

SCIENCE-Fiction Fanzine

Vol. XXXII, No. 06; June 2020

The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy 2020 תל אביב: המועדון יעסוק בספר "שם הרוח" מאת פטריק רות'פס (אופוס, 2010). המועדון יתקיים ביום חמישי, תל אביב: המועדון יעסוק בספר "שם הרוח" מאת פטריק רות'פס (אופוס, 2010). המועדון יתקיים ביום חמישי, 25.6.20, בשעה 19:30 מיקום (זום או פיזי) יקבע בהמשך עפ"י המצב מנחה: דפנה קירש. אירוע הפייסבוק. ירושלים: לפרטים על המפגשים הבאים ניתן להצטרף לקבוצת הפייסבוק <u>מועדון הקריאה הירושלמי של האגודה</u>. ניתן גם ליצור קשר במייל עם מרכזת המועדון בירושלים - <u>גלי אחיטוב</u>, ולהצטרף לקבוצת הוואטסאפ של המועדון.

כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים בלוח האירועים (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד) לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף ל<u>רשימת התפוצה</u> או ב<u>דף האגודה בפייסבוק.</u> Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: http://www.sf-f.org.il

This month's roundup:

- Part XI of the Time-Space series: Skinjobs & Sleeves (about living forever)
- Special guest contributor Eli Eshed (in Hebrew): Love and Robots Part II (Conclusion)
- Our usual, interesting tidbits from various websites will return next time
- Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

Sorry for not writing in time for the May issue! I spotted a new Andromeda book on the Internet - commissioned by the Crichton estate/foundation in honor of the 50th anniversary of the classic Andromeda Strain novel, which was later made into a movie. I recommend searching the various reviews, both *YouTube* videos as well as newspaper-type written articles that enthusiastically endorse the latest story. They are predicting that it will be made into a motion picture as well. Apparently the new author employed the latest technology, and uses both outer space and earth as settings for the action. He also makes use of a number of characters, which undoubtedly add to the plot.

- The Andromeda Evolution by Daniel Wilson. (hilarious Washington Post review) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb0jv_vNbV0
- Book trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLR0Sk Lrs4

Gary

The most SF fun I've had in a great long time:

Montreal Science Fiction and Fantasy Association – (MONSFFA) DIY Virtual Meeting Event

WOW – I'm glad I got a chance to see this.

Cathy Palmer-Lister sent me some links to their monthly meeting that had to be done virtually, because of the COVID-19/CORONA epidemic^(*), they couldn't meet face-to-face.

Instead, the team of very skilled, talented, and imaginative members put together a series of activities, quizzes, parody songs, etc. to lighten up the mood and keep members somewhat occupied and entertained SF-wise. There is a nice list of recommended SF reading and viewing, and a quiz of short sound clips from SF movies (I failed miserably ... - but nevertheless enjoyed it tremendously - be http://www.monsffa.ca/?p=10111

As part of the virtual meeting, MONSFFA member Sylvain St-Pierre prepared a fascinating presentation "SF&F PLAGUES AND DISEASES". He first give us a historical run through famous epidemics from 400 BC to today, then science fiction and fantasy stories from the 19th and 20th centuries, including several in French and even one in Italian.

An incredible job, Sylvain! (apparently part I of several) See http://www.monsffa.ca/?p=10226

I'd like to take this opportunity to express my concern and sorrow over the way Montrealers have been suffering due to the epidemic. It's currently one of the hardest hit North American cities. Tragic and sad. Stay strong and healthy, my friends!

Time and Space # XI:

Skinjobs & Sleeves - Real Out-of-Body Experiences

What if you could live forever? Doesn't this raise you to a god-like level: An Immortal? Though your physical body may eventually break down, your spirit lives on (or so they say). That part of you never dies.

But how do you contain it, and propagate it (pass it on) after a normal lifespan?...

Some thoughts on several related SF TV series and movies - by Leybl Botwinik

The search for eternal life, immortality, is part and parcel one of humanity's most passionate desires and daring dreams. We find mention of the aspiration in the very first pages of the Bible: The "Tree of Life" in the Garden of Eden. We learn of different cultures and religions that believe in the afterlife or reincarnation. Stories abound of resurrection or the magic of some life-giving elixir, the so-called "Fountain of Youth" that is yet another instance of Mankind's wish to 'beat-the-clock', or at least enjoy some form of longevity and extended life.

