

Twentieth-Century
Literary Criticism

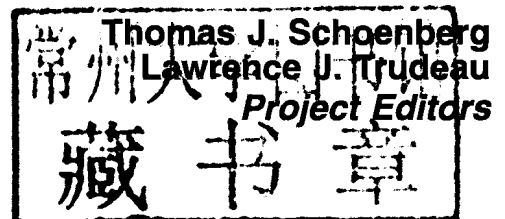
TCLC

227

Volume 227

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



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**Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol.
227**

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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." TCLC "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

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A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the author's actual name is given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the name of its author.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it originally appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *TCLC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the numbers of the *TCLC* volumes in which their entries appear.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." In *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*, edited by Reginald M. Nischik, pp. 163-74. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2007. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 206, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 227-32. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

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Christopher Isherwood

1904-1986

(Full name Christopher William Bradshaw Isherwood) English-born American novelist, playwright, autobiographer, nonfiction writer, screenwriter, biographer, and essayist.

The following entry provides an overview of Isherwood's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *CLC*, Volumes 1, 9, 11, 14, and 44.

INTRODUCTION

Isherwood is considered a prominent prose writer of the twentieth century. Although he produced plays, essays, and religious writings, as well as several autobiographies and biographies, he is best known for his keen observations of Weimar Germany as presented in the novels *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), which were published collectively as *The Berlin Stories* in 1946. Throughout his career Isherwood examined universal themes, including alienation, sexuality, spirituality, and the nature of personal identity. In his later works, including the novel *A Single Man* (1964) and his second autobiography, *Christopher and His Kind, 1929-1939* (1976), the author candidly addressed the subject of homosexuality and openly expressed his views on religion and spirituality. Often noted for his unobtrusive writing style and his insights into Western culture, Isherwood has increasingly been recognized for his wit, subtle irony, and masterful formal stylizations. Paul Robinson has declared that "Christopher Isherwood is a deceptively straightforward writer, as much in his autobiographical works as in his fiction. His unfailing lucidity and his eagerness to entertain can distract us from attending to his deeper—and often deeply serious—purposes. Just as important, they can dull our sensitivity to the sometimes dizzying authorial posturing and self-ironizing that create multiple levels of meaning and invite complex, even contradictory, interpretations."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Isherwood was born August 26, 1904, in High Lane, Cheshire, the son of Kathleen Machell-Smith and Frank Bradshaw-Isherwood, a military officer. In his youth he attended St. Edmund's preparatory school in Surrey, where he first met the Anglo-American poet W. H. Au-

den. In the spring of 1915, during World War I, Isherwood's father was killed in action in France. Four years later Isherwood began attending Repton, a prestigious public school, where he met a student named Edward Upward, with whom he established a close relationship. Isherwood followed Upward to Corpus Christi College, in Cambridge, in 1923. At college Isherwood and Upward collaborated on surrealistic fantasies that they called the Mortmere stories, in which the authors satirized the hypocrisies and conventions of English culture. Isherwood failed to keep up with his studies at Cambridge, however, and after fabricating answers on an exam in 1925 he was asked to withdraw from the university.

On leaving Cambridge Isherwood moved to London, where he worked as the private secretary for a string quartet and began to seriously pursue a career in writing. In London he was reunited with Auden, who introduced him to Stephen Spender, another poet and Oxford undergraduate, and the three formed a literary circle, later referred to as the "Auden Gang." In 1928 Isherwood's first novel, *All the Conspirators*, was published. Poor book sales prompted him to consider a career in medicine, but his attempt to study at King's College, London, was unsuccessful. In 1929 Isherwood visited Germany and decided to move to Berlin, where he felt free from the stifling social and sexual expectations of English culture. Once settled in Berlin he finalized his second novel, *The Memorial: Portrait of a Family* (1932), and began writing down his impressions of pre-Hitler Germany. These impressions formed the basis of his acclaimed work, *The Berlin Stories*, which includes the novels *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin*. *Goodbye to Berlin* contains sketches that Isherwood had published separately, including the episode titled "Sally Bowles," which appeared as a novella in 1937.

Isherwood left Berlin in the early 1930s, when the political climate intensified and the Nazi party came to power. Isherwood, along with his German lover, a young man known only as Heinz, wandered Europe until 1937, when Heinz was forced to return to Germany. After entering the country Heinz was arrested for homosexual activities and sentenced to serve in the German army. During this time Isherwood continued to write and produced several plays in collaboration with Auden, including *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935), *The Ascent of F6* (1936), and *On the Frontier* (1938).

