

The Diary of Coda Veronesi

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Fusco, L. K. (1927, November 5). [Diary of Coda Veronesi]. Biennale Library

The following is an incomplete collection of the diaries of one unnamed author – suspected to be playwright, Coda Veronesi, notable for his script, ‘An Orange Blue’, though largely unsuccessful in the rest of his works, whose journals came to light amongst the wreckage of the 1927 Teatro La Fenice fire which consumed the theatre on the 1st of March under indeterminate circumstances. It is unclear whether the events described in Veronesi’s journal truly occurred, and though certain events have been found through our research to correlate to accurate historic fact– others seem to be entirely fabricated or outside the realm of scientific explanation. Often the dates are incorrect, either by a few days or by several decades. It could be that Veronesi considered his words to be true at the moment of inception. The playwright was widely speculated to be functioning with an impaired state of mind toward the end of his life due to delusions and hallucinations exacerbated by his sub-par living conditions and failure to achieve recognition for his plays following, ‘An Orange Blue’.

2 February:

The tides are high. The tides are higher than they have been all year. I can see the canal now: his heaving body swelling, engorged with impurity. Overripe. The people, too, are flush with contamination. I have seen men – devoted men, charming men, pious men! I have seen these very same men fill their stomachs with the blood of Christ one night, and their spirit with sin the next. Those men that assume mountains shall break their earthen spines and grind their teeth and bend to kneel before them at their... *sincere request*... if they shall not choose to repent – then I shall grant them the kindness of doing so in their stead.

14 February:

The hour is god-awful late. I have been awoken from rest by a persistent knocking on the door of my room. When I got up and pressed my ear to the wood I could hear no breathing, no rustle of fabric on the other side, only garbled noise and something resembling human speech – horribly distorted and fragmented beyond comprehension. I am at my desk now though the knocks still resound in rhythmic symphony, bouncing brightly sonorous off this room’s waterlogged walls.

21 February:

The order will be as follows: Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Chiesa di San Giacomo dell'Orio, and San Giacomo di Rialto. It is not nearly enough to eradicate just three out of the myriad churches tainting our city from the very core. It begins with the Frari, as it always does, those dusty bones and paint-laden canvas clinging to the walls – and if they burn alongside the pews and altar, we will be all the

better for it. The question lies in the method: to avoid being noticed, to stoke the flames high enough, to get the timing just right, then make my way to San Giacomo dell'Orio in time to see the final curls of smoke and onto the next edifice for the *finale*.

22 February:

I may have miscalculated. I have mapped out my path in a separate journal and see no way to move from the three points within an appropriate time frame- there is simply too much distance between the churches. Even if I were to spark a flame and run the distance between each point (and run I must for it would be much too crowded and slow to wait for a gondola) it would be entirely uncertain if the fire had caught on, or simply fizzled into oblivion in my haste. If I cannot clean the streets of all decided upon sites, then there is no point in doing away with just one. I must have the Frari for her imposing beauty; San Giacomo di Rialto for the terrible age gathered at her shoulders, her wearied history – *I cannot...* I will not replace them!

Oh! It almost slipped my mind! The knocking came again last night – for the third time this week – accompanied by the violent perversion of dialogue. In the morning there was a letter, inviting me to witness the opening spectacle of La Fenice. As if I would entertain their fanciful world! Their galas, and premieres and *fêtes* for any person that is willing enough – tempted enough – to dine in luxury with corruption.

1 March:

The play is something soulless, about a hardboiled detective solving crime in New York. The war is involved in some way. I used to be one of them – empty eyed, greedy corvids snatching at fine jewellery and a thick paycheck – but I have better things to do now. Nobler pursuits. I must get away. Some place in this wretched theatre, this *sanctuary of art*, where I am not recognised as failed, stagnant potential by patronising sympathizers.

I could not sit through another act of this drivel if it were my saving grace and these people – I had forgotten how far removed they were from earthly matters. No one here would care if a few far away churches burned to the ground, no matter how brilliantly they beamed! Oh, if only they were the ones sloughing ash from their bones! They would shine finally, the way we all had dreamed, only it would not be the stars their names were etched in, but cold funerary stone.

The charred remains of Coda Veronesi were later found in one of the Apollonian Halls, where an event for the leading names in Venice's theatre scene was being hosted. His journal was found tucked under a seat in the auditorium. Veronesi's writings lead us to assume that he was responsible for the destruction of La Fenice, however there is no concrete evidence of this being the case. No other casualties were reported aside from the playwright with the theatre and all surrounding buildings being efficiently evacuated. Repairs are ongoing, with the Teatro La Fenice due to open early February, 1928.