



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

המפגש הבא בסדרת ההרצאות ע"ש עמוס גפן יתקיים בבית-אריאלה, שד' שאול המלך 25, תל-אביב,

ביום רביעי 29.1.03, בשעה 20:00 - הכניסה חופשית

מכונות זמן: פרדוקסים ופתרונות: סקירה ספרותית

ההרצאה תסקור את ההיסטוריה הספרותית של המסע בזמן, החל מוולס וכלה בווייליס, ותעמוד על ההבדלים בין מכונות הזמן השונות. יוצגו הטכניקות השונות המאפשרות את המסע בזמן, ובהן קסמים, כשפים, פנטזיות וטכניונים באפס כבידה. כמו כן יוצגו הפרדוקסים הנובעים מהמסע בזמן ופתרונותיהם האפשריים. לבסוף, אם הזמן יותיר מקום, יוצגו מאפייניה של מכונת הזמן האידיאלית.

המרצה: רון יניב: רון יניב הוא המו"ל של "חלומות באספמיה", כתב-עת חדש למדע בדיוני ופנטסיה.

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

Where are the Space Stories on TV?

Genah Alfandary has a complaint.

"The TV companies have cut out most real space stories from TV for the winter season. We have no more space ship adventures except a few reruns of *Enterprise* and *Star Gate*. For some reason, Israel never even got to see *Voyager*, which by now is a veteran series."

Genah suggests that **sf fans petition the TV companies** to correct this situation, and (with the help of **Mark L. Levinson**) has provided email addresses.

Here is Mark L. Levinson's list:

"If you want a space opera broadcast to all the House of Israel, then the best people to petition are **Channel 1** and **Channel 2**:

"**Channel 1** is run by the **Israel Broadcasting Authority**. You could try their ombudsman, ombudsmann@iba.org.il. Or you could try their chairman, chairman@iba.org.il.

"**Channel 2** is programmed by three different companies. **Tel-Ad** is telad@telad.co.il. **Reshet** is info@reshet-tv.com and its chairman is yochanan@reshet-tv.com. **Keshet** is evidently_editor@keshet-i.com.

"For the **Second Broadcasting Authority** as a whole, which includes both **Channel 2** and **Channel 10**, there's an ombudsman: natsiv@channel2.co.il. I can't find an e-mail address for Channel 10; perhaps that would be something else to complain to the Second Broadcasting Authority ombudsman about.

"**Channel 3** the **Israeli Family Channel**, which goes out over both cable and satellite, is run by **ICP**, icp@icptv.co.il.

"There is also, for what it's worth, **Channel 33** at arutz33@iba.org.il.

"Good luck."

Mark L. Levinson - Herzlia, Israel - nosnivel@netvision.net.il

And Genah adds: "I have another address where you can send a petition:

ylevy@tevel.co.il - Yehudit Levy works with programming at **Tevel Cable Co.**"

And I say: Let's get the Sci-Fi channel here. Who needs Channel 1, 2, 3, 10 or 33?

Star Trek Book Review by Gary Roth

The Joy Machine by James Gunn, based on the story by Theodore Sturgeon (1996), pp. 264, plus afterward about the author(s).

Here's another good idea gone to waste! This is the story of an earthlike paradise planet that becomes more like a slave planet, thanks to an invention called the Joy Machine. The inhabitants turn into virtual slaves, performing meaningless and mindless tasks in order to receive a "payday" (a technologically-induced, deep ecstasy that lasts until the recipient wakes up hours later). Visitors to the planet become trapped, including Federation agents sent previously to investigate.

The person in charge of the system is an old friend of Kirk's, and to the dismay of the reader, betrays Kirk more than once to the Joy Machine. A few rebels capture the Enterprise's captain, and together they

attempt to restore normal life. However, things don't go as planned, thanks in part to the starship's computer "coming to life" with a mind of its own.

Despite the excellent credentials of the author(s), this book was drawn-out and often boring, with much space (no pun intended) devoted to describing the scenery, with very little dialogue. There was much trickery and deception, with the scary possibility of the Joy Machine's influence spreading to the rest of the galaxy. I found much of this artificial intelligence superiority to be depressing, and considered the ending as unconvincing, unauthentic, and hollow -- lacking finality. Grade: C.

Sara Beck Svetitsky Discusses Two of her Favorite Fantasy Authors

Declare by Tim Powers Harper Paperbacks, 2002. Reviewed by Sara Beck Svetitsky.

