

THE CRYSTAL SHIP

June 1977

Gumbo's Variations

Ladies and Gentlemen,welcome aboard 'THE CRYSTAL SHIP', on a voyage of discovery through regions as yet uncharted,(by me that is),most of which lie in the affiliated fields of fantasy and science fiction.Within the covers of this slim volume lie the thoughts,opinions and findings of one person,your humble captain. It is my intention to bring to your notice individuals in many fields worthy of your attention,and also to outline general subjects and movements in those self-same fields.It is also my intention to attract some degree of participation from you,the reader,and I hope to be able to include at least one article or story in each issue from some other source than my own pen.I will welcome correspondence,(which of course will be answered) and especially ideas on the future course of THE CRYSTAL SHIP.In this respect I would like to thank Stuart and Rosie Clark for the much-needed criticism of what I now prefer to call my 'pilot' issue,(all one of them!) Much of the material from that ill-fated idea has now found it's way into this tome.

The range of articles in this edition reflect my own tastes and interests, and I am arrogant enough to hope that they will be of sufficient interest to other people to ensure a demand for subsequent editions. The main subjects covered are SF, Fantasy, Music (both Rock and Folk, plus anything else that catches my ear), books in general, and any other kind of media that attracts me. There will be occasional items of more general interest, and frequently a short story.

These, then, are the bare bones of the matter. Below there is a contents list. Scan through and read only those items that interest you, or read all the articles and (hopefully) gain new interests. The Crystal Ship awaits you.

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Arcadian Driftwood

PETER S.BEAGLE.

In 1971, in one of my periodic searches for new fantasy reading matter, I picked up a book by an author completely new to me. The writer was Peter S. Beagle, and the book was "The Last Unicorn".

I did not realise it at the time, but I had unknowingly chosen one of the few truly original fantasy novels to have been written since "Lord of the Rings".

From the beautifully evocative opening paragraph I was hooked, and the book was devoured without pause, and then read again slowly several times. I was very impressed and went looking for more books by Beagle, only to find one other novel, not entirely of a fantasy nature, and a third which is not available in Britain. My frustration was immense, and it has not been alleviated in any way because Beagle has not, to my knowledge, produced any further books since "The Last Unicorn" was issued in 1968.

Peter Beagle was born in 1939, in New York City and graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at twenty. At twenty-one his first novel was published, followed five years later, in 1965, by a second book called "I See By My Outfit", which was basically a travelogue of a motor-scooter trip across the USA. His third book, issued in 1968, was the sublime "The Last Unicorn". Since then he has apparently gone into screen-writing, for I believe I saw his name on the credits of the Roman Polanski film "Chinatown", as a co-writer with Polanski. I hope the switch from books to the more lucrative screenplays is not permanent, for the fantasy field badly needs the original ideas that abound in Beagle's one contribution to the genre.

His first novel, entitled "A Fine and Private Place", was a strange mixture of the common-place and the fantastic. Almost the entire story takes place in a New York cemetery. Yet this is no Bram Stoker-ish horror story of unquiet graves and doom-laden atmosphere, but a humorous character-filled piece of writing of great charm

The main character, Jonathan Rebeck, has dropped out of society and, at the time of the novel, has been living in a mausoleum for nineteen years. He has never left the cemetery in all that time, and lives on food brought to him by a cranky, sharp-tongued raven, who is one of the wittiest characters in the book. Rebeck talks with the raven, and to the rapidly-distinguishing ghosts of the people buried in the cemetery.

Two of the ghosts, both recently dead, seem to possess a particularly tenacious hold on life, and they gradually fall in love. This process is disturbed by the impending trial of the man-ghost's widow, who has been accused of murdering him. The raven brings news of the trials' progress, and it gradually becomes obvious that the man, Michael, committed suicide, an ironic fact when compared to Michael's persistent attempts to hold onto as much of life as he possibly can.

The story of how the two lovers' problems are resolved, and how Rebeck meets

Gertrude Klapper, a Jewish widow visiting her husband's grave, and is finally persuaded to leave the cemetery, is quite fascinating. Although not strictly a fantasy novel, the book is worth reading for the superb blend of pathos and humour that Beagle uses to such good effect.

It was with "The Last Unicorn" that Beagle brought his full imaginative powers to bear on an entirely fantastic subject. It is a beautifully written, excellently thought-out book, combining the elements of pathos and humour so evident in his first novel, with a stunningly simple but effective plot based firmly in the fantasy tradition.

It is very hard to pin down exactly the reason why "The Last Unicorn" is so successful in its treatment of a fairly common-place quest subject. As Lin Carter says, in his excellent book "Imaginary Worlds", the components Beagle uses in the book, when examined in the light of cool reason, seem rather unpromising. But when put together by a writer as good as Beagle, they form a story of great beauty in some magical way in which logic does not appear to play a part. The book is definitely a modern fantasy classic, and is in a class of its own, for I can think of no real antecedent.

The ingredients in Beagle's magical recipe consist of a unicorn, (apparently the last one in the known world, and quite the best unicorn in any fantasy story ever), a magician (of somewhat less than perfect abilities, a kind of poor-man's Merlin), a huge red bull, (whose task is to capture all of the unicorns), an old and twisted castle by the sea complete with an old and equally twisted king, and a young, heroic prince of indeterminate birth. Add a mad carnival of phantom monsters conjured up by a witch, a band of outlaws masquerading as second-rate Robin Hoods, and a blighted land where only one village is able to prosper and you have a diverse mixture which Beagle weaves into a fascinating, absurdly splendid story.

