



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 - Issue # 317 – August 2016

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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 August 25, 2016.

Here are the details for the next few book discussions:

Aug. 25 – *Nimona* (graphic novel), by Noelle Stevenson (moderator: Greg).

Sept. 22 – *The Scorpion Rules*, by Erin Bow (moderator: Claire).

Oct. 27 – *The Plot Against America*, by Philip Roth (moderator: Rob).

Dec. 1 (combined Nov./Dec. session) – *Luna: New Moon*, by Ian McDonald (moderator: Carl).

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Minutes of the July LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Conventions: Teresa discussed her favorite panels at this year's AwesomeCon; she enjoyed the Karl Urban panel and all of the *Doctor Who* panels. Peter passed around materials for the upcoming Shore Leave Con and Historicon – and the latest Sigma newsletter from the Pittsburgh area sci-fi group. Carl distributed a flier for (Re)Generation Who3 Con in Baltimore.

TV News: David compiled a list of the new genre TV shows: *Time After Time*, *Son of Zorn*, *Making History*, *Timeless*, *Frequency*, *Good Place*, and *Exorcist*. He also enjoys *BrainDead*, the TV show about alien bugs eating the brains of politicians. *Game of Thrones* just finished its current season; two more (shorter) seasons are forthcoming, perhaps 13 to 15 episodes total. John Barrowman has signed a contract enabling him to appear on various CW Network shows: *Arrow*, *Legends of Tomorrow*, *Flash*, and *Supergirl*.

Movie News: David described a script written for the *Alien III* movie which was never produced. Rob is looking forward to the new *Ghostbusters* movie. There seems to

be some sort of controversy about the fact that the four main characters are now all female. <snooze> David expressed concerns over significant reshoots of the upcoming *Star Wars: Rogue One* movie. Teresa and Dan watched the three-hour extended cut of the *Batman vs. Superman* – which they found still as boring as the two-hour version of the movie. The original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* movie will be shown at the AFI Theater in Silver Spring – presented by Count Gore DeVol. Sounds like fun!

Other News: Much discussion about the *Pokemon Go* game, available on iOS and Android. Marvel continues its revamp of some characters: the new Iron Man will be a black female; and Amadeus Cho is the new Hulk. Rob likes the Marvel comics online subscriptions – and wishes that DC would do the same.

Upcoming LSF book discussions: See column 1 on this page.

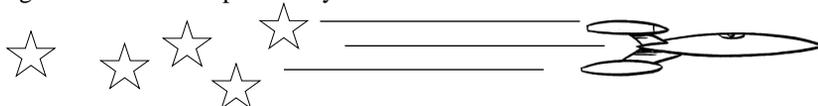
LSF Movie Outings: *Ghostbusters* at Mazza Gallerie (July 17); *Star Trek Beyond* at the Air & Space Museum on the National Mall (July 23). Maybe an outing to see the new *Suicide Squad* movie on Aug. 6?

Finally, we watched the original *Ghostbusters* movie. "Who you gonna call?"

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<<<<< August 2016 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, August 14th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. The meeting will begin at 1:30 and the "group watch" will begin at 3:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

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Page 3: 2015: Year of the Dwarf Planet; 2016: Year of the GIANT Planet?

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

SF Books (Part 3)

by Carl

I started this series of reviews back in May: SF stories about Humanity while it's still confined to our Solar System (pretty much confined inside "the Oort Cloud"). So far, I've reviewed *Mission: Tomorrow* (an anthology edited by Bryan Thomas Schmidt), *Leviathan Wakes* (the first of the "Expanse" novels by James S.A. Corey), and *The Ophiuchi Hotline* and *The Golden Globe* (two of the "Nine Worlds" novels of John Varley). Now it's time to talk about the latest novel from one of my favorite SF authors.

Luna: New Moon
by Ian McDonald
(Tor, 2015)

Ian McDonald has been writing F&SF for about 30 years now; and he's won a slew of major awards, including the Hugo, Locus, Philip K. Dick, BSFA, and John W. Campbell Awards. He lived in Belfast during the whole of "the Troubles" (196-1999); and, as a consequence, he views Northern Ireland as a post-colonial society imposed over an older culture.

A major theme running through McDonald's SF works is the impact of rapid social and technological changes on non-Western societies – for example: India (*River of Gods*, 2004), Brazil (*Brasyl*, 2007), and Turkey (*The Dervish House*, 2010). In *Luna: New Moon*, McDonald takes us off-planet. ("I'm still writing about developing economies, it's just that this one happens to be on the Moon.")

