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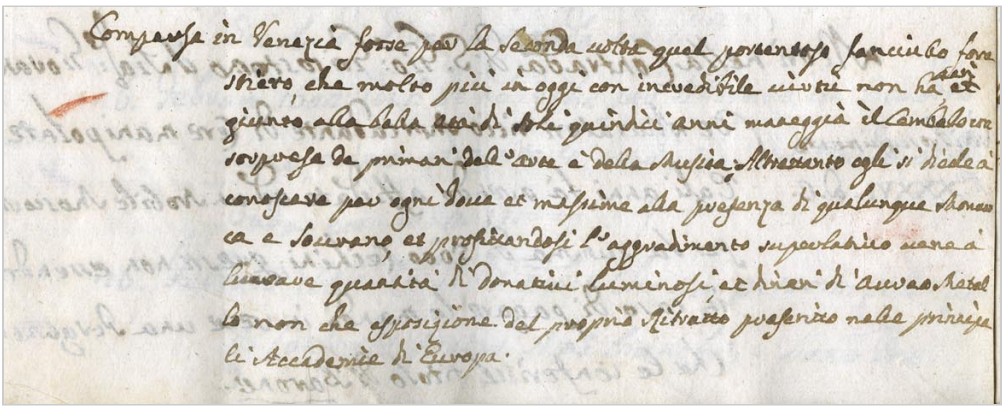
Gradenigo on Mozart in Venice (24 Feb 1771)

Dexter Edge

Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Civico Correr, Ms Gradenigo Dolfin 67.28, f. 30r

24. Febraro *[...]*

Comparse in Venezia forse per la seconda volta quel portentoso fanciullo fore
stiero, che molto più in oggi con incredibile virtù non ha pari, et
giunto alla bella età di soli quindici anni maneggia il Cembalo con
sorpresa de [sic] primari dell’arte è della Musica. Altrettanto egli si diede à
conoscere per ogni dove et massime alla presenza di qualunque Monar
ca e Sovrano, et profittandosi l’aggradimento superlativo vene à
lucrare quantità di donativi luminosi et dinari d’Aureo Metal
lo non che esposizione del proprio Ritratto preferitto nelle principa
li Accademie d’Europa.



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[translation:]

24 February *[...]*

Appeared in Venice, perhaps for the second time, that prodigious foreign boy,
whose incredible virtuosity now has no equals, and who at the
great age of just fifteen years, handles the harpsichord to the
astonishment of leaders in art and music. What is more, he has

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> made himself known everywhere, particularly in the presence of whatever monarch and sovereign, and profiting from the extraordinary approval, has gained quantities of shining gifts and coins of golden metal, not to mention the exhibition of his own favorite portrait in the principal academies of Europe.

Commentary

On 31 Jan 1771, Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart returned to Milan from a brief trip to Turin, where they had investigated the possibility of obtaining an opera commission for Wolfgang at the Teatro Regio (see our entries for 9 Jan 1771 and 26 Jan 1771). They remained in Milan only a few days following their return, long enough to attend the second carnival opera, Carlo Monza's *La Nitteti* (which had premiered on 19 Jan) and to dine at least once more with Wolfgang's patron Count Firmian on 2 Feb. (The first carnival opera had been Mozart's *Mitridate*; see our entries for 1 Jan 1771 and 16 Jan 1771; on Mozart and Count Firmian, see our entry for 4 Apr 1770.) The Mozarts departed for Venice on 4 Feb. The trip of around 265 km (165 mi) took an entire week, in part, Leopold wrote to his wife on 13 Feb, because of bad weather (*Briefe*, i:418). They arrived in Venice on 11 Feb, the Monday before Ash Wednesday, and so were able to experience the final days of the Venetian carnival season. They remained in the city for four weeks, leaving on 12 Mar.

