

חדשות האגודה – ינואר 2024 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy 2024

תל אביב: מועדון ינואר יעסוק בספר "האיש במצודה הרמה" של פיליפ ק. דיק (עם עובד, 2012). ויתקיים ביום חמישי 25.1, בשעה 19:30, פנים אל פנים או בצורה מקוונת, בהתאם למצב. לקבלת המיקום יש להירשם במייל של דפנה קירש. בדף האירוע בפייסבוק, <https://www.facebook.com/events/1041913523811981> ירושלים: לפרטים על המפגשים של המועדון הקריאה ניתן להצטרף לקבוצת הפייסבוק: <https://www.facebook.com/events/690079196174998> או ליצור קשר במייל עם מרכזת המועדון בירושלים - גל אחיטוב, 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 לרשימת התפוצה או בדף האגודה בפייסבוק. Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

This month's roundup:

- Special Wartime Issue (#4): Some thoughts
- How "Zion's Fiction" Was Born – by co-editor Emanuel Lottem
- TV/Film Reviews: Star Trek: Picard (season 2) + Jules + Foundation (season 1&2)
- 'Krull': The science fantasy of 'Star Wars' without the magic

Our usual tidbits from the Web.

– Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

Special Wartime Issue #04

Dear Readers: Immoral 'Fantasy' on the World Stage...

Over 100 days have passed since the terrible events that began early Saturday morning, October 7th, when the democratically elected terrorist organization in Gaza, Hama-SS, decided to attack its neighbouring state – Israel. The massacres, tortures, burning alive of over 1000 innocent men, women, children, elderly, handicapped – and subsequent kidnapping of several hundred others has (not surprisingly) been mostly forgotten. Instead, many world leaders – pressured by both ignorant and/or antisemitic constituents are pressuring Israel for a ceasefire while it is defending itself against Hama-SS that proudly announces it will do more of the same again and again. The rapes, child beheadings, etc. have been mostly, if not entirely, ignored by most women's and human rights organizations including the UN. Not to mention the 'woke' and their dead-minded leaders, such as in the major universities... How has the World gone so morally astray? How will future generations judge the people and the leadership of today?

Author Douglas Murray – who is pro-Israel – took to task the worrisome immoral responses of the heads of Harvard, Penn, and MIT in the recent congressional hearing about calling for Genocide of the Jews on College campuses. In an interview with Sky News, he suggested that the responses seemed have been automated, like by ChatGPT. In fact, he stated that he ran some of the questions posed at the hearing through ChatGPT, and that the AI was more moral than the human presidents of these great centers of education. See minutes 06:25-07:00 in the following: [WATCH: Douglas Murray dismantles pro-Palestinian 'activists' | World Israel News](#)

More recently, South Africa (SA) made an appeal to the International Court of Justice in the Hague that led to a hearing. SA claimed that Israel was "committing genocide" on the residents of Gaza. Israel did not start the war. Hama-SS new very well Israel would retaliate, seeking them out, mixed in amongst the Arab civilians (a deliberate war crime), and that many Gazans would die, because the money spent on terror tunnels for Hama-SS fighters are off limits to the civilians seeking shelter from the fighting.

I am, nevertheless, optimistic that things will begin to look up soon, and that all the hostages will be liberated. Also, that the Hama-SS terrorist entity and all its adherents – including its partners in crime, Hezbollah and Houtis, and their mutual bosses who are running the show: the fanatics in Iran – will be quickly destroyed. – Leybl

Related link in "Fun from the Web": ["Musk, Israel agree on use of SpaceX Starlink satellite internet in Gaza"](#)

How “Zion’s Fiction” Was Born

By Emanuel Lottem

It was an early morning sometime in mid-2013. I was sitting by my desk when suddenly Skype started its icky ringing. On my screen I saw an unfamiliar face, but when the man introduced himself, I recognized the name at once. Sheldon “Sheli” Teitelbaum had been, with me, a staff member of the defunct but fondly remembered *Fantasia 2000*, Israel’s most influential SF magazine. The young, handsome, black-haired IDF officer I knew was replaced by a white-bearded gentleman, but well, that’s linear time for you. After an exchange of pleasantries, I asked to what I owed this unexpected pleasure, and Sheli said two words: Zion’s Fiction.

