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The People's Prince: Popular Politics in Early Modern Venice*

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On Friday, April 7, 1595, a solemn procession accompanied the body of Pasquale Cicogna, the eighty-sixth doge of the Venetian Republic, to his final resting place.¹ Ducal funerary processions traditionally involved more than a thousand participants, including Venetian magistrates, ecclesiastics, representatives of the confraternities, and foreign diplomats; many thousands of spectators looked on.² A guard of *Arsenalotti*, workers from the state shipyard, carried Doge Cicogna's bier out of the Ducal Palace and into Piazza San Marco, the political and religious heart of the city and as such the central space for governmental ritual.³ Ducal funeral ceremonies were supposed to be a formal celebration of republican values, underlining the durability of the Venetian state despite the mortality of its doges. But the moment Cicogna's body left the palace the procession was interrupted. In the palace courtyard, in front of the members of the Signoria, the republic's highest executive council,⁴ "all the boys and common people shouted 'Viva, viva, Marino Grimani!'" in a show of enthusiasm for one of Cicogna's

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¹ On Pasquale Cicogna, see Andrea da Mosto, *I dogi di Venezia nella vita pubblica e privata* (Florence, 1977), 305–11; for ducal funerary processions, li–lv; Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, NJ, 1981), 274–76.

² See the report by Mantua's ambassador in Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Carteggio Estero, Venezia (hereafter ASMa, Venezia), b.1527, April 8, 1595.

³ Iain Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco* (London, 2009); Massimo Rospocher and Rosa Salzberg, "'El vulgo zanza': Spazi pubblici, voci a Venezia durante le Guerre d'Italia," *Storica* 48 (2010): 83–120, 98–99.

⁴ The Signoria consisted of the doge, the six ducal councillors, and the three leaders of Venice's highest tribunal (the Quarantia).

prospective successors. Next, in the piazza two or three boys on sedan chairs emerged “dressed in the doge’s clothes and his insignia, followed by the rest who also shouted Grimani’s name. And in this manner they threw the entire procession into disarray,” reported the Spanish ambassador, Francisco de Vera y Aragon.⁵ Meanwhile, the Florentine ambassador, Giovanni Ugucioni, marveled at the boys’ impertinence.⁶

In his pivotal study of Venetian ritual, Edward Muir considered popular protests during ducal funerals “largely incidental”: republican patrician themes dominated Venice’s civic ritual, forming the cornerstone of a shared identity and contributing to popular acceptance of patrician rule.⁷ Yet the interruption of Cicogna’s funeral was more than an incident: it was the expression of popular support for one of the ducal candidates, couched in symbols of Venetian political culture.⁸ The boys’ attire copied the formal ducal costume, while the sedan chairs and cries from the crowd recalled the victory lap that each newly elected doge made in the special palanquin (*pozzetto*) in that same location.⁹ By exploit-

⁵ Archivo General de Simancas, Consejo de Estado, Leg. 1346 (hereafter AGS), April 8, 1595: “q’nel entierre que ayer se hizo de Pascual Cicogna, delante la Signoria todos los muchachos y gente popular dezian à voces altas, ‘viva, viva, Marin Grimani.’ . . . Y e nel mismo acompañamiento ò procession, sacaron dos ò tres muchachos en diversas andas con el vestido e’ insignias del dux, siguiendo les los de mas con el grido come hè dhó. Y desta manera rompieron por toda la procession.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. On protesting boys, see Ottavia Niccoli, “Compagnie di bambini nell’Italia del Rinascimento,” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 51, no. 2 (1989): 346–74; Samuel K. Cohn, *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200–1425; Italy, France, and Flanders* (Cambridge, 2006), 93–94; Andrea Zorzi, “Rituals of Youthful Violence in Late Medieval Italian Urban Societies,” in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Italian Ritual: Studies in Italian Urban Culture*, ed. Samuel Cohn Jr., Marcello Fantoni, Franco Franceschi, and Fabrizio Ricciardelli (Turnhout, 2013), 235–68.

⁶ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato (hereafter ASF, MdP), b.2994, April 8, 1595: “la libertà delle grida e dell’attione di quelli putti m’ha fatto maravigliare.”

⁷ Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 272–73. There is an abundance of historiography on political ceremonies, but good places to start are *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages*, ed. Sean Wilentz (Philadelphia, 1985); and Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), particularly the chapter on government as a ritual process.

⁸ On popular culture and disruptive rituals, see Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 51–91; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978). For Venice, see Linda L. Carroll, “Carnival Rites as Vehicles of Protest in Renaissance Venice,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 4 (1985): 487–502; and Peter Burke, “The Carnival of Venice,” in his *Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge, 1987), 183–90. Inhabitants of Rome also mimicked papal election procedures and celebratory rituals: see Laurie Nussdorfer, “The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, no. 2 (1987): 173–89.

⁹ On ducal dress, see Da Mosto, *I dogi*, xl–xli; Alberto Tenenti, “La rappresentazione del potere,” in *I dogi*, ed. Gino Benzoni (Milan, 1982), 83–85.

ing the ritual space of the piazza and the presence of an audience including Venetian and foreign dignitaries, the boys mimicked a ducal coronation, thereby suggesting the direct transfer of authority from Cicogna to Grimani before the patrician electoral college had even convened. This article argues that their demonstration was part of broad and intense popular participation in Venice's politics, which went beyond mere acceptance. Although formally excluded from any involvement in politics, ordinary Venetians used civic ritual, demonstrations, disorder, and even violence to make their voices heard and to influence patrician decision making at the highest level.

Since the mid-twentieth-century social historians have analyzed the political contributions of ordinary people, focusing on crowd behavior, patterns in collective actions, and revolts.¹⁰ Initially their research described a trajectory of progress: premodern revolts were considered communal, localized, and spontaneous, and only by the late eighteenth century did more modern forms of protest—large-scale, deliberate, coordinated—emerge.¹¹ Recently, however, medievalists and early modernists have emphasized that premodern did not mean prepolitical and that a “rich and varied course of popular protest” existed between 1300 and the French Revolution.¹² Popular politics in the form of protests, dissent, and rebellion are now considered integral to early modern politics.¹³

However, Venice's political stability and lack of popular discontent have always been key to its reputation as *La Serenissima* (“the most serene one”).¹⁴

¹⁰ Pioneering works on European premodern popular politics are Eric Hobsbawm, *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester, 1959); George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848* (New York, 1964); Charles Tilly, *The Vendée: A Sociological Analysis of the Counter-Revolution of 1793* (Cambridge, MA, 1964); E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 76–136; Louise A. Tilly, “The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (1971): 23–57; Davis, “Rites of Violence.”

¹¹ See Rudé, *The Crowd*. According to Tilly, modern political collective actions only developed after 1850: see Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492–1992* (Oxford, 1993), and *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge, 2008).

¹² Samuel K. Cohn Jr., “Authority and Popular Resistance,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750*, vol. 2, *Cultures and Power*, ed. Hamish Scott (Oxford, 2015), 418–39, 434; Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Houndmills, 2002); William Beik, *Urban Protest in Seventeenth-Century France: The Culture of Retribution* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹³ Wayne Te Brake, *Shaping History: Ordinary People in European Politics, 1500–1700* (Berkeley, 1998); Peter Blickle, ed., *Resistance, Representation, and Community* (Oxford, 1997); Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001).

¹⁴ By contrast, political resistance to Venetian rule in subject cities has received significant attention: Joanne Ferraro, “Oligarchs, Protesters, and the Republic of Venice: The

Venetian humanists first propagated this mythical image of Venetian society organized around a strict sociopolitical hierarchy, immune to internal strife.¹⁵ Unchallenged until the French invasion of 1797, a wise patriciate (roughly 5 percent of the population) governed the city-state and its dominions, choosing a doge from its own ranks; a devoted secondary elite, the *cittadini*, fulfilled most bureaucratic duties.¹⁶ The *popolani*—the majority of Venetians, primarily involved in the guilds and trades—were powerless but content, with no other political role than that of silent or applauding subject. Venice thus seems the epitome of functionalism: a system of interconnected parts, working together harmoniously to maintain a state of social equilibrium, with the elite providing elaborate rituals and sufficient food to pacify ordinary people.¹⁷

The image of Venice as an inherently static, patrician-dominated society has been challenged by studies on the lives of guild members, Arsenal workers, household servants, and *popolano* women, groups once considered marginal, while work on the patriciate has revealed the internal dynamics and tensions within this class.¹⁸ Studies have focused on the ways in which the patrician and *popolano* worlds overlapped, for example, in the household and in patronage relationships, in religious confraternities, and even in ritualized forms of popular violence.¹⁹ Yet at the same time we still know relatively little about the nature

‘Revolution of the Discontents’ in Brescia, 1644–1645,” *Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988): 627–53; Amelio Tagliaferri, *Per una storia sociale della Repubblica Veneta: La Rivolta di Arzignano del 1655* (Udine, 1978).

¹⁵ For the myth’s impact on historiography, see James S. Grubb, “When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography,” *Journal of Modern History* 58 (1986): 43–94. For the divisions in Venetian society, see Anna Bellavitis, “Family and Society,” in *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797*, ed. Eric R. Dursteler (Leiden, 2013), 319–51.

¹⁶ On the *cittadini*’s political position, see Alfredo Viggiano, “Politics and Constitution,” in Dursteler, *Companion to Venetian History*, 65–68.

¹⁷ Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge, 2005), 131–34.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Richard Mackenney, *Tradesmen and Traders: The World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c. 1250–c. 1650* (London, 1987); Ruth Martin, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice, 1550–1650* (Oxford, 1989); Robert C. Davis, *Shipbuilders of the Venetian Arsenal: Workers and Workplace in the Preindustrial City* (Baltimore, 1991); Joanne Ferraro, *Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice* (Oxford, 2001). Groundbreaking work on the patriciate by Stanley Chojnacki (e.g., *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* [Baltimore, 2000]) and studies such as Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1980); and Dennis Romano, *The Likeness of Venice: A Life of Doge Francesco Foscari* (New Haven, CT, 2007) have shown that the governing class was not without factions.

¹⁹ On the household: Dennis Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice, 1400–1600* (Baltimore, 1996). In *Patricians and Popolani: The Social Foundations of the Venetian Renaissance State* (Baltimore, 1988), Romano argued that citywide patronage relationships between patricians and wealthy *popolani* formed the basis for Venetian stability in the fourteenth century. Poorer *popolani* mainly focused

of these intersecting relations. For instance, the famous collective fist fights on the bridges in the city's working-class areas may have offered a "popular answer to the centralizing encroachment of the patrician state," but, despite being officially outlawed, they were watched by many nobles, which raises the question of how popular and elite culture interacted.²⁰ John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano pointed out more than fifteen years ago that the "complexities of Venetian popular culture and its relation to the culture of the elites" as well as "issues of resistance and opposition" needed to be examined, but the idea that the Venetian constitution enjoyed popular support and that the republic knew no real sedition has proved remarkably resilient.²¹ In the historiography on popular politics, Venice, one of Europe's most densely populated cities, continues to function as the exception to the rule.²²

Yet our understanding of everyday forms of resistance has broadened in recent decades. Anthropologist and sociologist James C. Scott, influenced by E. P. Thompson's work on the eighteenth-century English crowd, has pointed to the broad range of political actions open to the politically disenfranchised. Scott uses the terms *public transcript* and *hidden transcript* to show how public displays of elite power and plebeian deference can coexist with (semi)secret acts of criticism—in the form of rumors, songs, gestures, and jokes—directed at the elite. Scott dubs these acts *infrapolitics*.²³ His work has enriched the his-

on the nuclear family and parish-based relations. On confraternities: Richard Mackenney, "Continuity and Change in the *Scuole Piccole* of Venice, c.1250–c.1600," *Renaissance Studies* 8, no. 4 (1994): 388–403. On the collective fist fights: Robert C. Davis, *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice* (New York, 1994).

²⁰ Davis, *War of the Fists*, 45.

²¹ John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano, "Reconsidering Venice," in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State*, ed. John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore, 2000), 26–27. Older studies taking social stability as a given, largely ignoring *popolani* as political actors, include Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973), 271; Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 42–43; Gaetano Cozzi, *Il doge Nicolò Contarini: Ricerche sul patriziato veneziano agli inizi del Seicento* (Venice, 1958); William J. Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Republican Values in the Age of Counter Reformation* (Berkeley, 1968); Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620* (Oxford, 1971).

²² For example, in his study on European medieval protest, Samuel Cohn examined more than a thousand collective protests but found only a handful of incidents for Venice, the "city most renowned for its social control over its masses and for political stability": Cohn, *Lust for Liberty*, 159.

²³ Scott aimed to offer an alternative to the concept of hegemony, coined by Antonio Gramsci, because it ignored the "extent to which most subordinate classes are able, on the basis of their daily material experience, to penetrate and demystify the prevailing ideology": James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT, 1985), 317, and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden*

torigraphy on early modern popular politics by increasing awareness of moments when hidden transcripts become visible. When viewed as a form of infrapolitics, the boys' demonstration during Cicogna's funeral becomes more than mere anecdotal *couleur locale*: it can be seen as an indicator of a broader popular political involvement.

Recent studies in Venetian history also provide entry points for reevaluating Venetian political life. Filippo de Vivo's research, for example, has shown how political information reached practically every layer of Venetian society.²⁴ Not only were ordinary Venetians politically informed; they could also voice their political opinions loudly, especially in times of crisis.²⁵ Furthermore, the notion that *popolani* made up a default category of those who did not belong to the patrician or *cittadini* circles is no longer tenable.²⁶ The questions this article seeks to explore, then, are how nonelite Venetians acted on political information, how we can decipher their actions, and how, in turn, patricians responded to the "moods and needs of the *popolo*."²⁷

The hidden transcript itself is, by definition, hard to discern. In the case of Venice, it is arguably even harder. Venice boasts one of the largest archives of premodern Europe, yet the state's production and organization of records mirrored the patriciate's anxieties about its political vulnerability: as De Vivo has pointed out, the process of record keeping was "driven by the ruling class's desire to hide all traces of its disagreements."²⁸ Secretaries were instructed to re-

Transcripts (New Haven, CT, 1990). For a historical application, see Braddick and Walter, *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society*.

²⁴ Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford, 2007). In her *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge, 2008), Elizabeth Horodowich argued that language could be both a tool for statecraft and, following Scott, an instrument of resistance.

²⁵ See, e.g., Rospocher and Salzberg, "El vulgo zanza."

²⁶ Claire Judde de Larivière and Rosa M. Salzberg, "Le peuple est la cité: L'idée de *popolo* et la condition des *popolani* à Venise (XVe–XVIe siècles)," *Annales ESC* 68, no. 4 (2013): 1113–40. See also Andrea Zannini, "L'identità multipla: Essere popolo in una capitale (Venezia, XVI–XVIII secolo)," in "Essere popolo: Prerogative e rituali d'appartenenza nelle città italiane d'antico regime," ed. A. Salvelli and G. Dellille, special issue, *Ricerche Storiche* 2, no. 3 (2002): 247–62.

