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ATTI E MEMORIE DELL'ATENEEO VENETO

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MUTINELLI'S REIGN: LIFE IN THE *FRARI*
IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Whereas the archives held in the *Frari* were a source of enormous pride in nineteenth-century Venice, and whereas their fame had undoubtedly spread across Europe, at the same time, the number of scholars working in this establishment remained very modest until Venetia was unified to Italy¹. Similarly, if the nineteenth century is popularly referred to as the century of history, and if Venice benefited from an important historiographic tradition, the local productions trying to make sense of centuries of Venetian history after the traumatic fall of the Republic remained rather few, despite desire for such works being reiterated by scholars all through this period, from Agostino Sagredo to Girolamo Dandolo up to Vincenzo Marchesi, in Italian Venice. As everywhere else in Europe, references to primary sources were then considered the basis of historiography, and the cult of the past crystallised on the new *Archivio Generale*. Founded by a decree signed by Francis Ist on December 13, 1815, the first batch of documents had been transferred in the ex-convent of the *Frari* in 1818-1819 – but I shall not develop here the history of the constitution of this collection: readers can find it in Francesca Cavazzana Romanelli and Stefania Rossi Minutelli's chapter in the Treccani's *Storia di Venezia* (2002)².

Historiography had been a fundamental part of Venetian culture for centuries. Before the loss of independence, most Venetian pro-

¹ Scholars' attendance was dutifully registered from 1852 onwards. See VENEZIA, *Archivio di Stato* (from now on ASVe), Archivietto, Consegne alla camera di studio, in three volumes. Previous data can be gathered from ASVe, *Presidio di Governo*. They have been usefully compiled in TEODORO TODERINI and BARTOLOMEO CECCHETTI, *L'Archivio di Stato in Venezia nel decennio 1866-1875*, Venice, Naratovich, 1876. However, the lists given are not exhaustive and therefore remain indicative.

² FRANCESCA CAVAZZANA ROMANELLI and STEFANIA ROSSI MINUTELLI, *Archivi e biblioteche*, in *Storia di Venezia. L'Ottocento e il Novecento*, Mario Isnenghi and Stuart Woolf (eds.), vol. II, *L'ottocento. 1797-1918*, ed. Stuart Woolf, Rome, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2002, pp. 1081-1122.

ductions aimed at praising the constitutional model of the Republic, and these texts were often written to answer foreign authors criticising Venetian modes of government³. The genre had slowly re-emerged after the fall of the Republic, in a context of European historiographic effervescence and as a reaction to important historians who were writing about Venice such as Ranke, Sismondi and above all Daru, whose *Histoire de la République de Venise* (1819)⁴ provoked great scandal. Venice did not cease to attract international scholarly attention for its singularity and its longevity: once the state was dead, its history could be read as an admonition (in particular for British historians, who saw a parallel between the Venetian and the British empires), and also with a spirit of justification (for the French writers, coming after Bonaparte's liquidation of the Republic). Yet, locally, a vivid desire existed to take control of that narrative: it was felt as a patriotic duty against what were considered to be "attacks" against the memory of the state. However, the shame for the events of 1797 and the long-lasting shock at the disappearance of the Republic made it well-nigh impossible either to scrutinise the past with a critical eye, or to continue lauding the perfection of the defunct system; many texts while full of nostalgia, did not really address any historical problem. It remained very difficult to face history serenely, to make sense of the past, and to find constructive links between past and present; the long identification of the ruling aristocracy with the state proved particularly problematic. My purpose not being here to discuss the context of foreign domination in Venice, I take the liberty to refer, for the Austrian period and in particular for intellectual life at the time, to: Zorzi's *Venezia austriaca* (1985), the essays edited by Benzoni and Cozzi in *Venezia e l'Austria* (1999), as well as the sixth volume of the *Storia della cultura veneta* (1986)⁵. Also, for the tur-

³ For a key study on Venetian historiography during the Renaissance see FRANCO GAETA, *Storiografia, coscienza nazionale e politica culturale nella Venezia del Rinascimento*, in *Storia della cultura veneta*, Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi (eds.), vol. 3, part 1, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1980, pp. 1-91.

⁴ PIERRE DARU, *Histoire de la République de Venise*, Paris, F. Didot, 1819. This work was a major reference not only for historians but also for many artists, writers and travellers. Three French editions, including corrections, were published within seven years: this was quite exceptional, especially for a work of such an amplitude (7 volumes). The book was published in German in 1824 and in Italian in 1837 (after an abridged version appeared in 1832).

ning point of the fall of the Republic and the polemics surrounding it, I would recommend Laven's chapter "The collapse of the Venetian republic and the experience of foreign domination" (2002)⁶. Finally, overviews of historical productions written by Venetians during this period are to be found in articles by Canella (1976) and Povoło (2000)⁷.

Focussing on everyday life at the *Archivio Generale*, the present article aims at understanding the perception and the use that were made of the Venetian public papers. These archives largely crystallized the debates surrounding history: the way it was considered and discussed, judged suitable for diffusion or not, what was expected from it, and its role in the difficult shaping of a new discourse on Venice. From a Venetian point of view, what was at stake was how the local elite self-represented itself through the organization of its memory and the promotion or not of its past, and how it tried to assert itself in the turmoil of nineteenth-century European history. But this collection of papers, in its material aspect, was also considered as a treasure invested with a particularly intimate rapport with Venetian identity. More particularly, this article will throw into light the rather exuberant figure of Fabio Mutinelli, who was director of the *Archivio generale* from 1848 to 1861, and author not only of an abundant administrative correspondence with his superiors, but also of a series of books on Venetian history. When he obtained the direction of the *Frari*, primary sources had long acquired a central role for European historians, many of whom held in great esteem Venetian state papers. Leopold Ranke, one of the most prestigious scholars of the time, had spoken very highly of the Venetian diplomatic papers, whose copies he used before visiting

⁵ ALVISE ZORZI, *Venezia austriaca, 1798-1866*, Gorizia, libreria editrice Gorizia, 2000 (first edition 1985); *Venezia e l'Austria*, Gino Benzoni and Gaetano Cozzi (eds.), Venice, Marsilio, 1999; *Storia della cultura veneta. Dall'età napoleonica alla prima guerra mondiale*, Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi (eds.), Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 1986.

⁶ DAVID LAVEN, *The collapse of the Venetian republic and the experience of foreign domination*, in *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs 1815-1835*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 29-52.

⁷ MASSIMO CANELLA, *Appunti e spunti sulla storiografia veneziana dell'Ottocento*, «Archivio Veneto», CVI (1976), pp. 73-116; CLAUDIO POVOLO, *The creation of Venetian historiography*, in *Venice reconsidered, The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, John Martin and Dennis Romano (eds.), Baltimore and London, the John Hopkins University Press, 2000.

the *Frari* for the first time in 1828-1829. Pierre Daru's vivid interest for Venetian documents, in particular from the State Inquisitors' archives (some boxes had been brought to Paris during the French occupation, although he mainly used French libraries) had also contributed to their fame, together with the vivid polemics surrounding his error of authentication of the Inquisitors' Statute⁸. In many European cities, archives had been instituted and organised, and various publications of primary sources were under way, displaying acute philological methods. However, despite their high reputation, and if partial copies existed in European libraries, very few scholars had actually access to the *Frari* themselves: the number of researchers only and slowly increased from the mid-1850s onwards, before becoming more significant after 1861⁹, but only exploding after Venice joined Italy. If archive-based methodologies were the norm, and if many commentators exclaimed in wonder at the world of paper contained in the *Frari*, in reality very few saw it, not to say used it.

Safety, decorum and prestige: promoting the Archivio Generale in Austrian Venice

Fabio Mutinelli made a career in the Austrian administration before becoming director of the *Archivio Generale* one month before the revolution, in February 1848. He had published some volumes of *storia patria*¹⁰, in which his conservative and religious views, certainly in tune with the government, were displayed – without mentioning his tribute to Emperor Ferdinand Ist¹¹. He had even obtained a permission to consult some public archives, then a very rare privilege. After the Revolution, Mutinelli soon re-established contact with the authorities,

⁸ The fourth French edition published in 1853 integrated the objections of the Venetian patrician and historian Tiepolo and the answers Daru formulated until his death. For more on these polemics see XAVIER TABET, *La 'Venise nouvelle' de Pierre Daru*, introduction to PIERRE DARU, *Histoire de la République de Venise*, Paris, Robert Laffont, Collection Bouquins, 2004, pp. IX-XLIV.

