



Lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 347 – February 2019

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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 February 28.

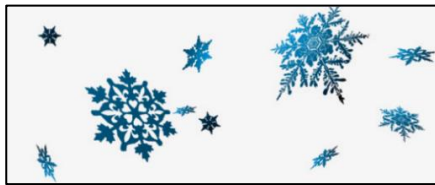
Here are the details for the next couple of book discussions:

Feb. 28, 2019 – *Mongrels* by Stephen Graham Jones (moderator: Carl).

March 28, 2019 – *Full Fathom Five* by Max Gladstone (moderator: John).



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Snowstorm Delays LSF Book Exchange! announcement from Peter

Due to the weather [a worse-than-expected snowstorm on January 12-13] and the risky road conditions on Sunday the 13th, we canceled the Jan. 13th LSF monthly meeting. *The Book Exchange that was scheduled for the January meeting will instead be held at the February 10th meeting.*

As a reminder, here's how to participate:

(1) Purchase a "favorite" science-fiction, fantasy, or horror item for the exchange: a book, a book series, comics, videotapes, "books on tape," etc.

(2) Insert a piece of paper (or bookmark) with your name on it.

(3) Wrap up the exchange item, but don't put any identifying marks or anything on the wrapped package to identify who it's from.

(4) Add your wrapped exchange item to the pile with the others at the meeting. You'll be assigned a number. (Only one exchange item – *i.e.* one package per person, please!)

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

This will be the twenty-ninth LSF Book Exchange. See you there!



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<<<<< February 2019 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, February 10th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. The meeting will begin at 1:30 PM and will feature the annual LSF Book (*et al*) Exchange (see article above). The "group watch" will begin about 3:00 PM. Hope to see you there!

What's Inside?

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Voyager II Leaves the Heliosphere

info passed along by Carl



On November 5, 2018, the Voyager II spacecraft entered a period of turbulence as it passed beyond the heliosphere (the bubble of our Sun's influence). For the second time, a human-made object had entered interstellar space. (Voyager I – or V'ger for *Star Trek* fans – passed beyond the heliosphere back in 2012.)

Voyager II's journey began 41 years ago. Its mission, according to NASA physicist Georgia de Nolfo, is to enable us to look at the galaxy outside the influence of "the clouded lens of our heliosphere" and give us "a whole new view from the other side of that boundary." Each Voyager probe left the heliosphere at a different location and encountered slightly different conditions. Unlike its predecessor, Voyager II still has a working plasma instrument that allows it to measure galactic cosmic rays. Most of these highly energetic – and dangerous – particles are deflected by the Sun's magnetic field; and Voyager II will use these cosmic rays as "galactic messengers" to reveal clues about the stellar explosions that formed them.

Voyager II is currently about 11 billion miles from Earth. That's more than twice as far from the Sun as Pluto; and it takes 16 ½ hours for signals from Voyager II to reach Mission Control at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, despite the fact that these signals are traveling at the speed of light. Technically, neither Voyager probe has left the Solar System yet. It will take them about another 300 years to reach the inside edge of the Oort Cloud (thought to be the source of comets) and another 40,000 years to exit the Cloud. Scientists expect to receive the last signals from the Voyager probes in about 5 to 10 years, when they run out of plutonium.

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info passed along by Carl

Here's some information about a local convention; I learned about it during a visit to a local comic book store.

The **Second Saturday Scrum Club** will hold its 2019 gaming convention this year at Davis Hall in College Park, Maryland on **Saturday, Feb. 16, 2019**. We anticipate having two sessions (late morning and late afternoon), with an equal split of miniatures wargames and role-playing games. Please sign up to the e-mail list (using the link below) to receive an announcement in the coming weeks on registration and the gaming schedule.

<https://sites.google.com/view/scrum-con/home>

The *guest of honor* at this year's convention is **David "Zeb" Cook**, veteran game designer and author of various seminal *Dungeons & Dragons* gaming books from 1980 through 1994. Zeb will run a game at Scrum Con and be available to sign copies of his work.

