



1 | James Wilson Morrice, *Market Scene in Venice*, ca. 1902, oil on panel, 15 × 13 cm, Bequest of Eleanor Morrice, The Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton. (Photo: Beaverbrook Art Gallery)

James Wilson Morrice at the Rialto Market in Venice

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When James Wilson Morrice travelled to Venice during the last years of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century, he gave much of his time and attention to the areas around the Rialto Bridge and the Piazza San Marco. This is hardly surprising as the two sites were the most famous Venetian monuments, even to those who had never seen the city. In the late nineteenth century, Venice was undergoing renewed celebrity as travel tourism increased, catering to the enormous numbers of people who were seduced by the plethora of publications, photographs, and postcards that lured more and more visitors to the city.¹ The Rialto represented the commercial heart of Venice while San Marco symbolized the authority of the Venetian republic; both had attracted travelers and tourists for over a thousand years and Morrice was no exception. Certainly, he drew and painted various other sites: near the Public Gardens at the eastern end of the city, close to the church of San Trovaso to the south, and around Campo Santi Apostoli toward the northwest.² But their numbers are slim in comparison to his images of the two places that had defined Venice in fact and legend since the city's official founding in 421. The material and topographical configuration of San Marco and Rialto allowed Morrice to construct and experiment with what could be considered his archetypal image of urban Venice: an open foreground of water or forecourt of pavement against a pierced wall of buildings disposed within a carefully contained rectilinear space in a gentle grid-like composition. That said, this text will look at one painting of the Rialto³ that largely contradicts Morrice's more familiar images of the City of Saint Mark.

Morrice's panel painting or pochade of the Campo San Giacomo di Rialto in the collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery (Fig. 1) celebrates what Henry James called "the summer Venice that is the visible Venice," in his collected essays, *Italian Hours* (first published in 1909). The visible city described by Morrice, however, is equally revealing of the invisible; that is to say, the inner compulsions of the painter and the complexities of his reaction to what lies beneath the appearance of things. Morrice's picture of the Rialto is a discrete Venetian image of the mundane business of living one's life, of going from one place to another, of buying and selling basic necessities, as implied by his



2 | James Wilson Morrice, *Golden Venice*, ca. 1903, oil on canvas, 49 × 59.8 cm, Bequest of the Estate of the Honourable Hartland de M. Molson, © McCord Museum, Montreal, M2002.139.1. (Photo: McCord Museum)

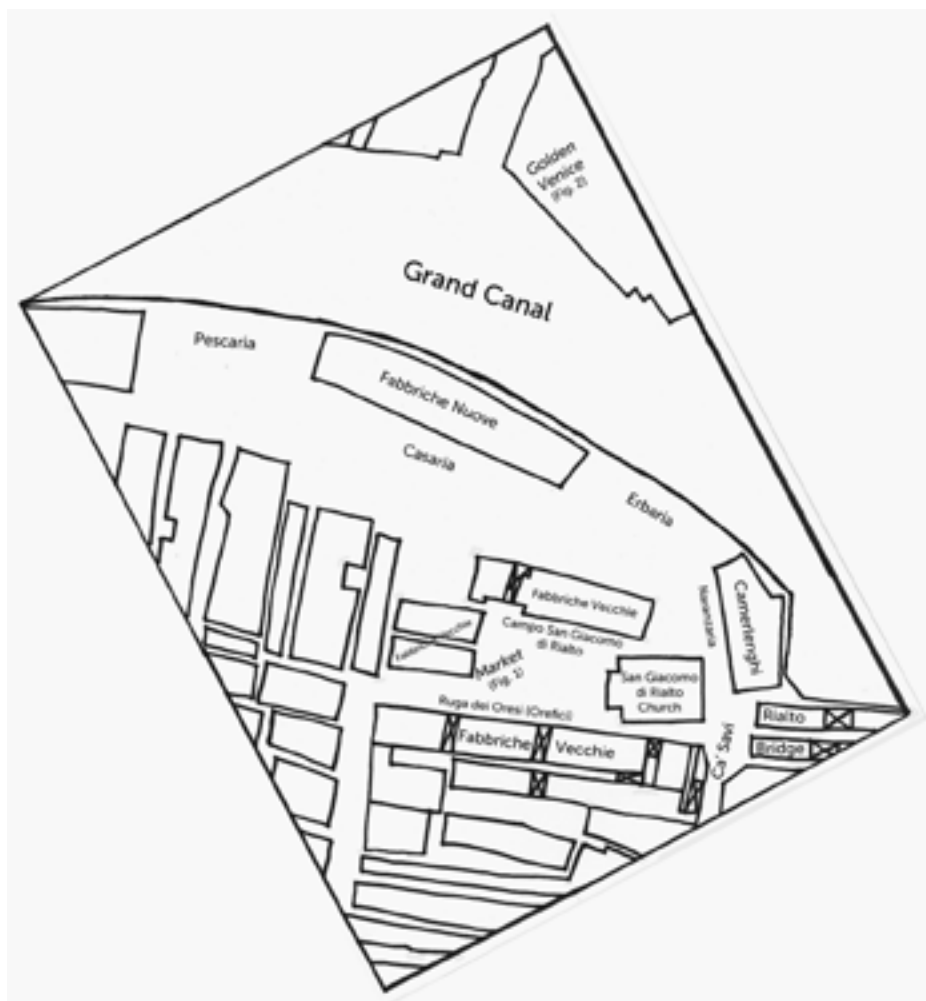
three female protagonists. But this particular site is unusual for Morrice, who preferred the sweeping views of the *palazzi* on the Grand Canal at either end of the Rialto Bridge (Fig. 2) to those of its market area.⁴ The plaza or campo (Fig. 3), which is also called San Giacometto and named after the ancient church on its southern side, was ringed by food markets, shops of all sorts, warehouses, offices, banks, and housing. By the eleventh century it signified the city's commerce and for several more centuries it was the centre of local and international trade. Because the Rialto market area was the main source of what we now refer to as goods and services, it also symbolized the daily life of the city, functioning as the social as well as the economic centre of Venice for both men and women (Fig. 4). The Rialto was a “cosmopolitan emporium



3 | Naya Studio, Venezia.
*S. Giacometto di Rialto e
 mercato dei frutti*, postcard,
 pre-1905, Fotocromo-
 Milano. (Photo: the
 author)

but also a centre of intellectual exchange,” for writers, artists, artisans and their patrons.⁵

Morrice’s relatively intimate view shows three Venetian women at one corner of the spacious campo and a small section of the arcaded two-story Fabbriche Vecchie complex of offices that frames it on three sides. The buildings, designed by Lo Scarpagnino (Antonio di Pietro Abbondi, ca. 1465–1549) and completed in 1522, were the focus of the major reconstruction project ordered by the city following the disastrous fire of 1514 that ravaged the entire area.⁶ The portion of the Fabbriche Vecchie indicated in the right half of Morrice’s panel was populated by small shops or *botteghini* and business was also conducted in the shaded arcade in makeshift offices. These archways led as well to the large food markets adjoining the campo



4 | Map of the Rialto, from Piero Pazzi, *Lo Stradario di Venenezia*, Vol. II (Venezia: Pazzi, 2001), 558; with author's adjustments. (Photo: Nicola Krantz)

where, as the Parisian literary and art critic Théophile Gautier commented, “Beneath [the] arcades swarms an active and noisy population, that mounts and descends, comes and goes, buys and sells, laughs and brawls.”⁷ Morrice’s little table in front of the corner column would have been part of the network of moveable stalls, along with more permanent shops that were (and still are to some degree) intrinsic to the expansion of trade in the market after Lo Scarpagnino’s reconstruction of the area. The pilaster behind the blue table has a circular bas-relief with a carving of the rampant Lion of Saint Mark with his Gospel that may possibly date from the mid-sixteenth century and was supposedly placed there in 1848 at the time of the short-lived Republic of Saint Mark during the Austrian occupation of Venice.⁸ This ubiquitous



5 | Unknown photographer, *Venezia. Mercato delle Erbe*, postcard, pre-1905, V. Generi, Venezia. (Photo: the author)

symbol of the power and glory of Venice was a constant reminder of the city’s unique past and a continued presence within its ever-changing urban identity.

