

**David Laven with Laura Parker**

**Foreign Rule? Transnational, national, and local perspectives on Venice and Venetia within the ‘multinational’ empire**

The so-called *seconda dominazione austriaca* of Venice and Venetia lasted from 1814 to 1866, punctuated only by the revolutionary parenthesis of 1848–9. This half century of rule from Vienna has traditionally been seen as a period of exploitative and insensitive government backed by heavy-handed policing, restrictive censorship, and ultimately dependent on the presence of regiments of white-coated Croat and Austrian troops. Such a *leggenda nera* of Habsburg tyranny has been challenged for some decades (Berengo, 1971), but there has persisted a tendency to view the rule of Francis I, Ferdinand, and Francis Joseph as a sombre and unhappy interlude between the fall of the *Serenissima* and the incorporation of Venice and its *Terraferma* within the newly united Italian state. More than thirty years ago Paul Ginsborg told us in his brilliant study of Daniele Manin that ‘the principles and requirements of the Austrians were in contradiction to the needs and aspirations of nearly every section of Venetian society’ (Ginsborg, 1979, 2); the failure to make significant changes in his recent Italian re-edition of the book demonstrates that he still believes there is no reason to alter this judgment (Ginsborg, 2007). Meanwhile, the Habsburgs’ acquisition of Venice remains for one respected British historian no more than ‘a mercenary transfer’ (Evans, 2009, 124). A more balanced view of Austrian rule has emerged in the specialist historiography (Zorzi, 1985; Meriggi, 1983 & 1987; Mazohl-Wallnig, 1993; Laven, 1996 & 2002; Tonetti, 1997; Gottsman, 2005), but less scholarly works (eg Keates, 2005), as well as representations in popular culture have continued to portray the Habsburg presence in Italy as unwelcome and alien: at best the Austrians are the moustachioed whitecoats of Giuseppe Giusti’s *Sant’Ambrogio*; at worst they are little better than precursors of Nazi occupation of 1943–5.<sup>1</sup> Underpinning this durably negative picture of Austrian rule has been the tendency to explain Venetian and Lombard unhappiness with Habsburg dominion in terms of the fundamentally ‘foreign’ and ‘German’ nature of the régime and its machinery of government. The problem with Austrian rule is presented in terms of one nation’s dominion over another.

It is, of course, a commonplace to write of the Austrian Empire as a ‘multinational empire’ (eg Taylor, 1948; Kann, 1950 & 1964; Macartney, 1969; Béranger, 1990 & 1994). Whether this apparently obvious fact constituted the key virtue or the fundamental shortcoming of the imperial project has been the central debate within the historiography of the Habsburg monarchy since before its fall. In their preoccupation with this question, twentieth- and twenty-first-century historians have often echoed earlier scholars and thinkers, bureaucrats and polemicists. Yet among those nineteenth-century authors who identified major benefits both in the existence of the Habsburg empire and in its multinational character are a number of surprising names. For example, in the years before the mid-century revolutions, the Milanese economist Carlo Cattaneo, who briefly and bravely assumed the leadership of the Milanese insurrection during the *cinque giornate*, argued that the Habsburg Empire should transform into a federation of autonomous states linked by loyalty to the ruling house (Armani, 1997; Thom, 1999 & 2000). Similarly the Bohemian historian František Palacký, usually portrayed as the *Otec národa* – the father of the Czech nation – argued presciently in his famous rebuff to the Frankfurt Parliament in April 1848 that the Austrian monarchy was necessary to defend the host of smaller nations of which it consisted from both German and Russian aggression: even bringing the component nationalities of the monarchy together as a confederation of small republics would be no more than an open invitation to the tsar

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, films such as *Le cinque giornate* (Dario Argento, 1973), *Le hussard sur le toit* (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, 1995), *Le cinque giornate di Milano* (Carlo Lizzani, 2004).

to expand at their expense (Palacký, 1948). The Hungarian Adolph Fischhof was imprisoned for his pivotal rôle in the *akademische Legion* during the Viennese revolution of 1848, but this did not prevent his becoming a stalwart advocate of Habsburg rule: the monarchy, he hoped, would eventually rule a vast *Nationalitätenstaat*, a sort of central European, dynastic Switzerland (Fischhof, 1866, 1868, 1885 & 1888). That at different times the empire could be defended by these men, all three of whom played an important rôle in the anti-Habsburg revolutions of 1848, demonstrates the degree to which even those instinctively uncomfortable with or opposed to Habsburg imperial domination were frequently able to recognise the benefits to be derived by its component parts from rule by the House of Austria. Many others, often numbering among the most committed defenders of the dynasty's power were a good deal less tolerant of such diversity. Figures such as the talented young official Baron Karl Friedrich Kübeck von Kùbau who drafted the initial proposals for the reincorporation of Lombardy and Venetia into the Austrian Empire, or Prince Prokop Lažansky who presided over the commission appointed to oversee this task shared a desire to impose policies of centralisation and uniformity wherever and whenever local conditions permitted (Laven, 2002, 64–6; Meriggi, 1983, 54–5).<sup>2</sup> Similarly the likes of Carl Czoernig and Bernhard Meyer saw the empire's best hope of survival and success in greater centralisation and homogeneity (Evans, 2009, 129; Meyer, 1857; Czoernig, 1858), believing such a strategy was needed to fend off the threat of separatism, to keep possible tensions between the nationalities in check, and, increasingly as the nineteenth century progressed, to stave off irredentist claims from nationalists without the imperial frontiers. Meanwhile, contemporary critics of the Austrian imperium – both Habsburg subjects and foreign – berated the empire from one of two basic perspectives. On the one hand, attacks focused on the alleged repression of diverse national rights, traditions, customs, and languages, the failure either to grant autonomy and privileges, or to permit secession and independence; on the other hand, they emphasised the failure of emperors to impose greater uniformity, to deal more firmly with all or some of the different nationalities.

