

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE LOST *Goodbye to Berlin*

All these people are ultimately doomed. This evening is the dress-rehearsal of a disaster. It is like the last night of an epoch.

— Christopher Isherwood.

*Goodbye to Berlin* is one of Isherwood's most popular novels. It was published in 1939. During the four years that intervened between *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and the present one Isherwood wrote three verse plays, all in collaboration with W.H. Auden and also completed the first version of his autobiography, *Lions and Shadows* (1938). The first of the dramatic trilogy *The Enemies of a Bishop*, retitled later by Rupert Donne as *The Dog Beneath the Skin* was, however, published in 1935. By the close of 1936 Isherwood turned again to a new novel, *Paul Is Alone*. Like *The Lost*, the novel records Isherwood's experiences with such people as are ultimately 'doomed'. The character of Paul is modelled on Arthur Norris and represents one of Berlin's 'lost'. The work was, of course, ultimately abandoned due to its huge structure, lacking in coherence.

Isherwood's verse plays, which included, along with *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, *The Ascent of F<sub>6</sub>* (1937) and *On the Frontier* (1938) are, in general, experimentations on the German Expressionist line and display the author's awareness of contemporary politics. Isherwood worked only on the plotting and part of the prose of the plays, while Auden contributed to their versifications. However, whatever share he had in their final accomplishments, the plays, perhaps more than the fictions, established Isherwood as one of the period's representative figures. *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *On the Frontier* are noted for their close scrutiny of the complexities of human behaviour and for their accurate portrayal of the dichotomy between the forces and manifestations of the Establishment on the one side and the all-embracing concept of love on the other. *The Ascent of F<sub>6</sub>* is by far the best of the trilogy. Based on its hero's, Ransom's, struggle for reaching the hitherto

unscaled peak of  $F_6$ , the story becomes for Isherwood the symbol of success under the spur of a domineering mother. The play affords to Isherwood 'the opportunity to accomplish what the protagonists of the novels successively fail to do,' says Alan Wilde, 'to engage themselves in and become part of some corporate spirit larger than the narrow confines of the self' (1971, 79).

Soon after completing three verse plays Isherwood turned to work on *Lions and Shadows* which was started as early as 1925 but not published till 1938. The title of the book is taken from C.E. Montaigne's *Fiery Particles* ('arrant lovers of living, mighty hunter of lions and shadows'); its subtitle, 'An Education in the Twenties' has implication that the book is concerned, above all, with the various stages in the life-long education — the education of an artist. The fact is that throughout his literary career Isherwood was engaged in a search for identity, as reflected in his novels, and of which *Lions and Shadows* is but another example. The book speaks of the rage of a young artist against the elders of his family and of the problems of a would-be artist. It depicts how the protagonist acts and encounters a series of people and places in the 1920's and what he learns and overcomes in the course of his education in order to become an artist. A faithful record as it is of his thoughts and feelings which provide its narrative interest, *Lions and Shadows* is indeed a study in growth of the novelist — his gradual maturation into a self-conscious individual.

*Lions and Shadows* has, of course, evoked controversy among the readers as to whether it is an autobiography or a novel. In the 'Preface. Isherwood himself says that the book is not 'in the ordinary journalistic sense of the word, an autobiography', and that one should 'read it as a novel'. Again, a few readers are fond of calling it a memoir. But in a memoir the narrator - character remains in the background, whereas in an autobiography he would be in the forefront. It is in this sense that *Lions and Shadows* may be studied as an autobiography. Isherwood is always at the forefront of his book in narrating his actions and experiences which enabled him, in course of his literary career, to formulate the fundamentals of his art and to flesh out his personality. Isherwood himself, however, seemed to find little difference between autobiography and fiction. He always looked upon his novels as a kind of fictional biography, just as autobiography is always fiction. In *Kathleen*

and Frank he admits that his novels are a kind of fictional biography. However, what is significant about *Lions and Shadows* is not the extent to which it is fact or fiction, but the artist's penchant for self-discovery, which provides the essential matrix of his fictions and for which his autobiography occupies an important position in the corpus of his literary writings.

