



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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### The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

#### הקרנת בכורה של "הרועה האחרון" בכנס "אייקון" 2013

עמית, גיק מצוי, סובל כבר כמה שבועות מחלומות משונים שבהם סמל אחד חוזר על עצמו – סמל שנראה לו מוכר באופן משונה. כדי לנקות קצת את הראש הוא משתכנע להבריז מהעבודה עם מאיה חברתו הטובה ולנסוע לים. הטיול הקצר הופך להרפתקה כשהם נתקלים בתימהוני זקן שלוקח אותם למסע מטורף בעקבות אוצרות עתיקים ברחבי ארץ ישראל, ובדרך הם נאלצים להימלט מסוכנים ממשלתיים קשוחים ומכוחות רשע שזוממים להשתלט על עולמנו ולשעבד את בני האדם.

"הרועה האחרון" הוא סרט מסע פנטסטי השואב אלמנטים גם מתרבות המיסטיקה היהודית ומהקבלה. הסרט, שמומן באמצעות מימון המונים ובתמיכת אגודה ישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטסיה, יוקרן בהקרנת בכורה בפסטיבל "אייקון", שיתקיים בתאריכים 22–24 בספטמבר. למעוניינים, יתקיים גם אירוע שאלות ותשובות עם אנשי הקאסט וההפקה, שייערך מיד אחרי הקרנת הבכורה.

#### כנס "מיתופיה" במודיעין

פרודו באגניס, הארי פוטר, טיריון לאניסטר, קטניס אוורדין, בלה סוואן, חיות מדברות, חתולים מחייכים – כל אלה ואחרים הם גיבוריו של "מיתופיה", כנס ספרותי המתקיים זו השנה התשיעית ומוקדש לספרות הפנטזיה, המיתולוגיה ועוד. ההרצאות בכנס יקיפו יצירות כמו "שר הטבעות", "הארי פוטר", "שיר של אש ושל קרח" (עליה מבוססת הסדרה המצליחה "משחקי הכס") ויצירות נוספות, וייקחו את אורחי הכנס גם למחזות מרתקים אחרים. בנוסף יתקיימו בכנס חידון, מופעי הקראות, הצגה הומוריסטית, סדנאות יצירה, כתיבה וסיפור סיפורים ושלל פעילויות חברתיות.

כנס "מיתופיה" יתקיים ביום המישי, 22 באוגוסט 2013 בספרייה המרכזית במודיעין. פרטים נוספים ותכניה ניתן למצוא באתר הכנס, או בעמוד האירוע בפייסבוק.

#### מועדון הקריאה של חודש אוגוסט יעסוק בספרו של יואב בלום "מצרפי המקרים".

המועדון בתל-אביב יתקיים ביום המישי, 29.8.13, בשעה 19:30, ב"קפה גרג", ויצמן 2, ת"א. מנחה: דפנה קירש. לצורך היערכות למספר המשתתפים, יש להירשם מראש דרך הדוא"ל של המנחה. כמו כן, רצוי להביא למפגש עותק של הספר. הכניסה חופשית ואינה כרוכה בתשלום, בחברות באגודה או בהגעה למפגשים נוספים. מועדון הקריאה של חודש ספטמבר יתקיים במסגרת פסטיבל "אייקון", כחלק מצעדה לכבודו של טרי פראצ'ט לדגל מלאת 30 שנה לסדרת "עולם הדיסק", ויעסוק בספרו של טרי פראצ'ט "בני החורין הקטנים".

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

### Letter to the Editor

Hi Aharon,

With respect to your review of *Blindsight* in the July *CyberCozen*, honestly ... to quote you: "I gave up reading it before getting to the end." Sorry to say, that your review was not up to par. You've presented much more interesting books in the past.

I know I shouldn't criticize (especially since I promised a few reviews and haven't gotten around to them yet...) - but what you presented was entirely confusing. Add to the fact that you trashed the book itself... Why do the review at all? **Leybl Botwinik**

**Leybl** – If my review was confusing, it's because I found the book confusing. But some say *Blindsight* is one of the best books of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Maybe a biologist would like it better.

