



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 - Issue # 306 – September 2015

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NASA Images of Pluto

info passed along by Carl

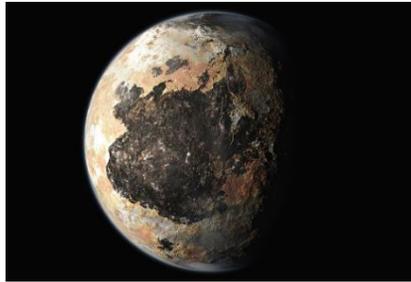
OK, OK, so Pluto is only a “dwarf planet”... fine. But I still think it’s cool that we’re finally getting a much better view of one of the Solar System’s outermost large planetary bodies.

On July 14th, NASA’s New Horizons spacecraft flew by Pluto and has been sending back some stunning pictures of Pluto and its moons.

To see more of those images, go to:

https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/newhorizons/images/index.html

As a reminder, Pluto was discovered by Clyde Tombaugh in 1930 and was originally considered “the 9th planet”. The discovery of other larger bodies in the Kuiper Belt (such as Eris



in 2005, which is 27% more massive than Pluto) led to Pluto’s reclassification as a dwarf planet (specifically, a “plutoid”). Pluto has five known moons: Charon, Styx, Nix, Kerberos, and Hydra. In fact, with a diameter just over half that of Pluto, Charon is so big that Pluto-Charon is sometimes considered a “double-dwarf planet”. (They both appear to orbit a center-of-mass position not centered on Pluto.)

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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 – for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. The next book discussion will be held on September 24, 2015.

Here are the details for the next three book discussions:

Sept. 24 – *Remembrance of Things I Forgot*, by Bob Smith (mod.: Bob A).

Oct. 22 – *The Monstrumologist*, by Rick Yancey (moderator: Teresa).

Dec. 3 (1st Thursday, combined Nov./Dec. discussion) – *The City and the City*, by China Mieville (moderator: Ross).

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GAYLAXICON 2016: Oct. 7-9, 2016

Check out the updated website:

<http://www.gaylaxicon2016.org/>

<<<<< September 2015 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, September 13th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob’s home, **1425 “S” Street NW, Washington, DC**. The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM and the social meeting at 2:00 PM. Please also bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. Hope to see you there!

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What’s Inside?

Page 2: Minutes of the August LSF Meeting; Tanith Lee (obituary).

Page 3: Mars and Venus “The Way They Were” (book reviews).

Page 4: Information About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians and Con Calendar.

Minutes of the August
LSF Meeting
taken by Scott

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Dan described the ICP – Insane Clown Posse – the members have an annual gathering where they exhibit poor hygiene.

Peter advised that supporting/non-attending members of the upcoming WorldCon (Spokane) can submit their 2017 con location ballot today.

Film News: The new *Fantastic Four* movie has received bleak reviews. (Was Roger Corman's *Fantastic Four* the best FF movie to date?) Arne is eager for a *Wonder Woman* movie. Rob commented that a female-lead superhero movie has yet to be produced. (Electra and Cat Woman do not count!) Dan said that *Suicide Squad* is being made into a movie. The upcoming R-rated *DeadPool* movie stars Ryan Reynolds. A Captain Marvel movie (with Carol Danvers) is planned for 2018. Dan and Rob agreed that the movie *Jupiter Ascending* is horrible, even though it is visually stunning. The film *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* (based on the novel of the same name) is coming out in 2016. Carl and Rob and Jim all said they enjoyed Pixar-Disney's short feature *Lava* (that accompanies the full-length feature *Inside Out*).

TV News: NBC's *Heroes Reborn* has a limited-series storyline, starring Jack Coleman. Carl described *Henry Danger*, a live-action superhero series on Nickelodeon. The new *Fear the Walking Dead* series premieres on Sunday, 08/23/2015. *Sense8* is a Netflix series that has been renewed for another season; Rob described the plot: eight people around the world who are psychically connected, lots of GLBT content, including a trans-woman and a gay tele-novela actor. Dan and Jim spoke favorably about *Humans*, the new series about robot-



Tanith Lee
1947 – 2015

I was saddened to learn that Tanith Lee, one of my favorite F&SF authors, passed away on May 24th. She was a prolific British writer in the fields of science fiction, horror, Gothic romance, historical fiction, and various types of fantasy, author of over 90 novels and some 300 short stories (as well as poetry). She even wrote two episodes for *Blake's 7*, the classic BBC science fiction series.

Ms. Lee made her first professional sale in 1968: a 90-word vignette entitled "Eustace". She worked at various odd jobs, but continued writing despite numerous rejections by British publishers. It wasn't until 1975, when DAW Books accepted *The Birthgrave*, an adult fantasy issued in mass-market paperback format. She continued to sell to DAW for many years; and Lee's writing career took off. After *The Birthgrave*, she was able to become a full-time writer. Her output remained phenomenal, even when major publishing companies became less accepting of her works. The rise of the small press movement (as well as Internet sales)

allowed her career to revive in recent years and she tended to be published by smaller publishers.