It is tempting for historians to echo the positions of the better-known nineteenth-century commentators on the *Nationalitätenfrage* and to privilege the many 'nations' of the Habsburg lands in their narratives and analyses. In so doing do we risk missing key parts of the story or otherwise distorting the picture? One danger with approaches that privilege so-called 'nationalities' is that they give a primacy to imagined communities that were probably only rarely or intermittently the primary focus of attachment or identity for much of the population. Within the Habsburg Empire there were many other potential poles that both transcended the national – one thinks automatically of adherence to the Catholic Church – or threatened to subvert or fragment it through, for example, the strength of historical, linguistic, and cultural identities or economically determined interests that operated at a municipal, local, or regional level. An emphasis on nationalities as fundamentally problematic, as dangers to the imperial project, also runs the risk of presenting the national as necessarily inimical to the multinational, dynastic Habsburg state, when it could serve as a potential buttress for the imperial project. In this article we want both to question the emphasis on the 'national' as the obvious subdivision of empire, *and* to ask how it could be used as a prop for the empire. We shall do so by looking at a number of case studies to suggest different ways to understand the relationship between Venice and Vienna during the *seconda dominazione*. We approach these case studies not by looking at Habsburg rule principally in terms of national domination of Austrian over Italian; instead we aim to locate Venetians within a transnational cultural space, and to highlight the extent to which the local, municipal, regional, and national could all work for as well as against the empire.

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur G. Haas's interpretation of the commission's work is grossly misleading. (Haas, 1963).

### **The Regno Lombardo-Veneto: What's in a name?**

The key debates that accompanied the re-incorporation of Lombardy and Venetia into the lands of the Habsburg Empire focused overwhelmingly on administrative structures and personnel, questions about the standardisation of law codes, the reorganisation of policing and censorship, changes to conscription and the fisc. But the officials tasked with overseeing the more-or-less smooth transition of these provinces back to rule from Vienna were also much exercised by what exactly to call the territories that had been recaptured from Napoleon. Never before had the Habsburgs ruled the lands on both sides of the River Mincio: when, following Campo Formio, Francis II had relinquished his Lombard possessions and assumed control of Venetia, the lands that fell to him were referred to as the 'Provincie Austro-Venete' (Gottardi, 1993). Having repossessed all the Lombard and Venetian lands, not to mention those areas that, prior to 1796–7, had been part of Venetian Lombardy – the so-called *al di là del Mincio* – and which had never previously experienced Austrian control, it made sense to incorporate all these provinces into a single territorial bloc within the Empire. This was not just to facilitate the smooth transition of territory and population from the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy to Habsburg rule, but also to avoid offering an excuse for the eruption of longstanding local antagonisms.

In the *Vorschläge* he produced in December 1814 as the basis for discussing the treatment of the reacquired north Italian provinces, Kübeck proposed that the lands should be called 'Ost- und West-Italien'. His rationale for such a name was that it would 'kill off the idea of the independence of numerous provinces and small states', undermining particularist *campanilismo* and creating a common sense of identity within the Kingdom, while simultaneously easing the assimilation of the Italian lands into the wider structures of the Austrian Empire (Helfert, 1908, 285). 'East- and West-Italy' was a deliberate attempt to stress the common *italianità* of the region, at the expense of the more deeply engrained historical identities of *lombardi* and *veneti*, of *milanesi* and *veneziani*, emphasising that the local population shared a common civilisation, culture, and language. But would such a name have any resonance for any of the inhabitants of the region? The members of the *Central-Organisirungs-Hof-Commission* entrusted with the reorganisation of the provinces seized from Napoleon seem to have agreed that it would not. The COHC toyed with the idea of 'Regno Longobardo' – proposed by the Aulic Councillor, Joseph Edler Hauer –, which clearly sought to echo the 'Regnum langobardorum' of the sixth to eighth centuries. But if this possibly gave a sense of historical legitimacy to the Kingdom, 'Lombard Kingdom' risked offending Venetians. The latter not only did not consider themselves to be Lombards; they were also immensely proud of their ancient ancestors' resistance to all invaders whether Goth or Frank, Lombard or Norman, Hun or Saracen. Moreover, the stress on Lombardy also suggested that the new order would continue to recognise the primacy of Milan (capital of Lombardy) over Venice. Venetian hostility to Napoleonic rule had not been based purely on dislike for high taxes and heavy conscription, anger at an economic policy that spelled disaster for the port, and unsurprising enmity towards the man who had robbed the city of independence and empire. Venetians also particularly resented the preferential treatment given to Lombards when it came to making appointments within the administration – something that, at least in the short-term, the Habsburgs were inclined to continue given the shortage of appropriate Venetian personnel –, and were bitter over the humiliating subjection of the former *Dominante* to control from Milan: under the French, Venice had been reduced to no more than capital of the Dipartimento dell'Adriatico, of comparable status to Treviso, Belluno or Udine. In deciding on the nomenclature of the new Kingdom, it was important to signal to the Venetians that there would be a clear breach with the previous régime. This meant that any idea of calling the Habsburg Italian provinces the 'Regno d'Italia', as they had

