

Reshaping the Republican Ritual: The Entry of the Procurators of St Mark in Early Modern Venice

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The Venetian republican tradition stands out in the early modern European context in terms of both politics and culture. Besides inspiring a sophisticated, multi-layered oligarchical government, in which power was distributed among a multitude of short-time offices and institutions, in Venice republicanism nourished what has been called the “myth” of the Serenissima: a system of symbols, or “an accumulation of inherited beliefs and meanings,”¹ offering a self-portrait of the ruling elite, the Venetian patriciate.² A city blessed by God and protected by St Mark, whose body was brought to the Lagoon in 828, Venice boasted of having enjoyed undisputed liberty since its foundation. This claim became even more distinctive in the sixteenth century, in a Europe dominated by kingdoms and empires. Works like Gasparo Contarini’s *De magistratibus et republica venetorum* (1543) and Donato Giannotti’s *La republica de’ Viniziani* (1540), which were widely read throughout Europe, consciously built the “myth” of a unique republican constitution, guaranteeing the perfect balance between monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. The “myth” famously led John Pocock to speak, with regard to Contarini’s model, of a “mechanisation of virtue”: in a state regulated so severely by accurate laws, ethics and politics seem to transform in a clockwork device.³

1 Ian Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 325.

2 The “myth” of Venice is a much-debated topic. For a comprehensive overview, see Elizabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *Venise triomphante. Les horizons d’un mythe* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999) and the essays included in John J. Martin and Dennis Romano (eds.), *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). For the imagery displaying the “myth,” see David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) and Giorgio Tagliaferro, “Le forme della Vergine. La personificazione di Venezia nel processo creativo di Paolo Veronese,” *Venezia Cinquecento* 30 (2005): 5–158.

3 See John G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) and, more recently, the chapter by Vittorio Conti, “The Mechanisation of Virtue: Republican Rituals in Italian Political Thought in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Republicanism: A Shared*

Civic ritual played a substantial part within the “myth” of Venice.⁴ The sovereign authority of the republic was staged through a series of highly codified performances, following a tight agenda that combined secular and liturgical events. Processions held to mark a religious occurrence, festivities celebrating a key historical date, receptions welcoming foreign guests, elections, popular games, and regattas helped to visualize the power of the state and republican ideology. During the solemn parades that crossed St Mark’s Square, for example, the symbols of Venetian power and independence (the *trionfi dogali*) were exhibited, including the sword, the banners, and the umbrella granted by Pope Alessandro III in 1177.⁵ These processions pivoted on the figure of the doge, the “prince” of the republic and the chief character in most ceremonial displays. It should be noted that in early modern times the *dogado* was a mostly representative office, for it was subject to strict limitations: the doge exercised little political initiative, could not manage freely his own property, and even needed the permission of the Senate to leave Palazzo Ducale. While performing civic rituals, however, his role remained fundamental, because his body came to personify the body politic of the republic, i.e. the patriciate as a whole. For instance, on the Feast of the Ascension (*Sensa*) the doge sailed out to the open sea and symbolically married the Adriatic by dropping a golden ring into the water. He thus claimed the maritime supremacy of Venice.⁶

Both the “myth” of Venice and its civic ritual have been widely studied. Yet, a major issue arises when considering the existing literature. Scholars have focused almost exclusively on the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, i.e. the centuries when the power of Venice was at its peak. Even if the Republic was fully independent until 1797, when it fell at the hands of Bonaparte, no comprehensive analysis has been dedicated to Venetian civic ritual with regard to the last two hundred years of the Serenissima.⁷ The reasons for this

European Heritage, ed. by Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 73–84.

4 See Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Matteo Casini, *I gesti del principe. La festa politica a Firenze e Venezia in età rinascimentale* (Venice: Marsilio, 1996); Urban L., *Processioni e feste dogali. Venetia est mundus* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1998).

5 See Francesca Ambrosini, “Cerimonie, feste, lusso,” in *Storia di Venezia dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, XII vols. (Rome: Treccani, 1991–2002), vol. v, *Il Rinascimento: società ed economia*, ed. by Alberto Tenenti and Ugo Tucci (1996), 441–520.

6 See Evelyn Korsch, “Renaissance Venice and the Sacred-Political Connotations of Waterborne Pageants,” in *Waterborne Pageants and Festivities in the Renaissance*, ed. by Margaret Shewring and Linda Briggs (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 79–97.

