



lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

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Lambda Sci-Fi at Past DC/Capital Pride Events
(pictures courtesy of LSFer Brian Stanton)

Above: 1991

Below: 2019



**** July 14, 2024 Meeting ****

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, July 14th**. 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. Hope to see you there!



📖 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 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 on July 25th.

Here are the details for the next several; discussions:

July 25 – *The City We Became*, by N K Jemisin (moderator: Zena).

Aug. 22 – *Die*, Vol. 1 & 2 (graphic novel), by Kieron Gillen *et al* (mod: Dan).



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What's Inside?

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Alternate Armadas

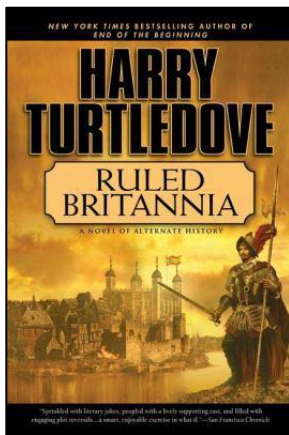
reviews by Carl

Alternate history stories always include a “point of divergence” from which the flow of our universe’s history has changed in some way. Most often this point of divergence results from either warfare or politics, such as the Confederacy winning the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln surviving (or avoiding) Booth’s attack, Nazi Germany winning WWII, George Armstrong Custer surviving to face a court martial after his defeat at the Little Big Horn, Charles Lindbergh being elected President of the United States, etc. Recently, I’ve been reading alternate history novels in which the point of divergence centers on the Spanish Armada sent against Elizabethan England in 1588 by His Most Catholic Majesty, Philip II of Spain.

Ruled Britannia

by Harry Turtledove

(New American Library, 2002)



There’s no better way to begin than with a novel by one of the acknowledged masters of alternate history, Harry Turtledove.

In Turtledove’s version of the events of 1588, the Spanish Armada got a number of breaks that it didn’t get in our timeline. Adverse weather conditions prevented English fireships from breaking up the Spanish fleet; and the Armada was able to escort Spanish troop ships safely across the English Channel from Dunkirk. Upon landing, the

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Robotica

info passed along by Carl

I’ve reviewed the amazing robotic creations of Boston Dynamics in a couple of previous issues of the LSF newsletter (October 2019, February 2020). Now they’re back in the news with their latest creations, a big furry blue “dog-bot” named Sparkles.

Sparkles is Boston Dynamics’s second famous robotic dog. The first – named Spot – was launched in 2016 and, since then, has been tasked with everything from fighting fires with the New York City Fire Department to “peeing” beer on command. Now Spot’s technology has had an upgrade and makeover. *Voila!* Sparkles, wearing a custom-made blue dog costume. (Note: In 2022, Boston Dynamics was purchased by Hyundai.)

Boston Dynamics has released a new video that features a meeting between Spot and Sparkles – and they dance together. Not coincidentally, the video was released on International Dance Day. Here’s a link to the video:

[Meet Sparkles | Boston Dynamics \(youtube.com\)](#)



And here are a couple of links if you want a quick review of the robots of Boston Dynamics:

[Evolution Of Boston Dynamics Since 2012 - YouTube](#)

[Evolution of Boston Dynamic’s Robots \[1992-2023\] - YouTube](#)



And while we’re on the subject of robots, here’s another one making the news: the Thermonator!



The Thermonator is a product of Throwflame, an Ohio-based company. It’s a fire-spewing robot “dog” that can operate in dark environments, has a torch light, and can shoot fire up to about 10 feet. It has an hour-long battery life and laser sighting to help shoot fire onto its target; users can connect it to WiFi and Bluetooth to control it using a smartphone. The cost of a Thermonator is \$9,420.

Thermonator has been advertised as a tool to help remove snow and ice, as a tool for wildfire and agricultural management, and for entertainment purposes. It’s legal in 48 states. In California, Thermonator must be fitted with a smaller nozzle to reduce its range and comply with state regulations; and Maryland buyers must hold a Type 9, 10, or 11 Federal Firearms License to legally possess one.

