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978-1-107-06052-4 - Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean:
The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England, 1450–1700

Maria Fusaro

Excerpt

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Introduction

Political economies of empire

The commerce of the world was to pass through Venice; other nations paying for their goods with great additional costs and duties. The Ionians could sell their oil, their staple production, only at Venice. Such a system, ruinous to the general interests, was also a great encouragement to smugglers, amongst whom the English appear to have taken the lead, and thus to have drawn upon themselves the especial [sic] anger of the Venetians. The proveditors of Zante and of other Islands complained, in 1596, that the revenue was defrauded by the skill and audacity of English seamen. Similar complaints were made in 1601. It appeared as if the then mistress of the sea was beginning, with prophetic instinct, to dread her future successor.¹

It is difficult to improve on the power of synthesis of a mid-ranking British colonial officer, serving the British crown in the Ionian islands at the apogee of the empire. The pages that follow will provide some background and elaborate on his comments, trying to explain how and why the English managed first to penetrate and then to exploit the Venetian Mediterranean during the early modern period. Ultimately my analysis will connect this to British commercial and political global expansion at large, through the lens of the long-term connection between the English and the Venetian economies from the fifteenth century to the collapse of the Republic of Venice in 1797 and beyond.

But this book is more than the analysis of an important commercial relationship. It also has the ambition of tracing some of the roots of a relationship that was political, cultural and artistic, but which had also in the economy and in imperial governance one of its strongest and longest-lasting features. My additional goal is to provide an economic and social explanation for the onset of the Venetian crisis, moving away

¹ Viscount Kirkwall ed. [George William Hamilton Fitzmaurice, Earl of Orkney, Viscount Kirkwall, Captain 71st Highlanders], *Four Years in the Ionian Islands Their Political and Social Condition. With a History of the British Protectorate*, 2 vols, London, 1864, i: 37–38.

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from the traditional Anglo-American approach that has been primarily concerned with the history of Venice as a ‘city’ or a ‘republic’ and, more recently, as one of the early modern Italian territorial states.² My intention is instead to focus on ‘Venice as an empire’ and to break free from the ‘myth of Venice’ in its political incarnation as the fundamental tool of historical interpretation.³ The story that I will tell concerns the emergence of early modern capitalism in general and the transformation of the Mediterranean, explored through a comparative perspective which sets Venice and England in the European context. A consequence of this is that the Ionian islands will feature prominently, as for centuries they were the loci of frequent contact and interaction between Venice and England, and their long-term historical development is a privileged window from which to analyse together Venice and England under the rubric of imperial governance.

By focusing on the history of Venice as an empire, it is not my intention to deny that the story of Anglo-Venetian relations is also a story about two cities, and the entanglement between the economic development of cities and that of states is relevant for both, even given the peculiarities of the Venetian city-state.⁴ In Fernand Braudel’s oft-quoted evocative analysis of the pivotal role of certain cities at different stages of European economic development, Venice’s apogee is situated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when it shared this dominant role with Bruges, in his words acting as ‘northern and southern poles’.⁵ In this scheme London’s period of predominance started only in the eighteenth century, with the golden ages of Antwerp, Genoa and Amsterdam standing between Venice and London. The seventeenth century was a transitional time for both cities and states, and their reciprocal commercial and political interactions shed new light on their shifting statuses. Though Venice was a city-state, attention to its urban dimension should not make us forget that it controlled a Mediterranean empire, based on the control of sea lanes for the furtherance of trade, and that England – *mutatis mutandis* – was on its

² For excellent examples of these approaches see the works of Frederick Lane, William Bouwsma, Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, Michael Knapton and James Grubb.

³ On this see the bibliographical essays J. Grubb, ‘When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography’, *Journal of Modern History*, 58 (1986): 43–94; and F. de Vivo, ‘The Diversity of Venice and Her Myths in Recent Historiography’, *The Historical Journal*, 47 (2004): 169–177.

⁴ C. Tilly, ‘Entanglements of European Cities and States’, in C. Tilly and W. P. Blockmans eds., *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, AD 1000–1800*, Boulder, 1994, 1–27; recently discussed also in D. Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650–1770*, Cambridge, 2003.

⁵ F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism: 1400–1700*, vol. iii: *The Perspective of the World*, Berkeley, 1992, 96–98.

