



Lambda Sci-Fi DC Area Gaylaxians

PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044

(202) 232-3141 - Issue #214 - Jan. 2008

E-MAIL: info@lambdasf.org WEBSITE: <http://www.lambdasf.org/>



The LSF Book Discussion Group

If you're interested in lively discussions of F&SF books (with an emphasis on elements of interest to the LGBT community), we invite you to join the LSF Book Discussion Group. Each month, we conduct fascinating roundtable discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF Book Discussion Group *generally* meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home: 1425 "S" St., NW -- for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. The next meeting will be held on January 24th.

Here are the details on the next several book discussion meetings:

Jan. 24th (back to the 4th Thursday schedule) - *Melusine*, by Sarah Monette; moderator: Rob.

Feb. 28th - *Rainbow's End*, by Vernor Vinge; moderator: Carl.

March 27th - *Hammerfall*, by C.J. Cherryh; moderator: Randy.

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January LSF Meeting

The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on the **Sunday, January 13th**, at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St. NW, #413). The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM.

Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. See you there!



New Year's Eve Video Party announced by Tanya Peltz

Unwind your holiday stress with movies and a potluck dinner at Lambda Sci-Fi's annual New Year's Eve Video Party. Here are the details on how to join in on the fun!

Where: The home of Tanya - 924 Maryland Ave, NE, Washington, DC. For directions, see:

<http://www.lambdasf.org/lsf/club/Tanya.html>

Date: Monday, Dec. 31, 2007

Time: The doors will open at 4:00 PM. The potluck dinner and the videos will begin in the 5:30 - 6:30 PM range. At 11:45 PM, the party turns into a private party (everyone invited), and we'll toast in the new year with champagne and sparkling cider.

What to Bring: Bring your favorite genre DVDs and videos (science fiction, fantasy, horror). Attendees will vote on which movies will be shown at the party (different concurrent "tracks"). It's a potluck meal, so bring along something scrumptious to eat. We're not pre-assigning categories of what food to bring, so everyone should just bring something from one (or more) of the following "basic food groups": appetizers (veggies, chips, etc.), a main course



Book (et al) Exchange at Jan. 13th LSF Meeting

As promised in last month's newsletter, here's a short reminder about Lambda Sci-Fi's *eighteenth* annual book (et al) exchange, which will occur at the upcoming Jan. 13th meeting! All LSF members — and visitors, guests, attendees, etc. — are invited to participate in this "blind exchange."

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

(1) Go out and purchase a copy of your "favorite" science fiction, fantasy, or horror book. (*NOTE:* 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
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item (enough to serve at least 4-5 people), dessert (of course!), and non-alcoholic drinks (both regular and diet).

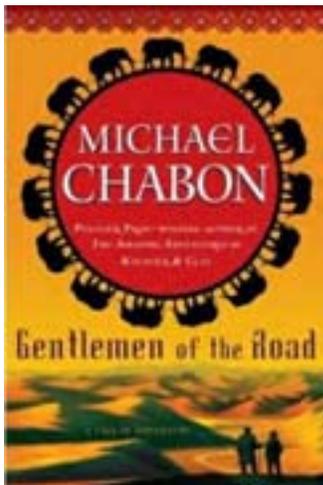
For more information, call 202-543-5293 or send email to: tpeltz1@yahoo.com

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

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Gentlemen of the Road
 by Michael Chabon
 (Ballantine, 2007)
 a short review by Carl



This is one of those books that only *tangentially* brushes up against the F&SF interests of our club — sort’a like Harold Lamb’s *Wolf of the Steppes* (which I reviewed in the June 2007 issue of this newsletter). *Gentlemen of the Road* is straightforward historical adventure fiction; but it’s certainly *written* in the style of a swords-and-sorcery adventure. (The dust jacket blurb compares its “rollicking spirit” to Fritz Leiber’s “Fafhrd and Gray Mouser” stories — and I can certainly see where they get that impression.) And — as with my previous observations about Lamb’s Cossack stories — unless you’ve recently studied up on the Black Sea/Caucasus region during the 10th Century, it’s going to pretty much seem as though this novel takes place in some fictitious, Conan-esque landscape.

