



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044
(202) 232-3141 - Issue # 292 – July 2014

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WEBSITE: www.lambdascifi.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 round-table discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF Book Discussion Group usually 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 book discussion will be held on July 24th.

Here are the details for the next couple of book discussions:

July 24 – *Ancillary Justice*, by Anne Leckie (moderator: Rob).

August 28 – *The Song of Achilles*, by Madeline Miller (moderator: Carl).

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LSF Gaming Party

Saturday, Aug. 2nd
announced by Peter



What: A Gaming Party.

When: Saturday, August 2; 2 PM – 11PM.

Where: Home of Peter and Rob, 1425 "S" St NW, Washington, DC 20009.

Directions at:

<http://lambdascifi.org/club/PeterRob.html>

What to bring: Bring your favorite table game (or two). Also, please bring munchies and/or soft drinks.

Dinner: For those who are interested, we'll order pizza. If you want to join in on the pizza order, please bring \$8 in exact change. For those that don't want pizza, you can order take out or go forage for food. There are a lot of food choices in the "U" Street Corridor, including Trader Joe's (a block away at 1914 14th St NW).

For more information: Please contact Peter at PeterPKnapp@gmail.com or Rob at: robgatesdc@gmail.com or call them at 202-483-6369.

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Gaylactic Spectrum Awards

2013 Best Novel Category
info passed along by Carl

The Gaylactic Spectrum Awards were created in 1998 by the Gaylactic Network to honor works in science fiction, fantasy and horror which include positive explorations of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered characters, themes, or issues. In 2002, the Awards were handed over to a newly formed, independent organization - the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards Foundation.

The 2013 Winner and Short List of Recommended Works for the Best Novel category (for novels published in North America in 2012) were announced at Gaylaxicon 2013 (Atlanta).

WINNER: *The Song of Achilles* - Madeline Miller (Ecco)

SHORT LIST: *Casket of Souls* - Lynn Flewelling (Spectra); *Forged in Fire* - J.A. Pitts (Tor); *Point of Knives* - Melissa Scott (Lethe); *Rapture* - Kameron Hurley (Night Shade)

Winners, Short List Recommendations, and all Nominees for 2013 and all previous years can be viewed at:

<http://www.spectrumawards.org/>

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<<<<< April LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, July 13th**. The meeting will once again be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM and the social meeting at 2:00 PM. Please also bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. Hope to see you there!

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What's Inside?

Page 2: Them Tar Hills (book reviews); Frank M. Robinson (obituary)

Page 4: Info About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians & Con Calendar

**Them Thar Hills:
F&SF in Appalachia
book reviews by Carl**

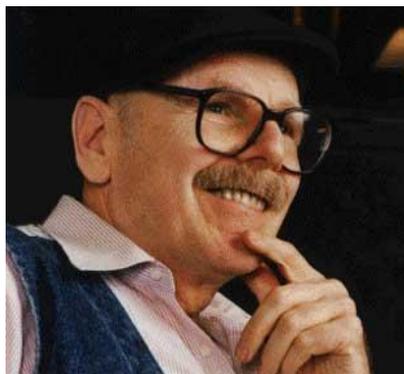


How about a little trip into “them thar hills”? Oh, not for gold... for treasures of a more literary nature.

F&SF lets us explore unusual and strange places: other planets, other dimensions, alternate realities, and so on. But, ya know, various authors show us that we really don’t need to go all that far to find the “unusual and strange.” H.P. Lovecraft, for example, shows us the mysteries and terrors to be found right there in New England.

Similarly, other authors are our guides into a setting that’s probably as different from our own experiences as Arkham or Innsmouth: the Appalachian Mountains. This ancient collection of rugged ridges and valleys extends from southeastern New York through northern Georgia and Alabama; and over time its inhabitants have developed a culture distinctly their own.

