



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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### The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

#### מחווה לאורסון וולס, לציון 70 שנה לצאת הסרט "האזרח קיין"

יערך ביום חמישי, 24.2.11 בשעות 18:30-21:30, [מרכז תרבות בבית אריאלה](#). ערב העיון יכלול הקרנת קטעי סרטים וראיונות עם אורסון וולס. לפרטים מלאים, תוכניה ומחירים, כולל הנחה לחברי האגודה, ראו [באתר האגודה](#).

#### הרצאות החודש בסדרה "בין מדע למדע בדיוני"

20.2.2011 – [Is there anybody out there](#): על חוצנים וחייזרים, אקסוביולוגיה ודימויים של חיים מחוץ לכדור הארץ. ההרצאה תעסוק גם במתודולוגיה המחקרית של חיפוש חיים נבונים מחוץ לכדור הארץ ותדון בהשלכות החברתיות של גילוי אפשרי של צורת חיים חוצנית בעלת תבונה וטכנולוגיה. ירצה אילן מנוליס, מנהל מצפה הכוכבים של מכון ויצמן למדע והישראלי הראשון שנקרא על שמו אסטרואידי.

מפגשי הסדרה מתקיימים בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות בימי א', בשעות: 20:00-21:30. לפרטים והרשמה פנו אל מירי צעדי-עדן, בטלפון: 08-9489996/510, בדוא"ל: [miritz@savion.huji.ac.il](mailto:miritz@savion.huji.ac.il), או בפקס: 08-9470171. תינתן הנחה לחברי האגודה.

#### מועדון הקריאה

במרכז דיוני מועדון הקריאה בחודש פברואר יעמוד הספר "עולם הסוף" מאת אופיר טושה גפלה. מועדון הקריאה בתל אביב יתקיים ביום רביעי, 23 בפברואר, בשעה 19:30 בבית הקפה "קפה קפה" ברחוב אבן גבירול 38 בתל אביב. מנחה המפגש: ליאת שחר. לצורך היערכות למספר המשתתפים, מומלץ להירשם מראש באמצעות הדוא"ל, בכתובת [liat42@gmail.com](mailto:liat42@gmail.com), כמו כן, רצוי להביא למפגש עותק של הספר. ההשתתפות במועדון הקריאה אינה כרוכה בתשלום, אינה מותנית בהגעה למפגשים נוספים, ופתוחה גם למי שאינם חברי אגודה. פרטים על מפגשי המועדון הנוספים שיעסקו בספר זה יתפרסמו באתר האגודה. המעוניינים להנחות מועדוני קריאה בכל רחבי הארץ מוזמנים לפנות בדוא"ל למרכזת הפרויקט, ליאת שחר: [liat42@gmail.com](mailto:liat42@gmail.com).

#### אוהבי ספרות המקור נקראים לדגל!

"היה יהיה", אסופת ספרות מקור ישראלית, יצאה השנה בפעם השנייה. מדובר באחת הבמות הבודדות לפרסום סיפורי מקור בדפוס, ומטרתה להגיע לתפוצה רחבה ככל האפשר. השנה, השנתון של האגודה יצא והופץ בשיתוף הוצאת אודיסאה, כשהאגודה לוקחת על עצמה את האחריות לקדם וליחצ'ן אותו. לאגודה דרושים מתנדבים שיפרסמו את השנתון ברשת ומחוצה לה ויעלו רעיונות לדרכים נוספות לעשות זאת.

לפרטים ולתנדבות [skipeshet@walla.com](mailto:skipeshet@walla.com) יש לפנות להדס משגב בדוא"ל:

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

## Book Reviews by Aharon Sheer

### *Nor Crystal Tears* by Allen Dean Foster (1982), 231 pages.

Foster (b. 1946, one of the youngest sf writers writing today) writes entertaining books. One of his nice ideas is a series of books about three

space-faring races, all using faster-than-light drives and all out to explore the universe. Besides Man, he has the insectlike Thranx and the reptilian

AAnn. This book is a first contact story between Man and the Thranx, but with an amusing twist. It's told from the point of view of a Thranx.

Still, I can see it from the human side. A human ship has run into technical problems and stops in the middle of space to make repairs. One of the ship's crew is wandering around the corridors of the ship when she encounters a cockroach! What is a cockroach doing on a spaceship? Worse yet, this cockroach is more than a meter long! What would be your reaction? Step on the cockroach? But what if the cockroach fights back?

