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E-MAIL: info@lambdasf.org WEBSITE: http://www.lambdasf.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 generally meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM. The next meeting will be Sept. 27th (at Peter & Rob's house, 1425 "S" St., NW - for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369).

Here's the schedule for the next several months:

— **Thurs., Sept. 27** - *The Mists of Avalon*, by Marion Zimmer Bradley (**the rescheduled August discussion.**); facilitator: Rob.

— **Thurs., Oct. 25** - "The Dunwich Horror", by H.P. Lovecraft; facilitator: Mike M. (**Note:** This story is available in any one of a number of paperback anthologies of Lovecraft stories. *And it's rescheduled closer to Halloween!!!*)

---**Nov./Dec. (date TBA)** - *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, by Michael Chabon; facilitator: Mike P. (**Note:** This Pulitzer Prize-winning book is now available in trade paperback format.)

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The Special Guest Minutes of the August LSF Meeting

by Rob Gates

You thought the haiku was the last; you thought it was safe to go back in the water.... Hmmm, funny that I mention water... Due to the floods-of-biblical-proportion in DC, our humble Secretary Scott was unable to make the August meeting and asked me to take minutes for him as a Special Guest Secretary! Luckily, our host was just outside the circle of power outages in the Dupont Circle area, so we gathered in relative comfort and light.

In business, the club had four proposals to vote on, and all passed without a fuss. The club voted to donate \$20 towards a Gaylactic Network ad in the Worldcon Program Book; we voted to admit the Atlanta Outworlders as an affiliate of the Gaylactic Network; we voted to donate \$925.57 to Gaylaxicon 2000 to balance and close their books (in exchange for which we get all the leftover t-shirts and stuff to sell); and we voted to grant our first-ever Life Membership to our Founder, Loree Cook-Daniels. We also called for any further nominations for the Special Election for Speaker to be held at the September meeting - no one new came forward and thus our candidates will be: Carl Cipra and Michael Cornett.

Kay and Rob gave reports on things to watch for at Worldcon from the Network and the Spectrum Awards.

Sept. 9th LSF Meeting

The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St., NW, #413) on Sunday, September 9th. The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can.

Remember: there will be a special election to fill the position of LSF Speaker for the remainder of this year. (Candidates' statements on page 3.)

See you there!

Various activities will take place in the Gay Fandom Suite Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. A handout listing programming items of GLBT interest is being produced, and a good time will be had by all. The Spectrum Awards ceremony is Thursday evening, alongside a panel occurring from 5-6 PM; a special Spectrum Awards Reception will take place on Friday evening in the Gay Fandom Suite; and a raffle is underway as a Spectrum Awards fundraiser. Tickets can be bought in person, or through the Spectrum Awards website: www.lambdasf.org/spectrum/

Kendall stepped forward and offered to take over the vacant role of Webmaster, to the sound of much relief from yours truly, who was handling it in the interim. Rob reminded everyone that the Book Discussion for August has been moved to September and that all

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

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The Element of Fire
by Martha Wells
reviewed by Carl Cipra

Back in the August 2000 issue of this newsletter, I reviewed *Death of the Necromancer*, by Martha Wells; and I stated how I really enjoyed it and was looking forward to reading more of her works. Well, lo and behold, I discovered that I already had another of her books sitting in my library -- *The Element of Fire*. As it turns out, *Fire* is Ms. Wells' first novel (1993), predating *Necromancer* by five years. But, first novel or not, *The Element of Fire* is still a "wowser" of a good story; and it just confirms my decision to add Martha Wells to my list of favorite authors!

Both *Fire* and *Necromancer* take place in the fantasy kingdom of Ile-Rien -- but the two novels are not simply two parts of an incomplete trilogy. Indeed, the two novels don't have any characters in common; and the events described in *The Element of Fire* seem to take place at least a couple of hundred years prior to those described in *Death of the Necromancer*. Whereas the Ile-Rien of *Necromancer* is an analog of mid-to-late Nineteenth Century Paris (with gaslights, the telegraph, railroads, newspapers -- plus magic), the Ile-Rien of *Fire* is analogous to the France of *The Three Musketeers* (the mid-1600's -- plus magic). In fact, I think Mssrs. Porthos, Athos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan would feel right at home in this earlier Ile-Rien (as long as they could get used to the magic, that is). *The Element of Fire* is filled with court intrigues, sword-fights, palace guards, a dowager queen, an evil duke, and all kinds of perilous derring-do.

