The Concept of Rebellion in Christopher Isherwood’s "Goodbye to Berlin"

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A B S T R A C T

The present study deals with Christopher Isherwood’s manipulation of the concept of rebellion in his novel Goodbye to Berlin (1939). The Isherwoodian novel depicts various stages of rebellion against the chaos of values, the middle-class conventions and against the authoritative moral standards that make certain forms of conduct appear right.

The aim of this research is to trace Isherwood’s experimentation with the concept of rebellion; the forms he introduces into it change the conventional understanding of rebellion from a punishable law-breaking act into an instrument to deal with the difficult problems then to raise man to the occasion. Isherwood proves that rebellion is a constructive, not destructive, act whose role necessitates the improvement of the state and the individual.

K E Y W O R D S

The Concept of Rebellion, Christopher Isherwood’s, The Novel, Goodbye to Berlin

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1. The Definition of Rebellion:

Rebellion can be defined as an armed resistance for political purposes conducted by nationalists against the government, resulting in a revolution or a civil war. In law, rebellion is considered an act of someone who engages in an act of resistance against the authority and is therefore subject to prosecution for treason, such as the Boxer Rebellion (1900) against the Western commercial and political influence in China, the French Resistance (1944-1945), the English Civil War or the Great Rebellion (1642-1649), and so on. John and Christopher (1987, 59) From this definition one can deduce that whenever violence increases rebellion escalates into a civil war or a revolution. The two terms “rebellion” and “revolution” are not synonymous.

Daniel Aaron alludes to the fact that the critic Arthur Koestler differentiates rebellion from revolution, saying that rebellion is liable to change its cause, whereas revolution is directed against only one object; and that the rebel may turn his protest against injustice or against any other form of evil but the revolutionary is viewed as a “fanatic,” “constant hater” who conducts all his protest against the tyrannical authority. Stephen (2004, 25) The spirit of rebellion seems to be flexible as far as its cause concerned, while the cause of revolution is almost always inflexible.

Orwell differentiates revolution from reform, saying that revolution only conserves, while reform means change and novelty. The researcher disapproves of Orwell’s opinion, saying that both rebellion and revolution lead to change. In the case of revolution, the change happens radically. But, in the case of rebellion the change can be viewed as a peaceful and gradual process in the sense that rebellion doesn’t necessarily eradicate the existing system but it may readjust them or reconciles the old values and the new ones According to these opinions, one can deduce that any revolution may lose its real purpose of reform and may turn into terrorism whenever it is combined with severe violence. Thus, the two terms “rebellion” and “terrorism” must be treated with caution. Nevertheless, a rebel can’t be called a terrorist because the former aims to achieve a positive change, while the latter can be viewed as an instrument for the destruction of peace and for the service of fascism.

Rebellion is also defined as an attempt within the society to redistribute its powers and resources by using force, by showing disagreement with the existing system, and by behaving differently from the normal ways of behavior. Its synonyms include: revolt, insurgency, mutiny, insurrection, uprising, resistance, subversion and counter-culture. Claude J. Christopher (1980, 33) Besides, rebellion is described as a counter-cultural act that encompasses a range of behaviors, extending from a mild flouting of the social norms to a severely violent act Stephen (2004, 102).

2.1. The Berlin Phase:

Berlin represents a starting-point for Isherwood’s literary productivity and for his emergence as a genuine hope for the modern English novel. The novelist’s departure to Berlin, from 1929-33, leaves a profound impact on his life and art. Both Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood travel to Berlin; not leaving it
until the Nazi rise to power in 1933. James, Kirkpatrick (1983, 325) Hitler’s declaration of the compulsive conscription compels Isherwood to leave Berlin. The moment when Isherwood announces himself as a supporter for German refugees from Hitler’s conscription, he is accused of criminality; therefore, he decides to go to America. Jeremy (1985, 20) Nevertheless, the Berlin phase stands for the happiest period in the author’s life. In fact, the sympathy he feels towards Berlin can be viewed as a challenge to the English intellectuals who regard the Germans as a barbarous nation without culture and without an artistic taste. Carolyn (1970, 20) Isherwood necessitates the distinction between the genuine German artists who are in exile (the playwright Bertolt Brecht is one of them) and the Nazis who threaten the creativity of art. Seldom does Isherwood feel strange in Berlin, for he finds his spiritual homeland in it. However, Berlin becomes no longer the heartland of Europe, and it is ushered as the wasteland in Isherwood’s *The Berlin Stories*.

