



Lambda Sci-Fi DC Area Gaylaxians



PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044



(202) 232-3141 - Issue #248 - November 2010
E-MAIL: info@lambdascifi.org WEBSITE: www.lambdascifi.org



LSF Website Change

info passed along by Carl



LSF owes a vote of thanks to Rob for registering a replacement domain and to Kendall for getting things set up with SuperbNet, thus fixing the old LSF site for the new domain and re-uploading. Now LSF once more has a web site. To repeat: It's a NEW DOMAIN NAME:

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

If you have saved the former web site address – or if you link to it from your web site – please update your bookmark/link.

Note: We no longer redirect the default home page to a "/lsf" sub-directory, so when you're in there updating your bookmark or link to our site,

if the URL you use has that, please remove it.

Obviously it'll take a while to drop a line to all the people we know to link to the new site, to ask them to update their links, and possibly longer for search engines like Google to pick up on the new site. And there are a few kinks here and there that Kendall might still need to iron out. Your patience is appreciated.

There are plans afoot to redesign the site so it looks more modern, is more streamlined (there's stuff on the old site that LSF has never used), and is easier to maintain, etc.

Stay tuned.

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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 roundtable 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 meeting, however, will be held on December 2nd.**

Here are the details for the next several book discussions:

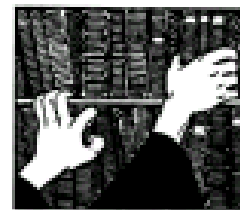
Dec. 2nd (combined Nov./Dec. meeting) - *Super Sad True Love Story*, by Gary Shteyngart; moderator: Peter.

Jan. 27th - *The Steel Remains*, by Richard K. Morgan; moderator: Rob.

Feb. 24th - *The Book of Lost Things*, by John Connolly; moderator: Teresa.

March 24th - *Galileo's Dream*, by Kim Stanley Robinson; moderator: Claire.

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November LSF Meeting

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, November 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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Happy Thanksgiving!!!



In twentieth-century Old Earth, a fast food chain took dead cow meat, fried it in grease, added carcinogens, wrapped it in petroleum-based foam, and sold nine hundred billion units. Human beings. Go figure.

-- Dan Simmons, *Hyperion* (1989) --

quoted in *Science Fiction Quotations*, edited by Gary Westfahl
Yale University Press (2005)

WHAT'S INSIDE?

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Two Months of LSF Meeting Minutes
taken by Scott



[Ye Olde Editor Sayeth: It was a struggle, but Scott finally turned over the last two months worth of LSF Meeting Minutes to me.]

Minutes of the Sept. 12th Meeting

Carl passed around an article from *Out* magazine that explores why straight women write “slash” (M4M) erotic fiction. Julian admitted to his addiction for Regency novels.

Jim reported that Jack, Kendall, Mike, Ron, and Jim all attended NASFiC (North American Science Fiction Convention, Raleigh NC, August 5-8). He said it was a small con, with perhaps 800 attendees, rather than the usual 1200 to 3000. The art show was also small. He also reported that there might be teleconferencing between WorldCon (Melbourne, Australia, Sept. 2-6) and DragonCon (Atlanta GA, Sept. 3-6).

The trailer for the fan-created “Browncoats” movie (based on *Firefly* and *Serenity*) looks really good. The upcoming Klingon-language performance of *Hamlet* piqued some interest, but it appears that no one has plans to attend – even if George Takei is there!

Will there be F&SF elements to the new NBC TV series *The Event*? Looks like it. Perhaps there will be an LSF outing to see the upcoming *Monsters* movie, which features aliens in Mexico. The upcoming *Solomon Kane* movie will feature the Puritan swordsman created by pulp-era author Robert E. Howard (also creator of Conan the Barbarian). Everyone seems eager to see JJ Abrams’s *Super 8* movie (to be released in 2011). Exactly what does happen after the train crash (as seen in the current trailers)?

