Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
Club Notice - 01/10/92 -- Vol. 10, No. 28

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
LZ meetings are in LZ 2R-158.

_D_A_T_E _T_O_P_I_C

01/29 LZ: A CLOCKWORK ORANGE by Anthony Burgess (Dystopias)

_D_A_T_E _E_X_T_E_R_N_A_L _M_E_E_T_I_N_G_S/_C_O_N_V_E_N_T_I_O_N_S/_E_T_C.
01/18 NJSFS: New Jersey Science Fiction Society: TBA
(phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)
02/08 SFABC: Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: Ginjer
Buchanan (Ace Books editor) (phone 201-933-2724 for
details) (Saturday)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 908-834-1563 hocpb!jetzt
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 908-576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 908-957-5619 mtgzy!leeper
HO Librarian: Rebecca Schoenfeld HO 2K-430 908-949-6122 homxb!btfsd
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 908-576-3346 mtfme!lfl
MT Librarian: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 908-957-5619 mtgzy!leeper
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 908-957-2070 mtgzy!ecl

1. Here the latest in our "Futurewatch" series, taken from a BBS somewhere "out there":

A Light In The Dark
Bell Labs Prove Existence of Dark Suckers
(Reprinted from the Bell Labs Newsletter)

For years it has been believed that electric bulbs emit light. However, recent information from Bell Labs has proven otherwise. Electric bulbs do not emit light, they suck dark. Thus they are now called dark suckers. The Dark Sucker Theory, according to a Bell Labs spokesperson, proves the existence of dark, that dark has

a mass heavier than that of light, and that dark travels faster than light.

The basis of the Dark Sucker Theory is that electric bulbs suck dark. Take for example the dark suckers in the room where you are.

There is less dark in the immediate area of the dark suckers than there is elsewhere in the room. The larger the dark sucker, the greater its capacity to suck dark. Dark suckers in a parking lot have a much greater capacity than the ones in this room. As with all things, dark suckers don't last forever. Once they are full of dark they can no longer suck. This is proven by the black spot on a full dark sucker. A candle is a primitive dark sucker. A new candle has a white wick. You will notice that, after the first use, the wick turns black -- representing all the dark which has been sucked into it. If you hold a pencil next to the wick of an operating candle, the tip will turn black because it got in the way of the dark flowing into the candle.

Unfortunately, these primitive dark suckers have a very limited range. There are, fortunately, portable dark suckers. The bulbs in these cannot handle all of the dark by themselves, and require the use of additional dark storage units. When the dark storage unit, referred to by some as a battery, is full it must either be emptied or replaced before the portable dark sucker can operate again.

Dark has mass. When dark goes into a dark sucker, friction from this mass generates heat. Thus it is not wise to touch an operating dark sucker. Candles present a special hazard because the dark must travel in the solid wick instead of through glass. This generates a large quantity of heat, which makes it inadvisable to touch an operating candle.

Dark is also heavier than light. If you swim deeper and deeper you notice that it slowly gets darker and darker. When you reach a depth of approximately 80 meters, you are in total darkness. This is because the heavier dark sinks to the bottom of the water and the lighter light floats to the top. The immense power of dark can be utilized to humankind's advantage. Dark which has settled to

the bottoms of lakes can be pushed through turbines to generate electricity. In this way dark can be forced into the oceans where it can be safely stored.

Prior to the invention of the turbine it was much more difficult to get dark from rivers and lakes to the oceans. The Indians recognized this problem and tried to solve it. When on a river in a canoe traveling in the same direction as the flow of dark, Indians paddled slowly, so as not to stop the flow of dark. When they traveled against the flow of dark they paddled quickly to help push the dark along its way.

Finally, it becomes clear that dark is faster than light. If you stand in an illuminated room in front of a closed, dark closet you notice that, as you slowly open the closet door, light slowly enters the closet. However the dark moves so quickly that you are not able to see the dark leave the closet.

In conclusion, scientists from the Bell Labs have noted that dark suckers make our lives easier and more enjoyable. So the next time you look at an electric bulb remember that its function is actually that of a dark sucker.

2. Last week we announced the "First SF Club Imagination Contest," in which we asked what event(s) you would go back and record if you had a time machine. People have been asking for clarification on the capabilities of this machine, so here are some more details. First of all, I am assuming you that need to specify a date and time (e.g., "September 1, 2756 B.C." or better yet, something like "now minus 1005940 days, 5 hours, and 20 minutes," which avoids calendar conversion problems). You can't change anything and can't be seen, and you can position yourself anywhere (including floating in the air above the Superbowl or some such). You cannot make adjustments to the time once you are there, though you can travel in space.

