



Science-Fiction Fanzine

Vol. XVI, No. 3; March, 2004

The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

1. המפגש הבא בסדרת ההרצאות ע"ש עמוס גפן יתקיים באולם מס' 302 בבית-אריאלה מרכז תרבות, שד' שאול המלך 25, תל-אביב, ביום רביעי 31.3.2004 בשעה 20:00, הכניסה חופשית

נושא ההרצאה: פיליפ חוזה פארמר וטרזן: מה הקשר?

בשנים האחרונות נפוצים ביצירות מד"ב וקומיקס תרגילי "החיה" או "שיבוט" ספרותיים של דמויות ידועות מהספרות הפופולארית והפגשתן בסגנון "טרזן פוגש את דרקולה" (מגמה שהגיעה לשיאה בסדרת הקומיקס המוצלחת "ליגת הג'נטלמנים"). נהוג לראות את ראשיתה של תופעה זאת בסידרה "משפחת וולד ניוטון" מאת פיליפ חוזה פארמר, בה כל בני המשפחה הן דמויות ידועות מהספרות הפופולארית. ההרצאה תסקור את יצירתו הרלוונטית של פיליפ חוזה פארמר ואת גישתו ה"רויזיוניסטית" לגיבורי תרבות פופולארית והשלכותיה על הספרות הפופולארית של היום.

המרצה: מר אלי אשד

אלי אשד הוא סופר וחוקר תרבות פופולארית, ספרות קלה ומדע בדיוני. מספריו: "מטרזן ועד זבנג" (בבל, 2002) על תולדות הספרות הקלה בישראל ו"הגולם: תולדות סדרת קומיקס" (מודן 2003) עם אורי פינק.

2. **פנטסיקון 2004: בחול המועד פסח, בתאריכים 7-8 באפריל 2004**, יתקיים כנס פנטסיקון 2004. הכנס יוקדש השנה לפנטסיה האורבנית, ובמהלכו יוקרנו סרטים מוכרים וחדשים, מיני סדרות על פי טרי פראצ'ט וניל גיימן, סדרת הקאלט "עלילות הפתן השחור", סרטי אנימה, פרקי "באפי קוטלת הערפדים" ועוד. אליהם יתווספו הרצאות מפי הסופר גיא חסון, העורך והמתרגם עמנואל לוטם, מומחה האנימה רז גרינברג ואחרים, הצגת החובבים הפרודית "פלנטיר", מפגש עם ועד האגודה הישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטסיה, דוכנים לממכר ספרים ואביזרים חדשים ומשומשים ועוד כהנה וכהנה. פרטים נוספים, באתר הכנס: <http://fantasy.sf-f.org.il>.

3. **צייר לי דרקון:** במהלך פנטסיקון 2004 תוצג בלובי תערוכת ציורים תחת הכותרת "צייר לי דרקון", שבמסגרתה יוצגו ציורים מקוריים בנושא דרקונים והשתלבותם בסביבה המודרנית ו/או האורבנית. אמנים וחובבים המעוניינים להשתתף בתערוכה מתבקשים לפנות בהקדם לחגית לב בטלפון 058-830610 או בדוא"ל levh@bgumail.bgu.ac.il, תוך ציון הנושא "fantasy Dragons".

More information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

Quote of the Month:

"Although today's cockroach may be primitive in the sense that it is simpler than an elephant, it is not primitive in the sense of being an ancient ancestral organism. It can't be: it's today's cockroach, a dynamic go-ahead cockroach that is ready to face the challenges of the new millennium.

"Although ancient fossil cockroaches have the same appearance as modern ones, they operated against different backgrounds. What you needed to be a viable cockroach in the Cretaceous was probably rather different from what you need to be a viable cockroach today. In particular, the DNA of a Cretaceous cockroach was probably significantly different from the DNA of a modern cockroach. Your genes have to run very fast in order for your body to stand still."

From *The Science of Discworld* by Terry Pratchett, Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen, p. 261

Two Reviews of the Film: *The Butterfly Effect*

A time travel story. Starring Ashton Kutcher as the hero who goes back in time. (2004)
 Rated R for violence, sexual content, language and brief drug use. 113 minutes. IMDB user rating 7.1/10

Avi Chami:

When Aharon suggested we go to see *The Butterfly Effect*, I was sure it was something based on the famous story by Ray Bradbury, "The sound of Thunder". But that was not the case. I saw a reference to one sentence based on the theory of chaos, that the flapping of butterflies in Brazil could cause a hurricane in the Philippines....

After that, I searched for comments on the film. On one site from the U.S., the film received close to 4 out of ten. Here in Israel, it received 4.7 out of 5. So, who should I believe?

So we went and I must say I agree with the Israeli viewers. The film is about a boy who has the ability to travel in time. He also can change events in the past, and then come back to live in an alternate reality. All he wants is to make the life of his girlfriend better, but things keep changing for the worst.