Appalachia is famous as Hatfield-McCoy territory – the land of moonshine and revenooers, “hol- lers” and “cricks.” “Them thar hills” can be dangerous, too – especially for interloping city-folk who don’t watch their step. It’s almost impos- sible to think of Appalachia without thinking of that landmark 1972 movie *Deliverance*, in which four Atlanta businessmen decide to canoe down a river in the remote northern Georgia wilderness. Jon Voight, Burt Reynolds, and friends have several graphic “close encounters with the Other” in that non-F&SF film. (“Squeal like a pig, boy!”) And I personally experienced a *big*



**Frank M. Robinson
1926 - 2014**

Frank M. Robinson, a gay science fiction author and Harvey Milk’s speechwriter, died peacefully at his home in San Francisco on June 30th. He was 87.

Frank was the author of one of the first thrillers, *The Power*, published in 1956 and later made into a blockbuster movie starring George Hamilton, Suzanne Pleshette, and Michael Rennie (1968). His book *The Glass Inferno*, written with Thomas Scortia, was later adapted for the screen by Irwin Allen as *The Towering Inferno* and had a who’s who list of stars including Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, William Holden, Faye Dun-

-away, and Fred Astaire, among many, many others. The movie is still generat- ing royalties. Frank’s science fiction book *The Dark Beyond the Stars* won a Lambda Literary Award in 1992. Two of his books were discussed by the LSF Book Club in years past: *The Dark Beyond the Stars* and *Waiting*.

Robinson wrote or co-authored over 15 books and many short stories in a wide range of genres, including techno-thrillers, political thrillers, mysteries, science fiction, and non-fiction. He was one of the premier Pulp Magazine col- lectors in the world, having started his collection at age 16 and working as an office boy for Ziff-Davis in his early career.

As a gay activist and Harvey Milk’s speechwriter, Robinson helped Milk become the first openly-gay elected politician. (Milk was assassinated on November 27, 1978.) Rob- inson later advised Dustin Lance Black, who was writing a screenplay on Harvey Milk’s life, which was made into a movie starring Sean Penn as Harvey Milk, James Franco as Scott Smith, and Frank M. Robinson as himself (2008).

ΛΨΦ

by Bob Angell

dose of “culture shock” when we visited my stepfather’s family in the back hills of Kentucky during the mid-1960s.

But what else might be out in “them thar hills” that we city-folk don’t know about? What wonders – or terrors – might be lurking in the next valley over? It’s no wonder, then, that so many F&SF writers have found the Appalachians to be the perfect setting in which to spin their tales. For ex- ample, there was that classic *Twilight Zone* episode entitled “Still Valley” (1961, screenplay by Rod Serling, based on a short story by Manly Wade Wellman), in which a backwoods Satanist offers his book of spells to a retreating Confederate soldier: a Southern victory, at the cost of his immortal soul. And, yes, Zenna Hen- derson originally set her stories of “the People” in the wilds of Arizona (hu-

manoid aliens that crash-landed and are attempting to live unmolested and unsuspected by fearful and ignorant humans); but in the TV adaptation of one of those stories (*The People*, 1972) it certainly looks like the People are hiding out in a secluded valley some- where in the Appalachians. And then there’s Melissa Scott, who combined the Fae with Appalachian moonshiners in the short story “Mr. Seeley” (*So Fae: Queer Fairy Fiction*, 2009); and Warren Rochelle set several chapters of his fan- tasy novel *The Called* (2010) in the Great Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina.

So, what got me started on *this* kick? Well, a couple of book-related events got me going...

(continued on page 3)



Them Thar Hills continued from page 2

The Old Gods Waken (Doubleday, 1979)
After Dark (Doubleday, 1980)
The Lost and the Lurking
(Doubleday, 1981)
by Manly Wade Wellman

The first book-related event was my trip to PulpFest (Columbus, OH, July 26-28, 2013). It was in the con's huge Dealers Room that I stumbled across hardback copies of a couple of "Silver John" novels by Manly Wade Wellman: *The Old Gods Waken* and *The Lost and the Lurking*. (I already had a copy of *After Dark* in my library, although I hadn't read it yet.) I've been a big fan of Wellman's "Silver John" short stories for years. (You might have heard me rave about the 2010 Paizo Publishing release of the collected "Silver John" short stories: *Who Fears the Devil?*) I was therefore delighted to get my hands on two more of Wellman's "Silver John" stories.