²⁷ Finlay, *Politics*, 45: "There is every indication that the patriciate was very sensitive to the moods and needs of the *popolo*, that, to some extent, the caste relied on 'the consent of the governed.'" Yet, he adds, the "political connections between patricians and *popolo* will always remain elusive" (49).

²⁸ Filippo de Vivo, "Coeur de l'État, lieu de tension: Le tournant archivistique vu de Venise (XVe–XVIIe siècle)," *Annales ESC* 68, no. 3 (2013): 699–728, 715–18. Magistracies in charge of the public peace did persecute cases of disorderly conduct, physical assault, swearing, and insulting on a daily basis: see Horodowich, *Language and Statecraft*; and Guido Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1980).

cord only the final decisions in council meetings and not to refer to debates or signs of discord. This practice of glossing over disagreements also extended to forms of discord outside the ruling class. For example, the patrician Girolamo Priuli (1476–1547) kept a diary between 1494 and 1512, during the War of the League of Cambrai. In 1509, when enemy armies beleaguered Venice, Priuli repeatedly complained about the many opinions on political topics circulating among ordinary Venetians. Once the war threat subsided, though, he immediately reverted to the default position, praising “the greatest silence” that had reigned in his city.²⁹ The election of 1595 seems to be marked by a similar development: whereas unofficial sources and outside observers indicate a growing protest movement, the official records are silent.

This silence was compounded by the fact that during ducal vacancies the state’s machinery came to a standstill. In papal Rome, civic councils took charge during the interregnum, which could last for months.³⁰ In Venice, the ducal vacancy signaled the virtual shutdown of the state, as meetings of all major councils, such as the Senate and the Council of Ten, were suspended.³¹ Of the important magistracies, only the Signoria remained active, to oversee the orderly transfer of authority to a new head of state.³² This vacuum was supposed to be short: in the sixteenth century it took electoral colleges on average five and a half days to appoint a new head of state. By contrast, the 1595 *vacanza ducale* (ducal

²⁹ Massimo Rospoche, “Non vedete la libertà di voi stessi essere posta nelle proprie mani vostre?” Guerre d’inchostro e di parole al tempo di Cambrai,” in *Dal Leone all’ Aquila: Comunità, territori e cambi di regime nell’ età di Massimo I*, ed. Marcello Bonanza and Silvana Seidel Menchi (Rovereto, 2012), 133. In her detailed reconstruction of a small-scale revolt on the Venetian island of Murano at the start of the sixteenth century, Claire Judde de Larivière posited that the Venetian political elite avoided using a “language of revolt,” thereby effectively downplaying forms of dissent: Claire Judde de Larivière, *La révolte des boules de neige: Murano face à Venise* (Paris, 2014).

³⁰ Nussdorfer, “Vacant See.”

³¹ For a basic introduction to the Venetian constitution, see Lane, *Venice*, 87–117, 251–73. In 1521, at the time of the Italian Wars, the Great Council decided that during future vacancies the Senate and Council of Ten could convene and decide on “matters of importance and immediate concern,” but only during the first phase of the vacancy, until the actual conclave began. To prevent the two bodies from having too much power during the political vacuum, they “were not empowered to handle, and must not handle, anything except matters that are of public concern and are pertinent to our state, as is just”: see Venice, *‘Città Excelentissima’: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, ed. Patricia H. Labalme and Laura Sanguineti White (Baltimore, 2008), 60–61. For the shutdown of April 1595, see the Florentine ambassador’s letter in ASF, MdP, 2994, April 5, 1595.

³² On the *vacanza ducale*, see Finlay, *Politics*, 121; Ugo Tucci, “I meccanismi dell’elezione ducale,” in Benzoni, *I dogi*; Matteo Casini, *I gesti del principe: La festa politica a Venezia e Firenze in età rinascimentale* (Venice, 1996), 46–56.

vacancy) dragged on for almost four weeks, requiring seventy-one voting rounds before Marino Grimani was finally elected doge.³³

This article traces and contextualizes the themes, the symbols, and the idiom of crowd politics used by ordinary Venetians during and after the 1595 election. Against the backdrop of the harsh social and economic circumstances of the late sixteenth century, the article examines the 1595 ducal vacancy, the career of ducal candidate Marino Grimani, and the fissures within the political elite. It then reconstructs popular participation in the election, which ranged from pro-Grimani demonstrations to an attempted attack on the Ducal Palace. Finally, it shows how Grimani responded to the popular voice, both immediately after the election and two years later during a sumptuous three-day festival in honor of his wife. On both occasions he used munificence and civic ritual to engage directly with nonelite Venetians. To uncover the Venetian “dialogue of power”—the phrase used by John Najemy to describe the political interaction between the elite and nonelite in republican Florence, a city-state where contention formed an essential part of political life³⁴—I have examined not just the official Venetian records but also anonymous chronicles, voting reports (which were illegally disseminated), and poems. In addition I have examined the correspondence of eight foreign diplomats, whose reporting was not constrained by a need to uphold the *Serenissima* myth and thus provides crucial information. Ultimately, the article demonstrates how the political concerns and actions of the elite interacted with those of ordinary Venetians, bringing to light dynamics often obscured by a supposedly monolithic political culture.³⁵ It argues that although the duration of the 1595 ducal election was exceptional, the political involvement of ordinary Venetians was not: it formed a central, albeit often elusive, dimension of Venetian political life.

DUCAL VACANCY

After a doge’s death, Venetian patricians focused their energies on the ceremonial farewell to their deceased head of state and the preparations for the election

³³ Tucci, “I meccanismi,” 119. Other drawn-out elections were those of Pietro Loredan (1567; seventy-seven ballots) and Pasquale Cicogna (1585; fifty-three ballots), both lasting twelve days.

³⁴ See John A. Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200–1575* (Malden, MA, 2006), and “The Dialogue of Power in Florentine Politics,” in *City-States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*, ed. Anthony Molho, Kurt Raaflaub, and Julia Emlen (Ann Arbor, MI, 1991), 269–88. Florence knew many revolts, of which the Ciompi Revolt of 1378–82 is the most iconic.

³⁵ Edward Muir, “The Anthropology of Venice,” in Dursteler, *Companion to Venetian History*, 487: here Muir states “one can no longer presume that there was any comprehensive, single Venetian point of view . . . no matter how monolithic Venetian political culture may have been.”

of his successor. Potential ducal candidates started lobbying for support at the first signs of a doge's ill health, calling in favors and strengthening connections constructed over decades.³⁶ Late medieval and early modern doges held a paradoxical position as princes in a republic: they were not allowed to show dynastic aspirations, and a set of laws, adjusted during each interregnum, regulated their position and curbed their power.³⁷ The rituals surrounding a doge's funeral were all meant to communicate that despite a doge's death, the republic lived on. Thus, as the preparations for the election of his successor got underway in April 1595, Pasquale Cicogna's body was stripped of his symbols of office: his gold ring and stamp for the ducal seals were smashed and his crown removed.³⁸ The doge's administrative authority passed to the members of the Signoria, who moved into the Ducal Palace for the vacancy's duration.³⁹

Once the news of Cicogna's death was made public, 150 *Arsenalotti* took up guarding the Piazza San Marco and the Ducal Palace. These shipyard workers had a specific civic duty to carry the doge upon his election around San Marco and upon his death to his funeral. But their presence during the interregnum was not purely symbolic: they also constituted a security force, to be deployed when the government feared violence from its own people.⁴⁰ Looting and (ritual) disorder had been a standard part of medieval Venetian vacancies, conforming to a widespread practice across premodern Europe.⁴¹ Although the Great Council had outlawed ritual sackings in 1329, this did not put a stop to interregnum violence.⁴²

In 1486, for example, when the newly elected Doge Agostino Barbarigo was paraded around Piazza San Marco, seven *garzoni* (apprentices) died in the crowd.⁴³ In 1521, in the upheaval surrounding Doge Antonio Grimani's election, a foreigner decapitated an *Arsenalotto*; two years later, at Grimani's funeral, boys blamed the doge for a prolonged famine, shouting "Death to the *carestia* [famine], long live the Signoria!"⁴⁴ At the coronation of his successor, Andrea Gritti,

³⁶ On lobbying, see Robert Finlay, "Politics and the Family in Renaissance Venice: The Election of Doge Andrea Gritti," *Studi Veneziani* 2 (1978): 97–117, 99–100.

³⁷ Finlay, *Politics*, 110–11; and Muir, *Civic Ritual*, chap. 7, "The Paradoxical Prince."

³⁸ Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 264, 268–78; Romano, *Likeness of Venice*, xx–xxi.

³⁹ Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 269.

⁴⁰ Rospocher and Salzberg, "El vulgo zanza," 99–100.

⁴¹ Casini, *I gesti*, 49. On the practice of ritual looting in general, see Carlo Ginzburg et al., "Saccheggii rituali: Premesse a una ricerca in corso," *Quaderni Storici* 65, no. 2 (1987): 615–36.

⁴² Alberto Tenenti, *Stato, un'idea, una logica: Dal comune italiano all'assolutismo francese* (Bologna, 1987), 200; Casini, *I gesti*, 35.

⁴³ Marin Sanudo il Giovane, *Le vite dei dogi (1474–1494)*, ed. Angela Caracciolo Aricò (Rome, 2001), 2:530.

⁴⁴ *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 34, ed. Federico Stefani, Guglielmo Berchet, and Nicolò Barozzi (Venice, 1892), col. 134. During the 1556 conclave, boys ran through the city, vilifying candidates: Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 264.

who was widely disliked, groups of boys mocked the new doge by appropriating political rituals in a display similar to the events of April 1595: they carried a puppet in ducal dress around the piazza while shouting the name of the more popular Luca Tron.⁴⁵ In 1570, the threat of violent protest derailed Doge Pietro Loredan's entire funeral: the funerary procession had already departed from Piazza San Marco when it became clear that an angry crowd stood waiting at the church of San Giovanni e Paolo. Blaming Loredan for high bread prices and low-quality bread, they planned to throw loaves at his corpse and drag him along on his bier. When news of this threat reached the members of the Signoria, the procession was quickly rerouted back to San Marco.⁴⁶

Venetian crowds also tried to intervene more directly in the political process of the ducal election. In 1559 popular disgust for one candidate—Marino Grimani's father, in fact—led to the storming of the Ducal Palace.⁴⁷ Eight years later, during the selection of the electoral council in 1567, "violent people created confusion," managing to reach the hall of the Great Council. The 1585 election saw skirmishes in the palace courtyard.⁴⁸ In 1676, after it became apparent that an unpopular candidate, Giovanni Sagredo, had the necessary votes to become doge, some sixty boatmen started throwing paving stones at Sagredo supporters. This outburst of popular violence resulted in a riot in the piazza, which, according to contemporary reports, was instigated by Sagredo's patrician rivals. The Great Council intervened by changing the composition of the electoral council, thus spoiling Sagredo's election as doge.⁴⁹ This selection of incidents shows that Venice was far from a perennially serene state. It also provides tantalizing clues about the forms and aims of political involvement of nonelite Venetians and of *popolano*-patrician political collaborations.

START OF THE ELECTION

On April 7, 1595, the day of Doge Cicogna's burial, over one thousand members of the Great Council, the basis of the Venetian constitution, gathered to appoint the forty-one patrician electors (the *Quarantuno*). A convoluted process

⁴⁵ Stefani, Berchet, and Barozzi, *I diarii*, col. 157, 158–59. For this election, see Finlay, *Politics*, 157–60.

⁴⁶ Biblioteca Museo Correr (hereafter BMC), Ms. Cicogna 2853, "Cronaca Agostina," c.187r–188r; and British Library (hereafter BL), Add. 8581, c.659v.

⁴⁷ Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 268.

⁴⁸ See Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 308, for the disorder in 1559 and 1585; Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (hereafter BNM), Marc. Ms. It. VII 255 (9168) for the tumult in 1567.

⁴⁹ See Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 414–15; and the introduction to *La copella politica: Esame storico-politico di cento soggetti della Repubblica di Venezia (1675)*, ed. Vittorio Mandelli (Rome, 2012).

consisting of nine alternating stages of selection by lot and selection by vote balanced chance with political interest, allowing the most powerful patricians to be part of the electoral college and hence influence the ducal election.⁵⁰ Written and unwritten laws restricted the number of potential ducal candidates: the new doge had to be old, so that his time in office would be naturally limited, but not decrepit; he had to be wealthy, but preferably without sons, to limit the risk of dynastic aspirations; a successful political career was a must, but *bella presentia* (cutting a good figure) could also be a factor.⁵¹ Once selected, the *Quarantuno* went into conclave until they had elected a new doge with a minimum of twenty-five votes.

The electors' discussions were kept secret because it was essential to project an image of patrician unanimity and thus give the doge, who lacked a monarch's divine right to rule, the necessary authority. But despite the government's efforts to suppress leaking, patrician insiders and humbler "information professionals," such as servants, secretaries, clerks, and news writers, provided regular election updates.⁵² Although the doge's powers were restricted, the electors' choice indicated the future political course of one of Italy's most powerful states. Foreign diplomats therefore avidly collected intelligence on the proceedings.

In 1595 the ambassadors of Pope Clement VIII, King Philip II of Spain, the Tuscan Grand Duke Ferdinando I, and the dukes of Modena, Ferrara, Parma, Mantua, and Savoy followed the election closely. Although they could make no progress with their own diplomatic missions during the vacancy, they kept up a regular flow of correspondence with their principals, writing at least once a week and often more frequently. Officially foreign ambassadors could have no direct contact with the Venetian political elite outside formal audiences, which is why most embassies were relegated to the relatively distant Cannaregio district. Yet all diplomats constructed networks of informants and spies, ranging from palace clerks to high-ranking patricians, turning the embassy neighborhood into one of the information hotbeds of the city.⁵³

The diplomats' reports on the 1595 vacancy do not show any clear biases, but there are some differences in tone. The Spanish ambassador Vera y Aragon was keen to report on internal tensions, perhaps because of the often-strained Venetian-Spanish relations. He also used negative terms such as "sedition," "in-

⁵⁰ Da Mosto, *I dogi*, xv–xxiii; Finlay, *Politics*, 141–44.

⁵¹ Tucci, "I meccanismi," 116–18.

⁵² See De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, 46–85, on the politics of leaking. The term *information professional* is his.