⁹ ASVe, Archivietto, Consegne alla camera di studio 1852-1869.

¹⁰ FABIO MUTINELLI, *Annali delle province venete dall'anno 1801 all'anno 1840*, Venice 1843. ID., *Annali urbani di Venezia, Dall'anno 810 al 12 maggio 1797*, Venice, G.B. Merlo, 1841.

¹¹ ID., *Dell'avvenimento di S.M.I.R.A. Ferdinando I d'Austria in Venezia, e delle civiche solennità d'allora: narrazione*, Venice, Gondoliere, 1838.

claiming that his establishment urgently needed to be taken out off the “abbiettezza in che si trova”¹². He did not essentially blame the recent events for that disorder and neglect. However, he explained that the revolutionary spirit had also contaminated the staff and a “purge” was required. In reality, the political argument was rather a pretext to persuade the authorities to follow his plans. Additional funds were also needed following the bombardment of summer 1849, which caused damage to the building (Mutinelli was careful not to talk too directly about it, using periphrasis, not to blame the Austrians)¹³.

Characteristically, in a long letter to the *Luogotenente*¹⁴, he sang a sort of hymn simultaneously to the *Serenissima's* history and to the public archives: a complete identification was established between the two. He sketched a mythical narrative of the Venetian Republic, in which he strategically and positively stressed the “neutrality” of this state from its origins¹⁵ - due to the political circumstances, the word “neutrality” sounded more innocuous than the one usually preferred by historians of “independence”. Moreover, Mutinelli highlighted Venice's separation from the rest of Italy: “l'altra Italia offeriva ogni maniera di governi e di leggi, e era intenebrata di civili ire [...] di sublimi vizii [con il loro] nobili turbolenti [e la loro] plebe ostinata, crudele, ora soggetta, ora ribelle”, whereas the lagoon state was stable, well organised and civilised. This traditional and idealistic summary was far from the vision Mutinelli developed in his books: but his innocent and peaceful portrait was meant to reassure his superiors and obtain their support. Mutinelli's hymn suggested that the Venetian past could be protected and promoted safely by the Austrian empire, as it conveyed no idea contradictory to the present rulers' principles and necessities.

Mutinelli implied that his was somehow the real Venice, far from the city that has just revolted in such a spectacular manner. The recent events should not have given the wrong impression to the Austrian

¹² ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated September 1, 1849 to *Conte Giovambattista Mariani ad latus di S.E. il Sign. Governatore civile e militare Cavaliere Gorzekowski*.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, letter dated December 05, 1849.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: «neutrale nei grandi abbattimenti fra la Chiesa e l'Impero, tra le città libere e il Monarca, poté Venezia trar profitto grandissimo di quella sua neutralità e della marittima sua condizione».

rulers: they should have clearly distinguished the history of the republic from the political use the revolutionaries had made of the past. Indeed, a strong revitalization of the *Serenissima's* memories and symbols had characterised Manin's government, and the new Republic had appeared to many as a ideal continuation of the old one, modernised and improved (because founded on democratic sovereignty). Venetians had long been used to history being constantly actualised and interpreted as a comment on contemporary events (that is why it was so scrutinised by the authorities). But with the revolution, many felt that past was actually regained, and that the shameful fall was finally redeemed. By contrast, trying to restore a link with the Austrian rulers, what Mutinelli put forward was the old golden myth of Venetian rulers' paternalism, which went together with the affection and piety of the subjects. This picture had fitted Austrian views during their previous occupations of Venetia: however, after the shock of the Revolution, they were bound to be much wariier of any *Serenissima's* revival.

The director therefore also stressed that the *Frari* was one of the jewels of the Austrian empire – as the city of Venice itself was –, representing it in the eyes of the world. Therefore, all the improvements he advocated would ultimately be in display for “il decoro ed il vantaggio dell'i.r. Governo Austriaco”. But this role of representation offered a double edge: Austrian authorities being very slow to answer his requests, Mutinelli ended up losing patience and concluding that if no progress was made, the image of Austria would be tarnished by the shameful and notorious chaos reigning in the building¹⁶. Mutinelli attempted to exploit the political agenda to find arguments that could support his interests, but felt constantly dissatisfied¹⁷. In

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, letter dated December 16, 1849 to the *Luogotenenza*.

¹⁷ Although he was without doubt free from revolutionary feelings, Mutinelli dedicated one of his books to the *Guardia civile*, a strategic *Storia del regno d'Italia*, Venice, Cecchini, 1848. He also used the arguments of the decorum and the international appeal under the revolutionary government: when all grants to administrations got cut, he protested that it would be particularly damning for his establishment: «ben presto regnerà nell'Archivio Generale l'immondezza e il disordine [...] ritrovati giorni più sereni e tranquilli, i forestieri, [...] per certo non si recheranno a visitare il Tribunale di Appello, la Contabilità Generale [...] bensì e fuor di dubbio, l'Archivio Generale, Istituto [...] di fama Europea», in *ibid.*, Archivietto 1849. Mutinelli was asked by the government to write reports every two weeks upon his staff's behaviour (*ibid.*, letter dated July 16, 1849).

his views, he was always acting with patriotism, in the sense that he felt he was only defending his *patria*¹⁸, the city of Venice.

International appeal and its danger

An important specificity of the Venetian archives, constantly stressed by Mutinelli in his professional correspondence, was that they were not only rich of “istoria patria” but also “forestiera”¹⁹. Indeed, European historians particularly enjoyed studying how their own countries were seen through the eyes of the Venetian ambassadors: their *Dispacci* and *Relazioni* were the most mentioned series of papers and often the most accessible ones (some copies existed in libraries, and they were amongst the first documents to be published when the *Frari* was progressively opened to dissemination)²⁰. For Venetians, this orientation recalled the ancient international role of the *Serenissima*, and Republican official historiography had been largely focussed on international relations. Mutinelli drew a parallel between the ancient alleged superiority of the Venetian state above all the others and, as a mirror to it, the actual European fame of his institution and the prestigious international scholars it attracted (also in a far-away echo of the old Venetian triumphant hospitality).

Nevertheless, this international appeal could be ambivalent. On one hand, it was supposed to give prestige to the establishment and to flatter Austrians with the idea that the Venetian archives were shining on behalf of their empire at a European level. On the other hand, the curiosity of foreigners could not be encouraged too much, in Aus-

¹⁸ The same devotion was expressed, for instance, by his contemporary Cicogna: «Ringrazio Dio che io mi sono sempre contenuto in modo di servire fedelmente alla mia patria, qualunque fosse il governo e di rispettare chiunque comanda. E fra questi io per sentimento di gratitudine doveva e devo sempre preferire il governo austriaco sotto il quale son allevato negli impieghi e negli onori» in PIERO PASINI, *Diario Veneto politico di Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna*, Venice, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, lettere e arti, 2008, p. 169. Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna (1788-September 1868), who made a career in the judiciary system, was particularly famous for his colossal volumes of *Inscrizioni veneziane*, but also for his *Saggio di Bibliografia* and for his library.

¹⁹ ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated December 16, 1849 to the *Luogotenenza*.

²⁰ One such enterprise in Venice was: NICCOLÒ BAROZZI and GUGLIELMO BERCHET, *Relazioni degli stati europei lette al Senato dagli ambasciatori veneti nel secolo XVII*, Venice, Naratovich 1856-1878 (11 volumes). *Rawdon Brown's Calendar of State Papers*, London, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1864, vol. 1, was also acclaimed.

