

ONE COMMUNITY'S SECRET: INCEST AND INFANTICIDE
IN THE LATE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY VENETO*Joanne M. FERRARO*San Diego State University, Department of History, CA-92182-6050 San Diego, 5500 Campanile Dr.
e-mail: ferraro@mail.sdsu.edu**ABSTRACT**

For six years one small community of rustics working on a Venetian patrician's landed estate in the province of Padua kept a horrible secret: one of the field workers was fathering children with his daughter and then murdering them. A bounty hunter, hungry for a cash reward, turned the village gossip to his advantage, denouncing the affair to the Venetian Podestà, who set out to punish the "monstrous delinquents and abominable sinners" and restore Divine Law. This article analyzes the criminal inquiry, highlighting the testimonies of the accused, their neighbors, and their kin to reveal the ambiguities surrounding deviant behavior. The Venetian Podestà could not comprehend why no one, including the village priest, had denounced such obviously grave crimes to the state. Community members, on the other hand, were intent on keeping the incest and infanticide a secret because cohesion was more important to their collective livelihood and reputation than abuse and sin.

Key words: family secrets, infanticide as male crime, gossip, community solidarity, gendered perceptions of behavior

IL SEGRETO DI UNA COMUNITÀ: INCESTO E INFANTICIDIO
NEL TARDO CINQUECENTO VENETO**SINTESI**

Per sei anni una comunità piccola di contadini che lavoravano i terreni di un patrizio veneziano nella provincia di Padova mantenne un segreto orribile: uno dei contadini concepiva bambini con sua figlia e li uccideva subito dopo la nascita. Un cacciatore ai premi, in voglia del ricompensamento monetario, volse le chiacchiere a suo vantaggio, denunciando l'affare al podestà veneziano che decise di punire "i delinquenti mostruosi e peccatori odiosi" e di restituire la Legge Divina.

L'articolo analizza l'inchiesta criminale, mettendo in rilievo le testimonianze degli accusati, dei loro vicini e parenti per rivelare le ambiguità attorno al comporta-

mento deviante. Il podestà veneziano non potè comprendere perchè nessuno, incluso il prete del villaggio, non denunciò un crimine così ovviamente grave allo Stato. I membri della comunità, d'altra parte, erano decisi a mantenere l'incesto e l'infanticidio un segreto, perché ritenevano più importante per la loro collettività la coesione che l'abuso e il peccato.

Parole chiave: segreti di famiglia, infanticidio commesso da uomini, chiacchiere, solidarietà della comunità, percezioni di comportamento maschili e femminili

MONSTROUS DELINQUENTS AND ABOMINABLE SINNERS

"Clarissimo Signore," wrote the bounty hunter Agostin Bornella to the Venetian Podestà of Cittadella, Giovanni Valier, in November 1593, "it has come to my attention through public chatter and acclaim that Bastian Stanghelin of Galliera is a bad man, of the worst nature that one could fear. Disdaining Divine and Human Laws with his diabolic spirit, he has known his daughter Mattia carnally for five or six years. He has taken her virginity and also procreated children that he then hid and brought to harm. This is very serious for a Christian, such that every fellow Christian and even God would find this horrible monster hateful and worthy of death. I haven't managed to catch him, as he is both a clever and terrible person that both kin and friends fear. But today with the help of God I found him in Janmaria Faltrini's osteria, and I captured him. I went immediately to the Villa in Galliera, and I also apprehended Mattia, Bastian's daughter. When she heard that her father had been retained, she tried to flee to her neighbors. She hid under a bed. Nonetheless, I caught her and took her to Your prisons. Thus father and daughter are in the hands of the Justice of Your Signoria. Monstrous delinquents and abominable sinners. Let Justice bring to full light what I have exposed of these two. Examine Girolamo Carraro, the cook for Clarissimo Piero Capello in Galliera, and his wife Oliana so that the truth be known and Justice might punish such a serious crime. It would be best to remove that peasant from the world. To me may the benign Serenissima bestow the rewards that I deserve as a faithful servant and captor, the one who exposed this serious crime. Let the reward be at the pleasure of the Illustrious and Excellent Council of Ten" (ASV, 1, ff. 1r–3v).¹

