Focusing on the period 1566–1656, this original and lively study sheds new light on the daily lives and material culture of ordinary prostitutes and their clients in Rome after the Counter-Reformation. Tessa Storey uses a range of archival sources, including criminal records, letters, courtroom testimonies, images and popular and elite literature, to reveal issues of especial concern to contemporaries. In particular, she explores how and why women became prostitutes, the relationships between prostitutes and clients, and the wealth which potentially could be accumulated. Notarial documents provide a unique perspective on the economics and material culture of prostitution, showing what could be earned and how prostitutes dressed and furnished their homes. The book challenges traditional assumptions about the effect of post-Tridentine reforms on Roman prostitution, revealing that, despite energetic attempts at social disciplining by the Counter-Reformation popes, prostitution continued to flourish, and to provide a lucrative living for many women.

Tessa Storey is a Research Associate at the Department of History, University of Leicester.
The aim of this series in early modern and modern European history is to publish outstanding works of research, addressed to important themes across a wide geographical range, from southern and central Europe, to Scandinavia and Russia, from the time of the Renaissance to the Second World War. As it develops the series will comprise focused works of wide contextual range and intellectual ambition.

For a full list of titles published in the series, please see the end of the book.
CARNAL COMMERCE IN COUNTER-REFORMATION ROME

TESSA STOREY

University of Leicester
For Mum and Dad
# Contents

*List of figures*  
List of maps  
List of tables  
*Acknowledgements*  
Notes on the text  
*Abbreviations*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of maps</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of tables</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Acknowledgements</em></td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on the text</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Abbreviations</em></td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introduction**  

1. Themes and issues in literature and image  
2. The social and cultural context  
3. Debating prostitution  
4. Policing prostitution  
5. A profile of Roman prostitutes  
6. Becoming a prostitute  
7. The business of prostitution  
8. At home  
9. ‘Because we are all made of flesh and blood’: prostitutes and their clients  

**Conclusion: Continuity and change: prostitution after the Reformations**  

## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix 1</th>
<th>Origins of prostitutes living in Rome</th>
<th>252</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>Notes on the registers consulted from the Archivio del Vicariato di Roma</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td></td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures

1 *Ecco il miserabile fine della Signora Anzola* (c. late sixteenth century). Civica Raccolta delle Stampe ‘Achille Bertarelli’, Milan. All rights reserved. (Stampe Popolari Profane, m 11F-1)  

2 *Questo Sié il manco mal di n’altre meretrize morir in l’ospedal* (early seventeenth century). Civica Raccolta delle Stampe ‘Achille Bertarelli’, Milan. All rights reserved. (Stampe Popolari Profane, m 11F-2)  

3.1–12 *La vita et miseranda fine della puttana* (Venice, c. 1650). Civica Raccolta delle Stampe ‘Achille Bertarelli’, Milan. All rights reserved. (Stampe Popolari Profane, m 11F-3, 11F-4, 11F-5, and Volumetto ALBO C 66 (Figs. 3.1, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10)  

3.1–12 *Vita del lascivo* (Venice, c. 1660s). Civica Raccolta delle Stampe ‘Achille Bertarelli’, Milan. All rights reserved. (Stampe Popolari Profane, m F-9)  

4.1–12 *La vita infelice della meretrice comparata ne dodeci mesi dell’anno lunario che non falla dato in luce da Veriero astrologo* (1692). Civica Raccolta delle Stampe ‘Achille Bertarelli’, Milan. All rights reserved. (Stampe Popolari Profane, m 6–3)  

5 First page of the *Relazioni dei Birri* vol. 104. An example of a page from the police reports. ASR, Tribunale Criminale del Governatore, Relazioni dei Birri, vol. 104, ci. This document is held at the Archivio di Stato di Roma, Italy and has been reproduced with their kind permission and with that of the Ministero Dei Beni e le Attività Culturali. All rights reserved.
Maps

1 *I luoghi*, the area allocated to prostitutes in 1592  
   page 80
2 Migratory flow of women working as *cortigiane* in Rome,  
   1590–1630  
   252
Tables

1. Showing the streets favoured by prostitutes and courtesans in the parish of S. Lorenzo in Lucina, 1607  
   page 90
2. Numbers of courtesans arrested as recorded in the Relazioni dei Birri, 1594–1606  
   101
3. Principal causes of arrest recorded in the Relazioni dei Birri, 1594–1606  
   102
4. Proportions of courtesans leaving cash bequests (based on fifty wills), 1594–1609  
   177
5. Bails granted to twelve courtesans in 1601  
   178
6. The wealth of the general population of Campo Marzio, as calculated from 3,511 households of 3,599 from the 1656 census  
   183
7. The wealth of households headed by prostitutes/courtesans in the 1656 census  
   184
8. Origins of 1,198 prostitutes living in Rome between 1590 and 1630, by nearest large town, region or country  
   253
Like so many others, this book started out as a PhD thesis. Later, some things were added and some things were taken away and the result has been a long time in the making. Accordingly, the list of those who have been involved is long, and some will barely remember me; others are still very present in my life, but the debt of gratitude remains.

I would like to give a heartfelt thank you first to those historians who have advised, supported and encouraged me along the way. Sandra Cavallo’s teaching of gender history inspired me to do an MA and then a PhD, and she has been teacher, colleague and friend, reading endless drafts, helping me think about masculinity and material culture, and supporting me from the wings. Olwen Hufton taught me to think about which questions to ask, about the practicalities of women’s lives, and her incisive comments as supervisor helped me lay the foundations of the book. Laurence Fontaine also supervised me, giving an enormous amount of her time and energy, and setting me thinking in unexpected directions about economics and material goods. More recently Lyndal Roper, first as examiner, then as colleague, finally as reader and editor, has read and re-read the drafts of this book, combining tough criticism, insights and encouragement in equal parts, whilst teaching me a great deal about early modern Europe, gender and how to write! My thanks also to Mary Laven and the other anonymous readers at Cambridge University Press for their comments and suggestions as to how to improve the text, and to Michael Watson the editor, Helen Waterhouse, Carol Fellingham Webb, my copy editor, and the rest of the production team at the Press.

