



SCIENCE-Fiction Fanzine

Vol. XXX, No. 05; May 2018

חדשות האגודה – אפריל 2018 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

- המועדון בירושלים יעסוק בספר " צד שמאל של החושך" מאת אורסולה לה-גוויין שהלכה לעולמה בינואר האחרון (ינשוף, 2005). המועדון יתקיים ביום שלישי, 29.5, בשעה 20:00, בחליט'תה, בית תה ירושלמי, רחוב הלל 6, ירושלים. מנחה: גלי אחישוב.
- המועדון בת"א: יעסוק בספר "ילדי בית הזכוכית" מאת יעל פורמן (מודן, 2011). המועדון יתקיים ביום חמישי, 24.5, בשעה 19:30 בבית פרטי בת"א, באיזור הטיילת ומגדל האופרה, כתובת מדויקת תינתן לנרשמות ולנרשמים למועדון. מנחה: דפנה קורש

***** חדש: - מועדון בחיפה: יעסוק בספר "אבק כוכבים" מאת ניל גיימן (אופוס, 2000). המועדון יתקיים ביום רביעי, 23.5, בשעה 19:30 בבית פרטי ברחוב אבא הלל סילבר בחיפה. כתובת מדויקת תינתן לנרשמות ולנרשמים למועדון. מנחה: ענת חיימין.
כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים בלוח האירועים (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד)
או לדף האגודה בפייסבוק. לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה
Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>**

This month's roundup:

- Book review: Orson Scott Card's "Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus" (1996)
 - Also, sorry, no "Sheer Science" this month – hopefully, something dedicated, next time
- Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

Real Reader Rebounds:

LB: About this year's CyberCozen 30th anniversary and other stuff

Oh, that sounds dirty: your fanzine is rated "XXX". You naughty boy, Leybl.

Naturally I am kidding. A quick mental computation means this is, in whole numbers, the 352nd issue of *CyberCozen*, which is an impressive number. Keep up the good work. As usual, this latest issue is full of interesting material, notably the notification of the upcoming publication of *Zion's Fiction*. I love that play on words, too. This is a book that I will probably get not only for the fiction, but for the introduction by Robert Silverberg. It all sounds very interesting and I look forward to seeing it.

You know, I have yet to watch *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*, despite it being broadcast dozens of times on our satellite service. Yes, it's recorded, too, but for some reason I haven't sat down to just watch the fershlugginer movie! One of these days, I will.

Rotten Tomatoes does fun movie reviews. I have my personal listing of top ten bad sf movies. Some of the titles on that list are *This Island Earth*, *Voyage to a Prehistoric Planet*, *The Creature from 20,000 Fathoms*, and *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*. Making lists like this are fun. What are some of yours, Leybl?

Well, for now that should do it for this letter. As always, thank you for publishing this fanzine, and may you have a good year.

All the best,

John P., USA

LB: "Worst SF movies"? I tend to erase them from memory ©, but "Death Race 2000" would definitely be on that list. **Contrast this:** <https://thestacker.com/stories/219/100-worst-sci-fi-films-all-time> **with this:** <https://www.msn.com/en-us/movies/gallery/100-worst-sci-fi-movies-of-all-time/ss-BBK261D>

Science/Space Museums anyone?

Just in from Cathy P-L:

The Montreal Science Fiction and fantasy association (MONSFFA) June outing will be visiting Ottawa's all-new Canada Science and Technology Museum with dazzling, immersive exhibits and some familiar favourites – including the Crazy Kitchen and giant steam locomotives. <https://ingeniumcanada.org/scitech/index.php>

The Canada Science and Technology Museum is thrilled to announce a BRICK-buster exhibition – coming to Ottawa from May 16 to September 3, 2018.

Named one of CNN's Top Ten "Global Must-See Exhibitions," THE ART OF THE BRICK exhibit by artist Nathan Sawaya is a critically acclaimed collection of inspiring artworks is made exclusively from one of the most recognizable toys in the world: the LEGO® brick. From child's toy to sophisticated art form and beyond, the world's largest display of LEGO art ever features original pieces as well as re-imagined versions of the world's most famous art masterpieces like Van Gogh's *Starry Night* and Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* as well as a gallery showcasing an innovative, multimedia collection of LEGO brick infused photography produced in tandem with award-winning photographer Dean West.

