Christopher Isherwood: A Major Model for the Margin?

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Abstract
The present article explores the fact that Christopher Isherwood, an author who was an American citizen for almost half of his life and who wrote his masterpiece, A Single Man *(1964), as an American writer, is excluded from mainstream histories of American literature. The article reviews primarily sources on American gay literature that establish Isherwood as one of the major formative figures of the twentieth-century gay novel. It concludes that in the age of authors coming from the margin to the center, the mainstream histories of American literature paradoxically seem to have pushed a major author to the margin of literary life.*

Keywords
Christopher Isherwood; twentieth-century American literature; twentieth-century British literature; gay literature; homosexuality; narrative technique; thematic criticism

In American literature, literatures on the margin sometimes seem to constitute a world of their own, independent of the literary mainstream. Indisputable celebrities of a minority/ethnic literature may be virtually unknown to scholars who are not experts on the literature of that particular minority, in this case, on American gay literature. One of the authors neglected by mainstream literary historians is Christopher Isherwood (1904–1986), who is not even mentioned in standard histories of American literature such as Richard Ruland's and Malcolm Bradbury's *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature* (1991) or Richard Gray's comprehensive *A History of American Literature* (2004). Even Cyrus R. K. Patell, who devotes fifteen pages to gay and lesbian literature in Volume 7 of *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (gen. ed. Sacvan Bercovitch, 1999) limits his treatment of Isherwood to a single note that "[s]ome novelists […] take up the project embodied by Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* (1964), which depicted the life of a middle-aged, middle class man, a life that in its very ordinariness implicitly attacked the idea that gay men were effeminate, deviant, and predatory."[1]

On the other hand, Isherwood is included in all histories of American gay literature as one of the most significant twentieth-century writers. The purpose of this study is to explore how Isherwood is perceived by these authoritative sources that in one way or another constitute the canon of American gay writing. Considering the fact that minority authors are often praised for the political significance of their work rather than their literary skill, I will explore whether these formative sources pay more attention to the narrative technique, or to other criteria, such as the themes or the attitude toward the gay subject matter.

The exclusion of Christopher Isherwood from the mainstream handbooks of American literature may be caused by a misapprehension of his British origin, especially when he wrote some of his most significant works as an American citizen. Isherwood was born in Cheshire, England, in 1904 and received his education at the University of Cambridge, though he never graduated. Along with the poets W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender,

1 Cyrus R. K. Patell, "Emergent Literatures," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 7:665.

he formed what is sometimes known as the "Auden Circle" or the "Auden Gang."[2] All of Isherwood's fiction is largely autobiographical. In the 1920s he spent several years in Berlin, and this experience became the basis for his novels *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), later collectively published as *The Berlin Stories* (1945). Some motifs from *The Berlin Stories* also became the basis of the musical *Cabaret*, best known as the 1972 movie directed by Bob Fosse, with Liza Minnelli, Michael York and Joel Grey. Isherwood came to the United States in 1939 and became a United States citizen in 1946. His later works were distinctly American, and they also included an increasing number of gay themes in novels such as *The World in the Evening* (1954), *Down There on a Visit* (1962), up to his masterpiece *A Single Man* (1964). At the end of his writing career, he returned to the genre of (auto)biographies and published titles such as *Kathleen and Frank* (1971), a biography of his parents, and *Christopher and His Kind* (1976), a reevaluation of his earlier autobiographical writing.

Isherwood's most significant novel, *A Single Man* (1964), was a major achievement in its time. It portrays a single day in the life of George, an Englishman in his fifties living in the United States. George recently lost his lover Jim in a car-crash, yet he is unwilling to admit that before his neighbors, preferring to tell them that Jim is with his family. The novel starts with a view of George's sleeping body coming alive and becoming George, George's morning routine, the seminar at the university where he teaches, his workout, his visit to a female friend dying of cancer, and an evening spent with another friend, a British woman contemplating her return to Europe. His day finishes in a bar where he meets a student of his, Kenny, with whom, after some talk, he goes skinny-dipping in the ocean, is brought by him home, and tucked in bed. Then, at the end of the novel, George falls asleep – and perhaps dies.

