



VINTAGE

LOST YEARS

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

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About the Book

Christopher Isherwood settled in California in 1939 and spent the war years writing for Hollywood, but by 1945 he had all but ceased to write fiction and even abandoned his habit of keeping a diary. Instead he embarked on a life of frantic socialising and drinking. Looking back from the 1970s, Isherwood recreated these years from personal memories to form a remarkably honest mixture of private and social history.

About the Author

Christopher Isherwood, among the most celebrated writers of his generation, was born in Cheshire in 1904. He left Cambridge without graduating, briefly studied medicine and then turned to writing his first novels *All the Conspirators* (1928) and *The Memorial* (1932). Between 1929 and 1939 he lived mostly abroad, spending four years in Berlin, and then elsewhere in Europe, producing the novels *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) on which the musical *Cabaret* was later based. Following his move to America (he became a US citizen in 1946), Isherwood wrote another five novels, including *Down There on a Visit* and *A Single Man*, a travel book about South America and a biography of the great Indian mystic Ramakrishna. During the 1970s he began producing a series of autobiographical books: *Kathleen and Frank*, *Christopher and his Kind*, *My Guru and His Disciple* and *October*, the text of one month of his diary published with drawings by Don Bachardy. Christopher Isherwood died in January 1986.

KATHERINE BUCKNELL

Katherine Bucknell is the editor of Christopher Isherwood's *Diaries Volume 1: 1939-1960* and W H Auden's *Juvenilia: Poems 1922-1928*. She also co-edits the Oxford University Press series *Auden Studies* and is co-founder of the W H Auden Society.

ALSO BY CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

Novels

All the Conspirators
The Memorial
Mr Norris Changes Trains
Goodbye to Berlin
Prater Violet
The World in the Evening
Down There on a Visit
A Single Man
A Meeting by the River

Autobiography

Lions and Shadows
Kathleen and Frank
Christopher and his Kind
My Guru and His Disciple
October

Biography

Ramakrishna and His Disciples

Plays (with W H Auden)

The Dog Beneath the Skin
The Ascent of F6
On the Frontier

Travel

Journey to a War (with W H Auden)
The Condor and the Crows

Collections

*Exhumations
Where Joy Resides*

Diaries

Volume 1: 1939-1960

Chronology

1904 August 26, Christopher William Bradshaw Isherwood, first child of Frank Bradshaw Isherwood and Kathleen Bradshaw Isherwood (*née* Machell Smith), born at Wyberslegh Hall, High Lane, Cheshire, on the estate of his grandfather, John Bradshaw Isherwood, squire of nearby Marple Hall.

1911 October 1, Isherwood's brother Richard Graham Bradshaw Isherwood born.

1914 May 1, Isherwood arrives at his preparatory school, St. Edmund's, Hindhead, Surrey; August 4, Britain declares war on Germany and Isherwood's father receives mobilization orders; September 8, Frank Isherwood leaves for France.

1915 May 8 or 9, Frank Isherwood evidently wounded at Ypres, probably killed.

1917 January 1, Isherwood begins keeping a diary; he records walking with W. H. Auden at school.

1919 January 17, Isherwood arrives at Repton, his public school, near Derby.

1921 Winter, Isherwood joins G. B. Smith's history form, where he meets Edward Upward, at Repton; November, Kathleen Isherwood moves with her mother to 36 St. Mary Abbot's Terrace in West Kensington, London.

1923 October 10, Isherwood goes up with an £80 history scholarship to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he renews his friendship with Edward Upward.

1924 Isherwood and Upward start keeping diaries and begin to invent a fantasy world, Mortmere, about which they write stories.

1925 June 1, Cambridge Tripos exams begin; June 18, Isherwood is summoned to Cambridge to explain his joke Tripos answers and withdraws from university; August, takes job as secretary to André Mangeot's string quartet; December, meets W. H. Auden and renews prep school friendship.

1926 Easter, Isherwood begins writing *Seascape with Figures*, which is the first version of *All the Conspirators* and his fourth attempt at a novel.

1927 January 24, takes first job as private tutor.

1928 May 18, Isherwood's first novel, *All the Conspirators*, is published by Jonathan Cape; May 19, he visits Bremen; June 22, Auden introduces Isherwood to Stephen Spender; October, Isherwood begins as a medical student at King's College, London, and Auden moves to Berlin.

1929 March, Isherwood leaves medical school at the end of spring term; March 14-27, he visits Auden in Berlin where he meets John Layard and begins an affair with Berthold Szczesny; November 29, Isherwood moves to Berlin.

1930 December, Isherwood becomes tenant of Fräulein Meta Thureau at Nollendorfstrasse 17; during 1930, his translation of the *Intimate Journals of Charles Baudelaire* is published.

1931 By early 1931, Isherwood meets Jean Ross and soon afterwards he also meets Gerald Hamilton; in September, he begins teaching English.

