



Lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 376 – July 2021

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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.

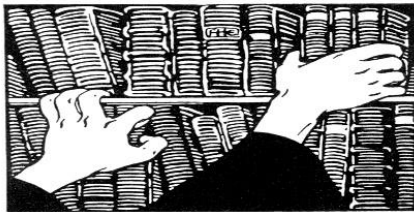
Before the COVID-19 shut-down orders, the LSF Book Discussion Group usually met on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home: 1425 "S" St., NW – for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. Now, book discussions are held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule). The next book discussion will be held on July 22 (via Zoom).

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

July 22 – *The Alteration*, by Kingsley Amis (moderator: Carl).

Aug. 26 – *Cemetery Boys*, by Aiden Thomas (moderator: Jason).

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You Can't Make This Stuff Up!

info passed along by Carl

Just when I thought I'd heard it all, something like this comes along!

During an on-line June 8th hearing of the House Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Louie Gohmert (Republican from Texas) seems to have suggested a most unusual solution to the climate change crisis. When questioning Jennifer Eberlien (Associate Deputy Chief of the National Forest Service), Gohmert said: "I understand, from what's been testified to the Forest Service and the BLM [Bureau of Land Management], you want very much to work on the issue of climate change... I was informed by the immediate past director of NASA that they've found that the moon's orbit is changing slightly, and so is the Earth's orbit around the sun. We know there's been significant solar flare activities, and so, is there anything that the National Forest Service or BLM can do to change the course of the moon's orbit or the Earth's orbit around the sun? Obviously, that would have profound effects on our climate."

Personally, I've got to admire Ms. Eberlien for keeping her cool. She responded: "I would have to follow up with you on that one, Mr. Gohmert." (I'd have had a hard time not saying some-

thing like: "Are you f—king serious?!")

Here's a YouTube link to an excerpt of this exchange:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsA72dLablY>

And here's a little background on Representative Gohmert. He's a long-time climate change denier. In 2015 he mocked Nancy Pelosi and Al Gore over their advocacy of the need to address global warming. He said that more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is a good thing because it means "we'll have more plants." (Definitely a WTF moment, says I.) And in 2016 he was interviewed by Steve Bannon on Breitbart News Radio on the issue of climate change. He said: "It seems like when you hear somebody say over and over again that climate change is our biggest problem, they don't know that climate has been changing a lot worse all over the millennia of mankind."

It would seem to be an understatement to say that Gohmert's grasp of scientific facts is... um... tenuous. Or perhaps he's just *really* good at cherry-picking his facts to support his denials of climate change? Yes, NASA says it's true that the Moon's orbit is changing slightly (a function of ocean tides on Earth). And, yes, NASA says it's true that the Earth's orbit around the sun is

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<< July 2021 LSF Meeting TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY >>

Due to Coronavirus, we plan to hold the July 11th 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: Quirky Finds (book reviews).

Page 3: Minutes of the June LSF meeting.


Page 4: Information About LSF and Con Calendar.

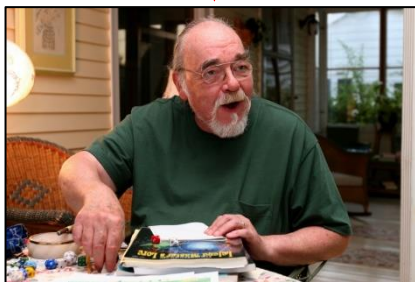


Quirky Finds

The early D&D “Greyhawk” novels of Gary Gygax (plus a bonus “Greyhawk” novel by Andre Norton)
Reviews by Rob

