



# Lambda Sci-Fi

## DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 379 – October 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. *Until at least February 2022, book discussions will continue to be held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule).* The next book discussion will be held on October 28<sup>th</sup> via [Zoom](#).

Here are the details for the next couple of discussions:

**Oct. 28** – *Silver Moon*, by Catherine Lundoff (moderator: Bob A).

**Dec. 2** (combined Nov/Dec discussion) – *Finder*, by Suzanne Palmer (moderators: Bob A & Carl).

**Jan. 27, 2022** – *Far Out: Recent Queer Science Fiction & Fantasy*, edited by Paula Guran (moderator: Carl)

**Feb. 24, 2022** – *A Memory Called Empire*, by Arkady Martine (mod.: Judy).

**March 24, 2022** – *Architects of Memory*, by Karen Osborne (moderator: Bob A)

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To our ConFAB Friends:

Due to the steady increase in COVID Delta Variant cases in Minnesota and on consultation with my Convention Committee, we are changing ConFABulous 2021 to a free, one-day virtual convention on Saturday, November 6, 2021.

#### REGISTER TODAY

To participate in ConFABulous, complete a brief FREE registration. Registration for the event is required to give you full access to the event. This registration:

- Gives you full access to event panels.
- Lets us know the number of attendees joining us for our virtual event.
- Gives you access to gaming and discussion Zoom events.
- Allows you to donate to the convention to help ensure that ConFABulous can continue in the future. Your donation is tax deductible.
- Allows you to register for RPG games once the schedule is published.

#### PREVIOUS REGISTERANTS

For those who have previously registered for ConFABulous 2020 or 2021,

we will be offering the following options:

- Carry your registration over to ConFABulous 2022 (October 14-17, 2022 at the Crown Plaza Aire, 3 Appletree Square in Bloomington, MN)
- Request a refund at: [info@confabulous.org](mailto:info@confabulous.org)

#### PARTICIPATE IN PANELS

Panels will be streamed live to the ConFABulous YouTube channel. Attendees viewing the channel will be able to participate by adding questions and comments in the live video chat.

Our full schedule for the day will be available on our website PROGRAMMING page and on our Facebook page and event once it is finalized. Panels will run for one hour, with 30-minute breaks between, except for a 60-minute break for dinner.

#### JOIN AN RPG

ConFABulous will have scheduled roleplaying events which will happen using Zoom or our Discord Channel. We will send an announcement of our full schedule of roleplaying games once it is finalized. It will also be listed on our website GAMING page. At that time, you will be able to register for RPG events on the Eventbrite registration page.

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### > October 2021 LSF Meeting TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY <

Due to Coronavirus concerns, we plan to hold the October 10<sup>th</sup> LSF meeting virtually. Anyone who would like to participate can contact Rob for virtual meeting information at [rob gatesdc@gmail.com](mailto:rob gatesdc@gmail.com). Hope to "see" you there!



### What's Inside?

Page 2: Minutes of the September LSF Meeting; Swords-and-Sorcery Fiction – The Adventures Continue (reviews).

Page 4: Information About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians & Con Calendar; Bennu Asteroid Update.

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## Minutes of the September LSF Meeting taken by Scott

Rob explained that LSF club meetings will be virtual through the end of 2021. The LSF book discussion is virtual through February 2022.

There was a half-hour discussion on *Doctor Who*, mostly on the topic of companions. And Peter wore a DisCon III red T-shirt.

All Things *Star Trek: Star Trek: Discovery* Season 4 and *Picard* Season 2 are starting soon. Peter is looking forward to the *Star Trek: Prodigy* animated YA-oriented series, which includes the character of Kathryn Janeway (voiced by Kate Mulgrew). David brought up the topic of the *ST:TNG* Tamarian race that speaks in metaphors. *Lower Decks* features lots of Easter eggs from other *Star Trek* series.

Rob was happy to report that he purchased the coffee-table *The Books of Earthsea: The Complete Illustrated Edition* (a coffee-table hardcover book, illustrated by Charles Vess).

Peter loved *Space 1999* as a child, but perhaps not much as an adult.