For me, the sad, quiet beauty of the unicorn, the pathetic attempts that are made by Schmendrick the magician to help her, and the heroic Prince Lir's heart-rending love for Amalthea (the unicorn transformed into human shape by Schmendrick to save her from the red bull), all make this book wellnigh indispensable.

Beagle's ability to mix the fantastic with the everyday, to add touches of humour and beauty to even the darkest scene, leaves me speechless with admiration. Even as the unicorn and Schmendrick escape from the wreckage of Mommy Fortuna's carnival, (which the only other genuine exhibit, a harpy, is busily destroying), Beagle lightens the proceedings with a Disney-like account of a blue jay seeing the strange pair. The bird goes home to tell his wife, who is busy tending their children and refuses to believe a word of it. She accuses him of seeing another hen-bird. As Beagle remarks, the wife was one woman who knew what to do with a slight moral edge. A short, maybe unnecessary passage, yet it is just one of the instances where Beagle creates a tricky situation for himself and then carries it off with deceptive ease.

"The Last Unicorn" was issued nine years ago, and since then (apparently) nothing has come from Peter Beagle's pen except screenplays, undoubtedly a more lucrative side-line, but somehow I cannot imagine them to have the lasting qualities of the one fantasy book that he has produced. Certainly if Peter Beagle never wrote another book in his life, he would still be remembered, but I sincerely hope that he is even now writing further fantasy novels. If he is, then I for one will be very pleased.

Recent Reads

ALBERT VONNEGUT : WAMPETERS, FOMA AND GRANFALLOONS.

This book is a collection of Vonnegut's articles and speeches, and the author's bitterly funny pessimism is well to the fore. Vonnegut's biting comments on a wide range of subjects is well worth reading. Also included in this book is a reprint of the Vonnegut Playboy interview, which shows brilliantly the many facets of this author's mind. (Published by Jonathan Cape.)

BOB SHAW : ORBITSVILLE.

Originally published in 1975, this novel won the British Science Fiction Award for the best novel of 1975, and it is a well deserved honour, for the book is really superb.

Following a similar train of thought to that which produced Larry Niven's 'Ring-world', Shaw has pillaged ideas similar to those proposed by Carl Sagan in 'The Cosmic Connection'. Whereas Niven chose the easier solution of a 'ribbon' circling a sun, Shaw tackles the more difficult concept of the Dyson sphere, totally enclosing the sun and providing billions of square miles of living space. But there the similarity stops, for while Niven's story is very 'hard' technology, (hell, part of the mechanism of Niven's world is held together by wires,) Shaw has concentrated on a better storyline, with a superb sting in its tale. This book is a classic, and a worthy progression from Shaw's earlier excellent books. (Now available in Pan paperback series.)

DR. PAUL BRUNTON : A SEARCH IN SECRET INDIA.

First published in 1934, this is the story of Brunton's own odyssey round India to visit the various Yogic sages, and to attempt to pursue his own inclinations towards such things. He succeeds in attaining his own spiritual goal in the end, but only after much searching and great disappointments. The writing is clear and unambiguous, and makes the whole book easily accessible to people unfamiliar with Oriental religions. The book is now reprinted and published by Rider, in paperback.



Islands

WHO IS ROBERT PIRSIG, AND HOW
CAN HE CHANGE YOUR LIFE ?

During the summer of '76, a book was finally published in paperback form that I had long been waiting to read, but had never actually managed to lay my hands on for a sufficient time to digest properly. The book was the famous "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance", by Robert Pirsig.

The enigmatic title is probably influenced by the Zen text-book "Zen in the Art of Archery" by Eugen Herrigel, but the book has little to do with Zen, and is not very informative about motorcycle maintenance, either. What the work does represent is the poles of Man's thinking at this time, and ambitiously attempts to bridge the gap between philosophy and technology, through the pursuit of quality.

The connection between Zen and keeping your motorcycle in good order lies in the possibility of transcending the distinction between subject, (the self), and object, (the world that is put against the self-in this case the machine). Although it was the imposition of this distinction in the first place which made scientific thought and the resultant technological achievements possible, it has now resulted in the alienation of Man from his world. By transcending this fundamental facet of Western thought, and so going beyond the limits of conventional rationality, we can regain that harmony between our thoughts and values on the one hand, and the parts and processes of the mechanical system on the other. This harmony has been lost to the Western mind since Plato imposed his idea of objectives on the Classical world. The basic message of this book is therefore: Keep your mind and your machine in tune together.

The ideas emerge gradually in the form of a soliloquy by a man travelling across America on his cherished Honda motorbike, with his eleven year old son, who rides pillion. The pattern of the ideas as they emerge, are reflected in the rise and fall of the landscape and weather conditions. His son is as shut off from his father's thoughts as he is shut off from the passing scenery by his father's back. This journey, however, is just the framework for the book, as the real journey is through time and ideas, tracing the path of a man's life through his search for the foundations of reason and value, which takes him through the frontiers of insanity.

