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Christopher Isherwood's Concept of Isolation from *Goodbye to Berlin* to *A Single Man*

Koncept izolace v díle Christophera Isherwooda a jeho vývoj od *Goodbye to Berlin* k
A Single Man

Diplomová práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou na téma „Christopher Isherwood's Concept of Isolation from *Goodbye to Berlin* to *A Single Man*“ vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V dne.....

Podpis

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Contents:

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Being (and Writing) Gay in Anglo-American Environment.....	8
3. Goodbye to Berlin.....	13
3.1 A Berlin Diary (Autumn 1930)	14
3.2. Sally Bowles.....	16
3.3. On Ruegen Island	20
5. A Single Man	29
5.1. The Identity	30
5.1.1. George as a neighbour.....	32
5.1.2. George as a Lover	34
6. Summary	35
7. Resumé.....	36
Bibliography:	37
Anotace	39
Annotation.....	39

1. Introduction

"A few times in my life I've had moments of absolute clarity when, for a few brief seconds, the silence drowns out the noise and I can feel rather than think and things seem so sharp and the world seems so fresh, it's as though it had all just come into existence. I can never make these moments last. I cling to them, but like everything, they fade. I have lived my life on these moments. They pull me back to the present, and I realize that everything is exactly the way it was meant to be."

A Single Man (film by Tom Ford, 2009)

This Master diploma thesis I am going to focus on one of the great literary figures of Anglo-American literature – Christopher Isherwood. Gore Vidal said about Isherwood that he was "[...] the best pro writer in English"¹. However overstated this declaration might be, during Isherwood's long life he became of the leading figure of his generation.

The name of Christopher Isherwood evokes: gay, gay liberation movement, Berlin, a film with Colin Firth. The thesis is going to explore the topic of isolation as it is depicted in a selection of his works. In order to do this I have chosen several of Isherwood's novels. The research will cover Isherwood's stories from his Berlin era (*Goodbye to Berlin* and *Christopher and His Kind*) together with his probably most distinct novel *A Single Man* published in 1964. These particular titles have been chosen for their striking difference in topic, atmosphere and technique of writing. Also the works mentioned above can be considered a cross-section of Isherwood's work in general.

¹ (Woodhouse) 155

Yet the novels are also surprisingly similar at the same time. What almost all Isherwood's works have in common is a certain degree of autobiography. Isherwood said in one of his interviews: "My work is all part of an autobiography"² All Isherwood's novels are interconnected and based on real life events. The majority of his writings draw from his own experiences. One could certainly argue: which author is not inspired by his own life experiences? However, in the case of Isherwood, it is not only mere inspiration. In his Berlin stories Isherwood wrote about people he encountered, made them main characters of his stories and managed to capture the unique atmosphere of pre-war Berlin. This method is most visible in his Berlin stories – *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin*.

Christopher Isherwood is also well-known for his novella written in the sixties *A Single Man*. This work of his is often mentioned by scholars who engage in literary criticism of gay fiction. This is the reason why a chapter on the development of gay literature in general is included in the thesis.

The topic of homosexuality is important yet for another reason. Not only was homosexuality and sex life one of Isherwood's main topics, since he himself was gay, but it allowed him to see things from a different angle. "Indeed, his greatest contribution to gay literature was to depict the homosexual as a faithful mirror of the human condition."³

There are in fact two Isherwoods. The one who wrote *A Single Man* and the other who is the author of Berlin Stories. Most of Isherwood's literary works from the early thirties share a note of optimism, even though they take place just before WWII. The reason might be that Isherwood himself was so exhilarated that he finally left England. As it will be demonstrated in the next chapter, Isherwood was not happy in his homeland and soon after he became more or less self-sufficient, he left England never to go live there again.

The main differences between the above mentioned works are going to be commented on. His ability to see behind the curtain of people's souls is similar

² rozhovor

³ (Malinowski and Brelin) 285

throughout his whole career, yet, it is *A Single Man* which finally shows the most honest picture of the human condition.

At this point I would like to insert a short reflection on the novel itself. The words I use now are words of E.M. Forster who was Isherwood's mentor with whom Isherwood kept up correspondence for many years. What Forster stresses in his *Aspects of a Novel* is that a "historian records, whereas the novelist must create."⁴ Isherwood is a blend of both in this matter since all his books contain a high degree of *a record* and also of *creation*.

Furthermore, Forster emphasizes the difference between a literary character and a real person: "[...] people in a novel can be understood completely by the reader, if the novelist wishes; their inner as well as their outer life can be exposed."⁵ This is exactly the moment when Isherwood chose to divert from the conventional way. This is the most visible in *Mr. Norris Changes Train* since the main character, Mr. Norris, is always presented only from the outside. This appears to be an excellent choice of device to reach the sought-after affect as the fourth chapter will show.

Another interesting aspect of Isherwood's novels is also the position of narrator. Since almost all his works make use of the author's experiences, the narrators are often called Christopher or William (Ishweroowd's middle name) and they always stay somehow separately from the other characters. While in Berlin stories Christopher is a mere observer, the main character of *A Single Man*, George, more than that. The novel lacks a narrator from the outer world, it contains only the main character. There are a few more exceptions, for instance *Christopher And His Kind*. Isherwood wrote this novel in which he described the events of his stay in Berlin when he was sixty years old. The author himself destroyed the diaries from that time, an act which still remains a mystery. . Nevertheless, he got back to those times when he was much older.

This thesis argues that in his later life, Isherwood did something he had not dared to do before – he opened up and wrote what in his own words is his

⁴ (Forster) 56

⁵ (Forster) 57

masterpiece – *A Single Man*. While the main characters of his previous novels are observed and commented on from the outside, in *A Single Man* the narrator finally becomes the hero. Isherwood very gently captures the loneliness and detachment of the hero, George, a man in his fifties.

2. Being (and Writing) Gay in Anglo-American Environment

This chapter is going to sketch the history of modern homosexual novel. As I mentioned before, Christopher Isherwood was gay. He was not only a homosexual author, but he and his partner Don Bachardy also took part in the gay liberation movement during the seventies. Being gay was never something banal, it always was a stigma a person had to deal with. "Identification as a homosexual is frequently accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame and by a sense of (often quite justified) paranoia, for to be homosexual in most modern societies is to be set apart and stigmatized."⁶ The paranoia Summers mentions is what led many homosexual authors to hide their orientation, for instance E. M. Forster, who came out only in his *Maurice* published in 1971, after his death.

