Heliotropia - An online journal of research to Boccaccio scholars

Volume 2 *Volume 2 (2004)*
Issue 1

Article 2

1-1-2004

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Recommended Citation

Pennisi, Francesca A. (2004) "Un-Masking Venice: Allegory and the Politics of Reading in Decameron IV.2," *Heliotropia - An online journal of research to Boccaccio scholars*: Vol. 2: Iss. 1, Article 2.
Available at: http://scholarworks.umass.edu/heliotropia/vol2/iss1/2

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Heliotropia 2.1 (2004) *http://www.heliotropia.org*

Un-Masking Venice:
Allegory and the Politics of Reading in *Decameron* IV.2

I.

Readers of the *Decameron*'s second novella of the fourth day will not fail to notice the unflattering, even defamatory, portrait Boccaccio paints of Venice, described in its very introduction to the tale as the "*città d'ogni bruttura ricevitrice*," or essentially, "city that embraces all evil."[1] In manners both explicit and subtle, the author depicts a city that is gossip-hungry while at the same time naïvely credulous, corrupt while corrupting, disloyal, tyrannical, unruly and, above all, hypocritical. Throughout the *Decameron*, depictions of cities with which the author was intimate, cities such as Florence, Siena and Naples, are common and often reflect Boccaccio's opinion of them. None of these portrayals, however, is as unforgiving as that found in what has come to be termed the "Venetian" novella, the only novella of the *Decameron* that uses Venice as its setting.

Commentators on the novella attribute Boccaccio's relentless criticism of Venice to a healthy antipathy that would come naturally to a Florentine, especially a Florentine with mercantile associations such as Boccaccio.[2] Not only was Venice a formidable rival of Florence in matters of commerce, but it also politically posed a threat and complicated regional relations with other powerful and commercial cities such as Genoa. Although the notion of *imperio veneto* is more relevant to a discussion of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Venetian politics, even as early as 1308 Venice showed signs of an expansionist policy on the Italian mainland (*terraferma*) by trying to take control of Ferrara.[3] Even more pertinent to the question of Venetian-Florentine relations of this time, and therefore to the concerns of this paper, are the events that led up to Venice's acquisition of Treviso from the Scaligeri in 1339. Although I will return to this event later in my argument, let it suffice to say at this point that the Venetian betrayal of their Florentine allies (a betrayal that is at the very heart of this particular political imbroglio) would in itself justify a robust Florentine resentment of the Venetians. Yet, despite the broad evidence that lends an easy accountability to Boccaccio's harsh criticism, it is my contention that Boccaccio's scathing treatment of the Venetians in this novella stems from something more complicated than a commonplace regional antipathy. It is my aim here to show that Boccaccio's novella is not only conscious of, but also a polemical response to, what historians of Venice have come to term "the Venetian myth" — a phenomenon intrinsic both to Venetian history and Venetian historiography.

Published by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst, 2004

II.

The notion of the "myth" as it relates to Venice is in itself a problematic one. Usually historians, in an effort to identify and define it, so as to be better able to look around it at the "reality" of the city that it is supposedly masking, find themselves juggling paradoxes and contradictions. It is never clear where the myth ends and where the "real" Venice begins, so much has the myth been inscribed into the very fabric of the Venetian political, social and cultural heritage. Looking at the matter retrospectively, such a circumstance might render moot the necessity of making distinctions between myth and reality since this "myth-making" has greatly contributed to, and is perhaps inseparable from, the actual Venice we know today. A thorough investigation of the phenomenon would probably entail a complicated dissecting process that in the end would leave us with a dismembered myth, and a still poorly understood historical reality.

These complexities might in fact explain the conspicuous lack of comprehensive study of the myth's manifestation.[4] Yet, as socio-critics such as Edward Muir and his extensive bibliography make clear, the myth does exist. In an attempt to bring together the already existing literature on the subject, Muir gives a concise and informative account of the phenomenon. Describing it as having been created by and for the Venetians, and perceptible to anyone who comes into contact with the city, Muir breaks the myth down into its basic elements, and describes it as infusing every aspect of Venetian life. He writes:

> Venice's historical reputation for *beauty, religiosity, liberty, peacefulness, and republicanism* modern scholars call "the myth of Venice." This catalogue of attributes constituting the myth is not just the creation of latter-day scholars, however; the Renaissance Venetians acknowledged the same myth in their visual arts, musical lyrics, poetry, official and popular history, humanist works and above all, in ritual and pageantry.[5]