The book has a true basis for Pirsig actually experienced, agonisingly, the whole process himself, finally being admitted to a mental hospital, where he underwent a

course of electro-shock treatment to alter his personality. A constant under current in the book is the slow discovery and assimilation of his previous character, (the ominous Phaedrus), into his overall personality. In many ways, I would not be surprised to learn that Pirsig had never intended to publish this book, and that he wrote it only to assemble the fractured pieces of his two personalities together into one cohesive whole.

The book is truly investigative psychology, with regard to the relationship between damaged father and almost certainly damaged son, as well as being a superb travelogue and carrier for Pirsig's comprehensive attitudes to the best methods of tackling life.

I have seen reviews which suggested that the philosophic arguments in the book are crude and naive, but as they were written by academic philosophers, these reviews can be considered to be biased. Speaking personally, the views expressed in Pirsig's book feel right. They are meaningful, and have great relevance to the problems of people struggling to have some kind of individual identity in this crazy world that Science and Technology have fashioned for us. The posturings of the 'philosophers' are nowadays so arcane and incomprehensible, that their very credibility is suspect.

You should be warned, however, that this is not a book to curl up with, for read properly it stimulates too many loose nerve endings. This is one of those books that can genuinely turn your head right around, and rearrange and unjumble clogged synapses in a way totally beneficial to your whole mental outlook. At least it had that effect on my mind, and on others who have read the book.

Pirsig himself is an enigma. Forty-eight years old, he was the son of a law school dean, and was strongly influenced by his father's academic background. He accumulated degrees in chemistry, philosophy and journalism, and attended the Benares Hindu University in India. While studying and teaching both rhetoric and philosophy, he struggled to remove the educational barriers between the rational (science-based) and the romantic (arts-based). The struggle was traumatic, culminating in a mental breakdown and two years spent in and out of hospitals. He was finally 'rehabilitated' by electro-shock treatment and released. "Zen" was Pirsig's way of putting the past behind him, and he is now working with the aid of a Guggenheim Fellowship on two further books. One is a study of cultural anthropology focusing on race relations, (which he says the critics will destroy him for because it will be so dull), and the other is a comparison between witch burning and mental institutions, pointing out the basic similarities in operation, as both are intended as a means of control, not as help.

"Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" is the beginning of a way of dealing with the irrationality of our Seventies. I only hope that other people can pick up where Pirsig stopped, and continue to weave his ideas back into the cloth of our society in order to alter it into something where all human beings can develop to their full potential. With this book, Robert Pirsig has more than done his share.

Cadence & Cascade

THE LATE-LAMENTED MR. FOX

Mr. Fox was a folk-rock band formed in 1970 by Bob and Carolanne Pegg, to further their musical ideas, which were moving away from the traditional material that they had successfully employed to become a respected duo on the folk club circuit.

Unlike their contemporaries, Steeleye Span, Mr. Fox used mainly newly-written material, most of them by band members, with an occasional song from outside. However, their roots were deep in the soil of the Peggs' native Yorkshire, and many of their songs are set in the Dales.

Much of the band's music has a harsh, abrasive quality, based on quirky rhythms and strange story lines. Mr. Fox's history was as turbulent as their music, but they managed to produce two fine albums before collapsing in ruins.

The major songwriter in the band was Bob Pegg, who contributed nearly all of the really good songs on their albums. Carolanne Pegg's efforts were far less successful, with only one excellent song on the two records.

The first album, simply titled "Mr. Fox", was released in 1970. The record has a complete feel to it, starting as it does with an introduction in the form of a song called "Join us in our game", which refers to many of the songs to be found on the album. The second track is the splendid, grisly tale "The Hanged Man", on the perils of rocky paths and the ghastly fate that awaits those that ignore them.

Carolanne Pegg's best song follows. "The Gay Goshawk" is a superb story of a seduction by a changeling, with a lovely other-worldly feel to it, a truly Gothic tale. Two relatively mediocre songs complete side one, while side two opens with a magnificent version of the Dave Mason classic, "Little Woman", one of the best that I have heard of this lovely song. This is followed by a rather desultory Carolanne Pegg song "Salisbury Plain."

The album is completed by a trio of Bob Pegg songs of remarkable power. The first, "The Ballad of Neddy Dick", is a jolly epitaph for a Dalesman, with the most infectious tune on the whole album. Next is the beautiful, elegaic "Leaving the Dales", telling of the slow disintegration of the Dale communities as the young folk leave for the cities. This really is a powerfully sad piece of music.

The final song is the macabre masterpiece, "Mr. Fox", a haunting, gruesome tale of a strange man, his grisly deeds and even nastier end. Sung by Carolanne, with a superb undercurrent of menace provided by cello, organ, violin and bass, with an electric guitar crashing in at moments of high excitement. This song personifies the whole strange character of Mr. Fox, the group.

Between the first album and the second, Mr. Fox shed two members, slimming down to a four piece band, mainly because of financial constraints, for the band were finding gigs hard to come by. A reputation for erraticism in their playing did not help matters,

for on some nights they were magnificent and on others dreadful. Relationships between Bob and Carolanne were strained and their marriage was falling apart, which obviously contributed to the bands' ailments.

Amazingly, they managed to put together a second album, "The Gypsy", released in 1971. Beginning with the wierdly evocative "Mendle" by Carolanne, "The Gypsy" was every bit as good as its predecessor. "Mendle" however, was marred by strangely mixed vocals, where the voice of Carolanne is so indistinct that the lyrics are totally lost at some points. The instrumental tracks are brilliant, with an amazing organ riff from Bob Pegg that is truly electrifying.