The world of science fiction also has numerous stories of methods to avoid the Grim Reaper, or at least of trying to keep a step or two ahead of him. In fact, the imagination has taken it several levels forward: the longevity of thinking machines, as well – but we'll get to that in a moment or two.

In addition to the bible story's Garden of Eden and its Tree of Life, myths and legends have recounted tales of other mystical and mythological places with such exotic names as El Dorado and Shangri-La. Some of these places are not just cities or worlds of riches and wonder (https://www.theclever.com/15-legendary-locations-that-may-have-never-existed/). Apparently, some also offer their inhabitants instant longevity (https://rachelmeetschina.com/2019/10/07/shangri-la-the-mystical-paradise-in-china/). But who wants to be cooped up their entire lifetime (actually, for eternity) in the same place?

Science, medicine, and particularly SF have suggested various long sought after solutions to let us live longer. Some of the methods:

- 1. Suspended animation Doesn't really make you live longer, though
- 2. Brain transplants Already outdated and inherently dangerous and unstable
- 3. Cloning Mostly passé, but still an option
- 4. Uploading and then downloading brain scans and such This seems to be the latest and greatest of the scientific techniques to ensure longevity

Clone drone

The most fun SF has had is with methods 3 and 4 – with all the varied medical, moral, and ethical implications – on both sides of the scale.

I remember an old Arnold Schwartznegger film from the year 2000 "*The 6th Day*" (which is linked to the biblical story, by the way), where he is cloned by mistake (sort of – you have to see the movie). The point here, though, is that the clone – assuming that it has its original's memories, feelings, past experiences, and so on – does not have **precisely all** of those memories and feelings of the original. The instant that the clone comes into existence, it diverges, creating a situation like that of two or more witnesses who were present at the site of an event, and each telling a (slightly) different story. This situation is particularly true if you start the cloning process on one date-time, for example a few months or even a few hours earlier, and you meet your clone some time later. Although your pasts are



exactly the same (also tastes and characteristics), in the time that has passed, there is a growing gap in the experiences of the two.

Which takes us to the futuristic possibility of scanning a person's brain patterns, thoughts, etc. storing (uploading) them in some database or storage medium, and then downloading that person's conscience or essence into a new "container".

Beam me to bits, Scotty

Let's step back a moment to the year 1966. Apparently, this is the **real** way that the Star Trek transporter works: It takes you apart (the scanner essentially slices and dices you as it's storing your image, and then rebuilds a new you at the target site, implanting you with the saved data). I believe this is the way that Capt. James T. Kirk (William Shatner) got split into two beings – one "Good" and one "Bad" by a defective transporter in the classic episode "*The Enemy Within*" (1966).



There was also a Star Trek book I remember reading where the transporter created two Capt. Kirks, one of who later became the consort of a female Romulan battleship commander.

We now leap forward again, about 47 years later, which takes us to the 2013 movie "*The Congress*" (– that deserves a special review of its own, someday). Without going into the entire plot, the main character (actress Robin Wright actually playing herself) is scanned externally only, standing, moving, and particularly in voice and facial expressions, to build a virtual copy of her. The copy is then used in computer generated images within movies – so that the 'actor' remains forever young, and can be manipulated in any which way, situation, etc. (BTW – highly recommended viewing).





In the 2014 movie *Transcendence*, to save her dying husband's "essence", a bio-engineer (played by Rebecca Hall) and her partner, scan and upload his (played by Johnny Depp) brain into a computer (see my review of the movie in CyberCozen November 2015).

The big issue here, is that the human essence is combined with an advanced and highly sophisticated AI program, making it difficult to determine if the mind in the computer is really 'human' or not.

