

***So long and tormenting is the silence. The Great Plague of Genoa  
through the Letters of Giannettino Giustiniani to the Court of Turin  
(1656-59)***

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*Abstract:* The letters of Giannettino Giustiniani to the Court of Turin had hitherto remained without the set of primary sources on the plague in Genoa in 1656-57 (probably the gravest epidemic in the ancient Genoese regime). Although the collection of letters is incomplete because of the plague itself, it is still a source of great interest. As Savoy agent and one of Cardinal Mazarin's most valuable informants, Giustiniani was a figure of high political profile: he was France's representative and the leader of the pro-French faction in Genoa; he was part of a vast information and intelligence network that included numerous Italian Courts, the Principality of Monaco, and the Barberini family. This *corpus* of letters provides several angles on the plague, though the running theme is that of Giustiniani's anguish at being cut off from his interlocutors, as indeed many of his letters never reached their destination or fell into the hands of his enemies. The *darkness* and *silence*, of which he speaks became his greatest torment: it was a veritable *plague of letters*. From his villa in Santa Margherita Ligure, in the Gulf of Rapallo, he recounted the course of the epidemic but provided a greatly mitigated version of it, for reasons at once of self-interest and public interest.

*Keywords:* Republic of Genoa – plague – postal systems – political news – espionage – Christine of Bourbon, Duchess of Savoy – Letter-Writing – Women

## Introduction

Our aim is to contribute to the understanding of the 1656-57 plague in Genoa, an epidemic which has been widely studied and is well documented by primary sources<sup>1</sup>. It was the last of the great waves of bubonic plague in the ancient Genoese regime and so greatly affected the Republic it influenced policy for years afterwards. It also had a devastating impact on the social and productive fabric of the city was devastating, causing a number of victims which is estimated as equalling, and possibly exceeding, half the population<sup>2</sup>.

The effects of the 1656-57 plague have also been regarded in terms of its effects on the fate of eminent families, as among the victims were also several members of the Genoese ruling class and intelligentsia. There were the patrons and collectors Giovan Battista Balbi, Giovan Filippo Spinola, and Ansaldo Pallavicino, for instance. Other *magnifici* died as «magnanimous heroes», wrote Father Antero, who had made a «voluntary sacrifice» of their lives, noted the annalist Filippo Casoni<sup>3</sup>, such as the influential marquis Giovanni Battista Raggi (one of the major patrons of the painter known as il Grechetto and brother to Cardinal Lorenzo)<sup>4</sup>. The secretary of the Raggi family, who wrote down the

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<sup>1</sup> G. Assereto, «Per la comune salvezza dal morbo contagioso». *I controlli di sanità nella Repubblica di Genova*, Città del silenzio, Novi Ligure 2011, pp. 36, 139.

<sup>2</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657. Cronache di una pestilenza*, in «Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria», V, 2, 1965, pp. 340-344 (pp. 313-435); F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio della Liguria negli anni 1656 e 1657 descritti da Filippo Casoni*, Fratelli Pagano, Genova 1831; A. Costa, *La peste in Genova negli anni 1656-57*, in C. Gini ed., *Atti del congresso internazionale per gli studi sulla popolazione (Roma, 7-10 settembre 1931)*, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Roma 1933, vol. 1, pp. 345-372; G. Rocca, *La peste di metà Seicento a Genova e in Liguria. Alcune considerazioni sulla diffusione spaziale di un'epidemia*, in *Popolazione, società e ambiente. Temi di demografia storica italiana (secc. XVII-XIX)*, Società Italiana di Demografia Storica ed., Clueb, Bologna 1990, pp. 707-721; R. Da Calice, *La grande peste. Genova 1656-1657*, Cooperativa E. Bullesi, La Spezia 1992; P. Calcagno and F. Ferrando, *Tra tutela dell'ordine pubblico e salvaguardia delle manifatture. La peste di Genova del 1656-1657*, in P. Fontana and L. Nuovo eds., *Il Cardinale Stefano Durazzo. Esperienza diplomatica e servizio pastorale*, Edizioni Liturgiche, Roma 2019, pp. 117-147; R. Palumbo, *La grande paura: La Spezia, Genova e il Levante Ligure al tempo della peste, 1656-1658*, Antiche porte, Reggio Emilia 2014; A. Zappia, *Il miraggio del Levante: Genova e gli ebrei nel Seicento*, Carocci, Roma 2021, pp. 10-11, 30. Cf. J.F.D. Shrewsbury, *A history of bubonic plague in the British Isles*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città, e Riviere di Genova...*, Stamperia Franchelli, In Genova 1744 (1st ed. Genova 1658), p. 127; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 8. Cf. A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste nell'Europa moderna*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1991, p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> P. Boccardo, *Epidemie nell'arte in Italia - GENOVA*, in «Il giornale dell'Arte», March 31, 2020, <https://www.ilgiornaledellarte.com/articoli/epidemie-nell-arte-in-italia-genova/133064.html>, 16/01/2022. Cf. A. Lonardi, «Quell'incrociarsi fatale ed aguzzo di membra» (R. Longhi, 1913)

letters composed by Lorenzo and his niece, Sister Maria Francesca, has been one of the most widely used epistolary sources among historians of the epidemic<sup>5</sup>.

Our study is also primarily devoted to a particularly valuable epistolary source which has unaccountably been neglected so far<sup>6</sup>. The letters in question were written by marquis Giannettino Giustiniani (1595-1672?) to the Court of Turin: most were addressed to the Duchess Christine of France, regent of Savoy and daughter of Henry IV and a smaller part to Carlo Giuseppe Vittorio Carron, marquis of San Tommaso and minister of the state. Regrettably, none of the letters of Giustiniani's correspondents have come down to us, as far as we know, nor any of his from 1656, the first year of the epidemic<sup>7</sup>; in spite of this, we are

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*L'immaginario della peste nella cultura artistica di età barocca*, in G. Amendola ed., *L'immaginario e le epidemie*, Adda Editore, Bari 2020, pp. 93-94 (pp. 71-99). On Gio. Battista Raggi, C. Costantini, *Corrispondenti genovesi dei Barberini*, in *La Storia dei Genovesi*, Atti del convegno di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova, Genova 15-17 aprile 1986, Genova 1987, vol. 7, pp. 189-206; Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 69; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 42; G. Gualdo Priorato, *Scena d'huomini illustri d'Italia del co: Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, Conosciuti da lui singolari per Nascita, per Virtù e per Fortuna*, Appresso Andrea Giuliani, In Venezia 1659; R. Soprani, *Le vite de pittori, scoltori, et architetti genovesi e de Forastieri che in Genova operarono, opera postuma di Raffaele Soprani*, Giuseppe Bottaro e Gio. Battista Tiboldi, In Genova 1674, p. 224; L. Alfonso, *G. B Castiglione detto il Grechetto*, in «La Berio», 2, 1972, p. 43 (pp. 40-44).

<sup>5</sup> On Lorenzo Raggi, nephew of Cardinal Ottaviano, a loyal Barberinian, who became general treasurer, majordomo to the Pope, then president of the Papal Mint and protector of the Monte di Pietà, finally cardinal (1647) and «pro-camerlengo» (1650), see G. Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica*, Tipografia Emiliana, In Venetia 1846, vol. 41, p. 266, 1852, vol. 56, p. 155. See also, L. von Pastor, *Storia dei papi dalla fine del Medio Evo*, vol. XIII, Desclée, Roma 1961, p. 265; C. Costantini, *Corrispondenti genovesi dei Barberini*, cit., pp. 190-192, 195-197; Id., *Fazione Urbana. Sbandamento e ricomposizione di una grande clientela a metà Seicento*, 1998, quaderni.net, <http://www.quaderni.net/WebFazione/000indexFazione.htm>, 1h, 1l, 2a, 2c, 2e, 2h, 3e, a6, g2, ga55n, ga57-66. Lorenzo Raggi's correspondence is part of the rare collections archive at the Biblioteca Civica Berio in Genoa (ms. M.R. V. 3.17), A. Lonardi, «*Quell'incrociarsi fatale ed aguzzo di membra*», cit., pp. 71-72; D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 326. Maria Francesca Raggi was Lorenzo's niece and daughter of Ferdinando (resident in Rome, agent of the Republic at the Papal Court from 1664 to 1669); she was a nun at Santa Brigida, a convent in the Genoese district of Pre, *Ibid.*, pp. 326-327; A. Neri, *Saggio della corrispondenza di Ferdinando Raggi, agente della Repubblica Genovese a Roma*, in «*Rivista Europea*», V, 1878, pp. 658-659 (pp. 657-695); V. Vitale, *Diplomatici e consoli della Repubblica di Genova*, in «*Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*», LXIII, 1934, pp. 20-21.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 322-323.

<sup>7</sup> There may be letters by Giustiniani (such as those to the marquis of Pianezza) in some of the Turin archives, cf. the collections Archivio di Stato di Torino (henceforth ASTo), Corte (henceforth C), Lettere Ministri (henceforth LM), Genova (henceforth G), mazzo 5 (henceforth 5); thus, Giustiniani wrote to Christine, Duchess of Savoy on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1657 that «about the progress of the contagion in Genoa I have written at length to the Marquis of Pianezza and for this reason prefer not to bore Your Royal Highness».

still in a position to understand that the duchess relied in her government on the support of a small group of advisors, amongst whom were the marquises of San Maurizio, of Parella, and of Pianezza, and the first secretary of state, Carron di San Tommaso, whose counsel on foreign policy was especially valued<sup>8</sup>.

To all intents and purposes, Giannettino Giustiniani was an agent of the Savoy court and was «one of Mazarin's most active and heeded informers» in Italy<sup>9</sup>. He was acting, that is, as representative of the king of France (albeit not in any official capacity: not with the credentials of resident minister), and was, furthermore, at the head of the pro-French faction in Genoa<sup>10</sup>. Because of his

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<sup>8</sup> E. Stumpo, *CRISTINA di Francia, duchessa di Savoia*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (henceforth DBI), vol. 31, 1985, *ad vocem*; Id., *CARRON, Giuseppe Gaetano Giacinto, marchese di San Tommaso*, in DBI, vol. 20, 1977, *ad vocem*.

<sup>9</sup> D. Pizzorno, *La Repubblica particolare. Pratiche politiche e prassi di governo nella Genova della prima età moderna*, Città del silenzio, Genova 2021, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> On Giannettino Giustiniani and his intense correspondence with «Cardinal Mazarin, with Chavigny, with Lionne, with Brienne, with the Italian princes and grandees who supported the French, such as Madama Cristina and Onorato Grimaldi, the brothers Francesco and Antonio Barberini, cardinals Girolamo Grimaldi and Rinaldo d'Este, etc.», see B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino: Giannettino Giustiniani*, in «Quaderni di Storia e Letteratura», 7, 2000, <http://www.quaderni.net/WebGiannettino/1GIAN1a.htm>, 1a, 1f. See also. G. Ferretti, *La ricerca di un'alleanza: l'istituzione del consolato francese a Genova*, in M.G. Bottaro Palumbo ed., *Genova e Francia al crocevia dell'Europa/Gênes et la France au carrefour de l'Europe (1624-1642)*, Atti del Seminario internazionale di Studi, Genova 27-28 maggio 1989, Centro di Studi sull'Età Moderna, Genova, 1989, pp. 101-147; E. Grendi, *Giannettino Giustiniani, François De la Fuye e i grani francesi (Genova, 1648)*, in R. Galli Pellegrini, I. Merello, F. Robello and S. Poli eds., *La "Guirlande" di Cecilia. Studi in onore di Cecilia Rizza*, Schena, Fasano 1996, pp. 518-529; D. Pizzorno, *Genova e Roma tra Cinque e Seicento. Gruppi di potere, rapporti politico-diplomatici, strategie internazionali*, Mucchi, Modena 2018, pp. 21 n., 53, 365; Id., *Genova, gli Este e Giannettino Giustiniani: il terreno negoziale genovese nella crisi spagnola di metà Seicento*, in «Società e storia», 161, 2018, pp. 445-470; G. Dethan Georges, *Mazarin et Gênes*, in R. Belvederi ed., *Rapporti Genova-Mediterraneo-Atlantico nell'età moderna*, Atti del I congresso internazionale di studi storici, Genova, 31 marzo-3 aprile 1982, Università di Genova, Genova 1983, pp. 165-173; G. Alzona, *Origini e disavventure di un frate-architetto alla corte sabauda: Andrea Costaguta (Genova 1604, Loano ≥1669)*, Centro Studi Piemontesi, Torino 2014. Giustiniani's letters to the Court of Paris are held at the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, and «some of his letters to the Count of Brienne and Minister Colbert are at the National Library in Paris. The largest part of the letters is addressed to Mazarin: the first letter is dated 7<sup>th</sup> January 1642, the last is dated 15<sup>th</sup> November 1660. Over the same period, Mazarin wrote more than two hundred letters to Giustiniani, which Giustiniani himself collected into two volumes. These volumes were later unbound and at least seventy of the original two hundred letters were lost. The manuscript used in 1863 by Vincenzo Ricci for the edition of Mazarin's letters to Giustiniani [...] (which belonged to the lawyer Molfino and in 1882 became part of the collection of the Archivio Storico del Comune di Genova) contains only 142 letters», B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 3a. Giustiniani's letters to cardinals Barberini and to the Duke of Modena are instead at the Vatican Library (mss. Barb. lat., 9822-9827) and the Archivio di Stato di Modena (CA, Genoa, busta 5-8), *Ibid.*, 3a.

political standing and of the vast network of informers and spies he ran over several decades, Giustiniani was in a unique position to observe and report on the events of the great plague in Genoa.

The tenor of his letters about the catastrophe that befell his city (and his own property) somewhat highlights a discord between his personal temperament and his public profile as experienced negotiator and communications professional<sup>11</sup>. This corpus of letters enables us to investigate a wide range of themes, and while some are typical of plague accounts<sup>12</sup>, there is also a peculiar, and highly personal slant that appears to be informed by a sense of heightened (or uncensored) fear in the face of isolation, with the breakdown of interpersonal relations and of all communication with the outside world<sup>13</sup>. This form of anxiety chiefly punctuates Giustiniani's correspondence and will be seen to mount week by week and letter by letter, as the plague made its relentless advance.

This epidemic wave, it will do to recall, took a rather long course. Initiating in North Africa, it then spread to the Iberian Peninsula (1647-48) before reaching the Spanish dominions of Sardinia a few years later (1652) and then Naples (March 1656). From Naples, it then moved northwards along the Italian

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara Marinelli describes Giustiniani as an «ambitious» man of no «excellent qualities» (he attracted, for instance, many rivalries), *Ibid.*, 1a, 1l. Diego Pizzorno qualifies some of his decisions as too rash and speaks of «clumsiness» and «feebleness», but points out that «on the side of information» Giustiniani's was «much more effective and relevant», with sources among «the French network as much as the communication networks that intersected in Genoa» and devoting himself to «intense espionage», D. Pizzorno, *Genova, gli Este e Giannettino Giustiniani*, cit., pp. 458-459.

<sup>12</sup> The main headings of which are the elaboration of grief and mourning, the distortion of social relations, the decline of trade and economic hardship, the increase in certain types of crime, medical-scientific theories, beliefs, superstitions and devotions, C.M. Cipolla, *Il pestifero e contagioso morbo: combattere la peste nell'Italia del Seicento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2012; G. Calvi, «Dell'altrui communicatione»: comportamenti sociali in tempo di peste (Napoli, Roma, Genova 1656-57), in *Popolazione, società e ambiente*, cit., pp. 561-579; P. Preto, *Epidemia, paura e politica nell'Italia moderna*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1987; A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit.; R. Sansa, *Conoscere la città per salvarla dalla peste: gli strumenti di indagine "statistica" durante la peste di Roma del 1656-1657*, in G. Da Molin ed., *Percorsi condivisi: ricerche su popolazione, ambiente e salute*, Cacucci, Bari 2014, pp. 309-327; P. Sorcinelli, *Viaggio nella storia sociale*, Mondadori, Milano 2009, pp. 41-53; P. Ulvioni, *Il gran castigo di Dio: carestia ed epidemie a Venezia e nella Terraferma, 1628-1632*, Franco Angeli, Milano 1989; P. Benjamin, «Convertire in se medesimo questo flagello»: autocritica del Doge Alvise Mocenigo nel bozzetto di Tintoretto per il dipinto votivo a Palazzo Ducale, in Id. ed., *Celebrazione e autocritica. La Serenissima e la ricerca dell'identità veneziana nel tardo Cinquecento*, Viella, Roma 2014, pp. 123-156.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M.P. Zanoboni, *La vita al tempo della peste: misure restrittive, quarantena, crisi economica*, Jouvence, Napoli 2020.

peninsula, first reaching the Papal States (May/June 1656), then the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and finally Liguria (June 1656)<sup>14</sup>.

As far as we know, while the dominions of the Republic were scarcely affected at all<sup>15</sup>, mortality and morbidity rates in Genoa itself were among the highest in Italy; the peak of the contagion was reached between the second half of June and the first half of July 1657, when several thousand deaths were counted<sup>16</sup>.

For the most part, Giustiniani's letters bring new evidence to known facts about the epidemic: they confirm, for instance, that for some time the Genoese believed they had again succeeded in keeping the contagion at bay (as indeed they had with the previous, grave epidemic in Northern Italy in 1628-30)<sup>17</sup>. There was a phase, in other words, in which it appeared Genoa had escaped the worst, confirming the city's reputation for efficiency in preventing and governing the plague<sup>18</sup>. The Republic had long held a permanent Health Office (the Conservatori di Sanità, an institution dating from the plague of 1528)<sup>19</sup> and

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<sup>14</sup> F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio* cit., pp. 7-8; B. Anatra, *La peste del 1647-1658 nel Mediterraneo occidentale: il versante italiano*, in *Popolazione, società e ambiente*, cit., pp. 549-560; R. Ago and A. Parmeggiani, *La peste del 1656-57 nel Lazio*, in *Ibid.*, pp. 595-611; G. Puggioni, *Peste in Sardegna (1652-1657)*, in *Ibid.*, pp. 659-669; F. Manconi, *Castigo de Dios. La grande peste barocca nella Sardegna di Filippo IV*, Donzelli, Roma 1994; S. D'Alessio, *Un'ultima punizione. Napoli, 1656*, in «Il Pensiero Politico», 2, 2003, pp. 325-334; G. Alfani, *Plague in Seventeenth-century Europe and the Decline of Italy. An Epidemiological Hypothesis*, in «European Review of Economic History», 17, 2013, pp. 408-430; C.M. Cipolla, *Il pestifero e contagioso morbo*, cit., p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> A «considerable part of the Riviere and of the Oltregiogo», Giovanni Assereto points out, was indeed spared from the plague, G. Assereto, «*Per la comune salvezza dal morbo contagioso*», cit., p. 139. Cf. P. Calcagno, *Pestilenze e controllo del territorio nella Repubblica di Genova*, in M. Berruti ed., *La peste a Finale (1631-1632). Diffusione e incidenza di una epidemia nella Liguria di antico regime*, Philobiblon, Ventimiglia 2012, pp. 96-161; R. Palumbo, *La grande paura*, cit.

<sup>16</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 353-355; R. Sansa, *Conoscere la città per salvarla dalla peste*, cit., p. 311; M. Lagomarsino, *Per i pubblici poteri*, in *Genova. La Liguria e l'Oltremare tra Medioevo ed Età moderna. Studi e ricerche d'archivio*, Bozzi, Genova 1976, vol. 2, pp. 409-429; W. Rossi, *Morbo, contagio, profilassi*, in *Ibid.*, pp. 393-408; G. Calvi, «*Dell'altrui communicatione*», cit., pp. 561-579; G. Assereto, «*Per la comune salvezza dal morbo contagioso*», cit.; P. Calcagno and F. Ferrando, *Tra tutela dell'ordine pubblico e salvaguardia delle manifatture*, cit., pp. 117-147; B. Anatra, *La peste del 1647-1658 nel Mediterraneo occidentale*, cit., pp. 549-560.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. J. Henderson, *Florence Under Siege. Surviving Plague in an Early Modern City*, Yale University Press, New Haven-London 2019; D. P. Bell, *Learning from Disasters Past. The Case of an Early Seventeenth-Century Plague in Northern Italy and Beyond*, in «Jewish Social Studies», Indiana University Press, 26, 1, 2020, pp. 55-66.

<sup>18</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 9-10, 33.

<sup>19</sup> G. Assereto, «*Per la comune salvezza dal morbo contagioso*», cit., p. 18; W.G. Naphy and A. Spicer, *La peste in Europa*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2006, pp. 74-81; C.M. Cipolla, *Origini e sviluppo degli uffici di sanità in Italia*, in *Id.*, *Le tre rivoluzioni e altri saggi di storia economica e sociale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1989, pp. 243-262.

Genoese diplomats were always particularly careful to signal plague warnings<sup>20</sup>. For the Genoese, the epidemic that eventually broke out in 1656-57 had involved a continued state of alert over at least a decade: an exceptional length of time marked by constant fears the wave would cross the borders of their State from the Iberian peninsula and Spanish dominions on account of ongoing trade relations that remained quite strong until at least the early 1650s<sup>21</sup>. But these letters also raise several questions: Giustiniani's mortality and morbidity figures are significantly lower than those provided not only by recent studies but some of his contemporaries, too, such as Father Antero Maria Micone, an Augustinian who was prominent among the clergymen who provided assistance to the sick, and who personally contracted the plague<sup>22</sup>.

It is easy to understand why someone in Giustiniani's position would want to minimise the seriousness of the epidemic for as long as possible, which is to say until the contagion reached its peak, and go back to doing so as soon as he thought the worst was over. His eagerness to reassure and (almost) unshakeable optimism would seem to have been dictated, first and foremost, by the nature of his service to the Courts of Paris and Turin, which involved being able to send and receive large quantities of parcels and letters, safely and quickly. At the same

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<sup>20</sup> A typical feature of mercantile civilisations, and especially major port cities, Archivio di Stato di Genova (henceforth ASGe), Archivio segreto (henceforth AS), 2328, Lettere Ministri (henceforth LM), Napoli (henceforth N), Giovanni Francesco Pallavicino and Nicolò Invrea to the Government; ASGe, AS, 2703, Lettere Consoli, Turchia, Ottavio Doria to the Government, Letters from December 12, May 9 and July 1667. See also J. Petitjean, *Gênes et le bon gouvernement de l'information (1665-1670)*, in S. Marzagalli ed., *Les Consuls en Méditerranée, agents d'information XVIe-XXe siècle*, Classiques Garnier, Paris 2015, pp. 215-232; A. Ceccarelli, *Plague and Politics in Genoa (1528-1664)*, in «Journal of Early Modern Studies» - JEMS, vol. 11, 2022; P. Preto, *Peste e società a Venezia*, Neri Pozza Editore, Vicenza 1978; R.J. Palmer, *L'azione della Repubblica di Venezia nel controllo della Peste*, in *Venezia e la peste, 1348-1797*, Marsilio, Venezia 1979, pp. 103-110; D. Pedemonte, *La "pubblica salute" dello Stato genovese*, cit., p. 99; R. Salvemini, «A tutela della salute e del commercio nel Mediterraneo: la sanità marittima nel Mezzogiorno preunitario», in Id. ed., *Istituzioni e traffici nel Mediterraneo tra età antica e crescita moderna*, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Napoli 2009, pp. 259-298.

<sup>21</sup> Political and diplomatic relations between Genoa and Spain came to an abrupt halt during the crisis of 1654, T.A. Kirk, *La crisi del 1654 come indicatore del nuovo equilibrio mediterraneo*, in M. Herrero Sánchez, Y.R. Ben Yessef Garfia, C. Bitossi and D. Puncuh eds., *Génova y la Monarquía Hispánica, (1528-1713)*, «Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria», LI, 1, 2011, pp. 527-538; C. Bitossi, *Un oligarca antispagnolo del Seicento: Giambattista Raggio*, in *Studi e Documenti di Storia Ligure. In onore di Don Luigi Alfonso per il suo 85° genetliaco*, in «Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria», n.s., XXXVI, 2, 1996, pp. 271-303; M. Herrero Sánchez, *La quiebra del sistema hispano-genovés (1627-1700)*, in «Hispania», 65, 219, 2005, pp. 115-151. See also G. Puggioni, *Peste in Sardegna*, cit., pp. 659-669.

<sup>22</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit. Cf. C.M. Cipolla, *Il pestifero e contagioso morbo*, cit., p. 22. See also D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 313-435.

time, there would have been a concern for the public interest in seeking to reduce the financial damage the city was suffering on account of the plague. And, finally, the impression sometimes surfaces that he also, and possibly above all, felt the need to reassure himself.

The letters are also notable for the light they shed on the life of Giustiniani himself; on account of his familiarity with his recipients (particularly the Duchess of Savoy), he felt free to make rather frequent references to himself, recounting his movements, for instance, but also, and more surprisingly, his spells of gout. Like most members of the patriciate, he fled Genoa in the early days of the epidemic and took refuge *in villa* with his family, secretaries, and servants<sup>23</sup>. From this self-confinement at Santa Margherita Ligure, on the Riviera di Levante (about 35 kilometres from Genoa), he continued to report on events in his city, where Giacomo Ottavio Giustiniani and other members of his family had remained and were doing their best to contain the epidemic<sup>24</sup>; the main residence of the latter was also at Genoa, and it too was devastated by the plague.

Giustiniani's testimony is of great interest to us, for its tone as well as its subject matter. In a vivid and urgent style, that is, it contributes new elements to the analysis of the immediate political, economic, and social consequences of the great plague.

