



Science-Fiction Fanzine

Vol. XVII, No. 8; August, 2005

The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

אייקון 2005

החגיגה השנתית של חובבי המדע הבדיוני, הפנטסיה ומשחקי התפקידים בארץ. הפסטיבל מתקיים זו השנה התשיעית בסינמטק ת"א ובאולמות אשכול-פיס הסמוכים לו בתאריכים 18 - 20 באוקטובר, חול המועד סוכות. הנושא הנבחר לפסטיבל השנה הוא "אשליות", תחום המאכלס את יצירות הז'אנר לאורכן ורוחבן.
הפסטיבל מארח השנה את סופר הפנטסיה **טים פאוורס (שערי אנוביס, הזמנות אחרונה)**.

כנס מיתופיה

ב-25 באוגוסט 2005 יקיימו חברי קהילת **טולקין** וקהילת **הארי פוטר** לבוגרים את כנס מיתופיה, שיוקדש ליצירותיהם של ג. ר. ר. טולקין וג. ק. רולינג. הכנס יכלול הרצאות בנושאים הקשורים לשני הסופרים וליצירותיהם, וכן מרתון אלטרנטיבי של סרטי האנימציה שהוקדשו במשך השנים ליצירותיו של טולקין, **מההוביט ועד שובו של המלך**.
מחירים: 15 ש"ח להרצאה, 20 ש"ח לסרט. חברי אגודה שיציגו את כרטיס החבר שלהם בקופת הכנס יקבלו כרטיס חינם לסרט על כל שני כרטיסים שירכשו.
פרטים נוספים ניתן למצוא ב-<http://www.mythopia.org>.

הוג מדע בדיוני ברחובות – SFIR - Rehovot Science Fiction Club

פעילויות התא מתקיימות בימי א' בשעה 20:00 בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות, חדר 2, בבניין ליד הבריכה. הפעילויות ללא תשלום.

חוג המד"ב ברחובות (SFIR) יצא לפגרת קיץ.

מידע נוסף ניתן לקבל באתר התא (<http://sfir.tk/>) או בדוא"ל sfir42@yahoo.com.

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

Letter to the Editor

Dear Aharon,

Thank you very much for the June *CyberCozen*!

Normally when I receive the letter, I glance at it and put it aside for "later" when I can sit down comfortably to read. Not this time! I saw the heading and read it on the spot, right through to the end, all six pages!

I read the book, *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, so many, many years ago I don't remember the details (like some fans). But I *do* remember I thoroughly enjoyed it, as did my husband. We found the humor a bit "weird" but loved it; and this was long before we had ever heard of Monty Python! After all, we are American-Canadian and British humor was a bit strange.

So, I'm going to see the film as soon as I can.

Thank you.

Clara Rimon

Israeli sf/fantasy Author DAN TSALKA Dies

By Eli Eshed

Major Israeli writer Dan Tsalka recently passed away after a battle with cancer. Tsalka was one of the first fans of American and Polish science fiction in Israel and wrote about those genres in Hebrew articles in the 1960s, among the first of their kind. He himself wrote the best Israeli young adult SF novel ever written *HaMasa HaShelishi shel Aldeberan* [*The Third Voyage of the Aldeberan*] (1979, about a boy who travels in time to various periods in the Land of Israel's past and makes contact with an alien robot who was sent by an intelligence from another star in the Byzantine age).

Tsalka also wrote *Milhemet Bnei Eretz biVnei Shahat* [*The War Between the Children of the Earth and the Children of the Pit*] (Am Oved, 1992), an outstanding young adult fantasy about the battle of King Solomon with a race of devils and their leader Ashmadai, a struggle in which the city of the immortals, Luz, becomes involved. This is one of the best original Hebrew fantasy novels for young adults ever written, if not the very best of all.

More recently he wrote for adults:

B'Siman HaLotus [*Under the Sign of the Lotus*] (Xargol, 2002), a near future thriller about an attempt to crown a descendent of the House of David as King of Israel, which was written in response to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995; he also wrote several short stories on fantastic and cabalistic subjects, usually set in different historical periods.

A year before his death Tsalka won the prestigious Sapir Prize for Literature for his autobiographical work *Tsalka's ABC*. His death is a great loss for Israeli literature.