The five elements that Muir describes as constituting the myth are typically studied as a creation of the Quattro- and Cinquecento; however, as Muir hastens to add (and this is crucial to the objectives of my own work), Trecento writers such as Petrarch were already clearly aware of its rudiments. Franco Gaeta, in an early essay on the myth, points out how the myth was an artistic and literary phenomenon as well as political, but also how often the literary works which dealt with the myth simultaneously "collaborated" in its creation.[6] Petrarch's epistolary writings, among many other examples, are a case in point. In the following passage, found in a letter of 1364 describing the Venetian celebration of their victory in Crete, Petrarch names not one, but three of the five elements that Muir claims comprise the notion of the myth:

> The august city of Venice rejoices, the one home today of *liberty*, *peace* and *justice*, the one refuge of honorable men, the one port to which can repair the storm-tossed, tyrant-hounded craft of men who seek the good life. Venice — rich in gold but richer in fame, mighty in her resources but mightier in virtue, solidly built on marble but standing more solid on a foundation of civil concord, ringed with salt waters but more secure with the salt of good counsel![7]

Gina Fasoli, in her essay on the origins of the myth, would contend that such hyperbolic passages are not merely "collaborative" with the myth; they are in fact embodiments of the myth itself. Quoting the writings of chroniclers such as John the Deacon of the eleventh century and Martino da Canale of the thirteenth, she sets out to show that it is precisely these types of documents that not only prove the remote origins of the myth, but in fact constitute the

very roots of a phenomenon which by the mid-fourteenth century, she claims, had already reached full maturity.[8] Furthermore, the myth-making process she describes is not limited to the creation of a grandiose Venice, but rather is equally as effective in the creation of what she terms "*perfida Venezia*," a so-called anti-myth to counteract the myth itself.[9]

As an example of this counter myth-making, she gives the Florentine Giovanni Villani's famous invective against the Venetians in his widely distributed *Cronica*, first printed in 1348. The Venetians, jealous of, and themselves threatened by, the aggressive territorial acquisition campaigns of Mastino and Alberto della Scala (or the Scaligeri), had formed an easy alliance against them with the Florentines, who had already lost Lucca at the hands of Mastino. In 1339, the Venetians abruptly betrayed their alliance to side with the Scaligeri, thus leaving the Florentines vulnerable. This prompted a deeply felt and fully justifiable resentment on the part of the Florentines toward the Venetians, reflected in Villani's denunciation of them as "perfidious… traitors of their own fatherland."[10]

The theme of Venetian betrayal is central to Boccaccio's tale — their disloyalty being the most emphatic punch-line of the entire novella: "…fu lealtà viniziana questa…," he quips in reference to the betrayal enacted by the Venetian "buon uomo" that resolves the tale. The phrase strikingly echoes Villani's own closing remark apropos Venice's betrayal of Florence: "Cotale fu la partita de la dislealtà del commune di Vinegia, …" he writes, clearly disapproving of Venetian fickleness.[11] Writing the *Decameron* a mere decade after these events, Boccaccio's obvious disapprobation seems easily attributable to them. It is equally as tempting to see Boccaccio's novella as simply another example of that genre come to be known as anti-myth writing. Boccaccio's tale, however, does more than merely foment anti-Venetian sentiment. As I would like to show here, Boccaccio is not just venting a simple animosity based on regional conflicts; rather, he is presenting a programmatic and thematic explosion of the myth-making with which Venice enshrouded her reality.

III.

In Boccaccio's novella, Venice is depicted as the ideal haven for the iniquities of Berto, a duplicitous delinquent who enacts a false conversion upon his arrival to the city, adopting the name of Frate Alberto. His false sanctity easily fools the gullible Venetians, prompting them to exalt him to saint-like status, and even appointing him guardian of their life-savings. Life goes smoothly for the impostor friar until the day he makes the acquaintance of Lisetta da ca' Quirino, a vain and silly woman whose confession to the friar consists of a hyperbolic and self-congratulatory appraisal of her own physical charms. Lisetta's foolishness is readily perceived by Frate Alberto as ideal "soil for his tilling," and it is at this point that the friar begins to enact the performance that will prove to be his tragic undoing. Informing the lady that he has lately been visited by the Angel Gabriel, he explains that this angel has so fallen in love with her "celestial beauties" that he must enjoy them physically through the body of Frate Alberto himself. Lisetta cannot resist such flattery, and Frate Alberto is said to "soar without wings" many times throughout the course of their first night together, and on many occasions thereafter.

