



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

כנס פנטסטי.קון 2008

כנס פנטסיקון 2008 יתקיים השנה בתאריכים 28-29/8/08 ויוקדש לנושא **פנטסיה מחתרית** (מעל פני האדמה ומתחת לה), יצירות פנטסיה החורגות מן המוסכמות וחורטות על דיגלן את החתירה תחת חוקי המציאות, הממסד, נורמות התרבות ואף תחת יסודות הז'אנר עצמו. בכנס יתקיימו הקרנות, פאנלים, הרצאות ושלל פעילויות שיעסקו בפנטסיה מחתרית; בין אם המדובר בקולנוע, בספרות, או במדיומים אחרים. יוקרנו סרטים קלאסיים בנושא, סדרות נבחרות, סדרות וסרטי אנימה.

בנוסף, יתקיים יריד אומנים ויוצרים בשלל תחומי היצירה בנושא הפנטסיה. כנס פנטסי.קון מציע השנה במה ליוצרים ויוצרות חדשים, ממגוון האמנויות והיצירה, שיצירתם עוסקת בפנטסיה והמדע-הבדיוני, או סופגת מהם את השראתה, לקחת חלק בשוק הקסום; להציג את עבודותיהם ולהציעה למכירה, ביריד האומנים הפנטסטי.

דרושים מרצים: אנו שמחים לפנות אליכם ולהזמינכם להציע הרצאה לכנס. ההרצאות יכולות לבחון את הנושא, הן מן הפן הפיסי, העולמות שמתחת ומחברתיות בנושא, והן מן הפן הסימבולי - יצירות ויוצרים מחתרתיים. כמו-כן, נשמח להצעות לרעיונות נוספים לפעילויות, הרצאות ותכנים אחרים. המעוניינים להציע הרצאה או פעילות מוזמנים ליצור איתנו קשר בכתובת Fantasy.con2008@gmail.com.

סדנת כתיבה למד"ב ולפנטסיה

במסגרת סדנאות אמני הקיבוץ, תינתן סדנה לכתיבת מד"ב ופנטסיה החל מ-9.7 עד 24.9.2008. הסדנה כוללת 12 מפגשים בני 3 שעות כל אחת, בימי ד' בשעות הערב. הסדנה מיועדת לכותבים מתחילים או לכותבים שרוצים לשפר את מיומנויות הכתיבה שלהם. עלות הסדנה 1060 ש"ח. מנחה הסדנה היא יעל (יולי) מיכאלי, אשר הנחתה סדנאות כתיבה במסגרת האגודה בארבע השנים האחרונות. לפרטים נוספים:

http://www.sadnat.org.il/info/semester_kaitz/900_ktiva.htm - 3

חוג מדע בדיוני ברחובות - SFIR - Rehovot Science Fiction Club

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

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

Movie Review: WALL-E (E-וול) (2008)

Director: Andrew Stanton, 97 min, G-rated

Reviewed by Ted Henderson

This film is a **Disney / Pixar** coproduction. Pixar which was founded by Steve Jobs of Apple Computers specializes in computer animation, and some of its previous productions are *Toy Story 1 and 2*, *Finding Nemo*, *Cars*, and *Ratatouille*. They average only one production a year. *WALL-E* is set on Earth 800 years in the future. Earth has been deserted by humans, and it is covered by huge mounds of trash left by

the human culture of over consumption. WALL-E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter-Earth Class) is the only robot left functioning. His task is to collect trash, compact it into cubes, and pile it up. The only living creature is a cockroach who accompanies WALL-E. WALL-E has collected a number of items from the trash. Among these are Rubrik cubes, light bulbs, and a plant.

A large conglomerate, “Buy ‘n Large”, took over Earth, and when life there became untenable due to the mounds of trash, they evacuated all humans to a large space ship called Axiom. To investigate conditions on Earth, they sent a probe called EVE (Extra-terrestrial Vegetation Evaluator). She is rather egg shaped, has large blue eyes and a rather terrifying laser weapon which she uses to demolish anything that impedes her. She encounters WALL-E and joins him. He shows her his plant which she takes into a compartment in her body. She takes WALL-E back to Axiom with her. There we find bloated humans whose every need is met lying around on deck chairs. I was reminded of elephant seals or walruses basking on the beach. Due to inactivity, the humans have lost most of their bone mass. When the captain of Axiom sees the plant he determines that it may be safe

to return to Earth. He instructs a recalcitrant autopilot named Auto, voiced by Sigourney Weaver, to return to Earth. Auto refuses to do so and ends up being partially destroyed. The humans return to Earth and take up living there again, reestablishing agriculture and other human activities.

The first part of the film is essentially without dialogue. The robots make a number of beeps, whistles, and grunts. The sound production was done by Ben Burtt who also did the robot voices in *Star Wars*. The movie is one of the most original I have seen, and it certainly is a bright spot in a summer dominated by sequels, remakes, adaptations from TV, and other trite productions. It is something that can be enjoyed by both children and adults. It is now playing in Israel.