Since the earliest days of the Rialto market, the arcades along the northwestern side of the campo were largely populated by goldsmiths and silversmiths whose famous workshops are the origin of the name of the long street at the centre of Morrice’s panel: the *Ruga degli Orefici* or *dei Oresi* in Venetian dialect. In his *Italian Hours* essay on Venice, Henry James commented that “the jewellers of this celebrated precinct – they have their immemorial row – make almost as fine a show as the fruiterers.” The *ruga*, which begins at the northern foot of the Rialto Bridge and continues for several blocks, was the principal commercial street of the Rialto and a counterpart to the Merceria off the Piazza San Marco. Because the *Ruga degli Orefici* functioned as a continuation of the bridge as well as the spine of the *Fabbriche Vecchie* buildings and the market, it was a favourite site of photographs and postcards of late nineteenth century Venice (Fig. 5). The portion of the street nearest the bridge was first called the *Drapperia* in the fourteenth century after the drapers, whose ornately crafted fabrics epitomized the Venetian textile trade – a significant part of the luxury goods

industry that had contributed so extensively to the city's wealth and still signifies Italian elegance.

The red-toned colonnaded Fabbriche Vecchie building along the left half of the Morrice image originally held the offices of the Dieci Savi, the city tax inspectors. Latterly it became and still functions today as the seat of Venice's Magistrato alle Acque. Its front façade is located on the Riva del Vin alongside the Grand Canal and can be glimpsed as a red daub in Morrice's painting, *Rialto Bridge* (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts). Some of his views of the Riva del Carbon across the canal, including his famous *Venice at the Golden Hour* (MMFA) were painted from the café in front of the Marconi Hotel, which is adjacent to the main entrance to the Ca' Dieci Savi alle Decime. The street level arcade of the Ca' Savi extends along the campo San Giacometto and is crowned by a (recently restored) frescoed vaulted ceiling, making it the second longest covered passageway in Venice after the Procuratie on the Piazza San Marco. Each of the small shops nestled between the colonnade arches and still identified by their canopies, also corresponded to the units created by the individual vaulted cells of the colonnaded passageways.

Fabbriche Vecchie is given only passing mention in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English and Italian guidebooks to Venice. Eugenio Musati, however, paid particular attention to the arcades in an entry in his *I Monumenti di Venezia. Guida Sinottica* from 1895.⁹ This may be due to the fact that the book was published to coincide with the first *Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte in Venezia* and offered a more diligent description of the lesser-known glories of Venice. In most publications, the primary tourist attraction of the campo was the church of San Giacomo di Rialto known to Venetians as San Giacometto.¹⁰ Positioned on the opposite side of the campo from that portion of the Fabbriche Vecchie in the Morrice panel, the church was supposedly founded in the fifth century and consecrated in 1177. That Morrice visited the church can be surmised from another of his paintings of the Fabbriche Vecchie that is part of the Thomson collection and a drawing for that image in his MMFA sketchbook #18. In both instances a greater part of the buildings and a significant portion of the campo pavement are included, suggesting that his viewing point was the church's medieval wooden porch.

Travel books about Venice, on the other hand, neglected the campo and even the church in favour of mouth-watering discussion of the Rialto markets (Fig. 4): the Erbaria for fruit and vegetables, the Pescaria for fish, the Casaria for dairy products, and the Naranzaria for luxury food like oranges. Numerous writers, beginning with the chronicles of Marino Sanudo in the late fifteenth century to Henry James in his *Italian Hours* four centuries later, effusively described the dazzling shapes and colours of piled-high produce in the market, where "All one's senses indeed are vigorously attacked; the whole



6 | James Wilson Morrice, *Houses with Figures* [Campo San Stefano], ca. 1902, oil on panel, 23.5 × 34.9 cm, Gift of William J. Morrice, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, 1943.801. (Photo: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts)

place is violently hot and bright, all odorous and noisy.” That Morrice was not immune to this aspect of the market’s charms is proven by his painting (private collection) of a row of docked vegetable-laden *caorline*, the utilitarian boats that he pictured alongside Jacopo Sansovino’s Fabbriche Nuove, which borders the Grand Canal slightly to the east of the Rialto campo.¹¹

Morrice’s attraction to the Campo San Giacometto could be explained by Théophile Gautier’s comment on “the old and new constructions of Scarpagnino and Sansovino. These reddened and degraded buildings, admirably toned and tinted by time and neglect, must constitute the despair of the municipality and the delight of painters.”¹² While Morrice had produced other images of the enclosed space of a Venetian campo, none is quite as immediate as that of the Rialto market. His view of the Campo San Stefano (MMFA) (Fig. 6) accurately implies an area almost as large and open as that in his several paintings of the monumental Piazzetta San Marco. In comparison, his views of the *campi* in *San Giovanni Nuovo* (National Gallery

of Canada) and of San Vidal in *Red Houses, Venice* (MMFA) are more intimate because of the smaller size of the actual sites but also because of Morrice's choice of a viewing point. Nevertheless, in these works Morrice usually gave about a third of the painting surface to the pavement of the campo: as a means to frame both his architectural subject and the small figures who walk along its forecourt, and also to provide a strong horizontal movement to balance the various vertical elements.

The situation is quite different in his construction of the Rialto Market picture. Its dramatically condensed pictorial space, the sharply cropped arcade of the northerly Fabbriche Vecchie, the falsely curved façade of the Ca' Dieci Savi, and mere sliver of the campo pavement, all disrupt Morrice's usual distanced view of Venice as an unruffled and clearly laid-out urban vista. Similarly the three female figures also challenge his tendency to sometimes portray Venetian women almost as *staffage*. Here they more than hold their own within the architectural surroundings and simultaneously measure the space in terms of time and place. Their quiet dignity and aura of self-possession signify their allure: "Nothing can surpass the grace of the shawl-clad figure seen down the perspective of the long streets."¹³ Needless to say, Morrice's highly tuned sensitivity to what he sees and his refined ability to turn it into a painting is as strong here as in his other images of a Venetian campo. His pictorial structure again exemplifies composition as the arrangement of unequal things, as Ruskin put it. The use of a vertical format, however, is particularly appropriate to this close-up, low view of a relatively narrow and congested architectural site. By abruptly truncating its magisterial buildings, he produces a vignette view rather than an urban portrait. This in turn makes the Fabbriche Vecchie seem less officious and more reminiscent of the types of anonymous buildings that line the network of streets leading into the campo.

As always, Morrice composes his image with a balance of directional movements that function like an invisible grid. In this pochade, however, the pictorial structure encourages and accommodates his audience rather than emphasizing the separation between the viewer and the viewed as when he uses a broad open foreground. The visual construction seems to be divided vertically in half as the solid flat corner pillars on one side play with the upward layering of punctured open doorways, arches, and windows on the other. The vertical thrust of the structural skeleton of the Ca' Savi is reinforced by the sturdy legs of the blue market table as well as by the female figures within the space. A small green wooden doorway, which marked an entrance to the covered passageway,¹⁴ also reiterates the rectangles of the upper-storey windows as well as the large stone columns on the opposite side of the street. More subtly, the wobbly arches on the first floor of the building play with the negative shapes of the market table.

In strong counterpoint is Morrice's interweaving of the horizontal movement across the panel. Most strikingly, he has slightly adjusted the height of the entablature of the columns at the right so that it seems to continue the distinctive stringcourse of the Ca' Dieci Savi. To enhance the tensions of the composition, Morrice eliminates any references to the elegant Renaissance stone balcony with its marble fretwork to the immediate right of the corner pillar. The small daub of blue above the pillar is the only reference to the sky but it also functions as a tonal counterpoint to the low table. Throughout the image, smaller horizontal elements like the tabletop, the lines of the capitals, the iron bar on the green door, and the bottom of the pale canopy contradict and temper the verticality of the architecture and the pochade itself. The flatness and frontality of Morrice's forms give them an aura and immediacy that is reinforced through the materiality of the paint and the physicality of the panel.

