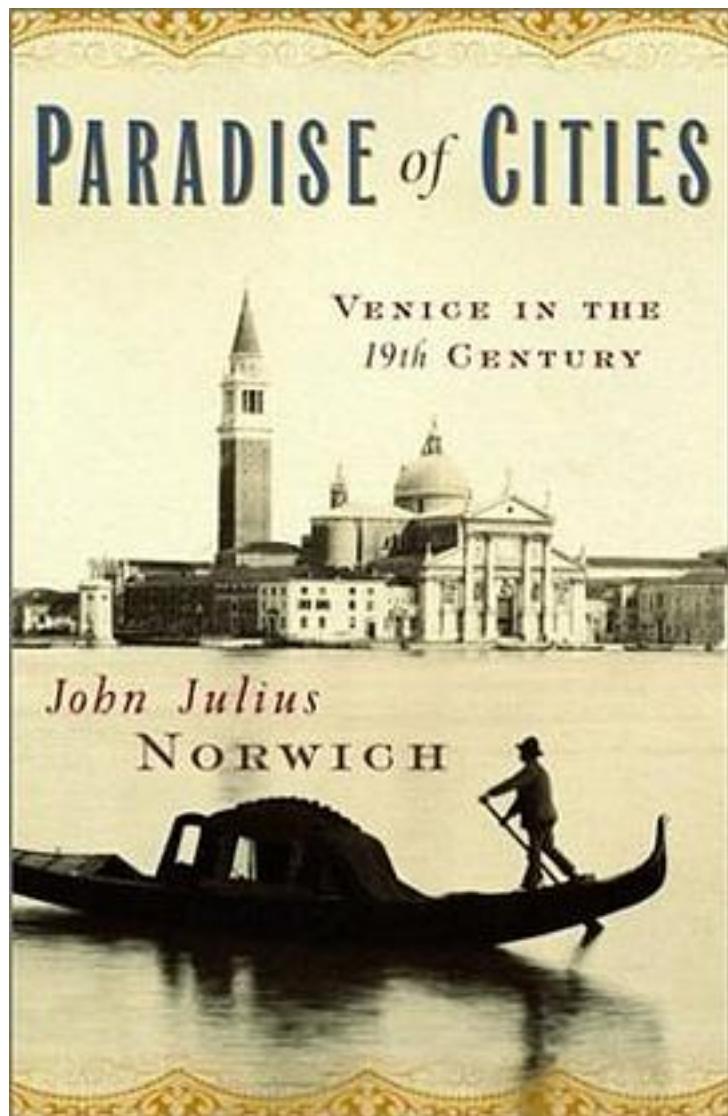


Paradise of Cities



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John Julius Norwich's *A History of Venice* has been dubbed "indispensable" by none other than Jan Morris. Now, in his second book on the city once known as *La Serenissima*, Norwich advances the story in this elegant chronicle of a hundred years of Venice's highs and lows, from its ignominious capture by Napoleon in 1797 to the dawn of the 20th century.

An obligatory stop on the Grand Tour for any cultured Englishman (and, later, Americans), Venice limped into the 19th century—first under the yoke of France, then as an outpost of the Austrian Hapsburgs, stripped of riches yet indelibly the most ravishing city in Italy. Even when subsumed into a unified Italy in 1866, it remained a magnet for aesthetes of all stripes—subject or setting of books by Ruskin and James, a muse to poets and musicians, in its way the most gracious courtesan of all European cities. By refracting images of Venice through the visits of such extravagant (and sometimes debauched) artists as Lord Byron, Richard Wagner, and the inimitable Baron Corvo, Norwich conjures visions of paradise on a lagoon, as enduring as brick and as elusive as the tides.

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