²¹ ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated February 12, 1850.

trian as in Mutinelli's and Venetian views. Indeed, there was a constant distrust regarding them: infiltration of new and pernicious ideas was always supposed to come from foreigners. In fact, in order to reassure fully his superiors, Mutinelli offered to check more closely on scholars' activities. He explained that his institution was a good centre to watch and know them, and offered his service to the government. A good instrument was the:

registri dei visitatori e degli studiosi, nei quali fra i nomi di molti Inglesi, Americani, Francesi, Russi, Belgi, Polacchi, Ungheresi, Slavi, Tedeschi, Spagnuoli ed Italiani si trovano a modo di esempio quelli di *Thiers*, di *Cantù*, di *Tommaseo*, di *Petrovitz*... per finire a quello di Berlan, troppo noto autore del famoso giornale rivoluzionario *Sior Antonio Rioba*. Or, dai colloqui con quelle persone e dalla natura dei ricercati documenti agevolmente rivelare si possono i principii e le politiche tendenze delle persone medesime²¹.

As scholars often studied for a long time: “così l'autorità politica facilmente e a tutto agio potrebbe giungere per questo mezzo a utilissime scoperte”²². Mutinelli's quite unexpected conclusion was that such knowledge would have allowed the state to: “seguire così senza alcun timore la via del liberalismo”²³. The shock of the European revolutions passed, an appearance of political “liberalism” was perceived as indispensable to the Habsburgs in order to follow the Western European trend and populations' aspirations while staying in power. However, it was hard to understand how the list of names given by Mutinelli – especially considering the little overall attendance of the archives in those years – could have possibly reassured the authorities.

²² Indeed, the length of the stay of some researchers suggests the formation of relations with the archives' staff: often, there were a maximum of 2 or 3 scholars at a time in the study room during weeks or months. For instance, Romanin studied steadily in the archives between 1851 and 1859, and whether Rawdon Brown was there as well, whether he was by himself. In 1861, there was another “low” in the study room, and Rawdon Brown was on his own most days. See ASVe, Archivietto, Consegne alla camera di studio 1852-1869. Echoes of everyday uses of the archives are to be found in MICHELA DAL BORGO, *The archives of the former Serenissima Repubblica and foreign scholars: historical research in the nineteenth century*, in *Rawdon Brown and the Anglo-venetian relationship*, Ralph A. Griffith and John E. Law (eds.), Stroud, Nonsuch, 2005, pp. 55-72.

²³ ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated February 12, 1850.

What was also noticeable in this proposal was the explicit link between the nature of the researches and the politics of the researchers: a necessary and transparent connection was drawn between the two. To know the nature of the research could reveal everything about the political ideas of the scholars (this was somehow a tribute to the essential importance attributed to history).

Preserving, controlling and diffusing the memory

One of Mutinelli's main proposals was to publish periodically a selection of original documents, following the model of the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, which first appeared in 1842 (published by Vieusseux in Florence). Apart from being required by the superiority of Venetian history, such a publication would have brought "più decoro e più fama a questo singolare istituto dello stato [...] unico nell'Austriaca Monarchia": it would have been an "impresa onorifica certamente per il Governo e per il paese"²⁴. Moreover, it would have enabled to control what emanated from the Archives: scholars would have been prevented to "precipitare in errori [e] alterare e travisare la verità"²⁵. This was an old concern when Venetians considered their history (the formation of the anti-myth might have been as old as the myth)²⁶: yet it had become particularly acute and defensive after the disappearance of the Venetian state, with the impossibility of elaborating a convincing counter-discourse. The director flattered Austrian paranoia but also shared it from a Venetian perspective. His project, he argued, would have avoided thefts, mistakes and diffusion of lies, a "lie" meaning anything contrary to the Austrian censorship and anything critical of Venice, and it would therefore have had the happy consequences of "diminuire le ricerche dei forestieri, e maggiormente tutelare i politici riguardi"²⁷.

But Mutinelli became demoralised by the inactivity of his superiors. He was furious when Tasel and Thomas published in Munich

²⁴ *Ibid.*, letter dated January 20, 1851.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ During the Republic, the anti-myth was not only French (Amelot de la Houssaie, in the seventeenth century) or Spanish but also, in the fifteenth century, Milanese or Florentine. Writing in response to these dark tales was an incentive to the strong historiographic tradition that characterized Venetian culture during centuries.

²⁷ ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated December 22, 1851.

Fontes rerum venetarum in 1851: this was “mortificante”²⁸. In 1854, as the *classe filosofico-storica dell’Accademia imperiale delle scienze* published the first volume of the *Monumenti Absburgici*, Mutinelli was asked to send regular “sommarii prospetti degli atti custoditi” to that institution²⁹. But he was visibly reluctant: he cautiously answered that indexes were missing and that he could only give a few examples of what could be useful. He probably feared that he would be asked to send documents to Vienna; in any case, this centralized project would not answer his expectations at all³⁰. The feeling of being neglected by their Austrian rulers compared to other imperial cities had long been at the heart of Venetians’ various forms of discontent. Finally, Mutinelli proposed creating a school in order to dispense courses on: the history of the Republic of Venice, diplomacy, and palaeography, as well as the formation of a little library. This could have been financed by selling some “atti inutili” – the “scarti”³¹ (discards) of papers which were regularly sold by the archives to get extra funding and make space on the shelves.

Venetian elites were aware of the evolution of archival work across Europe, and would have liked their *patria* to become an archival capital city: it would have given it an international role intellectually, despite its very peripheral political situation. Yet, there was an unsustainable tension between: the dissemination of knowledge, the idea that truth was an ultimate value, and the necessity to control memory and protect the reputation of Venice. A similar dilemma was shaping contemporary local historiography, despite many claims and some efforts to adopt a more lucid and detached vision of the *Serenissima* (as in Agostino Sagredo’s work). Archivists’ main objective was certainly not to allow a better understanding and a critical approach of the Republican past. It was, at best, to organise its cult or, at least, to guarantee its possibility. The priority was to conserve the past intact, as if it were somehow reincarnated into the world of paper of the *Frari*, and to make

²⁸ *Ibid.*, letter dated May 23, 1851.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Archivietto, 1854, Fascicolo XVII, letter dated November 15, 1854.

³⁰ His project only became reality long after, under a different form, with the periodical «Archivio Veneto», which started in 1871, after many regions of now unified Italy had already started their own collections.

³¹ ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated December 05, 1849.

sure the memory of the defunct Republic was only known under the form of praise (texts elaborated by local elites, even when called “history”, were more rightly *memorie patrie*). As regards the constitution of the *Archivio Generale*, a sort of “naturalization” and “venetianisation” had mentally operated, in the sense that the origins and the history of the archives were scarcely recalled and increasingly blurred³². Fundamentally, its existence was perceived as a direct inheritance from the Republican times, as a continuation of Venetians’ legendary care for their constitution, laws and customs.

Controlling archives’ staff

A considerable proportion of the archives’ staff had participated actively in the revolutionary movement, in particular as *guardie civili*³³. Nevertheless, Austrians were aware that Mutinelli’s political argument was largely a pretext³⁴. Personal disagreements and pro-

³² The question of the state papers, which were previously divided between many buildings, was vividly discussed during the *Municipalità*, and efforts to concentrate them started during the French occupation. But a new and decisive phase opened with the 1815 decree, when Francis Ist visited Venice, and when the archives were transferred to the ex-monastery. For the history of the creation of the *Archivio Generale*, and especially for the principles behind the organisation of the Republican papers, see FRANCESCA CAVAZZANA ROMANELLI, *Dalle venete leggi ai sacri archivi. Modelli di organizzazione delle memorie documentarie alle origini dell’Archivi o dei Frari*, in *Storia, archivi, amministrazione, Atti delle giornate di studio in onore di Isabella Zanni Rosiella*, Rome, Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali-Direzione generale per gli archivi, 2004, pp. 241-268; EAD., *Gli archivi della Serenissima. Concentrazione e ordinamenti*, in *Venezia e l’Austria*, Gino Benzoni and Gaetano Cozzi (eds.), Venice, Marsilio, 1999, pp. 291-308; EAD., *Gli archivi veneziani tra conservazione e consultazione. Progetti e strategie nella tradizione ottocentesca*, in *Archivi e cittadino. Genesi e sviluppo degli attuali sistemi di gestione degli archivi*, Gianni Penzo Doria (ed.), Sottomarina, Il leggio, 1999, pp. 96-109; EAD., *Storia degli archivi e modelli culturali. Protagonisti e dibattiti dell’Ottocento veneziano*, in *Archivi e storia dell’Europa del XIX secolo. Alle radici dell’identità culturale europea*, Irene Cotta and Rosalia Manno Tolu (eds), vol. 1, Rome Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali-Direzione generale per gli archivi, 2006, pp. 95-108. For an account of the archives in Republican times see CLAUDIA SALMINI, *Buildings, furnishing, access and use: examples from the Archive of the Venetian Chancery, from medieval to modern times*, in *Archives and the metropolis*, M.V. Roberts (eds), London, Guidhall Library Publications, 1998. For an overview and a critical approach of the *Frari* until today see DANIELE CESCHIN, *L’archivio dei Frari*, Padua, il Poligrafo, 2005.