Isherwood may be given scant attention by historians of American literature, yet it is significant to note that this kind of neglect cannot be observed in histories of British literature. In his introduction in *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (3rd ed., 2004) Andrew Sanders even discusses the reasons for Isherwood's inclusion:

> Both Auden and Isherwood, who became citizens of the United States in the 1940s, have been included simply because it seems impossible to separate their most distinctive work from the British context in which it was written. The situations of Conrad, Eliot, James, Auden, and Isherwood are in certain ways exemplary of what has happened to English literature in the twentieth century. It is both English and it is not. It is both British and it is not.[3]

Yet (or perhaps, for this reason), Sanders focuses on Isherwood's early, pre-American period: "His collaborative experiments with drama apart, Isherwood is likely to be remembered for his two most individual works of fiction, *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939)."[4] This appraisal would certainly face strong opposition from the critics of American gay literature who almost universally agree that Isherwood is likely to be remembered primarily for his novel *A Single Man* (1964), a work Sanders fails to mention altogether.

2 See Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 594.

3 Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 15.

4 Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 566.

Isherwood is also dealt with by other histories of British literature, however briefly. Ronald Carter and John McRae in *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland* (1997) records Isherwood's cooperation on W. H. Auden's drama, his "uses of cinematic techniques in his Berlin novels *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) [in which the] narrator says 'I am a camera' and proceeds to tell is stories with the kind of distanced objectivity a camera can lend" up to a short mention of his American period, including a list of "auto-fiction" in novels such as *Lions and Shadows* (1938), *Down There on a Visit*, *A Single Man* and "the directly autobiographical, openly gay" *Christopher and His Kind*.[5]

Despite its conspicuous omission from the mainstream histories of American literature, Christopher Isherwood receives critical attention from cultural critics and theoreticians: the concept of camp sensibility has been introduced into English by Isherwood, which is a fact only fleetingly acknowledged by Susan Sontag in her celebrated essay "Notes on 'Camp'" (1964): "Apart from a lazy two-page sketch in Christopher Isherwood's novel *The World in the Evening* (1954), [camp] has hardly broken into print."[6]

Later on, Isherwood's works began to attract attention because of their formal features as well. *A Single Man* is a novel lauded by the Austrian narratologist Monika Fludernik who points out that it is one of only a few English novels that use an impersonal pronoun for introducing a human protagonist[7]:

> 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 therefore deduced *I am, I am now*. […] Obediently the body levers itself out of bed […] and shambles naked into the bathroom, where its bladder is emptied and it is weighed […] Then to the mirror. What it sees there isn't so much a face as the expression of a predicament. Here's what it has done to itself, here's the mess it has somehow managed to get itself into, during its fifty-eight years […]. Obediently, it washes, shaves, brushes its hair, for it accepts its responsibilities to the others. It is even glad that it has its place among them. It knows what is expected of it. It knows its name. It is called George.[8]

Further proof of Isherwood's significance is indeed plentiful, including numerous monographs devoted to him and his work. As early as 1994, St. James's *Gay & Lesbian Literature* listed at least four biographies, three book-length bibliographies, and half a dozen monographs on Isherwood,[9] and several new books have been published on Isherwood since then.

5 Ronald Carter and John McRae, *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1997), 388–89, 441, 502–3.

6 Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp,'" in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), 275.

7 See Monika Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996; London: Routledge, 2005), 176; Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology* (London: Routledge, 2009), 50.

8 Christopher Isherwood, *A Single Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1964), 9–11. Isherwood's italics.

9 See Claude J. Summers, *Gay Fictions: Wilde to Stonewall; Studies in a Male Homosexual Literary Tradition* (New York: Continuum, 1990), 196.

Regardless of the rather marginal treatment of Isherwood by the mainstream critics and historians of American literature, he is discussed by virtually all works on American gay literature. At this point it is vital to remark that I am interested only in the general volumes because the monographs on and biographies of an author often lose track of a balanced view of the whole American literature by focusing primarily on this particular author. The realm of sources can be divided into two basic categories: tertiary sources such as encyclopedias and dictionaries, and literary histories.