7 The only remarkable exception, as far as civic ritual is concerned, is Matteo Casini, “Cerimoniali,” in *Storia di Venezia*, vol. VII, *La Venezia barocca*, ed. by Gino Benzoni and Gaetano Cozzi (1997), 107–60.

gap in the literature are manifold. On the one hand, this is due to a broader critical paradigm, assuming a “decline” or a “repudiation” of ritual in early seventeenth-century Europe. From this period onwards, social and cultural transformations would erode the value of both religious and profane ceremonies, making civic ritual politically uninfluential as part of a wider process of secularization.⁸ On the other hand, as regards the Republic of Venice in particular, most scholars argue that the Serenissima itself would “decline” throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this endless decadence, “the Venetian elite carefully adjusted the rhetoric of the myth so that it remained effective,”⁹ but never altered or modified it. According to these studies, then, the patriciate simply preserved the tradition of the “myth,” as if any major change made to this symbolic capital was unbearable.

This chapter aims to challenge this thesis by questioning the idea of a “ceremonial city” frozen for two centuries in its Renaissance etiquette. I assume, on the contrary, that there was a metamorphosis in seventeenth-century Venetian pageantry and encomiastic production, and I argue that this new representation of power hinged on a new social basis. Indeed, this shift is primarily due to the power relationships within the patriciate, which radically changed after the end of the Renaissance. The economic and political crisis affecting Venice in the seventeenth century, culminating in the Ottoman-Venetian wars of Candia (Crete, 1645–69) and Morea (the Peloponnese, 1684–99, 1714–18), exacerbated the contrasts between rich and poor noblemen. Although nominally equal in rights and power, the two parties had increasingly different prerogatives, depending on the private fortune of their houses (*casate*).¹⁰

This process deeply affected the “myth” of Venice. According to the “myth,” the patriciate was an estate without internal contrasts, whose decisions were unanimous and highly coherent. Even Pocock’s idea of a “mechanisation of virtue” in early modern Venice comes from this political tradition. Starting in the 1630s, however, the most wealthy and powerful patricians openly challenged this vision, as they claimed an unprecedented protagonism both in politics and culture, from poetry to architecture. Several collections of eulogies were printed, glorifying this or that patrician with words and metaphors foreign

8 See Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

9 Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, 331.

10 See Gaetano Cozzi, “Dalla riscoperta della pace all’inestituibile sogno di dominio,” in *Storia di Venezia, La Venezia barocca*, 3–104; and Guido Candiani, “Conflitti d’intenti e di ragioni politiche, di ambizioni e di interessi nel patriziato veneto durante la guerra di Candia,” *Studi veneziani* 36 (2008): 145–275.

to the republican tradition, and churches arose with façades adorned by the portraits of the patrons in place of angels and saints.¹¹ Sculptures portraying statesmen and captains of the Serenissima, which were quite rare before the 1620s, now appeared in squares, churches, and private palaces.¹² A good example are the images of sea captains, whose role stood out during Candia and Morea wars.¹³

Civic ritual also played a key part in the process, as this chapter shows. By way of example, I examine a ceremony that, despite being neglected in the literature so far, was central in seventeenth-century Venice: the entry of the procurators of St Mark.¹⁴ My analysis takes into consideration the texts printed when a *procuratore* was elected and focuses on the festival books describing the performance of the ritual. These texts were built to mirror the novel forms of the ceremony, to “represent” the entry in the sense of “presenting it again” and even “re-creating it,”¹⁵ and, of course, to honor the procurator himself. In doing so, they pursued a form of individual celebration that was unparalleled, at least to this extent, in the republican tradition.

1 The Procurators' Election: Ritual, Ceremony, and Literature

In a letter sent on September 17, 1732 to Francesco Maria Zanotti, his dear friend and former teacher at the University of Bologna, the Venetian poet and philosopher Francesco Algarotti (1712–64) bitterly complains about the situation of contemporary poetry. In order to comply with social standards, writes

11 On seventeenth-century church façades, see Martin Gaier, *Facciate sacre a scopo profano. Venezia e la politica dei monumenti dal Quattrocento al Settecento* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere e Arti, 2002); and Massimo Favilla and Ruggero Rugolo, “Frammenti della Venezia barocca,” *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 163 (2004–05), 47–138.

12 Matteo Casini, “Some Thoughts on the Social and Political Culture of Baroque Venice,” in *Braudel Revisited: The Mediterranean World 1600–1800*, ed. by Geoffrey Symcox, Teofilo Ruiz, and Gabriel Piterberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 180.

