

## HENRY JAMES ON THE GRAND CANAL

In splendid ritual  
Of gondolas James went,  
after the funeral  
Of the Duchess of Kent,  
Through Venice to deposit  
In her beloved canal  
Remnants of her closet:  
Coats, hats, a Spanish shawl,  
Chemise and chemisette—  
Both gowns and underthings.  
These, watered down, got wet.  
But would not sink. James wrings  
    Them dry. Legends and clothes  
Fetch me comparison  
With legendary prose  
Floating in the sun.  
As for the gowns retrieved,  
Gowns that never conceived  
Blossom—they umbrella  
At Arestino's piers,  
While "Bella, cosa bella"  
Shout the gondoliers.

*R. W. Stallman*