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The Muslim Friend: Cross-Confessional Male Intimacy in Eighteenth-Century Italy

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Abstract

In early modern Italy, stereotypes about Muslim men's supposed inclination towards the vice of 'sodomy' gave rise to fears that Christian masculinity was being tainted. Eighteenth-century court records from the Republic of Genoa and the Papal States contain numerous instances of cross-confessional male relations that faced persecution by state authorities. In each of these cases, Christian men were prosecuted for taking a sexually 'passive' role in relation to sexually 'active' Muslims, while the reverse scenario was never pursued. This article argues that the sexual focus of judicial authorities obscured the enduring bonds of affection and mutual obligation that developed between men across religious lines. The existence of these relationships unveils an intimate sphere of connections across faith in the early modern Mediterranean while highlighting an intersectional site of Christian social anxiety, where fears of religious contamination overlapped with concerns about same-sex intimacy.

Keywords

Mediterranean – Italy – slavery – Sexuality – Sodomy – Friendship – Genoa – Papal States

Introduction

On a spring evening in 1786, the freed slave Ali of Tunis and the apprentice Emanuele Zunino were followed in secret as they left a dockside tavern. The pursuer trailed the couple for several minutes as the two men walked inebriated through the old alleyways of Genoa, until reaching Ali's lodgings at an inn, the *Locanda dei Quattro Canti.* Their fellowship aroused enough suspicion for the man who had trailed them to report his sightings to the police chief, who then marched his men to the inn, "suspecting the crime of sodomy." The innkeeper claimed that the Tunisian hadn't returned, but the policemen kicked and banged on the door until Ali let them in. Ali was found wearing a shirt and no trousers, while Emanuele was hanging out of the window, attempting to escape from the intruders.[1]

Following their arrest, Ali and Emanuele were handed to the *Magistrato delle virtù* (Magistrate of Virtues), an institution tasked with punishing 'sodomy' in the aristocratic Republic of Genoa. After two weeks of questioning and incarceration, the two men were released, having avoided a possible sentence of torture, banishment, imprisonment, or galley servitude. Through the fragmentary surviving evidence, it is possible to collect elements of their successful defense. Emanuele told the judge that he had accompanied Ali home to aid him in his drunken state. He also claimed that he had attempted to flee because he feared that his father "was coming to beat him because he had seen him with the Turk." Also key to the ruling were two medical inspections of Emanuele's body, which "found his pudenda in their natural state." Ali – referred to as "the Turk" or "the slave" in the documents – was never physically examined during the investigation.[2]

Ali and Emanuele's sparse paper trail sheds light on the prosecution of 'sodomy' in early modern Italy, as well as on the limitations such sources present for a history of male-male affection. Through interrogations and humiliating medical inspections, judges sought proof of penetration, showing little interest in other forms of same-sex intimacy.[3] At the same time, the case displays a common pattern in the persecution of cross-confessional relationships, in which Christian males were accused of being the sexually 'passive' partners of 'active' Muslims, called *Turchi* (Turks) in the sources. Out of 112 cases pursued

1 Archivio di Stato di Genova (ASG), Diversorum Collegii e Senato (DCS), 1071, 25 April 1786, *Denuncia contro il Turco Alì di Tunis ed Emanuele Zunino indagati per vizio nefando*.

2 Ibid.

3 Umberto Grassi, "Regulation and Homoerotic Transgressions," in *The Routledge History of Emotions in Europe 1100–1700*, eds. Andrew Lynch and Susan Broomhall (London, 2019), 134–135.

by the Magistrate of Virtues between 1734 and 1796, over one in ten involved Muslim men, a significant number considering that Muslims constituted less than one percent of the population in the second half of the eighteenth century.[4] In each of these instances, the Magistrate investigated and punished Muslims for 'penetrating' Christians. The opposite relation was apparently never deemed worthy of note. As will be seen in the following pages, authorities only persecuted those relationships which appeared to threaten the virility of their Christian subjects.

In this article, I argue that anxieties over Muslim-Christian socialization in early modern Italy intersected with concerns over same-sex intimacy. Through a critical reading of eighteenth-century judicial documents, I contend that normative gender ideals defined Christian masculinity in opposition to Muslim men, who were portrayed as sexually deviant. By analyzing the documentary evidence in light of this bias, I argue that relationships such as Ali and Emanuele's must be read beyond the sexual lens of the archive. I contend that these persecuted same-sex relationships, regardless of sexual intimacy, reveal bonds of affection and mutual obligation across faiths in the early modern Mediterranean. It was the cross-confessional nature of these intimate relations which led to repression and claims of sexual transgression.

In the European Christian cultures of medieval and early modern Europe, Muslims were associated with the vice of 'sodomy,' considered the most abominable of sexual crimes.[5] This stereotyped association characterized the Christian self-image of moral superiority in the Mediterranean, justifying imperial ambitions, religious conversion, and the ransom of Christian captives from Islamic lands.[6] As Noel Malcolm has recently argued, it also reflected the two

4 Salvatore Bono, "Schiavi Musulmani a Genova (Secoli XVI–XVIII)," in *Rapporti Genova-Mediterraneo-Atlantico Nell'età Moderna*, ed. Raffaele Belvederi (Padova, 1990), 87.

5 Vincenzo Lavenia, "Contaminating Infidels, Burnt Bodies, and Saved Souls: Sodomy and Catholicism in the Early Modern Age," in *Bodies in Early Modern Religious Dissent: Naked, Veiled, Vilified, Worshipped*, eds. Elisabeth Fischer and Xenia von Tippelskirch (Abingdon, 2021), 155–173.

6 Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York, 2000); Jacqueline Pearson, "'One Lot in Sodom': Masculinity and the Gendered Body in Early Modern Narratives of Converted Turks," *Literature and Theology* 21, no. 1 (2007): 29–48, https://doi.org/10.1093/litthe/frl060; Eric R. Dursteler, "Slavery and Sexual Peril in the Early Modern Mediterranean," in *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500–1800) – Neue Perspektiven Auf Mediterrane Sklaverei (500–1800)*, eds. Juliane Schiel and Stefan Hanß (Zurich, 2014), 473–499; Vincenzo Lavenia, "Between Heresy and 'Crimes Against Nature': Sexuality, Islamophobia and the Inquisition in Early Modern Europe," in *Mediterranean Crossings: Sexual Transgressions in Islam and Christianity (10th–18th Centuries)*, ed. Umberto Grassi (Rome, 2020), 65–88.

