

Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

הרצאות החודש בסדרה "בין מדע למדע בדיוני"

מרצה החודש: ד"ר אבשלום אליצור, פיזיקאי שמחקריו עוסקים בתורת המדידה הקוונטית וביחסות כללית. שימש מרצה ופרופסור-אורח באוניברסיטאות ומכונים מדעיים בארץ ובחו"ל, ממקימי "אייר, המכון הישראלי למחקר מתקדם"

23.1.2011 **הקוונטים**: ממדע בדיוני לטכנולוגיה ממשית

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@savign.ac.il, או בפקס: 08-9470171.

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.

skipeshet@walla.com להתנדבות ולפרטים 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 Review by Aharon Sheer

Queen City Jazz by Kathleen Ann Goonan (1994), 465 pages.

From Wikipedia: **Kathleen Ann Goonan** (born 14 May 1952) is an American science fiction writer. Several of her books have been nominated for the Nebula Award. Her debut novel **Queen City Jazz** was a **New York Times** Notable Book of the Year, and her most recent novel **In War Times** was chosen by the American Library Association as Best Science Fiction Novel for their 2008 reading list. In July 2008, **In War Times** won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for Best Science Fiction Novel.

Queen City Jazz is an anti-nanotechnology sf novel. The pushers of nanotechnology ("nan") imagine a future in which food, clothing, housing, everything will be created by tiny invisible-to-the-eye machines that will manufacture everything we need for life out of raw materials. The dreamers do not see any problems with sources of energy, disposal of waste, everything will be free. Noonan imagines a future world in which one city after another has converted to nanotechnology, and the residents of these cities will live the good life, free of worries.

The heroine, a young woman named Verity, doesn't know where she came from or who her parents are. She has been adopted by a modern equivalent of a Shaker community that called itself Shaker Hill. The Shakers were groups that established communities in the early 1800s based on the idea that no member of the community would have sex or give birth to children. Instead the Shakers adopted orphans, raised them, and integrated them into their communities. This book's Shakers have rejected

modern nanotechnology, and refuse to have any contact with the big cities dominated by nanotechnology. They grow their own food, they build their houses out of raw materials, and they make their own clothing.

But in this world many of the wonderful cities of nanotechnology have been attacked and corrupted by some kind of plague that affects not only the operation of the city but also the people living there.

The great danger to the Shaker communities is wanderers affected by this plague. If such wanderers infect the residents of Shaker Hill, the infected ones will go crazy. The Shakers must deal harshly with any visitors who might be infected.

Despite all this, Verity is fascinated by the cities – or what is left of them. Many cities have been essentially abandoned, although there are parts of the cities that are still functioning without any residents. The libraries, for example. Verity sometimes slips off and goes to the nearby city of Dayton, Ohio, to explore the library, and to learn all kinds of things which excite her very much. The computerized information systems are still working, and she can learn much about the world. Such visits are of course not encouraged in Shaker Hill.

The first part of the book describes the ideal life of Verity's adopting Shaker Hill, with its cooperation, affection, and mutual help. Verity knows that she is strange, for she has little nodules behind her ears which none of the others have. She also has a radio stone, with which she can sometimes hear radio broadcasts from cities that are still functioning, like Norleans, or Tokyo.

One of her friends in Shaker Hill is a man named Blaze. Shaker Hill is near a river, and Blaze had told Verity about the river:

“The New Ohio River had never been bridged, at least not for the length they knew. Blaze had told her that the seeds for an infinite number of bridges, with designs that stunned the heart and eye, were hidden somewhere in Cincinnati. ‘All of civilization lies buried there,’ he’d said toward the end, eyes flashing, as if he himself wanted to go and activate the seeds, as if they were presents to be opened and passed out.

“Standing next to the near-freezing river as the wind buffeted her back, Verity was pretty sure that she didn’t believe him. If all that was there, why didn’t people use it? Blaze just said that the things nan could do were as dangerous as they were beautiful, and that was what made it so fascinating. Something about how the very shape of matter could be shifted and changed and used, almost as easily, once it was all set up, as just *thinking* about it, and about how that was so glorious.” [p. 79]

Later on, Verity flees from an attack of the plague which destroys Shaker Hill, and ends up going to the city of Cincinnati. Although not perfect, Cincinnati has many functioning features. The streets are filled with people, many of whom, however, are holograms, appearing only to help fill up the streets. The stores function, and one can go in and get food or clothing free of charge. But often some of the other customers are not real people. There are nightclubs filled with musicians, and audiences, and Verity loves especially the clubs with jazz music, and becomes friends with one of the musicians, a man named Sphere.

