



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 375 – June 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 June 24 (via Zoom).

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

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

July 22 – *The Alteration*, by Kingsley Amis (moderator: Carl).

Aug. 26 – *Cemetery Boys*, by Aiden Thomas (moderator: Jason).

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Ingenuity Flies on Mars!

info passed along by Carl

On April 19th, NASA's experimental Mars helicopter (named Ingenuity) rose from the dusty surface of Mars into the planet's thin air, achieving the first powered flight on another planet.



Artistic rendering of Perseverance & Ingenuity

Flight controllers in California confirmed Ingenuity's brief first hop after receiving data via the Perseverance rover, which stood watch more than 200 feet away. The 4-pound copter's twin, counter-rotating rotor blades needed to spin at 2,500 revolutions per minute—five times faster than on Earth. With the Martian atmosphere being just 1 percent the thickness of Earth's, engineers had to build a copter light enough—with blades spinning fast enough—to generate lift. It also had to be sturdy enough to withstand the Martian wind and extreme cold.

Interesting note: Ingenuity carries a bit of wing fabric from the 1903 Wright Brothers Flyer. ΛΨΦ

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

Due to Coronavirus, we plan to hold the June 13th LSF meeting virtually. Anyone who would like to participate can contact Rob for virtual meeting information at robgatesdc@gmail.com. Hope to "see" you there!



What's Inside?

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Page 4: Don Sakers (obituary).

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Minutes of the May LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

[Ed. Note: It was a sparsely-attended meeting, possibly due to a combination of Mother's Day and very nice weather in the DC area.]

Other News

Peter discussed plans for a socially-distanced LSF outing to see the *Star Wars* X-wing Fighter in the Restoration Hall at the Steven F. Udvar Hazy Center out near Dulles (Saturday, June 5, at 2:30 PM). Karl mentioned that they charge for parking during the daytime.



Karl confessed that he is a Big-foot fan, and he will be attending a Big-foot convention in 2021.

Movie News

Peter and Rob said they enjoyed *Stowaway* (shown on Netflix); it appears to be upon the 1954 genre short story "The Cold Equations" by Tom Godwin. (How do you deal with not having enough resources on a spaceship when one of those aboard is a stowaway?) *Stowaway* is character-driven rather than action-driven. Carl mentioned that he recently saw a TV news item discussing how *Kong vs Godzilla* has helped to save movie theaters – it has made over \$90 million domestically. Peter read off a listing of upcoming genre movies: *Black Widow* (July 9), *Suicide Squad* (August 6), *Cruella* (May 28), *Jungle Cruise* (July 30), *Finch* (originally named *Bios*; September 30), *Shang Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* (September 3). No evidence exists that the Ursula K. Le Guin's *Left Hand of Darkness* is being made into a movie. Marvel has released a "sizzle reel" to encourage people to return to the movie theaters – check it out on YouTube.



Charles Butler
1952 – 2021

On April 24th, LSFer Jim Williams passed along the sad news that long-time DC area fan Charles Butler had passed away unexpectedly that day. Jim said: "I learned the news from the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington Facebook internal page, and I have no further information at this time. Charles has been having health issues and was in significant pain, but he was still participating in the chorus's June 'virtual' concert."

Charles Butler was born in Patrocínio, Minas Gerais, Brazil, the son of missionary parents. He became involved in GLBTQ activism in 1975 and Pagan activism in 1981. Although he was not directly associated with Lambda Sci-Fi, he served as long-time coordinator of the esoteric study track at both Ecumenicon and Chessiecon. He first moved to Washington DC hoping to get a job with the US Diplomatic Corps. Instead, he became a

"worker bee" for the DC Parole office, then an advertising manager for *OUT Magazine*, a sign language interpreter for the Metropolitan Community Church (DC and Northern VA), and a founding member of the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington DC.

Charles was spiritually active in the Christian, Jewish, and Pagan communities. He graduated from the Howard University School of Divinity with honors; and he was trained in Clinical Pastoral Education to work with those who are in critical illness. He was an early member of Bet Mishpachah Synagogue (GLBTQ Inclusive Synagogue). He also received training (and ordination) in such Pagan traditions as Wicca and Santeria. He worked as a chaplain in four Federal prisons, worked with other chaplains for and with incarcerated Pagans, volunteered in two county correctional centers, and visited incarcerated individuals who were Wiccan, Norse, Asatru, Northern Tradition, Umbanda, Santeria, Palo, and other identified Pagan traditions.

