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"The 20th century gloried in the cult of personality, and Edmund White's *Arts and Letters* is a wonderfully broad examination of the people who defined our culture. White makes the case for a history that is largely gay, but he does so without resorting to provincialism. Insightful, funny, sometimes brash, *Arts and Letters* argues persuasively that these people's lives and work are inseparable, and by marrying biography and criticism achieves a grand social critique." — Andrew Solomon, author of *The Noonday Demon*

Arts and Letters

by Edmund White

(SAN FRANCISCO) Cleis Press is pleased to announce publication of *Arts and Letters* by award-winning novelist and biographer Edmund White.

Reading Edmund White is like sharing a café table with a witty professor, a clove-smoking aesthete, and a boy of fifteen. You never know who will speak the next line, but you know it will turn your head. In these 39 lively essays and profiles, the best-selling novelist and biographer draws on his wide reading and his sly good humor to illuminate some of the most influential writers, artists, and cultural icons of the past century: among them, Marcel Proust, Catherine Deneuve, George Eliot, Andy Warhol, André Gide, David Geffen, and Robert Mapplethorpe. Whether he's praising Nabokov's sensuality, or critiquing Elton John's walk ("as though he's a wind-up doll that's been overwound and sent heading for the top of the stairs"), or describing serendipitous moments in his seven-year-long research into the life of Genet, White is unfailingly observant, erudite, and entertaining.

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About the author:

Edmund White is the author of 17 books, including a trilogy of autobiographical novels: *A Boy's Own Story*, *The Beautiful Room Is Empty*, and *The Farewell Symphony*. Other books include the novels *Forgetting Elena*, *Nocturnes for the King of Naples*, *Caracole*, and *The Married Man*, as well as a collection of short stories titled *Skinned Alive*. White lived in Paris for many years and wrote *The Flâneur* and *Our Paris* about his time there. He won the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Genet: A Biography* and has also written a short biography of Proust and a collection of essays, *The Burning Library*. A regular contributor to *The TLS*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *Vanity Fair*, Edmund White is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and is the director of the creative writing program at Princeton University. He lives in New York City.

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Praise for Edmund White:

The Flâneur:

"From the first few pages, I was ready to give myself over to his wanderings, just to find out where he would go next.... Edmund White tells such a good story that I'm ready to listen to anything he wants to talk about." — *New York Times*

Marcel Proust:

"[A] succinct and elegant account of Proust's fifty-one years.... In the best tradition of literary biography, White manages to add to the joy of reading his subject, not diminish it." — *The New Yorker*

"White has a novelist's eye for the telling detail or the remarkable phrase."
— *New York Times*

The Burning Library:

"A very important book delivered at a crucial moment.... The collection, beyond the obvious pleasures of White's style and his thinking — clear, informed, and warmed by the presence of an unmistakably personal voice — proves that intellectually respectable journalism of a kind reminiscent of George Orwell's is still possible."

— *New York Newsday*

Genet:

"White has caught the uncatchable man — the public Genet as well as the recluse: no better praise can be given a biographer." — *The Daily Telegraph (London)*

"[White] presents the life meticulously, reads Genet's work intelligently and writes beautifully." — *New York Times*

The Beautiful Room Is Empty:

"A beautiful book...told with humor, insight, and aphoristic elegance.... It both marks the apotheosis of the old coming-out novel and transcends it." — *San Francisco Chronicle*

"With intelligence, candor, humor — and anger — White explores the most insidious aspects of oppression.... An impressive novel." — *Washington Post Book World*

A Boy's Own Story:

"Every so often a novel comes along that is so ambitious in its intention and so confident of its voice that it reminds us what a singular and potent thing a novel can be. One of these is *A Boy's Own Story*." — *San Francisco Chronicle*

"[R]epresents the strongest bid to date by a gay writer to do for his minority experiences what [James Baldwin, Herman Wouk and Mary McCarthy] did for theirs — offer it as a representative, all-American instance." — *Washington Post Book World*

Nocturnes for the King of Naples:

"There are few novels which defy reviewing. They are the ones that provide us with unique reading experiences, which become valuable additions to understanding of the world and ourselves. Edmund White's new novel is one of these...he has embodied his story in some of the finest writing to be found in recent American fiction."

— Doris Grumbach, *Washington Post Book World*