⁵³ Peter Burke, "Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and Communication," in Jeffries Martin and Romano, *Venice Reconsidered*, 389–419; De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, 75. Also Daniela Frigo, "Small States and Diplomacy: Mantua and Modena," in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800*, ed. Daniela Frigo (Cambridge, 2000), 147–75.

solence,” and “mutiny” to describe crowd actions during the election, possibly reflecting Habsburg Spain’s own ongoing concerns with internal unrest.⁵⁴ Class struggle and the role of popular governments influenced Florentine political life well into the sixteenth century, which may explain why Tuscan ambassador Giovanni Uguccioni, serving in Venice between 1592 and 1596, reported violent incidents and menacing disturbances in detail and interpreted them as potential revolts.⁵⁵ The envoys of smaller states had a clear information advantage, since they were often stuck in the same post for years. Aurelio Pomponazzi of Mantua, for example, served for seven years in Venice and was consequently well informed.⁵⁶ Ferrara’s ambassador Annibale Ariosti had been in Venice since the 1560s, first serving as embassy secretary and then as ambassador. He was at least as well connected as Pomponazzi, and since the 1595 election was Ariosti’s fourth, he analyzed the vacancy procedures and patrician factional strife with great acuity, while also reporting diligently on the *popolano* demonstrations in the street.⁵⁷

Parma’s ambassador, Juan de Zornoza, sent off a dispatch on April 8, the day the composition of the electoral college was finalized. He included a list of the names of the *Quarantuno* and the candidates they were thought to support (fig. 1).⁵⁸ All three front-runners were themselves members of the electoral college. With eighteen votes, Leonardo Donà was seven votes shy of the required majority, according to Zornoza’s estimate. Donà’s competitors Marino Grimani and Giovanni Foscarini had nine and seven votes, respectively.⁵⁹ In the election’s

⁵⁴ Vera y Aragon served in Venice between 1589 and 1596 and between 1600 and 1603: Federica Ruspio, *La nazione portoghese: Ebrei ponentini e nuovi cristiani a Venezia* (Turin, 2007), 77; Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia española* (Madrid, 2002), 7:269–72. In the late sixteenth century, Habsburg Spain had to deal with a series of revolts, caused by a combination of rising food prices and political dissatisfaction, which may have heightened Vera y Aragon’s sensitivity to public disorder.

⁵⁵ Giovanni Uguccioni later became ambassador at the imperial court in Prague in 1601–6: Marcello del Piazzo, *Gli ambasciatori toscani del principato, 1537–1737*, *Notizie degli Archivi di Stato* 12 (Rome, 1952). He had taught civil and canon law at Pisa between 1581 and 1592: Jonathan Davies, *Culture and Power: Tuscany and Its Universities, 1537–1609* (Leiden, 2009), 36.

⁵⁶ Palace servants had kept him informed of Doge Cicogna’s health: see his letter of April 1, 1595, in ASMa, Venezia, b.1527. On Pomponazzi: Michaela Sermidi, *Le collezioni Gonzaga: Il carteggio tra Venezia e Mantova (1588–1612)* (Milan, 2003), 14.

⁵⁷ His uncle, Claudio Ariosti, served as Ferrara’s ambassador in the 1560s and 1570s. Annibale’s sources were Senate members and diplomats, such as Giovanni Dolfin, the Venetian ambassador to France.

⁵⁸ Archivio di Stato Parma, Venezia, b.615 (1579–99) (hereafter ASPr, Venezia), April 8, 1595; Uguccioni included a similar list: ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 12, 1595.

⁵⁹ On Foscarini, see Martin John Clement Lowry, “The Church and Venetian Political Change in the Later *Cinquecento*” (PhD diss., Warwick University, 1971), 347–48.

+ 364/1
 Los quarenta y cinco electos a nombre del sermo Principe

Donado.	Nicolo concavini fu Auo + gador.	Grimani.	Piero Sando fu del cons. de dioze.
Foscarini.	Piero Capelo fu Consiglier.	Foscarini.	Fran. da molin fu Pro. iob. alla biuae.
Donado.	Zuane Venier fu capo dell Consiglio de. oc.	Grimani.	Matteo Zane. R. fu sauo. del Cons.
Grimani.	Ant. de Sorio fu capo dell consiglio de. oc.	Foscarini.	Geor. la trella Procons. Zustinian. x. Aluise Zorzi de Pregadi
Foscarini.	Giacomo pravelo fu cons. glior.	Donado.	Bartol. Zuan de Pregadi
Donado.	Bernardo Savada de Pregadi.	Donado.	Raffaele Rappini de Pregadi
Zustinian.	Fran. Bernardo de Pregadi	Grimani.	Marin Grimani R. Pro. iob.
Donado.	Masce. An. conor sopra le + amare de Pregadi.	Donado.	Piero Magno fu sopra i. An.
Donado.	+ Ant. guerini de Pregadi	Donado.	Aluise Salamon fu sa. + cio de terra ferma.
Grimani.	Geor. Serezi de Pregadi	Donado.	+ Don. Sesto dona de Pre.
Donado.	+ Fran. Morecini el censor	Foscarini.	M. An. Valaresio x. mo. i. An.
Donado.	Aluise malpiero fu sof. i. An.	Grimani.	M. Vicuisan fu cons. glior.
Foscarini.	Nicolo Gusoni fu sauo. gode.	Foscarini.	Andrea Minoso de Pre.
Grimani.	Polo rani Procons.	Donado.	Dome negalon de Pre. Di
Foscarini.	Giacomo Foscarini cau. e Procons.	Zustinian.	Fran. falier fu Agente
Grimani.	+ Andrea Sando fu sopra i. An.	Donado.	Zustinian. Zustinian. fu Consiglier.
Zustinian.	Aless. michiel fu sopra i. An.	Grimani.	+ M. An. Badoer fu sopra i. An.
Donado.	O. Aluise nauaggier. x. An.	Donado.	Lunario dona. R. e Pro. iob.
Donado.	Masce. An. Pisani Pro. sopra i. An.	Donado.	Sarco Moto de Pregadi.
Grimani.	+ Lunario Macenigo de Pregadi	Donado.	+ Giac. Bagnolo fu sopra i. An.

FIG. 1.—List showing four columns with, in the second and fourth columns, the names of the electors and, in the first and third columns, the names of the candidates, that is, Donado (Donà), Foscarini, Grimani, or Zustinian (Giustinian). The arrows indicate electors Giacomo Foscarini, Marino Grimani, and Leonardo Donà, who are shown supporting themselves. Diplomatic dispatch of April 8, 1595, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Carteggio Farnesiano Estero, Venezia, 615 (1579–99), c.364/1. Color version available as an online enhancement.

early stages the diplomatic corps agreed that Donà could count on the most votes in the *Quarantuno's* secret ballots.⁶⁰ The diplomats also agreed on something else: popular backing for Grimani was overwhelming and highly public. On April 8, Vera y Aragon wrote to Philip II that the majority of the people wanted Grimani as “prince” and that they “shouted this very publicly.”⁶¹ “All the people want Grimani” and “the people shout for Grimani,” reported both the papal nuncio and the ambassador for Parma.⁶² Although formal Venetian sources do not refer to these utterances, the popular voice was far from hidden. Mantua’s ambassador summed it up: “If the popular vote were heard, it would be Grimani.”⁶³ But he, and all his fellow ambassadors, knew that the Venetian *popolani* had no formal say in choosing a doge.

This had not always been the case. During the earliest period of the republic all free men had had a vote in the ducal election through the General Assembly, but their part had been progressively reduced to a postelectoral role.⁶⁴ The so-called *Serrata* (Closing) of 1297, which limited the membership of the Great Council to a restricted set of families, formally sealed off the ruling class from the *popolo*.⁶⁵ Henceforth, the Signoria would present each new doge to the *popolani*, announcing that he had been elected “if it pleases you.” Because this still allowed the possibility that the people would reply with a resounding “no,” the formula was shortened during the election of 1423: from then on Venetians were simply informed of the elected doge’s name, to which they were supposed to respond with shouts of “Sia, sia” (“Let it be so, let it be so”).⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Letters from Ambassador Carlo Emmanuele Scaglia in Archivio di Stato di Torino, Lettere Ministri, Venezia (1593–99) (hereafter ASTo, Venezia), April 15, 1595; Aurelio Pomponazzi’s letters in ASMa, Venezia, April 11, 1595; papal nuncio Lodovico Taverna’s reports in Archivio Segreto di Vaticano, Dispacci del nunzio a Venezia alla Segreteria di Stato, b.31 (hereafter ASVat, Venezia), April 8 and 17, 1595; Annibale Ariosti for Ferrara in Archivio di Stato di Modena, Venezia (hereafter ASMo, Venezia), b.73, April 15, 1595; and Andrea Minucci for Modena in ASMo, Venezia, b.83, April 15, 1595.

⁶¹ ASMa, Venezia, April 8, 1595: “essendo cosa notabile il vedere unione universale in applauso suo”; AGS, April 8, 1595: “se entienda q’tendra gran parte enesta eleccion el procurador Marin Grimani . . . la mayor parte della lo dessea por Principe, gridando tan publicamente.”

⁶² ASVat, Venezia, April 8, 1595; ASPr, Venezia, April 15, 1595.

⁶³ ASMa, Venezia, April 5, 1595: “se fosse esaudito il voto popolare, saria il signor Procuratore Grimani.”

⁶⁴ In these early elections, powerful noble families in the General Assembly already dominated the process: Lane, *Venice*, 91.

⁶⁵ Stanley Chojnacki has challenged the idea of the patriciate as a fixed ruling class: see, e.g., his “Identity and Ideology in Renaissance Venice: The Third *Serrata*,” in Jeffries Martin and Romano, *Venice Reconsidered*, 263–94.

⁶⁶ Finlay, *Politics*, 44–45. For the post-1423 election process, see Tucci, “I meccanismi,” 107–14; Da Mosto, *I dogi*, xiv–xv; Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 282–83.

CAREER CHOICES

It would be hard to find two more contrasting characters than front-runner Leonardo Donà and Marino Grimani, the piazza's favorite. They had been colleagues on various councils and diplomatic missions for decades while at the same time competing for prestigious posts.⁶⁷ Politically, Grimani advocated a pro-papal course. Donà belonged to the anti-Habsburg and anti-papal camp, also known as the faction of the *Giovani*.⁶⁸ Grimani and his wealthy wife Morosina Morosini were generous patrons of the arts. Donà, by contrast, was frugal, if not outright stingy, and, having taken a vow of chastity in his youth, died a bachelor. As the doge during the Venetian-papal conflict of 1606–7, Donà has come to be identified with the republican ideals of austerity and duty, but in 1595 he clearly was losing the popularity contest to Grimani.

Analyzing Marino Grimani's pre-ducal career is key to understanding why and how he became the people's choice. Born in 1532, he reached political adulthood in 1557 when he was elected as *Savio agli Ordini*, a junior post that groomed promising young patricians for public office.⁶⁹ In 1559 his father, Girolamo Grimani (1496–1570), was a serious contender in the ducal election, but he became the object of aggressive popular protest when angry crowds pounded on the gates of the Ducal Palace and shouted: "If you make Grimani doge, we

⁶⁷ On Grimani, see Giuseppe Gullino, "Marino Grimani," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 59 (2003), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/marino-grimani_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/marino-grimani_(Dizionario-Biografico)); Lowry, "The Church," 349–51. On Donà, see Gaetano Cozzi, "Leonardo Donà (Donati, Donato)" in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 40 (1991), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leonardo-dona_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leonardo-dona_(Dizionario-Biografico)); Federico Seneca, *Il doge Leonardo Donà, la sua vita e la sua preparazione politica prima del dogado* (Padua, 1959); Marco Brunetti, "Il diario di Leonardo Donà procuratore di San Marco de cintra (1591–1605)," *Archivio Veneto*, 5th ser., 21 (1937): 101–23; D. S. Chambers, "Merit and Money: The Procurators of St. Mark and Their *Commissioni*, 1443–1605," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 60 (1998): 23–88; James C. Davis, *A Venetian Family and Its Fortune, 1500–1900: The Donà and the Conservation of Their Wealth* (Philadelphia, 1975); Lowry, "The Church," 343–44.

⁶⁸ Historians have much debated the strife between the *Giovani* and *Vecchi* factions in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: see Viggiano, "Politics and Constitution," 59; Cozzi, *Il Doge Nicolò Contarini*. It would be too simplistic to identify Grimani simply as belonging to the faction of the *Vecchi*: see also Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 178; and M. J. C. Lowry, "The Reform of the Council of Ten, 1582–1583: An Unsettled Problem?" *Studi veneziani* 13 (1971): 275–310.

⁶⁹ The *Savi agli Ordini* were a (minor) part of the *Collegio*, the council that directed the republic's daily functioning. On the *Savi agli Ordini*, see Paul F. Grendler, "The Leaders of the Venetian State, 1540–1609: A Prosopographical Analysis," *Studi veneziani*, n.s., 19 (1990): 35–85; and Stanley Chojnacki, "Kinship Ties and Young Patricians," in his *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice*, 206–26.

will feed him to the dogs!”⁷⁰ Perhaps it was his hunchback, incompatible with the ducal physical ideal, or his reputation for avarice that gave offense.⁷¹ In any case, Girolamo, a member of the *Quarantuno*, withdrew his candidacy. This episode must have made an impression on his son.

Girolamo Grimani’s political fortunes resumed an upward trajectory after 1559, which paradoxically caused Marino’s career to languish for a full decade. Girolamo became *Savio del Consiglio*, a member of one of the highest councils, which automatically excluded his two sons from any serious office.⁷² Like so many of his peers, he invested in land instead of in the increasingly risky maritime trade. Marino, who had been involved in the family’s agricultural business since his late teens, now devoted all his energy to managing the Grimani estates, collecting rents, and selling produce.⁷³

The sixteenth-century shift of patrician investments away from maritime commerce and toward agriculture has traditionally been seen as both a sign and a cause of Venetian economic decline, but it was a strategic choice in a century characterized by food scarcity and rising grain prices.⁷⁴ The Venetian government became increasingly preoccupied with maintaining the public granaries and organizing the importation of cereals, often at the expense of the Terraferma. Still, the instability of agricultural yields and worsening climatic conditions meant that food crises became a cyclical reality, even in the metropolis. Average grain prices spiked during years of dearth, but averages obscure the misery of the more violent price fluctuations from month to month or even week to week. During famines, starving Terraferma peasants would flock to Venice, camping out in squares and doorways and contributing to a sense of social dislocation.⁷⁵ When food supplies evaporated, unrest and sedition became very real possibilities in the *Serenissima* as well. During the famine of 1569–70, for instance, the “people became even more agitated, and they said many strange and dishonorable things

⁷⁰ Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 268: “Se voi fate doge il Grimani, noi lo daremo a mangiar ai cani!”

⁷¹ Girolamo was described as *gobbo* (hunchback) in his marriage contract: Michaela dal Borgo, “Girolamo Grimani,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 59 (2003), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/girolamo-grimani_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/girolamo-grimani_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

⁷² Gullino, “Marino Grimani”; Dal Borgo, “Girolamo Grimani.” The six *Savi del Consiglio* set the agenda for the Senate and were part of the *Collegio*.