Charles was also a published author. He performed a great deal of research in preparation for writing his historical novel *Princess of Galilee*. It tells the "true" (or at least more likely) story of Salome, the famous dancer of the seven veils. ("Oscar Wilde got it wrong.") His non-fiction *Pagan Prison Ministry: Working with Incarcerated People* is based upon his years of service as a prison chaplain for Pagans.

TV News

Peter recently watched the first episode of a recently-released animated *Doctor Who* series. Netflix just released the superhero-themed *Jupiter's Legacy*. Rob recommends the animated superhero series *Invincible*, based upon the Image Comics series of the same name. *Invincible* is gorier than *The Boys*, and its voice cast is stellar (Steven Yuen, Mark Hamill, Seth Rogan, and more). A TV series based on Asimov's "Foundation" novels is coming out on Apple Plus later this year. Rob also suggested watching the alternate history series *For All Mankind*.

Upcoming LSF book discussions:

- *Too Like the Lightning* by Ada Palmer (May)

- *Watership Down* by Richard Adams (June)
- *The Alteration* by Kingsley Amis (July)

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Women of Greco-Roman Myth & Legend – Part 3

review by Carl

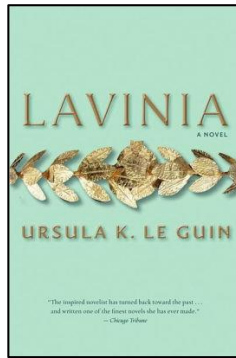
Greco-Roman myths and legends mostly focus on men, particularly warriors, monarchs, and male deities. With very few exceptions (such as the mythological runner Atalanta), the ancient myths don't give mortal women much time "center stage". Some of the goddesses get "starring roles"; but mortal women seldom do. Yes, Greek tragedians occasionally gave important roles to mortal women – for example, *The Trojan Women* and *The Bacchae* by Euripides – but it's more the exception than the rule. Modern fantasy writers seem more willing to center their novels around the women of Greco-Roman myths and legends; and I've been reading a number of them.

Lavinia

by Ursula K. Le Guin
(Mariner Books, 2008)

As with the previous two reviews – Richard Purtill's *The Mirror of Helen* (reviewed in the Sept. 2019 issue) and Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (reviewed in the May 2020 issue) – Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia* has links to the Trojan War. Instead of Homer's *Iliad*, however, Le Guin's source material for this novel is the *Aeneid*, an epic poem written by the Roman author Publius Vergilius Maro (now better known as "Vergil" or "Virgil") toward the end of the First Century BC. Vergil designed his *Aeneid* as a piece of national propaganda to celebrate the glorious history of the city of Rome (as well as the new Imperial dynasty begun by Augustus Caesar). It attributes the founding of Rome to Prince Aeneas of Troy who, after the destruction of his home city, wandered the Mediterranean, romanced (and abandoned) Queen Dido of Carthage, and eventually landed in central Italy. As Le Guin notes in her Afterword: "That Priam's nephew Aeneas of Troy had anything at all to do with founding Rome is pure legend, a good deal of it invented by Vergil himself."

Le Guin chooses to tell the story of the arrival of the Trojan ships (and Aeneas's adventures in Latium) through the eyes and voice of Lavinia, only daugh-



ter of King Latinus. She is the shy and obedient princess who (according to prophecy) will marry a foreigner and bring war to the land. Le Guin's story, however, reveals how it is not the fulfillment of prophecy that leads to Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas – it is Lavinia's choice to marry the man who would become the love of her life despite her knowledge (through visions) that he would not survive beyond three years after their marriage.

Le Guin does a fine job of creating a credible depiction of society and religion in central Italy during the Bronze Age. But it wasn't her goal to simply craft a believable historical background for a legendary love story. She is, after all, one of the Great Names of F&SF literature. There's a strong (and, to my mind, unique) Fantasy element to the novel. The Greco-Roman deities never make an appearance in the story – instead, the F&SF content centers on Lavinia's encounter with Vergil himself. When Lavinia makes a solitary pilgrimage to a sacred spring to seek divine guidance, she has several dream encounters with the "spirit" of Vergil, the poet who pretty much created (or *will* create?) Lavinia out of whole cloth when he wrote (or *will* write?) the *Aeneid*. Vergil tells Lavinia that he has fallen ill on a voyage from Greece to Italy and believes himself to be experiencing delirious visions while nearing death. The two of them discuss various aspects of Vergil's epic poem – including, he admits, its shortfalls and errors. Vergil also tells her of Aeneas's origins, the Fall of Troy, and Aeneas's affair with Dido of Carthage. During one such discussion, Vergil even "remembers" leading someone through the Underworld:

(continued on page 5)