Isherwood never tried to suppress his orientation in his life, all his friends and family knew from the beginning that he was homosexual. Yet there were phases in his life when kept back, mostly among strangers when he was young. Nowadays, being homosexual is not considered a shame. However, even now there are moments when we realize that the situation is more complicated and there is a not an insignificant number of people who would oppress homosexuals rather than give them more rights. Thus we can agree that homosexuality is still a contemporary topic.

Christopher Isherwood was born in England in the times after the Wilde scandal. It had not been very long since Queen Victoria's death and the society was far stiffer than nowadays. That period was anything but favourable to being different from the majority, the least to homosexuals who were considered

⁶ (J.Summers)14

biologically defective.⁷ Even though it was not a crime to be homosexual, to indulge in homosexual activity was.⁸ The Criminal Law Amendment Act adopted in 1885 criminalized all homosexual activities and led to ruthless persecution.

Although Isherwood did not suppress his homosexuality in life, he did in his work. It was necessary to withhold the information of the narrator's orientation. However, possible punishability was not the only reason. His orientation would attract more reader's attention to the narrator, Christopher. Thus Isherwood's strength – the vivid depicting of characters who are living more or less in isolation, all of them in their own way.

Isherwood's moving from the United Kingdom can be viewed as an escape from a rigid society. In Germany, where he spent four years, the atmosphere was more open-minded. While in his homeland Isherwood gained little sexual experience, it all changed in Berlin.⁹ As he himself asserts in *Christopher and His Kind*, for Christopher, Berlin meant boys.¹⁰ Nevertheless, even though some of his finest works were written in or about Berlin, neither there did he settle. It were the United States, possibly also because their "less organized hostility to homosexuality."¹¹ That is why this thesis is going to deal mainly with American gay novel.

As Annamarie Jagose in her *Queer theory* says, during the second half of the twentieth century there were five successive schools of thoughts and politics. They were homophile movement, gay liberation movement, lesbian feminism, ethnic model of gay identity and contemporary queer theory.¹²

In the United States, the homophile organizations were for instance Chicago Society for Human Rights (the first established one) and more prominent Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis. Their goal was to organize homosexually oriented people and to improve their social status. Nevertheless,

⁷ (Trušník)16

⁸ (Jeffery-Poulter) 12

⁹ (Parker) 79

¹⁰ (Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind*) 30

¹¹ (J.Summers) 19

¹² (Jagose) 21

none of these societies became widely known. The Second World War became a milestone for homosexual minority, the society started changing views and homosexuals could gather since in almost every urban centre "the evolution of visible gay subculture"¹³ was visible with a number of gay bars.

As Claude Summers emphasizes, our culture typically perceives sexuality as a dichotomy between heterosexuality and homosexuality.¹⁴ However, many studies show that it is much more complicated. A key moment not only for homosexuals themselves but also for the thematic literature was the year 1948. A zoologist Alfred Kinsey together with Wardell Pomeroy and others published a study called *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*. Since then Kinsey's results (or more precisely methodology) have been called into question, yet this work triggered discussions. Kinsey set a scale from zero to six, zero being exclusively heterosexual and six strictly homosexual. Only small percentage of men fell into the boundary values. Thirty-seven percent of American males had had significant homosexual experience, twelve percent were predominantly homosexual for at least a three-year period and four percent were exclusively homosexual.¹⁵ The results of Kinsey's experiment were surprising and they caused a stir which opened discussions about diversity of sexual behaviour.

Had it not been for Kinsey, it is possible that the gay liberation movement would arise later than in the sixties. The gay liberation movement opposed the moderate means of homophile organizations.¹⁶ The agitation and discontentment of gays and lesbians were slowly rising. The breaking point were Stonewall Riots in June 1969. The unrest started after recurring police raids on Stonewall Inn, a homosexual bar in New York, when the occupants began to defend themselves against police harassment. Another milestone during the twentieth century was the year 1981 with the emergence of AIDS, a disease which made a whole generation of gay authors disappear. Let us mention at least the authors of so called The

¹³ (J.Summers) 23

¹⁴ (J.Summers) 13

¹⁵ (J.Summers) 24

¹⁶ (Trušník) 19

Violett Quill, a group of seven writers from New York, four of which died before 1990.

At this point, the division of pre-Stonewall literature by David Bergman is used. First, Bergman specifies works mostly for heterosexual audience in which homosexuals are only minor characters. Second, he distinguishes highly appreciated authors such as André Gide, Marcel Proust or Thomas Mann. Third group contains pornography for homosexual readers. The works of the fourth category have a homosexual perspective since they do not explain anything but they presuppose homosexual experience.¹⁷ Thus we can see that to define the beginnings of homosexual literature is extremely difficult.

One of the dominant topics has always been the so called coming out – public assertion of one's sexual orientation. However, some authors do incorporate other themes as well, a good example would be James Baldwin.¹⁸ In the year of Kinsey report (1948), two novels worth mentioning were published, Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and Gore Vidal's *The City and The Pillar*. As Trušník asserts, these two novels represent two different views on homosexual literature.¹⁹

Vidal's novel contains all the typical features of a coming-out novel – awakening of one's sexuality, difficult relationship with the hero's father and an escape from hometown. Capote, on the other hand, goes beyond the borders of a realistic novel and makes use of gothic elements and the grotesque and the coming-out is not incorporated, also because of the hero's low age.²⁰

Since the publishers certainly determined what would be published and what not, the writers often resorted to subsidy publishing. In 1956 Edward Uhlan (who worked in subsidy publishing) declared that he extremely often comes in contact with books written by homosexuals trying to explain why they are

¹⁷ (Bergman) 42-43

¹⁸ (Trušník) 51

¹⁹ (Trušník) 51

²⁰ (Trušník) 52

homosexual and making sure that they are a part of the society.²¹ The themes of gay fiction of those times were indeed not very varied.

As it has been mentioned before, James Baldwin was one of those who included thematic diversity into his novels. Let us mention at least his famous novel *Giovanni's Room*. What made Baldwin exceptional is that he not only incorporated topic of homosexual identity, but also of racial identity.

