Fiction & Reflections on Venice

Creating ... Stories · Places · Atmosphere



REFLECTIONS ON VENICE
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Blending Fiction into Reflections

What better way to bring alive ... Stories · Places · Atmosphere?



Our Palazzo Patron Tier, and Palazzo Patrons get doses of fiction with a Venetian theme.

It is our way of bringing Venetian history alive. It gives a bridge to the emotions the characters experience.

It might be the recent past (the Cozy Mystery novel is set in 2004) or distant Medieval times.

Examples of Fictional Posts:

People from the Past

- Step into a 15th-century room with a printing press. Smell the hot ink, hear the scrape of metal type, and the excitement of a character holding a new pocket book in their hand for the first time.
- Feel the devastation of *acqua alta* with a scene with characters navigating a flooded Venetian alleyway as the flood siren sounds. The murky, green lagoon water reflecting the lamplight as they hurry home after an evening playing viola at San Vidal.
- Tune into the times of Lord Byron or Henry James as a visiting scholar (academic) seeks solitude in a fading Venetian palazzo open for the Biennale, listening to the waves lap against the marble steps.

An Excerpt from a Novel

Here is an extraxt from ***The Temptation of Forgiveness*** by Donna Leon.

Sometimes we want the character Patta to go away, and for Brunetti to be promoted to Vice Questore in his place (though he'd hate the role.)

Sometimes when Patta talks of his son we feel empathy, which surprises us. At other times he is vicious and vindictive.

> "His phone rang. 'The Vice-Questore has arrived, Commissario,' Signorina Elettra told him in the voice she used when Patta stood near her desk.
>
> 'I'll be there immediately,' Brunetti answered and got to his feet.
>
> He found the autumnally tanned Patta in front of Signorina Elettra's desk, speaking with her about his schedule for the

afternoon. Today, Patta wore a dark grey suit Brunetti had never seen before; while he waited for them to finish, Brunetti directed his attention to it. He studied the silent caress the jacket gave to Patta's broad shoulders, the gentle fall of the cloth of the single pleat. His glance ran down the sleeves of the jacket and fell upon the buttonholes at the cuffs. Yes, they were hand-sewn, a detail that always won Brunetti's sartorial admiration.

Patta's black shoes, as well, had obviously been made for him, the tiny holes decorating the toes serving only to accent the smoothness of the leather. The laces had tassels. It was difficult for Brunetti to admit how much he admired those shoes.

'Ah, good morning, Commissario,' Patta said amiably. 'Do come into my office.' Over the years, Brunetti had come to believe that Patta adjusted his pronunciation to the importance of the person with whom he spoke. With the Questore, Patta spoke an Italian of impeccable purity, more Tuscan than any Tuscan was capable of. It was the same voice he used with Signorina Elettra. His Palermitano accent thickened in direct proportion to the diminishing importance of the person with whom he spoke. Odd vowel sounds began to appear, 'i' landed on the end of feminine nouns; double 'll's' were transmuted into double 'dd's'; the 'Madonna' became the 'Maronna', and 'bello' became 'beddu'. Sometimes the initial 'i' in words disappeared, only to scamper back into place at the sight of a person of higher station. From the clear Italian of Patta's greeting, Brunetti judged himself to have been promoted a few rungs, a promotion good sense told him would be temporary."

We'll take an extract and reflect on what emotional reaction it provokes.

Can we step into the shoes of the character?

Is it anything like real life?

Do we see, hear, sense La Serenissima?

I'm drawn to this extract below from A Sea of Troubles by Donna Leon, where Brunetti's marriage is in peril for a time as he experiences mixed emotions about another woman.

Suspicions about this happening give his wife Paula's words a different depth.

> "We never know them well. Do we?"
> "Who?"
> "Real people."
> "What do you mean, real people?"
> "As opposed to people in books," Paola explained. "They're the only ones we ever know well. Or know truly.

And we'll dip into the Cozy Novel I'm writing.

I'll use the characters to explore and give insights about Venice. Our heroine, (and at this point she has a different name each time I sit down to write). Today she can be Flavia … visits a art exhibition and sees something unusual while drinking a Bellini and mingling with other guests.



The Carmini

Or Aunt Beatrice goes to buy Christmas panettone, talks to others on the way, and stops at the Church of the Carmini, Santa Maria dei Carmini.

She's grieving for her niece, who has been murdered. This is her local church where she came with her parents as a child, and spent many hours gazing around during mass.

Beatrice remembers when lightning struck destroyed the statue of the Madonna del Carmine in 1979. Sh'd been a young woman, setting out on a teaching career at the local maternelle, still hoping to be married in this church one day. The Madonna had been replaced, and they had got to know the sculptor a little while he'd been working.

The new Madonna was beautiful, but when Beatrice closes her eyes she sees the old Madonna who had gazed down at her, her grandmother and great grandmother over time.

The grandeur of the Tintoretto altarpiece had never meant much to her, and it was the Madonna and the bronze angels on the balustrade (by Girolamo Campagna) that she looked to at times of fear or loss. She

inevitably came to sit in the same pew in the Carmini where she had held her grandmother's hand,

> Aside: The altarpiece is the *Presentation of Jesus at the Temple* (1542) by Tintoretto

This is the sort of scene that I might choose for a short fictional extract, giving insight into the character as well as the treasures in the church of the Carmini.

Palazzo Bookshelf

And finally let's shine the spotlight on the ***Reflections*** Bookshelf. We'll try to keep alerting readers to books (or films, music) which link to a theme.



Palazzo Library Membership

The idea is for you, as members of the Palazzo Library to get historical, or cultural background, the and atmosphere of a place alongside involvement in the process of writing a cozy novel set in a shadowy Sestiere of Venice.

In Week 1 there is an informative article, followed by something visual like a montage of photos or video, then the fictional week, before returning to the factual article again.

We think this schedule gives you a more individual monthly package to make it worthwhile stepping into the Palazzo Library and becoming a subscriber. You also get a

Let us know if you have any questions, queries or ideas.

I'm off to continue reading Miss Garnett's Angel, by Salley Vickers, which I've started reading again.

Have a good day,

Ruth

