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The Souls of Venice

Janet Sethre

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The Souls of Venice Janet Sethre
How is a life defined by a city, and a city by the lives within? Where do an individual and a culture coincide? Perhaps more than any city in the world, Venice inspires these questions and suggests romantic answers. This book focuses on people who have been shaped by Venice and have shaped Venice in their turn. The author considers them in five groups: the "mutilated culture heroes", (e.g., the eunuchs Narses), who despite or because of some great sacrifice helped the city define itself and its mission; the "fugitives from splendour", (e.g., the St. Pietro Orseolo or El Greco), so overwhelmed by beauty that they fled the city; the "prisoners of Venice" - the convicts, the cloistered, the mad; the "symbiotics", who lived in close communion with the city for long periods of time (e.g., Titian); and the "fugitives from self" (e.g., Igor Stravinsky), who have come from elsewhere seeking a new identity, and who ended up helping to create a new identity for the city itself. More than a collection of biographies, this richly textured and insightful work examines the roots of people's "Venice-ness" as well as the city's own humanity.

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