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How to Read Venetian *Relazioni*

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Things Not Easily Believed: Introducing the Early Modern Relation

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Article abstract

Les rapports de fin de mission des ambassadeurs vénitiens, ou relazioni (relations), décrivaient le pays où ils avaient servi, leur souverain et sa cour, et analysaient la politique que ce souverain avait avec les autres états. Apparues au XIII^e siècle, les relazioni qui subsistent se répartissent des années 1490 aux années 1790, et sont parmi les sources les plus connues pour l'histoire moderne. Toutefois, il semble nécessaire de renouveler notre compréhension de leurs usages et de leurs significations originales. Cet article se concentre sur les nombreuses variantes des relazioni, éliminées dans les éditions modernes, et cherche à reconstruire le processus par lequel elles ont apparu et circulé, d'abord oralement, et ensuite ont été déposées, sous forme écrite, dans les archives de Venise, mais aussi diffusées sous la forme de pamphlets manuscrits et imprimés, vendus en dépit des lois interdisant ces pratiques. On traite ensuite des fonctions institutionnelles, collectives et personnelles, que les relazioni ont joué au moment de leur rédaction : pour le gouvernement, pour leurs auteurs et pour leurs nombreux lecteurs appartenant ou non aux élites politiques.

How to Read Venetian *Relazioni*

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Les rapports de fin de mission des ambassadeurs vénitiens, ou relazioni (relations), décrivaient le pays où ils avaient servi, leur souverain et sa cour, et analysaient la politique que ce souverain avait avec les autres états. Apparues au XIII^e siècle, les relazioni qui subsistent se répartissent des années 1490 aux années 1790, et sont parmi les sources les plus connues pour l'histoire moderne. Toutefois, il semble nécessaire de renouveler notre compréhension de leurs usages et de leurs significations originales. Cet article se concentre sur les nombreuses variantes des relazioni, éliminées dans les éditions modernes, et cherche à reconstruire le processus par lequel elles ont apparu et circulé, d'abord oralement, et ensuite ont été déposées, sous forme écrite, dans les archives de Venise, mais aussi diffusées sous la forme de pamphlets manuscrits et imprimés, vendus en dépit des lois interdisant ces pratiques. On traite ensuite des fonctions institutionnelles, collectives et personnelles, que les relazioni ont joué au moment de leur rédaction : pour le gouvernement, pour leurs auteurs et pour leurs nombreux lecteurs appartenant ou non aux élites politiques.

Ever since the thirteenth century, Venetian ambassadors coming home at the end of their postings were required to provide end-of-mission reports, or *relazioni*. Length and details varied, but most covered three aspects: the country where they had served, that country's government (mostly a description of the court and sovereign), and that government's attitudes towards other states, including Venice itself. Ambassadors were great observers of high politics, bent on scrutinizing the personality of ministers in order to pick up traits that might guide present and future negotiations. But they also provided wider information about geography, military and economic strength, and customs, including religious rites. By the sixteenth century, other European ambassadors, especially papal nuncios, also submitted reports, but Venice stood out for two

reasons. First, it had a larger number of permanent representations than any other European state: Ferrara, Florence, Mantua, Milan, Naples, Rome, Savoy, Urbino and, outside Italy, the Empire, Constantinople, France, England (with a gap in 1558–1603), and Spain (the United Provinces and Russia were added later, respectively in 1610 and 1783). Venice also sent occasional missions to Egypt, Persia, Poland, and the Swiss Cantons, and held consular representations in Sicily and Syria. Furthermore, to a greater extent than anywhere else, Venetian ambassadors codified the rules of *relazioni* as a genre, the timing for their presentation, and the manner of their preservation. Other Venetian officials, including mainland and overseas governors as well as special envoys, also filed reports on their missions, and many of this paper's findings apply to them too.¹

The extant *relazioni* span, with some gaps, three centuries, from the 1490s to the 1790s. Unsurprisingly, they are among the most famous sources of the early modern history of Europe and beyond, used extensively by historians as diverse as Leopold von Ranke and Fernand Braudel. In particular, Ranke made *relazioni* into the foundations of his “scientific” history: history based on documents, overcoming the uncertainty and bias of previous historians. As Anthony Grafton's *Footnote* showed, Ranke was anxious to downplay previous scholarship in order to construct his own reputation as an innovator.² In the first instance, then, this article concentrates on *relazioni* to add a further footnote to Grafton's book. Many historians used them in writing their histories long before Ranke, like the Venetian patrician Marco Foscarini, who in 1752 described *relazioni* as “solid foundations and aids” for historians and as “historical essays” in their own right.³ A century earlier, the *Bibliographia politica* of Gabriel Naudé, then a cardinal's librarian in Rome and later a secretary of Mazarin, already placed *relazioni* among the must-reads for ministers and secretaries. Naudé believed they were especially useful for the preparation of ambassadors alongside the theoretical treatises of authors such as Ottaviano Maggi, Alberico Gentili, and Gasparo Bragaccia, who all in turn also read and cited *relazioni*.⁴

The prevalent historiographical use of *relazioni* consists in extrapolating reported information without consideration for the act, and reception, of reporting. Who wrote them and why? To whom were they addressed? What were the objectives of reporting? How did they circulate and what did readers make of them? By reconstructing the process through which *relazioni* were first delivered as speech, then written down to be locked away in Venice's archives, and finally circulated in manuscript and occasionally in print despite strict laws

to the contrary, we can reconstruct some of the institutional, collective, and personal functions *relazioni* played for their authors, for the government their authors served, and for their many readers inside and outside that government. To do so helps us to understand the meaning of *relazioni* at the time, to enrich our interpretation of the textual strategies of reporting information, and finally to gain a sense of the multifaceted world of information of which *relazioni* were such an important medium.⁵

Ranke and beyond

There are significant reasons why we have lost all sense of the early modern uses of *relazioni*, and largely they have to do with their self-styled modern “discoverer.” We tend to think of Ranke as the quintessential historian of high politics, and his traditional critics have been social or economic historians. But he wished to capture the spirit of the age above the factionalism and partisanship that were a staple of politics, and so extracted *relazioni* out of the oligarchic and republican context in which they were composed. “Only from the tallest mountain, far above the smell, din, and agitation of human passion, can one see the basic features of the earth and the purity of the divine idea.” To Ranke, *relazioni* captured the *Zeitgeist*; through them, “the historian not only researches particulars (*einzelnes*) more precisely but believes himself to have gained new and true perspectives on the whole (*das Ganze*).”⁶ The worth of *relazioni* consisted in providing “genuine and unfalsified information.”⁷ And, as he wrote in a long description of the Venetian archive, they could do so precisely because, he thought, Venetian ambassadors were *unparteiischen*: unbiased, above the political struggle.⁸ Their objectivity stemmed from their neutrality, because they reported not on their own but on other people’s countries, and was guaranteed by secrecy: ambassadors could afford to provide honest information because they knew they could express their criticisms without fear of reprisals. Moreover, they could write freely and concentrate on information without worrying about flourish.

Ranke knew that *relazioni* circulated. In 1824–27 he used the old manuscript copies held in German and Austrian libraries, and his second book (published in 1827) devoted two pages to describing the multiplication of copies as a result of the curiosity of cardinals and other statesmen (the sort of circle that

Naudé also had in mind).⁹ As a zealous book collector, he profited from the antiquarian book market then flourishing, and his own collection included some 120 *relazioni*.¹⁰ But Ranke's encounter with the Venetian archive in 1828–30 effected a long-lasting change in his understanding of *relazioni*. In all subsequent works he neglected their pre-modern uses and instead concentrated on the uniqueness of the archive itself. Ranke had long held a burning desire to study there. As he told his brother, “there sleeps a still unknown history of Europe.”¹¹ He developed a real “Passion” for Venice, where he claimed to feel “at home.”¹² His research there was the basis of the book that was to seal his reputation as Europe's foremost historian, *The Popes of Rome* (1834–36). Ranke's insistence on the secrecy of his sources may have been tied to his desire to assert the novelty of his approach and his own reputation. He gained admittance to the Venetian archive, then closed to the public, thanks to a personal interview with Metternich in Vienna, proof of his connections and status, which he boasted about in his letters and subtly alluded to in his publications.¹³ Reflecting, much later, on the beginning of his career, Ranke still liked to remember “the Venetian papers, which at that time lay still unused, almost unknown” (“*die venezianische Papiere, die damals noch unbenutzt, beinahe unbekannt waren*”).¹⁴ Ranke made the archive into a must for historical research, yet also contributed to sacralizing archival sources out of context. Interestingly, this turning point may have been influenced too by the romantic view of Venice as the city of mystery. The archive, long fabled as the repository of history's most terrible secrets, held a special place in this imagination; penetrating it afforded a voyeuristic pleasure, one which was common in both historical and fictional works at the time.¹⁵

Since then, the use of *relazioni* for historians has widened, but Ranke's abstraction of these texts from the historical context in which they were first written and read had serious consequences for subsequent historiography. First, in the history of ideas, historians such as Willy Andreas and Friedrich Meinecke read *relazioni* as applications of theories about reason of state.¹⁶ Others, such as Myron Gilmore, Angelo Ventura, and Gino Benzoni, embraced this perspective, but saw *relazioni* as fully part of Venice's republican ideology.¹⁷ Both interpretations tend to obliterate the peculiarities of different authors and texts. In the words of Andreas, *relazioni* are “works of a spirit... artworks of a political culture.”¹⁸ Second, as part of the widespread interest in the rise of the early modern state in the 1950s and 1960s, *relazioni* have been studied as elements

in the history of diplomacy.¹⁹ In this spirit, but with a keener sense of the state's limitations than his predecessors, Donald Queller retrieved and published the Venetian legislation concerning ambassadors and described the evolution of *relazioni* as part of the ambassador's duties.²⁰ But even the diplomatic historians who studied the institutional framework of *relazioni* have failed to describe the ambassador as a concrete historical figure. As Carlo Morandi wrote, without a shade of irony: "the Venetian ambassador is a type, a model, and his reports are the classic expression of diplomatic activity."²¹ The recent renewal in interest in diplomatic history might benefit from a new understanding of the Venetian *relazioni*.²² Finally, historians with an interest in culture and cultural encounters have read *relazioni* as proto-ethnographic texts, bent on describing not just politics but alien customs and societies; their value lay especially in the fact that they acted as means of information about the East in the West.²³ The most famous work in this strand was that of Lucette Valensi, who used *relazioni* to trace a shift in Venice's attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the sixteenth century, from respect bordering on admiration to repugnance for tyranny and corruption.²⁴ Other historians, such as Gino Benzoni, have emphasized the self-reflective nature of *relazioni*, projecting the Venetians' own stereotypes onto others.²⁵

