

PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044 – 202/232-3141 – Issue #106 – January 1999
E-MAIL: LambdaSF@aol.com **WEBSITE:** <http://members.aol.com/lambdasf/home.html>

New Year's Eve "Video Madness" Party
by Peter Knapp

Come celebrate New Year's Eve at Julian's fabulous home in Georgetown. The party begins at 5:00pm on Thursday, December 31st. As usual, please bring your favorite genre videos (science fiction/fantasy/horror). As a group we'll vote on which videos to watch. We will also be indulging in our traditional pot-luck pig-out (at least those of us who are not ill from the previous night's indulgences) so please bring an appetizer, a main course (enough to serve at least

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Upcoming LSF Meeting
by Peter Knapp

The next LSF meeting will be held Sunday, January 12th at the home of James Crutchfield: 1414 17th Street, NW Apartment 413 (near Dupont Circle). The business meeting is at 1:30pm; the social meeting is at 2:00pm. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks to share if you can. Hope to see you there!

9th Annual LSF Book Exchange at January Meeting!
by Carl Cipra

As promised in last month's newsletter, here's a short reminder about Lambda Sci-Fi's *ninth* annual book exchange, which will occur at the upcoming January 10, 1999 meeting! All LSF members - and visitors, guests, attendees, etc. - are invited to participate in this "blind book exchange."

In case you've never participated in one of these before (or in case you've forgotten), here's how it works:

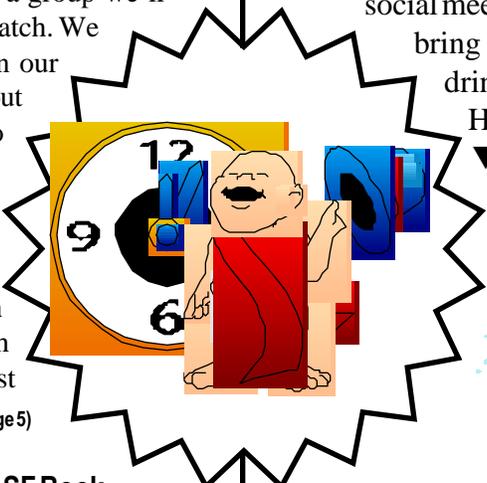
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Book Discussion Group
by Niko Maljuzić

Lambda Sci-Fi's book discussion group no longer exists merely in virtual reality! Our first meeting will be held on Thursday, January 28th at 7:00pm, at the home of Niko Maljuzić: 1630 "R" Street, NW #426, Washington, DC. (The backup location - just in case - is Peter & Rob's home, on "S" St.)

The first book we will be discussing is Mary Doria Russell's *The Sparrow*. Jennifer & Niko will facilitate the discussion.

If you plan on attending, RSVP to Niko at 202/387-5326. See you there! ▼



Two Novels by Octavia Butler reviewed by Carl Cipra

You know, sometimes it's pretty strange how you get around to reading a particular author. Several months ago, as I was wandering around my local CVS Pharmacy, shopping for something-or-other, I happened to glance over their rack of paperbacks. (Geez, who'd'a thunk it?) There, amidst all the titles by various African-American authors, I spotted several science fiction novels by Octavia Butler; and I decided to pick one up. I'd been *thinking* about reading something by Butler for quite some time – after all, she'd won major awards (the Hugo, for “Speech Sounds,” 1983; and the Nebula, for “Bloodchild,” 1984) and I'd heard good things from Rob about some of her novels. So I decided to take this as an opportunity for actually reading one of her books. After perusing the blurbs, I chose *Mind of My Mind*. As it turns out, I was happy with my choice.

Mind of My Mind mainly takes place in contemporary Southern California.