The title track of the album follows, the fifteen minute long "The Gypsy", by Bob Pegg. The song tells of the love of a townsman for a gypsy girl, and his pursuit of her across the Yorkshire countryside towards Scotland, and is a brilliant piece of lyric writing complimented by exceptionally good arrangements.

The second side contains the marvellously idiosyncratic "Aunt Lucy Broadwood" with a rhythmic beat guaranteed to stick in anyone's brain. A relatively poor traditional song "The House Carpenter", and the beautifully sad "Elvira Madigan" follow, and the ^{album} is completed by two more Bob Pegg songs. The first is a charming tribute to morris men, called "Dancing Song", and the album finishes with the hymn-like "All the good times", with mournful lyrics of great power and beauty.

And for Mr. Fox "All the good times" was a fitting closing track. "All the good times are dead and gone," go the lyrics, and for Bob and Carolanne Pegg that was so, for they split up the following year and the band collapsed shortly afterwards.

Mr. Fox were always in the shadow of Steeleye Span, a fact that was emphasised at the Loughborough Folk Festival in 1971, when both bands appeared, almost as a trial of the electric folk-rock genre. Steeleye Span triumphed and Mr. Fox failed miserably, and for them there was no way left but down.

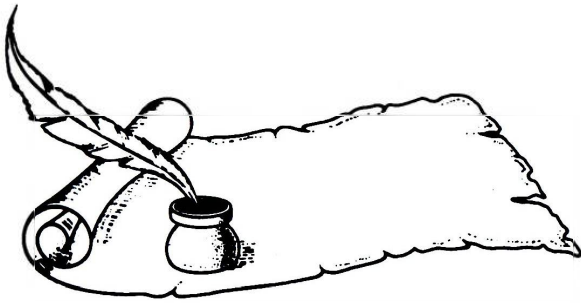
Since their break-up, both of the Peggs have put out a number of solo albums. Carolanne's records I have not heard, but the Bob Pegg albums, which he recorded with Nick Strutt, are very good, especially "The Shipbuilder". But their later works are not really comparable to those two Mr. Fox albums, which can now be obtained as a double album, entitled "The Complete Mr. Fox" on Transatlantic Records.

Gumbo's Variations 2

While out walking on the African veldt one day, a missionary suddenly came face-to-face with a lion. Thinking that his situation was hopeless, he sank to his knees in prayer, but then became quite relieved when the lion got down on its knees beside him.

"Dear brother lion," said the missionary, "how heartening it is to find you joining me in Christian prayer, when a few moments ago I feared for my life."

"Don't interrupt," growled the lion, "while I'm saying grace."



Earth Works

THE GOLDEN BEES
OF DAEDALUS.

Part one.

Polikrates unfastened his cloak, and dropped it onto the grassy bank, sinking down beside it with a sigh. It was good to have a day off from his studies. Thank the Gods that his father needed help from his tutor in sorting out the estates' finances today. On a beautiful morning in early spring, the last thing a fourteen-year old boy wanted was to be instructed in rhetoric and musty old history.

Below him on the hillside the sheep were grazing peacefully in the sunshine, while behind him the forest was bursting into green growth. It was warm enough for the boy to lay on the grass sunning himself into a quiet doze.

Polikrates' eyes closed against the strengthening rays of the sun, as the slight morning mist was dissipated by the heat. Soon his only contact with the outside world was the red glow of light on his eyelids, and the slight, gentle whisper of the breeze sweeping up from the Aegean Sea.

The boy dozed for a while, and would probably have fallen completely asleep if it had not been for a sudden buzzing that passed over his head and then settled down to a slight hum beside him.

"Bees," he thought, "though it does seem rather early in the year for them."

He opened one eye, and glanced in the direction of the sound. Then the other eye flew open in surprise, and he sat up, staring in amazement at the scene before his eyes.

On the grass beside him lay the cloak, where he had dropped it. The golden centaur clasp that his father had given to him only a month ago was lying on top of the garment. Two large bees sat on the brooch, their translucent gold wings folded over gilded bodies. To the astonished boy, it seemed as if the bees were made of the same gold as the clasp.

Suddenly, the bees' wings unfolded and the insects took flight, carrying the clasp between them with some difficulty. Lurching as they flew, they headed off up the hill and into the forest.

For a moment the boy just stared in amazement after the strange insects. Then, with a strangled gasp, Polikrates shook off the paralysing effects of his surprise, and leapt to his feet.

"Come back with my brooch, thieves," He shouted, and plunged off up the slope and

into the forest in pursuit of the creatures.

The bees' progress was slow, laden down as they were with a burden apparently many times their body weight. This enabled Polikrates to keep the thieves in sight, although he could not close the gap between the bees and himself. It was like chasing a will o' the wisp, as the bees and their burden glinted in the patches of sunlight falling through the trees, then vanished behind bushes and trees. Polikrates had to fend himself off from tree-trunks and crash through small bushes in his reckless pursuit of the insects.

Soon Polikrates began to tire, and the bees drew further ahead. Just as the boy was about to give up the chase, due to exhaustion, the trees began to thin out and soon Polikrates found himself standing at the top of a steep slope leading down into a valley.

At the foot of the slope a grassy meadow began, and in the middle of the meadow stood a small bee-hive, conical in shape with a beautiful blue colour. The bees had settled at the entrance to the hive, and by the time the boy had descended precipitately to the valley, he found that a small group of drones were pushing his clasp into the hive.