### 1. Progress of the epidemic and its immediate consequences

Although Genoa had lived «in great fear of the contagious disease»<sup>25</sup>, *i.e.* under constant alert since at least the plague of Valencia (which in 1647 had caused 16,000 victims), it wasn't until the autumn of 1655 that there was real cause to fear the disease might actually spread to Liguria (either via Naples/Milan, or via Cagliari/Alghero)<sup>26</sup>. At the end of May 1656, the Kingdom of Naples had been reached by the epidemic and was cordoned off by the other States, starting with those ruled by pope Alexander VII. From Naples, however, the epidemic still reached the Papal ports of Nettuno and Civitavecchia, south and north of Rome, respectively, and finally Rome itself. Agostino Pinelli, representing the Genoese government at the Papal court, first reported a suspected case of plague on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1656, in a tavern in the Trastevere district<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 336-337, 402.

<sup>24</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 317-318, 347.

<sup>27</sup> ASGe, AS, 2365, LM, Roma (henceforth R), Agostino Pinelli to the Government, June 10, 1656; Cfr. *Ibid.*, Magistrato della Sanità, filza 74, Litterarum extra dominij, Agostino Pinelli, Letters from June 10 and 24, 1656; A. Ceccarelli, *Rome, 1656-57. The plague recounted by Genoese diplomacy*, in «EuroStudium3w», 2021, 2, pp. 27-76; D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 319, 348-352.



From the Genoese perspective, the epidemic truly appeared a menacing wave; month by month they saw it mount and come closer, and the illusory hope that it would never break upon their city vanished in mid-June 1656, when it became finally apparent that plague had entered their *home*<sup>28</sup>. Just like in Naples and Rome, the disease first manifested itself in the poorest and most populous districts, where sanitary restrictions were hardest to enforce and where the «inhabitants weighed the possibility of plague against the immediate, concrete, and no less frightening certainty of starvation»<sup>29</sup>.

The first foci appear to have developed simultaneously in an urbanised area between the Foce and Sturla, to the east of the city:

some reported sailors from Sardinia had landed on these very beaches. They had been quarantined, but, in violation of prohibitions, had sold infected goods which certain merchants then brought inland. Others held the disease had developed in the same *lazaretto* to which numerous Genoese refugees had flocked and found asylum after leaving Naples precisely to flee the plague<sup>30</sup>.

«We are afflicted by a great fear of the plague», wrote Sister Maria Francesca Raggi on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1656, adding that «two or three cases» were reported, as far as she was aware, «in the Val Bisagno and the Sturla district». As soon as 23<sup>rd</sup> July she was writing of a city besieged by plague and fear; reaching Milan, Piedmont and Parma was already impossible, and soon «we will be isolated on all sides», she wrote<sup>31</sup>.

On 13<sup>th</sup> September, Giovanni Francesco Pallavicino, a Genoese agent in Palermo, reported on a ban ordered by the viceroy on anyone coming from Liguria. The Sicilian health committee understood that «in Sturla and other nearby places and in the Boroughs of the City of Genoa the contagious disease has taken hold, and it may be suspected it is already racing through other parts

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<sup>28</sup> F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 27; Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 25, 31.

<sup>29</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 319-320, 355, 372. Cf. G. Assereto, «Per la comune salvezza dal morbo contagioso», cit., pp. 68-71; C.M. Cipolla, *Contro un nemico invisibile. Epidemie e strutture sanitarie nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1985, p. 76; A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit., pp. 37 ff. The reaction of the population of the Roman district of Trastevere was more or less the same, as testified by the letters of the Republic's resident minister in Rome, A. Ceccarelli, *Rome, 1656-57*, cit., pp. 27-76.

<sup>30</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 320. Cf. F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 27; A. Costa, *La peste in Genova*, cit., pp. 345-346; Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 25-31.

<sup>31</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 350-352. Cf. J. Henderson, *Florence Under Siege*, cit.

of that State»<sup>32</sup>. Patently, «the disease» no longer hovered at the borders of the Republic and was now «within it»<sup>33</sup>. Nor could there be any further doubt, Cardinal Lorenzo Raggi wrote, that it was «real plague»<sup>34</sup>.

The abundant data on mortality and morbidity that we have for the period between October 1656 and the end of February 1657 has been translated by Danilo Presotto into eloquent graphs and tables, though it should be pointed out that mortality estimates have always been the most debated aspect of this epidemic<sup>35</sup>, and some scholars suggest the plague was less catastrophic than most contemporaries appear to have believed<sup>36</sup>. According to Presotto, mortality among the infected was initially at 60-70%, rising to 80% in November-December 1656, and reaching 90% during the summer of 1657. At the beginning of June 1657, in the city of Genoa alone (which was the epicentre of the contagion), about 3,000 deaths a week are estimated, rising to 7,500 at the end of the month, and falling back to about 3,000 in the second week of July. When we look at the demographics, victims mainly belonged to the poorer strata, for the sum of reasons that are evident in the history of every epidemic: the violation of restrictions (due to the impossibility of observing them), highly precarious sanitary conditions, and the difficulty in accessing medical care and obtaining food<sup>37</sup>.

An important clarification should be made concerning the reliability of the primary sources on which the studies we have are primarily based. Our main source are the bulletins issued by the Genoese Magistrato di Sanità, which were based on the data its commissioners gathered in the various districts of the city. These bulletins were then forwarded to the health authorities of neighbouring states, who, «fearful of not being adequately informed», sent their own trusted agents to the borders to seek to find informants from within the Genoese

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<sup>32</sup> ASGe, AS, 2328, LM, N, Giovanni Francesco Pallavicino to the Government, Palermo, September 13, 1656. Cf. V. Vitale, *Diplomatici e consoli*, cit., p. 101; D. Palermo, *La suprema deputazione generale di salute pubblica del Regno di Sicilia dall'emergenza alla stabilità*, in «Storia urbana», 147, 2015, pp. 115-138.

<sup>33</sup> ASGe, AS, 2328, LM, N, Giovanni Francesco Pallavicino to the Government, Palermo, September 18, 1656.

<sup>34</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 356.

<sup>35</sup> A. Costa, *La peste in Genova*, cit., p. 370; D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 313-435.

<sup>36</sup> Giuseppe Felloni and Giulio Giacchero, notably, estimate just under 40,000 deaths during this plague wave, D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 315, 329-333. Cf. G. Giacchero, *Storia economica del settecento genovese*, Apuania, Genova 1951, pp. 26-28; G. Felloni, *Per la storia della popolazione di Genova nei secoli XVI e XVII*, in «Archivio Storico Italiano», CX, 1952, pp. 239-340 (pp. 236-254).

<sup>37</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 330-333, 336-337, 398. Cf. C.M. Cipolla, *Contro un nemico invisibile*, cit., pp. 31 ff.; J.N. Biraben, *Les hommes face a la peste*, La Haye, Paris 1976.

provinces. This is why gaps in the records of the Genoese health authorities can be usefully supplemented by

private documents issued by families which, due to their position [...] in the affairs or magistracies of the Republic, could be informed of and follow the work of the *Magistrato di Sanità* on a day-to-day basis<sup>38</sup>.

A further opportunity to compare and verify data is provided by documents held at the archives of neighbouring states, typically the issue of intelligence-gathering campaigns and routine activities<sup>39</sup>. One such source is the collection of letters Giannettino Giustiniani wrote to the Savoy Court of Turin: for years, Giustiniani informed the Savoy government about what went on within his own Genoese Republic, detailing the movement of ships and armies, the influx of goods, weapons, and cash, the transit of eminent personalities and whatever political indiscretions he could lay hold of. During the plague, he was asked to report first and foremost on the progress of the contagion and its political, economic, and social fallout. Being perfectly aware of the delicacy of his role and of the way his words would affect the balance of political and commercial relations, he weighed them most carefully, usually downplaying the seriousness of events.

His first letter about the plague was written on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1657 and the last one of any significance in October 1658. Sometimes he would produce two or three letters a week (which might bear the same date, namely the actual postage date of the envelope containing them); at other times there would only be one letter a week, and there are also gaps spanning several weeks. These surviving letters make it possible, however, to document some eleven months of the full seventeen-month period that so crucially impacted on Genoa and the Genoese (while the rest of Italy, meanwhile, was also in a state of suspense). Within the period documented in the letters, most poignantly, we have details of the phase that ran from March to May 1657, when the Genoese (who had already suffered a toll of 40,000 deaths, in all probability) were for the second time illuded that the worst was over, that the cold of winter had swept away the contagion (the summer season being particularly, and rightly, feared for favouring the

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<sup>38</sup> Much of the documentation produced by the health magistracies was often «lost, because it was either destroyed or abandoned», *Ibid.*, pp. 321-322. See also, D. Pedemonte, *La "pubblica salute" dello Stato genovese: il Magistrato di Sanità della Repubblica come strumento di governo delle informazioni, controllo del territorio e politica economica*, in P. Calcagno and D. Palermo, *La quotidiana emergenza: i molteplici impieghi delle istituzioni sanitarie nel Mediterraneo moderno*, New Digital Press, Palermo 2017, pp. 99-120.

<sup>39</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 322.

spread of plague)<sup>40</sup>. In actual fact, the most acute phase of the epidemic was just about to occur.

Before we analyse the letters in detail, starting with Giustiniani's figures on mortality and morbidity, it is worth pointing out that the total lack of letters relating to the year 1656 cannot be solely attributed to the epidemic situation determining the blockage of postal flows between Genoa and Turin. There is, to the contrary, plain evidence that Giustiniani corresponded with numerous courts throughout all of 1656<sup>41</sup>; as for his correspondence with the Court of Turin specifically, we still have letters written by him at the very peak of the contagion (in the summer 1657) when communication had become, theoretically, impossible. Presotto's work, besides, is largely based on collections of letters covering the entire two-year period (1656-57). We may be almost certain that the gap in this collection for the year 1656 is the result of mere displacement or loss of the documents: a regrettable but understandably common phenomenon in all epidemic/post-epidemic phases. For similar reasons, large numbers of Giustiniani's letters to the Court of Turin are truncated and in a poor state of preservation. There is a sweeping sense of *disorder* about this body of correspondence that seems to extend from its subject matter to the materials in the collection itself<sup>42</sup>.

On 13<sup>th</sup> January 1657, Giustiniani wrote to Christine of Savoy that the contagion had «disordered all things, and brought a thousand problems» bearing heavily on his own existence<sup>43</sup>. The word echoes again, twelve days later, in the description made by Filippo Spinola, Genoese Postmaster general, to Flavio Chigi, the pope's nephew, of the overwhelming «disorder» caused by the epidemic; even the postal service he ran needed rebuilding from scratch, as none of his couriers had survived<sup>44</sup>. «All was confusion and disorder»<sup>45</sup>, wrote Father Antero, one of the most valuable witnesses of this pestilence, as Giustiniani, in a

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 325, 329. «We are in excellent health here», wrote Cardinal Lorenzo Raggi from his exile in Novi Ligure, «in this very cold and snowy air, I do not think the plague cares much to reach'. And in another of his letters (January 1657) he commented: 'the disease in Genoa has eased off a lot with the snow», *Ibid.*, pp. 374, 378. See also F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 31; Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 33; C.M. Cipolla, *Il pestifero e contagioso morbo*, cit., p. 25; Id., *Contro un nemico invisibile*, cit., p. 33; Cohn S. K., *Cultures of plague. medical thinking at the end of the Renaissance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010.

<sup>41</sup> B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 3a.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. ASGe, AS, 2328, LM, N, Nicolò Invrea to the Government, Letters from September 1656 to July 1658; B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 3c, 3d; P. Sorcinelli, *Viaggio nella storia sociale*, cit., pp. 41-53.

<sup>43</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, January 13, 1657.

<sup>44</sup> Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (henceforth AAV), Segreteria di Stato (henceforth SS), Particolari (henceforth P), vol. 36, fol. 17r., Filippo Spinola to Flavio Chigi, Genova, January 25, 1657.

<sup>45</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 16.

letter to the Marquis of San Tommaso from the beginning of 1658, lamented: «how many letters have been lost in this adversity that is the plague [...], it is impossible to estimate; I hope that good order will soon return»<sup>46</sup>.

To continue communicating with the Courts of Turin and Paris, as well as with his vast network of Italian informers (in Milan, Venice, Mantua, Modena, Florence, Rome, and beyond), Giustiniani had to resort to *unconventional* means: special couriers and trusted agents, whom he often sent on long, impervious journeys by land and sea. In this way, he was able to provide sufficient updates on the progress of the contagion, which «persisted in a state of moderate seriousness», he wrote to the Duchess of Savoy on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1657 («a fact for which we live in anguish, and which does not facilitate relations with neighbouring states»)<sup>47</sup>.

On the same date Giustiniani posted another letter, giving further details on the situation, together with some political remarks. His hopes that the epidemic would soon be extinguished grew day by day, as the plague only lasted in Genoa while the rest of the State, including the more isolated small villages and *villas*, was now «in health» and had resumed *free trade*. Mortality and morbidity in Genoa itself, he assured, were not alarming; that is, they remained stationary, with two or three deaths per day and as many new cases of infection. The «root» of the disease, however, had not been «eradicated», so one could not exclude the plague «could spread again, causing more damage». The Spaniards, «always studying ways to do us harm», he further commented, «not being at all pleased with the improvement of health conditions and the resumption of trade flows, have once again issued proclamations in Milan prohibiting trade with Genoa». On the other hand, the governor of Milan had ordered the removal of the fencing system (*rastelli*) installed at Serravalle in the early days of the contagion<sup>48</sup>. In other words, the Genoese could once again trade in provisions and everyday wares with Lombardy. According to Giustiniani, this proved the real aim of the Spaniards was to prevent trade between Genoa and Germany (which necessarily had to pass through the State of Milan) from starting again. Madrid and its ministers used the fear of contagion as a mere pretext, Giustiniani argued, on consideration of the fact that, on the other hand, trade was again

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<sup>46</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, January 1, 1658.

<sup>47</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, January 20a, 1657.

<sup>48</sup> On the barriers called *rastelli* and used to cordon off given areas in times of plague, A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit., p. 25; R. Benedetti, *La via della peste dalla Terra di Nettuno a Roma (1656)*, in «Roma moderna e contemporanea», XIV, 1-3, 2006, p. 23; D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 353.

regular between the Spanish port of Finale Ligure (on the Riviera di Ponente) and Livorno, the French port of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany<sup>49</sup>.

For several more weeks Giustiniani remained cautiously optimistic, or so tried. On 26<sup>th</sup> January, for example, he informed the Duchess of Savoy that 'the contagion was coming to an end'. Physicians had all assured him that the disease «had changed species», with the plague turning to «malignant fevers». Even the friar known as John of Paris (Giovanni da Parigi), who had a reputation as healer and in the previous months had performed «miracles of great value», said he wanted to return to his own convent, taking advantage of Lent, as there no longer was the «slightest shadow of contagious infection». The friar had also arranged for some 300 lazaretto patients (seen to have fully recovered) to be sent to the convalescent hospital<sup>50</sup>.

On 9<sup>th</sup> February, Giustiniani wrote that the «public» and «private calamities» of the Genoese appeared to be coming to an end; that the contagion was in «its last decline» and likely to vanish completely before Easter<sup>51</sup>. On 17<sup>th</sup> February, he expressed himself more precisely: mortality had stabilised at two or three deaths a day, with sometimes no suspect deaths for several days<sup>52</sup>. In a further letter bearing the same date, he opined the contagion would have already ended, had it not been for the excessive humidity caused by the Sirocco wind, which had blown impetuously for days<sup>53</sup>. The Sirocco was «ever an unhealthy wind» in case of pestilence, as was the southerly Austro, commented another witness to this epidemic, Nicolò Spinola (writing to his brother Ambrogio, a merchant in Antwerp). To wipe out the contagion, Cardinal Raggi instead pointed out, a cold, dry Tramontane was needed<sup>54</sup>. At any rate, Giustiniani wrote, there were hopes that at least short-range trade between Genoa and the two Riviervas would resume within a few days<sup>55</sup> (Nicolò Spinola expressed the same the following day)<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, January 20b, 1657.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, January 26, 1657.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 9, 1657.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 17a, 1657.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 17b, 1657.

<sup>54</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 364, 371, 376, 380, 383. Cf. Cohn S. K., *Cultures of plague*, cit. On Nicolò, son of Franco Spinola, and his letters, D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 324 ff.

<sup>55</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 17b, 1657. On the notional link between plague and air quality, Biblioteca Universitaria di Genova (henceforth BUG), ms. B.VIII.28, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico*, entry *Peste*; W. Rossi, *Morbo, contagio, profilassi*, cit., p. 393; C. M. Cipolla, *Miasmi e umori*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1989; R. Sansa, *L'odore del contagio. Ambiente urbano e prevenzione delle epidemie nella prima età moderna*, in «Medicina e storia», 3, 2002, pp. 83-108. Cf. A. Ceccarelli, *Plague and Politics*, cit.

<sup>56</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 382.

Finally, in March 1657 came from several quarters the announcement that the plague was over: Giustiniani wrote that «the shadow of contagion», following a long period of steady decline, had «completely vanished»; and, as «proof of this common conviction», gave the absence of any reports of suspect deaths over several days. The Senate then ordered the *rastelli* to be removed so that trade could resume within the state.<sup>57</sup> On 2<sup>nd</sup> March, Cardinal Raggi too commented on the decline of contagion in Genoa (while still residing at his prudential retreat) but did specify that «new cases continue in good numbers»; to which his niece Maria Francesca replied two days later, on 4<sup>th</sup> March, from Genoa that the Genoese were again «in great anguish because the number of new cases has grown so much»<sup>58</sup>.

Giustiniani persisted in thinking differently, and on 16<sup>th</sup> March was even more trenchant: «the illness, by the grace of God, has ceased completely», he assured the Duchess of Savoy, «and [...] we enjoy full health, trading freely within the State, and hoping soon to have the same opportunity with all others»<sup>59</sup>. Yet, only two days later, Nicolò Spinola wrote that 42 deaths had been recorded in the city and in the *lazaretto* della Consolazione alone, that week, showing that the contagion was again on the rise<sup>60</sup>.

Finally, in April, Giustiniani too had to reassess: «In telling you about the contagion in Genoa,» he wrote to the Duchess of Savoy on April 6<sup>th</sup>, «I must sincerely acknowledge that the City cannot be said to be free from the disease, with sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes three, sometimes four new cases a day, while some days go by without deaths from plague»<sup>61</sup>. On 8<sup>th</sup> April, Nicolò Spinola gave a far greater figure than Giustiniani's, writing that 41 deaths had occurred that same week (again, speaking only of the city and the *lazaretto* della Consolazione)<sup>62</sup>.

Uncertainty, bewilderment, and anguish were at the root of disagreements among physicians too, with Giustiniani observing how «among themselves they are discordant»<sup>63</sup> as some believed recent cases to be «relics of contagion» while others argued «the Disease had changed species». His own stubborn optimism (which is to say his desperate need to convince the Turin Court), briefly glimmers at the close of this letter: along the two Rivas, the state of health was again «perfect»; and in the city of Genoa trade remained free, as «when the plague was

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<sup>57</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 1657.

<sup>58</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 383.

<sup>59</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 16, 1657.

<sup>60</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 384.

<sup>61</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 6, 1657.

<sup>62</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 387.

<sup>63</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 6, 1657. Cf. A. Pastore, *Crime and justice in times of plague*, cit., p. 175.

not there». One could conclude, he opined, both medical schools were in a certain sense right: what remained were *relics* of the contagion, of a disease that had not yet wholly disappeared but was no longer «of a malignant species». Proof be it that, in such a «close-set» city, where a population of «over one hundred and twenty thousand souls» lived densely packed together, no more than «three or four people a day were dying»<sup>64</sup>. For all Giustiniani's attempts at mitigation, he had finally disclosed the truth of the matter: namely that mortality rates had risen again in Genoa in recent weeks. The «horrendous massacre»<sup>65</sup> was just about to take place.

«Signor padre carissimo, we are in a very bad state, the plague is on the increase, spreading among the burghers and nobles», and had reached the convents too, reported Sister Maria Francesca Raggi, on 12<sup>th</sup> May, adding that she could feel «death was very close». On 18<sup>th</sup> May, on account of the 118 new deaths there had been, Nicolò Spinola announced that he was taking refuge in the Riviera di Levante<sup>66</sup>. As for Giustiniani, we have no letters from May 1657 to help us monitor the contagion, whereas his letters from following months have fortunately survived and are almost wholly devoted to the plague. It could hardly have been otherwise, since Giustiniani himself was forced to define what took place between June and July 1657 as *the cruellest massacre*, with over 36,000 victims (as estimated by Danilo Presotto) and possibly as many as 40,000 (according to Maria Francesca Raggi and other witnesses)<sup>67</sup>. To assess the scale of this, let us consider that over the *entire* course of the epidemic between 60,000 (F. Casoni) and 80,000 (F.M. Accinelli) victims were recorded in Genoa (but 40,000-55,000 according to the lowest estimates)<sup>68</sup> out of a population that Giustiniani reported as amounting to 120,000 inhabitants (though, quite notably, not even the latter estimate tallies with the «73,170 inhabitants counted on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1656», at the start of the contagion)<sup>69</sup>.

It is at this stage that we have the most harrowing series of letters, with Giustiniani finally unable to minimise the anguish and dismay he felt. «I regret that I am not able to give Your Royal Highness good news about the health of

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<sup>64</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 6, 1657.

<sup>65</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 2.

<sup>66</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 389-391, 404.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 326-327, 330, 334, 405-406.

<sup>68</sup> The number of deaths in this epidemic has always been the matter of greatest contention among historians, *Ibid.*, p. 335; M. Lagomarsino, *Per i pubblici poteri*, cit., p. 426.

<sup>69</sup> Clergyman Giovanni Francesco Ravara gave the closest figures to those of Giustiniani, reporting that Genoa had had 100,000/123,00 inhabitants before the contagion and that the surviving population was of 9,000 women and 5,000 men in August 1657, D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 315, 336, 410, 412. Cf. F.M. Accinelli, *Compendio delle storie di Genova dalla sua fondazione sino all'anno 1750*, [Giovanni Battista Frediani], Lipsia [Massa] 1750, vol. 1, p. 211.



Genoa», he wrote to the Duchess of Savoy on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1657, «for the contagion has continued to gather strength and in the past week, between inside and outside [the city walls] the dead numbered 312, though all were plebeians of the lowest». Not that the Genoese could therefore live «without the fear that [the plague] might spread even to the higher [social] orders». The government had taken all possible measures to stem the disease, Giustiniani assured, and hoped to have it soon «repressed». The following weeks would be decisive<sup>70</sup>.

Maria Francesca Raggi's account on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, the following day, was much starker: plague was spreading uncontrollably, especially in the Pre' district where she lived. «I see no one and have no news of anyone», she added, but the little that had filtered through the walls of the convent was enough to inspire «great horror»: the deaths were innumerable and the poverty «unspeakable, the people dying in the streets of sheer hunger, because the exercise of all trades has been suspended, so those plebs who lived by their work are wholly destitute [of food] and in misery»<sup>71</sup>. Giustiniani similarly informed the Duchess of Savoy on 7<sup>th</sup> June that the Genoese were «more and more afflicted, as one hundred people a day continue to die between the City and the Lazaretti, and there are more than a hundred plague infections every day». And while «the Disease» had not yet «penetrated among the good people» (the upper classes), the fear of it was so great the government had been induced to tighten restrictions even further: «Please it God that they be of benefit', he concluded, 'and deliver us from so horrible a scourge»<sup>72</sup>.

In assessing Giustiniani as an informer, we have to consider that the latest accounts from the city would only reach him at his country residence (a few dozen kilometres from Genoa) with some day's delay, at a time in which the disease spreading at an unaccountable rate. Thus, the figure of one hundred deaths per day Giustiniani gave on 7<sup>th</sup> June is in fact consistent with Presotto's data for the previous week (straddling May and June 1657), with deaths then rising to more than 200 per day over the first week of June, still according to Presotto<sup>73</sup>. Similarly, writing on 15<sup>th</sup> June, Giustiniani reported 150-200 deaths per day for the second week of the month, though the more probable figure is 350-400 per day. Nonetheless, he still qualified it as a «massacre», though one that still mainly affected the poor («very rare cases occurring among People of mediocre and honest condition»); and, while the Genoese experienced «great» fear, their

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<sup>70</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June 1, 1657.

<sup>71</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 394.

<sup>72</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June 7, 1657.

<sup>73</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 330.

confidence in divine intercession and in the efficiency of the Republic's magistracies was «greatest»<sup>74</sup>.

The divergence between what Giustiniani reports and the more reliable estimates we have is minimal in the case of his letter from 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1657, which covers the period 15<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> of that same month. During that week, that is, the daily mortality rate roughly remained at 350-400, and Giustiniani too informed the Duchess of Savoy that the «afflictions» of Genoa «had grown in the highest degree», with more than 300 deaths daily and even more numerous new infections<sup>75</sup>. It is striking, on the other hand, that although Maria Francesca Raggi was still a recluse in the monastery of Santa Brigida, saw nothing, and had no figures to give, her letters from the same period communicate the horror experienced by the Genoese far more effectively. She speaks of overcrowded *lazarettos*, of healthy and sick people wandering the streets together in search of sustenance, of huge piles of corpses everywhere, with pigs grazing among them, and of as many corpses left unburied in houses. In a matter of hours, the plague had wiped out entire families and all of the caretakers at her convent were also dead. «It's a miracle that I can still write», she wrote to her father on 15<sup>th</sup> June, realizing that each letter could be her last<sup>76</sup>.