Pointers to SF on the Web

By Sara Beck

Here in Israel we SF&F readers are at the end of a pretty long supply line. We can't hope to find interesting new writers by browsing through the bookstore; we're lucky if the bookstore has Stephen King. We can't find *F&SF* or *Asimov's* on the newsstand. Usually when a book gets a good review in this esteemed publication, readers ask the reviewer if they can borrow it, because they know they aren't going to find it easily. It's frustrating.

But this is the 21st century and there is more to literature than dead trees. What does the internet offer a SF&F fan? The obvious answer is, unbelievable quantities of trash. But there is also excellent SF to be had, legally and for free, if you know where to look. Herewith a quick look at some sites that will keep the SF fan happy while waiting for the Amazon shipment to come. This is NOT a complete list by several factors of 10. It's basically sites that I have found and that I like enough to

keep returning to. I'm sure that many readers can recommend other good sites, which I would love to see (Amnon Stupp, are you reading this?).

I'm going to divide the SF sites into three types. There are sites which have classic stories for download or on-line reading. My favorite is <http://www.freesfonline.de/index.html> Go to the author list, marvel at the many names you never heard of, click on an author, get a capsule history (homepage, bibliography, awards), and read a story or several. I love this site because it has those stories of well-known authors that never got into the anthologies. While it tends to the classics, going back to the 1940's and 1950's, it has quite a few of the good young writers as well, depending on their attitude to free access. Ted Chiang, for example, has almost all his stories up on the Web for free. (Ted Chiang has the distinction of having the highest ratio of

awards to stories published in the genre. He writes very little and every thing he writes gets a Hugo nomination. This site has a Hugo-nominated short story and novelette of Chiang's. Enjoy). Baen publishing has a Free Library, which means what it says: go to <http://www.baen.com/library/> and download entire books for free. Baen does a lot of space opera and military SF, but also some alternate history, notably the *Ring of Fire* series, so if that is your taste, check them out. Another excellent site is <http://www.infinityplus.co.uk/index.htm>. Infinity Plus is part magazine, part story site; it has editors, reviews, interviews with writers, and other features. They publish new stories and reprint stories from the last 20 years or so. If you want to re-read "Fire Watch" or "Green Magic" you can find them here, but while you're at it, look at Lavie Tidhar and Tamar Yellin and all the other writers you never heard of. And if you like ghost and horror stories, check out <http://www.horrormasters.com/>. This site sells new stories in "pay for download" format. I've never used that, because I don't like contemporary horror. I go to horrormasters for their classics library. They have dozens of stories by M. R. James, H. P. Lovecraft, Lord Dunsany, W. W. Jacobs, Kipling, Doyle; it's like browsing through a good public library in the USA.

The next type is the on-line magazine. Here I recommend *Strange Horizons* (<http://www.strangehorizons.com/>). It comes out every week with a new story,

an article or two on a topic of interest to readers, and several reviews. They have good writers and reviewers (perhaps because they PAY them, with money readers donate). Several Hugo and Nebula nominated stories have appeared there, and well-known writers do their reviews. I look forward to the new *Strange Horizons* every week as I used to look forward to getting a new *F&SF*. I'm sure there are other good magazines, which I am not keeping up with because I have to work for a living, so readers should recommend their favorites.

The final type of site I read regularly are blogs. Not just any blogs, because that way lies madness, but selected blogs of people who are excellent reviewers, writers, or both. I recommend "Asking the Wrong Questions" <http://wrongquestions.blogspot.com/> by Abigail Nussbaum (a local!) and who writes well and intelligently (not that I always agree with her) about new books but especially about TV shows. Her writing is so thoughtful that I enjoy her analyses even of TV shows I have never watched. She also links to new stories on line, for example to the Hugo and Nebula nominated stories that are posted. The Mumpsimus (<http://mumpsimus.blogspot.com/>) is also good. It's a bit post-modern and literature-theoretical compared to what I usually read, but it's good to get out of the comfort zone sometimes.

And thus, my friends, one can maintain contact with the field, keep up with new writers, and enjoy the classics, even when the only store in town is Steimatzky's.

Short Book Review by Aharon Sheer

Moonseed by Stephen Baxter (1998), 534 pages.

This is one of the best sf novels I've read in a long time. I didn't care for some of Stephen Baxter's more recent novels (*Time*, *Space*, and *Origin*), but I liked this one. It's a science fiction novel with a solid pseudo-science base. It's a great astronaut novel about a cheap (only two billion dollars) NASA future trip to the Moon. And it's a disaster novel with two characters I developed a fondness for. I cared about what would happen to them.

Note that Baxter is fascinated by astronauts and by NASA. He applied to NASA to become an astronaut and was turned down. Many of his novels since then have had astronauts as his heroes, and NASA is always there in the background.