¹ *"Comparsi [...] Agostin Bornella così dicendo: Clarissimo Signor essendomi preso visto di notorio, si par publica voce et fama venuto ad orecchi, che Bastian Stanghelin da Galiera homo di mala condition, et pessima natura posso il timor del grande Iddio da parte. Sprezzando le leggi sì Divine come humane da diabolico spirito spinto et spronaso si ha fatto lui so da certo tempo in qua che sono circa cinque over sei anni continuamente carnalmente conosser Mattia sua figlia, et havendogli tolta la virginità, ha anco di lei procreato figlioli, quali occultando et facendo li andar di mal, il qual suasso mi ha parso così grave che spirito da cristiano affatto, parendomi che un così ruffando mostro tanto a*

A sordid story of incest and infanticide unfolded in this rural hamlet of northeast Italy in the winter of 1593. It was the criminal investigation of two crimes which Venetian authorities would define as against God, the State, and the institution of the family, crimes that were both dangerous and interconnected with sin. The official inquiry did not focus on the victimization of any individual, whether the molested daughter of Sebastian Stanghelin or the murdered infants. It centered instead on the nefarious Sebastian Stanghelin, who had defied Divine and human law and offended both God and all good Christians. With the help of God and Venetian Justice, the Venetian Council of Forty declared, this offender would be removed from the Christian community.

The 'diabolical spirit' that moved Sebastian to incest and infanticide was already familiar in the language of the Avogaria di Comun. Guido Ruggiero has shown for fifteenth century-Venice that it was a means of explaining the causative psychological motivation of rapists and other delinquents (Ruggiero, 1985, 91). In the Age of Reform, however, it took on new vigor as communities throughout Europe purged and purified themselves of sin and sinners. Yet this was not just the language of the State Attorneys or the Venetian Council of Ten. It was that of a bounty hunter seeking to make his living by capturing criminals and collecting rewards. Whether he held any moral convictions is difficult to say.

Neither was this the language of the neighbors on whose village this shameful story descended. The attitude of community members in the rural hamlet of Galliera Veneta in 1593–1594 is intriguing: the Stanghelins' neighbors and kin had been aware of grave moral wrongdoing for five or six years, yet no one had come forward. It was the bounty hunter who broke the conspiracy of silence. Even the village priest, Prè Rastrellin, to the astonishment of the Podestà of Cittadella, Giovanni Valier, failed to intervene in the Stanghelin family's affairs. Robbing a daughter of her virginity and

Iddio et ogni cristiano odioso, meriti esser extinto, et cosi havendolo piu frai spraso non ho mai potuto haverlo, si per la sua sagacità come persona terribile, si par parenti come par amici molto temuto, et difficilissimo da haver. Pur hoggi con l'aiuto di Iddio li ha trovato qui in Cittadella in hostaria da Janmaria Faltrini et l'ho preso et subito mi son congiunto nella Villa di Galiera, et ho anco preso Mattia predetta sua figlia, la qual havuta nota della retention del padre si era da certi suoi vicini fugita, et sotto un certo leto nascosa nondimeno anco essa l'ho presa et condotta nelle prigioni di Vostra Signoria Clarissima, quali padre et figlia gli presento nelli mani della Giustitia di Vostra Signoria Clarissima come monstruosi delinquenti et di cosi ruffando et abominol peccato operatori, et acciò la Giustizia venga pienamente in luce di quanto gli espongo gli do, gli infrascritti testimonij da esser sopra tal caso et essere esaminati. Instando anco che sian esaminati Girolamo Carraro cochier dal Clarissimo Signore Piero Capello in Galiera, et Oliana sua moglie a fin che trovate la verita di quanto gli dico la possi esercitar la sua Giustitia dando quel castigo che a cosi grande error si conviene levado dal mondo un tanto fattore, et a me siano concessi per benignita del Serenissimo Dominio indi quelli benefizij che merita la sua fidelissima servitu come captor, et propellator (to propel, in this case the author of, or one who caused) di un cosi grave delitto; et come meglio piacerà all'Illustrissimo eccellentissimo Consiglio di Dieci in ogni caso et instando." (ASV, 1, ff. 1r–3v).