For all of Giustiniani's faults as a chronicler, his letter of 7<sup>th</sup> July 1657 is nonetheless extremely valuable to us, as it documents the most horrifying spell of the great plague. In the fateful two weeks between 23<sup>rd</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup> July 1657, it is thought the mortality rate exceeded 1,000 deaths per day (1,200 according to Maria Francesca Raggi and other witnesses; 1,500 according to Father Antero), thus peaking at 7,000-7,500 deaths per week (Presotto) or even 10,000 (Father Antero)<sup>77</sup>. Giustiniani again has much lower figures, reporting 4,000-5,000 deaths for each seven days: «I fear [...] that the blessed God has wished to punish the excessive condescension of these Our Lords [in the Genoese government]», he wrote, «as there is no doubt that lack of rigour on many occasions becomes cruelty, therefore I am very sorry to have to communicate to Your Royal Highness that the contagion has reduced the City of Genoa to a worse state than Naples, with four and even five thousand people dying a week, without distinction of class». The disease was now also scourging «the Merchants and Nobles, in great numbers, not even sparing the members of the Senatorial Order,

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<sup>74</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June 15, 1657. Cf. D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 330.

<sup>75</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June 22, 1657. Cf. D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 330.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 396 ff.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 330-333, 399-401; F. Casoni, *Successes of Contagion*, cit., p. 36.

among whom the President of the Magistrature of Health has died, while two or three other Senators [...] are in danger of dying»<sup>78</sup>.

Senator Giovanni Battista Raggi had also died while holding perhaps the most onerous office, that of superintendent of the city's expurgation of corpses. «If he had followed my advice», commented his brother, Cardinal Lorenzo, «he would not have fallen. Instead, he was willing to take on the very responsibility that twenty of the most important commissioners had declined to take». Giovanni Battista had died with tears in his eyes, commented his niece, Sister Maria Francesca, «seeing himself alone and abandoned by everyone»<sup>79</sup>.

On 20<sup>th</sup> July, Maria Francesca sent another very bleak letter:

the city is ruining and going to destruction, Nobles are dying without number, the entire Doge's palace is infected, the Archbishop's palace too, the Senators are dying, almost all First ministers are dead, as well as the Second [deputies] and Third [deputies of the deputies], there is no longer any rule, people are starving without hope of relief<sup>80</sup>.

Giustiniani's next report could only follow, we understand, at an exceptionally long interval, on 8<sup>th</sup> August. Without denying the tragedy, he endeavoured, once again, to show optimism. In Genoa, he wrote, there were only «ten thousand people» left, many of whom were convalescing or had already recovered from the plague. This was the main reason why «things [...] were much better». The city had been «purged, perfumed» and «the healthy» had been separated «from the infected». Mortality was again most low, at «two or three [deaths] a day». Nor was morbidity any longer frightening, «as most of the infected were healing»<sup>81</sup>.

Once again, Giustiniani's figures do not tally with Presotto's, who has calculated that in that first week of August the mortality rate was still significant, albeit in sharp decline, and *in the range of 30-140 deaths per day*<sup>82</sup>. On the other hand, Giustiniani's data on the overall population, with about 10,000 survivors

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<sup>78</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, July 7, 1657. Filippo Casoni spoke of eleven victims, among the Senators and Procurators (Felice Spinola, Antonio Maria Soprani, Gio. Luca Chiavari, Giacomo Negrone, Gio. Battista Raggi, Nicolò Scaglia, Giacomo De Franchi, Nicolò Spinola, Tommaso Franzone, Orazio De Franceschi e Gio. Battista Lercari), F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 41.

<sup>79</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 403, 407. See also Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 69; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., pp. 42, 73; P. Boccardo, *Epidemie nell'arte in Italia*, cit.; S. Bettinelli, *Opere dell'abate Saverio Bettinelli*, Zatta, In Venezia 1781, vol. 5, p. 278; G. Gualdo Priorato, *Scena d'huomini illustri*, cit. See also R. Sansa, *Strategie di prevenzione a confronto: l'igiene urbana durante la peste romana del 1656-1657*, in «Roma moderna e contemporanea», XIV, 1-3, 2006, pp. 93-109.

<sup>80</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 405.

<sup>81</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, August 8, 1657.

<sup>82</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 330.

(though he would then give 14,000 in April 1658)<sup>83</sup> more or less aligns with Maria Francesca Raggi's figure of 10,000-12,000 and Nicolò Spinola's 12,000<sup>84</sup>. On the other hand, Father Antero spoke of only a few thousand *residents* in Genoa at the height of the plague<sup>85</sup>. Presotto has offered an estimate of 18,000 survivors, explaining what makes the calculation extremely complex: the «totals reported by various sources, which range between 12,000 and 16,000 people, [...] do not take into account the Genoese, who [...] by fleeing the city, had saved their lives», though Maria Francesca Raggi, for her own part, had been particularly careful to point out the exponential increase of contagion «among the villas» of the wealthy as of July 1657<sup>86</sup>. In the face of it all, at any rate, clergyman Giovanni Francesco Ravera, who on 20<sup>th</sup> August estimated 14,000 survivors, commented «we will never see Genoa again [even if] we lived 100 years»<sup>87</sup>.

Giustiniani again wrote to the Duchess of Savoy in a letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> October. For two days «the City of Genoa [...] had put itself under quarantine», he wrote, «and it was hoped this measure would bring a happy outcome» with the «total liberation from the Disease», which however «was hardly felt any longer»<sup>88</sup>. Twelve days later (on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1657), he assured that by then «days would pass without anyone dying» and the only infirm to be seen in the city were «those wounded by the Disease» (afflicted by «gangrene»), who «had not methodically treated themselves». Some among the latter «were still dying, but their disease was no longer infectious [...], and the certainty of total liberation [from the disease] was now in sight». Again, this is at variance with Presotto's estimates of a toll of 4-5 deaths per day over the week of 15<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> October<sup>89</sup>; Giustiniani, further, concluded by shifting the subject to Tortona and Voghera, on the borders between the State of Milan and the Savoy Duchy, where news had it that the plague had arrived. «May it please God that it does not spread to Lombardy», he wrote at the very close of the letter, evidently seeking to shift elsewhere the attention of Christine of Savoy, as far away from Genoa as possible<sup>90</sup>.

Giustiniani's remaining letters, written between December 1657 and October 1658, document the aftermath of the great plague, a further nine months clouded by ominous shadows. He admitted he feared a new recrudescence of the contagion, particularly along the two Rivas, and even more so the way the

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<sup>83</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April (?), 1658.

<sup>84</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 409, 413.

<sup>85</sup> F. Casoni Filippo, *Successes of Contagion*, cit., p. 38.

<sup>86</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 336, 414.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>88</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, October 12, 1657.

<sup>89</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 330.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, October 24, 1657.

Spanish could make instrumental use of by. On 29<sup>th</sup> December 1657, he wrote to Christine of Savoy that with the «last, new moon» the situation had further improved. Hopes had «doubled» as the Rivieras had remained «intact and very healthy». The curve of contagion had, in short, «declined incredibly» and there were hopes there could soon be a return to normality if the plague did not *recur* («the weather not being cold»)<sup>91</sup>. A few days later, he triumphantly announced that Genoa had been declared «clean and free of all suspicion», that the special powers conferred on certain magistracies in the emergency («the authority previously assigned to a few people») had been revoked, and that all laws to this effect had been repealed<sup>92</sup>.

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 1658, Giustiniani gave his report of the magnificent ceremony for the investiture of Doge Giulio Sauli (1656-58), who had been elected on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1656 and could only be crowned on Epiphany 1658 (due to the epidemic)<sup>93</sup>. Giustiniani reported seeing at the Doge's palace such an exceptional «concourse of Nobility, of Dames, and of citizens» that no difference was noticeable «compared to three years ago». No one in Genoa had the «slightest doubt» about it: the city was restored to *perfect* health<sup>94</sup>, indeed better than in any other «city in Europe [...], without fear of relapse»<sup>95</sup>. The entire territory and all of the villages «between the Piedi dei Monti and the Genoa province», he specified a month later, were *purged* of the disease. The only exception were «Chiavari and its surroundings», in the Riviera di Levante, where some outbreaks persisted. On the other hand, he *swore*, Chiavari was «guarded by a thousand sentries»<sup>96</sup>. In short, it was «the fourth month that public health issues» no longer caused any concern<sup>97</sup>.

But Chiavari, where the first case of plague had been recorded on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1656, as Cardinal Raggi wrote, and countless others occurred during 1657, as Nicolò Spinola further wrote, again had to be quarantined on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1658 (as Giustiniani himself admitted shortly afterwards)<sup>98</sup>. Nonetheless, the epidemic was indeed close to an end; if not quite «excellent health» throughout

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, December 29, 1657.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 1, 1658. Cf. *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, January 1, 1658.

<sup>93</sup> ASGe, AS, 476, Cerimoniarum, libro III, fols. 245-246; F. Casoni, *Annali della Repubblica di Genova del secolo decimo settimo*, Nella Stamperia Casamara, In Genova 1800, vol. 6, p. 416; D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 369.

<sup>94</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 12, 1658.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 17, 1658.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, February 6, 1658.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 7, 1658.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 28, 1658. See also D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 364, 396 ff.

the Republic<sup>99</sup>, at least the hope that the last outbreaks would be extinguished before the summer had returned.

According to Giustiniani, the last known cases of plague in the city of Genoa occurred during the second week of April 1658. In one instance, there appear to have been «two or three deaths from malignant fever, with petechiae»<sup>100</sup> within the household of an esteemed physician, Canevari<sup>101</sup>, who was himself locked up in the *lazaretto* for transgressing the «order of the Magistrato di Sanità». The other report concerned the household of another worthy citizen, Giulio Centurione, who, for his own part, had been on the front line in the fight against the epidemic<sup>102</sup> alongside his relative Giovanni Battista<sup>103</sup>; this time, a woman of the household was «found with a mobile gland in her thigh»<sup>104</sup>. These diverse symptoms called for a new consultation of physicians, which failed, however, to end in agreement: «the opinions of physicians and surgeons are manifold», Giustiniani wrote, «with some believing that [the latest outbreaks] derive from contagious infection and others [believing] the opposite, because two or three women of the lowest social ranks, with petechiae and malignant fever, have

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<sup>99</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 30, 1658.

<sup>100</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 20, 1658. The plague manifests itself externally in three ways, Father Antero specified, «either as black petechiae, or as *carboni* («coals»), or as bubos and parotids», Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 163;

<sup>101</sup> Canevari came from a prestigious Genoese medical family: on Demetrio Canevari (1559-1625), papal chief physician, see A. De Ferrari, *CANEVARI, Demetrio*, in DBI, vol. 18, 1975, *ad vocem*; L. Malfatto and E. Ferro eds., *Saperi e meraviglie. Tradizione e nuove scienze nella libreria del medico genovese Demetrio Canevari*, Sagep, Genova 2004; R. Savelli, *Catalogo del fondo Demetrio Canevari della Biblioteca Civica Berio di Genova*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1974; S. Brevaglieri, *Libri e circolazione della cultura medico-scientifica nella Roma del Seicento: la biblioteca di Johannes Faber*, in «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée moderne et contemporaines» - MEFRIM, 120, 2, 2009, pp. 1-20. Ottavio (who died in July 1644) and Domenico Canevari, were themselves prominent Genoese physicians, both becoming rectors of the College of Physicians (the former in 1640, the latter in 1663-64, 1671, 1676, etc.), L. Isnardi, *Storia della Università di Genova scritta da P. Lorenzo Isnardi*, Tipografia del Regio Istituto de' sordo-muti, Genova 1861, vol. 1, pp. 133-134; E. Bruzzone, *Storia e medicina nella storiografia della peste*, ECIG, Genova 1987.

<sup>102</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 20, 1658. See also Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 128.

<sup>103</sup> Giovanni Battista Centurione was general commissioner of the Magistrato di Sanità and superintendent of the new *lazaretto* in Santa Chiara (later to be made doge, 1658-60). The Santa Chiara *lazaretto*, 'the first to be opened and one of the last to be closed', housed, in particular, «the plague victims of the Bisagno, where the disease caused 12,000 victims», G. Nuti, *CENTURIONE, Giovanni Battista*, in DBI, vol. 23, 1979, *ad vocem*. See also D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 8, 351-353; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 76.

<sup>104</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 20, 1658.

recovered, and the glands can only be declared Buboes when, they insist [...]they are fixed, not mobile»<sup>105</sup>.

Whatever the case, rumours of a new outbreak of the plague in Genoa reached Turin that same spring of 1658, and Giustiniani doubted not these rumours were artfully fuelled by the Spaniards. Because of the financial damage already caused by the epidemic to the Republic, he now spoke out firmly: «I confess [...] to Your Illustrious Lordship», he wrote on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1658 to the Marquis of San Tommaso, «that I am greatly disgusted by the injustice and perfidy of those who have written in Turin that the disease is spreading again in Genoa» – a claim «more false than the sect of Calvin and Luther is false». The state of public health had been in order for seven months by then, and the Piedmont health authority could easily send its inspectors to Genoa to ascertain this: «Our Magistrato di Sanità is forbidden from concealing anything», he specified, «were it even the merest [...] shadow»<sup>106</sup>.

Giustiniani's concerns and sense of urgency were rooted in the broader crisis the Republic of Genoa was facing in its international relations. Before the plague, in 1654, there had been political and commercial tensions with the Spanish surrounding the port and territory of Finale, which the Spanish regarded a strategic dominion and Genoa had been claiming for decades; this led to reprisals on both sides and almost broke up the fraying alliance between the two states. Meanwhile, the Republic was also facing tense jurisdictional disputes with the papacy, to the point that in December 1652 it was threatened with an interdict and excommunication by pope Innocent X. As the pope called for a crusade against the Turks, that is, asking Genoa to join in at the side of the Venetians, Genoa had raised the stakes and almost precipitated a full diplomatic crisis. In the event, Genoa never sided with Venice in the war of Candia (or Cretan war, 1645-69) and alienated sympathies from both Venice and Rome<sup>107</sup>, provoking Innocent X's successor, pope Alexander VII, to make the assessment in September 1656 that Genoa was a «friendless state» (with a mind to the Spanish, Venetians, and to Piedmont, besides Rome)<sup>108</sup>. Not without cause, then, in writing

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, Cf. A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit., p. 175.

<sup>106</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, April 5, 1658.

<sup>107</sup> A. Ceccarelli, *Rome, 1656-57*, cit., p. 29.

<sup>108</sup> ASGe, AS, 2365, LM, R, Agostino Pinelli to the Government, September 2, 1656. Cf. C. Bitossi, *Il granello di sabbia e i piatti della bilancia. Note sulla politica genovese nella crisi del sistema imperiale ispano-asburgico, 1640-1660*, in *Génova y la Monarquía Hispánica*, cit., pp. 495-526; V. Vitale, *La diplomazia genovese*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, Milano 1941, p. 10; Id., *Diplomatici e consoli*, cit., p. VIII; C. Costantini, *La ricerca di un'identità repubblicana nella Genova del primo Seicento*, in «Miscellanea storica ligure», VII, 2, 1975, pp. 9-74; T.A. Kirk, *La crisi del 1654*, cit., pp. 527-538; M. Herrero Sánchez, *La quiebra del sistema hispano-genovés*, cit., pp. 115-151; P.

to the Court of Turin two years later, Giustiniani indulged in a thrust against the proclaimed good governance of the plague, which the Chigi family flaunted (the «conduct and way of life of the *Signori Chigi* in Rome will inevitably breed disorder»)<sup>109</sup>, while the pope, for his own part, admonished the Genoese representative in Rome that «the extreme evils» that had afflicted the Republic of Genoa descended from its lack of «moderation» (its *vanitas*). A similar position was held by Cardinal Lorenzo Raggi<sup>110</sup>.

Given the delicate balance of international affairs, it is unsurprising that Giustiniani should respond very badly to the rumours of a new contagion. «With particular personal disgust I have learnt that in Turin, against all truth, someone writes that in Genoa the disease is spreading again», he again wrote to the Christine of Savoy in April 1658. «I swear to Your Royal Highness that I was always accurately informed by our Magistrato di Sanità, who, according to our laws and customs, is forbidden from concealing the truth and has indeed taken an oath to always represent it [...] ever more so before the Magistrates of foreign Princes»<sup>111</sup>. Giustiniani further assured that «although the news of suspect cases of plague had circulated, because of recent deaths, albeit most rare» («which had nevertheless continued»), Genoa and its State were indisputably recovered. The suspected outbreaks had proven to be false alarms in the light of the «visit and reconnaissance of each corpse, made by several Physicians and Surgeons and witnessed by several officers of the Magistrato di Sanità». Over the last four months, Genoa had also «repopulated, up to 45,000 or 50,000 souls, from the 14,000 it had been left with»<sup>112</sup>. And finally, Giustiniani closed with an unwontedly forlorn plea to the Duchess for her «to trust that none more than myself will speak the truth to you»<sup>113</sup>. All of «those rivers of suspicion» had to be ignored, returned to sender. The Duchess must trust him and the absolute confidence he had in «these Gentlemen of the Magistrato [di Sanità]», who had never deflected from inspecting with the utmost rigour. One was not to «lend an ear» to the voice of the malevolent, nor to that of the superstitious «populace»<sup>114</sup>.

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Calcagno, *“La puerta a la mar”*. *Il marchesato del Finale nel sistema imperiale spagnolo (1571-1713)*, Roma, Viella 2011.

<sup>109</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, September 10, 1658.

<sup>110</sup> ASGe, AS, 2367, LM, R, Giovanni Pietro Spinola to the Government, March 20, 1660. Cf. A. Lonardi, «*Quell’incrociarsi fatale ed aguzzo di membra*», cit., pp. 71-72; L. Stagno, *Vanitas. Percorsi iconografici nell’arte genovese tra Cinquecento ed età barocca*, De Luca editori d’arte, Roma 2012.

<sup>111</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April (?), 1658.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 15 (?), 1658. Cf. Father Antero also often took issue with the «ignorant» and superstitious «People», Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 2, 15, 22 ff.



In spite of the renewed assurances and efforts to show that all doubtful cases «had immediately extinguished themselves»<sup>115</sup>, there was still plague in Genoa, as Giustiniani was perfectly aware. His last diplomatic effort in this vein relates to a case that occurred in May 1658, in which the victim was a customs officer. Again, Giustiniani reassured there was «no real basis [to speak] of contagious disease», only mere «suspicions, which were immediately allayed». «I don't know what misfortune we have against us», he concluded: as if the plague hadn't been enough, now there are those who want to resurrect it at all costs<sup>116</sup>. It is a fact that the echoes of the customs incident reverberated for weeks before vanishing, perhaps in connection with the fact that the first Genoese citizen to have unquestionably died of plague (and had had the whole of Italy talking, in September 1656) was also, as a matter of fact, attached to that same customs house<sup>117</sup>.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May 1658, Giustiniani finally admitted that the customs officer in question did in fact show 'a few signs of infection' but was still the only verified case 'after twenty-eight days', out of a total of '50,000 People' now living in the city ('who enjoy complete and perfect health'). Genoa, in short, was repopulating and goods were proportionally flowing through its customs houses in proportion. Even if the customs officer turned out to be a proven case of plague, the disease evidently «no longer had any vigour, was no longer infectious [...], since he, by reason of his office, had dealt [...] with thousands of people»<sup>118</sup>.

He then returned to the subject, with new and more incisive arguments, on 18<sup>th</sup> May, evidently hoping to ensure that the Genoa plague would never be spoken of again. He reasoned that the disease «had run its course», or rather «no longer had any poison, nor the malignant capacity to contaminate others», as the much-debated case of the customs officer in fact confirmed:

which not only did not infect any of those who had any contact with him, who were infinite, but not even any of his Servants, who touched him and served him at all hours, nor any of his adult sons, who slept with him; they are all very well, as, thanks be to God, both in the City and in the State a whole, perfect health continues.<sup>119</sup>

Until mid-September 1658, Giustiniani made succinct references to public health and gave his usual crisp reassurances. He held the «firm hope that the

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<sup>115</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, Letters from April 12 and May 4, 1658.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May (?), 1658.

<sup>117</sup> ASGe, AS, 2328, LM, N, Giovanni Francesco Pallavicino to the Government, Palermo, Letters from September 25 and 28, 1656; D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 358-359.

<sup>118</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 11, 1658.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 18, 1658.

contagious disease had completely disappeared throughout the State»<sup>120</sup>, and more frequently still expressed the absolute *certainty* that this had already happened<sup>121</sup> (Genoa and Liguria had long lived «without the slightest shadow of suspicion»)<sup>122</sup>. Rather to the point, the Republic of Lucca had returned to trade with Genoa at the beginning of August and the Grand Duke of Tuscany «had removed from the gates to all of the cities of his State the Guards appointed to preside over [public] Health»<sup>123</sup>. On 24<sup>th</sup> September the State of Milan, the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza, and the Republic of Venice also took similar measures<sup>124</sup>. As Genoa was finally lifted from its enforced isolation, Giustiniani rejoiced.

The Court of Turin, on the other hand, hesitated to restore the regular transit of goods and people. The previous plague of 1630 had had a heavy impact on the Duchy of Savoy, marring the early phase of Christine's regency, and not only was its memory still alive, but *rumours* about Genoa were still going round. Giustiniani found these fears absurd: «I am appalled by the fear that is still nurtured in Turin, that in our City and State there should be [...] the suspicion of some Disease, after so many repeated assurances I've given that no place exists in Europe that enjoys such perfect health». Giving further credence to these lies, he wrote, would only benefit the Spanish (who are still «ill-disposed towards the Most Serene Republic of Genoa, and treat us as enemies»). He therefore entreated Christine of Savoy only to lend credence to the *facts*, which were that from the State of Milan

anyone [...] could come into Genoa, buy all the goods they wanted and return to the Milan area, without a moment's quarantine; on the contrary, any Genoese who wished to go to the State of Milan was obliged to spend twenty days in quarantine [...]: thus recites the Spanish decree, to [save] appearances; in reality [...] transit is free and anyone can go up and down by the less patrolled roads [...], without spending the least amount [at customs], or by handing out a handful of change to the Inspectors of the Guards, the same as in all States, and from Turin to Genoa it is now four months (as I have said already) that People have been come and going, without inspection<sup>125</sup>.

But relations between Turin and Madrid were also somewhat complicated around 1656-58. The war with Spain, which broke out over Monferrato, «interspersed with truces and almost continuous negotiations [...] between the courts of Madrid and Paris, [...] continued to drain the country's already scarce [...] resources». For Christine of Savoy, a peace agreement with Madrid was

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 22, 1658.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 29, 1658.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, Letters from June 5, 12, 19, 1658.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, August 13, 1658.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, September 24, 1658.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, September 17, 1658.

therefore an absolute priority, while at the same time she very unwilling to antagonise France. The way out of this complex political and diplomatic conundrum only came with the Peace of the Pyrenees in November 1659<sup>126</sup>.

To conclude, Giustiniani sought to make political use of the plague in all of his speech, whether reporting figures of the contagion, levelling accusations against the Spanish, or formulating judgements on how the emergency was managed in Naples and Rome, patently aiming to bolster a pro-French stance within the Court of Turin (discouraging it from signing a peace agreement too much to the disadvantage of Mazarin's France)<sup>127</sup>. More generally, he was quite desperate to prevent the *darkness* and *silence* to which the plague had condemned Genoa from being instrumentally interpreted as *God's chastisement* and thus resulting in political isolation<sup>128</sup>. Let us just close this section on the laconic comment made by Genoese clergyman Giovanni Francesco Ravara in a letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> July 1657: «no Prince has come to our aid', he wrote, with the exception of the king of France, the duchess of Savoy, and the Republic of Lucca, 'the pope has completely abandoned us [...] refraining even from sending any gravediggers; the Milanese have done worse than the pope»<sup>129</sup>.

## 2. The plague of letters

Virtually all of the letters Giustiniani wrote to the Court of Turin during the great plague contain some form of lament and anxiety, whether veiled or explicitly stated, but ultimately expressing a veritable obsession about his state of enforced isolation; what was hardly a bearable condition for most, became a torment for one whose business was that of *informer*. Besides, Giustiniani felt he had a more fundamental cause for grief, as for 15 years exactly he had been in the service of the French Crown, he reminded Christine of Savoy in a letter on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1658<sup>130</sup>. A few days later, he restated how his devotion to the king had cost him

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<sup>126</sup> E. Stumpo, *CRISTINA di Francia*, cit., *ad vocem*.

<sup>127</sup> More generally, Giustiniani clearly had a «personal interest in the establishment of more intense relations between Genoa and France»; from 1656, on the other hand, he complained of Mazarin's «ingratitude» towards him, B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., I, 11. Cf. D. Pizzorno, *Genova, gli Este e Giannettino Giustiniani*, cit., p. 459.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. BUG, ms. B.VIII.28, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico*, entry *Peste*; A. Ceccarelli, *Plague and Politics*, cit.; P. Ulvioni, *Il gran castigo di Dio*, cit.; P. Benjamin, «Convertire in se medesimo questo flagello», cit., pp. 123-156; F. Manconi, *Castigo de Dios*, cit.

<sup>129</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 403.

<sup>130</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, October 29, 1658. As Barbara Marinelli has pointed out, the time at which Giustiniani permanently placed himself in the service of the French Court is still uncertain, since he himself «was never too precise about this, giving contradictory indications. In 1671, for example, he said he had been serving France

most of his already uncertain wealth<sup>131</sup>, and later protested, in March 1659, «I do not need Signor Cardinale Mazarino to grant me further Pensions, but rather that he orders the payment of those he has already promised me»<sup>132</sup>.

The causes for concern detailed by Giustiniani in his letters afford us a precise view of the way the plague affected such other matters as the timeliness and privacy of political news (the safeguard of mail flows, more generally). Over at least 22 months, Giustiniani was constantly preoccupied with, and sometimes powerless to do anything about, the fate of the crates, parcels, and letters that for that were, essentially, the main *tools* of his *trade*. (An instance from ten years before this crisis clarifies the nature of his work and the stakes that would have been involved, though possibly not explicitly declared. In May 1647, acting as local agent of the Este family in Modena, Giustiniani had had to facilitate the controls at the notoriously scrupulous Genoa customs house on a shipment involving some parcels of goods arriving from France. While we have no inventory of the items the Este family were expecting from France, undamaged and possibly uninspected, it most probable they were «luxury items, perhaps together with some [...] compromising documents»<sup>133</sup>).

