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Lonely Times, Lonely Places: Christopher Isherwood's Chronotography of Loneliness

Abstract: This article outlines the connections between the phenomenon of loneliness and the categories of time and space in Christopher Isherwood's writing. Characteristically autobiographical, it reflects the author's quest for self, including the geography of his wanderings around Europe and emigration as well as the complexities of the historical context of his life. The study starts with a discussion of loneliness as an existential issue and goes on to explore its temporal and spatial manifestations at the various levels of national, gender, and age identity, including the experience of being a foreigner in an alien sociocultural space and psychological immaturity as a specific temporal modality of emotional estrangement. The article then investigates how Isherwood uses time and space to construct narratives of historical change, in which the pre-war anxiety and the post-war consumerism are revealed through the city/nature juxtaposition. The social dimension of loneliness is analysed in terms of the Foucauldian concepts of heterotopia and heterochrony. Gay bars, hospitals, and universities alike constitute spaces of contained otherness, where time is experienced differently, reinforcing either the sense of community or social alienation. Finally, the article looks at the notion of home, which functions as a chronotope and the point of conceptual and structural organisation for the circadian novel.

Keywords: *loneliness; time; space; Christopher Isherwood; identity; autobiographical writing; modernism.*



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Introduction

Reflecting on the notion of “aloneness”, Rubin Gotesky suggests that the phenomenon has two dimensions: temporal (interval) and physical (distance) separation (Gotesky 215). These are primarily neutral states as all people are separated from others in terms of space (e.g. different countries), time (e.g. different generations), or both. The crucial point here is the centrality of time and space in the perception of loneliness.

One of the authors particularly preoccupied with the problem of loneliness is the Anglo-American writer Christopher Isherwood. The connection of his oeuvre with the notions of time and space is made salient by Berg and Freeman in their two seminal monographs: *The Isherwood Century* (2001) and *Isherwood in Transit* (2020). The former emphasises the extent to which the historical background informed his works as well as to which he was able to capture the zeitgeist of the period, whereas the latter investigates how the writer’s identity was influenced by his geographical and spiritual wanderings. However, the interconnection of time and space in Isherwood’s texts, especially in their relation to the concept of loneliness, has not been a focus of particular scholarly attention.

I have outlined elsewhere the significance of the temporal and spatial dimensions of the discourse of loneliness in Isherwood’s *A Single Man* (see Drannikov 22–9). This article aims at a further and more detailed exploration of how these categories are mutually shaped, transformed, and reflected throughout his writing.

A lonely world: time and space as existential markers of loneliness

Loneliness is pervasive, simultaneously individual and universal, it does not recognize geographical or generational borders, and thus, to employ a Shakespearean metaphor, makes all the world its stage. The existentialist philosopher José Ortega y Gasset suggests that the reason for such a “radical solitude” is the intransferability of life: “Not only am I beyond the other man, but also my world is beyond his: we are two mutual ‘beyonds’ and, because of that, radically strangers (my translation)” (109). Since one cannot fully share one’s experience with someone else, the essence of existence is loneliness.

George, the protagonist of Isherwood’s *A Single Man*, is lonely in a variety of ways, yet the main, all-encompassing aspect of his loneliness is the existential one. The novel begins with George awakening and gradually going through the process of self-identification: “Waking up begins with saying *am* and *now*... *Here* comes next, and is at least negatively reassuring; because here, this morning, is where it has expected to find itself: what’s called at home” (1; emphasis added). The existential crisis George is experiencing is so traumatic that his consciousness struggles to establish itself. Initially, the protagonist refers to himself as “it” as if not yet fully grasping his humanness. He gradually goes through the stages of existential (“am”) and then temporal (“now”) and spatial (“here”) orientation. These phenomenological markers allow George to construct

his reality. It is, however, a reality of monotony and anguish at the loss of his partner Jim, the source of George's loneliness.

