

In Print

Cooking Up A European Holiday

Travel guides are like cookbooks: The witty, literate ones — the ones which are a joy to read — are seldom of much practical use; and even the other sort, the volumes of the nuts-and-bolts variety, can rarely be followed to the letter. Like good cooks, good travelers have to know the basic rules; beyond that, it is a question of instinct, and, ultimately, of art.

The *Let's Go* series of guides to Europe, assembled by the Harvard Student Agencies, might be described — to continue the traveling/cooking analogy for just one more sentence — as a sort of college-level *Joy of Cooking* for the footloose.

Let's Go: Europe, *Let's Go: Britain and Ireland*, and *Let's Go: France* (Dutton, \$4.95 for the first, \$3.95 for each of the other two), are not just for college students, of course — though they do contain plenty of information about student canteens, youth hostels, and other facilities open only to holders of International Student Identity Cards or such. The books, in general, are digests of information of all sorts — transportation, local customs, sights to see, budget-priced hotels and restaurants, etc. — directed at anyone who must count kroner (or francs or dinars) while abroad.

The *Europe* volume covers 30 countries, including all of Eastern Europe (except Albania), Israel, Turkey, some of North Africa, and the U.S.S.R. The other two volumes are, obviously, a good deal more complete about their respective areas and do not appear to be drawn from the same original material, as there are considerable differences in the places listed and the way they are described.

A few casual errors appear here and there (*moules farcies* are described as "stuffed clams," to the surprise, no doubt, of mussel-lovers and students of the French language alike; *saltimbocca*, the complex rolled veal specialty of Rome, is dismissed as "a spicy ham dish"; the denizens of the remarkable Mother Earth's in Paris are identified as "expatriot Americans"), but the books seem sound for the most part, and are nothing if not functional.

The *Let's Go* books are updated annually, incidentally. These are dated 1978/79. A detailed guide to Italy will be published in February of next year.

Colman Andrews

O'Brien Sings, Miller Chats

A *Flann O'Brien Reader* (Viking, \$11.95), edited by Stephen Jones, is a topping introduction to a too-little-known writer whom it is a great pleasure to meet, thank you very much. Flann O'Brien, born Brian O'Nolan and sometimes known as Myles na Gopaleen, was a very funny, very warm writer (he died in 1966), whose five novels (perhaps the best of them are *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Poor Mouth*) are minor classics and

whose "Cruiskeen Lawn" columns in *The Irish Times* were wiser and wittier than John Leonard, Art Buchwald, and Jimmy Breslin (none of whom O'Brien resembles) put together.

O'Brien's was a loving humor, and he knew, incidentally, how to make the English (and, one presumes, also the Gaelic) language dance and sing as well as Joyce or James Stephens did. Consider: "One afternoon I was reclining on the rushes in the end of the house considering the ill-luck and evil that had befallen the Gaels . . ."; or, better still: "Not everybody knows how I killed old Phillip Mathers, smashing his jaw in with my spade; but first it is better to speak of my friendship with John Divney because it was he who first knocked old Mathers down by giving him a great blow in the neck with a special bicycle-pump which he manufactured himself out of a hollow iron bar."

A *Flann O'Brien Reader* includes selections from each of the five novels, some representative newspaper columns, and a good range of other short material. Viking has also published (in 1974) a splendid edition of *The Poor Mouth*, with illustrations by Ralph Steadman.

Henry Miller's little book of portraits (the written kind), *My Bike & Other Friends* (Capra Press, \$7.95 hardbound, \$3.95 paper), is a pleasant, touching, minor work of casual biography and reminiscence. It is the second volume of the author's *Books of Friends*, and, like its predecessor, it is chatty, a tiny bit self-conscious, and occasionally quite innocently obscene.

C.A.

To Hell with von Däniken & Shields

In Search of Ancient Astronomies (Doubleday, \$10) is a collection of pieces in the field of archaeoastronomy — the study of the astronomies of ancient and prehistoric times through archaeology — by several engineers and astronomers, edited by the director of the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles, Dr. E.C. Krupp. It is popular science, as opposed to pop science, and is richly illustrated with photographs and diagrams. Velikovsky, von Däniken, et. al. are given appropriately short shrift, by the way. Of von Däniken, Krupp writes that, "He has revitalized P.T. Barnum's assessment of the skepticism and intelligence of the human mind, and astronomy and archaeology are left holding the bag." He also points out that the very underpinnings of the Swiss writer's theories are racist in nature.

I can heartily recommend *The Brooke Book* by Brooke Shields (Wallaby, \$3.95 paper) to anyone who is interested, on any level, in the observation and examination of popular cultural phenomena. Like Marilyn Chambers, Shields used to be a model for Ivory Soap. Now, at 13, she is a movie star (of Louis Malle's *Pretty Baby*). The book is a collection of photographs of her, from infancy to infamy, together with some "documentary" material (horoscope, handwriting analysis, etc.) and some darling little poems, stories,

Don't Knock the Rock

Plowing through *Rock 'n' Roll Is Here to Pay* (by Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo; published by Nelson Hall) is about as exciting as a Saturday night with a textbook on the rise of capitalism in the Arctic Circle, but apparently someone decided we needed enlightenment on the corruption (ho hum) running rampant in rock over the years. The music biz is no longer a part-time operation, but a billion-dollar baby-boom industry, and Chapple and Garofalo (two ex-Yalies and concert promoters) think they have all the answers, 350 pages worth. Exposés of payola (gasp), drugola (shriek), and record companies' initial low investment of \$1.55 per album are presented as dramatically as the Nixon resignation, when any listener worth his turntable could have told you about it five-ten-fifteen years ago.

