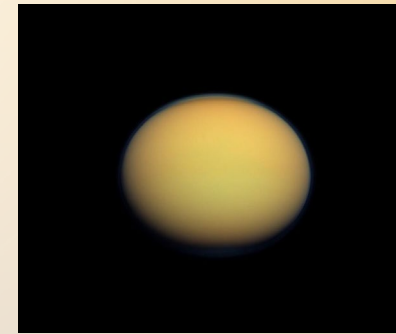
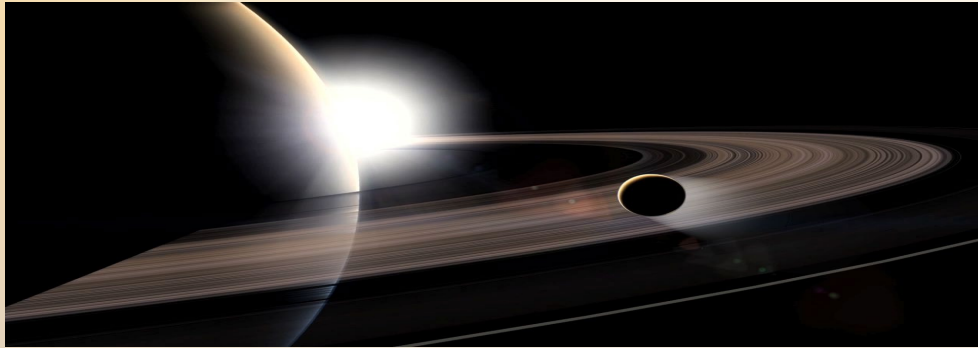


WEEK 3 LESSON: “SLOW LIFE” (2002) BY MICHAEL SWANWICK



[IMAGES: HTTP://WWW.NASA.GOV/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/SATURN AND TITAN3.JPG](http://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/saturn_and_titan3.jpg)

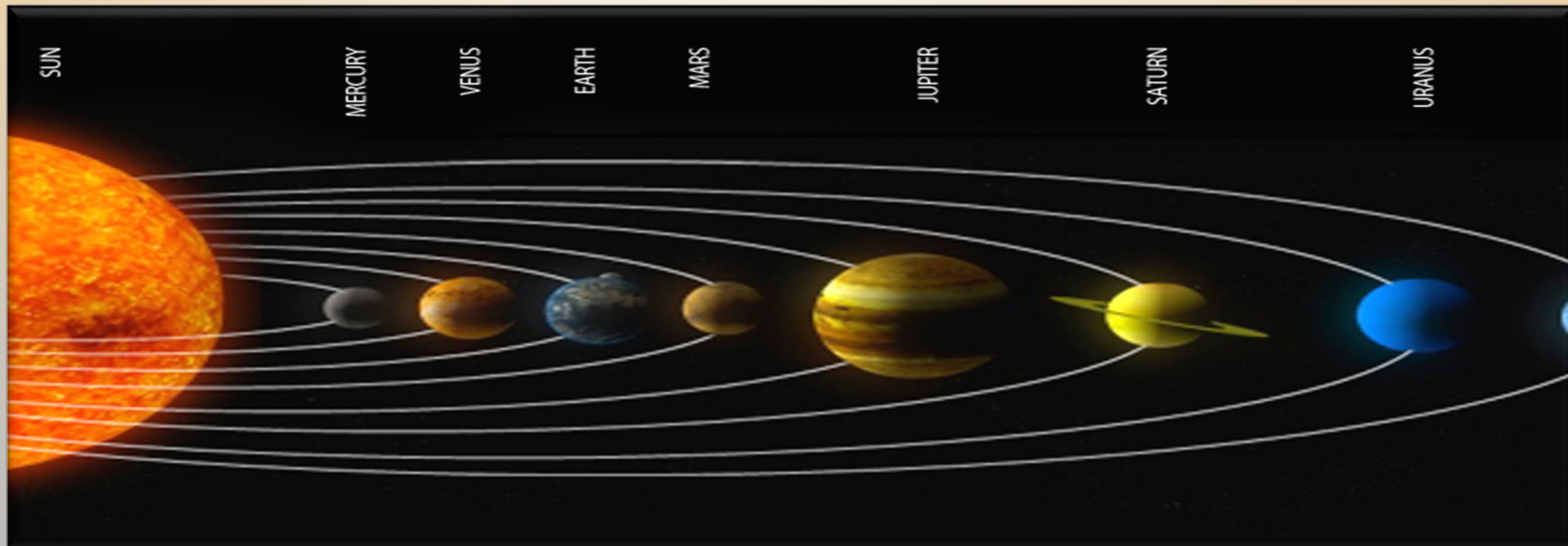
FOR EAC 234: SCIENCE FICTION, PROF L. BOILY