The category of time, in this case, precedes even that of existence: both the verb and the adverb anchor the self in the present. The novel's temporality is generally focused on what might be called the feeling of the moment. For George, the essence of the moment is a past sealed off by the liminal situation of Jim's death and a future that cannot be imagined without him:

But now isn't simply now. Now is also a cold reminder; one whole day later than yesterday, one year later than last year. Every now is labelled with its date, rendering all past nows obsolete, until – later or sooner – perhaps – no, not perhaps – quite certainly: It will come. (Isherwood, A Single Man 1)

George is thus trapped in the present, with each grief-stricken day so similar to another that they virtually become a sort of infinite recursion. Yet he somewhat manages to break free by the end of the novel: "Damn the future. Let Kenny and the kids have it. Let Charley keep the past. George clings only to Now" (*A Single Man* 149). "Now" ceases to be "a cold reminder", becoming a vitalistic affirmation as George finally manages to accept and deal with his loss.

In an even broader existential context, one might talk about the eschatological perspective of loneliness. In the words of Joseph Conrad, "indestructible loneliness... surrounds, envelops, clothes every human soul from the cradle to the grave, and, perhaps, beyond" (250). Similarly, George imagines Jim observing him from a rather vague afterlife:

[I]t would be like the *brief visit of an observer from another country*, who is permitted to peep in for a moment from *the vast outdoors of his freedom* and see, at a distance, through glass, this figure *who sits solitary at the small table in the narrow room*, eating his poached eggs humbly and dully, *a prisoner for life?* (*A Single Man* 6, emphasis added)

The "vast outdoors of freedom" is in stark contrast to "the small table in the narrow room", creating a juxtaposition between a desolate earthly existence, seen as an imprisonment, and a liberation potentially granted beyond its limits. Here, the very concepts of life and death as related to loneliness are framed in temporal and spatial terms. In an existentialist reading of this passage, loneliness is not only a major category of being but also an integral attribute of non-being.

Across time and space: looking for the self

Whether real or purely symbolic, the boundaries between continents and countries are a contributing factor to the functioning of loneliness. Long pre-war years of

wandering around Europe and the subsequent emigration to the United States make it rather difficult to pinpoint Isherwood's national identity: as he himself puts it in his fictionalised autobiography *Christopher and His Kind*, "I'm looking for my homeland" (Isherwood, *Christopher* 13). The matter is definitely one of the dominants in his writing as most of his characters are essentially foreigners, tourists, migrants, or expatriates.

The author's native England is often portrayed as hostile, a place one longs to escape and leave behind. Upon his return home, the narrator of *Down There on a Visit* bemoans the mores of his compatriots:

[H]ere we are, take us or leave us – this is where you'll do things our way, not yours . . . They are indomitable, incorrigible, and so utterly self-satisfied that they no longer have to raise their voices or wave their arms when they address the lesser breeds. If you have any criticisms, they have one unanswerable answer: you can stay off our island. (Isherwood, *Down There* 139)

These features of national identity are epitomised in the character of Mr Lancaster. A stereotypical English gentleman, he is pragmatic, individualistic, and characteristically chauvinistic. He is a successful businessman but also a foreigner in a country he cannot comprehend, which makes him profoundly lonely. So much so that, eventually, he commits suicide. Space is thus represented in both a misplaced national identity and a foreign environment to which he struggles to adapt.

Another novel, *The World in the Evening*, also features a protagonist facing an identity crisis, Stephen Monk. Although the national aspect is not as clearly defined in the development of the plot, at some point he mentions his complicated geographical background, reminiscent of Isherwood's travelling around Europe:

My Father was American, and I was born here. But I went to England when I was five years old...Then I started to travel around; I was hardly ever in England after that. I came back here once – only on a short visit, though. Mostly, I was on the Continent: Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Greece – all over the place...So now, I don't really belong anywhere. (Isherwood, *The World* 44, emphasis added)

The idea of not belonging, a certain rootlessness reflects the correlation between national identity and loneliness. Without a specific sociocultural space to associate oneself with, one is a stranger everywhere.

