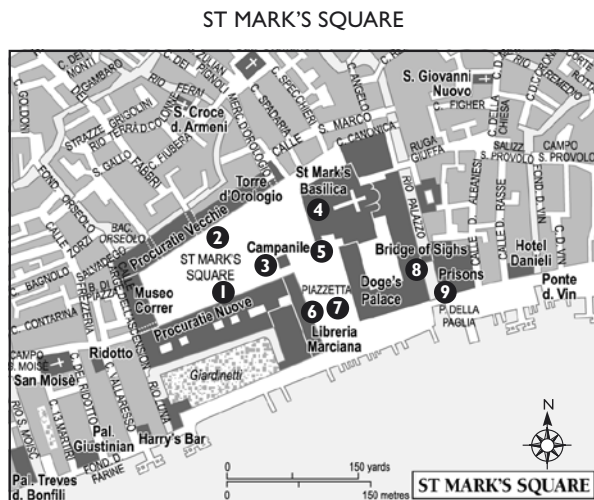


Numbered dots on the maps show locations that relate to the extracts in the ensuing anthology. The names of authors of the extracts are shown in *bold*.



### 1. Florian's

This famous café, where 'the immense cluster of tables and little chairs stretches like a promontory into the smooth lake of the Piazza', is the destination for the narrator on hot summer evenings in **Henry James's** *The Aspern Papers* (1888; see p. 120). It is also where the journalist Merton Densher spies Lord Mark, his defeated rival for the dying Milly Theale's affections, on an afternoon of 'cold lashing rain' in James's *The Wings of the Dove* (1902; see p. 123).

### 2. St Mark's Square

Here litanies are decreed to be sung in 1513 to absolve the city of its sins and to ward off further earthquakes. The historian **Marin Sanudo** worries that they will not be effective, because earthquakes 'are a natural phenomenon' (see p. 184).

### 3. The Campanile of St Mark's

The poet **Goethe** first sees the Mediterranean sea from the top of the Campanile, the bell tower of St Mark's, in 1786.

### 4. St Mark's Basilica

On the balcony on the façade of St Mark's the poet **Petrarch** is given the place of honour beside the Doge to watch the celebrations in the square below of the Venetian re-capture of Crete in 1364. The spectators so pack the square that 'a grain of millet could not have fallen to earth' (see p. 146).

### 5. The Tetrachs

These sculpted porphyry figures set into the southwest corner of St Mark's are traditionally believed to represent Roman emperors. **Thomas Coryate** sees them in 1608 and ascribes a more fanciful history to them (see p. 61).

### 6. The Libreria Marciana

The art historian **Giorgio Vasari** is fulsome in his praise for 'the beautiful and rich library opposite the public palace', designed by his fellow Tuscan, the architect Jacopo Sansovino, in 1537 (see p. 200).

### 7. The Piazzetta

**Ezra Pound** came here 'in my young youth / and lay there under the crocodile / By the column', by which he meant the column of St Theodore, with his remarkably crocodile-like dragon, which stands between St Mark's Square and the water (see p. 149).

### 8. The Doge's Palace and 9. The Prisons

**Casanova** was imprisoned 'under the leads'—prison cells in the roof of the Doge's Palace—following his arrest in 1755 (see p. 41). Despite his libertinism and his gambling, it was for 'atheism' that he was convicted (probably one of the few offences that he did not commit), and he dramatically escapes by prising up one of



Elizabeth Barrett Moulton Barrett (1806–61) was a successful poet long before her marriage to Robert Browning (see p. 29) at the age of 38 (the double Barrett was her father's strategy to prevent the Barrett name being lost should his daughters marry—an eventuality he did everything in his power to prevent). Largely self-taught, she envied her brother's opportunities for education, and

while he was at school she stayed at home avidly reading anything she could lay her hands on, which included Homer and Virgil in the original. At the age of 14 she published an epic on the Battle of Marathon and at 21 a long Byronic poem, *The Development of Genius*.