### 2.2. Goodbye to Berlin:

*Goodbye to Berlin* deals with the last three years and a half of the Weimar Republic. It is turned into a play, *I Am a Camera* by John Van Druten, and into a musical *Cabaret* by Bob Fosse. John (1976, 275) This novel can be thought of as a sequel to *Mr. Norris* so as to examine the middle-class decay, to censure the totalitarian dictatorship of Hitler and to celebrate the democratic socialism. A term applicable to *Goodbye to Berlin* is the roman-fleuve. Jeremy Hawthorn defines roman-fleuve as a series of sequential novels which can be read and appreciated individually. Alfred, (2003, 2) The novel is originally intended to be part of a huge epic novel, called *The Lost*. In an interview, the author gives a comprehensive defence of the choice to fragment the narrative flow of the art work. Isherwood realises that the epic novel requires “hundreds of characters”; that he can get the same influence of the epic novel by changing it into a sequence of narrative episodes without the necessity to fill the gaps between these sketches; and that “so what I did was to take up all the broken bits and put them into *Goodbye to Berlin* ... And you’ve got the same effect, that you’ve met a whole world” Brian (1976, 273) Even though John Lehmann accuses *Goodbye to Berlin* to be meaningless fragments, the critic Stanley Poss discovers a sort of “contrapuntal organisation” in the novel. The first episode juxtaposes with the last episode; ‘Sally Bowles’ and ‘On Reugen Island’ represent a kind of polarities in the sense that the former portrays the female prostitution while the latter portrays the male prostitution; and ‘The Nowaks’ and ‘The Landauers’ portray the oppression of the workers and the Jews. Claude J (2004, 2) On that ground, the six narrative sketches in the novel are complementary as if they cover the history of one large family. Some characters appear repeatedly in most of the episodes such as ‘Christopher Isherwood,’ Otto Nowak and Frl Schroeder. Starting with the introductory ‘The Berlin Diary,’ dated autumn (1930), to end with the concluding ‘The Berlin Diary,’ dated winter (1932-33). In a city of loss and misfortunes, people are divided into enormous rebellious outcasts: sexual outcasts, as Sally Bowles and Frl Kost; economic outcasts, as the Nowaks; political outcasts, as the Communists; social outcasts, as the Jewish Landauers; the psychological outcasts, as Peter Wilkinson; and Chris as an allegorically collective outcast. Hence, Isherwood celebrates the Berlin life with a cast of immoral characters: Sally is a cabaret singer; Frl Schroeder
is a gossip; Otto is a homosexual boy; etc. Such a cast of immoral outcasts satisfies the author’s insurgent indignation at the death of the Weimar Republic. John (1970, 180).

The first episode, ‘A Berlin Diary,’ flourishes the background of the novel. It introduces the major characters and the important circumstances of the novel. In the second episode, ‘Sally Bowles,’ the English novelist gets involved in an adventure with a naughty cabaret singer. At the end of the episode, Sally subdues to an abortive operation then travels to Paris. In the third episode, ‘On Reugen Island,’ the English novelist spends a holiday at the seaside resort with Peter Wilkinson and Otto Nowak. Chris is supposed to complete writing his novel on the Berlin beach. In the fourth episode, ‘The Nowaks,’ the financial hardships compel Chris to occupy a room in Otto’s flat which occurs in the poorest slum in Berlin. The fifth episode, ‘The Landauers,’ traces Chris’s relationship with a wealthy Jewish family, the owner of the biggest department store in Berlin. Being a tutor to the eighteen-year-old daughter, Chris becomes fascinated with Natalia’s mysterious cousin Bernhard.