And here's one that's perfect for our trying times

In the TV series "*Dark Matter*" (2015-2017), there is a novel way to take a vacation (described in CyberCozen of Dec 2017). Basically, you get into a pod and are placed into a form of suspended animation for the duration of the "trip". You are scanned and then a disposable clone, at your remote vacation site (perhaps hundreds of light years away), in an equivalent pod, is sent all of your 'data'. This disposable clone or simulacrum 'wakes up' in the pod, believing it's you, and experiences the vacation for you – exactly as you would behave, while you are safely ensconced in that pod at the base station. In this way, you can't get hurt, drown, injured if mugged, get food poisoning, contract a disease, and so forth.



When the vacation is over, your duplicate, somewhere far, far away, returns to the pod at the remote station. Its memories (experiences) are uploaded and sent to you, where you receive them, wake up, and feel like you've just returned from your trip — with all of the clone's memories (the clone subsequently disintegrates). The only risk you that take, is that if your clone doesn't make it back to the pod at the other end, you never get the vacation 'experience' fed back to you. This method is also good for long distance business meetings where you want to be face-to face with your clients.

In theory, you should be able to leave the pod after the initial upload-download, let your clone enjoy the event, and come back to the base station when the time is up, for the reverse upload-download from the remote clone. A rather timesaving activity. You can both work and enjoy a vacation in parallel (pays the bills, I think).

Whatever the case may be, this would be perfect for our COVID-19/CORONA times ©.

Is that really me?

In the past couple of months, I've had the opportunity to catch up on some SF viewing, both of which inspired me to write up this article.

The first – that I'll cover afterwards, is the 4-season *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009) – and the second, is the first season of *Altered Carbon* (2018-). What they both have in common is the concept of transferring a person's essence from one "body" to the next. This is correct as concerns Altered Carbon, and for Battlestar Galactica, about transferring artificial intelligence (AI) from one 'container' to the next.

Stack 'em up & Sleeve labour

Altered Carbon takes place in the far future. The first season takes place mostly on some planet whose main city reminds me of the dark and crowded streets and alleyways of Blade Runner. There are various flashbacks to other places and other times (such as when our main protagonist was a child). Without going into the entire plot, I want to just focus on the issue at hand.

After generations – probably hundred of years, Mankind has developed a way to keep people alive way past normal lifespans, by the use of two technologies "Stacks" and "Sleeves".

A stack is about the size of a poker chip and is an implant that is made in a child at the back of the neck, grafted onto the spine. It continually records a person's entire life. This is reminiscent of what we saw in Robin William's "*The Final Cut*" (reviewed in the December 2014 issue of Cybercozen).

If the person dies prematurely, or even at a ripe old age, the stack can be removed and implanted into a new body, and the person (more correctly, the 'essence' of the personna) is then resurrected.

A sleeve is basically a cloned body into which a person's 'essence' (like what we discussed before) is scanned, uploaded into some cloud or server somewhere, and with all its memories intact, transferred (downloaded) into a new cloned body.

Here are some of the issues and complexities of the sleeve:

- 1) You have to be pretty ('filthy'?) rich to afford this, particularly for two reasons:
 - a. You have to periodically back up your memories (costly service, but probably not as much as the next part), else you might 'lose' something important.
 - b. Typically, you store extra bodies for safekeeping to be unsealed and 'revived/resurrected' as required. Storage can be rather costly. There is a company that has a monopoly on this business.



- 2) You can buy and sell sleeves and if you want, you can go over to a different one and be a body you never were before (such as a man's essence inhabiting a female sleeve, or an athlete, etc.)
- 3) There are also synthetic body sleeves but not recommended. You could probably use one as a 'temp' body, just like you can get a temp car until your car gets back from the mechanic/body shop after a light accident
- 4) It's against the law to double-sleeve, for reasons similar to the double-clone dilemma in **The 6th Day:** Which one of the sleeves is the 'real' person and which is the copy? This is actually easy to determine. However, since people have been using sleeves for several hundred years, the original body sometimes no longer exists. So multiple sleeves are all equal, and since this is illegal, only one can stay alive. The conscience of any other duplicates must be erased On the positive side, for environmental conservation purposes, you can reuse the sleeve...
- 5) Poor people sometimes 'sell themselves' (the nice phrase is 'contract themselves out') as down payment until they've worked off the cost of the sleeve. The **real** term for this is (semi-)slave labour including for sexual favours...