cultures' differing norms in the punishment of sexual transgression.[7] While Islamic jurisprudence condemned a set of sexual practices defined as *liwāṭ,* the Ottoman territories and Morocco never experienced the scale of persecution which was seen in Italy, where special institutions were established to punish 'sodomy,' or in Iberia, where sexual transgression was tried by the Inquisition as a form of heresy.[8] To offer a quantitative comparison: in eighteenth-century Genoa the Magistrate of Virtues heard at least 112 cases of 'sodomy,' while in Venice the Council of Ten prosecuted 153, not counting cases heard in other courts.[9] In the same century, Islamic courts in Ottoman Aleppo heard a total of four cases of *liwāṭ,* only one of which resulted in a sentence (banishment from the neighborhood).[10] Court records from eighteenth-century Damascus and Istanbul display the same disinterest in the repression of same-sex encounters, especially when these practices were consensual, and large amounts of anecdotal evidence suggest a similar picture for the Maghrib.[11] While Islamic law required high standards of proof for the punishment of sexual transgression (the act had to be witnessed by two or four Muslim men of good standing, depending on the legal school), sentences for 'sodomy' in early modern Europe were based on anonymous denunciations, dubious medical examinations, and confessions under torture – forms of evidence which Cesare Beccaria, writing in 1764, derided as "half-proofs."[12]

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7 Noel Malcolm, "Forbidden Love in Istanbul: Patterns of Male–Male Sexual Relations in the Early-Modern Mediterranean World," *Past & Present* 257, no. 1 (2022): 55–88, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtab039.

8 Arno Schmitt, "'Liwāṭ' Im 'Fiqh:' Männliche Homosexualität?," *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 1 January 1970, 49–110, https://doi.org/10.5617/jais.4565; Vincenzo Lavenia, "Between Heresy and 'Crimes Against Nature:' Sexuality, Islamophobia and the Inquisition in Early Modern Europe," in *Mediterranean Crossings: Sexual Transgressions in Islam and Christianity (10th–18th Centuries)*, ed. Umberto Grassi (Rome, 2020), 65–88.

9 Tommaso Scaramella, *Un Doge Infame: Sodomia e Nonconformismo Sessuale a Venezia Nel Settecento* (Venice, 2021), 147.

10 Elyse Semerdjian, "'Because He Is so Tender and Pretty': Sexual Deviance and Heresy in Eighteenth-Century Aleppo," *Social Identities* 18, no. 2 (2012): 175–178, https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2012.652844.

11 Abdul Karim Rafeq, "Public Morality in 18th Century Ottoman Damascus," *Revue Du Monde Musulman et de La Méditerranée* 55, no. 1 (1990): 187–188, https://doi.org/10.3406/remmm.1990.2342; Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul, 1700–1800* (Berkeley, 2010), 88–89, 117; Malcolm, "Forbidden Love in Istanbul," 62–64.

12 Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800* (Chicago, 2005), 77, 123; George Rousseau, "Policing the Anus: Stuprum and Sodomy According to Paolo Zacchia's Forensic Medicine," in *The Sciences of Homosexuality in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Kenneth Borris and George S. Rousseau (London, 2007), 75–81; Cesare Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments and Other Writings*, ed. Richard Bellamy, trans. Richard Davies (Cambridge, 1995), 79.

Despite these differences, historians have compared Islamicate and Southern European erotic practices within a single category of 'Mediterranean sexuality.' According to this body of work, this Mediterranean sexual pattern was characterized by a division between 'active' and 'passive' roles, and a non-egalitarian relationship in which grown men had sex with beardless youth whose gender was not yet considered fully male (called *imberbi* in Italian and *'amrad* in Arabic).[13] The growth of a beard marked a male's transition from boyhood to manhood, and from a 'passive' to an 'active' sexual role. In this normative early modern understanding of homoerotic relations, sexual 'passivity' was considered humiliating, and adult males who consented to it were disparaged as effeminate.[14] While these studies outline the dominant model of sexuality in the Mediterranean, historians have also noted cases of adults in the region establishing reciprocal, long-term relationships of same-sex love.[15] These kinds of relationships are rarely found in the archive, which tends to reproduce a normative perspective. In European court proceedings in particular, the judge's pursuit of proof of penetration offers a "hypersexualized and mechanical" image of male intimacy, which overshadows the wider dimension of affection.[16] This affective sphere is even more elusive when it comes to cross-confessional relations, which are filtered in the archive through stereotypes of sexual peril and contamination. Instead of reproducing the sexualizing discourse of the archive, this article analyzes it, reconstructing the relations of affection, trust, and mutual obligation which developed between men of differing faiths.

13 Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford, 1996), 116; El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800*, 26; Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*, (Berkeley, 2005), 15.

14 El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800*, 19–21; Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500–1900* (Berkeley, 2006), 38–39; Scaramella, *Un Doge Infame*, 159.

15 Luiz Mott and Aroldo Assunção, "Love's Labors Lost: Five Letters from a Seventeenth-Century Portuguese Sodomite," *Journal of Homosexuality* 16, no. 1–2 (10 January 1989): 91–104, https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v16n01_05; Ugo Zuccarello, "La sodomia al tribunale bolognese del Torrone tra XVI e XVII secolo," *Società e storia*, no. 87 (2000): 40; Giuseppe Marcocci, "Is This Love? Same-Sex Marriages in Renaissance Rome," *Historical Reflections* 41, no. 2 (2015): 37–52, https://doi.org/10.3167/hrrh.2015.410204; Grassi, "Regulation and Homoerotic Transgressions," 137–140; Scaramella, *Un Doge Infame*, 109; Thomas Bauer, *A Culture of Ambiguity: An Alternative History of Islam*, trans. Hinrich Biesterfeldt and Tricia Tunstall (New York, 2021), 196–197.

16 Grassi, "Regulation and Homoerotic Transgressions," 134.

The comparative history of same-sex relations in Italian and Islamicate contexts reveals a degree of similarity between the two shores of the Mediterranean. However, the literature continues to offer little information on how Muslims and Christians in the early modern Mediterranean interacted with each other on an intimate level.[17] Despite a flourishing field of scholarship on the persecution of same-sex desire in early modern Italy,[18] and a growing corpus on the presence of Muslims in the Italian states,[19] there has yet to be a systematic study of Muslims in Italian trials for sexual transgression. This contrasts with the more widely studied persecution of Jewish men in these trials, although in most cases these did not involve relations with Christians.[20] Where historians have noted the sexual practices of Muslims in Italy, they have primarily noted cases of enslaved men who purchased sex or who perpetrated acts of sexual violence towards women and children.[21] This historiographical orientation reflects the

17 Jocelyne Dakhlia, "Homoérotismes et trames historiographiques du monde islamique," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 62, no. 5 (October 2007): 1119–1120, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0395264900035769.

18 Gary Ferguson, *Same-Sex Marriage in Renaissance Rome: Sexuality, Identity, and Community in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY, 2016); Fernanda Alfieri and Vincenzo Lagioia, *Infami Macchie: Sessualità Maschili e Indisciplina in Età Moderna* (Rome, 2018); Umberto Grassi, *Bathhouses and Riverbanks: Sodomy in a Renaissance Republic* (Toronto, 2021); Scaramella, *Un Doge Infame*.