John is a young man who wanders the Carolina mountains during the mid-20th Century, doing odd jobs and singing traditional songs while playing his silver-stringed guitar. (Hence his nicknames: Silver John, and John the Balladeer.) He also encounters – and often counters – any number of back-hills spirits, creatures, evil magic-workers, and "nameless horrors". Wellman (a longtime resident of North Carolina) garnered well-deserved praise for the way he captured the tone and spirit of American folktales in his "Silver John" stories.

These three novels tell about John's longer adventures.

In *The Old Gods Waken*, John comes to the aid of Luke and Creed Forshay, who live at the foot of Wolter Mountain. They are being threatened by the Voth brothers, who are using their dark "druidic" magic to awaken the malign pre-Indian spirits that sleep beneath the summit of Wolter Mountain. In *After Dark*, John comes to the aid of Ben Gray and his daughter Callie, who are menaced by the Shonokins (a malign pre-human race making a bid to rise to power again). In *The Lost and the Lurking*, John doesn't just accidentally wander into the isolated backcountry town of Wolver; he's agreed to investigate Wolver at the request of a "government man" from Washington DC. ("He allowed he'd come from the White House itself, with a duty for me to do. The President of the United States called upon me personally, and well you know that when the President of the United States calls upon you, you hark at him.") Having heard about John's reputation as a magical trouble-shooter, the Government wants him to run down the truth about some kind of powerful magical cabal (in fact, a Satanic cult) in Wolver with foreign connections.

As I said at the start, I've been a big fan of the "Silver John" stories for a very long time now. But I must admit that I didn't find these three novels as enjoyable as Wellman's shorter fiction. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed all three novels – but I didn't enjoy them *as much* as such stories as "O, Ugly Bird" or "The Desrick on Yandro". I think Wellman is a superior writer when it comes to short stories – they're well-crafted and quick-hitting. The longer format of the novel (even short novels such as these) tends to slow down the impact of his story-telling. But I think even mediocre Wellman stories are superior to a lot of the other stuff on the shelves these days.

Wisp of a Thing (TOR, 2013)
by Alex Bledsoe

My discovery of this book was rather more prosaic: one of my typical forays through the local Barnes & Noble. I stared at it for a while, read the blurb on the flyleaf, perused a couple of passages of text, and finally decided to buy it.

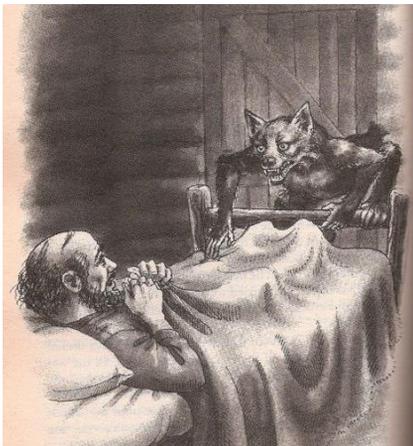


Rob Quillen is an up-and-coming folk musician – but he's known much more widely from the publicity surrounding his girlfriend's tragic death. For a couple of different reasons, Quillen travels to Needsville in the Smokey Mountains of Cloud County, Tennessee. First, he's looking to escape from recognition as "the folk-music guy whose girlfriend died in the plane crash" and the heart-breaking sympathy that always accompanies that recognition. Second, he's seeking the healing power of music. He's heard stories about the Tufa, a group of reclusive hill folk, and rumors about an age-old song said to be carved in stone, a song that can reputedly cure an aching heart.

