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A

"AMERICAN GENRE PAINTERS

IN VENICE: 1877-1893"

by

Giovanna P. Fiorino-Iannace

Volume I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2004

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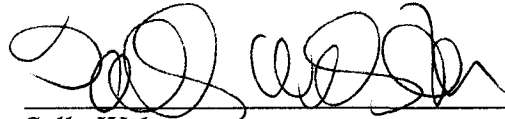
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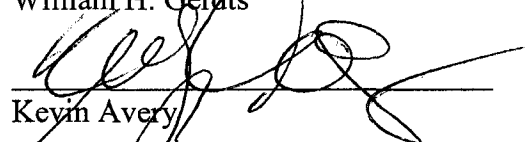

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

AMERICAN GENRE PAINTERS IN VENICE: 1877-1893

by

Giovanna P. Fiorino-Iannace

Adviser: Professor Katherine Manthorne

Throughout the nineteenth century, American and European artists captured Venice's contradictory characteristics, juxtaposing the romantic with the macabre, the brilliant with the subdued and the superficial with the sentimental. In the case of the American artists, who had embarked on their sojourns in Venice between 1877 and 1893, the primary appeal was the city's picturesqueness and timeless quality. As the home of hundreds of lace makers, bead stringers and glass blowers, Venice seemingly was untouched by the onset of industrialization, which was affecting the rest of the world, and was a tangible link to the past.

This dissertation concentrates on the American artists who romanticized the Venetians and provided superficial images of the women and men at work, in relation to the works created by their European counterparts. I propose that the American artists were advancing an Italian stereotype with which American viewers would feel comfortable. The artists produced images that changed the viewer's perception of Venice and its inhabitants, who were associated with the decrepitude of the Italian city. This romanticized impression is also conveyed in pictures of the Venetians at

prayer and at leisure. The American artists in Venice portray quintessential Italian traits, crafts and pastimes, which address contemporary Venetian life and simultaneously honor ancient traditions. This nostalgia for a simpler life, as rendered in these art works, suggests the American genre painter's antebellum tradition of depicting communal contentment and peaceful living.

By reviewing the cultural and social circumstances in Venice during the late nineteenth century, this thesis reveals the impact the Italian experience exerted on American thought and the artists who painted these scenes. This interest in the Venetians and their customs, superficial as it may have been, resulted in some of the best works produced by the American artists. Their quaint pictures of figures at work, in prayer and at play were appealing because they filled an emotional void as Americans attempted to uphold an ideal way of living that was no longer possible in a technologically progressive America.

In memory of my father

Giovanni Fiorino

a motivating force and believer in my dreams

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5.11. Eugene De Blaas, *The Rivals*, 1886. Oil on canvas, 44 x 26 1/2 in. Christie's, London.

- 5.12. John Singer Sargent, *Unfinished Sketch of a Lady in a Gondola*, ca. 1881. Watercolor, 13 x 9 1/2 in. The Ormond Family.
- 5.13. Ralph Wormeley Curtis, *Drifting on the Lagoon*, 1884. Oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 37 1/2 in. Collection of Graham Williford.
- 5.14. Robert Blum, *Woman in a Gondola with San Giorgio Maggiore in the Background*, ca. 1887. Oil on canvas, 14 x 21 1/2 in. Formerly Berry-Hill Galleries, New York.
- 5.15. Michael Cammerano, *Piazza San Marco at Night*, 1869. Oil on canvas, 21 7/8 x 38 3/16 in. The National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome, Italy.
- 5.16. Childe Hassam, *Florian's*. Watercolor. 15 x 10 in. Private Collection. Illustrated in William Dean Howell, *Venetian Life*, Vol. 1, 1891, after p. 74.
- 5.17. William Logsdail, *The Piazza of St. Mark*, 1883. Oil on canvas, 24 15/16 x 87 9/16 in., Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, England.
- 5.18. Samuel Melton Fisher, *Festa, the Interior of a Venetian Café*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 43 x 60 6/16 in. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

5.19. John Singer Sargent, *Café on the Riva degli Schiavoni*, ca. 1881. Watercolor.
Private Collection.

5.20. Julius LeBlanc Stewart, *Venetian Veranda*, 1891. Oil on canvas, 40 x 57 in.
Private collection.

5.21. Julius LeBlanc Stewart, *A Spring Day in Venice*. Illustrated in General Lew.
Wallace, *Famous Paintings of the World, A Collection of Photographic
Reproductions of Great Modern Masterpieces*, (New York: Fine Publishing
Company, 1896), p. 110.

5.22. Ralph Wormeley Curtis, *Woman at Balcony*, ca. 1882. Oil on canvas, 30 x
19 1/4 in. Formerly Hirschl and Adler, New York.

5.23. Ralph Wormeley Curtis, *Scirocco*, ca. 1887. Oil on canvas, 86 5/8 x 27 6/16 in.
Palazzo Barbaro-Curtis, Venice.

5.24. Ralph Wormeley Curtis, *In the Garden*, 1884. Oil on canvas, 33 1/2 x 35 1/2 in.
Formerly owned by Isabella Stewart Gardner. Berry-Hill Galleries, New York.

5.25. William Logsdail, *Venetian Al-Fresco*, 1886. Oil on canvas, 40 x 64 6/8 in.
Private collection.

5.26. Otto H. Bacher, *On the Lido*, October 20, 1880. Etching, 11 3/8 x 17 1/4 in.

The Trout Gallery, Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

5.27. Julius LeBlanc Stewart, *The Yacht on Namouna in Venetian Waters*, 1892.

Oil on canvas, 56 x 77 in. The Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Connecticut.

5.28. James Tissot, *The Last Evening*, 1873. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown.

Guildhall Art Gallery, London.

5.29. Julius LeBlanc Stewart, *Roba di Scirocco—Venice (Sirocco Effects—Venice)*

ca. 1891-1892, Location unknown.

INTRODUCTION

American painting underwent a transition in the 1870s that was stimulated by the open dialogue and exchange of ideas between Europe and America. Paintings by the Hudson River School artists were no longer in high demand and an increasing number of artists began training in Europe and concentrating on more cosmopolitan themes. The number of American artists working in Europe reached a peak by the end of the decade and foreign training had an impact on painting styles, which alternated between the broad, vigorous brushwork and rich, dark tonalities of the Munich School and the light palette and spontaneous brushstroke of the Impressionists, who were emerging in Paris.¹ These new approaches to painting were accompanied by a greater interest in genre painting, dictated by the changing taste of the American art patrons.

Throughout the nineteenth century, American and European artists captured Venice's contradictory characteristics, juxtaposing the romantic with the macabre, the brilliant with the subdued and the superficial with the sentimental. In the case of the American artists, who had embarked on their sojourns in Venice between 1877 and 1893, the primary appeal was the city's picturesqueness and timeless quality. In the 1870s, the sights of Venice were familiar to Italian artists and viewers, but for young Americans, most of whom had never had an opportunity to travel to or live in Italy, these subjects were pleasingly exotic and offered an escape for themselves and their patrons. As the home of hundreds of lace makers, bead stringers and glass blowers, Venice seemed to them untouched by the onset of industrialization that was affecting much of Europe and the United States; its citizens seemed a tangible link with the past.

A thorough study of the Venetian genre images produced by the American artists during the late nineteenth century has been lacking. As such, this dissertation provides an in depth investigation into the types of subjects portrayed by an international group of artists at a time when Venice was undergoing a major transformation on an economical and political level. The discourse of this phenomenon is strengthened by the thematic examination of the most popular Venetian subjects.

This dissertation will analyze the quintessential Venetian genre works produced by American artists in relation to those created by their European counterparts, both of whom shared an affinity for genre subjects stimulated by the city's enchanting people and palaces. I propose that the American artists who converged in Venice during this fifteen-year period romanticized the Venetians and provided superficial images of men and women at work in order to advance an Italian stereotype with which American viewers would feel comfortable. As Barbara Groseclose points out, the American artist was clinging to a pristine vision of work ethics while corporate capitalism in America was on the rise and the work site was gradually relocated from the home or small workshop to the factory, involving the transformation of task-oriented activities into time-managed labor.² The same transition of the work environment is not readily evident in the Venetian scenes, which reveals why these images were so favored. They presented an attitude of pleasure in the workplace that could no longer be associated with American work ethics.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the factory system invaded the antebellum farm and shop economy, upsetting familiar patterns of work and the way

Americans had been accustomed to think about their labor.³ As the century progressed, the mills grew larger, labor discipline became more exacting and the work process more subdivided and dependent on machinery. Thus, the factories obliterated the need for special craftsmen and slowly eroded the individuality of the highly creative and skilled worker. In contrast, during the same period the craft industries in Venice were experiencing a revival associable with antebellum values, such as communality and the dignity of labor.

The Venice of the late nineteenth century allowed one to revisit imaginatively these bygone times and fading practices. As the culture of labor in America changed, the American artists emphasized aspects of Venetian life that refer to the virtue of hard work and romanticize the Venetian laborer. Furthermore, the artists produced images that altered the observer's perception of Venice and its inhabitants, often associated with the decrepitude of the Italian city. Instead of perpetuating a negative image of the Venetians, the American artists promoted an idealized impression, representing scenes of Venetians at prayer and at leisure.

American genre painting flourished in the early nineteenth century and focused on depictions of rural scenes and small town life, and often conveyed a moral or lesson to its viewers. Outside of the visual arts, the word "genre" is defined as "kind, sort, or style," but in relation to the history of art, "genre painting" has come to mean scenes of everyday life as experienced by the average person, "the recording of commonplace, everyday activities that present pleasures, vices and follies; the work, play and amusements of ordinary people painted in a generally realistic, straightforward, pictorial manner."⁴

Originating in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, the eighteenth-century American scenes of daily life were based on three traditions: topographical views animated with small-scale working or strolling figures; sentimental genre themes, such as those portrayed by French artist Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805); and political or satirical genre, as seen in the works of William Hogarth (1697-1764).⁵ By the second half of the nineteenth century, genre had emerged as a separate branch of painting in America with close ties to the European prototypes that emphasized gestures, anecdotal elements, and moralizing or humorous stories.⁶

In the 1870s, the introduction of the new movements and styles of painting, such as French Impressionism and Munich Realism, transformed the way images of people engaged in their daily routines were classified by critics and viewers alike. By this time, formal elements involving the handling of paint and manipulation of light, under the influence of the Dutch masters and Velázquez had superceded the stage-like settings and pictorial manner of American genre works painted during the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the Venetian genre scenes of the 1880s and early 1890s were popular due to their subject matter, rather than their cosmopolitan formal qualities.

The American genre artists working in Venice clearly left behind the scenes of American rituals, such as corn husking, haying, apple picking, and turkey shoots, and had become attracted to what they perceived as the more exotic activities of the Italian working class. Simultaneously, genre painting, which had been previously considered in academics as a minor art associated with a lower quality of taste, began to appeal to a more sophisticated middle class. The images produced during the 1880s in Venice

satisfied a new audience that was attached to a more academic style of painting reflected in the works of Robert Blum and Frank Duveneck discussed in this study.⁷

Elizabeth Johns has observed the role of genre painting in her book *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (1991), in which she outlines the reasons for genre's ongoing popularity during given periods. Johns believes genre painting should be studied as a "systematic cultural phenomenon that develops in certain economical and social circumstances and meets social needs peculiar to a specific audience."⁸ The same formula used to discuss American genre themes can be applied to the Venetian genre images of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. One must analyze the interests of the region where the paintings were produced – Venice – and shown – Italy, England and the United States – and those who viewed them – the middle and upper classes in relation to their subjects – mostly lower working-class people located in various Venetian locales.

While certain American genre subjects were less popular after the 1860s, resulting in a decline in the number of genre images produced in America, Venice provided a new source of inspiration for American painters. The reason for the shift away from traditional genre subjects among the American artists may have been due to the political and social climate in America. With the end of the Civil War and the political reunification of the North and South, Americans were slowly beginning to acknowledge foreign situations that were similar to theirs. America as a nation could sense a kinship with Italy, a country that had itself undergone the full unification of its independent states by 1871. Moreover, with its new status as a unified country, Italy could also boast an

impressive ancient past that enticed American artists traveling to Europe in the 1870s in search of a level of training and cultural exposure that was lacking in America.

The unification of Italy brought about the “great change” that Johns recognizes as a stimulus for the production of genre subjects. Unification transformed the hierarchical power structures of the Roman Catholic Church and secular government and did indeed shift social and political relations in Italy. As was the case in America, a “typing” of the Venetian people was established according to class and gender, which was perpetuated by the artists working in the city. The American artists in particular were appealing to a market that called for romantic and exotic themes, such as Italian lace makers, bead stringers and water carriers.

According to Gabriel Weisberg, what made genre painting so popular was the depiction of episodes from daily life, either contemporary or historical, with which the viewer could identify. Furthermore, genre could “fulfill the need for adventure by providing glimpses of distant lands and times, allowing viewers to forget daily concerns and worries. Genre paintings filled with human-interest narratives provided concrete visualizations of many of the stories or episodes offered in newspapers and popular novels.”⁹ In the case of the Venetian genre scenes, the American public was reminded of the essence of a work ethic that honored the skilled worker and the home production of handcrafts.

Venetian scenes of everyday life painted by American artists in the 1880s represent a new direction in the history of American painting, since these works were clearly removed from the mainstream of American genre painting. While a very few

American artists were beginning to adopt Impressionist methods of painting, for subject matter they looked to Venetian genre pictures because such images evoked traditional American genre scenes of social interaction and communal activity. Some of the works created were innovative images that diverged from conventional genre works and introduced scenes of modern life, instilled with a lack of purpose and portraying attractive figures in ambiguous settings, such as those painted by Sargent.

This dissertation will confirm that the American works lack the level of social consciousness that is evident in the paintings of the European, especially Italian, artists. The American artists in Venice portray characteristic Italian traits and pastimes that superficially address contemporary Venetian life and honor ancient traditions, emphasizing universal values, such as work ethics and morality, that appeal to the viewer. Moreover, the nostalgia for a simpler life, as rendered in these genre pictures, continued the American antebellum tradition of depicting communal contentment and peaceful living during times of adversity. Therefore, these Venetian images are akin to the mid-nineteenth-century genre pictures of the not too distant, but irretrievable past, prior to the triumph of mechanization.

This study will trace the evolution of Venetian genre paintings by American artists in the 1880s and review contemporary periodical literature and the histories of the most important exhibition venues for American artists at the time, including the National Academy of Design in New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Royal Academy in London. A survey of the Royal Academy exhibition reviews has uncovered more Venetian genre scenes by European artists than

originally anticipated. In addition to the numerous seascapes, favorite themes included fishermen, water carriers, and *dolce far niente* (sweet idleness) scenes, some of which will be discussed in comparison to the American works. A list of the Venetian genre themes exhibited between 1877 and 1893 in each of the above-mentioned institutions is included at the end of this dissertation.

The American artist's concentration on subjects that deal with work or leisure activity indicates that he was not concerned with creating individualized studies, but rather generalized types of figures, which appealed to a wide audience. Thus, the works examined in this thesis demonstrate that the American artist was depicting the romantic pleasantries of Venetian life, while minimizing its unpleasant or squalid aspects, such as poverty and inadequate sanitation. These American works contrast with the Italian examples that render a more factual image of the Venetian native's experience.

The number of American artists fascinated with the depiction of Venice and its inhabitants during the 1880s is greater than might be supposed. The list of painters, writers, composers, and others who worked in the city continued to grow as artists from different nations and artistic backgrounds traveled to Venice for inspiration. Some of the best-known American artists who worked there during the 1880s include John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), who visited the city on at least two occasions—once in the fall of 1880 and again from 1882 to 1883; Robert Blum (1857-1908), who visited almost every year of the decade; Frank Duveneck (1848-1919), in Venice from 1878 to 1880 and several times during the early 1880s, and Charles Ulrich (1858-1908), there in 1885 and throughout the latter part of the decade. Other American artists working in the city were

James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), who lived in Venice from 1879 to 1880, and Ralph Wormeley Curtis (1854-1922), Sargent's cousin, who visited Venice throughout the 1880s and contributed to the abundant depictions of Venetian genre subjects.

Since the visits of these American artists overlapped, it can be assumed that any one of them was familiar with the others' works. The artists, however, each established their own preferences for the types of people, mainly workers, and range of activities to depict. This study will compare their works and consider the possible influences of one artist's conception of a theme on another's. As will become evident, some images drew upon earlier examples, while others presented new interpretations, which may have represented a conscious effort on the part of the artists to create works distinct from those of their contemporaries.

Any attempt to follow the development of American art in Venice during the 1880s must necessarily consider the European counterparts and the works produced by the international group of genre painters gathered there. The outstanding exponents of what has been described as the neo-Venetian school¹⁰ were the Austrians Ludwig Passini (1832-1903) and Eugene de Blaas (1843-1931); the Dutch artist Cecil Van Haanen (1844-1914); the Italians Giacomo Favretto (1849-1887), Alessandro Milesi (1856-1945), Ettore Tito (1859-1941), Luigi Nono (1850-1918); and the Englishmen Luke Fildes (1844-1927), William Logsdail (1859-1944), Henry Woods (1846-1921) and Samuel Melton Fisher (1860-1939).

Even though the members of this international group of artists worked practically side by side, they cannot be linked by a common academic affiliation. As noted by critics

writing during the period, this consortium of artists did not constitute a cohesive school:

There can hardly be said to be any artistic circle in Venice, for the Italian artist is prejudiced, the French and German painter studiously individual and the American too self-contained. The various nationalities haunt each their own particular café, and no cosmopolitan art club exists.¹¹

Although none of the non-Italian artists appears to have enrolled in the Venetian Art Academy or followed the same contemporary master, the abundance of artwork produced in the 1880s offers evidence that most of these artists sought out the same subjects. As a result, the art historian is confronted with a plethora of Venetian genre oil paintings, watercolors, etchings and drawings, all of which need to be consulted in order to understand the origin of certain trends and preferences.

Given the large number of painters working in Venice during this period, only the most representative works by the major artists will be examined. The first chapter will explore the social, political and cultural climate in Venice during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and focus on the first group of American artists to arrive in the city in 1877. This chapter also will outline the reasons why they preferred to paint in Venice and discuss Whistler's legacy, which influenced even those artists who did not have the good fortune to work with him in Italy.

The predominant Venetian subjects will be addressed thematically in the following chapters. Chapter 2 will discuss images of workers with strong manual skills, including lace makers, bead stringers, glass blowers and workers, and onion stringers. Chapter 3 will continue with laborers whose responsibilities involved more strenuous physical activity, such as water carriers and washerwomen. Chapter 4 will evaluate

images of the religious activities of the Venetian people as they prepared for special processions or engaged in prayer before shrines or within church interiors; and the last chapter will focus on leisure pursuits – the art of *dolce far niente* (sweet idleness) that was encountered in virtually every corner of the city and practiced by the rich and poor alike.

The experience of the American artist in Italy has been explored by several art historians, all of whom have paved the path for this current study of American artists depicting Venetian genre subjects in the late nineteenth century. Among the scholars of note is Barbara Novak, who devoted two chapters to the American experience in Italy and the influence of European trends in her book, *Nature and Culture*, published in 1980.¹² Novak's chapter on "Arcady Revisited: Americans in Italy" discusses the American artist's passion for Italy, which offered a level of maturity and cultivation that could not be found in America in the mid-nineteenth century. Novak's chapter on "America and Europe, Influence and Affinity" examines various European traditions that influenced the art of the Americans. Some of the factors discussed are the landscapes of the Macchiaioli in Italy, such as those by Silvestro Lega (1826-1895), Giovanni Fattori (1825-1908), and the related artist Federico Zandomenighi (1841-1917), and how their classic planarism connected with the work of Winslow Homer (1836-1910) and the American luminist tradition.

The art historians Regina Soria and Margaretta M. Lovell also have studied the attraction Americans artists felt towards Italy. Soria's *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century American Artists in Italy 1760-1914*, published in 1972, is the first comprehensive study

to document the vital role Italy played in the development of American art and thought.¹³ The entries in the *Dictionary* primarily include short biographies of the American artists who went to Italy to pursue their studies, a list of each artist's works that deal with Italian subjects, and pertinent bibliographic references.

Two of the most relevant exhibitions that follow Soria's and Novak's seminal works and coincide with Lovell's studies on American artists in Venice include *Americans in Venice 1879-1913*, presented in New York at the Coe Kerr Gallery, Inc., in 1983, and *American Artists Abroad: The European Experience in the Nineteenth Century*, shown at the Nassau County Museum of Fine Art in 1985. Donna Seldin wrote the catalogue for the Coe Kerr exhibition and for the first time reviewed art works of every type, including landscape and genre. A catalogue accompanied the second exhibition with an essay by Holly Pinto Savinetti, which deals with a number of countries and discusses art produced in all the major Italian cities.¹⁴

A more specific list of American artists who took an interest in Venetian subject matter is supplied by Lovell in two books: *Venice: The American View 1860-1920*, an exhibition catalog for a show held at the Fine Arts Museum in San Francisco in 1984; and *A Visitable Past: Views of Venice by American Artists 1860-1915*, published in 1989.¹⁵ The first of these provides a general overview of the American artists working in Venice, with brief biographical information on each. The second book, based on Lovell's doctoral study (Yale, 1980), discusses theoretical aspects such as high, low and ironic mimetic methods of painting borrowing from the critical vocabulary of Northrop Frye. The high mimetic or epic fiction concerns a protagonist of a higher order than the viewer,

but one that is subject to the order of nature; the low mimetic mode, which constitutes the majority of images of Venice created between 1860 and 1915, allows the viewer to relate to the modest scale and viewpoint of these pictures; and the ironic mode is characterized by a portrayal of the world as more absurd and fragmented than the observer senses it to be in reality.

Contrary to Lovell's statement in both of her works that "there are relatively few compositions that focus on Venetians – single or clustered. And those genre scenes that were painted point to a truncated vision of Venetian Society," numerous genre images were produced in the 1880s.¹⁶ These generally light-hearted and attractive scenes of the everyday life of the Venetian working class seem to have had an almost universal appeal.

Lovell observes that there were no Venetian subjects in American art during the eighteenth or the early-nineteenth century, and that very few Venetian scenes were painted after World War I. The author explores the larger subject of the meaning of Europe to Americans and conducts a case study in deciphering modes and methods of artistic presentation and interpretation. She explains that during the late-nineteenth century, "rival mythologies of frontier innocence and European experience often stared at each other across the expanse of an urban parlor, reflecting the owner's easiness with both visions as mythic," as alternatives of his own non-rural, non-European quotidian experience.¹⁷

Other publications have shed light on the artists working in Venice during the second half of the nineteenth century, such as a dictionary of European genre painters compiled by Philip Hook and Mark Poltimore that identifies additional European artists

who concentrated on Venetian daily life.¹⁸ Julian Halsby's book, entitled *Venice: The Artist's Vision. A Study Guide to British and American Painters*, published in 1990, deals with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists who depicted various aspects of Venice. Halsby covers a broad area, and although he briefly mentions both American and British genre artists, the information is scattered into several parts of the book.

In *The Venetian Hours of Henry James, Whistler and Sargent*, Hugh Honour and John Fleming discuss three of the most important figures who lived and worked in Venice. Dealing with these artists on a more social level, the authors focused on the attractions of Venice as a vibrant city. Other resourceful studies have been published in the form of exhibition catalogues. For example, the exhibition, *The Lure of Italy*, held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1994, included an essay by Erica Hirshler, "Gondola Days': American Painters in Venice." Similarly, the 1997 exhibition held in Venice entitled *Venezia Da Stato a Mito* included an essay by William H. Gerds on the American artist's experience in Venice during the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Altogether, this body of literature has helped lay the groundwork for a more thorough analysis of the Venetian genre pictures created during the 1880s. Still, these pictures have not been the subject of any single study.

There have also been several essays and books written on individual American artists and their Venetian encounters, such as Lisa N. Peter's essay on "John. H. Twachtman: A 'Modern' in Venice, 1877-1878," Alastair Grieve's *Whistler's Venice*, and Margaret MacDonald's *Palaces in the Night: Whistler in Venice*, with the last two published within the last three years.²⁰ A great deal of literature exists on Sargent's work

and throughout this text several key writings will be referred to in the context of specific paintings.

When considering Sargent's Venetian scenes, one must be aware of the most recent studies published within the last two decades that deal with his Venetian works in particular. Linda Ayres's essay "Sargent in Venice," from the exhibition catalogue of the John Singer Sargent show held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1986, carefully analyzes pictorial elements in order to help assign the Venetian works to one or the other of Sargent's two sojourns there. Whereas Trevor Fairbrother's 1990 essay "Sargent's Genre Painting and Issues of Suppression and Privacy," provides an integrated approach to studying Sargent's work as a whole that offers the richest understanding of Sargent as a person.

Fairbrother argues against the restrictive approach to Sargent's genre paintings as a separate category of painting produced under the informal working conditions of his "private world" as opposed to the social rigors of his portrait studio. Fairbrother explores "privacy, as a propriety, and suppression, for fear of losing status, as they affected Sargent's dealings with people, including his general art world acquaintances, his portrait subjects, and those unidentified 'subjects' of his genre paintings."²¹ Sargent wanted to deliver the private moments of other people's lives to a public audience, as can be seen in his Venetian works.

There is also Hugh Honour and John Fleming's *The Venetian Hours of Henry James, Whistler and Sargent*, mentioned above, which is a selective study that explores the experiences and social circles shared by these three prominent figures in the late

nineteenth century.²² Several other books on Sargent followed, including Fairbrother's 1994 monograph; the catalog for the exhibition entitled *Uncanny Spectacle: The Public Career of Young John Singer Sargent*, held in 1997 at the Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, which examines the strategies the artist used to market his works and mold the public perception of his talent; Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond's monographic study of 1998, which provides a survey of all aspects of Sargent's work and discusses the artist's early landscapes and subject pictures, with the latter sometimes filled with "erotic charge;" Fairbrother's *John Singer Sargent, the Sensualist*, published in 2000, which continues the probe into several private and personal aspects of the artist's works and questions his sexual preferences; and most recently, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's exhibition catalog *Sargent and Italy*, with essays by Jane Dini and Bruce Robertson.

This last publication provides the most comprehensive overview of Sargent's Italian works and consists of six essays, including R. W. B. Lewis' "American Writers in Sargent's Italy," Stephanie L. Herdrich's *John Singer Sargent and the Italian Renaissance*," and most important of all for this study, Richard Ormond's "Modern Life Subjects." This last essay focuses on Sargent's Neapolitan/Capri and early Venetian genre subjects and will be referred to in relation to Sargent's works discussed in this thesis.²³

While the current locations of Sargent's Venetian paintings are well-documented, many examples by other artists remain unlocated. Works have often been discovered through references in contemporary exhibition reviews and illustrations in nineteenth-

century periodical journals, such as the *American Art Review*, *Art Journal*, *Fortnightly Review*, *The Magazine of Art*, and other late nineteenth-century publications. In the United States, the *American Art Review* and *The Studio* (New York) offer insight into the subject matter of the American works by providing detailed descriptions and critical reviews of images that portray the picturesque populace of Venice. These periodicals complemented each other and identified works then deemed worthy of note. The reviews in the periodical literature revealed the overall preferences and attitudes toward Venetian genre works created by American artists that were shared by critics and public viewers alike.

Perhaps the best contemporary chronicler of Venetian life in the second half of the nineteenth century was William Dean Howells (1837-1920), who lived in Venice as American consul for four years, from 1861-1865, and first published his two-volume work entitled *Venetian Life* in 1866, before the unification of Italy.²⁴ Howells is referred to often in this dissertation, for he offered a personal account of the sights and sounds he encountered in Venice as a temporary dweller of the city and helped capture the cultural and social atmosphere in Venice at the time and shortly thereafter. Howells's main purpose in writing *Venetian Life* was to document a Venice that other travel books were "very slow to tell." He explained that this book reveals

. . . as much as possible of the everyday life of a people whose habits are so different from our own, endeavoring to develop a just notion of their character, not only from the show-traits which strangers are most likely to see, but also from experience of such things as strangers are most likely to miss.²⁵

Other late nineteenth-century sources complemented Howells's work and

reinforced certain aspects of the Venetian experience, including writings by Henry James, Julia Cartwright and Francis Hopkinson Smith.²⁶ James approved of Howell's work. In an 1868 review of his *Italian Journeys*, James noted that

Under the favor of his work on "Venetian Life," Mr. Howells took his place as one of the most charming American writers and most satisfactory of American travelers. . . . Thanks to the keenness of his observation and the vivacity of his sympathies, he treads afresh the most frequently trodden routes. . .²⁷

Howells mentions the types of vendors and small dealers that were to be found in each *campo* in Venice, many of which were not depicted by the American artists. First-hand shops included that of the apothecary, draper, blacksmith, shoemaker, green grocer and fruiter. Whereas the second-hand merchant shops, "where you buy and sell every kind of worn-out thing at the lowest rates" were represented by the coppersmith, watchmaker, wood carver, gilder and barber. Lastly, Venice had numerous small dealers, such as boys selling shirt buttons and hairpins, fishermen with baskets of fish on their heads, peddlers selling house wares, men who sold water by the glass, charlatans who advertised cement for mending broken dishes or drops to cure toothaches, jugglers, organists and poets, who sang new songs and sold them to the crowds.²⁸

The Americans' lack of focus on the restaurateurs, hotel managers and the like, was a result of the low profile that these citizens maintained in Venice, as did the surviving aristocracy, even to its own apparent extinction.²⁹ By and large, it would seem that American artists naturally gravitated to the more colorful and interesting working class, subjects that bordered on the exotic and would have appealed to the cosmopolitan art collector. None of the above-mentioned types of workers seemed to accomplish the

artist's objective, for while they might be classified as picturesque subjects, these figures were not as easily romanticized, most likely because only men conducted these occupations and they were not as visually appealing as the handcrafters.

Likewise, American artists did not portray many of the popular themes painted by the European artists, including ice cream vendors, musicians, singers and minstrels on the piazza, newspaper sellers (a popular subject in American art during and after the Civil War), or beggars, who were probably too dismal a subject. The Lido beach and its beach-goers, ferry stations, policemen, nursemaids, cooks, animal keepers, chair menders, and scenes dealing with funeral processions on the lagoon and Carnivale celebrations were also subjects avoided by American artists during the 1880s.

Women dominated the American pictures, which portrayed them in every aspect – work, prayer and leisure – and the male figures play a peripheral role. For the American artist, the religious devotion of the female peasant was more appealing than that of the male worker, who often is rendered as less devout than the former. Leisure activities of the high-class female tourist, frequently traveling to Italy to enjoy the *dolce far niente* atmosphere, also took precedence over the pastimes of her male counterpart or of the Venetian working class, as represented in the works of Julius Le Blanc Stewart and Ralph Wormeley Curtis. Both of these artists chose to depict the American vacationer enduring the Venetian *sirocco* (sultry southeast wind) either on a veranda, the deck of a ship or in a private garden, for this was the world with which they were familiar and most comfortable.

In an article written for the *Fortnightly Review* in 1883, James Wedmore poses

and answers the question of why Venice was the choice for so many genre artists in particular. He responds:

I suppose it may be because the painter of Genre [sic] delights to be picturesque as well as to be true, and picturesqueness may be hand in hand with truth in all these studies of the working folk of Venice as they labour and as they enjoy. The population is still the most picturesque, and perhaps the most varied in Italy, and the separate life of the place and its unique position have created for it its own industries; so that the glass-blowers, and the bead-stringers, and the lace-makers can give the interest of novelty to the painters of every day.³⁰

Therefore, these pictorial depictions of Venetian workers playing while working struck a chord with the artist and viewer alike. In effect, these images represented the best of both worlds.

For the most part, the American genre artists in Venice portrayed the lower working class as they performed their tasks, wearing their local attire – long shawls and colorful skirts for the women and dark cloaks or striped shirts for the men. As with American subjects painted back home, there was a high level of stereotyping and idealization that was meant to encourage the sale of these “European” works. But in the work of the artists who remained in America in the 1880s, there was a lack of picturesque laborers compared with the images created by their compatriots in Italy. Most of the remaining craftsmen the young artists could encounter in America were visually uninteresting, and the old, simple industries were beginning to vanish as the “mowing machine had replaced the scythe and the sickle, and the great factory the hand-loom. The new machines were complex, unpicturesque, and . . . their appearance was too novel and too changeable to become typical.”³¹ Industrialization had already transformed and

modernized American work traditions.

The American enthusiasm for images of Venice has been linked with a deep interest in the exploration of the past, and especially those aspects of life long-ago that seemed to be absent from the American political, moral and aesthetic experience of the period.³² Unlike Rome and Florence, Venice was uniquely linked with the eastern Mediterranean via its trade market and incorporated Byzantine and Islamic features into its architecture. Indeed, for many, Venice was a fairyland, a place to remove oneself from the daily stresses and economic changes encountered at home. By the 1880s, America's new wealthy class could well afford a comfortable life, and they could justify any extravagance associated with a visit to Venice by pointing to the education and enrichment to be experienced by viewing art masterpieces in the city.

By reviewing the cultural and social circumstances in Venice during the late nineteenth century, this thesis will reveal the impact the Italian experience exerted on American thought and the artists who painted these scenes. This interest in the Venetians and their customs, superficial as it may have been, resulted in some of the best works to be produced by the American artists. Their quaint pictures of figures at work, in prayer and at play were appealing because they filled an emotional void as Americans grasped to hold onto a seemingly ideal way of living that was no longer possible in a technologically progressive America.

Notes

¹ Several scholars have written about the influence of Europe on the nineteenth-century, American artist, including, William H. Gerds, *Monet's Giverny: An Impressionist Colony*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993); Lois Marie Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons*, (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1990); Michael Quick, *American Expatriate Painters of the Late Nineteenth Century*, (Dayton, Ohio: Dayton Art Institute, 1976); *Munich and American Realism in the 19th Century*, exh. cat. with essays by Michael Quick and Eberhard Ruhmer, (Sacramento, CA: E.B. Crocker Art Gallery, 1978) and H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters' and their French Teachers*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991).

² Barbara Groseclose, *Nineteenth-Century American Art*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 95. In the section devoted to "Labour in genre paintings," Groseclose discusses the American passage from an agrarian economic base to an industrial one and how the gradual overtaking of entrepreneurial capitalism by corporate capitalism affected a change in the culture of work.

³ Daniel Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America: 1850-1920*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 22-23. Information regarding the effects of industrialism on the American work culture is taken from this source, unless noted otherwise.

⁴ *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. Jess Stein, (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 591. According to *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, in 1791 the term "genre" was used by Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), the French writer and theorist, to describe domestic scenes, and by the mid-nineteenth century this usage was fully established, "Genre," *The Grove Dictionary of Art Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed April 2003), <http://www.groverart.com>. George Michael Cohen, "A Regional Study of American Genre Painting from 1830 to 1880," dissertation, Boston University, 1962, p. 1-2. Cohen continues to explain that genre painting does not portray historical, allegorical or idealized scenes, but that it does employ traits such as the absurd, the pathetic, the exaggerated, the ironic, or humorous.

⁵ Patricia Hills, *The Painters' America: Rural and Urban Life, 1810-1910*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 2. Hills notes that by the eighteenth century, American scenes of daily life were found on commercial signs, banknotes, embroidery, fire screens, literary illustrations, and an occasional decorative, over-mantle picture.

⁶ A moral or narrative element has always been present in the canonical genre works by William Sydney Mount (1807-1868), such as *Loss and Gain* of 1847 (Museums at Stony Brook, New York), and by George Caleb Bingham (1811-1879), including *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri* of 1845 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

⁷ In her essay, “When to-day we look for ‘American Art’ we find it mainly in Paris,” H. Barbara Weinberg, mentions that American painters studying in Paris often appeared “to be ‘impressionizers,’ rather than Impressionists, applying chromatic veneers of broken strokes to solid forms that depend on preliminary studies and some studio retouching.” Stephan Koja, ed., *America: The New World in 19th-Century Painting*, (Munich, London and New York: Prestel, 1999), p. 225.

⁸ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. xii.

⁹ Weisberg, *Redefining Genre*, p.10.

¹⁰ The term “neo-Venetian school” is found in the art reviews published during the late nineteenth century, including “Fine Art. The Royal Academy. II,” *The Academy* 33, no. 838 (May 26, 1888), p. 365. This review lists Englishman Henry Woods, American Robert Blum, Austrian Cecil Van Haanen and Italian Giacomo Favretto among the representatives of this school.

¹¹ “Henry Woods,” *Art Journal* (1886): p. 102.

¹² Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

¹³ Regina Soria, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century American Artists in Italy, 1760-1914*. (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1982).

¹⁴ Donna Seldin, *Americans in Venice 1879-1913*, (New York: Coe Kerr Gallery, Inc., 1983). Holly Pinto Savinetti, *American Artists Abroad: The European Experience in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, 1985.

¹⁵ Margaretta Lovell, *Venice: The American View 1860-1920*. (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 1984). Margaretta Lovell, *A Visitable Past: Views of Venice by American Artists, 1860-1915*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989). In the first work, Lovell includes statistics on the number of artists working in Venice between 1860 and 1920. She explains that as many as ninety American artists are known to have worked in Venice, and approximately 3,000 works attest to the tremendous draw the city had for them and their patrons, and this despite the fact that Venice had no established art school, no sale galleries, and until late in the nineteenth century, no contemporary art exhibits, p. 12.

¹⁶ In the first of the two studies, *Venice – The American View, 1860-1920*, Lovell states that “Most artists omitted figures from their compositions, or included them as minor elements in the distance; a few made figural studies of Venetian models, . . .” on p. 13.

In *A Visitable Past*, the author again mentions that “There are relatively few compositions that focus on Venetians – single or clustered,” p. 75.

¹⁷ Lovell, *A Visitable Past*, (1989), p. 1.

¹⁸ Philip Hook and Mark Poltimore, “Venetian Genre” in *Popular Nineteenth Century Painting: A Dictionary of European Genre Painters*, (London: Antique Collector's Club Ltd., 1986), p. 594-602. Halsby, Julian. *Venice: The Artist's Vision – A Guide to British and American Painters*, (London: B. J. Batsford, Ltd., 1990). Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Venetian Hours of Henry James, Whistler and Sargent*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991).

¹⁹ Erica Hirshler, “Gondola Days’: American Painters in Venice,” in Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., *The Lure of Italy – American Artists and the Italian Experience, 1760-1914*, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1992), p. 112-128. William H. Gerds, “‘Un sogno di bellezza:’ Pittori Americani a Venezia,” in *Venezia da Stato a Mito*, (Venice: Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 1997), p. 113-127.

²⁰ Lisa N. Peters, “John H. Twachtman: A ‘Modern’ in Venice, 1877-1878,” *The Italian Presence in American Art, 1860-1920*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992). Alastair Grieve, *Whistler's Venice*, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000). Margaret F. MacDonald, *Palaces in the Night: Whistler in Venice*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

²¹ Trevor Fairbrother, “Sargent’s Genre Paintings and the Issues of Suppression and Privacy,” symposium paper for “American Art around 1900, Lectures in Memory of Daniel Fraad,” in *Studies in the History of Art* 37 (1990), p. 29-49.

²² Linda Ayres, “Sargent in Venice,” in *John Singer Sargent* exhibition catalogue, NY: Whitney Museum of Art, 1986. Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Venetian Hours of Henry James, Whistler and Sargent*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991).

²³ Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent*, (New York, 1994); Marc Simpson, Richard Ormond and H. Barbara Weinberg, *Uncanny Spectacle: The Public Career of John Singer Sargent*, The Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, MA, (1997). Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, eds. *John Singer Sargent*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998). Other current publications on Sargent include *Sargent Abroad, Figures and Landscapes*, with essays by Warren Adelson, Donna Seldin Janis, Elaine Kilmurray, Richard Ormond and Elizabeth Oustinoff, (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1997). Donna Seldin Janis’s essay, “Venice,” focuses primarily on Sargent’s late nineteenth and early twentieth century watercolors, p. 181-215. Sally M. Promey, *Painting Religion in Public. John Singer Sargent's “Triumph of Religion” at the Boston Public Library*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000) is among the

most recent writings on the artist that examines the subject, content and other aspects of this mural series and the representation of religious content in a public sphere. Other recent books are Fairbrother's *John Singer Sargent, The Sensualist*, (2000) and Bruce Robertson, ed., *Sargent and Italy*, (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2003).

²⁴ William Dean Howells, *Venetian Life*, 2 Vols, New York, 1866. Two early works that document Howells experience in Italy and his relationship with artists of his time include James L. Woodress Jr., *Howells and Italy*, (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1952) and Clara Marburg Kirk, *W. D. Howells and Art in His Time*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1965).

²⁵ Howells, *Venetian Life*, (1886), p. 94.

²⁶ Among the many sources, the most important include Henry James, "Venice." *The Century Magazine* 25, no. 1 (November 1882): p. 3-23; Julia Cartwright, "The Artist in Venice, I," *Portfolio*, 15 (1884): p. 17-22; Cartwright, "The Artist in Venice, II," 15 (1884): p. 37-42; Julia Cartwright, "The Artist in Venice, III," *Portfolio* 15 (1884): p. 45-48; Henry Perl, *Venezia*, (London: Sampson Low, Marstow and Company, 1894); Francis Hopkinson Smith, *Venice of To-Day*, (New York: The Henry T. Thomas Company, 1896); and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *Nights. Rome, Venice in the Aesthetic Eighties, London, Paris in the Fighting Nineties*, (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1916).

²⁷ "Review of 'Italian Journeys. By William Dean Howells, Author of *Venetian Life*. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867,'" *North American Review* 106 (January 1868): p. 336; also in John Auchard, ed., *Italian Hours*, "Appendix II: Henry James on Italian Travel Books," (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 325.

²⁸ Howells, *Venetian Life* (1886), p. 64-65.

²⁹ Lovell, *A Visitable Past*, (1989), p. 75.

³⁰ Frederick Wedmore, "Genre in the Summer Exhibitions," *Fortnightly Review* 33, no. 198 (June 1883), pp. 868-869.

³¹ Isham, p. 474.

³² Lovell, *A Visitable Past*, (1989), p. 1.

CHAPTER 1

Venice and the American Artist's Pilgrimage in the Late 1870s

Although Italy attracted artists and writers throughout the nineteenth century, during the 1880s a wide circle of important American painters visited and worked in the city of Venice. A significant number of these artists were genre painters, who traveled to Venice to find refuge from the modern world. They were drawn to Europe by a yearning for a more sophisticated level of art training than was available in the United States, and entered the Royal Academy in Munich, or the Ecole des Beaux-Arts or in the numerous private ateliers in Paris. Eager to secure patronage, American painters were no longer reluctant to pursue foreign training. Indeed, after the end of the Civil War, as the United States became more fully engaged in international political, economic, scientific, and social affairs, cultural internationalism was inevitable.¹

This chapter provides a summary of the artistic trends prevalent during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as well as an overview of the socio-cultural and political atmosphere in Venice after its unification with Italy. Radical changes occurred in Venice toward the final decades of the century, which in turn affected the artist's experience in the city and the images he chose to depict. The experience of Frank Duveneck, William Merritt Chase and John Twachtman, who visited Venice together in 1877, will be examined, followed by a discussion of the works of Duveneck's students. A study of the American genre artists in Venice during the 1880s would not be complete without first considering the influence of Whistler and his enduring presence. Whistler's

vision of Venice was essentially new, for he was the first major artist to move away from the Grand Canal and towards the backwater canals in order to represent the secret *cortiles* (courtyards) and high bare salons of impoverished palaces.² His Venetian etchings and pastels, created in late 1879 and 1880, disclosed a previously hidden side of Venice and set the stage for artists to come.

The appeal of Venice changed during the 1880s in ways that inspired the American artist in search of creative and exotic subject matter. But, before the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Venice had not been especially enticing to the American artist. The classical ruins and history of Rome exerted a greater appeal to an earlier generation of painters such as Thomas Cole (1800-1842), Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872), William Page (1811-1885) and John G. Chapman (1808-1889), who were primarily interested in painting landscapes. As Erica Hirshler notes in her essay “Gondola Days: American Painters in Venice,” the main reasons for the long indifference to the pictorial possibilities of Venice were its lack of several elements: a suitable landscape setting as defined in Claudian terms; the vestiges of a classical past, that is, ruins to explore and to sketch; a great classical monument, such as the Roman Coliseum, to suggest a great moral or historical lesson; and a stable political and economic situation, since Venice had passed back and forth from French to Austrian control.³

Thus in the late nineteenth century, American artists found themselves drawn to Venice for several new reasons. First, they were deeply impressed by the brilliant Venetian color and light, which in turn both expanded and brightened their color palette

and changed the focus of their subject matter. Second, they were enticed by Venice's art historical background and strong cultural roots; and last, Venice fulfilled the artist's yearning for a vanished past. Venice's triumphant past was characterized by its connection with the Byzantine Empire through the trade market, and its superiority in the crafting of glass, lace and other decorative arts. While American cities were undergoing a transformation, the Venetian world remained untainted by the major environmental changes resulting from industrialization. Therefore, it offered American artists a chance to escape to a seemingly timeless place quite unlike that of their homeland and pursue their intrigue with an array of picturesque figures found in every corner of Venice, people who appeared untouched by the intrusion of modern urban culture and served as a link to an idyllic past.

Before the Civil War, American cities had begun to experience major changes as the installation of railroad tracks cut across streets, and bridges and viaducts were built for them. In the decades following the war, these changes accelerated and American society swiftly outpaced its European counterparts in terms of modernization.⁴ Moreover, to the regret of many Americans, by the 1880s up to forty percent of the population of the rural townships had disappeared as demographics shifted and bustling cities expanded into former farmland, adding factories, railroads and department stores.⁵

After the Civil War, a new class of wealthy Americans was eager to purchase works of art for their newly acquired mansions. To these buyers, foreign works held the greatest appeal even if they lacked quality. This expanded market was partly due to the activity of art dealers, such as Samuel P. Avery, who recommended the purchase of some

choice European painting to his clients. The more enlightened patrons acquired French works by artists such as Jean-Leon Gerôme (1824-1904), Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891) or Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875), to name a few, whereas less sophisticated collectors selected paintings from the school of Parisian genre painters, with their colorful renderings of amusing modern anecdotes, as well as the new German school of Munich, with its shiny bitumen and bold brush work.⁶

The increased ease and accessibility of foreign travel lured numerous artists across the Atlantic to study the old masters and to learn from renowned teachers such as Augustus Carolus-Duran (1837-1917) in Paris or Wilhelm Leibl (1844-1900) in Munich. For those who could not afford to visit Europe, the advances of photography offered Americans increasing opportunities to see a glimpse of what they were missing while piquing their interest. Three magazines that catered to and kindled the desire for novelty were *Scribner's*, *Harper's* and the *Century*, each of which provided critical and descriptive articles on European arts and artists. Helping to feed American curiosity about Europe, a new school of wood-engravers generated illustrations capable of approximating the texture and tone of original masterpieces.⁷

Prior to discussing the Venetian genre paintings of the 1880s, one must understand the historical and social events that preceded and overlapped with the creation of these images, which are summarized in the next section. This background information will lay the groundwork against which the American genre works can be more accurately analyzed.

THE REVITALIZATION OF VENICE

Venice experienced its own industrialization, albeit at a much slower pace than America. Geographically, it became more accessible with the construction of a railway that connected a portion of the city to the mainland in 1846 and the introduction of two bridges that crossed the Grand Canal – the Accademia Bridge, built in 1854, and the Ferrovia Bridge, erected in 1858. Then, following its unification with Italy in 1866, Venice was set on a course of cultural and economical revitalization, witnessed by the widening of streets, the introduction of a water bus service, the building of an aqueduct to transport fresh water from the mainland, and the opening of a fish, fruit and vegetable market at the Rialto.

Records of the steady stream of projects submitted to the Commune indicate the urgency of the need for sanitation; housing for the lower and middle classes; a water supply through aqueducts; and a sewer system, increasingly understood as necessities to prevent cholera epidemics.⁸ Furthermore, in order to ease congestion around the western area of Piazza San Marco, Via 22 Marzo (referring to the first day of Daniele Manin's temporary Republic) was completed in 1881. An accessible passage through Venice was a concern for many citizens who wanted to modernize the city and give it viability.

Over the course of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, elegant shop fronts and commercial buildings emerged in the Via 22 Marzo behind new hotels on the Grand Canal. In 1884, the Via 2 Aprile (commemorating the day in 1849 when Venice had declared its resistance to Austrian rule) opened, thus widening the area behind the Rialto Bridge and facilitating passage from San Marco to the Rialto. However, a

disruptive development occurred in 1881, when the introduction of steamboats began to upset the quietude of the lagoon. This symbol of progress was a great source of debate and protest, when in 1881 the first journey of the *Regina Margherita* provoked the gondoliers to strike in.⁹ The plight of the struggling gondoliers lasted well beyond the immediate uprising and provided inspiration for a number of paintings, which will be discussed in the proceeding chapters.

The resurgence of Venetian glass making on the island of Murano was complemented by the re-establishment of the cottage industry of lace making in the 1870s, with its subsequent founding of related schools on the islands of Burano and Pellestrina. Industrial growth continued to accelerate with the founding of the Junghans clock-making factory by the Herron Brothers in 1882 and that of the Stucky Mill a year later. Thus, while Venice was experiencing a revival of industry, the government was devising several means to improve the physical layout and thus the marketability of the city.

In December 1886, the Mayor of Venice released a plan that included demolishing low-grade housing for the poor and working classes and replacing them with hygienic and comfortable housing; creating space so that air could circulate and providing a sewerage system that did not discharge into the waterways, thereby reducing the unhygienic odors permeating the streets.¹⁰ With all of the above-mentioned changes in effect, Venice's surroundings already had been transformed to some extent by 1887, the year that tourists had their first opportunity to view contemporary art at the National Art Exhibition. This exhibition represented a turning point for Venice, which would

organize a permanent display of international art by instituting the Venetian Biennale in 1895.

For the Italian artists, a strong influence on their depictions of the Venetian people was the work of a group of artists known as the *Macchiaioli*. Based in Tuscany during the second half of the nineteenth century, these artists created “patchy” works conceived in terms of a basic *macchia* (spot or daub), while advocating nationalist sentiments.¹¹ They reacted strongly to the political and national movements in effect during the 1860s, especially before the unification of Italy in 1866. Among the most important members of the *Macchiaioli*, each representative of the different classes – lower middle class, upper middle class and middle class respectively – are Giuseppe Abatti (1836-1868), Giovanni Fattori (1825-1908), Silvestro Lega (1826-1895) and Telemaco Signorini (1835-1901).¹²

The political and social circumstances that occurred during the struggle for unification and provoked the works of the *Macchiaioli* were no longer strong concerns in later decades. The *Macchiaioli* were united against the Florentine Academy’s training methods and the interference of foreign influences on politics in Italy. The Italian populace was faced with health and economic crises as Venetians were living through a cholera epidemic and implementing the much-needed revival of its industries, such as lace and glass making. Exemplary works by the *Macchiaioli* that dealt with similar religious themes will be compared with the works created by the American genre artists working in Venice during the 1880s and early 1890s.

Before Italy was fully united, American journalists had associated the issue of Italian morals with the country’s supposed lack of true religiosity before Italy was fully

united. In 1855 *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* published an article on "Italian Life and Morals—Effects of Romanism on Society," in which the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism were analyzed by comparing the former as representing Italy and the latter the United States. The writer began by emphasizing that rigid Catholics could "not conceive how good morals, prosperity, a wise government, or salvation can exist independent of papal authority," and proceeded to discuss negative aspects of Catholicism or papal authority on Italian schools, women, dandies and beggary. While both religions "are comprehensive, self-denying, laborious, and unwearied," Roman Catholic benevolence "partakes of the parade and ostentation of the Church, which controls and directs its operations. It delights in uniforms, chantings, torch-lights, and masquerading. . . . Protestantism . . . makes no theatrical exhibition of its benevolence. . . ." ¹³

This contemporary writer's most poignant observation is that while Roman Catholic cities outwardly presented a stronger appearance of public morality than Protestant capitals in terms of prostitution and drunkenness, the average morality of the Italians was lower than that of the American since

Italians are not educated *up* to the Protestant standard of *truth* and *honor*. As beggary with the lower classes carries with it no shame, so falsehood among the higher would not be deemed a vice. . . . Its population is not one of readers. Journals are small, scarce, and restricted to only what jealous governments permit to be known. They are but an indifferent clue to the moral condition of Italians. Crimes may be common or rare, and nothing be heard of them away from their immediate circle. ¹⁴

Since Catholicism was the dominant religion in Italy, with Jews and Protestants

representing less than one per cent of the population, and the papacy was a powerful political entity, the country and its people were classified in religious terms. With the unification of Italy, however, the perception about the identity of her people was radically transformed.

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN VENICE POST-UNIFICATION

After the unification of Italy, the Church reinforced its political role as well, for it was aiming to unite the people against the temporal powers, and to control their decisions regarding the Italian government and its legislation. The Church benefited from its special role in the rural society of the Venetian provinces. From the last phase of Austrian rule through unification, the clergy operated with striking autonomy and after unification the Venetian church was also able to respond aggressively both to the secularizing influence of the liberal state and to the progressive philosophies of nascent Socialist movements.¹⁵

In Venice, for centuries the Jewish population had been required to live in what is still known today as the Ghetto, one of the most intriguing areas of the city. In 1516 the ruling Council of Ten decreed that all Jews in Venice must live in a designated area, and permitted into the rest of the city only for limited stays of a stipulated interval.¹⁶ This Jewish quarter, cut off by wide canals and manned by Christian guards at the two Watergates, was named the Ghetto after a foundry – *geto* in Venetian – that once occupied the site. By 1866, the Jewish population in Venice was free to live wherever it

pleased. Jews were now allowed to attend any school, practice any profession and own land and property – all rights previously denied them – and were no longer required to wear identifying badges and caps.¹⁷ Therefore the *Risorgimento* represented the emancipation of the non-Catholic religions – Judaism and Protestantism.

The restrictions that had been placed on Italian Jews had been strongly opposed in Florence in the 1850s, where the *Macchiaioli* were advocating unification. At least two members of the group – Vito D'Ancona and Serafino De Tivoli – were Jewish,¹⁸ and the works created in the 1850s and 1860s by those who were not members of the group, clearly stated their discontent with the political status quo. The most poignant of these is offered in Signorini's *The Ghetto of Venice* (Fig.1.1), painted ca. 1860 and exhibited at the Promotrice exhibition of 1861 in Turin, the capital of the new Italian state that was one of the most liberal on the issue of Jewish civil rights.¹⁹

Although artistically speaking not a religious work, *The Ghetto of Venice* is theoretically imbued with religious and cultural overtones. It is unlike any of the picturesque or quaint views of Venice depicted before or after 1860 and is a conscious attempt on the part of the artist to represent the ugliness and darkness of the segregation of the Jews from the rest of the Venetian population. *The Ghetto of Venice* is ahead of its time and anticipates Whistler's Venetian engravings and pastels. In effect, it is also equivalent to the social statements found in the paintings of the American Ash Can School and the Social Realists more than forty years later.

The painting is a close-up view of one of the Ghetto's tenements, which is flanked by more than a dozen men, women and children nonchalantly walking about or

conversing. The main focus is on the gloomy peasant woman in the foreground carrying a basket; she is caught between the shadow of the tenement and the sunlit path she is about to enter. Albert Boime argues that the public could not have missed the fact that Signorini's work was a metaphorical image of Venice still bound to Austria, especially through the use of the *macchia* technique, which is ideally suited to show the frayed textures, to suggest the sickening smells, and otherwise present the grimy aspects of ghetto life.²⁰ However, it is difficult to attribute this technique solely to unattractive subjects for the Macchiaioli used the same method of painting for all of their works.

After Garibaldi succeeded in taking Rome in 1870, local associations of all kinds were formed, and a wide assortment of newspapers, journals, posters, and "scientific" studies were published. The new movements precipitated first by the anarchists and then, by the 1880s, by the Socialists, added a new dimension to civic life that helped spread anticlerical ideology from the cities to the countryside, and from the artisans and literate classes to the peasants, the workers, and the illiterate.

During the 1880s, there were cholera outbreaks recorded throughout Europe, but their terror was especially heightened in Venice. The emotional character of the Italian people and their strong imaginations led to a widespread panic as cholera struck suddenly and killed thousands of victims.²¹ For the poorer classes, religious faith was their only consolation. They turned to the church for spiritual guidance, often to a particular saint to whom one declared a special devotion, for deliverance from this latest plague. In August 1884 *The New York Times* observed this phenomenon in a column entitled "Cholera and Politics." The author wrote:

It is the firm conviction of the ignorant classes in Italy that the best, if not the only, method of combating a pestilence is to retain some able saint for the public defense. Having selected a saint who has made in previous years a specialty of driving away pestilence, his interposition is marked by a solemn procession to his shrine, and the matter is then left in his hands with the full conviction that he will do all that can be done in the premises. . . . and every one knows how the Blessed Virgin herself is believed to have stopped the plague in Venice. Other saints have done excellent work, according to popular belief, in driving the cholera and the plague from various Italian towns, and while of course there is a choice among these saints there are at least half a dozen of them who are regarded as almost certain to give complete satisfaction.²²

The fear of this lethal outbreak was felt throughout Venice, and even kept some artists and tourists away from the city. The concern was greater among the year-round residents than it was for visitors, and although the article refers to the “ignorant classes” rather than to the “lower classes,” the upper classes probably had left the city or felt secure as long as they maintained a distance from the poor.

In the 1880s, the Church also blamed the country’s political leaders for the epidemic, now ascribing it to Providence retaliating for the leaders’ lack of religious conviction and immorality. During a previous outbreak of cholera in the 1870s, the Pope had predicted the epidemic as a consequence of the new government having deprived him of his temporal power.²³ The *Times* article of 1884 did not denigrate the religious belief of the people, seeing as it provided them some solace and relieved their hysteria. Many readers must have agreed that “Whatever may be the case with educated and liberal Italians and Frenchmen, religion has not yet lost its hold on the people, and the alarm caused by the appearance and spread of cholera will drive thousands of backsliders into the arms of the church.”²⁴

By the 1890s, Socialism was considered a conscious rejection of the Church.

Politically, the clerics competed with the government for the support of the Italian people, especially the peasants. The Church viewed the Risorgimento, the movement to unify Italy and create a national identity, as an anticlerical movement that aimed to reform the church and destroy the Pope's temporal power. The *non-expedit* (refusal of permission) prevented the Catholic movement from engaging in national politics, but the Catholics were nonetheless serious competitors in the field of mass organization. In 1874, the Vatican set up the *Opera dei Congressi* (Work of the Congresses) to coordinate initiatives and mobilize Catholics at the local level by banning Catholics from participating in national politics, but allowing them to take part in municipal affairs.²⁵

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII's famous encyclical on the social question, *Rerum Novarum* provided a new stimulus to the Catholic movement by calling for action to redress the injustices of capitalism in Italy. In that document Leo XIII defended private property, religious education, and religious control of the marriage laws, and he condemned Socialism and Marxism; declared that employers should treat their employees fairly, pay them suitable wages and permit social organization, and that government should include people from various classes who followed Christian principles.²⁶

The Catholic subculture became solidly implanted in the Veneto and northern Lombardy as it catered to the needs of the peasants by providing cheap credit through rural banks (*casse rurali*). The priests' knowledge of their parishioners was indispensable in helping the rural banks to avoid bad financial risks and thus their role in social control was further reinforced.²⁷ As in earlier centuries, the lower classes turned to the Church more often than not to find comfort and support and would, on occasion, pay

for indulgences. Most rural people experienced the Church through the local priest by way of the sacraments, attendance at mass, and the celebration of patron saints' days and processions.²⁸ The experience in the northern Italian cities was also very similar.

In the Veneto, a firm network of Catholic associations were established and the highest levels of the organization there were in the hands of a small lay and Church elite, the former including many aristocrats. While this elite was primarily concerned with ways to battle the liberal state and defend the positions of the Church, the mass of members – poor peasants – were more concerned with local activities and providing for themselves.²⁹

THE PERCEPTION OF VENICE

Venice was enriched by a deep-rooted cultural history, stemming from the magnificent art works of the Renaissance and Baroque periods and the musical masterpieces that forever immortalized the city. In the last days of the Republic, terminated by Napoleon in 1797, the most famous Venetian native artists were scattered throughout Europe, namely Giambattista Tiepolo and his sons in Würzburg and Madrid; Canaletto in London; Antonio Canova in Rome, and playwright Carlo Goldoni in Paris.³⁰ Although alternating between French and Austrian rule for more than half of the nineteenth century, Venetian cultural life was further enhanced by the presence of Gioacchino Rossini, the most commanding figure in Italian opera and creator of almost forty operas. Unfortunately, even amidst all of these achievements, Venice remained

closely linked with the Republic and its negative reputation, equated with decadence, repression and sensual gratification, aspects that were alluded to in the works of Whistler, Sargent and the Symbolists.

By the 1880s, Venice had acquired considerable popularity through the writings of the well-known, English writer and painter John Ruskin (1819-1900). Ruskin was enamored of Venice, which he visited for the first time in 1835, and was inspired to write several books about the city and its outstanding architecture. The most important of these was his *Stones of Venice*, published in three volumes between 1851 and 1860. He advocated the moral value of Gothic architecture, the style that was then being reasserted in Venice, and disliked Renaissance and Baroque techniques for they confirmed the early decay of the city.³¹ Ruskin was convinced that the city's monuments were slowly being destroyed by restoration, and he recorded them in daguerreotypes, plaster casts and meticulous watercolors, thereby influencing a generation to exchange the classicism of Rome for what he considered the more moral and aesthetic lessons of Venice.³²

For centuries artists had traveled to Venice to further their careers by studying the renowned masterpieces located throughout the city's islands. But in the late nineteenth century, the appeal of Venice was refocused on the Venetians themselves. The simplicity of life on the lagoons appealed to tourists in general and artists in particular as they witnessed the local inhabitants perform their daily routines. Henry James noted that Venice offered advantages to its visibly poor inhabitants:

It takes a great deal to make a successful American; but to make a happy Venetian takes only a handful of quick sensibility. The Italian people have, at once, the good and evil fortune to be conscious of few wants; so that if the

civilization of society is measured by the number of its needs, as seem to be the common opinion today, it is to be feared that the children of the lagoon would make but a poor figure in a set of comparative tables. Not their misery, doubtless, but the way they elude their misery, is what pleases the sentimental tourist, who is gratified by the sight of a beautiful race that lives by the aid of its imagination. The way to enjoy Venice is to follow the example of these people, and make the most of simple pleasures.³³

These simple pleasures included an al-fresco toilette, bathing in a side canal or listening to someone narrate a story.

An article of 1882, entitled, "Venice Revisited," described the great appeal of Venice's understated beauty: ". . . not only because Venice and her landscapes touch the mind and the emotions in so many ways that her fascination is so peculiar, but because these influences are so quiet and subtle, rather felt than perceived, and not all felt at first, but slowly growing day after day upon the traveler as he becomes more attuned to his environment."³⁴

Everyday life in Venice offered a world that was untainted by modernity and industrialization, on a par with the appeal of Brittany.³⁵ Hence, Venice offered the American artist a chance to escape to a timeless place, quite unlike that of contemporary America. Americans often depicted the Venetian inhabitants, especially the workers, and these people inspired a substantial number of Venetian genre pictures throughout the 1880s. The upper classes of Venice were rarely pictured, partly because they were less interesting than the colorful working class, and partly because they were not often seen congregating in the city's streets. As William Dean Howells suggests in his book *Venetian Life*, "the greater number of the nobles and the richer, of the professional classes lead for the most part a life of listless seclusion . . ."³⁶ Consequently, the popular images

of Venice concentrated on the everyday life of the laborer and to a smaller extent the tourist's experience in Venice.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Italian genre painting was divided according to styles and themes associated with particular regions. With the unification of Italy completed by 1871, two movements dominated Italian art: Naturalism and Realism. *Ottocento* Naturalism, which began with the romantics' celebration of nature, surfaced throughout Italy and the rest of Europe at various times and in different manners in each region.³⁷ It was a bridge between Romanticism and Realism and viewed as another reforming trend, turning the quest for truth toward the immediate and visible social environment.