1932 February 17, *The Memorial* is published by Isherwood's new publisher, the Hogarth Press; March 13, Isherwood meets Heinz Neddermeyer while living at Mohrin with Francis Turville-Petre; August 4-September 30, Isherwood visits England and meets Gerald Heard and Chris Wood; September 14, he meets E. M. Forster; October, works as translator for a communist workers' organization, the IAH (Internationale Arbeiterhilfe), in Berlin.

1933 March 23, Hitler achieves dictatorial powers; April 5, Isherwood arrives in London with his belongings, preparing to leave Berlin for good; April 30, he returns to Berlin and on May 13, leaves for Prague with Heinz; they travel to Greece for the summer and return to England in September; October, Heinz returns to Berlin and Isherwood begins work as Berthold Viertel's collaborator on a film script for *The Little Friend*.

1934 January 5, Heinz is refused entry into England; January 20, Isherwood meets Heinz in Berlin and takes him to Amsterdam, returning alone to London; February 21, filming starts on *The Little Friend*; March 26, Isherwood joins Heinz in Amsterdam and they travel to Gran Canaria for the summer; June 8-August 12, Isherwood writes *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*; August 26, *The Little Friend* opens in London; September 6, Isherwood and Heinz set off for Copenhagen.

1935 January, Auden visits Copenhagen to work with Isherwood on *The Dog Beneath the Skin*; February 21, *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* is published by Hogarth; April, Isherwood moves Heinz to Brussels; May 9, *The Last of Mr.*

Norris (U.S. edition of *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*) is published by William Morrow; May 13, Heinz receives a three-month permit for Holland and they settle in Amsterdam, lodging next to Klaus Mann; also in May, *The Dog Beneath the Skin, or Where Is Francis?*, written with Auden, is published by Faber and Faber; September 16, Isherwood and Heinz return to Brussels; December 21, they move from Antwerp to Sintra, Portugal, where Spender and Tony Hyndman join them.

1936 January 12, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* opens at the Westminster Theatre in London; mid-January, Isherwood completes a draft of *Sally Bowles*; March 14, Spender and Hyndman leave Sintra for Spain; March 16–April 17, Auden visits Sintra to work on *The Ascent of F6*; July 25, Heinz is ordered through the German consul in Lisbon to report for military service, but does not; September 11, Faber publishes Auden and Isherwood's play *The Ascent of F6*; Isherwood works on *Lions and Shadows*.

1937 February 26, *The Ascent of F6* premieres at the Mercury Theatre in London; March 17, Isherwood takes Heinz from Brussels to Paris; April 25, he joins Heinz in Luxembourg; *F6* successfully transfers to the Adelphi Little Theatre; May 12, Heinz is forced to leave Luxembourg and goes to Trier, in Germany, where he is arrested by the Gestapo; July 16–August 4, Isherwood works for Alexander Korda on the film script of a Carl Zuckmayer story; August 12–September 17, he works with Auden in Dover on their new play, *On the Frontier*; September 15, Isherwood finishes *Lions and Shadows*; October, the Hogarth Press publishes *Sally Bowles* (later incorporated into *Goodbye to Berlin*).

1938 January 19, Isherwood and Auden leave for China to write a travel book, *Journey to a War*; during the spring "The Landauers" appears in John Lehmann's magazine, *New*

Writing; March 17, *Lions and Shadows* is published by Hogarth Press; July 1-9, Isherwood and Auden, returning around the world from China, visit Manhattan where Isherwood meets Vernon Old; September 19, Isherwood begins writing *Journey to a War*, using his own and Auden's diary entries; September 26, *The Ascent of F6* is televised; October 1938, Faber publishes Auden and Isherwood's last play together, *On the Frontier*; November 14, *On the Frontier* opens at the Arts Theatre in Cambridge; mid-December, Isherwood works with Auden in Brussels on *Journey to a War*, completed December 17; Jacky Hewit accompanies Isherwood in Brussels through the New Year.

1939 January 19, Isherwood sails for America with Auden, arriving January 26 in New York where they settle; March, *Goodbye to Berlin* is published by the Hogarth Press and in the U.S. by Random House; the same month, *Journey to a War* is published by Faber and by Random House; early May, Isherwood applies for U.S. residency; May 6, he sets off for California with Vernon Old; June 9, Isherwood gets quota visa; July, Isherwood begins working with Berthold Viertel again and meets Swami Prabhavananda; early August, Isherwood begins instruction in meditation; October, Isherwood's new story, "I Am Waiting," is published in *The New Yorker*; November, Isherwood gets his first Hollywood film job writing for Goldwyn Studios.

1940 January, Isherwood begins his first writing job at MGM, on *Rage in Heaven* for Gottfried Reinhardt; July 9, Uncle Henry Bradshaw Isherwood dies, Isherwood inherits the family estate and gives it to his brother, Richard; November 8, Swami Prabhavananda initiates Isherwood.