Now, I’m famous for my quick and witty repartees, and this knack did not fail me this time either, because I immediately replied, “huh?” Sheli said emphatically, “Zah-ions Fiction,” to which I shrewdly countered, “say what?” Sheli patiently explained the idea: an English-language anthology of Israeli science fiction stories, to be edited by us. I fell for the idea at once, hook, line, and sinker.

A lot of sinkers, too, because the road turned out to be much more difficult than either of us had anticipated. First of all, we brought on board Avi Katz, the well-known illustrator who had also been a *Fantasia 2000* veteran, and then we began sifting out through the bulk of original stories written from 1980 on. In between discussions of the pros and cons of each story one of us thought worthy of inclusion, we found time to daydream of a series of anthologies (you can only get a Hugo for editing a short-story anthology if you’ve published at least three of them), to schmooze about the good old days, and to argue about politics, literature, and other stuff.

But most of all we argued about the stories. Many of them both of us dismissed – either immediately or with many misgivings – for any number of reasons. But there were quite a few which one of us liked and the other one didn’t, or the other way round. Looking back on it, this had been sheer fun, discussing the merits or otherwise of a story, instead of arguing about the things most people disagree about. But at the time, this was wearing both our patience very thin.

There was also a major practical hurdle to contend with. Most of these stories were written in Hebrew and had to be translated. Now, I’m a translator, and I could have done the work, but it would have taken me – what with the work I’ve been doing for a living – at least one year. Back then, this seemed like an exceedingly long time. Little did we know what lay ahead of us...

We finally agreed on our list of stories – some written in English to begin with, some translated by me, and some by others. Avi Katz provided beautiful, woodcut-style, black-and-white illustrations for each of them, and Sheli persuaded Robert Silverberg, the Grand Old Master of Science Fiction, to write the preface. Aharon Hauptman, the founding editor of *Fantasia 2000*, wrote the afterword, and we were all set to go, except for one thing. We had to write the introduction.

It didn’t help, time-wise, that Sheli and I kept arguing about each sentence, constantly deleting what the other one wrote and substituting our own ideas and phrasings in its stead. The introduction, as you can read it now in *Zion’s Fiction: A Treasury of Israeli Speculative Literature*, has gone through at least 50 drafts, I reckon. Maybe I’m exaggerating, so let’s say 45. But finally, we had a book! All that was left was to find a publisher and let our anthology loose at an unsuspecting worldwide readership.



What a gruelling task this proved to be. We wanted it to be a history of Israeli science fiction and fantasy, but we soon realised that we had to begin, however briefly, with a history of modern Hebrew literature in general, and then clamor against the stranglehold of self-appointed literary gatekeepers over this history for such a long time, and then explain the circumstances under which a new generation of writers managed to shake off this iron grip, and then characterise the writing of a diverse group of avowedly individualistic, not to say idiosyncratic writers, and then...

That hackneyed phrase, easier said than done, does not even begin to encapsulate the trials and tribulations that still ominously lurked in our future. First things first, we needed an agent, and it took Sheli quite some time, with Bob Silverberg's help, to find one – a nice man called Eddie Schneider of the New York JABBERwocky agency (I did hit Caps Lock, but not accidentally). He took our cause to heart and cast as wide a net as he possibly could. But then the letters of rejection began piling up. If you've never received one, let me tell you that these are invariably cast in a polite, regretful mold, ending with the best of wishes for success – elsewhere.

We were nearing despair, to use an understatement, when Eddie managed to find us a

publishing house neither of us has ever heard of before, Mandel Vilar Press. Its chief, Robert Mandel, was willing to give us a shot, for a sum that was very far from covering our expenses, but what the hell. We were going to get a book on the expectant market! Readers who're interested in international SF would buy it, Jews would give it as Bar/Bat Mitzvah gifts to eager youngsters, professors of Israel and/or Judaic studies in any number of universities would prescribe it as mandatory reading for their students, the possibilities were endless!

