



Hot News: Teleportation Achieved

CyberCozen reader **Dr. Sam Braunstein**, was involved recently in the **first successful teleportation experiment**. Working with a group at Cal Tech, Sam and his colleagues demonstrated "Unconditional quantum teleportation" of optical coherent states. While Sam was a post-doc at the Weizmann Institute a couple of years ago, he gave our club a talk on this subject. He is now a lecturer at the University of Wales, Bangor. Sam says that optimistically we may have "beam me up Scotty" teleportation in a hundred years, based on this technology. Just in time for Captain Kirk. For technical details, see *Science*, 282, 706-709. If you want to see what the press has to say, see Sam's site:

<http://chemphys.weizmann.ac.il/~schmuel/NewsPR.html>

especially British newspapers The INDEPENDENT, The SUN, and The DAILY POST. The SUN, for example, compares Sam to Francis Crick and Stephen Hawking.



A Disgusting Repulsive Book I Regretted Reading Recently

Reviewed by *Aharon Sheer*. Hopefully, this is not going to be a series.

The Iron Dragon's Daughter by *Michael Swanwick* (pronounced "Swannick") (1994), 424 pages. Recommended by Oleg Sverdlov. The book was reviewed in **CyberCozen** by Sara Svetitsky in February 1996. Every few pages Swanwick made me feel ill. I often regretted starting this book, although I read it to the (happy?) ending. The book describes a world parallel to ours, in which magic works along side of technology, and both are required. I can only describe its atmosphere by bringing some quotes. The "Iron Dragon" in

the title is a war machine, an intelligent attacker, who can communicate directly with the mind of its operator. It is a device which can wait in silence for months before acting, since it "had the uncanny patience of all iron-base saurians" (p. 93). The philosophy expressed throughout this book is simple: "The strong abuse the weak... Why should this bother anybody? It's a system." (p. 195). This philosophy is casually and heartlessly displayed in numerous incidents. In one example the heroine, Jane, and her friends go into a nightclub:

"Behind the bar was an enormous glass tank, lit by harsh fluorescents, where the rest of the club was bathed in red and purple. A horse was drowning in the tank. Legs churned up clouds of bubbles. Eyes bloodshot and wild, it craned its neck to lift agonized nostrils above the thrashing surface. It was excruciating to watch. The music was slow and romantic, but just loud enough that the horse struggled in silence.

"Jane shifted her chair so she wouldn't have to see." (p. 213)

Jane's dragon has some harsh opinions about Jane's world. He says, "Was it me... who said you must live and love and lose and grow old and die? Who poisoned your every friendship and drove you away from those you most

desired? Who said that you must learn only by making mistakes and that the lessons you learned must then do you no good? That was not I." (p. 302).

The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

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This Issue of CyberCozen:

- Review of TV Series by Raz Greenberg.
- List of Best SF Novels - from LOCUS Magazine.

בגיליון זה של CyberCozen:

- ביקורת לסדרת טלוויזיה מאת רז גרינברג. (אנגלית)
- רשימת ספרי המד"ב הטובים ביותר מתוך המגזין לוקוס. (אנגלית)

In this world people have power to affect their surroundings in unexpected ways. When a mob of people rages through the streets, "paint blistered, popped, and released spores of rust in tiny puffs. Asphalt buckled. ...Trash

multiplied by the curbs and bobbed in the oily waters of the canal. Walls crumbled." (p. 311)

The mixture of science and magic is fascinating. Jane is a student, and uses scientific techniques to gain knowledge. Here are some details from one such study:

"She set out the argon ion laser on the lab bench to her left and the sample chamber to the right The chamber had a monochromometer mated to a photon counter at the far end ...

"... With the device tuned to 514 angstroms, the goggle would filter out everything but the *raman* from the sample and she'd be able to look on it direct....

"The excitation of free ions in the solution brought to life a tiny orange sprite.... The life span of such creatures was fleetingly brief; in the excitation of the laser light they were born and died thousands of times per second. The being she saw now as one was actually many, its movements an illusion of continuity similar to the generation of repeated images on a television screen....

"... Jane waited while the sprite evolved through slow incremental changes, growing ever more familiar. Finally a minuscule Puck leered up into her goggled eyes, licked its lips, and grabbed its crotch. It was too much to expect subtlety from such a primitive creature." (p. 249-252)

Besides being an urban fantasy mixing magic with technology, the book is also a love story and a quest. Readers who are sensitive to such things should be warned that it contains a

number of explicit sex scenes, one of which is not disgusting.

The author is a superb writer -- if you can stand to read such things.

Just to be fair, here is my review of another book by the same author:

Vacuum Flowers by Michael Swanwick (1987), 248 pages. Recommended by Bill Silverman. I seem to remember enjoying this book as I read it, but the only thing I can remember about it a month later is what "vacuum flowers" are. Draw your own conclusions.



