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ספריות וספריי העתיד במדע הבדיוני (סיום)

Future Libraries and Librarians in Science Fiction (conclusion)

By Eli Eshed מאת אלי אשד

סרטי מד"ב Science Fiction Movies

במקרים של **ארוזו** ו-**LOGAN'S RUN** המדובר בספריות חרות שהגיבורים נאלצים לחפש בשרידיהם, ובמקרה של **רולבול** מדובר בספרן זקן בשווייצריה שטוען שספרייתו (למעשה המחשב העולמי הענק) כוללת את כול הידע הקיים ("חוץ מהמאה ה-13 שנמחקה בטעות, אבל מה זה בכלל משנה היו שם רק דנטה וכמה אפיפיורים מושחתים...").

עד כמה שהדבר מפתיע הסרט החשוב היחיד שבו מתוארת בצורה מתוחכמת כלשהי עתיד הטכנולוגיה הספרנית הוא סרט ישן של ג'ורג' פאל **מכונת הזמן The Time Machine** (על פי ספרו של ה. ג. וולס) מ-1960. בסרט זה מוצא את עצמו הגיבור בעתיד הרחוק בספריה/מוזיאון שבאמצעות האמצעים הטכניים המדהימים שבה הוא לומד על ההיסטוריה של עולם העתיד. קטע זה הוא הקטע היחיד הידוע לי מסרט וכלשהו העוסק בטכנולוגיה ספרנית של שימור ושחזור העבר.

פרט לכך אין התייחסויות חשובות שידועות לי על עתיד הספריות בקולנוע.

גם בסרטי המדע הבדיוני ספרנים ומידענים הם נדירים ביותר. אך בשנות ה-70 הופיעו מספר סרטים שבהם נטלו ספרני העתיד מקום חשוב, עם גם הדמיון ויכולת החיזוי שגילו היו מוגבלים ביותר. והעתיד בהם תואר תמיד כמקום שבו המידע הוא תמיד מוגבל או חסום בפני הקהל הרחב. לדוגמה, הסרט **סוילנט גריין Soylent Green** (לפי ספר של סופר המד"ב הארי האריסון) מ-1973 תיאר עתיד של פיצוץ אוכלוסין מוחלט ושוו כול הידע הקיים נימצא בידהן של כמה ספרניות זקנות שדרך מגלה הגיבור צירלטון הסטון שמזון סינתטי חדש להמונים הוא למעשה מורכב מבשר אדם.

בסרטים הבאים מגלים הגיבורים באמצעות ספריות את האמת על עולמם **ארוזו Zardoz** מ-1974 שבו שון קונרי מחסל חברה הדוניסטית מנוונת. **רולבאל Rollerball** מ-1975 על משחק ספורט קטלני בעתיד שבו שולטות בעולם -- וזה כבר נראה כמו תחזית מדויקת -- חברות ענק רב לאומיות.

LOGAN'S RUN מ-1976 על עתיד הדוניסטי שבו כול מי שהוא מעל גיל 30 מוצא להורג. אבל בספריות אלה אין טכנולוגיה חדשה שאפשר להצביע עליה.

סדרות טלוויזיה Television Series

בסדרת הטלביזיה המקורית של **מסע בין כוכבים Star Trek** היו התייחסויות לסיפריה ראשית של הפדרציה בשם "ממורי אלפא" אך לא היה שום מידע ספציפי על דרך פעולתה. אמנם הסרט **מסע בין כוכבים 9: המרד Star Trek 9: Insurrection** אמור היה לכלול ספרנית עתידנית שהייתה אמורה לעזור לאנשי צוות האנטרפרייז בחיפושי מידע, אבל הקטע עמה קוצץ לפני צאת הסרט

קומיקס Comics

גם בסיפורי קומיקס איננו שומעים רבות על עתיד הספריות או ספרנים בכלל עם יוצא דופן ויותר נכון יוצאת הדופן של הלוחמת בפשע **נערת העטלף** בסידרת **בטמן Batman** של חברת **די סי DC** שהיא חייה הפרטיים ספרנית. ולאחר שהיא הפכה לנכה כתוצאה מפעילות של פושע מרושע נערת העטלף הפכה ל"יאורקל", מעין "סופר מידענית", שאין מידע שהיא

אינה יכולה להשיג עם האמצעים המתוחכמים שברשותה. אבל פרט לה ולסופר גיבור משנות החמישים **קפטין קומט Captain Comet** שבחיי הפרטיים היה ספרן אפור, אין אנו מוצאים בקומיקס הרבה על מוסד הספרייה בכלל ובעתיד בפרט.

