



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 391 – October 2022

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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. The next book discussion will be held **in person on October 27th**. All attendees **MUST be fully vaccinated**.

Here are the details for the next two discussions:

Oct. 27, 2022 – *Spear*, by Nicola Griffith (moderator: Carl).

Dec. 1, 2022 (combined Nov/Dec discussion) – *She Who Became the Sun*, by Shelley Parker-Chan (mod: Keith W).

Note: The Virtual Book Club also meets (via Zoom) on the same evening as the face-to-face discussion group: same book, same questions, *different* attendees. Look for the Zoom link in the usual book club notice or on the LSF web page.

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LSF Tabletop Gaming Party and Monthly Social Meeting Saturday November 12th

****All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.****

What: It's a gaming party. There will be plenty of room for gaming, so please bring your favorite games (cards, board, etc.). **Please note: this event will replace our normal second Sunday of the month social meeting.**

When: Saturday, November 12; 2:00 PM to 11 PM or so.

Where: Home of Peter and Rob, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC. Their home is in the Midcity (14th and "U") neighborhood between Dupont Circle and Logan Circle. Directions (with Metro and parking advice) at: lambdascifi.org/club/PeterRob.html

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

Dinner: For those who are interested, we'll order pizza for dinner. To get in on the pizza order, please bring \$10 in exact change. If you don't want pizza, you can order take-out or go forage for food. There are a lot of food choices in the Midcity (14th and "U") Corridor.

Questions: Contact Peter at: PeterPKnapp@gmail.com

Remember: All attendees **MUST** be fully vaccinated.

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Happy
 Halloween!!

***** October 9, 2022 Meeting = IN PERSON! *****

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, October 9th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated**. The doors open at 1:30 PM and the meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

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Trickster Tales

short reviews by Carl

The Trickster is a fascinating archetypal character; he prominently features in the myths and legends of cultures around the world and across the millennia. He is sometimes a mischievous spirit-god: a liar, a thief, a shape-shifter, a schemer. He plays foolish pranks against the high and mighty, and constantly tries to get something for nothing. Stories about him frequently depict his pronounced sexual appetite, mostly (although not exclusively) for women. His plans don't always work – he's often caught in the act and punished or humiliated. But he is not evil – amoral perhaps, and often self-serving, but not outright evil. In fact, the Trickster is often portrayed as a culture hero who brings benefits to humanity – or even as a demiurge that literally helps to bring the world into being.

You've certainly heard of one or more of his incarnations in myth and legend. There's Loki in Norse mythology; and Anansi (Spider) in various African myths. In Greek mythology, there's Hermes who, as a mere baby, steals the cattle of the Sun. There's Punch, of "Punch and Judy" fame; and Till Eulenspiegel of various German fairy tales. And, of course, there's Br'er Rabbit in the African-American tales from the *ante-bellum* South. The Trickster has even reincarnated as any number of pranksters in popular American culture, particularly in cartoon form: Coyote (he who hunts the Roadrunner), Heckle and Jeckle (the mischievous magpies), Woody Woodpecker, Daffy and Donald Duck, and (most famous of all) "that Oscar-winning rabbit, Bugs Bunny." In fact, we even discussed the trickster motif during the LSF book discussion of *Watership Down*.

So, what brought on this short mythological discourse? Well, I'll tell ya...

American Indian Trickster Tales
selected & edited by Richard Erdoes &
Alonso Ortiz (Penguin Books, 1998)

During one of my visits to the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (on the Mall, just east

Minutes of the September LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Wonderful surprise! Long-time LSFer Jim Williams was in attendance! Jim commented on his late sister Charlotte's name appearing on the Chicago WorldCon "In Memoriam" list. He noted that he also attended the 1974 WorldCon in Washington, DC, where he ran into a number of known genre authors in the hotel hallways.

Rob announced that there might be another board game party coming soon – stay tuned for details!

TV News: David liked the *Lower Decks* Season 2 episode titled "wej Duj", which is Klingon for "Three Ships" – plot summary: "The three ships are the *Cerritos*, the *Che'ta* (a Klingon ship); the *Sh'Vhal* (a Vulcan ship). In each case we get a look at the folks on the lower decks."

Rob hates Netflix's *Lost in Space* series. He says he got wrapped up in the CW's *Legends of Tomorrow* and less so with *Batwoman*. He is also loving how "meta" Disney+'s *She-Hulk* (starring Tatiana Maslany) is. Jim is enjoying CW's *Superman and Lois*; he noted that the character of Jonathan Kent is being recast. Jeff likes Amazon

Prime's *Rings of Power*, which has attracted some racist hate; Rob finds the series visually stunning, but wishes that it would focus more on plot development. Scott noted that the first episode of the final season of *Handmaid's Tale* will air on September 14th.

What is J. Michael Straczynski's mysterious *Babylon 5* project? Ostensibly, it will include all of the surviving cast members. Reunion event or audio production perhaps?

