



The Fanzine that Flies
(well, at least attempts to)

December 1982
Registered by Australia Post
Publication No. NPH5483



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Publication No. 10,000,000

Kimball Kinnison sat in the central control position. He was surrounded by a thousand lensmen, each directing a fleet of ten thousand space ships of the Galactic Patrol. Ahead lay the combined might of the forces of Boskone. The coming battle would decide the future of civilisation in two galaxies.

A globe of pure Arisian thought suddenly formed in front of the Gray Lensman. It contained a complex message, a document glowing with a blue diffuse light.

"ORNITHOPTER ELEVEN!"

exclaimed Kinnison. "You fellows had best start without me."

This is a QX fanzine published by Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 433, Civic Square, Canberra, ACT 2608, AUSTRALIA. Copies go to the Spectator Amateur Press Society and a few other people by way of saying "Hello". There are even some people who might like to subscribe, and that can be done by paying over \$1 per issue or \$2 for 3 issues. It is published bi-monthly (it says here). Before I wrap up this formal bit I suppose I should mention the Big Red *A* - if you find that it has deposited itself on your copy that means that the honeymoon is over and that you'll have to do something like send a letter of comment or money to reassure me that you're interested in getting this fanzine. MM.574

WHAT'S GOING DOWN UP DOWN UP DOWN UP DOWN UP DOWN UP AT THE FACTORY

I always knew that those cardboard tubes we used for the main spars were not strong enough. So it was no great surprise when the wing collapsed and the ornithopter plunged downwards, out of control.

Fortunately the pilot was able to crash land in the pond with a gigantic splashing from the remains of the still flapping wings. Great cascades of water went in all directions, drenching the happy revellers and knocking over some of the palm trees. The grass was ruined and later had to be sent back to the factory to be re-dyed.

While we were struggling with sponges and buckets to get the water back into the pond we didn't notice that it was slowly leaking out through a small rip in the side and the first we knew about that was when the water shorted out the electricity supply so that the lights went out and the air compressor stopped working.

The reason that we were using one of those large plastic domes supported by air pressure was because they are cheap and there is no internal support. The supposed advantage was that the ornithopter could fly around where the cameras could get good shots of it without it being exposed to the weather. The scantily clad women at the revels were also glad to be inside during the freezing winter weather which we have here in Canberra.

Despite valliant efforts to get the compressor working again, and some frantic but fruitless efforts with a bicycle pump, the dome slowly sank in on itself. Those of us who were trapped inside when the zip fastener on the air lock jammed could do nothing but wait to be engulfed by the sky blue plastic canopy with the glued on cotton-wool clouds. Beryl thought that she might be able to cut our way to freedom with a pair of nail scissors but the hole that she made only led out more air in a rush, creating a gale which sucked away the scissors and made an amazingly flatulent sound. The end result was that the dome sank even faster.

Somebody yelled that if we didn't act quickly we would all be suffocated in the huge plastic bag and so we huddled together under one of the beach umbrellas, hoping that it would form a tent around us. It didn't. The spike on the top of the umbrella punctured the plastic, the last of the air was let out and the weight of the plastic was too much for the flimsy wire and fabric of the umbrella.

The next thing I knew, this woman and I were lying together in a position which would normally have been very interesting - if I didn't have my mind on higher things and if we'd been able to move even a fraction of an inch, what with the weight of the plastic.

Despite the screaming I soon passed out again, and dreamed of how things should have gone.

A white dove flew alone in a gentle spring sky. Its wings moved in slow motion while in the distance I began to hear the gentle wafting of a slow passage from the "Spring" section of "The Four Seasons". After a moment a warm but strong masculine voice, one which gave the feeling of great warmth and trust, spoke:

"Over four hundred years ago a man of great wisdom and learning looked at the birds flying free in the sky and thought that man too might fly. That man was the genius, Leonardo da Vinci."

After a couple more wing beats the dove was slowly superimposed by a man flying our new ultra-lightornithopter, also flapping its wings in slow motion. For about ten seconds the man flew in languid flight, doing slow turns and banks.

"Leonardo devoted his life to discovering the secret of flight... but he never found it."

The man flying the ornithopter glided down and landed in a wooded glade beside a small lake. The music changed mood, becoming much more lively. Suddenly he was surrounded by a hoard of scantily clad beautiful women popping the corks of bottles of champagne. This scene faded back to that of the man with his ornithopter in flight, once more gliding languidly back and forth.

"Modern technology has discovered the secret of man powered flight, and now every person can fly away to a new way of life... a new dimension in flight... the 'da Vinci' by Orrite Ornithopter Production Systems."

I was woken from this delightful dream by the sound of the chain saw cutting through the plastic and letting in fresh air.

We had the next OOPS Board of Directors meeting while we were still in the hospital. At it we decided that we were not going to try television advertising again.

The reason that we had got into the predicament in the first place was because consumer surveys had shown that we weren't making a gigantic profit because of inbuilt consumer resistance to new ideas or, to put it another way, most people simply don't know what an ornithopter is. And if a person doesn't know what an ornithopter is they cannot appreciate its beneficial attributes. As a result they won't buy them.

A highly regarded consultancy operating out of the posh part of Canberra organised something that it called a "public education campaign". You or I might call it a television advertisement and only charge half as much for it. Still, if you want the best you've got to be prepared to pay top money. We were lucky that our financial wizard had the contacts to raise the money. (Beryl apparently has close personal ties with a banking organisation in Sicily which is interested in diversification into a chain of laundromats here in Australia - as well as any other likely enterprise.)

As I lie here in hospital I wonder about the future. Will ornithopters take off in a big way without a television campaign to launch them? Will our new "da Vinci" model be a big hit with the smart set? Will I get better soon enough to let me get away before the Sicilian bankers decide to collect their money?

A LOOK AT THE EDITOR'S PRIVATE LIFE

There's not much to look at this time, things are pretty much as they were the last time I wrote comments under that particular heading. When I wrote those

paragraphs last issue about the enjoyment that we had been getting from the renovations business I was under the impression that it would all be over by the time I came to put together these paragraphs. Unfortunately this hasn't happened and, although everything is nice and quiet at the moment there is the business with the carpet which will have to be sorted out before everything is as it should be. We will have to pick up all the stuff that we've moved down to this end of the house, the books, the fanzines, the records, the furniture and everything else, and move it back down to the other end again. When the carpet has been fixed up we can move it all back yet again.

What was the name of that Greek character who kept on pushing the rock to the top of the hill and then watching it roll down the other side? I know how he felt.

The good news is, and I've been telling everybody else so I may as well tell you as well, that the academic year is once again over. Only another four and it's all over. When I decided to take up part time study back in 1979 it seemed like a good idea, the abstraction of the work that would be involved was something that really didn't concern me that much, and in the coming few months I'll probably forget about it again too. But when it gets towards the middle of October and there's only a couple of weeks of lectures left I begin to feel the way that one would if they had just duplicated five hundred copies of a hundred page fanzine and only had left the task of collating it. If it wasn't for the fact that so much has been accomplished there wouldn't be the stamina left to carry on to the end.

Three years completed and, as I said, only another four to go. This studying exercise also reminds me of the shoving rocks business. Of course, when I'm finished I can then put some letters after my name and feel as though I actually know something about something. One of the disadvantages about knocking around in fandom, though, is that there are already a lot of smart people who know it all already, which means that after seven years I'll only be up to where all the others already are. How depressing!

The great thing about the academic year is that it doesn't really clash with the great summer entertainment, cricket. Only an hour or so ago I put the final touches to the last essay for the year, and in about half an hour the first ball will be sent down in the 1982/83 test series for The Ashes. How's that for timing... the Australian Cricket Control Board and the Australian National University have been working towards this hour and a half break for the past eight months and I congratulate them on the superb timing. What saved them in the end was the decision to play the match in Perth where they are normally two hours behind the times and now three hours behind because they don't have daylight saving. What this means, of course, is that if I lived in Perth I wouldn't get that essay finished for another five days and that, more to the point, I wouldn't be typing this stencil now. Is that why they don't seem to be sending many fanzines over from the West these days?

As the season progresses you'll probably find here a few comments about the noble game of cricket. I hope that the British readers will bear with me through this period and, as for you people who will no doubt complain that I shouldn't be wasting my time... shame on you! A person has to have some outdoors summertime activity. I just prefer to lie around indoors watching other people indulge themselves.

The trouble with cricket is that you have to watch it. This means turning off the typer and going to sit in front of the television set. This means that I won't get as many stencils cut as I might. I did have a bright idea though. You recall that last issue I was writing about getting a word processor one of these days. Well, when I do I'm going to have the vdu hooked up to a television receiver so that I can look at the tv on the screen. That means that I'll be able to watch the cricket and type at the same time.

Changing the subject once more,

I suppose that I have to admit that the heading of this section isn't really much of an indication about what is in it. When you read that word "Private" you could be forgiven for thinking that you were going to read some deep secrets, daring revelations and that sort of thing. Well, you should know better than that. I spent too many years of my life living in Melbourne among the kindly souls there who only rarely force their deeper and more primitive emotions upon each other. It's a habit that I don't expect to pick up here in Canberra, even though it is a lot closer to Sydney where primitive passions are all the go - or so I am lead to believe.

However, I must admit that there is something that I have been ashamed of for the past couple of years, a terrible failing, something that should have been done which has remained undone up until now... which leads me to the next section of this issue.

THE FIRST "WE'LL PRINT ALMOST ANYTHING" SECTION

Back at about the end of 1979 Valma and I went around to visit John Foyster and Jennifer Bryce who had just returned from a trip to Britain and Europe. John had won GUFF and had gone to SeaCon, Jenny had gone with him and then, after they had looked around Britain they went off and saw a bit of Europe.

During the slide show that glorified the architecture of Vienna John and Jenny talked about the great time that they had. Sometime during that evening I asked Jenny if she would write a report of her trip, a separate commentary on what they had seen and done. She very kindly said that she would. And a few months later, when we were in Canberra, the article duly arrived. It is my shame that it's taken until now to publish it.

Jenny is not one of the most visible people in fandom in Melbourne. There is a fairly simple reason for this, she is not really a fan at all, her interests lie more in a musical direction. While you and I might spend an afternoon at a wild collating party Jenny will happily take her oboe and pop off to a pleasant musical afternoon. And I envy her for it too.

IMPRESSIONS OF EUROPE THROUGH NON-FANNISH GLASSES

Jennifer Bryce

Background information

Leigh thought that it would be interesting to see what the world looked like from a non-fannish perspective, and since I had the opportunity to accompany John Foyster to SEACON, a "trip report" was in order. I had been overseas once before, six weeks in 1976. One of my main vices is that I play the oboe, so on this, my second trip, I arranged to play in a master class during our first week in London.

London

Do 'planes ever arrive at respectable and civilised times? Not at Heathrow. Chris Priest and Randal Flynn met us at 7.00am and whisked us into London in Chris's diminutive mini, coping on the way with problems such as the non-existence of the Economy Hotel into which we had been booked by Qantas. The London I saw from the mini still seemed a bit unreal as we whizzed (somehow possible in London traffic) past the familiar Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the Battersea Power Station...

But once we found ourselves in a queue I knew we were really in London. I don't know how Londoners manage to do any work. They certainly couldn't work a thirty-five hour week, they have to spend so much time queueing - at banks, post offices, bus stops, and waiting to be connected on the telephone. It is always "rush hour" in London. The footpaths are like the entrance to Flinders Street Station at five o'clock due to the density of people and also because Londoners have not yet decided on which side of the footpath they should walk. Hyde Park

provides some respite from this continual rush, and we found ourselves gazing at the Serpentine by about eleven o'clock on the morning of our arrival. I was surprised to note that one could hire deck chairs for 15p per sitting. I guess that in London the grass is usually damp, but I'm sure that Australians would never be prepared to pay to sit on a chair! They would bring their own. When, during my last week away, I found myself hiring a deck chair at Brighton, I decided that I had truly adjusted to the English way of life!

