



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

**אירועים בהשתתפות לארי ניבן (Larry Niven)**

סופר המד"ב הידוע לארי ניבן יבקר בישראל באמצע חודש מרס 2008, וישתתף בשני כנסים:  
 א. הכנס "פנטסיה ומציאות – עבר, הווה ועתיד" המארגן במשותף ע"י אוניברסיטאות בר אילן  
 וחיפה, והאגודה. ניבן יתארח בחלק הכנס שיתקיים בבר אילן. הכנס ייערך בימים 18-19/3  
 באולם וואהל שליד אונ' בר אילן. אתר הכנס ובו כל הפרטים הדרושים יעלה בקרוב – נא לעקוב  
 אחר פרסומים באתר האגודה.  
 ב. "כנס המרחב המוכר" מארגן ע"י האגודה, באירוחו הנדיב של מכון ויצמן, ביום 20/3. פרטים  
 באתר [/http://k-space.sf-f.org.il](http://k-space.sf-f.org.il)  
 בשני הכנסים יתקיימו אירועי חתימה על ספרים.

**מועדון הקריאה**

במרכז דיון מועדון הקריאה בחודש פברואר יעמוד הספר "עולם טבעת" (*Ringworld*) של לארי  
 ניבן (הוצאת מעריב).  
 מועדון הקריאה בתל אביב יתקיים בתאריך 27/2 יום ד', בבית הקפה "קפה ג'ו" בבוגרשוב 87,  
 בהנחייתו של רותם ברוכין. פרטים לגבי מפגשים נוספים של מועדון הקריאה העוסקים בספר  
 זה יתפרסמו באתר האגודה. השתתפות במועדון הקריאה אינה כרוכה בתשלום או בהגעה  
 למפגשים נוספים, ופתוחה גם למי שאינם חברים באגודה.  
[http://www.sf-f.org.il/story\\_997](http://www.sf-f.org.il/story_997)  
 ספר החודש של המועדון בחודש מרץ יהיה "ג'ונתן סטריינג ומר נורל" של סוזנה קלארק. פרטים  
 יופיעו באתר האגודה לקראת סוף פברואר.

**בלייד ראנר (Blade Runner) – יום עיון רב-תחומי בבית אריאלה בשיתוף הד-ארצי**

לרגל צאת תקליטור הסרט בלייד ראנר – הגרסה הסופית, ייערך ביום חמישי, 21.2 בשעה  
 20:00 בבית אריאלה יום עיון בנושא בהנחיית נועה מנהיים ובהשתתפות נסים דיין, ד"ר אהרון  
 האופטמן ואחרים. במהלך הערב יוקרנו קטעים מהסרט. מחיר כניסה 50 ₪, לחיילים  
 ולסטודנטים 40 ₪.

פרטים נוספים ניתן למצוא באתר בית אריאלה:

[/http://www.tel-aviv.gov.il/Hebrew/Education/Ariela](http://www.tel-aviv.gov.il/Hebrew/Education/Ariela)**כנס על "פנטסיה ומציאות" - 18-19 במרס 2008, יום ג', יום ד', באוניברסיטת חיפה:**<http://lib.haifa.ac.il/fantasy/>

חוג מדע בדיוני ברחובות – SFIR - Rehovot Science Fiction Club

24.2 דוגמה

כל פעילויות התא הרחובותי מתקיימות בימי א' בשעה 20:00 בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות, חדר 2 (הבניין שליד  
 הבריכה). הכניסה לכל הפעילויות אינה כרוכה בתשלום. לפרטים נוספים, כתבו אל ([Sfir42@yahoo.com](mailto:Sfir42@yahoo.com)).

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

## Book Review by Aharon Sheer

*Someone to Watch Over Me* by Tricia Sullivan (1997), 357 pages.

Recommended by Shmuel Kahn.

This book is a page-turner that I disliked very much. The basic idea is a future technology that allows another person to see what you see, hear what you hear, feel what you touch, feel your pain when you are hurt. All of your sensations go through the thalamus, the brain's switchboard for incoming physical sensation, and in this new technology your thalamus is connected to the thalamus of your Watcher via a satellite link. If you have a miserable life in which no one has ever been really interested, the idea of being so important to someone that he (or she – you have no way of knowing which) will want to watch your every action might seem very attractive. Suddenly poor unimportant you are really important to someone else, somewhere.

Knowing that you are perhaps being Watched, at any moment, might dramatically change how you view yourself and the world. Everything you do is being Watched! Somebody cares. Plus, they pay you good money for agreeing to be watched.