Jim and Jeff nattered about the "Corridor Crew" YouTube channel. The guys at Corridor Crew critique and analyze special effects in movies. Jim watched a freebie first episode of AMC+'s *Moonhaven* series. Two questions: Has anyone else wanted to watch subsequent episodes? Is it worth investing time in the series?

NBC's new *Quantum Leap* series premieres on September 19th.

Upcoming movie releases:
Black Adam, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Avatar II*.

Upcoming LSF Book Discussion titles: *A Psalm for the Wild-Built* by Becky Chambers (Sept. 22); *Spear* by Nicola Griffith (Oct. 27); *She Who Became the Sun* by Shelley Parker-Chan (Dec. 1, combined Nov./Dec. discussion).

Raven (Haida)



of the Air & Space Museum) – including their *fabulous* museum bookstore – I found this slim volume. Its stated purpose is "to bring Trickster to life for a modern American audience" in a "spirited collection that draws together two centuries of American Indian oral tradition."

After an informative introductory essay, the editors present over 100 Native American Trickster tales from dozens of different tribal sources. Trickster is shown in his many guises: Raven (from the Northwest Pacific coast), Iktomi the Spider (from the various Sioux tribes), Rabbit (from tribes that originated in the Southeast), the

seemingly ubiquitous Coyote (whose tales range from the Arctic to Mexico), and a number of others. Here are just a few of the stories included in this book.

"Putting a Saddle on Coyote's Back" – in which Coyote's plans to eat Rabbit go awry – reminds me of another famous Coyote's numerous failures to eat a certain Roadrunner. "Coyote and Fox Dress Up" is an example of Trickster's many cross-dressing stories; in this one, the title characters run a scam on the Wolf Brothers. In "The Winkte Way", Spider and Rabbit go even further and engage in male-male sex. (*Winkte* is the Sioux word for hermaphrodite or transvestite. Spider and Rabbit do it "the *winkte* way.") In "The Talking Penis", Nixant (another Trickster guise) gets into big trouble because of... well, I'm sure you get it. "Tar Baby" is a *very* familiar story: the wily, thieving Rabbit is captured by the

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Trickster Tales

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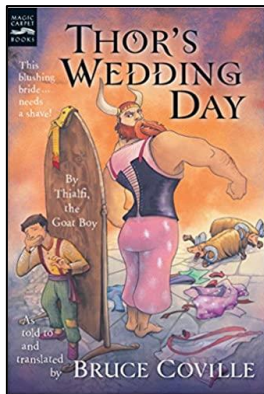
Frenchman and eventually escapes by getting the Frenchman to throw him into a briar patch. The final story in the collection – “Raven Lights the World” – is an example of Trickster-as-demiurge, using his wiles to bring light, the Sun, the Moon, Stars, and various other benefits to humans.

American Indian Trickster Tales is a fascinating – and entertaining – collection. It’s also surprisingly bawdy, definitely not what you’d classify as “children’s lit.”

Thor’s Wedding Day

by Bruce Coville

(Magic Carpet Books/Harcourt, 2005)



On the other hand, *Thor’s Wedding Day* definitely is “children’s lit.” Its author, Bruce Coville, has written dozens and dozens of very popular YA books. The story is narrated by Thialfi, a youngster who has been indentured as a servant to Thor, the Thunder God. His primary duty is to tend to Gat-Tooth and Tooth-Grinder, the talking goats who pull Thor’s chariot across the skies.

Here’s how Coville explains the basis for this novel: “The bones of *Thor’s Wedding Day* come from an ancient Norse poem called the *Thrymskvitha*—a delicious burlesque of the gods, and the only truly funny myth I know.” Someone has stolen Thor’s hammer Mjollnir; and this threatens the security of Asgard. Then the giant Thrym makes a ransom demand: give him the goddess Freya as his bride and he’ll return Mjollnir. Naturally, Freya objects; so, Odin orders Thor to disguise himself as Freya – with Loki and Thialfi

disguised as bridesmaids – and sends them off to Jotunheim to retrieve Mjollnir. Adventures – and hilarity – ensue.

Matthew Cogswell’s delightful illustrations add to all the fun – particularly the picture of Thor being laced into a corset. (There’s a color version on the cover.) And we’re not talking about the blonde beauty of Chris Hemsworth here; as the picture shows, this is the big, burly, bushy-bearded version of Thor. Like I said: funny!

The Trickster featured in *Thor’s Wedding Day* is, of course, Loki; and he demonstrates quite a number of Trickster traits. He’s shown to be a shape-shifter – in this case, becoming a falcon in an attempt to locate Mjollnir. He’s definitely depicted as a thief and mischief-maker. (Three guesses as to who is ultimately behind the theft of Mjollnir.) And then there’s the cross-dressing – and a little more. I’ll let Thialfi/Coville describe it:

They were dressing Loki at the same time, but being decked out as a woman didn’t bother him at all. If anything, he seemed to enjoy it. But then, according to Gat-Tooth, Loki had once turned himself into a pretty little mare and was the mother of Odin’s horse, Sleipnir. So I suppose dressing up as a bridesmaid wasn’t such a stretch for him.