⁷³ For Marino’s early involvement in agriculture: Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter ASV), Procuratori di San Marco de ultra, b.163.

⁷⁴ Ugo Tucci, “The Psychology of the Venetian Merchant in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J. R. Hale (London, 1973), 346–78; Stuart Woolf, “Venice and the Terraferma: Problems of the Change from Commercial to Landed Activities,” in *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Brian Pullan (London, 1968), 175–203.

⁷⁵ Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, 358.

about the government, remarking . . . that they ought to be cut to pieces,” according to one chronicler.⁷⁶

The last decades of the century were especially bad. In the election year 1595, Venice was reeling from episodes of scarcity and disease. The plague epidemic of 1575–77 had wiped out 50,000 people, roughly a quarter of the city’s population.⁷⁷ For many survivors, especially among the *popolani*, the stringent quarantine regulations designed to halt the plague led to unemployment and poverty.⁷⁸ In the 1580s and 1590s, Venice was hit by another prolonged famine. In 1581 Arsenal workers rioted and broke into the state granaries, and in 1591 so many poor went in search of food that it seemed they besieged public buildings and streets.⁷⁹ Grimani’s wealth sheltered him from hunger and, as the owner of vast and widespread estates, he may actually have profited from rising prices. Yet the periodic recurrence of scarcity and its effects on the poor, as well as the not so poor, also shaped his political career.

In 1560 Marino and his younger brother Almorò had married two sisters from the Morosini family in a double ceremony. Morosina and Angela brought in large dowries consisting of land and real estate in Venice, Terraferma properties, and even a castle in Venetian Istria.⁸⁰ The two couples each had their own floors in the enormous Grimani palace on the Grand Canal, in the parish of San Luca. The two brothers formed a *fraterna*, which meant they jointly owned and managed the family’s patrimony.⁸¹ As landlord of a large number of Venetian rental houses and commercial properties, such as the famous Osteria dello Storione (Sturgeon’s Inn) at Rialto, Grimani was in close contact with *popolani* tenants. Although Venetian patrician families, unlike their peers in Florence and Genoa,

⁷⁶ BMC, Ms. Cicogna 2853 (Cronaca Agostina), c.164: “si usava di molte strane, et inhoneste parole contra la Signoria dicendo . . . che bisognerebbe tagliarli a pezzi. Et certo la città rea in grandissima necessità, et in gran bisbiglio.” Translation from David Chambers and Brian Pullan, with Jennifer Fletcher, *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450–1630* (Oxford, 1992), 109.

⁷⁷ Daniele Beltrami, *Storia della popolazione di Venezia dalla fine del secolo XVI alla caduta della Repubblica* (Padua, 1954), 57.

⁷⁸ Brian Pullan, “Wage-Earners and the Venetian Economy, 1550–1630,” *Economic History Review* 16, no. 3 (1964): 409–10.

⁷⁹ BMC, Ms. Cicogna 2853, (Cronaca Agostina), c.165; Andrea Morosini, *Storia della Repubblica Veneziana* (Venice, 1784), 138.

⁸⁰ Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 313; BMC, P.D. 1276/7.

⁸¹ Gullino, “Marino Grimani”; Michel Hochmann, “Le mécénat de Marino Grimani: Tintoret, Palma le Jeune, Jacopo Bassano, Giulio del Moro et le décor du Palais Grimani; Véronèse et Vittoria à San Giuseppe,” *Revue de l’Art* 95 (1992): 41–51. On the *fraterna*, see Frederic C. Lane, “Family Partnerships and Joint Ventures in the Venetian Republic,” *Journal of Economic History* 4, no. 2 (1944): 178–96.

do not seem to have created neighborhood power bases, this was one way in which patrician and *popolano* lives intersected on a regular basis.⁸²

In 1570, after his father's death, Marino could start advancing his political career again. In the Venetian political system, a specific office could mean either a position of power at significant cost or a profitable job. Grimani focused his career on the Terraferma, where offices were prestigious but costly.⁸³ In 1571 he became the *podestà* (resident governor) of Brescia, a notoriously expensive post.⁸⁴ Close to the border of the Habsburg Duchy of Milan, Brescia was economically and strategically important and always ruled by patricians with political and financial weight. Brescia suffered from recurring food shortages throughout the 1560s and 1570s, a situation aggravated by its obligations to supply Venice with annual grain tributes.⁸⁵ Grimani's experience in the agricultural business proved an essential asset. One of his main tasks was to ensure that an adequate amount of grain reached Brescia from its surrounding territory, which involved a tug-of-war with local landowners intent on selling where prices were highest.⁸⁶ Avoiding accusations of avarice, Grimani fulfilled his first serious office with "splendor and honor, corresponding to his dignity."⁸⁷

With his career now well underway, it became time to make strategic choices. By 1575, only Almorò and Angela had male offspring. Marino and Morosina, however, were raising four daughters. This meant, first, that they did not have to secure an inheritance for a son. Second, the lack of male heirs gave Marino an edge in any future bids for the ducal throne. Third, marrying his daughters to members of influential families would, at the expense of large dowries, help to broaden his political connections. On March 14, 1575, the Grimani *fraterna* was dissolved, allowing each couple to manage their possessions according to their own familial and political needs.⁸⁸ Almorò opted for a more conservative course, while Marino over the next few years converted economic capital into

⁸² For Grimani's real estate, see Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 312. On ties between patrician landlords and *popolani* renters, see Finlay, *Politics*, 50–52. On the absence of neighborhood power bases, see Dennis Romano, "Charity and Community in Early Renaissance Venice," *Journal of Urban History* 11, no. 1 (1984): 63–82, 81.

⁸³ Dorit Raines, "Office Seeking, Broglio, and the Pocket Political Guidebooks in Cinquecento and Seicento Venice," *Studi veneziani* 22 (1991): 139, 170–71. See also Gaetano Cozzi, "Authority and the Law in Renaissance Venice," in Hale, *Renaissance Venice*, 293–345.

⁸⁴ The *podestà* was responsible for civil and judicial affairs: Joanne M. Ferraro, *Family and Public Life in Brescia, 1580–1650: The Foundations of Power in the Venetian State* (Cambridge, 1993), 15–16.

⁸⁵ Amelio Tagliaferri, ed., *Relazioni dei rettori veneti in Terraferma*, vol. 11, *Podestaria e capitanato di Brescia* (Milan, 1978), 98–99, 108, 120.

⁸⁶ Ferraro, *Family and Public Life*, 166–71.

⁸⁷ Tagliaferri, *Relazioni dei rettori veneti*, 11:134.

⁸⁸ Gullino, "Marino Grimani"; BMC, P.D. 1276/7.

social and political capital, marrying off three daughters and spending freely in pursuit of ever more prestigious offices.⁸⁹

This strategy paid off. During the 1580s Grimani entered the highest echelons of Venetian politics. In 1587, at age fifty-five, he was nominated *capitano* of Padua, the most important mainland governorship.⁹⁰ His appointment coincided with the severe famine that would last into the mid-1590s. Again, Grimani had to deal with insufficient provisions, high grain prices, and speculation. At the end of his tenure he delivered the traditional final report to the Senate, starting with a description of devastating hunger and poverty. Of the area outside Padua, he said, “the farmers live in such poverty, that if I had not seen it with my own eyes I would not have believed it.”⁹¹ Both he and his colleague the *podestà* had invested much of their own funds to feed Padua and to give the even harder-hit countryside some relief.⁹² On April 1, 1588, while he was still Padua’s *capitano*, Grimani was elected Procurator of Saint Mark, the second-highest office in the republic and traditionally a stepping-stone to the dogeship. His tasks as procurator would include managing the execution of wills and bequests, distributing alms, and allocating cheap housing.⁹³ With the famine in Padua peaking, however, Grimani refused to abandon his post, claiming this would endanger the town’s supplies and the *quiete*, the public order.⁹⁴ Only at the official end of his tenure did he return to Venice to take up the office most associated with charity.

Giving could be a spiritual act that earned the individual benefactor divine favor, but charity could also carry political implications.⁹⁵ In republican Rome,

⁸⁹ Donata married Francesco Tiepolo della Misericordia in 1579; in 1582, Laura married Nicolò Corner della Ca’ Grande, son of Zorzi Corner, one of the wealthiest and most powerful nobles of the late cinquecento. Maria married three times: Alvise Grimani da S. Polo in 1593, Nicolò Molin da S. Caterina in 1607, and Lorenzo Giustinian in 1608. The fourth daughter, Beatrice, became a nun: Lowry, “The Church,” 341; Gullino, “Marino Grimani”; Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 317. Grimani remarked on the high costs of the dowries in his testament: ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, b.1249/I, October 26, 1602, c.181r–v.

⁹⁰ Gullino, “Marino Grimani”; Raines, “Office Seeking,” 186–87. The *capitano* was in charge of military and financial affairs.

⁹¹ Amelio Tagliaferri, ed., *Relazioni dei rettori veneti in Terraferma*, vol. 4, *Podestaria e capitanato di Padova* (Milan, 1975), 92.

⁹² Tagliaferri, *Relazioni dei rettori veneti*, 4:89–93; Agostino Michele, *Le glorie immortali del Ser.mo prencipe di Vinigia Marino Grimani descritte in dodici singolarissime orationi fatte nella sua creazione da molti eccellentissimi ambasciatori, e da altri pellegrini ingegni* (Venice, 1596), 11.

⁹³ Reinhold C. Mueller, *The Procuratori di San Marco and the Venetian Credit Market* (New York, 1977); Chambers, “Merit and Money,” 29.

⁹⁴ Tagliaferri, *Relazioni dei rettori veneti*, 4:93–94.

⁹⁵ Gene A. Brucker, “The Florentine *Popolo Minuto* and Its Political Role, 1340–1450,” in *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200–1500*, ed. Lauro Martines (Los Angeles, 1972), 170–73. See also Sandra Cavallo, *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and Their Motives in Turin, 1541–1789* (Cambridge, 1995).

giving was a necessary part of political display and of maintaining social harmony: notables showed generosity by organizing games for the *plebs* and established patronage relations through symbolic gifts to supporters.⁹⁶ In republican Venice, however, individual patricians who gave too much or too freely raised suspicion precisely because this could be instrumental in building a *cliente*.⁹⁷ In an attempt to curtail private initiatives, the Venetian distribution of charity increasingly became a matter for state-backed institutions during the sixteenth century.⁹⁸

But distinguishing between state and individual acts of munificence was (and is) not easy. Many Venetian offices, such as Grimani's mainland governorships, required visible acts of charity and largesse, but how, and how much, the individual officeholder gave obviously depended on his own wealth and willingness. It is unclear what Grimani spent on munificence during the first eighteen years of his career, but there is no doubt that he gave liberally. He had the wealth to do so: he paid 2,539 ducats for the *Redecima* of 1582, a tax representing roughly one-tenth of the annual revenue from his real estate and land. This was an enormous sum considering that he already had been spending heavily in office for years.⁹⁹ What is more, the Grimani-Morosini lands ensured periodic deliveries of cereals, flour, and bread, which could be consumed privately, sold, or donated.¹⁰⁰ In years of famine, Grimani had the habit of giving bread to the poor in his own parish of San Luca, thus establishing or reinforcing local patronage relations.¹⁰¹

What impelled Grimani to give so liberally? In part this can be ascribed to his religious sensibility and to the spectacles of poverty he had witnessed both in

⁹⁶ See Paul Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque: Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris, 1976); and Arjan Zuiderhoek, *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire: Citizens, Elites, and Benefactors in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 2009) on the political motives of giving in ancient Rome. On the complex question of late antique poverty, charity, and wealth, see Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ, 2012).

⁹⁷ De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, 40–41; Finlay, *Politics*, 219–21.

⁹⁸ Pullan, *Rich and Poor*; Tom Nichols, "Secular Charity, Sacred Poverty: Picturing the Poor in Renaissance Venice," *Art History* (2007): 139–69; David D'Andrea, "Charity and Confraternities," in Dursteler, *Companion to Venetian History*, 421–81.

⁹⁹ To put Grimani's tax payment into perspective, his predecessor Pasquale Cicogna and his successor Leonardo Donà paid 493 and 326 ducats, respectively, for the same *Redecima* tax: ASV, Dieci Savi alle Decime, Redecima del 1582, bb.157/57; 157 bis/440; Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 306, 312–13, 326. Almorò Grimani was taxed for 3,449 ducats, underlining the differences in asset management since the dissolution of their *fraternità*.

¹⁰⁰ Grimani sold grain and flour to Venetian bakers for thousands of ducats yearly: ASV, Archivio Privato Grimani-Barbarigo (hereafter APGB), b.20, *Notatorio 1589–1604* and *Intrade del Polesine e Rovigo*.

¹⁰¹ BNM, Ms. It. VII, 2255 (9168), c.295. On fourteenth-century patronage relations on a parish level, see Romano, *Patricians and Popolani*.

Venice and in the Terraferma cities.¹⁰² But his public generosity was also politically motivated, even though this went against the Venetian republican ideal. His father's failed bid for the dogeship had shown him how popular hostility could, in fact, obstruct patrician politics. Grimani's own choices throughout his career ensured that by the time he was a serious ducal contender in the 1590s, his name had become synonymous with generosity. The Spanish ambassador, explaining Grimani's popularity to Philip II in 1595, wrote that he was not just one of the richest and most important patricians but also a "great giver of charity" and "effectively a father of the poor."¹⁰³

The criticism leveled at Grimani by his peers indicates that his charitable activities went beyond what was institutionally required. As the English ambassador Henry Wotton, a perceptive observer of Venetian affairs, wrote after Grimani's death in 1605: "his youth [was] unstained by any notorious disorder; in his settled age, instead of faults, they [his fellow patricians] taxed him with too public charity."¹⁰⁴ Leonardo Donà especially was suspicious of Grimani's motives. Elected Procurator of Saint Mark three years after Grimani, Donà scrupulously controlled the procurators' chaotic administration, in a futile attempt to correct his colleagues' slack—or, even worse, biased—distribution of charity. Donà was not against charity per se, but it had to be suprapersonal.¹⁰⁵

A CONTESTED ELECTION

On Tuesday, April 11, 1595, Donà and Grimani, together with their competitor Foscarini and thirty-eight other electors, reported to the Ducal Palace. All three candidates knew that it took delicate maneuvering to advance one's candidacy from within the electoral college.¹⁰⁶ As they took up residence on the palace's

¹⁰² On Grimani's piety, see the nuncio's comments and the number of charitable legacies in his last will: BMC, Codice Morosini Grimani 358, c.247; and ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, b.1249/I, c.177v–184v.