13 Matteo Casini, “Immagini dei capitani generali,” in *Il “Perfetto Capitano”. Immagini e realtà (secoli XV–XVII)* ed. by Marcello Fantoni (Rome, Bulzoni: 2001), 219–70.

14 The best essays on the topic are Reinhold C. Mueller, “The Procurators of San Marco in the 13th and 14th Centuries: A Study of the Office as a Financial and Trust Institution,” *Studi veneziani* 13 (1971): 105–220; and David S. Chambers, “Merit and Money: The Procurators of St Mark and their *Commissioni*, 1443–1605,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 60 (1997): 23–88. However, these two studies do not consider the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

15 See Benoit Bolduc, *La Fête imprimée. Spectacles et cérémonies politiques (1549–1662)* (Paris, Garnier: 2016), 9–40.

Algarotti, poets have to celebrate in their works all kinds of public events. For instance, he and Zanotti have been asked to compose laudatory verses for a young noblewoman forced to become a nun, and to praise a patron whose name and face they do not know.¹⁶ It can get even worse, Algarotti continues.

What could be more ridiculous than this flow and this incredible dysentery of sonnets and of any other kind of poems, which we have seen pouring into Venice these days for this new procurator?¹⁷

Here the target of Algarotti's sharp criticism is clear, for he refers to the recent election (June 5, 1732) of Carlo Pisani as procurator of St Mark. The appointment of a new procurator was one of the most significant political events in Venice. As top-ranked magistrates in charge of the church, treasury, and legacies of St Mark's basilica, the *procuratori* held the most prestigious office in the Republic after that of doge. Just like the doge, and unlike all other Venetian offices, *procuratori* were appointed for life, and they entered the senate (*pregadi*) without the need of being re-elected annually. Most of the doges themselves were selected among the procurators.¹⁸

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the position of procurator was as relevant as ever. The office was created in the eleventh century, and over time had grown both in number – from two (1231) to nine members (1443) – and in power, for the *procuratori* had accumulated more responsibilities throughout the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Besides the upkeep of the basilica and the Piazza area, where they were entitled to private accommodations (the *procuratie*), procurators distributed alms, took care of orphans, executed wills, and administrated perpetual trusts made by private testators. As of 1319, such demanding tasks were distributed among the *procuratori* as follows. Three procurators *de supra Ecclesia* kept their duties related to St Mark's basilica; three procurators *de citra canale* ("from this side of the Grand Canal") retained financial functions in the *sestieri* of San Marco, Castello, and Cannaregio; and three procurators *de ultra* ("on the other side") performed the same job regarding the *sestieri* of Dorsoduro, Santa Croce, and San Polo. Their financial duties granted the *procuratori* a large influence over the Venetian

16 See Francesco Algarotti, *Opere*, vol. XI (Venice, Carlo Palese: 1794), 363–367.

17 *Ibid.*, 364. "Ma qual più ridicola cosa che quel flusso e quella dissenteria incredibile di sonetti e d'ogni altra maniera di poesie, che si è veduta a questi di sgorgare in Venezia per questo nuovo procuratore?". Translations are all mine.

18 See Peter Burke, *Venice and Amsterdam: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Elites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994), 14.

economy and money markets, and even if the sway they exerted on politics was to some extent limited (for example, they did not take seats in the Maggior Consiglio after their election) they certainly were among the most powerful men of Venice.¹⁹

The *procuratori* played a major role within Venetian rituality as well. Since 1459, the ceremonial books outlined that four of them had to accompany the doge to all the solemn masses he attended away from St Mark's.²⁰ The most ritualized moment in their career was their election. The entry of a new member was accurately staged and performed, and gave rise to various celebrations throughout the city. When the news of the election broke, bells rang for three days in celebration. Drums and trumpets sounded in the streets, as the newly elected handed out wine, bread, and money near the *traghetti* (ferry stops) at his own expense. By night, churches and buildings were decorated with lamps, and there were fireworks in many parts of the city.²¹ Then the actual entry was scheduled. This ceremony could be held a few days as well as several months after these public rejoicings, because procurators could be away from Venice as ambassadors at the time of their election. The performance was at once physical and symbolic: the day the *procuratore* officially started his office, he also received the keys to his new apartments on the Piazza. In other words, his "entry" into service matched his "entry" to the *procuratie* palace.