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path to developing its own empire along rather similar lines. This book will highlight how a long-standing concern about maritime trade – its sustenance and expansion – was common to both states. From this descends another striking common element between them, namely how much of their state policy was directed by the interests of commerce and the furtherance of international trade. Foreign trade was considered by early modern states as the fundamental sector of the economy, regardless of the existence or not of open ‘mercantilist’ policies; this had been especially true for Venice since its beginnings, but for England this was a new development, successfully employed to further its economic growth whilst it acquired its own empire.

Venice as empire

Discussing Venice under the category of ‘empire’ is a contested issue. Popular writers on Venice are not at all afraid of frequently using this term; amongst the most prominent I am thinking of Jan Morris, Alvise Zorzi and Garry Wills.⁶ And empire appears in countless references in fiction, journalism and assorted media when commenting on or illustrating Venice’s past.

The rightly famous and evocative image by Giambattista Tiepolo of Neptune offering his gifts to a regal and serene Venice graces the cover of a recent volume, *Political Economy of Empire in the Modern World*, yet Venice appears in the volume only tangentially in a sophisticated essay by Sophus Reinert dedicated to emulation between empires.⁷ Its absence is not really surprising, as for a long time academic specialists of Venice have been shy in evoking ‘empire’ directly, generally preferring *Stato da Mar* (or *Stato da Terra*) and *dominii* – which are the most common expressions used in the sources to refer to Venetian possessions in the Levant and the Italian mainland. Recently, though, there have been some welcome signs of change, and a new attitude is emerging. The introduction to *Venice Reconsidered* – a volume which presented the state of the art in Venetian research on the occasion of the two-hundredth

⁶ J. Morris, *The Venetian Empire: A Sea Voyage*, Harmondsworth, 1980; A. Zorzi, *Una città, una repubblica, un impero, Venezia: 697–1797*, Milan, 1980; G. Wills, *Venice, Lion City, the Religion of Empire*, London and New York, 2001.

⁷ S. A. Reinert, ‘The Empire of Emulation: A Quantitative Analysis of Economic Translations in the European World, 1500–1849’, in S. A. Reinert and P. Røge eds., *Political Economy of Empire in the Modern World*, Basingstoke and New York, 2013, 105–128. Worth noting that Patrick O’Brien regrets the absence of the Venetian case from a volume he co-edited on these issues: P. O’Brien, ‘Final Considerations’, in P. O’Brien and B. Yun Casalilla eds., *European Aristocracies and Colonial Elites: Patrimonial Management Strategies and Economic Development, 15–18 Centuries*, Aldershot, 2005, 247–263, 253.

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anniversary of its demise – defined the Venetian state thus: ‘its empire reached from the Alps, through the cities, towns and villages of north-eastern Italy, across the Adriatic to Istria, Dalmatia, Corfu, Crete and Cyprus’. And the editors concluded by saying ‘Venice’s organic history was most easily read through its imperial and economic fortunes’; however, both aspects were missing amongst the volume’s contributions. Still, the term empire was introduced, and it is probably not a coincidence that subsequent Venetian scholarship has revived it as an analytical category.⁸

Interesting stimuli also are coming from recent Greek scholarship on Venice, which is becoming seriously engaged with issues of governance and identities, especially how these were reflected in the language describing – then as now – what has come to be known in Greek history and historiography as the Venetokratia (*βενετοκρατία*).⁹ Monique O’Connell’s book *Men of Empire* focuses on the *Dominio da Mar* as a stage where political careers were made (or destroyed), and its prosopographical approach draws readers’ attention once more towards Venice’s internal civic power mechanisms; even so, her analysis overcomes the traditional reticence in using the dreaded ‘e’ word.¹⁰ A similar approach is visible in Natalie Rothman’s analysis of trans-imperial subjects, people whose lives were at the frontiers between Venice and the Ottoman empire, and whose activities and self-representations ‘straddled linguistic, religious, and political boundaries’.¹¹ Benjamin Arbel’s essay ‘Venice’s Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period’ openly discusses empire in an ‘operational’ fashion, but does not attempt to define what exactly was meant by ‘empire’ within the Venetian context beyond *imperium* in its early modern sense of ‘sovereignty’.¹² This can be a problem, as ‘empire’ is not only an important (and currently fashionable) concept, but also a

⁸ J. Martin and D. Romano eds., *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797*, Baltimore, 2000.