The two “gentlemen” of the title are wandering comrades in arms — they’ve been mercenaries, adventurers, soldiers, mountebanks, whatever it takes to make an itinerant living. And two more disparate companions would be hard to find. Zelikman is pale-skinned, pale-haired, moody, thin, and habitually dresses all in black. He’s skilled as both a physician and a swordsman, wielding a long, thin blade he calls “Lancet.” His partner-in-adventure is Amram, a copper-skinned, gray-haired giant from Abyssinia, a former soldier in the armies of the Byzantine Emperor — *his* pre-

Book (et al) Exchange
 continued from page 1



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!

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ferred weapon is a huge battle-ax called (in rough translation) “Defiler of Your Mother.” It’s somewhere around the year 950 A.D., and the pair have wandered into the Caucasus region between the Black and Caspian Seas. One day, while earning their pay by less-than-reputable means, they meet an ugly old Persian mahout who wants to hire them as bodyguards to escort him and a young boy to a certain mountain stronghold. It seems that the youth is actually a Kazar prince whose entire family has been killed by a usurper; and the old Persian (a family retainer) is trying to get the prince to safety at the fortress of a distant relative before the usurper’s agents track them down and kill them. One additional problem: the young prince is a hot-head who doesn’t *want* to go into “protective custody” — his ambition is to ride back to Khazaria and (somehow) personally avenge his father’s death. Not the easiest of assignments for Zelikman and Amram; but — what the heck! — anything for a fee (well, *almost* anything)!

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**Author Reading at
 March LSF Meeting**
 announced by Peter Knapp



Author Warren Rochelle will deliver a reading at the March 9th LSF meeting.

Warren Rochelle is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, Virginia. He has had his work published in several journals, including *Foundation* and *Extrapolation*. His critical work, *Communities of the Heart: The Rhetoric of Myth in the Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin*, was published by Liverpool University Press in 2001. His creative works (short fiction and poetry) have appeared in *Forbidden Lines*, *Aboriginal Science Fiction*, *Beyond the Third Planet*, *Crucible*, and *Romance and Beyond*. He is also the author of two novels: *The Wild Boy* (2001) and *Harvest of Changelings* (2007).

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Gaylaxicon 2008



"Twenty
 years
 of
 fun!"

See Con Calendar
 on page 6 for details.



**Dec. 9th LSF
Meeting Minutes**
taken by Scott

Business portion:

Time for the annual LSF officer elections! Here are the candidates: Speaker - Theresa Ruby; Treasurer - Rob Gates; Membership Coordinator - Peter Knapp; Secretary - Scott Roberts. Carl suggested a vote by acclamation, since there were no opposing candidates and we had a quorum of members (and absentee ballots). A vote was then held to accept the slate of unopposed candidates by acclamation, which passed.

Peter distributed items from the LSF post office box, which included flyers for "Odyssey," a writing workshop.

Social portion:

Theresa passed around a recent issue of *Wizards* magazine, which included news about upcoming genre movies.

Theresa and Peter both saw the play *Avenue Q* and enjoyed it.

Carl brought a recent issue of *TV Guide* that features a lot of information about the popular TV series *Heroes*.

Barrett passed around *Probe 134*, the August 2007 newsletter of "science fiction and fantasy from South Africa."

There was much discussion about the currently-running Sci Fi Channel mini-series *Tin Man*. Consensus is that the character of "DG" is too bland, and the actress who plays her doesn't exactly display a wide range of emotion. Some attendees were too bored watching it to continue to the end of the series. Azkadeliah's flying monkeys emanating from her bosom raised some eyebrows. Most everyone felt that last year's Sci Fi December special, *The Lost Room*, was much better.

