



### The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

#### התחילה מכירת הכרטיסים המוקדמת לכנס עולמות!

כנס עולמות, הכנס השנתי למדע בדיוני ופנטזיה, יתקיים בתאריכים 27-28 למרץ, חול המועד פסח, באשכול פיס, רחוב שפרינצק 4, תל אביב. נושא הכנס השנה הוא "מנהיגים ומורדים". בואו ליומיים של הופעות, הרצאות, סדנאות, פאנלים, הקרנות ואירועי קהילה. כבר עכשיו אתם יכולים לחזות בכל אירועי הכנס בתכנייה שבאתר. הקדימו לרכוש כרטיסים! כך תשלמו פחות ותבטיחו את מקומכם באירועים.

#### יום גיבורי-על: 22 במרץ בקולנוע לב דיזינגוף סנטר, תל-אביב

יום שכולו גיבורי-על, עם הקרנה מיוחדת של שני להיטים קולנועיים במיוחד עבור קהל חובבי המדע הבדיוני והפנטזיה של ישראל, וכולכם מוזמנים!  
 יוקרנו הסרטים "סקוט פילגרים נגד העולם" ("האקסים של החברה שלי") בבימויו של אדגר רייט, ו"הנוקמים" בבימויו של ג'וס ווידון.  
 בין הסרטים: "טעימות מעולמות" – לקראת כנס "עולמות 2013" שמתקיים ב-27-28 במרץ, נחשוף כמה טעימות מתוך ההקרנות והאירועים המרכזיים שיוצגו בכנס.  
 האירוע יתקיים ביום ו', 22/03/2013, בשעות 10:00-15:00. מומלץ בחום להזמין כרטיסים מראש. הכרטיסים הם עבור הפעילות כולה ומחירים 80 ש"ח לאורחים ו-65 ש"ח לחברי אגודה בהצגת כרטיס חבר בתוקף. להזמנת הכרטיסים היכנסו ל-<http://shop.sf-f.org.il>, הירשמו למערכת ובחרו באירוע עם התעריף המתאים. איסוף הכרטיסים המוזמנים יתבצע בדוכן הרישום בסמוך לכניסה למתחם הקולנוע. הנרשמים יקבלו מידע נוסף בסמוך לאירוע.

אין הפסקה במהלך הסרט והמקומות אינם מסומנים. לבריורים אתם מוזמנים לפנות לדוא"ל [cinema@sf-f.org.il](mailto:cinema@sf-f.org.il) או לדף האירוע בפייסבוק.

#### מועדון הקריאה של חודש מרץ יעסוק בספרו של אורסון סקוט קארד, המשחק של אנדר.

החודש יתקיימו מספר מפגשים של מועדון הקריאה:  
 המועדון בת"א יתקיים ביום חמישי, 21.3.13, בשעה 20:00, ב"קפה גרג", ויצמן 2, ת"א. מנחה: איתמר אולפינר.

מועדון נוסף בהנחיית איתמר אולפינר יתקיים במסגרת כנס עולמות, ביום רביעי, 27.3.13, בשעה 14:00, באשכול פיס, שפרינצק 4, ת"א (הכניסה מרחוב הארבעה).  
 המועדון בירושלים יתקיים ביום ראשון, 17.3.13, בשעה 19:00, בבית הקפה "קופי בין", רחוב יפו 34, ירושלים. מנחה: מריה ציבלין.

לצורך היערכות למספר המשתתפים, יש להירשם מראש דרך הדוא"ל של המנחה, ולציין לאיזה מפגש אתם מגיעים. כמו כן רצוי להביא למפגש עותק של הספר.

הכניסה חופשית ואינה כרוכה בתשלום, בחברות באגודה, או בהגעה למפגשים נוספים.  
 מועדון חודש אפריל יעסוק בספרו של ניל גיימן לעולם לא עולם.

לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה או לדף האגודה בפייסבוק.

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

חג פסח כשר ושמח
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<b>Have a Kosher and Happy Pesah</b>
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## Author Review by Sara Beck

### *The Oxford Historian Stories* of Connie Willis

Since Aharon Sheer dislikes time travel stories, it falls to me to present Connie Willis to the readers of this esteemed 'zine. Connie Willis is a popular and respected American Science Fiction writer who holds the record for Hugo and Nebula awards -- 11 and 7, respectively. Her *Historian* or *Oxford Historian* novels, novellas and short stories are set at the Oxford History Department around the year 2060. In 2060 historians conduct their research by time traveling into the past. The novels in the series are *Doomsday Book* (1992), *To Say Nothing of the Dog* (1998), and *Blackout/All Clear* (2010). (*Blackout/All Clear* is one novel that was split up into two by unusually unscrupulous publishers). Every one of these novels won a Hugo and two won the Nebula. Two novellas in this universe, "Fire Watch" (1983) and "The Winds of Marble Arch" (2000), have also won Hugos.

