



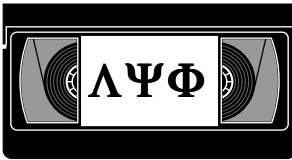
# lambda Sci-fi DC Area Gaylaxians



PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044

(202) 232-3141 - Issue #259 - October 2011

E-MAIL: info@lambdascifi.org WEBSITE: www.lambdascifi.org



## Video/Potluck Party (Oct. 22)

Come join the gang at LSF for one of their famous Video/Potluck Parties!

**What is it?** A science fiction/fantasy/horror video and potluck party. We will watch the movies that receive the most votes. There will probably be two different screens running concurrently.

**When is it?** Saturday, October 22; 3:00 PM - ??

**Where is it?** Julian's home at 2462 Tunlaw Road NW, Washington, DC.

### Where to get directions?

<http://lambdascifi.org/club/Julian.html>

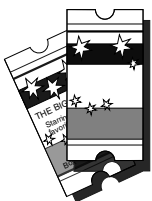
**What to bring?** Bring science fiction, fantasy, and horror DVDs to watch and snacks, dinner food, and/or non-alcoholic drinks to share.

**For more information?** Please contact Peter at:

Peter.P.Knapp@gmail.com  
or call him at 202-483-6369.

**On the day of the party,** call Julian at 202-306-1497.

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### October LSF Meeting \*\*\* Location Change!\*\*\*

The next LSF meeting will be held on Sunday, **October 9th**. 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 will begin at 2:00 PM. Please also bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. See you there!

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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 will be held on **October 27th**.

Here are the details for the next couple of book discussions:

**Oct. 27th** - *Demon's Lexicon*, by Sarah Rees Brennan; moderator: Claire.

**Dec. 1st** - REMINDER: This is our traditional combined November/December book discussion. *Naked City: Tales of Urban Fantasy*, an anthology edited by Ellen Datlow; moderator: Carl

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## Happy Halloween to the folks at LSF from the Simpsons Addams Family!



## WHAT'S INSIDE?

September 2011 LSF Meeting Minutes (pg.2); *Detective Dee and the Mystery of the Phantom Flame* (film review - pg. 2); *Illustrated Steampunk from Abrams Image, Part 2 of 2* (book review - pg.3); *About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians* (pg. 4); *Con Calendar* (pg. 4)

## September 2011 LSF Meeting Minutes taken by Scott

Teresa reported that the new “shaky cam” *Apollo 18* movie is chock-full of inconsistencies. And the aliens? Rock aliens. No one at the meeting volunteered to coordinate an LSF movie outing to see it. Teresa also said she likes Gary, the autistic teen in the SyFy Channel series *Alphas*. And I quote: “He is awesome.”

Carl expressed some confusion about some of the details in the final “Harry Potter” movie. Various plot points were explained, including the “elder wand.” David attempted to provide a detailed description of some character’s sister or aunt – I lost track.

And then there was a name circle to help get everyone acquainted with each other.

Rob described Orson Scott Card’s retelling of *Hamlet*, recently published by Subterranean Press – it shows that Hamlet’s father was a pedophile, which (of course!) apparently led to homosexual relationships between various male characters. Card, once again, apparently has sparked quite a fury. Despite Card’s continuing uncomfortable focus upon abused children and pedophilia, there was praise expressed for *Songmaker* and *Ender’s Game*. Does Card perhaps have unresolved personal issues?

Rob gave a short review of Joan Slonczewski’s new novel, *Highest Frontier* – “the college of the future, in orbit.” He also mentioned that he might suggest Joan’s latest book as the focus for an upcoming LSF book discussion.

It was noted that *World War Z* is being made into a movie. (The zombie-disease’s incubation period seems to have been shortened up quite a bit, from a few weeks to a few seconds.) There is a trailer on YouTube.

Jim and Carl like the new Kia TV commercial featuring dancing hamsters and mechanoids.

