

Article

Mapping Heresy in Sixteenth-Century Venice

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Abstract: Drawing on a systematic study of the *Savi sopra l'eresia* archive in Venice, the most complete collection of historical records pertaining to Italian heretical movements and their repression, this article sketches the geography of heretical circles in Venice between the 1540s and the 1580s. The article puts space back into history and reads the history of religious dissent against the urban structure of sixteenth-century Venice, where streets and squares favored people's encounters, allowing and fueling the exchange of information and the process of knowledge generation. Shifting the focus from people to places, and emphasizing fluidity and porosity, suggests new ways to pursue a more dynamic and performative conception of religious dissent.

Keywords: Renaissance Venice; heresy; Counter-Reformation Italy; Inquisition; spatial history

1. Introduction

Sixteenth-century Venice was a “city of heretics”. The Capuchin friar Bernardino Ochino, who was one of the most important and influential figures in the Italian Reformation, defined it the “gate of the Reformation” in Italy in 1542 (Firpo 1993; Camaioni 2018).¹ Sources tell us of common people debating theology on the city's bridges, women discussing free will in the Rialto market, forbidden books circulating inside Catholic churches, and nunneries pervaded by Protestant ideas. Moving from the original records of the *Savi sopra l'eresia* archive in Venice, this paper will sketch the geography of heretical circles in Venice between the 1540s and the 1580s.

This innovative approach is meant to put the history of sixteenth-century Venetian religious dissent in context. By shifting from people to places, my goal is to capture the everyday dimension of heterodox life, unveiling habits, practices, connections, and networks relating to Venetian “heretics”. The concept of heretic/heresy has a rich and controversial historiographical tradition, as it comes from the label employed by the Inquisition, and I use it with full awareness of its complexity. With this term (and its synonyms, heterodox/HETERODOXY or religious dissenter/DISSENT), I denote the behaviors, attitudes, and ideas that were incompatible with Roman orthodoxy and condemned by the Church authorities. The theological fluidity of Italian religious dissent prevents us from applying rigid confessional labels. The heterodox movement in Venice was driven by many different groups (including Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and Valdesians). On their journeys through the movement and in their encounters with these groups, Venetian heretics often adopted a flexible approach that was open to contradictions and developments. Their involvement must therefore be framed from a perspective that excludes, or at least nuances, clear doctrinal affiliations and rigid dichotomies.

Considering the geography of the heterodox movement and portraying it in its deep connection with the city is helpful in this respect. A survey of the Venetian landscape can provide an operational overview of the heretical movement, highlighting elements of internal continuity and rupture, as well as possible relationships that are not directly documented in sources. In this respect, this paper highlights heretical hubs and their evolution, revealing heretical mobility and itineraries, and putting social, geographical and religious aspects into a dialogue to narrate a *situated* history of religious dissent in the city.



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The choice of focusing on heretical practices more than religious doctrines is instrumental in unveiling the daily dimension of the heterodox movement and the patterns of Venetian heretics' secret sociality. With this in mind, on the one hand, this paper reconstructs the map of the commercial places (most of all, bookshops and pharmacies) which represented safe shelters for prohibited books and heretics, with their location in the city (Grendler 1975; De Vivo 2007a; Salzberg 2014; Kostylo 2015, 2019).² On the other hand, it traces the wider spatiality of heretical hotspots in the city as it emerges from its sources: where did heretical conversations take place? Is there a recurrence of these places? Where did heretics store and exchange forbidden books? Where did they live? Were there some Venetian areas which were more pervaded by heretics? If so, why? What (if anything) changed over the course of the century?

The history of Venetian religious dissent has been tackled in several historiographical works (Grendler 1979; Martin 1993; Barbierato 2012, 2019). Some of these have also pointed to the urban locations involved in the heterodox movement, while describing specific features of the latter. In this respect, the most significant is *Venice's Hidden Enemies*, by Martin (1993), which recreates the social world of the Venetian evangelicals, Anabaptists, and millenarians, blending social and religious history. Although it collocates heretics in their social environment, providing information about where they lived and worked, a precisely articulated map of the heretical groups does not emerge from the book. Martin's focus is on people more than places, and in addition, it mostly concentrates on working class people and on radical cliques.³ Moreover, the history merges with the history of repression, and it tends to flatten the many internal differences and historical developments of the movement regarding the disciplining dynamics which suffocated it. Information on the geography of Venetian heresy is also provided in two works which focus on specific Venetian contexts: one by Massimo Firpo on jewelers' heretical networks, and one by Federica Ambrosini on patricians' heresy (Firpo 2001; Ambrosini 1999). The latter indicates some aristocratic buildings as the venue for heretical meetings, while the former describes the religious environment of the jewelers active in the Rialto area. However, as was the case with Martin's book, they do not attempt to reconstruct the whole geography of the Venetian heterodox movement in its historical evolution.

On the contrary, my work aims at putting space back into history, drawing inspiration from the historiographical works that have focused on the crucial role that urban space played in defining individual and collective practices and relationships (Lefebvre 1976; De Certeau 1980; Hillier and Hanson 1989; Chojnacka 2001; Ago 2021). Walking around the city was an activity with intellectual importance on its own. It was a vector of ideas, and it could strengthen religious identities. In Venice, in particular, where walking was necessary, since no carriages and horses could travel around the city, this activity embedded social and intellectual value (other than logistical). As De Vivo explained, streets and squares "acted as conduits for social transactions, arenas for the display of personal or civic honor, and settings for elaborate practices of sociability" (De Vivo 2016). Moreover, due to the city's high density, Venetian streets favored people's encounters, allowing and fueling the exchange of information and the process of knowledge generation. The strict interconnection between the shape of the urban space and the way that meetings, exchanges, and interactions take place has been highlighted by scholars (Ago 2021). "The spatial order organizes a set of possibilities and impediments" (De Certeau 1980). This was particularly true in the water-bound city of Venice.

Space was active, and it contributed to the historical dynamic. Therefore, concentrating on places, focusing on fluidity and porousness, allows one to pursue a more dynamic and performative conception of religious dissent. Sixteenth-century religious life was not just about institutions, ideas, or books. It was the result of a multifaceted connection between explicitly religious phenomena and other fields of human life. In this perspective, space was not just an empty container to be filled. Connecting the structure of the city to the geography of the Venetian religious dissent helps to reveal the functioning of the heterodox movement. It is useful to seek out social, rather than religious, dynamics that are not always explicitly

narrated by the sources and to focus on the sequence of actions and interactions that resulted in the development of the heterodox movement—regarding the concept of *movement*, we refer to “groups that focus on specific issues, and aim to produce, resist, or undo, by means of a collective effort, certain historical change” (Della Porta and Diani 2006). This approach puts the emphasis on contexts, networks, and practices rather than theories and single characters. It is helpful to avoid the “anthological bias,” that is to say, focusing on those thinkers who achieved a top position in the history of religious dissent (and, for instance, excluded women and other people who were not literate) (Jacob 2009).⁴ The heterodox movement resulted from a specific historical, social, cultural, and even spatial configuration and from the action of all the actors involved in it.

