



Lambda Sci-fi DC Area Gaylaxians

PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044

(202) 232-3141 - Issue #239 - February 2010

E-MAIL: info@lambdasf.org WEBSITE: <http://www.lambdasf.org/>



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 roundtable discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF Book Discussion Group generally meets 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. The next meeting will be held on February 25th.

Here are the details on the next several discussion meetings:

Feb. 25th - *Palimpsest*, by Catherynne Valente; moderator: ?

March 25th - *Aye, and Gomorrah* (short story collection), by Samuel R. Delany; moderator: Rick.

April 22nd - *Bonshaker*, by Cherie Priest; moderator: Krista

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2009 Gaylactic Spectrum Award for Best Novel

info passed along by Carl

The Winner and Short List for the Best Novel category of the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards were announced last October at Gaylaxicon (Minneapolis) last year. The official press release has not yet been issued, but I figured I'd pass along the information anyway.

As a reminder, the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards were created in 1999 by The Gaylactic Network (the premiere organization for GLBT fans of science fiction, fantasy, and horror) to honor works of SF/F/H that deal positively with gay characters, themes, and issues. The independent Gaylactic Spectrum Awards Foundation was created in 2002 to manage and further the mission of the awards: to educate and raise awareness of GLBT content in SF/F/H. Winners of recommended works are selected by a jury of judges.

The 2009 Spectrum Award winner for Best Novel is actually a "duology" (one story split between two

February LSF Meeting

The next LSF meeting will be held on the **Sunday, February 14th**. The meeting will be held at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St. NW, #413), near Dupont Circle. The business meeting will begin (as usual) at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. See you there!

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books). It's "The Stratford Man" Duology by Elizabeth Bear, composed of *Ink and Steel* and *Hell and Earth*. The story takes place in England during the early 1600s - as well as in Faerie, Hell, and other fantastical places - and features William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe as main characters.

The other novels in the judges' recommended Short List for 2009 are:

All the Windracked Stars
by Elizabeth Bear

City of Ashes by Cassandra Clare

Havemercy by Jaida Jones

& Danielle Bennett

Shadows Return by Lynn Flewelling

Turnskin by Nicole Kimberling

Nominations for the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards are open to everyone; and nominations for the 2010 Awards (for works published in 2009) are currently open. You can nominate works (novels, short fiction, "other" works - such as anthologies or films or TV shows) on-line at the following website: www.spectrumawards.org/nomform.htm

For more information about the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards, including a complete listing of all nominated works for 2008 and prior, you can visit the website: www.spectrumawards.org or send e-mail to:

info@spectrumawards.org

[Ed. note: When it is released, we will of course print the official announcement in this newsletter.]

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WHAT'S INSIDE? Minutes of the Jan. 2010 LSF Meeting (pg. 2); An Early Instance of Science Fiction (pg. 3); Used Space Fleet for Sale (pg. 3); Regency Fantasy, Part 2 (book reviews - pg. 4); About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (pg. 6); Con Calendar (pg. 6)

**Minutes of the Jan. 2010
LSF Meeting**
by guest-scribe Rob Gates

It was apparently a difficult day for our officers, as both our Speaker and our Secretary were missing in action. But we braved on ahead without them, and I stepped in to scribble some notes on the goings-on while David K stepped in as our “Teresa-for-the-afternoon” (as guest Speaker).

With no business to attend to, we began the meeting with our usual name circle, and then jumped right into the social-sharing portion of the meeting.

In TV news, the David Tennant (and Russell Davies) era of *Doctor Who* has ended with the completion of “The End of Time” (the finale episode featuring Tennant as the Doctor). Those who had seen it gave it lukewarm reviews at best, and anticipation is already beginning for the premiere of the new Doctor Who, Matt Smith, in the spring. We also spent some time discussing British actors and actresses on TV shows who are trying (some successfully, some not) to do American accents.

We passed around the usual array of comic books, magazine articles, and newsletters. Peter also noted the club and convention flyers available for folks, and we reviewed upcoming events: book discussion and future meetings.

