French Views of Venice:
From the Fourth Crusade through Napoleon

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Liberal Studies

By

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April 30, 2013
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people helped me with this thesis. Fr. John W. O’Malley, SJ, arch-enemy of the superfluous word, advised me, encouraged me, and taught me to trust my historical instincts. Prof. James Grubb inspired me, steered me, and referred me to Prof. Reinhold Mueller, who was generous with ideas and material from his forthcoming book. Sem Sutter of the Georgetown Library tracked down articles and books with good cheer. Prof. Kathryn Olesko made the Republic of Letters come alive. Prof. Frank Ambrosio and Deborah Warin reminded me how much there is to love about Italian history. Jan Janis, Lourdes Riviriego, and Bill Skinner lent their formidable language skills to difficult Old French texts and embraced the challenge with cheerful zeal. Mario Cellarosi decoded a nearly impenetrable piece of Venetian legalese. Abby Sherburne helped me understand an obscure Latin footnote. My sister “Renaissance Ladies” Louisa Woodville and Ann McClellan were encouraging and helpful every step of this long journey. My cohort-mates in the Georgetown DLS program Mary Gresens and Daphne Geanacopoulos knew exactly what to say and when to say it. Ann Ridder gave good and patient counsel. My family and friends showed good-natured interest as I embraced what one called “the Journal of Obscurity.” Fellow “lagoonatics” Eric Denker, Judith Martin, Luca Zan, and Luis Guardia have fanned the flames of this idea for more than ten years. Much longer ago I learned to love European history from my Aunt Phoebe, who took me to France and Italy when I was fifteen. Thanks to all of you.

The biggest thanks goes to my husband, Don Daniel, for letting Antelm the Nasty, James the Bastard, Amelot, Daru, and Napoleon crash our dinners, and who shared his own scholarly wisdom and patient support these past two years.
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INTRODUCTION

Venice had a long, influential, and often peculiar existence as a polity, and has an even more distinctive one in its afterlife. Venice the place triggers the imagination as almost no other. Venice as a political idea has been claimed by champions of representative government and elite rule alike, capitalism and socialism alike. Venice as an all-purpose stand-in for degradation and evil is a centuries-old phenomenon and still alive and well.¹ A place that made its fortune on spice, Venice acts as one: tiny but powerful, leaving all it contacts with a lasting aftertaste.

The most basic demarcation for original sources on Venice are the categories called “myth” and “anti-myth.” These are summed up by James S. Grubb as follows. The Venetian myth extols “a city founded in liberty and never thereafter subjected to foreign domination; a maritime, commercial economy; a unified and civic-minded patriciate, guardian of the common good; a society intensely pious yet ecclesiastically independent; a loyal and contented populace; a constitution constraining disruptive forces in a thousand-year harmony and constancy of purpose; a republic of wisdom and benevolence, provider of fair justice and a high degree of toleration.” The Venice of anti-myth, on the other hand, is “tyrannical, oppressive, unstable, contentious, divided, inconstant, treacherous, covetous, impious.”² Both grew up accretively, with the apotheosis of the myth generally held to be Contarini’s 16th-century De

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¹ Webster Tarpley, “The Venetian Conspiracy,” YouTube (June 20, 2012), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFeSm5x4W4o (accessed February 20, 2013). “Webster Tarpley on Venice, the mediaeval Venetian Conspiracy, that conquered Amsterdam and Britain; the Byzantine Empire; Martin Luther; the Vatican; 911; NeoCons and homosexual Republicans.”

Here I explore the French historical view of Venice, from the Fourth Crusade in 1204 through the Napoleonic era, and explain the apparent longstanding antipathy of the French for the Venetians. While scholars have written on situational, time-bound antagonisms, no work has heretofore traced these into a continuous narrative, measuring thrust and counter thrust against long waves of cultural change in Europe, and the weakening and death of the Venetian state. This is what I do in the pages that follow.

Negative French views toward Venice reflect interrelated themes that evolved from the thirteenth through the nineteenth centuries. These strands incorporated French-Venetian contact during the Crusades, in the Latin Crusader Kingdoms, in courts and marketplaces throughout Europe, on battlefields in Italy, and finally in salons, coffeehouses, and the Republic of Letters. Its aspects were cultural, commercial, political, military, and intellectual.

Strands of French antipathy toward Venice developed over time. The first is a sense that during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, and in relationships between Venetians and Franks in the Crusader Kingdoms, Venetians manipulated their Frankish allies for commercial gain. This disdain for the Venetian commercial lifestyle, particularly as contrasted with iconic chivalric values, became quite clear during the League of Cambrai in 1509, as the written sources demonstrate in treating both the established Venetian myth and growing counter-myth.

Another strand is religion. This found expression in cynicism about Venetian fidelity to Christian teachings, concern about Venetian commercial dealings with the Muslim Turks, and a general sense of Venetian faithlessness. The controversy between Venice and the papacy,
culminating in Interdict and defense in 1606-7, were particular high points. Religious tension around Venice shifted in the later seventeenth century, when anti-clerical writers saw in Venice a pernicious clinging to Catholic tradition and practice, and linked it to hypocritical moral decadence and resistance to Enlightenment thought.

I assert that each of these strands was informed as much by what was going on in the time and place of the historian as what was going on in Venice at the time under study; French reactions to Venice were conditioned by French concerns with France.

Why does this topic merit the historian’s attention? There are six reasons.

The first is related to the longevity of Venice, which existed as a political unit for over eleven centuries (from approximately the 6th century to 1797), and was written about by French historians for over six centuries (from the Fourth Crusade in 1204 to the 19th century). This extraordinarily long period enables us to observe developments along many fronts. One is intellectual: during the lifetime of Venice we see an essentially religious orientation move to a humanistic intellectual tradition and then into the so-called age of enlightenment. Another is political: this time frame encompasses the development of the modern nation state and the forging of national identities, often with the help of state-sponsored histories. A third development is historiographical: during this period the historian’s art moved from chronicle writing with a teleological orientation to a more fact-based history. So the first answer to the question “why is this topic important?” is that it enables us to observe intellectual, political and historiographical developments over a long period of time in the context of a fixed object of history (Venice) written from a fixed perspective (French).
A French historiographical development, the *annaliste* school, arose in the first part of the 20th century; its *longue durée* view provides a particularly appropriate way to study Venice, and extended comparisons of French views of Venice facilitate this. According to the *longue durée* view, history is driven not only by the political or military actions of rulers, but at least as much by the activities, habits, and cultures of ordinary people over long periods of time. The aptness of this view for the study of Venice becomes clear to anyone seeking to find the tipping points in Venetian history. When did ascent become stasis, and stasis decline? One might locate the first, as I do, in the decisions made after 1423 to expand Venetian presence on the *terrafirma*, and the second in 1509, when the outcome of that decision – the opposition of other land-based powers much larger than Venice – became apparent. In the *annaliste* view we would see these political-military decisions in the context of longstanding cultural trends, and so they are: the first is informed by the growing orientation of Venetian nobles for the landed lifestyle, the second by the gravitation of European nation states toward larger tax bases cohered by more general national identities, and the peculiar Venetian resistance to this model. Related to this is a question not often studied – perhaps because it is so dispiriting – and that is, when did Venice begin to be a failed state? That Napoleon knocked it over with a feather is well known; at what point this become possible is not. At what point did Venice become so weakened that reinvigoration was no longer possible? This study helps to answer this question by taking a fine look one particular governmental role, and one the Venetian government traditionally took very seriously: propaganda. So a second answer to the question of why this thesis is valuable is that it helps us address the issue – one rarely addressed, and well suited to the *longue durée* view of the *annalistes* – when did the Republic of Venice effectively die?
What happens to the history of countries that no longer exist? In the case of Venice the line is not a sharp one. As Venice moved from vibrancy into decrepitude the official reaction to hostile writings changed. Instead of dignified silence regarding the hostile work and the production of other works emphasizing Venetian greatness, we see the opposite: panicked indignation, prohibition of the critical work, yet no effort to counterbalance. The death of Venice as a polity does not appear to mark an important demarcation in how historians write about Venice, or how Venetians debated that view; instead that point was reached more than a century before; important governmental roles were abandoned before the government itself fell. This study enables us to study and contrast four separate moments in the French presentation of Venetian history. The first two of these – the Fourth Crusade and the League of Cambrai eras – were times when Venice commanded the full arsenal of hard and soft weapons of state, and used them to counter critical histories as they saw fit. The last moment was after the fall of the Republic and thus when it fell to private individuals to refute historical criticism. The third moment – the 17th century – is from this perspective the most interesting. The Republic of Venice still existed, and was able to take brute measures against a critical work, by having its author jailed temporarily, prohibiting the book’s publication, and deeming it a crime for Venetians to read it. Yet these are merely police actions. No Venetian work was written to counter this critical view for over a century; and the book ultimately undertaken to do so was embarrassingly inadequate. This paltry response, so much enfeebled from earlier times, suggests fundamental weakness in the governmental propaganda function. Since this function had been so central to the Venetian state since its origins, we may note its absence as a signal diminishment of Venetian state power. Again, looking only at French writers holds nationality
constant and enables us to focus on the temporal element, in this case the arc of a national life. The *longue duree* view here enables us to examine the failure of the Venetian state not as the moment of its defeat but as the processes of decay that presage that moment. Since Venice as a polity declined and ceased to exist during the period under examination, we are able to contrast the historical treatment of a vibrant, living polity as opposed to a declined or dead polity; this is the third answer to the question.

Studying Venice as observed by the French enables us to examine a set of questions around the subjectivity and responsibility of historians. This is a slippery subject, and holding two fixed points constant provides some traction for the historiographer addressing it. Why do people write history? How do historians choose what is important enough to write about? How do historians transcend their own time and space? In this case, I ask each author: who are you, and why are you writing about Venice? What we find is that the motivations for the French historians studied here are sometimes careerist (Lemaire’s seeking court patronage by writing about a popular and timely topic), sometimes deliberately mischievous (Antelm’s inventing stories to discredit an enemy), sometimes sincerely passionate (Vaux-des-Cernay’s vilification of a Venetian culture seen as hostile to Christendom, Daru’s denunciation of a civilization seen as decadent), sometimes personal (Villehardoin’s and Clari’s self-justification for making common cause with Venice, Amelot’s later works, counterattacks against unfair treatment). So the fourth answer is, from this thesis we learn something about the motives and subjectivity of historians.

The persistent negativity of French writers for Venice is in itself a question worth answering. It is a negativity that begins in the Fourth Crusade era and continues for longer than
the Venetian republic does. The tenaciously antagonistic view of one culture for another with
which it is similar in many ways, had political alliances from time to time, enjoyed some mutual
admiration, and did not share a contested border, is worthy of the historian’s interest, both for
its own specific elements and for what it has to teach more generally about cross-cultural
understanding (and misunderstanding). Thus the fifth answer: in looking at the longstanding
French dislike of Venice, we can we learn about cross-cultural relations.

The last reason that this topic merits attention is related to the multi-layered interest
Venice holds for the reading public. This interest comes from all sides. It is artistic, economic,
political, social; it is related to Venice not only as a polity, but as an idea and as a destination. Its
importance has been demonstrated in a wide variety of writings on Venice, including (in
addition to those already mentioned) art and architectural history, sensitive ecological
management, construction of cross-class social buttresses, consciously arm’s-length Catholic
heterodoxy, abnormal family relations, art and civic ritual in the service of the state, openness
to visitors. One area of interest is the extent to which the physical remains of Venice – the city
of Venice – have been expropriated by outsiders for agendas having nothing to do with Venice
itself. Venice has been used by John Ruskin as a demonstration of the medieval religious ethos
(Stones of Venice), by Thomas Mann as a metaphor for fin de siècle decadence (Death in
Venice), by Henry James to show the grip of old-world values over new-world vitality (The
Wings of the Dove), by Benito Mussolini’s propagandists as a symbol of pan-Italian strength and
virtue, and by Roberto Rosselini as a symbol of Fascist perversity (in Era Notte in Roma). Venice
has served generations of Europeans and Americans on journeys of artistic creation, personal
expression, or escape. This phenomenon of Venice as a screen on which the concerns of others
are projected is long and rich. The French saw in Venice a reflection of what they wished not to be; hence, Venice as “the French mirror.” It is in this vein that I propose to show how Venice was used by the French, over centuries, in their own projects of cultural formation and the forging of their own national identity. This is the sixth and last reason for interest in this topic.

Students of Venice often use the analogy of a kaleidoscope; the elements of Venice can be arranged, and rearranged, into very different pictures. In this thesis I would like to introduce another analogy: Venice – or Venetian historiography – as a pinball game. In the course of these chapters we will see certain ideas about Venice launched, and propelled or repelled by historians with keen agendas, skill, and luck. These ideas may come from legitimate historical documents and forgeries alike.3 We will see here the ideas of chivalry and Christianity come in for this kind of debate, and they set the stage for the persistent dualism in which Venice is viewed by the French: Were its distinctive origins free or not? Does its wealth reflect skill or greed? Is its political independence due to prudence or treachery? Is its domestic peace attributable to justice and good governance, or tyranny? As the French navigate their own progression from decentralized baronies in the Crusading era, to monarchy in the League of Cambrai era, through the “Republic of Letters” in the Enlightenment era, to the republic of the post-revolution era, these questions take on weight. Various French writers sort the answers out to their own satisfaction; as they do so, we see Venice play a role on the stage of the French civic imagination.

3 See conclusion and appendix for further discussion of the role of forgeries in Venetian historiography.
CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF VENETIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

This thesis began with a question: why does the popular image of Venice – a place of frivolity, tyranny, and decadence – differ so greatly from the Venice of diligent merchants, dignified diplomats, skilled shipwrights, and sound civic and financial administrators that built the city up from a swamp and established a successful and largely peaceful trading empire?1 The answer, I came to realize, is that we look at Venice backwards. Closest to us is a long period of occupation (both military and economic) in the nineteenth century,2 accompanied by depictions of Venice as “a bloody and lurid melodrama.”3 Next closest in time is a long period of stagnation and decadence during the two preceding centuries. Only then, moving backwards in


time, do we come to its age of robust vitality, in the fifteenth century and before. As compelling as Venice’s own self-presentation was from early times, it could not overcome, at least in the popular view, the negative references circulated about it by others. These date from the Crusading era, the League of Cambrai era, the seventeenth century, and achieved their apotheosis in the nineteenth history, with a stream of artistic works alluding to a cruel, corrupt, tyrannical and unhealthy Venice, from the bravos that began to appear as a specifically Venetian villain in the 1790s, to Thomas Mann’s 1912 Death in Venice. Widespread international scholarship on Venetian exemplarities – commerce, shipbuilding, diplomacy, and civic life – would only come to the fore only in the second half of the twentieth century. Those who would know the Republic of Venice see it only through the layered agendas of the writers that bring Venice to us.

Venetian historiography has had two periods. Up until the fall, to write about Venice was to engage with the attention of the Republic of Venice. Writings on Venice were read and noted by “the cautious and committee-ridden bosom of the Most Serene Republic.” Rather than refute unflattering depictions, the Venetian Republic preferred to present itself and its

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7 Norwich, History of Venice, 577.
past proactively, in serene splendor of its own design, untroubled by the denigration of others. The most effective of these representations was Gasparo Contarini’s *De magistrabitus et republica Venetorum*, a city laudation that goes further and becomes the archetype of what comes to be known as the myth of Venice.

Contarini’s work circulated in Europe and became part of the often contentious conversation around good governance at the cerebral level. Visitors to Venice were engaged on a more sensual plane, an enterprise on which the republic and its denizens spent significant resources. This barrage of propaganda took in everything from the mosaics of St Mark’s to the ceremonies on feast days to the elegant lifestyles of their Venetian hosts. Visitors to Venice were given the same tours and told the same stories and were often obliging enough to repeat them in their accounts. Most of the works explored in this thesis relate to this pre-fall era.

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10 Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 127-30. The financial records of the Venetian *scuole* – charitable confraternities – show they regularly spent as much as 40% of their revenues on the robes and candles needed the state processions in which they were required to participate.


13 Thomas Coryat, *Coryat’s Crudities, Hastily Gobled up in Five Moneths Travells in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia Commonly Called the Grisons Country, Helvetia Alias Switzerland, Some Parts of High Germany and the Netherlands; Newly Digested in the Hungry Aire of Odcombe in the County of Somerset, and Now Dispersed to the Nourishment of the Travelling Members of This Kingdome* (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 301-428,
In the second period – beginning from the fall in 1797 – there was no Republic to talk back. Historians engaged other historians, but no longer Venice itself (although Venetian patriotism was a factor until after the brief republican resurgence in 1848). This changes the tenor of the conversation. Histories of Venice are increasingly less along pro-con dimensions – or myth-antimyth dimensions – but on whatever subject engages the scholar. Certainly Venice became part of the conversation about Italian nationalism, and was used by various authors to in the course of the late, difficult birth of the nation of Italy.14 Yet the Venetian Republic is gone. Venice, for the scholar, can now be anything the evidence supports – art, social mobility, commerce, military history, the environment.15 People write now not in the service of some larger entity, but of their audiences and their scholarly agendas.

Perhaps nothing better depicts the shift in the subject of Venetian imagery than the contrast between two paintings of St Mark’s Square. Gentile Bellini’s 1496 painting (see fig. 1)


http://books.google.com/books?id=evxVAAAYAAYJ&dq=coryat+crudities+1905&source=gbs_navlinks_s (accessed February 16, 2013) and John Evelyn, The Diary of John Evelyn, ed. William Bray (London: Walter Dunne, 1901), 194-217, http://archive.org/details/diaryofjohnnevely01eveliala (accessed February 16, 2013). Englishmen Thomas Coryat and John Evelyn traveled to Venice from May to October in 1608 and August 1645 to April 1646 respectively. Despite the half century separating their visits, the stories they tell after visiting the arsenal are remarkably similar, indicating the extent to which official tours of this important site stayed on message.

14 Grubb, Myths, 47-8.

15 Ibid., 92-4.
shows a procession in which members of the Venetian confraternities and guilds processed through the square in a highly articulated order, each with their robes, relics, canopies, and other paraphernalia, all richly appointed. The great numbers and intricate lineup depicted shows what has come down to us in many descriptions about the ritual statecraft that was an intrinsic part of Venetian diplomacy. The impression made by processions like this was recorded by many visitors – and that message was, here was a prosperous and well-ordered society, proud of its traditions.

Indeed, this painting was commissioned for one of the scuole participating in the procession shown.

In contrast is a painting by Luca Carlevarijs from 1710. It is exactly the same location – but what a different scene! First, by this time carnival was celebrated up to nine months of the year, and masks were worn by some people regularly. Secondly, the painting shows a group of individuals, not a group of people arranged in a unit. Most of the people are well dressed, but not all. Dogs lounge and a theater troupe plays underneath the bell tower. This picture was painted for an Englishman to take home with him – perhaps someone depicted in the painting itself. The contrast between these two paintings is multifaceted. Perhaps most significant is

\[16\] Muir, Civic Rituals, 185-250. Muir titles one of his chapters “A Republic of Processions.”
that by the early part of the eighteenth century, Venice was being defined not by itself for its own purposes, but by others for theirs.

Yet for much of early modern Europe Venice was the exemplary polity, to be imitated or opposed but always indicative of core values; thus writings on Venice explicate the cultural value systems of other Europeans at various stages of their development. Here I pursue this from the French perspective, investigating the way in which French histories of Venice are affected by the individual French historian’s personal circumstances – time period, class origins, religious beliefs, local or regional biases, career or professional aspirations, readings of the histories that came before them – and how these are affected in turn by the larger forces of culture and nation. I then look at the Venetian response or lack of response to these French presentations. Finally, I see how these French reflections and Venetian reactions evolve over time as the French monarchy centralizes and is then transformed by the revolution and Napoleon, and the Venetian Republic matures, declines, and dies.

The phrase “exquisite corpse” is a surrealist concept by which words or images are collectively assembled with each participant adding to the composition in sequence, either by following a formula or by following what the previous person contributed. Writers about Venice follow the exquisite corpse game, and Venice itself – the fabric of the city – can be considered to be the “exquisite corpse” of the Republic that built it. In this dissertation I query thirteen French¹⁷ authors: who are you, and why are you writing about Venice? Are you advancing a cause? Are you representing a client? Are you following a scholarly question of your own

¹⁷ I had originally hoped to cover French, British, and American views of Venice. That turned out to be a bridge too far.
devising? Venice has represented many things over the long life of its historiography. There is something to learn from this interrogation – about Venice, about France, and about human values.

**Venetian Historiography**

**Cassiodorus**

In the year 537, Venice entered the historical record when Cassiodorus, an elite Roman serving the Ostrogoth Theodoric the Great, wrote a flattering letter\(^{18}\) to the Venetian tribunes so that they would perform shipping services and transport wine and oil from Istria to Ravenna. This letter touches so many of the themes of Venetian historiography invoked on both the positive and negative side that it is worth quoting extensively:

> We have previously given orders that Istria should send wine and oil, of which there are abundant crops this year, to the Royal residence at Ravenna. Do you, who possess numerous ships on the borders of the Province, show the same devotion in forwarding the stores which they do in supplying them.

> Be therefore active in fulfilling this commission in your own neighbourhood, you who often cross boundless distances. It may be said that [in visiting Ravenna] you are going through your own guest-chambers, you who in your voyages traverse your own home.... Beholders from a distance, not seeing the channel of the stream, might fancy them moving through the meadows. Cables have been used to keep them at rest: now drawn by ropes they move, and by a changed order of things men help their ships with their feet. They draw their drawers without labour, and instead of the capricious favour of sails they use the more satisfactory steps of the sailor.

> It is a pleasure to recall the situation of your dwellings as I myself have seen them. Venetia the praiseworthy, formerly full of the dwellings of the nobility, touches on the south Ravenna and the Po, while on the east it enjoys the

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delightsomeness of the Ionian shore... Here after the manner of water-fowl have you fixed your home....

Like them there are seen amid the wide expanse of the waters your scattered homes, not the product of Nature, but cemented by the care of man into a firm foundation. For by a twisted and knotted osier-work the earth there collected is turned into a solid mass, and you oppose without fear to the waves of the sea so fragile a bulwark, since forsooth the mass of waters is unable to sweep away the shallow shore, the deficiency in depth depriving the waves of the necessary power.

The inhabitants have one notion of plenty, that of gorging themselves with fish. Poverty therefore may associate itself with wealth on equal terms. One kind of food refreshes all; the same sort of dwelling shelters all; no one can envy his neighbour's home; and living in this moderate style they escape that vice [of envy] to which all the rest of the world is liable.....

Therefore let your ships, which you have tethered, like so many beasts of burden, to your walls, be repaired with diligent care....

This charming letter raises many of the core elements of the myth of Venice, and presages some of the criticisms, with more questions than answers. In these early day, was Venice free, or a tributary to Theodoric? Was this letter about duty or business? Cassiodorus salues Venetian skill in shipbuilding and engineering, and a gives nod to the lack of envy and peaceful relations of the Venetians. He also raises here the question of Venetian origins – were they noble or non-noble refugees? In any event, no leaders are named, no nobles praised; what is praised instead is hard work, ingenuity, and equality.
Chronicles through the Fifteenth Century

During its life, the Venetian Republic was defined, explained, celebrated, and critiqued from within. From the mid tenth Century, its history was chronicled by nobles and citizens, anonymous and known, writing from sources and oral histories, in a style that was increasingly to be characterized by reference to sources and a secular tone. These include the *Chronicon Gradense* and *Chronicon Altinate*, two works that were carried out by many hands in both Venice and Constantinople from the mid tenth Century to the thirteenth Century; the *Cronaca Veneziana* of John the Deacon in 1008; an anonymous *Historia Ducum Veneticorum* written around 1177; *Les Estoires de Venise* by Martin da Canale in 1275; *Chronicon Venetum* by Andrea Dandolo in 1339, shortly before he became Doge; *De quattuor virtutibus cadrinalibus to cives Venetos* by Enrico da Rimini in 1375; and the *Cronaca* of Cristofero da Soldo in 1465. Humanist influence shaped the writing of history; in the fifteenth century these included Sabellico’s *Rerum venetarium* and Bernardo Giustiani’s *De origine urbis Venetarium*. The Crusading-era works explored in chapter two come from the early part of this era.

Relazioni

Venetians dispatched by the state to other places were urged to communicate not only *dispacci* relating to the particular business of their mission, but also more broadly about the nature and custom of their destination, the characteristics and relationships of its ruler, and its

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relationships with its neighbors. These came to be called *relazioni*. Mentioned in legislation as early as the late thirteenth century, in their mature version of the sixteenth century they became exemplary. It was recognized by leading Venetians that *relazioni* might contain information useful to the state on many levels, and the delivery of a *relazione* by a returning ambassador could be a career-making event. Venetian *relazioni* were held up as models by other polities, copied and prized by families of returned ambassadors, and mined by modern historians beginning with Leopold von Ranke in the 1830s.

**Official Historians and Diarists**

Venice began to appoint official historians in the 1530s, at about the same time the *relazioni* matured. Their relationship seems obvious – diplomats with experience in observing other places would return to Venice with a framework for writing about Venetian history and a basis for comparison – although the historians appointed did not always in fact have this experience. The role was sometimes combined with a professorial chair at one of the state-sponsored Venetian schools. Some official historians (e.g. Paolo Paruta, 1540-1598), were experienced diplomats, others (e.g. Pietro Bembo) were humanists with less practical experience. Other Venetians kept diaries – Sanudo, Priuli, Sansovino – that have become, like the *relazioni*, important sources for modern historians.

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Exposition of Venetian Myth and Anti-Myth, Sixteenth Century

The many wars in Italy provided fertile ground for Venice’s enemies to attack with words as well as arms; anti-Venetian literature blossomed particularly in French courts, as we will explore more in chapter three. In 1529 Gasparo Contarini, serving as ambassador to the Emperor Charles V in Spain, wrote his influential *De magistrabitus et republica Venetorum*, laying out the first full articulation of the myth of Venice. The Florentine Donato Gianotti followed, in 1540, with a similar work, *Dialogi de Republica Venetorium*. Other Florentine historians wrote of Venice in their attempts to understand their own history, and contemplate what relations the various Italian city-states should have among themselves. Machiavelli wrote in *The Prince* that Venetians, in their expansion onto the Italian terraferma, cynically exploited local Guelph-Ghibbeline animosities to divert criticism to their own rule. Francesco Guicciardini believed that Venetian faith in their myth of superiority was their undoing. In the sixteenth century the humanist influence in Padua and other intellectual centers pushed the writing of history into new directions. Francesco Patrizzi was one who moved away from moral histories and toward more organized works in his *Dialoghi* of 1560.

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22 See note 8.

23 Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, 4-5.


Visitor Accounts, Fifteenth – Eighteenth Centuries

Visitors to Venice, sometimes pilgrims en route to Jerusalem, sometimes diplomats or businessmen with Venice as their destination, often wrote accounts of it. The Swiss Brother Felix Fabri in 1453 wrote a detailed account of accompanying pilgrims through Venice,\(^27\) while the shrewd Burgundian diplomat Philippe de Commines gave unglossed reactions to what he saw in his 1498 memoirs, for example, remarking on the number of foreigners in Venice.\(^28\) British visitors Thomas Coryate in 1611 gave a breathless account of the ducal palace (“absolutely the fairest building that ever I saw, exceeding all the king of Frances Palaces”) and reading its propagandistic art literally (“These pictures upon the wals are nothing else but Historicall descriptions of many auncient matters”). Likewise John Evelyn, in 1697, repeated what he had heard at the Arsenal: “There is one cannon, weighing 16,573 pounds, cast while henry the Third dined, and put into a galley built, rigged, and fitted for launching within that time.\(^29\)” Not all visitor accounts were positive. British visitor Moryson Fynes in 1617 wrote of the Venetians: “they dreame themselves to be Dukes and marquises, while they are indeed


\(^{29}\) See note 13.
Papal Denunciation and Anti-Papal Defense

In 1605 Pope Paul V and Venice clashed on questions of papal-secular privilege. The immediate causes were Venetian assertion of the rights to try clerics for civil offenses and approve the foundation of new churches and the acquisition of property by them and by clerics, both rights long claimed by the Venetian state but now resented by a resurgent papacy. The conflict escalated and Venice, advised by the Servite friar and theological counselor Paolo Sarpi, resisted. The Pope excommunicated the entire Republic of Venice, including all its dominions, a decree the Venetians ignored.

Sarpi offered an energetic defense in 1607 with *Risposta di un Dottore in Teologia*, delimiting church rights in secular matters. Although the book was banned, Sarpi then followed with an *Apologia*, *Considerazioni sulle censure*, and *Trattato dell' interdetto*. Jesuits living

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in Venice left simultaneously with being expelled, but other Venetian clerics remained and ignored the Interdict, carrying on their functions. Sarpi’s works were admired by other European states – Catholic as well as Protestant – as important assertions of secular power.

**Enlightenment Writings of the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries**

French historiography from the late seventeenth century, most notably Amelot de la Houssaye in 1676, had identified the communal and secret elements of the Venetian constitution as oppressive, *ancient regime*, and anti-Enlightenment. Freschot followed this line of attack in 1709, and Laugier in 1768. (Amelot’s influential writings are the subject of chapter four.) Voltaire saw Venice as a society incapacitated by ennui. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, serving in the French embassy at Venice in the late eighteenth century, formed an opinion of the state

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37 Chambers and Pullan, *Documentary History*, 218.


40 Amelot de la Houssaye is the subject of chapter 3 of this thesis. He wrote a history of Venice that was critical and landed him in the Bastille when the Venetian ambassador complained.


42 See chapter four.
as repressive and violent, and used it in his 1762 *Social Contract* as an example of the natural degeneration of government.\(^\text{43}\) He was clearly influenced by the *barnabotti*, poor members of the nobility, many of whom sold their votes, and some of whom criticized the government and thus attracted the attention of the Council of Ten.\(^\text{44}\) By the 1770s the division between the Venetian government and its critics, led by Giorgio Pisani, was so public as to be well known outside of Venice.\(^\text{45}\) Venice’s decline in military and relative economic power was now joined by an increasingly fragmented internal polity.

**Historiography After the Fall**

A fundamental change occurred after the fall of the Republic in 1797. We have seen that the French tradition of viewing Venice as retrograde went back over a century. However, when Antoine Daru, a high-ranking officer of Napoleon, wrote his critical *Histoire de la Republique de Venise* in 1819,\(^\text{46}\) there were, unlike before, no Venetian officials to take note of his account. It took nine years for a Venetian noble, Domenico Tiepolo, to write a work subtitled “corrections

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of some errors discovered in the Venetian history of Monsieur Daru\textsuperscript{47} – and Tiepolo was, by that time, writing as a private citizen.

Daru’s lengthy work was known primarily for the notorious “Statutes of the Inquisitors of State,” a lengthy, secret, and shocking document purporting to give details on the state spying and the secret trials and executions it supported.\textsuperscript{48} These sensationalistic documents inspired many works of art: Lord Byron’s 1823 	extit{Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice} and James Fenimore Cooper’s 	extit{The Bravo} were two of the many works of fiction that succeeded as literature and had extended lives as operatic plots.\textsuperscript{49} The Romantic sensibility of the nineteenth century was alive to the possibilities of Venice – urban, bureaucratic, corrupt – as antithetical to its agenda. Even Ruskin’s 	extit{Stones of Venice} in 1853 was able to locate in the evolution of Venetian architecture a perceived move away from nature to an increasingly repressive and artificial society.\textsuperscript{50} Tiepolo understood that Amelot had relied on forged documents, and his second rectification dealt with these “secret statutes of the Inquisition of state” and their


\textsuperscript{48} See appendix for excerpts.


dubious authenticity. However, while Amelot made many corrections proposed by Tiepolo and others, he did not remove the “Statute” and the view of Venice they gave continued to predominate. Only in 1855, when the Venetian scholar Samuele Romanin wrote a source-based history of Venice, *Storia di Venetia*, were the “statutes” relied upon by Daru conclusively demonstrated to be forgeries. (Daru is the subject of Chapter Five.)

**Archival History and Risorgimento Politics**

Between the publication of Tiepolo’s defense in 1828 and Romanin’s in 1855, Venetian historiography incorporated two important trends. The first had to do with modern historical methods. The Prussian Leopold von Ranke’s work in the early 1830s, and his essays on Venetian history specifically, had enormous impact. His urging of modern, source-based methods coincided with the opening of the Venetian archives, from which he wrote three well-regarded essays. His essay on the Spanish conspiracy impressed upon him the importance of questioning the official version of historical events. A key moment in the availability of the Venetian archives occurred in 1871, when Rinaldo Fulin launched the first issue of *Archivio Veneto*. The

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51 Tiepolo, *Discorsi*, 113-4.

52 Samuele Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, vol. 3. (Venice: P. Naratovich, 1855), http://books.google.com/books?id=IXQZAAAYAAJ&q=inquisitori&source=gbs-navlinks_s (accessed February 19, 2013): 69-79; Francis Marion Crawford, *Venice, the place and the people: Salve Venetia; gleanings from Venetian history*. 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1909): 10-19. http://books.google.com/books/about/Venice_the_place_and_the_people.html?id=4qBDAAAAYAAJ (accessed February 19, 2013). While there was a body known as the “Inquisitors of State,” they were a sub-body of the Council of Ten, their role was very circumscribed, and their genuine statues were very different from the forged statues. This body was distinct from the “Inquisitors of the Holy Office,” who functioned in Venice in collaboration with the civil authorities.

long, fruitful, and still unfolding process of mining the extensive Venetian records could begin,
achieving one high point with the 1905 publication of the first of three volumes of Heinrich
Kretschmayr’s *Geschichte von Venedig*, widely respected as a leading source for generations of
Venetianists. The second trend operated at a deeper and perhaps not always conscious level.
Italian nationalism, simmering under the long yoke of French and Austrian occupation, was an
important subtext for Venetian histories in the 19th century. The short-lived Venetian Republic
of 1848 was the last hurrah for those who would seek a real restoration of the Venetian
republic; Romanin’s history, as Verdi’s operas, can be read as patriotic, anti-Austrian works. As
the generation that remembered a living Venetian Republic aged, many of its mythologizing
urges were channeled into Italian nationalism, and a celebration of Venice as the lone light of
liberty in an increasingly occupied Italian peninsula.

**British Interest**

The long awaited unification of Venice with the rest of Italy in 1866 was celebrated at La
Fenice (the doge’s palace being too damaged by the Austrian departure to serve the purpose),
with gatherings of nobles from many parts of Italy and a large contingent of British expatriots.54
British interest in Venice had grown throughout the 19th century and major contributions to
Venetian historiography came from Rawdon Brown and Horatio Brown (not related), two
British historians who collectively spent nearly a century combing the Venetian archives for
documents related to Britain under a stipend allowed them by Lord Palmerston’s

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government. Britain’s interest in Italy straddled a cultural world – souvenirs of grand tours lined the walls of Britain’s great country houses – and a political one, as a steady stream of Victorian travelers, many en route to India, passed through Venice and were shown around by members of the small, eccentric, expatriate community. Members of the government which had become interested in the Venetian cause both for reasons of economy and political stability, fearful that the Veneto could be the potential tinderbox in a pan-European conflict. In this, they were not far off: simply too early by 55 years and too far west by 319 miles.

Celebration of Liberalism

In the late nineteenth century, Venice was celebrated as a liberal exemplar by Italians such as Sismondi and Croce, and non-Italians such as Symonds and, particularly, the Swiss Jacob Burkhardt in his landmark work of 1860, The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy. Molmenti in his 1880 La Storia di Venezia nella Vita Privata praised Venice as a secular state bravely resisting papal authority.

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55 Ibid., 131.
World War I and the Rise of Fascism

This uplifting backwards look contrasts with depictions of contemporary Venice, a refuge for wealthy pleasure-seekers under the lowering cloud of war, depicted brilliantly by Thomas Mann in his 1912 *Death in Venice*. Italy, of which Venice was now a part, entered World War I on the part of the Allies, after having been part of the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria. Poorly armed and led, Italy lost over 600,000. Post-unification Italy was not to deliver the promised benefits of either territory or prosperity. It was not until 1913 that universal male suffrage was adopted; this was the year of peak Italian emigration. While parts of the north modernized, the south did not; all over Italy was crushing poverty. Many backward parts of the north were areas of former Venetian colonization, and Venetian history was read very differently in these places than in Venice. In the hands of nationalists such as Benedetto Croce, “history” was a tool of advocacy. Nothing could be further from Ranke’s standards than Croce’s injunction that “every true history is contemporary history”59 and “history is the story of liberty.”60 In a similar vein, Gramsci’s class-based theories saw the failures of the ruling class in Venice as causing stagnation, the delayed development of the nation, and vulnerability to outside forces in the form of Napoleon. Mussolini’s propagandists, on the other hand, derided Venice for living in the past, but on the other found appeal in Venetian strength and


60 Croce, Benedetto. *History as the story of liberty*. Translated by Sylvia Sprigge. New York: Norton 1941. “History as the Story of Liberty” is the English title given to Croce’s “La storia come pensiero e come azione.”
discipline. On the other end of the political spectrum, Gramsci accused the Venetian patriciate of manipulating ideology to preserve privilege; even liberal moves were meant to limit true progress. In a view more positive toward Venice, Gaetano Salvemini of the economic-juridical school saw proto-socialism in Venetian medieval history. These writers used Venetian history as a surrogate for liberal-fascist debate. Writing at the same time, Delio Cantimori wrote in the other direction, ramping back the rhetoric and overstatement. His area of interest was church history, and due to his accurate and sensitive writing, as well as his personal efforts, we are (in the words of Grubb) “far more sensitive to the varieties of orthodoxy current and permissible within Catholicism before and after Trent, and we don’t have to refute old canards about Sarpi being a crypto-Protestant.”

**Republican Italy**

The Italian Fascist regime collapsed in 1943, during World War II, and the following year per capita income reached its lowest point in the twentieth century. It also lost yet more of its former colonies (in addition to those lost after World War I) and saw its borders in the north somewhat diminished. In 1948 Italy (following the first election in which women had the vote) allied itself with the U.S. and began to receive Marshall Plan benefits. The ensuing decades saw growth, known as the “Economic Miracle.” This coincided with a rich period in Venetian

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63 Ibid., 47-8.

64 Ibid., 57.
historiography in which scholars from Venice and its former *terraferma* colonies engaged in robust debate about Venetian rise and fall, colonialization, and the Venetian role in economic growth during its empire. Cessi stressed the importance of developments as early as the fifteenth century (loss of Flanders trade, rise of Turks) in determining the trajectory of Venice.\(^{65}\) Chabod, in *Scritti sul Renascimento*, located the beginning of the end in the fall-off of interest in the perfection of the republican model.\(^{66}\) Berengo, in his 1956 work *Il prolema politico-sociale di Venezia e della sua terraferma*, demonized the patricians; for Berengo (per Grubb), “The Venetian state exemplifies backwardness: feudal, agricultural, aristocratic…its failure…rendered the Republic an anachronism and made it vulnerable to Napoleon’s brusque remedy in 1797.”\(^{67}\) In his works of the late 1950s on Sarpi, Morosini, and other Venetian figures, as well as other topics, Cozzi used archives to demonstrate that the nobility was becoming more fractured and disparities in wealth were growing in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. He emphasized in his work the ideals that joined people of Venice with those of its *terraferma* colonies.\(^{68}\) His approach contrasts with that of Ventura, in his 1964 *Nobilta e popolano nella societa veneta del ‘400 e ‘500*, who argued there that Enlightenment ideas did not prosper in Venice, where highhanded nobles were reactionary and resistant to reform. Like Berengo,

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 57-61.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 48.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 70.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 78-82.
Ventura put Venice in the mainstream with the rest of Europe in the *ancient regime* mindset of its patricians with their privileges.  

Fasoli wrote his landmark 1958 *Nascita di un mito*, making the myth itself the subject of study, a topic taken up again by Gaeta, who found variants on the myth and demonstrated its usefulness within Venice.  

The Christian Democrat historian and politician Fanfani argued from a presentist basis that while Venetian failure to reform and become more capitalist cost Venice its independence, this was not strictly the fault of the nobility but of all strata of society.  

Gino Luzzatto, in his 1961 *Storia Economica di Venezia dall’XI al XVI Secolo*, attributes to the nobility limitations that led to economic weakness and vulnerability to Jacobin ideas.  

Beltrami, in his 1961 *La penetrazione economica dei Veneziani in terraferma*, discussed the nobility’s attitude toward trade and agriculture, lamenting absentee landlords but noting population increases.  

Gino Benzoni, writing in 1966 of Venice in the interdict, exposed earlier debates on that subject “a relic of Risorgimento debates between papalists and liberal nationalists,” and obsolete.  

Finally we have Giorgio Cracco, whose work prompted Frederic Lane to write “Muckrakers and purifiers have both left their mark on Venetian historiography... In this century the purifiers have on the whole been dominant, but Giorgio Cracco’s book is part of a growing effort to...”

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69 Ibid., 68-92.  
72 Ibid., 67.  
73 Ibid., 71, 74.  
74 Ibid., 57.
reverse that trend.”75 So we see within this period known as the “Economic Miracle” a robust discussion of Venetian terraferma colonization by Italian historians, and the role of Venice and its aristocrats played in economic development of the Veneto. In this debate conflicting claims of myth and countermyth were examined, audited and moderated. The myth in many parts was validated; the nobility parsed and found to be less monolithic than presented, especially in the Republic’s later years.

Annaliste Exploration of Venice

With its multifaceted story and rich archives, Venice has been an irresistible object of study for the annaliste school of history.76 Fernand Braudel himself wrote on Venice extensively and, beginning in 1961, published Le decline de Venise au XVIIeme siecle, The Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II, and Civilization and Capitalism. While studying Venice extensively (the index entry for Venice in Mediterranean loftily states, “the pages are too numerous to serve any purpose in giving them”), he rejects Venetian exceptionalism, and also points out the lurking presentism in almost any discussion of Venice (e.g., do scholars pursue the decadence discussion in the shadow of Europe’s own diminishment?).77


76 “Daru’s Venice,” The Quarterly Review 31 (Dec. 1824 – Mar. 1825), http://books.google.com/books?pg=PA445&id=j51KAAAAcAAJ#v=onepage&q&f=true (accessed February 19, 2013): 427. The author of this unsigned piece accuses Daru of being an “annalist”: The thread of his narrative is disagreeably broken by an abrupt division of paragraphs and sections; and we are often reminded of the staid precision of the Annalist.”

77 Grubb, Myth, 61.
American Expropriation of Venetian History

The American economic historian Frederic Lane gave long, close study to Venetian shipping and commerce, working at first in the *annaliste* vein, but eventually migrating to a question that also occupied two other important American historians, Hans Baron and William Bouwsma, and that is the nexus of capitalist or proto-capitalist economies with republican (or proto-republican) governments. Lane’s important opus began with *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance* in 1934 and culminated in *Venice: A Maritime Republic* in 1973, with many important articles, essays, reviews and monographs in between. Lane was reflective and always careful to stay within his evidence and arguments. William Bouwsma, in his 1968 *Venice and the Defense of Republican Italy in the Age of the Counter-Reformation*, distinguishes two separate cultures, Venice and Rome, with Venice the progressive, Renaissance, humanist, republican culture, Rome the medieval, authoritarian, absolutist culture.78 As Martin and

78 Grubb’s fundamental criticism of Bouwsma merits an extensive quote:

however brilliant in its parts, as a whole the book is not about Venice at all but, as the subtitle declares, about “Renaissance values in the age of the Counter Reformation.” Venice is all Renaissance, but a Renaissance which is abstract ideal rather than historically specific moment: embodiment of freedom (personal and national), toleration, humanism, empiricism, republicanism, civic mindedness, secularism, resistance to dogmatism, activism, pluralism, self-determination, modernity. Rome as Counter-Reformation is a throwback to the dark and medieval: scholastic, “hierocratic,” centralized, intolerantly orthodox, conformist, repressive, absolutist, Tridentine, Jesuitic, reactionary, hegemonic. The giovani are Renaissance men, the vecchi neomedieval, and the affirmation of the former was a necessary step toward the modern world. Paruta and Sarpi, Baronius and Bellarmine locked in mortal combat between mutually exclusive visions of God and civil society; Venice won at least the immediate battle and so could pass on republican ideals and virtues first to England and finally to the United States. Bouwsma is writing, then, about the great Atlantic republican tradition that, it has been pointed out, is not even to be placed within the realm of the history of ideas but that resides in a metahistorical realm of political theory. Irrespective of the book’s intrinsic merits, its effect on specifically Venetian studies was to harness the concerns of Cozzi to a schematization so absolute and abstract as to be beyond verification or refutation and thus to make further concrete historical enquiry almost pointless.
Romero observe, “In its most exaggerated form this historiography sought in the Renaissance republics of Venice and Florence the origins of an unbroken and transatlantic republican tradition”. Hans Baron’s 1955 work on Renaissance Florence and Venice also has presentist overtones for American readers. He claimed that sheer fear of invasion caused Florentines to become accepting of the realpolitik of Macchiavelli. These works are, collectively, important for American historiography.

**Venetian Historiography Since 1970**

Brian Pullan’s 1971 *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State* is in a class by itself not for its heft and tremendously detailed sourcing, nor because of its significance to religious as well as economic and social issues, but because it answers the question, once and for all, about the role of the nobility in maintaining social order. The answer is that it was central: with their sustained and substantial contributions to the scuole grande, the nobility provided enough food, justice and dignity to their Venetian compatriots to endorse the myth. This was a major milestone in Venetian studies. It is at approximately this point in time that Venice – long since extinct as a republic – begins to lose resonance as a political surrogate for a political unit, as long-contested questions are finally settled.

Grubb, in his 1984 *Four Decades of Venetian Historiography*, has posed the question whether the Venetian subjects are exhausted, the major questions answered, with the huge

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amount of material published between World War II and the date of his article. Scholars, of course, have continued to write about Venice, but one could argue that the major debates have played out, with counter-argument answering argument so that the middle ground in most cases has been honorably reached. Archival work has by and large trumped categorical assertion. The Venetian myth has been examined and found useful, while Venetian exceptionalism has been dismissed in most areas (e.g., that the late aristocrats were monolithically ancien regime) and explained in others (e.g., that its lagoon geography gave it unique advantages).

Indeed, important historical questions continued to be asked and answered. The parsing of the nobility continued beyond Rich and Poor. While some political work Venetian studies now would appear to be less driven by national or regional loyalties, and more simply by areas of interest. Likewise, scholarly positions (or attacks on positions taken by previous scholars) are less likely to be determined by nationality or region than by individual belief or research agenda. Interest in Florence, for example, has prodded Venetianists, as John Hale asserted in his introduction to his 1970 collection on Venetian essays was instigated by Rubinstein’s similar book on Florentine essays. For the most part, however, the work on Venice that has emerged since Grubb’s essay in 1984 has been driven by agendas that are not easy to categorize by the author’s nationality – not driven by national loyalties or needs to explain – but simply by pure academics. There is more textured and specialized work, such as the brilliant exposition of

80 Hale, Renaissance Venice, 14.

81 There is a trend toward increasing internationalization of Venetian scholarship in the biographies of the contributors to the two important essay collections cited here, Hale’s from 1973 and Martin and Romano in 2000. The 1973 contributors are six Italians, seven Americans, and three British; the 2000 contributors are two Italians, ten Americans, three British, one French, and one German.
religious imagery in Venice by Rosand and Sindig-Larson; important social history by Ginzberg, Queller, Finlay, and Davis; studies on education and humanism by Grendler and King; and the important work on state ritual of Muir. The Venetian environment has been written about with poetic mastery by Crouzet-Pavan. Convents, pirates, witchcraft, the inquisition, redemption of slaves, sale of second-hand clothes – all have been treated from the Venetian angle.

Venetian art and architecture receives attention of the highest quality. Patricia Fortini Brown’s work covers narrative painting, private life, consumerism, family, and the Venetian sense of the past. Influences on Venetian artistic taste have been covered in masterful works by Debra Pincus and Deborah Howard, and Venice’s trade with the east explored by these and other writers. While histories of Venice have typically ended with the fall in 1797, several notable books have been written in recent years about Venice after the fall: Nineteenth-century Venice has received attention by Pemble and Norwich (who also wrote the standard English-language general history of Venice from the perspective of a British peer), and Deborah Plant’s *Venice: Fragile City* takes the history from 1797 to 1997. In a pragmatic vein, Robert Davis has written on Venice as a tourist destination.

**Venetian Historiography in Recent Years**

A survey of recent work on Venice shows that, of the fifty most recent journal articles citing “the Republic of Venice,” nine concern the sciences; eight, religion; seven, political, military, or economic history; seven, art or architecture; four, historiography or the history of ideas; four, what I call “useful history,” that is contemporary concerns (e.g., voting, public safety) for which Venice has been cited; two on intercultural history; and one each on Judaic
studies, gender, and witchcraft. The people, ideas, and fabric of Venice continue to provide grist for the scholar, the poet, and the practitioner.

