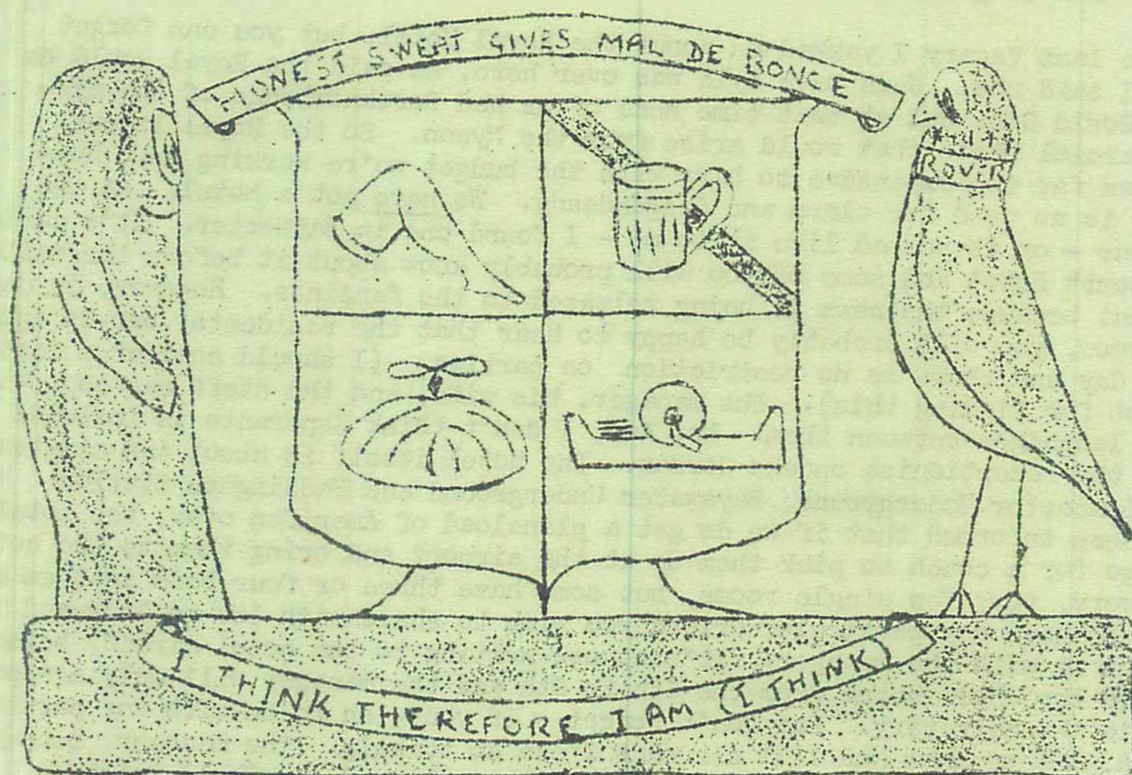


# Vagary



## No. 3

VAGARY NO. 3. Published for the 11th OMPA Mailing, Spring, 1957, by Roberta Wild,  
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### C O N T E N T S

|                                     |                                    |    |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----|
| THE WEREWOLF OF THE WAAF WARD. .... | Page                               | 3  |
| MYTHOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY.....      | Page                               | 7  |
| TRASHERY OF VERSE DEPARTMENT.....   | Page                               | 9  |
| TOUGH WOOD.....                     | Page                               | 12 |
| REVIEWS.....                        | All over the place, most probably. |    |

### THIS AND THAT

Before I start, in case the stencils go cockeyed on me again, I apologise in advance. Now to get down to it!

