

*The Image of Venice: Fialetti's View and Sir Henry Wotton.* Deborah Howard and Henrietta McBurney, eds.

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This beautifully produced book is a labor of love on the part of its contributors and the Friends of Eton College, who funded both the restoration of the Fialetti view and the publication of this commemorative volume. It combines two intersecting biographies, those of Sir Henry Wotton, first permanent English ambassador to the Serenissima (from 1604), and that of Odoardo Fialetti, printmaker and painter, and the huge canvas that links them together, painted by Fialetti in 1611 and donated by Wotton to Eton College in 1636, after he had become its provost. Little known until now, the painting still hangs in the college today. Howard and McBurney provide the narrative background and context of this remarkable work, ably augmented by papers from Allison Sherman, Laura Walters, Ruth Bubb (who restored the painting), Daniel McReynolds, Christy Anderson, and Andrew Hopkins.

Following Howard's general scene setting, Sherman provides a *tour d'horizon* of the many views of Venice produced throughout the century prior to Fialetti's work. She starts with the magnificent benchmark of de' Barbari in 1500, emphasizing the importance of Venice's flourishing printing industry in ensuring the dissemination of these images, as well as their complementary written guidebooks, over much of Europe. Most owed much to de' Barbari in their composition and orientation, although none were remotely comparable in terms of quality, refinement, and detail.

Walters then summarizes Fialetti's artistic output. Little known today, he was highly versatile and a prolific producer of prints. Originally from Bologna, Fialetti was active in Venice from 1596; few of his paintings survive, but his prints, it is argued, were more expressive and inventive. As his reputation grew, he produced many series of book illustrations for carefully identified markets, including uplifting philosophical tracts for the nobility and practical handbooks for fellow artists. Bubb then describes the technical aspects of the production of this huge canvas (200 cm high and 425 cm long), which apparently grew in size during the course of its creation, with extra bits of canvas added at each end to increase its panoramic field of vision. Several mysteries surround it: one is that, although the almost universal consensus is that it was made for export, it was extraordinarily difficult to transport (unless, riskily, it was rolled up, as Bubb believes it was); nobody knows who commissioned it.

The second mystery is discussed by Hopkins, who unpacks some of the details of the representation, which incorporates a number of (willful?) anachronisms: some recent buildings are depicted, while others — some very important — are omitted; great prominence is given (understandably) to the hubs of San Marco and Rialto, whereas other areas are highly condensed. Among the most glaring omissions are the Fondamente Nove and the vast Scuola Grande della Misericordia, while others (notably Santa Maria dell'Umilta) are given excessive prominence. Some suggestions

are put forward by Hopkins and others as to possible reasons for these inconsistencies; none — it seems fair to say — are fully convincing either to the contributors or to myself.

McBurney outlines the biography of Wotton, an engaging and attractive character, thrice ambassador to the Serenissima, whose hyperenthusiastic Protestantism led him into some rather treacherous waters. McBurney again raises the issue of the patronage of the canvas, but is not persuaded conclusively by any of the possibilities. McReynolds gives us an elegant and perceptive discussion of the three-way relationship between Venice, Wotton, and the papacy in the period of Sarpi and the interdict. He requotes Wotton's much regretted remark that an ambassador was "an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of his country." The final resolution of the interdict was a diplomatic triumph for the republic, but a personal failure for Wotton, whose furious lobbying of the republic (and of Sarpi) to join a European Protestant league went considerably beyond the conventional duties of his majesty's ambassador.

Anderson discusses Wotton's architectural treatise (1624), which contains the famous triumvirate of "Commoditie, Firmenes and Delight"; his particular skill lay in adapting his extensive classical knowledge to the vagaries of the English climate and the customs of its inhabitants. The book concludes with McBurney's summary of the afterlife of the painting at Eton since 1624, and Bubb's technical appendix on the restoration process.

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