. 22, Nirenberg disputes Toaff's findings. My own archival readings lean me toward Toaff's picture of a pre-Tridentine casual familiarity between Jews and low-status Italian Christians, in sex and life, and to argue, on this, against Nirenberg. Anna Esposito, "Matrimonio, convivenze, divorzio: rapporti coniugali nella comunità ebraica di Roma tra Quattro e Cinquecento," *Zakhor: rivista di storia degli ebrei d'Italia* 3 (1999), 121, finds in the crime-penalty books (*taxae maleficiorum*) of 1512–1522 much evidence of interreligious sexual traffic, backing Toaff's argument as to frequency, but leaving the matter of social meaning still unresolved.
62. b. 29.7, f. 19v, Cesarini. Abramo's advocate at Ancona was named Agnolo Feretto.
  63. b. 29.6 ff. 6v–7r, Lancidonia.
  64. Poliakov, *Banchieri juifs*, 129–138, discusses the nature of Jewish-held pawn goods, generally precious, and durable, and often well stored in strong buildings with iron grills. To the poor, such a state of affairs must have added glamor to such goods and to their holder. See also Toaff, *Love, Work, and Death*, 239–240.
  65. b. 29.6, f. 1v.
  66. Giuseppe Celata, "Gli ebrei in una società rurale e feudale: Pitigliano nella seconda metà del Cinquecento," *Archivio storico italiano*, 138, no. 2 (1980), 197–255, especially 223–224, for the cozy relations of a Jew and a rural magnate.
  67. b. 29.6, ff. 19r–20v, for the allegation and f. 20v for the words.
  68. *Ibid.*, f. 18r, Sante. Appoggio had been papal governor in Fano in 1548, three years before Cesarini himself held the post. See Weber, *Legati e governatori*, 459.
  69. b. 29.6, f. 42v, Sante, to a question about where the plot came from, late in the trial. For the dates of the messages and the names of the messengers: *Ibid.*, f. 18r, Sante.
  70. b. 29.7, ff. 19v–20r, Cesarini.
  71. b. 29.6, f. 27v, Lancidonia; *Ibid.*, f. 7r, Lancidonia.
  72. *Ibid.*, f. 7r-v, Lancidonia.
  73. *Ibid.*, ff. 23v–24r, Lancidonia in confrontation with Sante. Sante in the same confrontation denies any such command: *Ibid.*, f. 24r; Cf. also *Ibid.*, f. 8r, where Lancidonia quotes Scarpone to the effect that enmity is the issue.
  74. *Ibid.*, f. 24r-v, Sante in confrontation with Lancidonia.
  75. *Ibid.*, f. 7v, Lancidonia.
  76. *Ibid.*, ff. 7v–8r, Lancidonia. There is some reason to believe that such an encounter did take place, for Lancidonia raises the matter again in Sante's presence, in court, in a confrontation: *Ibid.*, f. 24r, Lancidonia, before Sante: "Don't you remember that it was in your house that day when Colorito came to do the gabella accounts?" In front of Sante, Lancidonia is unwilling to repeat the curse: "He said some bad thing or other about him."

77. b. 29.6 1v, Marcantonio.
78. Ibid., f. 1v, Marcantonio.
79. Ibid., ff. 1r–2v, Marcantonio.
80. Ibid., f. 14r, Marcantonio. Sante conceded in court this promise of 25 scudi: Ibid., f. 17r.
81. Ibid., f. 46v, Sante: Unless, he adds, the lord were to repay him.
82. Ibid., f. 2v, Marcantonio.
83. Ibid., f. 8r, Lancidonia, who depicts herself as present for the whole planning. But see Marcantonio's account, which does not mention Lancidonia's presence, and thus implies her absence, and a longer time for plotting: Ibid., f. 2r.
84. Ibid., f. 8r, Lancidonia.
85. Ibid., f. 2r, Marcantonio.
86. Ibid., f. 24r, Sante in confrontation with Lancidonia.
87. Ibid., f. 8v, Lancidonia.
88. Ibid., f. 42r-v. On the other hand, Sante does say that he had been "in casa," i.e., "in" (or "at") Lancidonia's house, perhaps corroborating Lancidonia. But against Marcantonio's precise "cellar," Sante's expression is vague.
