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מועדון הקריאה של חודש יוני יוקדש לספר "הילד של המכשפה" מאת מייקל גרובר, ויתקיים ביום חמישי, 28.6.12, בשעה 19:30, ב"קפה גידי", פרישמן 20 א', תל-אביב. מנחה: [דפנה קירש](#) לצורך היערכות למספר המשתתפים, יש להירשם מראש דרך הדואל של המנחה dafna1485@walla.co.il. כמו כן רצוי להביא למפגש עותק של הספר. הכניסה חופשית ואינה כרוכה בתשלום, בחברות באגודה, או בהגעה למפגשים נוספים.

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In Memoriam: Ray Bradbury 1920 – 2012 (age 91)

I first encountered Bradbury's stories in the early 1950s when I was in high school (1951-1954). They made a tremendous impression on me. They were so strong emotionally for me, that if I read a Bradbury story I could not read anything else for hours. When I saw there was a Bradbury story in an sf magazine I subscribed to, I would leave it for the last, alone. While for other stories, I might read several in order, for Bradbury I always put the story aside to read by itself, when I was ready for that emotion.

Bradbury only wrote one sf novel, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). Most of his stories were fantasy (like *The Martian Chronicles*, 1950). However one of his short stories ("The Pedestrian", 1951) was delightful science fiction, based on an actual incident: it seems that he had been stopped by the police for walking on the street at night. The police said, roughly, "Nobody walks on the streets here. What are you doing here?"

Everybody has cars. People who walk could only be up to no good." Bradbury turned that true incident into a short story in which a man walking on a street at night is stopped by a robot police car. Try to explain to a robot police car why you are walking at night! (The car takes him to a psychiatric hospital.)

Being an sf fan and not a fantasy fan, I rarely read Bradbury after high school.

But those stories I read by him in high school were unforgettable.

Book Reviews by Aharon Sheer

[Reviews of Books One and Two of *The Quintaglio Ascension* were in the May 2012 *CyberCozen*]

Foreigner by Robert J. Sawyer (1994), 287 pages. *Book Three of The Quintaglio Ascension*.

This is the third in the trilogy about dinosaurs brought from Earth 65 million years ago, and placed on a

moon of a gas giant far from Earth. These dinosaurs have developed intelligence, and are now at a level of

technology similar to that of Earth not far in our past. They call themselves “Quintaglios”, and call their moon “Land”.

As Book One, *Far-Seer*, introduced us to astronomer Afsan, the Quintaglio parallel to Galileo, and Book Two, *Fossil Hunter*, introduced us to his son biologist Toroca, the Quintaglio parallel to Darwin, so Book Three introduces us to psychoanalyst Mokleb, the Quintaglio parallel to Sigmund Freud.

Properly speaking the inventor of Freud’s “talking cure”, which Mokleb developed independently, was Austrian Jewish physician Dr. Josef Breuer (1842-1925); Freud learned of the method, adopted it, wrote about it, collaborated with Breuer, expanded the method and developed it further; he also credited Breuer in lectures he gave.

However, if I were to say that Mokleb is the dinosaur Josef Breuer, few would know who I was talking about.

In the first book, Afsan was blinded by a high priest as punishment for his teaching that the gas giant is just another planet, and not the Face of God. In some respects these dinosaurs can regenerate lost limbs. A lost arm, leg or tail will regenerate. Normally eyes do not regenerate. However, after an injury to Afsan’s head, his eyes regenerate beautifully, responding to light exactly as normal eyes. But still Afsan remains unable to see. His doctor decides Afsan suffers from “hysterical blindness”, a blindness caused by psychological reasons rather than physical reasons. Afsan is referred to Mokleb, who is able to treat hysterical symptoms via a “talking cure”. Many months of treatment pass without improvement. Mokleb suspects, in good Freudian fashion, that the cause is deep in Afsan’s earliest childhood.