Carl reported on how much he enjoyed a sci-fi DVD he picked up at Worldcon: *The Extraordinary Adventures of Adele Blanc-Sec*, directed/written by Luc Besson (who also directed/wrote *The Fifth Element*). He said he’d

## Detective Dee and the Mystery of the Phantom Flame a short review by Carl

This is the latest offering in *Wu Xia* films (martial arts adventures). As with so many of them, it’s visually stunning – with lots of rock’em-sock’em, flying-fists action. It’s also won acclaim and several awards at various film festivals. The storyline is pretty complex and convoluted; but it all makes sense if you pay close attention. The dialog is Mandarin (with a little Spanish thrown in – don’t ask) with English subtitles. The special effects are eye-popping; and there’s actually a fair amount of F&SF content to it.

The action takes place in China in the year 690 AD. The Empress Wu Zetian – *de facto* ruler of China for about 30 years (in the name of her husband and sons) – plans to be recognized as sole Emperor in her own right. (Note: She was, in fact, the *only* female ever to be so recognized.) Opposition and discontent abound. Suddenly, a series of loyal senior officials die horribly and publicly – apparently by spontaneous combustion. Because this threatens to delay Empress Wu’s inauguration ceremony, she releases the infamous Detective Dee from prison and convinces him to investigate. Complications, political intrigue, and more

see about bringing it to the next LSF video party. He also mentioned having seen a new “Cthulhu” short film at Worldcon, entitled *The Whisperer in Darkness* – from the same fan-folks who created *The Call of Cthulhu* (2005). He said he’d like to see about getting a copy as soon as it becomes available.

Rob reminded everyone that CapClave (a local sci-fi convention featuring short F&SF works) is coming up in October.

**Julian kindly offered his home for an upcoming LSF video party: Saturday, Oct. 22, starting at 3 PM. [Ed. Note: For details, see page 1.]**

A new MTV comedy horror called *Death Valley* – more zombies! – is forthcoming. Perhaps it might be less successful than *Teen Wolf*? Some LSFers expressed interest in the upcoming new sci-fi TV series *Terra Nova* – colonizing



deaths ensue as the plot nears its deadly climax. Even Detective Dee has a hard time finding his way through all the interlocking intrigues.

Detective Dee is based on an actual historical character, a Tang Dynasty magistrate and statesman named Di Renjie (c. 630–700 AD). In this film, he’s rather more of a martial arts hero than portrayed in the history texts or in the “Judge Dee” detective novels (1946–1967) written by Robert van Gulik.

I quite enjoyed the film. It’s on a seriously-limited engagement at the Shirlington arthouse theater. Odds are you’ll need to catch it when it comes out on DVD or via Netflix. But I think it’ll be worth your while to check it out.

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the past via time travel. Two new TV shows centered upon fairytale characters were also discussed, although no one could recall either TV show’s name. Rob said he likes the *Fallen Skies* TV series – although the plot points are fairly standard for the genre.

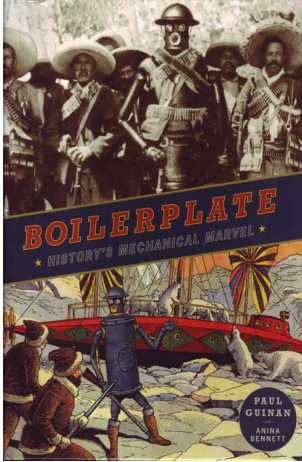
Jim raved about Asimov’s short story “The Ugly Little Boy”, which has been made into a 20-minute film. He also remarked that the latest *Star Trek: New Voyages* episode (“Enemy Starfleet”) shows that the series just keeps getting better. It features a new actor playing Spock, who supposedly was the body double for Zachary Quinto in the recent *Star Trek* reboot.

The new *Contagion* movie was discussed in comparison with *The Day After* and *Testament*. (Do we get to see Kate Winslet die a horrible death?)

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## Illustrated Steampunk from Abrams Image, Part 2 of 2

reviewed by Carl



In last month's LSF newsletter, I reviewed *The Steampunk Bible*, the first part of a two-part review of illustrated steampunk books published by Abrams Image. OK, so here comes Part 2!

### ***Boilerplate:* History's Mechanical Marvel by Paul Guinan and Anina Bennett (Abrams Image, 2009)**

This book has been around for a couple of years now. I've seen it time and time again on the shelves at various bookstores; but (for some reason or other) I could never get past the cover to look through it. Go figure. (Maybe I mistakenly thought it was a graphic novel, which isn't a literary form that I prefer.)