¹⁰³ AGS, April 8, 1595: "procurador Marin Grimani, q'es un cavallero de los mas ricos y mas principales desta ciudad. Et qual por haver sido gran limosnaro, y padre en effetto de los pobres, la mayor parte della lo dessea por Principe." These tropes obviously were part of a humanist panegyric vocabulary: "father of the poor" recalled the late Roman and medieval tradition of bishops as protectors of the poor and distributors of charity. Richard C. Trexler, "The Bishop's Portion: Generic Pious Legacies in the Late Middle Ages in Italy," *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought and Religion* 28 (1972): 397–450.

¹⁰⁴ Logan Pearsall Smith, ed., *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton* (Oxford, 1907), 1:342–43.

¹⁰⁵ Chambers, "Merit and Money"; Brunetti, "Il diario," 116; Donà's diaries in BMC, Donà d. Rose, nos. 34 and 35.

¹⁰⁶ Da Mosto, *I dogi*, xviii, xxiii; Tucci, "I meccanismi," 122. Each nominee was discussed before voting took place. If a nominee was among the electors, he had to leave the room; he could not vote for himself.

second floor all doors were locked and windows blocked to prevent communication with the outside. In many ways the procedure resembled the papal election process, although the election of a pope was heavily influenced by international politics. As in Rome, the Venetian conclave was far from watertight, with both nobles and nonnobles leaking information.¹⁰⁷ At each meal the electors could find messages in napkins and tablecloths, hidden there by palace servants, while certain members of the *Quarantuno* and the attending notaries and secretaries concealed voting results and reports under dirty tableware and in the laundry to be smuggled out.¹⁰⁸

The candidates' families, their patrician supporters, and the diplomatic corps could count on a steady trickle of information. Engagement with the election, however, extended to a far broader range of nonpatrician Venetians, who discussed candidates in public and private, gambled on the outcome, and recorded electoral results in sometimes surprising places.¹⁰⁹ For instance, in 1587, one of the guards on the Lazzaretto Nuovo, the quarantine island, registered the death of Doge Nicolò da Ponte and the subsequent election of Pasquale Cicogna in paint on the wall of the island's main building, where it still can be seen today.¹¹⁰ Inmates of the *Pozzi*, the prisons on the ground floor of the Ducal Palace, wrote the outcomes of the 1579 and the 1606 elections on the walls of their cells.¹¹¹

The diplomats quickly grasped that votes were divided among the three main candidates and that none of them was willing to cede, owing to political differences, personal antipathies, and pride. By day five of the conclave, they began to predict a long and difficult procedure.¹¹² As the days and ballots went by, the Signoria became anxious and discussed speeding up the procedure by reducing the electors' comforts and food. They decided instead to give them a formal admonition, hoping this would convince one of the candidates to withdraw or bring

¹⁰⁷ John M. Hunt, "The Conclave from the 'Outside In': Rumor, Speculation, and Disorder in Rome during Early Modern Papal Elections," *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012): 355–82; Nussdorfer, "Vacant See."

¹⁰⁸ ASV, Collegio (Minor Consiglio), Notatorio, registro 57 (1595), c.30v, April 19, 1595. Uguccioni reported on April 15 that he had copies of all the voting rounds; ASF, MdP, b.2994.

¹⁰⁹ For gambling on elections, see Finlay, *Politics*, 53–54; Jonathan Walker, "Gambling and Venetian Noblemen, c. 1500–1700," *Past and Present* 162 (1999): 28–69.

¹¹⁰ The guard documented the arrival of a ship from Istanbul at the start of July, adding the death of Doge Nicolò da Ponte and subsequent election of Pasquale Cicogna. Francesca Malagnini, *Il Lazzaretto Nuovo di Venezia: Le scritte parietali* (Venice, 2017), 174–75.

¹¹¹ Francesco Zanotto, *I Pozzi ed i Piombi: Antiche prigioni di stato della repubblica di Venezia* (Venice, 1876), 111–12, 120–21.

¹¹² ASMo, Venezia, b.73, April 5 and 15, 1595; ASVat, Venezia, April 8, 1595; ASMa, Venezia, April 14, 1595; ASMo, Venezia, b.83, April 15, 1595.

about the election of an outsider.¹¹³ Accordingly, on April 19, 1595, after ten days of voting, the Signoria's secretary read out a statement to the *Quarantuno* urging them to consider the dangers that threatened the paralyzed city: the economy suffered because state-regulated ships could not depart, there was no Senate to deal with pressing international matters, and violators of the law could not be prosecuted because all tribunals had been suspended.¹¹⁴

The warning, however, failed to break the gridlock and did little to dispel the hostile atmosphere among the electors. An anonymous report, probably written by a Signoria member, indicates that after the admonition Grimani and Foscarini started quarrelling.¹¹⁵ Three days later, on April 22, after nearly two weeks of isolation and more than fifty rounds of voting, the three main competitors shouted insults at each other and threatened lawsuits.¹¹⁶ The electoral paralysis meant that the Venetian city-state was virtually ungoverned and increasingly ungovernable. "The republic remains without its head," reported Ambassador Ariosti to Ferrara.¹¹⁷

STREET POLITICS

In two hundred years no election had proved so difficult: any suggestion of patrician harmony was by now untenable. The diplomats interspersed their analyses of the politicking inside the conclave with reports of pro-Grimani rallies in the streets. On April 15, five days into the conclave and eight since the ducal funeral, Parma's ambassador Zornoza reported that day and night "the people cry Grimani." He estimated that between four and five thousand people continually called for Grimani's election.¹¹⁸ It had been just over a week since the boys' mocking performance during the ducal funeral.¹¹⁹ Ordinary Venetians apparently had more options for expressing their political preferences than just (semi)secret infrapolitical actions, to use Scott's terms.¹²⁰ In defiance of the city-state's formal political structure, Venetians engaged in large-scale public demonstrations.

¹¹³ For similar interventions during the 1585 election, see Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 307–8.

¹¹⁴ ASV, Collegio, Notatorio, reg.57, c.32v–33v, contains the text of the admonishment read by the Signoria's secretary, including the reference to the "sospesa et interdicta città." An anonymous report adds a wealth of additional information: see BNM, Ms. It. VII, 2255 (9168), c.274–303.

¹¹⁵ BNM, Ms. It. VII, 2255 (9168), c.286, 293–94.

¹¹⁶ ASMo, Venezia, b.73, April 22, 1595, and b.83 for that same date.

¹¹⁷ ASMo, Venezia, b.73, April 22, 1595.

¹¹⁸ ASPr, Venezia, April 15 and 29, 1595.

¹¹⁹ As William Beik has shown for urban protests in seventeenth-century France, preparations for demonstrations usually followed a pattern, starting with meetings in markets and taverns. The first phase often involved the mobilization of children. Beik, *Urban Protest*, 253.

¹²⁰ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.

The speed with which the nature and range of protests had changed indicates that the interruption of Cicogna's funerary procession was neither an isolated nor a spontaneous event. Although it is unclear how and by whom the 1595 rallies were planned, within the space of a week they had developed into a widespread movement. The authorities could do little to suppress these protests, which showed no sign of abating. An increasingly desperate Signoria tried to clamp down on the leaking of electoral information, decreeing that any secretary or servant caught smuggling news in or out of the Ducal Palace would be condemned to the galleys.¹²¹ This met with partial success: the diplomats grumbled that voting results became more difficult to find, but inevitably information still got out.¹²²

The attempt to stem the information flow, however, had a counterproductive effect. With fewer accounts of the voting available, rumors abounded. The anonymous news writer for Parma's ambassador recorded that "morning and night a whispering descends on the city, saying first that this one has been elected, then another."¹²³ During papal elections, rumors often turned into street fights and ritual pillaging—forms of popular disorder that historians see as an integral part of the Roman *sede vacante* but not of the Venetian vacancy.¹²⁴ Yet as the 1595 ducal election dragged on, the atmosphere in the city became increasingly fraught. On Wednesday, April 19, a false rumor of Grimani's imminent election meant that "all the people became agitated, shouting and yelling *Viva il Grimani*. . . . A large number of people went to the Grimani Palace, closing their shops and showing great signs of desiring him as prince."¹²⁵ Ariosti wrote on April 19 that "the entire city" wanted Grimani, and three days later Pomponazzi stated that the whole Piazza San Marco shouted for Grimani. Tuscan ambassador

¹²¹ ASV, Collegio, Notatorio, reg.57, c.30v, April 19, 1595. See also the *avviso* of April 22, included in ASPr, Venezia, b.615.

¹²² ASMo, Venezia, b.73, April 22, 1595, and b.83 for that same date. Uguccioni reported that he could no longer obtain voting results: ASF, MdP, b.2994.

¹²³ ASPr, Venezia, *avviso* of April 22, 1595: "mattina et sera si poneva nella città un sussuro dicendo hora esser fatto uno, hora esser fatto l'altro."

¹²⁴ For the Roman vacancy, see, e.g., John M. Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome: A Social History of the Papal Interregnum* (Leiden, 2016), and "Conclave from the 'Outside In.'"

¹²⁵ ASPr, Venezia, *avviso* of April 22, 1595, included with the ambassador's correspondence: "il mercoledì sera essendosi sparso fama che la mattina l'ill.mo Grimani havea scosso 23 balle che hebbero sospetto che fusse la sera stato eletto se misse il popolo tutto in conquasso cridando strepitando *viva il Grimani* andando grandissima quantità di popolo alla casa del detto ill.mo serando le botteghe con grandissimi segni di desiderio di haver il detto ill.mo per principe, et così ogni giorno sera, et mattina si sta con questa opinione che sia stata fatto l'electione hora del'huno, et hora dell'altro." On *avvisi*, see Mario Infelise, *Prima dei giornali: Alle origini della pubblica informazione* (Rome, 2002); De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, 80–84.

Uguccioni, with a Florentine's sensitivity to plebeian rebellions, wrote that the "rabble continually applauded and called for Grimani" and that if they became rebellious ("fattiosa") it would certainly produce disorder.¹²⁶ Although they were loath to address it in their statement to the *Quarantuno*, it was this kind of public agitation that formed the background to the Signoria's entreaty to speed up the election process.

Who were these demonstrators? Establishing their profile is difficult, given the lack of sources naming individuals. Because of the suspension of the courts, there are no criminal records dealing with disturbances during the vacancy, nor are there any in the twelve months afterward, perhaps because of the authorities' unwillingness to pursue offenders and thus admit to a loss of control.¹²⁷ But there are some alternative sources, such as poems or songs that circulated. One anonymous poem urged the *Quarantuno* to hurry and elect a new doge, commenting on the disrespectful manner in which "the rabble, women, porters, and children" expressed political opinions in public squares and streets.¹²⁸ The disreputable (rabble, porters), women, and the young are categories that contemporaries often equated with disorderliness, revealing perhaps more about stereotypes than about actual social identities, yet members of these groups were indeed often involved in popular protests.¹²⁹ In any case, it seems that a broad segment of Venetians had taken to the streets: the news report of April 19 talked of Grimani supporters closing their shops to participate in the demonstrations, indicating that retailers and artisans were part of the movement. What is more, the Spanish ambassador reported that members of the *cittadini* class were joining the *popolani* for pro-Grimani rallies in the piazza.¹³⁰ This is corroborated by a second poem, which a news writer considered important enough to include in a newsletter sent to Rome, which described how "great and small, *popolani* and *cittadini*"

¹²⁶ ASMo, Venezia, b.73; ASMa, Venezia, b.1527; ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 22, 1595.

¹²⁷ For an English parallel, see John Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 2005), 239–40, 338–39.

¹²⁸ Antonio Pilot, "L'elezione del Doge Marino Grimani e una canzone inedita," *Pagine Istriane* 2, no. 2 (1904): 55–56: "Adesso ogniun par libero talmente / che chi no ha rispetto ai so maxori / mena la lengua stravagantemente / la zentagai, le femene, e i fachini / i putti e i fantelini / con strepiti e romori / su le publiche piazze e per la strada / senza nissun rispetto / vuol descorrer de stado, e de fattion / con la so opinion." Porters, or *fachini*, were ubiquitous in Venice: see Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*, ed. Paolo Cherchi and Beatrice Collina (Turin, 1996), 1277–79.

¹²⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford, CA, 1975), 124–51; John Walter, "Faces in the Crowd: Gender and Age in the Early Modern Crowd," in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (Cambridge, 2007), 96–125; Beik, *Urban Protest*, 27, 36–37; cf. Cohn, *Lust for Liberty*, 92–96.

¹³⁰ AGS, April 27, 1595.

asked loudly for Grimani to be made doge.¹³¹ The participation of *cittadini* demonstrators must have been especially worrying and potentially destabilizing to the elite. The involvement in protests of this intermediate group, always portrayed as loyal to the ruling class, was rare; when it did happen, such as when the Habsburg Emperor Maximilian attacked in 1509, it sent the authorities into a panic.¹³²

The support for Grimani had a clear message: it focused on his reputation as “father of the poor” and on the themes of abundance and munificence. The slogan “Viva Grimani, who will have large loaves of bread baked!” was heard everywhere, day and night.¹³³ These shouts probably played into patrician prejudice against a populace that was “all stomach and no head,” but it would be too simplistic to conclude that munificence automatically equated popularity.¹³⁴ In 1523, for instance, Doge Andrea Gritti distributed cheap grain after his election, but the people continued to cheer his competitor, Antonio Tron, and never favored Gritti during his dogeship.¹³⁵ And although bread was a central theme in the protests, these were not straightforward food riots sparked by grain scarcity, a form of collective action that is often interpreted as prepolitical, spontaneous, and uncoordinated.¹³⁶ In Venice, as in many other early modern cities, the authorities guaranteed a stable bread price through a sophisticated provisioning system (*calmiere*) that rested on state-controlled grain warehouses and public bread shops (*pistorie*). Yet in times of scarcity a stable bread price meant that, inevitably, the weight and quality of a loaf diminished. Venice was not immune to food riots, such as raids on state warehouses and bakeries. These could be triggered by acute shortages but also by the distribution of lower-quality bread through state bread shops, in a pattern similar to that discussed by Thompson for eighteenth-century England and by Louise Tilly for early modern France.¹³⁷ For instance, in 1569–70 the distribution of bread made from millet, a lower-

¹³¹ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Urb. Lat. 1063, Avvisi dell’anno 1595, c.255r: “Pero grandi, e picenini / popolari, e cittadini / demandemo in zenochioni / senza brogio per cantoni / questa gratia ad’ alta vose / che’l sia fatto nostro dose.”

¹³² Rospocher, “Non vedete la liberta,” 134–35.

¹³³ ASPr, Venezia, April 15, 1595: “Viva Grimani, che fara far grande i pani.” The second poem described how people shouted for Grimani: “Per Venetia va cridando / assai zente strepitando / con dir che Marino Grimani / fara grossi, e grandi i pani”: BAV, Urb. Lat. 1063, Avvisi dell’anno 1595, c.255r.