**Just in, read it in the Yiddish "Forverts" online
Moscow Space Museum Has Re-opened**

It had been shut for many years because after the collapse of the Soviet Union some crucial objects were stolen.



12th of April saw the re-opening of the Cosmos-museum in Moscow. In addition to Putin, the first woman in space (1963) former Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova (81 yrs. old) was present. The museum is part of a large park-like complex of museums about national 'accomplishments', with many exhibitions and entertainment centers – possibly similar to the Washington Smithsonian complex of multiple museums – but not privately funded, instead, planned in the 1930's by Stalin.

LB: Unfortunately no time to translate the entire article by Yoel Matyeev, but if you click individual words, you will get a translation, or grab the whole thing and run it through Google translate. It comes out not too badly. At least you can 'understand' the nice pictures 😊

Full Yiddish article here:

<http://yiddish.forward.com/articles/209269/fascinating-moscow-space-museum-has-re-opened>

While we're on the subject - Some more fun from the Websites:

Have money – will travel

Blast Off to a Luxury Hotel in Space (for \$9.5 Million) – Angela Moscaritolo

Do you have an adventurous spirit and some serious money to burn? A company called Orion Span wants to organize your next vacation—to outer space.

For just \$9.5 million, Orion Span will take you on a 12-day journey 200 miles above the Earth's surface to Aurora Station, what it's calling "the first luxury hotel in space."

The company expects to open the hotel in late 2021 and host its first guests in 2022. When operational, the hotel will host six people at a time, including two crew members.

To read more, see:

<https://www.space.com/39956-jeff-bezos-picard-best-star-trek-captain.html#>

**So that's how it all began: with Sputnik 1!
How Space Exploration Has Evolved Over the Years – Joel Hruska**

On October 4 1957, the Soviet Union made history when it lobbed a beach ball with four antennas stuck on it into low earth orbit. As far as scientific payloads are concerned, the 23-inch diameter sphere didn't do much beyond transmitting a beeping sound that could be picked up by amateur radio enthusiasts. But Sputnik 1's impact on the space race, American technological leadership, and the long-term trajectory of our own space exploration program can't be overstated. In the 60 years since Sputnik 1 orbited our pale blue dot, we've pushed the envelope of what's technologically possible in ways that the Soviets could scarcely have conceived of in 1957.

To read more, see:

<https://www.extremetech.com/extreme/268268-how-space-exploration-has-evolved-over-the-years>

Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus

BOOK REVIEWED by Leybl Botwinik



- Orson Scott Card, Author
- Tor Books – copyright 1996
- 398 pages + about 3 pages of sources (including annotations)

Before we tell you about this book, some pre-requisite history and time-travel pointers.

A) How to change history:

Step 1: Read/study history (Optional – but good to have)

Step 2: Watch history unfolding in real-time (Optional – but good to have)

Step 3: Cause things to happen in history that will affect the timeline

Step 4: (Not really a step – but the result of Step 3) If you're at the wrong end of history, you will probably disappear after Step 3 – Else you are now part of a new timeline.

B) Notes:

- A) Step 1 refers to finding all the available research and resource material so you can become acquainted with everything related to that period in history – or point in time – that you want to affect. This implies gathering material from public or personal libraries and bookshops. If practicable – interview anyone who actually lived through the period in history and may be able to shed some more light on the related subjects.
- B) Step 2 is possible only if you have some way to peer into/monitor past events (technological [1], crystal ball, time tunnel, etc.)
 [1] – In one of the early Fantastic Four issues (I can't seem to locate it, but sometime in the 1960s), the comic book creative team of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby came up with Reed Richard's (Mr. Fantastic's) time-probing-reconstruction device: You would walk into a room (carefully, so as not to affect the air/heat currents too much) and turn on the machine, that would analyze the air and heat-signatures of whoever was recently in the room. It would then generate a series of silent 3-D moving images that reconstructed what had happened a few minutes earlier...
- C) Step 3 in order to effect a change: contact someone in the past and tell them or show them something that will cause them to do something other than what they originally did in history. This is similar to Step 2 – but you must have some means/device/magic power/etc. to be able to pass something into the past, from a sound or image, to an object, or even a live person.
- D) Step 4 – actually, as a direct consequence of Step 3 – implies some sort of event that did not historically take place, and will cause the original timeline to diverge. Thus, depending on the butterfly/domino effect of the initial change, there may be almost no effect on you personally or on society in general (a very minor, even negligent divergence) or – at the other extreme – the divergence may cause monumental (even cataclysmic) changes in time – such that you and/or your originating 'world/time' may cease to exist.