The entry took place as follows.²² On the appointed day, friends and relatives picked up the newly elected procurator in front of his house, and took

19 A more detailed list of procurators' duties can be found in Chambers, "Merit and Money," 30–32.

20 *Ibid.*, 31.

21 On these rejoicings, see Sabrina Minuzzi, *Il secolo di carta. Antonio Bosio artigiano di testi e immagini nella Venezia del Seicento* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2004), 29–33; and Paolo Delorenzi, *La galleria di Minerva. Il ritratto di rappresentanza nella Venezia del Settecento* (Verona: Cierre, 2009), 14–24.

22 The most exhaustive source is a letter by a Florentine courtier describing the entry of procurator Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1713: Giovan Battista Casotti, *Da Venezia nel 1713. Lettere a Carlo Tommaso Strozzi e al canonico Lorenzo Gianni* (Prato: Guasti, 1866), 7–11. Further information can be found in the contemporary treatises by Fulgenzio Manfredi, *Dignità procuratoria di San Marco di Venetia* (Venice: Domenico Nicolini, 1602); and Vincenzo Maria Coronelli, *Procuratori di San Marco, riguardevoli per dignità e merito nella Repubblica di Venezia, colla loro origine e cronologia* (Venice: n.p., 1705); as well as in the manuscript work by Giancarlo Sivos (BMV Ital 1978, which is an eighteenth-century copy of the 1587 original; see Chambers, "Merit and Money," 23). We can also lean on several accounts in the Venetian gazettes. The pages of the "Pallade Veneta" related to the entry of the procurators are indexed in the catalogue by Delorenzi, *La galleria di Minerva*, 301–48. On this gazette, see Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *Pallade Veneta. Writings on music in Venetian society, 1650–1750* (Venice: Fondazione Levi, 1985).

him by boat to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, near the Rialto, on the Grand Canal. The group landed here because of its proximity to the church of St Salvador, where a first solemn mass was celebrated, allowing the crowd to gather. Afterwards, the *procuratore* left St Salvador in an imposing procession, consisting of up to five or six hundred people and including servants and foreigners, musicians and soldiers, captains and knights from the *Terraferma* (the mainland of the Republic of Venice), as well as the other procurators and a large part of the Senate. Arranged in pairs, the cortège marched past the Mercerie (the street where the most refined shops in Venice were located), and paraded from the Rialto to St Mark's Square. Another mass, combining sacred and civic ritual, was celebrated in St Mark's basilica. The procurator stepped to the altar, swore a personal oath (*commissione*) written for the occasion, and left generous alms. Then he entered the ducal palace for his formal investiture in the presence of the doge. He delivered a brief oration to congratulate the Collegio; finally, he received a velvet purse containing the keys to the office. Those who had marched with him from St Salvador to St Mark's either received four *pani di zuccari* (Venetian sweets) as a gift or joined the banquet that ended the celebrations.

As the literary sources constantly stress, superb decorations adorned the ceremonial route, which was transfigured by ephemeral arches and structures bearing the coat-of-arms of the *procuratore's* family.²³ The *campo* of St Salvador was filled with priceless tapestries, and the surrounding streets and alleys, as well as the Rialto Bridge, were papered with festoons. Persian drapes hung from the windows, and several paintings, including allegorical compositions and portraits of the elected, were exhibited along the path taken by the procession. The shops on the Mercerie played a main role too, because the owners put their most polished items on display. Gems, pearls, mirrors, rare feathers, and precious fabrics were arranged to compose the procurator's crest. Sumptuous laceworks, decorated in gold and silver and bearing the procurator's name, were placed next to the engravings with his portrait, which many shops displayed in the window.

These ephemeral decorations included even literature. Like the engraved portraits of the procurator, printed sheets with sonnets and other eulogies hung on the walls or were distributed among the crowd attending the entry.

23 A good example is the festival book for the entry of procurator Girolamo Basadonna in 1682: Cristoforo Ivanovich, *Minerva al tavolino. Lettere diverse di proposta e risposta a varii personaggi, sparse d'alcuni componimenti in prosa e in verso. Concernenti per lo più alle vittorie della Lega contro il Turco sino questo anno. Parte seconda* (Venice: Nicolò Pezzana, 1688), 118–30.