Lee has been described as "constantly reinventing herself" and challenging strict genre boundaries. Her prose is always richly poetic, even mythic. Her style has also been described as "not always easy on the reader". She always seemed to be looking for new literary realms to explore. *Don't Bite the Sun* (1976) and *Drinking Sapphire Wine* (1977) – a mildly-erotic SF duology – explore a future world in which technological miracles allow a youth-obsessed culture to explore freedom of gender expression, physical enhancement, and personal identity. Some of her most popular stories are grouped together as the "Tales from the Flat Earth": *Night's Master* (1978), *Death's Master* (1979), *Delusion's Master* (1981), *Delirium's Mistress* (1986), and *Night's Sorceries* (1986). They are set in a mythic world where demigods and other powerful supernatural entities work out difficult relationships with mere humans – think of them as fairy tales for adults. Lee's "Blood Opera Sequence" (*Dark Dance*, 1992; *Personal Darkness*, 1993; and *Darkness, I*, 1994) explore such themes as homophobia, racism, and sexism. Lee even wrote historical fiction set during the French Revolution (*The Gods Are Thirsty*, 1996).

Ms. Lee's works have frequently been nominated for various awards. She was the first woman to win the British Fantasy Award (1980, for *Death's Master*). She won 2 World Fantasy Awards for her short stories (1983, 1984) and a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013.

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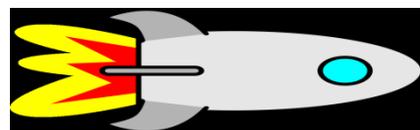
ic servants known as "synths." Rob and Peter are watching the Netflix's *Daredevil* series. A reboot is being planned for the Saturday morning live-action series *ElectraWoman and DynaGirl*.

Other: It's reported that the Beijing 2024 Olympics theme-song is a really obvious knock-off of a song from the Disney film *Frozen*. Jim attended the Shore Leave convention over the weekend and got to hear John Barrowman speak about his role on *Arrow*. Jim also got to speak with ac-

tor Daniel Davis, who played the Moriarty character on *Star Trek: TNG*. Several attendees agreed that *This War is Mine* is a thought-provoking war-survival video game.

Robin Wayne Bailey's *Shadowdance* is this month's LSF book discussion title (Thursday, Aug. 27).

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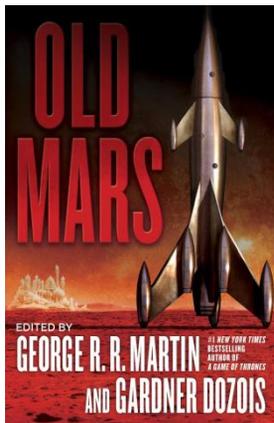
Mars and Venus “The Way They Were”

reviews by Carl

Remember “the good old days”? You know, when there were still 9 planets in the Solar System, and classic F&SF authors assured us that every one of those planets (as well as the Moon, several asteroids, and many other sub-planetary bodies) were filled with native lifeforms and Earthly adventurers. It was the time of the classic “planetary adventure” stories of HG Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Otis Adalbert Kline, Leigh Brackett, CL Moore, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, and others.

But then came the dawn of a new age, when science took us into space and we were all sure that all our dreams of science fiction would come true: Sputnik, Vanguard, Explorer, the manned Mercury and Gemini and Apollo programs, and the unmanned Mariner interplanetary explorations. Suddenly, Mars was no longer a dying world of ancient, decadent civilizations – it was a frigid, lifeless desert. And Venus was no longer a world of rain-drenched swamps and dinosaurian monsters – it was a pretty good stand-in for Hell, with a poisonous atmosphere.

Yes, novels like Kim Stanley Robinson’s award-winning trilogy—*Red Mars*, *Green Mars*, *Blue Mars*—and Andy Weir’s *The Martian* are a joy to read; but – damn! – don’t we miss “the good old days”? Well, be of good cheer! It’s George RR Martin and Gardner Dozois to the rescue – with two more of their incredible anthologies: *Old Mars* and *Old Venus*. (I believe I’ve raved about several of their previous anthologies in previous issues of the LSF newsletter: *Songs of Love and Death*, 2011; *Down These Strange Streets*, 2012, *Warriors*, 2013; and *Rogues*, 2014.)



Old Mars

edited by George RR Martin
& Gardner Dozois
(Bantam Books, 2013)

This is the first of the two Martin/Dozois “old planet” anthologies. There are some “big names” in the roster of 15 contributors, including Allen Steele, S.M. Stirling, Mike Resnick, Liz Williams, Melinda Snodgrass, Michael Moorcock, Joe Lansdale, and Ian McDonald.

George R.R. Martin begins the Introduction as follows: “Once upon a time there was a planet called Mars, a world of red sands, canals, and endless adventure. I remember it well, for I went there often as a child.” He provides a fascinating review of the literary “history” of the Red Planet and of the scientific discoveries that put an end to the “old Mars” that fueled that tradition. He concludes the Introduction as follows: “Mariner could not find Old Mars. But you can. Just turn the page.”