New Sci-Fi Dictionary

SFDictionary.com

info passed along by RR Angell

I stumbled upon a new sci-fi dictionary that you might be interested in. It is called *The Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction*. You can look up words and their origins. They have categories like weaponry and fandom. Here's the entry about the first use of "warp drive":

[1947 J. Barrett
Stellar Snowball in *Startling Stories* Mar. 89/2
[page image](#)
[John Barrett bibliography](#)

With these modern time-warp drives a small magnetic disturbance is cumulative, and the center is like the center of a cyclonic windstorm.]

https://archive.org/details/Startling_Stories_v15n01_1947-03/page/n87/mode/lup

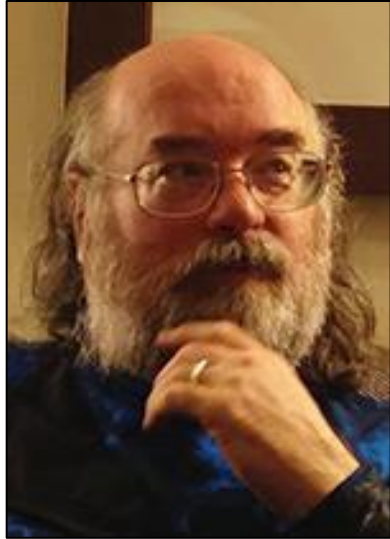
The *very* neat thing is that the occasional source stories have been digitized on archive.org and links are available to browse (old ones from defunct mags), and you can see the original art. "Stellar Snowball" has a gal on the spaceship wearing a bikini top and swim suit bottom with high heels (of course) and a bare-chested man in a kilt pointing a gun at her. (It's got everything a 12-year-old boy of any persuasion might like!)

Sadly, I couldn't find Tom Reamy in there, so I wonder if they are run by homophobes, or just haven't gotten around to him yet, or he just didn't make up any new words that carried on. However, Geoff Ryman is in there for contributing the term "mundane sf." So the idea of this as a dictionary holds.

The site is an abandoned offshoot of a project started by the Oxford English Dictionary. It is now edited by Jesse Sheidlower, a lexicographer and the author of "The F-Word: A detailed history of the word fuck."

Definitely worth a browser bookmark.

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Don Sakers
1958 – 2021

So very many of us were deeply saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Don Sakers on May 17th from a heart attack. Fellow author and longtime friend Melissa Scott reported: “It was totally unexpected, and everyone’s reeling – he was completely fine up until he wasn’t.” Don was a well-known F&SF fan, writer, and friend of the Gaylaxians, as well as (to quote Rob) “a fixture at conventions in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern US region” for over 30 years.

Don was born in Yokosuka, Japan, a self-described “Navy brat by birth” who was “launched the same month as Sputnik One.” He spent his childhood in such far-off lands as Japan, Scotland, Hawaii, and California. For 42 years, he worked as a librarian at the Anne Arundel County Public Library in Maryland until his retirement a few years ago.

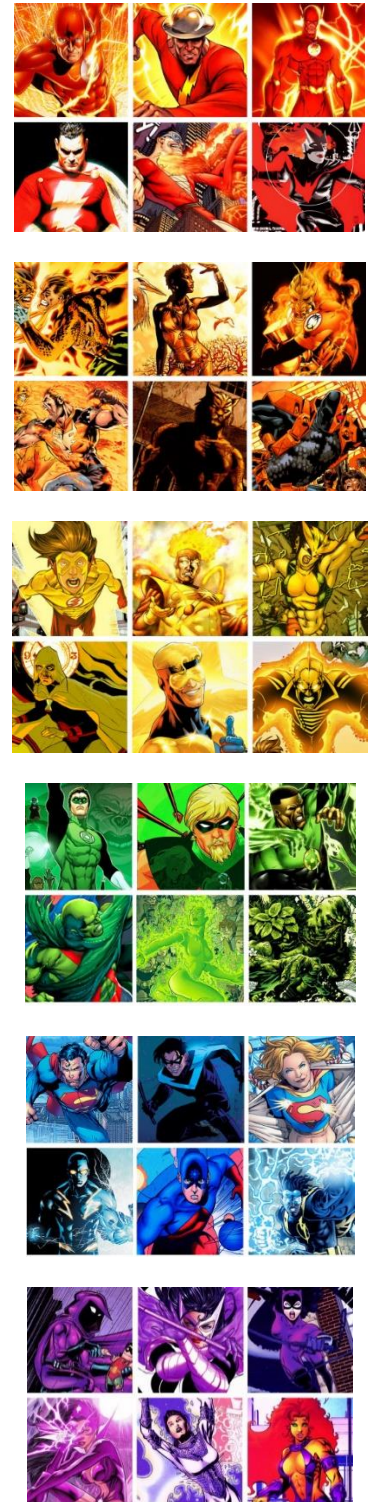
Since the mid-1980s, Don had a long string of published short stories and novels, starting with “Gamester” (*Questar*, June 1981). Much of his SF work is part of his “Scattered Worlds” series – beginning with *The Leaves of October* (1983, a Compton Crook Award finalist)

