

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 9/17/86 -- Vol. 5, No. 10

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in MT 4A-235.

 D A T E T O P I C

- 09/24 MT: Book Exchange (Rm 4A-235)
- 10/08 LZ: BLOOD MUSIC by Greg Bear (Genetics)
- 10/15 MT: (Re)organizational Meeting for MT discussion (Rm 4A-235)
- 10/29 LZ: MALLWORLD by Somtow Sucharitkul (Commerce)
- 11/19 LZ: THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by Ursula K. LeGuin (Sexual Identity)
- 12/10 LZ: NEUROMANCER by William Gibson (Consciousness)

HO Chair is John Jetzt, HO 4F-528A (834-1563). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). MT Chair is Mark Leeper, MT 3E-433 (957-5619). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). MT Librarian is Bruce Szablak, MT 4C-418 (957-5868). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, MT 1F-329 (957-2070). All material copyright by author unless otherwise noted.

1. It is a little known fact but many books are discontented with their owners. It is an old story, when they were first bought, they assumed their relationship was going to be one long reading giving them plenty of reading and attention. Some get the attention they crave at first, some don't even get that. Almost always books end up with a boring existence sitting on a shelf or even in a dark box. In an attempt to increase the overall book satisfaction, we will be holding an owner swap on September 24, room MT 4A-235. Books will have an opportunity to change owners and discover just how many losers there are out there who own books. If you have discontented books or are considering adoption, you might want to show up. Science fiction is preferred, but you can bring any books, magazines, or typewritten stories you think might be discontented. Come on, admit your books are getting a less than fulfilling life being owned by a clod like you. Bring them in and let them try someone else and let someone else's books try you.

2. Space Activism comes to Central Jersey! That's right, folks,

you can now become a space activist without driving to the far reaches of New Brunswick. Michael Confusione (a Middletown resident) is trying to form the Monmouth County chapter of the L5 Society. The organizational meeting will be this Thursday, September 18, at the Monmouth County Library, Route 35, at 7:30 PM.

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For more information contact Mike Confusione, 176 Lynch Road, Middletown NJ 07748 (201-671-3218).

3. A correction to my con report of last time; the paragraph which was at the end of page 10 and the beginning of page 11 was missing the last three words. It should have read:

People were also asked to "testify"--to write their names and favorite natural laws on pieces of paper that were handed out. Card then read a selection of these, with commentary. Some he had problems with, since they were abstruse mathematical or scientific concepts that he didn't understand. A sample of his commentary: "Joe Smith likes the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle...at least that's what I think it says." This was contrasted with two words that Card claimed would sound impossible together--like "bicycle sex" or "vegetable athletics." Actually, he said, the latter two he could understand but not ... "creation science."

Let this be a warning to you--never start an nroff input line with a '!' [-ecl]

4. Randolph Fritz sends the following letter of comment:
Evelyn & Mark -

I thought you might like to know that your newsletter reached me. Thanks. After some struggle (some mailer had divided the very long lines with lots of overstriking -- I had to figure out what was wrong & fit them back together), I managed to print it. [Are others receivers of e-mail copies having this problem? -ecl]

I enjoyed Mark's movie reviews. I rarely visit movie theaters (somehow there always seems to be something to read) and perhaps for that reason I enjoy reading his reviews. They

seem much more useful than what I used to read in the New York Times.

I was less pleased with Evelyn's ConFederation report. I liked the story about Effinger and the cookbook, but was less pleased with the blow-by-blow accounts of panels attended. Cons are not primarily meetings of scholars; very little said at the program functions is worthy of permanent note. The most interesting con reports are accounts of people or humorous personal essays. Exasperatingly, every time Evelyn's report started in that direction, it quickly turned into a list of names; interesting, perhaps, to people present but not to me. What was said, what was done at the usenetter's party? I'd be more interested in accounts of a few conversations, rather than an exhaustive list of attendees.

Gripe, gripe, grumble, grumble, . . .