Tim Powers has been writing innovative modern fantasy for decades, and is one of the founders of the "steampunk" school. [Note: *The Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* defines "steampunk" as follows: "Item of sf terminology coined in the late 1980s, on the analogy of CYBERPUNK, to describe the modern subgenre whose sf events take place against a 19th-century background."]

His *Last Call* is one of the most highly regarded fantasy novels of the 1990s. In Powers' novels historical events and persons are interpreted in fantastic, twisted ways. The basic premise of *Last Call* is that Las Vegas, and in particular the Flamingo Hotel, is the "ruined castle in the wasteland" setting for a modern re-enactment of the Fisher King ritual.

The premise of *The Stress of Her Regard* is that ancient, vampiric creatures of animated stone were attracted to the English Romantic poets. And odd though these may sound, when you read those two books, it works. First, no matter how fantastic the additions, they are put onto a solid and verifiable base of facts. Second, there is just something artistically right about those two concepts; Powers' "Southern California" books (*Earthquake Weather* and *Expiration Date*) take for their starting point a Los Angeles infested with ghosts in all stages of

after-life, and it simply doesn't work that well (my opinion, but shared by many).

In *Declare*, the historically verifiable setting is the 20th-century history of the Soviet Union, specifically the horrors of the Soviet secret services and the fabulous oddity of the Cambridge spies, Burgess, Maclean and above all Kim Philby. The fantastic premise is that there is on Mt Ararat a colony of the creatures that appear in the Arabian Nights as Djinn and in Armenian legend as fallen angels, that a particularly nasty specimen with a liking for human sacrifice became the guardian demon of the Soviet Union, and that Kim Philby had been assigned from birth to be an intermediary between humans and djinn. (Doesn't that explain a lot? Doesn't it make as much sense as anything else written about Philby?). The hero is Andrew Hale, an English secret agent who was also marked from birth by the djinn, and the heroine, Elena, a Spanish secret agent who flips between ardent Communism and ardent Catholicism and with whom both Hale and Philby are in love. Hale wants to destroy all the djinn on Ararat and Philby wants to exploit them so he can live forever. Hale and Elena are solid, believable characters with real personality conflicts, but Philby is a remarkable creation: superhuman, or with the option of becoming superhuman, in some respects, but definitely lacking even normal humanity in others.

So **Declare** combines secret service operations that would appeal to John Le Carre fans with fantastic episodes that read more like Stephen King. Many of the fantastic sections take place in the Arabian desert, a setting that has not been overused in fantasy, and tap into folklore and legends that are also refreshingly original to a modern fantasy reader (the djinn react very badly to any mention of King Solomon, for example). **Declare** doesn't have the gothic humor and wildly baroque detail of **Last Call**, but also

avoids the huge cast of characters (many of whom had multiple personalities) of that book, and is the most concise and tightly written of Powers' recent novels.

I thought **Last Call** was one of the two best fantasies of the 1990s (the other being **The Innkeeper's Song**, in case you are curious) and **Declare** is at least as good. It may even be better -- I have to see how often I re-read it. In any case, it is very highly recommended.

Diana Wynne Jones: A tribute to a children's author by a reputed adult

By Sara Beck Svetitsky

Diana Wynne Jones is a British writer of fantasy whose books are mostly marketed as children's or young adult reading. She has never attained the wild popularity of Harry Potter but many of her books are or will be classics. In the fantasy and science fiction fields the distinctions between children's, young adult, and adult fiction are often blurry. There are books aimed at children that adults can enjoy too. In this class I put Jones' **Dogsbody** and **The Homeward Bounders**. These are written with a simple style and dialog and little character development, which is fine for the 5th grade but a little skimpy for an adult reader. But they are built on deep, beautiful, even mythic themes. Jones, in an interview on her Web page, said (I paraphrase) that adults do not read as well as children, that children understand things that adults need to have spelled out. I understood this when I saw the local 10-year-old read these two books: she did not recognize the figures of Prometheus (from **Homeward Bounders**) or Arawn (in **Dogsbody**) or know their traditional roles, but she understood the characters and the stories perfectly. And even in these books for young children Jones does not avoid some very serious emotions. In **Dogsbody** the hero is betrayed by the creature he trusts most, and in **Homeward Bounders** the power of "them" is so chilling that even an adult reader doesn't see how they can be fought. It is typical of Jones' villains that they betray, entrap, and manipulate rather than fight outright. The difficult scene when the hero recognizes the true nature of the friend or relative who has exploited him recurs in both the children's and adult's books.

