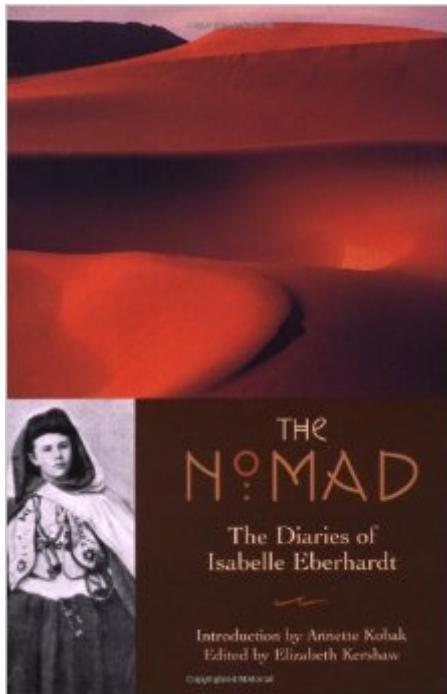


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The Nomad: The Diaries Of Isabelle Eberhardt



Synopsis

In her short life Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904) came to be known as the ultimate enigma and representative of everything that seemed dangerous in nineteenth century society. Born the illegitimate daughter of an aristocratic Russian emigree she was a cross-dresser and sensualist, an experienced drug-taker and a transgressor of boundaries: a European reborn in the desert as an Arab and Muslim, a woman who reinvented herself as a man, wandering the Sahara on horseback. A profoundly lonely individual for all her numerous sexual adventures, she roused controversy and was loved and hated in equal measure. A mysterious attempt was made on her life and even her eventual death was ambiguous: she drowned in the desert at the age of twenty-seven.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The unusual life and bizarre death of Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904) remains a mystery. Dressing as a man, she traveled through Saharan Africa and drowned -- in the desert -- at age 27, which only emphasizes the uniqueness of the written record she left behind. Unlike the works of other desert adventurers such as Sir Richard Burton and T. E. Lawrence, Eberhardt's diary never clarifies why she endured these hardships, or why her life was such a complex tangle that there was an attempt on her life shortly before she drowned. Her unsettling story of gender deception, unaccompanied travel in Islamic society, and unresolved death is so far out of cultural norms that her story is seldom told, and makes this diary all the more intriguing.

This is a book I remembered for 30 years and went back one day recently to find. I was not

disappointed although I can see why this book appealed to me so strongly as a 20 year old. Isabelle is an amazing writer. Like the writers of haiku, Isabelle captures the beauty of the desert around her and her feelings about her life in so few words and yet so beautifully. Her love of her adopted country and religion season her view and experience of life. One might wish she had had a happier time of it or been a little better at making a living, but overall this brief book is an amazing contribution to the world by a very unusual person. I highly recommend it.

It is such a pity that Isabelle Eberhardt is so little known because there is something about her that can be found in all of us. She was a free thinking, independent woman at a time when it was hardly the thing to do. She converted to Islam by her own free will but remained her own person, she did not conform to an image of what Islam should be or what others thought it should be nor did she just convert and then melt into the mass of her fellow co-religionists. She maintained much of her anarchist upbringing and lead a life that was free from and restraints. She entered the Qadiri Sufi order and seemed to have taken the order seriously practicing the prayers that she was ordered to perform. She travelled deep into Algeria and wrote of the land and its people with a style that reflects her own free spirit. She would not be confined by anyone and perhaps it was that which brought about an attempt on her life and the anger of the colonial powers who ruled Algeria. She lead a lonely life but seemed to have had several partners. Her life was full of contradictions and this book, her diaries reflects all of that. The life of a young woman who would not be restrained neither by the times that she lived in, the culture that she was from nor the religion that she had chosen to convert to. This book captures the wild mystery of a life that was lived both in the deserts of Africa and amongst the cities of Europe. A beautiful book recommended to anyone who still has the spirit of travel or the love of the writings of someone who chose to live life as they wished to live it.

This is a nice selection of entries from the short but fascinating life of Isabelle Eberhardt who begins her journal on January 1st, 1900 on an island in the Mediterranean sea with introspection that reminds me of the best of Henry Miller's Tropics and Rimbaud's season in hell. Born in Switzerland, Eberhardt traveled widely, in Tangiers and Arabia, often dressed as a boy and converted to the Muslim religion. Tales of travel and sexual adventures abound and make you want to read the complete set of her existing journals. Many of her writings were lost in the flash flood which took her life in 1904. What survived is amazing as well as tantalizing. One of the most unique women in modern times.

I agree totally with one of the other reviewers that this is pretty bad. I too, usually enjoy reading and learning about women of the Victorian era that went and did things out of the norm or traveled to exotic locals solo which was also at the time considered not proper. But this, this is just pointless. These rambling essays and random thoughts are so disjointed, uninteresting, all over the place chronologically and half the time just simply make no sense at all. This is the second book of Eberhardt's journal notes that I've read, this one I just couldn't finish. I regret ordering all of her books at once and now do not even plan on reading the others. As I said in the other review that I did for Eberhardt's "Prisoner of Dunes", if one publisher put all the books into one and put her thoughts or essays in chronological order it would at least present better. However, these entries are just so unimportant, uninteresting, and offer dull, boring, trivial information that has the reader fast asleep. I absolutely love and devour travel narrative books written by or about adventures in the Middle East, but I just could not wade through this drivel. I was highly disappointed after eagerly awaiting to read them, and often while reading kept thinking "what is the point of all this?". I plan to resell all these books I bought and hope to recoup some of my money back.

I expected to really enjoy this book as I found the subject fascinating and new to me. Unfortunately, the stilted writing and the lack of substance made it unreadable. I think a book about this woman's life with quotes interjected would be more interesting than this rambling collection of thoughts. I'm very disappointed.

This book is absolutely sincere and beautiful. A jewel.

I did not finish the book. A lot of it seemed to me like the typical journal entries of a young woman, a lot of soul searching, romantic thoughts, thoughts about being different...One of the phrases that are repeated over and over again: "I have to learn how to think..." It's probably just me, but I started to get really annoyed by that statement. In my opinion these diaries are just too personal, too intimate and not significant enough to be published.

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