



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 388 – July 2022

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The LSF Book Discussion Group

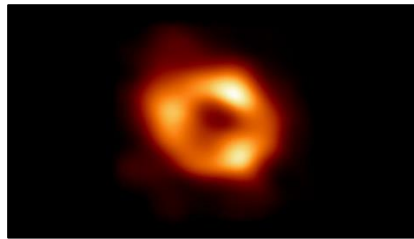
If *you're* interested in lively discussions of F&SF books (with an emphasis on elements of interest to the LGBT community), we invite you to join the LSF Book Discussion Group. Each month, we conduct fascinating round-table discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF 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. The next book discussion will be held **in person on July 28th**. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.**

Here are the details for the next discussion:

July 28, 2022 – *Light from Uncommon Stars*, by Ryka Aoki (moderator: Rob)

Note: The Virtual Book Club also meets (via Zoom) on the same evening as the face-to-face discussion group: same book, same questions, *different* attendees. Look for the Zoom link in the usual book club notice or on the LSF web page.



The Black Hole at the Center of the Milky Way info passed along by Carl

On May 12th, astronomers from a consortium of observatories (collectively known as the Event Horizon Telescope) unveiled the first image of the black hole at the center of our galaxy. The image shows a glowing ring with three bright spots spaced along it. It's about 27,000 light years from Earth; and scientists were surprised to find out that it tilts face-on toward Earth. Feryal Özel (an astronomer at the University of Arizona) described this as "the first direct image of the gentle giant in the center of our galaxy."

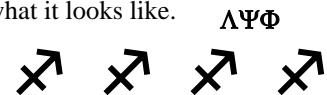
This achievement relied on contributions from more than 300 scientists at 80 institutions, including eight telescopes (one of them at the South Pole). The project uses an observational technique known as Very Long Baseline Interferometry and requires calibrating

multiple dishes spread across the planet to function as if there were a single, Earth-size telescope. It took years to process and analyze all the collected data to create this image.

Back in 2019, the Event Horizon Telescope consortium also produced the first-ever image of a black hole: the super-massive black hole located at the center of galaxy Messier 87. That black hole has a mass roughly 6.5 billion times that of the Sun.

The black hole at the center of the Milky Way is known as Sagittarius A* – or Sgr A* ("sadge-ay-star"), for short – because (from Earth) it appears near the constellation Sagittarius. It has a mass equal to more than 4 million Suns. Decades ago, astronomers realized there was something in the heart of our galaxy that emits tremendous amounts of radiation – consensus was that it's a black hole. In 2020, Astrophysicists Andrea Ghez and Reinhard Genzel were awarded a Nobel Prize in physics for discovering that stars in the Milky Way's galactic center were moving in a pattern consistent with orbits around a massive black hole.

And now we've got some idea of what it looks like.



***** July 10, 2022 Meeting = IN PERSON!!! *****

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, July 10th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.** The doors open at 1:30 PM and the meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

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WandaVision Wins a Nebula Award!

info passed along by Peter & Carl



The 57th Annual Nebula Awards (for works released in 2021) were announced at a live broadcast on May 21, 2022, by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, Inc. The hosts/Toastmasters were Connie Willis and Neil Gaiman.

The Nebula Awards are given to the writers of the most outstanding speculative fiction works, as voted by full, associate, and senior SFWA members. SFWA was founded in 1965 by author Damon Knight. It began with a charter membership of 78 writers; it now has over 2,000 members and includes many of the leading writers of science fiction and fantasy.

Here's a list of this year's winners:

- **Novel:** *A Master of Djinn*, by D. Dieli Clark (Tordotcom).
- **Novella:** *And What Can We Offer You Tonight*, by Premeem Mohamed (Neon Hemlock).
- **Novelette:** "02 Arena", by Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki (*Galaxy's Edge*, Nov 2021)
- **Short Story:** "Where Oaken Hearts Do Gather", by Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny*, March/April 2021)
- **Andre Norton Nebula Award for Middle Grade and Young Adult Fiction:** *A Snake Falls to Earth*, by Darcie Little Badger (Levine Querido).
- **Rav Bradbury Nebula Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation:** *WandaVision, Season 1*, by Peter Cameron, Mackenzie Dohr, Laura Donney, Bobak Esfariani, Megan McDonnell, Jac Schaeffer, Cameron Squires, Gretchen Enders, Chuck Hayward (Marvel Studios).
- **Game Writing:** *Thirsty Sword Lesbians*, by April Kit Walsh, Whitney Delagio, Dominique Dickey, Ionnaya Kemper, Alexis Sara, Rae Nedjadi (Evil Hat Games).