In the last Vagary I yakked on about the Royal Hotel, but you can forget everything I said now. When Dave Kyle was over here, he said the Royal would be okay for a World Con, but at that time none of us had foreknowledge of the disastrous financial state that would arise from the Nycon. So the Royal is out. It's hall was far too expensive to hire with the budget we're working on. However, there is no need for alarm and despondency. We have got a hotel. At the eleventh hour - or it seemed like it to me - I found one in Bayswater. It's called the Kings Court Hotel and some of you will probably know about it before the mailing comes out because the news is being released to the fanzines. However, in case you don't know, you will probably be happy to hear that the residents' bar is open 24 hours a day and there is no restriction on parties. (I should collect a Scotch from you lot for finding this). The manager, his wife, and the staff can cope with about nine languages between them. No, Ron, I don't think Esperanto is included and, Anne, the receptionist speaks German. The hotel itself is about ten minutes walk from Lancaster Underground, Bayswater Underground and Paddington Station. We have also been informed that if we do get a planeload of Amerifen over, the hotel will arrange for a coach to pick them up at the airport and bring them to the hotel. There are very, very few single rooms, but some have three or four beds in them so if any of you have any particular friend you wish to share with let me know and I will arrange it with the manager. It's no use writing to the hotel direct, because we've booked the whole hotel from the 6th to 9th and the manager will only accept bookings via the Secretary. But don't forget - if you wish to be with any particular friend, let me know and I'll see what I can do to help. The manager, because he has been so helpful, has been made an honorary member of the World Science Fiction Society and if anyone is low enough to think this is a cunning ploy on my part, he's dead right. After all, if he should change his mind about parties (a highly unlikely thing) as a member, he'll have to throw himself out, too. And don't forget - if any of you have bright ideas for the programme, let Dave Newman, Norman Shorrocks, or John Roles know so they can fit the item in. And forget about Archie's bashed bonces. We and the Programme Committee, when we get to the Con, are going to crack a few bottles - and not over each other's head either.

.. Yes, thank you, my fractured thumb is improving day by day.



THE WEREWOLF OF THE W.A.A.F. WARD.

Hospitals aren't always places of worry and crises - any doctor or nurse can tell you of incidents that although alarming at the time are amusing in retrospect. Like the werewolf, for instance.

ago,

It happened several years/ but I can still remember that night clearly. I had been admitted to R.A.F. Hospital, Ely for a minor operation and the first thing the night sister said when she came on duty was, "Oh, God! Not you again!" This was rather unfair, I thought. After all, it wasn't my fault if I'd been carted in once before to have a hernia (obtained when I wanted to turn a corner and my motor bike didn't) sorted out. At that time, this particular sister had been on day duty. M'm, perhaps she did have reason for alarm on seeing me again, though.

"If you're in here for another operation," she said severely, "no larking about this time. Don't let the day sister have to hunt for you all over the place when she comes to give you your pre-op jab." (When I had been in before, I'd got tired of staying in bed while waiting to go to the theatre and the sister had had to track me down to the solarium, where she found me playing solo whist with three up-patients) "Furthermore", she continued, "don't ask to get up the moment you come out of the anaesthetic."

She went on her rounds and I noticed the red-haired Irish girl in the next bed eying me with awe.

"Why aren't you afraid?" she demanded.

"Because there's nothing to be afraid of," I said reasonably. "They perform miracles in this hospital. Anyway, I'm only in for a minor op."

She was an odd child, this Ginger. No matter how the rest of us tried to persuade her that it was all to help her get well, she would not allow any of the specialists (not even the W.A.A.F. specialist) to examine her because it was against her principles. We never did discover exactly what the principles were. Even when I told her of the woman doctor who died of smallpox because vaccination was against the principles of the religious sect to which she belonged, Ginger refused to change her mind. She also had the maddening habit of keeping her mouth shut at the wrong time, thereby putting the fear of God into me.

It happend the following night. I'd come back from the theatre and had recovered sufficiently to demand some supper. At least, I thought I'd recovered, but pentathol has some peculiar effects at times. It seemed to creep up on me again about nine o'clock and my imagination - which it seemed to effect - started putting in some overtime. An orderly thrust a cup of tea at me, which may have been dish-water for a ll I knew, but it tasted like nectar to me.

The lights went out, but whispering among the patients went on for some time. In the middle of an animated ~~conversation~~ a strange sound intruded itself.

"Woof!"

PAGE 4

A sudden silence descended on everyone.

"Woof."

"There's a dog in the ward," said someone.

"There can't be!" exclaimed someone else.

"Woof."

"There you are!" said the first voice triumphantly.

A few girls sat up and peered round the ward, then gave their judicious opinion that there was no dog in the ward.

"Woof."

I tried to recollect if there was a balcony running round the ward, could not recall whether there was or not and twisted round in order to look out of the window and find out. A dog could easily have wandered on to the balcony.

A full moon sneered down at me.

"Woof." The sound seemed very close to my bed.

I leaned down and peered under my own bed and then under Ginger's. No dog. (No Chuck, either).

"Woof." Suddenly I realised where the sound was coming from and if I had had the gift of teleportation, I'd have teleported myself clean out of that hospital.

"It's Ginger!" I blurted.

"Woof," affirmed Ginger.