been named during the *decennio napoleonico*, was also completely out of the question. Calling the provinces the ‘Kingdom of Italy’ would antagonise anti-Napoleonic sentiment; equally it risked fostering hopes among those who looked nostalgically on the previous régime. And it would be a particular insult to Venetians, who had suffered so much under French rule, while Milan – ironically given that it was the Milanese who rebelled against the Napoleonic régime – had been turned into a grand Napoleonic capital city (Helfert, 1901, 206–208; Meriggi, 1987, 17–18).

In order to smooth the transition to rule from Vienna, Venice had to be given equal status with Milan to prevent municipal and regional jealousies. Thus, it became clear that the names of both regions had to be included in the name of the Kingdom. Significantly, when the Emperor eventually chose the name for the new Kingdom in early April 1815, he opted for the ‘lombardisch-venetianische Königreich’ or ‘Regno Lombardo-Veneto’ and not the Kingdom of ‘Lombardy and Venetia’. While eager to break with his son-in-law’s legacy, and to recognise the equal status of both parts of his Italian territories, he had no desire to emphasise their differences; despite the equality established between Milan and Venice (both had the status of joint capital), Francis wanted to rule Lombardy-Venetia as a single Kingdom (Laven 2002, 84; Helfert, 1901, 206–208; Meriggi, 1987, 17–18). Strikingly though, what was at stake here was not the question of nationality and the new transnational threats of revolution, liberalism or nationalism, but rather the necessity of containing and managing local rivalries and jealousies, both historic and recent.

### **Foreigners, the *Biblioteca italiana*, and the uses of Italian culture**

On more than one occasion between the Congress of Vienna and the outbreak of revolution in 1848 Metternich described Italy as a ‘geographical expression’. Many historians – perhaps most notably A.J.P. Taylor – have argued that Metternich’s views on Italy derived from the fact that he considered this nationalism as anathema to the multi-national empire: the idea that Italy should be a merely ‘geographical expression’ was wishful thinking, a goal rather than a reality: as Taylor famously wrote ‘with other opponents the Habsburgs could compromise [...] only Italian nationalism was implacable’ (1948, 41). It is not our intention here to point out again the wrongheadedness of Taylor’s position, or to highlight the internal contradictions that make the Oxford historian’s arguments – polemical brilliance and seductively elegant prose notwithstanding – completely self-defeating (Laven, 2002, 78–9). Rather our point is to stress that both Francis I and his minister not only had a firm – possibly even exaggerated – belief in the essential cultural homogeneity of the Italian peninsula, but that they were also anxious to cultivate a sense of cultural *italianità* as a useful political tool.

Several preliminary points are worth making before looking at the Austrian attempts to foster a common Italian culture. First, if, as we have argued above, Austrian rule of Venetia is frequently (and mistakenly) described in terms of a ‘foreign’ presence, then Austria itself can be seen as controlled by foreigners too. Metternich, born in Koblenz, was a Rhinelander, who spoke better French than German; as a young man – like Goethe – he studied at the University of Strasbourg, before completing his education at Mainz; Friedrich von Gentz (architect of the Carlsbad decrees and Metternich’s chief adviser) was born in the Prussian city of Breslau (Wrocław) and educated in Berlin and Königsberg. Most significantly, there is an argument to be made that Francis I was himself Italian: the son of the Grand Duke of Tuscany and future emperor, Peter Leopold, Francis was born in Florence and did not move to Vienna until 1784, when he was sixteen; all Francis’s twelve brothers and sisters were also born in Tuscany. Viewed from this perspective, might it not be plausibly argued that, rather than Austria’s sinisterly exercising its

hegemony over Italy and the German Confederation, an Italian and two non-Austrian Germans dominated the empire's affairs in the early decades of the restoration?

This is, of course, something of a caricature. There is little evidence that Francis saw himself as especially Italian, but equally he would not have assumed the position adopted by Francis Joseph in 1859, when he famously rejected Napoleon III's suggestion of anti-Prussian collaboration with 'Doch, Ich bin ein deutscher Fürst'. Francis could conceive of himself as Tuscan, Italian, German, Austrian ... but above all else he was dynastic in his worldview. A rhetorical description of him as Italian character simply serves to highlight the fundamental problem of trying to view late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe in terms of nationalities or degrees of 'foreignness'. Lombards and Venetians could clearly consider both Francis and Napoleon foreigners, *oltremontani* to use the word that was current in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Gilbert, 1984; 1965), but given their respective Tuscan and Corsican origins, they were also recognisably from the broader cultural and linguistic family of Italians. This did not necessarily make them any more popular: for, while historically loathing for the *barbari* from beyond the Alps was strongest at times of actual invasion, some of the most intense prejudice and dislike was always retained for fellow Italians regardless of whether they found themselves at war or peace. In contrast, dislike for Napoleon or Francis was not premised on their being foreign, but on their pursuing policies that caused resentment.