Soon afterward, however, Lisetta's own vainglory and the gossip-loving Venetians bring the friar's flights of ecstasy to an abrupt end. When she announces to her neighbor that Saint Gabriel himself has been sleeping with her on account of her "celestial beauties," in less than

two days the news is spread all over Venice. The rumor also reaches the ears of her in-laws, who one night set out to find whether the Angel Gabriel really knows how to fly. The imposter is able to foil their ambush by making a quick escape out Lisetta's window into the Canal Grande. He then takes refuge in the home of a "buon uomo" who generously gives him sanctuary, only to blackmail and betray him when he finds out his lodger's true identity while on business at the Rialto. Masquerading him as a "uom salvatico," or "savage man," he leads the hapless friar out to Piazza San Marco, there tying him to a column and exposing him to the implacable fury of the Venetians. Feeling themselves betrayed, they practically sacrifice the friar on the spot. He is saved only to be incarcerated in a monastic prison and made to stay there for the remainder of his short, miserable life.

This extraordinary tale is Boccaccio at his best; it has all the elements we come to expect as we read through the *Decameron*: the wily impostor, the ingenuous victim, the ingenious deception, the unpredictable turns of Fortune. As in other tales found in this masterwork, there is an easy interchangeability between the victims and the culprit, the gullible and the wily, the deceiver and the deceived. As a number of critics of the novella have pointed out, however, most notably Millicent Marcus, the ending is unusually severe compared to other tales that treat similar subject matter. As Marcus notes, lovers who exhibit Frate Alberto's talent for improvisation are typically rewarded in the tale with a future of unpunished sexual bliss.[12] After all, it is Lisetta's vanity and stupidity that are taken advantage of by Frate Alberto's wily wit. Why, then, the merciless punishment?

Marcus' reply to this question, which I will here paraphrase, is in part necessary for the furthering of my own argument. The critic suggests that perhaps Boccaccio is punishing not the lover in Frate Alberto, but rather another aspect of Frate Alberto's comportment that is related to his duplicitous role as lover. In the simplest terms, the answer appears to lie in Frate Alberto's justification to Madonna Lisetta as to why the Angel Gabriel must come to her in a human body. He tells her:

> Because he is an angel and coming in the form of an angel you would not be able to touch him, and so for your enjoyment, he would like to come in the form of a man. (IV.2.23)[13]

As Marcus suggests, what Boccaccio is actually doing with these words is causing Frate Alberto to use the sacred notion of allegory to his own licentious ends, since the words themselves are nothing but a simplified summary of St. Thomas Aquinas' *theory of accommodation* (i.e., the theological precept that explains the need for sublime spiritual truths to be converted into concrete terms in order to be apprehended by humans). In his *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas explains:

> Holy Scripture fittingly delivers divine and spiritual realities under bodily guises… Now we are of the kind to reach the world of intelligence through the world of sense, since all our knowledge takes its rise from sensation. Congenially, then, Holy Scripture delivers spiritual things to us beneath metaphors taken from bodily things.[14]

Frate Alberto appears to be being punished not for his lovemaking, but for his misappropriation of allegory in order to get to the lovemaking. Masquerading himself as the Angel Gabriel, he has literalized the angel's role as the Annunciator of the ultimate scriptural allegory, that of divine love taking on human flesh. His impersonation of the Angel Gabriel, however, is highly significant not only for the role of Annunciator that that angel plays, but

also for the important role that the Annunciating angel plays in relation to the Venetian myth.

An annunciation is at the very foundation of the city's most elemental mythology — that of its patron saint, Saint Mark. As legend would have it, Saint Mark, on his journey from Aquilea to Rome, made a sojourn on the island of Rialto (naturally, at this point uninhabited). In a dream, an annunciating angel appeared to him, prophesying that a beautiful city would one day be founded on that desolate site. That city would one day be the keeper of his remains and he would be its holiest benefactor, granting it graces through his name.[15] Venice's special relationship to the Annunciation is also evidenced by the fact that March 25th, the Christian calendar's date of the Annunciation, was also the date chosen for the founding of the city. This may in part explain why an enactment of the scene of the Annunciation as it is written in Luke 1:28–38, replete with priests impersonating Saint Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, was a crucial element of a feast exclusive to the Venetians. This feast, called the *Festa delle Marie*, has been identified by the critic Giorgio Padoan as the feast that represents the important backdrop to the novella under discussion.[16]