Many of the Italian genre artists discussed in this study attended the Accademia in Venice at approximately the same time, including Giacomo Favretto, Luigi Nono, Ettore Tito, Alessandro Milesi, all of whom also studied with Pompeo Molmenti (1819-1894). We know that these Italian artists were acquainted with each other through their common place of study at the Academy in Venice, and they enjoyed amicable relationships, and that some were friendly rivals, as was the case between Tito and Milesi.³⁸ Thus the camaraderie experienced among the art students enrolled in Venice was comparable to that of the American artists who ventured to Venice in the late 1870s. By that time, a visit to Venice had become a prerequisite for their art training, particularly for those who had first studied in Munich.

ARTISTS IN VENICE DURING THE LATE 1870s

According to William Merritt Chase, “the student who goes abroad and schools himself well becomes, in my opinion, the better American,”³⁹ and this is exactly what a number of American artists chose to do, just as Chase did. Chase, Duveneck and Twachtman were among the first American artists to sojourn in Venice for a period of time beginning in 1877. Each of these artists had received the same artistic training at the Munich Royal Academy, where artists such as Wilhelm Dietz (1839-1907) and Karl Theodor von Piloty (1826-1886) taught. The alternative to this training was the approach of Wilhelm Leibl (1844-1900), which emphasized bravura brushwork and dark color tones, in a manner influenced by the works of Frans Hals (1581/85-1666), Diego Velázquez (1599-1660) and Titian (d. 1576). Leibl became the leader of the new Munich School and as such, exerted a profound influence on the younger artists; even Duveneck admitted that Leibl had more influence on his work than any other artist in Munich, although he never studied with him.⁴⁰

In 1872 Chase enrolled at the Royal Academy in Munich, which had been founded in 1759 and was a focal point for art education in Central Europe. By the 1870s the Academy had become a major place to study art and was renowned for its distinguished teachers, especially Dietz, a genre painter and illustrator, and Piloty, who became director of the Academy in 1874.⁴¹ Chase may have studied at first with Diez, an advocate of strong color and free brushwork, before he entered Piloty’s studio two years later in 1874.⁴² In Munich, Chase became friends with Duveneck, who was teaching

there at the time, and also met Walter Shirlaw. The three artists became so close that they were nicknamed the “Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”⁴³

During this training period, Chase’s work, with its bold colors, delineation of textures and substances, and realistic rendering of fleeting moments, reflects the influence of Piloty. The Munich style was characterized by bold and vigorous brushwork and warm, brown tones against dark backgrounds. Before long, Chase, together with some other students in the Academy, began to grow weary of the classes offered and the classical approach to composition that was advocated, and desired a new outlet. This dissatisfaction with the Academy led to the opening of a joint studio in Munich by Chase and Duveneck in 1875, supported by Shirlaw, Frank Currier and other American students.⁴⁴

Led by Duveneck, Chase and Shirlaw, members of the American Artist’s Club, as the group became known, exchanged ideas regarding subject matter, composition, and color. They strengthened and unified their techniques as each artist began to present formal papers on art and eventually critiqued one another’s work. Modeling their programs on German art associations of the time, the artist’s mounted club-sponsored performances of *tableaux vivants* (live works) after paintings by Dutch and Flemish masters, organized informal exhibitions and arranged social events.⁴⁵ These activities established a strong camaraderie among the American artists in Munich that provided the outlet they had sought from the traditional teachings of the Academy. The friendship between Duveneck and Chase would last a lifetime.

From 1875 until 1877, Twachtman also studied in Munich at the Academy, with

Ludwig Loefftz, who carried on Leibl's method of painting directly from the model and building his figure's head in dark and light tones, while treating textures with broad directional brush strokes.⁴⁶ Earlier, from the winter of 1874 until the spring of 1875 at the Ohio Mechanics Institute in Cincinnati, Twachtman had studied with Duveneck, who had just returned from four years of study in Munich. The two later departed for Europe together.⁴⁷ Twachtman's affiliation with Duveneck would also continue beyond the Munich years as he embarked on his first trip to Venice.

In the spring of 1877, Frank Duveneck and John Twachtman invited William Merritt Chase to join them on a trip to Venice that was to last almost a year. Their stay in Venice became an experience that changed their approach to painting, lightened their palette, introduced them to new subject matter, and established a connection to the city that would ensure their future return. The three American artists found lodging in Venice near the Accademia and the church of San Trovaso, on the Fondamenta San Trovaso, 945 on the Grand Canal.⁴⁸ During this period, Chase became very ill and was assisted by both Duveneck and Twachtman, who slowly nursed him back to health. The situation was worsened by the fact that the three artists were running short of money, which made it impossible for any of them to leave the city.

Katherine Roof has documented the three artists' meager existence in Venice. They dined on beans, the cheapest food obtainable, and Duveneck was obliged to ask an English acquaintance to lend him five francs to purchase soup for Chase's recovery. Duveneck received some assistance in the form of a basket filled with delicacies sent by Katherine de Kay Bronson, an American who was living with her family in Venice and

considered among the founders of the Anglo-American colony. Bronson, credited with perpetuating the characteristic spirit in Venice and a distinctive *bouquet* evoked by transatlantic wealth, intellect and sensibility, was the sister of Richard Watson Gilder, the editor of *The Century Magazine*. She came to Venice in 1876 and rented the sixteenth-century Casa Alvisi, on the Grand Canal opposite the church of Santa Maria della Salute, together with a guest suite in the adjacent Palazzo Giustinian-Recanti, where expatriate society often gathered.⁴⁹ According to Josephine Duveneck, the artist's daughter-in-law:

Her house was filled with rich embroideries, antique silver lamps, mirrors with sprays of flowers painted on them, cabinets containing every specimen of Venetian glass from fragile goblets to large crystal trays and innumerable painted figures of saints and madonnas rescued from some medieval chapel to grace the nooks and recesses of her luxurious setting. . . . She entertained lavishly and often persuaded Frank Duveneck to attend her soirées.⁵⁰

Aside from Bronson's assistance, Duveneck was fortunate to receive a much-needed portrait commission at this time, which provided the funds for him and his traveling companions to leave Venice. As the story is told, Duveneck was copying one of the Italian pictures in the Accademia when a gentleman entered and asked for Duveneck by name. The man had been sent by the Trustees of Cornell University to inquire if the artist would be interested in painting a portrait of their president, Andrew White, who was also in Venice at the time.⁵¹

When Chase was feeling better, he visited the Accademia and other museums to study paintings by Tintoretto and Giorgione, while simultaneously painting approximately forty works consisting of contemporary street scenes, interiors, still lifes and a few portraits.⁵² At the Accademia there were masterpieces such as Giorgione's

mysterious work *The Tempest* of 1507, Giovanni Bellini's *Pieta* of 1505 and Tintoretto's *The Miracle of St. Mark Freeing a Slave* of 1548. The last example was representative of the neo-Venetian style, known for its vibrant palette and strong use of light for special effect.

In August 1878, the Englishman Henry Woods and the Austrian Ludwig Passini joined Dutch artist Cecil Van Haanen in Venice. The acquaintance of these artists is particularly significant, as they were among the most notable painters of Venetian genre scenes in the 1880s. In a letter dated August 28, 1878, Hotel Nazionale, Venice, Woods wrote to Fildes:

I arrived here yesterday morning. I was simply stewed all the way. It was over 88 deg. [*sic*] in the optician's shop on the Riva today . . . I was rather knocked up yesterday, and in the afternoon went to bathe at the Lido. On the steamer I found Thoren the Austrian I knew before and Van Haanen. I was very much pleased to find the latter here; he is a very good fellow, just the fellow you would like. When I mentioned your name, he said "Ah! Mr. Fildes is a very great artist" and was full of enquiries; he had seen one of your big pictures. I was very glad to hear a clever fellow like that come out at the mere mention of your name.⁵³

In a letter of October 19, 1878, from Casa Zabeo, 1089 S. Gervasio e Protasio, Woods writes to Fildes and mentions Van Haanen again. He comments as follows:

Van Haanen is painting a fluffy red-haired girl in a pale green bodice; you would make a hit with her. He is designing a subject picture, he goes to work exactly as you do, the full size at once, altering every day, painting over and over thinly whilst designing . . . aiming first to get the effect in colour. . . . Being a figure painter he says it is best to avoid the picturesque backgrounds that you find here as it is an impossibility to work a figure composition to them. You have said the same thing. . . . I find Passini's backgrounds very simple. It is very difficult for me to avoid sitting down to them.⁵⁴

While Chase's observations of Passini are unknown, these remarks by Woods offer an idea of Van Haanen's personality and his painting methods, an artist about whom little is known and whose best-known work, *Venetian Bead Stringers*, will be compared to American works dealing with the same theme in the next chapter.

Among Chase's early Venetian works was his *Venetian Fish Market* (Fig. 1.2), also known as *The Yield of Waters*. The painting originally included a young boy in the right hand corner, a figure subsequently removed from the painting by Chase, but known to us through a woodcut. The painting, in its original state, was noted for its true-to-nature elements, its "superbly vivid bit of portraiture" and its "brilliant brushwork."⁵⁵ Without the inclusion of the young boy, the picture is more properly classified as a still-life painting of several types of fish – skate, octopus, shrimp, eels and lobster.

As in Chase's portrait of Duveneck as *The Smoker*, exhibited at the Salon of 1881, emphasis is placed on the decorative accessory – the chair. Regarding the 1881 painting, Duveneck is known to have humorously commented: "I was of no importance, merely an accessory in the portrait,"⁵⁶ a telling statement that applies to *Fish Market* as well. In *The Smoker* Duveneck's role was as a genre character, not as himself, and the boy's role in *Fish Market* is as a genre accessory, not as the central character. *Fish Market* entered the collection of Samuel Coale in St. Louis and was often reproduced in woodcuts, (in which the young boy is still present), and received widespread recognition in the early 1880s.⁵⁷

Among the forty paintings Chase created during his stay in Italy are *The Antiquary Shop* (The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY), *City Streets, Venice* (Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, CT), *Feeding the Pigeons* (The Parrish Art Museum,

Southampton, L.I., NY), *Interior of St. Mark's, Venice* (unlocated),⁵⁸ and *Courtyard in Venice* (Fig. 1.3), the latter of which depicts a young woman sitting in an otherwise empty Italian courtyard.⁵⁹ Most likely painted out-of-doors, this last work displays Chase's gradual transition from his dark Munich paintings to the lighter colors and tones of his later work. It may also be considered an example of his passing concern for natural light effects.⁶⁰ In addition to these works, Chase also drew sketches of life in Venice that would serve as prototypes for future works, as Blum would do in the next decade. Munich-trained artists commonly took "notes" outdoors in the form of sketches, which they would then rely on for reference. For Chase, Venice appears to have precipitated an important change in his artistic style for it was after his stay in the city that he moved from the dark, realist palette of the Munich school to the lighter, more genre focused paintings he produced in the late 1880s in New York City

Twachtman also incorporated figures into his Venetian landscapes, but downplayed the narrative element, as evident in his *View of Venice* (Fig. 1.4) of 1877 (formerly Berry-Hill Galleries, New York), one of his earliest Venetian paintings in the manner of Canaletto. This work displays a panoramic view in a crisp and detailed fashion in the background, but judging from the title one would not be aware that a fisherman is featured in his boat working in the center foreground of the painting. *View of Venice*, along with Twachtman's *Venice, Campo Santa Marta* (Fig. 1.5) ca. 1878, is among the few examples where the artist included a genre scene.

In the later work, Twachtman avoids Venice's grand scenery and prefers to depict a quiet square, named for the monastery of Santa Marta that was dominated by a large

cotton factory and populated by fishermen and their families.⁶¹ There are only two figures present, a man and a woman flanked by the surrounding buildings and the massive white sail of a boat in the harbor, and the viewer is almost placed in the painting as if walking along the same path. The bundle of cloths the male figure appears to be carrying indicates the existence of the factory, but is not of importance to the artist who is interested in the Venetian scenery. Other Venetian scenes by Twachtman, such as *San Trovaso, Venice*, ca. 1878 (Spanierman Gallery, New York) and *Canal, Venice*, also ca. 1878 (Mr. and Mrs. Allen P. McDaniel) convey the Munich style with their broad brush strokes and dark tones.

Of the original trio of American artists who visited Venice in 1877, only Duveneck was to continue his affiliation with Venice and its inhabitants. Chase's stay was brought to an end when he received an invitation to teach at the newly-formed Art Students League in New York City. Likewise, towards the end of 1878, Twachtman returned to his hometown of Cincinnati and by the autumn of 1879 he was in charge of teaching painting and drawing classes at the Women's Art Association of Cincinnati. In the fall of 1880 Twachtman was invited to teach Duveneck's students in Florence, and from there he went to Venice with Duveneck and the other American students as noted below.

Of all the artists mentioned above, Duveneck had the most direct influence on a number of young American artists who chose to study with him in Munich, where he taught his own classes from 1878-1881. He was a constant source of inspiration to his students, known as the "Boys," including John W. Alexander, John C. Anderson, Otto

Bacher, Frank Benson, Charles Abel Corwin, Joseph DeCamp, Charles Forbes, Charles H. Freeman, Oliver Dennett Grover, George E. Hopkins, Charles E. Mills, Harper Pennington, Albert Rheinhard, Louis Ritter, Julius Rolshoven, Henry Rosenberg, Julian Story, Edmond Tarbell, Ross Turner, Theodore Wendell and Theodore Wores.⁶²

Duveneck's *alla prima* style of painting appealed to his students, who followed him throughout the Bavarian landscape and settled with him in Polling, a small village approximately forty miles southwest of Munich, before retreating to Italy. A review of their experience in Venice and some of the works painted by these artists reveals that the concentration on genre subjects did not occur until later in the 1880s.

Duveneck's excursions to Italy – Florence in the winter and Venice in the summer – for a two-year period beginning in 1879 appear to have altered his style of painting. During these years, he began working in a colorful palette mirroring the colors found in those Italian cities. Initially, Duveneck would teach in Munich during the winter and bring his students to Polling for the summer months, but by the fall of 1879, he had relocated to Florence, Italy to teach his students. Duveneck rented a villa on the Poggio Imperiale, a hill south of town, and his students joined him in November. The new arrivals included Bacher, Grover, De Camp, Rolshoven, Hopkins, Wendel and others.⁶³ The group of artists became immortalized in William Dean Howell's short story "Indian Summer," in which the young men are referred to as the "Ingelhart Boys," and considered a welcome presence in Italy.

From Florence, Duveneck moved his students to Venice for their summer classes. According to Charles Mills, Duveneck had established two classes in Italy – one for ten

students who were more advanced, and another for five less-experienced ones, who were dubbed the “Kindergarten” – and had them paint live models from 8:30 a.m. until 12 p.m. and again from 1 to 4 p.m., leaving the evening hours between 7 and 9 for drawing.⁶⁴

Grover also offered some insight into the world of the “Duvneck Boys” and the summer months in Venice in a lecture he presented in Cincinnati in 1918. He explained that

Joseph DeCamp was just plain “Joe” in those days, the breeziest, cheekiest, most warm-hearted Bohemian in Venice. Full of life, energy and ambition, he worked unceasingly . . . The student days in Italy . . . were more significant, probably, than a similar period in the lives of most students, because more intensified and concentrated. The usual student experiences of work and play, elation and dejection, feast and famine, were ours, of course, but in addition to that, and owing to peculiar circumstances and conditions, the advantage of the intimate association and constant companionship we enjoyed not only with our leader but also with his acquaintances and fellow artists, men and women from many lands, was unique and perhaps quite as valuable as any actual school work. We lived in adjoining rooms, dined in the same restaurant, frequented the same cafés, worked and played together with an intimacy possible only in that age and such a community of interests.⁶⁵

DeCamp had spent five years at the McMicken School of Art and Design in Cincinnati (now the Art Academy of Cincinnati), beginning with evening classes in 1873 and he was a member of Duvneck’s group at the Ohio Mechanics Institute in Cincinnati, where Duvneck taught during the season of 1874-75.⁶⁶ Following this training, DeCamp decided to study in Munich at the Royal Academy and eventually spent almost five years studying abroad. It was in Munich that he became friends with his fellow-student Julius Rolshoven.

There are at least six paintings that place DeCamp in Venice, which he visited in late December 1880, before his return to the United States in 1883, including *Bridge in*

Venice (Private Collection), *Venetian Street* (Private Collection), *A Street Scene in Venice* (Cincinnati Art Museum) (Fig. 1.6), *Venetian Courtyard* (unlocated), *Venetian Boatyard* (Private Collection) and *Venetian Canal Scene* (Private Collection). In these works, one or two distant figures serve as decorative accessories, and the Munich style of painting is prevalent, as indicated by their broad brushstrokes, thick impasto and strong contrast of light and dark tones.

Rolshoven's works have also been described as exemplary of the Munich style. Richard Muther, an early, twentieth-century art critic, provides insight into the artist's Venetian works as portraying "girls kneeling before the image of the Virgin at the sound of the Ave Maria, views of the Doge Palace or of Chioggia," and as presenting "nothing of the sunny play of light which modern Italy shed over such scenes; on the contrary, powerful, greenish-blue tones were spread out, with an effect of dark and solemn gravity."⁶⁷

Duveneck was an exponent of the Munich style of painting that was defined by vigorous brushstrokes and dark tones conveyed in a realistic manner. His technique was obviously developed during his studies in Munich, beginning in 1870, but it was improved upon by his exposure to the work of the seventeenth-century masters, especially Hals, Rembrandt and Velásquez in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.⁶⁸ At the time of Duveneck's classes in Italy, it was brushwork, rather than a carefully finished charcoal or crayon preliminary drawing that he insisted upon as the real foundation of a picture. Thus, he imparted the painter's, rather than the draughtsman's, point of view in teaching his students that once the rough outlines were suggested in charcoal, the canvas

should be quickly covered with paint, boldly blocking in the large masses.⁶⁹ Duveneck's later exploration of genre themes depicting the working class was complemented by his apparent interest in architectural views of Venice, as seen in his series of etchings.

Duveneck executed approximately thirty etchings of Venice, many of which focus on architectural details. He became interested in this medium during his second visit to Venice in 1880 and produced three of his best plates – two versions of the *Riva degli Schiavoni and Laguna*, also known as *View of Shipping from the Riva*.⁷⁰ It would not be until a few years later, from 1883 to 1885, that Duveneck's etchings would incorporate more genre subjects.

Duveneck's interest in etching led to the production of numerous examples that demonstrate his keen eye for detail. His talents are also evident in his ability to render his figures effortlessly. Duveneck was not satisfied with mere accurate surface delineation, largely based on his technique of directly painting on the canvas; he also sought to render observations that penetrated beneath the surface and revealed the character of whatever he was painting.⁷¹

Frank Duveneck's summer sojourns in Venice introduced his students to a large network of European artists working in the city. Most important was the friendship established between James McNeill Whistler and a number of Duveneck's "Boys," as they became known. Otto Bacher, who published two articles and a book on his experience with Whistler in Venice, provides the best account of their relationship.⁷² These accounts also offer an idea of student life in Venice. From the day Bacher and the others encountered Whistler, their work was significantly affected. A score of students,

all pupils of Duveneck who had been with him in Florence, had come on to Venice to be with him for the summer of 1880 and resided in the Casa Jankowitz, at 2140 Campo San Biagio, or the immediate neighborhood.⁷³

Whistler had arrived in Venice in September of 1879 in order to create twelve etchings of the city for the Fine Arts Society of London.⁷⁴ At first he occupied a room in the Palazzo Rezzonico, but early in 1880 he moved in with Frank Duveneck, who was also in Venice at that time, at the Casa Jankowitz located at the lower end of the Riva degli Schiavoni.⁷⁵ The area was ideal since it offered intimate glimpses of the local life, glimpses that Whistler represented and popularized in his etchings of Venice. Bacher describes the experience:

We led the average student life, all working enthusiastically in a vast field of new subjects, some of which could be reached only in our own little boats, which also served us well for a frolic in the lagoons when the day's work was over. None of us was burdened with money, and we breakfasted or lunched in any place suited to our purse or near our subjects. As a rule we dined "down-town," as we called any place near St. Mark's, and preferably at the restaurant where we would find Duveneck.⁷⁶

The students almost simultaneously turned to a comparable, if not greater leader, who was to join them on their journey.

Whistler's popularity rivaled Duveneck's, as he gradually wove his way into the group by requesting permission to sketch from the windows of their rooms. Whistler became well acquainted with everyone and spent so much of his time working at the Casa Jankowitz that he eventually decided to move from his quarters, located on the opposite side of the Grand Canal near the Church of the Frari, to the Casa Jankowitz. He chose a

room with beautiful views of the Doge's Palace, San Giorgio Maggiore and the Church of the Salute, which inspired a large portion of the etchings and pastels he created during this time. As if this close proximity were not enough, the students followed Whistler everywhere.

The boys sometimes lunched with Whistler and ate *patate americane* ("American Potatoes" or French fries), muskmelons, watermelons and figs, but dinner was the main event of the day because Whistler normally dined with them. Once again Bacher provides his reader with a captivating account of the members of society encountered by the Boys during their sojourn in Venice:

We dined at some one of the numerous restaurants that were to be found in the neighborhood of the Piazza, afterwards strolling along to the Café Quadri or to the Café Florian, where we enjoyed our coffee in the open air, listening to the music, telling stories, and watching the thousands who came and went. Among the people whom we learned to know by sight were Richard Wagner, George Eliot and her husband, Mr. Cross, Ouida, Robert Browning, Meissonier, Martin Rico, Liszt, and other celebrities.⁷⁷

Aside from this cosmopolitan group of musicians, writers and artists, Whistler introduced Duveneck's Boys to William Graham, an artist who was interested in painting the architecture of Venice under different climatic conditions. But perhaps the most influential acquaintance was that of John Singer Sargent, known for his "exceptional charm" and "wonderful power of description."⁷⁸ Duveneck and Sargent shared the same admiration for the works of Hals and Velásquez. According to Bacher, Whistler considered Sargent "a clever man, but had no method of gauging him as he now stands."⁷⁹ Conceivably, Whistler was not very familiar with Sargent's work and thus

unable to judge his merits, but he may simply have been unwilling to admit Sargent's notable reputation as a burgeoning artist.

A more revealing anecdote about what Whistler really thought of his fellow expatriate is recounted in L.V. Fildes's monograph about his father, Luke Fildes. Fildes, the artist, disliked Whistler, and unlike his brother-in-law Henry Woods, did not take him seriously as an artist. Woods was on friendlier terms with Whistler, with whom he spent time in Venice. On one occasion, Whistler supposedly was not looking forward to Sargent's arrival in the city and was discussing the subject with Woods shortly before they attended a reception in one of the palaces to which the most fashionable and artistic members of society were invited. "Summing up his views on the possible rivalry of the two Americans, Woods remarked: 'Well, one sergeant doesn't make a battalion any more than one whistler makes an orchestra.'" Whistler enjoyed the play on words so much that he asked Woods if he could repeat the phrase about sergeant and the battalion at the reception. Woods happily obliged.⁸⁰

Sargent had studied in Paris in the 1870s at a time when many artists were concerned with discovering new ways of representing the world, and developing new styles of painting that were as much about technique as about subject.⁸¹ He had formally enrolled in the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the official Paris art school, in October 1874, where he drew from casts and from life. He also studied for three years with Emile Carolus Duran, who championed a new form of realism that portrayed objects and people under faithfully recorded conditions of light and atmosphere.⁸²

Prior to his stay in Venice, Sargent had traveled extensively to Brittany, in 1877,

Naples and Capri, in 1878, and to Spain and North Africa, in 1879-1880.⁸³ Venice appears to have been his next venue as he continued to experience first-hand the exoticism of the places he visited and depicted insightful images of the people he encountered on his trips. Florence was among the cities Sargent considered in 1874 when he was deciding on a place to pursue his artistic studies, but the threat of cholera that existed at the time convinced him that Paris was by far the best option.⁸⁴

When Sargent arrived in Venice in 1880, he occupied a studio in the Palazzo Rezzonico, as had Whistler upon his arrival in Venice a year earlier. This palazzo offered Whistler and Sargent a thriving arena to review stylistic strategies practiced by other artists occupying its rooms for

The old Palazzo Rezzonico had been divided into studios and turned into a veritable barracks of artists. Native Italians, students down from Paris, and some of Frank Duveneck's boys in from Germany, all shared an industrious existence in the noisy halls of the fifteenth century palace. Sargent took a room on an upper floor . . . In the fall, when his family returned to Nice, Sargent retained his studio in the Rezzonico, painting some small figure pieces in the halls, trying his hand again at watercolor out of doors, and making notes on wood panels of details of architecture, variations of color in the weather-worn walls of the city, and the same effects of failing light that he had studied in Morocco.⁸⁵

Albeit there were many prominent European artists living and working in Venice in the early 1880s, Whistler was the most influential. Venice was a challenge to a "modern" artist such as Whistler, whose aestheticism coincided with the more deeply felt "realism" of his years in France with Courbet and other avant-garde painters.⁸⁶ Whistler had already confronted the same problem in London, where he sought out working class districts, especially the squalid riverside districts of Wapping and Rotherhithe, but Venice

proved to be a greater challenge than any subject he previously had explored. He wandered down unsavory alleys, glanced at stagnant canals and explored areas of Venice until then ignored by artists. Nevertheless, Whistler transformed remote sections of the city into poetic visions of melancholy and evanescent beauty. His method of working and his ability to capture the elements of Venice remained with Bacher and the rest of the Boys long after Whistler had departed in 1880. Whistler's influence was felt by those who followed in his footsteps and traveled to Venice after 1880, even if they had never encountered him directly, which is a credit to his genius.

Although Elizabeth Pennell never met Whistler in Venice, she knew of him through her husband Joseph Pennell, who had made his acquaintance in London. She astutely observes that:

He [Whistler] seemed to pervade the place, to colour the atmosphere. He had stayed in Venice only about a year. In the early Eighties little had been written of him except in contempt or ridicule. But to the artist he had become essentially a part of Venice, his work as inseparable from its associations, as the Venetian painters like Carpaccio and Tintoretto who had lived and worked there all their lives and about whom a voluminous literature had grown up, culminating in the big and little volumes by Ruskin upon which the public crowding to Venice based their artistic creed.⁸⁷

It is ironic that while most tourists relied on Ruskin's writings to guide them through Venice, that it was Whistler, his arch nemesis, who actually transformed how the characteristic scenes of Venice were interpreted and immortalized.

While discussing Whistler's depictions of Venice, Otto Bacher further relates:

. . . all of Whistler's etchings of Venice were drawn right from the subject, and all the figures in these etchings were drawn from life and out-of-doors,

and often near his house groups of bead stringers and lace makers could be found almost every day in any of the *calles* of Venice. Whistler often worked from these groups of women as they worked daily at their vocation.⁸⁸

Whistler's pictorial interpretations of Venice captured the spirit of the city and its people, who graced his architectural vignettes. Many, if not all, of the artists, who had followed Duveneck to Venice, revered the living legend, and Whistler in return seems to have thrived on their attention. The younger artists catered to his every whim, whether it entailed accompanying him on a swim at the Lido, helping with the display of his pastels on Sunday afternoons or providing inks, paints and paper upon his request.

Whistler and Duveneck also saw a good deal of each other while in Venice, and Whistler, together with the other American artists in Venice, shared an appreciation for Duveneck's etchings.⁸⁹ Heermann acknowledges that the two artists were always friendly, but they were too different for the friendship to go beyond a certain point. Christine Evans suggests that Duveneck may have had a closer relationship with Whistler than originally thought, since Duveneck's personal collection included one of the expatriate's etchings, which may have been given to him by Whistler himself.⁹⁰ In addition, Duveneck borrowed Maud Franklin, Whistler's model and mistress, who was staying with him in Venice, to pose for a large canvas *Girl with a Book* painted during the summer of 1881.⁹¹

Whistler's pastels exerted a great impact on Duveneck's students, as their drawings changed from a dark, thickly-worked style, influenced by the Spanish artist Mariano Fortuny, through the Naturalism of Bastien-Lepage, to Whistler's lighter, more

decorative, topographically accurate approach.⁹² Whistler was very prolific during his fourteen months in Venice, producing fifty etchings and approximately one hundred pastels, a medium that he utilized to convey atmospheric effects and nuances of light and color. Following in his footsteps, Twachtman drew small pastels displaying a Whistlerian delicacy, showing back canals and views from the Casa Jankowitz; Bacher, too, seems to have imitated his scenes, and Whistler's pastel works influenced Robert Blum.

The Venetian sojourns of other American artists overlapped with Whistler's stay in the city. In May of 1880 Blum arrived in Venice, and stayed for about two and a half months. At first he was living at the Hotel La Luna, on the main island, but eventually he took a room at the ever-popular Casa Jankowitz. The location of this building is significant since the Casa Jankowitz was near the San Biagio area, where women workers were constantly within sight. As Otto Bacher noted, San Biagio was "one of the many *calles* where lace-makers and bead stringers could always be found at their work," and where most of the artists kept their boats moored.⁹³

It was at this time that Blum reestablished his association with Duveneck, his former teacher of 1874 and 1875 at the Ohio Mechanics Institute,⁹⁴ and when Blum became friendly with members of Duveneck's large class of American students, including Otto Bacher. Whistler was still in Venice, also at the Casa Jankowitz. Therefore, Blum was aware of the works Duveneck and his students were producing, as well as those by Whistler. Blum may also have been familiar with John Singer Sargent's paintings from this early period since Sargent was residing in Venice at this time. Sargent was a well-

known figure who was gradually rising to fame, and if Blum had not met him during these summer months, within two years he would visit his studio in Paris.⁹⁵

Unlike Whistler and Sargent, Blum established his reputation by portraying ideal Venetian genre themes that concentrated on the people of Venice and were filled with beautiful young women. Blum approached his subjects in a realist manner highlighted with small hints of the impressionist brushstroke and non-traditional perspective of objects and figures caught in the spur of the moment. Thus his paintings offered appealing genre images of women working both indoors and outdoors at the popular Venetian arts and crafts, using the most up-to-date techniques.

Blum's relationship with Whistler seems to speak for everyone's experience. Blum wrote home to his parents on June 27, 1880: "Whistler is here, and I know him well, and he is very busy making an etching from my window and he seems very much interested in me and though I am sometimes dissatisfied with my work, he always encourages me. He is a nice man."⁹⁶

Originally, Bacher also had etched his views from the window of the Casa Jankowitz, but eventually started to use Whistler's approach of drawing the subject in a series of sittings and then biting the plate indoors. Bacher credits Whistler with teaching him how to etch a deep, dark doorway with a figure somewhere in that darkness, which is contrasted against something near the opening that is even darker.⁹⁷ A perfect example of this method is seen in Whistler's *Beggars* (Figure 1.7), and is also utilized in Bacher's etchings of *Retaie (The Net Maker, Chioggia)* (Figure 1.8) and *Lavandie (Washer Woman)* (Figure 1.9), where other activities are captured in the distance.

Whistler's strong influence cannot be overemphasized for many of the American artists in Venice, both during his stay and after his departure, were affected by his subdued tones and decision to depict many of his favorite subjects in his painterly style. Two other major influences on the American artists included Dutchman Frans Hals and the Spaniard, Diego Velásquez, both of whose works easily could be studied during excursions to Holland and Spain. In Whistler's case, students had a living source, who taught by example and expressed his opinions regarding art quite freely.

The effect of placing a scene within in a scene is borrowed from Velásquez, in particular from his painting *The Tapestry Weavers* of 1657 in the Prado Museum. Although this painting depicts an interior setting, Velásquez still implemented the spatial effect of a deep recession leading to another intricate composition. His Dutch contemporaries, such as Pieter de Hooch (1629-1684), also utilized this device. Whistler was an admirer of both artists and was familiar with their works.⁹⁸ Yet, even if none of the artists working in Venice had knowledge of these techniques as used by Velásquez and de Hooch, the city's *sottoportici* (arcades) lend themselves to such depictions. One's eye travels through Venice's dark passageways and is often led to an elaborate vignette in the far distance. The arched or rectangular structures of the Venetian *sottoportici* further create the impression of peeping through a keyhole and watching others caught unaware of the viewer's presence.

As to the actual process of creating the Venetian etchings, most of the artists in Duveneck's circle owed a great deal to Bacher and his expertise in that area. Bacher had been etching since 1876 in Munich, where he developed a larger than normal portable

hand press from a description in Hamerton's first edition of "Etching and Etchers."⁹⁹ It was on this press that many plates by the Boys and Whistler himself were printed by Bacher. Duveneck, Whistler and Bacher worked together and often depicted the same scenes, used the same press, and even the same inks and paper.

It is no wonder that Duveneck's etchings were mistaken for the work of Whistler when three of Duveneck's *Riva* etchings were submitted by Lady Colin Campbell, an acquaintance of Duveneck's, at the Society of Painter-Etchers exhibition at the Hanover Gallery in London. Unbeknownst to Duveneck, these works were exhibited and because his name was not recognized at the time, Sir Seymour Hayden, Whistler's brother-in-law, and Alphonse Legros suspected that Whistler was working under a pseudonym in order to circumvent the terms of his contract with the London Fine Arts Society, which stipulated that Whistler's etchings must only be shown and sold by them.¹⁰⁰ Eventually the misunderstanding was clarified, but not before provoking the ire of Whistler.

According to Henry Rosenberg, one of Duveneck's Boys, Bacher's work became more solid both in tone and in its use of planes after he had met Whistler. Rosenberg also reported that Bacher began to use larger plates and to create more elaborate compositions on his printing press that

. . . not only aided Mr. Whistler but many of us who were introduced to the needle by him thru [sic] sheer kindness and enthusiasm for the art. Some of us had read Hammerton's book and consequently had become discouraged by his long process. Mr. Bacher laughed at us, coated several plates in a few minutes, told us to go out and make a drawing on them with a needle stuck in a stick of wood, showed us how to bite them with his mordant, and pulled proofs for us – all in a day. This was a revelation and several made mighty good plates. . . . His painting in the school was not brilliant. He seemed not to have much sympathy with the material tho [sic]

he was industrious. In our summers in Venice he dropped color almost entirely for the needle, where his heart really was.¹⁰¹

Bacher joined Duveneck, Theodore Wendel and a few others in submitting etchings from their Venetian sojourns to the Fourth Annual Exhibition of the Society of American Artists in New York in 1881. In the early summer of 1881, Bacher returned to Venice for a year and a half and also visited Rome, Naples, Sicily and perhaps Florence, and in the winter or early spring of 1882, printed an edition of twenty-one books of his etchings under the title *Etchings of Venice* that sold for 300 francs in Europe and \$65 per copy in America.¹⁰² These etchings, which will be discussed in the following chapters, are important reflections of Whistler's works.

Some examples of Whistler's Venetian etchings that portray vignettes with lace makers and bead stringers include, *The Mast* (Figure 1.10) of 1880 and *Bead Stringers* (Figure 1.11) of 1879-1880, and a pastel *Bead Stringers, Venice* (Figure 1.12) also created around the same time. In the left foreground of *The Mast*, a small group of lace makers is visible, along with other groups and passers-by. The woman in the left foreground is making bobbin lace, distinguishable by the large lace-making pillow and the bobbins hanging off the front edge of it. The area drawn is part of the wide Calle Larga dello Stendardo, facing west.¹⁰³

In both *Bead Stringers* and *Bead Stringers, Venice* Whistler emphasizes the essential gestures of bead stringing and omits the details of the craft at hand. The women are shown either working in front of a doorway, or in one of the narrow *calles*. In the pastel the bright-color accents help distinguish the pouch in the lap of the seated figure on

the left as an object of the trade, and the lifted and extended position of the woman's arms identifies this figure as a bead stringer. The workers in the pastel example are peripheral and serve a decorative purpose offering scattered bits of color.

While in Venice, Whistler corresponded with his mother and in one undated letter from this period, possibly written in April 1880, he described to her the beauty of Venice even during inclement weather:

At last the ice and snow have left us—and now the rain is pouring down upon us . . . perhaps tomorrow may be fine—And then Venice will be simply gorgeous, as now and then I have seen it—After the wet, the colors upon the walls and their reflections in the canals are more gorgeous than ever—and with sun shining upon the polished marble mingled with rich toned bricks and plaster, this amazing city of palaces becomes really a fairy land—created one would think especially for the painter. The people with their gay gowns and handkerchiefs—and the many tinted buildings for them to lounge against or pose before, seem to exist especially for one's pictures—and to have no other reason for being!¹⁰⁴

Apparently, he was not concerned with Venetian culture or social conditions of the inhabitants he depicted. They were anonymous, but brilliant bystanders.

Although Whistler was a temporary visitor in Venice, he still managed to befriend several foreign artists. As discussed earlier, Duveneck's "Boys" followed Whistler about wherever he went, much to the dismay of the older teacher-artists;¹⁰⁵ but he was also well-known by many of the European artists. As the Pennells describe:

There was a large colony of foreign artists and art lovers and a club, English in name, really cosmopolitan in Venice, where Whistler met Rico, Wolkoff, van Haanen, Tito, Blaas, if he had not already met them on the piazza. Alexander Rolshoven and Bacher were with Duveneck. Harper Pennington came in the autumn, and Scott, Ross, Turner, Blum, Woods . . . were among the other men he knew.¹⁰⁶

The best chronicler of Whistler's experience in Venice is Otto Bacher, followed by Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell, who published a biography on the artist in 1908. Together, their writings offer an in-depth look at the expatriate and his relationships with the other American artists in Venice during the same period. Bacher conveyed the story of the Russian artist, Alexander Roussoff (1853-1927) – then known as Alexander Wolkoff – who questioned Whistler's skill with pastels, in an article as well as in his book on Whistler. In this case, Roussoff challenged Whistler's skill and dared to state that he could easily replicate the American artist's pastels. Unknown to Whistler, the Boys arranged for the Russian artist to use Whistler's own pastels. The six jurors selected included Bacher, Duveneck, the Spanish artist Martin Rico y Ortega, the English artist Henry Woods, and "two strangers" – an Austrian and Dutchman.¹⁰⁷ These last two figures may have been the Austrian painter Ludwig Passini and the Dutch artist Cecil Van Haanen. To almost everyone's pleasure, Roussoff failed to deceive the jury that had been formed to distinguish the works presented and supposedly had to endure mud baths for one week as his penalty.

Very little is known about Roussoff's affiliation with the American artists in Venice. The Fine Arts Society in England thought so highly of his pastels that for years they held one-man exhibitions of Roussoff's views of Venice, Rome and other romantic subjects.¹⁰⁸ And although he published an autobiography in 1923, there is hardly any specific reference to his acquaintance with other American and European artists working in Venice, with the exception of John Singer Sargent, Ludwig Passini, and Alessandro Zezzos (1848-1914). More importantly, Roussoff does not refer to Whistler or the

authorship challenge that had occurred. It is known however, that Roussoff spent more time in Venice than Whistler, and created numerous Venetian works, including *Faint-Hearted* (Figure 1.13) (unlocated) and *Child's Funeral in Chioggia* (Figure 1.14) (Sydney Museum of Art). They are two distinctive works for the first depicts a courtship scene between a water carrier and a gondolier; and the second, as the title reveals, depicts a somber funerary ceremony within an expansive church interior. Both of these subjects represent themes that the American artists avoided. Courtships scenes were probably considered too frivolous and the child's funeral too melancholy to present to the American public.

Roussoff, nobleman whose full name was Alexander N. Mouromtsoff Wolkoff, decided to give himself a pseudonym as there was already an artist called Wolkoff and he did not want to be known as an amateur painter.¹⁰⁹ Following this short period of training, he decided to live in Venice and resided in an apartment in the Palazzo Contarini on the Grand Canal, which he was able to purchase late in 1882 due to the success he had achieved in selling his watercolors. Roussoff and his wife became acquainted with many of the affluent members of foreign society that visited and stayed in Venice throughout the year. He regularly visited the Malipiero Palace, home of Princess Hatzfeldt of Germany, and met musicians, such as Liszt and Wagner, and popular artists, including Passini, Zezzos, Ruben and Puteani.

In 1886 Roussoff was also acclaimed by viewers of the Royal Academy exhibition as having created the best watercolor, as noted in a vote tallied by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, an honor that the Russian artist recognized as he praised England for "the

lack of all national bias in the appreciation of works of art.”¹¹⁰ The painting exhibited that year was entitled “*Angiolotto, Popular Name for a Child’s Funeral*.” It appears to be the work now known as *Child’s Funeral in Chioggia* mentioned above.

Aside from his encounter with Whistler, Roussoff apparently did not leave as lasting an impression on the American artists in Venice as one might have imagined. Roussoff’s works upheld the tradition of Venetian genre and were well-exhibited in England in the late 1870s and 1880s, but they are not mentioned by the American artists in any existing documentation. The fact that his pictures were not written about by the other artists, however does not necessarily mean Roussoff’s work was unknown by his contemporaries. This lack of recognition may be due to the rivalry experienced with Whistler, who was extremely instrumental in establishing precedents with his artwork that the other artists could follow and expand upon.

It is not clear how familiar Whistler or any of the American artists were with the paintings of the new Venetian school of artists, but in one case, Whistler did express his opinion to Bacher regarding one of the foremost Venetian genre painters, Ettore Tito.

Bacher recounts:

While we were in Venice a beautiful painting representing a minor piazza was exhibited in the window of the most prominent book-shop in the city. As Whistler and I were walking past, I called his attention to it and told him about the well-known Venetian artist, Tito, who painted it. He stopped, looked at the picture very minutely and objected to every figure, and the rendering of the details of the beautiful buildings. There was not a thing that met with his approval.¹¹¹

The painting in question was Tito’s market scene of *Campo Santa Margherita*, displayed

in the shop of Ferdinando Ongania in September 1880.¹¹²

Alastair Grieve's recent publication on Whistler's Venice identifies the sites from which the artist drew or painted in order to determine both the order in which Whistler created his works in Venice and which places he selected and omitted. Grieve was able to determine whether Whistler's views were true to the original locations or edited to suit his preferences. Most notably, he established that Whistler did not pursue a specific agenda in depicting his scenes, did not reverse his etched views, and did not create drawings in any of the Venetian churches that were ever so popular with tourists.¹¹³ Thus, he searched and captured images of Venice that interested him most, almost at whim, but remained true to the city's surroundings.

Whistler eventually left Venice for London in mid-November 1880. His first Venice set, a series of twelve etchings, was shown at the Fine Arts Society Gallery in December 1880 and published that same year; while a second series of twenty-six etchings – of which twenty-one were Venetian subjects – was also exhibited and published in 1886.¹¹⁴ Whistler never returned to Venice. If many American genre artists did not come to know Whistler personally, most were familiar with his famous Venetian etchings. There is little doubt that Whistler's works continued to influence other American artists, who were soon to follow in his footsteps and sojourn in Venice.

As for other artists, Blum was constantly traveling and he was not able to complete all of his works where he started them. His pastels and etchings of Venice were drawn from life, but the oils were painted in his studio and based on drawings and etchings.¹¹⁵ At the end of June 1881, he was again in Italy and residing at the Casa

Jankowitz. By October of the same year he had returned to the United States, where he apparently relied heavily on pencil drawings with extensive notes on the colors of the subjects, as well as photographs and his memory to complete his final paintings in oil.¹¹⁶

Duveneck returned to America sometime in the fall of 1881, but was discouraged by the lack of patrons in Cincinnati and by early November 1881 had settled in Venice once again.¹¹⁷ Throughout the 1880s he would reside in the city and continue to create some of his best genre works, while adopting a lighter palette more suited to the vibrant colors found on the lagoons. Duveneck's second phase of Venetian genre works, dating from 1883 to 1885 and displaying a turn towards draftsmanship and a brighter color scheme, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

While Duveneck and his "Boys" came and went, other artists proceeded to visit Venice in the early 1880s as part of the Grand Tour of Europe, but their artwork remained unaffected by the experience. For instance, Childe Hassam recalls his brief trip to Venice in 1883, but mentions that the works he encountered there did not influence his work. In an interview of January 31, 1927, he comments that he went to Venice to work and that he, together with Edmond H. Garrett, an illustrator, "saw the galleries and went to all of the galleries except some of the lesser —, well of course, there are no lesser ones, but they are out of the way, but some of those have some of the best master pieces that we might have seen. We were interested to see and look around."¹¹⁸

In Hassam's case, he was also interested in seeing for himself Venice's Grand Canal, which had been a favorite subject of Turner. Most of Hassam's renditions of that famous cityscape reflect the influence of Turner's glorious works in the British Museum,

which he viewed while in London. During this trip, Hassam produced a number of finished and in-progress watercolors, from which he selected sixty-seven sheets for an exhibition at the Gallery of Williams and Everett, which opened in Boston late in 1883.¹¹⁹ The titles for Hassam's lost paintings can be traced to his one-man show at Noyes, Cobb and Co., held in Boston, March 9-10, 1887, and the accompanying catalogue pamphlet that lists the works exhibited.¹²⁰ In 1892, several of his early watercolors were reproduced in color as illustrations in William Dean Howells's *Venetian Life*.¹²¹ Those works will be discussed with related topics in the following chapters as well.

Reflecting on his excursion to Venice in "Talk on the Old Masters," held at the New York School of Art, on November 17, 1906, William Merritt Chase best summarized what many artists traveling to Venice must have considered true. Chase related:

. . . I may mention something about Venice, and just what happened there when the masters followed their studies. A student could not help be a fair artist with those surroundings. There is not a moment when one is not influenced by the very best that could be obtained, and one cannot help to marvel that there are not more masters, considering that from the very beginning there were thousands upon thousands trying in the same direction. There are a few, of course, who by their work have attained to a certain amount of popularity, especially men of our time. I have in mind such a man as John Singer Sargent. . . . I think he had done enough to make him last To mention another man, I am thinking that such a man as Whistler, who did not produce many pictures, but think he has done enough.¹²²

Interestingly, Chase did not mention the Renaissance masters in his discussion, but rather praises two of his contemporaries, who happen to have created some of the best-known and provocative Venetian scenes.

Notes

¹ H. Barbara Weinberg, "When To-day We Look for 'American Art' We Find It Mainly in Paris," in *America: The New World in 19th-Century Painting*, (Munich, London and New York: Prestel, 1999), p. 222. In this essay, Weinberg discusses the types of works that appealed to art collectors in New York, Philadelphia and other cities. Patrons preferred French academic paintings, especially if they depicted accessible subjects, were technically impressive, and appeared to be good investments. American artists studied in Europe and followed in their teachers' footsteps or domesticated their lessons in order to sell their paintings.

² Richard Dorment and Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler*, (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1994), p. 179.

³ Erica Hirschler, "Gondola Days: American Painters in Venice," essay in Theodore Stebbins, *Lure of Italy*, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1992), pp. 114-116.

⁴ For a good overview of the period see Alan Trachtenberg. *The Incorporation of America. Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 115.

⁵ Trachtenberg, p. 114. Trachtenberg explains that European cities had largely retained ties to the past by preserving medieval structures that symbolized a more coherent and unified social order. In the nineteenth century one witnessed the inception of great public museums and concert halls, the widening of streets into grand boulevards (Paris), the planning of public gardens and parks, p. 115.

⁶ Samuel Isham, *History of American Painting*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1905), p. 360.

⁷ Isham, p. 375.

⁸ Margaret Plant, *Venice: Fragile City, 1797-1997*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 168. Plant provides a thorough study on the history of Venice and its cultural nuances over the last two centuries. Mayor Giobatta Giustinian established a commission for a "Study of a Plan of Reform for the Streets and Canals of the City of Venice," and a proposal was drawn up by Piero Bianco. The discussion on the development of Venice is taken from this source, unless otherwise noted.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 171.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 209.

¹¹ Norma Broude, *The Macchiaioli: Italian Painters of the Nineteenth Century*, (New

Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987): p. 5., and Nancy Gray Troyer, The Grove Dictionary of Art Online, ed. L. Macy (accessed April 24, 2003). Another source for information about the *Macchiaioli* is Silvestra Bietoletti, *I Macchiaioli: la storia, gli artisti, le opere*, (Florence: Giunti, 2001). The *macchia* technique is characterized by a strong and clear chiaroscuro effect that structures the composition spatially, both in depth and on the surface plane. The all'aperto (outdoor) sketches of the *Macchiaioli* were often done without the plan of a specific studio piece in mind. Rather, these spontaneous sketches recorded visual data that could be referred to by the artist whenever required. The *Macchiaioli* are associated with the French Impressionists, who shared an interest in the effects of light and color. The main difference between the two groups is that the former applied light and color to create form and pictorial space, whereas the latter was not concerned with conveying form or depth. Also, the Impressionists used the scientific colors of Isaac Newton, while the *Macchiaioli* palette remained more traditionally Romantic.

¹² Albert Boime, *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.10.

¹³ "Italian Life and Morals—Effects of Romanism on Society," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 10, no. 57 (February 1855), p. 320, 329.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.331.

¹⁵ Douglas R. Holmes, *Cultural Disenchantments. Worker Peasants in Northeast Italy*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 114-115.

¹⁶ Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *Venice Triumphant: The Horizon of a Myth*, trans. Lydia C. Cochrane, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p.163.

¹⁷ David I. Kertzer, "Religion and Society, 1789-1892," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John A. Davis, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 200-201.

¹⁸ Boime, pp. 235-236. The presence of ghettos in Italy was considered as a contradiction of the Catholic Church's teachings of love and humanity and became a prime target for Risorgimento polemics. The Jewish communities of Venice, Rome, Milan and Livorno pledged their money and their bodies to fight in the revolutionary regimes in 1848.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 237-238.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 242. Another painting of 1861-1862 that alluded to the isolated Veneto is Domenico Induno's *Povera Venezia* (Poor Venice). In 1882, Signorini depicted *The Florence Ghetto*, also a symbolic painting that in this case alludes to the decision to

demolish the Florence Ghetto, which lay between the Mercato Vecchio (Old Market) and Via Tornabuoni. By the 1880s the Ghetto had become a place for poor senior citizens and criminals of all ethnic backgrounds to live.

²¹ “Cholera in Italy,” *The Spectator* 57 (September 6, 1884), p. 1164. The spectacle caused by the cholera outbreak in Italy was compared to the Middle Ages, when the only method of dealing with the pestilence was to quarantine the peasants and kill any who failed to obey. Several cases of suicide were reported as a means of escaping the plague; peasantry stoned trains arriving from supposedly infected areas and ships were fired upon as they passed the coast. Neapolitans were noted as resorting to heathen practices forbidden by the Church and when those fetishes failed, their troubles were attributed to malign influences such as witches, wicked doctors, and mysterious poisoners of air and water.

²² “Cholera and Politics,” *The New York Times* (August 29, 1884), p. 4. The cholera epidemic claimed at least 55,000 people between 1884 and 1887, and eventually the cause was linked to slum conditions.

²³ S. G. Young, “Venice,” *The Galaxy* 24, no. 3 (September 1877), p. 345.

²⁴ “Cholera and Politics,” *The New York Times* (August 29, 1884), p. 4.

²⁵ Christopher Duggan, “Politics in the Era of Depretis and Crispi, 1870-1896,” in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, Short Oxford History of Italy, ed. John A. Davis (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 156.

²⁶ Donald Kagan, Steven Ozment and Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage Since 1648*, Vol. 11 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc, 1983), pp. 850-851.

²⁷ Adrian Lyttelton, “Politics and Society 1870-1915” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Italy*, George Holmes ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 251. Information regarding the political role of the Catholic Church in Italy is taken from this source unless noted otherwise.

²⁸ David I. Kertzer, “Religion and Society, 1789-1892,” in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, Short Oxford History of Italy, ed. John A. Davis, ed., (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 183.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 199.

³⁰ Plant, p. 10. The Venetian Republic was established in 421 and eliminated in 1797 by Napoleon’s army. Plant provides a detailed discussion of Venice’s many artistic, literary

and musical accolades during the years of the Republic and afterwards, which are summarized in this chapter.

³¹ Plant, pp. 131, 133. Plant explains that Ruskin did everything within his power to dissuade Venice away from innovation and was among the earliest critics of the effects of industrialization on Venice. Ruskin preferred the picturesque, and was opposed to the replacement of ancient materials by modern substitutes in order to “restore.”

³² Hirschler, p. 121.

³³ Henry James, “Venice,” *Century Magazine* 25, no. 1 (November 1882), p. 4.

³⁴ *The Nation* 35, no. 910 (December 1882), p. 484.

³⁵ For an in-depth study of artists who visited and stayed in Brittany, as well as the artist colonies established in the nineteenth century, see Michael Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America*, (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1985).

³⁶ William Dean Howells, *Venetian Life*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1886 edition), p.22.

³⁷ Roberta J. M. Olson, *Ottocento. Romanticism and Revolution in 19th-Century Italian Painting*, (New York: The American Federation of Arts and Centro Di della Edifimi srl, 1992), p.23.

³⁸ Elena Bassi, “Alessandro Milesi, uomo e artista,” in *Alessandro Milesi, pittore*, Clauco Benito Tiozzo, ed., (Venice: Edizioni Helvetia, 1989), p. 12. Among the students enrolled simultaneously at the Academy in Venice were Milesi, Nono, Tito and Favretto. Gugliermo Ciardi had recently completed his studies but his ties with Milesi were reinforced by the marriage of Milesi’s sister to Ciardi in 1886. Nono and Milesi were neighbors on the Zattere for decades and were not considered rivals, possibly because they focused on different genre themes.

³⁹ “William Merritt Chase Papers,” Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Reel N/69-137, Frame 470.

⁴⁰ Josephine W. Duvenceck, *Frank Duvenceck, Painter-Teacher*, (San Francisco: John Howell Books, 1970), p. 38. The Leibl Circle consisted of Carl Schuch, Johan Sperl and Wilhelm Trübner and Leibl himself, all of whom shared an interest in art for art’s sake and believed that a painting’s formal qualities were more important than the subject matter. For more information on the influence of Munich Realism on the American artists see *Munich & American Realism in the 19th Century* (Sacramento: E. B. Crocker Art Gallery, 1978) with essays by Michael Quick and Eberhard Ruhmer.

⁴¹ Bryant, Keith L., Jr., *William Merritt Chase: A Genteel Bohemian*, (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1991), p. 24. Students at the Academy began their training by enrolling in drawing classes, followed by elementary painting and a master class. Painting technique classes were followed by courses in composition and the nude.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 25, 27.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Bryant, pp. 32-33. Peters, p. 25. To honor the American centennial (July 1876), the American Artists' Club of Munich organized a "pretentious ball," held at Munich's Hotel Detzer.

⁴⁶ Richard Boyle, Intro, *A Retrospective Exhibition: Robert F. Blum (1857-1903)*. (Cincinnati, Ohio: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1966), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁷ Lisa Peters, *John Henry Twachtman, An American Impressionist*, Atlanta: High Museum of Art, June 6, 1999 –May 21, 2000, exh. cat., pp. 20, 21. Duveneck organized a free class for young local artists at the Ohio Mechanics Institute from the fall of 1874 until the late spring of 1875 that contained sixteen students, including Twachtman, Robert Blum and Joseph DeCamp, two other artists who would also travel to Venice and work with Duveneck. Duveneck allowed his Cincinnati class to draw sitters from the streets of the city, as opposed to having the students copy antique casts or depict posed models, and he encouraged them to focus on the character of his subject rather than on rendering an exact physical representation.

⁴⁸ Bryant, p. 44.

⁴⁹ Katherine Metcalf Roof, *The Life and Art of William Merritt Chase*, (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1917, 1975 edition), p. 45; John Pemble, *Venice Rediscovered*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 43.

⁵⁰ Josephine W. Duveneck, *Frank Duveneck, Painter-Teacher*, (San Francisco, California: John Howell Books, 1970), p.90.

⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 67-68. Duveneck was paid one hundred and fifty dollars for this commissioned portrait and used the money to purchase food for his fellow roommates. According to Josephine Duveneck, Cornell University does not have a record pertaining to the present location of this picture.

⁵² Bryant, p. 44. Chase's pictures reflect his Munich training and tend to display dark colors and bold brushwork. The darkness of his interiors was relieved only by strongly-colored draperies or other furnishings. Chase also must have been familiar with the work of the Austrian Eugene De Blaas and the Dutch artist Cecil Van Haanen, both well-known European artists of the period recognized for their popular genre images. Upon the sale of Chase's possessions in 1917 at the American Art Galleries in New York, Van Haanen's painting *Resting* was among the works that were listed as number five in the sales catalogue, measuring 6-1/4 x 8-1/4 inches and signed at the lower left: "To Mr. Chase, C. Van Haanen."

⁵³ L.V. Fildes, *Luke Fildes, R.A. – A Victorian Painter*, (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd, 1968), p. 51.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 53.

⁵⁵ Marianne B. G. Van Rensselaer, "William Merritt Chase," *American Art Review* 2, First Division, (1881), p. 137.

⁵⁶ Roof, p. 41.

⁵⁷ Bryant, p. 45.

⁵⁸ *Interior of St. Mark's* was exhibited at the Society of American Artists in 1879, together with Chase's *Portrait of Frank Duveneck*, and will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis that deals with religious genre images.

⁵⁹ A more complete list of Italian/Venetian subjects painted by William Merritt Chase is provided in the exhibition catalogue "Chase Centennial Exhibition" held at the John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, Indiana from November 1 through December 11, 1949. The catalogue's "Checklist of Known Works" includes *An Italian Girl* (oil on canvas, formerly LeRoy Ireland, New York, NY); *Venetian Lace Maker* (oil on canvas, owner unknown); *A Memory in the Italian Villa* (oil on canvas, formerly W. J. Polk, St. Louis, M O); *Old Room, Venice* (oil on canvas, formerly Virginia Gerson, New York, NY); *The Black Gondola, Venice* (oil on canvas, Formerly Newhouse Galleries, New York, NY); *Gondolas* (owner unknown); *Gray Day on the Lagoons* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); *In Venice* (oil on canvas, Museum of Art, Providence, Rhode Island); *Piazzetta, Venice* (oil on canvas, Mrs. Joseph A. Locke, Newton Center, MA); *On the Balcony, Souvenir of Italy* (oil on panel, formerly LeRoy Ireland, New York, NY), *Italian Cloister* (oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock, Arkansas); *The Uffizi* (oil on panel, formerly Virginia Gerson, New York, NY); and *Rigoletto* (oil on canvas, formerly Julius H. Weitzner, New York, NY).

⁶⁰ Barbara Gallati, *William Merritt Chase*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1995), p. 22. Gallati notes that while one would expect Chase's art to reveal

startling visual evidence of his response to Venice's magnificent views and dazzling effects of light, Chase continued to paint in the studio or focused on street scenes that were executed in a surprisingly subdued range of colors. More important for Chase was the renewed interest in still life and the introduction of the fish motif.

⁶¹ Peters, *John Twachtman*, p. 28.

⁶² Edna Maria Clark, *Ohio Art and Artists*, (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Publishers, 1932), pp. 87-88. For more information on the Duveneck "Boys," see Elizabeth Wylie, *Explorations in Realism: 1870-1880. Frank Duveneck and His Circle From Bavaria to Venice*, exh. cat., Massachusetts, Danforth Museum of Art, April 21 through July 2, 1989. Duveneck and the "Boys" shared a special friendship and often enjoyed outings together. While in Polling, the American artists painted the peasants of the village and turned an abandoned monastery into their studio.

⁶³ Laurene Buckley, *Joseph DeCamp—Master Painter of the Boston School*, (New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1995), p. 14.

⁶⁴ Charles E. Mills to his father, December 15, 1879, Frank Duveneck Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., quoted in Laurene Buckley, *Joseph DeCamp—Master Painter of the Boston School*, (New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1995), p. 15.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Norbert Heermann, *Frank Duveneck*, pp. 49-50. The lecture was given by Grover at the Woodlawn Women's Club in Cincinnati, Ohio on January 18, 1918.

⁶⁶ Buckley, p. 10.

⁶⁷ Richard Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1907): p. 492. According to Muther, Rolshoven exhibited these types of pictures from Venice. Venetian genre paintings by Rolshoven have not been located.

⁶⁸ Christine T. Evans, "Frank Duveneck: The Italian Years," Masters thesis, College of Design, Architecture and Art, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1981, p. 8.

⁶⁹ Heermann, p. 53.

⁷⁰ Emily Poole, "The Etchings of Frank Duveneck," *Print Collector's Quarterly* 25 (October 1938), p. 313. Norbert Heermann relates a story regarding Duveneck and DeCamp's search for the beautiful handmade printing paper that Bacher used in his monograph on Frank Duveneck, p. 62. Bacher had revealed his source and the two artists ventured to the market to purchase the paper, used by a couple of women to wrap butter. Whistler eventually discovered where to find the paper and obtained as much as he could.

⁷¹ *Frank Duveneck*, Cincinnati Art Museum Exhibition, 1936, pp. 12-13.

⁷² Stories relating to Whistler's stay in Venice and his relationships with numerous individuals during this time abound and are retold in several contemporary works. The most important writings are Otto Bacher's *With Whistler in Venice* (New York: The Century Company, 1908), excerpts of which were published in *Century Magazine* 73 (December 1906), pp. 207-218 and *Century Magazine* 74 (May 1907), pp. 100-111; E.R. Pennell and J. Pennell's *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1908), pp. 261-288; Elizabeth Pennell's *Nights* (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1916); and Harper Pennington's article "Life in Venice," *Century Magazine*.

⁷³ Bruce Weber, "Robert Frederick Blum (1857-1903) and His Milieu," Ph.D. Dissertation, (City University of New York, 1985), p. 105. Alastair Grieve provides Casa Jankowitz's new name as the Pensione Bucintoro, No. 2135 Castello in his book on *Whistler's Venice* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 106. However, the correct number is 2140, which is not the Pensione Bucintoro. The Pensione is adjacent to No. 2140, but its windows do not face the Doge's Palace, one of its main attributes.

⁷⁴ Donna Seldin, *Americans in Venice 1879-1913*, exh. cat. (New York: Coe Kerr Gallery, Inc., 1983), p. 16.

⁷⁵ Regina Soria, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century American Artists in Italy, 1760-1914*, (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1982), p. 323.

⁷⁶ Otto Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice*, (New York: The Century Company, 1908), p. 11. Bacher tells of many happy moments in the Casa Jankowitz that were highlighted by Whistler's presence and the close proximity to the hub of Venice, where they could view picturesque groups, including the fishermen coloring the sails of their boats.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 1908, pp. 24-25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 1908, p. 26. Bacher comments about Sargent's social skills for he visited many of the Americans who were living in Venice and exhibited great charm. Whistler thought he was a "clever man," but difficult to discuss based on the work he had done thus far.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁸⁰ L. F. Fildes, *Luke Fildes, R.A., A Victorian Painter*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1968), pp. 66-67. "Norbert Heermann Papers" at the Archives of American Art, Reel number 1151 include quotations from "Boys in Venice" that mention "Whistler would look very handsome when he was all dolled up in his dress clothes ready to go to a big reception like those at Clara Montalba's Salon. She was the artistic social leader of those Venetian

days.” It may have been before such a reception that Woods and Whistler had this discussion regarding Sargent. Duveneck was also invited to these receptions and attended reluctantly, while “Sargent would go there, his was an artists’ reputation at that time.”

⁸¹ Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond, ed., *John Singer Sargent*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 23.

⁸² Kilmurray and Ormond, p. 24. Barbara H. Weinberg discusses Sargent’s training in Paris in *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth Century American Painters and their French Teachers*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991) and in an essay entitled “Sargent and Carolus-Duran” for the exhibition catalogue *Uncanny Spectacle: The Public Career of the Young John Singer Sargent*, (Williamstown, Massachusetts, The Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, 1997).

⁸³ Kilmurray and Ormond, *John Singer Sargent*, p. 61.

⁸⁴ Ormond, Conforti, et al, *Uncanny Spectacle*, p. 6.

⁸⁵ Mount, *John Singer Sargent*, (1955), pp. 67-68.

⁸⁶ Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Venetian Hours of Henry James, Whistler and Sargent*, (Boston, Toronto and London: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), pp. 38-39. Discussion of the challenge that Venice posed to Whistler’s “modern” artistic manner is taken from this source. The authors mention that even Baudelaire had noticed and approved of his Thames Etchings as an instance of a “modern” artist’s interpretation of the city. They also mention Whistler’s affiliation with the Californian artist William Graham, a topographical painter and vice-consul, who was in Venice during Whistler’s first winter in the city.