העתיד The Future

אסימוב שבו הספרנים/מידענים הם בעלי כישורים פרה פסיכולוגיים אדירים של שכנוע. בימים אלה כשספריות רבות נמצאות על סף ההתמוטטות ומעבר לה בגלל מחסור כרוני בתקציבים ובגלל האדישות של הפוליטיקאים והציבור, דומה שיש צורך דחוף בכישורים כמו אלה של אנשי "המוסד האחר" כדי להציל את הספריות....

מה אם כך יהיה העתיד של הספרנים והמידענים? להיות מוחלפים בידי תוכנות המחשב כמו אצל סטפנסון או אולי אולי להמשיך להתקיים כמומחים לארגון וסידור מידע במאגרי המידע כמו אצל וינג'?

אם זה היה תלוי בי כי אז הייתי בוחר בעתיד של *The Second Foundation* האחר של

הערה: אם יש מישהו שידוע לו על התייחסויות מעניינות לעתיד מוסד הספרייה בסיפורי מדע בדיוני, בסרטים, תוכניות טלביזיה, קומיקס וכו' אשמח אם יודיע לי על כך.



Quote of the Month

"The best way for science fiction media to go is in small, exquisitely crafted films like *Charly* or *Gods and Monsters* – a beautiful film, made for about two and a half million bucks, which earned over forty million. That's a better pathway than the big lollapalooza extravaganza exploding-world model – and here the behemoth is surely the latest *Star Wars* film, which was first time in the theater I've ever wished I had a hand remote control that had two buttons: 'Mute' and 'Freeze-Frame'. I would have liked to have looked at that movie and not had to listen to the plotline or the dialog."

-- From an interview with physicist and sf writer **Gregory Benford** in *LOCUS* January 2000, p. 76



Film Review: *Gods and Monsters*

Reviewed by Aharon Sheer

Despite sf writer Gregory Benford's comment quoted above, *Gods and Monsters* is not a science fiction film. It's a film about **James Whale**, the Hollywood director who in the 30s made three of the greatest sf movies of all time, *Frankenstein* (1931), *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), and *The Invisible Man* (1933), all notable for their irony and impish black humor. But this film takes place in 1957 after Whale has had a stroke. Whale suffers from hallucinatory flashbacks: a word, smell, or sight can throw him into some emotional scene of his past as if he were experiencing it now. The final important element of this film is that Whale was openly homosexual in a state (California) where to this day homosexual acts are a felony offense. (Not long ago a well-known actor was threatened with six months in jail for propositioning someone in the men's room of a gay bar in Los Angeles.)

The viewer of this film has these three elements deal with:

- (1) Some wonderful excerpts from *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein*.
- (2) A superb portrayal of a sophisticated, highly intelligent, sensitive old man who has had a stroke and is suffering from the resultant brain damage (played by Ian McKellen).
- (3) Whale's attempts to seduce his young, non-homosexual gardener, who is disgusted by this, although he admires the director for his great films, and pities him for his affliction.

A very good film (Academy Award winner for Best Screenplay Adaptation 1998, and two Academy Award nominations: Best Actor, and Best Supporting Actress), but it is not for every sf fan.



Book Review: *Cosm* by Gregory Benford (1998), 374 pages.

Reviewed by Aharon Sheer.

Physicist Benford teaches and does research at the University of California, Irvine. This novel takes place mostly at Irvine, and has a black woman particle physicist as its hero. Three oppressed minorities represented in one hero! Benford, as a scientist himself, has a good feel

for how scientists work, and has tried to represent this in this novel, which, taking place at his home university, also has a verisimilitude of place which is quite convincing. On the other hand, one is shocked by the small-mindedness, vengefulness, and jealousies of these physicists. One might almost think they were human beings.

A few years from now, our heroine, Dr. Alicia Butterworth, arrives at Brookhaven National Laboratories in Long Island, New York, to do a long planned experiment on the new RHIC (Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider), called "Rick" for short. Before she has even started she is told that they are planning to do her a great wrong: They plan on keeping all data from her forthcoming experiment at Brookhaven for *six months* before passing it on to her at Irvine. That means, in her view, that they are stealing *her* data. They will get to examine *her data* at their leisure, and only long after they have milked it will she get a chance to use it. Of course they have some budgetary explanation for this act of *theft*, but that doesn't make the situation easy to accept.

Alicia, however, gets her chance to take revenge. When her experiment is run, an explosion occurs, and a shiny sphere, 38 centimeters in diameter and 100 kilograms in weight, appears at the focus of a powerful magnet. What does Alice do? She takes the sphere home to Irvine with her (it is *hers*, after all – its *her* experiment). But she tells no one at Brookhaven. Let *them* have *her* data, she's got the prize!

