Hollins University

Hollins Digital Commons

The Hollins Critic

4-1968

Vol. V, No. 2: American Wandering Minstrel: Peter S. Beagle and "The Last Unicorn"

Benedict Kiely

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.hollins.edu/critic



The Hollins Critic

Volume V, No. 2

Hollins College, Virginia

April, 1968

American Wandering Minstrel: Peter S. Beagle and "The Last Unicorn"



Peter S. Beagle's first novel, A Fine and Private Place, in which a raven speaks as wisely as a raven should, in which the living and the dead live as happily together as most people do, was written before he was twenty years of age. His second novel, The Last Unicorn, in which he sends the white beast on a quest for her vanished brothers and sisters appears now, about seven years later. He dedicates it, delightfully, to: "The memory of Dr. Olfert Dapper who saw a wild unicorn in the Maine woods in 1673, and for Robert Nathan, who has seen one or two in Los Angeles."

In between the two books he went on a journey, or a quest, not explicitly to find the life-giving water in the well at the world's end, nor to kill the evil King

The Hollins Critic

EDITORS-John Rees Moore, George P. Garrett

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS—Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Daniel Hoffman, Howard Nemerov, Walter Sullivan, Benedict Kiely, Robert Scholes, R. H. W. Dillard, William Jay Smith

COVER ARTIST-Lewis O. Thompson

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS-Elizabeth Tunstall Collins and Christine Costigan

Published five times a year, in the months of February, April, June, October, and December, by Hollins College, Virginia. Second class postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia. Copyright 1968 by Hollins College, Virginia 24020.

All material appearing in *The Hollins Critic* is written by pre-arrangement with the contributors. No unsolicited manuscripts can be considered.

The Hollins Critic is one dollar a year (\$1.50 in Canada and overseas).

of the Bad Blacklands, nor to hack his way through brambles and thickets of thorns to awaken the sleeping princess. No: he and a friend called Phil rode off on two scooters, Jenny and Couchette, from the towered island of Manhattan to cross the Isthmus of North America to the sun of California where golden oranges grow all the year round. Peter S. Beagle went along to see what he could see, and to meet a girl in California; his friend, to paint something of what he would see. An ordinary enough journey, but in the account Beagle wrote of it in a book, I See By My Outfit, there are a few indications of what to expect from The Last Unicorn.

In Manhattan in the early morning (You could sing that if you had a guitar.) Beagle and his friend Phil, about to set out on their quest, carry in their heads and on their tongues the stock dialogue of Hope and Crosby on the Road to Everywhere, "much as the Greek minstrels carry epic poetry." Across the street from Phil's apartment house a pile-driver has been at work since six in the morning "which is about the hour Prometheus' vulture used to report for duty." Already, this peopled isle is full of odd noises.

Among their private gospels are Professor Tolkien's Lord of the Rings and T. H. White's The Once and Future King, and it is worth noting that T. H. White, a man who looked like Jehovah, had translated a twelfth-century bestiary in which due respect was paid to the Monoceros: "a monster with a horrible howl, with a horse-like body, with feet like an elephant and with a tail like a stag's. A horn sticks out from the middle of its forehead with astonishing splendour to a distance of four feet, so sharp that whatever it charges is easily perforated by it. Not a single one has ever come alive into the hands of man, and although it is possible to kill them it is not possible to capture them."

The story, of course, is not as simple as that, and T. H. White's annotations to the Bestiary do, indeed, provide a useful little compendium of knowledge on the nature of the unicorn. Spenser had been concerned about the "compeer of lion-kings/The steed self-armed, the Unicorn". Aldrovandus, who had given copious pages to the matter, and Browne and Alexander Ross had agreed that when they spoke of the Monoceros they did not intend the true rhinoceros of whose existence they were well aware. The Bestiary described two unicorns because Aelian believed there were two species, one a solid-footed creature about the size of a donkey and

identified with the Indian Asse, the other a clovenhoofed beast identified with the oryx. White's annotations open the road to vast research into a most complicated subject, and the bestiary's other description of the milk-white beast brings us closer to the animal that goes questing in Peter S. Beagle's novel: "He is very small like a kid, excessively swift, with one horn in the middle of his forehead, and no hunter can catch him. But he can be trapped by the following stratagem.

"A virgin girl is led to where he lurks, and there she is sent off by herself into the wood. He soon leaps into her lap when he sees her, and embraces her, and hence he gets caught."

