



Science-Fiction Fanzine

Vol. XIV, No. 2; February, 2002

**The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy**

**FantasyCon 2002** will be held **March 31 - April 2** in Mofet Hall (Ramat Gan)  
(אולם מופת, בית ההסתדרות, רח' הרצל 13 פינת קריניצי, רמת גן)

The Con will include **fantasy movies** and **TV series**, **lectures**, **chats with writers** and **more**. Many of the movies and TV series have never been shown in Israel.

For more information please visit the Con website:

<http://fantasy.sf-f.org.il/main.html>

**Purim party** Feb. 26 – the **Society** and **Starbase 972** join forces: This year's party will include a Filk song contest, "The Weakest Link", a costume contest and more!

ביום ג', 26/2/2002, בשעה 20:00. בניין רשת המתנ"סים, רח' בנימין 4, רחובות

See: <http://www.sf-f.org.il/story.php3?id=221>

### Letter to the Editor

**Editor's Note:** Eli Eshed's article "A Survey of the State of sf in Israel in the Last Five Years" appeared in *CyberCozen* August-September 2001. It has now been published in US sf newsletter *LOCUS* (circulation 4,500), in the January 2002 issue, under the title "Science Fiction in Israel". It appears with reproductions of the covers of nine books discussed in the article, and photos of four of the authors. One of the authors discussed by Eli is **Barry Prigat**. Barry's picture appears in the article, the cover of his book *The Promised Land* appears, and his children's books are also discussed. I sent Barry a copy of the *LOCUS* issue. Barry had very cooperatively provided me both with the book *The Promised Land* and his photo, at my request, so that I could scan the book cover and the photo, and send them to *LOCUS*.

**Dear Aharon,**

Thanks a lot for the January 2002 *LOCUS* magazine. I was very excited to read the article "**Science Fiction in Israel**" and especially the paragraphs about my book *The Promised land*. It was nice that Eli Eshed thinks the book is the best in its genre. I take it as a compliment to be mentioned together with Brian Aldiss. **Non-Stop** is one of my favorite sf books although I started to write *The Promised Land* before I read it. (Yes, it took many years to write the book and to improve it until I was satisfied enough to find a publisher.)

I was surprised to find that the article has a paragraph dealing with SF for youngsters in Israel and I enjoyed reading about my "Millimeter" and "Keren Alpha" series. (In each of the two series, six books have been published so far, and there are three more written that will appear in the near future). By the way, "Keren Alpha" in English is not "Alpha Corner" but "Alpha Ray" (which is an atomic radiation ray and also the names of the heroes). I hope that some day I'll be able to translate the series to English. (The books have the advantage of not being connected to any specific country, and that's why I chose 'translatable' names for all the heroes.) The books are about a computer fan who plays Quest Computer Games and must navigate the Alpha expedition to finish the complicated and dangerous paths successfully, and overpower wicked sorcerers.

Thanks again for everything. It was something special!

Yours sincerely, **Barry Prigat**

## HOW TO WALK ON THE MOON

by Yaakov Macales

Regarding Aharon Sheer's article in the January 2002 issue of *CyberCozen* about the scientific accuracy of the movie *2001*, I would like to point out another "mistake" that was not mentioned. There are two scenes where we see people walking on the moon. The first is a meeting inside a room at Clavius Base and the second has a group of men wearing space suits descending into the pit where the monolith had been discovered.

Since the movie was made before the first manned moon landing in July 1969, I can't really say they goofed when they made the film since there had been no previous experience with this. The problem is that the people are seen walking normally, as we do here on earth, which is impossible in the one-sixth gravity of the moon, even if one is in a pressurized facility where it is not necessary to wear a space suit. Here on earth, we walk by placing one foot in front of the other with the forward foot a small distance off the ground. We then shift the center-of-mass of our bodies forward so that the weight is removed from the rear foot, which is still on the ground, towards the forward foot. Gravity then pulls the forward foot downward towards contact with the ground. We then shift our rear foot ahead of the forward foot which is now on the ground, and then repeat the process. Because of the low gravity on the moon, it takes

a much longer time for the forward foot to move downwards to the ground, making the whole process much longer and more frustrating.