He had just put out his hand to rescue his property, when a voice from behind stopped him.

"I wouldn't touch that if I were you, young fellow. Those bees are more than capable of dealing with intruders if they are annoyed."

The speaker was a little man, hardly taller than Polikrates' chest. He had a round red face fringed with brown whiskers, and two hazel-brown eyes twinkled out from under thick bushy eyebrows. This head was perched on top of an equally round body clothed in browns and greens, with a gleaming silver belt around the little man's fat middle.

"But that's my brooch they have stolen," gasped the boy, "and if I go home without it my father will be very annoyed."

"Well, that's too bad, but I am afraid you will have a hard job convincing the bees to release the thing now." The little man shook his head. "No, once they get gold inside, they hold onto it, and woe betide any who dare try to remove anything from their hive."

"But what do they need gold for, they are bees not misers?" Polikrates said, most bewildered by the whole affair.

"Well, you might say that they need the metal more than you do, my boy. Let us move away from the hive before you disturb the bees. We will sit down awhile, to let you recover. You've obviously been running hard, and look exhausted."

The little man danced across the grass to the bank of a clear, bubbling stream and sat down. Polikrates followed slowly, after a backward glance at the hive showed that the brooch had completely disappeared into the entrance.

The boy washed his face in the stream, and drank deeply of the cold spring water. Then he turned back to the little man, who had been watching him with some delight.

"Who are you, little man? And what do those bees do with the gold?" Polikrates

determined, determined to discover just what kind of mystery it was that he had fallen into.

"Oh, your first question is easy, for my name is Iain O'Crigh, and I'm known as a lepracaun where I come from, which is many a weary mile away from here, right over at the edge of the world. I sort of worked my way down from the Emerald Isle by stages, following the sun. I always did like the sun, and there was just not enough of it for me back home, nasty wet and draughty place that it is. So I migrated south to warmer climes, just like a bird. I arrived on this island a good while ago, and it suits me fine, especially when I discovered the hive over there." The little man leaned back against a rock and kicked up his legs in amusement at the bewildered look on Polikrates' face.

"Apart from their thieving habits, what is so special about those bees?" Said the boy, his head spinning with the lepracaun's tale.

"Wait here and I'll show you," said O'Crigh, and he jumped to his feet and moved in a series of hops, skips and dances across the grass to the hive. He bent over the entrance and whistled gently. A bee appeared immediately, glinting in the sunlight. The lepracaun danced back to the stream, and the bee followed, buzzing round the little man's head, like a bead of light circling him.

"Here, take a good look at this little fellow," O'Crigh said, extending a finger to the boy. The bee hovered for a second above the lepracaun's hand, then landed gently on his out-stretched finger.

Polikrates stared in wonder at the 'insect'. The bee was entirely made of gold! Its wings were metal beaten so thin as to be translucent, the down of its body consisted of delicate filaments of gold, and its multi-faceted eyes shone like jewels in the sunlight.

"This is a marvel, Iain O'Crigh, but one beyond my comprehension. What is this bee, a living being or a metal artifact?" Polikrates' eyes were wide in wonder, and all thoughts about his stolen brooch had vanished from his head.

"Oh, you humans are all the same. You don't even know the history of the little patch of land you lay claim to most of the time." Said O'Crigh, grinning. "Tell me, who is this island named after?"

"It is named Ikaria, after Icarus, Daedalus' son, who is said to be buried here." Polikrates answered, annoyed at the look of superior amusement on the lepracaun's face.

"I beg your pardon. I didn't know I was in the presence of a scholar. You no doubt know of Daedalus' achievements too, how he was the greatest artisan the world has seen. Well, once upon a time he accepted a challenge from a king of somewhere or other, to make a pure gold honeycomb. This he did, in the most ingenious way, which many goldsmiths now use to cast small gold trinkets. To make the honeycomb even more life-like, he made two beautiful bees from gold, which he placed on the honeycomb. Well, the king was amazed by Daedalus' work, and he made a gift of the pieces to the temple of Hephaestus. This

naturally brought them to the attention of the god, and he was so pleased with the superb workmanship, that he imparted a little of his own life-force into the bees. It is the same life-force in these bees as Hephaestus uses for his metal hand-maidens, and they are as immortal as the god himself. Hephaestus gave instructions to his priests that the bees were to be brought to this island, in secret. And this is where I found them."

Polikrates' head was spinning with wonder. In front of his eyes was a legend come to life, made by the hands of the island's hero, Daedalus, and given life by the lame god Hephaestus.

"How do you know all this, O'Crigh?" He asked.

"That was easy to find out. You only have to talk to the bees, they will tell you, if you know the right language." Said the lepracaun, puffing himself up.

"If you can talk to the bees, could you get my brooch back for me? They would let you have it, I am sure." Polikrates said, suddenly remembering his loss.

"Well, I could, I suppose, but I won't," said the lepracaun, beaming at the boy. "You see, just between you and me, I have helped these little creatures out in the last few years, by getting them the gold they need to increase their numbers, and now I've trained them to get it for themselves, by thieving from the likes of you mortals." He chuckled, his red face gleaming with mirth. "And you can be sure I get my share of the proceeds too."