¹³⁴ Cited by De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, 88. See also Wotton in Pearsall Smith, *Life and Letters*, 2:139.

¹³⁵ Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 239–40.

¹³⁶ See Rudé, *The Crowd*, and *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century: Studies in Popular Protest* (London, 1974), 23; and Yves-Marie Bercé, *Revolt and Revolution in Early Modern Europe: An Essay on the History of Political Violence*, trans. Joseph Bergin (Manchester, 1987); cf. Cohn, “Authority.”

¹³⁷ Thompson, “Moral Economy”; Tilly, “Food Riot.”

quality grain, caused furious Venetians to storm grain warehouses and plunder bakeries.¹³⁸ Yet at the time of the election, in the spring of 1595, grain prices were stable, and there are no recorded attacks on granaries or bakers.

The specter of famine, however, was ever present.¹³⁹ By the end of the sixteenth century, an estimated seventy percent of the population depended on “pane calmierato,” price-controlled bread.¹⁴⁰ The issue of the availability and quality of public bread thus affected the vast majority of Venetians, including the working poor and day laborers but also artisans and shopkeepers and, of course, their families. They formed a reservoir of potential pro-Grimani supporters. The Venetian people’s understanding of the right quality and price of bread shaped collective actions and protests.¹⁴¹ And as figureheads of the republic, Venetian doges were often held responsible for grain shortages or low-quality bread, as at the funeral of Doge Pietro Loredan in 1570.

A forceful doge, especially one with an understanding of agriculture and food distribution and a reputation for munificence, could influence the policies made in the Senate, which took decisions on urban provisioning and supervised the *Officio alle Biave* (Grain Office), in charge of the city’s granaries and the *calmiere*.¹⁴² From the perspective of ordinary Venetians, therefore, Grimani had crucial ducal qualities in times of hunger. Although motivated by economic concerns, the demonstrators’ goal thus was primarily political: they used the symbol of bread to express their political agenda, in dialogue with Grimani’s carefully cultivated reputation and with the ultimate aim of influencing the republic’s provisioning policies.

But how much impact could the popular voice have on a ducal election? Some ambassadors doubted that the crowd’s show of support would do Grimani much good. Zornoza wrote that he hoped that such fervent desire would not damage Grimani’s chances, and Vera y Aragon remarked “I don’t know how much [the continuous shouting] will help him.”¹⁴³ The popular enthusiasm, in fact, initially

¹³⁸ BNM, Cod. Marc. VII 539 (7735) (Cronaca Savina), c.406–10.

¹³⁹ Maartje van Gelder, *Trading Places: The Netherlandish Merchants in Early Modern Venice* (Leiden, 2009), 41–66.

¹⁴⁰ I. Mattozzi et al., “Il politico e il pane a Venezia (1570–1650): Calmieri e governo della sussistenza,” *Società e Storia* 20 (1983): 271–303, esp. 280–81.

¹⁴¹ See also Thompson, “Moral Economy”; Patrick Lantschner, *The Logic of Political Conflict in Medieval Cities: Italy and the Southern Netherlands* (Oxford, 2015), 15.

¹⁴² The *Officio alle Biave* consisted, among others, of *provveditori* (patrician officials) supervising the city’s granaries and *sopraprovveditori* who controlled the supply of grain by private merchants: Maurice Aymard, *Venise, Raguse et le commerce du blé pendant la seconde moitié du xvi siècle* (Paris, 1966), 74–78.

¹⁴³ ASPr, Venezia, April 15, 1595; AGS, April 15, 1595: “La gente popular grida Grimani, no sè quanto le aprovecharà.” Uguccioni also assumed that plebeian support damaged Grimani’s chances: ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 12, 1595.

only strengthened Donà's resolve not to allow any of his supporters among the electors to vote for Grimani, thereby effectively prolonging the election.¹⁴⁴ Yet the combination of a government shutdown, an apparently interminable ducal election, and a popular candidate with a reputation for largesse made for a volatile situation. On April 25, after sixty-five ballots, the Signoria decided to admonish the electors a second time, stressing that good government was more and more in disarray as the chance of "scandalous incidents" increased.¹⁴⁵ This time the Signoria did refer—although still obliquely—to an increasing danger of political turmoil.¹⁴⁶ They pointed to the threat of "public digressions" (*errario publico*) and "novità"—which in an early modern context meant not just novelties but also political changes and instability—without giving any specifics.¹⁴⁷

Other sources, however, show that after a vacancy of twenty-three days, the situation was escalating. The crowds shouting for Grimani continued to grow and were impossible to suppress, despite the Signoria's attempts.¹⁴⁸ Protests also became more threatening. On the night of April 25—the feast of Venice's patron Saint Mark—following the Signoria's second admonishment, a crowd of some 10,000 "plebeian men" gathered in the piazza, according to the Tuscan and Spanish ambassadors. At least three hundred of them were armed with lances and carried Grimani banners.¹⁴⁹ They stood on the Ponte della Paglia, right in front of the Ducal Palace on the side of the *piazzetta* (the extension of the piazza toward the lagoon), well within earshot of the electors, shouting that Grimani should be made doge. The men then tried to break down the palace gate, threatened greater disorder, and beat a Foscarini supporter almost to death.¹⁵⁰ After a vacancy of nearly four weeks, Venice seemed on the brink of a revolt. According to Vera y Aragon "this insolence was little else than sedition" and a veritable "popular mutiny" (*motin popular*). He added that if the election continued any longer, the republic would risk losing its liberty. Uguccioni agreed and wrote to Florence that a longer *vacanza ducale* could lead to "accidents and important

¹⁴⁴ On the competition for votes, see the ambassadorial reports for Mantua, Parma, and Ferrara.

¹⁴⁵ ASV, Collegio, Notatorio, reg. 57, c.37r–38v.

¹⁴⁶ On the Venetian political elite's reluctance to use terms like *sedition* or *revolt*, see Judde de Larivière, *La révolte*, 264–66.

¹⁴⁷ ASV, Collegio, Notatorio, reg. 57, c.38r. Also BNM, Ms. It. VII, 2255 (9168), c.291. On *novità*, see Michael J. Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Ithaca, NY, 2005), 11–12.

¹⁴⁸ BNM, Ms. It. VII, 2255 (9168), c.295: "il popolo ch'andava continuamente gridando per la Piazza di San Marco e per le strade *Viva il Grimani* con gran seguito e sempre più crescevano, ne per quanti ordini, mezzi, ne per tutte le provisioni fatte, non fù mai possibile d'aquietar esso popolo."

¹⁴⁹ ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 26, 1595; and AGS, April 27, 1595.

¹⁵⁰ ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 26, 1595.

alterations.”¹⁵¹ Inside the Ducal Palace Leonardo Donà had come to similar conclusions: despite his strong objections against Grimani, he withdrew his candidacy and released his votes to prevent greater disorder. The next day the *Quarantuno* elected Grimani with the bare minimum of twenty-five votes, after a record-breaking seventy-one ballots.¹⁵²

Who were these armed men and how closely were they related to Grimani and his family? Urban elites often enlisted popular support for their own factional quarrels.¹⁵³ Yet despite all the circulating whispers and rumors, no one, not even those diplomats most in the know, hinted at a connection to Grimani. By contrast, patrician instigation of *popolani* riots was widely reported in the 1676 election.¹⁵⁴ One anonymous patrician observer did point to the political repercussions of munificence within a republican context: “This act of charity is dangerous in republics, because if the donors then use it in bad faith, they become dangerous once in power”—hastening to add that Grimani had never abused his power, always seeking to calm the people.¹⁵⁵ Although Grimani had consciously crafted a popular, even a populist, public image during the previous decade, it is highly unlikely that a Grimani faction directly controlled the demonstrating crowds. The Tuscan ambassador wrote to the Grand Duke: “I would almost say that the people have made him [doge].”¹⁵⁶ That ordinary Venetians had played such an overt political role only increased patrician nervousness.

AFTER THE ELECTION

Grimani’s election initially did nothing to restore order. The announcement of the final result created a celebration that bordered on the uncontrollable. The streets filled with ecstatic celebrators, who lit so many bonfires that it seemed as if the city was going up in flames. Shouts hailing Grimani, ringing church bells, and exploding firecrackers created a deafening noise all through the day and the following night. Observers claimed that the Venetians had never before expressed

¹⁵¹ AGS, April 27, 1595: “desda insolencia, que fue poco menos que sedicion.” ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 26, 1595: “se la sede vacante havesse durato troppi giorni più, si vedeva ingrossando gli humori . . . [e] può nascere accidenti e variationi importanti.”

¹⁵² BNM, Ms. It. VII, 2255 (9168), c.295. As the youngest of the three candidates, Donà could hope that this would play to his advantage in the next election.

¹⁵³ See, e.g., Beik, *Urban Protest*, 199–218.

¹⁵⁴ Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 414–15.

¹⁵⁵ BNM, Ms. It. VII, 2255 (9168), c.295: “(tanto è pericolo nelle repubbliche questo atto di carità) che se l’autori poi aplicano in mala parte, riescono al governo pericolosi.”

¹⁵⁶ ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 26, 1595: “e quasi quasi sto per dire che la plebe l’habbia fatto lei.”

such intense joy at the election of a new doge.¹⁵⁷ Crowds descended upon the piazza in the hope of entering the Ducal Palace to congratulate Grimani. When, as a precaution, the palace doors were kept closed, joy mixed with pent-up frustration turned into violence.

Official Venetian records do not describe any of these violent outbursts but only include a brief estimate of the damage to public property.¹⁵⁸ The foreign diplomats, however, wrote detailed reports. “Lowly people,” according to one diplomat, within an hour had destroyed some fifty market stalls and covered stands erected on the piazza for the annual Ascension Fair, while also demolishing the benches of various palace tribunals. At Rialto, market stalls suffered a similar fate.¹⁵⁹ Part of the debris was used to build an enormous bonfire in the piazza, and the rest was turned into makeshift standards: people put their hats or berets on top and ran through the city shouting “Viva Grimani!”¹⁶⁰ Another group ran in the opposite direction, from Rialto to the piazza. Accompanied by drums, they carried Grimani banners and similarly improvised standards topped with *pani grossi*, the weighty loaves the new doge had come to be identified with, thus transferring the image of bread and abundance from their demonstrations to their celebrations.¹⁶¹ For centuries, flags, banners, and standards had had a galvanizing effect on rebelling Italians.¹⁶² One observer likened these bands traversing the city to soldiers on the battlefield, an uncomfortable comparison given that they pledged allegiance to Grimani personally, not to the republic.¹⁶³ There seemed little difference between festive and defiant frenzy.

Grimani realized he had to address this heady mix of disorder and high expectations. He did so by combining the traditional coronation rituals with more personalized and highly visible messages of munificence. On April 26, after a turbulent and chaotic night, he was crowned doge in the three-stage ceremony that

¹⁵⁷ BL, Add. 8581, c.735r–7r; BNM, Ms. It. VII 142 (7147), c.339–40; AGS, April 27, 1595. This is also the frame used by pro-Grimani authors, such as Giovanni Rota, *Lettera nella quale si descrive l'ingresso nel Palazzo Ducale della Serenissima Morosina Morosini Grimani, principessa di Vinetia* (Venice, 1597), A1v–A2r.

¹⁵⁸ The damage to the benches of the tribunals in San Marco was estimated at 371 ducats; ASV, Deliberazioni, Terra, filza 135, c.211–12, May 20, 1595.

¹⁵⁹ BMC, Codice Cicogna 2479; ASPr, Venezia, April 29, 1595; ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 26, 1595. Ugucconi talks of “gente bassa” and “gente minuta.”

¹⁶⁰ ASMo, Venezia, April 15, 1595; ASPr, Venezia, April 29, 1595.

¹⁶¹ ASMo, Venezia, April 26, 1595; ASPr, Venezia, April 29, 1595. Carrying pikes with loaves on the points was also a traditional gesture in protests against high bread prices: Peter Burke, “The Virgin of the Carmine and the Revolt of Masaniello,” *Past and Present* 99, no. 1 (1983): 3–21, 11.

¹⁶² Cohn, *Lust for Liberty*, 179–88; Richard C. Trexler, “Follow the Flag: The *Ciampi* Revolution Seen from the Streets,” *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 46, no. 2 (1984): 357–92.

¹⁶³ Rota, *Lettera*, A2r.

had developed over the centuries: the presentation of the new doge in St. Mark's Basilica, the *sparsio* (tossing of specially minted coins to the people) in the piazza, and the actual coronation on the steps of the Ducal Palace.¹⁶⁴ After having been presented by the electors, Grimani spoke to the gathered crowds—consisting of an estimated 30,000 people—from the basilica's pulpit (fig. 2).¹⁶⁵

The ambassador for Parma had a front seat to the proceedings and wrote a lengthy reportage. He described how the new doge acknowledged the driving force behind the popular rallies, saying that he would “endeavor to maintain the abundance that they so desired, . . . that this was his explicit wish.” Grimani then announced that the price of flour would be lowered. The crowd responded by roaring “Viva Grimani, father of the poor.”¹⁶⁶ In a coronation poem, Bergamo's representative, Nicolò Besucio, directly connected the “padre dei poveri” leitmotif to Grimani's rise to the dogeship: “As he becomes a father of the poor, he is made the peoples' prince; as he stoops to the wretched, he is raised to be the most fortunate.”¹⁶⁷

Marino Grimani has not left behind a memoir or diary to shed more light on his motives for combining republican ideals with blatant displays of munificence.¹⁶⁸ But, as a landowner and businessman, he did keep careful track of his finances in his account books, which provide insight into his daily concerns. After the three-week hiatus of the conclave, he immediately updated his records, pointing out his own election with a terse “Note that on 26 April I was made doge.” The listed expenses for his coronation, however, demonstrate anything but a laconic attitude.¹⁶⁹ Those Venetians with high hopes for Grimani's “natural humanity and munificence” were not disappointed.¹⁷⁰

The second stage in the ducal coronation was the *sparsio*, designed over the centuries to channel the ritual violence of the medieval *spoliazione* (despoliation) of the new doge and the sacking of his family palace. The act of tossing coins at the crowd was part of many premodern inauguration rituals, symbolizing the bond between rulers and ruled.¹⁷¹ The ducal oath called for the distri-

¹⁶⁴ On the ceremony, see Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 263–88.

¹⁶⁵ On the size of the crowd, see ASPr, Venezia, April 29, 1595.

¹⁶⁶ ASPr, Venezia, April 29, 1595; BAV, Urb. Lat., April 29, 1595, 273v; ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 29, 1595, on the lower bread price.

¹⁶⁷ Michele, *Le glorie*, 29–30: “che però mentre egli si fa padre de' poveri, è fatto prencipe de' popoli, mentre s'abbassa a i meschini, vien sollevato a piu fortunati.”