There is an analogy here on earth, which is trying to walk on the bottom of a swimming pool in deep water. In this case, the buoyancy of the water also, in effect, reduces the pull of gravity on the forward foot.

The astronauts found that it was much more efficient to hop from one place to another if they wanted to move relatively quickly. The problem with this form of locomotion is that, on the moon, a person's weight is only one-sixth that of it on earth, but his inertial mass is the same, so once they get moving at a good clip, it is rather hard to come to a halt. We see this in films of the astronauts moving around and frequently overshooting the location they wish to stop at.

In the television series *From the Earth to the Moon*, which dramatizes the history of the Apollo lunar landing program, the moonwalks were simulating by attaching helium balloons to the space suited actors which allowed their motion to appear realistic. I would like to see the scene in *2001* inside Clavius Base re-filmed with people in their normal street clothes hopping around like that. It would be most amusing!

## The Model of the "Surprise Story" - Writing a Short Story

By Alon Itzkovitch

If you've been thinking of writing an sf or fantasy story with a surprise ending, Alon's advice here might interest you. (See his story in Hebrew below and decide for yourselves if he knows something.)

1. The inspiration, the "spark": the author derives the idea for the story from something he saw or heard (a scene in a movie, a book, a song, a random sentence heard on the street, an article, etc.).
2. "The Surprise Idea": The strength of the story is based absolutely on the originality and the bizarreness of "the surprise idea", the final sentences which will leave the reader surprised and astounded.
3. The characters: They should have an Israeli – Jewish character.
4. First determine only two things: the opening of the story, and its ending. The middle of the story can be developed afterwards.
5. First draft: Rapid writing of the story while ignoring mistakes and leaving out complex descriptions. These will be corrected and added during the "rewrite".
6. If the "surprise" is the "reality" surrounding the hero/heroes, it should be revealed step by careful step, scattering hints on the way to the ending, without revealing "the surprise" too quickly.
7. If the "reality" is not "the surprise" but is just the background for the plot, it is desirable to provide an introduction to the "reality" before the start of the plot line. This introduction will teach the reader the ideas, the terminology, and the "game rules" of the story, in order to save the reader from having to learn this during the plot action.
8. "Rewrite": This is the edit of the draft, in which the author cleans up the story with respect to spelling and grammatical errors, adds external descriptions, and repairs problematical sections.
9. Believability check: Are there "scientific" errors, plot errors, or inconsistencies, which spoil the believability of the story? The kind of reader we want won't forgive such errors.

10. Checking the delivery of the message: Was the message delivered clearly from the brain to the paper? Perhaps explanations crucial to the plot were left out?
11. "Final Rewrite": if problems were found.

**Additional recommendations:**

- A. Avoid "long and unfamiliar words" which require the reader to use a dictionary.
- B. If you gave the story to a friend for a professional or fanish reading, and he/she understood the story completely differently from you, go back to the writing table (without panic, it's not so bad!).
- C. Avoid obscuring the story via frequent "time jumps" backwards and forwards, and "dives" into mysterious dreams that only the author understands.
- D. Remember – delivering the message is entirely the author's responsibility. If the author doesn't respect his story, the reader won't respect the author.

**סיפור: מעשיה לזנב רקטה מאת אלון איצקוביץ**

**Story: A Tale for a Rocket's Tail by Alon Itzkovitch**

[This story originally appeared in *CyberCozen* May 1991][סיפור זה הופיע לראשונה בסייברקוזן, מאי 1991]

<p>That November night, looking up into the sky You said "Hey, wish that was me up there – "It's the biggest rocket I could find... "...Look at me go with my tail on fire..." (Kate Bush)</p>	<p>בליל נובמבר אחד, משקיף אל השחקים אמרת: "היי, הלוואי והייתי אני שם -- זאת הרקטה הגדולה מכל אשר אוכל למצוא... ...הבט בי כשזנבי בוער באש..." (קייט בוש)</p>
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כשהייתי ילד נהגתי לחלום על רקטות וטילים. כשהתבגרתי למדתי כיצד לתכנן ולבנות ארחס. ואולם לא חלמתי מעולם שאהיה בתוכם, לא כנוסע רגיל אלא כחלק מראש נפץ הרסני.