Aharon

### Quote of the Month:

“... hunting was nonetheless a major force in human evolution. The key is to ask not what the mind can do for hunting, but what hunting can do for the mind. Hunting provides sporadic packages of concentrated nutrients. We did not always have tofu, and the best natural material for building animal flesh is animal flesh. Though plant foods supply calories and other nutrients, meat is a complete protein containing all twenty amino acids, and provides energy-rich fat and indispensable fatty acids. Across the mammals, carnivores have larger brains for their body size than herbivores, partly because of the greater skill it takes to subdue a rabbit than to subdue grass, and partly because meat can better feed ravenous brain tissue. Even in the most conservative estimates, meat makes up a far greater proportion of foraging humans' diet than of any other primate's. That may have been one of the reasons we could afford our expensive brains.”

From *How the Mind Works* by Steven Pinker, 1997, p. 195

**Movie review** by Aharon Sheer: *Europa Report* (2013), 90 minutes, director Sebastián Cordero, screenplay Philip Gelatt, Rated PG-13 for sci-fi action and peril

This is a genuine SCIENCE fiction movie, meaning that it attempts to be solidly science based. As such, it will never be shown in movie theaters in Israel (no vampires, no zombies, no robots, no car chases, and no violence).

The idea is that a space ship is sent from Earth to Jupiter, with the objective of exploring Jupiter's moon Europa. The scientific base is the November 2011 discovery of water beneath the ice of Jupiter's moon Europa. Europa has, underneath its solid frozen exterior, an ocean of water, not ice. The speculation is that this water might harbor conditions for the creation of life, and perhaps have life itself. So a nine months'-long trip is taken to bring a six person scientific crew to Europa to explore. The crew also presumably knows that their reward will be in making a truly great scientific discovery. There is little chance they will ever get back to Earth.

Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif. Scientists Kevin Hand and Steven Vance were consulted on the scientific aspects of the movie. Well done. NASA photos were used of the surface of Europa from a distance. Presumably the appearance of the surface of Europa up close was speculation.

The early part of the movie shows daily life on the spaceship. Many of the ideas are taken from life on the International Space Station (ISS), things we have seen in video clips filmed by people on the ISS. People on this long trip have similar problems, and use similar solutions (regular exercise, for example), as people on long stays on the ISS. For those like me who are familiar with such videos, this part is boring.

A principle of this movie – like many of the serious SCIENCE fiction books of Ben Bova – is that, if anything can go wrong, it will. They manage to get all the way to Jupiter without problems. Jupiter is a long way from Earth, and sending a message by radio to Earth takes time: 33 minutes to the Sun, plus or minus 8 minutes for light to go from the Sun to the Earth depending where Earth is in its orbit around the Sun. It follows that consulting with Earth is not going to be easy. But they should be able to bring problems to the attention of Earth, and get advice as to solutions.

Unfortunately, because of a technical malfunction caused by a solar flare, communication with Earth stops as they get to the vicinity of Jupiter. Hence, from that moment on the crew of the space ship is on its own. No consulting with Earth.

Another problem comes up. As is well known, small groups of people, locked up in a limited area for months at a time, sometimes show psychological problems. An example: Antarctic crews stationed there for long periods. One or the other of the crew is

likely to have serious psychological problems. On this trip too, that happens. An engineer in the crew, Andrei Blok (played by Michael Nyquist), stops regular shaving. He has constant thick stubble of hair on his face in contrast to the other men who are closely shaven. There are worries among the other crew members about his mental stability.

Once in the vicinity of Jupiter, they begin orbiting the moon Europa. The plan is to send a lander to Europa, land on Europa, and explore it. Once there, the idea is to drill a hole in Europa's surface, and try to explore the ocean beneath. Presumably it will be possible to collect water samples and study them for signs of life. But another problem develops: The landing point has been specially chosen to avoid spots which are seismically active. Unfortunately, they land a hundred meters from the planned location, and this happens to be a place where there are Europa quakes. Not pleasant, and distressing.

Engineer Andrei Blok looks out the window of the lander and sees luminescence. Since his mental state is suspected, the others in the crew doubt his report. But later on, another person goes outside of the lander to the surface, and also sees luminescence. Taking a risk, that person turns off the illumination in order to see the luminescence better. It is really there, but what causes it?

Happily, the crew does find signs of microscopic life in the water samples from underneath the frozen surface. So they have made a major discovery. Alas, they will never be able to report their discovery to Earth.