The royal court of Ile-Rien seethes with intrigue. The weak-willed young King Roland sits on the throne, but two powerful factions actually rule the land. One faction is led by Duke Denzil of Alsene, who is the king's handsome cousin and the royal favorite. Denzil continually plays on Roland's fears and emotions to wrangle favors and preferments for himself and his henchmen -- and, unknown to most



people, Denzil has designs upon Roland's young wife and the Throne of Ile-Rien itself. The other faction is led by Roland's mother, the oh-so-competent Dowager Queen Ravenna. Ravenna has actually been ruling Ile-Rien since the death of her late, unlamented husband; and Roland is cowed - and frequently bullied - by this formidable woman.

Such mundane political machinations are, however, the least of Ile-Rien's worries. Urbain Grandier, a powerful and evil sorcerer, has escaped the clutches of the Inquisition in the neighboring Kingdom of Bisra and is known to be hiding somewhere in Ile-Rien. Grandier's exact intentions are unknown; but it is suspected that his overwhelming desire for revenge includes arranging a war between Ile-Rien and Bisra that would devastate both kingdoms. Meanwhile, Roland's bastard half-sister, Kade, has sneaked back from exile. Kade -- known by her detractors as "Kade Carrion" -- is half-fayre, daughter of the late King and his mistress, the Fayre Queen of Air and Darkness, and is skilled in both fayre magic and sorcery. Kade's exact intentions are also unknown; but she's considered to be mentally unstable and it's no secret that she harbors long-standing grudges against both King Roland and her stepmother, the Dowager Queen. And, as if that's not enough, Ile-Rien hasn't had a Court Sorcerer in some time and the magical Wards protecting the royal palace are failing -- just when they're most needed!

Surprisingly, the key figure who might possibly save Ile-Rien is someone with *no* magical powers whatsoever: Thomas Boniface, the handsome Captain of the Queen's Guard and, for

quite a number of years now, the Queen Dowager's lover. He's bold, daring, smart, witty, and *very* proficient with a sword. But is even the dashing Thomas Boniface up to the challenge of handling a weak-willed king, a traitorous duke, a flighty young queen, a mad half-human princess, and an evil sorcerer -- all at the same time?

Martha Wells brings it all together into a really satisfying read. She has combined themes and motifs from a number of different historical and literary sources, including the Arthurian legends, Seventeenth Century France, and the swashbuckling adventures of Alexandre Dumas. And I find *The Element of Fire* to be evocative - rather than merely derivative - of those sources. Her characters are well-designed and carefully delineated; the dialog is witty and well-written; her treatment of magic and the Fayre Realms is masterful; and the action never stops. To my mind, the name "Martha Wells" on the cover guarantees a great reading experience! Now that I've read both *Death of the Necromancer* and *The Element of Fire*, I'm really looking forward to reading her two other novels: *City of Bones* (1996) and *Wheel of the Infinite* (2000). Λ Ψ Φ

**DAVID GERROLD'S
THREE LAWS OF
INFERNAL DYNAMICS**

1. An object in motion will always be headed in the wrong direction.
2. An object at rest will always be in the wrong place.
3. The energy necessary to change either of these states is always more than you wish to expend, but never so much as to be totally impractical.

excerpted from *Science Fictionisms*
compiled by William Rotsler
(Gibbs-Smith Publisher, 1995)

August Minutes

continued from page 1

following months have shifted accordingly. And Michael announced another fabulous LSF Movie Outing to see *The Others* on Sunday, August 19th.

We also had a visit from a Special Guest - Brett Parson - who is a recent addition to the Gay & Lesbian Liaison Unit for the District Police. He came by to visit us, let us know they exist, and generally brighten our day. He answered questions about safety and other local police departments' handling of gay and lesbian issues, and he handed out flyers and business cards. He had a great sense of humor, and we all thanked him for coming by.

Next, it was on to the Social portion of our meeting. We began with a name circle, then started the show and tell....