From all these works, we learn oddly little about the peculiarities of different ambassadors or the evolving context in which they wrote. In fact, despite their many differences, most historians describe *relazioni* as the collective expression of Venetian wisdom, and the Venetian ambassador as the faceless representative of the Republic. Partly, this remarkable continuity stems from the fact that they all employ the same editions, published in the wake of Ranke's success, when governments sponsored the massive publication of diplomatic sources throughout Europe. Between 1839 and 1878, Italian scholars published 25 volumes of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *relazioni* as an erudite contribution to the struggle for national unification.²⁶ The sources published in this enterprise are still widely available, constantly used and frequently republished, generally without any philological apparatus.²⁷ These editions have two problems. First, they generally and often tacitly omit the passages where ambassadors boasted their own personal qualities, because (as one editor said) "such particular occurrences do not seem of great interest for our readers."²⁸ In so doing, they make it difficult to appreciate much of the ambassador's purpose in presenting his report. Second, modern editions make *relazioni* look like a

seamless corpus. While such editions provide us with a useful text of reference, they make us forget that there were many variations—as each *relazione* went through different stages, from oral to manuscript and from one manuscript version to the other. As we shall see now, such changes are extremely important.

The instability of the text

Once we move from modern printed editions to the many manuscript collections of *relazioni* made in early modern times, the first point we realize is the proliferation of different versions. Nineteenth-century editors were interested in establishing the “best” reports as those closest to the “originals.” Instead, we should see textual instability as rich evidence of a *relazione*’s different uses. Our inquiry into textual variation is therefore in line with the most recent approaches to the material study of texts, as carried out in philology and in the history of the book.²⁹ To paraphrase the new philologists, in *relazioni* we do not just see variants: “they are variance.”³⁰ In fact, the very notion of “original document” is to some extent a misconception. It is not at all clear that those extant in the Venetian State Archive are the copies originally handed in by ambassadors. The handwriting is often obviously more recent than the period in which the *relazioni* were authored; the pagination and numbering suggest that some reports have been extracted from collections held outside the archive in modern times; and reports dating from different periods are occasionally included in the same manuscript.³¹ Our first task should therefore consist in understanding the complex process that led from speech to written record.

While we regard *relazioni* as texts, in fact they originated in an act of performance, namely the oral presentation made by the ambassador to the Senate or the Collegio.³² The verb usually employed to describe this act was *riferire* or (in Venetian) *referir*, from the Latin *referre* (to bring back, from the past participle of which, *relatum*, in turn came the vernacular *relazione*). Unlike the English equivalent “reporting,” it was a verb associated with speaking.³³ To those who first heard a *relazione*, dress, bodily posture, and tone of voice were as important as contents, as we know for example from the contemporary diaries of patrician Marin Sanudo (1496–1534).³⁴ When his eminent colleague and later cardinal Gasparo Contarini reported in the Senate, Sanudo noted the up- and downsides of his performance, including setting, timing, and cloth-

ing of the speaker: “dressed in black velvet he mounted the speaker’s stand and delivered his report with a low voice, so that it was hard to understand; it was very long [...] he stood there three and a half hours,” “and was praised by the Doge.” Sanudo’s main complaint had to do with the volume of Contarini’s voice.³⁵ Other times, he remarked about the length of a *relazione*’s delivery and the effect it had on the audience. Of Marco Foscarelli, returning from the embassy in Florence, he wrote: “he stayed four hours at the speaker’s stand, said many things with much exaggeration... and greatly bored the Senate... ending two hours after sunset.”³⁶ In turn, the text of *relazioni* shows traces of the original delivery, such as frequent addresses to the audience and references to the timing and physical surrounding of the delivery; in 1611 the consul returning from Syria admitted that, to report all the things he observed in three years, he had no time “this morning.”³⁷ Some ambassadors built on the performative features of their speech. For example, we can imagine Simone Contarini spreading his arms when he told senators in 1612 that he was laying out “before (their) eyes, as in a theatre, a representation of the world, nature, and the laws and styles of the various peoples” he met.³⁸ Finally, the *relazioni*’s delivery was to some extent a ceremonial occasion. In 1459 the Council of Ten limited the retinue brought by ambassadors to the Ducal Palace on the day to “eight or at most ten.”³⁹

While speaking, ambassadors may have helped themselves with notes or read full texts. For example, Andrea Navagero’s *relazione* of Spain (where he served in 1523–27) is lost, but a set of notes is extant in a manuscript in the Biblioteca Comunale di Treviso. The beginning of the document reads like a fully written-out speech; then Navagero broke the flow and only noted a series of aide-memoirs: “Then continue by relating the things of Spain, the kingdom and the cities; customs, conditions, artisans, the peers, their revenues... Then relate the things of Hernando Cortes and his departure from Spain... Then the Emperor,” and so on. Every topic is followed by a series of items of factual information arranged over successive lines, much like modern bullet points.⁴⁰ Summaries also circulated. For example, having mentioned a *relazione*’s delivery, Sanudo occasionally left a blank page, explaining that he would fill it later, “because I can have something from the ambassador.”⁴¹ Examples abound in Sanudo’s diaries, even when he was not in the Senate, showing that he used documents received from others. Another example is a summary of Sebastiano Giustinian’s 1519 report from England, once in the private library of one Contarini, written in the third person and therefore not based on the report deliv-

ered by the ambassador.⁴² More than one person may have worked on these texts. While we associate *relazioni* with ambassadors, many were ghost-written by secretaries and others, a point which deserves greater attention than one can give here.⁴³ In mid-seventeenth century an anonymous patrician observed of a colleague that he was better at delivering reports than at joining in debates, “a sign that writing is easier than speaking, because more than one person can work on it together.”⁴⁴ Even ambassadors who authored their *relazioni* may have pre-circulated copies among peers (as one said in 1619, he sought the feedback of “some relatives in the Senate, not trusting my own judgment”).⁴⁵

Having delivered their report orally, ambassadors were to present it in writing for filing in the Republic’s secret archive. The first law requiring ambassadors to report on their missions, in 1268, already stipulated that they should have the reports written down (“*facere poni in scriptis aut facere scribi*”).⁴⁶ Later laws reminded ambassadors of their duties and set aside special cabinets in the archive for this purpose. Judging from the extant collections in the *Secreta*, not all ambassadors complied, and indeed successive decrees repeated themselves. Often a long time elapsed between oral delivery and archival filing, when *relazioni* may have been exchanged between their authors and other patricians. Some envoys deposited them years later, like Marco Foscarini, who submitted written copies of his reports on Rome and on Florence in 1533, respectively seven and five years after first delivering them.⁴⁷ The series extant in the Archivio di Stato begins in the 1530s, perhaps a sign that yet another decree requiring written deposit (in 1524) was finally implemented.⁴⁸

The passage from oral to written form, mediated as it was by intermediate steps such as notes, made for a high degree of flexibility in the text. From a linguistic point of view, for example, it is likely that the oral reports were delivered in a variant of Venetian, but most of the written copies are in more or less literary Tuscan. Contents changed as much as form. Sanudo’s versions tend to be shorter than those in private libraries edited in the nineteenth century, but occasionally he included more detailed factual information.⁴⁹ Partly, ambassadors may have altered their texts in response to the reception of their oral reports. For example, we know from Sanudo’s notes that Carlo Contarini spoke about Martin Luther and “his rites,” but was cut short by the doge (who interrupted Contarini with a curt “enough with such talk”: “*basta parlar di questo*”).⁵⁰ Unsurprisingly, Contarini made no mention of religion in his written text. As Franco Gaeta has noted, references to theological debates tend to be absent

from most *relazioni* at this time. However, this may have had less to do with lack of interest (as Gaeta thought) than with censorship and self-censorship.⁵¹ The same, incidentally, can be said of Gasparo Contarini's own 1530 report on his embassy to the pope: the published text makes no mention of Luther, but the short summary that Sanudo wrote down while Contarini spoke includes two references to the implications of the Reformation for the pope and for the emperor.⁵²

The circulation of copies

Different versions proliferated because *relazioni* did not stay locked in the archive but circulated in different copies. Sanudo had access to many because he was a well-connected patrician, but they also surfaced in collections far away from Venice. On visiting the university library at Oxford in 1616, the Venetian representative in England was astonished to find "a large volume in manuscript" containing fourteen *relazioni* by Venetian ambassadors; other similar cases are known.⁵³ An analysis of some of the copies' material aspects helps explain the manner of their circulation.⁵⁴ Some survive as separates, that is, independently transcribed documents, written by different people and at some later point bound together in aggregates according to subject matter. Others are sections of compilations by one hand only. Such differences indicate different kinds of uses. The former was closer to the time of first delivery, and may have originated from the author himself or from one of his associates; alternatively, it might indicate a particular reader's interest for a particular report. The latter was made later for a collector, in Venice or elsewhere, often by a scribe or secretary. The handwriting's quality is also important, because a good hand may indicate a professional writer, such as a secretary or a scribe, and this in turn may point to a commercial transaction, as in the case of a scribe selling copies of *relazioni*, or hired for the purpose of copying one or more *relazioni*. One mode does not exclude the other. For example, Leonardo Donà owned an elegant Italic copy of Piero Duodo's 1592 *relazione* about Poland; but in the same manuscript volume we also find a short summary scribbled by Donà himself and dated the day Duodo reported in the Senate.⁵⁵ Clearly, Donà made notes about the report on or shortly after first hearing it, then procured

the full text. Furthermore, many professional copies of other reports in the Donà collection carry marginal annotations by their owners.