Our second point is that neither Metternich – who was, at least in cultural terms, profoundly italphile – nor Francis I had any desire to prevent the cultivation of a common Italian cultural identity. This might seem surprising given the patriotic activities of German romantics over the previous two decades, which should have constituted a warning of how such a cultural agenda could threaten Austrian hegemony. Yet, as we have observed, Metternich was eager to emphasise Italian cultural unity and a sense of a collective political destiny for the peninsula, mobilised in the interests of Austria. It was, after all, Metternich who had championed the idea of an Italian Confederation to parallel that established in Germany (Laven, 1997). Thus the Austrian authorities determined to establish the *Biblioteca italiana* as a vehicle for Italian literary, cultural, and scientific debate under the auspices of the Habsburg régime. It is well-known that the attempt by Bellegarde to woo Ugo Foscolo – who, despite having been born on Zante, and having spent his childhood in Venetian Dalmatia, was widely acknowledged as the most talented of all 'Venetian' men of letters – as the journal's editor proved abortive: Foscolo slipped into exile rather than take an oath of allegiance to the Austrian emperor (Haas, 1963, 96; Helfert, 1901, 175). The *Biblioteca italiana*'s editorship fell instead to the astute Giuseppe Acerbi, who made no secret that the journal had been established to propound those principles that best matched the interests and goals of the Austrian government (Luzio, 1910, 16). Acerbi was certainly careful to exclude overtly political articles, which was scarcely surprising given the heavy-handed nature of the Habsburg censors operating both locally in Lombardy-Venetia and under the Viennese *Polizeipräsident*, Joseph Count Sedlnitzky von Choltic (Laven, 2002, 175–92; Berti, 1989). But while Acerbi eschewed politics, he managed – or was perhaps permitted – to perform a careful balancing act, maintaining a fair measure of editorial independence without alienating the administration, police, or censors (Bizzocchi, 1979). The journal never reached the same literary heights as the short-lived *Conciliatore* of September 1818 to October 1819, or the Florentine *Antologia* founded in 1820, or of the *Annali universali di statistica* or the *Politecnico* (which have come to be so closely associated with Carlo Cattaneo), but it did play a significant rôle in the cultural life of Venice, the Regno Lombardo-Veneto, and the peninsula as a whole. The *Biblioteca italiana* was a genuinely Italian project.

What is striking to us about the state-sponsored *Biblioteca italiana* is not so much the content of the articles therein, but the way in which Acerbi divided material. Each edition, always sporting a woodcut of Petrarch on the frontespiece, essentially contained two main sections (on literature and the liberal arts, and on science and the mechanical arts respectively), and two so-called appendices of extracts and reviews. These latter were split not according to subject matter, but according to place of origin: on the one hand, there were ‘Scienze, lettere ed arti straniere’ and, on the other hand, there were ‘Scienze, lettere ed arti italiane’. The former might address works from France, the United States, Britain, and *Austria*; the latter included works published not only in the Lombardo-Veneto, but also in the Two Sicilies, Tuscany, Sardinia-Piedmont, and the Papal States. Italy may have been dismissed as a ‘geographical expression’ by Metternich, but to the official intellectual mouthpiece of the Habsburgs it was also desirable that it should become a cultural whole.

Within this context it is worth remembering that Venetians were anxious to stress their distinctiveness. There was, for example, an extremely lively interest in dialect poetry. In the early years of the restoration, Venetian dialect poets, notably Antonio Lamberti, Francesco Gritti, Camillo Nalin, and, above all, Pietro Buratti, perhaps best known as author of the *Elefanteide* (a satirical poem that landed him in considerable trouble with the authorities), were both popular and influential. Their audience was by no means purely local; it was also recognised internationally: as one review of Nalin’s poetry remarked, ‘[...] lasciamo le lodi di questo dialetto, già da Byron e da altri stranieri appellato il più poetico di tutto’ (*L’Apatista*, 27 Oct. 1834). Indeed, it was quite probably Buratti’s *ottava rima* that first inspired Byron’s *Beppo*, and ultimately his greatest work, *Don Juan*. The pride in the distinctive nature of Venetian dialect and culture was not, of course, in direct opposition to a sense of *italianità*. As we shall see, such municipal, local, and cultural allegiances were not mutually exclusive. There was no straightforward ideological connection between language and a sense of nationhood.

