

The Editor,
Sir,

REVIEW OF "THE FIAT BOOK"

I have read not without amusement the letter in the December *Notornis* in which F. N. Hayes takes me to task for my comments on *The Fiat Book of Common Birds* Vol. 2. At no point does he dispute or challenge the veracity of my statements on the status of certain birds in New Zealand. Since when has a reviewer been expected to say that everything in the garden is lovely when manifestly it is not?

Of course, I rejoice that in the words of my critic I am "simply not with it." What sensitive or civilised person would wish to be so classified in the 1970s; which, even if they do have some compensating merits, have been described as sick, silly and sadistic? Is not a certain air of detachment preferable?

So my Latin tag is outmoded, is it? May I remind F.N.H. that Latin and Greek remain the basis of nomenclature in the natural sciences. Did not Dr Johnson remark "Classical Quotation is the parole of literary men all over the world"? Is not F.N.H. aligning himself with the illiterate allies of the neo-barbarism?

I am aware that there are those who think a pun the lowest form of wit. Yet my bilingual effort seems to have been appreciated by those who had the wit to understand it. The Swan of Avon was not above using puns. Maybe I am just one of his groundlings who enjoy them.

Finally, Mr Editor, I am surprised that F.N.H. was allowed to describe *Notornis* as semi-scientific. Surely if its contributors are genuinely seeking the truth about birds or are offering reasonable hypotheses such as are tenable till disproved, *Notornis* is scientific. If it is not concerned with the truth about birds, is it scientific at all? In any case, can any real meaning be attached to the word 'semi-scientific'?

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[Other correspondents have written privately to the Editor about this matter; he thanks them all for their interest and advice. This correspondence is now closed, the point having been made.—Ed.]



EMU FOR DISPOSAL

A member wishes to sell the following parts of *The Emu*: vols 41 (1941) - 74 (1974) in as new condition. What offers? Replies to H. T. Wenham, Plant Pathology Department, Massey University, Palmerston North.