For more details on Dan Tsalka see:

http://www.ithl.org.il/author_info.asp?id=276

AND

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=588610>

Author Review: Avraham Davidson

By Sara Beck Svetitsky

“Ah, I had such a great collection of baseball cards (or possibly Marvel comic books), if my parents hadn't made me throw them out I'd be rich today”.... this thought is so common it has become a cliché among middle-aged Americans. (It is almost certainly not quite true, either, as the high prices one hears about for these items only apply if they were kept wrapped in plastic, but I digress). Those of us who read science fiction and fantasy in our youth often have similar stories: “I got the paperback of *Nightfall and Other Stories*, or *Who Fears the Devil*, or *What Strange Seas and Skies*, for 25 cents in 1969, and over the years it fell to pieces or went missing, and I really want to read it again, but how?” The good news is that there are now small presses devoted to reprinting classics and, what is even more useful, to printing collections of an author's work that had previously been scattered among magazines (and all the forces that combine to destroy old paperbacks work twice as hard on old copies of *F&SF* or

Analog). The bad news is that they're not 25 cents anymore. You're lucky if they're only 25 dollars.

Which explains how I, a person of no great literary pretensions, have so many books that were printed in runs of 250 or 1000 or at most 2000 from presses with names like Ash Tree Press, Mirage Press, and the New England Science Fiction Association.

The subject of this review is my latest acquisition: *!Limekiller!* (2003), the British Hidalgo stories of Avram Davidson, published by Old Earth Books (which is also re-printing all of Clifford Simak, if any fans are interested). Avram Davidson was, it is generally agreed, the best writer of short fictions ever to work in science fiction / fantasy. Even a casual reader has probably found "The Golem", "Or all the Seas with Oysters", and "Dagon" in different collections. A few years ago Tor books (not exactly a small press, but still very worth-while) published *The Avram Davidson Treasury* (1999), which contains maybe a third of his stories and which all fans of science fiction, fantasy, and good writing should have already bought.

The typical Davidson story has his unique personal voice, not to be mistaken for any other writer: great erudition, playful use of many languages, faithful reporting of dialogue as it is actually spoken, and an almost stream-of-consciousness attention to the character's changing thoughts. His fiction has been described as not so much stories, as the recounting of lives in which stories happen. It is impossible to think about Davidson without wanting to quote from the stories, and all are quotable; a paragraph picked at random (from "The Hills behind Hollywood High", Dorothy has been turned into a gorilla earlier in the story):

"For a moment you had me fooled" said he. "A better-looking gorilla suit I never seen. What, you're embarrassed. Someone should see you rifling the garbage can, you should have what to eat?"

He shook his head from side to side, uttered a heavy sigh which seemed not devoid of sympathy.

"I'm not wearing a gorilla suit!" exclaimed Dorothy.

This time the shake of the head was skeptical. "Listen" said the man. "That LA has one weird what you might call ecology, this I know: possums, coyotes, escaped pythons, the weird pets some people keep because from human beings they don't find empathy: okay. But gorillas? No. Also gorillas don't talk. They make clicking noises is what, with an occasional guttural growl, or a squeal. Say. That was some squeal you gave just now. Give it again."

You can see in that excerpt the sheer fun of following Davidson's writing and hearing the speech of his characters. But in much of Davidson's writing the charming and light style is used for stories that are sad, pessimistic, or frightening; a Davidson story lures the reader in by promising, say, 19th century comedy, and at the end delivers 20th century tragedy. As in "The Slovo Stove", also in the *Treasury*, which starts with cow snout soup and finishes by encapsulating 200 years of loss of ethnicity, culture and learning among immigrants to America.

Davidson's longer fiction does not equal his short, and he did not write linked or series stories, except for the fragments of the Vergil Magus world, the Esterhazy tales, of which more later, and the book at hand. The *Limekiller* stories are the adventures of Jack

Limekiller, Canadian expatriate, who lives on his small boat in the tropical country of British Hidalgo, which is actually modern Belize (Davidson lived there for a while). One of the stories, “Manatee Gals won’t You Come out Tonight”, is well known and in the *Treasury*, but the Old World Press volume is the first re-printing for the other five stories. The *Limekiller* stories showcase Davidson’s special gifts. They use the speech patterns of the different characters faithfully, as the people would really talk: the Bayfolk, Black Arawack, Creole, and Government characters speak in their own distinct voices. Another typical quote:

The Bucket of Blood held at least equal dishonors as Worst Dive in Town, the Poor Man Port had its own vigorous advocates, the Bucket of Blood was nearer. It was reached via a boggy yard; “If me customer gweyn *fahl*, time he leave,” said Bitty Billy Blood, the licensee, ‘I want he *fahl sahft*, live come bock ah nudder day.” “Stone dead hath no fellow”, was Our Mr. Limekiller’s comment. “Fah true, Johnny” was the reply.

And the stories have the typical Davidson rhythm: they start off innocently, humorously, oh-look-at-the-quaint-people-and-the-exotic-tropics, and they slowly turn very scary. As Limekiller bumbles around trying to scrape together a living, by hauling people or things on his boat, he hears bits of stories, random comments from the locals, and deduces that there are things that people don’t want to talk about and places they don’t want to go. Because he is a foreigner and doesn’t know any better, or possibly for some darker reason, he ends up going to those places and finding out first-hand what people don’t want to talk about. Each story by itself is moderately frightening, but the effect of them together is much more than that: it is the slow revealing of the old horrors in the bush, just outside the circle of firelight. The stories appear to be digression after digression, full of detours and irrelevancies (and Davidson was supreme at apparent irrelevancies) and only at the end do we see that every detour actually leads Limekiller further into the trap.

