



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 366 – September 2020

E-MAIL: info@lambdascifi.org

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.

Before the COVID-19 shut-down orders, the LSF Book Discussion Group usually met 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. Now, book discussions are held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule). The next book discussion will be held on September 24th ([via Zoom](#)).

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

Sept. 24 – *The Devourers* by Indra Das (moderator: Konrad).

Oct. 22 – *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern (moderator: Zena).

Dec. 3 (combined Nov/Dec discussion) – *The Affair of the Mysterious Letter* by Alexis Hall (moderator: Carl).

Jan. 28, 2021 – *Circe* by Madeline Miller (moderator: Konrad).

Feb. 25, 2021 – *The Glass Hotel* by Emily St. John Mandel (moderator: Zena). ΛΨΦ

Join the Space Force?

info passed along
by Wayne #1 and Carl

Oh boy, oh boy! Here's your chance to get into space! Your chance to follow in the footsteps of Captain Kirk, Commander Ryker, and Ensign Crusher! Mars, Arrakis, and the forest moon of Endor – here you come! Eee-hah! But hold on there, Space Cowboy! It's not quite as easy as hopping on the next space shuttle so you can "cruise along the Milky Way in *Fireball XL-5*."

Ever since the Commander-in-Chief first announced it in 2019, the U.S. Space Force has been the center of controversy – not to mention doubt and outright ridicule. When the Space Force's logo was unveiled in January of this year, its unmistakable "similarity" to the Star Fleet logo did nothing to allay the doubt and ridicule. And then there's the Space Force's khaki-cammo uniform design... in space? Maybe they actually *do* have plans to land on the forest moon of Endor?

As reported in the August 2020 issue of *Military Officer* magazine, Gwen DeFilippi (Air Force Asst. Deputy Chief of Staff for manpower, personnel, and services) noted that the Space Force has begun accepting applications from officers and enlisted airmen interested in formally transferring into the new service. But De-



Filippi also noted some technical problems, such as the fact that some of the Air Force's computer systems are decades old and not designed to accommodate a new military branch.

At any rate, if you're interested, take a look at their recruitment video:

www.bit.ly/3dtRMd3

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<< September 2020 LSF Meeting TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY >

Due to Coronavirus concerns, we plan to hold the September 13th LSF meeting virtually. Anyone who would like to participate can contact Rob for virtual meeting information at rob gatesdc@gmail.com. Hope to "see" you there!



What's Inside?

Page 2: A Sidewise Award Winner (book review); Minutes of the August LSF Meeting.

Page 3: Quirky Finds (book review).

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

A Sidewise Award Winner

a short review by Carl

The Sidewise Awards have been presented annually since 1995 to recognize excellence in alternate historical fiction. The award takes its name from Murray Leinster's 1934 short story "Sidewise in Time", in a which strange storm causes portions of Earth to swap places with their analogs from other timelines. In this review, I'm taking a look at one of the more recent winners in the Long Form (novel) category.

Once There Was a Way

by Bryce Zabel

(Diversion Books, 2017)

Once There Was a Way was the winner of the 2018 Long Form Sidewise Award. I think it's a fascinating "alternate history" exploration; but I'll admit that it's probably not going to be everybody's cup of tea. Unlike many (most?) alternate histories, *Once There Was a Way* doesn't rely on warfare ("the Nazis won WW2") or major political events ("Lincoln survived the assassination attempt") as its branching-off point. The premise of *Once There Was a Way* is less traumatic, but no less fascinating: What if the Beatles didn't break up in 1970?

"So what?" you ask. You'd be amazed. In the style of a retrospective journalistic account, author Bryce Zabel explores the cultural (and, surprisingly, political) events that might have ensued if the Fab Four had managed to keep working and creating together. I don't want to give away any of the details, for fear of spoiling the fun; but here are some "teasers" to look forward to when you read it. The Beatles, Stanley Kubrick, and *The Lord of the Rings*. The Beatles at Woodstock. The Beatles, Richard Nixon, Ted Kennedy, Elvis Presley, and the Watergate Scandal. George Harrison and Steve Jobs. John Lennon and the radical Weathermen Underground. As I said: fascinating.