Despite "jet-lag" I went to a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on my first night in London. I renewed my acquaintance with the Underground, although I was horrified to discover that the return fare for Paddington-Embankment-Paddington was 80p (that is, roughly \$1.60 for a journey that would approximate Flinders Street- St Kilda-Flinders Street). The concert program was the Poulanc Trio for piano, oboe and bassoon (Tamas Vasary, Neil Black and Graham Sheen), Milhaud Sonata No. 2 for violin and piano (Michael Tree and Tamas Vasary) and the Mozart Divertimento in E flat K.563 (Pinkhas Zukerman, Michael Tree and Yo Yo Ma). I was interested in Neil Black's playing, as he would be taking the oboe master class in which I would be taking part later in the week. But the Mozart was, I think, the best that I have ever heard. Pinkhaus Zukerman was as fiery as one can be playing Mozart, and Yo Yo Ma's eloquent phrasing taught me a great deal about how to play Mozart.

Two nights later I went back to hear Yo Yo Ma playing Saint Saens with the English Chamber Orchestra (Neil Black plays principal oboe). I braved the performer's bar at interval to meet Neil Black. My naive wonderment was somewhat shattered when I observed my heroes tossing back scotches and gin-and-tonics before applying themselves to a Mozart symphony (number 33). I was relieved to observe that Neil Black drank orange juice.

One evening Chris Priest picked us up from our lodgings, the Mitre House Hotel, and took us to Chris Evans' place. Randal was there too. I am not an aspiring writer but I enjoyed the evening very much. It started in a pub where I rediscovered the wonders of draught cider - typically luke-warm. Understandably, in the early part of the evening the conversation centred on "catching-up" with fans from Australia. By the time we were back at Chris Evans' for coffee the talk was about writing, and such issues as whether it is desirable for a novice writer to model himself on an established writer.

The day of the master class arrived. I faced it with some apprehension. Could I do it? What would the other players be like? Would I be noticeably older? In Australia I had felt excited about playing the oboe in London in the presence of an internationally-known player. But now, faced with the reality, it seemed like an ordeal, after which there would be a holiday with no further responsibility other than getting from one place to another. I was tending to think "In three hours time I'll be free".

A master class is a public music lesson. In this case it was held in the Purcell Room of the Royal Festival Hall complex and was billed as part of the Southbank Summer Musical Festival. The audience was made up of subscribers to the festival and "odd bods" who paid two pounds per ticket. Such a class is conducted by a well known and respected performer on a particular instrument from whom "advanced" students receive a lesson before an audience. Sometimes all the participants have to perform the same piece of music, but in this case there was a variety of pieces. I had been asked to play the first movement of the Mozart Oboe concerto in c major, but I suspected that the other students, who would have been well known to Neil Black, had been able to choose what they would play.

There were four of us all together - one other Australian, who was studying the oboe in England and doing the "European Circuit": auditioning for any casual position that becomes available in any orchestra in Europe. One does not learn great truths in a thirty minute public music lesson. I was relieved that I didn't disgrace myself by breaking down in the middle or losing my place. My

playing was tense, however, largely because I hadn't had the opportunity to adjust to the new environment. Also I was quite exhausted from having to haul my luggage a considerable distance just before the class. There had been no opportunity to rehearse with the pianist - usually one would require several hours of practice to discuss mood changes, tempo, and the like. Excuses aside, I did learn interesting incidental things, like Neil Black plays with the same brand of oboe as I do, and English oboists can get their cane (for the oboe reeds) from Southern France without going through a commercial distributor.

It was a suitably cold, wet afternoon for one who was feeling a trifle let down after the masterclass. I sat in a grotty cafe and wrote a blow-by-blow (observe the pun) description of the class for my teacher.

SeaCon

I arrived at SeaCon in time for the masquerade, and was immediately burdened with the responsibility of taking photographs of the Norstrilia Group. The group looked good but failed to act out their parts with suitable aplomb. Later I found myself at an Australia in '75 reunion and later still, at a Sweden in '83 party. We had travelled light, and therefore had not brought with us a cellar-full of fine Australian wines. To attempt to overcome this omission we had visited the Australian Wine Centre in London and had purchased, at great expense, a wine cask (unknown elsewhere in Europe) of Botany Bay Riesling. The cask may well have contained Botany Bay, but it did not contain riesling. This discovery was made in the early part of the evening, and I'm sure that many non-Australian fans are still puzzled about the reputation of the Australian wine industry.

The next morning started with a business session at which it was announced that the 1981 WorldCon would be held in Denver. I was a little amused at the amount of talk that went on about sites for future conventions. Why don't the fans relax and enjoy this one, rather than spend so much time worrying about future sites? One of the highlights of the convention for me was that Australia versus England half-hour cricket match played with plastic bat, ball, and wicket on the pebbly beach. It was more reminiscent of "Australian" Rules football than cricket, because if you let the ball bounce, its direction after impact was quite unpredictable due to the pebbles. The match was a draw although later the English announced that they had won, giving due stress to the fact that there was an English umpire. The match gave me a good opportunity to observe the Brighton foreshore. The pebbles and the weather provide a very inhospitable environment for swimming and sunbathing, therefore there were all kinds of entertainments available. Apart from the native habit of sitting in deck chairs there was miniature golf, a Punch and Judy show, fortune tellers, and lots of icecream vendors.

In the evening we attended the banquet. Apart from the excitement of a waitress dropping a tray of plates, all was reasonably pleasant, except for Bill Rotsler's reaction to meringue, raspberries and icecream (I was at the same table as Bill). Due to Bill's presence there was much signing of the back of menus, mainly to encourage him to illustrate them. By the end of the evening he had illustrated and annotated the linen table cloth. If only the hotel staff had realised - they could have sold it for quite a price!

On the final morning I attempted to take in the vast art show, and managed to find one rather impressionistic watercolour that I quite liked. Unfortunately I have not acquired a taste for sf art, largely because I haven't read much science fiction. The books were being packed up, so I decided to go in search of the Royal Pavilion, built by George IV. I had the crazy idea that the pavilion was at the end of one of the piers. It had occurred to me that the piers looked decidedly Victorian and I was puzzled as to how a Georgian pavilion could find itself at the end of one of them. I paid 15p and walked along the one pier that is still safe enough to use (the other pier has had to be closed). It was rather like Luna Park without the Big Dipper. There was a

coconut shy (which reminded me of Milly Molly Mandy), trampolines, dodg'em cars, a room full of mechanical games, and lots of shops selling all manner of tourist trinkets. It was worth paying 15p for the experience, but I preferred to try to imagine the pier in the late nineteenth century and the discreet bathing machines that would have been dotted along the foreshore. I later discovered the true Royal Pavilion when John showed me the Lanes. One of the lasting impressions of Brighton is of the flamboyant sweet shops specialising in sugar dolls which you presumably disrobe by licking off the coloured coating and, of all ironies, sugar false teeth!

The closing ceremony of SeaCon started well with a mock opening ceremony and a sick Barry Humphries joke from Brian Aldiss. But the most pleasant part of our last evening in Brighton was a meal with Terry Hughes and Terry Carr. Even for a fan, and certainly for a non-fan, the most rewarding aspect of the convention was the opportunity to talk with old acquaintances and to make new friends.

We travelled back to London by train with Nils and Ellen from Copenhagen. I am always amazed by the fluency with which such people speak English, and feel ashamed that my only other language is a basic "school girl" French. Admittedly, Ellen teaches linguistics and English at Copenhagen University.

The Green and Pleasant...

Travelling is, of necessity, hectic, and it is very nice to find yourself in a haven where you don't need to rush around eating out, booking tickets, and queueing at banks. We spent a day visiting my sister at Peverel's Farm House near Colchester. The farm house is equidistant from two villages, Colne Engaine and Pebmarsh. Apart from a new housing estate near Colne Engaine these villages consist of a store, a church, a green and a letter box. In the morning we wandered along the lanes to Colne Engaine, returned to sit and read in the sun, then in the afternoon one of us was overcome with a strong desire for Pepsi Cola. I ultimately yielded to this person's plight by cycling to Pebmarsh on an extremely dilapidated bike with no brakes. I bought the village's entire stock of colaferous drinks: one can of Coca Cola and one can of Pepsi.

Europe on a few Dollars...

We returned to London and carted our luggage out to Chris Priest at Harrow-on-the-Hill. I can well understand why Chris has stayed in the same flat for over ten years. It opens onto a meticulously kept (by somebody other than Chris) Beatrix Potter garden which in turn gives onto the Harrow playing fields. It is very peaceful and seems to me an ideal home for a writer. In the evening we caught the underground to Victoria Station. Our Grand Tour of Europe had begun.

We travelled to Basel through Costanza, Brussels, Luxembourg, Metz, and Strasbourg (which I had expected to be in Germany but it's in France). John may well remember Basel for his discovery of a wonder drink, Ovomaltine - better than Ovaltine or even malt Milo. But walking along the banks of the Rhine in the evening was pleasant too. The next day John left for Frankfurt to spend the weekend with Horst and Cherry Grimm and I met up with Liz, a friend from university and we set off in her car for the alps. It appears that there are no poor people in Switzerland. Despite the high prices people are very well dressed and drive late model cars. Liz, who would consider herself far from affluent, drove a two year old Citroen (a smaller model than we can get in Australia) for which she paid cash when it was brand new. We headed for the Glaudenberg Pass. I had been a little apprehensive of the climbing ahead of us as I remembered Liz as a very active person who played a great deal of sport. Now she does a lot of walking and cross-country skiing. But fortunately I did not have to admit to my own lack of fitness, just as we would reach a point where I would feel physically incapable of lifting a foot, she would suggest a rest.

We climbed to the top of the pass, with cow bells of various pitches sounding around us, as the cattle were up on the summer pastures. There were a few wild flowers, and we managed to find a gentian. Apparently Edelweiss is almost extinct. As we walked along the top of the pass we would greet other walkers with "Gretsi". I was surprised that in this area there was a lot of evidence of the Swiss army. Apparently there are hospital sites and huge hideouts dug into the mountains in many parts of the country. In such a peaceful environment I was amazed to learn that all men under the age of sixty must pass an annual shooting test.

We stayed in a private house, advertising rooms for rental, at Sachseln. The people in this village did not speak English or French so I was totally reliant upon Liz for communication. I recall smiling bravely as I tried to drink a Swiss speciality - kafe kruter - which has some kind of Schnapps in it made from aniseed. I slept very soundly that night. The next day we made our way to Burgenstock, a "posh" tourist resort which commands a superb view of Lake Lucerne. We reached the tip of Burgenstock before the "posh" tourists had finished their breakfasts so we were able to admire the view in peace. We ultimately retreated from the tourists and walked down the mountain and around the valley, sometimes through forests, sometimes in the open with the sun giving us a gentle tan. It was not unusual to come upon shrines on the mountain walks. I recall one in particular which had been built in the 1920s. It was the kind of manifestation you would expect from an Asian religion, but as we descended the mountains we noticed little plaques depicting the stations of the cross set in the trees leading to this shrine. We arrived back at Basle in time to meet John's train from Frankfurt and to catch the train to Vienna.