However, the absence of spatial connections is not the only problem in the construction and functioning of Monk's identity. Age is a common denominator for both the concept of time and loneliness. Although usually what is taken into account is an individual's stage of life (for example, old age is associated with a higher risk of social isolation), certain behavioural patterns can also be regarded as age-related. This is of particular significance for the discourses of gender and sexual identity. Commenting upon the historical development of the notion of homosexuality, Jamie Carr explains that

“[u]nlike the ‘heterosexual’ subject, the ‘homosexual’ subject...failed to evolve from immaturity to maturity, to develop emotionally from ‘childhood’ into ‘adulthood.’ Homosexuality was articulated, then, as a problem of *time*” (6). In Jamie Harker’s astute observation, “Stephen is a checklist for homosexual pathology: promiscuous, unfaithful, narcissistic, infantile, insensitive, dishonest, and cruel. ‘Infantile,’ however, is the adjective that recurs most often” (Harker 27–8). His infantility thus functions as a specific temporal modality of loneliness.

The descriptions of Monk’s childishness abound in the text. For instance, he himself confesses: “If life was as crazy as this, then I couldn’t cope with it. I was as helpless as a child in the midst of this mess I had created” (Isherwood, *The World* 141). Monk’s lies, betrayals, temper tantrums are indicative of his psychological immaturity, which causes problems in all his relationships, be they friendly, familial, or romantic, and leads to his emotional and social estrangement.

Recuperating after a car accident, Stephen is forced to stay in bed and thus, in a confined space of his room, has ample time for reflection and reminiscence. He goes through his deceased first wife Elizabeth’s correspondence, having a kind of one-sided dialogue with her. As Lisa M. Schwerdt points out, “Stephen addresses Elizabeth almost as often as he does the reader, the time-shifts allowing him to recreate the past as a means to his ‘self-analysis’” (124). Memory thus becomes another temporal feature that organises the narrative not only structurally, but also conceptually. Appropriately, the three parts of the novel are titled ‘The End’, ‘Letters and Life’, and ‘The Beginning’. By revisiting and re-evaluating his past, Monk manages to “open himself to the truth” (Schwerdt 124) and reconstruct his identity, going from the end of his old life to the beginning of a new one.

A new life for Isherwood himself began after the emigration, arguably one of his most crucial decisions, and equally controversial. It led him to the personal journey of discovering the teaching of Vedanta and establishing a long-term relationship with Don Bacchardy, meanwhile resulting in bitter criticism back in England, both political and literary. However, it was vitally important for Isherwood to reframe himself as an American author:

He had to prove to the English that his emigration had been a serious action, that he had put down roots and become, at least partially, American. (To prove, in other words, that he had deliberately changed countries, not merely ran away from home.) (Isherwood, *Lost Years* 86)

The struggle to balance his English heritage with his newly constructed American identity can be clearly seen in Isherwood’s writing of the period. What eventually became *A Single Man* was initially supposed to be called *The Englishwoman* (a homage to Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*). The aspect of national identity was present in the author’s mind as Isherwood wanted “to show America through British eyes... By keeping my viewpoint, I can do this bifocally – showing how America seems to the Englishwoman and how it

seems to me” (qtd. in Kaplan 42). Although the focus shifted from a woman to a man and some of the major concepts were reworked, national identity remained woven into the canvas of the text. As William R. Handley suggests, George seems to be “an unsuccessful transplant from England” (Handley 67). Indeed, to his colleagues, he believes, “his background and degrees are British and therefore dubious” (Isherwood, *A Single Man* 42). His origin is not specifically emphasised and even the title underwent change because, as Isherwood points out in his notes to one of the drafts of the novel, “the fact that George is English is not the most important thing about him” (qtd. in Kaplan 45). And yet, he most definitely feels alien in American society. Despite using the collective ‘we’ when talking about Americans as opposed to Europeans, George has not fully integrated into this sociocultural space and is perceived by others, but most importantly by himself, as inherently foreign.