The publication of *Goodbye to Berlin* soon after *Lions and Shadows* is significant in terms of the artist's growth and of the overall development of the namesake narrator. In his study of Isherwood's novels Alan Wilde observes: 'Self-analysis is what, on one level, at least *Lions and Shadows* is, and it is also what Christopher achieves as a result of his education' (1971, 25). This 'self-analysis' as the artist's sole objective is established as the book's *raison d'être* and is, at the same time, enabled him to present himself in name and deed in *Goodbye to Berlin*.

Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* carries on the general tastes and tendencies of the 1930's especially those associated with W.H. Auden. Auden and the whole lot, say, Stephen Spender, C. Day Lewis and others, being products of the middle-class training and expensive education against which they revolted, were caught between two worlds : the self and the world. They desired, both in letter and spirit, to reconcile the two and thereby to merge themselves with the rest of humanity. Virginia Woolf, in her essay 'The Leaning Tower', offers an illuminating study of the general tendency of the writers of the thirties. She writes : 'When everything is rocking round one, the only person who remains comparatively stable is oneself'.... So they wrote about themselves'(1967, 177). Referring to the writers of the thirties as 'Tower dwellers' Mrs. Woolf further stresses that they were great egotists and the strength of their most valuable works lay surely in their ceaseless exploration and establishment of the 'comparatively stable' self. Furthermore, when Stephen Spender labelled his friends as 'The Divided Generation', he referred only to his contemporary writers who were mostly caught between 'two worlds at war'. We have also Auden's and Day Lewis's poems of internal struggle and doubt, Isherwood's thoroughly discontented protagonist in *Lions and Shadows* — all substantiate Mrs. Woolf's observation that these writers made some strenuous attempts to achieve the ideal of commitment — 'to be whole, to be

human ... to be down on the ground with the mass of human kind' (1967, 176).

This is what Isherwood exactly does in *Goodbye to Berlin* : to assert his self in a hostile world and to conjugate it with the others. From now on, preoccupation with the self is, for the artist, not merely narcissistic but a process of dynamic exploration, whether one can establish independence while keeping commerce with the vast wave of humanity. Isherwood found that Germany's political situation was gradually deteriorating. He had been forced to live among the poor and the 'lost' — the individuals whom respectable society abandons in horror and contempt. A number of his friends were harassed by the German police. Heinz, a seventeen-year-old German boy who lived with Isherwood as his homosexual partner for a pretty number of years, was arrested for draft evasion. Heinz was convicted of reinforced onanism with Isherwood. In fact, Isherwood's worry about Heinz and the contemporary political events of Germany led to the change in the artist's concern with self. This change finds its expression in the book's leading theme, making the narrator much more pensive, serious and self-reflective than that of *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and suggests a progression in the narrator's psychological development. Isherwood now feels a growing ease in his relation to those people and forces who were once deemed to be hostile to him. Now he learns how to relate and connect with them.

The novel consists of four short sections, 'Sally Bowles', 'On Reugen Island', 'The Nowaks' and 'The Landauers', and two 'Berlin Diaries' — one at the beginning and the other at the end. All the four of the six sections had been published earlier and had actually been planned as part of the unweildy novel, from which *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* had been extracted, originally to be called *The Lost*. In an interview with Brian Finney Isherwood explained that 'The Lost would have been like Balzac's *Splendeurs et Miseres des Cortisanes* — very complicated, all sorts of absurd contrivances to bring it all together, hundreds of characters... And so what I did was I took up all the broken bits and put them into *Goodbye to Berlin* just as slivers of something' (quoted in Finney : 1979, 143). All six sections are neatly organized and acquire a coherence and meaning when fitted into each other. They follow in chronological

order: the first section is dated 'Autumn 1930', while the final section is subtitled 'Winter 1932-33'. The other four sections span the intervening period — 'Sally Bowles' covers October 1930 to Autumn 1931; 'On Reugen Island' Summer 1931; 'The Nowaks' Winter 1931-2; and 'The Landauers' flashing back to October 1930 and forward to May 1933, and the final diary, ending as it does, in May 1933. In all sections, as in *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, the narrator — the characterized 'I' — is Christopher Isherwood himself. This characterized 'I', whom Isherwood calls 'ventriloquist's dummy', appears under different names in different stories. He is 'William Bradshaw' in *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, 'Herr Issyvoo' in Berlin diary, 'Chris' in 'Sally Bowles' 'Herr Christoph' in 'The Nowaks' and simply 'Mr. Isherwood' in 'The Landauers'.

