
Scratch Pad 10

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FAST BACKWARD

For eight months in a row, each time I switch on the computer, I cast a sorrowful gaze over the vast pile of fannish letters, reviews and articles, shake my head, and return to desk-topping whatever gigantic Macmillan manuscript is sitting beside my keyboard.

When at last I finish one of these gigantic jobs, I put my head up, realise that I have not (a) answered a letter for ten months, (b) published the issues of *TMR* and *SFC* that should have appeared exactly a year ago, (c) learned how to use most of the bits of software I've put on the computer during the last six months; and (d) I need to save my ANZAPA membership.

One difficulty: three weeks ago I discovered that I was more than a year and a half behind in reading my ANZAPA mailings. That's easily fixed, I thought. I'll read them all, but do mailing comments on only the most recent mailing.

Several weeks later, with the dreaded Alan Stewart at my heels, I find that I still have three mailings to read (most of them are b-i-g mailings). If I read them, I will not have the time to publish a magazine. If I don't read them, I won't know the end of everybody's stories.

I should say that reading vast numbers of ANZAPA contributions has been a great pleasure. This pleasure, I must admit, has been greatly exaggerated because reading the mailings immediately followed the partial ingestion of Damien Broderick's scholarly tome *Reading by Starlight*. I don't object to the book because it is scholarly, but because parts of it seem to be written in nothing that I recognise as the English language. It's the current language of academics, the group of people to whom Damien has addressed the book. They are welcome to their own language, and I'm sure Damien speaks it quite well, but it's not my language, and it's not that of any writer I consider to be worth reading. The only reason I read the book was because it is written by Damien. I wish he would read lots of Leanne Frahm fanzines, and write a funny book about fandom. (Yes, I know he tried that once.)

Much of the enjoyment of reading lots and lots of ANZAPA magazines is catching up with what people have been doing over the last year and a half. Some of these events are miserable — the story of **Womble** falling victim to blindness came as quite a shock to the system when I reached it

— and some are fascinating, such as **Cath Ortlieb**'s account of what it was like to watch the birth of **LynC**'s child. Some passions are incomprehensible, such as **Weller**'s extreme precautions when buying a car, but then, I've never bought a car. Some passions are highly comprehensible, such as **Noel Kerr**'s piece of nostalgia about Luna Park. (I've never been inside Luna Park, but after reading his article for the first time I have a good idea of why people feel strongly about it.)

I've been caught up in such a sweep of fannish history while reading these mailings that I don't feel like doing much in the way of mailing comments:

- I had hoped to strike up conversations with **Lucy Huntzinger** and **Gary Mason**, but they've already disappeared.
- **Janice Murray** has been here, dropped out, and has been invited to rejoin.
- **Margaret Arnott** has proved to be a particularly strong voice in the apa, after all those years away.
- **John Newman** has been here for quite a while, but I haven't 'spoken' to him yet.

ANZAPA is a shifting, amazing world, and I just wish the OBE could allow me a few weeks' grace for me to carry out all my plans. You'll just have to put up with what follows.

A great strength of the most recent mailings of ANZAPA has, of course, been **Perry Middlemiss**'s Best of ANZAPA. When he began the project I doubted whether he could continue it. I thought that moving house, bringing up baby, and drowning under his workload would obliterate the whole notion. But I underestimated Perry Middlemiss.

After the first few volumes I was pissed off because my contributions seemed to have been passed over. How could Perry have ignored *Supersonic Snail* 3, all 90 pages of it? It includes what I remember as one of my best articles. (Not that I've looked up the article to find out whether it is still readable.) As if to make up for lost time, Perry has recently reprinted two articles I'd completely forgotten I'd written. I don't know what to think about them now; one of them is definitely not one of my best.

I have no memory of many of the articles in the volumes that have appeared so far. That's because I put all my efforts

during the late 1970s into *SF Commentary* and trying to prop up my shaky career. Was I out of ANZAPA for much of that time, or did I fail to read the mailings? Probably the latter. When I fronted up to the first ANZAPA convention in 1978, the first thing I said to Leigh Edmonds was, 'You've lost a lot of weight. What's your secret?' His reply was 'Lettuce.' If I'd read Leigh's article about changing his eating habits, I would not have asked the question.

If I'd edited *The Best of ANZAPA*, I might have chosen a quite different set of articles. Perry's preference is for the fannish anecdote, but such anecdotes can get a bit wearying in quantity, no matter how well written. A great strength of ANZAPA has been its gathering of people with special interests that go beyond fandom or science fiction. Perhaps the volumes could have stood a few more of these expert-but-interesting articles.

Or maybe such articles were never as good as I remember them. Perry gets the big gold star for taking the trouble to read all those back mailings, let alone doing a fine job of layout and copy-editing. Thanks.

Over the last year and a half, the chief highlight has been the presence of **Leanne Frahm**. It is a lasting sorrow to me that in some obscure way Leanne does not seem to approve of me, or even like me much. My heart breaks whenever I think of this, but does not stop me enjoying *Spangled Drongo*. The funniest article in the mailings I've been reading has been the Prescient Convention Report (pre-Constantinople). I hope it is reprinted in some genzine sometime.

There are all sorts of bits and pieces that leapt off the page while reading the mailings. For instance, **Jean Weber** says somewhere that she found that using Word 6.0 made it unnecessary to keep using Ventura. Because I am just boning up on Corel Ventura (the latest version of Ventura), you give both Elaine and me a good reason to investigate Word 6.0, especially as Elaine might find herself desktopping maths books sometime in the future. The trouble is that all the desktop programs offer immensely more than one ever needs and leave out natty little features that I would love to have (such as automatic shadow box lines on frames, and outline headings, such as those offered by WordPerfect). I've investigated PageMaker, but not yet learned it.

In April last year, **Gerald Smith** asked about the origins of the William Atheling Award. The original intention was to give an award to the best piece of critical writing appearing anywhere in the world (on the basis that critical writing about sf was a specialty of Australian fans). It soon became apparent that, because of the rise of the academic journals and the enormous proliferation of critical writing that failed to reach Australia, we had little hope of surveying the world field. However, throughout the late 1970s and the early 1980s, there were enough strong articles appearing to justify the continuation of the Atheling as an award for Australian reviewers and critics. Now that nobody much seems to be interested in either non-media fanzines or in critical writing, it seems sensible to let the Atheling Award slip into the night.

Somebody else asked about the James Blish Award. This is a copycat award (Atheling was Blish's pseudonym) set up in Britain some years ago, but as far as I can remember, only one was ever given. According to whoever raised the point, the winner was George Turner.

