



### The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

**מועדון הקריאה של חודש מאי** יעסוק בספרה של דיאנה ווין ג'ונס "הבריון של ארצ'ר". המועדון בתל-אביב יתקיים ביום חמישי, 30 במאי, בשעה 19:30 ב"קפה גרג" ברח' ויצמן 2 ותנחה אותו [דפנה קירש](#). לצורך היערכות למספר המשתתפים, יש להירשם מראש דרך 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 יוני יעסוק באסופת הסיפורים "היה יהיה 3". לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה או לדף האגודה [בפייסבוק](#).

### סדרת הרצאות ב"חמישי בקמפוס" בשיתוף אוניברסיטת תל-אביב

במהלך החודשים הקרובים תתקיים סדרת הרצאות של האגודה בשיתוף עם אוניברסיטת תל-אביב, במסגרת "חמישי בקמפוס". בסדרה יתקיימו הרצאות במגוון נושאים הקשורים למדע בדיוני ופנטזיה בקולנוע ובטלוויזיה. ממסע בין כוכבים, דוקטור הו ומטריקס ועד לאנימציה יפנית. הכניסה להרצאות חופשית, ניתן להזמין מראש כרטיסים באתר של [חמישי בקמפוס](#).

ההרצאות לחודש מאי:

16.5 – "מטריקס והאנימציה היפנית" מאת רו גרינברג

30.5 – "כי ג'ון טרבולטה אחד לא מספיק" מאת לילי דאי

כל ההרצאות יתקיימו בשעה 19:00, בחדר 002 בבניין דן-דוד.

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

## Letter to the Editor

Hi Aharon,

I am quite a bit backlogged on my e-mails, and in this case my *CyberCozen* reading, so I did some quick catching up and practiced my speed-reading skills.

- Jan2013 issue: Really enjoyed the list of "best SF and Fantasy books" for 20th and 21st centuries. I've read many of them (20th century) and look forward to reading the ones I haven't yet.

- Feb2013 issue: It was refreshing to see that someone has put together a collection of SF for young readers - particularly Jewish SF. I grew up with a lot of SF for young readers and highly recommend it for parents to get their kids reading SF books - and not to just take in SF via movies and TV. There's nothing like a good book!

- Mar2013 issue: Thank you Sara Beck for the intro to the time-travel stories by Connie Willis. I look forward to picking up some of her writing. I always loved history in general, and historical novels in particular, and more so fascinated by time-travel (some of my own writing deals with time-travel). Your review of Connie's premise sounds quite correct: The time traveler him/herself is bound to be greatly affected by the trip as well.

- Apr2013 issue: *Steel Beach* - Wow! Those nano-bots are truly miraculous. I wonder if one could take this one step further and convert one's body into other shapes and "life-forms". For example: add gills and toughen up the inside and outside of the body for

living underwater, and maybe adding fin-like parts (merman/mermaid). Couldn't we take that even one step further and reshape into cat-like, dog-like, bird-like shapes (or creepy-crawlers, for that matter)? ... interesting possibilities.

Keep up the good work, Aharon, **Leybl Botwinik**

### **Book Review by Aharon Sheer**

***Deadly Silents*** by Lee Killough (1981), 245 pages.

Recommended by Shmuel Kam. I had never heard of Lee Killough (born 1942) before. Wikipedia says she writes sf mystery novels. She has written some 13 novels. I would say she seems to write sf police novels. Some come in a series and take place in the near future, and show how improved technology helps the police do their jobs. I read one of those, ***Dragon's Teeth***, but did not care for it. But this book is not part of a series. It is far future sf: it takes place on another planet in another solar system. Still it is a police novel, but with some sly changes.

The planet of Egar has an alien population which is telepathic, both broadcasting and receiving. (In contrast, human beings broadcast all the time, but they cannot receive.) Language is poorly developed (why do they need language at all?). Almost all communication is via telepathy. In this world, no one has any privacy. All your neighbors know what you are doing. Having sex with your girlfriend? All the neighbors know all about it. Had an argument with the best friend? Everybody knows. How can anyone be a criminal when everyone knows what you are thinking? Why would police be needed?

The planet of Egar is suitable for humans to live on too (oxygen atmosphere, food edible). Gravity is 1.2 of earth and the day is about 36 hours. (However, while humans might adjust to 1.2 g, I suspect they will not adapt to a 36 hour day. A roughly 24 hour day is built into our cells.)