All this and more, along with echoes from the music of George Brassens, and images from the world of Pogo—the Okeefenokee Swamp, which is grossly insulted by being called a swamp, but is instead a magic land straight out of a phantasy by George MacDonald—is very useful knowledge to have in your head when you set off on a scooter from Manhattan to California.

The only dragons encountered by the way are, fortunately, a few cops who, as American cops go, behave civilly enough, albeit suspiciously, towards two bearded young men. Sensitive to the changing moods of the day, the two travellers do not ride their scooters through the melancholy of the hour before dark for that hour is "a strange lonely time to be driving something as small and open as a scooter as far as we are." Somewhere in the Midwest they hear tell of a hurricane, like the hand of God, that tore away a house and left the family holding on to the piano: a hurricane like the weird wind or devil that swept away the man's wife, in that novel Mulata by Asturias, or like the tornado of a Red Bull that confronted the chaste unicorn at the castle of King Haggard.

The people met on the quest-by-scooter have an odd sort of bright glow about them: even the college hero observed in a beershop, and the hero's girl and the hero's best buddy; most certainly the Jewish girl, met in a pawnshop, who had once flown her own plane and who, out of a sort of pity, slipped the wanderers a five dollar bill; and the pitiful prostitute who may have been rivalling Munchausen when she told her high romantic tale; and a sad quiet old couple who suddenly turn out to be experts on and worshippers of precious stones-banded agate, lace agate, moss agate, plume agate, sagenite. The harsh mountains are, after all, magic mines and "a two-dimensional butterfly can make the twig it lights on, and the tree that twig belongs to, seem unreal." What seems to be a shaggy white cloud on the horizon turns out to be snow, and the black mass wearing it "like a torn piece of cloth caught on the horn of a bull" is their first Rocky Mountain. It sets Peter S. Beagle thinking with James Stephens, and not for the only time on the journey, that the mountains ought to be taught a little modesty. That is the James Stephens who in The Demigods brought the angels of God down to walk the roads of Ireland with the tinker people.

Within sight of the mountains they encounter in a public camping-place a hospitable young couple who invite them to a picnic that comes straight out of The Wind in the Willows: baskets of fried chicken, sausages like nightsticks, cheeses as big as pizza pies, enough packages of lunch-meats to play cards with, pillowcases full of potato chips, a portable cooler with soft drinks. Afterwards they are held up by scooter trouble among the horrors of Las Vegas, where hypnotised

slaves are compelled, some of them, to make love to as many as three one-armed bandits at the same time; and Las Vegas, is, for Peter and his companion, Tolkien's Mordor, almost but not quite at the end of a road lined with magic caves of pawnshops where one always may have the chance of finding that masterpiece of an old-fashioned guitar. They are, after all, wandering minstrels.

All this to point out that Peter S. Beagle has a mind that, even on an ordinary journey, inclines naturally to music and magic. He is given to glimpses of what Alain-Fournier called "the other mysterious landscape." Why, for all I know, he may have been like Martin Hearne in the Yeats play The Unicorn From the Stars: "He used to be gueer as a child, going asleep in the fields, and coming back with talk of white horses he saw, and bright people like angels or whatever they were." He began to exercise this rare mind first in a graveyard in Yorkchester in New York City, and it is nothing to be surprised at that a young man, whose first novel began with a raven stealing a whole baloney and flying with it to an old man (Elijah) who has lived for nineteen years in a mausoleum in the cemetery, should now write a novel about the last of the unicorns. That raven in the novel A Fine and Private Place is no relation whatsoever to Poe's dismal, one-worded, repetitive bird. Indeed, in a story in which both the living and the dead talk with wisdom and eloquence, and in which there is a haunting love-talk between a dead man and a dead woman, the raven is the best talker of them all. Goldsmith said to the face of the Great Lexicographer that if he, Johnson, ever tried to make fish talk in an apologue, he would make them talk like whales. Peter S. Beagle has made a raven talk marvellously in the style of Jimmy Durante.

To have the dead talk to the living and the living talk to the dead, and to have a talkative raven in the chair to preside over the gathering, was a great training for the sort of thing that Peter S. Beagle has done now in The Last Unicorn. The interested and curious may, by the way, like to compare A Fine and Private Place to, say, Flann O'Brien's novel, posthumous in two senses, The Third Policeman. Mairtin O Cadhain's fine novel of the voices of the dead talking about life, Cre na Cille, is, alas, available so far only to readers of Gaelic.