- **38th Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Honor:** Mercedes Lackey.
- **Kevin J. O'Donnell, Jr. Service to SFWA:** Colin Coyle (for best exemplifying the ideal of service to fellow SFWA members).
- **Kate Wilhelm Solstice Awards:** Arley Sorg, Troy L. Wiggins, and (posthumously) Petra Mayer (for distinguished contributions to the science fiction and fantasy community).

For a list of all nominees, go to: <https://www.tor.com/2022/05/21/here-are-the-winners-of-the-2021-nebula-awards/>

Editorial Addendum:

The event was not without controversy.

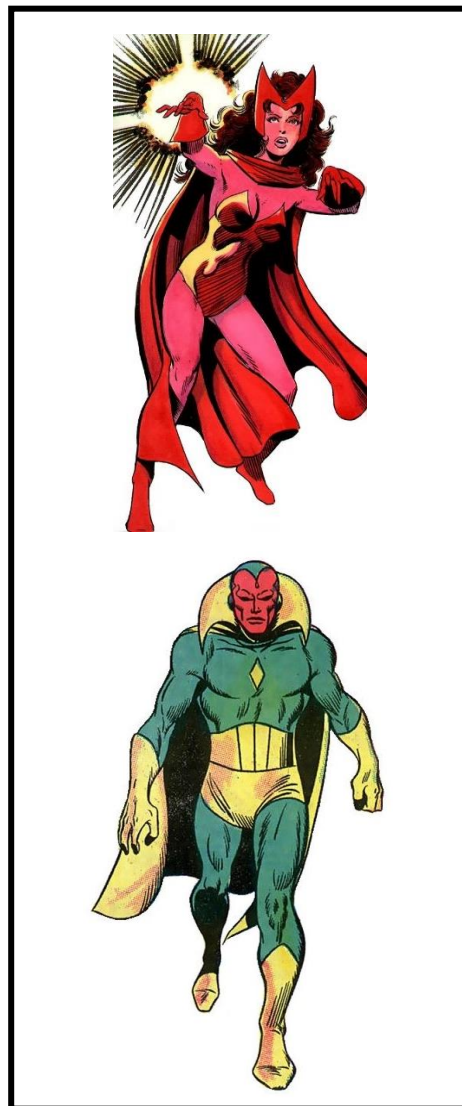
The next day (May 22), the SFWA Board of Directors sent out an e-mail to all Conference attendees and SWFA members. This e-mail included the following:

We learned yesterday that while participating in the "Romancing Sci-Fi & Fantasy" panel, Mercedes Lackey used a racial slur. First, we apologize to our attendees and the other panelists who were subjected to that slur. We've disabled access to the panel to avoid any additional harm being caused.

Second, we are immediately removing Mercedes Lackey from the conference and the additional panels she was scheduled for, in accordance with SFWA's Moderation Policy. The use of a racial slur violates the instruction to "Respect all cultures and communities. Do not make derogatory or offensive statements even as a joke."

That applies to everyone in a SWFA space, at all levels of their career.