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82 Survey done through JSTOR February 28, 2013. Journals represented are these: Renaissance Quarterly had the most articles with six; Historical Journal, Isis, Past and Present, Journal of Modern History, Shakespeare Quarterly and Transactions of the American Philosophical Society had two each; and twenty-nine other journals had one each.
CHAPTER TWO

FRENCH VIEWS OF VENICE FROM THE FOURTH CRUSADE

The Fourth Crusade and its aftermath1 provided the first extended exposure of Franks and Venetians to each other. What view did the Franks take of the Venetians and how did it evolve? In this paper I will explore what five primary sources tell us about Frankish-Venetian relations from early thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries. It is a story with elements of respect and contempt. Told in five distinct voices, each with its own values, biases, and characteristics, this period of French-Venetian interaction branded its imprint on the image of Venice for centuries.

In this paper I will first introduce the five sources, giving their places and times of composition, the culture from which their authors (or likely authors) came, what we know of their motivations for writing, and how their accounts have been regarded by scholars. In this section I will also suggest an identity for a previously unknown author of the so-called La Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Tresorier. Secondly, I will give a close, comparative reading of their respective accounts of certain aspects of the Fourth Crusade experience, contrasting the elements that drive the profound differences in these accounts, and showing how the Frankish view of Venice could be admiring and positive according to some authors, and bitterly negative according to others. Next I will analyze the influence these respective accounts might have had, given that the more enduring view of French authors toward Venice was the negative view. Finally, I will draw conclusions about how particular, personal elements interacted with overarching economic, cultural, and political factors to bring about this outcome: an enduringly negative French view of Venice and Venetians.

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2 Peter W. Topping, *Feudal Institutions as Revealed in the Assizes of Romania, the Law Code of Frankish Greece* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949); Carl Stephenson, review of *Feudal Institutions as Revealed in the Assizes of Romania, the Law Code of Frankish Greece* by Peter W. Topping, Speculum 26, no. 1 (January 1951): 224-226; 2 Peter W. Topping, review of *La Féodalité en Grèce médiévale. Les Assises de Romanie: sources, application et diffusion* by David Jacoby, Speculum 48, no. 4 (October 1973): 760-763, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2856243 (accessed February 24, 2013). Initially it seemed to me that in demonstrating points of tension between Venice and the Frankish east I could find no better source than The Assizes of Romania, a collection of law and practices for the Peloponnesian peninsula, then called the Morea, during the 13th and 14th centuries. This was a time when the Morea was shared by the Venetians and the Franks. Surely a century of close contact, the Venetians with their commercial culture and important military ports of Modon and Corin, famously called “the eyes of the Republic,” and the Franks with their highly cultivated court of Andravida, so redolent of French chivalry that its fame spread to France itself, would yield conflict that would prove my point. Yet I found this well to be completely dry. After a brief war between the Franks and Venetians ending in 1209, which established Venetian title to the two ports and a piece of their respective hinterlands, no other Frankish-Venetian conflict on the Morea is recorded. The Assizes of Romania shows the extent to which French feudal culture, tradition, and law was imported, with some adaptation, to the largely Greek culture of the Morea. It contains no element of commercial law. Ironically, it has survived and come down to us because of the Venetians; the single extant copy, written down in Venetian dialect, was commissioned by the Venetian government in the 15th century and approved for use by the few remaining Venetian holdings in the Aegean, which by that time included agricultural as well as commercial enterprises. But this is after the period concerning us here.
Five Sources

1207: Geoffrey de Villehardouin

Notwithstanding the fact that the Crusade failed in its explicit goal of reaching the Holy Land, impoverished many of its participants, and resulted in the sacking of two co-religionist cities, one a major cultural capital, the cohesion of its Frankish-Venetian military alliance was impressive. It was particularly so give the fundamentally distinct and often opposed cultures of the two primary participants: feudal, chivalric Franks and commercial Venetians. Yet in spite of all this, the two most reliable Frankish eyewitnesses to the Fourth Crusade did not blame their Venetian allies for the Crusade’s failures and difficulties.

Geoffrey de Villehardouin, a French noble and insider to the strategy of the Fourth Crusade, was not only an eyewitness to events but a protagonist in them. While this might have given him motive to shade his account in its more embarrassing places, and while the Venetians might seem a convenient scapegoat, Villehardouin never wavered in his pro-Venetian stance. Scholars of the last 50 years have posited widely varying interpretations of Villehardouin’s viewpoint, candor, and sophistication. To

Following standard usage, I use “Frankish” to distinguish Europeans in the Latin east and “French” to distinguish the French from others in the European context.

Donald E. Queller, The Latin Conquest of Constantinople, from the series Major Issues in History, ed. C. Warren Hollister (New York: Wiley, 1971), http://books.google.com/books?id=ihZnAAAMAAJ&q (accessed February 24, 2013). Queller assembles a series of readings reflecting these views, from what he calls “the primitive theory of accidents” to the “modified theory of accidents,” and a full treatment of the conspiracy or “treason” theories. He also reviews the historiography of the Fourth Crusade as society became less religious and more secular, as historians became less focused on cataclysmic events rather than incremental changes, and as the impact of nationalism, economic explanations, and psychological awareness became felt in the historian’s profession. Queller reprints excerpts on the Fourth Crusade by various authors, giving them his own title and introduction. Some of Queller’s chapter titles (and the authors whose works they include) are: “The view of a leader” (Geoffrey of Villehardouin); “A view from the ranks” (Robert of Clari); “Venetian greed” (Louis de Mas Latrie); “The treacherous Treaty of 1202” (C. Hopf); “Swabian responsibility” (E. Winkelmann); “The papal party blames the Germans” (Innocent’s Epistolae and the Gesta Innocentii); “The chief responsibility was Philip of Swabia’s” (Comte P. Riant); “The Treaty of 1202 disproved” (G. Hanotaux); “The false treaty perpetuated” (E. Pears); “A French theory of accidents” (J. Tessier); “Did Villehardouin conceal the truth?” (E. Faral); “When did Alexius arrive in the West?” (H. Gregoire); “Alexius’ escape to the West” (N. Choniates); “The failure of Christian fraternity” (W. M. Daly); “In defense of Venice” (R. Cessi); “The current synthesis” (E. H. McNeal and R. L. Wolff).
some he was a far-sighted strategist, arranging events to French advantage against great odds⁵, or even a schemer, pulling strings behind the scenes and keeping his machinations from the rank and file.⁶ To others he was a naïf, played by the Venetians⁷ or the Germans⁸ for their own ends. To some he was a diligent chronicler, recording the Frankish host’s bumbles and heroics with equal candor⁹; to others he shaded his account, artfully persuading the reader of the rightness of his actions.¹⁰ Whatever reservations one might have about Villehardouin, he is the best we have on the Fourth Crusade, and no historian questions his fundamental reliability on matters of fact and date. Most readers find his gravitas compelling; we shall explore below how his selections and omissions shaped the Fourth Crusade story for his contemporaries.

Stylistically Villehardouin’s account has elements of epic¹¹, with formal listings of events and names, and measured explanation of strategy, alternating with passages of more emotion. There is mourning for knights that died – “But alas, how great the pity! For never again did he bestride horse but

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⁵ Ibid., 44-54. This is an excerpt titled by Queller from the texts of another scholar: “A French theory of accidents” (J. Tessier).

⁶ Phillips, Fourth Crusade, 80-1.

⁷ Queller, Latin Conquest, 21-4 and 24-5. These are excerpts titled by Queller from the texts of other scholars: “Venetian greed” (Louis de Mas Latrie) and “The treacherous Treaty of 1202” (C. Hopf).

⁸ Ibid., 26-9 and 32-8. These are excerpts titled by Queller from the texts of other scholars: “Swabian responsibility” (E. Winkelmann); “The chief responsibility was Philip of Swabia’s” (Comte P. Riant).

⁹ Ibid., 74-8. This is an excerpt titled by Queller from the texts of another scholar: “Did Villehardouin conceal the truth?” (E. Faral).


that once”12 he says of Thibaud – or foreboding – “Thus did the count make an end and die; and much evil ensued” he says of Geoffry of Perche, whose less worthy brother took up his crusading commission.13 Villehardouin does not hesitate to condemn his fellow crusaders. “How ill-advised were they, both the one and the other,” he says of Boniface and Baldwin, “and how great was the sin of those who caused this quarrel!”14 His greatest anger is aimed at those who tried to break up the host. “Alas! they acted very evilly, for never did they keep their word, but went to Syria, where, as they well knew, they would achieve nothing.”15

Villehardouin was a man of mature years at the beginning of the Fourth Crusade, and the Latin east was to occupy the rest of his life. It is estimated that he wrote his account in 1207, given that the events portrayed end in 1206. We have little documentation for Villehardouin after this, but there is some indication that he never returned to France and died in the Latin east.16

1216: Robert de Clari

Robert of Clari is regarded as the other most reliable eyewitness source. A poor knight from Picardy, Clari provides the perspective of the mass of troops without Villehardouin’s inside information. While he came late to the Crusade, relied on hearsay, and got his dates wrong, he is regarded as a reliable source of the view of the common man on crusade. His account, too, is staunchly pro-Venetian.


13 Ibid., 12.

14 Ibid., 73.

15 Ibid., 25.

Clari gives color, smells, and sounds to augment Villehardouin’s somber and occasionally lecturing account. Unreliable as he might be in many ways, we can count on him to say what crusading meant not only to the Frankish troops, but to the little people on the Venetian side. Only Clari makes it clear what sacrifices the workaday Venetian artisan had made to make the Frankish fleet. Only Clari gives us the sound of Frankish kitchen knaves banging pots outside the walls of Constantinople to rattle the Greeks. Only Clari gives us the picture of the eve of the Venetian departure for Zara, when thousands of Frankish soldiers, no matter how broke from buying expensive provisions on the Island of St Nicholas all summer, affixed wax candles to their spears as candles to celebrate the departure, “so that it seemed that all the host was one bonfire.”17 A great deal of Clari’s account deals with descriptions of Constantinople, its palaces, sights, and relics.

Clari makes no claims to high style, but insists on his accuracy, saying at the conclusion of himself “albeit he may not have recounted the conquest in as fair a fashion as many a good chronicler would have recounted it, yet hath he at all times recounted the strict truth.”18 In fact, it was the other way around. While his facts are often off, the immediacy of his voice is compelling. For action, it is hard to improve on this: “drew he his sword and smote the bailiff in the middle of his head, so that he clove it clean down to the teeth.”19

Clari’s motive appears to be glorification of his own deeds and those of other common people. He is touchy when the “high men” take press their advantage to their detriment, as when, after the sack of Constantinople, “Then came together the noblemen, the rich men, and took counsel amongst

18 Ibid., Ch. 120.
19 Ibid., Ch. 21.
themselves (and neither the lowly folk of the host nor the poor knights wist a word thereof) how they might take the best habitations of the city. And straightway began they to deal treacherously with the lowly folk and to show them bad faith and ill comradeship."\(^{20}\) Yet he lionizes one of the highest men of all, the Doge of Venice. Aged and blind, the Doge captured Clari’s imagination, and Clari puts into his mouth the best lines of the Crusade. “Wretched boy!” Clari has him bellow to Alexis, “we have raised you from the mire, and we will throw you into the mire again.”\(^{21}\)

Among other contemporaneous pro-Venetian sources, none have the credibility of Villehardouin and Clari. Some are written by the Doge and Venetian chroniclers, clearly advocating for their own point of view. Others are written by Frankish nobles seeking support from fellow nobles, or pardon from the Pope, in which case there is a clear motive to present the Crusading host as a whole in the best possible light. Other accounts were written later, perhaps for propagandistic purposes, or otherwise not eyewitness accounts. Villehardouin and Clari are regarded by a wide variety of historians as the most credible of all the Fourth Crusade sources and the only contemporaneous ones on the pro-Venetian side that are not, in fact, written by Venetians or otherwise compromised. \(^{22}\)

\(^{20}\) Ibid., Ch. 80.

\(^{21}\) Clari, \textit{Conquest}, Ch. 59. (In this case I have used the more vigorous Hopf translation.) Clari also attributes to the Doge the grisly, punning sentence on Mourzuphles, who was pushed to his death from a tower – high justice for a high man.

\(^{22}\) Donald E. Queller and Irene B. Katele, ‘Attitudes Towards the Venetians in the Fourth Crusade: The Western Sources,’ \textit{The International History Review} 4, no. 1 (February 1982): 1-36, \url{http://www.jstor.org/stable/40105791} (accessed February 24, 2013). Queller and Katele analyzed 41 Western sources, ranging from full-scale accounts of the Fourth Crusade to single letters or accounts in which the Fourth Crusade played a very minor role. They found 18 to be generally pro-Venetian. The most credible and complete of these were Villehardouin (1206-7) and Clari (1202-5). Of the 16 other pro-Venetian sources, seven are written either by the Doge or other Venetians; four are letters written by Frankish nobles for specific purposes, either to other Frankish nobles or to the Pope, at a time when holding the host together was regarded as essential, and it was therefore not in their interest to denigrate the Venetians; and the rest were not eyewitness accounts. Of Queller and Katele’s 23 anti-Venetian accounts, seven were written by the Pope or his biographer; eight by other ecclesiastics; five by followers of Baldwin of Montferrat or Boniface of Flanders; one by a Genoese diplomat; and one by a Russian (or possibly German) traveler. The last is \textit{La Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Tresorier}, discussed below.
Of the contemporaneous anti-Venetian accounts, the bitterest were written by the Greeks. Others were written by the Pope, who, for reasons both spiritual and earthly, wrote scathingly to the Venetians. A few were written by members of other merchant communities, whose competitiveness with the Venetians would lead us to assume anti-Venetian bias. Others were written or commissioned by ecclesiastics on campaign, whose interests may have been to publicize the pious courage of a bishop, justify the movement of relics, or castigate Venetian defiance of the Pope.23

1212: Peter des Vaux-le-Cernay

Our third source is one of these. The Historia Albigensis is an account of the later (1209-1255) so-called Albigensian Crusade, in which tens of thousands of men, women and children from the midi were killed or maimed for their religious beliefs by fellow Frenchmen. Innocent III, angered by the murder of the legate he had sent to the politically fragmented Languedoc to end the heresy of Catharism, called for crusade against Cathar heretics in general and Raymond of Toulouse in particular24. Ostensibly about religion, recent historians have emphasized a political undercurrent in which the independent, Spanish-influenced south was brought by waves of civil violence into the orbit of the French monarchy. The Cistercian monk Peter des Vaux-de-Cernay, whose abbot and uncle Guy was an ecclesiastical leader in this effort, wrote an account of it. The lay leader of this campaign was Simon de Montfort, a brutal and ambitious noble of orthodox beliefs. Simon and Guy had earlier played brief, dramatic roles in the Fourth Crusade, and Peter, who was an eyewitness to these events, recapitulates

23 Ibid., 30-1.

them as a sort of flashback in his main story of the Albigensian Crusade. His condemnation of the
Venetians – reflecting that of his influential patrons, Simon – is personal and bitter.  

Queller and Katele, in their overview of western sources of the Fourth Crusade, say of Peter’s
account:

The *Hystoria Albigensis* tells how Simon of Montfort and Guy travelled to the noble and
rich city of Venice, where they found magnificent ships to take them overseas. The wise
and valiant Doge, seeing the crusaders' poverty and hardship directed the fleet towards
Christian Zara.  

But this characterization is at odds with the actual text. While Peter does say that the city of
Venice is very rich, he does not call it noble. Rather, he calls the Venetians “cunning and ill-disposed,”
and says that due to the excessive prices they charged for their ships, they impoverished the Franks and
thus put the Franks under obligation. Queller and Katele have Peter reference the Doge, and call him
“wise and valiant” (a phrase Villehardouin uses repeatedly); yet Peter’s text makes no mention of the
Doge at all.

The disconnect appears to come from a footnote in an earlier edition of the *Hystoria*,
apparently made by an editor, contrasting Peter’s account of the Fourth Crusade with Villehardouin’s.
The footnote says that Villehardouin’s account has little wisdom in it, as Villehardouin sees in the
Venetians honor, energy and strength, and commends their achievements, while condemning the plans
of some of the monks. The footnote concludes that this should give the reader pause. Thus, the
commenting editor is as skeptical about Villehardouin’s pro-Venetian stance as Peter would have been.

25 Ibid., 57-9.

26 Donald E. Queller and Irene B. Katele, ‘Attitudes Towards the Venetians in the Fourth Crusade: The
Western Sources,’ *The International History Review* 4, no. 1 (February 1982): 30,

27 Queller and Katele used the 1926-1930 *Hystoria* edited by Guébin and Lyon. I was unable to locate this
edition and used instead the 1855 Migne edition. Although Sibley and Sibley do not include the footnote in their
translation, it would appear that the footnote was written by an early editor and included in both the Migne and
Guébin and Lyon editions. I am grateful to Abby Sherburne for translating this footnote from the Latin for me.
It seems that Queller and Katele have picked up what the editor says about Villehardouin’s view of the Venetians and confused it with what Peter said of the Venetians – when they are in fact opposite views. Indeed, Peter’s views of Venice are unwaveringly negative, as we will see in the textual comparison below.

Peter has been characterized as an unsophisticated sycophant,28 penning his account to advance in favor with his uncle, also his abbot, by recording his upright action during the Crusade, and to associate both of them with their powerful patron, Simon of Montfort. Peter uses a flashback from the Fourth Crusade as a way of establishing Simon’s orthodoxy on religious matters – something that would be relevant to his later “crusading” activities. Through Peter’s account we see Simon objecting to the siege of Zara, attempting to make undermine the Doge’s negotiations with the Zarans, enabling the abbot to read the papal letter opposing the siege, and ostentatiously removing himself and his party from the rest of the Crusaders. Peter makes it clear that “the Count of Montfort and the Abbot of les Vaux-de-Cernay refused to follow the multitude to do evil.”29

Our first three authors are known persons, all coming the northern part of France with a long Crusading tradition. The last two authors are unknown.

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28 Sibley and Sibley, Historia Albigensis, xxviii.
29 Ibid., 57.
1232: La Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Tresorier

There are two sources on the Fourth Crusade written from the viewpoint of the Latin east. The first has been published30 as La Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Tresorier. In this source we see full-throated anti-Venetianism come from Frankish writers co-existing with Venetians in the Latin east.

Unlike the first three sources, with their undisputed authorship and straightforward provenance, this fourth source has an unknown author and a complex story. Because the character of the authorial voice is at the center of my argument, I spend some time untangling it here.

The Chronique is a compilation of many manuscripts31. The manuscripts are purported to be continuations of the chronicle of Bishop William of Tyre, an important work by the educated Frankish Bishop of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, that records the first Crusades and the four Latin kingdoms that came out of them.32 William ended his narrative in 1184. The manuscripts that make up the Chronique—the “continuations” – came out of these early Latin kingdoms and the additional Latin kingdoms that emerged from the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Of the seven extant manuscripts, all now in French

30 Louis de Mas Latrie, ed., Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier, publiée, pour la première fois, d’après les manuscrits de Bruxelles, de Paris et de Berne, avec un essai de classification des continuateurs de Guillaume de Tyr, pour la Société de l’histoire de France (Paris: Renouard, 1871), http://books.google.com/books?id=o6YUAAAAQAAJ&printsec (accessed February 24, 2013). I am grateful to Jan Janis, Lourdes Reviriego, Bill Skinner, and Don Daniel for help in understanding this work and in translating the sections used.


32 Morgan, Chronicle, 9. William of Tyre’s work “has those qualities of careful documentation, objectivity of judgment, and stylistic elegance which are now considered essential to the writing of history, but which in its day were all too uncommon.”
libraries, one came to reside there from an abbey in France, one from Rome, and four from the east – one illustrated with miniatures that are definitively identified as coming from an atelier in Acre.

**Ernoul**

We know little of the hands that produced these works, with the exception of the two named in the title. Ernoul was associated with the ruling Ibelin family of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and in the late 1220s and early 1230s became a substantial personage in Cyprus. It is possible that he negotiated a five-year treaty with the Genoese in 1233 that granted them substantial commercial rights in Cyprus, which would constitute in itself anti-Venetianism. However, Ernoul’s hand in the *Chronique* probably ended in 1187, so he did not write the sections relating to the Fourth Crusade.

**Bernard**

Bernard is associated with the wealthy abbey of St Peter in Corbie, near Amiens, known as a center of scholarship and manuscript copying. As early as the 9th century, Corbie statutes made provision for the employment of a parchmenter, and catalogues from 1220 attest to the extent of its library. Amiens was also a crusading center. It was much visited by merchants, pilgrims and soldiers during our period. So it is not surprising for accounts of life in the east to come to Corbie – either written

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33 Ibid., 10.

34 Las Matrie, *Cyprus*, II, 56. During our period, Cyprus was ruled by Amalric of Lusignan, who had ties of marriage to the Ibelin family, rules of Jerusalem. The Ibelins had granted commercial rights to the Genoese in 1223.

35 It is tempting to attribute anti-Venetianism in Cyprus to the notoriously irresponsible Venetian reign of Cyprus, but this did not begin until 1489.

36 Morgan, *Chronicle*, 89, 115, 140, 145, 147. Morgan, following and augmenting with new sources the work of Mas Latrie in this respect, has meticulously traced the various sources of the *Chronique* from extant manuscripts and printed sources, for some of which authorship or editorship is known, to source documents, using their variations to compile trees of relationships.

37 Ibid., 46-7.
down or told orally by its many visitors – and for important compilations to be written there. Bernard was likely a lay treasurer at Corbie, possibly an oblate who had entered Corbie in retirement and whose talents Corbie had used in two capacities, as a treasurer and an editor. Bernard’s contribution was one of compiler, editor, rearranger, and adder of bridging bits either of his own or someone else’s hand, making the chronicle into a coherent whole. This whole, while not extant, is reliably traced in the sources that are.

Anonymous author of source document

So the *Chronique*’s section on the Fourth Crusade was written by an author in the Latin east after Ernoul, and made its way – through unknown and unnumbered hands – to the abbey of St Peter in Corbie in northeastern France, where Bernard made it part of a coherent work. That work, now lost, formed the backbone of other manuscripts eventually compiled by Mas Latrie into a single whole and published in 1871.

Who wrote the original Fourth Crusade account? We do not know. However, there does appear to be reliable evidence for a single author of the 1197-1216 portion of the work. I argue that this author is likely to have been, like Ernoul, a lifelong resident of the Latin east.

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38 Ibid., 48.

39 Ibid., 49-50.

40 Ibid., 58.

41 Mas Latrie’s editorial method is to follow a single line of text, indicating with footnotes where the various extant sources differ from his text.

42 Morgan, *Chronicle*, 138. The account of the Fourth Crusade is similar in all the sources. Morgan’s conclusion in this respect is confirmed by my own reading of the Mas Latrie footnotes. The variation between them are for the most part wording and spelling, with the occasional insertion of names (Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 331-3, 338-41, 343-50, 360-9, 373-85, 390). There is one instance of an inserted heading in one of the sources that I will discuss below (Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 343). There is one instance of the insertion of a long list of names (Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 373-4). In another place there is a paragraph inserted (Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 376-7). Overall, it
We see from the evidence that our author is less oriented toward Jerusalem and more toward Constantinople than Ernoul. He is not interested in Cyprus or the Ibelin dynasty, and he almost never mentions the military orders. Yet his interest in Europe is keen and well-informed. Indeed, his orientation is European; unlike Ernoul, who uses "outremer" to mean Europe, as an easterner would do, our author uses "outremer" to mean the east. Furthermore, I argue for a specifically French outlook, meaning one that was oriented toward feudal life and took chivalric values as a frame of reference, rather than the commercial orientation associated with the trading cities of Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Amalfi, Marseilles, or Barcelona.

Our source’s account of the Fourth Crusade is vehemently anti-Venetian. He never even mentions Villehardouin, the Venetian’s French ally, although Villehardouin is important to the story and he is mentioned in the chapter summaries (which would have been added later). Likewise, he never mentions the Villehardouin dynasty that ruled Morea from 1206-1278, and was responsible for the Morea’s long period of relative prosperity and stability in the fraught Latin east. This is surprising for a chronicler interested in French chivalry, as the Villehardouin court of Andravida in Morea was known even in France for its tournaments, culture, and *courtosie*.

We also notice that while many events are told briefly and plainly in the *Chronique*, including much of the Fourth Crusade story, the section on the treacherous treaty between Venice and Egypt is extended and well crafted (see appendices).

is clear that all the manuscripts all derived from a common source for the Fourth Crusade material, and that the differences between them are attributable to the copyists and editors.


44 This is the robust period; after this, there were short-lived reigns, sometimes by Villehardouins.

The *Chronique*’s summary treatment of the Fourth Crusade, as compared to the *Chronique*’s other topics, and as compared to Villehardouin and Clari, might be said to devalue it for historians. Certainly, for dates and simple facts one would prefer the more reliable Villehardouin and Clari. The *Chronique* retains important value, however, for the information it yields about the mindset of the Franks in the Latin Kingdom. It is this mindset that concerns us here.

**Antelm the Nasty**

I argue from recently published sources that the unidentified author for the 1198-1216 portion of the source for the *Chronique* was one Antelm, dubbed the Nasty. Antelm, a Cistercian, was the first Latin archbishop of Patras in the Morea, from 1205, when he came to the Morea from Burgundy, through a violent and rapacious tenure, to approximately 1241. A letter from Pope Honorius III to prelates in Morea, dated 10 June 1224, gives 30 specific charges against “our venerable brother, archbishop of Patras.” The charges range from theft of church property, to violence amounting to terrorism of local Greeks and Franks, lay and clerical, to “the vice of infamous incontinence,” and harboring clerics of the same vice. Antelm’s ambition led to his becoming an archbishop by 1205, and by 1207 he had managed to bypass the supervision of the Latin patriarch at Constantinople. Brutality was

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46 The Fourth Crusade occupies little space in the text – a scant 20 pages of 652 in Mas Latrie.


48 Ibid., 149-75, 178, and especially 181-2 and 194-5.


50 Ibid., 129-32. This is a previously unpublished letter from Pope Honorius III to the Archbishop of Athens, Bishop of Coron, Canon of Corinth, and Canon of Patras, dated June 10, 1224.

51 Ibid. 98
not his only attribute. Antelm was a skilled letter writer, not above falsifying documents (one of the charges against him), and an effective propagandist; even the frescoes at his mansion – depicting the story of the destruction of Troy, with its overtones of French chivalry\textsuperscript{52} – demonstrate his skill in self presentation.

This extraordinary person carried on a longstanding battle against the Prince of Achaia (as Morea was called), Geoffrey I Villehardouin,\textsuperscript{53} throughout the latter’s long reign from 1209 to 1228. At stake were church lands, which Geoffrey’s barons estimated constituted one third of the island.\textsuperscript{54} Although Antelm succeeded in having his prince excommunicated for long periods of time, eventually the Pope was moved to intervene on Geoffrey’s side; the Latin kingdoms in the Byzantine Empire were under constant military assault by the Greeks, and for the Pope military success by the Latin powers was important for the church. It says a lot about the difficulty of oversee the church in remote, war-torn frontier kingdoms that Antelm was never permanently recalled, but only had his income reduced for a short time. While he was put on the defensive for some time, he prevailed in keeping his position, his lands, and his ill-gotten wealth. He endowed Hautcombe Abbey in southern France, near Annency, where he returned toward the end of his life as a respected benefactor. The head of St Erine, donated by Antelm, became a beloved relic of the abbey and the saint herself the patron saint of boatmen on Hautecombe Lake.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{53} This was the chronicler’s nephew.

\textsuperscript{54} Schabel, Antelm the Nasty, 122.

I assert that Antelm had the skill, opportunity, and knowledge to write the *Chronique* until the date 1216, and reason to stop at that time. Antelm likely came east with William of Champlitte around 1205, and was quickly elected archbishop. By 1210 had received permission from Innocent III to reorganize his chapter, effectively avoiding supervision by the patriarch (a Venetian named Thomas Morosini), and amassed large fiefs. However, by 1216 the charges made by his many enemies in Rome were beginning to stick; the next year would see a new Pope and the beginning of his official investigation. So, although Antelm was to survive in office and probably retire to France, he was on the defensive by 1216.

With his travel back and forth to Rome, Antelm’s outlook would correspond to that of a Frenchman living in the Morea while remaining well-informed on European events. His interests would correspond to the point of view exhibited by the author of this section of the *Chronique*. We know Antelm was a skillful writer; his letters to the papal curia got him out from under the patriarch’s supervision and got his enemy Geoffrey I excommunicated. He was a cleric on the frontier between Christendom and the Muslim world, which might account for the satire of Muslim clerics in the *Chronique*. For a chronicler, mockery was one weapon to be wielded against enemies; another was silence. Antelm had reason to omit reference (and thus glory) to the Templars – no doubt his hunger for fiefs came up against theirs; in any event, one of the charges against him was that he gave indulgences to those who killed Templars. Strikingly, the *Chronique* makes almost no mention of any Villehardouin,

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56 Schabel, *Antelm the Nasty*, 98.

57 Ibid., 98-9.

58 Ibid., 113-4.

59 This was the 18th charge in the letter from Pope Honorius III to the Archbishop of Athens, Bishop of Coron, Canon of Corinth, and Canon of Patras, dated June 10, 1224. See note 49.
either the chronicler of the Fourth Crusade, or the many members of the most effective ruling family of
the Morea, perhaps of the entire Byzantine Empire.

Most significantly, Antelm had a grudge against the Venetians, and the vindictive cleverness to
express it effectively with his fabricated treason story. There are two possible reasons for this grudge.
The first is that the patriarch at Constantinople whose oversight Antelm evaded was the Venetian
Thomas Morosini, and Morosini was the source of the first recorded complaint about Antelm to the
pope. Morosini would continue to oppose Antelm, sometimes successfully, and was surely a thorn in his
side. The second reason is that the bishops of the Venetian harbor colonies of Coron and Modon were
likely more independent than he would have liked. The bishop of Coron received a copy of the letter
Pope Honorius II wrote in 1224. The Bishops of Coron and Modom were called to be part of the long
investigation against Antelm,60 perhaps reflecting the relative independence they enjoyed by virtue of
their status as Venetian colonies.

There are other, minor points that suggest Antelm as the author of that part of the Chronique
that included the so-called treacherous treaty. For example, in one place the Chronique criticizes the
Venetians for taking the area at Constantinople more inland and leaving the Franks with the shoreline.61
To anyone familiar with Venice, this makes no sense – Venetians always wanted to be close to their
ships, and notoriously grabbed the neighborhoods nearest the harbor in ports like Acre that it shared
with other Italian merchant republics.62 However, Antelm himself thought of the coast as a dangerous

60 Schabel, Antelm the Nasty, 121.

61 Mas Latrie, Chronique, 375-6.

62 Deborah Howard, Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-
1500 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 26
place that made one prey for pirates; he once for this very reason petitioned the pope to exchange his coastal location for an inland location.  

While I believe the case for Antelm to be strong, there are certainly counter-arguments. Would someone of Antelm’s brutish temperament really be inclined toward history writing? I would argue that Antelm was a very strategic brute, who knew how to use both wiles and force to advance his agenda, amassing wealth and prestige in the east to aggrandize himself back in Burgundy. The section on the treacherous treaty is a devastating indictment of an enemy that would have resonated in a forum key to Antelm’s ambitions, the papal Curia. I would also note that Antelm gave a post not yet vacant to a certain “Papal scribe,” Hugh; although this too became the subject of investigation, Hugh went on to have a successful career in the Latin east. This is just one suggestion that Hugh knew how to mobilize influential opinion on his own behalf. We also have the allegations of forgeries of papal and imperial documents, and the simple fact that he managed to delay his investigation for at least seven years.

Would this section of the Chronique have to be written in the east? Other chronicles of the period were written by Europeans returned from the east, such as Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, discussed above, or dictated to European scribes, as was likely the case with Martin, Cistercian abbot of Alsace, whose accounts were recorded by the monk Gunther of Pairis, and Conrad of Krosigk, Bishop of Halberstadt, and Nivelon of Chérisy. Other chronicles were compiled by writers resident in Europe from the composite accounts of pilgrims, merchants, clerics and others on their travels; this is the case of Ralph of Coggeshall, a Cistercian in Essex, England, whose Chronicon Terrae Sanctae draws on the

63 Schabel, Antelm the Nasty, 112.
64 Ibid., 128.
65 Ibid. 129
66 Queller and Katele, Attitudes, 30.
conversation of many foreign travelers that passed through Coggeshall Abbey\textsuperscript{67}. A cleric in a large abbey known for its hospitality to travelers would have received a steady stream of visitors, all keen to tell their stories to an attentive audience. Could this not be the case for the *Chronique*? I argue that it was not, on the grounds of dissemination. A single source\textsuperscript{68} has been identified for three manuscripts known to be of eastern provenance, a manuscript extant that can be associated (through its illustrations) with Acre, and a manuscript written in Rome in 1295 of unknown provenance. The general movement of chronicles to copyists was westward; the common source for these five manuscripts was much more likely to have been the east than the west.

A third objection is that the sections I assert Antelm wrote include passage with detail about the topography of Constantinople,\textsuperscript{69} when we know Antelm to have expressed repeated aversions about travel to Constantinople, given the distance and danger. Yet it is unclear if Antelm actually visited Constantinople or not. In one of his many altercations with other clerics, he assigned the bishopric of Olena to a certain ally of his. Pope Honorious countermanded this, saying that the bishopric was already occupied, and the Empress Yolande of Constantinople intervened on Antelm’s side. So he appears to

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\textsuperscript{67} Joseph Stevenson, ed., *Radulphi de Coggeshall Chronicon anglicanum: De expugnatione Terræ Sanctæ libellus*, Thomas Agnellus De morte et sepultura Henrici regis Angliæ junioris, Gesta Fulconis filii Warini, Excerpta ex Otis imperialibus Gervasii Tileburiensis. Ex codicibus manuscriptis edidit Josephus Stevenson (London: Longman, 1875), \url{http://books.google.com/books?id=mdvUAAAAMAAJ&pg} (accessed February 24, 2013): xii-xiii. Stevenson in his preface to the *Chronicum* explains that the habit of the Cistercian abbeys was to keep chronicles related to their particular abbey, the wider Cistercian community (which had an extensive geographical presence), and important events generally, and makes this remark on the sources: “The hospitality so readily exercised by the monastic orders naturally brought many travelers under their roof, from whom the inmates derived information which at times must have been of the highest value. Details of this nature find a place more than once in the pages of our Chronicle, and contribute in no slight degree to its importance...vouched for, as they are, by men who took part in the incidents which they narrated.... [The introduction by gradual accretion of new matter] shows the conscientious honesty of the writer, and impresses us with the conviction that he did his best to secure and to perpetuate the truth.” At the same time, references to an invisible hat, a green boy and girl, and a merman remind us that some of the accounts given by travelers would have been gathered at many removes or completely fanciful.

\textsuperscript{68} Morgan, *Chronicle*, 140.

\textsuperscript{69} Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 362-7.
have influence with Yolande or someone in her court. However Yolande did not arrive in Constantinople until 1217, after the authorship of this part of the chronicle.\textsuperscript{70} So this point remains unclear.

1304: The Chronicle of Morea

Finally we come to a work written a century after the Fourth Crusade in the Latin east, the prototype of which was probably written between 1304 and 1314, to which additions might have been added up to 1388. It is certainly not a reliable source for information on the Crusade itself – “a muddle of inaccuracy” its editor describes it\textsuperscript{71} – but it is a window on how the Fourth Crusade was viewed at a particular time and place. The Chronicle of Morea, like the Chronique d’Ernoul, is a collaborative work of unknown authorship for which we have only derivative manuscripts extant. Scholars disagree on the original language of the source document; extant derivatives exist in four languages. The Aragonese and Italian are clearly translations, but whether the Greek is adapted from the French or the French from the Greek is unclear, and shows how distinctive Frankish society in the Morea had become by the early fourteenth century.

Written at the end of the long Frankish domination of Morea, after any realistic hope for a Frankish revival against the Greek resurgence, the Chronicle of Morea has a nostalgic cast. Its record of events, meant to reflect glory on the Franks, betrays a society that has become in some ways eastern.\textsuperscript{72}

In light of the subtle differences between Villehardouin and Clari, the Chronicle of Morea’s account of


\textsuperscript{72} For example, the Chronicle of Morea never shows the Doge of Venice consulting with the many councils we know to have been part of dogal life, but rather making decisions in the despotic style consonant with Greek culture.
the Fourth Crusade reads like the story turned upside down. In it, the Franks attack Zara eagerly\(^{73}\), and the Pope urges the host to attack Constantinople, preferring it to going to the Holy Land.\(^ {74}\) In the *Chronicle of Morea*, the Doge is even wiser and more valiant than Villehardouin and Clari show him to be. Overall, the anonymous author of the *Chronicle of Morea* gives a view of Venice and the Doge that is as positive as Peter’s and Antelm’s are negative.

Thus we have five sources, four written by Frenchmen after sojourns in the Latin east, and one by a Frankish native. Two are reliable on facts and pro-Venetian (Villehardouin and Clari) – one is reliable on facts and anti-Venetian (Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay) – and two are unreliable on facts, one extremely anti-Venetian (Antelm the Nasty) and the other just as extremely pro-Venetian (the unknown author of the *Chronicle of Morea*). These last two are written by sources longer resident in the Latin east; while unreliable on facts, they give the perspective of those actually living in the Latin kingdom and familiar with its political, commercial, and social life.\(^ {75}\)

**Comparative Reading of Various Points**

To learn from the sources I have identified elements of the Fourth Crusade for close textual comparison. While other elements might be of greater interest to historians of the Crusades, the elements here provide the sharpest points of contrast for how Venice was viewed by Franks. Our five sources run the gamut of opinion on Venice from positive to negative. On the positive end are the sober and credible Villehardouin and the risibly inaccurate anonymous author of the *Chronicle of Morea*. Clari’s view is in the middle, generally pro-Venetian. Peter is scorchingly anti-Venetian; his few facts are

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\(^ {73}\) Lurier, *Chronicle of Morea*, 79-80.

\(^ {74}\) Ibid., 81-2.

generally accurate. Antelm is just as negative, but much of what he says is exaggeration or outright fabrication. No two sources give similar accounts of every point, and all agree in several places; there is a kaleidoscopic quality to the comparison. Looking at their different views of various aspects of Venice gives a more nuanced view of their authorial motivations and can help us surmise how their account might have been influenced by their surroundings, and influenced them in return.

Positive Attributes

The wealth of Venice. Villehardouin found the Doge’s palace “passing rich and beautiful.”76 When Clari’s pilgrims came to Venice, “greatly did they marvel...at the great riches that they found in the city.”77 Peter’s French barons met at “that very rich city, Venice.”78 The negative sources are quick to associate that wealth with overcharging for goods and services. Peter leaves no doubt: “The Venetians, a cunning and ill-disposed people, saw that our crusaders had used up all their funds – a consequence of the excessive cost of hiring the ships – and that with almost no resources remaining to them they were in fact unable to pay most of the charge; thus the Crusaders were under an obligation to them and in their power.”79 Antelm writes of coldhearted overcharging for provisions for the pilgrims on the island of St. Nicholas; when they had paid all they had or could borrow on what they needed to live, some of the small people had to return home.80 Even the anonymous author of the Chronicle of Morea, usually pro-Venetian, writes that upon learning of the French enterprise the Doge “became very pleased...for he expected and he suspected that Venice would receive honor and much profit from this expedition”;

76 Villehardouin, Chronicle, 5.
77 Clari, Conquest, Ch. 10.
78 Sibley and Sibley, Historia Albigensis, 57.
79 Ibid., 58.
80 Mas Latrie, Chronique, 349.
likewise the nobles and commons of Venice “heard the words and the information which the doge had told them, they were overjoyed...”81

**Shipbuilding expertise.** A second positive attribute on which all agree – indeed, the facts make it hard to disagree – is shipbuilding expertise. Both Villehardouin and Clari effuse about the fleet, Villehardouin saying "the fleet they had got ready was so goodly and fine that never did Christian man see one goodlier or finer," and Clari going even further to say “it was the goodliest thing to behold that ever hath been since the beginning of the world.” The others merely say that the barons agreed to approach Venice, the grudging implication being that there was no question that place best equipped to furnish a suitable fleet. Only Clari mentions the alternatives: “the messangers... spoke to the Genoese and told them what they were seeking; but the Genoese said that they could in no wise aid them. Then they went on to Pisa, and they spoke to them of Pisa. And these made answer to them that they had not so many vessels nor could they aid them in any wise. Then they went on to Venice...”82

**Maritime skill.** An attribute on which sources generally agree is Venetian maritime skill. At the siege of Constantinople the Venetians famously joined their maritime and military skill and used their ships, with walkways ingeniously constructed off the masts, to breach the city walls. The anonymous author writes of the Venetians as “skilled craftsmen of the sea,” who “with cunning and prudence and with great skill, built bridges upon the transports; with skill and prudence they threw these across to the walls, climbed onto them with their shields and swords and forced their way on to the walls of the City.”83 Clari characteristically credited the Doge with this ingenuity:

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81 Lurier, *Chronicle of Morea*, 77.

82 Clari, *Conquest*, Ch. 6.

83 Lurier, *Chronicle of Morea*, 83.
Then did the Doge of Venice cause most marvelous engines to be made, and right
goodly ones; for he had them take the spars which support the sails of the ships, which
were full thirty fathoms in length, or more, and these he caused to be firmly bound and
made fast to the masts with good cords, and good bridges to be laid on these and good
guards alongside them, likewise of cords; and the bridge was so wide that three armed
knights could pass over it abreast. And the Doge caused the bridge to be so well
furnished and covered on the sides with sailcloth and other thick stuff, that those who
should go up the bridge to make an assault need have no care for crossbow bolts nor for
arrows. And the bridge projected so far forward beyond the ship that the height of the
bridge above the ground was full forty fathoms or more. And each one of the transport
ships had a mangonel, which continually hurled missiles against the walls and into the
city.84

In every account one senses the close relationship of these unnamed Venetians to their ships.
Villehardouin recounts how the Greeks one night set fire to some of their ships that would drift with the
wind toward the Venetian fleet:

And to this bears witness Geoffry the Marshal of Champagne, who dictates this work,
that never did people help themselves better at sea than the Venetians did that night;
for they sprang into the galleys and boats belonging to the ships, and seized upon the
fire ships, all burning as they were, with hooks, and dragged them by main force before
their enemies, outside the port, and set them into the current of the straits, and left
them to go burning down the straits.85

Even Antelm attests to the closeness of Venetians and their ships – he accuses them of hiding
booty in their ships at night.86

**Negative Attributes**

In this period we also see the beginning of a set of evolving negative attributes that the French
will attach to the Venetians throughout the period under study.

**Greedy.** Probably the most widespread and durable charge against the Venetians is greed. Peter
sums it up when he writes, “The Venetians, a cunning and ill-disposed people, saw that our crusaders

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84 Clari, *Conquest*, Ch. 44.


had used up all their funds – a consequence of the excessive cost of hiring the ships – and that with almost no resources remaining to them they were in fact unable to pay most of the charge; thus the Crusaders were under an obligation to them and in their power.” In his view the greedy Venetians cleverly manipulated the French to their nefarious ends. Antelm’s view is exactly the same. In his account the Venetians were happy to learn that the French needed ships, and sent their shrewdest men to France to do business with the barons. Likewise when the Franks were in Venice, each paid what he could, and when they had paid all they had or could borrow on what they needed to live, some of the small people had to return home. When they had paid all they had, the pilgrims urged the Venetians to go, but the Venetians replied that they would not put to sea until the pilgrims had honored their bargain, as the Venetians had well honored theirs. The high men borrowed money and offered pledges, but the Venetians wouldn’t accept that, they wanted to be paid. It seemed as if we would spend the whole winter on that island, and that made the high men unhappy and feeling exploited.

Even the usually pro-Venetian author of the Chronicle of Morea sounds this note of gleeful greed, writing that the Doge “became very pleased on hearing the message, for he expected and he suspected that Venice would receive honor and much profit from this expedition.”

**Unchivalrous.** There are many suggestions, even from the pro-Venetianists, that Venetians lack the key attribute of chivalry: physical courage for on-land combat. This is a point that would have placed the Venetian commercial-maritime ethos most squarely in opposition to the French feudal ethos. Even pro-Venetian Villehardouin makes this implication subtly but repeatedly. During the fray between Franks

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88 Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 339.

89 Ibid., 349.

90 Lurier, *Chronicle of Morea*, 77.
and Venetians at Zara he writes "the Venetians could not abide the combat." He describes the impressive demand of the blind, 90-year old Doge demanding to be landed at Constantinople, suggesting that the Doge knew well the necessity of leading from the front:

And when the Venetians saw the standard of St. Mark on land, and the galley of their lord touching ground before them, each held himself for shamed, and they all gat to the land; and those in the transports leapt forth, and landed; and those in the big ships got into barges, and made for the shore, each and all as best they could. Then might you have seen an assault, great and marvelous.

On shipboard, Villehardouin found the Venetians courageous – "And the Venetians lay on the sea, in ships and vessels, and raised their ladders, and mangonels, and petraries, and made order for their assault right well" as if their courage emanated from their boats and the sea, and abated on land. Antelm makes this same point more directly, accusing the Venetians of staying in their ships, without letting the Franks know, while the Franks were all armed and awaiting battle. Villehardouin tells of the Doge’s public commitment to the Crusade, demonstrated to the crowd at Saint Mark’s:

And they sewed the cross on to a great cotton hat, which he wore, in front, because he wished that all men should see it. And the Venetians began to take the cross in great numbers, a great multitude, for up to that day very few had taken the cross.

In contrast to the French taking the cross out of Christian fervor, bravery, or feudal obligation, Venetians were reluctant to sign on. Clari tells of how, when the French crusaders arrived in Venice, the Doge took action to fill his own ships:

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91 Villehardouin, Chronicle, 22.
92 Ibid., 42-3.
93 Ibid., 40.
94 Mas Latrie, Chronique, 365.
95 Villehardouin, Chronicle, 17.
When the Doge of Venice saw that the pilgrims were all come, then summoned he all those of his own land of Venice. And when they were all come, then did the Doge command that the half of them should dispose themselves and make themselves ready to go in the fleet with the pilgrims. When the Venetians heard this, some rejoiced, others said that they could not go thither; nor could they come to any agreement how the half of them could go thither. But at last they resorted to lots; for they made, two by two together, two lumps of wax, and in the one lump they put a writing. Then came they to the priest and gave them to him; and the priest made the sign of the cross over them, and he gave to each one of the two Venetians one of these lumps, and he of the twain that had the lump with the writing, he must needs go in the fleet. Thus they made their division.96

The closest Villehardouin ever comes to humor is in a passage about soldierly fear, although in this case it is the Venetians showing more courage. The French were advising an attack on Constantinople on the less fortified side, but the Venetians pointed out that the current could carry them away. Villhardouin says, “And you must know that there were those who would have been well pleased if the current had home them down the straits, or the wind, they cared not whither, so long as they left that land behind, and went on their way.”97

Antelm, who has nothing good to say about the Venetians, implies that they were cowardly at Adrianople; when the Venetians and those that were with them saw the battle, “they felt great fear and turned toward their tents; they knew well that it would go hard for the ones in the front.”98

Villehardouin, on the other hand, applauds the courageous leadership by the Doge after this same battle, which was a disastrous loss for the Latins. In this account he speaks of himself in the third person:

Then did Geoffry of Villehardouin, the Marshal of Champagne and Roumania, summon to the camp the Doge of Venice, who was an old man and saw naught, but very wise and brave and vigorous; and he asked the Doge to come to him there where he stood with his men, holding the field; and the Doge did so. And when the Marshal saw him, he called him into council, aside, all alone, and said to him: 'Lord, you see the misadventure that has befallen us. We have lost the Emperor Baldwin and Count Louis, and the larger part of our people, and of the best. Now let us bethink ourselves how to save what is

96 Clari, Conquest, Ch.11.
97 Villehardouin, Chronicle, 60.
98 Mas Latrie, Chronique, 285.
left. For if God does not take pity of them, we are but lost.’ And in the end they settled it thus: that the Doge would return to the camp, and put heart into the people, and order that every one should arm and remain quiet in his tent pavilion; and that Geoffry the Marshal would remain in full order of battle before the camp till it was night, so that their enemies might not see the host move; and that when it was night all would move from before the city; the Doge of Venice would go before, and Geoffry the Marshal would form the rear-guard, with those who were with him. Thus...they departed at foot pace, and took with them all their people mounted and dismounted, the wounded as well those who were whole-they left not one behind. And they journeyed towards a city that lies upon the sea, called Rodosto, and that was full three days’ journey distant. So they departed from Adrianople...”