There was a paralysed silence. The girls who had first sat up to investigate abruptly disappeared under their bedclothes.

"Somebody do something," I said desperately.

The only answer was a lot of heavy breathing and a "Woof" from Ginger. Wild thoughts began to chase through my head, no doubt encouraged by that damned pentathol. The first thing I thought of was rabies, but realised that if Ginger had been bitten by a mad dog, she would have spent all day telling us about it. Ginger "woofed" again.

"Should we ask for a vet.?" I ventured, but the patients remained firmly asleep. Then a horrifying thought occurred to me.

It was the night of the full moon.



That did it, as far as I was concerned. Terrifying tales of werewolves rushed through my head and I peered furtively at Ginger. All I could see was a tuft or two of hair sticking out from between the sheets and I wondered if Ginger had changed shape beneath the bedclothes. I felt ill at the thought. After all, the only sort of wolf I was interested in was a wolf all the time and the thought of being attacked by a different type of wolf put me into a panic. Operation or no operation, if none of the up-patients would get help, I would get it myself.

"Woof!" remarked Ginger as I slid out of bed.

I staggered down the ward and pushed open the swing doors.

"Orderly!" I bawled.

"Yes, love?" The orderly wandered out of the kitchen, munching a sandwich. "Are you hungry?" she asked.

At that moment the Night Sister, attracted by my yell, peered out of her office.

"You! I might have guessed it! What are you up to?" she demanded. Then: "Good Heavens! What are you doing out of bed? You had an op this morning."

Without more ado, Sister and the orderly grabbed me and hustled me back to bed, not without protest on my part.

"And don't let me catch you out of bed again," said Sister. "You're not too old to be smacked, you know."

I gave her what was probably a very evil glance and pointed to Ginger.

"That Waaf's barking like a dog."

"Nonsense!" said Sister briskly. "You've been dreaming."

"Woof," said Ginger promptly.

The orderly and Sister gazed blankly at Ginger. Finally, Sister said in a tone of surprise:

"What does the child think she is? A werewolf?"

To have my theory confirmed was too much for me. Next moment Sister and the orderly were dragging me away from the window and once more shoving me into bed. While the orderly hung on to me, Sister approached Ginger furtively, then skipped back out of the range of any possible fangs.

"Ginger, wake up," she said. "You're barking."

Whereupon Ginger sat up and said with great dignity: "I am not barking. I have the hiccoughs - woof!"

Then why the hell didn't you say so?" I yelled.

I've often wondered what would have happened to Ginger if Sister hadn't held me down until the orderly returned with a cup of tea and a capsule that must have had a powerful kick, because it put me out almost immediately.

First barking Waafs, now barking budgies. I'm haunted.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

If anyone is wondering why the hell the budgie on the front cover is wearing a dog collar, my uncle's budgie barks. (See also RET 6). While on the subject of the cover my thanks to Atom for allowing me to borrow one of his Bams, although you have probably realised that the Atom touch is lacking.

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"You know, I never knew my husband drank until one night he came home sober."

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### REVIEWS

(Well, I said they would be all over the place)

Having rather carelessly collected a comminuted fracture of the right thumb through getting it trapped in the door of a railway carriage, I find that I have time to ponder on the mailing since I am unable at the moment to follow my occupation of shorthand typist. (It probably accounts for all the blasted typos, too - well, I've got to find an excuse for them haven't I?) The only snag is that I have to put the comments down in longhand, but I hope the thumb will be back to normal by the time the next mailing is due. (It will be thirty degrees out for good, but I can use it reasonably well now. You will have gathered that I wrote the reviews some time ago). But this is probably the first and last time that I have managed to ponder on the mailing the day I received it. Here goes.

BLUNT (Sanderson). I liked the explanation of the title, but (the damnable but) there were three zines in this mailing devoted to reviews only and we also have "The Lesser Flea" and "Launching Site". What's going to happen if all members decide just to put out reviewzines? We'll all end up wondering how the hell we can review reviews and find ourselves thinking of the second law of thermodynamics and the law of diminishing returns, because nobody will be writing articles and when there's nothing left except to review a review of a review - see what I mean? I'm not saying there shouldn't be any reviews - being human we all like our share of egoboo - but I would like to know a little more of the personality behind a zine, especially when I know that the reviewers can write excellent material. Having got that carp over I must admit that Sandy has made an excellent job of BLUNT. Re your comments on doing things, then stopping. I hope it won't apply to fanac but if you start something then stop, what will you do about sex? (And don't say have tea). The story of the tealeaves and the staper is in Vagary 2.