Relatively little is known about their activities there. Leopold sent only four letters from Venice, and added a bit more about their stay in a letter from Vicenza written two days after their departure; but these letters say little about musical activities. Leopold mentions just one concert appearance by Wolfgang in Venice, in a letter of 1 Mar: "Am kommenden dienstage [5 Mar] werden wir eine Academie haben" ("This coming Tuesday we will have an academy"; *Briefe*, i: 421–22). The only known report of this concert appeared in the *Staats- und Gelehrten Zeitung des Hamburgischen unpartheyischen Correspondenten* in remote Hamburg on 27 Mar:

> Aus Italien, vom 7 März.
>
> *[...]* Zu Venedig hat sich vor kurzem der junge Mozart, ein bekannter Clavierspieler von 15 Jahren, öffentlich hören lassen, und die Aufmerksamkeit und Bewunderung aller Musik=Kenner rege gemacht. Ein geübter Musicus gab ihm ein Fugenthema auf, welches er sofort über eine Stunde lang, mit so vieler Wissenschaft, Fertigkeit und Harmonie so richtig und Tacktvest ausarbeitete, daß auch die größten Kenner in Erstaunen gesetzt wurden. Er hat für das Mayländische Theater eine ganze Oper componiret, die man daselbst im vergangenen Carneval aufgeführet hat. Seine leutselige Bescheidenheit, die seine frühe Wissenschaft noch mehr erhebt, erwirbt ihm durchgehends das größte Lob, das seinem mit ihm herumreisenden würdigen Vater zum ausnehmenden Vergnügen gereichen muß. [*Neue Folge*, 18]

From Italy, 7 March.

[...] In Venice, the young Mozart, a well-known keyboard player of 15, recently performed in public, and excited the attention and admiration of all music connoisseurs. An experienced musician gave him a fugue subject, which he immediately worked out for over an hour, with so much science, facility, and harmony, so correctly and securely in tempo, that even the greatest connoisseurs were filled with astonishment. He composed an entire opera for the theater in Milan, which was performed there this past carnival. His gentle modesty, which accentuates even more his precocious science, continually garners him the greatest praise, which must give exceptional pleasure to his worthy father, with whom he travels.

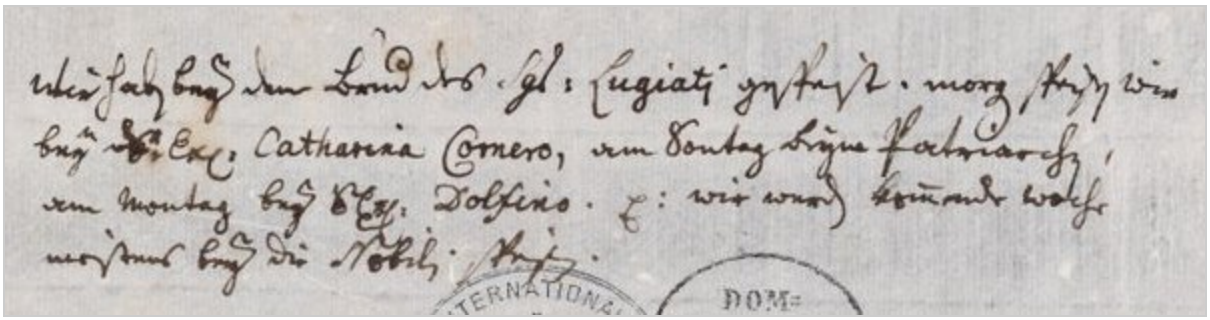
(This article was published one day earlier in the *Hamburger Relations-Courier*, no. 49, Tue, 26 Mar 1771, [2].)

The passage transcribed at the top of this page is from a chronicle of Venice kept from 1747 to the first months of 1774 by Pietro Gradenigo (1695–1776; on Gradenigo, see Basso 2006b). The passage was first published by Pier Giuseppe Gillio in *Il Giornale della Musica* in 1992. Our transcription presents a corrected and completed version based on an image of the original provided by the Biblioteca del Museo Civico Correr, to whom we are very grateful.

Gradenigo does not refer to Mozart by name, but calls him "quel portentoso fanciullo forestiero" ("that prodigious foreign boy"). He does, however, give Mozart's age correctly: Wolfgang had just turned 15 the previous month. By the time of Gradenigo's entry on Sun, 24 Feb, Leopold had written only two letters from Venice, on 13 and 20 Feb, and neither refers to any performances by Wolfgang. Gradenigo, on the other hand, writes that on 24 Feb, Mozart performed "forse per la seconda volta" ("perhaps for the second time"), implying that there may have been at least one earlier performance. Gradenigo gives the impression that he may not have heard Mozart in person —Gradenigo was 75 years old at the time, and he might not have gone out often. But if his information was correct, Wolfgang's appearance on 24 Feb may have been (at least) his second in Venice.

