



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

מיתופיה 2010 -- הספרייה המרכזית, מודיעין - 19 באוגוסט 2010

כנס מיתופיה, בארגון של קהילת טולקין הישראלית וקהילת הארי פוטר לבוגרים, הוא כנס שנתי המוקדש לספרות הפנטסיה, אשר מתמקד ביצירותיהם של ג'.ר. טולקין וג'ק רולינג. השנה יערך הכנס בספרייה המרכזית של מודיעין. כחלק משיתוף הפעולה בין הארגונים יהיו חברי האגודה הישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטסיה זכאים לקבל כרטיס חינם לאירוע באולם הגדול, בקניית שני כרטיסים לאירועים נוספים באותו אולם. המארגנים ממליצים להירשם מראש באתר הכנס או בפייסבוק לצורך קבלת עדכונים. בין הנרשמים מראש יוגרל כרטיס כניסה יומי. פרטים נוספים באתר הכנס: www.mythopia.org, או [בדף הפייסבוק של הכנס](#).

Charles Stross - Author GoH at Icon 2010

צ'ארלס סטרוס – יהיה הסופר האורח באייקון 2010. סטרוס, סופר המד"ב הבריטי, יהיה הסופר האורח בפסטיבל אייקון 2010. סטרוס חי באדינבורו שבסקוטלנד ובין ספריו מדע-בדיוני, פנטסיה ואימה בסגנון ה. פ. לאברקאפט. (בפברואר 2010, סייברקוזן פרסם בקורת על *Saturn's Children* by Charles Stross (2008) פרטים נוספים עליו ועל יצירתו בקישור הבא: <http://www.icon.org.il/2009/CharlieStrossNews>

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

Back Issues of CyberCozen: Oleg Sverdlov has put PDF copies of issues of CyberCozen going back to 1989 at his site:

<http://www.kulichki.com/antimiry/cybercozen/>

Unfortunately, the older issues do not contain the graphics (because the graphics were photocopied and not computer input). But that could be fun for some bored high school student to scan in, no?

Thanks, Oleg!

Film Review by Aharon Sheer: *Inception* (2010), directed by Christopher Nolan, written by Christopher Nolan, 148 min, rated PG-13 for sequences of violence and action throughout. Starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

This film claims to be a science-fiction film. Actually it's a Boom-Boom-Bang-Bang film. Meaning that there are lots of explosions, and lots of shooting. It doesn't qualify as an Explosion film – not enough explosions. The sf idea is the implanting of ideas into a person's mind while he/she is dreaming. Leonardo DiCaprio plays the hero, and to prepare himself for the part, he read Freud on

Dreams, and talked to psychologists and psychiatrists about dreams. I don't know why he bothered.

One of the central ideas of the film is that time in a dream is much faster than in reality. According to this ridiculous idea, five minutes of dreaming (in real time) is 60 minutes of action in the dream. The longest period of dreaming in a night of sleep is about an hour, so that would be 12

hours of action in the dream. But now go down another layer. Suppose while you are dreaming you dream that you have fallen asleep, and shortly thereafter begin dreaming. This is second-layer dreaming. In second layer dreaming you also get the multiplier effect. Five minutes of second-layer dreaming (measured in first-layer time) gives you an hour of action, so that 12 hours of action in the first-layer dream becomes six days of action in the second layer. Now go down another layer, and dream that you go to sleep and start dreaming in your dream in your dream. You'll get more than two months of action. Go down more layers and you could spend a whole lifetime in a dream in a dream ... in a dream. "Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made." (from the poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra" by Robert Browning). The hero and his wife supposedly spent an entire lifetime, including a happy old age, in a deep-layer dream world they created for themselves.

But that is only peripheral to the plot. While the title of the film "Inception" has been translated into Hebrew as "התחלה" in the film itself the concept of "Inception" is translated as "השתלה" which means "Implantation". The hero's profession is to put people to sleep, and then implant ideas in their brain while they are sleeping, and also to steal ideas from them while they are dreaming. To get the best effect, subtle chemicals are used which make it very difficult for the person to wake up. And of course the hero makes the person go down levels of the dreaming, so the sleep action can cover large amounts of dream time, although little in reality. If you want to discover a person's secrets, in the dream you have lots of lower-level dream time action to use to frighten the person into

thinking of the things you want him to think about. Frightening the person involves lots of Boom-Boom-Bang-Bang in the dream.

There are two women of romantic interest for the hero in the movie. One is a girl named Ariadne, whose job is to create environments for people to dream in. These dream environments may have fantastic elements; for example, an Escher-like world in which it is not clear what is up and what is down. However, Ariadne's creativity does not seem well used in the movie. And the other is the hero's wife, Mal, who we are told early in the movie committed suicide because she did not want to abandon the dream-world in which she was living, leaving her husband with their two small children, but also with the blame for causing her death.