Circular elements, which are so prevalent in Venetian Renaissance architecture, also soften the geometry of Morrice's grid. For example, the loops of the first-storey arches replicate the shape of the incised relief to the right as well as the women's covered heads. The large, oddly trapezoidal awnings that stretch over the Ruga degli Orefici add another organic configuration that is reiterated by the shawled figures. Similarly, the wedged dark awnings echo the tilted shape of the upper section of the Ca' Savi while the pale bright coverings refer to Morrice's design of the muted pavement of the Ruga and the corner of the campo. As so often occurs with Morrice, there are numerous subtle plays of diagonal movements as shapes and forms align themselves along intersecting axes, like the patterned ornamentation of Veneto-Gothic facades. As they traverse the surface of the panel in various directions, the diagonals also trace the multiple movements that constitute the modernist glance. The similar shapes that change in scale and their shifting movements make the image appear larger than the actual size of the panel and thus all the more persuasive as a record of daily life in Venice.

While the vertical format is true to how he actually perceived the site and accurately records the spatial sensations of the place, this upright composition suggests that Morrice was being more experimental in handling the space than is usual in his Venice views. The implied pictorial depth is quite limited and almost abrupt; the Ruga degli Orefici, which is a comparatively long and wide street for a Venetian walkway now seems to be as cropped as the adjacent buildings. The street functioned like a long thread that tied the Rialto Bridge to the Campo San Giovanni and northward to the fish market. However, the loggias of the Fabbriche Vecchie, especially those of the building on the right side of the panel, disturb the Ruga's continuity: "the architectural element of the rows of columns emerges as yet another autonomous motif that permeates the fabric ... This creates a second theme

that provides cohesion for the individual moments, another red thread that makes a coherent experience of the multipartite, interwoven space possible.”¹⁵ The criss-cross rhythms in Morrice’s image reveal and even exaggerate this complex relationship between the street and the arcades and shape our understanding of the site as a place and as a painting.

The positioning of the three female figures reiterates the topography of the site: the left figure proceeds along the Ruga toward the bridge, the middle figure marks the point of intersection between two wings of the Fabbriche Vecchie, and the third marks the perimeter of the Campo San Giacometto. Their careful placement makes the street a place of habitation, not just transition. But Morrice’s compressed vertical space also keeps one’s eye from wandering too far away. Certainly the topography of Venice, with its tall buildings and its assortment of *calle*, *fondamenta*, *salizada*, *ramo*, and *ruga* laid out in a bewildering maze of stone and water, often ensures a limited scanning of many sites. Morrice keeps this vista more tightly in check by constructing the image around the details of the architecture rather than the larger design of the buildings. Open skies and almost empty campi or canals that gave breathing space to the architectural facades in Morrice’s other Venetian images have now vanished, replaced here by an enclosed and inhabited slice of the city. Similarly, clear summer air and luminescent dappled sunshine have displaced his usual softly hued and watery atmosphere.

Within this small corner of the Rialto Market, the plays of colour and light connect and divide the forms within an almost abstract design. Despite the clarity of their silhouettes, the lack of any strong distinction between the boundaries of the figures and the architecture also reinforces this sense of the ambiguous and the actual. Morrice’s foreshortened and filled-up space gives a sense of orderly enclosure but he also maintains the disquieting modernist preference for the fragmentary. Another paradox lies in his careful attention to constructing his image at the same time that he displays his loose, almost flimsy touch, so that paint functions as form not effect. The somewhat experimental space of this painting and its heightened colour could suggest the painting may have been done after its usual date of around 1901–1902. But because there are so few available documents, the dates of Morrice’s work are often as elusive as the exact dates of his trips to Venice.

Morrice did more than one hundred paintings of Venice and filled several documented sketchbooks with drawings of the city, so it is worth considering the Rialto market pochade in terms of possible lessons learned. The most unusual compositional element here is the strong and unreciprocated diagonal sweep of the upper stories of the Ca’ Dieci Savi. Morrice may have intended to suggest (rather than portray) the depth of the Ruga degli Orefici

by giving a decided axial curve to the building, with only a relatively narrow patch of pavement indicating the street. The palazzo appears to turn inward as he fabricates the optical distortions that come with a low viewpoint. Perhaps there is also a nod to the (exaggerated) foreshortened peripheral vision of a pedestrian on the Ruga. Such an aperture-like image is unusual for Morrice who preferred a less disruptive spatial arrangement in his Venetian work. However, the use of an oblique viewpoint to emphasize the immediacy of the image and the aura of the moment was popular with other foreign painters, especially Americans¹⁶ like his friend Maurice Prendergast.¹⁷ It was, perhaps, one way for international artists to make the streets of Venice seem more accessible and less daunting, while still acknowledging the exoticism or ‘foreignness’ of the place and its people. It is also possible that Morrice considered a cropped view of the buildings of the Fabbriche Vecchie as a means to soften the site and to temper its historical resonance, in the same way that he only painted partial views of St. Mark’s Basilica and the adjoining Ducal Palace.

I would also like to suggest that Morrice’s departure from his decidedly frontal compositions might also have been encouraged by his encounter with the paintings of Jacopo Tintoretto. One of Morrice’s notebooks makes mention of the church of the Madonna dell’Orto, which holds several of Tintoretto’s most magisterial paintings as well as his own tomb. His painting of the *Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple*, ca. 1552, with its famously distended curving staircase is exemplary of Tintoretto’s use of an almost-Mannerist lunging pictorial space. Similarly his *Theft of the Body of Saint Mark* (Fig. 7) from a decade later with its strange illusionist arcade along the left side of the canvas exemplifies his spatial manipulations that may have affected Morrice. Commissioned by the Scuola Grande di San Marco, the painting was housed in the Marciana Library as of 1860, before going to the Accademia museum in 1920. The Gallerie dell’Accademia, which had been remodeled and modernized in 1895 and was also noted in Morrice’s sketchbooks, provided easy access to Venetian painting and detailed descriptions of its holdings were to be found in every guide to the city.¹⁸

Then as now, Venetian churches were filled with work by Tintoretto but the most important collection, which includes over sixty of his paintings, was on two floors of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco. It would have been surprising if Morrice had not known the celebrated Scuola and even the adjacent church, which holds more Tintoretto canvases.¹⁹ While Morrice does not attempt anything even slightly approximating the perspectival distortion that is second nature to Tintoretto, he may have found a different way of seeing the city’s architecture by looking at Venetian painting. Certainly Tintoretto and other painters often modeled their biblical architectural



7 | Tintoretto, *Theft of the Body of St. Mark*, ca. 1564, oil on canvas, 421 × 306 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. (Photo: the author)

settings on Venetian buildings.²⁰ If Tintoretto's images did have an effect on Morrice, they might have also influenced his intentions for the three women in the Rialto panel. Participating in a fluid curved procession, the figures in their different poses elucidate and even rationalize the distorted pictorial space. This contrasting interchange of the organic and constructed, of fact and fiction, is intrinsic to the play of fixity and flux in Tintoretto's great biblical narratives in the Scuola San Rocco.

A further factor suggesting that Morrice probably had a good look at Tintoretto is his open brushwork and the sensation that he is painting light over dark, the natural colour of the pochade, but also the formula for much of Venetian sixteenth-century painting. Another implication of his knowledge of Tintoretto, as well the paintings of the preceding generation of Venetian painters lead by Giovanni Bellini, is Morrice's use of stronger, more saturated

tones of red, blue, green, and ochre, which is so evident in all of their work from the early years of the Renaissance in Venice.²¹ I am not suggesting that such painting caused Morrice to forsake his interest in French Impressionism (in its widest definition); however, it is well documented that many Parisian artists of the time developed a new admiration for Tintoretto through the numerous reproductions of his work as well as first-hand encounters.²²

Tintoretto's 'modernity' was defined by the two-dimensionality of his planes of unbounded colour and his creation of a dynamic and unnatural space through drawing and light that defied traditional perspective. These traits may help explain why Manet, Cézanne, and Degas were so attracted to the Venetian's paintings. Furthermore, the Impressionists' notion of "painting quickly," which implies the work was rapidly painted although it actually disguised a carefully considered composition, could have found a precedent in the performative *prestezza* or "quickness" in Tintoretto's paintings that overlaid his own precisely planned compositions. Various critics including his latter-day biographer Gustave Soulier, who mentioned Morrice in his important text on painters of Venice in 1905,²³ considered Tintoretto's art as "revolutionary." In his monograph on Tintoretto, Soulier wrote that the Venetian was "the most authentic and complete precursor of our modern painters,"²⁴ thus reinforcing the idea of "Tintoretto the Impressionist" found in other early twentieth-century writings.