With the plague complicating his customary work, on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1657 Giustiniani wrote to the Marquis of San Tommaso about one of his many charges: the recovery of two boxes of objects (the precise contents of which is unknown to us) belonging to Onorato Gini, a native of Nice, knight and *commendatore* of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus, and minister at the Papal court between

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for more than thirty years, *i.e.* roughly since 1640» (the year for which «his trip to Paris» is documented), B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 1a.

<sup>131</sup> In this letter Giustiniani also asked to be rewarded with a fief or rich ecclesiastical benefice in favour of his son, ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, October 31, 1658. In his letters to the Court of France, Giustiniani wrote that he had six children, though we only have sufficient evidence for Giuseppe Domenico, Maddalena and Cristina, born in 1640 and named after the Duchess of Savoy. The profiles of the others, including Giulio and Luigi («who were named after Cardinal Mazarin and King Louis XIV respectively») remain nebulous. In 1660, moreover, Giustiniani declared that he had «only one son (Giuseppe Domenico) and two unmarried daughters: evidently the other three had died», B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 1a. The personal patrimony of Giustiniani, «of noble origins but of modest wealth», would have been small due to the less than prudent management by his father (Domenico Giustiniani Recanelli, originally from Chios, who moved to Genoa following the Ottoman conquest of the island, 1566). «All his life», in short, Giustiniani tried «without much luck, to recover for himself and his family the prestigious social status that had belonged to his ancestors», *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March (?), 1659.

<sup>133</sup> D. Pizzorno, *Genova, gli Este e Giannettino Giustiniani*, cit., p. 458. See also G. Felloni, *Organizzazione portuale, navigazione e traffici a Genova: un sondaggio tra le fonti per l'età moderna*, in Dino Puncuh ed., *Studi in memoria di Giorgio Costamagna*, «Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria», n.s., XLIII, 1, 2003, pp. 337-364.

the final years of Christine's regency and the first years of the reign of Charles Emmanuel II.<sup>134</sup> In the case of Commendatore Gini's two crates, on the other hand, which gone through Genoa and had been blocked because of the risks of contagion, Giustiniani could report on his success in founding them and having them released from the warehouse in which they lay. They were now «purged and free», as he had informed the «*Signor Commendatore* himself some weeks previously». But because he had received no reply, he was now asking what he was to do, and to whom, above all, he should forward the parcels in question, as his instructions were only to send them to Turin, via Savona<sup>135</sup>.

Several months later (in the spring of 1657), there had still been no reply, so Giustiniani again took pen and paper and wrote to the Marquis of San Tommaso, this time in resentful tones:

when the [...] Commendatore Gini, because of the contagion, could not have his two parcels, he hurled thunderbolts that the impossible should be attempted [to free his coffers], and because it was not possible to please him, he even convinced himself that the two parcels were lost, lending his ear to the malignancies of impostors. Now that they have been ready for him to recover for two months, having been transferred from the Lazaretto to the Customs House, it looks like he no longer cares. At any rate, I have been told that there is one Discalced Carmelite Father just waiting for a delivery order; if I am given it, I will proceed.

All that Gini needed to do was to provide Giustiniani with an address, although the Court of Turin had further requested, meanwhile, that Giustiniani personally collect «two parasols» for the Duchess of Savoy from inside one of the boxes. He wrote in reply that he was ready to arrange a special delivery for the parasols, on the condition that they only be delivered to the duchess after a few weeks. «I will never give my consent» to have them directly placed into the duchess' hands, he specified, «after so much handling by People», and so expose the duchess to the risk of contagion<sup>136</sup>.

This curious affair (the outcome of which is unknown to us) may require a brief digression. Plague hindered mail flows not only because couriers would be prevented from crossing the border of a territory affected by contagion. The disinfection of parcels, packages, and crates became largely mandatory even when plague was merely suspected, and often remained in effect as a precautionary measure weeks after quarantine. The most common disinfection

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<sup>134</sup> On Onorato Gini and his Roman mission, M. Tabarrini, *Carlo Rainaldi e i Savoia a Roma: la chiesa del Santo Sudario*, in S. Benedetti ed., *Architetture di Carlo Rainaldi: nel quarto centenario della nascita*, Gangemi, Roma 2012, p. 319 (pp. 297-321); G. Dell'Oro, *La grande riforma di Cristina di Borbone (1631-1663). Il conflitto per il controllo dei benefici ecclesiastici*, in «Cristianesimo nella Storia», XXXIII, 3, 2012, p. 839 (pp. 795-844).

<sup>135</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, January 13, 1657.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, March 30, 1657.

practices were smoking and soaking in vinegar (or other mixtures), which frequently resulted in serious damage to letters, often totally compromising their contents, not to mention the instances in which consignments were destroyed because of suspected contamination<sup>137</sup>.

The characters we qualify as *information professionals* were, in short, middlemen and intermediaries of varying rank and social standing, several of whom were mere couriers, but others were Postmasters General, diplomats, and, as in the instance of Giustiniani, members of some *intelligence* agency or network; for all, however, the plague struck as a personal tragedy within the general dramatic turn of events<sup>138</sup>. Let us think of the reactions of Genoese Postmaster General Geronimo Spinola to the early signs of the epidemic that finally swept Genoa (having started in North Africa and first spread to Spain). In a letter to cardinal Giovanni Giacomo Panciroli (Vatican Secretary of State) dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 1648, Spinola had to apologise for the state of the mail that had reached him from the nunciature in Madrid, via Marseilles, which he was preparing to forward to Rome and announced to have suffered serious damages. Because of the outbreak of the plague in Valencia, letters and dispatches going through France «had been soaked in vinegar»<sup>139</sup>. Spinola complained of the exhausting «infinite difficulties» and of the «very serious damage» that the epidemic was causing to the postal network he managed (on which numerous Italian and European courts relied)<sup>140</sup>. The nuncio in Madrid, Giulio Rospigliosi (later, pope Clement IX) also could barely communicate with Rome and complained of the forbidding sanitary measures in force at Spanish ports<sup>141</sup>. The letters that continued to arrive were «very few», commented Nicolò Invrea from his post as Genoese representative in Naples, in spite of the fact that almost all of the provinces of the Kingdom had been «purged of infected objects»<sup>142</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup> L. De Zanche, *Storia della disinfezione postale in Europa e nell'area mediterranea: catalogo dei bolli, sigilli e annotazioni manoscritte di disinfezione dell'area italiana*, Elzeviro, Padova 2008; O. Pastine, *L'organizzazione postale della Repubblica di Genova* («Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria», LIII), Cavanna, Pontremoli 1926, p. 406 (pp. 311-507); G. Durante, *Trattato della peste, et febre pestilentielle...*, Presso Giovanni Battista Ciotti, In Venetia 1600.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. E. Andretta, E. Valeri, M.A. Visceglia, P. Volpini eds., *Tramiti. Figure e strumenti della mediazione culturale nella prima età moderna*, Viella, Roma 2015.

<sup>139</sup> AAV, SS, P, vol. 22, fol. 14, Geronimo Spinola to cardinal Giacomo Panciroli, Genoa, January 11, 1648. See also O. Pastine, *L'organizzazione postale della Repubblica di Genova*, cit., pp. 327, 406.

<sup>140</sup> AAV, SS, P, vol. 23, fol. 131, Geronimo Spinola to cardinal Giacomo Panciroli, Genoa, August 1, 1648.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, Spagna, vol. 99, fols. 211 (Giulio Rospigliosi to cardinal Giacomo Panciroli, Madrid, May 9, 1648), 218 (Giulio Rospigliosi to cardinal Giacomo Panciroli, Madrid, May 16, 1648).

<sup>142</sup> ASGe, AS, 2328, LM, N, Nicolò Invrea to the Government, May 16, 1657. On Invrea's mission (appointed on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1656, at the beginning of the epidemic, he remained in Naples until March

«Still the lack of letters goes on», wrote Maria Francesca Raggi at the beginning of the great plague in Genoa. The anxieties, musings, and hopes she expressed in her letters were mostly unrelated to political matters, as they were family letters and almost a shared diary, as we have seen), yet she too was fully aware that it would soon become impossible to communicate with the outside world («we will be cut off from everyone»), and, at the height of the contagion, wrote that sending letters had become an extremely dangerous business<sup>143</sup>.

While the role of Genoa as a commercial and military hub within the so-called *Spanish imperial system* is very well understood, Giustiniani's letters shed further light on the centrality of Genoa in the early-modern system of postal exchanges and as a news marketplace<sup>144</sup>. For further illustration of its central position in the communications network, and of the problems the Genoese had already faced and partly overcome in the years preceding the arrival of the great plague, we may go back to the summer-winter of 1652 as the contagion began to encroach all around the Italian peninsula (having by then reached Sardinia) and caused the first risk of blockage between Genoa and Rome.

On 6<sup>th</sup> July 1652, the representative of the Genoese government to the Papal court, Lazzaro Maria Doria, reported that the islands of Majorca and Sardinia and the Languedoc territory had been declared off limits, whereas Minorca, Corsica, and Liguria were deemed to be highly exposed<sup>145</sup>; only a week later, the

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1659), V. Vitale, *Diplomatici e consoli*, cit., p. 101. Cf. S. Andretta, L. Bély, A. Koller and G. Poumarède eds., *Esperienza e diplomazia/Expérience et diplomatie. Saperi, pratiche culturali e azione diplomatica nell'Età moderna (secc. XV-XVIII) / Savoirs, pratiques culturelles et action diplomatique à l'époque moderne (XVe-XVIIIe s.)*, Viella, Roma 2020.

<sup>143</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 349, 395. Cf. M.C. Panzera and E. Canonica eds., *La Lettre au carrefour des genres et des traditions du Moyen Âge au XVIIe siècle*, Classiques Garnier, Parigi 2015; Cf. G. Zarri ed., *Per lettera. La scrittura epistolare femminile tra archivio e tipografia, secoli XV-XVII*, Viella, Roma 1999; M.L. Doglio, *Lettera e donna. Scrittura epistolare al femminile tra Quattro e Cinquecento*, Bulzoni, Roma, 1993; J. Daybell ed., *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2001; C. Pal, *Republic of Women. Rethinking the republic of letters in the seventeenth century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012; L. Hannan, *Women of Letters. Gender, Writing and the Life of the Mind in Early Modern England*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 2016; R. Earle ed., *Epistolary Selves. Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, Routledge, London-New York 2019.

<sup>144</sup> A. Pacini, *Desde Rosas a Gaeta. La costruzione della rotta spagnola nel Mediterraneo occidentale nel secolo XVI*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2013; P. Calcagno, *Corsari e difesa mobile delle coste. Il caso genovese nella seconda metà del XVII secolo*, in «Studi Storici», 55, 4, 2014, pp. 937-964; G. Parker, *The army of Flanders and the Spanish road, 1567-1659: the logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries' wars*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1972; D. Pizzorno, *La Repubblica particolare*, cit., pp. 54, 128; M. Infelise, *Prima dei giornali. Alle origini della pubblica informazione (secoli XVI e XVII)*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2002, pp. 85-115. Cf. F. de Vivo, *How to Read Venetian «Relazioni»*, in «Renaissance & Reformation», 34, 1, 2011, pp. 25-59.

<sup>145</sup> ASGe, AS, 2360, LM, R, Lazzaro Maria Doria to the Government, July 6, 1652.

Postmaster general in Genoa, Geronimo Spinola, refused to take delivery of two parcels for the governor of Rome (Monsignor Girolamo Farnese) arriving from places Spinola considered «suspect» even though they bore the seal of the Genoese Magistrato di Sanità. He further warned that, in the future, postal cases travelling as part of similar shipments would have to be burnt<sup>146</sup>.

In August 1652, to further complicate the situation, health officials in Florence finally blocked the transit of couriers north of Lunigiana (on the border with the Republic of Genoa), thus interrupting the customary postal route between Rome and Genoa (a land route that went through the Grand Duchy of Tuscany)<sup>147</sup>. Numerous disturbances to the postal service ensued, some of which imputable to espionage activities.

On 25<sup>th</sup> August, for example, the secretary of the Spanish ambassador in Genoa protested harshly to the government of the Republic because of an incident that had occurred the previous week. Having travelled to Sarzana, on the eastern border of Liguria, to collect from the courier the ambassador's mail from Rome (as the courier was no longer allowed to reach Genoa), he had had to wait for them to be disinfected: the letters were smoked, but in the course of the operation some seals had broken, which is to say they had been intentionally broken. Some of the letters were opened, or lost, or got mixed up. Among the correspondence were two parcels from Cardinal Trivulzio and the Viceroy of Sicily (Rodrigo Mendoza d'Infantado) which contained sensitive information for the King of Spain. The fact that «their every contents may have been disclosed» constituted a serious damage to the *Monarquía*, the ambassador's secretary had protested<sup>148</sup>, causing the Genoese government to send a commissioner to Sarzana to find «by all means [...] the lost letters» and bring the culprits to justice<sup>149</sup>. Seeking to remedy the postal crisis with Rome and the southern part of the peninsula, moreover, the Republic asked its Postmaster general (now assisted by his son, Filippo Spinola) to engineer an alternative route that involved shipping from Civitavecchia instead of going over land. But the experiment was logistically too complex and too risky from a sanitary point of view, and was boycotted by Innocent X, by the Spinola family<sup>150</sup>, and by the Grand Duke of

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, July 13, 1652.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 2361, LM, R, The Government to Lazzaro Maria Doria, Letters from August 9 and 13, 1652; O. Pastine, *L'organizzazione postale della Repubblica di Genova*, cit., p. 338.

<sup>148</sup> ASGe, AS, 2360, LM, R, August 25, 1652. See also, G. Signorotto, *TRIVULZIO, Gian Giacomo Teodoro*, in DBI, vol. 97, 2020, *ad vocem*; V. Auria, *Historia cronologica delli signori viceré di Sicilia...*, Per Pietro Coppola, In Palermo 1697, p. 120.

<sup>149</sup> ASGe, AS, 2361, LM, R, The Government to Lazzaro Maria Doria, August 25, 1652.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 2360, Egidio De Rossi to the Government, Civitavecchia, Letters from August 4 and 30, 1652; *Ibid.*, Lazzaro Maria Doria to the Government, Letters from July 26 and August 3, 1652; 2361, The Government to Lazzaro Maria Doria, Genoa, July 23, 1652. Cf. AAV, SS, P, vol. 27, fol. 290r.



Tuscany (by means of new restrictions for the port of Livorno, where the postal convoys called at)<sup>151</sup>.

In the light of the precedents set in 1652, when contagion still only loomed on the horizon, it is not hard to understand how several thousand letters and boxes would have gone missing, lost or destroyed, when the plague actually arrived. As stated in Filippo Spinola's letter to Flavio Chigi, the Genoa post office was an utterly desolate place after the great plague: it had suffered dozens of victims among its staff and was strewn with sacks of mail that had lain abandoned for months<sup>152</sup>. As for Filippo, he himself had been prevented from reaching his office and forced to serve quarantine at his villa, right at the beginning of the epidemic, after his personal barber had died of the plague<sup>153</sup>. Writing on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1657, another Spinola, Nicolò, described to his brother Ambrogio, the «great confusion» which reigned in Genoa and the «lawless» state of «abandonment» of all things<sup>154</sup>.

Again and again, in his dispatches to the Court of Turin, Giustiniani returned to the question of *how many letters had been lost during the contagion*, for which there was no definite answer. Such a scenario of isolation, disorder, and devastation would be typical of all epidemic crises, but affected Giustiniani (as an agent of political communication operating from Genoa, a crucial hub in news exchanges) in a wholly specific, and to us enlightening, manner.

On 17<sup>th</sup> February 1657, for instance, Giustiniani wrote to the Duchess of Savoy that the long-awaited 'French courier's suitcase' had finally arrived in the port of Genoa, but contained no letter for him, neither from Paris nor Turin. «While last week I lamented the negligence of the French officers who had delayed more than usual in delivering Your Royal Highness's letters to me', he wrote, 'now I suffer this infamous villainy at the hand of Spanish soldiers, who have stolen Your letters from me»<sup>155</sup>. It is for this reason that Giustiniani too occasionally communicated with Turin via the sea route, which involved going through Savona Nice<sup>156</sup>. The ordinary postal route would also have been the fastest under normal conditions; it was the route travelled by the Lyon courier and which, crossing the mountains from Genoa, reached Alessandria<sup>157</sup>; but in

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<sup>151</sup> ASGe, AS, 2361, LM, R, The Government to Lazzaro Maria Doria, Letters from October 8 and December 20, 1652. Cf. C. Ciano, *La sanità marittima nell'età medicea*, Pacini, Pisa 1976.

<sup>152</sup> AAV, SS, P, vol. 36, fol. 17r., Filippo Spinola to Flavio Chigi, Genoa, January 25, 1657.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 34, fol. 53, Filippo Spinola to Giulio Rospigliosi, November 18, 1656.

<sup>154</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 413.

<sup>155</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 17b, 1657.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, November 24, 1657.

<sup>157</sup> G. Felloni, *Itinerari e tempi delle comunicazioni secondo le fonti genovesi (secc. XVI-XVII)*, in «Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria», LIII, CXXVII, 1, 2013, p. 112 (pp. 97-115). See also O.

the midst of a plague epidemic, and with warfare continuing in Monferrato, the journey along that route became exceedingly lengthy and dangerous.

In a different letter, Giustiniani gives more detail of the Spanish soldiers' *infamous villainy* against him:

the courier has told me that he was robbed shortly after Acqui<sup>158</sup>, by two companies of Spanish cavalry commanded by Sergeant Major Orrisi of Alexandria, which were going to escort and secure the [...] cargo of money, which arrived at the port of Finale, destined for the Governor of Milan; they took all the letters addressed to me, all the parcels to Your Highness [...], six hundred *doppie*, some boxes of jewellery, and other things. This time they made no dissimulation, the theft occurred in clear daylight, in the public street, and was committed by the Spaniards. If the Court of France does not complain this time, it will be acknowledged as lawful, when it benefits the Spaniards, to plunder (as they do, in fact) as often as they wish<sup>159</sup>.

On this occasion, Giustiniani gives tangible reasons for his deep-seated animosity towards the *Monarquía*, though episodes of his couriers being robbed, far from being exclusive to this time of plague, were such a common occurrence they had inspired a novel by Ferrante Pallavicino seventeen years earlier<sup>160</sup>. This disruption in postal exchanges, a veritable *plague of letters*, came of countless compounded complications, however, starting from the need to resort to untried routes and messengers. For all of his particular resentment against Spain, in short, Giustiniani increasingly had to resign himself to the «absence of letters» as a peculiar form of *torment*:

once because the courier was robbed, another time, as occurred last week, because the courier could not cross the rivers, which were too swollen due to unusual rainfall [...], yet another time, as occurred this week, because there was no letter for me, neither from France nor from Turin<sup>161</sup>.

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Codogno, *Nuovo itinerario delle poste per tutto il Mondo...*, G. Bordoni, Milano 1616, pp. 14, 24-26, 44, 168, 282.

<sup>158</sup> Located in Val Bormida, in the Alto Monferrato.

<sup>159</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February (?) 1657.

<sup>160</sup> F. Pallavicino, *Il corriere svaligiato con la Lettera dalla prigione...*, A. Marchi ed., Università di Parma, Parma 1984; A.N. Mancini, *Stampa e censura ecclesiastica a Venezia: il caso del 'Corriere svaligiato'*, in «Esperienze letterarie», X, 4, 1985, pp. 3-36. Mazarin's letter to Giustiniani of 19<sup>th</sup> January 1655, documents a very similar episode: «since the courier was robbed, most of the letters have been lost, and I particularly miss those from Your Lordship», B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 3c.

<sup>161</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 3, 1657. It is perhaps worth remembering that, even during ordinary times without plague, 'on the less guarded routes and at mountain passes, mail in transit was the target of outlaws who searched for packages in the hope of finding something of value in them. Often the letters arrived very late and with obvious signs of tampering (with broken seals); it was not only the negligence of the courier that was to blame: a significant part of this «postal disorder was due to espionage, practised sporadically along the way [...] by royal offices themselves». Political theorists judged

In several other cases, the Court of Turin complained about receiving no letters, or reported their loss. «I was amazed to learn from Your Royal Highness that [...] You did not receive any letters from me that week». This time, Giustiniani blamed his secretary as the most likely culprit and supposed that, amid the general chaos, he had «mistakenly» bundled the letter to Turin «either with the Lyon or Paris post»<sup>162</sup>.

Writing on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1657, when Genoa had suffered its most dreadful week, we read, with a toll of several thousand victims, Giustiniani also launched a personal campaign to convince the Duchess of Savoy at least to allow on-foot couriers (*pedoni*) to travel between the city of Turin and the *rastelli* at Cremolino<sup>163</sup>. Over the next 14 months, that is, he stubbornly persisted in demanding that couriers be allowed as far as the barriers at the border between the Savoy Duchy and the Republic of Genoa, so that the Genoa courier could exchange his correspondence with the Turin courier<sup>164</sup>. The same procedure, we have seen, had been adopted at Sarzana, on the eastern border of the Republic, in 1652. Contrarily, were the Duchess unwilling to accept this solution, it would be necessary to continue to operate by *subterfuge*, as Giustiniani had been doing for several months; this involved employing specialised couriers, cunning individuals who were prepared to face countless dangers and obstacles and were therefore exceedingly rare and expensive. Occasionally, he was able to count on a few «friends» who would deliver his own precious letters and bring back to him the «news from the World» that were the *salt* of his trade: on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1657, while the epidemic was still at its peak, he reported that «not a single letter having arrived for many weeks», it was temporarily impossible for him to perform his business<sup>165</sup>.

Until December 1657, Giustiniani had to adapt to a situation in which it was not possible to communicate with Turin by the *ordinary* means that involved tried and tested couriers along short and familiar routes; but he became restless by

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them to be entirely lawful operations; the Genoese thinker Andrea Spinola (1562?-1631) regarded them to be a matter of reason of state, and in Venice, quite notoriously, «not even the correspondence of the apostolic nuncio was spared», B. Caizzi, *Dalla posta dei re alla posta di tutti. Territorio e comunicazioni in Italia dal XVI secolo all'Unità*, Milano, Franco Angeli, Milano 1993, pp. 23-25; BUG, ms. B.VIII.28, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico*, entry *Posta*; *Ibid.*, ms. B.VIII.29, entry *Spie*. Cf. E.S. Gürkan, *The efficacy of Ottoman counter-intelligence in the 16th century*, in «Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae», 65, 1, 2012, pp. 1-38.

<sup>162</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 18, 1657. «For his correspondence Giannettino used more than one scribe», as he himself specified to Mazarin in April 1653, B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 1a.

<sup>163</sup> Halfway between Genoa and Alessandria.

<sup>164</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, July 7, 1657.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, August 8, 1657.

January 1658, and from then on incessantly requested that at least a service of «regular on-foot couriers» be permitted to travel as far as the *rastelli* of Alto Monferrato<sup>166</sup>. It was necessary to return to the «customary, regulated correspondence», at all costs<sup>167</sup>.

From his letter to the Marquis of San Tommaso on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1658 we further learn about the way he responded to plague restrictions to get certain letters to destination while guaranteeing the sensitive political information they contained was secure. «I am astonished by what Your Illustrious Lordship wrote to me on 28<sup>th</sup> December, namely that you have not received any reply from me», he wrote, upon learning that yet another of his letters had been lost. He then specified:

I have always endeavoured [...] to reply with punctuality and diligence, both via the route that passes through the State of Milan, and by means of an on-foot courier via the direct route, as far as the *rastelli* [at the border between Piedmont and Liguria], having always sent all my letters for you, for the *Signor* Marquis of Pianezza, for the *Madama* [the Duchess of Savoy] [...] and for the *Signor* Ambassador Servient [the French ambassador in Turin] under the cover of [a disguise envelope to] the *Signor generale* Gonteri.<sup>168</sup>

We thus learn that a third route existed alongside the *direct route* (also the shortest, now interrupted at the *rastelli* di Cremolino due to the plague) and the *sea route* (via the ports of Savona/Nice), and that Giustiniani experimented this third route to reach Turin via an unspecified itinerary through the State of Milan. We learn, moreover, that among his regular correspondents at the Savoy Court were the Marquis of Pianezza (also a minister) and the French ambassador (Ennemond Servient)<sup>169</sup>, and that central to the mechanism was Aimone Gonteri, a «most faithful [servant] of the Madama Reale» [the Duchess] whom she had created General of the Postal service, and was thus put «in charge of the espionage and interception services» («the regent's eyes and ears»), as well as Aimone's son Paolo Gonteri (later also to become General of the Postal service<sup>170</sup>).

Giustiniani's device to reach his correspondents in Turin was, in short, the *coperta di sicurezza*: all of his letters, that is travelled in a disguise envelope addressed to Aimone Gonteri (as postmaster in Turin), who then sorted and

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 12, 1658.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 17, 1658.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, January 17, 1758.

<sup>169</sup> E. Stumpo, *CRISTINA di Francia*, cit., *ad vocem*; G. Claretta, *Storia del Regno e dei tempi di Carlo Emanuele II duca di Savoia*, vol. 2, Tipografia del Regio Istituto de' sordo-muti, Genova 1877, p. 213.

<sup>170</sup> C. Rosso, *Uomini e poteri nella Torino barocca (1630-1675)*, in G. Ricuperati ed., *Storia di Torino*, vol. 4, *La città fra crisi e ripresa (1630-1730)*, Einaudi, Torino 2002, pp. 62, 74, 152 (pp. 6-195). Cf. B. Caizzi, *Dalla posta dei re alla posta di tutti*, cit., p. 23 ff.

manually delivered them. For an indication of the extent to which the system was trusted, we may note that it was felt unnecessary to cipher these letters, and that the stratagem was commonly used where the political stakes were high, such as in the exchanges by post between the Vatican Secretariat of State and the nunciature in Madrid<sup>171</sup>.