As is often the case, the bulk of our discussions focused on movies. We spent significant time discussing 3D technologies and the move toward movies in 3D. *Avatar* was discussed at length, both from a technical sense and from a story perspective. A few folks had seen the SyFy Channel *Alice* miniseries and did not speak highly of it, despite its steampunk-iness. Upcoming films also garnered much attention – particularly Pixar’s *John Carter of Mars*, the Tim Burton *Alice in Wonderland*, and the remake of *Clash of the Titans*.

Of course, the big event of the January meeting is our annual blind book exchange, and it was its usual good time. Here’s what people brought and received:



Rick received the *Hellboy* DVD from Peter.

Jeff received 3 Alistair Reynolds books and Bruce Sterling’s *Schismatrix Plus* from Carl.

Peter received the 1st three “Wheel of Time” books from David K.

Bryn received 3 books in the “Foreigner” universe (by CJ Cherryh) from Julian.

David received 2 Samuel Delany books on writing and an erotica collection from Rick.

Julian received *Trick of the Light* (by Rob Thurman) and the *Dresden Files* DVD from James.

David K received *Dragonhaven* (by Robin McKinley) from Jeff.

Carl received *Soon I Will Be Invincible* (by Austin Grossman) from David.

Rob received *Companion to Wolves* (by Elizabeth Bear and Sarah Monette) from Scott.

James received *Accidental Creatures*, *Turnskin* and *The Love We Share Without Knowing* from Rob.

Peter received *The Host* from Scott.

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**The guy who invented the first wheel was an idiot.
The guy who invented the other three, he was a genius.**

---- Sid Caesar ----

quoted in
*If Ignorance Is Bliss,
Why Aren't There More Happy People?*
(*Smart Quotes for Dumb Times*)
by John Lloyd & John Mitchinson
(Harmony Books, 2008)



Washington Irving
1783 - 1859

It is a mortifying circumstance, which greatly perplexes many a pains taking philosopher, that nature often refuses to second his most profound and elaborate efforts; so that often after having invented one of the most ingenious and natural theories imaginable, she will have the perverseness to act directly in the teeth of his system, and flatly contradict his most favourite positions. This is a manifest and unmerited grievance, since it throws the censure of the vulgar and unlearned entirely upon the philosopher; whereas the fault is not to be ascribed to his theory, which is unquestionably correct, but to the waywardness of dame nature, who with the proverbial fickleness of her sex, is continually indulging in coquetries and caprices, and seems really to take pleasure in violating all philosophic rules, and jilting the most learned and indefatigable of her adorers.

Washington Irving
A History of New York (1809)
(*Washington Irving: History, Tales and Sketches*; The Library of America, 1983)



An Early Instance of Science Fiction

by Carl Cipra

It never ceases to amaze me just how far back in American literature you can find recognizable science fiction stories. There's Jack London's "The Shadow and the Flash" (1903) – perhaps inspired by H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* (1897). Rather earlier is Nathaniel Hawthorne's astounding little story on miniaturized machinery, "The Artist of the Beautiful" (1844). And now (believe it or not) I find that I can add Washington Irving to this list of early American science-fictioneers.

"Whoa!" I hear you call. "Washington Irving?! You mean the guy who wrote 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' and 'Rip Van Winkle'?"

Yes, indeed, that's the guy! I've always enjoyed reading Irving's works; and I recently decided to read his classic *A History of New York* (the 1809 version). (It was a *long*-delayed decision, I might add.) And – wonder of wonders! – it was in Book I, Chapter V, that I discovered that Washington Irving had written a story about an alien invasion of the Earth almost a century *before* H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* (1898). And Irving described this invasion in very "science fictional" terms.