"Gay" tertiary sources provide a good start for further discussion. However, due to the space limitations, such sources can, by definition, provide only a short biographical or bibliographical information with no deeper analysis. Yet they reveal the first surprise, as the Christopher Isherwood entries in *Gay & Lesbian Literature* (St. James Press, 1994), *The Gay & Lesbian Literary Companion* (Visible Ink Press, 1995), as well as *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage: A Reader's Companion to the Writers and Their Works, From Antiquity to the Present* (Henry Holt, 1995) are all different versions of a biographical sketch by Claude J. Summers. The Isherwood entry in *Completely Queer: The Gay and Lesbian Encyclopedia* (Henry Holt, 1998) is not signed by Summers, yet he is listed as the only reference. Summers thus emerges from these entries as a significant expert on Isherwood, and, as we will see later, he indeed is one.

While (over)simplification is a feature of the genre of dictionaries, they should never provide a distorted view of the author in question. However, this is exactly what happens in Robert Drake's *The Gay Canon: Great Books Every Gay Man Should Read* (1997). In spite of its self-confident title, the book is basically a collection of chronologically organized profiles of whom Drake believes are the canonical writers in gay literature. Drake does include an entry on Isherwood and *The Berlin Stories*, noting that "[h]omosexuals are neither played up to nor repressed in *The Berlin Stories*."[10] He also comments on the increasing presence of homosexuals in his work, "perhaps none more memorable than Quaker Bob Wood in *The World in the Evening*."[11] The fact that Drake chooses *The Berlin Stories* as Isherwood's greatest achievement is consistent with Sanders's opinion, yet unlike Sanders, who was writing a history of British literature, Drake was presenting his vision of the gay canon. Thus his not even mentioning *A Single Man*, or not acknowledging Isherwood's role in introducing the concept of camp in *The World in the Evening* (camp is mentioned at least ten times in the book), makes Drake's book one of the most flawed pieces of gay criticism. Yet, it may be of some interest that there is an easy explanation for Drake's omission: his acknowledged great model for the work on the canon was Harold Bloom and his rather controversial tome *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (1994), in which Bloom lists only *The Berlin Stories* as his recommended book by Isherwood.[12]

The other part of the spectrum is taken up by literary histories, from which the readers expect contextualized information. As writing a history of any literature is an extremely demanding task, there seems to be only one attempt in the field of gay writing by the British poet and scholar Gregory Wood, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (1998). Even though Woods tries to capture the male tradition of gay writing

10 Robert Drake, *The Gay Canon: Great Books Every Gay Man Should Read* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 267.

11 Drake, *The Gay Canon*, 267

12 See Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (1994. New York: Riverhead, 1995), 523. On the other hand, Gregory Woods, while having his reservations on Bloom's choice of books, acknowledges that "gay writing is reasonably strongly represented here, in spite of Bloom's celebrated resistance to recent developments in subcultural literatures and subcultural literary criticism." Gregory Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1998), 11.

from Ancient Greece up to the present, a significant part of his treatment of twentieth-century literature is devoted to American literature due to its defining influence within the context of gay writing, prompted in the first place by the gay liberation movement accelerated by the Stonewall Riots in 1969.

Woods, in his treatment of Isherwood, combines a biographical perspective with a narratological one when he focuses on how Isherwood solved the "problem of unwanted self-revelation,"[13] a problem faced by many gay authors who came out (Christopher Isherwood, Thom Gunn) and those who did not (W. H. Auden, John Cheever). Woods points out what Isherwood admitted in the 1970s; that in his 1935 novel *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* he did not want to use a homosexual narrator, yet he did not want to make him heterosexual, which means that the narrator necessarily ended up asexual.[14]

When paying so much attention to the issue of the narrator, it is rather surprising that Woods does not comment on the narrative innovations in *A Single Man*; on the contrary, he is rather critical of the novel when he notes George's hatred of his heterosexual neighbors and their children:

> The book's problem, to my mind, is that its central character is as single-dimensional as he is single. More sophisticated in the conception than in the execution, this most explicitly gay-affirmative of its author's novels is undermined by the fact that George's jaundiced anti-heterosexualism is unrelieved by any sense of the homosexual as a social being: George has no gay friends.[15]

The last issue Woods comments on is the model relationship between Christopher Isherwood and Sally Bowles in *The Berlin Stories*, i.e., a relationship between a gay man and a straight woman, which is a major precursor of similar relationships in gay fiction.[16]

Woods's attempt at writing a history of gay literature is unparalleled in literary scholarship; other authors in one way or another make it a special point that they do not try to be comprehensive and they try to focus only on a small part, period, or group. This is also the case of Claude J. Summers who had emerged as an expert in the dictionaries of gay literature overviewed above. Summers published a monograph called *Christopher Isherwood* in 1980, yet as a monograph it lies outside the scope of the present essay. However, he also authored *Gay Fictions: Wilde to Stonewall* (1990), further subtitled *Studies in a Male Homosexual Literary Tradition*, in which he sees Isherwood as the climax of this pre-Stonewall literary tradition, and his last chapter on Isherwood is adopted from his earlier monograph.[17] He claims that as "[h]omosexuality features in the early novels in many guises," often more or less hidden, "gay characters are juxtaposed with the heterosexual characters to reveal beneath their apparent polarities a shared reality of the deadened spirit."[18] He devotes two pages to Isherwood's later, i.e., American novels, *The World in the Evening* and *Down There on a Visit*. In both of them, the theme of

13 Woods, *A History of Gay Literature*, 338.

14 See Woods, *A History of Gay Literature*, 337.

15 Woods, *A History of Gay Literature*, 345.

16 See Woods, *A History of Gay Literature*, 351.

17 See Summers, *Gay Fictions*, 9.

18 Summers, *Gay Fictions*, 196.

the relationship of community and the individual is featured,[19] a theme dominant in *A Single Man*, the novel to which the main part of his chapter is devoted.

Unlike some other authors, who try to see George primarily as a gay man, Summers comments extensively also on the literary value of the novel, noting that "[t]he key to the book's extraordinary power resides in Isherwood's masterful control of narrative technique." He naturally notes the transformation of a "depersonalized object […] into full humanity," claiming that the narrative technique is responsible for establishing the "double vision, its simultaneous concern with the mundane and the transcendent."[20] He goes on to remark that "the dispassionate narration actually fosters the reader's identification with the alienated, homosexual hero" through the "narrator's persistent and flagrant violations of George's privacy—even following him into the bathroom and frequently reporting on his bodily functions—create an enforced intimacy between reader and protagonist." He goes so far as to claim that the "narrative technique contributes to the book's success in describing George, despite all his crotches and idiosyncrasies, including his sexuality, as an Everyman figure."[21]

The references in this chapter reveal that Summers is well informed of the work of other critics, as he cites Alan Wilde and his analysis of "double vision" in *A Single Man* as well as critics like Jonathan Raban, Paul Piazza, or Brian Finney and in this way he brings the (then) current research on Isherwood to his readers. Yet Summers does not avoid the thematic criticism either: the themes of loss, death/mortality, minority consciousness, homophobia, loneliness/isolation, influence of Vedantism as well as George's transformation by the "baptism in the surf" (swimming with Kenny) are discussed.[22] As Summers is one of those authors who deal with more periods in Isherwood's life, it is quite surprising that he does not comment on Isherwood's role in establishing the concept of camp in Anglo-American literary tradition.