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Pennell, *Nights. Rome, Venice in the Aesthetic Eighties, London, Paris in the Fighting Nineties*, (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1916), p. 94.

⁸⁸ Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice*, (1908), pp. 98-99.

⁸⁹ Poole, p. 323, and Heermann, p. 61.

⁹⁰ Evans, p. 55.

⁹¹ Weintraub, p. 250 and Evans, p. 55.

⁹² Margaret McDonald, *Palaces in the Night: Whistler in Venice*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), p. 29. MacDonald continues to point out

some of Whistler's American followers, as noted in the text of the thesis.

⁹³ Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice*, p. 185.

⁹⁴ Bruce Weber, *The Golden Age: The Cincinnati Painters of the Nineteenth Century*. Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1979), p. 37.

⁹⁵ Weber, "Robert Frederick Blum (1857-1903) and His Milieu," p. 108.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 107.

⁹⁷ Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice*, (1908), pp. 101-102.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 71-72.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Wylie, *Explorations in Realism: 1870-1880. Frank Duveneck and His Circle from Bavaria to Venice*, exh. cat. Danforth Museum of Art, (April 21 – July 2, 1989), p. 13. Josephine Duveneck elaborates on this incident of mistaken authorship in her monograph on Duveneck, p. 91. She mentions that Whistler was under contract with the London Fine Arts Society, which stipulated that he should receive a stipend of one thousand guineas to make twelve etchings. Haden, Legros and Dr. Hamilton, a physician interested in art, took one of the Duveneck etchings to the Arts Society in order to compare it with the Whistler plates being held there. After careful examination, it was determined that Whistler was not the creator of the etchings in question. Afterwards, Haden contacted Duveneck in Venice and offered to purchase all three of the prints exhibited in the Hanover Gallery.

¹⁰¹ "Margery Ryerson Papers," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York Branch, Reel 962, Frame 2-3. Rosenberg's remarks are found in a letter dated August 17, 1920, to Margery Austen Ryerson, who was researching the distribution of Bacher's etchings. Rosenberg mentioned that a close friend of Bacher's, C. M. Fairbanks, formerly the night editor of the *New York Sun*, had very good proofs of the Venetian plates.

¹⁰² R. H. Love Gallery, *Otto H. Bacher*, p. 12. Sometime later Keppel and Co. in New York acquired the twelve plates included in Bacher's publication for 2,500 francs.

¹⁰³ Alastair Grieve, *Whistler's Venice*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 54.

¹⁰⁴ Getscher, quoted on p. 118, undated, autograph letter, Freer letter, no. 176

¹⁰⁵ Fildes, p. 64.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Robbins and Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1911), p. 190.

¹⁰⁷ Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice*, (1908), p. 204.

¹⁰⁸ Robert H. Getscher, "Whistler and Venice," Ph.D dissertation, (Case Western Reserve University, 1971), p. 133.

¹⁰⁹ Roussoff, A. N.. *Memoirs of Alexander Wolkoff-Mouromtsoff*. Trans. Mrs. Huth Jackson, (London: John Murray, 1928), pp. 180-181. All forthcoming information on Roussoff is taken from this source unless noted otherwise. Roussoff had studied to become a scientist on vegetable physiology, but later decided to study art. For a period of five to six weeks, he worked in the studio of a Professor Gabl, who taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. Roussoff was eager to establish a reputation on an international level and wished to exhibit his watercolors at the Paris Salon. As a result, he sent four watercolors to the firm of Adolphe Goupil, the French art dealer and print publisher, for advice in late 1879 or early 1880; Goupil replied that although the artistic quality was good, the subject matter was unattractive. Goupil, however, did offer his services to get two of the watercolors into the Salon. Roussoff had also contacted the Fine Arts Society in London and sent them some watercolors with fixed prices that were considered unreasonably high. Unfortunately, Roussoff seldom provides exact dates in his biography and thereby it is difficult to determine at which times of the year he was working and living in Venice.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 238-239. On August 16, 1886, the *Pall Mall Gazette* listed Roussoff's *Angioletto* as the best watercolor by 194 votes. Roussoff never exhibited any of his works in his native country. His wife was English and he felt that England was the country of watercolor painters and that it offered facilities that he could not find elsewhere. By 1890 he stopped exhibiting in London and painting in general.

¹¹¹ Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice*, p. 286.

¹¹² Grieve, p. 40. The display of Tito's painting in Ongania's shop was also referred to in *La Venezia*, September 17, 1880.

¹¹³ Grieve's *Whistler's Venice* identifies practically every site Whistler captured in his etchings and pastels and includes photographs of the locales in order to compare the artist's interpretation of Venice.

¹¹⁴ T.R. Way and G.R. Dennis, *The Art of James McNeill Whistler – An Appreciation*, London: George Bell and Sons, 1903), pp. 9/72. Maria Naylor explains Whistler's complicated printing method used for the Venetian subjects that involved wiping with

three cloths, then with the palm of the hand and the tips of the fingers until just the right amount of ink film he desired was left on the plate. Often only one or two proofs from an entire day's work would satisfy Whistler and the rest would be destroyed. Maria Naylor, Intro. *Selected Etchings of James A. McNeill Whistler*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1975), p. xiii.

¹¹⁵ Seldin, p. 16.

¹¹⁶ Weber, 1985, p. 144.

¹¹⁷ Evans, p. 70.

¹¹⁸ "Lockman Papers," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Reel 503, Frame 324-325, Childe Hassam, N.A., Second Interview, January 31, 1927.

¹¹⁹ Donaldson Hoopes, *Childe Hassam*, (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1979), p. 12.

¹²⁰ Watercolor titles that refer to Venetian subjects as listed in the Noyes, Cobb and Co., Boston, "Catalogue of Oil Paintings and Water Colors by Mr. Childe Hassam" (March 9-10, 1887) are No. 43 *Early Morning, Venice*; No. 53 *Idle Hours*; No. 54 *The Gossips*; No. 98 *Venice*; No. 100 *Distant Venice*; No. 101 *Doge's Palace and Tower of St. Mark's*; and No. 102 *Roses*. There were no oils of Venice listed.

¹²¹ William Gerdtz notes in his essay "Three Themes" in *Childe Hassam, Impressionist*, (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1999), that Hassam created a number of these images for Howell's publication later than his original visit to Venice in 1883. His *Gondoliers* and *A Regatta* are interpreted in the sparkling brushwork, high color, and flickering sunlight of Impressionism – an aesthetic that he does not seem to have practiced as early as 1883, p.125. This information is based on an unpublished paper, by David B. Dearing, "The Book Illumination of Childe Hassam," written for the Graduate School of the City University of New York, 1984

¹²² "Talk on the Old Masters by Mr. Chase, New York School of Art, November 17, 1906," William Merritt Chase Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Reel N169-137, frame 500.

CHAPTER 2

La Popolana – Part I: Lace Makers, Bead Stringers, Glass Workers and Onion Stringers

This chapter discusses five significant workers partaking in communal labor that required training and manual dexterity – lace makers, bead stringers, glass workers and blowers, and onion stringers – representative figures in the Venetian working class that were immortalized by the American artists. The images depicted by artists such as Robert Blum and Charles Ulrich concentrated more on the idea of play while at work, rather than the exact labor involved in these crafts, of which lace making was one of the most challenging to master. The works of these two artists will be compared to those of James McNeill Whistler and John Singer Sargent, whose strong European backgrounds and sophisticated approaches to their depictions of Venice set them apart from the rest. The works of these last two artists not only evoked a Venice of their own, but they also represented an advanced interpretation that only an experienced artist could impart.

The revival of Art and Crafts was an international phenomenon that reached Venice in the 1870s with the reestablishment of its lace and glass industries.¹ The Venetian lace industry claimed supremacy over Belgium and England and was considered favorable for women since the moral implications were emphasized: traditionally lace workers, the wives and daughters of fishermen and sailors, could work at home and maintain a virtuous proximity to their family and thus contribute to public morality.

The glass industry was not merely a revival of traditional skills; it had a wide range of applications and number of gifted glass blowers who could create original and modern designs, such as the cage cup (a brown lattice overlay on a vase or goblet), the multicolored enamels produced by Salivati in the 1870s, and the Neo-classical cameo glass bowls. Likewise, the Byzantine revival of the late nineteenth century and the vogue for mosaics from Venice added to the appetite for luxury, gold and adornment that put mosaics on famous facades such as Liberty's of London and the South Kensington Museum, under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, in Secessionist buildings in Vienna, and in Venice itself, on the palaces on the upper Grand Canal.²

Captivated by Venice's unique charm and link to the past, Blum and Ulrich were drawn to the picturesque people of Venice and to the time-honored crafts that were thriving and instrumental in making Venice a flourishing city. The lace makers, bead stringers and glass blowers became tourist attractions and reinforced the idea that the role of Venice in the Italy was both vital and virtuous. The beauty of the handworks complemented the physical appeal of the workers, and together they supplied the perfect ingredients for a subject painting, albeit it devoid of any social awareness of the conditions of the Venetian worker.

The working class was comprised of poor men and women struggling to support their families while providing the upper classes and tourists with the luxurious commodities, especially lace and bead work, that were considered as precious as jewels and indicative of wealth and prestige. While these working women were distressed by the low wages they earned,³ the depictions captured on canvas and film portray attractive,

vibrant individuals, who are indifferent or seemingly unaffected by their dire situation, as is evidenced in Blum's Venetian works.⁴

Photography played a crucial role in popularizing Venetian scenes, for many photographers were busy immortalizing views of Venice in the 1880s, in images such as the Brogi Studio's *Calle dell'Ang San Martino (Venezia)* (Fig. 2.1). Picturesque views of the city were sought after, and numerous photographers, such as Carlo Naya (1816-1882), especially known for his genre scenes, established studios in Venice during this period and made photographs for export.⁵ In addition to the numerous cafés, souvenir shops and other tourist attractions around St. Mark's Square, there were photography shops that supplied architectural views as well as genre images. Pictures of the life of the ordinary Venetian people were enormously popular with tourists.

The majority of the photographs of living and working conditions in Venice were taken in the more remote *sestieri* (sections) where the poorer people lived.⁶ Among the most popular subjects were children playing in the streets and women stringing beads. For tourists, these smiling workers, who seemed happy in their obvious poverty, represented the supposedly untroubled *joie de vivre* found in Venice, where all work was easy and carefree. The women wrapped in their Venetian shawls, the barefoot children and the fishermen of this decaying town embodied the lure of the exotic. When a tourist visited a photographer's studio, pictures of ordinary people were presented to him as entirely unadorned images of the real Venice. Photography, unlike painting, could depict these themes more directly, without losing credibility.

Photographers did all they could to create believable pictures. Naya arranged his

figures with care and chose suitable Venetian backdrops, enhancing the concept of *Venezia pittoresque* (picturesque Venice). The photographs of Tommaso Filippi (1830-1879), who managed Naya's studio for a time until he left around 1893 to establish his own shop on St. Mark's Square, were even more plausible in their pursuit of unadorned realism. In the work of Filippi, the viewer feels he is walking through the streets with the photographer, receiving a direct impression of the life of the people. The women selling vegetables, the fish sellers on the Rialto market, the water carriers, lace-makers, cobblers, craftsmen, fishermen, gondoliers, even the photographers themselves contribute to these images of the everyday life of the Venetian people.

Naya's popular genre photograph of *Bead-Workers* portrays four Venetian women in the foreground, two of whom are actually working and two others who are casual onlookers. It is not certain if Blum and the other American painters of Venetian genre subjects saw these particular photographs, but they must have seen similar images that inspired their work. For Blum, the most important source for a painter was his imagination. In 1895, he mentioned to his students: "It is not exact imitation of the model that is desirable, but a representation of the model as it appears in your mind, otherwise photography could do all our work for us."⁷ Nonetheless, it was common practice among illustrators at the time to use photographs whenever necessary and Blum frequently used them as the basis of his illustrations.⁸ Beginning in the early 1880s, he may also have utilized photographs that he himself had taken as an aide-de-memoire for his work in watercolor, oil, pastel, etching and drypoint. Further proof of Blum's use of a camera is indicated in a photograph of Blum, dated 1883, which portrays him seated at a

table upon which rests a camera.

It is documented that some of the American artists did profit from use of a camera. In a letter dated November 9, 1885, Bacher refers to his new camera, which he used to create subjects for etchings both when he was at home and when he was living with Blum and Ulrich at the Palazzo Contarini on the Grand Canal: "At last, I hear that my new camera will be here tomorrow and you do not know how interested I am to see it and to use it at once to make things for subjects to etch from when I am away from here."⁹ Another letter dated a little over a year later (November 14, 1886) mentions the fate of that camera and one of Bacher's important acquaintances. In this letter Bacher writes ". . . After and during luncheon, I was with Henry Woods, A.R.A. at his nice house on the Grand Canal. I sold him my camera and had to go through the whole form which took me all the afternoon. . . . My object in selling my camera is to remain here as long as I can . . .".¹⁰

Even if most of the American artists working in Venice did not own a camera, they could purchase photographs for future reference. Once again Bacher offers some insight into the use of photographs. In an interview of 1883, he discussed his experience in Venice and noted that he "brought home over five hundred photographs of famous paintings, statuary, etc., gathered from all parts of Italy and Greece."¹¹ These Venetian "souvenir" photographs would have provided quick references for the Venetian genre themes that were continuously represented in paintings of the period.

As noted in Chapter 1, Blum frequently traveled to Venice throughout the 1880s to work on his subject paintings and could have amassed his own collection of "souvenir"

photographs. In some cases, his recollections may have served him best. His July 1887 trip to Venice is of importance since after he settled at the Palazzo Dario, he visited the Esposizione Nazionale, which featured a special section devoted to paintings by the recently deceased Giacomo Favretto,¹² who was among the first painters to popularize Venetian genre scenes, whether they represented the nineteenth or eighteenth century. A student at the Venice Academy of Fine Arts, from 1864-1870, Favretto was trained in the tradition of Neo-classical history painting. His mature style was as firmly rooted in the Venetian art of the past as it was allied with contemporary trends. The loss of an eye following a severe infection in 1877 had not impeded Favretto's work, for he quickly became a successful painter distinguished by his preference for painting the Venetian population rather than its architecture.¹³

One may infer from Blum's visit to Venice's 1887 National Exhibition that he was interested in the works of his Italian contemporaries. In fact, in the same exhibition could be seen works by Luigi Nono, Ettore Tito, Guglielmo Ciardi, Cesare Laurenti, and Alessandro Milesi—artists whose names appeared in the succeeding Venice exhibitions as representatives of the best in modern Venetian art.¹⁴

In a letter to William Merritt Chase, dated October 29, 1887, Blum mentioned his visit to the exposition in Venice and wrote: "The Exhibition which closes tomorrow has some very fine things in it and three pictures by Favretto which you would be delighted with I know."¹⁵ The three works represented were *Market on the Rialto Bridge* (Fig. 2.2), *Ferry on the Maddelena* (Fig. 2.3) and *El liston (The Promenade)* (Fig. 2.4). The first work, *Easter Fair*, is rendered in a vertical format that was seldom used by the American

artists, with the exception of Whistler, who chose a vertical perspective for many of his pastels. Blum does not mention the work of the other exhibitors, such as Milesi, whose two entries are mentioned below.

Similarities in the treatment of subject can be seen between one of Favretto's typical genre scenes, *In Sartoria, Rammendatrici* (Fig. 2.5) of 1878, a work exhibited in Paris at the 1878 Universal Exposition,¹⁶ and Blum's *Venetian Lace Makers* in the Cincinnati Art Museum, discussed later in this chapter. Favretto's work, like *Venetian Lace Makers*, also portrays a lighthearted and friendly atmosphere. Having characterized the Venetian work environment as relaxed and good-humored, his dressmakers casually continue with their sewing, while they cheerfully turn to each other and chat. The whole setting, although cluttered with the materials of their trade, renders an innocuous slice of the Venetian work experience, not unlike the pictures produced by the American artists in Venice during the 1880s.

LACE MAKERS

One of Blum's most famous paintings portrays the lace makers of Venice, a most popular subject in Venice during that decade. A world supplier of laces in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, Venice's needlework industry had declined to the point of extinction by the mid-19th century. Foreign tourists caused this lost art to rise again in the last decades of the century, and the mere eight lace making students of 1872, boomed into 3,400 by 1897.¹⁷ Hence, the high demand for Burano lace in the nineteenth century was fulfilled as this craft became a celebrated pursuit and the product a relished

possession. As noted in an article of 1876, entitled "A Search for Old Lace in Venice:"

Like all other industries in Venice, the sale of lace thrives chiefly on the fancy of the foreign visitors. The natives are generally too poor to buy much of it, and, indeed, much of what is on the market is the product of forced sacrifices made by noble but impoverished families of Venetian origin.¹⁸

The lore associated with the making of lace always reverts back to Venice and a young sailor who brought home to his betrothed delicate coralline, telling her that it was the lace the mermaids wove in their coral caves under the transparent waters of the Indian Ocean. The young girl vowed to make something far prettier with her needle and produced a marvelously beautiful wedding veil that led to fame as "Noble ladies, princesses, and queens became the patrons of the young worker in mermaid's lace, and finally the *guipure* (a type of lace), which she had invented to please her lover became the taste of all Europe."¹⁹

Whether the American artists were familiar with this folktale is difficult to determine, but it is clear that their pictorial renditions offered some of the same romance and fiction evoked by the legend. Blum's pictures of Venetian lace makers date from 1885 to 1887. They are usually interiors in which daylight enters through an open window or door and in which several young women either diligently work or enthusiastically converse with one another. The inspiration for these works can be traced to Blum's second stay in Venice. It was shortly after his arrival in Venice in mid-June 1885 that the artist went to the island of Burano, a short distance from the main city, and visited the Scuola Merletti di Burano, one of the famous lace-making schools established in 1872.²⁰ This school may have provided Blum with the settings and the models he

needed to paint works such as the oil study entitled *Venetian Lace Makers* (Fig. 2.6), although the actual subject of this particular painting has been debated.

Lace-making on the island of Burano was taken very seriously and students were trained on various levels depending on their skills. For instance, the more apt and intelligent pupils, whose responsibility it was to trace out in threads the design to be worked, received drawing lessons from professional artists. The 320 workwomen employed in the late 1880s were divided into seven sections so that each was specialized in one method and one type of lace, which also enabled the school to produce more work more cheaply.²¹

In the first section were fifteen workers, confined to preparing the outline of the design; the second included sixty workers who executed the ground work of little square holes; the third consisted of twenty-five workers trained to complete the ground work of small round holes; the fourth had one hundred workers executing *guipure*, or the stitches that fill up the flowers; the fifth employed eighty workers who joined the different pieces of lace together and worked the high relief to the flowers; the sixth included approximately ten workers who detached the lace when finished from the pattern paper, cleaned it and prepared it for sale; the seventh and last comprised married women who were occupied with family duties and not subject to the same work hours as the single women. The fifth section of lace making required the most proficiency and skill, for only those trained in every section of lace making were chosen. In addition, drawing lessons were required, as with the first section, which created the initial outlines of the designs.²²

Unlike most of the trades in Venice, which formed unions to protect the rights of

the workers and imposed obligations on their members, lace-making did not exist as a formal trade or profession. The craftswomen, who established lace-making never united in a guild, possibly due to the fact that lace was made in homes, convents and asylums, therefore diminishing the professional standing of the artisans and making it unnecessary for them to be organized into guilds.²³ Thus the young woman who wished to earn a living from her lace making could do so from anywhere, and not necessarily on the island of Burano. Nonetheless, Burano has long been associated with Venetian lace-making, more so than any other Venetian location, and was equated with this honorable trade.

Blum was attracted to Burano because it was, as he wrote home, “unspoiled by the plague of foreigners, . . . completely secluded.”²⁴ It was here that Blum’s was inspired to depict Venetian craftswomen and lace makers. He started work on his etching *Busy Hands* (Fig. 2.7) and painted the oil sketch *Venetian Lace Makers* (Fig. 2.6), formerly titled *Parisian Flower Makers*.²⁵ The perspective of these two works leads the viewer’s eye down a narrow diagonal, and whereas in the etching the background reveals more of the outdoors with its large open door, the painting has only a small open window and door in the back right-hand corner. The etching includes a single figure seated apart from the women at the table, and lacks the congenial atmosphere offered in Blum’s paintings. It may represent a study of a scene Blum witnessed in a workshop or home setting, where several young women would gather to concentrate on their handiwork.

Although the painting based on this etching is small in scale (only 15 x 18 inches) and also is considered a study, it offers insight into Blum’s handling of paint. The overall effect of the study is dark with shades of brown predominating the canvas. In fact, the

darkness of the room is curious considering the nature of the detailed work that is being conducted. The door in the back of the room is open, but oddly the window over the door and the larger window to the left of the doorway are shuttered and do not allow any light to enter the workspace. The garments and accessories of the workers offer a range of colors from a russet red, dusty rose-brown to a maroon in the row of women with their backs turned away from the viewer, to a bright yellow gold, vibrant orange and creamy white of the figures facing the observer. Spots of red, orange and green serve to denote flowers and stems that are located on the long worktable and on the chair in the foreground. The green tones are not natural in appearance and the outdoor scene in the back corner of the painting is rendered in a weathered blue-green tone that is also detected in front of the second figure from the left sitting in the back row.

This particular figure is working over a crescent-shaped form, which at first glance appears to be a bunch of green stems. Upon careful examination, the green object is recognizable as a ceramic bowl or container that may have been utilized to help construct floral shapes out of silk.²⁶ Blum lavished a great deal of detail on the still life of the tall, tinted bottle, through which can be seen the back of a chair located on the opposite side of the table, a testimony to his talent for accurate renditions. Most of the objects on the long wooden table are indistinct, except for what appear to be jars on the right hand side of the table, consistent with the types of containers used to hold glue. The glue would have been applied to silk fabric or ribbons to help shape the flowers and maintain their form.

The figural arrangement of the group in the foreground of Blum's *Venetian Lace*

Makers had been employed previously in the work of Cecil Van Haanen, one of the notable foreign painters in his day, praised for the charm and originality of his Venetian genre pictures. Before deciding to live in Venice in 1873, Van Haanen was employed in London as a draughtsman for several of the leading illustrated magazines.²⁷ His presentation of Venetian popular life was simple and realistic, his compositions formed by carefully delineated lines and strong effects of color.

One of his most renowned works is *Venetian Bead Stringers* (Fig. 2.8), which achieved immediate success when it was exhibited in Paris in 1876, where it received a medal, and was joined by a painting of a similar subject executed by his friend Frank Ruben, who was living at the same address in Venice.²⁸ He continued to exhibit his paintings in London; and at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1882, his studies of Venetian life were declared by the *Magazine of Art* to be "of their kind, both for color and for craftsmanship, the best pictures of the exhibition."²⁹

Together with Eugene de Blaas and the Italian genre artists, Van Haanen promoted the neo-Venetian style that became so pervasive in the last quarter of the century. Several European painters, including Favretto, Ludwig Passini, Henry Woods, and Luke Fildes, practiced this new Venetian mode of painting. The style is characterized by vibrant color, strong finish, charming arrangements of lovely Italian women and a forceful evocation of sentiment.³⁰

Van Haanen's *Bead Stringers* was well known by contemporary English and American artists. Known today only by an etching, it seems to have had a tremendous influence on several American artists, especially Blum and Sargent. Both Blum's

Venetian Bead Stringers and Sargent's *The Bead Stringers of Venice*, examined below, also seem to have borrowed from Van Haanen's figural types. Although Blum's workers are more uniformly engaged in their work, Blum incorporates the same long, receding and narrow arrangement of the chairs and the workers seen in Van Haanen's picture and utilizes it for the placement of his figures in *Venetian Lace Makers*. The Venetian interiors of the European artists, painted only a few years earlier, demonstrate the influence these works had on the arrangement of Blum's figures in his Venetian works.

The receding diagonal perspective is a device that was employed previously in Ulrich's *The Glass Blowers* of 1883 (Fig. 2.9) that deals with other forms of manual labor and lend themselves to this particular format. The scene is not a Venetian subject, but rather depicts German workers in New York who are fashioning glass eyeballs for use in taxidermy.³¹ The perspective allows the artist to incorporate several figures on the canvas and conveys the sense of an assembly line of workers. In the *Glass Blowers*, the layout of the figures seated along a workbench is especially similar to that of Blum's *Venetian Lace Makers*. Blum would have been familiar with Ulrich's painting, which gained popularity when it was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1883 and praised for "its surpassingly fine technique, which, while going even into minute things, is yet wonderfully broad and simple."³²

There is evidence in Blum's *Venetian Lace Makers* that he reworked certain areas several times and left other sections unfinished, possibly in the hope of returning to them at a later time. For instance, *pentimenti* (under paintings) have surfaced on the canvas in two particular sections – the hands of the woman seated to the far right of the table, and

the foot stool in the foreground, upon which lay rosy flowers surrounded by a thin paper. What appears to be a ribbon or cloth in the hands of the figure to the far right, is actually a *pentimento* from a pair of hands that was originally painted too large for her body and either scraped or painted over. As for the stool, Blum seems to have altered the original orientation of the legs so that they are not architecturally accurate.

The bouquets of colorful floral shapes scattered about in the painting – on the chair in the foreground and on the top of the cupboard-like piece of furniture behind the foreground figure dressed in white – denote that floral arrangements are either part of the work being done or that the sitters are making silk or bead flowers. Polychrome lace was popular at this time, but the flowers that were applied would have been two-dimensional, unlike the three-dimensional flowers shown in Blum's painting.

As stated above, the subject of the painting is questionable, for visual evidence of lace-making and the required accoutrements, such as bobbin or needle lace-making pillows, are lacking. A thorough examination of the painting has revealed that the young women shown in Blum's painting are not lace makers, but most likely silk or bead flower makers. This conclusion has been confirmed by three, twenty-first century lace makers, who have indicated that there is too much paraphernalia on the worktable in Blum's painting for the women to be working on lace designs.³³ Blum was clearly more concerned with the picturesque group of young women busy at work, rather than the actual activity. Taking all of these observations into consideration, Blum's painting should be renamed "Venetian Flower Makers," or even "Busy Hands," as the etching is titled.

Lace-making was, however, the subject of several works by Blum, as well as unlocated versions of the same theme by Ulrich and Chase. Two other oils paintings inspired by Blum's visit to Burano are his 1886 *Study for Venetian Lace Makers*, portraying two women possibly using bobbins to make lace, and *The Lace Makers* (Fig. 2.10), presenting another pair of young ladies working on bobbin lace pillows in front of a balcony window with a view of the facade of a nearby palazzo. The figures are concentrating on the work at hand and there is no interaction among the figures or with the viewer. Both of these versions are finished paintings, but they can be regarded as studies for the largest (30 1/8" x 40 1/4") and most ambitious work of Blum's lace maker series, the *Venetian Lace Makers* (Fig. 2.11) in the Cincinnati Art Museum.

This painting received favorable comments and honorable medals when exhibited both in the United States and Europe. It was shown in New York for the 1887 Third Prize Fund Exhibition held at the American Association; in London at the Royal Academy in 1888; in Paris at the 1889 Universal Exposition, where it won a bronze Medal; in Chicago at the Chicago Inter-State Industrial Exposition in 1890; and in St. Louis at the 1904 Exposition.³⁴ Blum must also have been satisfied with this work, since in mid-July 1887, he completed a pastel, identical in detail and composition to the *Venetian Lace Makers*, and had it sent to Cincinnati as a gift to his family.³⁵

When the oil painting of *Venetian Lace Makers* was first exhibited at the Third Prize Fund Exhibition, it received recognition as one of the best figure paintings ever painted by Blum. *The Nation* reported the following:

A dozen of the proverbially picturesque Venetian girls of the people are seen

in this picture seated in groups around their cushioned stands in a large room, . . . The gay, almost gaudy, colors of the girls' dresses are happily contrasted, and the picture is excellently painted throughout. In fact, it is marked by unusual knowledge and completeness in treatment, and is in every respect a strong picture. There are some delightful bits in it, such as the figure of the girl bending over her work near the door in the middle of the composition, and the one in the red dress in the foreground, in which admirable delicacy of color and breadth of painting are shown. The effect of diffused light in the room is well rendered, and the girls, chatting and laughing over their work, look natural and real.³⁶

Indeed, the viewer is greeted with an assortment of vivid colors – the vermilion red of the ruffled dress of the woman on the far left (with her back to the viewer), the pale aqua-green of the Venetian blinds, the white of the door and window panels, and the mustard yellow of the back wall. The observer is also introduced to nine elegantly dressed lace makers, one of whom on the far left flirtatiously acknowledges the artist and viewer. The foreground figures exude a sense of optimism, and may portray wealthy young women on the Grand Tour in Venice, learning how to make lace and embroider from the masters, a common practice in Victorian times.³⁷ However, the figures are wearing long dresses similar to the ones seen in the Canajoharie Library painting.

Instead of working in a dark room, the lace makers in the Cincinnati Art Museum's *Venetian Lace Makers* are set against a wall that is interrupted by two large openings – one a balcony and the other a window – that filter the light entering the room. The play of dark and light shadows is magnificently handled amidst the colorful details of the garments of the young women and the gilded mirror hanging between the two openings. The mirror reflects a glimmer of something red and white but the image is indistinguishable, an effect that is typical of many Venetian interiors decorated with old

mirrors. The airiness of the room serves to disguise the actual confinement of these women, who are working in an enclosed area. The viewer is visually led from one handsome group of lace makers, or students, to another, and continues to recede to the far corner of the room, where one encounters a partially visible, closed door, accented with a stark, white doorframe. If these women represent well-to-do tourists or Venetian ladies receiving lace-making instruction, this closed environment may suggest the privileged, yet confined world in which these women live. Metaphorically, these women are confined in their environment and protected from the world they can only see from the window.

At first it is not clear if the interior setting for this work is the Scuola Merletti in Burano, known for its needle lace, but it would appear that this scene does not occur in the school. Contemporary images from the period, including an advertisement for the Scuola Merletti (Fig. 2.12) and an oil painting of the early twentieth century by Pieretto Bianco (Fig. 2.13), which portray the young female students seated in rows as they work on their lace. This leads one to consider that Blum may have actually also visited other independent studios on the island of Burano, such as Chioggia or Pellestrina, two other Venetian locals, where the production of bobbin lace, as depicted in Blum's paintings, was more prevalent than the needle lace made in Burano.

Michelangelo Jesurum and Paolo Fambri, who had devoted themselves to the resurrection of needle lace on Burano, are credited with establishing a lace revival in Chioggia and Pellestrina, which started with the founding of a Society for the Venetian Manufacture of Lace on January 8, 1874. The plan was to reeducate the lace workers

until a product could be achieved superior to that of France or Belgium for its precision and quality, sold at a less expensive price.³⁸ In 1874 one school opened on Pellestrina, and another one in Venice, but eventually the one in Venice had to close from lack of students. Jesurum also founded a school in Chioggia, and by 1877 the lace industry provided bread and employment to more than 1,500 women, who worked in their own homes scattered throughout the city, and produced lace according to their talents and available time, after their homemaking tasks.³⁹

A picture by Anders Zorn, the well-known, late-nineteenth century Swedish painter, also entitled *Venetian Lace Makers* (Fig. 2.14), painted in 1894, depicts the classroom setting of the lace making school in Pellestrina, where each of the figures is working on bobbin lace, requiring the use of a bobbin pillow and bobbins. While both Blum and Zorn's works are presented with a distinctive tilted perspective, they were clearly painted in different interiors, not to mention that the women depicted in Zorn's painting are shown wearing a traditional uniform.

Written confirmation that Blum visited Burano with Charles Ulrich and Franz Rubens exists in the form of a letter Blum wrote to William Merritt Chase from Venice on July 5, 1885. In the letter Blum notes that they had gone for "a spell," but that Ulrich had decided to return to Venice sooner.⁴⁰ There does not appear to be any similar evidence that Blum had visited Pellestrina or was familiar with the lace makers in that area. However, his stay in Burano would have most certainly provided him with many suitable models that he could then place in his setting of choice, perhaps combining elements from all three locales for Venetian lace making.

As with works by other artists, it seems that Bacher and Blum were concentrating on Venetian genre types, rather than specific locales in their depictions of lace makers, net makers and bead stringers. In two letters written a week apart in August 1886, (on the 8th and 14th), Otto Bacher mentioned that he had only been doing figure work thus far, which he “thoroughly enjoyed,” and that the “Boys” at work in the Palazzo Contarini were doing figure work. In addition, Bacher commented how paying for models every day drew heavily on his light pocket.⁴¹

Bacher also worked on a picture of lace makers, as described in a letter written on September 20, 1886. He wrote:

I have done a hard week's work on my canvas (large) but I cannot say that I have gained any. I have not gotten all in shape to start painting. I have one side yet to compose. It does not seem to want to come. I hope that I shall get paint on the canvas this week. The subject is hardly one of a real subject picture. It is mostly composed of lace makers in an interior with the sunlight playing among them. I am doing it near a balcony and I get a small view out of the window but as of now I have only three figures drawn, two girls and a child – the canvas is almost two and a half yards long and one and a half high, rather large but – [sic].⁴²

The whereabouts of this painting, as described by Bacher, is unknown. He did, however, produce an etching of *Lace Makers* (Fig. 2.15), one of forty subjects from his Venetian series of etchings.

The etching displays a quaint domestic interior with two women and two young children gathered around a fireplace, quite different from the description of the painting and probably unrelated.⁴³ Compared with Blum's and Zorn's Venetian lace making scenes, Bacher's etching appears less striking visually and concentrates on the role of the

lace maker as mother in a home environment. A young woman is working on her lace making in front of a large hearth with two young children seated on the floor beside her and a third older child, a boy sits in one corner of the hearth. A second woman is shown standing and pointing to a black kettle in the hearth. The picturesque setting found in Blum's lace making images is lacking in Bacher's etching, and the addition of the children makes the etching a domestic genre scene. Bacher's work follows along the same vein as traditional American genre paintings, such as those by Lily Martin Spencer, which emphasized the virtues of being a mother. Thus Bacher is affirming the principle that a woman's main priority is her family and then her work.

Little is known about Ulrich's version of *Lace Makers of Burano*, currently unlocated. A review of the Prize Fund Exhibition of 1886 in *The Art Amateur* provides some indication of the painting's weaknesses and how it differs from Ulrich's *Glass Blowers of Murano*, which was awarded a prize in the same exhibition. The author writes:

The artist does not succeed so well in painting sunlight, as is evident from his "Lace Makers of Burano," the point of which is the contrast between the dark room full of figures and the bright day light scene visible through the large open window. The latter is cold, and rather crude, and makes it plain that the painter has much to learn before he can handle out-of-door subjects with the success that attends his efforts at painting effects of confined light.⁴⁴

Based on this information, it seems that while Ulrich's lace makers are situated indoors, they are rendered against a large window similar to some of Blum's lace maker studies or *Busy Hands*, but not quite as successful in terms of the handling of light, especially when contrasted against a dark interior.

When Blum's companion to *Venetian Lace Makers*, *Venetian Bead Stringers*, was exhibited at the March 1888 Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, it received mixed reviews in *The Studio* and both paintings were criticized. Clarence Cook reprimanded Blum for continuing to follow in the manner of *Venetian Lace Makers*.

Cook wrote:

We are convinced that if the clever painter would not only forget Venice, but tear out of his book the names of Whistler, Passini, and Van Haanen, he has ample material in his own talent to make us forget them too. He is a delightful draughtsman, good observer, and puts abundant life and character in his personages, but whether it is because all the artists haunt the same models in the same places, or because the art of a few of them has overmastering charm, we know not, only here is the fact, that we find too close a resemblance between their pictures to be pleasant.⁴⁵

This opinion was a valid one, for Blum was obviously borrowing from the neo-Venetian style of the contemporary Italian and European artists working and exhibiting their works in Venice in the 1880s. Blum was also criticized in England for the continued concentration on Venetian themes carried out in the same vibrant and realistic manner, when in 1888 he exhibited his *Venetian Lace Makers* at the Royal Academy in London.

Claude Phillips wrote:

The neo-Venetian school is happily not so over prominent as it has been of late years. . . . It would be unjust not to call attention to another work of this school, "Venetian Lace Workers" (49), by Robert Blum. This, though not specially well-observed as a study of life and manners, furnishes one of the most consummately realized studies of the qualities of light and of chiaroscuro to be found in the whole exhibition. A feeble echo of the attempt of this school—which is admirable enough after its peculiar fashion when it is a Van Haanen or Favretto who paints—is to be found in several works to be seen at Burlington House, though these no longer have invariably for their theme Venetian views or Venetian manners.⁴⁶

The fact that Phillips mentioned that this is not a “well-observed as study of life and manners,” suggests that the critic was aware that Blum was manipulating his Venetian settings to achieve his romanticized images.

In *Venetian Lace Makers* Blum satisfied the viewer’s sensations by staging attractive young women clad in colorful and feminine gowns, while partaking in a dignified activity. The painting considers many of Blum’s interests as an artist: diffused light, young women busy at handiwork, vivid and scintillating color, a fluid and dynamic use of outline, arrangements of figures in profile as well as with their backs to the viewer, and the formal relationship of figures and the chairs in which they sit.⁴⁷ Prior to *Venetian Lace Makers*, Blum’s easel paintings treated the subject of women at work on a smaller scale and in an uninspired manner. As he further explored Venetian themes, he continued to paint larger and more elaborate pictures, evidenced in the next challenging theme he produced: that of bead stringers at work.

BEAD STRINGERS

The bead industry in Venice, which can be traced back to the thirteenth century, also experienced a resurgence in the nineteenth century. Bead stringing was a universal cottage industry, which was a small, but very visible aspect of the revival of the glass industry, and which like the lace industry, had all but vanished before the Arts and Crafts Movement spread to Italy.⁴⁸ By the 1880s, large quantities of beads were produced once again with Venetian shipments to the United States alone amounting to six million

pounds of beads yearly.⁴⁹ The stringing of these beads was performed by lower class women, as seen in two late nineteenth-century photographs of Venetian bead stringers (Fig. 2.16 and Fig. 2.17) that document the setting for such work and the essential accouterments of this occupation. The beads were kept together in a large wooden box from which the *infilatrice* filled her wooden scoop and set it on her lap, with the wide end beside her left hand.⁵⁰ She then took up a skein of glazed cotton that was slightly stiff and difficult to tangle, and cut it to the required length. She also tied a number of threads around her body just below her arms, and withdrew them one at a time, to thread her needles.

The number of needles used varied according to the size of the bead; when the needles were ready the threads were straightened, knotted together at one end, and passed once or twice round the scoop to keep them out of the way. When the needles were full the beads were pushed down on the thread very neatly and dexterously, and as the threads filled up they were piled on the shallow end of the scoop. The whole process was repeated until a pile of neatly tied bunches replaced the long loose strings of beads on the scoops and then they were dropped into a basket on the floor. Monotonous as the process seems, artists such as Blum and Bacher were able to embellish their images of the Venetian bead stringer with decorative accessories, most likely in an effort to increase their mass appeal, and produced striking pictures for the American public to view.

The bead stringer was a ubiquitous figure in Venice and is mentioned in American literature dealing with tourists and expatriates living in the city, such as Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima*. James's character Hyacinth Robinson writes a

letter to the Princess commenting on the Venetian women he encountered near the little *campo* in which he was residing:

The Venetian girl-face is wonderfully sweet and the effect is charming when its pale, sad oval (they all look underfed), is framed in the old faded shawl. They also have very fascinating hair, . . . and they slip along together, in couples or threes, interlinked by the arms and never meeting one's eye (so that its geniality doesn't matter), dressed in thin, cheap cotton gowns . . . I have seen none of the beautiful patricians who sat for the great painters – the gorgeous beings whose golden hair was intertwined with pearls; but I am studying Italian in order to talk with the shuffling, clicking maidens who work in the bead-factories – I am determined to make one or two of them look at me.⁵¹

Unlike lace making or the fabrication of intricate glass vessels, bead stringing involved labor that was fairly simple and required very little skill. And although their gowns may have been cheap, Blum renders them rather colorful in his portrayal and the women wearing them are just as picturesque.

Blum's *Venetian Bead Stringers* (Fig. 2.18) of 1887-1888, begun in Venice and finished in America, was painted as a pendant to his *Venetian Lace Maker* (Cincinnati Art Museum). It is an outdoor courtyard scene, which presents five personable Italian women in various stages of work. The woman on the left, who has tilted her chair forward, is taking a break as she reaches for a large, clear bottle with her right hand and holds a glass in her left. Next to her is a young woman with her hands in her lap and glancing over at the viewer, followed by a fair-haired worker in the act of tying a string of beads around her head, a fourth figure looking down at the beads in her wooden tray and a dark-haired woman on the far right holding up her string of beads before her.

The newspaper, *La Venezia*, is noticeable on the bottom far right, but in this case

the paper is not intended to provide information on the events of the day, but serves a more practical purpose as a liner to contain the tiny beads. The newspaper confirms the Venetian setting and may also highlight the fact that the bead stringers are illiterate. Furthermore, these women represent the sensual female being, who does as told; whereas the unseen literate, thinking, male is the one to whom these women report. In effect, the newspaper may suggest a male supervisor who dominates them.

The wooden birdcage, located above the third figure from the left, holds several birds, placed in a circular arrangement similar to that of the five bead stringers seated below. This motif alludes to an iconographic tradition that originated in Holland in the 17th century and is exemplified by such paintings as Jan Steen's (1626-1679) *The Dancing Couple*, and the birdcage frequently symbolized imprisonment.⁵² Blum may have desired that the viewer associate the captivity of the birds with the lower class bead stringers or even with the confinement of Venice under foreign rule for so many years.

Whichever the case, this painting does not allude to the meager wages that these women were earning. As Otto Bacher briefly noted in a letter of 1883:

Many of the poorer classes are engaged in the monotonous industry of stringing beads and spinning at which they can earn about eighteen cents per day, but their wants are limited and they are happy and contented. In common with women kind [sic], they are fond of dress when the taste can possibly be gratified and love of flashy, gaudy colors is prominent.⁵³

He, like so many other visitors in Venice, chose to assume that the bead stringers were satisfied with their occupation and low standing in the community. For the artist, their "gaudy" clothing was deemed just as appealing as their craft, regardless of the bead

stringer's financial struggles. Thus, there is a complete lack of a social consciousness on the part of the American artists for the difficulties that the bead stringer faced. This is evident not only in Bacher's remarks, but in the images they chose to depict.

Blum's enthusiasm for representing people in work-related activity had begun in earnest in Holland. More complex treatments of women busy at handiwork followed during his stays in Venice after 1885. In choosing to emphasize situations involving labor, Blum's art had much in common with that of Ulrich, who had established his reputation, and won coveted American honors, for his depictions of people busy at their occupation, whether wood engraving, printing, peeling potatoes, or glass blowing.

Blum's *In a Dutch Courtyard* of 1884-1885 and *Dutch Courtyard Scene: Study for Venetian Bead Stringers* (Fig. 2.19) are precursors to his *Venetian Bead Stringers* and are unpretentious renditions of female laborers. Although the titles of these two works identify them as Dutch settings, the communal gathering of these women in an outdoor space are reminiscent of the painting of Venetian bead stringers that was to follow. In *Dutch Courtyard Scene*, three young women are seated outdoors on rush-seat chairs in a triangular arrangement and in a familiar setting filled with large windows and wooden shutters. The figures are also positioned in a manner comparable to that in the *Venetian Bead Stringers*: the figure on the far left is leaning forward, this time reaching for something on the ground; the middle figure has her back turned to the viewer, and one figure is looking down at her work. In addition, the artist leaves the area to the left of the women nearly empty, except for a pair of clogs under the wooden bench.

On occasion, critics complained about Blum's use of a large empty foreground in

many of his watercolors of Venice of 1880-1882. Failing to realize that Blum sought an asymmetrical effect, and tried to make his work appear to lie on a single plane in the manner of the Japanese, a critic wrote of his Venetian work:

The *Venetian Bead Stringer* is ruined because he left it unfinished, that is, with the lower half of the picture all but a piece of blank paper. A few suggestive touches would have taken away the bareness from a work for which he asks a good price, unfinished. A sketch is one thing, and a picture is another; the two cannot by any means be combined, any more than you can combine oils and watercolors. That Mr. Blum can finish a motif harmoniously throughout is well known. This present manner of his is as much an affectation as the affection of a ball-room belle.⁵⁴

Nonetheless, *Venetian Bead Stringers* was well-received by the public, which was also more interested in the prettiness of the figures than with the social circumstances of Blum's sitters, be they actual bead stringers or starving models.

In comparison to Blum's painting, Bacher's interpretation of the same subject is rather unpicturesque, although it does offer more attention to the local bead stringers environment. Bacher's etching of bead stringers (Fig. 2.20), dated 1882, is among the first bead maker subjects depicted by an American artist living in Venice during the 1880s. It is a detailed street scene of the Corte de le Colonne, as noted on the street sign above the well in the background, with several female figures stringing beads and a separate figure watching from a doorway on the left. The Corte de la Colonne, located off of the Riva dei Sette Martiri, is a very old courtyard whose dwellings originally housed mariners who had served the Republic. It was also the site depicted in Whistler's chalk and pastel drawing *Bead Stringers* (Fig. 2.21), drawn on the back of his pastel entitled *Venice: Sunset* (Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington,

D.C.).⁵⁵

Whistler's drawing centers on a group of four women and one young child in front of a double doorway and beneath a biforate window, featured in the background of Bacher's etching. The second figure from the left in Whistler's *Bead-Stringers* connotes the subject with her outstretched right hand – the characteristic pose of the Venetian bead stringer. Whistler and Bacher selected the same vertical format for their works, but while Bacher's etching provides a great deal of architectural and facial details, Whistler captures the essence of his sitters with very few strokes

Bacher faithfully renders the ever-present water well, located in the middle ground on the right, and includes additional bead stringers in the far background. The broken dinner plate with a black cross painted in the center lies on the pavement as a silent reminder to the group and passers-by that one of the members of the group has died. The few coins in the plate represent contributions collected toward the payment for a mass for the deceased.⁵⁶ The symbolism of the cross would not have been apparent to the American viewer, but Bacher was making an attempt to portray the scene he witnessed.

However, most of the American artists were mainly interested in depicting groups of women, shown seated indoors or outdoors and making typical Venetian handicrafts while idly conversing with one another. As seen in Blum's *Venetian Bead Stringers*, the emphasis is placed on the features of these lovely Italian women. In his introductory essay for the catalogue of the 1966 retrospective exhibition of Blum's work, Richard Boyle appropriately compares Blum's women to the American concept of beauty. Boyle

observes that Blum's stylization of the female face takes on a peculiarly American flavor; a sort of "Gibson Girl" type seems to populate his *Venetian Lace Makers*, as well as his other Venetian canvases.⁵⁷ In fact, the typical features of the northern Italian woman conform more closely to this association than those of the southerner. Ludwig Brosch makes a similar evaluation of the work of some other artists, most particularly that of Eugene De Blaas. Brosch criticizes the Austrian artist for not presenting a realistic rendition of Venetian women; instead, De Blaas created "the Venetian beauty as a chocolate box creation."⁵⁸

De Blaas's *The Rivals* and *In Thought (Daydreaming)* (Fig. 2.22) are two examples of his works that epitomize the ideal Venetian beauty. The same Neo-Venetian figure can be seen in works such as Luke Fildes's *An Italian Flower Girl* (Fig. 2.23) and Ettore Tito's *La chiromante* (The Fortune Teller) (Fig. 2.24). All of these images render the Venetian woman as a vision of unadorned loveliness; and they are misleading to the nineteenth-century viewer. Brosch further explains his disapproval of these types of portrayals:

Bought up by all the dealers (even at present day), reproduced by every photographer, these spurious Venetian beauties were distributed all over the world and were taken to represent or rather even now unfortunately represent—the Venetian woman of the people . . . When one had the very questionable pleasure of conducting about Venice, strangers who are not exactly connoisseurs in art, one always listens to the demand: 'But my dear fellow, where are the lovely Venetian women that we see in pictures? Have the painters idealized them, or has the stock of them died out? Tell the truth now are there really any beautiful Venetians like that?'⁵⁹

Many artists did indeed perpetuate the myth of Venetian feminine beauty, yet other genre

painters avoided the portrayal of the Venetian woman as a “Gibson Girl” or a “chocolate box creation.”

In contrast, Sargent depicted the antithesis of the model Venetian woman, as evident in his less idealized interpretation of Venetian bead stringers. His works are far removed from the enchanting atmosphere evoked by Blum and could not be more contrary in terms of coloration, essence and attitude. With the exception of his unfinished outdoor version of Venetian bead stringers, *The Bead Stringers of Venice* (Fig. 2.25), all of Sargent’s other paintings in this series incorporate obscure, interiors that lack the ambiance of sunny Venice and portray the inhabitants secluded in eerie, dark *palazzo* settings. The spacious interiors are graced with small groups of figures scattered about the elongated, non-descript room. Several examples of his bead stringer series include *Venetian Bead Stringers* (Fig. 2.26) painted between 1880 and 1882; *Venetian Interior*, in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute; and a *Venetian Interior* (Fig. 2.27) in a Private Collection. The *palazzo* interior depicted in each is practically empty and the artist’s intent appears to have been to call attention to the figures spread in clusters across the dim room. The bead stringers themselves are the only decorative props in these ethereal settings, which appear antithetical to the ideal workspace. Yet, the emphasis in Sargent’s Venetian interior paintings is seldom centered on the type of labor that is supposed to be represented, such as bead stringing..

Whistler’s influence is evident, not only in the choice of palette and the small glimpses of color and light, but in terms of composition. Sargent may have seen Whistler’s *Palace of Rags* (Fig. 2.28), which renders the interior of the *palazzo* in almost

complete darkness and emptiness, except for the glare of light entering from the open window located in the rear of the room. Sargent's paintings of Venetian bead stringers lack both Van Haanen's attention to the "charms and attributes of his sitters" and his individual and accurate rendering of the women, for the American artist was more concerned with the problems of chiaroscuro suggested by the interiors in which these bead stringers worked and chattered than with providing an intimate portrayal.⁶⁰

The mysteriousness of the subject matter appealed to Sargent, as did the class and life of the people whom he portrayed in deep pictorial spaces brightened by flashes of color and light, also recalling the dark paintings of Diego Velázquez, whose work Sargent admired.⁶¹ There is an element of repression and secrecy in these badly lit images that may refer to the dark times under the Republic of Venice. These interiors also convey the state of decay that the city was experiencing, physically, due to the cholera outbreaks, and structurally with its crumbling buildings. These seedy aspects also appealed to Whistler and are present in his Venetian works. The series of etchings by Whistler discretely conveys the hidden world of Venice, with its ghost-like figures, and the *Palace of Rags* likewise could figuratively relate to the conditions in Venice.

Recent research on the identity of the palace interior depicted by Whistler and Sargent in these scenes has narrowed the possibilities to less than a handful of places in Venice. Grieve has carefully compared the *portego* (hall) of several buildings to correctly identify the exact locale.⁶² There are very few palaces with *porteghi* that have staircases on one of the ends, front or back, rather than at one of the long sides, as seen in the works of Whistler and Sargent. Two buildings have been proposed – Palazzo

Foscarini and Palazzo Moro-Lin – based on their *porteghi* (halls) with staircases at one of the ends. Both palazzi are in close proximity to San Barnaba and the latter is opposite the Ca'Rezzonico, where Sargent rented a studio in 1880. Grieve believes the Moro-Lin is the most likely site since it has a long association with artists, such as Francesco Hayez in the eighteenth century and Lodovico Lipparini in the nineteenth century. Though Lipparini died in 1856, it is possible that some kind of painting school continued in the palace, which may explain the different canvas combinations on the walls of Sargent's interior paintings.

In Sargent's outdoor scene of *Venetian Bead Stringers*, the middle figure stares off into space, while the standing observer gazes with indifferent interest at the third worker, who slowly threads glass beads onto strings with long wire needles. However, the most prominent figures in the foreground are depicted with their backs turned to the viewer and the figure on the right that has been cut off appears to have her legs raised, indicating she is tilting her chair off the floor and precariously leaning against the wall, reminiscent of the female figure in *The Sulphur Match*.

Another small group of bead stringers is visible in the background, indicated only by a few well-placed brushstrokes. The contrast of light and shade is dramatic and the bright burst of sunlight on the blanched wall divides the picture into two planes, as if we are looking at reflections of the same three women, with one group at work and the background figures in a moment of repose. Sargent's *Bead Stringers* evokes none of the frivolity or vibrancy of the colorful garments and decorative details found in Blum's famous painting of *Venetian Bead Stringers*, such as the birdcages, local newspapers, or

glass bottles. The figures in Sargent's work can be interpreted more symbolically for his groups of three women may represent the Three Fates, representing the passage of life -- one spins the thread, the second measures it and the third cuts it.

In the last example mentioned (Fig. 2.27), Sargent has emphasized the elderly woman who quietly demonstrates her craft to the viewer, possibly representing the passing on of this tradition to the next generation of women. The elderly woman is placed in the forefront – perhaps in admiration of her proficiency in this time-honored trade – with two young women looking on the far right. Although older craftswomen were able to train others, they themselves could no longer carry out the task. These handicrafts could be very involved and required hand and eye coordination skills that the younger women could easily master. Years of bead stringing, embroidery or other hand related crafts took their toll on the worker's eyesight. Sargent's *Venetian Interior* is the only example where an old woman is the central figure. Sargent calls attention to the effects of the passage of time and juxtaposes the new and the old, possibly as a way to relate to the New and Old Worlds – America and Europe.

Considering the small scale of most of Sargent's works mentioned above, usually no more than two by three feet, it appears that these paintings served a particular purpose for the artist. They may have been exercises in light and dark tones, studies for a larger work or perhaps they were meant as small souvenirs for the artist's family and friends. Marc Simpson has studied the reception of Sargent's *Venetian* figural paintings in his essay "Sargent and His Critics," which traces his exhibition venues in Paris, New York, London, Boston, Philadelphia, Brussels, Dublin and Geneva. Sargent was sometimes

associated with the Impressionist movement, a blanket term that covered works that could not be classified as academic, and with the work of Francisco Goya, Frans Hals and Diego Velázquez. As early as 1878 and 1879 Sargent had sent small-scale genre scenes for exhibition in New York, all the while taking advantage of an American fascination with contemporary Italian paintings by making his subjects of comparable scale and style demonstrably Italian.⁶³

Two of Sargent's Venetian interior scenes were not well-received when they were first shown at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1882 or the following winter in Paris, since they did not offer viewers the sun-filled palette that viewers expected. As for the subject, exhibition goers did not wish to see the lower rungs of Venetian society, which was not considered noble and cosmopolitan.⁶⁴ Therefore, Sargent was not aiming to please his public with these unidealized interpretations.

Sargent also exhibited some of his Venetian genre paintings at the Cercle des Arts Libéraux in the spring of 1881 and the Mirlitons during the 1880s, however it is uncertain which ones; he also showed four Venetian scenes at the first exhibition of the Société internationale de peintres et sculpteurs in the winter of 1882-1883.⁶⁵ It was not until 1888 that Sargent's Venetian scenes began to receive favorable recognition at which time one interior scene and one street scene were exhibited at the National Academy of Design in New York. It was the artist's handling of paint, rather than the subject depicted that was noticed.⁶⁶

Unlike the contemporaneous depictions of the peasants of Brittany, Sargent's Venetian works, especially those that deal with bead stringers, do not contain an

underlying moral or religious connotation. This fact also may indicate why the public did not favor his Venetian paintings. As the paintings did not sell immediately, Sargent decided to use them in trade for goods and as gifts for his friends. Between 1881 and 1882 he gave *A Venetian Interior* (Clark Art Institute) to Jean-Charles Cazin (1841-1901), a French painter.⁶⁷ Fellow artists and friends were capable of appreciating Sargent's bravado, regardless of whether attractive Venetian women graced his pictures or if they represented a higher level of spiritual existence.

Sargent's works stand apart from those of the other American artists, for they offer a sense of mystery and seclusion that is more indicative of the Symbolist paintings than with the reality-oriented subjects of his peers. The interior scenes especially relate to the imaginative works of the Italian Renaissance artist Vittore Carpaccio, whose works were visible throughout Venice, including the Museo Correr that houses his *Two Venetian Ladies* of ca. 1490 (Fig. 2.29). Previously entitled *The Courtesans*, due to the low necklines on the sitters' dresses, this painting exudes the same aura of mysteriousness that one senses in Sargent's paintings. The two women actually are waiting for their husbands to return from a hunting party, depicted on a companion panel. However, when viewed independently, the subject matter is ambiguous and can be linked to the unclear purpose of Sargent's Venetian women, painted almost four hundred years later.

Sargent's Venice is dark and detached and his figures are equally aloof, even when shown stringing beads out-of-doors. His craftswomen do not find pleasure in their work and seem to linger in their empty world. Political or sentimental overtones are

lacking in Sargent's depictions and he choose to paint the bead stringers of Venice as he had the ritual pictured in *Fumée d'Ambris Gris* (1880, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA) – because the foreignness of the subject was compelling and provided an excellent foil for his artistic concerns. Likewise the Venetian interiors, concentrate on the class and life of the people that Sargent found exotic.⁶⁸

GLASS WORKERS AND BLOWERS

As compared with most of the other craftspeople, or women, who were employed as lace makers or bead stringers, glass workers earned much higher wages. The commissions in the glass departments were numerous and the wages were immense for Venice – one hundred francs per week to the best workmen and twenty francs per week to even the young teenage boys. In addition to having an artistic team, there was an administrative department and a packing branch that ensured beauty, quality and safe transport. In 1868, the London trade in Venetian glass was brisk, and branches were underway in Paris and Vienna. Cases of glass were also dispatched to San Francisco, and “New Yorkers were beginning to appreciate Venetian enamel mosaics and Venetian glass at their full value.”⁶⁹ Thus, the glass industry allowed the Venetians to ascend to a new-found supremacy in the decorative arts and to improve their financial status.

Dating back to the thirteenth century, Murano glass-making has a rich and long history, which involved the introduction of a new quality in glass and new crafting techniques at various times throughout the centuries. The second half of the nineteenth

century saw the recovery of Venetian artistic glass, which had been in decline, as Venetian craftsmen decided to reproduce designs from past eras, including those of Roman and pre-Roman times.⁷⁰

By the 1860s, this revival of antique manual craftsmanship led to the reproduction of the most complex Renaissance and *settecento* Venetian examples, and a decade later emphasis was placed on the reproduction of archaeological glass. In 1866 Antonio Salviati, a lawyer from Vicenza, opened Salviati and Company, which immediately employed the most expert glass blowers, decorators and technicians available, as well as the most qualified apprentices. Salviati encouraged his workers to develop manual skills through the mastery of artistic theory and practice in compulsory drawing classes held in the glassworks and in the island's museum. The firm was successful in part due to the devotion of the artists educated and trained on the spot and in part to the capital invested by what was known as the Anglo-Italian Mosaic and Glass Company, a group made up of Sir Henry Layard, the discoverer of Nineveh and a resident of Venice since 1884, and a few other English lovers of art. Inspired by the idea of the revival of the lost branches of an ancient art, these men spared no expense to enable the original authors of the glass-making revival to carry out Salviati's conceptions.⁷¹

Between 1871 and 1878, Vincenzo Moretti, from the Salviati glassworks, created the first murrhine (mosaic glass) in almost two thousand years, as well as the first blown copies of ancient sand-core glassware with their characteristic combed-thread decoration. At the 1878 Universelle Exposition in Paris, the Salviati and Company of Venice and Murano workshops presented vessels with engraved gold leaf between two vitreous

layers, copies of paleochristian originals, and Augustan-inspired glass cameos, as well as the murrhine pieces.

For those who did not have an opportunity to travel to Murano to see the historic glass works for themselves, one had only to arrange a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In 1881 James Jackson Jarves, the American art critic and art collector, donated approximately three hundred examples of Venetian glass, believed to be ancient examples. The collection also included examples of glass beads, engraved glass, “constructional” glass for mirrors and cabinets, toys and revivals of earlier glass styles created in the nineteenth century.⁷² These examples enhanced the museum’s collection of Italian glass and were placed on view immediately, as is customary when such an important gift as Jarves’s is accepted. If not accessible to the public in the galleries, then one could request to study the glass specimens in the storage areas, pending special permission from the curator.

Jarves’s main reason for presenting these pieces to the Metropolitan Museum was to bring Venetian glass to the American viewer’s attention and to inspire future artists. The donor made certain that this major gift did not go unnoticed by writing an article for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in 1882 that focused on “Ancient and Modern Venetian Glass of Murano” as represented in his own glass collection.⁷³ There was an ongoing debate regarding original antique glass versus imitation pieces being produced by the Salviati Company and others in the 1880s. However, neither Whistler, Ulrich, nor Sargent were interested in alluding to such controversies in their work. Their paintings were focused on the creation of Venetian glass and its by-products. According to Jarves,

Venetian glass should be highly praised for its marvelous characteristics:

Glass is specially adapted by its flexible nature in its earliest material stage to be shaped into forms of an exuberant fancy, quaint, delicate, lithe, coquettish, and beautiful, with every variety and combination of captivating color suggestive of the spirited side of artistic invention, of its wit, its jokes and gibes, its merriment, as well as what comes from intellectual yearnings towards a higher idealism, a perfect refinement of substance and taste. . .⁷⁴

The entire process of glass-making in Murano is a highly involved and intricate technique, the height of perfect craftsmanship. As described by the anonymous author of an 1868 article printed in the New York periodical, *The Nation*,

I cannot repress the wonder and admiration of the perfect results produced by this practiced obedience of the hand to the color and form-appreciating eye; for it must be borne in mind that every object is formed by *two* men—the artist and the assistant. Let the assistant present his rod with the streamlining metal at the end in too large a piece or too hot or too cold, let him withdraw it an instant sooner or later than he ought, and his master's work is spoiled; let the master himself blow too hard through his rod, or turn it in air a trifle too high, or manipulate it in the furnace too swiftly or too slowly, and failure is the result. With the best hands a failure is now rare; with the lads, frequently; and years pass before they are able to make two objects of the same size and form.⁷⁵

Writing in *The Stones of Venice*, John Ruskin offered his own perception of bead making in Venice, an industry he found “utterly unnecessary” and dehumanizing.

According to Ruskin there was

no design or thought employed in their manufacture. They are formed by first drawing out the glass into rods; these rods are chopped into fragments of the size of beads by the human hand, and the fragments are then rounded in the furnace. The men who chop up the rods sit at their work all day, their hands vibrating with perpetual and exquisitely timed palsy, and the beads dropping beneath their vibration like hail. Neither they, nor the men who draw out the rods, and fuse the fragments, have the smallest occasion for the use of any

single human faculty; and every young lady, therefore, who buys beads is engaged in the slave-trade, and in a much more cruel one than that which we have so long been endeavoring to put down.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, Ruskin must have been aware of his wife's penchant for Venetian beads as a few years earlier Effie Ruskin had related the purpose and value of these Murano glass beads, which she herself had purchased, in a letter from December 1849. She writes

On Saturday we rowed to Murano, an island about 20 minutes from here. . . . It is now nearly deserted but the Cathedral is extremely interesting and the island for several centuries has been chiefly celebrated as being the seat of the Manufactories for the famous Venice glass, which amongst other merits broke in pieces when poison was put in it. One Manufactory entirely for beads we went over. . . . All sizes and colours are made but always of the same form. They are cheap. I got an immense bunch of all colours for 2/6 but they were very small ones. I have ordered some red of a peculiar kind and extremely beautiful and much more expensive to make into necklaces for Sophie, Alice & Eliza [Jameson]. I will get pretty clasps from Genoa where they work gold so beautifully.⁷⁷

These types of beads were also used for rosaries and for the bead embroidery found on small bags and other feminine accessories that were popular throughout Europe and America.

Although secrecy has always surrounded the drawn-glass bead making process of Murano, descriptions written in 1834 and 1919 represent procedures unchanged for centuries, including fifteen steps, the most interesting one involving the stretching of glass into hollow tubes.⁷⁸ A hollow globe of molten glass was attached to two metal plates with rods each held by one man who ran in the opposite direction, drawing out a tube of glass at least three hundred feet long. The original bubble of air remained as an orifice or tunnel running the entire length of the tube. The tube was cut into canes, the

canes were made into beads, and reheating techniques finished the beads.