At the same time, Carpaccio, who according to Henry James signified the greatest and most faithful painter of modern life,²⁵ was also rediscovered because his views of Renaissance Venice showed everyday life carried out in the streets of a city that was still easily recognizable. Carpaccio's narrative images such as the Saint Ursula cycle long held by the Accademia offered innumerable models for combining people and places. His work certainly influenced Maurice Prendergast as a model for inserting groups of figures into Venetian sites and Carpaccio may also have had an effect, albeit milder, on the American's friend, James Wilson Morrice. In the August 1901 issue of *Studio International*, a description of Carpaccio's painting method of unmixed colour applied bit by bit might have also struck a chord with Morrice as it was similar to the processes of Post-Impressionism. I am not suggesting that Morrice's attention to Venetian Renaissance painting caused him to "break his brushes," to the extent that it happened (so it seems to me) when he encountered the work of Matisse in the earliest years of the twentieth century. But with at least a half a dozen visits to Venice around the turn of the century, it seems more than possible that this "man with the delicate eye" would have been stimulated and encouraged by the painting that helped make Venice the major destination for so many of Morrice's contemporaries in America, Britain, and France. Without denying other factors, I believe that it may

well have been his attention to mid-sixteenth century Venetian painting that provided Morrice with the means to move from a Whistlerian *fin-de-siècle* painter to that of a robust modernist.

Venice had a strong effect on many other foreign or *stranieri* artists and the city's popularity in art periodicals, exhibitions, and collections may even have helped make their careers. Paintings by Morrice and his non-Italian contemporaries often continued Whistler's self-publicized dictum of portraying "the Venice of the Venetians," with working-class people or *popolani* moving comfortably through the streets of Venice. Certainly many modernist foreign artists gave the city a kind of contemporary monumentality, as more prosaic buildings, narrow streets, and crooked passageways became the new visual emblems of the past in the present. But despite their advocacy of representing everyday Venetian life, foreign painters produced comparatively few views of a campo, making Morrice's image of the Campo San Giacometto all that more unusual. Campi were the center of community life as they were the forecourts of the hundreds of parish churches scattered across Venice. Margaret Lovell suggests (none too persuasively) that Americans rejected the campo as a viable subject because they "tend to be hot and airless spaces. No watery reflections or shimmering leaves break up the light and suggest respite from land-locked, man-made stone enclosures."²⁶ It is certain that neither Prendergast nor Morrice shared this prejudice. A marked contrast to the American concept of Venice can be seen in the paintings of a campo by Venetian painters. For example, Ettore Tito's *Campo Santa Margherita* (private collection) of 1880, Giacomo Favretto's various versions of *Campo di San Polo* in mid-decade (Fig. 8), along with Alessandro Milesi's *Ciacole*, ca. 1890 (private collection), set in the Campo SS. Giovanni e Paolo, all focus on incidents in the daily life of the Venetian poor and how they lived their lives.²⁷ This emphasis on people over place seems to me to be the single most important narrative difference between Venetian and foreign paintings of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To cite only one example, the buildings, especially the Ca' da Mosto, which are the subject of Morrice's *Golden Venice* (Fig. 2), function only as background detail in Milesi's *Pope!* (Fig. 9).

While the Rialto Bridge was a common enough subject for foreign painters and photographers, the Campo San Giacomo di Rialto and the Fabbriche Vecchie were largely ignored. Among Morrice's associates, Francis Hopkinson Smith's image of the north and easterly buildings of the Fabbriche Vecchie (private collection) is one of the few to clearly show the site. Smith pays close attention to the details of the architecture but the real subject is the glamorous women doing their daily shopping amidst the piles of produce in the same corner of the campo as painted by Morrice.²⁸ Maurice Prendergast's



8 | Giacomo Favretto, *Mercato di campo San Polo a Venezia in giorno di sabato* [Saturday Market in the Campo San Polo, Venice], 1883, oil on canvas, 130 × 207 cm, private collection. (Photo: the author)

well-known *Market Place Venice*, ca. 1898 (private collection), that might have been familiar to his friend Morrice, relates strongly to the most popular photographs of the area: the view from the top of the Bridge, along the Ruga and the narrowed *Fabbriche Vecchie*. In this case, the red ceremonial flag suspended from an unseen rope on the bridge halts the deep recession of the long street. Similar views that begin closer to the foot of the Rialto Bridge and extend the length of the Ruga and beyond were painted by the Venetian, Ferruccio Scattola at the very beginning of the twentieth century.²⁹ His images give more attention to the architecture than Prendergast's and also show greater empathy with the *popolani* or *minore veneziani* than bestowed by most foreign painters, perhaps because they represented Scattola's own world.

Foreigners' views of the Rialto area were typified by saccharine and sentimental paintings of happy, healthy *popolani* lounging around the market – a stereotypical imagery that was beloved by the Paris and London salons and wildly popular with collectors, and eagerly reproduced in numerous art magazines. This romantic portrayal of Venetians was also promoted in books by local and foreign writers and in countless photographs and illustrations, all of which were essential to the booming tourist industry.

For example, the noted historian Pompeo Molmenti wrote, “The artistic sovereignty of Venice has loving subjects everywhere. From all parts of the world artists come to study the peculiar habits of her merry, witty people, and to enjoy the pleasant life, where the streets adorned with incomparable artistic beauties offer as smiling an aspect as the humble byways with their crumbling walls, or the canals with their green watery paths.”³⁰

While Venetian painters may include part of the Rialto area in their pictures, the site is usually only a backdrop to their representation of the difficult and often desperate lives of the majority of the *minore veneziani* – a subject that was seemingly of no overriding interest to foreign artists. Whistler’s etchings and those of the Duveneck boys certainly focus on the *popolani*, but their images did not truly portray social and economic conditions, even though they give due diligence to the architecture of the poorer parts of Venice.³¹ On the other hand, Tito’s *Old Fishmarket*, 1893 (Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderne, Rome), for example, portrays a gondolier who is unemployed because, with the introduction of the *vaporetto* a decade earlier, the waterbus had become the main means of cheap transport of residents and tourists along the Grand Canal. Milesi’s *Pope!* (private collection) (Fig. 9) of 1897 is similarly set at the Rialto market and the abject poverty of its protagonists may also reflect the undercurrent of social protest supported by more progressive Venetian citizens through the later nineteenth and beginning of the next century. Foreign artists could see these paintings relatively easily in Venetian (and international) exhibitions and in artists’ studios. However, it is an open question whether visiting painters truly understood that depicting tattered clothes and humble settings described the reality of contemporary Venetian life for most of its people; and that the *popolani* were not merely symbols of an exotic ancient society that had somehow managed to survive and adapt to the modern age.³²

Morrice’s portrayal of the Campo San Giacomo di Rialto has no overt commentary about the city or its inhabitants, nor does his approach really stray beyond that of the carefully distanced observer. The meaning of its content could be defined by modernism, where the apparent casualness of his image, its overriding sense of the familiar, the accessibility of the subject, and the directness of its content, give the Rialto pochade its startling intimacy and its celebration of the momentary. Although his off-hand elegance is essential to his means of composing and exemplary of his modernist sensibility and the aesthetic of the period, it is quite possible that intentionally or not, he was mindful of the documenting of Venice in the plethora of photographs and illustrations circulating at the time.³³ This is only to suggest that documentary photographs by Venetians such as Carlo Ponti, Carlo Naya, Tomaso Filippi, and especially Ferdinando Ongania, whose *Calli e Canali in Venezia* was



9 | Alessandro Milesi, *Pope! [Daddy!]*, 1897, oil and tempera on canvas, 151 × 189 cm, private collection. (Photo: the author)

published in English in 1899 with a preface by Ruskin, were widely available and presumably could have been of value to Morrice as an *aide-mémoire* at the very least.³⁴

Photographs of the Rialto – the bridge, the campo, and the market – were available in every form of print media including advertisements. One of the most popular themes was working-class women gathered at the numerous small stalls in the campo and adjoining market areas; many others show the jumble of shops and people crowded along the Ruga degli Orefici. However, Morrice's rejection of the anecdotal or the directive narrative that was current in many Venetian photographs and postcards aimed at tourists, suggests he may have been better attuned to the sensibility of foreign photographers like Alvin Langdon Coburn, James Craig Annan, or Alfred Stieglitz, who shared his own somewhat tempered view of the city and its inhabitants.