Mostly thumbs up for the *Battlestar Galactica: Razor* special. Good to see *ST:TNG*'s Michelle Forbes ("Ro Laren") back playing a role that suited her well.

Peter mentioned that the annual *Doctor Who* Christmas Special is coming

up, "Voyage of the Damned" (involving the *Titanic* and featuring Kylie Minogue). He said that the Christmas Special is used as a fundraiser for needy children.

The LSF New Year's Eve party at Tanya's Capitol Hill home was announced. It's likely that the *Doctor Who* Christmas Special will be shown there! (See article on page 1 for details.)

Peter said that Donna Noble, the character from the "runaway bride" *Dr. Who* episode, will be the new Companion in *Doctor Who* Season Four. Peter reported that Season Four will include some episodes with former companions Rose Tyler and Martha Jones. Plus, the Sontarans (described by Peter as "potato head people") from the original *Doctor Who* series will return.

A few meeting attendees saw Stephen King's *The Mist* movie and weren't enthusiastic about the ending. It was noted that lead actor Thomas Jane (also featured in the movie *The Punisher*) had an obligatory scene where he took off his shirt.

Regarding *The Golden Compass* movie, many people felt it was too short – it could easily have been a three-hour movie. Also, the ending was too upbeat, when it should have ended on a lower note. Some movie reviewers claimed that it was perceived as being anti-Catholic (despite the polemics in the book having been "toned down" for the film version).

A name circle was initiated mid-meeting, since some new faces had arrived. Welcome, both existing members and new attendees!

Carl mentioned the change in the design of the LSF newsletter masthead. Hopefully, the change in font won't be unsettling. [Ed. Note: And, remember, Ye Olde Editor is looking for feedback!]

So what IS the monster in the upcoming (2008) *Cloverfield* movie? Theresa saw the previews and thinks that it might be Cthulhu. But it could just as well be Godzilla.

I am Legend (based on the Richard Matheson book of the same name, starring Will Smith) is due to hit the theaters soon. Previous versions of this story were: *The Last Man on Earth*

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(1964, starring Vincent Price) and *The Omega Man* (1971, starring Charlton Heston).

Will the actors for the upcoming *Star Trek* "academy" movie fare well? Will there be a second movie with these actors?

Carl briefly described the process for the annual January LSF blind gift/book exchange (for more information, see the article on page 1 of this newsletter).

Carl reported on his adventures at Philcon and at Darkovercon. Philcon seemed to have had about 1/3 fewer attendees than usual, and the book dealers were not happy. However, at Darkovercon, the book dealers were quite happy.

Playstation's *Eye of Judgment* game was briefly described. I can't wait to see this game actually being played at some future LSF gaming party! Λ Ψ Φ



In case you have *no* idea what a "potato head" Sontaran looks like -- *I certainly didn't!* -- just take a gander at the picture! Another triumph for the folks at the BBC!

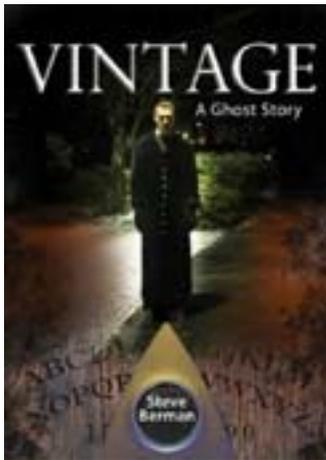


Spectral Love

two reviews by Carl Cipra

Once again, serendipity at work: books with similar themes coming out right about the same time — both of them dealing with an adolescent boy and his relationship with a dead boy's ghost. Another connection: I learned about both of 'em as a result of Gaylaxicon 2007 (Atlanta). Steve Berman was a Gaylaxicon guest, and I learned about his new novel at the con. Don Sakers recommended Barzak's novel one day while we were chatting at the con.

