



Christopher Isherwood: His Era, His Gang, and the Legacy of the Truly Strong Man

David Garrett Izzo

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In a comprehensive critical study of the literary artist, mystic and gay-activist icon Christopher Isherwood, David Garrett Izzo draws on previously unavailable material to offer a fresh appraisal of the writer's literary milieu and his influence on 20th-century literature and culture. The first thorough examination of Isherwood's work and life in 20 years, Izzo's analysis brings into play the Mortmere stories, by Isherwood and Edward Upward (dating from the 1920s but published only in 1994), and the "Diaries, 1939-1960" published in 1996, to position Isherwood within a circle of British writers that included - besides Upward - W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Cecil Day Lewis. Describing Isherwood as a "catalyzing influence" on the Auden generation, Izzo explores the dissemination of Isherwood's ideas through his own work and the writings of his contemporaries. Tracing Isherwood's personal and literary evolution, Izzo details the writer's rebellion against England's class-conscious traditions, his immigration to the United States in 1939 and his study of Vedantic philosophy. Izzo chronicles Isherwood's rejection of the traditional hero and his search for a more sensitive, less vainglorious alternative whom Isherwood dubbed the Truly Strong Man. Izzo suggests that all of Isherwood's writings - British and American - reflect his quest to represent artistically the Truly Strong Man, a quest Isherwood fulfilled after meeting his Vedantic guru Swami Prabhavananda. Proposing that the writer's American art serves as a metaphor for his spiritual philosophy, Izzo reads Isherwood's American novels in light of his Vedantism and places his autobiographical work from the final years of his life in the context of his adopted religious beliefs.

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