This precludes such trips as "Go back to the first man and the first woman" (unless you happen to know the exact date!) But you can travel back to Gettysburg on July 3, 1963, and follow the action around. But if you happen to be in a bad position at a

given time, you can't reposition yourself again for that time. (In the ten-use machine, you can, but it uses up a use.)

You can also make your own rules, but they must be consistent and reasonably stringent. You cannot, for example, say that you want to go back to "the most important event ever" and assume the machine can translate that.

There are no prizes, just the fun of thinking about this, and of seeing what other people think. If we get enough entries, we may ask for people to vote for what they think is the best.

3. The following contributions to the Middletown SF Club Library have been catalogued:

Adams, Douglas	Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The (H01)
Adams, Douglas	Life, the Universe, and Everything (H03)
Aldiss, Bryan	Helliconia Summer
Aldiss, Bryan	Helliconia Winter
Aldiss, Bryan (ed)	Galactic Empires 1
Aldiss, Bryan (ed)	Galactic Empires 2
Anderson, Poul	Day of Their Return, The
Anderson, Poul	Knight of Ghosts and Shadows, A
Anderson, Poul	Knight of Ghosts and Shadows, A
Anderson, Poul	Winter of the World, The
Anthony, Piers	Orn
Anthony, Piers	Ox
Asimov, Isaac	Adventures of Lucky Starr, The
Asimov, Isaac	Caves of Steel, The/Naked Sun, The
Asimov, Isaac	Foundation Trilogy, The

Asimov, Isaac	Further Adventures of Lucky Starr, The
Asimov, Isaac	Gods Themselves, The
Asimov, Issac	Foundation's Edge (F04)
Bear, Greg	Forge of God, The
Bester, Alfred	Starlight
Brown, Fredric	Best of Fredric Brown, The
Burroughs, Edgar Rice	At the Earth's Core
Campbell, John W.	Best of John W. Campbell, The
Carr, Terry (ed)	Universe 10
Carr, Terry (ed)	Universe 3

Carr, Terry (ed) Universe 7
Cherryh, C. J. Arafel's Saga
Cherryh, C. J. Hunter of Worlds
Clarke, Arthur Profiles of the Future
Conklin, Groff (ed) Omnibus of Science Fiction, The
Donaldson, Stephen R. Man Rides Through, A
Ellison, Harlan Approaching Oblvion
Elwood, Roger Epoch
Elwood, Roger Futurelove
Farmer, Philip Jose Dark Design, The (R03)
Foster, Alan Dean Nor Crystal Tears
Haldeman, Joe Infinite Dreams
Haldeman, Joe Mindbridge
Haldeman, Joe Mindbridge
Harrison, Harry West of Eden
Heinlein, Robert A. Farnham's Freehold
Heinlein, Robert A. Job, A Comedy of Justice
Herbert, Frank Children of Dune
Herbert, Frank Children of Dune
Herbert, Frank God Emperor of Dune
Herbert, Frank et al Lazarus Effect, The
Kaye, Marvin et al Masters of Solitude, The
Knight, Damon Best of Damon Knight, The
Knight, Damon Science Fiction of the 30's
LeGuin, Ursula K. Wind's Twelve Quarters, The
Lucas, George Star Wars
Ludlam, Robert Bourne Supremacy, The
McCaffrey, Anne Dragonflight (D01)
McCammon, Robert R. They Thirst
Miller, Walter M., Jr Canticle for Leibowitz, A
Niven, Larry et al Dream Park
Niven, Larry et al Legacy of Heorot, The
Pohl, Frederik Beyond the Blue Event Horizon
Pohl, Frederik Early Pohl, The
Pohl, Frederik Gateway
Pohl, Frederik Gateway
Pohl, Frederik Heechee Rendezvous
Pratchett, Terry Colour of Magic, The
Silverberg, Robert Lord Valentine's Castle
Simak, Clifford D. Heritage of Stars, A
Tolkien, J. R. R. Book of Lost Tales, The

Mark Leeper
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TALES OF THE WANDERING JEW edited by Brian Stableford
Dedalus, 1991, ISBN 0-946626-71-5, L8.99.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

The Wandering Jew has been a popular topic in literature as an archetype borrowed from Christianity (though running a distant second to Faust). The best-known "mainstream" work involving the Wandering Jew is probably Eugene Sue's _T_h_e _W_a_n_d_e_r_i_n_g _J_e_w (also available from Dedalus, ISBN 0-946626-33-2, 864pp, L9.99). But to nine out of ten science fiction fans, the name conjures up images of the old wanderer in Walter M. Miller's _C_a_n_t_i_c_l_e _f_o_r _L_e_i_b_o_w_i_t_z. But even if this is the only knowledge you have of the Wandering Jew, as Ahasuerus, or Cartaphilus, or Michob Ader, have no fear--Stableford explains the origin and literary history of the Wandering Jew (and why he has so many names). The basic primary source material is two-fold. Matthew 16:28 says, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming into his kingdom." John 21:22 says: "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he [Judas] tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me," although the next verse appears to be a disclaimer: "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that this disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him; He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry until I come, what is that to thee?"