This suggests that *relazioni* were the object of all three modes of what Harold Love usefully described as “scribal publication”: personal, authorial, and entrepreneurial.⁵⁶ In the first, Sanudo, Donà, and others who attended a report’s delivery could jot down and then circulate summaries of their contents on the basis of their mental notes; or they could transcribe, and annotate, complete texts for their personal use, texts which they could then file in their libraries or lend to others. But, unlike short summaries, complete copies first had to find their way out of the author’s ownership. This could be unknown to the author; for example, if someone copied the text deposited in the archive, as likely happened in 1583, when a secretary complained that a patrician, who was given a copy of a recent *relazione* of France, brought it home and kept it overnight.⁵⁷ Or it could be that ambassadors themselves supplied copies, in which case we can speak of authorial publication. I will come back to this, which may be described as a leak, when I discuss the uses of *relazioni* for their authors. Ambassadors and their relatives also had connections with a range of figures acting as intermediaries of information. Some were minor nobles, real or self-advertising, such as *cavalier* Giulio Cesare Muzio, who profited from supplying *relazioni* relating to both Venetian territories and foreign embassies.⁵⁸ Secretaries and servants could also act as moles. A copy of Girolamo Lando’s report on England bears the signature of Lando’s “maestro di camera,” who obviously prepared it with or without his master’s approval.⁵⁹ Francesco Paisio, once a governor’s secretary at Palmanova, was accused of “disseminating many *relazioni* of ambassadors from England, France, Spain and elsewhere, descriptions of the Arsenal, expenditures and income of the Republic and every business of land and sea, including all the fortresses of this state, indicating the number of soldiers on land and on sea.”⁶⁰

Finally we know that *relazioni* were also the object of entrepreneurial publication by professional scribes, a thriving industry offering its services to a diverse clientele.⁶¹ In 1613 the Inquisitors of State inquired about one Cesare Prata, “who used to work as a scrivener” but was now “making a profession of ambassadorial *relazioni*.”⁶² Copied *relazioni* nourished a blackmarket, where price varied with contents, length, and sensitivity. While ambassador in Rome, Leonardo Donà himself compiled a two-page double-columned list of “all reports to be bought in Rome” (“*relazioni che si ritrovano in Roma da comprarne*

le copie"). Most were reports by Venetian ambassadors, a fact which suggests that Donà was less interested in information than preoccupied with the unlawful disclosures of that information in Venice; but he mentioned several non-Venetian reports about Sweden, the East Indies, and Muscovy, and no report about Venice, possibly because he meant to register the advantages of the information economy in Rome.⁶³ And as in all markets, there could be forgeries. When a secret report could not be found, another one was fabricated and sold as real. For example, the *relazione* on Rome broadcast under the name of Tommaso Contarini is a *pastiche* of earlier reports, not surprisingly since Contarini died while on his mission and could not have presented his report.⁶⁴ No doubt, this was an elite market, but it was a market nonetheless, accommodating a larger public than could simple distribution through acquaintances of the kind that benefited Sanudo at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

From large manuscript circulation, it was a short step to printing.⁶⁵ In the decades between 1589 and 1618, several collections, including very many Venetian *relazioni* as well as other reports, were published in France, Italy (including the Venetian territories), and Germany, occasionally under the cover of false imprints and eliding the names of the *relazioni*'s authors. Each contained several ambassadorial reports as well as other official records. Most of these collections were appropriately entitled *Tesori politici*, "political treasures." As the title-page of the first edition boasted, they contained "*relazioni*, instructions, treaties, and various speeches of ambassadors, relevant to the perfect knowledge and understanding of the states, interests and attachments of the world's greatest princes."⁶⁶ A later edition added that they were also "relevant to the perfect understanding of reason of state," a nod in the direction of the then-prevailing mode of political literature.⁶⁷ Some *relazioni* made it into print, often within a few years of first delivery, like Giovanni Sagredo's report on the imperial court, delivered in 1665 and printed in 1670, and Domenico Zane's report on Spain, delivered in 1659 and printed in 1672.⁶⁸ Collections were also published in the original and in translation, generally in small formats to ensure greater diffusion. They consistently boasted their originality and authenticity, like one of 1681, "translated from an Italian Manuscript which has never seen the light before."⁶⁹ The connection between manuscript and print worked both ways. For example, some of the manuscript copies held in the library of the Venetian patrician family Donà were taken from one of the printed *Tesori politici*.⁷⁰ By the early seventeenth century the *relazioni*'s circulation was so extensive that their

publicity was to a degree accepted by some ambassadors themselves. Francesco Morosini's 1608 report about Florence omitted describing the city in detail and instead referred his readers to his predecessors' reports, "to be found both in the archive and publicly in print."⁷¹ Other reports connected with the ambassador's mission also circulated, such as descriptions of their travel by secretaries or young patricians in the ambassador's retinue.⁷²

Users and uses

The *relazioni*'s illicit circulation indicates that they had a value, both actual and metaphorical, inside and outside Venice. The proliferation of different versions reveals the many different uses to which various people put these texts, both the few who authored *relazioni* and the many who read, transcribed, and exchanged them, against the law which sanctioned their secrecy. We can try to reconstruct some of these uses by surveying the different users involved: the institutions commanding *relazioni*, their authors, and their readers.

The government

The most obvious, and in principle the only, use of *relazioni* was inside the Venetian government. The 1524 Senate decree which definitively established their collection in writing listed the two main institutional functions of the reports. The first was to guide present and future policy. For this reason the reports variously started with a description of the country and its ruler, but always ended with an analysis of that state's foreign policy, including its relations with Venice. Oral delivery in the Senate was to introduce an equally oral debate, so weighty that the government required patricians related to prelates (the *papalisti*) to leave during the delivery of reports on Rome, and barred the ambassador's retinue from entering the council hall.⁷³ Thus *relazioni* made for serious business. As the Senate explained, transcripts were necessary because those who heard spoken reports were too busy to learn them by heart, and for the instruction of future patricians.⁷⁴ As Nicolò Tiepolo put it at the beginning of his 1532 report, the information contained in *relazioni* "greatly benefits" rulers for two reasons: first, "because rulers can correct or improve their

government by emulating the virtues... and avoiding the mistakes” of others; and second, because information allows them to “prepare against suspicions.”⁷⁵ So, a colleague stated in 1506, ambassadorial reports were part of the provisions of a “*bene instituita republica*.”⁷⁶ Once written down, *relazioni* constituted a long inventory of the resources, strengths, and weaknesses of neighbours, enemies, and allies—a record of past data that might serve as a guide to forecasting future events. For ease of reference, in 1636 the two patricians in charge of the Republic’s archive suggested that each ambassador prepare an index of his report (as an archivist was to do with older ones), “so that [*relazioni*] may more easily serve in all occasions of public service.”⁷⁷ The archival collection of *relazioni* was also to help future ambassadors prepare themselves. In the months prior to their departure, the Republic allowed ambassadors-elect access to the Senate, “to instruct themselves about the affairs of the world,” and to the secret archive, where they could ask for “copies of those writings which might be useful for the affairs of the court to which they are destined, so that well enlightened and instructed they may more aptly serve our affairs.”⁷⁸ Understanding the *relazioni*’s didactic function inside the government helps revise the assumption of those historians who, in contrast with Ranke’s enthusiasm, suggested that Venetian ambassadors gained no reliable information on their host countries because they rotated too quickly (every two or three years).⁷⁹ In fact, the Venetian government used the *relazioni*, among other devices, to ensure the continuous preparation of its representatives.

The other function of *relazioni* as spelled out in the 1524 decree was to make it possible to assess an ambassador’s own conduct, and when appropriate to praise him “*ad exemplo de altri*.”⁸⁰ In Venice as elsewhere in medieval and early modern Europe, a degree of anxiety surrounded the negative consequences that might arise from contacts between ambassadors and foreign princes.⁸¹ The earliest law we have considered, requiring ambassadors to report on their missions in 1268, specifically asked them to account for their handling of state funds and obliged them to surrender any gifts received abroad.⁸² The government’s control was as much political as economic. Not for nothing did all governmental representatives submit their reports to the council that originally sent them on their missions with precise “commissions” spelling out their obligations and the limits of their powers. *Relazioni* were end-of-mission reports and, properly speaking, constituted the last act required of an ambassador (as Bernardo Navagero began his in 1546, “this *relazione*, which is the last

part of my embassy”).⁸³ Donald Queller affirmed that by the sixteenth century *relazioni* lost this specific function to become texts of general information.⁸⁴ But in fact, they continued to include material about the ambassador’s own diplomatic achievements, or about the difficulties he encountered, especially when he was instrumental to the conclusion of a treaty, or when he served at a particularly charged time.⁸⁵ Moreover, ambassadors extraordinary (“*straordinari*”), who were sent on shorter missions for special tasks, always devoted their *relazioni* to the affairs they handled. To sum up, inside Venetian institutions *relazioni* had two equally important and eminently political functions: to guide public policy, and to check on the private individuals carrying out that policy. As we shall see now, ambassadors were unsurprisingly more eager to emphasize the former than the latter.

Authors

Relazioni had a use not just for the government, but also for their authors. Embassies were highly prestigious but extremely onerous tasks, especially as the expenses far surpassed the ambassador’s emolument. Personal and economic costs had to be offset by the political advancement gained.⁸⁶ Unsurprisingly, then, ambassadors used reports to advertise their skilfulness and dedication—after all, the 1524 decree seen above also allowed for the possibility that reporting might lead to praise, “for the encouragement of others.” Diarists such as Sanudo regularly recorded the approval ambassadors received, and around 1500 an anonymous French description of Venice mentioned that the doge’s response to the *relazione* was “a thing of which Venetian gentlemen take great account.”⁸⁷ Once again, performance during delivery mattered greatly, as ambassadors tried to capitalize on the grandeur of the occasion at greater length in person than in the written versions they later handed into the archive. For example, Carlo Contarini’s written report contained only a very vague recommendation of himself and his secretary. But we know that, when speaking in the Senate, he dwelt on the expenses he incurred on his mission and implored the doge to let him keep a gift he received while abroad.⁸⁸ Clearly, he thought it important to trumpet his efforts in person. Ambassadors also consistently eulogized their secretaries and successors, possibly with an eye to winning the favour of the many relatives and friends who sat in the audience. Such networking must have

been an overriding concern, particularly as ambassadors would soon become eligible to other posts; yet, if we judge on the basis of the printed editions, which often omit these passages, we miss the point altogether.

