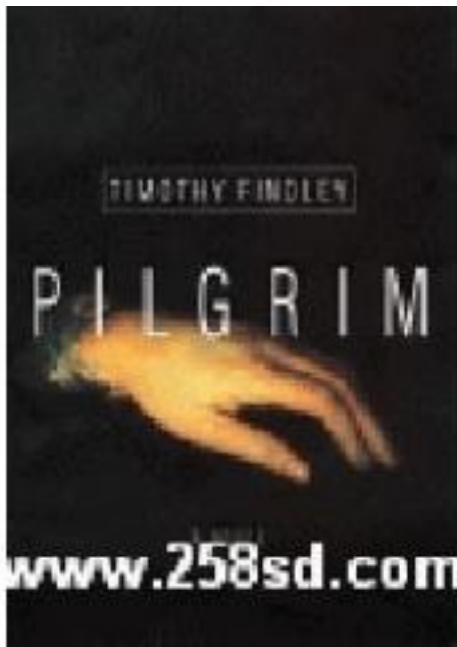


Pilgrim



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著者:

出版者:

出版时间:

装帧:

isbn:9780060191979

Amazon.com Timothy Findley's Pilgrim is the story of a man who can't die even though he tries over and over to kill himself. Diagnosed as schizophrenic, in 1912 he's placed in a Zurich clinic where Carl Gustav Jung is hard at work trying to determine the perimeter of the collective unconscious. For Jung, this man becomes an embodiment of the psyche's mystery. Claiming to have no past history but to have simply arrived one day at consciousness, Pilgrim lives in a limbo outside individuality and subjectivity. He's everyone and no one. Is he a messenger? Or is he a basket case? As the novel gathers momentum, we realize that Pilgrim is a character much like Virginia Woolf's Orlando, traversing gender and time, a witness. But whereas Woolf is a feverish and emotional writer, Findley is philosophical and dry, playful and slightly pretentious. Imagining conversations between Pilgrim and Henry James,

Leonardo da Vinci, and Oscar Wilde, this novel is like a party full of beautiful guests. Or a safe train trip through an exotic landscape of consciousness where men use cologne that smells like "moss... lemons... ferns" and schizophrenics are elegant and well dressed, like the old countess who believes she lives on the moon and asks her doctor, "Is this a ballroom? Am I being courted?" --Emily White From Publishers Weekly In the early hours of April 17, 1912, two nights after the sinking of the Titanic, a man named Pilgrim, author of a renowned book on Leonardo da Vinci, steps into the garden of his London home and hangs himself. Amazingly, five hours later his heart starts beating again, and he revives. Findley (Headhunter; The Telling of Lies) is at his peak in this story of a man who cannot die, but has grown so weary and despairing of life that he longs only to escape it. Pilgrim, under the care of his wealthy friend Lady Sybil Quartermaine, is removed to the B?rgholzli Psychiatric Clinic in Z?rich, where Carl Jung, a principal doctor, is persuaded to take on his case. Is Pilgrim mad, or is Jung, struggling to find himself as a theorist and to sustain his uneasy marriage, the one who is deluded? Did Pilgrim dream of the fate of the Titanic victims, and is he dreaming now of the carnage of the coming world war? Did he, as his journals attest, know da Vinci, know St. Teresa of Avila, help build the great cathedral at Chartres? The story moves back and forth from Pilgrim's mind to Jung's, to Pilgrim's journals as they're being read by Emma Jung who seems to understand Pilgrim's dilemma far better than her husband does. Ambitious doesn't half describe a novel that includes an eyewitness account of the death of Hector in the Trojan War, appearances by Henry James and Oscar Wilde, and both the woman who posed for the Mona Lisa and her reincarnated self as the man who's just stolen it from the Louvre. Aimed at the general reader, not James scholars, Jungians or fans of Virginia Woolf's similarly premised Orlando, this is a polished and exhilarating entertainment that's challenging, mystifying and expertly crafted, even if its kaleidoscopic perspective is no longer entirely fresh. 4-city author tour. (Jan.)

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