Nevertheless, every photographer – foreign or Venetian – seemed entranced by shawled *popolani* women and they were as much a part of the allure of Venice as its canals and the buildings.

The fringed black or gray *scialle* or *siàl* in Venetian, was made of cotton or wool and was the most common covering for *popolane* until the end of World War I.³⁵ Younger and unmarried poor women often wore patterned and coloured shawls, but most likely these were made from reused materials. Venetian upper-class women were usually dressed in the same high-fashion French designs as their tourist-sisters, making it difficult to differentiate between these two groups based on costume alone. Such fashionable women do appear in Morrice's images of the Piazza and Piazzetta San Marco as well as the Grand Canal, but they are outnumbered overall by his shawled figures. Morrice often used the motif of cloaked women traversing the streets and arcades of Venice, but his pochade of the Rialto market is a rare example of a distinct group of three *popolane* who seem neither completely anonymous nor a kind of afterthought. Their identity is expressed through their connected poses – walking, standing, and sitting – as they progress from the Ruga degli Orefici to the Campo San Giacometto. The figures' weight and gravity as well as their dignity and demeanor put them on an equal footing with the imposing architecture in a lyrical combination of motion and stillness, of bustle and quiet.

The women have a commanding presence in the painting: two of them face the viewer (and the artist) and while the third is in profile, she is the central figure of the pochade in several ways. Positioned on the main vertical axis and closest to the viewer, her dominance is enhanced by the fullness and colour of her shawl. She is also the compositional link between the other two figures as Morrice places her head on the same level as the woman on the left but their differences maintain their separation. On the right side of the panel, a different sort of play of stance and scale connects the standing and seated figures. The two-dimensionality of the brightly cloaked body of the central figure, with its loose triangular forms, is reinforced by the flatness of the adjacent corner pillar as well as the enclosing canopy that echoes the shape of her shawl. At the same time, the tones of her long black skirt are repeated in the more modest dress of the other women. Because of his careful composing, the women have a candour and ease that exemplifies the placidity and detachment of modernist narrative in which nothing seems to happen. Morrice's intentional denial of anything that might suggest a specific story is further implied by the unidentified merchandise sold by the woman seated at the blue table – although the daubs of yellow ochre suggest that they might be brass objects like moulds and measurers or pots and pans.

Because of the nonchalance of his narrative, Morrice seems to synthesize Whistler's projection of "an unembellished Venetian life in compositions

of [relatively] stark simplicity.”³⁶ While this theme of observed daily life is essential to notions of the nineteenth-century Baudelairean *flâneur*, there is also the suggestion here of parallel lives. Morrice is a witness to their shopping and at the same time he is also noticed by two of the women simply because they share his line of sight. Similarly, all three women are absorbed in their own tasks, just as he is absorbed in painting his pochade. This in turn leads to modernist notions of visually representing self-contemplation as an expression of the inner life of the painted, as well as that of the painter. In these two colliding worlds Morrice’s Venetian women navigate their way through the city, just as he charts his way through his Venice pictures.³⁷ However, and perhaps more importantly, the physical and psychological distance that allows Morrice to observe and be observed by Venetian women, defines his own identity as a traveler, as a foreigner, and as an outsider.

Unlike many of his contemporaries – residents or foreigners – Morrice was not interested in picturesque impoverished girls in romanticized settings. His friend Maurice Prendergast also looked at women in Venice with the distanced view of *stranieri*, but he tended to see them more as idealized creatures with a great deal of charm and even glamour. He pictured the women, both Venetians and visitors, in Carpaccio-like large groupings moving about a *campo* or as part of a procession parading over bridges or along a *riva*.³⁸ Although Morrice did a few images of people gathered together on the Piazzetta in the evening, he tended to focus closely on only one group of revelers and the women are never as stereotypically comely as those by Prendergast. In a way, Morrice’s more pragmatic images of *popolane* are somewhat closer in handling and attitude (but not necessarily subject) to those of Walter Sickert³⁹ than Prendergast’s “celebrated Venetian woman notable for her fringed shawl, wrapped closely around her shapely figure.”⁴⁰ Morrice’s approach to picturing women is also decidedly different from the artificialities in many of John Singer Sargent’s images of beautiful and enigmatic *minore* Venetian women.⁴¹

So who are the women in Morrice’s Rialto pochade? The simplest answer is that they represented the many anonymous *popolane* who defined the economic, social, and cultural spheres of the area in and around the market. The walking and seated figures may be wives and mothers whose domestic responsibilities were unceasing: “dalla messa alla mensa” (from the church mass to the meal), while the standing woman is likely an unmarried servant because of her bright shawl. Yet nothing in their rendering suggests that Morrice considered them within the broadest definition of portraiture.⁴² In modernist terms, the three *popolane* are more of a metaphor for women rather than a likeness of particular people. For his own reasons, he decided upon three female figures and then pictorially reinvented them on the panel. The physical and psychological distance between the painter and the painted



10 | Unknown
 photographer, *Tipi veneziani*, postcard, sent
 1902, N.P.G. Diffida.
 (Photo: the author)

further symbolizes that he knew nothing about them except their social class, and that seems to have been largely a matter of their costume. In many ways, the anonymity of Morrice's women reflects the attitudes of the outsider whether in art or literature.

Popolane were a favourite preoccupation of foreign illustrators and writers and almost every travel book on Venice devotes long passages to constructing and imposing an identity onto these constantly observed but seemingly exotic women (Fig. 10). One of the few *stranieri* authors to mention *minore veneziane* shopping at the Rialto market, the French writer Charles Yiarte commented that they came from "the different quarters of Venice ... and from every corner of the town." But he then divides them into two contrasting groups: girls decked out in "coloured handkerchiefs ... jewellery of delicately-worked gold ... bright glass beads ... or glass balls; while, wrapped in old gray shawls and showing only their wrinkled profiles and silver locks, [are] the old women of the Rialto."⁴³ The simpler characterization by the British author

and critic Arthur Symonds almost describes Morrice's figures: "Venetian women are rarely pretty, often charming, generally handsome. And all of them, without exception, walk splendidly."⁴⁴ Henry [Henrietta] Perl however, criticized this limited view of *minore* women: "Many able Italian critics ... are of the opinion that artists of the present day do not sufficiently study the women of Venice" and goes on rather contradictorily to say that there are really two kinds of young women, blonds or brunettes: "These peculiar types are of very great importance to the general effect of any Venetian scene, and must therefore be taken fully into account in any study of the local colouring of the place. They do not exactly give the whole scheme of colour, but they give the tone to every picture which can truly be styled Venetian."⁴⁵

As mentioned earlier, the shawl was a constant motif in the visual and literary representation of poor Venetian women: "that most graceful of garments,"⁴⁶ which lends "grace and distinction to the wearer."⁴⁷ In Morrice's images of Venetian women, the *scialle* becomes a metaphor for the disguised body, but they wear their cloaks with the same poise as the upper class carried their parasols and he often painted the two classes of women co-existing easily within the same picture. In his pochade of the Rialto area, the shawl could be seen as a visual sign of the paradox between their immediacy and their anonymity, which also represents a woman's position in Venetian society. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century the *siàl* had become a symbol of working women's (slowly) growing economic empowerment and emancipation.⁴⁸ The poorest of the poor, they were a formidable presence in the city. Women were the largest percentage of the population, partly because of enormous immigration of girls from the countryside who came to Venice to work as servants. They married relatively late, largely due to their responsibilities to their own families and a lack of money for dowries. They also had fewer children than elsewhere and this may help explain why their mortality rate was comparatively lower than Venetian *popolani* men.