I learned about two *other* interesting similarities later: (1) Both authors have been nominated more than once for the Short Fiction category of the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards — Barzak in 2004 and 2007; and Berman in 2002, 2004, 2005, and 2006/2007 (one of Berman's stories, "Kiss," was on the short list for 2004). (2) These books are their respective authors' debuts as novelists.



Vintage: A Ghost Story
by Steve Berman
(Haworth Positronic Press, 2007)

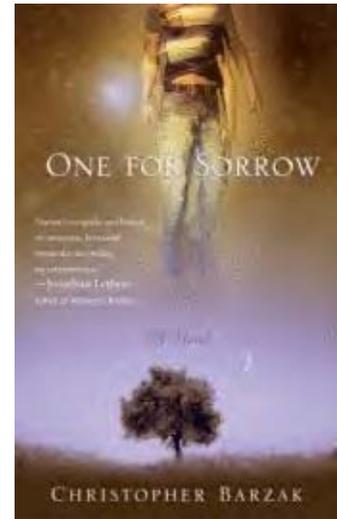
Vintage is, I think, my favorite of the two. The young Mr. Vesey is a 17-year-old, gay Goth-boy living in a small semi-rural community somewhere in New Jersey. (The story is told as a first-person narrative, and I don't believe his first name is *ever* mentioned.) He recently fled his intolerant parents' home when they discovered he was gay. Now

he's living a refugee's life at the home of his loving Aunt Jan, working part-time at a vintage clothing store and bumming around with his best friend Trace and her friends. One night, he encounters a local legend, the "ghost that walks down Route 47," the ghost of Josh Wyle, a local highschool jock who was killed under mysterious circumstances by a hit-and-run driver back in 1957. From that meeting, Vesey learns two things: (1) he apparently has a penchant for contacting ghosts (which leads to some frightening encounters); and (2) he's fallen in love with Josh (the handsome ghost). Complications ensue.

Falling in love with a ghost doesn't exactly turn out to be a bed (hearse?) of roses! Yes, Josh's touch is thrilling and enticing — but it's also unexpectedly deadly: sexual excitement tempered with a frisson of icy peril! To complicate matters, Vesey also finds that he's falling in love with Trace's cute 15-year-old brother "Second Mike" — and learns that ghosts (at least *this* particular ghost) can be both jealous and possessive, a deadly combination. Oh, and one more thing: with each succeeding contact, Vesey learns more about the final hours of Josh's life, the evening leading up to his lonely death on Route 47. Did the shocking events at that party back in 1957 lead to more than just an unfortunate roadside accident? Did someone at the party follow and then deliberately murder Josh? Vesey and Trace set themselves the task of finding out what really happened, in hopes of laying Josh's ghost to rest and (at the same time) saving Vesey from almost certain death as a result of his continued contact with Josh.

Vintage is a short, enjoyable, easy read. I quite enjoyed the way Berman handles Vesey's involuntary visions of the past, induced by his contact with various ghosts. I also quite enjoyed the way he portrays the intimate scenes between Vesey and Josh. There are none of those pages-long graphic descriptions of male-on-male sex that one tends to find in small-press gay F&SF — I found Berman's descriptions of spectral "sexual" contact to be unique and fascinating, especially when linked

to his depiction of the deadly effects of prolonged human contact with ghosts.



One for Sorrow
by Christopher Barzak
(Bantam Books, 2007)

One for Sorrow is a rather more complicated, complex, troubling book. Once again, a troubled youngster becomes intimately involved with the spirit of a dead boy — but that's pretty much where the similarity between this book and *Vintage* end.