The books aimed at older children / young adults have more demanding writing

and complicated plots and characters; many of Jones' best known works, including four novels that make up **The Chronicles of Chrestomanci**, the linked books of **The Dalemark Quartet**, and what all her readers call "the Griffin books" (**Dark Lord of Derkheim** and **Year of the Griffin**) are aimed at this age group. Finally there are books written for and marketed to adults: **Deep Secret**, **A Sudden Wild Magic**, **Hexwood**, and **Fire and Hemlock**. But the distinctions between these categories are pretty arbitrary: I would give **Deep Secret** to a 10 or 12 year old to read with no hesitation, while **Fire and Hemlock**, which I have seen sold as a teenagers' book, is hard going for an adult.

Jones does not repeat herself, but there are some themes that recur. Her setting is usually a multiverse of worlds that magicians can travel between. They are not too far from "our" world, in fact "our" world figures in the **Chrestomanci** books as "the one that unaccountably doesn't have any magic". There are magical powers and, often, people who are supposed to manage the flow and use of magic. This is pretty standard fantasy fare and many lousy books have been written in such settings. The special delight of Jones' books is that the magic users are intensely human, imperfect, and usually don't know what to do with their powers. There are no superheroes in Jones' books!

In **Charmed Lives** and **The Lives of Christopher Chant** we see children who have immense natural magical powers being conned and exploited by unscrupulous relatives (who have convinced them that they in fact have no powers); when the children find out the truth they have to deal not only with their feelings of betrayal but with guilt for evil things they did under the influence of the

trusted relative. In *The Dalemark Quartet* some of the characters are actually gods (or tutelary spirits or earth spirits or whatever) and they still make mistakes, quarrel, back the wrong candidate for kingship, and are conned by evil sorcerers. In *Deep Secret* the narrator is a Magid (which makes me wonder if Jones knows any Jewish sources, especially as there is a tradition that there are 36 of them), one of those entrusted with directing the destiny of worlds, and he is an insecure young man who feels too deeply, blames himself for everything, and fears he can't handle the job. Jones brings the harsh reality of life into the fantasy world better than any other modern writer I can think of.

Some of Jones' books make a special nod to SF fans. She wrote *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*, which skewers every sword and sorcery cliché out there, and *Dark Lord*

of Derkheim" describes the misery of having your world turned into a theme park for tourists from another (our) world looking for, well, for what's described in the *Tough Guide*. (*Dark Lord of Derkheim* is also about people who have great magical powers and still have to struggle with their lives, make awful mistakes, and live with the consequences, in contrast to the attitude demolished in the *Tough Guide*). And much of *Deep Secret* takes place at a Science Fiction Convention in Bristol, England (which really occurred, although without the most obvious supernatural interventions), and features real British SF writers and fans.

This is not a complete guide to Jones' writing; there are a few books of hers I haven't been able to find. I recommend her writing in the highest possible terms; as I said at the start, many of her books will be classics.

Science Fiction and Fantasy in Israel at the Start of the 21st Century

By Eli Eshed -- Part 3.

Futurism, Prophecy, and Alternative Science (continued)

Futurism

An outstanding example of a "futuristic – prophetic" work is Mordechai Y. Nessayahu's book *Cosmotism* (Poetika v'Tovei Sefer, 1997). The author prophecies an astounding and unique future for the State of Israel, in a universe which the author assumes is filled with alien civilizations. The author proposes a careful, sophisticated, far-seeing use of Jewish tradition whose source is in the Old Testament. These Jewish principles provide a path to the survival of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, who will spearhead the struggle to save human beings from self-destruction through misuse of nuclear weapons and ecological disasters such as global warming. This book is filled with grandiose speculations and fascinating proposals, and in my opinion is one of the most important books to be published in Hebrew in recent years, but which has not received the attention it deserves. The author, Nessayahu, was one of the ideologues of the Labor Party in Israel, and had a major influence on Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres and their peace program.

Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres published a work of prophecy in 1998 *B'Reshit Hadasha [A New Beginning]* (Zmora-Bitan), in which he describes a new and better future for Israel and the Middle East, "new" as a result of the information revolution, and peace. The current reality as we know is quite different from these predictions. We can describe Peres and Nessayahu as "the last utopians".