Minutes of the Oct. 10th Meeting

Only a small set of attendees this month.

Teresa and Carl mentioned that they really like actress Jane Lynch (of *Glee*, *Two & a Half Men*, and *Boston Legal*). Teresa passed around a flyer for the Round House Theater Bethesda’s presentation of a play based on Madeleine L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time* (running from Dec. 1 – 26). Carl passed around a couple of news items sent in my Wayne # 1: an article on the new costume for Wonder Woman/Diana Prince; and a review of *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction* (Wesleyan, Aug. 2010), which is a collection/overview of SF stories from Nathaniel Hawthorne and Jules Verne to William Gibson. He also mentioned that Capclave 2010 will be held up in Rockville, MD (Oct. 22-24): Guest of Honor is Connie Willis. He also compared the novel (2005) and film (2010) versions of Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*, about cloning and organ-farming. Finally, he mentioned that a favorite weird-borderline-F&SF film – *The Good, the Bad, the Weird* (a Korean “Western” set in pre-WWII Manchuria) is now available in DVD.

The jury is still out on the new TV series *The Event*, which has elements of *Lost* and *Flash Forward*. More word on the upcoming *Monsters* movie: Six years ago, a space probe broke up during re-entry over Mexico; and, soon after, new life forms began to appear.



When the will defies fear,
when duty throws the gauntlet down to fate,
when honor scorns to compromise with death --
this is heroism.

-- R.G. Ingersoll: Speech in New York (May 29, 1882) --

from *A New Dictionary of Quotations on Historical Principles from Ancient & Modern Sources*, selected and edited by H.L. Mencken
Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. (19th printing, 2001)



The New Face (and Body) of Captain America
info passed along by Carl

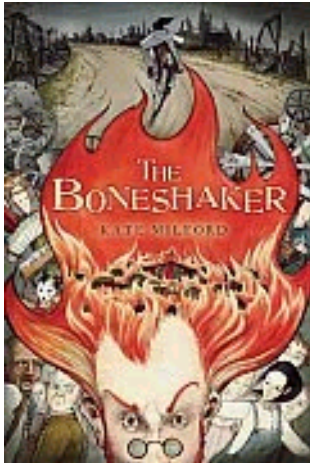
Just in case you missed the latest issue of *Entertainment* magazine, here are a couple of eye-opening pictures of Chris Evans, who portrays Marvel’s All-American Hero in next year’s *Captain America: The First Avenger* (director: Joe Johnson). As you may remember, Evans appeared as The Human Torch in the two *Fantastic Four* movies – and they found an excuse every now and then to show off his hot bod. Well, as you can see, Evans certainly maintains his superhero... um... image as Captain America. *Yowsah!*



Edgy YA F&SF

three novels reviewed by Carl

Don't let the YA ("young adult") classification scare you off; a lot of YA fiction is really good. I've enjoyed YA F&SF for years and years now. (Oddly enough, I didn't start reading Heinlein's "juveniles" at first. I started out with Burroughs and Bradbury and Robert E. Howard.) Case in point: here are three really good YA novels that I've recently read: one that's Fantasy, one that's Dark Fantasy/Horror, and one that's SF/Horror. All of them are set around the turn of the last century.



The Boneshaker
by Kate Milford
(Clarion Books, 2010)

This first novel is pure Fantasy, through and through. As I was reading it, I was reminded of several other works of Fantasy: Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (both the 1962 novel and the 1983 film), *Crossroads* (the 1986 film, starring Ralph Macchio and Joe Seneca), and the "Silver John" (aka "John the Balladeer") stories of Manley Wade Wellman. The first sentence advises: "Strange things can happen at a crossroads." And if you're at all familiar with the mythology and superstitions surrounding crossroads, then you know you're in for a weird ride.

