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### Women's Account Books in Venice and the Veneto Region. Material and Emotional Aspects

*Les livres de comptes des femmes à Venise et en Vénétie : aspects matériels et émotionnels*

*I libri contabili delle donne a Venezia e nel Veneto. Aspetti materiali e emozionali*

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# Women's Account Books in Venice and the Veneto Region. Material and Emotional Aspects

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- <sup>1</sup> In a famous painting by Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Young Man*, or *Portrait of a Gentleman in His Study* (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia, 1520s), a young man dressed in an elegant dark suit is depicted in a domestic setting, flicking through a voluminous leather-bound account book with an air of melancholy. The book is resting on a table covered with a green cloth on which are scattered various objects, some related to the practice of writing, others with a strong symbolic value (Fig. 1). The solid leather binding of the account book, the presence of a separate index placed between the book cover and the pages, the annotations written in the Venetian way—*alla veneziana*, debts on one page and credits on the opposite page—are all features that help us to identify the typical bookkeeping tradition in an Italian context. The crossing-out marks on the left-hand sheet serve to indicate completed accounts. Given the lack of information on the identity of the man portrayed, the interpretation of the painting's rich symbolic imagery has generated some rather diverse opinions. The most widely accepted hypothesis is that a crucial moment in the young man's life was captured here, namely the need to abandon youthful pastimes, to which the lute and hunting horn hanging from the wooden wall paneling behind him would allude, in favor of his new commitments to managing the family business, symbolized by the account book.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1. – Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Young Man, or Portrait of a Gentleman in His Study*.



Oil on canvas, 97 x 110 cm, c. 1520, Inv. 912, Venezia, Gallerie dell'Accademia.  
With the permission of the Italian Ministero della Cultura.

- 2 It is no coincidence that the subject in this splendid painting is a young man. As is well known, the practice of bookkeeping, along with the duty of managing and administering the family estate, has mostly been a male prerogative in ancient-regime families: the responsibility of the *paterfamilias* or men of the household. However, as a well-established field of studies confirms, despite an undeniable and profound gender inequality, as well as evident social and geographical differences across Europe, even women possess the skill of writing and, in some cases, non-trivial literacy and numeracy competencies are confirmed. Recent studies on women's daily writing, particularly in the Italian context of the early modern age, confirm a very vibrant picture. Sitting at their desks, mostly in their domestic environment, wives, daughters and widows handle account books, loose papers, receipts, pens and ink. Out of necessity, by choice, due to the death of their husbands or for other reasons, these women write, do accounts, handle money, make decisions and administer assets.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 Drawing on preliminary findings from an ongoing research project on women's daily writings in the Republic of Venice from the 16th to the 18th centuries, this contribution seeks to explore some of the material aspects of account books that have emerged so far, whilst also reflecting on how the physical nature of these objects facilitates the negotiation of gender roles within the family context. As a conclusion, focusing on some case studies, an attempt will be made to identify emotions and memories that account books as objects evoke and convey at a very particular moment, namely when the women to whom they belong dictate or write their will.

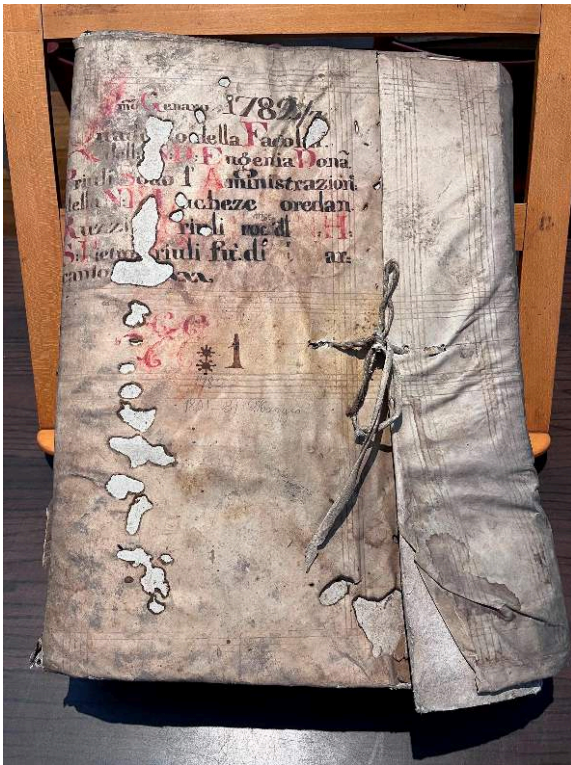
## 1. Some functional and material aspects of women's account books

- 4 As part of the project *Between Family and Work. Women and Practical Knowledge in Treatises and Everyday Writings (Republic of Venice, 16th–18th Centuries)* a survey was conducted of 42 women's account books identified in various archives and libraries in the Veneto Region.<sup>3</sup> The wider aim of the project was to compare what emerges from the treatises of the time—with particular attention to the genre of the *Economica* (*Oeconomica*, household management as a doctrine of the *oikos*) in the Italian Renaissance—regarding the practical tasks and knowledge expected of a good wife, mother and daughter, with the actual literacy and numeracy skills possessed by women in Venice and the Venetian mainland. If the aim of the project was to gather validations or discrepancies between theory and practice—this will be accounted for elsewhere—the investigation allowed for the evaluation and handling of several account books, items of singular status, since they are both archival material and real objects.<sup>4</sup>
- 5 As Jessica Berenbeim wrote in her study on late medieval England, the document occupies a fundamental role in almost every aspect of life, personal and public, practical and symbolic. Situated at the intersection of social life, politics and material culture, the written text of the document is inseparable from its aesthetic and material parts. In essence, the meaning and authority of the document consists in its appearance and materiality as much as in its textual content.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, if the analysis of women's account books has provided clues about the writing and bookkeeping skills of the women who owned and used them, the possibility of opening them, leafing through them, handling them and comparing them with similar ones belonging to the same household has permitted adding further elements about the relationship that women of the past had with this particular category of objects belonging to the material culture of writing.
- 6 Despite the fact that many and various objects are commonly found in the places and contexts of writing, scholars have so far given little importance to the material aspects of this practice, as Cydney Alexis and Hannah J. Rule write. And yet, as well as being cognitive, social and cultural, the practice of writing is also and above all material. As the editors point out in the book's introduction, “a material culture approach foregrounds and maintains focus on the everyday artifact as meaningful and as a revealer of culture and history, as a way to account for the experiences and lives of particular people, as well as communities, in situated contexts”.<sup>6</sup> All the more, unlike other types of objects the archival nature of account books allows the scholar easier direct contact than objects preserved in museums. Therefore, we will quickly focus here on some material aspects of account books, and then move on to a more specific reflection on the meanings and emotions that such objects evoke in the women to whom they belong.
- 7 An initial finding concerns the size and quality of the books. However, since the sample is not numerically significant as in the case of other research done on similar sources, these data should be considered with caution, pending broadening the scope of the survey.<sup>7</sup> What stands out is the variety of supports and sizes of the books used for domestic accounting, a practice that, both here and elsewhere, proves to be as mixed and diverse as ever. For example, the account books of Loredana Lucchese Priuli, who resided in the second half of the 18th century in the Venetian palazzo Ruzzini Priuli in

