



SCIENCE-Fiction Fanzine

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Don't miss the ICON 2015 Fest (29 Sep-01 Oct): <http://2015.iconfestival.org.il/>

חדשות האגודה – אוקטובר 2015
פסטיבל אייקון 2015 בפתח!

אירוע הדגל השנתי של חובבי המדע הבדיוני, הפנטזיה ומשחקי התפקידים יתקיים השנה תחת הנושא "**הרפתקאות**". הפסטיבל מאורגן על ידי האגודה הישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטזיה והעמותה למשחקי תפקידים בישראל ונערך בשיתוף פעולה עם המחלקה למופעים, עיריית תל-אביב-יפו. גם השנה נארח אורח כבוד מחו"ל: סופר המדע הבדיוני האמריקאי עטור הפרסים **טד צ'יאנג**. לכניסה למערכת ההזמנות: program.iconfestival.org.il

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

In keeping with 'tradition': Shana Tova – Happy New Year 5776 – שנה טובה ה'תשע"ו

In this issue:

1) Artificial Intelligence (AKA: AI) in recent films – Part V:

- "Automata" film (2014)
- Asimov's Laws, Tilden's Rules, and the Automata Protocols
- + More next month ☺

2) Sheer Science: Pre-empted with some interesting CyberCozen historical/hysterical facts and figures – Leybl Botwinik (CyberCozen editor)

More AI (+ Film Reviews) – Part V

By Leybl Botwinik

Artificial Intelligence (AI) really becomes interesting when mechanical devices start resembling humans in form, speech, and action.

Film Review: Automata (2014)

– Reviewed by Leybl Botwinik



Background:

Released in 2014, the "Automata" movie stars one of my favorite actors: Antonio Banderas (we'll get to him in a moment). The story begins with the bleak news (for us, and our kids),

that by the near dark future of 2044 something like 99% of the world's human population has been wiped out by extreme solar flares that have turned our planet into one large desert.

I have to stop at this point, in my relating how the story unfolds, to make a very critical comment: The human apocalypse due to solar flares has practically nothing to do with the main storyline and concepts. This is a story about robots and humans. The "end of civilization" in this film could just as well have been by virtue of (pick your favorite ☺): atomic war, epidemic, alien invasion, water/air pollution, lack of fresh water, overpopulation and then sterility both running amok, or just plain boredom, etc.). The year and background circumstances are practically inconsequential, and the main storyline could just as easily have been presented in the dark alleys of a large overpopulated city, or on some other planet.

There are some valid plot reasons for giving us a dead/desolate planet – I just think it could have been done differently. In fact, if you're going to "invent" this kind of depressing background, at least try to make it a social comment (e.g. a statement against exploitation, or a call to save the ecology, etc.): "... or else this is what the world will look like for your kids, next generation...".

Now, Back to the Story:

There are only a handful of cities left on the planet, and about 20 million people. In order to rebuild – and because of the radiation and harsh exterior conditions, robots have been produced by the ROC corporation to do the difficult and dangerous jobs. Again I comment: As far as the main plotline is concerned, except for one issue (which we'll touch upon later) the world doesn't have to end, and robot workers and servants could just as easily play their roles in a fully populated, but maybe dysfunctional world (like ours).

The robots have two built-in laws called "Security Protocols". The first protocol prevents harm to humans (supposedly, this means that they will also do their utmost to protect humans from harm). The second protocol prevents them from improving (or even fixing) themselves or other robots. This second one is very strange. OK, we don't want super-powered or enhanced thinking robots like Marvel's 'evil' Ultron (see previous parts), or Terminator's SKYNET (in an upcoming part), but otherwise, why can't a robot fix itself or another robot if it can do the job right (what: does this void the warranty)? I think this second protocol is rather unimaginative. I much prefer Asimov's Laws of Robotics (more on these laws later). The

fact of the matter is, that ROC doesn't want the robots to be able to fix themselves – else they would lose money on maintenance fees. Big Business at its Best ...

The movie begins with a scene where a police officer doing a routine patrol in a 'homeless' area (NOTE: It is often referred to as the "Ghetto"), comes across a robot that looks like it is fixing or altering itself. He subsequently shoots the robot and puts it out of order. Since all the robots are under the jurisdiction of the ROC corporation, they send out their best insurance investigator Jacq Vaucan (played by Banderas) to find out if this was in fact the case. At the Police Morgue the forensics specialist reports that the robot is unregistered (i.e. un-owned), and also that it is composed of miscellaneous parts from other robots – both of which make it illegal, and that it in fact has no 2nd protocol. This is, of course, absurd as far as all involved in the investigation are concerned. Jacq is skeptical himself.