The written copies eventually handed into the archive, and circulated as we have seen, were generally polished texts. Modern historians believe that ambassadors concentrated on information without worrying about flourish. But this is to ignore that content and form influence each other, to neglect the literary qualities of *relazioni*, and to misunderstand the intention of their authors.⁸⁹ After all, like all Venetian patricians, ambassadors had a profound training in both the theory and practice of rhetoric.⁹⁰ We can point out some of the rules of their genre.

The first was that, in an aristocratic body of equals, *captatio benevolentiae* required that ambassadors balance self-praise with modesty, declaring their homage to the prudence of the forefathers and their devotion to the benefit of the public. In 1506 Vincenzo Querini began his *relazione* by stating that he had served “not because of my merit, but out of the generosity of the Senate” (“*non per mio merito ma per benignità di questo senato*”), a way of paying respect to the patrician ideal of selfless dedication to the public.⁹¹ Returning from England in 1557, Giovanni Michiel began his *relazione* stating that such complex matters “would require a person with more wisdom and experience than I have,” but then went on to write a very long piece in three parts (the modern printed edition spans almost 100 pages).⁹² Ambassadors were to remark on the experience they had gained while also showing respect for the experience of their audience. As an ambassador observed in 1532, he was well aware that some of his listeners in the Senate had themselves been ambassadors to the same court, although he added that they should listen to him all the same because “the affairs of princes and human states change every day in different ways.”⁹³

A second point, then, was to stress the novelty of the situation the ambassadors encountered, or the particular difficulty of the mission they carried out. For example, Piero Gritti, ambassador to Spain in 1616–19 at a time of war between Venice and the Habsburgs, stressed that in less than 40 months of service he had to deal with “the hardest occurrences and the most dangerous accidents.” Interestingly, he suggested that precisely such difficulties made his report important, as showed by physicians, who “learn the temperance of our bodies and the quality of our complexions when we are ill better than when we are in perfect health.”⁹⁴

In exhaling their own qualities, ambassadors had to praise dedication more than skill. In 1546 Bernardo Navagero alluded to his many sacrifices obliquely, by asking to keep a gift of Charles V only as a sign of the Senate's liberality and "not because I have been through battlefields, often without anything to eat or drink, forced to sleep on the naked soil while waiting for my carriages; not because I have seen seven or eight of my servants die; not because I have lost four mules and two horses—he was strangely more accurate in counting animals than servants—not because I have had to go through areas infected of plague or because I have put my life in danger a thousand times; not because I have spent most of my estate for Your Serenity. About all this I wish you to hear from others not from me."⁹⁵ Thirty years later, Giovanni Michiel flaunted his sacrifices throughout a whole career of service on Venice's behalf, saying that he came home "used up in these duties, it being more than twenty-six years without interruption that I have been wearing out my boots. I can honestly say that traveling on your orders I have followed every valley, crossed every mountain, and passed over every river in Europe."⁹⁶ As these examples show, the best line was to exalt one's worth in the form of devotion and so to couch achievement in the republican language of service.

A further point regards the *relazioni's* assertion of accuracy, a common feature of the report genre. Ambassadors were unlike the authors of other texts of information because they generally did not have to stress the veracity of their reports. No one doubted—at least in the Senate—the report's authenticity, because every one knew the speaker to have just come back from his mission, and so his capacity as eyewitness was so obvious that it could remain implicit. It was after the moment of delivery, as we have seen, that publishers had to stress the authenticity of *relazioni* in titles or paratextual apparatus, because they reproduced texts which had hitherto been hidden, and therefore were "curious" yet unverifiable.⁹⁷ In some cases, however, ambassadors did enter the text to underline their own participation in, or at least eyewitnessing of, particular events. This gave the text an immediacy which would have impressed on listeners a sense of reality, one that was especially important in the case of exceptional circumstances. For example, in recounting in 1559 the violence at the death of Paul IV, Bernardo Navagero frequently recurred to the first person: "I have seen, most Serene Prince... all the people of Rome riot... break the prisons... run in fury... I saw the people go in great multitude and with great noise..."⁹⁸ Because they knew their colleague to have witnessed it, the patricians

of the *Serenissima* must have felt all the more shocked by the graphic depiction of violence. Other times, the narrator recounts seeing something because he wants to confirm second-hand knowledge. Thus in 1589 the ambassador, returning from Savoy at a time of war, said that “*opinione universale*” held a particular fortress as the key to the duchy, and he agreed, saying, “I have been able to see from far away the quality of that location.”⁹⁹ Ambassadors knew they had to surround themselves with informers and knew that their own success depended on their informers’ reliability. In turn, they pledged their own reputation as a guarantee of their sources’ worth. Another strategy was to insert the audience into the text, by making comparisons between the institutions, customs, and culture of the countries visited and those of the motherland. For example, in 1532 Nicolò Tiepolo, who followed Emperor Charles V through his many realms, contrasted with German the Latin origin of the French language, “*come anco la nostra Italiana*,” and compared the treasure bonds in Spain (*Giuri*) to the Venetian *Monti*.¹⁰⁰ From comparison might come inspiration; in such cases, ambassadors used their report to put forward a particular political opinion, thus using news from abroad to influence policy at home. This could merely refer to specific questions (such as how to pay judges, on the basis of the French example in 1546).¹⁰¹ Or it might involve broader foreign models, whether positive or negative. The most famous instance of the latter case is the *relazione* of Marco Foscari, ambassador to Florence in 1527, where he witnessed the establishment of a republic following the sack of Rome.¹⁰² It is an elaborate text, full of classical citations and based on Machiavelli’s *Istorie fiorentine* and other Florentine political texts.¹⁰³ Foscari’s *relazione* disparaged the “popular” nature of the Florentine Republic; it has therefore been seen as a text in support of Venice’s aristocratic version of republicanism. However, the point is not that Foscari voiced Venetian political culture as a whole, but more specifically, that his report represented the most oligarchic group inside the patriciate. It was part of a fight inside Venice, a means of influencing governmental policy. For this reason, having first delivered his report upon his return, five years later Foscari went on to circulate a much more elaborate version. At this time, the Florentine republic was over, yet its disastrous experience could (Foscari thought) teach something to the Venetians just when doge Andrea Gritti, Foscari’s cousin and ally, was promoting a series of oligarchical reforms for the concentration of power in the restricted Council of Ten.¹⁰⁴ Gritti’s political reforms failed, largely because of the opposition they encountered. It is

no coincidence, then, that an anti-oligarchic patrician like Sanudo disliked the report when Foscarei first delivered it in the Senate.¹⁰⁵

As ambassadors had political objectives that lasted beyond the moment of oral delivery, the circulation of *relazioni* was crucial. One of the most striking such examples concerns the report by one of the two Venetian ambassadors who signed the peace of Paris between Venice and the Austrian Habsburgs in 1617, Ottaviano Bon.¹⁰⁶ The Senate resented the terms of the peace as granting unnecessary concessions and believed the ambassadors acted beyond the terms of their commissions. When the other ambassador, in his own *relazione*, accused Bon of having struck the deal without his consent, Bon used his report to justify his actions.¹⁰⁷ He accepted responsibility for the treaty and described it as reasonable in view of Venice's difficult conditions. In fact, he turned the blame for the imperfections of the treaty on those who had favoured war in the first place. In presenting his report to the archive, he said he offered it as a lasting record in defence of his conduct for the benefit of the Senate. Having failed to convince the Senate, however, Bon was barred from office and banned to Padua. A year later, he therefore went about circulating the *relazione* as effectively as possible, asking his brother and nephew (back in Venice) to prepare copies for distribution among relatives and political allies. At the same time, he also made a substantial donation to the college for the children of poor noble families—his was clearly a wide-ranging strategy to garner support and reverse his political disgrace. It worked, for a few months later he was pardoned and given an important mainland governorship. The Inquisitors of State opened a formal enquiry into the *relazione*'s leak, and the Senate ordered all copies destroyed, but the leaks served Bon's personal cause well. Moreover, it served the strategy of his anti-war party, because it took place precisely when the Senate was debating whether to resume war against the Habsburgs. It was in this context that, as Bon told the Inquisitors, he thought his text could function “as a warning and a call to wakefulness” (“*per avvertimento et risvegliamento*”).¹⁰⁸

Readers

Interrogated by the Inquisitors of State, Bon tried to play down the circulation of his *relazione*: “what happened to me is what happens in all cases of *relazioni*, because they are curious and desired things.”¹⁰⁹ He knew that his report would

enjoy a large readership because *relazioni* excited curiosity. The Inquisitors' enquiry reveals a large number of readers indeed. The first were part of a close political group of friends, relatives, and other like-minded patricians (all members of the anti-war Corner, Valier, and Bon families), to whom Bon gave copies.¹¹⁰ As readers became producers of further copies, the report reached others, including also Bon's adversaries (one of whom duly denounced the leak). As the Inquisitors retorted, the report was read "publicly, in the Great Council, in the city's squares, and everywhere" ("*publicamente in gran consiglio, nelle piazze, et da per tutto*").¹¹¹ Some patricians sought the *relazione* for political reasons; others for curiosity, like Agostino Bembo, who said he had been "moved by such curiosity, having heard that rumours of this text circulated in the squares" ("*portatovi da una curiosità così fatta, intendendo che caminava alle piazze la voce di questa scrittura*").¹¹² Not all readers were patricians. While visiting Bon in Padua, the physician Alvise Biscacciante was given a copy, which he read aboard the boat taking him back to Venice and then discussed at a party in his home. As he explained, "after dinner the women began playing and we began reading" (interestingly, several of his guests said that they had already seen it). Later, Biscacciante also lent the report to a patient.¹¹³

