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Diaries: Volume 1, 1939-1960 (Isherwood, Christopher Diaries)



Synopsis

At times pious, at times profane but always unashamedly honest, The Diaries of Christopher Isherwood provide an inside look at the life and times of one of the most celebrated writers of the century. Chronicling Isherwood's life from 1939, when he emigrated to the United States, until 1960, these entries cover some of the most turbulent years of his career and give readers unprecedented insight into the major turning points in his life. Here, Isherwood relates the spiritual crisis he went through as World War II began, his discipleship (along with Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard) with the Hindu monk Swami Prabhavananda and his decision to become a pacifist. Here also are his accounts of his intense social life in Hollywood, his career as a screenwriter and his many sexual affairs. Readers will be particularly fascinated by his revealing anecdotes and gossip about the literary greats (such as W. H. Auden, Thomas Mann, E. M. Forster, and Tennessee Williams) and movie stars (such as Greta Garbo, Charlie Chaplin and Sir Laurence Olivier) of the time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First of all, these diaries are beautifully and ably edited by Katherine Bucknell, providing a fascinating introduction of over fifty pages. In addition to the journals themselves, Bucknell delivers an Isherwood chronology, glossary, and index at the end. She divides the journal into three parts: The Emigration, January 19, 1939âDecember 31, 1944; The Postwar Years, January 1,

1945âApril 13, 1956;and The Late Fifties, April 14, 1956âAugust 26, 1960. The voice of Isherwood evolves from that of a solid mid-career writer to that of an âemeritus professor,â beginning his senior years with as many projects as he can handle.â Iâve always felt a certain affinity for writer Christopher Isherwood (born in Wyberslegh Hall, High Lane, Cheshire, England) 1904-1986, for a number of reasons. Largely because he is one of the first important writers of his generation to write fiction with gay charactersâwith gay love lives, as if it is a normal situationââIâve looked to his writing for a certain guidance. Through his well-traveled life he demonstrates a certain brand of courage. He never seems to hide who he is from the world at largeâeven Hitlerâs Gestapo as he lives in Berlin during his twenties. He doesnât marry a woman as cover, as many of his colleagues and friends do. He openly loves and shares a domestic life in a major way with at least two men, three, if you count one relationship that is rather ill-fated. The latter one, his partnership with artist Don Bachardy, thirty years his junior, endures from 1953 until Isherwoodâs death in 1986. I also feel close to Isherwood because of the career he chooses, one that is rather skin-of-your-teeth at times. He writes the projects he wants to, not the ones that necessarily earn him the most money.

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