³³ Contrary to what had happened at the *Biblioteca Marciana*, for instance.

³⁴ One employee, Bragadin, was described in a police report as: «affezionato al legittimo governo e di ottima condotta, [ma] sembrerebbe che non incontrasse le viste del Direttore [...]». Durante il tempo dei sconvolgimenti politici [...] gli fu apposta la taccia di austriacante e fu

blems exterior to the revolution were responsible, as in Mutinelli's long fight to get rid of the care-taker, Giovanni Alberti, accused of: "introdurre clandestinamente persone nell'Archivio Generale [...] intrusa una famiglia nel di lui alloggio, e di aver tramutato, l'orto annesso allo Stabilimento in luogo di passatempo e di vendita di vino". He also took the opportunity to blame him for "trafugamento di una lettera originale 8 luglio 1709 dello Tzar di Russia Pietro I", although no proof existed³⁵. Mutinelli's idea was to reorganise the establishment with people close to him; he even claimed he could run the archives with 10 employees only, but carefully chosen, and with better salaries, to stop them taking secondary jobs. He bitterly noticed that Venice counted a total of 18 employees against 35 in the much inferior Milanese archives – old rivalry resurfaced, aggravated by the conviction that the Empire was always favouring the Lombard capital.

By contrast, three members of staff were targeted by the police for their revolutionary ideas but appreciated by Mutinelli. Cesare Foucard, as he "sentiva assai italianamente"³⁶, was suspended by the Austrian government, but still came to work for free. Mutinelli explained that if no document was lost during the bombardments of summer 1849, despite the building receiving about 90 impacts³⁷ (and here he forgot his usual reserve on that event), it was largely thanks to "lo zelo veramente distinto degli stessi signori Martens e Foucard, i quali, sebben più o meno spregiudicati per il contegno osservato nella rivoluzione [...] non cessano di essere i più capaci e più intelligenti impiegati di questa Direzione"³⁸. Another police report described Foucard's "fanatismo repubblicano, esternando senza riguardi sentimenti avversi al Governo Austriaco", but admitted that "dicevasi che presentemente

perfino minacciato dallo sfratto», in ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated December 12, 1849 from *Direzione Centrale d'Ordine Pubblico* to *Luogotenenza*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, letter dated September 05, 1849. This letter had been reported missing for at least five years.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, police report.

³⁷ In August 1849, Cicogna mentioned: «[il] letterato Fabio Mutinelli, che il timor delle palle austriache aveva allontanato da Venezia, e fatto andare a *Malamocco*. Egli lasciò alla custodia dell'Archivio (di cui è direttore) l'impiegato *Fouchard* [sic] e *il Martens*», in PASINI, *Diario Veneto politico di Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna*, p. 165.

³⁸ ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated November 09, 1849 to the *Direttore Centrale dell'Ordine Pubblico*.

si comporti con prudenza, controsegnangosi però nella sua foggia di vestire sempre d'un distintivo del partito liberale"³⁹. The decision was finally taken to reintegrate him cancelling the promotion obtained during the revolution: Mutinelli would be keeping an eye on him.

A few years later, Foucard played a pivotal role in the foundation of the school of palaeography: he designed the first curriculum and became its first director (although its progress was slow). However, in 1857-1858, Mutinelli had turned vehemently hostile to him: he complained over a question of authority, and retaliated by confiscating Foucard's keys of the director's offices (he probably took umbrage from him)⁴⁰. Then he reported rumours of corruption concerning his employee: he might have received a present from some foreigner, possibly Slav, in exchange for consulting documents, maybe prohibited ones. Mutinelli – who, in his general dislike of foreigners, particularly hated Slavs – added:

osservo, a lume della Superiorità, che il *Tommaseo* nel numero uno del suo giornale *La fratellanza dei popoli*, edito nei giorni della Rivoluzione, e di cui era pure collaboratore lo stesso Foucard, diceva che: "il fine di essa fratellanza esser doveva quello di operare per lettere, per istampe, per viaggi... *evitandosi fin le apparenze di cospirazione...* ma procurando sì fratellanze simili *massime negli Slavi*"⁴¹.

A few days later, the government put Foucard at the disposition of the Marchese Selvatico to help him to compose an important "prospetto dei monumenti artistici ed storici"⁴² of Venetia⁴³. Mutinelli was furious: his ex-employee was still present in the archives all day long, and was even allowed outside office hours. He continued accusing him of illegally communicating documents to other scholars, including prohibited ones: for example volumes from the Council of

³⁹ *Ibid.*, letter dated April 05, 1850, *Direzione Centrale d'Ordine Pubblico* to *Luogotenenza*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, b. 432, letter dated October 26, 1857 from Foucard to Mutinelli, forwarded to the *Presidenza*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, letter dated July 15, 1858.

⁴² *Ibid.*, letter dated July 19, 1858 to *Luogotenenza*.

⁴³ The first publication was: *Monumenti artistici e storici delle provincie venete, descritti dalla commissione istituita da sua altezza i.r. il serenissimo arciduca Ferdinando Massimiliano Governatore Generale*, Milan, i.r. stamperia di stato, 1859.

Ten to Romanin⁴⁴. In a successive wave of severe political purge in Venetia's administrations in 1860, following the loss of Lombardy to the kingdom of Italy, Foucard was sacked by Austrians from the direction of the school of palaeography.

Accessing the archives

Together with the bombardment, the most famous episode regarding the *Archivio Generale* during the revolutionary period had been the decree dated May 28, 1848 opening it to scholars. The memories of the Republic of San Mark had been a strong incentive for the Venetian population to support the movement, and many references to the Manin government as a modernised *Serenissima* had been made. It was no coincidence either that Samuele Romanin started his lessons on Venetian history at the *Ateneo Veneto* and first entered the public archives during this period⁴⁵. Despite the official return of prohibitive principles following the Habsburgs' restoration, the idea of an archive as a place of study was achieved in the new status implemented in 1852-1853, although some formal (especially regarding the archives of the State Inquisitors and those of the Council of Ten) and informal obstacles persisted. Yet, the study room became more accessible; a register of admission was organised; and in 1855 the opening of the palaeographic school showed that the centre of gravity was slowly moving towards the study of documents, quitting the pure principle of conservation. For years the number of scholars remained very small, though: it increased slightly after 1854, but there were still less than 15 different scholars a year in all the 1850s (by contrast, from 1815 to the revolution, it is unlikely that more than 50 historians had had access to the *Archivio Generale*). The attendance significantly increased from 1861 onwards, the proportion of Venetians becoming considerable. This evolution was very slow and contested. For instance, the re introduction of a tax to pay on

⁴⁴ Samuele Romanin (1808-1861), born in Trieste in a modest Jewish family, moved to Venice in 1821, where he taught French and German and became a sworn interpreter in German. His ten-volume *Storia documentata di Venezia* was the most accomplished answer to Daru's.

⁴⁵ For an illustration of the *Quarantotto* as a watershed for Venetian historiography see XAVIER TABET, *Daniele Manin e la storiografia repubblicana francese: un'ambasciatore dell'esilio*, in *Fuori d'Italia: Manin e l'esilio*, Michele Gottardi (ed.), Venice, Ateneo Veneto, 2009, pp. 85-110.

any document consulted put a huge brake to studies around 1852-1853; this tax already existed before 1848, but scholars were normally exempted. Rawdon Brown and Samuele Romanin vigorously campaigned against this restriction, which was abandoned. In fact, in case of disagreement, scholars contacted directly the *Luogotenente*, who tended to be more sympathetic than Mutinelli⁴⁶. However, the apparent access to the documents remained unclear and partial: any document communicated to scholars was still checked first by the staff; often, only extracts were available, and the entire transcription was impossible; introducing a copyist was a very rare privilege.