Every mother dinosaur lays eight eggs. And the females are fertile three times in their lives. If every baby dinosaur that hatches were allowed to live, their planet Land would soon be overwhelmingly overpopulated. Long ago it was decided that only one of each clutch of eight eggs would be allowed to live. The babies hatch seeing and physically active. After the babies have had a few days to develop and show their capabilities, the blood priests eat each of the babies except one. Thus overpopulation is prevented. What is the criterion for staying alive? Only the one fastest, and most aggressive, is allowed to live. After that babies are raised in a crèche, where they come to know their crèche-mates well. But none know who their father or mother is, and none have any living siblings. Family relationships are of no interest.

There is one exception: The Royal Family. Each baby in “The Family” is allowed to live, and each will, when it grows up, rule one of the eight regions of Land. The priests decide which one, based on its personality, will rule each area, and send it there.

In the current story there is another exception to the rule that none know their parents. While on a long sea voyage, Afsan impregnates a female colleague, Novato, who has just reached maturity and fertility. Since there are no priests aboard, all eight babies remain alive. Even if raised apart, they have the possibility of knowing who their parents and siblings are.

Novato has worked for a long time with Karshirl, but never discussed with her the fact that she is her mother. She asks for a meeting with her:

“I’m your mother,” she said.

“Yes, I guess that’s the term, isn’t it?” Karshirl was quiet for a time, then added again, ‘Fancy that.’

“Don't you want to ask me questions?’ said Novato.

“Well, as an engineer, I've long wondered where you got the inspiration for the far-seer.’

“Not that kind of question. Questions about myself. About you. About us.’

“Questions, ma'am? Nothing comes to mind.’

“I'm your mother,’ Novato said again as if that said it all.

“Karshirl's tail swished expansively. ‘I guess it's interesting to know. I'm sure some people idly wonder about who their parents were, but I never have myself.’

“Never?’

“Not really, no.’

“Novato sighed, air whistling out between her pointed teeth. ‘I suppose I should have expected this. Before I left Pack Gelbo, I never knew who my mother was, either. Now that I've been gone for twenty kilodays, I wonder about it a lot. I try to recall the females who were eighteen, thirty-six, or fifty-four kilodays older than me, to see if any of them resemble me. But the memories are dim; I keep hoping for an excuse for a trip back to Gelbo. I'd like to see her, whoever she is.’ She paused. ‘As I thought you might like to see me.’

“I see you often already, Novato. Forgive me -- I'm not normally this dense, but I don't seem to be getting the point of all this.’

“We're a family,’ said Novato.

“Family,’ repeated Karshirl. ‘And 'mother.’ I'm sure you're using these words correctly, although I've never heard them applied thus. Oh, I've heard of 'The Family,' of course -- Dy-

Dybo and his ancestors. And the term 'crèche mother' is sometimes used. But the way you're using them...’

“Novato leaned on her tail. ‘Don't you see? I know my other children.’

“Yes?’

“Know them in special ways.’

“That's very strange.’

“I want to know you.’

“You do know me.’

“I mean, I want to know you as my daughter.’

“Now, that's a word I don't know at all.’

“Daughter: female child.’

“Karshirl spread her hands. ‘We can't know each other any better than we already do. You have your territory and I have mine.’

“But there's so much I could tell you. About what it's like at ages you haven't yet reached.’

“I've always thought that discovering those things for oneself was part of the joy of growing up.’

“Yes, but you'll be calling for a mate soon.’

“Karshirl nodded. ‘Probably, although I haven't felt the stirrings yet.’

“I can tell you about that.’

“Karshirl's eyelids blinked. ‘I don't want to be told about it.’

“I'm your mother,’ said Novato again.

“Karshirl spread her hands. ‘I accept that.’

“Novato sighed once more. ‘But that's all, isn't it?’

“What else could there be?’

“Nothing,’ said Novato, growing angry. ‘Nothing at all.’

“Karshirl said, ‘I'm sorry if I've upset you somehow.’

“‘Just go,’ said Novato. ‘Go away. Leave me alone.’

“Karshirl turned around and walked down the beach, her tail swishing in open bewilderment.” [p. 152-153]

As a good Freudian, Mokleb suspects that the trauma of watching your siblings eaten, with only you remaining alive, is an early childhood, long repressed memory. Well!