I am very grateful to the many others who have read different versions of this book and assisted in many ways: Renata Ago, who helped me with documents and thinking about Rome; Michèle Cohen, who has read, commented and been a friend; Sara Matthews-Grieco and Simon Ditchfield, who have read much of this, at one stage or another, made many suggestions and urged me on. Lotte Van de Pol has shared her wonderful work
on Amsterdam with me and Angelica Pediconi has helped me with hygiene in Rome. Attending seminars held by the Centre for the Domestic Interior project at the Victoria and Albert Museum was stimulating and several of those involved – Marta Ajmar, Flora Dennis and Ann Machette – have helped me think about material culture and music. Patrizia Cavazzini and Helen Langdon have at very short notice been extremely helpful with their expertise on Baroque paintings.

A project like this, undertaken in the seemingly impenetrable archives of Italy, requires a great deal of help from the natives. My heartfelt thanks go to those Italians, friends and acquaintances, who have been involved along the way: Riccardo Bassani for showing me how to use the archives in Rome and how to find my cortigiane in the first place, as well as providing me with a floor to sleep on; Federica Favino, who helped with Latin, palaeography and much much more; and Maria Pia di Donato, who has likewise helped with Latin and translations. I should also like to thank all those archivists who have helped me in the Archivio Capitolino, Archivio del Vicariato di Roma, the Vatican Archives and Vatican Library, but above all in the Archivio di Stato di Roma, particularly Anna Lia Bonella, Augusto Pompeo and Michele di Sivo.

Along the way a great deal of money has been spent and much pasta and wine consumed. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Department of Education and Science and the European University Institute for the four years in Florence, and the École Française de Rome for its several grants to stay in Rome and the use of its marvellous library and accommodation, particularly Dr Catherine Brice for assisting me and encouraging this project. After my PhD the Leverhulme Trust stepped in with a generous special research fellowship which enabled me to start writing up and teaching.

Particular thanks are owed for the support from friends at the European University Institute: Cristina Espinoza, Mette Zolner, Veronique Pujas, Mario Drago, Silvain Rivet, Mirabelle Madigner, Cathy Richmond, Cathy Woolf and Sergio Amadeo. A huge thank you must go to Mai, Mimmo and Lidia Cinga Cozzupoli, who were tireless in their much needed offers of hospitality and company when I went to research in Rome. Thanks also must go to Paul Ginsborg, who unwittingly inspired me to go back to university to study Italian and history, to Patrick Guilfoyle for helping with my first computer, and to all those old and new friends who have egged me on, refraining from raising an eyebrow when all enquiries were met with the same old reply, ‘still finishing the book’. A special thank you to Magda
Acknowledgements

and Petra, who in turn have made it possible to work without worrying about my children.

Finally my deepest thanks must go to my family, both Storeys and Dows, for their unfailing moral support. To Emily and Edward, who were not consulted, and around whose young lives I have tried to balance the claims of motherhood and academia, and who have given up much time with me for the sake of this book. To Abigail, Kazi and to James, who in the course of all this became my husband. He has fallen asleep over endless drafts, pointed out the racy double entendres, helped with the statistics, dried tears, picked up the pieces and lent his unswerving dedication, emotional and intellectual support throughout. Last but not least, to my parents who, in one way or another, over all the years, in so many different ways, have made all this possible, and to whom I dedicate this book.
Notes on the text

MONEY

There were ten baiocchi to a giulio, and ten giulii to one silver scudo.

Wages in the Roman construction industry at this time were forty or fifty baiocchi a day for builders and twenty-five to thirty baiocchi for their assistants, but they may not have found work every day. An artisan might earn about three scudi a month, and a very good one five or six.¹ One of the Bargello of Rome’s policemen earned four scudi a month, plus bed and board.² Women were paid far less. A washerwoman or female servant might earn about one scudo a month, and a wet nurse two scudi, although they would have received board and lodging as well. As for what that could buy, in 1628 the legal price of an eight-ounce loaf of bread was one baiocco and dinner in an osteria could cost between eight and twelve baiocchi.³

TIME

The time was calculated from sundown. For convenience I have estimated the times myself.

All translations are mine, with help from Maria Pia di Donato and Federica Favino unless otherwise mentioned.

Spellings and punctuation of quotations from the archives have been modernised.

¹ The second figure is for a leather-worker, aged forty-one, cited in Renata Ago, Economia barocca. Mercato e istituzioni nella Roma del seicento (Rome: Donzelli, 1998), 14.
² ASR, TCG, Testimonì per la Difesa, vol. 190, c18r, 19 March 1603.
Abbreviations

ARSI Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu
ARSRS SP Archivio Romana della Società Reale per Storia Patria (a journal)
AS Archivio di Stato, Sezione Orvieto
ASF Archivio di Stato di Firenze
ASR Archivio di Stato di Roma
ASV Archivio Segreto Vaticano
AVIC Archivio del Vicariato di Roma
BAV Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BNF Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze
RB Relazioni dei Birri
SA Stati delle Anime
SAF Sant’Andrea delle Fratte
SLL San Lorenzo in Lucina
SMP Santa Maria del Popolo
TCG Tribunale Criminale del Governatore
TD Testimoni per la Difesa
TNC Trenta Notai Capitolini
U19 Ufficio 19
Urb. Lat. Urbinati Latini