Book news: The June issue of *F&SF* magazine had a few stories with GLBT content. Fiona Patton's latest book, *The Golden Sword*, is on shelves now. Liz Williams' *The Ghost Sister* has a lesbian protagonist and is on shelves now. Lynn Flewelling's latest, *The Bone Doll's Twin*, has a gorgeous Palencar cover and will be on shelves in late September/early October and has GLBT content. An anthology of Australian *F&SF*, *Dreaming Down Under*, has a great cover by gay Australian artist Nick Stephopolous and is available now. Ben Bova's latest, *Precipice*, is highly recommended, though has no GLBT content. Finally, a collection of the Hildebrandt art from Tolkien calendars has been collected in a coffee-table art book.

TV & Media news: Cartoon Network has an entertaining new cartoon called *Samurai Jack*. There's also a new computer-animated cartoon on Saturday mornings called *Cubix*. Carl reported on a marvelous-looking movie preview for a computer-animated film called *Ice Ages*, coming in December. Michael M. passed around gorgeous 12" action figures from the Universal Monsters collection and mentioned that *Lord of the Rings* toys will be coming out from a company called Sideshow (website:

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Special Election for LSF Speaker on Sept. 9th -- Candidates' Statements --

Michael Cornett

The office of speaker is a simple one: to run the meetings and preside at club functions as needed. I have had several years of experience doing that and I'm sure my experience can be put to the use of the club. It is my intention to keep the meetings fun and pleasant for everyone, and make club functions as positive an experience as possible for all concerned. I also will do my best to make newcomers feel welcome and to be sure that current members are respected and appreciated. Lambda Sci-Fi has been through a lot in recent years and has survived and thrived; I plan to do what I can to aid its continued growth. Thank you.

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Carl Cipra

What will I bring to the office of Speaker? Answer: my skills as a leader and as a trained facilitator; my continuing concern that Lambda Sci-Fi be the kind of club where members enjoy attending meetings and other activities; my desire to encourage more members to participate in making LSF even better; and my ability to work with anyone to achieve the goals LSF's members have decided upon. How do you know I'm reliable? Well, I've got a pretty decent track record in that regard - I was the second person to hold the position of LSF Speaker (1994-1995) and there weren't any complaints about my performance. If you elect me Speaker once again, can you continue to rely on me? Yes.

Trickster Tales “for Kids”

by Carl Cipra

Trickster and the Fainting Birds
told by Howard Norman
illustrated by Tom Pohrt
(Gulliver Books/Harcourt Brace &
Company, 1999)

The Jack Tales, stories by Ray Hicks
as told to Lynn Salsi
illustrated by Owen Smith
(Callaway/Simon & Schuster, 2000)

I’ve mentioned any number of times in reviews how I’m “hooked on” illustrated children’s books and young adult (YA) literature – particularly when they deal with F&SF themes and subject matter. I don’t just read them for the “pretty pictures” or as a quick-fix to satisfy my longing for “sense of wonder” (although, truth to tell, that’s certainly part of the reason) – I’ve discovered there’s often much more to them than that. I’m continually amazed at the sophistication, the nuances, and the depth to these books. Somehow, I can’t believe that children and/or “young adults” are the only audience these books are aimed at; I find it hard to believe that kids can possibly pick up on what I see in there. Now, granted, it might be that I’m not giving kids the credit they deserve – or that I’m reading more into these books than the authors intended; but, on the other hand, some of the children’s and YA literature I’ve bought just might be examples of “the Rocky & Bullwinkle syndrome.” (Come on, you and I know that Jay Ward & Associates never intended those cartoons just for young kids. What “kid” has the background to understand the humorous references behind names like: the Kerwood Derby, Boris Badenov, Natasha Fatale, and Francois Villain and the Kingdom of Applesauce-Lorraine?) Be that as it may, I recently ran across two illustrated children’s books which both deal with a pretty darn sophisticated mythological archetype: the Trickster. The books are *Trickster and the Fainting Birds* (“told by Howard Norman”) and *The Jack Tales* (“by Ray

Hicks, as told to Lynn Salsi”).

