



White Man/Yellow Man: Two Novellas

Shusaku Endo

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White Man/Yellow Man, by one of Japan's most celebrated writers, gathers into one volume two novellas set during World War II one in France, one in Japan. White Man, which won Japan's most prestigious Akutagawa literary prize, is the work that first brought Endo wide recognition. The main character in is a French collaborator who assists the Nazi occupiers of Lyon with their interrogation and torture of a Catholic seminarian, a man he knows and whose cousin he had ruined before the war. The narrative unfolds in the voice of the collaborator in his diary, which unflinchingly documents the cruelty and sadism of human beings while still pondering the Christian desire for redemption.

Yellow Man is the story of a Japanese man who, though raised as a Christian, maintains a distressing wartime liaison with his best friend s fiancée. Exhausted by the war and slowly dying from tuberculosis, he discovers that his commitment to an alien white God has never been more than superficial.

Endo s novellas intertwine most clearly in this character and the persecuted French missionary whose relationship to God is deeply sincere contrasting the experience of a man who discovers his indifference God to that of one who discovers that he has no choice he must either be faithful or die. Together, these novellas do more than paint a portrait of life on two continents in the waning days of the war. They also address the fundamental question: What is the meaning of Christianity for East and West alike?



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