1941 By January 11, Isherwood finishes working on *Rage in Heaven* and then "polishes" other MGM scripts; February 17, he breaks with Vernon Old and, in mid-March, moves next

door to Gerald Heard; early May, Isherwood finishes his first year's contract at MGM and leaves the studio; by mid-June, Denny Fouts moves in with Isherwood; July 15, Kathleen Isherwood returns to live at Wyberslegh with Richard; August 22, Isherwood flies east to visit Auden and meets Caroline Norment at the Cooperative College Workshop, a refugee hostel in Haverford, Pennsylvania; October 11, he moves to Haverford to work in the hostel; also during 1941, Gerald Heard begins to build his monastic community, Trabuco.

1942 June 30, Isherwood has a medical exam at the draft board; July 6, the Haverford refugee hostel closes, and Isherwood returns to California; July 13, he receives his draft classification, 4-E, and applies to Los Prietos Camp to do civilian public service; by October 12, Isherwood begins working on a translation of the Bhagavad Gita with Swami Prabhavananda; October, another story, "Take It or Leave It," is published in *The New Yorker*; November 30, Isherwood starts work at Paramount on Somerset Maugham's *The Hour Before Dawn*; December 31, Isherwood writes "The Wishing Tree" for the Vedanta Society magazine.

1943 January 29, Isherwood finishes at Paramount; February 6, he moves into the Vedanta Center, Ivar Avenue, in preparation for becoming a monk; May, Isherwood begins writing *Prater Violet*; August, Denny Fouts introduces Isherwood to Bill Harris.

1944 February and again in March, Isherwood stays with Aldous and Maria Huxley in Llano where Isherwood and Huxley work out a film story, *Jacob's Hands*; April 17, Isherwood decides he cannot become a monk; during June, Isherwood spends a few days with Bill Harris at Denny Fouts's flat in Santa Monica; Isherwood and Huxley complete draft of *Jacob's Hands*; August, Isherwood and

Prabhavananda's translation of the Bhagavad Gita is published; September 25, Isherwood moves to Ananda Bhavan, the new Santa Barbara Vedanta Center in Montecito; November 17, Isherwood leaves Ananda Bhavan and moves to Laguna; late November, Isherwood returns to the Hollywood Vedanta Center on Ivar Avenue.

1945 February 5, Isherwood's affair with Bill Harris ends; February 21, Isherwood starts three months' work on Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* for Warner Brothers; June 2, Isherwood attends Bill Caskey's twenty-fourth birthday party; June 4, he returns to Warner Brothers to work on Maugham's *Up at the Villa* for Wolfgang Reinhardt; during the summer, *Prater Violet* appears in *Harper's Bazaar* and New Directions publishes *The Berlin Stories*, containing *The Last of Mr. Norris* and *Goodbye to Berlin*; August 23, Isherwood moves out of the Vedanta Center into the Beesleys' chauffeur's apartment; he begins translating Shankara's *Crest Jewel of Discrimination* with Swami Prabhavananda; September 25, Isherwood and Bill Caskey move into Denny Fouts's empty apartment, 137 Entrada Drive, Santa Monica; November, *Prater Violet* is published in the U.S. by Random House; towards the end of the year, *Vedanta for the Western World*, edited and introduced by Isherwood, is published by Marcel Rodd.

1946 January 12, Isherwood undergoes surgery to remove a median bar inside his bladder; April, Caskey quarrels with Denny Fouts, and Isherwood and Caskey move into Salka Viertel's garage apartment, 165 Mabery Road, Santa Monica; May, *Prater Violet* is published in the U.K. by Isherwood's new English publisher, Methuen; during the summer, Isherwood revises his wartime diaries, 1939-1944; November 8, he becomes a U.S. citizen; towards the end of the year, Isherwood works with Lesser Samuels on a film treatment, *Judgement Day in Pittsburgh*.

1947 January 19, Isherwood sets out (via New York) on his first postwar trip to England; March 28, he signs deed of gift passing on Marple estate, including Wyberslegh, to his brother Richard; April 16, returns to New York; during the summer, he lives with Caskey at James and Tania Stern's apartment at 207 East 52nd Street, Manhattan; in August, Shankara's *Crest-Jewel of Discrimination* is published; September 19, Isherwood sails with Caskey for South America to write a travel book, *The Condor and the Cows*; September 28, they arrive in Cartagena, Colombia; October 28, Isherwood and Caskey travel south via Bogota; November, they continue through Ecuador and reach Lima, Peru, by year end; also in 1947, the first U.S. edition of *Lions and Shadows* is published by New Directions.

1948 January, Isherwood and Caskey travel in Peru and Bolivia; February, they leave La Paz, Bolivia, for Argentina and depart from Buenos Aires by ship in late March; April 1, they stop in Rio, then continue direct from Brazil to North Africa and France, arriving in Paris on April 22; April 30, they proceed to London; late May, Isherwood visits his family at Wyberslegh; June 9, Isherwood and Caskey sail for New York; June 15, Isherwood returns alone to California and on July 19 he starts work on *The Great Sinner* at MGM; mid-August, he meets Jim Charlton; that summer, Isherwood begins translating Patanjali's yoga aphorisms with Swami Prabhavananda; September 20, Caskey returns; September 28, Isherwood moves with Caskey into 333 Rustic Road; October 9, Isherwood finishes work at MGM; November 12, Isherwood's nanny, Annie Avis, dies; December 16, Denny Fouts dies in Rome.

