

Subversion in the *Serenissima*. Popular Dissent and Political Conflict in Early Modern Venice

The idea of Venice as an essentially stable polity remains one of the most enduring myths of European history. While other Italian and non-Italian states went through numerous political uprisings and rebellions, Venice's central story has been its continuity, stability, and lack of political discontent: present-day scholars are still convinced that *mormorationi* (rebellious rumours or mutterings) were repressed by the doge and his armies of spies. This paper argues that the mechanisms of Venetian popular dissent, and the tensions it caused, have been systematically underestimated, leading to the exclusion of Venetian history from a broader Italian and European framework in which popular politics have become firmly integrated.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a period of cyclical dearth, epidemics, and economic decline, which sparked frequent and intense bouts of popular unrest. Yet the legitimation of Venetian power relations hinged on demonstrations of republican authority - such as ducal coronations, processions, and funerals - which required a popular audience. It was precisely during these carefully orchestrated events, that public and hidden transcripts collided, causing dissent aimed at the doge and the patriciate to become both visible and audible. Based on chronicles and the correspondence of foreign diplomats, this paper will examine the impact of Venetian dissent, which ranged from oral subversion to graffiti, and from insults to violent riots.