Soon after, following up on some leads, Jacq discovers another robot at a construction site that sets itself afire in an apparent suicide move – or attempt to 'destroy evidence'. While taking it apart and studying it, a powerful 'nuclear' battery is found hidden inside it. This second 'dead' robot is reactivated by the ROC

investigating team so that it can be questioned by Jacq. The robot, however, burns itself out rather than answer key questions. This is, of course, brushed off as just a short circuit or malfunction (after all the robot was badly damaged when it 'caught fire' in the first place...).

This raises questions of whether a 'clocksmith' may have been modifying robots (ROC people still can't believe that the robots are doing this to themselves). The more that Jacq digs into the issue, the stranger it gets, with robots 'committing suicide', etc. To try to track down a lead, a 'female exotic dancer' robot named "Cleo" is shot in the leg on purpose by the same policeman who terminated the first robot of the movie, in order that she leads them to the suspected clocksmith tinkerer – Dr. Dupre (played by Melanie Griffith).

Jacq and Dupre have a non-conclusive, short discussion of the 7 million year evolution of Man versus the potential several weeks equivalent evolution of a Robot that did not have the 2nd protocol to 'interfere' with its evolving. Soon after Jacq leaves her, however, she contacts him, just after she has 'upgraded' Cleo with some parts that Jacq left her from the original "executed" and "suicidal" robots, – giving Cleo a measure of independence that circumvents the 2nd protocol. From here on in, the movie's tension really starts building

with Jacq coming face-to-face with the impossible: self-thinking and adapting machines with an agenda for surviving...

The Actors:

Banderas looks perfect for his role as Jacq. He is physically very gaunt (is the real-life actor possibly actually not well? I hope not) – perfect for a world at the brink of death. There are quite a few instances when his character Jacq has to "make consequential decisions" or act out emotional scenes. In those moments, he does the job superbly. His fellow actors, for the most part are OK too.

Unfortunately, the producers thought that sticking in high-profile actresses (Melanie Griffith and Birgitte Hjort Sørensen) would maybe enhance the movie (or help with the ticket sales) – when in fact both roles are of consequence to the plotline, but any particular acting requirements are just about nil: Birgitte is just Jacq's pregnant wife Rachel. She has multiple scenes but doesn't really do much talking or acting. Melanie is a robot tinkerer. In fact, Melanie appears for about 3 minutes in her first scene with Banderas, and soon after, during her second appearance of about 2 minutes, she is murdered by a pair of 6-to-8-year old kids hired to kill her and Jacq. Although her 'action' is truly important for the plot – nothing in the role requires any major acting skill (nor do we see/feel any).





Special Effects:

I really loved the robots, though. These Robots definitely look mechanical with no attempt by ROC to make them fully 'human'-looking.

The story behind the robots, is that they are being 'exploited' and are 'in danger' – if such a thing is possible. They are shown to be breaking down, 'handicapped' (e.g. missing legs and arms, and not being repaired), very dirty, residing in dumps like tramps and homeless people. The person who designed the robot faces and heads (there are several models) did an outstanding job:

The facial shape of the simple workers is very bland and sorry-looking – especially when they are smudged with soot/dirt – making you want to sympathize with the 'poor suffering robots'.



The "suiciding" robot burns itself out – or maybe it's only a short circuit on the damaged boards. Its pneumatic fluids, however, then overflow and it looks like it is crying.		
The exotic dancer Cleo has a face like a porcelain doll. She gets upgraded by Doctor Dupre, and later removes her facial 'mask' to 'feel' free and independent.		
The new quantum Automata Pilgrim 7000 model looks like an advanced LEGO doll. It originally had the mask with the dot-eyes but also removed it as a sign of freedom to think and act on its own.		

About Protocols and Robotic 'Evolution':

About halfway through the film, it's just (or mostly) Banderas and the 'free' robots. There are many emotional moments where Jacq must learn to accept the new reality and deal with his emotions and feelings. It is difficult for him, because his whole life – and his job, was dealing with 'just' machines. Suddenly something new has evolved.

Jacq: "You're just a machine" ... **The robot responds:** "Just a machine? That's like saying that you're just an ape" ...

The ROC corporation has developed special security protocols to ensure mankind always maintains control over the population of robots that serves it. As the story unfolds, we see that this is a pre-meditated way to suppress any evolution of the machines. Although at first this may seem to be a consequence of the demise of the human race (from 6-7 Billion to about 20 Million, even though 20 Million is not a small number either) – it seems that the supremacy of ROC is the most important factor.