SCOTTISHE (Small Sister Lindsay). Dammit, Ethical, don't be so modest - there's nothing of the curate's egg in this zine except - h'm, that poem. Yes, I see wot I did. I'm sorry. Jazz and its offshoots doesn't really appeal to me, but I once remember seeing a cartoon called the "Boogie-Woogie Boy of Company D" which amused me immensely. That profound statement on the bottom of the last page but one carries a lot of truth in it.

Continued on Page 11



MYTHOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

After Archie's heart cry for books on mythology, I was going to send him a list, but as others may be interested, I'm putting here. This is a very brief list and some I've mentioned will probably only be found in a library or museum, and most of the books refer to others. Where they can be obtained in a pocket book edition I've put the name of the pocket book firm. AA

- |                                       |   |            |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------|
| The Bible.                            | Old Testament (parts of Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Daniel & Apocrypha)  |            |
| Rig-Veda                              | Sacred Book of the ancient Hindoos  |            |
| Popul Vuh                             | Sacred Book of Quiché Indians of Central America.   |            |
| The Eddas                             | The Icelandic Sagas   |            |
| Kalevala                              | Finnish Saga  |            |
| Mythology                             | Edith Hamilton  | Pan.       |
| Comparative Religion                  | A.C. Bouquet.   | Penguin    |
| Sacred Books of the World             |   |            |
| Myth or Legend?                       | G.E. Daniel et alii   | Bell       |
| Bulfinch's Mythology                  | Thomas Bulfinch      Modern Library, New York<br>(He leaves out the really naughty myths)   |            |
| Focus on the Unknown                  | Alfred Gordon Bennett.  | Rider      |
| An Introduction to Mythology.         | Lewis Spence  |            |
| The Chaldean Account of Genesis(1890) | George Smith  |            |
| The Golden Bough                      | Sir James Fraser. 13 vols. or one abbreviated book.   |            |
| Moons, Myths & Man                    | H.S. Bellamy  |            |
| The White Goddess                     | Robert Graves   |            |
| The Golden Fleece                     | Robert Graves   |            |
| Lands Beyond                          | L. Sprague de Camp & Willy Ley  | Rinehart   |
| The Greek Myths 2 Vols                | Robert Graves   | Penguin    |
| the Iliad                             | Homer (                  Nelson Classics and  | Penguin    |
| The Odyssey                           | Homer                  "                  "   | Penguin    |
| Men and Gods                          | Rex Warner  | Penguin    |
| Greeks and Trojans                    | Rex Warner  | Penguin    |
| Histories                             | Herodotus (you'll have to search for the myths)   | " from     |
| The Republic                          | Plato                  "                  "                  "                  "                  "  | " of Plato |
| Plays                                 | Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus (Each of their plays are based on famous myths, but beware of Euripides, he embroidered them himself. All available in Penguin books) |            |
| The Bull of Minos                     | Leonard Cottrell. Factual, but some myths quoted.   | Pan        |
| Women in Antiquity                    | Charles Seltman B.C."                  "                  "                  "  | Pan        |
| Works and Days                        | Hesiod. 9th cent./farmer poet. Try a library or museum  |            |
| The Twelve Olympians                  | Charles Seltman   | Pan        |
| The Twelve Olympians and Their Guests | Charles Seltman. Expanded hardcover edition of above.   |            |
| The Legend of Perseus 3 Vols. (1894)  | E.S. Hartland   |            |
| Handbook of Greek Mythology           | H.J. Rose   |            |
| Theogony                              | Hesiod  |            |
| Metaphysics                           | Aristotle   |            |
| Mythology                             | Fulgentius  |            |
| Fabula                                | Hyginas   |            |