The glass workers and blowers work environment provided a dark and detached setting for the artists intrigued by the strong contrast of light and dark areas, and more importantly offered the artist an opportunity to include male workers. Among Sargent's paintings of Venetian laborers dating to the early 1880s, is his *Venetian Glass Workers* (Fig. 2.30), in which the artist includes male laborers for the first time (one on the left-hand side, beneath the window, and the other in the right background, next to the woman on the far right), as well as the usual female handi-workers. This painting focuses on another Venetian trade – that of cutting bundles of thin glass rods into pieces of glass that will eventually be transformed into beautiful beads.

As in the depictions of bead stringers, Sargent's glassworkers are engaged in their work, without the illumination of sunlight and isolated from the rest of the city. Sargent's paintings are more vague and melancholic than the works by his American contemporary, Robert Blum. However, like his colleague, Sargent also seems to have been influenced by photography, in both technique and subject matter. As Margaretta Lovell observes in *The Visitable Past*, Sargent's compositions are dark and haphazard, like bad snapshots taken under difficult conditions.⁷⁹ Perhaps the artist was commenting on the poor work conditions of the glass worker by depicting such a gloomy workroom.

Of the many American and European artists working in Venice during the late nineteenth century, Sargent, Ulrich and Whistler are the only three who documented the art of glass making on the island of Murano, representative of a male-dominated industry. Whistler's etching, *Glass Furnace, Murano* (Fig. 2.31), is a far less descriptive rendition

than Ulrich's painting of the same subject, entitled *Glass Blowers of Murano* (Fig. 2.32). Nevertheless, Whistler's talent for capturing movements of figures and the features of a dark interior using relatively few strokes is very effective in this example. However, he depicts the massive, sweltering interior of the glass-making factory equipped with hot open ovens without focusing on the actual process. Ulrich's painting provides a closer view of the several stages of glass making that involved different levels of skill. Both artists include a series of glass blowers arranged around one central oven, but Whistler incorporates a small group of well-dressed tourists on the left side of the composition, people who would have considered a visit to a glass factory on Murano one of the highlights of their trip to Venice and the demonstration of the glass-blowing process a site not to be missed.

Ulrich's *Glass Blowers of Murano* of 1886 (Fig. 2.32), with its accurate presentation of the subject, enhanced by the narrative element in the foreground, is characteristic of the artist's work and documents "the spirited side of artistic invention" involved in the making of Venetian glass. The darkened interior is true to the glass manufactory's environment, whose challenges probably appealed to Sargent when he depicted his glass workers painting in the early 1880s.

Glass Blowers of Murano reveals a familiar Venetian worksite on the nearby island of Murano, as documented in a detail of a photograph (Fig. 2.33) from the Alinari Studio. Ulrich's later work departs from his New York glass-making scene, entitled *Glass Blowers* of 1883, both in terms of composition and delineation. As discussed above, his earlier work was praised for its wonderful attention to detail. The *Murano*

painting is more summary than the early painting and it does not display the delicate, hand-blown glass, but rather the process by which this glass is produced.

Ulrich arranges his male figures in an hierarchical manner from left to right, beginning with the youngest, and least-experienced worker on the lower left, who is distracted from tending to the details of the stem and handle as he gazes at the three flirtatious women of different ages; to the seated man behind him, who is working on the stem of a piece; then the standing figure blowing the molten glass into shape through a long pipe; to the central standing worker and lastly to the oldest laborer on the right, heating the glass in the smoldering ovens, probably most accustomed to the high temperatures of the ovens. The older worker can also suggest the time-honored glass making-process, perfected by decades of workmanship and dedication. This organization of the figures presents not only the process of glass-making, but also the stages of life. However, the viewer's eye is directed to the standing middle-aged figure in the center of the painting, shown evaluating his work. This worker may represent the glass blower, who has achieved the height of his trade and is still young enough to reap its full benefits.

Ulrich's work reflects his knowledge of Italian Old Masters as well as seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters. Using their traditional techniques, he provides a close-up view of the Murano workers in a thin haze that captures the intense heat of the ovens. While half of the figures are shown seated and conversing, as with the three seated women on the right and the one seated man on the left, half of the others are captured in the midst of their work. The men will soon be having their lunch as

evidenced by the bottle of wine and wrapped cheese in the foreground, and the women are relatives or observers rather than the laborers in this instance since glass blowing was, and still is, a male-dominated craft.

Evidence of the types of valuable Venetian glass that these workers would have been emulating is found in the emerald-green jug in the foreground of *Glass Blowers of Murano*. It has been suggested that Ulrich included the vase as a reference to the oldest piece of preserved glass, which was dated to the beginning of the fifteenth century and had been found among the heaps of broken glass in 1870 during excavations near the Rio dei Vetrai in Murano.⁸⁰ However, the revival of traditional glass making and all of its benefits were not without its risks to the worker for after years of working in such difficult conditions and being exposed to extreme heat and virtually light-deprived workrooms, glass artisans gradually began to experience problems with their vision. As reported 1889 in the *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art*, published in Edinburgh, Salviati himself had presented the detriment of glassmaking in his paper on the "Manufacture of Venetian Glass." The article notes:

. . . there is one terrible circumstance in connection with this industry, and that is, that after many years of work, when these good people are between forty and fifty years of age, they begin to lose their sight, and after a short while are wholly blind. There seems to be no remedy for this unfortunate state of things, for many protective devices have been tried without success. The blindness is caused by the excessive heat and also by the glare of the never-ceasing flames from the glass furnaces. It is some comfort to know that these poor victims to art are content to live very simply, and as their wages are high, they are able to save large sums. Thus their declining years, although passed under such sad conditions, have not the additional misery which want entails.⁸¹

Ulrich's *Glass Blowers of Murano* does not suggest any of these hazards, and instead

depicts each of the workers as healthy, virile men, regardless of age. Although true to the glass factory environment, the painting conveys the positive aspects of glass making and romanticizes the glass blower by including the light-hearted narrative scene in the foreground.

Although Ulrich's painting received a prize at the Second Prize Fund Exhibition, it was not considered one of his best works. One critic commented: "there is much honest, careful painting; but the picture lacks interest, both artistic and local. The artist is evidently not in sympathy with Venetian types . . ." ⁸² Indeed, *Glass Blowers of Murano* does not offer a poignant or socially conscious image of the glass blower, but it is nonetheless a tour de force in terms of its color, composition and atmospheric effects.

As with Blum's companion, indoor and outdoor Venetian scenes of the lace maker and bead stringer, respectively, Ulrich complemented his quintessential Venetian interior scene of the glass blower with his depiction of the Venetian onion stringer working outdoors. Although the latter theme was not a subject associated with a decorative art, such as lace making or glass work, it did require hand and eye coordination skills and could be performed while seated. Onion stringing itself was not engaging, but the female worker employed to carry out the task was necessarily attractive enough to depict. This combination of the mundane and somewhat exotic or unusual task of onion stringing may have been why Sargent was also drawn to the subject.

ONION STRINGERS

The stringing of onions for the purpose of storage and sale is a time-honored

tradition in Italy, similar to the stringing of garlic cloves. In Ancient Rome and throughout history, onions were often considered a food for the working class, the poor, and the military since the strong odor and taste offended the palettes of the wealthy.⁸³ Even so, the onion's spherical shape and concentric rings were thought to symbolize the universe and were a powerful image of divine perfection. The round layers of the onion represented heaven, hell, earth, and the universe. This quality of wholeness was captured in the Latin word *unio* or *unioem*, meaning "unity," and *unio* also referred to a single large pearl, another product of nature formed in many concentric layers. Like garlic, the onion was believed to aid in the warding-off of evil spirits and was employed to cast spells, serve as a good luck charm and ward off the "evil eye." Some people also suggested that the onion was a prophylactic against cholera and infectious fevers.⁸⁴

Onion stringing is a monotonous task that involves placing the neck of the onion in a loop and tightening it and weaving the stem of the next onion around the string, and so on, to form a chain. Venetian onion stringers would string Italian sweet red onions, known for their mild, sweet flavor and coarse texture and often one would see women who sold vegetables walking around the city with a string of onions over their shoulders.

Ulrich and Sargent were among the American artists charmed by the Italian onion stringer, enough so to portray this curious worker in their paintings. Once again, Sargent integrated a genre theme in an ambiguous interior setting, while alluding to Venetians at work. Margaretta Lovell has noted that these small vegetables, enchantingly painted by Sargent, look as valuable as magnified pearls and that "these passages are marvels of just that transformation of the valueless into the priceless."⁸⁵ The same characterization

applies to Ulrich's *The Italian Idyll* of 1892 (Fig. 2.34), cast in a luminous outdoor setting bursting with sweet, magnified onions.

The painting's ironic title, *Italian Idyll*, alludes to the peaceful mood of the scene, even before one has a chance to contemplate the image and determine that it does not depict poetic or romantic surroundings. In fact, while the painting does exude an aura of bliss, the subject matter is hardly one that holds the most appeal and would surely have been less enticing to the public audience if the work had been entitled *Stringing Onions*. Ulrich's painting depicts four young women working under the summer sun and seated on low rush-seat chairs that are surrounded by an abundance of red, Italian onions. Two of the main figures in the middle appear to rest momentarily from the undesirable task at hand of gathering and stringing onions.

Italian Idyll is an unusual subject for Ulrich, best-known for such somber, social-realist works as his immigration scene *In the Land of Promise – Castle Garden* of 1884, and such workshop interiors as his highly-detailed *The Village Print Shop* (Fig. 2.35) of 1885. The latter is a small oil (23 x 23 inches) painted in shades of black, brown, tan and white, in which a young boy is enjoying a mid-afternoon break. It was after a series of such somber pictures that Ulrich chose to create scenes of greater variety, such as this one, which differs markedly from his earlier, sober images in an effort to make his paintings lighter in subject and thus more appealing to possible buyers.⁸⁶

Unlike Ulrich's earlier works, *The Italian Idyll* is a brilliantly colored picture with hues of white, weathered green, burgundy and bright tomato red. The main figure on the far right languorously stares at the viewer and invites you to into the weary, dreamlike

atmosphere of this land of onions created by the artist. The setting for the work at hand and the garb of the onion stringer are accurate, as determined when the painting is compared with a contemporary photograph of onion stringers in a Venetian street (Fig. 2.36) captured by Giuseppe Primoli. The photograph and the painting were created during the same period and the figures depicted are extremely similar. The female figure in the photograph wears the same wide-brimmed hat, polka-dotted vest and bright-colored scarf as Ulrich's main figure, and the architectural features of the buildings and doorways in the photograph correspond to those seen in the painting.

While the main onion stringer in the photograph is shown standing and surveying the sea of onions, a second stringer is seated nearby, sheltered from the sun by a makeshift awning. Primoli's photograph records the overwhelming abundance of onions that have taken over the street with the two women serving as accessories to the scene; whereas Ulrich's painting celebrates the onion stringer herself in her bizarre domain and conjures a lackadaisical, romantic dream world. Although it is difficult to prove that the photograph was the artist's source, the similarities strongly suggest that the fantastic scene was not a mere fabrication.

Italian Idyll was exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition in the United States section and was noted by one writer as less sensational than Ulrich's *Glass Blowers of Murano*, but equally well-painted

... although the technical problem of rendering the wealth of onions that surround these not very industrious maids was sufficiently serious. It is these sober and not unartistic renderings of modern objects that Mr. Ulrich has chosen to excel and by means of them he has established a satisfactory reputation both at home and abroad.⁸⁷

This painting was a vast improvement on Ulrich's other known attempt to represent an outdoor subject.

As previously mentioned, during the summer of 1886, Ulrich, Blum and Bacher all decided to depict lace makers and hired a group of models to pose for them.⁸⁸ Each began work on his own painting, but only Blum's picture is known today. Ulrich probably did complete a painting on the subject, for in 1886 he exhibited three Venetian genre works at the Second Prize Fund Exhibition at the American Art Association of the City of New York – *Glass Blowers of Murano* (no. 272), *Lace Makers of Burano* (no. 273) and *Venetian Girl* (no. 274). The *Lace Makers of Burano* was considered less successful than the *Glass Blowers* mainly because of Ulrich's handling of sunlight. The *Art Amateur* noted

. . . the point of which is the contrast between the dark room full of figures and the bright daylight scene visible through the large open window. The latter is cold, and rather crude, and makes it plain that the painter has much to learn before he can handle out-of-door subjects with success that attends his efforts at painting effects of confined light.⁸⁹

Italian Idyll provided Ulrich with an opportunity to create the effects of daylight and to present to the American viewer a euphemistic rendition of the work experience in Venice. The canvas radiates with a bright white that shines on the women and makes the onions glisten. Furthermore, Ulrich crowns the main onion stringer with a straw hat and frames her between the lines of the weathered green shutters. She is prepared for her close-up as two of the young girls gaze at her in admiration and curiosity. Such was the response *Italian Idyll* elicited from the American observer, who was taken with the

foreignness and allure of the image. Ulrich alluded to an ideal world where no matter how unpleasant and base the task at hand, one could find peace and beauty, but this was a world that did not in effect exist anywhere, even Venice. If one believes the notion that onions can protect against the plague and evil spirits, these women are guarded from contagion despite their low status in society.

Sargent's representations of onion sellers could not be more different than Ulrich's, both in terms of color and atmosphere. His onion stringers do not appear guarded by the mystical powers of the vegetable. Sargent places his onion stringers in a dull, empty palace, very similar to the setting of his bead stringers. In his *Venetian Women In the Palazzo Rezzonico* (Fig. 2.37), painted around 1880, and *Stringing Onions* (Fig. 2.38) in 1882, small groups of women are shown idly holding strings of onions over their shoulder or are engaged in the weaving process, but where are all the onions?⁹⁰ Sargent's palette in these paintings is brighter than that of his Venetian street scenes. Light filters from the balcony doors or windows and white and gray tones are accented by bits of red in the accessories worn by the models.

One modern element in *Venetian Women in the Palazzo Rezzonico* refers to the influence of photography. This is the truncation of the legs of one woman seated on the floor at the far-left of the middle ground of the painting. A glimpse of white stockings, together with the black tips of a pair of backless shoes, provides evidence of another woman lying on the floor. The manner in which these figures are fragmented by the picture plane approximates the slice-of-life perspective of photography, a marker of modernity frequently found in the work of the French Impressionists. This separation of

the figure from the rest of its body was a conscious choice made by the artist. In this case, Sargent's fragmentation of the body leaves one to imagine another attractive Venetian girl lounging in the massive, empty room.

The emptiness of this grand space emphasizes the insignificance of these figures, their meaningless existence in a place where pleasure was supposedly encountered at every turn. As in most of his Venetian outdoor and indoor scenes, Sargent's figures in *Venetian Women in the Palazzo Rezzonico* are isolated from the rest of Venice, and it is possible that the artist was commenting on the manner in which the working class was also removed on a social and spiritual level from the finer aspects of life.

CONCLUSION

Blum, Bacher, and Ulrich appear to have concentrated on similar subjects dealing with groups of laborers gathered together in a work environment, but not necessarily working. Although some of the paintings mentioned here have not been located, (as with the lace maker subjects), it is probable that these artists borrowed some of the same models, based on the knowledge that the three artists shared a studio and often traveled together. Blum clearly distinguished his career with his lace maker and bead stringer paintings, as did Ulrich with the glass blower motif and his images of Venetian onion stringers, two subjects he also shared with Sargent.

These American artists depict different Venetian crafts and specialties, but these figures all served the same purpose in the artist's mind – to beautify their paintings and

bring a sense of levity to a world that was experiencing a progressive transition in the work place. These Venetian scenes of the 1880s are ages apart from the urban labor culture in America and recall none of the uprisings and strikes that were occurring in the United States, such as the Haymarket Square strike held in Chicago in May 1886. Furthermore, there appears to be less of a disparity between work and home life in the Venetian subjects for these women worked out of their home or small workshops, unlike the women in the United States who were working out of mills and factories. As Barbara Groseclose has explained in her analysis of the culture of work in America during the nineteenth century, domestic advisers attempted to maintain a distinction between home and the workplace, and it was suggested that while women could work, ladies could not and were expected to labor solely in their household.⁹¹ Therefore, to the American eye, the Venetian women were seen just as women, and not as ladies.

Even so, these women were not cast as corrupt or devoid of virtue, but rather as young and virile and thus far unaffected by the health hazards of their livelihood, such as the loss of eyesight inherent when making lace and molding glass after a period of time. The poverty of the bead and onion stringers is another issue that is also avoided for the artist was not interested in making the American public aware of the social conditions of the Venetian working class. As far as the artist is concerned, the Venetians exemplify the ideal work culture where one works at whim and plays while working, without the fear that impending technology will render your skills unnecessary.

The following chapter will review other distinctive work themes as portrayed by the American artists living in Venice in the 1880s, such as the water carrier and washer

woman painted by Duveneck; the women of Chioggia captured from afar by Bacher; and the vegetable seller rendered by Blum. In each case, these subjects are approached on an ideal level and reflect the artist's positive attitude towards Venice and its working class. No task was considered too difficult or disagreeable for the Venetian worker to enjoy, at least according to the interpretations with which the American artists provided the public.

Notes

¹ Margaret Plant, *Venice: Fragile City, 1797-1997*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 177-179. General information relating to the Arts and Crafts movement in Venice and its industries is taken from this source, unless otherwise noted.

² *Ibid*, p. 179.

³ "Distress in Venice," *The New York Times* (24 July 1888), p. 4. News of the "inconceivable distress" that the working classes in Venice experienced due to "miserably low rate of wages" reached the pages of New York's popular newspaper. Such similar commentaries relating to the social, political and artistic aspects of Venetian popular life frequently appeared in *The New York Times* throughout the 1880s.

⁴ Bruce Weber, "Robert Frederick Blum," Ph.D. dissertation, The City University of New York, New York, 1985, p. 144.

⁵ Linda Ayres, "Sargent In Venice," essay in *John Singer Sargent*, (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1986), p. 64.

⁶ Dorothea Ritter, *Venice in Old Photographs, 1841-1920*, intro. John Julius Norwich, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), p. 66. All information regarding photography in Venice during the nineteenth century is taken from this book, pp. 66-67, unless otherwise noted.

⁷ Jessie Jones, "Mr. Blum's Advice to Art-Students: Jotted down by One of his Painting Class in the Art Students League," *Art Amateur* 35, (November 1895), p. 115.

⁸ Weber (1985), p. 82. The information relating to Blum's use of photography is taken from Weber's dissertation. The photograph mentioned is in the Collection of the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C..

⁹ William H. Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher*, (Madison, Wisconsin: Education Industries, Inc., 1973), p. 131.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 152.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 269. Henry James also mentions the tourist's purchase of "several bushels of photographs" in his 1882 article "Venice" in *The Century Magazine*, p. 5.

¹² Weber (1985), p. 297.

¹³ Daniel Rosenfeld, ed. *European Painting and Sculpture, ca. 1770-1937 in the*

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Rhode Island: Rhode Island School of Design, 1991, pp. 158/159.

¹⁴ Selwyn Brinton, *Venice Past and Present* (London: The Studio Ltd., 1925), pp. 20-21.

¹⁵ "William Merritt Chase Papers," Archives of American Art, N68-101, Frame 21.

¹⁶ Guido Perocco and Renzo Trevisan, *Giacomo Favretto*, (Milan: Umberto Allemandi and Co., 1986), p. 74.

¹⁷ Lovell, 1984, p. 27.

¹⁸ "A Search for Old Lace in Venice," *The Catholic World* 22, no. 132 (March 1876), p. 852. The author also laments the fact that precious pieces of lace, valuable for their material and history, were leaving Venetian palaces and falling into the hands of collectors "to whom possession is much, but appreciation is very little," p. 853.

¹⁹ "Lace Lore," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 53, no.317 (October 1876), p. 681. The story, as told in this article, was related by the author's grandmother, who was educated in a French convent, where she learned about womanly accomplishments of working with the needle. The grandmother related that Venetian women produced numerous kinds of lace and that the French collected these coveted patterns and published them in book form.

²⁰ Seldin, p. 16. Burano was best-known for its needle lace. Closest to Burano on the nearby mainland is Pellestrina, where the bobbin-lace industry was established also by Countess Adriana Marcello together with a businessman by the name of Michelangelo Jesurum in 1874. Documentation of visits to Pellestrina by the American genre artists has not been discovered.

²¹ G.M. Urbani de Gheltof, *Technical History of the Manufacture of Venetian Lace*. trans. Lady Layard, (Venice: Ferdinando Ongania), 1888, p. 56. About 1875 polychrome lace was introduced in Venice, which involved creating bobbin-made lace in colors with designs of flowers, fruits, leaves, arabesques, and animals, with the various tints and shading required.

²² *Ibid*, pp. 56-57.

²³ "Pellestrina in Venice Lagoon, Home to Venetian Bobbin Lace," *International Lace Magazine* 37 (Spring 1996), p. 32. "The Michelangelo of Lace," *International Lace Magazine* 38 (Summer 1996), p. 20. Another article written during the period "A Prison for Women in Venice," by Rev. Alexander Robertson in *The Sunday Magazine* (1890), pp. 773-775, notes that the prisoners were divided into "schools" according to their age

and capacity. The first school consisted of women between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five, responsible for making or mending lace. “The scarfs [sic], shawls, and dresses being made were extremely lovely, and the ingenuity displayed in mending old and precious lace was remarkable. All the lace is wrought for the firm of Jesurum & Co., which, encouraged by the Italian Government, has done so much to revive the industry in Venice.”

²⁴ Blum to Chase, June 22, 1885, William Merritt Chase Papers, Archives of American Art, microfilm roll no. N/68-101).

²⁵ Weber (1985), p. 279. Weber has identified the setting for the painting and the etching as a depiction of the Scuola di Merletti in Burano, however there is no proof that this work represents that lace-making school. Based on late nineteenth and early twentieth century images of the school, the interior in Blum’s first *Lace Makers* is mostly likely a workroom or domestic interior.

²⁶ For this detailed description of Blum’s painting, located at the Canajoharie Library and Museum, I am indebted to Shirley Egan, a lace maker from Aurora, New York, who kindly agreed to examine the painting in person for signs of lace making and provided information regarding the content of the work. Ms. Egan is not convinced that the figures in this painting are making lace of any sort. The table and chairs are too tall, the latter of which do not allow the girls’ feet to touch the ground, and thus creating an unstable grounding for lace making. Also, the white covering on the worktable appears to be a stiff oilcloth with ragged edges meant to cover a messy work surface, unlike the delicate type of cloth on which one would apply smaller pieces of lace, as in the case of a tablecloth or bedcover.

²⁷ Percy E. Pinkerton, "Cecil Van Haanen," *The Magazine of Art* 10, (1887), p. 1.

²⁸ Pinkerton, p. 2, and M. Halevy, *L'Eau forte*, (Paris: Barrie frères, 1888) p. 88. The person Pinkerton refers to as Frank Ruben is probably Franz Rubens.

²⁹ “Cecil Van Haanen,” The Artists Files, New York Public Library, microfiche H2, frame E3.

³⁰ Weber, 1985, p. 286.

³¹ Ulrich’s *Glass Blowers* was described in “Mr. Ulrich’s *Glass Blowers*, *Harper’s Weekly* (April 21, 1883), p. 251 as depicting seven glass blowers in a New York factory who are engaged in making artificial eyes for the use of the taxidermist, more specifically owl’s eyes. The article includes a detailed analysis of the whole eye-making process that originates with the melting of a black piece of glass into the shape of a pupil. Special thanks are due to Prof. William Gerdts for bringing this information to my attention.

³² *National Academy of Design Notes*, 1883, p. 19.

³³ For this insight into the lace maker's work environment, I am indebted to Devon Thein, lace maker and volunteer at the Antonio Ratti Textile Center in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Bianca Rosa Bellomo, lace maker and math professor from Bologna, Italy. Both Ms. Thein and Ms. Bellomo have examined Blum's lace making series of paintings and strongly believe that the women depicted in the Canajoharie Library painting cannot possibly be working on lace. Shirley Egan, as noted in footnote 26 of this chapter, also indicated that the Canajoharie Library version does not appear to depict lace makers, Venetian or otherwise.

³⁴ Annette Blaugrund, *Paris 1889 – American Artists at the Universal Exposition*, (exh. cat., Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1989), p. 117.

³⁵ Weber, 1985, p. 292.

³⁶ "Fine Arts. The American Art Association," *The Nation* 44, no. 1143 (May 26, 1887), p. 457.

³⁷ Lori Howe, Member of the Arachne Lace Group, January 27, 2002.

³⁸ "The Michelangelo of Lace," *International Lace Magazine* 38 (Summer 1996), p. 20.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 20.

⁴⁰ Archives of American Art, New York, "William Merritt Chase Papers," N68-101: 32.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 145.

⁴² Andrew, pp. 146-147.

⁴³ The "Venetian Series" of etchings by Bacher consists of (1) *Geovanni [sic] (Giovanni)*, (2) *Ponte dei Sospiri*, destroyed plate, (3) *Ponte dei Sopiri*, second plate, (4) *San Marco*, (5) *Ponte del Pistor*, tall plate, (6) *Ponte del Pistor*, short plate, (7) *Perlaie*, (8) *La Merlettaia*, (9) *Retaie*, (10) *Lavandie*, (11) *Belvedere (On the Balcony)*, (12) *Castello Quarter, Riva*, (13) *Pozzo San Vio*, (14) *Tragheto San Felice*, (15) *Rainy Night*, (16) *Canal on Zattere*, (17) *Fondamenta delle Zattere*, (18) *Zattere*, (19) *Ca' Doro*, (20) *Via Garibaldi*, (21) *Ponte di Rialto*, (22) *Laguna Veneta*, (23) *Bridge in Moonlight*, (24) *Chioggia*, (25) *Fishing Boats, moored, Giudecca Canal*, (26) *Entry-way and Lantern, Castello Quarter*, (27) *Canal in Venice*, (28) *Fondamenta dei Tolentini*, second state, (29) *Lido*, (30) *Vessels*, second state, (31) *Ships at Anchor*, second state, (32) *Two Boats*, seventh state, (33) *Lagoon*, (34) *Venice, Shipping and Palazzo Ducale*, (35) Abandoned sketch on copper for number 34, (36) *Entrance to Canal Grande*, (37) *Venetian Models*,

dry point, (38) *Sailboats*, dry point, (39) *Archway with Figure*, dry point and (40) *San Giovanni e Paolo*.

⁴⁴ “The Prize Fund Exhibition,” *The Art Amateur* 15 (July 1886), p. 25. The article also mentions a third painting by Ulrich that was also exhibited together with *Glass Blowers of Murano* and *Lace Makers of Burano*, as “a girl in a red shawl with a water-jar,” that is “notable as a pleasant bit of color.”

⁴⁵ Clarence Cook, “National Academy of Design 63rd Annual Exhibition, Second Notice,” *The Studio*, n.s. 3, (June 1888), p. 113.

⁴⁶ Claude Phillips, “Fine Art. The Royal Academy. II,” *The Academy* 16, no. 838 (May 26, 1888), p. 365.

⁴⁷ Weber (1985), p. 287. Weber compares Blum’s *Venetian Lace Makers* to the work of Velásquez and Pieter de Hooch. As in *Las Meniñas*, the mirror on the wall and the door to its left relate to similar objects in the rear of the Velásquez painting, and the entire interior is bathed in a rich chiaroscuro, enveloping figures in a warm play of light and shadow. The formal integrations of the pictorial elements, particularly the treatment of the interior space with its two large windows, recalls de Hooch.

⁴⁸ Lovell, 1984, p. 101.

⁴⁹ Lois Sherr Dubin, *The History of Beads from 30,000 B.C. to the Present*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1987), p. 111.

⁵⁰ Joan Edwards, *Bead Embroidery*, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 77-78. The information included in this section is an abridged version of the detailed description on the bead-making process provided by this source.

⁵¹ Henry James, *The Princess Casamassima*, (London: Penguin Books, 1886, 1987), pp. 394-395.

⁵² Weber, pp. 300-301.

⁵³ Andrew, p. 269. Weber, 1985, pp. 299-300.

⁵⁴ “Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of American Water Color Society,” *American Art Review* 2 (1881), p. 197. Quoted in Weber, p. 148.

⁵⁵ Grieve, p. 132.

⁵⁶ Andrew, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Richard Boyle, introduction in *A Retrospective Exhibition: Robert Fredrick Blum (1857-1903)*, (Cincinnati, Ohio: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1966), p. 7.

⁵⁸ Ludwig Brosch, "The Paintings of Ettore Tito," *The International Studio* 27, (1905-6), p. 308.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 308.

⁶⁰ Halevy, *L'Eau-forte*, p. 88.

⁶¹ Steve Kern, Clark Institute of Art, 1990, p. 163. At least two of Sargent's Venetian interiors were finished by May 1882, when they were exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in London.

⁶² Grieve, pp. 74-75. Grieve relies on Elena Bassi's comprehensive book on Venetian palaces (*Palazzi di Venezia*, Venice, 1976) to compare the plans of various palazzi. He suggests that Whistler's pastel and Sargent's oils may show a brothel, though, as he also surmises, this seems unlikely since Sargent's *Venetian Interior* (1880-1882) in the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, includes a small child with the group of women located next to the open balcony window.

⁶³ Marc Simpson, "Sargent and his Critics," in *Uncanny Spectacle: The Public Career of the Young John Singer Sargent*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 68. According to Simpson, writings on Sargent's earliest exhibited genre works of oyster gatherers and Neapolitan children compare them to contemporary Italian and Spanish painters, including Francesco Paolo Michetti, Giovanni Boldini and Mariano Fortuny, p. 46.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 50, 55. Several journals praised two now unidentified Venetian watercolors, the only works in that medium that Sargent is known to have shown up through 1887, as being "only impressionist sketches, but what light! What sparkle." Maurice Du Seigneur, "L'Art et les artistes au Salon de 1881, Paris: Paul Ollendorf, 1881, p. 230, quoted in Simpson's essay on p. 50.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 35.

⁶⁶ Kern, pp. 179-180.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 189. *A Street in Venice* also was given away as a gift; Sargent presented it to J. Nicolopuolo, the Greek minister to France. Sterling Clark purchased this painting from Scott and Fowles.

⁶⁸ Margaret Conrads, *American Paintings and Sculpture at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute*, (New York: Hudson Hill Press, 1990), p. 179.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 414.

⁷⁰ Rosa Barovier Mentasti, *Venetian Glass, 1890-1990*, trans. Matthew McParland. (Verona: Arsenale Editrice, 1992), p. 9. The following discussion about Murano glass-making is taken from this source unless otherwise noted.

⁷¹ “Venetian Glass,” *The Nation* 9, no. 430 (November 19, 1868), p. 413. The author provides examples of the work conducted by Salviati’s establishment, including the mosaic of the Last Supper executed in Venice for Westminster Abbey; a life-size figure on gold ground of Niccolo Pisano, from Leighton’s design; Apelles and Benozzo Gozzoli, Giorgione, and William of Wykeliem, for the new court of South Kensington Museum and the decorations for the spandrels and tympan of the National memorial to the Prince Consort’s in Hyde Park. The shop under the Procuratie Vecchie at the corner of St. Mark’s Square glistened with chandeliers, mirrors, vases, urns, chalices, cups, bowls and wine glasses. Nineveh was one of the oldest cities in Assyria, located in northern Iraq. Layard was a respected archaeologist, who from 1849 to 1851 was the first to excavate Nineveh, one of the oldest cities in Assyria, located in northern Iraq.

⁷² Jessie McNab, “A Species of Creation,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*. (November 1960), p. 92. It appears that although Jarves believed he was collecting 15th and 16th century glass, many of the pieces he donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s, now in the department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts (ESDA), are actually 19th century examples. According to Jessie McNab, Associate Curator in ESDA, the Jarves glass collection was immediately exhibited in the museum for a long period of time. In *The Two Lives of James Jackson Jarves* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 276-277, Francis Steegmuller quotes a letter James Jackson Jarves wrote to Louis Palma di Cesnola, the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The letter, written from Florence and dated March 30, 1880, proposes the donation of about 200 pieces of old Venetian glass to the museum. Jarves explains his motives in relation to his father’s role as the “first man in America to establish the manufacture of this beautiful article on a large scale, . . . Indeed, among his friends, he was sometimes called “the father of American glass.”

⁷³ James Jackson Jarves, “Ancient and Modern Venetian Glass of Murano,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 64, no. 380 (1882), pp. 177-188. Jarves had a particular connection with glass making as his father, Deming Jarves, had founded the Boston and Sandwich Glass Company in Sandwich, Cape Cod, Massachusetts in 1823. In 1824 the company began making cut and blown glass, and from around 1830 also produced pressed and colored glass. In 1858 Deming Jarves left and founded the Cape Cod Glass Company, which produced varieties of colored and opaque glass, including Sandwich Alabaster, Peach-blow and Gold Ruby. The Cape Cod Glass Company closed in 1869,

upon Deming Jarves's death. This information is taken from *The Dictionary of Decorative Arts*, Penguin, p. 152.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 186.

⁷⁵ "Venetian Glass," *The Nation* 9, no. 430 (November 19, 1868), p. 414.

⁷⁶ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. II, (New York: Frank Duveneck F. Lovell and Company, 1953), pp.166-167.

⁷⁷ Mary Luytens, Ed. *Young Mrs. Ruskin in Venice, Unpublished letters of Mrs. John Ruskin written from Venice between 1849-1852*, (New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1965), p. 79.

⁷⁸ Dubin, p. 110. Additional information concerning bead making in Venice is taken from this source, unless otherwise noted.

⁷⁹ Margaretta Lovell, *A Visitable Past: Views of Venice by American Artists, 1860-1915*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 79.

⁸⁰ Michael Quick, "Munich and American Realism" in *Munich and American Realism in the 19th Century*, (Sacramento: E. B. Crocker Art Gallery, 1978), p. 7.

⁸¹ "The Month: Sciences and Arts, The Manufacture of Venetian Glass," *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art* 6, no. 291 (July 27, 1889), p. 477.

⁸² "Prize Fund Exhibition." *Art Age*, (May 1886), p. 179.

⁸³ Mara Reid Rogers, *Onions: A Celebration of the Onion through Recipes, Lore, and History*, (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995), p. 8. The onion was sometimes treated as a sacred object and Egyptians would swear their oaths on an onion, as a guarantee of good faith. All references to the history and meaning of the onion are taken from this source, unless noted otherwise.

⁸⁴ C. C. B., "Cholera and the Onion," *Notes and Queries* 2 (September 24, 1892), p. 246.

⁸⁵ Lovell, 1984, p. 104.

⁸⁶ Andrea Popowich Meislin, "Charles Frederick Ulrich in New York, 1882 to 1884." M. A. thesis, (Arizona: The University of Arizona, 1996), p. 73.

⁸⁷ "Charles Ulrich," The Artist Files, New York Public Library, microfiche U14/A5. The source of this text is not indicated on the microfiche. The *Catalogue of Mr. Edward Runge's Collection of American Paintings*, Public Sale, held on January 9, 1902 at The

American Art Galleries, New York notes two other Venetian subjects painted by Ulrich in the late 1880s. They are listed as No. 54. *A Daughter of Venice* (signed at the right, at the top, H. 13 in. x W. 9 in.), of a Venetian girl whose “dull red shawl hangs from the girl’s head, leaving only a fringe of black hair visible above her forehead, and is wrapt [sic] around her figure. She stands behind a stone wall, leaning on a large, brown, earthenware water jug, which rests upon it,” and No. 70. *Venetian Flower Makers* (signed at the right, H. 25 in. x W. 17 in.), of three women, including at least one bead stringer, as noted in the accompanying catalogue description: “In a courtyard, the red stone and plaster walls of which are hung with the broad leaves of a gourd vine, sit three girls around a pot of flowers that stand upon a stool. The one on the left is dressed in pale blue, while another, in yellow petticoat and dark gray bodice, is lifting up strings of colored beads from a wooden toy on her lap.”

⁸⁸ Blaugrund, p. 117.

⁸⁹ “The Prize Fund Exhibition.” *Art Amateur* 15, (July 1886), p. 25.

⁹⁰ *Venetian Onion Seller* (Private Collection, ca. 1880), which portrays a Venetian girl with a string of onions tossed over her shoulder, bears Sargent’s signature, but his authorship cannot be confirmed. There are stylistic qualities present in this last example, formerly attributed to Sargent, that are atypical of his work during this time—for instance, the window on the right-hand side with the detailed outdoor view of sailboats on the lagoon and the lighter tones used. Also, the features of this young girl are more distinctive than those of any of his figures in his Venetian scenes.

A letter dated August 4, 1951, which was written from Paris by a dealer named K. Hiraga and addressed to Mr. Dlugosz, is associated with this painting. In the letter, a copy of which was discovered at the Frick Art Reference Library in New York, he states the painting “has never been exhibited, having remained in the apartment of M. Lemerrier until I purchased it from his heir.” The letter in question was located among the Supply photo archives found at the Frick Art Reference Library in New York for John Singer Sargent. Mr. Hiraga, a French art dealer, continues to write “It is a magnificent work, in perfect condition, the tones rank and clear as if just laid on. You will see the composition by the photographs . . . It is a highly decorative work, creative and expressive of his personality and has this advantage over an ordered portrait. The tones are clear and luminous, the gradation of the whites is particularly beautiful and contrasts with a scale of rich dark tones are dark and golden. . . . So far as the history of the work goes, it is absolutely authentic. Sargent gave it to his proprietor and it stayed in his apartment until I bought [sic].

In all of the current literature on Sargent very little about this painting, *La Marchaud d’oignons*, is mentioned.

⁹¹ Groseclose, *Nineteenth-Century American Art*, pp. 106-108.

CHAPTER 3

La Popolana – Part II: Water Carriers, Washerwomen and Other Venetian Figures

Few writers of the late nineteenth century could resist commenting on the numerous charms of Venice and its people as encountered in the *campos* and narrow streets of the city. The street merchants and popular types of workers, such as lace makers, bead stringers and glass blowers, were described in the guidebooks just as the American artist depicted them. With the exception of Sargent, artists and illustrators created idealized pictures of the Venetians at work during the late nineteenth century. Even the most strenuous tasks were made picturesque, as seen in the American paintings of the water carriers and washerwomen, two ubiquitous types whose services were required on a daily basis.

This chapter examines the portrayal of the Venetian working class that performed the most physically strenuous tasks for the inhabitants and visitors of Venice, as in the art of James McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent and Frank Duveneck. These three artists also concentrated on marginal figures in the Venetian community. Whistler set the precedent by focusing on images of Venetian beggars and out of the way street scenes occupied by the working class as seen in his etchings discussed in Chapter 1. It was to Sargent's advantage that he had visited Venice several times during his youth and that he was no longer enticed by its architectural and exotic beauty.¹ As Linda Ayres notes, he was able to observe the Venice no one else wanted to acknowledge and was not blinded

by the romanticism of the city that enthralled so many others.

On the other hand Duveneck, transformed his style during his later stays in Venice from a dark, somber tonality to a lighter palette; nonetheless he succumbed to idealizing the Venetian female worker from the lowest social status in society, such as the water carrier and washer woman. These laborers handled and used water, which is a symbol of life and characteristic of the maternal.² Yet, in Venice this substance and commodity was associated with sickness and death. The quality of the water in Venice amid its salt lagoons had been a major concern for centuries, and was linked to the cholera outbreaks in the late nineteenth century. Notably, none of these negative connotations relating to the Venetian water system are suggested in the works created by Duveneck or the American artists.

The last two subjects to be addressed in this chapter are some of the other Venetian genre types painted by the American artists, and specifically Sargent's depiction of Venetian women, seemingly caught en route to an undisclosed destination or in the midst of conversing. Unlike Blum and the Italian artists, Sargent approached his figures from an unconventional perspective and de-glamorized the Venetians. This element of anonymity will also be analyzed in relation to Sargent's works. In contrast to the figures depicted by the other American artists, his men and women are disassociated from the work environment and cast as marginal figures of society.

A similar conclusion can be made regarding the water carrier and washerwomen subjects. These workers are among the least recognized in the city, and very little has been written about their role in society. It is clear, however, that in order to conduct their

duties, they had to be able-bodied and sturdy, and represented the opposite of the trained handworker. Although the Venetian water carrier and washerwoman provided necessary services to the public, they were still considered insignificant constituents for they did not possess specialized skills that are indicative of the ancient crafts that made Venice so famous. Nevertheless, the majority of American artists managed to present these figures in quaint and innocuous settings, and granted them the same importance given to the other workers they portrayed.

WATER CARRIERS

The Venetian water system, an ingenious invention that had been long established, needs to be reviewed in order to provide insight into the world of the water carrier during the second half of the nineteenth century. The water supply of Venice in early times depended both on springs and rain-water, which was collected, filtered, and stored in cisterns or wells of suitable construction; but as the number of inhabitants in the city grew very large, it became necessary to bring fresh water from the mainland in boats.”³ To store this supply, a set of large cisterns was built at Lizza Fusina on the mainland, into which the water of the Brenta River was conducted by artificial canals, still known as *seriole*, which cost the Republic millions of ducats to build.⁴

The *pozzi*, or wells, made available the natural springs found in the subsoil of the mainland, or the rainwater, which was collected and stored in large shallow cisterns, or *cassoni*. These were located either in the public squares for general use, or in the

courtyards of private houses, and were built of brick and filled with sand. In the center of the *cassone*, a deep *pozzo*, or well, was sunk; and into these cisterns water was conducted by means of suitable drains called *pilele*, whence it gradually filtered into the well, to be afterwards drawn up by buckets, or *secchi*. These cisterns represent a remarkable example of the highest ingenuity, and skillful adaptation by the self-taught engineers of the Middle Ages, who utilized materials of the very simplest and cheapest to attain with perfection the end desired.⁵ Later, the wells received supplies of fresh water brought from a distance by artificial means. The water was not poured directly into the well itself, but upon the ground near it, and was allowed to flow down the *pilele*, and then filter through a bed of sand. This latter custom prevailed until a few years ago, when water was brought from the Brenta to Venice by iron pipes laid under the lagoons, and distributed over the city by smaller pipes. This development, while of immense advantage to the inhabitants, is inevitably destroying some of the picturesque features in the daily life of the place.

The number of wells apparently has varied considerably at different periods, but has been steadily diminishing for a long time. Extensive modernization of the city has swept away many of them, especially those belonging to private individuals, and their places have not usually been taken by others. The most serious loss of well heads has been caused by their sale to foreigners, and large numbers of them are to be found in England and Germany. In 1814, more than 5,000 wells were registered in Venice; but in a work published in 1856, only 2,000 are mentioned.

It was only at certain hours that the public wells were open, a provision intended

to equalize the chances of each individual's getting her fair share, and also to prevent undue waste. The wells were opened at two of the Church's canonical hours, once at Terce in the morning (approximately 8 a.m.) and again at Vespers in the early evening, following the ringing of the parish-church bell, which indicated those hours. By 1890, the bells were still ringing, but the canonical hours no longer signaled the opening or closing of the wells, rather the Municipality fixed the times according to the season of the year.

The water carrying damsel, or *bigolante*, as the Venetians called her, was generally among the most familiar figures in Venice. She usually gathered around wells, which were common resorts of the women of the neighborhood. On a daily basis, and at a certain hour, Venetian women met and exchanged the gossip of the day as they collected their water. Two late nineteenth-century photographs of posed water carriers, entitled *Water Carriers in the Ducal Palace* (Fig. 3.1) and *Venetian Women at a Pozzo, Campo San Pietro di Castello* (Fig. 3.2), provide a glimpse of their attire and environment: one photograph conveys the elegance of the Doge's Palace courtyard, and the other that of a stark and grimy *campo*. As William Dean Howells explained in *Venetian Life*:

. . . there are some things which must be brought to the house by the dealers, such as water for drinking and cooking, which is drawn from public cisterns in the squares and carried by stout young girls to all the houses...the cisterns are opened about 8 o'clock in the morning, and then their day's work begins with chatter, and splashing, and drawing up buckets from the wells; and each sturdy little maiden in turn trots off under a burden of two buckets.⁶

Many artists chose to depict *bigolanti* collecting their water by the wells that were

integral to the atmosphere of the Venetian courtyard. This water was intended for drinking purposes only and it was not to be used by barbers, dyers, painters, tripe-sellers, furriers or other tradesmen who might need the water for their commercial activity.⁷

Until the introduction of the aqueduct between 1882 and 1884, the Venetian water-carriers formed a very picturesque feature in the streets and squares. The law forbidding them to earn money by taking water into private houses had either been rescinded long before, or had become obsolete; and numbers of women, young and old, came down from the mountains and gained a livelihood by supplying the wants of the citizens with so many *secchi* (buckets) per day in return for a few copper coins.

These workers were identified as *bigolanti*, derived from the *bigollo*, or curved stick with a hook at each end, with which they carried two buckets slung across their shoulders. They wore the usual white wide-sleeved *camicia* (shirt) of the *contadina* (peasant), with a short sleeveless jacket or bodice, generally of black or very dark material; a light-colored handkerchief hung round the neck, and another was tied on the head; or sometimes—especially in the summer—they wore a very wide-brimmed, low crowned, straw hat. Shoes and stockings were usually discarded except in winter, and the lithe swiftness of the women's movements contrasted strongly with the lazy *fiacca* (weariness) of the people of the city.

By their industrious and frugal habits water carriers often succeeded in accumulating a very useful sum of money in a few years, and then they returned to their mountain homes in the Veneto region to settle down permanently. They were sturdy and

strong, and, as a rule, very quiet and respectable women, of a type different from, and easily recognized among, the natives of Venice itself. A few still remained by 1890, but their number gradually dwindled, as the advantages of a constant water supply within the houses were becoming more widely extended.

The image of the female water carrier could be considered a mandatory subject for all artists who visited Venice, second only to the depictions of bead stringers. Among the European artists who had already devoted works to the *bigolante* are Van Haanen, De Blaas (Fig. 3.3), William Yeames (diploma piece) and Favretto (Fig. 3.4), to name a few. Viewed together these paintings form a romanticized, pictorial documentary on the life of the Venetian water carrier as she either wears her traditional garb, including a black brimmed hat, as in the Van Haanen, gleefully glances to the side, joins a group of other women engaged in the various steps of collecting the water or prepares to leave the well or casually raises her head towards the painter. These sentimentalized renditions reflect the artists' pervasive interest in romanticizing the image of the water carrier, rather than emphasizing the compositional elements as seen in the later works by the American artists, such as Maurice Prendergast. The American examples tend to focus on architectural features and place these women away from the picturesque water well setting.

The American artists who explored the water carrier theme include Whistler, Sargent, Bacher, Blum and Duveneck. Two of the most innovative portrayals of water carriers gathering water are found in Whistler's pastel *The Doorway, Venice* (Fig. 3.5) of ca. 1879-80 and Sargent's oil painting *Venetian Water Carriers* (Fig. 3.6) of ca. 1880-

1882. Whistler's work is broken up into a series of planes that at first glance are unnoticed. Upon careful examination of the pastel, one finds that the central doorway leads to a waterway entrance; beyond that entrance is the canal, and beyond that, another image of a different doorway on the opposite side of the courtyard. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this device was often used by Dutch, seventeenth-century artists, such as Pieter de Hooch, artists with whose works Whistler was familiar and spoke of favorably.⁸

In the left foreground of Whistler's pastel, two women are in the process of collecting water from the small well on the left. With the main doorway, the series of balconies above form a T-shape, which creates the foil for the two water carriers. Whistler captures the essence of the architectural features and the women, both those at the well and those appearing on the balconies, with relatively few lines and scattered color accents, such as the blue in the shutters and the white columns and frames of the various doorways.

Unlike Whistler's pastel, Sargent's painting shows no vista beyond, only a dark doorway, with emphasis placed on the irregular arrangement of the brick stones on the ground. The figures in Sargent's *Venetian Water Carriers* are at two different stages of retrieving water, with one figure collecting water and a second woman walking away and carrying a full pail of water. The women balance themselves as they prepare to retreat with their commodity in hand and display expressive body language. The two women seem to form a centrifugal force on opposite ends of the well and the positioning of their hands is important, as the water carrier on the right stretches her left arm towards the doorway holding a thin rope and sets her left hand in sharp contrast to the darkness

behind her.

This figure is actually pointing to the bleak doorway, alluding to a hidden and seedy activity, possibly prostitution. The jagged stones that comprise the pavement also suggest that these women are dislocated from society. In effect physical and psychological uneasiness permeates this painting and the viewer cannot help but sense that this is not a pleasant place to visit. An underlying tone of secrecy suggests that more is taking place here than just gathering water. As examined more closely in the following sections, it becomes evident that practically all of Sargent's Venetian figures are placed in primal and disturbing settings, suggestive of an underworld that none of the other American artists confronted.

Bacher's straightforward etching of *Pozzo San Vio* (Fig. 3.7) is also devoted to the water carrier, and it appears to be the only example of a work where the exact location of the well has been included in its title. From a heraldic point of view, the public well-heads, and even more so, the private ones, provided historical evidence of many patrician and other families of the city. Apart from the lions of St. Mark, which for the most part were removed in the late eighteenth century, the arms of various public officials were a traditional decorative element on Venetian well-heads. Other devices were based on the patron saints of parishes, monasteries and convents. In *Pozzo San Vio* Bacher chose to depict a cylindrical well-head surmounted by a polygonal element with decorative rounded arches. This form is the most common pattern for Venetian well-heads, one that was frequently found in the courtyards of Venetian families and often exported to and imitated in the Venetian mainland territories.⁹

Blum's pastel of Venetian water carriers, entitled *A Gossiping Place in Venice* and dated 1884 (Fig. 3.8), borrows elements from Whistler and Favretto. Like Whistler, Blum places the well off-center and creates a spatial recession by making the lines of the background parallel to the picture plane, rather than by using linear perspective. Likewise, Blum attracts the viewer to the figures by placing them against a light background. In comparison to Favretto, in his *Peasant Women at the Well* (Fig. 3.4), Blum also brings his figures to the near foreground and articulates the wall behind the water carriers with a series of dark doorways and windows. These perforations draw the observer's eye and appear to tilt the picture plane. While Blum may have been familiar with Whistler's pastel, *The Doorway, Venice*, it is uncertain whether Blum would have known this particular work by Favretto, but he clearly was aware of the Italian artist's work in general.

Duveneck may also have been aware of Favretto's paintings in general. He produced some etchings of the city that capture a true sense of what it was, and to some extent what it still is, like to walk through the piazzas and across the bridges of Venice. Together with the students that followed him to Venice, Duveneck frequently rented gondolas in which to take their painting materials as they searched among the *piccoli canali* for attractive scenes to paint.¹⁰ And eventually, some of the Boys started to exert some influence on Duveneck's art. Early in the summer of 1880, Otto Bacher, who had been etching in Venice for two years (1876-78) joined the Duveneck class in Munich and remained with them in Italy.¹¹ On this trip, Bacher encouraged Duveneck to go outdoors and etch the picturesque Venetian scenes that captured the daily experiences of the

tourists and of the Venetian citizens alike.

Some of Duveneck's most picturesque etchings of Venice are his *Piazza San Marco*, *The Rialto*, *Venice*, and *The Bridge of Sighs*, all created around 1883. In these images Duveneck documents the city in all of its grandeur, and he incorporates workers, such as gondoliers, seed sellers and water carriers, into his scenes. Duveneck, unlike Blum and Sargent did not also choose to paint lace makers or bead stringers, subjects which were somewhat more refined than water carriers and washerwoman. Most notably, Duveneck's later etchings of 1883-1884 demonstrated a shift from the architectural studies seen in his earlier etchings of 1880-1881 to an emphasis on the working class of Venice.

Duveneck, possessed by what Elizabeth Boott called the "genius of ugliness,"¹² focused on some of the unglamorous, yet dignified aspects of the Venetian worker. By simply instilling a sense of warmth and meaning into his works, he was able to portray these unflattering subjects in quite an attractive manner. Italy inspired and transformed his style, giving his work a lighter subject matter and a brighter palette. Almost at once, he achieved a new, more colorful and imaginative direction that was partly due to his close association with Whistler, Sargent, Twachtman, and other painters whose methods reflected Impressionistic innovations.¹³

Duveneck's colleagues and critics were introduced to his new style of painting with *Water Carriers, Venice* (Fig. 3.9) when it was exhibited in New York and Boston. This stylistic transformation in his artwork was in part due to the Venetian subjects and locale, in which brilliant color tones and pleasant details prevailed. Duveneck may have

also been attempting to produce more saleable works, as there were no commissions arranged by Lizzie Booth after 1882 and the buying market was scarce, due to an epidemic in Venice that kept visitors away.¹⁴

Duveneck's painting *Water Carriers, Venice* also deals with *bigolanti*; however his work diverges from the typical portrayal of these women gathered around central water well. Instead, Duveneck's painting, his largest Italian canvas, measuring 47 x 72 inches, provides a view of two women and a young girl walking onto a piazza and away from the stone bridge in the background. They presumably are returning from the wells, with their buckets already filled with water. Other familiar types of Venetian figures are introduced as well, such as the fisherman posed next to the balustrade, which is flanked by his nets; two urchin-like, young boys, one sitting and one lying on top of the balustrade, and a number of male and female figures in the distance walking over the bridge's stairs. In the background are the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore, on the left, and the Church of Santa Maria della Salute on the right.

A mid-nineteenth-century photograph of fishermen and young boys (Fig. 3.10), taken by Carlo Naya and simply titled *Genre Scene*, portrays a similar composition with male figures leaning against the balustrade of a bridge and placed against an architectural background. The fishermen and young boy are reminiscent of Duveneck's figures in *Water Carriers*, and could easily have served as models for his painting. However, there is no evidence to confirm that the artist was working with the assistance of genre photographs. Though it appears that Duveneck relied on the same models for his works, as did Sargent. For instance, the young girl in *Water Carriers, Venice* dressed in a white,

short-sleeved blouse and a brown skirt, reappears in *Canal Scene with Washerwomen, Venice* of 1885, as does the second *bigolante* from the left.

Even though it is known that Duveneck would often set up his easel on heavily trafficked thoroughfares, as seen in a photograph from the 1880s (Fig. 3.11), some of the main figures appear to have posed for the artist in his studio. Apparently Duveneck experienced difficulty with *Water Carriers, Venice* and worked on it for two years, often repainting the foreground figures, which may explain why the major figures, although executed well, lack the spontaneity of much of Duveneck's work.¹⁵ The original owner of this painting, Reverend F. Ward Denys noted that he had purchased the painting directly from the artist in Venice during 1884 when cholera had kept most visitors away from the city and artists were in unusual need. The inclusion of the churches in the background may not have been coincidental and could refer to the reverence Venetians expressed in the past as the Church of Santa Maria della Salute (Church of Our Lady of Health) was commissioned to be built following the end of the plague of 1629-1630 as a sign of gratitude to the Virgin Mary.¹⁶

WASHERWOMEN

The spread of cholera occurred rapidly and was associated with the poor hygiene standards in Venice. As noted in an article on "Safeguards Against the Cholera," by Samuel Abbott, published in 1892, filth and especially filthy water propagated the spread of the disease; and preventive measures included "absolute cleanliness, municipal,

household and individual,” and “a faultless condition of the domestic supplies of food, water and ice.”¹⁷ Abbott explains that sulphurous acid fumes came into general use in connection with all infectious diseases “dangerous to public health” for the disinfection of apartments which had been inhabited by the sick and other solvents should be used to disinfect the clothing and utensils worn and used by them. Thus if a washer woman was asked to wash the clothes of a diseased victim without using the appropriate disinfectants, not only was she at risk of contracting cholera, she was also inadvertently introducing the germ into the canals. Even amidst this danger, the American artists avoided negative connotations of the washerwoman in their paintings, as seen in the following section.

Perhaps the best known of Duvneek's picturesque Venetian subjects are not his water carriers, but his canal scenes with washerwomen, a theme that was popular with Luke Fildes as well. Duvneek's pictures are usually composed of one central female figure holding a basket full of clothes under her arm or over her head, another female figure, who is hunched over and already washing a set of clothes, and one or two other figures that sit and carry out unrelated work near the canal. Three typical works include *Canal Scene with Washerwomen, Venice* (Fig. 3.12) and two paintings both entitled *Study for Washerwomen, Venice*, one from around 1885 (Fig. 3.13) and the other an unlocated work, dating ca.1886 (Fig. 3.14).

Of the three examples mentioned *Canal Scene with Washerwomen, Venice* is the largest (37 1/2" x 45") and the most detailed. At the right is a man smoking a pipe with a young boy next to him, and on the left are two seated figures, one of whom is a bead stringer checking her stands. The locale is a familiar one and reminiscent of a similar

view seen in the canal scenes by Fildes, for example *Venetians* and *Venetian Life*, both painted a few years earlier.

Fildes's Venetian period lasted on and off during the 1880s. It was so profitable for him to paint Venetian scenes for English picture buyers that he made many trips to Venice during the 1880s for the purpose of obtaining more such scenes. It seems that Fildes was looking for a particular type of model, a picturesque peasant figure that was no longer prevalent in England. When he finally came to the conclusion that the peasant of England was a thing of the past he turned to Venice, where all he had to do was go out to the marketplace and entice a model to pose for him in her everyday dress.¹⁸

His *Venetians* of 1883-1884 (Fig. 3.15) and *Venetian Life*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1885, are among his most important genre painting from this period, both simple presentations of scenes from everyday Venetian life. In *Venetians* two women are seen sitting on the steps of one of the side canals; one is washing some clothes, while the other fans herself. From left to right, the background displays a series of Venetian types, including a pumpkin seller, a young girl holding a jug of wine, a mother carrying her baby, a woman strolling by with a young child, and some men talking, and possibly selling wine (as the sign above them suggests *vino nuovo* (new wine)). This pleasant painting provides a slice of Venetian life as could be seen by anyone floating by in a gondola.

Venetian Life is an engaging painting whose foremost features did not go unnoticed. It had an immense effect on the public and on critics at the Royal Academy. They admired the work's masterly drawing and painting, and the "gorgeousness of colour

seldom seen in the work of English painters"; and Fildes was noted as painter of one of the "pictures of the year."¹⁹ What makes this work impressive is the emphasis on the charming picturesqueness of the people themselves and on the remarkable colors. In *Venetian Life*, exhibited together with its companion *An Italian Flower Girl*, the observer is provided with another attractive Venetian site. The two women on the far left are seen relaxing; one woman is fanning herself and the other is steering her child's paper sailboat. Five other women are captured in the midst of some sort of task, be it rolling up yarn, sewing, threading a needle, or even possibly stringing some beads.

However, a different feeling is conveyed in Duveneck's work since his figures are more secluded. Of particular interest in *Canal Scene with Washerwomen*, is the inclusion of the artist's self-portrait on the right, leaning on the wall and admiring the women before him. The artist casts himself as a fisherman ogling the washerwomen, and envisions himself as one of Venice's picturesque figures. He is therefore both the outsider and object of the painting – another decorative feature that entices the onlooker. As observed by Christine Evans, the scene is cluttered with still life detail, which is foreign to Duveneck's nature, but may have been incorporated for the sake of realism and to please his patron, Mr. George S. Harter.²⁰

Duveneck's *Washerwoman, Venice* is stylistically similar to the *Canal Scene with Washerwomen, Venice* in its tight delineation of form and bright colors. Interestingly, its composition resembles that of a work that the American artist may or may not have seen, Cecil Van Haanen's *The First Dip* (Fig. 3.16). This work was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1882 and noted for its admirable technique, "variety of character, the facial

expressions, and the truth of gesture. It is graceful in line, correct in value, and harmonious in colour, it is very human; and we have seldom seen a story better told. If there is fault, it is a slight poverty of illumination.”²¹

The scene also presented the typical way children were taught to bathe in the canal with a rope tied securely around their waists to ensure that they would not be pulled in too deep and drown. The other *Washerwoman, Venice* painting, completed around the same time as the first version, is very different in style. Painted with thick and almost Expressionist brushstrokes, its colors are very warm and rich in tone.

Margaretta Lovell proposes a possible key to the strange peacefulness associated with *Canal Scene with Washerwomen, Venice*. She correlates the triangular shape formed by the washerwoman's attendants and the washerwoman herself, to the type of configuration usually seen in Renaissance Madonna altarpieces; hence, the washerwoman is, in a sense, a type of Madonna of the canal, a personification of beauty and wholesomeness.²² However, it is not beauty and wholesomeness that are normally associated with the Madonna, but holiness, which is not a trait that can be attributed to Duveneck's washerwomen.

In fact, the washerwomen ranked low in the social structure of Venice. Whereas periodical literature of the late nineteenth century often refers to the Venetian bead stringer, lace maker, water carrier and flower seller, there is no mention of the washerwoman. It appears that this type of worker was very common and since special skills or physical agility were not required to perform the duties involved, very little significance was given to the washerwoman. The one aspect of her life that the artist

could enhance was the act of washing clothes in the canal or along the shores of the nearby lakes, an anomaly in late-nineteenth-century America.

Van Haanen had painted *Washerwomen* (whereabouts unknown) of Venice as well, which together with his *Bead Stringers*, had won him “sudden fame” when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1881. Described as depicting two women doing their wash, this work was considered cleverer than his *Bead Stingers*.²³ Other washerwomen images of this period include Tito’s *Women Washing Clothes in Lake Garda*, Ralph Wormeley Curtis’s *Washerwomen in Venice* and Bacher’s *Calle Manzione, Chioggia* (Fig. 3.17).

Bacher’s women are scattered about with one woman washing cloths on the lower right and two sets of women – one located under the portico with three women huddling together and their heads covered with white shawls and another to the center-left, shown scattered about and washing copper-lined pots. The sky is a cloudless, vibrant blue poised against the terracotta of the architecture. The setting is similar to one captured in an illustration by Luigi Cima from Henry Perl’s publication *Venezia* (Fig. 3.18), which depicts the characteristic arched porticos and brick-faced buildings, adorned with small groups of woman that still donned the traditional attire, including the white shawls over their heads.

Calle Manzione captures the essence of a three-mile long town, Chioggia, closely associated with the history of Venice and reputed to have protected the city from attack on several occasions. Known for its fishing industry, Chioggia contained one major street that connected to small side streets described as “mere gangways, house-passages

without roofs, where the population lives and labours, brings up its children . . . Here under God's free Heaven, . . . is lived the simple life of these fishermen and sailors from the cradle to the grave."²⁴ Women and children dominated the area as most of the male population was away at sea for years at a time. Bacher's painting does not portray the fishermen or net makers, but rather concentrates on the inner workings of this less-known Venetian island. Before the women performing age-old manual labors, Bacher has imposed the shadow of a street lamp. The shadow protrudes from the lower left corner onto the street and towards the viewer. Bacher may have been alluding to the progress of technology in this traditional setting virtually untouched by modernity.

By the end of the 1880s, American art critics were tiring of the remaining examples of Venetian genre works that continued to be exhibited. Commenting on Henry Hall's *Venetian Water Carriers*, Clarence Cook voiced his concern:

Mr. Henry Hall is a young painter who is making his mark, but whose talent we cannot fairly judge until he finds his own subjects. Just now he, too has the Venice fever, and paints his perfunctory well-curb in the well-known court, with the well-known girl drawing the same old water. He has skill enough to make us look twice and again at his picture, and to praise the action of the girl who is doing the work, but he cannot make us think the thing worth doing, and we know he has skill enough to find out a field of his own for himself and break it with his own plow.²⁵

Nonetheless, Venetian genre themes continued to capture the interest of American artists, who portrayed images of Venetian male workers, as well as female ones, including the vegetable vendor.

OTHER VENETIAN FIGURES

While Duveneck and Sargent concentrated on the water carriers and washerwomen of Venice, European artists, such as Ettore Tito, were devoting attention to other Venetian figures. Tito, a favored Italian artist, had gained a reputation both in America and England, was a great traveler and made his mark wherever he went. He often visited Paris, where he was a fashionable painter of the day; stopped in London almost annually; and he worked for the *Graphic* and also for the American magazine *Scribner's*.²⁶ Hence, Tito's work was widespread and he was well-known outside of his homeland.