The *Savi Sopra L'eresia* archive in Venice is today one of the most complete collections of historical records about the Italian heretical movement and its repression. These documents provide a great amount of information about the heretics' daily life, recording where they lived, worked, met, hid books, sheltered in times of persecution, celebrated Protestant ceremonies, such as the Holy Supper, and discussed religious matters. Moreover, because of its geographical configuration, a lagoon stretched out on the Adriatic Sea, Venice is probably the only city in the world which has not changed much in the last five centuries. No cars, ground public transportation, factories, or popular buildings have touched the structure of the canals, bridges, and *campi, calli* as it developed in the early modern age, apart from minor changes. Following the sources, it is possible to disclose the secret life of the heretical networks operating in the city.

This paper contains the preliminary results of the ongoing research that I have carried out (as a side project) while working on the reconstruction of a network of heterodox physicians in late Renaissance Venice (Celati 2023). Physicians make a good case-study in investigating religious dissent in the city: they worked all over Venice, their networks were very dense, covering all social levels of the social hierarchy, and they were well represented in the heretical movement. While following the relational paths of the characters at the core of my research, I have extended the inquiry to all the contacts they developed during their time of activity in Venice, and about whom sources are available. I started noticing that from one generation (those who were born in the 1510s) to the other (those born in the 1530s/40s), places, contacts, and heretical habits recurred. I then started to systematically take note of spatial information. In some cases, I developed digital visualizations which have led me to realize the centrality of certain areas. At this early stage of the project, the digital visualizations are rough, and I will only include one of them in this paper, for illustrative purposes. However, they have heuristic, other than explanatory, value.⁵ Digital imaging is, in fact, useful for showing the density and extent of spatial phenomena, and it can add a concrete quantitative perspective to the qualitative view, thereby fine-tuning the research hypothesis. In order to make sense of the data, I have collected all the places mentioned in the sources, taking note of the “function” that they had in the movement. I have then classified this function as: *heretical activities*—meaning that in that place were held conversations about Protestant issues/against the Church, celebration of the Holy Supper, common readings of forbidden books, and other kind of heterodox meetings; *forbidden books*—meaning places where prohibited books were exchanged or smuggled; *practice*—places where people in the movement used to spend leisure time or worked; *heretical preaching*—meaning churches where the preachers promoted reform-oriented doctrines; *religious duty*—meaning the churches where people involved in the movement went to fulfil their religious duties in a Nicodemite way; and *living*—meaning that heretics lived there. I have then taken note of the decade to which the places relate (1540s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s). I have associated places and people, taking note of men and women who attended them or lived there, and I have listed the places in my table every time they appeared in the sources (so that I could notice its recurrence). This work has been useful to draw general trends about the geographical distribution of heresy in Venice, on which the next paragraph will focus.

2. The Geography of Heresy in Sixteenth-Century Venice

As Table 1 shows, strange as it may seem, churches offered opportunities for spreading heterodox ideas. They acted as social meeting points as well as—and perhaps even more than—Catholic places of worship. Moreover, Venetian churches and sermons regularly brought the faithful into contact with theological discourse, often introducing them to non-conformist opinions or providing a stage for anti-Catholic behavior. Gasparo Parma, a heretic active in the network of the heterodox physician Girolamo Donzellini in the early 1550s and forced to recant in 1568, for example, used to “meet up in church” (“ritrovarsi in Chiesa”), but left as soon as Mass started.⁶ The physician Vincenzo Negroni turned his back on the preacher in the church of San Polo as a mark of protest whenever the priest expressed theological doctrines that he disagreed with.⁷ For his part, during his first deposition, Gianbattista Gemma, the heterodox apothecarist at The Two Doves (*Due Colombine*), stated that he had regularly gone to listen to the sermons in the church of San Geremia, in Cannaregio, seizing the opportunity to “discuss something in a Christian way” (“ragionare di qualche cosa cristianamente”) with the aristocrat and cohort of his, Sebastiano Malipiero; the friends even went as far as questioning the preacher about the doctrine of predestination.

Table 1. Sample of a table concerning spatial information relating to the Venetian heterodox movement.

Place	Heretics Related to the Place	Activity	Sestiere	Time
Chiesa dei Frari	Girolamo Donzellini	religious duty	San Polo	1540s–early 1550s
Chiesa dei Frari	Dionora Calia	religious duty	San Polo	1560s
Chiesa dei Frari	Girolamo Parto	religious duty	San Polo	1570s
Chiesa dei Frari	Caterina Sartora	religious duty	San Polo	1570s
Chiesa Frati minori	Caterina Sartora	religious duty	Castello	1570s
Chiesa San Marcuola	Gian Battista Gemma	religious duty	Cannaregio	1560s
Chiesa Sant’Apostoli	Agostino di Modena	forbidden books	Cannaregio	1560s
Chiesa Sant’Apostoli	Bernardino Ochino	heretical preaching	Cannaregio	1530s
Chiesa Santa Lucia	Caterina Sartora	religious duty	Cannaregio	1570s
Chiesa Santo Stefano	Girolamo Parto	pratiche	San Marco	1570s
Chiesa Servi	Gian Battista Gemma	heretical activity	Cannaregio	1560s
Corte dei Muti	Andrea de’ Freschi Olivi	living	Cannaregio	1550s

It is possible to list the Venetian churches with the most extensive and effective links between the Catholic and Reformed worlds. In the Church of San Cassiano in the sestiere of San Polo, Giulio da Milano preached the Lent sermons in 1541, which led to his arrest. Sources also expose the pulpit of the Observant Franciscan church of San Francesco della Vigna, in the Castello district, as the place from where latitudinarian doctrines, not fully compatible with Roman Catholicism, were preached. In the 1520s and early 1530s this church was the home to the theologian and cabalist Francesco Zorzi, who was also appointed as adviser to the architect Jacopo Sansovino in the reconstruction of the church. Following hermetic and cabalistic principles, the architecture of San Francesco della Vigna was meant to express the harmony of the cosmos (Foscari and Tafuri 1983). In fact Zorzi,

the author of the *De Harmonia Mundi* (*On the Harmony of the World*, 1525) and the treatise *In Sacram Scripturam Problemata* (*Problems in the Holy Scriptures*, 1536) was influenced by Ficino's doctrine of *pia philosophia*, and he had access to the *Corpus Hermeticum* through Ficino's translation (Zorzi 2010). In his texts, he discussed the chances of salvation for those who had not received Christ and put forward a spiritual religiosity which was opposed to any form of dogmatism. Although these doctrines were not Reformed, they were considered dangerous. The new Tridentine orthodoxy could not tolerate the essentially non-confessional content of the Hermetic and Neoplatonic tradition. Moreover, the emanationist understanding of the cosmos could potentially lead to pantheistic visions and endorse heretical notions of the Trinitarian dogma (considering the Son and the Holy Spirit as manifestations of the only one God, as did, for instance, Miguel Servet) (Manzoni 1974; Alcalá 2011). Zorzi's *De Harmonia Mundi* was the first Neoplatonic text to be systematically subjected to censorship in 1578.

