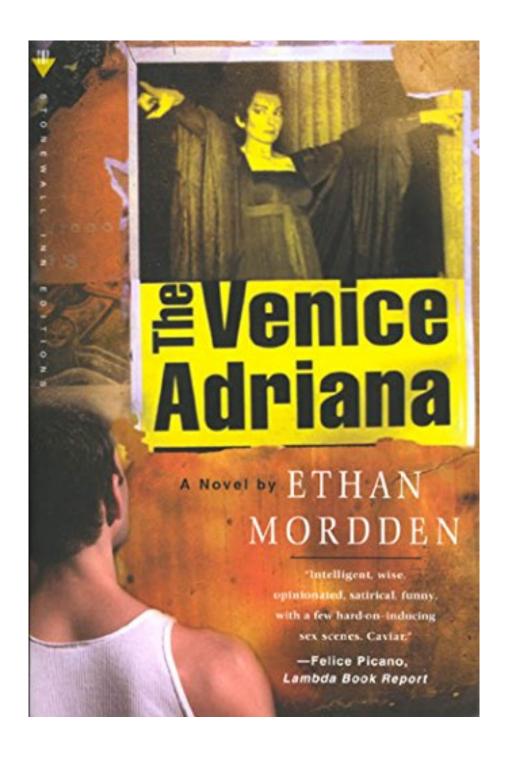


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Greek origins and ending with Adriana's drug-laden last days. Mordden is in top form here, displaying the same high level of artistry as in his other novels. This book must be read slowly to appreciate the subtleties of character and theme. Recommended for public and academic libraries.?Roger W. Durbin, Univ. of Akron, Ohio

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Greek-American opera singer Adriana Grafanas is the most famous opera singer of her time and her scandals, temperament, and cancellations were the stuff of international headlines. Now, in her early 60s, her voice is in shreds and she is near retirement. Sent to Venice to "pull together" her autobiography, American Mark Trigger is drawn into the compelling world of Adriana and of Venice itself. Trying to uncover the truth about Adriana's life, Mark instead discovers his own passions--men and Adriana's music. Bold, sensual, and evocative of a forgotten time and place, The Venice Adriana is Ethan Mordden at his finest.

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Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Compulsively funny and insightful

By A Customer

In his imagined memoirs of the ghost-writer of a fading opera diva inspired by the legends of Maria Callas, Ethan Mordden has gone a step beyond his prior gay buddies novels. While some of the delightful breezy humor from the former books is present, this book is ready to take on more serious issues, such as homophobia in the performing arts. I found it compulsively funny and insightful, and would recommend it highly, especially to the legion of Callas admirers! And tell us, Ethan, is there really a Venice Adriana tape, or must we remain consoled by the two arias from Cilea's opera that Callas recorded in 1954 in an aria collection conducted by Serafin?

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Brava Adriana

By Owen Keehnen

THE VENICE ADRIANA, is a real literary page-turner. Set in 1962 Venice the book focuses on a young gay writer (Mark Trigger) sent to ghost write the autobiography of fiery opera diva Adriana Grafanas (a character closely modeled upon Maria Callas). Over the course of a year the book traces Mark's awakening sexual identity as well as his tumultuous relationship with Adriana. Over time he discovers the woman behind the legend, a woman obsessed with acceptance while facing the erosion of her talent, a woman whose life has become her greatest performance and whose truth is ultimately an operatic tragedy of mythical proportions.

As an ardent fan Mark is promptly swept up in Adriana's life and dramas, a world populated by a cast of profoundly fabulous and colorful characters - a sexy leading man, a jet setting princess, a gay Italian film director, gossips, critics, "omosensualis" galore, and many more. Even Venice itself is brought vividly to life, given characterization through precise description and a brilliant use of language that made me want to drop

everything and learn Italian.

In addition to being a sexy lot of fun the book also explores the tangled skein of issues involving the artist -the state of celebrity, self-invention and transformation, gay identity, determination verses destiny,
redemption and acceptance, the elements of genius, the enduring nature of art by all too human creators, and
much more. Operatic to say the least! This is a fascinating stew to consider with no easy answers, which
seems to be the ultimate truth of great art and the ultimate deception of all who attempt to define it.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Il Sonnambulo

By WR

There is an awfully good reason, it turns out, why this is among Mordden's least known books: It is dull. Just as dull as you'd expect it to be to listen to a gaggle of egocentric neurotics talk about (and talk about and talk about) themselves. In fact, what fails utterly about the novel is that so much of it is one long, uneventful conversation after another--and by uneventful, I mean simply that all that talk neither moves the plot forward nor aids in character development, and the participants are not (by a very long shot) interesting enough to keep you turning pages just for the transcendental joy of reading their bons mots. Mordden's command of Italian, meanwhile, isn't nearly as good as he thinks it is, and his portrait of Vieri, a sort of grown-up Tadzio, one supposes (and the protagonist's love interest, though I would defy anyone to explain why - Vieri is cute, but he's an idiot; but then again, so is Mark Trigger, the "hero" of the piece), is an insult to Italians. (Yes, folks, the men ARE all bisexual. How's that for meaningful cross-cultural insight?) The nucleus of the novel, the Greek opera diva, Adriana Grafanas, is broad. In all senses of the word. If Grafanas is meant to be a mock-Callas, her psychodramas are tired and her tantrums are not delicious enough to be called temperamental. No, all Grafanas is, is an over-privileged brat. Callas was a piece of work, but at least she was interesting. There's tons of opera talk in the book (flawless if you're into it, deadly if you're not), but Mordden always writes about opera as if he's aiming several feet above your head because, let's face it, you're not \*special\* enough to know what he's talking about--a larf, actually, when one considers the Incredibly Shrinking Audience for opera and the fact that there's essentially been no new repertoire for nearly a century. How rarefied does the air have to get before we all drop dead for lack of oxygen? I'm not sure where \_Venice Adriana\_ falls in the line of Mordden's so to say oeuvre, but it feels very early and very amateurish. He's a great writer; go find something else of his to read and let this one sink into a nice, dignified oblivion.

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