|  |  |                         |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| On Lycrophon                             | Tzetzes                                    |                         |
| Theseus                                  | Plutarch                                   |                         |
| Homeric Gods                             | W.F. Otto                                  | Thames & Hudson         |
| Gods of the Greeks                       | C. Kerenji                                 | " "                     |
| Metamorphoses                            | Ovid                                       | " Penguin               |
| The Aeneid                               | Virgil (this book is downright propaganda) | "                       |
| Transformations                          | Antoninus Liberalis                        |                         |
| On the Nature of the Gods                | Cicero                                     |                         |
| Dialogues of the Gods                    | Lucian                                     |                         |
| Idylls                                   | Theocritus                                 |                         |
| Heroides                                 | Ovid                                       |                         |
| Parallel Stories                         | Plutarch                                   |                         |
| Incredible Stories                       | Palaephatus                                |                         |
| Natural History                          | Pliny                                      |                         |
| Gods of the North                        | Brian Branston                             | Thames & Hudson         |
| Myths of Babylonia & Assyria             | Donald A. MacKenzie                        | Gresham                 |
| Babylonian & Assyrian Religion           | SH. Hooke                                  | Hutchinsons             |
| Myths & Legends of Babylonia and Assyria | Lewis Spence                               |                         |
| Dwellers on the Nile                     | Sir E.A. Wallis-Budge (1891)               | Religious Tract Society |
| Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt       | Lewis Spence                               | Harraps                 |
| The Mabinogion                           | Trans. Gwyn & T. Jones. Welsh legends      | Everyman                |
| Histories                                | Geoffrey of Monmouth. 12th Century A.D.    |                         |
| Morte D'Arthur                           | Sir Thomas Malory 15th Century             | Everyman                |
| King Arthur & Joseph of Arimathea        | Dr. J.A. Robinson                          |                         |
| Arthur of Britain                        | E.K. Chambers                              |                         |
| George of Lydda, Patron Saint of England | Sir E.A. Wallis-Budge                      |                         |
| Popular Romances of the West of England  | Robert Hunt                                |                         |
| The Druids                               | T.D. Kendrick                              |                         |
| Curious Myths of the Middle Ages (1884)  | S. Baring-Gould                            |                         |
| Atlantis: The Antediluvian World. (1882) | Ignatius Donnelly.                         | Samson Low              |
| Atlantis: The Mystery Unravalled         | Jürgen Sparuth.                            | Citadel Press N.Y.      |
| The Story of Atlantis                    | W. Scott-Elliott (1909)                    |                         |
| The History of Atlantis                  | Lewis Spence                               |                         |
| Built Before the Flood                   | H.S. Bellamy                               |                         |
| The Atlantis Myth                        | H.S. Bellamy                               |                         |
| Secret Cities of Old South America       | Harold J. Wilkins                          |                         |
| Old Civilisations of the New World       | A. Hyatt-Verrill                           |                         |
| The Myths of Mexico and Peru             | Lewis Spence                               |                         |
| The Civilisation of Ancient Mexico       | Lewis Spence                               |                         |
| The Myths of the North American Indians  | Lewis Spence                               |                         |
| The Trickster                            | Paul Radin                                 | Routledge & Kegan Paul  |
| Myths & Legends of Maoriland             | A.W. Reed                                  | Reed, Wellington N.Z.   |
| Maori Religion & Mythology               | Elsdon Best                                |                         |
| Polynesian Mythology                     | Sir George Grey                            |                         |
| Legends of the Maori                     | James Cowan and Sir Maui Pomare            |                         |
| The Lore of Whare Wananga                | S. Percy Smith                             |                         |
| Myths & Legends of Polynesia             | Johannes C. Andersen                       |                         |
| Legends of the Maori                     | Colonel Porter                             |                         |
| Maori Legends                            | Kate Clark                                 |                         |
| Maori Lore of Lake, Alp & Fjiorð         | Herries Beattie                            |                         |
| Folk Tales of the Maori                  | A.A. Grace                                 |                         |



TRASHERY OF VERSE DEPARTMENT

Having lately read a number of books that extrapolated on perfectly frightful futures ("Limbo 90" depressed me for days) I have decided to climb aboard the same band wagon. If Tennyson had been a fan, could you have imagined him extrapolating on the awful years ahead and perhaps coming up with something like this:

THE PASSING OF JOPHAN

Once all day long the duper Drums revolved  
 Among the fen in many scattered lands.  
 Until Jophan's disciples, fan by fan,  
 Fell by the way into Gafian glades.  
 Jophan despaired, for he was wounded deep  
 And blamed his sorrows on the fakefan Seventh.  
 One small name fan remained and with some char -  
 I mean some tea and not a pop-eyed fish -  
 Revived the King of Fandom for awhile  
 And took him to Trufandom's golden tower.

Then spoke great Jophan to the small name fan:  
 "And now must come a bitter, bitter blow.  
 For with subscribers going off like milk  
 On summer days, I must hock my one and only love.  
 Oh, faithful one, go pawn my duplicator."

