



LAMBDA SCI-FI

DC Area Bisexual/Gay/Lesbian Science Fiction Association

P.O. Box 10087 * Silver Spring, MD 20914 * (301) 445-5650 Issue #8 - November '90

LAST MEETING MINUTES

by David Neveu
transcribed by Carl Cipra

In attendance were 22 members of Lambda Sci-Fi. Our special guest during this meeting was Robert Gowan, visiting from the Great Lakes Gaylaxians.

There was a discussion of various upcoming conventions: CostumeCon '91, Philcon '90 (Nov.), EveCon (Arlington, VA, New Year's weekend), and WorldCon '93 (San Francisco). The previous month's newsletter was passed out to those who missed it.

Peter Knapp's "Star Trek: the Next Generation" party was reported to have been a great success. About a dozen or so members showed up to see this season's opening episode, the continuation of last season's cliff-hanger. (Of course, we all ended up discussing various aspects of the episode. We also somehow ended up discussing various aspects of the late-lamented "Star Trek" animated series.)

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GAME NIGHT - A REVIEW

by Brian Kirby

Game Night at Peter's got off to a GREAT start! Peter kept saying we wouldn't all fit in his apartment, since there were just too many of us! But we managed to fit quite nicely. At the start, we split up into two groups: in the bedroom, "Dungeons and Dragons"; and in the living room, the main group. (NOTE: The D&D game is just starting up. Interested? Contact Chris F. for details.)

Those of us in the living room started off by playing "Icehouse," which was brought by Peter's friend Mark. (Some of us still can't figure out how this game is played, even though we watched closely!) To play, you place pyramid on the playing field at the same time as your opponent(s). *(continued on page 4)*

BOOK REVIEW

Uranian Worlds

Edited by Eric Garber & Lyn Paleo (G.K. Hall & Co., second edition, 286 pp., \$35.00)

Reviewed by Don Crisostomo

In 1983, the definitive annotated bibliography of lesbian and gay themes in science fiction and fantasy was published. URANIAN WORLDS, as edited by Eric Garber and Lyn Paleo appeared. This book contained 586 citations of relevance and importance to what the compilers termed, "themes of alternative sexuality in speculative fiction." These same editors have now released their second edition which far surpasses the original reference work, with the addition of over 300 new titles for a total of 935 citations.

Thus, in seven years, one can readily see the progression of lesbian and gay themes in science fiction and fantasy. The time period covered in this new edition covers works from Lucian of Samosata (ca. 200 A.D.) to Storm Constantine's THE FULFILLMENTS OF FATE AND DESIRE (third in The Books of Wraththlu Trilogy published in '89). *(continued on page 4)*

TREK TRIVIA TEST

The answers!!!

EPISODE: "By any other name". What's wrong with it? Opening sequence, one crewman gets zapped into a dexahedron, then another...and they lie on the ground.

Scene after Titles, the alien picks up one of them and crushes it, the crewman is rematerialized.

Flaw: The Other crewman should have appeared.

From what part of the Excelsior did Scotty remove an important component to disable the ship? A component from main transwarp computer.

What does Code 710 mean?

Do not approach planet under any circumstances. *(continued on page 3)*

BOOK REVIEW

Elves'n'Rock: A Comparison of Three Recent Books by Carl Cipra

Emma Bull. War for the Oaks. Ace Books, 1987.
Mercedes Lackey & Ellen Guon. Knight of Ghosts and Shadows. Baen Books, 1990.

Gael Baudino. Gossamer Axe. ROC Books (Penguin), 1990.

These three books are part of a genre that's new to me; and I'm not quite sure what to call it. I've heard them called "Elf Punk" and I've heard them called "Modern Urban Fantasy." Frankly, I'd probably never have picked them up myself--all three books were recommendations of one sort or another that I half-heartedly agreed to read. Guess what? I liked all three of 'em very much. Whatever you call this brand of fantasy/science-fiction, I'm sold on it! (At least I'm sold on these three examples.)