There are some amusing scenes in the movie. A group of sleepers are sleeping deeply while traveling in a car. When the car goes around a curve the dreamers dream that gravity changes. They may even feel they are flying through the air. Thanks to the chemicals they have been fed, they do not wake up. The most interesting scenes in the movie are scenes like these, where the movie jumps from level to level, showing what is happening at one level (reality or a dream?) and also what is happening at a deeper level (certainly a dream, or is it a dream within a dream?).

Although we saw this movie during summer vacation, when all the Israeli teenagers were on vacation, the theater was almost empty, and there were no teenagers in the audience, only a very small mixed group of adults. This may be a really big action movie in the U.S., but I suspect it will not last long here in Rehovot.

Short Book Reviews by Aharon Sheer

Reunion – A Pip and Flinx Novel by Alan Dean Foster (2001), 342 pages.

Most American sf writers have never been outside the United States, and their

aliens are about as alien as someone from Kentucky. Alan Dean Foster is

exceptional. According to this book's blurb, "He's lived in Tahiti and French Polynesia, traveled to Europe, Asia, and throughout the Pacific, and has explored the back roads of Tanzania and Kenya... eaten panfried piranha ... in Peru, white-water rafted the length of the Zambezi's Batoka Gorge, and driven solo the length and breadth of Namibia." Many of his novels have aliens as heroes or enemies, and they are quite different from typical American space travelers and the aliens they meet.

In Foster's Commonwealth series (of which this is one), there are three intelligent alien space-traveling races: humans, the insect-like Thranx, and the reptilian AAnn. In part of this novel the human hero has to deal with hostile AAnn. (Foster's *Nor Crystal Tears* introduced me to the Thranx.)

Flinx, the human hero whose full name is Philip Lynx, travels everywhere with an Alaspinian minidrag coiled around his neck and left shoulder. The minidrag's name is Pip, and he has the advantage that he looks charming (brightly hued although reptilian in aspect) but can be deadly dangerous to anyone who is threatening his owner Flinx. (Pip can spit in their eyes.) The

two of them are inseparable, perhaps because Pip is about as intelligent and likeable as a dog.

In the middle of this book, there is a long section in which Flinx must march, with no food or water, through an alien and very dangerous environment populated by silicon beings that look like rocks but are at least as sapient as earth serpents, and much more dangerous.

Flinx also has powerful but unpredictable telepathy, the result of his having been created by the genetic engineering of a strange religious group that was subsequently made illegal. There are very few others like him. Flinx can influence the minds of other humans, and often gets what he needs by telepathic influencing for which he feels very guilty for improperly using.

Regrettably, this book is a middle book of a long series. So it starts in the middle, and ends in the middle. There are even semi-sentient plants playing an important role in this book, but we never find out what will become of them since the information is apparently in a later novel in this series. For the casual reader, it might be smarter to look for an earlier book in the series, or a later one.

Coyote Rising by Allen Steele (2004), 408 pages, plus half a page list of scientific sources.

This book could be called "Adventures on a Distant Planet, Book II". It's classic science fiction, a continuation of the novel *Coyote*, which was reviewed in *CyberCozen*, December 2009. The book is subtitled "A Novel of Interstellar Revolution". The spaceship from Earth which reached the planet Coyote took decades to reach it using older technology. Its passengers were primarily a few dozen opponents to the dictatorial leaders of what was once the United States of America.

A few short years after the first spaceship landed, a second spaceship containing a thousand colonists arrived,

having been sent decades later, but with much better and faster travel technology. The second ship had orders to take over Coyote, and establish an Earth-style dictatorship in place of whatever government the dissidents had established. Among the new group were Savants, robots whose brains contained the downloaded brain contents of highly intelligent humans. The Savants were practically indestructible, and were totally dedicated to the dictatorship.

"A Savant. Like almost everyone else he knew, [Captain] Baptiste found himself nervous in the company of these creatures; persons

who'd chosen to have their minds downloaded into mechanical forms, eschewing their human bodies for virtual immortality as cyborgs. Baptiste believed them to be closet sociopaths, people who would rather interface with an AI than look another person straight in the eye. The fact that they all looked very much alike didn't help much either; the same black robes, the same skeletal forms. Yet once WHU [the Western Hemisphere Union] granted them legal status as citizens, many had gone to work for the Union Astronautica, where they served as a legion of posthuman intellects. For some reason, space attracted them." [p. 13]

But the new arrivals discovered that the earlier colonists had fled to some unknown place invisible from space. So the leaders of the new colonists took over the small number of buildings abandoned by the first group, and dumped the remaining of the colonists in the surrounding fields to fend for themselves. Only food was guaranteed twice a day.

