



Science-Fiction Newsletter

Vol. X, No. 6; June, 1998

Next SCIENCE FICTION CLUB Meeting:  
**Tuesday, July 7, 1998, 8:15 p.m. -- Lecture (in Hebrew)**

**Avi Chami will lecture on  
 "A Dimensional Trip"**

Rehovot Science Fiction meets (when it meets) on a Tuesday evening  
 at the home of Tova and Bill Silverman,  
 19 Eisenberg St., fourth floor, Rehovot, Tel. 08-947-6142.  
 There is a REFRESHMENT CHARGE of 3.50 Shekels (for those who partake).

### **Dimensions**

The next club lecture, on **Tuesday, July 7**, will be on the subject of *Dimensions*. I'm publishing *now* the outline of lecturer Avi Chami so that participants can prepare for a lively discussion. **Warning:** Avi's lecture will be in **HEBREW** (the audience may comment in English, however).

#### **An outline of the July lecture by Avi Chami**

***A dimensional trip:*** In this meeting we will speak about physical dimensions

**1. Starting point - dimension zero**

**2. One dimension - the building of dimension one from dimension zero.**

**3. Two dimensions**

How to build two dimensions from one dimension - and the general case (n dimensions from n-1 dimensions)

Life in two dimensions (**Childhood's End** - Arthur C. Clarke)

Martin Gardner's question

**Flatland** - Edwin Abbott (1884) - שטוחלנדיה

**3.1 Two dimensions and three dimensions**

The perfect crime

The relationship surface/volume - The shrinking/expanding world question

Are big insects impossible?

Two faced 2-dimensional bodies - one faced 2-dimensional bodies: Moebius strip - zero faced bodies?

How to represent 3-dimensional bodies in two dimensions - perspective, unfolding and slicing

**4. Three dimensions**

Inside and outside - Is it possible to define "inside" or "outside"? (continues on page 2)

**The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy**  
**Meetings** (in Hebrew) on *Science and Science Fiction*  
*Join the Society, get its announcements, and go to its meetings!*  
 Call 03-5283803 or 03-6044959

#### **This Issue of CyberCozen:**

- One of the Authors Responds to my Book Review of **The Summerlands** by Ellen Foxxe  
 בגיליון זה של **CyberCozen**  
 אחת הסופרות מגיבה לביקורת שלי על הספר **The Summerlands** מאת אלן פוקס (באנגלית) •

**4.1 Three dimensions and four dimensions**

- Hyperspace
- Black holes, white holes and wormholes
- 4-dimensional solids - the Tesseract (a four dimensional cube) and the true magician
- Representations of 4-dimensional solids in three dimensions



**The Summerlands**

by Ellen Foxxe

In May I reviewed the first two books in **The Summerlands** series. One of the authors, Devra Kunin, has kindly replied to my criticisms. I will give excerpts from my comments in quotes, followed by Devra's comments in brackets:

"A parallel history novel, it takes place in what corresponds to our 1700's, with sailing ships and muskets.

[No, the English Civil War was in the 1600s]

"In the wake of religious persecution and a revolution against the aristocracy, many have fled to the New World to establish independent colonies. They find themselves under attack by large tree-living birds, who are bothered by the colonist's clearing the forests in which they live. Gradually the colonists learn that the birds are sapient: they have a language, they build cities in the treetops."

[They're not birds, you know -- they're feathered mammals, an evolutionary development that was perfectly possible, hair and feathers being two variants on the same thing]

"Thus we have the beginnings of something that might remind us of **Anne McCaffrey's** Pern series, or perhaps **Mercedes Lackey.**"

[I wouldn't know. Neither of us has read them.]

"We anticipate a developing relationship between humans and birds .... Perhaps even a love affair."

[Probably not possible.]

"Instead we have a rollicking war story"

[That was the general idea. The more rollicking the better. An adventure story is what we had in mind.]