Isherwood's first story of the novel, 'Sally Bowles', represents sexual perversion of the Berlin society, which invariably leads to disease and death. Dealing with 'the romance of prostitution racket' the episode exposes the pathos in the life of one of the Berlin's 'lost'. Sally, like Arthur, is oblivious of the debacle around her. But she is at once innocent and naughty, sophisticated and naive, and her capacity for make-up and for using people to her end is what Arthur Norris badly lacked. Originally an English expatriate who lives for fast money and success as a cabaret entertainer, Sally adopts a German name and becomes a call-girl. She tries to shock the uninvolved narrator, Christopher, with her vulgarity and nasty approach. Every love affair, as Isherwood's story unfolds, in which Sally is involved, either with Klaus or with Clive, earns her a huge sum of instant money. But Sally's economy suffers all the time since that she has to incur a lot for abortion; her love affair ends with abortion. However, what is redeeming in Sally is her childishness and innocence — which enables her to begin afresh after each failure.

The nasty side of Sally's character might rouse the reader's moral indignation. But the reader, as much as Christopher, cannot help pitying Sally when she holds cushion in her arms and imagines it to be her baby who was never born: 'I imagin'd how it'd grow up and how I'd work for it and how, after I'd put it to bed at nights, I'd go out and make love to filthy old men to get money for its food and clothes' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 73). The story is both an attempt to satirise 'the romance of prostitution racket' and yet, to show that even the greatest

disaster leaves a person like Sally essentially unchanged. Brian Finney comments : 'The two aims tend to conflict as the satire is undercut by Sally's unflagging powers of recovery after each successive setback' (1979,149). Sally is made to pay more heavily for her third attempt of love with one George P. Sanders who lifts a large sum of money from her bag before leaving her. At the end, again, Sally is duped by a sixteen-year-old con man who calls himself Paul Rakowski, pretending to be a European artist, promises her a leading role in a new movie but leaves her in the lurch when she wants money from him. In fact, 'Sally's continuing emotional naivety' says Brian Finney, 'runs counter to the hard financial lessons she has been taught. Her abortion which *she* should have linked her to the images of disease and death that attach themselves to the remaining representatives of a dying society leaves her virtually untouched, the most ephemeral member of the lost' (1979,149).

The next episode 'On Reugen Island' uses the metaphor of mental illness and disease, and is a critical statement about the decadent German society at large. It is a pastoral interlude which takes place away from Berlin. The story presents a Nazi surgeon Peter Wilkinson and a sexual sponger of German origin, Otto Nowak. Both are homosexuals. Peter bought Otto in order to cure his own psychological disorder and neurosis, and in doing so he joined that lot of English foreigners who flocked to Germany, particularly to the decadent Berlin for the purposes of male prostitution. Peter is a hypersensitive Englishman, about Christopher's age, who ultimately fails to cope with the shallow but violently sensual Otto. On the other hand, Otto Nowak, who has the health and vitality of an animal, cures others with his animal strength. But like an animal he is selfish too, seeking his sustenance and pleasure with a complete indifference to those around him. 'A sexual sponger' says Alan Wilde, 'indiscriminately prostituting himself to men and women, Otto is far less capable than Sally of sustaining a personal relation' (1971, 70). But despite his animal vitality Otto is psychologically a derelict. Poverty and unemployment have turned him into a life-long actor who can believe in nothing beyond the scene in which he is participating. More often than not he feels alienated from the people around him and from himself as well : 'Nobody understands me here. Nobody is good to me. They all hate me really. They wish I was dead' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 144).

The fate of Otto, unfortunate and pitiful as it is, is the terrible consequence of the sexual exploitation of the Nazis. At a broader perspective, Otto is a wretched victim of the decadent Berlin society beset by the worst evils of Fascism during Hitler's rise to power. He represents, as Brian Finney observes, 'how closely Fascism resembles English Imperialism. Both are products of repression and disease, and both seek to cure an illness in others that in fact underlies their own love of power' (1979,150).