The church of the Santi Apostoli, located in the Cannaregio district, was too a center of heterodoxy, most notably between 1539 and 1542, but also subsequently (see Figure 1). It was here that Bernardino Ochino stayed during Lent in 1539 and 1542 as the guest of the parish priest, Marco Santo, who introduced him to the evangelical circles of the city (Camaioni 2018). Those who regularly attended the church and listened to Ochino's preaching included Pietro Aretino, Pietro Bembo (who brought along the painter Titian for the sermons), the bookseller Gabriele Giolito, and the humanist Celio Secondo Curione. This group was "contaminated by the preaching of Fra Bernardino" ("contaminati per il predicar di frate Bernardino"), while Santo's pastoral work transformed the church into an environment as pure as the primitive Church.⁸ In the late 1540s, non-conformist readings of scripture were still being preached in the Santi Apostoli. The physician Stefano De Giusti, an Anabaptist convert who was forced to recant in 1550, stated that "the beginning of this wicked belief of mine was two or three sermons given by Master Marian of Crema in Santi Apostoli about three years ago, and ever since then I have gone from bad to worse, continuing to hold this wrong view."⁹ The area near the Santi Apostoli was also home to Grazioso Percacino, a friend of the heretical physician sentenced to death in 1572, Teofilo Panarelli. Percacino was connected to dissident religious groups by the production of compromising texts, which he printed and sold in his bookshop in campo Santi Apostoli. Finally, Agustino da Modena, also a physician, discussed St. Paul with a converted Jew in the same church in 1563, "pulling out a book from his breast" ("cavandosi un libro dal seno") that he considered "highly valuable" ("molto prezioso") which he did not want to "show to anybody as it will be taken from him" ("mostrar a persona del mondo che gli sarà tolto").¹⁰ Agustino later invited the converso to dinner at his home after enquiring whether he "knew Hebrew" ("sapeva ebreo") and could help him to read the precious book, entitled *More Nebuch*, which "speaks against the faith and against images" ("parla contro la fede e contro le immagini"). The work in question was the *Guida dei perplessi* (*Guide for the Perplexed*, in Hebrew *More Nevukhim*), written in the twelfth century by Mosè Maimònide, the Andalusian philosopher, rabbi, physician, and jurist. This text attempted to rationalize Judaism through the philosophy of Aristotle by addressing the "perplexed", who were unable to explain the contradictions between philosophical teachings and the literal meaning of the Torah. The fact that a text like this could be found at the Santi Apostoli, becoming a means for forging new heterodox friendships, speaks volumes about the social relations in Venetian churches.

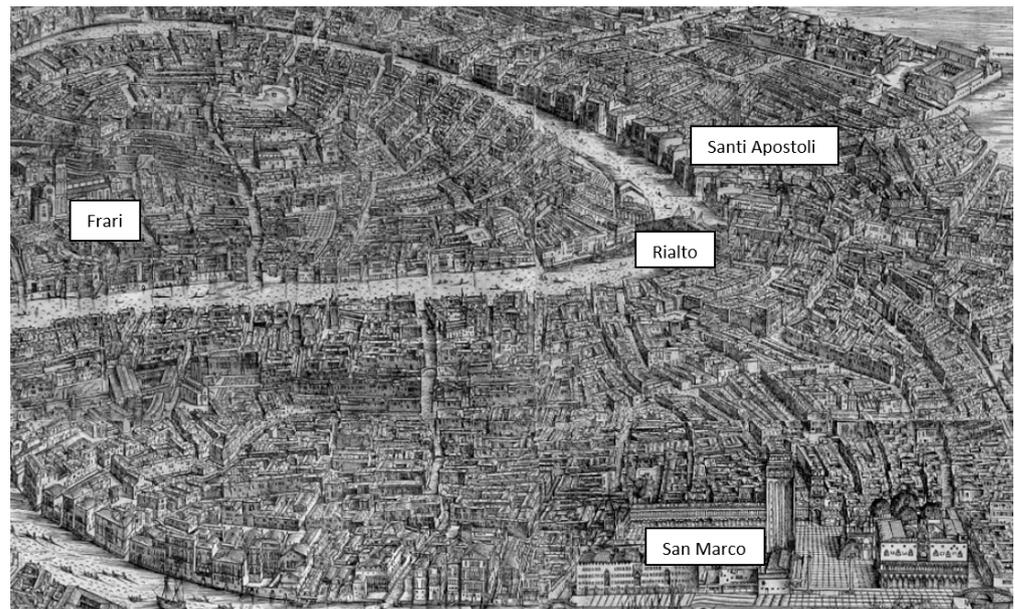


Figure 1. Zoom in of the De Barbari's map of Venice (early sixteenth century), with indications of some of the main places mentioned in this paper.

Girolamo Donzellini, a physician, heretic, and books smuggler (Quaranta 2019; Celati 2023), told his judges that in the 1540s and early 1550s he “took communion in his parish church, which was in San Beneto and San Lio” (“pigliava la comunione nella sua parrocchia che stava a San Beneto e San Lio”), between San Marco and Castello, while he confessed to a “father from Tolentino” (“padre di Tolentino”) at the Basilica dei Frari, on the (opposite) left bank of the Grand Canal in San Polo (see Figure 1).¹¹ Although it can be assumed that a heterodox thinker like Donzellini, who was sentenced to death by the Inquisition in 1587 after five trials, did not assiduously reveal sins to his confessor, he was probably not lying about confessing at the Frari, as it was vital for defendants to demonstrate their observance of confession during an inquisitorial trial. The same church was also used for confession by other Venetian inhabitants affected by religious disquiet. Girolamo Parto, a notary sentenced to death by the Inquisition in the 1570s confessed at the Frari, unlike the rest of his family who went to the nearby parish church of San Pantalon. Caterina and Francesco Sartori, a married couple tried by the Holy Office in 1574, travelled to the Frari from their home in Cannareggio to confess.¹² Dionora Calia, a housekeeper in contact with Teofilo Panarelli, lived in San Samuele (on the right bank near San Marco); when she was tried for heresy in 1566 and 1578, she told her suspicious judges that her confessor came from outside Venice, and that she fulfilled the precept of faith when he visited the Frari once a year.¹³ Finally, Claudio Textor, a French heretical alchemist who had immigrated to Venice and was executed here in 1587, also chose to confess in the Frari. The sources do not enable us to explain these repeated mentions of the church with any certainty, but its size and the constant flow of people meant that witnesses could always confirm that someone had confessed. It is also feasible that there were priests in the church with some form of connection to the heterodox world. An apothecary named Francesco told the judges in 1560 that he had learned heretical views from the preacher at the Frari, who frequented his *spezieria* in San Raphael (probably the area close to the church of the Angelo Raffaele in Dorsoduro, a ten-minute journey from the Frari).

