



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

תחרות הסיפורים של "עולמות"

תחרות הסיפורים של כנס "עולמות" נפתחת, ואנחנו מזמינים אתכם לשנס מותניים, לחדד מוחות ועטים ולכתוב לנו על נושא הכנס: "מנהיגים ומורדים". [באתר האגודה](#) ניתן למצוא את כל הפרטים, יחד עם תקנון התחרות.

אתר "היה יהיה" ממשיך להתחדש, ומקבל כתובת חדשה!

אתר "היה יהיה" עבר דירה, ועכשיו תוכלו למצוא אותו בכתובת: annual.sf-f.org.il. בימים אלו עובר אתר השנתון מקצה סיפורים וכעת ניתן למצוא בו מידע על האסופות, הסיפורים והסופרים, קישורים לסיפורים מהאסופות שהתפרסמו ברשת ופרטים בנוגע להגשת סיפורים. בקרוב אף יהיה ניתן לקנות את האסופות ישירות דרך האתר.

מועדון הקריאה של חודש פברואר יעסוק בספרו של טד צ'יאנג **סיפורי חייך ואחרים** (אופוס, 2003). המועדון יתקיים **ביום המישי, 28.2, בשעה 20:00 ב"קפה גרג"** ברחוב ויצמן 2 בת"א. את המפגש ינחה **שי ברנשטיין**. לצורך היערכות למספר המשתתפים יש להירשם מראש דרך כתובת הדוא"ל של המנחה. כמו כן, רצוי להביא למפגש עותק של הספר. הכניסה חופשית ואינה כרוכה בתשלום, בחברות באגודה, או בהגעה למפגשים נוספים. מועדון חודש **מרץ** יעסוק בספרו של אורסון סקוט קארד, **המשחק של אנדר**. לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף ל**רשימת התפוצה** או ל**דף האגודה בפייסבוק**.

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

HELP! CyberCozen Needs Material! (Originally appeared in 2003)

Once every few years (during the 25 years I have been publishing *CyberCozen*) I ask readers to help out by contributing material. I'm looking for commentary, jokes, interesting quotes, book and film reviews, and very short stories. Mostly I want stuff in ENGLISH. Since the Israeli Society for sf and Fantasy has its own publication in Hebrew, and there is an sf/fantasy magazine in Hebrew, and numerous internet sites in Hebrew, I prefer to provide a platform for original Israeli sf/fantasy thought in English.

Two books of Fantasy Short Stories for Children reviewed by

Aharon Sheer

Jewish Sci-Fi Stories for Kids (1999), 190 pages. Pitspopany Press, New York and Jerusalem

The first problem with this collection of six short stories is that only one is sf. The others are fantasy. So why not honestly call it *Jewish Fantasy and SciFi stories for Kids*?

The one sf story is "My Clone and I", by Miriam Baskin. The idea is we

have a genius 12 year old boy, Adam Mordechai Goldstein, who has already succeeded in doing his Ph.D., and is now working full-time as a post-doc. (The author obviously does not know how much time and work is invested in getting a Ph.D. It takes years!)

Suddenly his family tells him that he has got to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah. He will soon start visiting the Rabbi for learning his Parasha. Well, Adam is horrified. He doesn't have time for this. And it's too old-fashioned! But Adam finds a clever solution: He clones himself secretly and sends his clone to the Rabbi. It's a humorous story and fun to read. I think 12 year-old kids would enjoy it too.

As for Jewish fantasy, sadly three of the fantasy stories are about a Golem. Could the writers not have picked other topics from Judaism? Perhaps they don't know that there are any.

I liked only one of the Golem stories, "Breath of Clay", by Stephanie Burgis. Jakob, an 11 year old boy in Prague decades ago, has a mother who is severely depressed. She lies in bed and does not even recognize him. They rent out rooms, and Jakob collects the rent. Other people help out. There is a family that takes him to the synagogue. People come and clean, provide food. Jakob is tremendously impressed by the Emperor's uniformed soldiers marching in the streets. But Jakob does not know that the soldiers are enemies of the Jews.

M is for Magic by Neil Gaiman (2007), 249 pages.

I've ignored Neil Gaiman (b. 1960) so far since he is a fantasy writer, and I'm more interested in sf. However he has won numerous awards, including Hugo, Nebula, Bram Stoker, Newbery Medal, and Carnegie Medal in Literature. He is the first author to win both the Newbery and the Carnegie medals for the same work, ***The Graveyard Book*** (2008).

A used bookstore seller sold me on this one. This is a collection of short stories. I also have a problem with short stories, since by the time you get into the world of a particular short story, it's over. There's also a problem reviewing short story collections, since a review may end up being longer than the story.

The ending, involving an attempt to use a Golem, has a happy and unexpected turn.

The second fantasy story I liked was "Medizinmann" by Dan Pearlman. This takes place during the Second World War, as the Russians are driving the Nazis out of Russia. The Nazis are moving west. One of the Nazis has been seriously wounded, and may lose his life. They are told there is a Jewish doctor in a small nearby Russian town, a religious Jewish town (how did religious Jews survive Communism in Russia?). They go and ask the Jewish doctor's help. But this is no European-educated doctor (even though he fled from Vienna). He is a Jewish medicine man, who can call on demons for help. A strange but interesting story. Perhaps this story requires a slightly more mature reader.

The remaining 3 stories did not please me.

I could not decide what age these stories are for. For some, perhaps a bright 11 or 12 year-old Jewish boy with some background in Judaism?