Pension Nossek provided us with a palatial room right on the Graben, in the centre of Vienna. It is best to leave a description of the buildings of Vienna to John's photographs. On our first evening we stood in a queue from 5.30 to 7.30 pm to get tickets (at 10 schillings each, 70¢) for the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and State Opera Chorus conducted by Leonard Bernstein performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The soloists were Gwyneth Jones, Rene Kollo, Hanna Schwartz and Kurt Moll. The queue was, I suppose, rather like queueing for football grand final tickets. We were herded in at interval until not one more human being could have fitted into the "standing room" space. After standing a good two hours beforehand I wondered whether I would be capable of standing for the duration of the symphony. But of course I could. Although I couldn't see much, the sound was thrilling. During the choruses in the last movement it seemed as though the opera house roof would be lifted with the sound, and as we were standing on a fairly high level we were carried upwards by the sound.

The next day, having successfully performed our tourist role in the morning, we visited Franz Rottensteiner in the afternoon. The unpretentious building that we approached gave no hint of the elegance of Franz's apartment. The walls were typically lined with books, a lot with English titles. Franz mentioned that he had read Beloved Son. He proved to have a delightful sense of humor and on several occasions humorously sent up the Viennese in a similar manner to the way we "knock" Australians. In the evening we met Hanna (now Franz's wife) and her brother (who speaks no English) and went to a cellar for such delicacies as bratwurst and saurkraut and an extremely rich Austrian speciality - a pancake with fruit, cream, and chocolate sauce. Despite our language problems (Hanna and her brother are Polish, Hanna's English is marginally better than my French, John has Science German, I have no German, Franz speaks English very well but is more used to reading it than to speaking for prolonged periods) we had a happy time. We were honoured with an invitation to Hanna's birthday party the next day.

The party was certainly one of the most interesting experiences I had on the trip. There were three Austrians, ten Poles, one Lithuanian, and two Australians. I spent some time talking to a salesman of nuclear engineering equipment to Eastern bloc countries. He had a lot to say about the black

market, particularly in the USSR. Dollars especially, and other Western currencies can get you just about anything. It is difficult to go to the Bolshoi or to a good restaurant without using the black market. I also learnt more about life in the Austrian and Swiss alps. I commented that during the weekend I had seen a number of permanent looking homes that must be snowbound during winter. Apparently the people who live in these houses are more isolated than people living in outback Australia as there are no facilities such as the Flying Doctor Service or School of the Air. If someone dies during winter they are kept in the cellar until the snow recedes. We also talked to a couple from Poland. She is a translator who works in Austria. He was a Communist Party journalist. He mentioned that he knew Wilfred Burchett. I left the party feeling elated from the experience of meeting people with a breadth of experience of life.

Some of the other delights of Vienna were the Klimts in the Belvedere Palace, the Rubens' in the Kunsthistorischesmuseum, Beethoven's house, and just standing in Stephansplatz looking up at the beautiful roof of the cathedral. There were also interesting sidelights such as a window display in Demels, a coffee shop, depicting Brezhnev and Carter with their fingers showing as missiles. We also paid due respect to the new United Nations Centre on the Danube.

Initial impressions of Florence were not very encouraging. We had narrowly missed sharing our train compartment with a dog, the train was late, and the name of the station "Firenze" was not discernable. But when, on the first evening, we found ourselves wandering around Bellosguardo - in the hills immediately behind Florence - we felt that Florence was indeed a beautiful place.

We did spend a lot of time in Florence trying to dodge tourists who were particularly plentiful in the galleries on Sunday morning, when no entrance fee was charged. My most pleasant memories are of picnic lunches in the Boboli Gardens, hearing a busker playing Bach on a flute as we emerged from the Uffizi, and the Cellini and Donatello sculptures in the Bargello.

We had intended to travel directly to Paris from Florence, but as train bookings were very heavy due to the end of the school holidays we decided to travel by way of the Cote d'Azur. We booked a room in Nice by telephone, and left Florence at about 1.00 pm. The train was overcrowded and very slow. Overall we lost three hours in time. Although more of our journey than intended took place in the dark we were still able to get a reasonable impression of the beauty of the coast. As we arrived in Nice at 1.00 am, instead of 10.00 pm, we were not surprised to discover that our room had been taken. The proprietor was most apologetic, however, and asked us whether we would mind having a very small room, as all the other rooms in the hotel had been taken. When we discovered that the cost of the room was only 22F (about \$4.50) for the two of us we decided that it suited us admirably. Should you be planning to visit Nice, remember to stay in Room 63, Hotel des Nations.

The foreshore of Nice had a number of characteristics similar to Brighton, but there were no entertainments for children. Most of the tourists appeared to be middle-aged. There were sections of the beach marked private (in English) and one could hire a lilo or a deck chair. The beach and the climate appeared to be more suitable for swimming - wind surfing was popular.

Our Eurail passes allowed us to travel, for no extra charge, on the superior train "Le Mistral" to Paris. We felt a little out of place in our dirty travelling gear and refrained from eating our provisions in the spotlessly clean compartments - we also refrained from taking dinner in the special dining car as we suspected that the prices would be beyond our means. Just before reaching each station a jaunty French tune would be played on the public address system and then a very polite voice would announce in both French and English "Ladies and Gentlemen, we are now approaching Avignon..." Needless to say, this train arrived on time.

In Paris we stayed in the heart of the Left Bank. I love the feeling of being in Paris. Although the Parisians are not very friendly, there is a sense of being surrounded by a lot of lively, interesting people. Perhaps part of the excitement for me is the challenge of trying to use my French. We spent a lot of time just walking around through the markets, inspecting the book stalls along the Seine, and through gardens. We did go twice to the cinema - "Alien" and "Frisco Kid", both with French subtitles - I found the French advertisements at interval more interesting than "Alien", but thoroughly enjoyed the other film.

I was particularly delighted to visit the Rodin Museum. It is housed in Roudin's villa and the statues of Balzac and Hugo help one to capture the spirit of artistic life in late nineteenth century Paris. Some of the pieces of sculpture (notably the famous "Thinker") are in the gardens surrounding the villa. Here, in particular, one feels that the sculpture has grown out of the stone.

I have already mentioned the beautiful flute music we heard outside the Uffizi in Florence. The standard of busking in Paris was remarkable. Particularly memorable is the work of a cello player outside the Louvre (Bach again) and a saxophonist at Gar du Lyon (one of the large railway stations). Who are these people? For me their music had perhaps greater beauty than the carefully rehearsed offerings of the concert hall. But so many people walk past them appearing not to notice. I guess that this is one of the results of living in an environment constantly intruded by forms of canned sound which has sullied our perceptions. There were at least crowds around the skilful mime and acrobatic acts performed in the square adjoining the new Georges Pompidou Centre. A feeling of impermanence suggested by the structure of the Centre itself is heightened by the temporary artistic activities nearby. The centre is a concrete, glass, exposed air conditioning pipe structure. Which, in contrast to the substantial buildings in the vicinity, looks as though it will soon be dismantled like Meccano, or a set of Leggo.

There was a strike while we were in Paris which affected all trains except the metro. This made my trip out to Ezanville to purchase cane for making oboe reeds a little more difficult than normal. The first leg was easy - I caught the metro to Port de Cliganacort. At Cliganacort I was to catch a bus to Port de Paris from where I could catch another bus to Ezanville, which is about thirty-five kilometres from the centre of Paris. But which bus to catch at Cliganacort? I did not know the number, and none of the buses showed Port de Paris as a destination. Perhaps I made a mistake in trying to use my French. Had I approached the bus drivers with a written sign "Port de Paris", things might have been simpler. As it was, my "Allex-vous a Port de Paris?" received a series of complex answers from which I gathered that some of the buses did go there, but they did not recommend that I catch them. When travelling one is sometimes rash in order to save time. I did not want to waste a precious morning at the bus station. I tried to hail a cab. But the cab driver would not go to Port de Paris or Ezanville either, and my "Pourquoi?" was met with a torrent of something which I fortunately could not understand. Defeated I went back to the bus station and found a bus driver who spoke slowly enough for me to pick up the word "changer" - I must change buses on the way to Port de Paris! He kindly pointed out where I should do this, and I ultimately reached my destination. It was frustrating, but a worthwhile experience as similar problems must confront most non-English speaking newcomers to Australia.

I had another rather amusing misunderstanding with the language at a bank. We were staying at the Hotel du Lys. I gave my address, pronouncing it "lee". The teller looked puzzled and commented that it was a strange name for a hotel and looked at me in rather a strange way. I noticed that he had transcribed "hotel du Lit" (of the bed, rather than the lily) which would indeed be an unlikely name for a hotel! (Almost as unlikely as the Economy Hotel.) I should have pronounced the name "leece".

John returned to England while I stayed on in Paris to spend the weekend with a friend from work. This included a trip to the Eiffel Tower, a boat ride down the Seine, and a visit to Notre Dame where I was horrified to find tourists taking flash photographs during mass and talking very loudly only a few feet from the participants. All this was punctuated at regular intervals by the ring of the cash register as the thoughtless tourists purchased souvenirs. Obviously the church can't afford to lose this custom as they presumably employ someone to sell the souvenirs. We happened upon a special exhibition of Goya aquatints at the Petit Palais - mainly bull fighting scenes. It was then time to catch the train to London. We crossed the channel by hydrofoil this time, which I found far preferable to the ferry, largely because it is so much quicker - only forty minutes.

The last two weeks

By this time we were certainly on the last leg of our trip. I was in no way eager to return home; I would love to have the challenge of living in another country for an extended period of time and to have to adjust to the language and customs.

Chris Priest put up with us as his house guests for our last two weeks in England. A lot of the time was spent visiting fans, and this will be covered in greater detail in John's report. I recall a pleasant evening at David and Hazel Langford's at Reading after which I spent practically the whole day in Blackwell's bookshop in Oxford. I attended more concerts which included Radu Lupu playing Beethoven's First Piano Concerto with the Philharmonia, and Solti conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra. I spent a day in Brighton and saw the real Royal Pavilion! It became evident that I was not going to accomplish all the things I wanted to do - I had to assume that one day I would return to do them. For example, I managed to see only one section of the Victoria and Albert Museum - the collection of musical instruments, and although we visited Bristol and saw Brunel's magnificent bridge over the Avon, there was no time to go to Bath. I did manage to see the impressionist collection at the Courtauld Institute which was some compensation for having missed out on seeing the Jeu de Paume collection in Paris.

Suddenly we found ourselves thanking Chris for his hospitality, and bundled onto the underground with all our luggage, heading for Heathrow and the plane home.

MY REPEATED REFERENCE TO AUSTRALIA

People laughed and scoffed, they sniggered behind his back, they pointed at him when he wasn't looking and whispered about him in dark corners at parties at conventions. They said he'd never do it, they said that it was impossible. But he has done it at last, Bruce Gillespie has re-published the first eight issues of SF COMMENTARY in a new flash format.

Back at the 1971 New Year Convention John Foyster and Lee Harding did a little skit for the Paul Stevens Show. This was at the time when John Bangsund - operating through his little publishing empire, Paragon Books - had great plans to publish all sorts of yearbooks, directories, collections of essays and the like, and Lee and John thought that they might parody these great ambitions. As things turned out, John Bangsund preceeded them with a skit which was one of the best things that he's done - as Professor Hum... Hum... Humphrey Tape of the University of Ard Knox lecturing on ektrachiasomes and so the whole thing fitted together rather well.