OK, OK, I'm not saying that Washington Irving consciously set out to write a science fiction story – the concept obviously didn't exist in the early Nineteenth Century. And it certainly couldn't be described as a "scientifiction" story, as Hugo Gernsback wouldn't coin that term until 1926. I suppose Irving *might* have thought of his story as a work of "speculative fiction" – a term proposed by Heinlein in 1947 (and favored by Harlan Ellison) – after all, Irving does begin this five-page passage with the words "Let us suppose..." But, whatever you want to call it, the tale is filled with lots of classic SF concepts.

First off, Earth is invaded by "the inhabitants of the moon." These lunar invaders are described as one-eyed, tailed, and "pea green" in color. (Oh, and they carry their heads under their arms. Sigh.) They are "possessed



of vastly superior knowledge to ourselves", having "arrived at such a command of their *energies*, such an enviable state of *perfectability*, as to controul the elements, and navigate the boundless regions of space." And they definitely have military superiority: "armed with concentrated sun beams, and provided with vast engines, to hurl enormous moon stones..." – "superior to us in knowledge, and consequently in power..." And, as a result, "the aerial voyagers, finding this planet to be nothing but a howling wilderness, inhabited by us, poor savages and wild beasts, shall take formal possession of it, in the name of his most gracious and philosophic excellency, the man in the moon." That all sounds pretty familiar, doesn't it? But, remember, Irving was writing this back in 1809!

And now you're probably wondering *why* Irving penned this tale of invasion and conquest of the Earth by moon men – and, moreover, why he included it in his *History of New York*. Good question. You see, Book I of the *History* is Irving's lead-in to his description of the rise Dutch Nieu Amsterdam and its eventual incorporation (as "New York") into the British colonies. In Chapter V of that Book, he describes the conquest of the Native Americans by the European colonists and "justifies" that conquest through a series of very logical, very tongue-in-cheek arguments reminiscent of Jonathan Swift's 1729 ironic "Modest Proposal" for solving the Irish famine by means of cannibalism. Irving uses the "alien invasion" scenario to illustrate his arguments. In effect, he's saying: "See? If you dare to object to the callous conquest of the Earth by the moon men, then how can you *possibly* justify similar arguments used by the European nations to justify their conquest of the

Used Space Fleet for Sale (One Previous Owner)

info passed along by Wayne # 1



[Ed. Note: Wayne # 1 passed along the following article, but the clipping didn't include which newspaper it came from.]

NASA slashes price on shuttles for sale

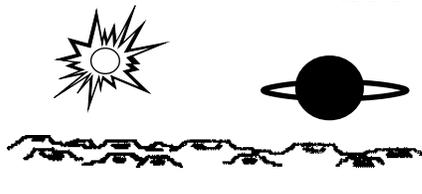
Associated Press, 1/15/2010

Here's a recession bargain: the space shuttle. NASA has slashed the price of the 1970s-era spaceships from \$42 million to \$28.8 million apiece.

The shuttles are for sale once they quit flying, supposedly this fall. When NASA put out the call to museums, schools and others in December 2008, seeking buyers, about 20 expressed interest. NASA spokesman Mike Curie expects more interest, what with the discount.

The space shuttle main engines are now free. NASA advertised them for \$400,000 to \$800,000 each in December 2008, but no one expressed interest. So now the engines are available, along with other shuttle artifacts, for the cost of transportation and handling.

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Americas?" Science fiction as social commentary. *Star Trek* anyone? (It just took Gene Roddenberry a little over a century and a half to catch up.) Λ Ψ Φ

Regency Fantasy, Part 2

by Carl Cipra

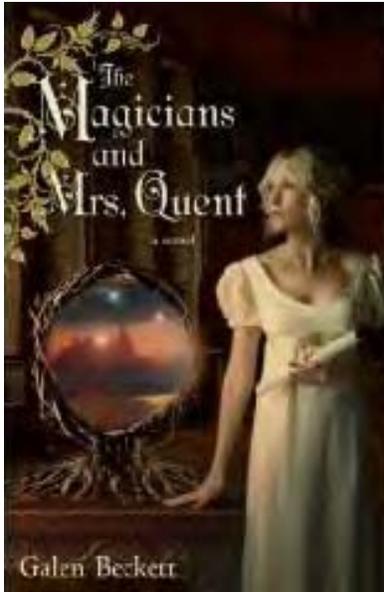


About a year ago (in the March 2009 issue of this newsletter), I began what I assumed would be a continuing series of articles about the F&SF sub-genre I've labeled "Regency Fantasy." Alas, things happened... and I am only now getting to Part 2.