In closing the letter, Giustiniani made a further, heartfelt plea: this disruption to the postal flow was immensely pernicious to the Republic, as Piedmont was the first leg of the route to France. «After three months of perfect public health', it was necessary to restore 'the habitual exchange of correspondence, via the traditional route, at least by means of on-foot couriers», particularly on account of the fact that none of the other States had ever wholly interrupted communications with Liguria, even «when the Plague was causing the most horrific massacre in Genoa»<sup>172</sup>. «From Milan and Florence», Giustiniani insisted, letters had continued to arrive «by the direct route», «even at the highest extremes of the contagion»<sup>173</sup> (though Maria Francesca Raggi instead testifies that the «standard courier from Rome to Milan» was also suspended for a long time)<sup>174</sup>.

In February, Giustiniani was still pleading with Turin for the Genoese to be allowed to «see the sun again, after months of unending, darkest nights»<sup>175</sup>, as the Republic urgently needed to exchange food supplies and other goods with France and Piedmont<sup>176</sup>. As for himself, the *Milan route* was no longer an option, being warned by his confidants «not to write any important things, because there

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<sup>171</sup> During the pontificate of Innocent X Pamphilj and his successor, between the Peace of Westphalia and the Peace of the Pyrenees (1648-59), Vatican dispatches were placed inside a disguise envelope addressed to the Genoa Postmaster general (Geronimo and later Filippo Spinola); having reached Genoa (through couriers of the Genoa Post Office) they were then loaded on ships bound for Spain (again by the Spinola family), and finally delivered to the nuncio in Madrid. And vice versa (the letters of the Spanish nuncio, inside a disguise envelope addressed to the Spinolas, reached Genoa first and then Rome). This postal delivery system is the subject of a forthcoming essay which is essentially based on Vatican documents, A. Ceccarelli, *The Spinola system for maritime postal exchanges between the Madrid nunciature and the Roman Curia (1645-1655)*, in N. Klein Käfer ed., *Privacy at Sea: Practices, Spaces, and Communication in Maritime History*, Palgrave MacMillan, London.

<sup>172</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, January 17, 1658.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 22, 1658.

<sup>174</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 349.

<sup>175</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, Letters from February 7 and 14, 1658.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 28, 1658.

are traps laid out against my letters». The Spanish had their eye on him, that is, and were exploiting the plague to hold him in check<sup>177</sup>.

Over the following months he persisted in the battle «for letters» to travel by the «direct and short route» and by means of «express on-foot couriers»<sup>178</sup>, advocating that it was crucial to the interests of Piedmont too<sup>179</sup>. In May 1658, there were finally signs of an opening from the Duchess, who must have asked him (as Giustiniani's reply suggests) which day of the week would be preferable for sending a courier to exchange letters at the *rastelli* at Cremolino. Giustiniani reports on his consultation with the Genoese Postmaster general, then on the loss of further letters («for which I blame the long journey they travel and the most dangerous places they pass through»), and finally suggests «Thursday, around evening time», so that «the Genoa on-foot courier who leaves at the opening of the Gates [of the city, at dawn] can reach the borders, where he shall pick up the letters from the Turin courier and hand over those from Genoa»<sup>180</sup>. For a moment it must have seemed to him that the «disorder» to which his correspondence was consigned and the anxieties that attached to their itinerary («so much longer and different from the usual») were truly about to end<sup>181</sup>. When exactly, he asked, would it be possible to return to the «ancient happiness of receiving letters two or three days the requested they were written»<sup>182</sup>? Hoping that this day had finally arrived, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May he arranged for a courier from Genoa to be «for the first time [...] at the border [...], on Thursday evening», but there must have been no counterpart to meet him. Giustiniani assumed that the courier «of Your Royal Highness has not yet been ordered to be there» and even arranged for another courier, paid by Genoese merchants, to collect the mail «at the barriers» and take it to Turin<sup>183</sup>, further announcing, on 29<sup>th</sup> May, that the experiment would be repeated the following Thursday, again at Cremolino, but «with the hope that this time the one from Turin would also be there, and that [the two messengers] would be able to exchange letters»<sup>184</sup>.

His battle against *the plague of letters*, however, was far from over. From the letters of June 1658, we learn that Giustiniani recruited and personally paid for an express courier to cover the Cremolino-Turin route. Increasingly bitter, he

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 22, 1658. Cf. *Ibid.*, November 24, 1657: 'it is useless to adopt special precautions for letters sent by the Milan route, I would sooner not use it'.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 30, 1658.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 20, 1658.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 4, 1658.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May (?) 1658.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 17, 1658.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, Letters from May 18 and 22, 1658.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 29, 1658.

asked the Duchess of Savoy what he should do in the future to send his mail both to her and to Paris: should he continue to send the Genoa courier to the border, in the hope that he would be met by the Turin courier<sup>185</sup>? Should put much faith in the reassurances made to him, this time, by the Marquis of San Tommaso<sup>186</sup>?

Seeing no change, in mid-June, Giustiniani entrusted an envelope to an unspecified «friend» who was able to reach Cremolino and make sure it was safely delivered to Turin<sup>187</sup>. He found the situation exasperating, however, and said so in a letter to the Marquis of San Tommaso: from the Genoese point of view, there was no reason not to reopen the border between the two states and return to «free trade»; at the very least, Turin should sustain «the very small expense of couriers»<sup>188</sup>. Next, on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1658, Giustiniani dejectedly wrote to the Duchess that the courier sent from Genoa had returned with only one letter from the Turin Postmaster general to his Genoese counterpart, and asked why her courier had again failed to show up at the border. Meanwhile, the delivery of mail to Turin was still being subsidised by Genoese merchants, while Filippo Spinola, as Postmaster, had accepted to send his courier one day earlier (every Wednesday), «so that he could reach the barriers at Cremolino on Thursday without fail»<sup>189</sup>.

At the start of October, while still complaining of the disruption to the postal service «produced by the contagion»<sup>190</sup>, Giustiniani had to face a new and further threat to the privacy of news exchanges: the office of Postmaster general of Genoa, held by the Spinola family for decades<sup>191</sup>, had gone into the hands of Giacomo Maria Salvago, with whom Giustiniani was not so familiar<sup>192</sup>. At such a critical juncture, he wrote, it was unthinkable not to allow the couriers to return «to their ancient path»<sup>193</sup>. While French couriers were about to resume service, Turin still gave no certainties<sup>194</sup>.

All along, for months and months on end, Giustiniani felt imprisoned by a «long and tormenting silence» which he continually fought against and struggled

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June (?) 1658.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June 12, 1658.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June 15, 1658.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, July 19, 1658.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, July 1, 1658.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, October 1, 1658.

<sup>191</sup> A. Ceccarelli, *The Spinola system for maritime postal exchanges*, cit.

<sup>192</sup> AAV, SS, P, vol. 37, fol. 442r, Filippo Spinola to cardinal Flavio Chigi, September 28, 1658.

<sup>193</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, Letters from October 8 and 18, 1658. *The philosopher* Andrea Spinola also well understood the political relevance of the office of Postmaster General, BUG, ms. B.VIII.28, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico*, entry, *Posta*.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, September 28, 1658.

to pierce; but the compound of the plague and of the measures that were taken against it in his own Republic and the States surrounding it was a force that far outweighed his means and political connections. The ban that entrapped him would only be finally lifted at the end of 1658<sup>195</sup>.

While the vicissitudes of Giustiniani provide some illustration of the relationship between epidemic waves and postal communications, the *business* in which he was involved was intimately related to a revolution that took place in the early modern world. Some historians have come to refer to the set of interlocking events that contributed to the birth of modern postal systems as an *undetected revolution*. This was a widespread and profoundly transformative phenomenon, and yet has been easily disregarded by even the most recent historians<sup>196</sup>. In this connection, our discussion gives clear indication of the effects that a modern system of communications throughout the European region could have, even in the earlier stages of its development, in the modernisation of States, societies, and economic systems<sup>197</sup>.

At first glance, we may find it hard to take seriously Giustiniani's sense of profound isolation and his desperation at the thought of so many letters being lost (or worse); all the more so when we think of the tens of thousands of victims his own city was suffering while he resided in conditions of relative safety. His preoccupations may even evoke the commonplace disparagement of Genoa as a mercantile civilisation made up of individuals at once «uncultivated» and «too busy making money»<sup>198</sup>. But we have to account for the state of mind of Giustiniani as that of a *political informer* of the Baroque age whose allegiances and livelihood depended on the workings of a complex and fragile system. It was still a system that relied on the ability and willingness of individuals to deliver parcels and letters by facing impervious roads, whatever the means, the weather, the political climate, and generalised as well as individual health conditions; but, without the small transformations that produced this great revolution,

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, January 1, 1658. Cf. G. Calvi, «Dell'altrui communicatione», cit., pp. 561, 571; G. Cosmacini and A.W. D'Agostino, *La peste: passato e presente*, Editrice San Raffaele, Milano 2008.

<sup>196</sup> B. Crevato Selvaggi, *Posta e viaggi in Dalmazia fra mare e terra*, in E. Capuzzo ed., *Sguardi sulla Dalmazia: storie di viaggi e viaggiatori tra XVIII al XXI secolo*, Società Dalmata di Storia Patria, Roma-La Musa Talia, Venezia 2021, p. 113 (pp. 111-131); O. Pastine, *L'organizzazione postale della Repubblica di Genova*, cit., pp. 317 ff.

<sup>197</sup> A. Pettegree, *L'invenzione delle notizie*, Einaudi, Torino 2014; B. Caizzi, *Dalla posta dei re alla posta di tutti*, cit.; T. Plebani, *Le scritture delle donne in Europa. Pratiche quotidiane e ambizioni letterarie (secoli XIII-XX)*, Carocci, Roma 2019.

<sup>198</sup> G. Assereto, *Inquisitori e libri nel Seicento*, in Id., *Le metamorfosi della Repubblica. Saggi di storia genovese tra il XVI e il XIX secolo*, E. Ferraris, Savona 1999, p. 135.



Giustiniani's *profession* would have had a very different face, and modernity as we understand it might not have come about<sup>199</sup>.

### 3. *The autobiographical standpoint: Giustiniani's experience of the plague*

The distinctiveness of this epistolary corpus owes in some measure to the autobiographical detail it affords. His close association with the Duchess of Savoy, foremost, and with certain other correspondents meant Giustiniani felt largely at liberty to share details of his personal life and various other considerations.

However much aspects of temperament, culture and personal/social mores, as well as of trade, profession, or office may help account for a prevailing absence of autobiographical references in so many of the letters we have from those times, we cannot but feel we are not fully able to account for the fact that authors with a known attentiveness to social, economic, and political upheaval would then be exceedingly reticent about the way plague impacted on their own lives<sup>200</sup>. An enlightening case in point are the differences in approach in the letters of Agostino Pinelli, from Genoa, and Gabriello Riccardi, from Tuscany, each representing their government at the Papal court while the plague hit Rome in 1656-57. Pinelli very rarely speaks of his own fears, suffering, and material hardship whereas Riccardi, who had great familiarity with the Grand Duke Ferdinand II and the Medici court, often indulged in personal considerations<sup>201</sup>. And yet, Pinelli must have been greatly buffeted at the time of his mission to Rome, suffering the loss of a son, of one unspecified «woman of his family», who also died of the plague, and having his own house sealed off as a consequence<sup>202</sup>.

Giustiniani, at any rate, affords clear insights into his own person in his account of the plague and discusses his ailments, scientific and religious beliefs, sensitivity and temperament quite openly<sup>203</sup>. Besides learning about his movements, the company he kept, how he coped with the plague logistically, and in the company of which people, the vicissitudes suffered by his estate and servants, there is also a great deal about his inclinations and moods; we are thus

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<sup>199</sup> A. Pettegree, *L'invenzione delle notizie*, Einaudi, Torino 2014; B. Caizzi, *Dalla posta dei re alla posta di tutti*, cit. Cf. F. de Vivo, *Patrizi, informatori, barbieri. Politica e comunicazione a Venezia nella prima età moderna*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2012; I. Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service. Organising Intelligence in the Renaissance*, Oxford University Press, New York 2019.

<sup>200</sup> G. Calvi, *Storie di un anno di peste*, Bompiani, Milano 1984.

<sup>201</sup> Ead., «*Dell'altrui communicatione*», cit., pp. 563-571; A. Ceccarelli, *Rome, 1656-57*, cit.

<sup>202</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 368.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. R. Earle ed., *Epistolary Selves*, cit.; T. Van Houdt, J. Papy, G. Tournoy and C. Matheussen eds., *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*, Leuven University Press, Lovanio 2002.

able to appreciate certain slants of his views about the plague in terms of his way of thinking, his habits, and cultural background.

Giustiniani witnessed the plague directly, as we know, albeit from his «villa, in the Gulf of Rapallo [in Santa Margherita Ligure], twenty-four miles away from Genoa», as he wrote to the Duchess of Savoy in June 1657. Like most Genoese *magnifici*, and especially those without government appointments, he had, in short, fled the city at the first signs of the plague. Luckily for him, the disease never reached Santa Margherita, where he enjoyed «general, perfect health»<sup>204</sup>. «My person, thank God, has been preserved from the storm», he could again say in October 1657, adding that he had moved out of town with his entire family, or rather with «everyone residing with me, in n. of 17».

His «Country home» and entire «countryside around the Golfo di Rapallo», however, were far from immune from serious threats of plague, since all the «neighbouring lands» had been «afflicted by contagion», whereas his «house at Genoa» had been gravely struck, he wrote. Being poorly preserved, this letter does not allow us to understand with certainty what happened to the servants who were left behind at Giustiniani's town house, although it seems most of them died. That house consequently remained unattended and had to be sanitised, causing the loss of furniture and decor, and considerable financial «damage that I do not know when I will ever be able to remedy»<sup>205</sup>.

On the other hand, Giustiniani also saw he had been especially blessed: «although I have had great misfortune with my possessions in Genoa, and ended up without servants», he wrote in August 1657, «having [...] escaped with my life so far is the greatest grace I could receive from our Lord God». The same blessing had also befallen «everyone at the Villa [scil. grounds] and my residence, miraculously spared by God's infinite goodness»<sup>206</sup>.

In the event, in spite of announcing his imminent return to the city several times (probably as a ruse to reassure Turin), he spent a year and a half in Santa Margherita and only returned to the city in January 1658, preceded by his wife<sup>207</sup>.

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<sup>204</sup> «Without the shadow of a suspicion, not to mention contagion, ever appearing», ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June 22, 1657. Perhaps because of financial straits (while waiting for his pensions to be paid from Paris), Giannettino stayed at the villa of Santa Margherita as early as 1652, «with great detriment to his reputation», B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 11.

<sup>205</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, October 12, 1657.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, August 8, 1657.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, November 24, 1657 («on my return to the City, which will be shortly, now that it is possible to return there, thanks be to God, with every security, as there is no longer the slightest suspicion of evil»); *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, January 1, 1658 («tomorrow or the day after

(All his letters, however, bear the indication *Genoa*, that being the place from which his secretaries sent them off.)

Throughout his protracted rustication, Giustiniani was thoroughly active. He possibly made short trips to Piacenza and Milan<sup>208</sup>, but mainly kept in touch with friends and contacts<sup>209</sup>. Among the Genoese, he often mentioned the Di Negro brothers, Emanuele and Negrone. About the latter, who had had direct contact with the Piedmont court, we learn that he declined to answer in person and sign any letters due to his position. A procurator and later senator of the Republic, Negrone Di Negro was also briefly president of the Magistrato di Sanità and superintendent of the lazaretto *della Consolazione*<sup>210</sup>. Senators, Giustiniani pointed out to the Marquis of San Tommaso, couldn't easily obtain permission to «correspond with the Ministers of Princes»: 'if the letter were to be found, and came into the hands of the Senate», Di Negro would probably end up causing «serious damage to his interests»<sup>211</sup>. But then, even after he deposed his «senatorial toga» and retired to «a villa, half a mile outside the city», Marquis Di Negro went on communicating with Turin through Giustiniani<sup>212</sup>. Mere *laziness*, was Giustiniani's unlikely assurance<sup>213</sup>, but it is far more probable that it was a precautionary measure against contagion which Di Negro and Giustiniani agreed among themselves.

We can be almost certain, at any rate, that Giustiniani occasionally continued to meet with his closest associates and sources (or their agents) even during the plague, which patently did not completely interrupt the flow of

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tomorrow I shall retire there [return to Genoa] having already been preceded by my Marchioness, who is already there»); *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 12, 1658 («I have been in Genoa for a few days, where I will continue my stay in the future»). Cf. *Ibid.*, Letter of April (?) 1658 («it has been four months since I returned to Genoa»). In 1639, Giustiniani had married the Chiara Campostano (Genoese, daughter of Giuseppe), B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 1a.

<sup>208</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, December 31, 1657.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 21, 1658. Cf. B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 1a, 1f.

<sup>210</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, October 12, 1657. Negrone and Emanuele were sons of Negrone Di Negro q. Filippo (1530-1608), E. Stumpo, *DI NEGRO, Negrone*, in DBI, vol. 40, 1991, *ad vocem*. On Negrone, Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 172; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., pp. 33, 44.

<sup>211</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, October 24, 1657. Cf. *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, July 3, 1658.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, September 10, 1658. Di Negro had already attempted to retreat outside the city, in October 1656, when he was procurator, and was punished by the Collegi, D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 370.

<sup>213</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, September 17, 1658.

information – some of which could clearly not, due to its nature, be put into writing.

Giustiniani's correspondence with Turin also sheds light on devotional aspects and scientific convictions. Consistently with the times, he displays a firm belief in the efficacy of religious and spiritual *remedies* against the plague. We also learn he was particularly devoted to the Madonna of Montallegro, whose sanctuary was «above Rapallo, three or four miles, on a very high hill, which can be seen from very far away». Persuaded that «the graces and miracles that [that Virgin] is pleased to do to those who commend themselves to her» were «incredible» (which explained the «constant and innumerable concourse of people» to her sanctuary), Giustiniani had «masses continually celebrated there and prayers offered» throughout his countryside confinement, for the health of his family, of the Republic, and of the Duchess<sup>214</sup>.

Research on the plague has extensively detailed the religious rites and practices performed in response. Some were official acts promoted by the government and archbishop Durazzo, the aim of which was to foster concord among the Genoese, as well as their spirituality. Others descended from beliefs and superstitions with the potential to be as contagious and lethal as the plague: in one famous instance, rumour spread that the oil from the lamp inside the Cappella del Soccorso in the Cathedral of San Lorenzo would protect the anointed against the disease. Ill-advisedly, massive crowds of people gathered outside the chapel to seek protection, but most certainly contributing to the peak of contagion of the summer of 1657, which shortly followed<sup>215</sup>.

At the end of official devotional practices, the most significant rite was perhaps the one which the Genoese clergy and government promoted as a *last resort*, to *appease the wrath of God*, as Maria Francesca Raggi wrote (the occasion is also recorded by Giustiniani). A «general fast of three days was ordered» in order to invoke the «protection of St John the Baptist», co-patron saint of the city, and for three nights his ashes were brought to the top of the cathedral bell tower so that the saint could bless «the whole state» from that height, and intercede for a longed-for «miraculous grace»<sup>216</sup>. Special prayers to St John the Baptist and St

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<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 25, 1657.

<sup>215</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 15; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 36; M. Lagomarsino, *Per i pubblici poteri*, cit., pp. 424-425. See also O. Niccoli, *Rinuncia, pace, perdono. Rituali di pacificazione della prima età moderna*, in «Studi Storici», 40, 1, 1999, pp. 219-261. Cf. A. Ceccarelli, *Plague and Politics*, cit.

<sup>216</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June 22, 1657. See also, D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 373, 376; M. Lagomarsino, *Per i pubblici poteri*, cit., pp. 421-422.

Bernard (another co-patron saint) were also composed<sup>217</sup>, and at the end of December 1657, a «*Te Deum* was sung, to give grace, and all of the cannons were fired»<sup>218</sup>.

While devotions met with his approval, Giustiniani gives a rather sceptical account of the abilities of the medical staff the authorities at one point called from France: but as Genoa still remained under quarantine, Giustiniani informed the Marquis of San Tommaso in October 1657 that the French «Surgeons and Physicians» had been «sent back [...] to Marseilles [...] as they were deemed neither able nor sufficient [for the need]’ and their skills had afforded very ‘little satisfaction»<sup>219</sup>.

He was greatly impressed, on the other hand, by the Frenchman Maurice of Toulon, a Capuchin friar he describes as «distinguished perfumer of infected things [...] and of the places where plague victims have died» (the friar did indeed compose a treatise which is a great source for our understanding of this plague wave). Giustiniani praised the friar lavishly for the ability he showed in «purging this city», and his fellow citizens largely agreed (one was the annalist Casoni, son of Gio. Michele, member of the Magistrato di Sanità)<sup>220</sup>. The government rewarded Father Maurice with a gift of religious items, but also, at the friar’s request, the liberation of «certain Frenchmen sentenced to the galleys». Giustiniani approved, relating how Father Maurice and his fellow «Capuchin [...] Perfumers» were «most contented» and highly esteemed when they left the city, which was by means of a galley of the Genoese public fleet<sup>221</sup>.

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<sup>217</sup> M. Lagomarsino, *Per i pubblici poteri*, cit., pp. 418-422. Cf. A. Ceccarelli, *Plague and Politics in Genoa*, cit.

<sup>218</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, January 1, 1658. Cf. Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 35; M. Lagomarsino, *Per i pubblici poteri*, cit., p. 429. See also P. Ulvioni, *Il gran castigo di Dio*, cit.; P. Benjamin, “*Convertire in se medesimo questo flagello*”, cit., pp. 123-156; R. Chiu, *Plague and Music in the Renaissance*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017.

<sup>219</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, October 24, 1657.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, January 12 and March 16, 1658. See also Maurizio da Tolone, *Trattato politico da praticarsi ne’ tempi di peste*, Calenzani, In Genova 1661, p. 490 di A. Manno, *Genova radunata*, Tipografia del Regio Istituto de’ sordo-muti, Genova 1898; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 33; D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 404. Father Antero, on the other hand, conspicuously stood apart in regarding the great expense that Genoa, unlike Naples, had incurred to perfume the city to be fundamentally useless, Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit, p. 193: «I conclude [...] by saying that, once the plague is over, let those who want to perfume do so, as Genoa splendidly did, to satisfy its citizens, and let those who do not want to perfume not do so, in imitation of Naples, which without any harm [...] rejoices in having spared itself the expense».

<sup>221</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 12 and March 16, 1658.

Giulia Calvi has portrayed the Genoa of the great plague as characterised by «a cultural panorama less diverse than in Naples and lacking figures of eminence», whether on the secular or religious side; in this regard, the Augustinian Father Antero and the Capuchin Father Maurice were exceptions<sup>222</sup>. On the other hand, the list of martyrs of this plague counts numerous members of the regular clergy as «victims of charity», Father Antero and Filippo Casoni recorded<sup>223</sup>; the study by Antonio Costa, on the other hand, also shows Genoa lost most of its parish priests, as several witnesses, including Maria Francesca Raggi, had repeatedly emphasised<sup>224</sup>. As far as we can see, however, Giustiniani only explicitly praised the two *healers* John of Paris (for his *miracles of great value*)<sup>225</sup> and Maurice of Toulon, which is to say only the two *French* clergymen, though there is the possibility that in his letters from 1656, all of which are lost to this day, he might have had some good to say about Father Antero and the many others who toiled at the lazarettos.

By the same account, we are inclined to guess Giustiniani would have found the services of other *lay healers* just as *useless* as those of the doctors and surgeons from Marseilles. Even when it came to *French* practitioners, his confidence in academic medicine was limited – an attitude he shared with Filippo Casoni and Father Antero. Casoni commented how the plague in Genoa had shown that doctors «did not know how to cure this type of disease», having no practical knowledge of it, whereas Antero pointed out no one who had resorted to the costly personal treatment of doctors had derived any benefit (and most had, in fact, died in agony)<sup>226</sup>.

Other observations by Giustiniani are more ambivalent, such as those relating to the situation in Naples, where the miracle of the relic of St Januarius [San Gennaro] had failed to occur. In January 1657, he wrote to the Duchess of Savoy to comment that «the procession of St Januarius took place in Naples with a great concourse [of the people]», «but at the same time in a spirit of incredible dejection», since «the usual liquefaction» («of the [congealed] blood from the head of that saint») that year «did not take place», which they the Neapolitans

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<sup>222</sup> Cf. F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., pp. 36-37, 49; G. Assereto, «Per la comune salvezza dal morbo contagioso», cit., pp. 12, 73, 141; D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 333 ff.; G. Calvi, «Dell'altrui communicatione», cit., pp. 562, 571-577. See also W.G. Naphy and A. Spicer, *La peste in Europa*, cit., p. 51.

<sup>223</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 3 ff.; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., pp. 8, 45.

<sup>224</sup> A. Costa, *La peste in Genova*, cit., pp. 367-368; D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 400.

<sup>225</sup> John of Paris was also praised by Father Antero, Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 3.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26 ff.; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 59.

took as a sign of God's continuing displeasure<sup>227</sup>. A week later, the Kingdom of Naples was further cast into gloominess by another omen as «besides the usual miracle [...] of blood [...] not having repeated itself, not even St Nicholas [patron] of Bari had delivered the usual manna»<sup>228</sup>.

In the context of the diverse allegiances of the Italian states, these remarks may carry several shades of meaning. They may be laden with irony, and even suggest God was justly punishing the Neapolitans, as subjects of the Spanish *Monarquía*, for allowing the plague to enter Italy in the first place and then trying to lay the blame on the French (a fact Mazarin also mentioned in a letter to Giustiniani)<sup>229</sup>.

