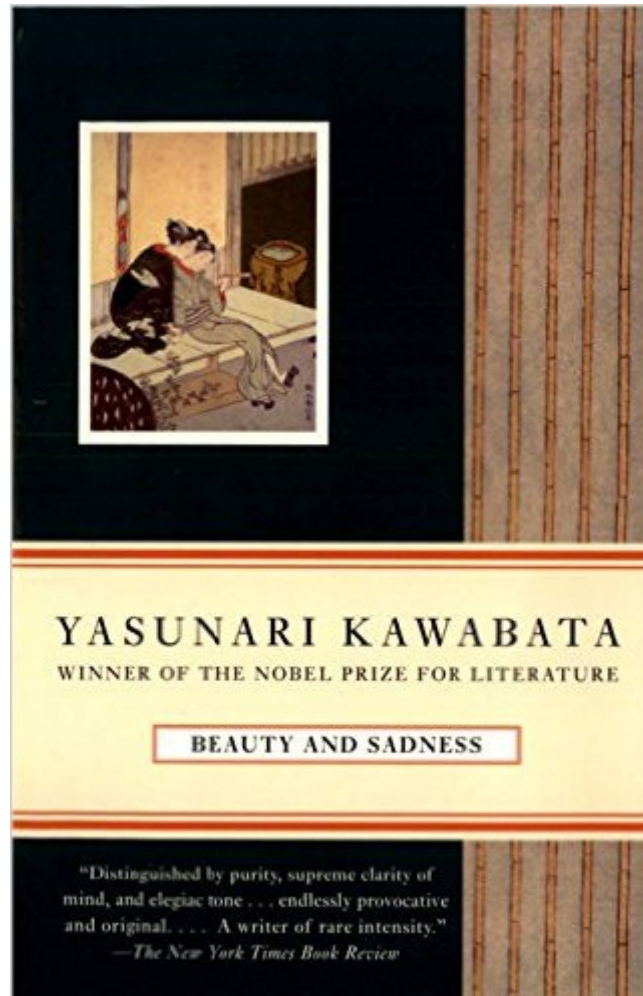


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Beauty And Sadness



Synopsis

Translation of: Utsukushisa to kanashimi to.

Book Information

Paperback: 206 pages

Publisher: Vintage; 1st Vintage International ed edition (January 30, 1996)

Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (27 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This little novel, though economical in size and language, is a monument to the Japanese ideal of . Kawabata's economical use of words by no means undercuts the concise imagery of his prose. At times, it is NOT what he has said or implied, but the empty spaces between his words that completely round out his thoughts. Much like a composer of music, attentive to each note and the silence in between, Kawabata's prose is highly musical and amazingly crafted. His eloquent, often delightful truths seem to bring the reader's attention to the essence of life, nature, and human nature. Though Kawabata won the Nobel prize for his literature, by no means would I consider his work pretentious, overly erudite, affected, or vain.... his writing exemplifies the clearest thoughts, the well turned phrase, a simplicity of characters and objectives but with the ease and elegance of learned man... a gentleman. This novel reminds me of an oriental landscape painting, some images are veiled in a mist, some easily discernable, some merely suggestive, all essential to the whole. It is beauty in the purest sense of the word... the only sadness was how quickly I devoured this short work and was hungry for more. So I read as many other of his works that I could.... you would not be displeased with this or any other of his works.

Kawabata's masterpiece. A story inexorably moving towards the tragic end, yet taking its time in doing so, exploring several side-issues and developing the protagonists' characters such that the

outcome appears inevitable. Magically and poetically interwoven with Japanese literature, history and art, human psychology, longing, desire and ultimate betrayal, this is a one-of-a-kind novel that defies all attempts at categorization and in a manner true to all classics, effortlessly transcends the boundaries of time and space in which it was created.

Art needs fuel. Something does not come from nothing, and novelists and painters often draw from the wellspring of their own misery to create magnificence. Kawabata's final book, "Beauty and Sadness" explores these themes, of the interlinking of creativity and pain, and how artists use their own lives to make something grander. Oki and Otoko are such artists, creating beauty from sadness. Their illicit and doomed love affair deeply wounded their souls, with the despair of their lost child lasting far longer than the brief time they spent together. Oki chronicles their story in his novel "A Sixteen Year Old Girl," and Otoko paints, continually seeking to exorcise her feelings and expressing them on canvas. Alternately, Keiko and Taichiro create sadness from beauty. Oki's child, Taichiro, is drawn into a web of revenge woven by Otoko's lesbian lover and protege Keiko. Whereas Oki and Otoko have made an uneasy peace, Keiko refuses to let it rest, and wants to punish Oki by taking his child in the same way he took Otoko's. Kawabata's skill at language portraiture is what makes this such a fine book, drawing the reader into the downward spiral of the character's lives. Anyone familiar with his writing knows where the path is going, but the skill of his craft tenders the sadness with beauty. It is a soulful journey, leaving one with a bitter taste and the reality of lost love.

Human relationships are anything but predictable. In 'Beauty and Sadness' Kawabata melds scenes of ardent love and revenge with subtle grace. He writes a story of love which is unpredictable and believable. The sound of the New Year bells chime with a man's longing to relive a part of his past. In his journey to do so he finds that the past cannot be revived. Instead he is thrown into a new episode which is completely out of his control. Written with the poetic beauty Kawabata is famous for 'Beauty and Sadness' is indeed the theme of love. A wonderful read for people interested in the complexity of the human relationship.

I did not really know what to expect when I purchased this book. What I received was a piece of intense literature expressing the very agony one can experience when placed in extreme circumstances. Such experiences were a test, in particular, of the main character's wife's endurance. Because I study the Japanese language and lived in Japan, I had the opportunity,

during that time, to observe how people interact within that society. This book truly shows how, whether American or Japanese, we are so much alike when our endurance is tested by circumstances. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. yonde kudasai! :)

The things you do, not what you say is what makes this book so special. The long silences between the words could be full chapters in their own right. And although Oki is quite an ass Kawabata does something masterful with him, in that even Oki doesn't understand himself, so don't expect to understand him, or Keiko, who hardly says anything that makes sense from a sane point of view. But that is the beauty in her sadness, a beauty that both Oki and Otoko recreate through their art which draws on the sad experiences of their lives. A must read for writers in particular. It was fun seeing a writer's mind at work in the way Oki came about creating his novel and the things he chose to leave out of his story for his own biased reasons, and then Otoko's reflections on art was a trip all by itself. Please read this book, read anything Kawabata wrote, you have nothing to lose and always something to gain.

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