As a reminder, the Regency Period is the title given to the years 1811 - 1820, when King George III of Great Britain was considered to have been unfit to rule and his son (the future George IV) ruled in his stead as Prince Regent (or he mis-ruled in his father's stead, as the case might be). Due to considerations of either fashion or politics or culture, the Regency Period is often viewed as lasting from 1795 to 1837 (leading up to the Victorian Era). In England, it was the time of such individuals as fashion trend-setter Beau Brummel, the Duke of Wellington, Admiral Lord Nelson, and the poet Lord Byron. In France, it was the time of the French Revolution, "Madame Guillotine," and the Napoleonic Wars. It was also the heyday of a trio of renowned English novelists: Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and Emily Bronte. And it is the works of these women that seem to have inspired all the recent "Regency fantasy novels" – not only from the standpoint of taking place during the Regency Period, but also from the standpoint of style, language, and social sensibilities.

In Part 1, I reviewed the works of Susanna Clarke: *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* (novel, 2004) and *The Ladies of Grace Adieu and Other Stories* (collection, 2006). Returning now (oh so belatedly) to this series of reviews, I

feature this month a couple of rather "odd" additions to the Regency Fantasy sub-genre: *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent*, and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.



The Magicians and Mrs. Quent
by Galen Beckett
(Bantam Books, 2008)

This book is advertised as an "enchanted debut novel." Actually, it's not – a "debut novel," that is. It seems that "Galen Beckett" is a *nom de plume* of long-time fantasy writer (and previous Spectrum nominee) Mark Anthony, who is best known for his "Last Rune" novels. Be that as it may, it's still an "enchanted" read.

Ah, but what do I consider so "odd" about this Regency Fantasy novel? Well, unlike all the other Regency Fantasy novels I've read, *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* doesn't actually take place in Regency England – or even in Revolutionary France or anywhere else in our reality; it takes place in a completely made-up world. (And a very strange world it is indeed – with days and nights that vary wildly in length, so that people must consult almanacs if they want to know just how long a particular day or night will last.) But the social constructs of this made-up world – and, indeed, the language and style in which the novel is written – are all very

clearly derived from the works of Austen and the Brontes.

The story begins in the city of Invarel (Beckett's analog for London), capital of the Kingdom of Altania. Ivy Lockwell is the eldest unmarried daughter of a genteel family that fell into poverty when Mr. Lockwell went mad some years previously. Ivy is bookish, intelligent, and rational; her sister Rose is dreamy and strange; and her other sister Lily is silly and boy-crazy. (I found it impossible to read this part of the novel without comparing it to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.) With the death of Ivy's mother, Ivy is packed off to the country, where she becomes the governess to some children at Heathcrest Hall, a gloomy and half-unused mansion with a locked room, an aloof and mysterious master (*Mr. Quent*), and a hostile housekeeper. (If you've read Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, then I think you can see where this part of the story is going!)

"OK, OK," you say. "I see the *Regency* aspects of the novel. But where's the *Fantasy*?" Actually, there's a lot of it – more and more as the novel progresses. Remember Ivy's father, Mr. Lockwell? He was a magician – his madness was a direct result of some mysterious magical activity he'd been engaged in. Then there are the fascinating *Siltheri*, a caste of cross-dressing actors and "illusionists" who stage performances of a dazzlingly magical nature in a less-than-savory district of Invarel. And throughout the novel is woven the cosmic (and somewhat Lovecraftian) threat of "the Ashen," some sort of soul-sucking aliens that are trying to force open a gateway into Ivy's world – a gateway that various magicians seem to think they can manipulate to their own advantage. Finally, at the ending, things seem to be coming to a head in faraway Torland, where "the Wyrwood is rising" and humans are being slain. Is that enough Fantasy for you?