89. Ibid., f. 8v, Lancidonia. For another example of mixed gambling, see Simona Feci, "Tra il tribunale e il ghetto: le magistrature, la comunità e gli individui di fronte ai reati degli ebrei romani nel seicento," *Quaderni storici*, 99, no. 3 (Dec., 1998), 598n.
90. b. 29.6, ff. 27v–28r, Lancidonia.
91. Ibid., f. 8v, Lancidonia.
92. Ibid., f. 27r, Lancidonia before the Governor.
93. Ibid., f. 28r, Lancidonia.
94. Ibid., ff. 8v–9r, Lancidonia.
95. Ibid., f. 28r, Lancidonia.
96. Ibid., ff. 27v–28r, Lancidonia, paraphrasing Scarpone.
97. Ibid., f. 8v, Lancidonia.
98. Ibid., f. 2r, Marcantonio.
99. Ibid., f. 3v, Marcantonio.
100. Ibid., Marcantonio.
101. Ibid., f. 9r, Lancidonia.
102. Ibid., Lancidonia.
103. Ibid., f. 2r-v, Marcantonio.
104. Ibid., f. 9r, Lancidonia.
105. Ibid., Lancidonia.
106. Ibid., f. 9r-v, Lancidonia.
107. Ibid., f. 2r-v, Marcantonio.
108. Ibid., Marcantonio.
109. Ibid., f. 9v, Lancidonia.
110. Ibid., Lancidonia.
111. Ibid., f. 9r-v, Lancidonia. See also Ibid., f. 27r, Lancidonia.
112. Ibid., f. 27r, Lancidonia.
113. Ibid., f. 9v, Lancidonia. See also Ibid., f. 27r, Lancidonia.
114. Ibid., f. 27r-v, Lancidonia.

115. Ibid., f. 9v, Lancidonia.
116. Ibid., f. 10r, Lancidonia.
117. Ibid., f. 10r-v, Lancidonia. See Ibid., 27v: Lancidonia, for “from my bank.”
118. Ibid., f. 10v, Lancidonia. See also Ibid., f. 15r, the court, quoting her.
119. Ibid., f. 2v, Marcantonio.
120. Ibid., f. 3v, Marcantonio; Ibid., f. 14r, Marcantonio, contradicting his reported version at his trial at Macerata.
121. Ibid., f. 2v, Marcantonio; Ibid., f. 10v, Lancidonia. Both name Raffaele, but Lancidonia has the imaginary letters come instead from Camerino.
122. Ibid., f. 15r, Marcantonio. See also Ibid., f. 10v, Lancidonia, for Scarpone’s claim that Raffaele was asleep.
123. Ibid., f. 10v, Lancidonia. Marcantonio, in court, says he came in before the servants: Ibid., f. 2v.
124. Ibid., f. 10v, Lancidonia: I conclude this from Lancidonia’s words: “At this point, Don Sante became visibile, so far as I could see, after he entered.” On the other hand, the expression (si palesò) may just imply coyly that she was surprised to see him.
125. Ibid., f. 2v, Marcantonio.
126. Ibid., Marcantonio.
127. Ibid., f. 10v, Lancidonia.
128. Ibid., Lancidonia.
129. Ibid., 2v: Marcantonio; f. 11r, Lancidonia; Ibid., f. 2v, Marcantonio confirms these words of Raffaele’s.
130. Ibid., ff. 10v–11r, Lancidonia, for the dagger; Ibid., ff. 19v–20r, Sante, however, denies any violence or even “injurious words.” Sante admits to drawing but denies striking; Ibid., f. 14r. Marcantonio confirms the drawn dagger but denies he saw Sante strike.