The Genoese, that is, lent little credence to rumours of plague-spreaders and other sorts of superstitions and «false miracles»<sup>230</sup>, but the convergence of a plague wave of exceeding gravity and of an intense international crisis (particularly in their relations with Madrid) did lead many of them to point the finger against the Spanish monarchy and its subjects<sup>231</sup>.

Giustiniani seems to merge the political and preternatural in his letters, however, and has a strong tendency to associate divine resentment (as manifested by the continuation of the contagion or its recrudescence) with such other portents of further disasters as particularly violent weather. Around the time in which he speculated on the failed occurrence of the miracles of the Saints Januarius and Nicholas, Giustiniani further noted, for example, that «a deluge of water falling from the sky» had prevented communication across a large stretch of the peninsula<sup>232</sup>, again causing *darkness* and *silence* to return with unusual violence.

A similar outlook is displayed in the letter to the Marquis of San Tommaso dated 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1658, in which Giustiniani speaks of the great «sadness» that once again marred Genoa's Christmas. What happened was that due to «a very

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<sup>227</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, January 13, 1657. Cf. M. Lagomarsino, *Per i pubblici poteri*, cit., p. 411; S. D'Alessio, *Un'ultima punizione*, cit., pp. 325-334; Ead., *On the Neapolitan Plague of 1656: Expedients and Remedies*, in D. Cecere, C. De Caprio, L. Gianfrancesco and P. Palmieri eds., *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples. Politics, Communication and Culture*, Viella, Roma 2018, pp. 187-204.

<sup>228</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 20a, 1657.

<sup>229</sup> B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 3c. Cf. G. Calvi, *L'oro, il fuoco, le forche: la peste napoletana del 1656*, in «Archivio storico italiano», CXXXIX, 3, 1981, pp. 405-458.

<sup>230</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 15 ff. See also G. Assereto, «*Per la comune salvezza dal morbo contagioso*», cit.; A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit., p. 185. Cf. L.A. Muratori, *Del governo della peste e delle maniere di guardarsene...*, N. Gavelli, In Pesaro 1743; G. Cosmacini, *Storia della medicina e della sanità in Italia dalla peste europea alla guerra mondiale, 1348-1918*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1987.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., pp. 27-28.

<sup>232</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 20a, 1657.

strong sea storm, which lasted from the morning of St Stephen's Day until the evening of the Feast of the Holy Innocents [28 December]», a number of boats moored in the harbour had sunk, causing the «death of about twenty sailors». Even the larger ships had been in great danger, including seven which were about to set sail for Cadiz with a cargo of «over a million in gold» and «precious wares» already loaded<sup>233</sup>.

As Giustiniani relates it, the end of the plague also coincided with an exceptionally harsh winter and early spring. «We have [...] such excessive spells of cold and snow as have never been seen before, and such that neither messenger nor notice can reach us from anywhere», he wrote on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1658<sup>234</sup>, and on 30<sup>th</sup> March, similarly: «there continues, beneath this sky of ours, an extravagance of thunderstorms so unusual that the eldest remember nothing like it [...], even the day before yesterday we had such an abundance of snow, and cold so severe, that one could not leave one's room [bedroom]»<sup>235</sup>.

But cold weather was at least believed to be beneficial in times of epidemic and slow down the contagion, in an age that still inclined to relate plague to disorders moral and spiritual, as also astral, geological, and meteorological phenomena<sup>236</sup>. Father Antero provides an example in his account of July 1657, when thousands died before his eyes:

in the month [...] of July, on a very dark night, a great rain suddenly fell, accompanied by thunder and lightning. I soon awoke, and oh what shouts, what groans, what screams were heard! What tearful voices mingled with the bellowing of thunder! They wanted to flee, but could not even get up, because the blankets were already all soaked with water and kept them oppressed and almost suffocated.<sup>237</sup>

Ravara, a priest, also noted the torrential rains of the summer of 1657, whereas Maria Francesca Raggi, on the other hand, recorded how the weather in the summer of 1656 had been so hot that the like «had not been felt for a long time» and related these extreme weather conditions to the course of the epidemic<sup>238</sup>.

Giustiniani's concerns about cold weather are probably to be framed in the context of his trade, as his thoughts most likely went to the tragedy of couriers stranded or lost on the Apennines, where they easily ended up being robbed or

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<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to the Marquis of San Tommaso, January 2, 1658.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, February 21, 1658.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 30, 1658.

<sup>236</sup> W. Rossi, *Morbo, contagio, profilassi*, cit., p. 393; R. Sansa, *Strategie di prevenzione a confronto*, cit., p. 94; S.K. Cohn, *Cultures of plague*, cit.

<sup>237</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., p. 17.

<sup>238</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 355, 413.



would be waiting in vain for a rescue team from the other side of the border barriers, cut off by river floods and heavy snow.

All in all, Giustiniani stands out as a typical seventeenth-century Genoese patrician; his faith in medicine was limited and qualified, but he equally disregarded most superstitions surrounding the plague, and particularly the notion that it could be the work of plague-spreaders<sup>239</sup>. He belonged, in short, to a ruling class that was primarily concerned with moral issues and material problems: from the way a sanitary crisis was to be controlled to the handling of its adverse effects on the economy and on society.

Giustiniani also often complained of physical ailments; he was afflicted with gout, as were many of his well-to-do contemporaries. Gout would often have him bedridden and get in the way of his business, and probably compounded his distrust of physicians (none of whom had been able to ease his suffering). «I've been in bed for over twenty days, succumbing to an importunate, obstinate *distillation*», he wrote, for example, in March 1657, «which has awakened my gout and [is causing] a persistent, inexpressible lack of appetite». On this occasion, Giustiniani apologised to the Duchess for the exceptional «brevity» of his letter but writing any further was truly beyond him that day<sup>240</sup>. A month and a half later he was hardly any better, still «in bed with the gout»<sup>241</sup>, and the same repeated itself in the spring of the following year, the gout having «continued to afflict me more severely than I thought». He was, this time, able to get out of bed, but not to write, being almost unable to use «his right hand»<sup>242</sup>.

These accounts would suggest that, although assisted by numerous scribes and secretaries, he probably preferred to draft at least some of his letters personally. But his gout must have meant he sometimes had to delegate the handling of important matters, starting with the drafting of letters and the arrangement of parcels, which was sensitive business, as we have seen, since most of his letters needed to be concealed by a disguise envelope. Gout too contributed to delays and the misdelivery of correspondence, as in the instance in which Giustiniani blamed one of his secretaries for a letter that never reached the Duchess and must have been slipped into the wrong envelope<sup>243</sup>.

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<sup>239</sup> P. Preto, *Epidemia, paura e politica nell'Italia moderna*, cit., p. 27; A. Ceccarelli, «In forse di perdere la libertà». *La Repubblica di Genova nella riflessione di Giulio Pallavicino (1583-1635)*, Viella, Roma 2018, pp. 68-104.

<sup>240</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 30, 1657.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 17 and 18, 1657.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, April 15 (?), 1658.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, May 18, 1657. Cf. B. Marinelli, *Un corrispondente genovese di Mazzarino*, cit., 1a.

#### 4. Returning to life: Genoese women and the plague

In spite of all that has emerged about the particular difficulties that beset Giustiniani during the plague, which descended from his *status* as a gentleman, his duties as an informer, but also the duplicity of a role that sometimes required of him that he veer away from the facts towards persuasion, the overall impression is that he was an optimist and wished to enjoy life. This outlook prevails in his letters to the Court of Turin and may well have influenced his interlocutors – for better or for worse, we might say, when we consider the callousness of his description of the peak of the epidemic. On the other hand, we need to remind ourselves of how easily death came about, whether by plague or otherwise, and was a harsh but commonplace fact of life for the men and women of early modernity, regardless of wealth and social rank<sup>244</sup>. With regard to this mindset, Giustiniani's letters from the end-phase of the epidemic are particularly instructive, pervaded as they are by a will to excise all memories of the experience and move on – something that's rather common to accounts of the plague, whether in the form of letters, diaries, chronicles, or otherwise<sup>245</sup>.

In a letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 1658, Giustiniani describes a swarm of «foreigners», coming «from all over», who have flocked to Genoa «to work in various professional fields». Coming from his long confinement in the Gulf of Rapallo he hadn't been at all optimistic about the way the city would appear to him and was instead struck by an «incredible» sight (something «I did not believe possible») which inspired him to assure the Duchess that «Genoa will soon return to being its old self». This information was followed by the news that the Marquis of Castel Rodrigo, the new Viceroy of Sardinia (whom the Republic had provided with two galleys, so that he could reach his new assignment «with greater safety»), was ready to resume «trade with us»<sup>246</sup>.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March 1658, Giustiniani enthusiastically reported on the carnival in Genoa, which now, in the climate of new-found normality, was even «more cheerful and sumptuous than at other times [in the years before the plague] with

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<sup>244</sup> P. Preto, *Epidemia, paura e politica nell'Italia moderna*, cit.; J. Delumeau, *Il peccato e la paura. L'idea di colpa in Occidente dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1987; Ph. Ariès, *L'uomo e la morte dal Medioevo a oggi*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1980; A. Tenenti, *Il senso della morte e l'amore della vita nel Rinascimento: Francia e Italia*, Einaudi, Torino 1982; M. Vovelle, *La morte e l'Occidente: dal 1300 ai giorni nostri*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2000.

<sup>245</sup> ASGe, AS, 2328, LM, N, Nicolò Invrea to the Government, July 2 (?), 1658; G. Calvi, *L'oro, il fuoco, le forche*, cit., pp. 405-458.

<sup>246</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, January 1, 1658.

a lavish parade of masques»<sup>247</sup>. He also vouched that «many marriages were celebrated» in the meantime, as the city filled up «with plebs, thousands of new ones born every week»<sup>248</sup>. This is stock Giustiniani hyperbole: Genoa's population was definitely not increasing by several thousand units a week, and the rising demographic trend owed far more to a returning population<sup>249</sup> and new immigration<sup>250</sup> than births (which fell sharply in the two-year period 1656-57).

It is true, however, that marriages actually «grew dramatically» during the plague (as of 1656-57, in fact, as Father Antero also noted); most new unions would have been driven by need, as cohabiting and otherwise unregulated couples chose to seek the benefits of legal recognition and as widowers who suddenly found themselves exposed emotionally, financially, or perhaps materially, and may have had children to feed or some wealth, however modest, to safeguard also took refuge in a second marriage<sup>251</sup>. Whatever could be said of that data, it did not bespeak an explosion of *joie de vivre*.

We learn from a different source, clergyman Giovanni Francesco Ravera (writing at almost exactly the same time, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1658), that Genoa had indeed repopulated, but mainly of its middle- and upper-class inhabitants. The poorer neighbourhoods of Pre', Portoria, and Marina, for instance, were now ghostly

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<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, March 7, 1658. Among the greatest Genoese thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, carnival is a recurrent and divisive theme. There were intellectuals such as Giulio Pallavicino (1583-1635), of the Accademia degli Addormentati, which traditionally arranged the carnival entertainment, on the one hand, and then there was, for instance, *the philosopher* Andrea Spinola. Pallavicino (who was *prince* of the earliest Addormentati, 1590), paid great attention to carnival rituals and considered them an indispensable element of the city's history (and its chronicles, consequently). The same applies to Anton Giulio Brignole Sale (1605-65), who re-founded the Addormentati and was author of *Il Carnovale* (Venice, 1639). Spinola, on the other hand, opposed all forms of worldliness and considered carnival to be a time of dangerous moral distortion, particularly harmful to young men and ladies: masques, balls, boat rides, comedies and amorous skirmishes were a clear departure from the austerity of the past. To thinkers of this bent, the disorder and unruliness which are typical features of carnival also evoked the image of pestilence, BUG, ms. B.VIII.25, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico*, entry *Commedie*; C. Farinella, *Accademie e università a Genova, secoli XVI-XIX*, in D. Punch ed., *Storia della cultura ligure*, Società Ligure di Storia Patria, Genova 2005, vol. 3, p. 119 (pp. 111-196); F. Vazzoler, *Letteratura e spettacolo nell'età della Repubblica aristocratica*, in *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 471-492; S. Morando, *La letteratura in Liguria tra Cinque e Seicento*, in *Ibid.*, p. 39 (pp. 27-64). Cf. A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit., pp. 100, 114.

<sup>248</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy, March 7, 1658. Cf. S. Cerutti, *Matrimoni del tempo di peste. Torino nel 1630*, in «Quaderni storici», n. s., 19, 55, 1984, pp. 65-106.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. G. Felloni, *Per la storia della popolazione di Genova*, cit., pp. 236-254.

<sup>250</sup> I will only mention Andrea Zappia's recent volume, underlining the effort made by the Republic to attract businessmen, with particular reference to exponents of the Jewish nation, A. Zappia, *Il miraggio del Levante*, cit.

<sup>251</sup> A. Costa, *La peste in Genova*, cit., pp. 367-369.

places, «deserted» and «frightful», and very few of the old workshops had reopened for want of tradesmen. The prices of wares had gone up prohibitively, and the prisons, finally, had filled with individuals whom the plague had turned into swindlers, thieves, and murderers<sup>252</sup>.

In striking contrast to this, Giustiniani wrote his most remarkable statement about the city's renaissance in June 1658, describing it as once again opulent and pervaded by joy. It is a fact that the Genoese *siglo de oro* had waned, and Giustiniani was fully aware of it<sup>253</sup>. And yet, as far as this particular letter is concerned, it seems justified to separate the rhetoric from a fundamental statement of a different order: Genoa had been through an ordeal, was now on the mend, and he was understandably proud to see it happen.

He regaled the Duchess with an account of a ball (the most beautiful «ball I have seen in my life»), which had taken place in one of the courtyards of the Palazzo Ducale, the doge presiding. There had been «two hundred dames, some as spectators and some as dancers, and among them, thirty attired in the French manner». The sumptuous majesty of the *French dames* had, indeed, stolen the show and conquered «the hearts» of all gentlemen. In style, that is, they had surpassed their rivals by far, who were instead «dressed in the Spanish manner, who had competed, with their large following, for the height of fashion, the most beautiful and sophisticated»<sup>254</sup>. An «infinite number of Knights and Citizens» had also attended, arriving from many «Provinces of Europe», and especially from «Venice, Rome and Milan». It was a feast that would be long remembered for the «great concourse» of participants and for its «extreme gaiety» and «incomparable pomp». Nothing like it had been seen *under the sky of Genoa* for «over a century»<sup>255</sup>.

Arguably, there is at play an intent to flatter the Duchess herself, who in her youth had been a champion of French tastes and fashion. In her latter years (1660-63), through Giustiniani, she also accepted to become the patroness of a Genoese lady who had fallen into disgrace through an unfortunate marriage arrangement and was held in public contempt for leading a frivolous life and dressing in the *French style*<sup>256</sup>. Giovanni Francesco Ravera also picked up on the change in fashion

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<sup>252</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 434-435. Cf. A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. G. Assereto, *Il ceto dirigente genovese e la sua diversità*, in *Ceti dirigenti municipali in Italia e in Europa in età moderna e contemporanea*, ETS, Pisa 2003, pp. 83-92; P. Boccardo and C. Di Fabio eds., *El siglo de los Genoveses e una lunga storia di arte e splendori nel Palazzo dei Dogi*, Catalogo della mostra, Genova 4 dicembre 1999-28 maggio, Electa, Milano 1999.

<sup>254</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June (?) 1658.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, June (?) 1658.

<sup>256</sup> G. Ferretti ed., *Christine de France en son siècle*, in «XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle», 262, 2014; B.A. Raviola and P. Gentile, *L'Umiltà a corte. Gentildonne, reti familiari con Casa Savoia tra Cinquecento e Novecento*, in A.

that occurred after the great plague: the Genoese, «particularly the ladies, began to dress all in the *French style*», he noted, and «although they were thus more comfortably dressed, they had lost that gracefulness and attractiveness that they had had by dressing in the *Spanish style*»<sup>257</sup>.

Genoa's women had long been the object of critical scrutiny. One known commonplace was captured in the description made by Enea Silvio Piccolomini (later Pius II, 1456-64, but then still a young humanist)<sup>258</sup> of Genoa as a *paradiso delle donne* – a perception that later translated into the indictment by thinker Andrea Spinola (1562?-1631) of a city he judged to be wholly in the hands of forward, uninhibited dames (*matte signore*), who loved parties and comedies, balls and boat trips, sleeveless dresses and cosmetics, and had no other interest than squandering their fathers' and husbands' wealth<sup>259</sup>.

During the great plague, however, it was immediately noted «more women died than men»<sup>260</sup>, especially among those who dedicatedly tended to the sick and were less well-off. Father Antero recorded the deaths of five out of the six rectors of the *Casa degli Orfani*, for instance, but great munificence, dedication, and personal sacrifice were also shown by numerous gentlewomen, some of whom went so far as to shed their luxurious robes, cut their beautiful hair, and volunteering at the lazarettos in person. Father Antero and Filippo Casoni both composed their tributes to the *heroines* and *martyrs* who came from the ruling nobility, one of whom was the young and beautiful Laura Violante Pinelli<sup>261</sup>. As a counterpoint to the irony of Piccolomini and Spinola's denunciation, we should be mindful that the women Genoa called *magnifiche* could also boast an excellent track record of works of piety and gave substantial impulse to the construction

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Cantaluppi, and B.A. Raviola eds., *L'Umiltà e le rose. Storia di una Compagnia femminile a Torino tra età moderna e contemporanea*, Olschki, Firenze 2017, pp. 29-68; A. Becchia, F. Vital Durand eds., *Édifier l'état: politique et culture en Savoie au temps de Christine de France*, Université Savoie Mont Blanc, Chambéry 2014. On the affair of Barbara Spinola, who had entered an unfortunate marriage, A. Ceccarelli, *Di supplica in supplica, di legge in legge. Coniugi in lite tra Francia, Spagna e rispettivi alleati: Barbara Spinola e Marcello Doria Galleano (1618-1660)*, in «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée moderne et contemporaines» - MEFRIM, 133-1, 2021, pp. 65-76.

<sup>257</sup> D. Presotto, *Genoa 1656-1657*, cit., p. 435.

<sup>258</sup> A. Scafì, *Un pontefice allievo delle muse*, in E.S. Piccolomini, *Dialogo su un sogno*, A. Scafì ed., Aragno, Torino 2004, pp. 10-13.

<sup>259</sup> BUG, ms. B.VIII.26, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico*, entry *Donne*; *Ibid.*, ms. B.VIII.28, entry *Paggi*. For an extensive discussion of the subject, see A. Ceccarelli, «*In forse di perdere la libertà*», cit., pp. 68-80.

<sup>260</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 17, 56; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 49.

<sup>261</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 56-87; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 42.

of the Genoese welfare system (another of Genoa's pioneering schemes); let us only mention Caterina Fieschi Adorno (whose name is inextricably linked to the history of the *Ospedale degli Incurabili*, 1447-1510)<sup>262</sup> and Lelia Pallavicino (who toiled to help the displaced and destitute in 1625, as the armies of France and Piedmont attempted to conquer the Republic)<sup>263</sup>.

We know much less about the women who were in monasteries at the time of the plague, whose families, whether aristocratic or otherwise, had had them enclosed within the more or less *permeable confines* of a convent even before the epidemic<sup>264</sup>. We do, at least, have the letters of Maria Francesca Raggi, whose gift for expression enabled her to paint a vivid, tough grievous, picture of her anxieties and loneliness as twice *prisoner of the plague*: not allowed exit her city convent while, around the streets and alleys of Genoa «people could be plagued by [just] a breath from the windows»<sup>265</sup>. All along, far removed from her convent of Santa Brigida, cardinal Lorenzo (her uncle) and his male nephews *were enjoying themselves* at their villa at Sampierdarena. Later still, as the plague progressed and cardinal Raggi and Maria Francesca's brothers moved inland to Novi Ligure she described her relatives in Genoa as being as far removed from her as those in Rome<sup>266</sup>.

Reading between the lines, Giustiniani's description of the ball at Palazzo Ducale bears testimony of sorts to his acknowledgement of the suffering of Genoese women during the plague<sup>267</sup>, consistently with a tradition of

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<sup>262</sup> BUG, ms. B.VIII.27, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico*, entry *Hospitali*; R. Savelli, *Dalle confraternite allo Stato. Il sistema assistenziale genovese nel Cinquecento*, in «Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria», XXIV, 1984, 1, pp. 171-216; E. Grendi, *La repubblica aristocratica dei genovesi. Politica, carità e commercio fra Cinque e Seicento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1987, pp. 281-306; Id., *Pauperismo e Albergo dei poveri nella Genova del Seicento*, in «Rivista Storia Italiana», LXXXVII, 1975, 4, pp. 621-665; M. Del Lungo, *Le risorse economiche dell'assistenza a Genova: il patrimonio dell'Ospedale degli Incurabili (secoli XVI-XIX)*, in «Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi», XVII, 1983, pp. 213-238; E. Parma Armani, *Pauperismo e beneficenza a Genova: documenti per l'Albergo dei Poveri*, in «Quaderni Franzoniani», I, 1988, 2, pp. 69-180; G. Petti Balbi, *Il sistema assistenziale genovese alle soglie dell'età moderna: l'Ufficio di Misericordia (secoli XIV-XV)*, in «Reti Medievali Rivista», XIV, 2013, 2, pp. 111-150; D. Solfaroli Camillocci, *I devoti della carità. Le confraternite del Divino Amore nell'Italia del primo Cinquecento*, Città del Sole, Napoli 2002; V. Polonio, *Ubi karitas, ibi pax: l'aiuto al più debole. Secoli IX-XVII*, in D. Puncuh ed., *Storia della cultura ligure*, cit., vol. 1 (Genova 2004), pp. 311-368; F. Ferrando, *Le istituzioni assistenziali della Repubblica di Genova*, in I. Merloni and A. Lercari eds., *La Misericordia a Genova e il suo Magistrato: istituzioni e società tra XV e XVIII secolo*, Atti del Convegno, Genova, 16 dicembre 2016, Sagep, Genova 2019, pp. 125-152.

<sup>263</sup> A. Ceccarelli, *'In forse di perdere la libertà'*, cit., pp. 72, 152.

<sup>264</sup> E. Novi Chavarria, *Monache e gentildonne. Un labile confine: poteri politici e identità religiose nei monasteri napoletani, secoli XVI-XVII*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2004.

<sup>265</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 358.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 358, 372.

<sup>267</sup> M. P. Zanoboni, *La vita al tempo della peste*, cit., pp. 30 ff.

involvement in the plights of their city throughout its most difficult moments. Within the aristocracy, we learn from Giovanni Francesco Ravara, the plague killed approximately 210 gentlemen and 60 gentlewomen<sup>268</sup>.

### Conclusions

The letters of Giannettino Giustiniani, we may conclude, provide a necessary complement to the framework of studies on the great plague in Genoa, furthering our understanding of early modern communication systems and of the immediate aftermath of the epidemic. His accounts perfectly exemplify the difficulties faced when seeking to convey urgent (and possibly confidential) information in times of plague, while the news with which he was concerned were crucial to the changes then taking place in Mediterranean Europe on a political and diplomatic level<sup>269</sup>.

Because of the plague, or because of the way the plague offered a pretext for governments to control postal flows, vast numbers of letters never reached their destination and confidentiality could not be ensured. We learn from Giustiniani of the ways in which public officials stole or pried into high-security correspondence by appealing to plague-control measures (a *ploy* which philosopher Andrea Spinola had clearly foreseen)<sup>270</sup>. But just as Giustiniani could blame several frauds on Spanish intelligence and denounce the Spanish for robbing his courier and prying into his correspondence, the incident at Sarzana shows how this *plague of letters* ran both ways.

The plague also caused delays and often meant information could not be double-checked or cross-examined. This served Giustiniani's ends when it suited him to provide mitigated accounts of the extent of the disaster in Genoa which

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<sup>268</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 412.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. P.M. Donato, *Lettere, corrispondenze, reti epistolari. Tradizioni editoriali, temi di ricerca, questioni aperte*, in «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée moderne et contemporaines» - MEFROM, 132, 2, 2020, pp. 249-255; H. Sirantoine ed., *Epistola 2. La lettre diplomatique: écriture épistolaire et actes de la pratique dans l'Occident latin médiéval*, Casa de Velazquez, Madrid 2018; T. Bru and S. de la Forest d'Armaillé eds., *Matière à écrire. Les échanges de correspondance du XVIe au XIXe siècle*, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, Saint-Denis, 2017; P. Cardim, «Nem tudo se pode escrever». Correspondencia diplomática e información «política» en Portugal durante el siglo XVII, in F. Bouza ed., *Cultura epistolar en la alta Edad Moderna. Usos de la carta y de la correspondencia entre el manuscrito y el impreso*, in «Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos», 4, 2005, pp. 95-128; J. Raymond, N. Moxham eds., *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2016; E. Plebani, E. Valeri and P. Volpini eds., *Diplomazie: linguaggi, negoziati e ambasciatori fra XV e XVI secolo*, Franco Angeli Milano 2017.

<sup>270</sup> Andrea Spinola had warned the Genoese against the risk that their enemies might sooner or later take advantage of the plague to seize the Ligurian state, BUG, ms. B.VIII.28, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico*, entry *Peste*.

he knew the Court of Turin could hardly verify, and it is quite possible that he fabricated outright lies as a last resort. Likewise, he mistrusted physicians as far as his own health was concerned but would still invoke the authority of their opinion to reassure the Savoy Court. As for his friend Di Negro's obdurate reluctance to write any letters from a certain point onwards, we can only speculate.

