

iii The Relic.

Deathly still, I wait
on the slick wet shore,
for the cries of murderous hate
to grudgingly subside.
Then I will freely move once more
among the languid waterways.

Long before the days
when a timid remnant came to hide
from terror's wild and shrieking face,
these eyes had come to rest
on the featureless mud of this lonely place.

They grew in numbers and audacity,
zealously voyaging east and west,
in search of profit and sweet luxury
and honour for a new born power –
their banners high above the earth,
exuberant and stern.

I revelled in the hour
when a city came to birth
in the sly adventurers' return
from a land as old as death.

On the welcoming shore
with rapturous breath
they honoured San Marco - their dream -
in a rough-hewn box of wood
raised high and proud.

You will know San Marco's text –
the treacherous scheme,
the shedding of blood,
the empty folded shroud.

His symbol is the lion's roar,
not unlike my own deep growl,
and I am saddened and perplexed
that my city in her glory
raises the lion's belittling scowl
and not my own more amiable grin.

I see the value of that story

in this place of humble origin
and I admit to undue haste,
but I was intrigued by the thought of a taste
sweetly ripening for a thousand years.

I was sadly unaware
of how the flavour disappears
when flesh returns to dust
and so, it seems, I must
most dutifully make amends
to dear San Marco and his faithful friends.