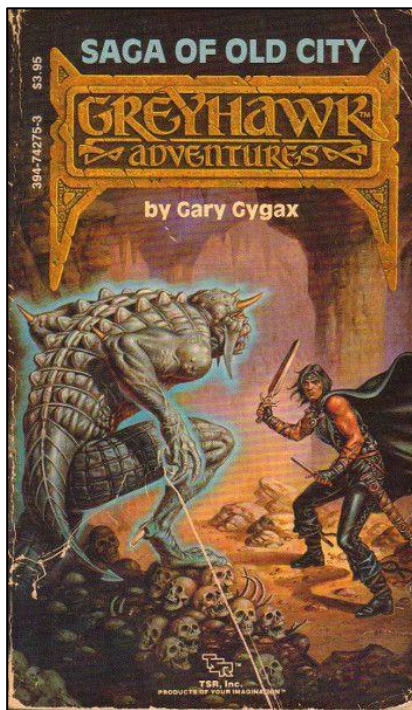
Saga of Old City; Artifact of Evil; Sea of Death; Night Arrant; City of Hawks; Come Endless Darkness; Dance of Demons – by Gary Gygax
Quag Keep – by Andre Norton

Perhaps it’s how my social-distancing-madness has chosen to express itself... perhaps I’m just weird... but recently I’ve taken it upon myself to do some quirky “historical” reading. No, I’m not talking about reading Regency romances (though I won’t lie – Netflix’s *Bridgerton* was delightful and might entice me to do so). I’m talking about understanding some of the history of one of my favorite pastimes, *Dungeons and Dragons*. I’ve been a D&D player and DM since before some of you were born, back before AD&D was even a thing; but I’d never really delved into the lore of the early campaign world of Greyhawk or the wealth of novels (well over 400!) written in the various D&D worlds over the years. So, I decided to start at the very beginning... with the “Greyhawk” novels written by one of the creators of (and the man considered the “father” of) D&D: Gary Gygax. 



Greyhawk was the central city in the earliest of the shared campaign settings in which packaged D&D adventures were set. Indeed, the world itself – actually called Oerth (clever, eh?) – is often just referred to as Greyhawk by D&D aficionados of a certain age. It was the world in which the games Gygax himself ran for his own players existed. Though it was the first of the shared/massive campaign settings that TSR (later Wizards of the Coast) created, it’s actually by no means the most prominent. That designation would go to the world

of Faerun (often referred to as Forgotten Realms), which has been the most used world for packaged adventures since the ‘90s. You may have heard of other settings too, such as: Krynn/Dragonlance; Dark Sun; Eberron; and Planescape. They’re all actually connected in some weird cosmology... but that’s just way too much to think about as today we’re really focused on the world of Greyhawk.



Gygax’s “Greyhawk” novels – the first of which was released in 1985 – are primarily tied to the adventures of a character named Gord, a young street urchin/orphan who grows up on the streets of the city of Greyhawk and develops skills as a rogue and adventurer. The “Gord the Rogue” books explore how he became the person he is, how he discovers the secrets of his own semi-divine ancestry, and more importantly some key adventures in his life. And as any good D&D player can tell you, the scale and scope of the adventures grow to earth-shaking (or Oerth-shaking) proportions. These “save the world” adventures bring Gord into contact with a cavalcade of allies and enemies – including many with names that will be familiar to anyone who has played D&D. Many of these early major powers in the world of Greyhawk – the wizards Mordenkainen, Bigby, and Melf, for instance – have had standard spells named after them in the list of spells available to

characters in the game even today. Indeed, this history tour was one of the engaging aspects of the series for a long-time D&D player like me.

That’s not to say it was the only engaging aspect. The stories move quickly, with a very heavy focus on action and movement and a much lesser focus on the emotional growth of characters. Gygax, while not exactly an astounding writer, was capable of writing exciting scenes of conflict and surface level character banter. He manages to weave in tremendous amounts of lore, and some solid – if occasionally cheesy – dialogue. Even for its time, this would definitely be considered light reading; and it’s clear who Gygax thought his audience was. (He is on record as strongly believing that D&D would never appeal to “girls.”) While there is a spattering of heroic female characters – including some combat-oriented ones – they are even more shallowly written than the male characters and seem to exist for the opportunity to be pretty or for male characters to express sexual interest toward (or to definitively talk about why they don’t feel any interest toward a particular female). And yes, there are a couple of homophobic moments, but only casually so.