Ill-health kept her at home for much of the time and many of her friendships—including her initial one with Browning—were conducted entirely or largely by correspondence. Later friends included Samuel Rogers (q.v.), John Ruskin (q.v.) and Thackeray. It was her father's expected opposition to her marriage and subsequent disinheritance of Elizabeth that caused her and Browning to remove to Italy; first Pisa, then Florence. Their financial independence was achieved by a legacy from an uncle. During her lifetime, Elizabeth's reputation stood much higher than her husband's. She was considered a competitor of Tennyson for the post of Poet Laureate in 1850.

In 1857 she wrote the lengthy poem *Aurora Leigh*, which Ruskin called the 'greatest poem of the century'. Later hailed as 'feminist', it portrayed the life of a female artist, addressing issues of class and women's rights. Though it polarised opinion, it was a literary success, particularly in America, where it sold well and continued to do so for several decades after her death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning did not spend much time in Venice, visiting only in 1851 with Robert and her maid Wilson, accompanied by their spaniel, Flush. Here are two descriptions from her letters, the first to the writer Mary Russell Mitford, the second to John Kenyon, a distant cousin on her father's side. It is interesting to note that despite

Robert's latter strong association with Venice, it was clearly not love at first sight, and on this early visit Elizabeth clearly enjoys herself while Robert is unable to eat or sleep.

*Letters (1851–61)*  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

To Miss Mitford

4th June [1851]

I have been between heaven and earth since our arrival at Venice. The heaven of it is ineffable. Never had I touched the skirts of so celestial a place. The beauty of the architecture, the silver trails of water up between all that gorgeous colour and carving, the enchanting silence, the moonlight, the music, the gondolas—I mix it all up together, and maintain that nothing is like it, nothing equal to it, not a second Venice in the world. Do you know, when I came first I felt as if I never could go away. But now comes the earth side. Robert, after sharing the ecstasy, grows uncomfortable, and nervous, and unable to eat or sleep; and poor Wilson, still worse, in a miserable condition of continual sickness and headache. Alas for these mortal Venices—so exquisite and so bilious! Therefore I am constrained away from my joys by sympathy, and am forced to be glad that we are going off on Friday. For myself, it does not affect me at all. I like these moist, soft, relaxing climates; even the scirocco doesn't touch me much. And the baby grows gloriously fatter in spite of everything.

To Mr Kenyon

7th July [1851]

Venice is quite exquisite; it wrapt me round with a spell at first sight, and I longed to live and die there—never to go away. The



Peggy Guggenheim on the steps of the Greek Pavilion, where she exhibited her collection at the 24th Venice Biennale, with *Interior* (1945, unknown location) by her daughter Pegeen Vail; 1948.

*Peggy Guggenheim (1898–1979), restless heiress and prescient collector of modern art, moved to Venice in 1946 after a turbulent life in New York, Paris and London, with spells almost everywhere else fashionable in Europe ('Berlin was horrible... I walked all over the city and saw nothing to justify my curiosity. We went to the opera and some night clubs full of gay boys but it was all very dreary'). A constant refrain in her autobiography, spoken or unspoken, was 'But of course we got restless and decided to travel again'. During the 1920s and 30s and even in the war years she partied with, collected, exhibited or otherwise supported financially*

*many painters and sculptors later to be famous such as Brancusi, Duchamp, Cocteau, Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock, Arp, Rothko and Giacometti. Guggenheim married twice, each time to an artist. Her first husband was the Dadaist Laurence Vail (with whom she had two children) and her second the Surrealist Max Ernst.*

*For most of the last 30 years of her life she lived in Venice, working on her collection. A niece of Solomon Guggenheim—her own father Benjamin had drowned on the Titanic—she was delighted in 1969 to be asked to leave her collection to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, which she duly did. The museum in what became her Venice home, the unfinished Palazzo Venier on the Grand Canal, is now administered together with the Guggenheim Museum in New York as well as with its new satellite museums in Berlin, Bilbao and Abu Dhabi.*

*Here, in extracts from her breathless but very readable autobiography *Out of this Century: Confessions of an Art Addict*, she describes her life in Venice, relatively tranquil after the non-stop party that had occupied much of her time between the wars.*

### *Out of This Century: Confessions of an Art Addict (1946–79)* Peggy Guggenheim

It was through Santomaso [an artist she met in a café] that I was invited to show my entire collection at the XXIVth Biennale of Venice. He had suggested to Rodolfo Pallucchini, the secretary-general of the Biennale, that the collection should be exhibited, and it was agreed that it should be shown in the Greek pavilion, which was free because of the Greeks being at war.