infanticide were crimes against society and injurious to the State, but they were also sins of the soul, and this priest had been aware of the Stanghelin family's travails. Ultimately it fell to the Podestà to gather testimony and to use his discretionary powers to judge the case, but during the course of the investigation he consistently asked why such grave crimes had not been reported. He received no clear answers.

THE INVESTIGATION

Following up on the bounty hunter's pronouncement, Podestà Valier ordered depositions, and with the assistance of the local criminal judge and his staff, he presided over the trials. In this case, fortunately for the researcher, Valier sent a summary to the Venetian Avogaria di Comun, but in 1593 this was not yet a regular practice. Records of infanticide, tried in the criminal courts (*malefici*) of the Venetian subject cities, did not always reach the capital city. Only in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and more precisely after 1680, did Venice intervene in a systematic way in criminal cases concerning infanticide in the mainland dominions, insuring that the various podestà sent copies of their proceedings to the Council of Ten. Giacomo Novello, a judge of the criminal courts in the Venetian regional state and author of *Practica et theorica causarum criminalium* (1558) did not define infanticide, nor was it defined in the criminal praxis for courts of the Venetian subject cities written by Priori in 1622. The crime of infanticide had assumed sharp definition in Venice by the fifteenth century, but this was not the case in the sixteenth-century mainland territories, that, unlike the *Dominante*, were grounded in Roman rather than Justinian's laws. In the Venetian terraferma infanticide did not have a fixed identity, and it was often conflated with parricide (Povolo, 1978–1979, 120–126; Povolo, 1979–1980, 415–432; Povolo, 1989, 89–153).

The Podestà summoned the Stanghelins' immediate neighbors and kin to testify about their knowledge and perceptions of what had happened in this incest and infanticide case. Mattia's siblings were also required to give depositions before she and her father were interrogated. Women and men were called to testify equally. The first witness was Alessandro Siricon, the first cousin of Mattia's deceased mother (ASV, 1, ff. 3v–6r). Clearly he had knowledge of Sebastian's wrongdoings, but did not want to interfere in another man's house. Alessandro deferred to the priest, the village authority.

"I know Bastian Stanghelin as the worst kind of man. There are murmurings here around the Villa that Bastian knows his daughter Mattia carnally."

"What about his other daughters? Are they good girls?" asked the Podestà.

"You could examine the priest of the Villa and find out a lot of things, if you have the authority from your superiors to examine him. Around the Villa this is public knowledge."

Other witnesses confirmed Siricon's testimony. They all knew that Mattia had been bedridden, and that she had had children with her father. Some offered further information about Bastian's wrong doings with his children, saying he did not feed them, and that he beat them. When he did not permit Mattia to go out and work in the fields, remarked Giuseppe Diala, the peasants assumed she was pregnant (ASV, 1, ff. 22v–24v). Only one witness, Giovanni Donà, denied hearing that Mattia had had sex with her father (ASV, 1, ff. 24v–26v). Only one, Gaspar Barbossa, mentioned that someone he knew wanted to start a quarrel with Bastian (ASV, 1, f. 29v). The others, it seems, did not want to interfere with a father's prerogative to rule his own house, even though they knew what Sebastian was doing was wrong. They also feared Sebastian's violent temper. They pretended not to notice, but notice they did, and they gossiped about it.