1949 January 6—13, Isherwood works for Gottfried Reinhardt at MGM; April 12, he completes *The Condor and the Cows*; he begins to work intermittently on his proposed novel *The School of Tragedy*; by May, he begins working

with Lesser Samuels on *The Easiest Thing in the World*; August 6-7, Isherwood meets Evelyn Caldwell (later Hooker); August, he finishes draft of *The Easiest Thing in the World* with Lesser Samuels; August 10, meets Igor and Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft; also in August, he works on *Below the Equator* with Aldous Huxley and Lesser Samuels; September 7, Trabuco is dedicated as a Ramakrishna monastery; November 11, Caskey leaves for Florida; also in November, Methuen publishes *The Condor and the Cows*; December 1, Isherwood writes a memorial article on Klaus Mann; during 1949, Isherwood is elected to the U.S. Academy of Arts and Sciences.

1950 Isherwood works on a film script, *The Vacant Room*, with Lesser Samuels; late April, Caskey returns via Kentucky to Rustic Road; June 29, Bill Kennedy proposes that Isherwood begin reviewing regularly for *Tomorrow*; August 11, Isherwood and Peggy Kiskadden leave for Arizona and New Mexico by car; December 10, Isherwood moves with Caskey to 31152 Monterey Street, Coast Royal, South Laguna.

1951 May 21, Isherwood leaves Caskey and moves to the Huntington Hartford Foundation, 2000 Rustic Canyon Road, Pacific Palisades; he works on *The School of Tragedy*; during the spring, John van Druten writes the play *I Am a Camera*, based on *Goodbye to Berlin*; by August 22, Isherwood is back in South Laguna with Caskey; mid-September, he decides to break finally with Caskey and returns to the Huntington Hartford Foundation; October, Isherwood goes to the East Coast for rehearsals of *I Am a Camera*, directed by van Druten; November 8, *I Am a Camera* opens in Hartford, Connecticut; November 28, *I Am a Camera* opens successfully on Broadway at the Empire Theater; December, Isherwood sails for England where he spends Christmas with

his mother and brother in a London hotel; Caskey joins the merchant marine.

1952 February 10, Isherwood returns to Berlin after eighteen years and sees Heinz Neddermayer for the first time since Heinz's arrest by the Gestapo in 1937; February 27, Isherwood sails from England for New York; by April 8, he returns to California with Sam Costidy; May 4, Isherwood settles at Trabuco where he completes Patanjali translation and part one of his novel, still called *The School of Tragedy*; May 21, he moves alone to the Mermira apartments in Santa Monica; also during May, Isherwood resigns from the board of the Huntington Hartford Foundation and the first chapter of his unfinished novel is published in *New Writing*; June, Isherwood begins fixing up Evelyn Hooker's garden house at 400 South Saltair Avenue in Brentwood and moves there in late summer; during 1952, *Vedanta for Modern Man*, edited by Isherwood, is published in U.S. and U.K.; Isherwood completes "California Story" (later reprinted as "The Shore" in *Exhumations*) to accompany Sanford Roth's photographs in *Harper's Bazaar*.

1953 January 6, Caskey leaves for San Francisco and ships out again; February 14, Isherwood begins relationship with Don Bachardy; February 20-26, Bachardy's brother Ted has a nervous breakdown and is committed; April 25, Bachardy moves out of his mother's apartment and into his own furnished room in Hollywood; May 16, Bachardy moves into Marguerite and Harry Brown's apartment in West Hollywood; August 5, Isherwood completes *The World in the Evening*; September, Isherwood moves out of Evelyn Hooker's garden house, at her request, and stays at the Browns' apartment with Bachardy; September 19, Isherwood and Bachardy move together into their own apartment; during October, Isherwood's article on Ernst Toller appears in *Encounter*; also in 1953, *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of*

Patanjali, translated with Swami Prabhavananda, is published.

1954 January, Isherwood begins editing an anthology, *Great English Short Stories*, and plans a biography of Ramakrishna as well as various new pieces of autobiographical fiction; January 25, he begins work for Eddie Knopf at MGM on *Diane*; June, *The World in the Evening* is published in the U.S. and the U.K.; August 25, Isherwood completes script for *Diane*; August 26, Isherwood turns fifty; during the spring and summer, John Collier writes a screenplay based on John van Druten's play, *I Am a Camera*, and Julie Harris accepts the lead; November, Isherwood and Bachardy visit Tennessee Williams in Key West to watch filming of *The Rose Tattoo* in which Isherwood plays a bit part; December, they travel to Mexico with Jo and Ben Masselink and Isherwood has an idea for a new novel which will eventually be called *Down There on a Visit*.