Babylon is fallen: historical change and the city/nature discourse

On a more local level, the geography of Isherwood’s prose is defined by two focal points: Berlin and Los Angeles. The German capital is marked by a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, it was the place of creative and sexual liberation: “To Christopher, Berlin meant Boys” (Isherwood, *Christopher* 3). In a way, it was a myth of a city complete with the image of the German Boy, the archetypal love interest, a personal love myth; a safe haven for romantic pursuits. On the other hand, this idealised vision started to crack as Berlin turned out to be the stage for the unfolding drama of Nazism.

Andrew Thacker traces modernist techniques in the (most conventionally accepted as) realistic of Isherwood’s novels such as *Goodbye to Berlin*. He borrows the phrase “geographical emotions” from the British writer and critic Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman) in his reflections on the image of the city:

The cold shrinks Berlin to ‘a small black dot’ on ‘the enormous European map’ and Isherwood’s imaginative geography now perceives the city to be surrounded by the Prussian plains, which are described as ‘an immense waste of unhomey ocean’, projecting the city as an island home under threat from watery waste. (*Modernism, Space and the City* 150)

The narrator’s psychological state is fused with the atmosphere of impending doom that reigns in pre-war Berlin, reflecting both the critical social changes and the loneliness of a person lost in a collapsing world.

Time is of no less essence in the depiction of pre-war neurosis and anxiety. Similarly to how in *Goodbye to Berlin* abandonment and alienation are spatially projected through physical sensations, in *Down There on a Visit*, the narrator has a sickening feeling of suspended, almost frozen time:

I keep remembering that phrase – it’s from Balzac – *un jour sans lendemain*, a day

without a morrow. This time we're living through now, this doom-heavy summer, is *un jour sans lendemain*, or my fear whispers that it may be; and everything one does seems to have a tomorrowless quality about it. (Isherwood, *Down There* 142–43)

It is the “end of history” approaching, with the future being at its most uncertain not only for an individual but for humankind in general. Both the urbanisation of space and such passive, fatalistic temporalities of paralysis and purposelessness are a particular feature of modernist discourse.

Los Angeles ostensibly became a home found, where Isherwood willingly chose to spend the second half of his life. *A Single Man*, Handley points out, is an indispensable text in the canon of Los Angeles fiction (63). However, it depicts the city in a somewhat unfavourable light. George “looks out over Los Angeles like a sad Jewish prophet of doom...Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city. But this city is not great, was never great, and has nearly no distance to fall” (*A Single Man* 89). Not unlike the Berlin myth, which was first associated with romantic decadence and sexual freedom but started to crumble later on, the Los Angeles myth is one of unwelcome transformation:

The Change began in the late forties, when the World War Two vets came swarming out of the East with their just-married wives, in search of new and better breeding grounds...So, one by one, the cottages which used to reek of bathtub gin and reverberate with the poetry of Hart Crane have fallen to the occupying army of Coke-drinking television watchers. (*A Single Man* 8)

In the Berlin case, the temporal impulse for the changes in space was the rise of Nazis to power. The external historical time of *A Single Man*, though perhaps of less tragic consequence, is nevertheless equally dramatic. Set in 1962, just after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the novel “unfolds under the spectre, then, of a nuclear war on one hand and in the heyday of nuclear family conformity on the other” (Cucullu 16). The horrors of the Second World War led to the existential sense of humanity balancing at the edge of an abyss. Concurrently, the post-war rapid economic growth conditions a shift in social consciousness towards consumerist practices, which George poignantly describes as “survival into a Rubble Age” (Isherwood, *A Single Man* 68). The former bohemian way of life symbolically represented by the images of alcohol and art has turned into a mundane existence of illusory stability. This change is indicative of George's growing estrangement from a society whose values clash with his queer nostalgia.