Despite the intentions of their governors, hospitals were also not immune to the spread of heretical ideas. The *Ospedale degli Incurabili* (Hospital for Incurables) had been established in Venice in 1522 on the Fondamenta delle Zattere, the southern outskirts of the city. The hospital treated patients with serious conditions who were not self-sufficient or could not pay their medical expenses, those with chronic, repellent, or dangerous diseases, and orphaned children (Pullan 1989; Garbellotti 2013). In 1528, the founder, Girolamo Miani,

together with a group of laymen inspired by devout Christian ideals (Palmer 1989), also established the *Ospedale dei Derelitti* (Hospital for the Destitute). Adjoining the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, this became the first hospital in the city with an important medical role. In such institutions, there was no clear boundary between pastoral care and bodily care, and material charity was contingent on spiritual charity. It was precisely because of this pious atmosphere, combined with the suffering and forced isolation of the sick, that they offered fertile ground for the reception, discussion, and propagation of non-conformist religious ideas. One case in point is that of Zanetto Cipolla, a twenty-eight-year-old barber surgeon at the *Ospedale degli Incurabili* who, in the 1560s, preached heterodox ideas to patients gathered around the fire at night (Celati 2018). He had spent his entire life at the hospital, where he had been raised as a foundling. Despite (or perhaps as a result of) all these years in such an uncompromisingly Catholic environment, Cipolla converted to the Reformation and started introducing radical doctrines into the hospital. When addressing his audience of patients, paupers, and hospital nurses, Zanetto denied the divinity of Christ and the value of the Gospels as a revealed text, teaching that it was necessary to believe “only in God” (“solamente in Dio”) and in “the ten commandments of ancient law” (“li 10 comandamenti della legge antica”).¹⁴ He also argued that priests should feed the poor instead of waking them for Mass early in the morning, and that clerics deceived paupers about the truth of Catholic doctrine, claiming that they had established the Church and “said anything they liked to earn money” (“facevano quei versi che li pareva allora, per guadagnar”).¹⁵ He did not attend religious services, and as his room was close to the altar, he locked himself inside to avoid hearing anything. The charisma deriving from Cipolla’s medical role meant that he could spread his views in a similar way to that of learned physicians. Furthermore, his daily contact with the sick allowed him to carry out a persuasive propaganda campaign on a regular basis. This heterodox campaigning, coupled with his blatant intolerance of the religious life at the hospital and his stubborn refusal to admit his wrongs, led to a long trial that ended in a public recantation before all those that he had “scandalized”.¹⁶

In addition to the case of Zanetto Cipolla at the *Ospedale degli Incurabili*, evidence of heretical infiltration can also be found at the Ospedale di San Giovanni e Paolo, for example, in the experiences of its apothecary, Francesco Castellano, and its steward, Antonio Columban. Both read and exchanged books such as *Pasquino in estasi* and believed in radical doctrines that denied the trinity (Columban) or rejected the difference between the “law” of Christians, Turks, and Jews (Castellano).¹⁷ In asserting that there only existed one God, to whom praying was sufficient in order to be safe, Castellano shared the same concept embraced by other heretics belonging to the medical context.

Embassies were also a place of encounter for heretics and the dissemination of heretical ideas. In Venice, the English embassy served as a base for political and religious activists (Pirillo 2018). In the late 1540s, the wars of religion were raging on German soil, the Council of Trent was yet to conclude, and even a *spirituale* like Reginald Pole could entertain the idea of becoming pope. Against this backdrop, the English crown held out great hope for Italian heterodox dissenters. Many of the latter (such as Bernardino Ochino) moved to England, where Edward VI duly appointed the former Augustinian monk, Reformed theologian, and religious exile Peter Martyr Vermigli as a religious adviser. In the 1540s, in Venice, one of the heretics who frequented the embassy was the diplomat Guido Giannetti da Fano. He came to Venice to be active at the English embassy, after having served the archbishop Pietro Antonio di Capua, who was inclined to Valdesianism, in Rome. At the English embassy also worked the secretary of the ambassador Edmund Harvel, Baldassarre Altieri, who was the Venetian agent of the Schmalkaldic League and the Resident in Venice of the Landgrave of Hesse and the Elector of Saxony. He corresponded with Luther and Bullinger on doctrinal and political issues, hoping that the Venetian Republic would openly support the Reformation and the Protestant princes. At the English embassy, Altieri provided the ambassador’s physician, Girolamo Donzellini, with copies of Philip Melancthon’s *Loci communes theologi* (*Common Places in Theology*), the *Pasquino in estasi* (*Pasquino in Ecstasy*)

by Celio Secondo Curione, the *Tragedia del libero arbitrio* (*Tragedy of Free Will*) by former Benedictine Francesco Negri, the *Homeliae in Evangelium Lucae* (*Homilies on the Gospel of Luke*), by Johannes Brenz, the *Catechismo* (*Catechism*), by Urbanus Rhegius, and the *De admirabili Dei consilio* (*On the Admirable Judgement of God*), by Johann Rivius. By passing these Reformed books on to the ambassador's medical doctor, Altieri was pursuing a political goal. International politics and religious dissent strictly overlapped in the dense urban space of Venice.

As archive sources show, in the sixteenth century, barber shops were also important centers for the spread and discussion of religious ideas (and of news in general). In 1565, Gian Battista Gemma was accused of having discussed the necessity to "preach about Christ instead of preaching about Virgin Mary, as these are womenly preachings" in a barber shop in San Leonardo, with the owner Francesco ("non bisogna predicar tanto della Madonna che queste sono prediche da femene. Bisogna predicar di Cristo").¹⁸ This discussion happened at 2 a.m.; this shows that barber shops were attended by people at every time of the day, and heretics did not spare occasion to speak volumes about their ideas. Apothecaries shops also acted as important centers for scientific and the religious discussion and contributed to the spread of heterodox ideas (De Vivo 2007a, 2007b). They were hubs of Italian city life in an extensive network; in their pronounced social dimension, they were used to exchange scientific information and to stay informed about local events and the latest developments in politics or religion.¹⁹ Together with barber shops, they played a fundamental role in the spread of Reformed ideas, providing a vital link in the heretical chain by storing and distributing prohibited books, offering shelter to dissidents, and acting as centers for the circulation of heterodox ideas.