Attendees stated that Lackey referred to author Samuel Delaney as a "colored" writer. She also allegedly used the term "colored" several times during the panel. Multiple SF&F writers took to Twitter to condemn Lackey, including co-panelist Jen Brown. One person who didn't seem to have a problem with Lackey's comments was Delaney himself, who posted a long Facebook commentary. Even though Delaney wasn't offended by the incident, dozens of authors and fans posted comments stating that Lackey caused immeasurable harm by referring to Delaney as a "colored" author. ΛΨΦ



Sidewise Award Winners

– Part 2 –

a short review by Carl

Sidewise Awards for Alternate History

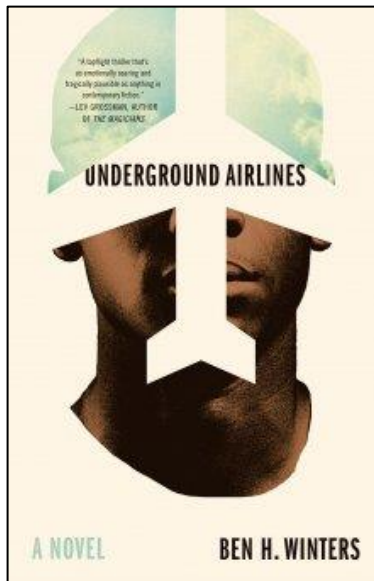


The Sidewise Awards have been presented annually since 1995 to recognize excellence in alternate historical fiction. The award takes its name from Murray Leinster’s 1934 short story “Sidewise in Time”, in a which strange storm causes portions of Earth to swap places with their analogs from other timelines. In the September 2020 newsletter, I reviewed Bryce Zabel’s *Once There Was a Way*. In this review, I’m taking a look at another winner in the Long Form (novel) category.

Underground Airlines by Ben H. Winters (Mulholland Books, 2016)

Underground Airlines won the Sidewise Award in the Long Form category in 2017.

The “point of divergence” for this alternate history novel is February 12, 1861, when president-elect Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in Indianapolis during a stopover on his way to his inauguration in Washington DC. It was “the martyrdom that saved the Union”. When Lincoln’s bloodstained speech was read to a hastily reconvened Congress, Senator Crittenden’s revised compromise legislation (a version of which had failed the year before) was taken up and passed. The new Confederate government was suspended, then abandoned; and our timeline’s Civil War was never fought. The compromise – consisting of six Amendments and four resolutions – preserved slavery where it was, prevented its extension elsewhere, and balanced Northern principles and Southern economic welfare. The clincher was the 18th Amendment to the Constitution: “No future amendment of the Constitution shall affect the



five preceding articles... and no amendment shall be made to the Constitution which shall authorize or give to Congress any power to abolish or interfere with slavery in any of the States by whose laws it is, or may be, allowed or permitted.”

Fast forward to contemporary times (smartphones, GPS, the Internet, etc.). Slavery is still legal in only four states, often referred to as “the Hard Four” (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Carolina). During the Lyndon Johnson Administration, Texas seceded and declared itself an independent Republic, refusing to remain any longer in a Republic that still sanctioned slavery in any State; this resulted in a nasty 11-year war and an uneasy detente. In 1973, the U.S. withdrew from the United Nations in the face of increasing international criticism. (The resulting legal, economic, and social conflicts and complications are gradually revealed over the course of the novel and are too complicated to outline here.) And the so-called “Underground Airline” manages to occasionally smuggle escaped slaves to freedom in Canada.

Jim Dirkson (or whatever his real name is) is a gifted, versatile African-American man. He is a “body snat-

cher” or “soul stealer”, an undercover agent of the U.S. Marshals Service assigned to help enforce the Fugitive Persons Act and hunt down escaped slaves (officially known as “Bonded Persons”). Dirkson is himself an escaped and recaptured slave, involuntarily recruited by the Marshals Service. He now lives under much better circumstances than he did as a slave, as long as he follows orders and continues to do his job well. Besides, he sees no way for the Constitutionally-sanctioned system of slavery to ever be toppled. It’s on his 460th assignment that he begins to have serious doubts. He’s assigned to hunt down an escaped slave named Jackdaw, who is reported to have reached the Indianapolis area after his assisted escape from an agri-business conglomerate in Alabama. But there are serious and unexplained flaws in the Jackdaw case file; and Dirkson’s “handler” (or supervisor) is uncharacteristically pressuring Dirkson to bring this case to a swift and tidy conclusion. Various abolitionist organizations are also involved, pressuring Dirkson to find Jackdaw and bring him in alive – with hints of motives other than simply rescuing a single escaped slave. The Jackdaw case involves Dirkson in many strange twists and turns, taking him from Indianapolis, down into the Hard Four, and back again. What’s the real story behind the Jackdaw case? Who’s putting pressure on Dirkson’s “handler”? And why are various abolitionist organizations so interested in this particular escaped slave?