In the post-Stonewall years until 1981 the gradual liberalization led to publishing more works with homosexual themes. The literary quality of the majority of them, however, was inferior. The exception to the rule is for instance Andrew Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance*.

Christopher Isherwood grew up in times when homosexuality was a taboo subject. Throughout his long life, he witnessed the shift from a society in which being gay was something disgraceful into the postmodern world of less strict morality.

²¹ (Uhlán) 14

3. Goodbye to Berlin

Christopher Isherwood was twenty five when he moved to Berlin. The person who introduced him to the world of Berlin bars and boys was long-life friend, Wystan Hugh Auden, a famous poet and also a homosexual. There are three works that deal with his Berlin stay – *Goodbye to Berlin*, *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Christopher and His Kind*. The last mentioned differs from the first two, since it is not a novel in the real sense of the word. *Christopher and His Kind* is more of an autobiography written in the seventies, recalling (among others) the author's Berlin years.

"Berlin was the most decadent city in Europe;"²² says Isherwood in *Christopher and His Kind*. That was the reason why he decided to move there. The society was more open to homosexuals with numerous gay bars and other places they could meet in. Isherwood found there what he was looking for. The change of scenery helped Isherwood to find his place in the world. Nevertheless, he did not lose anything from his alertness and he remained a social critic. As Summers claims "[...] The homosexual's unusual relationship to society gives him or her a valuable perspective as social analyst and critic."²³ Mostly in his Berlin stories Isherwood criticizes the society by means of showing other people's dreary lives. Not very often he resorted to political debates, but still, they are present to some degree in *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and some of the stories of *Goodbye to Berlin*. What interested him more were the social conditions and humanness and throughout his writings he proved to be capable of insightful observations.

Goodbye to Berlin consists of the following stories:

"A Berlin Diary (Autumn 1930)", "Sally Bowles", "On Ruegen Island (Summer 1931)", "The Nowaks", "The Landauers", "A Berlin Diary (Winter 1932-3)"

Even though

²² (Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind*) 30

²³ (J.Summers) 15

3.1 A Berlin Diary (Autumn 1930)

The first part of "A Berlin Diary" introduces the narrator, Christopher Isherwood, young writer, his lodgings and his landlady, Frl. Schroeder. The narrator will be called Christopher in the thesis in order to distinguish him from the author himself.

Frl. Schoreder familiarly calls her guest "Herr Issyvoo". The reader learns about various flatmates that Isherwood has and they certainly are an interesting group. This house and its lodgers appear throughout the whole book and thus all the pieces are interconnected.

However, the first story centres on the character of Frl. Lina Schroeder. As Isherwood points out several times, she did not use to be as poor as she is now since before the War and the Inflation she used to be "comparatively well off and even kept a maid."²⁴ Nevertheless, those times had passed and she had to settle for a less comfortable way of life. Her lodgers are not of the most respectable kind. The quarter where "Herr Issyvoo" is living now is not of the best in Berlin. However, his landlady somehow supposes that her English guest is from the upper-middle class (at least) and actually rightly so, even though Christopher's financial and social status is not mentioned in the novel. Right from the start the landlady confides in Christopher regarding problems and peculiarities of the others. Readers are also introduced Frl. Kost, a prostitute, Frl. Mayr who is a Bavarian Nazi-minded jodlerin, and Bobby, a mixer. The reader gets a picture of an obscure society the protagonist got himself into.

Nevertheless, Christopher somehow does not fit there. Or, more precisely, that is the effect the author tries to achieve. Yet, it is questionable whether he succeeded. Herr Issyvoo is becoming a part of the world of the other characters whether he likes it or not. As readers can see, the author used his own name. This, however, can be a little misleading since in the preface he says that "the readers

²⁴ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 8

are certainly not entitled to assume that its [the book] pages are purely autobiographical"²⁵ and emphasises that " 'Christopher Isherwood' is a convenient ventriloquist's dummy, nothing more."²⁶

The first part of "A Berlin Diary" contains the famous sentence "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking."²⁷ This statement has since been quoted by almost every Isherwood critic writing. As Isherwood himself proclaims, it expresses the distance of the narrator, "He is the detached foreign observer, getting his first impressions."²⁸ In fact, it supports the idea of Isherwood's narrator not only as a foreigner coming to the country for the first time, but also.... This detachment mentioned is something that the reader notices throughout the whole book. In all the stories, readers learn almost nothing about Christopher. However, they have a chance to learn almost all the details about his stay in Berlin including his private matters in *Christopher and His Kind*, a book written in the seventies. *Christopher and His Kind* is the only genuinely autobiographical record of Isherwood's stay in Germany since he burned his diaries from those times after writing *Mr. Norris* and *Goodbye to Berlin*.²⁹

The author wisely chose the story "A Berlin Diary" to begin with. In only a few pages, readers are taken into his world which is dissimilar not only to an Englishman's world, but probably also to the majority of the inhabitants of Berlin. Nevertheless, the story lacks any depth. Even in his short stories, Isherwood incorporated something we could call "a study of character", but this short story lacks any.

²⁵ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 6

²⁶ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 6

²⁷ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 7

²⁸ (Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind*) 51

²⁹ (Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind*) 38

3.2. Sally Bowles

One of Isherwood's most famous stories is "Sally Bowles". Sally was based on Jean Ross who became Isherwood's friend for many years. She is a pretty English girl of nineteen who makes a living of sorts and she is waiting for an opportunity to become an actress. Sally is a singer and definitely not a good one.³⁰ Her lifestyle, however, is a bit more costly. Since she is worldly-wise despite her age, she is always on the lookout for a well-off man (or more precisely, *men*): " 'That's the man I slept with last night,' she announced. 'He makes love marvelously. He's an absolute genius at business and he's terribly rich.' "³¹ This she announces at the beginning of the story, just after Christopher is introduced to her. No matter how experienced or even hard-bitten she might seem, one cannot miss certain childishness. Actually, the further one keeps reading, the more immature she gets.