"Why not resort to Justice and denounce this nefarious thing?" the Podestà queried repeatedly. Unlike urban Venice, where the unrestrained community gossip pronounced domestic violence clearly unacceptable and neighbors came to the assistance of abused wives (Ferraro, 2001, 119–134), at the Capello Villa the community voice over Mattia's confinements never rose above a quiet murmur. Galliera Veneta, with its provincial parish, and the Capello estate was a tightly knit association. In 1530 the bishop of Treviso, Francesco Pisani, made the Capello family patrons of the parish. Villa and parish became almost one unit, with the same social and economic base. Everyone knew everyone else. If the Stanghelin criminal case is any indication, the rustic laborers practiced endogamy. Many workers on the villa, male and female, were related to one another. They were part of two main social units contemporaneously: the family in its nuclear and extended form; and the collectivity. This was the result of the way their work was organized: raising pigs; planting, harvesting, drying, and grinding grain all required collaboration. Each of the nuclear families that lived under separate roofs of the *dependence* was not really isolated, but in practice integrated. The families shared animals and tools and divided their labors. They worked to the rhythms of a common calendar, described not by months and days but by the events of the agrarian cycle. *Planting season. Harvest season. The time when newborn colts finish weaning and are ready to run free* are the descriptives the protagonists use in our story. The men gathered at the local hostelry after work to drink and play cards. The women shared domestic and field chores together, and exchanged information about the trials and events of their own life cycles, such as pregnancy, birth, miscarriages, and death. Knowledge circulated through gossip. Together these village folk formed a collective mentality, with some homogeneity. The bounty hunter, on the other hand, was an intruder that disrupted the quiet rhythms of their farming life, exposing their secrets and their vulnerabilities. Still it was their own gossip that brought them to the attention of the wandering bounty hunter that ultimately invoked Venetian justice.

What did the community silence in Galliera Veneta in 1593–1594 signify? Recently Edward Muir concluded in his analysis of Buia, a tiny Friulan village, in 1516 that the sense of community in Renaissance Italy was built on a combination of "thin" or fragile trust and "thick trust," trust built upon daily human interactions – at the bar, the church, the fields, and the barns. "Thick trust" sustained attempts to either resolve conflict or to contain it (Muir, 2002, 4–12, 16). The community of Galliera Veneta tacitly chose to contain its conflict over Mattia and Sebastian's incest through private arrangements. Gossip flourished, as did private conversations behind closed doors, but knowledge of misbehavior never reached Venetian officials or the patrician proprietor of the Villa. Galliera Veneta shunned institutional arrangements, which were public representations of authority. Members of the community did not want something as delicate as incest and infanticide resolved in public space, the space of the Podestà and his court. Community arrangements at Galliera Veneta were in all likelihood motivated by self-interest, a desire to maintain safety in the face of outside authority. Moreover, in some respects the Stanghelins' neighbors and kin were complicit in the misbehavior because they did not regulate it. They may have feared retribution from authorities. The priest behaved the same as the laity. He may even have held the privileged information of Mattia's confession. He may have told Sebastian not to repeat the offense but he would not take the next step and break privilege. Mattia's kin and neighbors clearly knew the incest and infanticide were wrong, and they were forthright once the Podestà called them to depose. However, not one of them wanted to be the first to denounce Sebastian's crimes. Avoiding the justice system and denying that the incest and infanticide problems existed served community interests best.

READING THE ARCHIVAL TEXT

The community's silence in Galliera Veneta helps explain why the historical record for the incidence of infanticide and incest is so thin. Povolo, charting infanticide cases over the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, found very few: fifteen for the city of Venice were brought before the *Avogaria di Comun* between 1451 and 1545 and eight for the period between 1731 and 1780. More were reported for the Venetian mainland, Istria, and Dalmazia: between 1685 and 1763 there were 210 (Povolo, 1989, appendices). Elsewhere in Europe and New England, reporting was slightly better (Hoffer, Hull, 1981). Cases of incest, on the other hand, were rarely reported. In Rotterdam and Delft Van der Heijden found seven cases of father-daughter incest for the seventeenth century. The girls were not viewed as victims but as accessories to the crime (Van der Heijden, 2000, 623–644). In the Veneto, the rise in cases of infanticide that were reported was due in part to the crime being more sharply defined in law over time as well as a tightening of judicial procedures. Infanticide became a social and juridical problem of prominence in the eighteenth century, when there developed a new and more positive