Storekeepers on the Mercerie showcased such texts as if they were rare merchandise. This is the textual “dysentery” Algarotti talks about in his letter. In the *Lettere inglesi*, a satirical work of fiction that mockingly describes the Venetian society of the time, Saverio Bettinelli (1718–1808) subscribes to Algarotti’s opinion in full.

Especially in Venice, poetry seemed to be a curious craft, a new manufacture, a wool mill. [...] Poets worked on them just like carpenters, painters, plasterers and machinists did; the only difference was their salary, which was the lowest of them all. [...] I have seen eight different books of poems published for a single procurator of St Mark. They were printed with pomp and huge expense. I have not seen such luxurious prints for scientific and important works.²⁴

2 The Expansion of the Ceremony in the Seventeenth Century

During the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the entry of the procurators of St Mark was a key moment in the ritual agenda of the republic of Venice. As such, the event was widely celebrated both by ephemeral texts, like the leaflets despised by Algarotti and Bettinelli, and by longer, more refined works. In the thirty-five years of the Morea wars (1684–1718), this literary production was massive: a preliminary survey, far from exhaustive, numbers among the works singularly printed for the entry of a *procuratore* three festival books, four books of poetry, six orations, and eight panegyrics, beside the accounts in the gazettes. The publication rate seems even to increase over the eighteenth century.

But was this an actual tradition in the republic of Venice? Was the entry of the procurators a codified part of the civic ritual that largely contributed, during the sixteenth century, to the “myth” of the Serenissima? Was the role of typography always crucial in representing this passage of status? Printed sources tell a different story. Before the 1680s, books celebrating a single procurator were very rare. Moreover, the shift in terms of publications mirrors a

24 “Mi pareva la poesia, massimamente a Venezia, un curioso mestiere, una nuova manifattura, un lanificio. [...] I poeti vi lavoravano al pari de’ falegnami, de’ pittori, degli stuccatori e de’ macchinisti, col solo divario che aveano paga più discreta di tutti gli altri. [...] Otto diversi ne ho veduti [di libri] per un solo procurator di San Marco, e stampati con pompa e spesa grandissima. Maggior lusso di stampe non vidi in opere scientifiche ed importanti”. See Saverio Bettinelli, *Versi sciolti* (Venice: Giovan Battista Pasquali, 1766), VIII–IX.

surprising difference in ritual. Indeed, throughout the sixteenth century, and at least until the 1630s, the entry of the procurators of St Mark was a much more modest affair. Not only had the performance less relevance, but even the route travelled by the procession was not the same.

To follow the evolution of the ceremony, we can turn to the famous work by Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima e singolare*. This sort of touristic guide *avant la lettre*, describing the most distinguished palaces, institutions, and festivities in Venice, was first published in 1581. Due to the huge success of the book, a couple of updated versions were published in the seventeenth century, adding to the original account subsequent events and new information. Thus, Sansovino's *Venetia* was reissued by Giovanni Stringa in 1604 and by Giustiniano Martinioni in 1663.

Sansovino's original from 1581 is very frequently quoted on the subject of the three-day rejoicings that followed the election of a *procuratore*. The short paragraph on the topic in *Venetia* was rewritten by Siros (1587), Manfredi (1602), and even Molmenti (1892).²⁵ Nevertheless, Sansovino's account is not very detailed, especially because he does not mention the entry, which was the final part of the election process, and was surely the most important one from the 1630s onwards. In *Venetia* there is no record of it. Even the three-day rejoicings seem to be a marginal issue compared to the historical origins and duties of the office. As evidence of this, Sansovino deals with the procurators in book 7 (*Delle fabbriche pubbliche*, "On public palaces") rather than in book 10 (*De gli abiti, costumi e usi della città*, "On city clothes, customs, and habits"). Venetian rites and ceremonies, such as the spectacular festivals organized to welcome foreign kings and princes, are described in the latter, while the rejoicings for the procurators are briefly evoked in the first, when discussing the *procuratie* (the palace on the Piazza). Apparently, then, the entry of the procurators of St Mark was not a crucial matter in sixteenth-century Venice, as far as civic ritual was concerned. Testament to this are the pages that Sansovino devotes, precisely in book 10, to the festivities held after the battle of Lepanto (1571):²⁶ the Rialto splendidly papered and covered with precious textiles, the paintings hanging on the Mercerie, the goods exhibited by the storekeepers clearly point to the future ritual, but the entry of the procurators has nothing to do with it yet.