- COPYRIGHT LISETTE BOILY -

SHARING TO THIRD PARTY WEBSITES IS NOT PERMITTED

IMPORTANT SETTING: THIS WEEK'S STORY, "SLOW LIFE," TAKES PLACE ON ANOTHER REAL LOCATION IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM – ON MOON OF SATURN, CALLED *TITAN*

- SEE AN IMAGE OF THE RINGED PLANET SATURN, BELOW – IT IS AN 'OUTER' PLANET IN RELATION TO ITS LOCATION TO OUR SUN (EARTH IS AN 'INNER' PLANET)
 - *NOTE: PLANETS DEPICTED BELOW ARE NOT EXACTLY 'TO SCALE'*



REAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TITAN

[HTTP://SOLARSYSTEM.NASA.GOV/PLANETS/TITAN](http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/titan)

- “SATURN'S LARGEST MOON TITAN IS THE SECOND LARGEST MOON IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM...TITAN IS BIGGER THAN EARTH'S MOON, AND EVEN LARGER THAN THE PLANET MERCURY” ... AND IT IS VERY, VERY COLD (NASA).
- “TITAN IS THE **ONLY MOON IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM THAT HAS CLOUDS AND A DENSE ATMOSPHERE, MOSTLY NITROGEN AND METHANE**. IT IS ALSO THE **ONLY OTHER PLACE IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM KNOWN TO HAVE AN EARTH-LIKE CYCLE OF LIQUIDS FLOWING ACROSS ITS SURFACE**” (NASA).
- “CASSINI [SPACECRAFT] HAS REVEALED **THAT TITAN'S SURFACE IS SHAPED BY RIVERS AND LAKES OF LIQUID ETHANE AND METHANE** (THE MAIN COMPONENT OF NATURAL GAS), WHICH FORMS CLOUDS AND OCCASIONALLY **RAINS FROM THE SKY** AS WATER DOES ON EARTH” (NASA).
- “TITAN'S ATMOSPHERE MAKES SATURN'S LARGEST MOON LOOK LIKE A FUZZY ORANGE BALL IN THIS NATURAL COLOR VIEW FROM THE CASSINI SPACECRAFT” (NASA).
- “CASSINI ALSO CARRIED THE EUROPEAN-BUILT HUYGENS PROBE, WHICH PARACHUTED THROUGH TITAN'S ATMOSPHERE IN 2005 TO MAKE THE FIRST LANDING ON A BODY IN THE OUTER SOLAR SYSTEM” (NASA).
- **TO DATE, ONLY AUTOMATED SPACE CRAFT AND PROBES HAVE EXPLORED TITAN IN DEPTH (HOWEVER, UNLIKE IN OUR STORY “SLOW LIFE,” NO HUMAN EXPLORERS HAVE PHYSICALLY VISITED TITAN...YET).**



HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE 'KNOW' ABOUT TITAN?

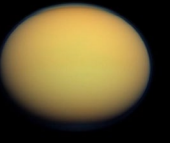
[HTTP://SOLARSYSTEM.NASA.GOV/PLANETS/TITAN](http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/titan)

- “TITAN WAS **DISCOVERED** ON 25 MARCH 1655 BY THE DUTCH ASTRONOMER CHRISTIAAN HUYGENS” (NASA).
- “**THE NAME TITAN COMES** FROM A GENERIC TERM FOR THE CHILDREN OF OURANOS (URANUS) AND GAIA IN **ANCIENT GREEK MYTHOLOGY**. IN THE STORIES, THE TITANS WERE THE ANCESTORS OF THE HUMAN RACE. THE TITANS WERE KNOWN TO HAVE DEVoured THE LIMBS OF DIONYSUS, THE SON OF ZEUS. ENRAGED, ZEUS STRUCK THE TITANS WITH LIGHTNING. (ZEUS HAD INTENDED THIS CHILD TO HAVE DOMINION OVER THE WORLD.) THE LIGHTNING BURNED THE TITANS TO ASHES, AND FROM THE ASHES, MANKIND WAS FORMED” (NASA).
- “IN 1994, **NASA'S HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE RECORDED PICTURES OF TITAN**, WHICH SUGGESTED THAT A HUGE BRIGHT CONTINENT EXISTS ON THE HEMISPHERE THAT FACES FORWARD IN ORBIT. THESE HUBBLE RESULTS DIDN'T PROVE THAT LIQUID SEAS EXISTED, HOWEVER; ONLY THAT TITAN HAS LARGE BRIGHT AND DARK REGIONS ON ITS SURFACE” (NASA).
- “**TITAN'S SURFACE REMAINED SHROUDED IN SECRECY BELOW THE CLOUDS UNTIL JULY 2004. THAT'S WHEN NASA'S CASSINI SPACECRAFT ARRIVED**” (NASA).