Then spoke the snf, ashake in every limb:  
 "No, lordly one, this thing I cannot do.  
 It is not meet for such a one as me  
 To pop out and pop in this great machine  
 And be accursed by fans for ever after  
 Because I hocked your soul for filthy lucre."

And off he went to wrestle with his conscience  
 And on a darkling shore met many fantoms  
 Of former fans who, with prognostications,  
 Had robbed themselves of dreams and so expired.  
 Round him they surged and once more prophesying,  
 Declared that the Enchanted Duplicator  
 Must precede Jophan to the fannish heaven.

So to the tower the snf returned  
 And sadly gathered up the great machine  
 To take it, as directed by the spectres,  
 And place it in a gleaming, golden rocket.  
 But tempted by desire for egoboo  
 He took the duper to his private rooms  
 Where he ran off a cruddy magazine,  
 Not thinking that, if Jophan was alone,  
 No manna-script of his could well survive  
 The Gafian chill that spread across the land.

At last he came to where the fannish lord  
Lay dreaming of his golden days of glory  
And to Jophan confessed his heinous crime.  
To which the Great One, nodding solemnly,  
Said: "Now my time is here. I, too, must go.  
Support my failing limbs and help me forth  
To where the spaceship waits to bear me off.  
But first you must deliver up the duper."

Once more the small name fan took the machine  
And this time placed it by the golden ship.  
And from the open airlock slithered out  
A tentacle, which hauled the duper up.

The snf then lifted up Jophan  
And staggered with him to the waiting ship.  
He placed him on a flatbed dangling down  
By cables from the spaceship's entry port.  
As it rose with cables sadly creaking,  
Then loudly cried the lonely snf:  
"Oh, my great Jophan, now what shall I do?  
For now I see the old true fans are gone  
And not one morn a fanzine's in the post.  
For now Jophandom is dissolved and I  
Am left to meet new faces and strange minds."

Then slowly answered Jophan from the ship:  
"The old fandom changes, yielding place to new  
And Ghu fulfils himself in many ways.  
If you should never see my face again  
It's your damned fault. For you were deluded  
By those shadows on the shore, as they were  
Projections of a Martian telepath,  
A Martian fan who lives aboard this ship,  
And my Enchanted Duplicator has been pinched  
So Mars' First Fandom may receive its touch -  
And I'm their guide. More things are taught by fans  
Than this world schemes of. Therefore, raise your voice  
Above them all at the Worldcon debate  
And vote for Mars in Nineteen Ninety Eight."

And if anyone is wondering why there are more beats in some of the lines  
than there should be, the damned stencil keeps rocking and rolling

---

"The ideal man is a gentlemen by day and a cad at night."

---



MORE REVIEWS

SATA N'S CHILD (Dorothy Ratigan) As I work in a Government Shipping Department I found the article on the Tranantarctic Expedition quite interesting, though I wasn't sorry when the "John Biscoe", "Magga Dan" and "Tottan" sailed as our Department was very much involved. To add to everythin, the first "John Biscoe" was originally called H.M.S. "Pretext", then a second "John Biscoe" was built so the first one received its original name of "Pretext" back. Then the New Zealand Government bought it and renamed it "Endcavour". So the "John Biscoe" you'll be reading about this year isn't the "John Biscoe" - "Pretext" - "Endcavour" you were reading about last year. Confusing, isn't it? A neatly laid out zine but, my goodness, what a lot of polysyllabic words!

LEER (Riddle) Bob Bloch's article on fanzines should henceforth be to fandom what the Gettysburg address is to America, and anyone who doesn't read, mark, learn inwardly digest his remarks should be drummed out of fandom. It seems to me that what with apartheid and banning science fiction the South African Government is emulating the head burying antics of its ostriches, which deceives no one except the ostrich. Being on the London Convention Committee, my blood ran cold on reading the comments at the end of the Con report. However, I believe everything has been sorted out.

NOISE LEVEL (John Punner) As I've said before, I like John's stories of the origins of folks songs. And it wouldn't surprise me if in a few hundred years Teddy Hart is to the Spaceways what Casey Jones is to the railways. Yes, I have read the current issue of Science Fantasy, but why plug it, John? Remember Alexander Pope and his published letters.

MORPH (Roles) The most delightful part of this is the rude, but entirely justified, criticism of Beverley Nicholls. His articles in a certain women's magazine give me the whim whams and one is left wondering how many people have been led up his garden path by his book on India. I have the "King in Yellow" and when I've finished the mailing I must take a look at it.