The raven of the Yorkchester Cemetery has a first-cousin, at least, in a blue jay who flits and chatters, briefly, in *The Last Unicorn*. But that blue jay is an almost taciturn creature compared with the butterfly who meets the last unicorn when she is setting out on her quest to find her lost and vanished brothers and sisters. The butterfly, that creature that can transform the twig and the tree upon which it alights, is, of course, the poet. The only reason why he (the butterfly), in a perverted and unknowing world, knows that the unicorn is a unicorn and not a white mare is, the unicorn sadly concludes, that "somebody once made up a song about unicorns; or a poem." And in a splendid speech the butterfly shows that, unlike some poets, he has carefully read contemporaries and predecessors: "Death takes what man would keep and leaves what man would lose. Blow wind and crack your cheeks. I warm my hands before the fire of life and get four-way relief . . .

"Excellent well, you're a fishmonger. You're my everything, you are my sunshine, you are old and gray and full of sleep, you're my pickle-face consumptive Mary Jane". And so on, for some time, as only a well-read butterfly could talk.

Peter S. Beagle

Born in New York City in 1939, Peter Beagle graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1959. His first novel, A Fine and Private Place, was published the following year. After living in Paris and traveling in France, England and Italy, he spent a year at Stanford University on a writing fellowship. I See by My Outfit, his second book, published in 1965, is an account of a cross-country trip by motor scooter. He has published stories and articles in The Atlantic and Holiday. Mr. Beagle lives in Santa Cruz, California.

-E. T. C.

A novel of this sort comes alive and stays alive on bright intensity of imagination with style as a useful auxiliary. If the imagination is opulent enough the author can even exist without style, and a new myth may even be created—as C. S. Lewis has noted in the case of George MacDonald. Now that I think of it, there is in The Last Unicorn the magic of living trees as there was in MacDonald's Phantastes, and it pleases me to think that Peter S. Beagle could have gone to school to the old Scottish necromancer who is so little read nowadays, or could have listened for a while to the sardonic James Branch Cabell. Peter S. Beagle has both the opulence of imagination and the mastery of style.

Truth, with a searing double vision, and Purity go, in the person of the unicorn, on the quest through a sodden world for a lost wonder. The first encounter with the clumsy dirty world comes when the unicorn meets up with the man with the hoe. Edwin Markham's plodding man, or such a son of the earth as the late Patrick Kavanagh might have thought of in the mood of his savage poem: The Great Hunger. To the hoesman, the unicorn is a white mare, beautiful, desirable, but still a white mare. So not having read any of the best bestiaries, and not knowing about unicorns and their exceptional elusiveness, he takes off his belt, loops it, and heads out to capture her. He fails, of course, as do others who are equally uncouth, for none of them know that if the male unicorn will leap (cunning fellow) into the lap of a virgin there must also be a better way, than by looping a sweaty belt, of capturing a female unicorn.

This theory is never developed, but to the path of the unicorn comes Mommy Fortuna, who owns the world's most wonderful circus, knows the ropes, or the only rope, that will hold a unicorn. You can, if you like, as you can also in the case of The Faerie Queene—although with some difference in time and space—hold up the joy and magic of the tale, by stopping to work out, to your own mathematical satisfaction, an allegory.

"The only rope that could hold her," Mommy Fortuna says, "would be the cord with which the old gods bound the Fenris-wolf. That one was made of fishes' breath, bird spittle, a woman's beard, the miaowing of a cat, the sinews of a bear, and one thing more. I remember—mountain roots. Having none of these elements, nor dwarfs to weave them for us, we'll have to do the best we can with iron bars."

