



lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 436 – July 2026

E-MAIL: info@lambdascifi.org

WEBSITE: www.lambdascifi.org



TO ALL LSFERS AND THEIR FRIENDS!

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 LGBTQ 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; but the next book discussion will be held on July 23, 2026.

Here are the details for the next four discussions:

July 23 – *The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August*, by Claire North; moderator: Andy.

Aug. 20 [*note changed date*] – *The Will of the Many*, by James Islington; moderator: Josh.

Sept. 24 – *The Mercy of Gods*, by James S. A. Corey; moderator: Greg.

Oct. 22 – *The Starving Saints*, by Caitlin Starling; moderator: Rob. ΛΨΦ



***** July 12, 2026 Meeting *****

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, July 12th**. 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!



What's Inside?

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**Vèvè-Punk:
Birth of the Dream**
by Dominick Rabrun
(Blue Cerberus, 2026)
a short review by Carl



I met “Dom” Rabrun on a “New Horror” discussion panel I moderated at Balticon. I found him to be a pleasant and well-considered person, and I was fascinated with descriptions of his first book, a collection of short fiction in a sub-genre which he calls “vèvè-punk”. (If you find the concept difficult to parse, just think about other “punk” genres: steampunk, cyberpunk, etc.) Rabrun developed his “philosophy” of vèvè-punk as a blend of Haitian Voodoo symbolism with futuristic Afro-Caribbean themes. It’s based on his personal experiences: he’s a first-generation Haitian-American and had an early conservative Christian upbringing (a former Jehovah’s Witness). Here’s how Labrun describes the book in his Introduction: “*Vèvè-Punk* is my creative world where tradition and innovation coexist, fusing together vèvès ancient Haitian Voodoo symbols, with modern technology.”

As we suspected, no one in the Dealer’s Room was selling copies of *Vèvè-Punk* – so, off to Amazon.com I went!

The vèvè-punk “universe” burst into being in 2002, when Legba (a *Loa* – one of the traditional Voodoo spirits) “finally convinced most of the Voodoo

Loas to join the Vèvè-Net, a techno-spiritual stock exchange” that allows Loas to provide portions of themselves (and their powers) to human beings (which, in turn, provides Loas with some sort of spiritual sustenance). Most of the earliest short stories in the collection provide readers with information about Voodoo spiritual beliefs and the events leading up to the so-called Gran Komansman in 2002. Several of these early stories feature Ednice Regis, a deceased Beholder (*i.e.* Jehovah’s Witness) assigned to contact other deceased souls in *L’Après* (an afterlife realm) and convert them (get them to “sign on” with the Beholders) – until her fateful meeting with The Gardner (*i.e.* Bondye, the Voodoo “supreme creator of everythingness”), which leads to her efforts to “overturn Jehovah’s tyranny from beyond the grave.”

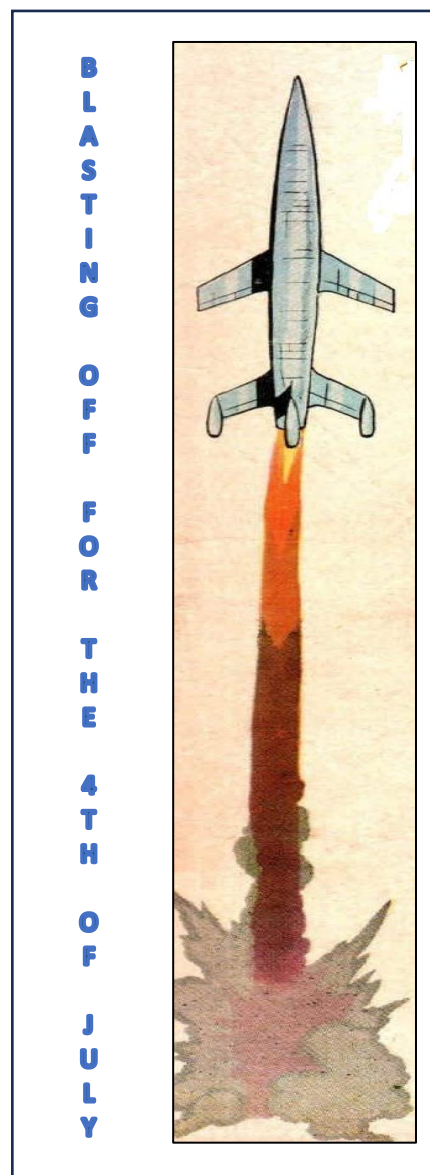
I think my favorite stories are the three longer stories that come at the end of the collection; “Son of Madame Koupe” and “Blood Hunt” and “Riding with Death.” All three of these stories are set after the Gran Komansman of 2002 and allow the reader to experience human interactions with Loas during the time of the fully-functioning Vèvè-Net – sometimes bizarre, sometimes horrifying. (I think I would have been very much “at sea” in these stories without the set-up provided by the previous stories.) “Son of Madame Koupe” is the story of the young Haitian boy Louis Duplessis, who interacts with Legba via a Soleil PlayKid (his handheld gaming device) – and his mother Veronique, who unintentionally transforms into the terrifying *Loa* known as Madame Koupe. In “Blood Hunt,” Janet Baptiste – an ex-Beholder who’s now an employee of the Department of Treaty Oversight – investigates the mysterious and deadly activities of a couple of renegade Beholder operatives. “Riding with Death” relates one of the adventures of Adam Regis (“a driven Voudouite man obsessed with speed and danger”) and his vèvè-tech-infused taxi as he tries to save the soul of a dead woman before the operatives of DieFree can turn her into a zombie. Adam is one of those morally ambiguous rogues that inhabit the noir fiction I enjoy; and I truly look forward

to reading more of Adam’s adventures and his encounters with Baron Vit, an aspect of the Voodoo *Loa* known as Baron Samedi.