19 Salvatore Bono, *Schiavi musulmani nell'Italia moderna. Galeotti, vu' cumprà, domestici* (Naples, 1999); Giuliana Boccadamo, *Napoli e l'Islam: storie di musulmani, schiavi e rinnegati in età moderna* (Naples, 2010); Jocelyne Dakhlia and Bernard Vincent, eds., *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe – tome 1: Une intégration invisible* (Paris, 2011); Cesare Santus, *Il « turco » a Livorno: incontri con l'islam nella Toscana del seicento* (Livorno, 2019); Serena Di Nepi, *I confini della salvezza: schiavitù, conversione e libertà nella Roma di età moderna* (Roma, 2022).

20 Tamar Herzig, "The Prosecution of Jews and the Repression of Sodomy in Fifteenth-Century Italy," in *L'Inquisizione Romana, i Giudici e Gli Eretici. Studi in Onore Di John Tedeschi*, eds. Andrea Del Col and Anne Jacobson Schutte (Rome, 2017), 59–74; Serena Di Nepi, "'Che questo è pubblico in ghetto Se poi sia vero o no io non lo so' Un caso di studio sulla struttura sociale del ghetto di Roma attraverso un processo per sodomia (1624)," in *Storia economica e storia degli ebrei. Istituzioni, capitale sociale e stereotipi* (*secc. XV–XVIII*) (Milan, 2017), 59–80; For a case of sex between a Jewish and a Christian man, see Katherine Aron-Beller, "Sopra l'imputatione del delitto di sodomia con christiano. The Proceedings against Lazarro de Norsa (Modena, 1670)," *Genesis* XX, no. 1 (2021): 63–91, https://doi.org/10.23744/4003.

21 Giovanni Romeo, *Aspettando il boia: condannati a morte, confortatori e inquisitori nella Napoli della Controriforma* (Firenze, 1993), 262–264; Peter Mazur, "Combating 'Mohammedan Indecency': The Baptism of Muslim Slaves in Spanish Naples, 1563–1667," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13, no. 1 (1 January 2009): 38, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006509X454707; Cesare Santus, "Crimini, violenza e corruzione nel Bagno di Livorno: gli schiavi 'turchi' in alcuni processi del XVII secolo," in *La città delle nazioni. Livorno e i limiti del*

archival visibility of sex work and sexual violence, which were more evident to authorities than consensual affective bonds.[22] To counter this bias, this article builds an archive of cross-confessional male intimacy in early modern Italy. This archive allows for an analysis of how the stereotype of the 'Muslim vice' operated within Italian society and how both Christians and Muslims experienced and responded to it.

The article is divided into four parts. In Part One, I argue that Christian masculinity in eighteenth-century Italian port cities was defined in opposition to a Muslim sexuality that was considered contaminated. I build on this analysis in Part Two, in which I interrogate the archive's gendered and sexualized image of Muslim men. In Part Three, I analyze the subject from the perspective of Muslims in Italy, showing that they were aware of the stereotypes which Christians assigned to them and disciplined sexual transgression within their communities. Finally, in Part Four I demonstrate how Christian and Muslim men in early modern Italy established long-term bonds of affection, which were viewed with suspicions of 'sodomy' due to their cross-confessional nature. I conclude by returning to the case of Ali and Emanuele, reading the archival fragment from the perspective of cross-confessional intimacy.

Christian Virtue and Muslim Vice

In 1752, Genoese police arrested six Christian and Muslim men who regularly met in the basements of two houses and who were the objects of scandalous rumors. According to a police report sent to the Magistrate of Virtues, galley foremen took enslaved Muslims to the houses and removed their chains, after which much eating, drinking, and merry-making would ensue.[23] Among those implicated, the twenty-four-year-old fisherman Giobatta Calcagno was accused of having been "sodomized" and "supported and supplied with clothes" for

cosmopolitismo (*1566–1834*), eds. Andrea Addobbati and Marcella Aglietti (Pisa, 2016), 104; Paolo Calcagno, "« Per sfogare la sua brutale libidine ». Pratiche di sodomia a bordo delle galee nel XVIII secolo," in *Storie di violenza. Genere, pratiche ed emozioni tra medioevo ed età contemporanea*, eds. Francesca Ferrando, Maria Cristina La Rocca, and Giulia Morisini (Rome, 2020), 171–172; Tamar Herzig, "Slavery and Interethnic Sexual Violence: A Multiple Perpetrator Rape in Seventeenth-Century Livorno," *The American Historical Review* 127, no. 1 (26 April 2022): 194–222, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhac011.

22 Grassi, "Regulation and Homoerotic Transgressions," 134–135; Scaramella, *Un Doge Infame*, 151.

23 In Livorno, too, guards facilitated slaves' exit from the bagno for sex, in exchange for a bribe. See Santus, "Crimini, violenza e corruzione nel Bagno di Livorno: gli schiavi 'turchi' in alcuni processi del XVII secolo," 104.

three years by "Amet of Bejaia," an enslaved Muslim who ran a kiosk in the galley harbor. The same report accused a man named Beltramo, another fisherman which Giobatta had introduced to the group, of having been *mantenuto* (supported) for six months by another Muslim man listed as "the slave *ra'īs,*" the captain of a captured North African ship.[24]

The term *mantenuto* – used to refer to a man who is supported by a woman or by his parents [25] – appears repeatedly in police descriptions of Christian men who were prosecuted as the passive sexual partners of Muslims. The descriptor reveals the gender and status disorder that made these relationships transgressive. *Mantenuto* denoted a shortcoming in the masculinity of the Christian men, who failed to adhere to gender standards according to which they had to provide for themselves and their families. At the same time, it expressed the normative gendering of enslaved Muslims, who were expected to play a passive role, both socially and sexually. The police report's reference to their notable social roles within the enslaved Muslim community (a kiosk-keeper and a *ra'īs*) reflected a concern that they had transgressed their assigned social status as slaves.

Although the court proceedings for this case are unavailable, insights into Giobatta and Amet's experiences can be gleaned from the standard protocols followed by the Magistrate of Virtues.[26] Giobatta would have been medically examined and interrogated – possibly under torture – to find out whether he had consented to sexual 'passivity.' After his confession, the magistrate would have tortured him again, this time forcing Amet to watch, to "clean the stain" of dishonor (*purgare la macchia*).[27] The differing punishment reveals that the main concern of the Magistrate was to discipline the 'passive' partner. This was also reflected in differing sentences: Giobatta Calcagno was sentenced to seven years chained to the galleys, while his partner Amet was only sentenced to five (on separate ships and with special supervision so that they would no longer commit "crimes of that nature").[28] The focus on punishing the 'passive' partner also explains the low number of women prosecuted in these trials. Out of the 112 surviving cases from the Magistrate of Virtue's archive, only seven prosecuted heterosexual 'sodomy.' This imbalance suggests that the primary

24 ASG, DCS, 1071, 11 May 1752.

25 "Mantenére," in *Treccani*, accessed 26 January 2023, https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/mantenere.

