



Lambda Sci-Fi

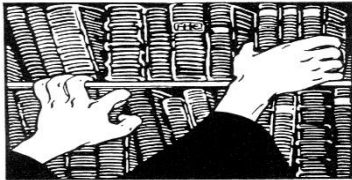
DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 - Issue # 334 – January 2018

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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. But the next book discussion will be held on January 25, 2018.

Here are the details for the next several book discussions:

Jan. 25, 2018 – *Binti and Binti: Home* by Nnedi Okorafor (moderator: Carl)

Feb. 22, 2018 – *Borne* by Jeff VanderMeer (moderator: Konrad).

March 22, 2018 – *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle (moderator: Rob).



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Annual LSF Book (et al) Exchange at Jan. 14th Meeting



That's right, gang, it's Holiday time again; and it's time for Lambda Sci-Fi's *twenty-eighth* annual book (et al) exchange, which will occur at the upcoming Jan. 14th meeting! All LSF members – and visitors, guests, attendees, etc. – are invited to participate in this "blind exchange."

In case you've never participated in one of these before (or in case you've forgotten), here's how it works:

(1) Go out and purchase a copy of your "favorite" science-fiction, fantasy, or horror book. (NOTE: Over the years, LSF has expanded the concept of "book" to include comics, videotapes, "books on tape," etc. If you want – or if you're feeling particularly wealthy – you can even make it *several* favorite books or whatever.)

(2) Insert a piece of paper (or bookmark) with your name on it. That's so whoever eventually ends up with the item will know who it's from and will get to know a little about you – at least to know what one of your "favorites" is.

(3) Wrap up the exchange item, but don't put any identifying marks or anything on the wrapped package to say who it's from. That's to make sure it's a "blind" exchange – i.e. no one is supposed to know who it's from at first. (And, by the way, all of that leftover Holiday wrapping paper should come in handy here!)

(4) At the meeting, add your wrapped exchange item to the pile with all the others; and you'll be assigned a number. (Only one exchange item – i.e. one package – per person, please!)

(5) When your number is called, you pick one of the packages from the pile. And when you open it up, you'll find out who it's from. See how easy?

I can hardly wait to see what shows up *this* year!

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<<<<< January 2018 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 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. *And don't forget – the Annual LSF Book Exchange will occur at this meeting!* Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

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New Secrets in the Great Pyramid

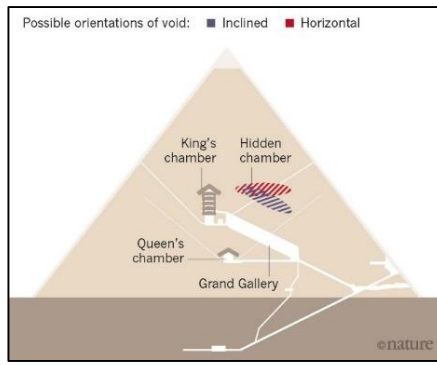
info passed along by Carl

Scientists have discovered a new mystery enclosed within the Great Pyramid of Khufu in Egypt. It seems there's a previously-unknown "large 100-foot-long void" located deep within the 4500-year-old structure. The cavity is above and similar in size to the Grand Gallery, the passage leading to the King's Chamber in the heart of the pyramid. "How did they find it?" you ask...

ScanPyramids, the mission to probe the interior of the Giza pyramids, began back in 2015. It's a joint program of Cairo University and the HIP Institute (a French non-profit company), with guidance from the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities and teamed up with Japanese physicists. Three different types of muon detectors were brought in to scan the interior of the Great Pyramid.

Muons are harmless, negatively-charged particles that constantly bombard Earth's atmosphere. They wink into existence and out again within millionths of a second, shooting downwards at nearly the speed of light. (Each minute, hundreds of muons are passing through your skull.) Stone absorbs the energy from muons in ways that pockets of air or bodies of water do not; and physicists can use the particles' trajectories to look inside otherwise impenetrable substances. Muon detectors have been used to probe volcanic chambers and nuclear disaster zones (such as at Fukushima, Japan).

ScanPyramids assigned independent teams to three different muon detectors arrayed around the Great Pyramid. Constantin Borozdin (a physicist at Los Alamos National Laboratory) said: "If you see the same signal with different technologies, it increases your confidence that what you see is real." At the moment, researchers know little about the Great Pyramid's void beyond its dimensions. The chamber might be horizontal or at an incline



parallel to the Grand Gallery; it might be a single structure or a sequence of smaller rooms; it might be stocked with treasures (or not).

Muon-based technology is still rare in archeology. It's expensive: an array of detectors can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It's also time-consuming: the exposure time for the nuclear emulsion film used at the Great Pyramid was measured in months. In the 1960s, it was used by Luis Alvarez (University of California, Berkeley) and his team to look for voids in the smaller Pyramid of Khafre, the 2nd-largest pyramid. (No secret chambers were found.)