The other thread in this book is the problem of how the dinosaurs are going to get off their moon, whose orbit has decayed over 65 million years, and it will break up into a ring of the Face of God.

How will the dinosaurs develop the technology of spaceships and faster-than-light transport, to carry

them to other sun systems with livable planets? The truth is that Sawyer does not know, since it has not yet occurred on Earth. So at the end of the book he just says it happened.

Regardless of this technological lacuna, Book Three, like each of the first two, has many different ideas, of which I have presented only a couple, and is a very readable story. While perhaps this book is more suitable for teenage boys, as one of these (who never got older), I enjoyed it very much. It kept me enthralled. Not a prize-winner, but Sawyer gave me a lot to argue with.

Note: The book ends with a 30 page concordance to Quintaglio history and terminology, telling in which of the three books various names or terms appear.

Quote of the Month:

Working on Borrowed Time by Guy Riddihough

Many of us are sleeping less than we used to because of the demands of work and the enticements of the Internet, television, and digital social networking. It is also true that we are increasingly sleeping outside of the times normally dictated by our internal circadian clocks (our "chronotype"). This difference between circadian and social clocks has been termed "social jet lag."

Roenneberg *et al.* have analyzed data from the Munich ChronoType Questionnaire (MCTQ), which assesses sleep behavior on work and free days. They calculated that one-third of the 65,000 European participants in the MCTQ suffered from at least 2 hours of social jet lag, with teenagers suffering the largest deficiencies. Reduced amounts of sleep are known to be correlated with increased body mass index (BMI) and obesity — the results showed that social jet lag is an equally important predictor of BMI. Furthermore, the average chronotype has shifted later into the night over the past decade, exacerbating social jet lag. This change in chronotype has probably been driven by a weakening of the external cues that normally entrain our circadian clocks — increasing numbers of people living and working in cities being exposed to less light during the day and more light during the night, and spending less time outdoors. People who regularly sleep outside of their circadian window can show an imbalance in glucose metabolism normally associated with type 2 diabetes.

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Why Hal Went Crazy:

In the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) the supercomputer Hal goes crazy. I always wondered why. Here is the explanation from Arthur C. Clarke's book 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968).

"Since consciousness had first dawned, in that laboratory so many millions of miles Sunward, all Hal's powers and skills had been directed toward one end. The fulfillment of his assigned program was more than an obsession; it was the only reason for his existence. Undistracted by the lusts and passions of organic life, he had pursued that goal with absolute single-mindedness of purpose.

"Deliberate error was unthinkable. Even the concealment of truth filled him with a sense of imperfection, of wrongness -- of what, in a human being, would have been called guilt. For like his makers, Hal had been created innocent; but, all too soon, a snake had entered his electronic Eden.

"For the last hundred million miles, he had been brooding over the secret he could not share with Poole and Bowman. He had been living a lie; and the time was fast approaching when his colleagues must learn that he had helped to deceive them.

"The three hibernators already knew the truth -- for they were Discovery's real payload, trained for the most important mission in the history of mankind. But they would not talk in their long sleep, or reveal their secret during the many hours of

discussion with friends and relatives and news agencies over the open circuits with Earth.

"It was a secret that, with the greatest determination, was very hard to conceal -- for it affected one's attitude, one's voice, one's total outlook on the universe. Therefore it was best that Poole and Bowman, who would be on all the TV screens in the world during the first weeks of the flight, should not learn the mission's full purpose, until there was need to know.

"So ran the logic of the planners; but their twin gods of Security and National Interest meant nothing to Hal. He was only aware of the conflict that was slowly destroying his integrity -- the conflict between truth, and concealment of truth.

"He had begun to make mistakes, although, like a neurotic who could not observe his own symptoms, he would have denied it. The link with Earth, over which his performance was continually monitored, had become the voice of a conscience he could no longer fully obey.

But that he would deliberately attempt to break that link was something that he would never admit, even to himself." [p. 149]

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