Clearly, *relazioni* had a number of uses not just for authors, but for their authors' associates, patrons, clients, and allies, as well as for opponents and neutral people. Different readers made different uses of *relazioni*, which have left a trace on the physical aspect of the numerous extant exemplars. All copies of Bon's report contain slight variations in the spelling, the syntax and the distribution of paragraphs; the titles also varied ("*Manifesto*," "*Giustificazione*," "*Scrittura in scarico*," "*Scrittura di Escolpatione*," "*Scrittura per giustificarsi*."¹¹⁴ Some carry scathing remarks against Bon by loyal Venetians—who, however, kept the *relazione* rather than destroy it as the Senate ordered.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, rather than as sections of compilations, it is much more common to find copies of this document as separates, often bound in parchment, originally circulating independently, at times with a paratextual apparatus of their own and under different titles (not just *relazione*, but *Manifesto*, *Giustificazione*, *Scrittura di Escolpatione*, etc.)¹¹⁶

The flexibility of the manuscript medium enabled a plurality of uses. For example, many of the numerous extant exemplars of Marco Foscarini's report on Florence do not contain the part on the city's government, perhaps because they belonged to readers who failed to share Foscarini's criticism of democratic

rule.¹¹⁷ Similarly, when in 1606 Piero Priuli, ambassador-elect to France, prepared himself for his mission, the manner in which he made a copy of the latest available *relazione* on that country shows that he was ready to update and modify the text.¹¹⁸ He did not transcribe the entire report, but only those parts that he still considered relevant: the wealth of the crown, the confessional divisions, and the relations with the papacy (crucial at the time of Priuli's mission, when Venice was verging on conflict with the Holy See). He left out the parts concerning the now-dead king Henri III, divided the text into headed paragraphs, and changed its original order. All this shows that those who acquired, transcribed, collected, and exchanged *relazioni* were not intent on preserving an original so much as on adapting it to their circumstances, re-writing it at least in part to appropriate it. Moreover, having read a report, others could also reply, like Jacopo Nardi, a republican Florentine exile in Venice who authored a rebuttal of Foscarini's *relazione* entitled "discourse against Florence's slanderers."¹¹⁹ In other words, the *relazioni*'s circulation defined political allegiances, both for and against an opinion.

To most Venetian patricians *relazioni* were political texts, animating a debate on foreign and home politics. Different readers had different reasons to be interested in their contents. Some looked for up-to-date intelligence. In 1612 the Spanish ambassador was reportedly prepared to pay dear ("*una buona mano di cechini*": a fair handful of gold coins) for the most recent *relazione* on Spain. Two years later, he passed the Spanish governor of Milan a copy of the *relazione* about the Venetian border town of Bergamo, which included precious military and economic data.¹²⁰ Especially for non-Venetian readers, *relazioni* contained valuable information about their own or other countries, and about Venice's attitude to those countries. But older ones had a value too. In 1692, the agent of the Duke of Modena in Venice offered his master to procure an entire collection, including ancient chronicles, political treatises, as well as *relazioni*—and all for a hundred ducats.¹²¹

Beyond patricians and ambassadors, *relazioni* had a use for a large variety of other people. They played an important role in the education of the politically informed. In 1646, an anonymous report about Venice addressed to a papal nuncio destined to the city stated that young patricians "apply themselves to studies, especially geography and history, manuscript *relazioni* and other similar writings, in order to acquire knowledge of the interests of princes and to be able to discourse freely about the things of the world" ("*Questi si applicano*

agli studi, come particolarmente di Geografia, d'Istorie, di relazioni manoscritte e simili, per acquistare informazione dell'interessi de' Principi e per poter francamente discorrere delle cose del mondo").¹²² Outside Venice too, *relazioni* were described as repositories of worldly wisdom. In 1598, Scipione Ammirato's *Discorsi sopra Tacito* argued that, thanks to *relazioni*, the Venetians were the best practitioners of "the true art of rulers," which was "to know men."¹²³ The politically informed throughout Europe sought after Venetian *relazioni* and, in his 1633 celebrated bibliography of political texts, Naudé recommended their collection.¹²⁴ Accordingly, *relazioni* filled the libraries of Italian and European literati, whom birth often excluded from government, but who constructed their careers upon the intelligence which they could offer their more powerful contemporaries. One example was the Neapolitan Giovan Vincenzo Pinelli, not a patrician like Sanudo, but the owner in Padua of a large collection of manuscripts and printed books.¹²⁵ His library, acquired by cardinal Federico Borromeo and now in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, boasts several volumes of *relazioni*.¹²⁶ An anonymous text, written in Rome and stored in Pinelli's collection together with texts about reason of state, affirms the need for princes to keep accurate information, derived from manuscript documents rather than printed histories.¹²⁷ Another, remarkable text, bound in the same volume, summarizes schematically the "true knowledge that is necessary in order to govern well a state" ("*Per governar bene un stato è necessario haver notitia vera de...*"): "the customs of the powerful, their worth, counsel and those of the prince," "offensive weapons and defenses," "the valour and nature (obedient or seditious) of the people," "the income and expenses," "the location of the country (well situated, abundant, well fortified, etc.)." The text singled out ambassadors as valuable means of information, and we know that these were some of the most important points discussed in all Venetian *relazioni*. So we may conclude that there was a degree of coincidence between the authors' text and the expectations of their readers.

If Pinelli and Borromeo were obviously elite readers, the first printed collections of *relazioni* (see above, p. 35–36) enlarged the readership of *relazioni* to a wider public: "newly printed for the benefit of those who enjoy understanding and conversing aptly about affairs of state" ("*nuovamente impresso a beneficio di chi si diletta intendere & pertinentemente discorrere li negotii di stato.*").¹²⁸ In the preface of a later edition, the publisher stated that "some believe that the matters of state governance belong only to rulers,... but today few are the

noble or spirited gentlemen who do not delight in such things.” He gave three explanations for this: “because great things bring delight”; because they provide a model for lesser activities, such as the government of cities and of one’s household; and finally because, as part of philosophy, politics is of interest to “lettered persons who search the truest causes of nature in the great machinery of the world.”¹²⁹ Such readers expected *relazioni* to reveal the mechanisms of politics and human nature and to open access to polite conversation and exclusive circles; *relazioni* held the promise of both intellectual reward and social distinction. At a time of otherwise limited information, even owning one was a sign of wisdom, a guarantee of insight, which one could boast in public, as many did in the streets of Venice.¹³⁰

Beyond politics strictly conceived, *relazioni* inspired the curiosity of all those interested in travel and the exotic. A good example is Pietro Bizzarri’s history of Persia (1583), a successful work which underwent several editions and appealed to a wide if knowledgeable public interested in the Shah’s kingdom and its relations with Eastern and Middle Eastern countries. The second edition (1601) added excerpts from the reports of several Venetian ambassadors, all translated into Latin for the purpose.¹³¹ We should not underestimate the sheer pleasure afforded by reading such reports. This must have been the case, for example, of a special report attributed to an ambassador we have already encountered, Ottaviano Bon, about Istanbul’s Serail. Covering not only points of diplomatic etiquette in the sultan’s palace, but also the life of the hidden women and slaves, it is still in print even in English as “an intimate portrait of life at the Ottoman court.” Although he probably based his report on much hearsay, Bon recounted how he entered thanks to the sultan’s temporary absence. The text circulated widely in manuscript, was printed in English translation in London in 1625, and there went through three editions.¹³² In reading a manuscript copy, even a Venetian *monsignor* declared his frisson, a kind of voyeurism which was at once political and sexual.¹³³

Finally, long before Ranke, historians regarded *relazioni* as reliable sources, and either summarized or excerpted entire passages in their published work. For this purpose, since 1516 Venice’s official historians, patricians who occasionally themselves served as ambassadors abroad, were given access to the archive.¹³⁴ Other historians were Venetians, but not patricians, such as the popular author Giovanni Nicolò Doglioni (1548–1629). He referred to *relazioni* as the source of one of his world chronicles (“*estrahendola da Libri diuersi*,

è stampati è à penna, è parte anco da relationi”); as he proudly explained, this was a sign of his work’s reliability. That he was a government clerk may well have helped him in obtaining his *relazioni*.¹³⁵ Writing in Venice about Charles V in the 1560s, Francesco Sansovino, polymath author and publisher, used the reports by two Venetian ambassadors to that emperor.¹³⁶ Foreigners did the same. In his history of Mary Tudor’s reign (1560), the Ferrarese Giulio Raviglio Rosso used Giovanni Michiel’s report on England, only three years old, which he perhaps obtained thanks to his connections with the Venetian patricians of the Accademia Venetiana.¹³⁷ In a mixed historical-juridical use, others relied on *relazioni* to prove privileges and rights, like Antoine Aubery’s *De la préminence de nos roys* (published in Paris, 1649), which included passages from the reports by Bernardo Navagero on Rome (1559) and by Michele Suriano on France (1562). In 1589, much earlier than Ranke, the *Tesoro politico* described *relazioni* as superior to and more accurate than printed histories.¹³⁸

Conclusion

Awareness of the different uses of *relazioni* enriches our own use of these texts in all fields of historical enquiry. In political history, in the context of republican Venice, *relazioni* were clearly the expression not of the Republic as a whole, but on the contrary of the factions, which the Republic detested. In a way which it would be impossible to imagine if we thought of *relazioni* only as secret texts locked in archives, they were not just means of information, but texts of action in support of particular political visions and policies, useful to rally friends and to expose enemies, and eventually meant to exert influence on policy-making. Together, they channeled the critical debate that Venice’s most serene republicanism feared yet invited despite itself. Ranke thought *relazioni* would tell him “how history really was”; but clearly their authors disagreed as to how things actually were on the ground both in the present and in the immediate past, and so did the many people who sought, read, and transcribed *relazioni*. Furthermore, by understanding *relazioni* as pieces in a debate—texts which stimulated further texts—we can appreciate their meaning and their contribution to intellectual history. Marco Foscarini’s oligarchic take on republican Florence is famous. But consider the relatively unknown report by Bon on the peace of Paris of 1617. Bon resorted to all the classic tropes

of Venetian pacifism, the same for which Machiavelli famously stigmatized Venice; he agreed with the great supporter of republican neutralism, Paolo Paruta, that all republics ought to avoid war. The strongest rejoinder to Bon, by Paolo Sarpi, not only replied point by point in favour of the Venetian conduct of the 1615–17 war, but made the most powerful rebuttal of the classic arguments for neutralism. He argued that only civil wars were detrimental to republics, and added that good governments showed their worth precisely in the face of external wars.¹³⁹ In the context of Venice's intellectual tradition, these are staggeringly original thoughts. Finally, the circulation of *relazioni* sheds light on a neglected aspect of cultural history. By understanding the multiple, often contradictory uses of *relazioni* by a whole variety of readers with different education and connections, we can gain a more inclusive understanding of political culture as far exceeding the government alone. This is an idea that, unlike Ranke, I think we should welcome.