Organized by and for the Venetians, the feast has a very long and complicated history that is almost inextricably intertwined with legend. What is definitely known, mostly through documentation dating from long after the feast's celebration had been discontinued, is that the festival took place from the 25th of January to the 2nd of February, giving way to an uninterrupted sequence of rites and processions that transformed Venice into a riotous carnival lasting eight days. The first mention of its practice occurs in a document of 1143 and historians know that by the Trecento the festivities grew to include theater, regattas, balls and concerts, as well as contests. So much attention was devoted to the festivities' more aesthetic aspects that artists as important as Paolo da Venezia were hired to paint decorations. The amount of money poured into the props and costumes by the different *sestieri* or neighborhoods (which eventually began to compete with one another) was so exorbitant that by the mid-Trecento the Venetian government had to impose laws against the wild spending and other excesses which the festivities engendered. It is certain that the festival was eventually suspended in 1379; however, the motives for this decision are not entirely known. It is hypothesized that the war with Chioggia of 1379–81 played an important role in the suspension of the festival, primarily for economic reasons. There also appears to be evidence, however, that the suspension took place for ideological reasons. It seems that, among other aspects of the festivities that had become difficult for the government to control, the festivals had become by the mid-Trecento opportunities for the display of immoral behavior by participants and spectators alike.[17]

An indication that this may have indeed been the case is given by Giustina Renier Michiel, daughter of an ancient Venetian patrician family, and author of the six-volume work, *Origins of the Venetian Festivals*, first published in 1817. A very interesting text in itself, it, however, does not even pretend an attempt at historical objectivity, blending as it does an odd array of miscellaneous fact and legend. In her discussion of this particular festival she explains the circumstances of the procession of the wooden Marys, which along with the enactment of the Annunciation, was one of the most important elements of the feast. Although historically speaking it is not clear whether the wooden effigies had replaced live girls, or whether live girls had come to replace the effigies, Michiel gives a rather interesting moral account of why she believes it was actually the twelve young virgins that were eventually re-

placed by twelve wooden effigies. She claims that the festival, which had once been an opportunity to display "virtue and innocence," had later become "a display for maliciousness in every class of citizen." This was due to the young girls who "temporarily freeing themselves from under the severe watch of their superiors, began to show their vanity and coquettish manners, so that they succeeded in attracting upon themselves the male gaze, distracting it as it were from contemplating the sacred images." To curb such immorality the government found it opportune to substitute the virgins with replicas of wood, to which the offended public reacted with violent protests.[18]

What this account seems to reflect is the Venetians' easy penchant for making allegories, but also their easy confusion of allegory with reality. The accusation is not one specific to Venice, since the making of allegories was common practice in most European cultures of the era. It can also be said that the practice of confusing allegory and reality, at best ill-guided, at worst sacrilegious, is not specific to this tale, but also a theme clearly evident in other tales and parts of the *Decameron*. Consider, for example, the ribald escapades described in III.10, where a licentious monk, Rustico, teaches a young female acolyte how to "*rimettere il diavolo in inferno*," or "to put the devil back in hell". Or the narrator's own admonishments to his readers and critics in the Conclusion, that they learn how to recognize the language of metaphor and how to use it appropriately.

What is particular to this novella is that Boccaccio is critiquing the practice specifically in relationship to Venice's self-mythologizing, and the manner in which the Venetians masqueraded their own social and political realities to make themselves appear to be something other than what they really were.[19] The confusion of allegory and reality exemplified by aspects of the *Feste delle Marie* is one example of this Venetian tendency to blur the line between reality and representation. It is, however, an important example because it is precisely these types of pageants and festivals that constituted the Venetian myth, becoming what Muir in fact describes as the myth's apotheotic embodiment. For the Venetians, the sacred had become equated with the profane, and religion had become inextricably linked to politics:

> Just as the Christian ceremonies relived the history of Christ, the Church, and the Saints, the Venetian liturgy re-enacted the history of Venice, so that secular history and legend became as sacred as the biblical mysteries… blending patriotism and faith.[20]

The misappropriation of allegory for which Frate Alberto is punished was common practice for the Venetians, and something visible to the casual observer:

> Through symbolism and allegory, the arts elevated a political idea — however self-serving, prevaricating or mean — to a transcendent plane; doges resembled saints, the gods directed the fortune of war or diplomacy, and Venice itself was the epitome of the theological, political and classical virtues.[21]

In substituting the friar's misguided staged allegory of the Annunciation for that of the Venetians in their festival, Boccaccio still appears to be alluding to the Venetian practice, and thus implying the hypocrisy of the Venetians. In fact, it can be argued that the entire novella is a deliberate satire of most of those categories on which Venice prided herself (e.g., beauty, religiosity, liberty and peacefulness) and that all the characters of this novella, in one way or another, are made to represent Venice and its mythic qualities. This is particularly true of the protagonists, Frate Alberto and Lisetta, two characters who, like the city in which they live,

are led astray by the myths that they have created of their own personas — the first of his sanctity, the other of her beauty.

This type of identification of city and citizen is further made evident in the tale's last scene, that of Frate Alberto's near-sacrifice. What was supposed to be the celebratory hunt of a boar, suddenly and frighteningly becomes a public sacrifice as Frate Alberto is offered as the official sacrificial substitute:

> Gentlemen, since the pig hasn't been brought, and there won't be any hunt, so that you won't have come in vain, I want you to witness the Angel Gabriel instead, who descends from heaven to earth at night to console our Venetian ladies![22]

This substitution eerily conforms to the critic-sociologist René Girard's model of the sacrificial ritual. He writes:

> All sacrificial rites are based on two substitutions. The first is provided by generative violence, which substitutes a single victim for all the members of the community. The second, the only strictly ritualistic substitution, is that of a victim for the surrogate victim. As we know, it is essential that the victim be drawn from outside the community.[23]

Frate Alberto, as the Venetian community's ritual victim, seems to meet all the qualifications that Girard observes for this phenomenon. For example, the victim must be from outside the community. Frate Alberto, a Venetian only by merit of his having lived there a number of years, is precisely that. Most important for the purposes of my argument, however, is the fact that there must be what Girard calls a "metonymic" relationship between members of the community and ritual victims. In other words, the community strives to choose a ritual victim that is most similar to the original victim, which is perceived as a "monstrous double." By sacrificing this second victim, therefore, the community is in effect cleansing itself of an impurity that it perceives in itself. Boccaccio might indeed be figuring a Venice that is aware of its own perfidy, however, the ending is essentially yet another example of the misappropriation of allegory — only in this particular instance, the substitution is reversed: that of the reality of the victim for a symbolic meaning.

Ultimately, however, the tragedy of mistaking the sign for reality, and vice-versa, relates back to Boccaccio's own literary project represented by the *Decameron* itself. Dedicated to idle young ladies whose chastity must be safeguarded at all costs, Boccaccio's text, subtitled "Prince Galahalt," would present a formidable threat to their virtue if taken too literally. Not coincidentally, the tale of the misappropriating friar occurs on the fourth day of the text, a day that distinguishes itself from the other nine by its lengthy introduction addressing specifically this problem. Upset at the criticisms that detractors have been hurling at him because of his book and its questionable subject matter, the author interrupts the *brigata*'s orderly storytelling to defend his work and warn readers of the perils of taking signs literally or ascribing inappropriate significances. As the mini-tale of Filippo Balducci he then relates comically illustrates, there is an unbridgeable rift between the symbolism of language and the realities of human nature, and to confuse the symbolic with the real is not only foolhardy but potentially corruptive.

It is precisely this corruption that Boccaccio seems to take most issue with in his "Venetian" novella. As such, it represents a subtle yet even more trenchant continuation of the defense that prefaces the Fourth Day. The last image we are left with in his tale of deceptions

is that of the Venetians as a duped, unruly, vicious and angry mob. This is certainly not the picture of the "*serenissima*" that the Venetians would have us believe. It is this harsh censure of Venice that would have me agree with Vittore Branca, and others, that the real protagonist of this tale is none other than Venice itself. Just like the friar in his novella, Boccaccio removes Venice's mask and urges us to take a second look at this most beautiful of all cities. What we are meant to see there, surely, is a lesson on true discernment.

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[1] Vittore Branca, ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 1987) 490. Translation is my own, as are all subsequent translations, unless otherwise noted. All subsequent citations will be noted in the text.