Nature, by way of counterbalance, leads to liberation from societal constraints. After discovering his wife's infidelity, Stephen Monk in *The World in the Evening* flees his agonised life and, while on a plane, is overwhelmed by the calm and wild grandeur of the American landscape:

It was the sort of super-spectacle which makes some people think of God or

Michelangelo, and which others find merely disgusting and dull because it seems to exclude their egos so completely...*the aloofness, the absolute otherness* of this country made me almost happy...*A world fit only for hermits*, reptiles and military manoeuvres; prehistoric, posthistoric, timeless, strictly neutral; proving nothing, disproving nothing. (Isherwood, *The World* 24, emphasis added)

Nature is portrayed as a kind of pagan primordial force, ultimate otherness. It is due to its humanlessness that it has such a profound impact on the observer. In a way, this wilderness is synonymous with solitude as a desired state of disconnectedness from society and almost ascends to the existential level in its dissolution of an individual self.

Similarly to Stephen, Elizabeth expresses her astonishment at the effect nature can have on human mental state: “The news certainly isn’t any less depressing, or Hitler any less frightening” but “there’s this vastness of water and sky all around: it seems to swallow your anxieties and fears. Fear flourishes in dark corners, gloomy hotel bedrooms, narrow streets; it simply cannot exist in this light” (*The World* 177). Natural spaces thus seem to exist beyond time, defying the social and historic temporalities that shape the outer world. This particular quality of natural spaces does not only oppose the neurotic cityscapes of the pre-war period, but also negotiates its “tomorrowlessness”.

That marvellous minority, The Living: heterotopias and heterochronies

In a social context, the categories of time and space can either be explicitly related to loneliness (e.g. forced isolation in prisons) or reinforce the sense of communality and belonging (e.g. joint celebrations at a festival). In both cases, their nature is defined by the relationship between an individual and a group.

One of the obvious instances of a specifically communal place is the Berlin gay bars frequented by Isherwood. Just like prisons, they are essentially heterotopias, to use the Foucauldian term, in that they create a space of otherness, deviation. The people gathered within are simultaneously united by their sexual preferences and disconnected from the rest of society. Heterotopias of this kind are ambiguous as they constitute safe spaces for those who challenge the socially constructed norm; simultaneously, they reinforce the feeling of difference and therefore estrangement and social alienation.

Another classical example of heterotopia introduced by Foucault himself is a hospital. In *A Single Man*, George visits one to see Jim’s former lover Doris. Loneliness in this place is experienced in multiple ways. First, the patients are physically separated from the rest of the society. It is one of the primary functions of a heterotopia to create a space of contained otherness in order to maintain balance in the outer world (Foucault 5). Not only her body, but also her mind, is weakened by disease and therefore Doris is lonely because she exists in an essentially different reality from which she only periodically emerges:

George has stopped bringing her flowers or other gifts. There is nothing of any

significance he can bring into this room from the outside now; not even himself. Everything that matters to her is now right here in this room, where she is absorbed in the business of dying. (Isherwood, *A Single Man* 76)

Doris' entire existence is reduced to this space. Her failing body is disconnected not only from the people beyond the hospital walls, but also from the hospital staff and visitors, adding a mental dimension to her loneliness as she is only partially aware of the world around her.

Although without elaborating on this part of the concept, alongside heterotopias Foucault introduces the notion of heterochronies: "Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time... The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time" (*Of Other Spaces* 6). According to this definition, heterotopias involve not only a spatial but a temporal aspect as well.