One cannot say that Sally is not happy with her life. Yet she very often needs to be assured that people like her and that is one of signs of her immaturity mentioned before. Christopher is asked whether he likes her and after his affirmative reply she wants to know if he is in love with her.³² At this point, the author did not give readers any hints of Christopher's homosexuality. Frl. Schroeder even considers Sally Christopher's girlfriend, "I should never have expected you to have a lady friend like that!"³³ In reply Christopher does not say anything to disclaim their romantic relationship. The reason might be this situation being a safety measure not to be suspected of homosexuality. In *Christopher and His Kind* we learn that real-life Frl. Schroeder, Frl. Meta Thureau, of course knew about Isherwood's liaisons for he did not try to conceal them in any way. She slept on a couch in the central living room so she heard all the

³⁰ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 30

³¹ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 28

³² (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 38

³³ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 39

sounds from the bedrooms she was renting. She was very understanding, exclaiming after one of Isherwood's lively nights " 'How sweet love must be!' "³⁴

As it has been said before, Sally is on the one hand almost childish and theatrical. She is extremely moody, about one of her good friends she says " 'That man bores me so! [...] I should like to kill him!' "³⁵ This is what Sally says about almost everybody.

On the other hand she is also quite realistic. She came to Berlin with a friend named Diana who actually did the same as Sally. Diana tried to find a job there but she was not as successful as Sally and thus she resorted to an easier solution: she soon found a lover who would provide for her and took her away from Berlin. Sally definitely could have been mad at her for leaving her, the younger, unexperienced one, at the mercy of a big city. However, Sally expresses deep understanding and says that " 'Everyone's got to look after themselves. I expect, in her place, I'd have done the same.' "³⁶ This shows that Sally knows the ropes.

There is one more moment I would like to mention. Sally gets pregnant with a now-ex-boyfriend of hers. When she first becomes suspicious she does not even want to go to the doctor:

" 'I wonder,' she said suddenly, 'if I'm going to have a baby.'

[...] 'But hadn't you better see a doctor?'

'Oh, I suppose so.' Sally yawned listlessly. 'There's no hurry.' "³⁷

It is strange that in a situation like this a young girl who surely cannot afford to have a baby does not really care, either about prevention or consequences. But then, when her pregnancy is confirmed, she keeps a cool head. There is no happy ending, no smiling happy family of a suddenly-grown-up Sally. She decides to

³⁴ (Isherwood, Christopher and His Kind) 52

³⁵ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 48

³⁶ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 32

³⁷ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 49

have an abortion which in her situation was the only option. However, here we can perfectly see the conflict in her personality, conflict between a grown up and naïve Sally.

There is one more example of Sally's naivety I would like to emphasize. One day a man named George P. Sandars visits Christopher with an oblique plea for a loan. Christopher of course refuses to give him anything but before the man leaves, he asks Christopher whether he knows any actresses since he sells a face-cream especially invented for them. Christopher imprudently gives him Sally's address and it has tragicomical consequences. Sally not only lends him a sum of money but also sleeps with the man (who introduces himself as Paul Rakowski now) and even accepts his marriage proposal and all this in less than 24 hours. Eventually he disappears with all Sally's money. Basically this is a comical situation but it could have a serious impact. Sally ignores any experience she has gained about men and she again and again makes the same mistakes.

Before this incident she tells Christopher that she is "beginning to think that men are always going to leave [her]."³⁸ One cannot wonder at that. Sally's behaviour is flirtatious and she herself says: " 'I'd do anything, just now, to get rich. If you're rich you can afford to stand out for a really good contract.' "³⁹ So is Sally simply a gold-digger? Behind all this there is just a young girl who is trying to do something with her life. Nevertheless, she, in her inexperience, attracts mostly men who abuse her (even though not physically). Sally keeps stumbling but always gets up again.

Finally it seems that Sally is growing mature when she pronounces that " 'I'm sick of being a whore. I'll never look at a man with money again.' "⁴⁰ Yet, it is only an illusion. After Christopher's short stay abroad he finds out that Sally's attitude to him has changed a lot. On one occasion she expresses deep content of Christopher's way of life:

³⁸ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 53

³⁹ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 48

⁴⁰ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 54

" 'I don't disapprove of you'- but she couldn't look me in the face – 'not exactly.'

'I merely make you sick?'

'I don't know what it is...You seem to have changed, somehow...'

'How have I changed?'

'It's difficult to explain... You don't seem to have any energy or want to get anywhere. You're so dilettante. It annoys me.' "41

At this point we have to admit that she might be right about Christopher being dilettante for he admits that he had not written much until his stay abroad.⁴² Yet one has to wonder whether it is not Sally who has changed. She moved out from Frl.Schroeder and seems not to suffer financially now. One can ask how she came by big money because there is no job she would mention. The reader might rightly guess that it all came from the expectable source – men.

However, this is not the end of their friendship. A few pages later, after the incident with Mr.Sandars-Rakowski they find common ground. Still, there is no absolution and it seems that even no progress in Sally's attitude to life.

I dare say that her relationship with Christopher is the only one which is worth something. Christopher is the only person who does not leave her and who sees under the surface. I believe that the reason for this is the nature of their bond – there is no sex. Even in relationships with girls it always plays certain role in form of jealousy. Isherwood himself claims that the relationship between himself and Jean Ross was "truly more intimate than the relationships between Sally and her various partners in the novel."⁴³ With Christopher there is no intercourse, no intent to change their status and no jealousy either. Nonetheless, as I have

⁴¹ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 66

⁴² (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 59

⁴³ (Isherwood, Christopher and His Kind) 56

mentioned, all this remains unsaid because of Christopher's concealed homosexuality.

Even though it might seem so, Sally is not considered a victim by Christopher. Christopher can both laugh at her and be disgusted with her. The narrator wants us to remember Sally Bowles in her bloom even with the mistakes she keeps making.

3.3. On Ruegen Island

The next short story in *Goodbye to Berlin* is "On Ruegen Island (Summer 1931)". There are two main characters – an Englishman named Peter Wilkinson and a German working-class boy Otto Nowak (sixteen or seventeen years old). "On Ruegen Island" is not the only story where we can find Otto, he is also one of the main characters of "The Nowaks", in which we also learn more about his social background. Christopher is spending a long holiday with the two men on an island in the north of Germany. They are almost always together, swimming, sunbathing and quite often fighting.

