

Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

מכונת הזמן – לוח אירועי מד"ב ופנטסיה

האתר "מכונת הזמן" הוא יוזמה עצמאית של יעל פורמן ואור ביאליק, שמטרתה לרכז את כל אירועי המד"ב, הפנטסיה, הקומיקס ומשחקי התפקידים המתקיימים לאורך השנה. הגולשים מוזמנים לעדכן את הלוח באירועים חדשים לפי קטגוריות. לפרטים נוספים, ראו: <http://sfevents.mad-logic.com/calendar.php>

חוג מדע בדיוני ברחובות – SFIR - Rehovot Science Fiction Club

פעילויות התא מתקיימות בימי א' בשעה 20:00 בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות, חדר 2, בבניין ליד הבריכה. הפעילויות ללא תשלום.

לרגל סיום שנת הלימודים, התא יצא לפגרת קיץ. הפעילות צפויה להתחדש באוקטובר 2006.

מידע נוסף ניתן לקבל באתר התא (<http://sfir.tk/>) או בדוא"ל sfir42@yahoo.com.

דגנת הכתיבה ברחובות

דגנת הכתיבה הרחובותית מקיימת מפגשים; לפרטים נא לפנות ליולי גנטמן בכתובת ygantman@yahoo.com
 More Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

Letters to the Editor

Aharon,

Fine reviews in the September *CyberCozen*. The film *The 13th Floor* sounds great. I too remember the orange groves only minutes from our home in Los Angeles.

Best, Sid Berger

Dear Aharon,

Thank you for the review of *Tarzan of the Apes* in the August *CyberCozen*. When my brother (2 years older) and I were growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., we read every *Tarzan* book and every *John Carter of Mars* (all by Edgar Rice Burroughs) we could get our hands on. Where we got them, I can't remember, because, as I recall, the Tompkins Park Branch of the Brooklyn Public (free) Library did NOT carry books by Edgar Rice Burroughs. We must have borrowed them from other kids on the block. But I hadn't remembered the beginnings of *Tarzan* and was very pleased to read your review.

As to the Greg Bear novel, *Vitals*, it sounds like it was written by Stephen King – yecchh! I once saw a film based on a King novel and it was so ILLOGICAL, I couldn't stand it. I wouldn't read a Stephen King novel if I were paid to do so! I am not opposed to horror when it's the reasonable, rational, logical outcome of a situation, but horror for the sake of horror is not my cup of tea – no appeal at all.

Best wishes to you and *CyberCozen* – long may it continue.

Clara Caren Rimon

Letters to the Editor (continued)

Aharon, *Tarzan of the Apes* is no longer in print.

Bob Smallman

Bob: I'm glad to tell you that you are wrong. A check on the Internet shows the following:

(1) You can buy a paperback copy of *Tarzan of the Apes* for \$6.99 on Amazon.com, and for £3.18 from Amazon.co.uk.

(2) You can download FREE either an audio edition or a text edition of several *Tarzan* books from **Project Gutenberg**, which has computer-generated text or MP3 audio versions of 19,000 classic books for FREE download. They also have some of Burroughs' *Mars* books. See http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page.

(3) You can read it (and many other books) directly on your computer screen from <http://www.literature.org/authors/> based on the Project Gutenberg editions.

Aharon

Book Review by Aharon Sheer

State of Fear by Michael Crichton (2004), 688 pages.

One of the funniest incidents in this book is about an obnoxious overly self-confident guy who joins a dangerous excursion despite being warned that they are going to a South Pacific island occupied by cannibals. "There are no cannibals," he says, more or less, "and there never have been. It's just a story told by white racist scientists trying to humiliate dark-skinned people by accusing them of things they never did." He gets eaten alive by dark-skinned cannibals. Well, he deserved it!

This book is not a science fiction novel but a science-based thriller. The basic story is about eco-terrorists who try to take advantage of the "state of fear" in the public which presses the story of "global warning" as being the most dangerous thing happening in the world today, and all caused by energy-guzzling vehicles and industries. The book was lent to me, and recommended by, Yaakov Macales, whose University degrees are in meteorology, and who thinks that global warming is a speculation, not proven, and that the cause of current climate changes is also speculative and not proven. Yaakov says that Jerry Stanhill, of Rehovot, who works in climatology, told him the same thing.