עליכם להבין שאיני אדם. פעם הייתי חלק ממוחו של ארווין רוזמן, המוכר לאיחוד הארץ כמדען טילים, אביו של טיל החמקן הבלתי ניתן ליירוט. אבל איני גם המוח המקורי כי אם העתק בלבד. ואיזה מטורף ירצה להעתיק אח זיכרונותיו לתוך טיל העומד להתפוצץ ממילא?

בשהייתי עדיין חלק מארווין רוזמן לא הייתי מאושר במיוחד. איבדתי את הורי בגיל צעיר ואז פרצה המלחמה הנוראה עם גזע הלטאות הזר, הטריקסאליים האורחים מהחלל. אני הייתי האחראי והיוצר הבלעדי של טיל החמקן. זה היה הטיל הנוקם באויב על החללים הרבים הפיל. ידענו שהאויב לא יכול ליירוט. הוא באמת היה טוב. ולי הייתה רק שנאתי מאחר שאחי היחיד, שריד אחרון שהיה לי, נהרג במלחמה. ורציתי מאוד בנקמה. איש לא ידע אודות ה"תוספת" הקטנה. הענקתי לעצמי אפשרות לראות את האויב מתפתל מרוב פחד. אני אדע שמותי יסב הרס לאויב וכך יחוש גם ארווין האמיתי שמחה משלו.

האיחוד שיגר מטח טילים לעבד אזור טריקסאלי. היה זה מטח עיוור ואני הייתי חלק ממנו. נעתי במהירות עצומה ובמהרה ראיתי את המטרה הקרבה. אלא שלא הייתה זו מטרה צבאית.

מתחתי ראיתי עיר טריקסאלית. לא היה כל ספק. הייתה זו מושבה אזרחית. לא היו בה מתקנים צבאיים. אולי היו מתקנים שכאלה תחת הקרקע ואולם אני ידעתי בתוכי שלא. פשוט ידעתי. אל תשאלו איך.

אימה חדשה נוצרה בי כשהבנתי שאיני יכול להיות רוצח. רציתי וחשקתי בנקמה ואולם זאת לא הייתה הדרך. איני יכול לשוב על עקבותיי.

ואולם אני יכול לנסות לעצור אח הקטל המיותר.

ארווין היקר, הבן, אין טעם בשנאתנו המשותפת. זאת הייתה המחשבה שגרמה לי להחליט. הפכתי לטיל המורד הראשון בהיסטוריה האנושית.

כשתכננו אותי לא חשבו מעולם על מעצור פנימי. ארווין רוזמן ודאי לא התכוון להשתמש בי כאמצעי בלימה ואולם אני פרצתי לתוך התכנות הפנימית והתחלתי להיאבק בה. לא הייתה לי כל שליטה בחמקן. הייתי אמור להיות רק משקיף.

אך הייתי במידה מסוימת ממציא הטיל ויכולתי להיאבק.