In 1938 Isherwood produced his first autobiographical work, *Lions and Shadows*, and traveled to China with Auden, which prompted another collaborative effort, *Journey to a War* (1939), a travel book and commentary on the Sino-Japanese conflict. Before returning to London Isherwood and Auden briefly visited the United States. As a result of mounting tensions in England and the threat of war, both Isherwood and Auden immigrated to the United States in January 1939.

During this transition Isherwood embraced pacifism, a conviction prompted, in part, by his fear that Heinz was now a German soldier. After arriving in New York the author visited southern California, where he decided to settle permanently. In Los Angeles Isherwood adopted the tenets of Vedantism, a branch of Hindu philosophy, which informed much of his later writings. He continued to write in the United States and produced another novel, *Prater Violet* (1945), which he followed with *The World in the Evening* in 1954. During this period he also established a romantic relationship with a young painter named Don Bachardy, with whom he remained for the rest of his life.

Isherwood continued to be productive throughout the 1960s, writing the novels *Down There on a Visit* (1962), *A Single Man*, and *A Meeting by the River* (1967). During the 1970s the author turned to nonfiction, producing *Kathleen and Frank* (1971), a biographical treatment of the lives and marriage of his parents, and what many consider his major autobiographical work, *Christopher and His Kind*, in which he examines his political and sexual experiences of the 1930s. In the last years of his life Isherwood became an increasingly outspoken advocate for homosexual rights and produced numerous speeches and essays for the cause. On January 4, 1986, Isherwood died of cancer, in Santa Monica, California.

MAJOR WORKS

Isherwood's literary reputation primarily rests on the success of those works known collectively as *The Berlin Stories*. The first of these works, *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, features a protagonist bearing the author's middle names, William Bradshaw. Bradshaw is a young and naive English author, who in 1930 is introduced to Berlin culture by an aging adventurer, named Arthur Norris. Norris, sometimes described as one of the most seductive comic figures of modern literature, is depicted as both lovable and dangerous. Bradshaw is thoroughly charmed by Norris, describing him, at one point, as "an amazing old crook," and regards him as an innocent but badly behaved child. As the novel progresses, however, the negative consequences of Norris's behavior are revealed. A decadent figure named Baron von Pregnitz commits suicide after Norris blackmails him, and the

Communist party leader, Ludwig Bayer, is assassinated as a result of Norris's betrayal. Gradually Norris emerges as a petty version of Adolf Hitler. As scholars have noted, Isherwood implicates readers in these ironic revelations, forcing them into a sympathetic understanding of both the gullible Bradshaw and the German people, who naively embraced Hitler during the 1930s.

In *Goodbye to Berlin*, another novel comprising *The Berlin Stories*, Isherwood analyzes the public and private factors that led to the rise of fascism in Germany. Written in six parts, the work achieves unity through the presence of a first-person narrator, an inhibited young man coming of age in a corrupt and decaying world. Isherwood also carefully balances the disparate characters that he introduces, underscoring both their polarities and their underlying similarities. The narrator, who compares himself to a camera, encounters these individuals with some degree of sympathy but ultimately fails to connect with them. The characters of *Goodbye to Berlin*, including a defiant gentile named Sally Bowles, the prim Jewess Natalia Landauer, the intellectual Englishman Peter Wilkinson, and an unrefined German hustler named Otto Nowak, represent the isolation and loneliness of German culture. In Isherwood's depiction, several factors, including alienation, the failure of morality on an individual level, and a distorted sense of reality, contribute to the spiritual death of the entire city and, in turn, to the spread of fascism throughout the country.

Although not as well known as his works produced in the 1930s and 1940s, Isherwood's late novels, written after his immigration to the United States, have attracted renewed interest from scholars in recent years. *Prater Violet*, Isherwood's first novel written after he left England, is set in London and features a protagonist named Christopher Isherwood, who is hired to assist a Viennese director named Friedrich Bergmann with the screenplay of a sentimental, escapist musical comedy. While the author incorporates levity and comic elements in the work, he also treats serious subjects, including Engelbert Dollfuss's repression of the Socialist uprising in Austria in 1934 and the spread of fascism throughout Europe. The primary themes of *Prater Violet* include issues of identity, the role of the artist in modern society, and the quest for transcendence, as related to the Vedantic renunciation of the ego.