*Goodbye to Berlin* is going to be discussed from the aesthetic psychological and Marxist perspectives. Starting with the aesthetic perspective, ‘Sally Bowles’ occurs in October 1930. She represents the voice of the aesthetic feminine protest. Sally is the chief character in the present episode. She is modelled on a real promiscuous cabaret actress, Jean Ross, whom Isherwood meets in Berlin. The Communist neighbour Fritz Wendel introduces her to Chris. He is the first-person narrator in *Goodbye to Berlin*.

Chris chooses adjectives to describe the landlady’s character. Every piece of furniture in her house is “solid, abnormally heavy and dangerously sharp.” (*Goodbye, 12*) Some pieces of furniture are shaped like “serpents,” “head of a crocodile,” “dagger,” “brass dolphin” (*Goodbye, 12*), and so on. Through the description of the furniture, Chris visualises the personality of Frl Schroeder and her out of fashion view of the “Capital and Society, Religion and Sex.” (*Goodbye, 12*) At the beginning of the novel, Frl Schroeder is seen as an advocate of the Communist Party voting for it at the election, but she changes her belief upside down and starts talking reverently about the Nazi regime in a perfect good faith. No wonder she keeps herself financially safe:

> She is merely acclimatizing herself in accordance with a natural law, like an animal which changes its coat for the winter, thousands of people like Frl Schroeder are acclimatizing themselves. After all, whatever government is in power, they are doomed to live in this town (*Goodbye, 206*).

The excerpt shows that the acclimatisers, like Frl Schroeder, are ready to change their moral and political principles according to whoever is going to gain power. Although Sally is considered a sexual outcast, Chris is eager to develop friendship with her. Ken Gonzales-Day refers to E. M. Forster’s faith in the personal relationship describing it as the spiritual aristocracy of “the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky.” Chris mutinies against the middle-class customs which may
rebuke any respectable gentleman like him to have acquainted with a prostitute. Donald W. Heiny says what makes Chris eager to develop friendship with the outcasts is his belief that understanding among human beings is more important than social taboos. Therefore, the human nature, not the social conventions must be the ultimate measuring-stick of life. Hence, Isherwood’s outcasts; such as Norris, Sally, Peter, Otto and Bernhard; reveal their true nature without regard to prohibitions and social censure. Chris’s friendship with Sally reveals an appreciation of the inherent love of spiritual beauty. Sally pursues her true nature without fear or shame. She remains as pure as a virgin even if she pretends not to be so:

I only meant that when you talk like that it is really just nervousness. You are rather shy with strangers, I think: so, you have got into this trick of trying to bounce them into approving or disapproving of you violently ... If you go to bed with every single man in Berlin and come and tell me about it each time, you still won’t convince me that you are La Dame aux Camélias—because, really and truly, you know, you are not. [italics in the origin] (Goodbye, 41-2).