Polikrates was beside himself with anger. This grinning little monster was as responsible for the loss of his clasp as the bees. Losing his temper completely, he leapt to his feet and charged towards the lepracaun, fully intending to beat the vile creature until he agreed to recover the brooch. But O'Crigh had other ideas, and other abilities that Polikrates did not know about. Before he had got close enough to lay a finger on the little man, invisible hands closed around his waist and lifted him into the air. He was whirled along head over heels, and deposited somewhat roughly in the stream. The sudden shock of his flight through the air and his immersion in the cold waters of the stream knocked all the fight out of the boy, and he crawled miserably out of the water, fully expecting the lepracaun to be waiting to finish him off.

But the lepracaun was still sitting where Polikrates saw him last, having apparently not moved a muscle, for the golden bee was still perched on his finger.

Polikrates was frozen with fear. "H-H-How did you do that?" He asked through chattering teeth.

"Oh, just a little bit of Irish magic, Polikrates. Yes, I know your name, even though you were rude enough to not introduce yourself when we met. I am finding that the more gold that I get in my crock from the bees, the stronger the magic becomes. Why, between me and the bees, I figure I can set up as ruler of the island in a few years time."

"You are using the bees for your own evil ends, O'Crigh," Polikrates gasped, "Hephaestus would turn you to stone before he would allow you to manipulate his beings

like this."

"Ah, be off with you, you young whelp, you are annoying me with your childish prattle." There was a glint of ill-humour in the lepracaun's eyes. He whistled shrilly to the bee and it flew quickly back to the hive. Outside the entrance, it hovered and then did a little dance air. Immediately, it was joined by half-a-dozen other bees.

The group hovered for a moment, then, to Polikrates' horror, flew straight for the boy. They moved with astonishing speed and all he could do was throw his arms up in front of his face and fall backwards into the stream. He surfaced to find that the bees had inflicted several wounds on his arms, for they obviously had stings as sharp as razors.

Polikrates realised he had only one chance, and that was to put as much distance between the hive and himself as possible, in the hope that the bees would not stray too far away from the valley. He forded the stream and ran into the forest on the other side, trying to protect his head with his arms as he ran, while around him the bees flew, occasionally darting in for a slashing attack on the boy's exposed arms and legs. Behind him, he could hear the loud, offensive laughter of the lepracaun.

On he ran, panic-stricken, completely losing all track of direction, until he finally stumbled over a tree-root, staggered a few paces before running full-tilt into a tree-trunk, then crashed to the ground, stunned. Above his prone body, the golden bees of Daedalus circled, their golden bodies splashed with the red blood of his wounds.

Jungle Line

JOHN AUBREY'S BRIEF LIVES.

Just before Christmas last year, I was persuaded to listen to a Radio 4 play called 'Brief Lives', performed by Roy Dotrice. I had never heard of the play before, though it had apparently been successful on its London showings only a couple of years before. The radio adaptation was marvelous, Dotrice playing the seventy-year old John Aubrey recounting tales from his life in the 17th century, telling anecdotes about the people he knew with great wit and much ribaldry.

With this experience still firmly in mind, I was browsing through the spoken word section of HMV's in Oxford Street, when I came across an Argo recording of Dotrice in the original stage play, recorded live at the Mayfair Theatre. Needless to say, I bought the record and was glad of it. While the stage play loses over the radio adaptation in that there is much visual action on stage that never gets on record, it does gain in spontaneity. In one instance, somebody in the audience sneezed loudly, several times. Dotrice slips in a beautiful ad-lib on the prevalence of disease in London at the time, totally in context and splendidly handled. If 17th century wit and ribaldry are your cup of tea, then buy "John Aubrey's Brief Lives" by Roy Dotrice on the Argo label. It's a two record set that is well worth the money.

Recently I have been reading Colin Wilson's excellent book, 'The Craft of the Novel', and was struck in particular by one of the many interesting points he makes. Wilson demonstrates quite clearly the way in which an author puts fixed limits on his characters, beyond which they cannot step without straining the readers' credulity.

While searching for verification of this point in my own memory, I came across one case where the limitations imposed by an earlier work has caused the author to physically impose a transition upon an important character, to enable him to credibly accomplish his appointed task within the whole work.

That author was J.R.R. Tolkien, and the character was Gandulf. Gandulf's apparent death at the hands of the Balrog in Khazad-dûm, and subsequent 'resurrection' enabled Tolkien to endow him with much greater powers than he had previously displayed.

Gandulf the Grey first appeared in "The Hobbit", and his personality was firmly delineated in this work. He was a wise, kindly old man, very cunning and clever, but had very few magical powers beyond the ability to make various forms of fire, and to 'far-see', a talent he demonstrated in the encounter with the three trolls.

This limitation on Gandulf's power was fine as long as he was only engaged on minor quests, like aiding the dwarfs recover Smaug's gold. On the larger stage of 'Lord of the Rings', he was barely able to hold his own, let alone play a vital, deciding role in the conflict. It was necessary to endow him with more power, and the way Tolkien chose to do this was via an ordeal by fire, with the Balrog providing the necessary adversary to transform Gandulf to a higher plane of being. From this emerged Gandulf the White.