1955 Isherwood gets more work at MGM on *Diane* and writing *The Wayfarer*, a script about Buddha; February 10, Bachardy starts his junior year at UCLA; February 12, Maria Huxley dies; March 18, Ted Bachardy has another breakdown and is hospitalized again; May 2, *Diane* starts filming; May 18, Bachardy's twenty-first birthday party; May 28, Isherwood begins writing his new novel first conceived in Mexico; June 8, he meets Thom Gunn; June 22, Isherwood sees preview of film, *I Am a Camera*; October 12, Isherwood leaves with Bachardy for New York City and on October 20, they sail from New York for Tangier; October 30, they sail for Italy and in mid-December continue on to Somerset Maugham's house in France; by Christmas, they are in Munich; December 28, they arrive in Paris.

1956 January, Isherwood and Bachardy arrive in London; January 30–February 6, Isherwood stays with his mother and

brother at Wyberslegh and sees Marple Hall for the last time (it will be demolished in 1959); March 6, Isherwood begins writing his new novel, calling it, for the moment, *The Lost*; March 11, Isherwood and Bachardy leave England for New York and California; during April, they buy 434 Sycamore Road; July 2, Bachardy enrolls at Chouinard Art School; September 24, Isherwood begins work on *Jean-Christophe* for Jerry Wald at Fox.

1957 February 12, Isherwood discovers a lump on the side of his belly; February 15, the tumor is successfully removed and proves benign, but ill health and depression persist; April, Isherwood prepares an introduction for a new edition of *All the Conspirators*, to be published in U.K.; early July, Isherwood and Gavin Lambert begin television project for Hermione Gingold, *Emily Ermingarde*; August 15, *Jean-Christophe* is shelved by Fox; October 8, Isherwood and Bachardy begin around-the-world trip, via Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bali, Bangkok, and Angkor; November 30, they fly to Calcutta and in December continue on to London.

1958 January 30, Isherwood and Bachardy reach Los Angeles (via New York); February 2, Bachardy returns to Chouinard Art School; February 11, Isherwood renews work on his novel and on the Ramakrishna biography; February 25, Bachardy begins taking painting classes from Vernon Old; mid-March, Isherwood begins work on *Mary Magdalene* for David Selznick, until late June; July 5, Isherwood completes a new foreword for U.S. edition of *All the Conspirators*; October, Isherwood and Bachardy begin writing a play, *The Monsters*; during the autumn, Isherwood and Lambert begin revising the film script of *The Vacant Room*.

1959 Mid-January, Isherwood and Bachardy complete *The Monsters*; March 7-April 13, Isherwood writes "Mr.

Lancaster,” the first part of the final draft of his novel; March 20, he signs on to teach at Los Angeles State College; April, the first installment of *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* appears in the March/April issue of the Vedanta Society magazine; May 1, Bachardy takes his first job as a professional artist; Isherwood begins writing “Ambrose,” the second part of his novel; mid-June, Isherwood and Bachardy undertake to buy 145 Adelaide Drive; July 31, Isherwood finishes writing “Afterwards,” a homosexual short story; August 18, Isherwood and Bachardy travel to New York and then England where Isherwood visits Wyberslegh and sees his mother for the last time; September, they visit France and return to New York and Santa Monica; September 22, Isherwood begins teaching at L.A. State College; September 30, Isherwood and Bachardy move to 145 Adelaide Drive; October, “Mr. Lancaster” appears in *The London Magazine*.

1960 L.A. State mounts exhibition on Isherwood; during the spring, Isherwood begins working with Charles Laughton on a play about Socrates; April 18, begins writing part three of his novel; May 25, he accepts a job at the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB) for the following autumn; June 10, begins writing “Paul,” the final part of his novel; June 15, Kathleen Isherwood dies; August 26, Isherwood completes his last handwritten diary; September 22, he begins teaching at UCSB; also in 1960, *Great English Short Stories* is published by Dell.

1961 January 23, Bachardy leaves for London to study art at the Slade; April 6, Isherwood joins Bachardy in London; he works with Auden on Berlin musical, but they abandon it when Auden leaves London in mid-June; October 2, Bachardy’s first show opens at the Redfern Gallery; October 15, Isherwood returns to Los Angeles alone; December 11-12, he travels to New York to meet Bachardy.

1962 January 2, Bachardy's first New York show opens at the Sagittarius Gallery; January 25, Isherwood returns alone to Santa Monica and on January 28 begins teaching again at L.A. State; he plans a new novel called, at first, *The English Woman*; February 17, Bachardy returns; early March, *Down There on a Visit* is published by Methuen in the U.K. and by Isherwood's new publisher, Simon and Schuster, in the U.S.; Isherwood's UCSB lectures are broadcast on radio; Isherwood and Bachardy begin remodelling their garage as a studio for Bachardy; Isherwood's novel, *The English Woman*, begins to evolve into *A Single Man*.

1963 During the winter and early spring, Bachardy considers living alone; October, Isherwood finishes draft of *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*; October 21, Isherwood sends final draft of *A Single Man* to both his U.S. and U.K. publishers; November 22, Aldous Huxley dies; December, Isherwood travels via Japan to India with Swami Prabhavananda and thinks for the first time of writing *A Meeting by the River*.

