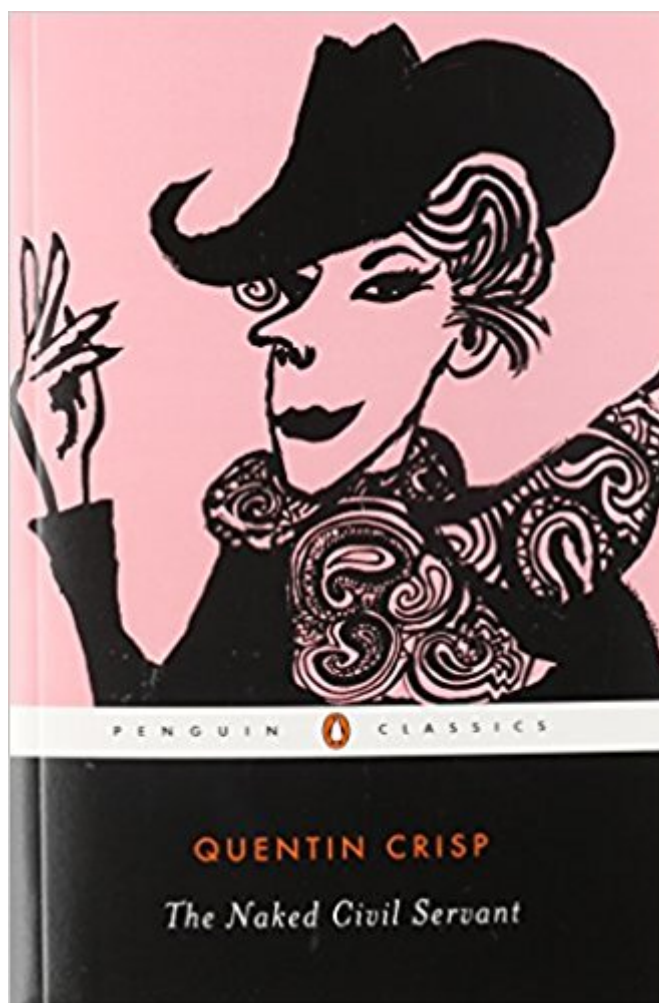


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The Naked Civil Servant (Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics)



Synopsis

A comical and poignant memoir of a gay man living life as he pleased in the 1930s. In 1931, gay liberation was not a movement—it was simply unthinkable. But in that year, Quentin Crisp made the courageous decision to "come out" as a homosexual. This exhibitionist with the henna-dyed hair was harassed, ridiculed and beaten. Nevertheless, he claimed his right to be himself—whatever the consequences. *The Naked Civil Servant* is both a comic masterpiece and a unique testament to the resilience of the human spirit. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Published at the height of the sexual revolution? 1968, to be exact? Crisp's memoir flaunting his homosexuality nonetheless raised plenty of eyebrows, even though he had been completely open about it for more than 30 years. Though quite humorous, the book is still sensitive to the feelings of anyone looking for acceptance for any reason. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"As soon as I stepped out of my mother's womb...I realized that I had made a mistake", Quentin

Crisp declares, giving a small hint of the witty and wry approach he takes toward the life he describes with uninhibited exuberance in this classic autobiography, which is both a comic masterpiece and a unique testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Crisp not only came out as a gay man in 1931, when the slightest sign of homosexuality shocked public sensibilities, but he did so with grand and provocative flamboyance, determined to spread the message that homosexuality did not exclude him or anyone else from the human race. His hilarious descriptions of encounters with parents, friends, employers, soldiers and sailors, and the law reveal the strength and humor of an honest man, determined to face the world with the uncensored, unapologetic truth about himself.

Quentin Crisp is one of the few famous queer people I can relate too. His humorous, witty insight into the life of the outcast (and specifically effeminate homosexual men) is frequently spot and often painfully revealing.