Rob said that the first episode of Netflix's animated *Q-Force* included a slew of offensive gay stereotypes, but then the second episode got better. Does the main character (voiced by Sean Hayes) work?

Did you know that the new Green Ranger on *Power Rangers* is gay? Hard to keep up.

Rob enjoyed the two most recent episodes of *What If* on Disney+, which have been particularly dark.

Peter and Rob recently saw the new Marvel movie *Shang-Chi* and rate it highly!

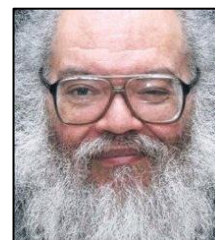
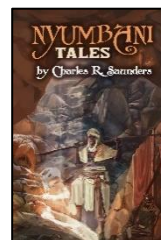
ConFABulous (gay-themed convention hosted by North Country Gaylaxians) is now being held in November and will be totally virtual, with no in-person component.

Game stuff: David downloaded a remastered *Final Fantasy 9*. Rob is playing *Wrath of the Righteous*.

## Swords-and-Sorcery Fiction – The Adventures Continue – short reviews by Carl

My “love affair” with swords-and-sorcery fiction (S&SF) began in the Summer of 1960. My family was moving from Chicago to Southern California (via Route 66, of course); and one day we stopped in a small town somewhere in Oklahoma. I have no memory of how I ended up in a thrift store; but it was there that I bought a couple of small hardback books I found on their shelves of used books. They were *Conan the Conqueror* and *Tales of Conan*, both of them published by Gnome Press (1950 and 1955, respectively); and they looked kind’a interesting. (As a side note, they only cost me a few bucks. I know, I know, one heckuva bargain!) And I was hooked! After that, I was continually on the hunt for more of Conan’s adventures or for similar S&SF works, either novels or (more likely) inexpensive paperback anthologies of S&SF short stories – such as *Swordsmen in the Sky* (Ace Books, 1964) or *The Spell of Seven* (Pyramid Books, 1965).

Several months ago, I was browsing around Amazon.com and ran across *Flame and Crimson: A History of Sword-and-Sorcery* by Brian Murphy (Pulp Hero Press, 2019). It provides a pretty good historical summary of the sub-genre, as well as (IMHO) some well-considered critical analysis of S&SF works and authors. (Some disturbing typos here and there, but that’s another matter.) I was especially pleased to learn about two comparatively recent S&SF collections that I hadn’t previously known about. As a result: the following short reviews...



*Nyumbani Tales*  
by Charles R. Saunders  
(MVmedia, LLC, 2017)

Back in the mid-1970s African-American (or African-Canadian) writer Charles Saunders decided to try his hand at writing S&SF stories, one of his favorite genres. But he decided to step outside of S&SF’s typical Eurocentric settings for his stories. Instead, he set his stories in a fictional continent called “Nyumbani” (which means “home” in Swahili). He peopled Nyumbani with fictional equivalents of the pre-colonial peoples and cultures of Africa; he drew upon the myths and legends of Africa for his story themes, societies, and magical systems; and into this setting he sent his wandering larger-than-life hero Imaro, a mighty warrior exiled from his Ilyassai tribe. The earliest Imaro stories were first published in the fanzine *Dark Fantasy*; and Lin Carter included one of them in the first *Year’s Best Fantasy Stories* (DAW Books, 1975). Then publisher Donald Wollheim suggested that Saunders turn his Imaro stories into a novel; and six of the Imaro novellas became the novel *Imaro* (DAW Books, 1981). That’s when I first ran across Saunders and his works – and was instantly

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## ConFABulous 2021 continued from page 1

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other activities will be announced soon.

Please join us on November 6th.

-- Don Kaiser

Chair, ConFABulous

Sponsored by Gaylaxicon Minnesota



Upcoming LSF Book Discussion titles: *A Song for a New Day* by Sarah Pinsker (Sept); *Silver Moon* by Catherine Lundoff (Oct); *Finder* by Suzanne Palmer (Nov/Dec); *Far Out: An Anthology of Recent Queer Science Fiction and Fantasy* edited by Paula Guran (Jan 2022); *A Memory Called Empire* by Arkady Martine (Feb 2022); *Architects of Memory* by Karen Osborne (March 2022).