S. Maria Formosa, are large in size (440–430 x 310–320 x 40–120 mm) and are difficult for even today's scholar to handle due to their weight and bulk. In the sample examined, however, both medium (280–300 x 210–220 mm) and small account books prevail, with considerable variation in the latter. This variety can be explained by the proper functions that the different types of account books have within the complex Venetian accounting system, as well as in other contexts, as has already been extensively explained by scholars who have investigated the practice of accounting in the early modern period. Thus, to mention just one type, the books called *vacchette* or *vacchette di spese* found in the various family archives were small account books for everyday use, usually narrow and long, very practical and inexpensive supports on which to record daily expenses, but also easy to carry.<sup>8</sup> To understand the material variety of the books identified, however, it may also be useful to look more closely at the family context from which they came. The Venetian noblewoman Lucchese, for example, was the last successor of the Loredan household and administered the family property when she was widowed, having lost first her husband, then her son Marcantonio, and then her daughter-in-law Eugenia Donà. No less than seven large registers remain in her name, some of them with a parchment cover and overbands (straps of thick leather), in which the management of the family property under Lucchese's supervision was scrupulously accounted for. In addition to her own dowry possessions, she was appointed legal representative of the only male grandchild and heir to her father's estate, Pietro, after the death of her daughter-in-law. The records cover a chronological span of more than half a century, much of the woman's life.

- 8 It may be useful to recall that the palazzo of Santa Maria Formosa had been left in 1708 by Doge Carlo Ruzzini in usufruct to the Loredan family, with the obligation that it be inhabited, that it be entitled Loredan Ruzzini, and that it would revert to the Ruzzinis in case the Loredan line died out. And that is what happened: since Lucchese Loredan, Pietro Priuli's widow, remained the only survivor, she lived in the palazzo until her death, after which the building would be sold. Instead, in 1801 the palazzo passed to her nephew Pietro Priuli, who purchased it for 20,000 ducats. In a context of obvious vulnerability for the survival of the lineage, Pietro would inherit the family property but also obtained the *palazzo* in which he had grown up: those large and cumbersome registers, difficult to handle even today, were destined to remain there, a symbol of a family continuity (Fig. 2).<sup>9</sup>

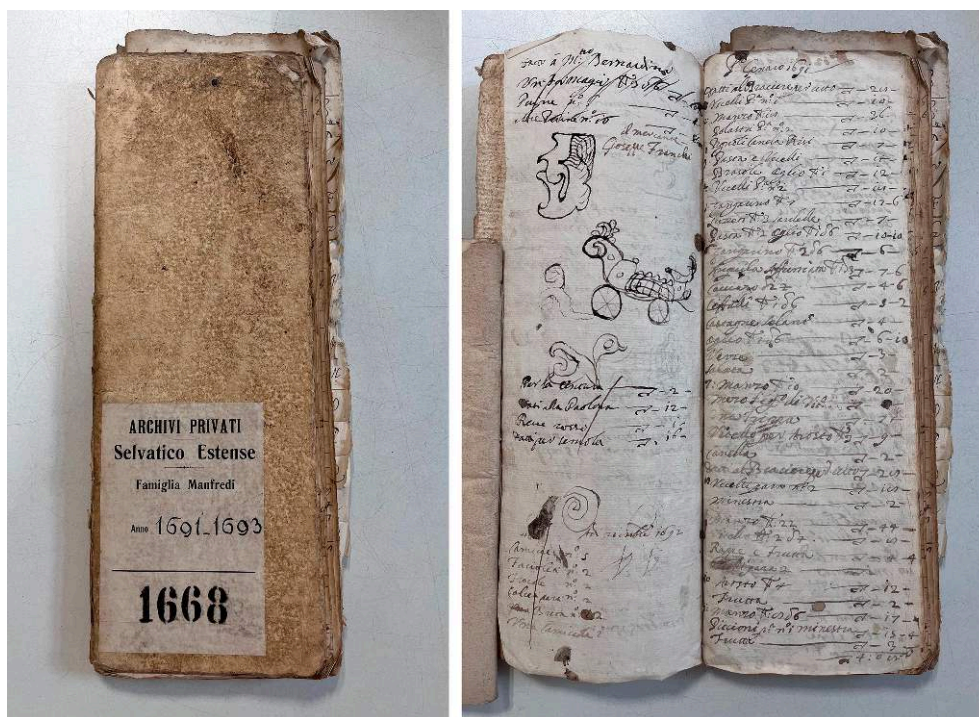
Figure 2. – Biblioteca Bertoliana di Vicenza, *Archivio della famiglia Folco Leonardi Priuli*, b. 434.



Large register, bound in parchment with a soft leather tie and three leather straps. On the cover, in red and black ink: "Primo gennaio 1782/3. Quaderno della facoltà della N. D. Eugenia Donà Priuli secondo l'amministrazione della N. D. Lucheze Loredan Ruzzini Priuli commissaria del N. H ser Pietro Priuli fu di Marcantonio". (44 x 31 x 9 cm)

- 9 By comparison, Ippolita Muzzarelli Manfredi's *vacchette* seem far more ordinary, or rather *banal*, in the sense intended by Daniel Roche.<sup>10</sup> Used almost daily by the spender—in Venetian, *spendidor*—mainly to note the expenses of food on the same day as the purchases, these simple paper journals show much freer and more immediate writing. It is possible that Ippolita, the owner of these little books, did not even control the daily accounts kept by the person who noted the expenses, since the servant (a certain Antonio appears, later followed by a certain Giorgio de Angeli), felt free to add, at the beginning and end of the expense journals, fanciful sketches and drawings (Fig. 3–4). Far more cared for, both in form as in content, appears to us the register in which Ippolita kept accounts on behalf of her daughter Maria Euride, heiress to her father's estate.<sup>11</sup>
- 10 It is indeed the widows' account books that provide some fascinating insights, which will now be considered in more detail.

Figures 3 and 4. – Expense book entitled *Vacchetta di spese giornalieri 1691-1692*, in the name of Ippolita Muzzarelli Manfredi, made of paper, with a cardboard cover.



(29 x 10 x 1 cm)

ASPd, Archivio della famiglia Selvatico, b. 1668.