26 The Magistrate explained its procedures to a local authority in ASG, DCS, 1071, 1 January 1783, *Di avvertimenti a darsi al Magnifico Podestá di Varazze nella processione che fa del delitto sodomitico commesso colá da Giovanni Francesco Lopez Spagnuolo.*

27 Ibid.

28 ASG, DCS, 1071, 11 May 1752.

object of persecution was not non-procreative sex in general, as much as the sexual 'passivity' of male Christian subjects.[29] Like women, Muslim men were expected to be sexually submissive and therefore appear to have only been persecuted when they transgressed their normatively assigned gender role.

Besides the persecution of cross-confessional relations, Christian sexual virtue in general was defined against the vice attributed to Muslims. This was the case even when no Muslims were present. In 1713, when a rural priest in the Republic of Genoa was denounced for living with a "scandalous young woman under the guise of a servant," his accusers described the relationship as a "Turkish wedding" (*matrimonio alla turchesca*).[30] The phrase echoed proliferating fantasies of harem life while presenting the couple as sexual outsiders to the Christian social body, an outside exemplified by Islam. It reflected a discourse which was actively promoted from the pulpit and in print, as in the homilies of the Genoese Inquisitor Romolo Marchelli (d. 1688):

> O godless bestiality! You are the slave of a Turkish Vice; your feet are in chains; your hunger is sated by a morsel of hardtack; your days contain more lashes than hours; with an oar as your pen, you write your miseries in the waves; and as you drift across the sea, the sweats of your labor replenish the waters …[31]

Such words stoked fear and awe in the hearts of Italian congregations, for whom maritime captivity was a tangible possibility. But for those parishioners who had returned from enslavement in Muslim territories, the preacher's fervor would have been followed by wary looks and defaming murmurs. Redeemed captives were reintegrated into the community, but there were still suspicions that they had yielded sexually to their previous masters.[32] In these cases, the physical scars of captivity were stigmatized somatic markers imbued with a sexual meaning. The famed natural scientist Luigi Ferdinando Marsili (d. 1730) was the object of such rumors after his return from captivity in Ottoman Rumelia. Marsili's "marks of misfortune," those "tearful reminders

29 Mary Elizabeth Perry has put forward this same argument in the Spanish context. Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton, 1990), 124–125.

30 Archivio Diocesano di Genova, Criminalia, 432, 46, 23 June 1713, *Per il Signor Arciprete di Varese, contro il Reverendo Andrea Giozzi.* Thanks to Paolo Fontana for sharing this source with me.

31 Romolo Marchelli, *Prediche quaresimali del P.D. Romolo Marchelli Genovese Bernabita* (Venice, 1679), 221.

32 Giovanni Ricci, "Restauri di identità contaminate: gli schiavi liberati dai 'turchi'" *Quaderni di discipline storiche* 17, Identità collettive tra Medioevo ed età moderna: Convegno internazionale di studio (2002): 73–74, https://doi.org/10.1400/35824.

of his painful slavery," were seen by a contemporary Bolognese chronicler as symbols of the sexual violence enacted by his captors ("those lecherous scoundrels"). His Ottoman masters, we read, had "ruined him with their lewdness" given their admiration for "his youth and the beauty of his body."[33] In addition to the "indelible marks" on his limbs, the chronicler claimed that Marsili had been "ruined to the point that he no longer has any control in those parts, because they opened him ruthlessly."[34] The chronicler's repetition of this visceral imagery three times over a period of more than thirty years suggests that the sexual stigma of captivity was one which followed Marsili for the whole of his life.

Other returned captives were suspected of having been contaminated by the 'Turkish Vice' and of spreading it within the Christian congregation. In such cases, individuals were subject to special scrutiny and more vulnerable to denunciations. This was the case for the shipmaster Bartolomeo Lottero, who in 1779 returned to his native seaside village of Spotorno (Republic of Genoa) after nine years of enslavement in Algiers. Within a few years, anonymous accusers reported him to the Magistrate of Virtues, claiming that he was "ruining most of the village's youth." The accusation claimed that Lottero had "brought with him the terrible vice" from Algiers, and urged the Republic to remove him and his partners from the community:

> this wicked vice will only stop growing once the roots of this evil seed have been removed, [...] that is to say, once the other seeds planted by the sinful Lottero have also been destroyed.[35]

The letter presented sexual transgression as a foreign species that originated in North Africa and invaded the village. Algiers was portrayed as a locus of vice, and the authors warned that now Spotorno also risked "becoming a City of Sodom, with the same punishment by our Lord God."[36] The writers likely sought to protect the honor of their village by externalizing 'sodomy,' defining it as a Muslim vice associated solely with the other side of the sea. At the same time, deploying catastrophic imagery and using language of

33 Antonio Francesco Ghiselli, "Memorie antiche manuscritte di Bologna raccolte et accresciute sino a' tempi presenti," MS 770, Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, vol. 40 (1680), 622.

34 Ibid., vol. 55 (1693), p. 57; see also vol. 66 (1704), 221–222.

35 ASG, DCS, 1071, 17 dicembre 1779, *Lettera ossia Supplica ai Serenissimi Collegi dell'Università, e Popolo di Spotorno contro il Patron Bartolomeo Lottero.* On anonymous letters to the Genoese Republic in the seventeenth century, including accusations of 'sodomy,' see Edoardo Grendi, *Lettere orbe: anonimato e poteri nel Seicento genovese* (Palermo, 1989), 90–91.

36 Ibid.

contamination created a sense of urgency that the petitioners hoped would prompt state intervention. By framing Lottero as polluted by his captivity in North Africa, and as a contaminant within the Christian community, the accusers believed that the Republic would hastily act on the sexual accusations.

The cases analyzed here demonstrate how Christian masculinity and sexual virtue in early modern Italy were defined in opposition to a sexual vice attributed to Muslims. This register was not only deployed against Christians who had intimate relations with Muslims, but also towards those who were suspected of having done so in the past. Even when no Muslims were present, a sexualized image of Islamic mores was used to enforce normative ideas of comportment. But how did these sources present Muslims themselves?

Gendering the Muslim Body

As we have seen, judicial authorities prosecuted free and enslaved Muslims as sexually 'active' partners, thereby painting an image of Muslim men as sexual aggressors. But this archival noise about the sexually dangerous "Turk" was accompanied by a silence over the sexual violence experienced by Muslims themselves, especially those who were enslaved. The sexual abuse of slaves is almost absent from the documentation, only emerging under particular circumstances. In the Papal port of Civitavecchia, for example, Muslim captives were routinely raped by Christian convicts. But this fact was only denounced due to fears that news of these acts would reach North African cities and lead to retaliations against Christian captives.[37] Prosecution of this crime was apparently nonexistent: the archive of the Governor's Tribunal in Civitavecchia does not seem to contain a single case of 'active' Christians sleeping with 'passive' Muslims.