Reinforced with a grumbled unpleasant spell that leaves a smell of lightning about the unicorn, the iron bars of fate, in fact, do constitute a cage, and truth

and purity, with eyes that have a most startling double vision, are in durance in the rarest of menageries. The writer's imagination never weakens. "Creatures of night, brought to light," the barker shouts around these cages or caverns of dark Hecate. There is the manticore, with man's head, lion's body, tail of a scorpion, captured at midnight eating werewolves to sweeten its breath. There's a dragon that speaks seventeen languages badly and is subject to gout, and a satyr "captured under curious circumstances revealed to gentleman only, for a token fee after the show." Even in this place of horrors, as in Las Vegas, Peter S. Beagle's young and humorous humanity breaks through; and the unicorn, too, sees the monsters very differently from the way in which the spectators see them, or the way in which the barker describes them. After reading this account of Momma Fortuna's caged inmates and victims you may be driven to revise your opinion of many monsters, ancient and modern and personally known to you: or to take of themand what a lovely idea—the unicorn's eye view. For in every cage she perceives a second figure: Cerberus with his three heads and his coat of vipers is to her an unhappy hungry dog with only one head and hardly any coat at all; the satyr is an old ape with a twisted foot; the manticore is no more than a lion, the dragon no more than a crocodile; and the Serpent of the Midgard, which seems to be a cagefull of snake, is only a baleful boa, coiled in a corner. But the harpy of hatred is real "with the body of a great bronze bird and a hag's face" and real, too, is Elli, or Old Age, "an old, bony, ragged woman who crouched in the cage rocking and warming herself before a fire that was not there."

From this house of horrors, some really horrible, some just pathetic, the Unicorn escapes with Schmendrick the Magician, who is just like any other man. As a magician he is but a middling performer and his best-intended efforts, like the best-laid plans of mice and men, are inclined to go arse over tip: he makes an entire sow out of a sow's ear, he turns a sermon into a stone, a glass of water into a handful of water, a five of spades into a twelve of spades, and a rabbit into a goldfish that drowns. But in the camp of Captain Cully of the Greenwood, Schmendrick, in a moment of sacred possession, brings back to earth Robin Hood and his men. Which is the myth? Which is the reality? Captain Cully is a genial devil who has given thought to his own image, and written his own ballads about himself to ensure his place in Child's collection. He lived too early to be influenced by Alan Lomax but he is so well aware of the attentive attitude the modern balladmonger should adopt towards the collector and the possibilities of being recorded, that he clutches hopefully at Schmendrick, thinking he may be Mr. Child himself, questing ballads; and when he finds that he isn't says with sad reconciliation: "One always hopes, of course, even now-to be collected, to be verified, annotated, to have variant versions, even to have one's authenticity doubted."

In the presence of Captain Cully and his men, and Molly Grue who is Captain Cully's cutty, Schmendrick performs his pathetic lefthanded tricks. His audience is so unintelligent as to be appreciative with the single exception of Molly Grue; and stung by the disappointment in her eyes, he cries out to the magic to take possession of him and, like many another man fascinated by what's difficult, never knows how exactly what happened did happen. For into the clearing walks a man too tall for a living man, dressed in green but for a brown jerkin and a slanting brown

Books by Peter S. Beagle

A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE:

New York: Viking, 1960. \$3.95. New York: Dell, 1963. \$1.85 (pa.). London: Frederick Muller, 1961. 18/ London: Corgi Books, 1963. 3/6

Toronto: S. J. Reginald Saunders, 1963. \$2.25 (pa.).

I SEE BY MY OUTFIT:

New York: Viking, 1965. \$4.95.

New York: Ballantine, (U6040). \$.75 (pa.)

THE LAST UNICORN:

New York: Viking, 1968. \$4.95.

_C. R. C.

cap with a woodcock's feather, the great bow slung over his shoulder, the arrows that would have made spears or staves for Captain Cully. After him stride his easily recognisable followers, and after them all, crazy and "wild with loss," go in a shouting stampede Cully's degenerate men, degenerate because they are merely the shape and size and hue of mortal men. But Cully, nothing if not a philosopher, even in this moment of utter disaster, reflects, wisely or obtusely, on the nature of all mythologising.

"Robin Hood is a myth," Captain Cully said nervously, "a classic example of the heroic folk-figure synthesised out of need. John Henry is another. Men have to have heroes, but no man can ever be as big as the need, and so a legend grows around a grain of truth. Not that it isn't a remarkable trick, of course."

Thereafter, the Unicorn, Schmendrick and the loyal wench, Molly Grue, who desired and encountered real magic, continue the quest to the strange town of Hagsgrate, the Castle of King Haggard, to the pure love between Prince Lir and the Unicorn-transformed, in a moment of crisis, into a beautiful woman by the haphazard magic of Schmendrick-and to the confrontation with the brute force of the Red Bull, and to the perilous sea where under the white horses the unicorns are held prisoners by the power of the bull and the miserly King of the castle.