attitude toward infants. Venice's centralizing tendencies were also significant in bringing this crime to light: up to 1650 infanticide was the competency of the various tribunals of the *terraferma*, and they were not among the cases that the rectors regularly reported to the Council of Ten. In 1680 the Ten obliged the rectors to send information to them about every case of homicide, and that included infanticide. Infanticide became more clearly homicide, placing greater significance on the infant's right to life.

In exploring the motivations for this crime Povolo finds that Venetian law did not keep up with the social reality of the unwed mother who killed her infant to maintain her honor. His analysis of criminal records for the years between 1711 and 1797 reveals the typical victim as a woman in her early twenties who worked in the fields during the summer and autumn and spun wool during the winter. Usually she had no father and lived on a marginal income. Closely observed by neighbors, reports came when it was deduced that a baby had been murdered (Povolo, 1979–1980, 426–430).

The Stanghelin episode, however, does not fit this profile. It is not an infanticide motivated by the honor, hunger, and poverty of a fatherless, unwed mother. In this case the father, not the mother, is the perpetrator of homicide, presumable to cover up the incest. Why did he not take the infants to a foundling home? Because Sebastian had broken the incest taboo, a biological law but also an agreement among men in patriarchal societies over the disposition of women as objects of exchange. He had no intention of giving his daughter in marriage but rather of abusing his own paternal power. According to this logic, a father who is entitled to give his daughter in marriage also has the prerogative to keep her for himself (Herman, Hirschman, 1981, 61–63). Implicitly Sebastian felt himself entitled to use his daughter as a substitute for his deceased wives. He had already remarried once, but upon his second wife's death he found it convenient to take full possession of his oldest daughter. If not physically and emotionally convenient then convenient because he already had five children under his roof and a third wife would have brought additional offspring to this poor rural laborer. His relationship with Mattia provided him with a sex life, and infanticide was a convenient form of birth control. Clearly most fathers stopped short of this pathological expression of patriarchy, finding suitors for their daughters, even if they felt a reluctance or sadness at giving them away.

As head of the household Sebastian was in a position to dominate, even though he was not the sole financial support of the family (as customary throughout early modern rural Europe, his children worked, too). His violent episodes are confirmation that he ruled by force. Moreover, his alcohol intake at the local pub may have been excessive enough to make him cross the line. It is plausible that he abused alcohol in addition to abusing his daughter.

Where were Mattia's allies? There was no mother in this family to act as a protective agent, although there is no guarantee that a mother would have interfered with a violent husband. The priest might have offered Mattia some hope. He was informed

of Sebastian's misbehavior, and may even have attempted to stop him with words, but if he did he was clearly ineffective. It seems he directed his anger at Mattia's aunt, Oliana, and punished her for not regulating the behavior of either Sebastian or Mattia. His refusal to confess Oliana until Easter may have been a signal to the community of his disapproval. On the other hand, it seems from the testimony that Sebastian could ultimately buy the priest's silence with a gold ring. Oliana had full knowledge of the incest for years, as did reputedly the other women of the Villa, but did nothing to stop Sebastian or protect Mattia. Nor did Oliana's husband want her to interfere in another man's house, a violent man no less. In fact, when Aunt Oliana asked her niece what she was doing, there is the implication that Mattia was as responsible if not more so for the wrongdoing. Mattia may have been viewed as an accomplice to the incest because she did not protest or denounce her father to authorities. The young woman had no allies. She lived in a community filled with tension but still bound together by private arrangements.