I actually agree with Aharon that most time travel stories do not, at the fundamental level, work. So why do I like these books so much? One reason for Willis' success is that her universe is rigged so that the silly and annoying paradoxes of time travel are not allowed to happen. The 'net' which sends the historians into the past calculates the effect of the trip on history and it will not open -- will simply not permit the passage -- if the result will be a noticeable change in reality. "We can't get within a year of Waterloo or Ford's Theater" as the head of the program puts it, and the first thing the discoverers of the 'net' tried was to try to kill Hitler; they couldn't. Nor is it possible to take

significant objects from the past into the future (although the meaning of 'significant' is stretched in *To Say Nothing of the Dog*). Time travel doesn't seem to have any practical application and there is not much popular interest in it; it is left to the historians.

The historians are not tourists but serious scholars who want to observe and understand the people -- the 'contemps' or 'contemporaries' -- of the past. They struggle for years to get their research trip ('drop', in the lingo of Oxford) approved and study the target era carefully. And when they arrive in the past they find they are not prepared for the important questions. How does it feel to see with your own eyes a legendary and beautiful building which was destroyed before you were born? (St. Paul's cathedral in "Fire Watch".) Or to meet an animal whose species is extinct in your day -- and to have no idea how to deal with it? (Cats are extinct in 2060; I am happy to report that they get over it.) Or to watch helpless while everyone around you dies of a plague which in your world could be cured in an hour -- and, even more horrible, to have known that the plague was coming? (*Doomsday Book*.) The importance of time travel in this world is not that it changes the past, but that it changes the traveler. To the point, sometimes, of shattering him.

Saying that the books concentrate on emotional and spiritual development does not mean that they lack drama. Time travel is not particularly safe; a visitor in the past can suffer and die

without making a paradox. Willis does not usually deal with confrontations between humans. Her nastiest characters are typically clerks or personnel managers, and the heroes don't battle them so much as try to avoid them. Even so these stories are full of violence and death. In *Doomsday Book* a historian is stranded in 1348 when a crisis in 2060 prevents her return to Oxford; she bonds with the 'contemps' and then the Black Death arrives. In *Blackout/All Clear* a team of historians sent to World War II discover that their scheduled return to the future does not work; they realize that they have done something to change history and the 'net' will keep them in the past until they put it right. In the meantime they have to survive the Blitz, when 'life and death is a matter of having gone back into your house for a minute to get your hat'. Even in *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, the most light-hearted of the series, the 'net' insists on repeatedly sending our heroes to Coventry Cathedral during the Luftwaffe bombing. Willis is very good at portraying great loss, and showing that loss is not less painful when it is impersonal. These books can be wrenching.

Willis, it is often said, writes 'science-fictional comedies of errors'. The time-

traveling heroes and heroines are usually missing meetings, losing important messages, getting grabbed for busy-work or sent on needless errands. Universities being natural settings for busy-work and needless errands, this ties into a running satire on academic life. Willis knows academia well, and her depiction of an inefficient, bumbling, and confused 2060 University is depressingly convincing. In the peaceful Victorian setting of *To Say Nothing of the Dog* the misunderstandings and misdirections are extremely funny. In *Blackout/All Clear* the missed connections intensify the feeling of desperation in World War II England, and in *Doomsday Book* the results are horrifying.

I hope I have interested even anti-time-travel readers in looking at these stories. If you are wondering where to start, they have no fixed order but "Fire Watch" is an excellent introduction. It can be found online at <http://www.infinityplus.co.uk/stories/firewatch.htm>

I will not say 'which is best' because they are too different to compare: *To Say Nothing of the Dog* is a romantic comedy caper, *Blackout/All Clear* a war story, and *Doomsday Book* a tragedy. I recommend them all.

### Book Review by Aharon Sheer

*Angelica* by Sharon Shinn (2003), 545 pages.

This is the fourth in a series of five books in the Samaria series. It is a strange book. Perhaps the sf background is explained in an earlier book.

Humans have settled the planet of Samaria. The heroine of this book, Susannah, is a member of a nomadic tribe, the Edori. There are also towns and villages. But in addition to the standard humans, there are also angels. Basically, humans themselves, the angels have wings and can fly. Not only

fly, but while flying they can even carry a non-winged human. This seems unlikely, as Earth birds have special light-weight bones which enable their wings to carry them. There's no indication these angels are different from other humans, other than their very strong wings. Carry another human? Not likely in my view.