John Foyster interviewed Olaf Bangsund of Parallel Books about his work and his aims. Towards the end of the skit Bangsund, getting a little carried away with his dreams of power and world domination, announced that he intended to re-publish his school exercise books in thirty volumes and soon a couple of people from the mental hospital raced up to take him away.

Just about

everybody thought that it was hilarious. (It was also the final act of about the best ever Paul Stevens Show which also included an interview with Superman, played by a lean Peter House - "You! You're Superman?" "Yep." "Bit thin, aren't you?" "I've been sick lately.") But at the time none of us realised that John Bangsund wasn't the threat. As it turned out, Bruce Gillespie was the one who had the tenacity and time to threaten us with old school books - but fortunately he isn't that tasteless.

Bruce was at that 1971 convention (I have a photograph of him sitting next to Donna Runic and looking fairly happy) and I suppose he found the skit fairly funny too - although it wasn't until several years later that we found positive proof of his sense of humor. At the time of that convention he might have published twenty or so issues of SF COMMENTARY and was still looking to the great future which lay ahead, rather than a glorious past. We should have realised that in the long run it would be Bruce who carried on the traditions which had been established by the ASFR group and that he had the dedication (and perhaps the lack of imagination) to stick to his original ideals of writing about, publishing writing about, and otherwise fostering Australian science fiction. But in 1971 Australian fandom seemed to be looking in other directions which would in the end lead to AUSSIECON (where all the diverse streams came together for four or so days).

@

In 1982 this reprint of fanzines from 1969 seems to be far less anachronistic than I would have expected. A basic reason is that Bruce, and the people who wrote for him, were some of the best; the latest news might not always be current but if it's well written it is still worth reading after a few years. It is also possible that others will find it less interesting than I since I was in fandom at the time that these issues were first published and I can still fill in the assumed understandings which exist in comments that Bruce made on the then state of science fiction and fandom. Bruce captured some of the excitement which existed around the first few conventions that were held in the late 1960s but when he mentions the Melbourne SF Clubrooms or the theatre at Murrumbidgee he probably fails to make the assumed common understanding with modern readers that he did make with them in 1969. Since his writing still makes those connections for me I am unable to judge whether other people will find his accounts of events incomplete and puzzling.

But I'm getting a bit ahead of myself here.

The reason that I want to write about these reprint SF COMMENTARIES under the heading of "What Happened Before AUSSIECON" is because for those who do not already have the first eight issues of SFC, they will find that this reprint gives them one perspective on what sf and fandom were like in Australia in the late 1960s. Since I entered fandom in that period I tend to think of it as a "golden age", for those who have come since it is probably all a bit of a mystery and for the real old-timers that period may have seemed to be when we were re-inventing the wheel again. If these old issues of SFC are at all important it is because they form a document of some historic interest - not because they contain serious writing about science fiction.

(There is, of course, a lot about sf in these issues. You will probably learn more about the sf of the period than you will about Australian fandom. However I leave that particular concern to those more interested in it, with the passing comment that this collection is a dippers delight because you will come across little jems of reviews or letters, odd comments about the state of various writers' minds or the general world of publishing. Somewhere in there you will find Bruce's thought provoking review of Aldiss's Intangibles Inc. or George Turner's short but accurate comments on Bob Shaw's The Two-Timers (which I happened to read only a month or two ago).)

@ Bruce appears to have fairly faithfully documented the events of the year, at least, those events which were of sf interest. There was, for example, the good news about Ron Graham's "Vision of Tomorrow", at a time when the first

issues were coming and everything looked good for an up to date Australian magazine. At the same time there seemed to be a renaissance in writing sf in Australia and there was, of course, the continuing critical interest in sf, both local and overseas. In other words there was an excitement in the air and Bruce reflected it. Of course the optimist of that period could, in retrospect, be considered premature or ill founded because, in looking back from 1982, it seems that little progress has been made in relation to the time that has passed.

The reservations which I have with the perspective that is recreated in this collection is that it is comprehensive enough to give the impression that it covers everything that happened while actually failing to do so. It may mention the majority of the events of 1969 but it has a largely sercon worldview which leads to a view of, for example, SYNCON '70 as a visible indication of the state of Australian sf whereas, if you were to ask me, I'd say that it was a watershed for fandom - leading to a formal fannish decision to launch a bid for AUSSIECON, the development of a stronger interest in comics, the first taste that most fans had of a convention outside Melbourne or of the hospitality of fandom as it then was in Sydney. The comments which Bruce made on the event are not incorrect or even unduly biased, but if you read them you must remember that there were other people reacting differently to the events of the time.

This, of course, highlights the individuality which is so important in most good fan publishing. It is also a reminder that very few fans publish anything which could be considered an unbiased or complete view of events and their meanings. And, except in such things as newszines, you wouldn't expect to read such a thing. The only insurance would perhaps be to re-publish other fanzines from that year. But it all seems like a lot of hard work, and only people like Bruce are likely to actually do anything like it because, as anybody who has published a hundred page fanzine will tell you, it isn't much fun.

One of the most interesting aspects of these early issues of SFC is the amount of space taken up with transcripts of convention panel discussions and talks. This may well be because Bruce lacked other material of substance and had to fill in with the things that people has said at those events. In those earlier days there seems to have been much more interest taken in what was said at conventions, the dialogues which the participants engaged in were believed to be important for the understanding and development of sf. They were planned to do more than take up program time and their supposed importance meant that many faneds went to considerable trouble to make the talks and discussions available to those who had not been able to get to the convention. This sort of thing doesn't happen these days, possibly because people are no longer idealistic enough to undertake the hard work. And anyhow, in this enlightened age, nobody pays any attention to what is said at convention program items.

@

I think that \$40 is a lot to pay for this sort of thing. I am, however, remarkably stingy when it comes to paying for other people's fanzines (I reckon that I spend enough getting my own into print). All the same, if you enjoy reading SF COMMENTARY and don't have these first eight issues, or if you are interested in what fandom and sf were like in Australia thirteen years ago, you might think about sending Bruce some money. It will introduce you to that now long past milieu and perhaps give you a feel for the naive enthusiasm which was all the go in those days.

Perhaps the best thing about this issue is that Bruce has got it published and out of the way so that he can get on with the more important business of publishing current issues of SF COMMENTARY. For too long Australian fandom has been without a focal point for discussion of sf, the amount of fiction that is being published in this day and age should be enough to keep Bruce in material for half a dozen issues if only he had the time, money and enthusiasm to publish them. I hope that Bruce now looks to the future

and publishes some new issues of SFC - he's reminded us of how good that fanzine can be, but we need to see it coming from the current world instead of from the past which is relevant only as history.

Finally, the technical stuff:

SF Commentary Reprint Edition: First year 1969, SF Commentary Nos. 1 - 8, edited and published by Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia, First edition November 1982 in an edition of 200 copies, 152 pages including index, price; \$40.

THREE MORE AUSTRALIAN FANZINES

Since I've spent the last few pages writing about Bruce Gillespie and the culmination of his great vision I suppose it is appropriate that I have a quick look at what three other people are doing in Australia in the way of fanzines. By an odd coincidence, two of the three are published in Western Australia - who says that they aren't publishing over there anymore?

Van Ikin

has kindly sent me the two most recent issues of his SCIENCE FICTION, numbers 10 and 11. They are interesting because they contain a lot of intelligent discussion of science fiction (or, as the sub-title puts it, "Speculative Literature"). These issues are also un-interesting because they do not involve the reader in the process of discussion, it is as though we all filed into the lecture theatre, listened to a few people talking and then went away without having had any effect on the course of events that we have experienced. Because of this SCIENCE FICTION seems to be a vaguely disturbing phenomena, to me at least. I do not trust an environment in which the writer cannot be openly questioned... but perhaps that is just my fannish background sticking its nose in where Van does not plan such an entry.

In this way SCIENCE FICTION

distances itself from the more usual sfnal environment and places itself in more academic surroundings. I gather that this sort of audience is the one to which Van is addressing himself, the style of his presentation suggests that it is to be read by people who are not accustomed to reading often shallow material and making shallow responses. I don't think that there is anything wrong with this sort of thing but it is just as well that not all fanzines conduct themselves in this manner because fandom would soon fold up and die from lack of nutrition from feedback.

The only other comment which I'd like to make on this possibly minor point is that in the long run it is not going to do much good for science fiction in Australia. The thing that made ASFR and SFC the influential and lively fanzines that they were happened to be their letter columns. For a while Bruce let his run away and the focus drifted from the central issue of sf, but in any case there was always a fascinating dialogue established between the editor, the writer, the contributor and the reader. Without this spark of animating life I suspect that SCIENCE FICTION will not gain too much of a reputation. (It may well be that there was a letter column at some stage, but that it withered and died because it was not used properly by the readers. In this case there is nothing that can be done but to wonder about the actual level of serious interest in sf in Australia).

I seem

to have spent the best part of a page writing about what isn't in this fanzine so I suppose that I should do it some justice and mention what it does have. The 10th issue focuses on Cordwainer Smith and Stanislaw Lem while the 11th concentrates on Jack Vance. As the 11th issue was a special program issue for Tschaicon, at which Vance was the Guest of Honour, this seems reasonable and even a good idea. By far the best item in the two issues is Terry Dowling's very long exposition on Smith's Instrumentality series of stories. At times I thought that it was weighed down by an excess of quotations - especially ones from people other than Cordwainer Smith - but it seems to be the vogue and does little to hide the basic ideas that Terry drives at. The argument is long and fairly complex, and I doubt that any other fanzine editor here, or anywhere

else, would be interested in publishing this. I also wonder about the number of people who will have the staying power to read this from beginning to end. Of course this is a quibble and if somebody like Terry Dowling is going to go to the immense effort to research and write this we owe it to ourselves to do our best to understand what he is attempting to show us.

For me, the more interesting items in the 10th issue were the reviews (?) of three Australian books, all having as a plot device the business of time travel. The books that Van Ikin discussed were David Lake's The Man Who Loved Morelocks, Lee Harding's The Web of Time and Ruth Park's Playing Beatle Row. I have read none of these and so was thankful that Van had taken the trouble to summarise some of the elements of the stories as well as write in some detail about the underlying impulses of the authors and the good and bad points of their work. These reviews should serve as an example to anybody thinking of writing about sf, even though most of us have neither the ability or the training to write in the manner that these reviews have been, it is something to aim for. It also reminds us (or should remind us) that there is more to reviewing books than just saying what happened and what the reviewer thought about it, we should look to reviews to give an indication of the foundations upon which books and stories are created. An understanding of these basics gives a much more satisfactory idea of what a book or a story is like, rather than the off-the-cuff offerings which we are normally subjected to.

The other thing about these issues of SCIENCE FICTION which it is worth passing comment on is the way that they are presented. Readers who remember back a few years to ENIGMA would not take long to work out who the editor of these new fanzines are. Van Ikin has found a format that suits his needs and he is sticking with it. True, the covers and the internal art is a little less exciting, but the format of the text and the style of the headings is virtually unchanged. The result is a thoroughly workman like production which is easy to read and understand. As I'd be fairly sure that the editor isn't aiming at much more I think that this is a good example of functionalism in fanzine production, and it is something which other fanzine editors would do well to consider.

SCIENCE FICTION is edited by Dr Van Ikin, Department of English, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, W.A. 6009. Three issues may be had for \$4.50 or single issues cost \$1.70. Overseas people can get three issues for \$7.00. I do not hesitate to recommend this fanzine to anybody interested in the serious study of science fiction.

Moving to another Western Australian fanzine, one more in the usual fannish mould, I have to report that there are some good parts and some not-so-good parts. The fanzine is the first issue of GOBSTOPPER, edited, produced and largely written by Seth Lockwood.