For more info, see:

"https://www.thrillist.com/entertainment/nation/netflix-altered-carbon-terms-sleeves-envoys"

The long and the short of it is: People with money have become like gods ... which takes us back to some of the opening thoughts of this article: To be immortal. And to be immortal often leads to the ability to amass wealth and especially power, and be cut off from the 'normal' masses in ivory towers (like in the TV series) – and possibly even be worshipped like some god.

From Toaster to Skinjob

In the **Battlestar Galactica** TV series, Cylons are robots created by man in some far distant universe of 12 colonies that are totally cut off from Earth (we are a legendary 13th colony) that have revolted, and made some sort of conscious decision to wipe out all of mankind from the universe. If you are familiar with the original series of 21 episodes from 1978 (as I am) things were pretty straightforward back then: the humans were the good guys, and the robots were the bad guys. Fairly plastic, and in retrospect, seemingly written for children's consumption.

The new series (four seasons, from 2004-2009) is much, much deeper. It has many adult moments and generally not suited for kids—what you could term "Viewer discretion advisable". Its four seasons are chock full of intrigue, politics, action, love, betrayal, etc. with plenty of twists and turns. The team working on this did a fair to excellent job and I'm glad I watched all 74 episodes. However, we're not here to discuss the show's plot, except for one aspect of it.



The main difference between the old and the new series is, that in addition to the metallic Cylon robot warriors, the Cylons developed super-advanced cyborg-like robots whose metabolism almost completely mimics a human's. They are completely organic – no mechanical parts or electronics, and yet they are not human. It's not exactly clear throughout the seasons how they are created (what their base material is), but it must be something akin to cloning. These level2 Cylons behave just like humans and bleed and die like them (though slightly faster and stronger) and SPOILER: some of them can even reproduce – so it's near impossible to tell the

difference.

When the humans discover that there are some Cylons among them, they come up with a new derogatory term. The originals were referred to as 'toasters', but the newly discovered humanoid Cylons are dubbed 'skinjobs'.

Now here's the interesting catch: the humans in *Altered Carbon* (at least most of the rich ones) strive to be like gods, living up high in their mount Olympus-like towers, 'far from the Madding crowd'. Humans want to be like their Creator....

In *Battlestar Galactica* the humanoid Cylons want to be human... They actually plan on exterminating ALL humans and replacing them with their more or less 10 models (they've duplicated themselves in the millions). However, their AI 'minds', for the most part, see themselves as human (or maybe more-than-human).



When one of these Cylons is "killed" its conscience and memory is instantly uploaded into a special home base station, and then downloaded into a new copy (duplicate). In this way, there are multiple copies of the same 10 or so Cylon models walking around at any given moment.... Cool ...

So here are my closing thoughts:

Humans seem to want to be like gods (in the past, Pharaohs and other kings and dictators thought themselves to be like gods, or at least 'appointed' by God). Robots want to be like Humans or to replace them (maybe like CroMagnon replaced the Neanderthal?). The 10 of them would also never die, but keep transferring their 'conscience' into new Cylon bodies. But wait, humans (that's us) are basically wet-bag containers with a conscience. Doesn't that make us like Cylons? And when we want to propagate, our own mechanism, DNA/genes, get passed on to the next generation...

So, there's nothing new under the sun ... except, maybe the ability to be immortal. According to the Bible, God kicked us out of the Garden of Eden before we could eat from the Tree of Life. He did, however, give us the ability to reproduce and propagate (be fruitful and multiply) ... Do we really want to be immortal? I personally have plans for the next few hundred years (I should live that long).

We always (or at least often tend to) complain that there aren't enough hours in the day, days in the week, etc. but immortality?... All good things eventually come to an end.

And in Heinlein's "immortal" words, from the movie Starship Troopers:

Do you want to live forever?

(Did H, write that? A US Marine said it in 1918. See "https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Daly")

Love, Sex, and Robots (Part 2) - Eli Eshed

Interview with MOR

The article is in Hebrew, so I'll give you a (very) shortened version of the Questions and Answers (Q&A) from Eli Eshed's interview of Mor:

Mor Hanai is the organizer and artistic director of the "Beer Sheva festival of short film", as well as the founder and CEO of the Negev Film and Arts Promotion Foundation. Eli asked her Q: how she came up with the idea. A: It was a final project for her course at Sapirfilm school. Just as I got a hug from my grandma during a visit, the idea popped into my mind – totally unconnected...Q: Were you inspired by some SF story? A: I'm not really into SF, but like the idea of using technology to tell stories of daily/real life. Q: you're planning a longer version – what's to be in it? A: I want to expand the set of characters and get deeper into the plot.