1964 January, Isherwood returns from India via Rome and New York and begins final draft of *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*; February, he starts to gather material for *Exhumations*; March, Isherwood begins working on *The Loved One* with Terry Southern; meets David Hockney; during the summer, Bachardy travels to North Africa, Europe, and London; July–September, Isherwood works on screenplay of *Reflections in a Golden Eye*; *A Single Man* is published in the U.S. by Simon and Schuster and, on September 10, in the U.K. by Methuen; September–December, Isherwood works on screenplay of *The Sailor from Gibraltar*.

1965 January 6, Bachardy leaves for a further long spell in New York, visiting several times during the year; Isherwood

finishes *The Sailor from Gibraltar* and *Exhumations*; early February, Isherwood takes up post as Regent's Professor at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA); spring, he begins writing *A Meeting by the River*; April 8, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* is published by Methuen and appears in the U.S. during the summer; November 1, he begins *Hero-Father, Demon-Mother (Kathleen and Frank)*.

1966 Spring, Isherwood is visiting professor at UCLA; Gerald Heard has the first of many strokes; *Exhumations* is published in the U.S. and the U.K.; May 31, Isherwood completes third draft of *A Meeting by the River*; July, he agrees to work on *Silent Night* with Danny Mann for ABC television, travels with Mann to Austria in September for filming; October, Isherwood visits England and stays with his brother at Wyberslegh where he reads his father's letters; November, *Cabaret*, Fred Ebb and John Kander's stage musical based on *I Am a Camera*, opens in New York, produced by Hal Prince.

1967 January, Isherwood begins working in more earnest on the book which eventually will be called *Kathleen and Frank*; spring, he corrects proofs of *A Meeting by the River* which is published in April in the U.S. and in June in the U.K.; May, he returns to England to look at family papers at Wyberslegh for *Kathleen and Frank*, carrying some back to California with him; also in 1967. Isherwood works with James Bridges on a play of *A Meeting by the River*.

1968 Isherwood adapts Bernard Shaw's novella *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* for the stage, and also adapts Wedekind's *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*; Bachardy again spends time in London and in New York; spring, Hockney begins work on a double portrait of Isherwood and Bachardy; October, Isherwood again begins writing *Kathleen and Frank*; also during 1968,

Isherwood and Bachardy work together on the play of *A Meeting by the River*.

1969 *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* opens at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles; July, Isherwood and Bachardy travel to Tahiti, Bora Bora, Samoa, New Zealand and Australia and begin work on a screenplay of Robert Graves's *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God* for Tony Richardson; also in 1969, *Essentials of Vedanta* is published.

1970 February—April, in London together, Isherwood and Bachardy continue to work on stage version of *A Meeting by the River*; Isherwood sends final draft of *Kathleen and Frank* to U.S. and U.K. publishers; also in 1970, E. M. Forster dies, leaving Isherwood the rights to *Maurice*.

1971 Isherwood completes revisions to *Kathleen and Frank*; February, Isherwood and Bachardy start work on a TV script of *Frankenstein* for Universal Studios; April 6, Stravinsky dies; August 14, Gerald Heard dies; August 26, Isherwood begins writing reconstructed diary of the "lost years," 1945–1951; October, *Kathleen and Frank* is published by Methuen; also in 1971, Isherwood undergoes hand surgery for Depuytren's contracture.

1972 January, Isherwood sees preview of film *Cabaret*, based on the musical, and the U.S. edition of *Kathleen and Frank* is published by Simon and Schuster; Isherwood and Bachardy undertake another TV script for Universal, *The Lady from the Land of the Dead*; April, the Los Angeles premiere of James Bridges' production of *A Meeting by the River*; also in 1972, Isherwood receives an award from the Hollywood Writers' Club for a lifetime of distinguished contributions to literature.

1973 Isherwood and Bachardy travel to London for the filming of *Frankenstein*; they visit Wyberslegh and afterwards go to Switzerland and Rome; summer, they work together on a screenplay of *A Meeting by the River*; Jean Ross dies; September 29, Auden dies; October, Isherwood begins a new autobiographical book eventually titled *Christopher and His Kind*; December, Isherwood and Bachardy's screenplay, *Frankenstein: The True Story*, is published by Avon Books.

1975 Isherwood works with Bachardy on a TV script adapted from Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*.

1976 May, Isherwood completes the final draft of *Christopher and His Kind*; July 4, Swami Prabhavananda dies; November, Isherwood's new U.S. publisher, Farrar Straus and Giroux, publishes *Christopher and His Kind*; *Frankenstein: The True Story* wins best scenario at the International Festival of Fantastic and Science Fiction Films.

1977 March, the U.K. edition of *Christopher and His Kind* is published by Methuen.

1979 May 15, Richard Isherwood dies of a heart attack; Isherwood and Bachardy collaborate on *October*.

1980 *My Guru and His Disciple* is published in the U.S. and the U.K.; July 16, Isherwood hears that Bill Caskey is dead; *October*, with drawings by Bachardy, is published.