Yigal Arica *Ma Tzofen Lanu HaAtid [What's in the Future]* (Aryeh Nir and Modan, 1999). This book was written by a secular expert on Kabbalah, mysticism, and reincarnation, as well as popular science, who has written several very successful popular books on these subjects. In this book he describes the future in terms of science, technology, society and economics. This is a comprehensive and optimistic book, perhaps the most readable book of its type in Hebrew.

Asher Idan *Madrich l'Meah HaEsrin [The 20th Century Guide Book]* (Dyunon, Tel Aviv University, 2000). A very optimistic book about the future and the information revolution, by one of the best-known Israeli futurists. It seems that, since the book appeared, much of the optimism found in this book with respect to the information revolution has disappeared.

An interesting futuristic book about the Internet was by an expert in information systems and management, Dr. Niv Ahituv (who is also Vice President and Director-General of Tel Aviv University), whose book *Olam L'Lo Sodot [A World Without Secrets]* (Am Oved, 2001) foresees in great detail a future world in which all recorded information about any person will be freely available to everyone. In his book he discusses various relevant works of science fiction.

Sculptor and poet Ezra Orion wrote *Pisul Bein-Galakti [Inter-Galactic Sculpture Toward the Third Millennium]* (2001). This is a sort of catalog and summary of his sculptural works, and also includes several speculative articles. Orion has been working for years on the idea of sculpture in outer space. He calls it "Sculpture in the Solar System" and "Inter-Galactic Art". In 1993, using the Mars Rover, he built a sculpture on the surface of Mars. Following a program he sent to NASA, the Rover placed stone upon stone to create a work of art. This work may perhaps disappear from the surface of Mars only after billions of years. This was the first time that an artist proposed building a sculpture on Mars, a program that was actually carried out. Orion calls it "Sculpture in the Solar System". In addition, starting in the 1980s Orion sent various laser beams into space. This project reached its peak in 1992 as part of the World Space Year. At that time, under his direction, a giant obelisk of energy was sent from laser stations in various countries toward the Milky Way Galaxy. In 2002 he tried to persuade to U.N. to carry out an additional project of this sort, using even greater power, but he has not yet been successful. He described his astounding artistic and speculative ideas in his books *Pisul B'Ma'arechet HaShemesh [Sculpture in the Solar System]* (Sifriat Poalim, 1984) and *Pisul Alumot Tahalichim [Sculpture with Beams of Processes]* (Modan, 2000). All these activities are part of his unusual artistic perception. He is unique in that he believes that there are numerous universes, and that his artistic acts are a way to contact and communicate with them.



Immanuel Velikovsky

In recent years a new publisher, Ram, was established to publish all of the works of the controversial researcher Immanuel Velikovsky, who contended that it is possible to explain many events in human history, including stories from the Bible, by collisions of comets with the Earth, from which the planet Venus was formed. This theory had a certain influence on science fiction, and in its time generated vigorous arguments. The publishing house, which is managed by Velikovsky's daughter Shulamit, has so far published six books, including some which were never published in any language. One of the books presents Velikovsky's correspondence about his ideas with Albert Einstein, who was sympathetic to them. The objective is to publish in Hebrew all of Velikovsky's works, including some which exist to this day only in manuscript.

New Age

In Hebrew, as in many other languages, there is an enormous range of "New Age" books, written by people who communicate with God, with angels, or with aliens from around the Galaxy.

The fad began in Israel with well-known Israeli spoon-bender Uri Geller in the 1970s, who contended that he is in communication with aliens, and that he is their representative on Earth. Today Geller supports himself partly by writing science fiction and fantasy in English, from his home in England.

Particularly noticeable is the fad that has developed in recent years of people who claim they can cure sick people with the "help" of aliens of various kinds with whom they are in communication. This fad received much publicity as a result of the publication by engineer Adrian Dvir of two books *Healing Yeshuyot v'Hutzanim [X3 Healing Entities and Aliens]* (Gal, 1998) and *L'Rapeh im Hutzanim [To Cure with Aliens]* (Gal, 2001). In these books he describes his contacts with beings from strange other planets around our galaxy and other galaxies, and the cures that he effected with their help. (Despite the fact that this sounds complete charlatanism, I know very serious people, including the most serious UFO researcher in Israel, Haim Mazar, who claim to have been cured by him.) In his books he also describes other healers in Israel (his competitors) who work with aliens different from the ones he works with. Among other things, he claims to be in contact with the spirit of an American sf writer, but the name he gives is not familiar to me.

Eli Eshed's series will be continued in following months.

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