Foster starts the book telling us about the life cycle of the Thranx. They are hatched from eggs, become larvae. "a lumpish, meter-and-a-half-long cylindrical mass of mottled white flesh." [p. 1] Only after years can they leave the cocoon and become adults. These larvae are intelligent, have limited abilities to talk, and a great ability to learn. Their early years are spent being taught by specialists, who have learned how to communicate with the larvae. "Teaching machines murmured their endless litany to the studious. Other adults occasionally came to visit, including a pair who identified themselves as his own parents...."

"He mastered High and Low Thranx, although he could properly speak neither. He learned physics and chemistry and basic biology...."

The larval years are spent underground, the ancient living space of the Thranx. "History told how the social arthropods known as the Thranx first mastered Hivehom, adapting to existence above as well as below the surface, and then spread to other worlds."

Foster's hero, "Ryo, of the Family Zen, of the Clan Zu, of the Hive Zex", was unusual. Where most larvae showed a clear preference for one type of learning, which would determine what

they would do as adults, Ryo wanted to learn everything. Most larvae wanted to be socially involved, live underground with the rest of the Thranx, work together with many others. Ryo tended to be solitary. As an adult his work would be aboveground, in the fields, caring for equipment. It was in the fields that he had his first contact with aliens: an AAnn shuttle attacked, killing and destroying. The AAnn would never dare attack the home planet of Hivehom, which was heavily populated and well-defended. Instead these vicious reptilian creatures attacked Thranx colony worlds for sport. Since Ryo worked above ground, he was one of the first that observed the aliens. He became a hero to his own people by attacking and driving away the cruel AAnn. But this also aroused his curiosity about aliens.

Not long afterwards he was privileged to see a message from a spacefaring relative who reported their having discovered a new form of alien life on an alien spaceship. Ryo was very excited by this, and wanted to drop everything and go to see these new aliens. But the response of his Clan was very negative. His relative had since denied the whole story. Ryo was soon to be married and a responsible adult. He was forbidden to have anything to do with this whole matter. Ryo quietly agreed with his Clan that they were right.

But after a few months, Ryo simply slipped away and left.

Foster tells us of Ryo's difficult adventures, and his lucky successes, particularly in meeting with a famous and wealthy poet strongly attracted to Ryo's unusual story of new aliens. The poet provides advice and cash and companionship on their travels, and eventually – near the end of the book – Ryo and the poet make the acquaintance of the humans who have been imprisoned by the Thranx. It seems that while Thranx never fight, and have lived

in peace for thousands of years, human beings still lose their tempers and may even strike one another. Having observed such horrifying violent behavior among the human prisoners convinces the Thranx army that there can be no contact with humans, ever.

Ryo thinks otherwise, and manages to learn to speak a human language, which none of the other Thranx had managed to do. ("It was a constant struggle to talk only with air and not with your limbs and body." [p. 191])

"Humans were practically blind in weak light. They really are an amazing

species, he mused. Consider what they have accomplished with poor vision, poor hearing, a weak sense of smell, no faz ability at all, and half the sensible number of limbs. Not to mention the burden of wearing their skeletons inside out. Quite remarkable." [p. 203]

And then Ryo has to persuade both sides to take a more cooperative view of things, to prove to them that the two races can live and work together. An optimistic ending.

### ***Standing Wave* by Howard V. Hendrix (1998), 386 pages.**

Howard V. Hendrix (b. 1959) has a BA in Biology, and both an MA and a Ph.D. in English Literature. He also seems to be one of the biggest bull-shitters in modern sf. This book is so filled with pseudo-philosophical crap that it was hard for me to finish it. One thing he's good at is getting into the heads of his characters. He has created a series of philosophical people who successively fill the pages with their deep ideas and (in several cases) their incomprehensible (but highly significant) poetry.

Nevertheless he creates vignettes about these people which can be gripping as much as they are disgusting. I don't know what other people think of him, but I expect he is controversial.

Hendrix's first novel was *Lightpaths* (1997). It was followed by *Standing Wave* (1998), set in the same SF universe. *Better Angels* (1999) is a prequel to the other two. The following is from a Locus interview with Hendrix, published in 1999:

"Of the novels, *Lightpaths* is much more a biological and sociological novel, whereas *Standing Wave* is more of a novel of physics, philosophy, and apocalypse. The third novel, *Better Angels*, has an odd relationship to the others.

"The background for the first novel came from my long-term interest in utopian and apocalyptic ideas. ... the left hand of apocalypse is the right hand of utopia. There are very similar pushes, because both are initially viewed as end-points to history. Utopias are often seen as a static non-changing future, while apocalypses are the abrupt end. In *my* utopia, it is not something that ends – it changes, shifts, a constant goal that's never really achieved.

