



really a sort of liquid cargo terminal, and then is “fired” back into circulation like a projectile fired from a gun. We then return to a series of flashbacks, and memories of his childhood. As he continues to look around with his high-power binoculars, he sees a shockingly bizarre sight in the pond, and has to struggle with what it might mean, until he meets the founder again. Is he stung by one of the glass bees? It seems unclear. Or is he just reacting to a memorable day in his personal history where he ate outdoors with his colleagues, and many of them were stung, but he was not?

After reading Bruce Sterling’s introduction, I was expecting more dialogue and action, and more of a science fiction story set in the present tense. Instead I got pages and pages of these digressions and memories. It is a very oddly told story. I don’t think it is a great book, but it is definitely somewhat haunting. Knowing so little about the history of Germany, I am sure I am missing a lot of subtext. Wikipedia says:

The novel follows two days in the life of Captain Richard, an unemployed ex-cavalryman who feels lost in a world that has become more technologically advanced and impersonal. Richard accepts a job interview at Zapparoni Works, a company that designs and manufactures robots including the eponymous glass bees. Richard’s first-person narrative blends depiction of his unusual job interview, autobiographical flashbacks from his childhood and his days as a soldier, and reflection on the themes of technology, war, historical change, and morality.

That’s all true, and this book’s blend of past and future reminded me a bit of the works of Stanislaw Lem and the Strugatsky Brothers. But overall, I did not find the story very compelling, and so I can’t give it a strong recommendation. The many digressions and ambiguities give critics lots to think about, and maybe under different circumstances I’d join them in reflecting more deeply on the book. Perhaps it was just not quite the right time for me to read it.

*Saginaw, Michigan*  
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