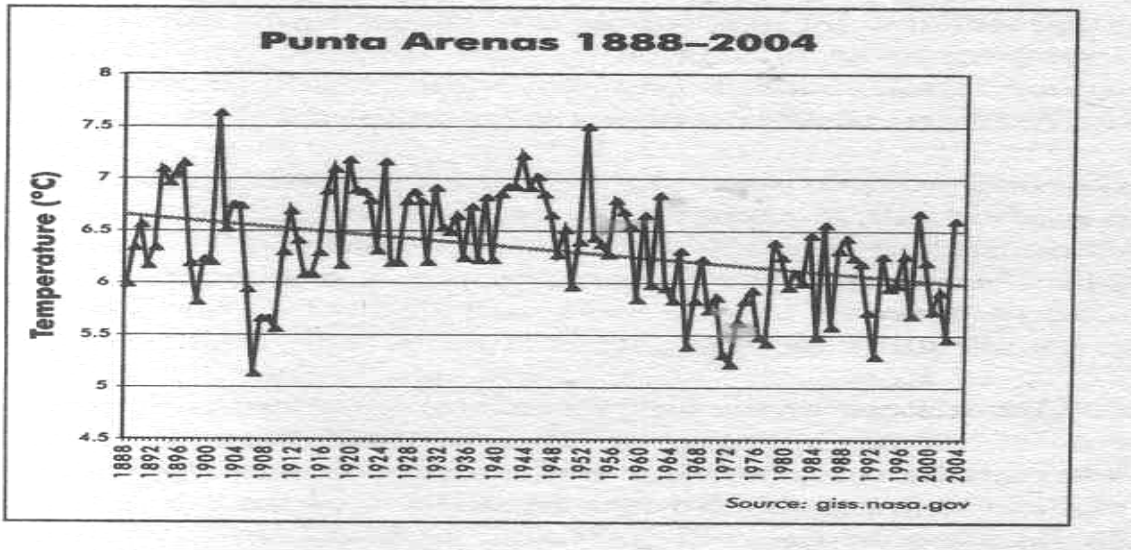
Everybody knows that the world is getting warmer. Right? The arctic ice is melting. Antarctica is melting. Soon there will be no glaciers left in the world. Right? One of the book's heroes is visiting Iceland:

"This particular glacier ... was of the type called a surge glacier, because it had a history of rapid advances and retreats. At the moment ... the glacier was pushing forward at the rate of one hundred meters a day – the length of a football field, every twenty-four hours. Sometimes, when the wind died, you could actually hear it grinding forward. This glacier had surged more than ten kilometers in the last few years...."

"The *reality* ... is that in Iceland the first half of the twentieth century was warmer than the second half, as in Greenland. The *reality* is that in Iceland, most glaciers lost mass after 1930 because summers warmed by 0.6 degrees Celsius, but since then the

climate has become colder. The *reality* is that since 1970 these glaciers have become steadily advancing. Right now, eleven are surging. That is the *reality*..." [p. 46-48]

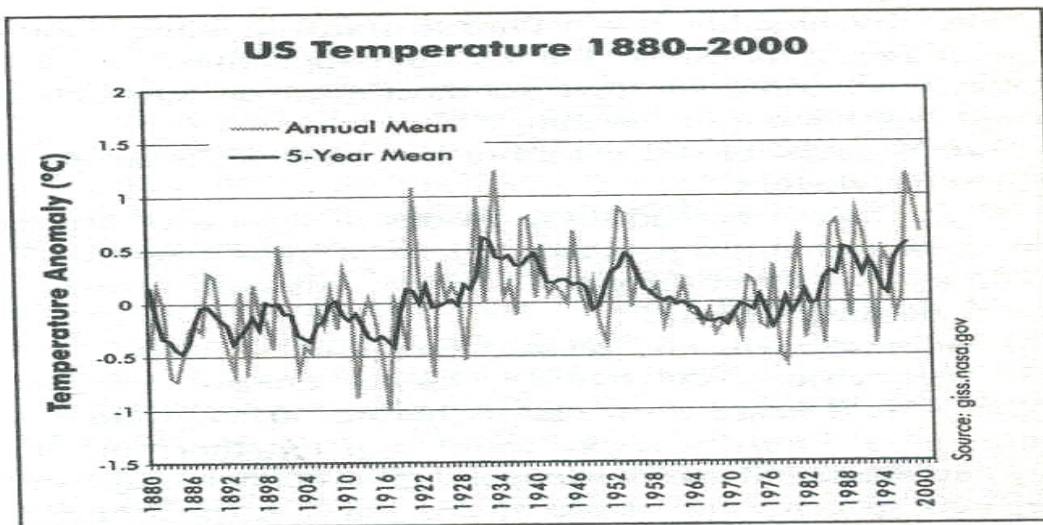
Some of the graphs presented in this book are quite amusing. Here's one:



One of the heroes of this book, John Kenner, is a professor of Geoenvironmental engineering at MIT. Kenner says about the graph above:

“It's the record from the weather station at Punta Arenas, near here. It's the closest city to Antarctica in the world.’ He tapped the chart and laughed. “There's your global warming.” [p. 211]
 (Note that this graph is from NASA.)

Here's another one (also from NASA):



And here's the discussion about the graph above, which shows US temperatures for the last 120 years. The discussion is preceded by a statement that the US has long had the best-maintained network of weather stations in the world over a large area.

"What is the change in temperature since 1880?"

"Looks like, uh, a third of a degree."

"A third of a degree Celsius in a hundred and twenty years. Not very dramatic." "She pointed to the graph. 'And what was the warmest year of the last century?"

"Looks like 1934."

"Does this graph indicate to you that global warming is occurring?"

"Well. The temperature is going up."