The Biennale, which was started in 1895, is an international exhibition of contemporary art, which is held every other year in the Public Gardens at the end of Venice, on the lagoon near the Lido. A lot of very ugly buildings put up in the time of Mussolini give it a distinct character. The trees and the gardens are wonderfully looked after and make a beautiful background for the various pavilions. In the middle of June, when the Biennale opens, the lime trees are flowering and the perfume they exhale is overpowering. I often feel this must compete strongly with the exhibition, as it is so much pleasanter to sit in the gardens than to go into the terribly hot and unventilated pavilions. ...

In 1948, after so many years of disuse, the pavilions were in a bad state and there was an awful lot of repairing going on up to the last minute. My pavilion was being done over by Scarpa, who was the most modern architect in Venice. Pallucchini, the secretary-general, was not at all conversant with modern art. He was a great student of the Italian Renaissance, and it must have been difficult for him, as well as very brave, to do his task. When he gave a lecture in my pavilion he asked me to help him distinguish the various schools; he was even unfamiliar with the painters. Unfortunately I had to go to the dentist, but he claimed that he had managed without me. ...

In 1948 the foreign pavilions were, naturally, à la page. But some were still very much behind the Iron Curtain. I was allowed to hang my collection three days before the Biennale opened. Actually, I wanted to go to Ravenna with Dr. Sandberg, the di-



Thomas Mann, photographed in 1900.

After the death of Thomas Mann (1875–1955), his wife Katia, recalling the holiday that they had taken together in Venice in 1911, averred that the details of his story *Death in Venice*, which had been first published in 1912, were taken from experience: ‘In the dining-room [of the Hotel des Bains], on the very first day, we saw the Polish family, exactly the way my husband described them ... and the very charming, beautiful boy of about thirteen was wearing a

sailor-suit, with an open collar and very pretty lacings. He caught my husband’s attention immediately.’ With his measured, thoughtful and finely-wrought prose (beautifully rendered here in Helen Lowe-Porter’s unsurpassed translation of 1930), Mann was an aristocrat among writers. He embellished the simple tale of an older man’s infatuation with a scarcely adolescent boy, with allusions to a lofty Nietzschean dichotomy between the conflicting impulses of Apollo and Dionysus, of purity and passion, within the artistic soul—a contrast which is given even clearer emphasis in Benjamin Britten’s operatic version of the story (1973). The city Mann describes is a Venice perceived in all its sublime beauty on the one hand, but insidiously invaded by a cholera epidemic on the other. Brilliantly, however—as these extracts show—Mann combines this overarching theme with amusing situations which every occasional visitor to the city will recognise, for example the helplessness of the tourist in the hands of the local operators (here, the gondolier who picks Aschenbach up on his arrival), who view the visitor as little more than a source of easy money. Nor could the moment of first rapture at the extraordinary richness and beauty of the city on arrival have been better captured than in this passage. And perhaps most subtly perceived of all is the way in which the city itself almost morbidly plays on our heart-strings and makes us strangely reluctant to leave and return to

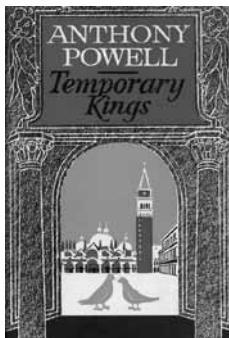
the ‘real world’. The story may be artificial, but Aschenbach’s agonised titubation is very real to our sympathies. The object of Aschenbach’s attentions—Tadzio in the story—has been identified as the young Polish nobleman Wladyslaw Moes (1900–86). The person of Gustav Aschenbach, though to some degree also autobiographical, could well have been suggested by the recent death of Gustav Mahler, which had deeply affected Mann. This connection was made explicit by Visconti’s film of 1971, based on the novella.