⁹ See the considerations of Chryssa Maltezou in ‘La vénétocratie en Méditerranée orientale: tendances historiographiques et état actuel des études’, in S. G. Franchini, G. Ortalli and G. Toscano eds., *Venise et la Méditerranée*, Venice, 2011, 161–180, 163–165 and bibliography quoted therein; also her ‘Dove va la storia della venetocrazia in Grecia? Stato della ricerca e orientamento’, in C. Maltezou, A. Tzavara and D. Vlasi eds., *I Greci durante la venetocrazia: uomini, spazio, idee (XIII–XVIII sec.)*, Venice, 2009, 21–38; also her ‘The Greek Version of the Fourth Crusade: From Niketas Choniates to the History of the Greek Nation’, in A. Laiou ed., *Urbs Capta: The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences*, Paris, 2005, 152–159.

¹⁰ M. O’Connell, *Men of Empire: Power and Negotiation in Venice’s Maritime State*, Baltimore, 2009.

¹¹ E. N. Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Ithaca, 2012, 11.

¹² B. Arbel, ‘Venice’s Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period’, in E. Dursteler ed., *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797*, Leiden and Boston, 2013, 125–253.

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lemma belonging to the select club of words whose meaning is so slippery and protean that they can be understood as an analytical category only within the same text, and unfortunately not always even in such a limited context. For the purposes of this volume I shall slightly modify Kenneth Pomeranz's wording and define empire as 'a polity in which leaders of one society also rule directly or indirectly over at least one other society, using instruments different from (though not always more authoritarian than) those used to rule at home'.¹³ This was certainly the case for both the *Stato da Mar* and the *Terraferma*, the Italian mainland, where the hierarchy of government was very clear, as all these disparate territories were ultimately ruled by the same governing body, the *Senato*,¹⁴ which, amongst the multiple republican institutions, had in this period the largest share of state governance. And the ultimate authority of Venice was unquestioned in three fundamental political spheres: foreign and defence policy; state finance, on which defence is utterly dependent; and the administration of justice.¹⁵

Behind the avoidance of the term empire in the Venetian context I believe stand three main reasons, all of them individually important and connected to each other. The first is chronological, as the 'imperial age' of Venice is traditionally posited between the end of the centuries-long war with Genoa (1380) and the 1571 loss of Cyprus – the 'royal crown' amongst Venetian possessions in the Levant.¹⁶ This precocity of the Venetian imperial experience puts it out of synch with other European cases, thus making practical comparisons more complex. The second reason concerns issues of both 'size' and 'function' as, even when the

Conversely Maurice Aymard, in a very recent essay, is still most cautious about wording defining the *Stato da Mar* as 'a system of markets and "colonies" [...] which was a real empire of islands and ports to support its commercial activities and the naval support required to protect these', in his 'L'Europe, Venise et la Méditerranée', in Franchini, Ortalli and Toscano eds., *Venise et la Méditerranée*, 3–11, 5.

¹³ K. Pomeranz, 'Social History and World History: From Daily Life to Patterns of Change', *Journal of World History*, 18 (2007): 69–98, 87.

¹⁴ Freddy Thiriet went one step further, calling the territories in the Levant 'colonial': F. Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne au moyen âge: le développement et exploitation du domaine colonial vénitienne (XII–XV siècles)*, Paris, 1959; an analytical synthesis of these issues is in S. McKee, *Uncommon Dominion: Venetian Crete and the Myth of Ethnic Purity*, Philadelphia, 2000, 1–18.

¹⁵ J.-C. Hocquet, 'Fiscalité et pouvoir colonial: Venise et le sel dalmate aux XVe et XVIe siècles', in M. Balard ed., *État et colonisation au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance*, Lyon, 1989, 277–315, 279; G. Cozzi, 'La politica del diritto nella Repubblica di Venezia', in G. Cozzi ed., *Stato, società e giustizia nella Repubblica Veneta (sec. XV–XVIII)*, Rome, 1980, 15–152.

¹⁶ See, amongst many, the classic: D. Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380–1580*, London, 1970.