Spiritual awakening is also an important theme in *The World in the Evening*, which follows the development of Stephen Monk, a rich and immature young man whose life disintegrates after the failure of his second marriage. Guided by several forces, including the ghost of his first wife, his Quaker aunt, and the examples of a German refugee and a homosexual couple, Monk is able to achieve inner peace and relinquish his egoism. In *Down There on a Visit*, Isherwood once again gives

his own name to the protagonist of the novel, who searches for meaning in his life and is forced to confront his own failures of commitment. In separate episodes the character of Isherwood visits four men as a tourist to their lives and witnesses their struggles. Some scholars consider *Down There on a Visit* the most autobiographical of Isherwood's novels.

Of all the author's late works *A Single Man* is regarded as the most accomplished, approaching in style, irony, and craftsmanship the author's early major works of fiction. Told from an omniscient third-person perspective, the novel traces a day in the life of George, a middle-aged English professor who is grieving over the death of his lover. Through the day's events, which are seemingly inconsequential and mundane, George experiences a spiritual awakening, and in the face of his grief is able to renew his commitment to life. *A Single Man* has also been recognized for its insightful portrayal of life in Los Angeles in the early 1960s. David Garrett Izzo has asserted that the novel "is Isherwood's most distinctive and perhaps his finest work," concluding that "for those who know the more subtle forms of mysticism, *A Single Man* is a mystical novel and a great one."

Isherwood's biographical and autobiographical works also constitute a significant portion of his literary output. In his early autobiography, *Lions and Shadows*, the author chronicles his early years, incorporating characters modeled after Spender, Auden, and Upward. In this work Isherwood also discusses his growing disenchantment with English culture, while treating the issue of his homosexuality in a veiled or "coded style," according to the critic Paul Robinson. In *Kathleen and Frank* Isherwood offers a remembrance of his parents, alternating passages from their letters and his mother's diary entries with his own commentary. The work begins with the Isherwoods' first meeting in the 1890s, covers the author's childhood years and young adulthood until his departure from England in 1939, and for the first time reveals his sexual orientation. At the end of the work Isherwood reflects on the impact that his parents had on his life. In *Christopher and His Kind*, the author recounts his political and romantic experiences of the 1930s. Writing from a 1970s perspective, Isherwood relates the events of his formative years with wit and wry humor. He also reveals his past romantic relationships in the work, including an alleged affair with Auden.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Isherwood first drew critical attention in the early 1930s with the publication of his second and third novels, *The Memorial* and *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*. After sections of *Goodbye to Berlin* appeared a short time later,

he was praised for his keen insights, social commentary, and style as a writer, and in some critical circles was hailed one of the most promising novelists of his generation. In 1939 John Lehmann declared that Isherwood was "one of the first prose artists of his generation to receive the full impact of fascist-menaced Europe" and to absorb "the whole scene into his art, without a single hiccup of indigestion." Among his staunchest supporters was British author W. Somerset Maugham, who famously declared in 1938 that Isherwood held "the future of the English novel in his hands."

During the 1950s and 1960s, however, Isherwood's literary reputation declined significantly. In the novels written during these decades the author introduced radically different themes and subject matter, which some reviewers found difficult to accept and at odds with his earlier success as a writer. Following the publication of *The World in the Evening* in 1954 critics condemned the novel, labeling it sentimental and weak, and many dismissed Isherwood, arguing that he had failed to comprehend or capture the American experience. In the years that followed a number of commentators also reacted negatively to Isherwood's growing preoccupation with spirituality and the Vedantic religion, attributing his "eccentric" themes to the influence of his new life in California. Others were unprepared for the author's increasingly candid treatment of his homosexuality.

Isherwood's later work was also overshadowed by a continuing interest in his earlier achievements. In 1951 John van Druten's dramatic adaptation of *The Berlin Stories*, titled *I Am a Camera*, was produced on Broadway, and was in turn adapted into the 1966 stage musical and 1972 film *Cabaret*. The commercial and critical success of these adaptations, while securing prestige and money for Isherwood, undoubtedly contributed to the neglect of his later achievements as a writer.

The last decades of the twentieth century, and the early years of the twenty-first, have witnessed a renewed interest in Isherwood's work, including many of his late novels and autobiographical writings. In addition, gay readers and activists have been increasingly drawn to Isherwood's writings since the 1970s. In fact, many critics and members of the gay community now regard the author as a pioneer and leading figure in the development of gay literature. David Bergman has argued that for "the first generation of openly gay writers, Christopher Isherwood was a persistent, pervasive, and profound influence both artistically and personally." Bergman describes the author's work as "imaginatively rich, stylistically challenging, and politically and spiritually engaged," and asserts that "more than any other writer, Isherwood gave direction to the gay literary movement." Several recent critics in addition to Bergman have studied Isherwood's treatment of homosexu-

ality in his work, including James Kelly, Brian Whaley, and Paul Robinson, while others, such as Stephen Wade and David Garrett Izzo, have emphasized his spiritual themes, particularly with respect to the influence of Vedantism on his writings. Isherwood's use of autobiographical material in his fiction has also been the focus of several critical analyses.