## 2. Widowhood and the “urgency” of bookkeeping

- 11 The above-mentioned Ippolita began herself keeping the register for her daughter soon after her husband’s death in March 1687.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, in 1723, shortly after the death of her husband, the Venetian noblewoman Laura Corner, widow of Pietro Donà, began her *Zornaletto*—bound in limp parchment with a fore-edge flap extending from the back cover (220 x 160 x 40 mm)—used for recording all the daily transactions: Laura’s first entry, by no coincidence, records the expenses for her spouse’s funeral. The noblewoman Orsetta Donà also begins a new medium-sized (280 x 200 x 10 mm) *Giornale di Dare e Avere*, with leather binding, on 18 September 1602, about two months after the death of her husband Marcantonio Bragadin, and exactly one day after receiving her dowry back.<sup>13</sup> Other similar examples could be added.<sup>14</sup>
- 12 This “urgency of writing” becomes clearer when we consider the specific Venetian context. Unlike elsewhere, a particular magistracy, the *Giudici del Proprio*, ensured that widows regained possession of their dowries after their husband’s death—a process that, although variable in duration, could sometimes be completed quite quickly.<sup>15</sup> If the husband had enjoyed the usufruct of the bride’s dowry during the marriage, either by managing it himself or delegating its administration, the widow, upon reclaiming her dowry, had to take on the responsibility of managing it and keeping the accounts.
- 13 It’s also important to consider that starting a new account book during a period of mourning is far from a neutral act. These are in fact women who have recently buried

their spouses (to whom they were sometimes bound by sincere affection, as is evident from their wills), mothers who often have young children of whom they are now guardians, but also women who find themselves in a very short time having to deal with ordinary accounting, starting with the expenses incurred for their husbands' funerals. Finally, following the restitution of their dowry, as guaranteed by Venetian laws, they are once again legally responsible for the administration of their dotal property. In the case of Venetian noblewomen, dowry assets could include objects, cash, or deposits in *zecca* (the mint) but also fields on the mainland, warehouses, shops, and rental properties in the city, all of which required the ability to manage income and expenses, the collection of rents, knowledge of crop quantities and quality, renegotiation of contracts with tenants, and so forth—demanding constant and uninterrupted administration and supervision.<sup>16</sup> Opening an account book after the death of their husband also means, for some of them, referring to themselves for the first time in a written document, as “widow of”, or in Venetian, “*relitta di*”. On the one hand, therefore, these particular account books give the idea of the frenzy of a life that must continue, out of necessity, full of needs and tasks that dictate and occupy the family and domestic agenda. On the other hand, sitting down at a desk to open a new book, perhaps purchased specifically, and writing, noting, keeping accounts, may be part of the process of grieving and becoming aware of a new female condition, that of widowhood.

- <sup>14</sup> This is the case of Piuchebella Contarini, who left two account books kept at different stages of her life: as a young girl before her wedding, and then as a widow, 38 years later. Piuchebella also began her *Libro A* about two weeks after the death of her husband Nicolò Donà, on 1 July 1649, and just one day after her dowry had been returned to her. It is a large debtors' and creditors' book, marked with an “A”, (420 x 280 x 70 mm), as this was considered the first of the new accounting series. An awareness of a changed situation comes through from the outset of the book: she names the new book, explains the current situation in which it began, and plans how she will manage her new wealth and accounting status.<sup>17</sup>
- <sup>15</sup> It is precisely Piuchebella's *Libro A* that seems to confirm a further fact, which also emerged from Serena Galasso's research: in this period, no specific gender distinctions related to the materiality of the supports is identified. Regardless of whether they are French *livre de rason*, Florentine account books or these Venetian ones, the use of standard models and an austere, unadorned aesthetic prevails until towards the end of the early modern period. Some decorative elements, a certain variety in colors and a greater personalization of the support, even linked to women's tastes, are found in this geographical area only in a later period. For example, this is the case of a small notebook (5.5 x 10.5 cm) discovered and studied by Laura Casella, and entitled *1788. Libro di memoria di soldi imprestati*. It was kept by the widow Silvia Rabatta Colloredo, and in the booklet the woman noted the names of people to whom she had lent money. While its small size allowed it to be easily stored and kept away from prying eyes, the cover with colored floral paper provides clues about the woman's individual taste and a certain personalization of the material support.<sup>18</sup> On the contrary, Piuchebella's book started in 1649 is quite alike to other men's books in the family archives. Indeed, it is remarkably similar, with the decoration on its leather binding and even with the color of the tie, to the account book initiated in 1622 (thus, 27 years earlier!) for the

administration of the estate of Dionisio Contarini, her forefather, for which Piuchebella's husband had also been involved (Fig. 5, 6).

Figure 5. – Large account book by Piuchebella Contarini, marked *Libro A* on the first page of the book (1649).



The binding is in decorated leather, with three leather overbands on the spine and a worn green fabric tie on the front cover. On the spine, a label from a later archival arrangement. (42 x 28 x 7 cm)

ASVe, Marcello Grimani-Giustinian, *Donà di Riva di Biasio*, b. 185.

Figure 6. – Large account book pertaining to the controlled administration of the assets of Dionisio Contarini, as explained on the first page of the book (1622).



The binding is in decorated leather, with three leather overbands on the spine and a green fabric tie on the front cover. On the spine, a label from a later archival arrangement. (30 x 20 x 6 cm)

ASVe, *Marcello Grimani-Giustinian, Contarini S. Antonin*, b. 7, f. 20.

- 16 What does this uniformity imply, besides confirming, as noted by other scholars, the importance of stationers (*cartolai*) and the circulation of ready-made models?<sup>19</sup> While the material scene in early modern Europe is marked by numerous “gendered objects”, does the account book fall into the category of objects that combine gender, where the distinctions between children—both boys and girls—between sisters and brothers, and between husband and wife, appear more blurred?<sup>20</sup> Does the idea of the preservation of the estate, and the practice of bookkeeping that guarantees it, level out the difference between the genders, at least in terms of access to and use of these specific material supports? Or is this leveling out rather to be understood in relation to that “collective and not individual self” specific to the writing of family books? These are mainly unresolved questions, on which stimulating reflections have recently been proposed.<sup>21</sup> Pending far more comprehensive investigations that include both men’s and women’s account books, perhaps it is possible to add a further element to the issue by seeing precisely in the uniformity to the prevailing—male—model a certain guarantee of the authority of the women’s account book.
- 17 To clarify, it is good to move on to other sources, whilst changing the point of observation. From the study rooms of today’s archives, we will now move on to explore the account books by placing them in their context of origin, within the domestic walls: we will cross-reference “biographical” clues of these objects with those of the women to whom they belonged, and of their family members.<sup>22</sup> In fact, three of the women encountered during this research, all Venetian patricians, make explicit reference to

their account books when making their wills, revealing emotions, significances and considerations regarding the ownership, transfer and safekeeping of their books, even with reference to the men of the family.