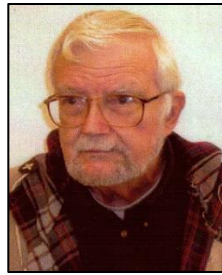
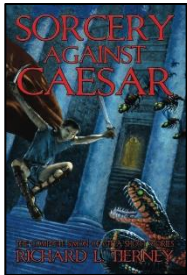
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## Swords-and-Sorcery Fiction

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hooked. After *Imaro* came *The Quest for Cush* (DAW, 1984) and *The Trail of Bohu* (DAW, 1985). Saunders also set a number of other non-Imaro stories in Nyumbani, but none of them seemed to garner the commercial attention of his Imaro stories.

Imagine my delight when I discovered the existence of *Nyumbani Tales*. This collection of 14 stories was published just three years before Saunders's death. Three of the stories – “The Blacksmith and the Bambuti”, “Pomphis and the Poor Man”, and “The Nunda” – feature characters who would become part of Imaro's saga; and “Katisa” (the first story in the collection) is about Imaro's mother and her estrangement from her tribe. Other stories are Saunders's retelling of African folktales. Although not all of these stories are fully within the S&SF sub-genre, many of them feature warriors battling against wizardry; and all of them involve derring-do in the face of some form of dark magic. I found *Nyumbani Tales* to be a delightful way to revisit Saunders's mythical/magical continent.



*Sorcery Against Caesar: The Complete Simon of Gitta Short Stories*  
by Richard L. Tierney  
("and Divers Hands")  
(Pickman's Press, 2020)

Richard Tierney was a devotee of Dark Fantasy. He was both a fan and a scholar of H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and the other *Weird Tales* Greats. He was also a fan of S&SF. I think I first ran across his short fiction in various S&SF anthologies and in his “completions” of some of Robert E. Howard's unfinished non-Conan short stories. Of special note here is Tierney's unique contribution to the S&SF genre: his “Simon of Gitta” stories. This is the first collection to include *all* the

“Simon of Gitta” short stories and one poem. (Truth to tell, I think some of these “short stories” might actually be novellas or novelettes – I've never been quite sure of the word-count distinctions.)

Simon of Gitta is a Samaritan swordsman-mage who wanders around the darker corners of the Roman Empire during the reigns of the emperors Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. He has a deeply personal grudge against all Romans: his family was slaughtered by Roman authorities while attending a religious celebration in Palestine; and Simon himself was sold to a gladiatorial school and spent two years fighting in various arenas to entertain the bloodthirsty Roman mob. Simon is eventually “rescued” from his gladiatorial life by a dark sorcerer who also has a grudge against the Empire. After engaging in some spectacularly sorcerous revenge in and around Rome itself, Simon spends the rest of his life on the run from Roman authorities, battling against supernatural monstrosities and their minions, and engaging in esoteric studies with various occult masters.

Simon isn't the ordinary, run-of-the-mill S&SF hero. Yes, he wields a sword with the best of them – all that practice in gladiatorial arenas didn't go to waste. But unlike Conan and his ilk, Simon isn't above supplementing swordplay with magic and trickery. Over the years, he supplemented his income as a street magician and honed his skills at disguises, escapology, ventriloquism, sleight-of-hand, and stage illusions; but his occult studies have also made him acquainted with the use of magical amulets and minor wizardry. In fact, Tierney loosely (*very* loosely!) based Simon of Gitta on the semi-historical character known as “Simon Magus.” (Not familiar with him? He's actually mentioned in the Bible – check out Acts 8: 9-24 – and various Apocryphal and Gnostic Christian texts. Or check out his portrayal by actor Jack Palance in the truly painful 1954 Biblical “epic” *The Silver Chalice*.)

It is through the person of Simon of Gitta that these stories are infused with hefty doses of Tierney's deep knowledge of Gnosticism and related esoteric mythologies. But Gnostic mysticism is only the start for Tierney. He brings a truly unique flavor to his S&SF stories by mixing Gnosticism with cosmic horrors from the

Lovecraftian Mythos. Azathoth, Tsathoggua, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, and Deep Ones appear in various stories (under slightly different “historical” names, of course).