This shiny sphere turns out to be one of the greatest discoveries in the history of physics. But Alicia keeps it quiet for weeks. She does not show it to any of her colleagues (although she does have the full cooperation of one postdoc and one graduate student in studying the sphere and keeping the secret). She enlists the aid of a theoretician from Cal Tech to help her to understand what she's got, and to give her suggestions for more experiments to do with the sphere (which they call **Cosm**). The theoretician also wants to keep his work a secret. This is because his theoretical explanation is so crazy that he's afraid his reputation will be ruined if anybody hears about it before experimental study

has proved him right (or wrong).

Finally the facts come out, and Alicia even publishes a short paper in *Physical Reviews*.

But what is most remarkable about all this is that she still lets *no one* (except her postdoc, her student and her theoretician) get near the sphere. She collects her data, but shows that data to *no one* (it's *her* data, after all). All her data is copied and transferred to a secure facility on campus, but *no one* is allowed to look at it except her group. The amazing thing is that the university goes along with this. They ask her about her latest results, and she puts them off, saying she's too busy dealing with the latest incoming data to have time to organize it for publication, or even to give a talk. The university *continues to give her money* for her work despite this astounding secrecy. And still she tells no one outside her little group anything!

Such secrecy and selfishness with respect to *my data* reminds me of the archeologists. Did you know that the almost none of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been studied, even today? They *belong* to a small group of elderly archeologists, who insist on doing all the studies themselves, but are so old and feeble they hardly have the strength to do it. No one else is allowed to look at the Scrolls. I believe that after decades they finally agreed to release photographs of the Scrolls. Even when they study a scroll and publish about it, they are fearful of letting anyone see the Scroll itself, for fear that someone will suggest they have perhaps made a mistake. This is how archeology is done all over the world. *This belongs to me! You can't see it!* Can physicists be as small minded and anti-scientific as archeologists? Apparently, yes! Benford knows his physicists, and he describes what everyone says is the world of a *real scientist*. Shocking!

A good read, with lots of hard physics and much hand-waving theory. Recommended.



Tomorrow's Yesterday-news

by Raz Greenberg

In a recent visit to a *Babylon 5* newsgroup, I read a message claiming that *Babylon 5* is the first science fiction show since *Star Trek* that managed to last over three seasons. While that's not true – *Quantum Leap* lasted four and a half seasons, and let us not forget *Doctor Who* (which is not an American show, but is definitely science fiction!) – the origin of this misconception is clear. Until

recently, science fiction TV shows were considered to be slot-fillers, doomed before they even started airing, let alone establishing an audience.

And then, almost seven years ago (was it that long?), a guy named Chris Carter came up with a little show called *The X-Files*. And many people – some of whom never even looked at anything labeled "science fiction" before – were

hooked. And that made all those big network executives say things like “hey, there are normal people watching this stuff!” and before we knew it, there was a mass of all those “me too!” shows – *Dark Skies*, *Sleepwalkers*, *Prey*, *The Visitor*, *Strange Luck*, *Strange World* (the last two haven’t aired in Israel yet) – and note that I’m writing this list from memory, so I’m sure there are some shows I left out. Now, here’s an easy question: how many of those shows are still with us today? Zip (actually, some pathetic descendants from that era, most notably *Profiler* and *Pretender*, are still around to make our lives miserable). True enough, there were some rare gems among them, now lost for good (*Space: Above and Beyond* anybody?) but most of the people who took one look at those shows didn’t bother to keep on with it. Why? What were those shows lacking? Was it talent? Not necessarily. Actually, very talented X-Files graduates did some of those shows. I think it was something else. Something deeper. Something called originality.

Now I can already see all those people telling me that this is the nature of TV: once a show succeeds in any genre, people want to recreate the success. To which I’ll respond that people who watch science fiction shows are smarter than the average viewer, who is willing to put up with wannabe shows. Take *The Visitor*: did anyone seriously think we need another *Pretender*, as if one wasn’t more than enough? And while on the subject: did anyone think letting the people who did movies like *Stargate*, *Universal Soldier* and *Godzilla* do a weekly TV show is a good idea? Another example, *Prey*: for some reason, they thought that by simply replacing the aliens from *The X-Files* with something called “New breed” they’d trick the viewers into thinking they are watching something new. Did they think we’re that stupid?