Zabel – an accomplished film and TV writer – has certainly done his research; and I think he's crafted a believable and imaginative alternate history based on that research. Give it a try and see if you agree.

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Minutes of the August LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Once again, the meeting was held via Zoom (during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown).

TV News: The new *Superman and Lois* series (featuring the actors from *Supergirl*) will air starting in January 2021. The final episodes of *Supernatural* are being rebroadcast. The *New Mutants* movie may be released on Disney Plus. The live-action *Mulan* movie will be shown on Disney Plus, with an additional \$30 required in order to see it at home. David described *NEXT*: a smart home technology (like Alexa) becomes a rogue AI. (Haven't we all feared that?) The trailer for the new series *Debris* was shown during the Peacock launch: "When mysterious wreckage starts falling from the sky, a secretive international agency is tasked with figuring out what it is, where it came from and what it can do." [Ed. Note: Scott says he watched the trailer for it and said it looks promising.]

Another new series is *Le Brea*: a sinkhole opens up in Los Angeles, with some of the people transported to the past. *Marvel's Agents of Shield* is winding up its last season. Dan reported that baseball-centered series *Brockmire* has transitioned into a sci-fi theme in its fourth season. Jordan Peale's *Lovecraft Country* starts on August 16; and there will be a second season of Peale's *Twilight Zone*. CBS All Access's animated series *Star Trek: Lower Decks* has started; Rob enjoyed the first episode, but Peter did not. The season finale of *Stargirl* is tonight. The second season of *The Boys* is starting soon. Rob reported on the rumors that the DC Universe streaming service won't be surviving. There are no plans for a second season of *Watchmen*. Dan likes the animated *Harley Quinn* series. Peter has binge-watched the four seasons of *The Expanse*. Season 2 of *Doom Patrol* looks promising. Amazon Prime's *Velocipastor* movie is about a pastor who becomes a velociraptor and then fights crime and ninjas. (Of course!)

Movie News: *Tenet* is slated to be released in September – or perhaps not. The screenplay for *Ready Player Two* has been announced.

Other News: Carl reported on a couple of recent B&N purchases: *The First Sister* by Linden Lewis (a space opera which seems to have Queer content); and *Cosmic Corsairs* (a space pirates anthology). Rob reported on the recent Hugo Awards announcements, including: *This is How You Lose the Time War* (Best Novella), *A Memory Called Empire* (best novel), *The Expanse* (Best Book Series), *Good Omens* (Best Dramatic Presentation – Long Form), and the *Good Place* episode "The Answer" (Best Dramatic Presentation – Short Form). Peter shared *Doctor Who* news: Peter Eccleston has started attending *Doctor Who* conventions and has recorded *Doctor Who* audio dramas. Chicago won the World-Con 2022 bid over Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (The number of votes in support of the Jeddah bid was very low.)

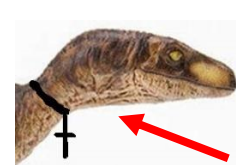


[Ed Note: To resolve a question that came up during one of the discussions during the meeting, it was indeed the cartoon character Roger Ramjet (see above) who took a Proton Energy Pill that gave him "the power of 20 atom bombs for a period of 20 seconds".]

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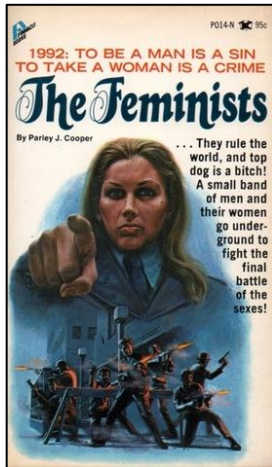
Velociraptor



Velocipastor?

