



Lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 374 – May 2021

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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.

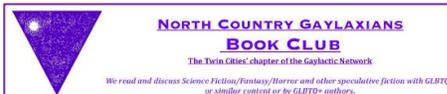
Before the COVID-19 shut-down orders, the LSF Book Discussion Group usually met on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home: 1425 "S" St., NW – for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. Now, book discussions are held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule). The next book discussion will be held on May 27 (via Zoom).

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

May 27 – *Too Like the Lightning*, by Ada Palmer (moderator: Judy).

June 24 – *Watership Down*, by Richard Adams (moderator: Peter).

July 22 – *The Alteration*, by Kingsley Amis (moderator: Carl). $\Lambda\Psi\Phi$



An Invitation to Join Book Discussions with the North Country Gaylaxians

info passed along by Jason T & Carl

Back in 2020, LSF's Scott participated virtually in the April 14th North Country Gaylaxians Book Club discussion of Peg Kerr's *The Wild Swans*. (The author even participated in the discussion!) And last month, Jason T (of North Country Gaylaxians) participated in the March 25th LSF Book Discussion of Jessica Anthony's *Enter the Aardvark*. (Ain't virtual book discussions grand?!) At the conclusion of our discussion, Jason extended an invitation to other LSFers to follow in Scott's (virtual) footsteps and join the North Country Gaylaxians in one or more of their upcoming books discussions.

The North Country Gaylaxians generally host their virtual book discussions on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM Central (8 PM Eastern). You don't need to sign up, just use their Facebook link to join the meeting:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/NorthCountryGaylaxians>

You can also join their Google Group – just send your e-mail address to Don at: donaldakaiser@gmail.com They send out an e-mail with the link the book discussion each month.

Here are the dates and books for the remainder of 2021:

- May 11 – *The Republic of Vengeance* by Paul Waters
- June 8 – *Master of Poisons* by Andrea Hairston
- July 13 – *Silk & Steel* – queer fantasy anthology ed. by Aliette de Bodard
- Aug 10 – *Chaos on Catnet* by Naomi Kritzer (sequel to *Catfishing on the Catnet*)
- Sept 14 – *Dancing Jack* by Laurie Marks
- Oct 12 – *Blood Moon* by Catherine Lundoff (sequel to *Silver Moon*)
- Nov 9 – *Maze-Born Trouble* by Ginn Hale
- Dec 14 – *Moomin Valley, Welcome to Moomin Valley, Moominsummer Madness* by Tove Jansson (Finnish gay author)



<< May 2021 LSF Meeting TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY >>

Due to Coronavirus concerns, we plan to hold the May 9th LSF meeting virtually. Anyone who would like to participate can contact Rob for virtual meeting information at rob gatesdc@gmail.com. Hope to "see" you there!



What's Inside?

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2020 Genre TV Show Mini-Reviews

by Peter Knapp

Of the 16 television series and one holiday special I saw in 2020, only two of the series were not based on existing series or specials. I know there's new stuff out there. I guess I'm a creature of habit.

Not surprisingly, I liked almost everything I watched, though two of my least favorite shows came from one of my most favorite franchises – *Star Trek*. Just because it has the *Star Trek* name doesn't mean it's good. (I mean good in the subjective sense. This is not a review of the objective quality of the TV shows I watched last year.)