Clari, generally a lionizer of the Doge, characterizes the Doge’s demeanor at this time in less glorious terms, writing “And whosoever was able to escape came fleeing to Constantinople; so came the Doge of Venice fleeing thence, and much people with him. And they left behind their tents and their harness, even as they had been sitting before the city; for never durst they turn again in that direction. And great was their discomfiture.” Clari’s interpretation, based as scholars generally believe it to be on camp rumor, may have been based on a misunderstanding of the Doge’s tactic of leaving the tents behind so as to deceive the pursuing enemy.

Unchristian. French observers often questioned the Venetian claim to Christianity, or saw in them a Christianity so hypocritical as to be dubious. Venetian involvement in crusading efforts had long made it vulnerable to this charge. Venice took a relatively active role in the First Crusade, assisting the Latins with transport, provisioning and some fighting. The primary strategy at this point in time was to gain a toehold in the east. The Golden Bull of 1082 had given trading concessions from eastern ports; Venice now aspired to enjoy trade on land of its own. Fighting in return for harbors and commercial

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100 Clari, *Conquest*, ch. 112.

rights, and the bringing home of relics to adorn the city and contribute to its pilgrim trade, had long been the *modus operandus* of the Venetian republic.\(^{102}\) The First Crusade provided an excellent opportunity to further this strategy, but Venice was careful to do so on its own terms and timetable. It was two years after the famous appeal of Pope Urban II before Venice took any visible steps to join the First Crusade, and two more years before it sailed\(^{103}\).

The First Crusade shows Venetian opportunism in full force. Not only did Venice sail late, its voyage to Jerusalem digressed en route to fight its commercial rivals the Pisans at Rhodes. This destination also enabled the Venetian bishop to carry out his long-planned relocation of the bones of St. Nicholas to Venice.\(^{104}\) Venetians finally sailed for the Holy Land and put in at Jaffa, where they met briefly with the ailing Godfrey who quickly turned negotiations over to his cousin Warner.

Albert of Aachen, who recorded the visit, emphasized (as was his tendency) the leadership of Godfrey, and wrote of the Venetians’ apparent dismay at finding him unwell; they were “shaking with mourning and lamentation.”\(^{105}\) Nonetheless they took the time to negotiate a tough and thorough contract. Indeed, time had grown so short that, by the time the contract was duly signed and witnessed, they decided to capture Haifa, not, it would appear, because it was the first choice of the crusaders but

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\(^{102}\) Howard, *Venice and the East*, 89-90. An early Doge had ordered that all trading missions to the east are required to bring back trading booty for the adornment of the city. Deborah Howard emphasizes the importance of this to the average Venetian: “As well as their service to Christianity, the trading benefits of those Levantine interventions, eagerly protected in the Genoese Wars and symbolized by the Pillars of Acre outside the vestibule’s doorway [at Saint Mark’s], would not have been forgotten by the Venetian public.”

\(^{103}\) Ibid., 77.

\(^{104}\) Ibid., 78.

because it fit the Venetians’ travel schedule. The capture was a bloody success and they returned to
Venice at the very end of the sailing season, carrying the bones of St. Nicholas.¹⁰⁶

Villehardouin’s account of Venetian Christianity appears to evolve. Initially, in his account of the
negotiation at Venice, he seems persuaded by the genuine piety of the Venetians. Having traced the
Doge’s careful winning over of increasingly wide circles of the Venetian body politic, he gives us the
climactic request at St. Mark’s of the envoys to the crowds of Venetians gathered there:

‘Lords, the barons of France, most high and puissant, have sent us to you; and they cry
to you for mercy, that you take pity on Jerusalem, which is in bondage to the Turks, and
that, for God’s sake, you help to avenge the shame of Christ Jesus. And for this end they
have elected to come to you, because they know full well that there is none other
people having so great power on the seas, as you and your people. And they
commanded us to fall at your feet, and not to rise till you consent to take pity on the
Holy Land which is beyond the seas.’ Then the six envoys knelt at the feet of the people,
weeping many tears. And the Doge and all the others burst into tears of pity and
compassion, and cried with one voice, and lifted up their hands, saying: ‘We consent, we
consent!’ Then was there so great a noise and tumult that it seemed as if the earth itself
were falling to pieces.¹⁰⁷

There are two ways to read this passage. Either the Doge and his Venetians and the six French
envoys have been carried away on a single wave of Christian passion – or Villehardouin and his fellows
have been played by the Doge in a gigantic theatrical production, designed to leverage Venetian skill
with Frankish need, for the ultimate good of the Republic. The Doge has given the envoys audience with
thousands of Venetians, and obligingly burst into tears as an example to his countrymen. If the
culminating cry ‘We consent!’ seems reminiscent of the cry of ‘Deo volente!’ that accompanied First
Crusade rallies, we should remember that there is a long distance between ‘God wills it’ and the proto-
democratic ‘we consent.’

The tears of pity and compassion, wept so copiously, dry soon enough. The next time
Villehardouin shows us Venetians in a conversation about Christianity is at Zara. Here he lets the

¹⁰⁶ Norwich, History of Venice, 80.
¹⁰⁷ Villehardouin, Chronicle, 7-8.
Venetians make their own case – no more does he argue in his own voice for Venetian piety. He records, in a seemingly impartial way, this heated exchange at Zara:

Then rose the abbot of Vaux, of the order of the Cistercians, and said to them: ‘Lords, I forbid you, on the part of the Pope of Rome, to attack this city; for those within it are Christians, and you are pilgrims.’ When the Doge heard this, he was very wroth, and much disturbed, and he said to the counts and barons: ‘Signors, I had this city, by their own agreement, at my mercy, and your people have broken that agreement; you have covenanted to help me to conquer it, and I summon you to do so.’

If even the Doge’s staunchest supporter is hard-pressed to justify the siege of a Christian city whose misfortune it was to have transferred allegiance from Venice to Hungary, his enemies have rich material on which to grind their axes. This is the context in which Peter writes that they are “a cunning and ill-disposed people,” and “wretches” subject to excommunication.

**Treachery.** Suggestions of Venetian greed and unchristian behavior come together in charges of Venetian treachery. This proved to be a view that persisted for centuries, launched by Antelm’s masterpiece of calumny, the treacherous treaty. In this clever extended passage, Antelm writes that when the Sultan of Babylon - who was at war with his nephew and others - heard of the Christian crusading plans, he met with his high priests and asked for their help. They were indifferent; whatever God wills, will happen. So the Sultan sends an envoy who gives great presents to the duke of Venice, with salutations and friendship, and asks him to detour the Christians from their attack on Egypt, in return for the franchise of the port of Alexandria. This the Venetians, by their diversions to Zara and Constantinople, accomplish.

Against this negative story we see Villehardouin and Clari, in their very different ways and, one suspects, for their very different reasons, champion Venetian honor. Villehardouin’s point is that the

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108 Ibid., 20-1.

109 See appendix.

110 Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 345.
Venetians “have well fulfilled all their undertakings, and above measure. But we cannot fulfil ours in paying for our passages, seeing we are too few in number; and this is the fault of those who have journeyed by other ports.”\(^{111}\) Clari defends the the Doge, who says to the Franks that “they had done ill in that they had asked, through their messengers, that the Venetians should make ready a fleet for four thousand knights and their accoutrements and for an hundred thousand foot; whereas, of these knights, there were scarce more than a thousand, since the rest had gone to other harbours, and of these hundred thousand footmen, there were scarce more than fifty or sixty thousand.”\(^{112}\)

Antelm has heard these arguments and is ready for them. He acknowledges that the position of the Venetians is that they would not put to sea until the pilgrims had honored their bargain, as the Venetians had well honored theirs. But he goes on to say that when the high men borrowed money and offered pledges, the Venetians refused to accept.\(^{113}\) This is another form of dishonor: refusing to accept the pledge of a Christian. Villehardouin suggests that the position of the Venetians was could be criticized by other Christians when he has the Doge tell his people, “Signors, these people cannot pay more; and in so far as they have paid at all, we have benefited by an agreement which they cannot now fulfill. But our right to keep this money would not everywhere be acknowledged; and if we so kept it we should be greatly blamed, both us and our land. Let us therefore offer them terms.”\(^{114}\) Clari echoes this concern:

When the Doge saw that they were utterly unable to pay all these moneys, nay, rather, that they were in exceeding sore straits, he spoke to his people and said thus to them: 'Sirs,' (quoth he) 'if we let these people go unto their own country, we shall ever be esteemed wicked men and deceivers. But let us straightway go to them and let us say to

\(^{111}\) Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 15.

\(^{112}\) Clari, *Conquest*, Ch. 11.

\(^{113}\) Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 249.

\(^{114}\) Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 15.
them that if they will render us these six and thirty thou–sand marks, which they owe us, out of the first conquests that they shall make and shall have for division, then will we set them over the sea."\(^{115}\)

We see here an effort by the Doge, and his two sympathetic reporters, to bridge the gap of honor between the Venetian, and the commercial code they assumed, and the French with their lack of experience with business transactions and commitment to chivalric honor.

Clari gives us another view of Venetian honor. It is one that comes out of his consistent reminding of the point of view of the common man. Clari concludes his discussion of the negotiation process with the Doge sending a herald throughout Venice to proclaim “that no Venetian should be so bold as to undertake any traffic, but that all should help in making ready the fleet; and so they did.”\(^{116}\) Thus Clari makes clear that the contract affected the livelihoods of the little people of Venice. For Clari, the Doge was their champion.

It is clear in comparing the sources that there were particular points that must have seemed important in the establishment of righteous or blameworthy action on the part of the Venetians. These points that are treated very differently based on the author’s overall orientation toward Venice. The most important of these – indeed, the point on which the entire Fourth Crusade foundered as a mission to the Holy Land – was the estimated size of the French host. On this point, Villehardouin writes:

‘Signors,’ said the Doge, ‘we will tell you the conclusions at which we have arrived, if so be that we can induce our great council and the commons of the land to allow of them; and you, on your part, must consult and see if you can accept them and carry them through. We will build transports to carry four thousand five hundred horses, and nine thousand squires, and ships for four thousand five hundred knights, and twenty thousand sergeants of foot. And we will agree also to purvey food for these horses and people during nine months. This is what we undertake to do at the least, on condition that you pay us for each horse four marks, and for each man two marks.’ And the covenants we are now explaining to you, we undertake to keep, wheresoever we may be, for a year, reckoning from the day on which we sail from the port of Venice in the

\(^{115}\) Clari, *Conquest*, Ch. 12.

\(^{116}\) *Ibid.*, Ch. 7.
service of God and of Christendom. Now the sum total of the expenses above named 
amounts to 85,000 marks.’  

On the surface this reads like a sober and faithful account of accurate figures. Yet one subtle 
point is noteworthy. Villehardouin puts these words in the mouth of the Doge, not his own or his fellow 
envoys’. This is the first mention of the number of Franks expected, not a repetition of any earlier 
request. In doing this, Villehardouin has separated himself, ever so slightly, from the damning recitation 
of numbers that turned out to be so drastically wrong. This separation is not enough to constitute 
plausible deniability; yet it is there. Indeed, Villehardouin has the fateful words uttered by the Doge, 
someone he knew (from the many disagreements over the course of the crusade) would be regarded by 
many of his readers as an arch-villain.

Alternative sources cite 94,000 as the sum total named by the Doge in the contract, while 
retaining the breakout as given above, thus constituting an arithmetical error on Villehardouin’s part, 
and 85,000 as the final sum owed. This alternative sum of 94,000 is easily explained by charging four 
marks per knight rather than two marks per knight, certainly a plausible pricing differential, given that a 
knight would expect substantially better service and provisions than a common fighting man. If these 
alternative sources are correct, we have another thing to note about Villehardouin’s account, which is 
that he does not mention any bargaining down from 94,000 to 85,000. If we accept this alternative, we 
then must ask why Villehardouin wrote this section as he did. Did he wish to distance himself from 
any commercial activity as unseemly as bargaining? If this is so, it is a clue to the depth of the disdain 
the French knights would have felt for the commercial Venetians.

Clari gives a different account of this key point, writing that the envoys told the Venetians “that 
they were bidden to seek to hire passage for four thousand knights and their accoutrements and for an

\[^{117}\text{Villehardouin, Chronicle, 6.}\]
hundred thousand footmen” and that the Venetians named a price of 100,000 marks. “When the messengers heard this they answered that an hundred thousand marks was too much; and they spoke together until they made a bargain for four-score and seven thousand marks...” As usual, Clari is wrong on the numbers, but is he right on the dynamic of bargaining? A penurious knight, bargaining for lower prices would have been a familiar way of life for him. At any rate, no anti-commercial scruples trouble his account of the envoys’ behavior vis-à-vis the Venetians.

The anonymous author of *The Chronicle of Morea*, like Clari, cites high numbers. Unlike Clari, he puts Villehardouin at the center of the action: "by word of mouth [Villehardouin] told [Dandolo] that he, as their friend and brother, arrange that they might have boats to pass over to the holy tomb of Christ, there in Syria; they required that 8,000 with their horses cross over and another 80,000 of their foot soldiers.”

We will see below how Villehardouin and Clari both regard carrying out the contract as a matter of honor for both parties; in their readings, the number contracted for was a crucial part of the understanding and drove the behavior of the Venetians in a way that was completely honorable. Antelm, in his project to vilify the Venetians, undermines this argument. In his account the envoys say explicitly that there would be great numbers, but they didn't know how many. In a chronicle that gives much less detail than the others, this point is significant. Indeed, recruiting crusaders in sufficient numbers had been a key concern of the French host from the beginning. Villehardouin confirms this:

Afterwards [post-Ecri] the barons held a parliament at Soissons, to settle when they should start, and whither they should wend. But they could come to no agreement, because it did not seem to them that enough people had taken the cross. So during all

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119 Clari, *Conquest*, Ch. 6.

120 Lurier, *Chronicle of Morea*, 77.

121 Mas Latrie, *Chronique*, 336.
that year [1200] no two months passed without assemblings in parliament at
Compiègne. There met all the counts and barons who had taken the cross. Many were
the opinions given and considered; but in the end it was agreed that envoys should be
sent, the best that could be found, with full powers, as if they were the lords in person,
to settle such matters as needed settlement.122

Note that Villehardouin does not say that enough people had taken the cross at this time. No
doubt in the many opinions given and considered were voices urging action and assuming that many
crusaders would join up, and others urging caution and lower numbers. One can only imagine the
dynamic of a “parliament” of French barons, each accustomed to having the decisive role.

The importance of this point is underscored when we contrast how the two last sources treat
uncertainty around the number of crusaders, and how this was to be handled. Antelm, writing a decade
after these events, says that when the French made they deal for ships and provisions, they explicitly
specified that there would be great numbers, but they didn’t know how many.123 No moral leverage by
the Venetians could thus come from a small number of Franks coming to Venice; according to Anselm,
there was never any commitment made on this point. As manifestly impossible as it would have been
for the Venetians, or anyone else, to prepare a fleet for an unknown number of crusaders, it suits
Antelm’s project of removing any plausibility for Venetian action.

The anonymous author of the Chronicle, writing a century after the Fourth Crusade, provides an
equally unlikely scenario that gives the Venetians complete coverage. He writes that “if it should turn
out that not enough Franks arrived to fill the heavy transports which the Venetians would outfit for
them, they would pay the cost of the ships which should have been left over and without delay or
evasion.”124 This suggests that the question of French numbers had become a key one in the century-

122 Villehardouin, Chronicle, 4.

123 Mas Latrie, Chronique, 339.

124 Lurier, Chronicle of Morea, 77-8.
long intervening discussion of the Fourth Crusade, for Venetian opponents and apologists alike. Both Antelm and anonymous fulfilled, *ex post facto*, the wish of their side in writing their accounts.

In any event, Villehardouin and his colleagues were given, according to him, very broad discretion in this matter. Villehardouin underscores this with his depiction of the reception he and the other envoys received in Venice.

The Doge of Venice, whose name was Henry Dandolo, and who was very wise and very valiant, did them great honour, both he and the other folk, and entertained them right willingly... ‘Signors, I have seen your letters; well do we know that of men uncrowned your lords are the greatest, and they advise us to put faith in what you tell us, and that they will maintain whatsoever you undertake. Now, therefore, speak, and let us know what is your pleasure.’

Given the sensitivity around this question of numbers, it becomes important to know whether or not Villehardouin and his fellow envoys exceeded their authority in Venice. Villehardouin himself writes, "To these six envoys the business in hand was fully committed, all the barons delivering to them valid charters, with seals attached, to the effect that they would undertake to maintain and carry out whatever conventions and agreements the envoys might enter into, in all sea ports, and whithersoever else the envoys might fare." With this careful detail, Villehardouin gives the reader no room to doubt the envoys’ authority. This assurance is echoed and, as usual, amplified, by the anonymous author. He writes of the barons, “they drew up written orders with hanging seals for [Villehardouin], they gave him their power and made him a proviso to ratify and fulfill whatever he might effect.” The seals that Villehardouin and his anonymous supporter insist upon are nowhere in evidence with the other writers. Clari has little to say on this point. According to Peter, the barons themselves went to Venice - so there

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125 Ibid., 4-5.

126 Ibid., 4.

127 Lurier, *Chronicle of Morea*, 76.
There was no reason to invest any envoy with authority. In Antelm’s account, the Venetians were summoned to Corbie – no envoys needed.\textsuperscript{129} Clari does not cover the negotiation in Venice. He makes no mention of Villehardouin by name; he calls him the Marshal of Champagne, and only mentions him twice. The first is in the list of crusaders. The second is as an envoy to Venice.\textsuperscript{130} This leads to the question of Villehardouin's role generally. We see that Clari makes scant mention of him; he calls him the Marshal of Champagne, and only mentions him twice, with the list of crusaders and as envoy. The only mention Antelm makes of Villehardouin is by title, at the battle of Adrianople. The anonymous author of the \textit{Chronicle of Morea}, in contrast, writes panygirics to Villehardouin:

\begin{quote}
...since God wished the expedition to take place, and so that so many great men should not hesitate in doubt, stay behind and abandon such a good voyage, from among them there appeared an upright knight; he was a noble man, wise beyond measure, called Geoffroy, de Villehardouin the surname, and he was grand marshal of Champagne. He had been the advisor and first counselor to the count of Champagne of blessed memory, who had advised him to make the expedition; and when he saw the decree of fate, the death of the count, he took up the affair of that expedition. He reasoned, as a wise man, that if would be a sin if, because of the death of one man, the expedition and the salvation of the Christians were abandoned and it would be worthy of censure.\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

The reason for this is simple: Villehardouin the Marshal is the uncle of Geoffrey de Villehardouin the founder of the Morea, patriarch of its long and successful ruling dynasty, and celebrating the lost glories of the Morea is the point of the \textit{Chronicle}. The reason for the favorable treatment anonymous gives to Villehardouin is to give a glowing back-story to the main point of the \textit{Chronicle}; accuracy was not the point. For Villehardouin the Marshal, accuracy matters very much indeed. He asserts his

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{128} Sibley and Sibley, \textit{Historia Albigensis}, 58.
\textsuperscript{129} Mas Latrè, \textit{Chronique}, 388-9.
\textsuperscript{130} Clari, \textit{Conquest}, Ch. 6. "Then they fixed upon their messengers. They all agreed that my Lord Conon of Bethune go thither, and the Marshal of Champagne."
\textsuperscript{131} Lurier, \textit{Chronicle of Morea}, 72-3.
\end{quote}
accuracy repeatedly and we are right to attempt to estimate it. How accurate is Villehardouin about the events he discusses? Perhaps the germane question in this case is not so much how accurate are the facts he gives, but does he give the right set of facts; are they the best selection of facts to give a balanced view of the crusade. Here, I believe, Villehardouin can be criticized. He places himself at the center of activity in his account. During the course of his account, he places himself as a consummate insider and leader of the Fourth Crusade. It is his recommendation to seek Boniface of Montferrat to replace Thibaud as a leader of the Crusade, after Thibaud dies and two other nobles decline the offer. He notes himself as an envoy not only in these cases, and in the fateful embassy to Venice, but at many crucial times later in the Crusade: to Montferrat, to Alexis, to Isaac and Alexis, to Boniface and Balwdin when they dispute. Villehardouin and a small group of others repeatedly seek to keep the host together when others attempt to leave. After the debacle at Adrianople, in which he played an important military role, he is one of just a very small number of French leaders remaining in the host, Louis and Boniface and many others having died, and Baldwin having been taken captive. In any event, he portrays himself as decision-maker, envoy to delicate missions, and military hero.

Clari, on the other hand, never mentions Villehardouin by name. It is not that he declines to name names; indeed his entire first chapter is a litany of the crusaders. He lists forty-nine crusaders by name, and four by title, one of whom is Villehardouin. He hastens to say that the list is not exhaustive: “these that we have named here were the richest men, and they bore banners.” He then goes on to cite “those that wrought there the most deeds of prowess and of arms, both rich men and poor”; there are nine rich and fifteen poor on his list, which emphasizes, as does his first list, men from his own region and economic circumstance.

So the impression we get from Villehardouin that he is always at the center of the action is not bourne out by Clari. Perhaps Villehardouin is happy to be an insider’s insider, directing things behind the scenes and letting others take the credit. Yet if this is so, his own account is suspect, or rather, so aimed
at the inside view that it is likely to have little resonance with other readers. We will come back to this point, after looking at the other authors’ views of Villehardouin.

Peter has nothing to say about Villehardouin. We have seen how and why the anonymous author of the *Chronicle of Morea* gives Villehardouin center stage in his passages on the Fourth Crusade. We have also seen how the *Chronicle’s* reports are “a muddle of inaccuracies.”

What is Antelm’s view of Villehardouin the crusader? The answer is that Antelm erases him. The only glimpse he gives us of any Villehardouin is the nephew, and that just once, when he says that the Emperor of Constantinople gave great lands “on the shore toward Apulia” to Geoffrey de Villehardouin. Henry of Anjou (this is how Antelm refers to Henry of Flanders – Henry’s grandmother was an Anjou, and the Angevins were active in the Aegean by the late 13th century) went into Turkey and conquered great lands. The obscure knights Payen of Orleans, Baldwin of Belvoir, and Peter of Braiencel conquered great lands. Geoffrey de Villehardouin the nephew – founder of a great dynasty that was to give the empire of Constantinople the most brilliant court and the longest stretch of peace and prosperity it was to know – conquers nothing. He is simply given a shore,132 and not one in an exotic place requiring knightly bravery, but one close to Europe. Here again Antelm uses exaggeration and erasure to make his point. As a port of embarkation, Apulia was a distant second to Venice. The larger point is that while the younger Villehardoin’s conquest of the Morea, which was in fact held by Venice as a result of the partition treaty, constituted a story of knightly exploits and deft diplomacy, Antelm suppresses it utterly in favor of this underwhelming account of an emperor’s gift.

If Villehardouin’s and Clari’s views were to prevail, Venetian behavior during the Fourth Crusade did not compromise their honor; if Peter’s and Antelm’s prevailed, they were distinctly base and dishonorable. Which view of the Venetians was to have more influence – and why?

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Analysis of Influence

We now turn to the question of how influential these five accounts – three generally pro-Venetian, two scathingly anti-Venetian – might have been to readers of their own times. This is an important point to make, because it is easy to conclude that current influence was reflective of contemporary influence, and it might not have been.

Villehardouin is regarded as the most reliable source available on the Fourth Crusade. Six manuscripts are extant; his account has never been lost or unknown. While there have been theories about Villehardouin’s shading his account or even being part of a three-way conspiracy to divert the crusade, many scholars accept his "theory of accidents." How might it have been received in his own time?

I suggest three reasons why Villehardouin’s account, so respected today, might not have been widely shared view in his own day. The first is the compelling logic of the numbers. According to Villehardouin’s own testimony, by the end of 1206 there would have been fewer than 1,200 living Frenchmen of the Fourth Crusade still with the host, while we know that over 7,000 had fled in the wake of the debacle at Adrianople alone, many after threatening to for months. Thus we see that of the original 11,000 French crusaders that came to Venice in spring and summer of 1202 and were still alive at the end of 1206, opponents of the cause outnumbered supporters six to one. In addition, we have the large numbers that took the cross but bypassed Venice.

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133 Queller, Latin Conquest, 24-63.

134 The number I get, using Villehardouin’s statements and pro-rating them to French and Venetian hosts, is actually 1,165 – I use 1,200 to avoid giving a false sense of accuracy.

135 A literal reading would have this number be as large as 22,000 – the original 33,500 contracted for less the 11,000 or so that actually showed up – but that assumes that 33,500 was an accurate estimate, which of course it was not. Some scholars have attempted to derive total numbers of troops using ratios to the knights that Villehardouin has named, but as that ratio might vary from under 100 to close to 200, the results would not be
This opposition by living veterans might have been mitigated somewhat by the loyalty of families of the war dead. We should note, however, that even if we add some 3,000 (the maximum possible number of French war dead) to the 1,200 Fourth Crusade supporters noted above, there are still nearly twice as many opponents as supporters. Furthermore, of Frenchmen that remained supportive of the Fourth Crusade enterprise after the debacle at Adrianople, some, like Clari, would have returned to France, but many, like Villehardouin, would have remained in the Latin east from where they would have less impact on the main currents of Frankish culture.

The second reason has to do with the content of Villehardouin’s history. Villehardouin named 160 Frenchman in his account of the Fourth Crusade. Of these, 113 were men of high status, noted when they took the cross, and 47 were lower men, mentioned only when they performed a deed. For the high men, forty five are mentioned for blameworthy deeds - mostly for attempting to leave or break up the host, or failing to come to Venice in the first place - and thirty six are noted for praiseworthy deeds, such as battle heroism or trying to keep the host together; the rest are noted only when they took the cross. Of the lower men, twenty three attempted to leave the host, and thirty one were heroic in battle. So the high men, influential in France, incur Villehardoin’s blame them more often than his praise. It is the opposite for the lower men, many of whom earn Villehardouin’s praise late in the chronicle. Opinion leaders in thirteenth-century French society may well have wanted to avoid Villeharouin’s scoldings and accusations, and not asked for his chronicle to be copied.

Who, then, would want copies of it? Those praised in it – and who praised more than the Venetians? Indeed, one scholar has noted the essential similarity of the six manuscripts extant and posited that copies may have been made in Venice as a model for Venetian intervention in Byzantine affairs, such as was sealed in Venetian-Byzantine treaties of 1310 and 1324. Perhaps Villehardouin was very meaningful, and I have preferred to limit my analysis to Villehardouin’s own numbers. Still, one might reasonably add some thousands to the number of living Frenchmen that opposed what they understood of the Fourth Crusade strategy of or the alliance with Venice to achieve it.
more popular in Venice than in France.\textsuperscript{136} It is entirely possible, then, that Villehardouin, our most reliable source for the Fourth Crusade from the perspective of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, did not reflect accurately 13\textsuperscript{th} century French views of the enterprise, particularly views that would have been influential in mainstream French culture.

What of the likely popularity of the other pro-Venetian works? Clari’s manuscript exists in one extant copy. It was made at Corbie in 1300 when five chronicles were copied into one volume, perhaps because the originals were deteriorated by either by neglect or overuse. Was it much used at Corbie? Or preserved accidentally? At any rate, when it was "discovered" in 1855, scholars were not familiar with it.\textsuperscript{137} The \textit{Chronicle of Morea} was likely popular in the Latin east. Eight manuscripts derivative of a missing prototype are extant, in Greek, French, Aragonese, and Italian. The last last two are clearly translations. Scholars disagree as to whether the missing prototype was in French or Greek.\textsuperscript{138} However, popular as it was in the Latin east, the \textit{Chronicle} is unlikely to have been very influential in France. By this time there was less French elite travel to the Morea. It had become a backwater, fighting a losing battle against re-Greekificaton. Thus it is possible to construct a plausible scenario of tepid demand for the pro-Venetian accounts of the Fourth Crusade.


It is a different story with the anti-Venetian accounts. Peter’s text, only partially completed at his death, enjoyed the early protection of the papacy, so “official” editions, with commentary, as we have seen, were available from the time of its composition. However, papal patronage does not necessarily indicate – indeed, may contraindicate - popularity. However, a lot of people were involved in the so-called Albigensian crusade and would have read this eagerly. One of these is the Peter’s protagonist, the “hero” of the Albigensian crusade, Simon of Montfort. Simon’s history with the Fourth Crusade is worth exploring. Montfort took the cross at Ecri with the highest crusading leaders:

With these two counts [Thibaud of Champagne and Louis of Blois] there took the cross two very high and puissant barons of France, Simon of Montfort, and Renaud of Montmirail. Great was the fame thereof throughout the land when these two high and puissant men took the cross.

Simon of Montfort and Renaud of Montmirail were, then barons owing their allegiance not to any intervening count but directly to the king (who took no part in this crusade). Their position was such that France took note of it.

What do we know about his personality? In the Hystoria Peter lavishes praise on Montfort, and after listing his gifts writes that “Such an abundance of God-given advantages might have produced in him an excessive pride; but God prevented this by saddling him with the torment of incessant anxiety, the consequence of pressing poverty.” So here we have a picture of an anxious man of high rank, plagued by financial difficulties, now in the public eye.

Clearly Montfort outranked Villehardouin himself. Yet Villehardouin and five others – one of whom, Alard Maquereau, is identified by Clari as a poor knight- are chosen to be envoys to Venice. Both Montfort and Villehardouin are envoys in the embassy to ask Odo of Burgundy to replace Thibaut

139 Sibley and Sibley, Historia Albigensis, xxv.
140 Ibid., 57.
141 Clari, Conquest, ch. i.
as leader after the latter’s death. Odo said not, and that was Montfort’s last embassy on behalf of the host. As Villehardouin moves to the center of the Fourth Crusade enterprise, Montfort becomes its implacable foe. At Zara he undermines the Doge’s – and Villehardouin’s – efforts to negotiate peacefully with the Zarans. Indeed, there is a dramatic, nearly violent confrontation between Montfort and the Doge at this time. Although we have seen excerpts before, Peter’s account of this incident is worth quoting here in full:

[T]he Count of Montfort and the Abbot of les Vaux-de-Cernay refused to follow the multitude to do evil and join in the siege, but camped at some distance from the city. Meanwhile the Pope sent a letter to all the crusaders ordering them – under threat of withdrawal of the indulgence of sins which he had granted them and on pain of severe excommunication – not to any harm to the city of Zara. On a certain day the Abbot of les Vaux-de-Cernay was reading this letter to the assembled nobles of the army, and the Venetians wished to kill him. The Count of Montfort got up and went to the centre of the gathering, confronted the Venetians and prevented them from murdering the Abbot. The noble Count then addressed the citizens of Zara (who had come to the meeting seeking peace) in the presence of all the barons, to the following effect: ‘I have not come here to destroy Christians. I will do you no wrong, and whatever others may do, I will ensure that you suffer no harm from me or mine.’ So spoke this valiant man, and withdrew himself and his followers from the meeting place. Let me delay no longer – the barons of the army chose not to heed the Pope’s instruction, but seized and destroyed the city; the wretches were comprehensively excommunicated in a second papal letter. I myself was present at these events and can therefore vouch for the truth of this account; indeed I actually saw and read the Pope’s letter dealing with the excommunication.\(^\text{142}\)

What we see here is very telling about the character of Montfort. Montfort attempts to take a position of leadership in the Crusade, and this “high and puissant” baron fails. He attempts to negotiate on behalf of the host, and he is proven tragically wrong. He attempts to lead a mass departure from the by now surely hated Doge and Villehardouin, and while many follow, the crusade moves on to its momentous conclusion without him.

Montfort has aligned himself with the pope, an alliance later to bear fruit in the Albigensian crusade. In his eyes, just as he and the pope would be an alliance for the forces of good, Villehardouin

\(^{142}\) Sibley and Sibley, *Historia Albigensis*, 58.
and the Doge must have seemed to him to be an alliance for the forces of evil. It would only be logical to see in this proud, anxious, violent man a livelong, clench-jawed opposition to Villehardouin and Venice.143

And what of Antelm? As we have seen, he warred with Villehardouin the nephew for a long period of time over ecclesiastical lands in the Morea, ultimately consolidating a mass of properties with Cromwellian rapacity. If he ultimately kept his post as archbishop of Patras, and died revered as the generous benefactor of the lovely Abbey of Hautecombe, it was not for lack of opposition by the Villehardouns and their Venetian ally, the Patriarch Thomas Morosini. My sense is that, as Montfort was to Villehardouin the crusader, so was Antelm to Villehardouin the nephew, Prince of Achaia – vigorous, brutal antagonist against a more established, urbane, and diplomatic figure of the establishment.

Yet who ultimately won the battle of reader opinion? The Chronicle I have referred to as Antelm’s was likely to have been quite popular. Its propagation was diabolically complex, and derivative works have survived in seven manuscripts. Antelm wrote at a time when there was a lot of travel by French elites between France and intervening stops and the Latin east. They commissioned luxury goods in both east and west and chronicles traveled back and forth. Crusading stories held great interest. And Antelm did not, like Villehardouin the elder, criticize French knights.144

The official relationship between France and Venice during the thirteenth and early part of the fourteenth century was shaped by the Fourth Crusade. Despite this shared enterprise and its momentous outcome, there was to be no close alliance between the two. Through 1377 commercial

143 Perhaps not accidentally, Philip of Monfort, a descendant of Simon, was to instigate a costly dispute between Venice and Genoa known as the War of Saint Sabas (1256–1270), a long-running conflict between the two merchant republics in the Crusader kingdom port city of Acre. Starting as a dispute over the monastery of St. Sabas and its surrounding land, it escalated into a long-term, multi-party war involving not only the two maritime republics but also the Knights Templar, the Knights Hospitaller, the Count of Jaffa, and John of Arsuf, and the Knights Hospitaller.

144 Morgan, Chronicle, 51-8, 140.
relations were the rule and political relations the exception between them – and when political relations occurred, they were shallow and unsustained. Venice sought French help to reverse Greek rule in Constantinople (and their favoring of Genoa), and although there were short-term gains, this approach did not bear fruit in the long run. In the time of Charles VI and his ambitions for Italy, political relations would come to the fore. By this time – out of our period here – Venice would be a land power, and the fundamental dynamic would be changed.  

Conclusions

We can draw three conclusions from this discussion of Venice and France in the Fourth Crusade. First, a coherent image of Venetians emerges from these French or Frankish pens. It is the image of a people that are shrewd, highly skilled, and exacting. They have wealth and maritime expertise and live by commerce. Whether or not they merit our respect, they do not follow the chivalric code: they engage in trade and shrink from battle on land. They are a people apart. All five sources repeatedly make reference to “the pilgrims and the Venetians,” as if Venetians are some different kind of being, not quite pilgrims, not definable by any term except their name. Yet individually they do not have names. Significantly, not one of these five accounts – even the sympathetic ones – ever mentions a single Venetian name except the Doge. The Venetians are a homogenous, anonymous, peculiar race, operating very effectively by a different code from the French.

Secondly, that depiction had two sides: Venetians could be greedy, conniving, and treacherous, or they could be skilled, shrewd, and honorable. By a century after the Fourth Crusade, we have reason to believe that the second view and its darker cast had ascendancy over the first.

Finally, this dynamic was fueled, in small or large part, by two personal oppositions. In both cases one side is the family of Villehardouin, first the crusader-chronicler uncle, Geoffrey of Villehardouin, Marshal of Champagne and later Roumania, and later his nephew Geoffrey I of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia. The older Villehardouin battled for the soul of the Fourth Crusade against the religiously purist view Simon of Montfort. The younger Villehardouin fought Antelm for lands and indeed standards of civilization. In the first case, the Villehardouin held the better pen, but may yet have lost the long-term struggle for ascendancy, as contemporaries spurned his well-written account and clung instead to their own opinions born of personal experience. In the second case, Antelm held the pen, and his story, in particular the fabrication of the treacherous, was to prove astonishingly tenacious and long lived.

The image of Venice was strongly drawn in the Fourth Crusade by competing accounts of the astonishing enterprise. We can reconstruct little contemporary French demand for the pro-Venetian accounts and more – perhaps much more – for the anti-Venetian accounts with its negative image. Elements of that image were never to change.

146 Simon had allies, and the stories of how they might have reacted to Villehardouin’s account is tempting but too much for this paper. Suffice it to say that the stories of Odo of Champlitte, James of Avesnes, Peter of Amiens, Renaud of Montmirail, and others in this respect remain to be told.
CHAPTER THREE

BETWEEN CRUSADER RHETORIC AND HUMANISM, REPUBLICANISM AND MONARCHY:
FRENCH VIEWS OF VENICE FROM THE LEAGUE OF CAMBRAI ERA

Introduction¹

The three centuries between the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and the League of Cambrai in 1509 saw plague, war, political consolidation, religious tension, and the rise of the monarchy in France. The 1209 Albigensian Crusade and its aftermath saw the area around Toulouse come into the orbit of the increasingly assertive French crown, as did once-independent lands in the center, north, and west of present-day France. Chartres Cathedral was built in 1260. The Latin Empire collapsed the following year (although the Principality of Achaea lasted into the fifteenth century and its court of Andravida was regarded as the epitome of chivalry). The passing of the French throne to the Valois after the 1328 death of Charles IV rather than Edward III of England sparked conflict, escalating in 1337 into war between France and England, and during the so-called Hundred Years War the English claimed sometimes large French landholdings. The once influential Cluniacs were eclipsed in influence by the more severe Cistercians, who in turn and experienced the need for reform.

The struggle between France, the Empire, and the Papacy resulted in a period from 1309 to 1376 when seven Popes, all from areas associated with the French crown, resided in Avignon, keeping a court increasingly secular in its orientation. Tension between France and the Empire was also one cause of the Great Italian Wars, in which Venice, other Italian communes, and their

and the Papacy fought armies sent by France and the Empire over the Alps. In 1494 the armies of Charles VIII of France came to Italy at the invitation of the Sforza of Milan, moved through the peninsula unopposed, and sacked Naples, which at the time was affiliated with Aragon. Venice, with whom France had previously been allied, led a league to oppose the French; their supply lines cut off, the French retreated, though claiming victory at Fornovo. The French were back in 1499 to make good a claim in Milan, whose Sforza leadership had abandoned the French at Fornovo. French actions in 1500 and 1502 involved Naples, but in 1508 French displeasure against Venice for abandoning their alliance, coupled with pressure from the Pope and the Empire, caused France to join the League of Cambrai, the object of which was to restrain the seemingly unbridled growth of Venice. Despite a stunning victory over the Venetians at Agnadello in 1509, the League of Cambrai fell apart the following year when Pope Julius, fearing French power so close to home, went over to the side of the Venetians. The Papal-Venetian alliance was not successful against the French, and in 1511 Pope Julius called a Holy League that came to include the Spanish, the Empire, and the English on the Papal-Venetian side. Despite French victory at Ravenna in 1512, the French left Italy after the Swiss countered them in Milan and restored the Sforza to the throne. Post-war boundary disputes divided the Holy League, and Venice one again allied with the French, with whom they shared Lombardy in 1513. The Holy League fell apart at the death of Pope Julius in 1513, leaving northern Italy to France and Venice.

In Venice the years between the Fourth Crusade and Cambrai marked the ascent of Venetian expansion, wealth, and power. Capitalizing on its empire of harbors, Venice expanded and consolidated its trade infrastructure, advancing technique in shipbuilding, finance, and
diplomacy. Domestically, Venice’s republican system evolved gradually. Trade was served by a coordinated system of state convoys to accompany merchant ships to destinations that Venetian diplomats had cultivated, while contract laws were refined and rigorously upheld. Taxation was made efficient. Venice closed its aristocratic caste in 1297 but retained certain rights for the citizen class, and undertook other steps (guarantee of equal justice, cultivation of confraternities in which non-nobles took leading roles, maintenance of grain supply) to ensure domestic harmony. This included public health measures to cope with the plague that made periodic visitations and, in the crowded urban setting, took a particularly high toll. Factionalism was muted by a deliberately complex set of election procedures. Officially Catholic, Venice did not tolerate heresy among Venetians but permitted foreigners to practice their own religions, traded with the Turks, and resisted every attempt by the Papacy to gain any secular influence in Venice. The Council of Ten was established in 1310 to fight against any abuse of power by the nobles, and the elected office of the Doge became less independent and more ceremonial with every passing Doge.

The collapse of the Crusader kingdoms eventually forced the Venetians to ports in the Black Sea and thus into conflict with the Genoese there, with whom the Venetians fought four wars, the last of which was within sight of Venice, before the Venetians defeated Genoa for good. Turkish bellicosity in the east, and growing interest among the nobility for the landed lifestyle, caused Venice to turn west for trade. Venice became increasingly drawn into mainland politics, in part to eliminate troublesome powers that could jeopardize its food supply, in part to compensate for shrinking trade routes in the east, in part to control the all-important routes into Germany and Dalmatia. At the death of Doge Tommaso Mocenigo in 1423, the Venetian
empire consisted of what it called the *Stato da Mar* – the Istrian peninsula, much of Dalmatia, Crete, and islands and harbor holdings in the east – and the *Terraferma* regions closest to it, including Udine, Cividale, Feltre, Belluno and most of Friuli.

Many thought that Venice had reached its natural limits, but the advocates of expansion prevailed. This put Venice into conflict with the Italian powers and their ever-shifting alliances at the same time that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Turks threatened its eastern front. The cost of maintaining a far-flung imperial infrastructure under increasingly hostile circumstances and supporting Italian condottieri to fight its land wars pressed Venetian finances. Venice made peace with the Turks in 1479, but it was a peace frequently ruptured by conflict and expensive to maintain. In 1484 Venice’s moves westward into the Po Valley attracted the opposition of Italian and other powers; those dynamics were to lead, ten years later, to the French wars in Italy. Most importantly for Venice’s long-term viability, in the 1490s Venice began to see its central place in the trade chain vanish with the discovery of markets to the west and direct routes to markets in the east.

This summary of events between the Crusades and the beginning of the 16th century shows the shifting realities faced by the political entity that was coalescing into the monarchy of France, and those faced by the more mature political entity of Venice, long a republic and an eastern empire, now becoming a troubled western one as well. The relationship between the two, for the most part distant and utilitarian, took a sudden hostile turn during the complex set of conflicts known as the Wars of the League of Cambrai. One side effect of these was a large amount of French propaganda against Venice – propaganda that reached back to tenacious suspicions about the Venetians from the Crusading era and used their resonance to make new
points about virtuous political behavior. This propaganda, together with other French writings on Venice – some pro-Venetian, some evenhanded – is the topic of this chapter.

Overview of Texts

Of the many French texts on Venice that appeared during this eventful period, seven are presented here. Chronologically, they are as follows:

1. the *Songe du Vieil Pèlerin* by Philippe de Mézières, completed in 1389²;  
2. a spurious letter,³ allegedly written by a Turkish leader "Morbesan" (or “Morbasenne”) to Pope Nicholas V in 1453;  
3. the *Memoirs* of Philippe de Commynes, written between 1497 and 1501;  
4. *L'Entreprise de Venise* by Pierre Gringore, published in April 1508;  
5. *La Légende des Vénitiens* by Jean Lemaire de Belges, published in May 1509;  
6. the *Harangue* of Loüis Hélian, Ambassador of France, the text of a speech delivered in the presence of the Emperor Maximilian, the Electors, Princes, Prelates, and Deputies of the Cities of the Empire, in the Diet of Augsburg in 1510; and  
7. the anonymous *Description ou traicté du gouvernement et regyme de la cyté et Seigneurie de Venise*, commissioned by Louis Malet, lord of Graville, probably written between 1509 and 1519.⁴

The first and last of these works, the *Songe* and the *Traicté*, while separated by 130 years and different in style, are similar; both admiring works by French authors seeking to transfer good government practices from Venice to France. The second work, the “spurious

² I am grateful to Prof. Reinhold C. Mueller for calling my attention to de Mézières.  
³ See appendix for the text of this letter.  
letter,” is a forgery: in the tradition of the “treacherous treaty” of the last chapter, this clever work puts words in the mouth of an infidel foe to drive home a standard criticism of Venice. It was likely written by a mischievous European humanist at a court hostile to Venice. Commines’ Memoirs are noted for their forthright and skeptical observations by a working diplomat; he observed the Italian wars of Charles VIII from Venice, where he lived during much of them. For the most part, Commines admires Venice, but is very clear-eyed about its motivations. The remaining three works – one by a popular dramatist, one by a court poet, one by a working diplomat – are extremely, even hysterically, anti-Venetian.

1389 - Songe du Vieil Pèlerin by Philippe de Mézières

Philippe de Mézières (1327-1405), a minor noble of Picardy, was a traveler, soldier of fortune, reformer, crusade-urger, writer, mystic, advisor to kings, and Chancellor of Cyprus. His Songe du Vieil Pèlerin is an elaborate piece written for the rulers of Christendom, particularly the kings of England and France, urging peace, unity, and good governance so that the powers of Europe could come together in a successful Crusade. The crusade he urged was never to happen, with even Pope Urban V preferring peace with the Turks over crusade, and de Mézières died disappointed.

The work de Mézières left behind shows the mind of a sophisticated public administrator at work in the language of his time. One writer has called him a “pragmatic

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mystic.” 7 In language redolent of Dante,8 de Mézières gives an extended allegory of the virtues, vices, and hierarchies existing in the Europe of his time, with references to princes and well-known figures lightly disguised. The character Hardiesse, attendant of Justice, speaks for Venice. She gives an account of the public bank (or the idea of one9) with explanation of its workings and the admiration for its efficiency. By calling the French king’s attention to improvement in financial administration, de Mézières seeks to fortify the French king so that he might lead Europe from a position of strength.


1453 – Spurious letter from "Morbesan" to Pope Nicholas V

Shortly after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 a report circulated of a letter written by one Morbesan ("Morbassene"), a Turkish Sultan or general, to Pope Nicholas V. The letter, almost certainly a forgery by a European educated in the humanist tradition, castigates the Pope for inciting war against the Turks – criticizes the practice of indulgences – reminds the Pope of Christ's preference for peaceful over warlike methods – asks the Pope to cease his calls for Crusades – and asserts that, as admirers of Christ, the Turks harbor no religious antipathy for Christians. Most importantly for our purposes, the letter castigates the Venetians for having usurped the lands they hold without just title; for their tyranny; and for their pride in thinking themselves the greatest of the Italians. It also asserts that the Turks and other Italians share a Trojan ancestry not shared by the Venetians.

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10 “Morbasenne,” letter from “Morbasenne” to Pope Nicholas V, July 1453., Chroniques de Mathieu de Coussy, Collection des Chroniques Nationales Francaises, Ecrites en Langue Vulgaire, du Treizieme au Quinzieme Siecle, ed. J.-A. Buchon (Paris: Verdière, 1826): Ch. 74, 31-4, http://books.google.com/books?id=oGBSAAAACAAJ&dq=Morbasenne++Chronique+de+Mathieu+d%27Escouchy&s ourse=gbs_navalinks_s (accessed February 20, 2013); “Morbesan,” letter from “Morbesan” to Pope Nicholas V, June 1453, The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet; Containing an Account of the Cruel Civil Wars between the Houses of Orleans and Burgundy; of the Possession of Paris and Normandy by the English; Their Expulsion Thence; and of Other Memorable Events that Happened in the Kingdom of France, as Well as in Other Countries. A History of Fair Example, and of Great Profit to the French, Beginning at the Year MCCCC, where that of Sir John Froissart finishes, and ending at the Year MCCCLXVII, and continued by others to the Year MDXVI, trans. Thomas Johnes, (London: H.G. Bohn, 1849): vol., ch. 68, 233-4, http://books.google.com/books?id=mvo8AAAAIAAJ&pg (accessed February 20, 2013); Schwoebel, Coexistence, 168n. “The letter was probably composed at one of the courts hostile to Venice and its chief purpose seems to have been that of anti-Venetian propaganda.” The letter, with small variants, found its way into the chronicles of Mathieu de Coussy, Enguerrand de Monstrelet, and others. See appendix for text of letter.
1501 – *Memoirs of Philippe de Commines*\(^{11}\)

Books seven and eight of the *Memoirs* of Philippe de Commines, advisor to Louis XI and Charles VIII, were written between 1497 and 1501, a time when de Commines was advising Charles VIII in the context of the Italian wars. Most of the space in these two books is devoted to detailing the complicated negotiations between the French and the various Italian powers, but Commines does break the action to give us his views of Venice. It is in this digression that we have his famous description of Venice as “the most triumphant city that I have ever seen.”\(^{12}\) Generally his view of Venice and Venetians are positive; critics of Commines might say that his own somewhat cynical view would find resonance in Venetian institutions and practices.

1508 – *L’entreprise de Venise* by Pierre Gringore\(^{13}\)

Pierre Gringore was associated with the theater of the fraternity of Paris law clerks, the Basoche. The original theater produced by the Basoche and its affiliated companies were well attended by ordinary Parisians and university groups as well as the law clerks. This rendered Gringore a man with a platform unrelated to court patronage. However, unlike his predecessors and successors, Louis XII had a positive relationship with the Basoche. These factors were


among those that caused Louis to be referred to as *père du people*. Gringore reflected the preferences of his young male audience in supporting the King’s war against Venice.  

