

From "The Heart in Exile"

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle**

Band (Jahr): **21 (1953)**

Heft 12

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-570645>

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feels himself more than emotionally involved: the police had visited the dead man's flat. Following not very promising clues, the most important of them being a photograph of a good-looking young worker, he begins to unravel the mystery surrounding the death of his former friend. On this journey into the past, not only of his friend's, but of his own as well, he comes once more into close touch with what the author calls London's «Underground». One clue leads him to another until the reasons for the suicide of his former friend are completely cleared up. This chain of events forms one part of the novel, beginning and ending — as so many novels on the homosexual theme do — with a suicide. But closely connected with and interwoven into this story is a second one, i. e. the development of a friendship between the doctor and a male nurse, whom he has taken into his house to act as his receptionist and housekeeper. And it is the development of this relation, leading for once to a well reasoned out happy conclusion, which brings to this novel the note of hope missing in practically all similar books. But apart from these two stories on which the plot of the novel is built, there is a third and perhaps the most important element in this book. Written as it is in the first person singular, the author uses the figure of the doctor as his protagonist to voice his opinions on an immensely wide range of questions connected with and relating to homosexuality. And it is in those statements that perhaps the greatest value of this book is embedded. No one interested in this problem will fail to gain considerably by reading these 'comments' of *The Heart in Exile*, not the least remarkable for its excellent portrayal of homosexual men of all kinds, among them the receptionist Terry, one of the most lovable characters one has met for a long time in a book of this kind — a man as inspiring as Walter Baxter's Private Anson or James Barr's Tim Danelaw. By depicting his characters in the way the author does he evades successfully the danger of cheap sentimentality as well as the coarseness, both so often found especially in American novels on the same theme.

«The Heart in Exile» is decidedly a book to be wholly recommended for its inherent qualities as well as for the note of human understanding it strikes so perfectly.

R. Young.

From «The Heart in Exile»

by Rodney Garland

On the way to Islington I told Ron that he could come to see me any time he was in trouble, and I gave him my card. But I didn't expect him to return; he would probably be too shy. I also told him he must try to pull himself together. I vaguely felt I was treating him a little shabbily, just pushing him out after he'd given me the information I wanted, but there was something else on my mind.

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning when I drove up to the house. I was surprised to see the light in Terry's window. Why wasn't he

asleep? I decided to go up to his room. He was in bed, wearing nothing under the blanket. There was a book in his hand and a burning cigarette in the ash-tray. Terry hardly ever smoked.

«Can't you sleep?» I said. «It's five to two.»

«It's the heat,» he said and smiled, but neither his voice nor his smile was convincing. I saw the handkerchief; then I looked a little closer. He had been crying.

He picked the book up from the blanket with his soda-red hand and put it on the night table. I suddenly knew what was on his mind: «Here I am slaving for you. Look at my hands. I devote my whole life to you because I love you, but you carry on with toughs, one after the other. You spend whole evenings with them.» But what he actually said was: «Would you like some hot milk?»

«No, thanks,» I replied. «I'm quite sleepy as it is.» I knew of course that Terry had not been listening while Ron was in the room. He'd never have done a thing like that.

«You sure?» he said.

«Quite, thanks,» I took one step towards him and looked into his face. «And there's no reason to cry, Terry. Absolutely none at all. You ought to know me better than that. Soon enough I'll tell you all about what's been going on. Now go to sleep.» I placed my hand on his naked shoulder. «Go to sleep. It's all over now.»

He touched my hand, gently, tenderly. His own hand was cold. Then, a second later, the pressure began to increase.

Bücher und Menschen

Noch einige Worte zu dem Roman von Walter Baxter

Zu dem Roman von *Walter Baxter, Look Down in Mercy*, dem der «Kreis» in seiner letzten Nummer eine längere Besprechung und einen Teilabdruck widmete, wäre noch folgendes zu sagen. Die deutsche Ausgabe dieses aussergewöhnlichen Buches, dessen Verfasser übrigens als Offizier den im Buch geschilderten Burmafeldzug mitgemacht hat, folgt der englischen Originalausgabe des Buches. Erstaunlicherweise weicht aber die amerikanische Ausgabe des Romans an verschiedenen Stellen von der Erstausgabe ab. An drei entscheidenden Stellen des Buches, die von der Beziehung zwischen Kent und Anson handeln, verdeutlicht die amerikanische Ausgabe diese Beziehung ausserordentlich und gibt ihr damit einen wesentlich stärkeren Akzent. Aber das Erstaunlichste ist der neue Schluss des Buches. Während in der englischen Ausgabe der Roman mit dem in Romanen über die gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe scheinbar unvermeidlichen Selbstmord Kents endet, misslingt in der amerikanischen Ausgabe der Selbstmord Kents in letzter Minute und das Buch schliesst mit dem Entschluss Kents, zu Anson zurückzukehren und mit ihm zu leben. Mag auch der Vorwurf, den das amerikanische Magazin «ONE» dem Verfasser machte — dass er durch diesen doppelten Schluss den Charakter Kents völlig fragwürdig macht — zu einem Teil berechtigt sein, so mag doch wohl der Gewinn grösser sein, der in dem nunmehr positiven Schluss eines so wertvollen Buches liegt. Er wird den gleichgeschlechtlichen Leser umso tiefer berühren, als sich in kaum einem Buch der langsam immer umfangreicheren Literatur zu diesem Thema eine sympathischere und anziehendere Gestalt gezeichnet findet, wie die des einfachen Soldaten Anson.

R. J.