The instances which illustrate this transformation are available both from 'The Hobbit' and 'Lord of the Rings'. Consider, for example, the wizard's party treed by wargs after their escape from the goblins' clutches in the Misty Mountains. The only defense Gandulf is able to put up is the trick with the blazing pine-cones. And a very effective defense it is too, against wargs. But when the goblins arrive, and with glee turn the fire back against its originator, there is nothing that the poor wizard can do. Here is a (relatively) powerless Gandulf, destined to destroy himself in order to take a goodly number of his enemies with him, saved only by the unbidden, timely arrival of the eagles.

In 'The Fellowship of the Ring', Gandulf is a much wiser, more care-worn person, but still has little power. It is great enough to hold off the Ringwraiths on Weather-top, but he can do no more than preserve his own life, and finally has to flee from them.

Even working in concert with other wizards, it is apparent that the one great exercise of power performed before Gandulf's transition, was not a decisive action. When the White Council drives Sauron from Dol Guldur, it is only a tactical retreat by the Dark

force from a weak position to his rebuilt stronghold of Barad-dûr. This Gandulf admits at the Council of Elrond.

By comparison, in his later encounters with the Nazgul on the battlefield at Osgiliath, where all nine are in attendance, the evil creatures refuse to face him, flying before Gandulf when he arrives to aid the beleaguered Faramir. At the shattered gates of Minas Tirith Gandulf faces King Angmar, mightiest of the Nazgul, with composure, and later rues the distractions which prevented him from taking part in the battle of the Pelennor fields, where he states that he could possibly have prevented the grievous loss of Théoden, King of the Rohirrim.

But it is Gandulf's encounters with Saruman that show most clearly the difference in his powers as a result of his experiences with the Balrog.

Early in 'Lord of the Rings' Gandulf goes willingly to Saruman, only to be captured and held prisoner in Saruman's stronghold, Isengard, with the obvious implication that Gandulf has no advantage over Saruman and cannot face him in a trial of strength.

Compare this to the encounter between the two wizards after the Ents have destroyed Isengard's physical defences, and bottled Saruman up in his tower of Orthanc. Here Saruman is given enough time to attempt his own enchantments, and can do nothing against the assembly of allies. Eventually Gandulf demonstrates that he has complete control over Saruman, preventing him from leaving the assembly by the force of his will and then smashing Saruman's staff of power with contemptuous ease. The roles are completely reversed and Gandulf has proved himself the most powerful. As Gandulf comments during this momentous occasion, he is then so much greater than Saruman that he is beyond anything that Saruman can even comprehend, a comment both on how high Gandulf has reached and on the depths to which Saruman has fallen.

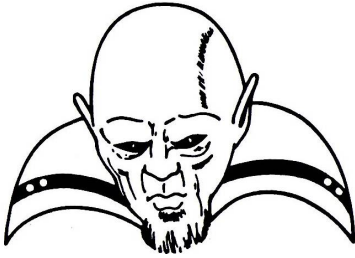
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"Writers are specialised cells in the social organism. They are evolutionary cells. Mankind is trying to become something else; it's experimenting with new ideas all the time. And writers are a means of introducing new ideas into the society, and also a means of responding symbolically to life. I don't think we are in control of what we do."

Kurt Vonnegut, from his Playboy Interview, reprinted in 'Wampeters, Foma and Gran Falloons,' (Jonathan Cape) a collection of Vonnegut's articles and speeches.

"Society iss Nix! "- Hans und Fritz, the Katzenjammer Kids.

"Happiness is eine kleine kaput beagle."- The Red Baron; special message for all Peanuts followers.



Starsailors

THE SF OF TANITH LEE.

Tanith Lee is one of those rare talents who seem able to write well in a number of fields. She has produced some very good children's books, two really excellent sword and sorcery fantasies and has created one of the most remarkable SF worlds in recent years.

Her two SF books, 'Don't bite the sun' and 'Drinking sapphire wine' (both issued by Daw Books in the USA, no British publication that I know of), are both situated in the city of Four Bee, on an unnamed world. Four Bee is one of three totally automated cities, devoted to maintaining its population in an incredible, hedonistic style. The city provides virtually everything for the populace, including new bodies when they die, whether by accident, old age (very rare) or by suicide, which is by far the most common. The people are therefore relatively immortal, but are frequently bored. The rate of suicide is high because ~~many~~ people change bodies frequently, designing for themselves ever-more fantastic appearances, of either sex.

The heroine, (the character is predominantly female), is unnamed through-out (the novel takes the form of her memoirs), and is one of the bright stars of the 'Jang' generation. This is the section of the population roughly analogous to our own teenagers, although in this context the change to 'adult-hood' is deemed to take place after about fifty years, at the very least.

The heroine is only half-way through her 'jang' period, but already she is bored of the sybarite society in which she has to live. She changes bodies less frequently than her acquaintances, and is searching for new experiences to satisfy her.

In the first book, 'Don't bite the sun', she tries to find an outlet by applying to the robot administration of the city to have her status changed from Jang to 'older person'. After a disastrous interview with a quasi-robot administrator, she tours the work centres to try and find a 'job' that will suit her, but with no luck. She decides to try another tack, and arranges to have a child, but that back-fires on her too, leaving her in trouble with the robots.

In desperation, she joins a band of people who are setting off to investigate an archaeological site in the desert. Here she becomes disgusted with the leader of the expedition when she discovers that he will allow nobody to actually work on the dig

except robots, and she finally explodes in anger and walks off the site into the desert. It is here that the roots of the second story are laid, for she is caught in a desert rain-storm, which causes the desert to bloom in the space of a few hours. She finds her way back to the sand-cruiser again, but her beloved pet is killed by the sand-cruisers defence screens, and she realises that she has been pushing too hard to be different and the novel closes with her lapsing into melancholy.