131. Ibid., 11r, Lancidonia. Sante (Ibid., f. 20r) and Marcantonio (Ibid., f. 14r) will deny these wounds.
132. Ibid., f. 11r, Lancidonia.
133. Ibid., Lancidonia, for her calling; 29.6, f. 2v, Marcantonio.
134. Ibid., f. 2v, Marcantonio.
135. Ibid., f. 11r, Lancidonia.
136. Ibid., Lancidonia.
137. Ibid., ff. 2v–3r, Marcantonio.
138. Ibid., f. 11r, Lancidonia.
139. Ibid., f. 11r-v, Lancidonia.
140. Ibid., f. 51r, Sante, in confrontation with Lancidonia. When asked to comment on these remarks, Lancidonia refuses, and just refers to earlier testimony. At that point, the trial transcript ends for good.
141. Ibid., f. 3r, Marcantonio.
142. Ibid., Marcantonio; Ibid., f. 42v, Sante.
143. Ibid., f. 3r, Marcantonio.
144. Ibid., f. 3r-v, Marcantonio.
145. Ibid., ff. 11v–12r, Lancidonia.
146. Ibid., f. 45r, Sante.

147. Ibid., f. 16r: “Contra dictos Abram et Scarpone hebreos carceratos.” Thus, according to the case label both are jailed.
148. Ibid., f. 19r-v, Sante; b. 29.7, f. 20r, Cesarini confirms his receipt and the contents of the letter.
149. b. 29.7, f. 21v, Cesarini, who admits to signing.
150. b. 29.6, f. 5r, Sante. In another version, Sante adds that the commission authorized him to “dig out the truth” from Abramo: b. 29.6, ff. 17v–18r.
151. Ibid., “And anything else that that commission contains, and I refer my testimony to it.” This step, deferring to an unseen document, was a common cautious move in a court system where defendants could not see the evidence. At the end of this story, Lancidonia will make the same move several times.
152. Ibid., f. 16r, Marcantonio; Ibid., f. 5r-v, Sante.
153. b. 29.7, f. 21r-v, Cesarini.
154. Ibid., f. 20r, Cesarini.
155. b. 29.6, f. 12r, Lancidonia.
156. b. 29.7, f. 21r-v, Cesarini.
157. b. 29.6, f. 19v, Sante; for Cirillo as archpriest of Loreto: 29.7, f. 8r; b. 29.6, f. 43r, Sante, for wanting the paper from Cesarini to escape trouble with Cirillo.
158. b. 29.6, ff. 12v–13r, Lancidonia.
159. Ibid., f. 16r, Marcantonio. Cola, quite illegally, had an indemnity from Sante for the pledge he stood.
160. Ibid., f. 15r, Marcantonio.
161. Ibid., f. 45v, Sante.
162. Ibid., 45v, Sante.
163. b. 27, ff. 12v–13r, 77v–78r. This act became one of the planks in Montecosaro’s legal case against the Cesarini regime. The man’s name: Fabio Olivello.
164. b. 29.6, f. 49r, the court to Lancidonia.
165. Ibid., f. 12v, Lancidonia.
166. Ibid., f. 12v, Lancidonia, for in the jail; Ibid., f. 24v, Lancidonia, for mutual confession.
167. b. 29.7, f. 20r, Cesarini.
168. Ibid., f. 21v, for Ciano. Ciano was a Roman lawyer; Ibid., f. 20v, Cesarini. In 1555 and 1556, Aldobrandini, as Carlo Carafa’s and then Paul IV’s secretary, would be deeply implicated in Cesarini’s legal and political problems, advising his rebellious tenants. At the time of Abramo’s arrest, Julius III, friendly to Cesarini, was still alive. Aldobrandini was an *avvocato consistoriale*, but then had no official post. See *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1960), 113–114.
169. b. 29.7, f. 25v–26r, Cesarini.
170. b. 29.6, f. 22v, Lancidonia: “When the lord’s second commissioner came, I was under house arrest.”; Ibid., f. 23r, Lancidonia in confrontation: “I was a prisoner in my house.”
171. Ibid., f. 23r-v, Sante and Lancidonia.
172. b. 29.7, f. 24v, Cesarini.