Adam McCormick lives in a small Ohio town. He has just turned 15, when the body of a young boy named Jamie Marks is found in the woods; Marks was brutally murdered and his body buried near some rural railroad tracks. Adam knew Jamie slightly from school — both of them were "loners" with screwed-up home-lives — and Adam had just started to get to know Jamie when the other boy disappeared. When Adam visits the site of Jamie's murder, he comes into contact with Jamie's ghost; and he subsequently becomes obsessed with the dead boy. By default, Jamie becomes Adam's one-and-only friend, and Adam becomes more and more a social outcast subject to strange behavior and reclusive tendencies. And Jamie has, in fact, become obsessed with Adam, as the only living person he's able to successfully communicate with. So Adam becomes more and more attuned to the spirit-existence of

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Spectral Love

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his dead friend, while Jamie (through Adam) compulsively “hangs on” to the world of the living instead of “moving on” to the next phase of existence (whatever that might be). Talk about a downer! This book provides quite a heavy dose of teen alienation, depression, grief, and co-dependency. (SPOILER ALERT! It’s not a complete go-out-and-slash-your-wrists downer, however. There is redemption at the end — of different sorts — for both Adam and Jamie.)

Funny thing, though: I never really felt “for sure” that all the supernatural stuff was actually happening! Yes, Adam “hears shadows speak,” and Adam and Jamie encounter other ghosts and somehow travel through “dead space” to escape and hide out in a burned-out church in Youngstown, OH. But nobody else seems to see the ghosts — except, only vaguely, Jamie’s distraught mother. As I read *One for Sorrow*, I couldn’t help but think that maybe Adam was somehow traumatized by his encounter with Jamie’s murder

site/grave — and that his subsequent morbid obsession with the dead boy led to derangement, thus “explaining” his visions and ghostly/shadowy encounters. But then I’d get to one of those descriptions of “traveling through dead space” — whereby Adam would somehow emerge in an unlikely distant place... A puzzlement, to be sure!

And then there’s the puzzling relationship between Adam and Jamie. I don’t believe the word “gay” is ever actually used to describe either of them — “troubled,” yes; but not “gay.” (I think Adam’s jerk of an older brother does call Adam “queer” at one point; but that’s about it.) Adam and Jamie are definitely attracted to and obsessed with each other — and I believe there are a couple of oblique references to human/ghost frottage between them — but I’m pretty sure the word “love” never appears in there anywhere. I guess it’s sort of a “love story” (albeit a twisted one) without the word “love” in it. (In contrast, there *are* some borderline graphic sex scenes between Adam and Gracie Highsmith, Adam’s equally-loner, on-again-off-again partner-in-weirdness



— so it’s obvious to me that Barczak could have given his readers a few “spectral thrills” if he’d wanted. I guess that just wasn’t the story he was aiming for.)

In the final analysis, I guess *One for Sorrow* is more of a “literary” work than *Vintage*. Both books deal with the concept of “youthful alienation” — but *Sorrow* explores the concept to a much greater depth and at much greater length. In contrast, as I said, *Vintage* is much more of a short and easy read. Both of them have their attractions — I guess it depends on what kind of book you’re in the mood for.

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Gentlemen of the Road

continued from page 2

Onward to adventure! Flashing swords, marauding Vikings, narrow escapes, hired assassins, daring rescues, loyal elephants, charming prostitutes, and marching armies — this book has ‘em all!

Unlike the previous Chabon books that I’ve read (*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, *The Final Solution*, and *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*), the storyline of this novel has *no* connection to the Holocaust and its aftermath — after all, the adventures of Zelikman and Amram take place some ten centuries before the rise of Nazi Germany. But the *Jewish* connection is definitely there. Both Zelikman and Amram are Jews: Zelikman was born in the ghetto of Regensburg, and Amram is from Abyssinia by way of Byzantium. (I believe Ethiopian Jews are referred to as “Falashas.”) And “Kha-



Zelikman and Amram
(illustration by Gary Gianni)

zaria” (the Khazar Khaganate) was the only Jewish nation in history outside of the Middle East. In fact, as Chabon states in the Afterward: “The original, working—and in my heart the true—title of the short novel you hold in your hands was *Jews with Swords.*”

But why write *this* novel? Again, quoting Chabon in the Afterward: “...maybe it is time to take a look backward at that tradition [the Jewish historical experience], as I have attempted to do here, and find some shadowy kingdom where a self-respecting Jewish adventurer would not be caught dead without his sword or his battle-ax.” Hey, it works for me! *Gentlemen of the Road* is a fun read, a quick read, and a fine addition to the tradition of sword-wielding adventure fiction, as penned by such writers as Howard, Leiber, Lamb, Sabatini, and Dumas.