Although this is a first issue of this particular fanzine Seth has been playing around with fanzines for the past year or so and that experience shows in this fairly well planned and executed offset and saddle stapled issue. For the most part the contents are well set out and pleasant to look at and the reproduction is excellent (if one can say that sort of thing about offset printing - which any trufan will tell you is a non event).

The good parts of this issue are the three main written contributions. Robin Johnson presents us with a Guest of Honour speech given at a conference held in an Australia which has developed into a very different continent from the one which we know with political divisions reflecting the different efforts at exploration which were carried out by the European colonial powers along the Australian coast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Only a small part of the continent (Tasmania in fact) was settled by the British... the rest I leave to your imagination. The speech and the report that goes along with it very cleverly give a lot of the background that a reader would need to understand the different political structure but I

wonder if it is not too clever for most readers.

The other two high points are Seth's own writing, firstly a report of a trip from Perth to Melbourne by car (what you might call an epic journey) and secondly a description of a visit to the Melbourne Concert Hall to hear a Percy Grainger concert. Both are well written and show a great deal of promise. Since I have a lot of difficulty in understanding why anybody would want to go and deliberately expose themselves to a whole concert of Grainger's music I found the first piece a lot more believable and enjoyable. I also thought that Seth's writing style was forced in places where he tried to gain a humorous effect with some written affectation which jarred. For example, there must be a better way to express the thought "I am, he admits without the slightest twinge of embarrassment, hardly no connoisseur of the mad notes gaily tripping. I'll listen to anything. But with this percussion infatuated composer, Australia's very own son of innovative musical perversion, swinging away -- ch, it was sweet."

Perhaps it is a phase that we all go through, when we try to assemble amazing collections of words into magnificent strings just for the sheer pleasure of doing it. Unfortunately most of us don't develop any real fluency with this sort of thing and it comes over as stilted verbosity - not what the authors generally intend. But despite this problem I was very glad to see that Seth had done this, it shows that he cares enough about what he is going to publish that he drafts out his own work and attempts to do something more satisfactory than just a first draft direct into the fanzine. I'm sure that if Seth keeps at this the effort will pay off in the long run.

The earlier piece is much more successful despite the same problems of inclination to waffle. The humor is more relaxed and flows much more easily. It is also in this piece that the value of drafting and re-drafting comes out more - it gives much greater control over the timing of humorous delivery and makes it possible to say something funny which also seems spontaneous.

An example which works is; "I had great fun trying to control the full beam and the spotlight when cars approached from the opposite direction, and could not understand the consternation in Grant's voice as, at one point, I managed to turn off all the lights as some leviathan freight truck bore down upon us."

The items which don't equal the rest of the issue are those by Skel (who seems oddly out of context and flat in a very short piece which is really no more than part of a letter of comment), the other piece which also fails is Seth writing large comments on a small letter from John Playford. There is no real context and the humor is much less developed and in most cases simply not funny.

Leaving those couple of blemishes aside this is an excellent first issue which should, after the doldrums of the second and third issues, pick up to be one of the best being published in Australia. If it is successful it will be because of the skills of the editor because Seth has shown that he has the potential to become an excellent fan writer. He also has a good eye for layout and production and if he can develop these skills together with a stable of good supporting writers I'm sure that we will all enjoy the results of his efforts.

GOBSTOPPER 1, edited by Seth Lockwood, 19 Coleby Street, Balcatta, W.A. 6021, is available for the usual, but not, apparently, for mere money.

Since I've just mentioned the "second and third issue doldrums" it seems only appropriate that I am now faced with writing about one. Since this is one of the most appalling fanzines it has been my unfortunate pleasure to read I'm not sure that "doldrums" is the sort of word that I should be using. This particular issue should serve as an example of a lot of things that a faned should simply avoid like the plague if she/he is going to ever produce something with a bit of polish and that is worth reading. I would like to think that in future issues this fanzine will get better but I fear that

the editor has already learned some bad habits which it may be difficult to unlearn.

The first and second issues of PARIAN showed some promise, but in this third issue Gerald Smith, the editor, has published nothing that is of any great interest and has produced it with such earnestness that the issue doesn't gain anything by at least being able to be some sort of parody. I think that most of Gerald's troubles stem from the fact that he is following a model of production which he is not suited too. He has read fanzines like WAHF-FULL or WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE and, either consciously or otherwise, modeled his efforts on those fanzines. Unfortunately Gerald lacks Jack's easy familiarity with a vast range of subjects and Jean's ability to bring in a whole lot of material on a subject that interests her, and so he is left, apparently floundering with some material which is neither well written nor interesting and a letter column which is, perhaps, the most abysmal part of the fanzine. And while some of the art is not bad some of it is pretty terrible too.

One of the problems that I have with John Alderson is that, on many occasions, I know little about the subject he is writing on and therefore feel inclined to hold my judgement on the facts that he uses and the way he interprets evidence. I most often trust writers to get that sort of thing right but when John writes in areas which I know about I find errors, or at least fairly major problems with interpretation of facts, and so I wonder about his accuracy outside my field of knowledge. At any rate, the particular Alderson item in this issue really doesn't do much one way or the other, being no more than an attempt to trace the root naming of Little Red Riding Hood in the story of the same name. It is very much of a non event and lends nothing to the issue.

The article by Harry Andruschak is too slight to bear consideration, some letters of comment are longer. On the other hand, Alf Katz begins his article by saying "I'm not an economist..." and then going on to prove the point by displaying his lack of knowledge of economics, political science and sociology for a page and a half. (For an example - Alf says that the thing which makes the working class possible is the "work ethic"; if one were to do away with that ethic one would destroy the working class. His trouble, it seems to me, is in confusing the names of things with the things in fact. Neither is Alf too careful with the terms that he uses; it seems that the thing he calls the "work ethic" is a shorthand description for the means by which power is exercised and people rewarded for the positions they hold and the roles they play in society. His idea of divisions in society seems to be based upon whether or not people are gainfully employed, not whether they are (in the traditional sense) owners of the means of production or "wage slaves". Surely the fact of being unemployed - that is, not being able to sell ones labour for a wage - is just as much a sign of being in the "working class" as actually earning a wage.)

The letter column, as I've already mentioned, is the worst part of the issue. The letters fall into a couple of basic categories - there are those which comment on or criticise previous issues and there are those which don't do much at all. One thing that I find particularly futile in fanzines is letter columns full of comments on that fanzine. The craft of fanzine production is partly one of illusion - when a person receives a fanzine they should find it easy and pleasant to read while being unaware of the work, planning and skill that has gone into it. When you read a novel, see a play or listen to a piece of music you are presented with a finished product which is the end result of all the skills and energies which its creator, or creators, can bring to bear on the subject - and so it should be with fanzines or any other form of self expression. Publishing and commenting on criticism does two harmful things to a fanzine, it stops the show while we are given a tour around to look at all the best forgotten failings of previous issues and, more importantly, it takes up the space which could have been spent in getting it right for a change.

This brings up the whole question of the reason for a

letter column, but I might give that a miss since I've got to leave room for one of my own.

My final observation on PARIAN 3 would have to be that it has very little to add to the fanzine culture in Australia (or anywhere) except that it shows, by example, the results of not having any worthwhile contents when you publish. Hopefully this will pick up in future issues but I wonder if there aren't so many fanzines being published in Australia at the moment that there are just not enough decent fan writers to keep them all supplied with acceptable contents.

PARIAN 3, edited by Gerald Smith, 8 Frawley Street, Frankston, Victoria 3199, Victoria. Available for the usual or 50¢ per issue or \$2.00 for four issues.

WE DO TOO GET LETTERS

Marc Ortlieb, PO Box 46, Marden, S.A. 5070.

From my own point of view the column by Rob Gerrand in issue ten suffers from brevity and over-generalisation. Gerrand starts off with a provocative statement, but never quite gets around to doing anything concrete with it. For a start, he takes us on what seemed a pointless trip back to the US sf of the fifties, but never quite gets beyond making lists, and then, half way through the piece he seems to remember what he set out to do in the first place, and gets back to Australian sf, only to dive almost immediately into the Australian film scene, leaving us with a quick mention of the magic names George Turner, Keith Antill, and Lee Harding, though not saying much about them. Indeed, I'd be interested in finding out what there is of value in Antill's writing. I tried to read Moon in the Ground, but found it even more boring than Dahlgren, and gave up after the first ten pages.

I'm afraid that this sort of hollow rhetoric gives sercon writing a bad name. Gerrand seems to be saying that Australian sf should be dealing with more realistic concerns, but he doesn't quite get around to saying why. He doesn't address himself to one of the basic problems of Australian sf as I see it - that it's terribly boring stuff, with very little in the way of plotting skill demonstrated in many of our novels at all. Harding's Displaced Person, for instance, is all very nice in the picture that it gives of Melbourne. It even introduces three rather interesting characters, but the ending is a terrible cop out. Carroll did a far better job of that in Through the Looking Glass. (Incidentally, from the kids I've spoken to who have read the book, I've received very similar criticism. They liked everything until the end.)

I'll

have to agree with you, Marc, that Rob's column in the previous issue was a bit short. I might also agree that it contained some generalisations, but I could not agree that it didn't seem to get anywhere. I should, perhaps, have allowed Rob to reply to this himself but, on the other hand, I don't really think that it should be necessary. The flow of ideas in the column seemed quite straight forward to me and they all link into a central idea which is the lack of American 50s traditional sf on the Australian product and the common ground between all the arts in Australia, including films and the writing of sf.

We can perhaps ask an interesting question; why is it that Australian films have been able to gain acceptance overseas and yet the same has not been so for our sf? Part of the answer might be in the financial structure of the arts business which can make good profits out of films and not out of books, it may be as a result of the growing power of films and the declining influence of books, or it might just be that it's been the right time and place for genius in Australian films while the fates have conspired to keep major talents out of local sf (or any other sort of sf for that matter). Since I am not familiar with non-sf publishing and writing in Australia I don't know if that industry is also a bit of a backwater. Perhaps somebody could enlighten me.

It's a pity that you didn't give some examples of the terribly boring and badly plotted novels that have been written here, just to give the rest of us something to think about. I have to admit that there has been a fair amount of boring stuff written here but then you'll have to admit that just as much boring stuff has been written in other parts of the globe as well. And are you sure that you're not confusing slow books with boring ones. I sometimes get the impression that there are people (like us) who come to science fiction through its pulp traditions and never quite get over the pacing of that sort of plotting and break neck speed - like the Anderson story which begins with the end of the world or, just to pick a character at random, the breakneck excitement of Kimball Kinnison saving the Galaxies. These days such stuff may be regarded as crude, but it still has an iron grip on many of the people who become dedicated sf readers and fans. I'm one of them and I often get bored with the speed of some writing... on the other hand I more often get annoyed with the shallowness and crudity of a lot of the new sf that I read which has come out of that same pulpy mould.

One story which comes instantly to mind, because I've read it so recently, is "Rails Across the Galaxy" which was published in recent issues of Analog. The thing picked me up and raced along at such a frantic pace that I scarcely had time to think about the possibility of events happening in the way that they were supposed to. I suppose that the whole point of that particular style of writing is to make sure that you haven't got time to get off the story and have a look around at the ideas that it is based on and the tricks of plotting which make the impossible happen. It's only after the story has reached a grand breakneck finale and shot you out into the real world beyond that you have time to ponder on what has been sold to you as a glowing gem but turns out to be half a dozen pen-size torches lashed together with bits of sticky tape and with almost flat batteries. When it is whirled fast enough it looks pretty good. So, which is the best sort of writing in the long run, and how do we recognise good local writing when we see it? Does Australian writing have to fit an overseas formula to be good?