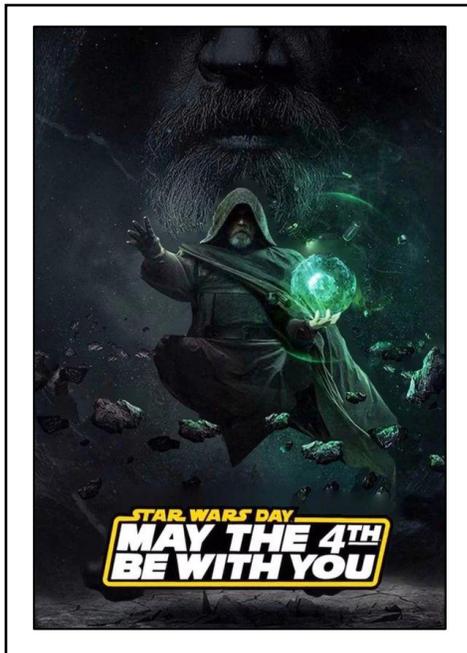
Unlike the movies I saw in 2020, not one TV show jumps out as my absolute favorite. My top three favorite shows are *The Expanse*, *Star Trek: Discovery*, and *His Dark Materials*, followed closely by *The Mandalorian* and *Westworld*. Here are the TV Shows I saw and my reactions.

GREAT

***The Boys* (Season 2)** – This anti-superhero show is a guilty pleasure of violence, gore, and language. If superheroes really existed, they would be monetized, and many would become entitled assholes. That's exactly what happens in the show. Season 2 was more outrageous than Season 1. Season 3 promises to be even more over-the-top.



***His Dark Materials* (Season 2)** – I really enjoyed this adaption of the second book in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy by Philip Pullman, a series that I really enjoyed reading. I think Season 2 continues doing a good job of adapting the source material. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, the season was cut



short by one episode that would have shown what Lord Asriel was up to. We'll have to wait for Season 3 to see how his path crosses with his daughter Lyra.

***The Expanse* (First 1/2 of Season 5)** – Story-arc-telling at its best, though only half of the season streamed in 2020. All the surviving characters from the first four seasons are back, including the core four characters who temporarily split up and have separate adventures that will intersect in the latter half of the season. Unfortunately lead Cas Anvar was accused of sexual misconduct. After an independent investigation, the series studio (Alcon Entertainment) let Anvar go. His character, Alex Kamal, is written out of the series in a believable way. The most dramatic episode, "Down and Out", saw Amos and Clarrisa figure out how to escape from a subterranean prison destroyed by an asteroid. Not having read the source material, I didn't know if they'd both make it out alive, which kept me on the edge of my seat.

***The Mandalorian* (Season 2)** – The second season of *The Mandalorian* continues to follow the travels of Lone Wolf and Cub, er, Din Djarin and Grogu as they travel the backwaters of the *Star Wars* universe looking for someone who can train 'Baby Yoda.' One of the most dramatic episodes ("The Tragedy") shows the kidnapping of Grogu by Moff Gideon and the destruction of Din Djarin's ship,

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Minutes of the April LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Film News: Rob hated the Zack Snyder 4½-hour cut of *Justice League*. Four Marvel movies coming out in 2021: *Black Widow* (July), followed by *Shang-Chi and The Legend of the Ten Rings*, *The Eternals*, and a new *Spiderman* movie. (Warning: Don't confuse the Eternals with the Inhumans, the Celestials, or the New Gods.) *Thor: Love and Thunder* – with the character of Jane Foster somehow becoming the God of Thunder – will be released in 2022. Peter liked *Godzilla vs. Kong*. The next theatrical *Star Trek* movie is scheduled to come out in 2023, with J.J. Abrams at the helm.

TV News: Peter and Rob reported on *Invincible*, the animated Amazon Prime superhero series starring Stephen Yeun; and Dan promoted the graphic novel it's based on. Dan and Teresa do not have positive comments about *The Servant*, a psychological horror streaming television series by M. Night Shyamalan. Zack Snyder has made another zombie movie – *Army of the Dead* – coming out on Netflix in a month. Rob chuckled over last night's *Saturday Night Live* Paramount Plus *Star Trek* skit punking millennials. Peter challenged Dan's list of the top five *Doctor Who* episodes. Karl likes the new Amazon Prime *Charmed* series; a fourth series has been announced.