TV Review: *Space: Above and Beyond*

Review by *Raz Greenberg*

(now showing in Israel on Saturdays at 10:00 AM, *Star World*)



In an interview I recently read with J. Michael Straczynski, the creator of *Babylon 5*, he was asked what he thinks about the comparisons between his show and the different *Star Trek* shows. Straczynski replied that he doesn't understand those comparisons. Not every science fiction show, he said, should be compared to *Star Trek*, just as nobody compares every cop show to *Dragnet*.

This may be true, but I think the real reason people compare *Babylon 5* to *Star Trek* is the fact that until Straczynski came up with *Babylon 5*, nobody succeeded in creating a TV space-opera that would shake, or even come close to the success of *Star Trek*.

Space: Above and Beyond is an example of a show that tried to compete with *Star Trek*, and flopped, despite its original, fresh approach to the subject, which in my opinion makes it equal to - and in some respects even

better than - both *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek*. Originally aired in 1995, the show suffered from poor ratings and constant disagreements between the network and the show's creators (Glen Morgan and James Wong, who both wrote some of the best episodes of *The X-Files* during seasons 1 and 2). It was cancelled after one season (23 episodes), despite fan's protest. It was then broadcast across the world, gaining new fans. About a year ago, it ran on *Star Plus* gaining a (very) small but loyal group of fans here in Israel. Recently, *Star World* started re-running it (the show was supposedly purchased by *Keshet* for broadcast here on channel 2, but to the best of my knowledge, hasn't aired yet).

There are two major differences between *Space* and the other shows. The first thing viewers will notice is the fact that *Space* takes place in the relatively near future - 2063, so

its approach to technology is a little more down to Earth - literally. This doesn't make *Space* the TV equivalent of any hard science fiction novel - it is still a space opera - but it does a much better work in the area than most other shows in the genre. The second thing that distinguishes *Space* from the other shows is its focus - *Space* is, in both its basis and in every single episode of it, a war drama. Sure, *Babylon 5* presented us with the struggle against the Shadows and Earth's fascist government, and the *Star Trek* shows come up with a new threat to the confederation every now and then (Romulans, Borg, Dominion - your pick). But *Space* is the first show in which you can actually feel there's a war going on.

Space starts with an attack on Earth's two first colonies in space, by a mysterious alien race. When it seems that those aliens aren't going to stop there, and that their next target is Earth, a war breaks out. This war couldn't have possibly come at a worse time for Earth, which is still recovering from a painful rebellion by the Silicates (a kind of murderous intelligent android - no more Mr. Data). Earth is also divided by its approach to the InVitroes - a race of artificially gestated humans, created to fill in for the losses during the Silicates' rebellion. Unfortunately, most of them made poor soldiers - which triggered a growing wave of hatred towards them. Then the war hits the unready Earth troops. When Earth's top-elite military unit, The Angry Angels, is wiped out during the first battle, Earth is forced to send troops of relatively inexperienced soldiers to the front lines. The show follows such a unit - a marine squadron called The Wildcards. This unit includes Lt. Colonel TC McQueen (the excellent James Morrison) - an aging, bitter InVitro, who serves as the squadron leader. Due to his war injury (he's the only survivor of the Angry Angels), he is grounded, and forced to see his soldiers risk their life every day, without being able to do anything about it. The more active leader is Shane Vansen (Kristen Cloke) who is burdened by the trauma of losing her parents in the Silicates' rebellion. Nathan West (Morgan Weisser) joined the army in the faint hope of finding his girlfriend, who had been on one of the attacked colonies. Cooper Hawkes (Rodney Rowland) is another InVitro with some serious attitude problems - torn between his disloyalty to Earth and his commitment to his squadmates. Two more minor characters are Venessa

Damphuse - who joined the army to run away from her problematic relationship with a previously married man, and Paul Wang - a young nervous man, who finds himself in a war he doesn't really want to fight. *Space* shows how these men turn from an inexperienced group of rookies who don't trust each other into Earth's new top Marine squadron.

Space emphasizes character development more than any other show in its genre. Much like their work on *The X-Files*, Morgan and Wong give you the feeling that they use the plot to enlighten the characters, instead of the other way around. You'll see this in the show's multiple-part episodes (Hostile Visit/Choice or Chance, Never No More/The Angriest Angel and And If They Lay Us Down To Rest/Tell Out Moms We've Done Our Best). Those episodes are supposed to advance the show's overall plot, but when you're through watching them, you'll find yourself caring more about whether West will ever find Kylen, or if McQueen will come to terms with himself, than wondering if Earth is going to win the war. This approach also helps when the show goes where the other shows have gone before (sorry, couldn't resist), most notably in the episodes The Enemy and Stay With The Dead. But if you're looking for a totally new experience, you should watch the episode Who Monitors The Birds. I kid you not when I call this episode the best piece of science fiction ever written and directed for TV. It's a truly artistic achievement.