But, as he wanders around the countryside, he can't find any clues as to the nature of "the song carved in stone" or where it might be found. What he does find are hints of some kind of mysterious power struggle within the Tufa community, a struggle for "the Tufa soul" (if you will) between Roundhouse Hicks (an unlikeable old curmudgeon with six-fingered hands who claims some kind of age-old authority over the Tufa) and Bliss Overbay (a vibrant singer/musician who currently leads the First Daughters of the Tufa). Central to the struggle would seem to be Bliss's young sister Curnen, a wild girl ("just a wisp of a thing") who runs wild in the woods and howls in the night like a lost spirit. And behind it all is the mystery of the origin of the Tufa.

I found *Wisp of a Thing* to be a very satisfying read. If you're interested in stories about the supernatural in the Appalachians, then I think you'll enjoy it, too.

By the way, *Wisp* isn't actually Bledsoe's first novel about the Tufa – that was *The Hum and the Shiver* (2011). But don't let that scare you off – I think *Wisp* reads perfectly fine as a stand-alone. The novels share only one character: the central character in *Hum/Shiver* only appears as a peripheral character in *Wisp*; and the storylines are apparently quite separate.



* * 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 copy of 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 Sunday, **July 13th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC.** 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 1-3, 2014 **SHORE LEAVE 36**. Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests: Richard Dean Anderson, Leonard Nimoy (via Skype), Robert Picardo, and more. Membership: \$80 for the weekend (daily rates available). Send membership (with SASE) and check payable to "Shore Leave" to: Shore Leave 36, PO Box 6809, Towson, MD 21285-6809.

Website (for info and "the quickest updates"): www.shore-leave.com E-mail: information@shore-leave.com

October 10-12, 2014 **CAPCLAVE 2014: CIRQUE DE LA CAPCLAVE**. Hilton Washington DC/North Gaithersburg (Gaithersburg, MD). Guests of Honor: Paolo Bacigalupi, Holly Black, Genevieve Valentine. Membership: \$50 June-July; \$55 Aug. – Sept.; \$60 at the door.

Website: www.capclave.org For more info: info@capclave.org

November 6-9, 2014 **WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION 2014**: 1914-2014 – Three Centennials. Hyatt Regency Crystal City (Arlington, VA). Guests: Les Edwards (aka Edward Miller), Guy Gavriel Kay, Stuart David Schiff, Laid Finlay (daughter of Virgil Finlay), Jane Yolen. Attending membership: \$200. On-line and mail-in membership forms available on the website.

Website: <http://worldfantasy2014.org/> For more info: info@worldfantasy2014.org

November 28-30, 2014 **CHESSIECON 2014**. Crowne Plaza Baltimore North (Timonium, MD). Author GoH: Tamora Pierce. Music GoH: Tom Smith. Art GoH: Theresa Mather. Special Guest: Katherine Kurtz. Membership: \$55 until Nov. 14; \$60 at the door. Payment via Paypal; or print membership form from website (checks payable to "Thanksgiving Science Fiction Society") and send to: TSFS, Inc., PO Box 83032, Gaithersburg, MD 20883-3032

Website: <http://chessiecon.org> For more info: info@chessiecon.org

February 13-15, 2015 **FARPOINT 22**. Baltimore North Plaza Hotel (Timonium, MD). Guests: Tim Russ, Marc Okrand, Timothy Zahn (author), and more. More info as it becomes available.

Website: www.FarpointCon.com

June 19-21, 2015 **CAPITAL CON DC 2015**. "A new science fiction/fantasy convention for the Washington DC area." Washington Court Hotel on Capitol Hill (Washington DC). Media GoH: Doug Jones ("Abe Sapien" in *Hellboy* and *Hellboy 2*). Author GoH: Sherrilyn Kenyon. Artist GoH: Ruth Sanderson. More info as it becomes available.

Website: <http://www.capitalcon.org/>