Again, as a reliable first-person narrator and a proficient in the human nature, Chris authenticates Sally’s innocence in the same way that Bradshaw proves Norris’s innocence. Tricks are arranged with good-will to protect her from the savage society. They are only a mask which is worn to gain the approval and disapproval of people. Theatricality represents the basis of her aesthetic faculty. What the quotation mentioned above assumes is that the real prostitute is not Sally but the corruptible Capitalists and the Nazis who parasitically sponge upon the suffering of the poor. “I don’t sponge on my friends,” Sally comments. (Goodbye, 40) She is a victim of the Capital. Antony Shuttleworth argues that her naivety opposes the difficult financial lessons she is already taught. The Great Depression compels women to be a prey to prostitution, for the economic crisis and war leave them no respectable job, except the filthiest ones. Prostitution, grocery and butchery flourish during the era of the economic stagnation. Another victim is Frau Krampf. She is a well-bred lady and a mother to several children. To bring her children food, she is obliged to let the Nazi butcher satisfy his “peculiar sexual perversion” (Goodbye, 189) in exchange for some cutlets or a steak. So, war and financial troubles play a dangerous role in humiliating women like Sally and Frau Krampf. “That is the one kind of business that still goes well nowadays,” Frl Schroeder comments. (Goodbye, 189) Another symptom of Sally’s naivety is the abortion scene. She is involved in a relationship with a pianist, called Klaus Linke. He is a typical business-like man. While Sally looks at her relationship with him in terms of love, Klaus looks at it in terms of work. However, what matters is not the development of their relationship but the abortion scene. In an interview, Brian Finney asks Isherwood what makes him so insistent on including the abortion scene in the novel despite the publishers’ disapproval of it. Isherwood replies asserting that without the abortion scene Sally would be just a “silly little capricious bitch” because the whole idea of the episode is to show that the misanthropic systems are not able to change the essential virginity of the character. Finney states that without the abortion scene Sally would never be left
“virtually untouched.” The maternal emotion she expresses towards the baby is a cry of protest against the bestiality of the modern society:

I wish I had had that kid. ... The last day or two, I have been sort of feeling what it would be like to be a mother ... And I felt a most marvellous sort of shut-off feeling from all the rest of the world. I imagined how it would grow up and how I would work for it, and how after I would put it to bed at nights, I would go out ... to get money to pay for its food and clothes (Goodbye, 62).

The protagonist’s warm maternity is a feminine protest against the futility of the insignificant life imposed upon her by the materialistic modern society. The abortion scene may be true and may exist only in the character’s mind to show her unchangeable feminine nature. That Sally keeps her feminine warmth as graceful as possible is an insurgent step to reform the society from its depersonalizing ideologies. ‘Sally Bowles’ is an invitation to return to the true nature and protect woman’s lawful rights. The aesthetic rebellion renounces the cultural progress if it adopts modernity as a pretence to monopolise women as an instrument to fulfil vile masochistic purposes. Moreover, the aesthetic rebellion rejects the depersonalisation of women because they are not inferior creatures but an aesthetic value occupying an essential role in reawakening the society.

Beside the aesthetic standpoint, rebellion can be viewed from a psychological perspective. ‘On Reugen Island’ presents an adolescent rebellion. The events of the narrative episode occur in the summer of 1931. Chris is supposed to spend a holiday on the beach to complete his novel. Otto, a working-class boy, and Peter Wilkinson, an English upper-class boy, share a fort with Chris. Peter is thin, dark and delicate. He suffers a homicidal neurosis and a masculine convulsion. Always involved in furious quarrels with his family, Peter thinks of killing his father. Since the religious and social creeds prevent him from expressing his anger frankly, Peter is haunted by physical and psychological disease:

Suddenly the left side of his face began to twitch. It twitched and twitched so that he had to cover his cheek with his hands. He felt certain that his father had noticed, and was intentionally refusing to remark on it—was, in fact, deliberately torturing him (Goodbye, 87).