Despite advancing modernization within Venice's social, political, and cultural spheres, enormous economic problems that began with health and housing continue to plague the city long after Italian unification in 1866; and the *popolane* were emblematic of and sometimes blamed for these difficulties. To add further insult to injury, poor women (and men) were regularly accused of moral corruption and a life of impropriety, supposedly preferring hardship to hard work. Their children were also considered ill-fated because it was assumed that their mothers were irresponsible and slatternly. Ironically, this condemnation of an improvident lower class became the source of those numerous pictures adored by wealthy art collectors in which healthy, carefree, and fun-loving Venetians of all ages lounge around the Rialto



11 | Henry Woods, *At the Foot of the Rialto Bridge*, 1881, oil on canvas, 71 × 98 cm, private collection. (Photo: <http://www.the-athenaeum.org>)

market, as seen in Henry Woods, *At the Foot of the Rialto Bridge*, 1881 (private collection) (Fig. 11). In reality, as well as carrying out their onerous duties as wives and mothers, lower class women had worked for generations as servants of all sorts: domestics, waitresses, seamstresses, sellers of water, food, clothes, and other basic commodities (Fig. 12), along with prostitution and the equally dishonourable job of modeling at the Accademia museum art school. As witnessed by the numerous photographs of Venice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, poor women were a constant presence in every sector of the city, providing the goods and services that allowed Venice to function. Thus, the presence of three closely-knit *popolane* in Morrice's image of a corner of the Campo San Giacometto is not an invention but a confirmation of the public place of *minore veneziane* women.

As the nineteenth century progressed, more working women became involved with trades but their meager wages still meant continued poverty. Slight improvements in schooling and specialized workshops led to more employment (but little increase in pay) in old *mestieri* like lace-making, dress-



12 | Unknown
photographer, *Milkseller*,
from *Venezia. Una storia
per immagini*, vol. 1, 1866-
1915 (Venezia e Mestre: La
Nuova, 2007), 35, fig. 39.
(Photo: the author)

making, embroidery, and bead-working that were often carried out at home. Women could work by themselves or more likely in groups seated near a doorway in a *calle* – a subject that became a favourite theme for some foreign artists, but not Morrice.⁴⁹ When new industries developed and transportation improved, local women moved to the factories as tobacco workers, match makers, textile workers, watchmakers, or glass beaders.⁵⁰ However the working lives of thousands of Venetian women, who were seasonal helpers, worked in a family *bottega*, held unclassified jobs, or carried out piecemeal artisanal work at home, remain unaccounted for and their stories go completely unheard.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the fight for improved working conditions gained force largely because of the liberals and socialists in government, but especially because of nascent unions, women's organizations, and progressive groups such as the Circolo di cultura etico sociale of Jewish men and women. The dark fringed shawl, which had once been regarded as an outward sign of a woman's lower class and her ill-fortune, now became a symbol of women's battles for better wages, reduced hours, improved lighting in the factories, adherence to labour laws, and protection from employers. In numerous political demonstrations and workers' strikes, wearing a shawl became a badge of pride rather than of poverty. In the 1904–1905 electoral campaign, writers wrote about female protestors with raised fists and tattered black shawls at rallies throughout the city. Not surprisingly, such women were scorned by the bourgeoisie who had invented the saying: “Co se slonga la franza, se scurta la virtu / e le pute d'un tempo no le se trova piu;” or,

“When the fringe becomes longer, virtue becomes shorter / And the girls of yesteryear are found no longer.”⁵¹ The woman seated at the sturdy blue table and surrounded by her ochre-coloured wares in Morrice’s Rialto pochade was undoubtedly one of those thousands of *popolane* who barely earned subsistence wages from menial jobs, but who were essential to Venice’s economy and the daily needs of its citizens. Morrice’s other two women are less identifiable, but their carriage and custom could hint that their shawls are perhaps more than mere clothing, even if the painter was probably unaware of its political meaning.

Morrice’s pochade suggests an intersection of public and private life. The site is so tied to the tourist’s idea of Venice that Morrice could gently manipulate the architecture for his own purposes without denying its historical authenticity. But it is this realization of the *Fabbriche Vecchie*, the campo, and the women that signifies his private response – to that place and at that moment. Like foreign painters before and after him, Morrice had to reinvent Venice to suit his own temperament and the panel became the public solution to a private enquiry. In this alluring pochade, Morrice addresses the physical presence of the Rialto as a means to formulate the metaphysical space of Venice. In the reciprocity between painter and painted, observer and observed that constitutes art, he has constructed an urban image that encompasses the long narrative of Venice and his own distillation of that story. Morrice’s pochade of Campo San Giacomo di Rialto can be regarded as “the size of your hand but artistically as large as a continent.”⁵² But the painting is also a cipher of his empathy with the city and his possible suspicion that Venice “has the ambivalent beauty of an adventure that is immersed in a life without roots, like a blossom floating in the sea ... offering our soul no home but only an adventure.”⁵³

NOTES

- 1 The most comprehensive English-language discussion of the period relevant to this article is Margaret PLANT, *Venice: Fragile City 1797–1997* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), chapters 5–7.
- 2 See David MCTAVISH, *Canadian Artists in Venice 1830–1930* (Kingston, ON: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1984), 18–25, 34–35. Sandra PAIKOWSKY, “James Wilson Morrice in Venice. The Campiello delle Ancore,” *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d’histoire de l’art canadien* XXVI (2005): 56–79, discusses an image near the Public Gardens.
- 3 There are countless histories of the Rialto area and its individual buildings on the internet in addition to especially, Richard GOY, *Venice: The City and its Architecture*

- (London: Phaidon, 1999), 94–101. Legend has it that Rio Alto was the original name of the city. A description of the Campo San Giacomo di Rialto can also be found in Marina Crivellari BIZIO, *Campi Veneziani* (Venezia: Filippi Editore, 2003), 71–75. Unfortunately the Rialto market is in danger of being closed down by the municipal government and more stalls disappear each year.
- 4 See PAIKOWSKY, “The Campiello delle Ancore,” for a discussion of a different Venetian market subject. Morrice made images showing market stalls and outdoor markets in various countries throughout his career.
 - 5 Deborah HOWARD, *Venice Disputed: Marc’ Antonio Barbaro and Venetian Architecture 1550–1600* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 152. The spelling of place names in Venice constantly varies; for example the campo and church may be cited as “de Rialto” or “di Rialto.”
 - 6 The project also included the construction of the city treasury offices known as the Camerlenghi and the nearby church of San Giovanni Elemosinario. The ancient church of San Giacomo di Rialto, on the fourth and southern side of the campo, was left untouched by the fire.
 - 7 Théophile GAUTIER, “The Grand Canal,” translated and reprinted in Esther SINGLETON, *Venice as Seen and Described by Famous Writers* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1905), 80. The essay was originally written in 1852.
 - 8 As part of their subjugation of Venice, the Austrians had destroyed numerous stone relief carvings of the Lion of St. Mark.
 - 9 Entry, “Fabbriche Vecchie di Rialto,” 66. Musatti’s book was published by Ferdinando Ongania (1842–1911) a famous Venetian photographer and one of the civic leaders who, like the art historian and writer Pompeo Molmenti (1819–1894), was determined to make visitors more aware of sites other than the Piazza San Marco and the Rialto Bridge. An important recent study of Molmenti’s contribution is Giuseppe PAVANELLO, ed., *L’Enigma della modernità: Venezia nell’età di Pompeo Molmenti* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2006). Among Ongania’s best-known books today are *Calli e Canali in Venezia* of 1890, which was published in English in 1899 and his monumental study of the Basilica di San Marco, published in installments from 1881 to 1893. The museum of the church was reopened in summer 2011 with an installation dedicated to Ongania. Numerous books on the history of Venice by Musatti (1844–1928) include *La Donna in Venezia* (1891), which is enjoying a new celebrity. The exhibition, now better known as the Biennale, initiated a wave of illustrated publications on the city in expectation of a new boom in tourism.
 - 10 In his writings on Venice, John Ruskin dismissed the church as “picturesque” but “grievously restored” and he had little if anything to say about its surroundings. The National Gallery of Canada has a Canaletto painting of the church, ca. 1740–60. His *Campo di Rialto*, ca. 1760, is in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.
 - 11 The Fabbriche Nuove was designed by Jacopo Sansovino in the mid-1550s as the final phase of Lo Scarpagnino’s original commission. Although the gondola predominates in Morrice’s images of Venice, he also painted the more prosaic transport boats like the *caorlina* and the *batela* that plied the Lagoon.
 - 12 GAUTIER, “The Grand Canal,” 79–80.
 - 13 Dorothy and Mortimer MENPES, *Venice* (London: A&C Black, 1904), 144.
 - 14 The green doorway is consistent with the (now open) path that begins at the western end of the Sottoportego del Banco Giro behind the corner column in the pochade,

then crosses the arcade of the Ca' Savi to the Ramo Quarto del Paragon and ends at the Campo Rialto Nuovo, the place that once housed the confraternity (*scuola*) of the Orefici.