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Randolph

[As I responded to Randy, I tend to find descriptions of people unknown to me to be boring. Also, I suspect many of you have never been to a science fiction convention and want some idea of what goes on there. More comments? -ecl]

Mark Leeper
MT 3E-433 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

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_N_O_T_E_S _F_R_O_M _T_H_E _N_E_T

Subject: Commentary on David Lindsay
Path: mtuxo!mtune!akguc!akgua!gatech!seismo!caip!daemon
Date: Mon, 25-Aug-86 22:40:48 EST

David Lindsay,
the Arcturan Voyager
by
Gary A. Allen, Jr.

David Lindsay is a unique phenomenon in Science Fiction. He was a contemporary of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. However, he was so far ahead of its time that today he is widely regarded as an author without equal.

Lindsay's history as an author is both sad and interesting. Lindsay was born on 3 March 1878 in a London suburb. Until about 1916, he worked as an insurance clerk for Lloyd's of London and had not written a single book. In 1916 at age 38, he married and opted to give up his secure job as a clerk to take up writing. His first book is in the opinion of many his greatest achievement. This book was entitled A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS and was published in 1920. His second book THE HAUNTED WOMAN was published one year later. THE HAUNTED WOMAN is regarded by some commentators as being even better than A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS.

Both books were commercial failures and were remaindered. A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS sold only 596 copies from a press run of 1430 copies. The London Times panned the book without mercy, and it was subjected to ridicule by contemporary literary critics. It should be emphasized that these first two books represented the commercial high point of Lindsay's career as an author. His later books, which even by modern standards were inferior to the first two, fared even worse in the commercial world. By 1939 after failing to find a publisher for his last book THE WITCH, Lindsay gave up writing and turned to running a boarding house for a living. On 6 June 1945, David Lindsay, a broken and despondent man, died from a tooth infection.

The writings of David Lindsay would have died a dusty death along with their author had not Victor Gollancz, a friend, republished A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS in 1946, one year after Lindsay's death. Then something truly marvelous happened: 26 years after the book had been written, it achieved a limited popularity. Even so, it was not popular with the general public. Instead it was an underground success with England's literary elite.

One of Lindsay's early fans was the Christian apologist C.S. Lewis. Lewis wrote about Lindsay in a letter to Charles Brady:

The real father of my planet books is David Lindsay's A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS, which you will also revel in if you don't know it. I had grown up on Wells' stories of that kind, but it was Lindsay who first gave me the idea that the "scientifiction" appeal could be combined with the "supernatural" appeal.

From that time on A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS was considered required reading among England's literary elite, and yet his books were once again out of print and seemed destined for obscurity. It didn't happen, as about every 15 years a reprint would turn up. His works have never had a wide popularity. Nevertheless, Lindsay's books have always maintained a core of devoted readers that refuses to dissipate with time. Lindsay himself realized this would occur and once commented to Gollancz: "Somewhere in the world, someone will be reading a book of mine every year. " Many books and articles have been written about Lindsay and A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS. The following are the more important commentaries:

The Strange Genius of David Lindsay by John Baker 1970

The Haunted Man by Colin Wilson 1979

David Lindsay by Gary K. Wolfe 1982

The story of A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS has a rather mundane beginning. By page 39 (page references refer to the Gregg press edition which is a reprint of the 1920 original), one is seriously thinking of flinging the book into the trash can. In the first 39 pages all that apparently happens is that the 3 principle characters meet and are transported from the Earth to an alien planet which will be the scene of action. The reader is accosted with some rather bizarre names: The three chief characters are Maskull, Krag, and Nightspore. The alien planet is called Tormance. If the reader had pitched the book into the trash before reaching Tormance he would have made a big mistake. The boredom of the first 39 pages and the funny names are all calculated for an effect. The transition from Earth to Tormance is absolutely breathtaking. The closest analogy I can think of is from the movie THE WIZARD OF OZ where Dorothy walks from her house into the land of Oz, the film changes from black and white to color, and Dorothy announces, "You know Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore." From that point on the reader is kept in a perpetual state of information overflow. I'm not talking about the overflow as in a low grade Swords-and-Sorcery novel where the author is pouring forth zillions of proper nouns without definition. Rather, we're speaking about concepts, symbolism and fast

paced action. David Lindsay did something that no one else in SF achieved in that he pushed the SF literary form to its limits and had then gone beyond. The story of A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS could not be expressed in any other medium.