1981 October, Isherwood learns that he has a malignant tumor in the prostate.

1983 July, Isherwood makes his last diary entry.

1986 January 4, Isherwood dies in Santa Monica.

Lost Years

A Memoir 1945–1951

Christopher Isherwood

Edited and Introduced by
Katherine Bucknell



Introduction

On his sixty-seventh birthday, August 26, 1971, Christopher Isherwood began to write the autobiographical memoir which is contained in this volume, about his life in California and New York and his travels abroad to England and Europe from January 1945 to May 1951. He called the work a reconstructed diary, and he intended it to recapture a lost period following World War II when he had all but abandoned his lifelong habit of keeping a diary. He based the reconstructed diary on his memories and on what he called his “day-to-day diaries,” the pocket-sized appointment books in which he regularly noted the names of people he saw on a given day and sometimes, cryptically, what they had done together.¹ He also drew on the handful of diary entries he did make during the lost years² and on letters he had written at the time (he asked for some letters to be returned to him for reference), and he consulted a few friends for their own recollections. The reconstructed diary, never completed by Isherwood but also never destroyed, is now published for the first time as *Lost Years: A Memoir 1945-1951*.

Like his earlier autobiography about the 1920s, *Lions and Shadows* (1938), *Lost Years* describes the relationships and experiences which gave inner shape to Isherwood’s life during the period it portrays, but in contrast to *Lions and Shadows*, the memoir begun in 1971 is based as closely as possible on fact. Unlike Isherwood’s other diaries, kept contemporaneously with the events they recorded, the manuscript of the reconstructed diary shows many alterations, often using white-out. Moreover, it is heavily

annotated with Isherwood's own footnotes, which comment, correct, and elaborate on his narrative. With a scholarly precision he might have mocked when studying history at Cambridge in the 1920s, he sharply scrutinized and questioned his memories, trying to establish exactly what happened and to understand why.

Lions and Shadows had aimed to entertain and was prefaced by Isherwood's disclaimer that "it is not, in the ordinary journalistic sense of the word, an autobiography; it contains no 'revelations'; it is never 'indiscreet'; it is not even entirely 'true.'" Isherwood goes on to say, "Read it as a novel." But *Lost Years* is the second book in a major new phase—roughly the final third of his career—in which Isherwood moved away from semi-fictionalized writing towards pure autobiography. It does contain revelations; it is highly indiscreet; and it foregoes deliberate artifice in order to try to recapture actual past events. It should not be read as a novel, although its aspiration to be true is partly reflected in its effort—deeply characteristic of Isherwood—to record and account for the way in which mythological significance arises from real events. In the reconstructed diary, as elsewhere in Isherwood's work, the play of fantasy and emotion is recognized and incorporated as a dimension of real experience.

Isherwood completed *Kathleen and Frank*, his detailed historical book about his parents, in the autumn of 1970. Having spent several years in prolonged meditation upon the heterosexual bond between his parents—they shared a late-Victorian, upper-middle-class marriage which was perfectly happy until devastated by Frank Isherwood's death in World War I—he seemed to need to react by writing about the very different affinities which shaped his own life. He was no longer motivated by the spirit of rebellion that governed his youth, but certainly, at first, by a spirit of relief and light-heartedness. On Thanksgiving Day 1970, thankful

that he had completed *Kathleen and Frank*, he wondered in his diary, “What shall I write next?” He considered a book about his relationship with his spiritual teacher Swami Prabhavananda—a book he would only begin half a decade later—but he knew already that such a book could not be a novel:

Surely it would be better from every point of view to do this as a factual book? Well of course there is the difficulty of being frank without being indiscreet: but that difficulty always arises in one form or another. For example, it is absolutely necessary that I should say how, right at the start of our relationship, I told Swami I had a boyfriend (and that he replied, “try to think of him as Krishna”) because my personal approach to Vedanta was, among other things, the approach of a homosexual looking for a religion which will accept him.³

For Isherwood, a book about his religious life, when he came to write it, would have to begin by addressing the question of his sexuality. So he went on to propose to himself that he write a book expressly about his sexuality and sketched out a plan for the reconstructed diary which he would, in fact, begin on his birthday the following August:

Then there is the fairly big chunk of diary fill-in which I might do, covering the scantily covered period between January 1, 1945 and February 1955—or maybe February 1953, when I met Don [Bachardy], because that’s the beginning of a new era. This would be quite largely a sexual record and so indiscreet as to be unpublishable. It might keep me amused, like knitting, but I should be getting on with something else as well.

The project which he compared to “knitting”—recreating the sequence and sense of his life during the late 1940s in little, unimportant stitches—did more than just keep Isherwood amused as he had at first imagined. It proved both challenging and absorbing, and for several years he attempted no other work of his own—although during the first half of the 1970s he collaborated with Don Bachardy on a television script of *Frankenstein* (1971), and on three other scripts which were never made: *The Lady from the Land of the Dead*, *The Beautiful and Damned* (both for television), and a film script of Isherwood’s novel *A Meeting by the River*

(1967), which they had already successfully adapted for the stage. Moreover, Isherwood's "knitting," somewhat like the flow of unselfconscious, free-associative talk in psychoanalysis, evidently set his mind free to delve more directly than ever before into his private life. The very insignificance and confidentiality of the task opened new avenues to self-reflection. And so perhaps without at first realizing it, Isherwood embarked on an entirely new episode of his life's work.