The time is 1913; the place is Arcane, Missouri (oh! that name!), a little town located near a crossroads. ("On one of those highways you could go all the way from Los Angeles,

California, to Washington, D.C. A fellow could leave his home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and visit family all the way in Canada by way of the other.") Actually, when Arcane had been founded in the early 1800s, it had been built right at the crossroads, but the "Old Village" was abandoned and Arcane was rebuilt from scratch a little ways down the East-West road. (Cue the eerie background music.)

Thirteen-year-old Natalie Minks is the town tomboy. (Think of a slightly older version of "Scout" from the film *To Kill a Mockingbird*.) She loves machines and is fascinated by mechanical things. Her father, Tom Minks, runs the town bicycle shop and is always tinkering with mechanical devices such as the little clockwork flyer he's helping Natalie build. On the other hand, Natalie's mother, Annie Minks, seems to be the repository for all the town's legends and mysterious tales (including the story explaining why the Old Village was abandoned); her bad cooking is also legendary.

It's in the summer of 1913 that strange forces begin to converge on Arcane. News arrives that there's an unknown epidemic in Pinnacle – the next closest town – and Doc Fitzwater is called away from Arcane to see if he can help. Meanwhile, a scruffy, young-looking drifter shows up at the crossroads ("with the carpetbag and the old tin lantern slung on a pole over his shoulder"), smiles, and decides to continue on toward Arcane. A little later, a strange caravan arrives in the Old Village – on its way from Pinnacle – and, after an unexplained mishap with a wheel at the crossroads, this caravan continues on its way to Arcane. Stand by, citizens of Arcane! Here comes the sinister and intriguing Dr. Jake Limberleg and his Nostrum Fair and Technological Medicine Show – replete with "cure-all tonics," weird exhibits, inexplicable machineries, and a cast of truly odd characters. Are Dr. Limberleg and his crew just an ordinary set of "snake oil" salesmen, out to bilk the simple townfolk of their hard-earned cash? Or is something rather more sinister in the offing?

And it's not as if Arcane

doesn't already have a few "unusual folk" of its own. There's Old Tom Guyot – former slave and Civil War veteran ("with his crutch and tin guitar") – who (says Natalie's mother in one of her tales) once met the Devil himself at the Old Village crossroads and beat Old Scratch in a musical competition. Then there's Mr. Simon Coffrett, who lives alone in a very big, very old house just outside town; Natalie has visions of him "jumping" from a great height to avoid taking sides in an ancient conflict. And there's Natalie's latest acquisition: a restored Chesterlane Eidolon, a weird antique bicycle (the "boneshaker" of the title, so named because of the rough ride it provides). How is it intertwined with all the other strands of strangeness winding through Arcane?

I found the gradual revelation of the identities of all these weird characters – as well as how they got that way – to be an absolute delight. The story is entertaining, the mix of mythical concepts is fascinating, and the story has a large dollop of creepiness and edginess that keeps the reader out of the "saccharine doldrums." It's a lesson that "nothing is ever quite what it seems" and that I guess it is possible to have "sympathy for the devil." I also think the last paragraph of the flyleaf blurb sums it up nicely: "First-time novelist Kate Milford has created a richly textured historical fantasy brimming with magical realism and steampunk elements. It is a story about family, community, and courage, and the necessity of looking evil directly in the face in order to conquer it."

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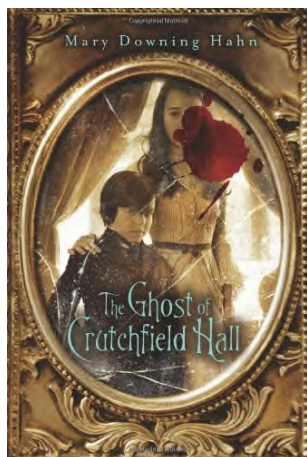
The souls of men
are full of dread.