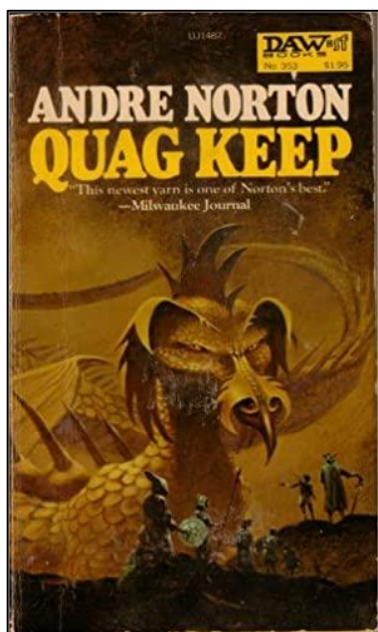
I’ll admit to the fact that I found the scenes involving some of the villains interacting with each other the most enjoyable. That may be because of the unintentional campiness of their dialogue and exchanges. They definitely were chewing the scenery, and that was fairly delightful to read.

One intriguing aspect to the books is that while the first couple of “Gord” books were published by TSR; the latter ones were published elsewhere, after Gygax had been pushed out of TSR. His distaste for what had occurred and the direction the company was going with the world he had created is clear from the fact that he destroys Oerth and Greyhawk as part of the multiversal cataclysm that Gord is up against in the final stages of the epic.

Along with the Gygax novels, I also felt it important to read what is widely considered the first role-playing-game-based novel: Andre Norton’s *Quag Keep*.

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Quirky Finds continued from page 2



Quag Keep was released in 1978, a full seven years before the first of the Gygax books (and around the time I was first exploring the game). It takes place in, you guessed it, the world of Greyhawk (sort of). Norton was invited to join in a game of D&D that was being run by Gygax in 1976 and after a single session – and without much additional knowledge about the world and lore – Norton wrote this short novel about six adventurers – the characters played by six people from our own world.

What makes *Quag Keep* an interesting artifact is that while it ostensibly takes place in the world of Greyhawk, it does so without Norton really understanding the lore of the world she used. There are elements that are inconsistent with the world of Greyhawk, and thus it never quite feels like an actual “Greyhawk” novel. Likewise, the use of the six people from our world who’ve been “transported” to the world of Greyhawk as their characters makes it stand out as well. The trope of people from our world being transported to a fantasy world has long been a staple of fantasy, and even in D&D history the trope was again used in the cartoon series in the ‘80s. But this really seems to take it in an interesting direction, as the players are both themselves *and* their characters at the same time in the story. Norton even uses a physical manifestation of the rolling

of dice to achieve things in the form of mysterious bracelets the six all wear. Indeed, this seems to be a precursor to an entire genre that’s grown in the last decade or so, called LitRPG, where real-world people go into a game world and manage their own character development (sometimes simulations, sometimes really going to a new physical world). As a writer, Norton’s skill clearly surpasses that of Gygax, though the style of writing could be challenging to the tastes of a modern reader. She keeps the pace of the adventure aspect moving though, so it’s a quick read.

All in all, these books were an interesting read – perhaps less so just as books than as artifacts of D&D’s history. Filled with adventure, a little trite (okay, a *lot* trite at times), occasionally cringe-worthy, but some fun to be had nonetheless. Enough so that I’m going to continue exploring the novels of the D&D worlds. Probably not all 400+ though.

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You Can’t Make This Stuff Up!

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irregular and subject to wobbling. (According to the NASA website, this is due to gravitational interactions with Jupiter and Saturn.) And, yes, NASA has pointed to research that suggests “changes in Earth’s position relative to the sun are a strong driver of Earth’s long-term climate, and are responsible for triggering the beginning and end of glaciation periods.” But NASA’s website makes no mention of the prospect of developing a method for changing the orbits of either the Earth or the Moon; and no government agency anywhere in the world has come up with a plan to address climate change by directed orbital alterations.

Attempts were made to contact Mr. Gohmert, to find out if he was serious about this. Instead, Gohmert lashed out at critics who mocked the idea of altering Earth’s orbit as a viable solution to climate change.