Although portrayals of Muslims as sexually 'passive' are absent from the judicial archive, visual representations offer abundant evidence of this trope. In the late seventeenth century, a knight of the Order of St. Stephen, Ignazio Fabroni, sketched the bodies of slaves aboard the Tuscan galleys, portraying some of them as effeminate objects of sexual desire. These sketches are unique among representations of galley slavery in that the artist had neither patrons nor an intended audience, instead drawing his subjects out of

37 Justine Walden, "Muslim Slaves in Early Modern Rome: The Development and Visibility of a Labouring Class," in *A Companion to Religious Minorities in Early Modern Rome*, eds. Matthew Coneys Wainwright and Emily Michelson (Leiden, 2021), 316; For Livorno, see Stephanie Nadalo, "Negotiating Slavery in a Tolerant Frontier: Livorno's Turkish Bagno (1547–1747)," *Mediaevalia* 32, no. 1 (2011): 316, https://doi.org/10.1353/mdi.2011.0004.

personal interest.[38] The open poses of the young galley slaves, their prominent buttocks, and their enlarged eyes remind us of the hierarchical sexual relations aboard the galleys, which officers like Fabroni took advantage of. Furthermore, their shorn heads and beardless faces portray the feminizing effect of the forced shaving of captives, which undermined their masculine identity in a context where beardlessness could signify sexual passivity (see figures 1–3).[39] Shaving was felt as such an affront to masculinity that in 1702 when the enslaved Muslims of Civitavecchia asked to be allowed to grow their beards, they claimed that they would rather suffer beatings or death than lose "the mark of manhood" (*il segno d'uomo*).[40]

The comparison of Fabroni's sketches with judicial sources reminds us of the multifaceted representations of Muslim masculinity, which could be portrayed simultaneously as "insufficient, excessive, and monstrous."[41] The feminization of the beardless captives coexisted with a register that codified Muslim men as a carnal threat and could be used towards false accusations. Out of twenty trials for 'sodomy' involving Muslims in Genoa and Civitavecchia during the eighteenth century, five were thrown out due to insufficient evidence to substantiate denunciations. This fact alone requires us to consider archival claims of cross-confessional 'sodomy' with a critical eye, particularly as such accusations were sometimes means to other ends.[42] In 1782, when Genoa saw the arrival of two Moroccan merchant companies following diplomatic agreements between the Republic and Muḥammad III (d. 1790), the merchant "Abdelexol Vomine" (*sic*) of Tetouan was reported to the Magistrate of Virtues for forcing himself onto a local man.[43] The accusation was made by the

38 Anna Agostini, *Istantanee dal Seicento: l'album di disegni del cavaliere pistoiese Ignazio Fabroni* (Firenze, 2017), 22; See also Santus, *Il 'Turco' a Livorno*.

39 Stefan Hanß, "Hair, Emotions and Slavery in the Early Modern Habsburg Mediterranean," *History Workshop Journal* 87 (1 April 2019): 14, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbz004.

40 Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, Scritture riferite nei congressi, Barbaria, vol. 3, f. 431v. Cited in Andrea Zappia, "In the Sign of Reciprocity. Muslim Slaves in Genoa and Genoese Slaves in Maghreb," in *Lepanto and Beyond. Images of Religious Alterity from Genoa and the Christian Mediterranean* (Leuven, Belgium, 2021), 266.

41 Pearson, "'One Lot in Sodom,'" 32.

42 On false and instrumental accusations of Jewish men in early modern Italy, see Michele Luzzati, "Satis est quod tecum dormivit : vero, verosimile e falso nelle incriminazioni di ebrei : un caso di presunta sodomia (Lucca, 1471–1472)," in *Manna buona per Mantova = Man Tov le-Man Tovah : studi in onore di Vittore Colorni per il suo 92° compleanno*, ed. Mauro Perani (Florence, 2004), 261–280; Tamar Herzig, *A Convert's Tale: Art, Crime, and Jewish Apostasy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, MA, 2019).

43 ASG, DCS, 1071, 7 July 1782, *Relazione del Magnifico Pretore della Rota Criminale per il carcerato Paolo Nattino, all'Eccellentissimo Magistrato delle Virtú*; Salvatore Rotta, "Genova e Marocco Nel Secolo XVIII," in *Studi Di Filologia e Letteratura Offerti a Franco Croce* (Roma, 1997), 271.

FIGURES 1–3 Details of galley slaves from Ignazio Fabroni's onboard sketches, 1664-1687. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Rossi Cassigoli, 199, Album di ricordi di viaggi e di navigazioni sopra le galere toscane dall'anno 1664 all'anno 1687. Courtesy of the Italian Ministry of Culture and the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze. Reproduction by any means is prohibited.

alleged victim, Paolo Nattino, whom the Tetouani had commissioned to produce a number of birdcages. To his surprise, Nattino was immediately arrested after delivering his allegations and questioned (likely under torture) to verify whether he had in fact consented to the sexual act in question. He retracted his accusation under interrogation, while a medical examination showing that his body was "in its natural state" led the Magistrate of Virtues to throw the case out.[44] While the court proceedings are absent, it appears that the accusation may have reflected a business dispute, and that Nattino had hoped that the stereotype of Muslim sexual vice would work to his advantage.

Sometimes, doctors would report their patients for 'sodomy' if they exhibited symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases. In these cases, claiming to be a victim of sexual violence at the hands of Muslims could save one from torture and a galley sentence. In 1705, Antonio Maria Carrara, a discharged sailor down on his luck, was turned in by a doctor after having gone to the hospital to cure his syphilis.[45] When the judges interrogated Antonio, he claimed that the syphilis had been passed to him by a Muslim galley slave who had assaulted him in Genoa's galley harbor. According to the testimony, his aggressor had bought him wine, bread, and cheese at a kiosk before assaulting him under the porticoes. Antonio could not recall his aggressor's name, nor could he identify him when taken aboard the galleys.[46] Instead, he painted a general image of a "Turk":

> I believe the slave was a Turk because he had a shaved head with a tuft of hair on top [...] he wasn't very fat, he had a skinny face, he was brown [*bruno*] in color, he wore a red blouse with white trousers, and he only wore a shackle without a chain, but I did not notice anything else [...] he was dark [*moro*] and big, with a ring around his ankle, and I saw him coming down from the *Raggia* galley [...] I believe he was a Turk because he was brown and of large stature.[47]

We can only speculate on Antonio's inability to identify his aggressor. Fear, trauma, fidelity, the covering up of sex work, and the construction of a scapegoat are all plausible explanations. But by accusing an abstract social category rather than an individual, his words illustrate the utility of a stock image of the Muslim as a carnal threat. The religious identity of the 'Turk' was

44 ASG, DCS, 1071, 7 July 1782.

45 ASG, Rota Criminale (RC), 458, f. 93v.

46 Ibid., f. 194r.

47 Ibid., ff. 100r, 100v, 194r. Note that in early modern Italy the adjective "moro," as a physical descriptor, could refer either to someone with dark hair or dark skin.

identified by the imposed stigma-markers of his outfit, haircut, and shackles, but also by his skin color and the physical stature for which he was selected in Mediterranean slave markets.[48] Together, these markers denoted a sexually perilous individual, gendered as masculine, in contrast to the fair and effeminate figures of Fabroni's sketches.