But wait, there's more! In one story, Simon wields the sword of Spartacus; and in other stories, he encounters Conan-related artifacts (Conan's phoenix-hafted sword and Thoth-Amon's Ring of Set). He gets to meet – and fight alongside – the Biblical Cain (whose backstory is rather different from what's presented in Genesis); and he even battles a vampiric Pontius Pilate!

Some of these stories even display connections with unexpected literary sources. “The Worm of Urukhu” definitely owes its themes and images to Frank Herbert's *Dune*; and two of the villains in “The Curse of the Crocodile” are obviously modeled on Baron Vladimir Harkonnen and his nephew Feyd Rautha! Any Latter Day Saints out there? If so, check out “The Secret of Nephren-Ka” (by Tierney associate Robert M. Price) – Simon of Gitta among the “lost tribes” in North America!

I honestly don't think of Tierney as being in the same class of S&SF storytellers as Robert E. Howard or Michael Moorcock; but, on the whole, I found the stories in *Sorcery Against Caesar* to be imaginative and enjoyable – unique mixtures of historical S&SF fiction and cosmic horror. Simon of Gitta isn't simply a Conan-knockoff; he's a fascinating addition to the roster of swords-and-sorcery heroes. There are still a couple of full-fledged “Simon of Gitta” novels out there that I haven't yet read – something to look forward to.

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**\* \* 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-generated (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, October 10th, 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

Nov. 6, 2001 **CONFABULOUS 2021**. A free, one-day, virtual convention hosted by North Country Gaylaxians. For details, see the article on page 1 of this newsletter. On-line registration through the convention's website: <http://confabulous.org/>

Dec. 15-19, 2021 **WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION (DisCon III)**. Omni Shoreham Hotel (Washington DC) – hotel information: <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/>

April 29 – May 1, 2022 **RAVENCON 15**. Virginia Crossings Hotel & Conference Center (Richmond VA). GoH: Terry Brooks; Music GoH: Rhiannon's Lark. Membership: \$35 before 12/31/2021; \$40 before 4/5/2022; \$50 at the door; day badges available. On-line registration at: <https://ravencon.com/store/Registration-c23522469> Webpage: <https://ravencon.com>

**Bennu Asteroid Update**

info passed along by Carl

The January 2019 and December 2020 issues of the LSF newsletter featured articles about the OSIRIS-REx 7-year round-trip mission to the asteroid named Bennu. As a reminder, OSIRIS-REx is scheduled to return Bennu samples to Earth in 2023. Now, a surprising new update...

The good news is that scientists have gotten better information on asteroid Bennu's whereabouts for the next 200 years. The bad news is that it seems Bennu has a slightly greater chance of colliding with Earth than was previously thought.

“We shouldn't be worried about it too much,” said Davide Farnocchia (a scientist with NASA's Center

for Near Earth Object Studies at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory). OSIRIS-REx collected enough data over 2½ years to help scientists better predict the asteroid's orbital path well into the future. Through the year 2300, the odds for a Bennu-Earth collision have risen from 1-in-2,700 to 1-in-1,750. Bennu will have a close encounter with Earth in 2135, when it passes within half the distance of the moon. It was previously believed that Earth's gravity could tweak the asteroid's future path and put it on a collision course with Earth in the 2200s — but, based on the OSIRIS-REx observations, this is now believed to be less likely.

If Bennu (measuring about a third of a mile across) *did* slam into Earth, it wouldn't wipe out life (dinosaur-style), but it *would* create a crater

roughly 10 to 20 times the size of the asteroid, said Lindley Johnson, NASA's planetary defense officer. The area of devastation would be much bigger: as much as 100 times the size of the crater. He told reporters that if an object Bennu's size hit the Eastern Seaboard, it “would pretty much devastate things up and down the coast.”

Johnson also said that finding threatening asteroids in advance increases the chances and options for pushing them out of our way. In November 2021, NASA plans to launch a mission to knock an asteroid off-course by hitting it. The experimental target will be the moonlet of a bigger space rock.

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