Nobody seems to have taken up the discussion about Guaranteed Income, although I believe it is still being touted in some countries. The fundamental question is: what sort of society do we want to have? The Labor Government, like

the Liberals, has decided in favour of a deeply divided, conspicuous-riches-and-conspicuous-poverty society. I find this repellent and unnecessary, even within the extreme limits of the thinking of all current governments in Australia. If it is the case that industries can only be efficient if they sack people, surely it is more efficient for the whole economy to pay people to remain out of the workforce? In fact, they must do this, or otherwise there will be nobody employed who can afford the products turned out by all these highly efficient companies. This seems obvious to me, but nobody says it in public debate. You can only have a humming economy if most people feel prosperous and secure. If people don't feel prosperous, and if they don't have secure jobs, they don't spend on anything but essentials. On the other hand, I cannot see why any individual in Australia should be allowed to earn more than (let's draw a figure out of mid-air) \$100,000 a year. Lop off their financial heads, I say, and equalise incomes.

But what's the use of saying these things? Keating is rich, and is in love with the rich, and Howard is the archetypal arse-licker, and Kennett's head is filled with shit and hot air, and there is no hope for anybody anywhere. Like most people, I work like a lunatic because I feel like somebody hanging over a window ledge hoping nobody will step on my fingertips just this minute.

In the same mailing, you really ask the hard ones, **Jeanne**: 'RTC to Jan about you and Elaine deciding to get married: "It can't possibly make much difference." Then why do it?' The easy answer is because Elaine's father was arranging our house loan at his own bank, and it made his job easier if we said that we intended to get married. The less easy answer is: if we had realised how much 'being married' is different from 'living together' we might either have got married earlier, or put it off for some years. We expected marriage to be just a nice happy family occasion, but otherwise nothing to get excited about. Instead we found that it did signal a satisfying sea change in our lives, although I couldn't adequately describe what that change was.

You're another ANZAPAn, Jeanne, who made nice remarks about my bit of fannish nostalgia about Adventon I. It would take yet another History of My Life to tell you why I dreaded going away to Camp Waterman, which was the Churches of Christ's youth camp in the Dandenong Ranges. I dreaded roughing it, and I dreaded most social activities with other kids. Most of all I dreaded (and still dread) any situation that threatens a good night's sleep. I had heard dreadful stories about how everybody stayed up giggling all night at youth camps. Never! At Adventon I, some people did set off into the bush for a midnight hike, and did cause a bit of a disturbance when they returned about four in the morning, but I did not miss out on my good night's sleep.

At the beginning of 1976, when I attended a similar convention at another youth camp in the Adelaide Hills, we were struck down by very hot weather and the presence of a very young James Styles, who one night was determined to keep everybody awake by yelling drunkenly. That was not a convention I remember with much affection, although it did introduce me to Marc Ortlieb, and it was the beginning of a very pleasant week staying with Paul Anderson and his parents and wandering around good old Adelaide town.

As I think more and more about the mailings I've just read, I keep thinking of more and more highlights. For instance, **Sally Yeoland** has not only kept up the high standards of her own contributions, but also resurrected more of the best of **John Bangsund**. For years, John has alluded to the time when

he visited A. D. Hope, assuming that I had read some piece that told of this amazing experience. But I've never read the piece that you revive, Sally, in the October 1994 mailing (*Le Chat Parti* No. 11) for the very good reason that *Australian Book Review* did not publish it. There might have been a fanzine version of this article, but if so, it's escaped from my memory.

'Meeting a Maker' is one of John's best articles, but it illustrates a disturbing element in John's writing: that he appears to put little halos over some people's heads and not over the heads of others. It's my essential belief that nobody is better than anybody else; that, as John's friend said, a man is 'only a man' (or 'a woman is only a woman' or 'a poet is only a poet, either skilful or not'). A person might be a better poet than somebody else, or a better writer, that doesn't make him or her a better person. As we all know from the experience of mixing in sf circles, often brilliant writers are inadequate people. In the end, either Hope wanted to meet you or not, and either you got along well together or not. But to not ring somebody because of who he or she is, or to plague somebody for the same reason (as must happen to some poets), seems the wrong response. In the end, a big name is just that, a name you recognise, and tells nothing about the person behind the name.

But, for all that, I envy John for managing to get at least one conversation with Arthur Burns. I would liked to have talked to Burns (before he died) about Linebarger/Smith. Unless Burns has written a major article about Linebarger, there is probably little surviving material upon which to base an adequate Cordwainer Smith biography.

ANZAPA has many writers whose fanzines give pleasure. For instance, **David Grigg** talks about my favourite subject: music. What a wonderful paragraph is this:

'Once one has managed to squeeze inside the edifice of Classical Music, one finds that there are a lot of doors leading off from the entrance hall. Which way to go is up to you and your tastes, and of course to what you stumble across as you wander. It does take a while, though, as I am finding, to shake off the feeling that you are an intruder rather than a guest!'

REAL LIFE

For years I've used my fanzines as repositories of diary entries, but I'm stuck this time. Life has been on hold since I spoke to you last. As I've mentioned already, my life has consisted in getting up in the morning, switching on the computer, and moving onto the next section of Macmillan work. Eventually I get sick of it, switch off the computer, do my exercises, read a book, sometimes watch a video or film on tv, then go to bed.

I notice slow movements of events, however. My chiropractor at the Carlton Health Group suggested that the therapeutic masseur at the same place could help me better than he could. The masseur decided that I was a hopeless case, but as a crusade he would attempt to bring my muscles back into existence. It was an odd experience, suddenly feeling that the top half of my body had gained a spring and a strength that it had never had before. I've tried to keep up the exercises he gave me, and for a long time I did feel much better. Indeed, the combined ministrations of the chiropractor and the masseur are the only things that have enabled me to keep working.

But it seems I am not made the for the glorious world of

For me, your metaphor rings true for jazz. I've never managed to get further than the front door mat in jazz. Well, maybe just a few inches inside the entrance hall.

For classical music, I feel like somebody who is reasonably comfortable within the Edifice for Listeners, knowing full well that one of those doors leads to a much larger Edifice for Performers. I am shut out of that. I've found my way round the edifice by listening, and noting down, and comparing performances — in your metaphor, by slipping inside various doors and staying there until some of the sounds begin to make sense. To judge from your article, you've learned by doing much the same.