173. Poliakov, *Banchieri juifs*, 183, n. 3, for such terms in a *condotta* of 1558, for Castelfoffredo, and for an earlier example (1473) from Ferrara. The author gives the Italian for the 1558 agreement. It translates, “If ever the said Jews

- be accused or taken to court for having sexual relations with Christian women, they cannot fall under any penalty at all.”
174. Feci, “Tra il tribunale e il ghetto,” 585, for many cases of “*composizione*” with Roman Jews; 581, for shakedowns.
  175. *Ibid.*, 548, for an example of a sentence of five years to a chronic malefactor who went to Christian prostitutes. Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice* (Oxford, 1983), 165, 167, reports two instances, one of a Jew and the other of a judaizing Christian sentenced to the galleys. In both cases, the provocation and the breaking of taboos, in the eyes of the Christian court, had been multiple and protracted. Rowing for the state was a penalty neither usual, nor casual; Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, “Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the Inquisition,” in Robert Davis and Benjamin Ravid, eds., *Jews of Early Modern Venice*, 99–102, describes crimes that landed men in the galleys. The defendants: a Jew who took baptism four times for the premium; a Franciscan who became a Jew; a Jew who took a Christian lover; and a Christian who took a Jewish lover, wore the Jewish hat, and frequented the ghetto – he, a recidivist, was sentenced in his second trial; another apostate; and a neophyte who sold fraudulent indulgences. Simonsohn, *Apostolic See and the Jews*, has only two references to sixteenth-century Jews in the Papal State sentenced to the galleys: vol. 5, items 2463 (in 1544, for a strange adultery case inside the Jewish community) and vol. 6, item 2743 (in 1548, crime unclear). This paucity of citations suggests the rarity of the practice. But Simonsohn surveyed Vatican papers but not the criminal court records, so there may have been more. Note, for instance, the absence in his book of any trace of Abramo’s trial.
  176. Simonsohn, *Apostolic See and the Jews*, vol. 4, 2046, doc. 1806. I thank Elliott Horowitz for this example.
  177. b. 29.7, f. 20v, Cesarini.
  178. b. 29.6, f. 22v.
  179. For this body, also labelled Universitas Hebreorum Marchiae, see Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews of the World of the Renaissance* (Leiden, 1973), 60, 84, 100–102. Shulvass knows little about it. Its scribe may have sat in Macerata. Shulvass does note (102) that at some point the Università set up a permanent representative in Rome. Shulvass is often vague with dates. If there was an agent in Rome in 1554, he may have dealt with Cesarini, but the lord reports that he negotiated the fine with not one but several Jews.
  180. Shulvass, *Jews of the World of the Renaissance*, 68–73, for the scanty resources of Italian Jewish communal bodies. Abramo himself probably could not have paid. Toaff, *Love, Work, and Death*, 238, sets the average capital of a bank between 4,000 and 5,000 florins. Florins and scudi were of similar value. But such capital was generally encumbered by debts. Moreover, Abramo had dropped his banking practice, probably in 1548, six years back.
  181. b. 29.7, f. 26v, Cesarini, who avers that Abramo, at the request of his family, was returned to his house under guard because ill.
  182. b. 29.6, ff. 40v–41r, Cesarini; b. 29.7, f. 23r, Cesarini claims that he never even knew that the man was ill.
  183. b. 29.6, f. 22v, the court to Cesarini; b. 29.7, f. 23v, Cesarini, for his use of his *auditore*, a judge, to press his claim for compensation.

184. *Ibid.*, f. 23r-v, Cesarini. For banking to fund communal governments, see: Poliakov, *Banchieri giuifs*, 156; Celata, "Pitigliano," 222–231 and *passim*. Luzzati, "Banchi ed insediamenti," 191, 203, and *passim*.
185. b. 29.7, f. 23v, Cesarini; Poliakov, *Banchieri giuifs*, 183, n. 2, cites a Jew of Rome who in 1562, under Sixtus IV, had to lay out 1050 scudi to repair the Lateran, via a fine for sexual transgression. The figure is comparable to Abramo's. On the other hand see *Ibid.*, 149, for a much stiffer 6,000 florins, imposed in Florence in 1463, on a banker of Pistoia worth shaking down with a judicial death threat. See also Toaff, *Love, Work and Death*, 7, on the universal practice, in Umbria, of fining the Jewish man.