THE SCIENTIFIC IMPORTANCE OF TITAN

[HTTP://SOLARSYSTEM.NASA.GOV/PLANETS/TITAN](http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/titan)



“THE CASSINI SPACECRAFT'S NUMEROUS GRAVITY MEASUREMENTS OF TITAN REVEALED THAT THIS MOON IS HIDING AN INTERNAL, LIQUID WATER AND AMMONIA OCEAN BENEATH ITS SURFACE. HUYGENS ALSO MEASURED RADIO SIGNALS DURING ITS DESCENT THAT STRONGLY SUGGESTED THE PRESENCE OF AN OCEAN 35 TO 50 MILES (55 TO 80 KILOMETERS) BELOW THE MOON'S SURFACE. **THE DISCOVERY OF A GLOBAL OCEAN OF LIQUID WATER ADDS TITAN TO THE HANDFUL OF WORLDS IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM THAT COULD POTENTIALLY CONTAIN HABITABLE ENVIRONMENTS**” (NASA).



SF & LITERARY DEVICES IN THE STORY “SLOW LIFE”

- **TITLE SIGNIFICANCE & IRONY**

- FOR WHOM IS LIFE REALLY “SLOW”? HOW IS THE TITLE IRONIC, RE: THE HUMAN ASSUMPTIONS AT THE BEGINNING?

- **FORESHADOWING & THE OPENING SCENE** (FIRST PARAGRAPHS) – **SYMBOLISM OF THE RAINDROP**

- **WORLD BUILDING & DESCRIPTION:** THE ‘REAL’ TITAN AS WE KNOW IT VS. TITAN IN THE STORY

- **SETTING**—INTEGRAL & INCONSISTENTLY ANTAGONISTIC (DEPENDING ON KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION)

- **SPECULATIVE SCENARIO**

- **FIRST CONTACT:** SENTIENCE, CONSCIOUSNESS, ANTHROPOMORPHISM – IDENTITY: SINGULAR ‘SELF’ VS. COMMUNAL ‘SELF’

- **EPHIPHANY:** OCCURS FOR BOTH HUMAN MAIN CHARACTER AND ALIEN CONSCIOUSNESS

- **FOUR CORE SF CONCEPTS:** INVENTION, EXPLORATION, DISCOVERY/REVELATION, TRANSFORMATION

- **THIRD PERSON SUBJECTIVE NARRATION & INTERNAL MONOLOGUE**

- SHIFTING POINTS OF VIEW (RELATED TO EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE ALIEN LIFE FORM & HOW THE HUMAN MAIN CHARACTER RESPONDS)

- **PLOT CONFLICTS** (PERSON VS. SOCIETY, VS. PERSON, VS. SELF, VS. NATURE)

- **OPEN OR CLOSED ENDING...?** READ THE ENDING CAREFULLY – WHAT DOES THE MAIN CHARACTER’S FINAL STATEMENT MEAN?

SPECULATIVE SCENARIO IN “SLOW LIFE”

- **GENERAL: THE STORY “SLOW LIFE” EXPLORES A SPECULATIVE ‘WHAT IF’ SCENARIO RELATED TO THE CONCEPT OF ‘FIRST CONTACT’ BETWEEN HUMAN AND ALIEN LIFEFORMS**
 - MORE SPECIFICALLY, ‘LIFE’ IN TITAN’S LIQUID WATER AND AMMONIA OCEAN(S).
- **SPECIFIC SPECULATIVE SCENARIO ‘WHAT IF’ QUESTIONS IN THIS STORY ARE:**
 - COULD “LIFE” EXIST IN SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT, AND WHAT MIGHT IT BE LIKE & HOW MIGHT IT COMMUNICATE WITH HUMANS?