The chief character, Maskull has discovered himself on a world where one grows and discards new senses and awarenesses with seeming abandon. The premise upon which the novel is based is the concept of God as an immoral and unethical entity. The true God of Tormance is Surtur. Surtur is a creative deity from which all life emanates. However an anti-God, Shaping, has overthrown Surtur and dominates Tormance. Shaping

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feeds on life itself by giving the life force a physical form. Maskull is unwittingly thrown into the middle of this cosmic struggle between these two deities. Maskull was sent to Tormance by the personification of Surtur, Krag. However he was literally left naked and totally ignorant of the true state of affairs upon his arrival on Tormance. Shaping, the god of lies, has the first crack at Maskull. From there the story unfolds as Maskull travels through the surrealistic landscape of Tormance to his own ultimate destruction and resurrection.

One can read A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS for pure entertainment. There is lots of action and interesting characters are brought in with almost wild abandon. Lindsay creates plot devices, SF concepts, and sensual imagery that I've seen no where else.

The real thrill to this book, however, is in its intellectual challenge. Everything in this book has triple nested symbolism. The name Tormance can be broken down to romance, torment, dominance. Pain is associated with Surtur, while pleasure is associated with Shaping. The name Maskull leads to man and skull, which symbolizes the conflict of the spirit and the body. Everything in the story is color coded. There are five colors on Tormance based on two color systems, which in turn are based on the two stars of the Arcturan system. The first color system is from the star Branchspell and uses the colors yellow, red, and blue. The second color system is from the star Alppain and uses the colors jale, ulfire, and blue. Branchspell is the larger star and has associations with Shaping. Alppain is a small blue binary companion and is associated with Surtur. The colors red and jale are compliments and associated with feeling. The colors yellow and blue are also

compliments and associated with relation. The colors blue and ulfire form the last compliments and are associated with existence. If a creature appears in the plot and it is colored red and ulfire, the reader knows that the creature has the qualities of feeling and existence and is affected by both stars and deities. By now it should be clear by what I mean by information overflow.

The theme of the book is a SF presentation of the philosophies of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. If you are not overwhelmed by the information or the symbolism, then the philosophy will blow you away. His works demonstrate the power of SF as a consciousness expansion aid and a medium for abstract thinking. I strongly recommend the works of David Lindsay.

Subject: Impossibilities

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cbatt!clyde!caip!daemon

Date: Mon, 8-Sep-86 11:20:49 EST

"Prepare yourselves, Gentlemen, for a whole new scale of physical scientific values"

Do you hate it when people say things are "impossible"? Well, I do, and

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this is a personal statement, so skip it right now if you'd rather. The belief in physical impossibilities is a mental aberration that afflicts both scientists and non-scientists. It has many causes, but the root causes are, I think: in scientists, a fear that their hard-won expertise will become obsolete; in non-scientists, a simple fear of the unknown. "Why, if telepathy existed, ANYONE could be reading my mind RIGHT NOW"

The established scientists' attitude to the impossible has been satirised by a lot of people from Charles Fort to H Beam Piper ("Ministry of Disturbance") so I'll say no more on that. Instead, let's analyse the disease.

There are three kinds of "impossible": technologically impossible, scientifically impossible, and theoretically impossible.

Technological impossibility: we have no means of doing it, therefore it

can't be done. For example, one of the best arguments against the possibility of space travel was the observation that no chemical combination known could release enough energy to lift its own weight out of our gravity well. Apart from sloppy technical analysis, this attitude seems a simple failure of nerve. For a contemporary analogy, look at the "ten million lines of working software is impossible" debate.

Scientific impossibility: we know of no theory that predicts it, therefore it can't happen. For example, the Earth can't be more than about ten million years old, because "even if it were composed entirely of the best grade coal" the Sun could not have been burning that long. Such indeed was the position less than a century ago. Perhaps we are in a similar state today over evolution: we have lots of facts, but they don't hang together, and there is no convincing theoretical model. Hence the endless debate between gradualists and catastrophists.