### 3. "In my double-entry book, where all my things can be seen"

- 18 As Maria Clara Rossi wrote about medieval wills, the choices of testators are the result of the set of experiences and relationships built up over an entire existence and the feelings nurtured towards life, others, family and God.<sup>23</sup> But these experiences and relationships also extend to objects. When viewed in relation to the last will, the book of accounts appears to us in all its complexity: on the one hand it represents the past, that is, the accounts of possessions owned in life; on the other hand, it can become crucial in planning for the *postmortem*. In this regard, it can either be an authoritative tool for confirming one's will or a risky obstacle.
- 19 When the Venetian noblewoman Chiara Priuli, widow of Andrea Morosini, sends for the notary to dictate her first will, she is at the home of her youngest daughter, Angela, in the newly built, majestic Palazzo Grimani di San Luca on the Grand Canal. It is 7 February 1574, and Chiara declares that she is sound in mind "although somewhat infirm in my body". In addition to indications and bequests, Chiara has her notary write: "I hereby remit to my dearest son-in-law Almorò all the debt he owes me, as it appears in my *vacchetta*, and I do this out of fairness, and because my dearest son-in-law Marino, his brother, so advised me." Further on, Chiara explains that Almorò had also incurred the debt for her own benefit, probably alluding to some expenses for work or furnishings incurred by her in her son-in-law's house so that she could live comfortably with Almorò and Angela's family.<sup>24</sup>
- 20 So, while the woman is ill, with the very real possibility of dying, she thinks back to those accounts written in her *vacchetta*, knowing that any heirs could have claims against her son-in-law. It is Almorò's brother, Marino, also Chiara's son-in-law (her two daughters had married two Grimani brothers), who advises her to have the debt cancellation put in writing in her will. But Chiara recovered that time and lived another 17 years together with her daughter, son-in-law and their children in the large Venetian palace. In the second and last will that she dictated on 17 February 1590, we find old and new names for donations and bequests. But Chiara again returns to the matter of debt: "Again, I order and will that in case the dearest Almorò Grimani my son-in-law turns out to be my debtor in my books, which I do not know of, the debt be remitted to him."<sup>25</sup> Chiara is ill again, this time more seriously (she dies shortly after) and she is also an older woman now. Her thoughts again return to the account book, although this time she is not quite sure whether in her own accounts her son-in-law still appears to be in debt to her: in doubt, she reiterates that she remits everything to him. The household of the Grimani family of San Luca is one in which esteem, unity and respect for roles can be felt, at least in the course of this generation; a context in which the family strategy, in the short and long term, is agreed upon.<sup>26</sup>
- 21 Maria Ragazzoni, widow of patrician Andrea Contarini, also mentions account books for a similar reason. When, in the summer of 1630, she hand-wrote her will, she also notes, "I remit to my sister, Giustina Corner, everything that may result that she is indebted

to me from my double-entry account book, or for other books, policies, notes, without exception, and that during her life she may not be asked [to return] anything, but only after her death". She went on to add that even if the sister had given instructions in her will to settle that debt, no one could collect it as long as Giustina was alive, but only after her death. That her sister was in a poorer economic situation than Maria is also evident from the bequest of one hundred ducats per year "without taxes" that the testatrix allocates to her as long as she lives. Maria names as her executors her very own sister Giustina, her only daughter Piuchebella—the author of the account books mentioned above—and her husband, Nicolò Donà, whom Maria here calls "loved by me as if he were my own son".<sup>27</sup>

- 22 Again, at the extreme crossroads of life, Maria feels that she can place her full trust in her executors, who are also her closest remaining family members. If that double-entry account book, along with other books, policies and notes, give evidence of accurate, expert, decades-long bookkeeping—a few examples remain in the family archives—these same documents could put her sister Giustina in a difficult position. Again, we find confirmation of the authority of the women's account book as a document, a value reinforced and legitimized by the will itself.<sup>28</sup> The feeling of affection, trust and respect within her small household indicates that Maria's wishes will most likely be respected and guaranteed.
- 23 More complex is the Piuchebella scenario, the next generation. When, on 29 July 1651, the already-widowed woman dictates her will "to a trusted person", she does not name her three sons as executors, choosing instead "Francesco Grimani my beloved son-in-law" along with her "beloved" daughter Maria. Piuchebella's attempt to protect her female daughters, shielding them from the ambitions of their brothers, is evident from the will: upon her death, she wants the "very many things" in the house in Padua to be recovered and, along with those of Venice, "all to be placed in the convent of S. Marta in the hands of my nieces, because Orsetta my daughter, having entered the convent, will know very well to say what I wanted to do". Not only that. Piuchebella knows that the daughters would still be entitled to a portion of their deceased father's capital, "which may be, as far as Nicolò my son said, ducats 2300 circa per person". However, Nicolò had not until the present day shown her the accounts in detail, and the mother makes a note of this in her will.<sup>29</sup>
- 24 Yet, as we already know, Piuchebella also had her account books. So, she adds: "My double-entry book where all my things are seen will be in the hands of Maria my daughter for I will give it to her", while the "writings" she kept in Padua were to be retrieved by her son-in-law Francesco "immediately following my death", with the recommendation that he "keep them close to himself".<sup>30</sup>
- 25 When all is considered, the women's account books consulted, read, photographed and handled seem to belong to the same category, that of the document-object. Whether they are simple paper *vacchette* in which to record daily income and expenditures or large leather-bound double-entry books in which to keep account of dotal or family assets, these women, or at least some of them, display a strong awareness of the potential authority of their account books. If today we often find these books in the same dusty boxes (*buste*) in which those of their brothers, husbands or sons are kept, we can imagine them new, opened for the first time on the desk before a woman newly widowed; or in the hands of a creative spender reviewing, somewhat absent-mindedly, the shopping he has done for his lady; or again, placed for years and decades on the

same shelves (in Venetian, *armeri*) where the account books of the men of the family are kept.

- 26 If we only focus on the material support, there is no evidence of a gender distinction; which makes one wonder. As Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan have noted, if we look at the objects that we own today, that we covet and which surround us in our everyday life, it is evident that ideas about gender and the material world are closely connected: “Gender informs things and, in turn, the things people own inform conceptions and perceptions of gender in wide-ranging ways.” If the number and variety of objects have certainly changed substantially over the centuries, it is nonetheless true that in the past, as today, the material environment reveals “norms, codes, anxieties, possibilities, and restrictions” about gender roles.<sup>31</sup> If we think of the Veneto region in the early modern period, it is a context in which preachers, treatises and legislators—just think of the numerous decrees of the Venetian *Magistrati alle Pompe*—complained of an unstoppable changing of customs, especially by women, a continual pursuit of the latest fashions in clothes, accessories, hairstyles, cosmetics, jewelry and footwear, or they deplored the lavishness pervading homes, of furnishings, the fine and sophisticated bedding embroideries, religious objects and even of infants’ cradles.<sup>32</sup> The general absence of frills, decorations, luxurious elements or other details of personalization from these books suggests that the authoritativeness of the document-object, at least still at this chronological point, prevails over the aesthetic criterion, or that of sensory pleasure. Or, to put it another way, it raises the question of whether a distinct gendered connotation or marked personalization of the object could have called the authority of the book into question.
- 27 When Chiara, Maria and Piuchebella’s sons-in-law would have searched the house for those account books in order to protect their mother-in-law’s will, objects quite similar to their own account books would have been pulled out of *cassoni* and shelves. A material and formal uniformity that seems no coincidence, given that the authority of that document-object, as seen in Piuchebella’s case, turns out to be far from obvious and sometimes had to be defended with the help of trusted daughters and sons-in-law. Documents possess a paradoxical combination of authority and instability, as Berenbeim writes: “The objects of documentation possess immense power, and yet the mysterious sources of this power can provoke confusion and anxiety.” In this sense, the account book appears to carry authority (or instability) as a document in different ways for men and for women.<sup>33</sup>
- 28 It is in the crucial gap between “ownership” and “property” that the material object of the women’s account book is located here, becoming symbolic of a much deeper and more complex issue. Were Piuchebella’s furnishings, fields, her castle (she owned part of it), papers, clothes and money really her property, or could the woman enjoy ownership of these assets only temporarily? The mother and her male children would have given different answers to this question. Here, the account book becomes a symbol and guarantee of the right of ownership over those assets, but it also tells something about the woman’s emotions: the desire to protect her loved ones and her possessions, fear of failing to do so, a sense of precariousness as a woman. Seen in relation to the will, the account book shows itself as an authoritative record of the accounting of the past, it is an expression of the wishes and fears of the present, but it can have an important impact, positive or negative, on her own future and on the future of the loved ones she will leave behind after her death.