Congratulations, David, for attempting to perform some vocal and instrumental music. I don't feel any confidence that I could do the same. My parents did not have the money to buy us any type of music instrument, but during one holiday which we spent at the house of a colleague of my father's, my sister began to pick out tunes on the piano without ever having touched one before. With only a year's piano lessons when she was about sixteen, she began picking up enough musical experience to complete the music major at teachers' college, and teach music in primary schools ever since. That's natural talent.

Your film list in the same issue, David. Sorry about some of the films that I left out of my Top 50. *Gregory's Girl* was my favourite film of the 1980s, yet it still just failed to make my list. How could I squeeze out *The Conversation*? I don't know. It belongs on that list, along with about fifty other films. I've never seen *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Cyrano* or *Parent-hood*, and for some reason took a great dislike to *A Fish Called Wanda*.

Here endeth my pitifully inadequate catch-up hold-all. If I've left out your name, it's not because I value your contribution less than those of the people I've mentioned. They're there because sometime during the last few weeks I stuck a little yellow sticker beside their names in my mind. For the people who keep up their mailing comments, I have nothing but admiration, but I'm not sure whether I'll ever get back to following your example.

fitness. As part of feeling good, I began to walk more. Late last year, one of my feet began to ache and would not stop. X-rays showed that I had two spurs inside my foot (no, I don't know exactly what 'spurs' are). I've hardly walked since, and for a long time was reduced to a near-hobble. Now the podiatrist at the same clinic has prescribed orthotics. We'll see if these very expensive little bits of plastic have any effect. I really enjoy my walks, especially as walking was one method of keeping down my weight. I've put back about 5 kg of the 15 kg that I lost early in 1994.

I've been worried about my exact status at Macmillan. This came to a head in November, when the 300 dpi laser printer began packing up, and I fell into the hands of a designer. Editors for Macmillan usually do their own page design, but for one book in particular the resident designer did what I consider an unbelievably fussy page layout. We had to buy a new 600 dpi printer. Worse, he wanted me to use fonts that were not available on the Postscript printer. I said that I had never been able to persuade Ventura to print non-Postscript fonts. Sergio put the latest Adobe Type Manager on the system and, lo! suddenly I had access to all

sorts of downloadable fonts. Of course, they take forever to download, but I still, he achieved quite something.

Getting involved in fonts led to me investigating other bits of software for the first time. It's one thing, however, to load software, and it's another to have any idea how to use it. I don't have that magical quality of being 'computer literate' that David Grigg discusses somewhere. When I experiment with something, it goes bung, and I fling my arms in the air, scream a bit, and withdraw from Windows. When I get time I will carefully follow the manuals, trying to do wondrous things on my computer.

For instance, and I hate to admit this, but I cannot persuade many bits of software to load into Ventura. I know it has something to do with playing with Objects, but try as I might, I cannot understand the principles of Objects. My computer often reduces me to babbling schtoopidity.

To some pleasant topics.

We own/are now owned by a kitten. One day the bloke at the car repair garage around the corner called in. 'Could you do something about some dumped kittens?' says he. Why us? The four kittens had been dumped at the back of the vacant block on the other side of his garage. It's only chance that anybody noticed them before they died. Elaine knew that she could not simply bring them into the house. Sophie, our large black cat, would kill them. She had tried to kill a stray cat once before, and we could not take chances. Elaine boarded the kittens at the vet's for several weeks while she found homes for them. Alan and Judy Wilson took two and LynC and Clive took another (thanks very much).

We couldn't see how we could keep the fourth kitten without endangering its life, but intrepid Elaine decided to have a go. She hired a large cage and placed it in the kitchen. She equipped it so that the kitten would be happy to stay there most of the time. She brought kitten home from the vet's, and placed it in the cage. The four big cats ambled in. Much sniffing and spitting, except from Oscar, who fell in love with it from the start. (Probably that's why Theodore hates the kitten so much.) TC treated the kitten as just part

of the furniture: don't bug me, kid, and I won't bug you.

But how would the kitten get on with Sophie? She wasn't afraid of any of the older cats, which helped. She'd bowl up to them and bat their noses, then back away as fast as possible. We gave kitten her first toy, a ball of rolled-up newspaper. She picked it up and presented it to Sophie. Sophie picked it up and ripped it to shreds. They've been friends ever since.

Kitten seemed to have physiological problems. One eye would not close, and one ear won't move. We found out that kitten could shut the inner lid of the eye, so it doesn't worry her. We suspect she has little or no sight in it, so we called her Polly, short for Polyphemus. We suspect that her hearing is not the best, either, or at least does not give her much of a sense of direction. We're worried about her going out onto the road, since she cannot tell the direction from which the traffic is approaching.

Polly is cute. She's charmed all the cats except Theodore, who is bone-headed, and she has an absolute belief in her own wonderfulness. Since we agree with her, everything's working out so far. Cross fingers.

Little else to report except that I've bought the usual swag of CDs since I wrote the last **brg**, but I don't have energy or room here to review them. My favourites are mainly CD pressings of performances that I had had only on vinyl, such as Barbirolli's version of Mahler's Symphony No. 6, Karajan's 1963 version of Brahms's Symphony No. 1 and Walton's version of his own first symphony. Plus vast amounts of rock, pop, blues, folk, folk blues, country, country rock, and even a bit of jazz (not much really, but I did buy a four-CD set of the early recordings of Louis Armstrong). Best record of the year is one that, improbably, Julian Warner put me onto: The Dirty Three. This has to be the best Australian rock/grunge record for quite some time: electric violin, electric guitar, drums and nothing else.

Books read? I'll see whether I have room for that list after the following article.

BOOKS OF REVELATION

This article was not written first for ANZAPA, but in desperate times I need to fill six pages somehow. It was written for a small British apa whose members have joined to talk about books (rather than, say, convention organising, or Real Life, or television series). Trying to introduce myself to people who mainly have not read my fanzines, I wrote the following about books and me. A shorter version will appear in the next issue of *Tirra Lirra*.

The most exciting event in my life occurred some time during 1953, when I was six years old. Because the shop was advertised on radio station 3DB's children's session, my mother took me to visit Tim the Toyman, Melbourne. This was a vast toyshop that ran the length of Regent Place. Both the lane and the shop have long since been destroyed to make way for Melbourne's City Square.

The premises of Tim the Toyman had been built by knocking doorways in the side walls of a long line of shops, thus allowing the dazzled child to wander from one room of toys to another. That's if he or she is interested in toys, which I wasn't at that age.

Already bored by the sight of the parade of toys, I wandered through one further door, and found paradise. The

final shop was a children's bookshop, called Peter Piper Books. My astonished gaze discovered a room whose entire walls were lined with books by my favourite authors, especially those of Enid Blyton. I pulled books from their places. I leafed through them. I marvelled that so many books existed. I wanted them all. My mother said that I could pick one of them. That would be my next Christmas present.