Notes

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1. See Amelio Tagliaferri, ed., *Relazioni dei rettori veneti in terraferma*, 14 vols. (Milan: Giuffrè, 1973–79).
2. Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote. A Curious History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), pp. 34–93; cf. Peter Burke, “Ranke the Reactionary,” in *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, ed. Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), pp. 36–44.
3. “Uno de' più sodi fondamenti e sussidj, che s'abbiano gli Scrittori di Storie,” “Storici componimenti,” Marco Foscarini, *Della Letteratura Veneziana* (Padova: Giovanni Manfrè, 1752), p. 460.
4. Gabriel Naudé, *Bibliographia politica* (Venice: Baba, 1633; reprinted Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1961), pp. 84–85.

5. For a wider interpretation of the world of political information in early modern Venice, see Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
6. Quoted in Theodore von Laue, *Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 119.
7. Leopold von Ranke, *The Popes of Rome; their Church and State in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 2 vols. (Glasgow, Edinburgh and London: Blackie and Son, 1846–47), vol. 2, p. 362.
8. Leopold von Ranke, *Zur Venezianischen Geschichte*, Sämtliche Werke, 42 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1878), p. 175.
9. Leopold von Ranke, *The Ottoman and the Spanish Empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1843), p. 2.
10. Edward Muir, ed., *The Leopold Von Ranke Manuscript Collection of Syracuse University: The Complete Catalogue* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1983), and Ugo Tucci, “Ranke and the Venetian Document Market,” in *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, ed. G.G. Iggers and J.M. Powell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), pp. 99–107.
11. “*Ich habe meine Hauptabsicht auf das Venezianische Archiv gerichtet. Hier ruht eine noch unbekannte Geschichte von Europa.*” Leopold Von Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walther Peter Fuchs (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), p. 111 (25 August 1827).
12. “*In Venedig ist es mir, als sei ich in una casa mia zurückgekehrt,*” Ranke, *Briefwerk*, p. 216 (6 August 1830); “*Für Venedig habe ich eine Passion,*” Ranke, *Briefwerk*, p. 217 (6 August 1830).
13. Ranke, *Briefwerk*, p. 126–27 (end of November 1827).
14. Ranke, *Briefwerk*, p. 494 (26 August 1868).
15. It is no coincidence that Ranke gave the most detailed description of the archive in a work on the 1618 conspiracy which was a staple of the “black legend” of Venice and a fascinating event for novelists at the time. Filippo de Vivo, “Quand le passé résiste à ses historiographies: Venise et le XVII^e siècle,” *Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques* 28–29 (2002), pp. 223–34, and Kathrin Maurer, *Discursive Interaction: Literary Realism and Academic Historiography in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2006). For a political interpretation of Ranke’s “archival turn,” which I only read after completing this article, see Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, “Leopold Ranke’s Archival Turn: Location and Evidence in Modern Historiography,” *Modern Intellectual History* 5 (2008), pp. 425–53.

16. Willy Andreas, *Staatskunst und Diplomatie der Venezianer im Spiegel ihrer Gesandtenberichte* (Lepizig: Von Quelle & Meyer, 1908); Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Idee des Staatsräson* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1924).
17. Myron Gilmore, "Myth and Reality in Venetian Political Theory," in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J.R. Hale (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 431–44; Angelo Ventura, "Introduzione," in *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato* (Bari-Rome: Laterza, 1976), pp. v–cvi; and "Scrittori politici e scritture di governo," in *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. 3/III *Dal primo Quattrocento al Concilio di Trento*, ed. G. Arnaldi and M. Pastore-Stocchi (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1981), pp. 513–63. See also Gino Benzoni, "Flash sull'Europa: le relazioni dei diplomatici veneziani," in *Europa. Storie di viaggiatori italiani* (Milano: Nuovo Banco Ambrosiano / Electa, 1988), pp. 108–31; "A proposito della fonte prediletta di Ranke, ossia le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneziani," *Studi veneziani* 16 (1988), pp. 245–57; "Ritrarre con la penna, ossia gli ambasciatori veneti ritrattisti," *Studi veneziani* 32 (1996), pp. 29–48.
18. "Werke eines Geistes... Kunstwerke einer politischen Kultur," Andreas, p. 124.
19. Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955).
20. Donald E. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation on Ambassadors* (Geneva: Droz, 1966), and "Newly discovered early Venetian legislation on ambassadors," in *Two Studies on Venetian Government* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), pp. 7–98; see also Queller's *The Office of the Ambassador in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), "How to Succeed as An Ambassador: A Sixteenth Century Venetian Document," *Studia gratiana* (1972), pp. 653–71, and "The Development of Ambassadorial *Relazioni*," in Hale (ed.), pp. 174–96.
21. "L'ambasciatore veneto è un tipo, un modello; le sue *relazioni* sono l'espressione classica dell'attività diplomatica." See Carlo Morandi, ed., *Relazioni di ambasciatori sabaudi genovesi e veneti durante il periodo della Grande Alleanza e della successione di Spagna* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1935), p. liiii. For the recent revival of diplomatic history see Daniela Frigo, ed., *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
22. For the renewed interest in publishing diplomatic sources, cf. *Istruzioni agli ambasciatori e inviati medicei in Spagna e nell'Italia spagnola (1536–1648)*, ed. A. Contini, F. Martelli and Cristina Calasso (Rome: Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali, 2007), 2 vols.

23. Robert Mantran, "Venise, centre d'informations sur les Turcs," in *Venezia centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente (secoli XV–XVI)*, ed. Hans-Georg Beck, Manoussos Manoussacas, and Agostino Pertusi (Florence: Olschki, 1977), pp. 111–16; Stefano Andretta, "L'immagine della Spagna negli ambasciatori e negli storiografi veneziani del Seicento," in *La Repubblica inquieta. Venezia nel Seicento tra Italia ed Europa* (Rome: Carocci, 2000), pp. 71–94; in this spirit, see also Marina Zancan, "Venezia e il Veneto," in *Letteratura Italiana. Storia e geografia*, ed. A. Asor Rosa, v. 2/1 (Torino: Einaudi, 1988), pp. 619–741, especially 651–57.
24. Lucette Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).
25. Benzoni, "A proposito," p. 254.
26. Eugenio Albèri, ed., *Le relazioni degli Ambasciatori Venetiani al Senato durante il secolo decimosesto*, 15 vols. (Firenze: Società editrice fiorentina, 1839–63); Nicolò Barozzi and Guglielmo Berchet, eds. *Le relazioni degli stati europei lette al Senato dagli ambasciatori veneziani nel secolo decimosettimo*, 10 vols. (Venezia: Naratovich, 1856–78).
27. When Luigi Firpo organized a massive publication of all *relazioni*, he had all previous editions photographically reproduced, without alterations, Firpo, ed., *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato. Tratte dalle migliori edizioni disponibili e ordinate cronologicamente* 14 vols (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1975–96).
28. Albèri, v. 1, p. 140n and pp. 195n and 288n. Compare for example Sanudo's and Albèri's versions of Gasparo Contarini's *relazione* about Spain (1525): Marino Sanudo, *I Diarii*, eds R. Fulin, et al., 58 vols. (Venezia: Regia Deputazione veneta di storia patria, 1879–1903), v. 40, p. 286, and Albèri, s. 1, v. 2, pp. 11–73, and note how Vincenzo Querini's 1506 praise of his secretary Anzolo Trevisan (Sanudo, v. 7: 191–93) is missing from Albèri, s. 1, v. 6, pp. 5–58. On this point see Ventura, 'Nota al testo', in Ventura (ed.), *Relazioni: LXXXI*, and now Claire Judde de Larivière, "Les *relazioni* des ambassadeurs vénitiens ou l'expression du for privé dans des documents publics (XVI^e siècle)," in *Car c'est moy que je peins. Ecritures de soi, individus et liens sociaux*, ed. Sylvie Mouysset, Jean-Pierre Bardet, Jean-François Ruggiu (Toulouse: Méridiennes, 2011), pp. 205–20.
29. D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London: British Library, 1986); Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England. The Lyell Lectures, Oxford 1995–1996* (Oxford:

- Clarendon Press, 1998); Brian Richardson, *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
30. Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 77.
 31. For example, Alvise Mocenigo's 1761 report on Naples in Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), *Collegio, Relazioni* b. 18 is part of the same manuscript as his 1739 report; see *Aspetti e momenti della diplomazia veneziana* (Venezia: Archivio di Stato, 1982), p. 28.
 32. There were few exceptions, for example in the case of ambassadors going from one representation to the next without coming back home. Some sent a written text, as in the case of Anzolo Correr, who sent his report about England from Richmond in 1637, before setting off for a new embassy in France in 1637; see Barozzi and Berchet, s. 4, v. 1, pp. 321–40. Others waited to deliver their report in the Senate till they came home eventually, as in the case of Antonio Foscarini, ambassador to France and then England in 1607–1616, who covered both embassies in a single report (this, however, was subdivided into two volumes in the modern edition, see Barozzi and Berchet, s. 2, v. 1, pp. 297–300 and s. 4, v. 1, pp. 167–88).
 33. Queller, "The Development," pp. 184–85; see also Giuseppe Boerio, *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano* (Venezia: Andrea Santini e figlio, 1829), *sub voce* "referir."
 34. See Sanudo. An incomplete list of the *relazioni* mentioned by Sanudo appears in Armand Baschet, *Les Archives de Venise* (Paris: Plon, 1870), p. 340.
 35. "Di veludo negro andò in renga et fe' la sua relation coa voce molto bassa, che mal se intendeva, ma molto copiosa... Stete da hore 3 e meza in renga..." Sanudo, v. 40, pp. 285–86.
 36. "Andò in renga [Pregadi] sier Marco Foscari, venuto orator di Fiorenza, et fè la sua relatione. Stete 4 ore in renga, disse assà cose di Fiorenza, si iactò molto... et compito con gran tedio del Consejo." Sanudo, v. 47, pp. 63–64.
 37. Guglielmo Berchet, ed., *Relazioni dei consoli veneti nella Siria* (Torino: Paravia, 1866), p. 130.
 38. Quoted in Valensi, p. 4.
 39. Queller, "Early Venetian Legislation," p. 49.
 40. "Segui poi dicendo prima circa alle cose di Spagna e il Regno, delle Città, e costumi, condition, artigiani, grandi, l'entrate loro..." "Poi segui dicendo delle cose di Hernando Cortes al partir suo di Spagna..." "Poi della persona di Cesare in particolare," Firpo, v. 9, pp. 151–61.
 41. 'Potendo aver da lui alcune cose,' Sanudo, v. 40, pp. 285–96.

42. Sanudo, v. 28, p. 15; see a different summary in Firpo, v. 8, pp. 167–89.
43. De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, pp. 74–75.
44. “*Contrasegno che sij più facile scrivere, che ben parlare, perché al scrivere vi può concorrere più d’uno*,” quoted in Dorit Raines, *L’invention du mythe aristocratique. L’image de soi du patriciat vénitien au temps de la Sérénissime* (Venice: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 2006), p. 275.
45. “*Alcuni nostri parenti senatori, per intender se era cosa che potesse passare, non mi fidando del mio giudicio*,” interrogation of Ottaviano Bon, in Archivio di Stato, Venice (henceforward ASV), *Quarantia Criminale*, b. 137, fasc. 1, trial 228: c. 26; see also below p. 42.
46. Roberto Cessi, ed., *Deliberazioni del Maggiore Consiglio di Venezia*, 2 vols. (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1931–1950), v. 2, p. 102. On some confusions surrounding this law, see Queller, “The Development,” p. 185 and n.
47. Albèri, s. II, vol. 2, p. 123.
48. The decree is published in Arnaldo Segarizzi, ed., *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato* (Bari: Laterza, 1912), v. 1, p. 284; in this paper, see the section on “government,” pp. 36–38.
49. This is the case of the 1532 *relazione* by the ambassador returning from the imperial court; see Sanudo, v. 56, pp. 320–56 and Firpo, v. 9, pp. 173–284.
50. Sanudo, v. 44, pp. 383–84.
51. Franco Gaeta, “La riforma in Germania nelle ‘*relazioni*’ degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato,” in Beck, Manoussacas, and Pertusi, eds., p. 572.
52. Sanudo, v. 53, p. 16.
53. Dispatch dated 26.8.1616, in ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 442, cc. nn. Similar cases in Benzoni, “Flash,” p. 143 and in *Aspetti*, p. 92.
54. The following information is drawn from several miscellanies in the Biblioteca Marciana (BMV) and in the Library of the Museo Correr (MCV), Venice: Mss. Donà 41 (miscellaneous), 47 (reports from France), 51 and 52 (from Switzerland), 146 (Constantinople), 216 (Rome), 219 (various Italian states).
55. MCV, Ms. Donà 41, c. 168.
56. Love, pp. 9–22 and 46–83.
57. Albèri, s. 1, v. 4, p. 406.
58. Reports dated 1.11 and 7.10.1612 in ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 607, fasc. 3, and fasc. 2, cc. nn.
59. *Relatione del viaggio di Girolamo Lando in Inghilterra*, BMV, *Cod. Ital.* VII.984 (7510), cc. 48–93.

60. “Ha costui seminato molte relazioni de Ambascerie de Ambasciatori statti in Inghilterra Francia Spagna et de altreove, descrizione delle cose tutte dell’Arsenale, spese e rendite della Republica et ogni altro affare da terra da mare, con tutte le fortezze di questo Serenissimo Dominio con notta de gli ordinarii presidii da terra et mare.” Report dated 24.5.1618, in ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 609, fasc. 7, cc. nn.
61. De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, pp. 108, 123–24.
62. “Il qual già molto tempo era scrittore,” “fa professione de rellazioni de Ambascerie”; reports dated 26.2 and 14.3.1613, in ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 607, fasc. 4 and 5, cc. nn.
63. MCV, Ms. Donà 216, cc. 259–60v.
64. Francesca Antonibon, *Le relazioni a stampa di ambasciatori* (Padova: Tipografia del seminario, 1939), p. 123.
65. Antonibon provides an (incomplete) list of printed editions.
66. *Tesoro politico, cioè relationi, istruzioni, trattati, e discorsi vari d’ambasciatori, pertinenti alla perfetta cognitione & intelligenza degli stati, interessi & dipendenze de più gran prencipi del mondo* (Colonia: Accademia italiana, 1589). See Tommaso Bozza, *Scrittori politici italiani dal 1550 al 1650. Saggio di bibliografia* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1949), pp. 68–71; Jean Balsamo, “Les origines parisiennes du Thesoro Politico (1589),” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 57 (1995), pp. 7–23; and Simone Testa, “Per una interpretazione del *Thesoro politico* (1589),” *Nuova rivista storica* 85 (2001), pp. 347–62.
67. *Tesoro politico in cui si contengono Relationi, Istruzioni, Trattati, & varij Discorsi, pertinenti alla perfetta intelligenza della Ragion di Stato. Et all’intiera cognitione de gl’Interessi, & dipendenze de’ più gran Prencipi, & Signori del Mondo* (Vicenza: Giorgio Greco, 1602).
68. [Giovanni Sagredo], *Relation de la Cour Impériale faite au Doge de Venise par le sieur S. après son retour d’Allemagne à Venise* (Paris: Cottin, 1670); Domenico Zane, *Relazione succinta del Governo della famosa Corte di Spagna fatta dal Cavaliere Domenico Zane tornato Ambasciadore della Serenissima Repubblica di Venetia* (Cosmopoli: Cottin, 1672).
69. *Recueils de diverses relations remarquables des principales Cours de l’Europe, écrites pour la pluspart par des Ambassadeurs, qui ont résidé à ces Cours; traduites en français d’un manuscrit italien, qui n’a point cy devant été mis en lumière* (Cologne: Chez Pierre du Marteau, 1681); see also *Lettere memorabili, istoriche, politiche, ed erudite*, 4 vols. (Pozzuoli: Bulifon, 1693–1697).
70. MCV, Ms. Donà delle Rose 47.

71. “*Che si trovano parte in secreto e parte alla stampa*,” quoted in Ventura, “Introduzione,” p. lxvii.
72. Eg. “Viaggio per Francia, Fiandra e Germania nel suo ritorno a Venezia” (1608), by Giorgio Giustinani’s secretary Pietro Vico, BMV, *Cod. Ital.* VII.214 (8163), cc. 192–215, and “Descriptione del viaggio di Germania e Polonia” (1684) by Angelo Morosini’s secretary Giacomo Cavanis, cited in *Aspetti*, p. 39.
73. Queller, “Newly discovered legislation,” p. 95; see also p. 31, above. Sadly no records were kept of these discussions, cf. De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, p. 18.
74. Decree of the Senate dated 15.11.1524 in ASV, *Senato Terra*, reg. 23, cc. 149v–150, published in Segarizzi (ed.), *Relazioni*, v. 1, p. 284.
75. ‘*Grandemente giovare nel governo delle repubbliche a coloro che in tale amministrazione son posti, la notizia della natura, qualità, forza e costume dei principi, cittadini e popoli diversi, imperocché da questa cognizione possono essi (imitando le virtù... e schivando i vizi e gli errori...) correggere o meglio fermare lo stato e governo dellle proprie cose loro*’, Albèri, s. 1, v. 1, p. 33.
76. Albèri, s. 1, v. 1, p. 3.
77. ASV, CX, Deliberazioni secrete, f. 40, cc. nn. (document dated 14.4.1636); on this see de Vivo, “Ordering the archive in early modern Venice (1400–1650),” *Archival Science* 10 (2010), pp. 231–48.
78. Laws of 1561, ASV, *Compilazione delle leggi*, b. 14, c. 291, and 1605, in ASV, *Consiglio di X, Comune*, reg. 55, f. 100. I have not been able to find earlier laws, but ambassadors-elect were already allowed into the archive around 1500 at the time of the writing of the “Description ou traictié du gouvernement ou régime de la cite et seigneurie de Venise,” in *Histoire des relations de la France avec Venise du XIII^e siècle à l’avènement de Charles VIII*, ed. P. M. Perret, 2 vols. (Paris: Welter, 1896), v. 2, p. 292.
79. Charles H. Carter, “The Ambassadors of Early Modern Europe: Patterns of Diplomatic Representation in the Early Seventeenth Century,” in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly*, ed. Charles H. Carter (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 278–80.
80. See above, n. 48.
81. Cf. for Florence Riccardo Fubini, “Diplomacy and Government in the Italian City-States of the Fifteenth Century (Florence and Venice),” in Frigo, pp. 34–35.
82. Cessi, v. 2, p. 102.
83. Albèri, v. 1, p. 291.