Quirky Finds

by Rob



Review:

The Feminists, by Parley Cooper
(Pinnacle Books, 1971)

So I've been doing some discarding in my book collection. Going through to find books I no longer need because I've read them and plan to not read them again, or have replaced them digitally, or in a few cases because I can't imagine myself reading them. While most of the work has been a mix of tedium (I have a new-found respect for cataloguers and librarians) and reminiscing, I've come across a few items that have been a bit more...unusual among my collection. Things like...*The Feminists*.

For some time, I had been a bit of an "anything goes" buyer of used books. Titles alone, or unusual covers, or an author's name on a blurb enough of an incentive to throw something in one of those "\$5 for as many used paperback books as you can stuff in this paper bag" type situations. And so, I can imagine that this particular recklessness and free-wheeling is what brought this book into my collection in the first place, because it certainly is not a book of any renown or a book by an author memorable for any works.

The Feminists is...a cautionary tale? Published in 1971, it tells of a time in the distant future (1992) when women have taken over control of all world governments (no, it's unclear how that happened – though apparently despite it being 20 years after the publication year in the year 1992, 1971 is effectively ancient times, given the societal changes and how

people refer to things that happened in the past as being a long, long time ago), and everything has devolved into dystopia because of it. As the cover blurb says: "1992: To be a man is a sin, to take a woman is a crime" which clearly should be enough to make you certain this is a dystopia; but in case you're not convinced that having sex with a woman without permission is enough to make this a dystopia, despite the women having ended the Vietnam War over tea and crumpets (not kidding), the book details the fact that factories have shut down, cars are rare...yet air pollution has gotten remarkably bad...bad enough to make it hard to grow food.

But fear not, gentle reader, our world can still be saved. A heroic man, Keith Montalvo, is on the run because a woman in his workplace couldn't resist his manly charms and threw herself at him for a supply room quickie. In the New York City of 1992, the ancient subway system no longer runs....and the tunnels and platforms have become home to a rebel underground of men and their willing women, women who want things back the way they were with men, their oh-so-manly men, on top. Keith connects with this rebel underground – who all trust him and start following him as a leader almost immediately, except for the jealous one who is upset that a woman he likes only has eyes for Keith – and mayhem ensues. Terrorist bombings, hideouts in the basements of really, really stereotypical girly gay men in Greenwich Village, internal conflicts over the affections of a woman in the rebel underground... you know, gritty, manly stuff. Keith and his allies try to undertake their most dangerous mission yet – blowing up the mayor of New York and her old friend the President at an event; but things go wrong and Keith is captured – and will be put to death as a scapegoat for all the actions of the terrorist rebel underground. But at the last moment is saved by the mayor realizing that she has forgotten the most important role of women, their whole reason to exist...motherhood. As the oppressive feminist regimes around the world collapse all at the same time – because once one government is controlled by men there's no way any other country could withstand their manly might – she sacrifices herself to save the man who she has discovered is her son...

Keith Montalvo, who is able to live happily ever after with the rebel woman who has clung to him throughout the story after immediately falling in love with him upon first meeting.

To say that *The Feminists* is misogynistic would be...an understatement. None of the women are presented as professionally competent in any way, and seem to be driven solely by emotion rather than using any sort of rational planning or thinking. But to say it has anything reasonable to say about **any** human is pretty difficult. The book manages to be unintentional farce in its approach to understanding gender, unintentional social commentary on the callousness with which people regard other humans, and ridiculous in its use of over-the-top plot coincidences. The women have been in power long enough to have completely overhauled society and somehow destroy the environment in some unknown way...but a short enough time that all the key players from the change in US leadership are still alive. The women have been in power and maintain significant armed forces within the city of New York and are aware of the rebels in the underground, yet have never bothered to do anything more than put some boards up over the entrances because of...and I kid you not...the innate fear of mice and rats inherent in all women.