I find nothing to disagree with in your comments about the three fanzines, other than to question your inclusion of Gerrard with Foyster and Turner. I'm not sure about your philosophy in suggesting that Jack should be using the more tried and true writers. I feel that a fanzine tends to attract to it the sort of writer who suits the general feel of the zine, and John Newman suits Jack's style of fanzine far better than, say, Turner would, though I'm sure that Jack would think twice before rejecting a piece by Turner. Your statement seems to hint that you'd like to see WAHF-FULL turn into one of those crusty Melbourne-type fanzines that you used to get before the WorldCon... I can't see that happening.

Joseph Nicholas's piece was beautifully written, and, if this is an example of what his trip report is going to be like, then it will be well worth the wait. I hope you are sending a copy of this issue to Ted White, and the other American Joseph Nicholas knockers. (True, they'll probably only notice the bit where he pokes fun at SF in Dimension, but what the hell...)

Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER, UK

"It's a funny thing," said Judith as she unwrapped the selotape from ORNITHOPTER 10 (while making the lunchtime sandwiches with her feet and boiling eggs between her teeth), "but whenever I see something this colour blue lying on the doormat I know it's an Australian fanzine." And then she took it off to work with her, leaving me to struggle with the profundities of this morning's Guardian and the shock horror news that the Leaderene may be thinking of calling an election next summer after all. But strap me if Judith isn't right: the blue of the paper used in British and American fanzines is different (albeit in an almost indistinguishable and ineluctable way) from that used in Australian ones. Perhaps it's got something to do with the

manufacturers' determination to capture each nation's individual climatic characteristics by reproducing the colour of the sky...

I must say that I felt pretty chuffed at what else you said about me - almost embarrassed, even. "Charming, delightful and witty"? "Infectious smile"? Aw, shucks - I feel like I ought to stuff my hands in my pockets, blush, cast my eyes downwards, and kick at the paving stones, I really do. (But it'll annoy the hell out of Ted White, you can bet your life on it. Probably provoke him into writing a sixteen-page letter of comment about how wrong you are and how I am to be abjured and denigrated on every conceivable occasion.)

Mention of Ted White (even parenthetically) brings me to your comments about history in the penultimate paragraph on page twenty-five. Yes, oh yes, how much I agree with you. I suppose I shouldn't really go on about the lengthy and rather pointless postal argument that he and I are having about the "true meanings" of the words "tradition" and "progress" since it really has nothing whatever to do with what you said (quite apart from which he doubtless won't thank me for making public what he might consider as a private dispute, but he seems to spend half his fanzines talking about me so why shouldn't I devote some space to talking about him?), but I do get pretty pissed-off with his apparently dogmatic insistence that the best fanzines ever were published during the fifties and that if we do not seek to emulate what they did then we cannot hope to produce equally terrific fanzines in the here and now. It doesn't seem to have occurred to him that (a) if the traditions to which he's harking back were as valid as he claims them to be then they'd still be alive and adhered to in the present (and, in consequence, that in seeking to revive them he's trapped in a view of fanzines that has already demonstrated its obsolescence) and (b) that writers and editors with the talent and wit to produce good fanzines do so by responding to their own needs and concerns (and those of the time in which they live) and not to some other person's or age's prescription as to what is good or bad. Ignoring these simple and obvious truths, however, White is thus enmeshed in the self-contradiction of pretending that we can only advance into the future by fixing our eyes firmly on the past, and a more ridiculous paradox I cannot imagine. To which he would perhaps respond by claiming that we have to know where we've been in order to know where we're going, and this I would not deny: but there's a world of difference between the critical re-evaluation of the past through the eyes of the present (which is what history is all about, after all, and an attitude which is more or less subsumed in the idea of "knowing where we've been") and the slavish recapitulation of the past that he's pushing. That's not history: it's hero-worship, and it can lead only to stagnation and ennui, a dead-end entirely devoid of the creativity and innovation that he claims to uphold.

Or perhaps you've been spared the copies of PONG and GAMBIT in which his views of fanhistory and fan traditions have been trumpeted? In which case. good on yer; but if not... you have my heartfelt commiserations.

The only Ted White fanzine that I have is that issue of GAMBIT with age old convention reports and the like. I am quite on the outer when it comes to the discussion that you and Ted have been having, and happily so. All the same, I'd have thought that it would be impossible to produce a fifties fanzine in the eighties. It may be possible to emulate the style of a fanzine from that age, but then in a fandom the size we have to put up with today, and the rampaging impersonality that it has forced upon us, the ideal of replicating the past would not be possible.

Perhaps fandom has now become big enough that part of it can indeed go off and pretend to be in the past, it might prove to be a much more comfortable sort of fandom than the modern one. The way to do that sort of thing would be to revive the old traditions and brand those who did not abide by them as fakefans. I'm not convinced that this sort of fundamentalist creed is the way to go even though I think it is quite attractive, since I find a lot of the old fannish traditions very entertaining and comforting (if I'm one of

the "in" crowd).

A real problem is that most of us really have no idea of what fanzines from that earlier period were like and what sorts of things the fans in those days did to entertain themselves. The only word that I have on the subject is what has come to me through the FANCY II and a couple of other odd sources; the other source is what people like Ted White and Dan Steffan care to tell me. I do not doubt that they are quite honest in their views, but they are interpreting the past for us and so if we were to follow their lead we might end up in only one part of what fandom used to be like. In many ways I've found the various clues that I've had of what fandom was like in the past very useful in organising how I am going to go about doing things. But the way that I choose to go is determined more by existing conditions than by what Walt Willis or Lee Hoffman did around thirty years ago. Those fans may thank us for still regarding their work as good, but I don't think that they would thank us for laying on their shoulders the responsibility for the way we order our fannish lives here and now.

On the other hand... in stating, as you do, that reprints of articles from the past can only be appreciated by today's readers if they are buttressed with material that sets them in some sort of context, you rather let yourself down by not providing said context for your reprint of W.D. Veney's "Pre-War Fanzines In Australia". Its subject is, it's true, an interesting one in itself (devoid of any actual criticism of the fanzines it discusses though it may be), but it strikes me that to say only that it was published sometime before the 1955 Sydney convention is somewhat insufficient - we need to know (if it's at all possible for such to be provided) what the times in which it was written were like, what reasons led to its being written in the first place, what impact it had on the fandom of the time, and (considering the amount of purely anecdotal material that it contains) whether or not it can be regarded as a definitive, verifiable history of its subject. And if it is not possible to provide such information, then I think we should at least be told more about its author and the fanzine in which it appeared; at the very least, such would provide us with some background against which to fix it.

While I take the point of your criticism, and admit that I should have done a bit more research on the matter, the problem of pre-1960s fandom is one which presents a person like me with rather difficult obstacles. The truth of the matter is that I know next to nothing about Veney and the reasons for his writing that article.

It seems to me that, unlike other fandoms, Australian fandom has really had only three or four phases. The first was the Sydney dominated fandom up until the early fifties; the next phase was the Melbourne dominated fandom that lasted on, in one way or another, until the 1966 Convention when the third phase began. That third phase is, depending on your perspective, either still going or has gradually evolved into a fourth phase somewhere along the line. For me the problem is that the participants in the different phases were fairly dis-similar in inclination and so traditions have not been passed on. I know very little about what happened in that early Sydney phase and so had little to say on the matter. I hope that as I progress through the series of "What Happened Before Aussiecon" a patchwork will be built up and items which now appear in isolation will start to find themselves in a context.

As to whether the Veney view of the past is accurate - I will treat it as such until I find out that it is not. There didn't seem to be any particular axes that he was grinding, but then I know so little about the era that I might not notice a bias which was obvious at the time the article was first published.

Anyway, many thanks for ORNITHOPTER 10, and (dare I say it) how terrific it is to see my article in print at last. Mind you, re-reading it, I'm struck by the amazing coyness of the reference to Judith Hanna in the opening paragraphs: merely "spending the night at the Lonergans", indeed! At least, it seems coy

when you take into consideration the originating address of the letter from her that you printed on the pages preceding my article and the fact that everyone who knows anything about us is by now well aware that she has since moved over here to - er, well, maybe we won't go into that.

Okay... but some of us, especially Melbourne fans, need to have such things spelled out before we make the connection.

Judith Hanna, 22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER, UK.

One effect of having moved to Britain is that I get to hear various British fans saying just what you say about Australian fanzines - that they're boring. Mind you, they also say this about some British and some American fanzines, but nonetheless, its arguable that Aussie fanzines, on the whole, don't have a good reputation over here. "Take themselves too seriously", is one comment, "sloppy reproduction" another. I haven't heard anyone echo your comment of "not enough intellectual excitement" (a very serious Melbournian comment that), but, yes, equally true of at least most of the local product, not to mention overseas fanzines too.

Receiving and enjoying Aussie fanzines at this distance, and at the same time reading the British and American fanzines that land on the doorstep, I find I enjoy the Aussie ones at least as much as the others: no doubt this has a lot to do with the fact that I know the personalities behind them, and so I can fill in a lot of the unstated background context. But I have to admit that Australians, on the whole, don't make an effort to put that context into words, and so many, like for instance Jack Herman and Jean Weber who are, in person, strong personalities, come over as no more than didactic editorial presences; they make no more effort to contextualise their contributors and sketch in a spot of the gossip background than they do to explain and project themselves.

@

I suppose that you could say that Australian fans live out the old bush myth of the taciturn character who is full of all sorts of knowledge but so keen on maintaining their reserve that they will not speak unless pushed to it. And when they do speak, it is only in non-personal terms.

The gossip, back-biting, and general personality is something that the British do seem to specialise in, and because what they write about is themselves and their friends and enemies, strangers stumbling across the odd British fanzine find themselves being told all sorts of background information about what fans and fandom over here are like. It all gets a bit incestuous at times, people start taking fandom itself and what everyone is doing to it rather earnestly, instead of simply getting on with what they want to make of it. Certainly, there's an attitude of parochial smugness, a taking for granted that "we write the best fanzines, so why do we need to read any of the foreign rubbish (unless it's talking about us)". But that can only be tackled by thrusting you-beaut foreign fanzines they can't dismiss in their faces, and challenging them to ignore that. But on the whole, the dominant flavour of British fanzines, that cult of the rampant personality, seems to me to be the essential quality in concocting the perfect fanzine. After all, isn't fanwriting and publishing a social hobby, a way of keeping in touch with and getting to know people through exchanging bits of paper, and isn't personality what makes you feel that you do know a person?

The intellectual challenge you seek in WAHF FULL (for instance) is one aspect of one kind of personality, and it's something I like to see. It's not something that seems to occur very often in the fanzines I remember having read recently, and seems more frequent in Aussie fanzines than in others: we have John Alderson with his mythology that outstrips the speed of sense, Marc's guessing-game faan-fiction and occasional pseudo-science, Jean on rape, and others I can't call to mind: perhaps in many of those cases, what's needed is an editor with the insight and selfconfidence to prune some of the material down to a zippier form, and to enter into debate with the issues raised,

rather than leave it to a future letter-column. Such an editor, by trimming material so it seemed interesting to her/him, and by stating their own views about what they print, would be impressing more of that personality stuff I mentioned earlier into their fanzines, rather than abandoning it to strangers.