- 29 Emotions, writes Sara Ahmed, are practices formed in the relationships between bodies, objects, or subjects. Moreover, in her reflection on the relationship between emotions and material culture, Joanne Begiato reminds us that the meanings of emotions are mutable, subject to time and experience. She urges us therefore to place objects in their three-dimensional dimension, that is, to include locations, buildings and spaces when we investigate the relationship between objects, subjects and emotions. Objects manifest emotions, bridging the gap between mediated and felt experiences and highlighting their role in cultural values and individual experiences. They can act both as agents in stimulating emotions and as vessels holding human meaning, revealing their dual nature as both containers and catalysts in the interaction between subjects and objects.<sup>34</sup> This complex interaction between individuals, objects, and emotions emerges with clarity from the cases we examined. We encountered women writing, managing accounts, and enduring bereavement, as well as books that were purchased, annotated, browsed, used, and then remembered—vulnerable and contested objects. We observed shelves and cupboards that preserve and unify, but which could also potentially expose the woman who held them to a fate different from what she had intended or desired in her will.
- 30 If, to protect her own *roba* (stuff), Piuchebella had to mobilize her nieces, the secure environment of the convent and her daughter Orsetta, swift action and secure hands were needed to defend her account books and her personal writings. In the hands of Maria and her son-in-law Francesco those books would have retained the meaning she ascribed to them, not just passive objects, but subjects capable of action, that is, capable of defending her own will and the future interests of her daughters. On the contrary, in the hands of her three male children they would perhaps have ended up in a drawer as keepsakes belonging to their deceased mother, or they would have become scrap paper for lighting the fire.

## 4. Conclusion

- 31 The investigation of women's account books from the early modern period, between Venice and the Terraferma, has revealed a picture that, to a large extent, echoes what previous research has suggested for other geographical areas. While the variety of the types of account books identified during the research can be explained by the functional criteria typical of the accounting systems of the time, in both Venice and Florence, the uniformity of the supports and materials, along with the absence of personalizing elements, leaves some questions unanswered. As an object, the women's account book appears almost identical to those of fathers, brothers, and sons, reflecting the "collective self" characteristic of family accounting and the collective writing it involves. However, later examples from the end of the eighteenth century suggest a greater openness to aesthetic criteria and more room for individual expression. From this initial investigation, the account book emerges as an "atypical" object within the rich and varied Venetian and Veneto material context. Compared to many "gendered objects" of the time, it remains largely detached from gender identification for an extended period. This preliminary picture, however, points to the need for further exploration through more comprehensive and systematic comparisons of women's account books across different geographical contexts, as well as comparisons between

women's and men's account books, given that there is still a lack of extensive and thorough research on these topics.

- 32 It was also shown that writing and accounting is not a neutral practice. In the sample examined, there are several account books that were opened by women who had just become widows, even within a few days of their bereavement. If the interaction with a new book, along with the practice of writing, is dictated by the everyday rush of life, it is also a way of becoming aware of a new state (and of defining it in writing), namely the condition of widowhood.
- 33 Finally, the account book, as is evident from the wills, is for the women who keep it, who record in it accounts, rents, sales, daily or extraordinary expenses, names of debtors and creditors, and so on, an object with multiple meanings and potentially consequence-laden implications, whether it is to protect a loved one or to avoid the actions of unscrupulous heirs. If these objects can shed light on the emotions, memories, and desires of some women at a crucial moment—namely, when they make their last wills—the data that emerged leads us to ask whether the account book can be included in the category of objects that “bridge” the genders. That is, whether the uniformity in its material appearance might also guarantee the authority of the female account book, in a context where its value and agency were anything but assured.

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## NOTES

1. See the catalog entry of the artwork on the museum's online site: <[www.gallerieaccademia.it/en/portrait-young-man-or-portrait-gentleman-his-study](http://www.gallerieaccademia.it/en/portrait-young-man-or-portrait-gentleman-his-study)>. For an iconographic reading of the painting and for a summary of the various interpretations, see E. M. Dal Pozzolo and M. Falomir (eds), *Lorenzo Lotto. Portraits*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2018, pp. 94, 281–3, cat. 28; see also D. A. Brown, P. Humfrey and M. Lucco (eds), *Lorenzo Lotto. Rediscovered Master of the Renaissance*, New Haven / London, Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 173–4, cat. 32; A. Gentili, “‘Virtus e voluptas’ nell’opera di Lorenzo Lotto”, in P. Zampetti and V. Sgarbi (eds), *Lorenzo Lotto*, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi per il V centenario della nascita (Asolo, 18–21 September 1980), Treviso, Comitato per le celebrazioni lottesche, 1981, pp. 415–24.

2. For the Italian context, see L. Casella, “Il confine quotidiano. Scritture di donne in Friuli tra Cinque e Settecento”, in M. C. La Rocca and S. Chemotti (eds), *Il genere nella ricerca storica*, Atti del VI Congresso della Società delle Storiche (Padua, 14–15 February 2013), Padua, Il Poligrafo, 2015, pp. 1057–72; Ead., “Forme della memoria quotidiana. I libri femminili come oggetti materiali (Friuli, secc. XVI–XVIII)”, in A. Fornasin and C. Povoletto (eds), *Per Furio. Studi in onore di Furio Bianco*, Udine, Forum, 2014, pp. 133–42. See also S. Galasso, “La memoria tra i conti: alcune riflessioni sulle scritture domestiche di donne a Firenze (XV–XVI secolo)”, *Quaderni storici*, vol. 54, no. 160 (1), 2019, pp. 195–223; Ead., *Le droit de compter : les livres de gestion et de mémoires des femmes (Florence, xv<sup>e</sup>-xvi<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Rome, École française de Rome, 2024; T. Plebani, *Le scritture delle donne in Europa. Pratiche quotidiane e ambizioni letterarie (secoli XIII–XX)*, Rome, Carocci, 2019. For an updated look at women's letter-writing in Europe, and for further bibliographical references, see C. Monagle et al., *European Women's Letter-Writing from the Eleven to the Twentieth Centuries*, Amsterdam, AUP, 2023.