A more relevant argument, perhaps, would be that original concepts are hard – if not impossible – to come up with these days in any form of science fiction, not just TV. A good example would be J. Michael Straczynski’s new

show, *Crusade*, which has been recently accused of ripping off the Japanese animated classic *Star Blazers*. However, even the people pointing to the amazing similarities between the two shows have to admit that while Straczynski may have ripped off the concept, *Crusade* itself has an original story of its own. My point? There is nothing wrong with old concepts if you use them in a new way. Take *Earth: Final conflict*. Sure, the concept may sound suspiciously similar to the 80’s show *V*, but Gene Roddenberry turned it upside down when he made it into a futuristic spy show. And you can imagine my disappointment when I discovered that in the show’s second season it just blatantly stole plots and ideas from other shows without even trying to disguise it. Or take the science fiction comedy *Third Rock From the Sun* (which actually isn’t my cup of tea, but I’m in minority here). Has it been done before? Of course it’s been done before. Ever seen *ALF*? But in *Third Rock* the creators of the show switched the points of view – showing how the others see us instead of the other way around – and what we got was (surprise!) a new show. And just look at what I consider to be the best show to come out of the *X-Files*-wannabe-boom, *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*. Like most of the other shows, it started with people doing a modern-day science fiction show (actually, it’s more of a fantasy show). But then, instead of letting a cop or a secret agent or a scientist fight supernatural horrors, they did the show around a high school girl. So, instead of getting more unexplained conspiracies from a mysterious gray-haired man, we got a girl who has to fight demons while trying to handle school, her family and her friends. Hey, that’s something new. Something original.

To conclude with some cautious optimism, the new science fiction shows coming up in the US – *Harsh Realm*, *Now and Again*, *Dark Angel* and *The Others* – sound original. I’m not celebrating, because I haven’t seen any of them yet. But let’s hope that they succeed. And let’s hope that if they do, the shows following them will not try to just imitate them, but will also come up with something new.



Film Review: Animated Fantasy

Reviewed by Guy Eldar

A few issues back, I brought you lists of the upcoming full-length animated features in Science fiction and fantasy. In the break of this years summer vacation, four of these movies have opened here in Israel. After seeing all four, I've decided to put on hold some of the new and rumors and to let you know why you should run to the theaters and see these fantastic fantasies.

I'll start with the first movie to reach us, Walt Disney's long awaited, **Fantasia 2000**. You might be asking yourself what this movie has to do with fantasy, but it does. All eight sections tell amazing stories of fantasy and music. Unlike the original, **Fantasia 2000** is only an hour and a half, filled with fun, excitement and laughter. Note especially the two final sections. One is of Donald Duck as Noah's assistant trying to hold the animals together, put to Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstances, Marches #1, 2, 3 & 4. The other is the story of nature, inspired by Japanese Manga Animation and put to Stravinsky's "Firebird Suite – 1919 Version". You may not like the whole thing, but I'm sure you'll find most of it spectacular.

Some three weeks after seeing **Fantasia 2000**, I found out that the above grand finale of the movie was not inspired by Japanese Manga in general, but drew its story, characters and atmosphere from high quality Manga – **Princess Mononoke**. This film, distributed by **Miramax** (a **Disney** company) around the world, has come to Israel in its original language – Japanese. It is the story of a young prince who leaves his house in search for a cure that would clear him of a curse he is carrying. In the process he finds himself in the center of a fight to the end between men and nature. He falls in love with Princess Mononoke, the adopted daughter of the she-wolf and the guardian of the forest. Happy end is of course guaranteed.

Although Manga is not my first choice in animation and I don't find the movement of the characters that realistic, the animation here was very good (especially considering it was all made by hand in the traditional way). When I left this movie, someone said from behind us "Disney make movies with millions of dollars, they are stingy on every minute and the movies come out (in most cases) OK. Here is a movie with an eighth of the budget Disney has, a movie more than two hours long, with characters and depth that Disney can only dream of". I agree with every word.

In between these two movies I rushed to the theaters to see two more, just in case they take them down (the English version, at least).

The first is the all-fun and superficial action comedy **The Road to El Dorado**. With the rebellious touch of **Dreamworks**, this is a fun movie with lots of laughs and excitement. I enjoyed the bright colors, the fast animation and the combination of 2D animation with extraordinary 3D animation. If you want to have a few laughs (and remind the Globus Group that there is an audience that wishes to see these non-Disney movies in English) go see this movie.

I've left the worst for last. **Dinosaur** is the biggest disappointment I've ever had from a Disney movie. Yes, the effects are breathtaking, but you get over it in about 15 minutes. The rest of the movie you sit back and try to remember where you have seen/heard this before. Well, to help you out, most of the story is very much like **The Lion King** and with that you can locate references to **Tarzan**, **Aladdin**, **The Jungle Book** and more. This movie was made purely to test new technology and not enough effort was put into the story. The big screen and the sound system make it worth seeing this movie in the theater, but keep in mind not to expect too much from it and you might to enjoy it.

Comments, News and Rumors' facts and sites would be appreciated. Write to: eldarguy@netvision.net.il
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