Peter and Otto are lovers. Even though this is not clearly stated anywhere in the story, there are many hints, and their homosexuality is the only possible explanation. "Even when suppressed or disguised for legal or artistic reasons, homosexuality [and not only Christopher's] is a felt presence in Isherwood's novels."⁴⁴ In *Ruegen Island* homosexuality is of course not a topic but a feature. The relationship between Otto and Peter is not perfect, in fact, they resemble opponents rather than lovers. This is partly because of the nature of the relationship – Otto is basically paid by Peter. So it is clear that to use the word *boyfriend* is a little exaggeration since the relationship is mostly based on money Peter supplies Otto with. As Isherwood states in *Christopher and His Kind*, it was quite usual for the men of the upper class (and moreover foreigners) to pay for the

⁴⁴ (Malinowski and Brelin) 286

boy's expenses in exchange for sex. Christopher himself had an affair with Otto and it ended with the same result.

The narrator first introduces Peter and explains his unhappy past. His mother died when he was a child but before that she had managed to "coddle him into a funk"⁴⁵. Several times he considered a suicide, yet for this act he was not courageous enough. The relationship with his father and siblings is rather non-existent since he proved to be good for nothing – he was not interested in the family business nor did he have any other occupation or at least a hobby. The author is trying to describe Peter as a misfit.

Yet, Peter face brightens when he is with Otto (in case they are on speaking terms). It seems that these are the only moments when he is not distressed. Otto is the only person Peter cares about and he is basically dependent on him. Before Peter came to Berlin, he spent a lot of money on a therapist whom he attended three times a week. Then he heard of a Berlin analyst who was cheaper so he decided to leave for Germany.

"And are you still going to him [the German analyst]?"

I asked.

"No... I can't afford to, you see."⁴⁶

The reason why Peter cannot afford his therapy now is Otto. Peter has literally exchanged the doctors for a lover, and it did not come to his expectations.

While Peter is clearly homosexual, Otto prefers girls. Isherwood explains Otto's sexual preferences in *Christopher and His Kind*.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, even the reader of "On Ruegen Island" comes to this conclusion, for instance Otto goes dancing with girls at the Kurhaus every day, to Peter's distaste. Otto not only goes dancing, but he also flirts with a young woman, a school teacher. It must be said that Otto does all this ostentatiously to provoke Peter even more. Otto on the one hand needs Peter, on the other hand he does everything to drive him away.

⁴⁵ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 82

⁴⁶ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 85

⁴⁷ (Isherwood, Christopher and His Kind) 50

"One evening, we were all walking up the main street [...]. Otto said to Peter with his most spiteful grin: 'Why must you always look in the same direction as I do?' This was surprisingly acute, for, whenever Otto turned his head to stare at a girl, Peter's eye mechanically followed his glance with instinctive jealousy."⁴⁸

The reason of Otto's behaviour is possibly an attempt to break free from Peter's financial domination. Otto is paid for his company but he does not accept his inferior status. And this behaviour only strengthens Peter's dissatisfaction. Claude Summers describes it as a "spoilt homosexual idyll [...]"⁴⁹ It is important to emphasize that Peter's motive is not a need to be dominant but his need for love.

While in the beginning of the story the atmosphere is light and optimistic, towards the end it deteriorates as well as Peter and Otto's relationship. Peter starts to treat Otto as a child, for instance he commands him when he has to come home from the dancing. Naturally, Otto does not like Peter's attitude and starts rebelling, really as a child.

" 'Come here,' [Peter] said again, in a sharp tone of command.

'Oh, leave me alone,' said Otto, 'I'm sick of you. I want to sleep now. Tomorrow I'm going back to Berlin.' "⁵⁰

And later on he really leaves. A few hours before Otto disappears, Christopher is talking to Peter about Otto.

"I asked: 'You don't think he cares for you, at all?'

'At the beginning he did, perhaps... Not now. There's nothing between us but my cash.' "⁵¹

⁴⁸ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 92

⁴⁹ (Malinowski and Brelin) 287

⁵⁰ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 95

⁵¹ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 98

This conversation concludes with Peter's confession that it would be better for him to leave Otto altogether but that he is not capable of that. All this just before they come home and discover that the young man has left for Berlin together with some of Peter's clothes and all his money, leaving just a short note, "Please forgive me, I couldn't stand it any longer here so I'm going home. [...] Don't be angry."⁵² Soon after him Peter leaves as well and goes back home to England to find another therapist.⁵³

Even though it cannot be said about either character that they live on the margin of society, there is something they share with those who do. Peter, being a homosexual, is predestined to never fully fit in. Together with his family background and fragile psyche the result is an isolated, depressive individual dependent on others and their affections.

No matter how different Otto seems, he has a few similar features. Otto is caught in a situation which does not suit him and this makes him angry even with people he once liked. The financial aspect of his relationship with Peter is something that he on the one hand needs, on the other hand it makes him despise himself. This contempt he feels is transformed into exasperation. So we now see that despite their differences both of them are engaged in their isolation and cannot help each other.

3.4. The Nowaks

As I have mentioned before, "The Nowaks" captures the family of Otto Nowak, one of the main characters of the previous story. Christopher is looking for a cheaper room to live in and visits the Nowaks, who live in Wassertorstrasse, to ask if they know of any free lodgings nearby. Frau Nowak is at first shocked: " 'But you can't live in this part of town – a gentleman like you! Oh, no. I'm afraid it wouldn't suit you at all.' "⁵⁴ Nevertheless, after their conversation she offers him to stay with the family in their small two-room flat. She is embarrassed to do it

⁵² (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 99

⁵³ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 100

⁵⁴ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 104

herself so she sends her younger son Otto to tell Christopher. The flat they live in is shabby and damp, yet Christopher accepts their offer.

The family consists of Frau Nowak, Herr Nowak, Otto, Grete and Lothar, a man of twenty. Christopher is to sleep in the back room with Otto while the rest of the family sleep in the living room, four people in two beds. Nowhere in the story it is expressed but Otto and Christopher are sleeping together, in fact, they are having the same kind of relationship as Otto and Peter Wilkinson had before. Peter's name is mentioned just once:

" 'Do you ever hear from Peter? I asked.

[...] 'Please...' he was gently reproachful, 'please, never mention Peter's name to me again. [...] Peter hurt me very much. I thought he was my friend. And then, suddenly, he left me – all alone...' "55

Even though Christopher does not express any astonishment, Otto's description of the events on Ruegen Island is very strange indeed. It was Otto himself who abandoned Peter. This certainly shows that Otto is still just a boy who needs to be ensured of the love of other people. After all, he does not differ from Peter very much. Only the way he shows his solitude is different. He loves to exaggerate and apparently enjoys acting as well, as it is several times also mentioned.⁵⁶

An attentive reader detects signs of something more than just friendship between the two. After breakfast, Otto usually exercises while Christopher writes, for "his admiration"⁵⁷. Otto knows the impact it has not only on girls but on men as well, to see his young body stretching and sweating and it is all done for a purpose. Otto wants to be wanted, more precisely he needs to be wanted.