The revolutionary period had also been characterized by closer contacts with the *Biblioteca Marciana*. Mutinelli presented his project of constituting a little library inside the archives, and exchanges between the two institutions were a preamble to this development⁴⁷. There was a striking similarity between Mutinelli's plans and those exposed at the *Ateneo Veneto* by the *abate* Giuseppe Cadorin in 1849, in a discourse entitled *Intorno al Veneto archivio, al suo ordinamento, ed al vantaggio che pegli studii storici si può ritrarre*, vibrant of passion for the *Frari*, Venetian history, the city of Venice and Italy. Together with the collaboration with the *Marciana*, the publication of papers and the creation of a library, Cadorin was also advocating: the opening of a better study room for scholars, increasing light and comfort, and the separation of the old from the modern documents, 1797 being the divide. This last idea was meant to expurgate Venetian recent past of foreign papers and souvenirs, cancelling these decades and restoring a direct link between the Republic of Venice and present-day Venetian situation⁴⁸.

Not all documents had the same status. From the creation of the *Archivio Generale*, special regulations were enforced regarding the

⁴⁶ Samuele Romanin's letter to the *Luogotenente* dated 15/07/1852 complained that the archives' direction «interpretando una legge [...] estende anche agli studiosi di storie le tasse volute [...] sicché lo studioso si vede arrestato nel bel mezzo dei suoi lavori [...] in quanto, per procedere, servirebbero un numero illimitato di documenti [...] per lo più raccolti in grossi volumi la tasse a pagarsi sarebbe assolutamente inopportabile» in ASVe, Archivietto 1853, fascicolo XVI.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Archivietto 1849, letter dated December 21, 1848 to *Magistrato politico provvisorio*.

⁴⁸ VENEZIA, *Archivio dell'Ateneo Veneto* (from now on ATVE), b. 33, 1843-46, written in 1849 (not dated).

archives of the Council of Ten and, to a major extent, those of the State Inquisitors, initially banned from access by specific mention⁴⁹. Now, a lot of requests concerned these particular papers: curiosity was largely fuelled by the black legend, without regard to the serious historical use that was actually being made of them. These special regards might appear in continuity with the attention, the treatment and the myths attached to these institutions during the Venetian Republic (to protect *ragioni di stato* and the secrecy of the proceedings of the Inquisition): but no real reevaluation of the foundation of these principles was made. Theoretically, even during the 3rd Austrian domination, the Inquisition papers were jealously kept shut⁵⁰, despite some special authorizations being granted. Even if the series of papers were not the same at all, this system might have felt like a reminiscence of the famous “secret chancery” of the Republic of Venice⁵¹.

Bearing the scholars

The main problem constantly referred to, well before Mutinelli's reign, was foreign scholars' requests to gain access to the archives. If they came from outside the Austrian empire, they needed a permit from the *Presidenza Luogotenenza* (who often would ask a police report on them). All scholars needed to express specific requests for documents, which could be very difficult, due to the nature itself of historical research and to the lack of cataloguing. Much annoyance and suspicion was raised whenever researchers, once entrance had been gained, decided to widen their enquiries – apart from the extra work it implied for the staff. Refusals were based on a variety of rea-

⁴⁹ See for the State Inquisitors' archives: *Collezioni di leggi e regolamenti pubblicati dall'i.r. Governo delle provincie venete*, vol. XIX, Venice, Andreola, 1838, p. 186.

⁵⁰ ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 432, letter dated May 03, 1857.

⁵¹ The *Cancellaria Secreta* was established in 1402. These papers were of more difficult access for reasons of security, but not only patricians and clerks needed access to some of these documents for their work, but official historiographers used them, as well as some occasional historians. The documents it contained were coming from many different bodies. The main governing bodies – as the Council of Ten – and magistracies of the State used to keep their own archives in their offices. These selected papers became a main target for foreign depredations after the fall of the Republic: that was also a consequence of the fascination for the black legend. See ANDREA DA MOSTO, *L'Archivio di Stato di Venezia. Indice generale, storico, descrittivo ed analfitico*, Rome, Biblioteca d'Arte, 1937-1940.

sons. Most of the time, what was banned was considered “political”, opposed to what was “historical”: these terms were commonly used but never defined (as for many aspects of censorship, interpretation and arbitrariness reigned)⁵². A criterion of chronology could be deduced, but it remained very relative, depending on the topic or the area studied: the sixteenth century, with the loss of independence of most Italian states, the rise of the Habsburgs in Europe and Protestantism, was usually the turning point for what was considered dangerous territory. But anything remotely touching the “decorum” of the House of Austria, in all historical periods, was to be avoided; the borders of the Habsburg Empire and its foreign policies were always dangerous subjects. General discussions on political regimes were carefully scrutinised, and whatever could be perceived as critical of the Catholic Church was banned.

For instance, Mutinelli tried to dissuade a Dr Lanz (from Giefesen) from studying papers referring to Charles V, as such a topic risked to “offendere il decoro del Governo” and to “offendere la gloriosa storia patria di quell’epoca”⁵³. It was viewed as extremely delicate and dangerous for the reputation of both Austria and Venice – the interests of the two were always presented in a relation of solidarity, even when they were historically opposed. The Venetian fight against the Uscocs had to be treated with allusive periphrasis, if not avoided altogether, because of the backing Uscocs received from Austria: that was why Mutinelli put obstacles to a Mr Manzoni (from Florence). Another reason was Manzoni’s request for a letter sent in 1595 by Paolo Paruta (then ambassador of the Republic of Venice at the Holy See), because it was: “riferibile alla politica europea, e particolarmente perchè si fanno molte lodi al valore della milizia italiana”⁵⁴ – the constant actualization of historical discourses could not be clearer. Inves-

⁵² For censorship during Austrian domination see GIAMPIETRO BERTI, *Censura e circolazione delle idee nel Veneto della restaurazione*, Venice, Deputazione di Storia Patria, 1989; and DAVID LAVEN, chapter *Censorship*, in *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs 1815-1835*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 175-192.

⁵³ ASVe, Archivietto 699/17/14, letter dated December 08, 1852.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, letter dated December 22, 1851. Mutinelli explained clearly: «siccome é ben noto, essi Uscocchi eran dell’Austria per i politici suoi fini, assettati a commettere di sovente eccessi e violenze a danno degli Stati Italiani, specialmente della Repubblica di Venezia».

tigating direct or indirect hostilities between the Habsburgs and the Venetian state at any period of history had to be avoided. Evoking Habsburg conquests in Italy required much tact: it was difficult to make sure that a given scholar would show it in a favourable light, especially when publishing abroad.

In addition, Mutinelli had very strong ideas about who was a respectable scholar: he needed to be highly recommended, in a social and political sense, to come from elite circles, and preferably to have already published. For instance, he was very reluctant to let Romanin in (“quanto bene la Luogotenenza trovasse di favorirlo”)⁵⁵. He tried to put obstacles to his progress: if he accepted such an individual, he argued, where was he going to stop? His hostility against Romanin could have been political (he had been close to the revolutionaries), but it was even more social and religious. He complained that the historian wanted to look at the papers from the Council of Ten: but, as he was a Jew, he thought it would have been particularly dangerous to show him “le corrispondenze religiose con Roma”⁵⁶. Fundamentally, historical discourse should remain the privilege of a conservative and Catholic elite: it was the only way to make sure of the “truth” which was going to be diffused.

