



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044
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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 October 23rd.

Here are the details for the next five book discussions:

Oct. 23 - *The Haunting of Hill House*, by Shirley Jackson - for comparison, try viewing the 1963 film *The Haunting*, directed by Robert Wise, starring Julie Harris & Claire Bloom (moderator: Rob).

Dec. 4 (1st Thursday, combined Nov./Dec. discussion) - *Blindness*, by Jose Saramago (moderator: Walter).



What is the trick, you ask?

The newsletter is late this month.

And what the heck is the treat? You're reading it!

Apologies from Y^e Olde Editor. (I'd better get started on the November newsletter right away, so that this doesn't happen next month!)



Jan. 22, 2015 - *Children of Kings: A Darkover Novel*, by Marion Zimmer Bradley & Debra J. Ross (moderator: Randy).

Feb. 26, 2015 - *Through the Woods* (a graphic novel), by Emily Carroll (moderator: Claire).

March 26, 2015 - *One-Eyed Jack*, by Elizabeth Bear (moderator: Carl).

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Bent-Con 2014

Nov. 7-9, 2014

Los Angeles Burbank
Marriott Convention Center
Burbank, CA

<http://bent-con.org/>



<<<<< October LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, October 12th**. 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 will begin at 2:00 PM. Please also bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. Hope to see you there!

What's Inside?

Page 2: Sept. LSF Meeting Minutes; The Dancy Flammarion Chronicles (reviews).

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

September LSF Meeting Minutes

taken by Scott

Business:

Rob described the current proposal for LSF/Gaylaxicons to co-host Bent-Con (Nov. 6-8, 2015). Rob said that Bent Con attracts approximately 3,000 people. LSF/Gaylaxicon would add a literary component to the media-focused Bent-Con and would attract Gaylaxian attendees who are willing to travel to Burbank, stay at the con hotel, and add to the hotel room block. A vote was taken of dues-paying LSF members: no opposition or abstention votes. Carl will now submit the Bent-Con/Gaylaxicon bid to the Gaylactic Network Board for approval.

Social:

TV News: There was general disappointment about last night's *Doctor Who* episode; Rob declared that Moffett is not doing justice to Peter Capaldi's version of the Doctor. David was beside himself with glee that characters from *Frozen* will appear in *Once Upon a Time* this Fall. Several DC Comics-themed TV shows are coming soon: *The Flash*, *Gotham*, and *Constantine*. Dan described *Forever* (about a man who comes back to life every time he dies) and *Intruders* (about people trying to become immortal by taking over others' bodies). He also said that *The Strain* is getting into its groove. Actor Steve Amell did a Q&A session on the upcoming season of *Arrow*: we will see the formation of a Justice League (minus Superman and Batman). An *Agents of SHIELD* spinoff is in the works; it will feature the adventures of Agent Peggy Carter. The SyFy Channel is developing Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* as a six-hour mini-series. *Z Nation* premiered on Friday night on SyFy – a post-zombie-apocalypse, a poor-man's version of *Walking Dead* – Rob says he gave up on it after 15 minutes.

Movie News: Peter read *Me-tro Weekly* movie reviews of Kevin Smith's *Tusk* (a continuation of *Twelve Monkeys*) and Terry Gilliam's *Zero Theorem* (a continuation of *Brazil*). Peter also described the non-genre Pride movie about a group of LGBT activists who raise money to help families impacted by the UK 1984 miner's strike. (That's right: it has LGBT content.) No one is quite sure about the upcoming movie *Interstellar*: the plot seems to center on wormholes and the time dilation effect. Peter also described *Space Station 76*, a retro-future comedy that's a homage to 1970s sci-fi. Short description of the upcoming *Jamie Marks Is Dead* film: bullied teenager Jamie Marks is found dead, and his ghost eerily visits two of his classmates. Plans are afoot for *Pacific Rim II*. Aquaman and Wonder Woman will apparently make appearances in the upcoming Batman/Superman movie. It seems as if the *Ghostbusters* franchise is going to receive a reboot, featuring a female lead.