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Horrors in the Woods

short reviews by Carl



Many, many years ago, I avidly collected (one volume at a time) the multi-volume *Man, Myth & Magic: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Supernatural* (Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 1970). A long article with the title "Wildwood" (in Volume 22) includes the following two passages: "The forest of legend and folklore is often strange and eerie, an other-world, the realm of Nature untamed by man, of unearthly and potentially dangerous beings." "In the forest you are lost. In the forest the trees put out roots to trip you up, and reach out for you with crooked, skinny fingers. In the forest, very often, lives the witch."

I've recently read three Fantasy novels that deal with those darker aspects of the wild woods.

Wychwood
by George Mann
(Titan Books, 2017)

I've been a big fan of George Mann's novels for a number of years, particularly his "Newbury and Hobbes" Victorian fantasy series and his 1920s post-steampunk "Ghosts" novels.

As *Wychwood* opens, Elspeth ("Ellie") Reeves's life has gone to hell. She's discovered that her long-term partner has been cheating on her for some time now; and she's simultaneously been "downsized" from her job as an investigative journalist. So she leaves London to decompress at her mother's home in the small village of Wilsby-under-Wychwood. And right when she arrives, a body is found in the Wychwood just a few hundred yards from her mother's back gar-

(continued on page 3)

Horrors in the Woods

continued from page 2

den – the body of a ritually-murdered woman. Based on the arcane symbols scattered around the corpse, Ellie believes that the woman was murdered by something or someone associated with the Carrion King, a Saxon magician who centuries ago based his malevolent rule in the depths of the Wychwood. As the grisly body count continues to rise, Ellie and her childhood friend – now Detective Sergeant Peter Shaw – get ever more deeply (and dangerously) involved in the investigation to find out who (or what) is behind all the sinister goings-on in the Wychwood.

As always, I enjoyed reading this latest George Mann novel. *Wychwood* reminds me of *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norell* by Susanna Clarke (2006) and the “Charm of Magpies” series by KJ Charles (starting with *The Magpie Lord*, 2017). I’m looking forward to the continuing adventures of Reeves & Shaw in Mann’s next novel, *Hallowdene*.

The May Queen Murders by Sarah Jude

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016)

When I picked this one up, I was hoping for something like *Harvest Home* by Tom Tryon (1973 novel) or perhaps *The Wicker Man* (1973 film). As it turns out, it has more in common with M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Village* (2004 film).

Rowan’s Glen is a remote farming community in the Missouri Ozarks. It definitely has connections to the outside world – children going to high school outside the Glen; folks selling their produce and crafts in surrounding communities – but folks in Rowan’s Glen tend to stick to themselves and their own unique traditions. They even have their own power grid (of a sort), with electricity courtesy of solar panels and a local hydropower mill.

But Rowan’s Glen also has its own unique superstitions and deep, dark secrets. A couple of decades ago, a new-

ly-chosen May Queen was savagely murdered by Birch Markle, a local boy. Birch evaded capture and escaped into the deep woods surrounding the Glen. Ever since then, he is reputed to have lived like a wild animal in those woods, occasionally emerging to slaughter stray pets in the Glen. As a diary entry says: “...the worst kind of bad Rowan’s Glen has ever known is Birch Markle. Things weren’t ever right with the Markle boy. There was no reason for the things he done, but sometimes, well, evil’s like that.” Now, as the Glen’s leaders decide to reinstitute May Day celebrations, incidents of savage animal dismemberment have increased – up to and including livestock. The local sheriff has declared a curfew; searches of the woods are turning up disturbing animal and human remains; and the folks in the Glen are becoming ever more panicky. Then the new May Queen disappears. Why have the number and savagery of these attacks suddenly increased? And is the new May Queen only the latest victim?

Just a couple of points to keep in mind about this novel: It’s a YA story, so it’s also full of teen-age angst and youthful romance. And some of the descriptions of attacks (and the results thereof) are rather “icky”. Oh, and there’s even some LGBTQ content – but I can’t tell you more than that without dropping some definite “spoilery”.