[2] For a historical-critical examination of Boccaccio's mercantilism, see Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio Medievale* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1985) and *Giovanni Boccaccio: Profilo biografico* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1997). For a biographical approach to the Boccaccio-Venice relationship, see Reinhold C. Mueller, "Boccaccino, Giovanni Boccaccio, and Venice," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 25 (1997): 133–42 and Giorgio Padoan, "Sulla novella veneziana del *Decameron* (IV 2)" *Boccaccio, Venezia e il Veneto* (Firenze: Olschki Editore, 1979): 17–46.

[3] For an in-depth discussion of the Venetian *terraferma* policy of this time and the peninsular reaction to it, see: Nicolai Rubinstein, "Italian reactions to *Terraferma* expansion in the fifteenth century," *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J. R. Hale (London: Faber and Faber, 1973): 197–217.

[4] Edward Muir in his *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1981) provides the most recent bibliography on the subject.

[5] Muir 21.

[6] "Dire che Venezia abbia costituito, rappresentato un mito politico non implica affatto un a restrizione al campo della trattatistica politica, intesa come genere letterario. Esiste tutta una serie di letterati, di poeti, di viaggiatori che nelle loro opere hanno accolto questo mito e che molto spesso all'incremento di questo mito hanno validamente collaborato." Franco Gaeta, "Alcune considerazioni sul mito di Venezia," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme e Renaissance* 23 (1961): 38.

[7] Francesco Petrarca, *Letters*, Selected and trans. by M. Bishop (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1966): 234, as quoted by E. Muir. Italics my own.

[8] " Giunti a questo punto conviene arrestarsi: si potrebbe continuare esaminando cronache e forestiere, scritture cancelleresche, lettere private, opere letterarie: ma non si farebbe altro che appesantire la documentazione di una nozione già acquisita: cioè che il mito di Venezia, già pienamente matura prima della metà del sec. XIV, ha origini remotissime." Gina Fasoli, "Nascita di un mito," *Studi storici in onore di Gioacchino Volpe*, vol. 1 (Firenze: Sansoni, 1958): 477.

[9] Fasoli refers to this double faceted myth as "un *mito bifronte*, che è anch'esso verità, antico quanto a Venezia, ed ancor più longevo; il mito di una Venezia magnanima, eroica, generosa, liberale, possente; il mito di una Venezia meschina, vile, avida, tirannica, stoltamente superba nella sua impotenza." Fasoli 449. Italics my own.

[10] "…i perfidi, estratti dal sangue di Antenore traditore della sua patria…," Giovanni Villani, *Cronica,* vol. 6 (Florence: Magheri, 1823): 175.

[11] Villani 177.

[12] Millicent Marcus, "The Accomodating Frate Alberto: A Gloss on *Decameron* IV, 2," *Italica* 56.1 (1979): 8.

[13] "Perciò che egli e agnolo et venendo in forma d'agnolo voi nol potreste toccare dice che per dilecto di voi vuol venire in forma d'uomo." (*Dec.* IV.2.23)

[14] "Dicendum quod conveniens est sacrae Scripturae divina e spiritualia sub similitudine corporalium… Est autem naturale homini ut per sensibilia ad intelligibilia veniat, quia omnis nostra cognitio a sensu initium habet. Unde convenienter in sacra Scriptura traduntur nobis spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Thomas Gilby, O.P. (New York and London, 1963) Ia. Iae. 9, 32–35. As quoted by Marcus 9.

[15] Fasoli 466–67.

[16] Padoan 19–25.

[17] For an extensive bibliography on the *Festa delle Marie*, see Muir, ch. 4.

[18] "Le Marie stesse non dissimulavano la loro compiacenza e vanità, allorché giungevano ad attirare sovra di se medesime il viril guardo, togliendolo alle sacre immagini…In somma una Festa, che dapprima era stata quella della virtù e dell'innocenza, divenne poscia per ogni classe di persone Festa di apparecchiata malizia." These passages are quoted and translated from Giustina Renier Michiel, *Le origini delle feste veneziane*, 6 vols. (Milan: 1829 ed.) vol. 1: 104–05.

[19] This undertaking of trying to separate reality from myth is one which even current historians of Venice embark upon when studying the social and political realities of Venice. Muir 18.

[20] Muir 77.

[21] Muir 50.

[22] "Signori, poi che il porco non viene alla caccia, e non si fa, acciò che voi non siate venuti invano, io voglio che voi veggiate l'agnolo Gabriello, il quale di cielo in terra discende la notte a consolare le donne viniziane." (*Dec*. IV.2.56)

[23] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1972): 269.