This does not mean that the ceremony of the entry did not exist at all. The reedition of *Venetia* edited by Stringa (1604) actually feels compelled to fill the

25 See Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima e singolare, descritta in XIII libri* (Venice: Giacomo Sansovino, 1581), 108r; and Pompeo Molmenti, "I Procuratori di San Marco," in *Studi e ricerche di Storia e d'Arte* (Turin and Rome: Roux: 1892), 62.

26 See Sansovino, *Venetia*, 158rv–159r.

gap, by adding a description of the procession as it was performed in Sansovino's times.²⁷ However, the event looks quite different from the one reported a century later. Firstly, the order of magnitude is different. About three hundred people (and not five or six hundred) attended the procession; at the end two (and not four) *pani di zucchero* were given. Secondly, the ceremonial route was not only sensibly shorter, but also, and more importantly, radically dissimilar, for the parade started from the church of St Moisè instead of from St Salvador, and it did not include the Mercerie. During the sixteenth century, the Mercerie were already the most famous street in Venice, and many cardinals and ambassadors explicitly asked the Venetian authorities to visit the shops, which were at the heart of the European luxury market.²⁸ Still, the street had a secondary role in the framework of civic ritual, for the axis St Salvador – St Mark's (although it could be used, as in 1571) was less travelled than the one of St Moisè – St Mark's. As this route was a more direct way with almost no shops on it, it can be assumed that at the time neither the profusion of ephemeral decorations nor the exhibition of luxurious goods were deemed mandatory to execute a ritual like the entry of the procurators of St Mark.

Most of the literature, assuming that the procession had always left from St Salvador, has not noticed the change of route.²⁹ Yet, this is clearly indicated in the third and last reedition of *Venetia* (1663), in which Martinioni adds a new paragraph, explaining that senators and procurators “do not gather anymore in the church of St Moisè, as Stringa said, but in the church of St Salvador.”³⁰ We can assign a more accurate date to the substitution, which happened shortly after the plague of 1630–31. Indeed, the first document attesting that St Salvador was papered for the entry of a procurator dates back to the election of Francesco Molin in 1634.³¹ The new itinerary was quickly codified, and in 1641, when Giovanni Pesaro was elected, the first festival book entirely devoted to the entry of a *procuratore* appeared, describing in detail the arrangements on

27 See Francesco Sansovino and Giovanni Stringa, *Venetia città nobilissima e singolare, descritta già in XIII libri [...] et hora con molta diligenza corretta, emendata e più d'un terzo di cose nuove ampliata* (Venice: Altobello Salicato, 1604), 211r–213r.

28 Filippo De Vivo, “Walking in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Mobilizing the Early Modern City,” *I Tatti Studies* 19 (2016): 125.

29 See for example Ambrosini, “Cerimonie, feste, lusso,” 450.

30 Francesco Sansovino and Giustiniano Martinioni, *Venetia città nobilissima e singolare, descritta in XIII libri. [...] Con aggiunta di tutte le cose notabili della stessa città fatte e occorse dall'anno 1580 sino al presente 1663* (Venice: Stefano Curti, 1663), 306.

31 See Delorenzi, *La galleria di Minerva*, 19. Delorenzi quotes Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Archivio privato Correr, reg. 165, “Sumario delle spese fatte nell'occasione di procurator di San Marco dell'eccellentissimo signor Francesco Molino, creato adì XI genaro 1633 stil veneto.”

the Mercerie.³² A few years later, an exceptional witness like Francesco Pannocchieschi d'Elci, the nephew of the then papal nuncio Scipione, stated that the entry of the procurators of St Mark was "the most relevant" (*la più rilevante di tutte*) among the lavish festivities that struck him when he was in Venice in the wake of his uncle (1647–52).³³ In the span of two decades, the ritual had undergone a sea change: it not only transformed in forms and locations, but also expanded, in terms of both performance and writing.