The heterotopia of a hospital is no exception. Foucault uses the heterotopia of a cemetery to explain heterochronies: "the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopic place since, for the individual, the cemetery begins with this strange heterochrony, the loss of life" (*Of Other Spaces* 7). Although not as closely linked to the concept of death, a hospital is still a transitional space, where time is perceived differently. In her article, Elizabeth Barry discusses the chronotope of old age with its more specific age-related institutions such as nursing homes and retirement communities, but, by and large, the same reflections can be applied to medical facilities in general:

They are ostensibly places of stasis rather than movement: for some residents, at least, the interaction will effectively be one-way, an arrival without a departure. In one sense, then, this residence is permanent, none more so. In another, of course, it is the definition of transient. These are the waiting rooms for *le grand départ*. ("A glut of slippers" 147)

It is not therefore surprising that George is extremely ill at ease when visiting Doris. His reaction to entering the hospital manifests itself in physical terms: "Ah, how the poor body recoils with its every nerve from the sight, the smell, the feel of this place! Blindly it shies, rears, struggles to escape" (Isherwood, *A Single Man* 74). The fluid temporality of the borderline state between life and death is experienced especially acutely in such a peculiar space. And, though still an outsider in his social milieu, George is thus reminded of his connection with humanity as a whole, "that marvellous minority, The Living... because he is freshly returned from the icy presence of The Majority, which Doris is to join" (*A Single Man* 82). Paradoxically, even when acknowledging this bond, he sees himself as a representative of the ultimate minority, albeit in a purely metaphysical sense.

Foucault also distinguishes "heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time," such as libraries and museums whose goals are to establish "a place of all times that is itself outside of time" (*Of Other Spaces* 7). This list can be extended by the heterotopia of a university, a place aimed at collecting, preserving, and redistributing knowledge. As

Barbara Read points out, “universities make use of temporal symbolism to promote a notion of themselves as distinct spaces of value, emphasising tradition, age and a conception in some ways of being ‘out of time’ in relation to the everyday outside world” (“The University as Heterotopia” 4). San Tomas State College in *A Single Man* is depicted in rather unflattering tones consistent with the novel’s acute awareness of mass production and consumerist philosophy. It is described as “[a] clean modern factory, brick and glass and big windows, already three-quarters built...being finished in a hysterical hurry...able to process twenty thousand graduates” (Isherwood, *A Single Man* 28). Education is presented in terms of a repetitive mechanical process rather than intellectual growth, students are perceived not as individuals but as “raw material which is fed daily into this factory...to be processed, packaged and placed on the market” (*A Single Man* 32). The flow of time in this heterotopia does not ensure the continuity of tradition or the sense of “out-of-timeness” suggested by Read, nor does it help to form an inner community as gay bars do. Instead, the only thing the students “have in common is their urgency: the need to get with it, to finish that assignment which should have been handed in three days ago” (*A Single Man* 33). This exemplifies a new brand of neurotic temporality. Distinct from the pre-war sensation of stasis, it reflects the post-war obsession with speed and productivity.

One’s home-self: the chronotope of home and the circadian novel

Home is a word constantly resurfacing throughout this article and Isherwood’s writing with a varying degree of specificity. In this section, I would like to take a closer look at the concept of home as a physical dwelling. It is often associated with safety and stability and functions as a geographic anchor in the construction and functioning of one’s identity. Thus, in the first draft of the biographical novel *Kathleen and Frank*, Isherwood states that the “loss of identity is really much of the painfulness which lies at the bottom of what is miscalled Homesickness; it is not Home that one cries for but one’s home-self” (qtd. in Parker 35). That is why, in *The World in the Evening*, Stephen Monk goes back to the house of his childhood in an attempt to put together the pieces of his broken life:

This was really a fresh start; or, at worst, a dead end. After thirty-two years, I had come back to the room I was born in, bringing nobody with me, nothing except a suitcase. Now at last, I told myself with apprehension and excitement, I’ve actually done it. I’ve cut all the life-lines, kicked away all the props. From here on in, whatever happens, I’ll be entirely on my own. (Isherwood, *The World* 36–37)

To Monk, the room appears rather impersonal, devoid of meaningful connections with the past, just like his whole life has a quality of alienation, not belonging to him. Home does not feel like home because Stephen’s “home-self” is as fragmented as other parts of his identity.

