



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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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)**.

חוג 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.

סדרת הרצאה + סרט

בעמוד זה: http://www.sf-f.org.il/story_776 תוכלו למצוא פרטים על סדרת ההרצאות+סרט "יקומים בדיוניים בעולם הקולנוע" של **גיא חסון** בסינמטק ת"א. הפגישות תתקיימנה בשבתות.

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

שנה טובה – Happy New Year

Correction: In the print edition of the August *CyberCozen* there was an error in the obituary of **Israeli sf/fantasy Author DAN TSALKA**. The next-to-last sentence should have read: "A year before his death Tsalka won the prestigious Sapir Prize for Literature for his autobiographical work *Tsalka's ABC*." The error was later corrected in the version sent out by email.

Personal Commentary by Mordechai Housman

I read with interest Mr. Eli Eshed's **Survey of Israeli SF & F in '04** in the July issue of *CyberCozen*. At one point in his survey, Mr. Eshed briefly describes two Hebrew novels by Gill Illutowich: *Tikun*, and *Yesh Kan Mishehu?* I wish to comment on his remarks about both of those novels. Please note that I am writing about *Eli Eshed*'s remarks, not about the books themselves, which I have not yet read.

In the novel *Tikun*, Eli describes, "it was discovered that the Jewish people are the creation of a secret and illegal experiment of an alien race." A similar belief already exists, and it sounds like it comes straight out of a science fiction novel. The self-styled "Nation of Islam" religion, founded by Wallace Fard in the 1930s (one of the four splinter groups is currently headed by Louis Farrakhan), believes and publicly teaches

that originally all people were black. All the black people, i.e., all the original people, are (were? How did they lose it?) gods, since they descended from the original black deities of the universe. "Allah" was one of those gods (according to one variant version). The black race created the heavens and the earth and created themselves. It's not clear in what order they did those two things, and I wouldn't assume the obvious in this case.

Anyway, around 6,000 years ago, a scientist named Yacub (the same scientist who, they say, accidentally created the moon during a laboratory explosion) was one of the council of 24 black scientist-gods. Yacub created the white race as a race of devils to strike back at the black race. He created the white race from "evil."

Incidentally, these people also believe that there exists a great spaceship waiting to take all the black "Moslims" away. (Not soon enough, unfortunately.) In fact, Farrakhan has publicly stated that 1,500 little space ships follow him around at all times. So you can see where he's coming from.

As Aharon Sheer once mentioned in an issue of *CyberCozen*, the word "astronaut" has another meaning in colloquial Hebrew. In English, we used to call such people "space cadets." I have to admit, I wonder why it isn't legal to simply drag Farrakhan away and lock him up in an insane asylum and medicate him so heavily that he can't remember where his feet are. They do it to people who are so much less dangerous, and without their consent. Or so I hear. (Please understand that I have nothing against Blacks. I just don't like people who believe that all Whites are devils and must be destroyed.)

So is this a case of science fiction predicting the, er, truth? Some of these beliefs date back to '65, and some of them as far back as the 1930's. Did Illutowich (remember him?) get the idea from them? Or did someone's personal reality predict a science fiction book? How does this compare to L. Ron Hubbard's career?

We might also mention the similarity to an idea in Karel Capek's play *R.U.R.*, in which very humanoid robots (what later came to be called androids) are created and eventually take over the earth. What is further striking about this example is how Walter Miller cited this play in his *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. He has a character make the claim that all extant human beings are actually descendants of those robots, and are therefore not G-d's original creations, but a race constructed by humans. Amusingly, the abbot rejoinders that the prevailing theory is that the story is from a parable. In that post-apocalyptic era, the concept of science fiction must be long forgotten.

Which brings us to the second novel Mr. Eshed mentions, Illutowich's *Yesh Kan Mishehu?*, in which, Eli says, an Israeli man awakens into a reality in which he and a Palestinian woman are the only living beings. At this point I almost hate to say this, but I'm pretty sure that I've also already seen the idea done where the last two people left alive are sworn enemies.

One example that comes to mind is *Enemy Mine*, by Barry Longyear. In that one, gender was not an issue at all. The human was male, and the Drac, like all Dracs, was

asexual. Furthermore, they were not the last two people left alive in the world, but two people, members of enemy races, stranded together on a barren planet. The human learns to appreciate the profundity of the alien race and its religion (distilled in a book called the Tal-man, whose name sounds suspiciously like the “Talmud,” but never mind), but has nothing to offer the alien in return besides some sayings from Mickey Mouse. (One wonders if Longyear has so little respect for human culture that he could find *nothing* of value in any of this world’s religions or creeds.) The end of the story seems to promise that this human will work successfully towards a distant future that will bring together the two races in harmony and mutual respect.

A completely different treatment of the subject was done much earlier by *Star Trek: The Original Series*, where the last living two men of rival races, one with black skin on his right side and white skin on his left side, and the other with the reverse, wind up locked in an eternal struggle because they couldn’t settle the battle over the meaningless racial difference that caused their respective races to destroy each other. It’s a poignant episode, with a moral lesson much needed in America, but a bit pedestrian and obvious (maybe “pushy” is the right term here). The two apparently kill each other, which does nothing to explain how a female member of one of those two races shows up in an episode of *Star Trek: TNG*, which is supposed to take place almost a century later.