¹⁶⁸ On the Venetian elite's lack of personalized writing, see James S. Grubb, “Introduction,” in *Family Memoirs from Venice (15th–17th Centuries)*, ed. James S. Grubb (Rome, 2009), xiv.

¹⁶⁹ ASV, APGB, b.33, c.343v–350v.

¹⁷⁰ ASMo, Venezia, April 26, 1595.

¹⁷¹ Casini, *I gesti*, 49. For Rome, see Irene Fosi, “Court and City in the Ceremony of the *Possesso* in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492–1700*, ed. Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Cambridge, 2002), 37.



FIG. 2.—Illustration from the Morosini-Grimani family chronicle showing Marino Grimani's acceptance speech to the crowds in the Basilica. Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Codice Morosini-Grimani, *Origine della famiglia Grimana*, 270, c.64. Color version available as an online enhancement.

bution of one hundred coins of silver, but Grimani clearly took this as indicating a minimum. One of the first things he did after the conclave was to pay the *Zecca* (Mint) 1,600 ducats to cast celebratory coins: the next day he and his male relatives tossed some 1,400 ducats worth of these coins to the assembled crowds as they were carried around the piazza, an act recorded in an illustration in a family chronicle (fig. 3). His wife and daughters threw the rest from the Ducal Palace's windows. This itself was a great expense, considering that a skilled craftsman in the Arsenal made some fifty ducats a year, but it was only one-fifth of the festivities' total cost.¹⁷² Grimani paid a staggering 7,000 ducats for the celebrations, spending it on dinners, salaries for musicians, cooks, porters, guards, decorations for his own *palazzo*, and, predictably, acts of munificence: he had his

¹⁷² BMC, F.2409 Promissione Marino Grimani 1595; Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 286; Da Mosto, *I dogi*, xxv. On wages, see Lane, *Venice*, 333; Pullan, "Wage-Earners."



FIG. 3.—Marino Grimani distributing money to the crowds during the *sparsio*. Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Codice Morosini-Grimani, *Origine della famiglia Grimana*, 270, c.63. Color version available as an online enhancement.

brother dispense eighty ducats to the inhabitants of their own parish of San Luca and ordered that almost five hundred ducats be distributed to poor Venetians and various institutions.¹⁷³

True to his reputation, Grimani donated grain and bread in an operation of such complex logistics and high costs that it has been dismissed as a pro-Grimani fabrication.¹⁷⁴ The entries in his account book show, however, that immediately upon his election he ordered bread to be bought at bakers and public

¹⁷³ ASV, APGB, b.33, c.343v, under the heading *elemosine*; and G. Giomo, “Le spese del nobile uomo Marino Grimani nella sua elezione a doge di Venezia,” *Archivio veneto* 33 (1887): 443–54. Uguccioni, the Florentine ambassador, exaggerated when he reported that Grimani had donated one hundred ducats to each of Venice’s seventy parishes, but his remark does indicate the impact that the new doge’s munificence made on the diplomatic community. ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 29, 1595.

¹⁷⁴ Maximilian Tondro, “Memory and Tradition: The Ephemeral Architecture for the Triumphal Entries of the Doge of Venice in 1557 and 1597” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2002), 98.

bread shops all over Venice. Within a day of his election the *pistorie* were empty, a situation that under normal circumstances would have caused riots. Not satisfied, Grimani continued to buy flour from Terraferma millers and Venetian sellers and had it baked into more bread. In addition he paid for transport and taxation costs, spending a total of 500 ducats.¹⁷⁵ For a few days, the new doge practically took over the state's supply system.

During three days Grimani men distributed bread at the doge's family *palazzo*, but the bulk was dispensed in a strategic move that used Venice's spatial structure to full advantage.¹⁷⁶ Grimani's accounts show that seven boats and gondolas deposited sacks of bread and containers of wine at each of the thirteen *traghetto* (gondola ferry) stations along the Grand Canal.¹⁷⁷ With only the Rialto Bridge linking the two banks of the canal, all those who could not afford a private gondola used these *traghetti* to cross the city.¹⁷⁸ They formed strategic nodes in the city's information system, often used by the state as the location for official proclamations.¹⁷⁹ Thus, not only did Grimani's munificence reach a cross-section of ordinary Venetians, but his personal reputation for charity was also broadcast through the information channels usually used by the state—an uncomfortable reminder to Donà and other patricians of the new doge's populist tendencies. Uguccioni reported that he had heard more than four prominent senators saying that had they anticipated the intensity of *popolano* support, Grimani would never have been made doge.¹⁸⁰

BREAD AND GAMES

The republic went back to business at the start of May with measures concerning food supply topping the agenda. The Senate's first decision was on the distribution of grain to the convents to be donated to the city's poor.¹⁸¹ In those first

¹⁷⁵ ASV, APGB, b.33, c.343v–346v. Also Giomo, “Le spese.”

¹⁷⁶ On the distribution of bread and wine and some minor ritual sacking at the Grimani Palace: ASF, MdP, b.2994, April 26, 1595.

¹⁷⁷ ASPr, Venezia, April 29, 1595; BL, Add. 8581, c.736r; BNM, Ms. It. VII 142 (7147), c.339.

¹⁷⁸ On gondolas and social status, see Dennis Romano, “The Gondola as a Marker of *Statio* in Venetian Society,” *Renaissance Studies* 8, no. 4 (1994): 359–74; Horatio Brown, *Life on the Lagoons* (London, 1884), 85.

¹⁷⁹ On the information system in Italian cities: Stephen J. Milner, “‘Fanno bandire, notificare, et espressamente comandare’: Town Criers and the Information Economy in Renaissance Florence,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 16, nos. 1–2 (2013): 107–51, esp. 112.

¹⁸⁰ ASF, MdP, b.2994, May 6, 1595: “et io ho sentito dire à più di 4 senatori d'importanza che se la nobiltà havessi creduto tanto sussiego e applauso della plebe, non havrebbero mai fatto il Grimani doge.”

¹⁸¹ ASV, Senato Terra, r.65, May 2, 1595.

months of Grimani's dogeship the Venetian government made an important change in policy, suspending traditional protectionist laws against foreign shipping and paving the way for the importation of northern European grain, which could alleviate shortages when Mediterranean harvests failed. Such a measure, facilitating the state's grain distribution, may well have been what his *popolani* supporters had envisioned.¹⁸² Grimani's personal charitable acts now had to follow the annual calendar of ducal obligations, offering alms on *Giovedì Grasso* and donating pigeons to the poor on Palm Sunday.¹⁸³ The window for extraordinary ducal largesse in response to popular demands had been brief—or so it seemed.

Two years after his own election, Grimani used his wife's coronation ceremony to drive home again his political message aimed at ordinary Venetians, elaborating themes from his own coronation and responding to the symbolism of the popular demonstrations.¹⁸⁴ Upon her husband's election, Morosina Morosini had been given the title of "dogressa," ducal consort. The dogressa was a rare female figure within the highest spheres of Venetian power, doubly so because many doges entered their office unmarried or as widowers.¹⁸⁵ As Holly Hurlburt has argued, the public function of the dogressa was "largely to enhance the power of the doge and confirm the patriarchal ideology of the state."¹⁸⁶ In a ceremony that mirrored her husband's coronation, Morosina Morosini was crowned in 1597 during a sumptuous three-day festival. Yet whereas the ducal coronation was circumscribed with little room for personal touches, the dogressa's was much less regulated because it so rarely occurred. This allowed Venice's power couple to turn the event into the feast of the century.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Van Gelder, *Trading Places*, 56–66. These changes also signaled Venice's decline as a maritime commercial power. On Grimani's efforts to increase the grain supplies, see Marco Giani, "Gravo Bavarese a Venezia: Progetti di tratte transalpine in una lettura di Minuccio Minucci a Paolo Paruta (1597)," *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arte* 172 (2013–14): 371–440.

¹⁸³ Nichols, "Secular Charity," 150–51; Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 255–66.

¹⁸⁴ Maartje van Gelder, "Ducal Display and the Contested Use of Space in Late Sixteenth-Century Venetian Coronation Festivals," in *Occasions of State: Early Modern Festivals and the Negotiation of Power*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Krista De Jonge (Aldershot, 2018).

¹⁸⁵ On the role of the dogressa, see Holly S. Hurlburt, *The Dogressa of Venice, 1200–1500: Wives and Icons* (New York, 2006); Pompeo Molmenti, *La Dogressa di Venezia* (Turin, 1884).

¹⁸⁶ Hurlburt, *Dogressa*, 10.

¹⁸⁷ See Bronwen Wilson, "'Il bel sesso e l'austero Senato': The Coronation of Dogressa Morosina Morosini Grimani," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1999), 77, which uses the term "publicity project." See also Lina Padoan Urban, "Feste ufficiali e trattenimenti privati," in *Storia della cultura veneta: Il Seicento*, ed. Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi, 2 vols. (Vicenza, 1983), 1:576–77; Van Gelder, "Ducal Display."

Scholars have analyzed the 1597 dogaressa coronation, focusing on festival pageantry and the role of gender within Venetian civic ritual.¹⁸⁸ The involvement of Doge Grimani himself has slipped under the radar. Visually he was largely absent: one of the few regulations prescribed that the ducal couple not appear side by side during the ceremony, so as not to project monarchical power. It was Morosina Morosini who took center stage, literally and metaphorically. Yet, behind the scenes, Grimani was very much involved. His master of ceremonies oversaw the event, while he himself paid almost 6,000 ducats for the celebrations.¹⁸⁹ This meant significant control over the decorative program.

The 1597 ceremony has traditionally been interpreted as the prime example of the increasingly elitist character of Venetian sixteenth-century political ritual: as Muir put it, “what did fishmongers and gondoliers know of Jupiter, Mars, and Latin epigrams?”¹⁹⁰ In this interpretation, ordinary Venetians seem to serve only as a passive audience. Yet read against the socioeconomic context of the final decades of the sixteenth century, Grimani’s rise to power, and the crowd actions of 1595, it becomes clear that the festival actually carried powerful messages aimed at ordinary Venetians, including fishmongers and gondoliers.

In the spring of 1597, Grimani asked the Great Council permission to organize the festival.¹⁹¹ It was during this planning stage that the rivalry between Grimani and Leonardo Donà was rekindled. The ducal couple had set their hearts on a joust in Piazza San Marco.¹⁹² Jousts had been a standard part of medieval festivities, but their potential for inciting unrest caused the Venetian authorities to impose stricter control at the end of the fourteenth century.¹⁹³ For Morosina’s coronation, the ducal couple, intent on revitalizing this tradition with

¹⁸⁸ See Molmenti, *La Dogaressa*, 305–25; Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 293–96, and “Images of Power: Art and Pageantry in Renaissance Venice,” *American Historical Review* 84, no. 1 (1979): 47–48; Wilson, “Il bel sesso”; Tondro, “Memory and Tradition.”

¹⁸⁹ ASV, APGB, b.33, c.353v–358v. His wife’s dowry obviously allowed him to spend so much on both coronation ceremonies.

¹⁹⁰ Muir, “Images of Power,” 51.

¹⁹¹ Even the timing of the ceremony reflects Grimani’s preoccupation with the city’s abundance. Instead of planning the ceremony in 1595, he postponed it for two years until food supplies were adequate to feed not just the city itself but also all the expected Italian and foreign visitors: ASPr, Venezia, April 29, 1595; Rota, *Lettera*, A2v; Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima, et singolare, descritta in XIII. libri da M. Francesco Sansovino . . .* (Venice, 1663), 417: Doge Grimani delayed “per alcuni rispetti concernenti il ben pubblico.”

¹⁹² BMC, Codice Morosini Grimani 358, c.284.

¹⁹³ The last tournament in the piazza was held in 1482: M. E. Mallett and J. R. Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State: Venice, c. 1400 to 1617* (Cambridge, 1984), 209–10.

its clear links to dynastic rule, engaged Venice's foremost architect, Vincenzo Scamozzi, to design a setting for "regal entertainment" in the piazza.¹⁹⁴

Donà, undoubtedly irritated by the joust's princely overtones, attempted to block it along with the rest of the celebrations, arguing that they could lead to public unrest.¹⁹⁵ In an exchange gleefully reported by the papal nuncio (who was always happy to see Donà thwarted) but not documented in the official records, Donà also claimed that the city would not be able to feed the expected crowds. Irritated, Grimani called for the *Sopraprovveditori alle Biade* (surveyors of the food supplies) to give an account of the city's provisions. Their books showed that the provisions were "copious" and more than sufficient to last the whole year, causing the doge to ask Donà directly whether this "seemed to him cause to fear a famine."¹⁹⁶ Donà persisted and claimed during a speech in the Senate that these were no times to "sound the trumpets in the piazza."¹⁹⁷ Despite Donà's protests, planning for the three-day festival went ahead. The joust, however, was canceled, leaving Grimani without a suitably impressive form of public entertainment.

At the start of the festival, on May 6, 1597, thousands of Venetians and visitors filled the city's streets. On the *piazzetta* the butchers' guild had built a triumphal arch that was the festival's most prominent ephemeral construction. Although normally interpreted as dynastic symbols,¹⁹⁸ its decorations can also be connected to the theme of abundance. On the side facing the waterfront, the arch was decorated with two large paintings depicting classical deities: Neptune, a prominent figure in Venice's iconography, was paired with a lesser-known figure, Ops, a goddess of motherhood and fertility. Mottoes explained to the literate viewer that Neptune and Ops represented the Venetian overseas dominions and

¹⁹⁴ Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima*, fol. 431v.

¹⁹⁵ Donà also opposed the donation of the Golden Rose to Morosina Morosini by a papal representative, an act symbolizing the Grimani's close connection to the pope: BMC, Codice Morosini Grimani 358, c.243–47.

¹⁹⁶ BMC, Codice Morosini Grimani 358, c.248: "E perche una delle ragioni, che s'allegavano contro la giusta, et il concorso di tanta gente era la carestia, sopra la quale s'era fatto molto cavaliere il Donato mostrato che non ci sarebbe stato modo di nudrir tanto nemmeno di forastieri, il Principe doppo la sudetta risoluzione di tralasciare la giusta fece chiamar in Collegio li Signori sopra le Biade, e fece dar conto delle provisioni, ch' hà la Repubblica abondanti, e molto ben sicure, che non potesse mancare il vitto, e rimanerne copiosamente per restantte dell' anno e voltato poi al Provveditore Donato li dimandò se li pareva, che le cose fossero in termine di temer la carestia."

¹⁹⁷ Upon which a smiling Doge Grimani turned to his counsellors, saying, "Signori, what would you have me do? In Venice, there can be only one doge, and you have wished it to be me," thus needling Donà with the reference to the much-contested election: BMC, Codice Morosini Grimani 358, c.249.

