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This major reevaluation of Paul Gauguin presents the artist and his work in an entirely new light. The vivid, unnaturalistic colors and bold outlines of Gauguin's paintings and the strong, semiabstract quality of his woodcuts had a profound effect on the development of twentieth-century art. Here readers will discover why Gauguin was one of the most important artists behind European modernism--yet one who also challenged its very tenets. Because while modern art largely rejected narrative, for Gauguin it remained central.

Gauguin is the first book to fully examine his use of stories and myth to give powerful narrative tension to his paintings at a time when other painters thought storytelling was dead. Gauguin's life in French Polynesia is often portrayed as a quest for the other, with the artist as the romantic explorer encountering primitive cultures for the first time. In fact, he was deeply immersed in world art and a great reader of Polynesian stories and myths. This book cuts through the mystique surrounding Gauguin--one the artist himself cultivated--to show how he self-mythologized, presenting himself to the world as a suffering, Christ-like figure.