-- Shakespeare, *Richard III* --

quoted in
*A New Dictionary of Quotations on
Historical Principles
from Ancient & Modern Sources,*
selected and edited by H.L. Mencken
Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. (19th printing, 2001)

Edgy YA F&SF

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The Ghost of Crutchfield Hall

by Mary Downing Hahn
(Clarion Books, 2010)

OK, I admit it; the first thing that attracted me about this book was its title. After all, I thought LSF's resident Mr. Crutchfield might get a kick out of seeing his family name so prominently displayed. And then I read it – it's creepy... good, but creepy! I can't help but wonder at the "Grades 4-6" level that one reviewer estimated as its audience.

It's 1884. The orphaned Florence Crutchfield has spent the last 7 years as an inmate of Miss Medleycoate's grim Home for Orphan Girls in London. (Shades of Charles Dickens!) Now her Great Uncle Thomas Crutchfield has sent for her, to come live at the gloomy family estate, Crutchfield Hall, out in the country – with her sickly cousin James and her strict and dour Great Aunt Eugenie. (Shades of Emile Bronte!) Florence soon learns that there's a spectral presence in Crutchfield Hall – the ghost of Sophia, James's older sister. There are all kinds of rumors about what a nasty little girl Sophia was when she was alive; and Sophia wants to return to the land of the living – if need be, over the dead body of her poor brother! As the anniversary of Sophia's death approaches, her ghostly powers increase, including her power to influence (or even control) the actions of Florence and James. Is James doomed? Can Florence break Sophia's malign influence?

Like I said: kind'a creepy – but enjoyable. And I'm amazed at all the

references to 19th Century literature in the story – not just the obvious Dickens-Bronte influences in the story itself, but also the fact that Florence is portrayed as an avid reader. In one scene, she and Uncle Thomas talk about a few of their favorites: *Wuthering Heights*, the works of Wilkie Collins, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, several of Dickens's works (*Bleak House*, *Our Mutual Friend*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and *Great Expectations*), and Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Wow! Ms. Hahn seems to be confident that her young readers are at least vaguely familiar with these works. Or maybe she hopes that her novel will serve as a "gateway to great literature"? (Personally, except for *Great Expectations*, I don't think I'd heard of any of 'em before high school – and I didn't come to appreciate Dickens until after college.)

I understand that Mary Downing Hahn has written a slew of YA ghost stories, many of them for Clarion Books. Maybe I need to check 'em out.



The Monstrumologist

by Rick Yancey
(Simon & Schuster, 2009)

This is the novel that started me thinking about writing some reviews about "edgy" YA F&SF. But this one is more than just "edgy" – it's got "bite." (Pun intended. You'll see.) In case you're keeping track, I consider this one to be SF/H.

What? You've never heard of a "monstrumologist"? No problem –

that's someone who engages in Monstrumology. Ah, and now you want to know what Monstrumology is, don't you? OK, I'll quote the "dictionary reference" at the beginning of the book:

mon-strum-ol-o-gy (noun)

1: the study of life forms generally malevolent to humans and not recognized by science as actual organisms, specifically those considered products of myth and folklore

2: the act of hunting such creatures

The book's Prologue begins in June 2007, when Rick Yancey (the author) is invited to re-visit an old-age/retirement facility where he'd previously interviewed some residents as background research for his latest "Alfred Kropp" novel. (Yes, Rick Yancey really is the author of the "Alfred Kropp" series of YA fantasy/action novels.) The facility's director asks Yancey to read through some notebooks or diaries left behind by a recently-deceased resident: "our oldest resident... an indigent—no identification, no living relatives." The director thinks Yancey will be interested in these notebooks because of the weird nature of their contents.

The author of the notebooks identifies himself as William James Henry (aka "Will Henry"), indicating that he was born in 1876 – which would mean that he was 131 years old when he died in 2007!! But wait; there's more! The orphaned Will Henry had been apprenticed to Dr. Pelinore Warthrop, a monstrumologist – and the three notebooks in Yancey's hands purported to describe Will Henry's harrowing experiences during 1888 in what Yancey named the "Anthropophagi Affair."