¹⁹⁸ Muir, "Images of Power," 47–48; Wilson, "Il bel sesso"; Tondro, "Memory and Tradition."

the Terraferma, the male and the female, and the Grimani and Morosini families.¹⁹⁹ However, with her hands filled with edible plants, fruits, and cereals, Ops visually represented abundance and food, a forceful message given the recent years of scarcity and perhaps also a reference to the arrival of grain from the north.

At the top of the arch stood a female representation of Venice, holding ears of grain in her hand; she was flanked by the virtues Justice, Clemency, Equity, and Munificence. This last virtue was picked up on the other side of the arch, which looked onto the *piazzetta* and was dedicated primarily to the doge's political career. Among the many depicted allegorical figures was a richly dressed woman distributing money with both hands to a crowd of people. She represented Grimani's work as a Procurator of Saint Mark, but she could also be interpreted as a reference to his generosity in general and to the *sparsio* two years earlier.²⁰⁰

During the festival the Ducal Palace was open to the public. The guilds had decorated the halls and offices, while Grimani's master of ceremonies, in all probability, had kept an eye on the thematic continuity and classical epigrams.²⁰¹ Visual and textual references to abundance appeared throughout the decorative program. The painters' guild, for instance, had depicted the doge's virtues, including Liberality and Abundance. The message of plenty, however, was nowhere as prominent as in the decorated rooms of the Grain Office. This space, which under normal circumstances housed the surveyors of Venice's provisioning program, had been assigned to the bakers. They celebrated the republic's ready supplies of grain in both highbrow and lowbrow idioms.

The bakers had given pride of place to a painting of Ceres, Ops's daughter: she was depicted as the Goddess of Grain, crowned with a garland of ears of wheat. In her left hand she held a horn of plenty, filled with corn, while her right hand carried more ears of wheat.²⁰² A motto under the painting read "Hilarius flavescens," or "More cheerfully they become golden," a reference to the flourishing of the crops under the goddess's and, by extension, the ducal couple's protection.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ On the importance of mottoes, see Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1975), 25–26.

²⁰⁰ Rota, *Lettera*, fol. [D3v].

²⁰¹ George W. McClure, *The Culture of Profession in Late Renaissance Italy* (Toronto, 2004), 160; Tondro, "Memory and Tradition," 128.

²⁰² This depiction followed Cesare Ripa's description of Abundance to the letter: Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, ovvero descrittioni dell'imagini universali: Cavate dall'antichità e da altri luoghi* (Rome, 1593), fols. [A1v–A2v].

²⁰³ Rota, *Lettera*, fol. [F4v]; Dario Tuzio, *Ordine et modo tenuto nell'incoronazione della serenissima Moresina Grimani Dogaressa di Venetia l'anno MDXCVII. adi 4 di Maggio. Con le feste, e giochi fatti, etc* (Venice, 1597), 9–10. See also McClure, *Culture of Profession*, 326.

These classical references would have been deciphered only by a select few. But even for those not versed in Latin, mythology, or iconography the entire display carried a clear visual message of abundance, with decorations made out of bread and cereals adorning the very room in which patrician surveyors decided on the distribution of cereals and the quality of bread. The visible presence of grain and bread and the fact that there was sufficient grain and flour to spare for such a display once again symbolically linked Doge Grimani to abundance.

This message was reinforced on the festival's third and final day. As an alternative to the canceled joust, Grimani had organized a series of aquatic games by Dutch sailors who had recently arrived on ships carrying Baltic grain as a direct consequence of the suspension of Venice's protectionist laws at the start of his ducal tenure.²⁰⁴ Grimani's cashbooks show that he paid for the sailors' silk liveries and matching hats in the pink and white of his family colors. He had wood sent to the Dutch ships to modify the sloops for the *naumachia*, and he ordered painters to decorate the boats in a suitable color (fig. 4).²⁰⁵ These aquatic games, performed on the *Bacino di San Marco*, in front of the Ducal Palace, were one of the festival's biggest attractions, drawing throngs of spectators. The Dutch performed their aquatic joust with some twenty sloops: four men rowed each sloop, while a fifth stood on a platform with a long *bastone*, or lance, as the engraving shows. Two boats fought duels in tournament style until only one man was left standing. He and his crew received a prize from the doge himself.²⁰⁶

These games were not merely frivolous entertainment. The Venetian fleet had been unable to provide the city with grain from northern Europe, leaving that trade almost completely in the hand of traders and sailors based in Amsterdam.²⁰⁷ By demonstrating their nautical skills, the northern seamen, dressed in Grimani colors, pledged their services to the doge personally, underlining his stake in safeguarding the city's abundance. Although the festival's many inscriptions and allegories were undoubtedly too complex to be understood by every spectator, within the context of Grimani's road to political power and the region's years of hunger, bread—in all its shapes and forms—and games created

²⁰⁴ ASV, APGB, b.33, c.354r–v, 355r. On the Dutch role in grain provisions, see Van Gelder, *Trading Places*, 41–66.

²⁰⁵ Giovanni Nicolò Dogliani, *Historia venetiana scritta brevemente* (Venice, 1598), 1032. The *naumachia* cost Grimani between 100 and 150 ducats: ASV, APGB, b.33, cc.354r–355r.

²⁰⁶ Tuzio, *Ordine*, 19–20. Such games were a standard part of Dutch festivals: J. ter Gouw, *De volksvermaken* (Haarlem, 1871).

²⁰⁷ Van Gelder, *Trading Places*.

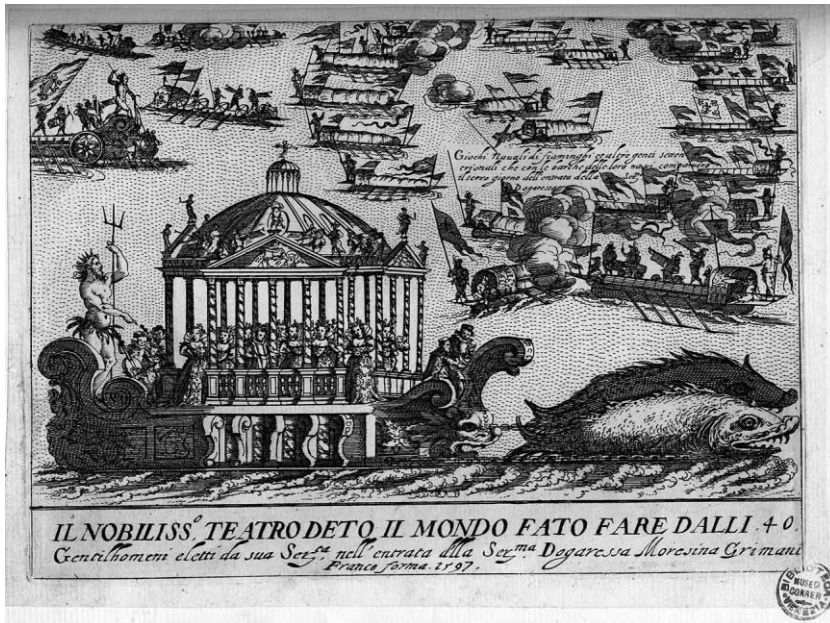


FIG. 4.—Northern sailors' aquatic joust (*giochi navali*) behind the *Teatro del Mondo*, a ceremonial boat designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi. Biblioteca del Museo Correr, St. PAL. DUC. 0146, Giacomo Franco, *Il Teatro del Mondo* (1597). Color version available as an online enhancement.

a powerful message. The doge once again recognized ordinary Venetians as his audience, responding to their earlier demands of bread by celebrating abundance.

Grimani died eight years later, on December 25, 1605. Yet his death did not put an end to his relationship with *popolani* Venetians: they again incorporated his reputation and the memory of his munificence in a range of public political acts. The election of the frugal Donà as the new doge was straightforward and quick, which can be interpreted as his reward for ceding his votes to Grimani in 1595 and as a correction of the republic's political course on the part of the elite. Donà explicitly refused to engage in acts of munificence during his coronation. When he was carried around the snow-covered piazza for the *sparsio*, family members distributed a small sum of money while Donà himself emphatically distanced himself from his predecessor by not throwing a single coin to the crowd. Predictably, this stance prompted a reply from the spectators, who were expecting ducal generosity "as in the time of Doge Grimani." In a reversal of roles, the dissatisfied *popolani* started pelting Donà with snow, "with some of the snowballs even reaching the doge's palanquin, which was not a good sign,"

according to one chronicler.²⁰⁸ Not satisfied with snowballs, boys then started to throw stones, which caused significant “disorder” (“tumulto”).²⁰⁹

Over the following years, while the memory of his generous predecessor remained alive, relations between Donà and the Venetian people continued to be fraught. Some six years after his coronation, on February 2, 1612, Donà headed the annual Candlemass procession to the church of Santa Maria Formosa, a ritual intended to assert ducal preeminence and civil concord.²¹⁰ Yet as Donà walked through the streets, “children and almost everyone in the crowd along the route taunted him by shouting ‘Viva, viva Doge Grimani, father of the poor.’” This apparently so offended Donà that for the remaining six months of his life he refused to take part in any public procession.²¹¹

CONCLUSION

This article presents an alternative image of Venice: one of intense protests, popular political involvement, and patrician populist strategies. In a state obsessed with presenting itself as ordered and peaceful, official records glossed over disorderly episodes that were deemed incompatible with the *Serenissima* ideal. Only by mining reports from outside observers and integrating these with official and unofficial Venetian records does it become possible to reconstruct both hidden and public transcripts of protest. It thus becomes clear that as the 1595 election dragged on, whimsical, infrapolitical acts developed into full-blown demonstrations, culminating in an attempted armed attack on the Ducal Palace. The impact of popular protest on Venetian politics, though, was not straightforward, since patrician attitudes toward *popolani* differed, as the Grimani-Donà rivalry has shown. Initially the protests actually contributed to the electoral paralysis, with Donà hardening his resolve not to help Grimani to a majority. But

²⁰⁸ BNM, Ms. It VII, 1818 (9436), c.87v: “et fù portato attorno la Piazza S. Marco, quale fù fatta netta dalla neve caduta il giorno avanti, et tornò nel Palazzo, senza mai gettar danari al Populo, ma ben li nepoti ne gettorono, se bene puochi. Per il che la plebe, che aspettava avidamente una quantità de denari come fù al tempo del Dose Grimani, restarono contaminati, et fra loro s’azzufarono col tirarsi della neve, per il che ne gionse anco qualche palla al pergamo di detto Dose, segno non troppo buono.” For snowballs thrown in protest at Venetian officials, see Judde de Larivière, *La révolte*.

²⁰⁹ BMC, 759, c.94: “Mentre [Donà] era portato per Piazza nella nave, o pozzo dalle Maestranze dell’Arsenal . . . molti ragazzi principiarono trà loro à buttar delle balle di neve, non contentandosi vennero à sassi, il che causò al quanto tumulto.”

²¹⁰ On this annual ritual, see Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 135–56.

²¹¹ BNM, Ms. It VII, 1818 (9436), c.88v: “vedendosi mal voluto dal suo popolo, tanto più che, essendo stato questo mese di Febraro a Santa Maria Formosa, secondo l’ordinario suo con la Signoria, ove li fanciulli, et anco quasi tutto il popolo li dettero una ramanzina gagliarda, gridando ad alta voce ‘Viva, viva il Dose Grimani, Padre dei Poveri,’ per la qual causa da quel giorno in poi non volse egli più andar in alcuna processione.”

ultimately, albeit to the dismay of many patricians, the mass protests outside forced the *Quarantuno* to elect the piazza's favorite. In the end, Marino Grimani became not just the "peoples' prince" but also a prince made by the people. Ordinary Venetians proved themselves capable of influencing the seemingly un-touchable world of patrician politics.

Instead of adhering to functionalist explanations of Venice's exceptional serenity, we need to develop a more inclusive view of Venetian political culture, one that incorporates and evaluates the popular voice, whether it contested or supported the authorities. This requires us to ask new questions about the Venetian dialogue of power: How and when could ordinary Venetians influence patrician decision making? How did patricians shape their relations with ordinary Venetians? How, in short, did the patrician and popular voices interact in the Venetian system, with its relatively large and ideologically diverse political elite, its predictably regular elections and rotating offices, and its nondynastic, chosen head of state? Such an approach will allow us to examine the continuities and changes in urban politics within this long-lasting city-state, from the Middle Ages up until the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, a period in which the European political landscape changed profoundly.

To the larger debate on the political interaction between premodern elites and ordinary people, a better understanding of Venetian popular politics can not only provide a long-term perspective but also—and, I think, crucially—highlight the importance of nonviolent popular politics and of protests that did not result in rebellion. As John Walter recently pointed out, historians "have yet to recover the full range of actions by which the people were able to voice their political beliefs or to express dissent."²¹² Most attention has been given to violent crowd actions, riots, and rebellions because of their greater visibility in the historical record and because earlier studies were intent on uncovering a progressive trajectory between premodern revolts and the revolutionary movements of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²¹³ Recent studies have criticized this grand narrative and the perceived dichotomy between premodern and modern contestation by arguing that popular movements were integral to Europe's political dynamics well before the age of revolutions.²¹⁴ We therefore need to pay close attention to the broad range of political programs and languages of the "subordinate classes." In-

²¹² John Walter, "Crowds and Popular Politics in the English Revolution," in *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution*, ed. Michael J. Braddick (Oxford, 2015), 331–44, 333.

²¹³ Rudé, *The Crowd*; and Tilly, *European Revolutions, and Contentious Performances*. But see also Samuel Cohn, "The 'Modernity' of Medieval Popular Revolt," *History Compass* 10, no. 10 (2012): 731–41, which argues that late medieval popular revolts in some ways were more modern than early modern or twenty-first-century revolts.

²¹⁴ Blickle, *Resistance*; Te Brake, *Shaping History*; Christopher R. Friedrichs, *Urban Politics in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2000).

stead of determining which actions and statements were more or less modern, we need to tease out their contextualized meanings and impact. Venice, with its lack of regime changes and shortage of iconic revolts, is particularly well suited to this type of research.

The Venetian case demonstrates first of all that the absence of successful rebellion did not indicate the absence of popular political consciousness and political action. Consequently, it underlines that when we use revolts and rebellions as benchmarks of popular political participation, we risk losing sight of other forms of resistance and contestation. As the quintessential “quiet” city, Venice offers the opportunity—and challenge—to historians to discern less visible forms of popular contestation, which nonetheless could have great impact.²¹⁵ We need to recognize not only why revolts happened but also why, when, and where they did not. Finally, every overview of European political history presents Venice as the standard of stability against which all other cities are measured. Rewriting Venetian sociopolitical history thus challenges assumptions that have long underpinned our understanding of early modern politics in general.

²¹⁵ For other examples of contained urban conflict, see Lantschner, *Logic of Political Conflict*; and Penny Roberts, “Urban Conflict and Royal Authority: Popular Revolts in Sixteenth-Century Troyes,” *Urban History* 34, no. 2 (2007): 190–208.