Doro, a several-thousand-year-old body-changer, has been engaged in his own personal, millennia-long breeding program. His goal is to produce a race of “superior” humans, humans with various psychic and paranormal “gifts” (shapeshifting, extended lifespan, telepathy, various psychokinetic powers, etc.). Why? Well, even Doro doesn't seem to be entirely sure about that. Possibly he's looking to breed a race of “gifted” humans with whom he can feel at home – or possibly he's breeding them just so he can feed on them! You see, Doro isn't like Anne Rice's “Body Thief” – he doesn't just *displace* someone's consciousness when he takes a new body; he somehow *de-*

vours the consciousness in that new body and discards the corpse of his former “shell”! Since Doro actually derives some sort of sustenance from this act, body-changing is essential to his continued existence. No matter how much he may enjoy a particular body, sooner or later he *must* choose a new body to change with (*i.e.* feed on). As it turns out, “superior” humans also “taste” better. And, since Doro has been using his various bodies down through the millennia to actively participate in his breeding program, he's literally been feeding on his descendants.

Down through the ages, Doro has discovered that it's better to group his “families” into small, socially-insular communities. This is both for mutual support (financial, social, etc.) and for protection. Doro's “superior” humans have often had to protect themselves against persecution as “witches” or “demons.” In addition, their “gifts” are often linked with mental instability and outright insanity – and the onset of their “gifts” (often around the time of puberty) is inevitably a painful, mind-wrenching experience that must be carefully monitored to avoid both suicide and psychophysical disruption of the surrounding human communities. However, Doro isn't satisfied with physical proximity as the solution to his descendants' problems; he's been attempting to breed a “special” telepath, one who can link his communities on the *mental* level. With the birth of Mary, he finally may have succeeded in breeding a telepath who can create and maintain a “pattern,” a gestalt mental community of “gifted” humans – but he may also have gotten more than he bargained for! Is Mary a tool – or a threat? Can Doro use Mary to fully

integrate his “gifted” society – or will he be forced to devour her mind?

What initially attracted me to *Mind of My Mind* was that the blurb seemed to indicate definite similarities to *Slan*, the classic SF novel by A.E. VanVogt, particularly the concept of the mind-gestalt. There are in fact similarities between Butler's “pattern” and VanVogt's “slans,” but



Mind of My Mind definitely doesn't take place in the same “whitebread” world as *Slan*. Butler is herself an African-

American and she writes about “people of color” who are often from “the wrong side of the tracks.” Doro originated in ancient Nubia; and he spent a *very* long time on his breeding program in Africa. Consequently, his descendants are mostly – although not exclusively – non-white. As you can imagine, this hasn't put many of his “families” at the pinnacle of Twentieth-Century American society. This leads to a fascinating exploration of a traditional SF theme – that of “the Other” – as well as to the interesting juxtaposition of a race of “superior humans” arising from an “underclass.”

I later checked *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Clute & Nichols, editors) and learned that *Mind of My Mind* is part of Butler's so-called “Patternist” series, five independent novels chronicling the emergence and “history” of the society Doro brought into being. Although not written in chronological order, Butler's story of the “Patternists” unfolds as follows (with date of actual publication): *Wild Seed* (1980), *Mind of My Mind* (1977), *Survivor* (1978), *Clay's Ark* (1984), and *Patternmaster* (1976).

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The Rousingly Successful Minutes of the December LSF Meeting By Rob Gates



Our usual host, James, was off watching dozens of men rolling around wrestling with each other and patting each other on the butt (he was at a football game), so Peter and I graciously offered to host the December meeting. On top of the new and exciting venue, we also had a special guest for the meeting, and stuck to a new format. All of which was so wonderfully successful, that we'll probably do it again real soon!