Reviews started coming in. They were glorious, one and all, they were the fulfilment of our every hope, they flattered our egos: you can read them for yourselves elsewhere on this site and see that I'm not exaggerating. The sales, however, have been another matter altogether. An unadulterated disappointment. We did find some consolation in a request (to which we immediately agreed, of course) to translate the book into Japanese. It is about to appear in Japan shortly, and we're holding our breath. But as for sales to the English-speaking world... not so good -- the market proved resistant to our efforts. I have heard it postulated that only five percent of the North American reading public favors SF/F. Of that number, maybe a fifth of a percent, is interested in Israeli literature in translation.

Naturally, then, we embarked on the second volume. 'More Zion's Fiction: Wondrous Tales of the Israeli ImagiNation,' which was published in 2021. The first volume has been translated into Japanese and German, and published as both softcover and hardback. What we never imagined is that we would make more money for these translations than we ever did in the U.S. Or that our publisher would fail to honor a contractual obligation to provide bi-annual publishing reports.

As for a third volume, inshallah. If we do it, we will concentrate on those rare stories that deal in some way with the political and military exigencies of Israeli existence.

Next year in Jerusalem? How about in three years?

See also here, for a summary of my monthly reviews – story by story – of book #2:
<https://www.yekum.org/2023/09/more-zions-fiction-the-complete-review>

LB: Love Sanchez' composition, with the TR-3B centered and at an angle:



Two military Huey helicopters, escort a TR-3B Black Manta antigravity craft.
Courtesy of: Jose Sanchez, Science Fiction, Fantasy and UFO Phenomena Illustrator

Star Trek: Picard (season 2) + Jules + Foundation (season 1&2)

Reviewed by: Leybl Botwinik

Following are a few short reviews of two SF TV series and one film I've recently watched.

1) *Star Trek: Picard – Season 02 (2022)*

Generally speaking, one has to admit, that Sir Patrick Stewart (who plays Jean Luc Picard) is a highly regarded actor – receiving his knighthood and multiple acting awards and recognition. Generally speaking, I don't remember seeing a film with him that I didn't enjoy. That having been said, Season 2 of "Star Trek: Picard" brings back the entity 'Q' – that I personally cannot stand. In this set of episodes, however, he is less annoying than usual – though maybe more dangerous.

The storyline – without going into too much detail – includes some parallel universe issues and time travel (yay! I love time travel stories) to LA in our day and age to stop a 'butterfly effect' threat that could mean the destruction of the Galaxy. Oh, and throw in a very dangerous Queen Borg to spice everything up a bit. The interesting mix of crew members from Season 1 (all playing well), join forces with Picard to thwart Q's intervention in the timelines, the Queen Borg's plan to destroy humanity, and ... there are various interesting twists in the storyline. I enjoyed it – Q notwithstanding – and it has, in my opinion a great wrap up in the season's final episode. I recommend watching.

2) *Foundation – Season 01&02 (2021 & 2023)*

It's been quite a of years since I read the original trilogy novels by Isaac Asimov. A friend of mine has more recently read the **Foundation** Series books, and also watched the TV series (I believe that the release of the TV show motivated his acquiring and reading the books). When I asked him (before viewing) how they compare, his answer was something to the effect of "The books were great. The series as well – but there isn't much in common between the two...".

Having taken that as a sort of warning, I settled down to watch a few episodes of the first series – and continued on through to the finale of the second season. I felt Asimov lurking in the background, so to speak – that the key concepts of 'Psycho-History' – as I barely remember them (but had somehow remained imprinted in my memory) had indeed been touched upon, and in a respectable way. Most probably, someone who – like my friend – has a more vivid/recent memory of the books, would find many faults and deviations from Asimov's masterwork.

I feel certain, though, that Asimov would have approved – if not of the storyline itself – at least of the concepts espoused in the series. Certainly, he would have approved of the high calibre of acting and the excellent actors themselves. I certainly was. There are some very intriguing plot twists that I'm pretty sure were not part of the original novels – but I feel that enough of the original concepts were either implemented, or inspired new ideas that Asimov himself might have added to the epic stories he created.

