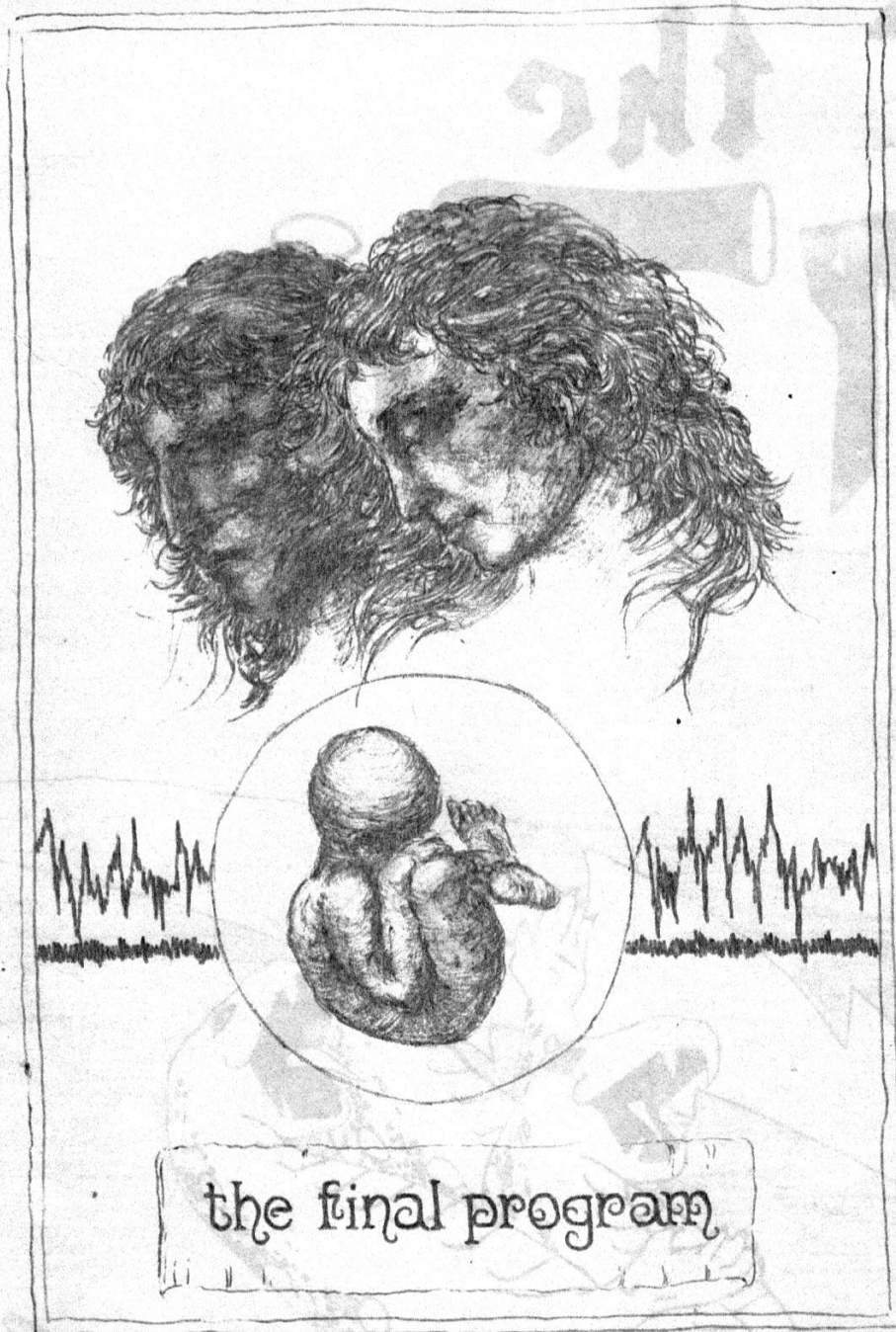


SFAVzine
Vol. 1
Number 1
1978

Up the T Tube





U.T.T.ances:
an editorial.
Stan. G. Hyde

UP THE
TUBE

I'm writing this on the ferry from Vancouver to Victoria, in the backseat of an Austin 1100 with the typewriter balanced on my knees (it's an old Underwood, the Percheron vie of the typewriters, and it weighs a ton). Therefore, forgive me my grammar, spelling, and also my typos.

Welcome to the first SFAVzine, the official organ of the Science Fiction Association of Victoria. It is a collective effort of the club (although my opinion predominates this first issue we will, hopefully, have more contributions next time, more opinions, more points-of-view.) and should continue regularly, as close to monthly as we can manage.

Yes, at last we have an ugly, shoddy, mimeographed fanzine. The club has come of age.

First of all, I would like to thank all the contributors and everyone who has helped me; their names are listed on the contents page and they know who they are.

Next I'd like to say a few words about science fiction films. (My opinions.)

The other night I was watching an old movie (the only worthwhile entertainment on the video) and I was treated to some disgusting preview shots of a mucous monster from outer space (He was once an astronaut, right? You saw this one in 1958.) bleeding--as he melted--all over a nurse that he was strangling.

This piece of grade-s junk (called THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN) is just one of the post-STAR WARS 'science fiction' movies. The 'science fiction' trend that has given us such enduring pieces of cinema as STARSHIP INVASIONS (proving once again that Canada can do it cheaper and worse), LASERBLAST (model animation at it's most out-rate.), and STAR CRASH (a spaghetti-Western in space).

We are being deluged in garbage. Hugo Gernsback would

Science Fiction film has always, for the most part, borne about as much resemblance to written SF as a flashlight does to a laser. As George Zebrowski points out in his excellent 'Science Fiction And The Visual Media' (in SCIENCE FICTION TODAY AND TOMORROW), "Written SF tries to be logical, abstract, and scientifically believable; while SF film is associative, immature, scientifically inaccurate and irrational." The place for written SF is in the head, the appeal of film is to the emotions.

