

Book-reviews

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They talked and they danced. Charlie danced all the time, sometimes with Roger and sometimes with Hans. They drank a lot of wine. At about four o'clock they left as they had to be on board by six. Hans walked with them along the Reeperbahn and left them at the street where they turned down to take the ferry. Passing Winkelstrasse, Roger remarked as casually as he could: «Want to go in again? You've still time!»

«Do you? You haven't had anything tonight.»

«No.»

«I'll wait for you, if you do. I've had enough.»

«I don't want to go in, Charlie.»

«I'm glad, Rog. It's no place for you.»

Roger laughed.

«What are you laughing at, Roger?» Charlie said suspiciously.

«You.»

«Me?»

«Just you, Charlie.»

«Well, I don't mind, so long as it makes you happy.» Charlie slipped his arm through Roger's, and they walked down the hill together. «You know something Rog, I like that dance place better than I've liked anything for a long time.»

That day they spent most of their free time sleeping, as did most of the people on the ship. There were many who felt far from well. When asked what he had done the night before Charlie mentioned Winkelstrasse and 'a couple of night-clubs', but was reticent about details. Most of the lads had been in Winkelstrasse at some time during the night.

(To be concluded)

Book-Reviews

THE SERGEANT, by Dennis Murphy: Viking Press, New York

This is a good first novel by a twenty-five year old author. It is swift-moving, terse, engrossing. It is sincere, intelligent and tries to be compassionate. It has the stature of real tragedy: it purges through pity and terror. All the same, it is yet another novel with a homosexual villain and it ends in suicide. The main gross difference between this book and others of similar pattern is that the villain is made understandable and one feels sorry for him, finally.

Tom Swanson is a young American soldier stationed in post-war France. He has just met and fallen in love with a French girl, Solange. A new first sergeant arrives and takes over his outfit. Sgt. Callan is attracted to Tom and, against the boy's will, makes him his orderly room clerk. Callan, who joined the army at sixteen, is now middle-aged and a hard-boiled, ruthless egoist, a man who has never been in love, who has never had a friend, who is utterly alone and whose emotions exist in total darkness deep within. Blindly, through actual coercion and sheer force of will, he establishes an emotional domination over Tom who does not understand what is happening any more than Callan does. Tom stops seeing Solange and allows himself to be pressured into a routine of nightly drunkenness with Callan. Tom loathes this feverish, guilt-darkened way of life and longs to be free of it but partly through fear of the older man, partly through pity for his desperate loneliness, is unable to break away from him. At last Callan makes unmistakable drunken passes at him and they realize what their relationship is all about. At that moment Callan's emotional hold over the boy is broken. Tom beats him up. The next day Callan shoots himself. Tom is reunited with Solange.

Throughout the book Solange is characterized as «good» and «clean» and Callan is called «dark» and «bad». Now, as a matter of fact Solange comes through as a real person. She impresses the reader as an intelligent, civilized human being, genuinely sensitive in her relationship with Tom. And in Callan we have an abysmally ignorant, undeveloped and twisted man. Mr. Murphy doesn't need those easy adjectives. He makes all his points very effectively without them. And instead of raising the moral

tone of his tale they seem, to this reader, to lower it slightly towards the plane of nursery morality.

The word «clean» appears again in the climactic scene in which Callan makes a fumbling sexual attempt upon Tom. As he did so, «the boy roared with lightning strength that came clean as a vision and time was shattered into a white eternity of knowing and shadows were gone forever and the strength ripped its way to the surface and coiled his neck into a muscled whip that cracked the man through the air and crashed him into the wall.» Callan had it coming to him, no doubt about that. He had dominated Tom through threats and a sort of emotional tyranny, not hesitating to exploit his position as Tom's superior to hold the boy in line. He well deserved the beating which he received. All the same, in that passage the little word «clean» rings like a bell, one of Pavlov's bells, perhaps, and we have the implied contrast between Tom's clean strength and Callan's dirty weakness — his sexual desire — and one feels that perhaps Tom is beating him up for the wrong reasons. And what is this white eternity of knowing which banished shadows forever? Can man's shadow side be banished forever? And is this clean strength and white knowledge really purity or just panic? Perhaps at that climactic moment a streak of sadistic Callanism was born in Tom as a defence against his own «homosexual component».

It is a darn shame that Callan shot himself. A good psychiatrist might have done wonders for him.

Luther Allan

THE KING MUST DIE, by Mary Renault; Pantheon; N.Y.

Miss Renault has developed the bare bones of the Theseus legend into a full length novel, fully fleshed. It is a book teeming with action and color and drama, a rousing good story. Its theme is the struggle between the patristic and matristic religions of old. The book deals with one of those crucial points in history when the male principle clashed with the female, and won. Thanks to that combination of scrupulousness and intuition which made *THE LAST OF THE WINE* so moving and memorable a book, Miss Renault enables us to feel, as if they were our own, the unfamiliar religions, political, social and personal emotions of those primitives who were the most meaningful ancients of our most meaningful ancients.