Oh, and the interior line illustrations by Gary Gianni (a fine artist whose works have also graced the latest “Conan of Cimmeria” re-releases) certainly contributed to my quick decision to purchase this book!

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****INFORMATION ABOUT LAMBDA SCI-FI: DC AREA GAYLAXIANS****

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (LSF) is an organization for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered (GLBT) people, and their friends who are interested in science fiction, fantasy, horror and related genres in all forms (SF/F/H). LSF's primary goals are to have fun, to provide a community, and to:

- promote SF/F/H, with particular attention to materials of interest to GLBT people and their friends;
- provide forums for GLBT people and their friends to share their interest in SF/F/H;
- promote the presence of GLBT elements within SF/F/H and within fandom; and
- promote SF/F/H within the GLBT community.

Annual membership fees are \$10, for which you will receive an e-mailed this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. (Hard copies of the newsletter cost an additional \$15 per year.) Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on the **Sunday, January 13th**, at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St. NW, #413). The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. Hope to see you there!

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.



Con Calendar

by Carl



August 6-10, 2008 **DENVENTION 3 (The 66th WorldCon)**. Colorado Convention Center & nearby hotels (Denver, CO). Guest of Honor: Lois McMaster Bujold; Artist GoH: Rick Sternback. Membership: were \$175 thru 05/31/2007 (has gone UP since then!). Make checks payable to "Denvention 3" and send to: Denvention 3, PO Box 1349, Denver, CO 80201
Website: <http://denvention.org> Information at: info@denvention.org

October 10-13, 2008 **GAYLAXICON 2008**. Hyatt Regency - Bethesda (Bethesda, MD). Guest of Honor: Geoff Ryman. Artist Guest of Honor: Alicia Austin. Download PDF membership form from the website. Membership: \$60 until 12/31/2007; \$65 from 01/01/2008; \$70 after 09/30/2008. Make checks payable to "Gaylaxicon 2008" & send to: Gaylaxicon 2008, c/o Lambda Sci-Fi, PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044-0656. Membership can also be purchased on-line via PayPal. Information at: www.gaylaxicon2008.org

October 17-19, 2008 **CAPCLAVE 2008**. Rockville Hilton (Rockville, MD). Writer GoH: James Morrow; Critic GoH: Michael Dirda. Membership: \$35 through the end of 2007 (will go up after that). Download the form from their website, with check payable to "Capclave 2008," and send to: Capclave 2008, c/o Barry Newton, PO Box 53, Ashton, MD 20861. (On-line payment options also available.) Online at: www.capclave.org

???? **PHILCON 2008**. ("Philcon 2008 has come unstuck in Time and Space!") Membership: \$40 thru as of 11/19/07; \$45 as of 6/1/08; \$50 as of 10/1/08; \$60 at the door (where/whenever *that* is!). Make checks payable to "Philcon 2008" and send to: Philcon Registration, PO Box 8303, 30th Street Station, Philadelphia, PA 19101-8303. (Online registration is also available.) More details as they become available. Website: www.philcon.org

October 2009 **GAYLAXICON 2009**. (Minneapolis, MN). Details to be announced as they are available. Membership: \$60 until 09/01/2009; then \$70 until 10/01/2009; \$80 at the door. Make checks payable to "Gaylaxicon 2009" and send to: Gaylaxicon 2009, P.O. Box 2412, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402
Website: www.gaylacticnetwork.org/gaylaxicon2009