I think the film was well done and kept me interested. Even on our way back it kept me thinking regarding if the boy really succeeded in saving his girlfriend (and how). I won't tell my conclusion -- it's a spoiler.

Highly recommended.

Aharon Sheer:

This is a fantasy horror film about a guy who has the hereditary unexplained ability to go back in the past and change (fix, prevent) traumatic events in his life. However, the change doesn't usually make things better, so he goes back again and again....

Despite the title, it has no scientific basis at all. The title suggests that a small change in one place will result in very large effects in a completely different place, but that is never what happens in this movie. In this movie the changes only affect him and his immediate friends.

It's not like Ray Bradbury's story "The sound of Thunder" where the hero goes back on a time-travel trip to see dinosaurs, accidentally steps on a butterfly, and returns to the present to find that the democratic government has been replaced by a dictatorship.

Still, the movie is pretty good if you like that kind of thing.

Three sf Book Reviews by Aharon Sheer:

Space – Manifold 2 by Stephen Baxter (2000), 454 pages. Recommended by Shmuel Kahn.

This is not a sequel to Baxter's *Time – Manifold 1* (1999) (reviewed in *CyberCozen* May 2002) but rather a parallel future history. It even has some of the same characters (Reid Malenfant being the most important). The central question here is physicist Enrico Fermi's classic statement about aliens from other planets: "If they existed, they would be here." The author says in his Afterword, "A good recent survey of the state of our thinking on extraterrestrial life is Paul Davies' *Are We Alone?* (Penguin Books, 1995)." So this book has aliens, and a rather unclear explanation as to why we have not seen them before. This is another depressing future, but a lot more fun to read than *Time*.

Earth calls the aliens "Gaijin" (the Japanese word for "foreigner"), because they were first detected in 2020 by a researcher in the Japanese colony on the Moon (NASA never made it). Contact with the Gaijin has a major effect on life on earth. They are very advanced technologically, providing new industries to earth, as well as minerals cheaply available from asteroids in space. Earth pays for these things the same way all backward

societies have made payment to wealthy newcomers: by selling them raw materials, such as heavy metals and complex organics. The aliens provide plentiful energy, beamed down as microwaves from great collectors in the sky. So the earth is able to try to restore its disastrously damaged ecology. But there are also vast human dislocations as miners and other workers in the energy industry become unemployed, oil becomes a relatively unimportant commodity, and great equatorial areas are taken for microwave receiving stations.

“The Gaijin had also been allowed to land on Earth, and had been offered cultural contact. The Gaijin had, strangely, shown interest in some human ideas, and a succession of writers, philosophers, theologians, and even a few discreditable science fiction authors had been summoned to converse with the alien ‘ambassadors’.” p. 91

The Gaijin also allow an occasional human to travel to other stars. They are interested in what humans think about unusual cosmological features. Such travel is problematic for humans, however. Travel is at the speed of light. When you go into one link point you are disassembled, and are sent as a large collection of information, and when you come out at the other end you are reassembled. So the traveler is not awake while traveling – in a sense he does not exist -- and is unaffected by the passage of time. But when such an earthman comes home, tens or hundreds of years may have passed on Earth.

The Gaijin are not like humans. They are more like complex machines that can break up into parts that can be repaired, and that can travel to other places, and merge with other parts, so that they all share common knowledge going back to their original planet. After each merger and separation they become different. They have no individuals, no self, no identity. But they have an unbounded future. Yet they are not machines, but a form of life that evolved in iron carbonyl seas (which is a compound of iron with carbon monoxide). Their original world has a form of iron-based photosynthesis to provide energy. (p. 282-3) These aliens are *alien*.

In fact, this book spans more than centuries. Some Earthmen discover that there have been alien visitors to the Solar System in the far past. 800 million years ago they came to Venus. Is the current state of Venus the result of that visit? Would Venus otherwise have been Earth’s sister planet? From this example, one might sum up a central thesis of this book as follows:

“A wave of colonists come to a solar system like ours. They take what they want, ruinously mining out the resources, trashing what remains. And then they move on ... or are somehow stopped. And then, later, when the planets have begun to heal, others follow, and the process begins again. Over and over.” p. 152

As the centuries go on, we meet many remarkable and repellent things, including humans who have evolved to live in microgravity:

“There was one guy with a huge dome of a head over a shriveled-up body, sticks of limbs, a penis like a walnut, no pubic hair. To Malenfant he looked like a real science fiction type of creation, like the boss alien in *Invaders from Mars*.” p.294

I enjoyed this book a lot more than I did *Time*, although I did not like the conclusions any better. Baxter calls this three-book series not a “trilogy” but a “**Manifold**”. I guess I’ll just have to get the third book - *Origin*, and find out what the third depressing alternative future is that Baxter suggests for us humans.