You can view a Thermonator in action in this video

[The Robot Dog With A Flamethrower | Thermonator \(youtube.com\)](#)

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Alternate Armadas continued from page 2

mighty Spanish legions quickly conquered England. Queen Elizabeth was deposed and sent to the Tower, because King Philip didn't want royal blood on his hands; and her chief counselor, Lord Burghley, was also spared from execution. (In *our* timeline, King Philip had stated that this was what he intended to do when he conquered England.) Finally, Philip installed his daughter Isabella and her husband Prince Albert of Austria as England's rightful monarchs; and the English Inquisition was instituted to return England to the fold of the Roman Catholic Church.

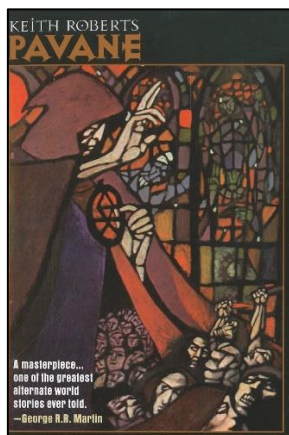
The events in *Ruled Britannia* take place during the years 1597 to 1598. England is comparatively peaceful, with many English having adjusted to Catholic and Spanish rule. There are, however, secret plans by a number of "loyal Englishmen" to "oust the Dons." Young William Shakespeare (poet, actor, stagehand, and promising new playwright) finds himself unexpectedly embroiled in one such plan – he is convinced by Lord Burghley to craft a historical play about Boudicca's revolt against the Roman invaders, and the premiere of this play will be used as the signal for open revolt. Unfortunately, Shakespeare is *also* tasked by the Spanish governor in London to write a play in praise of King Philip II of Spain; and he's been ordered to have *this* play ready for staging at Queen Isabella's court as soon as news is received of the terminally-ill Philip's death. Pressure, pressure, pressure. How is Shakespeare to write two plays at once? And, even worse, how will he and his fellow actors prepare for and rehearse the Boudicca play without risking imprisonment and almost certain execution at the hands of the English Inquisition? And if the rebellion does in fact begin but isn't successful, then execution is inevitable.

The story is seen from the point of view of two famous playwrights: William Shakespeare and Spanish poet Lope de Vega, who is serving in the Spanish army of occupation. (In *our* timeline, de Vega survived the defeat of the Armada and became one of Spain's most re-

nowned playwrights – often called "the Spanish Shakespeare.") Supporting characters include Christopher Marlowe (also a renowned playwright – as well as an apparent member of the English underground) and other members of the Theater company, such as Richard Burbage and Will Kempe.

I found *Ruled Britannia* to be a delightful – and exciting – read. It's full of Shakespearean references, language, and allusions. For example, there's the (completely fictional) character Constable Walter Strawberry: he's obviously based on Shakespeare's "Constable Dogberry" (from *Much Ado About Nothing*) and provides similar comic relief at various points in Turtledove's novel. Turtledove even did a masterful job of "recreating" scenes from two Shakespeare plays-that-never-were: *Boudicca* and *King Philip*. His research into all things Shakespearean is impressive; and, as usual, his historical research impressively and effectively supports this alternate history story.

Pavane by Keith Roberts (Old Earth Books, 2011)



Some years ago, the subject of the LSF Book Discussion Group was *The Alteration* (1976) by Kingsley Amis; and Amis cited *Pavane* as an inspiration. OK, I was intrigued. I knew that there's a copy of the 1968 Ace edition of *Pavane* buried somewhere in my stacks; but I couldn't locate it. So, off I went to Amazon.com to get this 2011 edition. (By the way, this 2011 edition features the same beautiful cover art – by

Leo and Diane Dillon – as the 1968 Ace edition.)

The point of divergence in *Pavane* also occurs in 1588; but it's caused when Queen Elizabeth I is shot and killed by a Catholic assassin. Vengeful Protestant mobs attack English Catholics, who fight back. During the short and bloody civil war that follows, the Spanish Armada lands unopposed. Spain occupies England, suppresses Protestantism, and imposes Catholicism. Without English support, the Dutch Republic's revolt against Spain is suppressed; and the dissident German Protestants are also defeated. Spain and Catholicism are triumphant! When Spanish power eventually wanes, the Catholic Church has no rivals, and the Pope becomes the effective spiritual *and* secular ruler of Europe.