- 15 Alban JANSON and Thorsten BÜRKLIN, *Scenes. Interaction with Architectural Space: The Campi of Venice* (Basel: Birkhauser, 2002), 124.
- 16 On American artists in Venice, see Margaretta LOVELL, *A Visitable Past: Views of Venice by American Artists 1860–1915* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) and her earlier *Venice: The American View 1860–1920* (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1985). Another standard text is Julian HALSBY, *Venice. The Artist's Vision: A guide to British and American painters* (London: Unicorn Press, 1990).
- 17 See Nancy Mowll MATTHEWS with Elizabeth KENNEDY, *Prendergast in Italy* (London and New York: Merrell, 2009). Despite its title, most of this excellent study is concerned with Venice. Other Americans such as Childe Hassam and Joseph Pennell treated the Rialto market with similar modernist strategies.
- 18 Mary Knight POTTER, *The Art of the Venice Academy* (Boston: L.C. Page, 1905) is one of many English-language examples, of which John RUSKIN, *Guide To The Principal Pictures In The Academy Of Fine Arts At Venice* (first published 1877) led the pack. Ruskin is noted in a Morrice sketchbook. Since its inception, the Accademia collection has only contained Venetian art; at the beginning of the twentieth century, the museum displayed three Tintoretto paintings.
- 19 Morrice could have also seen Tintoretto paintings in Paris and especially in London where there were important collections by the 1890s.
- 20 In *The Theft of the Body of St. Mark*, for example, the Palazzo Ducale and the Piazzetta were a stand-in for buildings in Alexandria.
- 21 Other well-known painters include Palma il Vecchio, Vincenzo Catena, Cima da Conegliano, Rocco Marconi, and Lorenzo Lotto whose works were held in the Accademia and in poorly lit churches across Venice.
- 22 See for example, Anna LEPSCHY, *Tintoretto Observed: A Documentary Survey of Critical Reactions from the 16th to the 20th Century* (Ravenna: Longo, 1983).
- 23 Gustave SOULIER, “Les Peintres de Venise,” *L'art décoratif*, janvier 1905; for Morrice, see pages, 25, 28, 32, *in passim*. In terms of its scope, his overview of foreign painters is unmatched by any book on the subject.
- 24 SOULIER, *Le Tintoret: Biographie critique* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1911), 130–31.
- 25 See for example, Marina COSLOVI, “Henry James and Vittor Carpaccio: The Horizontal and the Vertical,” *RSA Journal* 15–16 (2004–2005): 31–44. James also considered Delacroix to be like Tintoretto: “one of the slightest of colourists, until you begin to conceive he is one of the greatest,” in his 1872 *Atlantic Monthly* article, “French Pictures in Boston,” republished in Henry JAMES, *The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essay on the Pictorial Arts*, ed. John Sweeney (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 48.
- 26 LOVELL, *A Visitable Past*, 66–7.
- 27 Recent publications on nineteenth and early twentieth-century Venetian painting include: Falvia SCOTTON, *Dalle maschere alle machine: Pittura veneziana 1896–1914* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2002); Giuseppe PAVANELLO and Nico STRINGA, *Ottocento Veneto: Il Trionfo dell colore* (Treviso: Canova, 2004); Enzo SAVOIA, *Vita a Venezia: Colore e sentimento nella pittura veneta dell'800* (Milano: Bottegantica, 2010); Myriam ZERBI, *Ottocento Veneziano* (Torino: Umberto Allemandi, 2010); Isabella REALE and

Myriam ZERBI, *Paesaggi d'Acqua: Luci e riflessi nella pittura veneziana, dell'Ottocento* (Torino: Umberto Allemandi, 2011); and Myriam ZERBI and Luisa TURCHI, *Nobilità del lavoro: Arti e mestieri nella pittura veneta tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Torino: Umberto Allemandi, 2012). The classic contemporary study of the long nineteenth century is Giuseppe PAVANELLO and Giandomenico ROMANELLI, *Venezia nell'Ottocento: Imagini e mito* (Milano: Electra, 1983).

- 28 Smith's watercolour *Venice – In the Fruit Market* is reproduced in colour in F. Hopkinson SMITH, "The Parthenon by Way of Papendrecht," *Scribner's Magazine* 45, no.4 (April 1909): 395. This image can also be found on the internet but with the title of Smith's article, not the work itself. An illustration of his watercolour, *A Fruit Stall*, showing a more distanced view of the same corner as Morrice's Campo di Rialto, is found in William HOWELLS, *Venetian Life* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1892), vol. 1, facing p. 134, and other editions.
- 29 Scattola's painting *Rialto* was reproduced in Gustave SOULIER, "Les Peintres de Venise," 24.
- 30 Pompeo MOLMENTI, quoted in *Rosen's Illustrated Guide: Venice* (Venice: S. Rosen, 1906), 117.
- 31 Among the many texts on Whistler's Venetian work, see: Eric DENKER, *Whistler and his Circle in Venice* (London: Merrell, 2003) along with Alastair GRIEVE, *Whistler's Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) and Margaret MACDONALD, *Palaces in the Night: Whistler in Venice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
- 32 Robert UPSTONE, *Sickert in Venice* (London: Scala, 2009), 37, comments that in the 1890s, Venice was a destination for "a kind of artistic ethnographic tourism" that was defined by "a pursuit of unusual and unspoilt folk society apparently unaffected by the modern."
- 33 It would have been impossible for Morrice to be unfamiliar with the vast number of photographs and reproductions produced for the Venice tourist industry. Photographic images were a common part of a painter's apparatus as an *aide-mémoire* and could have been an asset to Morrice when he worked on his Venice canvases in his Paris studio. Photographs could also stimulate ideas for a painting.
- 34 For an overview see: Dorothea RITTER, *Venice in Old Photographs 1841–1920* (London: Calmann and King, 1994) and various publications by Italo Zannier. Ongania first published *Calli e Canali* in 1891 and the book of 200 plates has been reprinted in various editions and in various formats.
- 35 A discussion of Venetian costume during the period relevant to this article is found in Doretta Davanzo POLI, "Moda, tessuti, merletti a Venezia nel primo Novecento," in *Modigliani a Venezia, tra Livorno e Parigi* (Venezia: Biblioteca nazionale marciana, 2005), 173–78. Also see her history of Venetian clothing, *Abiti antichi e moderni dei Veneziani* (Vicenza: Nera Pozza, 2002).
- 36 MACDONALD, *Palaces in the Night*, 23.
- 37 For a comparative discussion of one of his Canadian paintings that focuses on female figures, see PAIKOWSKY, "James Wilson Morrice's *Return from School: A Modernist Image of Quebec Children*," in *Depicting Canada's Children*, ed. Loren Lerner (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2009), 347–64.
- 38 See MATTHEWS, *Prendergast in Italy*; while he showed locals and tourists together in his watercolours, his monotypes only depicted Italian women and mainly *popolane*.