טסתי במסלול פרוע בינות לבניינים הגדולים. טריקסאליים היסטריים רצו למקלטים. לא צחקתי. הם כאמת  
 נבהלו. המטרה ננעלה מחדש שוב ושוב ואני ביטלתי אותה שוב ושוב.  
 לא אוכל להמשיך כך זמן רב.  
 טילים החטיאו אותי. לצערי הם הסבו לעצמם נזק יותר מאשר סיכוי לפגוע בי. כשהיאוש אחז בי נזכרתי שיש  
 לי יכולת תקשורת.  
 ש י ד ר ת י .  
 "הקשיבו תושבי העיר. אני מוחו של הטיל העומד לפגוע בכם. לא ידענו שזו מטרה אזרחית. אני רוצה לפגוע  
 בכם. נדבו מטרה עליה אוכל להינעל מחוץ לעיר. מנעו טבח מיותר."  
 ניחשתי מה תהיה התשובה והם אכן שידרו בחזרה.  
 "לך תאכל חרא, מוח טיל!"  
 טוב, טריקסאלי נשאר טריקסאלי. עקשן ומלא שנאה.  
 ואז פניתי לצד הגאווה המטופש שלהם.  
 "יש ברשותי מצלמה. בני הארץ יחזו במותכם בשידור ישיר."  
 ואז ראיתי ספינת קרב קטנה מאותתת לי. טסתי בעקבותיה, מניח לכוונת להינעל על המטרה הסופית. אומרים  
 שלכל טיל יש שם וכתובת.  
 זאת הייתה הכתובת.  
 קיוויתי שהטייס הטריקסאלי יפלט החוצה ואולם ידעתי שהוא יבחר במוות של כבוד.  
 צר לי עליו, למרות שאני שונא אותו.

מעשיה זו שלפניכם אולי אינה מסופרת כהלכה ואולי קצרה. כל הסיפור שבפניכם הוקלט ברגעים האחרונים  
 לפני התפוצצותי ע"י לווני האיחוד. אני מניח שרבים התקשו להאמין.  
 ובכול זאת מעשיה זו אינה מגוחכת. אם אי פעם יחלוף טיל מאיים מעל ראשיהם, נסו לספר לו את סיפורי זה.  
 ואם הראש לא יאזין, נסו לספר זאת לזנבה של הרקטה.  
 אולי הוא יהיה מוכן להקשיב.

### Book Review by Sara Beck Svetitsky

**CRYPTONOMICON** by Neal Stephenson (1999), Bantam Books, 918 pages.

Neal Stephenson is a brilliant and infuriating writer, and **CRYPTONOMICON** is his most brilliant and infuriating book yet. In fact, while it is not the most brilliant book I have ever read, it is a definite candidate for most infuriating.

This is the book you just can't throw across the room, even though many passages richly deserve it. For one thing, the annoying bits alternate with passages of complete genius, and for another it is 918 pages long and very hard to throw. It's the size of a Pynchon novel, and Pynchonesque in other respects as well. But unlike Pynchon, Stephenson's books are driven by technology, specifically the technology of information. And where there is information, there will be people trying to get that information and others trying to stop them. **CRYPTONOMICON** is the first novel in a series of undefined length on the theme of Crypto, of ciphers, codes, secrets and deceptions. The series is going to cover several time periods from the 16th century to the present; this book itself jumps back and forth between the present-day story of geeky programmer Randy Waterhouse and Amazonian Amy Shaftoe and the World War II adventures of their grandfathers, Lawrence Waterhouse, the mathematical genius who breaks the codes, and Bobby Shaftoe the gung-ho marine who provides the cover stories. Each time frame also has a host of fascinating secondary characters. Stephenson creates wonderful, real, funny,

people, writes them excellent dialog, and then lets them wander around without much plot to keep them in line. As I keep saying, brilliant and infuriating.

Most educated people today probably have an idea that code breaking was an important intelligence effort in WWII and have heard of Enigma and Alan Turing, and possibly even of Indigo (the Japanese code, also broken early in the war). We don't usually ask why the Axis didn't realize the codes had been broken and change them. A partial answer is that the Allies put up cover stories -- spotter planes flying around pretending to look for U-boats whose positions were already perfectly well known, for example. Bobby Shaftoe and the mysterious detachment 2702 do that, and things that seem to make much less sense. Many of the Detachment 2702 passages are hysterically funny ("Put the codebook on the ship. Ram Norway.") but also drop the reader into the paranoid, smoke and mirrors world of deception. If your commanding officer is about to let the Germans capture a codebook is he a traitor you should shoot, or is he following a subtle plan? Can you ever know? The WWII sections are on the whole excellent; Stephenson can write about the horror of the Japanese sack of Manila as well as he writes humor. And the historical reality of the war enforces a certain amount of plot discipline on Stephenson, who

needs it.