While most scholars today still consider *The Berlin Stories* Isherwood's best work, they also regard his other books, most notably *A Single Man*, *Down There on a Visit*, and *Christopher and His Kind*, as equally important and worthy of more serious study. In addition to being praised for his insightful commentary, masterful prose style, and subtle irony, Isherwood is increasingly viewed as an influential figure in twentieth-century English literature. In her essay focusing on Isherwood's shift from fiction to nonfiction writing, Katherine Bucknell has acknowledged the author's influence on modern literature. Noting that he could be seen "as an originator of the documentary and autobiographical fiction now widely practiced in various forms," Bucknell concludes that "examples of Isherwood's influence on younger writers abound; by now his work is part of the cultural atmosphere."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- All the Conspirators* (novel) 1928
The Memorial: Portrait of a Family (novel) 1932
The Dog Beneath the Skin [with W. H. Auden] (play) 1935
 **Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (novel) 1935; also published as *The Last of Mr. Norris*, 1935
The Ascent of F6 [with Auden] (play) 1936
Sally Bowles (novella) 1937
Lions and Shadows (autobiography) 1938
On the Frontier [with Auden] (play) 1938
 **Goodbye to Berlin* (novel) 1939
Journey to a War [with Auden] (travel essay) 1939
Prater Violet (novel) 1945
Vedanta for Modern Man (philosophy) 1951
The World in the Evening (novel) 1954
Down There on a Visit (novel) 1962
An Approach to Vedanta (philosophy) 1963
A Single Man (novel) 1964
Ramakrishna and His Disciples (biography) 1965
A Meeting by the River (novel) 1967
Essentials of Vedanta (philosophy) 1969
Kathleen and Frank (biography) 1971
Christopher and His Kind, 1929-1939 (autobiography) 1976
October [with Don Bachardy] (autobiography) 1980

People One Ought to Know [with Sylvain Mangeot] (poetry) 1982

Diaries, Volume One: 1939-1960 (diary) 1996

Lost Years: A Memoir 1945-1951 (memoir) 2000

*These works were published together as *The Berlin Stories* in 1946.

CRITICISM

David P. Thomas (essay date winter 1972)

SOURCE: Thomas, David P. "Goodbye to Berlin: Refocusing Isherwood's Camera." *Contemporary Literature* 13, no. 1 (winter 1972): 44-52.

[In the following essay, Thomas asserts that the famous "I am a camera" phrase from *Goodbye to Berlin* should not be interpreted as an indication of Isherwood's narrative method in his work. Instead, he maintains, it is meant to be read as "a defensive mask, the pseudo-impersonality of a young man, 'alone, far from home,' attempting to protect a vulnerable personality against the terrors of isolation."]

I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed.

The second paragraph of *Goodbye to Berlin* (1930)¹ has become almost the obligatory starting point for discussions of Christopher Isherwood's fiction. Richard Mayne asserts that it "very closely describes the role which Isherwood plays as the narrator of his novels. Here, he is a self-effacing onlooker, making no judgments, forming no attachments, withholding imaginative sympathy, ultimately not involved,"² while G. H. Bantock, quoting the same passage, complains of "the lack of a sense of personal reaction, except insofar as the mere angle at which the camera is held can imply a comment."³ Introducing an interview with Isherwood, George Wickes noted that in *Goodbye to Berlin* the author "perfected his technique of observing through a dispassionate narrator bearing his own name"⁴—again referring to the "camera."

These examples can be multiplied, especially from among Isherwood's reviewers. In a more weighty context, Norman Friedman selected the offending (in this case) paragraph to illustrate "what seems the ultimate in authorial exclusion" for his *PMLA* article on "Point of View in Fiction."⁵ He went on to argue that the effort "to transmit unaltered a slice of life is to misconceive

the fundamental nature of language itself: the very act of writing is a process of abstraction, selection, omission, and arrangement.”⁶ It would be difficult to gainsay this pronouncement, and Isherwood certainly appears open to a charge of aesthetic naiveté. But all these commentators, Friedman included, have agreed to treat the “camera” passage as a declaration of authorial method—as, in effect, a short theoretical manifesto. “Isherwood,” the narrator of *Goodbye to Berlin*, is Isherwood, they imply.