Louis Untermeyer points out that Lewis Carroll, Hans Christian Anderson, both the Grimm Brothers, Bulfinch and Malory "must have been looking over Beagle's shoulder and smiling approvingly while he wrote this wild, whimsical, and, in the end, wonderful touching fairy-tale. It is magic with a touch of majesty." That's a lot of people to be reading over a young man's shoulder, and the thought of all that gang joining in one approving smile is quite awesome. But Louis Untermeyer is shrewd, as always, and exactly right, and the approving smiles are most richly deserved. Added to which Peter S. Beagle seems to have seen in vision the harsh Sea of Moyle, and the stillness of Lough Derryvara, or heard in his dreams the roars and stamping of the Brown Bull of Cooley. This is only to say that if a man dares to enter these enchanted woods he must have his own mind and magic and style, and he must also know the landmarks.

The Butterfly had spoken to the Unicorn about the Red Bull, Momma Fortuna had mentioned King Haggard; and Schmendrick, when questioned by the Unicorn, says: "He is an old man, stingy as late November, who rules over a barren country by the sea. Some say that the land was green and soft once, before Haggard came, but he touched it and it withered." But to bring Haggard down from such sombre pretentiousness to an almost lovable humanity he has no light in his castle, no fires, and he sends his men out to steal chickens, and bedsheets, and pies from windowsills. As Lenny Bruce might have said, he can't be all bad and, indeed, King Haggard and his wretched underpaid or unpaid old men, turn out-in spite of there being a doom over himself and his castle and the country around it-to be a quite delectable crew.

But the Bull, the Red Bull is a splendor: Brute Beauty and Valour and Act and all the rest of it, and nothing at all to do with Purity, although he may have a certain relationship to Truth. He keeps the unicorns where he considers they belong, in the refrigerator, in the sea, in the cool sea. This is as fine a bull as ever I saw chained by the nose in the epical bull-house at the great creamery of Mitchellstown, County Cork; the difference being that because of all this artificial insemination business, the Mitchellstown bulls had the mean look in their eyes of men who knew they were being cheated and would one day, or night when the world turned over in its sleep, do something drastic about it. The Red Bull of Haggard's Castle is a big man, as big as the man spoken of in John B. Keane's play The Highest House on the Mountain-a man seen in the town of Tralee, a man so big that, it was said, he had seventeen buttons on the fly of his trousers.

According to rumor: "The Bull is real, the Bull is a ghost, the Bull is Haggard himself when the sun goes down. The Bull was in the land before Haggard, or it came with him, or it came to him. It protects him from raids and revolutions, and saves him the expense of arming his men. It keeps him a prisoner in his own castle. It is the devil, to whom Haggard has sold his soul. It is the thing he sold his soul to possess." But the Bull's splendid first appearance diminishes all legend: "He was the color of blood, not the springing blood of the heart but the blood that stirs under an old wound that never really healed. A terrible light poured from him like sweat, and his roar started landslides flowing into one another. His horns were as pale as scars."

The Red Bull, alas, is baffled in the end and the stampede of the unicorns passes as, once again to quote one of the greatest of twentieth century authorities on unicorns, Martin Hearne saw them when he dreamed in Connacht of the vinevards of France: "They tore down the wheat and trampled it on stones, and then they tore down what were left of the grapes and crushed and bruised and trampled them. I smelt the wine, it was flowing on every side—then everything grew vague." In that passage there's a great deal about the trouble with unicorns, and their relations with mortal men.

There are so many wonderful things to loiter with in this book: that male unicorn, for instance, who died from a surfeit of violets; or Captain Culley's zany

The Royal Canadian Air Force Exercises

The brave Canadians all leap so and so many times, run in place, do their push-ups, sit-ups, grow ever more fit, step up their pace as if their achievement levels were rungs on Jacob's ladder, for it's cold there and life is meager, physical. Songs of angels would hang in the frosty air in little puffs. It's not for me! Better those indolent southern isles where all one does is lie by the sea and there aren't any such things as trials of strength, or virtue, or endurance, or of anything but humility. Great gifts fall down from the heavens for all-coconuts, sunshine. Inflate your notion of what is fit for man, his place in the world, his just desert, and you get, instead of a blessed tan, a sunburn, measured in its hurt.