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existence of an empire is acknowledged, its relatively small size and lack of oceanic dimension compare it unfavourably with early modern examples such as Spain, Portugal, England and France. Regarding function, the Venetian one is usually (rightly) defined as a ‘commercial’ empire, and this appears to automatically slot it into a different, and somewhat inferior, category of analysis. Last, but by all means not least, is the lack of self-reflection on the concept of ‘empire’ embedded in the Venetian primary evidence. In the next few pages I shall confront directly these intertwined issues and present some introductory considerations on how these obstacles need to be overcome. Finally, I point out issues which are ripe for further development by future scholarship. My aim is to show how Venice’s political economy was the result of *functional* imperial concerns, and it is only when this is fully appreciated and accounted for that the full picture becomes clear. These preliminary considerations will also provide further evidence on the importance of the Anglo-Venetian commercial interaction which is the main focus of analysis of this volume.

Regarding chronology

From its very beginnings Venice grew under the shadow of Byzantium, and – *pace* the ‘myth’ of primitive freedom – the subordinate status of Venice in the early centuries of its life has been conclusively accepted. Extremely helpful in tracing the development of the relationship between Byzantium and Venice has been the linguistic analysis of bilateral treaties, from an early language of gracious concessions from Byzantium to the *Commune Veneciarum*, to a later stage (from 1187) in which the pacts start to look like treaties between two separate sovereign states.¹⁷

The Fourth Crusade forced historians to engage with empire and how this affected and was affected by Venetian peculiarities. There are two separate analytical issues connected with this: first, the position of Venice ‘within’ the Latin empire during its short life (1204–1261); secondly – and far more crucially – the position of Venice towards its own *Stato da Mar* from 1204 until the end of the Republic in 1797.¹⁸ The events following the conquest of Byzantine empire in 1204 forced Venice to

¹⁷ M. Pozza and G. Ravegnani, *I trattati con Bisanzio, 992–1285*, 2 vols, Venice, 1993–1996, i: 80. See also D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge, 1988. On Byzantine trade concessions to Venice: P. Frankopan, ‘Byzantine Trade Privileges to Venice in the Eleventh Century: The Chrysobull of 1092’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 30 (2004): 135–160.

¹⁸ Interesting elements on the supranational, maritime and Mediterranean vocation of Venetian politics until its very end can be found in F. M. Paladini, ‘*Un caos che spaventa*’: *poteri, territori e religioni di frontiera nella Dalmazia della tarda età veneta*, Venice, 2002.

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negotiate its way and *modus operandi* with European crowns, and to formally deal with the entrance of feudal structures within the Venetian state. In the words of David Jacoby, the establishment of the Latin empire, and the solutions adopted in the choice of a Latin Emperor, ‘entailed Venice’s subordination to a feudal leader in the empire’s framework. It also led to the integration of the Venetian state and its dependants within a feudal institutional network totally alien to Venice’s own social structure, political system and mentality’.¹⁹ In this hybrid situation, it is interesting to see how the position of Venice vis-à-vis the Latin emperor was exceedingly flexible, subordinate in certain things, and equivalent in others. In Jacoby’s analysis, the role and activities of the Venetian *podestà* in Constantinople and his use of the title *dominator* suggest ‘a formal affirmation of parity or quasi-parity directed towards the holder of the Imperial office in the Latin Empire, rather than an expression of authority with respect to the Doge’.²⁰

It is not my intention here to enter into the debate on the existence of an overarching strategy supporting the supposed imperial ambitions of Venice, even given the elevation of the Doge to the title of ‘*quartae partis et dimidiaie totius imperii Romaniae dominator*’.²¹ The events of the following two centuries will show clearly that the actual formation of the Venetian maritime empire was a gradual, and in many cases circumstantial, affair.²² What I would like instead to argue is that, *however established*, the end result of the Fourth Crusade was to start a process of substantial territorial acquisition in the Eastern Mediterranean which was a true empire. When the Latin empire collapsed in 1261, what

¹⁹ D. Jacoby, ‘The Venetian Presence in the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204–1261): The Challenge of Feudalism and the Byzantine Inheritance’, in his *Latin Romania and the Mediterranean*, Aldershot, 2001, II: 141–201, 142.

²⁰ Jacoby, ‘The Venetian Presence in the Latin Empire’, 147; see also T. F. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*, Baltimore and London, 2003; A. Carile, ‘Partitio terrarum imperii Romaniae’, *Studi Veneziani*, 7 (1965–1966): 125–305; M. Balard, *Les Latins en Orient, XIe–XVe siècle*, Paris, 2006, 217–218.