There's little to recommend this book other than its sheer audaciousness, but at the same time, it was...not as bad as it could have been? It was actually vaguely readable even if utterly cringe-worthy. Like a completely schlock movie you watch, not for quality, but for ridiculousness.

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"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute."

– Rebecca West –
(1892 – 1983)

quoted in
*Women Know Everything:
3,241 Quips, Quotes, and Brilliant
Remarks*
by Karen Weekes
(Quirk Books, 2007)

* * 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. Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. Due to Coronavirus concerns, the Lambda Sci-Fi meeting for Sunday, Sept. 13th, will be held virtually. We'll keep you informed of the status of future meet-ings.

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 (with help from Bob Angell)

Sept. 4-7, 2020 **TCEP 27** ("Ted and Craig's Excellent Party"). "Barking Mad is said to announce that TCEP 27 has been cancelled. In discussions with the Hampton Inn, Barking Mad was forced to conclude that TCEP could not be held safely on the originally scheduled dates. Rather than postpone the convention, only to have to postpone again, we have decided that it would be better to cancel this year's convention, so that we can focus on having the best TCEP ever in 2021." Website: <https://www.barkingmad.org/>

Oct. 10, 2020 (Noon to Midnight) **CONFABULOUS III**. Converted to a 1-day virtual convention, hosted by North Country Gaylaxians; for LGBTQ geeks and gamers; featuring a single track of discussion panels and on-line gaming.
Website: <http://confabulous.org/>

Oct. 17-18, 2020 **CAPCLAVE 2020**. "Due to the novel coronavirus, the Capclave team has made the decision to be virtual this year. We will be holding Capclave October 17-18. Yes, this is two days, but we will run longer on Sunday than is typical. We will be focused on presentations, panels, and small group activities such as author readings or discussions. Keep an eye on our website and social media for news regarding new participants. We plan to use Zoom for most activities, but we are looking at adding a text chat area via Discord as well."
Website: <https://www.capclave.org/capclave/capclave20/>

Nov. 27-29, 2020 **CHESSIECON 2020**. "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chessiecon 2020 will be online only. The Lord Baltimore Hotel has been postponing room reservations to November 2021. Official announcement forthcoming. Do you have a Discord account? We have an official Chessiecon server where you can keep up with friends, ask questions, and get announcements straight from the staff! Contact videogames@chessiecon.org for the invite link!"
Website: <http://chessiecon.org/> Info at: info@chessiecon.org

Dec. 11-13, 2020 **AWESOME CON** (delayed from May 2020). Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington, DC). Guests include: Mario Lopez, Mark-Paul Gosselaar, & Elizabeth Berkley (*Saved by the Bell*); Ron Perlman (*Hellboy*). Includes "Pride Alley, a celebration of queer creators and fans curated by GeeksOUT." Membership: 3-day passes = \$80; 1-day passes = \$40-\$55 (depending on the day). Various selected "add-ons". Limited tickets – on-line purchase advised via their Tickets Page.
Website: <https://awesome-con.com/>

April 16-18, 2021 **RAVENCON 15**. Virginia Crossings Tapestry Collection by Hilton (Glen Allen, VA – just north of Richmond). Guests of Honor: Terry Brooks (Author), Rhiannon's Lark (Music). Membership: \$35 before 12/31/2020; \$40 before 3/27/2021; \$50 at the door.
Website: <https://www.ravencon.com/>

July 9-11, 2021 **SHORE LEAVE 42** (rescheduled from July 2020). Delta Hotels Marriott Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Actor GoH: Denis Lawson (*Star Wars* "Wedge Antilles"); Brandon Routh (Superman & The Atom); Robert Duncan McNeill (Lt. Tom Paris); Brent Spiner (Data); Alex Kingston (River Song). Membership: \$105 for the weekend (\$120 at the door); daily rates available. Printable registration forms & on-line registration available through the Registration Page.
Website: <https://www.shore-leave.com/info/update-2020-04-25.htm>