The dense network of *spezierie* in Venice provided the heretical movement with meeting places for debating doctrinal questions, reading forbidden texts, and even hiding. It would be quite an undertaking to comprehensively reconstruct (and pinpoint) the phenomenon as it appears in Inquisition documents. We can, however, provide a brief sample of cases. We know that in 1549, the *speziale* Camillo Orsin from Milan denied the presence of Christ in the Eucharist in his *Spezieria all'Orsa*.²⁰ In 1551, Emiliano Bonifacio, a *speziale* in *San Foca*, persuaded a small audience that Purgatory did not exist, and that the doctrine of free will was unsustainable by reading from the Bible.²¹ In the early 1550s, Donzellini was a regular customer at the *Spezieria all'Insegna della Torre*, whose owner was considered "the most profligate in these worldly matters" ("il maggior tristo de queste cose del mondo"). Shortly afterwards, in the mid-1550s, the apothecary at the *Spezieria alla Chioccia* was forced to recant.²² In around 1560, heretical conversations were often conducted at the *Spezieria al Cagnoletto* (for which the owner's father was tried), at the *Spezieria del Pardo*, and at the *Spezieria all'Insegna di San Rocco*, popular among workers (for which Domenico Gottardo was tried).²³ While at the *Spezieria all'Aureola* and *Spezieria allo Spinon*, Teofilo Panarelli denied the value of the invocation of saints.²⁴ Moreover, in the 1570s, Bernardin Legge, the apothecary at the *Spezieria alle Tre Colonne*, was denounced for his "diabolical art" ("arte diabolica").²⁵ In 1576, the apothecarist at *La Luna* was denounced for ill speaking against priests and aristocrats, and for failing to fulfil his religious duties, such as confession. In addition, there was a *spezieria* inside the Frari building that was both owned and frequented by men involved in the movement. At this pharmacy, the empiricist Antonino Volpe and the physician Decio Bellebuono prepared medicines obtained through distillation and other alchemical procedures. Volpe and Bellebuono featured in an Inquisition case that blended professional rivalry, alchemical chimeras, and religious heterodoxy. One regular visitor to this *spezieria* was the heterodox priest Don Fedele, who was connected to Teofilo Panarelli's group.

In 1567, Antonio Moscardo, the third heterodox brother, along with Paolo and Giuseppe (who were in the same heretical group as the physician Panarelli), was protected in a *spezieria* owned by a fellow believer named Carlo. Antonio managed to escape through Carlo's vegetable garden at night, evading the Inquisition's henchmen, but he was subsequently caught and put on trial. During the same period, Ludovico Abioso, a young

merchant converted to Protestant ideas and another member of the same circle, was called to the *Spezieria alla Borsa* and warned about the case being prepared against him. From the 1560s onwards, the same apothecary shop was also frequented by Vincenzo Negroni, a physician ordered to recant, Alessandro Guerini from Crema, a former friar and empirical physician accused of practicing judicial astrology and making “extremely rare poisons” (“veneni rarissimi”), and Teofilo Panarelli.²⁶ The latter mainly used the *Spezieria di Castello*, where he met the goldsmith Giulio di Stan in the late 1560s, leading to joint readings of the *Beneficio di Cristo* (*Benefit of Christ Crucified*). This text was also available in other *spezierie*: Panarelli stated that he had found it at the *Spezieria dell’Elmo*, where he had also taken his friend, colleague, and fellow heterodox thinker Francesco Pegolotto. They read the “sweet little book” (“dolce libriccino”) together and discussed predestination, free will, and justification by faith.

Panarelli also used the *Spezieria delle Due Colombine* and the *Spezieria della Gatta* in San Marcuola (Cannaregio), both of which were owned by the Gemma family. The former was managed by Silvestro and his sons, Giambattista and Marcantonio, while the *Spezieria della Gatta* was owned by Silvestro’s brother, another Marcantonio.²⁷ There is some documentation of the heretical socializing that occurred in such places. Silvestro and Marcantonio Gemma organized chess matches between members of the heterodox network at the *Gatta*; while at the *Due Colombine*, there was a hidden copy of a text by “Savonarola about the *Miserere*” (“Savonarola sopra il *Miserere*”). In addition, people “spoke ill” (“parlava male”) of friars, the intercession of the saints, indulgences, Mass, and Catholic sacraments.²⁸ Marcantonio Gemma’s sisters-in-law were scandalized whenever they visited their sister, Marita, the apothecary’s wife. On a typical day in the Gemma household, one might have heard imprecations against the clergy or witnessed irreligious behavior (such as eating meat on the eves of feast days) and the mocking of Catholic rituals and sacraments.

As the heretical groups in Venice were closely monitored by the repressive authorities, they were regularly forced to seek new safe meeting places. For instance, Teofilo Panarelli’s circle went to great lengths to read heterodox books between 1565 and 1570, hiding in the vegetable garden on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, or on the Giudecca. The houses of Venetian patricians involved in the movement, such as Marcantonio Da Canal and Alvise Bembo, provided another safe environment. These aristocrats were active members of the group led by Panarelli in the 1560s. Most notably, Da Canal entrusted the education of his children to the aforementioned Don Fedele, who lived with the family for a year; when the priest went on trial in 1568, he accused his former employer of being a clever dissimulator.²⁹ It is significant that, a decade beforehand, the same two patricians, Da Canal and Bembo, had associated with Girolamo Donzellini and above all, with his brother Cornelio, who had worked as a tutor at their respective homes in San Lorenzo and Rio Marin. Even at the height of the Counter-Reformation, these aristocrats continued to host heterodox meetings and dissidents.

Private houses not belonging to aristocrats could function as heretical hotspots as well. That of the heterodox doctor Andrea de Neri from Perugia, near the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, for instance, functioned as the storage place used by the heterodox printer Pietro Perna for his book smuggling activities (Perini 2002). From here, Perna distributed books “that denied purgatory and free will” (“che negavano il purgatorio e il libero arbitrio”), works by Pier Paolo Vergerio, and “by other authors from the Capuchins printed on German soil” (“di altri autori de scapuzini stampati in le parte di Alemagna”), as well as texts in German that were probably distributed at the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*. The storehouse was situated a stone’s throw from the imposing convent of the Dominican Order, the guardians of orthodoxy and the backbone of the Holy Office in Venice. When Perna was caught and arrested at De Neri’s house in 1549, the books were burned, and he was banished from the city. He never returned to Italy and settled in Basel, from where he sent to Venice books to be smuggled by Donzellini. In a letter sent by Perna in 1550, along with a box of prohibited books, Donzellini was told to keep anything that interested him

and take the remaining books to their storehouse, which was clearly still operative, despite the Inquisition raid the year before.