3. The project, under the supervision of Laura Casella and funded by the Department of Humanistic Studies and Cultural Heritage (DIUM) at the University of Udine, was carried out in 2022–23; however, the work of cataloging and digitisation is still ongoing, and in the meantime new account books are being discovered. The women's account books identified to date are part of various family archives of nobles and patricians that have been incorporated into the State Archives of Venice (ASVe), including the *Donà di Riva di Biasio*, *Contarini da S. Antonin*, *Grimani e Barbarigo* archives; the State Archives of Padua (ASPD), including the *Selvatico* and *Frigimelica* archives; the State Archives of Verona (ASVr), including the *Giuliani* and *Malaspina* archives; and the Bertoliana Library of Vicenza (BBVi), which holds the *Folco Leonardo Priuli* archive. The investigation also includes the account books of countess Ippolita Muzzarelli Manfredi, who resided in Ferrara, with her accounting records eventually transferred to the State Archives of Padua.

4. The 42 account books identified so far belong to 18 different women residing in Venice, Padua, Verona and Ferrara. Multiple account books are preserved for some of them (7 women out of 18), while only one copy survives for the others (11 out of 18). The entire corpus of documents spans from 1557 to 1801, with a clear prevalence in the 17th century. The most frequent type is the *Libro di Debitori e Creditori* (Debtors' and Creditors' book).

5. J. Berenbeim, *Art of Documentation. Documents and Visual Culture in Medieval England*, Toronto, PIMP, 2015, pp. 3–9, in particular p. 5. On the importance of documents as “physical things”, see also M. O'Toole James, “Between Veneration and Loathing. Loving and Hating Documents”, in

F. X. Blouin Jr. and W. G. Rosenberg (eds), *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory. Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, pp. 43–53.

6. For a recent summary on the relationship between WS (Writing Studies) and material culture, see C. Alexis and H. J. Rule, “Introduction”, in C. Alexis and H. J. Rule (eds), *The Material Culture of Writing*, Colorado, Colorado University Press, 2022, pp. 3–17. See also the interesting, chronologically broad reflection by Michael Friedrich in M. Betrò, M. Friedrich and C. Michel (eds), *The Ancient World Revisited: Material Dimensions of Written Artefacts*, Berlin / Boston, De Gruyter, 2024 (“Introduction: Towards a Holistic Study of Written Artefacts in Ancient History”, pp. 1–30). On books as cultural artifacts, linked to social, economic, and political processes, refer to the classic study by D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

7. See above all Serena Galasso's study of Florentine account books between the 14th and 16th centuries, with a sample of 202 books. Cfr. S. Galasso, *Le droit de compter*, op. cit., especially pp. 97–147 for the material aspects. See also S. Mouysset, *Papiers de famille. Introduction à l'étude des livres de raison (France, XV<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007; M. Cassan, J.-P. Bardet and F.-J. Ruggiu (eds), *Les écrits du for privé. Objets matériels, objets édités*, Limoges, Presses universitaires de Limoges, 2007; on book formats see also F. Allegrezza, “La diffusione di un nuovo prodotto di bottega. Ipotesi sulla confezione dei libri di famiglia a Firenze nel Quattrocento”, *Scrittura e civiltà*, vol. 15, 1991, pp. 247–65. The inventories of family archives have yielded a limited number of account books titled to women in our project's case. However, a more thorough analysis might uncover a greater number, as women's account books were sometimes found in the consultation of the *buste* (boxes) without being indicated as such in the inventory.

8. For an overview in English on the characteristics of early modern Florentine account books, which is also useful for the Venetian context, see R. Goldtwaite, “The Practice and Culture of Accounting in Renaissance Florence”, *Enterprise & Society*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2015, pp. 611–47. See also on this topic, S. Galasso, *Le droit de compter*, op. cit., pp. 117–24. For a very detailed description of Italian stationery binding, see K. Beaty, “Tackets, Buckles, and Overbands: Italian Stationery Bindings of the HBS Medici Family Collection”, in J. Miller (ed.), *Suave Mechanicals: Essays on the History of Bookbinding*, vol. 6, Ann Arbor, The Legacy Press, pp. 61–119.

9. BBVi, *Archivio Folco Leonardi Priuli*, registers 430–436. About the palazzo, G. Fontana, *Cento palazzi fra i più celebri di Venezia*, Venice, P. Naratovich, 1865, pp. 217–20. Other biographical and information on the family is obtained from the very account books.

10. Refer to the well-known study by D. Roche, *A History of Everyday Things. The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600–1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000 (1989). While it is true that material culture studies do not priori distinguish the importance of objects, it is clear that for account books, families differentiated between temporary supports and books intended to remain in family palaces, to safeguard assets and benefit future generations. For a discussion on the relationship between material support and content hierarchy, see M. Corsi, “Il libro del mercante: tipicità ed eccezione”, in G. De Gregorio and M. Galante (eds), *La produzione scritta tecnica e scientifica nel Medioevo: libro e documento tra scuole e professioni*, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio dell'Associazione italiana dei Paleografi e Diplomatisti, Spoleto, Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012, pp. 147–77; S. Galasso, *Le droit de compter*, op. cit., pp. 119–20.

11. ASPd, *Archivio Selvatico Estense*, bb. 1664, 1665, 1667–1670; in the year 1687 Count Nicola Gaetano Manfredi, formerly *Giudice dei Savi* in Ferrara, died without male succession; the account books in the name of his widow Ippolita began precisely in 1687. In the same family archive also see, b. 1612, *Libro autentico della contessa Ippolita Muzzarelli, come erede usufruttuaria del conte Nicola Gaetano Manfredi*.

12. *Ibidem*. The account book is organized into sections *Dare/Avere*, in Venetian style; begins in 1687 and ends in 1692. From the first page it appears that the widow Ippolita Muzzarelli, on her daughter's behalf, keeps the accounts of the father's estate; in the first section, the properties to which Maria Euride is entitled are described.

13. ASVe, *Archivio Marcello Grimani-Giustinian, Donà di Riva di Biasio*, b. 181, f. 39. At the beginning the widow explains that she had obtained the restitution of the dowry the day before (c. 1: “*qual poi [cavedal] mi fu restituito da ser Vido Bragadin et donna Helena sua madre commissarii del ditto quondam ser Marc'Antonio giusta il costituito fatto da loro nell'Officio del Proprio sotto il giorno di heri e levato da ser Piero Donado mio fratello et commesso sotto il giorno presente*”).