I do feel that this review may be out of place here but here goes. In the mid 1980's I was lucky enough to meet Quentin as he was performing at the Donmar Theatre in London. I was introduced to him through a close friend of mine who was a leading light in the 'alternative theatre' world. Being a photographer I was able to photograph Quentin and he was very gracious. A few months later I was in NY and telephoned him and invited him to lunch which he agreed to and we had an enjoyable lunch and I photographed him yet again. I asked him this question -: 'How did he feel about being so inspirational to so many people both homosexual and heterosexual? I do not recall his precise words but he responded in a bemused manner as if it had never occurred to him before. I told him that I was a heterosexual man and had admired him for his courage and honesty in being just who he wanted to be and that he was an icon for many of my students. He thanked me and later sent me a short letter which I was able to read out to my students in Sydney. Many of them were very appreciative on hearing his words and they eventually bought the above book. When the play, based on his life and written by Tim Fountain toured Australia, I was able to contribute a few photographs for that book. The pics were cropped but nonetheless I admired Quentin and the play was well received. The book is called 'Quentin Crisp by Tim Fountain. The play toured during the last year of Quentin's life and describes that last year. Unfortunately Quentin never got to see the play which I felt so sad about. He was a courageous man and I felt very fortunate that I got to meet him. He inspired me to be a better person and I cherish the photographs I have of him.

What a wonderful glimpse this provides into the witty, self-pity-free mind of this unique and wonderful character. Highly recommended. You'll laugh out loud - but the moving thing is his bravery, and the light touch he uses in talking about the kinds of prejudice and danger an openly gay man faced daily in his day.

My introduction to Mr. Crisp came when I saw the British television film based on this book. I was just coming out as queer, and I was riveted by the sense of self-acceptance that this character portrayed. I knew I wanted that kind of freedom in my own life, to live as honestly as possible. I found the British paperback of the book in British Columbia, and it became my constant companion. The book helped me to accept my transvestite nature, which had been a source of such scorn when I was an innocent child who wanted to wear play dresses when I played house with the neighborhood girls. Accepting my feminine nature was like embracing with safety and love the innocent child I once was, a child who was tormented for something he could not comprehend because it was a part of me that felt so natural. The writing is wonderful. Over time, Mr. Crisp came under much criticism from the queer community for some of his less popular opinions, but he was never swayed to change his mind and become a politically correct hypocrite, thank heaven. He celebrated the individual, and his style was, in essence, self-acceptance, if not self-love. His humor was charming and witty. I remember when one television interviewer asked Mr. Crisp about his dyed hair, and Mr. Crisp answered, "Some people have asked if it's a wig; but of course a wig would look more natural." I confess I've stolen that line, having a character in one of my short stories proclaim it. I return to this book again and again, and find much to admire, to adore. Perhaps Mr. Crisp wasn't happy in his homosexuality, but he has helped me to celebrate my own. A positive light, however bent.

If you're a true Stylist, you will thrill to the sound of your Master's (lilting, quavery) voice. Also helps with memorizing his in/famous quips and one-liners! ^__~

Love it, Quentin Crisp's work is becoming hard to find..I am currently looking for the movie under the same name starring William Hurt. Thank You the tapes arrived today in perfect condition ..

Brilliant. He has way with words and the message is still as pertinent as ever.

Audio Book, I purchased this Audio cassette for a Patient of mine that I take care of. He was with his

partner for 56 years!!! unbelievable right? im just so envious of him, I wanted to get him a nice gift to remember me by. This "the Naked Civil Servant" was the proper gift, beings he is very hard of hearing and Loves Audio books> When it arrived I gave it to him as a gift, he was so thrilled as he state3d he had seen the Movie the Author made about this Book, and its a True story!! he thanked me much and appreciated that I was envious of his 56 year relationship with his partner, back in the days when being GAY was bearly even accepted, noticed and or frowned upon....he suffered through the years of being silent with his lover,....and now that we are in the days where GAY marriage is allowed in many states I just wish he could have had the opportunity to Marry his partner before his partner passed. I will always remember this man, as I now have to take on new patients (im a visiting nurse) he will always stick in my mind as he and his partner paved the way for people like myself! if you have a chance to read this book or see the movie, PLEASE DO its an awesome book and an even more amazing MOVIE my patient told me!!

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