Not even our first visit to the Claremont Library, in the Melbourne suburb of Malvern, stays in my mind with that same ecstatic clarity. The Claremont Library was one of the last of the old-fashioned private lending libraries that littered the suburbs until the arrival of television in 1956. My Auntie Betty, who borrowed books from the Claremont Library, told my mother about it. When we (my mother, two sisters and I) visited, we found an old-fashioned, musty room filled with books that looked the worse for wear. We launched ourselves at the children's bookshelves, and found huge numbers of Enid Blyton books. Another paradise.

From our point of view, the Claremont Library's greatest asset was its proprietor. The little old lady who sat behind the counter was indulgent to book-addicted children. She let us borrow up to ten books at a time, and never charged late fees, although we were always late returning books. My mother wondered how the little old lady made a living.

How did I become a book addict?

I was afflicted with this condition before I could read. I must thank my parents, although I'm sure they never meant me to be a book maniac. My parents read to me and my sisters from when we were very young. I became an addict of good stories before I realised they sprang out of books.

My father bought shellac 78 rpm children's records that were stored in huge leather-bound albums. Each side of a record played for about four minutes. Excerpts from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* were highlights of the collection.

The essential quality of a good story was that it described events that could not happen to oneself. They belonged to The Other, that exciting world that was the opposite of one's own dreary existence. In one world I existed; in the other world, my imagination existed. I wanted always to escape from the small, cramped, ineffectual world into that spacious world in which anything was possible. Until I was well into my twenties, those two worlds rarely met. In the mundane world, I was no good at anything much; in the imaginary world, people of rare resourcefulness went on grand adventures, and I went with them.

At the same time that I became addicted to stories, I grew to love books themselves. I ran my fingers over glossy papers and avoided books printed on pulpy paper. I opened each book and rubbed my nose over the paper. Some of the world's most beautiful scents emerge from book paper. At an early age I recognised that idea of 'type face'. Although I could not describe the differences between them, I felt drawn towards books printed in some type faces rather than others. I found that some books were sturdy in the hand, and others cracked down the spine.

My parents had little money, but somehow they bought us a few picture books that quickly wore out and had to be sticky-taped back together. Before I learned to read, I would sit at the table and pretend to read out loud every word of any one of the 'Thomas the Tank Engine' books, reciting from memory what had been read to me many times.

This was merely a shadow of the reading experience I saw before me, but I was not able to teach myself to read before I went to school. During our first week of school, we received our copy of *John and Betty*. Letter by letter, we went through the alphabet. Okay. How do they go together in words? Okay, I see that. But what can 'ing' mean? There are no words in which you say 'nnn' and 'guh' together. That doesn't make sense.

A great revelation of my schooldays was being told how to pronounce 'ing'. My entire life had changed. English doesn't make obvious sense — instead it is a dazzling playground of contradictions. I felt as if I removed the top from a pickle bottle only to find it to be Pandora's box. Now all the stories in the world were available to me. Now I need not be bound within the endlessly boring world of Ordinary Existence. What a wonderful aspiration! What a futile hope!

I skipped through the set readers while many of the other kids were still staggering through *John and Betty*. Every new word I met went straight into the brain. I could spell everything. Where could I find more books?

As I've said, I discovered Peter Piper Books, whose treasures remained unavailable because of the high price of books, and the Claremont Library, which my sisters and I raided every month or so. There the greatest treasures there were books by Enid Blyton.

A few years ago I bought new paperback copies of some of the Blyton books I had enjoyed during childhood. Why had they worked so well? Enid Blyton wrote stories in which

not only the events in front of you are interesting, but they offered a promise that the events to follow would also be interesting. Who cares that the adult reader might think the style a bit flat? When I was a child reading these books in my head, I injected style into the prose; Enid Blyton gave me the events that I could never have imagined or experienced for myself.

When Enid Blyton wrote about secret islands, mountains with rivers running through them, voyages to the Shetlands, and insoluble mysteries, they seemed more real than anything I had encountered in real life. Blyton's characters seemed alive to me. When they spoke, they didn't speak to me in squiffy British tones (as Australian librarians of the 1960s claimed) but in down-to-earth Australian tones, because that's how they spoke in my head. By contrast, the characters in most of the other children's books I tried reading had no life in their voices.

My mother bought for me a weekly children's magazine called *Sunny Stories*. Printed in tiny type (no pandering to children's eyesight in those days), it featured advertisements for Cadbury's Bourneville Cocoa on the back and in the main published stories by Enid Blyton. When *Sunny Stories* folded in 1954, the same company began *Enid Blyton's Magazine*, which proclaimed on its banner 'The Only Magazine I Write'. Still in her prime, Blyton wrote an entire magazine per month, plus many books per year. Later pundits scorned this achievement, claiming that Blyton hired ghost writers. (This claim, which disgusted Blyton, was given a kind of sad credence only because the declining quality of her work during the late 1950s and 1960s. But that was after I had read all her best books two or three times.)

If I write much about the works of Enid Blyton, it's because the experience of reading them remains the model for what I seek in good fiction. A good book should be exotic: it should offer an experience beyond that of one's own circumstances and capabilities. A good book should be astonishing: at some point in a book one's jaw should drop and you should feel that you had just dropped three floors in a lift. At its best, a book, whatever its ostensible subject matter, offers you an entire world other than one's own. You enter it; it makes you its own; you make it your own; the book becomes the world you really would like to inhabit.

If this seems like a theory supporting escapism, so be it. Ordinary existence is boring, dull, stupid, drab and limited; the author offers the Other.

My parents did not share this theory of literature. They encouraged our love of books because books offered Moral Improvement; because they showed the best way to live one's ordinary life. Our bookshelves at home were filled with dull books based on a particularly puritanical version of the Christian religion; with books offering great gobs of information (I enjoyed the books that showed pictures of galaxies and trains); and with some books of fiction that were supposed to be Good For Us.

But I sought wonderful fabrications; and the source of wonderful fabrications is the mind of an Author. I realised this as early as 1953, and began writing stories. Many of the other kids, I felt sure, never quite realised that books had authors. For me authors, Enid Blyton chief among them, were the great magicians of the world. They were the people who turned dross into gold. I wanted to be one of them.

That I've never become a writer of fiction is the failure of my life. I don't find inside my own mind the magnificent riches that I find in other people's books. Fortunately I found eventually that I could dig out other people's riches, polish them, and put them on display; in other words,

become a reviewer and critic.

