***Beyond Eyewitness: A New Proposal Regarding Venetian Narrative Painting***

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**Abstract**

Though it is a commonly held trope that Venetian narrative painting suffers a great caesura between the end of the fifteenth and mid-sixteenth century, a modal investigation reveals common pictorial strategies with similar purpose across the century. The later sixteenth-century paintings at the Scuola Grande di San Marco continue the objectives of the earlier narrative decorations by employing two pictorial strategies of space and time, the polytopic and the anachronic. Patricia Fortini Brown’s famed eyewitness mode proposed in *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (1988) forms the basis of a new investigation into the definition of the truth advanced by the narrative paintings. By placing St. Mark in a multiplicity of time and a multiplicity of space the painting cycle advances Venice as a pervasive term, an empire that can span both time and place.

            Comparing two paintings made for the Scuola Grande di San Marco, Bellini’s *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria* with Tintoretto’s later *Stealing of the Body,* demonstrates the shared strategies that bleed St. Mark’s hagiography into past and present, home and abroad. Anachronically folding time to combine the sixteenth century into the first century and polytopically, blending Alexandria and Venice, both paintings of stories that take place in the first century prefigure St. Mark’s posthumous predestined residence in Venice not to occur until the ninth century. Working with larger questions of identity, coexistence, and diverse societies, the article positions the pair of paintings within the St. Mark narrative cycle at the confraternity and to the greater Venetian pictorial tradition.