SF film, in the 70s, is more ghettoized than written SF ever was. Observe, for example, the gradual ghettoization of SF's most well-known father-figure, H. G. Wells. Poor Wells, the educated and concerned critic of society and technology has been turned into a monster-movie marquee name--much as Edgar Allen Poe's name was traded on in the 60s by Roger Corman and his quickie horror flicks. The best and most honest Wells adaptations were filmed in the 30s. His presence can be felt (as script writer) in THINGS TO COME and also (in spirit) THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES. However, as both were British films (and Britain seems to have gotten in the habit of regarding SF as a degenerate genre), perhaps a look at Hollywood adaptations is more valid. Certainly THE INVISIBLE MAN and THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU are more Hollywood gothic (a la FRANKENSTEIN and DRACULA) than SF. Still, they remain fairly close to the original material and somewhat Wellian. In the 50s, however, Hollywood turned to the most xenophobic (prejudiced against aliens) of Well's novels. Certainly THE WAR OF THE WORLDS was a relevant film for a world poised on the brink of nuclear destruction, but it is also a 'monster' movie. By the 60s, Well's THE TIME MACHINE (filmed, like THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, by the moderately competent George Pal) had been destroyed, it's human, social theme changed into yet another baz-the-bomb action thriller with radioactive mutant monsters. Now, in the late 70s, EMPIRE OF THE ANTS, THE FOOD OF THE GODS, and the new ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU have been shock-theatre junk, drawing their inspiration more from grade-Z horror films than from Wells.

The gradual decline of Wells in the cinema mirrors, in some ways, the SF film experience. Examine the two major films of 1977, STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. Both are absolutely outstanding for their achievements in special effects...., film technology is proceeding at an incredibly rapid pace. But....

Let me point out, first, that I loved STAR WARS. I also loved THE THREE MUSKETEERS. They were both good adventure films, and STAR WARS is much better space opera than, for example, Jack Williamson's THE LEGION OF SPACE. However, there is not as much innovation, either as SF or as film, in STAR WARS as there is in Lucas' own THX 1138. And there is more thought--as opposed to visceral action--in either THIS ISLAND EARTH or FORBIDDEN PLANET, both also Space Opera.

It's legal to go into a theatre, watch a picture, and not think. I just wouldn't want to do it all the time.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND also sports spectacular special effects. However, aside from technical flaws like the mothership changing scale constantly in relationship to Devil's Tower and making it's initial appearance moving up, from the earth, instead of down, there are too many unanswered questions. What does a line like, "Einstein was right." mean? It does not explain why people from different ages have not gotten older in relation to each other. (Cyrogenic suspension perhaps? An immortality drug?) The film is frustrating, leaving too much mysterious--overwhelming visually but not making the audience think.

At least, unlike Klattu and Gort in THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, the aliens are not fascists. Still, for a star-travelling civilization they do seem curiously ~~primitive~~ inefficient. The people, in whose brains they have implanted their contact message, are almost exclusively turned away by the U.S. military. It is inconceivable, to me, that the civilization capable of that gorgeous mothership could be outsmarted by the

United States military.

Hmmmmmm.

Harlan Ellison has called the film a, "1950s SF film." I agree, but I do think it is the best 1950s SF film ever made. (It doesn't have John Agar in it.)

Both films were good, but they weren't everything that good SF can be. In fact, they were very little of it. With the technical angle under it's belt, Hollywood should be able to produce the kind of SF that has been written for years, solid, entertaining material that makes an audience think and is meaningful to them.

But we may not see that kind of film very soon, because most of the post-STAR WARS film is pre-1961, and more of it is a deliberate steal. Consider Jack Webb's appallingly awful PROJECT U.F.O. (or Dragnet Is Invaded By The Saucermon). Webb, who is formula-written television at it's worst, seems to have a knack for finding actors who are no better than himself--I guess it makes him look good. A rip-off of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, the show is so pudding-headed that it is almost unwatchable. A nice dull format to enject excite commercials into.

And now, at a price of seven million dollars, ABC is launching GALACTICA, or BATTLESTAR, or BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, or EARTH ST or something that should simply be titled WE RIP-OFF STAR WARS. Television is a constant state of deja vu. From the producers,

"We'll be doing stories that are familiar to people, just a whole different context; like we've got a Pearl Harbor attack for openers, th take off like WAGON TRAIN and from there on it's Cowboys and Indians w them constantly being pursued."

More proof that any competent garden-slug could program televisio more intelligently than the people who run it now. Sure, I like seein things explode too, but why does TV and Filmed SF have to be such junk?

Is it because the people who make it can't think? Or because th don't want us to think?

I have to admit, I can't under-
it.

AFTERMATH.....(?)

Time ticks away th lonely hours
that I spend in my hardened shell,
"What good am I?" I ask myself
as I hang myself out to dry.

The sun beats hot and dries my skin,
It cracks and I emerge reborn;
a new person.
Out of the cocoon that imprisoned me
and my story,

My story of timeless deeds of bygone days,
When the radiation levels rose to their
peak
and then subsided.....