Though Stableford gives a very complete introduction, there are a few omissions worth mentioning. Recent works that Stableford doesn't mention include _T_h_e _L_a_s_t _C_o_i_n by James Blaylock (here he is Judas), _T_h_e _H_o_m_e_w_a_r_d _B_o_u_n_d_e_r_s by Diana Wynne Jones (here he is Ahasuerus), and the _C_a_s_c_a: _T_h_e _E_t_e_r_n_a_l _M_e_r_c_e_n_a_r_y series by Barry Sadler (in which he is one of the Roman soldiers who gambles for Jesus's robe). In the film _T_h_e _S_e_v_e_n_t_h _S_i_g_n he is Pilate's gatekeeper (but then he's Roman, rather than Jewish, isn't he?); in DC Comics "Secret Origins" (#10) he is the Phantom Stranger. According to one person, in this version he was a man named Isaac whose wife was killed trying to protect their child from Herod's slaughter of the innocents and so he ended up hating Jesus. Older works include George Sylvester Viereck's _M_y _F_i_r_s_t _T_w_o _T_h_o_u_s_a_n_d _Y_e_a_r_s, _T_h_e _A_u_t_o_b_i_o_g_r_a_p_h_y _o_f _t_h_e _W_a_n_d_e_r_i_n_g _J_e_w, _T_h_e _P_r_i_n_c_e _o_f _I_n_d_i_a by Lew Wallace, and the Danish play _G_e_n_b_o_e_r_n_e.

After Stableford's twenty-five page introductory essay, the book gives us twelve historical pieces, including "The Wandering Jew's Soliloquy" by Percy Bysshe Shelley. While the poetry selections don't do much for me, the prose pieces are on the whole well-chosen. "The Magician's Visiter" [sic] by Henry Neele is little more than an episode with a punchline made obvious by the story's presence in this anthology. But there is real magic in "A

Virtuoso's Collection" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, a story of a museum of historical, mystical, and mythical relics. That it is run by the Wandering Jew is anti-climactic--the catalog of items is enough to stir one's sense of wonder. (I was reminded of Lawrence Watt-Evans's descriptions of far-off places in "Why I Left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers," surely an odd companion piece to a Nathaniel Hawthorne story.)

George MacDonald's "Passages from an Autobiography of the Wandering Jew" has some powerful moments, but also dragged in spots. "The Holy Cross" by Eugene Field suffers similarly--it has a powerful story swamped by an overly long and drawn-out ending. "The Wandering Jew" by Rudyard Kipling doesn't belong here: it's not about the Wandering Jew, but about a man seeking immortality. That his method is based on a major scientific gaffe on Kipling's part makes this all the more annoying--why did Stableford include it?

"The Mystery of Joseph Laquedem" by A. T. Quiller-Couch changes the basic legend of the Wandering Jew so much as to render it almost unrecognizable. The same is true of "The Accursed Cordonnier" by Bernard Capes, though the latter's "Oriental" horror style helps save it.

O. Henry is the first in this volume to update this story with "The Door of Unrest." Michob Ader claims to be the Wandering Jew, condemned to wander the earth forever for turning Jesus away from his door. But Ader turns out to be just an old drunk with a sad history. Or is he? This is, after all, by O. Henry. The final historical piece is John Galsworthy's "Simple Tale," another episodic tale emphasizing the learning of charity more than the plight of the Wandering Jew.

Leading off the recent stories is Mike Resnick's "How I Wrote the New Testament, Ushered in the Renaissance, and Birdied the 17th Hole at Pebble Beach." Unlike the older stories, which see the Wandering Jew obsessed with his fate to the exclusion of everything else, this story postulates that he decides to take an active role in determining his future, rather than just wandering around. And part of that role involves things that affect our history in major

ways. This Wandering Jew has changed with the times and his modern English is a delightful change from the King's English (King James, that is) that older writers seem to feel was part and parcel of the Wandering Jew. Resnick does humor well--and not often enough, so this is doubly welcome. (One wonders, though, how this Jew managed to get into all those country clubs?)

