

An open letter to Peter Wildeblood

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'Do you now, I feel so tired after this long day, and you must be weary too. Let's get some sleep.'

Gently disengaging his protecting arm, Kurt turned over on his side, and as he did so, he realized everything. For he now knew that Paul's hold over him had for ever snapped during those hours with the young sailor, and the magic moment which he had invoked to tarry a while, would remain for an infinite duration. He closed his eyes, and falling asleep in the strengthening daylight, passed through the portal into inner freedom.

By Christian Graf.

Translation by P. H. B.

An Open Letter to Peter Wildeblood

Dear Mr. Wildeblood,

A Swiss bookseller-friend gave me an advance copy of your autobiography *AGAINST THE LAW*, shortly to be published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London. Excuse me for not writing a lengthy review of your excellent book, but it has touched me so deeply that I would rather express my sincere gratitude in an open letter to you on the pages of *THE CIRCLE*. I feel that in this way the attention of many people will be drawn to your book and thus help to enlarge the circle of your prospective readers.

It goes without saying that any homosexual will be deeply and sincerely touched by reading your courageous autobiography. It is also such a well-written book that, in my opinion, it will one day rank among the few classics of homosexual literature. The descriptions of your early life and development, the fair way in which you describe the Montagu Trial (in which you were so tragically involved) and the narrative of your imprisonment all make deeply moving reading. (The way the author emerges at the end of his term in prison should set an example to all of those amongst us who have been imprisoned for having had relations with another consenting adult male.)

But I do hope that your book will be read by more heterosexual people than by homosexuals. It is for the heterosexual majority that your book may be of the greatest help in understanding the homosexual minority. May it come into the hands of all those at present engaged in England in the task of an eventual change of the law in regard to relations between two consenting adult males. I do pray that your book may prove to be the turning point needed for the reform of the present English law. As the book stands you have not left one stone unturned. You have industriously and intelligently covered the whole of the ground, and one is tempted to ask: Why set up a Royal Commission when all the answers are given in this book of yours? The essence of a crime is the harm it does to another individual or to society. In the case of two consenting adult males no harm can possibly be done, and as society takes no cognisance — at least not in law — of adultery or fornication it ought not to take cognisance either of the actions of two grown-up men.

The gratitude I feel towards you for having written this book extends also to many people mentioned in it — to your parents who stood by you — to Sir Robert Boothby for his ceaseless efforts in having a Royal Commission set up — to Lord Pakenham for his truly Christian attitude. It extends also to all the people who showed you and your two friends at the end of your trial their sympathy with you and their displeasure with the verdict given, and even to your neighbours at Islington who welcomed you home in so friendly a fashion after your return from prison. Doesn't it all prove how utterly ridiculous the present law in England is when it is enforced on a man who has done nothing worse than to live in the way nature intended him to, with no possible harm to minors, no question of importuning or public nuisance? Your book is bound to clear up a good many points of our problem, and, in clearing them up, it has become a wedge in our campaign for recognition. In my opinion no judge who has read your book will, in the future, be able to pass a sentence of long imprisonment with an easy conscience upon a man like yourself who stands 'accused' of something which in a case like your own — and in thousands of others — is 'unaccusable'.

As a small sign of the gratitude THE CIRCLE feels towards you, the first four pages of your book are printed below by the kind permission of your publishers. May they induce many readers to buy your book.

(If there is one criticism to make, I should like you to leave out one single word in your book and that's the word 'Germany' in your list of the countries in which witch-hunts such as those in England and the United States could not possibly occur. With Western Germany being re-armed under the auspices of the great Western Powers, the fate of German homosexuals is already turning from bad to worse.)

With the expression of my personal gratitude for your book,

yours sincerely, Rudolf Burkhardt.

AGAINST THE LAW

by Peter Wildeblood

(From his autobiography, published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.)

Sometimes, when a man is dying, he directs that his body shall be given to the doctors, so that the causes of his suffering and death may be investigated, and the knowledge used to help others. I cannot give my body yet; only my heart and my mind, trusting that by this gift I can give some hope and courage to other men like myself, and to the rest of the world some understanding.

I am a homosexual. It is easy for me to make that admission now, because much of my private life has already been made public by the newspapers. I am in the rare, and perhaps privileged, position of having nothing left to hide. My only concern is that some good may come at last out of so much evil, and with that end in view I shall set down what happened to me as faithfully and fairly as I can. I do not pity myself, and I do not ask for pity. If there is bitterness in this book, I hope it will be the bitterness of medicine, not of poison.