'On Reugen Island' is followed by 'The Nowaks'. The third section of Isherwood's novel explores the economic origins of the sickness that afflicts Otto and her mother, Frau Nowak, who has contracted tuberculosis. They live in a slum where poverty invariably begets fatal diseases like tuberculosis. Christopher now freely mixes with them and with all those who are abandoned by the respectable society of Berlin. As he was out of cash, he rents a bed in an already crowded bedroom. He is at once horrified to see the Sanatorium where the overworked, underfed Frau Nowak, Otto's mother, now consumptive, was sent by the Board of Health. Indeed, the history of the Nowak family as well as the scene of the Sanatorium records the deep sense of failure of the existing social system to accommodate the poor and the sick. Frau Nowak, a charwoman, slaving through the day for livelihood for her family, lives in a condemned apartment where she coughs and often spits blood. She is doomed, therefore, to tramp the streets and catch tuberculosis. The description of the condemned apartment, with its tight quarters, its squalor and destitution, reveals more forcefully than any sociological extrapolation of Isherwood, the inner poverty of the Nowaks and of the majority of the Berliners during the final years of the Weimar Republic.

Isherwood does not spare even the doctors who disagree and often delay in meting out proper treatment to the patients. No wonder that the Sanatorium with all its provision of well ventilated rooms, balcony, diet and comfortable surroundings could not permanently cure the poor patients whose disease relapsed as soon as they were discharged and went back to their life of drudgery: 'Frau Nowak told us that Muttschen had been three times in this Sanatorium already. Each time she has been discharged as cured, but within nine months

or a year, she would have a relapse and have to be sent back again' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 168). From the deepest layer of his nature, Isherwood condemns the social system which cannot provide any permanent cure to these patients. As Frau Nowak dies, the whole family falls apart : Otto comes down to the street for his living; Lothar, his brother, disappears; Herr Nowak, their father and Greete, their sister, lapse into the most primitivistic existences. Brian Finney aptly remarks: 'Clearly his (Otto's) circumstances have turned him into one of the 'lost' whose resemblance to his dying mother makes Isherwood on at least one occasion see both of them as creatures demonically possessed' (1979, 151). The Nowak family, thus, typical of so many Berlin families, moving inevitably towards its doom, signified not only the economic crisis but also social injustice, hatred and inequality of outlook towards the poor people in Germany in the thirties.

The fifth section of the novel 'The Landauers' anatomizes the theme of alienation and paralysis — the two cancerous germs deeply embedded in Capitalism. The Landauers are a wealthy, Jewish family, owners of a huge department store. The master of the family, Bernherd Landauer, once asked Christopher to pay a visit to his apartment. The narrator's details become symbolic. On his first visit, he found that Bernherd lived in consummate solitude. Bernherd's flat had four doors to insulate him from reality. He was hermetically sealed from the world: inside, Christopher can hear nothing from outside. Bernherd's oriental robes further stress his convoluted seclusion. Never did Bernherd speak directly; instead, he insinuated through stories and oblique references which shrouded him in mystery. It is significant that the connection between character and environment is nowhere more pronounced than in this episode. Bernherd's is perhaps the most complete statement of the theme of the 'lost'. He once admitted to Christopher that he was 'getting out of touch with existence' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 222). He cannot act; he seems to be already dead. He is wholly possessed by some inertia of the Prufrockian kind. When Christopher demurs 'What about tomorrow?', Bernherd replies, 'Tomorrow is too late' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 224). Like his mother who died of cancer, Bernherd's denial of life leads him virtually to commit suicide.

Bernherd is doubly damned, as a capitalist and as a Jew. In the latter

capacity, he is representative of his fellow Jews who also met a similar fate. Needless to mention, ubiquitous is the threat of a political disaster in all four sections of *Goodbye to Berlin*. During the thirties, the whole of Germany was engulfed by political upheaval, resulting in Jew-hunting by the Nazis. Berlin was at this time passing through a critical phase of its history, and a general feeling of disaster was prevalent everywhere. When the Nazis came to power, they were out to exterminate the Jews. One of the factors that enabled them to continue their inhuman treatment was the silence of the conscience of Europe. Isherwood offers us a foretaste of the impending crisis through the mock-humble remarks of the polished young Jew, Bernherd. When Bernherd asked Isherwood 'Are you happy here?', he replied, 'Very happy'. Bernherd then responded with a sarcastic remark: 'That is wonderful. I think ... most wonderful. A spirit possessed of such vitality that it can be happy even in Berlin' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 194). When Christopher was unexpectedly taken to a garden-party at Bernherd's cottage, he was thinking at the end of the party that 'all these people are ultimately doomed. This evening is the dress rehearsal of a disaster. It is like the last night of an epoch' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 219). This uneasy feeling and premonition of a general disaster pervaded the whole of Germany during Hitler's regime and siphoned off the very lifeblood of the common Berliners. They are destined to live a life-in-death situation. Piazza's observation seems to be worth quoting in this connection: 'The last story, "The Landauers", placed before the final diary, with chilling horror, brings the stories to the same conclusion as that of Joyce's "Dubliners": Paralysis' (1978,96).

