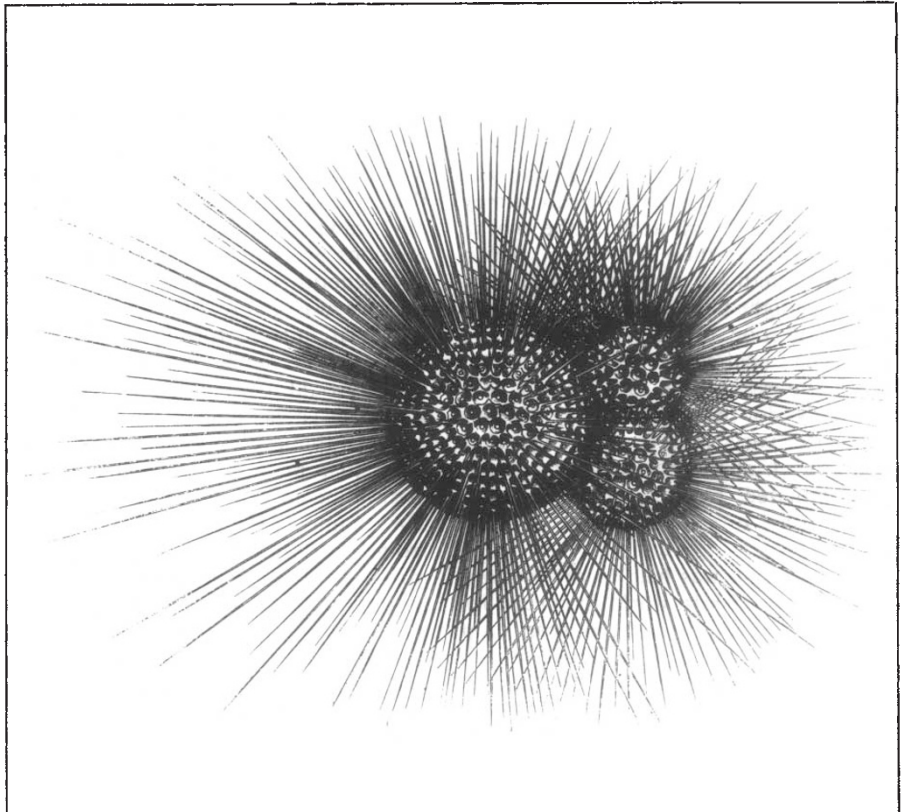


fronted with enormous amounts of new data relating to the near and far side of the Moon, Commission 17 of the International Astronomical Union set up a subcommittee on lunar nomenclature. They decided to extend the previous system of nomenclature to the reverse side of the Moon and to name craters after deceased scientists, special attention (and presumably preference) being given to astronomers. It was also proposed (*Trans. IAU, XIII B*, 103; 1967) that the nomenclature should be widened to include people associated with the present space effort and particularly cosmonauts and astronauts and others who have lost their lives in space vehicles. It was also thought that named craters should be at least 18 km in diameter. Conservatism and caution were stressed, the committee members pointing out that the names would be permanent, so only names of permanent renown should be used, revision and reassignment being thought undignified. Features below the minimum size were to be designated accordingly to the Mädler system, capital Roman letters being used for craters, valleys and other depressions, lower case Greek letters being used for hills, mountains and other eminences. In 1973 (*Trans. IAU, XV A*, 205; 1973) the working group went so far as to suggest that small features with diameters less than 100 m should have "given names" such as John, Mary and Nikolai, followed by the name of the nearby major feature. Scientists whose names were similar in sound to others and so omitted earlier were now to be given craters. So Born who had not been included because of his similarity to Bohr, Rutherford—Rutherford, Lawrence—Lorentz, were now in luck. In 1973 the qualification for a place in the nomenclature was also broadened but still the working group emphasised that they would "exclude all political figures, national heroes, religious figures, and modern philosophers. Ancient philosophers and various legendary figures will be accepted, however". The people responsible for Martian nomenclature (*Icarus*, 26, 85; 1975) broadened their outlook still further bringing in biologists, geologists, atmospheric physicists and even science fiction writers concerned with the lore of Mars. The major sinuous channels were named after the name of Mars in a variety of other, largely non-Indo-European, languages.

Sagan advocates that the craters of Mercury should be named after great poets, authors, composers and other scholarly or artistic figures who were not physical scientists. He puts forward a large list of candidates containing such worthies as Dostoyevsky, Bertrand Russell, Picasso, Tchaikowsky and Hiram Bingham. The end result of the



### 100 years ago

*Globigerina*: from the 1872–76 voyage of the *Challenger*.  
from *Nature*, June 1, 14, 95; 1976.

nomenclature should be a non-provincial distribution of nationalities, epochs and occupations; to quote Sagan "a distribution that our great-grandchildren can be proud of. It is just conceivable that some of them will be living in the places under discussion".

In the more specific cases of the satellites of Jupiter the IAU Working Group for planetary nomenclature have proposed a set of names for satellites V to XIII (*IAU Circular*, No. 2846; 1975). The Galilean Satellites are named after lovers or consorts of Zeus, the father of the gods in Greek mythology. The nomenclature group have tried to continue this tradition, naming the remaining satellites after friends of Zeus (all human, with the exception of Amalthea who was the goat which suckled the infant god). Sagan points out that the names proposed for VI, Himalia, and XII, Ananke don't fit the scheme, Ananke's being the mother of the Fates placed in judgment over the Olympian gods and not a friend of Zeus at all. Also Elara (VII), Lysithea (X), and Carme (XI) are thought, by Sagan, to be a touch obscure. He also finds it surprising that the most prominent remaining consorts seem to have been omitted and suggests that Maia, Leto, Semele, Demeter, Alcmena, Hera, Latona, Aegina, Pasi-

phae, Themis, Metis and Eurynome should be afforded due consideration.

The best chance for a place in the nomenclature for mere mortals, however, still remains the discovery of a comet or asteroid. □

## Plant pathology changing direction?

from M. S. Wolfe and J. A. Barrett

A conference on the Genetic Basis of Epidemics in Agriculture was held in New York on April 5–8, 1976 under the auspices of the New York Academy of Sciences.

In 1970, disaster struck the American corn crop in the form of southern corn leaf blight, a fungal disease which reduced the total yield by 15% and thus rocked the world grain markets. In the same year, and for similar reasons, another cereal pathogen caused much greater suffering, but was less publicised: downy mildew of pearl millet in India reduced the yield of the "poor man's crop" by 30% and directly caused hunger and starvation. The similarity between the two disasters was the development of advanced forms