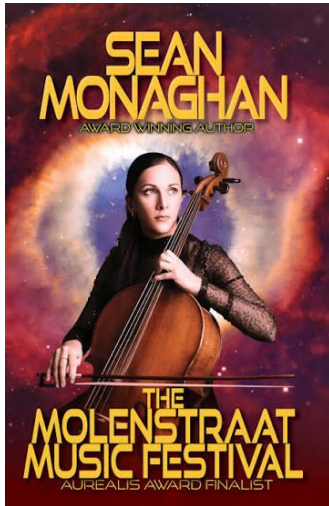
The author has also been kind enough to include a Glossary at the end of the book. It certainly came in handy at times – and I don’t recommend skipping it. I was delighted to finally realize that the Glossary is actually a story of sorts, as related by Anba, a *zemi* (a type of Voodoo spirit) that currently inhabits a pair of telepathic glasses worn by Janet Baptiste (as featured in the story “Blood Hunt”).

I don’t think *Vèvè-Punk: Birth of the Dream* is going to be everyone’s cup of tea. I found it challenging at times; but it was still a really enjoyable read.

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**The Molenstraat
Music Festival**
by Sean Monaghan
(Triple V Publishing, 2015)
a short review by Carl



In the June newsletter, I reviewed Monaghan’s short story “The Man with the Ruined Hand” (*Asimov’s Science Fiction*, Jan/Feb 2026); and I mentioned that I enjoyed it so much that I immediately went to Amazon.com and ordered a couple of his longer works. *The Molenstraat Music Festival* is one of those books.

All I can say is: “Wow!”

Clancy Jonah lives a quiet, solitary life in his modest home in the out-back on the backwater planet Kaylee. He was once a gifted cellist and a talented music teacher, but his ever-increasing arthritis caused him to abandon his musical instruments many years ago. He refused his doctor’s recommendation to have webwork filagree implanted in his hands – instead, he takes his daily pills (when he remembers) to address his health problem. Now the eighty-seven-year-old spends his time gardening (with variable results) and painting. In fact, the off-world sales of his paintings has become his major (if occasional) source of income – as well as good therapy for his hands.

One day, Tamsin Birchall and her daughter Eleanor show up at Clancy’s home. Eleanor had been a very talented cello player, with a dazzling musical future before her. But five years ago, she fell from a horse in a riding acci-

dent and injured her head. As a result, she suffers from unexpected fugue states and is unable to focus for long while playing her cello. Like Clancy, Eleanor has refused the injection of the microscopic implants that would address her injury. Eleanor and her mother hope that Clancy will be able to work with Eleanor and help her overcome her disability. Otherwise, her musical career is over. Clancy outright refuses their very lucrative offer – citing his own increasing arthritic state – but he eventually agrees to see what he can do for Eleanor. Most of the novella recounts the story of Clancy’s relationship with Eleanor and the unanticipated musical results of this relationship.

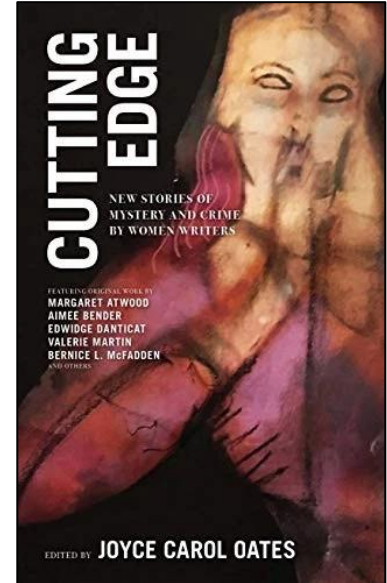
I think *The Molenstraat Music Festival* is another example of Monaghan’s impressive skill as a writer. The characters of Clancy and Eleanor are very relatable. The novella clearly shows Monaghan’s love of music; and I found the writing to be almost lyrical. The ending raises thought-provoking questions about the nature of talent and the efficacy of technological cures.

It’s a short work, but – as with “The Man with the Ruined Hand” – it’s filled with very impressive world-building. There’s the ecology and society of the planet Kaylee, as well as hints at the nature of the interstellar society of which it is a part. And Monaghan has included indications of intriguing technologies, such as Clancy’s almost magical AI-house and the “echo transport” that Eleanor and her mother rely upon. All in all, I found it to be a very satisfying read; and I look forward to reading some of Monaghan’s longer novels.

