



Notebooks

By Tennessee Williams

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Notebooks By Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams's *Notebooks*, here published for the first time, presents by turns a passionate, whimsical, movingly lyrical, self-reflective, and completely uninhibited record of the life of this monumental American genius from 1936 to 1981, the year of his death. In these pages Williams (1911-1981) wrote out his most private thoughts as well as sketches of plays, poems, and accounts of his social, professional, and sexual encounters. The notebooks are the repository of Williams's fears, obsessions, passions, and contradictions, and they form possibly the most spontaneous self-portrait by any writer in American history. Meticulously edited and annotated by Margaret Thornton, the notebooks follow Williams' growth as a writer from his undergraduate days to the publication and production of his most famous plays, from his drug addiction and drunkenness to the heights of his literary accomplishments. At one point, Williams writes, "I feel dull and disinterested in the literary line. Dr. Heller bores me with all his erudite discussion of literature. Writing is just *writing!* Why all the fuss about it?" This remarkable record of the life of Tennessee Williams is about writing—how his writing came up like a pure, underground stream through the often unhappy chaos of his life to become a memorable and permanent contribution to world literature.

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Notebooks By Tennessee Williams Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This magnificent tome is a treasure trove for Williams scholars and fans. Independent scholar Thornton not only tracked down Williams's early short stories and poems but often presents photo reproductions of the original manuscripts. A talented sleuth, Thornton cross-checks journal entries with letters Williams wrote to friends, offers minibiographies of people mentioned in the journals and has found photos of most of the cast of characters at the time they were in touch with Williams. Her detective work is fully one half of this massive book. (Williams's journal entries, from 1936 to 1958 and 1979 to 1981 run on the right-hand pages opposite Thornton's annotations.) As the playwright, according to Thornton, "modulated his tone and style to suit the recipient" of his voluminous correspondence, his journal reveals his authentic voice. These entries primarily showcase the budding artist who was plagued with insecurities, increasing drug dependency and an equally destructive addiction to celebrity, but his loyalty to his work remained so strong that he was still able to write *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Summer and Smoke*, *The Rose Tattoo* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* all between 1945 and 1955—the period that reflects the bulk of these notebooks.. Williams's dramatic life may be familiar to many, but thanks to Thornton's superb scholarship, his interior conflicts, motivations and drive are at last revealed. Photos. (Jan. 30)

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From [Booklist](#)

The greatest American playwright? Regardless of one's personal thoughts on his ultimate ranking, Tennessee Williams was inarguably great. For the first time, and for dedicated aficionados of his work, his complete journals are now being published. Kept during his adult life, from 1936 (at age 25) to 1981 (two years before his death at 71), his journals were scribbled by pencil into a series of ordinary spiral-bound notebooks, but what they contain is *not* ordinary. These entries are Williams unvarnished; his voice and views are not rehearsed, second-guessed, or even polished. He is honest about his life and lifestyle, from his overnervous stomach to his sexual exploits to the places to which he traveled. When opened at any page, the book displays annotations, which have been carefully and energetically written, on the left-hand side; the journal entries themselves appear on the right side. The fact is that a large degree of the pleasure of the book derives from the enjoyment of reading these extraordinarily riveting annotations. *Brad Hooper*

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Review

"Margaret Thornton has done something that would have delighted Tennessee Williams. She has served up his revealing notebooks with so rich of a mix of additional material and notations that the result is almost a new literary genre: a mix of diary, biography, autobiography, scrapbooks, and documentary history. It is addictive, and it bares Williams's soul."—Walter Isaacson, author of *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*

(Walter Isaacson)

"These notebooks—partial as they are—will help clarify the creative and psychological highs and lows which both sustained and buffeted Tennessee Williams throughout his extraordinary life."—Edward Albee

(Edward Albee)

"Of the more than one hundred books written about Tennessee Williams since his death, his own book, the *Notebooks*, is unique. It records the innermost feelings of America's greatest playwright from youth to old age, as jotted down by the playwright himself."—Allean Hale, Krannert Theatre, University of Illinois-Urbana

(Allean Hale)

"Here we have Tennessee Williams on and about Tennessee Williams, more revealing even than the *Letters* and sometimes more vulnerable than in the *Memoirs*. Thornton has supplied a masterfully edited, copiously annotated, and lavishly illustrated edition that is invaluable for scholars and Williams fans worldwide."—Philip C. Kolin, University of Southern Mississippi

(Philip C. Kolin)

"A sound and solid record of an artist's intimate mind and heart—and while personal, the *Notebooks* offer new insight into the cognitive patterns, cultural context, and physical life of one of the twentieth century's most important writers. I was profoundly moved by this privileged glimpse at Tennessee Williams' life and mind."—Ron Carlson, Director of Creative Writing, University of California at Irvine
(Ron Carlson)

"The *Notebooks* take us on a harrowing journey, and we come to know Williams the person very intimately, in the way he quite pitilessly knew himself. Reading them is like reading Van Gogh's letters or the diary of Nijinsky: the art arises from great pain that elicits pity and terror for the artist and lets us understand the uniqueness of his creations more subtly and intuitively."—Brian Parker, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto

(Brian Parker)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tara Scribner:

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