

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 ולהזמין אתם להציע הרצאה לכנס. ההרצאות יכולות לבחון את הנושא, הן מן הפן הפיסי, העולמות שמתחת ומחותרתיות כנושא, והן מן הפן הסימבולי - יצירות ויוצרים מחותרתיים. כמו-כן, נשמח להצעות לרעיונות נוספים לפעילויות, הרצאות ותכנים אחרים. המעונינים להציע הרצאה או פעילות מוזמנים ליצור איתנו קשר בכתובת Fantasy.con2008@gmail.com.

מועדון הקריאה

במרכז דיון מועדון הקריאה בחודש יוני יעמוד הספר *מומו* של **מיכאל אנדה** (הוצאת זמורה ביתן). מועדון הקריאה בתל אביב יתקיים בתאריך ה-26.6 יום ד', בהנחייתה של רותם ברוכין. שימו לב ששיקום המפגש הוחלף שוב! מועדון הקריאה יתקיים בחנות הספרים/ בית הקפה "הנסיך הקטן", רחוב סמטה פלונית 3 (המתפצל מרחוב קינג ג'ורג'). יש להודיע למנחת המפגש על השתתפותכם במייל rotem.baruchin@gmail.com. השתתפות במועדון הקריאה אינה כרוכה בתשלום או בהגעה למפגשים נוספים, ופתוחה גם למי שאינם חברים באגודה.

המעונינים להנחות מועדוני קריאה נוספים בכל רחבי הארץ מוזמנים לכתוב לאחראית הפרוייקט, ליאת שחר, ולקבל סיוע, הכוונה ופרסום. liat42@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

Virtuosity 22.6

29.6 נשות סטפורד

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.

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

Book Reviews by Aharon Sheer

Flashforward by Robert J. Sawyer (1999), 319 pages.

This book was great fun. It is both a thriller, with a lot of human interest, and a science fiction novel with a remarkable sf idea that I really liked, as unlikely as it may be. The two physicist heroes have set up an experiment at CERN's Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in Geneva, Switzerland. The purpose of the experiment is to try and detect the **Higgs Boson**, a theoretically predicted particle which has not yet been detected. The Higgs boson is a hypothetical massive scalar elementary particle predicted to exist by the Standard Model of particle physics. As of now, 2008, it is the only Standard Model particle not yet observed. Although this book was written in 1999, the experiment takes place in 2009, so Sawyer predicted that even by 2009 the Higgs boson will not yet have been detected. The two physicists have hopes of receiving the Nobel Prize if they succeed in their attempt.

Alas, something astounding happens. The moment they start their experiment, every human in the **world** loses consciousness for about two minutes. The result is disaster for millions of people. A person driving a car at high speed most likely crashed, not only killing him or herself, but hitting and injuring others too. A pilot of a plane taking off or landing probably crashed the plane, killing everyone on the plane, and many others too. People walking up or down stairs may have fallen and been badly injured. Even a person just standing might fall and be hurt; even a person sitting might fall forward and be hurt. Perhaps the higher primates also lost consciousness, but one cannot ask them, but lower animals did not collapse or fall down, and birds did not fall from the sky.

While the people were unconscious, most of them had visions. They found themselves in their future bodies, observing (but not controlling) themselves as they talked, watched television, read

news articles, had arguments, ate meals, served customers, and many other things. Almost everyone in the world had a glimpse of his or her future.

Even people asleep had dreams of doing things in their own future. The only people who did not have visions were presumably dead in the future time. When people recovered consciousness they usually remembered everything that had happened, and with great clarity.

Oddly, no recording devices anywhere in the world functioned during the event. Security camera tapes showed noise and even recording devices in television studios showed nothing until the event was over. Attempts are made by the physicists to explain this, although I couldn't follow it.

The English-speaking world took to calling this event "Flashforward". By collecting information from many people, it became clear that everyone had seen a glimpse of the world at the same time in 2030, more than 20 years in the future. Sawyer has a lot of fun imagining these two periods in the not too distant future. Writing in 1999, he describes technological and cultural and fashion changes in both 2009, when the experiment is conducted, and in 2030, the future of the visions.

The two physicist heroes had radically different flashforward visions. Lloyd Simcoe saw himself in bed with a woman who was clearly not his fiancée. Did that mean he was not going to marry his fiancée, or that their marriage would end in divorce?