-G. B. Harper

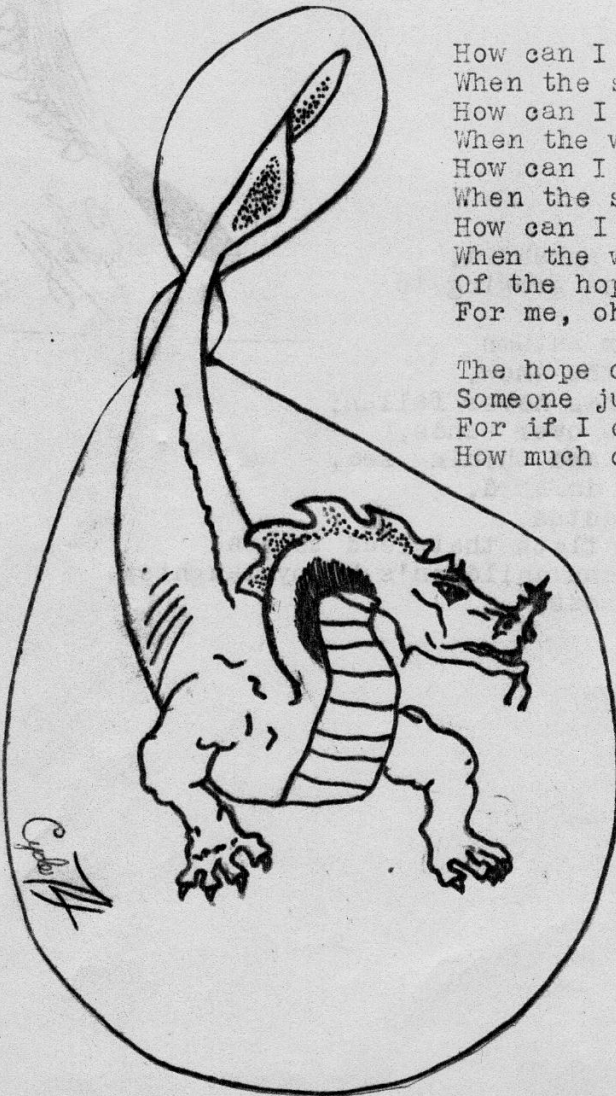
HOW CAN I WEEP IN THE DARK

How can I weep in the dark, my love,
When the stars shine down on me?
How can I weep in the dark, my love,
When the wind sings in the tree?
How can I weep in the dark, my love,
When the stream laughs o'er to me?
How can I weep in the dark, my love,
When the world is whispering to me
Of the hope there is in the world, my love,
For me, oh yes for me.

The hope of finding somewhere, my love,
Someone just true to me,
For if I can't weep in the dark, my love,
How much can I have loved thee?

-Anne Cave

I swam fields
Of clinging, drowning rain;
I walked oceans
Of stinging sand.
All was dark,
My eyes were gone,
My ears were gone,
No sounds were near.
No feeling, no sound,
no sight, no smell.
I had no heart
To beat within,
I had no blood
to course through me.
I did not live



Time flies away in lonely hours
That I spend in my hardest shell,
"What good am I?" I ask myself
as I hang myself out to dry.

The sun beats hot and dries my skin,
It cracks and I smart with pain;

Yet was not dead,
I had no mind, no sense, no soul,

No nerves, no brain,
I could not breathe,

But did not choke,
Then I woke....

A dream so strange,
Could it have meaning to me?

I did not know,
But calmed myself

For I must wait,
It did no good to shake

For waiting was an old friend,
And so for that

Were strange dreams
How can I weep in the dark, my love,
When the stars shine down on me?

How can I weep in the dark, my love,
When the wind sings in the trees?

How can I weep in the dark, my love,
When the stream flows on to sea?

How can I weep in the dark, my love,
When the world is full of life?

My world, a world of sunshine,
Of blossoms, of leaves growing to

green
And turning to red in autumn

Then falling before the snow,
Of lands where snow has never fallen;

Where palm trees wave over sands,
Golden before a blue and shining sea,

Of tundra where life is hard,
Of deserts growing cactus,

Of misty marshes and flats that lead to sea,
Of lover's whispers and children's happy laughter,

Of sorrow and of sadness,
Of joy, of ecstasy,

This, my world,
Is gone.

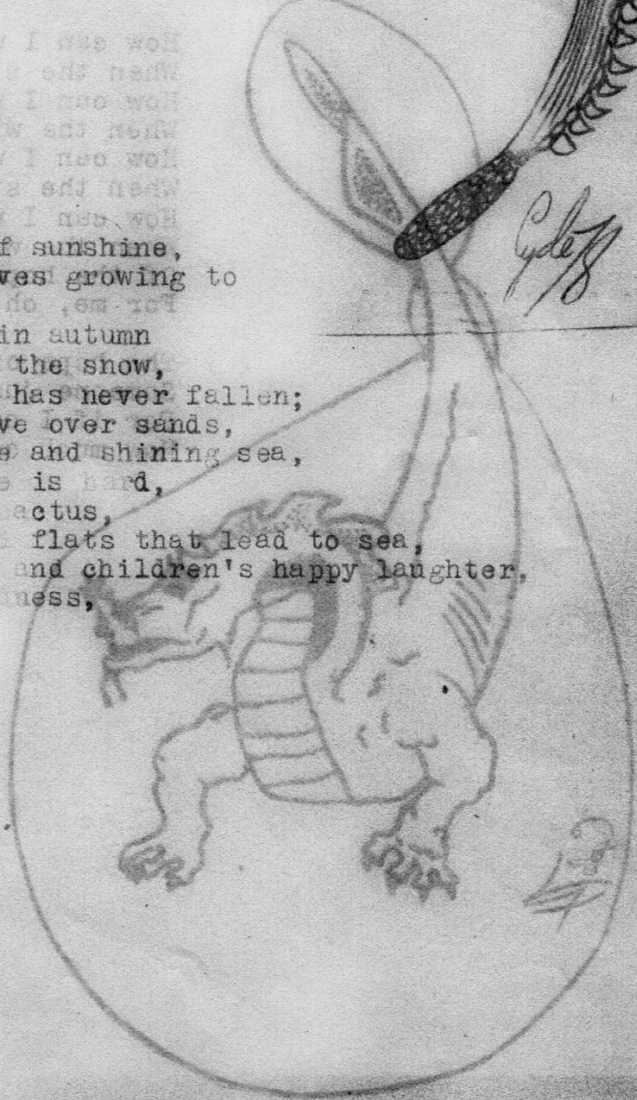
Is gone, Anne Cave
My eyes were gone,
No hands were near,

No feeling, no sound,
No sight, no smell,

I had no heart
To beat within,

I had no blood
To course through me,

I did not live



FARMING THE HIGH FRONTIER
(Part One)
By K. Cordingley

The concept of a 'space colony,' an orbiting biosphere for many thousands of people, is becoming closer to reality every day. Estimates of when the first colonies can be established vary considerably, with Gerard O'Neill (the main force behind the concept) feeling that one will be constructed in his life time and with NASA taking a less optimistic but, probably, a more realistic view. These proposed colonies will have a variety of functions with their major purpose being the construction of solar power stations and supplying this power to earth by microwave.