That's probably one way to go about it. Editing is certainly an important thing and some faneds would do well to completely delete some of the stuff that they now print as well as tighten up other material. There is, of course, a certain amount of discretion needed in fanzines because the written material that the editors get is costing them nothing and the only payment that the authors get is egoboo - and there isn't much of that left by the time some heavy handed editor has hacked away at a piece. As for the idea of an editor commenting on contributions; I'm not sure that it is a good idea because it predisposes the reader to judge the contribution, based upon what they have read about it from the editor. There is also a certain amount of courtesy involved, and that small payment of egoboo would be very quickly dispersed if the author finds that her two page opus is followed by a similar length of editorial criticism.

This relates, I think, to your comments about the social nature of fan writing. People who write for fanzines do so because they want to entertain their friends (or potential friends) and tell them things which they hope will be interesting. The payment is a social one whereas the payment for professional writing is in hard currency and the hope that a lot of people out there, who the writer will never know about, will be interested or entertained by what has been written. Although we may expect no less quality in one form of writing than in the other, the different reasons for writing to one audience than to the other would mean that different styles are used.

Perhaps I should attempt to do my bit for intellectual content by using a bit more jargon... not that I admit that my previous letter used much of that substance, of which I strongly disapprove except when used in jest. One way of telling bad sociology at a glance is if it's so overladen with jargon that the writer seems to be more out to disguise their own confusion than to communicate what they think or have found out. From the tenor of your reply I gather that a hallmark of bad history is a wholesale slathering of sociological jargon designed, no doubt, to serve the very same purpose. Mind you, one terrible problem sociologists face is that as soon as they settle on a useful word, "function", "situation",... along come the politicians and pseudo-philosophers and pinch it for a buzz-word, whereupon it acquires all the vague and wooly common-usage ambiguities it was supposed to avoid.

One of the problems with what fan history I've read so far is that most of it seems very boring to one who wasn't involved; far more so than reading about the old bones and stones of archeology and palaeontology, two subjects that fascinate me. Would I find fanhistory more fascinating if it were older? No, I think it's the presentation that's at fault, not the subject matter. Veney's article, like the Molesworth history of what seems like roughly the same era (ante-Aussiecon = antediluvian?) is mostly a catalogue of names, linked with other names and places. It lacks any of the sense of personality that no doubt permeated the events at that time. As you yourself say, merely reprinting articles of the time is no better: as the last issue of GAMBIT, with its resuscitated twenty-year-old world con reports showed, old writing can be even more boring than the same thing done recently, when it at least has the virtue of topicality for at least some of its readership. Perhaps the approach Joseph used in his tailpiece to *BY BRITISH*, an essay written for the modern audience, relating the old and past events to the perspective of the writer's present is the best bet; and using liberal helpings of quotes from the original articles in the course of such a discussion would provide them with the context they need in order to get across whatever it is that makes you think them worth reprinting.

Richard Faulder, c/ Department of Agriculture, Yanco, NSW 2703

I often say "strewth", a word I have retained in my vocabulary for the same reason I have refused to incorporate "guy" - a desire to defend Australian culture from creeping Americanisation which I have held for many years, since I have never been able to see any basis in a superior American culture for this trend, only in a more efficient public relations machine. This is in spite of the fact that I've never met an American I disliked - possibly because I've never met any of the brash American tourists of infamy. (You will no doubt point out that I have a weakness for American-style fast food, and I could reply with the old line about consistency being a hobgoblin, but there's more to it than that. Whatever else you may say about such food, it is there whenever you walk into an outlet, after at most the briefest of waits, and the food is well cooked. A well-cooked pie, chiko roll or Australian-style hamburger will beat McDonalds or Kentucky Fried Salmonella every time. The trouble is, even when you do eventually get your piece of Australian take-away food, it is usually poorly cooked. Chiko rolls are especially susceptible to this problem, due to the fat not being hot enough - I can cook perfect chiko-rolls every time, while the meat pie has increasingly become a misnomer over the years.)

That's all very interesting, Richard, but where can you get a McDonalds or Kentucky Fried Whatsit out there on the fringes of civilisation? Or do you have to make epic journies to get your daily required dosage of such food? I must also say that I admire your moral courage in admitting to eating such foods with relish, as it were. Most fanzines you read these days mention food as some sort of gourmet delight, not the sort of stuff that you have to consume in order to stay alive and in good working order.

You've probably heard me remark before on the saltbush plains of the west, but your mention of the Nullarbor reminded me again, especially since the area around Hay, Balranald and points west is totographically speaking, even flatter than the Nullarbor plain. You stand there amidst the saltbush, which stretches as far as the eye can see, underneath the empty blue bowl of the sky, and lose your sense of perspective. Is that object actually a distant tree, or merely a slightly larger saltbush?

I enjoyed Joseph Nicholas' piece, but I don't intend to stop travelling on planes either. The trip itself soon becomes boring, but take-offs and landings, especially if you're sitting next to the wing and have some appreciation of what all the activity thereon is about, continue to fascinate.

Indeed, especially when the spoilers go up and the flaps go down and you find yourself looking down through large areas of open sky where there once used to be solid and reassuring metal. I reckon that they should have little smoke generators on the leading edges of wings so that the passengers can see how the air is flowing over the wing, it sometimes happens when you are flying through fog and you can see the uses that wing fences and the like have.

Paul Kennedy, 13 William Street, Cambridge Park, NSW 2750.

I received your fanzine the other day, but no letter! So over the last week or so I have been trying to work out how you got my address and two, why you sent us ORNITHOPTER 10. All I can assume is that you either wish to trade for TIME LOOP, or you want me to subscribe.

I have enclosed a copy of TIME LOOP in return for the issue of your fanzine, but after reading through it I have to answer negatively. Your fanzine does not fall into my area of interest in fanzines and does not have the things that I look for in the type of contents you carry. So I would have to reject an offer to trade on a permanent basis or to subscribe. By the way, I did like your information on pre war fanzines.

While I was a bit taken aback by your letter, Paul, I am grateful that you bothered to write. Most people who are

not interested simply don't bother to respond.

The reason that you got the issue of ORNITHOPTER was because in recent months there has been quite a discussion in several fanzines about the differences between media and mainstream fandoms and I thought that it might be an idea to find out what life is like on the other side. It also seems to me that even though I primarily derive my interest in sf from the printed work and you get your entertainment from the film and tv versions, we are still basically interested in the same thing. I am bemused at the way in which you conduct your fanac, it seems oddly business like to me, but then I get the impression that things may happen differently in your corner of fandom, on a much more formal basis. It had, for example, never occurred to me that I should send a letter with a fanzine that I'm sending for the first time; I'd previously thought that people who I came across in other fanzines (which is where I get most of my addresses) would be aware of most of the fannish traditions and act accordingly. But perhaps we just don't hold a common set of values - while I might not find your fanzine very good or very interesting I am still interested in what you and your friends are doing, I had expected the feeling to be mutual. My mistake.

In regard to the column entitled "The Good, The Bad and The Indifferent", I feel that you really do not know what you are talking about. I find it hard to believe anyone can say there are no great Australian fanzines at the moment, when it would be near impossible to even hear of the existence of all the fanzines in this country, let alone actually see them. How can anyone make such a judgement and then also make the comment that most people in Australia would agree that Q36 is the best Australian fanzine. Rubbish. I have never heard of it, as would many many other sf fans. Why? Easy, it doesn't fall into their area of interest. I will buy fanzines on "Doctor Who" and some on "Blake's 7", I will trade only for fanzines like DATA and WAHF-FULL, as for the rest I am not interested.

The other point is that you do not mention why a fanzine is great. I mean, what you look for in a zine, which could vary a lot with person to person. I feel presentation is one of the major points of a fanzine, along with regularity, good information and meeting your objectives and aims.

If I knew what it was that made a "great" fanzine I wouldn't spend as much time as I do pondering on it, I'd be producing the thing. One of the reasons that I am trying to review a few fanzines in depth is to form some idea of what a really good fanzine has. I have no doubts that my views are personal ones, I expect that other people will differ from my views and would like them to tell me why they disagree. If this sort of dialogue were to take place then we might all be a lot better off.

As for your suggestion that we have to know about and see every fanzine in Australia before we can make a judgement, that is just nearsighted and perhaps shows the limitations of your own interest. I keep my ear close enough to the ground to get a fair idea of what is being published in Australia. While I might not hear of everything I get the impression that I do get to hear about the fanzines that are good enough to matter. There is a filtering process involved here, and it is the same in all areas of human endeavour. I do not expect that you will have seen, or want to see, every sf film and tv show that has been made. But you know enough about what's going on to know what to look out for and what not to bother with.

If you've never heard of Q36 it's because you aren't interested enough to find out about all the fanzines that are being published in Australia. I could not blame you for that because it does not fall within your area of interest. However, I would hate to think that my interests were so limited that I did not bother to find out about what else is being published in Australia, and since I am interested enough I think that my views could be a little more informed than yours on this particular matter.

The other thing I should mention is that there is obviously a lot of difference between the fannish traditions which I understand and the standard operating procedures that you understand. This means that while we may have a lot in common there are also differences which make our fannish cultures quite alien to each other. Your comment about "objectives and aims" had me stumped for a little while. The only things that I have along that line is to publish a good enjoyable fanzine. I find that a laudable aim in itself, unlinked with any other outside stimulus. Fanzines produced by media fans seem to lack that central core of being, and could not exist outside the framework of an external reality. Of course, one of the problems with fanzines which exist to be no more than perfect fanzines in their own right have is losing contact with the original motivation which is sf. You may have already noticed that.

There were a few other letters too: Joan Dick sent an interesting letter of some of her flying experiences; Jack Herman who wrote, among other things' *"I find some of Joseph's sentences begin to rival Diane's quoted masterpiece."* and *"Rob Gerrard hasn't been doing his homework. Bert Chandler's latest two or three novels of the Grimes series, including The Anarch Lords, are full of contemporary Australian references and satire."*; John Snowden, who mentioned that Graham Stone has been delivering a series of talks on the early history of sf at Sydney Futurian meetings; Jean Weber, who didn't seem overly incensed by my comments about her fanzine and said that she kept missing where one item in the issue finished and another ended (it's quite simple really, when you come to an underlined heading that's the beginning of a new section); and Joseph Hanna-Rivero who commented, *"I cannot understand why Australia has been slack in publishing science fiction magazines. I have not seen one quality and regular Aussie sf magazine on the newsstands. For instance, what has become of "Futuristic Tales", I have not seen an issue of this magazine since February this year."*

Just to take up on Joseph's point for a moment, the whole business of the rise and fall of Australian sf magazines is probably something that would repay a bit of study. I suspect that the problem lies partly in difficulties that publishers of such magazines have in getting them distributed on a regular basis to adequate outlets, and partly in the packaging and the presentation of the magazines. For example, Valma and I were recently in a Canberra bookshop and happened past the science fiction shelf. Perched there on the shelves were copies of the local fiction magazine "Crux", together with the latest issue of "Science Fiction Review". Now SFR is a competently produced fanzine but nothing to set the blood on fire and have me buying it on impulse. But along side Dick Geis's effort "Crux" looked a very poor magazine instead, merely a saddle stapled publication (perhaps about B5 in size) which had neither been collated and stapled neatly nor trimmed. It simply did not look worth the price of admission and so I didn't buy it.

I am well aware of the cost of getting things printed in Australia these days. And I know that cost is not the only problem, there may also be the lack of access to decent art and to people who know how to deal with layout and those sorts of things. They have to be overcome before people are going to be interested in reading the words that the magazine has to offer, and they need skills which some aspiring magazine editors probably don't have. More to the point, these days the business of launching and supporting a magazine through the initial stages will cost tens of thousands of dollars to do on a large scale, and scale is what makes such a venture successful.