And then I read *The Steampunk Bible* – and quickly ran off to purchase a copy of *Boilerplate*.

*Boilerplate* is a brilliant piece of Steampunk (possibly "Gearpunk"?) literature. It purports to be the straightforward history of a mechanical man during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. I don't think I'd classify it as a work of "alternate history," though, because it's supposedly telling the story of something that actually happened in "our timeline" rather than in some alternate timeline. I think *Boilerplate* is rather more like "cryptohistory" (aka "hidden history") – it tells the story of something that happened but that very few people know about anymore. (Maybe "forgotten history" would be a better term?)

As stated in the book's Forward:

*Boilerplate is one of history's great enigmas, a technological breakthrough that languished in obscurity—until now. Ironically, the robot's fame in years past was part of the problem. Many researchers have been led astray by apocryphal tales of the automaton, and there's confusion about whether Boilerplate existed at all. As a result, historians are reluctant to include the robot in official texts.*

But let's be clear on this: *Boilerplate* is a work of fiction. "Boilerplate" (the fictional Victorian robot) was created in 2000 by artist Paul Guinan. The character was originally intended for comics but became known via Guinan's faux-historical website. For this website, Guinan devised an incredibly detailed history for Boilerplate, expertly interweaving fictional and historical characters. He photo-shopped various archival images to illustrate this history, so that the robot appears to be interacting with various historical figures, such as Theodore Roosevelt, Pancho Villa, prizefighter Jack Johnson, and others. *Boilerplate* (the book) brings the website information (along with photographs and other graphics) into the printed medium and is the creation of Guinan and his wife Anina Bennett. The book is an ingenious piece of work – and wonderfully illustrated!

Here's the back story: Talented amateur (and entirely fictional) scientist-engineer Prof. Archibald Campion created his prototype mechanical man (later dubbed "Boilerplate") in the late 1880s. Campion's self-proclaimed purpose for creating a mechanical soldier was "preventing the deaths of men in the conflicts of nations." His inspiration was the death of his beloved brother-in-law during the brief U.S. conflict with Korea in 1871. (Yes, there really was a U.S. Korean Expedition in 1871.) Campion created his automaton in collaboration with fellow scientists Edward Fullerton (pioneer of fuel-cell technology), Nikola Tesla (the genius of electromagnetics), and (the fictional) Frank Reade Jr. (creator of the Steam Man and various other fabulous inventions of the 1870s and 1880s). Campion first exhibited his "Mechanical Marvel" in the Machinery Hall of the 1893 World's Columbian

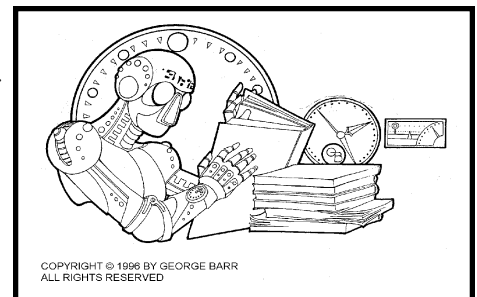
Exposition in Chicago.

The bulk of the book recounts the history of Prof. Campion and "Boilerplate" from 1893 until the automaton's disappearance in October 1918 during the WWI Battle of the Argonne Forest. At the same time, the reader is treated to an amazing overview of many of the most significant U.S. and world events during this period, including: the U.S. economic Panic of 1893; the Pullman Strike of 1894; the annexation of Hawaii by the U.S.; Kitchener's Sudan Campaign of 1896-1898; the Klondike Gold Rush; the construction of the Panama Canal; the Spanish-American War; the Philippine-American War; China's Boxer Rebellion; the Russo-Japanese War; Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution; Lawrence of Arabia and WWI's Middle Eastern Front; and WWI's European Front.