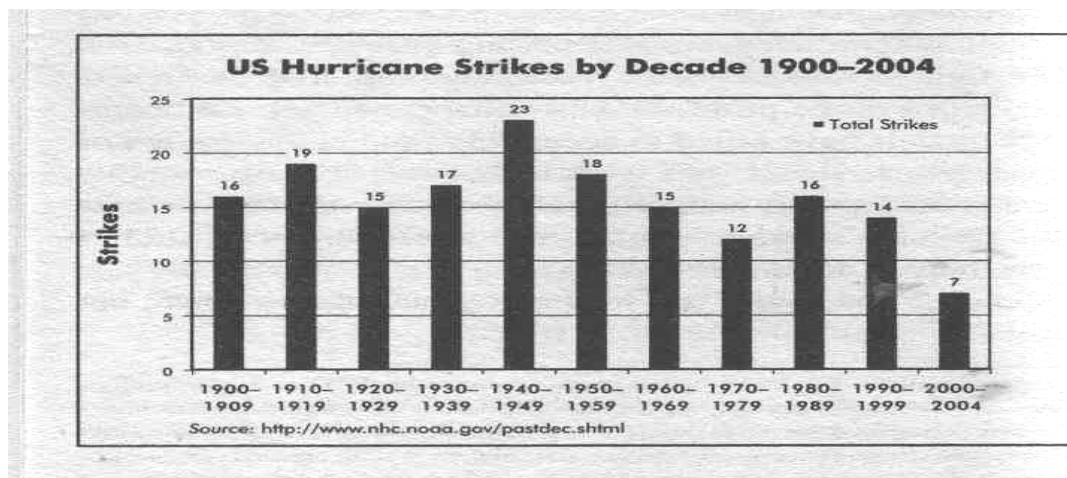
"For the last thirty years, yes. But it went down for the previous thirty years. And current temperatures in the US are roughly the same as they were in the 1930s. So: Does this graph argue for global warming?" [p. 97]

Or take the commonly repeated statement that "Antarctica is melting". Here's Kenner's assistant talking:

"The data show that one relatively small area called the Antarctic Peninsula is melting and calving huge icebergs. That's what gets reported year after year. But the continent as a whole is getting colder, and the ice is getting thicker." [p. 214]

Crichton gives references for this, in case you want to check it yourself -- from respectable journals like *Science* and *Nature*, among others.

Then there's the oft-repeated claim that there are more US hurricane strikes today than in previous decades. New Orleans Louisiana was recently damaged by one such hurricane. In a graph on that, the worst hurricane decade between 1900 and 2004 was 1940 to 1949. Admittedly the first decade of 2000 is not yet over.



And again, here is what the fictional Kenner has to say about that:

"US hurricane strikes over the last hundred years are clearly not increasing. And similarly, extreme weather is not more frequent globally. The data simply do not agree...." [p. 468]

With all the science stuff, isn't there any story in this book? The answer is, yes, but I did not find the story convincing. The claim of the novel is that much money is being taken from the environmentalists' pockets and being invested in eco-terrorism. These eco-terrorist attacks are intended to persuade the world that Global Warming is a major danger, and that the world must act NOW, or ELSE. Crichton's eco-terrorists are not averse to committing murder and theft to get their point across to the dumb public who still insist on driving their big cars. If such things are really taking place in the world, it is frightening. Author Crichton may have convinced me that nobody really knows what is going to happen with the weather, nor why, but he has not convinced me that there are such grandiose eco-terrorists in the world. I hope he is wrong.

Since it's a novel, the arguments are carried by the main characters, and on both sides of the issue. In Crichton's "Author's Message" at the end, Crichton lists a number of his personal conclusions with respect to Global Warming. I quote just a few:

- "Atmospheric carbon dioxide is increasing, and human activity is the probably cause."
- "We are also in the middle of a natural warming trend that began about 1850, as we emerged from a four-hundred-year cold spell known as the 'Little Ice Age'."
- "Nobody knows how much of the present warming trend might be a natural phenomenon."
- "Nobody knows how much of the present warming trend might be man-made."
- "Before making expensive policy decisions on the basis of climate models, I think it is reasonable to require that these models predict future temperatures for a period of ten years. Twenty would be better."
- "We desperately need a nonpartisan, blinded funding mechanism to conduct research to determine appropriate policy. Scientists are only too aware whom they are working for. ... Scientists know that continued funding depends on delivering the results the funders desire. As a result, environmental organization 'studies' are every bit as biased and suspect as industry 'studies'. Government 'studies' are similarly biased according to who is running the department or administration at the time."
- "I am certain that there is too much certainty in the world." [p. 625-627]

Like I said, this book is a science thriller, and not science fiction. It contains a LOT of science, and a lot of graphs and references from highly respectable sources. If you have a skeptical mind, I suggest you read *State of Fear*. If you believe everything written in the newspapers, don't bother.

This book was reviewed briefly by James Schlesinger in the April 2006 *CyberCozen*. There is also a quote from it in the July 2006 *CyberCozen*.

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