Inquisition sources also point at Venetian prisons as places where heterodox friendships could be developed or strengthened, and where heretical discourse circulated. In 1588, twenty-one-year-old Zuan Battista Capponi, who was serving a sentence for heresy in the Rialto prison, was teaching the other inmates that Jesus was not divine, and his miracles were made “through science and the art of the Cabbalah.” Thanks to his propaganda, Capponi had convinced his Greek cellmate Zorzi to go with him to the “anabaptist land.” His heresy was particularly radical, and the authorities were deeply worried about his proselytizing activity. As he could generate “confusion” in the minds of those who were “oppressed and incarcerated,” he needed to be moved to a different unspecified location. Capponi’s case testifies of the porosity of the Venetian urban space. While he was serving a sentence for heresy, he was able to obtain a book by Agrippa (one of the most important Renaissance magicians), printed in Basel, from some of his fellow inmates. Capponi’s collection of books was rich, and it included texts on physiognomy and other occult disciplines, such as chiromancy. He had acquired his books from a bookseller in Santi Apostoli, which at the end of the 1580s, was still a lively area in terms of the circulation of ideas and prohibited books. In prison, Capponi could not renounce his intellectual interests and, apparently, he was not compelled to do so. Between one reading and the other, Giovan Battista would also spread odd dangerous ideas such as that priests’ tonsure derived from the fact that “when Jesus Christ our lord was buried the apostles stole the body, buried it again in a vegetable garden and finally ate it and, before eating it, one of them shaved Jesus’ head and this is why they go around shaved like that.”³⁰

A similar case was that of Guido Antonio da Prata, who was interrogated by the Inquisition in 1572. Prata was fond of *humanae litterae* (“libri di studio di umanità”) and had been serving a prison sentence for the last eleven years. In the 1560s, he had shared his cell with some people imprisoned for heresy and had absorbed heretical ideas from them, although he declined them in a rough, crude, and even violent way, which derived from his personal horrible existential condition.³¹ He had been in the same cell as the heretical humanist Publio Francesco Spinola, who preached “all the time on the things of the faith” and was executed in 1567, and had also known the heterodox doctor Niccolò Buccella during the first trial of the latter (before Buccella escaped to Poland, where he found professional success and material wealthiness) (Paolin 2018; Stella 1967; Caccamo 1970). At the beginning of the 1570s, while still in prison, Prata used to shout blasphemies and all sorts of invectives against the Church. As he was screaming out of physical pain (he was sick with hemorrhoids) and was psychologically worn out by the harshness of prison life, the Inquisitors tried to understand whether he had indeed converted to Protestantism, or he was just mad. During their inquiry, they therefore interrogated other prisoners and came to know about other cases of inmates who promoted heterodox ideas and practices and who might also have been influenced by De Prata.

As for the general geography of the Venetian heretical activities (see Figures 1–3), the sources related to the trials held between the 1540s and the 1580s show, as is to be expected, a prevalence in the city center, Rialto, and San Marco. As one can imagine, the area of Rialto, which bustled with tradesmen and traders at the market and incorporated the only bridge over the Grand Canal, was regularly frequented by Venetian residents, becoming a hotspot for heretical discourse. Here the physician Agostino Vanzo, burnt at the stake in 1579 in Belluno, attended the Spezieria del Carro, where he sent letters from prison asking for support, which implies a certain degree of complicity with and trust in the apothecarist. Near the bridge was the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, a *palazzo* overlooking the Grand Canal that served as a headquarters for German-speaking merchants and a warehouse for their goods, as well as housed the offices of the Fugger banking family. The Fondaco played an essential role in the spread of heterodox ideas during the religious crisis in sixteenth-century Venice, and it was even used as a place of rendezvous and a hideout for heretical groups (for instance, the one led by Panarelli). In the Rialto area, the heretical network of jewelers

which worked at the Ruga de Oresi was also active. Forbidden books were hidden and secretly exchanged in their shops—in particular, we can mention the one of Giulio da Stan, where Panarelli received a copy of the *Benefit of Christ Crucified*.



Figure 2. Map of the main places mentioned in Inquisition records for the period of the 1540s–1580s. The size of the circles indicates the extent of activities discovered in those locations.

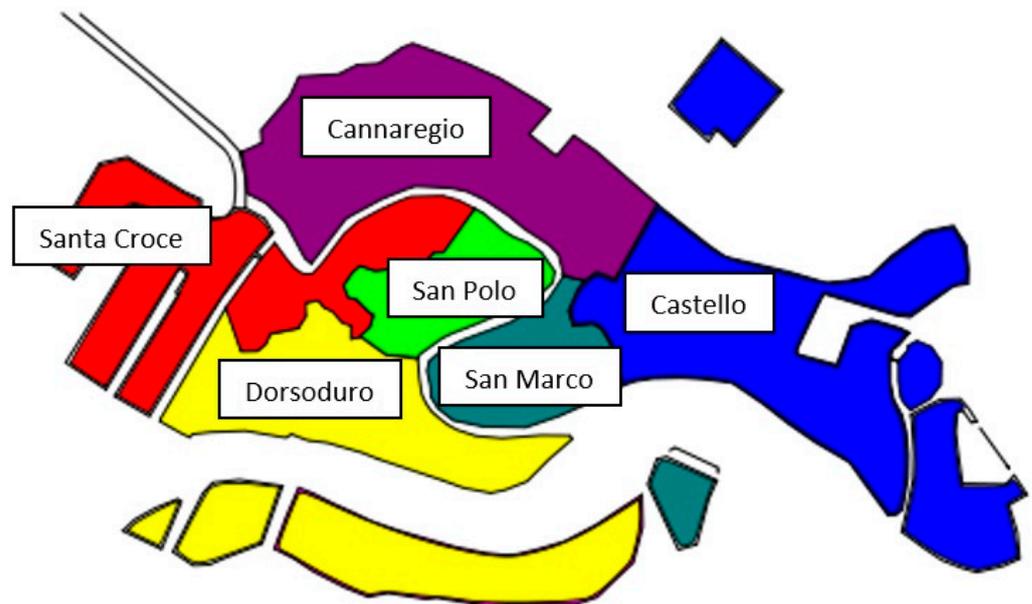


Figure 3. Map of the sestieri of Venice.

Rialto was also the nerve center for book distribution and therefore, in many respects, the spread of heterodox ideas. While the majority of the city's bookshops and printing houses were located between the Merceria and the Frezzeria (the main thoroughfares connecting Rialto and San Marco), a plethora of small-scale vendors could be found on the Rialto bridge and in the surrounding *calli*, selling inexpensive vernacular books and pamphlets with Reformed overtones. Many of these books were read aloud or sung in the street as a marketing strategy, combining the learned and popular worlds (Salzberg 2014). The vibrancy of the Venetian publishing market was renowned throughout Europe and

remained part of the city's appeal until the late 1540s, when the effects of censorship started to be felt (Infelise 2013). The men of culture who came to Venice from all over Europe were familiar with the different bookshops. Andrea Arrivabene's bookshop *all'insegna del Pozzo* (at the sign of the well), for instance, was one of the main dealers in Protestant texts, various anti-Catholic publications, and scientific works. Arrivabene was also involved in the heretical movement: in 1549 he was summoned by the Holy Office and warned not to sell heterodox books; in 1551 he was denounced as a Lutheran; and in 1570, he went on trial again for selling forbidden texts. On each occasion, he defended himself successfully. His shop was a delivery point for foreign publications imported into Italy through a dense network of relations extending northwards from the Venetian Republic (most notably, to Basel and Frankfurt), and it welcomed people involved in the heterodox movement. Both Donzellini and Panarelli attended it and, although it is not documented in the sources, they may have met each other in this bookshop. For certain, it was in this shop that Panarelli encountered, for the first time, Ludovico Abioso, who was to become one of Panarelli's main cohorts and who was very active in the same heterodox network. In the Merceria was also located another bookshop that formed part of the city's heretical network until the end of the century. It was *all'insegna di Erasmo* (at the sign of Erasmus) and it was owned by Vincenzo Valgrisi, a French-born naturalized Venetian.³² Valgrisi built up a network stretching from the Venetian Republic to France. Both Vincenzo and his sons, Giorgio (who inherited the shop) and Felice (who received the family publishing business), were also suspected of nurturing heterodox beliefs and were in contact with several heretics, including Girolamo Donzellini.