In a postscript to his letter from Venice on 20 Feb 1771, Leopold Mozart writes:

> Wir hab[en] beÿ dem Brud[er] des *Sg[r]*: Lugiati gespeist. morg[en] speis[en] wir beÿ S^{r}: Ex: *Catharina Cornero*, am Sontag beÿm Patriarch[en], am Montage bey S^{r}: Ex: *Dolfino*. &c: wir werd[en] kom[m]ende woche meistens beÿ die *Nobili* speis[en].



(Digital Mozart Edition)

> We dined with the brother of Signor Lugiati. Tomorrow we dine with His Excellency Caterino Corner *[see below]*, on Sunday with the Patriarch, on Monday with His Excellency Dolfino, etc. In the coming week we will dine mostly with the nobility.

The first reference is to Bartolo Lugiati, brother of the Mozarts' host in Verona, Pietro Lugiati, who had commissioned the famous "Verona" portrait of Wolfgang (see our entries for 5 Jan 1770 and 8 Jan 1770)—certainly the portrait that Gradenigo is referring to. The Patriarch of Venice, with whom they dined on Sun, 24 Feb, the day of Gradenigo's entry, was Giovanni Bragadin (1699–1775; Treccani, it.wikipedia). Thus it seems likely that Wolfgang performed at Bragadin's that day, and this is the appearance that prompted Gradenigo's entry. On Mon, 25 Feb, the Mozarts dined with a member of another old Venetian patrician family, the Dolfins (the commentary to *Briefe* suggests Giovanni Antonio Dolfin).



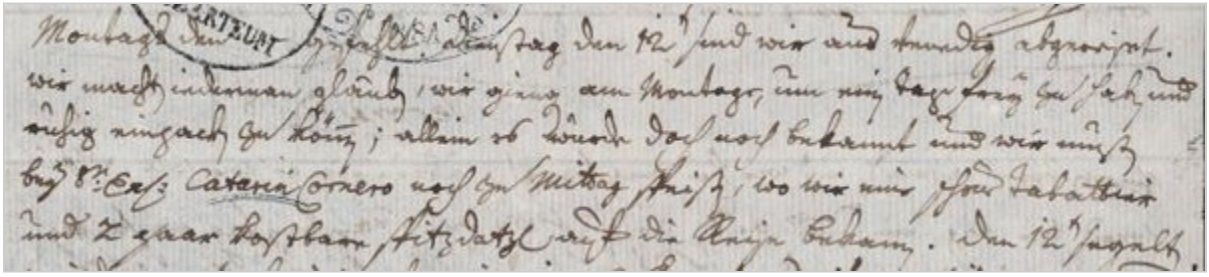
Giovanni Bragadin

The identity of Leopold's "Catherina Cornero," with whom they dined on Thu, 21 Feb, the day following Leopold's letter, was long unclear. Based on Leopold's spelling, the commentary in *Briefe* assumed that he was referring to a woman, "probably" (although no evidence was given) the wife of Giovanni Corner (to use the Venetian spelling of the family name). The editors perhaps meant Giovanni di Francesco Corner (d. 1799), the last male member of the Corner di San Polo line (see it.wikipedia); they presumably did not mean Cardinal Giovanni Corner (1720–1789) of the San Maurizio line. Another prominent male Corner at the time of the Mozarts' visit was Flaminio (1693–1778), but he was married to Margherita née Donà.

However, Leopold's "Catherina" seems certainly to have been Catterin (Caterino) Corner (1732–1802), head of the San Cassiano line, and the occupant of the Palazzo Corner della Regina (Ca' Corner della Regina) on the Grand Canal (see Ponzo 2006a). The palace was named after his illustrious forebear, Caterina Corner (1454–1510), Queen of Cyprus, and it would not be surprising if this branch of the family had perpetuated both female and male forms of that name. But Leopold Mozart might not have been familiar with the male form, and initially spelled it as he thought he had heard it.