The problem might come if your Watcher can influence you. While this was not in the contract, suppose that the Watcher can also communicate with you. Make suggestions, give encouragement, or commands. Hurt you if you do not obey. Interfere with you. Take over your body completely from time to time. Would this be good or bad? What if you – like the male hero Adrien in this book – were a young man from a slum living a criminal life, with little good experience and knowledge? And what if your Watcher is a wise, experienced person, who can provide you with money, assistance, advice, exciting work? Over the course of years the young man might become wise too in the ways of the world, grow, mature, become competent.

In this book the young man, Adrien, is a hit man, a professional killer who

travels all over the world. The starting scenes in this book are pretty horrible. Lots of violence. He is involved in running illegal substances, carries plenty of money, lives well. But things don't always go as planned. Sometimes the wrong people get hold of him, beat him, torture him. They want information and can make him quite miserable. And the Watcher is there watching at any time.

Adrien is in Zagreb, and into the story comes a young Croatian woman, Sabina. Intelligent, artistic, caring. A professional composer of music for the piano. He has been hurt. She doesn't know why he has been hurt, but she is willing to help him. And she does.

Adrien tells Sabina about his Watcher:

“Sabina, you've never shared your head, have you?”

“Ah ...’ a long, low, exhalation. She was catching on.

“You didn't guess?”

“I don't know much about it.... Is it true someone can feel, inside you?”

“Yeah, it's true.”

“You don't like it.”

“He grunted. ‘How did you guess?’”

“Why? Why do you do if you don't like it?”

“Good fucking question. He said, ‘When you first start carrying, it seems like a simple deal.... They tell you all you have to do is live your life... it's private between you and one watcher.’” [p. 33]

So Sabina gets involved in international intrigue, illegal brain implants, powerful brain-altering drugs. But perhaps as an artist this opens up for her a whole new opportunity of creativity – new vistas. She is attracted to this young man, and wants to become part of his world.

One of the many evil people in this book sums up the new situation:

“‘The age of individuals is over.’ He spoke in a monotone as if reciting a magic spell. ‘It was historically brief and now it’s over. The only role left for individuals to play is in surfing the big mudslides of mass desire.... To be of consequence, all an individual can do now is seed himself across the species, multiplying and therefore, paradoxically, ceasing to – ’” [p. 288]

So that’s the dreamed-of future, in which some people become Watchers (and controllers) for many people, taking over the dregs of humanity and living many lives. This is a fascinating book, with two complex characters and a complex plot. But this is a future I hope never comes to be.

**POEM: "ALF" by Miriam Ben-Loulu**  
(from *CyberCozen August 1991*)

Look Children, see Alf?  
Now look at Alf's face.  
(No, he's not an ugly bear.  
Alf's from outer space.)

Look children, look and learn.  
Space's as out front door.  
(First "E.T." and now "Alf" dolls  
At your local store.)

(Superman and Wonder Girl  
Made too much of violence.  
But the laughs on dear Alf's show  
Only murder silence.)

Look children, see Alf?  
Alf is very nice.  
(If he weren't from outer space  
Would you watch him twice?)

Look children, look and learn.  
Space is a new fad.  
(But I keep on wondering  
Were BEM's this bad?)

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**by an Alf Non-Fan**

**Note for those too young to have met them personally, "BEM"'s are "Bug-Eyed Monsters", which many years ago graced the covers of all the worst SF magazines, and showed up in a number of early SF movies too.**

**Advertisements** (provided by Miriam Ben-Loulu) (October 1993)

**Loptick's Optics** has a new supply of those fashionable flexible frames that give that ultra-chic look to faceted eyes. We still have a few of the rose-colored spy glasses for spies at our special reduced prices.

**Anyone knowing where Flie Trappe is, please notify his family on Venus.**

## Short Book Review by Aharon Sheer

*West of the Sun* by Edgar Pangborn (1953), 208 pages.

Edgar Pangborn won the International Fantasy Award in 1954 for a science fiction novel, *A Mirror for Observers* (1954), even though it was a science fiction novel, and not a fantasy novel. I reviewed *Davy* (1964), another, much better, sf novel by Pangborn, in the November 2006 *CyberCozen*. *West of the Sun* was Pangborn's first science fiction novel, and it might be called "anthropological science fiction" although "anthro" suggests human society. It was reissued in 2001.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Western society on Earth is dominated by the Collectivist Party, a descendant of an earlier Communist government. They have developed interstellar space travel (what optimists people were in 1953), and in 2056 they send an exploration ship to another star that has an earth-like planet circling it. Regrettably the Collectivist Party does not make scientists happy, especially a doctor like astronaut Doc Wright, or an anthropologist like astronaut Paul Mason. Their ship *Argo* crashes at their destination.