The technology for these colonies is being developed rapidly and several books on space colonization are presently in print. Two excellent books, both now in paperback, explain in detail the how, what, where, and why of space colonization. These are Gerard O'Neill's THE HIGH FRONTIER and T. A. Heppenheimer's COLONIES IN SPACE. Both books, and especially O'Neill's, paint a very rosy picture of life on (in?) a space colony. I feel personally, that initially at any rate, the colonies would have a more austere, almost construction camp air about them.

It is clear that due to the high price of transporting materials from earth to the colonies (and the location of the colonies is still being hotly debated) that they must be essentially self-supporting, especially in regards to food supply. However, after making this point, neither book confronts this question well, and O'Neill is especially unconcerned. He mentions the 'green revolution' and the tremendous advances in agriculture. One gets the feeling that he believes (with Heppenheimer to a lesser extent) that plant production can meet virtually any demand made of it. In fact, most people on reading these simple

explanations of how production can be tripled or quadrupled must wonder why we still have a hunger problem here on earth. As much as our politics, economics, and social customs prevent the discoveries of the 'green revolution' from being utilized to their fullest extent, O'Neill and Heppenheimer are still guilty of simplifying the problem.

As O'Neill is a physicist and Heppenheimer is an aerospace engineer, it is understandable that neither could be expected to have an exhaustive knowledge of agriculture. The fact remains that some of their statements are not only naive but plainly wrong. Some of this originates, I suspect, from the common misconception among physicists, that biological systems obey laws as obviously and obligingly as physical systems. But there is a margin of the unpredictable in every biological system that makes infallible human prediction impossible. Agriculture in space colonies will not be simple or easy, and it will not yield answers right away.

One of the first problems arising with the O'Neill Colony farms is that it is assumed that virtually all crops will be grown hydroponically (Although O'Neill is not terribly clear on this point.) Many crops, for example--tomatoes have been grown successfully on earth. However, there is almost always some sort of soil medium used, either sand or wood shavings for support of the plants. However, besides the less tasty quality of plants raised by this method of farming, there are also many crops which cannot be grown this way, among them all root crops. Certainly the growing of large fields of grain by this method is an infant science--necessitating the development of radically different harvesting equipment than what is presently in existence. Other problems involved in hydroponics include those of nitrogen fixing crops such as soybeans which require a soil bacteria to exist in symbiosis with them.

However, the most insurmountable problem with hydroponics, and indeed with any intense cropping system is

finding the required nutrients necessary for plant growth. O'Neill suggests that this will be a simple matter and describes a technique for producing nitrogen--ignoring phosphorus, potassium, and many necessary trace elements. These, we are told, will be mined in space (from either the moon or the asteroid belt). As phosphorus remains rare even on the earth some possible problems with this scheme can be envisaged.

The second major problem area will be associated with radiation and proper radiation shielding. O'Neill claims that "plants are relatively insensitive to radiation, so there appears to be no need to provide agriculture areas with radiation protection." With all due respect to their 'relative insensitivity', plants have evolved on earth where they have been very well shielded from cosmic ray activity and solar flares, and there has been no reason for them to develop any resistance to radiation. High radiation levels for long time periods may not kill plants or even reduce productivity, but the mere physical action of particles passing through plant chromosomes will certainly cause mutation rates much higher than those on our planet. Plant species used in agriculture have many times more chromosomes than humans, making lethal mutations very likely.

Radiation shielding, therefore, is more likely to be a permanent feature than O'Neill admits (Though he does give a small nod of the head to the problem, "In early days, though, before we have sufficient experience, it may be wise to grow our seed-crops within the space colony's living-habitat where full protection from cosmic rays and solar flares will be provided.).

Another area where problems may well arise is overlooked by both Heppinheimer and O'Neill, and one must wonder at their naivety. In discussing the problem of beneficial bacteria and the spread of disease in the agriculture pods, O'Neill says, "Passing all wastes

through a high-temperature solar furnace, which will cost nothing practically, will ensure that everything entering the agricultural areas is sterile." In the event of a disease occurring within a pod the same technique will be used, and then "appropriate bacteria can be reintroduced." Many bacteria are essential for plant growth, primarily the species involved in the nitrogen fixation in legumes. A number of species of legumes will have to be grown on a space colony and the bacteria are absolutely essential to their survival. Various other 'beneficial' bacteria, including species found in human and animal digestive tracts would be included.

These bacteria are 'beneficial' on earth because competition from thousands of other bacterial species has resulted in them finding this 'niche,'--and there are more mysteries in a few grams of soil than in all the problems of space colony construction. Mutations occur fairly regularly in bacterial populations--but these mutations, many of which would not survive on earth due to the pressure of competition, will flourish in the simplified environment of the colony. Destroying and 're-seeding' the agricultural mediums of the pods may become a baffling and expensive procedure (and in space it is economics, not starvation, that eliminates a population. They go home.).

I am, quite consciously, pointing out potential problems without giving many answers. (The answers will be the result of much difficult research.) But the problems of life in a space colony (of which creating a whole, man-made eco-system is surely the most challenging) must be confronted now and not treated as 'easily solvable', then tabled for future discussion. If the L-5 Society and the other individuals working toward the colonization of space are to succeed and are to be taken seriously by a skeptical lay public, then they must have answers. They must remember that though the aim is to construct a civilization for mankind in space, construction will remain an academic question if the problem of how to feed the colonists is not solved first.