Blum's and Ulrich's graceful and smiling rendering of similar subjects resemble Tito's scenes, such as his popular *Venetian Fish Market, "Pescheria"* (Fig. 3.19) of 1887, a painting whose picturesque qualities, variety of figures and colors was undoubtedly seen by Blum since this work was also exhibited at the 1887 Venice Exposition and immediately acquired by the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome.²⁷ *Venetian Fish Market* is painted from life and it reveals a scene from a popular Venetian working and shopping area brimming with a mass of people. Rafaella Barbiera, writing about Tito's individual show in the Venice exhibition of 1912, considered this painting as belonging to history, "For therein is expressed the outdoor life, full of busy movement, in the old market which is now gone forever, with its wonderfully picturesque effects of types and colouring."²⁸

Classified by some as a "steel shed," the fish market loomed on the Grand Canal

itself and was opened to the public in 1884,²⁹ but fish markets existed before the building of the metal shed. In 1877, the Friday fish market was described as one of

... the most picturesque scenes in Venice ... and the fish are, from the loveliness and brilliancy of their tints, as curiously beautiful as everything else in this bewildering city. ... The fishermen wear wooden slippers with toes only, and heavy brown stockings reaching to the knee, and occasionally scarlet caps, which well become their bronzed face."³⁰

As Charles Caffin has noted in his article on the Italian artist, the true importance of *Venetian Fish Market* lies in its reflection of Tito's realism, which had already been singled out from that of his contemporaries, and the artist's concern with essentials of form and movement.³¹ This emphasis on realism was also encountered in the Venetian genre works painted by American artists in the late 1880s.

Shortly after returning to New York in 1888, Blum completed his watercolor *A Venetian Pumpkin Vendor* (Fig. 3.20). It is a realistic depiction of a daily occurrence in Venice, that of the floating greengrocer traveling from doorway to doorway, with fruits and vegetables to sell. This phenomenon has been described as one of the highlights of the day:

Boats full of garden – and orchard- produce are drawn up here and there at the steps, and while the dealers balance aloft their vegetables and fruit, shrilly disclaiming on their merits, men and women, pannikins in hand, appear at windows and door-ways and on stairs, screaming in unison, each side trying to beat in the bargain and each apparently feeling him-or herself worsted and outwitted.³²

Fruit and vegetable vendors were popular Venetian types, captured earlier in Luke Fildes's *A Venetian Fruit Seller* (Fig. 3.21) and presented in Ludwig Passini's *The Mellon*

Seller (Fig. 3.22), the latter of which is very similar to Blum's *Pumpkin Vendor*. It is highly likely that Blum was aware of the Austrian's watercolors, for Passini was among the international group of painters that flocked around Whistler and Duveneck during the early 1880s. Fildes's *Venetian Fruit Seller* of 1876 is one of his earliest pictures painted in Venice. It is based on a fairly simple composition, which focuses on two figures—the typical Venetian beauty and the eager-to-sell fruit seller – and it precedes Blum's *The Pumpkin Seller*. However, it is evident that in this instance it was Passini's *The Mellon Seller* that exerted the most influence on Blum.

Passini was noted "not only as the very first European watercolor artist, but also as the most skillful renderer of scenes of Venetian life."³³ It is interesting to note that not only did both Blum and Passini depict popular Venetian life, they both also worked extensively in watercolor. A brief overview of Passini's background will shed some light on the influence he may have exerted on Blum, as well as on the other American genre painters in Venice in the 1880s.

Passini settled in Venice in the mid-1850s and steadily became recognized as an accomplished genre painter,³⁴ noted for such works as his 1871 *A Tasso-Reader*. This early painting represents the keen insight Passini had into the life of the Venetian people and the multitude of characters. Living on the Grand Canal, he worked in one of the long, lofty rooms on the top floor of the Palazzo Vendramin.³⁵ Therefore, he had a fine opportunity to analyze the Venetian people and was able to depict scenes, such as *The Captive Fisherman (A Fisherman's Wooing)* (Fig. 3.23) and *The Mellon Seller* that romanticized the life these workers led.

It is also worth noting that *The Captive Fisherman* was reproduced on the cover of an American magazine, known as *Hearth and Home*. The contents of the December 1874 edition of this New York-published magazine do not seem to correspond to the image. It is simply a front cover, but nonetheless the publication provided an outlet for Passini's work to be seen in the United States. It is conceivable that other reproductions of this Austrian artist's work may have also been sent to America, and been seen by American artists.

The Mellon Seller, however, is by far Passini's best-known work. As mentioned above, this watercolor bears a close resemblance to Blum's *Pumpkin Seller*. In both works a floating market is moored next to a narrow *calle*, on which a group of buyers are ready to bargain. Both paintings present the typical dark-haired Italian beauties, ranging from the little child in the mother's arms to the more matronly Venetian woman. The description of Passini's work, as related by the German art critic Ludwig Pietsch, could easily refer to either artist's rendition:

Amongst the women we have female beauty of pretty well every age, from the *bambino* in the mother's arms on the right, to the grandly modeled matron in the center of the eager circle, and as if to mark the contrast between high and low life, Passini has given us, on the right, a true Venetian coquette, fan and all complete, stepping daintily along on her way perhaps to some interesting rendezvous [sic].³⁶

Writers such as Percy Pinkerton discussed Passini in the 1880's; and in 1888 Clarence Cook criticized Blum's *Venetian Lace Makers* and noted that Passini as one of the Italian artists the American was imitating. Therefore, the similarities between Blum's *The Pumpkin Seller* and Passini's *The Mellon Seller*, and the latter's influence on Blum, needs

to be recognized.

The main differences between the two works is that Blum's includes fewer figures, and that his boat is shown floating towards the left, while Passini's craft has entered from the left and is moving towards the right. Hence the vantage points of the vessels are reversed. However, aside from these slight variations, the pictures are still very similar, and both are filled with the brightness and essence of Venetian life. Blum depicts his scenes with the same neo-Venetian qualities found in Passini's painting. As Charles Caffin pointed out, Blum's "technique was usually piquant, alert, and sprightly, simplified and spontaneous. It excelled in the expression of movement, whether of a single figure or of a crowded and animated scene; and this lively realism was always tempered by the purely pictorial intention of reaching an expression of beauty."³⁷

Contemporary literature concerning life in Venice mentions the colorful fruit and vegetable vendors and the appeal of the pumpkin to the Venetian people. Howells discusses the shrieking merchants who sell fruit and fish in the area from the wide thoroughfare leading from the last bridge on the Riva degli Schiavoni to the gate of the Public Gardens. The street is a *rio terrà* (filled-in canal) "abandoned to the poorest classes who manifest themselves, as the poorest classes are apt to do always, in groups of frowzy women, small girls carrying large babies, beggars, of course, and soldiers. . . . in this quarter the traffic in pumpkin seeds is the most popular, -- the people finding these an inexpensive and pleasant excess, when taken with a glass of water flavored with anise."³⁸

Almost nothing is known about Blum's final trip to Italy in the late spring of

1889. Two works associated with this last visit are a watercolor, *A Venetian Market*, known today only through a photograph, and an oil painting entitled *Girl on a Balcony*. The watercolor centers on the subject of Venetians working and shopping at the local fruit and vegetable markets found in every corner of the Venetian square. It is a subject that had been depicted earlier by Italian genre painters. Examples include Tito's *Campo Santa Margherita* of 1881 (Fig. 3.24) and Favretto's *Mercato in Campo S. Polo* (Fig. 3.25), painted in 1884. Unlike the Italian examples, however, Blum's figures are not captured unaware in a natural manner. The center figure is clearly posing and forms the main focus of the watercolor.

SARGENT'S VENETIAN WOMEN

Unlike the *campo*, which is the social and urban focus of the entire community and frequented by water carriers, washerwomen and vendors, the *calle* or ordinary street is always very narrow, regardless of the size of the neighborhood, and more remote than the *campo*. In such a complicated layout as Venice, though, there is a hierarchy of spaces, beginning with the Piazza San Marco, down through the major parish nuclei, to the smaller parochial sub-centers and finally down to tiny semi-private *corti* shared by perhaps two or three houses.³⁹ This hierarchy of spaces seems to have trickled down to a reciprocal hierarchy of classes that most-knowingly was captured by the genre artists of the 1880s, as noted below. Indeed, the dark *calle* was one of Sargent's favorite setting for his Venetian genre scenes.

During his trip to Venice in February of 1874, at the age of eighteen, Sargent spent his time studying the works of Tintoretto in Venetian churches and collections.⁴⁰ It was not until he revisited the Italian city in the fall of 1880 that he began to depict the Venetian people. Occupying a studio on the upper floor of the Palazzo Rezzonico – a sumptuous seventeenth-century palace on the Grand Canal – Sargent created a group of Venetian genre paintings,⁴¹ such as *Venetian Interior* (Carnegie Institute) and *Venetian Street* (Fraad Collection). Since Sargent did not date many of his works and they share similar, if not the same titles, it is difficult to assign an exact year to many of his paintings. In order to avoid any confusion, it is generally stated that his paintings of Venice were executed between 1880 and 1883. They are distinguished in this text by their current ownership.

Before visiting Venice in 1880, Sargent had traveled to Holland, where he had studied and copied the portraits by Frans Hals and most likely also viewed recent landscape and genre works of the Hague School painters contemporary with Hals, such as Pieter de Hooch.⁴² By mid-September 1880, Sargent, who was born in Florence and had lived in Europe all of his life, moved to Venice. However, the city's monuments and panoramas did not overwhelm him. Since he had traveled to Venice at least three times before, two of these when he was seventeen and fourteen, the tourist spots appeared commonplace to him.⁴³ He therefore steered away from representing Venice in all its grandeur, and instead sought the interesting, yet quotidian aspects of Venice and its people.

Most, but not all, of Sargent's Venetian subjects are attributed to his next stay in

the city from August of 1882 to December of 1883. This time he stayed in the Palazzo Barbaro, a fifteenth-century palace also on the Grand Canal, owned by the Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Curtis, an American expatriate family distantly related to Sargent.⁴⁴ Three works from this period are his *Street in Venice* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., where the figures are placed in a steeply receding space; *The Sulphur Match* (Fig. 3.26), one of the artist's most intimate portrayals; and *Venetian Girl (with a Fan)* (Fig. 3.27), the largest oil painting by Sargent during this decade, measuring at almost eight feet high. Both of the last two works mentioned are signed and dated by the artist. The street scene belonging to the National Gallery is known to depict Calle larga dei Proverbi, and according to Linda Ayres and Jane Myers, the Fraad version may also represent the same general area in the northern part of Venice, near the Church of Santi Apostoli.⁴⁵

Although Sargent's works from this period are limited in color tone and subject matter, his outdoor scenes are highlighted with shades of rose and brick that mostly represent the walls of the narrow Venetian streets, as seen in *A Street in Venice* (Fig. 3.28) in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. In this painting the brick wall to the left of the figures is especially detailed and it captures well the look and feel of the worn walls. The figures are notably un-idealized, and they represent the opposite of the sentimental figure that one finds in Blum's paintings. Sargent's Venetian women are not bound by fashion, as they are in his elegant portraits, and the former usually don dark shawls over their heads, a precursor to the veils and shrouds that are found in the murals he painted for the Boston Library in the early part of the twentieth century.

The subject of the use of veils and shrouds in Sargent's works has been studied by

Sally M. Promey, who believes that these veils or costumes isolate the figures from the outside, suggesting secrecy, as well as protection from the exterior world.⁴⁶ Although Promey does not draw a connection between Sargent's symbolic use of accessories and his Venetian paintings, the shawls his Venetian figures wear accentuate the mysterious nature of these women and shield them from unwanted glances. These wrapped figures appear most often in the religious Venetian genre images depicted by the American artists, painted virtually at the same time as Sargent's street scenes. In those depictions, which will be discussed in the next chapter, the shawl shrouds the sitter in anonymity and protects her from the elements, be they physical or psychological.

As described by Bella H. Stillman in an 1890 article, entitled "Life in Modern Italy," women, for the most part, could "be found in the streets in the *merceria* and about those parts of town, which are least frequently by strangers; but they are chiefly women of small social pretensions," for ladies were conspicuous by their very absence, aside from their presence among the inevitable tourist parties.⁴⁷ American and English women were more at liberty to wander the city on their own and followed a different social milieu.

Upon the occasion of a small exhibition at the Carfax Gallery that featured Sargent's foreign works, one critic observed Sargent's approach to the common scenes. The critic for *The Athenaeum* wrote:

For here we see, alas! that Mr. Sargent when he goes to Venice for his holidays reacts to the new surroundings for all the world like an ordinary tourist. His water-colours with their crude oppositions of positive yellow and hard purple shadows, show the city under the same aspect that we know so well in those *ricordi di Venezia* which the plain man brings home and frames in German gilt

mouldings. . . . Nor when he treats the inhabitants of Venice is he more artistic. No artist of fine susceptibilities would have found his account in the vulgarly picturesque type of his *Gondolier* (No. 13). Such a model might have been flirting with one of Mr. Woods Venetian girls round a well-head.⁴⁸

It was considered acceptable to display the “vulgarly picturesque” gondolier type if he was engaged in an activity, even flirting, but to focus on the Venetian worker so closely for mere observation was testing the limits of appropriate subject matter.

As observed by Trevor Fairbrother, Sargent painted young Venetians of his age, whom he had watched conducting their lives and their amorous exchanges naturally and openly. Detailed information about the people who modeled for Sargent’s Venetian street scenes is not readily known, but as Fairbrother points out, it is doubtful that additional knowledge about them would radically alter these paintings’ narrative ambivalence, as their fascination lies in our not being sure whether the people depicted know each other and whether their encounters are innocent or not.⁴⁹ Indeed the identity of these figures is not substantial for it is their anonymity that reinforces the mystery surrounding these street scenes.

In 1888, Sargent exhibited two of his Venetian Scenes – *A Street in Venice* (National Gallery) (Fig. 3.29), owned then by Stanford White, and *Venetian Interior*, which belonged to the artist James Carroll Beckwith – at the National Academy of Design. These paintings were unfavorably compared with Blum’s *Venetian Bead Stringers* and Bacher’s *Bella Vista* and *Desdemona’s Palace, Venice*, also exhibited that same year. *The Studio* commented as follows:

Mr. Sargent, Mr. Blum, Mr. Bacher and Mr. Henry W. Hall have all of them

cast their nets in Venice and brought up the familiar fish, which each proceeds at once to cook after his own recipe. Mr. Sargent, tiring of the over-dressed beauties for the nonce, has picked up a few of the slouchiest specimens of woman-kind that Venice produces, but serves them up with such a skillful turn of the wrist, and such a dexterous toss of the pan, that with our eyes shut we should almost take them for duchesses.⁵⁰

Even if Sargent was capable of turning his ordinary figures into “duchesses,” he still had difficulty selling his Venetian paintings. In fact, the two that were included in the National Academy of Design exhibition were given to their owners as gifts from the artist.

Margaretta Lovell emphasizes the unromantic quality of Sargent’s Venetian interior scenes and feels that by radically restricting the field of vision in these works, “Sargent concentrates on the seemingly objective qualities of light and substance, demoralizing, in fact dehistoricizing, his subjects.”⁵¹ Yet perhaps Sargent’s interest was not simply his figures. The women are foils for his outdoor and indoor settings, providing markers. Together the figures and the environment – be it a dark chamber or pale street corner – create the gestalt he was seeking, an aura of mystery and ambiguity, and a sense of alienation from the rest of society.

While in Venice, Sargent hired a group of models, some of whom appear in more than one picture, but no record exists of where they came from or how he found them.⁵² Venetian models appear to have been easy to obtain, and although some of the figures depicted may have become professional models, like their Parisian or British counterparts, they remained part of the working class while they also became absorbed in the art world.

Sargent is among the few artists who captured his models in his Venetian studio during moments of repose.⁵³ His painting *Interior of the Artist's Studio in the Calle Capuzzi, Venice* (Fig. 3.30), dated between 1885 and 1886, provides a small glimpse of the corner of his dark studio. Inscribed "To my friend [William] Logsdail," this work indicates that Sargent and the English artist knew each well enough to exchange their artwork. Indeed, the two artists both occupied studios on Calle Capuzzi at San Vio during the fall of 1880.⁵⁴

Sargent's model in this painting is Gigia Viani, who is shown in two poses—one standing and one seated—and dressed in somber color tones. This device of repeating a figure within a single painting was used later by Sargent in his *Cashmere* (Private Collection) of 1908, where a series of seven girls is actually seven depictions of the same girl, Reine Ormond, who was the artist's niece. This device may be a reflection on the passage of time captured photographically with a shutter, or it may demark the emotional state of the model. Likewise, it may signify the dual personality of his figure – aggressive in one instance and submissive in another. She is a reflection of herself, with one image being real and the other a shallow façade. The same effect can be seen in *Sortie de l'Eglise, Campo San Canciano, Venice* ca. 1882 (Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Halff, Jr.), in which three women are depicted, each of whom is caught in different poses as she is putting on or removing her black shawl, an important accessory for any woman entering a church. Until a few decades ago, in Italy it was customary for a woman to cover her head upon walking into a Catholic church, and to this day women are not permitted to enter with their shoulders bare.

Martin Brimmer, a trustee of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was visiting Venice around the time Sargent was staying there. A friend of Daniel Curtis, Sargent's uncle, Brimmer wrote in a letter of October 26, 1882 that Curtis was

Now a Venetian inhabiting a proud palazzo who is good company everywhere, but especially in these his happy hunting grounds—His son too is a very nice bright fellow, with a love for his art and a nice feeling for it. Young Sargent has been staying with them and is an attractive man. The only picture of his I have seen is a portrait of Thornton Lothrop, in which I thought the head a masterly piece of painting. He had besides some half-finished pictures of Venice. They are very clever, but a good deal inspired by the desire of finding what no one else has sought here—unpicturesque subjects, absence of color, absence of sunlight. It seems hardly worthwhile to travel so far for these. But he has some qualities to an unusual degree—a sense of values and faculty for making his personages move⁵⁵

What is significant about Brimmer's remark is his observation that Sargent was looking for something different in Venice. Indeed, Sargent appears to have been searching for a particular type of Venetian, and he wished to present his figures using his own distinctive style. The pervasive black tones in Sargent's works reflect the gloominess associated with his mysterious Venetian figures.

As mentioned, *The Sulphur Match* and *Venetian Girl (with a Fan)* are specifically dated 1882 and represent portraits of people from the Venetian working class in non-descriptive interior scenes. The female model for both paintings is again Gigia, shown dressed in the same white garment in both. The male figure, who also appears in several other Venetian street scenes, remains unidentified. *The Sulphur Match* is an unidealized rendition of a man and woman in an isolated corner. Considered one of Sargent's most sexually charged images, the painting emphasizes the fleshy left hand of a woman

bracing her chair against a door. The wine bottle and broken glass in the lower right corner may imply the loss of virtue, as in Dutch seventeenth-century painting, and the lighting of the match has been interpreted by Richard Ormond as an erotic metaphor.⁵⁶ Also symbolic may be the attention to the woman's only exposed hand, which is perhaps meant to imply that she is a handworker.

The English artist Frank Bramley painted a similar work entitled *Weaving Nets* (Fig. 3.31) and dated 1883, a year after *The Sulphur Match*. Bramley had studied together with Logsdail in the town of Lincoln and was acquainted with Sargent and his art work. Bramley's work includes a man and a woman engaged in conversation. The wall in *Weaving Nets*, unlike the wall in Sargent's painting, is not bare. From it hangs a large net, above which is a small shrine, whose details are difficult to discern. On the floor adjacent to the net maker are more nets, which identify the scene for the viewer. Bramley's image appears to be a flirtatious encounter, yet it is essentially innocent. The figures are not in close contact and there is no air of mystery about the male figure. Although the tones are dark shades of gray and taupe, with the exception of the net maker's garments, which are pink and cream-colored, the atmosphere is benign. Bramley could have easily made his setting more sensual or uncanny, but this was clearly not his intention. His figures represent a Venetian courtship, or perhaps only a young girl's infatuation.

Sargent was the only artist consistently to place his figures in disquieting scenarios. His Venetians are situated in abruptly receding, backlit hallways and dark alleys, suggesting a "lack of purpose" to his paintings and thus heightening their

modernity.⁵⁷ Yet these works lend themselves to an imaginative narrative relating to the less conspicuous aspects of life in the Italian city, a narrative only a true local would be able to conjecture. As with *Venetian Girl with a Fan*, also known as *A Venetian Girl*, the figure often appears in a dark, non-descriptive interior that does not suffice to inform the viewer the role of this figure. In *Venetian Girl with a Fan* one could conjure a story of a girl working or living in a grand old palazzo. However, upon closer examination, the so-called fan that Sargent's model bears in her arms offers a clue as to her occupation. John Wilson has suggested that the object the figure holds is not a fan, but probably a bundle of thin glass rods, essential for the making of glass beads.⁵⁸ In effect Sargent's genre portrait elevates the status of this Venetian working woman by presenting her image on a large scale, similar to the scale of the artist's portrayals of his wealthy clients.

The men and women that Sargent depicts in his intimate street scenes most likely belong to the *demimonde*, since the unattended women and male-female encounters shown refer to incidents that would have been forbidden to Venice's upper class women.

As Howells indicated in *Venetian Life*:

It is true that their damsels are now no longer imprisoned under the parental roof . . . but it is still quite impossible that any young lady should go out alone. Indeed she would scarcely be secure from insult in broad day if she did so . . . for in Venice a woman has to encounter upon the public street a rude license of glance, from men of all ages and conditions, which falls short of outrage...for her to walk alone with a young man would be vastly more scandalous than much worse things, and is, consequently, unheard of.⁵⁹

These comments clarify that the expatriate's Venetian street figures would not have been considered members of a refined and respectable society.

The relative lack of contemporary critical success that Sargent's Venetian genre paintings experienced may be due to the fact that he deliberately avoided well-known, attractive aspects of Venice and strayed from presenting an acceptable, or more appealing, image of the Venetians. In great measure, Sargent may have been attempting to convey a spontaneity and momentariness that the other artists overlooked, as well as a sense of a franker subject than what one expected to encounter in Venice.⁶⁰ As another critic remarked about Sargent's Venetian scenes:

We see neither the Grand Canal, nor the Piazza San Marco ... Mr. Sargent takes us into gloomy little squares, and mean dark rooms which are pierced by a single ray of sunshine. Where are Titian's beautiful women? These are certainly not their descendants; women we scarcely see under their unkept hair, cloaked in an old shawl as though shivering from a fever. Why need we go to Italy to collect such impressions?⁶¹

Reflecting on the choice of subject, or lack thereof, it may have been a combination of a lack of refinement, as well as of aesthetic beauty, that collectors found unappealing in Sargent's Venetian genre works, especially in comparison with Blum's light-hearted scenes.

There is a strong psychological, as well as sinister, charge to these figural images, as noted above with his *Venetian Water Carriers*, upon which Sargent seems to have been fixated. By adding various components to his settings, such as marginal figures or lurking cats, the artist may have been experimenting with creating a specific effect of unease that goes beyond anything that can be seen in other figural scenes that he painted before or after the 1880s. Vernon Lee perceived Sargent as a person with two pairs of inner conflicts that each involved a battle between indulgence and repression: the first

revolved around his vivacious mother, as opposed to his stern and self-denying father; and the second related to his own personality as he used his art to engage bizarre subjects, such as the Venetian street scenes, while denying that it had personal meaning.⁶²

Unlike the subjects painted by the other American artists, Sargent's Venetian scenes are stimulating works. As noted by Richard Ormond in his essay in *Sargent and Italy*, these Venetian paintings allowed Sargent to explore the relationship between the sexes and perhaps provided an outlet for him to release his own sexual tensions.⁶³ Either way, the artist was fascinated by these Venetian figures and preferred placing them in compromising or precarious settings that evoked both eerie and disturbing moods for purposes known only to him.

Both Ormond and Fairbrother have emphasized the sensual aspects of these Venetian subjects in recent publications. Even if Sargent were homosexual, as suggested by Fairbrother, these images are more sensitive to the fact that the artist was viewing these scenes as a neophyte, intrigued by what he saw even though he could not feel the intensity he was depicting for himself.⁶⁴ Indeed, Sargent was the only artist to focus on individual studies of Italian males, in particular his strapping *Gondolier* and mischievous *Italian Man with a Rope*, to be discussed in Chapter 5.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Sargent's Venetian works are an anomaly when compared with those created by his American counterparts. He chose to depict Venice and its lower class

citizens as downtrodden and decaying, both physically and morally, and foreshadows the French Symbolists, such as Gustave Moreau, who characterized Venice in this manner in his allegorical watercolors of the early 1880s. Nevertheless, Sargent still romanticizes the Venetians in his own unique way by placing them in seedier and mysterious surroundings. He was capable of approaching his figures from an unorthodox vantage point because he had been exposed to exotic subjects in his previous excursions in Morocco and Spain, and adopted Spanish compositional models, such as *Las Meniñas* by Velázquez.

Sargent never treated the subjects of his Venetian paintings moralistically or sentimentally; instead, he rendered people and settings that appealed to his taste for the strange or curious as objectively as possible.⁶⁵ His academic training distinguished his work from the Munich style characterized by dark tones and bravura brushwork, which further separated him from the other American artists in Europe, who were ardent followers of Frank Duveneck. Sargent's Venetian scenes did however convey a broader affinity with Impressionist art through his use of unconventionally cropped, snapshot-like points of view and the painterly treatment of details, such as the man's fur collar and the woman's glistening, colorful skirt in the Clark Institute *A Street in Venice*.⁶⁶

As Margareta Lovell has pointed out about Duveneck's ambitious paintings of Venice, they provide an image of labor, especially female labor, under pre-industrial, but socially humane, visually handsome, and atmospherically favorable conditions.⁶⁷ The same argument can be made for almost all of the Venetian scenes painted by the American artists, even those produced by Sargent: his images may be mysterious, sensual

and even decadent, but his figures are always visually attractive.

Given the paintings examined above, it is apparent that in most instances the American artists were depicting similar genre scenes that focused on the life of the Venetian working class, encountered throughout Venice. The types discussed in this chapter constitute the workers who labored outdoors and interacted with the public on a different level than did the lace maker or glass blower. Perhaps it was the artists' familiarity with these figures that made them so appealing, since these workers represented the soul of Venice. Even if they were classified as unglamorous, the water carrier and washerwoman evoked a timeless charm that was unique to Venice.

The beauty of these workers, many of them women, contrasts with the ugliness of commercialism and the onset of a materialistic world. They were to some extent symbols of the struggling common man, who managed to survive throughout the ages and preserved the time-honored work traditions of the city. The American artists in Venice were consciously creating images that ignored the onset of industrialization, possibly with the goal of luring the art patron towards their fresh and exotic paintings.

Notes

¹ Linda Ayres, "Sargent in Venice," in *John Singer Sargent* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986), pp. 49-73.

² J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), p. 364-365. Cirlot explains that the projection of the mother-*imago* (image) into the waters endows them with several spiritual properties characteristic of the mother. A secondary meaning of this symbolism is found in the identification of water with intuitive wisdom.

³ William Scott, "Venetian Wells," *Universal Review* 8 (1890), pp. 393-394. Unless noted otherwise, all information related to Venetian wells is taken from Scott's article.

⁴ Scott, p. 394.

⁵ "Supply of Water to the Cities. —The Cisterns of Venice," *Journal of the Franklin Institute* 75 (June 1863), p. 363.

⁶ Howells, *Venetian Life*, p. 106.

⁷ Alberto Rizzi, *Well-Heads of Venice. The Public Well-Heads in Venice and the Islands on its Lagoons*, (Venice: La Stamperia di Venezia Editrice, 1970), p.18.

⁸ Alastair Grieve, *Whistler's Venice*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 36. According to Grieve, Whistler is recorded as having spoken with admiration of the Dutch masters while in Venice and probably was aware that Ruskin disliked them. Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell also refer to Whistler's discussion of Dutch artists in *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, (London, 1911), p. 194.

⁹ Rizzi, p. 52. Between 1889 and 1905 a considerable number of Venetian wellheads disappeared from their sites in public squares and courtyards, most of them were notable medieval specimens that were sold to antique dealers and dispersed to buyers in Germany, Prussia, England and even America, with only a small number reaching museum collections.

¹⁰ Josephine W. Duvenceck, *Frank Duvenceck – Painter -Teacher*, (California: John Howell-Books, 1970), p. 94.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 89.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 76.

¹³ Robert Neuhaus, *Unsuspected Genius – The Art and Life of Frank Duveneck*, (San Francisco: Bedford Press, 1987), p. x.

¹⁴ Evans, p. 81. Due to Duveneck's financial need, the artist was forced to sell this painting "on time" to Reverend F. Ward Denys, who bequeathed it to the National Museum of American Art in 1943.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 80.

¹⁶ Marion Kaminski, *Art and Architecture – Venice*, (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1999), p. 77.

¹⁷ Samuel W. Abbott, "Safeguards Against the Cholera," *North American Review* 155 (July/December 1892), p. 499. Information regarding the spread and prevention of cholera is taken from this source unless noted otherwise. According to Abbott, sulphurous acid was difficult to apply and may not have been an effective disinfectant. Instead, he suggested exposing contaminated objects to high temperatures for a prolonged period, either by steaming, boiling or baking, or burning them altogether.

¹⁸ "Luke Fildes, R.A. As Painter of Venetians," *The Art Annual* (Christmas 1895), pp. 14/16.

¹⁹ Fildes, 1968, p. 93.

²⁰ Evans, p. 82. *Washerwomen, Venice* is one of the few examples of a commissioned Venetian subject. It was commissioned by George S. Harter, founder of the Harter Bank of Canton, Ohio and remained in the Harter home for nearly half a century until it was given to a prominent Cleveland collector around 1930.

²¹ "Art in December," *Magazine of Art* 6 (1883), p. x.

²² Lovell, 1989, p. 75.

²³ "Art Notes," *Magazine of Art* 4 (1881), p. xli.

²⁴ Henry Perl, *Venezia*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1894), p. 232.

²⁵ "National Academy of Design – Sixty-Third Annual Exhibition, Second Notice," *The Studio* n.s. 3, no. 7 (June 1888), p. 113.

²⁶ Ludwig Brosch, "The Paintings of Ettore Tito." *The International Studio* (New York) 27, no. 107 (January 1906), p. 310.

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- ²⁷ Luigi Marangoni, *Ettore Tito*, (Venezia: Serenissima, 1945), p. 10. Selwyn Brinton, "The Recent Work of Ettore Tito," *The Studio* 71, no. 283 (September 1920), p. 4. The image illustrated in this thesis is the correct version of the Venetian fish market painting exhibited by Tito at the Exposition. This information was provided in the recent monographic study *Ettore Tito*, (Venice: Cini Foundation, 1998), p. 200.
- ²⁸ Quoted in Selwyn Brinton, "The Recent Work of Ettore Tito," *The Studio* 71, no. 283 (September 1920), p. 4.
- ²⁹ *The Magazine of Art* Vol. 26 (1901), p. 19.
- ³⁰ S. G. Young, "Venice," *Galaxy* 24 (September 1877), p. 338
- ³¹ Charles H. Caffin, "The Art of Ettore Tito, Modern Italian Painter," *The Craftsman* 17, (December 1909), p. 248.
- ³² Ellen Olney Kirk, "In a Gondola," *Lippincott's Magazine* 50 (November 1892), p. 646.
- ³³ Ludwig Pietch, *Contemporary German Art at the Centenary Festival of the Royal Academy of Art, Berlin*, trans. N. D'anvers, Vol II (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), pp. 18-19.
- ³⁴ Percy E. Pinkerton, "Ludwig Passini—A Painter of Modern Venetian Life," *The Magazine of Art* 10 (1887), p. 128.
- ³⁵ "Ludwig Passini," *The Art Journal* n.s. 41 (1889), p. 46.
- ³⁶ Pietsch, p. 20.
- ³⁷ Charles Caffin, "American Studio Talk" *Magazine of Art* 8 (1885), p. clxxxiv.
- ³⁸ Howells, *Venetian Life*, 1886, p. 291.
- ³⁹ Richard Goy, *Chioggia and the Villages of the Venetian Lagoon*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 309.
- ⁴⁰ Lovell, 1984, p. 95.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 95.
- ⁴² Fairbrother, "American Art around 1900," p. 36.

⁴³ Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent – His Portrait*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 95. Sargent first visited Venice when he was less than one year old.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 95.

⁴⁵ Linda Ayres and Jane Myers. *American Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings from the Collection of Rita and Daniel Fraad*, (Forth Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1985), p. 28.

⁴⁶ Sally M. Promey. *Painting Religion in Public. John Singer Sargent's Triumph of Religion at the Boston Public Library*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 255. Examples of the use of veils or shrouds in Sargent's work include *Fumée d'Ambre Gris* (1880, Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts), *Sally Fairchild* (1890, Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago) and *Mrs. Gardner in White* (1922, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston).

⁴⁷ Bella H. Stillman, "Life in Moral Italy, II. The Citizen" *The Chautauquan* 11, no. 2 (May 1890), p. 17. Stillman indicated that the education of a young Italian girl was geared towards obtaining a husband and by going out alone a girl jeopardized her chances of finding a suitor.

⁴⁸ "Mr. Sargent at the Carfax Gallery," *Athenaeum* 121, (May 23, 1903), p. 665.

⁴⁹ Trevor Fairbrother, "American Art around 1900," p. 33, 24. Fairbrother notes that as with his earlier genre pictures, Sargent used models in Venice. The artist devoted at least one sheet of drawings to a man always seen wearing a fur-trimmed hat. Fairbrother assumes the model is a Venetian of the same class as the woman he is seen with, but he feels this man might also be a bohemian figure in the artist's circle. In his Venetian pastel, *Riva degli Schiavoni at Sunset* (1880, Fogg Museum of Art), Whistler featured a solitary, mysterious man with similar facial features, wearing a hat and a fur-trimmed cape and standing at a gondola mooring.

⁵⁰ Clarence Cook, "National Academy of Design 63rd Annual Exhibition, Second Notice," *The Studio* n.s. 3, no. 7 (June 1888), p. 112. This is the only time Sargent exhibited Venetian works at the National Academy of Design. The painting by Harry W. Hall that Cook refers to in his critique is entitled *Venetian Girl Sewing*, no. 344. Interestingly, Cook does not mention Frank Duveneck's *Venetian Washerwomen*, no. 373, which was also exhibited at this time and lent by T. P. Thorne. Maria Naylor, ed. *Exhibition Records of the National Academy of Design, 1861-1900*, 2 Volumes Vol. 1, A-L and Vol. 2, M-Z, (New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., New York, 1973).

⁵¹ Margaretta Lovell, "Modernist Interrogations of an Old World: John Singer Sargent's Venice," *Bolletino del Centro interuniversitario di recherche sul "Viaggio in Italia"*

C.I.R.V.I. 8, no. 1-2 (1987), p. 69.

⁵² Richard Ormond, "Modern Life Subjects," in *Sargent in Italy*, 2003, p. 75. Information relating to Sargent's Italian models is taken from this source, unless noted otherwise.

⁵³ Additional works by Sargent that portray his favorite model, Gigia Viani, include *Venetian Woman* (originally in the Joseph V. Reed Collection, Denver, CO) and his watercolor *Venetian Girl* (formerly in the Miss Emily Sargent Collection in London), both of which were probably painted in the same indoor location as his Venetian interior scenes flanked with bead stringers. Richard Ormond has noted that there is no contemporary confirmation of Gigia Viani's identity and that several women featured in his Venetian scenes are associated with this model, even though the women shown in his paintings clearly appear to represent different individuals. Ormond, "Modern Life Subjects," p. 75 and p. 79, footnote 26.

⁵⁴ *William Logsdail (1859-1944) – A Distinguished Painter*, (Lincoln: Usher Gallery, 1994), p. 38. In autumn 1880 Logsdail set out for Venice with the intention of studying color and extending his experience. Upon his arrival he took the first of five studios he was to have in Venice, in the Calle Capuzzi.

⁵⁵ "Martin Brimmer Letters," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Reel D32, Frame 184. Lovell, 1984, p. 95.

⁵⁶ Ormond, *John Singer Sargent*, 1998, p. 78.

⁵⁷ Lovell, "Modernist Interrogations of an Old World: John Singer Sargent's Venice," p. 64.

⁵⁸ John Wilson, *Masterpieces of American Painting from the Cincinnati Art Museum*, November 19, 1991 – January 5, 1992, Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum, p. 20. Wilson also mentions that the size of *A Venetian Girl*, together with Sargent's correspondence, suggest that the painting was intended for submission to the Paris Salon of 1883. However, the painting was never exhibited and remained in Venice in the possession of the artist's cousins at the Palazzo Barbaro. The painting was owned and purchased by various members of Sargent's family until it was acquired by the Cincinnati Art Museum in 1872. Upon seeing the painting again at the Palazzo Barbaro in 1913, Sargent is said to have commented, "I have never painted a better head."

⁵⁹ Howells, pp. 360/362.

⁶⁰ This valid argument was expressed to the author by Kevin Avery, December 2003.

⁶¹ Lovell, 1984, pp. 97-98.

⁶² Fairbrother, *Sargent the Sensualist*, p. 116.

⁶³ Ormond, *Sargent and Italy*, p. 75.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 76; and Fairbrother, *Sargent the Sensualist*, pp. 155, 161 and 164.

⁶⁵ Fairbrother, "American Art around 1900," pp. 36-37.

⁶⁶ Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent, The Sensualist*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 56/59. Fairbrother mentions that the boldness of the pictorial space in Venice sparks Sargent's interest in Impressionist elements, such as the cropped perspectives that often characterized the pictures of Gustave Caillebotte, Mary Cassatt, Edgar Degas and Auguste Renoir.

⁶⁷ Lovell, *Venice: The American View 1860-1920*, p. 39.

CHAPTER 4

Venetians in Prayer

The religious practices of Italian peasants had changed little since the Middle Ages. An article on “Life in Modern Italy,” written in 1890 stated

Many of the rites are reminiscences of the old pagan ceremonies, such as the carrying of the miraculous images of the Madonna from one village to another The peasants believe most sincerely in the miracle-working images, in ghosts, visions, and all things supernatural. Statues of saints are reported to have turned aside in horror at sacrilegious deeds, and the accounts are seriously printed in the local papers. The people are completely priest ridden.¹

Religion played a major role in the lives of the Venetian people, who celebrated many *feste* (festivals) honoring numerous saints and holy days and were often seen praying before chapels and shrines decorated with statues of the saints. Together with their daily chores and labor, attendance at Mass was of great importance to Venetian women in particular, especially in the 1880s, when a number of events reinforced their religious beliefs.

As examined in Chapter 1, the reasons for the new emphasis on religious subject matter and the catalysts that brought about striking changes in the social and cultural atmosphere of Venice and of Italy in general are due to several factors. They include the terror inflicted by the cholera outbreaks, the recent unification of Italy, and the Catholic subculture that remained an important part of northern Italy.

Following a discussion of the American artist’s reaction to Catholicism, this chapter is divided into two sections that relate to the types of scenes that were popular

with the American artists in the late 1870s and 1880s, beginning with interior scenes of the Basilica of St. Mark, followed by images of outdoor shrines, especially those painted on the island of Chioggia.

Earlier American artists who visited Europe depicted very few, if any, Italian religious subjects, aside from copies by the old masters, with the exception of Daniel Huntington. This lack of interest in religious genre imagery may be associated with the general anti-Catholic sentiment that existed in the United States, where the majority of the population was Protestant and distrusted the Pope's leadership of the Roman Catholic Church. In contrast, American painting placed greater emphasis on a different form of spirituality, one witnessed through the beauty of nature, and presented in the landscape paintings of the Hudson River School. The social commentary on Catholicism and its absurdity was better served by cartoon illustrations, published during the second half of the nineteenth century in response to the Catholic Church's actions.

PROTESTANT REACTION TO CATHOLICISM

In December 1864, just at the time the Civil War had taken on an almost mystical significance as a struggle for human liberty and social progress, Pope Pius IX established a syllabus of "the principal errors of our time," and insisted on the dominance of the Church in matters of culture, science, and education.² He bluntly proclaimed: "It is an error to believe that the Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself to, and agree with, progress, liberalism, and contemporary civilization." Following this declaration,

the Pope consolidated his power at a Vatican Council that met from December 1869 to October 1870, the first such gathering in three hundred years. The Council resulted in the dogma of Papal Infallibility in matters of faith and morals that further alienated the judgment of Protestants. The strongest voice for Americans came in the form of articles as presented in *Harper's Weekly*, which was filled with articles detailing the evils of Catholic power abroad and at home – sentiments shared and perpetuated by illustrator and social commentator Thomas Nast (1840-1902).³

Nast's anti-Catholicism was rooted in his German Protestant upbringing and his intellectual maturation at a time when anticlerical Liberalism was strong in America. The old prejudices contributed to the sense that the Church posed a deadly challenge to Nast's social beliefs and he feared the Pope was planning to preside over the United States, as seen in two of his cartoons, one entitled "Excommunication of Modern Civilization. Galileo of the 19th Century. 'But Nevertheless It Does Move' " (December 25, 1869) and the other featured above the heading "'The Promised Land,' as Seen from the Dome of Saint Peter's Rome" (October 1, 1870) (Fig. 4.1). This second example portrays the Pope as a greedy man gleefully pointing to the not so distant New World. He overshadows the other religious figures accompanying him, and is figuratively supported by a huge crucifix. These powerful cartoons supplied strong anti-Catholic sentiment that easily spread throughout the nation.

While the American artists were not particularly religious, it is difficult to determine if they were observant of their own Anglo-Protestant beliefs during their sojourns in Venice, since existing documents and letters do not reveal if they attended

services. Twenty years earlier it would have been virtually impossible to attend a Protestant service in Italy, but by the 1880s the attitudes and obstacles that had hindered the progress of Protestantism in the past were reformed or obliterated. In 1880 *The New York Times* reports in an article, entitled “Protestants in Italy. Progress of Missionary Work since Religious Liberty was Established,” that The Methodist Episcopal Church had begun to establish missions in Italy in 1871, but that active missionary work did not begin until the spring of 1873 for

It was with great difficulty that halls could be rented for preaching the Gospel. The priests interfered, and owners of property dared not brave their anger. But to-day [sic] Protestant congregations are organized in Perugia, Bologna, Venice, Milan, Modena, Pisa, Florence, Naples, and Rome, and in all of these places the missionaries have been encouraged in their work by many conversions.⁴

Regardless of their personal beliefs, American artists were intrigued by the strong faith they witnessed in the congregations of Venetian churches, manifested, for example, in the praying of the rosary and devotion to special saints, who were thought to provide certain favors upon humble request. These churches also housed some of the most important art works created by the Renaissance and Mannerist masters and offered renditions of the most magnificent liturgical music. According to the notes of Duveneck’s biographer, Norbert Heermann, “the boys all haunted the Catholic Church for pictorial tone and music.”⁵ St. Mark’s alone could boast of its magnificent golden Byzantine mosaics, some in the atrium, baptistery and chapels of the basilica, dating from the twelfth century or later, and its colorful marble floor, designed to imitate Turkish carpets.

The casual visitor to Venice may not have been aware of the powerful influence the Church still exerted on the Italian people, for some writers commented on the lack of religious observance they encountered in Italy. An anonymous writer of 1889 believed

The irreligion of the Italians is by this time a byword for Europe. Yet I fancy that if the peasantry and artisans of Italy had the same chance of telling the world how their sympathies run as their betters, who claim to guide them, we should hear less of this irreligiousness. They are not less religious than of yore, but more intelligent. They are more troubled by doubts, and less convinced by the old priestly half-menacing reminder that a doubt is brother-in-law to a sin. That there is error somewhere they are at least beginning to perceive, dimly or less dimly. This error, however, is not in the Church herself; it is only in the hierarchy.⁶

The religious genre images painted in Venice in the 1880s do not appear to allude to these political issues or contain hidden messages. Yet it is clear that the artists were aware of a pervasive religious sentiment displayed on a regular basis by the Venetian people, especially the lower classes, which visitors encountered in the church interiors and at outdoor shrines.

Nonetheless, many forms of popular Catholic religiosity were reinforced during the nineteenth century, from the devotion to various saints or particular objects of veneration – such as the Sacred Heart, the Madonna, or Saint Anthony of Padova – to assorted pilgrimage sites and the mystical use of various sacred objects. In addition, the huge numbers of pamphlets that instructed the devout in the mysteries of the rosary, the catechism, and special prayers, or provided words to accompany the holy images, were even more effective as literacy spread throughout the country.⁷

For the most part, many of the American and European visitors to Venice were

Protestant, and observed with interest not only the artwork in the city's churches, but also the devoted followers of Catholicism. Henry James describes what many writers and artists most probably felt when they entered a church in Italy and witnessed the congregation in prayer. In his tale "Traveling Companions" James expresses his opinion through the character of Mr. Brooke, who has accompanied a young aspiring artist named Charlotte Evans to Padua. As the two have entered the Church of Saint Anthony together, Mr. Brooke comments:

What a real pity that we are not Catholics; that that dazzling monument is not something more to us than a mere splendid show! What a different thing this visiting churches would be for us, if we occasionally felt the prompting to fall on our knees. I begin to grow ashamed of the perpetual attitude of bald curiosity.

Upon witnessing an Italian couple praying together in the church, Mr. Brooke envies them: "Be they husband and wife, or lovers, or simply friends, we, I think, are rather vulgar beside them."⁸

One does not know with certainty if the non-Catholic, American artists also felt this way, but the fact that some of them chose to depict Venetians in prayer, often from the perspective of an observer, suggests a willingness to understand the religious devotion that they bore witness at the time. Genre painters depicted their figures as if they had been caught unaware in the midst of prayer, but in actuality the artists worked primarily from models who were everywhere and needed not be professional to suit their fancy. Annette Calthrop, writing in 1885, commented on the use of the interior of Venetian churches as common backgrounds for figure painters working in Venice. She

writes:

. . . [The artist] is at liberty to pose his models upon the spot, to try the effect, let us say, of a solitary figure, kneeling in utter self-abandonment, before an image of the Madonna, or to arrange a group of children whose merry faces betray heedlessness of the meaning of their whispered words, as they hurry through a few prayers, around a glimmering lamp, below a crucifix. The priest of the church has only the one stipulation to make, that models and artists should desist from work during mass and vespers . . .⁹

The church interior provided an authentic setting equipped with the required religious imagery, while focusing on another important aspect of the life of the common Venetian woman when she is not at work stringing beads, making lace or performing daily chores.

One common link among these images of religious devotion depicted by the genre artists in Venice, whether set in the more traditional church interior as individuals attended mass or prayed, or alongside a water shrine, is the strong presence of women. By far, the Italian women appear to have been more religious than the men and provided artists with the motifs they were seeking. Likewise, the women once again come under the scrutiny of the male gaze. James's tale, "Traveling Companions," is very telling when Miss. Evans's father is too tired to visit the roof of the Milan Cathedral and comments: "I confess that I'm about played out. I'd far rather sit here and watch these pretty Italian ladies saying their prayers."¹⁰ A bit later in the same church, an Italian woman approaches Mr. Brooke and Miss. Evans and acknowledges: "You were watching me at my prayers just now; you thought me very curious, apparently. I don't care. You may see me here any day."¹¹ It was the same curiousness that may have prompted the American artists working in Venice to devote drawings, etchings and

paintings to these religious subjects. These subjects in effect provided the perfect souvenir picture for the art patron who was interested in the Venetian experience: the locals conducting their rituals.

In an article on “Venice,” published in November 1882 for *The Century Magazine*, James again makes a telling remark when he mentions:

There are moments, after all, when the church is comparatively quiet and empty, when you may sit there with an easy consciousness of its beauty. From the moment, of course, that you go into an Italian church for any purpose but to say your prayers, or look at the ladies, you rank yourself among the trooping barbarians I just spoke of; you treat the place like an orifice in a peep-show. Still it is almost a spiritual function,—or, at the worst, an amorous one,—to feel one’s eyes on the mighty color that drops from the hollow vaults and thickens the air with its richness.¹²

The emptiness James described evokes a lack of reverent attendance; and the rest of the passage elicits the sense of the church as a trysting place. Thus the basilica’s interior became a stage of sorts for its visitors. For the average tourist its appeal ranged from mild curiosity about the rituals that some may have considered fanatical, to admiration of the attractive women who attended Mass and said their prayers, to the appreciation of the marvelous artwork that covered the walls.

The Italian genre artists tended to be more familiar than their American counterparts with the annual traditions and processions associated with particular holidays and therefore depicted more detailed and personal images. There are, however, several noteworthy examples of religious genre scenes painted by American artists that evoke the somber spirituality experienced in the magnificent Basilica of St. Mark and by the simple waterside shrines.

INTERIORS OF ST. MARK'S

The Basilica of St. Mark is by far the most famous church in Venice and a tourist attraction for visitors of all religions. It was built as a shrine to St. Mark, the Evangelist, who was martyred and first buried in Alexandria, Egypt, in 57 A.D.. While suffering in prison, Christ appeared to Mark and uttered the words now engraved in the center of the city: "*Pax tibi, Marce, evangelista meus*" (Peace to thee, Mark, my Evangelist). The Venetians stole the remains of the saint in 829 and brought them to Venice. The basilica was constructed soon after the arrival of the remains; the city's former patron saint, San Teodoro, was demoted and St. Mark was installed in his place, with his lion as the city's emblem.¹³ The lion of St. Mark, portrayed everywhere – on the basilica, the palace of government, the Campanile in the Piazza San Marco, and on the Clock Tower – served as an almost exclusive symbol of the city.¹⁴

As the epicenter of sacred space in Venice, St. Mark's remained a solemn place of prayer in the nineteenth century, even if the foreigners who flocked to visit it and walk within its mosaic-covered walls sometimes treated it as a tourist attraction instead. As noted in an article of 1889:

. . . every marble column in the basilica has its cripple, its hunchback, or its dwarf, who affrights the unwary . . . Knots of tourists, peering here and there with eyeglasses and binoculars, and dropping their 'Baedekers;' artists heroically painting pictures which all look like live vignettes in London fog; snuffling sacristans with divers [sic] strange legends upon their tongues, which they recount to new-comers for fivepences; the clicking of hammer and chisel from scaffolding overhead; the passage to and fro of large, loose-limbed priests . . . and the frequent chant from the choir, or the low, methodical hum of the clergy engaged in one of their many Lenten services, – these various

sights and sounds compose the impression left by the interior of the basilica.¹⁵

Another negative factor related to St. Mark's was the large amount of restoration work being completed on the exterior of the basilica. In 1882, Henry James wrote in his article for *Century Magazine*:

There is a great deal of dishonor about St. Mark's altogether, and if Venice, as I say, has become a great bazaar, this exquisite edifice is now the biggest booth. It is treated as a booth in all ways, and if it had not, somehow, a great spirit of solemnity within it, the traveler would soon have little warrant for regarding it as a religious affair. The restoration of the outer walls, which has lately been so much attacked and defended, is certainly a great shock. . . . Wherever the hand of the restorer has been laid, all semblance of beauty has vanished, which is a sad fact, considering that the external loveliness of St. Mark's has been for ages less impressive only than that of the still comparatively uninjured interior.¹⁶

Nevertheless, Saint Mark's Basilica remained one of the greatest sources of inspiration for generations of artists captivated by the luminosity of the magnificent mosaics and the overall grandeur of the church. Most of the interior paintings of this basilica avoid depicting throngs of people and instead tend to reflect on a solitary or isolated figure, as noted in Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*. He writes:

At every hour of the day there are groups collected before the various shrines, and solitary worshippers scattered through the darker places of the church, evidently in prayer, both deep and reverent, and for the most part, profoundly sorrowful. The devotees at the greater number of the renowned shrines of Romanism may be seen murmuring their appointed prayers with wandering eyes and unengaged gestures; but the step of the stranger does not disturb those who kneel on the pavement of St. Mark's . . .¹⁷

The American artists produced a number of works showing peasant figures praying in a church interior, specifically in St. Mark's Cathedral. Earlier examples include George Yewell's *Interior of St. Mark's*, painted ca. 1873, Duveneck's *Interior of St. Mark's, Venice* of 1878, Chase's *Interior of St. Mark's* of ca. 1879 and Bacher's *San Marco* (Fig. 4.2) of 1879, and Theodore Wores's *Interior of St. Mark's* (Fig. 4.3) of 1880.¹⁸ Following this group, Bacher painted two oils of the subject – *Inside Saint Mark's Cathedral* (Fig. 4.4), known through a photograph, and *Interior of St. Mark's, Venice* of 1884, recognized through a painted etching (Fig. 4.5).

Other American artists intrigued by St. Mark's include Robert Blum, who painted *Morning in St. Mark's* (Fig. 4.6), Charles Ulrich, whose unlocated painting of *The Ceremony of Washing the Feet, in St. Mark's, Venice*, is known only through a description of the work written at the time of its exhibition at the National Academy of Design in 1887, and Edwin Blashfield (1848-1936) with his *Interior of St. Mark's, Venice*.¹⁹ An unlocated interior scene of St. Mark's was also painted by Ralph Wormely Curtis and exhibited at the Salon of 1885.

Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891), who began visiting Venice in 1867 and resided at Casa Fumagalli, painted *St. Mark's, Venice, Madonna del Bacio* (Fig. 4.7) in 1882 at around the same time that other artists were also working on similar scenes of the Venetian people in prayer in St. Mark's Basilica. This work is a rare example of a religious painting by the French artist, who is best known for his historical scenes. The architectural elements and intricate parquetry floor of the basilica are rendered so meticulously that one is able to count the number of tiles and cracks in the floor.

Supposedly, Meissonier vowed never to sell this painting:

Oh! this picture of the *Madonna del Bacio*, how I love it! I would not sell it for anything that could be offered me! If it were burnt, I should feel as if a piece of my flesh had been torn away. Sometimes when I was at work at St. Mark's, it was so dark that I went to the door from time to time with my picture to see what I had painted in the dim light. I wanted to show by the kneeling woman's gesture that she is tormented by passion, and the calm priest, who came in by chance one day, unwittingly supplied the contrast I at once seized.²⁰

This work, among the first paintings of the interior of St. Mark's by Meissonier, was followed by several additional versions by the French artist.

Harper Pennington relates how he and other members of the Duveneck "Boys" would stalk Wagner, the composer, and Meissonier, both short, stout men, and that the French artist "worked for hours with a tiny box and brushes. He grew very cross when anyone came within ten feet of him, hid his box, and growled audibly. . . . Some of the more audacious would sometimes pretend to be sketching him. At that he always fled, snarling." Aside from the annoyances the artist encountered while working, Meissonier painted at least three additional oil paintings of interiors of St. Mark's from 1882 to 1888. These paintings focused on combinations of worshipers in different parts of the Byzantine church. His renditions of St. Mark's and the activity that occurred within its walls are sentimental, but they indicate an awareness of the idiosyncrasies of the basilica and its worshippers that the Americans then lacked.

Before turning to Meissonier's paintings of St. Mark's, it is important to mention the role of the clergy in providing access to church interiors. After twenty years of painting inside various churches, Alexander Roussoff was able to offer some insight into

the artist's experience of working in Venetian churches and the clergy that tended to them. He praised the priests for their amiability toward the painters who

. . . were shut up in the churches from midday until five o'clock, and during that time were absolute masters, except in the Church of the Frari, where the guardians stayed throughout the afternoon waiting for tourists and their tips. In all other churches the guardians went off and shut the doors with a double lock. I wish I were a poet to be able to describe one's feelings when left alone within those old walls, which during untold centuries have been silent witnesses of joyous and poignant scenes of human life. . . . No where else can a painter find more favorable opportunities for his work, absolute absence of noise and of people who come in and out and annoy by their presence, and the delight of finding one's subject each day under the same conditions and under the same aspects of light and shade.²¹

One of Roussoff's better-known works is his *Child's Funeral in Chioggia* (Fig. 1.14), about which he commented in his *Memoirs*. The artist further reflected on his experience of working in Chioggia for one month:

The day after my installation I went to the Church about ten o'clock with my easel, paper and colours. . . . Anyone who wished, could come in, as the folding doors of the church were only separated from the road by a curtain. The congregation consisted of very few people, and these people sat behind me on the benches in order to watch my painting. I was in the way of the priests, and they bowed very amiably to me each time they passed . . . Just opposite me was a confessional where I often saw women kneeling, waiting for the priest, who would then come out of the sacristy and gravely walk across the Church; but before going into the confessional, he would turn towards me and bow from afar.²²

It was probably in Chioggia that Roussoff also painted his *At the Confessional* (Figure 4.8), another religious subject that was not explored by American painters – the theme of penitence. While the American artists did not deeply ponder over the role of religion in the lives of the Venetian people, Roussoff offered his audience a touch of sentimental

reality that appealed to his English patrons. *At the Confessional* juxtaposes an elderly beggar seated at the foot of the penitence stall with a younger woman about to enter the booth. These women represent the importance of atonement in any stage of life and the hand of the priest hearing confession has a stark and harsh presence – the judging hand of God.

In 1882 Meissonier painted *Venice*, described as an interior of St. Mark's, in which worshippers kneel as mass is being said at the Miraculous Chapel; next followed *Saint Mark's, Venice; the Madonna dell' Scoppio* of 1887 with two women and a man praying before the Virgin, with a beggar woman at the corner of the pillar, a group of worshipers at the shrine of the Miraculous Virgin, and an old man standing with his hand on the third pillar, to the left of which the holy water basin at the entrance opens onto the square of the lions; lastly, the following year, in 1888, Meissonier painted *Saint Mark's, Venice*, a sketch on panel that shows priests officiating and worshipers kneeling during mass in the Miraculous Chapel.²³

William Merritt Chase's painting of St. Mark's (unlocated) was among the earliest examples by an American artist and was mentioned in an art review of The Society of American Artist's exhibition of 1881 as having been painted in Venice and displaying the following qualities:

In color this picture is remarkably fine, and in handling it is admirable. The textures—of the veined marble, and of the metal lamps which the old sacristan is cleaning, and of all the different accessories—are rendered with a power that is as various as impartial in its manifestations. Without being at all minute, as the word is commonly understood, the treatment is detailed to a greater degree than in any of the works to which I have already referred. Yet no atom of unity or breadth has been sacrificed in the process.²⁴

Otto Bacher also used St. Mark's interior as an important backdrop. For instance, the praying figure in his painted etching of the *Interior of St. Mark's, Venice* is a minor detail in this work, in this marvelous rendering of the marble columns and flickering mosaics found in the basilica. The "Art Notes" from the New York periodical, *The Art Review*, of December 1886 verifies that this impressive work was created in the church itself and that during its progress, Bacher "had the great advantage of the friendly suggestions of Meissonier, who was spending the winter in Venice." The short article continues to praise Bacher for catching "the true Byzantine flavor that all who have entered the great church must remember; the sheen, and almost the color, of the precious old marble are happily rendered, and the general effect is grandiose and vast."²⁵

Bacher's unlocated painting of *Inside St. Mark's Cathedral* (Fig. 4.4) is very similar to an etching he made of the same subject (Fig. 4.5). The etching *San Marco* places more emphasis on the female figure than *Interior of St. Mark's Cathedral* by presenting a close view of a woman kneeling at the Shrine of the Virgin. It makes little reference to the worshipers in the background and omits the figure of the small child who appears in the painting. Blum also rendered the pose and garb of a woman wearing a shawl around her shoulders in a drawing, labeled *St. Mark's* (Fig. 4.9), in the collection of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design in New York; however, a related finished work by Blum has not been located. This figure's attire identifies her as part of the Venetian lower class and her anonymity allows her private devotion.

A precursor to the American versions of church interiors is an early work by Favretto, *Women in the Church* (Fig. 4.10) of 1876 that explores the religious experience

and piety of the rich versus the poor. In *Women in the Church*, Favretto focuses on two fashionably dressed figures, one a young woman idly seated and distracted by something unseen on her right and a kneeling woman dressed in black with hands clasped in front of her face. The contrast in emotion is striking and may capture the tourist as opposed to the Venetian native's religious experience. The physical comportment of the two women informs the viewer that one figure is a casual spectator, coming to church to be "worshipped" and painted by the artist, while the other is a remorseful believer and true worshipper.

In the works of Italian artist Luigi Nono, there is a greater attentiveness to the emotional feelings of his sitters, even when the artist does not portray a devotional subject. In his *In Church* (Fig. 4.11) painted in 1881 and sometimes referred to as *Mass of Maria*, Nono renders his figures from the perspective of a nearby worshipper. The woman and child are beautifully portrayed in a series of shades of red and brown. The work was probably painted in Saint Pantaleon's Church, which was located near the Palazzo Dolfin where Nono lived and worked.²⁶ More importantly, the painting is dominated by female figures representative of the lower classes. The woman and child depicted in the middle foreground are shown in profile and are reminiscent of the Madonna and child types painted during the Renaissance. The girl crouched on the lower right sits in a penitent pose that Nono used for his figure in *Refugium Peccatorum*, while the central figure holding her baby provided the initial idea for the impressive standing figure in *Ave Maria*, mentioned below.²⁷

Two additional church interiors were painted by Ludgwig Passini and illustrated

in an article of 1887 in *The Magazine of Art – At Mass and The Procession of the Host* (Fig. 4.12).²⁸ *At Mass* is a straightforward rendition of the service with the celebrant's (the priest's) back turned to the congregation. Among the predominately all-female congregation, is one male – possibly a fisherman – located in the center of the painting. *The Procession of the Host* depicts the interior of the Church of the “Frari, where a priest is leaving the sacristy to take the holy wafer to some dying person.”²⁹ This work displays a dynamic composition, typical of the mass departure from the church after the completion of the service. According to Percy Pinkerton, the painting was created for an “exalted personage,” who criticized Passini's positioning of the face of an old woman on the left. She wears an elegant paisley shawl and holds a fan as she bows her head in prayer, or possibly in despair. Her face is not visible to the spectator, and the patron, who went to see it, asked Passini to alter the work. Passini refused. Finally, although his patron wanted to purchase the painting, the artist delivered the picture to a dealer.³⁰

Although it is not clear whether the American artists were even familiar with either of the two works by Passini that are mentioned here, his religious subject paintings could be seen in the United States. One of his watercolors, entitled *Mass in an Italian Church at Chioggia, near Venice* of 1879, had been exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1879 and was on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1886 through 1903 and was described as an “interior of a church, with a priest in white and gold chasuble standing before the altar at the right; figures of peasants kneeling in prayer in the pews, two smiling children in the left foreground.”³¹ This description applies to *At Mass* and may refer to that work. In any case, it is clear that Passini was interested in presenting large

groups of figures and focusing on their varying expressions of concentration or distraction.

In contrast, the church interiors in most of the American works are very grandiose, even when the artist concentrates on one particular corner of St. Mark's, but they do not document the congregation's experience of attending mass. For instance, Bacher's praying figures are shown isolated, standing away from the crowds that gathered in St. Mark's. The vast ceilings and decorative elements of the basilica, which are true to the actual architectural features of the church, isolate and humble his figures. By this disparity of scale, Bacher may be suggesting a physical and spiritual separation of man from God. However, it does not appear that Bacher, or the American artists of other, unlocated works (known through published descriptions), had a hidden political agenda or social statement to make. This lack of commentary is interesting for at the same time St. Mark's was undergoing a controversial restoration process.

In the 1880s, while sections of St. Mark's were being restored, other churches all over Italy were likewise being conserved. Architects were turning medieval fragments into Neogothic wholes, and giving medieval finishes to buildings that had never had them.³² In Venice, these restoration projects had been underway for decades while the city was still under Austrian rule. The basilica of St. Mark's received the most attention, both nationally and internationally. The northern façade was under repair for twenty years, from 1843 until 1865, and the southern façade, overlooking the Piazzetta, for ten years, from 1865 until 1875.³³

In addition, much of the original Oriental marble revetment was replaced with

newly quarried *verde di susa* and Verona marble; the protruding back altar of the Cappella Zeno (Zen Chapel, the funeral chapel for Cardinal Giovanni Battista Zeno) was removed; and the marble columns and porticos were cleaned with abrasives. Inside the church, the deteriorating twelfth-century mosaics of the Cappella Zeno were replaced with modern copies, and the cracked and uneven marble pavement of the north aisle was dug up and relaid with mosaics supplied by the Anglo-Italian firm of Salviati.