²¹ A. Pertusi, ‘*Quaedam regalia insignia*: ricerche sulle insegne del potere ducale a Venezia durante il medioevo’, *Studi Veneziani*, 7 (1965): 2–124; Laiou ed., *Urbs Capta*.

²² See also M. Angold, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Historiography of the Fourth Crusade: A Crime against Humanity or just an Accident?’, in G. Ortalli, G. Ravegnani and P. Schreiner eds., *Quarta Crociata: Venezia, Bisanzio, Impero Latino*, Venice, 2006, 301–316. It is worth mentioning that a debate on the nature of England’s imperial trajectory and on the possible existence of structurally different phases in its history is still a lively element in the historiography of the British empire. For a recent analytical synthesis see S. Pincus, ‘Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 69 (2012): 3–34, especially 31–32 and the bibliography quoted therein.

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remained of these territories (and those acquired in the intervening time) became in various ways subject to the ultimate authority of the Venetian government, and the same destiny befell those lands added until the eighteenth century, whether through conquest, exchange, purchase or self-devolution. Gaining territorial possessions in the Levant (and later on the Italian mainland) forced Venice to exercise its traditional pragmatism and flexibility in coming up with solutions to formalise the acquisition and political relationship and to govern these territories. Their political settlement and organisation and, increasingly, their defence, became a primary preoccupation of the Venetian ruling class, and would remain so until the self-dissolution of the Republic. This is what a *functional* empire looks like, regardless of what it was called by contemporaries.

Venetians themselves did not really discuss the nature of their possessions, whether in the Levant or, increasingly from the fifteenth century, on the *Terraferma*, nor did they usually refer to them as an ‘empire’.²³ Behind this are two separate issues: on the one hand an important role was certainly played by the traditional Venetian disdain for abstract conceptualisation, which in some ways was a defining factor of the Republic’s identity and self-perception.²⁴ On the other hand, Venice was both a ‘republic’ and a ‘city-state’, and the imperial city-state’s ambiguous identity played an important role in Venetian self-perception and self-representation which still awaits precise definition and proper conceptualisation by scholars.²⁵ However, Venice’s political economy shaped its strategy and policies in a way that made it *act* like an empire. Although this happened in both the *Stato da Terra* and *da Mar*, my analysis here will focus only on the latter, and I will argue that Venetian activities in the Levant – Venetian or Ottoman – is where there is plenty of common ground for introducing Venice into the debates on the comparative history of early modern empires. Another important element behind the lack of conceptualisation and reflection on Venice as an empire is that its commercial hegemony and heyday of imperial incarnation both substantially pre-date the eighteenth-century fascination with the

²³ On the meanings and usage of the terms *dominium* and *imperium* in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Venice see M. Knapton and J. Law, *Marin Sanudo e la Terraferma*, in M. Sanudo, *Itinerario per la Terraferma veneziana*, G. M. Varanini ed., Rome, 2014, 9–80, 40–45 and bibliography quoted therein.

²⁴ On this cultural and political reticence see M. Knapton, ‘The *Terraferma* State’, in Dursteler, *A Companion to Venetian History*, 85–124, 91–93.

²⁵ Anastasia Stouraiti is currently working on these issues through her project *Rethinking Metropolitan Culture and Empire in Early Modern Venice*, which investigates the political culture of empire in Venice (Leverhulme Trust, 2014). Some initial considerations on these issues are in her ‘Talk, Script and Print: The Making of Island Books in Early Modern Venice’, *Historical Research*, 86 (2013): 207–229, esp. 224–229.