186. b. 27 has the complete trial in Montecosaro; b. 52 has the trial in Civitanova. Of this, only ff. 110–154 survive.
187. b. 27, f. 62v, witness 2.
188. *Ibid.*, f. 78v, witness 4.
189. *Ibid.*, f. 79v, witness 4.
190. *Ibid.*, f. 82r, witness 3.
191. b. 29.6, f. 26r, Lancidonia.
192. *Ibid.*, f. 26r, Lancidonia, for commissario Tullio, at her arrest; *Ibid.*, 21r, Sante, for the date of Tullio's seizure of his books; *Ibid.*, f. 13r, Lancidonia, to the effect that Tullio examined her many times; *Ibid.*, f. 25v: Lancidonia also mentions a Michelangelo, who also interrogated her.
193. *Ibid.*, f. 17v. This passage, referring to prior testimony, probably relates things said in Macerata.
194. *Ibid.*, f. 43r, Sante. In Rome, Sante seems very eager to forget his Macerata deposition on this matter, as if to duck a Roman charge of perjury.
195. *Ibid.*, f. 3v, the court, summarizing testimony in Macerata.
196. *Ibid.*, f. 14r, Marcantonio.
197. *Ibid.*, f. 25v, Lancidonia.
198. *Ibid.*, f. 48r, Lancidonia.
199. *Ibid.*, f. 47r.
200. Montecosaro: 6 February to 5 March 1556, under Desiderio Guidone; for Civitanova, papers survive from 10 March through 21 March 1556. The name of the commissario, probably Guidone, is lost as the manuscript, similar in hand and organization to Montecosaro's, is incomplete; for Rocca Sinibalda: 1 February to 30 March 1556, with further inquiries in Rieti as late as 20 March, under Anselmo Canuto.
201. b. 29.6, f. 4v, Sante.
202. BAV, Urbinat. Lat. 1038, Avvisi di Roma, f. 140r (23 May 1556) reports the beginning of Cesarini's examination. The affair was of public note and international interest.
203. ASR, Governatore, Tribunale Criminale, Processi (sixteenth century): busta 25 (1556) and busta 34 (1557). I know Canuto well from his inquest at Rocca Sinibalda, back in February, and from his own grueling trial next year at Pallantieri's hands. In my next book, I will tell his story.
204. b. 29.6, ff. 10r–13r.
205. *Ibid.*, ff. 13v–16v.
206. *Ibid.*, f. 22r-v.

207. Ibid., f. 24r. The whole confrontation runs from f. 22r to f. 24v. "Deposing with much animus," notes the court, about this kitten speech.
208. Ibid., f. 25r.
209. Ibid., f. 26v.
210. Ibid., f. 26v.
211. Ibid., ff. 33r ff. The subject of Abramo appears on f. 41v ff.
212. Ibid., f. 47r.
213. Ibid., ff. 47r–48r.
214. Ibid., f. 49r-v.
215. Cecchi, "Feudo dei Cesarini," 219, for the generous conditions of the grant of 1560.
216. Cecchi, "Feudo dei Cesarini," 243–245.
217. Scholars have already observed this judicial punctilio. See Simona Feci, "The Death of a Miller: a Trial contra hebreos in Baroque Rome," *Jewish History* 7, no. 2 (Fall, 1995), 9–27, especially 22. See also Kenneth Stow, "The Papacy and the Jews: Catholic Reformation and Beyond," *Jewish History*, 6, nos. 1-2 (1992), 268, on the ideological centrality of legal correctness to the Catholic approach to Jews, even after the ghetto was established. See also Kenneth Stow, "Delitto e castigo nello stato della chiesa: gli ebrei nelle carceri romane dal 1572 al 1659," in *Italia judaica: gli ebrei tra Rinascimento ed età barocca. Atti del II. convegno internazionale. Genova 10–15 giugno 1984* (Rome, 1986) 173–192, especially 191.