Leopold refers to the same person twice more. The portion of his travel notes for Venice that contains this name is known only from a later copy; the autograph is missing. Schurig (1920, 54) transcribes the relevant entry as "S: E: Cattarina Corner", whereas *Briefe* (i:424) gives "S: Exc: Catharina Corner". The discrepancies do not inspire confidence in the reliability of either. Fortunately, Leopold refers to the person one last time, in a letter to his wife written on 14 Mar 1771 in Vicenza; in this case the autograph survives, so we can be sure of his spelling:

> *[...]* dienstag den 12^{tn} sind wir aus Venedig abgereiset. /
> wir macht[en] iederman glaub[en], wir gieng[en] am Montage, um einen
> Tage freÿ zu hab[en] und / ruhig einpack[en] zu kön[nen]; allein es wurde
> doch noch bekannt und wir must[en] bei S^{r}: Ex: *Catarin Cornero* noch zu Mittag
> speis[en], wo wir eine schöne Tabattier / und 2 paar kostbare spitzdatzl auf
> die Reise bekam[en]. *[...]*



(Digital Mozart Edition)

> *[...]* Tuesday the 12th we departed from Venice. We made everyone believe
> that we were leaving on Monday, in order to have a day free and to be
> able to pack up in peace; but it became known anyway, and we had to
> dine at midday with His Excellency Catarin Corner, where we received
> a beautiful snuffbox and 2 pair of expensive shirt cuffs for the trip. *[...]*

Here the given name has no feminine 'a' at the end, so it more clearly refers to Catterin Corner. It seems certain, then, that Leopold and Wolfgang dined with Catterin (not Caterina) Corner on Thu, 21 Feb, probably in the Ca' Corner della Regina. If Wolfgang also performed there, this could be the earlier performance that Gradenigo alludes to.

If, for the sake of argument, we assume that Wolfgang's first performance for the nobility in Venice was at Corner's on 21 Feb, the Mozarts would have been in the city for ten days by that point. Given that Wolfgang is unlikely to have performed during the last days of carnival, when so much else was going on, there still would have been several days between Ash Wednesday (13 Feb) and his conjectured appearance at Corner's when he might have performed for the nobility but apparently did not. A letter dated 2 Mar 1771 from Giovanni Maria Ortes in Venice to the composer Johann Adolph Hasse in Vienna may hint at a possible reason for the delay:

> *[...]* Ma non credo però ch'essi si trovin molto contenti di questa città, nella quale si sarebbero forse creduti che altri cercasse di loro più ch'essi d'altri, come sarà loro avvenuto altrove. E qui per verità non usano molto di andar in cerca di stimar altri, per meritevoli e stimabili ch'essi siano, e non è poco che stimino chi va in cerca di esser stimato. È cosa curiosa veder la disinvoltura colla quale il ragazzo gode di questa differenza, quando il padre ne pare un poco piccato. *[...]*
> [Pancino 1998, 228, corrected from *Dokumente*, 119]

> *[...]* But I do not believe, however, that they are very happy in this city, in which they may perhaps have thought that others would seek them out, as will have happened to them elsewhere, rather than they seeking out others. And it is true that here it is not the custom to go in search of others to praise, however meritorious and estimable they may be, but rather to praise those who come seeking esteem. It is a curious thing to see, the nonchalance with with the boy enjoys this difference, whereas the father seems rather piqued by it. *[...]*

In other words, Leopold may have been expecting the nobility to invite Mozart to perform, rather than having to seek them out. In this light, one can perhaps also detect more than a hint of irony in Gradenigo's phrases "alla bella età di" ("at the great age of"), "qualunque Monarco e Sovrano" ("whatever monarch and sovereign"), and "quantità di donativi luminosi, et dinari d'Aureo Metal" ("quantities of shining gifts and coins of golden metal")—as if the old patrician families of Venice, of which the Gradenigos were one, were perhaps not terribly impressed by traveling teenage prodigies and the gifts heaped on the Mozarts elsewhere. (On this letter, see also our entry for 2 Mar 1771.)