Although none of the interiors of St. Mark's depicted by the American artists in the 1880s show evidence of the ongoing conservation in the church, the *Macchiaioli* often used similar settings to express their opinions. For example Beppe Abbati's *The Cloister of Santa Croce* of ca. 1862 (Fig. 4.13), calls attention to the construction work taking place in the Florentine church at the time the picture was painted. Alberti's painting depicts a few monks strolling along the cloister enveloped in shadows, contrasting those figures against the bright light that shines onto the workers carting blocks of marble and stones. Albert Boime considers Abbati's approach to Santa Croce as

. . . a remarkable case of artistic and philosophic self-restraint, consistent with the understatement and objectivity of the *macchia* in general. . . . As against the stereotypical view of the monastic *vita contemplativa*, Abbati asserted its dialectical and ideological counterpart, *vita activa*, as a force for change.³⁴

Unlike the Venetian church scenes, the works of the *Macchiaioli* display a conscious effort to avoid the conventional approach to church imagery. The Venetian scenes represent the personal experience of the worshipper, irrespective of the debates surrounding the restoration of St. Mark's, and record the beauty of the church interior's

architectural and geometric elements. The American images only allude to the presence of peasant worshipers, marginal figures in society, who nonetheless are close to God.

For example, Blum's *Morning in St. Mark's*, featured as an illustration (reversed) in Henry James's article "Venice" quoted above, is a horizontal composition in which the human presence is barely noticeable on the right hand side. The haziness of the church may refer on a physical level to the incense the priests were so fond of burning, and on a spiritual level on the dreamlike atmosphere of the church. This work recalls the work of Whistler, as well as Sargent's later painting, known as *Pavement of St. Mark's* (Private Collection) of 1898, which is completely devoid of any human presence and focuses on the crumbling marble floor of the basilica. The deterioration of the pavement refers to the ongoing debate between the benefits of conservation verses preservation, and may also indicate the artist's belief that Venice could not escape the state of deterioration even within the sacred church walls.

It was this sense of decay that attracted the Symbolist painters to Venice – the new Byzantium. The Symbolists enjoyed the decrepitude of the palaces, the vapors rising from the lagoons and the alternating dull and bright hues.³⁵ The goal of these artists was to return to the purity which some believed to have existed in the Middle Ages. The agony of Byzantium offered religion as an attraction, for the Church offered a sumptuous and sacred setting and all the riches of liturgical vocabulary. With the exception of Sargent, none of the American artists associated Venice with death and the mystical world, for they were more concerned with the technical challenges of depicting St. Mark's Byzantine mosaics and highly decorated walls than with its spiritual

connotations.

Blum's work becomes more impressionist at this time, experimenting with the contrast of light and dark tonalities to convey architectural forms and figures. Specific references to Blum's experience while sketching and painting in St. Mark's have not been discovered, but art historian Bruce Weber referred to a letter of May 19, 1880 written by the artist regarding his visit to the Vatican. During his stay in Rome, Blum remarked facetiously, and with a hint of his Evangelical upbringing, that when he visited the Vatican, the Pope did not give him a private audience. The artist also chided the Italians for their poor treatment of local priests, who were required to serve a mandatory term in the Italian army, and Catholics for their ritualistic "knee bending in church."³⁶ Blum's drawing of *St. Mark's* (Fig. 4.9) studies exactly this type of kneeling figure.

Perhaps the richest example of Catholic ways and tradition is Ulrich's *Ceremony of the Washing of the Feet* (unlocated), described in *The Studio's* review of the National Academy of Design's Sixty-Second Annual Exhibition of 1887 as having

. . . some good points, but has the serious defect of being less a picture than a statement of fact. As this ceremony . . . is a ceremony pure and simple – a mere blown egg, so to speak; there was no necessity of our knowing anything about it but the picturesque side. We do not need to be told how many legs these twelve beggars have, nor who of them has one stocking off and one stocking on. Titian or Veronese, or any other great painter, would have given us the whole affair, without further burdening us with so much as a single fact to carry home. We have no rooted objection to facts. Only, if we must have them in a picture, we like them as much smothered as possible in beautiful color, spirited drawing, delightful composition and other dainties properly belonging to art.³⁷

Ulrich alone chose to paint such a specific subject. In contrast, Sargent usually stopped

at the entrance of the churches he visited; and Whistler did not paint a single church interior.

Sargent's painting *Sortie de l'Eglise, Campo San Canciano, Venice* (Fig. 4.14) of 1880-1882, which also exists as an etching, shows three women grouped together, who are donning their typical black shawls and are probably the same models seen in his Venetian interior scenes. The identification of the church was probably not of great importance to Sargent, who appears more interested in displaying the dispersal of the church-goers after mass. The only other religious works by Sargent are illustrations for a volume of "Spanish and Italian Folk-Songs," published by Miss Alma Strettell in 1887, which includes "a quaint image of the Madonna such as Southern peasants worship," and a Crucifixion.³⁸ Although Sargent's painting does not depict St. Mark's or its surroundings, which was probably too familiar for his taste, these images reveal the artist's preference for the cursory aspects of church-going rather than the actual act of attending Mass. Sargent selected a nondescript church for his backdrop that is more humble and does not display the ostentatious elegance of St. Mark's.

Nonetheless, many artists considered St. Mark's to be the model Venetian church and they were drawn to it, almost as if it were a mandatory subject for their portfolios. No other church represents Venice quite so well as St. Mark's, with all of its grandeur and decrepitude, juxtaposing the old with the new, and the exotic with the sacral. James Jackson Jarves summed up the significance of St. Mark's Basilica to the American reader by writing the following: "From the first glimpse to the latest study, deeper at each look, it stirs the heart and imagination far more than the intellect and religious sentiment. San

Marco is something more than faith, more than history—more than even a poem. It is all three combined with art, archaeology, tradition, grace, and music . . .”³⁹

OUTDOOR SHRINES AND CHIOGGIA

Prior to the 1880s, the primary American painter of Italian scenes of a religious nature was Samuel F. B. Morse, who traveled to Europe in the late 1820s and produced several outdoor paintings of peasants praying before the shrine at Subiaco, Italy in 1830. Subiaco is a small town located in central Italy that was once part of the Papal States and is home of the Benedictine Order, founded in the early sixth century. To this day, it is a popular pilgrimage site, yet none of this history is indicated in Morse’s work. His *Chapel of the Virgin at Subiaco* (Fig. 4.15) is shown from a distance with its worshippers portrayed as mere silhouettes. A slightly later version – *Contadina at Shrine of the Virgin* (Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond) – focuses on a young woman whose face and body is shown in profile, in pose recalling the Renaissance portraits painted by Piero della Francesca. This later work is more intimate, due to the closeness of the subject to the viewer, but it lacks the spiritual sentiment one would expect in such a setting.

In May 1831 Morse spent two months in Venice, where, at the request of his brother-in-law, Charles Walter, he copied Jacopo Tintoretto’s *The Miracle of the Slave* of 1548 in the collection of the Accademia (Museum of Fine Art, Boston), originally painted for the Scuola Grande of San Marco.⁴⁰ There appears to be no other indication

that Morse was concentrating on religious, or even genre subjects at this time. In July 1831, Morse left Venice and traveled to Milan. It was at this time that he witnessed a service in the Cathedral in Milan and commented about Catholicism: “It is a religion of the imagination . . . architecture, painting, sculpture, music, have lent all their charm to enchant the senses and impose on the understanding by substituting for the solemn truths of God’s Word, which are addressed to the understanding, the fictions of poetry and delusion of feeling.”⁴¹ This attitude was common among many artists and writers who continued to visit Italy and observe religious services and ceremonies for the next five decades.

Morse’s disapproval of Catholic liturgical practices was accompanied a few years later by an aversion to Catholicism as a political institution. His anti-Catholic and anti-foreign sentiments were expressed in a series of articles printed in the *New-York Observer*, republished as *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States* (1835), *Imminent Dangers* (1835) an anti-immigrant pamphlet, and *Confessions of a French Catholic Priest* (1837).⁴² Nevertheless, Morse’s shrine paintings do not appear to have influenced the American artists painting Venetian shrine images more than fifty years later in Chioggia.

Chioggia is an island located near Venice, known for its fishing port and which provided many models for the genre scenes painted by the American artists, including Frank Duveneck. It is perhaps best known as the childhood home of the eighteenth-century portrait painter Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757) and a place frequented by the Italian playwright Carlo Goldoni, who resided in Chioggia with his family between 1725

and 1729. One of Goldoni's best plays is *Baruffe Chiozzote*, written in 1760, and based on the experience of the Chioggian woman during that period.

Chioggia's outdoor shrine was one of the most distinctive, but such water shrines were visible throughout the Grand Canal. The landings for the *traghetto* each had a shrine with a dim picture of the Madonna lit by a little lamp, and a small wooden hut against the wall of the nearest house, in which the boatmen would take refuge in inclement weather.⁴³ Known as the *Refugium Peccatorum*, Chioggia's marble statue, located on a balustrade on the southern side of Cathedral of Chioggia's *Sagraeto* (little church yard), displays a tall sculpture of the Madonna and child covered by a golden cupola. The statue, along with the balustrade was originally placed on the steps in front of the ancient Town Hall, subsequently demolished in 1814. Legend has it that criminals condemned to death used to stop before this statue to recite their last prayer.⁴⁴

The locals, who were performing an act of penance, frequented the site throughout the late nineteenth century. As such, it appears that the image of people praying before this statue of the Madonna and Child impressed at least one American artist – Otto Bacher. Bacher is known to have visited Chioggia, where he lived with Henry Rosenberg and a local schoolteacher for one month, and where they witnessed a fisherman seated in the market place reading Tasso to a group of peasants.⁴⁵ He probably painted *The Madonna, Chioggia*, discussed below, during this sojourn on the island.

The religious desired the forgiveness of God and invoked the help of the saints and prayed to the Virgin Mary, the most revered saint of all. The role of the Madonna in

the Catholic faith is manifold. Foremost, she is known as Mary the mother of Jesus, the mother of God, and as a nurturer. As explained by Richard Tarnas, in *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Mary stands as the supreme example of the virtues characteristic of the Christian ethos – purity and chastity, tenderness and modesty, simplicity, inner beauty, moral innocence, unselfish devotion and surrender to the divine will.⁴⁶ The Virgin Mary is also identified with the Church, and thus is not only the embodiment of Christian humanity but also the nourishing mother within whom all Christians could be encompassed, protected and guided. For the Venetians, the Madonna was held in special esteem as their personal protector from the plagues that had ravaged the city throughout history. It was this “idolatry of the Virgin Mary” to which Samuel Morse objected even though he painted several views of her shrine at Subiaco, on the outskirts of Rome.

Morse was in Italy during the early months of 1830 and maintained a journal in which he recorded his complex response to Catholicism. He remarked on the “monotonous bawling” of priests, condemned cardinals for deferentially kissing the Pope’s toes, and was offended by the Vatican monks who begged for alms. In addition to this negative attitude to Roman Catholics, Morse was shocked by the erotic frescos of Pompeii, and thereby concluded that Italians possessed “the most depraved state of morals.”⁴⁷ He was attracted to the majestic architecture and the pageantry, especially the music, but his Calvinist mentality rebelled against these distractions from devotion.⁴⁸

Morse painted at least two genre scenes at Subiaco, *Chapel of the Virgin at Subiaco* of 1830 (Fig. 4.15) and *Contadina at the Shrine of the Virgin*, also of 1830 (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond), mentioned above. Both of these works

include the monastery of San Benedetto in the background and juxtapose the image of the praying individuals against the awe-inspiring and vast landscape. The picturesque elements of the shrine's location enticed the artist who described the shrine in a letter: "This chapel stands by the side of the road upon a hill east of Subiaco, and is a good example of those shrines before which the contadini (peasant workers) bow the knee, and worship the virgin; in the distance is the town of Subiaco."⁴⁹ The painting emphasizes the fragility of humanity by juxtaposing the tiny figures and the enormous, enveloping landscape.

Among the other American and English artists who depicted shrine paintings are Rhoda Holmes Nicholls, known to have exhibited *A Gondoliers Shrine, Venice*, no. 526 at the National Academy of Design in 1884, and who provided the watercolor illustration of *A Shrine in Chioggia* (Fig. 4.16) for William Dean Howells's 1891 edition of *Venetian Life*; and Bacher, who also exhibited a work called *St. Mark's Shrine* no. 178 at the NAD in 1884.⁵⁰ The grandiose eighteenth-century balustrade that surrounds the approach to the Campo del Vescovado beside the Cathedral of Chioggia motivated a similar poetic response from artists in the 1880s, as seen in the famous images by Luigi Nono, and Otto Bacher's *The Madonna, Chioggia* (Fig. 4.17).

Two outdoor religious works by Nono – *Refugium Pecatorum* of 1882 (Fig. 4.18) and *Ave Maria* of 1892 (Fig. 4.19) – are among the most popular of several versions that he depicted of young women praying before the statue of the Madonna of Chioggia. It was customary for fishermen and their families to pray to the Madonna after sundown – the hour of the Ave Maria – as they set out in their boats. Nono's poignant paintings

portray a solitary, young child, and a mother holding her baby respectively, with the later picture capturing an act of penitence, and possibly the despair, of a destitute child. The 1882 version of *Refugium Pecatorum* was so greatly admired that it was engraved for the *Art Journal* in 1883 (Vol. 29) and may have been familiar to Bacher.

The reverence shown to the Virgin Mary may convey a dual love of church and state, as indicated by the long-established history of the myth of Venice as Madonna. Edward Muir's *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (1981), extrapolated the "myth" of Venice as the precondition for famous rituals and festivals, religious in the first instance, and then turned to the service of the state.⁵¹ The myth relates to the sacred virgin city, the Serenissima, representative of a Virgin, undefiled, and ruled by a benevolent male patriciate, the Doge, who undertakes the symbolic rites on behalf of the Republic. Therefore, there is a cyclical relationship between Venice, which is characterized as female, and the women shown worshipping the Virgin Mary. The women depicted are seeking to emulate the Madonna's virtuous example. Physically they embody her image and symbolically they also represent the city of Venice.

Nono's emotional subject matter and subdued palette contrast those of fellow Italian artist Favretto, who depicted entertaining themes that glossed over the reality of poverty in Venice. Nono conveyed the anguish and seriousness of his figures through the careful positioning of their bodies and the expressiveness of their facial features. As has also been noted by Pietro Zampetti, although Nono's figures are of no great size, they still loom in pictorial space, because space sets them off proportionally.⁵² The same presence is not achieved in the images painted by the American artists, perhaps because

religious reverence on the part of the artist is also lacking. There is no personal or spiritual association between the figures of the Madonna and Child and the American artists. Therefore it is easier for them to secularize the religious genre scenes that they produce, be it the worshippers praying inside St. Mark's or before an outdoor shrine.

Bacher's *The Madonna, Chioggia* is known only through a black and white photograph, but it can be certain that the work presents a mixture of multihued and grisaille colors. The white and gray tones of the rounded sculptures contrast the jutting, angular sails that loom across the expanse of the balustrade. Two female figures are shown praying before the shrine and are miniscule in scale compared to the statues and abstract sails. Bacher has placed the viewer from a safe distance, which allows the artist to concentrate on the ground before him.

As one examines the painting closely, the shadow of a tree in full bloom is noticeable in the foreground. This ominous form divides the canvas and is a symbol of nature that in this instance may refer to the presence of God. The two worlds of heaven and earth are separate, as are the beliefs of the spiritual-minded and the skeptical. It is apparent that while the shrine at Chioggia intrigued Bacher, he appreciated the physical beauty of the site and the abstract forms of the sails in the background, more so than the actual act of reverence and contrition, witnessed regularly before the statue of the Madonna of Chioggia.

This shrine impressed the American artists, possibly because of its grandiose stance and the virtuous effect it had on the residents of this remote island of Chioggia. The shrine was a focal point to which the devout flocked; yet, for the American artist it

was more of a curiosity that added a touching element to his sentimental works. Indeed, perhaps the only American artist who seemed genuinely affected by the religious images and shrines located throughout Venice, was Frank Duveneck.

Duveneck was familiar with Catholic Church interiors in America from an early age. As a boy, he worked in a large establishment, the Institute of Catholic Art, in Covington, Kentucky that built altars for Catholic churches. Later on, a painter named Smith took an interest in him and when he was about eighteen a church decorator of German birth and training named Lamprecht came to Cincinnati and took him on as an assistant.⁵³ Reference to Duveneck's mother sheds some light on his family's religious beliefs. Norbert Heermann's unpublished papers on the "Boys in Venice" mentions that Duveneck wanted to paint something in memory of his mother, who belonged to St. Joseph's Church in Cincinnati. The account refers to a statement made by Duveneck: "If you ever hear of a church that wants some decoration tell me about it, and money will be no object."⁵⁴

One of the most tender genre scenes Duveneck produced during his last summer in Venice is his *Venetian Shrine, Sketch* (Fig. 4.20). It presents to the observer a private moment of prayer as a husband, wife and child are shown paying homage to a shrine located on the water. This rare subject for Duveneck reveals a sense of religious faith, both on the part of the family shown and of the artist. The three figures suggest the Holy Family and have a universal appeal that draws the viewer to the scene. They are mother, father and child and convey a human bond that many could understand, regardless of one's religious faith. For Catholics, children are the fruits of marriage and

representations of God's love. Nothing is considered more precious than human life and children are the supreme gift and main purpose for entering into the sacrament of marriage, as is suggested in Duveneck's figures. Contemporary viewers of *Venetian Shrine, Sketch* also noticed some of these values.

The work was described in a 1907 review by Henry Payne of the Twelfth Annual Exhibition of Western Artists:

Woman and Shrine, boat, water, distance and sky are suggested with the hand of the master; but I dwell upon the picture rather for the sake of the two figures at the right end of the boat. The few touches that have been employed have been applied with the certainty of art and tenderness of feeling that the relationship between the two figures demands for there can be no doubt, this is a father and son . . . though Duveneck had not gone into this matter with his brush, he has made it easy for us to do so.⁵⁵

In this case, Duveneck provides an image of domestic tranquility and native faith, qualities attributed to "simple," poetic people and found lacking in those who are blinded by common modernity.⁵⁶ In fact, in all of his Venetian genre paintings, Duveneck seems to be interpreting the Venetians as basically happy people, who willingly and graciously perform their daily chores and model for the artist.

Many changes were occurring in the artist's life at the time this oil sketch was created and they are indicated in this painting. For instance, not only was Duveneck planning to pursue his career in Paris, he was also seriously considering marriage, which in turn may have spawned paternal feelings. These sentiments coincide with the stylistic changes evident in his later Venetian works.

Working and living in Venice throughout the 1880s obviously played a role in

altering Duvneck's art, but the greatest impact on his life and approach to painting was his relationship with the artist Elizabeth Booth. A contemporary of Duvneck and his circle, commented that the artist "was safe when he was with the boys, but when he got into association with ladies a weakening influence began to work insidiously in him. His work actually became sweet. Hals and Brower were forgotten."⁵⁷ There is a good deal of truth to this observation, for Duvneck's palette became lighter and his subjects more attractive during the period of his longstanding relationship with Booth. Shortly before or after creating *A Venetian Shrine*, Duvneck married Booth on March 26, 1885 in Paris and they both returned to Villa Castellani, Bellosguardo, outside of Florence, residing there with Francis Booth, Elizabeth's father, for the next year and a half.⁵⁸

In 1887 Duvneck's first and only son was born in Florence, Italy, and it was clear to the artist that he would not be returning with his family to Venice. While Duvneck preferred to work in Venice, his sentiments towards raising a family had changed his notion of living there. In a letter dated October 10, 1886, Bacher discusses Duvneck's return to Venice for a short period of ten days and that he intends to rent a palace for four or five years to be used solely as a studio. As Bacher writes about his fellow artist: "He will not be back here for a year or more. He says that he expects a bouncing boy . . . he does not want to live in Venice with a young child as he thinks it is a bad place to raise a family."⁵⁹ Unfortunately, in March of 1888, Elizabeth Booth died of pneumonia in Paris, while Duvneck was working on a full-length portrait of his wife to be exhibited at the Paris Salon in the spring of that year.⁶⁰ Booth's unexpected death also altered the course of Duvneck's career and led him to explore sculpture as a

medium for the first time. In the late 1880s, he designed a full-length, bronze memorial for his wife's grave in Florence, a poignant homage that evokes the compassion seen in *A Venetian Shrine*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Practically every image discussed in this chapter portrays women of various ages engaged in some form of religious devotion, whether kneeling in St. Mark's, attending Mass, or praying before a local shrine. The lack of male figures is largely due to the fact that Venetian working class men were for the most part less religious than their female counterparts; the lack of affluent church-goers in the paintings may also be because wealthy Venetians preferred to practice their religion in private. Whenever men appear in these scenes, they are more often than not members of the clergy, and on occasion their appearance invades a private moment.

Male ecclesiastics were more prevalent in pictures that depicted religious festivals and processions, when such figures presided and were respected by the lower class Venetians. More importantly, these religious functions offered the Venetian population an opportunity to affirm the identity of the local community and represented a proactive response to the fear of being infected with cholera. According to Bella Stillman, writing in 1890, the Italian peasants were generally happy and enjoyed their holidays to the fullest for they offered an escape from the reality of their harsh life. As she writes:

If to that supreme bliss you add a crowd of friends and acquaintances engaged

in the same way, with smoking and gambling for the men and gossiping for the women, unlimited ringing of church-bells for the little boys and a procession with a life-size saint in gorgeous garments, you have the groundwork of a little village *festa* which will be looked forward to for six months before, and remembered for six months afterward.⁶¹

In a sense, these events intermingled worship with leisure for the working class.

However, most *festa* and procession scenes were painted by the English, rather than the American painters, largely due to the fact that these European artists visited regularly or lived in Venice for a long period, as was the case with Henry Woods and Samuel Melton Fisher. The Englishmen wished to portray innocent genre scenes of young women partaking in religious traditions for they also allowed the artist to not only idealize, but also sweeten these images for their audience.

For instance, many works by these English painters reflect the young Venetian girl's life as she receives the seven blessed sacraments. Two examples of these overly sweet renditions, or popular pot-boilers, include Woods's *Preparation for the First Communion* (Fig. 4.21) of 1883 and Fisher's *La Cresima, a Venetian Confirmation* (Fig. 4.22) of 1891, both exhibited at the Royal Academy shortly after they were painted. In these works, Woods and Fisher capture the innocence of the young Venetian girl in great detail, and these two particular paintings could serve as companion pieces. Fisher's work concentrates mainly on portraying the young ladies, while Woods's offers an assortment of characters from the community that play a role in the upcoming special event.

In contrast to their work, are the religious genre paintings by fellow English artist Clara Montalba. Clara Montalba was the most successful member of a family of artists,

comprised of three sisters – Clara, Ellen and Henrietta – and one brother named Augustus. Ellen and Hilda painted mainly Venetian scenes, while Henrietta was a sculptor and Augustus dabbled in art and pursued culinary interests.⁶² Reference to the Montalba family is found in the correspondence of Luke Fildes and Henry Woods, as well in various archival papers pertaining to the American genre artists in Venice.

As one of the few women who painted Venetian scenes in the 1880s, Montalba focused on the male ecclesiastics, including members of the clergy, monks, altar boys and the like. They represent the thinking or rational being performing the church's rituals, in direct opposition to the emotional female kneeling in prayer. Two examples of Clara Montalba's figural works are *Procession of the Feast of St. Anthony*, (its complete title being *Monks going to the Church of Santa Maria della Salute, on the Fête of Santo Antonio*), and *Funeral Procession* (Fig. 4.23) that include a cast of men. Montalba's Venetian images concentrate on the ritualistic aspects of the Catholic religion, and differ from those by the American artists, who were not interested in these particular ceremonies, which were considered superfluous and bombastic.

Ulrich appears to have been the only American artist to depict Venetian religious practices during holy days, as noted in *The Ceremony of Washing the Feet, in St. Mark's Venice*. The only other exception is Maurice Prendergast (1849-1924), who in the late 1890s painted several vibrant watercolors containing a cast of Venetians celebrating religious festivals. Although these important rituals were a conspicuous part of life for faithful Venetians, the American artists could not relate to these celebrations. The lack of such images by American artists is explained by the relatively short time they stayed in

Venice, as opposed to the European artists such as Logsdail, Woods and De Blaas, who remained for at least a decade in the Italian city, if not most of their lives. This would explain works such as Logsdail's, *Preparation for the Procession of San Giovanni Battista, Venice* (Fig. 4.24), a highly detailed rendition of the popular, Italian feast day of Saint John the Baptist that was painted around 1886. The festivals became second nature to the European artists, who had witnessed them numerous times and enjoyed their fanfare, even if they did not necessarily participate. Moreover, the Protestant art dealer in America may not have deemed such themes interesting enough to market.

As with the interior church scenes, the images showing outdoor shrines were commonly painted by the American artists. The shrines were places of pilgrimage that allowed the artist to incorporate elements of the scenery, such as canals and remote *fondamente*, without having to focus on too many religious details. Expansive outdoor and indoor settings provided suitable backdrops, as seen in Morse's paintings, and allowed the painter to observe from a safe distance. For the Italian artists, such as Nono, who could relate easily to the strong religious devotion expressed by the locals, the emotional impact of these shrines on the devotee was of great relevance.

The presence of the lower classes in these religious scenes does not only reflect their more frequent attendance at mass, but the close association of the Venetian peasants and workers with "simplicity" and innocent ignorance. They did not refer to scientific discourses in their time of need, rather they relied on their faith to carry them through times of starvation and disease. The emphasis in these Venetian works is not on the peasants' humility or their connection to nature and to God, as seen in the works of the

French Realists, such as Jean Francois Millet's *Angelus* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris) of 1865 or Gustave Courbet's *Funeral at Ornans* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris). Nor is moral superiority of hard labor an issue in these Venetian genre scenes, since the figures are not portrayed larger than life, nor do they dominate their environment.

Rather, the figures are incorporated into the generic surroundings of massive architecture or sculptural decoration for the American artists abstained from displaying too many details of the church interiors, some of which were quite ornate, such as St. Mark's. These artists selected non-descriptive elements that clearly identified the religious location, but did not relish in the richness of the statues and carvings, the brilliant mosaics and complicated architectural structures. They focused on the compliant working class as the servant of a greater being.

William Dean Howells remarked on the faith of the poor, as especially evident on Christmas Eve:

The equality of all classes in church is a noticeable thing always in Italy, . . . In these costly temples of the eldest Christianity the poor seem to enter upon their inheritance of the future, for it is they who frequent them most, and possess them with the deepest sense of ownership. The withered old woman who creeps into St. Mark's . . . takes visible possession of its magnificence as God's and hers, and Catholic wealth and rank would hardly, if challenged dispute her claim.⁶³

The physical rewards that the working class could not reap from the hours of their labor, they could seek from God and the Virgin Mary in the form of spiritual salvation.

Some of the American artists may have secularized the religious imagery they depicted so that they could relate to the veneration they witnessed. Others, such as

Duveneck, could associate with the religious imagery and shrines because they were a familiar part of their upbringing, or their early artistic training. Although the American artists may not have done so intentionally, they revealed the private experience of the working class bead stringer and water carrier at prayer, who feared the omnipotence and wrath of God and called on the Virgin Mary for intercession. The fact that practically all of the figures depicted in these religious scenes are women may also signify their personification of Venice, both sacred and profane.

Notes

¹ Bella H. Stillman, "Life in Modern Italy," *The Chautauquan* 2, no. 1 (April 1890), p. 9.

² Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 1968), p. 160. Information regarding the Pope's actions during and after the American Civil War is taken from this source unless otherwise noted.

³ *Ibid*, p. 160. Thomas Nast was born in the Bavarian Palatinate and came to New York at the age of six with his family. At the age of fifteen he became a staff member of *Leslie's Illustrated*, a mass-circulated journal, and succeeded to freelance for *Harper's Weekly* and *New York Illustrated News*. Nast learned from the British graphic artists of his time and was directly influenced by John Leech and Sir John Tenniel of *Punch* magazine, and by painter and book illustrator John Gilbert. The work of Honoré Daumier and his contemporaries united art and politics and also inspired Nast's caricatures.

⁴ "Protestants in Italy. Progress of Missionary Work since Religious Liberty Was Established," *The New York Times* (27 September 1880), p. 8. The article's information is based on an address given at the Sixty-first Street Methodist Episcopal Church in New York, by Rev. Dr. Leroy M. Vernon, one of the missionaries to Italy. The topic was listed as the "Religious Condition of Italy."

⁵ "Norbert Heermann Papers," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Reel number 1151 include quotations from "Boys in Venice" unpublished papers, no page numbers.

⁶ "Venice in Spring," *Littell's Living Age* 66, no. 2346 (June 15, 1889), p. 663.

⁷ David J. Kertzer, "Religion and Society, 1789-1892" in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century: 1796-1900*, Short Oxford History of Italy, ed. John A. Davis, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 204.

⁸ Leon Edel, ed, *Complete Tales of Henry James*, Volume II, (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1962), pp. 208-209.

⁹ Annette Calthrop, "A Studio in Venice," *London Society* 47, no. 279 (March 1885), p. 299.

¹⁰ Edel, ed., *Complete Tales of Henry James*, p. 176.

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 182-183.

¹² Henry James, "Venice," *The Century Magazine* 25, no. 1 (November 1882), p. 10.

¹³ Frances Toor, *Festivals and Folkways of Italy*, (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1953), p. 251. The tale surrounding St. Mark is taken from this source unless otherwise noted. Toor further explains that when St. Mark's body was exhumed it emitted a sweet fragrance that astonished all of Alexandria. During the voyage, a man on another ship questioned the authenticity of the remains and the Venetian ship immediately and mysteriously began to ram the other and would have destroyed it if the skeptic had not changed his mind.

¹⁴ Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *Venice Triumphant*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University of Press, 2002), p. 268.

¹⁵ "Venice in Spring," *Littell's Living Age* 66, no. 2346 (June 15, 1889), pp. 661-662.

¹⁶ Henry James, "Venice," *The Century Magazine* 25, no. 1 (November 1882), p. 8. This article includes illustrations by or after paintings by Robert Blum, Clara Montalba and Martin Rico.

¹⁷ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Volume II, (New York: Frank F. Lovell and Company, 1853), p. 75.

¹⁸ A more complete list of the American artists who depicted the interior of St. Mark's Basilica prior to 1880 is provided by William H. Gerdt in his essay "'Un Sogno di bellezza e di colore: pittori americani a Venezia,'" in *Venezia: Da Stato a Mito*, Venice: Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 1997, p. 112-127. Yewell visited Venice during the summer months of 1867 with the landscape artist Sanford Gifford, but it was not until 1873 that he began painting Venetian interiors while in Rome. A previous version of *Interior of St. Mark's* had been exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1872. David Neal painted his *Interior of St. Mark's* (Art Institute of Chicago) in 1869, and in 1874 Charles Gifford Dryer also depicted the same subject. Dyer's work, which is unlocated, was greatly admired.

¹⁹ Blashfield's version of *Interior of St. Mark's, Venice* was exhibited in 1888 at the Society of American Artists (no. 6) and was considered "excellent . . . a finely colored canvas, and, as a study, remarkable for truth of observation." "Fine Arts: The Society of American Artists—II," *The Nation*, no. 1192 (May 3, 1888), p. 373. Interior scenes of St. Mark's were very popular among the American artists who visited Venice and often were exhibited upon their return to the United States.

²⁰ Vallery C. O. Greard, *Meissonier: His Life and His Art*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd and Miss Florence Simmonds, (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1897), p. 262. *Madonna del Bacio* was exhibited at the Triennial Salon of 1883, at the Antwerp Exhibition of 1885, and at the Paris Exhibition of 1889.

²¹ Roussoff, *Memoirs*, p. 242.

²² *Ibid*, p. 240-241. Another painting by Roussoff that deals with Venetian religious devotion is an unlocated work entitled *After Mass*, described in “Venice as Painted by the Moderns,” *Art Journal* (1883): p. 142 as “another church interior that shows us those bundles of devotional humanity – an old women doubled over their scaldini and finishing a tardy rosary – which the retiring wave of an Italian congregation always leaves clinging to their altar steps, when the lights are extinguishing one by one.”

²³ *Ibid*, pp. 376-377. The descriptions of the various versions of *Interior of St. Mark's* are taken from the catalogue of Meissonier's works listed in this translation of Meissonier's memoirs. Other Venetian works by the French artist include *Grand Canal, Venice* of 1888 that shows a view from the entrance of Casa Fumagalli, where Meissonier lived in Venice, and his gondola, which waits at the steps (on a post a figure of the Virgin stands, where a lamp burns at night); *A Member of the Council of Ten* of 1889, which depicts a Venetian noble wearing a red velvet robe with gold buttons and a black velvet cap and seated on a settee shaped; and two works of 1890 – *Venice (The Canal behind San Rocco)* and *The Lido, Venice*. In addition to these oil paintings, there is a watercolor dated 1884 and entitled *Venice* that also pictures the entrance to the Casa Fumagalli.

²⁴ M. G. Van Rensselaer, “William Merritt Chase,” *American Art Review* II, First Division (1881), p.136.

²⁵ “Art Notes,” *The Art Review* 1, no. 2 (December 1886), p. 55. The etching was published on November 1, 1886 by Frederick Keppel & Co. and was considered true to the original painting.

²⁶ Roberto Tassi, *Capolavori dell'Ottocento Italiano dalla raccolta Gaetano Marzotto/Masterpieces of Nineteenth Century Italian Painting from the Gaetano Marzotto Collection*, trans. Stephen Eddy, (exh. cat., New York: National Academy of Design, 1994), p. 80.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 82. The catalogue entry for Nono's *Mass of Maria* notes that the artist's son, Mario Nono, recounted in his memoirs of 1963 the story of how a resting model suggested the slumped figure in this painting. The memoirs were published in 1990 in conjunction with the catalogue of the Nono exhibition held in Sacile.

²⁸ Percy E. Pinkerton, “Ludwig Passini: A Painter of Modern Life,” *The Magazine of Art* 10 (1887), pp. 128 and 129.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 130.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 130.

³¹ “Ludwig Passini,” The Artists Files, New York Public Library, microfiche P136/C5.

³² John Pemble, *Venice Rediscovered*, p. 128. In Florence, the uncompleted Santa Croce and cathedral (Santa Maria del Fiore) had their facades replaced; in Milan, San Simpliciano and Santa Maria del Carmine were finished; and in Naples, a Neo-Gothic facade was substituted for the eight-century edifice of the Duomo.

³³ Ibid, pp. 128-129. All forthcoming information regarding the restoration program for St. Mark’s Basilica is taken from this source, unless noted otherwise. Pemble explains that “Judging by responses to Venice, the Romantic love of ruins was very slow to penetrate the Anglo-Saxon mentality. Until late in the nineteenth century there is little evidence to suggest that British and American observers regretted the loss of picturesque decay.” Ruskin alone was mortified by the restorations being carried out in Florence and Venice and believed that once a Gothic building was ruined it could never be reconstructed, pp. 130-131.

³⁴ Albert Boime, *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento. Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 250.

³⁵ Philippe Julian, *Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890s*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 24. Information on the Symbolist artist’s attraction to Venice is taken from this source. Gustave Moreau spent several weeks in Venice copying the paintings of Vittore Carpaccio in 1859 and occasionally revived his memories of the city in allegorical watercolors dating from the 1880s.

³⁶ Weber, “Robert Frederick Blum,” (1985), p. 102.

³⁷ “The National Academy of Design – 66th Annual Exhibition,” *The Studio* (New York) n.s. 2, no. 10 (April 1887), p. 192.

³⁸ Royal Cortissoz, “John S. Sargent,” *Scribner’s Magazine* 34, no. 5 (November 1903), pp. 520/522. Cortissoz mentions that Sargent provided six of the twelve illustrations for Strettell’s publication and that “The frontispiece is a sketch of a gypsy dance, with figures thrust forth from, or almost buried in, mysterious gloom.” In addition to the Madonna and Crucifixion, the other plates depict “a woman who draws back in terror from the mystic message of the cards whose power she has invoked, . . . a dancer, with superb gesture, . . . a dainty garden scene.”

³⁹ James Jackson Jarves, *Italian Rambles—Studies of Life and Manners in New and Old Italy*, (London: Sampson Low, Marsten, Searle & Rivington, 1883), p. 221.

⁴⁰ William Kloss, *Samuel F. B. Morse*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers,

1988), pp.122/126.

⁴¹ Quoted in William Kloss, *Samuel F. B. Morse*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1988), p. 126. Morse did not paint religious subjects, except for the few works he included in his well-known *Gallery of the Louvre* (Terra Museum of Art, Chicago, Illinois), created between 1831 and 1833, in which the artists includes Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet's *Deposition*, Raphael's *Madonna and Child with John the Baptist* and Titian's *Entombment*, among other works.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 135. Morse was also against the patronage of European paintings over American works.

⁴³ "Venice," *Littell's Living Age* 47, no. 2096 (August 23, 1884), p. 458.

⁴⁴ The history on Chioggia and the *Refugium Peccatorum* is taken from the website www.lamargherita.it/chioggia1.htm.

⁴⁵ "Norbert Heermann Papers" at the Archives of American Art, New York, Reel 1151 include quotations from "Boys in Venice," unpublished, no page numbers.

⁴⁶ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999): p.163.

⁴⁷ Samuel F. B. Morse Diary, April 7, 1830, May 20, 1830, and September 3, 1830, Morse Papers, Library of Congress. These remarks are quoted in Paul J. Staiti, *Samuel F. B. Morse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): p. 179, 180. Staiti writes: "To Morse, the Catholic Church, which his father had taught him to regard as the ecclesiastical whore of Babylon, seemed responsible for all of Italy's ills. Its riches were no cure for rampant poverty; its priests dispense false piety instead of true faith; its hold over the masses was pure authoritarianism; and its leaders despotically ran both church and state. In every way Italy seemed antithetical to the spirit of American republicanism and Protestantism," p. 180.

⁴⁸ Kloss, p. 119.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 122.

⁵⁰ Naylor, *Exhibition History of the National Academy of Design*, p. 685 and p. 18-19.

⁵¹ Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981). Reference to Muir's book is found in Plant, *Venice Fragile City: 1797-1997*, p. 417. The information pertaining to this myth is taken from Plant. In 1177, after a great naval victory, the Pope gave the Doge of Venice a ring with which to wed the Adriatic so that the world might know the sea is subject to Venice, "as a bride is to her

husband.” The ceremony of wedding the Adriatic was celebrated annually by the Doge by throwing a ring into it.

⁵² Pietro Zampetti, “Luigi Nono” in *A Dictionary of Venetian Painters (Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*, Vol. 5, (Leigh-on-Sea: F. Lewis Publishers Limited, 1979), p. 51.

⁵³ L. H. Meakin, “Duveneck, A Teacher of Artists,” *Arts and Decoration* 1 (July 1911), p. 382.

⁵⁴ “Norbert Heermann Papers,” Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Reel 1151 include quotations from Herrmann’s unpublished “Boys in Venice,” which are not paginated. According to the Cincinnati Catholic Genealogy and History web page, www.2.eos.net/dajend/catholic.html, there is one Roman Catholic Church devoted to St. Joseph’s in the Cincinnati area that originally stood at Linn and Laurel Streets, (dedicated in December 1846).

⁵⁵ Henry Payne, “The Twelfth Annual Exhibition of Western Artists,” *Sketchbook*, (December 1907), pp. 17-18. There are two drawings of the same scene in Duveneck’s sketchbooks at the Cincinnati Art Museum; *Duveneck’s Sketchbook*, Archives of American Art, Roll 1151.

⁵⁶ Lovell, 1989, p. 75.

⁵⁷ “Norbert Heermann Papers” at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Reel 1151.

⁵⁸ Evans, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁹ Williams, *Otto H. Bacher*, pp. 147-148.

⁶⁰ Jan Newstrom Thompson, *Duveneck: Lost Paintings Found*, exh. cat., (Santa Clara, California: Triton Museum of Art, 1987), p. 22. The painting, which is now in the Cincinnati Art Museum, was almost complete when Elizabeth Booth died on March 22, 1888. Her body was brought back to Florence, Italy, where she was interred in the Allori Cemetery in April. Booth’s role in Duveneck’s art career is discussed in Christine Evans’s study, referred to above, “Frank Duveneck: The Italian Years,” M.A. Thesis, Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, 1981.

⁶¹ Stillman, “Life in Modern Italy,” p. 9.

⁶² Julian Halsby, *Venice: The Artist’s Vision*, (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1990), p. 127.

⁶³ Howells, *Venetian Life*, 1891, p. 115.

CHAPTER 5

“Dolce Far Niente: The Locals and the Tourists at Leisure”

While some American artists concentrated on scenes of the Venetian working class laboring and worshipping, as discussed in the previous chapters, others chose to depict the upper class tourists. This chapter will study leisure scenes by Robert Blum, Ralph Wormeley Curtis and Julius Le Blanc Stewart, in which the locals have become peripheral figures, shown servicing the needs of the city’s visitors. The examples discussed manifest the same vein of superficiality seen in the images examined earlier and indicate that the American artist was concerned with pictures that conveyed a euphoric environment that appealed to the senses. The American pictures will be compared with the leisure scenes produced by the European artists, who expressed a greater interest in portraying leisure as experienced by the locals. Alessandro Milesi and William Logsdail are among the European artists living in Venice who offered the viewer some insight into daily Venetian customs outside of the sites of labor and worship.

Most of the images are set outdoors and rendered in a bright palette, indicative of the color of Venice, but the perspectives of the American and European artists differ and can be attributed to the level of awareness each group possessed regarding the city and its rituals. Unaware of the reality of the worker’s experience, the typical, well-to-do visitor was anxious to escape from her harried, but somewhat jaded, existence. She splurged on the fine Venetian lace work, bead necklaces and mouth-blown glass produced by the locals, and enjoyed the city’s idiosyncratic amusements, such as the gondola ride and al-

fresco sojourns. These first two subjects will be considered in this chapter, followed by a review of Piazza San Marco's popularity and the appeal of the Lido as related to yachting activity.

VENETIAN LEISURE

Venice, more than any other Italian city, tempted its visitors to delight in idleness.

As William Dean Howells explained:

Beginning with the warm days of early May, and continuing till the *villegiatura* (the period spent at the country seat) interrupts it late in September, all Venice goes by a simple impulse of *dolce far niente*, and sits gossiping at doors of the innumerable café on the Riva degli Schiavoni, in the Piazza San Marco, and the different squares in every part of the city.¹

The absence of vehicles left the city clear of dust and unwanted noise and allowed all – rich and poor – to relish its distinctive pleasures on a variety of levels. Artists of all nationalities were quick to pursue such subjects, which served as quaint genre scenes that portrayed Venice as the epitome of leisure respites. One did not have to venture far to become enthralled by the beauty of the city and its timeless nature.

Henry James, who was very fond of Venice, commented in an article on the city, published in 1882 that “Venetian windows and balconies are a dreadful lure, and while you rest your elbows on these cushioned ledges the precious hours fly away.”² The same could be said about riding on the glistening lagoons in a gondola or lounging in front of a view of the Grand Canal, for one quickly succumbed to the Italian activity known as

“dolce far niente.”

The term “dolce far niente” refers literally to “the sweetness of doing nothing” and more generally to leisure time. As such, these images by the American genre artists captured an aspect of Venice that was in tune with those of the French Impressionist painters, whose art represented a bourgeois society that concentrated on the pleasurable aspects of life.

All manner of leisure subjects were popular in America in the 1880s and 1890s and often centered on the life of the wealthy, especially their local summer pastimes. Summer resorts were emerging on the outskirts of New York City as well as in other American locations, yet few people were able to afford long and truly recreational vacations. While most prominent and powerful figures in society lived in princely mansions and made excursions to elegant pleasure resorts, there was an international economic depression from 1873 to 1896.³

Basically speaking, American people of means knew practically nothing about the daily life of the working class from which they stood apart. The same could be said of their knowledge of the Venetian nobility. Indeed, the leisure scenes that were painted by American artists in Venice represented mainly the experiences of non-Italian tourists since the city had become a mecca for those seeking pleasure, culture, and history in one place. The most frequent tourists were Germans, followed by Americans, English and French. The Austrians, who had governed and resided in Venice for decades, were considered less foreign. After a lapse of twenty years since his last visit to the city, one writer commented at the end of 1882 that

Visitors of course there were even then, as there have been for a century past or more, ever since art died in Italy and people came to look at her grave. But they were then comparatively few, almost confined to rich people who were making a sort of grand tour of Italy, and artistic people who had a special purpose in studying Venetian architecture and pictures. . . . Now the Northern barbarians have descended upon Italy in a flood, though, to be sure, a fertilizing flood which scatters gold in its path. During the tourist months, and especially, of course, during September and October, one might think that there were as many strangers as natives in Venice. In and around the Piazza of St. Mark nothing is heard but German and English.⁴

Venetians have always spent a good deal of their time in the open-air, especially during the summer months, when the skies are clear and the weather is warm, perfect for an al-fresco toilette, meal, or a promenade on St. Mark's Square. The Piazza offered a festive atmosphere enlivened by the elegant cafés, such as the ever-popular Florian's, the impressive landmark made by the *Campanile* (bell tower), the Byzantine grandeur of the Basilica, the allure of the music, and even the pigeons that forever fill the square. In addition to these spectacular features, the throng of tourists and locals mingling together enhanced the diversity of St. Mark's Square.

Otto Bacher offered his recollections of daily life in Venice in an interview published in *The Herald* of Cleveland, Ohio on January 13, 1883. In his discussion, the American artist recalled:

There in the restaurants you will meet the distinguished visitors of every clime enjoying social chats over a cup of coffee. The principal reading is done in the cafes where periodicals and papers are always to be had and where nearly everyone takes his meals. The climate is lovely and to an American who is accustomed to hurry and enterprise, the easy and languid way of the Venetians is a subject of many comments.⁵

This “easy and languid” approach to life appealed greatly to those who visited Venice and it accounted for the number of foreigners who decided to establish a second home there.

The American artists Ralph Wormely Curtis and Julius LeBlanc Stewart were already accustomed to living a life of leisure, for they both came from wealthy families. Stewart’s father, William H. Stewart (1820-1897) had moved at the end of the Civil War from Philadelphia to Paris, where the family lived on the income from their Cuban sugar plantations.⁶ W. H. Stewart is best known for his patronage of European paintings, most notably by Spanish artists, and at the time of his death his collection included twenty-five works by Mariano Fortuny y Marsal, eleven by Martin Rico, seven by Giovanni Boldini, four by Ernst Jean Meissonier and significant works by the academic artists Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Léon Bonnat, Paul Baudry, Jean-Baptiste Camille-Corot, Jean-León Gérôme, Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta, Alfred Stevens, Constant Troyon, and Eduardo Zamacois y Zabala.⁷ Stewart’s friends also represented some of the most influential and well-to-do part-time residents of the Venetian *palazzi*.⁸

Thus while both Curtis and Stewart attempted to show the commonplace side of Venice, as with Curtis’s *Bridge of Sighs* (Fig. 5.1), depicting a young mother with child before a moonlit view of the Bridge of Sighs, and Stewart’s *Canal Scene* (Fig. 5.2) of peasant children playing in a nearby canal, their most recognized Venetian works portray the tourists at leisure.

The following section explores the theme of gondola rides as a habit of pleasure rather than necessity for the rider. By analyzing the importance of the gondolier in the

Venetian community, it becomes apparent that the American artists were romanticizing their images of the gondolier and perpetuating the stereotype of this figure as a lighthearted individual whose only desire was to entertain his patrons. They overlooked the gondolier's hardships, as he faced starvation and the threat of technology in the form of the steamboat, and focused on the enjoyment he provided to the tourist.

GONDOLA RIDES

The history of the gondola – Venice's unique mode of transportation – dates back more than 1,000 years and may be the most familiar part of the Venetian experience. The gondolier partakes in the mythology and symbolism that surrounds this vehicle, for local legend says that gondoliers were born with webbed feet to help them walk on water. The gondola itself was designed with elements that relate to the city, such as the *ferro*, located at the bow, which has six metal teeth, that represent the six *sestieri* or sections of Venice (San Marco, San Polo, Cannaregio, Castello, Dorsoduro and Santa Croce).⁹

Apart from the unique construction of the gondola, this boat, foreign to the United States, offered a romantic method of transportation that had long been associated with the allure of Venice. American commentators of the late nineteenth century described the swan-like gondola “as felicitous an evolution out of conditions and environment as is the light canoe which Adirondack guides pick up at the shore of the lake,” and understood the importance of the craft as “something essential, permanent, which belongs to Venice and must belong while Venice lasts, not something which supercedes other inventions

and must in time be superseded.”¹⁰ Artists also relied on the gondola, manned by able oarsmen, to take them on the tour of Venice in search of promising subjects, and they were aware of the gondolier’s financial struggles.

Reference to American artists’ affiliation with their gondoliers during the 1880s is noted in letters and reminiscences, as found in an article about Whistler, written in 1903. The author, W. Scott, explained that on occasion Whistler was very generous with his dependants, including his gondolier, who at the time was in the process of buying a better boat. Scott wrote: “. . . I remember his advancing a considerable sum, which of course became practically a free gift, to “Beppi,” his gondolier . . . Whistler had no sooner left Venice; however, than the old boat appeared again, and did service for years.”¹¹ The gondolier seems to have managed to find a way to survive, even in the face of hardship and the ensuing competition with progress.

We know from Bacher’s account that another one of Whistler’s gondolier’s was named Cavadoro: “a very handsome type of man, was hired by Whistler by the month and came to know with his Italian intuition just where Whistler most desired to go. If he did not ride, he would follow his master carrying the paraphernalia under his arm.”¹² The gondolier catered to the wealthy foreign visitors, especially American and English ones, who were willing to pay very well for his services. According to Howells, these services included waiting at tables, going to the market, taking the children to school, and serving the ladies as footman.¹³ Another commentator noted in 1889, the gondolier possessed poetic qualities:

It is with grief that I remind my untravelled reader that in Venice the gondola

is the cab. Is a cabman a poetic object a person to whom you would invite lyrics or elegies? I trow [sic] not. But on the other hand, the gondolier unlike the London cabman, has his redeeming qualities. He is picturesque. . . . He is also very amenable to civility. . . . Indeed, when all is said, the gondolier is not a bad fellow, though, like the pigeons, somewhat spoilt by being photographed in his boat by enterprising amateurs a hundred times in the year.¹⁴

Of all the American artists who depicted the gondolier, Sargent is the only painter to make an actual portrait of one, as seen in his *Head of a Gondolier* (Fig. 5.3) and *Man Pulling a Rope* (Fig. 5.4).¹⁵ The emphasis on male figural types could stem from Sargent's own attraction to these individuals. Although Sargent's sexuality has been considered by Trevor Fairbrother and others, there is no clear and conclusive evidence to confirm the artist's sexual preference.¹⁶ There is a sensuous element captured in these two works, which show the typical young, dark, handsome and virile, Italian man, and a direct interaction between sitter and artist or viewer in Sargent's works that is not found in his subsequent paintings of gondoliers or in male types in general by other artists.

The main male figure in all of his street scenes has not been identified. It is possible that the model for those scenes was Sargent's loyal gondolier, who also may have posed for the artist's painting *Head of a Gondolier*. In this work Sargent depicts a young, handsome man with Brunette features and a moustache. His chiseled jaw and full lips enhance the sitter's sensual appeal and his dark eyes are full of mystery. As the gondolier's body is incomplete, the detached or floating appearance of the gondolier's head is heightened. This effect is akin to the French Symbolist artist's penchant for displaying the dismembered heads of Medusa or the beheaded St. John the Baptist, as seen in the works of Gustave Moreau.

An 1881 article in *The New York Times*, reporting on the gondolier strike that occurred in November of that year, described the typical back alley scene one was likely to encounter and could easily have referred to the figures who are the focus of Sargent's street scenes, many of which are believed to date from 1881-1882. *The Times* discussed the pastime of the gondolier during the brief strike period as such:

The gondoliers certainly behaved with great order and sobriety. There was no rioting in the streets. Only the wine shops were a little fuller than usual, and you met groups of tall, broad-shouldered fellows, in slouched black hats and coats over one shoulder, talking quietly at the corners of the narrow streets.¹⁷

In essence, Sargent's street scenes could serve as illustrations for the above-quoted eyewitness account since they were painted around the time of the gondolier strike in Venice. The only element missing is the female counterpart, usually shown conversing with the male figure or avoiding his menacing gaze.

While a number of visitors could not live without their gondolier, the notion of the gondola as a vehicle of transportation was considered uncomfortable and offensive to some American visitors. One observer writes, "I have called the gondola a hearse. Where is the person who, upon the first eager introduction to the gondola, has not felt that he is stepping into his coffin when, with scant grace, he creeps into the black cabin of the lithe black boat?"¹⁸ The role of the gaunt gondolier could be associated with Charon, the mythological ferryman who escorted the souls of the dead across the Styx, especially at a time when the Italian region had been re-stricken with a cholera outbreak.

Thomas Mann metaphorically characterized the gondolier as such a figure in his novella *Death in Venice*, in which a suspect gondolier takes the main character, Professor

Aschenbach, to the Lido. The gondolier possessed an ethereal aura as he hovered over his passengers: “Standing to his work, on the highest part of his boat, with one foot directly behind the other, . . . in a foreshortened view of the boat, . . . so that with arms outstretched the man appears to be skimming the surface.”¹⁹

Nevertheless, a majority of the visitors who associated the gondola ride with romance and amusement and were enchanted by the sights and sounds discovered during a moonlit passage while accompanied by the gondolier’s serenade. Francis Hopkinson Smith described the experience in a gondola in glowing terms as:

. . . nothing else of its kind your feet have ever touched – so yielding and yet so firm; so shallow and yet so staunch; so light, so buoyant, and so welcoming to peace and rest and comfort.

How daintily it sits in the water! How like a knowing swan it bends its head, the iron blade of the bow, and glides out upon the bosom of the Grand Canal. You stop for a moment, noting the long, narrow body, blue-black and silver in the morning light, as graceful in its curves as a bird; the white awning amid ships draped at sides and back, the soft-yielding, morocco-covered seat, all cushions and fringes, and the silken cords curbing quaint lions of polished brass. Beyond and aft stands your gondolier, with easy, graceful swing bending his oar.²⁰

The gondola ride was heralded as a therapeutic journey that also benefited the gondolier, who was a “keen oarsman” preserving the “manly art” of rowing, which took rank as a fine art among aquatic sports. Furthermore, it was remarked how

So beautiful are the movements of the adept in the Venetian stroke, so thoroughly does it exhibit and put to the test the muscular build of a man that very few artists have ever been in the lovely City of the Adriatic without falling into ecstasies over the gondolier.²¹

While the published commentaries about Venice and her marvelous gondolas were

positive and inviting, the harsh reality of life in Venice could not be completely ignored. The plight of the gondolier was dire during this period of time, and often mentioned in the newspapers abroad, which may explain why few visiting artists selected gondolier themes for their works, as opposed to the subject of gondola rides.

Representations of gondoliers by other artists include Bacher, Hassam and Whistler. Bacher's etching of *Giovanni* (Fig. 5.5), dated 1881, was included in his *Etchings of Venice* series that he had published independently in 1882. Incorrectly spelled "Geovanni," instead of Giovanni, the etching presents a unique point of view as the artist sits at the opposite end of the gondola and depicts the four other passengers on board. Giovanni, the gondolier, is shown hovering over two well-dressed, older women and two young children – a boy and a girl, all of whom are intricately rendered. To judge by the inscription on the upper right-hand side of the etching, which reads "To Mrs E.R.D. and Miss M.F. in memory of many happy days – Otto H. Bacher, Venice 81," the work was meant as a souvenir, perhaps of two of the figures in the boat. Of all the figures portrayed, the gondolier appears the most jovial, whereas the passengers look very dour and only the woman on the left acknowledges the artist. There is no air of mystery in this scrawny boatman, who could be a figure out of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. The quietness of the sitters lends itself to a domestic narrative.

Among the illustrations Hassam created for the 1891 re-publication of Howells's book *Venetian Life* are two watercolors entitled *A Venetian Regatta* (Fig. 5.6) and *Gondoliers*, which can be categorized more as a genre scene than the portrait-like renditions by Sargent.²² The gondoliers in *Regatta* are characterized as lithe figures

graciously hovering over the prows of their gondolas. Hassam creates a cartoon effect and the weightlessness of the gondoliers reflects the buoyancy experienced during this occasion. The whole work is festive and livened by the areas of pink, yellow and blue that distinguish the festive garments of the participants in the regatta.

The Gala Regatta takes place in September and is among the most spectacular events in Venice. All the palaces along the Grand Canal hang costly tapestries from windows and balconies, forming a colorful background for the procession of historical, decorated gondolas, lead by the Bucintoro, the traditional great stage barge of Venice, occupied for the occasion by personages in costume. In addition, the *gondolieri*, wearing their colors – violet, yellow, red – in their shirts and sashes, and white trousers, compete in regatta races for the first and second prize, which are monetary, and the third one, which is a baby pig.²³ Winning the regatta was equivalent to winning the lottery and an important victory for the struggling gondolier.

Whistler did not work on a regatta scene and he normally did not emphasize the features of his Venetian figures. He did, however, generously portray a gondolier in his pastel, entitled *Sunset, Red and Gold – The Gondolier* (Fig. 5.7). The dark figure, dressed completely in black with a wide-brimmed hat and fur-collared coat, is set before a blazing red and yellow sky highlighted by the blue skyline of the Church of the Redentore and the Salute. Although sparse in terms of architectural detail, Whistler's mustached gondolier is captured in all his mysteriousness, reminiscent of Sargent's gondoliers or men dressed in black who are featured in his street scenes. Whistler unconsciously also may be alluding to the vulnerability of man against the vastness of

nature – sea and sky. In this example, the man is a gondolier, who at the time was more preoccupied with protecting himself from the tides of progress than with the natural elements.

Two European artists who were impressed by the gondoliers and the circumstances of their daily life were the Englishman William Logsdail and the Italian Alessandro Milesi. Their works reveal more about the personal lives of the gondoliers, as well as some of the underlining traits for which gondoliers were known, than do the depictions created by the American artists. Logsdail lived in Venice in the autumn of 1880 and rarely left the city until 1900, aside from a period of residence in London from 1887 to 1891 and visits to London for exhibitions at the Royal Academy and occasional excursions.²⁴

Painted in 1882, *Eve of the Regatta* by Logsdail (Fig. 5.8) provides a new approach to the gondolier theme by removing the figures away from their work environment. The two men are shown indoors as they debate their strategy for the upcoming race. The painter and the viewer are a third party to an animated discussion taking place between a gondolier on the right and a fisherman on the left. The clothing worn by the two figures reflects their respective livelihoods, but if that is not enough for one to distinguish their roles, Logsdail has included the fisherman's accoutrements – nets and baskets, with one fish still visible in the left foreground – and the gondolier's oars placed against the wall and beneath a small sketch of a gondola, located to the right of the gondolier's head. Logsdail relates that in the space of ten days he painted these two life-size figures of his gondoliers almost as a joke, as they talked over a glass of wine.²⁵ Yet

this was one of the most innovative works of the period and it was well received at the Royal Academy of 1883, if somewhat overshadowed by the artist's painting of *The Piazza*, which was also exhibited that year.

Perhaps the only painter to shed light on the reality of the gondolier's domestic life was Alessandro Milesi. Unlike the works by the American artists, which are positive and amusing, Milesi's images offer a personal glimpse of the gondolier's life, as seen in his painting *The Gondolier's Lunch* (Fig. 5.9). This work reflects the artist's compassion toward the common man and demonstrates how Milesi himself earned the title of "artista del popolo" (artist of the people). Milesi places the viewer before the gondolier's family, his wife and child, who quietly watch the gondolier eat his meager lunch. The scene compels one to ponder the worker's hardships, including his meager wages, for it appears that the gondolier cannot provide enough food for his entire family. Indeed, Venice was filled with gondoliers, most of whom had few other talents and competed for the same clients. *The New York Times* featured a short article on the subject of "The Gondoliers" in May 12, 1885, in which it was observed that

If one half of the gondoliers should abandon their profession the remainder might manage to live, but as there is nothing for an ex-gondolier to do in Venice he might as well starve with his gondola as starve without it. There is a terrible amount of misery in Venice of which the tourist who are so delighted with the strange beauty of the place have little suspicion.²⁶

Thus, Milesi captures this misery and expresses a sense of compassion that is not present in the American paintings.

No longer the mysterious or entertaining figure envisioned by most tourists, as

seen in the works of Sargent or Ralph Wormely Curtis, Milesi's gondolier is a prime example of the type of sentimental figures he chose to depict. Clauco B. Tiozzo praises Milesi since "few painters, better than he, have succeeded in creating master works of authentic pictorial art permeated by true poetry, inspiring one to the world of the humble, the poor, to whom he felt associated, and for a sentiment of affectionate love."²⁷

American viewers, however, preferred to see the jovial, serenading gondolier who greeted the masses of tourists upon their arrival in Venice, and such were the types of scenes the American artist created. The works of Logsdail and Milesi call attention to a reality that is lacking from the American genre scenes, and portray the gondolier on a more personal and intimate level, at a time that tourists gave little thought to the families of these workers, or any of the Venetian laborers and craftsmen, for that matter.

For the National Exhibition of 1887, held in the Public Gardens in Venice on the feast day of St. Mark's, Milesi submitted two works *Vorla Montar?* (Fig. 5.10) and *In Attesa*, both of which were very well received, and were viewed by some of the American artists, such as Blum and Chase, who are known to have seen the exhibition. For those who did not attend, *Vorla Montar?* was reproduced and critiqued in all of the popular journals of the time, and eventually acquired by the Kédivè Palace in Cairo, Egypt.²⁸ It captures the moment as a young woman is about to board a gondola. She is the focus of male admirers –one gondolier eyes her as another beckons her to "come aboard." The title itself is suggestive and may imply a sexual subtext. To the left is a member of the clergy casually conversing with another male figure and to the right the prow of the boat thrusts upward in front of the young woman.

The woman appears unattended and is possibly an American tourist, who would have been bolder about traveling alone and would have been able to afford this method of transportation more readily than a Venetian working class woman. Although quite different in subject matter and pictorial style, from Sargent's works, *Vorla Montar?* conveys a disturbing feeling as the female subject innocently begins to embark on the gondola. Both artists Sargent and Milesi, have chosen themes that place young women alone with male figures in somewhat suggestive juxtapositions. However, Sargent's dark tones and awkward perspectives complement the drama of the paintings, whereas Milesi's scenes are not ominous. Nonetheless, Milesi's painting *Vorlar montar?* alludes to the loose social mores associated with Venice, which had a long history of prostitution and promiscuity under the Republic.

The allure of the gondolier, as well as the sensation of floating, while seated in an exotic vessel and surrounded by the Venetian landscape were irresistible to the city's visitors. Furthermore, the gondola offered its visitors some anonymity, for as indicated by Henry James in his article on Venice:

There is something strange and fascinating in this mysterious impersonality of the gondola. It has an identity when you are in it, but thanks to their all being of the same size, shape, and color, and of the same deportment and gait, it has none, or as little as possible, as you see it just before you. . . . One may say, as a general thing, that there is something rather awkward in the movement of even the most graceful gondolier, and something graceful in the movement of the most awkward. . . . Sometimes, as you see this movement in profile in a gondola that passes you,—see, as you recline on your own low cushions, the arching body of the gondolier lifted up against the sky,—it has a kind of nobleness which suggests an image on a Greek frieze.²⁹

Hence, the popularity of the theme of the gondola ride – a timeless means of

transportation pictured by the American artists of the late nineteenth century as a sensuous and mysterious craft that altered one's state of mind.

There are several paintings by Sargent, Curtis and Blum that capture the well-to-do visitors of Venice enjoying the luxury and sensation of riding in a gondola. The gondola passengers, who are boarding or riding in a gondola, could not be more different from Frank Duveneck's water carriers or washerwomen, which document the diversity in the quality of life experienced by the residents of the city during the 1880s. The American gondola images deal mainly with women, unlike those painted by the European artists, which tend to focus on the gondolier conversing with his companions or flirting, rather than actually working, as in De Blaas's *The Rivals* (Fig. 5.11). In other instances, the gondola and its oarsman are peripheral to the main scene at hand, as in Alessandro Milesi's *Wedding* (National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome).