Gaiman says this is a collection of short stories from 2007 and going back to 1984, chosen to appeal to younger readers. But what ages are younger readers? In the story "Troll Bridge", the hero, then seven years old, meets a troll. Here is the description of the troll:

"He was huge: his head brushed the top of the brick arch. He was more or less translucent: I could see the bricks and trees behind him, dimmed but not lost. He was all my nightmares given flesh. He had huge strong teeth, and rending claws, and strong, hairy hands. His hair was long, like one of my sister's little plastic gonks, and his eyes bulged.

He was naked, and his penis hung from the bush of gonk hair between

his legs." [p. 26-27] (bolding added by me)

Whoops? What age reader should read this? I thought a bit, and decided that a 13 year old boy reader would understand. But then I remembered an experience I had at age 18, when I was summer camp counselor in Oregon, in the mountains. We counselors took a large group of 9-11 year old boys to a camping area, where they slept and cooked and ate. Next to the camping area was an ice-cold stream. However, this was a hot summer day. The stream was deep enough to swim on the surface, but not very deep, and most of us stripped naked and went into the cold water (snow melt from the top of the mountain). Squatting down, the water came up to my neck, and we all swam for a while. Then I stood up, and one of the counselors who had not stripped looked at me and made a remark in front of all the boys very similar to Gaiman's last sentence in the troll description (bolded above). The counselor did not use the word "gonk" which had not yet been invented, but the boys got the idea. None of the 9-11 year olds seemed to have any difficulty in understanding that statement, and some laughed. Nor were they upset by it. However this story, "Troll Bridge", is not about a child hero, it is about life.

So I decided that when a boy reads these short stories, either he understands or not. If he understands, fine. And if not, then he will just go on to the next story. Each reader will just have to decide what is suitable.

No, there is no sex in this book, although a little teenage romantic interest does appear. I guess it's suitable for younger readers, meaning anyone (like me) that wants to try and read it. But very few of the stories have young heroes.

One of the nice things about Gaiman's stories is that they are very human. The characters are often like people you know, so identification is strong. This usually true, even if the character is an alien, as a few are. Of the eleven stories, there were some I liked very much, some were boring, one was dreadful. One story I really liked, "The Witch's Headstone", was about a living eight year old boy who is being raised by dead foster parents in a grave yard. In school, where he is the only pupil, his teacher is trying to teach him how to "fade out" (become invisible?). But he is just not good at it.

Like this one, there are several stories which require a strong suspension of belief.

I think this book is a matter of taste.

If any *CyberCozen* reader has an English-reading child, or grandchild, and would like to have either of these two fantasy short story books, reviewed above, just ask.

Quote of the Month:

“You might think this is just the banal observation that blood is thicker than water. But in today's intellectual climate, the observation is a shocking, radical thesis. A Martian who wanted to learn about human interactions from a textbook in social psychology would have no inkling that humans behave any differently to their relatives than to strangers. Some anthropologists have argued that our sense of kinship has nothing to do with biological relatedness. The conventional wisdom of Marxists, academic feminists, and cafe intellectuals embraces some astonishing claims: that the nuclear family of husband, wife, and children is a historical aberration unknown in centuries past and in the non-Western world; that in primitive tribes marriage is uncommon and people are indiscriminately promiscuous and free of jealousy; that throughout history the bride and groom had no say in their marriage; that romantic love was invented by the troubadours of medieval Provence and consisted of the adulterous love of a knight for a married lady; that children used to be thought of as miniature adults; that in olden times children died so often that mothers were unaffected by the loss; that concern for one's children is a recent invention. These beliefs are false. Blood really *is* thicker than water, and no aspect of human existence is untouched by that part of our psychology.”

From *How the Mind Works* by Steven Pinker, 1997, p. 431-2

Quote of the Month:

“THE MEANING OF LIFE

“Man does not live by bread alone, nor by know-how, safety, children, or sex. People everywhere spend as much time as they can afford on activities that, in the struggle to survive and reproduce, seem pointless. In all cultures, people tell stories and recite poetry. They joke, laugh, and tease. They sing and dance. They decorate surfaces. They perform rituals. They wonder about the causes of fortune and misfortune, and hold beliefs about the supernatural that contradict everything else they know about the world. They concoct theories of the universe and their place within it.

“As if that weren't enough of a puzzle, the more biologically frivolous and vain the activity, the more people exalt it. Art, literature, music, wit, religion, and philosophy are thought to be not just pleasurable but noble. They are the mind's best work, what makes life worth living. Why do we pursue the trivial and futile and experience them as sublime? To many educated people the question seems horribly philistine, even immoral. But it is unavoidable for anyone interested in the biological makeup of Homo sapiens. Members of our species do mad deeds like taking vows of celibacy, living for their music, selling their blood to buy movie tickets, and going to graduate school. Why? How might we understand the psychology of the arts, humor, religion, and philosophy within the theme of this book, that the mind is a naturally selected neural computer?”

From *How the Mind Works* by Steven Pinker, 1997, p. 521

From June 2006
LIMERICKS
By Miriam Ben-Loulu

A giddy young lady from Trill
 Was searching the worlds for a thrill.
 When she met a mundane
 Who made her exclaim;
 For her, magic was run-of-the-mill.

A giddy young lady from Trill
 Was searching the worlds for a thrill,
 So she stopped on a planet,
 To see everything on it,
 But found nothing of interest there still.

A macho young bravo of Fain
 Was bigger in brawn than in brain,
 As he fought a wamboose, two plinks, and a roose,
 For a better seat in the train.

We were jaunting along on a spree,
 And the planets we saw, a to z,
 But a bomb spoiled our trip
 When it messed up our ship
 And we learned how to get a LIFT, free.

The air was a hundred and two there
 And the density was high too
 If you took a deep breath
 You were courting your death,
 Yet we still hoped we'd all make it through.

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