None of the ScanPyramids physicists were experts in Egyptology; and they were reluctant to speculate on just what the "void" is. No plans have yet been announced on the possibility of accessing the cavity, which doesn't appear to be accessible without using some seriously-invasive procedures.

For the article in *Nature* magazine, go to:

<https://www.nature.com/news/cosmic-ray-particles-reveal-secret-chamber-in-egypt-s-great-pyramid-1.22939>

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Minutes of the December LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

A Note from Scott: We nattered about mostly non-genre stuff, so that's why the minutes below are so skimpy.

Rob passed around the current issue of the *SnotGirl* comic.

David described a "mauve shirt" – similar to a "red shirt". A Mauve Shirt is a former Red Shirt who has more screen time than a Red Shirt, but gets killed off nevertheless.

TV News: The CW's *Riverdale* series, based upon the Archie Comics, centers upon sex and drugs. Suspense? Horror? This show has to have a cult following. David and James love the *Dirk Gently* series, a holistic detective with Elijah Wood as his sidekick.

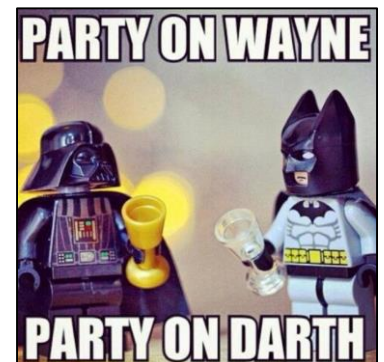
Film News: David enjoyed the *Justice League* movie. James is underwhelmed by the Aquaman character. *Coco* has broken box office records in Mexico. The upcoming *Wrinkle in Time* movie looks fabulous; and *A Wrinkle in Time* will be the subject of the March 2017 LSF Book Discussion Group. Peter organized a *Last Jedi* movie outing for 12/16/2017.

There was a discussion of Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Tales of EarthSea*, comparing the source text against the animated series and the live-action series.

Wess thought that *Avenue Q* would be a gay-themed play. Sorry, it's not.

A reminder: the annual LSF book exchange is slated for the January 2018 meeting.

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What Color Is a Dinosaur? (Continued!)

info passed along by Carl

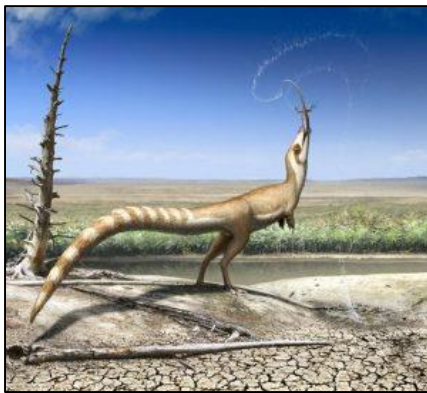
[Ed. Note: This article is a continuation of previous articles in the November and December LSF newsletters.]

But wait! There's more!

University of Bristol paleobiologist Jakob Vinther continues to find new and unusual details about dinosaur coloration through more detailed examination of the *Sinosauropteryx prima* fossil discovered two decades ago by a farmer digging a well in northeastern China.

As a reminder, *Sinosauropteryx* revealed that at least some dinosaurs were covered in bristles or fluff that paleontologists refer to as "proto-feathers" – or "dino-fuzz", if you'd prefer. And in 2010, researchers learned more about dinosaur coloration when they identified protein sacs embedded in the very detailed *Sinosauropteryx* fossilized skin and proto-feathers. Now Vinther and his colleagues have used high-tech photography (blocking out all incoming glare) to continue examining two *Sinosauropteryx* fossils.

First surprise: it looks like *Sinosauropteryx* had a brown mask streaked over its snout, from eyes to cheeks, rather like a raccoon. No other known dinosaur fossils have shown a "bandit mask like this. Among modern "mid-level predators" – such as raccoons (weighing 8 to 20 pounds) and badgers (weighing 20 to 35 pounds) – bandit masks are a warning to other predators: "Don't mess with me!" On the other hand, *Sinosauropteryx* wasn't exactly a "mid-level predator" – it was about four feet long and weighed under six pounds (about the weight of a chihuahua). Maybe the face stripes served to cut down glare from the sun? Wood frogs and small birds such as yellowthroat warblers also have mask-like splotches. These markings could, of course, have served multiple function for *Sinosauropteryx*. Vinther noted that he



he wouldn't be surprised if other dinosaurs have similar marks and we just haven't identified them yet.