The two Berlin diaries — one at the beginning, dated Autumn 1930, and the other at the close, dated Winter 1932-3, deserve special notice, both thematically and structurally. The opening diary, naive and light-hearted as it is, presents a state of glee involving Frl. Schroeder, Isherwood's landlady, Frl. Mayr, a tenant and Frl. Glanterneck, a Galician Jewess. The narrator is amused and fascinated by the zeal and zest of the Berliners to survive and to resurrect into a fresh lease of life even after the Great War that devastated the whole of Germany. In the later diary, the tone shifts, from comedy to pathos, from the narrator's curiosity to horrible incredulity. In the first diary, Christopher is found to feel happy to see the glitter of Berlin in its make. In the final diary,

Berlin appears as a doom-laden city — a city of the 'lost' : 'The sun shines, and Hitler is master of this city ... and dozens of my friends ... are in prison, possibly dead' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 255). In fact, the two diaries are set against each other in dialectical relationship which corresponds to the internal contrapuntal organization of the whole structural network of the novel. For instance, the heterosexual promiscuity of Sally Bowles contrasts with the homosexual relationship of Otto and Wilkinson on the Reugen Island. The proletarian Nowaks are contrasted with the wealthy Landauers. The contrapuntal polarities that characterize the two diaries also reflect the real polarization of attitudes to democracy during Hitler's regime in Berlin. According to Paul Piazza, 'The opening and concluding Berlin diaries are like weather maps which record the increasing velocity of the approaching storm. Both diaries are well-planned inventions, intended to mesh with the tone and temper of the stories they intersperse' (1978,98).

In *Goodbye to Berlin*, Isherwood, therefore, portrays with the objectivity of an artist, much like T.S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*, the 'modern inferno' which was Hitler's Germany in the thirties. In each section of the novel each of the principal dynamic portraits represents one of Berlin's misfits. They might either be sexual outcasts like Sally or psychological outcasts like Peter Wilkinson, either economic misfits like Nowaks or social misfits like Landauers. Finally, the whole novel becomes a compendium of the 'doomed' and the 'lost'. Brian Finney aptly says: 'The whole <sup>of</sup> Berlin society (and not just the Capitalists and the Nazis) is corrupt, Isherwood implies' (1979,153). But what is interesting about the author-narrator is that he is not just content to portray the sham and the 'lost', but freely joins the whole lot. He does involve with the 'doomed' with a penchant for examining his self — for exploring whether it is possible for an artist to assert his individual identity while connecting with the vast wave of humanity around him. In *Goodbye to Berlin*, Isherwood, in fact, drops his blinkers to the real world. He gives up what is ideal and shows it in its true colours. In 'Sally Bowles' the narrator depicts the piteous spectacle of a call-girl who is sexually exploited time and again and is finally duped. In 'The Nowaks' he shows how poverty and unemployment breed diseases like tuberculosis. At Bennherd's Tea-party Isherwood's realization that 'all these

people are ultimately doomed' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 219) and his horrifying perception in the final Berlin diary that 'whatever government is in power, they are doomed to live in this town' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 255) only reinforces Isherwood's awareness of the real rather than the ideal or wonderful, as in his earlier novel, *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*. These insights not only make the namesake narrator more penetrating and self-reflective than that of the earlier book, but record the growth of his self.

