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# Isherwood on Writing: The Lectures in California

*Christopher Isherwood*

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**Isherwood on Writing: The Lectures in California** Christopher Isherwood

In the 1960s, Christopher Isherwood gave an unprecedented series of lectures at California universities on the theme “A Writer and His World.” During this time Isherwood, who would liberate the memoir and become the founding father of modern gay writing, spoke openly for the first time about his craft—on writing for film, theater, and novels—and on spirituality. *Isherwood on Writing* brings these public addresses together to reveal a distinctly—and surprisingly—American Isherwood.

Given at a critical time in Isherwood’s career, these lectures mark the era when he turned from fiction to memoir. In free-flowing, wide-ranging discussions, he reflects on such topics as why writers write, what makes a novel great, and what influenced his own work. Isherwood talks about his working relationship with W. H. Auden; his literary friendships with E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Stephen Spender, Aldous Huxley, and Somerset Maugham; and his work in the film industry in London and Hollywood. He also explores uncharted territory in candid comments on his own work, something not contained in his diaries.

*Isherwood on Writing* uncovers an important and often-misunderstood time in Isherwood’s life in America. The lectures present, in James J. Berg’s words, “an example of a man, comfortable in his own sexuality and self, trying to talk about himself and his own life in a society that is not yet ready to hear the whole story.”

A major figure in twentieth-century fiction and the gay rights movement, Christopher Isherwood (1904–1986) is the author of many books, including *A Single Man* and *Down There on a Visit,* available from Minnesota.

James J. Berg is dean of liberal arts and sciences at Lake Superior College in Duluth, Minnesota. He is editor, with Chris Freeman, of *The Isherwood Century: Essays on the Life and Work of Christopher Isherwood* (winner of the Lambda Award) and *Conversations with Christopher Isherwood.*

Claude Summers is professor emeritus of English at the University of Michigan, Dearborn and author of many works, including *Gay Fictions: Wilde to Stonewall.*

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