

Book review : "Maybe Tomorrow" and "Somewhere between the Two" : two novels by Jay Little

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Two Poems

by C. P. Cavafy.

To Remain

It must have been one o'clock at night,
Or half past one.

In a corner of the wine shop;
Behind the wooden partition.
Except the two of us the shop was quite empty.
A paraffin lamp hardly lighted it.
The waiter who had to sit up was asleep at the door.
No one would have seen us. But anyhow
We had become so excited
We were incapable of precautions.
Our clothes had been half opened — they were not many
For a divine month of July was blazing.
Enjoyment of the flesh in the middle
Of our half-opened clothes;
Quick baring of the flesh — and the vision of it
Has passed over twenty-six years; and now has come
Here in these verses to remain.

Their Beginning

The consummation of their lawless pleasure
Was done. They rose from the mattress;
Hurriedly dressed themselves without speaking.
They go out separately, secretly from the house; and as
They walk rather uneasily up the street, it seems
As if they suspect that something about them betrays
On what sort of bed they lay down not long ago.
But for the artist how his life has gained.
Tomorrow, the next day or years after will be written
The lines of strength that here had their beginning.

(From: *The Poems of C. P. Cavafy*, translated by
John Mavrogordato, The Hogarth Press, London.)

Book Review

«Maybe Tomorrow» and «Somewhere between the Two»
two novels by Jay Little (Pageant Press, New York).

«Make hay while the Sun shines», that's what Jay Little may have been thinking when his first novel *Maybe Tomorrow* met with some success. So, as the dust-cover informs us, he took up the first draft of a novel he had started writing earlier, and rehashed it. But what he succeeded by finishing *Somewhere between the Two* was — contrary to what his publisher says — writing a second

novel even worse than the first one. Now let's be frank and admit it — that first novel, though definitely second-rate fiction, was of the kind we secretly love to devour, however much we disclaim it in public. It was full of suggestive words. Pants were taken off, shorts were dropped, nude bodies arched, and a lot of the action took place in bed-rooms. However, in the minor character of Paul Boudreaux there was some hint of latent talent.

The first novel dealt on 345 pages with a couple of years in the life of the hero, Gaylord le Claire. Gaylord is the sort of fellow who starts crying at the drop of a hat; and the skin of Robert Blake, the man he loves, is golden-bronzed. (I once started counting Gaylord's tears and the mention of Robert's bronze skin, but had to give up in despair in the middle of the book.)

Now in his second novel, Mr. Little deals on 90 pages less with the twenty decisive years in the life of his new hero, Terry Wallace, a female impersonator. In my humble opinion the author has lamentably failed in making the reader feel the lapse of those twenty years. For instance, one wonders what Terry Wallace and that bunch of other female impersonators did during the Second World War which is never even mentioned. Terry who has never known his parents finds out in the middle of the book that the aunt who brought him up, is really his mother, and the richest man in town his father. After Terry and his mother — aunt have whispered the sweetest words on earth, e. g. «mother» and «son» into each others ears, the mother-aunt dies suitably but not without leaving Terry five hundred thousand dollars in cash, and his father conveniently commits suicide after the burial of the mother but again not without having first set up a trust-fund for his son. A couple of years later the man who had kept Terry first when he went to Hollywood, dies too and leaves him his luxurious estate. After his death Terry plays a few bit parts in pictures but what with being called at 6 a. m. and the director very hot for him he can't be bothered with pictures any longer. So after an interval of a good many years Terry returns — nearly a millionaire — to female impersonating (*The Show Must Go On*) and though he is by now forty he naturally does not look a day older than nineteen. At the end of the book Terry has found everything but «fulfilment», the poor lad. Forty himself he meets his former lover (another one time female impersonator — and I forgot to mention that nearly all of them are *normal* and happily married). That lover is sixty now but Terry «had never felt so drawn to Phil as at this moment». A couple of hours later Terry meets the 25 year old son of that former lover and he thinks «Phil's (jun.) eyes had a veiled glint as he walked away from him.» But prepare for a surprise! On the last but one page Terry meets «the most beautiful young man he had ever seen» and who should it be of all people but Gaylord le Claire, the hero of Mr. Little's first novel. Do those two meet before or after Gaylord had his heart-breaking and everlasting first affair with Robert Blake? We need not worry about the answer. As the publisher informs us, Mr. Little is now working on a third novel which may give us the answer.

I take my leave of Terry in the act of «pulling at his ear meditatively» as he does so countless times in the course of those twenty years. Having put «Somewhere between the Two» down I take out of my book-shelf the volume of short stories *Derricks* by James Barr and re-read with deep satisfaction the story called *Success Story*. I think Mr. Little might profit by reading just this one too, as it shows plainly what a homosexual story should and can be.

Richard Arlen.