We also find Isherwood connecting his life with the dirty slum denizens of the 'lost' city of Berlin. He freely mixes with Sally and makes friends with Bernherd. He stands by those who are poor, sick and are abandoned by the respectable society. This involvement elevates the novel from the level of mere political pamphleteering to the burgeoning of realization of personal selfhood and universal brotherhood. Christopher forges a link between him, the narrator or the creator and his characters. In this connection, Stephen Spender in *World Within World* writes: 'Christopher, so far from being the self-effacing spectator he depicts in his novels, was really the centre of his characters, and neither could they exist without him, nor he without them' (1977, 124). The namesake narrator is as involved in contemporary politics and connect with the 'doomed' in different sections of the novel as Isherwood was during his years in Berlin. The namesake narrator's friendships with such characters as Sally, Nowak or Bernherd provides Isherwood with the potential means of examining his self. Search for self is not, by now, for Isherwood, mere establishment of individual independence. He seeks to solidify his identity while relating his self to others. Alan Wilde thus says that 'it might be most accurate to say that his friendships, such as they are, are his means to self-understanding, just as they are, more concretely, the readers' means to understanding him' (1971,72).

In *Goodbye to Berlin* Isherwood also shows advancement in his familial ties. As time rolls on, he becomes mature in understanding the fundamental relationship between parents and children. It is interesting to note that he now feels, as he never did in his earlier novels like *All the Conspirators* and *The Memorial*, a growing ease in his relation with his termagant mother, Kathleen. Christopher's relationship with Fraulein Schroeder affords perhaps the best example of this progress. Mary Scriven in *The Memorial* is drawn in a positive

light. Nevertheless, Frä. Schroeder in *Goodbye to Berlin* is by far the more sympathetic to her boarders than any in Isherwood's novels of the early period. She heartily looks after her boarders and takes care of them in all their hazards. Another mother character in the novel, Frau Nowak, is portrayed as quite hospitable to Herr Christoph. She also tries to understand Otto's problems. Again, Frau Landauer, who seems to be protective towards her daughter, Natalia, shows her liberal attitude in encouraging the tutor, Mr. Isherwood, to take Natalia to the movies. The mother figures, therefore, as presented by Isherwood, unlike the monstrous Kathleen, seem to be understanding their sons' needs and problems. This suggests Isherwood's growing ease in his familial ties with his mother. On the other hand, Kathleen, too, does not appear offended by her son's behaviour. She also seems to be seriously concerned with the problems of her son. Isherwood writes about the latest development in his ties with his mother in *his autobiography*: 'She is infinitely more broad-minded, more reasonable than she was to the old days' (1993,222). Isherwood also believed, with the coming of maturity, that concern about self does not preclude familial ties, but finds its fruition only when an individual overcomes the hurdles at home and in the world around him. It is noticeable in all his novels from *Goodbye to Berlin* onward that Isherwood's process of self-identification becomes suggestive of the fact that he must learn to relate art to life and try to connect with those who once seemed to be at loggerheads with him.

Along with the portrayal of self and familial relationships, the novel also exposes Isherwood's sexual nature. In the earlier books, Isherwood had only hinted at his sexual practices, but never turned them as the themes of his novels. In *Goodbye to Berlin* the signals of his heterosexuality, as in 'Sally Bowles' and of his homosexuality too, as in 'On Reugen Island' are unmistakable. Sally, a call-girl openly invites Christopher: 'Do you mind if I lie down on your sofa, darling?', to which he replies: 'No, of course, not'. Comfortably settled, Sally also bursts, 'I'm most terribly tired. I didn't sleep a wink last night. I've got a marvellous new lover' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 47). But a homosexual as he was, Christopher's terms with Sally does not last long. He feels bored to continue his love with Sally. So, when Sally exclaims — 'Oh, for God's sake.... don't start being English!', Christopher scolds her 'Well, then, if you want to know, it rather

bores me' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 47). Later, Sally asks Christopher, 'But you're not in love with me, are you?', and the narrator curtly says, 'No, I'm not in love with you' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 49). 'On Reugen Island', however, explores a different type of sexual nature. It is significant to note that Isherwood deliberately refrains from straightforwardly identifying himself with the namesake narrator's homosexuality, since he was aware of Oscar Wilde's imprisonment for overt portrayal of onanism. Yet, one sees clearly depicted Isherwood's homosexual relation with Walter. Again, Peter Wilkinson's homosexuality with Otto Nowak for the cure of psychological disorder is an open statement on sex. Otto, of course, was, in reality, Isherwood's boy-lover. The namesake narrator's description of Otto's physique only reflects back on Isherwood's own homosexual nature: 'Otto has a face like a very ripe peach. His hair is fair and thick, growing low on his forehead' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 100).