Miscellaneous News: Peter passed around the current issue of *Parsec*, the newsletter of the Pittsburgh area sci-fi group. Jim W. discovered some *Lost in Space* and *Outer Limits* Facebook pages. Rob reported that Ursula K. LeGuin recently won the 2014 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Jeff and Carl talked about how they both enjoyed *Roadside Picnic*, a Soviet-era Russian sci-fi novel by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. Dan described the 1984 BBC series *Threads* (the UK following a nuclear attack) as much more depressing than the similar American film *The Day After*.

Upcoming LSF Events: There will be an end-of-summer LSF Gaming Party on Saturday, Sept. 20th. The LSF Book Discussion Group will discuss *Kafka on the Shore* by Haruki Murakami in September and Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* in October (also suggested: watch the 1963 film *The Haunting*).

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The Dancy Flammarion Chronicles

reviews by Carl



*Alabaster:
Pale Horse*
by
Caitlín Kiernan
(Dark Horse,
2014)

I think I've mentioned from time to time that I'm a *big* fan of Caitlín Kiernan. I've enjoyed everything I've ever read by her; and I can't recommend her works highly enough. One of her novels, *The Red Tree* (2009), was on the 2010 Short List for the Spectrum Awards; and the LSF Book Discussion Group discussed her *The Drowning Girl* (2012) in May. I regularly scan through new anthologies hoping to find another of her short stories – it's pretty much a guarantee that I'll buy the anthology if one of Kiernan's stories is in there! Imagine my joy in finding a (to me) new collection of Kiernan short stories!

Alabaster: Pale Horse is a collection of Kiernan's "Dancy Flammarion" stories. Kiernan has been writing stories featuring this character for over a decade. She first appeared in Kiernan's second novel, *Threshold* (2001); and Kiernan describes that version of Dancy as "a sort of latter-day southern gothic Joan of Arc, a sixteen-year-old on a crusade to destroy the otherworldly forces that destroyed her family" and "quite probably insane". This was followed by a number of "Dancy Flammarion" short stories: collected and printed in 2006 and reprinted in 2010. These stories featured a "rebooted" version of Dancy, "increasingly wiser and more world weary and less certain of herself", which Kiernan refers to as "Dancy 2.0". "Dancy 3.0" appeared in a number of Dark Horse Comics graphic novels (2011, 2012, 2013).

The 2014 edition of *Alabaster: Pale Horse* is a reprinted collection of the "Dancy 2.0" stories, which Kiernan describes as follows: "It's a different, and I think weirder, sort of trip than [the

(continued on page 3)

Dancy Flammarion

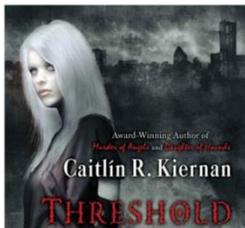
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graphic novels].” And, as with everything else by her that I’ve read, it’s reeeeeeally a great read!

Dancy Flammarion is a young woman with a horrific and haunted life. She wanders northern Florida and southern Georgia, following the commands of a terrifying being (possibly an angel) as some sort of “heavenly hitman” sent out to destroy monstrous beings. And what creatures they are! For example, there’s the Gynander (who wears the skins of his victims) and the weird old man at the Texaco station (with his captive demoness). But perhaps none of them are as terrifying as the enigmatic being that orders Dancy about. Dancy is troubled by her role as an instrument of destruction wielded by her angelic master, frequently questioning her role in some unknowable supernatural contest.

Dancy is a fascinating, complex, dark character. Add to this Kiernan’s skill as a writer and her masterful use of mood and language, and *Alabaster: Pale Horse* is one heckuva read.

Threshold
by Caitlín
Kiernan
(ROC,
2007)



In fact, I enjoyed *Alabaster* so much that I decided to go hunt down a copy of *Threshold* and find out what “Dancy 1.0” is like. Dancy Flammarion is a secondary character in *Threshold* – an important character, but definitely secondary to Chance Matthews, the primary point-of-view character.

