

Book Review: Dominic Standish, *Venice in Environmental Peril: Myth and Reality*. Forward by John Elgin. University Press of America, Inc. 2012. ISBN: 9780761856641 (Paperback). 306 Pages. \$38.99.

Reviewed by James Panton¹

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On 4 November 1966 a confluence of severe weather – high tides, winds, heavy rains swelling the rivers and canals – led Venice to experience traumatic floods, the worst to hit the city in the twentieth century. In some parts of the city water levels rose to 194 centimetres above mean sea levels, while the Doge's Palace on St. Mark's Square drowned under a meter and a half of sea water. Between three and 5000 Venetians were left homeless as shops and businesses were ruined and homes left uninhabitable. Electricity was knocked out for over a week. Unsurprisingly for a city with as many cultural treasures as Venice, many millions of dollars of damage was done to artworks and historic buildings. Although there were no flood-related deaths in Venice's historical centre, two people died of heart attacks during the flood in Chioggia, a town that sits a few miles south of the city on an island at the mouth of the Lagoon of Venice. Alleyways were left awash with rubbish, dead pigeons, and drowned rats.

Destructive and traumatic as the floods of November 1966 undoubtedly were, it is surely no great surprise that Venice would be at risk of flooding. It is with good reason that Venice has at different times been known as the 'City of Water,' the 'Floating City,' 'City of Bridges,' or 'City of Canals.' Venice is composed of 117 islands separated by canals and rivers and linked by bridges, situated in a 56 by 11 kilometre

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