Underground Airlines is a combination of political thriller and *noir* fiction – a fascinating consideration of racial tensions that still smolder in our own timeline, as well as an exploration of the concepts of morality versus legality. It’s a fine example of Ben Winters’s writing skill; and I quite enjoyed it.

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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. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be on Sunday, **July 10th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC. All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.** We hope to see you there.

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, Peter & Scott

July 15-17, 2022 **SHORE LEAVE 42**. Delta Hotels Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Guests: Brandon Routh (Superman/Clark Kent, Ray Palmer/Atom); Adam Baldwin (Jayne, *Firefly*), Summer Glau (River Tan, *Firefly*), Gates McFadden (Dr. Beverly Crusher, *ST:TNG*), and others. Weekend membership: \$105; daily rates available. Web page: www.shore-leave.com

July 29-31, 2022 **OTAKON 2022**. (A convention devoted to animé, manga, and Kpop.) Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). Guest list to be announced. Membership rate: \$100 for the weekend (daily rates available).
On-line registration: <https://www.otakon.com/register/> Webpage: <https://www.otakon.com/>

July 29-31, 2022 **CONFLUENCE 2022**. Sheraton Pittsburgh Airport Hotel (Coraopolis, PA). Guests: Neil Clarke (editor of the Hugo and World Fantasy award-winning *Clarkesworld Magazine*), Tim Griffin (award-winning teacher, musician, and storyteller), and others. Weekend membership: 7/1/22 - 7/25/2022, \$60 at door.
Web page: <http://confluence-sff.org/>

Sept. 1-5, 2022 **80TH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION (CHICON 8)**. Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel (Chicago IL). GoH: Erle Korshak; Artist GoH: Floyd Norman. Membership: \$240. Webpage: <https://chicon.org/>
On-line registration: <https://registration.chicon.org/>

Sept. 24, 2022 **RAINBOW SPACE MAGIC 3.0** ("an online LGBTQ+ science fiction and fantasy convention to discuss the craft of writing queer SFF"). Free to participants and convention-goers.
To receive further updates, [please sign up for our mailing list here.](#) Webpage: <https://www.rainbowspacemagic.org/>

Sept. 30 – Oct. 2, 2022 **CAPCLAVE 2022**. Hilton Washington DC/Rockville Hotel & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). GoHs: Ursula Vernon, Irene Gallo. Membership: \$60 to Aug. 31st; \$65 from Sept. 1st to Sept. 15th. On-line registration at: <https://www.capclave.org/capclave/capclave22/registration.php>
Webpage: <https://www.capclave.org> Info at: info@capclave.org

Nov. 18-20, 2022 **PHILCON 2022**. Doubletree by Hilton (Cherry Hill NJ). Principal Speaker: Keith DeCandido; Artist GoH: Charles Urbach. Membership: \$55 thru 7/31/2022. Website: www.philcon.org

Nov. 25-27, 2022 **CHESSIECON 2022**. (A very LGBTQ+ friendly con.) Delta Hunt Valley Hotel (Hunt Valley MD). GoH: Danielle Ackley-McPhail; Music GoH: Blibbering Humdingers. Membership: \$50 until 10/30; \$55 after that; \$60 at the door; daily memberships available. On-line registration (via PayPal): <https://johogan.org/chessieconlogin.cfm> OR by mail to: TSFS, Inc., PO Box 83032, Gaithersburg MD 20883-3032 (checks payable to: TSFS, Inc.).
Info at: info@chessiecon.org Website: <https://chessiecon.org/>

Feb. 10-12, 2023 **FARPOINT**. Delta by Marriott Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Guest: Wilson Cruz (*ST: Discovery*).
For more information: www.FarPointCon.com