Another author, who analyzes Isherwood in detail, is Reed Woodhouse in his *Unlimited Embrace: A Canon of Gay Fiction, 1945–1995* (1998). The word *canon* appears here as well as in Drake's handbook; however, Woodhouse's approach is rather self-centered, when he, obviously inspired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, sees his critical/historical monograph as his own "*biographia literaria*"[23] when he admits: "I have followed the broad historical arc of gay fiction since World War II, but have been egoistical enough to see in literary history my own roughly simultaneous history writ large."[24] His definition of the canon of gay literature is also interesting and it certainly influences his insight as well as methods, when he writes: "My canon is not a mere list of good books or, despite its hubristic confidence, a prescription to authors of who or what they should write. It is rather an argument about how to be gay – how to lead a good life as a gay man."[25]

Despite the self-centered approach, Woodhouse in his introduction provides an overview of types of gay literature, which also helps explain why some authors are so inaccessible to the general reading public. This is true especially in those works belonging

19 See Summers, *Gay Fictions*, 196–99.

20 Summers, *Gay Fictions*, 201.

21 Summers, *Gay Fictions*, 201–2.

22 Summers, *Gay Fictions*, 211.

23 Reed Woodhouse, *Unlimited Embrace: A Canon of Gay Fiction, 1945–1995* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 12.

24 Woodhouse, *Unlimited Embrace*, 13.

25 Woodhouse, *Unlimited Embrace*, 13.

to what Reed Woodhouse calls "ghetto fiction." Woodhouse explains that "[t]hese books, like the gay ghetto itself, represented the gay world at its further point of self-definition, and were an expression of homosexuality at its most concentrated: that is, as nearly as possible without normative reference to the straight world." He lists *A Single Man* as one of the "proto-ghetto" books which "differed from ghetto ones mainly because their characters lacked a gay community, and sometimes even the name 'gay' for who and what they were. As a result, these novels and stories emphasized individual courage rather than a group identity."[26]

Woodhouse's analysis is much less technical than that of other critics, and could be called a commented close reading of the novel, especially of three key scenes (the waking-up scene, the classroom scene, and the final scene in which George meets Kenny at the end of the day). He does take notice of the introduction but refuses to make a significant conclusion: "How easy it would have been to fall into an exaggeration: to make the point of the passage a self-consciously presentation of 'stream of consciousness' or to go for the effect of self-pity and 'lostness.'"[27] He simply sees it in the context of the emphasis on body present in the whole novel as a transition when George is "more a body than a mind."[28] Woodhouse notes Isherwood's use of military metaphors in the novel and comments on the "tone" of the novel repeatedly (which is "sardonic," "of amused disgust," or "just right, neither sliding into bathos nor dismissing the question 'who survives'"[29]).

The rest of Woodhouse's analysis, which relies on comments on the key scenes, and thus approaches, at best, thematic criticism, is exactly in concord with his intention to discuss "how to lead a good life as a gay man." Indeed, Woodhouse seems to be more interested in George as a gay man than in George as a character. It would be tempting to condemn Woodhouse's criticism as not sufficiently scholarly and not impartial enough, yet his passionate discussions are congruent with his methodological approach and reveal enthusiasm for books many certified literary scholars might envy. Moreover, the personal discussion of the novel provides a living testimony of the role of gay novels, including *A Single Man*, in the lives of gay men.

A detailed analysis of Isherwood and his work can also be found in works of gay literary history and criticism that do not focus on Isherwood's times or that are interested primarily in other authors. A typical case is David Bergman's *The Violet Hour: The Violet Quill and the Making of Gay Culture* (2004). Ostensibly, the book deals with the Violet Quill group of authors, i.e., authors active at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, who included Edmund White, Andrew Holleran, Felice Picano, Michael Grumley, Robert Ferro, Christopher Cox and George Whitmore. However, by contextualizing the work of the Violet Quill members within the American "gay culture," the scope of the monograph goes far beyond the Violet Quill authors. About ten pages are thus devoted to Isherwood and his influence on Violet Quill members. When evaluating Isherwood's influence, Bergman often cites Violet Quill members, especially Ferro, White, and Holleran.