The TV series storyline starts a bit slow. It is not, after all, an 'action movie'. It is a TV series with some profound ideas, based on a profound series of concepts in Asimov's original storyline. Keep in mind, that the plots in the Foundation series of novels are pretty 'heavy'. The way the various threads tie together in the TV series over a period of more than a hundred and fifty years (plot wise) – combined with great special effects, exotic and/or SF-ish settings, excellent actors and acting – make this a commendable TV series, and I can't wait for the next season to release.

3) Jules

An issue I haven't seen in a while in recent SF movies and TV shows (other than '*Resident Alien*') – though is a mainstay of SF – is about 'Aliens'. More specifically, how to deal with an extra-terrestrial: as a potential friend or potential threat?

An elderly man living in a small town in rural USA is introduced to us at the weekly townhouse meeting where citizens can ask questions, make suggestions, or complain to the mayor and members of the town council. He stands in line and vents his list of issues – the council members basically nod their heads, ignore him, and listen to the next in line – with the same head-nodding and ignoring the speaker's suggestions and/or criticisms. Then in the next scene, he does it again, repeating virtually the same content (which he read from a notebook that he brings along with him). Of course, everyone is patient with him and his constant and repetitive 'monologue'.

He wakes up one night to the sound and then the sight of a spaceship that has crashed into his back garden. The next day, at the town meeting, he repeats his usual text, but adds that a spaceship that has landed on his property and crushed his flowers. Of course, no one believes him – particularly not his daughter who is a veterinarian.



After a day or two, the spaceship opens a portal and a space being – an alien/ET – crawls out, 'hurt'. Eventually the old man offers him water to drink and takes him in. The alien likes/ feeds off of apples.

Long story short, first one and then a second elderly woman who also attends the townhouse meetings joins him and they take care of the Alien, whom they name 'Jules'. Jules, after recuperating, and ever silent, fixes his spaceship and leaves, but before that, wants to invite the old man who is degenerating mentally (Alzheimers) to join him in outer space. He refuses and would rather stay and die on Earth.

A delightful, easy on the mind and on the heart movie.

p.s. Love the T-shirt, but don't remember it actually being in the movie.

Interesting nostalgia of 40 years ago

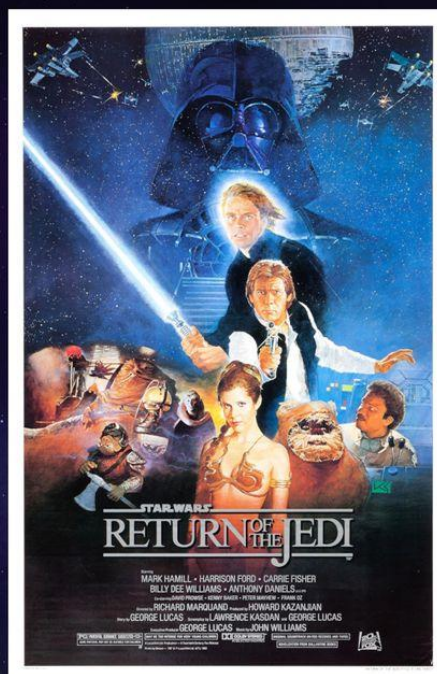
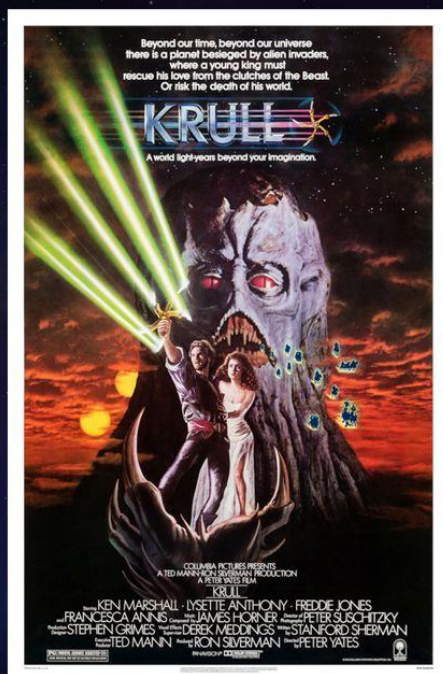
From: <https://www.space.com/krull-the-science-fantasy-of-star-wars-without-the-magic>