PART TWO: WHAT'S FOR DINNER TONIGHT?

or
PIGS IN SPACE

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF
THE FOURTH KIND!

by: David Thomson

Boy, do I have a story for you! It started on a Sunday afternoon and at the end, everybody was tied up. You see, I went to this meeting somewhere in Oak Bay; well, actually I was taken there by someone else, who said it would be a social gathering (I've had my shots!; distemper, hoof & mouth, etc.), so why not? When we arrived, everything looked normal on the outside, so I wasn't worried (much).

Once inside, your shoes are forcefully removed from your person (no one takes my shoes!), which are then guarded by a ferocious, man-eating killer, who will remove your feet from your ankles if you attempt to collect your shoes before the allotted time.

Now you meet the people you've heard so much about. They look normal enough on the surface, so I guess it's alright. The meeting commences and as time slips away, you wonder what you've gotten yourself into (help! I'm surrounded by nuts!), but as still (hic.) (pardon me) more time slips by, you find yourself becoming one of them, and just when your sanity is in question, refreshments are served; the food I can't eat as cavities have a new contract out on me, but liquid refreshments are welcome (four lumps for me, and plenty of cream) and are downed with gusto - plus a Roloids Chaser.

By now, we are sitting around discussing whatever enters our little heads and conversation is something else entirely than what's normal. Eventually, (and expected) out come the ropes (or one rope and a bit of string) and then everyone's all tied up and while two are roped into this scene, the remainder of us sit back and laugh. Ever try drinking tea while you're laughing? (or for that matter, while you're stepping through a piece of string?). Anyhow, one thing led to another, and I wound up saying 'yes' to a bunch of questions, and before I knew it, I'm a member (how'd dat happen?).

It sounds interesting, and my mouth has said things all by itself, before my brain knew what was going on. As I said, I'm in, and how bad can things get, I ask you?

Q: If Ella Fitz-Gerald married Barth Vader, what would her new name be?

A. Ella Vader.

METRIC TIME

contributed by:
Zeno Woloszczak

Doubtless you will have read in the National Press, that from midnight on the 3rd of January, 1979, the whole of Canada, except Ottawa, will be converted to metric time.

From that date, there will be 10 seconds to the minute, 10 minutes to the hour, 10 hours to the day, and so on, delineated according to the following table:

OLD TIME	NEW TIME
1 second	- 1 milliday
1 minute	- 1 centiday
1 hour	- 1 deciday (or millimonth)
1 day	- 1 day
1 week	- 1 hectoday
1 year	- 1 kiloday

Obviously, from the Board's standpoint, due to the fact that one hour (deciday) represents 5/12ths of an old one, staff might be expected to work longer hours, viz 3½ decidays or millimonths per day. However, as this is inconvenient for administration and payroll purposes, it is intended that the luncheon break will be shortened by 1/3 of a new hour, thus making a total daily working time of 4 new hours. It is not expected at this time that compensatory uplift will be

made to salaries, except in the case of leap kilodays, where an adjustment will be made at the end of the hectoday, every 1-6 decamonths. Overtime meal vouchers will be issued to non-management hectodaily roll employees for the time worked in excess of 5/6ths of a deciday, provided approval from the management has been obtained beforehand. The Pension Scheme will not be affected, but superkilodayuation will be adjusted accordingly.

A further bulletin will be issued closer to Deciday, but if these arrangements present difficulties, or if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact your immediate supervisor.

Leave

Leave will be affected only so far as the change to metric time is concerned and no one shall be worse off than previously. Thus, if an employee was entitled to 22 days (old time) he will be entitled to 220 decidays or one hectoday plus 20 decidays for every hectoday over and above 20 kilodays service since the 10th deciday of the 3rd hectoday of 1954. Dominion Day will accordingly be reduced to 5 decidays (six south of the 49th parallel) but 10 demidecidays will be added where relevant to the Christmas break which will be moved after 27 hectodays to Labour Day to take advantage of the longer shopping decidays. Labour Day is cancelled. The term "a month of Sundays" is not to be used on official documents. The correct term will be "a hectoday of decidays".

Your immediate supervisor has been allotted 3 centidays per capital to clarify any points which may arise prior to Deciday.

ALIEN RACES IN ANDRE NORTON'S FICTION
compiled by: David Thomson

Salariki Warrior (PLAGUE SHIP)

Height - 2 meters
Colour - skin is grey, side of arms and legs is tawny yellow, blue-grey or white,
Hair - thick along backbone
Species - Feline
Dress - loin cloths, brightly dyed. Wide shashes forming corseletts about the waist. Brightly dyed cloaks

Personal Weapons - Claw knife & net.

Ranger, First Galactic Empire (after 8054 A.D.) (THE LAST PLANET)

Height - 2½ meters
Colour - Grey
Hair - Hairless, scaly bod
It has four digits on both hand and feet.
Species - Zacathan (reptilian)
Dress - Grey tunic & pants, no boots or headgear.
Personal Weapons - Blaster or Disruptor.

Soldier, Rigillian Confederation (SARGASSO OF SPACE)

Height - 2½ meters
Colour - Pale blue
Hair - hairless, faintly scaled
Species - Zacathan
Dress - Coarse, dark brown tunic and pants. Black knee boots. Scouts wear communication helmets.

Limbian Native (Forerunner) (SARGASSO OF SPACE)

Height - 3/4 to 1 meter
Colour - Greyish
It's body consists of two globes one half as large as the other. Two pairs of very thin, four-jointed limbs (highly flexible) protrude from the upper globe - one pair which separates at the second joint into limber tentacles that end in a cluster of hair fine appendages. No featur body semi-transparent.
Species - X-tee
Dress - None
Personal Weapon - Stones.