Gringore’s work is a lively denunciation clearly reflecting a dramatist at work. He addresses the Venetians directly, likening them to the barbarians of old, and accuses them of pride, dishonor, and usurpation. He lists all the powers and places ranged in opposition to the Venetians and exhorts them, “Tremble, tremble, bourgeois Venetians.” His poem lists of all the animals wishing to harm Venice – they are of course the porcupine of Louis XII, the eagle of the Empire, and the black lion of the Germans – and the array of weaponry that will be used against Venice. Gringore shows his attentiveness to his audience with his work’s color and energy and clever reinforcement of their popular prejudices.

**1509 – *La légende des venitiens* by Jean Lemaire de Belges**

While Gringore wrote his work in April 1508, just as the League of Cambrai was getting under way, that of Jean Lemaire de Belges was written in the heady aftermath of Venetian defeat by the French at Agnadello in May 1509. Lemaire was a different sort of writer from Gringore and his audience and purposes were different. His audience consisted of courtiers and court-watchers; he wishes to secure the patronage of the first and demonstrate his ability to

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17 *Ibid*. Gringore’s inclusion of the English leopard, when England was being courted to be part of the League, but did not ultimately join, speaks to the fact that this is an early work.
reach the latter. Unlike Gringore, who seeks to please a crowd, Lemaire names individuals he wishes to flatter or highlight. Gringore writes for a growing professional class, Lemaire for a small group of people clinging to old privilege. Lemaire’s piece is old-fashioned, seeking to conform to court protocol and respect court conventions.

Lemaire begins with Venetian “tyranny” and injustice within its own borders, then moves outward to its dealings against other “Christian princes,” and ends with an old theme: denunciation of the Venetians for their alleged alliance with the Turks.

1510 – *Harangue* by Loüis Hélian

The apotheosis of anti-Venetian rhetoric in this era is the *Harangue* delivered by French Ambassador Loüis Hélian at the diet of Augsburg convened by Emperor Maximilian I. The *Harangue* is just that: a screed, cataloguing at a highly emotional pitch every known complaint against the Venetians. Hélian was the French Ambassador to the Empire and made his speech at Augsburg in 1510 in an attempt to get the Emperor to support the anti-Venetian League of Cambrai.

Hélian’s themes are that Venice is prideful, lowborn, traitorous, greedy, unchristian. They are torturers, anti-German bigots, barbarians, perverts. They are not even human. They defile the cross. His style is impassioned – he sputters with indignation, carrying his work to an

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19 Norwich, *History*, 408-9. By April of 1510, when this speech was to have been given, Venice and the Pope had already concluded secret negotiations to ally against France.
emotional crescendo, and ends with a reference to his own death, as if carried off by the worthy effort of his righteous, breathless denunciation.

1509-19 – *Traicté du gouvernement et regyme de la cyté et Seigneurie de Venise* commissioned by Admiral Louis Malet de Graville

The seventh and last text is a work that is practical in its orientation and almost journalistic in its style. This *Traicté*, like de Mézières’ *Songe*, is a study of the institutions of Venice for the improvement of France. It is by an unknown author writing under the patronage of Louis Malet, lord of Graville, a very highly placed official who served Kings Charles VIII, Louis XI, and Louis XII. Unlike de Mézières, writing 130 years earlier, Graville’s anonymous amanuensis does not indulge in literary embellishment. In 116 chapters he describes Venetian institutions on many fronts: the Great Council, Doge, elections, and other political institutions; diplomacy and governance of cities under Venetian jurisdiction; the Venetian judiciary; the *monte*, taxation, and other fiscal institutions; religious institutions, including the *scuole*; the Lords of the Night and other police activities; the mint; and those institutions devoted to public health and welfare, the grainery, water and health authorities. Yet the greatest number of chapters – fully 31 – are dedicated to military matters, and most of these relate to ships – *navires, nez*, great galleys, “bastard” galleys. It seems clear that its author was engaged in straightforward fact-finding, responding to the desires of a patron with a particular interest in improving French naval capacity, and to that end quite naturally interested in studying the institutions of the pre-eminent European naval power.

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Graville’s author expresses a reticence about his assignment. In the Prologue\textsuperscript{21} he writes that he is writing as commanded on how the lords of Venice govern their city and those in their jurisdiction, and that the job is very difficult, almost impossible, because both modern and ancient authors have found great difficulty in describing Venetian institutions and laws, “so many as they are and of such perfection.” The author likewise caveats his own personal shortcomings, saying that he is really too ill for the job, but that he has decided to obey the orders because he wants to show goodwill towards his patron and that this is his last chance to please him, and if what he describes does not conform to reality, it can be attributed to the changing times; if it is too short, because he cannot remember everything; and if he is boring, because of his shortcomings in expression. Careful and shrewd, Graville disdained to have his opinion on facts shaped by anti-Venetian propaganda,\textsuperscript{22} and has commissioned an independent fact-finder of his own to gather intelligence about this power that would sometimes be France’s enemy, sometimes its ally.

We thus see that French writings on Venice from this era are widely diverse. Their authors range from serious fact-finders to propagandists for hire, their attitudes toward Venice range from flatteringly approving to hysterically critical, and their styles from thunderingly assertive to modest and understated.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{21} I am grateful to Jan Janis for her help in translating and understanding this prologue.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{22} Mueller and Braunstein, \textit{Venezia vista}, 89-90.}
Themes

My interest is in ascertaining which of these themes were to endure, and which to fade over time among French writers. To begin with, which themes carry over from the Crusading themes in the last chapter?

Greedy

Venetian greed remains a major theme, indeed so much so that it need only be suggested for the point to be made. When Gringore proclaims that “Always, in the end, one must give account,”23 that would surely have been understood as a subtle dig at the Venetian mercantile ethos. Hélian, on the other hand, is not subtle at all. “Such is their avarice, extreme as it is, that it is better to say nothing than to say too little,” he says, and asserts as evidence the rental price of the Fondaco de Tedeschi,24 the taxes with which Venetians “sully and charge their Subjects,”25 and the fact that Venetians “are engaged with the Bank, never the Militia.”26 Yet now the greed is perceived on a national rather than just a personal level. Venice, says Hélian, has made a “grand state from despoiling their neighbors... amassing in Venice all the gold, silver stones, walls, vases, statues, paintings; and last of all who have been able to find the most precious in all the places of the World, who they have left the mark of their avarice.”27

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24 Hélian, Harangue, 193.
25 Ibid., 206-7.
26 Ibid., 191.
27 Ibid., 206.
Lemaire recalls the Fourth Crusade as an example of Venetian avarice: Baldwin Count of Flanders and Hainault, Louis of Savoy, Boniface of Monferrat, and other princes went to Venice for ships for their Crusade; the Venetians had many waiting, but would not equip them until the Princes had promised to put Zara into their hands the city of Zara, compelling the princes against their wishes. “And thus,” concludes Lemaire, “more and more, the Venetians slipped out of the good opinion of Christendom, as they attempted to profit from them instead.”

**Unchivalrous**

Charges that Venice is unchivalrous appear to be dying out, perhaps because chivalry itself is no longer current in a post-Crusading Europe. Hélian’s lament that “They are engaged with the Bank, never the Militia; with the Merchandise, never with the Letters; and they are devotees of Mohamed, and not of Jesus Christ” seems a nod to the old chivalrous ethos, but we no longer have reports, for example, on that staple of chivalry, physical courage. The complaint of the mercantile rather than military lifestyle has shifted to complaints about greed, as noted above, and usurpation of what is not rightly theirs. The word “usurp” appears frequently in all the anti-Venetian accounts, and when explicated is found to be related to the right to occupy certain lands.

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Unchristian

The charge of Venice being unchristian has not abated, although there is more of a political tone than a religious one than we saw during the Crusading era; it appears to be less a question of Venice working against the Christian faith than of their working against their co-religionists, of retreating from the banner of Christendom. Lemaire caveats at the beginning of his work that “it doesn’t seem as if I give the history of a Christian people in these narrations [of early Venetian history], but it is necessary to say these things.”\(^{31}\) He accuses Venetians of “giving a sentence of death to the Most Christian King Charles the VIII\(^{th}\)” with a reward of 100,000 ducats, and six ducats to those that would bring the head of a Frenchman, and even priests and peasants of Lombardy,” prissily adding, “I regret that in my zeal for the truth I must descend into this abyss of odious material.”\(^{32}\)

In 1480 the Turks sacked the coast of Apulia and turned the city of Otranto into market for Christian slaves. As this occurred in the lower Adriatic – in other times called the “Gulf of Venice” – Venetian complicity was assumed. Lemaire bolsters this case with praise of Venetian naval strength, naming Antonio Grimani as “the captain of their army of the sea,” which patrolled “with all diligence the coast of Apulia and of Calabria, and that with all force recovered from the hands of the French that which they had taken.” He names the cities of Otranto and Brindisi, along with others, and says that “this was under the pretense of giving aid to King Fernand [of Naples] against the French, to recover the Kingdom of Naples; you see their


\(^{32}\) Ibid., 375.
accustomed practices."33 Lemaire claims that when the Turks took Apulia the Venetians had eight galleys in Zacynthe in port – and for the lack of this, 250 Christian creatures became slaves of the Turk.34

In Lemaire’s view, Venice is most irreverent to ecclesiastical dignity, out to exult the Turk and enfeeble Christianity. Venice’s many quarrels with the Papacy are, as Lemaire admits, easy to prove. He goes back to 1318 for disputes between Venetians and the patriarch in Goriza, who consigned them to eternal damnation, an excommunication by Pope Sixtus IV, and charges that the Venetians had the Archduke of Pisa strangled. Lemaire continues stories of Venetian usurpations against the Church in Italy, advancing the theme that opposition to the Papal States is unchristian.35 At the same time as Venetian relations with the Holy See are tense, relations seem to be friendly with the Turks. “I have seen two galleys,” Lamaire reports, “that take the ambassador of the Sultan to Venice. This same year, I have seen in Venice several Moors from Barbary, and ambassadors from the King of Tunis and of Turkey. This communication, and the familiarity of these people, don’t seem like bringing the fruits of war to Christendom.”36

33 Ibid., 382-3.
34 Ibid., 396.
35 Ibid., 383.
36 Ibid., 397-8.
Another theme that persists, indeed expands, is treachery. While Lemaire, as we have seen, is content to assign the Zara incident to Venetian greed, Hélian recalls the alleged “treacherous treaty” between the Venetians and the Sultan of Egypt, writing as follows:

Saladin Sultan of Egypt assieged Jerusalem. In the noise of this Siege, many Lords resolved to die for the defense of the Religion, coming to Venice with their troops, and renting Ships to pass on to Syria. The Venetians had received their silver in advance, pretending that the winds were contrary, and exposing all their Army to Dalmatia, to serve in reducing Zara and other Cities raised in this Province. Meanwhile, the Sultan took Jerusalem, not by the fault of the Christians, as many people imagined; but by the malice and the treason of the Venetians.

The intervening centuries since the Fourth Crusade have provided more evidence of Venetian treachery, related to Venetian acquisition of territories in both the east and *terraferma* Italy. Lemaire writes that the Venetians lured Maximilian I into Italy “with a thousand promises into Italy to fool,” while “the very Christian King, with royal instinct of high courage and magnanimity, had a horror of such excreable treason.” Lemaire goes on to say that the manner of Venice’s taking Ravenna “is well worth noting, for the great treason it represents”:

In this time there dominated at Ravenna a man named Obizzo de Polenta, who was a simple man, without malice. The Venetians lured him and his wife and son to Venice with the promise of a grand festivity, and they went with all their train;

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37 See previous chapter.

38 Hélian, *Harangue*, 201.

but their joy was short. They were kept hostage on the island of Crete, where they died.\footnote{Ibid., 378-9.}

Lemaire accuses Venice of usurping Cyprus in a “perverse and diabolical” plot.\footnote{Ibid., 375.} It is hard to make an account of Venice’s 1489 acquisition of Cyprus\footnote{Norwich, History, 364-8; Louis Mas Latrie, Histoire de l’île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan (Paris: l’Imprimerie Imperiale, 1861): vol. 3, 343-99, http://archive.org/details/histoiredellede01unkngoog (accessed February 21, 2013).} sound impartial. In its barest outlines, John II Lusignan was the legitimate king of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, Cyprus and Armenia. In the war of succession following his 1458 death, his 14-year-old daughter Charlotte and her husband, Louis of Savoy, succeeded to the throne of Cyprus. (The marriage between Charlotte and Louis had been brokered by Genoa in a bid to trump Venetian influence on the island.) John II also had an illegitimate son James II Lusignan, known as “James the Bastard.” With backing from the Sultan of Egypt, James the Bastard overthrew his half-sister and her French husband and became king in 1464. That same year, Marco Cornaro, a wealthy Venetian noble – with ties to Cyprus based on marriage, inheritance, lending to the crown, and over 200 years of family trade – arranged the marriage of his daughter Caterina with King James the Bastard. Then 14, Caterina was (in ceremonies of great pomp) married in Venice by surrogate, with the Cypriot ambassador standing in for James the Bastard, and declared a “Daughter of St. Mark.” Four years later, in 1472, she sailed to Cyprus to join her husband. The following year James died, leaving Caterina pregnant with a son, who also died shortly after birth.
thereafter. In the tense environment around the throne, both deaths were regarded as suspicious, but could just as well have been natural. Queen Caterina Cornaro had a contentious sixteen-year reign as sole monarch of the Kingdom of Cyprus, threatened on one side by the Genoese-backed Charlotte and Louis of Savoy, constantly plotting to regain the throne, and pressured on the other by her “father,” the Venetian Republic, represented by her male relatives, who urged her to resign in favor of the Republic. In 1489 Queen Caterina finally ceded sovereignty of Cyprus to Venice, in return for a fief in Asolo and the right to be regarded as “Queen of Cyprus” for life.

Not only does Lemaire accuse the Venetians of poisoning James and his son so that Venice could inherit Cyprus via their “daughter”; in Lemaire’s telling, Venice also is complicit in the original coup carried out by James against his sister and her French husband.43 Gringore, too, asserts that Savoy (that is, France) should rightly have inherited Cyprus, and to get it Venice took as a daughter a woman of Venice – this was an unnatural act, and “two natural children were detained in Padua as prisoners; you love too much your ducats.”44 Here we begin to see a new theme – Venetian unnaturalness – that will gather steam in the seventeenth century.

As the old forgery45 of the treacherous treaty is remembered, a new one is found. A spurious letter, allegedly written by a Turkish leader "Morbesan" to Pope Nicholas V in 1453, is

43 Lemaire, Légende, 379-80
44 Gringore, L’Entreprise, 153-4.
45 Gabriel Hanotaux, ”Les Venitiens ont-ils trahi la chretiente en 1202?” Revue historique 4 (1877): 74-102, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40937492 (accessed February 22, 2013). The treaty was conclusively disproved as a fake by Hanotaux. Hanotaux first cited the lack of contemporary evidence for such a treaty from Villehardouin and Clari. He then shows that the mercantile treaties that did between Venice and Egyptian Sultan Malek el-Adel, made available in 1856 by Tafel and Thomas, were undated, but assumed by Hopf to have been prior to the fourth Crusade. He finally shows how that dating would have been impossible, using detailed information about Sultan Malek el-Adel’s calendar, which shows that he could not have been in Cairo, where the treaties were executed,
circulated and makes its way into many collections. This very clever forgery puts complaints about the Venetians in the mouth of a Turk. Like the French writers (which “Morbesan” may well be), “Morbesan” complains about Venetian greed: "Through their pride and ambition, they have possessed themselves of many islands and other places that formed part of our government,—which usurpations we cannot and will not longer suffer." Like the other writers, “Morbesan” complains of Venice’s island acquisitions: “We also intend subjugating the island of Crete, and the others in that sea, of which the Venetians have robbed us by violence.” And with devious cunning, “Morbesan” knows to separate the identity of the Venetians from those of other Italians: “we know the Venetians to be a distinct people, in their manners and laws, from the Romans, although they think themselves superior to all the world.”

Proud

Pride is a new theme, and one that had particular resonance for the French at this time. We have already seen, in the person of Louis XII and his admiral Graville, the efforts put forth by the French crown and its diligent servants to bring French systems up to date with the best practices in order to defend and extend its borders. This was part of a larger centralization of

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46 “Morbesan,” Letter, 234.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

the entire realm so as to put its power and resources behind the monarchy, and thus to support these improvements. Buttressing the prestige of the monarchy was important to this, and contrasting French monarchy with Venetian republicanism was a powerful tool for French pamphleteers:

In the course of this pamphlet war a set of images of the French monarch was elaborated, an ideal of French history was developed, and the contest between France and Venice was transformed into a much larger contrast between monarchy and republicanism. The events leading up to Agnadello as well as the battle itself were magnified to assume the significance of a climactic and definitive test of strength between two competing political systems and, what is more, two competing attitudes towards history, political morality, and civic virtue. In the course of explaining Agnadello, Louis XII’s publicists addressed themselves to the old project of establishing the basis for an historical, political, and cultural unity among Frenchmen; a unity for which the king and monarchy in general were to be the symbols.50

In this epic battle between monarchy and republicanism, French propagandists were keen to show Venetians as proud, and proud as bad. They did not disappoint. “You have been too long without a lord in your land,” warned Gingore darkly, “and your pride will be brought low by war.”51 Hélian derided the cherished Venetian ritual of the wedding of the sea:

It is an unheard of thing, to espouse the Elements. The History you learn of the Tyrians, the Carthaginians, the Rhodiens, the Athenians, the Romans, and the famous King Xerxes have all been great powers of the Sea, and very skilled in Marine science, as today are the Genoese; but you never hear a single Prince, nor a single Republic, having the vanity or the temerity to espouse the sea. Here are the Venetians capable of a great folly and of such arrogance.”52


51 Gringore, L’Entreprise 146-7.

52 Hélian, Harangue, 187-8.
By contrasting the Venetians with the ancient seafaring cultures, and having them come up short, Hélian both attacks their pride and excludes them from the elite company of the ancients so valued by the humanists of the time.

Lowborn

This brings us to the humanist phenomenon of the widespread claim of Trojan ancestry by European powers. The vaguer claims made in prior centuries have matured and been made more specific.\(^{53}\) France claimed descent from Priam,\(^{54}\) Padua Antenor\(^{55}\), and Genoa from the Trojan prince named Janus.\(^{56}\) Venice goes a different route in its mythologizing, first subtly delineating its reputed Trojan ancestry, and then repudiating it altogether.\(^{57}\) The delineation comes with the 1292 Chronicle of Marco, which seems to distance Venice from using Trojan origins as a warrant for imperialism, stressing rather the building of Venice from unoccupied land, or perhaps even non-existent land, as they reportedly “built their own ground out of earth and timber.”\(^{58}\) Thus their origins came not from conquest but from building anew, and not from


\(^{56}\) Ibid., 63-88.


\(^{58}\) Ibid., 100.
general-led military victory but rather from egalitarian work. As such, the chronicler diminishes the role of Antenor, whom he has visit Venice after its collective founding. The careful selection of site and land reclamation suggest government by collaboration rather than proclamation. Antenor comes to Venice but does not stay, the implication being that this sort of government was not hospitable to monarchy. Indeed, the fact that Antenor had been a Greek captive for five years, and the Trojan founders of Venice had not, compromised his level of freedom in comparison to theirs.

By 1543, Gasparo Contarini, in his archetypal representation of the myth of Venice, gives new circumspection to the founding legends. In his more evidence-oriented era, fanciful Trojan stories without proof could not be asserted with credibility. Rather, Contarini uses the very absence of material proof to demonstrate the nature of Venetian origins: “The nobility of the Venetians is linked to their ancestors for their consenting desire to establish, honour and amplify their country, without having the least regard of their own private glory.”

Within this context we can better understand the references to Trojan ancestry made in the Cambrai-era works. “Morbesan” makes clever use of Trojan elements to flatter the French and alienate the Venetians:

We marvel, therefore, and grieve, that the Italians should be our enemies, —for we are naturally inclined to be attached to them, as being, like to ourselves, of the issue of the trojan race, and of ancient birth. We are sprung from the same blood, and regularly descended from king Priam and his line; and it is our

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intention to advance with our armies to those parts of Europe that have been promised to us by the gods of our forefathers. We have also the intention of restoring Troy the great, and to avenge the blood of Hector and the queen Ixion [Hecuba], by subjecting to our government the empire of Greece and punishing the descendants of the transgressors.  

As we know “Morbesan” to be, in fact, a European writing from a court hostile to the Venetians – and one steeped in the coded humanism of the time – this text is easily understood as a propaganda to celebrate the French and put down the Venetians. We need, however, one more piece of information in order to decipher fully the “ballade,” steeped in Trojan references, with which Lemaire ends his Légende. The third stanza begins

And now one sees the reflorescence of Troy
By Francion, or Francus son of Hector...  

This much is straightforward: the son of Hector whose name begins with “Fr” will “reflourish” Troy. But what are we to make of the line, repeated seven times, “Now is Priam avenged on Antenor”? Priam is clearly France. We know Antenor to signify Padua. Where does Venice come in? The answer is found in a rewriting of the legend of Venetian origins that we first see written in a 1612 work but must have had currency in the era of the League of Cambrai. That rewriting holds that Venice, so proud of its independent origins, was actually a Paduan colony – it’s seaport. The notion of Venice as the service entrance to the city it

61 See note 10.
62 Lemaire, Légende, 400.
63 See note 55.
64 See next chapter for treatment of the Examen de la liberté originaire de Venise.
regarded as its educational annex would have been particular galling to the proud Venetian sensibility.

In this culture of high humanism, ties to the ancient world, particularly the Roman empire, with its tangible remains, is important. Here Venice is particularly vulnerable, being clearly not a Roman city.\(^65\) Gringore puts Venice’s founding as when inhabitants from cities, castles, towns, and villages, despite danger and inconvenience, fled to the marshy islands, in the shadow of beautiful, elegant Aquileia.\(^66\) Hélian will have it both ways: Venetians are both creatures of the mud – “They choose for their ambassadors the Senators full of ruses and artifices, who trick and trap Foreign Princes, as the Fish and the Birds”\(^67\) – and yet too sinister for this simple origin:

> a race of people fleeing from the excrement of all Nations, retired into the Swamps of Venice and live among their fish, and then the Fishermen have become Resellers, and the resellers Pilots, and the Pilots Merchants, and they finally become the Lords of Cities and Provinces by their larceny, their murders, their poisonings, and by all their other detestable crimes? You might believe it, Most Serene Princes, but you would believe trickery.\(^68\)


\(^{67}\) Hélian, *Harangue*, 181.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 186.
Ungovernable

Another new theme that is thoroughly exploited by Gringore, Lemaire, and Hélian is Venetian republicanism and ungovernability. This was a theme near to the heart of the monarchy and thus remunerative for patronage-seeking writers. Gringore tells the Venetians, "You are sheep without a shepherd, badly counseled, badly taught." Lemaire uses examples of Venetians disciplining their leaders to conclude, "you can see the beautiful reverence in which they hold their Doge, and those of his house, and his blood." He terms this arbitrary tyranny, without foundation in reason, and extends it to the rest of the government, so that captains are executed for minor causes, like Carmignola, or thrown in prison, like Pisani, or exiled, like Grimani. In his view the of Constantinople is what comes of "not recognizing any pope, any emperor, any Christian prince."  

Decadent

A final theme we begin to see – and will see more in the next era – is Venetian debauchery. Hélian writes,"I don’t pretend to tell you anything new about their horrible gourmandizing, nor their infamous debauchery. If you want to know something of their unnatural pleasures, one has only to glance at a group of pimps, and an entire nation of Whores and Wretches, without distinction of sex, age, or family, and no respect for religion."  

69 Gringore, L’Enterprise, 146-7.  
70 Lemaire, Légende, 367-70.  
71 Ibid., 393.  
72 Hélian, Harangue, 193.
Given these denunciations, it is not surprising that, shortly after the Cambrai era, Venice would abandon its earlier policy of ignoring what was said in other countries, and appoint a literary censor. In 1516, a bill was passed in Venice. The prologue said “we know without any doubt and alteration of the truth, that written events regarding happenings are very descriptive and have major elucidatory power.” Referring “the Roman rulers of the world,” they recalled writers “never holding back on praise to the Republic and never compromising on the possible gains to be achieved,” and also to the work of Sabellico, who “always recognized the endeavors of our Republic, until the end of the war with Ferrara in our times. And from the successes, many noteworthy writings from the cities followed, rightfully produced, so that the memory of historical facts would not be forgotten.” With this careful background, the law appoints

our gifted, noble Andrea Navagero de S. Bernardo who is the expert on Latin and Greek literature and on the style of such, to be the judge of all writings in Italy and elsewhere.... Moreover, he will have, in addition, the responsibility that Italy is not criticized in all the important cities of the world. Also, in the uncivilized world, it should demanded, in accordance with our public honor, that our literary works on humanity be accepted by the most learned authorities.

The law further imposed a penalty of 300 ducats for each work contrary to the standards as mandated by the State with our censor being the accuser. The law – departing from the long tradition of toleration – was passed, twelve votes to four. In the next chapter we will see its application.

Conclusion

Anti-Venetian notions from the crusading era – that Venetians were greedy, unchivalrous, unchristian, and treacherous – showed a tenacious persistence three centuries later. These charges would be, with printing technology, be refined and amplified for a larger audience in the era of the League of Cambrai. Gringore, the energetic populist, and Lemaire, the elegant courtier, each served their respective audiences with largely overlapping themes. Hélian the rhetorician pulls everything together into one vitriolic hole, often putting multiple negative charges against Venice in a single sentence. At the climax of his speech, Hélian’s denunciation of Venetian evil is so complete that he cannot even regard them as human:

As these Republicans are neither Turks, nor Christians, they make a third Sect, and takes a milieu between the good and the bad Angels; they are neither of the Sky, neither of the Inferno; they are the Werewolfs and the Evil Spirits, who want the night by the houses, who excite the storms and the tempests on the Sea against those who navigate; asseiging the poor Laborers through hail, and entering the Human Body through torment. They are only rich in the misery of others, and all that they could is come through the violence and through the injustice.74

To a lesser but increasing extent, French writers would also follow the *Traicté* of Graville’s anonymous author, in listing the positive attributes of Venice, either for the benefit of the French state or the growing number of individual travelers. The geographer Pierre d’Avity would describe Venetian institutions approvingly in his 1615 *Estates, empires, & principallities*,75 but the treatment he gave to Venice was superficial. It shocked his translator:


75 Pierre d’ Avity, sieur de Montmartin, *The estates, empires, & principallities of the world Represented by ye description of countries, maners of inhabitants, riches of proviences, forces, government, religion; and the princes that have gouerned in every estate. With the begin[n]ing of all militarie and religious orders. Translated out of
D’Avity’s plan is enough to appall any writer, no matter how diligent. It is evident that a work constructed upon the principle of including almost everything that man ought to know about the world in which he lives can hardly be other than a medley of incongruous information.\(^\text{76}\)

D’Avity shows that, one century after the League of Cambrai propaganda, it was entirely possible for a bland account of Venice to emerge from a French pen. Indeed, we to see with d’Avity one step in the long evolution from didactic history to guidebook.

To conclude this chapter we will again move forward in time, to 1699, and another attempt by a Frenchman to write something comprehensive yet inoffensive about Venice: Alexandre Toussaint Limojon de Saint-Didier’s *La ville et la république de Venise*.\(^\text{77}\) Limojon had served as secretary to the French Ambassador in Venice, and believed that it was “not less important to shew the Maxims of the Republick, and the Genius of this People, than the most refined Argument that can be made upon the Policy of their Government.”\(^\text{78}\) The modesty of Limojon’s concept of his work can be shown by the names of its three divisions: Part 1, “the advantageous Situation of Venice, and its most remarkable sights”; Part II, “the Origin of the Republic of Venice, and the form of its Government”; and Part III, “the mores and manners of life among Gentlemen and Gentlewomen of Venice, and of other persons, secular and religious.” Limojon’s commitment to editorial blandness may have stemmed from his

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\(^{76}\) Ibid., 328.


\(^{78}\) Limojon, *City and republic*, n.p.
temperament, or his political and social ambitions. In any event, his book has not attracted the attention of the ages. One paragraph, however, serves our purposes here:

[I]t hapned that the Author of the History of the Government of Venice, who was employed in the preceding Embassy, did likewise resolve upon a Design much like to mine.... As I know not the Author, so I am not possess'd with any partiality to speak either well or ill of him: Yet as I am able to judge of his Book with more assurance, than they less conversant with the Affairs of this City; so I think my self oblig'd to say he hath penetrated into all the Mysteries of the Venetian Republique, upon which subject scarce any thing hath escap'd his Enquiries: But I leave others to judge if he hath not shewn too much Passion, as likewise what reason the Republick had to complain of him.

Limojon’s predecessor in the French embassy at Venice had indeed “shewn too much Passion,” at least for his own security and comfort. He was the author that would, more than any other, shape future views of Venice, both for French-speaking audiences and others: Amelot de la Houssaie.
CHAPTER FOUR

BETWEEN HUMANISM AND ENLIGHTENMENT:
FRENCH VIEWS OF VENICE FROM THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Introduction

In 1599, on the eve of the seventeenth century, Lewis Lewkenor published his translation of Contarini’s *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum*, with “sundry other Collections, annexed by the Translator for the more cleere and exact satisfaction of the Reader,” and a short history of Venice under each doge.\(^1\) With this work Lewkenor inaugurated a century of publications on Venice that were to reflect a new set of cultural and geo-political realities, in which Venice was to serve as a contested image of good and bad governance.

During the 133 years between the publication of Contarini’s *Magistratibus* in 1543 and 1676, when Amelot first published his *Histoire*, Europe experience political spasms, religious struggle, and intellectual growing pains through which the humanism of Contarini’s time became enlightenment, the thinking for oneself that was to feed revolution in England, France, and, belatedly, in Italy itself. In England, the Stuart kings James and Charles I had proven unable to extend the long *Pax Gloriana* of Elizabeth. With Cromwell came parliamentary and military rule and, in 1649, regicide. Meanwhile the religious tension of an Anglicansim too Protestant for the Catholics and too Popish for the Puritans led to a decade of religious experimentation.

The restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, and the easing out of his successor James II in 1688 in the so-called Glorious (because nearly bloodless) Revolution, led England to a hard-won sense of stability – at least internally.

In France, Henry III (whose state visit to Venice in 1574 was an archetype of Venetian propaganda in motion) was assassinated in 1589 and succeeded by Henry IV, whose Edict of Nantes was to prove a bridge too far over the roiling religious tensions felt in France, as it was in every European nation. His successors Louis XIII and Louis XIV maintained the court as center of the cultural firmament, fueling the glory of French art, architecture, and performance, and the addicting the French fisc to cancerous taxation. Royal ministers Richelieu and Mazarin used every tool at their disposal to further the centralization of the monarchy of France, including an ambitious cultural program. Colbert continued these propaganda efforts, and advanced the military capacity necessary to expand at the expense of weaker neighbors and defend against stronger ones.

Such, at that time, was Spain. After 1506 the House of Hapsburg united rule of the Spanish Empire with that of the Austrian, and rendered Charles V the most powerful man in Europe; but this did not spare him ruinously expensive wars and the corrosive cost of cultural imperialism. Even the silver that poured in from its colonies led not to wealth but to inflation and ultimately economic exhaustion.

From the Defenestration of Prague in 1618 to the bitterly negotiated Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, Germany and the Empire endured the 30 Years War, one outcome of which was the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* – he that ruled would decide the state religion, as determined in the 1555 Peace of Augsburg.
The Papacy’s long-delayed response to the reformation urges of its own members and Martin Luther’s Protestant breakaways came in a council held between 1545 to 1563 primarily at Trent, a town of usefully vague heritage, being Italian speaking but part of the German political orbit.\(^2\) The uneasiness behind the face of Catholic unity manifested itself in the increasingly desperate calls for a Catholic league to defeat the Ottomans. The fleeting, glorious moment of Catholic unity at Lepanto in 1571 was not to be repeated. The “Holy League” that defeated the Ottomans at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, marking the western-most extent of the Ottomans in central Europe, had just two parties, the Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Events in Venetian history during this period signal loss and retrenchment by a state politically and economically weakened. Post-Cambrai Venice experienced the Hapsburg vise, the ascent of the Ottomans, and political isolation from rest of Europe, even while its popularity as a tourist destination grew. Domestically we observe civic decline, ennui, and an almost millennial sense of *carpe diem*. From 1530-64 Venice was at peace with the Turks,\(^3\) the end of which was marked by the loss of Cyprus in 1570, ending 81 years of occupation of that optimally located stronghold, whose acquisition had cost Venice dearly in the court of public


opinion a century before. The 1571 Battle of Lepanto saw a Catholic alliance of Venice, Spain, and the Papacy, led by the bastard hero Don John of Austria, defeat the Turkish fleet. This moment of glory was all too soon over, with no follow up, despite Venetian pleading. The 1573 treaty with the Turks might have seemed inevitable from the Venetian perspective, but led to resurgence of the centuries-old charge of treachery.

It was a fearful age. Explosion in the Arsenal in 1569, and fires in Doge’s Palace in 1574 and 1583, left physical damage quickly repaired (and in the case of the Doges’ Palace, with its propagandistic decoration program updated and sharpened), but the psychological cost lingered. These events must have compounded the notion of a republic under siege. The Interdict controversy between Venice and Pope Paul V of 1606-7, and the so-called “Spanish Conspiracy” of 1616-18 are part of the story of this chapter. Venice prevailed in both, but while the former earned Venice the admiration of Europe, the latter did not; indeed, its particulars were to become raw material for lurid anti-Venetian stories centuries later.

It was in this stew of religious, economic, military and political tension that a series of writers – French, Venetian, and English – were to cast Venice in varying and competing lights. Their images were to have lasting impact, in sometimes unexpected ways.

Amelot: Origins and First Publication

Abraham-Nicolas Amelot, Sieur de la Houssaie⁴ (1634-1706) was born in Orleans. He studied at the Jesuit College there, where he earned room and board as an almoner by

performing low-level work such as drilling the students in their studies and making copies by hand. He moved to Paris and studied at the Sorbonne for a time, during which he took theology from Gaston Chamillart. Amelot’s Jesuit education was to serve him well. He was a linguist and a critical thinker, two skills which were to serve him throughout his stormy career.

Amelot left a substantial legal record; this, coupled with remarks taken from his writings leave the impression of a brilliant, unpleasant man, impulsive and irascible in youth, who took a reflective turn in old age. Around 1666 he was recommended by the Jesuits to serve as second secretary to the French embassy in Portugal, and from there was sent to the more important French embassy in Venice. His promising embassy career ended when he was discovered to have stolen both objects and documents in Lisbon. Notified of his young secretary’s thievery, the Venetian ambassador dismissed him, but rather than sending him home, simply relieved him of duties dispatched him to the Venetian library “to find as many documents as he wanted for his commerce [in illicit documents]”, the implication being that his French masters had no issue with his habit of theft as long as his victims were Venetian, not

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6 Ibid.

7 It is possible to see the influence of Jesuit Ignatian teaching on Amelot’s works in several ways. One is his use of word choice, signaled by his translation of the Italian word *squintio* as *examen*, which is a central Jesuit concept and also a prayer, and his use of the word *discerner*, an important Jesuit concept, twice as frequently as Nani and Contarini used its Italian form, and ten times more frequently than Sarpi did. Amelot’s fellow Frenchman and refuter Casimir Freschot did not use the word *discerner* at all. Another suggestion of Jesuit influence is discussed below.

8 E.g., the prefaces to his *Letres de Cardinal d’Ossat* and *Homelies Teologiques et Morales de Palafox*.

9 Soll, *Publishing the Prince*, 11. From a letter written by the Marquis de Seignelay to the king.
French. Under these inauspicious circumstances Amelot found his true calling: unearthing
documents that would reveal statecraft from the inside.

Amelot turns up next in 1670 in Paris, where Frederic Leonard (1624-1712), printer to the
king, publishes an anonymous work later revealed to have been written by Amelot. It is a
compilation of the records of a recent trial, clearly written to sell books with the recapitulation
of a sensationalistic accusation; yet it also shows some sympathy for the accused as a dignified
and perhaps innocent man. It is a work that appeals to popular anti-Semitism: the trial in
question was for the murder by a Jew of a Christian child, allegedly to use his blood for a
religious ritual. The work ends with the execution of the peddler. Although the reader is left
with uncertainty as to the guilt of the peddler, the existence of the ritual practice is assumed.

This despicable charge made by a Christian wheelwright against a Jewish peddler comes
in the context of a broader tension. Two years prior, Louis the XIV had come to Metz with a trail
of nobles, visited the synagogue and Jewish ghetto, and then reconfirmed privileges granted to
the Jewish community by his father and Henri IV before him, extending those privileges to
encompass even greater rights to trade. The ostentatious attention to a disliked minority must
have rankled, with its undertone of the monarch undermining local custom and practice. More
specifically, the extended trade privileges had been opposed by the Christian majority, most
notably the butchers who had made unsuccessful formal complaint at the time.10

Amelot, having so early in his life burned two bridges to career opportunity – the French
diplomatic service and the influential Jesuit fathers who had recommended him – appreciated

10 Joseph Reinach, Raphaël Lévy: Une Erreur Judiciaire sous Louis XIV (Paris: Librarie Delagrave, 1898): 10-
11, http://books.google.com/books/about/Rapha%C3%A9l_L%C3%A9vy.html?id=u2RBAAAAAYAAJ (accessed March
7, 2013).
the bookselling potential for an account such a lurid charge. This much would have been obvious to any publisher. But it was Amelot the voracious reader – and sometimes unscrupulous obtainer – of official records that saw more potential for this material. And it was Amelot the author that shaped the material into a work that transcends the character of shallow caricature. As Shakespeare had done in the Merchant of Venice eighty years before, Amelot told a story that, along one line, pandered to the stereotypes of anti-semitism rampant in his society, while along the other drew out the humanity of his Jewish protagonist, and the weakness and cruelty of his Christian persecutors\textsuperscript{11}.

After the execution of the unfortunate and probably innocent peddler, the trial came to the attention of the King, not doubt in part from Amelot’s book. He held a royal inquiry that resulted in the dismissal of charges pending against two other Jews. Key to their defense was the involvement of two men who took up the case not for humanitarian but professional reasons. One was Richard Simon, an Oratorian priest and biblical scholar. Simon used the case to publicize his case against the so-called blood libel, which Amelot had casually traced to the book of Exodus. “Naturally they are a miserable race, and hate us mortally, but we have to prove to them we follow Christ’s injunction to love our neighbor,”\textsuperscript{12} he wrote in explanation of his action, although it seems professional ambition more than Christian love was Simon’s own motivation. The other was Louvois, Louis XIV’s minister of war. Louvois was known for his dedication in making the army run more efficiently, particularly in provisioning the fighting men

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 13-5, 15-6. The work cites testimony from the trial that introduce in the reader’s mind questions about the circumstances of the child’s disappearance, e.g., Was the mother negligent? Did she embellish her testimony to cover up her negligence? Ultimately it was determined likely that the child wandered into the woods and was attacked by wild animals.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 35-6.
as well as possible. Louvois noted that the horses and other goods provided by the Jewish merchants in Alsace were cheaper and of better quality than those provided by other vendors. The presence a large, competitive trading community served Louvois’s interests, and he did not want to see it diminished for any reason. His interest helped to get the case reopened. Both Simon and Louvois will reappear in Amelot’s life story.

Although the market for the book would have been great in light of these events, it was not reprinted. Perhaps Amelot feared that further attention would uncover his identity, when his establishment in a paying occupation was yet so tenuous; perhaps Frederic Leonard regretted having published something opposed by someone as important as the minister of war. In any event, the book quickly became “fort rare.”

Although this was Amelot’s only venture into crime literature, several features of this publishing project would continue to be present in his future work. The first was his partnership with Frederic Leonard. The second was his ability to work quickly to exploit timely public interest in a work. The third, and most important, was his ability to turn official records into compelling works that bore his own stamp of relentless scrutiny.

A career that began opportunistically was soon to take on the nature of a mission. Amelot would become the obtainer, editor, and commentator on state documents that would enable his readers to see behind the veil of officialdom. Ultimately he would perfect the art of

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13 Ibid., 62-3.

14 Viallon-Schoneveld, Amelot, 337.

15 Ibid., 334. This relationship had personal as well as professional elements. We know from a lawsuit filed by the family of her late husband that Frederic Leonard’s daughter, Marguerite, was close to Amelot. The family alleged that Marguerite carried on an adulterous relationship with Amelot during the last year of her husband’s life.
using a famous title as the carrier for his own thoughts. As Jacob Soll has argued persuasively\textsuperscript{16}, Amelot was the author of the works he edited. The most reprinted of those include his editions of Tacitus, Gracian, and Machiavelli, the last of whom has rendered Amelot one of the most reprinted editors of all time. In taking considerations of state out of the royal chambers and into the private library and public café, Amelot would anticipate by a century Immanuel Kant’s exhortation\textsuperscript{17} “Think for yourself!”

\textit{Histoire du gouvernement de Venise}

It was Amelot’s second editorial venture that involved Venice. His original \textit{Histoire du gouvernement de Venise}, its three follow-on works, and the histories, novels, plays, and operas they inspired, would make him the most influential French voice on Venice, of his own or any time.\textsuperscript{18}

The \textit{Histoire} first appeared in 1676. What Amelot purported to do in his \textit{Histoire} was, he claimed, something new: he would use an abundance of material – “letters, memoirs, relations, ancient annals, and principally the Instructions he received at the very source, when I had the honor of being employed in the Affaires of the Ambassador of France to Venice”\textsuperscript{19} – to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[16] Soll, \textit{Publishing the Prince}, 112. And visually: Soll’s book includes on page112 a compelling depiction of one page of Amelot’s Tacitus, in which there is a little bit of Tacitus surrounded by a great deal of Amelot.
\item[17] In \textit{What is Enlightenment}?
\item[18] Amelot’s influence on nineteenth century authors, and the persistence of their stereotypes of Venice, are treated in the following chapter.
\end{footnotes}
help the French understand Venice. Not only would he clarify peculiarities so confusing to
visitors, like the Great Council's voting procedures; he would show Venetian institutions, like
the Council of Ten, "au natural." He did not fear that anyone would accuse him of hatred or
sourness against Venice, which he had no reason to hate, because he was using reliable
sources, and furthermore because "these Republicans, like the rest of mankind, are a mix of
good and bad, and I neither cut nor extend their praise and the glory of their good actions. I
have no need to defend myself." Yet he had taken the precaution of dedicating his work to a
powerful patron: the same Louvois who had taken such an unexpected interest in the subject of
his first book.

Amelot divided his Histoire into three parts. In the first he talked about the Great
Council, the laws, the College, the Senate, and the relationships Venice had with other powers,
in the second the Doge and magistracies. These sections of the book mirror other works on
Venice20 in organization and stated subject matter. The third part is more original. It begins

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20 Contarini, Commonwealth; Pierre d'Avity, sieur de Montmartin, The estates, empires, & principallities of
the world Represented by ye description of countries, maners of inhabitants, riches of prouinces, forces,
government, religion; and the princes that have governed in every estate. With the begin[n]ing of all militarie and
religious orders. Translated out of French by Edw: Grimstone, sargeant at armes (London: Printed by Adam Islip for
Mathew Lownes and John Bill, 1615),

survey of the signorie of Venice, of her admired policy, and method of government, etc. : With a cothoration to all
Christian princes to resent her dangerous condition at present, (London: Printed for Richard Lowndes at the White
Lion in S. Pauls Churchyard, near the West end, 1651),

de Saint-Didier, The City and Republicke of Venice. In Three Parts. Originally Written in French by Monsieur De S.

http://books.google.com/books?id=uf8ItwAAACAJ&dq=inauthor:%22Alexandre-Toussaint+Limojon+de+Saint-
Didier%22+1699&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TqfMUKvICCom50QHq7YDgCg&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA (accessed March 6, 2013).

Contarini’s work (originally De magistratibus et republica Venetorum, first published in 1543), generally
considered to be the apotheosis of the myth of Venice, begins with the location and origins of the city,
with a long discourse on the Inquisition of Venice, in which he treats the famously fraught relationship between Venice and Rome. It moves on to a “Discourse on the Causes of the Decadence of the Republic of Venice,” the very title of which would scandalize Venetian patriots, and the content of which does not disappoint; and it ends with a section on the “Mores and Maxims” of the Venetians.

Unlike most works written by Venetians themselves, or by authors content to accept the Venetian version of their customs, Amelot’s *Histoire* contains unflattering material at virtually every turn. In the section on the Great Council, Amelot writes of “abuses in the Elections and Judgments of this Council, where all goes according to the caprice and ignorance of the young people,” and “the Venality of the balloting is a great evil, the rich buying the votes of the poor.” In the section on ambassadors, he writes that some are negligent of their duties. In the section on the Doge he writes that “the Venetians do not want a Doge of sublime spirit... but prefer a mediocre man.”

Amelot does not neglect to point out the successes and special aspects of Venetian government or the wisdom of its many of its customs. He gives the positive and negative both. then moves to the Great Council, the Doge, the Senate, the Council of Ten, the judiciary, other magistracies, and the terraferma government. D’Avity’s work, in which Venice is one section among many, also begins with location and origins, then moves to manners, riches, “forces” (military), and government – Great Council, Senate, College, Doge, Council of Ten, judiciary, other magistracies – religion, and a brief history, Doge by Doge. Howell describes the magistracies and physical places of Venice, then gives a history from the first doge to 1605, with a great deal of attention to Lepanto; then, although there is no official break, a long discourse on the interdict. Limojon gives first “the advantageous situation of Venice” and its most remarkable features, then its origins and government, finally its mores, manners, and public diversions.


22 Ibid., 130.

23 Ibid., 161.
Indeed he begins with the flat assertion that “the Government of Venice is without contradiction the most beautiful in Europe of its type, because it is a faithful copy of the ancient Republics of Greece, and because of its assemblage of the most excellent Laws.” He goes on to say that other writers have dealt with this before – he names Contarini and Sansovini – but they have only given surface descriptions, touching them only in passing, far from probing the depths of the mysteries of the Venetian government and “domination of this Nobility.” Amelot asserts that his work will be a deeper interpretation, giving for the first time “satisfaction to honest people” on this subject.24

The approach Amelot often uses is to describe a particular institution in its ideal state – often with references to Rome, Sparta, or Lacedemon – and then give its actual working state, citing archival evidence or simply asserting what he has picked up firsthand from his presence in Venice. A typical example is his description of the role played by men of the nobility in the Republic:

All the Nobles are subject to the Laws of age, and must wait the right number of years, and commence their course of government service with small Magistratures, as they say sin dalle ultime mosse, taking their careers step by step. Thus one does not take on great Charges until a certain age, no more than at Lacedemon, where one had to be old to arrive at honors. From here comes the Proverbe, only in Sparta is it good to grow old. This is the symbolism of the Basket of Medlars25 covered with straw one sees at the entrance to the grand Stairway of St. Mark where one goes up to the Great Council and the Pregadi: just as the Medlars ripen in straw, so in the same spirit must the Young wait until they have had enough experience and merit to enter the Government. It is thus

24 Ibid., 1-2.

25 An obscure type of fruit. “The uniqueness of the fruit comes from the fact that it must be nearly rotten to be edible….The process of ‘ripening’ the fruit is referred to as bletting which takes 2 to 3 weeks in storage. The fruit becomes soft, mushy brown, sweet and tasty with a flavor described as close to cinnamon applesauce.” From http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/376/.
a good policy to have the Nobles pass by degrees from Tribunal to Tribunal, and learn from a perpetual emulation a spirit of service to the Country and the hope that they may come one day to the highest dignities. Whereas if the young Nobles obtained great Magistratures at Venice, where nothing lasts forever, they would then refuse the others. This already happens too often, and those given great charges think it beneath them to lesser offices.26

Here is, first, admiration for an idea – that leadership is reserved for the mature – and flattering comparison of Venice with ancient polities.27 Then there is a visual aid – the sculpture of the medlars – in deference to the practice by which Venetian culture is built into the fabric of the city, so that hosts and guides can point it out to visitors, the better to for them to remember and pass along Venetian wisdom. If Amelot had stopped here, as more tractable writers on Venice would have done, all would be well; but Amelot goes further – premature promotion “already happens too often, and those given great charges think it beneath them to lesser offices” – and asserts that contemporary Venetian reality deviates from its own admirable ideas.