3 Luxury between the Republic and the Family

The expansion of the ceremony of the entry in the central decades of the seventeenth century is alien to the "myth" of Venice and to the image of the Venetian patriciate as a concordant and communal body politic. Instead, it seems to be connected with a new individualism, which targeted magnificence as means for a celebration of either self or family (*casata*). The massive expenditures staged on the Mercerie aimed to project the exceptional status of the few houses that could afford such spectacle. In this respect, it should be noted that in the period considered a very rich man could also buy his access to the college of procurators. While there were only nine *procuratori* "by merit" (*per merito*), since 1516 additional positions were on sale for twenty thousand ducats. The sale of the office was an exceptional measure to finance the state treasury; hence, it was not done regularly. Nevertheless, the rising costs for the wars of Candia and Morea persuaded the Senate to adopt this measure on several occasions, so that respectively forty-one (1645–69) and twenty-four (1684–1703) procurators "by means" (*per mezzi*) were elected.³⁴

The measure echoed the one taken in 1646, which was even more radical. For the first time after the *serrata* (lockout) of 1297, the patriciate welcomed into its ranks some new families, as long as they could pay an enormous amount of money (one hundred thousand ducats). This policy called into question the balance between economic and political power, and gave rise to tensions within the patriciate.³⁵ As regards the entry of the procurators, such tensions

32 Domenico Vincenti, *Gli apparati veneti, ovvero le feste fatte nell'elezione in procuratore dell'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor Giovanni da Pesaro cavalier* (Venice: Pietro Miloco, 1641).

33 Francesco Pannocchieschi D'Elci, "Relazione sulle cose di Venezia," in Pompeo Molmenti (ed.), *Curiosità di storia veneziana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1919), 315.

34 For a complete list see Coronelli, *Procuratori di San Marco*, 196–202. See also Pannocchieschi, "Relazione," 313–14.

35 See Roberto Sabbadini, *L'acquisto della tradizione. Tradizione aristocratica e nuova nobiltà a Venezia (secc. XVII–XVIII)*, (Udine: Gaspari, 1995).

emerged from the sumptuary laws promulgated by the competent authorities, the *provveditori alle pompe*.³⁶ On April 10, 1683, a petition was addressed to the Signoria, denouncing the luxurious decorations on the Mercerie as detrimental to republican values. The report filed by the *provveditori* convinced the Senate and the Maggior Consiglio to propose a law in this regard, which was voted on June 16 and July 4, respectively. The law aimed at making the entry of the procurators more sober: the fleets of boats escorting the elected to the Fondaco, as well as the public fanfares and the portraits hanging on the Mercerie, were formally forbidden. The *provveditori* reiterated the prohibition seven times between 1687 and 1692.³⁷

This legal process, however, did not entail major consequences. Actually, the most lavish entries date precisely to these years, as shown by the encomiastic literature proliferating in the 1680s. According to the festival book by Michelangelo Mariani (1624–96), four huge portraits of procurator Leonardo Donà were put on a display during his entry in 1688, in spite of the 1683 interdiction. The first painting, portraying the *procuratore* on horseback, hung in *campo* St Bartolomeo, at the beginning of the ceremonial route; the second was at the end of the Mercerie, on the back of St Mark's clock tower; the third, an oval painting, hung in the Piazza; and the fourth, which was even bigger than the others, stood over the entrance to the *procuratie*.³⁸ Even the purchase of the office could become a source of literary pride: the title of a booklet printed in 1690 for procurator Sebastiano Soranzo (*Loro divenuto più glorioso del merito*, "The gold made more glorious than the merit") confirms that seventeenth-century wit did not flinch from such a paradoxical *topos*.³⁹ More generally, all these texts are hyperbolic, both in terms of quantity (there are many texts, and they are often long-winded) and quality, for their pages constantly move towards figures of augmentation such as anaphora and iteration. Authors increase their rhetorical devices, multiplying the metaphors and the classical *exempla* to reflect (to represent) the luxury of the performance.

Such luxury was not intended to celebrate the Republic, nor the patriciate as a whole. A value that could not belong to the "myth" of Venice, splendor rather

36 On these magistrates, see Giulio Bistort, *Il magistrato alle pompe nella Repubblica di Venezia. Studio storico* (Venice: n.p., 1912).

37 I would like to thank Dr. Giovanni Florio, who checked the original documents in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Registri, Registro 42, cc. 260r-261r and *Provveditori alle Pompe*, b. 2 e b. 3.

38 Michelangelo Mariani, *L'ingresso trionfale dell'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor Leonardo Donato procurator meritissimo di San Marco* (Venice: Pietro d'Orlandi, 1686).