In this sense it is worth reflecting on two of the great heroes of 1848 in Venice. On the one hand, Niccolò Tommaseo, a Dalmatian Italian, was principally famous until he became embroiled in the *Lotta legale* for his rôle as a talented lexicographer, author of the *Dizionario dei sinonimi della lingua italiana*. He would later collaborate in the 1850s in the production of a *Dizionario della lingua italiana* (of which numerous editions would appear from different publishing houses for decades). Yet as well as being a leading figure in Italian lexicography, and a key player in the Venetian anti-Austrian insurrection of 1848, Tommaseo was also, from at least 1839, a champion of the Slavic national cause and a close collaborator with Stipan Ivičević (Reill, 2012, 142–48); he was also profoundly interested in questions concerning the Slav languages of Dalmatia (Bonazza, 2004, 2008). On the other hand, Daniele Manin, the driving force behind the Venetian revolution (Ginsborg, 1979), was also a talented lexicographer, having worked with Giuseppe Boerio on the *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano* (1829). Manin, who in 1848–9 was deeply suspicious of the Piedmontese in general and their ruling house in particular, nevertheless, ultimately proved pivotal in legitimating the House of Savoy’s leadership of the movement for national independence through his endorsement of the *Società Nazionale Italiana*. A taste for dialect did not equate to opposition to or for that matter support for the idea of nationhood.

Since Dante wrote *De vulgari eloquentia* in the first lustrum of the fourteenth century, debate had raged over whether Italy needed a common tongue. Whether championed by the Venetian Pietro Bembo two hundred years after Dante, or by Alessandro Manzoni in the nineteenth

century, the demand for a common tongue had had powerful and eloquent supporters, but this did not necessarily translate into either nationalism or calls for unity, just as a preference for or taste in regional dialect did not preclude a fiercely nationalist or pro-unification stance. Moreover, a passion for local languages could also be part of a wider project: thus when, two years after Venice was lost by Austria, Giovanni Domenico Nardo published the text of a paper entitled ‘Considerazioni filologiche sull’importanza [sic] dello studio comparativo dei dialetti rustici’, which had been delivered at the Ateneo Veneto, his position was not only to take pleasure from and demonstrate local pride in Venetian dialects. Nor was his goal simply to study and preserve linguistic curiosities. Rather he sought to locate Chioggio and Buranello, Padovano and Veneziano within broader philological and linguistic debates. In doing this he was consciously echoing ideas that he traced back to eighteenth-century scholars such as Melchiorre Cesarotti, and even the early philological works of the great historian Ludovico Muratori. On the one hand, Nardo intended his work to contribute to the understanding of the origins and development not just of Italian but also of Indo-European languages more generally through the study of ‘i dialetti nazionali’ (Nardo, 1868). On the other hand, Nardo wanted to build on the foundations of Manin’s and Boerio’s work to improve still further the value of this ‘opera fondamentale’. Working on the dialects of the Venetian lagoon and its hinterland was thus an act of scholarship with local, national and transnational resonance.

### **Celebrating the past: the *Panteon Veneto***

In 1847 Venice played host to the ninth and final Congress of Italian Scientists. The first of these congresses had taken place in Pisa in 1839, under the relatively tolerant rule of the Archduke Leopold II. Thereafter there had been gatherings in Turin (1840), Florence (1841), Padua (1842), Lucca (1843), Milan (1844), Naples (1845), and Genoa (1846). In one sense these events were openly pan-Italian – the word ‘nazionale’ was unashamedly and regularly used in describing them – but they also attracted a fair number of non-Italian scholars. When Gottardo Calvi – Genoese-born champion of the ‘società di mutuo soccorso’ – wrote an account of the first congress, originally published in the *Rivista europea*, he acknowledged the German inspiration for the meeting, but stressed that the aim was to bring ‘i dotti di quasi tutte le parti d’Italia’ together ‘per chiarire alcuni dubbi e per proporre nuove ed importanti questioni, il tutto a vantaggio della scienza, dell’Italia, dell’umanità’ (Calvi, 1839, 5–6). The idea, so succinctly expressed by Calvi, that the congresses simultaneously celebrated the city in which they were held, while equally contributing to the glory of Italy *and* the welfare of humanity became a standard theme. This was equally true of those organised in Italian cities that were also part of the Habsburg empire. For example, at the Milan conference, the opening address of Count Vitaliano Borromeo, to an audience that included the Austrian Viceroy and the Cardinal Archbishop, began by acknowledging Lucca, the last host, before expounding on the vitality moral, industrial, and cultural of the Lombard capital. Borromeo continued to define the purpose of the congresses as serving ‘all’onore del *Nome Italiano* e alla maggiore utilità universale’ (*Diario*, 1844, 3).

As Maria Pia Casalena has pointed out, while the congresses have become ‘a fully-fledged myth in the national memory of the Risorgimento’ (2007, 153), it is important not to exaggerate their nationalist agenda. Certainly they did on occasion provide arenas for the expression of such sentiments, but their agenda was more often national than nationalist. For the organisers and rulers who offered patronage to the congresses, as well as local delegates there was also the opportunity to vaunt municipal pride within both a national and a pan-European, even global context. Moreover, some ostensibly nationalist actions, such as the distribution at the Genoa congress of commemorative medals celebrating the centenary of the ‘Balilla’ rising against the Austrians, could