This might not have angered the Venetians had he remained on the impersonal level of institutions. The French geographer Pierre d’Avity, for example, wrote in 1615 of Venice’s “defects” without exciting official opposition. He gave them as, first, their dependence on foreign supplies of food, for which “they do so much esteeme a peace with the Turke” and with Spain; second, their dependence on Italian fighters rather than the superior Swiss or German;


27 In addition to the references within the text, this particular passage is framed by a quotation from Livy and one from Tacitus.
and third, “that they make not any of one of their subjects, but a stranger Generall of their armie.” Flawed as these institutions might be, d’Avity concludes that the wisdom of the Venetian nobility will prevail:

But these defects are not all past remedie, and for this cause those wise Senators haue a continuall care to preuent all inconueniences, and haue no other desseigne but to preserue the State in peace and libertie. Without doubt they are not like to haue any troubles and combustions among themselues, for they neuer suffer any priuat quarrell to grow among them, but they presently pacifie it, either by loue, or by the authoritie of the soueraigne councell of ten. Moreover there is not any citisen or gentleman that doth attaine to any such reputation, degree, or wealth, as he may hope to make himselfe a tyrant, but they liue louingly together in great peace and concord.  

D’Avity preserves the image, cherished by the Venetian nobility, of a wise and cohesive ruling class that will steer Venice successfully through all its troubles.

This class is precisely what Amelot attacks. He names nobles committing individual crimes and peccadillos. Giulio Giustiani has a noble Spaniard cudgeled for giving his wife a present; Procurator Giambattisto Cornero-Piscopia marries the daughter of a gondolier. A Procurator of the Contarini family, “son of the Doge and odious to all the Nobility for his avarice,” attempts to obtain a gift of furs worth 12,000 crowns from the Ambassadors of Moscow, and is foiled in his attempt by a relative, who has a law passed banning such gifts. This same Doge’s son “takes whatever he could lay his hands on,” a situation made worse by the animosity the people felt toward that Doge for being less magnificent than his

28 d’Avity, Estates, Empires, 530.
29 Amelot, Histoire, 344.
30 Ibid., 30.
31 Ibid., 160.
predecessors, so it is a double insult, against the greed of the son and the avarice of the father. Another Contarini insults a Dandolo during a toast that turns their old friendship to implacable enmity. Nobles who marry into the wealthy bourgeoisie of the mainland are held in contempt, and their children called amphibians.

More damagingly, Amelot shows the Venetian nobility abandoning their age old duties and responsibilities. Some contemptuously mock the system of elections by proposing unelectable names (newly-made nobles, nobles of Jewish extraction). They lack resolution regarding defense of Cyprus, earning them a lecture from Procurator Girolamo Zane, calling to mind their once-proud determination. Their famous system of justice is corrupted by jurists pronouncing sentences of service in the galleys for trifles when their own ships need oarsmen.

Amelot strips off the mystique of the Dogeship. The old houses regard it as “pure servitude.” Some have it thrust upon them against their will, and take accept it gracelessly: a Cornaro was said to have died “of pure anger” eight days after his election. And why not? As

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32 Ibid., 163.
33 Ibid., 355.
34 Ibid., 30.
35 Ibid., 198.
36 Ibid., 319.
37 Ibid., 350-1.
38 Ibid., 354.
39 Ibid., 153.
Amelot describes it, the highest office would have nothing but the honor to commend it; it would not appeal to men unmotivated by that desire to serve the state. Doges are spied upon by the Council of Ten quite openly:

They can go, if they want, to the very bedside of the Doge, interrupt his Cabinet, open his chests, and make an inventory of everything in his family, not excusing his sons, brothers, and nephews - to have greater liberty to bring their accusations against the Doge.

Doges are prisoners in their palace, surrounded by spies and informers, deprived of common entertainment, without any of the authority associated with princes, their authority is diminished daily, and they are vilified more all the time. Doges must work at their job until they die in it, or are deposed at the pleasure of the state; people often have no news of a Doge's sickness or death until they hear of his funeral.

Time and again, Amelot shows a wise and respected Venetian institution as it should be, and as it actually is in his own observation. There are a few instances where Amelot cites nobles doing their duty with honor and extraordinary patience, as when the State imprisoned Vittor Pisani and then restored him to leadership “to the dishonor of those who calumnized him,” and Antonio Grimani, who was degraded and banished, only to be recalled and elected Doge.

40 Ibid., 164-5. Amelot relates how at a Dogal coronation the new Doge, while accepting congratulations, looks at the magnificence of his election as the beginning of his funeral pomp, and as if he were a victim being prepared for sacrifice. He quotes Angitonus saying that his dignity is but “honorable servitude,” and his crown a sign of obligation to the country and obedience to its laws.
41 Ibid., 204.
42 Ibid., 159.
43 Ibid., 153.
44 Ibid., 126, 129.
Overall, however, there is an undeniable gap between the way things should be, and the way there are, at a time when the nobility have simply grown tired or bored with their duty.

Sometimes Amelot shows a picture of intellectual degradation. It must have been painful for Venetians, always having regarded themselves as sophisticated and worldly, to read accounts of their fellow nobles embarrassing themselves in foreign capitals out of ignorance, mocked by others for their “superb, ridiculous pretentions, which affront them greatly,” and thus preferring to remain in Venice, where “in revenge, they are princes at home.” Amelot shows Venetians indulging their vanity with fanciful lineages; they “don’t think themselves deceived to see descent from Roman consuls, Kings, emperors in their fabulous genealogies. For they are the people in all of Italy most favored by the chimera of their extractions.” What passed for erudite in an age of humanism is shown as credulous by Amelot in the Age of Enlightenment:

The Contarini would have themselves descended in a direct line from Count Palatin of the Rhine, from where they have their proper name, and the last Doge of that family signed his name always Contareno, and not Contarini like the other branches, to attach his name more closely to that ancient origin. The Morosini look for their name in Hungary from a city of that name. The Giustiniani have taken for their origins the emperor of that name, and disclaim their relation to the Giustiniani of Genoa, who were non-noble before the reformation of that government. The Cornari derive themselves from the Cornelii of Rome, and to emphasize the connection, they affect always the Latin inscription of Cornelius in their public monuments.

And so on, continues Amelot, for the the Querini, Loredans, Valiers, Pisani, Veniers, and others “whose vanity would not be outdone by their ingenuity.” Yet not stopping there with a picture of naïve self-importance, Amelot must turn the knife once more: “Not only is there no

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likelihood of truth in all this, they are fooling themselves, for their actions hardly resemble the
glory of the ancestors they have adopted.” 46

Here Amelot approaches the apex of his anti-Venetian charges, penning a paragraph so
damning that his English translator47 left it out of his otherwise faithful work:

There is no place in the world where the youth are so indolent or so licentious as
Venice, where they live as they will, neglecting their duty without fear or shame,
which are the two principle instruments of virtue. What others call laziness or
cruelty, these young nobles believe pass for bravery. A Priulian believed he
would earn marks for valor to commit an outrage against his Regent without
regard for the sacred character of this person. That his father applauded him for
this with praise is even more criminel. These young people are full of vice and
brutality, without any modesty; they vaunt publically all of their excesses, and do
in full view what the rest of the world covers in a veil of shadows. So they love
voluptuousness and debauchery, and infamy. These were not the people who
brought the Republic victory over the Turks.48

This accusation of a father giving wrong encouragement to his son is one aspect of
something that is a major theme for Amelot: the unnatural breakdown of natural family
relations. Throughout his book Amelot gives embarrassing detail around the contemporary
social practices of the Signory. Often in wealthy families only one son marries, generally the
youngest, while the others must be contented with amassing wealth.49 Similarly, there is the
“necessary evil” whereby “every day noble daughters are thrown into Convents when they

46 Ibid., 352.

47 The translator was Thomas Belasyse, 1st Earl Fauconberg (1627-1700). Belasyse served Cromwell –
whose daughter he married – and then the Restoration regime that followed, a career history that speaks to his
tact. He likely omitted this paragraph not for its story of Venetian decadence, but rather specifically for its veiled
reference to regicide, a delicate topic in England at the time.

48 Ibid., 353.

49 Ibid., 31.
don’t have a vocation and would be happier remaining in their fathers’ homes.”50 This practice gave rise to irregular unions, including semi-permanent unions involving one woman and multiple men:

They are remarkably easy about keeping mistresses in common [Belasyse adds here, “viz. two, three, or four men to a Miss], and something that is elsewhere a subject for discord and hatred produces for them union and amity. It is among their lovers that they speak with open heart, and treat with their Alliances and their designs, the Gentlemen they will prefer for advancement, and those they will exclude... In this society they find their closest relations. So their other friends are not offended, nor their allies, if they prefer in elections their companions in debauchery.51

This is a startling disclosure. Elsewhere Amelot discusses, as do all commentators on Venice, the lengths to which Venetian systems attempt to avoid family preference in elections, excluding from balloting those with the same surname as the candidate. The disclosure above shows how the more important “family” in political matters are in fact “companions in debauchery” – men that share a mistress. This is part of a pragmatic and diffident attitude toward marriage that Amelot illustrates with an unattributed quote: “It is a purely civic ceremony that binds the opinion but not the conscience; a free woman who is only employed is in no worse condition than a wife married for political reasons.”52

Amelot is no bourgeois moralizer or champion of happy marriage; we have already seen his own irregular domestic arrangements53. Yet he comes back time and again to images where

50 Ibid., 70.
51 Ibid., 343-4. Note that Belasyse does not include the last two sentences in his translation.
52 Ibid., 343.
53 See note 15.
home is displaced by other institutions. Venetians, he writes, are undomestic, not visiting each other in their homes but rather in the casinos, where they discuss personal matters in front of everyone, and they are unwelcoming to foreign visitors. Likewise the church is displaced as a sanctuary by casinos, as “consecrated, so to speak, to public pleasure”, where criminals are safe and the hospitality welcoming. Charitable institutions bring up the thousands of babies that would otherwise be drowned in the canals. Fathers do not educate their sons in good habits at home, but rather the opposite:

The principal cause of their decadence is the bad education they give their youth... to see fathers of families entertain concubines and other instruments of debauchery, in sight of their children, who have bad habits instead of good knowledge, and similarly engage as they advance in age, corrupted by the bad example they seek to emulate. Even more, as they enter into the management of affairs with these evil dispositions, it’s impossible that public administration would not feel the impact.

Amelot makes frequent reference to the links between family and civic behavior. The Doge, for example, “has four feasts each year to which all the Nobles are invited in their turn, without distinction between the poor and the Rich, of Ancient and New. Thus the Doge is a Father to his Family with equal caresses for all his children, to have among them concord and fraternal amity.” The Procurators’ role, as it expanded from looking after the fabric of the

54 Ibid., 341-2.
55 Ibid., 209.
56 Ibid., 357.
57 Ibid., 329.
58 Ibid., 157.
cathedral to administering wills, was to “keep good order and decorum in families.”

Procurators had once been so esteemed throughout Italy that nobles in other cities sent their sons to Venice to learn from them; now it had declined to the point that the honor could be bought.

Likewise Venice fosters unnatural relations in its *Terraferma* holdings. Amelot writes how the common people find Venice “gentle and just” because their representatives there make their homes “as open as the church,” with set days for the people to inform on their own local nobles, whom the people hate; and the Venetians appear “in kindness and candor” to take all at face value, when in fact their goal is to diminish the rich families of the local families, who are between the Venetian Signory and their own people “like fish between boiling oil and fire.”

This degradation takes a step to the sinister when Amelot describes the Council of Ten. Yet here too Amelot gives both sides of the case. He explains why the institution is as it is. The Ten, he asserts, is impartial with respect to rank; no one is above the law. Suspects are given no benefit of the doubt for a reason. Workings are fast and secret for a reason. Spying – worst of all on the person of the Doge – serves a purpose. The mind-numbing thoroughness and

59 Ibid., 188.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 185.

62 Ibid., 54.

63 Ibid., 197.

64 Ibid., 196.
ruthless efficiency Amelot outlines exists because of precedent, shrewdly considered for the advantage of the state. This does not mitigate against the dreadfulness of living in a police state, where one can be reported on by one’s nearest relatives\(^66\) - yet another example of unnatural living.

Here it is that Amelot writes the lurid passages\(^67\) mined so well by dramatists in the next two centuries, with nobles hanging by their heels between the columns of St Mark, drownings in the Canal Orfano, disappearances, murmerings, sinister work, pathetic pictures of the families and friends of the accused, the gibbet. It is here he writes that while sometimes execution is suspended, it is dangerous to interfere, and this fear suspends even the natural duty of family members. All magistrates are subject to the Ten - one treats the general of the army like a slave, with possible banishment, prison, demotion, death, or banishment as their recompense. In the atmosphere of scrutiny Amelot paints, fathers condemn sons, a Doge’s own son was sentenced to life in prison, and the Council could even strangle the Doge himself if all ten assembled and found him guilty.\(^68\)

With Amelot’s account of the ecclesiastical Inquisition in Venice, there is an abrupt change of voice from the rest of his *Histoire*. Here, the tone of the knowing insider, revealing decline and decadence, gives way to a more majestic tone, a ringing declaration of Venetian wisdom and courage in the face of a Papal Court intent on territorial aggrandizement. Amelot

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\(^{65}\) Ibid., 204.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 206.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 200-3.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 200-9; Norwich, *History of Venice*, 479-80. Amelot compares this to Venetian general Bragadin’s treatment by the Turks in 1571; Bragadin was executed and then skinned.
writes here that each Prince knows best the needs of his state and must guard his state against slipping into new dangers, and Rome rightly takes the view that Venetians are very difficult with respect to ecclesiastical control, and no Prince in Europe better understands Rome’s designs or opposes them with more vigor.\textsuperscript{69}

In fact, we are reading Paolo Sarpi, the famous defender of Venice, making his case for political independence to the whole of Europe. Throughout this chapter, although Sarpi is rarely named, the ideas are Sarpian, the tone is Sarpian, and the driving logic is Sarpian. Amelot begins his chapter on the Inquisition by asserting that the Inquisition in Venice does not exist by Papal commandment or Bull, but by action of the Great Council in 1289. This is a Venice that constitutes its inquisition with a balance of ecclesiastics and seculars, checking Rome’s desire to overstretch at every opportunity.\textsuperscript{70}

In contrast to his fearless attacks on the Venetian power structure, there are times where Amelot shows a sympathetic view to the marginalized of Venice. Writing with sympathy of the many unmarried noble girls thrown into convents when they have no vocation, Amelot defends the reputation the convents have for their lively social activities\textsuperscript{71}, pointing out that for the young women within their walls, talking with a lover at the grate seemed a harmless enough diversion in lives otherwise devoid of pleasure.\textsuperscript{72} He is particularly nuanced in describing the fragile life of the courtesan, pointing out how they are used to mop the excesses

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item ibid. 291.
\item ibid., 281.
\item While accusations that some convents acted as brothels would have attracted the most attention, many others were simply venues for musical and theatrical activity, attracting to their walls visitors that might not otherwise come.
\item ibid., 89-90.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
of the male nobility and wrung out at their pleasure; they are particularly vulnerable to the sumptuary laws, which are enforced at irregular and arbitrary intervals, so that they must buy their raiment over and over, once from the tailor and then from the tax collector. 73 Even the daughter of the gondolier who married the Procurator gets sympathetic treatment: she wore more jewels than Amelot had ever seen a Venetian woman wear, perhaps to announce the baseness of her birth, or perhaps to be as remarkable in her accessories as in the adventures of her life. 74

He mentions the poor several times, particularly the poor nobles, with whose marginal existence he must have felt some sympathy. He notes the posts reserved for poor nobles – such as Capodistria and Raspo, where “much is gained with little expense” 75 – to whom few opportunities were open other than selling their votes. Amelot writes that the venality of the vote is a great evil, whereby the poor become the servants of their wealthier equals. 76 One of the outcomes of this is a law strictly prohibiting nobles to meet with members of foreign embassies, of which Amelot had been one. Amelot writes of two nobles and their reactions to encountering him in public. A Senator from the House of Tron, seeing him at the home of the Cure of Santa Maria Mater Domini, fled “as if from the plague,” while a Procurator “was brave enough, in an act that would have been fatal to many others” to converse openly with Amelot.

73 Ibid., 236.
74 Ibid., 235-6.
75 Ibid., 260.
76 Ibid., 16.
at a stationer’s shop. In contrasting the comical cowardice of the first with the heroic courtesy of the other (unnamed, perhaps out of respect or a desire to protect a man who had been polite to him) Amelot shows his own prickly sensitivity.

Amelot had, at times, the willingness and ability to look beyond gender and class to see the individual’s unique gifts, circumstances, and challenges. Perhaps this stemmed from his time with the Jesuits of Orleans, who might have shared with him the concept of *cura personalis* or care of the whole person. Yet the sympathetic treatment Amelot gave to some characters was outweighed by his derogatory treatment of Venetians as a group. He sums these up in a great list of charges at the end: Venetians are ungrateful, paranoid, envious, parochial and disdainful of non-Venetians, inconstant, shortsighted, hypocritical, unforgiving, vengeful, unsociable, cheap, self-indulgent, jealous, debauched, timid, deluded, suspicious,Spying, corrupt, obsessive, prideful, deluded, indolent, licentious, neglectful of duty, without fear or shame, lazy, cruel, full of vice and brutality, without any modesty, loving voluptuousness, infamous, vain, fractious, they treat their wives like servants, and they cannot stand raillery.

Yet while Amelot disdains the Venetian nobility, he views the decline of Venice with regret: “if one considers the losses these Lords have sustained over a hundred years, and now from the Turks, if God did not put his hand to it, this famous Republic runs great risk of being

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77 Ibid., 34-5.

78 Ibid., 331-56.
reduced from its ancient Patrimony, and be only an empire of lagoon and swamp, giving homage to a Great Lord, like Ragusa.”

While Amelot certainly observed and wrote about wise practices as well — the first section, the section on the Inquisition, even parts on the Council of Ten all acknowledge Venetian wisdom — the negative would have overwhelmed the positive for most of Amelot’s readers. Amelot’s book might have appeared to be evenhanded to someone learning of Venetian government for the first time, or to someone looking for evenhandedness. (Amelot certainly thought it evenhanded.) However, to readers accustomed to hearing of Venice in terms of the flattering accounts of visitors, repeating with gratifying consistency the stories given out by the long-established Venetian propaganda machine through Venetian art and architecture and expounded by Venetian hosts and guides to those that visited their city, and reading previous works that did not “probe the surface,” Amelot’s criticisms exploded like a bomb.

The negative reaction the Venetians had to Amelot’s book was not just because it embarrassed individuals or showed the Republic in an unflattering light. Underlying these complaints was something more fundamental: the book stripped away the veil of official

79 Ibid., 329. Ragusa is present-day Dubrovnik. Like Venice, Ragusa was a successful merchant republic, but only independent for a short while.

secrecy from Venetian statecraft. In one section, for example, Amelot parses Venetian statecraft regarding the French by explaining that “as long as they could dream of contenting the King of France, or detaching the Pope from the League, they could resist the other Princes... or so it seemed at the time.”81 This evaluation would owe much to Amelot’s reading of Nani (cited below), whose history Amelot quoted frequently. The shrewd evaluation of options that Nani wrote about, however, was in Amelot’s view a thing of the past. What he observed was that the Senate were faced with two options, “one resolute and generous, the other lazy and timid,” they would cobble together a compromise, “without examining either the incompatability or the danger – that is, the worst of all possible worlds.”82 It was shocking to have Venetian deliberations revealed to the world in their explicit parts, rather than wrapped in the mysterious myth of Venetian wisdom.

The damage was felt most keenly by those Venetians of high rank named by Amelot; they, not unreasonably, felt that Amelot had dishonored themselves and their families. The Contarini family came into the most criticism83. It is a Contarini Doge whose “odious” and “avaricious” son is persecuted by his own indignant relative84 – a young Contarini who rudely refuses to stand in committee session85 – a Contarini that violates old practice by Ducal

81 Ibid., 321.

82 Ibid., 327.

83 Whether this is because they deserved it or because Amelot’s sources knew more about Contarini peccadillos than those of other families, we will never know.

84 Ibid., 160.

85 Ibid., 164.
emblems added to the family escutcheon— a Contarini that insults an old friend with a
tasteless toast.

It was also a Contarini who was serving as Venetian Ambassador to France at the time
the book came out in 1676. Through his intervention, Amelot was thrown into the Bastille for
six weeks in the spring of 1676, from 2 April to 15 May. A knowledgeable commentator writes
that this was done to satisfy the complaint of the Venetian ambassador “pure and simple,” as it
was likely that the King had given tacit approval of the work, since it was “always useful to
make it seem that republican government was more evil than could be imagined.” The official
correspondence around Amelot’s brief incarceration betrays a casual attitude toward the
prisoner and great interest in his book. The Procurator General Chollet wrote to the Marquis de
Saint-Thomas on 17 April of 1676 that there is nothing new at the booksellers other than the
History of the government of Venice; it is well-written and attracting attention; the Ambassador
from Venice has made a great fuss against the author, saying he has done great injury to the
republic; and he will send along a copy of the book to the Marquis if he can get one. There
was more official action the following year, when the book was expanded and reissued, but
nothing came of that either. The commentator Abbe Drouyn pointed out that the first and

86 Ibid., 180.
87 Ibid., 355.
88 François Ravaisson, Archives de la Bastille. Documents inédits, tome 8 (Paris: Durand, 1876),
89 Quoted in ibid.
90 Ibid., 94.
second attempted suppressions of the book resulted in twenty-two editions in three years of
the Histoire, and its translations for sale in England, Germany, Piedmont, and Spain. 91

The sheer audacity of the book would have been felt most keenly by two particular
individuals. One was the Venetian ambassador to France, the Contarini whose father – he of
the odious avarice – had been depicted in the Histoire. Contarini fils was so angered that,
according to a later account by Amelot, he fumed in front of the servants that he would send
Amelot’s head back to the Venetians. 92

The other individual was Giovanni Battista Gaspare Nani (1616-1678), the Venetian
historian that Amelot had read and admired and sought to emulate. Yet Nani was also an
aristocrat, and a diplomat of note: he had been the Venetian Ambassador to France from 1643
to 1668. Nani too complained to the French authorities about the book. 93 His reasons were
quite different from Contarini’s. Nani came in only for praise in Amelot’s book. At one point he
is cited for negotiating a treaty successfully,94 in another held up as an example of honesty:
“there are but few people like the Procurator Nani,” who used money he had received as a
gratuity for state purposes, whereas others would have pocketed it.95 If these were efforts on
Amelot’s part to ingratiate himself with a historian he admired, it did him no good; Nani’s
loyalty to Venetian Republic, and to the noble class that ran it, far outran any sympathy he

91 Ibid.
92 Amelot, Memoire in Histoire (1685), 7.
93 Soll, Publishing the Prince, 69.
94 Amelot, Histoire, 126.
95 Ibid., 267.
might have had for an upstart French historian who exposed the very secrets of state he had spent his career guarding (Nani’s history dealt with events long past) and the Republic he still served (Nani always cast Venice in a positive light). Rather than the fellow feeling of one professional for another that Amelot seemed naively to expect, Nani was likely to view Amelot with disdain, as a pilferer of documents to which he had no right, and a second-guesser of his betters. Additionally, Nani might have felt too exposed for comfort in the context of Amelot’s contentious work. His own *Historia della Republica Veneta*, first published in 1662 and widely reprinted, had featured exactly the kind of political commentary Amelot celebrated, and Amelot quoted him repeatedly. Nani probably did not wish to have been associated with someone so controversial.96 Nani was part of a tradition of statesmen-historians (as Contarini had been) that preferred to have their histories regarded as the after-hours avocation of a man who is a mover of the events he is describing97. Amelot’s project of commentary for the common man would have flown in the face of this tradition. For all these reasons, Nani may have wished to make Amelot scarce.

The commentators quoted above knew the game that was being played. Amelot was put into the Bastille to appease the French Ambassador, but he would soon be released and permitted to continue his work, which was useful from France’s point of view. Nani too understood reality: his position as a nobleman put his own history – admittedly much more positive and discreet than Amelot’s – in a different category. Amelot, brash and young,

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96 Nani, *Degl’Istorici*, “Vita di Batista Nani,” xx-xxi i. The biographical essay accompanying a reprint of his works in 1720 makes it very clear that Amelot’s mentioning of Nani was an embarrassment to the older man.

understood none of this. From his point of view. Amelot had no reason to hate Venice when he wrote his *Histoire*. He had lived and studied in Venice, gathering material like a sponge, and from it written a book of which he was justly proud. Amelot genuinely believed that he had been evenhanded in his treatment of the Republic. He admired the idea of Venice, and may even have believed that in describing its current state under the rule of a noble class too degraded to carry out its duties he would be contributing to its resurgence.

It is important to note that what Amelot says about Venice in his *Histoire* is based on his personal examination, through reading, conversation with Venetians, and first-hand observation, of how far current practice in Venice deviates from the ideal. His assessment flows not from any negative French stereotypes from the past, but in fact from a close examination of the myth of Venice, as put forth by Venetian writers and by the full panoply of cultural expression – art, architecture, performance, ritual — and its repetition by Venetians themselves. Amelot’s *Histoire* in its first edition has nothing to do with anti-Venetian stereotypes of the past, but examines Venice on its own terms.

Learning his beloved work would get him thrown into the Bastille, Amelot changed his view of Venice and his method of working on it. He conceived a hatred, if not for Venice itself, certainly for the nobility that ran it. Amelot would channel this passion into his next three

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98 In the preface of the book, where he apologizes for the “roughness” of his prose, Amelot writes with an air of pride and perhaps expectation of praise.

99 Amelot, *Histoire*, 242. Amelot’s nuanced understanding of this is displayed in his description of the order of march on public occasions: first come the Secretaries, then the Chancellor — all of these are citizens and thus non-noble — then the Doge, then the nobles, then the body of citizens. This, says Amelot, shows several important points. First, that the nobility and the citizens are not equal; second, that the Chancellor “is not a Man of the People, but a Minister and Officer of the Nobility”, by whom he is chosen and to whom owes his duty; and last, “to signify the harmony and accord of all parties to the Government.” Amelot further notes that the Chancellor, after his election, is attended in his procession by the most senior Procurator, who “gives him his hand,” as do the rest of the nobles do to the citizens.
works. They appeared, in rapid succession, later in 1677. In this burst of spiteful creativity
Amelot would reach far back into the library of anti-Venetianism to satisfy his craving for vitriol
against the people that had treated him so unfairly. He found there two works, different in
every way except for the object of their animus.

The **Squitinio, Translated as the Examen**

In 1612 there was published in Mirandola the *Squitinio della Liberta Veneta*. It was an
anonymous work that purported to examine the origins and history of Venetian liberty, and
concluded that for most of its history Venice was not free at all. The *Squitinio*, to which Amelot
in his translation gave the title *Examen de la liberté originaire de Venise*, has six propositions:

1. Venice was not born in liberty but always “subject to the Jurisdiction of others”

2. Venice was “from time to time” under obeisance to the Emperors, Odoacer and the
   Gothic Kings

3. After the destruction of the Goths, Venice returned to imperial jurisdiction for a century

4. Then Venice lived for a time in liberty under a Doge, who had all the administration in
   his hands

5. This passed into the domination by the Doge

6. This became domination “by the Nobles, to the exclusion of all the Citizens”

The first notable thing about this remarkable little book is that its thesis strikes at the
very heart of Venice. It is hard to over-emphasize the role independence played in the Venetian
self-image. Contarini wrote that “there seemeth nothing to remaine which we could wish for, hauing a commonwealth unenthralled, enjoying a true libertie and freedome.”

David Rosand, in demonstrating how the very fabric of Venice is an integrated expression of the myth of Venice, begins with liberty. He shows its deeply articulated connection with Christian iconography:

More than a new Rome or a new Constantinople, Venice was a new Jerusalem, a city beloved of God, who caused her to rise from humble mud, resplendent, above the waters, a beacon of Christian liberty. The Roman Empire had been destroyed by the barbarian tribes; pagan might was fallen, and God in his infinite wisdom saw to a proper, Christian succession. On March 25 began as well the new era of political grace. As the Archangel Gabriel had announced the conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary of a Savior to redeem humanity from Original Sin, so did God assure the political salvation of mankind through the foundation of this Christian republic on the very same date. Thus did the Feast of the annunciation become an integral part of the state calendar. A celebration (like all such feasts in Venice) at once religious and patriotic, it was an occasion for an official andante in trionfo, the triumphal procession of the doge and Signoria...

Rosand explains how the Annunciation, symbol of virgin birth, is appropriated by the Venetians for its own message of birth in freedom, and its record of never being conquered is likewise connected to images of the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. The two are shown in sacred conversations, utilizing the Venetian space between them to incorporate the city into their story, all over the city, in painted altarpieces, in bas reliefs on the Rialto bridge and west façade of San Marco, and in statues housed in the basilica’s corner towers. So the idea of freedom took concrete, three-dimensional form all over the very city – one literally walked (or

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100 Contarini, Commonwealth, 40.
101 Rosand, Figuration, 13.
102 Ibid. 14-25
floated) through depictions of it. The idea that it might all be a gigantic hoax would have been an abomination to the Venetian sensibilitiy.

The second noteworthy thing about the *Squitinio* is its seeming erudition. Long quotes in Latin, citations from scholars ancient and modern, careful parsing of language – all convey a sense of masterful scholarship. Just how cleverly the author has tailored his material to support his case, suppressing all else, however, is plain to anyone with access to the same sources. Two examples will suffice.

In the first chapter, the author spends twelve pages to make the case that Venice was born subject to Padua, which was in turn subject to Epirus, so that Venice was in fact “subject in the second degree, or doubly subject, as is manifest to all the world.”103 His method is to cite many authors quickly, in an apparent attempt to make it seems as if the evidence for his case is vast. Yet his examples do not hold up to close examination. He quotes Strabo, the ancient Greek philosopher, to support his case that Venice was merely the port city of Padua, to which it was subject. Yet in fact what Strabo writes is this:

Concerning the Heneti [Venetians] there are two traditions, some saying that they are a colony of those Kelts of the same name who dwell by the ocean. Others say that they are descended from the Veneti of Paphlagonia, who took refuge here with Antenor after the Trojan war; and they give as a proof of this the attention these peoplebestow on rearing horses; which, though now entirely abandoned, was formerly in great esteem among them, resulting from the ancient rage for breeding mules, which Homer thus mentions: ‘From the Eneti for forest mules renowned.’104

103 Amelot, *Examen*, 15. All translations from Amelot’s French into English are my own.

So the Heneti are not connected with the Paduans, and they are possible descended from Trojans, a lineage even older than the Roman. Strabo does write of Padua, whose people are the Insubri:

Patavium, the finest of all the cities in this district, and which at the time of the late census was said to contain 500 equites. Anciently it could muster an army of 120,000 men. The population and skill of this city is evinced by the vast amount of manufactured goods it sends to the Roman market, especially clothing of all kinds. It communicates with the sea by a river navigable from a large harbour [at its mouth], the river runs across the marshes for a distance of 250 stadia. This harbour, as well as the river, is named Medoacus.\(^{105}\)

So Strabo names the port city of Padua, and it is not Venice. Furthermore, Strabo puts out the possibility that Venice is founded by Troy, which makes it more ancient and honorable than Padua, which has no such possible connection. Next, the Squitinio’s author appears to quote Andrea Dandolo’s 1339 Chronicon Venetum in support of his case;\(^{106}\) yet Dandolo preferred a divine founding of Venice with St. Mark, not Padua, playing the leading role.\(^{107}\) Likewise he cites Bernardo Giustiani in support the Paduan colony theory, but Giustiani “linked the rise of Venice directly to the decline of Rome,” peopling it with pious Romans tired of factionalism.\(^{108}\)

Tales of a Paduan founding of Venice did have its adherents – Paduans. Patricia Fortini Brown writes that in the mid-1330s “there developed within the circle of the city’s intellectuals an interest in carving oub for Padua and for eminent Paduan families a historical role in the

\(^{105}\) Ibid.

\(^{106}\) Amelot, Examens, 6.

\(^{107}\) Brown, Venice & Antiquity, 34.

\(^{108}\) Ibid., 172-4.
The script worked out by the Paduans included the founding of Venice by Paduans. Yet the Padua-educated Francisco Sansovini, once said that his favorite thing about Venice were all the antiquities there, and he was not talking about Paduan relics. Rather, in his chronicle when he writes of the founding of Venice, he tells a story of proud independence. In sum, the author cites sources that do not, in fact, support his case.

In the second chapter, the author gives a close reading of the letter written by Cassiodorus for the Gothic King Theodoric in 523. He acknowledges that the letter is open to different interpretations; his consists of a close parsing of the words used, which in his telling connote orders given by the Gothic king to the Venetians, and duty owed by the Venetians to the Gothic king. His interpretation of this oft-quoted letter turns the conventional reading on its head. That is well expressed by John Julius Norwich, who writes that “even Theodoric may have been a little unsure how far he could presume on Venetian obedience”; the letter, with its lengthy praise for Venice, “certainly seems somewhat fulsome for what must have been after all a fairly routine piece of government business... Even when allowances are made for Cassiodorus’s naturally florid style, the impression he leaves is unmistakable: though these

110 Ibid. 286.
112 Amelot *Examen*, 34
113 Ibid., 35-43.
strange water-people could be extremely useful to the central government, they must be handled with care."

Perhaps the most notable thing about the Squitinio is its calm manner of presentation, as if it is simply one scholar writing to another, while making statements of breathtaking audacity. Only a hardworking reader with access to a large library would be in a position to see how selective – or downright contrary – the author had been in bending his sources to the service of his argument. It is amusing to contemplate how Amelot, were he so inclined, would have destroyed the the Squitinio. But as he entered the Bastille with the book in hand, his humor was just the opposite.

The Squitinio, published 65 years before, had become quite rare. A note found in a recently sold copy reads in part, “This celebrated and rare tract ... was wrote [sic] by Don Alfonso de la [?]Turva ... No publication ever gave so much offence to the proud Venetians, who used every means to suppress it ... After many year's search, I procured this copy at Rome, in the year 1765.” A rare work, available only in Italian, offensive to the Venetians, suited Amelot’s needs perfectly. Publishing it into French would give Amelot the opportunity to “write” – with translation, introduction, and annotation – what he could not write.

And so he does. Amelot writes in the preface that he is astonished that the Squitinio has never been translated before into French as it is one of the most famous books of the century – that all the princes and ministers of Europe have it in their libraries – and that its author is of

114 Norwich, History of Venice, 6-7.

such reputation that Frensh, Spanish, Italians, and Germans all want him for their countryman. Amelot says that it is the common view in Italy that the author is Dom Alfonse de la Queva, Ambassador from Spain to Venice, and later Cardinal, and one of the great geniuses of the time.\textsuperscript{116} (As Amelot surely knew, de la Queva, also known as the Marquis of Bedmar, was the most hated man in Venice.) Paolo Sarpi, Amelot continues, that great man, who successfully refuted all the writings of the court of Rome during the Interdict of Venice, would never undertake a response to this, not out of moderation, or prudence either, but out of fear that the honor of triumph would go to his adversary. And Amelot knows that the Doge has pressed Sarpi to do this. All this shows that the Squitinio is a work of great weight, and well worth the pain to translate it.

Thus does Amelot introduce the book. Who actually wrote the \textit{Squitinio}? Amelot says in his Preface that is is the hated Spanish Ambassador Bedmar, who was widely seen as being at the center of a plot to overturn Venice with the help of the Spanish in Sicily. The plot resulted in the punishment or banishment – or, as was rumored, midnight execution – of several hundred men from Venice.

Casanova has a more interesting theory. He will later write that it is one Marcus Welser (1558-1614), the brilliant son of an Augsburg-based German banking family who spent 25 years visiting Venice as a merchant and was very close to the papacy\textsuperscript{117}. Casanova’s theory is that Bedmar pretended to have written it at the behest of the Pope, who gave him in recompense

\textsuperscript{116} The Preface to the \textit{Examen}, Amelot’s French title for the \textit{Squitinio}, is unnumbered. The translation is my own.

the Cardinal’s purple hat. Either man could have written it. Both were longtime residents in Venice. Both were aligned with Papacy against Venice. Both were linguists and scholars and facile with their pens. From Amelot’s perspective, a Bedmar authorship was better for sales. In any event, with the Squitinio Amelot got what he wanted: a confident, seemingly erudite book that devastated the Venetian self-image to its core.

Harangue

Amelot found a second book to add to his anti-Venetian catalogue. In contrast to the seemingly erudite Squitinio, the Harangue of Louis Hélian is just that: a screed, cataloguing at a highly emotional pitch every known complaint against the Venetians. Hélian was the French Ambassador to the Empire and made his speech at Augsburg in 1510 in an attempt to get the Emperor to support the anti-Venetian League of Cambrai. Amelot refers to the Harangue as “having falling into my hands” as he was preparing the Examen for press, and that he felt that:

it would please the Public, if it were translated into our Language and added to the Squitinio, in the form of a Supplement. For here the author of this writing has examined only the Original Liberty of Venice: This man [author of the Harangue], one of the greatest men of his time, was employed by Louis XII to deal with some of his most important matters, recounts the original, the progress, the designs, the artifices, and the means to the rule of this Republic, which he makes to seem totally natural. Perforce with the Squitinio and this Harangue, which all the Empire admired in Augsburg, one learns more than with all the Historians of Venice together.

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119 Amelot could have filched a copy from the Marciana library in Venice.

120 Amelot, Examen, 176. All translations of the Harangue from Amelot’s French to English are my own.
In fact, it is a recitation of all the most toxic of the charges brought against the Venetians in earlier eras, recounted in high and colorful style. First Hélian attacks the pride of the Venetians, these "fine and malicious Foxes, these furious and superb Lions have had the thought of subjugating Italy, and then the Roman Empire...an insatiable desire to command."121 Their practice of wedding the sea is likewise derided as overreaching: "It’s an unheard of thing, to espouse the Elements. The History you learn of the Tyrians, the Carthaginians, the Rhodiens, the Athenians, the Romans, and the famous King Xerxes have all been great powers of the Sea, and very skilled in Marine science, as today are the Genoese122; but you never hear a single Prince, nor a single Republic, having the vanity or the temerity to espouse the sea. Here are the Venetians capable of a great folly and of such arrogance."123 With pride is ambition: "Oh God! What is the strait, what is the Ocean, that cannot be absorbed and engulfed" by the Venetians!124

This ambition is all the worse for their lowborn origins. "Hardly 100 years ago, then they were strong in their Swamps, they had not yet put foot onto the Terrafirma, and and they already have more country from their tricks, than the Romans conquered with the countries in 200 years. But are they ready to rest? Don’t believe but that they have already set their ambitious spirit on extending their lands beyond the Alps, to build bridges on the Danube and Rhine, the Seine, the Rhone, the Tage and Ebre, and to establish their domination over all the

121 Ibid. 180

122 This is probably a dig at the Venetians.

123 Ibid., 187-8.

124 Ibid., 185-6.
provinces of Europe.”125 Their history is recounted as a false one: “a race of people fleeing from
the excrement of all Nations, retired into the Swamps of Venice and live among their fish, and
then the Fishermen have become Resellers, and the resellers Pilots, and the Pilots Merchants,
and they finally become the Lords of Cities and Provinces by their larceny, their murders, their
poisonings, and by all their other detestable crimes? You might believe it, Most Serene Princes,
but you would believe trickery.”126

This “strongly subtle” trickery is part of their statecraft. “They choose for their
ambassadors the Senators full of ruses and artifices, who trick and trap Foreign Princes, as the
Fish and the Birds.”127 Likewise do they abuse visitors: “No one ever comes to Venice who,
however sage or well-advised they might be, is not tricked, or tormented by a Customs Officer,
or is tormented by Informers, of which there is an infinite number.”128

Venetian greed is legendary. “Such is their avarice, extreme as it is, that it is better to
say nothing than to say too little.” Hélian cites the daily rental price of the Fondaco de Tedeschi
as sufficient for a year.129 Here Hélian contrasts the mercantile orientation with others more
honorable, and associates it with infidel beliefs: “They are engaged with the Bank, never the

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid., 186.

127 Ibid., 181. Note this reference to Venetian origins as fishers and bird-trappers.

128 Ibid., 19.

129 Ibid., 193.
Militia; with the Merchandise, never with the Letters; and they are devotees of Mohamed, and not of Jesus Christ.”

Indeed, Venetians are more Turks than Christians. “Ask of God, Most Serene Princes, whether the Venetians are more true Christians, or true Turks. For if they are good Christians, they would use their fleets to defend them, and not for the destruction of Christians as they have done; and we could again have Jerusalem, Constantinople, and all the Orient.” This is proven by the unwillingness of the Venetians to go to the aid of Constantinople against the Turks in 1453. Hélian reports that the Venetian general of the nearby fleet, when asked by Greek envoys for help, responded “that this was not the custom of the Republic to defend the Good of others,” and that “if one complained of the misery of the Christians, and he felt the pain, but he had an express order from the Senate that to use thus, and that he could not contravene without danger and loss of [Venetian] life. Meanwhile, Constantinople was taken, and pillaged, within sight of the Venetian Fleet, where one heard the cries and the groans of women and children, that one slaughtered without pity.” And after not helping their fellow Christians, “They bought from the Turks all that was precious, then filled their Ships, and, in a sort of triumph, took to Venice their Reliques and debris of the Roman Empire.”

The second fall of Constantinople calls to mind the first. Hélian resurrects the accusation of the traitorous treaty first invented by Antelm the Nasty in the early fourteenth century.

130 Ibid., 191.

131 Ibid., 196.

132 Ibid., 198-200.

133 See chapter two.
While Hélian’s accusation differs in minor ways from the original (for example, he conflates the siege of Zara with the digression of the fleet), the important point – Venetian selling out fellow Christians to the Sultan of Egypt’s silver – is there:

Saladin Sultan of Egypt assieged Jerusalem. In the noise of this Siege, many Lords resolved to die for the defense of the Religion, coming to Venice with their troops, and renting Ships to pass on to Syria. The Venetians had received their silver in advance, pretending that the winds were contrary, and exposing all their Army to Dalmatia, to serve in reducing Zara and other Cities raised in this Province. Meanwhile, the Sultan took Jerusalem, not by the fault of the Christians, as many people imagined; but by the malice and the treason of the Venetians.\(^{134}\)

Here is the first accusation of Venetians as torturers. “The Venetians have Butchers of Human Flesh, they have their deep pits and their Brazen Bulls\(^{135}\), as formerly cruel Tyrants had, whose excesses were reported by History. It is here that some of their Subjects have perished miserably, in whom they found too much merit, or who were suspected because of their great riches.”\(^{136}\)

Although presumably Hélian delivers his Harangue to a large group in Augsberg, he naturally tailors it specifically to the German emperor, recalling the recent wars in which Venetian troops had driven imperials troops back over the Alps, and imperial allies in northern Italy defeated. “The Alps are still stained red with [imperial soldiers’] blood, and the mountains are all white with the bones of your Citizens. The principles of the Senate and of the Nobility of

\(^{134}\) *Ibid.* 201

\(^{135}\) A Sicilian torture device.

Padua have been shamefully hanged for looking out for their own interests. After all this, [Venetians] have dared to present themselves here again with somber Robes, and demand of you Peace, with tears in their eyes and a piteous voice and a head hung down. These past days they have, at the foot of the walls of Verona, surprised in the night with rope ladders to climb and enter the City, and slaughter the garrison, and they nevertheless have the boldness to tell you.”

Now Hélian moves to the Venetian argument that if other Europeans do not support Venice, the city and its patrimony will be lost. “What, Most Serene Princes, do you want the ruin of Venice, do you want the ruin of all of Italy that Venice would burst before your eyes? It is not of your bounty or your clemency to want to lose such a flourishing City and such rich Merchants, neither to undo such beautiful and magnificent edifaces, of which there is such despoilment and trophies of the Romans and the Greeks, and the debris of many opulent Cities.”¹³⁷ Hélian appeals specifically to German pride. “You are no longer men, German Princes and Lords, you are no longer the dignified Inheritors of your Ancestors, if you give advantage to dominate these merchant Harpies, these venomous Serpents, these bloodthirsty Tigers, and these mortal enemies of Your Imperial Majesty and of all German Nations.”¹³⁸

Before closing, Hélian touches on the some items suggesting Venetian decadence. Venetians “pass their youths, not in Padua or Paris, but on the Sea, and instead of studying Philosophy and Law, where they would be instructed in the things of their Religion, are taught

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¹³⁷ Ibid., 194-5.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 196.
to suck people to the bone, and amass vast amounts of silver, and are clad in all the manners of Barbarians, and of all the superstitions and customs of the Mohamedans.”

Hélian gives little space to the charges of lascivious living, but that little makes his point. “I don’t pretend to tell you anything new about their horrible gourmandizing, nor their infamous debauchery. If you want to know something of their unnatural pleasures, one has only to glance at a group of pimps, and an entire nation of Whores and Wretches, without distinction of sex, age, or family, and no respect for religion.”

Indeed, the Venetians are so different from fellow Europeans, and so far out of the norm, that they constitute a different sort of people altogether. “As these Republicans are neither Turks, nor Christians, they make a third Sect, and takes a milieu between the good and the bad Angels; they are neither of the Sky, neither of the Inferno; they are the Werewolfs and the Evil Spirits, who want the night by the houses, who excite the storms and the tempests on the Sea against those who navigate; asseiging the poor Laborers through hail, and entering the Human Body through torment. They are only rich in the misery of others, and all that they could is come through the violence and through the injustice.”

One of the obligatory classical references is used to identify Venice with three of the cities destroyed by the Romans, forbears to his audience. “The Romans, wisest people in the universe, ruined three powerful Cities, that were all three capable of being the seat of the Empire of the World, Carthage for its perfidy; Capua for its voluptuousness, and Corinth for its

\[139\text{ Ibid., 189.}\]
\[140\text{ Ibid., 193.}\]
\[141\text{ Ibid. 196.}\]
avarice: vices that the Venetians have in high degree, without speaking of their other great faults, which are these particulars: this evil race was so to speak hard as a rock with ruses and trickery, of which it boasts being the great master. They only breathe treason and violence, and anyone who treats or traffics with them only repents it in the end.”

In his conclusion Hélian addresses the Venetians directly about their present plight. “You are homeless without friends, and almost without money. It is necessary now that you perish in your tour, in view of all the Princes. You who have had the hardness to see Constantinople perish without stirring; who have sold to the Turks so many Cities of Thrace, of Macedonia, of Greece, and of Dalmatia, those that have been loyal to your faith, which is only the faith of Carthage, or the perfidious African; You, who have abandoned so many of the poor Christians to these Barbarians, and who have been Merchants of their blood and their liberty. On what terms should I, to plead your extreme misfortune, Jerusalem, and that of all the Holy Land, who moans under the Tyranny of the Ottomans?”

After this performance, Helan treats us to a moment of false modesty. “It takes another man than me, Most Serene Princes, to speak against these wicked Republicans, that all the world finds worthy of execration, and all the most infamous and rigorous supplications. It takes an Orator more vehement, or a Prosecutor full of Divine fire, to excite in the spirit a just indignation and make movement against the epitome, the insolence, the rapine, the oppression, the treason, the cruelty, the sacrilege and they impiety of the Venetians, who puts his temerity just to this point, that they well dare again to enter the lists with the four most

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142 Ibid. 191-2.

143 Ibid., 200-1.
powerful Princes of Europe, and dispute them the Empire, even after having been vanquished; who has made a grand State from despoiling their Neighbors, who have tricked and oppressed; who have amassed in Venice all the gold, silver stones, walls, vases, statues, paintings; and last of all who have been able to find the most precious in all the places of the World, who they have left the mark of their avarice and their injustices.”

His penultimate paragraph is a recapitulation of all his charges. Venetians are people who have “filled up the Universe with funerals; who sully and charge their Subjects with Taxes, Fees, and Tariffs; and putting them in cruel servitude; who torment and insult Priests, profane Temples, usurping Good Ecclesiastics, and misusing the Pope, have almost abolished and anulled the Christian Religion, as they have tacitly conspired with the Great Sultan, and made a partition of the Universe with him, ceding to him and abandoning all the Eastern Empire, in order to have the West. Thus without doubt is the design of these Republicans, who mistake Princes, who sack and burn Cities, who pillage the Provinces, who abuse the Holy Places, who destroy the Christian Republic, and were born for the persecution and ruin of the Human Race. And through all this you sleep, Most Serene Princes, and you don’t take advantage of the pain? Listen a bit more, during which you lose the time to consult and deliberate, they scale the walls of Verona. That You, who have such Military reputation, you suffer this affront, this ignomie, that simple ruffians and little women would never suffer? You, I say, who have the example of your Ancestors that one would never offend with impunity.”