Sargent's unfinished watercolor of *A Lady in a Gondola* (Fig. 5.12) conveys a similar sensation of floating as seen in Blum's painting, discussed below. However, Sargent's darkly-clothed figure emerges from the starkness of the white background of the paper on which the image is painted. The figure's face and upper body are finished, but the architectural setting and the gondola are barely suggested. There are visible pencil indications of the gondolier perched above yet, given the image's unfinished state, the passenger appears to hover on the surface of the paper as if in a dream-like trance, comparable to the feeling of riding in a gondola. Sargent attains a psychological state of mind in this work by using soft, languid strokes that evoke euphoria and other-worldliness that can be associated with the works of the Symbolists. The fact that the

work is unfinished enhances this sensation of dislocation from the tangible world.

This watercolor represents the second gondola scene Sargent painted during his 1880-1882 trip to Venice. The first example is his *Portrait of Ramón Subercaseaux*, which shows the artist's Chilean friend, a diplomat and amateur artist, sitting in a gondola.³⁰ Once again, Sargent has created an uncommon theme – a male figure riding a gondola – that remained unexplored by the other American artists. With few exceptions, colleagues and acquaintances were hardly, if ever, portrayed by any of the artists working side by side in Venice. Other artists, such as Ralph Wormeley Curtis, did however render the interior of the gondola in great detail, revealing the lush décor that graced the cavernous craft.

While in Venice, Curtis painted one of his best-known works – *Drifting on the Lagoon* (Fig. 5.13) of 1884. Although Curtis never attained a wide reputation as a professional artist, he produced a large number of ambitious paintings, some of which were painted in Venice throughout the 1880s. Curtis must have deemed his Venetian subjects among his best works for he often exhibited views of Venice and contemporary genre scenes at the Paris Salon.³¹ He may have believed these subjects worthy of the Salon, for unlike Sargent and the other American artists in Venice at the time, Curtis depicted the high society visitors more often than the inhabitants of Venice.

For instance, *Drifting on the Lagoon* and *Sirocco*, exhibited in Venice at the 1887 National Exposition,³² both portray elegantly dressed women enjoying themselves in a very comfortable atmosphere. Aside from the effects of the water and the refined handling of paint in *Drifting on the Lagoon*, one cannot help but notice the rich interior of

the gondola. It is furnished with curtains and delicately carved benches on which lie some books and a fan. As described by William Dean Howells, the gondola appeared to be a living thing full of grace and movement under the hands of the gondolier and the

. . . wood-work of the little cabin is elaborately carved, and it is usually furnished with mirrors and seats luxuriously cushioned. The sensation of the gondola's progress, felt by the occupant of the cabin, as he falls back upon these cushions, may be described, to the female apprehension at least, as 'too divine.' The cabin is removable at pleasure, and is generally taken off and replaced by awnings in summer.³³

Among Blum's gondola images are his watercolor, *Lady Boarding a Gondola from a Palazzo* (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts) of 1885, which reveals the more private view of an upper-class woman boarding a gondola from a Venetian villa, and his *Woman in a Gondola with San Giorgio Maggiore in the Background*, painted ca. 1887 (Fig. 5.14). The second example, an unfinished oil painting, again centers on an upper-class woman, only this time she is shown in closer proximity with the viewer. The woman listlessly sits in the plush and comfortable gondola as she enjoys the quiet beauty of the lagoons. She is in a state of relaxation as noted by the limpness of her body. The painting evokes a feeling of drifting into sleep as the gondola moves away from the shore with the Campanile and the domes of St. Mark's in the distance on the left and the ships docked near the Riva degli Schiavoni. The darkness of the gondola seems like a cavity or cocoon in which the woman peacefully lies. She is physically sheltered from the outside world and is likewise hidden from public view, reflective of her status as a member of high society who isolates herself from the common people of Venice. Likewise, she is seduced by the

luxuriousness of the gondola and the intoxicating sensation of floating.

For the most part, the women depicted in the gondola scenes by American artists represent the tourist's experience in Venice. Reference to the typical American visitor in the city was included in a short story entitled "The White Lady's Gondolier," published in *The New York Times* in 1887. The story involves a married, eighteen-old American woman (*la donna bianca* or the white lady), who hires the gondolier Zefferino to assist her during her stay in Venice. She is characterized from the viewpoint of the gondolier as an independent person who

. . . Zefferino had heard Venetian ladies discuss American girls a hundred times. He learned that they had a fragile beauty which disappeared early; were very bold and impudent; stared at men as you might a dog, but could defend themselves; . . . – they and their race were barbarians and that was all about it. Yet he gathered that Americans were not a bad sort of folk, on general principle, being all of them rich, all mathematicians, and most of them geniuses in mechanics. A foreigner might not be flattered by this last; but Zefferino was a true Italian, and the sight of a machine – except in a steamboat ruining his trade on the Grand Canal – affected him to the tearfulness of the sublime.³⁴

It appears that both the tourist and the locals had misgivings about one another. The Venetians considered Americans "geniuses in mechanic," while the Americans viewed the Venetians as quaint and simple workers.

If the American tourist did not abide by Venetian customs, then it would explain why there were so many pictures of American women depicted unattended in the gondola. Yet, the woman dominated most of the paintings discussed here and in previous chapters, for they equivocate the beauty and allure of Venice, as noted in the outdoor leisure scenes analyzed below.

AL-FRESCO LEISURE -- THE PIAZZA, CAFÉ AND VERANDA

The Venetian populace in general was noticed and admired by visitors to the city, but women received the most attention. In a letter dated January 22, 1886 that Blum wrote to Bacher from Venice, he commented on a few of the cafés in the vicinity and the pastime of people-watching. Blum wrote:

. . . I hardly care to sit with that German gang at the Florian's and act mummy. So after dinner at the Capello nero which I spin out as long as a cheap dinner can be [sic] I saunter forth chewing a toothpick and ogle the *Ragazzi* [sic] for a while up and down the *mercerie* then for a cup of Capuchina [sic] at the Orientale and then home.³⁵

Obviously, the café offers the best opportunity to capture a glimpse of Venice in action, as no playhouse can accomplish. However, no other square in Venice is more famous or remarkable than the Piazza San Marco. Henry James describes the popular square in his article on the Grand Canal, written in 1892:

The everlasting shuffle in the Piazza of these irresponsible visitors is contemporary Venetian life. . . . The shopkeepers and gondoliers, the peddlers and the models depend upon it for a living; they are the custodians and ushers of the great museum – they are even themselves to a certain extent the objects of an exhibition. . . . Piazza San Marco is like the lobby of the opera in the intervals of the performance.³⁶

Florian's was, and still is, the most popular outdoor café located in the Piazza San Marco. Some would even say that it is an institution that represents the city's long and colorful history. This grand café opened its doors in December 1720, under the ownership of Floriano Francesconi, and is considered

. . . a true institution, because it summarizes in its own history, the history of the whole city, of the last glimmers of seventeenth century splendor to the infinite fissures of today, in a city no longer suited for man, invaded by massive tourists who march in flanked battalions and compels the Venetians . . . to take refuge more often in the past . . .³⁷

For the artists who resided in Venice, Florian's past history was less significant than its contemporary appeal. It was the preferred meeting-place of the evening, where one could retire from work and enjoy leisure activities while listening to the orchestra play.

Bacher refers to the common after-dinner activity in a letter written on August 29, 1886, in which he writes:

Then, after dinner, – Café Florian – where all meet who do not dine together and all events of the day are discussed. I have as a rule, three games of chess with M. de Rosa at a franc a game. . . . Then, after the games, we have a walk up and down the Piazza – go to the whiskey shop for a drink of vermouth, quinine, and seltz. Then to bed – this is always about eleven o'clock p.m. – the music is over at half-past ten.³⁸

The cafés in Venice were extremely popular and frequented by the sojourning stranger and resident alike, who often encountered more peace and quiet than in St. Mark's itself for "The tranquility of the Venetian cafés, whether their patrons are counts or fishermen, is rather remarkable. They are true havens of rest."³⁹ Unfortunately, aside from Hassam's illustration for *Venetian Life*, there are no other American works that reflect the crowds and pastimes at this legendary café.

Among the earlier images inspired by St. Mark's Square and the café scene is the work by Italian artist Michele Cammerano (1835-1920), entitled *Piazza San Marco at Night* (Fig. 5.15), of 1869, painted in a style similar to that of Eduoard Manet (1832-

1883), whose work Cammarano had seen on a visit to Paris. Cammarano, together with the Milanese artist Domenico Indunno, pioneered a form of realism that opposed the strong draftsmanship and modeling of academic painting. Similar to the composition of Manet's *Music on the Tuilleries*, *Piazza San Marco at Night* presents a contemporary scene with two central figures elegantly dressed in white garments, starkly contrasting with the darker tones that are accented by spots of bright color, such as the red cape of the woman seated on the right. The painting's composition is photographic, in that its edges abruptly crop the scene in the midst of the activity on the *piazza*, most likely set at Florian's. The rush-seated chair on the far right, empty but for a black top hat, invites the viewer to sit and join the crowd.

The American Childe Hassam also chose the popular café as the subject of his illustration *Florian's* (Fig. 5.16), for the 1891 edition of Howells's *Venetian Life*, portraying its patrons in strokes of pastel colors. The top hats are easily discernible, as is the essence of this fanciful meeting place of the rich and famous. A contemporary article about Venice sets the atmosphere:

The ladies are elegant as their taste will allow them to be, and the gentlemen are exquisite dandies of a ridiculous type. They do not, it must be said, possess anything like as much beauty of face or form as one expects in them. The dark eyes and long hair of the ladies are, . . . worthy of notice, though blue eyes also are to be seen; but their deportment is very much against them.⁴⁰

The lure was so strong that “people of all shades of politics” met in Florian's “dainty little saloons, though there were shades of division even there, and they did not mingle.” Howells also mentions that there was a separate room “devoted to ladies and forbidden to

smokers,” where idlers “looked long and deliberately in upon its loveliness, and then returned to the bosom of their taciturn companions.”⁴¹ These sections of Florian’s were not the subject of any artworks in the 1880s.

Englishman William Logsdail presented a highly-detailed image of the populated square and café in his painting *The Piazza of St. Mark* of 1883 (Fig. 5.17), exhibited at the Royal Academy that year. A *tour de force* that reveals the vivid and multifarious types of individuals who congregated in St. Mark’s in the 1880s, this painting was one of the most admired pictures of the season. As *The New York Times* reported:

We have had studies by the dozen of Venetian life and Venetian scenery; the fair lagoons have long been happy hunting grounds for the artist, but we have rarely had a more pleasing and successful delineation of life before St. Mark’s than this of Mr. Logsdail. It is the Queen of the Adriatic *en fête*, that pretty informal *fiesta* that she dons every evening under the brilliant sunset rays, and before her marvelous cathedral, when all the world comes forth, sauntering up and down the *Piazza* or sitting in groups about the marble-topped tables discussing . . . the nothings of daily life.⁴²

It was an open stage whose cast alternated depending on who was doing the viewing. One writer in the *Fortnightly Review* of 1883 disliked Logsdail’s *The Piazza of St. Mark* because, among other things, it unrealistically presents the lower classes of Venice, who would not have been privileged enough to enjoy the pastimes of the leisure class. Frederick Wedmore wrote that Logsdail:

. . . has been almost offensively prosaic. No one denies the picture’s skills; and the lovers of freedom and enterprise must praise its boldness; but one does not like it more the more one knows it. . . . It is very clever, and very capable; one may almost say brilliant; but one wants the note of refinement, the note of penetration.

Perhaps, after all, it is not precisely characteristic of Venice to have

marshaled in the foreground the shallow figures of the two empty-faced women, who loll and look bold; but even of such women, it seems to me, that it is a superficial and imperfect rendering. Again, the introduction of a certain plastered head – that of the lad in the middle of the picture – it is not so much realistic as revolting. The café front is crowded less with types of refinement that are at leisure to-day than with the types of indolence and satiety for whom no leisure has attraction. The vigorous, good-humored face of an English painter asserts itself among the crowd of the idler and roué; but, in the main, Mr. Logsdail has painted not the charm of Venice, but its social decay.⁴³

The “social decay” that Wetmore referred to was a reflection on his biased opinion and confirms that the public, critics included, were uncomfortable with images of members of different classes mingling together. The fact remained that Venice, especially Piazza San Marco, was an ideal location for the interaction of the various races and classes.

Logsdail himself provided direct insight into the painting in his *Memoirs*, where he writes:

To give any idea of the scene on any summer evening when the crowd collects to sit at [a] café table or saunter up and down and listen to the music in that gorgeous setting of intricate architecture was a difficult task I had set myself . . . I had become so hardened to the annoyance of onlookers that I frequently worked there in the midst of the crowd while the band played . . . The two lascars I got from a P & O Ship, which then had a branch service between Venice and Egypt. They give a touch of bright colour and are not incongruous as at that time they were frequently seen about the Piazza.⁴⁴

The picture proved to be a crowd-pleaser and was sold immediately to Joseph Ruston, an important collector of Logsdail’s work from Lincoln, for the high price of 1,000 pounds.⁴⁵ Altogether, this work successfully combines architecture and human activity.

Another article about Venice, written several years before Logsdail’s painting was exhibited, describes a Venice where anyone in any station could and did frequent St.

Mark's Square, even if the upper and lower classes distanced themselves from one another. The author writes

At dusk in the summer nearly every one repairs to St. Mark's place. A gayer scene than it presents when the band plays it is impossible to imagine. The three great flagstuffs from which wave the national colors give it a fête day aspect. The entire square is thronged with promenaders. . . . Mingling with the throng of beautiful dames, one sees strangers from all countries, and in holiday garb, the sailors of many nations, especially those of Italy, the neatest and most tastefully attired seamen in the world. . . . Sitting outside of the cafés are officers of various regiments, with the Apollo-Belvedere-like proportions of which many of the Italians are remarkable, recalling the old Greek style.⁴⁶

Many of Logsdail's friends are portrayed in this painting, which took nearly a year for the artist to complete. His primary purpose for creating such a work was to give a thoroughly accurate and naturalistic account of the crowd that gathered in the Piazza each summer evening. Sparing no detail, Logsdail began by depicting the architectural background, which features the lower half of St. Mark's Basilica and the Doge's Palace; these have been cropped to fit into the pictorial frame. The figures were added last and, unlike the setting, were not created on site but in a garden on the Giudecca or the cloister of an abandoned monastery, where Logsdail had a monk's cell to store his picture.⁴⁷

Portraits of many popular artists are depicted in this who's who of Venice, including Henry Woods and Frank Bramley, who look out from the middle distance and whose heads appear between the two seated women in the left foreground. Also visible are the artists Samuel Melton Fisher, Cecil Van Haanen, Ludwig Passini, Leo Ruben and Giuseppe De Maria. Less well-known were Logsdail's two gondoliers, Giovanni and Pescante, most likely also the models used for *Eve of the Regatta* and Chappie,

Logsdail's white Pomeranian.⁴⁸ The three lofty flagstaffs in the front of the church rise from pedestals resembling candelabra, executed by Leopardo in 1505.⁴⁹

A rare glimpse of the inside of a Venetian café is rendered by Englishman Samuel Melton Fisher in his painting *Festa, the Interior of a Venetian Café*, completed in 1889 (Fig. 5.18), the same year Blum completed his *Venetian Bead Stringers*. Fisher focuses on a group of women and one man, atypically shown, not working, but casually enjoying a cup of coffee and reading a newspaper. The inclusion of the wall mirror is a clever device that provides a view to the activity outside of the café, possibly of outsiders who are not privileged to frequent such places. Mirrors played an important role in the paintings of the French Impressionists, as seen in Manet's *At the Café* or Manet's *Bar At the Folies Bergères*, in which mirrors reflect what is taking place within these interiors and hence the view in front of the sitter.

In the late nineteenth century, many artists began to paint Parisian figures in public interiors lined with large mirrors. Mirrors were considered emblems of elegance, luxury and of a refined civilization. Decorative and impersonal, they optically extended and brightened the ordinary interiors they adorned with reflected light. In turn, they transformed the ordinary into the sumptuous. Mirrors in general augment the light in an interior, and because the café's large window is opposite the mirror panel, the figures in the middle plane of Fisher's painting become silhouettes.

The mirrored panel in *Festa*, a common feature of the Venetian cafés, reduces the people both inside and outside the café to decorative accessories and creates a picture within a picture. Instead of echoing the walls on which they are located, these mirrors

reflect the canal, the fishermen, and the gondoliers working outside the café's doors on the upper level and the activity within the café on the middle level. The third level brings four women, one man and a small child into the foreground. Fisher does not include himself in the mirror, and the central figure is a gondolier standing outside the café windows. Altogether, there are twenty figures in this work, but only six are "real;" the others are reflected – part of the same world, but separate.

A. C. R. Carter, writing about Fisher and his work for the *Art Journal* in 1899, described *Festa* as typical of the Englishman's Italian works and praised the painting for overcoming "the difficulty of grouping harmoniously a number of figures . . . The colouring is soft, suffused, and in tender harmony. A *tour de force* is provided in the painting of the mirror which bounds the room, and in which the figures are reflected."⁵⁰

The title of the painting denotes that this is a special day – a *festa* (holiday) – but it does not indicate what type of holiday it is or who the individuals depicted are. Pictorially and symbolically, Fisher was able to combine three separate worlds into one. As the patrons of means are being served inside the café, there are other Venetian workers, such as the gondolier seen reflected in the mirror, who are waiting to serve them outside.

The frequenting of the Venetian café was habit forming. Blum referred to this pastime in a diary entry dated Sunday, February 15, 1891, which was written while he was living in Japan. Blum wrote:

I fancied once or twice I smelled that spectacular oriental odor which I noticed when I first landed. And there certainly came over me again strongly that keen desire to drop into some place to sit down for a cup of coffee or a drink and watch the people – I missed the café again which I

so longed for all during the summer when we used to go out walking.⁵¹

Thus you could remove the artist from Venice, but you could not take Venice out of the artist. Even so, Blum did not paint Venetian café pictures.

Among the American artists, only Hassam and Sargent opted to paint café or restaurant scenes, even though Bacher, Elizabeth Pennell and Blum often mentioned their daily attendance at Florian's or the Café Orientale in their publications and personal letters. Interestingly, American artists also did not concentrate on café subjects in their homeland until the early twentieth century, such as William Glackens (1870-1938), who in 1905 painted *Chez Mouquin* (Art Institute of Chicago), one of the best French restaurants in New York, and John Sloan (1871-1951), who in 1912 depicted *Renganeschi's Saturday Night* (Art Institute of Chicago), a popular Italian restaurant on West Tenth Street.⁵² In line with French Impressionist themes, Glackens and Sloan were both painting scenes of modern urban life.

Sargent's watercolor *Café on the Riva degli Schiavoni* (Fig. 5.19) depicts a glimpse of modern Venetian life, but on an impersonal level. Painted around 1881, this work depicts the outdoor sitting area of the Café Orientale, located on the Riva degli Schiavoni. As opposed to Florian's, where one encountered the elegant side of society, dandies and well-dressed ladies, foreigners and tourists, the Café Orientale, located on the noisy thoroughfare of the Riva was frequented primarily by the city's inhabitants.⁵³ Yet, Sargent's viewer is not presented with the accoutrements of the café or portraits of the artists, such as the Duveneck and his Boys, who lived nearby in the Casa Jankowitz.

Elizabeth Pennell wrote about the Café Orientale and described its seedy

attributes in her 1916 publication, *Nights – Rome, Venice in the Aesthetic Eighties, London, Paris in the Fighting Nineties*. In this book, she relates that sailors and sergeants played checkers in a new gilded room, but that Duveneck's corner was "in the older, shabby, stuffy, low-ceiling room . . . Had the old room been seedier and duller – our company never was – I still would have seen it through the glamour of youth and thought it the one place in which to study Venice and Venetian life."⁵⁴

Yet, the figures seated in the foreground of *Café on the Riva degli Schiavoni* are not locals, but rather Englishmen, distinguished by the bowler hats they are wearing. Quite different from the intimate street scenes Sargent painted during the same period, the Café Orientale was nonetheless considered one of the least impressive cafés in Venice that attracted a different clientele, one that could not afford anything else and did not desire a posh décor.

Unlike the Venetian café scenes created by the European artists, Sargent provides few strokes to delineate his shadowy figures and selects a broad view of the Riva as his background. Sargent is more concerned with the surroundings and atmospheric ambiance of Venice than with the specifics of the café experience. He approaches his café scene on an expressive level and denotes the shabbiness of the Café Orientale through his dark male images and the use of gloomy shades of brown and tan colors. Even so, Sargent manifests the pleasures of Venice by including a marvelous view of its distinctive architecture that could be appreciated while seated at an outdoor café. The landmarks seen in the background of his painting are recognizable from left to right as the church of Santa Maria della Salute, the *Biblioteca Marciana* (Marciana Library) and the

Doge's Palace.⁵⁵

When not enjoying the café scene, tourists and residents alike spent their time savoring the wonders of Venice outdoors in any way possible. Venetians suffered throughout the winter in their cold homes and longed for the warmth of the spring and summer months. Howells explains that

. . . late in September, all Venice goes by a simple impulse *of dolce far niente*, . . . and now young girls steal to their balconies, and linger there for hours, subtly conscious of the young men sauntering to and fro, and looking up at them from beneath. . . . The poor, whose sole luxury the summer is, lavish the spring upon themselves unsparingly. They work, they eat, they sleep out of doors.⁵⁶

American and English genre painters especially explored the Venetian al-fresco subject in the 1880s, and for the most part concentrated on women at leisure. Unlike the Englishmen, who painted outdoor lunch scenes or curbside toilettes, the American artists created leisure scenes set in protected interiors with a remote view to the external world.

Verandas and balconies, offered women an outlet to enjoy the open air while maintaining their reputation. Custom did not permit women to venture out alone, but the balconies compensated for this restriction.⁵⁷ Venetian ladies could thus be found seated in front of the stone balconies located on the upper floors of their homes without the accompaniment of a chaperone or escort. The women were in effect like caged birds, protected from escape. The secluded atmosphere is rendered in the images discussed below, including Julius Stewart's *Venetian Veranda* (Fig. 5.20), very similar to, if not the same work in an altered state, as *A Spring Day in Venice* (Fig. 5.21),⁵⁸ and Ralph Wormeley Curtis's *Woman at Balcony* (Fig. 5.22) and *Sirocco* (Fig. 5.23).

Venetian Veranda depicts a young woman comfortably reclining on a wicker chaise lounge, as portrayed many times by Stewart in his *An Idle Afternoon* of 1884 (Private Collection) and *Repose* of 1888 (Private Collection), both of which are interior scenes. These works were lavishly painted, with their main female figure adorned by an arrangement of roses and flourishing plants that compliment the beauty of the sitter. In *A Spring Day in Venice*, a man and woman are present on the left and the Venetian skyline is visible in the distance. General Lew Wallace described this work, which he included in his *Famous Paintings of the World* in 1896, as

. . . differing materially from nearly all the delineations which we have seen of Venice and the Venetian life. . . . The city is thrown into the distance, across the lagoon. The softness of the climate, the perfection of beauty on every hand, the luxurious surroundings, the profusion of flowers and exhaling leaves, have suffused the spirits of the visitors from the colder climes of the North, and transformed them into Venetians for the day.⁵⁹

With the removal of the two standing figures and the architectural elements, as seen in *A Spring Day in Venice*, the atmosphere in *Venetian Veranda* is altered, for now the woman is isolated and the setting appears more intimate, as with the other two paintings by Stewart mentioned above. As indicated by the gondola in the left middle ground, a visitor, most likely a male guest, either has just arrived or gone away. The book in the woman's lap, perhaps a love story, and the prow of the gondola above her on the far left, imply a romantic interlude. Furthermore, the wilted and fallen roses to the right of the woman also suggest that her moral standards are waning in the all too-enticing city of Venice.

Akin to Stewart, Curtis also focused on leisure time as experienced by the wealthy

tourist sojourning in Venice, but some of the latter's images indicate a sinister side of Venice. Curtis's *Woman at Balcony* connotes an eeriness similar to that found in Sargent's ambiguous, dark interiors, with their contrasting back lights. The scene is very somber and the woman is shown in profile, standing in front of a loggia of a palazzo, possibly the Palazzo Barbaro that was owned by the Curtis family since 1875. The atmosphere is mysterious and the claw-like position of her hand calls to mind Sargent's emphasis on hand gestures, as seen in his *Dr. Pozzo*, *Madame Gautreau* and more so, *The Sulphur Match*. Aside from the work's title, there is no indication that the painting is a Venetian subject; yet, it captures the same mystery noted in Sargent's works.

On the other hand, *Sirocco* was more indicative of the quintessential, romantic Venetian scene. This painting was well-received when it was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1886 as *Sirocco in Venice* and noted for its delicate color scheme, "exceedingly graceful young ladies," and the "languor natural to the season when the hot *sirocco* blows is perfectly reflected in the figures clad in white gowns."⁶⁰ The term *sirocco* refers to a "sultry wind,"⁶¹ and connotes the welcome breeze during a stifling summer day. The two women in *Sirocco* are situated in a protective and attractive setting as they peacefully sit on a balcony, which faces a side canal. While one figure, resembling the woman in *Drifting on the Lagoon*, holds a guitar, the other idly gazes into the water. Curtis delicately contrasts the shades of white and flesh-colored tones seen in the gauze sleeves of one figure and the balcony's voluminous awning. The rosy coloring of the woman seated in the chair may hint at the heightened awareness of the music of the wind. She sits in repose, as her cupped fingers lay still in her lap. The leaves of her fan appear to

touch the water below, which echoes the brown color of her fan. She is within reach of the canal, yet clearly separated from it.

Upon first glance, the woman on the lower plane appears to be playing the guitar, but she is merely strumming it, for she is not pressing the chords on the fingerboard of the instrument. She is seated on an airy, sea-green coverlet or mat, and appears to float on the water that lies below. The flowering plant on the lower left may refer to the beauty of these young and impressionable ladies. Their elegant, white dresses with light, fluffy skirts that flow onto the floor indicate that these women belong to the upper class and are not natives of Venice. Perhaps they are American friends of the Curtis's who were staying at the Palazzo Barbaro.

Among the frequent visitors to Palazzo Barbaro was Isabella Stewart Gardner, who owned Curtis's Venetian garden scene, entitled *In the Garden* (Fig. 5.24) that was subsequently returned to the Curtis family. In her diary entry for May 1884, Gardner notes a visit to the Curtis garden in Venice.⁶² Unfortunately, she did not describe the garden, but one can suppose that the visit was special enough, if she had noted it even cursorily. It is safe to assume that the garden depicted in Curtis's painting belongs to his family.

In the Garden shows a female figure, possibly a Curtis family member, seated in a wild floral garden with a mysterious, dark man seated behind her gazing at the woman from a distance. The role of the man is uncertain – he may represent the gardener or a houseguest, but nonetheless his detachment from the woman is disconcerting. What should be a private moment for the woman is actually an intrusion. The physical distance

between these figures enjoying the vibrant setting may indicate the remoteness of their social levels and creates a psychological tension, heightened by the man's blatant gaze.

Both *In the Garden* and *Sirocco* capture the essence of the *dolce far niente* Venetian style as experienced by the artist and his wealthy friends, and are indicative of the leisure scenes depicted by the American artists working in Venice. In all the works mentioned in this section, the female figures are sheltered from the city and physically removed from interaction with the common residents of the city. Indeed, none of the American artists appear to have been interested in the leisure activities of the working class, as were the European artists, among them Logsdail.

Logsdail's *Venetian Al-Fresco* (Fig. 5.25), an instant success when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1886, offers a unique glimpse of this outdoor life as could only be experienced in Venice. Its subject matter is a summer picnic in a gondola as it glides along the Grand Canal towards the Rialto Bridge, seen in the far distance. In some of the reflections and other areas of the picture, Logsdail uses a modified form of the square brush technique popularized by the Newlyn School and adopted by Frank Bramley, the artist's friend who was in Venice from 1882 to 1883, but its ravishing coloring and clarity of line refer to James Tissot.⁶³

As with his earlier work, *The Piazza of St. Mark*, Logsdail began here by painting the background *in situ* and the individual figures were posed in the studio and the gondola. There are several characters in this painting that are interacting with one another on different levels during this leisurely family outing. The gondolier appears smitten with the young girl on the far right and the woman holding a child in the

foreground acknowledges the artist, whose empty rush seat is noticeable in the foreground. The same device of placing an empty chair in the foreground is seen a little later in Blum's *Venetian Bead Stringers*, which in turn may borrow from Tito's *La chiromante* of 1886.

Venetian Al-Fresco was also sold to Joseph Ruston (for 800 pounds) and while most critics praised the painting, there were some, like *The Athenaeum*, that voiced disapproval for the inclusion of ordinary people: "their faces and figures illustrate the class about whom we already know enough from M.M. Van Haanen, de Blaas, Woods, Fildes, and half a dozen less competent painters. Their attractions are exhausted and we have had quite enough of them."⁶⁴ Nonetheless, *Venetian al-Fresco* still was considered one of Logsdail's best works. On the occasion of the Manchester Royal Jubilee Exhibition, held in 1887, another critic praised the painting for its naturalistic rendering. J. E. Hogson wrote:

W. Logsdail grapples still more resolutely with the difficulties of open daylight, of light streaming from every side and casting no shadows. In 166, "The Piazza, Venice," and 99, "Venetian al-Fresco," he seems to have carried the matter to its ultimate perfection; no further word is left to be said on the subject, and whatever artistic impressiveness may reside in the rendering of this particular truth, must now be manifest. We who at the moment have our heads full of fifty years of British art, with its very various sources of interest, may be pardoned if we suggest to Mr. Logsdail a doubt, which very naturally arises in our minds, whether the intellectual gratification to be derived from seeing open daylight so truthfully rendered is sufficient to justify an artist of his commanding ability in devoting any more time to it exclusively.⁶⁵

During the same year, 1887, Julius Stewart was concentrating on similar outdoor scenes, but his works were solely devoted to the wealthy tourist's experience in Venice.

In 1887 he painted *Visitors to Venice* (39 x 26-1/2 inches) in which “two women are seated in a gondola that glides along the narrow waters of the canal as the blue-shirted boatman propels it along.”⁶⁶ The canal scene is typical of the settings depicted by Martin Rico and Robert Blum, with the added element of a leisure genre scene. Stewart knew the work of Rico and Fortuny through his father’s art collection and from the Sunday gatherings in the Stewart home in Paris, which were frequented by Rico, as well as Paul Baudry, Giuseppe De Nittis, Meissonier, Rico, and other European artists.⁶⁷

Stewart had access to virtually any artwork he desired, and it is his world that he captures so well during his trips to Venice. In the next section, Stewart’s *On the Yacht Namouna in Venetian Waters* of 1892 will be discussed as representative of the types of upper class scenes for which he was famous. More importantly, it is a rare example of a yachting scene associated with Venice, a theme that the European genre artists did not explore. The modernity of the steamship may not have been as appealing to collectors, who were attracted to the pre-industrial features of Venice and the city’s more traditional methods of transportation. Yet, if the wealthy class had to select a vehicle of choice it would have to be the yacht.

THE LIDO AND YACHTING

The Lido was the remedy of choice during the Venetian, hot summer months for its close proximity to Venice made it ideal for one to take a daily excursion. It offered one an opportunity to swim in the Adriatic, gamble in the Casino or simply watch the

other travelers partaking in these activities. Some of the Lido's visitors also could afford to indulge in the finer pleasures, such as yachting; however, with the exception of a very few, most of the American artists working in Venice only could content themselves with a dip in the water.

Both Otto Bacher and Harper Pennington mention daily bathing trips to the Lido in their articles about Venice and the artist's experience there.⁶⁸ In a letter dated July 19, 1886, Bacher relates that "It is hotter than fury here now and I take a bath on the seashore everyday at 5 p.m. I have taken a season ticket that costs ten dollars, – bath, suit, steamer, etc. We have others of the boys with us."⁶⁹ Yet, the Lido was seldom depicted by any of the American or European painters during the 1880s and the few examples that exist all date from the first half of the next decade.

The plainness of the beach area did not offer the aesthetic appeal of the Grand Canal for the beach was not representative of Venice's unique allure and beauty, in fact it was a dusty, rather than sandy beach. For most of the American artists, the Lido was a place to escape to when they did not wish to work. The artists could retreat from their paintbrushes and indulge in their own "dolce far niente," such as swimming, and at practically no cost.

The ambiance of the Lido is described by Henry James in his tale *Traveling Companions*, written in 1870, as his two main characters, Mr. Brooke and Charlotte Evans, two American tourists, venture to the beach. He writes:

Near the landing-place on the hither side of the Lido is a small *trattoria* for the refreshment of visitors. An arbor outside the door, a horizontal vine checkering still further a dirty tablecloth, a pungent odour of *frittata*, an admiring circle of

gondoliers and beggars, are the chief attractions of this suburban house of entertainment, . . . She and I accordingly started slowly for a stroll along the barren strand which averts its shining side from Venice and takes the tides of the Adriatic. The Lido has for me a peculiar melancholy charm, and I have often wondered that I should have felt the presence of beauty in a spot so destitute of any exceptional elements of beauty. . . . In my own country I know many a sandy beach, and many a stunted copse and many a tremendous ocean line of little less purity and breadth of composition, with far less magical interest. The secret of the Lido is simply your sense of adjacent Venice . . . Along a narrow line in the middle of the island are market-gardens and breeze-twisted orchards, and a hint of hedges and lanes and inland greenery. At one end is a series of low fortifications duly embanked and moated and sentinelled.⁷⁰

It is exactly this section of the Lido that was depicted by John Twachtman and Otto Bacher, two artists who appear to have documented the beach area. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of these works are unknown.

By the late 1870s, the Lido was beginning to develop into a fashionable resort that became a popular vacation spot for wealthy tourists. Venice had resumed its role as the center for trade and commerce and had inaugurated a line of ships to the Orient and the Indies, and the waterways leading to the Lido had made it possible for large ships to travel to her shores. S. G. Young commented on the Venetian resort's appeal to New Yorkers in 1877 as it was

. . . now possible for New Yorkers, weary of paying a sum which in Europe is a little fortune for the privilege of inhabiting four stories, which have every luxury and convenience except the indispensable one of a dwelling all on one floor, to come over to Venice and spend the summer in one of the most charming sojourns in the world. The new establishment of baths on the Lido, will be a gold mine for Venice, and it will become one of the most attractive watering-places on the continent.⁷¹

Originally an undeveloped property, the Lido quickly became a popular attraction

and a commercial entity equipped with terraces, bathing houses and hotels. According to Henry James's essay on Venice, published in 1882, the Lido was spoiled and "part of a United Italy, . . . made the victim of villainous improvements. A little cockney village has sprung up in its rural bosom There are bitumen walls and gas-lamps, lodging-houses, shops and a day theater. The bathing establishment is bigger than before, and the restaurant as well . . ."72

Bacher's etching, *On the Lido* (Fig. 5.26) of 1882, ignores the massive development that the Lido had undergone a decade earlier. Bacher focuses on a lone figure walking away from the viewer and wearing a coat, which suggests that it is late in the day or season. He is carrying what appears to be a rifle along an overgrown road with a view of the deserted beach and massive ocean on the right-hand side. The only evidence of the bathing area is found in the rooftops in the middle-ground, with relatively few bathers in the water. Both Bacher and Twachtman chose to ignore the popular sights associated with this locale and selected a late autumnal and somber setting. Their images juxtapose man against nature.

Robert Blum also painted a Lido-related scene in his unlocated work *On the Way to the Lido*. Rendered in oil, it was exhibited at the National Academy of Design's Annual Exhibition in March 1881 and described by one reviewer as lacking in accuracy:

Whether from lack of keenness of observation, or because he could not give up the handsome line of the figure in the chief gondolier of his composition, the man has his feet misplaced, and is rowing the gondola in an attitude impossible even to a skillful oarsman. . . . Fortunately, there is something, and a good deal, besides, in the picture to condone for a departure from exactness. There is truthfulness in tone, brilliant color, freshness. And for the gondolier there is certainly a finer outline than the real man, seen from that direction, would

present.⁷³

The emphasis in Blum's work was clearly on the figure of the gondolier. Unfortunately, an image of this painting has not been located, making it difficult to determine other aspects of this work.

Unlike the American leisure beach scenes painted in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, such as those by Samuel Carr of Coney Island and William Merritt Chase of Shinnecock, Long Island, the Venetian images do not present its visitors actively enjoying the beach. The French Impressionist beach paintings, including Eduoard Manet's *The Beach at Boulogne-sur-Mer* of 1869 or Edgar Degas's *Beach Scene* of 1876-1877, both incorporated the working class together with the upper middle classes. The genre artists in Venice were aware of these beach paintings and most likely consciously chose to avoid Venetian beach scenes, especially since the Lido was more of a tourist attraction than a representation of the native's daily experience. Also, scenes of the Lido may not have been desired by the American art patron at this time. One may speculate further that the Venetian beach was a personal haven for the artist, which he did not wish to commercialize, or that he felt uncomfortable displaying people in their bathing suits and swimming, but this can not be determined with great certainty.

The types of visitors attracted by the Lido are the subjects of Julius Stewart's famous painting, *The Yacht on Namouna in Venetian Waters* (Fig. 5.27), which successfully combines portraiture and genre. It is a rare example of the tourist's experience in Venice in all its luxury, and the earliest of several works by Stewart that were staged on James Gordon Bennett's 226-foot long steam yacht, whose interior was

designed by Stanford White (1853-1906).

The permanent residents of Venice loathed steam yachts, for they represented the intrusion of foreign technology, were considered unsightly, and represented a break from the past. In 1883, Bacher expressed the strong displeasure with these modern vehicles: “American enterprise is making itself felt and several small steam yachts have been introduced in the canals to the intense disgust of the inhabitants who are wedded to the time-honored gondola.”⁷⁴

Portrayed in Stewart’s painting are the actress Lillie Langtry in the striped blouse on the right, and an intended portrait of the playboy-sportsman Frederic Gebhard and Bennett himself.⁷⁵ The painting is thought to be one of a series illustrating the Four Seasons, with this work representing the summer, and it is the only extant work from the series.⁷⁶ Ulrich Hiesinger’s recent study on Stewart has shown that one local Venetian girl was included among the group of travelers, as the “shipboard beauty” with her arms raised in the middle ground. The picture is in fact contrived, both in the use of this model, and also in that the artist’s friend John C. Van Dyke posed as a substitute for the well-known personality Gebhard. Van Dyke sheds some light on the conception of this painting:

One summer in Venice, Jules Stewart was painting a large picture of a yachting party at sea. . . the *Namouna*, was lying off San Marco out of commission, and it was the foredeck of that yacht that furnished the background of that picture. Bennett had given Stewart the run of the yacht, and we practically lived on her, going ashore for luncheon and dinner at restaurants. Models in Venice at that time were not easy to find, and so I posed for one of the men in the group. Stewart made such an exact portrait of me that it was recognized at once when the picture was exhibited. The other members of his yachting party were rather composite in character.

A Venetian girl furnished pretty blond coloring, but her features were not good. Stewart would paint at her for fifteen minutes and then lay down his brushes and exclaim: “Great Heavens! How ugly she is!” Fortunately the girl did not understand that much English and was pleased with herself in the picture because Stewart made her both young and attractive.⁷⁷

Stewart’s image resembles another shipboard scene, *The Last Evening* (Fig. 5.28), painted by the French-born artist James Tissot (1836-1902) in 1873. Tissot, who moved to London in 1871, was known for his elusive narrative paintings that were rendered in high detail. His pictorial and refined style of painting is captured in Stewart’s own works. In *The Last Evening* an officer and an invalid woman are shown courting one another in the foreground as they are observed by some disapproving passengers. Two unsympathetic, older men are seated in the background – one a fellow officer and the other a well-dressed gentleman, possibly the woman’s relative. Behind these two fellows, a curious little girl has perched herself next to their shoulders to hear their conversation, so that there are several layers of eavesdropping occurring in this work. While Stewart’s yacht painting does not present the complicated rigging or multifaceted plot seen in *The Last Evening*, Stewart may have been inspired by Tissot’s image of the young couple for his own portrayal of the two figures pictured on the right of *On the Yacht Namouna, Venice*.⁷⁸ By adding the couple, Stewart provided a bit of narrative to this elaborate group portrait of his friends.

Exhibited together with *On the Yacht Namouna, Venice* at the Columbian Exposition in 1893,⁷⁹ *Roba di Scirocco—Venice (Sirocco Effects—Venice)* (Fig. 5.29) of ca. 1891-1892 (location unknown), features a small genre scene at the far right with two women in elegant clothing preparing to embark from the Lido in a gondola while giving

alms to a male beggar with his hat in his outstretched hand. In front of this genre scene are seated two young boys. According to Hiesinger, the white steam yacht shown entering the harbor in the distances is the *Namouna*, whose arrival may have prompted the women to leave the island. Thus the yacht indirectly represents James Gordon Bennett and the lifestyle of the rich.

Without sentimentalizing the subject, Stewart acknowledges the poverty that existed in Venice at the turn of the nineteenth century. *Roba di Scirocco* represents the dichotomy that existed between the world of the lower class Venetian and the upper class tourist for Stewart juxtaposes the rich and the poor before the expansive view of the lagoon. He chose to include the beggar and small group of peasant children as peripheral figures, and placed them on the lower plane of the canvas, whereas he symbolically located the yacht on a distant and higher plane, within sight, but beyond accessibility.

CONCLUSION

For most tourists, the Venetian experience was short-lived and free of unpleasantness. The American artists in Venice favored depictions of the tourist at leisure, more so than the Italian and English artists, who concentrated on the lower classes enjoying the serenity and beauty of the city. The lower class was best portrayed at work and adhering to the ideal image of playing while working, whereas the affluent citizens of Venice were not depicted at all. The reason for the absence of scenes depicting the pastimes of the wealthy Venetian may be due to the fact that there were not

many to be found. In 1865, George Augustus Sala commented that the throng of people seen in the streets of Venice, mainly the Riva degli Schiavoni, was composed of fishermen, sailors, gondoliers, artisans, beggars and grisettes for

As regards the well-to-do Venetians: there are, in the first place, no well-to-do Venetians; and, in the next place, if there were, they wouldn't come out. Italian ladies and gentlemen are precisely the people you don't see in this city, that was once called *La nobile città* and *Venezia la ricca*.⁸⁰

Even if the nobles had been more visible, they would not have suited the American artists' purpose for the artists were interested in the picturesque and seemingly simple characteristics of the working class. For the Italian artists, such as Milesi and Nono, the life of the working class was a familiar subject with which they felt comfortable enough to depict. Perhaps their works were not dictated by the art patron, as well those of the American and English artists working in Venice.

One must consider the trends in nineteenth-century English painting in order to understand why English artists portrayed the same popular subjects that the Americans painted – the Venetian working class – in such a sentimental manner. Fildes, Fisher and Logsdail were enriched by their native country's rich literary history and were accustomed to exposing their viewers to the sobering reality of English life. While some English painters of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, such as John Everett Millais (1829-1896), popularized depictions of frivolous subjects that satisfied the general public, such as blowing bubbles or dressing for the evening, there were others who dealt with the pressing economic issues of the period and displayed a deepening social awareness, as seen in the works of Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914), such as *Hard Times* of 1885,

Frank Holl (1845-188), and even in Fildes's own works (*Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward* of 1874).⁸¹

In the 1880s, the American artist did not illustrate the same level of social awareness in his depictions of American scenes, nor was he exposed to literary figures who were considered equivalent to Charles Dickens in antebellum America. Not until the beginning of the twentieth century would social issues of the working class become central to the images depicted by the American artist working in America. Until then, relatively few painters and photographers focused on the hardships of the American lower classes and contemplated their way of life.

The American artists managed to manipulate the image of the Venetian people, who were for the most part unfamiliar to the American public. They create an ambiance of pleasure around the Venetians, even when they were shown laboring and in subservient roles for these portrayals corresponded to a stereotype that was unthreatening to the foreign viewer. In spite of this, none of the American artists portrayed the same figures in moments of leisure for the lower classes were in essence amusing themselves while working. The activities of the bead stringer or water carrier, when not shown actively conducting her trade or duties, were of minimal interest for such scenes did not strengthen the image of hard work and virtue, qualities equated with contentment. As long as the labor depicted was deemed pleasurable, artists could make their works desirable to the perspective buyer.

For some American artists, the tourist's enjoyment was deemed more important than the idealized depiction of the Venetian working class. The central figures in the

American leisure scenes of Venice are usually friends of the artists and they represent the artists' personal world, for they consorted with the well-to-do visitors and part-time residents of the Italian city. They relished in the city's beauty and easily adapted to the amusements it had to offer, including the dreamy gondola ride and refreshing al-fresco retreat in the Piazza San Marco or on an isolated balcony.

Curtis' and Stewart's paintings of Venetian leisure are more superficial than the sentimentalized images of the working class for both artists portrayed the self-absorbed tourist and almost completely ignored the social conditions of the Venetians. They depicted Venice as a city of pleasure, a hedonistic retreat for the prosperous. However, it appears that the Venetian native was able to perfect the art of "dolce far niente" in any situation. As indicated in the American paintings discussed in this thesis, the essence of sweet idleness could be evoked even when the Venetians were depicted in their work environment for labor, both skilled and unskilled, was still equated with play and untouched by modern industry.

Notes

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- ¹ William Dean Howells, *Venetian Life*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1867, 1886), p. 57.
- ² Henry James, "Venice," *The Century Magazine* 25, no. 1 (November 1882), p. 13.
- ³ A. W. Greeley, "Where Shall We Spend Our Summer?" *Scribner's Magazine* 13, no. 4, April 1888, p. 481. Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America—The Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 39.
- ⁴ J. Bryce, "Venice Revisited," *The Nation* 35 no. 910 (December 7, 1882), p. 484.
- ⁵ Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher*, p. 268.
- ⁶ D. Dodge Thompson, "Julius L. Stewart, a Parisian from Philadelphia," *The Magazine Antiques* 130, no. 5 (November 1986), p. 1047.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, p. 1047.
- ⁸ Stewart's earliest depictions of Venice include *Visitors to Venice* (1887, location unknown), *Canal of San Francesco, Venice* and *View of Murano, from Venice*, both exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1889.
- ⁹ Susie Boulton and Christopher Catling, *Venice and the Veneto*, (London: Dorling Kindersley, 1995), p. 28-29. Information relating to the legend of the gondolier is taken from this source. Gondolas are hand-crafted from nine woods – beech, cherry, elm, fir, larch, lime, mahogany, oak and walnut – using techniques established in the 1880s.
- ¹⁰ Ellen Olney Kirk, "In a Gondola," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* (November 1892), p. 643-644. The author also explains how "the idea of such a boat could only have been developed among born lovers of the exotic, the rare, who possessed a distinct artistic faculty for assimilating and making practical use of all that could enhance the beauty and stateliness of daily life."
- ¹¹ W. Scott, "Reminiscences of Whistler Continued. Some Venice Recollections," *The International Studio* (New York) 21, no. 82 (December 1903), p.102.
- ¹² Otto Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice* (New York: The Century Co., 1908), p. 94.
- ¹³ Howells, *Venetian Hours*, 1886, p. 334
- ¹⁴ "Venice in Spring," *Littell's Living Age* 66, no. 2346 (June 15, 1889), p. 668.

¹⁵ Several other artists chose to paint gondolier themes, although none of them convey the physical handsomeness portrayed by Sargent, even when the artist is a woman. Rhoda Holmes Nicholls, an English artist who trained with Michele Cammarano in Rome and met her husband, Burr H. Nicholls, in Venice in the mid-1880s, painted *White Walls of Venice* in 1884, which depicts two male figures seated on the lavish marble steps in front of a gondolier station. Exhibited at the Sixtieth Spring Exhibition of the National Academy of Design in 1885, this work, together with another painting, *A Summer Day in Venice*, focuses more on the gondolier's rest station than on the figures themselves. These works are little vignettes of a remote area that is void of tourists, and reflect on the languid nature of the occupation during certain times of the day. Although there are more men in Duveneck's images of the *Tasso Reader* (Cincinnati Art Museum) than any other Venetian genre works, sexual overtones are not sensed, which is primarily due to the artist's rendering of the figures, and reflects Duveneck's own strong heterosexuality.

¹⁶ Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent*, New York, 1994, pp. 8, 83, 142. Richard Ormond, "John Singer Sargent: A Biographical Sketch," in *John Singer Sargent*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 14. Ormond relates that the artist did have close male friendships and that groups of portrait studies of young men parallel those of his female friends. Although Sargent was a physical and sensual individual, he guarded his privacy.

¹⁷ "Out of Foreign Papers: Gondoliers on the One Strike Known in their History," *The New York Times* (5 December 1881), p. 3.

¹⁸ "Venice in Spring," *Littel's*, p. 660.

¹⁹ "The Gondola," *The New York Times*, (9 September 1977), p. 3.

²⁰ Francis Hopkinson Smith, *Gondola Days*, (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897), p. 13.

²¹ "Propelling the Gondola: A New Art of Rowing for Athletic Young Men," *The New York Times*, (7 November 1880), p. 8. This article praises the gondolier and his rowing technique "practiced in Venice, in the damp, many-toned canals, on board those graceful black swans of naval architecture, the gondolas. Neglected by the upper and richer classes of Italians for the far inferior, less healthful, and less artistic mode of rowing which is now fashionable with us, the Venetian boating population retains this fine art in the midst of poverty and contempt."

²² There are a total of fifteen watercolors illustrated in William Dean Howells 1892 edition of *Venetian Life*. Childe Hassam completed the largest number of images (seven), including the two frontispieces for Volumes I and II – *Sunset from Gardens* and *A Regatta* respectively, and illustrations representing *Florian's*, *Feeding the Pigeons in*

the Piazza, The Rialto Market and Palazzo Giustiniani. Rhoda Holmes Nicholls provided six images for *A Street Door, A Water-Gate, St. Mark's During Service, A Shrine in Chioggia* and *Amphibious Boys*. The other two illustrations were painted by Francis Hopkinson Smith and include *A Fruit-Stall* and *A Corner of the Rialto*.

²³ Frances Toor, *Festivals and Folkways of Italy*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1953), p. 256.

²⁴ *William Logsdail (1859-1944) – A Distinguished Painter*, (exh. cat., Lincoln: Usher Gallery, 1994), p. 38. Logsdail began writing his memoirs in 1925 and related anecdotes about his life, but they contain very little comment on the art or criticism of other artists. In 1900 Logsdail and his family left Venice to tend to the education of his two children; and from 1900-1902 he remained in Taormina, Sicily before returning to England.

²⁵ Edward Norris, *Victorian & Edwardian Paintings in the Walker Art Gallery and at Sudley House*, Volume 2 of *Victorian & Edwardian Paintings in the National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside*, (London: HMSO Publications, 1996), p. 284.

²⁶ “The Gondoliers,” *The New York Times*, (12 May 1885), p. 4. On August 16, 1887, under “Current Foreign Topics,” *The New York Times* mentioned that the gondolier strike had ended in Venice, p. 1.

²⁷ C. B. Tiozzo, *Alessandro Milesi*, p. 37. The original quote reads “pochi pittori, meglio di lui, sono riusciti a creare dei capolavori di autentica Arte pittorica permeati di vera poesia, ispirandosi a quell’ambiente degli umili, dei poveri, al quale lui si sentiva tanto legato, e per un sentimento di affettuoso amore.”

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 43.

²⁹ Henry James, “Venice,” *The Century Magazine* 25, no. 1 (November 1882), p. 14.

³⁰ Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Venetian Hours of Henry James, Whistler and Sargent*, (Boston, Toronto and London: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), p. 57. Ramón Subercaseaux was a friend of Sargent’s from Paris and had also taken a studio in the Palazzo Rezzonico. Sargent painted a portrait of Subercaseaux’s wife in 1881, which won him a medal at the Salon of 1881.

³¹ *Blaugrund*, p. 136.

³² Giuseppe Pavanello and Gian Domenico Romanelli, eds., *Venezia Nell'Ottocento: Immagini e Mito*, (Milan: Electra, 1983), p. 207.

³³ Howells, *Venetian Life*, 1886, p. 337.

³⁴ Caius, "The White Lady's Gondolier," *The New York Times*, (30 October 1887): p. 13. This short story provides insight into the gondoliers' life and sympathizes with their plight for "Famine was in their stomachs and rage in their souls, no wonder they rowed languidly, spent most of the day on their backs, and degenerated from the old politeness of their address. Fortunately for him Zefferino was unmarried, and therefore only had a father and mother, a grandmother, and three sisters to provide for." At the end of the tale, Zefferino and the "white lady" select the winning numbers of the lottery and share their prize, which "was to a gondolier a fortune."

³⁵ Otto Bacher Papers, 1877-1938, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Reel 1654, frame 200-201.

³⁶ Henry James, "The Grand Canal," *Scribner's Magazine* 12, no. 5 (November 1892), p. 532.

³⁷ Danilo Reato, *La bottega del caffè, I caffè veneziani tra '700 e '900*, (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1991), p. 67. The original quote reads as follows in Italian: "una vera istituzione, perché riassume nella sua, tutta la storia di una città, dagli ultimi bagliori dello splendore settecentesco alle infinite crepe di oggi, in una città no più a misura d'uomo, invasa dal turismo di massa che marcia a battaglioni affiancati e costringe glie ultimi veneziani . . . a rifugiarsi sempre più spesso nel passato . . ."

³⁸ Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher*, p. 146.

³⁹ "Venice in Spring," *Littell's*, p. 665.

⁴⁰ "Venetian Life," *All the Year Round* 69, no. 146 (October 17, 1891), p.369.

⁴¹ Howells, *Venetian Life*, 1886, p. 59.

⁴² A. De G. S., "Royal Academy Work," *The New York Times*, (27 May 1883), p. 4.

⁴³ Frederick Wetmore, "Genre in the Summer Exhibitions," *Fortnightly Review* 33, 198 (June 1883), p. 868.

⁴⁴ *William Logsdail*, exh. cat., (Lincoln: Usher Gallery, 1994), p. 40. The abbreviation P & O stands for Peninsular and Oriental Trade Company.

⁴⁵ Robert Upstone, "William Logsdail in Venice and London 1881-1890," in *William Logsdail*, exh. cat., p. 26.

⁴⁶ S. G. Young, "Venice," *The Galaxy* 24, no. 3 (September 1877), p. 338.

⁴⁷ Upstone, *William Logsdail*, exh. cat., p. 26, and “Catalogue,” p. 40.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, “Portrait of the Artist,” p. 26-27.

⁴⁹ City of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, *Illustrated Catalogue (with Descriptive Notes) of the Permanent Collection of Painting and Sculpture*, (Birmingham: Hudson and Son, 1904), p. 100.

⁵⁰ A. C. R. Carter, “Mr. Melton Fisher and His Work,” *Art Journal* 51 (1899), p. 237.

⁵¹ “The Robert Blum Diaries, February 15, 1891. Although no diary has been discovered from Blum’s trips to Venice, Blum did maintain one while he was living in Japan. A copy of the diary entries is filed in the library of Dr. William Gerdts. The original “Diaries” are still owned by Blum’s ancestors.

⁵² For a thorough examination of the urban leisure scenes depicted by the American Realists, including café and restaurant themes, see H. Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger and David Park Curry, *American Impressionism and Realism. The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915*, exh. cat., (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), pp. 200-233.

⁵³ Among the contemporary articles that discuss the Riva degli Schiavoni are George Augustus Sala, “The Streets of the World. Venice: Riva degli Schiavoni,” *Temple Bar* 13 (February 1865), p. 183-191; and Julia Cartwright, “The Artist in Venice, Part I,” *Portfolio* 15 (1884), p. 20.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *Nights – Rome, Venice in the Aesthetic Eighties, London, Paris in the Fighting Nineties*, (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1916), pp. 82-83. Pennell notes that the Café Orientale was not as expensive as Florian’s or the Quadri, which “are to the other cafés of Venice what St. Mark’s is to the other churches. . .” The author was also very fond of Frank Duveneck, who she viewed as a celebrity, and credits him with making her stay in Venice memorable.

⁵⁵ Honour and Fleming, p. 61. The Café Orientale no longer exists and was taken over by the annex to the Hotel Danieli.

⁵⁶ Howells, *Venetian Life* (1886), pp. 57, 63.

⁵⁷ Young, “Venice,” p. 336.

⁵⁸ Bruce Weber of Berry Hill Galleries, Inc., in New York believes *A Spring Day in Venice* may be the original rendition of *Venetian Veranda*, June 2001. The painting in its current condition is in a private collection and would require infrared photography to

determine if the architectural elements and two side figures were painted over at some point.

⁵⁹ General Lew Wallace, *Famous Paintings of the World. A Collection of Photographic Reproductions of Great Modern Masterpieces*, (New York: Fine Art Publishing Company, 1896), p. 110.

⁶⁰ "Art Notes," *The New York Times*, (19 September 1886), p. 6.

⁶¹ *Cassell's Italian Dictionary*, compiled by Piero Rebori, (New York: Funk and Wallace, 1967), p. 456.

⁶² Isabella Stewart Gardner Travel Diaries, Entry for Wednesday, May 21, 1884, Archives of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Massachusetts. Gardner was a close friend of Ralph Curtis, who often assisted her with the acquisition of Italian old master paintings. Other diary entries from the same 1884 trip to Venice outline Mrs. Gardner's activities while in Venice, such as going to Florian's for ices and coffee with her husband (Wednesday, May 14); visiting the Lido with Ralph Curtis (Saturday, May 17); buying lace (Tuesday, May 20); stepping into St. Mark's to hear music (Wednesday, May 21); going to the photographers and bookshops (Friday, May 30); entering St. Mark's to see the procession of Corpus Domini, which occurs only once a year, (Thursday, June 12); visiting Murano (Thursday, June 12) and purchasing gondola chairs (Friday, June 13). All of these popular activities indicate the general routine shared by many tourists in Venice, with the possible exception of purchasing gondola chairs, which may not have been feasible for the common visitor.

⁶³ *William Logsdail*, exh. cat., p. 27.

⁶⁴ *The Athenaeum*, no. 3059, (June 12, 1886), p. 785.

⁶⁵ J. E. Hodgson, *Fifty Years of British Art*, (London: John Heywood, 1887), p. 96.

⁶⁶ New York Public Library, Artist Files for Julius LeBlanc Stewart S983/D3 include an image of this painting that is annotated as being illustrated in a catalogue from the Kende Gallery, Gimbal Bros, Sale 274, no. 86, February 28 and March 1, 1947. The painting is listed as formerly belonging to the Eastern Educational Institution.

⁶⁷ Ulrich W. Hiesinger, *Julius LeBlanc Stewart. American Painter of the Belle Époque*, (New York: Vance Jordan Fine Art Inc., 1998), p. 17. Stewart's relationship with the numerous artists working in Venice during the same period, such as Blum, Ulrich, and other American and European artists, has not been documented.

⁶⁸ Otto Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice*, and Harper Pennington, "Artist Life in Venice." *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 42 (old series Vol. 64), 1902), p. 837-838.

⁶⁹ Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher*, p. 143. In another letter dated July 4, 1886, Bacher writes about his accommodations at the Palazzo Contarini and visiting the Lido: ". . . I have done nothing so far but get our studio palace into order. The four of us [Bacher, Blum, Ulrich and Cameron ("Paris friends")] will go into it to work and pay expenses together. It is the place Duveneck had taken and as he will not come, we have it. It is a fine place to work in and I hope we will come out of it with good things. Ulrich has a piano and every afternoon, we have good music from him. He has such nice bachelor quarters and he must be a very happy one. . . . As this is fire cracker day, we will go to the Lido for a swim as it is the only thing we can do here."

⁷⁰ James, *Travelling Companions*, p. 200.

⁷¹ Young, "Venice," *The Galaxy*, p. 344.

⁷² James, "Venice," *The Century Magazine*, p. 23. One work that deals with the Lido is Otto Bacher's etching, entitled *On the Lido*, in which a heavily garbed man is shown walking alone along the deserted stretch of grassy land.

⁷³ "The Academy Exhibition," *The Critic* 1 (March 26, 1881), p. 83.

⁷⁴ Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher*, p. 268. This remark is found in the same interview published for *The Herald*, Cleveland, Ohio, January 13, 1883.

⁷⁵ Thompson, p. 1052. In *Julius LeBlanc Stewart*, Hiesinger mentions that John Van Dyke, the American art critic and Stewart's friend, wrote in his memoirs that Van Dyke himself posed for the figure of the reputed Gebhard.

⁷⁶ Hiesinger, p. 48-49. According to Hiesinger, contemporary reports confirm that the first of the group, *Spring* (location unknown), was painted by Stewart in Antibes in the summer of 1889. By November 1890 another work in the series, *Autumn* (location unknown), was in progress but unfinished; and *Winter*, not yet begun at the time, was intended to represent a ball with decorations of winter flowers. The Yacht *Namouna* was named after the heroine of Alfred de Musset's epic poem of Spain and of Édouard Lalo's later ballet.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Peter Wild, ed., *The Autobiography of John C. Van Dyke, A Personal Narrative of American Life, 1861-1931*, (University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1993), p. 150.

⁷⁸ Julius Stewart, although born in Philadelphia, lived and worked in France for most of his life, and would have been aware of Tissot's popular paintings. In 1873 Stewart enrolled in the atelier of Jean Léon Gérôme at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which is the same year that *The Last Evening* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London. As a young student, Stewart would have kept abreast of current exhibitions.

⁷⁹ Hiesinger notes that *Sirocco Effects* also belonged to James Gordon Bennett. It was exhibited at the 1892 Salon and considered "a most pleasing picture," p. 52.

⁸⁰ George August Sala, "The Street of the World. Venice: Riva degli Schiavoni," *Temple Bar* 13 (January 1865), p. 190.

⁸¹ For more information on the history of nineteenth-century English painting see E. D. H. Johnson, *Paintings of the British Social Scene: from Hogarth to Sickert*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1986): pp. 185-273. Domestic genre maintained its popularity throughout the late nineteenth century; however, English patrons of art began to favor overly sentimental and trivial subjects. Harry Quilter, art critic for the *Spectator* and *The Times* blamed the art patrons for requesting "pleasant, trivial and pretty" subjects, and equated their private galleries with "big sweetmeat boxes."

CONCLUSION

The search for something new and exciting led many artists to Venice, a place that was a world apart from their own and exemplified social and cultural values that intrigued the American artists. The beauty of Venice and the charm of this simple but picturesque city lured artists into the search not only for lessons from the masters of the Renaissance, but also for exotic subject matter. In the formation of their pictures, the American artists were particularly involved in two kinds of discovery: one, the physical discovery of a foreign territory and two, the meaning of this adventure to them—their self-discovery.¹ They were also part of a movement in American genre painting of the artist's observations of everyday life in foreign cities – in this case Venice.

The Venetian genre scenes painted by the American artists convey a special connection with past traditions and erstwhile work ethics eradicated by industrialization and the onset of the era of the machine. The Venetian subjects that focus on skilled and physical laborers relate more carefree, less regimented patterns of work and play than what was taking place in America. They contain nostalgic overtones for a way of life identified with antebellum America. These images offer the viewer an escape from reality and honor a way of life that is filled with strong religious devotion and unlimited recreation at every turn. The American works idealize life in Venice as would someone who comes and goes and is virtually unaffected by the reality of the difficulties and hazards the Venetian laborer faced, such as struggling to provide for one's family and the possibility of losing one's eyesight.

These images rarely show evidence of pity and do not convey any sense of compassion for the Venetian worker, an element that exists in the renditions produced by the European artists who worked in Venice practically side by side with the American artists. The American paintings do not suggest a social consciousness of life of the common man in Venice, nor do they allude to the economic and physical changes that were affecting the city's inhabitants. For instance, tourists and artists alike would have been aware of the spurts of cholera outbreaks throughout the 1880s and the steps taken to improve the general hygiene in Venice. Yet, the American artists do not focus on the aspect of death, which was a major impetus for the Symbolist artists. For instance, the Symbolists depicted the decay in Venice, but they were attracted to the city for the same reasons that the American artists were – a hatred for progress and a yearning for a fleeting standard of living. Venice served as a diversion on many levels and supplied the American public in particular with an image of an exotic and animated social environment.

