

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