Theoretical impossibility: we can prove it can't be done. The most famous example is, of course, the transmutation of the elements, a longstanding fantasy, born from deep desires in the human psyche, finally laid to rest by the Atomic Theory, which showed the chemical elements to be immutable. Today's bugbear is (you guessed it) faster-than-light travel. Every physicist will explain at the drop of a photon why it's theoretically impossible; few physicists admit that theories, like all human creations, are fallible, and that the universe is an endless surprise.

Perhaps we should avoid the word "impossible", and say only "we don't know how", or "our current theories predict it won't happen", or something sounding a little less like Divine Truth. But, given the deep desire of the human mind to believe it knows the Divine Truth, such a change is no doubt impossible.

Robert Firth

Date: Mon, 25-Aug-86 13:45:20 EST

There is almost a "sub-genre" out there of closed time travel stories, ie stories where there is only one, fixed time line, so the act of going into the past in some way causes the current present. The point usually is that the causal chain is very tangled, so the characters are at first baffled, then surprised.

Heinlein's stories have I think been mentioned: By His Bootstraps and All You Zombies. Another really good one is As Never Was, by P Schuyler Miller. Man discovers time machine. Makes trip into future. Returns with utterly baffling artifact. Now read on... Another I recall is Aldiss' T, from Space Time & Nathaniel (an excellent early collection)

I can think of three main themes to time travel stories

(a) If you don't like the past you can change it:

"With the time machine I vill give der Fuehrer the Bomb!"

"Professor Bose is going to change history! We must get to the Chrono Lab first!"

(b) If you don't like your life you could have lived it differently:

"Johnny, I know you very well - better than you expect - and I tell you you MUST NOT go to the Red Sox game!"

"Give me one good reason, old man!"

(c) The closed causal loop:

"Professor, your time machine cost \$1000000000. How could you afford that on the pay of a CMU teacher?"

"Simple. My first trip in the Chronoautomobile was to London in 54BC, where I invested one penny at 3% compound interest!"

Any more?

Robert Firth

Subject: time travel themes

Path: mtuxo!houxm!ihnp4!cbatt!clyde!caip!daemon

Date: Mon, 8-Sep-86 15:05:50 EST

Robert Firth lists three categories of time travel stories. I'd note at least one more category (possibly a super-category?): You can't change the past because: space-time won't take the strain ("A Gun for Dinosaur", de Camp); your past is yours alone ("The Men Who Murdered Mohammed", Bester); your time-machine is really a fantasizer ("Flight of the Horse", Niven); you'll foul things up so as to prevent time travel's invention (TIME AND AGAIN, Brunner); etc.

Subject: Movie Review [TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2]
Path: cbosgd!cbatt!clyde!caip!lll-crg!lll-lcc!pyramid!decwrl!sun!mwicks
Date: Thu, 28-Aug-86 19:19:55 EST

REAL MAN NIGHT AT THE MOVIES....A NEW BEGINNING.....

WARNING!!!!!! THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE OFFENDED EASILY BY GRAPHIC DISPLAYS OF SEX AND VIOLENCE SHOULD NOT READ THE FOLLOWING REVIEW!!

You thought that ALIENS was suspenseful?? You thought that The FLY was gross and disgusting??? You thought that NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD broke new ground in the realm of horror films?? You haven't seen this one:

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE PART 2
starring Dennis Hopper as Lieutenant Enright, Caroline Williams as "Stretch", and Bill Johnson as "Leatherface".

The film opens with a brief paragraph describing what happened in the first movie. Then.....

It's a big football weekend in Texas and we see a couple of local?? yahoos in a Mercedes on their way to a party, shooting up signs and whatnot with a gun. They happen to play "chicken" with a Chevrolet pickup and run it off the road. Little do they know what group of infamous brothers are inside. Turns out the truck ends up ahead of them on a bridge somewhere and Leatherface decides to do some custom body work on their Mercedes for free while they're speeding down the road. Unfortunately the driver's head gets in the way and the car crashes off the bridge.