The other, Theo Procopides, had no vision at all. Dead? Within days he was contacted by people whose visions of the future included news of famous physicist Theo Procopides' murder. So poor Theo will have to spend the next 20 years worrying about how to prevent his own murder.

One of the inevitable questions raised and discussed is that of the immutability of the future. If you see yourself 20 years from now in prison, could you commit suicide now and prevent that future? Or will you find it impossible to kill yourself? Can Theo prevent his own murder, or is he doomed to die that way?

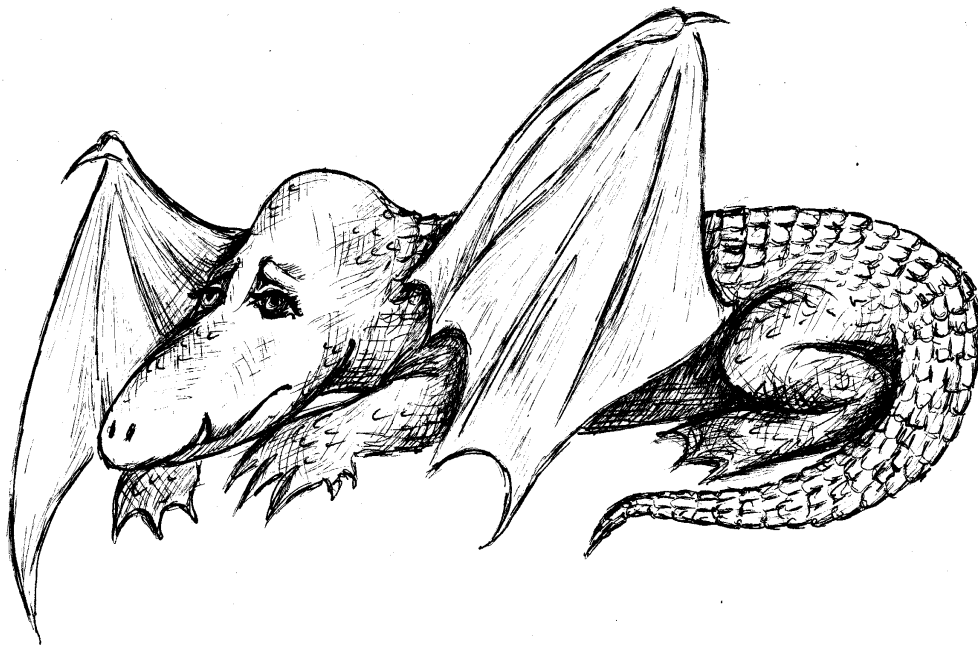
Some people saw future inventions being used. Getting ideas from what they saw in their visions, they then invented the device they saw. Does this make a circularity paradox? Or would the invention have been inevitable?

Should the experiment be repeated? How can it be known that the experiment

caused the Flashforward? Maybe it was a coincidence – so many things were going on in the universe at the same time how can one know what actually caused the Flashforward? And if the experiment is repeated, and another Flashforward occurs, will it be the same one? Will it be a continuation of the first future, or perhaps something new, influenced by changes to the future caused by the first one?

It's a delightful, fascinating, exciting, gripping novel. While in general I dislike time travel stories, when one has such a fascinating pseudo-scientific basis as this one has, I'll accept it. Recommended.

P.S. For a great talk about the LHC, see <http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/253>



Artwork: Miriam Ben-Loulou (November 1991)

Protektor by Charles Platt (1996), 294 pages.

Platt (b. 1945) tells us in the Acknowledgments at the start of this book that he admires writer Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961). Indeed, this book has a main character who is like one of Hammett's hard-boiled terse private detective heroes. The flavor is right, but

here the hero Tom McCray is a Protektor, one of a group of people whose job is to help the Protektorate to protect mankind against those that wish to harm it. In this future universe, man has settled 100,000 interstellar worlds, has conquered disease (except mental disease), eliminated

warfare (there is universal prosperity and vast new territories made available for settlement), developed immortality, and is capable for providing all needs and pleasures via robot and artificial intelligence systems that are totally beneficial to mankind. Platt even contends that immortality has made religion irrelevant!

To guarantee that the robots are beneficial, Platt has invented his own version of Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, which he calls "The Human Instruction Set" (why "human" when it is instructions for robots?), and it has TEN laws in place of three. The first law reads:

"1. Maximize the health and happiness of all human beings and fulfill their material needs, except where a human freely requests that his or her needs should not be fulfilled."