In terms of special effects, *Space* is uneven. For space flights and space combat, the show uses miniature models - a technique similar to the *Star Trek* shows, but it's really not up to the *Star Trek* level - and it's very far from the quality computer animation in *Babylon 5*. But what *Space* lacks in space combat, it makes up for in ground combat. Not since James Cameron's *Aliens* (and, to a lesser extent, Paul Verhoeven's recent *Starship Troopers*) has anyone managed to demonstrate so realistically what futuristic infantry war would look like. The combination of the special effects with the masterful direction makes the battles look so real, you can literally smell the gun smoke.

If you like science fiction shows, you shouldn't pass on *Space*. The reruns are an opportunity for *Space* fans to enjoy - and for new viewers a chance to get to know - this excellent show.

Ed. Comment: The Hizballah in Lebanon today have more advanced infantry equipment than the soldiers in Verhoeven's Starship Troopers film have. Did I miss something, Raz?



TV Recommendation: *Earth: Final Conflict*

By *Guy Eldar*

(now showing in Israel Wednesdays to Saturdays, excluding Thursdays when airing soccer, at 20:00, METV-24)

Due to lack of space in this issue, we did not include a review of this new and exciting series *Earth: Final Conflict*. However, because the show started airing at the beginning of October, I wish to bring you up to date and highly recommend it to all you SF fans.

Earth was created by Gene Roddenberry and is produced by his wife, who found the scripts after his death. The story tells

about the welcoming of an alien race to earth which seems friendly enough, but the resistance finds out their plans for invasion. Great effects and a good conspiracy plot in the new big thing in SF on American TV (the series made it in to its second season this September). For more details, check out the show's web site: <http://earth.finalconflict.com/>. I hope to bring you more about the show next issue.



LOCUS POLL: The Best sf Novels Ever Written (before 1990)

LOCUS magazine, the monthly sf newsletter, is a must for editors, writers and publishers in the sf and fantasy field. This year they polled their readers as to the best sf novels ever. They requested only books from before 1990, "to winnow out any briefly popular, flash-in-the-pan books, leaving those novels that can stand the test of time." Here is their list:

No	Title	Author	Year	No	Title	Author	Year
1	Dune	Frank Herbert	(1965)	17	The Time Machine	H.G. Wells	(1895)
2	The Moon is a Harsh Mistress	Robert A. Heinlein	(1966)	18	The Man in the High Castle	Philip K. Dick	(1962)
3	The Left Hand of Darkness	Ursula K. Le Guin	(1969)	19	The Dispossessed	Ursula K. Le Guin	(1974)
4	The Foundation Trilogy	Isaac Asimov	(1953)	20	Stand on Zanzibar	John Brunner	(1968)
5	Stranger in a Strange Land	Robert A. Heinlein	(1961)	21	Nineteen Eighty-Four	George Orwell	(1949)
6	The Stars My Destination	Alfred Bester	(1956)	22	The Demolished Man	Alfred Bester	(1953)
7	A Canticle for Leibowitz	Walter M. Miller	(1959)	23	The Martian Chronicles	Ray Bradbury	(1950)
8	Childhood's End	Arthur C. Clarke	(1953)	24	Starship Troopers	Robert A. Heinlein	(1959)
9	Ender's Game	Orson Scott Card	(1985)	25	Downbelow Station	C.J. Cherryh	(1981)
10	Hyperion	Dan Simmons	(1989) *	26	Ringworld	Larry Niven	(1970) *
11	Gateway	Frederik Pohl	(1977) *	27	2001: A Space Odyssey	Arthur C. Clarke	(1968)
12	The Forever War	Joe Haldeman	(1974)	28	The War of the Worlds	H.G. Wells	(1898)
13	More than Human	Theodore Sturgeon	(1953)	29	Fahrenheit 451	Ray Bradbury	(1953)
14	Lord of Light	Roger Zelazny	(1967)	30	The Mote in God's Eye	Niven & Pournelle	(1974)
15	Neuromancer	William Gibson	(1984)	31	Way Station	Clifford D. Simak	(1963)
16	Startide Rising	David Brin	(1983)				* [the series]

I like this list very much. I would agree with most of it. It's interesting to note which authors appear more than once on the list. The remarkable book NOT on the list is *Solaris*, by Stanislaw Lem, which is probably missing because LOCUS readers -- mostly Americans -- refuse to read in translation. Hardly any of these books are in print today in Hebrew, although almost all were translated at some time. The exceptions are the Asimov, and two of the Heinleins, probably reissued now because of the success of the movie *Starship Troopers*.

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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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