During the day giant Flowers open up over the city, presumably collecting energy from sunlight to power the city. And at night:

“Cincinnati was slowly lighting up. Against dusk, it glowed like a lightstick, all different colors. The tightly furled Flowers were lit from beneath and sheathed in shadow, and tiny lights that were windows blinked on, building by building, until the entire City was glowing, madly, challenging the stars.” [p. 113]

Verity is welcomed by a Cincinnati family that invites her into their house, gives her food and a bed. They also provide her with a book:

“...she reached over and picked up the book called, *Cincinnati, the Queen City*.

“Verity rubbed her fingers over the embossed Bee on the green cloth cover, then opened the book and read:

“Cincinnati is the fourth city in North America to vote for Conversion, on the historic date of October 28, 2032. Since then, a few short years ago, like all the Flower Cities, it has enjoyed a standard of living unparalleled since the beginning of time. Communication has not only been restored, it is conducted at a faster rate and with both a greater accuracy and a wider emotional bandwidth than ever before.

“Congratulations on your choice as well as on your acceptance as a provisional citizen of our beautiful Queen City. For those who are apprehensive about nan, we have provided this book to inform you and set your mind at ease. You are of course free to use any of the various nodes around the City to get the same information and we hope that once you are more fully informed, you will set this book aside and begin to access our great Queen City directly.” [p. 183]

It’s winter, and Verity rides through the snow-covered streets on a sled:

“The holos became more frequent as Verity got closer to the taller buildings. She flew past them, and sometimes through them if they happened all of a sudden, and finally she dragged her feet to slow the sled because she was afraid one of them might turn out to be real.” [p. 191]

One of the buildings Verity sees in Cincinnati is the old train station, Union Station:

“She pressed her forehead against the window and saw the powerful, overwhelmingly beautiful arch of Union Station come alight, specially placed spotlights throwing the huge columns into relief.

“But the railyards were deserted and beyond them, beyond the dark hills surrounding Cincinnati, were the wide and deserted Great Plains, and legendary Denver, and all the other Flower Cities that had become infected: Seattle, San Francisco, Houston. On the old weathersats they had been constellations of light, like those in Europe or Asia. What had happened to them, she wondered, the Flower Cities on other continents? She remembered Tokyo on the radio stone. And Russ [in Shaker Hill] had spoken of Information Wars, once: swift and deadly, nan viruses added to one City, and then transmitted down the maglines, infecting the others.

“Perhaps, like Cincinnati, their electricity still lived, transmitted only to the eyes of Bees and Ghosts. But Columbus had been a Flower City, part of the NN, the Nanotech Network, and it was dead now. The buildings themselves looked like withered husks.” [p. 234-235]

Verity shares a room with her musician friend, Sphere:

“Their small room had wallpaper of vines and hydrangeas. The hydrangea blossoms, large and pink, appeared to be flying through the air as if they were in a hurry to get somewhere and do something.

“Verity sat up, swung her legs around until her feet touched the bare wood floor. She was surprised to find it warm. She stretched and the covers fell back from her shoulders.

“She poured water from a pitcher into a bowl and splashed water on her face, dried it. Much better. She walked over to the double-hung window and struggled to

raise it, then noticed a small circle of the wood sill that was not wood glowing. She touched it and the window slid up.

"She leaned out into the morning. She was wearing nothing and she didn't care. Everyone would think she was part of some story.