84. Queller, "The Development."
85. Eg. Sanudo, v. 1, pp. 405–8 (1496); Albèri, v. 10, p. 199 (1572) and v. 15, pp. 387–415 (1574); Barozzi and Berchet, s. 1, v.1, pp. 405–30 (1608), and s. 2, v. 1, pp. 259–87 (1608).
86. Andrea Zannini, "Economic and social aspects of the crisis of Venetian diplomacy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," in Frigo, pp. 109–46.
87. "Qui est chose de quoy les gentilzhommes de Venise tiennent grant compte," "Description ou Traictié," p. 292; see above, n. 78. See Sanudo v. 1, pp. 103 and 615, and v. 2, p. 923.
88. Firpo, v. 9, p. 168; Sanudo, v. 44, p. 384.
89. James C. Davis, ed., *Pursuit of Power: Venetian Ambassadors' Reports on Spain, Turkey, and France in the Age of Philip II, 1560–1600* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 11.
90. De Vivo, "Rhetoric and government in sixteenth-century Venice: some paradoxes," *The Italianist* 27, special supplement "Caro Vitto: Essays in Memory of Vittore Branca" (2007), pp. 188–205.
91. Albèri s. 1, v. 1, p. 3; see Donald Queller, *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).
92. Albèri, s. 1, v. 2, pp. 291–380.
93. Albèri, s. 1, v. 1, p. 34.
94. Piero Gritti, report about Spain, 1620, Barozzi and Berchet, s. 1, v. 1, pp. 497–98.
95. "Né io ardisco domandarla perchè io sia stato alla guerra non avendo molte fiate né da mangiare né da bere, e convenendo dormire sulla nuda e pura terra per non essere arrivati li cariaggi; non per avere veduta la morte di sette o otto miei servitori; non per essermi morti quattro muli e due cavalli, la maggior parte della mia stalla; non per aver passato per molti luoghi sospetti di peste e per avermi esposto a mille altri pericoli della vita; non per avere speso la maggior parte delle facultà mie in servizio e onore di vostra serenità, sì come desio che ella più tosto ciò da altri che da me intenda." Albèri, v. 1, p. 367.
96. Quoted in Davis, p. 8.
97. See also pp. 35–36 above.
98. "Io ho veduto, Serenissimo Principe,... tumultuar tutto il popolo di Roma... andare a romper le prigioni con liberar tutti gl'incarcerati, correr a furia verso la casa di Ripetta deputata per l'Inquisizione... Vidi esso popolo andar con gran moltitudine e romore verso il monastero della Minerva, dove officiano frati dell'ordine di San Domenico..." Albèri, s. 2, v. 4, p. 36.

99. Albèri, s. 1, v. 5, p. 135.
100. Albèri, s. 1, v. 1, pp. 50, 45.
101. Report by Marino Cavalli in Albèri, s. 1, v. 1, p. 227. See also Gaetano Cozzi, *Repubblica di Venezia e Stati italiani. Politica e giustizia dal secolo XVI al secolo XVIII* (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), pp. 171–2.
102. Ventura, “Introduzione,” pp. XLVIII–LVI and Giuseppe Gullino, “Foscari, Marco,” in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, v. 49 (1997), pp. 328–33.
103. See Gigi Corazzol, “Per l’attribuzione a Donato Giannotti della ‘Scrittura di N. Secretario della Repubblica di Firenze,’” *Studi Veneti offerti a Gaetano Cozzi* (Venezia: Il Cardo, 1992), pp. 187–92.
104. Foscari read his report to the Senate on 9 March 1528; in 1533 he handed in a short summary but also composed a longer re-elaboration; see Ventura, pp. 183–84.
105. See above, p. 31.
106. For what follows, see De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, pp. 63–70.
107. Barozzi and Berchet, s. 2, v. 2, pp. 5–31.
108. Interrogation of Bon, ASV, *Quarantia Criminal*, c. 30v.
109. “È da credere, che sia occorso a me quello che occorre a tutti in questi casi di relatione, come cose curiose, et desiderate,” interrogation of Ottaviano Bon, in ASV, *Quarantia Criminal*, c. 27.
110. Initially Bon claimed that he showed the text to “alcuni nostri parenti senatori, per intender se era cosa che potesse passare, non mi fidando del mio giudizio,” ASV, *Quarantia Criminal*, c. 26v.
111. ASV, *Quarantia Criminal*, c. 26v.
112. Interrogation of Agostino Bembo, 5.3.1620, ASV, *Quarantia Criminal*, c. 55v.
113. Interrogation of Biscacciante, 16.11.1619, ASV, *Quarantia Criminal*, cc. 23r–v. The Inquisitors told Bon that it was particularly serious that the *relazione* had been seen by commoners, c. 26v.
114. See respectively: MCV, Ms. Correr 1147; MCV, Cicogna 1124, cc. 83–146v; BMV, *Cod. Ital.* VI.296 (5846), cc.133–48; *ibid.*, cc.168–204; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. *Barberiniano latino* 5308.
115. Eg. MCV, Ms. Donà 450, fasc.15, inscribed “Scrittura piena di bugia e falsità, et perciò abbollita dall’Ecc.mo Senato.”
116. De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, p. 68.
117. The *relazione* also circulated widely, and 50 years later Leonardo Donà said that in Rome one could buy “infinite copie”; MCV Donà 41: 242v, cit. Ventura: lviii.

118. ASV, *Capi del Consiglio di Dieci, Dispacci ambasciatori e residenti*, b.11, cc.199–204; see de Vivo, “Le armi dell’ambasciatore. Voci e manoscritti a Parigi durante l’Interdetto di Venezia,” in *I luoghi della produzione della cultura e dell’immaginario barocco in Italia*, ed. L. Strappini and G. Ragone (Naples: Liguori, 2001), pp. 191–94.
119. “Discorso fatto in Venezia contro ai calunniatori del popolo fiorentino,” in *Vita di Antonio Giacomini Tebalducci e altri scritti minori* (Florence: Barbera, 1867), pp. 227–310.
120. Granzino’s reports dated 7.10.1612 (ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 607 fasc. 1, cc. nn.), 17 and 29.3 and 5.7.1614 (*ibid.*, b. 609, fasc. 1, cc. nn.). More examples in Baschet, pp. 348–50 and 353n.
121. Mario Infelise, *Prima dei giornali. Alle origini della pubblica informazione* (Bari: Laterza, 2002), p. 62.
122. Text published in Andretta, *La Repubblica inquieta*, pp. 205–38, quotation at p. 214.
123. Scipione Ammirato, *Discorsi sopra Cornelio Tacito* (Firenze: Giunti, 1598), pp. 293–97, “Che la vera arte de principi è conoscer gli huomini.”
124. See above, n. 4.
125. Marcella Grendler, “Book Collecting in Counter-Reformation Italy: The Library of Gian Vincenzo Pinelli (1535–1601),” *Journal of Library History* 16 (1981), pp. 143–51.
126. See Adolfo Rivolta, *Catalogo dei codici pinelliani dell’Ambrosiana* (Milano: Tipografia Arcivescovile, 1933), pp. 60, 74, 75.
127. “Consideratione di quanta importanza sia ad un Principe o ad altro Ministro Publico l’havere scritture di Stato,” Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, Ms. R.122 sup, c. 412. I would like to thank Angela Nuovo for pointing me to this document.
128. *Tesoro politico* (1589), title page.
129. “Se ben la materia del gouerno di Stato par ad alcuni, che si appartenga solo à Principi, c’hanno da gouernar sudditi, nondimeno, perche oltr’al diletto, ch’apportano seco le cose grandi, sogliono anche tirarsi in argomento delle minori, & chi ha da trattar’i negotij publici della sua Città, & chi anche le bisogne della propria casa, ne sà ritrar costrutti, pare c’hoggidì pochi siano quei nobili, & Signori di spirito, che di questo non si dilettono; maggiormente ch’essendo parte molto necessaria della Filosofia, ella in ogni tempo è stata soggetto di persone anche letterate, ricercatrici delle cause più uere della natura in questa grân machina del mondo.” *Tesoro politico* (1602): sig. A2r.

130. De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, pp. 62–63.
131. Pietro Bizzarri, *Rerum Persicarum Historia* (Frankfurt: Typis Wechelians, 1601), pp. 487–512 and 630–44.
132. Ottaviano Bon, *The Sultan's Seraglio*, ed. Geoffrey Goodwin (London: Saqi, 1996); see Barozzi and Berchet, s. 5, v. 1, pp. 59–115 and 116–24.
133. Luigi Lollino, *Vita del cavaliere Ottaviano Bon tradotta in lingua volgare* (Venezia: Naratovich, 1854), pp. 9–15.
134. Gaetano Cozzi, “Cultura politica e religione nella ‘pubblica storiografia’ veneziana del ‘500,’” *Bollettino dell’Istituto di Storia della Società e dello Stato veneziano* 5 (1963), pp. 215–94. For example of transcriptions of *relazioni* in official histories, see Stefano Andretta, “L’immagine della Spagna,” pp. 83–4.
135. Giovanni Nicolò Doglioni, *Compendio historico universale di tutte le cose notabili successe nel Mondo* (Venice: Misserini, 1622): sig.s +3, +5v. Doglioni (1548–1629) may have obtained *relazioni* as a clerk in the Venetian chancellery, see Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 378–80.
136. Alfred Morel-Fatio, *Historiographie de Charles-Quint* (Paris: Champion, 1913), pp. 152–53, referring to Francesco Sansovino, *Il Simolacro di Carlo Quinto imperadore*, published in 1567.
137. Giulio Raviglio Rosso, *I successi d’Inghilterra dopo la morte d’Odoardo VI fino alla giunta in quel regno del serenissimo don Filippo d’Austria principe di Spagna* (Ferrara: Di Rossi, 1560) was first published by the Accademia Veneziana in 1558.
138. “Si deve dar maggior fede e credenza alle Relazioni di detti signori ambasciatori, che a qualsivoglia altra historia, anchorchè sia data alla stampa,” quoted in Simone Testa, “Alcune riflessioni sul *Thesoro politico* (1589),” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 64 (2002), p. 684.
139. Paolo Sarpi, *Opere*, ed. G. and Luisa Cozzi (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1969), pp. 1059–70, especially 1063–65.