The final pages of the Berlin diary epitomizes Isherwood's handling of the homosexual motif. Isherwood describes that a few drunk American youths, in one of Berlin's parties, were amazed to see 'men dressed as women', and asked 'what's on here?' Fritz replied, 'Men dressed as women'. Then one of the young Americans became surprised and asked: 'Men dressed as women? As women, hey? Do you mean they're queer?' Fritz answered: 'Eventually we're all queer' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 238). This show of 'queerness' is suggestive of the knotty issues of homosexuality which runs through *The Berlin Stories* 'like an accompaniment — not merely the advertised, painted boys of the notorious brothels, but the more poisonous homosexuality that is comradeship and masculinity gone awry' (quoted in Piazza: 1978, 178-79). The open handling of homosexuality as such is a positive indication of Isherwood's growing ease with his own sexual nature, which enables him to grow in the understanding of his self. He need no longer conceal his homosexuality, and we continue to perceive the progression in an honest presentation of sexuality, thematically much denser here than it had been in *All the Conspirators* or *The Memorial* or even *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*.

*Goodbye to Berlin* is also a successful attempt, on the part of Isherwood, at reconciling the claims of the artist and the claims of the moralist. The theme

as such has lent the book a certain amount of literary value and interest which earned it wide reading public during the thirties and at the same time absolved it from being called a mere documentary novel on Berlin. John Lehmann was the first to point out that Isherwood's work is entirely revolutionary and humanist. In *New Writing in England* he describes *Goodbye to Berlin* as 'one of the few successful solutions in recent years of the problem of reconciling the claims of the artist and the claims of the moralist who is aware of, and passionately rejects social injustice and social decay (1939,25). The artist here presents us with a photographic representation of the scene of decay and degeneration, while the potential moralist silently condemns the injustice which he finds in contemporary Berlin society, injustice leading to the disruption of its social order. From the opening pages of the book clearly evident is the sharp antagonism between the Nazis and the Jews, which caused immense political uproar in the whole of Germany threatening every individual living in the Fascist regime of Hitler. The Nazis, who were politically backed by Hitler, were not just content with shouting anti-Jewish slogans, but were desperately trying to exterminate the Jews from every walk of life. Once two Jews were attacked in an open street by a Nazi for taking two call-girls into their private car, as he 'felt it his mission to defend the honour of all German women against the obscene anti-Nordic menace' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 236). The Jews, however, get away by jumping into the car and disappear. After a little commotion, the crowd disperse, but when the narrator, Christopher, returns to the same spot after three hours, 'the Nazi was still patrolling up and down, looking hungrily for more German womanhood to rescue' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 236). These events, however, incidental they are, are symptoms of a greater tragedy, of a disaster that was fast approaching. Again, when Christopher was taken to a garden party at Bernhard's country cottage, he is found, at the end of the party, to contemplate upon the inevitable doom of all Berliners: 'All these people are ultimately doomed. This evening is the dress-rehearsal of a disaster' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 219). These premonitions of an impending calamity, which no one could escape, seemed to threaten the very basis of Berlin life at large.

The social and moral decay was largely caused by economic degeneration due to the collapse of the Darmstadter und National Bank, and the consequent

hopelessness which was rampant in Berlin society found its expression in sexual perversity. Sally became a call-girl as she could not find any other source of money-making in Germany. The poor Nowaks are the worst victims of an economically bankrupt society. The gradual degradation of the Bernherd family which was once affluent and wealthy in the whole of Berlin may be traced to the general collapse of the country's economy. And as the economic situation degenerates, traditional moral values break down. Frau Kramf does not hesitate to stoop to her perverted butcher to obtain cutlets or steak. The whimsical butcher will not sell a piece of meat unless and until he has the pleasure of pinching and slapping the cheeks of a sensitive well-bred girl. The Reformatory School boys no longer have a choice between the engineering works and prison when the former goes bankrupt. One of the most vivid images of Berlin's general decay, on the eve of Hitler's rise to power, is of the jaded decadence of the 'Salome' which was so decorated as to look like a hell, where the 'stage lesbians' imitate 'the laughter of the damned'. The whole of Berlin society, in fact, contracted a malady that was hardly curable.