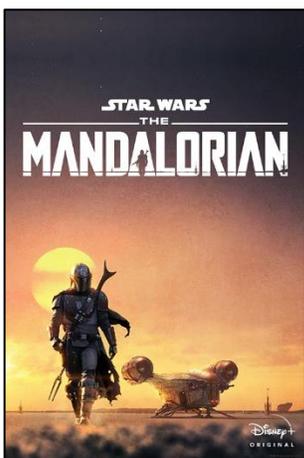
Other News: Peter has just purchased his plane ticket for Gallifrey 2022 in Los Angeles. It has been announced that George Takei will be appearing as a guest at Awesome Con 2021. DisCon III – WorldCon 2021 – will be held December 15-19, 2021 in DC at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. Capitol Pride 2021 has been cancelled. Rob said that perhaps a live in-person LSF meeting might occur as early as September or October 2021, depending on developing COVID circumstances – stay tuned. And, of course, there was lots of non-genre chat about Coronavirus vaccinations.

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2020 Genre TV Show Mini-Reviews continued from page 2

the *Razor Crest*. I guess I'll have to drop my LEGO model of the *Razor Crest* out the window. One thing I found humorous about the show is that it hints at an explanation as to how Emperor Palpatine, last seen falling to his death in *Star Wars: Episode VI – The Return of the Jedi*, is alive and 'well' in *Star Wars: Episode IX – The Rise of Skywalker*. *The Mandalorian* takes place between the second *Star Wars* trilogy and the third *Star Wars* trilogy.



Star Trek: Discovery (Season 3)

– The *Disco* crew find themselves in the 32nd century. Star Fleet is a shadow of its former glory. Dilithium is extremely rare, as most of it exploded in 'The Burn.' Programmable matter is a thing, and the ship and crew get upgraded equipment. The show is no longer constrained by future depictions of the future from other *Star Trek* shows, as the 32nd century is beyond the reach of *Star Trek* canon. This is a good thing. Also, both a non-binary character (Adira, played by Blu del Barrio) and a transgendered character (Gray, portrayed by Ian Alexander) join the crew of the *Discovery*. Overall, I enjoyed the season, with the most dramatic episode being "There is a Tide...", involving the crew of the *Discovery* fighting to get their ship back from The Emerald Chain. As they've killed off supporting crew members in previous seasons, it wasn't clear if everyone would survive the fight.

***The Umbrella Academy* (Season 2)** – More alternate timeline superhero insanity ensues in the second season of *The Umbrella Academy*. After failing

to stop the apocalypse at the end of Season 1, the Umbrella Academy time travel to try again. The journey to the past splits then up, and initially each sibling must figure out how to live in the 1960s. The show has strong queer content, which is always appreciated. The most dramatic episode, the season finale ("The End of Something") does an amazing job of tying up all the season long plot threads in a satisfactory way. It's also heart-breaking, as Vanya has to say farewell to Cissy, the woman she fell in love with during her stay in the 1960s. Klaus also comes to terms with the loss of his boyfriend, who he couldn't prevent from going off to war to die.

***Westworld* (Season 3)** – I had almost given up on *Westworld* during Season 2, as it felt like a rehash of Season 1 with the violence and blood turned up a notch. At the end of Season 2, some of the hosts (artificial sentient intelligences that could pass for humans) had escaped the park and were running amok in the real world. I enjoyed trying to figure out who was human and who was a host and what the heck everyone was up to. Free will in the human world of the future tuned out to be just as controlled as the host world of *Westworld*. Beware our future A.I. overlords...



FUN

Altered Carbon (Season 2) –

In the *Altered Carbon* universe, human consciousness and memory are stored in alien tech implanted into everyone's spine. When someone dies, that tech can be transplanted into a new body, called a "sleeve". This allows the rich to live forever, as they can pay for new sleeves, sometimes having a collection of clone bodies to occupy as needed. As a result, most of the Season 1 characters are now played by different actors, including Anthony Mackie, who replaces Joel Kinnaman as Takeshi Kovacs, a mercenary trying to survive in a world that values life even less than our current world. Gone from Season 2 is the full-frontal nudity (both male and female) that livened up Season 1. Ah well.