Home is also, to use Bakhtin’s term, a specific chronotope “most often invoked as

the archetypal locus of time and space” (Barry 146). Taking George’s house from *A Single Man* as an example, the following features of the chronotope of home might be differentiated:

1) It is an isolated space that functions as a refuge from the roughness of the outside world. When Jim was alive, the compactness and seclusion of the house transformed it into an Edenic locus amoenus: “as good as being on our own island” (Isherwood, *A Single Man* 9).

2) It is a place where everyday activities are not purely functional but, according to Vivian Sobchack, “are secured and transfigured into intimate social communion” (qtd. in Barry 148). For George, “[b]reakfast with Jim used to be one of the best times of their day. It was then, while they were drinking their second and third cups of coffee, that they had their best talks” (*A Single Man* 5). Without his partner, George merely eats his poached eggs “humbly and dully” as the communicative aspect of home life is disrupted.

3) It is a place of remembering, a space in the present where the past is preserved both mentally and physically. George’s dwelling is imprinted with his memories of living with Jim:

Think of two people, living together day after day, year after year, in this small space, standing elbow to elbow cooking at the same small stove, squeezing past each other on the narrow stairs, shaving in front of the same small bathroom mirror, constantly jogging, jostling, bumping against each other’s bodies by mistake or on purpose, sensually, aggressively, awkwardly, impatiently, in rage or in love – *think what deep though invisible tracks they must leave, everywhere, behind them!* (*A Single Man* 3–4, emphasis added)

The persistent awareness of a significant other’s absence is defined by the marks of their presence since memory as a temporal modality manifests itself through space.

4) Similarly to the beach or the bar, home grants liberation due to its queerness. However painful, home is the only place where true grief is allowed as George refuses to let the neighbours know about Jim’s death and even his closest friend Charlotte does not fully comprehend the nature of his loss.

Just like the initial title, the specific genre and temporal organization of *A Single Man* is a homage to Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*. David Higdon appropriately classifies both texts as ‘circadian’ or one-day novels. He also defines four “primary focal points” or “rhythms” that structure the circadian narrative: an ordinary day; an individual’s death day; the response of an individual to another individual’s death; and a significant, memorable day (60). I would argue that *A Single Man* corresponds to at least the first and the third of these modalities (the second as well, if one reads the end of the novel as George’s death). But most notably, “All these rhythms *share a concentration on a narrowly circumscribed moment and a confined place*” (Higdon 60, emphasis added). This means that for the very structure of a circadian novel, the correlation of time and space is of primary importance. Even more specifically, these two categories appear to be

mutually bound.

George's day ends where it begins: at home. It is the first space his waking consciousness recognizes and then uses to construct his identity. It is also the last place his mind registers as he falls asleep – speculatively, the very last one indeed. The time of George's life is recurrently reflected within a single day and so does its space form a complete circle. Even the Vedantic phenomenology delicately woven into the otherwise non-religious narrative is related to the notion of home: “if some part of the non-entity we called George has indeed been absent at this moment of terminal shock, away out there on the deep waters, then it will return to find itself *homeless*” (Isherwood, *A Single Man* 152, emphasis added). Home can thus be regarded as both a location that the physical body inhabits, and as the body itself, in its function of a vessel for the mind or soul. In both instances, it seems to converge multiple spatial and temporal dimensions, conveying the connotations of connectedness or loneliness.

Conclusions

The texts under analysis reveal to what extent the notions of time and space are rooted in Christopher Isherwood's writing. The author's attention to the matters of temporality stems from the fact that “he was acutely aware of the significance of time in one's life, both personally and politically” (Carr 2), while spatial dimensions often feature in Isherwood's prose as a reflection of the geographical and spiritual landscapes that the writer and his characters traverse in their quest for self.

Both categories of time and space can be defined and interpreted in their relation to loneliness. Thus, certain temporal (such as age and memory, the influence of history on an individual and society) and spatial concepts (such as national identity, city/nature juxtaposition, heterotopias, home) constitute a complex and heterogeneous discourse, manifesting existential, phenomenological, social, and psychological modalities of solitude, isolation and disconnectedness.

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