His final coda begins with one final charge of blasphemy:

144 Ibid., 206.

145 Ibid., 206-7.
Do not, I conjure in the name of God, do not let pass with impunity such injury that the Venetians and the Turks have made to Jesus Christ, and to all Christians in general, and to You in particular. Do not suffer it, that one reproach you for not having done your duty against the Barbarians; who in the Conquest of the East has committed a thousand abominations in the Churches, who have made to serve the Seraglio and their pleasures, and Equerried their horses; and then have dedicated themselves to the detestable Mohammed, whom they adore like a God; who have thrown the Religion of the Saints to the Dogs; who have laid down the Crucifix (I have horror to say it) in the path of the Horses, who have thrown it in the mud, etc., and then have attached it to the Gibbet, crying in a loud voice: Here is the God of the Christians, to the great ill of all Christianity, and particularly the German Nation. How thus do you not go against these wicked people? How do you not take your Eagles and your victorious arms against these Infidels? You should not only march, all Christians should follow you. Go first against the Venetians, who are the cause of all evil, and then against the Turk without obstacle. All these wars that you have made against others, they serve nothing to your glory: a little fever, a bad air, that you risk your life and reverse your designs, and that you never will rest, neither your pleasures, nor your buildings, nor all your commodities. But that which you have made for God you live at, and during your life, and after you death; and you find in the sky fivefold of what you have contributed for one so just and so Holy a War. Break thus the only obstacle that has stopped you, I mean Venice, the sewer of all waste, and the receptacle of all vices. Render liberty to all Christianity, and exterminate this evil Republic, with whom you will never live in security,

Thus it ends. In this speech Hélian has gathered in one place all the charges that had been made against the Venetians by the time of the League of Cambrai – greed, pride, ambition, republicanism, treating with the Infidel against fellow Christians, otherness – and added those that would come more to center stage in the future – decadence, lasciviousness, and bad education of their youth.

Perhaps most the most remarkable thing about this overwrought little tract is the extent to which, toward the end, it transcends the commonplace French observations about the Venetians from the Fourth Crusade, and reaches back to the rhetoric of the first Crusade. Pope

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Urban’s original call for the First Crusade in 1095 alluded, as does Hélian here, to offense against the person of Christ and abuse of the holy places. In an act of fundamental expulsion, Hélian has circled back to the earliest pan-Christian alliance against non-Christians and specifically removed Venice from it.

SUPPLEMENT

Yet for all this discovery and rediscovery, Amelot’s work on Venice was not done. He would publish a third work in that eventful year of 1677. Unlike the other two, this was not anti-Venetian, but quite the opposite: this was a work that showed Venice in what some would deem its finest hour. Tellingly, Amelot titled it simply the “Supplement” – as if perhaps to balance out the work? – to his History of the government of Venice, and had it attached, usually with the Examen and the Harangue, to every copy of the book. His own explanation was this:

Having spoken in several places in my History of the power of Secular Princes, and of the quarrels of the Republic of Venice with the Popes, I believed that I render a service to the Public if I give a Relation of the Difference that the Signory had with Paul V for the defense of his authority; with a translation of the two little Tracts on the Interdict published by the Doctors of Venice; the

147 Thomas Andrew Archer and Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, The crusades; the story of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem (New York: Putnam, 1894): 37-8; Howard, Venice and the East, Howard, 77. Pope Urban II “gathered a great Council at Clermont, where his exhortations stirred lords of every degree to bind themselves in a sacred mutual engagement to redeem the Sepulchre of Christ from the hands of the Mohammedan. Such is Albert of Aix’s narrative, and despite some taint of legend it is no doubt true in the main.”
http://archive.org/stream/crusadesstoryofl00archuoft/crusadesstoryofl00archuoft_djvu.txt Hélian did not go so far as to castigate the Venetians for their desultory participation in the original Crusade, although he might have. It was two years after the famous appeal of Pope Urban II before Venice took any visible steps to join the First Crusade, and two more years before it sailed.

148 Although the work is signed by Sarpi and four other churchmen (Sarpi is listed second, after the “Archdeacon and Vicar General of Venice”), it reads as pure Sarpi.
Monitory of this Pope against the Senate, and the Protestation of the Senate against this Monitory; and the Circular Letter written to the Cities of the State; all Pieces that I have judged worthy of the curiosity of Honest People, and that I judge to be even more attractive because they defend the common cause of all Princes against the pretensions and enterprises of the Roman Court.\(^{149}\)

He goes on to say that “this famous Affaire” that has occupied all the great princes of Europe, which indeed it had, being a particularly vivid example of the struggle between Catholic secular rulers and the Pope. The work is composed of nineteen propositions. The first two strike a legalistic note: commands do not oblige unless published, and that the Interdict of Pope Paul V was never published. The points quickly move to the tension of church-state responsibility. The next points say that commands of the Pope should not be executed by ecclesiastics if they would cause scandal or trouble with the church, and that not only scandal but an infinity of wrongs would come from observation of the Interdict. Furthermore, churchmen may act in their own interests; justifiable fear excuses observation and obedience of all laws and commandments, even if legitimate, and such fear might include fear of torment, prison, loss of means, and ruin of family. Point seven flatly says that Ecclesiastics had just fear of losing lives and wellbeing of selves and families if they were to keep the Interdict.

Here Sarpi moves on to the heart of the matter: that the power of the Popes is limited to divine law but does not extend over material matters. In fact, the obedience of Christians to the commands of the Pope is not absolute, because it is sinful to obey something that runs against the laws of God. At this point Sarpi asserts the right and responsibility of individuals to examine Papal teaching. He says that Christians are not obliged to obey the commandment of

\(^{149}\) Amelot, *Supplement*, 3-4
anyone, even the Pope, until they have examined whether or not it is appropriate, legitimate, and an obligation, and he who obeys blindly, without having made such an examination, sins. It is not enough for the Christian to receive assurance from the Pope that a given commandment is just; the Christian must examine it for himself. Furthermore, if after having examined a commandment someone is unable to determine whether or not it is contrary to the laws of God, or whether or not it would lead to scandal, that person is obliged to seek the counsel of wise men of good conscience and zealous in supporting the honor of the Holy See.

The next points move to the question of Interdict itself. When the Pope, in order to make himself obeyed in such things, relies on the authority given to him by Christ, and fulminates and passes a sentence of excommunication or interdict, we are not obliged it or execute it except for the respect due the Holy See, to the extent to which it is unjust and of no value. Indeed, a judgment which is unjust and void, even if pronounced by the Pope himself, is an abusive power, even an act of pure violence, for which it is permitted and necessary to him who does not have a prince who can defend him to oppose it with all of the strength God has given him, defying those who are trying to implement this sentence, except in those cases where one must show respect to the Holy See. It is a sin, not only for the judge who pronounces an unjust and void sentence, but also for the minister who executes it, when it is so obviously thus.

Finally, Sarpi ends with the responsibility of princes. The prince, against whom has been given this kind of a sentence of excommunication, and for which the whole is put into Interdict because he did not want to receive a bad commandment from his spiritual superior, can prevent a proclamation of this Interdict, and can continue to practice the Catholic religion, and
he would sin if he did not do this, if he had probable knowledge that the divine cult would suffer some diminution, and it would cause scandal. Sarpi ends by saying that the Interdict is a new censure which would lead to the destruction of the Church if we do not exercise all the discretion we should in the use that we make of it.150

Reading this, one is struck by two things. One is how very Protestant this sounds. No wonder that other readers from other nations thought Venice ripe for Protestantism151. If Sarpi was a loyal Catholic – as indeed he appeared to be – one could entertain a sense that Sarpi is saving the Pope from his own excesses. The other is to wonder why Amelot would translate Sarpi, at this time, and wrap this translation into his controversial Histoire? There are three possible reasons. The first is that Amelot clearly found Sarpi compelling – his Histoire follows Sarpi closely for most of the section on the Inquisition – and he might have been keen to let Sarpi speak in his own voice. Secondly, Sarpi was well known and would therefore sell well. Having familiarized himself already with the works, Sarpi might have found it a relatively easy step to make a full translation. Thirdly, Amelot might have felt as if the addition of the supplement would make the work as a whole seem more evenhanded, and diminish the possibility of a return visit to the Bastille.

Whatever the reason, Sarpi’s work was the fourth and last piece that Amelot published on Venice, after his Histoire, the Squitinio (translated as the Examen), and the Harangue. Let us evaluate these works in the context of their contribution to French anti-Venetian literature. I will take them not in chronological order, but in order of the novelty of their contribution – so


the hoariest first. The *Harangue* – originally written and delivered at a time when rulers of northern Italy and the Empire feared Venice and were seeking to ally against it – rehearsed every anti-Venetian fact or rumor that its author could find, some dating back to the crusading era. Originally the text of an overheated speech given at Augsburg in 1510, Amelot gave the aptly named *Harangue* new life by translating it from the Latin to the French and binding it with his own popular history.

The *Squitinio* is an inventive new calumny against the Venice myth of independence. In this work, the anonymous author takes a fanciful legend – that Venice was a Paduan colony – and purports to support it with a barrage of quotations from authors that, upon closer inspection, do not say what the author implies they say. He then extends this brash model to other eras of Venetian history. All in all it, is an elegant piece of anti-Venetian propaganda, produced either by one of Venice’s enemies, Spain or the Papacy, or both in concert as Casanova would have. This work is targeted specifically at the idea of Venetian independence.

Amelot’s original *Histoire* uses his own archival research and first-hand observations to identify Venetian shortcomings from their own ideal. It is not a repetition of earlier anti-Venetian thoughts. Rather it is a sorrowful depiction of the myth of Venice gone to seed, with yet much admiration for Venetian ideas, institutions, and wisdom in it. It added a new and compelling catalogue of anti-Venetian images. Some of these images related to personal behavior: of decadence, ennui, and the substitution of a life centered around the ridotto or the boudoir of the courtesan for the domestic setting – the substitution of unnatural debauchery for natural family life. Other images relate to a brutally efficient state: sinister goings on, midnight executions, mysterious disappearances, all being exercised without any mercy.
Amelot’s *Histoire* was reprinted 22 times, in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish – but it was never printed in Venice, which prohibited it as much as it could. As no Venetian was allowed to read it, none could refute it, and none did for a century.

**Casanova**

In seeking disparaging adjectives to attach to Amelot, his enemies have an embarrassment of riches. Thieving, anti-semitic, adulterous, and plagiaristic are all probably accurate descriptors, at one time or another, for this major force in early modern intellectual history. There is, then, a certain satisfying symmetry in the fact that Amelot’s major refuter – indeed, the only refuter that attempted to oppose him with words rather than imprisonment – was Giacomo Girolamo Casanova de Seingalt (1725 – 1798).\[^{152}\] The notorious Venetian libertine, braggart, swindler, and spy was also the author, in this case, of a very bad book.

The infamous polymath was a Venetian, born of theatrical parents in 1725, nineteen years after Amelot’s death. Toward the end of his eventful life he crossed pens with the ghost of Amelot in order to ingratiate himself with the Venetian Council of Ten that had exiled him on suspicion, almost certainly true, of spying. While this was the reason he gave and certainly the final cause of his writing, it appears that his thoughts had taken a turn of nostalgia for his home country, then in the final throes of its decline, and that this had been stimulated by conversations with Voltaire.

Voltaire’s *Candide* makes many passing references to Venice and includes two scenes set there. Though brief, these mentions speak volumes about the contemporary aura of Venice. The passing references show Venice as an entrepôt and meeting place for people on the make. Through the scene of the six fallen monarchs – the dethroned Grand Sultan, Emperor of Russia, King of England, two Kings of Poland, and King of Corsica\(^\text{153}\) - Venice is shown as the consolation destination for out-of-favor rulers and aristocrats, especially during Carnival season.

*Candide*’s second Venice scene depicts a noble class immobilized by ennui. Voltaire’s protagonists, wide-eyed innocents Candide and Martin, dine at the home of a jaded Venetian aristocrat, the Senator Pococurante.\(^\text{154}\) When Candide remarks on the beauty and grace of the two pretty serving girls, Pococurante replies

\(^{153}\) Voltaire, *Candide*, ed. Philip Littell (New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc. 1918), http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/19942/pg19942.txt (accessed March 6, 2013). Candide’s six dinner guests introduce themselves thus: “’My name is Achmet III. I was Grand Sultan many years. I dethroned my brother; my nephew dethroned me, my viziers were beheaded, and I am condemned to end my days in the old Seraglio. My nephew, the great Sultan Mahmoud, permits me to travel sometimes for my health, and I am come to spend the Carnival at Venice.’ A young man who sat next to Achmet, spoke then as follows: ‘My name is Ivan. I was once Emperor of all the Russias, but was dethroned in my cradle. My parents were confined in prison and I was educated there; yet I am sometimes allowed to travel in company with persons who act as guards; and I am come to spend the Carnival at Venice.’ The third said: ‘I am Charles Edward, King of England; my father has resigned all his legal rights to me. I have fought in defence of them; and above eight hundred of my adherents have been hanged, drawn, and quartered. I have been confined in prison; I am going to Rome, to pay a visit to the King, my father, who was dethroned as well as myself and my grandfather, and I am come to spend the Carnival at Venice.’ The fourth spoke thus in his turn: ‘I am the King of Poland; the fortune of war has stripped me of my hereditary dominions; my father underwent the same vicissitudes; I resign myself to Providence in the same manner as Sultan Achmet, the Emperor Ivan, and King Charles Edward, whom God long preserve; and I am come to the Carnival at Venice.’ The fifth said: ‘I am King of Poland also; I have been twice dethroned; but Providence has given me another country, where I have done more good than all the Sarmatian kings were ever capable of doing on the banks of the Vistula; I resign myself likewise to Providence, and am come to pass the Carnival at Venice.’ It was now the sixth monarch’s turn to speak: ‘Gentlemen,’ said he, ‘I am not so great a prince as any of you; however, I am a king. I am Theodore, elected King of Corsica; I had the title of Majesty, and now I am scarcely treated as a gentleman. I have coined money, and now am not worth a farthing; I have had two secretaries of state, and now I have scarce a valet; I have seen myself on a throne, and I have seen myself upon straw in a common jail in London. I am afraid that I shall meet with the same treatment here though, like your majesties, I am come to see the Carnival at Venice.’” Voltaire, 142-7.

\(^{154}\) A name that seems to seems to diminish, with “poco,” the esteemed title “procurator” – exactly what Voltaire seems determined to convey.
They are good enough creatures. I make them lie with me sometimes, for I am very tired of the ladies of the town, of their coquetries, of their jealousies, of their quarrels, of their humours, of their pettinesses, of their prides, of their follies, and of the sonnets which one must make, or have made, for them. But after all, these two girls begin to weary me.155

Similarly, Pococurante is weary of his world-class art collection (“the figures are not sufficiently rounded, nor in good relief”), his exquisite musicians (“I have long since renounced those paltry entertainments”), his gardens (“I know of nothing in so bad a taste”), his magnificently bound Homer (“that continual repetition of battles, so extremely like one another”), and his books of political philosophy (“I should be pleased with the liberty which inspires the English genius if passion and party spirit did not corrupt all that is estimable in this precious liberty”). The Venice Voltaire has captured here is one of a tired society whose nobles have long-since abandoned their responsibility for government service for enjoyment of their extensive fortunes – yet find no enjoyment in a life without purpose. This dispiriting conversation takes place not in Venice but in the Senator’s mainland villa. Everything once noble about Venice has been abandoned in Voltaire’s story, even the city itself.

The scene disgusts Candide and Martin, and is meant to disgust the reader, but Casanova reading it must have longed for such familiar comforts. In 1760, while visiting Voltaire where he was living in semi-retirement outside Gevena, they sparred over the “freedom” Venice afforded its citizens.156

155 Voltaire, ch. Xxv.
156 Early Casanova biographers have tended to be faithful to Casanova’s own account of this conversation from his memoirs; more recently Ian Kelly points out that Voltaire barely mentioned the entire visit. Here is how Ednor reconstructs the conversation: Casanova says to Voltaire “the liberty we enjoy is not so great as is enjoyed in England, but we are content.” Voltaire puses back, “What! Even in the Piombi?” Amelot replies, “My dentention was an act of great despotism; but, aware that I had knowingly abused my freedom, I somethings thought that the
Some years after this conversation with Voltaire, Casanova found himself in a Barcelona prison for 42 days. He later boasted of having written his refutation while in prison, completely from memory, leaving blanks only for quotes from Amelot.\textsuperscript{157} His biographers have attributed this claim to braggadocio. I assert that he may well have done so; the \textit{Confutazione} is a rambling, steam-of-consciousness work that gives more space to his intention to refute Amelot, indignation about Amelot, and anecdotes with distant connection to Amelot, than to any actual refutation, and more space to unrelated topics than to Amelot at all.

Casanova began his \textit{Confutazione} by pointing out his unique qualifications for writing it: it was illegal for other Venetians to read Amelot’s \textit{Histoire}, but Casanova was already exiled. He got advance sales for the book from well-wishers to help the publication process along. Although the title page says Amsterdam, the work was in fact published in Lugano. The work was intended to gain a reprieve from the Council of Ten’s sentence of exile, and Casanova must have calculated that the appearance of a three-volume work of that title would be more important than the actual quality of his arguments. If so, his major challenge would be filling up three volumes. In fact, he filled only half that amount with actual discussion of Amelot, and this consists of name-calling, tittle-tattle, and digression. In any event, three volumes appeared with the title \textit{Confutazione della storia del governo Veneto d’Amelot de la Houssaie}, and that might in the end have been all that was required for Casanova’s purposes.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 266-71.
In 1774 Casanova was restored to his home country. His first act was to visit the Council of Ten, which wanted to know how he had escaped from the piombi nineteen years before: the story on which he had dined out for decades was still to serve him well. Thus the Council of Ten was able to flex its aging muscles in a rare show of magnanimity against one of Venice’s most infamous native sons, appealing to them with this long-winded gesture of patriotism. Their pardon of Casanova came with the understanding that he would spy again, this time for them. All this occurred just twenty-three years before the fall of the Republic.\textsuperscript{159}

Perhaps the \textit{Confutazione} is most valuable in pointing out how much the institutions of Venice had indeed crumbled in its final century. That the Republic had not organized a refutation of Amelot’s work when it was being read all over Europe, but instead merely banned it at home, in reversal of its proud policy of tolerance, can be interpreted two ways. One is that Voltaire’s picture of Venetian nobility was accurate: they were mired in ennui to the point of incapacity. In an earlier age Senator Pococurante, or one of his equally well-read colleagues, would have been dispatched to undertake a refutation of Amelot that would trump the original with counter-attack,\textsuperscript{160} grave wit, and examples of Venetian achievement – but in the current age such talent was wasted on self-indulgent vanities. The second is that Amelot’s book was unanswerable – or so difficult to answer that the easier way to deal with it was suppression, and late eighteenth century Venetian officialdom was interested in the easier way. Of course these two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. The nobility may have become incapacitated, and the book may have been unanswerable. This inability of the Republic to

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 284-7.

\textsuperscript{160} Certainly the embarrassing facts of Amelot’s life gave rich material for such a counter-attack.
counter printed threat is consistent with a republic that was likewise unable to counter military threat when it came in 1797.

Other works by Amelot and Events of Amelot’s Life

His works on Venice were only the beginning of a long and productive but unhappy life for Amelot, in which his translations of Tacitus, Machiavelli, and Gracian were to make him one of the most widely read and reprinted authors of his time. He appeared to have a genius for making enemies, including a dictionary writer that used “Amelot” in twenty-six definitions, including those for dysentery and toilet paper. Amelot died in 1706 at the home of a supporter, into whose library Amelot’s own works were subsumed. He left no estate, no family, few friends. The recorded events in his life are a mixture of publications, arrests, and lawsuits. Most of the signal events in his life were catastrophes. He ended his life in indigence. As one biographer said, “The freedom with which he wrote on political subjects appears to have procured for him a temporary fame, unaccompanied with any other advantages.”

161 This writer, Pierre Richelet, wrote a poem featuring Amelot in the definition for “good sense” that I translate loosely as follows:

A nasally hoarder
Who doesn’t like people
A shadowy gossip
And miserable snark
Good sense cocked a snook at him,
This political animal,
Domestically snared –
He ought to be burned.

Originally published in 1664, this dictionary was republished up until 1722, so Amelot could be said to have achieved a kind of temporary immortality with it.


Summary of Amelot’s influence

Yet his influence was vast. Amelot’s importance in early modern political thought and intellectual history has only recently been recognized. In the collaboration – more accidental than intended – between royal ministers and entrepreneurial printers that led to the public sphere as we would recognize it, grubby Amelot played a major role. Throughout his career of authorship, translation, and editorial work, Amelot blurred the boundaries between original authorship and production to such an extent that the most important scholar of his life and work, Jacob Soll, has argued “that Amelot de La Houssaye is the author of the books he edited,”¹⁶⁴ and included in the list of “works by Amelot de La Houssaye” *Le Prince de Nicolas Machiavel*, *Histoire du concile de Trente*, and *Discours politiques sur Tacite*. This assertion is less outlandish than it might seem when one looks at the layout of a page of the last, where the words of Tacitus are surrounded and vastly outnumbered by Amelot’s summary and commentary. His intention was not to eclipse the originality of Machiavelli, Sarpi, or Tacitus, but rather to frame and emphasize their meaning for contemporaries – and to sell books. Although the conventional view would be the reverse, Soll argues convincingly that the better known authors served as amanuenses for Amelot. It was, after all, Amelot who chose them and brought their works to public light. If he chose for his own thoughts to take form in commentary and footnotes, it was because putting his name on an original work had led him to experience the inside of the Bastille.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of Amelot on Venetian historiography. There was particular interest in sixteenth-century England for works on Venice, and Contarini, Nani, and Amelot were translated into English by statesmen Lewes Lewkenor, Robert Honywood, and Thomas Belasyse, 1st Earl Fauconberg in 1599, 1673, and 1677 respectively. Amelot describes in his Histoire the warm feelings James I harbored for the Republic, and works on Venice authored by Englishmen appeared as well. On Honywood’s translation of Nani, the British Dictionary of National Biography says:

There may have been a domestic political motivation in Honywood’s choice of Nani’s history of Venice. From the civil war period onwards, the government and institutions of Venice had been of especial interest to Englishmen of parliamentarian and oppositional sympathies... Such men admired Venice as a mixed polity, in which the head of state ruled in collaboration with an enlightened aristocracy, and which had, uniquely among Italian states, successfully resisted tyranny. Interest in Venice seems to have been especially intense in the middle and later years of Charles II’s reign: Honywood’s translation is one of ten books on the government of the Serene Republic to have been published by Englishmen during this period. Since Nani’s history explicitly honors the institutions of Venice and celebrates liberty, it is probable that Honywood’s translation would have carried anti-monarchical and possibly republican connotations in the fraught English politics of the 1670s.

Amelot’s work on Venice – ultimately bound into one volume – was reprinted twenty two editions in three years, and translated into English, German, Italian, and Spanish. It would be found in the collections of John Adams, the Abbé de Saint-Real, Napoleon,  

165 James Howell, S.P.Q.V. : a survay of the signorie of Venice, of her admired policy, and method of government, etc. : With a cohortation to all Christian princes to resent her dangerous condition at present (London : Printed for Richard Lowndes at the White Lion in S. Pauls Churchyard, neer the West end, 1651).

166 Ibid.

167 The original John Adams Library contained many works on Venice, including those of Bembo, Morosini, Nani, Paruda, and Sabellico, as well as Amelot.  

http://www.johnadamslibrary.org/search/
British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, the first public library in Dublin, the forerunner of the New York Public Library, Edward Gibbon - and on the bedside of one Pierre Daru. Amelot’s Venice would become the Venice of the nineteenth century.


170 Eleven works by Amelot are part of the rare book collection of Archbishop Marsh’s Library, founded in 1701 in Dublin by Bishop Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713).  
http://books.google.com/books?id=wX5aAAAAIAAJ&dq=amelot+disraeli&source=gbs_navlinks_s
http://www.marshlibrary.ie/catalogue/Search/Results?lookfor=amelot&type=AllFields&submit=Find

171 http://books.google.com/books?id=s-eqATEMaowC&dq=amelot+histoire+venise+astor+catalogue&source=gbs_navlinks_s

http://books.google.com/books?id=rpVpAAAAIAAJ&dq=amelot+venice+gibbon&source=gbs_navlinks_s

173 This is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

FROM ENLIGHTENMENT TO DEMOCRACY:
FRENCH VIEW OF VENICE FROM THE AGE OF NAPOLEON

Introduction

Just forty-five years separated Casanova’s restoration to his native home in 1774 and the 1819 publication of Pierre Antoine Noël Bruno Daru’s *Histoire de la République de Venise* – but for both France and Venice, that brief band of time separated two eras, worlds apart. In Venice those years saw, perhaps not the death of the Venetian Republic – the previous chapter showed all the ways in which its institutions had withered over its last two centuries – but its official declaration of death, the final abandonment of any hint of pride and independence, and the dismantling of its political, cultural, and economic life.

Events in France were of much farther reaching importance. The France of Casanova’s adventures, one of unbridled aristocratic advantage and unsustainable government borrowing, could not last. Class hatred culminated in the seizing of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, followed by two months of the Great Fear, the articulation of the Rights of Man, and the August decree. In one summer, the French people would see idealism, anarchy, and the flushing away of centuries-old privilege in a river of blood. Montesquieu and Necker, Jacobins and royalists, Montanards and Girondins, *anciens* and *sans coulottes*, Louix XVI and Robespierre, the Third Estate and the *Cinq-Cents*, Marie Antoinette and real-life Mesdame Defarge, Bourbons and ultra-Royalists, Thermadore and the Directory – all these tumbled across the stage that was France, to
the collective bewilderment of the rest of Europe, during these years. It was a short
Corsican artillery lieutenant, whose upward military progress was hastened by the flight
of noble officers as well as his own drive and brilliance, that finally harnessed the
whirlwind of social change. He led military triumphs that distended the borders of the
French Empire from Gibralter to Russia, and Naples to the Arctic Circle. Napoleon’s
restless genius, genuine desire for progress, and ambitions for immortal fame all
contributed to major innovations, including the Concordat with the Catholic Church and
the Napoleonic Code. Imperial pretensions, misplaced family loyalties, and British
defeats all preceded his abdication in 1814 – brief comeback for the so-called Hundred
Days – and final exile the following year. In the Bourbon restoration that followed,
liberal royalists prevailed over ultra-royalists in a period of fragile peace. It was in post-
Napoleonic Paris in the early ears of the Bourbons that Daru’s *Histoire de la République
de Venise* was written.

Venice’s end came at the hands of Napoleon, in the lightening march across
northern Italy that was to endear him to the French people and earn him his coveted
imperial crown. If Napoleon’s armies moved more quickly and fought more effectively
than their Italian enemy, it was only in part due to his driven leadership, and the general
state of disarray he found in Italy. It was also due to a superb officer corps, recruited, as
was Napoleon himself, not on the basis of blue blood, but of merit. His chief commissary
officer – whose career took him from junior artillery officer to minister of state in charge
of war efforts, grand eagle in the Legion of Honor, membership in the Académie
française and Académie des sciences, and made him a Chevalier of Saint-Louis and count of the empire – was Daru.

**Daru and Stendhal**

Pierre Antoine Noël Bruno Daru (1767 – 1829) came from a modest background in Montpellier and was educated at a military school run by the Oratorians. He had ties to, although did not attend, Saint-Cyr, and entered artillery service at an early age. At the same time he was keenly interested in literature, published several minor pieces early on, and continued to write throughout his life. His talent as an officer was recognized as early as 1793, when at age twenty six he was assigned to lead units protecting the coasts of Brittany from British or French Royalist incursions. He experienced the Reign of Terror personally, imprisoned on charges of collaborating with Royalists and the British, and emerged in 1794 during the Thermidorian Reaction, after the fall of Robespierre in the summer of 1794. In 1799, he became chief commissary to the French Army in the north of Switzerland, where his talent, hard work, and honesty were noted, this last being in particularly short supply among the corrupt and fast-moving French army. After the Eighteenth Brumaire coup in November 1799, Napoleon appointed Daru to be chief commissary to the army in northern Italy, which Napoleon himself, then First Consul, effectively commanded. Daru was one of three French officers to sign the armistice with the Empire which closed the campaign in North Italy in June 1800. When France entered war with Great Britain in 1803, Daru became chief commissary for the army on the northern coasts and then for La Grande Armée, which in the autumn of 1805 defeated the armies of the Austrian Empire and Russia. After
Austerlitz, he helped draft the Treaty of Pressburg. In 1807 he was the chief financial and administrative officer for the French army in Prussia, and was one of the chief agents through whom Napoleon pressed hard on that land. Daru was present at a meeting between Napoleon and Goethe during which he inserted appropriate references to Goethe’s works. Daru was made a count of the Empire in 1809 and secretary of state in 1811, showing great ability in domestic matters, and in 1813, after a series of French defeats, he took up the portfolio of military affairs until Napoleon’s abdication in 1814. Daru helped Napoleon during the “Hundred Days” of his brief return to power, and after the Second Bourbon Restoration became a member of the Chamber of Peers, opposing the Ultra-royalists. He died in 1829 at the age of 62.

This last French author was a man of immense practical abilities and accomplishment. We also happen to know a great deal about his personal life and personality from an unusual source. Daru was the cousin of Stendhal, and helped the writer at several points in his youth to get a commission in the French army as a cavalry officer and other state posts. Stendhal’s impressions of his powerful cousin are vivid and worthy of digression.

Although both men were polymaths, brilliant in both mathematics and literature, Daru and Stendhal had completely different temperaments. Stendhal found his cousin, for the most part, gloomy and irascible; we can only imagine what Daru thought of his shy, sensitive nephew, whose stated goal when coming to Paris was “to be a seducer of
women.”¹ Stendhal was 16 when he came to live in the Daru household in 1799 from Grenoble. Emotionally wounded by his mother’s death when he was seven, and the cold treatment he received from his other family, Stendhal studied mathematics to escape, and took the first prize at his school. Although students that had won the second prize gained entry to the Ecole Polytechnic, Stendhal “was careful not to stand examination” for it. Arriving in Paris the day after the Eighteenth Brumaire (9 November 1799), he immersed himself in salon life, fell in love repeatedly, and scrutinized – with a novelist’s eye and a teenager’s disdain – the relatives with whom he now lived. Daru, sixteen years Stendhal’s senior, was back in Paris after distinguishing himself on campaign with Napoleon in northern Italy when Stendhal joined the family quarters. He had spent the spring with the French army in the Danube. Just two weeks after Stendhal moved in, Daru was attached to the Cinq-Cents for military legislation, advancing Napoleon’s war agenda from politically divisive Paris. Within a year of Stendhal’s arrival, Daru’s would be one of three French signatures on the armistice with the Empire which closed the northern Italian campaign. They lived in different worlds, the diligent military administrator working for one of the most driven leaders in history, and the excruciatingly sensitive and self-involved teenage boy, while at the same time they shared living quarters and family life. Stendhal’s Oedipal sensibilities are well known,²

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and it is thus not suprising to see the looming role Daru plays (unknown to himself) in Stendhal’s burgeoning emotional life. His fascination and hatred of the older man comes through over and over. In his introduction of Daru Stendhal describes him as a “man of the world, some old sixty-five years old” – in fact Daru was 32 at the time! – who “must be properly scandalized by my clumsiness and awkwardness.”

He describes Daru’s background, which is the same as his own:

M. Daru, out of Grenoble, was the son of a bourgeois family claiming nobility, as was all my family. He made his own way in the world, and without stealing had perhaps met four or five hundred thousand francs to his name. He had crossed the Revolution with skill, and without being blinded by love or hatred. He was a man without passion…. He had bought a house in the Rue de Lille, number 505, at the corner of rue de Bellechasse, which he modestly occupied the small apartment above the gate. He looked like a fake who had been around.

Mme. Daru, for whom Stendhal would later conceive a probably unrequited passion, makes an unpromising first impression. Here again is the adolescent propensity to see everyone over thirty as “old”:

His wife was little and wizened who, like any provincial, who had married him because of his fortune, which was considerable, and things she dared not whisper to him. Ms. Daru was good at heart and strongly polished, with an air of dignity befitting the wife of a provincial souspréfète. I've never met anyone more completely deprived of heavenly fire. Nothing in the world could move her soul to do something noble and generous.

The entire Daru family was to have a great influence on the emotionally starved young writer; indeed, this immersion into warm family life, after his loveless upbringing in the provinces, must have constituted an important stage in his life. He found Daru’s

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3 Stendhal, Brulard, 23.
oldest son to be “prudent, wise, but unfriendly.” He was closer to the younger son, who was something of a dandy (as Stendhal aspired to be: “He had neither head nor spirit, but a good heart, he could not hurt anyone”). It was the daughters who receive the most attention from Stendhal, especially the high-spirited Mme. Cambon. ⁴

After a few months of life in Paris with his newfound family, discontent set it. “There was dinner, which bored me to death. The cuisine of Paris I disliked almost as much as its lack of mountains.” He lacked money, and the cramped apartment, with its cramped provincial values, felt constrictive. He was desperate for education of a different kind, one partially fulfilled by the salon life he was gradually discovering:

I had seen the world, and even that old neck of a bottle, Madame de Montmort, the original Madame de Merteuil in Dangerous Liaisons. She was now old, rich and lame. On moral grounds, she objected that no one spoiled me, and when I went to her house she always did. "It's so hard for the young!" she said.

Stendhal contrasted with “the silence that fell too often at the court of that old bourgeois despot, bored M. Daru. That was my main complaint. A man should be, in my opinion, a passionate lover, and with the outlook of a child, bringing joy and movement to every society he joins. He invokes “the universal joy, the art of pleasing” he finds in Shakespeare’s comedies, the “kindness and pure air in the courtyard of an ex-prefect, an old libertine, somewhat bored, and devout, I think! The absurd cannot go further.” This contrasted with the silence of the Daru living room. “I was dying of stress, disappointment, dissatisfaction with myself.” The endless spiral of self-absorption felt by the young man come from the provinces would soon be broken. Stendhal was alone in

⁴ Ibid., 78-81.
his room, looking out the window and thinking "Should I compose music or write comedy, like Molière? " when he was distracted by Daru, come to ask why he did not sit for the entry exam to the Ecole Polytechnique or, if this year was lost, why he did not study for the exams of the following season, in September 1800. What struck Stendhal was not so much the older man’s question as his manner during the conversation:

This severe old man heard my explanation me with great politeness. It was the first time he would show this courtesy, so new to me, it was the first time in my life an older relative had called me “Mr.,” and in my shyness it made me crazy. I saw very well the question at the bottom of the conversation, but these polished preparations made me suspect deeper, unknown, terrible things.

Stendhal infused what must have been a short conversation, experienced by Daru as a family responsibility interrupting his work, with gigantic meaning, which he describes in contradictory language suggesting its looming depth of meaning for him.

I felt terrified by the diplomatic ways of the skillful ex-prefect, which made me unable to express my opinion. The complete absence of formal school made me feel a child of ten years in my relationship with the world. The aspect of this imposing character, who intimidated everyone in his home, starting with his wife and eldest son, talking to me face-to-face, behind closed doors, made me speechless. Even today I see this figure of M. Daru the father, looking at me, just me, with his head a little cocked…. The extreme anxiety of the moment has destroyed my memory of it. Perhaps M. Daru said something like: “My dear cousin, I will leave here in eight days.” In the excess of my shyness and my anxiety and my dismay, it seemed to me that I was reading from a script written in advance of the conversation I wanted to have with M Daru. I do not remember a single detail of this terrible interview. I think I said “My parents let me determine my own path in life.” M. Daru, with a rich tone and a feeling that struck me hard for a man so full of action, and habits so diplomatic, replied “I can see that all too well.” The word struck me, everything else is forgotten.

Stendhal’s exaggerated over-interpretation of this conversation with Daru was soon displaced by other vivid feelings, generally involving women. For example, one
memory he records involves his room, which overlooked a garden from the second floor. The house had belonged to Condorcet, whose pretty widow was living with a scientist nearby. Condorcet, “not to be harassed by the world,” had kept a ladder in wood, by which he climbed to his own room on the third floor. The thought struck him with delight: Condorcet, the author of logic (which Stendhal had read with enthusiasm two or three times), climbing the ladder to his pretty wife in the room above Stendhal’s own.

The Polytechnique question haunted him. He longed for some “supreme good,” worthy of sacrifice – and in his callowness, he saw these “boring” years in Paris as that. He saw his reluctance to enter the Polytechnique the following year not as fear, because he loved mathematics, but because he could not see it answering the “terrible question”: Where is happiness on earth? Or, is there happiness on earth? Then he is charmed by spring, and admits that “as sagacity has never been my forte, I missed the most important fact; I was like a skittish horse who does not see what is, but imaginary obstacles and dangers. My heart rose, and I walked proudly past the greatest perils. I am still well today.” As so often happens in reading these passages, we strain to find the “fact,” when the point is Stendhal’s feeling. Perhaps the fact we seek is to be found at the end of this particular paragraph, when he relates that Daru’s oldest daughter, the charming Mme. Cambon, upon seeing Stendhal in an olive-colored velvet jacket, remarked, "It suits you very well."5

5 Ibid., 107-16.
In 1800, probably following Daru’s promotion, the family moves into larger quarters in a building owned by the former maid of Marie Antoinette, who was “quite glad of the protection of two wars Commissioners,” Daru and his son. Stendhal too is getting along in the world, remarking that he “seemed to be very well received in the salon of Mme. Cardon, in January 1800. They played charades with disguises, and there was constantly joking. Poor Mrs. Cambon was not always there; madness offended her pain, she died a few months later.”

We are given no direct insight as to how the death of his oldest daughter might have affected Daru, but it might have prompted a turn, even at this busy time of his career, to poetry. He wrote Cléopédie, “a little poem in the Jesuit style, that is to say in the genre of Latin poems made by the Jesuits in 1700.” Stendhal remarked that it seemed now to him “flat and runny” but was the sort of thing he ready thirty years before. At this time Daru was also the president of four literary societies – “this kind of silliness abounded in 1800, and was not as empty as it seems today...reborn after the Terror and years of fear.” This occasioned the most affectionate anecdote Stendhal gives regarding Daru, who related the story to Stendhal with “a sweet joy in the glory of his eldest son.” The “glory” was, apparently, a cross-dressing episode that ended in laughter for the usually taciturn older man. As Daru was returning from a literary society, he saw his son Edmond, disguised as a girl, and chased him up the stairs, at which point Edmund’s petticoats fall off. “I was very surprised,” Stendahl quotes Daru as saying, “to see that kind of person in our neighborhood!”
Daru – probably attempting to do something with his difficult younger relative that they would both enjoy – took him to some of these literary meetings. Stendhal could not enjoy it. “Poetry horrified me: what’s the difference with Ariosto and Voltaire! This was bourgeois and flat (which I already had good school!).” He did, however, admire the throat of one of the society ladies as she read a poem.  

A somewhat more mature Stendhal shows us Daru at work. We get a vivid picture of life at the war office in Paris, with Daru in charge of seven or eight hundred clerks under fifteen or twenty leaders in an atmosphere of nearly unbearable tension. “I soon caught the contagion the terror inspired by M. Daru.” Everyone trembled at addressing him – Stendhal trembled even at the sight of the door. Daru berated the supervisors, “mostly men of no talent,” for shortening or simplifying or confusing the business at hand. Stendhal pictures the source of the stress: on the left side of his desk, a pile of letters, sometimes a foot high, asking for orders, each one beginning: "I have not received orders from Your Excellency ... and with the prospect of Napoleon at angry and saying that there was negligence, etc."  

In 1809 Stendhal, now a young commissioned officer, is thrown together with his much more senior relative who is bearing the burden of Napoleon’s military ambitions in Erfurt. For about a week the two of them, working along, have overall stewardship of the army in that theater. Daru has made his reputation on efficient movement of

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6 Ibid., 121.
7 Ibid., 143-6.
supplies, and lives and military ends hang in the balance of the decisions he makes.

Stendhal describes the pressure:

There was not even a copyist. I was amazed by what he did. He only got angry maybe two or three times a day. It should have been a pleasure, but I was upset by his harsh words, and angry against myself for that. The assignment didn’t help my progress and, besides, I’ve never been crazy for advancement. I see today that I only wanted as much as possible to be separated from M. Daru, if only by a door half closed. His harsh words on me, present and absent, were unbearable.

Ultimately the pain Stendhal felt in his interactions with his cousin from these days – “the volcano of insults” – overshadowed whatever kindness Daru may have shown him as an adolescent (“a nine-year-old of sixteen”), and the considerable help Daru gave to him professionally. Stendhal mined his recollections of Daru over and over, portraying him, always in unflattering terms, as Burrhus, Z, Probus, S[on] E[xcellence], and Bostargi Bacha.8 Stendhal summed up his impressions of Daru this way:

My relationship with M. Daru started in February or January 1800 and ended with his death in 1829. He was my benefactor, in the sense that I was preferred to many others, but I spent with him many days of rain, with a headache from an overheated stove, writing from ten in the morning to to one hour after midnight, under the eyes of a madman who was constantly angry because he was always afraid. It was a ricochet... he had a mortal fear of Napoleon, and I had a mortal fear of him.... M. Daru and I look at the heart of man and the nature of man from different sides.9

Ultimately any description of Daru we have from Standhal is more about Stendhal than Daru, but we are fortunate, in attempting to understand this majestic but fundamentally flawed work, to have some rounded image of its author.

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9 Stendhal, Brulard, 145.
Histoire de la République de Venise

Readers coming to Daru expecting anti-Venetian excoriation find something altogether different. Daru the historian was no less diligent than Daru the intendant, and no less scrupulous. It is clear that he did not intend to write a polemic but a well-researched history. He steeped himself in the Venetians’ own history of themselves, and the Italian view of them, as well as the French view: of the ninety works cited in the lengthy work, twenty-five are by Venetian authors and twenty-seven by other Italians, and his own work reflects careful study of theirs. His is not just a work of power shifts; Daru is a sensitive and perceptive student of human nature as well. And we let us not forget that this military intendant was a poet as well. Although Daru’s chapters are short and his paragraphs numbered, military style, the cadence and craft in his writing is worthy of the story. Stendhal was not the only gifted writer in the family.

Over the course of the book’s thirty-nine chapters and 1,400 pages, Daru describes the long rise, long crest, and long fall of the Venetian republic from the political-military, and cultural perspectives. Daru’s authorial view is not unlike that of Guicciardini in the fifteenth century, or Nani in the sixteenth century, or Norwich in the twentieth century: an omniscient narrator of historical events who steps aside from time to time to comment approvingly, or foreshadow ominously, the dramatic action. Yet his view is slightly different from any of these. Guicciardini was a Florentine who considered himself to be an Italian, and considered Venice an enemy of Italian unity. Nani was a Venetian, although not afraid to criticize Venice in his works. Like Daru, both men were statesmen as well as historians, and like Daru they had some hand in the
unfolding of the story they told. Norwich, an Englishman, sees the Venetian republic in
the past; the entire millennium-and-a-half will lead to an ignoble downfall that it is his
sad duty to tell.

Daru’s authorial voice does not remain constant. It shifts for the obvious reason:
he was part of the conquering army that executed the ignoble downfall. And so in the
last quarter of Daru’s work – basically from the Spanish conspiracy in 1618 onward – we
see the omniscient perspective come out from behind the clouds. The voice becomes
less impartial – it becomes a French voice. At the end of the book, the pronoun for
France has shifted from “they” to “we.” Inevitably, the closing chapters become an
apologia for French action.

Any book that purports to treat the entire history of the Venetian republic is an
undertaking of magisterial proportions. Daru gave this book the years of effort that it
required, and we can only imagine the late nights and early mornings it must have
required (we have the picture from Stendhal to help us imagine). We have seen that he
digested ninety works on Venice, in French, Italian, and other languages, organized his
scheme, and wrote it in succinct and elegant prose. If he lingers longer than attention
might warrant over the military chapters, we must remember that he was a military
man, for whom every battle is a unique set of circumstances and who has seen how skill
and luck interplay in making victory or defeat. As a working military administrator and
battlefield negotiator, he knows how the immediate aftermath of a battle can magnify a
win or attenuate a loss. Importantly, he knows how propaganda is used alongside
military might. Daru’s working expertise with these elements of government make him a shrewd and often sympathetic observer of the Venetian position.

As a historical work, Daru’s history is a mountainous undertaking and in many ways superb. Let us select a few key moments in Venetian history to look at Daru’s treatment of them. Regarding Venetian origins, Daru begins by writing that Venice is remarkable for the singularity of its origins, its site, and its institutions, and goes on to say that “tradition” has given Venice an Asiatic origin, and that this is no news to the “lovers of antiquity.” Then in one deft paragraph he quotes Strabon, Virgil, and Homer, then two of the medieval scholars that developed those vague references into the much the much coveted Trojan origin for Venice, another author that calls it all a “vast field of conjecture,” and points out that an equally good Trojan case can be made for Prussia, Flanders, and Poland. He concludes by admitting that “the Venetians, of whom so little is known of their origin, remain ignorant about their early centuries.”

Daru’s treatment of the closing of the aristocracy in Venice – the so-called Serrata – is likewise well-researched, moderate, and original. He interrupts – with obvious reluctance – his description of military matters to treat the political institutions of Venice. First he traces the history of the peninsula from the fall of the empire. Then he sets the context by reviewing, one by one, political evolution in Milan, Genoa, Florence, Siena, Pistoia, and Pisa, pointing out the commonality they shared of


11 Ibid., 40-1.
resistance at various times to conquerors. Venice, Daru asserts plainly, had never been conquered, and its leading citizens had acquired great wealth not from serfdom but from immense trade – which Daru termed a “more pure” source. These leading citizens were “a most respected nobility of Europe, serving the state with honor; Venice was, in short, “worthy of the freedom she had managed to defend.” The Doge, Daru points out, had seen his power diminish a century before, with advisors not of his choosing and mandated committees surrounding his official actions; the Senate and the Great Council were already, by the thirteenth century, the repositories of power. It was, in Daru’s telling, a gradual process by which the Great Council became a “self-renewing” or closed body, but even so one in which “none of the most illustrious citizens of Venice pretended they sat on the council for themselves, they sat rather for their constituents.” For Daru, it was not power-hungry oligarchy, but temperate responsibility, that drove the development of the Venetian political constitution in these centuries.\(^{12}\)

Daru’s telling of the story of Venice’s acquisition of Cyprus\(^ {13}\) draws on a particularly wide range of sources and writing styles. The first part of the story – the courtship and wedding of James the Bastard King of Cyprus and Catherine Cornaro – is told as a domestic comedy of manners before the tone changes from entertaining narrative to grim realpolitik.

James, realizing he does not have a priestly vocation, falls in love with a portrait of Catherine while visiting her uncle. The marriage is arranged, executed, and

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., 238-40.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 546-56. See chapter three for the basic story.
consummated, with all due ceremony.\textsuperscript{14} Three years later James he is dead, having left a widow and infant son along with three natural children, and “one did not hesitate to attribute to poison” his death. “Hardly had the king’s eyes closed” when Catherine is shoved aside by a hovering Venetian admiral who grasps the reins of power. She learns that her sister-in-law Charlotte is reasserting her claims and has appealed to the Venetians, as a legitimate Lusignan daughter, and has produced a son. As if to underscore the fragility of Catherine’s position, Venetians stood at the font with her rival, Charlotte, as her newborn son is baptized. Tense years follow, with the King of Naples, the Egyptians, and the Turks watching for their opportunities. Catherine does not fold. In 1488, twenty years after the Venetians escorted their “daughter” Catherine to Cyprus as a new bride, and fifteen years since she has ruled alone, Catherine is treated in public as a queen, but on the inside, she is just Catherine Cornaro. In a monstrous contradiction, the Republic wants to inherit a title “as mother,” and they are impatient to inherit. “Catherine has faced this obsession with a patience that maddens her tyrants.”

Venetian impatience is underscored by the fact that their “inheritance” is not yet assured; Catherine is sufficiently young to remarry and redirect the succession, and Venice would lose twenty years of effort and a rich island if that happened. Some of her relatives in Venice have forgotten to temper their ambition for princely titles, and the

\textsuperscript{14} It was Rawdon Brown who first connected Catherine Cornaro with the St. Ursula cycle of paintings done by Vittore Carpaccio for the Scuole de S. Orsolo in 1497-8.
Inquisition of State “imposed their silence.” Nonetheless, the Queen of Cyprus did not lack for heirs. A government so prudent would not fail to present such a great danger. Catherine must be prevailed upon to renounce her crown – and before the impending war between the Turks and the Sultan of Egypt broke out. Finally Venice sends her own brother; finally Catherine submits. So we see, opines Daru, the cruelty and injustice of this acquisition, engineered by the Inquisitors of State.

In the ceremonies of investiture Venice has legitimized their usurpation. A Venetian ambassador went to the Sultan of Egypt with gifts on behalf of Catherine and the signory of Venice, and made a speech of faith and homage, which the Sultan received with hauteur, claiming to know no other ruler of Cyprus than the queen. It was a year before the Sultan would receive the Venetians and number them among his vassals. When this grand iniquity was consummated, George Cornaro became a Procurator of St Mark, and his son received a cardinal’s hat, so touched was Pope Alexander VI to see conserved for the true religion a realm menaced by the power of the Moslems.