### *Death in Venice* (1912)

Thomas Mann

He saw it once more, that landing-place that takes the breath away, that amazing group of incredible structures the Republic set up to meet the awe-struck eye of the approaching seafarer: the airy splendour of the palace and Bridge of Sighs, the columns of lion and saint on the shore, the glory of the projecting flank of the fairy temple, the vista of gateway and clock. Looking, he thought that to come to Venice by the station is like entering a palace by the back door. No one should approach, save by the high seas as he was doing now, this most improbable of cities.

...Is there anyone but must repress a secret thrill, on arriving in Venice for the first time—or returning thither after long absence—and stepping into a Venetian gondola? That singular conveyance, come down unchanged from ballad times, black as nothing else on earth except a coffin—what pictures it calls up of lawless, silent adventures in the plashing night; or even more, what visions of death itself, the bier and solemn rites and last soundless voyage! And has anyone remarked that the seat in such a bark, the arm-chair lacquered in coffin-black, and dully black-upholstered, is the softest, most luxurious, most relaxing seat in the world? Aschenbach realized it when he had let himself down at the gondolier’s feet, opposite his luggage, which lay neatly composed on the vessel’s beak. The rowers still gestured



The cover of the first edition of *Temporary Kings*, published in 1973, the penultimate book in Powell's twelve-volume series *A Dance to the Music of Time* (1951–75).

publishing, as did Anthony Powell. By the eleventh volume, *Temporary Kings*, the development of the plot has been subordinated to the development of these characters: the preposterous Widmerpool, teased at school for having the wrong sort of raincoat, is now Lord Widmerpool, a Labour peer and probably spying for the Soviet Union; his man-eating wife Pamela is being pursued by sometime Hollywood mogul and press baron Louis Globber; while she in turn is pursuing the young American academic Gwinnett, who is in Venice researching a biography of X. Trapnel, a Marxist friend of Jenkins and minor writer who has recently died in a North London pub after being ditched by the same Pamela, who threw the manuscript of his last novel into a canal. Inbred and unwholesome, the series is also strangely compelling, intricately and elegantly written, often very funny, and superb social history. Here is Nicholas Jenkins's friend and fellow author-turned-publisher Mark Members persuading Jenkins to attend a literary conference held in Venice in the early 1950s, where most of *Temporary Kings* is set.

The twelve-volume *A Dance to the Music of Time* by Anthony Powell (1905–2000) was published over a period of 25 years. Hailed at the time as 'the most remarkable sustained feat of fictional creation in our day' (The Guardian newspaper), it was immediately popular and has sold enormously, in many languages, ever since. Organised as a literary soap opera, it follows the interlocking lives of a group of English acquaintances from school days at the time of the First World War to the early 1970s. None of the characters is truly sympathetic, except possibly the narrator himself, Nicholas Jenkins, an enigmatic and self-effacing mild snob who, after Eton and the Army, works in pub-

### *Temporary Kings* (1973)

Anthony Powell

'All the more reason to go, Nicholas, see what such meetings of true minds have to offer. I should not be at all surprised if you did not succumb to the drug. It's quite a potent one, as I've found to my cost. Besides, even at our age, there's a certain sense of adventure at such jamborees. You meet interesting people—if writers and suchlike can be called interesting, something you and I must often have doubted in the course of our *via dolorosa* towards literary crucifixion. At worst it makes a change, provides a virtually free holiday, or something not far removed. Come along, Nicholas, bestir yourself. Say yes. Don't be apathetic.

Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;  
Seek we sepulture  
On a tall mountain, citted to the top,  
Crowded with culture!