The reason for this may lie in the family. Otto's relationship with his mother is far from ideal. Throughout the story Frau Nowak gets more and more space. It is her character which deserves a more detailed analysis. It seems that the

⁵⁵ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 116

⁵⁶ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 104

⁵⁷ (Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*) 100

mother has given up hope that her children, maybe except for Lothar, appreciate what she does for them. As Colin Wilson states, "the description of Frau Nowak is detached, almost cruel."⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it is the life which has been cruel to her and Isherwood depicts all of this very faithfully.

Even though they all live together, it cannot be said that they have a close relationships There are few moments, when Christopher finds what he was looking for – the solidarity among them. One of these occasions is Christopher's first evening with the Nowaks, Frau Nowak cooks a hearty dinner paid for with Christopher's money and they are talking and dancing.⁵⁹ Yet, most of the days the atmosphere is tense. The reason for the tension is mostly Frau Nowak's relationship with her younger son and her daughter. Grete is a fat girl of twelve who does not help her mother at all:

" 'Mummy! Come and look at the pretty flowers!'

'I've got no time for your pretty flowes,' exclaimed Frau Nowak at length, in great exasperation: 'Here am I with a daughter the size of an elephant, having to slave all by myself, cooking the supper!' "⁶⁰

In this moment Otto steps in and scolds Grete for just sitting around doing nothing. Otto's intervention is grotesque since he certainly does not set a good example. Even though he is seventeen, he does not do anything, not at home, nor anywhere else. Once he had a job as an apprentice to an upholsterer but after a few weeks he left, for as he says: "The master was so unkind to me. He always gave me the hardest jobs to do. [...] And do you think I put up with that?"⁶¹ He certainly did not. In general, Otto does only what he wants exactly as a small child.

It is no wonder that his mother favours her older son, Lothar, who works hard and even attends an evening school. That does not mean she detests Otto; she

⁵⁸ Notes 321

⁵⁹ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 108

⁶⁰ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 107

⁶¹ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 114

is, to a certain extent, tolerant, "Otto's not a bad boy, but he's such a scatterbrain."⁶² The word scatterbrain is indeed an understatement. Nevertheless, she continues her monologue by praising Lothar, she even terms him "a model son"⁶³.

The constant comparing of Lothar to Otto always leads to, as Isherwood called it, "a sermon about the Good and the Worthless Brother"⁶⁴. Otto's reaction to Frau Nowak's declaration that he is no son of hers⁶⁵ is dancing around the room and behaving like a mad man. There is one more thing regarding Otto which embarrasses Frau Nowak – and that is his relations with men. During the first evening the head of the family, Herr Nowak, hints at Peter:

" 'Christoph doesn't like our food,' said Herr Nowak. 'Nevermind, Christoph, you'll get used to it. Otto was just the same when he came back from the seaside. He'd got used to all sorts of fine ways, with his Englishman...'

'Hold your tongue, father!' said Frau Nowak warningly."⁶⁶

To none of them occurs that Christopher spent the holiday with Otto and "his Englishman". Frau Nowak apparently knows that the Englishman was not just a friend. I dare say that Herr Nowak also, yet he does not mind to express himself even before a stranger. It is thus his wife who is at least trying to maintain the decorum.

Not only Frau Nowak's family is problematic, her health as well – she keeps coughing night and day. The insanitary conditions of their dwelling only make her trouble worse. Finally, it is decided that she is going to a sanatorium for a few weeks. Towards her departure Christopher spends more and more time away from the flat. Before Frau Nowak leaves for the sanatorium, he moves out altogether. Otto manifestly expresses his fears that within six months he will die,

⁶² (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 107

⁶³ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 107

⁶⁴ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 122

⁶⁵ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 122

⁶⁶ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 109

no cause mentioned. He also again shows his childishness by saying that his father will not give him anything to eat.⁶⁷ At Otto's age he should be able to take care of himself. Yet, when he hears the word "work", he bursts into tears.⁶⁸ Otto is posing himself into the role of a victim, only to draw attention.

Few weeks after Frau Nowak leaves, Christopher visits the family. There are only Herr Nowak and Grete in the flat, both sons spend more time with their friends. Christopher finds Herr Nowak drunk, dancing with Grete only by candlelight since the electricity bill has not been paid. The flat is very messy since there is nobody who would care now. It is clear that none of them cares about any of this.

One day Otto and Christopher visit Frau Nowak in the sanatorium. They are introduced to the women she shares her room with and the whole day is jolly. Since Frau Nowak does not have to do anything there, just take care of herself, she feels better now and "[looks] years younger"⁶⁹.

What is surprising is that the problems seem to have disappeared, there is not a single fight between her and Otto. But still, she assumes it must have been Christopher who organised the visit: "Ah, Herr Christoph, how nice of you to come! How nice of you to bring Otto to visit me!"⁷⁰ Although the visit is the only occasion when Otto and his mother are not quarrelling, she seems to have given up on him. She does not expect any kindness from her son's side.

In "The Nowaks" it is the mother who is given most space. Thus Isherwood shows her suffering. Frau Nowak is the person who holds the family together. Nonetheless, it is not acknowledged by anybody. She is a very unhappy person but she still can find joy. Her health is constantly deteriorating and not a single one of her children cares to help her with the household. She is always surrounded by people but no one can give her what she needs. The only way she

⁶⁷ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 127

⁶⁸ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 127

⁶⁹ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 132

⁷⁰ (Isherwood, Goodbye to Berlin) 133

shows her woes is constant scolding. Thus she is isolated, even though she is not alone.

What the short stories included in *Goodbye to Berlin* have in common is a certain impression of triviality. They often include only one or two round characters, the rest of them are flat. This would not be very surprising in short stories but the form of the narrative is. Even though the first-person narrative is usually used to stress the narrator's point of view, Isherwood chose not to include the narrator into the stories at all. The reader knows nothing about Christopher's behaviour and very little about his opinions. Neither does the reader get into the characters' heads since there are no descriptions of their mental processes. The stories remind more of drafts prepared for further elaboration or comical sketches. Yet, while reader laughs at Sally's foolishness, at the same time there is a penetrating sense of gloom. "On Ruegen Island" is not simply a story about a break up but it captures the atmosphere of isolation which cannot be eliminated. While these two mentioned parts of *Goodbye to Berlin* are centered on the characters themselves, the other stories are more focused on the German society and the changes it was going through.