In his Thanksgiving diary entry he had gone on to ask himself whether he would ever again write fiction:

Have I given up all idea of writing another novel, then? No, not necessarily. The problem really is as follows: The main thing I have to offer as a writer are my reactions to experience (these *are* my fiction or my poetry, or whatever you want to call it). Now, these reactions are more positive when I am reacting to actual experiences, than when I am reacting to imagined experiences. Yet, the actuality of the experiences does bother me, the brute facts keep tripping me up, I keep wanting to rearrange and alter the facts so as to relate them more dramatically to my reactions. Facts are never simple, they come in awkward bunches. You find yourself reacting to several different facts at one and the same time, and this is messy and unclear and undramatic. I have had this difficulty many times while writing *Kathleen and Frank*. For instance, Christopher's reactions to Kathleen are deplorably complex and therefore self-contradictory, and therefore bad drama.

On the one hand, Isherwood was restating, and perhaps rediscovering, something he had long known: that his reactions to real experience were more vivid, more intense than anything he could invent. On the other hand, he conceded that writing accurate history was a more severe discipline than writing fiction, because he could not alter the facts to conform to his artistic intention. As early as 1953 he had described in his diary his "lack of inclination to cope with a constructed, invented plot—the feeling, why not write what one experiences from day to day?" Then, in 1953, he had attributed the feeling to the fact that he had fallen in love with Don Bachardy: "Why invent—when Life is so prodigious?" And he had added, "Perhaps I'll never write

another novel. . . .”⁴ Yet he had gone on to write several of his best novels over the twelve or thirteen years following 1953. But eventually the fiction did stop. Isherwood wrote his last novel, *A Meeting by the River*, in 1965 and 1966; by the time it was published in 1967, he was already hard at work on *Kathleen and Frank*, which is based so closely on his parents’ letters and diaries that it incorporates long passages from them, “brute facts,” which he could not rearrange and which forced him to struggle with the complexity and contradiction of real life. As soon as he finished correcting the proofs of *Kathleen and Frank*, he began reconstructing the lost years of his own life, 1945 to 1951, according to a similar version of the newly established method.

In September 1973, Isherwood at last began to get on, as he had envisioned in the Thanksgiving diary entry, with “something else as well.” This was to be an autobiographical book, about his life in America, in which he planned to tell, according to an inspiration derived from Jung, his “personal myth.”⁵ It would share publicly some of his wartime diaries as well as the fruits of the “knitting” he had done in the meantime, and it would be for him a new kind of book. By late October the American autobiography began to undergo a metamorphosis, because Isherwood realized that he could not explain why he had emigrated to America without first telling about the personal crisis which had occurred when his German lover Heinz Neddermeyer had been turned away from England by an immigration official in January 1934. So he shifted the book’s focus backward to the decade of the 1930s, in order to tell the story of the events which drove him away from England in search of what he called “my sexual homeland.”⁶ Isherwood and Heinz had been forced to wander through Europe in search of a country where they could settle together, safe from Hitler’s persecution of homosexuals and from his conscription; finally, Heinz was arrested by the Gestapo in

May 1937, just inside the German border. When Isherwood at last published this autobiography as *Christopher and His Kind* in 1976, he overnight became a hero of the burgeoning gay liberation movement. The book sold faster than any other he had ever written.

Isherwood conceded in interviews and letters that he had moved beyond the brute facts in writing *Christopher and His Kind*, because he wanted it to read as a novel rather than a memoir.⁷ In earlier works, as the book itself makes clear, he had moved away from facts not only to heighten dramatic effect but also to avoid writing about his homosexuality. But in *Christopher and His Kind* he no longer wished to avoid writing about his homosexuality; on the contrary he wished to tell about it in detail. This new impulse, to reveal rather than to conceal, is a continuation of the impulse according to which he had begun the reconstructed diary in 1971 (indeed, *Christopher and His Kind* incorporates whole passages from the reconstructed diary), and Isherwood's ability in the 1976 autobiography to deal forthrightly with his sexuality, as the underpinning for the trajectory of his life, grew directly out of the confidential and, as it had once seemed, insignificant work he had already done recapturing his postwar life from 1945 to 1951. *Christopher and His Kind* was a relatively shocking book, even as late as 1976. The reconstructed diary is far more shocking; even now, some passages have been altered or removed to protect the privacy of a few of Isherwood's friends and acquaintances who are still alive.

Isherwood's reconstructed diary is sexually explicit partly because, for the first time ever, it could be. In 1971, seven years after the publication of his assertively homosexual novel *A Single Man* (1964), two years after the Stonewall riot in New York, and well into the cultural and sexual revolution spawned during the 1960s, he was comfortable committing to paper (though not necessarily for publication) details of personal relationships such as he would for years