'Krull': The science fantasy of 'Star Wars' without the magic

By [Richard Edwards](#) published November 26, 2023

Forty years on, "Krull" remains a flawed – but intriguing – effort to cash in on George Lucas's galaxy far, far away.

Luke Skywalker's well publicized exploits on the Death Star were such a spectacular success that there was an air of inevitability when other Hollywood studios tried to make a "[Star Wars](#)" of their own. More remarkable was the fact that their subsequent efforts to milk the cash cow (or bantha, perhaps?) took such different approaches to outer space. However, most of the wannabes ignored a crucial element of George Lucas's extremely lucrative franchise – for all the spaceships, robots, and lasers, "Star Wars" was actually fantasy in sci-fi clothing, built around a hero whose quest revolved as much around magic (cleverly rebranded as "the Force") as futuristic gadgets.



From the Space.com article:

A side-by-side movie poster comparison of sci-fi fantasy movie "Krull" (1983) and "Star Wars: Return of the Jedi" (1983). (Image credit: Columbia Pictures)

In the years following "A New Hope," viewers were invited to experience the high camp of "Flash Gordon," the overblown space opera of "The Black Hole," and a Roger Corman-produced interstellar riff on "The Magnificent Seven" called "Battle Beyond the Stars." "[Star Trek](#)" also got in on the act with the "2001: A Space Odyssey"-esque grandeur of "The Motion Picture," while T.V. viewers were given a weekly dose of sci-fi in their homes courtesy of "Battlestar Galactica" (arguably one of the [best sci-fi TV shows of all time](#)).

Read on at: <https://www.space.com/krull-the-science-fantasy-of-star-wars-without-the-magic>

Fun from the Web

- Medical emergencies will happen in deep space. Here's how Canada is getting ready <https://www.space.com/canadian-space-agency-deep-space-healthcare-challenge-finalists>
- Canada soars into space with new moon and ISS astronaut missions <https://www.space.com/canada-soars-space-iss-astronaut-moon-missions>
- Elon Musk, Israel agree on use of SpaceX Starlink satellite internet in Gaza <https://www.space.com/elon-musk-israel-starlink-gaza>
- This Week In Space podcast: Episode 91 –Holiday Special – Review of 2023! <https://www.space.com/this-week-in-space-episode-91-year-in-review>

TV&MOVIES

- "Fallout" – First Trailer Welcomes You to a Familiar Post-Apocalypse <https://gizmodo.com/fallout-tv-show-prime-video-bethesda-2024-1851066136>
- 'For All Mankind' season 4 episode 6 review: Culmination of a storyline decades in the making <https://www.space.com/for-all-mankind-season-4-episode-6-review>
- 'Apollo 13' moon disaster movie hits a new high for film fans <https://www.space.com/apollo-13-moon-disaster-movie-library-of-congress-preserve>
- Everything we know about 'Alien: Romulus' <https://www.space.com/everything-we-know-about-alien-romulus>

"Alien: Romulus" is set to hit theaters on Aug. 16, 2024.

(Image credit: 20th Century Studios)



BOOKS

- Mace Windu honors Qui-Gon's final mission in upcoming 'Star Wars: The Glass Abyss' novel <https://www.space.com/star-wars-novel-mace-windu-glass-abyss-preview>

GAMES

- Everything we know about Star Wars Eclipse <https://www.space.com/everything-we-know-about-star-wars-eclipse>

For Comments: E-mail: levbl_botwinik@yahoo.com. Tel: Leybl Botwinik +972-54-537-7729
 Editor: Leybl Botwinik. Founding Editor: Aharon Sheer (א"ר). Logo by: Miriam Ben-Loulu (מ"ל).
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