14. ASVe, *Archivio Marcello Grimani-Giustinian, Donà di Riva di Biasio*, b. 222, f. 112. On the cover: “+ / 1723 / Zornaletto / N. 1”. A few loose papers are inserted in the fold of the parchment front cover. The journal covers income and expenses from 1723 to 1730. The very first entry is for expenses for her husband's funeral (c. 1: “*Adi 21 7bre [1723]. Spesi per il funerale come da conto lungo, e ricevute poste in Filza al n. 1: lire 1682:19*”). Of the 42 account books found, 25 are written during the woman's widowhood, 7 as a married woman, 7 as a single woman, and 3 cases are uncertain. Although some of the women keep an account book both before marriage (or during) and as widows, the condition of widowhood is the most frequent. Apart from the numerical data—a larger sample would be needed to draw definite conclusions—a qualitative investigation is equally interesting. This is particularly evident in the case of women for whom multiple account books, kept at different stages of their lives, have been preserved. A different example, yet equally interesting, is the unmarried Elisabetta Donà, daughter of Francesco, who remained in her father's house throughout her life and managed not only her own accounts, but also those of her brother Giovanni.

15. On the restitution of dowry and testamentary freedom in Venice, see S. Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice. Twelve Essays on Patrician Society*, Baltimore / London, The John Hopkins University Press, 2000; I. Chabot, “*Ricchezze femminili e parentela nel Rinascimento. Riflessioni intorno ai contesti veneziani e fiorentini*”, *Quaderni storici*, vol. 118, no. 3, 2005, pp. 203–29; Ead., *La dette des familles: femmes, lignage et patrimoine à Florence aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Rome, École française de Rome, 2011, pp. 60–7.

16. A. Bellavitis, *Famille, genre, transmission à Venise au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Rome, École française de Rome, 2008, especially pp. 55–72. Also see Chabot, “*Ricchezze femminili e parentela nel Rinascimento*”, op. cit., pp. 203–29. For a more general discussion on female property rights, see G. Calvi and I. Chabot (eds), *Le ricchezze delle donne. Diritti patrimoniali e poteri familiari in Italia (XIII-XIX secc.)*, Turin, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1998. Within material culture, see the interesting contribution by Isabella Cecchini on the series *Mobili* of the *Giudici del Proprio*: I. Cecchini, “*A World of Small Objects: Probate Inventories, Pawns, and Domestic Life in Early Modern Venice*”, *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2012, pp. 39–61.

17. ASVe, *Archivio Marcello Grimani-Giustinian, Donà di Riva di Biasio*, b. 185. Incipit: “*Libro A di me Piuchebella Contarini relictà de ser Nicolò [Donà] / fo de ser Francesco levato adi primo luglio 1649 [dopo] / la morte del detto ser mio Consorte nel quale tenirò [li] / conti cossi delli capitali della mia dote, consignatimi il [...] / giorno da miei figlioli come di quelli della mia dimissoria / et specialità; et delle entrate dependenti dalli mede[simi] / havertendo che comincerò sempre lanno il primo Gennaro.*” Piuchebella's other account book, a dowry register, is in ASVe, *Archivio Marcello Grimani-Giustinian, Contarini da S. Antonin*, b. 6, f. 15. I intend to explore this interesting case study further in another contribution.

18. L. Casella, “*Forme della memoria quotidiana*”, op. cit., pp. 133–42, in particular pp. 139–40, figure 5; on uniformity in the supports and the substantial lack of distinction between genders, see S. Galasso, *Le droit de compter*, op. cit., pp. 146–7; L. Casella, “*Il confine quotidiano*”, op. cit., pp. 1057–72. On women's account books in late eighteenth-century England, with interesting

insights into personalization and gender, see R. E. Connor, *Women, Accounting, and Narrative. Keeping Books in Eighteenth-Century England*, London / New York, Routledge, 2004.

19. For the role of stationers and the circulation of standard models in the Italian context, see F. Allegrezza, “La diffusione di un nuovo prodotto”, *op. cit.*, pp. 254–60; A. Melograni, “The Illuminated Manuscript as a Commodity. Production, Consumption and the Cartolaio’s Role in Fifteenth-Century Italy”, in M. O’Malley and E. Welch (eds), *The Material Renaissance. Studies in Design and Material Culture*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007, pp. 191–221.

20. A. Cremer, “Introduction”, in Ead. (ed.), *Gender, Law, and Material Culture, Immobile Property and Mobile Goods in Early Modern Europe*, London, Routledge, 2020, pp. 1–31. On the practice of accounting in relation to gender, see R. E. Connor, *Women, Accounting, and Narrative*, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–66, 150–1.

21. On the “collective self” of family books refer to R. Mordenti, “Les livres de famille en Italie”, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2004, pp. 785–804. On the *livre de rason* as everyday objects and their accessibility in the family context, S. Mouysset, “Aux marges de l’écrit”, in A. Castillo Gómez (ed.), *Culturas del escrito en el mundo occidental. Del Renacimiento a la Contemporaneidad*, Madrid, Casa de Velásquez, 2015, pp. 189–98. On the formal models that are common to female and male bookkeeping, S. Galasso, “Il mestiere di sposa. Genere, scrittura contabile e gestione domestica a Firenze nel XVI secolo”, in P. Avallone and G. T. Colesanti (eds), *Donne e lavoro. Attività, ruoli e complementarietà (secc. XIV-XIX)*, Cagliari, Istituto di Storia dell’Europa Mediterranea, 2019; Ead., “The Threshold of the Marketplace: Women’s Work and Linen Manufacturing in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Florence”, *MEFRM*, vol. 135, no. 1, 2023, pp. 79–93, especially pp. 81–2. On the actual competencies of women and their work within the domestic sphere, see M. Martini and A. Bellavitis, “Introduction: Household Economies, Social Norms and Practices of Unpaid Market Work in Europe from the Sixteenth Century to the Present”, *The History of the Family*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2014, pp. 273–82; R. Sarti, A. Bellavitis and M. Martini (eds), *What Is Work? Gender at the Crossroads of Home, Family, and Business from the Early Modern Era to the Present*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2018.

22. On the cultural biography of objects, see A. Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value”, in Id. (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–63; in the same volume, see I. Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process”, pp. 64–91. See also F. Dei, “La vita sociale delle cose, trent’anni dopo: quale ‘svolta’ negli studi di cultura materiale?”, *Contemporanea*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2016, pp. 441–9.

23. M. C. Rossi, “A partire dai testamenti. Materiali e spunti metodologici per una storia dei sentimenti nel medioevo”, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, vol. 128, no. 2, 2016, pp. 544–64.

24. In the original: “Remeto al mio carissimo genero messer Almorò tuto el debito che ha con mi, come appar per la mia vacheta, et questo facio per equità, et per esser anchora così consigliata dal mio carissimo genero messer Marin suo fratello.” And moreover, she declares that the debt was incurred “per tenir casa a mia istantia”. The first and second wills of Chiara Priuli, widow of Andrea Morosini, are in ASVe, *Archivio Grimani e Barbarigo*, b. 28 (uninventoried archive). A copy of the second will is also in ASVe, *Grimani di San Luca, ora San Tomà, Misc.*, b. 23, f. 1.