26 Woodhouse, *Unlimited Embrace*, 2.

27 Woodhouse, *Unlimited Embrace*, 156–57.

28 Woodhouse, *Unlimited Embrace*, 157.

29 Woodhouse, *Unlimited Embrace*, 157, 158.

Based on Ferro's comments, Bergman believes that Isherwood "provided the most easily assimilable lessons for [Violet Quill's] fiction."[30] A major influence is based on the autobiographical character of Isherwood's fiction and his constant "crossing and recrossing the boundaries of genre"[31] of fiction and non-fiction. In this way he helped to establish the largely autobiographical character of the Violet Quill writing, a fact acknowledged especially by Ferro. Furthermore, Bergman appreciates Isherwood's "constant shifting of perspective," which he calls "Swiftian," and which is best epitomized by the relationship of George and Kenny. Bergman also makes it a special point that George's death at the very end of the novel is only suppositional, with this section starting "Just let us suppose, however…," and in this way defying the requirement of a tragic ending of a gay novel.[32]

Moreover, Bergman appreciates George as a character who, at the age of fifty-eight, defies the stereotypical type of a "dirty old man."[33] The theme of the relationship of between Age and Youth later influenced other Violet Quill authors, especially Andrew Holleran in his novel *The Beauty of Men* (1996), which Bergman considers "a retelling of *A Single Man* within the context of post-AIDS realities."[34] He goes on commenting on the influence of Isherwood on the other Violet Quill authors, after which he reaches his final verdict:

> More than any other work before the Violet Quill, *A Single Man* discusses a gay man's experience without apologetics or sexual titillation, as though the reader will regard this life as any other—that is, as something unique in itself, as part of a class of similar lives, and as connected to all of human experience. George is neither a freak nor a blank, not a gargoyle nor an idealized figure.[35]

However, Bergman's views on Isherwood must be perceived in the reflection of the fact that his focus was primarily the Violet Quill, not Isherwood *per se*. In spite of that, Isherwood emerges as a cardinal influence on the Violet Quill authors both for the autobiographical nature of his writing and the themes he explores in his fiction.

The latest addition to the wealth of gay literature criticism is Les Brookes's *Gay Male Fiction Since Stonewall: Ideology, Conflict, and Aesthetics* (2009). This volume is affected by the same issue as Bergman's monograph, as Isherwood lies primarily beyond its scope. Despite that, Brookes chooses three pre-Stonewall works he considers "daring, controversial, groundbreaking fictions"[36] for detailed analysis: E. M. Forster's *Maurice* (written in the 1910s, published posthumously in 1971), Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* (1948), and Isherwood's *A Single Man*. Brookes places *A Single Man* in the context of other single-day novels, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), when he notes that "[l]ike Leopold Bloom and Clarissa Dalloway,

30 David Bergman, *The Violet Hour: The Violet Quill and the Making of Gay Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 60.

31 Bergman, *The Violet Hour*, 61.

32 See Bergman, *The Violet Hour*, 63.

33 See Bergman, *The Violet Hour*, 63.

34 Bergman, *The Violet Hour*, 68.

35 Bergman, *The Violet Hour*, 78.

36 Les Brookes, *Gay Male Fiction Since Stonewall: Ideology, Conflict, and Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 44.

George is both unique (the 'single' man of the novel's title) and archetypal,"[37] which he notices especially in the beginning of the novel. Brookes understands the "struggle between identity and difference […] is central to the novel,"[38] which he further explores by analyzing George's non-existent connection with the gay community as well as his edantic ideas.

To sum up, the amount of space devoted to Isherwood in histories of British literature, all types of sources on American gay literature as well as other critical and theoretical sources makes the exclusion of Christopher Isherwood from mainstream histories of American literature rather perplexing. As various historians and critics of gay literature balance their discussion of the themes important in the gay community with their appreciation of Isherwood's narrative techniques, Isherwood's inclusion in the canon should not be accused of being politically motivated: the sources consulted in this article pay due attention to Isherwood's literary skills, both in the role of the narrator in his early fiction and the innovative narrative technique in his later fiction, namely *A Single Man*. In the age of authors moving from the margin to the center, the mainstream histories of American literature seem paradoxically to have pushed a major author to the margin of literary life. However, the reasons for Isherwood's literary ostracism remain unresolved and beg for future research.

Acknowledgement
The research for this paper was supported by GA ČR, Project 405/09/P357 "Faces of American Gay Novel After 1945."

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37 Brookes, *Gay Male Fiction Since Stonewall*, 45.

38 Brookes, *Gay Male Fiction Since Stonewall*, 59.

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