"I was trying to deal with how imperfect humans can make a more perfect society. So I set it aboard an orbital habitat which, of course, is threatened, because isolated places are always threatened. And I tried to work out a number of social, political, and biological issues."

Here are some quotes from *Standing Wave*, to give some of the flavor of the book. Mei Ling, retired, builds a wooden maze, and lets sea water flow through it:

"As the weeks passed, Mei Ling became more and more the connoisseur of chaos as a subtler form of order. The waves in the maze behaved in a manner that was neither quite random nor quite predictable, and it was exactly there that

beauty lay. Like the round of her days here, there was something quite soothing about them as, tide after tide, seated on the sand, she watched the wave maze and logged in the endless variations the waves created in their interaction with it. The tidal bore was never boring.” [p. 17]

Can one rely on computers to make really important decisions? A chemical megacorp has a solution:

“A young woman from an ‘economically stressed’ family had been head-shot into a coma by youths holding up the Kwikstore where she’d been working. ...soon enough the damaged woman had been *volunteered* by her family to serve as a ‘minder’, an overseer of all the chemical conglomerate’s toxic waste monitoring facilities.

“In exchange for Big Chem paying all her hospital bills, the comatose young woman had been interfaced to Big Chem machines so that she completely oversaw their toxic waste reprocessing concerns. Good for Big Chem’s bottomline, good for the family’s budget, even if it did smack vaguely of slavery.” [p. 21]

The Allessah is an artificial alien object with which some Earth people can communicate.

“‘As nearly as I could tell,’ she began cautiously, ‘it started out as a joint venture of a number of expansionist spacefaring cultures. Something like ten million years ago. What became the Allessah began as a distributed structure of self-replicating, self-improving information retrieval, storage and transmission devices. The only human things I’ve come across that parallel its initial design are what are called Von Neumann probes. Or maybe nodes of an artificial galactic nervous system, only each point along it a satellite-library vastly

more infodense than Earth’s entire noosphere.” [p. 64]

Some people interfacing with the network suddenly die horribly. Investigators look at a video of what happened:

“‘This is normal speed,’ Lanier said as they watched. ‘It begins from the point of view of the user, in this case a North London businessman, Walter Oliver. He is working with data belonging to Crystal Memory Dynamics, his employer, through a pirate virtual mail system called SubTerPost. That’s their logo there, the post horn with all the extra spirals in it. Oliver has his terminal’s camera in room-surround mode – that’s his real-time image, the overlay in the lower left hand corner. Here it comes.’

“As Mei-Ling watched, a cascade of data suddenly poured into Oliver’s node in the infosphere. The man in the lower left-hand corner began to grope about in severe agitation. Lanier isolated and blew up the image-stream taken from Oliver’s room camera. Lights flashed on either side of Oliver, his image and the space around him seeming to distort for an instant. Then it appeared to Mei-Ling that she really was watching an almost explosive eversion, the turning inside-out of a human being – a bursting loose of splattering blood and gore. Where, an instant before, a man in a business suit had sat, now there was only intestines and other viscera steaming on a lumpy broken mound.” [p. 85]

And here is a little philosophizing:

“... he wondered now why it should be that matter-energy was supposed to come first, and consciousness was supposed to arise out of that. Why couldn’t consciousness come first, then

matter and energy precipitate out of it, instead? Why was it that matter and energy were supposed to shape space and time? Why didn't space and time shape matter and energy?

"At the very least, he thought, there should be some kind of synergistic process whereby consciousness, space-time, and matter-energy all interacted strongly with each other, even if phrasing it this way did make it sound as if space-time and consciousness were somehow two types of the same thing..." [p. 146]

And then there is Dundas, one of the evil people of the book, a Christian fanatic who has infiltrated a peaceful nature-loving society that tries to live without metal machines:

"He looked at them now, in their simple homespun garments,

gazing in rapture up at the tall trees. From what he overheard them saying, he knew that, instead of seeing the big trees as examples of the divine handiwork put on Earth for Man's use, they were reveling in the fact that the trees had been 'preserved' from the timbermen....

"Their kind were all meddlers, muddlers, lumpers, makers of mud people, Dundas thought. No respect for what God's will decreed about boundaries between sexes, races, and species. Making everything and everybody a big mess of 'equal rights'. Denying God's ordained hierarchy and ready to unleash anarchy in its stead." [p. 164]

I hope these quotes give you a fair taste of this strange book.

## Drawing by Miriam Ben-Loulou (January 1995)



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