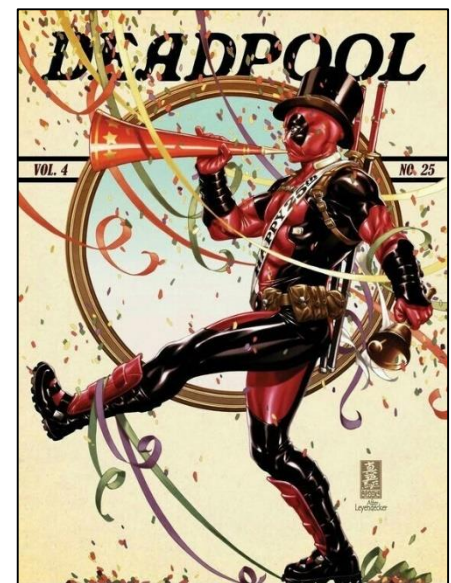
Second surprise: *Sinosauropteryx* was "camouflaged", with a light belly and a dark back. This is known as countershading and is seen on many modern animals (pronghorn antelope, coyotes, squirrels, etc.). The November LSF newsletter article cited the August 2017 discovery of countershading in a spectacularly-detailed fossil of a nodosaur (a huge armored dinosaur) – as well as the fact that paleontologists were puzzled about the VW-sized nodosaur possibly using countershading as a camouflage device. However, in the case of *Sinosauropteryx* – a very much smaller creature – countershading makes a lot of sense. The dark brown back and the white belly would have helped to obscure the little creature's outline from larger predators (of which there were many in Cretaceous times).

Following up on this discovery, paleontologists created a mock *Sinosauropteryx* with a 3-D printer and placed the model in various environments, to see where the coloration might be most effective. Result: It appears that *Sinosauropteryx*'s countershading would be most effective in open prairies or savannas and less effective in wooded areas. Says Vinther: "Using camouflage patterns, we can say which dinosaurs lived where, to paint a more complete picture of how the landscape looked like back then."

Yes, *Sinosauropteryx* fossils were found next to those of known woodland dinosaurs; but Vinther suggests that this happened when their

bodies were swept together into that Cretaceous lake and that they probably never met while alive.

So, what color is a dinosaur? Detailed research keeps coming up with fascinating new answers to this question. I can hardly wait to see what they discover next. ΛΨΦ



* * 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-gendered (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, **January 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



Feb. 9-11, 2018 **FAIRPOINT 2018**. Delta Hotel by Marriott (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests include: Nana Visitor, Matt Frewer, author Timothy Zahn. Membership: \$85 for the weekend. Mailing address: Farpoint Enterprises, 11708 Troy Court, Waldorf, MD 20601. On-line registration available.

Website: <http://www.farpointcon.com/>

Feb. 16-18, 2018 **KATSUCON 2018**. Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center (Washington, DC). An annual 3-day fan convention for multicultural enthusiasts and entertainment. Membership: \$70 until 02/2018 (\$170 for "VIP tickets"). Registration on-line.

Website: <http://www.katsucon.org/>

March 30 – April 1, **2018 AWESOME CON 2018**. Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington, DC). Guests include: Dave Bautista ("Drax the Destroyer"); Jeremy Bulloch (adult "Boba Fett"); Joe Keery (from *Stranger Things*); Joonas Suotamo ("Chewbacca" in the latest *Star Wars* films); Karen Gillan ("Amy Pond"; "Nebula"); Michael Rooker ("Yondu Udonta"); Phil LaMarr (voice actor). Membership: \$75 for the weekend (daily rates available, as well as more expensive "special packages"). Tickets available on-line.

Website: www.awesome-con.com

May 11-13, 2018 **GAYLAXICON/OUTLANTACON 2018**. Outlantacon is hosting Gaylaxicon in 2018. Membership: \$40 until 12/31/2017 (will go up after that).

Website: <http://www.outlantacon.org/> Info: info@outlantacon.org

Aug. 16-20, 2018 **WORLDCON SAN JOSE**, the 76th World Science Fiction Convention. McEnery Convention Center (San Jose, CA). Guests of Honor: Chelsea Quinn Yarbro & Spider Robinson. Membership: currently \$210 (will go up!). On-line registration thru the convention's website. More information (including hotel information) as it becomes available.

Website: www.worldcon76.org

October, 2018 **CAPCLAVE 2018**. [More details as they become available.] Membership: \$55 until May 2018. For updates, please visit: www.Capclave.org Info: info@capclave.org

Nov. 1-4, 2018 **WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION**. Baltimore Renaissance Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore, MD). Membership: \$200 (current rate; will go up). Guests of Honor: Kaaron Warren, Scott Edelman, Michael J. Walsh. Artist Guest of Honor: Tom Kidd. Special Guest: Aliette de Bodard. On-line registration or print out registration form & send to: WFC2018 c/o Baltimore Science Fiction Society, Inc., PO Box 686, Baltimore MD 21203-0686

Website: <http://www.wfc2018.org/>