What were Mattia's choices? Denouncing her father meant facing a judicial process and disclosing the intimate details of her sex life with public, male authorities. Having her father punished would mean destroying the household, leaving her siblings without the financial support and paternal authority that was important to that society. There was also tremendous shame attached to public disclosure. Mattia could also have chosen to flee the household and to try to find work as a domestic servant, but that was not without its own sexual dangers, either. Nor was it clear that her father would allow her to wed or that she had any marriage prospects before her father's seduction. Not all women were encouraged to marry, and in Mattia's social milieu many could never afford to wed.

Mattia chose to stay, and her case thus offers us the opportunity to look beyond social choice, to dig deeper into the young woman's psychological development. Describing the night her father took her virginity she laments to the Podestà, "He was with me about a quarter of an hour, and having done it, he left immediately that time, not saying a loving word or acting sweetly the way one usually does under those circumstances. Your Honor, having committed the act, as I said, he left me without saying anything." These are the words of a daughter experiencing profound disappointment if not shock that her father not only did not love her enough to protect her but that even when he took her virginity he did not show her any affection. Do these words also hint at her hope for a mutual relationship, one that would partially explain why Mattia cooperated with her father for six years? "[...] he left immediately that time [...]," she said, but what about the others? She tells the Podestà that she yielded to physical force, at least the first time. Legally as well as emotionally this would explain her victimization. She also describes the sex as her father's business, not hers. But the consistent pattern of sexual relations over the long term also suggests that Sebastian eventually succeeded in seducing his daughter. She tacitly assumed a wifely role

for him, suggesting that Sebastian's attitude was of critical importance to her own development (Ford, 1998, 13, 163; Weinberg, 1955). He did not find her a suitor but rather wholly possessed her for himself, and Mattia allowed herself to be abused and her children to be murdered while simultaneously longing for her father's affection.

The Stanghelin case merits a niche in current historiographical discussion over the repression of Catholic women's sexuality outside of marriage. The enclosure of young girls and women who were not tracked for marriage has been characterized as a means of protecting both their honor and the honor of their families from external threat (Wiesner, 1993, 50–53; Laslett, 1977; Ruggiero, 1985; Cavallo, Cerutti, 1990, 73–109; Farr, 1987, 839–854). This case reveals other dangers, suggesting that the sexuality of women was enclosed in early modern Europe not only because of external threats to their honor but also because enclosed space implicitly created internal dangers to their well being. Fathers and brothers not only feared the seduction by other men of their daughters and sisters, respectively, but also that they too could seduce them and be seduced. The historian Lauro Martines has argued that closed domestic space in the Italian Renaissance cities encouraged incest, whether real or imagined. Most of his examples, however, are based on fictive tales of genetic mothers and sons or young wives and their stepsons. Up to the mid-sixteenth century he found not a single story about incestuous relations between father and daughter. Martines argues that household space did not confine men and so was unlikely to suggest their involvement with daughters (Martines, 1998, 255–290; Martines, 2001, 199–229). Perhaps. Incest is not the kind of phenomenon we have abundant evidence for. It is still plausible that women enclosed in domestic space, particularly those with meager living accommodations who commonly shared a bed with several people, either consciously or unconsciously entered their fathers' and brothers' fantasies. Sex was not a secret in that context.

Mattia Stanghelin also falls back on her father's violent tendencies to explain her cooperation in the incest, and the kin and neighbors who testify also admit to intimidation. Male violence and female coercion are entirely in keeping with the gender norms of the period as well as the parameters of the law. My own book, *Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice*, illustrates one aspects of feminine resistance to patriarchy, rejections of arranged marriage (Ferraro, 2001, 33–68). Mature women turned to the Venetian ecclesiastical court well after their fathers' deaths to claim they took their marriage vows under coercion. Stories about fathers putting knives to their daughters' throats so that they would consent to wed abound. This kind of violent imagery was not confined to the betrothals, marriage rites, and wedding nights in *Marriage Wars* but also to the stories of forced monachization that Jutta Sperling has studied (Sperling, 1999, 37–38).