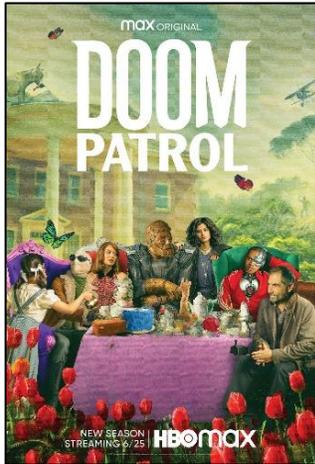
Doctor Who (Season 12) –

My front door is painted to look like the TARDIS. It's a clue that *Doctor Who* is my favorite show. Unfortunately, it's currently not a very good show. All the elements of my favorite show are there; they are just not put together very well. The current show-runner, Chris Chibnall, like his two predecessors, is a lifelong fan of the show; and I think he gets bogged down by the mythology of the show at the expense of telling a good tale. This morning I re-watched "Fugitive of the Judoon," which I nominated for a Hugo award; and on second viewing I found it held up well. Recurring mercenaries called the Judoon are looking for a fugitive hiding on Earth. The Doctor intervenes and by the end of the episode meets another version of herself who doesn't remember her and *vice versa*. This upset many continuity obsessed fans. I am not one of those fans. I loved meeting a new incarnation of the Doctor. Where she fits in the timeline isn't resolved, which I thought was great. Probably the weakest part of the episode was the reintroduction of Captain Jack, who did nothing to advance the episode. His appearance was a setup for his reappearance in the following New Year's Day special. His scenes felt like filler that didn't go anywhere. During the credits, I noticed it was co-written by Chibnall and Vinay Patel, who wrote last season's excellent "De-

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**2020 Genre TV Show
Mini-Reviews**
continued from page 3

mons of the Punjab.” I wonder if Chibnall wrote the Captain Jack sequences and Patel wrote the new Doctor sequences?



Doom Patrol (Season 2) – This ‘superhero’ show is on acid. Stories go all over the place, and the heroes do weird things. Timothy Dalton (be still my beating heart) turns out not to be the nurturing doctor who helped save the lives of the Doom Patrol. He orchestrated the conditions that created the heroes. What do you do when your mentor turns out to have ruined your life? The show continues to have strong queer content, including Danny the Street, a living and sentient piece of urban geography who can magically and seamlessly place himself in any urban landscape at will.

LEGO Star Wars Holiday Special – Fun, fun, and more fun, with lots of blue milk. Unlike Lower Decks (see below) I found this special very funny.



Rick and Morty (Season 4, Part 2) – Five more episodes of bizarre time-and-dimension-traveling. The show is getting very self-referential, which I think is detracting from it. The same happened in the last season of *Venture Bros.*

OKAY

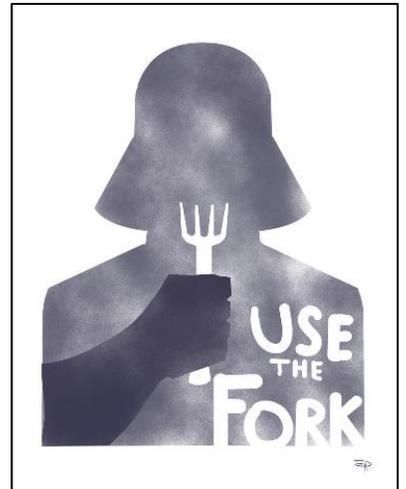
Another Life (Season 1) – One of the two original shows I saw this year. The show didn’t leave much of an impression on me; and I had to look up the synopsis while writing this. Set in the future, an alien artifact lands on Earth. What’s its purpose? Are the aliens trying to invade? Katee Sackhoff leads a team of astronauts who go on a mission to seek the origin of an alien artifact. The team doesn’t like each other. And the onboard conflict didn’t appeal to me. It was bleak. The show has been renewed for a second season. Perhaps I’ll give the show another chance in Season 2.