FIRST CONTACT, EPIPHANY & SPECULATIVE SCENARIO

- **FIRST CONTACT** CHANGES BOTH THE ALIEN LIFE FORM AND THE HUMAN MAIN CHARACTER – HOW?
 - **FIRST CONTACT** REFERS TO THE FIRST TIME HUMANS ENCOUNTER A SPECIFIC ALIEN SPECIES
- EACH HAS A DIFFERENT **EPIPHANY** AS A RESULT OF THE FIRST CONTACT EXPERIENCE
 - **EPIPHANY** REFERS TO A SUDDEN FLASH OF TRANSFORMATIVE KNOWLEDGE OR INSIGHT
 - EPIPHANIES ARE NOT ALWAYS PLEASANT
- THEIR DIFFERING EPIPHANY MOMENTS **CHANGE** EACH OF THEM IN **UNEXPECTED AND UNANTICIPATED WAYS**
 - **CHANGE = TRANSFORMATION** (AN SF CORE CONCEPT)
- ***THE SPECIFIC WAYS THEY EACH CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THE EPIPHANY RELATED TO FIRST CONTACT ANSWERS THE SPECIFIC SPECULATIVE SCENARIO WHAT IF QUESTIONS (SEE PREVIOUS SLIDE)***

SPECIFIC EPIPHANIES

- WHAT IS THE EPIPHANY INITIALLY EXPERIENCED BY THE ALIEN LIFE FORM WHEN IT ENCOUNTERS THE HUMAN MAIN CHARACTER?
 - HOW IS IT DESCRIBED IN THE STORY?
- WHAT IS THE EPIPHANY EXPERIENCED BY THE HUMAN MAIN CHARACTER WHEN SHE ENCOUNTERS THE ALIEN LIFE FORM?
 - HOW DOES THE ALIEN COMMUNICATE WITH HER, AT FIRST?
- WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS CHANGES BOTH THE ALIEN AND HUMAN GO THROUGH AFTER THEIR INITIAL EPIPHANIES, BY THE END OF THE STORY?

THE ENDING: OPEN OR CLOSED?

- WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE STORY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?
- WHAT DOES LIZZIE MEAN BY HER FINAL STATEMENT: “BRING IT ON” (SWANWICK, 2002), AND WHAT IS THE ALIEN OFFERING HER, AND WHY?
- HOW DOES THE STORY’S ENDING TAKE US BACK TO THE TITLE AND BEGINNING OF THE STORY - IN IRONIC WAYS?
 - HOW DOES THE ENDING CLEAR UP WHO REALLY IS THE ‘SLOW’ ONE IN THE STORY?

AN IMPORTANT FINAL NOTE ABOUT ANY TYPE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VIOLATION

- YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED, NOT EXPECTED, AND NOT SUPPOSED TO ‘RESEARCH’ THE INTERNET (OUTSIDE OF COURSE LESSON MATERIAL) OR USE ANY GENERATIVE AI TOOLS FOR IDEAS ABOUT OUR ASSIGNED SHORT STORIES (THIS PREVENTS YOUR OWN LEARNING!)....BUT IF YOU DO:
 - MAKE SURE YOU QUOTE AND CITE ANY AND ALL EXTERNAL SOURCES, EVEN GENERATIVE AI (SEE OUR COURSE SITE FOR INFO ON HOW TO CITE)
 - ALWAYS HIGHLIGHT YOUR OWN IDEAS ABOUT ANY STORY WE COVER IN THE COURSE—IF YOU ARE CONFUSED ABOUT A STORY, IT’S OKAY TO SAY SO (ASKING QUESTIONS AND HIGHLIGHTING WHAT IS NOT UNDERSTOOD ARE THE BEST WAYS TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW!)
 - DEPENDING ON THE AMOUNT AND SEVERITY OF THE UNCITED MATERIAL (PLAGIARISM), OR ANY TYPE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VIOLATION, A REDUCED GRADE, A ZERO GRADE, A ZERO GRADE AND A COMMENT ON THE STUDENT’S TRANSCRIPT.

THE END

IMAGE FROM FLICKR, 'ALIEN LANDSCAPE?' BY YURY PROKOPENKO.