"The colonists arm the birds"

[bird-people, please! These guys do not lay eggs! Of course, the cover IS misleading. Had the artist read any of the descriptions, he would have known that the Yerren do NOT have beaks.]

"The colonists arm the birds with muskets and enlist them as allies in the war, both as scouts and killers. They are the Indians of this New World"

[AAAAAGGGHHH!!! I hate this idea! We were stuck with the Yerren, in the book contract, but we tried to make them as little like American Indians as possible (e.g., clans instead of tribes) because the idea is outright offensive. When we first got the contract, I complained about the idea, and someone argued, "But they're intelligent, they're not really animals, so what's offensive about that? "Suppose the book were set in alternate-world Africa instead of America," I snarled, "and the native population were intelligent apes, you wouldn't find that offensive?" Anyway, by the time we were through with the Yerren, I was rather fond of them, but they're not birds or Indians.]

"The authors have created their own hateful, spiteful, stupid religion (without Christ)"

[Yes, this is basically a world in which Arianism instead of Christianity became the dominant mystery religion. It could have happened that way.]

"Here too there is a little too much Political Correctness: a woman hero, Rolande Vendeley, becomes a sea captain, and leads her ship into battle. What bothered me? First she freely takes a lover from her crew. I see two serious problems: 1) jealousy among the mostly young male crew"

[Tsk! The crew is not all male--that's your assumption. Besides, you thought Ivy was a guy?]

"and 2) pregnancy. Since this is alternative history, it might be possible to explain this, but I don't recall seeing any explanation."

[Have you ever seen an explanation in a fantasy book of why the characters all have perfect teeth? This is one of the accepted conventions of the genre. You're not a fantasy reader, so it bothers you. Pregnancy is not a problem for the same reason that Perry Mason never lost a case, that someone got murdered every single time Jessica Fletcher came for a visit. Fans may say, "Don't people know better by now than to invite her???" but they're just kidding -- they know there'd be no show if someone didn't get murdered. It's called suspension of disbelief -- fantasy readers are good at it. But as for "political correctness" -- Rolande simply wouldn't be as much fun if she were male. Besides, you don't want to let people know that YOU find it hard to imagine a world in which women routinely do these things! My readers don't find it hard to imagine at all -- and that's the point. I want young readers (and I really think of these as Young Adult novels, though adults enjoy them) to be exposed to that sort of world. In the **Silverglass** books, a character goes into an inn looking for her friend, and asks the innkeeper if he's seen a tall, blue-eyed woman warrior. He says impatiently, "Lady, I get soldiers in here all the time." The whole point is that there's nothing unusual about her in this world. She's not exceptional. THAT'S the kind of world I want young people to be able to imagine. And they can. If you can't take this idea for granted, you're showing your generation.]

"Vendeley's ship wrecks on a pirate island, and she and her crew find themselves unarmed and surrounded by armed pirates. Yet she is neither raped nor forced to sleep with the pirate leader." [See above. Besides, again you're assuming that there aren't any women on this island. That was never the case even in the real world. Pirates had

plenty of women around. The bits in the book about the women on board ships are actually quite accurate. These are not guys who haven't seen a woman in months. Chances are pretty good that said pirate leader has just come from a carousal of some sort when he meets Rolande -- there was some shouting going on in the background as I recall --]

"The same Vendeley, in the enemy port, steals the clothes of a respectable gentleman, wears them, steals a government seal, and pretends to be an important official. She is accepted and respected as that important woman, although she is wearing a man's clothing, with no modifications."

[They're not a "man's" clothes, they're just clothes. If you look at the descriptions of the clothing, you'll see that her regular clothes aren't any different -- just shabbier. She did not steal the guy's underwear, you know.]

"I wish that a similar effort had been made to explain those other anomalous items."