We note three elements in this account of the acquisition of Cyprus. First, Daru has given us a great deal of information – more than other accounts. We learn of James the Bastard’s natural children. We learn of the Sultan of Egypt’s stalling. We learn that Venetians were present at the baptism of Charlotte’s son. Clearly Daru has researched this chapter in Venetian history thoroughly. Secondly, he has discriminated among his

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15 See the appendix for the text of the “statutes” of the Inquisition of Venice regarding this.

16 This was the second highest honor in Venice after the Dogeship.
sources. We might wonder at his giving us a chatty and romanticized version of the courtship – the source for this triviality cannot have its detail verified. Yet Daru has abstained from using unverifiable sources for more substantive matters. We do not see, for example, James the Bastard’s spurious speech, about which Daru would surely have known. We can infer that he saw no harm in giving a little color and humanity to his characters, but drew the line at passing along politically freighted accounts unless he was sure of their accuracy.

Finally, we see that Daru sees this story as an inflection point in the morals of the Venetian Republic. Not only did this occupation of Cyprus by the Venetians, Daru writes, augment the power of the Republic; it brought about a revolution in its mores, and accelerated their depravation. These Cypriots were extremely corrupt. The climate of the island, and the ease of acquiring riches, turned the Venetians into voluptuous satraps who imported into their home country the habit of indolence and monstrous disorder. Their example corrupted the entire population, and the government did nothing to arrest the process of contagion. One might say that it is a principle of aristocracies to deprave mores, and dampen generous passions, to guarantee the tranquility of the state, and favor the oligarchy.17

Daru sees Cyprus as a key moment for the Republic. The admiration he has shown up until this point now becomes dampened, bit by bit. It was not a chance romance in this corrupt island that was the key. It was an institution back in Venice, one that Daru introduced without fanfare 26 pages before his account of Cyprus begins, and

17 Ibid., 555.
mentions again toward the end of that account. Institutions matter to Daru. He was a believer in, and a driver of, Napoleonic institutional reform. Daru also had the respect for evidence that characterized the best of French practical thought from Colbert through Braudel. Unfortunately for Daru, some of the “evidence” on which he relied was manufactured, producing in his mind an institution that did not exist.

Statutes of the Inquisition of State

In the course of writing his work Daru examined thousands of works. Many were themselves earlier histories of Venice, based on documents from the copious Venetian archives. The closer Daru approached to the time in which he was writing, the more he had to rely on documents directly. He was writing from Paris, where much material from Venice had been shipped, archives in addition to artworks. One particular document fell into his hands (to use Amelot’s phrase) that was to overshadow all others in terms of his book’s legacy, and that is the so-called Statutes of the Inquisition of State.

The “Inquisition of State” referred to in these statutes requires careful explanation about what it is not. First, it has nothing to do with religion. What is generally called the “Ecclesiastical Inquisition” or the “Inquisition of Venice” is the activity in which Venetian state cooperated with the church in rooting out heresy. Doge Francesco Dona and his six councilors established the Inquisition of Venice on 22 April 1547. “Half Holy Office linked to Rome, half board of magistrates accountable to the Ten, the Senate and the Collegio, this tribunal was designed to deal with the religious
problems of one of the most variegated city populations in Christian Europe.”\(^{18}\) That
Inquisition is a fascinating story – Amelot devotes over thirty pages to that Inquisition
and the many ways in which the Republic delimits its authority, part of its ongoing effort
to weaken the power of Rome within its borders – but it is not this story.

Secondly, and on a more subtle plane, the “Inquisition of State” referred to in
Daru’s statutes is not subject to the Council of Ten, but a separate body.

Finally, Daru’s “Inquisition of State” is all-powerful, unconstrained, and utterly
secret.

There was a real Inquisition of State.\(^{19}\) It was established at some unknown point
in the fifteenth century as a sub-group of the Council of Ten, composed of two or three
men. They served as investigators for the Ten and their charge was “to come to the
Council with what they have found, and the Council will decide what it thinks best with
regard to them.”\(^{20}\) They spied on the people they were told to spy upon by the Council
of Ten (which was really a council of sixteen, as it included the six dogal counselors).
They had no authorization to act on their own account. Their remit, as the entire Council
of Ten’s, was limited to crimes against the state.


\(^{19}\) To minimize confusion, I will refer to the real body without quotations and the body as
discussed by Daru and others and based on the forged “Statutes” with quotations.

\(^{20}\) Francis Marion Crawford, *Venice, the place and the people: Salve Venetia; gleanings from
http://books.google.com/books/about/Venice_the_place_and_the_people.html?id=4qBDAAAAAYAAJ
(accessed February 19, 2013). Crawford has summarized nicely the findings of the various historians that
disbelieved the “Statutes.”
In 1539 this group took on the title Inquisition of State and began to act as their own tribunal; however, they were still associated with the Council of Ten. In 1582 they were confirmed in having a separate tribunal and their own archives. Their portfolio continued to be public safety, that is plots and conspiracies against the state. That Inquisition, while it is held in the same grim regard as the Ten itself, is not the Inquisition of the “Statutes.”

To understand the difference between the two, let us take a closer look at the fictitious “Statutes.”²¹ There are 103 of them: the first forty-eight date from 1454; the next 21 are undated but refer to the fall of Cyprus, which means 1489 or later; and the last 34 are undated but say “from the term of Francesco and after.” They begin succinctly:

1. All regulations and orders of the court will be written in the hand of one of us. We will use a secretary for the shipment of implementing acts without the initiate into the secret council.

2. This status will be enclosed in a cassette which each of us keep the key in turn for a month in order to have the facility to put the chapter in memory.

3. The form of proceeding the court will always secret. Neither we nor our successors, will bear no outward sign. Public service to be the better assured that the court will be surrounded by more mystery.

“Statute Ten” orders pre-emptive spying:

10. The court will assemble the day after the Grand Council has held one meeting. Here we examine the list of all those who have been elected to roles which give entry to the senate. Their reputation, their property, their habits, will be the subject of this review, and

if someone seems to deserve some suspicion, two observers, unknown to one another, it will be attached to track all his actions. If this monitoring provides no information, we will detach some wise person to talk business mysteriously during the night, and engage, under the lure of a considerable reward, to discover some secret government a foreign minister, and if after this ordeal, even after having resisted, the patrician does not immediately report this proposal to the court, it will be entered in a register called the Register of suspects, and carefully monitored by us and our successors.

So already in “Statute” ten we see now a register of suspects, authorized and wide-ranging sting operations against patricians. The remaining statutes will spread the remit of the “Inquisition of State” over every aspect of Venetian life. Foreign ambassadors and the Papal Nuncio come, not surprisingly, for the most scrutiny. Poor nobles prone to murmurs and “broglios” come next. Colonial administrators who might wish to marry their children to non-Venetians, or who might become too close to foreign princes. Patricians come under the most scrutiny. The chilling effect the “Statute” twenty would have had on discussion in the Senate and Great Council can be imagined:

20. Observers shall be specifically responsible to account for all that has been said by murmuring patricians in the Council, especially in the early morning hours, because they speak more freely then as a smaller number of people are there. These observers will report by week, not omitting special reports, when they have to disclose any important circumstances.

Gradually the net widens to include citizens, and then artisans. “Statutes” thirty-seven and forty-three reference members of the Council of Ten (clear proof that the two bodies were distinct) and “Statute” thirty-eight the Doge himself.
Most incendiary to non-nobles would be the statutes related to artisans. Infamously, “Statute 26” authorizes the assassination of workers who would take trade secrets out of Venice. Statutes cover execution, banishment, leniency (rare), trade, property abroad, scuole and convents, the Arsenal, military matters, carnival, use of firearms. Spies are to be recruited from all levels of society, and key targets, such as foreign ambassadors, are as a matter of course to be covered by two spies, unknown to each other. Failure of one spy to report what another spy has observed gets that spy added to the Register of Suspects. One can imagine that with this kind of fear-fueled competition, the Register would eventually include most of the population of Venice. Read end to end, the “Statutes” present a picture of a veritable police state, with KGB-like or Staasi-like scrutiny of all over all.

Daru becomes unreliable after the “Statutes” come into his story. He continues to use sources, almost all of them sound. But his interpretation is colored by this massive forgery – and by the further fiction that such a large undertaking of the Venetian government, carried out by so many nobles and citizens over so many years, affecting so many individuals and families, could indeed have remained secret over all these years. So many spies recruited. So many suspects corrupted to save themselves death. So much legitimate state business diverted to secret channels. Such a chilling effect placed on the Great Council and Senate. Such a pervasive culture of fear – terror, as Daru called it, and he had known the French terror first-hand – cast over the entire Republic of Venice, and lasting for so many years. The French terror had lasted two decades. He depicted this terror existing in Venice for two centuries.
Cyprus and the “Statues” conflate into the turning point for Daru, but it not an overly sharp one. He brings up the supposed excesses of the Inquisition of State, and the real excesses of the Council of Ten from time to time, but they do not take center stage. Venetian history goes on. Many historians of Venice, once the turning point (wherever they choose to locate it) is past, cannot bear to linger over the decline of Venice. Indeed, for most readers, one Turkish defeat reads a lot like another, one sign of internal decay is as saddening, one more sumptuary law as pointless, one more great artistic or architectural work springing up amid all this decline, as ironic; Venetian history is long, and a rush to the end is understandable.

Daru does not do this. We read with him year to year as the life slowly drips out of Venice, and in this fine parsing of history find nuggets in this admittedly unappealing stretch of Venetian history not found elsewhere. Nor is Daru so wedded to his theme that he omits the moments when Venice does something praiseworthy.

Harbingers of the end come over and over. In 1718 it is diplomatic:

Here ends the history of Venice, or at least by ending his active relations with the rest of the world. Here Venice was reduced to a passive existence.  

22 Ibid., 1166.

In 1783 it is economic:

The financial condition would not be long a mystery. The republic was put to the test when in 1783 it opened in Venice a loan at three percent; Venetians did not buy the securities offered. Transported to Genoa, the offering failed again. Finally, it was necessary to go to Antwerp, where Venice raised with difficulty the sums needed.

23 Ibid., 1200.
In the 1790s, with the Barbary pirates, it was military: “This was the last political event in the history of Venice...”\(^{24}\) In the eighteenth century it was over for Venice – and yet Daru does not rush. The reason, of course, is because this is the run-up to his own main story: that of the French Revolution. What is happening in Venice and its neighbors is happening to France as well: it is change – world-breaking, or world-creating, change. For Venice, it is the end. For France, and the world, it is the beginning.

Daru’s two stories meet in Chapter thirty six of his work. One of Daru’s skills is in varying the pace and style of his work, alternating short, birds-eye views with long, worms-eye views, and alternating the noisy action marching armies or debating politicians with his own commentary. He uses these, and all the rest of his narrative talent, in introducing the French Revolution. “The events that follow,” he tells us, “belong to history”:

I know no man who has the right to say he is impartial, but here we do not judge the French Revolution. In recalling this great event, we should not forget that this is the depiction as it was seen in Venice. It is in Venice that we hear these eloquent voices, these unexpected maxims, heroic acts, wearing away the excitement and the terror; these deplorable mistakes, horrific scenes, causes so poorly known; these royal misfortunes that have astonished the world; and those batterings that shook us all. The universe was present at this great spectacle, and all hearts throbbed, but with mixed feelings. If we want to know what emotions these stories stirred in a nation different from us in its form of government, interests, and habits, we must move to the middle of it. Here, our personal opinions, our national prejudices, lose their imperial sway. Thanks to an abundance of historical material – perhaps too prolix

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 1194.
in the eyes of contemporaries – we will turn to the spectacle of Venice in the turbulent deliberations of the senate.\textsuperscript{25}

With this Daru authorizes himself to fix the Venetians in that point in time: 1789. It is eight years before their own government will fall, and with it the world that is Venice for its nobles, citizens, and artisans – and it is the moment of creation for the government that will bring about that fall. We cannot paraphrase the last 230 pages of Daru, but rather make these few points. First, Daru establishes Venice as an unstable place with this indictment: “In a country where conditions are unequal, it is a dangerous condition that where the great can no longer justify their privileges by brilliant service and where the small have no way out of their powerlessness.”\textsuperscript{26} The promise of this instability is fulfilled, as, per Daru’s equation, it inevitably must be; the patricians will not abandon their privilege, nor go back to providing brilliant service, nor bring the little people out of their “powerlessness.” At this point Daru has done something he has heretofore avoided: he has become doctrinaire. Not only is the equation arbitrary, but the suppositions are unexamined. Are conditions really so unequal as to make things dangerous? Many scholars of European history would argue that they were much less unequal in Venice than in other places. Are the little people really powerless? Scholars of Venetian culture have argued that all non-nobles had some power, if only social power, and many had a lot of power. Are they any more powerless than most of the great? Scholars of the Venetian elite have proven conclusively that a great many of the

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 1213.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 1214.
patricians had lost money and lived lives of the “shamefaced poor” – a condition regarded by some as even worse than regular poverty, because the “shamefaced poor” are unable to beg, and because they know better how abject their condition is, having once known better. These fine points do not trouble Daru, who shows Venice tottering into oblivion, with long debates leading nowhere, fitful attempts to make tiny reforms, and never enough political will to rein in the Inquisition of State that looms over it like an invisible shadow, the sole functional institution in a republic where nothing else functions, and the elites whose job it is to make them function rush instead to the gaming tables, losing consciousness in chance.

Eventually Daru’s story ends with French domination of Venice, and eventually he must relinquish the veil of “history” that separates his sources from his audience. The last sections of the book are source documentation, including correspondence between the French army – of which Daru was the chief commissaire – and the Venetian republic, and the transfer of Venice to Austria. Then he prints the controversial statutes; then a summary of the government of Venice; and then, with more in each edition, direct documentation related to 1618, periods before, and periods after, including much documentation related to Napoleon. Ultimately for Daru, Venetian history becomes French history, and historian becomes self-justifying actor. For all Daru’s diligence in research and elegance in writing, his work is fundamentally flawed. This flaw was to damage the reputation of Venice deeply.
Napoleon: General, Journalist, Stage Director

No discussion of French views of Venice can be complete without considering the huge amount of anti-Venetian propaganda unleashed by Napoleon in the final months of the Republic’s existence and the period immediately following its fall.27 In 1797 Napoleon was just one of five members of the Directory; he sought to use a brilliant string of victories in Italy to enhance his position. His 30,000 tired and ill paid soldiers did indeed achieve success after success in Italy under the direction of their twenty-eight-year-old general. Venice – seeking to retain its shaky unarmed neutrality – stood between Napoleon and his target: Austria. Not only did Napoleon seek to march through Venetian territory, he also coveted Venice’s port for further military advantage, Venetian wealth to shore up his army’s needs, and Venetian art for its prestige value.

All these were factors important to Napoleon, but not to his supposed superiors in the Directory. They were jealous of his success, kept in the popular eye by the parade of old masters paintings he sent back to Paris. They regarded his plan of pushing through the Tyrol as too risky and wanted for him rather to give up half his army to another general for maintaining in northern Italy while Napoleon pushed to Rome.

Initially Napoleon sought not to conquer Venice but to ally with it. The Republic, badly advised and led by patricians whose first concern was preservation of their private wealth, were hopelessly unrealistic about their strategic situation. They refused, repeatedly. Influenced by his reading of Amelot and reports of anti-French sentiment in

Venice – and irritated by Venice’s pokey and dreamlike refusals to his offers – Napoleon made up his mind that Venice was a police state, with prisons full of tortured political prisoners, and a great threat to the French. As his negotiations with Venetian officials got nowhere, two events triggered Napoleon’s (real or feigned) fury. The first was the coordinated “assassination” of 400 Frenchmen in what Napoleon was to call “Veronese Easter,” when peasants from the Veneto, opposed to French “Jacobism” and resentful of the army’s increasing demands, and Sclavonian (Croatian) mercenaries working for Venice, carried out a coordinated attack on French garrison soldiers and hospital patients in Verona on Easter Monday while Napoleon was temporarily in Germany. This was April 17, 1797. On April 23 a brash French officer, Laugier, attempted to bring a French warship into Venetian waters by dragooning an old fisherman into piloting it; they were stopped by Venetian ships and Laguier was killed. Two Venetian envoys were dispatched to intercept Napoleon en route back to Italy. They found him at Gratz and there followed a theatrical exchange. Napoleon at first hid his rage and listened courteously to the nervous Venetians. Then, without apparent warning, he launched into a terrifying – and in part, mystifying – rant:

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28 Carlo Botta, Storia d’Italia dal 1789 al 1814, vol. 3 (Capolago: Mendrisio, 1833), http://archive.org/stream/storiaditaliada03bott/storiaditaliada03bott_djvu.txt (accessed March 12, 2013): 58-9; Edmund Flagg, Venice: the city of the sea, from the invasion by Napoléon in 1797 to the capitulation to Radetzky, in 1849 (New York: Scribner, 1858), http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-index?c=moa&cc=moa&view=text&rgn=main&idno=ABQ4129.0001.001 (accessed March 12, 2013): 182. Botto and Flagg both report that the Veronese Easter plan was in fact instigated by a trick – a manifesto that bore the signature of the Venetian provveditore of Verona, Francesco Battaglia, who was in fact extremely anxious to keep the peace. Both name a republican agent named Salvador as the author of the document. Flagg attributes the plan itself to a French officer named Landrieux who was anxious to bring matters to a head. Botta makes no mention of Landrieux but writes that Salvador was a close ally of Napoleon himself, who later flung himself in to the Seine in Paris out of remorse, to end his life “with a little honor.”
Are the prisoners released? Are the murderers punished? Are the peasants disarmed? I want no empty words. My soldiers have been massacred. I must have vengeance—vengeance! A government served by spies so well as yours should know the instigators and perpetrators of those murders. But it is as despised as it is despicable. It cannot disarm those it has armed. I will disarm them for it. But my prisoners: are they free? I will have them all—all—all! All who are in prison because of political sentiments. I will go myself and demolish your dungeons—your *piombi*—your Bridge of Sighs. I will be a second Attila to Venice. I will have no Inquisition—no Golden Book, institutions of a barbarous age; opinions shall be free. Your government is antiquated—it must be destroyed. At Gorizia I offered to Pesaro alliance. It was rejected. You awaited my return to cut me off. Well, here I am: but I treat no more. I dictate. I might have gone to Vienna, but I chose to accept peace. I have eighty thousand men and twenty gun-boats. Now, if all the prisoners are not at once set free, if the English Envoy is not dismissed, the people disarmed, the murderers surrendered, I declare instant war. If you have nothing new to reply, I can only add that you can go. I cannot receive you, covered all over with French blood. When you have delivered into my hands the three State Inquisitors, the Commandant of the Lido, and the Chiefs of the Venetian Police, I may hear your attempted palliation of unpardonable crimes.

The envoys at this point brought up payment—in fact, they had been paying the French for peace since Napoleon’s arrival in northern Italy—but he rebuked them again:

No-no-no! Could you proffer me the treasures of Peru—could you pave your whole Dogado with gold it could not pay me for the blood of the meanest of my Frenchmen, so treacherously slain!29

Napoleon’s brilliance as a propagandist went hand in hand with his brilliance as a general. In order to leverage his successes in Italy into political gains in Paris, Napoleon carried out a three-pronged propaganda campaign—not completely different from the program Venice had followed for a millennium—of words, images, and ritual. He launched a newspaper, *Le courrier de l’armée d’Italie*, staffed it with professional

journalists, and gave it his own voice, one of caring and respect for his soldiers. In doing this, he capitalized on the habit of newspaper-reading that had taken hold of Paris in the previous decade, and the captive audience he had of 100,000 soldiers in Italy, coming from all over France. *Le courier* was deeply influential. While it was distributed free to the soldiers, it was bought eagerly by subscription in Milan and Paris, and many of its stories were reprinted by the home French press.Founded in July 1797, there were 248 issues from Milan, and sent all over Italy and France, before it ceased publication in December 1798. Napoleon’s view of what he saw in Italy – or thought he saw, or wanted to see – would be widely shared in France.

Napoleon’s use of imagery is well known. In Italy he associated himself with symbols of Roman wisdom and majesty, paid the best Milanese artists to render images of himself in classical poses, and used these for his letter paper. Just as he sought to show himself as timeless, dignified, virtuous, and wise, he showed Venice in the terms he used with the envoys in Gratz: a spy-ridden police state. In fact, the actual roster of prisoners held by the Inquisitors of State at the fall is distinctly underwhelming in light of Napoleon’s sputterings. There were none in the Piombi, three in the Pozzi, and


twenty-four in the Quattro, all criminals. (In other prisons, there were in all ninety-eight criminals and five lunatics.) Two weeks before fall of the Republic, in accordance with Napoleon’s demand, the Venetian authorities had released all the prisoners held for political purposes “on condition that they return to their homes.” The average number of political prisoners held at any one time between 1791 and 1796 was two and a half.33 In 1796 there were reports from just twenty-five confidi. “It would, therefore, seem that there is no truth in the popularly accepted idea that Venice was one of the most spy-ridden of states.”34 Yet Napoleon presented the Venice he wished to present, in words and, memorably, pictures.

Figure 4: A Venetian torture chamber as imagined by French propagandists. British Museum. Norwich, History, facing 421.


34 Ibid., 109.
Finally, Napoleon understood the importance of ceremony and ritual. He sent artworks back to Paris throughout his years in Italy, echoing the Roman generals with their parades of booty. He choreographed his own movements with the sure touch of stage manager. He gave intricate directions to the ceremony during which Venice would be transferred to the new “municipal” puppet government; it involved banners proclaiming that “LIBERTY IS PRESERVED BY OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW,” “DAWNING LIBERTY IS PROTECTED BY FORCE OF ARMS,” and “ESTABLISHED LIBERTY LEADS TO UNIVERSAL PEACE” and a “Tree of Liberty” – a pole topped with a red Phrygian cap.35 While this ceremony had no lasting cultural impact, Napoleon’s venture into amateur stage direction did. In 1798 French dramatist Antoine-Vincent Arnault wrote a play about Venice. Arnault was close to Napoleon, his biographer, and Napoleon rewarded him with high state position by Napoleon. The play was called *Blanche et Moncassin, ou les Vénitiens*. Arnault uses the most notorious parts of Amelot’s disputed *Histoire de Venise* on the Spanish Conspiracy of 1618-22 (an alleged plot by the Spanish Ambassador to lead an overthrow of the Venetian Republic which became an intensive "spy war.") Moncassin is honest, and he and Blanche are in love, but her father disapproves. Moncassin is falsely accused of treason; Blanche goes before the Inquisitors - one of whom is her father - with proof of his innocence. Arnault’s original ending for the play was a happy one; but this was not to last:

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The ravishing fifth act had for a collaborator General Bonaparte. It is said, indeed, that the author’s intention was to let his hero live, saved from execution by a rival. However, in a reading at Malmaison, this ending displeased one judge who had ideas in literature as absolute as in politics. The happiness of two lovers seemed bland and overly romantic: “Your hero must die!” cried Napoleon, “We must kill, yes, kill him!” So Moncassin was put to death by order of Napoleon, and the public confirmed the sentence with its unanimous applause.36

Napoleon’s view prevailed. Arnault rewrote his ending so that the heartless Inquisitors denounce Blanche for treason too. After her fruitless pleadings, the curtain drops and her dead lover is seen hanging from a rope. This work was to inspire a long line of plays, operas, and fiction about Venice that was to persist for the next century and more.

Themes

Daru’s history became famous for its accusations against Venice, so those who have not read Daru but merely read about Daru might be surprised at the extent of his evenhandedness in writing about Venice. It would be a misleading to emphasize Daru’s negative views of Venice without remembering the many accolades he gives it. He was as scrupulous as any Venetian mythologist to “acknowledge the epic in his subject.”37 He lauds the skill, enterprise, ideas, and courage of Venetian traders (even if attributing


some of this enterprise to greed) in the ninth century\textsuperscript{38} and later.\textsuperscript{39} In discussing the development of the aristocracy at the end of the thirteenth century, he recites at some length the tenets of the myth of Venice, acknowledging that Venice was never conquered, enjoys great wealth, and is governed with wisdom. He again commends the government for its wisdom in the fourteenth century, shown by curbing jealousy that leads to class warfare with sumptuary laws, and more importantly by enabling non-nobles to share in the profits of long-distance trade and industry: “Trade means equality.”\textsuperscript{40} He observes, in telling the story of how Andrea Grimani was recalled from banishment to serve as Doge in 1521, that “It was one of the distinctive characteristics of this government never to be led by passion.”\textsuperscript{41} He praises their diplomacy and systems for dealing successfully in many cultures, their “modesty and dexterity,” their sophisticated material culture, their accomplishments in the arts, and their many advances in the sciences and engineering.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{Greedy}

Daru was a liberal of the nineteenth century who rose through merit and viewed the world as through the lens of logistics and economics, far from the feudal view of commerce as a necessary evil. When Daru observes that "Riches became the sole idol of

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 69.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 598-601.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 300.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 826.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 524-7.
the Venetians,” this is not a religious critique, it is a social one.\textsuperscript{43} For Daru, wealth enabled Venice to pay top wages and hire the best engineers, the best ship designers, the best sailors, the best mercenaries.\textsuperscript{44} Greed was not an evil in and of itself, but as a less worthy channel for Venetian energy and talent, a depressant or distraction from what Venetians should be doing, and had been doing for so much of their history. After the sailing of the Portuguese around the Cape of Good hope and the discovery of the new world, Venetians seemed to retire from the game of discovery. Their long vaunted competitive spirit needed another outlet “Venetians no longer harbored dreams of glory,” Daru lamented, “but their ambition remained, and it had only one outlet: greed.”\textsuperscript{45}

**Tyrannical**

The theme of tyranny is central for Daru, and it takes two forms. The oppression of colonized peoples is a common form of tyranny, and Venetians, for all their supposed wisdom in governance, are as prone to it as the next occupying power. “The nobles and the wealthy owners of mainland have suffered impatiently from Venetian tyranny. They have not spoken out against the government from fear of the misfortunes of revolution” writes Daru of the terraferma colonies.\textsuperscript{46} Some suffered in place, others simply left: “We also saw, in 1783, an emigration of eighty Dalmatian families, Venetian subjects, who

\begin{enumerate}
\item ibid., 916.
\item ibid., 596-7.
\item ibid., 1213.
\item ibid., 1297.
\end{enumerate}
took refuge in Constantinople to escape the tyranny of the Republic.”⁴⁷ The other form of tyranny is internal, and it is a condition that Daru sees as pervasive in Venice because of the Inquisition of State. Daru sees in the statues a remedy that rivals the illness. This is what he means when he says that “often means to escape outside dangers” – such as the Spanish conspiracy – “had no other result than promoting tyranny within.”⁴⁸ Daru believed that the Inquisition of State had grown into an ultra-secret, invisible, Staasi-like layer over normal society, and he lamented it: “In Rome the dictatorship was ever temporary, in Venice we went further, we created a perpetual dictatorship.”⁴⁹ Note that here Daru says “we,” as if what he describes is not just a Venetian condition but a human one.

**Corrupt**

Daru was a man whose honesty was the characteristic that first brought him success. As a commissaire of the entire army, he would have sought low bids on goods regularly, and despised any system of corruption. His evaluation of Venice goes through a sociological as well as an economic lens. He knew how the poor nobles sold their votes, their only means of getting money. He knew that wealthy nobles neglected their duty (see below). He sensed that breakdown of natural family life (he was a devoted family man) brings about corruption of morals and of government.⁵⁰ As a military man,

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⁴⁷ Ibid., 1296.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1202.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1428.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1214.
Daru was inclined to assess the moral stage of a nation by its military. This is his dictum: “barbarians fight as a nation; conquerors adopt military conscription; rich nations prefer enrollment; corrupt nations use foreign mercenaries.” Venice, as we have seen, used foreign mercenaries.\(^5^1\)

Decadent

As with Amelot, Daru gives us a full picture of the “freedom of manners, which had been long touted as the company’s main charm of Venice” become “a scandalous disorder.” His signature example shows us not only an inhumane exploitation of children, on the part of parents, but an unconscionable enabling function played by the state: “We saw not only mothers traffic in the virginity of their daughters, but sell a contract whose authenticity was guaranteed by the signature of an officer publishes and performance under the protection of the laws.”\(^5^2\) It was not just the existence of these disorders, but their normalization, that struck Daru as decadent. “Idleness, misconduct, vanity, not taking opportunity to acquire fame and wealth... The proud aristocracy no longer took shame in its inaction.”\(^5^3\)

\(^5^1\) Ibid., 1425.

\(^5^2\) Ibid., 1212.

\(^5^3\) Ibid., 920.
Neglectful of Duty

As Amelot before him, Daru saw this excessive pleasure-chasing coming at the expense of duty, taking away time and focus from service to the family, community, and state. Daru’s striking image calls to mind the picture of Venice painted by Voltaire:

Gaming was the main occupation of society. It was a singular sight to see around the gaming table persons of both sexes, masked, and the grave robed personages of the magistrature, acting as banker, each one imploring chance, passing agonies of despair and delusions of hope, all without saying a word.54

Weak

What is new in Daru from the previous writers is his focus on the weakness of Venice. While tyranny and corruption are active evils, weakness is a passive evil, a shriveling up of all promise. Daru sees weakness on the state level as well as on the individual level. In the 1520s “the French did fight, and Venetians, too weak to risk anything, let some opportunities slip by”.55 In 1537 Doge Cornaro made a speech saying, "Our enemies deem our weakness in our submission."56 When faced with the conflict between Charles V and Francis I, Venice cowered: “Convinced as they were too weak to stand between two great powers, and that it is an illusion to try to maintain the balance, when you do not have the arms strong enough to hold the balance, they determined to remain spectators.”57 Among the nobility, speech substituted for action – “the speeches

54 Ibid., 1212.
55 Ibid., 844.
56 Ibid., 856.
57 Ibid., 872.
that were delivered on this occasion, form huge volumes” – but when the question was called, many could not even find the resolve to cast a ballot. Out of nine hundred and seventy voters, there were two hundred and fifty-seven null votes.58

**French Reception**

One early review of Daru’s book came in 1823 from Adolphe Thiers,59 the French politician and historian, at the very beginning of his career when he was working as a journalist in Paris and had just published the first two volumes of his ten-volume work on the French Revolution. (Thiers would play a major role in French history, serving as prime minister in 1836, 1840 and 1848; suppressing the Paris Commune in 1871, during which thirty-five thousand Parisians died; and serving as provisional President.) “Thiers,” declaimed Marx, “that monstrous gnome, has charmed the French bourgeoisie for almost half a century, because he is the most consummate intellectual expression of their own class corruption. Before he became a statesman, he had already proved his lying powers as an historian.”60 Indeed, Thiers had many other critics of his histories; one said they are “marked by extreme inaccuracy, by prejudice which passes the limits of accidental unfairness, and by an almost complete indifference to the merits as

58 Ibid., 1204.


compared with the successes of his heroes.” Nonetheless, his own history was extremely popular; “coming as the book did just when the reaction against the Revolution was about to turn into another reaction in its favour, it was assured of success.” Thiers expressed no opinion on the authenticity of the statutes. His interest in Daru was related to the theme of usurpation of power. Thiers sees the Venetian “oligarchy” as guilty of usurping power by deceit and violence, first reducing the monarch to the condition of captive before reducing the republic itself “to the status of a body plagued by a ghost.” In this construct, the ideal government of the one, the few, and the many as celebrated by Contarini and others becomes lopsided, as “the few” erode the rights of those on either side of them. Later in his History of the French Revolution, Thiers would absolve the "attack" against the "worn out body" of the old Serenissima perpetrated by the young general who was "contining the revolution in the world." Yet Thiers harbored some regret against the fall of Venice as well. In a Europe where the French Revolution accelerated the changes and transformations, Venice was intended to represent the myth of an unchanging world.

Daru revised his work three times during his lifetime, accepting some of the corrections brought to his attention, but he never gave on the central point of the

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61 Britannica.

62 Ibid.


64 Ibid., 233.
Statutes of the Inquisition of State. His chief critic was Domenico Tiepolo, an impoverished Venetian aristocrat, who accused Daru of being a tool of Napoleonic propaganda and harboring anti-aristocratic prejudices. Tiepolo filled six notebooks with 228 observations of where he found Daru in the wrong; these he published in 1828. He divided his work into six “rectifications.” The first deals with Daru’s assertions about Venetian origins, the second about how the Republic evolved; the third attacks a series of errors on domestic and foreign policy, while the sixth and last on various matters of nuance. These are all areas where Daru was willing to take some correction. On the fourth and fifth – on the Council of Ten and Inquisitors of State, and on the Spanish Conspiracy, where their reputed actions were most in evidence – Daru held firm.

Tiepolo’s work is a mixture of solid research and ad hominem attack, shrewd argumentation and circular restatements of the myth of Venice: that the Venetian system was good was demonstrated by its material and political successes over the centuries. He chose to hone in on Daru’s idea of the Council of Ten and Inquisition of State in particular, and argue on the basis of evidence that Daru’s 1485 “Statues” were a forgery. First, there was no version of them in the state archives. Secondly, they were

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66 Ibid., I, 26.

67 Ibid., II, 111-3.

68 Ibid., I, 83-5.

69 Ibid., II, 32-62.
written in Venetian dialect, although that was not used for official business until the middle of the sixteenth century. Thirdly, the title “Inquisition of State” was not used until the seventeenth century. In sum, Daru had placed his belief in a fake.

We see from Daru’s letters that he engaged Tiepolo with vigor, regarding him as a worthy opponent to be subjected to all the tools in his arsenal, including sarcasm and condescension. He collated his responses to each of Tiepolo’s objections and they were published, posthumously, in the 1853 fourth edition of his work.

Daru accepted some of Tiepolo’s minor corrections but rejected out of hand his arguments regarding the Statues and the Council of Ten with withering sarcasm, and irritation; of the thousands of documents he had cited, why did Tiepolo harp on this one? Had it not been found in multiple libraries all over Europe? True, there was no trace of it in Venice, but did that not prove the success of its policy of utter secrecy? He counted on his point of view on Venetian history prevailing. Indeed, by that time it would appear that Venetian history had passed completely into the realm of myth and fiction. The by now familiar Venetian attacks on Napoleonic treachery faded with flight or death of the Venetian aristocracy and the absence of any Venetian government.

70 Ibid., II, 63-4, 84.
71 Ibid., II, 75-7, 86.
72 Daru, 1953, 239.
73 Ibid., 303.
During the decades before and after Tiepolo, Venice was a provincial capital of a colony.

In the long, sad Austrian occupation leading up to Venice’s joining Italy in 1866, excitement over the French Revolution faded. It was time for a reappraisal.

That would come when the spade work of Tiepolo would be augmented by that of Samuele Romanin in 1861 and Vladimir Lamansky in 1882, who uncovered documents that told another story: “instead of ruthless and highly trained professionals, Lamansky discovered meddling amateurs who... clogged up government with superfluous paper and red tape, while trying in vain to keep their plots and stratagems secret.”75 On the French side, Leon Galibert pointed out in 1847 that the historian of Venice had an impossible job explaining how a “government that appeared monstrous and terrible had nonetheless been popular and had to its credit an extraordinary record of success and distinction,” and in 1855 Jule Michelet admitted that one found too little blood for the Venetian “terror” to deserve the name. Even Mas Latrie, who translated without dissenting comment the treacherous treaty of the Fourth Crusade, felt obliged to disclose some hesitation over the “Statutes” in his history of Cyprus. 76

Conclusion

Many works of art based on Venice stem from Amelot, Napoleon, and Daru.

75 Pemble, Rediscovered, 96.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>year</th>
<th>artist</th>
<th>title</th>
<th>featured character note</th>
<th>influence</th>
<th>note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Antoine-Vincent Arnault (1766 – 1834) - French dramatist and Napoleon biographer</td>
<td>Blanche et Moncassin, ou les Vénitiens</td>
<td>Blanche goes before the Inquisitors - one of whom is her father - with proof of her lover’s innocence; the curtain drops and her dead lover is seen hanging from a rope</td>
<td>Amelot</td>
<td>Arnault was close to Napoleon; in a private performance, Napoleon vetoed a happy ending for the play, saying “Kill him!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Gioachino Rossini (1792 – 1868) - Italian composer</td>
<td>Bianca e Falliero</td>
<td>Stendhal wrote of the first scene, “one felt already in the presence of despotism, all-powerful and inexorable”</td>
<td>Arnault, Amelot</td>
<td>Opera ends in a wedding; tragic endings were out of fashion, and the artists may have deemed references to arbitrary force impolitic under Austrian occupation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Alessandro Manzoni (1785 – 1873) - Italian poet and novelist</td>
<td>Il Conte di Carmagnola</td>
<td>Heroic and loyal condottiero executed by Venetians for treason.</td>
<td>memoirs of condottieri</td>
<td>The execution of Carmagnola, a hired general who was almost certainly betraying the Venetians, was taken up by as proof of Venetian treachery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Lord Byron (1788 – 1824) - English poet and leading figure in Romantic movement</td>
<td>The Two Foscari</td>
<td>Bloodthirsty member of the Council of Ten torture the Doge’s own son.</td>
<td>Amelot, Daru, Sismondi</td>
<td>Based on actual events of 1423-57 in which Foscari’s son, probably corrupt, really was tortured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>James Fenimore Cooper (1789 – 1851) - American author</td>
<td>The Bravo: A Venetian Story</td>
<td>Innocent wrongly executed.</td>
<td>Daru</td>
<td>An indictment of aristocrats and people, lethargic in their endless celebrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885) - French author and dramatist</td>
<td>Angelo, tyran de Padoue</td>
<td>Venetian governor of Padua spied upon by his own staff who report back to the Inquisitors of State.</td>
<td>Amelot and Daru</td>
<td>Features “a spy in Venice, a eunuch in Constantinople, a pamphleteer in Paris.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Gaetano Donizetti (1797 – 1848) - composer from Bergamo (former Venetian province)</td>
<td>Marino Faliero</td>
<td>Treasonous Doge seeks overthrow of republic.</td>
<td>Byron’s Marino Faliero</td>
<td>Based on the actual event which led to the the Council of Ten in 1310.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Giuseppe Verdi (1813 – 1901) - Italian composer and patriot</td>
<td>I Due Foscari</td>
<td>Bloodthirsty member of the Council of Ten torture the Doge’s own son.</td>
<td>Byron</td>
<td>See above; in this retelling, the populace is implicated alongside rulers in shared degradation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Wilkie Collins (1824 – 1889) - English novelist</td>
<td>Haunted Hotel: A Mystery of Modern Venice</td>
<td>English lord killed mysteriously in Venice on his honeymoon.</td>
<td>Byron</td>
<td>Wilkie once had a character say of Byron: “Bad food for excitable minds. Don’t let it get a hold of you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Jacques Offenbach (1819 – 1880) -German-born French composer</td>
<td>Les Contes d’Hoffman</td>
<td>Hedonistic city too far lost in its own pleasures to see its approaching doom</td>
<td>Faust legend</td>
<td>“History has slipped away, politics are mostly irrelevant to personal dramas, and love has become a ruthless game of sex and power.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Thomas Mann (1875 – 1955) - German novelist, social critic, and Nobel laureate</td>
<td>Death in Venice</td>
<td>Aschenback gripped by ruinous inward passion in midst of cholera epidemic.</td>
<td>Plato, Nietzsche</td>
<td>Struggle between god of restraint, Apollo, and god of passion, Dionysus; Venice shown as corrupt, pandering, deadly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Based on Pemble, Rediscovered, 90-6, and Johnson, Myth, 533-554. All quotes from Johnson.

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The tenacity of these themes of lurid decadence is underpinned by the subjective needs of the “republics” in which they lived: the republic of letters with its idealism, and the republic of France attempting to implement it. Amelot’s indignant first-hand reports of decadence and corruption, trumpeted by Napoleon, and augmented by Daru’s vision of a police state implied by the “Statutes” on which he insisted, had wide resonance through these works. Venice, with its exhausted myth, had to go.

In the first part of the nineteenth century, these themes found resonance with British, French, Italian, and American authors. Their imaginations gave the page and stage wicked parents, treasonous Doges, bloodthirsty Inquisitors, executed innocents, and a tyrant driven crazy by spies. In the latter part of the long nineteenth century the myth moved away from Venetian historical specificity to the use of now-established Venetian images to signal more more pan-European fin-de-siecle themes, as Wilkie Collins, Jacques Offenbach, and Thomas Mann brought Venice into sinister and pathetic focus with a British lord murdered on his honeymoon, a Faustian prostitute, and an inwardly ruined old genius wandering around cholera-ridden Venice in makeup.
Chapter 6

Conclusion: Making Meaning of French Views of Venice

French authors writing about Venice from the Fourth Crusade to Napoleon adhered to a series of themes that developed and evolved over time, as seen in both legitimate and forged documents (shown darkly shaded below) throughout the four periods studied. Venetian greed was a timeless theme, as true at the fall of the Republic as at the beginning, but the others waxed and waned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Themes about Venice</th>
<th>Crusading era</th>
<th>Cambrai era</th>
<th>17th century</th>
<th>19th century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  greedy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  unchivalrous</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  unchristian</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  treacherous</td>
<td></td>
<td>Antelm the Nasty treacherous treaty</td>
<td>spurious Morbesan letter</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  proud</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  lowborn</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  ungovernable</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  tyrannical</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>false &quot;statutes&quot; of Inquisitors of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  corrupt</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 decadent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 neglectful of duty</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 weak</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Darkly shaded boxes indicate forgeries; see appendix for texts.
The charge of being unchivalrous was one that resonated with the French during the Crusading era; the anonymous Venetians, skillful with their ships but apparently fearful without them, did not answer to the chivalric ideal of physical courage demonstrated by combat on horseback so central to French culture. In the Cambrai era this charge, although culturally dated, still resonated in the backward-looking Burgundian court in which Lemaire wrote, and was good for a laugh in Gringore’s street theater.

Likewise the theme of Venetians as unchristian came very naturally during the Crusading era, and was well-suited for the Cambrai era, when the French King assumed the honorific “treschristian”; its strength waned in the anti-clericalism of the French enlightenment. Not so the charge of treachery, perhaps the most vehement of all the charges. From its launch with Antelm the Nasty’s “treacherous treaty” in the Crusading era, amplified by the repetition of that treaty and the addition of the spurious “Morbesan” letter, Venice was established as a betrayer of Christendom. Although the alliances in the Cambrai era were among and against Christian powers, Gringore, Lemaire, and – especially – Hélian positioned the Venetians as unchristian on multiple levels. The theme of treachery does not survive into the nineteenth century. Perhaps in the era of realpolitik permanent alliances were no longer expected; perhaps something about Venice itself had changed. Indeed, the faults attributed to Venice in the nineteenth century were less those of a threatening power and more those of a declining one.

Three criticisms of Venice that appear in the Cambrai era are directly related to the project of French monarchical centralization. Overweening pride is one: the Venetians will respect no monarch. Lowborn origins are another; rather than coming from noble origins – developed, in this time of humanism, into Trojan heroes – Venetians sprang from fisherman
and birdcatchers in the mud of their lagoon. Ungovernability is a crucial third theme. It evolves.

In the Cambrai and enlightenment eras, Venetians are seen as dangerously republican, unsafe and unnatural alongside divinely-ordained monarchy. In the nineteenth century, republican French thought shows Venetians as unwilling to compromise their aristocratic ways for the common good.

Venetian tyranny appears in a small way in the seventeenth century, and billows to monstrous proportion in the nineteenth with the forged “statutes” of the Inquisitors of State. Three related themes follow on: corruption, decadence, and neglect of duty. These are all referenced by Amelot in the course of his firsthand knowledge of Venice, and encounters with individual Venetians. Amelot’s definition of corruption extends to the intellectual; in his age of enlightenment, to see Venetians lazily accept the views of their forbears, unexamined, strikes him as decayed. Daru takes these themes up again in the nineteenth century, using the reports of others (including Amelot) to make his case. As corruption, decadence, and neglect of duty all blossom in Daru’s nineteenth century account, a final charge is added, unique to his era: that of weakness. Daru, of course, lived to see Venice fall and was part of the machine that struck the final blow.

Certainly there were positive French writings about the Venetians as well. In the Crusading era, when their agendas coincided, Villehardouin wrote flatteringly of the Venetians. Philippe de Mézières and the anonymous writer commissioned by Amiral Louis Malet de Graville wrote of specific Venetian practices for French emulation. Many French writers on Venice – d’Avity, Limojon, Freschot – wrote approvingly of Venice, repeating large parts of the positive myth Venetian writers advocated. Even Amelot and Daru admired Venice within the
pages of their books. Yet none of these positive writings had the tenacity or the longevity of the negative works on Venice. The denigrating themes had a persistence that went beyond travelers’ curiosity, serving a need in the French psyche that was answered again and again.

This is French self-definition – and self-celebration – using Venice as a negative. Part of the French project of working out what were and were not desirable national characteristics was carried out with the help of Venice, standing for what they did not wish to be. In the Crusading era, it was good to be chivalrous – in the Cambrai era, it was good to be treschristian – in the seventeenth century, it was good to be enlightened – in the nineteenth century, it was good to be democratic. Venice was not those things at those times, and helped thus to solidify notions of what it meant to be French. The scurrilous oath of James the Bastard – in which he promises to keep his oath to the Egyptian Sultan or else commit a string of unthinkable acts – is an extreme, comic example of Venice as non-role-model. Whatever it meant to be French, it meant not-Venetian.

What are legitimate sources for historical accounts?

In “The World We Have Lost: History as Art,” Kathryn Olesko bemoans the retreat to a narrow positivism in history:

The long-standing debate on the function of the novel in history has failed, always, to achieve consensus on what novels mean both as historical documents (do novels tell us anything reliable about the past?) and as genres of writing (can fictional writing capture the “reality” of the past, not as historical writing does, but in a complementary way?)..... when it comes to evaluating historical writing, historians genuflect at the altar of positivism..... Disciplinary history is a pack of tricks we play on the dead.¹

If novels are unacceptable as a form of historical understanding, so might be many of the forms of evidence treated in the preceding chapters, where court poetry, street theater, propaganda, and forgery take their place alongside unquestionably legitimate sources such as first-person accounts, official chronicles, and commissioned works of research. How do we find meaning in these various texts about Venice, coming as they do from such diverse eras and apparent perspectives?

**Ranke's answer**

This is not an original question. Leopold von Ranke considered it between 1825 and 1831, when he was exposed to newly opened archives in Venice and produced his *Ueber die Verschwörung gegen Venedig*. Kasper Eskildsen explains that while this little work is ostensibly about the Spanish Conspiracy in Venice, it is really about Ranke and his methods:

The drama of Ranke’s book was not the drama of 1618, but the drama of Ranke’s struggle with his sources.... The main character in this story was not the deceitful Jacques Pierre, betraying the Venetian republic, but the heroic Leopold Ranke, facing the deceits of past historians of Venice.... “The investigation, on which I venture, poses more than one difficulty. The authors, whom it concerns, often make unintended, and sometimes even deliberate, errors; many of the documents, which are presented to us, are not authentic; the actors themselves are faced with false as well as well-founded indictments. As I strive to recognize undeceived the authentic, and to discern the true course of these matters, it is my wish to lead the reader out of this labyrinth and to a pure and satisfactory conviction.”²

Ranke’s path out of the “labyrinth” drilled through the walls and straight to the sunshine. Concluding, more than a third of the way into his book, that “we are still almost

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standing where one stood immediately after May 1618,” which is to say with no better understanding of what actually happened, Ranke retreated into a narrow form of assurance: only an author with personal access to the archival documents could write truthful history. Any author without that firm archival backing “would only reproduce tradition or expose his own fantasies.” In an 1831 speech back in Berlin, Ranke showed a hardened view. Spurning the more expansive views of other scholars who argued not only for the use of objects, monuments, and inscriptions, but also “rationalized reconstruction and divination,” Ranke insisted that only written records, from the archives, counted for history, and stated a drastic conclusion: “I think that [periods without documentary support] should be excluded from history.”

Ranke has been thoroughly critiqued, perhaps most colorfully by E.H. Carr, who in 1961 accused Ranke and other positivists of “intoning the magic words Wie es eigentlich gewesen like an incantation - designed, like most incantations, to save them from the tiresome obligation to think for themselves”:

This is what may be called the common-sense view of history. History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historian in documents, inscriptions and so on, like fish on the fish monger’s slab. The historian collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him. Acton, whose culinary tastes were austere, wanted them served plain.... Even Sir George Clark ...himself contrasted the 'hard core of facts in history with the 'surrounding pulp of disputable interpretation' - forgetting perhaps that the pulpy part of the fruit is more rewarding than the hard core. First get your facts straight, then plunge at your peril into the shifting sands of interpretation - that is the ultimate wisdom of the empirical, commonsense school of history....Now this clearly will not do.