Figure 2 shows also a density of heretical activities in Cannaregio in the northwest periphery of Venice. This sestiere was on the right bank of the Grand Canal, near the Jewish ghetto, and it was a working-class area. The local inhabitants were mostly poor people, migrants, servants, and maids (Braunstein 1998; Coryat 1611). The area was also home to several embassies and foreign visitors from all over Europe who exchanged their books and ideas with the Venetians. As the local police had no jurisdiction in areas surrounding embassies in the city, contraband could flourish. Moreover, the number of shops in this area increased dramatically over the course of the century (a phenomenon that exploded in the seventeenth century), contributing to the increased footfall in the *calli* of Cannaregio. Finally, the sex trade and sex work networks were particularly robust here, granting a high level of people circulation (Weddle 2019). These social and geographical features might well have contributed to the success of the Reformed movement in the area, as heresy propagated through daily contact and physical contiguity. In the trial against Caterina Sartora, a local resident in the 1570s, the witnesses dissuaded the judges from interrogating her neighbors, as they were all members "of the same sect [as her]" ("della [sua] stessa setta")³³. In this period, Caterina lived in San Girolamo with her husband, Paolo, and together they ran a tailor shop, which was the venue for heretical meetings and conversations. In the 1550s, the woman had already been connected to people involved in the heterodox movement. She was the housekeeper of Donzellini and the Maggi couple, and she testified in the trial against them in 1553. Moreover, she was the wife of an empirical doctor and alchemist from Rome, who had been denounced to the Inquisition and had died soon afterwards during his attempt to escape. His name was Pietro De Megis, and he had a reputation for denying Catholic dogmas and promoting radical ideas. Together, Pietro and Caterina lived near the Ponte dell'Aseo, an area exposed to contacts with the Jews who lived in the same neighborhood in the ghetto. De Megis was, in fact, friends with a converted Jew called Gian Battista De Freschi Olivi, who was a physician and whose mother, Elena, was tried as "giudaizzante" at the beginning of the 1550s.³⁴

While Gian Battista had, apparently, peacefully accepted conversion to Christianity, Elena was reluctant to abandon her religious habits and faith, and she had been heard menacing to "take by the throat" the local priest when he spoke about the incarnation of Jesus Christ or the virginity of Mary ("prender per la gola"). Elena and her son lived for three years with a woman, Margherita, who was in charge of Gian Battista's daughters'

education and, at the time of Elena's trial, was heard by the Inquisitor as a witness.³⁵ The relationship with this pious Catholic woman was damaged by religious issues: while Margherita tried to reinforce Elena in the latter's Christian faith, bringing her to the Mass in Santi Apostoli, the old Jew woman persisted in mocking Christian rituals. Margherita's pupils (Elena's nephews) confirmed these facts, and Gian Battista reacted by physically hurting his daughters and firing Margherita. However, this was not enough to prevent the reputation of Elena as a bad Christian from spreading. Heresy thrived in the city center as much as in the Venetian periphery, where interactions between Christians and Jews were developed. Although more research needs to be carried out in this respect, it may not be coincidence that these relationships were smooth and productive when they involved heretics such as Piero De Megis, but became problematic when they involved Catholic women.

Laura Stella also lived in the same location (Ponte dell'Aseo). She was denounced in 1555 for owning, reading, and reproducing (by asking someone to copy it) a book of secrets by Pietro D'Abano, which also contained prayers and spells "by many others."³⁶ It is unknown whether Laura had been in touch with the alchemist De Megis. However, the fact that they were neighbors is a clue in this direction, and it is revealing of the tortuous paths that the connections between heterodox thought and heterodox practices, both in religion and the inquiry into nature, took among Venetian women and men in sixteenth century Cannaregio.

3. Conclusions

This paper is a preliminary exploration of the geography of religious dissent in Venice and does not presume to exhaust a subject which would require years of collective research. However, it provides a sample of the results that this kind of research can lead to.

In sixteenth-century Venice, space was contested. On the one hand, it was that of the devotion to Saint Mark; that of the pious schools and confraternities active in the city; and that of the city's innumerable churches, which marked the rhythm of daily life in the city with the sound of their tower bells (Zorzi 1990). On the other hand, there was the secret, underground world of the heterodox movement. These two urban spaces were not utterly opposed. The Venetian space was the venue for exchanges in the name of fluidity. The heterodox movement existed thanks to a complex interplay of historical and existential contingencies, individual experiences, and constant relationships and exchanges. In this respect, space was porous. Places of Catholic devotion, such as churches, and places enhancing Counter-Reformation discipline, such as prisons, often became the setting for the spread of the heterodox discourse, the exchange of forbidden books, and the heretical conversion of prisoners. Fluidity also characterized "transit zones" such as Cannaregio, where Catholics, heretics, and Jews lived close to one another.

What did it mean *living "heretically"* in a sixteenth-century metropolis like Venice? Mapping the geography of religious non-conformism, moving from places to people, helps to answer this question. While religious repression increased from the 1540s onward, as the re-organization of the Holy Office led to a deeper, more extended, and more effective persecution of heretics, the independent search for new theological theories and solutions persisted, increasingly acquiring a secret and clandestine dimension. Sources suggest a certain continuity in the places chosen by heretics for their underground activities, in terms of the types of commercial places involved in the movement (most of all, bookshops and pharmacies), of the areas of the city more pervaded by religious dissent (the area between Rialto and San Marco and Cannaregio), and of the churches more frequently attended by reform-oriented people. Systematically recording the safe places where the heterodox discourse grew, and the hiding places that dissidents chose, provides essential information about heretical networks in the city. This methodology illuminates the functioning of mechanisms such as trust, cooperation and collusion, cultural and material exchange, as well as intellectual and religious transfers, also allowing one to focus on actors often

neglected by historians, such as women and prisoners, and the role they played in the heterodox movement.³⁷