The year is 2110; and the Moon is a technological-industrial powerhouse governed by the Earth-based Lunar Development Corporation (LDC). Lunar society is capitalistic (in the extreme), libertarian (of a sort), and high-tech. There is no law outside of contract law and contractual obligations. There aren't really any "law-breakers", although there are violations of contract. And contract disputes are mediated

by contract lawyers and neutral arbitrators – but sometimes disputes are resolved by a form of the *code duello*. The four basic essentials of Lunar life – air, water, carbon (food), and data – are rationed on a use-if-you-can-pay basis. (And woe betide the poor who can't!) Although the LDC governs the Moon, Lunar society is dominated by the five Great Families, who between them control most aspects of Lunar life through their family-held corporations (the "Five Dragons"). The fiercest rivals are Mackenzie Metals (the oldest of the Dragons, controlling most mineral extraction) and Corta Hélio (the newest Dragon, mining the "helium-3" needed to power Earth's fusion reactors). It's the attempted assassination of Rafa Corta (heir to the Corta dynasty) that sets off a series of plots, conspiracies, skirmishes, and outright warfare that rage throughout most of the novel.

The cast of characters is huge – and the dynastic intermarriages and corporate alliances made me scurry a number of times to the "Cast of Characters" at the front of the book. The dynastic rivalries and internecine warfare has led some reviewers to call McDonald's novel "the *Game of Thrones* in space". I'm surprised that more of them haven't also looked to Frank Herbert's *Dune* for comparisons (helium-3 and *mélange*; Robert Mackenzie and Baron Harkonnen; etc.). One reviewer has even compared it (with some justification, I think) to James Clavell's novel of family-business rivalries in Hong Kong: *Tai-Pan* (1966) and

Noble House (1981).

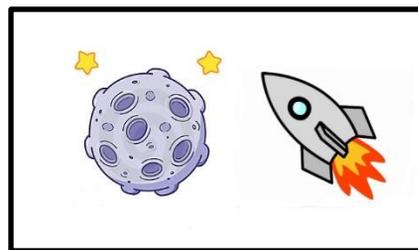
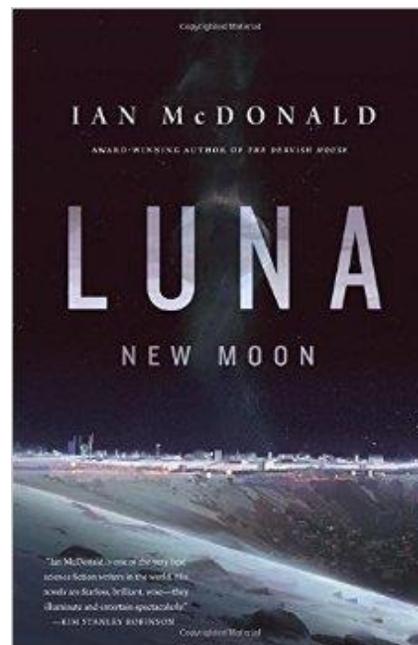
I really enjoyed *Luna: New Moon*! There's enough solid SF content to keep diehard SF fans like me happy, as well as non-stop action and a surprisingly large amount of positive LGBTQ content (which I don't seem to remember in McDonald's other novels). The "cliff hanger" ending makes me even more avid to read the concluding book in the duology – *Luna: Wolf Moon* – due out in early 2017.

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(to be continued next month)



Coming in October! For more details, see page 4.



2015: Year of the Dwarf Planet

info passed along by Carl

Did you know that NASA unofficially declared 2015 to be the Year of the Dwarf Planet? Neither did I. I guess it didn't get much play in the news services.

The concept of "dwarf planet" was defined back in 2006 by the International Astronomical Union: a planetary-mass object that is neither a planet nor a natural satellite. In other words, a dwarf planet is in direct orbit of the Sun and is massive enough for its gravity to crush itself into a hydrostatic equilibrium shape (usually a spheroid), but has not cleared its neighborhood of other material around its orbit. The most famous "fallout" was, of course, the "demotion" of Pluto from planetary to dwarf planetary status.

At any rate, a lot of dwarf planet discoveries occurred during 2015. Early in 2015, the *Dawn* spacecraft detected several "bright patches" on the asteroid (dwarf planet) Ceres, where water-rich minerals and salts are exposed. In July 2015, the *New Horizons* spacecraft found glaciers of frozen nitrogen between mile-high mountains of water-ice on Pluto and a canyon much deeper than Arizona's Grand Canyon on Charon, Pluto's largest moon (at one time also classed as a dwarf planet).

And in November 2015, Scott Sheppard (an astronomer at the Carnegie Institution for Science, in D.C.) discovered a dwarf planet – designated V774104 – located 103 AU (astronomical units) or about 9.6 billion miles from the Sun (more than three times farther away from the Sun than Pluto). It's estimated to be about half the size of Pluto, but its exact orbit has yet to be determined. V774104 is thus the most distant identified planetary/dwarf planetary object. (The former holder of that title was the dwarf planet Eris, which was discovered in 2005 at 97 AU from the Sun.) Only the *Voyager* probes, *Pioneer 10*, and



V774104 – image credit, NASA

some long-period comets are known to be farther from the Sun. The discovery of V774104, with its potentially strange orbit, is also feeding speculation that an as-yet-undiscovered large planet is hiding out there in the furthest reaches of the Solar System.