And what happens when the grim secret of the Bloody Man, or the Manatee Gals, or the Silky Tree is revealed? Not much, actually; that is the really scary thing about British Hidalgo. Limekiller may be shocked, horrified, hysterical, but the locals already knew that there are horrors outside the firelight, and that the past is the present in “the mindless tropical forever”. Limekiller has a series of nightmares that tell him where to find a treasure map; when he properly turns over the map to the local constables they ask him, naturally, how he came to be looking for it underwater in a crocodile den. Limekiller has no idea what to say, and a local friend says quite simply “Old Pike dreamed it to him”. There is a pause, and then the constable tells the clerk firmly: “Write: *Acting on information received...*”

These are excellent stories, any of them are as good as most of the stories in the *Treasury* and “Sleep Well of Nights” and “Here Beneath the Silky Tree” are worthy to join “Manatee Gals” on the 10 Best list. With this book, and the *Treasury*, the only first-rate Davidson we are missing are the Dr. Esterhazy stories, which showcase Davidson’s historical erudition; they are set in the 19th century Triune Monarchy (don’t bother looking for it on the map) and are also excellent, funny and scary. Old Earth Press is reprinting them too, but I haven’t ordered them yet. I haven’t given up hope that the paperback I got decades ago in Berkeley is going to turn up again.

Short Book Review by Aharon Sheer

The Lifeship by Gordon R. Dickson and Harry Harrison (1976), 251 pages.

Gordon Dickson's great talent is in describing alien societies convincingly. Although he wrote the popular *Dorsai* series, which I didn't like, his best books to my mind are singletons in which the central interest is contact between man and alien beings. This book has a curious additional feature: The distant future described has mankind divided into two stratas: The "Adelman" are superior humans whose job is to make decisions and take responsibilities, and the "Arbiters" are those whose job is to work and obey orders. [Note: "adel" in German means "aristocracy", so an "adelman" should be an aristocrat. "arbeiter" in German means "worker".] An Adelman, a group of Arbiters, and one alien member of the alien Albenareth race find themselves in a lifeship after the space ship they were in was destroyed by an explosion. To the Adelman and to the Albenareth this looks like a two-man situation: The one Adelman, who sees himself as having to represent all the humans on board the lifeship, opposite the alien; both see the opinions of the Arbiters as irrelevant. What is important about the alien is that the Albenareth have provided humankind with space travel. Only the alien is capable of flying the lifeship. In this artificial situation we have a story about getting to know one another. The Adelman is forced, for the first time in his life, to find out what the Arbiters are like as human beings, and not just as his slaves. He also has the opportunity to get personally and deeply acquainted with an Albenareth. There is also a problem: the alien insists on continuing on to the space ship's original destination, even though there is not enough food in the lifeship to get them there alive. This is a matter of pride for the alien. There are also a number of puzzles to be solved. This is not a great novel, but I enjoyed most of it.

Quote of the Month:

"We know that the cosmic clockwork can go haywire. It won't happen quickly, but there may be some big changes to the solar system on the way. The underlying reason is chaos – chaos in the sense of 'chaos theory', with all those fancy multicoloured 'fractal' things, a rapidly expanding area of mathematics which is invading all of the other sciences. Chaos teaches us that simple rules need not lead to simple behavior.... In fact, simple rules can lead to behavior that in certain respects has distinct elements of randomness. Chaotic systems start out behaving predictably, but after you cross some 'prediction horizon' all predictions fail. Weather is chaotic, with a prediction horizon of about four days. The solar system, we now know, is chaotic, with a prediction horizon of tens of millions of years. For example, we can't be sure which side of the Sun Pluto will be in a hundred million years time. It will be in the same *orbit*, but its position in that orbit is completely uncertain."

From *The Science of Discworld* by Terry Pratchett, Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen, p. 117

For Comments: 13 Pinsker St., Rehovot 76308. Email: asheer@netvision.net.il. Tel: Aharon Sheer 08-947-1225

Editor: Aharon Sheer. Logo by: Miriam Ben-Loulu

For mail delivery of *CyberCozen*, please donate 30 shekels per YEAR; For airmail to US \$15; If Aharon Sheer can hand-deliver it, 15 shekels. For **free email delivery** write to asheer@netvision.net.il (specify XP Word format, or RTF format).

rightCopy © 2005

All Rights reserved to specified authors and artists.

כל הזכויות שמורות למחברים וליוצרים, כפי שצוינו.