In Erich Fromm’s analysis, experience can enter awareness only under the condition that it can be perceived and ordered in terms of socially evolved categories, which work like a filter to determine the forms of awareness (Fromm 1960: 99). Religion (like its bedmates Medicine, the Law, and the Family) has tended to queer the relationship of marginalized subjectivities to its embedded heteronormative values, as it strives to drive a wedge between queer folk and their sexuality. Yet there is plenty of evidence that many queer lives are open to diverse bandwidths of ‘spiritual’ inquiry (as I will define it), beyond the heteronormative filters of the standard model.

I will discuss my research into the life and writings of the British expatriate writer Christopher Isherwood and probe the reasons behind the dismissive treatment of his religious life by the literary commentariat. I will also present extracts from my memoir, *The Boy in the Yellow Dress*, to demonstrate how the practice of life writing (memoir/ biography/ autobiography) can produce versions of subjectivity that are resistant to homophobic constructions, bypassing Fromm’s filter by drawing on sources of knowledge only liminally present in the socialized mind. Such praxis produces texts that multiply sites of political contestation (Halperin 1995: 28) with hostile discourses, working not only to ‘talk back’ to the culture (hooks 1990: 337) but to uncover and reclaim previously unrecognized knowledge resources, detoxified of the homophobia embedded in conventional religion and the pathologising discourses of psychological medicine.