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Notes

- 1 “Christ has already started to seep into Italy, but I would like him to enter there gloriously and openly, and I believe that Venice will be the gateway” (“Già Christo ha incominciato penetrare in Italia, ma vorrei che v’intrasse glorioso, a la scoperta e che credo che Venezia sarà la porta”); see the letter written by Bernardino Ochino on 7 December 1542.
- 2 In this respect sources can be cross-referenced with secondhand literature.
- 3 Some information about the social geography of religious dissent in Venice is provided by Martin with reference to the radical groups of artisans located in the area of San Mosè.
- 4 It is worth providing a full quote from this paper, since my work follows a similar methodological approach inspired by the constructivist paradigm (although applied to religious history instead of the history of science): “One has to investigate the process that changes an individual statement into a collectively admitted fact. This process is social, political and cultural at the same time. This means that the driving force of the history of science or of ideas is not the intrinsic quality of concepts, results and statements, but a set of procedures that define truth, authority, and obvious facts.”
- 5 As the preliminary results presented in this paper show, developing a complete digital map of data related to the geography of the Venetian heterodox movement, following the example of existing digital humanities projects, such as Locating London’s past, <https://www.locatinglondon.org/> or Hidden Florence, <https://hiddenflorence.org/> (accessed on 1 January 2022), would enhance our knowledge of the phenomenon (see also the GIS digital visualisations which corroborate the author’s point in [Ago 2021](#)). For an introduction to the methodology of the digital humanities and the benefits of using them in the reconstruction of historical networks, see [Ceserani et al. \(2017\)](#).
- 6 Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter: ASV), Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Gasparo Parma*, Busta (hereafter Bu.). 25, 26r.
- 7 Ivi, *Contro Vincenzo Negroni medico*, Bu. 22, statement by Antonio Mercadante, 22 March 1567.
- 8 The definition of “contaminated” comes from Dionigi Zanettini, known as Il Grechetto, who described the group thus in a letter to Rodolfo Pio dated Venice, 14 January [1546], ([Bushbell 1910](#)).
- 9 “I started having bad religious views after hearing two or three sermons by Master Marian of Crema in the church of the Santi Apostoli three years ago. Since then, I have gone from bad to worse, persisting with these wicked opinions” (“Il principio di questa mal opinione che vedo che fusse due over tre prediche che fecer quel maestro Marian da Crema in San Apostolo da tre anni in circa e da quella volta in qua se pur sono andato de male in peggio continuando in questa mala opinion”), ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Stephano medico de Gardon*, Bu. 8, deposition of 13 December 1550. On the subject of preaching heterodox content, either directly or indirectly, see [Caravale \(2016\)](#).
- 10 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Agostino di Modena Medico*, Bu. 17, statement by Gian Battista dal Cairo, 16 October 1563.
- 11 Ivi, *Contro Girolamo Donzellini*, Bu. 39, 31v.
- 12 The woman was Caterina Colbertalda, Donzellini’s housekeeper. She later married Francesco Sartor and took his name, and they worked together in his tailor’s shop in Cannaregio.
- 13 Dionora alternated between this church and San Francesco della Vigna. ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Dionora Calia*, Bu. 21, deposition of 16 July 1566.
- 14 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Zanetto barberotto dell’Ospedale dell’incurabili*, deposition by Giorgio Veneto on 14 February 1568.
- 15 *Idem*.
- 16 In addition to the case of Zanetto Cipolla at the *Ospedale degli Incurabili*, evidence of heretical infiltration can also be found at the Ospedale di San Giovanni e Paolo, for example in the experiences of its apothecary, Francesco Castellano, regarding which see ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Francesco Castellano speciale*, Bu. 32, and its steward, Antonio Columban, *Ibid.*, *Contro Antonio Columban*, Bu. 22. Both believed in radical doctrines that denied the trinity (Columban) or rejected the difference between the “law” of Christians, Turks, and Jews (Castellano). They also read and exchanged books, such as *Pasquino in estasi*.
- 17 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Contro Francesco Castellano*, B. 32. “Non intendeva tante leggi, di cristiani ebrei turchi ecc, Dio doveva fare una sola legge,” ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi. Contro Francesco Castellano*, B. 32.
- 18 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro speciali delle Colombine*, deposition by donna Franceschina, 8 May 1565.

- 19 The phenomenon was not limited to Venice. For example, heterodox groups met at *spezierie* owned by Viano de Viani in Viadana and Giuseppe Rianaldi in Bologna. In Modena, a city that was particularly active in the spread of heterodox doctrines, the *bottega* of a “plague doctor” (“medico di piaghe”), Pietro Curioni, served as a meeting place, while the heretical meetings of the Accademia Modenese were held at the *spezieria* owned by the family of the founder, the physician Giovanni Grillenzoni. Archivio di Stato di Modena, *Inquisizione*, Bu. 5, 22. Finally, the Anabaptist Pietro Manelfi testified that he had discussed matters relating to faith at *spezierie* in Ferrara and Venezia.
- 20 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Camillo Orsin Milanese*, Bu. 7.
- 21 Ivi, *Contro Emiliano Bonifacio*, Bu. 9.
- 22 Ivi, *Contro Marco Jacomo Darina*, Bu. 15.
- 23 Ibid., *Contro Domenico Gottardo*.
- 24 Ivi., *Contro Teofilo Panarelli e Ludovico Abioso*, Bu. 23, 12 June 1567, deposition by Andrea Calatario.
- 25 Ivi, *Contro Bernardin Legge*, Bu. 38.
- 26 Ibid., *Contro Teofilo Panarelli e Ludovico Abioso*, Bu. 23, deposition by Ludovico Abioso, 24 May 1568.
- 27 Ivi., *Contro Giambattista Gemma*, Bu. 37, testimony by Marcantonio Gemma sr, 11 October 75.
- 28 Ivi, *Contro Teofilo Panarelli*, Bu. 32, deposition of 20 November 1571.
- 29 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contra Pre Fidelem*, Bu. 23, 54v.
- 30 Ivi, *Contro Giovan Battista Capponi*, Bu. 61 “Che la chioresa che portano i sacerdoti è per recordanza che quando Jesu Christo nostro signore fu sepolto, li apostoli ruborno il corpo, lo sepelirono in un orto, et, nel mangiarlo, uno di essi gli pelò la testa e per ciò vanno così rasi.” List of heresies publicly stated by Capponi in prison, reported in an (unsigned) letter sent to the Venetian Inquisitor.
- 31 Ivi, *Contro Guido Antonio De Prata*, Bu. 32.
- 32 In 1559, the Holy Office forced Valgrisi to remove the sign of Erasmus, and his *bottega* was renamed “At the Sign of the Tau,” the letter featured on his publications.
- 33 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Denuncia contra Caterina 1574* [in *Contro Giambattista Gemma*], Bu. 37, complaint by Ottaviano Navarta.
- 34 Ivi, *Contro Elena De Freschi Olivi*, Bu.12.
- 35 Ibid., deposition by donna Margherita, 27 March 1555.
- 36 Ibid., *Contro Laura Stella*.
- 37 This historiographic gap, regarding specifically women who were not members of the aristocracy, has now been partially bridged in Caffiero and Lirosi (2020). See in particular the first two essays by Michaela Valente, “Tra i silenzi della storia. Primi appunti su donne e Inquisizione romana nella prima età moderna,” pages 1–25, and Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi, “Inquisizione e donne accusate di luteranesimo,” pages 27–54, which provide a more extensive bibliography.

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