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‘science of commerce’ and its connection with government.²⁶ By the time intellectual debates about the relationship between political action and economic supremacy came to dominate the European intellectual scene, Venice was a spent force, and the rise of fiscal-military and then nation-states with global empires (or aspirations thereof) made its example useful only as a moral cautionary tale, but (understandably) neglected for the purposes of comparative governance. In a sense this volume, and the research behind it, was born out of the desire to understand if something could be learned from this early example.²⁷

The interlacing of these three issues – republican city-state, chronology and function – has hindered scholarly reflection on empire; here I would like to contend instead that it would be most stimulating to start a proper discussion on these questions in the realm of political economy. Introducing a comparative element should help to foster a debate which cannot have a strict nominalist approach: Venetians did not talk of ‘empire’, hence historians will not either. However, this is not just a semantic argument, as I would like to argue that the absence of Venice from the comparative history of empires derives in great part exactly from semantics: with empire scholars reasoning that, as historians of Venice mostly do not use the word (and they are the experts), this must mean that Venice was not an empire, and therefore not worth engaging with in a comparative fashion. My approach will be entirely *functionalist*, along the lines suggested by Robert Bartlett when, in his masterful treatment of medieval Europe’s early colonisation patterns, he commented how

the pattern of the Italian colonial empires has some similarities to that of the British Empire of the year 1900 – a series of islands and headlands dotted along the main commercial pathways, linking the metropolis to distant markets. It has, indeed, been pointed out that the travelling times involved for those saltwater powers were closely comparable: ‘one month from Venice to Canea [in Crete], just as one month was needed for the voyage from London to Bombay; seven to eight weeks from Venice to Constantinople, as from London to Hong Kong; nearly three months to link Venice and Trebizond and Tana, as London and New Zealand.’ The scale of the age of the steamship was vaster than that of the age of the galleys but the peculiar elongated cape-and-island geography of a maritime empire was still the same.²⁸

²⁶ I. Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge (Mass.), 2005; P. B. Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy*, Cambridge (Mass.), 2010.

²⁷ The relationship between the Venetian and the English commercial empires, when mentioned, is usually articulated not in terms of ‘learning’, but in terms of ‘inheritance’, see P. M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, London, 2004, 30.

²⁸ R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350*, Princeton, 1993, 188–189; Paul Kennedy discussed a similar pattern for the ‘tropical’ regions of the nineteenth-century British empire (*The Rise and Fall*, 154).

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There are, indeed, even more points of contact between the two imperial narratives. Both Venice and England controlled empires based on control of the sea and sea lanes. The interconnectedness of the maritime and naval element, and the way this offered possible comparisons between them, was frequently pointed out, starting in the sixteenth century. Just to give one example, the quotation at the beginning of this chapter by Viscount Kirkwall, commenting on commercial competition in the late sixteenth-century Eastern Mediterranean, is a classic formulation of these issues, phrased in terms of *exempla*: ‘it appeared as if the then mistress of the sea was beginning, with prophetic instinct, to dread her future successor’.²⁹

Empire and self-perception: dominion and jurisdiction

The aversion to theoretical conceptualisation is reflected in the utmost pragmatism with which the Republic approached issues concerning ‘dominion’ especially in the *Stato da Mar*. Its sensitivity and particularly its foreign-policy implications were very clear to the Venetian government, and Alberto Tenenti was extremely careful in arguing that the Venetian government never confused ‘effective possession with a legitimate title’.³⁰ Such arguments were part of the self-fashioning of the Republic which we have come to know as the myth of Venice.³¹ As much as the myth posited the ‘eternal’ – as in a-temporal – nature of the Venetian polity, unruffled by external events – hence the title of *Serenissima* – it is possible to detect clear lines of evolution in the political discourse employed by Venice on the issue of sovereignty. The centuries-long controversy on Adriatic jurisdiction is a case in point. The Republic had claimed jurisdiction of the Adriatic Sea, which was then known as the *Golfo*, and this was originally justified through a mythical tale about the role played by Venice in mediating the reconciliation between the pope and emperor which preceded the Peace of Venice (1177). The ceremony

²⁹ Kirkwall, *Four Years in the Ionian Islands*, 38. An analysis of several of these instances is in Lambert, ‘Now is come’.

³⁰ Discussing the Venetian control of Dalmatia and parts of the Croatian coast: A. Tenenti, ‘La politica veneziana e l’Ungheria all’epoca di Sigismondo’, in T. Klaniczay ed., *Rapporti Veneto-ungheresi all’epoca del Rinascimento*, Budapest, 1975, 219–229, 222.

³¹ Such as the representation of dominion through artistic production, where the imagery of dominion was particularly well developed and nuanced: Chambers, *Imperial Age*; P. Fortini-Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past*, New Haven and London, 1996; D. Howard, *Venice & the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture, 1100–1500*, New Haven and London, 2000; D. Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State*, Chapel Hill, 2001.