Eli continues with some thoughts of his own about the short film, and with some related links.

מור חנאי היא יזמת ומנהלת אמנותית של "פסטיבל הסרט הקצר באר שבע". מייסדת ומנכ"לית הקרן לקידום הקולנוע והאמנויות בנגב.

:להלן ראיון עם מור חנאי

אלי: מתי ובאיזו מסגרת נוצר "יום העידכונים?

מור: "יום העידכונים" התחיל כפרויקט גמר של סיום התואר בקולנוע במכללת ספיר. ביקשו מאיתנו להגיש סינופסיס של הרעיון עד סוף הסמסטר, ולא עלה לי כלום. זה הטריד אותי מאוד, וכל מה שעלה לי לא מצא חן בעיניי. עד שבסופ"ש אחד זה קרה ברגע הכי לא קשור – אני אצל ההורים שלי במושב, סבתא שלי בדיוק נכנסת, מתקרבת אליי לתת לי חיבוק, כשבדיוק אז עולה לי הדבר הזה לראש, וכמו שמרצה שלי אמר לי פעם, המוזה מגיעה לביקור של כמה

שניות, צריך לדעת ללכוד אותה על הדף. עשיתי פרסה ורצתי למחשב למעלה תוך שאני צועקת לה "מצטערת אני לא יכולה עכשיו" (מתרגלים אליי בסוף), ופשוט הקאתי אל הדף את המילים "בעולם שבו ניתן לברוא לעצמך את בן הזוג המושלם..." ככה נולד הרעיון לסרט. אני מראה את הדף הראשוני הזה בהרצאות על הסרט וכל פעם מופתעת מחדש כמה המסמך הזה היה קרוב למוצר הסופי.

אלי: מאיפה ההשראה לסיטואציה הזאת שאותה תיארת בצורה משכנעת כל כך? יש סיפורי מדע בדיוני או סרטים ששימשו לך השראה?

מור: היית אולי מצפה שאני אהיה חובבת מד"ב גדולה אבל לא. זה מצחיק כי אנשים שפוגשים אותי אומרים לי "את לא נראית כמו מישהי שעושה מד"ב". אני לא בטוחה אם זו מחמאה או לא. החלק שאני אוהבת במד"ב הוא השימוש



באמצעי הטכנולוגיה בשביל להגיד משהו על העולם של היום. בעבודה על הסרט לקחנו השראה מהסרט הנפלא "היא" של ספייק ג'ונס, הצבעים והארט שלו היו מאוד אורגניים, מחוברים, ואפילו קצת וינטג', והרגשתי שאנחנו כחברה הולכים לשם, ולא לסרטי המד"ב של האסתטיקה המינימליסטית ששומרת על מראה נקי. עניין אותי להראות עולם שהוא מצד אחד מאוד חם ואנושי באסתטיקה שלו, ומצד שני אין שם מקום לכל מה שהוא לא "מושלם", ואז אתה מתחיל להבין שגם המושלם משנה כל הזמן את הצורה שלו, כי אין באמת דבר כזה. אדם, שמגלם בכישרון רב מיכאל מושונוב, ממשיך באובססיביות לשנות שוב ושוב את בת הזוג שלו כך שתתאים לו, מבלי לשנות את עצמו.

אלי: כמה זמן עבדת עליו?

מור: לקח שלוש שנים מהכתיבה עד שהוא הוקרן לראשונה (אציין שזהו פרק זמן שבמהלכו אפשר ליצור סרטים באורך מלא.....)

אלי: מה את מתכננת כעת לגבי הגירסה הארוכה, במה היא תהיה שונה?