The Protocols – reminiscent of Asimov's 3 Robot Laws seem to try to one-up him.
Note, that there are only 2:

- **First protocol: Prevents the robot from harming any form of life.**
- **Second protocol: Prevents the robot from altering itself or other robots.**

The first one talks about protecting life in general – not just human – that's different. But the 2nd protocol? What's wrong with that? Just responsibility to protect mankind from robots becoming superior to us – and maybe switching roles where we will serve them one day – or disappear entirely? I doubt it. And why can't robots be allowed to survive? Don't they have rights too? I believe that Asimov thought so, and therefore created the laws to both protect mankind, but also to provide certain fundamental rights to robots as well. Tilden seems to even go several steps further. In fact, Asimov, eventually adds one more law to his original 3.

He didn't, however, – as far as I can remember – discuss the possibility of Robotic evolution that parallels mankind's – i.e. the 'creation' of a new 'species'.

This film does in fact present the conflict of 'species'. In a certain manner, the film presents the speculative future parting of ways between the 'old' (Mankind) and the 'new' (Robotkind).

Although the Robot is better able to withstand the brutal physical hardships of the new desolate world, one shouldn't count Mankind out – after all, whether or not you believe that God made us, – we made the machine. That should count for something, shouldn't it? ☺.

Robotic Laws and Logic – Or: Rules were made to be broken (?)

Disclaimer: Most of the following is taken from the Internet, and primarily from:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laws_of_robotics

Asimov's 3(+1) Laws:

The best known set of laws are Isaac Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics". These were introduced in his 1942 short story "[Runaround](#)", although they were foreshadowed in a few earlier stories. The Three Laws are:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

In later books, a zeroth law was introduced, that takes precedence over the other 3 ones:

0. A robot may not harm humanity, or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.

Tilden's Laws:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilden%27s_Laws_of_Robotics

Mark W. Tilden is a notable robotics physicist who was a pioneer in developing simple robotics. His three guiding principles/rules for robots are:

1. *A robot must protect its existence at all costs.*
2. *A robot must obtain and maintain access to its own power source.*
3. *A robot must continually search for better power sources.*

In Wired magazine, Tilden paraphrased this as

1. *Protect thine ass.*
2. *Feed thine ass.*
3. *Look for better real estate.*

What is notable in these three rules is that these are basically rules for "wild" (untamed) life, so in essence what Tilden stated is that what he wanted was "proctoring a silicon species into sentience, but with full control over the specs. Not plant. Not animal. Something else."

Sheer History: CyberCozen's Early Days

- In memory of Aharon Sheer (7"ט) – Founding Editor

NOTE: Due to the length of the AI film review above, plus the Robotic Laws addendum, "Sheer Science" – prepared by Doron Calo*, PhD (*our new CC Sheer Science editor ☺) – will appear next issue. We're looking forward to it. Hope you are too ☺

I recently acquired almost all the back issues of CyberCozen since its founding in 1989 and began a scanning and storage process. The 1994-1998 issues are now complete and up on our main repository (see editorial credit box at end). There are some really fascinating items. Here's one:

What were the original names proposed for the club and this fanzine?

Let's look back at the March 1990 issue (this is just a clipping – we'll have the full issue up soon):

CYBER COZEN

REHOVOT SF-F CLUB FANZINE

פנזין המד"ב


מועדון רחובות כלעדי!!!

NAMES: Club name, newsletter name. Aharon Sheer proposed calling the club Cybercoven, and the newsletter Cybercozen. At the February meeting comments were made: There's nothing Hebrew or Israeli in the proposed names. Cybernetics in Hebrew is Kibernetika. Club in Hebrew is a meeting place (pronounced variously klahb or kloob) while in English the word has two meanings: 1) a group of persons organized for a social, literary, athletic, political or other purpose (in Hebrew usually called a Hug, pronounced "hoog"), or 2) the meeting place of such a group (mo'adon).

A variety of names were proposed (C means the name is for the Club, N for the Newsletter): Moshe Kahn: "Cyberkvetch" (C and N) (because SF fans take themselves too seriously). Eli Eshed: "Cybersabra" (C) (to provide an Israeli feeling). Amit Yizhar: "Cybernest" (C) (because a club is a place). Elana Dror: "Cybercove" (C), "Cybercode" (N) (because she doesn't want to be associated with witches). Abe Bursten: "Imagination" (N) (because that's what SF is about). Counter-suggested: "Imagician" (C? N?). Rami Silverman: "Cybrehovot" (C and N) (because its activities take place in Rehovot). "Sabriction" (C? N?) was also proposed (Sabra fiction?).

Amit Yizhar provided the logo on the right which has the N name "Cyber Siance Fiction" Its misspelling of "science" contains hints of "Cyber Seance" or "Cyber Psience".

The "Cyber Cozen" (N) logo on the top was contributed by Alon Itzkowitch.



Don't forget ICON 2015 Fest 29 Sep-01 Oct:



<http://2015.iconfestival.org.il/about-icon/>

We'd love to hear your thoughts on any of the above subjects and we may publish some of them!

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