The exercise of persuasion was, besides, Giustiniani's stock-in-trade and there's no reason to doubt he would not wince at lying in the service of his country. It is a fact that the Genoese oligarchy made a strenuous effort to contain the disease in the early days of contagion but simultaneously denied plague had actually reached the Republic and ordered all of their agents to stifle all rumours of plague (a scheme Antonio Costa qualifies as a «merciful lie»)<sup>271</sup>. On the other hand, Genoa had founded its fortune on trade and was governed by a ruling class that realised how it made pragmatic sense to make *apt plague management* depend on *apt news management*<sup>272</sup>. When we discount the numerous *magnifici* who, quite naturally, fled to their country villas, neither cowardice nor ineptitude tarnished the conduct of governing aristocracy when disaster struck (starting with the high example set by the highest authorities: Sauli, as Doge, and Archbishop Durazzo)<sup>273</sup>.

In this light, we can see how Giustiniani would have felt justified in his doggedness to *downplay* mortality, morbidity, and declining economic indicators or, vice versa, to *exaggerate* birth and marriage figures, overall population, civic participation, as the case required. Still, we need to be mindful that his surviving letters cover the years 1657-58, when the damage to Genoa's economic and productive fabric was macroscopic and the Republic urgently needed to restart its postal system, on which so much depended. Unfortunately, we can only make intelligent guesses as to how reliable Giustiniani's accounts were seen to be by the politicians and diplomats at the Court of Turin (for instance, when he dismissed the news from beyond the Apennines as *rumours*), but it is a fact that his efforts to secure the reopening of mountain passes on the strength of the information he was giving them were repeatedly frustrated<sup>274</sup>.

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<sup>271</sup> A. Costa, *La peste in Genova*, cit., p. 348.

<sup>272</sup> D. Pedemonte, *La 'pubblica salute' dello Stato genovese*, cit., pp. 99-120.

<sup>273</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 121-127; F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 43; G. Assereto, «Per la comune salvezza dal morbo contagioso», cit., p. 143; M. Lagomarsino, *Per i pubblici poteri*, cit., pp. 420-421; J. Petitjean, *Gênes et le bon gouvernement de l'information*, cit., pp. 215-232. Cf. A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit., p. 180; P. Calcagno and D. Palermo, *Introduzione to La quotidiana emergenza*, cit., pp. VII ff.

<sup>274</sup> A. Pennini, «Con la massima diligentia possibile». *Diplomazia e politica estera sabauda nel primo Seicento*, Carocci, Roma 2015.



While Giustiniani's political allegiances lay squarely with France, we should not take all of his opinions as reflecting this bias. His negative comments on the way the plague was managed in Naples, for example, are not only in line with the opinion of his Genoese contemporaries but with the understanding of most historians today, and should not, therefore, be written off as propaganda<sup>275</sup>. As for the work of the Congregazione di Sanità in Rome, of which he spoke in unflattering terms, the historical evidence is not conclusive and tends to divide historians, whereas Giustiniani's Genoese contemporaries would have taken some pride in the positive contributions their representatives made towards establishing what came to be advertised as the Chigi papacy myth<sup>276</sup>.

In the darkest phase of the epidemic, Giustiniani also spoke out against the Genoese ruling class, denouncing a situation that had become *worse than in Naples* on account of mismanagement and negligence by the Serenissimi which resulted in tragedy that really amounted to *cruelty*<sup>277</sup>. Cardinal Raggi had also expressed himself along similar lines, saying the Genoese approach had been too light-hearted, first underestimating the gravity of the epidemic, then taking draconian measures which largely remained unimplemented<sup>278</sup>. Alessandro Pastore has also pointed out their action was impaired by «mistakes», «delays», and «flaws»<sup>279</sup>. On the other hand, when that *crucial week* was over, Giustiniani revised his assessment considerably: he went back to praising the Magistrato di Sanità and spoke in more nuanced terms of some of the Republic's strategic infrastructure (its postal system and customs office, for example).

Quite a few of his statements concerning the plague agree fully with our understanding of the events, suggesting he could be objective. The greater part of the territory of the Republic was scarcely affected, historians largely agree, and the epidemic did initially cause the greatest number of victims among the lower classes. For the reasons that have already been discussed, and not for the optimistic reasons Giustiniani advertised, there was also a consistent rise in marriages.

On a different level of enquiry, the letters afford insights into Giustiniani's psychology and existential outlook, accounting for his anguish and dismay in the face of the thick *darkness* and tormenting *silence* that set in with the plague. These

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<sup>275</sup> Antero Maria da San Bonaventura, *Lazzaretti della Città*, cit., pp. 16, 193; I. Fusco, *Il Regno di Napoli nelle emergenze sanitarie del XVII secolo. Istituzioni, politiche e controllo dello spazio marittimo e terrestre*, in «Storia urbana», 147, 2015, pp. 51-70; Ead., *La grande epidemia. poteri e corpi sociali di fronte all'emergenza nella Napoli spagnola*, Guida, Napoli 2017.

<sup>276</sup> F. Casoni, *Successi del contagio*, cit., p. 24. Cf. A. Ceccarelli, *Rome, 1656-57*, cit., pp. 27-76.

<sup>277</sup> ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine, Duchess of Savoy, July 7, 1657.

<sup>278</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., pp. 354, 361, 364.

<sup>279</sup> A. Lonardi, «*Quell'incrociarsi fatale ed aguzzo di membra*», cit., pp. 71-72; A. Pastore, *Crimine e giustizia in tempo di peste*, cit., pp. 173 ff.

feelings of generalised anxiety, precipitating into anguish and dismay, and sometimes anger, would have been primarily motivated by reasons of office, and that is one side of the story. At the same time, it is also possible to extrapolate from his biography into a cross-cultural, comparative perspective. We find that similar references to darkness and silence define human reactions to epidemics crisis across history, but, from a different angle, it would be worth exploring the extent to which the sense of being in a *blackout* among Giustiniani's contemporaries was accentuated by their being a generation shaped by the recent revolution in postal systems. Men and women had become accustomed to, and dependent on, receiving letters *two or three days after they'd been written*, Giustiniani records, and had taken to writing large numbers of letters which would reach the most diverse destinations. Therein lay one of life's greatest joys, which could also produce a sense of *craving*, wrote Maria Francesca Raggi<sup>280</sup>. The plague, in short, gave these writers a heightened perception of the importance of letters and moved them to write more than ever, in the full knowledge that each letter might be their last (Maria Francesca Raggi) – a dismay against which writing offered, in a sense, a powerful *remedy*.

There is a lot more that this powerful stream of letters from the time of the great plague in Genoa might teach us, if the letters are read for more than historical data. On the margins of the story told by Giannettino Giustiniani, we are left with the image of the several thousand letters and parcels that were lost, abandoned, or destroyed (as Filippo Spinola, Genoa Postmaster general also testified). While they neither reached their destination nor are available for our scrutiny, the fact itself that we are aware that they were once written bears witness to the desperate attempt to communicate with the outside world by Genoese citizens of both sexes and diverse social conditions.

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<sup>280</sup> D. Presotto, *Genova 1656-1657*, cit., p. 373. Cf. W.H. McNeill, *La peste nella storia: epidemie, morbi e contagio dall'antichità all'età contemporanea*, Einaudi, Torino 1976.

### **Selected letters, selected excerpts**

(ASTo, C, LM, G, 5, Giannettino Giustiniani to Christine Duchess of Savoy/to the Marquis of San Tommaso, January 1657-October 1658)

**January 13, 1657** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Lei mi chiese di avere pensiero di due casse del Commendatore Gini, le quali, per li molti accidenti sovvenuti dopo del loro arrivo in questa città, non è stato possibile sbrigarle per il contagio dalli Lazaretti; hora restano purgate e libere e pronte da potersi inviare ad ogni cenno, come ne ho scritto alcune settimane fa al medesimo Signor Commendatore, dal quale non havendo ricevuto risposta, vorrei sapere ciò che se ne deve fare, et a chi indirizzarle a Savona, perché gionghino costì con sicurezza».

**January 13, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Ma come che il contagio ha non solo dissordinato tutte le cose, ma apportato insieme mille pregiuditij, gli è forza ch'anch'io ne senta la mia parte [...]. A Napoli si era fatta la Processione di S. Genaro, con grandissimo concorso, ma parimente con incredibile mestizia per non essere succeduta alla confrontatione del sangue alla testa di quel santo, la solita liquefattione, dal che temevano non cessati pur anche li flagelli di Dio».

**January 20a, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Il contagio di Genova si conserva in quella mediocrità quasi insensibile che ho scritto a V.A.R. colle mie precedenti, ma non si estingue, il che ci fa vivere in pena e non affacilitandoci la remissione della pratica con i Vicini, fa che si patisce di molti rinfreschi. Un diluvio d'acque cadute dal cielo questa settimana ha impedito che non si sono intese molte novità [...]. Di Napoli scrivono che continuava estrema la mestizia in quella città e nell'altre del Regno perché oltre il non essere successo il solito miracolo alla confrontatione del sangue colla testa di San Genaro, ne meno San Nicola di Bari rendeva più la solita manna».

**January 20b, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Continua Dio mercé sempre più viva la speranza di che debba restar affatto estinto il mal del contagio in Genova, mentre tutto lo Stato si conserva sano, e

l'istessi Borghi, e Ville all'intorno, ch'hanno reso libero e frequente commercio, e dentro la città sono sopra quindici giorni che non ne muoiono se non due o tre il giorno, e non ne cade maggior numero di feriti. In ogni modo non sbarbicandosi affatto la radice, si teme che al primo tempo possa ripolulare con maggior danno. Li Spagnuoli, che studiano sempre tutte le forme di farci del male, sotto palliato pretesto d'altro fine, sofferendo malvolentieri che le cose della sanità caminino meglio, e che possa reintrodursi il traffico, hanno fatto nel Milanese ripubblicare proclami rigorosissimi, proibenti non solo il commercio e contrattazione con il Genovesato, ma hanno fatto levare li Rastelli ch'erano piantati a Serravalle, per mezzo de quali si davano, con le dovute caotele, e si ricevevano e rinfreschi e robbe, e tutt'altro non volendo hora che verghino tampoco le Robbe di Germania, arrivata nel Milanese, destinate per Genova».

**January 26, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Riconfermo a V.A.R. che le cose del contagio vanno a terminare affatto, e di già tutti li Medici hanno sottoscritto che il Male habbi mutata specie e declinato a febri maligne. Il P. Fra' Giovanni di Parigi, il quale per verità ha in quest'occasioni fatti miracoli d'humano valore et esperienza, promette di doversi ritirare al suo Convento dopo mezza quaresima, perché non vi sarà più alcuna minima ombra d'infettatione contagiosa, e questa settimana dal Lazaretto ne ha inviati 300 risanati all'hospedale de convalescenti».

**February 17a, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Sempre più s'avvalorano le nostre speranze che la Città di Genova debba rimanere affatto libera dal contagio, passando de giorni che non ne muore alcuno e quando succedono de morti non eccede il numero di due in tre».

**February 17b, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Le cose del contagio si vanno credendo Dio mercé estinte, e se non fosse sovvenuta un'estrema humidità cagionata dal vento scirocco, si sarebbe dalla città ripresa la contrattazione con ambe le Riviere. In ogni modo si spera che debba seguire alla prossima settimana [...]; è giunta in questo porto la valigia del corriere di Francia senza alcuna lettera per me, e se la scorsa settimana mi dolsi della negligenza degli ufficiali francesi che più del solito ritardarono di rendermi le lettere di VAR, ora subisco l'infame assassinamento dei soldati spagnoli, che pure mi hanno levato sue lettere».

**February (?), 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Mi ha fatto sapere il detto corriere essere stato assassinato poco per di qua d'Aqui, da due compagnie di cavalleria spagnola, comandate dal sergente maggiore Orrisi d'Alessandria, le quali andavano per scortare, et assicurare il soprascritto denaro arrivato al Finale per il Governatore di Milano, gl'hanno preso tutte le lettere a me dirette, tutti li pieghi di S.A., di Modena, seicento doppie, alcune scatolette di galanterie, et altro. Non vi è stata questa volta maschera, l'assassinamento è seguito a sol chiaro, nella publica strada, è commesso dalli Spagnuoli; se alla Corte di Francia non se ne risentiranno questa volta, si potrà dire che resterà sottoscritta a favor de' Spagnuoli di poter assassinare (come vanno facendo) sempre che gli piacerà».

**March 3, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«[...] hora con far assassinare il Corriere, come seguì la settimana passata et hora con impedirgli che non possi passare i fiumi oltremodo ingrossati per le insolite piogge cadute, com'è seguito questa presente, non essendoci arrivata alcuna lettera, né di Francia, né di costì».

**March (?), 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Haverà V.A.R. veduto dalle mie precedenti come ridotta alla più estrema declinatione l'ombra del contagio provatasi nella città di Genova, si sperava la sua totale estintione, hora le aggiungo credersi affatto spirata, et in prova di questa comune credenza, essendo alcuni giorni che non è succeduto alcuna cosa, il Serenissimo Senato ha fatto levare tutti li Rastelli e rimessa la città alla libera contrattatione di tutto lo Stato».

**March 16, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Il Male Dio mercé è cessato affatto da Noi e si gode intera salute, trattandosi liberamente con tutto lo Stato e sperandosi di dover'haver libera pratica, come per inanzi anche in tutti gli altri».

**March 30, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Questa buona nuova, che si è compiaciuta darmi, spero che apporterà anche a me la salute, essendo sopra venti giorni che mi ritrovo a letto, combattuto da un'importuna ostinata distillatione, la quale non solo mi ha risvegliato la gotta, ma mi continua un'inappetenza inespriabile, che perciò la supplico humilissimamente questa volta di condonarmi la brevità».

**March 30, 1657** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Quando il detto Commendatore Gini per l'accidente del contagio non poteva avere i suoi due colli, fulminava, acciocché si operasse contro l'impossibile e per questo non potendosi eseguire, credette sino che si fossero smarriti, dando l'orecchio a frotole d'impostori; hora che sono già due mesi che li puol'havere, essendo dai Lazzaretti stati riposti in Dogana, pare non se ne curi, in ogni modo mi viene detto esservi un tal Padre Carmelitano Scalzo che aspetta un ordine perché se gli habbino a consignare, in arrivando, glieli farò rimettere in mano, et all'hora si potrà trattare di separare da essi le due ombrelle di V.S. Illustrissima a, ma per far comparire quelle robbe in mano di Madama Reale, mia Signora, io non vi darò mai il mio consenso, essendo state troppo maneggiate da Persone».

**April 6, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«In dirle come vanno le cose del contagio in Genova, sincerassimamente devo manifestargli non potersi chiamar la Città libera, succedendosi quando uno, quando due, tre o quattro casi il giorno, passando però qualche giorno che non vi muore alcuno. Li Medici fra di loro sono discordi, alcuni vogliono che sijno reliquie del contagio, et altri che il Male habbi cambiata specie; nelle Riviere vi è perfetta salute et in Genova si contratta con la medema libertà di quando non vi è mai stato male, il che fa credere quando bene fossero reliquie del contagio, che il male non sij più di specie maligna, mentre in una città sì ristretta di sito, dove abbonano centoventimila anime, non muoij che tre, o quattro Persone il giorno».

**April 15, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Del contagio scrissi a V.A.R. la sincerissima verità, e da quando gli scrissi ad hora, sempre si è andato migliorando, in modo che non se ne fa caso alcuno, et è falso tutto ciò che vien scritto diferentemente di quello che attesto a V.A.R.».

**May 18, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Sono rimasto meravigliatissimo nel leggere nell'humanissima di V.A.R. che mi segni di non haver ricevuto mie lettere quella settimana [...] e bisogna che per errore il segretario l'habbi posta o nel piego di Lione, o in quello di Parigi, per la detentione mia nel letto, trattenutovi dalla gotta».

**May 25, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Ne farò sabato prossimo cantare il Te Deum a Nostra Signora di Monteallegro, situata sopra Rapallo, tre o quattro miglia, sopra un'altissima eminenza che si scorge assai di lontano. Di sì fatte tavole della Regina del Cielo non ne ho vedut'altra, rappresenta quando sopra d'una bara vestita fu portata da quattro

Apostoli alla sepoltura, precedendo tutti gli altri professionalmente; sono incredibili le Gratie et i Miracoli che si compiace di fare a chi se gli raccomanda et ha un continuo concorso d'innumerabil Popolo; quivi ho fatto del continuo celebrar sacrificij e porger preghiere per V.A.R. e così hora gliene farò rendere le dovute gratie, non potendo capire in me d'allegrezza per la consolatione che sento di che V.A.R. si sia rimessa in sì buon stato, Dio glielo perfettioni a misura del suo desiderio, acciocché ne restino esauditi i miei voti».

**June 1, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Mi spiace che non posso dare a V.A.R. quelle buone nuove della salute della Città ch'ella mi segna desiderare nell'humilissima sua, essendo che il contaggio ha sempre preso vigore, e nella scorsa settimana, tra dentro e fuori, li morti sono stati trecentododici, gente però tutta dell'infima Plebe, ma non per questo si vive senza timore che non possa diffondersi anche negli Ordini migliori; le diligenze sono esattissime e tutte le immaginabili, colle quali si spera non solo che non debba far maggior progresso, ma che debba reprimersi et estinguersi affatto».

**June 7, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Il contagio ci tiene sempre più afflitti, continuando a morirne tra le Città et i Lazaretti vicino a Cento Persone il giorno, e scoprendone tutti li giorni sopra cento de feriti; il Male però non è ancora entrato fra la gente buona, ma il timore è grande, che vi si possa introdurre, le diligenze si continuano tutte le immaginabili esattissime, piaccia a Dio che giovino, e di liberarci da sì horribil flagello».

**June 15, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Continua nella Città di fare il contagio una strage crudelissima, morendone centocinquanta e dugento il giorno, tuttavia però nel Popolo minuto, e sono rarissimi li casi che succedono nelle Persone di mediocre honesta conditione; il timore è grande che il Male non si dilati maggiormente, ma grandissime sono anche le speranze nella misericordia di Dio, e nelle diligenze che si continuano di che debba restare estinto».

**June 22, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Con gran ragione la somma pietà di V.A.R. va commiserando le afflizioni della nostra Città, cresciuta in sommo grado, morendone più di trecento il giorno e denunciandosene maggior numero de feriti. Si è ricorso alla protezione di S. Gio. Battista ad honor del quale si è ordinato un digiuno generale di tre giorni, la sera de quali dal Campanile del Duomo benedirà tutto lo Stato colle sue Sacrissime

ceneri, e se ne attende qualche gratia miracolosa. Io Dio mercé, mi ritrovo da un anno in qua in una mia Villa nel Golfo di Rapallo, ventiquattro miglia discosta da Genova, dove si gode una generale perfetta salute senza che mai vi sia apparsa alcuna ombra di sospetto non che d'infettatione, così sij servita [...] di preservarci per l'avenire e di liberare la nostra città da un sì horribil flagello».

**July 7, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Temo certamente che Dio benedetto habbi voluto la vitiosa soverchia clemenza di questi Nostri Signori, essendo che per verità il non usar rigore in molte occasioni è crudeltà, et a me spiace grandemente di dover rappresentare a V.A.R. che le cose del contagio hanno ridotto la Città di Genova in peggior stato che non fu quella di Napoli, morendone quattro e cinquemila la settimana, senza distintione di Persone, cadendo colla Plebe et i Mercanti, et i Nobili in molto numero, senza perdonare né tampoco all'Ordine Senatorio, del quale è morto il Presidente della Sanità, e due, o tre altri Senatori feriti sono in pericolo, per tanto come tutte le altre strade riescono impenetrabili e d'una dilatione sì longa, che riuscirebbe infruttuoso ogni più importante aviso, come nella congiuntura che siamo potrebbe accadere, che dovessi dare a V.A.R. la supplica humilissima di far praticare almeno per mezo de Pedoni che venghino le lettere da Torino a drittura alli Rastelli, come si è fatto sin' hora, e che quivi a suo tempo vi sia chi riceva nostri pieghi».

**August 8, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Sono avvisato dalla città che questa settimana si principierà di nuovo a far le solite speditioni [...]. Per quanto habbi havuto in Genova grandissima iattura di robba, e mi ritrovi senza servitori, l'hevere però salvata la vita sin' hora è la gratia maggiore che mi potessi ricevere da S. Dio mercé, come l'hanno ricevuta tutti quelli della Villa, e luogo dove soggiorno, preservato miracolosamente dall'infinita bontà di Dio e dalla protezione di N. Signore. Le cose della Città (non essendoci rimasto diecimila Persone) caminano assai meglio, resta purgata, profumata, con essersi divisi li sani dagli infetti, non ne morendo più che due o tre il giorno, e guarendo la maggior parte, sì che spero vi si introdurrà il buon ordine con stabilità, e rientrerò nell'honor e consolatione di meglio riservire V.A.R. Nuove del Mondo non ne sappiamo, non essendosi da settimane in qua dispensata pure una lettera [...] ch'io non ne ho ricevute da parte alcuna».

**October 12, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Ho scritto subito all'Eccellentissimo Negrone di Negro, hoggi senatore della Republica Serenissima [...]; la Città di Genova alli X di questo mese si pose in



quarantena e se ne spera felice riuscita con la totale liberatione dal Male, che in essa non si faceva quasi più che sentire. La mia persona Dio mercé è stata preservata dalla tempesta, colla mia famiglia e tutti quelli che erano appresso me, in n. di 17, nella mia Casa di Campagna, dove si è goduta una perfettissima intera salute, et in tutto il contado del Golfo di Rapallo, per quanto altre terre confinanti sijno state afflitte dal contagio, non vi è stato né rispetto né ombra altra di male [...] però nella mia casa di Genova non solo [...] Persone che vi trattenevo in n. di 7 fra quali due [...] di denaro, danno che non so quando mai poterò riparare».

**October 24, 1657** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Dall'Eccellentissimo Negrone di Negro ho ricevuto l'aggiunta aperta per V. S. Illustrissima, m'ha pregato di scusarlo se non si è sottoscritto, perché ci vuole troppa manifattura di licenze a nostri Senatori per scrivere a Ministri de Principi, et per lo più non si ottengono, come anche se non ha nominato suo fratello, perché se la lettera fosse ritrovata, et andasse in mano al Senato, farebbe male li fatti suoi, per avere scritto senza licenza [...]. Dentro la Città si continua la quarantena; si sono rimandati li Cirusici, e Medici a Marsiglia, da quali si è ricevuta poca soddisfazione, non essendo stati conosciuti né habili né sufficienti, passavano de giorni senza che vi morisse alcuno, et non vi era rimasto che cancrene in quelli che stati feriti dal Male, non si erano curati metodicamente, et di questi tal'uno ne moriva, ma il loro male non ritteneva più malignità d'infettar altri, et si vede certissimamente l'intera totale liberatione. A Tortona e Voghera erano successi casi di Peste, piaccia a Dio che non si dilati nella Lombardia».

**December 29, 1657** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Stimando sempre che debba importare il servitio di V.A.R. la relatione di come procedono le cose del contagio, devo dirle che l'ultima nuova luna, ci ha raddoppiate le speranze sì che ben presto la Città n'habbi ad esser liberata, che sarà il tutto per Dio mercé. Le Riviere si conservano intatte, e sanissime, ha declinato incredibilmente il Male anche da quell'estrema moderatione nella quale si è sempre contenuto, sì che se non ripullula, mancando il freddo, habbiamo grand'argomento di sperar bene».

**January 1, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Per cominciare il meglio del mio desiderio, l'anno novo che hoggi principia, doppo del più longo, e tormentoso silentio c'habbi osservato in mia vita, et che la perfetta stabilita salute in Genova mi anima riverentemente [...]. Questa Republica Serenissima alli 29 del mese caduto dichiarò netta e libera da ogni sospetto di contagio la Città, ed in conseguenza finita l'autorità rimessa in pochi,

et invalide le leggi decretate per tal'effetto; alli 30 ne cantò il Te Deum in rendimento di Gratia, con lo sparo di tutto il canone, li forestieri che vi entrano da ogni parte per travagliare in diverse Professioni è incredibile, sì che ben presto Genova sarà la stessa di prima, che non credevo. Il Marchese di Castel Rodrigo, che va V. Rè in Sardegna è stato il primo a volere commercio con Noi, havendo richiesto due galee alla Republica, per passare con maggior sicurezza al suo Governo, et ha promesso di far dare subito al suo arrivo pronta e libera pratica da tutto quel Regno a chiunque vi arriverà da Genova. Le Galere partirono sino delli 28 del passato et a quest' hora vi si credono giunte».

**January 1, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Ma quante lettere si sieno smarrite nella nostra sciagura del contagio Dio mercé terminato, gli è incredibile di poterlo stimare, io confido che si debba rimettere il buon'ordine [...]. La città è netta e libera da ogni sospicione di contagio; io domani o l'altro mi ci ritirarò havendomi di già precorso la Marchesa mia che vi si ritrova».

**January 2, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Qui si sono fatte le feste con mestizia per una fierissima tempesta di mare la quale ha durato dalla mattina di Santo Steffano, sino alla sera del giorno degl'Innocenti , hanno nel Porto naufragato molte barche con morte d'una ventina di marinai, hanno pattito tutti li vasselli grossi ch'erano in gran numero e sette in specie destinati per Cadice, sopra de quali era imbarcato più d'un milione d'oro di ricche merci, dettero grandemente che respirare e temere all'Interessati; detti vasselli convoyati da un Potentissimo di guerra della Republica dovevano partire nelle Feste».