Chance Matthews (a brilliant young paleontologist) – and Deacon (her alcoholic ex) and Sadie (Deacon’s current squeeze) – have inadvertently attracted the attention of an ageless menace hidden beneath Red Mountain in Birmingham AL. Out of nowhere, a weird little albino kid (Dancy) shows up and tries to convince Chance that she’s their only hope to combat a menace they don’t understand. Dancy has re-

cently escaped from a Florida mental facility, the latest stop on her quest to find Chance Matthews, as directed by the “angel” in her dreams – so you can see why Dancy is having such a hard time convincing them she’s not totally insane. The “creepiness factor” builds and builds and builds; and Chance and friends start to believe in Dancy and to realize just how much danger they’re in.

Kiernan is a trained paleontologist, and she skillfully uses her knowledge of Paleozoic life to “flesh out” the millennia-old horrors that Dancy *et al* face. In fact, *Threshold* is subtitled “A Novel of Deep Time”, based on the terminology used by geologists and paleontologists when they consider the immensity of geologic history (*i.e.* “billions and billions” of years). Kiernan’s references to trilobites and other Paleozoic biota give her story a scientific “basis” that Lovecraft was unable to supply for *his* depictions of “ageless horrors”. All this and “creepiness”, too! I really enjoyed it.

Hmmm. Maybe I should look up some of the Dark Horse graphic novels and take a look at “Dancy 3.0”.



Alabaster: Wolves
Alabaster: Grimmer Tales
by Caitlín Kiernan
(Dark Horse, 2013, 2014)

OK, so (as you knew I would) I hunted up copies of the collected Dark Horse “Dancy Flammarion” graphic stories. As you also probably know, I’m not the world’s biggest fan of graphic novels – I’m not opposed to ‘em, but I’m just not a big fan. These two collections, however, are examples of graphic novels that I *do* like – a lot! Stories by Caitlin Kiernan, art by Steve Lieber... Wow! I’m a happy man!

As mentioned above, the Dancy Flammarion of these graphic novels is slightly different from the Dancy Flammarion of *Threshold* and the short stories. Dancy 3.0 takes a lot more damage during her adventures – or, as Kiernan says: “she tends to get her ass kicked in the process.”

Several of the stories in *Alabaster: Wolves* feature werewolves. And pieces of some of the short stories from *Alabaster: Pale Horse* have been re-purposed for inclusion in these stories. Dancy’s seraphic master makes a number of appearances in *Alabaster: Wolves*; but by the end of the final story, Dancy has alienated the seraph and been “inhabited” (sort of) by the dark forces contained in a Necronomicon-like grimoire.

The stories in *Alabaster: Grimmer Tales* are *very* different. Instead of the frightful seraph, Dancy is driven by the unseen dark entities formerly contained in “Culhwch’s book” (as seen in the final story in *Alabaster: Wolves*). She has become a pawn/weapon in their supernatural feuds. The “frame” for these stories is the talkative raven that Dancy met in *Alabaster: Wolves*; this embodiment of the Trickster tells a boxcar full of supernatural creatures about how he accompanied Dancy Flammarion through three of her weird adventures. And each story features an appearance by the ghost of a girl werewolf that Dancy killed in *Alabaster: Wolves* – a ghost who gradually falls in love with Dancy. The second story – “Blackbird” – is a unique addition to the “Dancy Flammarion” canon: it’s a *science-fiction* story (set in a spaceship) with supernatural overtones. And I’m not sure how to describe what happens in the hard-hitting third story (“White as Snow”) – I can only hope it doesn’t signal an end to the saga of Dancy Flammarion.

For a guy who’s not usually interested in graphic novels, I must admit that I’m reeeeeeally a big fan of these two. I highly recommend them.

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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 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, **October 12th, 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



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: \$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/>