Apart from Leopold's passing reference and the article in the Hamburg newspaper, nothing specific is known about Wolfgang's public concert on 5 Mar. Gradenigo may again be of some help. In an entry in his chronicle on Tue, 19 Feb, he wrote:

> Questa sera si adempiva la prima delle sei Accademie filarmoniche alle ore una di notte nella Casa di Meo a S. Paterniano, e se ne diede già in stampa alli Nobili rispettosa cognizione, et invito. Li Virtuosi di Canto: è la Signora Anna de Amicis per le due prime comparse, et il Signor Pasquale

> Potenza per tutte le sei in seguito, non che altri rinomati Musici, che ebbero il primo merito sopra le Scene in tutto il corso del poco fà spirato Carnovale. Li Associati preventivamente a tale onesto divertimento pagaranno per tutte le sei sere un Cechino, e quelli che vi interveniranno a piacer loro esborsaranno Lire 4 per uno ogni volta. [Quoted in Gillio 1992]
>
> This evening the first of the six *Accademie filarmoniche* took place at one at night in the Casa di Meo at San Paterniano, as was already made known in print to the nobility et invito. The virtuosi of song are Signora Anna de Amicis for the first two appearances, and Signor Pasquale Potenza for all six in the series, as well as other renowned musicians who had distinguished themselves on stage during the entire course of the recently ended Carnival. The members previously at this honest entertainment will pay one zecchino for all six evenings, and those who attend at their pleasure will part with 4 lire each time.

Here "alle ore una di notte" ("one at night") means one hour after dark, not one o'clock in the morning, and the Latin phrase "et invito" implies "and other interested parties." The date of Mozart's concert, 5 Mar, was a Tuesday, and if all six concerts in the series that Gradenigo reports took place on Tuesdays, Mozart's might have been one of these. If so, it would have been the third concert of the series.

Anna de Amicis (c. 1733–1816) was one of the most famous Italian sopranos of the time. The Mozarts had first met her in Mainz in 1763 (she is referred to in Leopold's travel notes for that city; see *Briefe*, i:85), and they had most recently encountered her in Naples in May 1770. In Venice in 1771 she sang the roles of Cleofide in Bertoni's *Alessandro nell'India*, and Emira in Borghi's *Siroe*, both in the Teatro San Benedetto (Wiel 1897, 283); Leopold and Wolfgang probably saw her in the latter on the day they arrived in Venice. She would go on to create the role of Giunia in Wolfgang's *Lucio Silla* in Milan in the carnival season 1772–1773. However, Gradenigo reports that she appeared in only the first two concerts of the series at the Casa di Meo in Venice (she was engaged in Naples from Easter, and would have had to make her way there); if Mozart performed at the third, they would not have shared the stage.

Pasquale Potenza, also known as Pasqualino (c.1730–1813), was a soprano castrato with a long but middling career on European stages (Libby 1992; also this webpage). He was near the end of his operatic career when the Mozarts were in Venice, and he is not known to have appeared in any productions there in 1771, although in 1770 he had sung the title role in Giuseppe Colla's *Vologeso* (Wiel 1897, 279–80). Leopold records in his travel notes that they met a "Sgr: Potenza" (*Briefe*, i:424), almost certainly Pasquale.

Cattelan (2000, 61ff) claims that Mozart's concert on 5 Mar 1771 was arranged by Elisabetta Maffetti at (according to Cattelan) one of the casinos she managed in the district around San Moisè. He offers no evidence for this claim apart from Leopold Mozart's statement in his letter of 1 Mar 1771 that they were going to dine with a "Mafetti" *[sic]* on "Monday"—that is, 4 Mar, the day before the concert (*Briefe*, i:422); so Cattelan's case, such as it is, rests on the fact that the

meal and the concert took place on successive days. Elisabetta Maffetti seems to have been a colorful and interesting figure in her own right, and it would have been attractive to think that the Mozarts had dealings with her; but Cattelan writes that in 1767 she married Antonio Dandolo, so Leopold is unlikely to have referred to her by her maiden name in 1771. In any case, Leopold actually wrote "bey S: E: Mafetti" ("at His Excellency Maffetti's"). In his travel notes for Venice (and elsewhere), when Leopold used "S: E:" or a similar abbreviation to refer to women, he wrote "S: E: Madame", or "S: E: la Sgr:ª", or "La Sigra Exca" (*Briefe*, i:424) to clarify the gender. Because in Italian "Eccellenza" is always feminine (as is "Exzellenz" in German), and because the default assumption at the time would have been that the honorific referred to a man, clarification would have been needed when it was used with a woman. Thus when Leopold wrote simply "S: E: Mafetti" without further qualification, he was almost certainly referring to a man, not a woman. Perhaps the Mozarts dined with Elisabetta's brother Pietro on 4 Mar 1771 (although Cattelan dismisses this possibility). Be that as it may, there is no other evidence to suggest that Wolfgang's concert on 5 Mar 1771 had anything to do with the Maffettis. Even so, Cattelan's claim has been reproduced as if it were fact by Ponzo (2006b) and others.