The Daylight Gate by Jeanette Winterson (Grove Press, 2012)

The legends of the wildwood aren’t restricted to tales of darkness and danger; the wildwood is also sometimes portrayed as a refuge. Here are a couple more quotes from that *Man, Myth & Magic* article: “Groves and woods have many symbolic connotations and are by no means always places of evil. They may be a place of retreat from the bustle of the noisy human world to the peace of Nature... The forests of medieval England sheltered thieves, vagabonds, fugitives from justice, men who had been turned off



their land, rebels and misfits of all sorts.” This short novel combines both aspects of the wildwood: horror and refuge.

The Daylight Gate is an historical fantasy based on the Trial of the Lancashire Witches in 1612, the first documented witch trial during the reign of King James I of England. Ms. Winterson demonstrates how King James’s two greatest obsessions – hunting down Catholics and hunting down witches – came together in the forests of northern England, centering around the Forest of Pendle in Lancashire. Lancashire had long been known as a center of witchcraft; the Demdike clan (around which much of the action in the novel swirls) was heavily involved in “witchery” and wandered about the Forest of Pendle. Lancashire was also a stronghold of the Catholic faith during the Seventeenth Century; and all of the conspirators involved in the 1605 Gunpowder Plot against King James had fled to Lancashire. The most horrific aspects of the novel are those that deal with the way witch-hunters and Catholic-hunters treated their “prey”.



The Daylight Gate is pretty good historical fantasy (as well as being a disturbing read), with the fantasy elements being relatively minor.

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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 trans-gendered (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, **February 10th, 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

Feb. 8-10, 2019 **FARPOINT** ("Your FAN-RUN CONVENTION for 26 YEARS!"). Delta Hotel by Marriott (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests: Wallace Shawn, Peter David, Keith RA DeCandido, Maurice LaMarche & Rob Paulsen. Membership: full weekend (3-day) pre-registration: \$85. Website: www.FarpointCon.com

March 9, 2019 (10 AM to 8 PM) **RETRIEVERCON** ("25 years of celebrating the art of Japanese animation"). UBMC Commons, 3rd floor (1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore). Panels, Vendors, Showings, and More! Admission is free! Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/retrievercon>

March 29-31, 2019 **(RE)GENERATION WHO 5**. Bethesda North Marriott (Rockville MD). Guests: Paul McGann, Yee Jee Tso, Daphne Ashbrook, Frazer Hines. More info available at: www.regenerationwho.com

April 5-7, 2019 **RAVENCON 14** (Virginia's Science Fiction & Fantasy Convention of Opportunity). Doubletree by Hilton Williamsburg (Williamsburg VA). Author GoH: Melinda Snodgrass; Music GoH: Library Bards (more to come). Membership: \$40 until 3/9/2019; \$50 at the door (daily rates available). Membership on-line through the website. Website: <http://www.ravencon.com/>

May 24-27, 2019 **BALTICON 53**. Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore MD). Guests of Honor: Elizabeth Bear, Scott Lynch, Nicky Drayden (2018 Compton Crook Award Winner). Membership: \$66 before March 1, 2019; \$71 from March 1 until April 15; \$74 beginning April 16; \$77 at the door. Website: <https://www.balticon.org/wp53/> E-mail at: balticoninfo@balticon.org

July 4-7, 2019 **NASFiC 2019/WESTERCON 72/1632 MINICON**. Davis Conference Center & Hilton Garden Inn (Layton UT). Guests include: Laurell K. Hamilton, David Weber, John & Bjo Trimble, Jim Butcher, Eric Flint, Vincent Villafranca (artist & designer of the new World Fantasy Award). Membership: \$70 thru 03/31/2019 (will go up after that). On-line registration at: registration@spikecon.org Website: <https://www.spikecon.org/>

October 18-20, 2019 **GAYLAXICON 2019**. Doubletree Hotel by Hilton Minneapolis-Park Place (Minneapolis MN). Membership: \$65 (ends 10/1/2019).

On-line registration via EventBrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gaylaxicon-2019-registration-51438596226>
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gaylaxicon-2019-registration-51438596226> Homepage: <https://www.facebook.com/MNGaylaxicon/>