In 1851, Rawdon Brown also encountered reluctance when he requested documents about Henry Wotton (although he had already had special authorisations to study papers from the State Inquisition). Mutinelli suspected that, in reality: “scopo della ricerca sarebbe quello di dar notizie sopra fatti di torchi clandestini, di prediche, di distribuzione di Bibbie per la propagazione del protestantismo in Italia, sin dal secolo decimosettimo immaginata e mantenuta viva dagli Inglesi”⁵⁷. Censorship against anything Protestant was of constant actuality: the possible diffusion of this religion was still considered as a dangerous threat by Austrians, and Mutinelli could not agree more. In reality, he knew that nothing of the sort was contained in the letters requested: however, as “rinnovandosi in questi dì, e per opera degli stessi Inglesi i medesimi fatti, ed avanzata la ricerca da un Inglese”, he felt it was his duty to in-

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Archivietto 1852, letter dated July 28, 1852.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Archivietto 699/17/14, letter dated July 28, 1852.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Pres. Luog., b. 41, letter dated May 28, 1851.

form the *Luogotenenza* of what was going on in his establishment, however unlikely the future risks might have been.

Despite all the rules and principles, prohibitions depended principally on the person asking for the documents, more than on the documents themselves (the same phenomenon was true for access to printed material: trusted people could order censored documents for personal use). Most foreign scholars were eminent visitors and Mutinelli felt obliged to handle them with tact for diplomatic reasons: yet, they were clearly a pain, if not a real danger. He got easily exasperated by their requests and behaviour; he described them as essentially shrewd and full of deceit: they pretended to be interested in one specific document and then asked for more; they constantly required more service. In reality, after due police check, the *Luogotenente* regularly gave his agreement to tenacious scholars, despite Mutinelli's opinion. The usual pattern was that Mutinelli tried to put obstacles, raised fears about state and religious interests, complained about the scholar's duplicity, but eventually gave way to his superiors' decision⁵⁸.

Beyond his idiosyncratic style, Mutinelli fundamentally shared the ancient conviction that foreigners diffused false and negative ideas about Venetian history. Indeed, Venetian fight against the “nemici di Venezia” – an expression used from Cadorin to Molmenti – continued to motivate contemporary Venetian historiography. Venetians' mission was to refute these calumnies. Despite political and social differences between historians, the truth to be diffused was principally: the inheritance between the old patrician rule and contemporary elite, in order to legitimate it (first this concerned the aristocracy, but a conjunction was increasingly made with the high bourgeoisie); the reactivation of the myth of the good paternal governance, the peaceful state and the interclass harmony and collaboration; the focus on the city of Venice as if it had been a city-state, and not an empire (present relationships with the *terraferma* were too problematic; and such a vision also allowed a parallel with other Italian city-states); and the exaltation of municipal cultural specificities. This was the winning model of “venetianess”, and it went together with a “westernization” and a progressive

⁵⁸ Many examples, as *ibid.*, letter dated December 05, 1849; *ibid.*, b. 432, letter dated December 19, 1860.

“italianisation” of history, in harmony with contemporary necessities. Samuele Romanin, author of the most famous nineteenth-century history of Venice, represented the apex of that movement, which he orientated, conforming to his ideals, towards a more bourgeois, Italian and liberal reading of the history of the Republic⁵⁹.

Some famous explorers

The *Abate* Giuseppe Cadorin wrote a series of texts on the public archives between 1846 and 1849⁶⁰. He was allowed in the institute for a research on Titian: this project perfectly associated Venetian and Austrian pride, as the painter was well known for his work for the glory of the Habsburgs⁶¹. More generally, producing work that could be qualified as purely scientific or artistic was a way to get more easily through Austrian censorship⁶². Cadorin’s 1846 discourse revealed his vast ambitions: it was a call to civic involvement through the study of history, which had to push far beyond the widespread but sterile antiquarian fashion for things past. An urgent awakening of Venetian intellectuals was required: he vehemently accused them of a “sonno di morte” dating from the death of the Republic⁶³. Starting with historical studies, this awakening should have spread to all intellectual fields⁶⁴. The city of Venice was for him the “patria”, but an Italian horizon was also evoked, in the sense that Venetian and Italian honours were at stake in finally

⁵⁹ SAMUELE ROMANIN, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, Venice, Naratovich, 1853-1864, 10 volumes.

⁶⁰ Giuseppe Cadorin, born in Cadore, settled in Venice where he died in 1851; he studied the Ducal Palace and Titian, and was director of the public schools during Manin’s government.

⁶¹ The monument to Titian in *Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari* was built between 1838 and 1852.

⁶² Censorship files show that much concern and attention was addressed to works susceptible to address a relatively wide public, as novels or newspapers, whereas “scientific” books were perceived more as an elitist read, and therefore less worrying.

⁶³ With the exception of the revolutionary years, the theme of the long Venetian sleep dominated the entire nineteenth century (although reference to the lion of St Mark became more frequent than the one to the queen of the Adriatic, probably in a desire to evoke fighting energy and the medieval state, more than the image of a peacefully dominating empire). The Venetian awakening was finally celebrated in Piero Foscarini’s texts: Piero Foscarini (1865-1923), politician and entrepreneur, was one of the first promoters of the “Grande Venezia,” and was amongst the most famous and aggressive representatives of Adriatic nationalism and *irredentismo*.

⁶⁴ GIUSEPPE CADORIN, *Dei miei studi negli archivi*, Venice, Cecchini, 1846, p. 34.

establishing the truth about Venetian history (neglecting the fact that the Venetian anti-myth had also been created by Italians)⁶⁵. Against passions, bad literature, calumnies of all sorts and non-Italian enemies, Venetians had to take responsibility for their history and finally revenge “l'ex regina dell'Adriatico” by reviving her spirit⁶⁶.

Although – and this was a rare occurrence – Cadorin explained that the *Archivio Generale* included post-1797 documents, he immediately added that these modern papers offered no interest. He classified the archives in: “veneti, democratici, italiani, austriaci”⁶⁷. He constantly drew an identity between Venetian nationality and Republican times, and considered all the successive regimes as foreign domination, imposing systems and values with no connection to local will and customs. At least, beyond the necessary flattery, he saw the Austrian monarchy as a structure bringing order, social peace and respect for aspects of Venetian culture. This was a rather common view, at least until the Revolution; a parallel between Habsburgs' and the *Serenissima's* ruling was also frequent, in the sense of a comparable reassuring conservatism. By contrast, Cadorin condemned the “governo italiano”, guilty of the loss and destruction of many documents, and suggested that its cultural politics, based on bourgeois and modern principles, did not understand at all Venetian specificities⁶⁸. Fortunately, Austrians decided that “tutti gli archivi politici veneti si dovessero unire in un solo locale”⁶⁹. Deep relief and satisfaction were expressed, as if the past had been thus saved. Beyond gratitude towards the Emperor, the *Frari* were also “venetianized” through the figure of their first director, Jacopo Chiudo, who had been an eminent

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33: «O preferiremo agli studi della patria, che sono studi italiani, e sacri a sì bel paese, con servile imitazione gli studi degli oltremontani scrittori perch'egli ridano della semplicità, della viltà, della debolezza dell'ingegno italiano?».

⁶⁶ Although he talked about the Venetian state, it was rather the city he had in mind. In the nineteenth century, a fusion was constantly operated between the Republic of Venice, the *Dominante*, the actual city of Venice, sometimes the territory of the *ex-dogado* – culminating, during the revolution, with the association with the “Repubblica Veneta” of Daniele Manin. A few years later, an approach very similar to Cadorin's gave life to Samuele Romanin's *Storia documentata di Venezia*.

⁶⁷ CADORIN, *Dei miei studi*, p. 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4: «in 1807 si separarono gli archivi in 15 parti [...]. In tal guisa le carte delle venete magistrature perdettero quelle forme che erano solo proprie del governo aristocratico, vestimenti alla foggia moderna».

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Republican legislator, and who: “consacrò tutta la vita all’amore della sua patria, al fedele servizio del monarca, alla conservazione degli archivi”⁷⁰. Cadornin’s chapter in the prestigious volumes *Venezia e le sue lagune*⁷¹ constituted the first little guide to the archives, when no printed catalogue yet existed; his description closely followed the *Piano sistematico per la distribuzione e collocazione di tutti gli archivi* established by Chiodo.