These books have several factors in common. In each one, the Elves/Fairy Folk/Sidhe/whatever manifest themselves (for one reason or another) in a major American metropolitan area. And in each case, the main human characters are part of (and the action of the story centers around) the modern music scene (be it rock, rock'n'roll, heavy metal, or what have you). Finally, all three authors demonstrate that Music is indeed "the stuff that dreams [and Magic] are made of." Even with these factors in common, however, three very different stories emerge.

In War for the Oaks, two Elvish forces, the Seelie Court ("the good guys") and the Unseelie Court ("the bad guys") have carried their never-ending conflict into the heart of Minneapolis. The main human character is a rock'n'roll lead singer; she is enlisted by members of the Seelie Court to put together a human-elfin rock band and help defeat the Unseelie Court for control of the city's public parks. Emma Bull's feel for and treatment of the Music/Magic theme is handled extremely well; and her description of a magical rock performance (midway through the book) is particularly powerful. As I read this book, though, I got the impression that the supernatural cast was virtually drawn, chapter

and verse, from the imagination of illustrator Brian Froud. All of the creatures appearing in Bull's book--the phouka, the glaistig, Hairy Meg, the Red Caps, the Seelie and Unseelie Courts, etc.--can be found gracing the pages of Froud's coffee-table book, Fairies.

Knight of Ghosts and Shadows takes place in Los Angeles. Some centuries ago, an elfin colony was established in the hills just outside the city around a power nexus of some sort; and this area has coincidentally(?) become the site of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire. Now, the RenFaire site is threatened by the bulldozers of unscrupulous corporate real estate developers; this also threatens the elves with extinction. Moreover, the elfin court itself is rent from within, sinking into some sort of dreamy, modern-day apathy and under attack by a powerful renegade elf-mage and his half-human daughter. When a young street musician/folksinger accidentally awakens one of the elves from the dream-state, he is hailed as a modern-day Bard and recruited in a desperate, last-ditch effort to re-energize the elves, save the RenFaire site (and the elvish power nexus), and defeat the evil elf-mage. The authors have added a number of ingenious twists to the elfin/mundane intermixture--for instance: elves regularly visit nightclubs disguised in punk or heavy-metal clothing; caffeine is an addictive poison to elves; and the entire creative "Hollywood" mystique is somehow linked to the presence of the elves in Los Angeles.

Finally, there's Gossamer Axe. Back in 6th-Century Ireland, two young women were magically dragged into the otherworld by a elvish harper-mage. Only one of them, a trained harpist herself, has managed to escape and is currently living in modern-day Denver. Now she's trading in her harp for a guitar and forming a heavy metal band in a final effort to pierce the magical veil between the dimensions, defeat the powerful harp-magic of the Sidhe (elves), and rescue her captive lover. Gossamer Axe is perhaps the best of these three books when it comes to an exploration of the motivations and psychologies of the characters.

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Elves'n'Rock - cont'd from page 2

This is especially true when the author shows how music/magic is channeled through (and affected by) a particular character's personality and state of mind. In addition, Baudino effectively emphasizes the eternal, unchanging nature of the elf-world by only using present-tense verbs to describe the action that occurs there.

There is actually another theme that these three books seem to have in common: the elvish folk (or at least some members of that "race") are very sexy/sexual and attractive beings, and Human-Elvish liaisons frequently occur. Each book handles the topic of elvish sexuality from a slightly different angle, however.

In War for the Oaks, the elvish royalty and nobility (both "good guys" and "bad guys") are all very ethereally attractive--two notable examples being Willy Silver (an elvish knight of the Seelie Court) and the phouka (who sounds like he's really sexy when he's in his "human" guise). The sexual ambiance of the characters is rather straight, with Eddi (the main female human character) falling in love with both Willy Silver and the phouka. Most of the other elvish creatures (such as Hairy Meg, the phouka in its "black dog" form, the Red Caps, etc.) are either weird, horrifying, or downright ugly (just as Brian Froud depicts them in his book)---and the concept of sexuality never arises for them.