As the narrative opens, Will Henry has been apprenticed to Dr. Warthrop for about a year. Late one night, a grave robber secretly delivers the corpse of a young woman to Dr. Warthrop. Upon examination, they learn that the corpse contains the unborn (but growing!) larvae of a particularly horrendous breed of flesh-eating monsters known as "anthropophagi." These rare creatures have never previously been

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Edgy YA F&SF

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found in North America – the species is believed to inhabit only the wildest regions of subtropical Africa, where humans have hunted them almost to extinction. Dr. Warthrop’s discovery raises a number of horrifying questions. How did these larvae come to infect the corpse of a young woman who has never left New England? Is there a nest of anthropophagi hidden in a graveyard somewhere nearby? If so, how long has this nest been in existence? Can they locate the nest before these ravaging monsters spread out more widely? Dr. Warthrop is also secretly worried that his late father might have had something to do with bringing these creatures to New England; and Will Henry begins to wonder if the mysterious death of his own father was somehow involved. Then, with the arrival of the mysterious John Kearns, a self-professed “monster hunter,” Dr. Warthrop and Will Henry discover that the anthropophagi aren’t the only monsters loose in New England.

Yancey has played around a bit with myth and legend; he’s intermixed



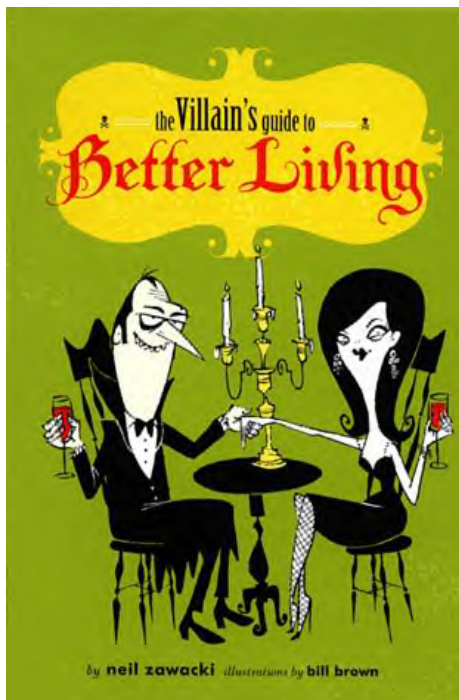
Blemmye
Nuremberg Chronicles (1493)

two different types of legendary creatures into a horrifying new possibility. Have you ever seen those antique maps with great swaths of unknown territory that are simply labeled “Here There Be Monsters”? Well, amongst those monsters were the “anthropophagi” – the “human-eaters,” aka cannibals (not otherwise described). Since ancient Greco-Roman times, there was also a belief in the existence of the *Blemmyae*, humanoid creatures without any heads but with eyes and mouths in the middle of their chests. Presto! Yancey has com-

bined these two concepts into his Anthropophagi: powerfully-muscled, razor-clawed, headless humanoid creatures with eyes and huge shark-like mouths – lined with lots and lots of very sharp teeth – in the middle of their chests. (To quote the wolf in the fairy tale: “All the better to eat you with, my dear.”) And, since the females of the species have no ovaries, their fertilized eggs must be implanted in humans in order to gestate. They’re not very bright (“somewhere between an ape and a chimpanzee”), but they are extremely dangerous. I think you can see the possibilities for some really scary scenes in the book – especially when Dr. Warthrop and Will Henry go down into their burrows beneath the New Jerusalem graveyard. If you’ve ever read H.P. Lovecraft’s “The Lurking Fear” (1922), you’ll know what I mean – the parallels are unmistakable.

The Monstrumologist was originally issued in hardback – it’s now out in trade paperback. And the sequel, *The Curse of the Wendigo*, has just been issued in hardback. Oh boy, oh boy!! Some creepy Halloween reading lies ahead for me!!