Coyote is not an easy place to live. For one thing, there are the "boids", human-sized vicious giant flightless "birds" that can kill a man with its beak in seconds. The whole settlement is surrounded by fences and automatic weapons that will kill anything approaching. This means that the new colonists cannot run away to travel or explore or enjoy the new planet; they must live under the thumbs of the dictators. So how did the original small group of colonists leave and settle elsewhere?

But that second colony ship was not the last. Three more came, depositing more and more colonists. The lucky ship crew members could go back to Earth; the colonists had to stay on Coyote.

"On the strength of a winning number on a lottery ticket and promises of a better life on the new world, I'd spend forty-eight years in

biostasis to get away from the Western Hemisphere Union, only to find that the same people who ran the show back there were also in charge out here. And that's how I found myself huddled in a leaky tent, eating creek crab stew and wondering how a smart guy like me had been rooked so badly, when the fact of the matter is that I'm not very smart and the system is rigged to take advantage of losers....

"When it was announced ... that the fourth Union ship from Earth ... had entered the system and would soon be making orbit around Coyote, I was the first person in line at the community hall in Liberty for the job of unloading freight from its shuttles. Literally the first; there were nearly three hundred guys behind me, waiting for a Union Guard soldier to open the door and let us in. During the warm seasons, we would have been working on the collective farms, but it was the middle of Coyote's 274-day winter and jobs were scarce, so I was willing to stand in the cold for three hours just for the chance to schlep cargo containers....

"One by one [the colonists] stepped off the ramp, squinted against the bright sunlight, looked around in confusion, then followed the person in front of them, who didn't have a clue as to where he or she was going either. Fresh meat for Coyote. I found myself wondering how many of them would make it through their first year. We'd already lost more than forty colonists to hunger, cold, disease, and predators. The cemetery outside Liberty had room for plenty more." [p. 52-53]

The Matriarch, the ruler of the colonists and of the soldiers who enforced the rules of the colony, was a harsh, cruel self-centered person. When the colony built a bridge across a river, to enable

expansion of the colony to new territory, she came to visit the construction site.

“The Matriarch silently observed the activity before her, making a face as she batted at the skeeters that tormented her. Garcia tried to explain what was being done, yet it was clear that the details bored her; she only seemed to take interest when she noticed a couple of nearby workmen fastening safety lines around their stomachs and thighs, mountaineering-style.

“‘Seems like a lot of wasted effort,’ she said, and Garcia informed her that he had mandated the practice as a safety precaution after a couple of men had fallen to their deaths from the towers. She shrugged as she swatted another skeeter. ‘Very well. If you think it’s important.’” [p. 160]

They had evil leaders like the Matriarch, and the five Savants, and the cruel soldiers. There were large numbers of colonists who had been hoping for a better life but had not found it. It’s not surprising that people would think of revolution. They were helped secretly by some of the original small group of colonists, whose location was unknown to the newer rulers. This group could slip in and out, blowing up equipment and inciting residents. Much of the book is about the long, slow battle between the original group, who had a free and democratic life, and the newer dictator-dominated settlers. The revolution is long and hard, with the dictator supported by vastly superior fire-power.

Still, we know that the WHU is going to continue sending more ships. So the *next* in this series is sure to come.

Quote of the Month: About Deaf Sign Language for the Hearing:

“There has recently been an educational experiment in Prince George's County, Maryland, with the introduction of Sign into first grade and preschool education among normal, hearing children. The children acquire it readily and enjoy it, and as they do they show significant improvement of reading and other skills. It may be that this facilitation of reading, of the ability to recognize the forms of words and letters, goes with the enhancement of spatial-analytic ability that occurs with the learning of Sign. Even when (hearing) adults learn Sign, they too may become conscious of changes in themselves -- a disposition to more vivid visual description, enhancements of visual imagery and memory, and often a freer and more direct expressive use of the body. It would be interesting to find out if there occurs to some degree, in such adults, an enhancement of visual evoked potentials such as Neville finds in hearing native signers.

“Interestingly, there is not a good correlation between ability to learn spoken languages and ability to learn Sign. Some polyglots are taken aback at finding how "hard" it is; and other people, who have never been able to learn another spoken language, may be startled to find how "easy" Sign is. These differences may reflect differing visual powers of individuals, and have little to do with intellectual powers, or linguistic powers, in general. In adult life, basic visual powers may be capable of only limited enhancement, whereas early training, seemingly; can enhance visual powers in us all.”

From *Seeing Voices* by Oliver Sacks (1989), p. 176

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