This is when Lt. Enright shows up. He's an ex-Ranger who apparently has been trying to track down the demons who killed members of his family 14 years ago (his brother's children I believe). Local enforcement officials have been uncooperative and he's labelled as a whacko. Kind of lives up to that title too when you see him walk into a chainsaw shop,

plop down a few hundred dollar bills and walk out with 3 chainsaws of his own-2 small and 1 large.

"Stretch" is a female DJ who works at a hole-in-the-wall rock radio station that happens to take requests. Naturally they record all

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requests and when the yahoos in the Mercedes phone up to hassle her she not only gets their smart remarks but background noise of Leatherface's toy hacking away and their eventual screams of terror also.

Stretch goes to Enright with the tape to help him out. He initially refuses, but later asks her to play the tape over the air. She plays it later that night, but who do you think hears it?? The bad boys in the Chevy truck, who pass the information along to their older brother. He's just won the Texas-Oklahoma Chili Cook-Off for the second year in a row. He reveals that his secret is in "the meat"....

After Stretch plays the tape she gets a visit from Leatherface and one of his brothers. This guy gives new meaning to the words bizarre and weird! He has a plate replacing part of his cranium and what he does with a coat hanger and a cigarette lighter is beyond gruesome!! This guy scares the hell out of Stretch and won't leave. Suddenly Leatherface appears and goes after her. She locks herself up but that only works for awhile. He breaks in and she says something that appeals to some primeval urge in him and he ends up leaving her alone. Meanwhile "platehead" has ball-peened the other station employee who had returned to see his "girl" Stretch. He gets hauled away in the pickup when the gruesome twosome take off.

Stretch recovers and sees the speeding Chevy drive away. Tired of waiting for Enright to show she hops in her Jeep and pursues them. Little does she realize that Enright was using her as bait and is now following her! They end up at an old tourist attraction called Battlelands. This is where the "family" picked up and moved to from their old house. It appears that they're more heavily into the food catering business now and their underground hideaway is a maze lined with human bones, various appendages and an assortment of skeletons, lights and lamps. Enright sees Stretch just before she falls into a hole that takes her to the very bottom of this grisly dungeon. Enright pursues another path and begins sawing up the foundations that lead into

the pit. Leatherface begins the process of cutting up the station employee while Stretch is hiding behind a barrel close by. In one of the funny spots in the movie we see Leatherface "fire up" an electric kitchen knife about 12 inches long which immediately turns ghastly as we see him "skin" the leg, chest, face and scalp of his victim. Stretch kicks over a prong and is discovered. Leatherface again is calmed by her & even hides her from his brothers. First he ties her up, then puts a mask on her. The "mask" is the face and scalp of her former co-employee!! ACK!!! How does she get free?? Turns out the partially skinned cowboy isn't quite dead and cuts her loose. Still has a spit or two left in him.....(You'll have to see the movie to get that).

Stretch is free but how the hell does she get out of there??? There are too many passageways and no signs. She gets caught again and of course is invited to dinner. "Grandpa" is still around and they bring out the pail and hammer so that he can have a crack at her. The misses drive you crazy and after a couple of weak hits and it looks like she's done for

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in comes Enright buzzing away! he gives the older brother a quick hemorrhoidectomy and starts playing "dueling chainsaws" with Leatherface. Stretch takes off again with "platehead" hot on her heels. There's a long drawn-out chase and struggle that takes them to the top of the structure-on the outside. Inside is a long-dead "Grandma" with a chainsaw locked in her hands. Stretch has no choice but to pry it from her fingers and to try and start it up to defend herself. She ends up giving "platehead" a quick appendectomy at about the same time Enright is giving Leatherface one. The movie ends with the older brother whipping out an old hand grenade, pulling the pin and having it bumped out of his hand while Stretch is topside going nuts with her chainsaw, twirling it all over hell. An opening for another sequel??? You decide.

Three and a half stars. Mike-Bob says check it out.