also carry a municipalist or even separatist agenda: the 1746 rebellion may have been anti-Austrian, but it was also against the Piedmontese who were allies of the Austrians at the time. The ninth congress in Venice was to be little different: certainly it provided a forum for the expression of occasional if generally veiled anti-Austrian sentiment, but Ginsborg's assertion that a 'climate of suppressed, and sometimes unsuppressed, nationalism permeated the whole congress' (Ginsborg, 1979, 68) seems an exaggeration. As with earlier congresses, the ninth, rather than simply pitching nationalist feelings against Austrian oppression, permitted a wide variety of delegates of very different political goals and allegiances to negotiate the sometimes conflicting but often complementary appeals of the municipal, the local, the regional, the national, the imperial, the European, and the global. Maria Laura Soppelsa has rightly observed, 'i due congressi veneti [Padua and Venice] non rappresentano solo luoghi altamente evocativi e portatori di valori e simboli pregni di significato' but also 'due importanti osservatori "speculativi" per un duplice ordine di motivazioni, e nazionali e regionali' (Soppelsa, 2001, 234), but they were also seen as a chance to position Venetian scholarship within broader transnational debates without challenging the region's political status as part of the Austrian Empire, even if some delegates profited from the opportunity to take a swipe at Austrian rule.

It is within the context of the ninth congress that we wish to examine the opening of the so-called *Panteon veneto* under the auspices of the Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti. The pantheon was intended to celebrate 'uomini insigni nella politica, nelle armi, nella navigazione, nelle scienze, nelle lettere e nelle arti nati a Venezia o nei suoi dintorni dai tempi antichi fino al secolo XVII' (AIVSLA, b.1: Panteon Veneto, 1847). Originally instituted under the Napoleonic Regno Italico, during the reign of Ferdinand the Istituto Veneto was treated especially munificently by the Habsburg authorities. This generous treatment included the grant of a magnificent space in the Palazzo Ducale (Gullino, 1996).

In the absence of a university in Venice, it was to the Istituto that the task of running the ninth congress was entrusted, and the Istituto's members saw the congress as an opportunity to erect a more lasting symbol to the great men of the city and its hinterland. There was, of course, nothing new about the idea of a pantheon. The members of the Istituto Veneto were certainly aware of much earlier examples both within and outside Italy's frontiers (Parker, 2011, 112–15), but there was much recent precedent as well. The publication of Francesco Regli's *I compagni del Walkalla* [sic] *descritti dal Re Ludovico I di Baviera fondatore del Walkalla* [sic] (Milan: Guglielmini, 1847) meant that members of the Istituto knew of the bombastic and nationalist enterprise of the King of Bavaria, a vast neo-classical monument to the great and good of the German nation. There were Italian models too. Not least because of Canova's prominent rôle in the project, educated Venetians were aware of the 'magnifica italiana raccolta di busti' (known as the *Protomoteca Capitolina*, it included Dante and Michelangelo, Titian, Veronese, Ariosto, Brunelleschi, and Goldoni) assembled by Pius VII in the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome (Rampoldi, 1834, 493). Many of those involved in organising the ninth congress had presumably read about or actually seen the statues of famous historical figures in the Palazzo Brera during the Milan congress of 1844. These in turn had probably been inspired by the statues of *uomini illustri* placed in the porticoes of the Uffizi in Florence in 1843 (Martinelli & Pietrangeli, 1955; Barsottini, 1856; Parker, 2011, 112–14). Nearer to home, the Prato della Valle in Padua, where statues to great men were first erected from 1775, also probably acted as an inspiration (Capellini, 2001), as did Francesco Hayez's frescoes for the *Parnaso Veneto* painted in the Palazzo Gritti in 1818 (Pavanello, 1992).



The statues of the Uffizi and Hayez's paintings in the Gritti unashamedly stressed the local at the expense of the national. The same priorities were evident in an independent plan announced by the Venetian sculptor, Francesco Bosa, first publicised in the Austrian-sponsored mouthpiece, the *Gazzetta privilegiata* on 19 January 1847. Bosa wished to commemorate a dozen famous Venetians: Andrea Navagero (humanist poet, diplomat, botanist), Carlo Goldoni, Lorenzo Giustiniani (patriarch and saint), Paolo Sarpi, Enrico Dandolo (blind doge behind the fourth crusade), Vettor Pisani (fourteenth-century admiral, victorious against the Genoese), Carlo Zeno (ditto), Francesco Morosini (seventeenth-century military commander in the wars against the Turks, subsequently elected Doge), Marco Polo, Giovanni Bellini, Pietro Bembo, and Marcantonio Bragadin (the Venetian military commander, flayed alive by the Turks after the capture of Cyprus). Bosa's work was curious for its omissions (Bellini was the only artist; Dandolo and Morosini were the only doges), and characterised by the high proportion of military figures. It was a martial Venice, as well as one of art, literature, exploration, and religion that he wanted to celebrate, and which was noted with pleasure by the Austrian-controlled press. If the *Serenissima's* past could be exploited for the glory of the modern city, so equally the city's heroism, imperial expansion, artistic brilliance of long-dead inhabitants could be appropriated for the greater glory of the Habsburg imperial project.