I found this to be a pretty darn good anthology – another feather in the caps of editors Martin and Dozois – and the quality is pretty “even”. There are, however, a few that I *really* liked.

A couple of the stories definitely reminded me of the version of “old Mars” presented by Ray Bradbury in *The Martian Chronicles*. In “The Ugly Duckling” (by Matthew Hughes), a corporate prospector bucks the system when he discovered “what Mars is”. Mary Rosenblum (“Shoals”) tells the poignant tale of a young boy – a social outsider – who has visions of the vanished Martian civilization.

Several stories were obviously inspired by the “old Mars” of the planetary romances *a la* Leigh Brackett and C.L. Moore. Here are a couple of examples. Mike Resnick’s “In the Tombs of the Martian Kings” is an adventure story about a search for fabulous riches among the ruins of the ancient Martian civilization. In “The Lost Canal”, Michael Moorcock shows how a notorious outlaw, while hiding out in the Martian wastelands, stumbles onto an opportunity to save the entire Solar System. Liz Williams (“Out of Scarlight”) tells a rollicking tale of adventure in the Martian outback – one in which everyone’s motives (and identities) aren’t necessarily what they seem. And in Phyllis Eisenstein’s “The Sunstone”, a young human returns home to Mars after being educated on Earth; and he learns about the true nature of his late father’s researches and his relationships with the native Martians.

I’m not sure *how* to classify some of the stories. Allen Steele’s “Martian Blood” is the story of a renegade scientist’s “dangerous” exploration of his belief that Martians and Earthlings are biologically related. In Howard Waldrop’s “The Dead Sea-Bottom Scrolls”, a literary researcher attempts to recreate the fabled journey of an ancient Martian across the Martian wastes. And Ian McDonald’s “The Queen of the Night’s Aria” is a weirdly funny tale of an old, self-important vaudevillian from Earth who is entertaining the troops during a vicious Martian War (a steam-punk-ish, Victorian Era alternate history).

There even a story with LGBTQ content: Melinda Snodgrass’s “Written in Dust”. It’s a tale of family loyalties among the Earth pioneers braving the harsh Martian frontier. It prominently features a same-sex couple in a stable, loving relationship.

As I said, I found this anthology to be a rollicking good read!

(to be continued)

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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 copy of 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. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on Sunday, **September 13th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC.** 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



Oct. 9-11 **CAPCLAVE 2015**. Hilton Washington DC North/Gaithersburg (Gaithersburg MD). Guests include: Gordon Van Gelder (Editor, *F&SF Magazine*); Alastair Reynolds (*Revelation Space*). Membership: \$60 until Sept. 30th; \$65 at the door. On-line registration thru the convention website. Website: www.capclave.org

Nov. 20-22, 2015 **PHILCON 2015**. Crown Plaza Hotel (Cherry Hill, NJ). Membership: \$40. Make checks payable to "Philadelphia Science Fiction Society" and send to: Philcon Registration, PO Box 8303, Philadelphia, PA 19101-8303. For on-line registration and additional information: www.philcon.org

Nov. 27-29, 2015 **CHESSIECON 2015** ("Where Traditions Evolve"). Radisson North Baltimore Hotel (Timonium, MD). Author GoH: Seanan McGuire; Artist GoH: Ursula Vernon; Music GoH: Heather Dale; Special Guest: Tamora Pierce. Membership: \$55 until Nov. 15; \$60 at the door. On-line membership available (using PayPal), or print out the membership form and mail it and a check payable to "Thanksgiving Science Fiction Society" to: TSFS, Inc., PO Box 83032, Gaithersburg, MD 20883-2032. Website: <http://chessiecon.org> Info at: info@chessiecon.org

Feb. 12-14, 2016 **FARPOINT 23**. Radisson Hotel North Baltimore (Timonium, MD). Guests to include: Sean Maher ("Simon Tam" from *Firefly*); more guests TBA. Membership: \$80 for the weekend (daily rates available). On-line membership available (using Everbrite). Website: <http://www.farpointcon.com/>

Feb. 12-14, 2016 **KATSUCON 2016** (anime, manga, cosplay, etc.). Gaylord National Resort (National Harbor, Washington DC). Membership: \$60 until August 31st; \$70 until Jan. 31, 2016. Registration is on-line. Website: <http://www.katsucon.org/>

May 27-30, 2016 **BALTICON 50** ("Our Golden Anniversary!"). The Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore, MD). GoH: George RR Martin; Artist GoH: John Picacio; more guests TBA. Membership: \$59 until Feb. 29, 2016; \$64 from 3/1 thru 4/15/2016; \$70 afterwards & at the door. On-line registration at: registration@balticon.org Website: www.balticon.org

Oct. 7-9, 2016 **GAYLAXICON 2016**. Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Minneapolis-Park Place (Minneapolis, MN). Guests of Honor: Eleanor Arnason (author); David Maxine (Hungry Tiger Press); Eric Shanower (*Age of Bronze*). Registration: \$50 thru 2015; \$80 at the door. Registration is on-line. Website: <http://www.gaylaxicon2016.org/>