The present-day story has some characters, notably a saintly Japanese engineer and a mysterious priest, who were introduced in the war sections. There is also Randy's business partner Avi, a Jew obsessed with the Holocaust and with using the Internet to prevent another one. But most of the present-day cast are Silicon Valley geeks supreme, and this is a culture that Stephenson knows well and reports on like an anthropologist. There is a certain poignancy to some of the episodes which were clearly written before the hi-tech bubble burst, but if you know hackers and geeks at all you will find parts of this extremely real and funny. Other parts you will wonder how an editor left them in. Or if the book was in fact edited at all. You may have heard that Stephenson trumped the lecture on Sumerian linguistics he put into his book *Snow Crash* by putting a Perl script in this book. The problem is not the Perl script, which is very short and which actually relates to something in the plot. The problem is that Stephenson put in everything that he happened to be thinking about at the time and forgot he had to have a plot at all. There are three pages describing how Randy Waterhouse finally got his wisdom teeth out, with a specious one-sentence connection to the plot, a 4 page essay on sexual stimuli hanging on the equally lame thread that a hacker wanted to demonstrate a new form of computer eaves-dropping and this happened to be the file that he picked up, another on how to divide up the family heirlooms fairly in a family of mathematicians, and more and more. These sections would do well as short stories describing life among the geeks, but do nothing for the book.

*CRYPTONOMICON*'s real problem is the fuzzy plotting of the present-day story. Randy and Avi are trying to set up a data haven near the Philippines and end up involved with everyone who survived from the WWII story or

their children, as well as a cave of gold and a German submarine which is somehow connected to Leibniz and which is clearly going to be the tie-in to the next book. The villains who try to stop and/or kill them are totally unconvincing. They are not even real enough as characters to dislike properly, and their motivations are left blank. With all the lengthy lectures on the right to privacy and how to protect yourself from a prying government, including an appendix on quite a good method of DIY encryption, the villains are not NSA agents making the world safe for Big Brother, but an obnoxious lawyer and his survivalist son. The reader is left saying "Excuse me?" Maybe it will come together in the next books, more thousands of pages away.

After the above rambling and critical comments, the reader of this review probably wants simple answers to a few basic questions about *CRYPTONOMICON*. First, is it good? Yes, it is very good, 4.5 stars out of 5. If I sound annoyed about the book it's because it could have so easily been great.

Second, will I like it? One can never be sure what someone will like. If you want tight plotting, this may not be for you. If you want to meet some really good characters, try it. Third, is it science fiction? That's a hard one.

*CRYPTONOMICON* is not futuristic; much of it is set in the past. It is not about the impact of new discoveries; there is only one technique which is new to me (van Eck phreaking) and I may just be ignorant. It is not about other races; the giant man-eating lizard is just a sideshow. But it is, as I said at the beginning, driven by and motivated by information technology. Further, it is about intelligent, technically savvy people who know they are in the midst of a technological revolution and are trying to use it to their own ends. So it will never be "mainstream" fiction and we might as well grab it for sf.

*For Comments:* POB 84, Rehovot 76108. Email: asheer@netvision.net.il. Tel: Aharon Sheer 08-947-1225

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כל הזכויות שמורות למחברים וליוצרים, כפי שצוינו.

### **STAR TREK REQUEST: Jerry M. Silber wrote:**

Hello there: I am the organizer of a networking *Star Trek* group in Albany, New York called **Fans Association Star Trek**. I would like your assistance in contacting Star Trek groups and Star Trek fans in Israel. I have been interested for many years to make contact with the Star Trek fans there. I am a Jew and I find that Star Trek and Judaism have many positive ideals in common. I found some Israeli Star Trek web sites, but they are in Hebrew. My Hebrew is not very good these days. Please feel free to email me at [jertrek@ix.netcom.com](mailto:jertrek@ix.netcom.com) or [jertrek@yahoo.com](mailto:jertrek@yahoo.com). You can also reach me on ICQ at 23531447. I can also be reached on MSN Messenger - [jertrek@hotmail.com](mailto:jertrek@hotmail.com)

Shalom and Live Long and Prosper, **Jerry Silber**