The Mozarts left Venice on 12 Mar 1771. On 13 Mar they stopped in Padua, where Wolfgang received a commission for the oratorio that became *Betulia liberata*. The next day they were in Vicenza, and on 16 Mar, Verona, where they remained for around three days. Leopold wrote from Verona on 18 Mar that he had received a letter from Milan on the 16th:

> Gestern habe Briefe aus Mayland erhalten, der mir ein Schreiben v Wienn ankündigte, so in Salzb: erhalten werde, und das euch in Verwunderung setzen wird, unserm Sohne aber eine unsterbliche Ehre macht.
>
> Der nämliche Brief hat mir eine andre sehr angenehme zeitung mit gebracht. *[...]* [*Briefe*, i:426]
>
> Yesterday I received a letter from Milan, that informed me of a communication from Vienna that will arrive in Salzburg, and will amaze all of you, but will bring our son immortal honor.
>
> The same letter also brought me another very welcome bit of news *[...]*

The expected communication from Vienna would be the invitation for Wolfgang to compose a serenata for the wedding festivities of Archduke Ferdinand and Princess Maria Beatrice d'Este that coming autumn, the work that became *Ascanio in Alba* (see our entry for 17 Oct 1771). The other "welcome bit of news" was almost certainly Wolfgang's *scrittura*, dated 4 Mar 1771, to compose the first carnival opera for Milan in the season 1772–1773, the work that became *Lucio Silla* (see *Dokumente*, 119, and our entry for 29 Dec 1772). Thus within the space of three days, Wolfgang had received or learned of commissions for three major vocal works.

Leopold and Wolfgang hurried homeward from Verona, reaching Innsbruck by 25 Mar, and Salzburg on 28 Mar. Wolfgang had apparently also made a good impression in Venice, because later that year he was given a commission, dated 17 Aug 1771, to write an *opera seria* for the Teatro San Benedetto for the carnival season 1772–1773. But this commission came too late, given the major obligations that Mozart had taken on in the meantime, and he never composed an opera for Venice.

Notes (⇧)

Gillio gives "Comparve" as the first word of Gradenigo's entry on Mozart, but it is actually "comparse." He reads the inserted word at the end of the second line as "stasi," which does not make much sense in context. The insertion is cramped and difficult to read, but we suggest it may be "pari." Gillio gives an ellipsis for the two words at the end of line 6. We believe that the reading is "vene à" (meaning "venne à"). The writer's 'u'-like initial 'v' can be seen elsewhere in the entry, for example in "volta" in the first line. Gillio give "lucrava" as the first word in line 7, but it is actually "lucrare".

Cattelan (2000, 68) states that the Mozarts dined with Catterin Corner, without any discussion of Leopold's use of feminine spellings in his first two references or the prior assumption in the Mozart literature that he must have been referring to a woman.

Dokumente (119) misinterprets the days of the week listed in Leopold Mozart's postscript of 20 Feb as referring to the preceding week, and thus has the Mozarts dining with Bragadin on 17 Feb and Dolfiin on 18 Feb, but then (perhaps because of a editorial error or oversight) dining again with them again exactly a week later on successive days. However, the postscript clearly implies only one meal with each, on 24 and 25 Feb respectively. This error is corrected in *Addenda* (19).

Sources differ regarding the number of volumes in Gradenigo's chronicle. The most trustworthy account is Glixon (2017, 34n40), who worked with the source very extensively: 39 volumes of "Notatori" covering the years 1747–1773, plus one further volume in a different library for 1774; and four volumes of "Commemorali." On Gradenigo's references to music, see also Over (1998).

We are grateful to the Biblioteca del Museo Civico Correr in Venice for providing the image of Gradenigo's passage on Mozart and for permission to publish it. Our thanks also to Stefano Frega, for his essential research assistance; Anne-Louise Luccarini, for her help with the Italian translations; Bruce Brown for answers to specific queries; and Carlo Vitali for his corrections to our transcription and translation of Gradenigo's entry.

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