-DAVID R. SLAVITT

password system; or the topsy-turvy curse that lay on the town of Hagsgate; or the town of Hagsgate itself which is one of the rarest towns of fantasy, if fantasy it be. But the tale that began in a quest ends, as it should, in another quest; and poor Prince Lir riding sadly forth to search for his lost love, or something or somebody, fulfills his manifest destiny as a hero.

In the odd mean town of Hagsgate, as odd and mean as any town in the world we live in, a man called Drinn, crossing the marketplace on a winter's night saw a child abandoned on a butcher's block and, although there was snow, that child was warm and chuckling "under a comforter of stray cats." Drinn did not rescue the child. He said: "I know the birth of a hero when I see it. Omens and portents, snakes in the nursery." He also knew the prophecy: that none but one of Hagsgate Town may bring the Castle swirling down, and that the selfish, fearful, prosperous, childless days of the town would end with the doom of King Haggard. So he chased the cats away and left the child to perish in the snow, but later when he came back to look the child was gone. "Had it not been for the cats," he said, "I might have chanced the child, but they made it so obvious, so mythological." Drinn was right about the child who, in the Castle of King Haggard, grows up to be the hero. To the Lady Amalthea-that is the Unicorn in human shape, whom Lir loves-Lir explains in a notable speech, what the lot of the hero is: "It is a trade, no more, like weaving or brewing, and like them it

(Continued on Page 12)

A Man of the Cloth

I lay as a lad with knees
Drawn up to my chest, in a bed
Inhabited by dragons,
And the fear was real.
I'd not uncurl my limbs to the foot,
Where the great jaws waited.

Raw-boned, matter-of-fact
As law on stone, my mother
Stood at the bed's head.
The light was on. "Do you think,"
She said, "a good housekeeper
Would allow a dragon in your bed?"

Shamed by a woman's word,
I learned the way of dragon taming;
As the good years flowed,
Took orders and became a man
Of prayer, an exorcist
Of fear, for the common good.

Raw-boned, between the dark And children, I have stood In the pulpit, Sundays, Law on stone to all believers Under the oaken vault In the well-kept house of God.

My dim parishioners, Knees drawn up in the dark, Embrace my word, more intimate Than sin or nightmare, Matter-of-fact as morning light In the narrow bed we share.

I have grown ever more complete
In righteousness, while listening,
By night, for the breath
Of law on a lip of stone
Just over my head,
And the close rush of a dragon's wing.

-JOHN ALEXANDER ALLEN

Later Poem

It was a country where they were too kind To give you the time of day when you asked for it. Instead they asked, What time would you like it to be? Exasperated, you did not know, except You wanted it to be earlier than it was, Whenever.

They obliged.

Exasperated, you Wanted to be without obligation, they Answered a question with a question, you Knew it was wrong, and so did they But they wouldn't give you the time of day.

-JOHN PAUKER

Bell Tower

I sway on bells, lean way out, bell back and forth over ground,

over lines of surf, over toy towns, over strokes of coast and curdles of stone.

I strike off hard from the bell tower side, lean and ride, ears, heart, head, ring and reel.

Let out the steep rope, rocking seas under, brain over brain, running black. Pealing.

-VALERY NASH

In Virginia Moore's Pocahontas in London, which appeared in our last issue, the line "Powhatan of the Virgin Virginia forest," should have read "Powhatan of the virgin Virginia forest,"—we offer our apologies.

has its own tricks and knacks and small arts. There are ways of perceiving witches, and of knowing poison streams, there are certain weak spots that all dragons have, and certain riddles that hooded strangers tend to set you. But the true secret of being a hero lies in knowing the order of things. The swineherd cannot already be wed to the princess when he embarks on his adventures, nor can the boy knock at the witch's door when she is away on vacation. The wicked uncle cannot be found out and foiled before he does something wicked. Things must happen when it is time for them to happen. Quests may not simply be abandoned; prophecies may not be left to rot like unpicked fruit; unicorns may go unrescued for a long time, but not forever. The happy ending cannot come in the middle of the story."

Molly Grue was angry that the cravens of Hagsgate did not save that naked abandoned child. But Schmendrick, the ordinary wise man, reminded her that if they had: "he couldn't have grown up to be a prince. Haven't you ever been in a fairytale before?"

Which the writer of The Last Unicorn could say with confidence and irony to any living man who would dare to challenge the authenticity of his unique tale.

-BENEDICT KIELY.

SECOND CLASS
POSTAGE
PAID
at Roanoke, Virginia