Perceptions of the Muslim masculine body could be contradictory, the only constant being their deviance which acted as a foil to Christian male virtue. These biased and instrumental representations can teach us to be critical of depictions of cross-confessional encounters in the archive. But how did Muslim men themselves relate to this stereotype?

The Slaves' Perspective

In 1738, the domestic slave "Amettino" of Tunis was brought in for questioning by the Governor of Civitavecchia, after police had found him in his bed with the fifteen-year-old Antoniuccio, a Swiss immigrant from Lucerne. The case had been reported by an anonymous "friend of the court." In addition to working as a domestic in the Apostolic Palace, Amettino identified himself as a "merchant" who ran a kiosk in the harbor as well as a cheese shop in the city.[49] His social position meant he had relative privilege within the confines of confessional slavery. By contrast, his partner occupied one of the lowest rungs of free Christian society. Described by the police as a "good-looking, foreign and miserable youth," Antoniuccio had become unemployed after his master had died. His "miserable" status as an unemployed foreigner without a family led him to seek the support of his countrymen: two Swiss guards supported him until they left for Rome and Ancona respectively. Thereafter he began to spend his days at Amettino's kiosk, drinking coffee and liqueur. In his testimony, Antoniuccio claimed to have consented to sleep with Amettino due to economic need and the "good words of the slave," who had said that he loved

48 Benoît Maréchaux, "Purchasing Slaves Overseas for the Business of War: Genoese Galley Entrepreneurs and the Mediterranean Slave Market in the Early 17th Century," *Journal of Global Slavery* 7, no. 3 (6 October 2022): 306, https://doi.org/10.1163/2405836X–00703002.

49 Archivio di Stato di Roma, Tribunale del Governatore di Civitavecchia (TGC), 643, 8, *Contro Amettino detto Bella di Tunisi schiavo e Antonio di Adamo Buigardi detto Antoniuccio di Lucerna per vizio nefando.* All following quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from the same document, which is not foliated. For a different perspective on this case, see Calcagno, "« Per sfogare la sua brutale libidine ». Pratiche di sodomia a bordo delle galee nel XVIII secolo," 171–172.

him ("*che lui mi voleva bene*"). The policemen's deposition, on the other hand, employed more visceral imagery: the Tunisian, they alleged, had "maintained and governed" the boy, using him to "release his brutal lechery" (*sfogare la sua brutale libidine*).

One of the key witnesses for the trial was "Nesan son of Omar of Bizerte," a fellow domestic slave in the Apostolic palace who knew Amettino well. His deposition before the Governor – given after raising his index finger in the air and making an "oath according to Turkish law" – provides an exceptional example of how Muslims in Italy were aware of the sexual stereotype which followed them.[50] When asked whether he knew why the police detained his friend, he replied that Amettino had been found:

> … sleeping in bed with Antoniuccio, and this isn't allowed because Christian law prohibits it, and what is worse is that our law prohibits it too because it leads one to believe in evil.

By emphasizing "our law" (*la legge nostra*) as standing in opposition to male-male sexual intimacy, Nesan preemptively refuted the stereotype of Muslim tolerance for 'sodomy.' In fact, Nesan went on to stress Amettino's exclusion from the Muslim community. During the arrest,

> Amettino asked me in Arabic why I hadn't warned him that the police were coming to his room, but I didn't reply, because he didn't deserve it. And since I knew he held this relationship with Antoniuccio, I had begged him to leave that relationship, because it was no good, but he never understood, nor did he understand that I was telling him this as a friend, and our *papasso* [the Muslim leader of the slaves] told him too, as he had been informed of the situation.

From this passage, we learn that Nesan could have prevented Amettino's arrest, but chose not to. Most importantly, the papasso, who held authority among the enslaved, was aware of the relationship and the threat to Amettino and also did nothing to save him from arrest. When asked about Amettino's reputation, Nesan responded:

> I have known Amettino for years, and he has always had a bad name when it comes to questions of the flesh because he runs after women and

50 On the Muslim oath in Italian courts, see Santus, *Il 'Turco' a Livorno*, 134–138.

> beardless youth [...] Amettino is also seen badly by our *papasso* and the other slaves because he is an arrogant slave, and nobody likes him.

His testimony is exceptional in demonstrating the extent to which the community of the enslaved could administer its own justice. Due to his reputation, Amettino had been removed from the protection of the community.[51] We might even consider whether the "friend of the court" who had reported Amettino was the papasso or Nesan himself, who lived and worked within the Apostolic Palace.[52] The decision to do so would not have been taken lightly, as the community was aware of the severity with which such acts could be punished, particularly when enslaved Muslims were involved. Just a few years prior, galley officers had punished a Tripolitan captive with a hundred blows for "tempting" a young cleric and holding his hand.[53]

Nesan's deposition suggests that Muslim communities in early modern Italy were well aware of the stereotypes they held in Christian contexts, long before the colonial occupations of the nineteenth century.[54] This awareness is confirmed by the memories of Osman of Timişoara, the most prolific Ottoman narrator of captivity in early modern Europe. Recalling an encounter with a Christian youth, Osman noted how his Muslim Ottoman identity was sexually fetishized:

> For me, this [encounter with the youth] was a most astonishing situation. Had another man – a sodomite – been in my place, he would have been overcome with boundless desire, for the boy was fresh and open to everything. As we lay there [in bed], he began the most wide-ranging of conversations, asking me about the unnatural vices of the Turks that he had heard spoken of and wondering aloud what these might be like – all

51 On the relationship between reputation, proof, and punishment in the jurisprudence of late eighteenth-century Tunis, see Sami Bargaoui, "« Quando dire è fare », ovvero come una ripetizione giuridica diventa una fonte storica," *Quaderni storici* 43, no. 129 (3) (2008): 607–608.

52 Historians have noted at least two cases of Jewish communities in early modern Italy punishing their members by reporting them to civil authorities as 'sodomites.' Simona Feci, "Tra il tribunale e il ghetto: le magistrature, la comunità e gli individui di fronte ai reati degli ebrei romani nel Seicento," *Quaderni storici*, no. 3 (1998): 586, https://doi.org/10.1408/10228; Tamar Herzig, *A Convert's Tale: Art, Crime, and Jewish Apostasy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), 63.