What really surprised me, however, was the fact that *The Magicians and Mrs. Quent* has some LGBT content. The LGBT aspects of the novel seem to

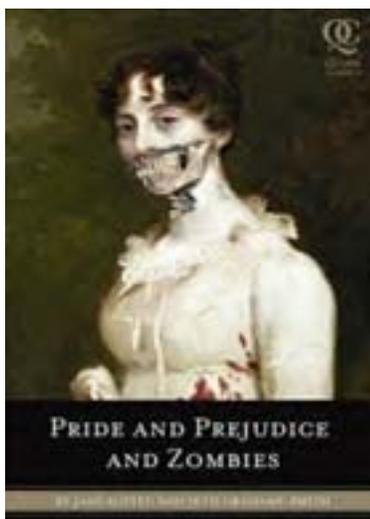
(continued on page 5)

Regency Fantasy

continued from page 4

cluster about the person of Eldyn Garritt, an orphaned young gentleman whose family has fallen on hard times and who is the sole support for his young, naive sister. At one point (early in the novel), young Eldyn has some very homoerotic thoughts about an angelic statue in the churchyard at St. Adaris – and, later, about a handsome young priest he observes in the church itself. One of the Siltheri (all of whom are male) seems rather more than a little interested in young Mr. Garritt’s – um – well-being. And then there’s Westen, the highwayman who’s wooing Eldyn’s sister: even he finds occasion to remark that Eldyn is “prettier still than his sister.” Hmmm. It doesn’t add up to a major contribution to the novel’s storyline; but I was delighted to see this level of positive LGBT content. Mayhap young Eldyn Garritt will feature more significantly in the next novel?

Oh, yes, there will be another novel – apparently to be titled *The House on Durrow Street*. I certainly look forward to reading it.



Pride and Prejudice and Zombies
by Jane Austen
and Seth Grahame-Smith
(Quirk Books, 2009)

Another “odd” Regency Fantasy? Decidedly so. First off, you’ll notice that it’s actually written by Jane Austen... and Seth Grahame-Smith. “Writ-

ten by Jane Austen?” you ask. “Indeed,” I respond. In fact, major portions of this novel are (word-for-word) Ms. Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*... and the remainder of the novel is directly based thereon. Mr. Grahame-Smith’s contributions to work entail sizeable action-packed scenes involving Oriental martial arts and... well... *zombies*! In fact, the blurb on the back cover describes the novel as “an expanded edition of the beloved Jane Austen novel featuring all-new scenes of bone-crunching zombie mayhem.”

Since the storyline is pretty much the same as Austen’s 1813 comedy of manners, I figure it shouldn’t be necessary to repeat it all here. (If you haven’t read *Pride and Prejudice*, then surely you’ve seen one of the recent films or BBC features based on it?) So, on to Grahame-Smith’s contributions. It seems that early 19th Century England has for the last half-century been beset by recurring outbreaks of zombies – good, old-fashioned, shambling, brain-eating zombies – or, as they’re variously referred to in polite society, “the unmentionables” or “the sorry stricken.” And the five young Bennett sisters are deadly Shaolin-trained zombie-killers. What fun! The non-Austen additions are often quite cleverly worked into Austen’s narrative. I really got a kick out of the Bennett sisters’ performance of the “Pentagram of Death” when a horde of zombies intrude on Mr. Bingley’s introductory ball at Netherfield Park. And Ms. Austen’s version of Elizabeth Bennett’s verbal contretemps with Lady Catherine de Bourgh is delightfully transformed by Mr. Grahame-Smith into a Shaolin-versus-ninja physical altercation. Ya gotta love it!