Pavane consists of a series of loosely-linked short stories set in England during the 1970s. For centuries, the Church has banned innovation and scientific research, particularly regarding all things electrical. England in the 1970s is a semi-feudal realm featuring Guilds and roughly 19th Century technology, but without railroads, telegraphs, or printing presses. The remote countryside is dangerous, with marauding bands of *routiers*, wild beasts, and occasional manifestations of "the Old Ones" or "People of the Hills" (possibly "the Fairy Folk" of olden times). And there are rumors of revolution...

Each of the linked stories centers on an individual who is suffering under – but attempting to overcome – the socio-religious restrictions he or she is facing. And each story includes a fascinating depiction of a technology that is either absent from or uncommon in our modern world, such as steam traction engines (like railroads, but without tracks), mechanical semaphore telegraphy (widely used in *our* timeline during the Napoleonic wars), and lithography.

(continued on page 4)

Happy
4th of
July!



**** INFORMATION ABOUT LAMBDA SCI-FI: DC AREA GAYLAXIANS ****

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (LSF) is an organization for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and trans-gendered (LGBT) 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.

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, **July 14th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC.** 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

Aug. 1-4, 2024 **PULPFEST 2024**. "Celebrating Mystery, Adventure, Science Fiction, and More." DoubleTree by Hilton Pittsburgh-Cranberry (Mars PA, 19 miles north of Pittsburgh). Weekend (\$40 if you stay at the DoubleTree, \$50 if you stay elsewhere) and single-day memberships available.

Website: www.PulpFest.com On-line membership via: <https://pulpfest.com/plpfest-paypal/>

Aug. 2-4, 2024 **OTAKON 2024**. "To celebrate Asian pop culture, (anime, manga, music, movies, video games, etc.) and its fandom." Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). Weekend membership: \$85 (daily rates also available). On-line registration. Website: www.otakon.com

Sept. 27-29, 2024 **CAPCLAVE 2024**. Rockville Hilton (Rockville MD). Guests of Honor: Sheree Renee Thomas; Matt Diniman. Membership: \$60 from June to July 2024; \$65 from Aug to Sept 2024; \$70 at the door.

Website: www.capclave.org Info: info@capclave.org

Oct. 11-13, 2024 **CONFABULOUS 2024**. Crowne Plaza Suites MSP Airport/Mall of America, previously Crowne Plaze AiRE (Bloomington MN). A fan-fun LGBTQ+ convention with a relaxed feel (gaming & discussion panels). Full Membership: \$60. Website: <https://confabulous.org>

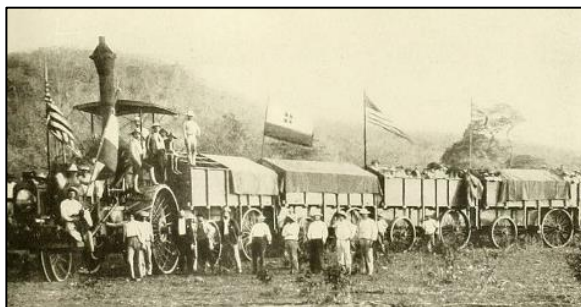
June 5, 2025 **HANACON**. "Anime, Art, & Asian Pop culture Convention." Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza (Silver Spring MD). "Early bird special" membership: \$40 (offer expires 1/1/25).

For more information: www.HanaConAnime.com

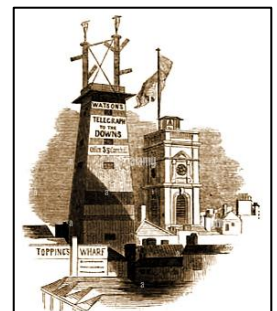
Alternate Armadas
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I was puzzled by the occasional appearance of one of "the Old Ones" in what is essentially a series of non-Fantasy stories. But then came the Coda, the final story in the book. This "great reveal" surprised the heck out of me – delightfully so, I might add. Everything suddenly made sense – even though the nature of the world was turned on its head. (No spoilers in this review, however.) I quite enjoyed *Pavane*; and I'm sorry it took me so long to get around to reading it.

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Steam Traction Engine pulling cargo



Semaphore tower