- E) Of course, what has been described in Step 4, is a very crude and unscientific explanation – there are so many other factors involved – but it will serve our purposes, for now.

And now, on to the review:

Orson Scott Card (of “Ender's Game” fame), winner of both a Hugo and a Nebula science fiction award, published this story more than 20 years ago (in 1996). His novel is still so relevant, that it should be compulsory reading for at least high-school level kids, for either History class, or some other relevant and mandatory Social Studies course in the school’s curriculum.

Plot background:

Two worlds are presented in parallel. The significant one – at first – is the future one. It takes place sometime after a cataclysmic event that wiped out 90% of mankind. Instead of 7 Billion people living on the planet, there are only about 700 Million. Mankind has finally learned a lesson from History albeit a little too late: study (and learn from) history to avoid repeating mistakes – and has therefore set up a special organization called “Pastwatch”, to study and analyze history (more below).

The second one, is the world timeline period in history when Christopher Columbus plans to make his world-changing exploratory voyage to the Far East by sailing westward, and instead “discovers America” (actually some islands off the coast, in the Caribbean, but still the jumping stone for ‘changing’ what the Euro-Asians knew of the world – and also what the Pan-American natives knew of the world.

One might even dub this historical milestone, as the “moment of the clash of continents” – and all the

people and societies that would be affected by Columbus’ historical voyage, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

One other factor plays a major ‘role’ in the story: Christianity, as it was being practiced at the time (in the 1490’s).

The Plot:

Card takes us to the future, where humankind is recuperating from a major human-made catastrophe that has wiped out almost everyone. The survivors (just a few generations afterward) have developed a technology to peer into the past. Imagine a drone flying around in your town, possibly in your home, spying on you.

Of course, the image resolution and features on the early models are not so great. As newer versions of the technology are introduced, the observers can pick up more: e.g. better quality pictures, better quality sound, etc.

As the researchers are learning, they begin to understand the scale of the disaster that has befallen humankind. According to their calculations, they forecast that there is no hope that humans will be able to survive for very long on the planet. In other words, the eco-system has been so badly damaged, that life on Earth is doomed.

One of the research families, discovers some very interesting phenomena while studying Christopher Columbus and his time period (I won’t divulge what – read the

book ©), and there begins a race against time to pursue a lead that may be able to save humankind.

Jumping back to the second layer in the book, Card takes us on a personal quest, accompanying Christopher Columbus in all the stages of his plan to reach the Far East, by taking a fleet of ships westward. This part of the story is very interesting from a historical point of view. Card's portrayals of the events leading to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain permitting and financing Columbus to outfit three ships and set sail – seems very authentic.

Being a bit of a history buff, I personally enjoyed it and also learned some fun facts. As a bonus, Card has added a short annotated bibliography at the end of the novel with references and notes about his sources for the historical descriptions of the personages and events surrounding Columbus and the famous voyage.

As mentioned, a third factor – Christianity – plays a signature role in the book. Columbus' story is told in the 3rd person, with Card as the narrator. However, we are also privy to all his 'thoughts' and feelings.

According to Card, Columbus did not only want to find a quick trade route to the Orient (that is, for purely

business/financial purposes), but he apparently also wanted to spread Christianity to the 'non-believers' (the Hindus and Orientals he was planning to meet up with). This became one of his key arguments to Ferdinand and Isabella, for taking on the dangerous voyage: The financial riches they would reap would also finance the retaking of Constantinople from the Muslim usurpers – and then on to Jerusalem (i.e. the start of a new Crusade).

