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Review

“In Kafka we have before us the modern mind splendidly trained for the great game of pretending that the world it comprehends in sterilized sobriety is the only and ultimate reality there is—yet a mind living in sin with the soul of Abraham. Thus he knows two things at once, and both with equal assurance: that there is no God, and that there must be a God. It is the perspective of the curse: the intellect dreaming of its dream of absolute freedom, and the soul knowing of its terrible bondage.”

—Erich Heller

“It is likely that these journals will be regarded as one of [Kafka’s] major literary works; his life and personality were perfectly suited to the diary form, and in these pages he reveals what he customarily hid from the world.”

—The New Yorker

Language Notes

Text: English, German (translation)

From the Inside Flap

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Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By DH

The definition of literature on x mas.

35 of 40 people found the following review helpful.

A Writer's Writer

By C. Middleton

Franz Kafka's diaries were never meant to be published. Yet his diaries are spread across the internet, the actual published diaries translated into many languages and countless printings. These dairies are very personal, and the gentle Prague Jew would certainly be appalled.

Why do we continue to find these writings so fascinating?

Well, simply, they're terribly honest. Kafka never meant for these diary entries to be published, let alone read by another person. For those interested in the mechanics and soul of writing, Kafka's diaries are a source of true wonder. A confessional of a gentle soul, a man trapped in an insurance job, staying up through the night writing his heart-out, his thoughts, pains and acute observations of a time on the brink of great and terrible change, the death and cruelty of two world wars.

When reading Kafka, there is an overwhelming darkness, loneliness, a strong shadow that continually hovered around him, a "something" he tried to rid himself of through intense self reflection, which the reader of these diaries will discover.

Kafka's life story is, for the most part, a tragedy. A painful experience as one, sometimes, can feel his self consciousness, that subtle pain at the back of the neck, when, you know, you're being stared at...and his continued bad health.

I've attempted to read Kafka's diaries many times, and only now, for some reason, can withstand the pain of his perceptions, his precarious relationship with his father, and the few women he loved and the true love he never married.

Kafka is a man that loved writing for writing's sake, an artist who experimented daily, till dawn most nights, to pick up his little brief case and begin his work as an insurance lawyer in a semi-official insurance institute.

A strange yet moving entry:

21 February 1911

I live my life here as if I were entirely certain of a second life, as if for example I had entirely gotten over the failed time spent in Paris, since I will strive to return soon. Connected to this, the sight of the sharply divided light and shadow on the street paving.

For a moment I felt myself covered in armour.

How distant, for example, are the muscles of my arms

Kafka's writing was for the act itself without pretension or grandious dreams, (though his success during his 40 year lifetime was no disappointment) an act of instinct, pure and natural. Kafka is the true writer's writer.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A fantastic insight into this man's life

By Eric C. Darsow

This book is one that I pick at after I read a particularly nice short story by Kafka. Of course, since these are his diaries, these are not plot driven. But plots are not the only reason one might read a text. These are his raw insights that he never thought would be read by other humans. He had given explicit instructions to his closest friend to have his diaries and several of his unfinished manuscripts destroyed after his death. Now, realistically, if he actually wanted them destroyed, he would have done so himself--so this leaves one to speculate. Regardless, the entries provide a remarkable insight into the mind of a man who lived a very dreary life and experienced mostly angst and sorrow.

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