



# A Mass for Arras (Andrzej Szczypiorski)

*Andrzej Szczypiorski*

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## **A Mass for Arras (Andrzej Szczypiorski)** Andrzej Szczypiorski

At the core of this novel is the true fifteenth-century tragedy of, first, plague and hunger and, later, the brutal persecution of Jews and witches in the small French town of Arras. *A Mass for Arras* explores the personal and political consequences of fear, fanaticism, and fascism in the story of Jan, a young member of the intelligentsia. Arrogantly pious and full of revolutionary zeal, Jan wholeheartedly participates in the torments inflicted on the "outsiders" in the name of moral and political righteousness. Yet when faced with escalating violence and, ultimately, his own downfall, he must choose between sincere commitment to the isolated village that adopted him and horror at a society gone mad. *A Mass for Arras* addresses themes of freedom and responsibility, individualism and conformity, and memory and loss. It is a moving account of a young man's coming-of-age in a time of disease and death, a profound political allegory of life in an emergent totalitarian state, a chilling indictment of government-sponsored repression and societal complicity, and a cautionary tale about the tendency of history to repeat itself, whether in fifteenth-century France, postwar Poland, or somewhere still closer to our own time and place.

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