Although there is none of it in the main thread of the story, homosexuality crops up everywhere throughout the book. Theseus works out his destiny in a thoroughly bisexual world. And while Theseus himself is as normal as they come, his reactions to the homosexuality he constantly encounters in others ranges from matter-of-fact tolerance to affectionate understanding when he finds such emotions in people close to him: precisely the range of sane and healthy attitudes ones wishes all heterosexuals could achieve.

L.A.

HOMOSEXUAL ACTS, from «The Times, London».

Sir, — We are a group of married women. We agree with the letter published in your paper on March 7 by 33 distinguished signatories supporting the Wolfenden Committee's recommendation about homosexual acts of consenting adults in private.

We believe the Government statement that public opinion is not ready for a change in the laws is too pessimistic; and that most humane and thoughtful people in this country would welcome early implementation of the report's findings on this subject.

Yours faithfully, Hester A. Adrian; Diana Albemarle; Enid Bagnold; Anne Barnes; Alice Bragg; Helen Cohen; Helen de Freitas; Judith Hubback; Peggy Jay; Iris Murdoch; Elizabeth Pakenham; Myfanwy Piper; Ursula Ridley; Teresa Rothschild; Cecil Woodham-Smith.

HOMOSEXUAL LAW REFORM, from «The Spectator, London».

Sir, — May I have the courtesy of your columns to announce the formation of a new society? It is called the Homosexual Law Reform Society, and is concerned to work for the implementation of the major recommendation of the Wolfenden Report upon private homosexual acts between consenting adults.

We believe that our present law is unjust, and no longer acceptable to modern medical opinion, the leading spokesmen of the Christian Churches or to humane good sense in general. Over ninety eminent people appear on our honorary committee, and we shall welcome help from all those who support this reform.

The address of the society is 219 Liverpool Road, London, N1. — Yours faithfully,
A. E. Dyson, Hon. Secretary

„der neue ring“

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Kameradschaftliche Vereinigungen und Zeitschriften des Auslandes:

angeschlossen an die «Stiftung Internationales Komitee für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung», ICSE; Sekretariat: Damrak 57, Tel. 34596, Postbus 1564, Amsterdam. — Organ: Newsletter.

Deutschland: Gesellschaft für Reform des Sexualrechts e. V., Grunewaldstrasse 78/1, Berlin-Schöneberg.

Int. Freundschaftsloge (IFLO) Postfach 1399, Bremen.

Organ: IFLO-Bundesbrief.

Verein für humanitäre Lebensgestaltung (VhL), Kettenhofweg 46, Frankfurt a. M.

Dänemark: Forbundet af 1948, Postbox 1023, Kopenhagen K. Organ: PAN.

Holland: Cultuur- en Ontspanningscentrum (COC), Postbus 542.

Amsterdam C. Central-Büro: Damrak 57, Tel. 34596. Organ: Vriendschap.

Clublokal: «De Schakel», Korte Leidsedwarstraat 49, Tel. 64511.

Norwegen: Det Norske Forbundet av 1948, Postboks 1305, Oslo.

Schweden: Riksförbundet för sexuellt likaberättigande, Postbox 850, Stockholm I.

USA: One Inc., 232, South Hill Street, Los Angeles 12, Calif.

Mattachine Society, 693 Mission Street, San Francisco 5, Calif.

Belgien: Centre de Culture et de Loisirs, boîte postale 1, Forest 3, Bruxelles.

Tous les réunions: 29, rue Jules Van Praet, 1er étage. (Près de la Bourse).

Frankreich: Le Verseau, Paris (Anschrift über ICSE).

Sonstige Zeitschriften und Vereinigungen, dem ICSE noch nicht angeschlossen:

Deutschland: Der Weg, Verlag Rolf Putziger, Uhlandstrasse 149, Berlin W 15.

«der neue ring», Monatsschrift. Verlag Gerhard Prescha, Alsterchausee 3, Hamburg 13. Telefon 45 74 23.

Frankreich: Arcadie. 162. rue Jeanne d'Arc, Paris 13.

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Mattachine Review (from U.S.A. in English)

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Gesamtherausgeber: Rolf. Verantwortlich für den deutschen Textteil Rolf; für die fremdsprachigen Texte die jeweiligen Einsender. — Diese Zeitschrift, sowie die Photographien des damit verbundenen Bilderdienstes, dürfen an Jugendliche unter achtzehn Jahren weder verkauft noch ausgeliehen werden. Die Redaktion lehnt jede Verantwortung von daraus entstehenden Folgen ab.