Another example is a *Twilight Zone* episode, in which the nuclear apocalypse has just taken place, and an American man named Adam meets a (Russian?) woman whose name you’ll *never* guess in a million years, and they wind up deciding to stay together. So she feeds him an apple from a tree she comes across. This episode had no point at all, or at least none that was apparent to me. If the point was to tell us that bitter enemies can make peace when necessary, and for the future of humanity, or simply out of loneliness, then why bring in all the Eden references? Interestingly, if we were to take this version to the next stage, we could imagine the constant battling between the two parents as the backdrop for the mortal struggle between Cain and Abel.

The honorable Mr. Eshed doesn’t tell us about the quality of Illutowich’s work, but if his treatment and prose and so forth are good, then all the more power to him for making good use of those ideas.

On another note, at the end of Mr. Eshed’s survey, he mentions a “thriving industry” of Ultra-Orthodox cinema. Surely this is a misprint of some sort. The Ultra-Orthodox, generally, don’t go to the cinema. The exceptions surely are not sufficiently numerous to float an entire film industry, or even one sub-genre thereof. Perhaps he meant “Orthodox,” not “Ultra-Orthodox?” The Orthodox that are not so-called “Ultra” do often attend the cinema, and do often have televisions in their homes, though this is probably not a given. To clarify, we so-called “Ultra-Orthodox” are the ones who generally refer to ourselves as “Charedi” (though I’m not a typical example). I’m sure you’ve heard of us. I cannot imagine there existing a Charedi cinema or film industry.

Shanah Tovah to all!

Eli Eshed replies:

With respect to “**Ultra-Orthodox cinema**”: No, this is not a mistake. In the last few years there has developed a thriving ultra-orthodox movie industry of cassettes and computer movies, and it is developing all the time. At the beginning it produced quite simple religious movies but now it has become the Israeli equivalent of the B movie industry in the States of films done incredibly quickly.

For a full description in Hebrew of this industry see:

<http://www.notes.co.il/eshed/9514.asp>

STAR TREK Book Review -- Submitted by Gary Roth

Avenger (the sequel to the New York Times Bestseller **The Return**) by William Shatner, with Judith Reeves-Stevens and Garfield Reeves-Stevens (1997), 370 pages.

Upon seeing Mr. Shatner's name on the cover, my first thought was that the purpose was to sell more books; that the story would not be very good. Boy, was I pleasantly surprised! This was the best **Star Trek** book ever, despite some minor questionable points (like Dr. McCoy appearing at age 146, while Kirk was 62 years old at the same time). The most amazing marvel of this novel is the variety, breadth, and depth of the characters, not to mention the mind-boggling number of turns-of-events and endless changes of locale throughout the universe. For example, Kirk comes across: an old lost love, a new potential love many years his junior, Picard, Spock, McCoy, and plenty of others. He also looks for meaning in life as a civilian after reviewing a childhood, life-threatening encounter with Sarek and Gov. Kodos, and remembering a brush with death via the Borg. Also, while he isn't the least bit interested in returning to space life, he is reluctantly pulled back into the command chair during a galaxy-wide emergency.

Here's the plot: a lethal virus

threatens the entire Federation with starvation and dissolution. Hostile alien empires eye the Federation with malevolence. Despite quarantines throughout the universe, the disease has collapsed ecosystems on many worlds and continues to spread, thanks to a group called the Symmetrists. These people began as a peaceful, political force but transformed into a radical, sinister, underground organization, spanning a number of planets and races. Meanwhile, Spock is determined to solve the mystery of his father Sarek's death -- by a naturally-occurring disease or inoculation from an unknown source. Of course, Spock's investigation ultimately leads to reuniting with Kirk, although the first meeting finds the two attempting to choke each other to death in the dark, with the identity of each unknown to the other until a flash of light comes to the rescue.

Some of the highlights are: Deanna Troi enjoys a brief period of command, with some aroused feelings of anger, and looks forward to revenge as well as another opportunity to lead;

Spock unsuspectingly suffers betrayal from his own close aide, in spite of a similar episode in which his father's aide committed suicide after doing much damage to the former ambassador; well-meaning biologists attempt to restore balance on a world effected by the virus, but in the process do more damage than good, which spirals into disaster; the good guys are imprisoned in holodeck-like cells and manage to ingeniously outwit the computer simulations to escape;

Kirk, on a science vessel, pulls a sneaky maneuver on the *Enterprise* with Riker at the helm and Picard in quarantine, in the process disabling the latter and warping away in the former; Picard, on a mission to solve the mysterious spread of the virus, is captured by the officer in charge of the planet that he is visiting, and then is miraculously rescued at the last second; a young Vulcan in a Star Fleet ship seemingly causes self-destruction, but in reality disappeared to another location; Kirk learned mind-melding and healing techniques from foreigners; Kirk knocks-out Picard during a standoff in which only one of the two captains could be

beamed to safety, and each one ordered that the other be beamed up (obviously the unconscious officer lost, due to another infamous trick); Kirk manages to upend a fleet of attacking spaceships with a nifty use of physics from his outmatched science vessel; a lady officer saves Kirk from certain death when a wounded Vulcan was about to shoot, and later steals his thunder during a shootout toward the end; etc.

The ending of the book is almost anticlimactic -- the fun of this story consists of the many intelligently-crafted action adventures that precede the denouement. Much effort was invested in explaining the reasoning behind each decision, and both interpersonal and intergenerational relationships were exploited to the max. Here's one of those gems: the female commander attempted to express her admiration for Kirk by recalling how his achievements were part of the standard Star Fleet history course, but this naturally led the senior officer to feel exceedingly old. The bottom line -- this book is a classic and a must-read for any **Star Trek** fan.

Note: there is a sample from the book *Icefire* from the last two authors appended to this book, which is a nice bonus.

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