מור: אורי סיון, שליווה את הסרט הקצר ומלווה גם את הפיתוח לסרט מלא. היה אומר לי בפגישות תסריט של הקצר "את זה תשמרי לגירסה הארוכה". מראש הקצר היה סוג של סרט ארוד מכווץ, ונאלצתי לוותר על חלקים מעניינים בשביל לשמור על הפורמט של קצר.

עכשיו העבודה היא להעמיק בעולם. לפתח דמויות נוספות שלא היו בקצר – בסרט הארוד למשל יש לאדם עוד זוגות חברים עם בני הזוג המושלמים שלהם, ובפתיחת הסרט אדם וזוגתו המושלמת מגיעים למעין חתונה של אחד החברים שהזמין לעצמו את בת הזוג המושלמת לו. גם התהליך שהוא עובר עם יולי, האנושית, משמעותי הרבה יותר. היא אוכלת לו מהצלחת, יורדת עליו במין, הוא לא יודע איך לאכול אותה.

יש גם כאלה שחושבים שמי שביים את "יום העידכונים" הוא גבר, כי הגיבור בסרט הוא גבר, ולרוב גברים כותבים גברים ונשים כותבות נשים. אני איכשהו נוטה לכתוב גברים, האמת היא שאני אפילו לא רואה הבדלים מהותיים בין גברים לנשים. מבחינתי כולנו בני אדם, עם הפחדים, התשוקות, והפגיעות שלנו, אבל זה כבר לשיחה אחרת".

הסרט שלה הוא מבחינתי פורץ דרך בקולנוע הישראלי הקצר. היא לקחה סיטואציה עתידנית של אדם החי עם אנדרואידית, ומתארת אותה בצורה אמינה ומשכנעת לגמרי על כל השלכותיה הבלתי צפויות. לא כדבר "טוב" או "רע", אלא כמשהו שקורה ויש לו פנים לכאן ולכאן."

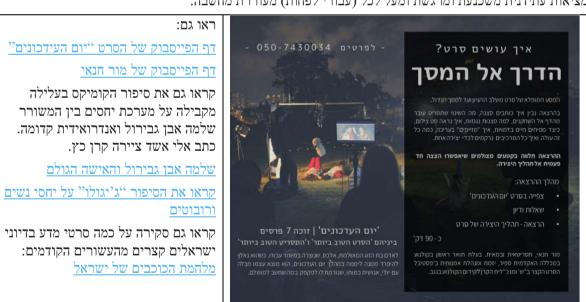
למשר 40 דקות אנחנו מאמינים שכד יכולה להיות המציאות, ומזדהים לגמרי עם הדמות של הגיבור, עם בעיותיו. ועם ההבנה שהוא מפיק לגבי קשריו עם האנדרואידית ועם בחורה אנושית.

האם קשרים כאלו יכולים להיווצר בעתיד? בהחלט כן. המסר של הסרט נראה כרלבנטי מאוד גם היום ועוד יותר מכך

יהיה מעניין אם בסרט הארוך שהיא עובדת עליו יופיעו תופעות צפויות בעולם האמיתי, של התנגדות קבוצות שונות ליחסים בין בני אדם ואנדרואידים.

אבל מצד שני ..בהחלט יכול להיות שיווצרו גם קשרי אהבה אמיתיים בין בני אדם ואנשים מלאכותיים.

מור חנאי נותנת הרצאה על "איך עושים סרט: הדרך אל המסך", ושווה להאזין לה, כיצד בסרט קצר יצרה פיסה של מציאות עתידנית משכנעת ומרגשת ומעל לכל (עבורי לפחות) מעוררת מחשבה.



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

For Comments: E-mail: leybl_botwinik@yahoo.com. Tel: Leybl Botwinik +972-54-537-7729 Editor: Leybl Botwinik. Founding Editor: Aharon Sheer (ז"ל). Logo by: Miriam Ben-Loulu (ז"ל). For free email delivery (PDF format) write to leybl_botwinik@yahoo.com Copyright © 2020 — Archives at: http://www.kulichki.com/antimiry/cybercozen Also (archived issues from 2014+) at: http://fanac.org/fanzines/CyberCozen/ And http://efanzines.com/CyberCozen/index.htm
All rights reserved to specified authors and artists C כל הזכויות שמורות למחברים וליוצרים