There are good reasons for assuming this identity. Not only does Isherwood use his own name for the central character (and narrator) of several works of fiction, but he has insisted that “my work is all part of all an autobiography.”⁷ To any reader of Isherwood’s novels, from *All the Conspirators* (1929) to *A Meeting by the River* (1967), this fact is self-evident. *Lions and Shadows* (1938), his very slightly fictionalized autobiography of the twenties, provides keys to certain recurring characters and themes in the fiction as a whole. “Chalmers” (Edward Upward), for instance, appears in *All the Conspirators*; “Weston” (W. H. Auden) crops up again in *Down There on a Visit* (1962), with “Stephen Savage” (Stephen Spender). In the same book, “John” is clearly John Lehmann, while there seems little purpose in the “disguise” of “E.M.” for Forster. In his preface to *Mr. Norris and I*, by Gerald Hamilton,⁸ Isherwood acknowledges the latter as at least the point of departure for his most famous rogue, while his indebtedness to Berthold Viertel, the Austrian film director, in the creation of Friedrich Bergmann (*Prater Violet*, 1945) itself inspired a commentary by Viertel.⁹

Isherwood’s fictional heroes, moreover, even when they are not given his own name, have on several occasions been implicitly identified by place of origin. Marple Hall, in Cheshire, Isherwood’s childhood home, appears as “Chapel Bridge” in the lives of Eric Vernon (*The Memorial*, 1932), “Isherwood” (*Down There on a Visit*), “George” (*A Single Man*, 1964), and “Oliver” (*A Meeting by the River*, 1967).

Much of Isherwood’s fiction has been based upon actual diaries; he has always invoked the *verité* of actual events with an acute sense of specific place and time—making use of what he has described as “islands of fact.”¹⁰ In these respects he has striven for a sense of the personal and the actual. In fiction of this sort, the author/reader relationship is unusually close: the reader is, in fact, obliged to take an interest in the authorial personality, for that personality is both the means and, substantially, the subject of the work. Isherwood makes this quite explicit in his prefacing note to *Exhumations* (1966), a collection of miscellaneous stories, essays, and short reviews: “This book is compiled chiefly for those who already feel some interest, never mind how slight, in my writings *and, hence in me* [my ital-

ics]. . . . If I am in a museum, I am beyond excuses; the past does not have to excuse itself. If I am in a courtroom, it is the business of someone else to defend me. . . .”¹¹ It is all very well to insist, as Isherwood does in his preface to *Mr. Norris and I*, that “the inquisitive and the malicious are eager to discover in every novel a *roman à clef*. But their miserable little key fits nothing but a broken pad-lock of their own discretion; it will never open the doors of Life or of Art”¹²—yet an author who assumes that interest in his work implies interest in himself can hardly complain of prying readers. The very meagerness of his disguise invites further speculation.

It is this apparent contradiction, the highly autobiographical writer who grows indignant at his too-intrusive readership (the public as Peeping Tom), which makes “I am a camera” more significant with reference to Isherwood’s technique than has been recognized. For the passage must be read in character, as the revelation of personality and not the exposition of theory. It is, indeed, entirely misleading as a description of Isherwood’s narrative method.

Even in context, the passage is discredited in these terms, as a brief analysis of the first three paragraphs of *Goodbye to Berlin* will show. The opening paragraph appears to set a standard of discreet reportage: “From my window, the deep solemn massive street. Cellar-shops where the lamps burn all day, under the shadow of top-heavy balconied façades, dirty plaster frontages embossed with scrollwork and heraldic devices. The whole district is like this: street leading into street of houses like shabby monumental safes crammed with the tarnished valuables and second-hand furniture of a bankrupt middle-class” (p. 1). At risk of pedantry, this is worth examining as the “recording, not thinking” “print” of the “camera.” In point of time, cameras should limit themselves to the present; yet “the lamps burn all day.” Cameras should be careful about place; yet “the whole district is like this.” Above all, perhaps, cameras should not use metaphors: “monumental safes,” is, however, metaphorical both as a primary comparison and as a prefiguration of the bankruptcy of the *Darmstadt* and *National* which occurs in the “Sally Bowles” section of *Goodbye to Berlin*—an event which expresses the final collapse of the German bourgeois economy. The disintegrating security of that bourgeoisie is thus doubly-exposed, so to speak, in this phrase.

This simply demonstrates by explication what Friedman asserts theoretically. “I am a camera,” which follows immediately, would therefore seem to be an affectation (Regard, the author at work!), or a genuine misunderstanding of the limitations of the reporter-stance. It is the third paragraph which really defines its context:

At eight o’clock in the evening the house doors will be locked. The children are having supper. The shops are shut. The electric-sign is switched on over the night-