VERITAS (Atom & John Berry) Omigosh, that cover! Is it Archie trapped in the tuba? What on earth can one say about this marriage of trufan minds except let there be no impediment to any future issues.

ARCHIVE (Ah-chee) Helen and I usually disagree about everything, but not this time - not on the subject of dominant sub-whatsit, something about which I know nothing from nothing and when they shout about it in the Globe I could scream. Because they will shout instead of discussing it in normal tones. If someone wanted to extract information from me I can think of no greater torture than being forced to stand at a busy London traffic crossing with a couple of jazz fans screaming at the pitch of their lungs across me a bout dominant subwhatsits or bawling blues at me. After an hour of that I'd confess to anything - even to being engaged to a certain fan. So, Helen, the next time we hear that sort of discussion let's both get up on our nyloned hindlegs and scream "Shaddup!" The Roaring Jelly Q. and A supplement was a ribtickler, especially the cri de couer from Mr. H.K.B. But he does get the run of the kitchen when his harem is busy fanning - we have to eat. Though he does misunderstand us at times. Like when Daphne said "that dish goes in the oven" he tried to cram his wife in there and bake her. Even Pamela thought his excuse that she was good enough to eat a bit thin.



TOUCH WOOD

A couple of mailings back, Daphne suggested that I should write of mythology or primitive customs. Her comment called to my mind one or two customs and superstitions prevailing to this day. Maybe I took Daphne too literally though, because when I told her of a Zulu premarital rite and another rite that married Zulus performed on their wives before going off to war she turned rather pale. Come to think of it I feel pale, too. Let's talk of something else.

How many of us touch wood when we say or something and wish to avert any bad luck the remark or deed might bring? The number probably runs into millions and "touch wood" is thousands of years old. In ancient days, when men worshipped tree spirits or had groves of trees sacred to their gods, a runaway slave or harried traveller could seek sanctuary there. In the same way that a Christian sought sanctuary in a church, so the pagan slave sought it under a tree or in a sacred grove. The moment he touched the sacred wood he was safe, for to have harmed him would have brought down the wrath of the gods on his pursuers.

April Fool's Day is another survival of an ancient custom. In the far-off days of group marriages the Pelasgi, to name one race, regarded May as a month of chastity, so for a month before that they used to have a rare old time. Boys and men would dress up in women's clothing and girls and women dress in the men's clothing. April Fool's Day is a relic of that pagan foolery. This topsy turvy arrangement survived as part of the Roman Saturnalia, which the Romans celebrated for twelve days at the time of the winter solstice in memory of the Golden Age of the god Saturn. The gods of the old religions became the demons of the new, so the last day of the month of pagan merrymaking became the day when all the evil in the world stalks abroad. We call it Walpurgis Night.

To return to the Roman Saturnalia. I've mentioned that the sexes wore each other's clothing and there are echoes of that even to this day. It is at Christmas that we stage pantomimes and in these the part of the Principal Boy is nearly always taken by a girl while the part of the Dame is played by a man. It was at this time, too, that the Romans gave presents to each other in memory of that age when every man had what he wanted. From this arose our own custom of giving presents at Christmas. And echoes of the topsy turviness are still to be found in the Services when Officers and Senior N.C.O.s wait at table on the ranks. Until the Puritans took over, England celebrated twelve days of misrule. On Twelfth Night, however, down came the decorations and everyone prepared to get back to normal. A superstition has grown that it is unlucky to leave decorations up after Twelfth Night. My own theory is that the lords and masters probably found some of their servants recalcitrant on becoming slaves again and dealt severely with the



problem, with the result that the downtrodden eventually decided it was unlucky to celebrate longer than twelve days

The Early Church showed great cunning by converting Saturnalia into Christmas. (They pacified their converts by equating Christ - who was born in August - with the pagan New Year child. Artists who portray a New Year baby shouldering poor old Kronos (Saturn, Father Time) out of the way are closer to the truth than they realise. But even the Early Church did not dare to alter the great pagan festival of Spring too much and although it is the most important date in the Christian calendar, Easter is still a movable feast. That Easter egg of ours - it was a pagan symbol of fertility, so it was in great evidence at the Spring Festival. How about that hot cross bun you eat on Good Friday? The cross has been regarded with awe since before recorded history - not only in the Old World, but in the New. Once the cross was enclosed in a circle because it was the symbol of a land - lost in a frightful catastrophe - surrounded by a river (canal?) and fed by four great rivers that flowed north, east, south and west. It was a land where all good things were to be had in abundance and when when it was lost beneath the waves the survivors, degenerating into a semi-barbarous state, remembered it as a sort of Paradise. (No prizes for guessing the name of this lost land). In the very ancient days of Egypt, when the religion was monotheistic, on certain days the priests used to make round flat cakes and draw crosses on them in memory of that drowned Eden. Will you think of Atlantis the next time you eat a hot cross bun?