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Gadamer’s answer

It most certainly would not do for Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose *Truth and Method*, first published in 1960, describes ways of understanding as far from Ranke’s as can be imagined. For Gadamer the hermeneutic process involves not just forms of evidence, but information surrounding that evidence, both the kind that can be explained and described and the kind that cannot be. It is analogous to consideration of a painting as either a genuine Rembrandt or not. The art historian gives evidence: brush strokes, canvas, frame construction. The connoisseur can only say – on the basis of a lifetime of exposure to Rembrandt’s false and true, and the many circumstances surrounding them, only some of which can be articulated – “My eye tells me so.” Gadamer addressed the extra-conscious aspect of this in the preface to the second edition of *Truth and Method*: “My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing.”

For Gadamer, history was neither a question of scientific method, nor one of original authorial intent; rather, the written history and its reader meet, according to Gadamer, in a fusion of horizons. That fusion in history happens when facts of the past encounter a reader of the present, and the work is interrogated by readers bringing their own questions, agendas, and unique horizons of expectations. The creative encounter between every active reader and a text yields ever new meaning, no matter how hoary or often read the text may be, and these meanings may be quite different from what the original author anticipated.

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Hans-Georg Gadamer’s suspicion that an infatuation with the past reflects our own present concerns\(^6\) is amply demonstrated by the French texts examined here, where during the League of Cambria era budding French monarchists condemn Venetian republicans, and in the revolutionary era French republicans condemn Venetians for clinging to aristocratic privilege. Indeed, in these works the fused horizon is more slippery than that of just one reader and one text. When we read, for example, an Amelot translation of a work by Hélian, that cites Antelm the Nasty’s chronicle, we are reading a seventeenth century translation of a sixteenth century political speech using a thirteenth century forgery. We are also reading a cleverly malicious work, cited once for political ends by a working diplomat, and another by an angry historian to sting an adversary.

Gadamer objects to the idea that we can, or should even aspire to, transport ourselves into the worldview of a historian. He calls this aspiration “naïve”, and asserts rather that the distance between our time and the time of the period under study is “not a yawning abyss, but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which all that is handed down presents itself to us.”\(^7\) There are two ways to interpret this assertion. One – call it the local interpretation – is that it might apply in a limited way to one reading the history of one’s own tradition, say an American reading about the Civil War, during the course of which many of the random elements of one’s own upbringing – food, religion, language, geography, family lore – are illuminated by the text, and the text is illuminated by these elements. The other – call it the diligent interpretation – is to assume that a diligent reader of a historical text concurrently


\(^7\) Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 264.
learns of the customs and traditions that might illuminate that text – as a competent history teacher might inform a class before assigning a primary source text – with other reading and research.

Yet we can see in light of the texts presented here limitations to both these interpretations. The local interpretation might well apply to studies of recent history – and in light of the texts here, the American Civil War is recent indeed. The Fourth Crusade was a long way back, and Gadamer’s “continuity of custom and tradition” in its case is fraught with discontinuity and distortion. The crusading idea as applied to the Hussites in the 1420s and Lepanto in 1572 was very different one from the Fourth Crusade. G.K. Chesterton’s crusading piece, the thundering 1915 poem *Lepanto*, is more about early twentieth century fear of modernity than about sixteenth century warfare. Crusading references closer to the contemporary reader, such as those of George W. Bush in 2001, are so foreign to the original idea as to be dibilitatingly diversionary. The “customs and traditions” cited by Gadamer may be thought of as an accretion of shellac obscuring a painting, which, when removed, alter our received understanding of the painting, as the famous cleaning of the Sistine Chapel in 1990 shocked people accustomed to thinking it had been painted in more muted tones.

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9 Michael Kimmelman, “After a Much-Debated Cleaning, A Richly Hued Sistine Emerges,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 1990. “The Michelangelo whose seemingly somber palette inspired generations of painters and historians has emerged as a different artist. The new Michelangelo may inspire future painters and historians in different ways from the old one, and it is no surprise that many people, who grew up with a powerful sense of the ceiling as it was, have had difficulty accepting the restoration.... Every generation of restorers, in other words, believes it understands the original intent of the artist. This one is no different.”
The hermeneutical challenges of history are daunting enough in history written with a full set of facts, straightforwardly and objectively; but if this study has shown anything, it is that texts are often not like that. Rather, history is written, as is fiction, to express something about the reality of the writer’s worldview. Like the artist or writer of fiction, the historian uses the material at hand – and we have seen the boundaries of fiction and history blended. So Gadamer’s sense that we can never “bracket” our prejudices is just one part of the difficulty of reading history; neither can we bracket the prejudices of the writer, even assuming we know what they are. Most readers of history have no idea what the author’s prejudices are. The threefold temporal character of our prejudices outlined by Bernstein – handed down by tradition, living in the present, anticipatory of future adjustment\(^{10}\) – is as true for the writer as for the reader. Yet it takes a lively imagination to appreciate the tension of strangeness and familiarity that existed for the writer in his or her far-away tradition, in addition to the historical knowledge that enables one to read fruitfully the *geste* of the medieval chroniclers,\(^{11}\) the scurrilous polemics of the “gladiators of the Republic of Letters,”\(^{12}\) accounts of the fall of Negroponte, covered by writers just learning to use broadsheets for news reporting,\(^{13}\) and the

\(^{10}\) Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 140-1.


\(^{13}\) Meserve, *News from Negroponte*, 442.
intricate calculus involved in dedications to patrons or would be patrons we see in the first centuries of the printed book.\footnote{A good example here is Amelot’s dedication of his Histoire to Louvois, Louis XIV’s minister of war; as we have seen in Chapter Four, Louvois’s power and prestige did not keep Amelot out of the Bastille.}

How do we have a hermeneutic understanding of such a wide variety of texts as we have encountered here, from diligent research to outright forgery? Gadamer, in the introduction to this second edition of \textit{Truth and Method},\footnote{Hans-Georg Gadamer, \textit{Truth and Method}, trans. Donald G. Marshall, and Joel Weinsheimer (2004. n.p.: Continuum, 2004): xxix., eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed February 15, 2013).} says that “the hermeneutic interest of the philosopher begins precisely when error has been successfully avoided.” This means putting material through the system of the discipline; in history, that means filtering out what is demonstrable error, ill will, misrepresentation, unsupported prejudice. Thus the fusion of horizons is appropriately narrowed when one takes out certain texts, eliminates candidates so to speak, on the basis of these factors.

Hermeneutic interpretation cannot take place until the appropriate disciplinary scrutiny has occurred. Not every text gets a seat at the table of hermeneutic understanding; first the technical knowledge of the discipline must be applied to the text and the text deemed available to such understanding. Hermeneutical understanding has to presume that the legitimate methodological inquiry has been competently carried out, erroneous claims excluded, and the status of the texts being studied taken into account. Then, we enter into the hermeneutic realm – where things are understood and evaluated – as meaningful and important in terms of themselves as objects, but as elements of a dialogical exchange, the purpose of which is not so much agreement as it is reflective judgment.
For the historian, this means amassing knowledge and subjecting texts to questions of dating, authorship, independence, accuracy, scrupulosity. But it is not so easy as to say, “this document is a forgery, I will put it to one side and not consider it.” In every forgery there is the same kind of truth as there is in fiction – at some level forgery is fiction – and that is the truth of the author’s desire to express something. But it is critically important that a forgery be appropriately tagged: not, “this happened” but “this author wished his intended audience to believe this happened.” The focus shifts away from the misrepresented event itself to the author and his intended audience – and our understanding at a later date has more resonance than it would have had without the forgery. Our understanding is not of an event and its factual accuracy but of the meaning and significance the event has had for others and might continue to have for us.

Back to Ranke

Having been confronted by forgeries related to Venice – in his case, forgeries exaggerating Venetian virtue – Ranke made an arresting observation about the forgeries he encountered: “For good money, these people sold documents, which would have been invaluable if they had been authentic.”16 Here Ranke misses the point. Propaganda and forgeries are facts in and of themselves: works that must be understood with a different set of assumptions around them. Someone wanted them to be produced. Someone wanted that point of view to be pressed. In fact, they are elements of wishful thinking, and knowing that someone wanted those something to appear as factual is, in and of itself, a fact. The desire to

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16 Eskildsen, *Ranke’s Archival Turn*, 437.
be seen a certain way – or to have one’s adversaries seen a certain way – is a fact, if one of a more complicated order than others.

Ranke’s path out of the labyrinth sacrificed hermeneutic understanding for good discipline, a poor bargain. Surely the risk the historian takes in attempting to understand documents of uncertain origin and context is real. There is an even bigger risk in seeking to extrapolate from scanty and various evidence to fill in the gaps about people who existed around better documented people. Yet both of these risks pale in comparison to the risk of omitting mention of them. Indeed, this is not a “risk,” but a one hundred percent assurance that we will write an incomplete history.

What is authentic outcome the historian seeks? For Ranke it was historical absolutism: that periods without documentary traces should be excluded from history. That is unacceptable today both because of the inherent inequity of excluding any period and the people in it from historical consideration, and the now long accepted world systems view of history¹⁷ (typified by writers such as Philip D. Curtin, Andre Gunder Frank Kenneth Pomeranz, Immanuel Wallerstein, and R. Bin Wong), emphasizing the essential nature of mutual interchange, according to which the exclusion of any period or peoples diminishes the understanding of all. Yet historical absolutism seemed right to Ranke. It is worth asking why.

The answer may be that Ranke’s elevation of the archive to the status of historical temple¹⁸ is an artifact of an imperial age. Ranke’s formative experiences took place in the


¹⁸ Eskildsen, Ranke’s Archival Turn, 442-51.
recently reorganized archives in Berlin, Paris, Vienna, and Venice, where government officials and bureaucrats gave him access to a treasure trove of government communications and records, each set of which tended to have a consistency of formatting that led one to think of them as discrete sets. Most records had a clear date and an author and a recipient, and these were often known characters. The records had previous been “organized” or catalogued or indexed and might have been assigned identification numbers, or at least (in the case of Venice) put into buste. In this construct, the researcher might develop a false sense of clarity and completeness around the notion of the archival “record.”

One can perhaps understand how Ranke could have developed such a binary approach to archival records. Berlin, Paris, Vienna, and Venice were imperial centers, run by people whose world views were shaped by their role in empire, and perhaps held an exaggerated view of the importance of that empire and of the imperial machinery, including the documents that ran it. For reasons that seem rather obvious now, a society of competing empires might be likely to give rise to a history that privileges the communications of military and political leaders. The rise of social history and the devolution of global power from the few to the many may be mutually supportive developments.

Conclusion

Gadamer’s view of history-writing, transcending Ranke’s narrow definition utterly, captures what these French authors on Venice have demonstrated:

Our historical consciousness is always filled with a variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard. Only in the multifariousness of such voices does it exist: this constitutes the nature of the tradition in which we want to share and have a part. Modern historical research itself is not only research, but the
handing down of tradition. We do not see it only in terms of progress and verified results; in it we have, as it were, a new experience of history whenever the past resounds in a new voice.19

Here is the messy but essential role of the historian: to describe “what was,” where the “what” refers not just to the factuality of events but more importantly to the meaning of events as they have been understood and judged in the past, and are still to be understood and judged in new ways. Research into the “what was” will always be incomplete, for all the reasons Ranke describes; and yet that is only half the job. The other is the handing down, and in doing so the historian joins the multifarious voices that describe not only what happened at some other time to other people, but what subsequent people said about that, and then people subsequent to them. This handing down is a continuous tradition, in which “tradition” is challenged time after time. It is not only a fusion of horizons, but a fusion of fused horizons.

Positivism may be the victory of the demonstrable over the real, or the easy over the subtle; but clearly comprehensive historical understanding must take in every available trail to understanding, not omitting any because of lack of documentation, or because that documentation takes a form, such as forgery, that deviates from the archival ideal.

The perspectives of the French authors studied here range from admiring to hostile, utterly reliable to comically not. Yet, each in their way, they all illuminate. I have identified as best I can the prejudices of the sources, and in particular four documents that I have identified as forgeries. Rather than putting them aside, I have tagged them as evidence of wishful thinking on the part of their authors who would change how French readers viewed Venice. I have bracketed them in the sense of not thinking that they reflect events in the same way that other

documents do, but they remain important parts of my own understanding of the French view of Venice.

Ultimately that understanding transcends the disciplinary view of history. I cannot look at Venice – or how the French looked at Venice – without placing my own experience somewhere in the frame. I see Venice as a westerner, as an American, as an elite, as an educated professional, as a woman, as a Catholic, as a pragmatist. I experience the history of Venice from both an intellectual perspective and an aesthetic one. I reflect on its centuries with full knowledge that someone, some day, will look back on my time and culture with the same lofty indifference and distant puzzlement, and perhaps with some understanding that eludes us now. My prejudices are my own, and hard won. I try both to exercise them and relax them to enter into my own hermeneutic understanding of the history of Venice, and of the French who sought to understand it themselves.
The Treacherous Treaty

In this clever passage from the Chronique d'Ernoul, Antelm the Nasty writes that when the Sultan of Babylon - who was at war with his nephew and others - hears of the Christian crusading plans, he meets with his high priests and asks for their help. They are unable to fight because of religious laws; and whatever God wills, will happen. The Sultan says he would take their lands, give them in return an allowance, and take the balance to hire defensive armies. But in the meantime he sends messengers to the Doge of Venice with gifts, salutations, and friendship, asking him to detour the Christians from their attack on Egypt, in return for the franchise of the port of Alexandria. Thus the Venetians, by their diversions to Zara and Constantinople, accomplish. Thus ends the reference to the treacherous treaty in the "Chronique."

Venice did indeed engage in a treaty with Egypt for commercial advantage, but this treaty was signed in 1208, after the Fourth Crusade. This treaty was published, undated, by Tafel and Thomas and, although undated, associated with the Fourth Crusade by Mas Latrie in

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2 The Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier was written by many hands, two of whom are named in the title, others, including those for the Fourth Crusade period, anonymous. I argue in chapter two that the author of the Fourth Crusade sections, which would include the excerpt discussed in this appendix, was Antelm the Nasty.
1852 and Hopf in 1867.³ In 1877, Hanotaux proved definitively that this commercial treaty could not have been executed before 1208,⁴ and therefore could not have been a treacherous treaty.

Nonetheless, the treacherous treaty theory continued to be cited as if true by scholars up to and including Norwich in the 1980s.

Excerpts from *Chronique d'Ernoul*⁵

Now I am going to talk to you about the sultan of Babylon,⁶ whose brother was Saladin, who seized the land of Egypt, after the death of his nephew, and who had seized the land of Damascus and Jerusalem from his other nephew. I am going to tell you what he did.

When he heard that the Christians had taken great pains to arrive to the land of Egypt, he protected with garrisons Damascus and the land that he had taken away from his nephew. At that moment the sultan of Babylon went to Egypt to ask for advice on how

³ Donald E. Queller, *The Latin Conquest of Constantinople*, from the series *Major Issues in History*, ed. C. Warren Hollister (New York: Wiley, 1971), http://books.google.com/books?id=ihZnAAAAMAAJ&q (accessed February 24, 2013). Queller assembles a series of readings reflecting these views, from what he calls “the primitive theory of accidents” to the “modified theory of accidents,” and a full treatment of the conspiracy or treachery theories. Some of Queller’s chapter titles (and the authors whose works they include) are: “The view of a leader” (Geoffrey of Villehardouin); “A view from the ranks” (Robert of Clari); “Venetion greed” (Louis de Mas Latrie); “The treacherous Treaty of 1202” (C. Hopf); “The Treaty of 1202 disproved” (G. Hanotaux); “The false treaty perpetuated” (E. Pears); “A French theory of accidents” (J. Tessier); “Did Villehardouin conceal the truth?” (E. Faral).


⁵ Louis de Mas Latrie, ed., *Chronique d’Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier, publiée, pour la première fois, d’après les manuscrits de Bruxelles, de Paris et de Berne, avec un essai de classification des continuateurs de Guillaume de Tyr, pour la Société de l’histoire de France* (Paris: Renouard, 1871), http://books.google.com/books?id=o6YUAAAJAQAJ&printsec (accessed February 24, 2013). I am grateful to Jan Janis, Lourdes Reviriego, Bill Skinner, and Don Daniel for help in understanding this work and in translating the sections used.

⁶ Al-Malik al-Adil (1145–1218) governed Egypt for his brother Saladin, channeling Egyptian wealth to Saladin’s various campaigns in Syria, including his war against the Crusaders (1175–1183). He was governor of Aleppo (1183–1186) but returned to Egypt during the Third Crusade (1186–1192). Following Saladin’s death (March 1193), and suppressed revolt and determined the succession. He was made governor of Damascus and then Sultan, ruling from 1200-1217 over both Egypt and Syria, promoting trade and peaceful relations with the Crusader states. He died defending Egypt and Palestine during the Fifth Crusade in 1218. The strength of the Ayyubid state was in part attributable to him.
he could protect the land from the Christians who were coming to his land. When he was in the land, he asked for the archbishops and bishops and priests of the place and he said to them:

Sirs, the Christians have made great efforts to come to this land and to take the land, if they can. They know that you have horses and arms, and that you are well equipped to protect the land and help defend it, since I am at war with the sultan of Aleppo and my nephews, if I cannot have all my people here, it would be good for me to have you here and there; it would be good for you to help me.

They said that they would come unarmed, that they would not fight; because their law prevented them from fighting, and against their law they would not fight; but on the contrary they would go as Muslims and would pray to the Lord, and defend well the land, since a thing they should not do, they could not do.

Then the sultan said: If the Christians come here, and they take the land, where would you go? What would you do?

They said: We would do what God pleases.

Then the sultan said: Since you neither wish to fight nor can fight, I will find somebody to fight for you.

Then he asked a scribe to come before him. Afterwards, he asked the highest archbishops he had and the richest ones, and he asked them how much income they had, how much the archbishop was worth and swear that they would not lie to him. That they would tell the truth, and he had them write it down this way. Afterwards, he called the others one by one and had them write it down this way. When everything was written, he made them add up how much the land was worth, and saw that they had as much income and land as he had.

He said: Sirs, you have more land than I have, it will be a great damage if you lose it; I will take the land and I will give you supplies, and with the rest I will find sargeants and knights and I will defend the land.

They said: Sir, why would you, please, take away our income that our ancestors gave to us?

He said he had no intention to take it away, but that he wanted to protect them and he would protect them.

He took all the land, and provided their income, to each according to their situation. Then he organized messengers, gave them money and great goods, then he sent them to Venice. And he sent to the doge of Venice and to the Venetians great presents.
he sent salutations and greetings. And he asked them if they could discourage the Christians from going to the land of Egypt; if they did, he would give them the right to use the port of Alexandria and lots of profits. The messengers went to Venice and they did what they were supposed to, and then they returned....

The Venetians prepared their ships and vessels, they had them loaded with supplies, and they picked up the pilgrims, and when the weather was good, they left from Zadar and went to the island of Corfu. This island is located between Durazzo and la Puglia. There they waited for the young son [of the overthrown Byzantine Emperor], and when he arrived, they left from there and went to Constantinople. Then, the Venetians had listened well to the plea and the request made by the sultan of Egypt, as I have explained to you before, that the pilgrims be dissuaded from travelling to Egypt.

The Spurious letter from "Morbesan" to Pope Nicholas V

Shortly after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 a report circulated of a letter written by one Morbesan (or “Morbassene”), a Turkish Sultan or general, to Pope Nicholas V. The letter, almost certainly a forgery by a European educated in the humanist tradition, upbraids the Pope for inciting war against the Turks – criticizes the practice of indulgences – reminds the Pope of Christ’s preference for peaceful over warlike methods – asks the Pope to cease his calls for Crusades – and asserts that, as admirers of Christ, the Turks harbor no religious antipathy for Christians. Most importantly for our purposes, the letter castigates the Venetians for having usurped the lands they hold without just title; for their tyranny; and for their pride in thinking themselves the greatest of the Italians. It also asserts that the Turks and other Italians share a Trojan ancestry not shared by the Venetians. In the tradition of the “treacherous treaty” above, this clever work puts words in the mouth of an infidel foe to drive home a standard criticism of Venice.7

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Morbesan lord of Achaia, son to Orestes, with his brothers, — to the high priest of Rome, health, according to his deserts.

Whereas it has lately come to our ears that, at the request and prayers of the people of Venice, you have publicly preached in your churches, that whoever shall take up arms against us shall receive in this life a remission of his sins, with a promise of life eternal hereafter. This we did not hear of until the arrival of some pilgrims, who have crossed the sea in Venetian vessels,— and it has caused in us the utmost astonishment. Although you may perhaps have received powers from the God of thunders to absolve and release souls, so much the more prudently and discreetly should you exercise this power, nor by such means induce the Christians to act hostilely against us, and more especially the Italians ; for we have lately had information that our fathers have declared the turkish nation was innocent of the death of your Christ crucified,— and that they neither possess nor have any knowledge of those places which are ^by you held sacred, and that we have always had the Jewish nation in hatred, who, from what we have read in histories and chronicles, did most treacherously betray and deliver up the Christ to the roman judge in Jerusalem, to suffer death on the cross.

We marvel, therefore, and grieve, that the Italians should be our enemies, — for we are naturally inclined to be attached to them, as being, like to ourselves, of the issue of the trojan race, and of ancient birth. We are sprung from the same blood, and regularly descended from king Priam and his line ; and it is our intention to advance with our armies to those parts of Europe that have been promised to us by the gods of our forefathers. We have also the intention of restoring Troy the great, and to avenge the blood of Hector and the queen Ixion [Hecuba], by subjecting to our government the empire of Greece and punishing the descendants of the transgressors. We also intend subjugating the island of Crete, and the others in that sea, of which the Venetians have robbed us by violence.

We require, therefore, that you act with more discretion, and that you impose silence on your preachers in Italy, that they may no longer comply with the requests before

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8 “Morbesan,” letter from “Morbesan” to Pope Nicholas V, June 1453, *The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet; Containing an Account of the Cruel Civil Wars between the Houses of Orleans and Burgundy; of the Possession of Paris and Normandy by the English; Their Expulsion Thence; and of Other Memorable Events that Happened in the Kingdom of France, as Well as in Other Countries. A History of Fair Example, and of Great Profit to the French, Beginning at the Year MCCCC, where that of Sir John Froissart finishes, and ending at the Year MCCCLXVII, and continued by others to the Year MDXVI*, trans. Thomas Johnes, (London: H.G. Bohn, 1849): Ch. 68, 233-4, [http://books.google.com/books?id=mvo8AAAJAAJ&pg](http://books.google.com/books?id=mvo8AAAJAAJ&pg) (accessed February 20, 2013); Schwöbel, *Coexistence*, 168n. “The letter was probably composed at one of the courts hostile to Venice and its chief purpose seems to have been that of anti-Venetian propaganda.” The letter, with small variants, found its way into the chronicles of Mathieu de Coussy, Enguerrand de Monstrelet, and others.
mentioned of these Venetians, and provoke the Christians to wage war against us, as we
have no cause of warfare against them from any difference in our creeds. It is of no
importance that we do not put our whole faith in your Christ, since we allow him to
have been a very great prophet; and as we do not follow his law, we are not to be
compelled to believe in him.

If any dispute has arisen between us, and the Venetians, it is without colour of justice,
or of authority from Caesar or from any other prince. Through their pride and ambition,
they have possessed themselves of many islands and other places that, formed part of
our government, — which usurpations we cannot and will not longer suffer, for the time
of repossession is near at hand.

For these and other reasons you ought therefore to be silent, and desist from your
enterprises, especially as we know the Venetians to be a distinct people, in their
manners and laws, from the Romans, although they think themselves superior to all the
world; but, by the aid of our great god Jupiter, we will bring their pride and insolence to
an end.

Should you not prudently desist from your intentions, we shall march our whole force
against you, aided by the numberless kings of the east, who, seem now to be
slumbering; and we will bring an irresistible force by sea and land, not only against you
and your walking pilgrims bearing the cross, but also against Germany and France,
should you excite them to war upon us.

With the aid of Neptune, god of the sea, we intend to cross the Hellespont, into
Dalmatia, with numberless armies, and to visit the northern regions as far as Thrace.

Given at our triumphal palace in June, in the 840th year of Mohammed, sealed and
enregistered.

The Horrible, Execrable and Most Damnable Oath Taken by James the Bastard

James II Lusignan of Cyprus, known as “James the Bastard,” overthrew his legitimate half-sister
Charlotte and her French husband, with backing from the Sultan of Egypt, to become King of Cyprus in
1464. That same year he married Caterina Cornaro, daughter of Marco Cornaro, a wealthy Venetian
noble. Caterina, then fourteen years old, was (in ceremonies of great pomp) married in Venice by
surrogate, with the Cypriot ambassador standing in for James the Bastard, and declared a “Daughter of
St. Mark.” Caterina sailed for Cyprus in 1472. The Republic of Venice, which already had a longstanding
commercial presence in Cyprus, amplified its political and military presence in Cyprus at this time. In 1473 James died, leaving Caterina pregnant with a son, who also died shortly thereafter. In the tense environment around the throne, both deaths were regarded as suspicious, but could just as well have been natural. Queen Caterina Cornaro had a contentious sixteen-year reign as sole monarch of the Kingdom of Cyprus, threatened on one side by the Genoese-backed Charlotte and Louis of Savoy, constantly plotting to regain the throne, and pressured on the other by her “father,” the Venetian Republic, represented by her male relatives, who urged her to resign in favor of the Republic. In 1489 Queen Caterina finally ceded sovereignty of Cyprus to Venice, in return for a fief in Asolo and the right to be regarded as “Queen of Cyprus” for life.

Lemaire includes this “oath” in his work “La légende des venitiens.” Not only does Lemaire accuse the Venetians of poisoning James and his son so that Venice could inherit Cyprus via their “daughter”; in Lemaire’s telling, Venice also is complicit in the original coup carried out by James against his sister and her French husband. This gives Lemaire the opportunity to associate Venice with the unsavory James the Bastard. Lemaire’s “La légende des venitiens” includes this passage that does that, to Venice’s great detriment, in a particularly colorful way.

Excerpt from 

La légende des venitiens

[James the] Bastard took a horrible, execrable and most damnable oath to the said Sultan which was afterwards translated from Arabic into Latin, and brought to Pope Pius by some knights of Rhodes, for which reason he would never receive the ambassadors of the said James as the ambassadors of a Christian king: but reprimanded them very severely. Since, then, the Venetians are his heirs, is it no necessary that they would take such an oath as the said James did, in the following manner?

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10 Ibid., 394-5.
First, he invoked the name of Almighty God forty times, and then said:

By the great and high God, merciful and gracious, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things that are therein: and by the holy Gospels: by the holy baptism: by St. John, the Baptist, and all the saints, and by the Christian faith: I promise and swear, that whatever I shall know, shall be discovered to my sovereign lord Alleseraph Asnal, Sultan of Egypt, and Emperor of all Arabia, whom God strengthen in his kingdom, and I will always be a friend of his friends, and an enemy of his enemies, and conceal nothing from him.

I will suffer no pirates in my kingdom: nor furnish them any provisions or help.

All Egyptians, who are slaves in my kingdom, I will redeem and set at liberty: I will offer every year, on the first day of the month of October or November, by way of tribute to the sovereign temples of Jerusalem and Mecca, the sum of five thousand ducats of gold: I will take care that the Rhodians furnish the pirates with no arms.

Whatever shall come to my knowledge, that deserves to be known, I will communicate to the Sultan truly, and without fraud.

If I fail in any of the above-said matters, I will be an apostate from the Christian faith, and the commands of the gospel: I will deny that Jesus CHRIST lives, and that his mother is a virgin: I will kill a camel on the holy water font: and curse the priests of the church: I will deny the divinity: and adore humanity: I will commit fornication on the grand altar with a Jewess, and receive on myself all the curses of the holy fathers.

Was not Marc Corrario a Venetian, whose daughter the said bastard king afterwards married to his detriment, present at the administering of the said oath and homage? Therefore it is most likely, that they are in possession of Cyprus upon the same terms, since they have usurped that title.

The “Statutes of the Inquisition of State”

The “Statutes of the Inquisition\(^{11}\) of State” referred to by Daru are a forgery, describing an independent and super-secret organization once part of, but increasingly independent from,

\(^{11}\) This “Inquisition” has nothing to do with religion. What is generally called the “Ecclesiastical Inquisition” or the “Inquisition of Venice” is the activity in which Venetian state cooperated with the church in rooting out heresy. Doge Francesco Dona and his six councilors established the Inquisition of Venice on 22 April 1547. That Inquisition is a fascinating story – Amelot devotes over thirty pages to that Inquisition and the many ways in which
the Council of Ten. Daru found them in his researches in the royal library in Paris, bound together with a work of Paolo Sarpi. He believed that he had found something genuine, and heretofore completely ignored by historians. To the charge brought by Tiepolo that nothing at all like them had been found in the Venetian archives or anywhere else in Venice, Daru replied that this demonstrated how successfully the Inquisition of State kept its secrets. Subsequent researches by other historians proved Tiepolo to be right – that Daru’s “Statutes” were a forgery. Belief or not in the veracity of the “Statutes” is key to understanding the nature of the Venetian republic in its latter centuries. Read end to end, the “Statutes” present a picture of a veritable police state, with KGB-like or Staasi-like scrutiny of all over all.

There are 103 “Statutes”: the first forty-eight date from 1454; the next twenty-one are undated but refer to the fall of Cyprus, which means 1489 or later; and the last thirty-four are undated but say “from the term of Francesco and after.” They begin succinctly with procedural matters:

the Republic delimits its authority, part of its ongoing effort to weaken the power of Rome within its borders – but it is not this story.

There was a real Inquisition of State. It was established at some unknown point in the fifteenth century as a sub-group of the Council of Ten, composed of two or three men. They served as investigators for the Ten and their charge was “to come to the Council with what they have found, and the Council will decide what it thinks best with regard to them.” They spied on the people they were told to spy upon by the Council of Ten (which was really a council of 16, as it included the six dogal counselors). They had no authorization to act on their own account. Their remit, as the entire Council of Ten’s, was limited to crimes against the state. In 1539 this group took on the title Inquisition of State and began to act as their own tribunal; however, they were still associated with the Council of Ten. In 1582 they were confirmed in having a separate tribunal and their own archives. Their portfolio continued to be public safety, that is plots and conspiracies against the state. That Inquisition, while it is held in the same grim regard as the Ten itself, is not the Inquisition of the “Statutes.”

See chapter five. Because real Statutes did exist, I use quotation marks to indicate when I refer to the forged statutes.

1. All regulations and orders of the court will be written in the hand of one of us. We will use a secretary for the shipment of implementing acts without the initiate into the secret council.

2. This status will be enclosed in a cassette which each of us keep the key in turn for a month in order to have the facility to put the chapter in memory.

3. The form of proceeding the court will always secret. Neither we nor our successors, will bear any outward sign. The more that the court is surrounded by mystery, the better the public is served.

*Just as these procedural matters emphasize secrecy, “statute” number five emphasizes secrecy in matters of arrest:*

5. It will be the same for the arrests. We will make no proclamation, no outward act. If the person to arrest was in a situation where we could not order him to appear before the leaders of the Council of Ten, or if they refused to obey, we put the commission to the captain of the henchmen, recommending him to avoid arrest at home, but try to seize the person of the blue and when it is outside the home, for conducting to the piombi.

*The next “statute” shows the how pervasive the enterprise of spying is meant to be, and how attractive it would be for the poor nobles, not only for the pay, but also to enable them to discharge grudges with the possibility of having enemies exiled, or to give them relief from their own legal or financial difficulties:*

6. The court will have the greatest possible number of observers, chosen from the nobility and also from the citizens, the people, and the religious. They are promised a reward for their reports when they are of some importance, the right to appoint some exiles, the expectation further employment, exemption from certain contributions, or other privileges. They are paid in silver if they refuse other compensation, but they will have no fixed salary. They will be paid according to the value of their services and if they are to be found entangled in some criminal case or debts, we can give them a safe-conduct, but always temporary, only eight months, renewed as deserved for their zeal.
The next two “statutes” are the first of many dealing with foreign embassies, the seemingly biggest preoccupation of the authors of the “statutes.” Note the use of previously banned Venetians in this sort of espionage:

7. Four of these observers are constantly, and unbeknownst to each other, attached to the house of each foreign ambassadors residing in the capital, to account for everything that is happening and all those who come.

8. If the observers placed at an ambassador fail to penetrate the secrets, we give some banned Venetian order to try to be received in the palace of the minister, under the pretext of enjoying the right of asylum. Measures that will be taken to allay his worries, and the termination of his ban, or other rewards commensurate with its condition, will be the price of his discoveries.

“Statute” ten orders pre-emptive spying, or so-called “sting” operations, based on what various nobles have said in the Great Council. This “statute,” along with others below, would have had a chilling effect on the free flow of debate in the Great Council. Here we also see the reputed existence of a “Register of suspects”:

10. The court will assemble the day after the Grand Council has held one meeting. Here we examine the list of all those who have been elected to roles which give entry to the senate. Their reputation, their property, their habits, will be the subject of this review, and if someone seems to deserve some suspicion, two observers, unknown to one another, will be designated to track all his actions. If this monitoring provides no information, we will detach some wise person to talk business mysteriously during the night, and engage, under the lure of a considerable reward, to discover some secret government a foreign minister, and if after this ordeal, even after having resisted, the patrician does not immediately report this proposal to the court, it will be entered in a register called the Register of suspects, and carefully monitored by us and our successors.

The next two “statutes” concern Venetians sent to be ambassadors abroad, and they show the extent to which the statutes, had they been genuine, would have signaled
how the secret “Inquisition of State” (or “court” as it is sometimes called in the “statutes”) had abrogated legitimate government functions. One directs foreign ambassadors to use financial means to obtain intelligence about foreign affairs and to keep these discoveries out of the official dispatches when advisable; it also requires ambassadors to report first to the “Inquisition of State,” not the Senate, on its discoveries. The next “statute” directs the Grand Chancellor – a bureaucratic post reserved for members of the citizen class – to instruct secretaries on his staff to spy on the ambassador and expressly warn “the court” if the ambassador uses his post to seek benefits for his family or himself, or if any important matters escape the ambassador’s attention. Poor nobles prone to murmurs and broglios come under great scrutiny.

“Statute” sixteen is perhaps the best known of all:

16. When the court has deemed necessary someone's death, the execution will never be public. The condemned will secretly buried at night in the channel Orfano.

The statutes appear to be ordered as if accumulated from precedent, rather than from a pre-determined outline, so that the next is not related to the last, but may go off in a new direction without transition, or back to an old topic with greater refinement and detail. Here we return to what is said in the Senate and Great Council:

20. Observers shall be specifically responsible to account for all that has been said by murmuring patricians in the Council, especially in the early morning hours, because they speak more freely then as a smaller number of people are there. These observers will report by week, not omitting special reports, when they have to disclose any important circumstances.

Gradually the net widens. The “statutes” will spread the purview of the “Inquisition of State” over every aspect of Venetian life, including include citizens, artisans, members of the
Council of Ten (clear proof that the two bodies were meant to be seen as distinct), and even the Doge himself. Infamously, one “statute” authorizes the assassination of workers who would take trade secrets out of Venice. This would particularly apply to the famed Venetian glassblowers, whose value to Venice can be seen by the generous treatment they would earn by returning:

26. If a worker transports an art out of the republic, to the detriment of the republic, he will be ordered back. He does not obey, his relatives will be jailed. If he returns, he will be forgiven, and given an establishment in Venice. If, despite the imprisonment of his relatives, he still wants to stay at abroad, we will take steps to find him and kill him; then, after his death, his relatives will be released. All ambassadors and consuls resident in foreign countries are required to give notice to the court of all any such news that could be detrimental to the republic.

The first forty-eight “statutes” are undated. Another set of “statutes” follows that make reference to the acquisition of Cyprus in 1489. That acquisition opened Venice up to considerable legitimate criticism\(^\text{16}\) and exacerbated the problem of certain nobles asserting their own royalty. Two “statutes” deal with these issues:

49. Since the acquisition of the kingdom of Cyprus by renunciation of Queen Catherine Cornaro, we hear in the *Broglio* that the descendants of the brothers of the queen have the pretension to call themselves princes of the blood, and that other patricians, not relatives of the queen, but those whose families once held as fiefs islands of the Archipelago and other lands of the Levant, have also claimed the title of princes. Survellants are responsible for listening carefully and reporting to the court any such absurd speech that could put disorder in the republic. Offenders will be arrested for any similar occurrence, and those who have made such claims will be warned, intimating that we do not allow such speech, under penalty of death, and that if they were bold enough to re-offend, and we could acquire evidence or out of court, he would be drowned as an example.

\(^{16}\) See chapter three.
50. It has come to the attention of the Court that many people, not only among the nobles, but even among city dwellers and foreigners, question the rights of the Republic to the kingdom of Cyprus; others, even more recklessly, say the rights of Queen Catherine herself had little merit. As it is important to curb this license, spies should denounce anyone who would take such remarks. The main culprits will be taken in hand. If their speech can be attributed to lightness and inconsideration, they will only be severely chastised and ordered to be more circumspect. If we see any malice, or if they recur for any reason whatsoever, they will drown. If it is a stranger who is guilty of such remarks, the first time they will be ordered to leave the territory of the Republic in twenty-four hours, assuming there is no bad intention; if there is, he will pay with his life.

After foreign ambassadors, the non-Venetian entity that comes in for the most scrutiny is the Papal Nuncio in Venice. The tension implied here must be understood in the context of the Papal Interdict and Venetian defense, led by Paolo Sarpi in 1607, and the so-called Spanish Conspiracy of 1618. Both of these were power struggles between Venice and the Papacy that were followed with great interest in all of Europe, and were regarded as matters of civic life and death in Venice. An earlier “statute” provided for the regular audit of papal mail: every two months, the papal mail would be intercepted and the letters read so that the list of suspects could be updated. This “statute” deals with conversation at the palace of the Papal Nuncio in Venice:

51. We have often been warned of some speeches that take place in the palace of the Bishop Nuncio, where the authority of the secular prince to judge ecclesiastics is questioned, even in civil matters. It is not only those attached to the court of his lordship reverend who allow this speech, but also Venetian clerics and nobles, either to take part in high-spirited conversation or to attract the good graces of the Pope. Some show great zeal in supporting these opinions, and even have the temerity to repeat these same words in the middle of their families and their society. To remedy these abuses, suspects are arrested, those whose words reach this court. However, if anyone must be killed, let it be far from the nuncio’s residence. Let the word leak out that they were put to death by order of the court and for this cause, but at the same time let nothing official be said. The ambassador of the Republic in Rome must earnestly
deny everything, so that he can take all the necessary precautions for the security interest of the people of his household. Venetian noble prelates bold enough to utter such maxims in the court of the nuncio, will be entered in a register entitled “Ecclesiastics Not Agreeable to our Government” and procedures will begin immediately against them. Immediately all his revenues will be sequestered, and escrow will be maintained under various pretexts until the culprit is notified of the real reason for the discipline, and has come to repent. If it was outside the palace of the Nuncio that he has made this reckless speech, he will be warned, and if he does not appear, secretly removed and locked up for a long time, so that these views are fatally eradicated, or at least that supporters of the Roman court are obliged to keep hidden, and not spread their views in Venice. If, after the seizure of his income and long imprisonment, the offender reoffends, then he will be prosecuted with the utmost rigor, because evil will be eradicated by iron and fire.

The poor nobles, often called “Barnabotti” after the neighborhood of San Barnaba, were an endless problem. This “statute” addresses their constant demands for the few jobs that might be open to them. We also see here the continued abrogation of regular government roles to this small and secret group:

60. Another practice, which deserves the name of abuse is this: many nobles, under the pretext of poverty, seek the advice of lordship in the expectation of menial jobs, which are only ministerial offices, and when they come to get them, they do not disdain to exert themselves at functions below their rank, such as those of bailiffs. This use has the double disadvantage of depriving the government of a way to reward services rendered by citizens or common people, and depriving them of encouragement. Secondly, people in these offices are provided with criminal waivers, so the result is that vile patricians fill offices with vile functions. This abuse of the requires great care....

At a certain point the “statutes” begin to seem like caricatures of paranoia. One “statute” appears to mandate against Venetians participating in business – when success at trade was long the pride of Venetian culture – because of the security risk it involves. The next prohibits the acquisition of property abroad. Certainly in military
matters the “statutes” leave no possible security breach unaddressed, beginning with the arsenal, always an object of jealous state protection:

62. The court will discuss knowledge of any fact which would imply guilt on the part of masters of the arsenal. When held in jail, we will bear in mind the usefulness of such men and public fame of their service. If the crime is unforgivable, we will poison the guilty man secretly. If not, we will banish him, assigning him a new home well inland, and far from any prince with a navy. If then we learned that the banned has gone to a foreign power with a navy, we will take steps to find and murder him provided, however, that he has the reputation of be a man of worth and skill in his profession. If on the contrary he is a man of little importance, we will proceed against him in the usual form.

63. We will have observers from some of the masters currently employed in the arsenal, assigning them a fixed salary of ten ducats per month. They will be interviewed frequently, in great secrecy, on all that happens in this place, to find out if there is anything prejudicial to the State, or negligence of subordinates, or failings the leaders, and if we find some notable disorders, we will take action on the spot, peremptorily and suddenly, but always with the proper caution to avoid being misled by calumny.

64. We will order the Proveditore-General of the mainland, and in his absence the captain of Brescia, to choose from the garrison a true and resolute military man to pretend to desert, go take refuge in the State of Milan, and give notice from time to time about the provisions of the Government of that country and their military preparations. These men will be given ten ducats per month, with the assurance of an increase in salary and advancement that can go up to the rank of captain, when they return after five years of good service. Several agents can be used in this way, but care should be taken that they are unknown to one another. The advice they give us will be forwarded as they arrive by the Proveditore-General or by the master of Brescia, when it is enough to merit the attention of the court.

We have seen the wide range of matters the “Statutes” cover – from procedure to execution, banishment, leniency (rare), trade, property abroad. Also covered are scuole and convents, carnival, and use of firearms. Here we see one statute go back to how to
select subjects to be spied upon, and how to protect spies from attacks of sarcasm (spies have feelings, too):

62. If we notice that a Secretary seems to be spending beyond his, we will put him under the supervision of two agents, and carefully observe all his actions, especially to obtain some intelligence among the servants of the Secretary, to discover if he would not trade with any foreign ambassador. It is easy to foresee that in this case the Secretary would not put his servants into his confidence, but he secretly go out at night to go to the place of rendezvous. Care must be taken to continuously monitor the door of his house, especially at odd hours. The captain-general will forward the order, and if the Secretary is caught at a rendezvous, he will be arrested on the spot and tortured to extract from him the truth. Information about his spending ways will be taken by separate inquisitors.... If by all these means it follows that the Secretary is guilty, we will have public justice.

63. Some of the most important spies complain of having been exposed to sarcasm in the course of their work, which cools their zeal and prevents devotion to work. To overcome this disadvantage, we will arrest those who will insult them. After their arrest, they will be put to the torture to declare what they may know about the court’s work, and then to apply whatever punishment the inquisitors see fit, to serve as a lesson to others. It is expected that the court could not exercise his authority without a Ministry of observers. However protection must be provided for an innocent person accused of slander out of the spirit of revenge; if an accuser does not give sufficient evidence of the fact, he will pay for his slander and for disrespecting the court and compromising the innocence of the accused.

Citizen secretaries were handled very delicately in the “statutes.” These men could be very useful, knew a great many state secrets, and had to be flattered to make up for their lack of political power. A particularly sensitive situation would arise if one of them desired to take the habit in retirement:

90. A secretary, having served a long time in the senate, and thus perfectly informed of all interests and all reports on the republic, can ask not only for his retirement, but might want to take monastic habit as well. It would be useless and unsuitable to forbid him from leaving the country, because the religious, having no will, can receive from their superiors
orders to move elsewhere.... To prohibit secretaries from entering orders, despite their vocation, would be a scandal, and would seem to all Catholics a violent opposition to God's service. It is very difficult to find a way to prevent this inconvenience, but to remedy it, as far as possible with human prudence, the court will decree this. Whenever a man is elected to a position of secretary of Senate, he will be summoned before us prior to installation, and warned that any time he retires from service, either by age or by reason of disability, he will want to stay in the good graces of the government, as he deserves and as his family expects: so that after his retirement, he will have an obligation not to leave the territory of the republic without permission; if he wanted to be an ecclesiastic, secular or regular, he must be held to be disqualified.... However the penalties set forth above shall not be applied to those who fall within the Carthusian Order or the Camaldolese reformed order, because these religious do not practice in the world, and cannot be suspected of embracing the state in the views of the century. We will see whether we should not also extend this exception to the Capuchins....

In contrast to this sensitive handling of the secretaries, we see this archetypal “statute” on how to execute someone secretly whose more public execution would cause outrage:

97. There is nothing wiser than for a government to profit from the mistakes of others, in order to avoid similar circumstances. It sometimes happens that one is forced to arrest a person who would be a cause of trouble and unrest if the government chastised him publicly. To kill such a person publicly would only cause more irritation and be more dangerous; his death would cause evil by resentment. If he is executed, this excessive severity produces enmity among his family and supporters. If he is pardoned, his arrogance would become outrageous. The tribunal shall deal with a case of this nature in this way. If the trial yields a conviction of guilt, worthy of death, the prisoner will be put in the care of a jailer pretending to have been bribed, and offering to help the prisoner escape in the night: and the day of the escape, he will give his prisoner food containing a slow-acting poison that leaves no trace. Justice in this manner will have achieved its goal a little later but just as surely, and have spared all discord from public interest.

Some of the other “statutes” are seemingly common-sense rules, such as those against rigged balloting, promotion of faction, and the administration of private justice.
Many more refined the program of surveillance against foreign ambassadors, the Papal Nuncio, and discontented nobles. As the series progresses, the style has changed to a more verbose and philosophical style.

In the very last “statute,” we see a sign of failure. It is a “statute” on how to deal with banished nobles flaunting their sentences in Venice:

103. We see every day increase the license of a foolhardy few patricians who, for offenses, if not horrific, at least serious, were sentenced to banishment, and threatened with the death penalty if they broke their ban. Not only do they dare to come and live Venice, but in defiance of public dignity, and to the great scandal of the people, they are not afraid to be seen in the city, either on foot or in gondolas. This example is dangerous, and has passed into a proverb, that when banishment is voted against a patrician, “it is only his robe that is banished.” This abuse is not new; twenty years ago the Council of Ten decreed that nobles who would break their ban, and who dare to look at Venice, remain excluded from the grand council five additional years in expiation of this new offense. But this did not eradicate or even decrease abuse, because nobody dares accuse the noble breaking their ban, though the thing is obvious and known to everyone. Many times our predecessors and ourselves threatened the enforcers severely, to punish their negligence in this regard, and they have humbly admitted that every day they met in Venice some noble condemned to banishment, but they did not dare arrest them, since this arrest could take place without bloodshed. The enforcers added that if the court would allow them to formally attack the guilty, they would be sure to fulfill their duty. The court, after mature deliberation, agreed that it was not appropriate to put in the hands of henchmen the lives of guilty Venetian nobles. Therefore, if not vitiated by an enormous crime, it seemed appropriate, if not to punish past abuses, at least to prevent the nobleman to return to vigorous action. Therefore, there are actually banished nobles who can stay in Venice, provided that they exercise restraint, and except in cases where they show themselves shamelessly, the court will discuss the matter, declaring that the culprit may be relieved of his ban by a resolution of the state inquisition, or extend the time of the ban as it deems appropriate. We can also speak out against the offender, exclude him from the grand council, after his return, for a number of years to impress upon the minds of the subjects due respect to justice, and so that a person cannot claim ignorance, it will be proclaimed briefly in the next general assembly, that all the noble exiles have to go to their place of exile in eight days, warning them that if
they are found to have broken their ban, their punishment shall be increased by the occurrence.
NOTE: I have used English translations wherever possible. When works were not available in English, I read them in the original and translated passages to use myself. When my skill did not stretch to meet the need, I was fortunate enough to receive gracious help. I would like to thank Mario Cellarosi for his translation of a particularly difficult Venetian document, a mélange of Venetian dialect, Latin, and legalese. I would also like to thank my French-speaking friends and husband for helping me to understand key documents, including forgeries, only available in Old French: Jan Janis, Lourdes Reviriego, Bill Skinner, and Don Daniel. And I would like to think Abby Sherburne for helping me understand the misapplication of a footnote in a Latin text.

I have included here all the sources cited in the paper and a few that were not cited but formed my background thoughts. The many electronic citations are made for the convenience of the reader, whether I used the electronic or hard copy of the work. In a historiographical work such as this, what might otherwise be regarded as secondary sources become primary sources. Here I have used 1912 as the cut-off date, so that Mann’s “Death in Venice” can be considered where it should be, as a primary source.

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