Claude J. Summers attributes the wretchedness of Peter’s life to the failure of his adaptation to the society. Such a failure is due to his parents, the school system and his upper-class upbringing. At Oxford, Peter suffers a nervous breakdown before the examination. His hatred of the educational institutions is to be blamed on Nazism. It is worth saying that the Minister for Education in Germany says that the school must be inspired by the spirit of the Nazi army so that all the students will be inculcated in that spirit. The students are compelled to belong to the Nazi Party to be accepted in universities from which liberal professors are dismissed. Such an opinion justifies Sally’s and Peter’s hatred of the school system. Not knowing what he wants, Peter is completely absorbed in reading in order to avoid thinking. “Only Peter had not any justification for his existence.” (Goodbye, 87)
above shows that Peter has a trash on the left side of his chest and suffers a contraction in the left side of his face. Peter hates his domineering mother for cuddling and petting him excessively. The exaggerated possessive parental love encourages Peter to develop a heart attack so that he will not go to the preparatory school which he dislikes. After the death of the mother, the father brings his son a tutor who seems a “very high-church young man.” (Goodbye, 89) But Peter develops a profound passionate relationship with the tutor to tease his father. To defy his father’s business and the elder brother’s science, Peter studies music and literature as a form of defiance. Several psychiatrists find no solution to Peter’s homicidal mania; therefore, he decides to leave England and go to Berlin searching for a remedy to his psychological troubles. In Berlin, Peter meets Otto Nowak whom he adopts as a private psychiatrist. In Lions and Shadows Isherwood assumes that one of the reasons that lead him and Auden to travel to Berlin is their enthusiasm for the psychology of Homer Lane whose ideas are clearly employed in their art works. For Lane, every physical disease is a mode of expression of the id caused by psychological stimuli. Thus, all the physical diseases even the influenza are indicators of the ego’s revolt against the repressive tyrannical forces:

Every disease, Lane had taught, is in itself a cure—if we know how to take it. There is only one sin: disobedience to the inner Law of our own nature. The results of this disobedience show themselves in crime or in disease; but the disobedience is never, in the first place, our own fault—it is the fault of those who teach us, as children, to control God (our desires) instead of giving Him room to grow. ... Conventional education inverts the whole natural system in childhood, turning the child into a spurious adult ... Diseases are ... manifestations of God—and those who try to ‘cure’ them without first curing the soul are only serving the Devil. The disease of the soul is the belief in moral control: the Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil, as against the Tree of Life (Lions and Shadows, 300-1).

Hence, family and school are responsible for inverting Peter’s childhood. Turned into an adolescent rebel, Peter makes an effort to regain the missing childhood by means of rebellion which appears unreasonable to the outside world. If the real faculties of the child are disallowed to grow naturally, then the child may be either a criminal or an adolescent rebel. According to the extract mentioned above, Peter’s homicide and his suicidal attempt result from the confinement of goodness in his character. Since criminality is unacceptable, Peter turns into an adolescent rebel to defy the English society and his father’s possessiveness through his involvement in a friendly relationship with Otto Nowak. Peter disbelieves in the class distinction between his family and Otto’s. God endows children great gifts which should be nurtured normally instead of being confined by the social tough customs. One may question whether the adolescent insurgency seems an unreasonable response to the psychological pressure caused by social conventions, or not. John Fuller refers to D. H. Lawrence who rejects the conception of the “right” kind of
feeling invented by the professional moralist, and the “wrong” kind of feeling. For instance, meekness and forbearance are classified as good; rebellion and anger are classified as wrong. What Lawrence wants to prove is that good and evil is a relative matter; and that evil is man-made. God endows man only goodness; hence, rebellion is not an unacceptable form of behaviour but a means employed by the adolescent rebel to protect him from the external forces which threaten his maturity. In the case of Peter Wilkinson, the adolescent insurgency is a healing action. It is an attempt to recover God’s goodness. Like Peter, in *The Memorial/Eric* is an adolescent rebel whose stammering is an emblem of some troubles which he encounters in the process of growth.