Guild Raider (THE ZERO STONE)

Height - 1 1/3 meters
Colour - Pale red
Hair - Hairless
It's head rests directly on the shoulders with no neck. Tall, feathery appendages are located on either side of the head. Four upper limbs are hung at it's side they are highly flexible.
Species - X-Tee
Dress - Coveralls, space boots
Personal Weapon - Blaster.

Archerian Native (Norbic)
(THE BEAST MASTER & LORD OF THUNDER)
Height - 2 1/3 meters
Colour - Reddish yellow
Hair - Bald

It has six inch horns (white) projecting from it's forehead that curve back over the head.

Species - Humanoid
Dress - Heavy leather corselet from armpit to crotch, split to allow leg movement - heavy leggings (thigh)
Personal Weapon - Bow, arrows, long knife.

Warrior, Xik Empire
(THE BEAST MASTER)
Height - 2 meters
Colour - Pale green
Hair - Coarse, bleached, curled rattails to shoulder
Species - Humanoid
Dress - Flat black tunic & pants, mat black boots
Personal Weapon - Service Issue Blaster.

Alien Aborigine (Sniffer)
(THE ZERO STONE)
Height - 2 1/3 meters
Colour - Pale-yellow
Hair - Bristly in stiff upright thatch on head & in two heavy brows down the outside of arms and legs to wrists and ankles. There are three round, shaggy patches down chest and middle.

It's hands & feet are large, with feet ending in huge claws. Eyes are deep set under bushy brows. It's nose is a fleshy tube attached only at the root, while the mouth shows two protruding fangs. It has no chin, flesh is wattled in loose flaps sweeping straight back from the lower teeth to join the throat, arms and legs. It is thin and barrel shaped.

Species - Humanoid
Dress - Skirt or kilt around loins, thong circles the neck on which are strung lumps of dull green and alternating red cylinders.
Personal Weapon - Club.

PILOT LETTER OF THE MONTH
(Reprinted from Science Digest)

"I vote 'no' on metrics. The public was not asked for it's opinion on this subject. Besides, our measurement system is as traditionally American as southern fried chicken. Our farmers depend on 'gallons' of herbicides per 'acre', how many 'inches' to set their plows, and how many 'bushels' are harvested from each acre. They feed America, and a large percentage of the world, on this program. Can any of the metric nations do this?

If we truly do change over to metrics now, we'll have our money system changed into rubles next.

I think it's very un-American and altogether political. I wish there were some way that the public could be heard effectively.

Mrs. Harold Dun
Hayden, Al.

FRIED-VEGETABLE-BRAIN-THINK IN ACTION. WE'LL BE DEAD OF IGNORANCE A LONG TIME BEFORE WE'RE DEAD OF METRICS. Sgh.

DRACULA: A.D. 2116 or
1950 A.D. : A.D. 2116

The book is THE SPACE VAMPIRES by Colin Wilson. It is supposed to be science fiction.

It isn't.

Let me hasten to observe, there are spaceships, there are astronauts, and the story is supposed to occur some-time after 2116 A.D. However, spaceships - even spaceships filled with interstellar vampires, can't take what it essentially a 1950's pseudo-Lovecraftian horror story and magically convert it into SF.

Colin Wilson isn't a completely incompetent writer. But his reasons for setting this novel in the future are incomprehensible...because the novel takes place in a world that is practically indistinguishable from our own. How so? Well, for example, there doesn't seem to be an energy problem, or an overpopulation problem, and nobody mentions why. Cities and lifestyles do not seem to have changed at all - or if they have, Wilson doesn't think it's important to mention it. England still has a prime minister (also, surprisingly, it isn't bankrupt and has a space program!). From a comment that one of the characters makes, we can conclude that the Kinsey Report is still the most outstanding research ever done on the problem of human sexuality. And people even read newspapers! The real thing, not printouts from their home computer data-centers.

In short, Wilson's post-2116 world is about as futuristic as next Friday.

Which might have been bearable if there had been much of a reason for the Space Vampires to be loose in a futuristic world, even an unconvincing one. Unfortunately, since Wilson spends most of his time proving that ordinary human beings can be vampires (through the time-honored technique of the boring dissertation by the eccentric scientist), there is no reason whatsoever for this to be a futuristic story.

In the final analysis, THE SPACE VAMPIRES is just a fairly interesting Cthulhu mythos story, with liberal doses of esoteric theorizing ...a book that was obviously well researched but that has, perhaps, a bit too much information on historical

vampires (e.g., Cour Magnus) and criminology. In fact, it has all the faults of most post-Lovecraft mythos stories. Instead of simply using the mythos as a background device to create a horror story that would actually frighten the reader, writers (from August Derleth on) have wasted most of their energy trying to blur the distinction between fiction and reality, mixing up the NECRONOMICON with THE GOLDEN BOUGH, and trying to make the reader believe that the story actually happened.

An incredibly stupid idea, because the readers knew the stories never happened, they just wanted a good, honest fright.

Wilson is no exception, though his fake 'facts' are a little more interesting than most; his novel still remains quasi-fiction, a lecture that adds more foot-notes to the Cthulhu cult. The background is interesting, but once one's intellect has done with the book, there's nothing left for the emotions. It's dull.

A fate worse than death, in a horror story.

And, worst of all, Wilson resolves his story with the most hoary, cliché, deus ex machina of them all. (John Agar was foiled by it in THE BRAIN FROM PLANET AROUS). I won't reveal it, in deference to those Wilson fans who still may want to read the book, but it's a cheap-shot ending, destroying any integrity the story had by cheating the characters of the chance to bring events to a satisfactory conclusion themselves.

Blaaaaaaa!!!