"But *Argo* lay at the bottom of a lake because of an error. Not an error like the gross errors twenty-first-century man still made in dealing with his own kind and still noisily disregarded, but an engineering error – something twenty-first-century man viewed with a horror once reserved, in not so ancient times, for moral evil. The cardinal sin was to drop a decimal. If, like Wright, or Paul himself, you were concerned with the agony and growing pains of human nature, disturbed by the paralytic sterility of state socialism and the worse paralysis of open tyranny, you kept your mouth shut – or even yielded, almost unknowingly, to the pressures that that reduced ethical realities to a piddling checker game perverting the use of semantics." [p. 18]

The scientists on this ship are not anxious to go back to Earth after their exploratory visit, and the engineering and maintenance of their ship is so poor that by the time they get to their destination, their ship could never make the trip back to Earth. So a small group of humans, five men and two women, land on a planet inhabited by intelligent non-humans, and they will have to find ways to survive on this world.

One of the two races of humanoids are pygmies, half the size of the humans, whose women are the taller and stronger warriors, while their men are fragile and weak and emotional, handling religious duties and raising the children. The pygmies have an advanced society, with towns and villages, methods of defense against predatory animals, and temples and gods. They are warlike, constantly battling their neighbors. They have a well-developed language.

The other race of humanoids are giants, much taller and stronger than the humans, but unlike the pygmies, they are kind and gentle. The giants have almost no social organization, meeting others of their kind mainly during their mating season. They also have language, but as non-social beings it is not well-developed. The pygmies like to hunt the giants for food, but there is little other contact between the two races.

The humans come along and try to be friends with both races. They establish good contact with one tribe of pygmies when one of the human women realizes who the bosses are among the pygmies – the women – and pretends to be the leader of the humans. They thus become allies of this tribe. The pygmies are quick learners, and are soon speaking fluent English. The humans cannot master the pygmies' language since the voice range required is beyond the capabilities of human vocal chords.

But the humans also befriend the giants. The giants too learn fluent English, and for them this is a step up, for they are open and receptive to the humans' ideas of friendship and cooperation. The pygmies just assume that the giants accompanying the humans are slaves of the humans, and accept that idea.

Doc Wright explains what the humans must do:

“Did [humans] ever create anything good except in a milieu of co-operation, friendship, forbearance? One of the oldest of commonplaces – the teachers all knew it. Lao-tse – Buddha – or stated negatively: “He who lives by the sword ...” And so on. Good is not the mere absence of evil, but the most positive of human forces. The instruments of good are charity, patience, courage, effort and self-knowledge, each unavailing without the others; remember that. ... Yes, as a prime example of my own philosophy totally perverted, I give you the Collectivist Party.” [p. 44]

So the humans teach some pygmies and some giants to live and work together. Things become difficult when a much bigger and better organized pygmy tribe tries to unite all the world's pygmies under one queen. This should have been easy, for the bigger tribe could field an army of many thousands. The humans try to help their pygmy and giant friends to retain their independence and cooperative way of life, but they cannot win this war.

In the end the humans find a clever solution: They find an island in the

middle of the ocean. This island is so far from the jungle of the pygmies and giants that the enemy pygmies' ships cannot go that far. Not only that, the flying predators that plague the coastal areas (forcing both the pygmies and the giants to stay in the jungle for fear of being attacked and eaten when out in the open), cannot reach this island. (Unlikely, if only because an occasional storm would have carried these flying beings to the island.) Thus this island is a kind of paradise, with no enemies, neither pygmy nor predators. Using the last fuel left for their lander, the humans take a small contingent of friendly pygmies and giants to the island, where they establish an idyllic three-race community, with the one surviving human woman having baby after baby from each of the four surviving human men.

The human ideal of equality of all races, espoused especially by the Doc Wright, human scientific leader of the expectation, creates something new and unique on this planet. A new kind of utopia, described at length.

*West of the Sun* is a strange book, proposing human ideals of feminism and racial equality in a completely non-human environment. I found the book rather boring, and hard to finish. I didn't really care for the characters; they never fully came alive for me. Neither the humans nor the non-humans were likable to me, and I really didn't much care what would happen to them. Still, I did finish the book.

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