Are you superstitious about wearing green? There's no need to be now, you know. In olden days, the only way to obtain the colour green was by using a very poisonous dye. Not surprisingly, this often proved fatal so that people were extremely wary of clothing coloured green.

When a member of your family dies do you go into mourning? The custom of wearing black after a funeral is thousands of years old. The ancient Greeks cut their hair and wore black after a funeral to disguise themselves from the ghost of the person they had buried. And at the funeral they would pile the dead man with flowers so that he would have offerings for the gods of the underworld.

We are all familiar with the phrase "best foot forward". Those of you who have been in the forces know that a march always starts off with the left foot. This is an echo of ancient days when soldiers wore only one sandal. The left foot was unshod so that a man could gain a purchase on muddy ground.

It is said that saluting originated from the custom of a man extending his arm with palm outward to prove he came as a friend. The true origin dates back to the time of the armoured knights. When a couple of knights met they raised their visors either as a gesture of friendliness or to find out if they were facing friend or foe. And so the custom of saluting developed.

Thirteen is regarded as an unlucky number and two explanations are given for this. One is that there were thirteen men at the Last Supper. The thirteenth man betrayed Christ and then hanged himself. The other is that there are thirteen lunar months in a year and as pagans worshipped the moon, the Early Church Fathers disapproved so fiercely of this way of reckoning the calendar that its converts preferred to count twelve months instead, thus keeping



possession of life and limb.

To finish up, let us have a digression. One of our names for the devil is Satan. Set was the dark god of the Egyptians. Shaitan was the devil of the Arabs, Surtr the black fire demon of the Teutons, Satar the "one wrapped in darkness" of the Hebrews. All variations of the same name. The devil has been equated with a sulphurous dragon and was supreme in the bad old days of iron. The Hebrew name for iron ore was necho-shet, meaning dragon-dirt or serpent-filth. The Hebrew shatan means to make water. Shet is their word for buttocks. The name Satan means the Stinker. Which all goes to prove the astonishing antiquity of one of our more vulgar cusswords.

Apropos of nothing in particular, the number of the train on which I crushed my thumb was No. 13.

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#### MORE REVIEWS

ARCHIVE BETWEEN MEALS (Ah-chee) The cover of Vagary should have warned you that I was going to explode somewhere in the issue, Archie. As for telegrams - at one time my mother had the whole of her family in the forces and I got round the problem of sending telegrams without worrying her by sending a greetings telegram.

INSCREWTHBOEBLE. (Slater). I thought the editorial somewhat pessimistic and ended up wondering if I had joined Ompa only to be "in at the death". However, there were some pungent points raised. It wasn't until you mentioned it, Ken, that I realised I could give Archie some recommendations on mythology. Thanks for giving my conscience a prod - and a bibliography is in this issue. Incidentally, you wouldn't by any chance have a good second hand copy of the "White Goddess", would you?

SCHNERDLITES. (Lindsay) Two lovely take-offs and yet I felt somehow disappointed with this ish. Maybe because there were no inspired zany adverts. Ethel seems to spend her spare time in a very interesting way.

BURP. (Bennett) Another reviewzine. See comments on BLUNT.

POOKA (Don Ford) Loved the limericks scattered through. That mathematically calculated character of the next teen-age heart-throb scares me to death. I recently saw "Love Me Tender" and came to the conclusion that if Presley wasn't careful he'd do himself an injury. The Con reports were the best I've read yet and should be very useful to the London Convention Committee.

PHENOTYPE (Eney). All reviews.

STYX. (Mills) I'd rather see an unjustified right hand margin. Mostly reviews, but I have no recollection of saying "I'll tell you what I like, etc."

GALLERY (Chick/Chuck) An excellent editorial, but the Goon ran away with the honours. Christmas stories I don't really care for as the endings can usually be foreseen - there's really only one way a Christmas story can end.

SKERRY (Bourne) Don't care for surrealist poetry, but liked the one a long way after Lewis Carroll. That Western tale - a "faithful friend" with some sense. What in hell is a boo boo?