The only person who seems to have come out of the back-yard publishing business at all well is Paul Collins, and he has probably only survived because he saw that there was no future in the magazines in Australia and went into book publishing. Norstrilia Press bypassed the magazine business all together and went straight into books. All the same, it is a real pity that there seems to be no proven publisher in Australia who is willing or able to publish short science fiction on a frequent and regular basis. That is the sort of thing that would be needed to liven up sf writing in this country.

THE VIEW FROM THE EDGE

Rob Gerrard

Reading parts of Bruce Gillespie's SF Commentary Reprint Edition: First Year 1969 is not just an exercise in nostalgia. The monumental effort Bruce put into typesetting 152 three column pages in what looks like seven point type is something for which we should all be thankful. The result is a handsome, readable tome which shows what a remarkably good magazine SF Commentary was, even in those days. This column is not, however, attempting to review the Reprint Edition. I have browsed through it, enjoying particularly the essay 'Beginnings' that linked each of the eight issues and provides an historical perspective and explanation of the circumstances behind the production of the magazine, but any proper consideration should await a detailed reading.

Rather than premature analysis, then, what I shall do instead is focus on a small controversy that fizzed and sputtered its way in those early issues.

John Brunner started it - or, depending on the point of view, reacted to it - by taking offence at a comment of Jack Wodhams'. Wodhams (Brunner believed) had implied that Brunner was a hack.

Bruce Gillespie replied that in Australia "any writer who works at frantic speed is thought of as a 'hack'". Bruce was "unaware of the extremely derogatory tone that the word 'hack' has in all sf fields but the Australian". He added that "Vivaldi, Dostoyevsky, Mozart, and Dickens may be included among the world's greatest hacks".

Brunner, somewhat mollified, wrote back a long letter in which, nonetheless, he pointed out that Bruce was "still begging the main question. Calling a writer a hack is a considerable insult. ...No, a hack, by convention, is not someone who merely produces a lot of work, but someone who disregards literary quality and makes no attempt to avoid cliché, being solely concerned to fill a given number of pages for a set fee." Brunner then went on in considerable detail to evidence the literary merits and variety of his work, adding as an aside: "the one single invariable principle I abide by is that I must enjoy what I'm doing. I get fun out of composing a dirty limerick with a tricky rhyme scheme; I make up crosswords; I ...".

After this aside (Brunner didn't say whether one could enjoy hack work) he went on to list some of the projects then before him, and came finally to make the point - which set me going on this piece - about the short-lived magazine "Vision of Tomorrow". As Brunner wrote: "I hate to say this, but I have to. For me, it suffers from the worst possible defect for an sf magazine. It belongs to the past, and not to the future. It seems to me to have no relevance to the world of Black Power and Viet nam, LSD and the Pill, H-bombs and the Rolling Stones, Chomsky's analysis of fundamental communication modes and Washoe the talking chimp - indeed, to anything which strikes me as foreshadowing the actual world of tomorrow."

This point pulled me up in my tracks, as it were, for it seemed markedly similar to a point I was trying to make in my previous column.

Yet while I felt that I agreed with Brunner, I still also felt that there was something being glossed over, that there was something not quite satisfactory about his argument. I had tried to come to terms with this something in my previous column, by acknowledging the worth and relevance of 'dream' fiction (if I can use that term), as opposed to world conscious or 'realistic' fiction.

Seeing Brunner's point expressed so acutely, however, raised the whole matter again. As expressed by him, it almost seemed he was suggesting that the only interesting fiction was that which adopted a sort of realism. Perhaps, then, what I was seeking was somehow to marry those aspects and attitudes, which could be termed realistic, with an essential poetry or Jungian sense of wonder.

Some sort of amalgum of the two approaches. And there my thoughts muddled. Where are the new Shakespeares writing their Tempests?

Incidentally, Jack Wodhams also wrote back explaining how his "esoteric use of the term 'hack'" was strongly imbued with empathy, and that he admired the work of Brunner, classing him "with Harlan Ellison, Isaac Asimov, Ann McCaffrey, Ray Bradbury - all top-grade hacks".

Brunner then wrote to Wodhams, who relayed to SF Commentary readers "Have received letter of pardon from John Brunner, have been cleansed of my sins, and we are all very matey, thank goodness."

All this says something about hacks, I suppose, but doesn't get us very far in the quest for relevance in fiction. And as for Shakespeare, wasn't he too just a hack?

GETTING AROUND AT CIRCULATION II

Somewhere or other somebody had written that nobody was writing that good old crunchy convention report like we used to get before whenever-it-was. So when I got myself ready to go down the road to Circulation II I went with a stack of filing cards in my pocket and my pen full of ink; I was ready to capture on paper all those witty comments and jot down the kernel of those juicy moments when fans are caught in the act of doing something merely ordinary.

I suppose that it would be no great news that over the period of a day and a half I did not note down anything at all on my cards. Most people who have been to more than one or two conventions will know the futility of trying to keep track of what goes on during moments of excitement (such as at conventions) and don't even bother to weigh themselves down with unnecessary weight - it inhibits movement when, as any military tactitian would tell you, it is necessary to be able to outmaneuvre adversaries such as people collecting money for DUFF, the enthusiastic neofan and that intensely boring person who is just dying to take up the conversation of Kurt Vonnegut Jr. where you left it two years earlier.

But I'm sure you don't want to read about my problems, you'd much rather know about Circulation II.

For the technically minded and the historians among you reading this in 2032, the convention was held at the Ainsle Hotel off in a normally quiet part of Canberra on the weekend of 27 and 28 November 1982. (For that future historian, if she also knows her cricket history, that was the same weekend that the second test match of the 1982/83 Ashes series was played in Brisbane and Kepler Wessels made 162 and almost carried his bat in his maiden test innings. Who says that all knowledge isn't contained in fanzines - it is if you only know where to look.) Last year the first Circulation was held earlier in the year, on a holiday weekend which just happened to co-incide with the end of a very long skiing season. As a result Sydney fans on their way back on the Monday afternoon had become caught up in a magnificent traffic jam which stretched for miles and miles and they didn't get home till very late. Because of this the Canberra fans organising the event this year thought to play it safe and held the convention later, just to be sure; and of course the snow was very poor this year and you could have held the convention in the middle of August and there would have been no trouble.

The Ainsle Hotel is a magnificent old pile of a building, it must have been one of the social centres of Canberra forty or so years ago. These days it has fallen on hard times and has changed hands more times than Dick Geis has won Hugos. I understand that this caused some problems for the convention committee but they bore up bravely and hardly anybody knew about their troubles unless they happened to see a worried huddle or furtive scuttlings. Sandra Hyde spent almost the entire weekend sitting in the reception area, playing cards and being on hand. Jean Weber seemed to be just about anywhere that you cared to look, she must have had what they call a "roving brief" to keep an

eye open for trouble. I don't know whether she found any though there were a few worried looks on Sunday morning when, it was rumored, the Hotel jacked up its prices without notice.

Most people seemed to spend most of the weekend just sitting around and chattering to other people. Some were mobile and others were fixed. Just as Sandra had set herself up in the reception area Christine and Derrick Ashby had a huge table loaded down with all sorts of stuff that they were trying to pass off onto the unsuspecting Convention member in the grand sounding name of "Melbourne in '85". Cindy Smith was there with her very popular silver jewellery and as well as another book seller there was poor old Lewis Morley who was selling off materials produced by a mutual acquaintance of ours.

One of the nice things about this Circulation (and the first one too) was that Marilyn Pride and Lewis stayed with us. This gave us a chance to catch up on the news and, of course, exchange news and views about that acquaintance. They arrived in Canberra late on Friday evening looking exhausted but were revived bright and early the next morning and there are few things more pleasant in life than sitting around the breakfast table conversing in the style which is suitable to that time in the morning - muted mutterings which become more complex as the time passes.

The convention was enjoyable also because it involved a lot of just sitting around in various poses with different people just chattering. Which is, of course, just what a convention like Circulation is designed for. A most pleasant afternoon was spent in Jack Herman & Cathy's room looking at the cricket and passing the odd comment. Later on events adjourned to what passed for a bar where there was a supposed panel item on fannish travels but really turned into Eric Lindsay and Peter Toluzzi telling stories on each other about the events that were supposed to have taken place on their trips to the US these past few months. I, being a member in good standing of clean and wholesome fandom, find it difficult to believe that all those things happen. Perhaps it all has to do with the circles in which you mix, I certainly don't recall reading about any such activities in Marc Ortlieb's report of what he saw in the US last year. I would find it very difficult to believe that a whole country could become so changed in a mere year.

Later on in the day Peter Toluzzi presented a slide show of his DUFF trip (about time that somebody who has won DUFF got around to letting us know what had happened - thanks Peter) and in the middle of all the usual sights and pictures there were a couple of slides of what apparently passed for fanac over there these days - a person with absolutely nothing on but manacles and whipped cream. No wonder the quality of US fanzines is, generally speaking, not what it might be.

From what Valma and I could find, there was only one room party in the evening. Just about everybody was there for it was a big room as far as the conveniences of the hotel went. In one corner Marc Ortlieb sat and tinkered with his guitar and occasionally did a filk song. My favourite was a fannish version of the old Them song "Gloria", called "Gafia". (The only trouble was that he left out the good bit about it coming to his house, coming to his room, and making him feel alright. Perhaps he thought that it was a little bit too explicite for trufannish ears.)

Meal times are usually quite entertaining too. A little party of four fans decided that they would sneak off to a Vietnamese restaurant and gradually found that there were another fifteen or so tagging along with them. The staff at the restaurant coped very nicely and hardly mixed up the orders or anything like that. Still, they made us realise what was what because the original gang of four were served well in advance of the rest of us and Helen Swift practised a smile which could be best described as "serve you gate-crashing lower forms of life right" as she consumed another prawn (or whatever - it was a long table).

And then there was the next day when I, as the

native guide, took a small bunch of people down to Civic for some lunch. We ended up at a little out-door place which I wouldn't recommend to anybody. The frugal meal that we ordered took the best part of an hour to arrive, and even then I didn't get what I'd ordered. The European man who apparently runs the place came out and grumbled to us a couple of times about the standard of the Asian help-- just to let us know that he was unhappy too so what did we have to complain about. Apart from that we entertained ourselves with the usual fannish chattering and Catherine Circosta and Marc Ortlieb held hands and gazed at each other a lot. I warned them of the dangerous effect that true love has on fanac, but I don't think they paid much attention.

The main trouble with Circulation II was that one and a half days was not long enough. The convention was only just getting going when it had to close down.

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CONCLUSION

In this final section there is a large open area which has been especially reserved for the business of telling you what's what. Some of you will find that it is occupied by nothing but an empty space (and there's nothing wrong with that) while others will find that the area is disfigured by a hideous Big Red *A*. What this disgusting sign means is that we may have come to a parting of the ways. What happens next is really up to you. If you respond to this issue in one of the duly prescribed ways (see the front page) you will receive further issues, but if you fail the test you won't.

Isn't that the height of simplicity? Who said that we here in Canberra live in the midst of miles of bureaucratic red tape? No forms or complex questionnaires, just a simple continued inertia will ensure that we will both save ourselves some time and effort in the future.

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And, those of you who didn't get it this time might be interested to know that I keep a little list and that you could be seeing the vile mark in the near future. Perhaps you might consider doing something now to preserve yourself from the blight. Of course it's up to you, and I would do nothing which would stir you to activity if you didn't feel like it, especially in the hot weather when there's cricket to be watched. All the same...