53 ASR, Camerale II, Epistolario, 39, 8 January 1727.

54 Dakhlia, "Homoérotismes et trames historiographiques du monde islamique," 1119–1120.

> the while lying naked on the mattress! For my part, I used every means to control myself, and while I was at moments aroused, I did not lose my composure to the point that this became obvious.[55]

While Osman carefully portrayed himself as resisting temptation, the ease with which he described mutual attraction contrasts with European captivity narratives, which often presented same-sex intimacy in violent terms.[56] At the same time, the boy's fascination with the "unnatural vices of the Turks" which he "had heard spoken of," demonstrates that the image of the Muslim 'sodomite' was not only a source of fear, but of attraction. Osman's memory discloses a space of consensual male intimacy between a Muslim and a Christian, a space that the stereotypical language of Italian judicial sources erases. The judicial archive presents cross-confessional intimacy as a transgressive Muslim sexuality that contaminated Christian masculinity. To what extent can this language allow us to reconstruct relations of care and intimacy?

Friends Beyond Faith

The chief spaces of cross-confessional interaction in early modern Italian cities were the *bagno* (slave prison) and the *darsena delle galere* (galley harbor), the enclosed dock where the thousands of oarsmen, sailors, artisans, and officials who manned the galleys laboured and lived.[57] In cities like Genoa, Livorno, and Civitavecchia, the darsena contained several kiosks run by enslaved Muslims. While these establishments were originally built by the slaves themselves, at the turn of the eighteenth century they were formally constructed and rented to Muslims by port authorities (see Figure 4). The kiosks offered food, drinks, liqueur, and tobacco, among an array of cheap goods and services from barbering to divining.[58] Through these activities, enslaved merchants improved their living conditions, while providing cheap sustenance to the local population. Cross-confessional encounters were a daily reality in such establishments, and

55 Osman of Timişoara, *Prisoner of the Infidels: The Memoir of an Ottoman Muslim in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. and trans. Giancarlo Casale (Oakland, 2021), 84.

56 Dursteler, "Slavery and Sexual Peril in the Early Modern Mediterranean."

57 Salzmann, "Migrants in Chains," 401.

58 Achille Marotta, *Enslaved and Freed Muslims in Early Modern Genoa* (PhD thesis, University of Bologna, 2024). See also Santus, *Il 'Turco' a Livorno*, 44; Walden, "Muslim Slaves in Early Modern Rome: The Development and Visibility of a Labouring Class," 314–315.

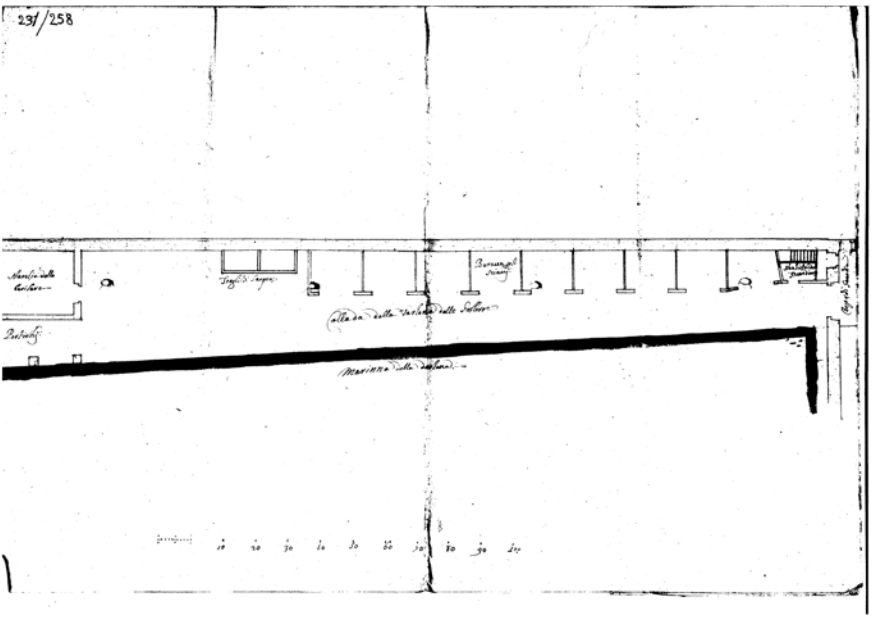

FIGURE 4 Plan for the reconstruction of the "shacks" on the quay of Genoa's darsena, 1701. Archivio Storico del Comune di Genova, Padri del Comune, 231, 258, Barache o sia botteghe in Darsina delle Galee.

enslaved Muslim kiosk-keepers even employed free Christians to run their shops while the galleys sailed during the summer.[59]

Opinions of the galley harbor varied greatly according to a person's social class. Despite the permanent character of the kiosks, state officials called them *baracche* (shacks), and described them as locations of idleness, illicit trade, and sexual peril.[60] In the euphemistic language of the Magistrate of Virtue's reports in Genoa, young men were to be shielded "from the problems and scandals which frequently take place in the darsena."[61] However, court proceedings demonstrate that the commoners who patronized these establishments referred to them as *taverne* (taverns) or *botteghe* (shops), relying on the cheap sustenance and pleasures that they offered.

These conflicting ideas of cross-confessional relations in the taverns were at play in 1707, when the eighteen-year-old servant Nicolino Scagliotto was

59 ASG, Camera Finanze, 1303, 10 October 1723.

60 Walden, "Muslim Slaves in Early Modern Rome: The Development and Visibility of a Labouring Class," 315.

61 ASG, DCS, 1071, 11 May 1752.

arrested following rumors of 'sodomy,' and a report that he had been seen kissing and embracing an enslaved taverner named Ametto.[62] Standing before the judge, the youth explained the background to his relationship with the slave: like other young men, Nicolino was used to spending several hours a day eating, drinking, and playing cards at Ametto's tavern.

Nicolino had no parents and had been unemployed for two months after quitting his job as a servant. These circumstances likely aroused suspicions that he was economically 'maintained' by Ametto. Asked why he left his job, Nicolino claimed that the merchant he worked for wanted to reduce his wages and that he was accustomed to serving noblemen, not merchants.[63] He claimed to support himself thanks to the money he was given when he left his job, and the support of his brother, who was a priest in Genoa. Nicolino denied that he ate free of charge at Ametto's tavern, revealing that, on the contrary, he had brought Ametto biscuits and fresh eggs when the slave was in the hospital.[64] In fact, this exchange of food went both ways. During Nicolino's incarceration, a prison-guard testified that Ametto had brought continuous provisions to the prison, including cheese, pears, almonds, watermelons, loaves of bread, and a flask of wine. Ametto had even tried to deliver a letter to Nicolino but the guards wouldn't accept it, so he passed on a message for his friend to "stay cheerful" and to let him know if he needed anything.[65] The guard noticed the insistence with which Ametto inquired about Nicolino, and asked him whether he had "strong feelings" for the youth (*se porti grande affetto*), to which the slave replied by telling him to "mind his own business" (*non cercare troppo*).[66] Meanwhile, Nicolino insisted to the judge that Ametto was a friend: "because everyone in this world has a friend."[67]