In a Venetian-Italian patriotic discourse made at the *Ateneo Veneto* during the revolution⁷², Cadornin narrated again his revelatory experience in the archives, and suggested some improvements to the establishment. His themes of civic involvement and “italianisation” of Venetian history flourished. The archives were still identified simultaneously with the *Serenissima* and with the contemporary city; but now, celebrating these papers meant celebrating past regained, and establishing the Venetian Republic as a direct source of inspiration and strength for the fighting present. The rhetoric of Venetian pride finally restored was a powerful revolutionary motto. Cadornin now blamed Austria for sending some precious Republican documents to Vienna, together with flooding the *Frari* with useless papers. Nevertheless, some modern documents would deserve attention, especially those “del tempo italico” (note the change of vocabulary to distinguish it from “italiano”), as some aspects of this adventure might be worth analysing. The revolution gave way to some re-evaluation of this period as an attempt of a political organisation at an Italian level (even Mutinelli’s *Storia del Regno d’Italia* gave some positive views about it).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Such a tribute to the first Venetian director (at the head of the archives from 1815 to 1840) remained a feature for later commentators, as Cecchetti (1839-1889, director of the archives from 1876, after a long career in the institution). Archives’ managers liked representing themselves in an ideal continuity with this prestigious figure: he stood for the courageous and visionary organizer who possessed a high knowledge of the Republican legislation, of which he was an eminent member before the fall of the Republic. At the direction of the newly founded archives, he did an enormous work in order to invent a classification which could reflect the constitution of the Venetian state. The reference to this fundamental legacy allowed establishing a direct and concrete link between the present archives and the Republican past.

⁷¹ *Venezia e le sue lagune*, Venice, Antonelli, 1847.

⁷² GIUSEPPE CADORNIN, *Intorno al Veneto archivio, al suo ordinamento, ed al vantaggio che pegli studii storici si può ritrarre* (unpublished), in ATVE, b. 33, 1843-46, written in 1849 (not dated).

In 1857, the French historian Armand Baschet narrated with complacency his studies in the archives, suggesting it was a very rare and enviable achievement⁷³. He described in epic terms his difficulties in getting hold of some documents (especially from the Council of Ten) and the numerous tricks he deployed, thus making a proper adventure of his trips to the *Frari*, and giving himself a heroic and pioneer role. Yet, he confirmed that a new era had started in terms of order and accessibility⁷⁴. In 1870, he indicated that the *Frari* had become a regular tourist attraction⁷⁵. Having completed his work, he admitted that his first encounter with the director had been very off-putting: initially, Mutinelli did his best to dissuade him from frequenting his establishment, and months of assiduity and hardship had been necessary before getting any acceptance and help. He asserted that it was thanks to himself that the prohibition hanging on the State Inquisitors' papers, although still existing formally, fell into disuse after 1857: he had then reached his Grail⁷⁶. He admitted that the creation of the school of palaeography also contributed to the opening of the archives, as students needed easy access to the documents. On the other hand, he drew the portrait of a sinister lethargy in the archives after 1859, due to the general political situation in Venice. Although all documents could be requested from 1864, thanks to a new status (which essentially continued under the Italian government until the complete reorganization of archives across the country in 1874), there was no one any more to request them... except from the students of the palaeographic school. In reality, if there was a drop in attendance in 1860, the number of scholars increased steadily afterwards, the majority of them being Venetians⁷⁷.

Baschet's texts represent a lively example of a literary genre that could be baptised the "*Frari epic*": archival work was presented as an

⁷³ ARMAND BASCHET, *Souvenirs d'une mission. Les archives de la Sérénissime République de Venise*, Paris, Amyot, Venice, Hermann fr. Münster, 1857.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁵ ARMAND BASCHET, *Les archives de Venise. Histoire de la chancellerie secrète*, Paris, Plon, 1870, p. 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72: «Avec cette autorisation, j'avais ainsi atteint aux derniers degrés du possible à l'endroit de ces archives».

⁷⁷ ASVe, Archivietto, Consegna alla camera di studio, reg. 1862-1867.

adventurous activity, the exploration of an unknown, exciting and dangerous land. Authors liked giving the impression they overcame all sorts of fearsome material, human, philological and administrative obstacles, and evoked: the magnitude of the archives and the mass of files they were confronted with; the mystery of old papers reflecting a unique, complicated and obscure government; the horrific number of rooms and length of corridors. They developed heroic metaphors, often referring to a sea trip and to a labyrinth, in a rather romantic mood which reflected the dominating vision of the city of Venice – in turn accentuating the equivalence between the archives, the memory of the *Serenissima* and the contemporary city. Their books constituted a sort of travel writing, mainly targeted at their home public – maybe also with the objective of justifying the length of their stay and the salary they were receiving for their glamorous hardship (Baschet also laboriously justified why he took him so long to publish his book).

Numbers were repetitively used to diffuse the archives' myth, from the first reports down to the latest tourist guides⁷⁸. Adriano Balbi⁷⁹ already gave a very enthusiastic description of the “miniera inesauribile” of the *Frari*, punctuated by data as: “298 sale e saloni”, and the indication that “il più antico [documento] risale all'anno 840”; he also fancied putting all the shelves one after the other to measure them (a recurring image thereafter)⁸⁰. Cadorin indicated: “contiamo registri membranacei, che hanno l'epoca dell'anno 883; ma questi non sono, a dire il vero, se non copie, autentici bensì, ma fatte dopo il 1000”⁸¹ (this last precision was usually forgotten by the successive writers). He also counted: “298 fra camere e sale”; “Archivi 2276”; “Numero di volumi circa 12 000 000”; and the years covered

⁷⁸ This is still a feature of present day tours of the Ducal Palace's “Secret Itinerary”, where reference is made to the chancery work under the Republic and to the *Frari*.

⁷⁹ The famous geographer and statistician Adriano Balbi (1782-1848) worked mainly in Vienna and Paris, and signed his work as “nobile veneziano”.

⁸⁰ Balbi used many praising adjectives: «una delle curiosità più notevoli di Venezia per la mole prodigiosa di documenti che contiene, pel dotto ordinamento che il sig. Direttore Chiodo seppe dar loro e per la maniera ingegnosa ed elegante con la quale si seppe appropriare il luogo [...] dovuto alla magnificenza del defunto imperatore», in ADRIANO BALBI, *Compendio di geografia*, 2^{nda} edizione italiana, sulla terza edizione francese, Turin, Giuseppe Pomba, 1840, p. 503.

⁸¹ *Venezia e le sue lagune*, vol. II, part II appendix, p. 3.

were 883-1847⁸² (whereas his followers tended to make the archives coincide with the life of the *Serenissima*). He concluded that the *Frari* constituted “uno dei più gelosi ed importanti stabilimenti delle venete provincie, e forse del regno Lombardo-Veneto”⁸³. In January 1849, Mutinelli repeated some of these data⁸⁴ but the establishment had now become one of the most important in Europe. After unification, the number of 14 millions of documents appeared, as in an 1869 Murray tourist guide⁸⁵ and an 1895 Baedeker⁸⁶. In the late 1870s, the building was considerably enlarged by the aggregation of the adjacent *Scuole di Sant'Antonio e dei Fiorentini* to accommodate the *Archivi notarili*⁸⁷. This confused love of numbers did not aim at accuracy and science: they were impossible to imagine and visualise, and were rather meant to impress and nourish fantasy, admiration and awe.

The decadence of Mutinelli's reign

In his archival epic, Baschet evoked the bitter irony of Mutinelli's problems with censorship when publishing his *Storia arcana e aneddotica d'Italia raccontata dai Veneti ambasciatori* (1856)⁸⁸. He asserted that some important historical parts were crossed out by the Austrian red pen, especially as regards the Papal Court⁸⁹, and noticed that Rawdon Brown or himself could read and copy documents with much less trouble than the director of the archives. In-

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ “298 locali, 1280 archivi; 12 milioni di volumi”, in ASVe, Archivietto Direzione, Anno 1849, Fascicoli 1 a 100, letter dated January 10, 1849 to the *Magistrato politico provvisorio*.

⁸⁵ JOHN MURRAY, *Northern Italy*, London, Murray, 1869: Archives from the «ancient Venetian state. Their bulk is appalling: they are said to fill 295 rooms, and to consist of upwards of 14 millions of documents, extending from A.D.883 to the present time. [...] The selections relating to Sanuto, and from the diplomatic correspondence of the Venetian envoys in England, made by Mr. Rawdon Brown, show to what good use they might be turned», p. 410.