When the second book opens, the heroine(?) is male, becomes involved with an old friend of hers and flouts the unspoken law of the Jang; that all sexual relationships must be contracted, even if only for a day. As a result she is pushed into reviving dueling by one member of her circle, who she subsequently kills in the contest that follows. The over-literal robots try her for murder, even though the dead protagonist is quickly revived and re-bodied, and acts as a prosecution witness at the trial.

She is found guilty and is given the option of either having her personality erased and starting again as a child, or of being exiled from the cities and residing in the deserts, an option most people consider too horrible to contemplate. The robots are not completely heartless for they cannot deny her the right to re-birth, but she must grow old and die naturally first. To everyones horror, she chooses exile and is given a sand-cruiser and a final re-bodying before setting off into the desert.

She has no real motive for choosing exile, other than a wish to get away from the city and to do something the city people consider shocking. It is an accident in the desert with her sand-cruiser, while she is trying to entice a desert animal to become her pet, that reminds her of the rainstorm and its aftermath in her previous visit. She demands a water-mixer, a machine to produce water from the constituents of the surrounding countryside, and sets out to build her own oasis in the desert.

She succeeds in this endeavor, and eventually the resulting garden draws the attention of the city when a robot newshound investigates her 'plight', only to find her seemingly happy with her exile in such beautiful surroundings.

Two of her friends, who have themselves fallen foul of the administrators, join her in exile and they then find out that the robots are trying to prevent the spread of the little colony by refusing to provide further machinery. A second group of Jang arrive, this time strangers who are not fitted for such a life, but only attracted by the different life style.

The crash-landing of this groups' aircraft, and the fault which causes her friends aircraft to crash on its second flight, convince the colony that the robots are determined to 'accidentally' cause all their deaths and so remove the nuisance value of the colonists. The robots justification for this is the belief that they would be resurrected afterwards anyway.

Finally, the whole conflict between the heroine and the administrators comes to a head when the robots infiltrate a group of androids into the colony, one of whom begins to help by building more water-mixers, only to betray the colony when they are finished.

The entire sequence from the beginning of the first book to the final(happy) ending is extremely well-integrated and planned,with perhaps the only jarring note being the fake slang used by the Jang,which looks as if it was ill-advisedly filched from Anthony Burgess. The two books are quite satisfactory stories in their own right,but together they make a fascinating tale of human ingenuity and courage,as well as being a very perceptive and telling comment on the dangers inherent in a fully automated society.

Tanith Lee's writing is fluid and inventive,and she is not foolish enough to show the whole picture as a black and white,evil-good confrontation. The plotting is subtle, and the slow emergence of the heroine's destiny makes interesting reading. As a projection of modern youth culture trends into the future,it is a sometimes chilling picture,but with a good solid twist in the tale,and a fine wealth of superb detailing make the two books important additions to any SF library. Tanith Lee is obviously one of the best new writers in the genre to appear in the last few years.

Starsailors 2

MARY STATON'S "FROM THE LEGEND OF BIEL".

"From the Legend of Biel" is a superb first novel of great originality and power. Mary Staton is a complete unknown and as far as I know has written no other fiction. Her book is an incredible,mind-expanding journey of discovery.

The story opens with the arrival of a Terran exploration vessel in a recently discovered solar system,where one of the planets is habitable and shows evidence of architectural structures on the surface. The explorers land and gain entrance to one of these geometrically-shaped buildings,where they discover a recording device,which they activate.

The details of the initial orbital exploration and first landing are splendidly handled,with a very 'authentic' touch which is rare nowadays,when the actual mechanisms of space flight are considered to be passé in SF.

The book then enters its second stage,retelling the story of Biel,a humanoid inhabitant of a dwelling like the pyramid the explorers have entered. To say more of the plot would not do it justice,for the gradual unfolding of Biel's story,and the explorers' reactions to it are cunningly interwoven into a spell-binding tale that is much deeper than it appears at first.

Basically,what sets the book apart from run-of-the-mill SF is the attention to detail and the subtlety of the characterisation. Mary Staton retains the flow of the story right through to the triple-twist in the ending,in a manner which suggests that she will be an author of great significance in the future,if she continues in this vein."From the Legend of Biel" is published by Ace SF,available at import shops.

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And here we are, on the last page of the first issue. I hope that you have enjoyed the experience, and furthermore that you will be sufficiently motivated to put pen to paper and WRITE to me at the address below, telling me just what you think of the Crystal Ship, (abuse readily accepted, I'm a masochist at heart).

Thanks must go to my wife, Pamela, for putting up with a distacted, irritable husband while I was working on the mag, (thanks a lot, kid, you can have the week-ends back again now, for a while), and for helping with headings and things. Thanks also to Immediaprint of Slough for printing it at a price I could afford. And thanks to Stuart Clark for general encouragement and for showing me the way with his stable of fanzines.

The next issue I hope to have out by the end of September, and I hope to have attracted enough comment to decide just what format the mag takes by the end of July. If there is any of you out there who are artists, you may have noticed the paucity of art in this issue. All such donations would be gratefully accepted, both of Sf and Fantasy subjects, (no larger than A4 though) and would of course be fully credited.



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