



Inside a Pearl: My Years in Paris

Edmund White

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When Edmund White moved to Paris in 1983, leaving New York City in the midst of the AIDS crisis, he was forty-three years old, couldn't speak French, and only knew two people in the entire city. But in middle age, he discovered the new anxieties and pleasures of mastering a new culture. When he left fifteen years later to take a teaching position in the U.S., he was fluent enough to broadcast on French radio and TV, and in his work as a journalist, he'd made the acquaintance of everyone from Yves Saint Laurent to Catherine Deneuve to Michel Foucault. He'd also developed a close friendship with an older woman, Marie-Claude, through which he'd come to understand French life and culture in a deeper way.

The book's title evokes the Parisian landscape in the eternal mists and the half-light, the serenity of the city compared to the New York White had known (and vividly recalled in *City Boy*). White fell headily in love with the city and its culture: both intoxicated and intellectually stimulated. He became the definitive biographer of Jean Genet; he wrote lives of Marcel Proust and Arthur Rimbaud; and he became a recipient of the French Order of Arts and Letters. *Inside a Pearl* recalls those fertile years for White. It's a memoir which gossips and ruminates, and offers a brilliant examination of a city and a culture eternally imbued with an aura of enchantment.

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