We started the meeting, as usual, with business. The Gaylaxicon: 1999 Committee asked LSF to okay a profit sharing plan for the other Network Affiliates in an attempt to encourage them to promote Gaylaxicon: 1999. The plan is fairly simple – each affiliate will receive blank con flyer masters with their club initials in the upper left corner. They'll be encouraged to copy and distribute the flyers at meetings, conventions, bookstores, and anywhere else they might find potential Gaylaxicon attendees. For every 5

registration forms that come in with their initials in the corner, they'll receive 1% of the profits from Gaylaxicon: 1999, up to a maximum of 5%. This plan would leave LSF with a minimum of 15% of the profits from the convention, though in that case *other* clubs will have generated 225 memberships. After a brief discussion and question and answer session, the club voted overwhelmingly to okay the plan. In other Gaylaxicon business, Rob & Jack filled people in on existing openings on the Gaylaxicon Concomm, including Treasurer. Anyone (and we want everyone) who is interested in helping out should contact either Rob or Jack. The convention is getting closer, and the workload is getting bigger.

There was also some non-convention-related business. Everyone was reminded about the upcoming New Year's Eve Video Madness Party at Julian's (see details elsewhere in the newsletter). Last year's New Year's Eve event was very well attended,

and we look forward to seeing many folks there again this year. Finally, Rob asked everyone to do one final check of their membership directory listing information. Peter hopes to have the new directories available at the January meeting!

With all the heavy duty business out of the way, we moved on to the more social and more chaotic portion of the meeting. After our usual introduction/name circle, we jumped right in. Carl and Nan filled people in on Network publicity news or lack thereof, and some discussion entailed regarding unresponsiveness of officers and representatives in the Network. Rob also gave a report on another Network project, the Spectrum Awards. Nomination forms are now available and are being distributed, and the final voting committee is being put together by the Network.

Joe R reported on his recent trips to the Kennedy Space Center for Shuttle

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Two Novels by Octavia Butler

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With this information in mind, I decided to hunt up *Wild Seed*. As it turns out, *Wild Seed* is not an "origin of Doro" story, but it does provide a lot of fascinating back-story. The action begins in Africa in 1690 AD. While searching for suitable "wild seed" (i.e. "gifted" humans who are not members of one of his communities), Doro locates Anwanyu, a shapeshifter who is possibly also immortal; and he decides to take her to the New World and to "domesticate" her into his breeding program. The novel follows the rocky and ambivalent relationship between Doro and Anwanyu well into the Nineteenth Century, from Africa to colonial Upstate New York

to ante-bellum Louisiana, with their interpersonal conflicts being colored by their very different opinions on Doro's breeding program and on his treatment of his offspring. By this means, Butler simultaneously explores the concepts of "family" and "slavery."

Despite having a body-changer and a shapeshifter as two major characters, I was surprised to find that Butler does *not* also explore the concept of "gender" in these two books. There are some mentions that Doro has, in fact, inhabited *female* bodies from time to time; there are scenes where Anwanyu shapeshifts herself into an

anatomically-correct male form; and it is mentioned that, in male form, Anwanyu has "sired" female offspring on various women – but that's as far as it goes. Gender issues are not apparently among the issues that Butler wants to explore in these books.

I'm glad I finally got around to reading Octavia Butler; I enjoyed both *Mind of My Mind* and *Wild Seed*. Granted, there's nothing "ground-breaking" about the themes and science fiction tropes she uses; but she writes well, and her non-Caucasian point of view adds a fascinating slant to the stories she tells. ▼

The Rousingly Successful Minutes of the December LSF Meeting

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launches, including the space station components launch. He passed around some commemorative plastic champagne glasses, and posters and offered them for sale with proceeds going to LSF. He and Bob S also talked about the Astronaut Hall of Fame and Space Camp in Florida and mentioned how fun the rides were. A number of folks mentioned their impressions of the new Star Trek film, *Insurrection*. In general, people seemed to enjoy it, though a number of people indicated it was not as strong as *First Contact*. In addition, a few people commented on the latest SF Channel miniseries, *Invasion Earth*. It got mixed reviews, but everyone seemed to agree that it was dark and complex.