The International Astronomical Union currently recognizes five (now six?) dwarf planets – Ceres, Pluto, Haumea, Makemake, and Eris – but it's estimated that there might be another hundred or so (possibly 200) dwarf planets in the Solar System. Further exploration of the Kuiper Belt will probably turn up many more dwarf planets.

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2016: Year of the GIANT Planet?

info passed along by Carl



On July 5th, the following message flashed on screens at Mission Control in NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab facilities in Pasadena, CA: "Welcome to Jupiter!" This signal traveled 540 million miles across the solar system to announce that the Juno spacecraft had successfully started orbiting Jupiter. The spacecraft also identified itself as "the farthest solar-powered spacecraft from Earth".

Juno was launched from Cape Canaveral on August 5, 2011. Its mission: study Jupiter's composition and evolution. It's the first spacecraft to orbit Jupiter since the

Galileo (which was deliberately crashed into Jupiter back in September 2003 to protect one of its discoveries, a possible ocean beneath Jupiter's moon Europa).

All indications are that everything is performing well after a 35-minute main engine burn slowed the spacecraft by about 1,212 miles per hour so that it could enter its Jovian orbit.

Juno's main spacecraft body is about 11.5 feet tall and 11.5 feet in diameter; with its three solar panels open, it's about as wide as a basketball court. It will orbit Jupiter's poles (to avoid the most hazardous radiation belts) 37 times for about 20 months, getting down to about 2,600 miles above the planet's dense cloud cover. The seven science instruments on board will study Jupiter's auroras and help scientists better understand Jupiter's origins, structure, atmosphere, and magnetosphere. Juno's mission will end in February 2018, when it's expected to crash into Jupiter.



Interesting note: On board Juno are three 1.5-inch Lego figurines depicting Galileo (who discovered Jupiter's four largest moons) and the Roman gods Jupiter and Juno. (They were included to inspire children to study science and math – but I'm quite sure Lego is thrilled at the advertising value.)

According to NASA, the Juno-Cam (an onboard color camera) will take "spectacular close-up, color images" of Jupiter. For further information, check out:

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



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Juno
Mission
Patch

* * 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, **August 14th, 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



Aug. 17-21, 2016 **MIDAMERICON II, the 74th Worldcon**. Kansas City Convention Center & Bartle Hall (Kansas City, MO). GoHs: Kinuko Craft; Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden; Tamora Pierce; Pat Cadigan. Membership: \$185 "until Spring 2016" (will go up after that). Registration is on-line (via PayPal). Website: <http://midamericon2.org/>

October 7-9, 2016 **CAPCLAVE 2016**. Hilton Washington DC North/Gaithersburg (Gaithersburg, MD). Membership: \$55 thru 7/31; \$60 from 8/1 thru 9/30; \$65 at the door. Author GoHs: Sarah Beth Durst, Tim Powers. On-line registration. Website: www.Capclave.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: \$65 thru Sept. 12th; \$80 at the door. Registration is on-line. Website: <http://www.gaylaxicon2016.org/>

Nov. 18-20, 2016 **PHILCON 2016**. Crown Plaza Hotel (Cherry Hill, NJ). Principal Speaker: CJ Cherryh; Artist GoH: Dave Seeley; Special Guest: LE Modesitt. Membership: \$45 through 7/31/2016. Checks payable to "Philadelphia Science Fiction Society" and send to: Philcon Registration, PO Box 8303, Philadelphia PA 19101 Website: www.philcon.org

Nov. 25-27, 2016 **CHESSIECON 2016**. Radisson North Baltimore [formerly North Baltimore Plaza Hotel] (Timonium, MD). Membership: \$55 until 11/15; \$60 at the door. GoH: Sarah Pinsker; Artist GoH: Tabitha Ladin; Music GoH: S.J. Tucker; Special Guest: Elizabeth Schechter. On-line registration via PayPal; or make check payable to "Thanksgiving Science Fiction Society" and send (with membership form) to: TSFS, Inc., PO Box 83032, Gaithersburg, MD 20883-3032 Website: <http://chessiecon.org/> Information: info@chessiecon.org

Feb. 17-19, 2017 **FARPOINT 2017**. Radisson Hotel North Baltimore (Timonium MD). Membership: \$80 pre-registration for the weekend (daily rates available). Guests: Enver Gjokaj ("Agent Daniel Sousa" from *Agent Carter*), more TBA. Checks payable to "Farpoint Enterprises" and send to: Farpoint Enterprises, 11708 Troy Ct., Waldorf, MD 20601. Register and pay on-line at: www.FarpointCon.com/register Website: www.FarpointCon.com

March 24-26, 2017 **(RE)GENERATION WHO3**. Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace (Baltimore MD). Membership: Pre-registration \$80; \$90 at the door; VIP packages available. Guests: Sylvester McCoy (7th Doctor), Michelle Gomez (Missy), Peter Purves (1st Doctor Companion Steven Taylor), Katy Manning (3rd Doctor Companion Jo Grant). Registration through the website: <https://regenerationwho.com/>