Gabriel Weisberg has noted in *Redefining Genre* that genre works of the second half of the nineteenth century drew the public's attention to the narrative side of daily life and met the constant demand for human-interest stories. Genre painting also fascinated collectors interested in obtaining adventuresome scenarios located near popular tourist spots.² Venetian genre images satisfied both of these desiderata, for in many ways they represent a form of entertainment that offered real-life situations with a strong dose of idealism – the reality shows of the nineteenth century. Likewise, Venice offered the romantic and remote atmosphere in which to place a vibrant and resplendent cast of

characters.

There are numerous links among the artists who visited Venice in the 1880s, some of whom were good friends and others who were rivals throughout their artistic careers. As such, it has become evident that the artists working in Venice in the late nineteenth century either all knew each other, or knew of one another's work. The studio locations and popular Venetian monuments afforded the American genre painters a font of remarkable resources that led to new acquaintances and a first-hand taste of novel cultural experiences.

Even within the field of Venetian genre, each artist was attracted to particular types of inhabitants that characterized the different social classes. For Robert Blum the artisan or craftsman was of prime importance, as shown in his depictions of lace makers and bead stringers. His paintings conveyed the Venetian woman as an attractive, yet talented or task-oriented individual, who used her hand skills to earn a living. By contrast, the works of Otto Bacher and Frank Duveneck concentrated on female Venetian workers who performed tasks of a more physical nature, such as washerwomen and water carriers. And on the other end of the spectrum are John Singer Sargent's enigmatic paintings, indicative of an artist who remained unenticed by the familiar splendors of Venice.

Sargent preferred to capture behind-the-scenes images that no other painter or photographer, with the possible exception of Whistler, cared to make known to the public. Sargent's men and women of Venice are mysterious, sensuous individuals, and possibly the true representatives of the city. The observer has a heightened awareness of

the role of Sargent's figures and senses the expressiveness of his models, purposely arranged in compromising situations or caught unaware of the public eye. In some instances, the models stare at the spectator and confront the viewer's gaze; in others they are artfully positioned in an interior setting, unmindful of the artist's presence.

When not shown working, the Venetians are presented as either praying or playing, as seen in the works of Ralph Wormeley Curtis and Julius L. Stewart. These images provide rare glimpses into the private world of both the residents and the tourists on an acceptable level, unlike Sargent's street scenes, and do not imply any impropriety that would have been questioned by the contemporary viewer.

While each artist exhibited his own interpretation of Venice and her people, none can be considered inaccurate, for Venice did not preclude the exercise of one's perspective or imagination. As one late-nineteenth-century writer expressed it: "There is an ideal Venice for the idealistic, and a Venice full of unexpected prose for the insistently naturalistic."³ Whatever aspect of this remarkable Italian city was chosen was simply left to the artist's discretion, and most suitably depicted.

It should be emphasized that the genre paintings of Venice created by American artists in the 1880s for the most part did not represent a Neo-Venetian style. The Venetian scenes exhibit the same painting techniques that were popular in the United States, such as Realism and Impressionism, even though the subjects were not American places and pastimes. For most of the American genre artists working in Venice, the goal was to portray attractive and marketable scenes, without intentionally interweaving political or moral messages. Yet, in many instances these genre or figural works

communicate the artist's appreciation for the carefree attitude that Venetians expressed towards life and for the beauty that surrounded the populace on a regular basis. Likewise, one can observe the transformation of the American artist's style of painting from that of his formal and informal art training, whether it was in Munich, Paris or the United States, before he eventually succumbed to the bright and vibrant light and atmosphere of Venice. This stylistic transformation was supported further by the cause of the Impressionist revolution in Paris.

The reasons for this keen interest in non-American genre subjects can only be speculated. The American artists seem to have been comfortable in depicting scenes that were removed from their home environment. These exotic works, in effect, attracted much-needed attention to American exhibitions. It was only by the early 1890s, when the uniqueness of these Venetian genre works had diminished that these artists refocused their interests. Blum had moved on to Japanese genre subjects, while Duveneck turned to teaching in the United States. Others returned to Venice in the early twentieth century, including Sargent and Chase, but the concentration was no longer on genre images or figural studies, but on the city's architecture and effects of color.

By the late nineteenth century art critics, who were growing weary of viewing the same subjects year after year, were beginning to criticize the plethora of Venetian genre scenes exhibited in America, particularly at the National Academy of Design. The novelty of these Venetian genre themes was waning. Critics found fault with subjects that had little meaning to the American public aside from a "purely objective picturesque standpoint," and especially with the painting's lack of imaginative originality.⁴

In a review of the Sixty-Third Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, held in 1888, *The Studio* articulated this displeasure by stating that the artist's attention should be given to more genuine scenes, as was done by George DeForest Brush, who exhibited *The Sculptor and the King*, a non-European subject, which won one of the exhibition prizes, not so much for its artistic merit, but because the work revealed

. . . a seed of something good in them, in the dogged determination of the artist to paint subjects that do really interest him, and that could not fail to interest us too, if only he could find out the way to do it. It is at least a healthy sign that while to the sore plague of a swarming immigration of actual European peasants, is added the weariness of an immigration in painted ones – German, Italian, Dutch and French – who swarm over the walls of our exhibition-rooms, one man at least should be trying to find material for his art in things more genuine to us.⁵

Indeed, there were a number of American artists, such as Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer and John G. Brown, who did focus on native themes. There were also those who continued to be influenced by European styles of painting and subject matter, and who consciously chose to concentrate on foreign themes rather than American subjects. The genre artists working in Venice also avoided themes that were popular in America. For example, they painted very few, if any, childhood scenes or images of the elderly in their Venetian paintings, two popular subjects in the United States.⁶

By the end of the 1880s, little remained to be explored in Venice. Elizabeth Pennell noticed in an article of 1889 that the visual material of the San Trovaso quarter, which had been so popular with the American artists, especially those residing at the Casa Jankowitz, had been exhausted. She explained that

When an artist just arrived in Venice and making his first *giro* of the canals

comes out in front of the *squero* near the church of San Trovaso, . . . his enthusiasm reaches the painting-point and he bids his gondolier rest a moment. And as surely as he gives this order, he receives the inevitable answer, 'Not here, signore; a little bit farther; and *ecco!* is it not finer?' and Camillo or Pietro, as the case may be, shows with pride exactly where the *Signor Pittore* Rico, or the famous *Signor Americano* Duveneck, or the *illustrissimo Signor Inglese* Jobbins, sat when he made his sketch. And somehow when the artist finds that his brothers of every nationality, together with Venetian photographers, have already painted and etched and photographed the *squero* of San Trovaso, and that it is such a well-known, well-worn *motif* that it has been catalogued in the Venetian art directory, his enthusiasm lessens, and he puts away his sketching materials, though the whole place may glow with color and sunshine . . . ⁷

Nonetheless, the charms and metiers of Venice managed to find their way across the Atlantic, where thousands of Americans would have had an opportunity to examine and collect the city's wares firsthand.

The culmination of the love of Venice and its accoutrements can be witnessed on the shores of the Atlantic with the Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago, Illinois in 1893, and the construction of Isabella Stewart Gardner's Venetian palazzo, Fenway Court, in Boston, which functioned as a private residence, then as a museum when it opened to the public in the early 1900s. The Columbian exposition recreated the gondolier-filled Venetian lagoons and offered visitors an opportunity to purchase the decorative crafts depicted by the American artists in their genre paintings, such as Burano lace and Murano glass. In addition, there were sixty Venetian gondolas available to carry passengers through the waterways of the exposition, propelled by European gondoliers dressed in the red jackets and red and white striped breeches worn four centuries earlier, and equipped with musicians playing guitars and mandolins.⁸

The Exposition also provided special exhibitions of the arts and crafts of Venice,

including glass blowing and lace making. In effect, for those who could not travel to Italy, a taste of Venice was delivered to their doorstep. For twenty-five cents visitors could observe the glass-making process as practiced in Murano and buy Venetian and Florentine glassware and mosaics, while others could view an exhibition of “Old and New Lace in Italy,” dedicated to Her Majesty Queen Margherita of Italy.⁹ For those interested in viewing other artwork, there were hundreds of paintings on display from around the world. Among the American paintings exhibited at the Columbian Exposition were Charles Ulrich’s *Italian Idyll* and Julius LeBlanc Stewart’s *Sirocco*, also known as *Venice*, discussed above. These works represent a worker theme on one hand, and a leisure subject on the other, together denoting the social range of life in Venice as experienced by the native and the tourist.

Within the next decade, several American cities had succeeded in recreating the look of Venice. Among the most famous sites were the Montauk Club in Brooklyn, New York, designed by Francis Kimball in 1891 after the Ca’d’Oro, the best known Venetian palazzo; York Hall, built in 1897 on the campus of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut; Kinney’s Folly, an amusement park in southern California planned by Abbot Kinney in 1905 as a fifteen-acre resort modeled on Venice and lastly, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, which was decorated with authentic Venetian decorations, including Venetian balconies and stairs, when it opened to the public in 1903.¹⁰ This admiration of Venetian architecture and decorative arts sustained America’s fascination with the Italian city and her people, already demonstrated by the great number Venetian scenes depicted during the late nineteenth century.

By the end of the nineteenth century, with the plethora of artists exploring various themes, genre painting became transformed into a vehicle for reaching and educating a wider audience, since such pictures “helped transport viewers to far-off realms or referred to situations they had either never encountered or knew too well, genre painting became an important aspect of nineteenth-century popular culture and a tool for mass education.”¹¹

The people of Venice held a great appeal for the American artist in the 1880s, a time in which numerous artists of all nationalities had been visually documenting the life of its working class, either by way of photography or oil and watercolor painting. One main reason for Venice’s fascination is succinctly summarized in the words of Francis Smith Hopkinson, a contemporary observer of this phenomenon:

If I have given Venice a prominent place among the cities of the earth it is because in this selfish, materialistic, money-getting age, it is a joy to live, if only for a day, where a song is more prized than a *soldo*; where the poorest pauper laughingly shares his scanty crust; where to be kind to a child is a habit, to be neglected of old age a shame; a city the relics of whose past are lessons of our future; whose every canvas, stone, and bronze bear witness to a grandeur, luxury, and taste that took a thousand years of energy to perfect, and will take a thousand years of neglect to destroy.

To everyone of my art-loving countrymen, this city should be a Mecca; to know her thoroughly is to know all the beauty and romance of five centuries.¹²

It is this ageless appeal that continues to lure artists even to this day. The considerable number of Venetian genre images created during the 1880s represents a distinguished body of work that is indicative of each artist’s predilection for depicting nineteenth-century Venetian life.

Notes

¹ Lovell, 1989, p. 99.

² Weisberg, *Redefining Genre*, p. 95.

³ "Venice As Painted by the Moderns," *The Art Journal* (1883), p. 138.

⁴ Anna Bowman Dodd, "The Subject of American Paintings," *The Art Review* 2, nos. 1, 2 and 3, (1887), p. 5. Dodd felt that American painting failed to awaken any interest in its viewers with its dull subjects. Although well-trained, the American artists were inspired by the wrong influences. Although referring primarily to French painting, Dodd's argument can be used for the other foreign influences on the American artists.

⁵ *The Nation*, (June 1888), p. 112.

⁶ Some examples of American genre paintings that are contemporary with the Venetian genre works include Edward L. Henry's *Watching for Crows* (1880, Terra Museum of American Art), Joseph Decker's *Our Gang* (1886, Location unknown), John G Brown's *Tuckered Out – The Shoe Shine Boy* (ca. 1890, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), and Alfred C. Howland's *Friendly Neighbors* (ca. 1891, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution). All of these images portray distinctly American scenes that would not be mistakenly identified as otherwise.

⁷ Elizabeth Robbins Pennell, "Venetian Boats," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 80, no. 478 (December 1889), p. 552.

⁸ Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893. The World's Columbian Exposition*, (Washington D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1992), p. 70.

⁹ Bolotin, pp. 107, 139, and Cora A. Slocomb Di Brazza, *A Guide to Old and New Lace in Italy*, (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1893). A one-mile strip of land was devoted to foreign and private exhibitions and was the first of its kind at a world's fair. Hundreds of souvenirs were available for purchase, and the proceeds of these sales were advertised as aiding a worthy cause. For instance, the preface to Di Brazza's *Guide* notes at the end that "For any information or purchases of books or laces, visitors are begged to address themselves to the lady attendant, remembering that every piece of lace sold, however insignificant it may seem, means at least one hearty meal for some poor and industrious woman, some fatherless, dumb or crippled child in Italy," p. 5.

¹⁰ Hirshler, "Gondola Days:" American Painters in Venice," p. 125-126. According to

Hirshler, Gardner took advantage of the restoration taking place in Venice and purchased fragments that were considered superfluous. Venetian dealers provided columns, capitols, Gothic windows, balustrades and Venetian lions. Gardner also collected Renaissance masterpieces, at the suggestion of Bernard Berenson and Ralph Wormely Curtis, including works by Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 97.

¹² Francis Hopkinson Smith, *Gondola Days*, (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897), p. 2 of prefatory.

APPENDIX 1

CHRONOLOGY

- 1849 Fall of the Republic in Venice
- 1851 John Ruskin publishes the first of three volumes of *The Stones of Venice* in March
- 1856 A viaduct across the lagoons in Venice is opened and the city is linked by rail to Vicenza in January
- 1857 Carlo Naya settles in Venice and opens a photographic studio that specializes in souvenir views of Venice
- 1859 The Treaty of Villafranca is signed
Most of northern Italy is seized by the Kingdom of Piedmont
- 1860 The first railway station is officially opened in Venice
Nathaniel Hawthorne publishes his novel *The Marble Faun*
- 1861 Southern and central Italy is seized by the Kingdom of Piedmont while Rome remains under the control of the Pope
The Kingdom of Italy is established and the King of Piedmont becomes the first King of Italy
The first Italian National Exhibition is held in Florence in September
- 1862 William Wetmore Story publishes *Roba di Roma* in London
- 1863 The National Academy of Design begins construction on the corner of 23rd and 4th Avenue in New York and is modeled after the Doge's Palace in Venice

- 1865 The American Civil War ends
- 1866 The Italian region, il Veneto, is united with the Kingdom of Italy
Carlo Naya and Carlo Ponti publish an album of photographs of
Venice, entitled *Vedute di Venezia*
The American Society of Painters in Water Color is formed
William Dean Howells publishes *Venetian Life* in two volumes
- 1867 Ernest Jean-Louis Meissonier begins to sojourn regularly in Venice and
takes residence at Casa Fumagalli
George Yewell visits Venice with Sanford Gifford
- 1868 English artists Birket Foster, Quiller Orchardson and Fred Walker visit
Venice together in May
- 1869 Henry James first visits Venice and thereafter writes fictional tales and
non-fiction essays relating to the Italian city and his experience there
- 1870 The unification of Italy is completed with the seizure of Rome by
Italian troops
Fifteenth century pieces of glass are excavated near Rio dei Vetrai in
Murano
Frank Duveneck travels to Munich to study in the Royal Academy with
Wilhelm Dietz
John Singer Sargent visits Venice together with his family for the first
time
Henry James publishes his tale *Traveling Companions* in the *Atlantic
Monthly* for the November-December issue

- 1871 The capital of Italy is transferred from Florence to Rome in July
 The first Italian National Exposition is held in Florence
- 1873 Frank Duveneck visits Venice for the first time
 Duveneck returns to America after cholera breaks out in Munich
 Cecil Van Haanen visits Venice for the first time and decides to reside
 in the city
 Mariano Fortuny visits Venice with his friend and fellow painter
 Martin Rico in October
- 1874 The Society for the Venetian Manufacture of Lace is founded on
 January 8th
 Luke Fildes travels to Venice for the first time with English artist
 Marcus Stone
 Mariano Fortuny dies in Rome on November 21st
- 1875 Charles Ulrich enrolls in the Munich Royal Academy in October at age
 seventeen
 Edouard Manet visits Venice for a few days in October with his wife
 and James Tissot, and produces two paintings
 Duveneck returns and works in Munich until 1877
 The Art Students League is formed
- 1876 The Centennial Exhibition is held in Philadelphia
 Duveneck is in Polling, South of Munich in the Bavarian Alps
 Henry Woods leaves England on a visit to Venice
 John Ruskin is in Venice re-writing *The Stones of Venice* and working

- on his *Guide to the Academy at Venice and St. Mark's Rest*
- 1877 Duveneck, William Merritt Chase and John Twachtman are together in Venice in late May, where Chase becomes ill with malaria
- Woods sends his first successful works, *The Ducal Courtyard* and *Street Trading, Venice*, to London
- The Society of American Artists is founded in New York in opposition to the conservative National Academy of Design
- In London, Whistler sues critic John Ruskin for libel, winning the case but becoming bankrupt in 1878 from the cost of the trial
- Giacomo Favretto loses his right eye following a severe infection
- 1878 Sargent spends a week in Naples at the end of July and several months thereafter in Capri
- Duveneck returns to Munich; he starts a school in Munich with two classes – one consisting of American and English students, and a second for other nationalities
- Otto Bacher enrolls at the Munich Royal Academy in the fall
- Whistler is awarded one farthing in damages in his libel case against John Ruskin in November
- Chase returns to New York and begins his teaching career at the Art Students League
- Henry Woods returns to Venice and begins his long career of depicting Venetian genre scenes
- Cecil Van Haanen exhibits his painting *Pearl Stringers of Venice* at the

Paris Salon

William Graham settles in Venice

The Society of American Artists holds its first exhibition when the works of Duveneck, Chase and other Munich-trained artists are exhibited

Victor Emanuel II dies and is succeeded by Umberto I in January 1879

1879 Duveneck and his "Boys" spend the summer in Florence

Whistler arrives in Venice for fourteen months in September and paints a series of etchings and pastels and a few paintings

Theodore Robinson travels to Venice in the fall, where he meets

Whistler

Henry Irving's production of *The Merchant of Venice* opens at the Lyceum Theatre in London on November 1st

Henry Woods builds his glass house studio in the back of Palazzo Vendramin

During the winter of 1879/1880, Sargent visits Spain and Morocco

The Circolo degli Artisti Italiani (Circle of Italian Artists) is founded in Florence

Several Venetian well-heads and other pieces of sculpture are removed from Venetian buildings and acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London

Luigi Nono returns to Venice after having lived in Sacile, Italy for several years

- 1879 The Lido in Venice is developed into a beach resort and casino in the early 1880s
- Sargent travels to Holland with Ralph Wormely Curtis to study the work of Frans Hals in the spring
- Blum arrives in Venice with Alexander Drake, art editor of Charles Scribner's Sons, on May 29, 1880 and stays for two and a half months until August 6th
- Duveneck takes his students with him to Florence in the summer and Twachtman joins them as part of the art staff
- Theodore Wores, one of Duveneck's "Boys," spends the summer in Venice
- Blum and Drake leave Venice on August 6, 1880
- Sargent visits Venice (290 Piazza San Marco) in mid-September and ends his first trip between January and March 1881
- Giovanni Boldini takes a studio in Ca' Rezzonico
- Auguste Renoir journeys through Italy in autumn and stops in Venice for a short period
- William Logsdail sets out for Venice in autumn and remains until 1887
- Whistler leaves Venice in November and returns to London with fifty etchings, over one hundred pastels and approximately eight paintings
- Whistler's First Series of twelve "Etchings of Venice" are shown in December at the Fine Art Society's Gallery and published

Duveneck visits Rome in late December and travels to England before returning to America

Alexander Roussoff arrives in Venice with his wife and children to visit his wife's aunt, Mrs. O'Connell

1881 Fildes stays in Venice from January 10 until the end of March and meets John Singer Sargent, Alexander Wolkoff, Franz Ruben, Thoren and Cecil Van Haanen

Henry James returns to Venice on March 25th and lodges on the fourth floor of 4161 Riva degli Schiavoni, now the Albergo Paganelli (Castello 4182 and 4687), until the end of June

Whistler's collection of fifty-three Venetian pastels are successfully exhibited in early spring at the Fine Art Society Gallery

Duveneck disbands his class in the spring

Blum returns to Venice in June and remains for four and a half months

Sargent returns to Venice during the summer and stays with the Curtis family in the Palazzo Barbaro

Duveneck, Blum and Twachtman are in Venice with Henry Muhrman in the fall and reside in the Casa Jankowitz located at 2140 Campo San Biagio

Walter L. Palmer visits Venice for two months

The first *vaporetto* line runs on the Grand Canal on September 15th

The gondoliers strike in retaliation to the new steam liners for a few days (October 31st through November 3rd)

Van Haanen exhibits *Washerwomen, Venice* in London, R.A.

Fildes exhibits *Venetians* in London, R.A.

Woods also exhibits Venetian subjects in London, R.A.

Renoir visits Venice in autumn and paints *Grand Canal, Venice*
(Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Duveneck, Bacher and some of the other “Boys” submit etchings from
their Venetian sojourns to the Fourth Annual Exhibition of the
Society of American Artists in New York

James Jackson Jarves presents almost three hundred examples of
“ancient” Venetian glass to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New
York

Blum exhibits six watercolors of Venetian subjects at the American
Water Color Society Annual Exhibit

1882 Bacher prints and independently publishes an edition of twenty-one
books, hand bound in vellum and entitled *Etchings of Venice*

Blum travels to Holland and Spain

Carlo Naya dies on May 30th and Tommaso Filippi takes over the
management of his photography firm

Giuseppe Garibaldi dies on June 3rd

Blum leaves for Europe on June 3rd and travels to Antwerp and then
Paris, where he visits Sargent’s studio with A. A. Anderson and
James Carroll Beckwith

Blum, Chase and Vinton proceed to travel to Spain at the end of June

- and visit Madrid and Toledo
- Sargent returns to Venice at the end of the summer and stays with the Curtis's at the Palazzo Barbaro
- The Society of American Painters in Pastel is founded
- Duveneck is back in Venice by early November
- The Fine Arts Society holds a large exhibition of Venetian subjects by various contemporary artists, excluding Whistler, in November
- Frank Bramley stays in Venice until 1883
- Sargent exhibits two Venetian scenes at the Grosvenor Gallery
- 1883 Numerous Venetian genre subjects are exhibited in London
- The Pedestal Fund Exhibition is held in New York and displays paintings by Eduoard Manet and Edgar Degas
- Joseph Pennell wins his first important commission and travels to Italy to prepare etchings for William Dean Howells's "Tuscan Cities," published in *Century Magazine*, during which time he tours Venice in early June and meets Duveneck and his "Boys," also in Venice at this time
- Richard Wagner, the German composer, dies in Venice at the Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi on February 13th
- Bacher exhibits sixteen etchings and several paintings of Venice in Cleveland in his studio exhibition held in March
- Blum becomes ill with malaria in April
- Fildes arrives in Venice in August with a commission to paint a major

- Venetian work for John Aird and he leaves before Christmas
- Childe Hassam visits Venice as part of his Grand Tour of Europe
- 1884 Julia Cartwright publishes three articles on “The Artist in Venice” in two issues of the English journal *The Portfolio*
- Bacher exhibits three of his Venetian scenes at the National Academy of Design in the spring
- The Second Annual Southern Exposition is held
- Duveneck returns to Venice
- Blum travels with Chase and Ulrich to the Netherlands in July and visits Antwerp, Brussels and Holland (Zandvoort and Haarlem)
- Sargent exhibits his *Madame X* at the Paris Salon and causes a scandal
- 1885 Woods exhibits *Returned from the Rialto* at the Royal Academy
- Fildes exhibits *An Al-fresco Toilette* at the Royal Academy
- Blum and Ulrich arrive in Venice in mid-June
- Blum and Ulrich visit Burano in late June, where they spend three weeks
- Twachtman arrives in Venice on October 1st, joins the Duveneck “Boys” and resides with Blum at Palazzo Contarini di Scrigni in the San Trovaso quarter on the Grand Canal
- Bacher returns to Venice in the fall only to leave for Paris by the end of December
- Blum leaves Venice in late November
- The Curtises purchase the Palazzo Barbaro

- Whistler presents his "Ten O'Clock Lecture" in London
- 1886 Charles Ulrich paints his famous *Glass Blowers of Murano*
- An article on Henry Woods appears in April issue of *The Art Journal* (London), with illustrations drawn by Jobbins
- Blum returns to Venice in July and resides at the Palazzo Dario
- Bacher is back in Venice by end of July and staying with Blum and Ulrich in the Palazzo Contarini on the Grand Canal
- Duveneck visits Venice for ten days in October (October 10-19th)
- Blum and Bacher leave Venice in late November and travel to Paris and London together
- Whistler's Second Venetian Series of twenty-six etchings, including twenty-one Venetian subjects, are exhibited and published
- Duveneck marries Elizabeth Boott and lives in Florence and Paris for two years
- Thomas Moran travels to Venice for the first time
- A major exhibition of French Barbizon and Impressionist paintings is organized in New York by the Parisian art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel
- 1887 Henry James returns to Venice after six years (February 22nd to April 16th) and stays at Mrs. Bronson's guest house at the Ca' Alvisi
- The National Exhibition of Art is held in the Public Gardens in Venice on April 25th, St. Mark's Day, and visited by Blum
- Giacomo Favretto dies on June 12th
- Blum returns to Venice in late July and stays at the Palazzo Dario in the

- San Trovaso quarter until late December
- Ulrich joins Blum at the Palazzo Dario in late August or early
September
- Twachtman exhibits Venetian subjects at the second exhibition of the
Society of Painters in Pastel
- 1888 Duveneck returns to the United States and heads the Art Academy in
Cincinnati
- George Eastman invents the hand-held Kodak camera box with its roll
film of one hundred exposures
- Record numbers of Venetian subject paintings are exhibited at the
National Academy of Design
- Robert Barrett Browning (“Pen”) purchases the Palazzo Rezzonico, a
seventeenth century palace on the Grand Canal
- 1889 The Universal Exposition is held in Paris
- Blum makes his final trip to Venice from late spring to mid-November
- Whistler’s Venetian pastels are shown at Wunderlich’s in New York
- Sargent travels from London to America, where he executes portrait
commissions and works on mural decorations for the Boston Public
Library
- Ferdinando Ongania publishes a collection of popular photographs of
Venice
- W. S. Gilbert and Sir. Arthur Sullivan’s comic opera, *The Gondoliers*,
is first performed at the Savoy Theater in London on December 7th

- Mariano Fortuny, son of the famous Spanish painter, moves to Venice
with his mother and sister
- Robert Browning dies in the Palazzo Rezzonico
- 1890 Whistler publishes *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*
- Julius Stewart leaves Paris for Venice in July
- Thomas Moran returns to Venice
- 1891 The Montauk Club in Brooklyn is designed by Francis Kimball after
the Ca' D'Oro, one of the best-known Venetian palazzi
- Robert Henri travels to Venice
- Howells's *Venetian Life* is reissued with illustrations based on
watercolors by Childe Hassam, Rhoda Holmes Nicholls, Francis
Hopkinson Smith and Ross Turner
- Pope Leo XIII issues the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*
- 1892 The Italian Socialist party is founded
- 1893 The Columbian World Exposition is held in Chicago, whose overall
design is based on the Venetian canals and includes the display of
Venetian handcrafts, such as lace making and glass blowing

APPENDIX 2

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN

Venetian (Italian) Subjects Exhibited 1875-1900

Exhibition Records of the National Academy of Design, 1861-1900, 2 Volumes

Vol. 1, A-L and Vol. 2, M-Z. Compiled and Edited by Maria Naylor

Published by Kennedy Galleries, Inc., New York, NY, 1973

VENETIAN SUBJECTS

Bacher, Otto (1856-1909)

1884 Address: Cleveland, Ohio

St. Mark's Shrine, no. 178, \$300.00

St. Mark's Interior, Venice, no. 205, \$500.00

Venice from San Giorgio, no. 376, \$400.00

1888 Address: 80 East Washington Square

Desdemona's Palace, Venice, no. 237, \$200.00

Bella Vista, no. 475, \$200.00

Beckwith, James Carroll (1852-1917)

1877 Address: Paris

Italian Contadina, no. 525, \$200.00

Blum, Robert Frederick (1857-1903)

1882 Address: 58 West 57th

A Bright Day at Venice, no. 524, \$400.00

Blum, continued

- 1888 Address: 80 West Washington Square
Venetian Beadstringers, no. 355, \$2,500.00

Bunner, Andrew Fisher (1841-1897)

- 1879 Address: 33 East 17th Street
The Riva, Venice, no. 1., Mayor Siedler
A Street in Venice, no. 470, \$300.00
- 1880 Address: 33 East 17th Street
Morning in Venice, no. 364
- 1883 Address: Venice
Sunset off Venice, no. 569, \$600.00
- 1884 Address: Venice
Il Fondamente Nueve (sic), Venice, no. 363, \$650.00
- 1885 Address: Venice
Rio dell Verona, no. 346, \$350.00
A Venetian Garden, no. 550, \$450.00
- 1886 Address: Venice
Rio del Aqua, no. 549, \$350.00
San Giorgio della Salute, no. 579, \$600.00
- 1888 Address: 146 West 55th Street
Canal of San Eustachio, Venice, no. 420, \$500.00

Bunner, continued

1891 Address: 146 West 55th Street

The Armenian Convent, Venice, no. 131, \$250.00

1895 Address: same as 1891

La Laguna – Venezia, no. 423, \$350.00

1896 Address: same as 1891

Fishing Craft on the Lagoon, Venice, no. 388, \$350.00

Chapman, J. Linton (1839/40-1905)

1882 Address: 52 East 23rd Street

St. Gervasio, Venice, no. 12, \$100.00

St. Giorgio, Venice, no. 14, \$100.00

Chase, William Merritt (1849-1916)

No Venetian subjects exhibited.

Cranch, C. P. (1813-1892)

1887 *Venice, near the Piazza, San Stephano*, no. 285, \$75.00

DeCamp, Joseph

No Venetian subjects exhibited.

Dryer, Charles Gifford (1846-1912)

1875 No address given

Interior of the Church of St. Mark, Venice, For Sale, no. 295

Duveneck, Frank (1848-1919)

1888 Address: 218 Fifth Avenue

Duveneck, continued

Venetian Washer-Women, no. 373, T. P. Thorne

Duvieux (Dunieux)

1878 No address given

Venice, no. 229, \$40.00

Hall, George Henry (1825-1913)

1880 Address: 51 West 10th Street

The Disguise, Doge's Palace, Venice, no. 253

1883 Address: Rome, Italy

A Window in Venice, no. 218, \$100.00

1889 Address: Paris

Gallery of the Church of St. Mark's, Venice, no. 330, \$300.00

Hall, Henry W. (Dates unavailable)

1888 Address: 11 Waverly Place

Venetian Girl Sewing, no. 344, \$125.00

Venetian Water Carriers, no. 516, \$350.00

Nicholls, Burr H. (1848-1915)

1883 Address: 74 West 35th Street

Fisher Boys, Venice, no. 52, \$350.00

1885 No address given

A Bit of Venice, no. 93, \$250.00

1888 Address: 58 West 57th Street

Nicholls, continued

Pigeons from St. Mark's, Venice, no. 514, \$300.00

1889 Address: 229 East 20th Street

A Bit of Venice, no. 12, \$100.00

Nicholls, Rhoda Holmes (1854-1930)

1884 Address: 74 West 35th Street

Life Among the People, Venice, no. 212, \$500.00

Mendicant Monks, Venice, no. 450, \$500.00

A Gondoliers Shrine, Venice, no. 526, \$125.00

1885 Address: 54 East 13th Street

The White Wall of Venice, no. 660, \$250.00

1887 Address: 58 West 57th Street

A Venetian Canal, no. 380, \$100.00

1899 Address: 913 Seventh Avenue

Daughters of Venice, no. 320, no price listed

Sargent, John Singer Sargent (1856-1925)

1888 Address: 33 Tile (sic) Street, Chelsea, London

Venetian Street, no. 213, Stanford White

Venetian Interior, no. 219, James Carroll Beckwith

Stiepevich, V. G. (1841-1910)

1889 Address: 1193 Broadway

At the Well, no. 67

Twachtman, John (1853-1902)

1879 No address given

View in Venice, no. 71, \$30.00

1879 *Dry Docks at Venice*, no. 73, \$40.00

Campo Marti, Venice, no. 207, \$60.00

Ulrich, Charles Frederick (1858-1908)

1887 Address: Paris

Washing of the Feet, St. Mark's Venice, no. 156, \$7,500.00

Weir, John Ferguson (1841-1926)

1872 Address: Yale College, New Haven, Connecticut

The Column of St. Mark's, Venice, no. 331, George Jewett

1887 Address: New Haven, Connecticut

Venice—Entrance to the Grand Canal, no. 442, \$750.00

APPENDIX 3

PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

Venetian (Italian) Subjects Exhibited (1843-1913)

PART I:

The Annual Exhibition Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1807-1870)

Edited by Peter Hastings Falk, Sound View Press, 1988

VENICE

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
Huntington, D.	1843	<i>Venetian Girl</i>
Leutze, Emanuelle G.	1847	<i>Venice at Carnival</i>
Vandyck, A.	1847	<i>Venetian Judge</i>
Lang, L.	1851	<i>Venetian Bride</i>
Shindler, A.Z.	1854	<i>St. Mark's Interior</i>
Stange, B.	1854	<i>St. Mark's Torchlight Procession</i>

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
Ballue, H.O.	1855	<i>18th Century Venetian Scene</i>
Wyld, W.	1856	<i>Venice</i>
Hollan, J.	1857	<i>Street in St. Mark's</i>
Perry, Enoch Wood	1858	<i>Canal Scene, Venice</i>
		<i>Cathedral of Murano</i>
		<i>Grand Canal by Moonlight</i>
		<i>St. Georgio Sunset</i>
		<i>St. Mark's Interior</i>
		<i>St. Mark's Sunset</i>
		<i>Staircase in St. Mark's</i>
		<i>Venice from the Lido</i>
		<i>Women of St. Mark's Going to Dry Their Wash</i>
Seeberger, C.	1858	<i>St. Mark's Interior</i>
	1859	<i>Venetian Water Carrier</i>

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
Hamilton, J.	1861	<i>Venice</i>
Tilton, J.R.	1861	<i>Venice</i>
Rothermel, P.F.	1863	<i>Venice</i>
Wild, H.G.	1853	<i>Venice</i>
Waugh, S.B.	1866	<i>Venice</i>

PART II:

The Annual Exhibition Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1876-1913.

Soundview Press, 1989. Compiled and edited by Peter Hastings Falk

VENICE

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Autenrieth, Charles M.	1878	1716 Girard Avenue, Philadelphia	No. 125. <i>Chapel Interior, Station Maria dei Miracoli, Venice (watercolor)</i>

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Bacher, Otto	1883	Bond & Superior Sts., Cleveland	No. 4. <i>Calle Manzoni, Chioggia, Italy</i> , \$750 No. 5. <i>Ponte Ca'Rosa, Venice</i> , \$100
Baker, Louis C. Jr.	1890	c/o Baker and Dallet, 5th and Walnut, Philadelphia	No. 394. <i>San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice</i> (watercolor/architectural drawing) No. 395. <i>Grand Stair Hall Entrance, Ducal Palace, Venice</i> (architectural drawing)
Bare, H.B.	1891	430 Walnut St., Philadelphia	No. 499. <i>An Exterior Balcony, St. Mark's, Venice</i> (architectural drawing)
Blum, Robert	1889	The Benedick, 80 Washington Sq., NYC	No. 22. <i>Venetian Bead Stringers</i> , \$2,500

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Bunce, William G.	1883	80 E. Washington Square, NYC	No. 47. <i>Venice</i> , \$1,000
			No. 48. <i>Venice</i> , \$200
	1884	Same as above	No. 21. <i>Blue Sky and Sea, Venice</i> , \$100
			No. 22. <i>Early Morning, Venice</i> , \$175
	1903	No address listed	No. 8. <i>Evening, Grand Canal</i>
1905	No address listed	No. 462. <i>Morning, Venice</i>	
Bunner, Andrew F.	1882	No address listed	No. 50. <i>Ponte al Riva, Venice</i> Reichard & CO.
	1884	Venice	No. 24. <i>Picturesque Venice, Rio della Verona</i> , \$35
	1885	Venice	No. 56. <i>Il Fondamenta Nuove</i> , \$600 No. 57. <i>San Marsilian, Venice</i> , \$350

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Bunner, cont.	1890	146 W. 55th St., NYC	No. 27. <i>Canal of San Eustachio, Venice</i> , \$350
Chapman, Carlton	1887	58 W. 57th St., NYC	No. 419. <i>Canal della Giudecca, Venice</i> (watercolor)
	1888	Same as above	No. 391. <i>On the Giudecca, Venice</i> (etching)
Clements, George H.	1887	48 Boylston St., Boston	No. 423. <i>Venice</i> (watercolor)
Day, Frank M.	1887	427 Walnut St., Philadelphia	No. 616. <i>Entrance to Via del Paradiso, Venice</i> (architectural drawing)
DeCrano, Felix F.	1887	1520 Chestnut St., Philadelphia	No. 71. <i>A Bit of Old Venice</i>
Duveneck, Frank	1902	Cincinnati Art Museum	No. 722. <i>The Bay of Venice</i> (unspecified medium)

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Duvneek, cont.	1902	Cincinnati Art Museum	No. 723. <i>Casa D'Oro, Venice</i>
			(unspecified medium)
			No. 726. <i>Via Garibaldi, Venice</i>
			(unspecified medium)
			No. 732. <i>San Pietro in Castello, Venice</i> (unspecified medium)
Gifford, Robert S.	1879	Y.M.C.A. Building, NYC	No. 733. <i>Riva degli Schiavoni, Venice</i> (unspecified medium)
			No. 174. <i>On the Lagoon: Venice, \$400; SAA</i>
Graham, William	1888	No address listed	No. 140. <i>On the Canal Looking towards the River</i>
	1893	The Ludlow, St. James Avenue, Boston	No. 335. <i>Fusinia, Opposite Venice</i>

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Hammond, John	1888	St. John, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia	No. 601. <i>Canale di S. Pietro, Venice</i>
Harrison, Alexander	1891	115 E. 23rd Street, NYC	No. 120. <i>Venice, Night Fête</i>
	1907	6 rue du Val de Grace, Paris	No. 37. <i>Souvenir de Venice</i>
			No. 41. <i>Souvenir de Venice</i>
	1909	Same as above	No. 713. <i>Vision Near Venice</i>
Hassam, Childe	1884	12 W. St., Boston	No. 284. <i>Grey Morning: Venice</i> (watercolor), \$50
Jacobson, S.	1877	No address listed	No. 277. <i>Moonlight: Venice</i> (George C. Thomas)
Juengling, Frederick	1879	No address listed	No. 363. <i>Custom House, Venice</i> (S. Coleman); (engraving)
Juglaris, Thomas	1881	1 Dudley St., Boston	No. 12. <i>Paul Veronese at Venice,</i> \$2000

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
King, George W.	1876	1334 Chestnut St., Philadelphia	No. 148. <i>Venice: Looking over the Bay</i>
Kirkpatrick, Frank Le Brun	1881	1222 Girard Ave., Philadelphia	No. 91. <i>San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice</i>
	1883	2141 Percy St., Philadelphia	No. 166 <i>Venetian Interior, XVIth Century</i>
	1887	Same as above	No. 167. <i>Studio Interior</i>
Laurence, Sydney M.	1892	St. Ives, England	No. 380. <i>A Gray Day on the Lagoons, Venice (watercolor)</i>
			No. 381. <i>A Venetian By-Way (watercolor)</i>
Loring, Francis W.	1889	18 Via S. Appolonia, Florence, Italy	No. 139. <i>A Palace Gateway, Venice, \$300</i>

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Loring, cont.	1894	Same as above	No. 211. <i>The Great Bridge at Chioggia</i>
Makart, Hans	1877	Vienna	No. 319. <i>Venice Paying Homage to Caterina Cornaro</i>
Mead, Frank E.	1891	925 Chestnut St., Philadelphia	No. 968. <i>Fountain in Wall and Sketches from Venice</i> (architectural drawings)
Moran, Thomas	1892	37 W. 22nd Street, NYC	No. 176. <i>Venice</i> (Edward H. Coates)
	1905	No address listed	No. 101. <i>Venice</i> (Edward H. Coates)
Mouchot, L.	1877	Paris	No. 132. <i>Sortie of the Grand Council: Venice, 16th Century</i> (William B. Bement)

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Nicholls, Rhoda H.	1884	58 W. 57th Street, NYC	No. 169. <i>White Wall of Venice</i> , \$300
Nicholls, Burr H.	1883	Poste Restante, Venice	No. 266. <i>A Venetian Courtship</i> , \$800
			No. 268. <i>Venetian Flower Seller</i> , \$240
	1885	c/o Grady and McKeever, NYC	No. 242. <i>Sunny Hours: Venice</i> , \$800
Palmer, Walter L.	1882	5 Fayette Street, Albany, NY	No. 244. <i>Venice</i> , \$1,500
Parrish, Stephen	1890	1334 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia	No. 154. <i>Sketch from Gondola:</i> <i>Venice</i> , \$50
	1895	1020 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia	No. 248. <i>Canal, Venice</i>
Pennell, Joseph	1883	Germantown, Pennsylvania	No. 485. <i>A Venetian Telegraph</i> <i>Office</i> (pen and ink)
			No. 487. <i>A Water Gate: Venice</i> (pen and ink)

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Pennell, cont.	1884	Philadelphia	No. 305. <i>Yesterday and Today:</i> <i>Venice</i> (etching), \$14 No. 308. <i>Doorway: Venice</i> (etching), \$9.50
Platt, George W.	1876	1420 Race Street, Philadelphia	No. 111. <i>View in St. Mark's, Venice</i>
Richards, Frederick DeBourg	1876	1334 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia	No. 167. <i>San Giorgio, Venice</i>
Rico, Martin	1877	No address listed	No. 265. <i>Venice</i> (A. J. Drexel)
Rolshoven, Julius	1893	233 Faubourg St, Honoré, Paris	No. 40. <i>Hall in a Doge's Palace,</i> <i>Venice</i>
	1905	No Address Listed	No. 513. <i>Sala of a Doge's Palace,</i> <i>Chioggia, Italy</i>
Sartain, William	1879	Y.M.C.A. Building, NYC	No. 269. <i>A Canal in Venice</i> , \$150, SAA

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Seel, Adolf	1877	No address listed	No. 112. <i>Interior of Monastery, Venice</i> (George C. Thomas)
Smith, Francis Hopkinson	1892	150 East 34th Street, NYC	No. 435. <i>A Summer Morning: Venice</i> (watercolor) No. 436. <i>On the Riva</i> (watercolor)
Stewart, Julius	1889	c/o George Carson Co., Philadelphia	No. 216 <i>Canal of San Francesco, Venice</i> , \$500 No. 217 <i>View of Murano, from Venice</i> , \$500
Tilton, John Rollin	1881	Rome	No. 401. <i>Group of Piles in the Lagoon: Venice</i> (watercolor) No. 402. <i>Giudecca, Venice</i> (watercolor)

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Tilton, cont.	1881	Rome	No. 404. <i>Porta Storta, Venice</i> (watercolor)
			No. 405. <i>Murano: Study of an Old Church</i> (watercolor)
			No. 406. <i>Morning Study of Sante [sic] Maria del Orte: Venice</i> (watercolor)
			No. 410. <i>Study of Canal and Tower of the Frari: Venice</i> (watercolor)
			No. 411. <i>San Giorgio, Venice: Evening</i> (watercolor)
			No. 412. <i>San Michele, Venice: Evening</i> (watercolor)
			No. 416. <i>Casa Tintoretto:</i>

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Tilton, cont.	1881	Rome	<i>Fondamenta del Moro, Venice</i> (watercolor) No. 419. <i>Scene on the Grand Canal, Venice: Fish Market</i> (watercolor) No. 423. <i>Chioggia: Fish Market</i> (watercolor) No. 424. <i>Bridge at Chioggia</i> (watercolor) No. 429. <i>Fish Market: Venice</i> (watercolor) No. 433. <i>Ponte Giustiniani: Venice</i> (watercolor) No. 435. <i>Study of Boats in Venice</i> (watercolor)

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Tilton, cont.	1881	Rome	No. 436. <i>Ducal Palace, Venice:</i> <i>Early Morning</i> (watercolor)
			No. 441. <i>San Giorgio, Venice</i> (watercolor)
			No. 444. <i>Bridge of Sighs, Venice:</i> <i>Early Morning</i> (watercolor)
			No. 445. <i>Grand Canal: Venice</i> (watercolor)
			No. 447. <i>Santa Maria della Salute</i> <i>and: Early Morning</i> (watercolor)
			No. 450. <i>Study of Venetian Fishing</i> <i>Boats</i> (watercolor)
			No. 453. <i>San Giorgio: Venice</i> (watercolor)

<u>ARTIST</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>
Waller, Frank	1883	337 4th Avenue, NYC	No. 376. <i>Venice: Eventide</i>
Wallis, Frank E.	1889	NYC	No. 424. <i>Sketch of Desdemona's House: Venice</i> (architectural drawing)
Wild, Hamilton G.	1880	8 Lonishburg Square, Boston	No. 69. <i>Palazzo delle Cavalli, Garden—Grand Canal, Venice</i>
Woodbury, Charles H.	1892	175 Tremont Street, Boston	No. 277. <i>End of the Riva, Venice</i>
Ziem, Felix	1876	No address listed	No. 107. <i>Venice</i> . For sale; (M. Knoedler)
	1877	No address listed	No. 169. <i>Grand Canal: Venice</i> (Henry C. Gibson)

APPENDIX 4

ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

Venetian (Italian) Subjects Exhibited (1888-1900)

The Annual Exhibition Record of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1888-1950.

Edited by Peter Hastings Falk

Sound View Press, 1990

Incorporating three annual exhibition series:

Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture, 1888-1950

Annual Exhibition of Works by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity, 1897-1950

Annual Exhibition of Watercolors by American Artists, 1888-1950 (including the

International Exhibition of Water Colors, 1921-1943)

In May of 1888, the Art Institute of Chicago opened its doors to the inaugural Annual Exhibition of American Oil Paintings. An immediate success, the exhibit was Chicago's latest attempt to establish itself as an active center of American cultural life by bringing to the city contemporary artwork by American artists working both at home and abroad.

<u>VENETIAN</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Ferguson, Henry A.	1889	No. 97. <i>Venetian Balcony</i>	52 East 23rd St., NYC
Nicholls, H. Burr	1894	No. 236. <i>A Venetian Water-gate</i>	242 W. 50th St., NYC

<u>VENICE</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Aspinwall, E.M.	1891-W	No. 7. <i>Venice</i> (watercolor)	39 Washington Sq., NYC
Bunce, W. Gedney	1894	No. 29. <i>Sunset, Venice</i> (watercolor), \$100	237 5th Avenue, NYC
		No. 30. <i>At the River, Venice</i> (watercolor), \$110	
Cameron, Edgar	1891-W	No. 34. <i>The Church of the Salute, Venice</i>	558 E. Division St., Chicago
		(watercolor), \$35	
Cranch, C. P.	1889-W	No. 11. <i>The Salute and Dogana, Venice</i>	3 E. 84th St., NYC
		(watercolor), \$100	
Dawson, Arthur	1889	No. 153. <i>Scene in Venice, after Rico</i> (etching)	Chicago
Ferguson, Henry A.	1889	No. 97. <i>Venetian Balcony</i>	52 E. 23rd St., NYC
	1891	No. 240. <i>Palace of the Camel, Venice</i> , \$350	314 E. 15th St., Stuyvesant Sq., NYC

<u>VENICE</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TITLE/PRICE OR OWNER</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Mills, Charles E.	1891-W	No. 179. <i>Near Venice</i> (watercolor)	No address listed
Moran, Thomas	1892-W	No. 129. <i>Morning in Chioggia, Venice</i> (watercolor), \$100	37 W. 22nd St., NYC
Nicholls, Burr H.	1888	No. 67. <i>Pigeons from St. Mark's, Venice</i> , \$300	58 W. 10th St, NYC
	1889	No. 68. <i>A Bit of Venice</i> , James W. Ellison	Same as above
	1894	No.236. <i>A Venetian Water-Gate</i>	242 W. 50th St., NYC
Nicholls, Rhoda	1888	No. 162. <i>A Court Yard in Venice in Olden Time</i> , \$300	58 W. 10th St., NYC
	1898-W	No. 258. <i>A Side Canal, Venice</i> (watercolor)	913 7th Ave., NYC
Smith, F. Hopkinson	1891-W	No. 272. <i>Along the Riva, Venice</i> (watercolor)	150 E. 34th St., NYC
		\$300	
Twachtman, John H.	1889-W	No. 250. <i>Gray Day, Venice</i> , (wc), Miss Rogers	Munich
Weir, John F.	1889	No. 1. <i>Entering the Grand Canal, Venice</i>	New Haven, Connecticut

APPENDIX 5

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS. LONDON

Venetian (Italian) Subjects Exhibited

1870-1894

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1870	William Q. Orchardson	<i>The Market Girl from the Lido</i> , no. 298	A. Graves, <i>Royal Academy of Arts</i>
1871	Clara Montalba	<i>Sketch in Venice</i> , no. 921	“ “
	William Q. Orchardson	<i>On the Grand Canal, Venice</i> , no. 462	“ “
		<i>In St. Mark's Venice</i> , no. 117	“ “
1874	William Q. Orchardson	<i>A Venetian Fruit Seller</i> , no. 1350	“ “
1875	Eugène de Blaas	<i>A Festa Day</i> , no. 597	“ “
	Clara Montalba	<i>La Salute, Venice</i> , no. 810	“ “
	W. Q. Orchardson	<i>Moonlight on the Lagoons</i> , no. 229	“ “
1876	William F. Yeames	<i>La Contadinella</i> , no. 102	“ “
		<i>Campo dei SS. Apostoli, Venice</i> , no. 380	“ “

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1877	Henry Woods	<i>A Street in Venice</i> , no. 159	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1877
		<i>A Canal Scene, Venice</i> , no. 567	A. Graves
1878	William H. Jobbins	<i>St. Mark's, Venice, South Aisle</i> , no. 723	A. Graves
		<i>St. Mark's Venice, South-West Doorway</i> , no. 725	“
	Henry Woods	<i>A Scene in Venice</i> , no. 567	“
		<i>Fishing Boats—San Pietro di Castello</i> , <i>Venice</i> , no. 963	“
1879	Clara Montalba	<i>A Canal, Venice</i> , no. 420	“
	William F. Yeames	<i>A Venetian Water Carrier</i> , no. 1054 <i>(La Bigolante)</i> , Diploma Work	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1879
	W. C. T. Dobson	<i>A Venetian Girl</i> , no. 175	“ “
	Henry Woods	<i>A Venetian Ferry</i> , no. 92	A. Graves
		<i>Street live [sic] in Venice</i> , no. 462	“
1880	Clara Montalba	<i>Early Morning, Venice</i> , no. 1439	“

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1880	Hilda Montalba	<i>Venetian Boy Unloading a Market Boat,</i> no. 32	<i>Academy Notes,</i> May 1880
	A. N. Roussoff	<i>Venice,</i> no. 871	A. Graves
	Cecil Van Haanen	<i>Pearl-Stringers in Venice,</i> no. 579	<i>Academy Notes,</i> May 1880
	Henry Woods	<i>Venice from the Fortifications at the Lido,</i> no. 104	A. Graves
		<i>Preparing for the Festa,</i> no. 141	“
		<i>Street Trading in Venice,</i> no. 357	“
		<i>The Ducal Courtyard, Venice,</i> no. 359	“
1881	F. Andreotti	<i>Monk Warming Himself at a Brazero,</i> no. 209	<i>Academy Notes,</i> May 1881
		<i>Monks in a Wine Vault,</i> no. 210	“ “
	Luke Fildes	<i>A Venetian Girl,</i> no. 378	“ “
	S. Melton Fisher	<i>A Moment of Idleness,</i> no. 36	“ “
	Rhoda Holmes	<i>Mendicant Monks, Venice,</i> no. 163	“ “

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1881	William H. Jobbins	<i>La Pescheria, Venezia</i> , no. 138	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1881
	Rudolph Lehmann	<i>Dolce Far Niente</i> , no. 589	“ “
	Clara Montalba	<i>St. Mark's; the Piazza Inundated</i> , no. 453	“ “
	Hilda Montalba	<i>A Venetian Fisher Boy</i> , no. 897	“ “
	Silvio Rotta	<i>Italian Lace-Makers</i> , no. 640 (watercolor)	“ “
	Alexander N. Roussoff	<i>Street Bargaining, Venice</i> , no. 635	“ “
	Cecil Van Haanen	<i>Washerwomen, Venice</i> , no. 589	“ “
	Henry Woods	<i>At the Foot of the Rialto Bridge</i> , no. 61	“ “
		<i>Gondolier's Courtship</i> , no. 334 (Elected A.R.A)	“ “
William F. Yeames	<i>Il Dolce Far Niente</i> , no. 208	“ “	
1882	Otto Bacher	<i>St. Mark's, Venice</i> , no. 494	A. Graves
	Eugène De Blaas	<i>A Venetian Convent in the 18th c.</i> , no.370	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1882
	Luke Fildes	<i>Nina</i> , no. 268	“ “
	William H. Jobbins	<i>Marketday—Serravale, Venice</i> , no. 55	A. Graves

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1882	William Logsdail	<i>Gossip</i> , no. 336	A. Graves
		<i>Gossip</i> , no. 691	“
		<i>Carnivale</i> , no. 1481	“
		<i>Buying and Selling on the Rialto</i> , no. 1530	“
	Clara Montalba	<i>On the Riva degli Schiavoni, Venice</i> , no. 54	“
	Hilda Montalba	<i>A Misty Day, Venice</i> , no. 679	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1882
		<i>A Venetian Bead-Threader</i> , no. 31	A. Graves
	Alexander N. Roussoff	<i>Tottering Steps</i> , no. 929	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1882
	Cecil Van Haanen	<i>Luncheon Time in a Venetian Sartoria</i> ,	“ “
		no. 176	
		<i>The Cobbler's Shop</i> , no. 344	A. Graves
	Henry Woods	<i>Bargaining of an Old Master</i> , no. 182	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1882
		<i>A Venetian Fan Seller</i> , no. 526	“ “
1883	Eugène De Blaas	<i>Flirtation</i> , no. 208	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1883
		<i>Sisters</i> , no. 26	“ “

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1883	S. Melton Fisher	<i>Una Vecchia</i> , no. 669	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1883
		<i>A Beggar—Venice</i> , no. 795	A. Graves
	William Logsdail	<i>Eve of the Regatta</i> , no. 372	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1883
		<i>The Piazza</i> , no. 477	“ “
		<i>The Misericordia, Venice</i> , no. 600	A. Graves
	Clara Montalba	<i>Trabacolo Unloading at the Custom House, Academy Notes</i> , May 1883	
		<i>Venice</i> , no. 700	
Hilda Montalba	<i>A Venetian Girl Fishing</i> , no. 144	“ “	
Cecil Van Haanen	<i>Gipsy Girl</i> , no. 190	“ “	
	<i>A Mask Shop in Venice</i> , no. 224	“ “	
Henry Woods	<i>Preparation for First Communion</i> , no. 179	“ “	
1884	Frank Bramley	<i>Weaving Nets, Venice</i> , no. 1557	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1884
	Eugene De Blaas	<i>After Church</i> , no. 423	“ “
		<i>Secrets</i> , no. 839	“ “

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1884	Luke Fildes	<i>Venetian Life</i> , no. 390	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1884
		<i>A Venetian Flower Girl</i> , no. 747	“ “
	Hilda Montalba	<i>A Venetian Girl Going to the Well</i> , no. 880	“ “
	Rhoda H. Nicholls	<i>A Venetian Staircase</i> , no. 157	A. Graves
	C. E. Perugini	<i>La Donna é Mobile</i> , no. 891	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1884
	Franz Rubens	<i>Foot of the Rialto</i> , no. 7	“ “
	Cecil Van Haanen	<i>Afternoon Coffee</i> , no. 721	“ “
	Henry Woods	<i>Il Mio Traghetto</i> , no. 396	“ “
		<i>In the Sun</i> , no. 209	“ “
		<i>Venetian Cloisters</i> , no. 446	“ “
<i>A Zucca Seller, Venice</i> , no. 227		“ “	
1885	Luke Fildes	<i>Venetians</i> , no. 559	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1885
		<i>Rosetta</i> , no. 861	A. Graves
	S. Melton Fisher	<i>A Winter Afternoon—Venice</i> , no. 836	“
	William Logsdail	<i>The Ca'd'Oro, Venice</i> , no. 628	“

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1885	William Logsdail	<i>The Ponte della Paglia, Venice</i> , no. 991	A. Graves
	Hilda Montalba	<i>A Venetian Boy</i> , no. 659	“
	Henry Woods	<i>Bartering</i> , no. 350	“
		<i>A Cottage on the Lagune, Venice</i> , no. 983	“
		<i>Cupid's Spell</i> , no. 259	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1885
		<i>Returned from the Rialto</i> , no. 379	A. Graves
		<i>A Water Seller at St. Rocco, Venice</i> , no. 227	“
1886	Giacomo Favretto	<i>L'Eté</i> , no. 320	“
	Luke Fildes	<i>A Daughter of the Lagoons</i> , no. 288	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1886
		<i>The Flower Girl</i> , no. 61	“ “
	E. Aubrey Hunt	<i>Venetian Boys at Play</i> , no. 553	“ “
	Marian Logsdail	<i>Canal Scene, Venice</i> , no. 835	A. Graves
		<i>Giudecca, Venice</i> , no. 881	“
		<i>Courtyard, Venice</i> , no. 928	“

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1886	William Logsdail	<i>Preparation for the Procession of St. John the Baptist, Venice</i> , no. 554	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1886
		<i>A Venetian Al-Fresco</i> , no. 1047	“ “
	Ellen Montalba	<i>A Venetian Girl</i> , no. 534	“ “
	Hilda Montalba	<i>A Bourano [sic] Boat</i> , no. 836	“ “
		<i>Tending the Rialto Shrine</i> , no. 448	“ “
	Alexander N. Roussoff	<i>“Angioletto,” Popular Name for a Child’s Funeral</i> , no. 1128	A. Graves
	Cecil Van Haanen	<i>A Spring Tide in Venice</i> , no. 781	“
Henry Woods	<i>Choosing a Summer Gown</i> , no. 66	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1886	
	<i>The Water Wheels of Savassa</i> , no. 114	“ “	
1887	Eugène De Blaas	<i>Venetian Fruit Seller</i> , no. 1011	A. Graves
	S. Melton Fisher	<i>First Communion, Venice</i> , no. 923	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1887
	Marian Logsdail	<i>At the Well</i> , no. 852	A. Graves

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1887	Clara Montalba	<i>Arrival of the King, Carneval, Venice,</i> no. 540	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1887
	Oliver Rhys	<i>A Venetian</i> , no. 853	A. Graves
	Henry Woods	<i>Under the Vine</i> , no. 47	“
1888	Robert Blum	<i>Venetian Lace-Workers</i> , no. 49	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1888
	S. Melton Fisher	<i>Venetian Costume Makers</i> , no. 583	“ “
	William Logsdail	<i>Summer in Venice</i> , no. 949	A. Graves
	Henry Woods	<i>Gossips</i> , no. 862	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1888
		<i>Saluting the Cardinal</i> , no. 213	A. Graves
	Henry Woods	<i>On the Giudecca, Venice</i> , no. 859	“
1889	Luke Fildes	<i>An Al-fresco Toilette</i> , no. 307	<i>Great Victorian Pictures</i> , p. 35
	S. Melton Fisher	<i>Festa</i> , no. 514	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1889
	Henry Woods	<i>On the Grand Canal, Venice</i> , no. 961	“ “
		<i>On the Steps of the Scuola, San Rocco,</i> <i>Venice</i> , no. 173	A. Graves

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1889	Charles Ulrich	<i>Gossips</i> , no. 1013	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1889
	Cecil Van Haanen	<i>A Venetian Water Carrier</i> , no. 425	A. Graves
		<i>An Early Cup</i> , no. 1001	“
	Henry Woods	<i>The Towers of San Rocco and the Frari</i> , <i>Venice</i> , no. 895	“
1890	Ralph W. Curtis	<i>Drifting with the Tide, Venice</i> , no. 1051	“
	Eugène De Blaas	<i>Scandal</i> , no. 1062	“
	S. Melton Fisher	<i>La Sposa</i> , no. 757	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1890
		<i>Marietta</i> , no. 872	A. Graves
	Alessandro Milesi	<i>Meditation</i> , no. 293	“
	Hilda Montalba	<i>A Venetian Market Boat</i> , no. 877	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1890
	Henry Woods	<i>In the Shade of the Scuola, San Rocco</i> , no. 51	A. Graves
		<i>La Promessa Sposa</i> , no. 278	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1890

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1890	Henry Woods	<i>On the Riva of the Giudecca</i> , no. 49	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1890
1891	S. Melton Fisher	<i>Una Cresima: The Confirmation of a Child, Venice</i> , no. 303	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1891
	Ellen Montalba	<i>A Posy from the Rialto</i> , no. 473	“ “
	Clara Montalba	<i>A Royal Escort, Venice, 1889</i> , no. 543	“ “
	Eugène De Blaas	<i>Admiration</i> , no. 301	A. Graves
	Marian Logsdail	<i>A Canal Scene</i> , no. 160	“
	Henry Woods	<i>Rivals</i> , no. 172	“
		<i>Venezia Benedetta</i> , no. 211	“
		<i>Sail-Making, Venice</i> , no. 381	“
	Henry Woods	<i>A Greeting</i> , no. 819	“
1892	J. Aumonier	<i>The River Piave, Belluno, Venice</i> , no. 892	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1892
	S. Melton Fisher	<i>A Summer Night</i> , no. 1023	“ “
	Marian Logsdail	<i>Feeding the Pigeons</i> , no. 148	“ “

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1892	William Logsdail	<i>Venice, from Public Gardens, Early Morning</i> , no. 125	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1892
		<i>The Giudecca Canal, Venice</i> , no. 831	“ “
		Hilda Montalba	<i>Going with the Wind</i> , no. 36
	Ettore Tito	<i>A Morning Toilet</i> , no. 825	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1892
		<i>An Old Story</i> , no. 24	A. Graves
	Henry Woods	<i>Before the Procession</i> , no. 3	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1892
		<i>The Church of the Frari and School of San Rocco, Venice</i> , no. 157	A. Graves
		<i>In the Belfry of the Campanile of St. Mark's, Venice</i> , no. 233	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1892
		A. Graves	
	Henry Woods	<i>A Village in Venice</i> , no. 750	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1892
1893	S. Melton Fisher	<i>Music</i> , no. 328	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1893
	William Logsdail	<i>In the Piazzetta: 18th Century</i> , no. 233	A. Graves

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1893	William Logsdail	<i>The Church of the Misericordia, Venice,</i> no. 451	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1893
	Clara Montalba	<i>San Giorgio, Venice</i> , no. 844	“ “
	Hilda Montalba	<i>Garden Wall of the Armenian Convent,</i> no. 616	A. Graves
	Henry Woods	<i>La Bella del Paese</i> , no. 119	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1893
		<i>Cloisters of the Frari Church, Venice,</i> no. 102	“ “
	Henry Woods	<i>The First Communion Veil</i> , no. 28	A. Graves
1894	S. Melton Fisher	<i>La Asta: A Sale by Auction</i> , no. 819	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1894
	William Logsdail	<i>Feeding Pigeons in Piazza San Marco,</i> <i>Venice</i> , no. 151	“ “
	William Logsdail	<i>Fondamenta dell'Abbazia, Venice</i> , no. 729	“ “
	Hilda Montalba	<i>A Venetian Canal</i> , no. 97	“ “
	Henry Woods	<i>Una "Campagnada,"</i> no. 752	“ “

Year	Artist	Venetian Genre Pictures	Reference
1894	Henry Woods	<i>The Colleoni Monument</i> , no. 250	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1894
		<i>La Friulanella</i> , no. 123	A. Graves
		<i>In the Mountains, Venice</i> , no. 726	<i>Academy Notes</i> , May 1894
		<i>Waiting for the Ferry</i> , no. 130	“ “

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IN VENICE: 1877-1893"

by

Giovanna P. Fiorino-Iannace

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