

2016 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards
Best Novel



Winner

Luna: New Moon
by Ian McDonald

Tor Books

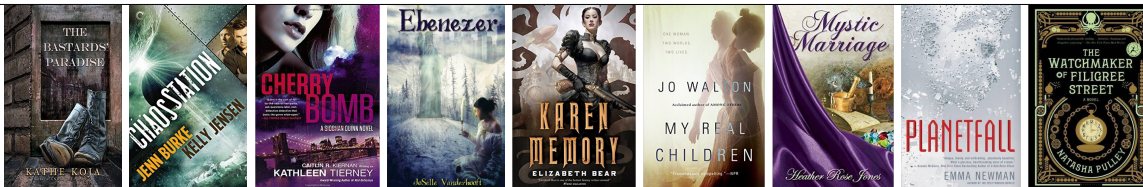
ISBN13: 978-0765375520

A major theme running through Ian McDonald’s SF works is the impact of rapid social and technological changes on non-Western societies. 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. 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. The dynastic rivalries and internecine warfare has led some re-viewers to call McDonald’s novel “the *Game of Thrones* in space”. It’s also possible to make comparisons with Frank Herbert’s *Dune*: helium-3 and mélange; Robert Mackenzie and Baron Harkonnen; etc. There’s enough solid SF content to keep diehard SF fans happy, as well as non-stop action. There’s also a surprisingly large amount of positive LGBTQ content – from all over the “queer spectrum”.

2016 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards - Recommended List



***The Bastards' Paradise* by Kathe Koja**
Roadswell Editions ISBN13: 978-1938263248

The third (and definitely final) novel of the continuing adventures of Istvan and Rupert (following *Under the Poppy* and *The Mercury Waltz*). They are now an older couple; they know each other inside and out (despite the occasional misunderstanding); and they're still definitely "outsiders", entertainers who occasionally rip off (and take on) Society. The "magical element" of the puppets is downplayed; but the apparent political situation of 189– Europe makes it quite clear that it's not "our" world. Very stream-of-consciousness, very artistic, still enjoyable.

***Cherry Bomb* by Kathleen Tierney**
ROC/Penguin ISBN13: 978-0451416551

The third of the "Siobhan Quinn" novels (following *Blood Oranges* and *Red Delicious*). Quinn isn't exactly a lesbian role model (a drug addict and an accidental vampire-werewolf); but she's definitely "heroic" (hunting down demons, vampires, werewolves, and other "nasties"). She now lives in NYC and has come into possession of a hellish artifact that could affect the outcome of a three-million-year-old battle between ghouls and djinn. Darkly enjoyable, witty, and full of wry humor.

***Karen Memory* by Elizabeth Bear**
Tor Books ISBN13: 978-0765375254

A retelling of Jack the Ripper story in the Old Steampunk West. Karen is one of the girls who works in the Hôtel Mon Cherie, a high-quality bordello run by Madame Damnable, in a city much like 19th-century Seattle, only with airships sailing the skies and "steam-powered mechanicals stalking the waterfront." One night, a girl shows up on the bordello doorstep, begging for help; and the men looking for her have a mind-control machine. If that's not enough trouble, a streetwalker's body is found in their garbage. Karen, her friends, and her lover are trying to find out what's going on. Miss Francina, a transwoman who also works in the bordello, completes the queer cast in this well-told and engaging adventure.

***The Mystic Marriage* by Heather Rose Jones**
Bella Books ISBN13: 978-1594934414

The saga begun in *Daughter of Mystery* continues here. The heroines of *Daughter*, Margerit Sovitre (now royal thaumaturgist of Alpennia) and her lover Barbara (now Baroness Savize) are very much a part of this story of magic, political intrigue, and love. The focus, however, is now on another couple: Antuniet Chazillen (an alchemist) and the woman who comes to love her, Jeanne (Vicomtesse de Cherdillac). Antuniet seeks to restore her family's honor and to continue her alchemy experiments; and when a long-lost book of alchemical secrets comes into her hands, Antuniet may have what she needs to complete her work. But others want these secrets; and the throne itself is threatened. Will our heroines survive? Will Antuniet and Jeanne sort out the secrets of their hearts? A well-crafted novel, with a very believable alternate Europe and an equally believable system of magic.

***The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* by Natasha Pulley**
Bloomsbury ISBN13: 978-1620408346

This tale explores both Victorian England and Japan, as well as questions of fate, free will, and love. Thaniel Steepleton finds a mysterious gold pocket watch on his pillow in his London apartment. Six months later, the watch saves his life. Trying to understand the mystery, Thaniel seeks out the watchmaker, who turns out to be Keita Mori, a Japanese immigrant who is more than he seems. Mori is clairvoyant and sees the future – or does he help create the future? As Thaniel seeks answers, he encounters Grace Carrow, an Oxford physicist who is somehow also part of his questions. Thaniel discovers he has another mystery to solve: to whom does his heart truly belong, to Keita or Grace?

***Chaos Station* by Kelly Jensen & Jenn Burke**
Carina Press/Harlequin Digital ISBN13: 978-1426899669

Well-paced space adventure that will appeal to fans of *Firefly* and *Farscape*. Felix, a former POW in an intergalactic war, is content with his crew/family aboard the independent trading ship Chaos. Content until his business partner introduces them to their newest client, who turns out to be Felix's former best friend and lover, Zander, a man so deep into black ops that Felix couldn't find him. Zander has his own troubles - a quickly deteriorating grasp on reality, a friend from his time in black ops who's just gone rogue and killed a handful of men, and a government that finds his continued existence inconvenient.

***Ebenezer* by JoSelle Vanderhooft**
Zumaya Boundless ISBN13: 978-1612710686

A stunning modern re-imagining of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, with "Ebenezer" being a lesbian named after a paternal ancestor. The descriptions of the three genii loci are absolutely incredible; and the exploration of Ebenezer's life story and relationships (family, lovers, acquaintances, co-workers, etc.) are heartfelt and moving.

***My Real Children* by Jo Walton**
Tor Books ISBN13: 978-0765332684

Parallel lives, parallel worlds, alternate histories. What if...? In one time line, Patricia Cowan is "Tricia"; she marries Mark, becomes a housewife, has four children, and when the children are grown, escapes what was a terrible marriage. In another time line, she is "Pat"; with her lesbian lover Bee, she raises three children, and becomes a successful travel writer, with homes in Britain and Italy. There is a nuclear exchange in the 60s, destroying Miami and Kiev, and the Russians get to the Moon first. Their lunar base is armed with nuclear missiles. Based on "historical events", neither time line is ours. Which is the "real" time line; which is true? Patricia Cowan remembers them both.

***Planetfall* by Emma Newman**
Roc ISBN13: 978-0425282397

A group of people are drawn to a "planet promising to reveal the truth about our place in the cosmos." Interesting mysteries, both scientific and interpersonal, abound. The main character is openly a lesbian and secretly a "hoarder".