As I said, you just can’t make this stuff up!

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Minutes of the June LSF Meeting taken by Scott

Misc News

Carl plugged Emily Danforth’s *Plain Bad Heroines* (a massive Queer Gothic novel, about a haunted girls’ academy and the movie being made about it); she’s the same author who write the Queer YA novel *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*. David has acquired this month’s LSF book discussion novel: *Watership Down* by Richard Adams. Ben talked about the current DC and Marvel LGBTQ special issues.



Carl is volunteering to serve as a potential panel moderator at the December 2021 World Con being held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in DC. Peter advised that the DC Air & Space Museum is currently undergoing renovations currently. He and Wess recently enjoyed visiting the Udvar Hazy Museum to see the Star Wars X-Wing Fighter.

TV News

Peter enjoyed the first episode of the new *Loki* series. Ben explained that the first episode provides the needed back story from the *Thor: Dark World* and *Thor: Ragnarok* movies. John is looking forward to *Foundation* on Apple TV. Ben is slogging through *Star Trek: Voyager*, currently watching season 7. Animated *Star Trek: Lower Decks* series has been renewed for a second season. *Star Trek: Prodigy* (animated series with Kate Mulgrew reprising her role as Captain Janeway) will debut later in 2021. There is much anticipation for the new *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* series with Anson

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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. 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, July 11th, will be held virtually. We'll keep you informed of the status of future meetings.

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

July 9-11, 2021 **SHORE LEAVE 42** (rescheduled from July 2020). Delta Hotels Marriott Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Actor GoHs: 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>

August 20-22, 2021 **AWESOME CON 2021**. Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). Guests to include: George Takei ("Mr. Sulu"); Christina Ricci ("Wednesday"). For information: <https://awesome-con.com/about/> Tickets available on-line: <https://awesome-con.com/tickets/> (daily passes, weekend passes, special passes, etc.)

Dec. 15-19, 2021 **WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION (DisCon III)**. Omni Shoreham Hotel (Washington DC) – hotel information available as soon as possible: <https://discon3.org/location/accommodations> Incorporating virtual and on-site/face-to-face programming. "We are committed to having a masking and health policy which complies with local legal requirements and CDC recommendations. As the situation is still fluid, we will be updating you with our requirements to be in-person as we get closer to December." Author GoH: Nancy Kress; Artist GoH: John Harris. Adult attending membership = \$200; virtual membership (to access on-line programming) = \$75. Website: <https://discon3.org/> Purchase memberships on-line at: <https://discon3.org/membership/membership-information/>

April 29 – May 1, 2022 **RAVENCON 15**. Virginia Crossings Hotel & Conference Center (Richmond VA). GoH: Terry Brooks; Music GoH: Rhiannon's Lark. Membership: \$35 before 12/31/2021; \$40 before 4/5/2022; \$50 at the door; day badges available. On-line registration at: <https://ravencon.com/store/Registration-c23522469> Webpage: <https://ravencon.com>

June LSF Minutes

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Mount, Rebecca Romijn, and Ethan Peck playing Captain Pike, Number One and Spock, respectively. Peter reported that season 13 of *Doctor Who* is being filmed. Lots of speculation regarding Amazon purchasing MGM Studios. Will James Bond be on TV now? (Ha ha.) Teresa is watching *Invincible*, based upon a comic book. Ben gave up on *The Boys*, since it is too gratuitously gory. *Bad Batch*, a sequel to *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, is no *Mandalorian*, but worth watching. The series premiered in May 2021 and consists of 16 episodes. Teresa

asked when the next season of *Stranger Things* is coming out. Peter and John are enjoying *The Expanse* series.

David provided a rundown of new genre TV coming this Fall: *Black Lightning* and *Supergirl* coming to their conclusions; *Debris* has been cancelled after one season; *Ghosts* (CBS comedy); *Crapopolis* (Fox); *LaBrea* (NBC); *Ordinary Joe* (NBC, with – count 'em – three timelines).

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