I have to admit that the reference to Sleipnir’s parentage surprised me. Granted, Coville doesn’t exactly state that Loki was mounted by a stallion, but I still think it’s a surprising inclusion for a kid’s book.

Thor’s Wedding Day is a classic Trickster story – and quite an enjoyable read.

Punch and Judy: A Short History with the Original Dialogue
by John Payne Collier
(Dover Publications, 2006)

Just for the heck of it, I pulled this one out of my library. (It seemed a good time to read it.) Although the word “trickster” never appears anywhere in it, all of the content clearly demonstrates that Punch is part of the long and venerable Trickster tradition. Here’s a short excerpt from the Foreword:



**Punch and Judy (after
illustr. by George Cruikshank)**

Something primitive within ourselves, deep buried in the subconscious, takes delight in this sly and consistent rogue, this jubilant and ruthless scapegrace, Mr. Punch, and is more glad when he cheats the hangman and turns the tables on the Devil than if he had paid the just penalty for his crimes.

I wouldn’t recommend reading this short book unless you’re *really* interested in exploring the origins, history, and cultural significance of Punch and Judy shows – or researching this particular aspect of the Trickster tradition. If you *are* interested, however, I think you’ll find that this unabridged republication of the 1929 edition is a “must read.” It includes the script of a traditional English version of “The Tragical Comedy, or Comical Tragedy, of Punch and Judy” (with numerous footnotes), as well as 30 delightful “Punch & Judy” illustrations by Victorian caricaturist George Cruikshank (1792-1878).

As a final note, here are some F&SF works that contain Trickster characters and themes:

- *Lord of Light*, by Roger Zelazny (“Sam”)
- *Anansi Boys*, by Neil Gaiman
- *Ink* by Hal Duncan (Book 2 of the “Book of All Hours”)
- Mr. Mxyzptlk in Superman comics
- The Riddler from Batman comics (although I don’t think the Joker qualifies)

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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. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be on Sunday, **October 9th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC. All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.** We 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, Peter & Scott

Oct. 14-16, 2022 **CONFABULOUS! 2022.** (hosted by North Country Gaylaxians) Crowne Plaza Suites MSP Airport – Mall of America (formerly the Crowne Plaza Aire) (Bloomington, MN). On-line registration available through the website. Webpage: <http://confabulous.org>

Nov. 18-20, 2022 **PHILCON 2022.** Doubletree by Hilton (Cherry Hill NJ). Principal Speaker: Keith DeCandido; Artist GoH: Charles Urbach. Membership: \$65. Website: www.philcon.org Registration: www.membership.philcon.org

Nov. 25-27, 2022 **CHESSIECON 2022.** (A very LGBTQ+ friendly con.) Delta Hunt Valley Hotel (Hunt Valley MD). GoH: Danielle Ackley-McPhail; Music GoH: Blibbering Humdingers. Membership: \$50 until 10/30; \$55 after that; \$60 at the door; daily memberships available. On-line registration (via PayPal): <https://johogan.org/chessieconlogin.cfm> OR by mail to: TSFS, Inc., PO Box 83032, Gaithersburg MD 20883-3032 (checks payable to: TSFS, Inc.). Info at: info@chessiecon.org Website: <https://chessiecon.org/>

Feb. 10-12, 2023 **FARPOINT.** Delta by Marriott Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Guest: Wilson Cruz (*ST: Discovery*), Rylee Alazraqui (*ST: Prodigy*). Membership (register on-line): \$90 for the weekend; daily rates available. For more information: www.FarPointCon.com



**ConFABulous!
2022 Update**

To our ConFAB Friends,

I am writing with an update on the convention plans. Please check out our website for the latest news on panels and role-playing games. Event scheduling and sign-ups for scheduled games will occur in early October and you'll be notified when we publish those details.

There will also be TONS of space for board and card gaming and plenty of board and card games to pick-up and play. This is a great convention to

experience great games that you never knew you loved!

We are still looking for additional programming ideas and panelists, so, please send your panel ideas and volunteer to be a panelist. Go to Programming for a list of the proposed panels we have so far put together for you.

Pathfinder Bounties & Quests will be joining us at the convention this year with two-hour introductions to the Pathfinder Second Edition world. (Additional details are on the website.) We also have a slate of role-playing games for you to participate in. If you would like to run a role-playing game at ConFABulous, or play in one, please email us. Remember to bring some chocolate for the Chocolate Symposium in our Con

Suite (a tradition at ConFABulous and in the Gaylaxicons we host), and we will see you at the con on October 14-16, 2022, at the Crowne Plaza Suites MSP Airport – Mall of America (formerly the Crowne Plaza Aire), 3 Appletree Square in Bloomington, MN!

Don Kaiser
Chair, ConFABulous
Sponsored by Gaylaxicon Minnesota
ConFABulous.org