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**Cutting Edge:
New Stories of Mystery and
Crime by Women Writers**
edited by Joyce Carol Oates
(Akashic Books, 2019)
reviewed by Carl



I had just finished reading a reeeeeally long, complex novel; and I figured I wanted to read something short – sort of a “palate cleanser.” So I dug through an ancient “to read” pile and found this nifty little anthology of “female noir.” In her Introduction, Joyce Carol Oates says: “What is distinctive about female noir isn’t likely to be an identifiable prose style, nor even a prevailing sensibility, but rather perspective: where the noir tradition in American fiction and films has been predominantly male, our perspective has been *male-directed*; in female noir, we are allowed to see, with a good deal of individual variation, from the point of view of the female observer, actor, agent.”

The anthology contains fifteen short stories and six poems. It’s a mixed bag of horror stories: some dark Fantasy, some psychological horror, and some murderous larceny. I enjoyed most of the short stories but Margaret Atwood’s six “speculative fiction” poems left me cold. (I’m not a big fan of modern poetry.) Here are a few of my favorites...

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* * 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 LGBT people and their friends;
- provide forums for LGBT people and their friends to share their interest in SF/F/H;
- promote the presence of LGBT elements within SF/F/H and within fandom; and
- promote SF/F/H within the LGBT 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 12th, 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 organization for gay people and their friends who are interested in science-fiction and fantasy.

* * Con Calendar * * by Carl

July 10-12 2026. **SHORE LEAVE 46**. "Celebrate Star Trek's 60th Anniversary." Lancaster Wyndham Resort & Convention Center (Lancaster PA). Guests include: Walter Koenig; David Hewlett; Anne Lockhart; Herb Jefferson; Oded Fehr. Membership: \$130 for the weekend; daily rates available. Website: www.shore-leave.com

July 30 – August 2, 2026. **PULPFEST 2026**. "Celebrating Mystery, Adventure, Science Fiction, and More." Includes Doc Con 2026, FarmerCon XXI, and Shadow Con. DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh-Cranberry (Mars, PA). Membership: Advance Full Membership = \$40 (if staying at the DoubleTree); \$50 Full Membership; Single-Day Membership for either Friday or Saturday = \$25. Registration form can be downloaded from the Homepage. Homepage: <https://pulpfest.com>

August 27-31, 2026 **LACON V** (2026 World Science Fiction Convention). Anaheim Convention Center, Hilton Anaheim & Anaheim Marriott Hotels (Anaheim CA). Guests of Honor: Barbara Hambly, Ronald D. Moore, Colleen Duran, Dr. Anita Sengupta, Tim Kirk, Geri Sullivan (Fan GoH), Stan Sakai, Ursula Vernon (aka T. Kingfisher). Full attending membership: currently \$200 (will go up). Daily rates available. For more information & on-line registration: <https://www.lacon.org/>

October 2-4, 2026 **CAPCLAVE 2026**. Rockville Hilton & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). Guests of Honor: Rebecca Roanhorse, Nino Cipri. Details as they become available. Website: <https://capclave.org>

Cutting Edge

continued from page 3

"One of These Nights" (by Livia Llewellyn) is a creepy tale of two twisted young women who fulfill their murderous fantasies at a local public swimming pool. In "A History of the World in Five Objects" (by S.J. Rozan) the unnamed protagonist mentally reviews a series of events in her life that led up to the horrific murders of her aunt and uncle – with an unexpected (and equally bloody) resolution. In "Too Many Lunatics" (by Lucy Taylor), a woman hunts through the dark-and-gritty streets and alleys of the city to locate her drug-addled, ne'er-do-well sister – but will she be a savior or an executioner? "Assassin" (by Joyce Carol Oates) is seen through the eyes of an often-ignored, resentful older woman who is determined to gain recognition by assassinating the British Prime Minister.

Several stories contain significant Queer content. I think my favorite is "The Boy Without a Bike" by Jennifer Morales. Paula revisits her ex-lover Beni to resolve the mystery of a bicycle stolen from Beni's son; but she ends up facing off against Beni's murderous neighbor. A close second is "Firetown" by Aimee Bender, in which a wealthy, attractive woman asks a Private Investigator (the unnamed first-person POV narrator) to simply locate her husband, nothing more. It's a classic *noir* story, with a mysterious *femme fatale* and a street-smart PI – with a coy lack of an identifying pronoun until the end of the story.

"OBF, Inc." (by Bernice L. McFadden) is a wry socio-political piece of speculative fiction. In a not-so-tongue-in-cheek commentary on the perversion of justice, a young recently-unemployed African American youth answers a mysterious ad from an even-more-mysterious company. What he learns (and what

the reader is presented with) is truly eye-opening.

"Mothers, We Dream" (by Cassandra Khaw) is the only outright F&SF story in the anthology. What seemed like an outright historical fiction account of a Scandinavian naval disaster suddenly morphed into a scary marine Dark Fantasy (*very dark!*). (I shouldn't have been surprised. Khaw is a frequent contributor to *F&SF*, *Lightspeed*, *Tor.com*, and *Strange Horizons*.)

A fun little anthology!

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