⁸⁶ KARL BAEDEKER, *Northern Italy*, Leipzig, Baedeker, 1895, p. 283.

⁸⁷ Cecchetti, who had campaigned for this aggregation, mentioned: «151 [extra] locali», to accommodate «80.000 grosse buste e registri», in BARTOLOMEO CECCHETTI, *L'Archivio di Stato in Venezia negli anni 1876-1881*, Venice, Naratovich, 1881, p. 33.

⁸⁸ FABIO MUTINELLI, *Storia arcana e aneddotica d'Italia raccontata dai Veneti ambasciatori*, Venice, P. Naratovich, 1856, 2 volumes.

⁸⁹ However, faithful to his style, he could have been exaggerating the importance of these corrections; although the original manuscript is not to be found, the censorship files seem to contradict his statement.

deed, Mutinelli encountered a series of humiliations during the last part of his career. As regards the *Storia arcana*, he was accused by the Austrian authorities of taking advantage of his position to access documents without the necessary authorisation: the *Luogotenente* also appropriately recalled that Mutinelli tried to “difficoltare ai privati studiosi l’esame de’ [...] documenti custoditi [in] archivio”; as he intended to publish the book “per proprio conto e lucro”, he would have made a financial profit out of his position⁹⁰. Problems were not only in regard to documents from the Council of Ten, but even from more accessible funds. Mutinelli complained he was being treated much unfairly compared to other visitors of the archives⁹¹, and added that some copies of documents were freely accessible in Vienna’s library⁹². By contrast, the content of the book was not a real problem, as Mutinelli’s narrative was constantly praising Austria’s historical role⁹³.

Despite working for 45 years for Austria, Mutinelli had much difficulty to obtain a pension, and left in ill-health and bitterness⁹⁴. He was substituted in 1861 by Girolamo Dandolo, who in Austrian eyes combined all the legitimacies: he had worked for the state for 34 years, had published on *storia patria*, was President of the *Ateneo Veneto*, and wore “uno fra i più illustri nomi patrizi di Venezia” – this was bound to please Venetians too⁹⁵. Ironically, a clamorous literary

⁹⁰ ASVe, Pres. Luog., b. 278, letter April 21, 1855, *luogotenente* Toggenburg to Home Minister De Bach, when the first part of the book had been examined by censors.

⁹¹ «studiosi di patria, di religione e di sudditanze diverse [hanno] la licenza di poter liberamente esaminare e trascrivere i documenti di questi archivi, possono poi essi senza alcuna riserva pubblicare colle stampe il risultato degli studii loro, o ne’ paesi della monarchia, o ben meglio senza esser soggetti a leggi di censura, all’estero, circostanza questa notevolissima che più volte ha servito di grave tema a ripetuti miei rapporti (giammai riscontrati)», in *ibid.*, letter December 22, 1854, letter to *Luogotenente* Toggenburg.

⁹² *Ibid.*, b. 432, letter dated June 03, 1855. It can be recalled that censorship laws were not harmonised at all in the Empire.

⁹³ A satisfied police report concluded: «La relazione dunque non contiene cosa alcuna contraria al decoro e ai riguardi delle Corti, né sotto le politiche e sociali considerazioni, mentre il Signor Mutinelli [...] dimostra [...] come erano frequenti e vive le propensioni degli italiani di appartenere piuttosto all’Austria che ad altra dominazione», in *ibid.*, b. 306, report dated February 09, 1858 to the *Presidenza Luogotenenza*.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, b. 432, letter dated August 06, 1858: «divenuto il ridicolo dei miei dipendenti, moralmente e fisicamente inetto a prestar servizio» in *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, letter dated July 30, 1860 about Girolamo Dandolo (1796-1867).

dispute had divided Dandolo and Mutinelli in 1854-1855⁹⁶. One of the main criticisms Dandolo addressed to Mutinelli was his use of documents: he attributed “importanza e valore a scritti [...] ridicoli”, believed everything he read in the “invereconde memorie di Leopoldo Curti, Giorgio Pisani, Jacopo Casanova”, the “Commedie, le Novelle, le Memorie dei banditi”, and “fraitese documenti ufficiali”⁹⁷. Most importantly, these methodological errors were at the service of a biased and nefarious project, as Mutinelli constantly: “occultò il buono, ingigantì il cattivo”⁹⁸! Dandolo, on the contrary, meant to rehabilitate all aspects of eighteenth-century Venice, extending to this century the golden legend of the Republic. He was also observing, more realistically, that the fall had been inevitable due to external circumstances. Although Mutinelli was particularly excessive, he attacked an epoch which was commonly regarded as the century of decadence, during which the real Republican values had been progressively lost under various forms of corruption: this reading allowed for an internal understanding of the fall, in a moral and religious key, attacking the individuals but preserving the original system. But Dandolo accused Mutinelli of calumnies, in the old tradition of defence of Venice, and argued he was blindly repeating the eighteenth and nineteenth century French calumnies (Dandolo was particularly prejudiced against the French).

Conclusion

Fabio Mutinelli constantly expressed a great sense of pride in the documents kept in the *Archivio Generale*. He never doubted they were treasures, at least as far as they dated from the Republican era - post-1797 papers being ignored. At the same time, he saw these papers as highly sensitive, and was very wary of what could be done with them. He was therefore particularly zealous in applying Austrian's rules in matters of censorship, to which he associated Venetians' desire to con-

⁹⁶ Mutinelli's *Memorie storiche degli ultimi cinquant'anni della Repubblica veneta* had been followed by Dandolo's *La caduta della repubblica di Venezia ed i suoi ultimi cinquant'anni, studii storici*, written in open polemics against it.

⁹⁷ GIROLAMO DANDOLO, *La caduta della Repubblica di Venezia*, Venice, Naratovich, 1855, p. 86.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, preface.

trol local historiography, together with his personal authoritarian style. He felt his mission was not only to preserve the Venetian memory and, to some extent, to organise it, but also to stop or, at least, canalize its dissemination.

In nineteenth-century Venice, there was an enduring difficulty to distinguish between memory and past. The elites' central motivation was to save and protect Venetian memory, especially against "foreigners" (anyone non Venetian). There was a persistent idea that these were stripping Venice of her past: materially, from Napoleonic deprivations to the departure of Austria in 1866, but also by the use and abuse of Venice's image in works of art, and by their writing on the Venetian state. The distrust of foreigners encouraged by Austrian policy was greatly increased by the local identity crisis, with the loss of confidence and the frustration in a situation where Venice had abruptly become an insignificant city whose destiny was in the hands of foreign powers.

Local identity was largely founded on this cult of memory, which tended to obstruct the confrontation with the past and prevent the development of a new historical narrative. Venice counted all sorts of collectors, antiquarians, numismatists, bibliographers or lovers of family archives: if this taste for collection already existed in Republican times, it took on encyclopaedic proportions in the nineteenth century. However, there was not necessarily much critical thinking in these activities, and an absence of synthesis persisted. These collections were often accompanied by a form of nostalgic conservatism and of vain regret for things past. The *Frari* were generally perceived in that context, as the best reliquary of the Venetian past – not to say as a reincarnation, under the form of a fantastic world of paper, of the past itself.

Yet, Venetians were very aware of contemporary historical Italian and European productions, and tried to answer "attacks" against the *Serenissima* with similar methodological weapons. However, these ripostes were very difficult to elaborate. Historiographers were motivated by various and often contradictory principles. They pretended to search for truth, stripping off the old myths, negative and positive, and interrogating frankly the nature of the former regime. Yet, they wanted to defend Venetian reputation and tried to justify the contemporary narrow social hegemonies. In spite of archive-based

methodologies and philological developments, fundamentally, only eulogy remained a valid narrative. At best, once the long mourning for the *Serenissima* was over, it gave rise to the construction of new myths, useful to understand the present and look at the future, as in Romanin's history, which was the most accomplished example of how the elaboration of a modern Italian identity was rooted and shaped in a strong municipal Venetian culture.