- 39 See UPSTONE, *Sickert in Venice*. Sickert's Venetian portraits and figures are decidedly less numerous than his architectural views.
- 40 MATTHEWS, *Prendergast in Italy*, 106. Both Morrice and Prendergast's sketchbooks include similar drawings of shawled Venetian women.
- 41 Recent monographs on Sargent in Venice include Richard ORMOND and Elaine KILMURRAY, *John Singer Sargent: Venetian Figures and Landscapes 1898–1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) and William ADELSON, ed., *Sargent's Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
- 42 On the changing visual representation of Italian women, see Francesca CAGIANELLI and Dario MATTEONI, *La Belle Époque: Arte in Italia 1880–1915* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2008).
- 43 Charles YRIARTE, *Venice. Its History, Art, Industries and Modern Life* (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates, 1896), 169. He also described differences between women in each of Venice's six districts in his chapter "Types of the People." In Horatio BROWN, *Life on the Lagoons* (London: Rivington, Percival, 1884), the author makes similar comparisons, especially in the chapter titled "Home."
- 44 Arthur SYMONS, "Venice" in *Cities* (London: J.M. Dent, 1905), 79. He also characterized types of woman in the different *sestieri*.
- 45 Henry PERL, *Venezia* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1894), 77–78. Symons states that they walk "superbly" partly because of their "heelless slippers," but Perl suggests it may be more a combination of their clothing and "the constant climbing down of the sloping bridges." Lonsdale and Laura RAGG, *Things Seen in Venice* (London: Seeley, Service, 1912), 141, commented that Venetian women were "far less beautiful than those of many other parts of Italy ... But they carry themselves well."
- 46 Horatio BROWN, *In and Around Venice* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1905), 27.
- 47 RAGG, *Things Seen in Venice*, 141.
- 48 For much of my discussion on *popolane*, I have relied on Maria Teresa SEGA, "Lavoratrici," in *Storia di Venezia: L'Ottocento e il Novecento*, vol. II, eds. Mario Isnenghi and Stuart Woolf (Roma: Edizioni Treccani, 2002), especially 803–54, and Tiziana PLEBANI, ed., *Storia di Venezia città delle donne* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008).
- 49 Sargent's gentle images of bead stringers, for example, do not suggest at all that these *popolane* were among the most politically active women. In addition to the sources cited directly above, see Luisa ACCATI, et al., *Perle e Impiraperle un lavoro di donne a Venezia tra '800 e '900* (Venezia: Arsenale, 1990).
- 50 The need to carry workers from Castello in the eastern part of Venice to the factories in the western and southern parts of Venice was a major reason for the development of the *vaporetto*. Giovanni Stucky threatened to close his flour mill (now a Hilton hotel), which had opened in 1895 on the Giudecca, if a steamboat route was not put into operation. In the census of 1901, over 1,000 women worked in tobacco factories while five times as many were in full-time domestic service.
- 51 I wish to thank Dr. Frederick Lauritzen for his translations and his friendship. The Italian wording is: "Quando si allunga la frangia, si accorcia la virtù e le ragazze di un tempo non le se ritrova più." The image of politicized shawled women goes back to the Risorgimento, a half-century earlier.
- 52 I have appropriated Charles Lang Freer's well-known comment on Whistler's panels.
- 53 Georg SIMMEL, "Venice," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, nos. 7–8 (2007): 46.

James Wilson Morrice et le marché du Rialto à Venise

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La peinture sur panneau, ou pochade, d'un coin du Campo San Giacomo di Rialto, v. 1902, par Morrice, qui fait partie de la collection de la Galerie d'art Beaverbrook, est en contradiction avec sa représentation la plus connue de la ville de saint Marc. Il abandonne ici ce qui pourrait être considéré comme une vue archétypale de la Venise urbaine : un premier plan représentant la mer ou une avant-cour pavée, devant un mur d'édifices percés d'ouvertures, disposés dans un espace rectiligne soigneusement délimité par une composition formant une sorte de grille. Il se concentre sur un seul coin du vaste *campo* et n'offre qu'une vue partielle des deux étages d'arcades des Fabbriche Vecchie, édifices à bureaux dessinés par Lo Scarpagnino (Antonio di Pietro Abbondi, v. 1465–1549) et terminés en 1522, qui encadrent trois côtés de la place. Les arcades des Fabbriche Vecchie que l'on voit dans la moitié droite du panneau de Morrice étaient remplies de petites boutiques ou *botteghini*. La petite table devant la colonne d'angle aurait fait partie d'un ensemble d'échoppes mobiles et de boutiques plus permanentes qui constituaient une partie intrinsèque de l'économie du marché et de la ville depuis ses lointaines origines. Le long du côté gauche du panneau, on voit une tranche de l'édifice connu sous le nom de Ca' Dieci Savi alle Decime, qui a déjà abrité les bureaux des collecteurs d'impôts de la ville et qui est toujours utilisé aujourd'hui par le magistrat des eaux. Entre ces deux sections des Fabbriche Vecchie passe la Ruga degli Orefici, ainsi nommée à cause des boutiques d'orfèvres qui la bordaient, qui a toujours été la route principale qui mène au Rialto et, plus tard, un sujet favori des peintres et photographes vénitiens et étrangers.

L'espace pictural dramatiquement condensé, l'arcade nettement découpée de la partie nord des Fabbriche Vecchie, la façade faussement incurvée du palais des Dieci Savi et le pavé tronqué du campo, tout cela bouleverse les vues habituelles où Morrice représente Venise comme un panorama tranquille et soigneusement disposé. De la même manière, les trois figures féminines s'opposent aussi à sa tendance à représenter parfois les Vénitiennes presque comme des accessoires. Ici, leurs poses élégantes élucident soigneusement et même rationalisent l'espace pictural déformé. Je présume que cette distance de Morrice par rapport à ses compositions habituelles, nettes et rectilignes,

aurait pu être inspirée par sa rencontre directe avec les peintures du Tintoret dans des églises, des confréries et la Galerie de l'Académie. La manière du Tintoret d'arranger des groupes de figures pourrait aussi avoir influencé les mouvements des figures féminines de Morrice qui se déploient en une courbe harmonieuse. Il a été démontré qu'au début du xx^e siècle, les artistes et critiques parisiens considéraient le Tintoret comme « le précurseur le plus authentique et achevé de nos peintres modernes », et il était souvent qualifié de proto-impressionniste. De même, l'apparente négligence de l'image, un sentiment prévalent de familiarité, l'accessibilité du sujet et le caractère direct du contenu pourraient être dus à sa connaissance des célèbres photographes de Venise tels Ponti, Naya et Ongania, mais aussi aux images modernistes de Coburn et de Stieglitz.

La présence de femmes du peuple, ou *popolane*, enveloppées dans un châle et déambulant dans les rues de la ville, est un motif fréquent dans les représentations de Venise. Dans ce tableau, le caractère distinctif de leur identité vient du rythme des rapports entre leurs différentes attitudes – marchant, debout et assise – dans leur progression le long de la Ruga degli Orefici vers le Campo di Rialto. Deux d'entre elles font face au spectateur (dans la ligne de visée de l'artiste) et bien que la troisième soit vue de profil, elle est la figure centrale de la pochade. Placée sur le principal axe vertical et le plus près du spectateur, elle domine du fait de l'ampleur et de la couleur de son châle qui suggèrent qu'elle n'est pas mariée et qu'elle est plus jeune que les autres. Elle est aussi le lien compositionnel entre les deux autres figures, mais les différences de tailles et d'attitudes préservent leur séparation et leur individualité. De plus, les trois femmes sont absorbées dans leurs tâches respectives, tout comme Morrice est absorbé par la peinture de sa pochade. Cela conduit en retour aux modernistes qui affirment que la représentation visuelle de la contemplation de soi est l'expression de la vie intérieure du sujet aussi bien que du peintre. La distance physique et psychologique qui permet à Morrice d'observer les Vénitiennes et d'être observé par elles, définit sa propre identité de voyageur et d'étranger.

Contrairement à plusieurs de ses contemporains – résidents ou étrangers – Morrice n'était pas intéressé à peindre de jeunes paysannes pittoresques dans des décors idylliques. Cependant, les trois femmes du Rialto semblent faire référence au calme naturel et à la dignité innée des *popolane* des toiles de Favretto, de Nono ou de Tito, artistes dont il aurait pu facilement voir les œuvres à Venise. Les femmes, dans la pochade du Rialto de Morrice, représentent simplement ces *popolane* anonymes qui définissaient la sphère économique, sociale et culturelle du quartier qui entoure le marché. Leurs châles, ou *scialle*, deviennent une métaphore picturale du corps dissimulé, mais elles les portent avec le même aplomb que les bourgeoises, leurs parasols.

Dans les toiles de Morrice, le châte pourrait être vu comme un signe visuel du paradoxe entre leur immédiateté et leur anonymat, et aussi de leur place dans la société vénitienne. Cependant, au début du xx^e siècle, le *scialle* allait devenir le symbole de la lente prise de pouvoir économique par les femmes et, probablement à l'insu de Morrice, un signe de leur agitation politique.

Les figures et l'architecture évoquent l'espace physique du Campo San Giacomo di Rialto, tout comme Morrice a formulé l'espace métaphysique de Venise et, en combinant les deux sphères, l'ambiguïté devient clarté et ce qui est perçu devient expérience.

Traduction : Élise Bonnette