Trickster-figures have been a staple of human myth and legend for as far back as anyone cares to check. The Trickster is generally a maverick, an amoral culture hero, sly and wily, often a thief, sometimes a shapeshifter, always on the make to dupe someone out of something, and frequently being duped himself. The archetype encompasses such mythic figures as Raven, Coyote, Anansi (the Spider), Loki, Puck, Hermes the Thief, and Prometheus. Trickster-figures are still very much a part of the modern-day cultural scene (Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker, Superman’s little nemesis Mr. Mxyzptlk, and many more); and Tricksters also occasionally show up in F&SF literature – for example Charles Finney’s Dr. Lao (*The Circus of Dr. Lao*), Fritz Leiber’s Gray Mouser (the “Lankhmar” stories), and Philip José Farmer’s Kickaha (the “World of Tiers” series).

Trickster and the Fainting Birds recounts seven Algonquian stories which Howard Norman gathered over the years from various Native American storytellers in Manitoba. The stories are written in a tone reminiscent of what you’d expect to hear if a talented old storyteller were recounting them to you aloud. (In fact, I even found myself reciting passages aloud just to hear how they’d sound.) Besides the title story (in which a young woman refuses to marry Trickster), the book includes such other stories as “Trickster and the Shut-Eye Dancers” (in which Trickster and Fox outwit some ducks and then Trickster out-foxes Fox) and “Trickster and the Clacking Sleeves” (in which an old woman teaches Trickster a lesson he richly deserves). Although the narratives themselves never really describe



Trickster’s appearance and, in fact, only refer to him by the name of “Trickster”, Tom Pohrt’s illustrations depict Trickster as a young Native American dressed in backwoods buckskin clothing and a long red scarf.

The Jack Tales relate stories about the Trickster in his guise as “Jack” – lineal descendant of that “Jack and the Beanstalk” and “Jack the Giant-Killer” we know from fairy tales. But the three short tales in this book are set somewhat closer to us than the “once upon a time” world of the fairy tales. They take place in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina; and various internal references (coinage, weaponry, word choice) seem to indicate that they took place at least a century ago. They are based on stories told to North

Carolina ethnologist Lynn Salsi by Ray Hicks, perhaps the greatest living old-style storyteller; and they are written in a slightly modernized dialect that still manages to give the stories a “back-hills” feel. Owen Smith’s illustrations inescapably remind me of the works of American artist Thomas Hart Benton. “Jack and the Northwest Wind” is a quest-tale, in which young Jack receives various magical items from a kindly old man only to be tricked out of them by three unscrupulous brothers. (Don’t worry, though – the baddies get their come-uppance in the end!) “Jack and the Bean Tree” is, of course, an American version of “Jack and the Beanstalk.” (It’s fascinating to see the well-known fairy tale in a whole new light.) The final tale, “Jack and the Robbers,” pits vagabond Jack and an improbable group of animal friends against a band of robbers. This story has definite resonances to the fairy tale about “The Bremen-Town Musicians” – and I’m sure you’ve figured out that the hapless robbers get the worst out of the encounter!

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Trickster Tales

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Both *Trickster* and *the Fainting Birds* and *The Jack Tales* perform a great service for modern readers, both young and old alike. The editor-authors haven't simply gathered a pile of stories together into a massive, dry-as-dust tome and annotated them to death with scholarly analyses. They have re-packaged certain facets of our world's fascinating oral heritage and made them readily available for a new audience, supplementing the narratives with vibrant visual imagery while still preserving the tenor and flavor the originals. They also do a great job of evoking a powerful mythological figure and making him accessible to young (and not-so-

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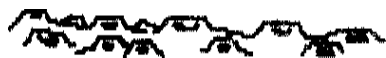
Like R2D2, Only Less Annoying

(excerpted from
Newsweek, 8/13/2001)

Now *this* is a personal digital assistant. The latest in space accessories from NASA talks, understands, and monitors temperature and atmospheric pressure like the Tricorder on *Star Trek*. But what makes it way cooler than earthbound PDAs is that the Personal Satellite Assistant looks and moves like Luke Skywalker's Jedi training remote in *Star Wars*.

On a shuttle mission or aboard the space station, the PSA will float, hover, and zoom, thanks to 12 fans that propel it in zero G. Its video cameras, wireless technology, and voice software will let the silicon astronaut scout for danger (seeking the source of smoke, say) and answer questions. ("What am I scheduled to do now?" "How do I repair this widget?")

"I think of it as the parrot on the pirate's shoulder," says PSA inventor Yuri Gawdiack. "It's there to be consulted, but isn't in the way." Unlike, oh, R2D2.