For the judge, a medical examination of Nicolino's body was sufficient proof that sexual relations had taken place, and grounds for his prison sentence.[68] But the acts of mutual support, the "strong feelings" that the guard read on Ametto's face and Nicolino's use of the term "friend" invite us to consider the relationship beyond the judge's search for proof of intercourse. The court proceedings demonstrate a bond of reciprocal gift-giving. Beyond the exchange of food, we find commensality, kissing, and embracing: acts which Alan Bray – in his seminal study of friendship in premodern England – called "the gift of

62 ASG, RC, 459, f. 123r.
63 Ibid., f. 126r.
64 Ibid., f. 127r.
65 Ibid., f. 147v.
66 Ibid., f. 131r.
67 Ibid., f. 126v.
68 Ibid., ff. 123v, 329r.

the friend's body."[69] While in eighteenth-century England the public kiss and embrace between men were supplanted by the handshake, in Italy such acts of male intimacy were widespread, much to the scandal of northern observers.[70] In Italy, unlike in England, public physical intimacy between men did not necessarily signify sexual transgression. But when such gestures took place between a Muslim and a Christian there was less room for ambiguity.

This line of reasoning does not seek to downplay the potential for erotic acts between Ametto and Nicolino. Rather, it expands our understanding of this cross-confessional male relationship from the narrow and modern category of 'sexuality,' towards a wider sphere of same-sex affection and ethical commitment.[71] The acts of sharing food, writing letters, visiting the infirm, and assisting the imprisoned all point to a bond of mutual obligation beyond the family, a bond of friendship that was key in early modern urban societies, where many young adults had no living parents.[72] This was the case for Nicolino – who nonetheless could rely on his brother, the priest – but especially for a captive like Ametto, who lived far away from his relatives and his homeland.[73] In this sense, Ametto and Nicolino's relationship was a form of voluntary kinship, with all the trust, fidelity, and obligations that kinship entailed.[74] Against this backdrop, the physical acts of kissing and embracing do not necessarily indicate an excess of sexual desire (the "brutal lechery" we read of in the archive) but a language of affection which, in Bray's words, "gestured toward a place of

69 Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago, 2003), 150.

70 One anonymous Englishman denounced kissing between men as "a fashion brought over from Italy (the Mother and Nurse of Sodomy); where the Master is oftner Intriguing with his Page, than a fair Lady." *Satan's Harvest Home, or the Present State of Whorecraft, Adultery, Fornication, Procuring, Pimping, Sodomy, and the Game at Flatts* (London, 1749), 51; Cited in Bray, *The Friend*, 212.

71 David M. Halperin, "Among Men: History, Sexuality, and the Return of Affect," in *Love, Sex, Intimacy and Friendship between Men, 1550–1800*, eds. Katherine O'Donnell and Michael O'Rourke (New York, 2003), 1–11; Grassi, "Regulation and Homoerotic Transgressions."

72 Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin, "Introduction," in *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300–1800*, eds. Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (London, 2005), 4, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230524330.

73 On the formation of relations of kinship among Muslim galley slaves in early modern Spain, see Thomas Glesener and Daniel Hershenzon, "The Maghrib in Europe: Royal Slaves and Islamic Institutions in Eighteenth-Century Spain," *Past & Present*, January 1, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtac011, 101.

74 Valerie Traub, "Friendship's Loss: Alan Bray's Making of History," in *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300–1800*, eds. Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (London, 2005), 17, 25.

comforting safety in an insecure world."[75] Whether or not Nicolino and Ametto committed 'sodomy,' as a friendship their relationship exceeded the accepted practices of male sociability.[76] Most importantly, the two men's relationship cut across boundaries of faith. It was this subversive aspect of their relationship that aroused suspicion, insofar as it exhibited acts of mutual aid and physical intimacy normally reserved for within the confines of confessional groups.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that anxieties about cross-confessional relations in early modern Italy intersected with concerns over male sexual transgression. By closely analyzing eighteenth-century court records, I have argued that conventional gender norms defined Christian masculinity in contradisctinction to Muslim men, who were portrayed as sexually deviant. Reading the evidence against the sexualizing lens of the archive, I have reconstructed relations of affection and mutual obligation between Muslim and Christian men.

By applying this analysis to the archival fragment that opened this article, we can reconstruct what happened to Ali of Tunis and Emanuele Zunino on that spring evening of 1786. From the judicial summary, we know that Ali and Emanuele had met at around two in the afternoon in the galley harbor.[77] As an apprentice, Emanuele may have worked for one of the artisans of the galleys, while Ali could have worked with his old galley mates in one of the kiosks. In any case, they were entangled in the dockside world of cross-confessional social relations. As they left the harbor and went to the tavern, some individuals may have viewed them with suspicion. Comfortably sharing wine and a meal, and perhaps an affectionate drunken touch, might well have summoned stereotypes of transgressive sexuality and raised eyebrows among their fellow drinkers as the evening went on. Ali did not bear the signs of slavery – the haircut, outfit, and shackles – but his name, his accent, and perhaps his physical appearance were stigmatized markers associated with 'sodomy.'

What was the young Emanuele doing with that "Turk"? One suspicious observer was sufficiently concerned to follow the two men as they walked through the alleyways at dusk. Ali lodged at an inn on Via ai Quattro Canti,

75 Bray, *The Friend*, 158.

76 Michel Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. James D. Faubion (New York, 1997), 136–137, 170–171.

77 ASG, DCS, 1071, 25 April 1786, *Denuncia contro il Turco Alì di Tunis ed Emanuele Zunino indagati per vizio nefando*.

which crossed Via della Maddalena, the street where Emanuele lived.[78] The proximity of their living quarters suggests that they may also have known each other from the neighborhood in addition to the galley harbor. The presence of a free Muslim in this neighborhood was a source of anxiety, as evidenced by Emanuele's fear that his father "had seen him with the Turk" and was coming to beat him.[79] For the anonymous observer, Emanuele's entry into Ali's room warranted police intervention. At some time after eight o'clock in the evening, the policemen burst into the room of the inn.

It may be tempting, even seductive, to read this relationship primarily through the lens of sex. This was certainly the perspective of the pursuer, the policeman, and the judge. But the nature of these men's bond is just as elusive to us as it was to them. After two weeks of incarceration, questioning (under torture, or at least the threat of it), and humiliating medical inspections, the judge ruled that the crime of 'sodomy' had not been committed. We cannot know whether Ali and Emanuele had an erotic relationship, and perhaps we ought to respect their right not to tell us. What seems abundantly clear, however, is that the cross-confessional nature of their companionship aroused scorn and suspicion.

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78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.