A number of magazines (including *Science Fiction Chronicle*, *G-Fan*, *TV Guide* special on *Charmed*, and some catalogues) and newsletters from other Gaylactic Network affiliates (Niagara Falls and San Francisco) were passed around. Rob read a news item he had picked up regarding a new live-action *Lord of the Rings* trilogy of movies currently in production with over \$130 million already budgeted. Kay updated people on the status of *Babylon 5: Crusade*, which now won't start until June, as well as *Reboot*, which won't be appearing on the Cartoon Network until April. The new *Babylon 5* movie, *A Call to Arms*, will still be premiering in January.

Carl, Nan and Rob reported on the successful room party at Darkover. The room was pretty full all night, and Carl kept the party open until after 2:00am chatting with ex-SCA chums, including Katherine Kurtz. Although no convention memberships were sold, many flyers were handed out.

Everyone was reminded about the upcoming start of the new LSF Book Discussion Group (see details elsewhere in the newsletter). Our first book will be *The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell, and our second book will be *Slow River* by Nicola Griffith. Future titles will be decided on by the group. Additional copies of both *The Sparrow* and *Slow River* have been ordered by Lammas for those who need them. We'll be working with Lammas to make sure copies of all of our selected books are available. Speaking of Lammas, their most recent newsletter (sent to over 3000 people) highlighted LSF in their community section. A huge thank you to them! As a side note, during a recent stop at Lammas I noticed that their genre section is starting to grow. A wonderful thing to see after years of shrinking! In other book news, Rob mentioned discovering a new lesbian-positive genre book at Philcon. The book is called *Mainline*, and the author is Deborah Christian. It's fast paced, cyber-ish, and a good solid read!

Finally, everyone was reminded that Uncle Joe's final "local" performance before his move to Florida will be *A Christmas Carol* at Wayside Theatre. A number of LSF'ers have seen it over the years, and it's a fine show, and a way to see Uncle Joe one more time before his move! In addition, Jack mentioned an upcoming banquet in honor of the season, called *Winterfest*. It includes a huge feast, and for those who wish to stay after dinner, a special rite celebrating the season. Everyone was also reminded that the January meeting would also be the annual Book Exchange (see details elsewhere in the newsletter!).

With all that, you'd think it was a long meeting. But remarkably, we were

done all of this by 3:00pm. Which was good considering we had a special guest present to tell us about her new book and do a reading. The club welcomed Jan Whitely and eagerly gathered round to hear from and about her book, *The Shimsara*. The book actually contains two complete novels, and she read a bit from each novel. The setting is a multi-verse, and the characters include gays and lesbians. There's murder, mayhem, action, romance, mystery, technology, magic, and a lot of universe building. Jan also discussed her road to being published, her writing methods, and answered (and didn't answer!) many questions from the group about the stories. Everyone seemed to have a wonderful time, and the stories were apparently a success because Jan managed to sell more than a handful of copies of the book. Jan also has developed contests with cash prizes for creative endeavors encouraged by her universe. If you missed the meeting, or just want to check it out, you can contact Jan for more information or to order books at: Transformr@aol.com. We had such a good time, we're already lining up our next special guest reading!

That was all for December! ▼

Editor's Corner
by Peter Knapp



Carl is starting the new newsletter production year in Hawaii so I'm filling in for him once again. I edited five newsletters in 1997 and three in 1998. If the pattern of descending odd numbers holds, this will be my only newsletter this year. (Hah!)

Thanks this month go to: Carl Cipra, Chris Browning, Joe Parra, Niko Maljuzić, and Rob Gates. ▼

New Year's Eve "Video Madness" Party

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4-5 people), dessert, or non-alcoholic drinks (diet and regular soda, juice, etc.). Julian's house is located at 1928 37th Street, NW, several blocks west of Wisconsin Avenue.

Note: The LSF party ends at 11:30pm and is immediately followed by a private party that all are invited to – to toast the new year.