Brian Finney points out that ‘On Reugen Island’ is a metaphor of the psychological and mental disorder, to foreshadow the Berlin society at large. So, Berlin becomes a microcosmic embodiment of the social disorder; the characters are the macrocosmic embodiment of the moral and psychological disorder. Among these infectious disorders are: Frau Nowak’s tuberculosis; Bernhard’s abdication of existence; Otto’s vision of the black hand; Chris’s vision of the ghosts in the sanatorium scene; and Peter’s hypochondria which is caused by his inability to defy his father in particular and the English establishment in general. In the autobiographical novel, *Lions and Shadows*, Isherwood seems in full revolt against the surgical remedy. Through the character of Peter, the novelist affirms whatever medical surgery Peter receives would be a waste of time and effort because remedy lies in the purity of heart. Peter finds the cure of his homicide with the working-class boy Otto. Again, Finney remarks that Peter tries to cure his neurosis by buying Otto. The researcher confutes this assumption, saying that Peter does not intend to buy Otto as much as the latter tries to sponge upon the former. At the end of the episode, Otto travels suddenly after he steals Peter’s money and clothes. In addition, when Peter meets Otto at Wannsee beach, the working boy suggests: “‘What!’ he said, ‘you give that man [the psychiatrist] fifteen marks a day just for letting you talk to him! You give me ten marks and I’ll talk to you all day, and all night as well!’” (*Goodbye*, 87) However, Peter transforms from a homicidal person into a normally mature person after his relationship with the working boy. Giving Peter a chance to express the repressed desires without restrictions, Otto deliberately teases his friend in order to set free the confined monster by turning it into a positive reflection of God. Otto lets Peter understand the false pretences of the barren upper-class mind. So, their relationship is not a matter of exploitation but a “sign of caring.” (*Goodbye*, 101) Gradually, Peter begins to be as fairly calm as an ordinary person. He never contracts illness after gaining sufficient freedom to express his true self naturally. Donald W. Heiny presumes that any art work can be observed as an emblem of the author’s social, realistic and psychological orientation; nevertheless, the author’s interest in showing the personal complexes of the characters does not make him a psychological novelist. The novelist reveals the characters’ state of mind not from the inside, but from the outside. Hence, Isherwood’s art works are not psychological but show a psychological tendency. The novelist does not express the thoughts of the characters through the stream of consciousness and the interior monologues, even though he relies on these techniques in his early novel.
The Memorial, but he relies on the observations of the objective cameraman-narrator to record the exterior social and political disorders of the society on the one hand and the interior state of mind of the characters on the other, as expressed below:

*I am a camera*with its shutter open, quite passive, *recording, not thinking.* Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Someday, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed [italics mine] (*Goodbye*, 11).

However, ‘Christopher Isherwood’ must not be thought of as a pure autobiographical portrait of the novelist Isherwood. Though the novelist gives his name to the cameraman-narrator, “‘Christopher Isherwood’ is a convenient ventriloquist’s dummy, nothing more.” (*Goodbye*, 9).

Furthermore, the fifth and the sixth episodes in the narrative will be discussed from the Marxist standpoint. ‘The Nowaks’ occurs in the winter of 1931-32. John Lehmann remarks that this episode is widely read in Russia where it appears under the title ‘Hobakn’ as a separate paperback version (61). ‘The Nowaks’ deals with the oppression of the working-class members and their insurrection against Capitalism. The Nowaks are economic outcasts. H. B. Parkes says that the Marxist philosophy signifies the role of the economic factor in the development of the society. The critic also argues that the society must be divided into two classes; that the gulf between them would grow broader; that the privileged class becomes parasitical upon the lower-class; and that the rivalry between the social classes must produce constant changes. From this philosophical insight, the Nowaks are representative of the unprivileged working-class. They are crushed by Capitalism, falling prey to the erroneous Marxist mind. While the poor workers represent the majority of the German population, the upper-class members, who hold all the state’s authoritative systems, represent only a well-polished minority of the population. Chris describes a “millionaire’s slum” in which the rich do not enjoy the “privacy nor the sunshine” that the workers enjoy. Their slum seems to be a large jail in which they suffer perennial fear: “Each [house] protected by a wire fence and a savage dog. Terror of burglary and revolution has reduced these miserable people to a state of siege.” (*Goodbye*, 23) As the author’s mouthpiece, Chris shows his sympathy with the workers’ suffering. Such enthusiasm transforms him from a neutral observer into an obstinate anti-Marxist rebel. He assimilates his private pain to the public pain of Berlin:

Berlin is a skeleton which aches in the cold: It is my own skeleton aching. I feel in my bones the sharp ache of the frost ... in bridges, tramlines, lamp-standards, latrines. The iron throbs and shrinks, the stone and the bricks ache dully, the plaster is numb (*Goodbye*, 187).