People on Samaria are very religious. The angels pray to God for help when there are problems. If an

epidemic disease is attacking a group of people, the angels pray to God, and pills will fall from the sky which can cure the disease. Nice.

The angels of course are at the pinnacle of the religious. They have their aerie where they gather each day to sing and praise God. The angels love to sing, and sing every day.

The current Archangel is old. He will soon be replaced by a younger angel: Gaaron. But Gaaron needs a wife. So off he goes to the Oracle to tell him who his wife will be. Surprise! It's Susannah, of the nomadic tribe of Edori. Gaaron flies over there. The tribe sees him flying in, but

"...they were determined not to be amazed at the apparition forming overhead. And rapidly descending.

"It was an angel, a man, oddly dressed in scanty leather flying gear and appearing, from this angle, twice the size of any ordinary human. His wings, spread to their widest to cushion his landing, looked big enough to wrap twice around a standing tent. The sun was behind him, so it was hard to see more of him than his graceful, gorgeous shape, like something out of a legend or a ballad. 'And then an angel of the god appeared and said, "Do not be afraid...." And Susannah was not afraid, not exactly, but a little thrill of apprehension ran along her veins. Never in her life had she seen a sight so imposing and so magnificent as this: an angel landing beside her campfire at sunset and stepping forward, out of the mystery of his own shadow, to resolve into a grave and earnest man.'" [p. 78]

Gaaron tells her that she has been chosen, and flies her back to his aerie (the angels' "hold"). Shoshanah has a boy friend, an exciting unfaithful young man who attracts her very much. All of sudden she has to go and live with the

angels? A bit of a shock. But she has no choice to accept. God has chosen her!

Like the angels, Shoshanah loves to sing, has a beautiful voice, and can sing together with any group, matching harmonies and rhythm. So in this respect she will find her place among the angels. But we also find some taste of the past:

"The room was well-lit and paneled on one wall with metal and glass cabinets that housed complex, indecipherable parts. 'Those are the music machines, you use them to play the old masses,' Miriam said as Susannah moved closer to the wall to examine them. 'They're very strange, aren't they? When I was a child, I was afraid to touch them, but apparently they've been operating for more than two hundred years and they're impossible to break.'

"Susannah put a hand up to touch the glass, then the metal, cool and sleek and utterly foreign to her waking experience. And so unexpectedly familiar. 'I've seen these before,' Susannah murmured.

"Really? At Windy Point or Monteverde? I thought you'd never been inside a hold before.'

"Susannah shook her head. 'In my dreams.'

"There was a polite silence behind her, and she turned to find Miriam and Ahio both looking quizzical. She spread her hands to indicate that she could not explain very well.

"I have these -- these strange dreams now and then,' she said.

"I'm wandering through a place that's all white and silver and glass. I've never seen anything that even resembled the place of my dream -- except these machines. I know it sounds odd,' she added. 'It seems odd to me, too.'

"Well, maybe your mother brought you to an angel hold when you were a little baby, and you saw these rooms, and your mind never forgot it even though you didn't really remember it,' Miriam said.

"Or maybe somehow my spirit knew that someday I would be among the angels, and it prepared

me for that moment with those dreams,' Susannah said. 'That's what the Edori would tell me.'" [p. 121-122]

She will learn to love Gaaron – in time. While I somewhat enjoyed this book, I would not read any others in the series.

### Quote of the Month:

"Another expansion of our vista comes from the startling similarities between identical twins, who share the genetic recipes that build the mind. Their minds are astonishingly alike, and not just in gross measures like IQ and personality traits like neuroticism and introversion. They are alike in talents such as spelling and mathematics, in opinions on questions such as apartheid, the death penalty, and working mothers, and in their career choices, hobbies, vices, religious commitments, and tastes in dating. Identical twins are far more alike than fraternal twins, who share only half their genetic recipes, and most strikingly, they are almost as alike when they are reared apart as when they are reared together. Identical twins separated at birth share traits like entering the water backwards and only up to their knees, sitting out elections because they feel insufficiently informed, obsessively counting everything in sight, becoming captain of the volunteer fire department, and leaving little love notes around the house for their wives.

"People find these discoveries arresting, even incredible. The discoveries cast doubt on the autonomous 'I' that we all feel hovering above our bodies, making choices as we proceed through life and affected only by our past and present environments. Surely the mind does not come equipped with so many small parts that it could predestine us to flush the toilet before and after using it or to sneeze playfully in crowded elevators, to take two other traits shared by identical twins reared apart. But apparently it does."

From *How the Mind Works* by Steven Pinker, 1997, p. 20

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