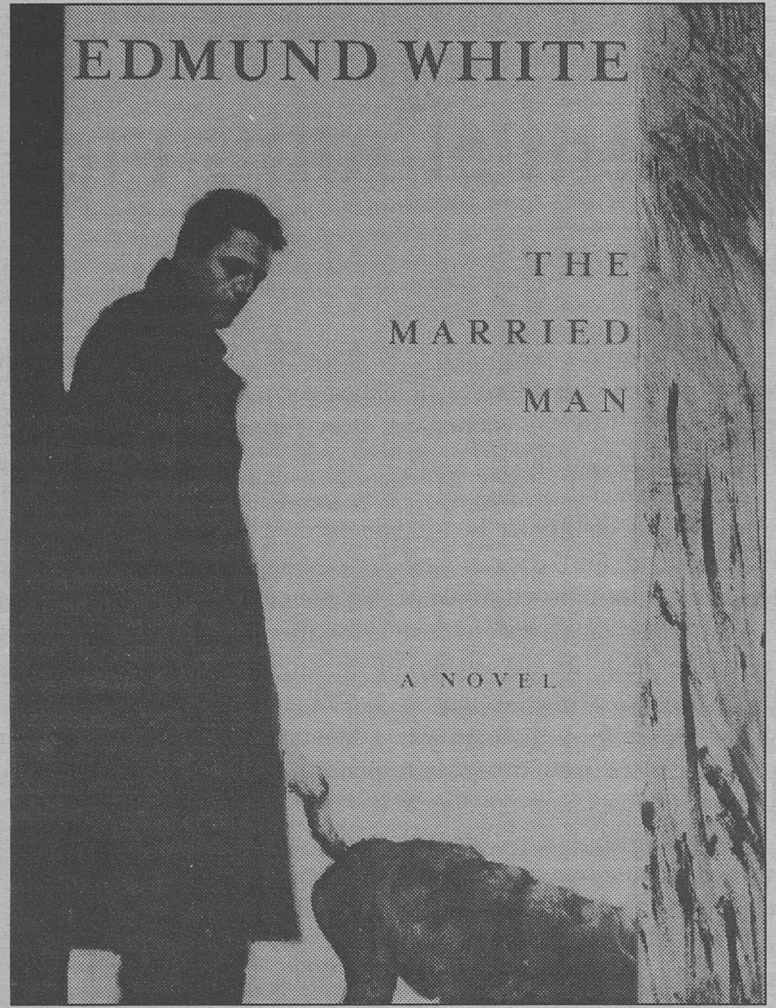
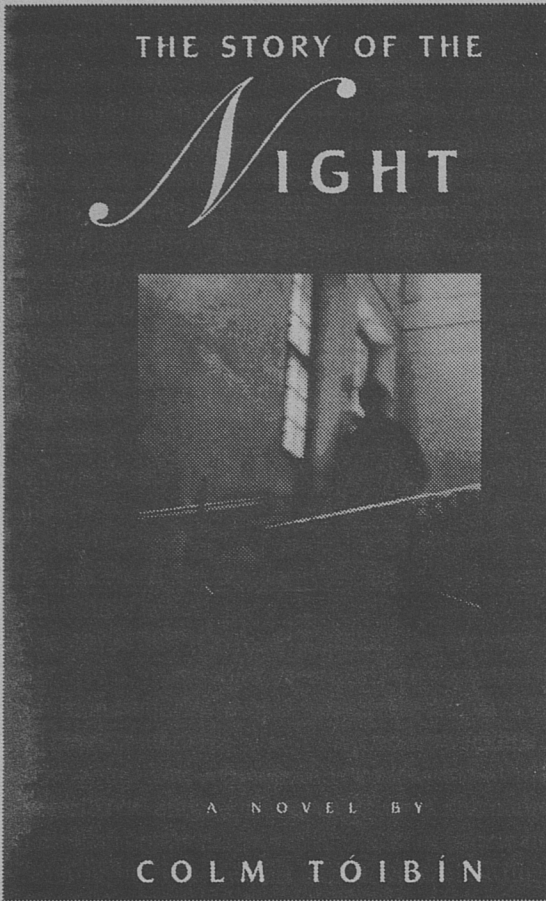


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seeming simple-minded. It wasn't until I reached the end of the novel that I realized how powerfully affecting—and tragic—his storytelling can be.

I've long admired Edmund White; his views on gay culture are never less than witty and wise. While his trailblazing importance as one of the first out gay writers is indisputable, I've sometimes found his prose style a bit rococo for my tastes. In recent years, his work has increasingly blurred the line between fiction and autobiography. White's uncharacteristically spare new novel, *The Married Man* (Knopf, 2000), though told in the third person, very closely parallels his relationship with French illustrator Hubert Sorin. I'd heard him recount the story of his lover's death in Morocco, but that hardly prepared me for the harrowing suspense of the novel's finale. No one writes about AIDS with brighter clarity and less sentimentality than White. Throw into the mix pithy social commentary, keen analyses of sexuality and aging, and masterfully sensuous visual details and you realize how lucky we are—that White is still with us, still writing.

There are no happy endings—yet—in the literature of the AIDS epidemic. What these five novels share, however, beyond a willingness to tackle head-on a subject matter many would rather deny, is a quality that makes them life-affirming even as they elegeize. There are others I've missed, more to come, prayers for a happy ending, promises not to forget. ▼



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