"The Wandering Christian" by Eugene Byrne and Kim Newman is an alternate history story--what if Constantine had been defeated by Maxentius outside Rome at the Milvian Bridge? (This is the second story with that premise I've read in the last two months--synchronicity?) Constantine's defeat, coming after his vision of a

cross against the sun, is the beginning of the end for Christianity. (In our world, of course, Constantine made Christianity legal within the Roman Empire.) The story consist primarily of the Wandering Christian telling the history of his world and himself in the thousand years since Jesus cursed him. The history will interest alternate history fans (and I won't spoil it by describing it here), and the Wandering Christian's personal story has one major variation--he can die. But whenever he dies, he wakes up the next morning in an identical body somewhere else. (That one major reviewer thought this was set in the far future rather than an alternate timeline I can only attribute to his not having read more than the first page--and that not well. Suffice it to say that I don't feel revealing this to be an alternate history a major spoiler.) One more comment: the appellation of "Wandering Christian" rather "Wandering Jew" (though not used in the story itself, in which all the other characters are ignorant of the history of such a person) is interesting. In almost all the legends, the Wanderer believes in the divinity of Jesus; after all, the curse worked. So the Wanderer, whether Jew or Roman initially, must generally be considered to be Christian, albeit unbaptized. (Although it would seem easily enough to get baptized in the Middle Ages, when priests would baptize anyone who stood still long enough.) Yet in almost all stories, he is still the "Wandering Jew." In this, he is the "Wandering Christian." An important facet of his character seems to be that he is of the "outsider"; once cursed, he cannot rejoin the brotherhood of the majority until his curse has run his course.

In Geoffrey Farrington's "Little St. Hugh," the eponymous character is probably one more familiar to Jews than to Christians, and probably also decanonized in the recent reorganization that also demoted (Saint) Christopher. Confused? Okay--here's the background. In the Middle Ages, Christians who had borrowed money from Jews and didn't want to have to pay it back--or who just wanted to stir things up--would put a dead child's body in the Jewish section of town and, when it was found, claim the Jews had sacrificed the child in some heathen ritual. (Easter was a popular time of year for this--they could accuse the Jews of using Christian blood for their Passover matzoh and it fit right in with the Easter sermon on how the Jews killed Jesus.) These trumped-up charges are now referred to as "blood libels." The child victim of all this was usually canonized quite rapidly as a "martyr to the faith"--hence "Little St. Hugh." Little St. Hugh, by the way, was a real person, Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, who at the age of nine was found dead in 1255, supposedly after being crowned with thorns, crucified, and then thrown in a well after an attempt to bury him failed when the ground refused to cover him. Ninety-three Jews were arrested; nineteen were killed and the rest released after the payment of a large bribe to the either the Francisans or the Dominicans (accounts vary). Little St. Hugh's story is told by Chaucer in the "Prioress's Tale." (Even Butler in his _ L_ i_ v_ e_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ S_ a_ i_ n_ t_ s labels

the charges against the Jews groundless.) In Farrington's story, the bishop is behind it all, having first used the child for his own Satanist rites. When he spots the Wandering Jew (as a Jew he had already seen burned alive once), he decides that the blood of an immortal would be even better than that of a child. What happens, and what will happen, provides the final irony to a story already full of ironical touches.

Robert Irwin's "Waiting for Zaddick" is set during World War II, or more specifically, during the Holocaust. Haim is spying for the Nazis and is told to find out what the Zaddick is. (In Yiddish, a zaddick, or more usually, tsaddik, is a miracle worker.) Though he hears the Hassids say that the soul's messenger comes only once and we must welcome him when he comes, Haim still fails to welcome the Wandering Jew and is trapped forever with no hope of a second

chance. This story bothered me, because it seemed to imply--unintentionally, I am sure--that the Jews of the Holocaust should have accepted the teachings of the Wandering Jew (and hence become Christian). I suppose if one accepts the reality of the Wandering Jew one must accept the validity of Christianity as well, but I am still not comfortable with the message I see here.

"Wanderlust" by Steve Rasnic Tem is ostensibly about the Wandering Jew, but in truth could be about any immortal. It is a well-considered look at what immortality means in terms of family life, even if the end seems a trifle contrived. (While it is well-considered, I can't say it is entirely original; Poul Anderson's _ B_ o_ a_ t _ o_ f _ a _ M_ i_ l_ l_ i_ o_ n _ Y_ e_ a_ r_ s is just one example of another work that covers this theme.)