The last couple of chapters are also a real treat. "Popular Depictions of Boilerplate" describes all the various forms of (fictional) "Boilerplate memorabilia" in novels, magazines, advertising, early moving pictures, and so on. The final chapter – "Boilerplate's Brethren" – kind of crosses the line between "our reality" and "the Boilerplate reality." It's a really good overview of mechanical men that actually appeared in history (such as the chess-playing "Turk" of the 19th Century), popular fiction (the "dime novels" of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, such as *The Steam Man of the Prairies*, 1868), and drama (Karel Capek's *Rossum's Universal Robots*, 1920, in which the term "robot" was coined). The illustrations in this final chapter – reprints from actual period publications – are an absolute delight.

Final comment: *Boilerplate: History's Mechanical Marvel* is a marvelous piece of Steampunk literature. If you're a Steampunk fan, this is another "must have." I'm just sorry I didn't read it years ago.

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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. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on Sunday, **October 9th, 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 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



Oct. 14-16, 2011 **CAPCLAVE 2011**. Hilton Washington DC/North Gaithersburg (Gaithersburg, MD). Guests of Honor: Carrie Vaughn & Catherynne Valente. Membership: \$55 July thru September; \$60 thereafter. Make checks payable to "Capclave" and send to: Capclave 2011, PO Box 53, Ashton, MD 20861. Register online at: [www.capclave.org](http://www.capclave.org)  
Website: [www.capclave.org](http://www.capclave.org) Info at: [info@capclave.org](mailto:info@capclave.org)

Nov. 18-20, 2011 **ANIME USA** ("Of Otaku, by Otaku, for Otaku!"). Hyatt Regency Crystal City (Arlington, VA). Membership: \$48 from 9/1 thru 10/31/2011. Register on-line at: <https://www.animeusaregistration.org/>

Nov. 18-20, 2011 **PHILCON 2011** ("Celebrate 75 years of Fandom!"). The Crown Plaza Hotel (Cherry Hill, NJ). Principal Speaker: Cory Doctorow; Artist Guests of Honor: Boris Vallejo & Julie Bell. Membership: \$40 (higher at the door). Make checks payable to "Philadelphia Science Fiction Society" and mail to: Philcon Registration, PO Box 8303, Philadelphia, PA 19101. Or register on-line at [www.philcon.org](http://www.philcon.org).

Nov. 25-27, 2011 **DARKOVER GRAND COUNCIL 34**. (A very LGBT-friendly convention.) Crowne Plaza Baltimore (Timonium, MD). Guests of Honor: Ellen Kushner & Delia Sherman; Special Guests: Katherine Kurtz, Melissa Scott. Membership: \$50 until 11/1; \$55 thereafter & at the door. Make checks payable to "Armida Council" and send to: Armida Council, PO Box 7203, Silver Spring, MD 20907. Website: [www.darkovercon.org](http://www.darkovercon.org) Info at: [jaille@darkovercon.org](mailto:jaille@darkovercon.org)

April 13-15, 2012 **RAVENCON 2012**. Holiday Inn Select Koger Center (Richmond, VA). Guests: TBA. Membership: \$30 before 12/31/2011; \$35 after that; \$40 at the door. Make checks payable to "RavenCon" and send to: RavenCon, PO Box 36420, Richmond, VA 23235. More info online at: <http://www.ravencon.com>

Aug. 30 - Sept. 3, 2012 **CHICON 7** (70th World Science Fiction Convention). Hyatt Regency Chicago (Chicago, IL). Guests of Honor: Mike Resnick (author), Rowena Morrill (artist), John Scalzi (toastmaster), Story Musgrave (astronaut). Membership: \$175 until 09/30/2011. (Will go up after that!) Make checks payable to "Chicon 7" and send to: Chicon 7, PO Box 13, Skokie, IL 60076. (You can also register on-line.) Website: [www.chicon7.org](http://www.chicon7.org) Info: [info@chicon.org](mailto:info@chicon.org)

Oct. 5-7, 2012 **GAYLAXICON 2012**. Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis-Park Place (Minneapolis, MN). Guests: Gary Russell (writer/producer), Wendy Pini (*Elfquest*), Lyda Morehouse (author), Kyell Gold (furry author). Membership: \$70 - 2011 registration. Register on-line (via Eventbrite). Website: [www.gaylaxicon2012.org](http://www.gaylaxicon2012.org)