Fortunately on-board cameras are photographing all the time, and eventually communication is reestablished and the camera recordings are sent to Earth. The movie is supposedly based on these recordings, as the crew is never heard from again. But information about their great discovery does get back to Earth.

A serious effort to describe scientific exploration of Europa. Serious problems are presented. Nothing most Israelis will be interested in. Maybe they'll show it at Icon.

## **Book Review by Aharon Sheer**

***Roma Eterna*** by Robert Silverberg (2003), 449 pages

This book is based on various short stories and novelettes published by Robert Silverberg, starting in 1989. They are joined together into numerous chapters with a consistent background. This is parallel history – the history of the Roman Empire for the last two thousand years, ending in our present.

The basic idea is that the Hebrews did not succeed in getting out of Egypt, and remained as slaves in Egypt. Hence they did not go back to Canaan and conquer it. There were no Jewish empires. No Second Temple in Roman times, and no Jesus Christ. Hence no Christianity. Rome was not converted to Christianity, and remained pagan. It continued to rule for the next two thousand years.

Each chapter discusses a different event in this Roman history. For example, one Roman emperor, having learned of the empires in North and South America from Norwegian explorers, sent a great fleet to South America. It attempted to conquer South America, but was defeated. Remember that in our history the Spanish conquered American empires because they carried with them: 1) cannons and guns and 2) smallpox. Now these alternative Romans did not have cannons and guns (at the time, they did get it from China later on).

However, no doubt they did have smallpox so that would have helped them to conquer the Americas, as in our history. It's estimated that 80% of the indigenous peoples in the New World died of smallpox, brought there by the Europeans (who were mostly resistant to the disease). This made their conquest of the new world easier, since

the indigenous peoples saw them seen as bringing with them terrible disaster, against which they could not defend themselves. However, Silverberg ignores that part of history.

Another chapter has a Roman official exiled from Rome to Arabia as a punishment for misbehavior. This official meets and is impressed by Mohammed, but sees the threat of Mohammed's ideas. He has Mohammed assassinated, thus preventing the development of Islam in this alternative history.

The Roman Empire has better and worse periods. Sometimes it splits into the eastern part ruled from Constantinople, and the Western part ruled by Rome. Later emperors manage to reunite the empire into one. And later on it again splits. This is a repeated theme in the book. In later times European regions demand and fight for independence. England, Spain, France. But later emperors succeed in putting down the local rebellions and reunite the empire.

Rome gradually develops modern technology, thanks to its connections with China and India. Gunpowder, electricity, internal combustion engines. To my mind this is rather unlikely. China had very advanced science, but it never developed the idea of having new scientific ideas published and spread so that many people could develop and improve them. Chinese science was not published, and hence perished. The Chinese had some of the most advanced medicine in some periods, but its use was restricted to the wealthy, and the knowledge was not publicized and did not spread. So I think it unlikely the Romans would have advanced in these ways. In fact, Silverberg does not mention at all the development of modern science and scientific investigation. Engineers the Romans were, and good ones, but never scientists. So they would not – in contrast to Silverberg's alternative history -- have developed the scientific knowledge that Silverberg assumes would have been developed by our time (in their alternative world).

For lovers of history, this is a fascinating book (even if some chapters are a little too long and drawn out), and it's fun to try and see how Silverberg has matched our history with the alternate history.

**Salacious Sal** (From June 1993)

## Salacious Sal



**Dear Sal:** My wife's a real witch. She makes my life hell. If that isn't enough, she comes from a large family and they're always visiting -- her parents, her sisters, her brothers, and even her covens (1st, 2nd, 2nd once-removed, and even the distant ones)! I'm going out of my mind! I ask for a glass of beer and I get some wizard brew. I try to watch the velly and find myself watching hallucinations. Love is dead -- and I probably will be soon.

What can I do?

**D.E Mon**

**Dear D.E.:** The best thing a male can do in a situation like this is to become a wizard -- a financial one is best. Wiz her out of the house. Buy her a new racing model broom. Make friends with a large vampire family and invite them to dinner when your in-laws come to visit.

Set out to bewitch her and she may learn to  
behave herself. Good Luck. **Sal**

Unemployed? Out of sorts? Overintelligent? Write **Salacious Sal** for  
advice!

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