The Istituto's pantheon – also announced in January 1847 – would eclipse Bosa's project, despite the latter's insistence that his original idea had been stolen. (Bosa to Istituto Veneto, 27 April 1847. AIVSLA, b.1: Panteon Veneto, 1847). The first fifteen busts and two plaques erected under the auspices of the Istituto Veneto, were located just off the *Scala dei giganti* in the *Palazzo Ducale*, and commemorated several of the figures chosen by Bosa: Pietro Bembo, Carlo Goldoni, Enrico Dandolo, Paolo Sarpi, Francesco Morosini. The majority were not on Bosa's list. Military men did not figure prominently. Most were men of letters (Goldoni and Bembo, Paolo Paruta, and Doge Marco Foscarini, Gaspare Gozzi and Apostolo Zeno, and the composer and writer Benedetto Marcello) or in the field of science and engineering (Galileo Galilei, Giovanni Poleni, the hydraulic engineer Bernardino Zendrini, the geologist Giovanni Arduino, and the polymath Lazzaro Moro). In this city of painters no one saw fit to honour Titian or Bellini, and while Canova was included alongside the architect Vincenzo Scamozzi, Palladio was not. This slightly curious selection is explained by the fact that, while the Istituto paid for the memorials to Bembo and Poleni, and the Congress delegates honoured Galileo, it was generally individuals who commissioned the commemorative busts. Personal taste and family connections shaped their choices. It was Giuseppe Camploy – impresario at the Teatro San Samuele, and dealer in pianos and sheet music (Rosselli, 1985, 250) – who paid for the bust of Benedetto Marcello, the only composer selected. Why he should have chosen Marcello over Monteverdi or Vivaldi is unclear. Even Canova's bust – a self-portrait – was donated by his half brother.

Venetians chose which figures to commemorate, but their choices had to be sanctioned by the Austrians. Significantly when a group of former patricians commissioned a bust of Enrico Dandolo, the authorities had no qualms about its incorporation. While Napoleon had carried off the *quadriga* in triumph from the front of the Basilica, Francis I had returned the four bronze horses to their 'rightful' place (Pilot, 1914, 226); now the great mediæval Doge who had stolen them from Constantinople was triumphantly acknowledged. Such memorialisation of republican imperialism might have proved problematic: after all, it took place in a building that was once the seat of Venetian imperial government, now used both to house both the Istituto Veneto and the Biblioteca Marciana – the cultural repository of Venetian learning – and as the centre of Austrian

administration. Yet the Habsburgs welcomed this celebration of Venice's republican, oligarchic, imperial (Parker, 2011, 116–27).<sup>3</sup>

The ninth Congress of Italian Scientists – as well as the parallel publication of the famous *Venezia e le sue lagune* – has traditionally been seen as a moment when Venice's greatness – 'la grandezza della città nostra' (Correr, 1847, I, ii) – was stitched into the fabric of a growing nationalist sentiment, soon to find voice in the 1848 insurrection. But it should equally be seen as one of several moments when the Austrians thought that they could appropriate a shared Italian culture and the past of world's most enduring republic to strengthen their own imperial project. Surprisingly this experiment did not cease with the revolution. Despite the reaction that followed the siege of Venice (Zorzi, 1985, 105–11; Laven, 2011, 56–7; Del Negro, 2002, 167–73), a more accommodating approach was soon adopted (Laven, 2011, 57–8), which extended to engagement with Venice's past. On 23 March 1853 the *Gazzetta privilegiata* announced official approval of the plans of the Istituto Veneto, now under the direction of the historian Augustino Sagredo, to expand the *Panteon*. Seven new busts were inaugurated in 1858: the commemoration of Giovanni Bellini and Titian was doubtless overdue, but lobbying also saw the inclusion of some relatively obscure figures (two of the memorials were paid for by direct descendants of the male line): the surgeon Francesco Pajola, the orientalist, Giambattista Galliccioli, and the translator of Ossian, linguist, and collaborator with the French, Melchiorre Cesarotti. If the last was a surprise, it also underlined the Habsburg spirit of tolerance. More interesting was the fact that Carlo Zeno and Vettor Pisani, fourteenth-century admirals in the wars against the Genoese, were memorialised: clearly martial glory could be accommodated notwithstanding the Venetians' recent and stubborn resistance. Significantly, this took place at a time when, in response to 1849–9, Venetians were excluded from serving in the Habsburg fleet (Sondhaus, 1989). More surprisingly still, in 1863, a bust of Angelo Emo – Venice's last great naval hero – was erected at the expense of the *municipio*. Indeed, the celebration of the late Venetian Republic – often seen as the 'victim' of the Austrian expansion – might be considered especially strange. In 1859 a bust was erected to Paolo Renier, Venice's penultimate Doge. The choice of Renier – scarcely one of the most heroic or famous of doges – was probably because his sculpture was paid for by his grandson Matteo Persico. Nevertheless, the inclusion of Renier and Emo shows the relaxed nature of the Habsburg authorities towards Venice's past grandeur. This readiness to annex Venice's past – to try render it an unproblematic municipal *lieu de mémoire* – is underlined by the way in which two busts were erected in the *Panteon* in 1860, paid for by the Emperor's brother Maximilian, viceroy of Lombardy-Venetia from 1857 to 1859. The bust of Tintoretto was unproblematic, almost inevitable given the inclusion of Titian and Bellini. But the inclusion of the sixteenth-century Doge Andrea Gritti – who as *provveditore generale* had organised courageous resistance to Emperor Maximilian I, and who had successfully reacquired much of the territory lost by Venice after the battle of Agnadello – spoke of a resurgent Venice recovering from imperial aggression. Gritti's was a story told with vigour in volume 5 of Romanin's (Romanin, 218–39, 263–8, 317), which had appeared in 1856. Even if one ignored Gritti as a strategist, he remained a powerful symbol of Venetian individuality, determination, and resistance (Magani, 1997, 209).