ΛΨΦ



Sure, it’s good to be bad, but the life of a villain is not always about blocking out the sun. It’s easy to forget about the little things that make life livable. You can conquer the world, but you can’t quite conquer your checkbook. You can invent a death ray, but you still have to work nights at the video store. You can even replace all humanity with robots, but you can’t convince any of them to go to the movies with you.

Most evil-doers lead a less than satisfactory existence, and chances are you’re one of these. But you don’t have to be. That’s right—it is possible to wake up in your coffin each night and not want to destroy yourself. You can regain that gleefully evil feeling you had so long ago and thought you’d never find again.

Imagine the possibilities. You’ll have more energy to tie maidens to railroad tracks. Your dastardly scheme to crash the moon into the earth will actually succeed. Your castle will be a lair for self-indulgence, and your life will be filled with minions begging to perform your every misdeed. You will be so up and so motivated that you’ll want to enslave humanity again—and you’ll have the strength to do it.

This will not be easy. You’ll have to make some changes, and warp your worldview significantly. You’ll have to shop. You’ll have to clean. You’ll have to mingle. But if you’re ready to become an evil overlord who matters, to take the dragon by the horns and shout, “No more!” then keep reading.

Introduction to *The Villain’s Guide to Better Living*
by Neil Zawacki, illustrated by Bill Brown
Chronicle Books (2004)

****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. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on **Sunday, November 14th**, 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. 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

Nov. 26-28, 2010 **DARKOVER GRAND COUNCIL 33**. A *very* gay-friendly convention. Crowne Plaza Baltimore (Timonium, MD). Guest of Honor: Elizabeth Bear; Special Guest: Katherine Kurtz; Musical GoH: Clam Chowder. Membership: \$45 until Nov. 1st: \$50 thereafter. Make checks payable to "Armida Council" and send to: Armida Council, PO Box 7203, Silver Spring, MD 20907
Website: www.darkovercon.org

Feb. 18-20, 2011 **FARPOINT 2011**. Crowne Plaza Baltimore (Timonium, MD). Guests: John ("Dr. Phlox," *Enterprise*) Billingsley, Bonita ("Gen. Diane Beckman," *Chuck*) Friedricy, more TBA. Pre-registration for weekend: \$80 (daily rates available). Make checks payable to "Farpoint Enterprises" and send to: Farpoint Enterprises, Inc., 11708 Troy Ct., Waldorf, MD 20601
Website: www.farpointcon.com E-mail: trekcontact@comcast.net

May 13-15, 2011 **GAYLAXICON 2011** (held in conjunction with OutlantaCon 2011). Holiday Inn Select Chamblee-Dunwoody (Dunwoody, GA). Guest: Melissa Carter. More information as it becomes available.
Website: www.outlantacon.org

May 27-30, 2011 **BALTICON 44**. Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn (Baltimore, MD). GoH: Ben Bova; Artist GoH: Vincent DiFate. Membership: \$60 after 4/20/2010. Make checks payable to "Balticon 44" and send to: Balticon 44, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686. (Registration forms available on-line.)
Website: www.balticon.org Information: balticoninfo@balticon.org

May 27-29, 2011 **TIMEGATE** ("The Home of Doctor Who and Stargate Fandom in Atlanta!"). Holiday Inn Select (Atlanta, GA). Guests Sophie Aldred ("Ace," from the era of the 7th Doctor); Ben Aaronovitch (Dr. Who script writer); Melissa Scott (author); and more. Membership: \$35 to 5/1/2011; \$45 at the door. Make checks payable to "TimeGate" and send to: TimeGate, PO Box 500565, Atlanta, GA 31150. Or purchase membership on-line at: www.timegatecon.org/memb/htm
Website: www.timegatecon.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: currently \$160 (will go up!).
Website: www.renovationsf.org Membership queries: memberships@renovationsf.org