Contact between Earth and Egar began many decades ago. But a surprising thing happened. Egars who

went to Earth representing their planet lost their telepathic ability. The loss was permanent – going home did not help. Such people were called “Silents”, hence the name of this book. Silents can neither broadcast, nor receive. There is now a sizable number of Silents on Egar.

One would think that Killough might make some comparison between sighted humans and blind humans, or hearing humans vs. deaf humans, but she does not.

The problem is that there has been a crime wave on Egar between Silents and Normals. The Silents often get into cruel conflicts with the Normals. The Normals are not used to having to explain things to people. They use telepathy. But the Silents neither receive nor broadcast. Actions on the part of Normals who can't help assuming that the other person understands can lead to vicious responses. And this means crime.

However the Earth policemen are not to be called Police – they are to be called Peacekeepers. Gradually we understand why. The main conflicts between the Silents and the Normals are helping them to work together, despite the serious limitations the Silents have.

Having no experience with crime, the Iregara have asked for help from Earth. A group of policemen and women are brought from Earth to help. They have to learn how to interact with the Iregara despite not being able to communicate with telepathy. This should help them to understand the problems that the Silents have.

One problem the Earth policemen have is that on Earth you catch a criminal, take him to court; you prove

that he is guilty, he is convicted and sentenced. Not on Egar. There are mediators whose objective is to solve the problem which led to the crime, if possible. Criminals are not convicted; if possible, they are helped. The Earth policemen have a hard time accepting this. Why bother to catch a criminal if the criminal is not punished?

What is really serious is a recent series of murders. In fact, it is now the Earth policemen who are being murdered. The assumption is that the murderer(s) are Silents. No person who broadcasts his thoughts all the time could possibly be a killer.

One example of a difference between Terrans and Iregara is seen in music. When a group of Iregara musicians sings, they do not use words, but only tones. However, much of the performance is telepathic. The combination of the telepathy and the musical melodies produces a unique work. Not surprisingly, Silents are not allowed to perform music. It would be

like letting a tone-deaf person on Earth sing songs on a stage. Even a Silent who is a superb musician, able to play Earth music, say by Bach, superbly, is not allowed to perform. Indeed when Ten, the policeman hero, listens to a work of Normal music and begins thinking the thoughts that the music inspires in him, he is told to go away – his thoughts contradict the musical message being created by the Normals.

Finding the Silent murderer is the overall story line, but the really interesting part is about the reactions of the humans to being in a society where they have to work with telepathic people. The fact that their innermost thoughts can be received by the Normals is very distressing. No privacy. Some become very bitter and hostile. Some have to be sent back to Earth. But the hero Ten loves it. And he learns to understand and do his Peacekeeping work very well. I enjoyed this novel very much.

### Short Book Review by Aharon Sheer

*The Blind Geometer* by Kim Stanley Robinson (1989), 87 pages

This novella won the 1988 Nebula Award for Best Novella; and was nominated for the 1988 Hugo Award for Best Novella. This is science fictional science fiction. It also presents us with a hero who is an alien to many of us: a blind man. So part of the science fiction of the tale is to get acquainted with a blind man. Then too, the idea of being an expert in geometry who is blind seems to be strange. But the truth is that mathematical geometry is not dependent on eye vision. While a three dimensional object can be visualized by the sighted, what about a five dimensional object? Or ten dimensions? Or infinite dimensions? That fact is that what a sighted geometer can visualize does not depend on vision but on his imagination. So indeed a geometer can be blind.

Carlos Oleg Nevsky was born blind and “since 2043” has been a professor of mathematics at George Washington University, in Washington D.C. Here Carlos talks about himself:

“I suppose I have wondered all my life what it would be like to see. And all my work, no doubt, is an effort to envision things in the inward theater. ‘I see it feelingly.’ In language, in music, most of all in the laws of geometry, I find the best ways I can to see: by analogy to touch, and to sound, and to abstractions. Understand: to know the geometries fully is to comprehend exactly the physical world that light reveals; in a way one is then perceiving something like the Platonic ideal forms underlying the visible phenomena of

the world. Sometimes the great ringing of comprehension fills me so entirely that I feel I must be seeing; what more could it be? I believe that I see.

