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978-0-521-17836-5 - Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice

Elizabeth Horodowich

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#### LANGUAGE AND STATECRAFT IN EARLY MODERN VENICE

Although historians typically describe the state as emerging through a wide variety of processes and structures such as armies, bureaucracies, and administrative organizations, this book demonstrates that a crucial but unrecognized component of statebuilding was the management of public speech: controlling foul language. Ideas about language were deeply embedded in Venetian political culture. Instead of studying the history of language through literary, printed texts, Horodowich examines the speech of everyday people on the streets of Renaissance Venice by looking at their actual words as recorded in archival documents. By weaving together a variety of historical sources, including literature, statutes, laws, chronicles, trial testimony, and punitive sentences, Horodowich shows that the Venetian state constructed a normative language – a language based not only on grammatical correctness, but on standards of politeness, civility, and piety – to protect and reinforce its civic identity.

Elizabeth Horodowich is an assistant professor of history at New Mexico State University. She earned her BA from Oberlin College in 1992 and her PhD in European history from the University of Michigan in 2000. Her articles have been published in journals such as *Past and Present*, *Renaissance Studies*, and *The Sixteenth Century Journal* and she is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Philosophical Society, the American Historical Association, and the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation. She is currently working on her second book, *A Brief History of Venice*.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
 32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
 Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521178365](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521178365)

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First published 2008  
 First paperback edition 2011

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*

Horodowich, Elizabeth, 1970–  
 Language and statecraft in early modern Venice / Elizabeth Horodowich.  
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-89496-8 (hardback)

1. Venice (Italy) – Civilization – 16th century. 2. Language policy – Italy – Venice – History – 16th century. 3. Italian language – Italy – Venice – Political aspects. 4. Venice (Italy) – Social life and customs – 16th century. I. Title.

DG675.6.H59 2008

945'.703-dc22 2008005718

ISBN 978-0-521-89496-8 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-17836-5 Paperback

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## Acknowledgments

In the course of researching and writing this book – which by now has taken up most of my adult life – I have had the great fortune of getting to know many people who have enriched both my work and my life with their intelligence, personalities, and friendship. Meeting the people listed here has been the absolutely best part of writing this book. I offer them my thanks and appreciation for their various contributions to this work.

This book began as a dissertation thesis under Diane Owen Hughes. At the University of Michigan, I am most grateful to Kathleen Canning, Helmut Puff, and Patricia Simons for their unfailing support as mentors and friends. In Venice itself, I have gotten to know the lagoon city, its history, and its archives as a part of a community of scholars whose ideas have helped mold this book. I thank David D'Andrea, Filippo De Vivo, James Grubb, Holly Hurlburt, Frederick Ilchman, Eugene J. Johnson, Cynthia Klestinec, Benjamin Kohl, Steve Ortega, Dennis Romano, James Shaw, and Jonathan Walker for their suggestions, references, and friendship. I owe a huge debt to Linda Carroll, whose truly impressive knowledge of Venetian and skills in translation have saved me many a time. I am also grateful to Laura McGough, who has been by my side since the beginning and read an entire draft of the final manuscript. The staffs of both the *Archivio di Stato di Venezia* and the *Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana* patiently assisted the production of my manuscript over the course of many years, including many frigid Januaries and many sweltering summers. In addition, this book would not have been possible without my good friends in Venice. For well over a decade, Tamara Andruzkiewicz, Melissa Conn, Kate Davies, Maurizio Fabbio, Johanna

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Fassl, Paolo Granzotto, JoAnn Titmarsh, and Suzanna Voltarel have all made Venice my second home.

Several individuals have generously shared their time and ideas with me as I worked on this book; I am grateful to Elizabeth Cohen, Tom Cohen, Trevor Dean, Valeria Finucci, John Martin, and Edward Muir for reading and commenting on parts of my manuscript. The support of several institutions also played a crucial role in the production of this book. I would like to thank the American Philosophical Society, the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the New Mexico State University College of Arts and Sciences for grants that enabled much of the book's research and writing. Many of my ideas about speech and gender percolated during a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute "A Literature of Their Own? Women Writing – Venice, London, Paris – 1550–1750," directed by Albert Rabil in the summer of 2001. Conversations with Laura Gowing and Virginia Cox, in particular, helped shape chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 2 is a revised version of an article first published as "Civic Identity and the Control of Blasphemy in Sixteenth-Century Venice," in *Past and Present* vol. 181 (2003), 3–34. Chapter 4 is also a revised version of the article "The Gossiping Tongue: Oral Networks, Public Life, and Political Culture in Early Modern Venice," first published in *Renaissance Studies* vol. 19 (2005), 22–45. I thank both Oxford University Press and Blackwell Publishing for permission to republish these essays here.

Making the unlikely move from the canals of Venice to the scorched earth of the Chihuahuan Desert, I have found myself among a truly excellent group of colleagues in the history department at New Mexico State University. With their creativity and wit, each and every one of my fellow historians has influenced how I think about the craft of history. I count myself most grateful to have landed among them. In particular, I thank Ken Hammond, Margaret Malamud, and Marsha Weisiger, who have read significant portions of my manuscript, and I offer perhaps my most important thanks to William Eamon, who has long been both my harshest critic and biggest supporter. I am truly lucky to have crossed his path in the Venetian archives many years ago, since that fortuitous meeting dramatically shaped both my life and, in turn, this book. He has been a mentor in the highest sense of the word.



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I thank my mother, Peggy, for the inspiration she has offered from the beginning, and my brother Karl for giving me a life full of lessons on the delights of foul language. It was he who first introduced me to this art, of which he is truly the master. I thank Louis – who came into this world while I was researching and writing these chapters – for embodying my hopes for the future. My husband, Steve, I must acknowledge, has not undergone any particular suffering for the production of this book; on the contrary, he has enjoyed many a gourmet meal and many a trip to Italy during its production. Nevertheless, my debt to him, for his unwavering support and encouragement, is immeasurable.