It does make for an interesting study on the horizontal and vertical development of the major record companies (CBS owns everything from Discount Records, a retail chain located near college campuses, to the Fender Guitar and Amplifier Co.), but a book like this which purports to be analyzing the business side of rock shouldn't be hurling barbs at Dick Clark ("there is something hateful and pure about this man"), AM deejays ("cheerful robots") and John McLaughlin ("the utterly-ridiculous old-time religion route"), true as they may be.

Their personal biases interfere with the autonomous dissection of the industry they strive for, so *Rock 'n' Roll Is Here to Pay* occasionally lapses into prime-time *National Enquirer* gossip instead of sticking to unprejudiced facts.

In fact, it would seem the authors have an utter distaste for the performers in general, reducing them to chart statistics, mechanized morons, and conniving copycats. The only musicians they interviewed for the book were Johnny Otis and Fred Parrish (founder of the Five Satins, in case your trivia banks aren't functioning), hardly representative of the persons who actually create the commodity being hustled today.

And some of *Rock 'n' Roll etc.* is incoherent nonsense. When I hear that "the rise of 'downer' drug use stimulated tape sales of 'heavy-rock' groups" (so blithering barbiturated bozos can nod out to the death sounds of Deep Purple in their cars) and rock critics "subsist on lavish press luncheons, free records, and fancy hotels" (nobody ever told me about that), it makes me wonder if they uncovered most of their material in a John Birch newsletter. The end result is *The Pentagon Papers* as a Spiro T. Agnew tirade, too bigoted to be taken seriously by anyone but fans of Archie Bunker and Anita Bryant.

Chris Clark

and, er, essays that Brooke herself has written. Pick up a copy of this one and pack it away somewhere and bring it out again in 20 years or so when somebody asks you, "Were the late '70s really that bad? Really that soulless?"

C.A.

Victorian Pop

In *Beyond the Looking Glass* (Pocket Books, \$6.95) Jonathan Cott has brought together "Extraordinary Works of Fairy Tale and Fantasy: Novels, Stories and Poems from the Victorian Era." Why he has chosen these ten tales from the thousands available is never explained. They are not divided into fairy and fantasy, or by decade written, or by fame vs. obscurity, or into any other categories that I can see.

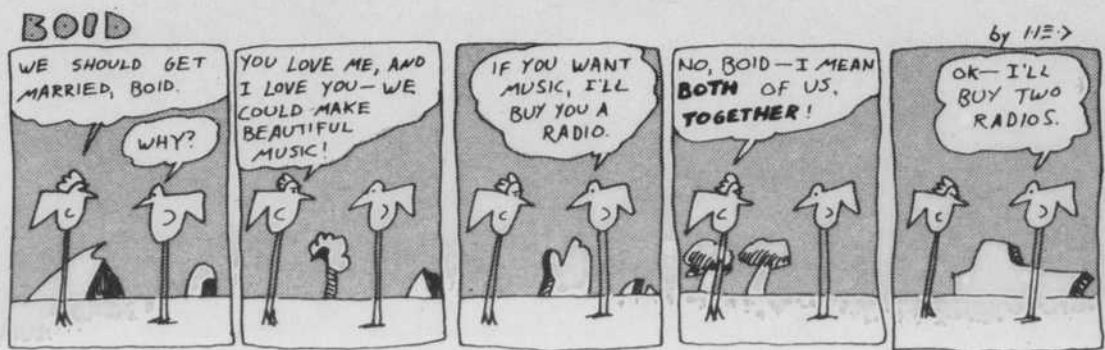
The fairy tales that we know are ancient orally-preserved stories, written down in recent centuries by collectors like the brothers Grimm. The "fairy tales" in this book were created in the nineteenth century. They may refer to familiar legends, or they may use some of the conventionalities of fairyland (like happenings in sets of threes or the guarding of one's true name) but that's neither enough to give them a place in our traditional literature, nor to endear them to the modern reader. Nor are the fantasy stories particularly inspirational, though

they contain dream-like transitions similar to Alice's stepping through the looking glass. Maggie Browne's "Wanted — A King" and Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" could be enjoyed by an older child today, but the sentiments expressed are sometimes too full of instructional period morality to be current.

The stories in this book would be of interest to a Victorian literature buff, while, conflictingly, Cott's preface would serve as a good introduction to the study of the Northern Germanic legend. Cott's lengthy though capsuled history of the folk tale runs from legendary evolution through literary history to psychological interpretation, but despite his many-chaptered essay, the stories that follow are barely mentioned. And Leslie Fiedler, in the first sentence of a "special introductory essay," categorizes fairy tales as "Victorian Pop," like Sherlock Holmes.

The original illustrations for the tales are reproduced with them, but Cott has also interspersed a charming yet irrelevant selection of Victorian illustrations and photographs. When I was eight, I wrote an illustrated book of fact and fiction — everything I thought everyone should know — and which included whatever I could think of at the time or had a picture of in my room. Unfortunately, Cott's book has duplicated the random feeling of my first major literary effort.

Becky Sue Epstein



MICHAEL WARD