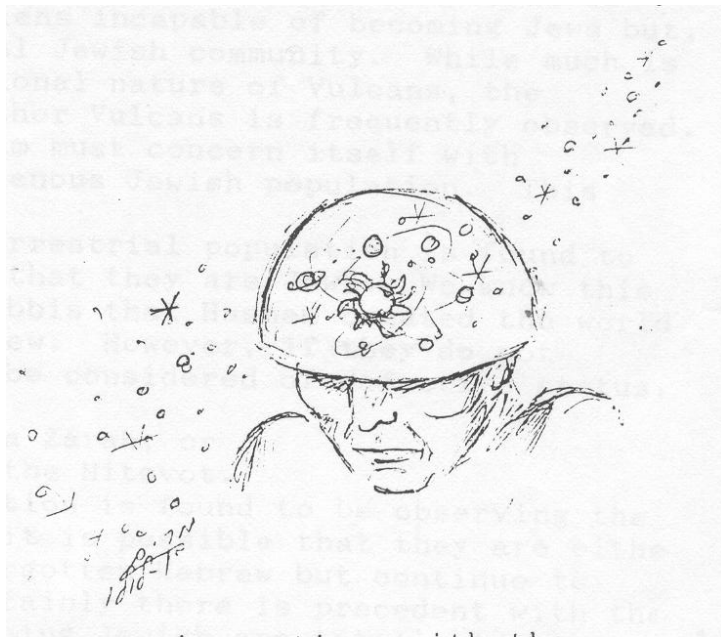
"And of course, she was.

"The City never eased to amaze her.

"Above, the Flowers were unfurling toward the sun. The hum of Bees seemed to resonate in her bones." [p. 337]

There is much more in this book. The style is strange, the atmosphere is strange, the characters strange. I read it a little bit at a time; it was too rich to read all at once. Worth trying, but you might not like it.

Artwork by Miriam Ben-Loulou (August 1993)



Two Quotes of the Month by Kay Redfield Jamison:

First Quote of the Month:

'Within psychiatric circles, if you kill yourself, you earn the right to be considered a "successful" suicide. This is a success one can live without. Suicidal depression, I decided in the midst of my indescribably awful, eighteen-month bout of it, is God's way of keeping manics in their place. It works. Profound melancholia is a day-in, day-out, night-in, night-out, almost arterial level of agony. It is a pitiless, unrelenting pain that affords no window of hope, no alternative to a grim and brackish existence, and no respite from the cold undercurrents of thought and feeling that dominate the horribly restless nights of despair. There is an assumption, in attaching Puritan concepts such as "successful" and "unsuccessful" to the awful, final act of suicide, that those who "fail" at killing themselves not only are weak, but incompetent, incapable even of getting their dying quite right. Suicide, however, is almost always an irrational act and seldom is it accompanied by the kind of rigorous intellect that goes

with one's better days. It is also often impulsive and not necessarily undertaken in the way one originally planned.'

From *An Unquiet Mind* by Kay Redfield Jamison, 1995, p. 114

Psychologist Kay Jamison, as you may have guessed, suffers from Bipolar Disorder, what was once called (and probably should still be called) "manic-depression", a name which at least tells you what the disease is about. It is highly genetic, and treatment requires both medication and psychotherapy to survive long-term. Kay gets both, although it took years before she accepted that this is the only way. Her research and books are world-famous.

Second Quote of the Month:

'When it's two o'clock in the morning, and you're manic, even the UCLA Medical Center has a certain appeal. The hospital -- ordinarily a cold clotting of uninteresting buildings -- became for me, that fall morning not quite twenty years ago, a focus of my finely wired, exquisitely alert nervous system. With vibrissae twinging, antennae perked, eyes fast-forwarding and fly faceted, I took in everything around me. I was on the run. Not just on the run but fast and furious on the run, darting back and forth across the hospital parking lot trying to use up a boundless, restless, manic energy. I was running fast, but slowly going mad.

'The man I was with, a colleague from the medical school, had stopped running an hour earlier and was, he said impatiently, exhausted. This, to a saner mind, would not have been surprising: the usual distinction between day and night had long since disappeared for the two of us, and the endless hours of scotch, brawling, and fallings about in laughter had taken an obvious, if not final, toll. We should have been sleeping or working, publishing not perishing, reading journals, writing in charts, or drawing tedious scientific graphs that no one would read.

'Suddenly a police car pulled up. Even in my less-than-totally-lucid state of mind I could see that the officer had his hand on his gun as he got out of the car. "What in the hell are you doing running around the parking lot at this hour?" he asked. A not unreasonable question. My few remaining islets of judgment reached out to one another and linked up long enough to conclude that this particular situation was going to be hard to explain. My colleague, fortunately, was thinking far better than I was and managed to reach down into some deeply intuitive part of his own and the world's collective unconscious and said, "We're both on the faculty in the psychiatry department." The policeman looked at us, smiled, went back to his squad car; and drove away.

'Being professors of psychiatry explained everything.'

From *An Unquiet Mind* by Kay Redfield Jamison, 1995, p. 3

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