**January 12, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Mi ritrovo da pochi giorni in qua dentro di Genova dove continuerò nell'avenire il mio soggiorno e posso con verità attestare a V.A.R. che il giorno della Pasqua de i Re che s'incoronò il nostro Serenissimo Doge, viddi a Palazzo tanto concorso di Nobiltà, di Dame, et di cittadini che non conobbi esserci differenza da tre anni fa a quel giorno, e continua sì perfetta la salute che non resta minimo dubbio in alcuno di non essersi rimessa la città nello Stato pristino più desiderabile d'ottima sanità. Questo mi anima a risupplicare V.A.R. di ordinare che le lettere possino ripigliare il loro naturale solito corso, se non anchora per mezzo de gli ordinarij, almeno di Pedoni regolati, che venghino alli rastelli di questi confini, recandoci quelle di costì, et di Francia, e levando le nostre, per il servitio di V.A.R. et per dimostrare a questa Serenissima Republica che non tantosto si è pottuto applicare

l'animo a reintrodurre per lo costumato camino la corrispondenza delle lettere, che l'ha fatto essequire [...]. Questa Republica ha fatto una Galea per ricondurre a Marsiglia il Padre Mauritio Cappuccino, insigne Proffumatore delle robe infette di contagio; et delli luoghi nelli quali sono morti appestati l'ha regalato di cose sacre di divotione et a sua richiesta ha liberato alcuni francesi di Galera; si è trattenuto in Genova cinquanta giorni più del bisogno et si parte contentissimo».

**January 17, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Qui in Genova continua sì perfetta salute che non habbiamo ad invidiarne alcun'altra città d'Europa, e tutte le apparenze ci persuadono sempre più a credere che debba perseverare senza timore di ricadute, il che mi rianima a supplicarla che almeno per le lettere comandi che si reintroduca la solita regolata corrispondenza, se non per mezzo degli ordinarij, per quello de Pedoni».

**January 17, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Io resto trasecolato di quanto mi scrive V.S. Illustrissima in data delli 28 di Dicembre di non havere mai ricevuto alcuna mia risposta [...] essendomi non solo dato luogo di respondergli con ogni puntualità e diligenza, tanto per lo Stato di Milano che per mezo d'un Pedone che fu spedito a drittura alli rastelli, havendo sempre inviato tutte le mie lettere non solo per V.S. Illustrissima e il Signor Marchese di Pianezza ma anche per Madama Reverendissima mia signora, e per il Signor Ambasciatore Servient, sotto coperta del S. Generale Conteri. Dico bene a V.S. che qui si soffrisse con gran disgusto, e dalla Republica Serenissima e da tutti li Particolari che godendosi in Genova dopo tre mesi la più perfetta salute che possa desiderarsi non si reintroduchi tra Torino, il Piemonte e questa città il solito commercio per la strada antica solita, almeno per mezzo de Pedoni quando con gl'altri Principi non è mai stata né interdotta né sospesa nel tempo che la Peste vi faceva la maggior strage».

**February 6, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Ho veduto come desiderava di ricevere delle lettere dal Signor Marchese Negrone Di Negro tuttavia Senatore Eccellentissimo di questa Serenissima Republica, confido che gli saranno pervenute, havendogliene inviato due mani, mi accorgo però che se ne smarriscono e durano troppo lunga fatica ad arrivare che perciò standosi sempre con più ottima salute in questa città et in tutto lo Stato che è fra il Pie' Monti et il Genovesato si dovrebbe ripigliare il diritto anticho camino almeno per la corrispondenza delle lettere, giurandole non essere più male alcuno nelle Riviere eccettuato pochissima cosa nella terra di Chiavari,

guardata da mille sentinelle, e che va a terminare al primo giorno, per altro è incredibile la salute la quale comunemente si gode in tutto questo dominio».

**February 7, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Se si rivedesse il sole doppo mesi di continue oscurissime notti, quali alegrezze non si scorgerebbero? Certamente non credo che sijno espressibili: così supplico humilissimamente V.A.R. di credere che il Giubilo, et la gioia recatami dall'humanissima sua in data delli 17 di Gennaro, doppo tanto tempo ch'ero rimasto privo di sì grande honore [...]. Corre il quarto mese che le cose della Publica commune salute non solo di questa città ma di tutto lo Stato fuori della terra di Chiavari quale pure ben presto resterà purgata, vanno prosperissimamente, e confidiamo nella misericordia di Dio che resti stabilita quanto si possi desiderare».

**February 21, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«In data delli 30 di Gennaro ricevo l'honore pregiatissimo della lettera di V.A.R. che come mi ha ricolmato di gioia per la certezza della sua pretiotissima salute, dell'inalterabile ottima volontà di gratificare lo Stato di Genova [...] sopra la pratica di reintrodurre il commercio et di che si ripigli il dritto camino per il corso delle lettere, acciò che singolarmente non patisci il servitio di V.A.R. ne scrivo per non tediarla diffusamente al marchese di Pianezza [...]. Abbiamo poi freddi sì eccessivi e Nevi non più vedute che non arriva né Persona, né aviso d'alcuna Parte».

**February 28, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Con le mie precedenti raguagliai V.A.R. della confidenza fra questo Stato e quello di Milano doppo del contagio, et come oltre de rastelli piantati alli confini per lo scambievole ricevimento non solo delle vettovaglie ma delle merci, havevano cominciato a Milano di dare quarantena a chi arrivava da Genova, glielo confermo, come gli confermo la sempre più perfetta salute e della città et delle Riviere, a riserva della Terra di Chiavari solamente, dove pure per essere passati di molti giorni senza che vi sia seguito caso alcuno. Domani, primo di marzo, si pone generalmente in quarantena, et non ha dubbio che possiamo ringratiare Dio che habbi liberato affatto tutto lo Stato. Con che spero dalla somma bontà di V.A.R. che non solo haverà dato gli ordini necessarij perché si reintroduci il commercio delle lettere, per il solito dritto camino, ma che in tutto il rimanente la Republica di Genova et il suo Stato non riceva dalli Stati di S.A.R. [...] meno di quello riceve dal Milanese».

**March 7, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Continua da noia la perfetta salute che mi fa sofferire con più aspra passione la longhezza del tempo con la quale m'arriva l'honore delle lettere di V.A.R. la quale voglio sperare che sopra le relationi inviategli con le precedenti di come si regola Milano con Genova, haverà dato ordine perché si prattichi per il dritto curto camino la commodità de Pedoni, come già si faceva. Non habbiamo questa settimana novità degne d'essere trasmesse a V.A.R. [...]. Qui si è fatto il Carnevale più alegro e Pomposo dell'altre volte, con copia di ricche Mascherate, si sono celebrati infiniti Matrimonij, et la Città si riempie di Plebe a migliaia di creature per settimana».

**March 16, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Sabbato li 9 del corrente rittornò da Tolone la galea di questa Serenissima Republica che vi ricondusse li Padri Cappuccini con li Proffumatori, che vennero nel tempo del contagio, per purgare questa città [...]. L'ubbidirò nel raguagliarla diligentemente di tutte le notitie che mi perverranno, ma se non ordina che si rintroductino li Pedoni conforme l'ho supplicata, et si prattica con tutti gli altri Stati, non gli giungeranno grate perché consumano troppo tempo in arrivare».

**March 22, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«La mia riverentissima istanza non è che in ordine alle lettere, state sempre ricevute da Milano, et da Fiorenza a drittura, anche nel maggior bollore del contagio, tanto più confido che V.A.R. reintroduchi l'uso de Pedoni tra Torino et li rastelli alli confini del Genovesato, hora che vi si gode intiera salute, massime che da Milano sono avisato di non scrivere cose importanti perché le mie lettere sono insidiate».

**March 30, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Credendo tuttavia che le mie lettere non possono giungere a V.A.R. con sicurezza, o almeno se non doppo un longo corso di giorni, mi sono in estremo ralegrato d'havere letto nell'ultima humanissima sua che haverebbe contribuito efficacemente per la rintroducttione del commercio, come si può pratticare a chius'occhi, continuando da noi sempre più ottima la salute; io però non faccio a V.A.R. umilissima istanza che per le lettere, le quali importerà sempre più al suo real servitio che gli arrivino con prontezza per il dritto e corto cammino che si suole pratticare dalli Pedoni espressi, tra Torino e Genova. Continua sotto di questo nostro cielo una stravaganza di temporali sì insolita che li più vecchi non la ricordano mai tale, anche ieri l'altro hebbimo una sì gran copia di neve con freddo sì rigoroso che non si potteva lasciare la camera».

**April 5, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Confesso poi a V.S. Illustrissima d'essere rimasto grandemente disgustato dell'iniquità e perfidia di coloro che hanno scritto costì ch'in Genova ripulluli il male più falso che non è falsa la setta di Calvino e di Lutero, come il settimo mese ci ha perseverato un'ottima e perfetta salute in questa città, e quando cottesti Signori del loro Magistrato di Sanità con il buon piacere de reali Padroni, vorranno inviare qui dentro la città a chiarirsi del vero, si riceverà a particolare favore. Il nostro Magistrato di Sanità non puole occultare alcuna cosa, benché minima e fosse semplicissima apparenza d'ombra, e quando le loro altezze reali o il Magistrato della sanità voglio sapere lo stato verissimo di salute che corre in Genova ricorrono per saperlo dal nostro Magistrato, che gli dirà quella medesima verità che non può celare al nostro Principe [...]. Repllico a V.S. Illustrissima che Dio mercé non si può star meglio da 6 mesi in qua, e che se sovvenirà per l'avenire cosa alcuna di sospetto, io sarò il primo a dargliene parte».

**April (?), 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Con particolare disgusto ho inteso che venghi scritto costì ripullulare il male da noi, contro ogni verità. Giuro a V.A.R. havere voluto sempre assicurarmi dal Magistrato, il quale, secondo le nostre leggi e forme di vivere, non può occultare il vero, et ha giuramento di manifestarlo religiosissimamente anche alli Forestieri privati, e molto più alli Magistrati d'altri Principi, di quello si è passato da quattro mesi in qua, che sono ritornato a Genova, et ho ritrovato esservi perseverata un'ottima perfettissima salute, principiata di tre mesi inanzi del mio ritorno, et se bene sono corse delle voci di qualche sospetto, per le morti, benché rarissime, le quali andavano seguendo, si sono tutte chiarite vane, dalla visita e ricognitione d'ogni cadavere fatta da più Medici e Cirusici, con l'assistenza sempre di più officiali del Magistrato. Sì che nel tempo delli mesi sudetti, replico a V.A.R. non essere seguito nella città alcun caso sospetto d'infettione contagiosa, et continuarsi a godere una perfettissima salute, con essersi ripopolata sino a 45.000 in 50.000 anime, da 14.000 nelle quali era rimasta. Quello poi habbi a riuscire in appresso, Dio lo sa, speriamo però nella di lui misericordia, che debba essere sempre di bene in meglio [...]. La supplico humilissimamente di credere che niuno più di me gli manifesterà la verità».

**April 12, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«V.A.R. si sarà poi confermata della perfettissima salute che qui si gode doppo sette mesi, conforme gli ho scritto, assicurandola che continua sempre di bene in meglio».

**April 20, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Le dico che habbiamo havuto questa settimana la Città in qualche commotione, per essere succeduta due, o tre morti di febre maligna con petecchie, in Casa del Signor Dottore Canevaro, il quale è stato carcerato nel Lazaretto come trasgressore dell'ordine del Magistrato di Sanità, et un'altra in Casa del Signor Giulio Centurioni, in una donna trovata con una Glandola mobile nella coscia. Intorno a questi accidenti sono divise l'opinioni de Medici e Chirurghi, volendo alcuni che procediino da infettione contagiosa, et altri che no, perché due o tre donne dell'infima Plebe con petecchie, e febre maligna sono risanate e le glandole, per essere dichiarate Buboni, si pretende da alcuni de Periti che debbano essere fisse, e non mobili, che è quanto per verità habbiamo di novo in questa pratica, che tutto fedelmente ho voluto partecipargli, con promessa di continuare in avvertirla di tutto quello soccederà di più, rappresentando riverentemente che l'accaduto sinhora non deve essere bastante di sospendere in V.A.R. la reintrodutione de Pedoni, troppo necessaria, e che sarà sempre in sua mano di sospenderlo, che gli parrà conveniente. Io non stimo che sia per andar innanzi questo sospetto, perché la salute generalmente è troppo perfetta e la diligenza per conservarla troppo grande».

**April 15 (?), 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Ho inteso da essa l'ottima dispositione di V.A.R. circa lo reintrodurre i Pedoni per sicurezza, e commodità della corrispondenza delle lettere, e voglio credere haverà comandato che si cominci di praticare, poiché quei fiumi di sospetto de quali la raguagliai con le mie precedenti, non hanno passat'oltre, e si sono dileguati nelli soli accidenti della loro suspicione, non essendo succeduto altro come m'hanno assicurato questi Signori del Magistrato, e dettomi di scriverlo a lettera [...] invigilando loro oculatissimi alla pratica, e pregando che non si vogli dare orecchie alle voci del volgo, essendo che la loro fede non soggiacerà mai ad alcun rimprovero benché minimo. La Gotta ha continuato di travagliarmi più aspramente di quello credevo. In ogni modo sto assai meglio, havendo lasciato il letto, per quanto non mi posso ancora prevalere della man destra».

**May 4, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«L'humanissima di V.A.R. in data della 17 di Aprile tutto che mi habbi ritrovato libero dalla Gotta m'ha in ogni modo mortificato per havere letto in essa che non haveva ricevuto quella settimana mie lettere, mentre non ho mai tralasciato alcuna di non riverirla, conforme il mio debito, ma ne incolpo il lungo tragitto che fanno, et i luoghi troppo gelosi che passano, che perciò gli rendo humilissime gratie del commandamento dato di stabilire un Pedone sempre più necessario al servizio di V.A.R. et a quello di Sua Maestà. Io haverei sempre osservato con

pontualità il giorno de suoi cenni, ma già che mi ordina di segnargli un giorno particolare, ho consultato che debba essere il Giovedì, verso la sera, del quale infallibilmente sempre il Pedone di Genova, che partirà all'appertura delle Porte, si ritrovarà alli confini per ricevere le lettere dal Pedone di Torino, et a lui consignerà quelle di Genova. Se poi V.A.R. non approverà questo concerto, si ubidirà sempre al minimo cenno di qual'altro di suo gusto, assicurandola che le cose della publica salute son sempre caminate perfettissime, di bene in meglio, non essendo mai succeduto altro delli scritti sospetti, quali si estinsero in loro stessi».

**May (?), 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Mi manca l'honore, questa settimana, delle lettere di V.A.R. e non può non continuare il disordine, mentre hanno da fare tragitto sì lungo e sì diverso dal loro corso naturale, spero che haverà stabilito il Pedone, confermandogli lo scritto per l'adietro che il vano sospetto insorse di qualche ripolulamento d'infettione, procedette più da timore d'una troppo diligente circospettione, che da alcun fondamento reale di malatia contagiosa, poiché li riputati sospetti, li quali furono subito ristretti, essendo sempre stati bene, sono stati liberati, e non è più succeduto accidente ch'habbi dato alcuna minima ombra di sospetto, e per verità si gode non solo nella Città ma in tutto lo Stato generalissimamente una perfettissima salute».

**May 11, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Intendo che ad uno ufficiale di dogana si sia scoperto qualche segno d'infettione, et è l'accidente unico doppo vent'otto giorni che si mormorò d'un altro caso che sia successo fra 50.000 Persone che soggiornano nella città e che godano intiera perfettissima salute. Non ho voluto tralasciare di darne parte a V.A.R., massime sapendo che doverà essere scritto da altri, ma il certo è che non deve considerarsi, perché quando bene fosse male dichiarato, apparisce che non ha più vigore e che non contamina chi tocca, perché costui, stante la cura del suo offitio, deve haver trattato e praticato con milliaia di Persone. In ogni modo prometto a V.A.R. di doverla avisare fedelmente ogni settimana di tutto quello anderà succedendo».

**May 17, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Ha ben ragione V. S. Illustrissima di sofferire con poca pazienza la dilattione troppo lunga con la quale si ricevono le lettere a Torino di Genova e di Torino a Genova [...]. Con lo stabilimento del Pedone si ritornerà all'antica felicità di ricevere le lettere doppo due, o tre giorni che saranno scritte».



**May 18, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Conforme mi detti l'honore di scrivere [...] con le mie precedenti di come il male aveva terminato il suo periodo, e non aveva più veleno, né malignità di contaminare altri, glielo confermo di novo, con l'esperienza praticata nell'Offitiale scritto della Dogana, il quale non solo non ha infetto alcuno di quelli che hanno seco, stati infiniti, ma né tampoco alcuno de suoi Domestici, che lo toccavano, e servivano ad ogn' hora, né un suo figlio, stato adulto, che dormiva seco, stando tutti benissimo, continuando Dio mercé, e nella Città, e nello Stato un'intera perfettissima salute, che perciò, ubidendo al commandamento di V.A.R., per Giovedì prossimo, che saranno li 23 di Maggio si farà essere per la prima volta il Pedone alli confini, e si continuerà nell'avvenire, perché vi si ritrovi tutti li giovedì sera».

**May 22, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Seguendo qua da noi la ferma speranza che sia a fatto sparito il male contagioso anche per tutto lo Stato [...]. Questa prima volta [...] non solo si spedisce il nostro Pedone alle sbarre del Piemonte, ma stimandosi che quello di V.A.R. non habbi ancora l'ordine di ritrovarseci, si spedisce anche dalle sbarre a Torino a spese di questi Mercanti, quali tutti non cessano di glorificare la sua Real Persona per la commodità presente [...]. Si supplica però V.A.R. di ordinare che per l'avvenire si ritrovi il suo Pedone il giovedì alle sbarre per ricevere le lettere di qua, e consignare al nostro quelle di Francia e d'altre parti».

**May 29, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Continuo di far spedire il Pedone perché si ritrovi infallibilmente alli Rastelli il Giovedì sera, con speranza che questa volta vi si debba ritrovare anche quello di Torino, e che debbino cambiare scambievolmente le lettere».

**July 1, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Ritornando presentemente il Pedone speditosi di qui alli Rastelli di Cremolino, e non havendo recato di costì altra lettera che una del Signor Generale Contari per il Generale delle Poste della Republica con l'aviso d'havere ricevuti li primi spacci [...] ricapiti ma mi ha arrecato qualche ammiratione il non haver ricevuto l'honore delle lettere di V.A.R. ch'attendevo, et il non essere venuto alli sodetti Rastelli il Pedone commandato da V.A.R. per la regolata e più pronta corrispondenza, in modo che di qui bisogna la seconda volta far la spesa di far portare li spacci in Torino, come si è fatto, e perché si continuerà di fare da Generale le spedizioni, nella forma concertata, il Mercordì, purché possa il Pedone infallibilmente ritrovarsi il Giovedì alli Rastelli di Cremolino, supplico

humilissimamente V.A.R. di comandar che vi si ritrovi anche il Pedone di costì, acciò possino cambiare li spacci».

**July 3, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Il Signor Marchese Negrone ha terminato la sua funzione senatoria e doverà essere conforme m'ha promesso più pronto in corrispondere a V. S. Illustrissima».

**June 5, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Continuando le spedizioni in conformità del comandamento di V.A.R. le confermo che Dio mercé non ci resta che desiderare in proposito della salute, riuscendo sempre più perfetta, senz'ombra d'alcuna minima sospettione [...]. Le cose della salute non possano continuare meglio».

**June (?), 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Non giunge sin'a quest'ora il Pedone di costì alle Barriere, o Rastelli, per quanto potrebbe portarsi che sino a Genova, non godendosi per verità maggior salute in alcun altro luogo di quella Dio mercé si goda in questa città, ma quel ch'è peggio per me è il restar privo dell'honore delle sue lettere non havendone ricevuta alcuna da costì, né tampoco per altra strada, che perciò mi sono risoluto d'ordinare che questa mia si porti per espresso da V.A.R., e se ne attenda la risposta, con la quale la supplico humilmente di dirmi se devo continuare in essecutione del suo real commandamento in far venire di qui li Pedoni alli Rastelli, con li spacci per costì e per Francia, acciò che vicendevolmente li cambi con il Pedone di Torino, che sarà sempre di maggior vantaggio di V.A.R., o pure comandarmi come dovrò governarmi, e tanto eseguirò. [...] Alli diece di questo mese, in uno dei cortili del gran Palazzo della Republica, alla presenza del Doge Serenissimo e d'ambi gl'Ordini senatori, si fece una delle più belle festa da ballo ch'hebbi veduto in mia vita, vi erano assistenti duecento Dame, fra spettatrici e danzanti, e fra queste trenta abbigliate alla francese, sì riccamente e maestosamente che la finezza confessò d'havere prodotto in publico li suoi vantì e sforzi maggiori, e per verità a differenza delle abbigliate alla spagnola, che contendevano col seguito di gran fattione il primato della moda e più vaga e più concertata, le francesi rappirno i cuori di tutto il Teatro, composto d'infinito numero di Cavaglieri e Cittadini, che se dalle Province di Europa vi si fossero ritrovati, come v'intervennero di Venetia, di Roma e di Milano alcuni Gentilhuomini forastieri altri spettatori dal gran concorso, dall'estrema allegrezza e dalla pompa incomparabile ben haverebbero confessato essere trascorso più d'un secolo, che questo cielo non fosse stato [...]».

**June 12, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Ricevo in questo punto la lettera del marchese di San Tommaso, la quale mi assicura dello stabilimento de Pedoni, quali dovranno infallibile ritrovarsi ogni Giovedì alli Rastelli di Cremolino».

**June 15, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Siamo al sabato doppo le dieci hore, et essendo rittornato il Pedone che si spedì mercordì notte a Cremolino attesta d’havere aspettato in detto luogo non solo il Giovedì, che V.S. Illustrissima mi assicura con la sua delli dieci, che vi si sarebbe ritrovato infallibilmente anche il suo Pedone di Torino, ma pure tutto il venerdì appresso senza che vi sij comparso alcuno. Io perdo grandemente di concetto appresso di tutti per la sicurezza attestata da me [...]. La supplico di far che segua con puntualità il concerto stabilito [...]. Giovedì prossimo, che saranno alli 20 di questo mese, si ritrovi il Pedone di Genova alli rastelli di Cremolino, come è seguito sempre queste settimane adietro. Ne invio a V.S. anticipatamente l’aviso per un amico che si conduce alla sodetti Rastelli, e mi ha promesso di dar sicuro ricapito a questa lettera».

**July 19, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Se non vi fosse passata per lo mezzo l’auttorità di V.S. Illustrissima in assicurarmi che il Pedone di costì si sarebbe ritrovato infallibilmente il Giovedì sera a Cremolino per consignare al nostro le lettere di Turino e ricevere egli quelle di Genova io non haverei continuato la spedizione [...]. Ritrovatosi il Pedone a Cremolino, ho ricevuto con non poca mortificatione le querele de mercanti e d’altri quali, sopra della mia parola, inviarono le loro lettere per il Pedone, le quali saranno rimaste a Cremolino per non havervi ritrovato lo scontro [...]; la piccolissima spesa de Pedoni dovrà durare poche settimane, perché ragionevolmente s’appriranno i Passi, e si introdurrà il libero commercio».

**August 13, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Lucca ci dà libera prattica, et il Gran Duca ha fatto rimuovere dalle Porte di tutte le Città del suo Stato le Guardie, che vi faceva assistere per la Sanità».

**September 10, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Il Signore Marchese Negrone corre il terzo mese che ha deposto la toga senatoria e che se ne sta godendo una villa mezzo miglio discosto dalla città nell’otio della quale parmi strano che non scriva».

**September 10, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«La condotta e modo di vivere de Signori Chigi in Roma produrrà infallibilmente de disordini come ne vedo V.A.R. benissimo informata».

**September 17, 1658** (to the Maquis of San Tommaso):

«Io resto trassecolato del dubbio possa vivere ancora costì che nella nostra Città e Stato vi debba essere tuttavia sospetto di qualche Male, dopo tante reiterate sicurezze date da me, che non vi è luogo in Europa che goda sì perfetta salute come si gode in Genova et in ambe le Riviere di essa, [...] stannosi male li Spagnoli con la Serenissima Republica, che ci trattano da nemici [...] e poi giudichi che chiunque dello Stato di Milano possa venire dentro Genova, comprare tutte le Merci che gli aggradano, e ritornarsene nel Milanese senza un momento di quarantena; per lo contrario che chiunque Genovese vuole andare nello Stato di Milano, sij obligato di fare venti giorni di quarantena, e doppo venti spogliato: così canta il decreto Spagnolo per l'apparenza; se bene il transito è libero a ciascuno, andando innanzi et indietro de gli arditi, chiunque li piace, senza spendere un quattrino, delli timidi con quattro soldi alli Commissarij deputati delle Guardie, e così segue in tutti gli Stati, et da Torino a Genova sono quattro mesi (come ho scritto altre volte) che vengono e ritornano Persone, senza che sijno osservate».

**September 28, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Mi sono rallegrato che li corrieri di Francia ripiglieranno il camino per Genova, perché la nostra corrispondenza sarà più regolata».

**October 1, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Ne incolpo il disordine prodotto dal contagio che ha obbligato li corrieri di prendere altro camino; mi sono in estremo ralegrato che essendo stati da tutti riammessi a libero commercio, debbano riprendere il loro antico in Genova più commodo, sicuro, et a loro più utile, et io in sì fatta maniera più regolarmente favorito d'un tanto honore».

**October 8, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Continuo tuttavia ad essere privo dell'onore delle lettere di V.A.R., spero però che con la generalissima apertura de Passi rittorneranno li corrieri a praticare il loro antico camino, et che io non soffrirò più sì grave pregiudizio».

**October 29, 1658** (to Christine Duchess of Savoy):

«Sono quindici anni Madama Reale ch'io doppo d'innnumerabili servitij e relevantissimi, ben noti al Mondo, dati da me alla Francia, et al Signor Cardinale Mazarini in specie, aspetto S. M. perché non solo mi soddisfi delle pattuire mercedi et delle mie pensioni, andando creditore di sopra settanta mila scudi, ma effettui insieme le promesse che mi ha fatto d'un Feudo et d'una buona Abbadia in persona di mio figlio, quali promesse mi ha fatto replicare per tutti gli Ambasciatori e personaggi Grandi passati per Genova».