All of the elves in Knight of Ghosts and Shadows are beautiful. Even the evil elf-mage Perenor is depicted as elegant and distinguished; and his half-human daughter Ria is apparently an absolute knock-out (and a ruthless opponent, too). As in her other books, Mercedes Lackey once again openly and sympathetically handles the theme of alternate sexuality (mainly bisexual and gay). Korendil, the handsome elf-warrior, is shown to be frankly bisexual, falling in love with both Beth and Eric (the two main human characters). Eric is in love with both Beth and Ria; and (in typical Lackey fashion) he is only coming to accept his love for Korendil slowly and painfully.

It is only in Gossamer Axe, however, that the theme of lesbian relationships is depicted. In fact, the deep and abiding love of Chairiste/Christa the harper for Siudb/Judith (who is trapped in the otherworld of the Elves) is the driving force behind all the action in this book. Christa's goodness and strength of character is also responsible for sexual healing and sexual awakening of several of the women in her rock band. Heterosexuality is most often shown in a negative light in this book---be it in the form of battered women, abused daughters, or the abduction of Christa's lover by Orfide (the elfin harper-mage) and her captivity by the King of the Elves. On the other hand, Christa is also in love with the young man who teaches her to play the guitar, and even goes so far as to sleep with him. Baudino handles all these various sexual themes frankly and masterfully, without ever sounding like she's orating from atop a soapbox.

I recommend all three of these books, especially War for the Oaks and Gossamer Axe. I can only hope that other authors will be able to handle the genre of "urban fantasy" or "elf-punk" as well as these women have.

TREK TRIVIA - cont'd from page 1

What was the term used by midshipmen at Starfleet Academy to refer to an obsolete or useless piece of equipment? Dunsel

Who Played the funeral dirge at Spock's funeral and what instrument and song was it? Scotty, on bagpipes.

What do you call a controlled implosion of the sudden mixing of matter and anti-matter within a starship's engines? Cold start of the engines

What does the Prime Directive SPECIFICALLY prohibit? Interference with the normal development of alien life or society

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Uranian Worlds - cont'd from page 1

In addition to the listings are also lists of selected anthologies, selected films and videos, and selected fan organizations (yes, Lambda Sci-Fi, D.C. is there!).

This book is a great improvement over the previous edition in many aspects and well worth the perhaps restrictive high price. This edition has an attractive purple and silver cover and the print is much larger and easier to read and follow. The first edition had a confusing and somewhat arbitrary codification system that used the letters A-F to indicate the degree of relevance in a work and also used the letter O to signify some forms of sexuality that were neither hetero- nor homosexual (e.g., transsexual or hermaphroditic). Alien sexuality which is neither hetero- nor homosexual was rated X (no, not the same as the one that just turned NC-17); and a ? is used for those works that were not based on socially defined labels, but rather on stereotypical mannerisms. The latest edition replaces the A-F codes with F and f to indicate works which respectively contain either major or minor elements of lesbianism or female bisexuality; and M and m indicate male homo- or bisexuality. The X rating now indicates such forms of sexuality as three-sexed aliens, androgyny, and vampirism; and the ? refers to elements which are open to interpretation.

Along with the bulk of information contained in this excellent reference work, are thumbnail biographies of such noted authors as Samuel Delany, Brian Aldiss, Ursula K. LeGuin, William Burroughs, and James Tiptree, Jr. The selections themselves are fascinating reading for those who wish to browse or those with a serious mind to explore the themes of gay and lesbian science fiction and fantasy. We certainly have traveled light-years beyond such works as John Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819) and Charles Beaumont's "The Crooked Man" (1955) to find inclusion and positive acceptance in works by Clive Barker, Michael Bishop, William Gibson, as well as Asimov, Bradbury, and Clarke. Themes such as AIDS, homophobia, and heterosexism are also beginning to appear in these works as well as strong lesbian and gay characters who are known for much more than

their sexuality. Garber and Paleo have achieved a notable and essential reference work which I highly recommend.

A note on availability: I called Lambda Rising as soon as I read about this edition in the September issue of LOCUS. They special-ordered my copy along with 50 other copies for the store.

GAME NITE REVIEW - cont'd from page 1

The pyramids vary in size and are used to either defend or attack. The different sizes represent different point values. After all the pyramids have been placed, the points are tallied.