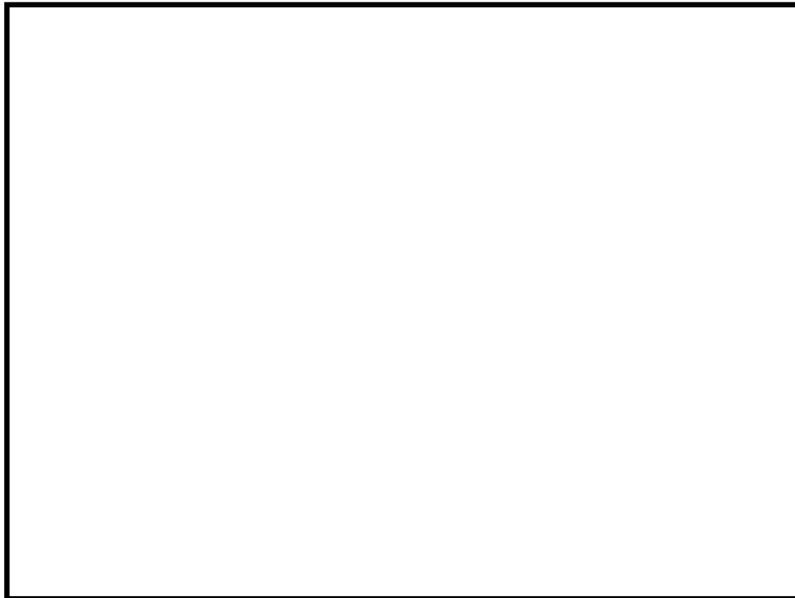
If you are riding **Metro**, take the Red Line to Dupont Circle. Exit at either side of the station, and head for the west side of P Street (the side with all bars, restaurants, etc.) Head for the second bus shelter (not the first one which is front of the old public restrooms). If you're at the second shelter, you should see Oasis Deli and Pan Asian on the other side of

the street. Take the D2 Metro Bus. Call Metro information at 202/637-7000 for the bus schedule.

If you are **driving from the North**, drive south on Wisconsin Avenue (from the direction of National Cathedral), and pass Massachusetts Avenue. Just after Calvert Street, 37th Street splits off from Wisconsin (as

Wisconsin swerves to the left). Take 37th Street. In about ½ mile, 37th Street passes through Whitehaven Park and intersects White Haven Parkway. Julian's place is just beyond White Haven Parkway, on your right.

If you are **driving from the South**, drive north on Wisconsin (from the direction of M Street). Take a left on some street to get to 37th Street. If you turn left on Reservoir Road or on R Street, you'll need to turn right on 37th Street and Julian's place will be a ways on your left. If you go further up Wisconsin to White Haven Parkway (near the "social Safeway"), turn left again on 37th Street. The best bet for parking is either along White Haven Parkway or along T Street. ▼



9th Annual LSF Book Exchange at January Meeting!

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(1) Go out and purchase a copy of your "favorite" science fiction, fantasy, or horror book. (Over the years, LSF has expanded the concept of "book" to include comics, videotapes, "books on tape," etc. If you want - or if you're feeling particularly wealthy - you can even make it *several* favorite books or whatever.)

(2) Insert a piece of paper (or a bookmark) with your name on it. (That's so whoever eventually ends up with the item will know who it's

from - and will get to know a little more about you, at least to know what one of your "favorites" is.)

(3) Wrap up the exchange item, but don't put any identifying marks or anything on the wrapped package to say who it's from. (That's to make sure it's a "blind" exchange - *i.e.* no one is supposed to know who it's from at first. And, by the way, all of that leftover Holiday wrapping paper should come in handy here!)

(4) At the meeting, add your wrapped exchange item to the pile with all the others; and you'll be assigned a number. (Only one exchange item - *i.e.* one package - per person, please!)

(5) When your number is called, you pick one of the packages from the pile. (And when you open it up, you'll find out who it's from.) See how easy?

I can hardly wait to see what shows up *this* year! ▼

INFORMATION ABOUT LAMBDA SCI-FI: DC AREA GAYLAXIANS

Lambda Sci-Fi is a Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror fan club for gay people and their friends. Annual membership fees are \$15, for which you will receive this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. Newsletter submissions are always welcome.



Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians is an affiliate of the Gaylactic Network, an international organization for gay people and their friends who are interested in science fiction and fantasy.



Convention Calendar

by Carl, James, and Peter



February 12-14, 1999 **KATSUCON 5: The Anime and Mänge Convention.** Hyatt Regency Crystal City (Arlington, VA). "Anime, manga, guests, art, music, wares, cosplay, gaming, dancing, karaoke, panels, workshops, and more." Hotel rates: \$92/night (up to 4 per room). Membership: \$30 until 1/15/99; \$40 at the door. Make checks payable to "Katsucon" and mail to: Katsucon, P.O. Box 8151, Reston, VA 20195-2051. For info, call 703/ 904-7256.
E-mail: katsucon@io.com Website: www.io.com/~katsucon

April 2-4, 1999 **BALTICON 33.** Baltimore Omni Inner Harbor Hotel (Baltimore, MD). GoH: David Weber; Artist GoH: Jennifer Weyland. Hotel rates: \$109 (sgl - quad); call hotel for res. (410-752-1100). Membership: \$40 until 3/13/99, \$45 at the door. Make checks payable to "Balticon 33" and send to: Balticon 33, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203
E-mail: bsfs@balticon.org Website: <http://www.balticon.org>

August 6-8, 1999 **MONSTER RALLY '99: First Annual World Horror Film Convention.** Crystal City Hyatt (Arlington, VA). Guests: Christopher Lee, Forrest J Ackerman, Zacherley, Elena Verdugo, and more. Hotel rates: \$105/night (sgl or dbl). Membership: \$40. Make checks payable to "FANEX" and send to: FANEX, c/o John Stell, 12118 Little Patuxant Pkwy, Apt. J, Columbia, MD 21044. For more info, call 410/665-1198.
Websites: FANEX.com or illertheatre.com

August 26-29, 1999 **CONUCOPIA: NASFiC 1999** (since WorldCon is in Australia). Anaheim Marriott (Anaheim, CA). GoH: Jerry Pournelle; Editor GoH: Ellen Datlow. Membership: \$85 until 12/31/98; \$100 after 12/31/98. Make checks payable to "SCIFI" or "Conucopia" and send to: Conucopia, c/o SCIFI, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409.
Website: www.99.nasfic.org

October 8-11, 1999 **GAYLAXICON 1999: THE 10TH GAYLAXICON.** Washington, DC. Guest of Honor: Diane Duane; Artist GoH: Nancy Janda. Membership: \$50 through August 1, 1999; \$60 at the door. (No mail-in registrations after September 1, 1999.) Make checks payable to "Gaylaxicon 1999" and send to: Gaylaxicon 1999, c/o Lambda Sci-Fi, PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044. For more information, call 202/232-3141.
E-mail: lambdasf@aol.com Website: <http://members.aol.com/lambdasf/home.html>

May 26-29, 2000 **COSTUMECON 18.** The Sheraton Hartford (Hartford, CT). "All the usual events of a CostumeCon - masquerades, a fashion folio and show, doll contest, dealers' room, costume exhibits, and strong programming oriented toward hands-on workshops." Membership: \$60 thru 8/31/99; \$70 from 9/1/99 thru 4/23/00; \$80 at the door. Make checks payable to "CostumeCon 18" and send to: CostumeCon 18, 11 Winter Street, Amesbury, MA 01913-1515.
E-mail: info@cc2000.org Website: www.cc2000.org

Aug. 31 - Sept. 4, 2000 **CHICON 2000:** The 58th World Science Fiction Convention. Hyatt Regency (Chicago, IL). Author GoH: Ben Bova; Artist GoH: Bob Eggleton; Editor GoH: Jim Baen. Membership: \$140 (so far). Make checks payable to "Chicon 2000" and send to: Chicon 2000, PO Box 642057, Chicago, IL 60664.
E-mail: chi2000@chicon.org E-mail Infobot: info@chicon.org Website: <http://www.chicon.org>