5. A Single Man

When Isherwood wrote *A Single Man* he was sixty years old. It was published in 1964, still a few years before the Stonewall Riots. However, the gay liberation movement had already started. This novel is often categorized as a novel of the homosexual subculture.⁷¹ The issue of sexual orientation is certainly incorporated, yet, it is not the subject matter of the novel as several critics point out. Roman Trušník emphasizes that the topic of a midlife crisis plays a more prominent role than homosexuality.⁷² The theme of homosexuality is not in the focal point, it is presented as a given fact.⁷³ George does not come out as a gay in the novel. The reason of this is the society for the novel takes place not in the sixties but a decade before. The time of the story is extremely important since these were the times when one's homosexuality was still a private matter inappropriate to talk about. Thus George has to hide his orientation.

A Single Man differs from Isherwood's Berlin stories in the aspect of the narrator. The change in the style of narration is considerable. The first person is preserved but the narrator is also the hero, unlike *Goodbye to Berlin* and *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, in which the attention was centred on the people around him.

The novel definitely shares many things with his previous works. What makes *A Single Man* peculiar in all Isherwood's writings is that his previous novels (possibly with the exception of the which he collaborated with Auden) miss some key features of *A Single Man*.

The main character is a middle-aged university professor named George, an Englishman living in Los Angeles whose partner Jim died several months ago. The novel captures one day of George's life. In this aspect it is similar to Virginia

⁷¹ (Burgess) 92

⁷² (Trušník) 61

⁷³ (Trušník) 64

Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and the stream of consciousness is also present. None of Isherwood's previous works employed this technique and he does so very meaningfully. *A Single Man* is the only Isherwood's novel which lets a reader to know the hero's mental processes.

A Single Man is not an autobiographical novel. Yet, although no Isherwood's partner had ever died (since 1953 Isherwood lived with his life-long partner, Don Bachardy, thirty years his junior, in a more or less happy relationship), there are certain similarities between George's and Isherwood's lives. The analogies between the two are for instance the British origin, place of living and also the position. Isherwood finally settled in Santa Monica in California and for several years he also taught at Los Angeles State College (now California State University). Apparently Isherwood used a few of his own characteristics for the hero of *A Single Man*.

Having described one day in George's life (which may be his last) Isherwood achieves to capture more than that. As opposed to *Berlin Stories*, in this novel Isherwood ponders about the nature of human existence as it will be shown in the next subchapters.

5.1. The Identity

One of the themes that recur throughout the novel is one's identity. The hero, being a homosexual, cannot fully expose himself to everyone. As Claude Summers says: "Though George is by no means defined solely by his homosexuality, it is, in fact, the characteristic that most pervasively defines his life."⁷⁴ The impossibility to open up leads him to take on several roles. The role of a neighbour, a teacher, a friend and a lover. As Woodhouse asserts, some of these roles have been imposed on him and he can no longer escape.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ (J.Summers) 203

⁷⁵ (Woodhouse) 156

Even being George is a role. In the very beginning of the novel, the hero is depersonalized:

"Waking up begins with saying am and now. That which has awoken then lies for a while staring up at the ceiling and down into itself until it has recognized I, and therefrom deduced I am, I am now."⁷⁶

The first couple of sentences suggest that waking up is seen as the act of birth; when one is born, he is a tabula rasa. After getting up, there are rituals that George has to undergo to become George "It knows its name. It is called George. By the time it has gotten dressed, it has become he, has become more or less George."⁷⁷ Clothes thus make him, who he is. Without them, he would again become the nameless entity.

The mornings are good for George for their indefiniteness which causes certain unconsciousness. The breaking point comes at the moment of descending the stairs.

"The doorway into the kitchen has been built too narrow. [...] And it is here, nearly every morning, that George, having reached the bottom of the stairs, has this sensation of suddenly finding himself on an abrupt, brutally broken off, jagged edge – as though the track had disappeared down a landslide. It is here that he stops short and knows. With a sick newness, almost as though it were for the first time: Jim is dead. Is dead."⁷⁸

George every morning undergoes the same pain time and again, the pain of realization of Jim's death. Curiously, this cruel awareness does not come in a place they spent more time in, such as the bedroom, or the living room couch. The

⁷⁶ (Isherwood, *A Single Man*) 4

⁷⁷ (Isherwood, *A Single Man*) 4

⁷⁸ (Isherwood, *A Single Man*) 4

pain acute George is feeling disappears, yet, Jim's death became reality again and George is reminded of the fact that he is all alone.

5.1.1. George as a neighbour

The house of Jim and George on Camphor Tree Lane was the only place where they could be who they were, the house was their sanctuary. The secret-looking house is surrounded by trees and accessible only by a bridge. George comments on the house: "As good as being on our own island."⁷⁹ They lived separately of the other neighbours and it satisfied their needs.

For the neighbour's children he has taken the form of an "old storybook monster"⁸⁰ which he enjoys:

"This is the role George has found himself playing, with increasing violence, since he started to live alone. It releases a part of his nature which he hated Jim to see."⁸¹

Jim's death had another impact on George, in contact with children George changes. He gives vent to something inside him and it transforms a calm elderly man into a savage individual.

After George's breakfast there is a long toilet scene. While sitting on the toilet bowl, he is reading a book and contemplating about his neighbours. The bathroom is on the ground floor and as there is a large window, he can see what is happening at the neighbours' yards. George in length describes the whole day of their prototypical families.

Whilst sitting and reading, he is watching the children play during what he calls "the Mothers' Hour"⁸². He does not observe their morning rituals with envy,

⁷⁹ (Isherwood, A Single Man) 7

⁸⁰ (Isherwood, A Single Man) 8

⁸¹ (Isherwood, A Single Man) 8

on the contrary, he sees under the surface of a polished family. A son of Mrs. Strunk, living just across the street, is "murdering"⁸³ scales:

"Ah, here's Benny, hammer in hand. He hunts among the trash cans set out ready for collection on the sidewalk and drags out a broken scale. As George watches, Benny begins smashing it with his hammer, uttering cries as he does so; he is making believe that the machine is screaming with pain."⁸⁴

After his mother sees Benny's aggressivity towards the object, she does not yell or reproach him for his conduct since "she has read all the psychology books"⁸⁵ and calmly asks him to stop. Overall she thinks that her liberal upbringing is being successful but as George remarks, the boy stops smashing the scales not because his mother told him to but because he got bored of it.