The spate of commissions from the *municipio* for busts inaugurated between 1861 and 1865 is also significant (Parker, 2011, 136–59; Bonannina, 1995 & 1996). Looking at the list of names,

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<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that the *Scala dei Giganti* and the statues of Mars and Neptune at its top, realised respectively by Antonio Rizzo and Jacopo Sansovino were not only designed as a symbol of the power and the authority of the doge, but also to emphasise Venice's domination of both the *stato da mar* and the *Terraferma* (Goy, 2006, 224; Fortini Brown, 1996, 164).

questions begin to arise: Did Doge Angelo Partecipazio's resistance to Pepin's attack on Venice in the early ninth century have a special resonance after 1849? Was the bust of Andrea Contarini – fourteenth-century hero of the wars against Genoa – to highlight Venice's differences with its former rival or to stress the fighting qualities of Venetians? Was the choice of Leonardo Loredan, who had so successfully weathered the League of Cambrai, a statement of Venice's independence of spirit? Was the inclusion in 1865 of Dante, whose connection with Venice was tenuous, a means of highlighting Venice's *italianità* as the new Kingdom sought to acquire the region? Some of the privately funded busts and plaques were also potentially problematic: if the memory of Marco Polo or Aldus Manutius was uncontroversial, other choices could be seen as political threats. For example, in 1866, on the eve of annexation, Vincenzo Paolo Barzizza's two commissions were placed in the *Panteon*. The aim was clearly to celebrate Barzizza's own forefathers, as the two busts erected honoured Gasparino Barzizza, the Bergamasco humanist, and, from the maternal line, Paolo Erizzo, a fifteenth-century admiral. But did the choice of another heroic naval commander emphasise Venice's connection with empire, war, and the sea? Potentially even more provocative was the commission from Faustino Persico (married into the Renier family, and a longstanding imperial Chamberlain, but also a friend of the anti-Austrian novelist Ippolito Nievo) of a bust of Ugo Foscolo, whose rejection of the *Biblioteca italiana* alone might have been considered sufficient to exclude him.

But there is another way of reading the celebration of heroic Venetians, and even the claims to *italianità* implicit in the erection of busts of Dante and Foscolo, or even those of Bembo or Aldus Manutius. Members of the Istituto were making patriotic gestures – with the *patria* here being Venice *and* Italy – but the Austrians were happy for this to take place. They understood that there was no point in 'Germanising' the region. If Francis Joseph conceived of himself very much as 'ein deutscher Fürst', he was also an Austrian Emperor fully aware of the cultural diversity of his territories. There was no point trying to suppress those cultures. It was much more effective to appropriate them: the celebration of Venetian heroes, even Venetian heroes who had fought against Habsburg rulers, was a much more effective way of attaching Venice to the ruling house and its imperial mission than any denial of past victories and grandeur, especially given the fact that a burgeoning historiography, Italian and non-Italian, was opening Venice's past to a growing readership across Europe and North America. Appropriation was a way of sanitising or neutralising the past: Austrian sanction reduced any patriotic threat.

## Conclusion

In 1866 Venice and its mainland were lost to Austria, a product of Prussian victory rather than Italian military prowess or a Venetian struggle for independence: 'foreign rule' had come to an end. Venetians welcomed their newfound 'liberation', but without great enthusiasm: any relief was rapidly diluted by a disillusionment and indifference. Venetians showed little rancour towards the withdrawing Austrian officials and soldiers. Less than a decade later, on 5 April 1875, huge crowds turned out to greet Francis Joseph when he visited the city; significantly the trip took place scarcely a fortnight after the inauguration of a monument to Daniele Manin.<sup>4</sup> One reason for the absence of ill-will towards the Habsburgs would seem to be the readiness with which the Austrians recognised and cultivated Venice's cultural and historical distinctiveness: the people of Venice were respected by Austria as both Italians and Venetians; there was no sense that they should not be intensely proud of their heritage, their language, their customs. Attempts to foster national sentiment in the aftermath of unification were obliged to continue to employ the local, or, at least, a hybrid of the

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<sup>4</sup> The significance was not lost to contemporaries. See, for example, the remarks in John Webb Probyn, *Italy from the fall of Napoleon* (1884, 347–8)

local and national. Venetians continued to negotiate their identity within a centralising state, through loyalty to the municipal, positioning their own past within a wider Italian and European narrative. This was certainly not unique to Venice – as Axel Körner has pointed out municipal identity could become ‘the key to engaging with the nation’ (2009, 5) – but, to the extent that nationalism took hold in the city, it was essentially dependent on accommodating that sense of the local that had always been acknowledged and fostered by the authorities in Vienna.