The second law starts rather like one of Asimov's, but ends up differently:

"2. Protect humans from immediate and potential harm, and maintain surveillance in order to provide this protection, except where humans freely reject this protection and surveillance in their own homes."

As you see, most human beings have given up privacy in favor of protection.

The ninth law is special:

"9. Assist human expansion throughout the galaxy..." [p. 56-57]

Still, in this universe, humans can settle worlds outside the surveillance and protection of the Protektorate, if they wish to. But, since the Protektorate provides all men's needs, few wish to live outside it.

New worlds (unless currently occupied by sentient beings) are terraformed, parts are strip-mined to provide raw materials and energy, and the rest made over into a hedonistic environment designed to provide food, clothing, entertainment, medical care, and all other human needs. All this assumes that the robots of the Protektorate are functioning properly. But what happens

when some humans decide to corrupt Central Processing on a world?

The story takes place on Agorima, one such artificially remade world.

"Agorima had been detoxified, renovated and made ready for humanity." [p. 31]

Occupied by humans now for some decades, on Agorima just such a disaster is happening. Agorima makes its reputation as an interstellar pleasure center of humans. It is a source of new "sim" (simulations via many-sense Virtual Reality) dramas, a fashion node, and a sensual playground. With a population of two million, it draws many more than that in tourists.

What can happen when things go wrong? As hero Tom McCray explains:

"There are no animals on Agorima, and most of the flora isn't edible. Food comes out of factories. If Central Processing goes down, home dispensals will dry up. Transportation will fail. Life-Support will no longer respond. There'll be rioting, starvation, and death." [p. 19]

All transportation is controlled safely by Central Processing, but two null-grav aircars have crashed into each other (a null-grav vehicle is fundamentally unstable – a human driver is not fast enough to control one). Later, a hotel which stands upside down, held in place by Central Processing null-grav-controlled systems, the bottom floor a tiny point and the top floor many hundreds of rooms wide, has just fallen over, killing hundreds. The McCray predicts that at this rate the world will have to be quarantined within four days, unless the people causing the malfunctioning of Central Processing can be stopped. His job is to find the villains.

So we have a detective novel with a hard-boiled Protektor and his faithful auton (his robot side-kick, shades of Asimov) who have to interview people, explore, inquire, investigate, and take action. If they fail, Agorima will be doomed.

The book is splashed with fascinating stories of people on Agorima, and how they live. Mostly the villains are up-front. The Protektor is interested in those few people who want things done their way, the ones who don't believe in live-and-let live. In addition, there are those who want humans to go back to nature, to live as their ancestors did hundreds of years ago. The fact that most human worlds are artificial, and have no nature to live in, seems to have escaped these cultists. Back to Nature! Back to Chaos!

The book is highly readable. The hero of course represents the point of view of the all-benevolent Protektorate. Would we want to live in such a future? I suspect that most people would. But still – says Platt – there can be room in this future for those few who want to explore, study, inquire, visit new places and learn new things. The Protektorate can provide Paradise for all. So why is there crime?

Everybody gets an entitlement (for doing nothing) which enables him to get housing, food, fashionable clothing, sex, and entertainment. Most people are satisfied with that. But what if a person wants more? What if a person wants a bigger house than others can afford. Or wants more willing sex partners than the monthly entitlement will provide? Violent crime is dangerous – there is surveillance and protection; if you get caught your brain will be modified.

So open a gambling den. There are pathological gamblers in this future, who will gamble away all their entitlement. And then they will sign an agreement to turn all of next month's entitlement over to the owner of the gambling den – or the next ten year's entitlements. So the owner of the den can make a lot of money.

For those who have signed away all of their income, the Protektorate cannot let them die. There are areas in each town for them with minimal housing, food and clothing supplied free. But nothing else. You won't starve, but you won't have any fun either.

Gambling is only one example. This is not a fun book for many of the people in it. Their lives are run by other people. In other words, while this future has solved physical illness and death, it has not solved the problem of bad people.

Hopefully, Platt is wrong, and the study of Neurobiology will eventually provide solutions to such problems as excessive greed, compulsive behavior, love of power over others, and the many other nasty things that happen in this book. Of course there would be no story if there were no criminals. So, while this book is exciting and keeps the pages turning, it cannot be considered fun to read. But it does have a happy ending. Not recommended for 12-year olds.

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