Right up to the end of the novel, Isherwood's penchant for exposing the vacuum in the lives of the 'lost' is conspicuous. But what is significant about the namesake narrator is that he hardly, or even never, passes any judgement. He only exhibits values without stating them and by illustrating their absence. In this connection, Colin Wilson mentions that Isherwood's objectivity is 'a little too cold and detached' (quoted in Finney:1979, 153). Colin's argument is that Isherwood has to maintain distance if he has to prevent his readers from prejudging his characters and to keep them aloof from traumatic experience of their characters. This detachment is, indeed, essential if he is to draw our sympathy for the 'lost'. When he utters 'Berlin is a skeleton which aches in the cold : it is my own skeleton aching' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 230), he certainly sympathizes with Berlin and its 'doomed' inhabitants and epitomizes 'the predicament of the "lost" to whom he too spiritually belongs' (Finney : 1979:154).

Finally, Isherwood's narrative technique in *Goodbye to Berlin* is worth mentioning, since it evoked controversy among the readers and scholars alike. The controversy consists in the artist's open declaration at the beginning of the novel that 'I am a Camera with its shutters open, quite passive, recording, not

thinking' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 9). The novelist's role as a 'Camera' in the narrative of his story may be cited as evidence of a new school of fiction. G.S. Frazer, for instance, found Isherwood as the leading practitioner of the 'documentary' novel of the thirties which was parallel in intention and achievement to British documentary film movement of the period. However, Isherwood's narrative motto as such—to be objective as a camera — was, perhaps, inspired by E.M. Forster's fictive method of maintaining objectivity without abjuring humanistic truth, philosophical credo and attention to detail. Colin Wilson, of course, holds a different view, believing that 'the essential idea came from Kierkegaard, via Rilke, James, Joyce and Huxley' (1976,316). The fact is that the writers of the thirties were obsessed with exploring their self, hence the use of a first-person narrator well fitted in their plea for achieving subjective truth in an objective way.

But a host of literary critics have been unduly harsh and severe on Isherwood's opening statement of the novel. Norman Friedman, for instance, points out that the declaration 'I am a Camera' only suggests the final extinction of the author. Literature is not mere recording, and a writer-artist cannot remain blind to the artistic principles of selection and rejection nor he can avoid reflecting on his individual moods and feelings. When Isherwood says — 'Berlin is a skeleton which aches in the cold: it is my own skeleton aching' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 230), he surely expresses his own feelings for the 'doomed' of Berlin; he does sympathize with the inhabitants of the 'lost' city.

Years later, in an interview with Robert Wennesten, Isherwood explained 'What I really meant by saying "I am a Camera" was not I am a camera all the time, and that I'm like a Camera.... My usual mood would have been to rush downstairs and get into action. The idea that I was a person very divorced from what was going on around me is quite false' (quoted in Fryer: 1977, 166). This is one reason why within four or five pages of the remark 'not thinking' we find him falling into meditating on the inevitable destiny of Berlin and its 'lost'. After presenting Frl. Schroeder, the narrator reveals: 'When I have been listening to her for sometime, I find myself relapsing into a curious trance-like state of depression. I begin to feel profoundly unhappy' (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 14). However, critics like Isaac Rosenfeld and Richard Mayne insist that the namesake narrator reveals nothing of himself, that Isherwood is a self-effacing

onlooker, making no judgement, forming no attachment, yet every reader is convinced that the namesake narrator does make friendship with Sally, Otto or Bernhard and pronounce his judgement. No one can deny that Isherwood sympathizes with and pronounces his judgement on, the inevitable destiny of the 'lost', when he says 'whatever government is in power, they are doomed. to live in this town' (*Goodbye to Berlin*,255).

We see, then, that Isherwood's art in *Goodbye to Berlin* finds its perfection in exploring not just what concerns an individual, as in *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, but how he embraces the larger world around him. Alan Wilde remarks: 'All of Isherwood's first-person novels, whatever their ostensible subjects, concern the education of their narrators' (1971, 63). What Christopher learns along the progression of this novel is that true art cannot be divorced from people, from politics and from life. It may be noted in passing that in the novels written after Isherwood's conversion to Vedantism, beginning with *Prater Violet*, the narrator is exclusively concerned with art in relation to life and to the society he lives in. He moves beyond his self, his ego and seeks connection with the larger objective world. *Goodbye to Berlin*, in this sense, may be said to have bidden goodbye to the world of the thrives — the world of the ego.