In 1973, after I had typed, duplicated, collated and stapled 250 copies of one of my magazines, the small son of a friend of mine walked into the room and said, 'Look, mummy, he's making a book!' The success of my life is that I have always been able to earn my living by making books: editing, typesetting, laying out, or even taking part in the production process.

While I was at primary school I read large sections of *Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopaedia*, and anything I could find about astronomy and atomic bombs. Without realising it, I had become addicted to science fiction in 1952 (a year before I learned to read) when I had heard G. K. Saunders' radio serial *The Moon Flower* on the ABC's Children's Session. I found few written examples of 'space fiction' while I was a primary school, but I did find in the children's section of the Claremont Library the 'Mars' books of Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Edgar Rice Burroughs is not much praised these days, because his books are labelled as 'sword and sorcery'. Indeed, on Burroughs' Mars, the warriors always reached for their swords instead of sitting down for a chat. The endless action was not what attracted me. Burroughs' acute visual sense gave me a Mars of dry ocean beds, canals, isolated cities under domes, princes and princesses and large green creatures. More importantly, the Mars books (compared to the same author's Tarzan books) were littered with science-fictionary ideas, including invisible rays, creatures whose heads could leave their host bodies and trot around on little legs, and, most memorably, the vast wall of living, growing flesh in *Synthetic Men of Mars*.

I no longer merely sought the exotic. Now I wanted ideas as well.

I was the kid who carried a book around in his pocket. Whenever I could find some spare time during lunchtime or playtime, I would drag out a book to read a few more pages. I was quite incompetent at all forms of sport and games. Worse, I kept coming top or equal top of the class.

I've heard of children who loved books who managed to keep their addiction secret. I've heard of unpopular children who protected themselves with humour. I had no such defences. The more isolated I was seen to be, often bullied and ostracised, the more isolated I made myself. I knew no other kids who admitted to reading books for pleasure. Even my parents, who more anybody else were responsible for my love of books, always wanted me to 'play outside' when all I wanted to do was read. One part of the world was me and my books. The other part of the world was everybody else.

At the age of twelve, in 1959, I felt abruptly that I was no longer a child. I stopped buying and reading comics. I stopped reading Enid Blyton books. I had already read all of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars books three times. One day when our family was visiting the Claremont Library I stepped deliberately out of the children's section and decided to borrow a book from the adults' section. The first adult book I borrowed was from a book case marked Science Fiction. It was Jack Williamson's *The Humanoids*. It was so astonishing, so far beyond any experience I had found in books until then, that I decided to track down as many science fiction books as I could find. Too bad that thirty-six years later I realise that *The Humanoids* was one half right-wing crap (Williamson's far-future world is hell because well-meaning robots will not allow people to harm themselves) and the

other half scientific hooley (the rebels are people with psionic powers). Whatever I remember with great pleasure was Williamson's fevered, even hysterical pleasure in dumping me the reader into the middle of his far-future world and keeping me there from the first loony page to the last.

Books, isolation, pleasure, and sickness make up a consistent pattern during my teens. When I began secondary school, I found that sport took up an even greater part of the curriculum than it had at primary school, and that I was even worse, relative to every other kid, at all sports than I had been then. Illnesses kept me out of sport for my first three years at secondary school.

During Form 1 (now Year 7) I developed papillomas on my feet: nasty warty growths that would not go away. The local doctor sent me a specialist in St Kilda Road. To reach the specialist I had to take the train from Oakleigh to Flinders Street Station (the centre of the Melbourne suburban network), then catch a tram down St Kilda Road to the specialist's office. What better day of the week to make such a visit than sports day? I would take the whole afternoon off. But I had never been to the city by myself before. My parents sat me down in front of a map of Melbourne, showed me where the streets are, and said: you're on your own.

The specialist's appointment took no more than half an hour on each afternoon. Back in town, with my feet bandaged, I began to explore the streets near Flinders Street Station. In this way, I discovered the bookshops of Melbourne many years before I might otherwise have done. Cheshire's (long gone), McGill's (now in a different location), Angus & Robertson (now a mere shadow of its former self) and the various Collins Book Depots offered me the same Elixir of Book that I had discovered years earlier at Peter Piper Books.

Many of the bookshops included the overseas science fiction magazines in their racks. What to buy with my small weekly supply of pocket money? Paperback books were 5/6 each, but the British *New Worlds* and *Science Fiction Adventures*, each edited by E. J. Carnell, were 2/6 each. The first issue of *New Worlds* I bought included the last episode of *Time Out of Joint* by Philip K. Dick. Philip Dick has since then been my favourite science fiction author.

In Form 2 (Year 8) I was affected by another medical condition that allowed me to skip sports days in order to visit yet another specialist in St Kilda Road. It was Sherman's disease, the back condition that I still suffer from. For nearly two years I wore a brace on my back. I spent more happy afternoons scouring the bookshops of Melbourne. I yielded to temptation and bought *Galaxy*, which cost 5 shillings. Such extravagance was well rewarded. *Galaxy* was the first science fiction magazine to be printed offset. Fred Pohl, just taking over from H. L. Gold as editor, used the process to feature magnificent page-wide half-tone graphics, a great stylistic improvement on the crude black-and-white illustrations of many earlier science fiction magazines. In that first issue that I bought, a page-wide illustration showed fronds of limbs joined together, with faces and other limbs emerging from the fronds. It was Virgil Finlay's art for Cordwainer Smith's 'A Planet Named Shayol'. From then on, I was a fan of the stories of Cordwainer Smith and the art of Virgil Finlay.

My reading life floundered for some years, mainly because I rejected the notion of reading the Classics (that is, teacher-approved books), but thanks to a Fourth Form assignment, I discovered a yen for critical reviewing. Not that I had ever heard of such a term. I loved writing, but I wrote little fiction. I could write opinionated essays for English, but

had not yet discovered my subject matter. Our English teacher suggested that we write a long book report on any novel that had not been set as a compulsory text. I chose Neville Shute's *A Town Like Alice* because it had a reputation at our household of being an 'Australian classic' although Shute was not Australian and wrote only a few books set in Australia. As I found out quickly enough, it is not a classic. Shute's reputation is based more on the movies made from his books than on the books themselves. After writing several thousand words about this awful book, I realised that I had nothing good to say about it, but I did not have the words to say exactly what I disliked about it. This was frustrating, and I don't think I received a high mark for the assignment. But the practice of writing the assignment showed me that somehow I would find the right way to say about books what should be said about them.

