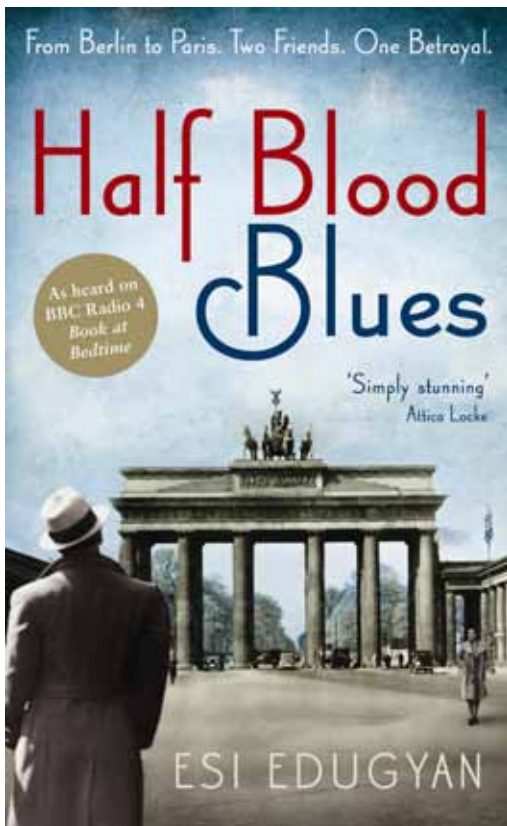




The Man
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2011

Reader's Guide



Other novels by Esi Edugyan
The Second Life of Samuel Tyne (2004)

Half Blood Blues

Esi Edugyan

Serpent's Tail
Price £10.99

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Man



About the author

Esi Edugyan's work has appeared in several anthologies, including *Best New American Voices 2003*, ed. Joyce Carol Oates, and *Revival: An Anthology of Black Canadian Writing*. Her debut novel, *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, was published internationally. It was nominated for the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, was a More Book Lust selection, and was chosen by the New York Public Library as one of 2004's Books to Remember. She lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

Half Blood Blues

'Chip told us not to go out. Said, don't you boys tempt the devil. But it been one brawl of a night, I tell you...'

The aftermath of the fall of Paris, 1940. Hieronymous Falk, a rising star on the cabaret scene, was arrested in a cafe and never heard from again. He was twenty years old. He was a German citizen. And he was black. Fifty years later, Sid, Hiero's bandmate and the only witness that day, is going back to Berlin. Persuaded by his old friend Chip, Sid discovers there's more to the journey than he thought when Chip shares a mysterious letter, bringing to the surface secrets buried since Hiero's fate was settled. In *Half Blood Blues*, Esi Edugyan weaves the horror of betrayal, the burden of loyalty and the possibility that, if you don't tell your story, someone else might tell it for you. And they just might tell it wrong...

Discussion points

To what end does the novel take the reader back and forth in time and place, from Berlin to Paris in the 1930s and 40s and Europe in the 1990s? How does this affect the reader?

Delilah is a major female character in an otherwise largely male-populated novel. How does she push against the gender relations in the novel, and how does her romantic involvement with the other characters affect the reader's sense of her character? Would you describe her as an early feminist?

Do you think that Sid, the narrator, is at the heart of *Half Blood Blues*? Whose novel is this?

Half Blood Blues explores, among other things, the jazz era of the 1930s. In what ways does jazz affect the novel's structure, the voice of its characters, the tone of the book?

One reviewer criticized the novel on the grounds that the Afro-German experience has been sidelined. How does telling Hiero's story from the point-of-view of a different character affect it? What are the moral implications of doing so?

Themed reading

Lawrence Hill *Any Known Blood*
Hans Massaquoi *Destined to Witness: Growing up black in Nazi Germany*
Mezz Mezzrow *Really the Blues*

Esi's recommendations from the book's back matter:

Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era
Clarence Lusane, Routledge, 2003

Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany
Michael H. Kater, Oxford University Press, 1992

Harlem in Montmartre: A Paris Jazz Story Between the Great Wars
William A. Shack, University of California Press, 2001

Useful links

Esi Edugyan's website

<http://www.esiedugyan.com>

Publisher's website

<http://www.serpentstail.com>

Article by Esi Edugyan

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/jul/13/esi-edugyan-top-10-americans-europe>

Radio interview with Esi on Canadian CBC's The Homestretch

<http://www.cbc.ca/homestretch/episode/2011/07/27/booker-prize-long-list/>

Profile of Esi from Quill & Quire magazine, July/August 2011

http://quillandquire.com/authors/profile.cfm?article_id=11911