Ian McDonald's "Fragments in an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" centers more around the premonitions of its central character, a young Jewish woman just before and during the Holocaust. The Wandering Jew is a secondary character, appearing solely to stir up people's fears and hatreds. The idea that one person in a cabaret show could somehow cause the rise of the Third Reich--even with Hitler in the audience--is difficult to accept. But the undeniable poetry of McDonald's writing makes up for the necessary suspension of disbelief. Actually, the story's _ o_ n_ l_ y weak spot is the Wandering Jew. Even the cabaret performance works--it's just the implication of its widespread effect that I question. (But then, accepting an eternally cursed immortal requires some suspension of disbelief anyway. Perhaps giving him this much power is something others can more easily accept than I can.)

In "The German Motorcyclist" by Pat Gray, I think the title character is supposed to be the Wandering Jew, but quite honestly I found the whole thing too obscure and pointless.

Scott Edelman may have gotten his inspiration for "The Wandering Jukebox" from Thomas Disch's "Brave Little Toaster," but

this tale of household appliances seems to have little, if anything, to do with the Wandering Jew, and I found it tedious rather than

intriguing.

Brian Stableford included one of his own stories, "Innocent Blood," about the (definitely this time) Wandering Jew and the AIDS-infected junkie he tries to save. In this story Stableford ties into a variant of the legend of the Wandering Jew invented by Eugene Sue--that the Wandering Jew was also a plague-carrier, bringing cholera with him wherever he went. Told from the point of view of the junkie, this is a successful modernization of the legend.

If Stableford brings the Wandering Jew into the gritty present, Barrington J. Bayley brings him into the far future in "Remembrance." About five million years in the future, that is, and condemned to wander the universe from planet to planet until Jesus returns, which will apparently not be until the end of the universe--another twenty _ b_ i_ l_ l_ i_ o_ n years. (The question of how he travels from planet to planet is never answered.)

And finally we have David Langford's "Waiting for the Iron Age," in which the Wandering Jew, after many deaths and rebirths, finds himself reborn in a data bank in a time capsule, immortal till--once again--the end of the universe, here described as 10 to the 1500 years (the last story was 10 to the 9). Now his wandering is reduced to wandering electrons around a loop, and this raises the question: is the purpose of the curse on the Wandering Jew to punish him or to have him serve as a lesson to everyone else? In this story, it must be the former, yet I think that the stories that presume the latter have more scope and offer more opportunity. This isn't a bad story, but by reducing the story to an emphasis on the awful punishment, Langford had removed any opportunity for repentance or salvation. And if Christianity is a religion that preaches that true repentance in one's lifetime will lead to salvation, this must hold true even for the Wandering Jew.

_ T_ a_ l_ e_ s _ o_ f _ t_ h_ e _ W_ a_ n_ d_ e_ r_ i_ n_ g _ J_ e_ w offers a variety of interpretations of a well-known legend. In spite of its fantastic nature, it is less well-known in the area of science fiction than might be expected, and Stableford's anthology may help change that. Currently there is no American edition, but by all means check your local specialty shops or science fiction convention dealers rooms; I recommend this book.

"The Gray Nun Legacy" by P. Smith
"The Loss of the British Bark Sophy Anderson" by Gary Lovisi
Gryphon Press, 1992, ISBN 0-93607-23-0, $6.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Well, first of all, calling this a double novel is a misnomer. The halves of the old Ace Doubles used to run about 35,000 words each; these are 6800 and 17,200 (a short story and a novelette). Still, one does not expect small press items to be as long as those from mainstream publishers.

On a more substantive level, though, the stories are not very good. While it's true that Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories don't always give the reader all the clues necessary to solve the mystery, they give _ m_ o_ s_ t of them, omitting perhaps Holmes's observation of mud on the killer's boots or scratches on a door. (These are hypothetical examples--don't ask me which stories they're from!) But in "The Loss of the British Bark Sophy Anderson" Lovisi has Holmes produce the solution--and then reveal for the first time all the information that led him to it. As a result, the reader (well, this reader anyway) feels cheated of _ a_ n_ y opportunity to work the mystery out for herself.

Smith's "Gray Nun Legacy" is, on the other hand, almost too simple to solve. Maybe it's because stories involving a valuable piece of jewelry and a copy have so few variations. (As an aside, can one really make a copy of a distinctive-looking pearl as easily as of a crystalline gem? And why do the people in these stories have these copies made anyway?)

Both authors manage to portray Holmes convincingly, without resorting to caricature. Lovisi's Watson, however, tends to be too emotional and high-strung to ring true. Still, this is a small flaw. The major defect in both stories is the plotting, and I can't recommend this volume.