In 1963 I discovered that books could be as useful for stimulating thinking as for providing entertainment and information. Until then thinking had been a painful exercise useful only for passing exams. In 1963 I read *Atlas Shrugged*, a super-technicolour widescreen baroque utopian science fiction novel by Ayn Rand.

We all know now that *Atlas Shrugged* is the arch-right-wing tome that has provided the blueprint for much that Newt Gingrich's mob are trying to do in the American Congress at the moment. Pundits put it beside *Mein Kampf* on the bookshelf.

But for a sixteen-year-old in 1963 *Atlas Shrugged* was a wonderful intellectual adventure, the story of heroic industrialists who were bucking the system (when all along I had thought rich industrialists were the system we were trying to buck) and trying to establish an ideal community. Rand's rhetoric is lavish, and her visual sense acute. For a thousand pages or so, the reader lives inside her paranoid vision.

I realise now that Rand, like Heinlein before her, succeeded by feeding the redneck prejudices of people who knew nothing about economics or politics. Rand's strength was in not caring a damn about her audience. She had no time for conventional religion. *Atlas Shrugged* was the book that weaned me off religion at one hit, although I continued to go to church with my family for some years. Rand had no time for conventional right-wing pieties. Her heroine, Dagny Taggart (I can still remember the name after thirty-five years) uses and discards one lover after another. 'Greed is good'; Ayn Rand said it first.

Not that I believed all of this stuff. The book was important because it alerted me for the first time that a person's political and economic beliefs were connected, and that they are important. This was first step in connecting my reading experiences and my real life. Within a year I had taken giant steps towards a viewpoint that is the exact opposite of Rand's, but that didn't matter. That one book had kick-started my nave mind into holding everything up for examination and re-evaluation.

At the end of my teens, I had still not entered the true world of books. I can only thank the people who set the courses for Matriculation Literature (1964) and three years of English at Melbourne University (1965-68) for doing that. By now I was commuting daily by train from Bacchus Marsh (a country town about fifty kilometres from Melbourne) to the university. This gave me a total of two hours' reading every day. I gulped down James's *Portrait of a Lady*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Forster's *A Passage to India*, all of Flaubert's major novels, Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, several Balzac novels, Borrow's *Lavengro* and Eliot's poems. And that was just in

First Year. I had entered Paradise.

Or had I? The road to paradise is narrow. I might well have read hundreds of books but failed to achieve my half-glimpsed aims.

In First Year, for the first assignment we were handed a duplicated collection of passages from poems. We had to read the passages, 'comparing and contrasting them'. I had no idea what to do. I read the bits of poetry. And re-read them. No ideas came to mind.

When the day came to hand in the assignments, I had written nothing. I turned up at the tutorial, to be met by a chain-smoking woman in her forties. Mrs Scoborio put us at our ease. She didn't seem too terrifying, but she had a clipped way of speaking that showed she knew what she was talking about. She was un-concerned that I had not yet written my assignment. She handed back the others' assignments. We looked at the passages. My mind was still blank. She took us through the first passage. She offered no comments of her own. She asked questions. 'What is the author doing in this part of this sentence? What is he or she really saying? Why has the author used this rhythm or cadence in this particular place?' As she coaxed us into teasing apart each sentence, I began to see the point she was making. During school English, the teacher always showed us what a story or poem 'meant', and we used bits from the piece as evidence to make general statements. Bit by bit, Mrs Scoborio showed us how to do the whole thing for ourselves: to read every bit of book, story, play or poem carefully, to listen the sound of each line or sentence, then make general statements based on the patterns we could find.

Of all the revelations described in this article, this is the most important: that no reader need depend on professor, tutor, theorist or dogmatist to find the value of any piece of creative work. All you need to do is read carefully enough, and the whole picture will be revealed to you. I'm not sure whether this was the viewpoint of Melbourne University's English Department as a whole, but it was Mrs Scoborio's, and it remains mine.

The English Department was described as 'Leavisite' in those days, but neither I nor any but serious Honours students read much of F. R. Leavis's work. He did believe that the reader, by examining passages of prose or poetry carefully enough, could 'prove' that one was 'better' than another, and as a result formulated the notorious Great Tradition of Leavis-Approved Novels. I don't think he would have liked my central discovery that criticism is essentially a do-it-yourself subject, and hence every reader formulates his or her own Great Tradition of favourite works.

I floundered through English, and did much better at History, and emerged in 1968 from Melbourne University having read many of the books that remain my favourites.

In 1968 I walked for the first time into a private living room that was lined with books. The living room was that of John Bangsund. From then on, I wanted to own at least as many books as I had seen on John Bangsund's shelves that day. Little did I know that, without really trying, one day my collection would fill a house.

By 1968 I owned enough books to cover a few shelves in a wardrobe. They included some cheap science fiction paperbacks, a few other paperbacks, and the novels, plays and books of poetry I had bought for my university courses. I had used libraries for many years, but now had no access to them. In 1969 I received my first real salary. When I travelled into Melbourne, I roamed the secondhand bookshops that I had discovered years earlier during my visits to

specialists. For my twenty-first birthday, my father built me a large bookcase that was meant to hold all the books I would ever own. This aim had failed totally by the end of 1971. Books were beginning to spill out all over my room. In 1973 I moved for the first time into my own flat. Bricks-and-board bookcases (an idea pinched from John Bangsund, who often moves house) enabled me for the first time in some years to put all my books on shelves.

When Elaine and I got together, we put together our book collections. When we moved into our house, we had built floor-to-ceiling bookshelves that covered four walls of the house. During the last 15 years we've had to add ceiling-high bookshelves on three more walls. We've run out of wall space, and books are now sitting in boxes.

Most people, when they enter the house, ask 'Have you read them all?' One gentleman, an academic, asked 'Where did you get that marvellous shelving?' Only one person has asked, sensibly, 'What is your favourite book of them all?'

Nobody ever dares ask: 'Why do you collect books?' The answer's easy: so that I can be surrounded by my friends. Barry Oakley, Australian novelist and commentator, speaks of having his books sit as friends on their shelves, speaking to each other above his head. At last I had my friends sitting beside me, and around me, and above me.

Books don't let you down. Even the worst book includes

something of value. If a book proves to be crummy, it never reaches the main shelves, or it is sold to a secondhand dealer. Books remain a sensuous delight to me: their dust jackets, their scent, the feel of good paper, the appearance of an attractive type face.

But are books worthwhile? I've spent most of my life out on a limb because I value books more than most other things in life, such as sport, car, holidays or having children.

