Lambda Sci-Fi
DC Area Gaylaxians



The Drowning Girl
By Caitlin R. Kiernan
Discussed May 2014

Discussion Questions

- If you were asked to describe this book to someone, what would you say?
- In 2012, *The Drowning Girl* won the Bram Stoker Award (given for "superior achievement" in dark fantasy and horror); and in 2013 it won the Tiptree Award (given for SF or Fantasy that expands or explores our understanding of gender). How do you figure it qualifies for (and/or deserves receiving) such very different awards?
- The book is subtitled "A Memoir". How do you feel about reading the memoir/memories of an unreliable narrator?
- Right off the bat, India Morgan Phelps (Imp) says: "I'm going to write a ghost story now… A ghost story with a mermaid and a wolf." Is it?
- Kiernan is sometimes called a "Lovecraftian" author; and she frequently contributes stories to Lovecraftian anthologies. Is there anything "Lovecraftian" about *The Drowning Girl*?
- What do you think about Kiernan's depiction of Imp's mental state?
- Occasionally, the narrator refers (and talks/types) to herself in the third person – or has short conversations with "Imp". What's going on here?
- Imp describes the type of people subject to memes/hauntings as "broken, hurting people". Is India Morgan Phelps (Imp) "haunted" by her mother and grandmother?
- Imp often refers to the conflation of "truth" with "facts" (or at least that there's a confusion of the terms). Do you see this as actually being a social, historical problem?
- Chapter 7: WTF? Dr. Ogilvy (page 232) calls it "very powerful" and "almost like an incantation" and "like a declaration". Really? What's going on in Chapter 7?

- *The Drowning Girl* includes two stories-within-the-story: “Werewolf Smile” and “The Mermaid of the Concrete Ocean”. What do you think about them in and of themselves as stories? Why do you think they were included in the novel?
- What do you think about Kiernan’s depiction of a transgendered character?
- Who/what is “Eva Canning”?
- What do you think Saltonstall actually saw at the river? [mentioned in his letter, quoted on pages 174 and 316]
- “It wasn’t hard to find Abalyn Canning’s marker.” [page 271] Typo?