39 Girolamo Frigimelica Roberti, *Loro divenuto più glorioso del merito, nel farsi procurator di San Marco l'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor Sebastiano Soranzo* (Padova: Francesco Brignonci, 1690).

applies to a single procurator or to his house. A good example of this rhetorical scheme, which breaks ties with sixteenth-century republican imagery, are the *Apparati veneti* published by Domenico Vincenti in 1641. Before narrating the entry of Giovanni Pesaro, as well as the rejoicings that accompanied the main event (pages 31–53), Vincenti outlines the procurator’s career in what looks like a short political treatise (5–31). Indeed, as professed at the beginning of the book, the topic should be the virtuous relationship between republican values and elective offices, for holding the office of procurator, in the Serenissima, is the reward for “a life lived heroically, working hard for the common good.”⁴⁰ According to republican ideology, Pesaro does not owe his success to his noble descent, but only to his merits; the Venetian institutions, working fairly and equitably as usual, have simply recognized them. Later in the text, however, this idea is spelled out in a quite equivocal way. Indeed, Vincenti argues, Pesaro could have boasted about his “blood” (*sangue*), because his family is one of the most wealthy and powerful of Venice, but he did not. Now, the whole passage is a counterfactual conditional, built on a strong anaphora (*poteva*, “he could have,” which is repeated four times). So, the hypothesis to be discarded (that is to say, Pesaro “bragging about a family that has always been a site of magnificence, a school of religion, a remarkable scene of royal greatness and an ever-shining glory of its Republic”⁴¹) is actually discussed in details, and allows Vincenti to write a four-page encomium of house of Pesaro (8–11).

4 Conclusion

After the end of the Renaissance, Venetian republican imagery and rhetoric radically changed, mirroring an evolving society. Both the economic context and the political arena were quite different from those of the sixteenth century; therefore, new laudatory strategies proved to be necessary to support government decisions and to glorify those responsible for them. The new importance accorded to public luxury was one of the consequences. Civic ritual was clearly affected, and festivals became even more lavish and spectacular, as shown by the paintings devoted to these events (another novelty from

40 “Una vita in continui sudori a publico beneficio heroicamente trascorsa,” Domenico Vincenti, *Applausi veneti*, 6.

41 “Poteva gloriarsi di una Casata, che fu albergo di magnificenza, scuola di religione, teatro cospicuo di grandezza reale, splendor non mai eclissato della sua Repubblica,” Domenico Vincenti, *Applausi veneti*, 8.

the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries). The entry of the procurators of St Mark is a remarkable example of this process.

There is more, however, than a mere shift of scale. Indeed, this transformation primarily concerned the ways in which the body politic of the republic was represented. The “myth” of Venice depicted the patriciate as an estate regulated by clockwork mechanisms: all patricians were equal before the law, and only the doge was considered a *primus inter pares*. While welcoming a foreign ruler or performing a ritual procession, the doge did not act for himself nor for his house, but he rather embodied the whole patriciate (i.e. the Maggior Consiglio); for this reason, he was the only exception to the rule. Things gradually changed after the 1630s, when several treatises spreading within the nobility, both prints and manuscripts, openly contested the “myth.”⁴² These texts criticized the wide-ranging influence exerted on Venetian politics by a few prominent *casate*, and countered the countless literary (poems, orations) and artistic (portraits, monuments) works extolling the members of these houses. The “myth” of Venice simply could not bear the new protagonism of the *grandi*, whose princely celebration lacked any reference to the republican tradition.

It is perhaps going a bit too far to talk of a veritable “cult of personality,” because these manifestations of pride normally included the whole *casata*. Even before the seventeenth century, the cult of ancestors was a widespread phenomenon in Venice, and almost every palace had family portraits hanging in the *portego*. In this respect, the *Applausi veneti* emphasized a rather common approach. Besides, as has been stressed, the lavish patronage of individuals was officially tolerated as a means to celebrate the whole Republic, even if the principles of such celebration radically changed.⁴³ However, there is no denying that a sort of hero worship, unprecedented in the republican iconography, raged in seventeenth-century Venice. Public luxury became a way of exhibiting private wealth and personal grandeur, and the celebration of the republican office of procurator served as a pretext to celebrate the men who held it. Thus, the simmering tension “between exaltation of the individual and the acceptance of the rules of an aristocratic community”⁴⁴ actually reshaped the representation of the patriciate. As the entry of the procurators of St Mark attests, civic ceremonies were no exception, for these opposing drives did reshape even the republican ritual.

42 On the “antimyth” of Venice, see Pietro Del Negro, “Forme e istituzioni del discorso politico veneziano,” in *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. IV, *Il Seicento*, ed. by Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1984), 420–21.

43 Delorenzi, *La galleria di Minerva*, 3–4.

44 Casini, “Some Thoughts,” 195.