[That's because you read science fiction, not fantasy. We're talking escapism here. If I wanted to write historical fiction, I'd write it. I do, after all, \*ahem\*, have a PhD in history from Harvard. But these books are just for fun -- ours and the reader's. They have internal consistency, and, if anyone's interested, the technology is consistent with what people of that time could have developed, given their knowledge -- although some of the developments actually occurred later in this world. Anyway, we think the books are great entertainment, and so did **Locus**, **Dragon Magazine**, and other reviewers (including, of all things, **Romantic Times!**). So there.]

[That was fun! Ah, how we Jews love to argue. Sei gesunt, Devra (and regards to the SF group from Jeri, the other half of Ellen Foxxe)]

*In response to the above, I emailed to Devra:*

Dear Devra,

If you haven't read Anne McCaffrey's **Pern** novels, you should pick up one of the early ones. They have science fiction elements, but then the Yerren are a science fiction element in your novels. And your novels happily (for me) lack one of the characteristics of many fantasy novels: magic, witches, etc. Which is also mostly true of the **Pern** series, which are great Sixteenth/Seventeenth Century adventures (a strong Renaissance feeling) in a very different world, and have some wonderful characters, many of them women. **Pern** has intelligent flying dragons, which I would call the fantasy element.

I suspect that had you read Anne McCaffrey, you'd have made better use of the Yerren.

Aharon

**Dear Aharon,**

As far as the "dragons" in **The Summerlands** books go, anyone who reads carefully will notice that they're actually pterodactyls -- survivals from the jungles of South America, apparently.

We were determined to have no actual dragons, despite what the publisher wanted -- or elves, for that matter -- and we'd have done without the birdpeople altogether if we could have gotten away with it. I did enjoy writing the lone Yerren character in Book 2, though, I must admit, after we got rid of most of the rest of them.

I prefer "magic" to be ambiguous -- maybe it's magic, maybe there's another explanation. I was annoyed that the amulet on the cover of **Season of Storms** is shown crying, unambiguously, when I made a point of writing that it's RAINING when that happens! (Not to mention that the cover makes the book look like a romance, when it's all about spies, pirates, and privateers --)

Haven't been able to read a fantasy book since I started writing them -- although I'm not sure which is cause and which is effect there.

Best regards, **Devra**

**Quote of the Month:**

"One idea that might be developed further might be called: Bad apples and good eggs: How so few cause so much of the world's troubles. I got this notion from an African-American graduate student who did a study of corruption in the Philadelphia Police department and pointed to a relatively few 'bad apples' as the culprit. I think in every population there is a relative handful of these. They are generally young males (though they may be older and female as well); and they tend to be action-oriented and psychopathic and often prone to substance abuse. All of these factors have a genetic and biological basis. Therefore there is the likelihood of each population and each generation producing its 'quota' of potential troublemakers. Now society is not powerless in dealing with the problems they cause; but unfortunately it takes only a few to create a lot of havoc or a lot of nuisance in security precautions. All you have to think of is airline security -- made necessary by only a handful of would-be terrorists. El Al does a good job here, but even it can't guarantee 100% results."

*From a letter from Dr. Elliott White, Dept of Political Science, Temple University, Philadelphia.*

**An Apology**

Due to some technical difficulties, this issue of **CyberCozen** has been delayed. I wish to thank you for your patience and we will make all efforts to avoid this from happening again.

Guy Eldar,  
Graphic Editor and Designer.

**התנצלות**

בעקבות מספר בעיות טכניות, גיליון זה של **CyberCozen** נדחה ועל כך ברצוני להתנצל. אני מודה לכם על סבלנותכם ואנו נעשה כל מאמץ על-מנת להימנע מהשנות של דחייה שכזו. גיא אלדר, עורך גרפי ועיצוב.

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For mail delivery of **CyberCozen**, please donate 30 shekels per YEAR; For airmail to US \$15; If Aharon Sheer can hand-deliver it, 15 shekels.

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עבור משלוח בדואר של **CyberCozen**, הנכם מתבקשים לתרום 30 ש"ח לשנה; עבור דואר אוויר לארה"ב \$15; אם אהרון שיר יכול למסור את העיתון באופן אישי, 15 ש"ח.

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