August Minutes

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sideshow.com). Speaking of *LotR*, the conflicting Tolkien panels at Worldcon have been shifted around and no longer conflict; and the latest ALA catalog of bookmarks and posters and stuff has a number of *LotR* items.

In convention news, both Helgi and Dan reported on Anthrocon - a furry convention. Helgi commented on the welcoming atmosphere and the panels on furry spirituality; while Dan commented on his experiences as an artist participant and making buttons that are becoming popular on the furry con circuit. They also mentioned a few upcoming furry gatherings and conventions. Dan also invited people to make use of his calendar of local genre happenings, at: www.solfire.com/~graysoul <<http://www.solfire.com/~graysoul>>

In news of the strange, the last of the "Rain Queens" died in Africa recently. Wayne reported on the end of this line of supposedly powerful "witches" who could control the rain and

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who were treated as something like royalty by the local folks. Another of our Special Guests, Antonio (visiting us from South Africa) reported on some of the behind-the-scenes facts: apparently, while they were treated like royalty, they really weren't all that well liked; and the mourning for her death was mixed with relief that the line had finally ended.

Finally, we talked about upcoming LSF events: a movie outing to see *The Others* on Sunday, August 19th; a trip to the Maryland Renaissance Festival, which we scheduled for Saturday, September 15th; and preliminary discussions about a potential Halloween party.

Then we all went our merry way -- some to homes with lights and air conditioning, and some to darkness and humidity, as power was still out in Dupont Circle. Thankfully, power returned, so I could type up these minutes. [Ed. note: And I'm ever-so-grateful!]

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Here's a tale, the saddest fable,
About a witch called Munching Mabel,
Famed for cooking stuff delicious,
Truly tasty, most nutritious.

One day she thought she had to try
To bake a magic mushroom pie
So off she ran to woods to find
Mushrooms of the perfect kind.
Alas, poor Mabel (nice but slow)
Stopped right there where toad stools grow.

And quite forgetting in her haste
Their very deadly poisoned taste,
Picked the biggest, white and red,
Then munching on it, fell down....



excerpted from
Mumbo Jumbo: The Creepy ABC
by Michael Roberts
(Callaway/Simon & Schuster, 2000)

****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 \$20, for which you will receive 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 held on **Sunday, September 9th**, at James Crutchfield's home: 1414 17th St., NW, #413 (near DuPont Circle) - 1:30 PM for business meeting; 2:00 PM for social meeting. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. 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, Rob, Mike and Kendall



Aug. 30 - Sept. 3, 2001 **THE MILLENNIUM PHILCON (The 59th World Science Fiction Convention)**. The Pennsylvania Convention Ctr. & Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. GoH: Greg Bear; Artist GoH: Stephen Youll. Attending membership: \$170 (at present; will go UP!). Make checks payable to "The Millennium Philcon" and send to: Millennium Philcon, PO Box 310, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0310. website: www.milphil.org

Sept. 28-30, 2001 **CAPCLAVE 2001**. Sheraton College Park (Beltsville, MD). "A new convention for the new millennium." Celebrating: "The Short Story in SF". GoH: Gardner Dozois. Membership: \$30. Make checks payable to "Capclave 2001" and send to: Capclave Registration, c/o Alexis Gilliland, 4030 8th St., Arlington, VA 22204

Nov. 23-25, 2001 **DARKOVER GRAND COUNCIL MEETING XXIV**. Holiday Inn, Timonium (Timonium, MD). GoH: Joanne Bertin; Special Guest: Katherine Kurtz; Artist GoH: L.W. Perkins. Membership: \$35 until 11/1/2001; \$40 after that. Make checks payable to "Armida Council" and send to: Armida Council, PO Box 7203, Silver Spring, MD 20907. *Avery* GLBT-friendly convention!

Aug. 29 - Sept. 2, 2002 **CONJOSE (The 60th World Science Fiction Convention)**. McEnery Convention Center & surrounding hotels (San Jose, CA). Author GoH: Vernor Vinge; Artist GoH: David Cherry; Fan GoH: John & Bjo Trimble. Attending membership: \$160 (7/11 - 12/31/2001; will go UP!). Make checks payable to "ConJose" and send to: ConJose, PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-1363 (or: reg@conjose.org). website: www.conjose.org