and including *Dance for the Ivory Madonna* (2002, a Gaylactic Spectrum Award finalist). (Side note: LSFers Rob and Carl both appear briefly as characters in *Dance for the Ivory Madonna*.) His short story “The Cold Solution” (*Analog*, July 1991) won the *Analog* Analytical Laboratory Award in the *Analog* Readers Poll (1992) – it was Don’s response to Thomas Easton’s classic “The Cold Equations” (*Astounding*, August 1954). Don edited the shared-world anthology *Carmen Miranda’s Ghost Is Haunting Space Station Three* (1990). His anthologies *Gaylaxicon Sampler 2006* and *QSpec Sampler 2007* were both Gaylactic Spectrum Award finalists. Don was also the author of two non-SF gay YA novels: *Act Well Your Part* (1986) and *Lucky in Love* (1988). Most recently, Don Sakers and Melissa Scott co-authored *Five Planes: The Rule of Five, Season 1* (2018), the first volume in a projected “Rule of Five” SF series; it was short-listed for the 2019 Gaylactic Spectrum Award.

In 2003 Don Sakers married well-known costumer Thomas Atkinson in a wonderful multi-couple wedding ceremony at the 61st World Science Fiction Convention (Toronto); a handful of delighted LSFers were in attendance. Don and Tom’s longtime Anne Arundel County home – Meercat Meade – is featured in the book *Weird Maryland*.

Don was a member of the Coast-Line SF Writers Group and the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. He taught SF writing through Howard Community College. In 2009, Don succeeded Thomas Easton as book reviewer for *Analog Science Fiction* – his column “The Reference Library” appeared in every issue. Don was Guest of Honor at the 1995 Gaylaxicon and a frequent guest speaker and panel moderator at other Gaylaxicons, Darkovercon/Chessiecon, Albacon, Arisia and Boskone.

Don has been described as “a wonderful and warm-hearted person.” He will be missed.



By and large, it seems to me that most SF fans are fairly comfortable with diversity. Part of this, I feel, comes from the common experience of being thought “weird” by the general populace.... Another reason that fans seem comfortable with diversity stems from the nature of Science Fiction itself. SF is often concerned with “the other” – the alien being, the time traveler, the citizen of a totally different society. After you’ve wrapped your mind around the concept of falling in love with a silicon-based insectoid creature whose society is based on ritual cannibalism, a friendly chat with the black lesbian sitting next to you is easy to handle.

— Don Sakers (*SFRevu*, March 2002 interview) —

*** * 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, June 13th, 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/>

Lavinia (book review)
continued from page 3

"What man did I guide? I met him in a wood, like this. A dark wood in the middle of the road. I came up from down there to meet him, to show him the way . . . but when was that? Oh, this dying is a hard business, Lavinia. I am very tired. I can't think straight any more."

The passage clearly refers to the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) and his *Divine Comedy*, in which the spirit of Vergil is Dante's guide through both the Inferno and Purgatory. (As a non-Christian, Vergil is incapable of guiding Dante through Paradise.)

Leave it to Ursula K. Le Guin to

provide a fascinating Fantasy paradox for her readers! I think she cleverly derived this facet of *Lavinia* from the Medieval/Renaissance belief that Vergil had prophetic powers. This was based on Vergil's supposed prophecy of the birth of Christ in another of his poems, the fourth *Eclogue*. Belief in Vergil's prophetic powers was so strong that it even led to belief in the *Sortes Virgilianae* ("Virgilian Lottery") – choose a passage at random from the *Aeneid* and it will foretell your future!

(Just as an FYI, another favorite author of mine – Avram Davidson – based his enjoyable "Vergil Magus" stories on the concept of Vergil as a magus or sorcerer.)

One final note: *Lavinia* contains

some Queer content. Le Guin depicts Ascanius (Aeneas's son by his late Trojan wife, Creusa) as a *very* homosexual young man. Unfortunately, he's not a *nice* young man. His ambitions and war-mongering lead to conflicts between the Trojan newcomers and the Latin natives. But making Ascanius very decidedly gay is certainly one way to explain why he doesn't found a dynasty – and why his half-brother Silvius (son of Aeneas and Lavinia) succeeds to the kingship after Ascanius's death. **ΛΨΦ**



**Lavinia
16th
Century
engraving**