Another Mrs. Strunk's son starts shooting a carbide cannon, again with no consequence. Mrs. Strunk attitude to bringing up children is according to George inappropriate. As George observes, Mrs. Strunk is a perfect example of a conformist who likes to be told what to do and what to think, and not only regarding her children.

The day in Camper Tree lane is always the same. After the Mothers' Hour, there is also a Father's hour when the husbands come home. The weekends are special since the families always spend them together, doing barbecue etc. All this is a fairly standard picture of life in the sixties. George comments sardonically: "Mr. Strunk and Mr. Garfein are proud of their kingdom."⁸⁶ He knows that he is different and that he simply does not belong. The Strunks and the Garfeins are aware of George's difference as well.

⁸² (Isherwood, A Single Man) 9

⁸³ (Isherwood, A Single Man) 8

⁸⁴ (Isherwood, A Single Man) 8

⁸⁵ (Isherwood, A Single Man) 9

⁸⁶ (Isherwood, A Single Man) 10

Their attitude to George is something he calls "new tolerance – the technique of annihilation by blandness".⁸⁷ George meditates on his neighbour's stand to him. Anything anomalous is considered a threat: "Among many other kinds of monster, George says, they are afraid of little me."⁸⁸ He perceives this behaviour as cowardly and it leads him to resentment of society he, however, is assimilated.

What George shares with Isherwood's characters from the Berlin stories is certain alienation. But while in the case of the heroes of "Sally Bowles", "The Nowaks" or "On Ruegen Island" the estrangement was caused by the life circumstances, George's isolation is triggered by his orientation.

The passages which comment on the Strunks or Garfields are one of the most insightful. George, as he says, "sees them" but they do not see him since he is only the poor widowed homosexual.

5.1.2. George as a Lover

Another topic reappearing in *A Single Man* is love. As Forster points out, love in novels is different from real life. In real life love is far more complex impression, it is not constant, and if it is constant, it is more of a social habit, not a human relationship.⁸⁹

A Single Man is the only story where love is essential. "The relationship of George and Jim gradually emerges to become the most deeply felt love story in all of Isherwood's fiction."⁹⁰ Nonetheless, it is possible that George's and Jim's love had become a social habit. All George has got now are memories and as time passes he tends to embellish them. Why is love so prominent? "I believe that these

⁸⁷ (Isherwood, *A Single Man*)10

⁸⁸ (Isherwood, *A Single Man*)10

⁸⁹ (Forster) 62

⁹⁰ (J.Summers) 202

are the reflections of the novelist's own state of mind while he composes, and that the predominance of love in novels is partly of this."⁹¹

It seems that the only reason of George's loneliness is Jim's death. However, it is not so. It is true that when Jim was still alive, they had their own world and were companions for each other. Yet, one can be isolated even in a pair.

George has not coped with Jim's death; it still has a huge impact on his life. Nevertheless, towards the end of the day he meditates on finding a new partner.⁹² This is just only a pure fantasy. George is not capable of any other relationships than those he has or those he has lost. "You won't and you never will."⁹³

6. Summary

The objective of the thesis was to explore the topic of isolation in two major works by Christopher Isherwood since they seem to differ in many aspects on the first sight. Nevertheless, it has been proved that despite these differences Isherwood maintained the feature which makes particular – the ability to capture the complexity of human existence and experience. *Goodbye to Berlin* the particular stories are certain sketches of his acquaintances, sometimes mocked for their faults, other times sympathized with for their fate. The sixties enabled a novel of an overt gayness to be published. It is the novel *A Single man* which finally allows Isherwood to open up and make use also of his homosexual experience. Nevertheless, George cannot be categorized only a gay, he is also a professor and a friend. In all these roles his homosexuality changes his perspective and thus the protagonist of *A Single Man* is the most fully human of all Isherwood's gay characters.

⁹¹ (Forster) 63

⁹² (Isherwood, *A Single Man*) 90

⁹³ (Isherwood, *A Single Man*) 8

7. Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá známým autorem britského původu Christopherem Isherwoodem. Isherwood se narodil roku 1904 v Anglii do vyšší společenské třídy, záhy si však začal uvědomovat, že upjatost tohoto prostředí mu kvůli jeho homosexualitě nikdy neumožní svobodné konání. Z tohoto důvodu pak odjel do Berlína, kde žil několik let před 2. světovou válkou a napsal jedno ze svých nejznámějších děl, *Goodbye to Berlin* (Sbohem, Berlíne).

Výše zmíněný povídkový román je v této práci porovnáván s dalším významným románem: *A Single Man* (Svoboný muž) z roku 1964. Hlavní rozdíl mezi uvedenými díly tkví v tom, že zatímco *Goodbye to Berlin* skečovitou formou uvádí pokaždé jinou hlavní postavu, v druhém románu Isherwood vytvořil postavu George, univerzitního profesora středního věku, jemuž zemřel životní partner. Je to právě George, který jako jediný z Isherwoodových postav dosahuje největší hloubky. Čtenář s Georgem prožívá celý den, od probuzení až do usnutí (a možné smrti). Práce prokázala, že právě v tomto románu se Isherwoodovi podařilo zachytit samu podstatu lidské existence se všemi kladnými i zápornými stránkami.

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Anotace

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Název práce: Koncept izolace v díle Christophera Isherwooda a jeho vývoj od *Goodbye to Berlin* k *A Single Man*

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Libor Práger, Ph.D.

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Annotation

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Department: Dep.of English and American studies, FF UP

Title: Christopher Isherwood's Concept of Isolation from *Goodbye to Berlin* to *A Single Man*

Supervisor: PhDr. Libor Práger, Ph.D

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Key words: Isherwood, homosexuality, Berlin, gay, development

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Characteristics: Main theme of the thesis is development of Christopher Isherwood as an author. It analyzes two major works, *Goodbye to Berlin* and *A Single Man*, the first one written in the thirties, the second one thirty years later.