The novel starts with the planet Venus exploding, leaving a ring of debris in space. This shocking event changes the evening / morning sky, but other than that is not of much interest to the general public. Some months following that inexplicable event, hero geologist **Henry Meacher** begins studying a Moon rock. This rock is one of the many Moon rocks that NASA brought back to Earth decades ago but never got around to studying. Why study it now? Henry had previously worked for NASA, and had been pushing for NASA to do Moon colonization. NASA, to get him off their backs (they were pushing the Space Station and their shuttles), send him to Scotland with a Moon rock to study.

As Henry says:

"More than half the Moon rocks have never been touched. We had to sterilize the box, with ultraviolet light and acid, dried it with nitrogen, punctured it to let out whatever trace of lunar atmosphere was in there – " [p. 101]

Nevertheless, some dust from this rock escapes quarantine, and starts Earth on the same course that led to the explosion of Venus. This rock dust, which Henry comes to call "Moonseed",

eats olivine, the most common rock in the earth's crust, and converts it to more Moonseed. The more Moonseed there is, the more is created. A geometric expansion.

The first Moonseed begins to develop in Scotland. It not only spreads over the Earth's surface, it eats downward, breaking up the Earth's crust under Scotland. Long dead volcanoes, stimulated by magma from deep underneath, exposed by the newly eaten crust, begin erupting, gradually destroying parts of Scotland. It's clear to Henry that all of the British Isles will go up in lava, in time. But he has to persuade the authorities that they have to take a long view in planning what to do. Henry succeeds in getting the Army to helicopter him to London to try and talk to the people in charge. He goes to the police:

"The desk officer stopped him, of course, and Henry resorted to a mix of persuasion, string-pulling, ranting and bluster to penetrate the layers of bureaucracy which, inevitably, surrounded the decision makers here. He even produced his passport. But ultimately it was his physical state, the filth and blood, that bore testimony that here was a man who had just walked out of the heart of it all, that lent him the authority to bamboozle these low-ranking cops.

"Actually it wasn't the first time he had had to bully his way through obstructive organizations: a career at NASA had trained him in that." [p. 161]

As the Moonseed eats through the sub-ocean crust, spreading across the Earth, volcanism and earthquakes begin appearing in coastal areas as far from Scotland as Seattle Washington and Los Angeles. The Earth is doomed! What happened to Venus is may now be happening to the Earth.

But lone genius Henry Meacher has a suspicion. He won't tell anyone what his real plan is, but he succeeds in persuading

his ex-wife, astronaut **Geena Meacher**, that men must go back to the Moon. The Moon is presumably filled with Moonseed since the original rock, which was the source of the spreading Moonseed on Earth, was a Moon rock. Why has the Moon not exploded despite the presence of Moonseed? The answer to that question may save the Earth. And she persuades NASA that a trip to the Moon can be done, and must be done fast. NASA persuades the U.S. Congress, and the Russians. (With the British Isles erupting, people are ready to be persuaded.) With all kinds of clever money-saving tricks, they in a few weeks build a new, cheap (only two billion dollars), way to get back to the Moon.

Much of this book is a terribly detailed description of Henry and Geena's trip to the Moon, together with a Russian astronaut, Arkady. Their vehicle is a combination of Russian and American capabilities.

"The basic Russian systems seem to have been augmented by American electronics, to handle the extra functions required of the ship on this Moon flight. Arkady mostly worked at the basic Soyuz controls, while Geena tapped on her laptop. They worked pretty smoothly, all things considered, but sometimes they stumbled, and they had to repeat what they were doing in English and Russian.

"The Soyuz turned in space, firing its attitude thrusters. Every clattering thruster pulse felt like a punch in the back.

Henry could feel the shove of his couch and the hull wall, physically swinging him around...." [p. 350]

"And the cabin was full of noises – the clatter and whir of pumps and fans and extractors – and every so often some mechanical gadget would change its tone, startling him awake once more. It was like trying to sleep inside some huge refrigerator, with the added frisson of knowing that on these rattling Russian machines depended his *life*." [p. 355]

Baxter has written a paean for travelling to the Moon. NASA could have had regular, cheap trips to the Moon running for decades since the 1970s, but they would have had more than zero risk – quite a bit more! Astronauts might have died! And Baxter gives us many of the details as to how it could be done – even today. If only NASA had used the knowledge they had then, and done it cooperatively with the Russians, we could have had working colonies on the Moon long ago, and for a lot less money than they spent on the shuttle program.

As Baxter says in his Afterword:

"It seems we really could get back to the Moon for under two billion dollars. The Moonseed may not be waiting for us – but a sister world is." [p. 535]

Should I give away the ending? Of course not. But it's an exciting disaster novel, and while most of the people on Earth are going to end up either dead or with horrible lives, won't mankind be saved? Let's hope so.... Worth reading.

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