25. In the original: “Item ordino e voglio che sel clarissimo messer Almorò Grimani mio genero paresse mio debitor sopra li mei libri, che non so, il tutto ghe sia remesso” (ASVe, *Grimani di San Luca, ora San Tomà, Misc.*, b. 23, f. 1, cc. 8v–9r).

26. I have analyzed the history of Chiara, her daughters and sons-in-law in more detail in my book, soon to be published with the Deputazione di Storia patria per le Venezie (M. Adank, *I Grimani di San Luca: cultura materiale, genere e potere nella Venezia del Cinque e Seicento*, Rome, Viella, in press).

27. In the original: “Lasso alla signora Giustina Corner mia sorella tutto quello che la si trovasse essermi debitor per il mio libro dopio, o per altri libri, polizze, notte, niuna acetuata, che in vita sua non si possino

*adimandarli cossa niuna, ma sollo dapoi la sua morte*"; and further on: "*mio genero, amato da me come proprio figliollo*" (ASVe, *Notarile Testamenti, Testamenti chiusi*, bb. 56–58, n. 217, will of Maria Ragazzoni, 6 August 1630).

28. See Berenbeim's reflection on the nature of a document's power in J. Berenbeim, *Art of Documentation*, op. cit., pp. 15–9.

29. In the original: "[La roba] sia tuta posta in monasterio di S. Marta nelle man delle mie nezze che Orsetta mia figliola, entrata in monasterio, saprà benissimo dir quello [che io] voleva far." And further: "[somma] che può esser, per quanto ha detto Nicolò mio figliolo, ducati 2300 in circa per una" (ASVe, *Notarile Testamenti*, b. 180, n. 1089, will of Piuchebella Contarini, 29 July 1651).

30. *Ibidem*. In the original: "Il mio libro doppio dove se vede tutte le cose mie sarà nelle man di Maria mia figliola che ghe lo consegnerò." Further on: "Et diverse scritte che sono in Padoa desidero che il signor Francesco Grimani mio commissario subito seguita la mia morte le mandi a tior e le tenghi appresso di esso, come anco tutte le altre mie scritte pertinenti a miei beni."

31. H. Greig, J. Hamlett and L. Hannan, "Introduction", in H. Greig, J. Hamlett and L. Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain Since 1600*, Palgrave Macmillan, London / New York, 2016, pp. 1–15.

32. The literature on this topic has now become extensive. A recent reflection in Italian can be found in M. G. Muzzarelli, *Le regole del lusso. Apparenza e vita quotidiana dal Medioevo all'età moderna*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2020. For a general overview on sumptuary laws in Europe, G. Riello and U. Rublack (eds), *The Right to Dress. Sumptuary Laws in a Global Perspective, c. 1200–1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019. On Venice, see P. Fortini Brown, "Behind the Wall. The Material Culture of Venetian Elites", in J. J. Martin and D. Romano (eds), *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797*, Baltimore / London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 295–338; L. Molà, "Leggi suntuarie in Veneto", in M. G. Muzzarelli and A. Campanini (eds), *Disciplinare il lusso. Legislazione suntuaria in Italia e in Europa tra Medioevo ed età moderna*, Rome, Carocci, 2003, pp. 47–57; G. Biondi, "Il prezzo del lusso. Legislazione suntuaria a Venezia dal XIII al XV secolo", in L. Righi and G. Vettori (eds), *Il lusso e la sua disciplina. Aspetti economici e sociali della legislazione suntuaria tra antichità e medioevo*, Trento, Università degli Studi di Trento, 2019, pp. 111–35.

33. J. Berenbeim, *Art of Documentation*, op. cit., p. 7. On the "unpredictability of paperwork", see also B. Kafka, *The Demon of Writing*, New York, Zone Books, 2012, pp. 9–18, 73–6.

34. On propriety and ownership, see A. Stuart, "Early Modern Political Philosophy on Rights of Ownership", in A. Cremer (ed.), *Gender, Law, and Material Culture*, op. cit., pp. 34–45. On the relationship between material culture and emotions, see S. Downes, S. Holloway and S. Randles (eds), *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions Through History*, Oxford, Oxford Academic Press, 2018, in particular the introduction (pp. 8–24) and the final chapter (J. Begiato, "Moving Objects: Emotional Transformation, Tangibility, and Time Travel", pp. 229–42). See also S. Broomhall, "Introduction", in Ead. (ed.), *Spaces for Feeling: Emotions and Sociabilities in Britain 1650–1850*, London / New York, Routledge, 2015, pp. 1–11; S. Ahmed, "Introduction: Feel Your Way", in Ead., *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2014 (2004), pp. 1–19, in part. p. 11.

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## ABSTRACTS

In recent years, several studies have focused on women's everyday writings in the early modern period, highlighting, even in the Italian context, the specific circumstances and the skills with which women of the past engaged in writing and accounting in their daily lives. This paper, however, shifts the focus to the relationship between these women and the materiality of the account books they owned, drawing from a corpus of account books identified in Venice and the Veneto region between the 16th and 18th centuries. In addition to providing a brief overview of the variety and material aspects of the examined account books, the study explores the emotional dimensions associated with the possession and use of account books by women, as revealed through the wills of some of them.

Ces dernières années, diverses études se sont concentrées sur l'écriture quotidienne des femmes dans la première modernité, y compris dans le contexte italien. Ces recherches ont en particulier analysé les circonstances spécifiques dans lesquelles les femmes ont utilisé l'écriture et la comptabilité, ainsi que leurs savoirs et compétences. À travers l'étude d'un corpus d'écrits du XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, conservés à Venise et Vénétie, la présente contribution se concentre sur le rapport des femmes à la matérialité de leurs livres de comptes. En plus de donner un bref aperçu de la variété et des caractéristiques matérielles des livres de comptes examinés, cet article explore les dimensions émotionnelles liées à leur possession et à leur usage, en analysant les volontés testamentaires de certaines femmes.

Negli ultimi anni diversi studi si sono concentrati sulla scrittura quotidiana delle donne nella prima età moderna, analizzando, anche nel contesto italiano, le circostanze specifiche in cui le donne si impegnavano nella scrittura e nella contabilità, così come i loro saperi e competenze. Il presente contributo sposta l'attenzione sul rapporto tra le donne e la materialità dei loro libri contabili, attingendo a un corpus di scritture conservate a Venezia e nel Veneto tra il XVI e il XVIII secolo. Oltre a fornire una breve panoramica sulla varietà e sugli aspetti materiali dei libri contabili esaminati, lo studio esplora le dimensioni emotive legate al loro possesso e utilizzo da parte delle donne, attraverso lo studio dei testamenti di alcune di loro.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** comptabilité, époque moderne, culture matérielle, veuves, testaments

**Parole chiave:** contabilità, età moderna, cultura materiale, vedove, testamenti

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