Was the paternal violence daughters described in this wide range of archival sources trope or social reality? My argument in *Marriage Wars* hinged on legal defi-

nitions, that reverential fear, the fear deriving from deep respect of paternal authority, was insufficient to demonstrate a union was coerced. Petitioners to the ecclesiastical court had to demonstrate that their consent to marry was the product of grave fear, the kind of fear that issued from threats of injury. Daughters, not sons, and their lawyers seemed to think that the imagery of violent and tyrannical fathers was a plausible reflection of social reality, a reality that both elite and popular culture shared. It is quite plausible that Bastian Stanghelin raped his daughter, yet the judicial questioning Mattia Stanghelin faced still presented her with a dilemma: did she allow herself to be seduced or was she raped? Did she wish to have sex or was she forced through violence? The claim that her father forced her might excuse her of any culpability if it was an isolated incident. But remaining in the sexual relationship, albeit forced, over the long term made her suspect to the Podestà.

Many more questions remain unanswered. How many incest cases in remote villages like Galliera Veneta went unreported? How common was incest in closed communities where marriage prospects were dim and there were few outlets for sex outside of matrimony? Was the community's silence a tacit acknowledgement that the phenomenon was not uncommon? That what fathers worked out privately in their own households was not the community's concern? That Mattia was old enough to defend herself and to make her own choices? Was it violent intimidation that protected Sebastian, or had he developed "thick trust" at the bar and in the fields?

"Thick trust" does not seem to have worked for Mattia, whose absence at the daily gatherings in the fields or to shuck beans was duly noted. No one seemed to think she merited punishment from the authorities, as did other neighborhood communities that suspected unwed mothers of infanticide, yet no one seemed to think she needed protection, either. The modern idea of rape does not appear in the rhetoric. This is not the case of a crime against an abused daughter. Mattia's lack of consent is not considered in the judicial inquiry so much as whether her participation was voluntary. The social – but especially emotional and psychological contradictions – of an incestuous marriage between father and daughter are masked by the rhetoric of Divine Law. For Sebastian Stanghelin there was no possibility of redemption. Giovanni Valier, representing Venetian justice, ultimately ruled that Sebastian be beheaded and that his body be burnt to ash. Only the obliteration of such an evil doer would restore Divine Law to Galliera Veneta.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Professor Claudio Povolo of the University of Venice for his invaluable assistance with the problem of infanticide and for his generosity in sharing both published work and archival references in the *Avogaria di Comun*.

SKRIVNOST NEKE SKUPNOSTI: INCEST IN DETOMOR
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Članek temelji na poglobljeni analizi sodne preiskave o incestu in detomoru v kazenskih sodnih spisih *Avogaria di Comun* v beneških državnih arhivih. Leta 1593 je lovec na nagrade, ki je potoval skozi kraj Galliera Veneta na območju Cittadelle blizu Padove, iz vaških govoric odkril, da ima nek poljski delavec otroke s svojo hčerko, novorojenci pa so takoj umorjeni. Beneški načelnik Cittadelle je obtožene priprl in zaslišal ter zbral pričevanja njihovih sosedov in sorodnikov, vključno z mlajšimi brati in sestrami zlorabljene. Analiza se osredotoča na pričevanja, ki razkrivajo dvoumnosti o odklonskem vedenju, ki ogroža samo institucijo družine. Po deleželani so se uprli pritisku Benetk, naj svojo skupnost očistijo 'hudičevskega zločina', da bi ohranili svoj kolektivni obstoj in ugled. Implicitne predpostavke državnih uradnikov o grehu in napačnem vedenju so v nasprotju s samopodobo obtoženih kot tudi zagovornikov skupnosti in ugleda družine. Vendar pričevanja bežno razkrijejo tudi nejasne odnose v skupnosti. Čeprav prevladujeta moško nasilje in prisila žensk (obe patriarhalni skrajnosti), prihaja tudi do delitve in izneverjenja zaupanja.

Ključne besede: družinske skrivnosti, detomor kot moški zločin, govorice, skupnostna solidarnost, moške in ženske percepcije vedenja

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