And now, having driven the stake through it's alien heart, having severed it's head and stuffed garlic cloves in it's mouth,

and burned it to the ground, there remains one last task of duty. We must scatter THE SPACE VAMPIRES' ashes in the purifying sunlight.

Examine, if you will, some of Wilson's writing, from a section near the end of the book, and see just how pigeon-headed a writer can be. The vampire leader, subdued and hypnotized, is interrogated by the heroes.

One of his captors asks:

"What is your name?"

"You could call me G'roon."

and later:

"Heseltine asked, "How did you become vampires?"

"That is a long story."

Which he tells, of course. It turns out that these beings, the Nieth-Korghai, were trapped in orbit around a black hole, long ago in their travels across the galaxy. The vampire leader explains:

"And then, after more than a thousand years, the black hole disappeared. It fell (??) out of space and we were free."

And they'd been turned into vampires.

To sum up, Colin Wilson should go have a talk to Sir Fred Hoyle about black holes or give up writing Science Fiction. Only the producers of QUARK could salvage anything useable from THE SPACE VAMPIRES.

A MAGIC PAINTING BRIGHT

THE MALACIA TAPESTRY: Brian Aldiss
Triad Panther: ISBN 0 586 04497 3

"People appreciate merit only on a pretentious scale. Write a history of the universe and it will be applauded however steeped in errors factual or grammatical; yet paint a tiny perfect landscape on your thumb and nobody will cheer."

So says master glass-engraver Giovanni Bledlore in Brian Aldiss' new novel, THE MALACIA TAPESTRY. He is probably right, certainly fans of the Lensman series and other cosmic blast-em-ups will be baffled by Aldiss' painstakingly

detailed, neomedievalist world (that seems to have been inspired from diverse paintings), and by his deliberate anachronism. His world is textured, filled with "the flavours of fresh-cut timber, spice cooking, gutters, and the incense from the local wizard." With its parades of 'ancestrals' (muzzled and saddled dinosaurs), its filthy streets, and its actors, wizards, and priests, Malacia is both a savage and a beautiful city.

Doubtlessly, some will object because Aldiss' world does not quite make sense logically. Are the characters really descended from dinosaurs, not apes? And, if so, why are their actions and their history so similar to ours? Surely an Ottoman empire could never arise in a world where civilization began millions of years before that of our own? And what would be the effect on a culture of a million years of previous history? How, after all, did the dinosaurs manage to survive?

The answer is, simply, that Aldiss does not care. The details of the world's creation are not necessary because the world is there, its feelings and sounds painted on every page with great flourish. And the canvas, while not strictly logical or realistic, brings fantasy and reality together to illuminate art and life and scrutinize the relationship between the two.

It is Aldiss' best novel so far.

Finally, a word about the American edition published by Ace Books. The cover (typically artless in a book about art!) depicts a Bert I. Gordon flash-eating dinosaur with a mouthful of uneven teeth, about to make a mouthful of two humans in a very hokey stance. It illustrates a key point in the book with nowhere near the artistry that Aldiss can manage in prose. I quote:

"Working in a whirl of darkness, I could hardly see what I did. I leaped back as the creature gave a convulsive thresh. Above me was the head. The eyes saw me. It could have been a trick of night and shadow that they seemed full

of benign wisdom, pity - no savagery there at all, just as someone once said it would be."

Yet more proof that book packagers (especially American ones) could be out thought by most moderately intelligent trilobites.

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CELL LIVES

THE LIVES OF A CELL: NOTES OF A BIOLOGY WATCHER: Lewis Thomas: Bantam Books; 1974 - 1978

Lewis Thomas is president of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre in New York. His book, THE LIVES OF A CELL, is plainly one of the best collections of essays ever written (it won the National Book Award) and it is speculative thought - well grounded in science, in the tradition of Carl Sagan. The title comes from Thomas' observation that the world, in many respects, behaves as if it were a single living cell.

To let Thomas' near-perfect prose speak for itself, (from a section of the book on societies - both insect and human), "And now, at last, they (ants) have become an Art Form. A gallery in New York exhibited a collection of two million live army ants, on loan from Central America, in a one-colony show entitled "Patterns and Structures". They were displayed on sand in a huge square bin, walled by plastic sides high enough to prevent them from crawling over and out into Manhattan. The inventor of the work arranged and rearranged the location of food sources in different places, according to his inspiration and their taste, and they formed them, selves into long, black, ropy patterns extended like writhing limbs, hands, fingers, across the sand in crescents, crisscrosses, and long ellipses, from one station to another. Thus displayed, they were watched with intensity by the crowds of winter-carapaced people who lined up in neat rows to gaze down at them. The ants were, together with the New Yorkers, an abstraction, a live mobile, an action painting, a piece of found art, a happening, a parody, depending on the light."

"I can imagine the people moving around the edges of the plastic barrier, touching shoulder to shoulder, sometimes touching hands exchanging bits of information, nodding, smiling sometimes, prepared as New Yorkers always are to take flight at a moment's notice, their mitochondria fully stoked and steaming. They move in orderly lines around the box, crowding one another precisely, without injury, peering down, nodding and then backing off to let new people in. Seen from a distance, clustered densely around the white plastic box containing the long serpentine lines of arm ants, turning to each other and murmuring repetitively, they see an absolute marvel. They might have dropped from another planet

Thomas, with his ability to pull the reader up from a description of ants into an overview of mankind, displays his special kind of perspective. He sees the world as a collection of inter-related systems, more resilient than man imagines, and more complex than the man on the street could ever guess. Thomas is essential reading for the Science Fiction fan, discussing the moral question of destroying moon virus or what we will say to the first extra-terrestrial civilization that we contact. In fact, his thoughts on dying, on society, and on intelligence, make his collection essential reading for any thinking person. Carefully scrutinizing mankind and his place in the universe, searching for a definition of man (which, by the way, is what SF does, too), Thomas is filled with hope.