It's not sepulture, and a tall mountain, this time, but the Piazza San Marco—my patron saint, please remember—and a lot of parties, not only crowded with culture, but excellent food and drink thrown in. There's the Biennale, and the Film Festival the following week, if you feel like staying for it. Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen? Take a chance on it. You'll live like a king once you get there.'

'One of those temporary kings in *The Golden Bough*, everything at their disposal for a year or a month or a day—then execution? Death in Venice?'

'Only ritual execution in more enlightened times—the image of a declining virility. A Mann's a man for a' that. Being the temporary king is what matters. The retribution of congress kings only takes the form, severe enough in its way, I admit, of having to return to everyday life. Even that, my dear Nicholas, you'll do with renewed energy. Like the new king, in fact.

Richard Wagner (1813–83) was no stranger to living in foreign lands: for twelve years between 1849 and 1861 he lived in France, and then mostly in Switzerland, exiled from his homeland of Saxony for his ‘revolutionary’ views and his participation in the Dresden Uprising of 1849. This past returned to haunt him: his first visit to Venice at the age of 45 in 1858–59 ended after less than a year because the authorities in Saxony had called for his expulsion from all Austrian territory, to which Venice then belonged. Wagner was to visit Venice six times in all, as the city grew in his affection. He loved it for its quiet and tranquillity. It cocooned him and cut him off from the outside world, giving him the psychological peace and protection to absorb himself fully in his work of composition. It was not easy, though, for someone as prominent as Wagner to keep himself isolated: his lodgings in Venice were often filled with friends, composers and admirers. In the evenings, too, when he dined in St Mark’s Square, he found himself in the curious predicament of hearing the sound of his own overtures performed by the Austrian regimental bands. Wagner’s first Venetian abode was in one of the Giustiniani palaces not far from Ca’ Rezzonico; his last was the grand Palazzo Vendramin, now home to the Municipal Casino of the city. It was here on 13th February 1883 that he died of a heart attack, while visiting Venice with his second wife, Cosima, the daughter of Franz Liszt.



Although much myth has grown up around Wagner’s memory, and although facts about him are distorted by prejudice, as his friends relate and as these two extracts, taken from his letters, show, there was an often endearing normality to his life—requesting supplies of snuff from his friends, or showing his concern for animals (among the last things he wrote was an open letter pleading against vivisection). In the final extract quoted below, which is taken from his autobiography, *Mein Leben*, Wagner beautifully evokes the melancholy of the songs of the Venice gondoliers—something which had also struck his compa-

triot Goethe (see p. 92), 70 years earlier. From the very beginning of his acquaintance with Venice, Wagner sensed the pervading sadness of the city: here it took on a peculiarly musical aspect.

**Letters (1835–65)**  
**Richard Wagner**

To Ernst Benedikt Kietz, an artist and friend with whom Wagner corresponded for nearly 30 years.

Venice, 18th October, 1858

O Kietz!

...I’m living in Venice for the present, in the greatest seclusion so that I too can recover and collect myself—I’m already succeeding. I had my grand piano sent here and am working again. I’m living very nicely on the Grand Canal and am altogether charmed by the place. Having no plans, I’ll wait to see how things will shape up. There you have everything I can tell you about myself without going into impossible details.

You could do me a big favor if you would get me some snuff. Can you afford to lay out the money for 3 pounds (1½ kilograms)? I can’t send money to France in a letter, and no one will give me a draft for 12 to 14 francs. If you find it possible, please buy me 2 pounds of the regular and 1 pound of the special kind *à la divette*. Send them via Marseille, *par mer*. Since one can bring in only very little for personal use, I’ll ask you please to send it in two packages. One to me: Canal Grande, Palazzo Giustiniani, Campiello Squillini [sic., for Campiello degli Squellini], No. 3228; the other one to Herr Karl Ritter, Sottoportico die [sic.] S. Zaccaria, No. 4691.

And now, behave yourself. I’ll soon come to Paris again. Let me hear from you before then and remain faithful to your

R.W.