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Peake

STUDIES

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Edited and published by
G. Peter Winnington, 2 ch. du Collège,
1453 Mauborget, Switzerland.
Tel. +41 24 436 22 32
E-mail peakestudies@gmail.com
Home page <http://peakestudies.com>

Editorial

THIS WILL BE THE LAST ISSUE of *Peake* STUDIES.

The reason for this is quite simple: the flow of articles offered for publication has dried up. Compared with twenty years ago, far fewer people are wanting to write about Peake, and without contributions the journal loses half its *raison d'être*. Its other purpose, to publish work by Peake, has been largely fulfilled. Although there are still many paintings and drawings in private hands (and therefore unknown to the rest of the world), the amount of unpublished poetry or prose by Peake is now, I believe, very small.

The only unprinted work of his that I am aware of is the short film-script, 'I had a Dream,' that Peake wrote for the Festival of Britain in 1951. So far as I know, it exists only on a single spool of film at the British Film Institute, and I have not been able to arrange to publish a transcription of it in *Peake Studies*. This is a shame, for Peake provided drawings that the camera played over while the actors Joan Maude and Michael Warre performed the monologue that he had written. What is more, he introduced a simple form of animation. In his first drawing of the dreamer, Susan, she has her eyes open. Then, when she begins to recount her dream, her eyes are seen to close. I believe that this technique inspired Peake's project for an animated film, *Just a Line*, which is illustrated on page 93 of *Writings and Drawings* and attributed to the early 1950s.

Although all Peake's known plays, complete or fragmentary, have been printed, mainly in periodicals, there is still no 'collected plays.' Methuen contracted to publish *Peake Plays I* more than six years ago (with the possibility of a volume II if the first was successful). I was appointed to edit it and duly supplied a book containing *The Cave*, *Noah's Ark*, and *The Wit to Woo*. The publisher dilly-dallied and missed the deadline of the 2011 centenary celebration; since then, they have been waiting for a 'suitable moment' to bring it out. The desire to publish Peake seems to have evaporated.

On the other hand, *Peake* STUDIES has printed quite a few letters by

Peake, and many more, starting with all those he wrote to Goatie Smith, remain unpublished. There is the possibility of a *Collected Letters*, in which previously unpublished letters, like those to Goatie, could be included. It all depends on permission from the Peake Estate.

Keeping *Peake Studies* going in the hope of more original work by Peake himself, or his admiring critics, is not an option, then – even as a newsletter: there’s desperately little Peake news to pass on. The late Sebastian Peake was very good at keeping his father’s name in the public eye, and he was generous in passing on details of persons to contact and material for me to print. So, as the journal closes, he is the first person I wish to thank for supporting it, closely followed by its faithful subscribers and keen contributors.

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On the following pages

Four colour illustrations to ‘Children’s Hour: four nursery rhymes’ from *Lilliput*, May 1950 (vol.26, No.5, issue 155, pp.37–40).

They have previously been reprinted, rather small, in *Mervyn Peake: the man and his art* (page 132).

The original drawings were sold at Sotheby’s on 24–25 January 1983.

These are reproduced from the magazine, so the colours may be a bit off compared with the originals.

The verses are also as printed in *Lilliput*, so they too may not be exactly as you remember them.

Mervyn Peake had already illustrated ‘How many miles to Babylon?’ ten years before, in *Ride a Cock-Horse*.

On that occasion, the boy was sitting up in bed, raising his candle to see a dark figure from Babylon, rising behind the bedhead.

Here he seems fascinated and at the same time slightly appalled by what he is seeing.