THE LIVES OF A CELL isn't a science book; it is a meditation. That it is well grounded in science and immaculately written only makes it better. It is a remarkably good book.

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THE OPHIUCHI HOTLINE

From: THE OPHIUCHI HOTLINE by John Varley; Dell Books: \$11.75

THE OPHIUCHI HOTLINE is an absolutely incredible book. It is set in the same universe as most of John Varley's future history stories. The situation is thus: mankind has been driven from Earth by an alien intelligence which (while visiting the intelligent creatures on Jupiter) have decided to expend some small energies to liberate the true intelligences of this planet, the dolphins and whales. Our civilization; thanks to the Ophiuchi Hotline, an interstellar laser communication from unidentified aliens in the vicinity of the star 70 Ophiuchi which supplies us with a steady stream of random information, has now spread and adapted to the other less-hospitable planets of the solar system.

The story's heroine is Lilo-Alexandr Calypso - a geneticist condemned to death for conducting experiments utilizing forbidden material from the Ophiuchi Hotline. Lilo does die - at least three times during the book. But she, and her various other cloned duplicates, manage to get involved in 'Boss' Tweed's plan to strike back at the Invaders, to join the symbiotic Ringers in Saturn's rings, to hatch a plot with other illegal clones to escape from the solar system in an asteroid ark, and finally to confront the mysterious intelligence from 70 Ophiuchi.

No amount of plot-description, however, could express the job of this near-perfect first novel. Varley is the best hard science writer imaginable, and this fast-paced adventure novel is loaded with mind-blowing ideas and with good, solid characterizations. Varley switches point-of-view from one Lilo character to her other cloned duplicates with amazing agility. His images, for example the 1930ish space ship are just so right.....I loved the book!

Those who have never read Varley should start now, because he beats Clarke, Niven and Pournelle hands down. His rich imagination should stimulate even the most cynical sense-of-wonder. It does everything that STAR WARS did and it thinks as well!

THE DANCERS AT THE END OF TIME

At last!

I had to wait five years from the publication of AN ALIEN HEAT through THE HOLLOW LANDS for THE END OF ALL SONGS, the conclusion of the romantic story of Jherek Carnelian from the end of time and Mrs. Amelia Underwood from England in the year 1896. I was terribly afraid that Moorcock would die before he finished the trilogy, because the three books are, without doubt, the best things that he has ever written. The writing is comic, ornate, lush in a way that is perfect for the story of innocent, decadent immortals at the End of Time. They are tragic, beautiful, and funny books, so much unlike Moorcock's other savage fantasy and black science fiction that they seem to be written by another author.

As usual, the books are connected into the mainstream of Moorcock's fiction by the shoddy little dramatic trick (designed to sell forty-five or so of his books to you) of shared characters crossing into different time-streams, realities, what-have-you. But the story is separate, and can easily be understood by someone with no acquaintance to his other fiction, and if you read no other Moorcock you should read this trilogy, because it is Moorcock at his best. Jherek, the Iron Orchid, Bishop Castle, Werther de Goethe, Sweet Orb Mace, Mistress Christia, Lord Jagged, and the other characters at the end of time are more memorable than any of the sword-and-swordcery blood-spillers.

The American edition of the book is published by AVON and the British edition is published by MAYFLOWER. Both are currently available. (There is also a companion collection of three novellas called LEGENDS FROM THE END OF TIME, published by DAW Books). Together they form an example of that little-seen but valuable commodity, science fiction which is good and which is also genuinely funny.

THE DEATH OF ZELAZNY

DAMNATION ALLEY is so vile, so shoddy, such an inarticulate piece of garbage, that it saddens me to see Roger Zelazny's name remaining on the final print. The one moment of resemblance to his novel: when Tanner (Hell Tanner in the book) pushes a woman from his dirt bike to be eaten by giant scorpions, turns out to be a con-job on the audience. The woman is a department store dummy! Fair-haired boy Jan Michael-Vincent could never do that to a real woman.

It was almost as if the producers were taking a deliberate stab at Zelazny, gloating him, taunting him with a ghost of the original character superimposed, for a moment, onto their bland-as-yogurt film.

Because, even if DAMNATION ALLEY was not a top-form Zelazny novel, it was still not sloppy, dull, unbelievable, and crap-headed. Even at his worst, there is a dark, poetic grandeur about Zelazny, a blackness that might have made DAMNATION ALLEY a disturbing, moving film. Instead though, we have Jan Michael-Vincent as a nice boy (who does help blow up the world, but then everybody makes mistakes) and George Peppard as the strict (but nice underneath, father figure) air force commander. In short, two cut-from-soap characters ready to face every cliché disaster situation imaginable (and a host of badly managed bugs growing awkwardly huge through bad process photography).

The film proceeds as a disjointed series of pigeon-headed adventures (the two screen writers - Alan Sharp and Luke Heller, have so mucked up the original premise that there is nothing close to plot remaining), all of which are totally incomprehensible. (How did the lone girl survive? Why did the earth suddenly return to normal? What was actually wrong with the earth in the first place?).

The most repugnant thing about DAMNATION ALLEY, however, is the fact that Jan Michael-Vincent survives! Mom, apple pie, the American way, and dimples will out, even against the holocaust. Such idiocy is unbelievable! Hell Tanner, of the novel, was a leather-jacket, vicious thug. A Hell's Angel (with a few redeeming moral convictions, but only a few) who was the only type of

survive the living hell that the world had become. Jan Michael-Vincent's character would have been torn apart by the post-holocaust world of the novel, nice guys do not live through armageddon. Atomic doom isn't a quick trip through the desert with a couple of funhouse thrills and a few bargain basement shocks, it is not a Disney G-rated picture! Atomic death is ugly.

Meanwhile, DAMNATION ALLEY the movie is Zelazny with his guts ripped out



Master Ray

*Court of the Crimson King
The Yellow Jester (II)*