“Then comes the problem of crossing the street, of finding my misplaced keys. Geometry is little help; it's back to the hands and ears as eyes, at that point. And then I know that I do not see at all.” [p. 11]

Early in the story Carlos is introduced to a woman, Mary, who seems to be schizophrenic. Mary has made a geometrical drawing, and Carlos

is asked if he can interpret it. Mary says to Carlos, “On border stand we n-dimensional space the.” Etcetera.

To say that there was much about this story I did not understand would be true. But in the end Carlos -- who has no girl friends -- and Mary fall in love. And there is a sort of happy ending. I won't say more, although the story does contain some real geometry: Desargues's Theorem (“including a reasonable proof in the affine case and a hand-waving approach when infinity is involved”, as a mathematician reviewer said). I did not even try to understand that.

## Were People Born in 1900 Old at age 47?

By Aharon Sheer

Some love to say that in 1900 the life span of people was 47. They think that at age 47 people were old and bent over and could hardly walk. Nonsense. In fact my mother's oldest sister, Blanche, who was born in 1900, died in 2004 at the age of 104.

The story about a lifespan of 47 is because that was an arithmetic average. The sad reason for that was that half of all children in those days died in childhood. My mother told of two twin brothers who died of measles at age 12. Very sad. Altogether, of the 11 children, 5 died in childhood. The average age of death (including the ones who died in childhood), of the siblings, was indeed about 47. But in fact, of those who

survived to adulthood, all but one lived past the age of 80. My mother was the first to die as an adult – at age 64. Today we have vaccinations for children and very few people die in childhood. In this respect, life is much better today.

**In the Biblical book of Psalms it says:**

Psalms 70: 10 “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty”

This means that 2,500 years ago (when Psalms was written) a person who reached adulthood could expect to live to age 70, perhaps even 80. So let's forget this nonsense that a person born in 1900 who reached age 47 was old and doddering. It's just not true.

## Science Quote of the Month Female Genital Surgeries in Africa

The most controversial case of appraisal determining a stressor's impact is that of female genital surgeries in Africa. Approximately 80-200 million African women have undergone traditional coming-of-age ceremonies involving surgical alteration of their genitalia. Procedures range from slicing the puce covering the clitoris to amputating all visible parts of the clitoris and the labia. Done "naturally" without anesthesia, the procedure is very painful. Nothing, it may seem, would constitute a better example of physical and sexual abuse of girls than the socially approved carving up of their genitalia (Shweder 2000).

The practice has incited widespread protest among feminists and human rights activists throughout the West who view it as a form of institutionalized child abuse. Patricia Schroeder wrote while she was a member of the U.S. Congress, "Female genital mutilation is an action that always endangers the child. Genital mutilation irreparably cripples a girl's sexuality and produces long-term health risks" (1994: 740).

But as Carla Obermeyer's (1999) comprehensive epidemiologic review has shown, genital surgeries do not impair sexual pleasure and rarely result in medical complications. Moreover, anthropological studies have revealed that practice is conducted and supported entirely by women themselves. Girls eagerly anticipate this coming-of-age ceremony as a test of their courage and as confirmation of their entrance into womanhood. And as the anthropologist Richard Shweder observed, they believe that "genital alterations improve their bodies and make them more beautiful, more feminine, more civilized, more honorable." Unsurprisingly, he noted, they regard "unmodified genitals as ugly, unrefined, and undignified, and hence not fully human," often expressing pity for female anthropologists who have not undergone the procedure (2000: 218, 219). Hence an event that would unquestionably qualify as a serious traumatic stressor in the Western world is valued as a personal milestone in the lives of female adolescents. Needless to say, its African advocates regard criticism of the practice as another instance of Western cultural imperialism.

From *Remembering Trauma* (2003,2005), by Richard McNally [p. 99-100]

### Advice Column: Salacious Sal's Advice to the Love Lorn (From June 1993)



**Dear Sal:** I'm only in my first metamorphosis and she's in her fifth. Do you think she's too old for me?

**Einat**

**Dear Einat:** When two souls are inflamed with love's fire, age is never of any importance and you should not allow it to influence your actions. A relationship with a mature female can be a very rewarding experience.

**S. Sal**

P.S. You are compatible shapes aren't you?

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