Do I still think that books are valuable because they provide an escape from the mundane? Yes, sort of. The mundane, I feel more and more, is a weird plot hatched by evil and stupid people to prevent the rest of us enjoying one's life and mind. If you step inside your own mind or that of the author you're reading, people accuse you of stepping outside mundanity. The world of the mind is interesting; mundanity isn't.

Did I ever find a point when the worlds of life and books joined together? For years my favourite novels had described scenes of love, lust or passion. I didn't believe that such an alien experience could never happen to me. In 1972, at the unlikely age of twenty-five, I kissed a girl for the first time. I realised then that the events described in all those books could happen to me. Revelation! Paradise!

— Bruce Gillespie, 17 May 1995

Listomania

I cannot resist slipping in a list or three. I've been writing lists of my Favourite Novels since 1962, when I was in Form 4 (Year 10).

Top 15 Novels (not in rank order)

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland/Alice Through the Looking Glass

Lewis Carroll (listened to or read throughout my life)

Les Misérables

Victor Hugo (read in 1959 or 1960)

Wuthering Heights

Emily Brontë (read in 1960)

Madame Bovary

Gustave Flaubert (first read in 1964)

Portrait of a Lady

Henry James (first read in 1965)

Hothouse

Brian W. Aldiss (read in 1968)

Voss

Patrick White (read in 1970)

Nineteen Eighty Four

George Orwell (read in 1970)

The Man Without Qualities

Robert Musil (read in 1971)

The Recognitions

William Gaddis (read in 1971)

Auto da Fé

Elias Canetti (read in 1971)

Tamarisk Row

Gerald Murnane (first read in 1972)

The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney

Henry Handel Richardson (read in 1974)

Riders in the Chariot

Patrick White (read in 1983)

Toilers to the Sea

Victor Hugo (read in 1988)

There they are: two women (Emily Brontë and Henry Handel Richardson); three Australians (White, twice, Richardson and Murnane); two French writers (Hugo, twice, and Flaubert); two Americans (James and Gaddis); four British persons (Carroll, Aldiss, Brontë and Orwell); one Austrian (Musil), and one indescribable (Canetti, who lived most of his working life in Britain).

There are four novels that have had a greater emotional impact on me than any others, but only one makes my Best 15 list. They are Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, which I talked about in my article; Owen Webster's *So*, an Australian novel of no great literary merit but a Book That Changed My life; Ursula Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore*, which is unique; and Henry Handel Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney*, which had me bawling my eyes out for the last 300 pages. It's a great (*sob* *sob*) read. Highly (*bawl* *sniffle*) recommended.

The best novel I've read is Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, but the greatest ripping yarns on the list are *Les Misérables*, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* and *Hothouse* (one of only two sf novels I've ever picked as Best Novel of the Year).

The only other sf novels that rear up towards the Top 15 are Philip Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Martian Time-Slip* and *Ubik*, and Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris*.

My favourite fiction writer of the twentieth century (and my favourite living writer, although he must be well into his nineties) is Halldor Laxness, from Iceland. I like each of his books equally. My friend Gerald Murnane likes *World Light* the best. I picked it as Best Novel in the year in which I read it (1977), but haven't reread it.

TEARS, IDLE TEARS: The 1970 Ditmar Awards

[Marc Ortlieb has always wanted to know what really happened during the awarding of the 1970 Ditmars. Here, from my editorial for *SF Commentary* 11, May 1970, is a slightly abbreviated version of how I saw the event at the time, plus the only existing list of the Ditmar runner-up for that year.]

If a few of the results in the Ditmars were surprising to you Out There, you may imagine how surprising they were to those people who attended the presentations on Sunday night, 29 April 1970. You may, if you like, imagine how surprising they were to the Scrutineer and the Committee. Daggers were drawn (figuratively, of course . . . I was too busy enjoying *The Bride of Frankenstein* to care much anyway). John Bangsund has been sufficiently incensed to issue his own 'Scythrop Poll' which has rules strict enough to cut out two, and possibly three of the Ditmar winners. That leaves a pretty poor field to choose from. John begs me not to tell the world (all 150 readers of *SFC* how stupid Australian fans are).

But that is precisely the point I wish to make, even if I show how stupid I am myself. That shouldn't be too hard to do. **Fact 1.** 500+ Ditmar ballot forms were printed and distributed throughout Australia. Even if some people did receive two or three copies of the form, this publicity still meant that every fan who has ever put his nose through the front door of the Melbourne SF Club or the Sydney SF Foundation, received one of these forms. The closing date was listed as 5 pm on the first full day of the Convention.

Fact 2. By 5 pm on the first full day of the 9th Australian Science Fiction Convention, I had received 12 ballot forms. A 2.4 per cent return. Only two of these returns had all places in all categories filled out. Mine was one of them. Without looking too glum (I hope) I felt rather desperate. I had just never realised how little Australian sf fans read or cared about science fiction.

What worth have awards based on popular vote, given by 12 people? Little or none, I decided, so when I met Dr Dick Jenssen on the Saturday afternoon I suggested that he call off at least two awards, the Best International SF, and the Fanzine awards. At that time, the eventual winners of the other two categories were clearly in front and never looked like losing, but *The Left Hand of Darkness* had 13 points; two firsts and a second. 13 points from 120 Convention attendees! What a farce. I had received ballot forms from practically none of the people I would have expected to be eager to vote. Eventually I received forms from only two pros.

Fact 3. The ever-genial Dr Jenssen looked undismayed, which was good of him, considering that he had paid to have the Ditmar trophies made. 'No worries,' said he, or words to that effect. I went into town on the Saturday afternoon to see *Patton*, disgruntled with people's reactions to the Ditmar and the general listlessness of the Convention up to that point (except for John Foyster's performance on the Saturday morning). When I returned, I was handed a great sheaf of Ditmar forms. Voilà! Where I had failed to stir much interest in people, Dick had managed to get *some* people to vote on *something*. Never have I been so grateful to one person for one kind deed. (Dick had auctioneered all that afternoon, so he must have been quite busy.)

Fact 4. At about 12.30 on Sunday morning I added up the final scores, and found the results that you may read in this magazine. There was one odd thing that I noticed —

several ballots looked oddly similar, and most of them voted for a book I had never heard of. Was it possible . . . ? Who had . . . ? Something very odd had happened while I was elsewhere.

In short, certain people who must remain nameless took advantage of the fact that people didn't care much about the Ditmars. Some people voted exactly the way in which some other people told them to.