Then we moved on to "Cosmic Encounters." This very interesting game is part boardgame, part role-playing, and part dice-game. Of course, we're still not sure of the rules. (We all took a vote later, and we think Peter was making them up as we went along.) The object of the game is to plant five bases on the planets of your opponents. Each player has a home solar system with five planets, which he must defend. On each player's turn, s/he attacks a chosen system, asks for help from other players (if desired), and then challenges his/her opponent. The winner is the player who is most successful in establishing five bases. The game was a lot of fun to play; and we learned that it's never played the same way twice. During the confusion of the arrival of dinner and the start of eating, Jaime quietly won the game. (NOTE: Jaime was a beginner, too! CONGRATULATIONS!)

As the evening wore down, we played "Cosmic Wimp Out." This is a dice game---lots of fun and fast-moving!!! It's all in the luck of the throw. (Keep your spirits up, Noel, your luck is going to get better!)

Thank you, Peter, for a really enjoyable and challenging evening!

MINUTES cont'd from page 1

The make-up of the club's membership was again discussed, specifically that there are lots more gay men than lesbians in the club. A brief discussion was held as to what we could do to attract more lesbians; but no clear solutions were reached.

As per usual, the discussion somehow turned to the "Dr. Who" series, with the discussion this time revolving around the changes in characterization/motivation/personality of the various incarnations of the Doctor.

Some discussion was held on "Fantasia"-virgins and planning a possible movie night to remedy this problem.

The proposed discussion of Jack Vance's Lyonesse seems to have fizzled, because no one was able to find it. Plans for discussing a more "accessible" book were discussed. Elizabeth Lynn's Sardonyx Net was discussed as a possibility; and Brian S. volunteered to look into ordering copies of it through his bookstore.

"Show & Tell" - One of our members brought in a copy of the 2nd edition of Uranian Worlds: A Guide to Alternative Sexuality in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror (ed. Barber and Paleo). Copies are available at Lambda Rising (about \$35 in hardback). This second edition has about twice as many entries as the first edition; and it even thanks members of the Gaylaxians organization (especially Frank Hummel) for information, research, support, etc. Its listing of clubs includes our chapter!

Carl briefly reviewed the various developments on the proposed reorganization of the Gaylactic Network. We should be hearing soon from Frank Hummel about the various proposals that have been made.

The November meeting will be November 11th, once again at Jim Crutchfield's (Dupont Circle area). The December meeting will be our "video-madness" meeting at Jaime's.

A number of members (with Peter Knapp as the organizer) are working up a "Photon" game-day in Silver Spring, MD (date to be determined).

As usual, the meeting seemed to ease its way into various discussion groups on any one of a number of topics (with all kinds of munchies).

TREK TRIVIA - cont'd from page 3

Name the device which is the basis for every important piece of high-tech federation equipment.

The Transtator (from "A Piece of the Action")

Warp factor 2 is how many times faster than Warp 1?

8 (Warp $N = N * N * N * c$)

Why did Decker countermand Kirk's phaser order while they were in the wormhole (anti-matter imbalance)?

The phasers were modified so that the main phaser banks were tied into the main warp engines to give it more power (something like the Yamato from StarBlazer tying the Wave Motion Gun to the Wave Motion Engine). When the Matter/Anti-Matter imbalance occurred, the phasers were automatically cut off.

Name the only episode in which 4 starships are shown flying in tight battle formation.

The Ultimate Computer

What was the name of the scientist that invented the Warp Drive?

Zefram Cochrane

ODDS AND ENDS

Note: To submit movie/book reviews for our newsletter, please mail your story on 5 1/4" IBM-PC formatted floppy disk (preferably in WordPerfect 5.0 or 5.1 format). You can also download your story onto our BBS (see Electronic Bulletin Board under Services). If you have some other IBM PC word processor, please contact AI at 384-6868 to see if we can use your format. Please specify how you want your by-line to read (i.e., do you want your full name credited, or do you prefer first name, last initial?)

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NEXT MEETING NOTICE

Meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. The October meeting will be at our regular time -- 2:00 p.m. on November 11th -- at Jim's apartment again, 1414 17th St., N.W., #413 We hope to see everyone there!