Away (Season 1) – The other original show I saw this year; it was also about a joint space mission, this time to Mars. Hilary Swank leads a crew made up of a closeted Chinese chemist, a religious Brit, a Russian cosmonaut, and an Indian medical officer. While there is tension between the crew members, it was less caustic than in *Another Life* and therefore more appealing. I would have tuned into a second season, but the show got canceled.

Star Trek: Lower Decks (Season 1) – This second animated *Star Trek* show really felt like a *Star Trek* show with its production design, sound design, and music. I just really didn’t find it funny and it’s supposed to be a comedy.

Star Trek: Picard (Season 1) – I wanted to love this show. I really did. But it’s a self-congratulatory self-wank of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* with a little bit of *Star Trek: Voyager* thrown in for good measure. I loved seeing Picard, Riker, Troi, and 7-of-9. Why couldn’t they have switched universes and joined the crew of the *Orville*? 😞 ΛΨΦ



Ed. Note: I couldn’t resist this silly graphic. It seems a fitting accompaniment for the “May the 4th” image shown on page 2.



Ed. Note: And I couldn’t resist this silly image either—just in case you weren’t sure about the look of “steampunk”. 😊

**** 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. Due to Coronavirus concerns, the Lambda Sci-Fi meeting for Sunday, May 9th, will be held virtually. We'll keep you informed of the status of future meetings.

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

July 9-11, 2021 **SHORE LEAVE 42** (rescheduled from July 2020). Delta Hotels Marriott Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Actor GoHs: Denis Lawson (*Star Wars* "Wedge Antilles"); Brandon Routh ("Superman" & "The Atom"); Robert Duncan McNeill ("Lt. Tom Paris"); Brent Spiner ("Data"); Alex Kingston ("River Song"). Membership: \$105 for the weekend (\$120 at the door); daily rates available. Printable registration forms & on-line registration available through the Registration Page. Website: <https://www.shore-leave.com/info/update-2020-04-25.htm>

August 20-22, 2021 **AWESOME CON 2021**. Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). Guests to include: George Takei ("Mr. Sulu"); Christina Ricci ("Wednesday"). For information: <https://awesome-con.com/about/> Tickets available on-line: <https://awesome-con.com/tickets/> (daily passes, weekend passes, special passes, etc.)

Dec. 15-19, 2021 **WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION (DisCon III)**. Omni Shoreham Hotel (Washington DC) – hotel information available as soon as possible: <https://discon3.org/location/accommodations> Incorporating virtual and on-site/face-to-face programming. "We are committed to having a masking and health policy which complies with local legal requirements and CDC recommendations. As the situation is still fluid, we will be updating you with our requirements to be in-person as we get closer to December." Author GoH: Nancy Kress; Artist GoH: John Harris. Adult attending membership = \$200; virtual membership (to access on-line programming) = \$75. Website: <https://discon3.org/> Purchase memberships on-line at: <https://discon3.org/membership/membership-information/>



"Big Blue" & Sparky ---- Samson & David ---- V-Man & The V-Boys

Seduction of the Innocent?

info passed along by Carl

In 1954, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham published *Seduction of the Innocent*. In it, he warned that comic books were a negative form of popular literature and a serious cause of juvenile delinquency, drug use, violence, and homosexual behavior. Wertham's book led to a Congressional inquiry into the comic book industry and the voluntary establishment of the Comics Code Authority.

It has been contended that Wertham wasn't the originator of the belief that Batman and Robin might be a gay couple; but he certainly popularized the accusation. Now take a look at the pictures to the left, which depict some *other* male superhero/sidekick teams from the Golden Age of Comics. I found these pictures on-line the other day, with the label "Golden Age Character Reference by Alex Ross." They certainly set off *my* gaydar! (Note: Werther's research has been widely disputed by scholars in the decades since *Seduction* was published.)

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