John Bangsund wants to know why I did not disallow these ballots. Firstly, because I had no proof that anything was amiss — all ballots were made out by paid-up members of the Convention. This was sufficient qualification for voting. Secondly, if people were as stupid as all that, they deserved what they got. Thirdly, by very devious methods the Convention voted for what were really the *best* selections in each category. In the Best Australian Sf and Best International Prozone section, the selections were grass roots popular votes. Fourthly, much as Italo Calvino and John Foyster may dislike to admit it, the points score in their sections was still not an overwhelming vote, when you consider that the possible maximum votes were 170 for each category. These items won by default — in the fanzine section in particular, no fanzine editor in Australia can feel happy about the votes for his magazine. In the International SF section, we can see that very few people in Australia read much sf, or if they do, they certainly don't agree with each other in the way that the Hugo ballots have led us to believe.

Is it worth holding future Ditmar Awards?

My immediate answer would be — no. Or at least we should not pretend that they are popular votes. When it came to the rub, the 1970 Ditmar Awards became the personal awards of Dr Ditmar Jenssen. If we had known this was going to happen, we could just have easily asked Dick and a few other people who read a lot of recent science fiction to form a panel and pick the Ditmars.

On the other hand, I made a few fundamental mistakes which cut down the chances that people would vote for the awards. I did not do preselection ballots, for a start. Lee Harding tells me that 'people like to have a little list in front of them which they can mark 1, 2, 3 and 4'. Bully for them — the only problem is that the preselection ballot virtually decides which item will be the eventual winner. I like to make my own choices in such matters, and I foolishly presumed that other people like to do the same.

I copied out the ballot form that John Bangsund distributed the year before, including a few changes. John now complains about the imprecision of this year's voting form; it is his voting form. But obviously the ballot form must be made far more precise by next year.

I want suggestions (if I remain Scrutineer of the Ditmars): **1.** Should we change the categories, and if so, to what? **2.** How should we get over the problem of books' availability in Australia? (I suggest 'Best International Science Fiction available in Australia in 1970 for the first time' or some such. This leaves out individual copies bought by individuals directly from overseas, and normally refers to any books imported by Merv Binns during 1970. **3.** I need nominations for the Preballot form sent to me during the year. If we must direct people's votes with a nomination form, let's do it on a democratic basis. Both John Foyster and I will keep our readers informed on what will appear during 1970. (The

latest venture by John Foyster and Leigh Edmonds is *Norstrilian News*, published fortnightly for a five-cent stamp a copy.)

And, most importantly, 4. I need people who will actually vote at the end of the year. What about thinking of it now? Noting down stories that catch your attention during 1970?

I don't like to sound like an evangelist, but I had never realised before how apathetic people *can* be. (I didn't join any student political movements while at University, so I didn't have my heart broken then.) John Bangsund, in *Crog*, suspects me of cynicism. How right he is — but how could I be more cynical than most of the members of the 9th Australian SF Convention?

The Ditmar Awards, Easter 1970

Best Australian Science Fiction of any length; or Collection

- 1 'Dancing Gerontius' (Lee Harding) *Vision of Tomorrow* (89 points)
- 2 'Anchor Man' (Jack Wodhams) *Vision of Tomorrow* (46 points)
- 3 'Split Personality' (Jack Wodhams) *Analog* (15 points)
- 4 'Kinsolving Planet's Irregulars' (A. Bertram Chand-ler) *Galaxy* (13 points)
- 5 'Androtomy and the Scion' (Jack Wodhams) *Analog* (10 points)
- 6 'Try Again' (Jack Wodhams) *Amazing* (7 points)
- 7 'Star Hunger' (Jack Wodhams) *Galaxy* (5 points)
- 8 'The Form Master' (Jack Wodhams) *Analog* (3 points)
- 9 'Undercover Weapon' (Jack Wodhams) *Vision of Tomorrow* (1 point)

Best International Science Fiction of any length; or Collection

- 1 *Cosmicomics* (Italo Calvino) Jonathan Cape (45 points)
 - 2 *The Left Hand of Darkness* (Ursula K. Le Guin) Ace Books (39 points)
 - 3 *Bug Jack Barron* (Norman Spinrad) Avon (30 points)
 - 4 *Stand on Zanzibar* (John Brunner) MacDonald (24 points)
- #5 *Pavane* (Keith Roberts) Ace (8 points)
#5 *Captive Universe* (Harry Harrison) Berkley (8 points)
7 *Nightwings* (Robert Silverberg) Ballantine (7 points)
#8 *Emphyrio* (Jack Vance) *Amazing* (5 points)
#8 'A Short and Happy Life' (Joanna Russ) *F&SF* (5 points)

- #8 'The Infinity Sense' (Verge Foray) *Analog* (5 points)
#8 *Dune Messiah* (Frank Herbert) *Galaxy* (5 points)
#8 'Since the Assassination' (Brian W. Aldiss) *Intang-ibles Inc.* (5 points).

Best International Professional Science Fiction Publication

(incl. Collections of Original Fiction)

- 1 *Vision of Tomorrow* ed. Philip Harbottle (64 points)
- 2 *New Worlds* ed. Michael Moorcock, Langdon Jones, Charles Platt, etc. (53 points)
- 3 *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* ed. Ed Ferman (31 points)
- 4 *Analog Science Fiction—Science Fact* ed. John W. Campbell (28 points)
- 5 *Amazing Stories* ed. Ted White; Barry Malzberg (24 points)
- 6 *Worlds of If* ed. Ejler Jakobbson; Frederik Pohl (14 points)

Best Australian Amateur Science Fiction Publication ('Fanzine')

- 1 *The Journal of Omphalistic Epistemology/exploding madonna* ed. John Foyster (52 points)
- 2 *Scythrop/Australian Science Fiction Review* ed. John Bangsund (45 points)
- 3 *Rataplan: Magazine of the Arts* ed. Leigh Edmonds (39 points)
- 4 *SF Commentary* ed. Bruce Gillespie (33 points)
- 5 *The New Forerunner* ed. Gary Mason (17 points)
- 6 *The Mentor/Eos* ed. Ron Clarke (3 points).

Back in 1995 . . .

Back in 1995, how little things have changed with the Ditmars. To judge from the nominations lists issued for the Thylacon ballot, it seems as if some categories received less than the 12 ballots I received in 1970.

Because of the 1970 fiasco, pre-balloted nomination forms have been standard for awarding the Ditmars. They don't seem to have lessened the controversies.

The main thing that has changed has been me. Imagine getting upset about fannish apathy! But it wasn't too bad a year for sf, was it? And the prozines were still read diligently.

Roll on, Ditmars. Roll on, Australian fandom.

— Bruce Gillespie, 15 April 1970 and 27 May 1995