***The Chronoliths* by Robert Charles Wilson (2001), 315 pages.**

Recommended by Sara Beck Svetitsky.

Robert Charles Wilson (1953-) likes to write books in which he puts large communities of people into incomprehensible situations, and then lets them try to figure out what is happening. For example, in *Mysterium* (1994), a town in the U.S. Middle West finds that it is now suddenly located in a country governed by a dictatorship in a world with a rather different technology. That is, when you travel the roads out of this town, after a while you get to a different country than the U.S. Thus the town members are both upset and distressed by the world they now find themselves a part of, and the world is deeply curious about and worried by their presence. Differences in technology are also of great interest to the new surrounding world, so the town becomes a subject of research interest.

In *The Chronoliths*, the whole future world changes when a gigantic monument appears in Thailand. This monument has an inscription claiming to be written 20 years into the future, and in honor of the great conqueror, Kuin. Year by year Kuin conquers new areas of the world and sends back in time his indestructible monuments – which some newsman names *Chronoliths*. Sometimes

the monuments destroy existing cities, sometimes they are placed symbolically in lightly populated parts of supposedly newly conquered areas. The author then tells us how Americans will respond as successive areas of the world are future-conquered by Kuin, always with the threat that the U.S. will be conquered eventually too. What kind of a future is American heading for? Besides the uncertainty and fear generated in masses of people by the successive appearance of these incomprehensible monuments, there are deteriorating ecological changes well described.

But most important, we have the small story of friends and colleagues who are witnesses to the appearance of the first Chronolith, and some others that follow, and how they react. Wilson's story is fascinating. While time travel stories usually leave me cold, this one's emphasis on the changes in society and the response of individuals makes it of steadily increasing interest. As the story goes on one wonders how this unbelievable future will finally unfold when the world arrives at the twenty year later mark and reaches the future time when the first Chronolith was actually sent into the past.

Highly recommended.

***Psion* by Joan D. Vinge (1982, 1996), 266 pages.**

I reviewed Joan Vinge's book *Snow Queen* in the October 2000 issue of *CyberCozen*. I must say I liked that book much better than this one. The hero here is an unpleasant, complex kid from the slums, named "Cat", who has super-psi powers that he at first doesn't even know about. Several unpleasant groups of people try to teach him to use his powers, and to put him to work for them. But they usually don't tell him what their actual motives are. Poor Cat is mistreated at every step of his life, and even at the end of the book his future is unclear. There is also a telepathic alien

race, the Hydra, who have the problem that they cannot kill someone whose mind they can read. The Hydra lived at peace with each other, but when they encountered human beings they had a problem. Humans could kill them without any hesitation, because humans could not read the Hydran minds. But Hydrans could not kill humans, since they could read human minds. It's like H. G. Wells famous short story "In the Country of the Blind" in which Wells shows that being sighted in a place where all the other people are blind may well be a serious disadvantage.

Being telepathic among those who can not read minds is, in this case, a disaster. I found the story unpleasant, most of the characters, including the hero Cat, unattractive. I gather that many people

like this book very much. Some people will say that that is just the way life is. You will have to try it yourself to decide.

Star Trek Book Review by Gary Roth

The Price of the Phoenix by Sondra Marshak and Myrna Culbreath, 1977, 182 pages.

Here is a good plot with too much brawn, as in punching and pounding every other page. A disgruntled, power-hungry, ingenious entrepreneur has discovered the process of life after death via a modified transporter. He lures Kirk into dying via a questionable violation of the Prime Directive, and then makes a deal with Spock and his old "ladyfriend", the Romulan commander for a reincarnated Kirk. The entrepreneur, named Omne, has created a complicated planet with a number of secret medical and scientific labs, and sets out to free the galaxy from the Federation and its values.

The story reminds the reader of the OK Corral -- a lot of big talking before a lot of fisticuffs. Omne makes two Kirks -- one makes a mindlink with Spock, the other has an intrinsic mindlink with the original Kirk "copy". Note that the Kirks are physically weaker than Omne, Spock, and the Romulan, and depend

on each of these latter three to survive. After quite a few major injuries and miraculous speedy cures, Spock, the Romulan commander, and the 2 Kirks manage to kill Omne and escape to the safety of the *Enterprise*. However, after speeding away at warp 8, a reincarnated Omne finds a way to beam aboard to threaten the escapees. Nonetheless, Scotty prepares a neat technical feat that saves the day -- read the book to find out ! Incidentally, the Romulan commander gets to take one of the Kirks with her as a sort of Romulan husband in disguise; an interesting turn of events indeed.

This novel repeats the same pugilistic theme over and over again, and leaves the reader hanging with the possibility of a sequel. While far-reaching existential issues are raised, they take a back seat to violence and muscular prowess, unfortunately. Rating: B.

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חג פסח כשר ושמח -- **Have a Kosher and Happy Pesah**