What hastens the spiritual death of Berlin is the Reichstag fire incident which is repeatedly emphasized in Isherwood’s novels. The public horror of Nazism intrudes upon the private life of the Communists after the Reich’s incident. Otto is forced to
escape an arrest planned by a Nazi rival, called Werner Baldow. They quarrel because of their relationship with Anni. Werner finds the Reich’s incident a good chance to be exploited to fulfill his private revenge on Otto. “There are lots of old scars being paid off nowadays” (Goodbye, 61), Baldow comments. Otto is unjustly charged of having a hand in the Reichstag fire; besides, the Communist leader is assassinated. Add to this, the workers are not allowed to administrate any liberal activity, whereas the Nazi troops are allowed to hold large demonstrations, or a “police demonstration” to give the Berliners the impression that the Nazis are the strong masters of Germany. However, the author blames not only the Nazis but all the institutions which support Hitler to enthrone himself, such as the church and the press. The church stands aloof without interfering to stop the bloody Nazi shower. Hitler already succeeds to buy the homiletic conscience of the religious men to carry out his own private ambitions. Since the angelic task of the church is polluted by decomposed politicians, the author starts seeking a new name for the church. It is “suitably preposterous—the Church of Immaculate Consumption.” (Goodbye, 182) Another institution Isherwood accuses as a Nazi co-conspirator is literature and the press. The press becomes an instrument to serve the political cause, and to exploit artists who are turned into propagandists. In The Berlin Stories Isherwood describes how Hitler forms his cabinet, and how the aesthetic privacy of art is intruded upon publicly. Books become no more than “copies of a school magazine” (Goodbye, 56) Art becomes a propaganda for political treasons, punishment, new rules and for enrolling persons who are kept in prisons. Pacifist writers and publishers have to pay taxes or will be taken to one of the Nazi barracks. Books propagating peace are piled to be burnt in a public place. In Literature in Society, Edgell Rickword refers to the large public burning of books which takes place in Germany. Before the Nazis seize power, Germany has witnessed a highly developed literature. But everything is turned upside down after the Reichstag fire. The Nazis conduct a public burning of books; all books which are about liberalism and pacifism are burned. Literature becomes a Nazi propaganda. The novelist aims to portray the denudation of the workers by comparison to the ritzy life of the bourgeoisie. Chris rents a room in the Nowak’s poor flat. Through the eyes of the cameraman-narrator, one can see whatever destructions the Great Depression causes in the life of the needy workers. Herr Nowak is a furniture-remover, and Frau Nowak is a hard-working woman. The elder son, Lothar, is a schoolboy and has an evening job in a garage. The younger son, Otto, is an apprentice to an upholsterer.

3. Conclusions:

The concept of rebellion belongs to no time and no place. It has its peculiar relevance to the twentieth century. In the modern age rebellion becomes a necessity for man to regain the missing human nature and to achieve self-assertion. The change of the moral standards in the modern society leads to change the traditional spirit, not its definition, of rebellion. After the techno-industrial progress, the social structure of the Western society is changed. Moral degeneracy, political pollution and indecency become part of the social structure of the Western society. Therefore, rebellion is no longer a rejection of the old generation’s social standards, nor does it attempt to overthrow the moral standards of the society.
Therefore, rebellion is no longer a rejection of the old generation’s social standards, nor does it attempt to overthrow the moral standards of the society. When society itself becomes counterculture, rebellion renders pro-culture. It is important for the existence of the individual and society, aiming at enabling the individual to restore the integrity of the human spirit so that man can live harmoniously in the modern society.
References:
Goodbye to Berlin is first published in 1939 by the Hogarth Press; reprinted in 1982 by Triad/Panther Books. All subsequent references to the novel are from the 1977 edition and will be referred to within the text of the thesis.