I must add, however, that even though this book substantially remains Austen’s work, occasional minor rephrasings have been made in the interest of modern readers – and lots of snide puns on the word “balls” have been added. Also, many short sections of Austen’s novel have been cut, including the following passage, in which Lydia Bennett relates what she considers to be an amusing story:

We dressed up Chamberlayne in a woman’s clothes, on purpose to pass for a lady—only think what fun! Not a soul knew it, but Colonel and Mrs. Forster, and Kitty and me, except for my aunt, for we were forced to borrow one of her gowns; and you cannot imagine how well he looked! When Denny, and Wickham, and Pratt, and two or three more of the men came in, they did not know him in the least. Lord! how I laughed! and so did Mrs. Forster. I thought I should have died. And that made the men suspect something, and then they soon found out what was the matter.

I find it interesting that this particular passage – what is possibly Ms. Austen’s only tangential LGBT reference – was deleted. Go figure.

On the whole, if you don’t enjoy Jane Austen, I don’t think you’ll overly enjoy *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. But if you *do* enjoy Jane Austen, then you just might be twisted enough to get a kick out of this “expanded edition.” And apparently lots of people have enjoyed it: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* spent rather a long time on the New York Times Bestseller List; and Quirk Books have even released another “Quirk Classic” entitled *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*, this time co-authored by Jane Austen and Ben H. Winters. (If you want to see a cute little 3-minute video ad for the new book, go to www.amazon.com and search for the page advertising *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*.)

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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 transgendered (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 this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. (Hard copies of the newsletter cost an additional \$15 per year.) Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. But the next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on the **Sunday, February 14th**, at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St. NW, #413), near Dupont Circle. The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. 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



February 12-14, 2010 **FARPOINT** ("Baltimore's Fandom Family Reunion"). Crowne Plaza Baltimore North (Timonium, MD). Guest: Mira Furlan ("Rousseau" from *Lost*; "DeLenn" from *Babylon 5*); and more to be announced! Pre-registration membership for the weekend: \$70. (Daily rates available.) Register on-line at: www.farpointcon.com -- or make your check payable to "Farpoint Enterprises" and send registration info to: Farpoint Enterprises, Inc., 11708 Troy Ct., Waldorf, MD 20601. Website: www.farpointcon.com E-mail: trekcontact@comcast.net

April 9-11, 2010 **RAVENCON 2010**. Holiday Inn Kroger Center (Richmond, VA). Author GoH: Rachel Caine; Artist GoH: R. Cat; Gaming GoH: Steve Long. Membership: \$35 from 1/1/2010 to 4/1/2010; \$40 at the door. Registration form available on-line. Make checks payable to "Ravencon 2010" and send to: Ravencon 2010, 3502 Fernmoss Court, Charlotte, NC 28269. Website: www.ravencon.com

May 28-31, 2010 **BALTICON 44**. Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). Author GoH: Tanya Huff; Artist GoH: Howard Tayler; 2009 Compton Crook Award Winner: Paul Melko; 2010 Compton Crook Award Winner: TBA. Membership: \$48 until 2/28/2010; \$53 from 3/1/2010 until 4/30/2010; \$60 after 4/30/2010 and at the door. Registration: registration@balticon.org Website: www.balticon.org E-mail: balticoninfo@balticon.org

August 5-8, 2010 **RECONSTRUCTION** (NASFiC 2010). Raleigh Convention Center; Raleigh Marriott City Center; Sheraton Raleigh Hotel (Raleigh, NC). GoH: Eric Flint; AGoH: Brad Foster. Membership: currently \$95 (will go up!). Make checks payable to "ReConStructure" and send to: ReConStructure, PO Box 31706, Raleigh, NC 27622 Website: www.reconstructionsf.org

October 29-31, 2010 **GAYLAXICON 2010**. Marriott Chateau Champlain (Montreal, QC, Canada). More details as they become available. Website: www.gaylaxicon2010.org

Aug. 17-21, 2011 **RENOVATION** (69th World Science Fiction Convention). Reno-Sparks Convention Center (Reno, Nevada). Guests of Honor: Ellen Asher, Charles N. Brown, Tim Powers, Boris Vallejo. Membership: \$140 until 4.30/2010. Website: www.renovationsf.org Membership queries: memberships@renovationsf.org

