
PAPERBOUNDS

VENICE: A Portable Reader. Edited by Toby Cole. Lawrence Hill, 1980. 242 pp. \$6.95 (cloth, \$12.95)

With its 28 miles of canals, Venice—which still holds the record for the world's longest-lived republic (727–1797)—has always captured travelers' imaginations. Abundant cause is found in this collection of 28 writings by historians, artists, novelists, and critics, including Edward Gibbon, John Ruskin, Charles Dickens, and Bernard Berenson. Driven onto 118 tiny islands in an Adriatic lagoon by invading Lombards in the 6th century, mainland natives became Venetians in "fits and starts," notes historian James Morris. After evolving "an amphibious society peculiar to herself," Venice began brisk trade with the Orient; for more than 1,000 years, the city-republic stood alone, "one foot in Europe, the other paddling in the pearls of Asia." A sizeable fleet provided protection from both Eastern and Western rivals. But there was little defense at home against tyrannical doges, patricians who ruled with a ruthlessness that won praise from Niccolò Machiavelli. Today, pollution and floods, caused in part by over-dredged canals, corrode the city's buildings, unchecked. Once "somewhere between a freak and fairy tale—the worldliest of all cities"—Venice is an artifact whose history outshines its prospects.

THE JAMES FAMILY. By F. O. Matthiessen. Vintage reprint, 1980. 706 pp. \$7.95

Transcendentalist, master of rhetoric, Henry James, Sr. (1811–82) made "humanity seem more erect," Henry Thoreau observed. Concerned with the spiritual fate of the common man, the elder James—father of novelist Henry Jr., phi-

losopher William, and journalist Alice—led lively family debates on religion, philosophy, science, society, and literature. Henry Jr. (1854–1916) agreed with his father that no experience was wasted "so long as it stirred the mind to reflection." William (1842–1910), the eldest, deplored his father's "unsystematic" approach to facts. A Harvard physiologist "during the era . . . when both psychology and philosophy had close connections with biology," William faulted his brother's fiction for its "thinness," its tendency to "give a certain impression of the author clinging to his gentlemanliness though all else be lost." Critic Matthiessen (1902–50) lets these tireless observers of American and European life emerge largely through their own letters and essays. Although he ranks the Jameses among America's major thinkers, he shuns labeling any one of them as representative of a particular 19th-century American (or European) school of thought. Each was, as William said of brother Henry, "a native of the James family."

SEEING THROUGH CLOTHES. By Anne Hollander. Avon reprint, 1980. 504 pp. \$8.95

"Clothes make, not the man but the image of man." Art historian Hollander argues that, throughout Western history, people have gotten their notions about what is stylish, or "natural," from pictorial representations and not from one another. Early Christian, medieval, and Renaissance artists, for example, influenced by classical sculpture, depicted Jesus and his apostles in the tunics of ancient statesmen and sages. Classical clothing thus became "suitable dress for holy persons." Hollander concedes that some clothes were invented with a useful pur-