Now, what the future Pastwatchers want to do, is influence Columbus to rethink his priorities, and most importantly, not let him return 'triumphant' to Spain. This would, according to Card – with some subtle and less subtle Pastwatch intervention – change the tide of history and give the natives of south and central America (Pan-Americans) an opportunity to reorganize themselves into a world power in their own right, thus preventing the spread of the 'wrong Christianity': where missionaries would convert the natives, while also making slaves of them.

(Pastwatch also solves the 'epidemic' factor that had wiped out hundreds of thousands of the natives when they contracted European diseases and had no natural immunity to them).

... of course, there is a lot more to the plot, but some of the ideas and 'technologies' used by the future Pastwatchers, though relatively simple, would probably to 'do the trick', assuming that the natives actually do what they planned for them to do.

As mentioned earlier, Pastwatch had come to the conclusion that the course of human history – the way it happened – would ultimately lead to the demise of humanity. They must therefore decide, if to chance changing history by intervening at a key point in time (i.e. Columbus) and hopefully the world will change for the better (hence the book's sub-title: "the Redemption of Christopher Columbus" – that Card selected) – or let history follow its current path.

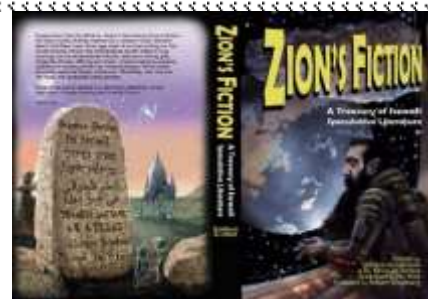
If so, it would also mean 'wiping out/clean' all of the timeline until their time, and resetting history. Would they / should they sacrifice their existence for the sake of the rest of human history (and future). After consulting first among themselves and then putting it to a global vote, they decide to go for it and set everything in motion by sending back three of their own to change history (as we/they know it).

Does it work? Will they be successful?
... read the book

Addendum: Years ago, in my teens – that would be about in the 1970's – I read an alternative history where the Mayans(?) were never conquered by Spain/Portugal and had even developed some primitive coal-energy based technology. If I'm not mistaken, this was because Europe had lost 2/3rds of its population, and not just 1/3 to the Black Plague – changing history. Unfortunately, I can't remember the book's title or author's name.

Great news for SciFi in Israel (and the universe)! Zion's Fiction is a go – launch date is September 2018

An English-language anthology of Israeli science fiction stories, titled Zion's Fiction, edited by Sheldon Teitelbaum and Emanuel Lottem and illustrated by Avi Katz, is due to be published in the USA by the Mandel Vilar Press publishing house. It includes a **Foreword by Robert Silverberg (!)**, an Introduction on the history of SF&F in Israel by the editors, and an Afterword by Aharon Hauptman.



And, one more for the road – thanks to Cathy P-L:

A ROBOT DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE: ASSEMBLING AN IKEA CHAIR WITHOUT HAVING A MELTDOWN

AND JUST LIKE THAT, humanity draws one step closer to the singularity, the moment when the machines grow so advanced that humans become obsolete: A [robot](#) has learned to autonomously assemble an Ikea chair without throwing anything or cursing the family dog.

Researchers [report today](#) in Science Robotics that they've used entirely off-the-shelf parts—two industrial robot arms with force sensors and a 3-D camera—to piece together one of those [Stefan Ikea chairs](#) we all had in college before it collapsed after two months of use. From planning to execution, it only took 20 minutes, compared to the human average of a lifetime of misery. It may all seem trivial, but this is in fact a big deal for robots, which struggle mightily to manipulate objects in a world built for human hands.

See: <https://www.wired.com/story/a-robot-does-the-impossible-assembling-an-ikea-chair-without-having-a-meltdown/>

We'd love to hear your thoughts on the above topics and with your OK, we may publish them!

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