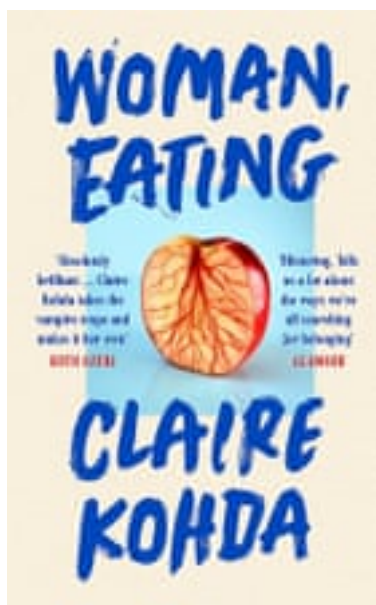


The best recent science fiction, fantasy and horror – reviews roundup

Woman, Eating by Claire Kohda; Lambda by David Musgrave; Plutoshine by Lucy Kissick; The Kaiju Preservation Society by John Scalzi; and The Way of the Worm by Ramsey Campbell

[Lisa Tuttle](#)



[Woman, Eating](#) by Claire Kohda
(Virago, £14.99)

A young artist arrives in London for an internship at a prestigious gallery. Without enough money for another room, she plans to sleep on the floor of her unfurnished studio. Lydia is the daughter of a Japanese father and a half-British, half-Malaysian mother, but what really sets her apart is that she's a vampire. After her vampire mother vowed never to kill another human being, the two of them survived on fresh pigs' blood, but alone in London, Lydia struggles to find nourishment. Blood sausage barely staves off the pangs, and she can't digest the oats. As her hunger grows, she imagines she might starve out the

vampire part of herself; watching food videos online, she considers her heritage: "In most Asian cultures ... there is no reverence for the vampiric monster as there is in the West; most blood-sucking things are women ... " The most unusual, original and strikingly contemporary vampire novel to come along in years.

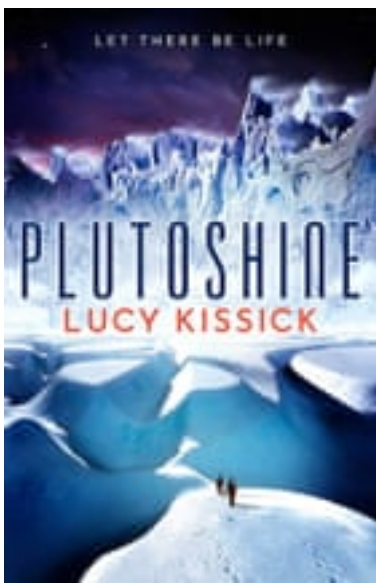


Lambda by David Musgrave (Europa, £12.99)

This impressive debut by a visual artist is set in an alternate 2019, in a Britain slightly different from our own. Object Relation laws have granted rights to smart machines (including talking toothbrushes), cyber-attacks are not so much terrorism as "a business plan that leverages the threat of mass murder", and a different race of beings has been part of the population for half a century. Tiny, air-breathing aquatic mammals, the lambda arrive by sea in small groups, quickly learn English, and form an accepted, if mysterious, class, living in flooded basements, transported by terrestrial humans in fishbowls to offices to do menial jobs. But when a school bombing is blamed on the Army of Lambda Ascension, acceptance turns to hate. An imaginative revisioning of some of today's fears and fantasies, written with bravura style and wit, this is literary SF at its best.

Plutoshine by Lucy Kissick (Gollancz, £16.99)

Thanks to the inventions of Clavius Harbour, "the most



powerful maverick in the solar system", 100 scientists and engineers have moved into a habitat on dark and distant Pluto, 4bn miles from the sun, to begin the long process of terraforming. Yet someone is trying to sabotage the mission. Harbour's 10-year-old daughter Nou holds a vital clue, but she's too traumatised by a near fatal accident to speak. Can the gentle Lucian, the "sun-bringer" who devised their solar mirror project, win her trust, solve the mystery and save the world? The author has a doctorate in planetary geochemistry, and clearly knows her stuff. The science has the ring of truth, and depictions of what it could be like on Pluto are thrillingly vivid. The tale itself is curiously old-fashioned, reminiscent of a book for children in the ease with which a child can go out into the airless, frozen world alone, the absence of sex, the excitement around baked goods, and a general cosy retro-Englishness. But it's a rousing good story, perhaps best enjoyed with a nice cuppa and a piece of cake.

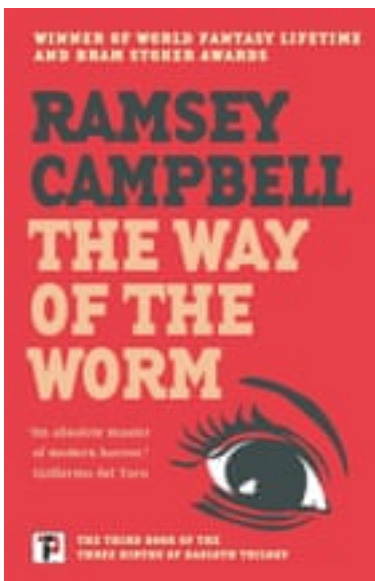
[The Kaiju Preservation Society](#) by John Scalzi (Tor, £16.99)

Kaiju, Japanese for "strange creature", refers both to a film genre and the gigantic monsters it features. The premise of Scalzi's latest novel is that Godzilla was a real creature that broke through from another dimension before dying, and the body of the gigantic beast inspired the first of the



Japanese monster movies. The atomic bomb and early nuclear explosions had the effect of thinning the barrier between our world and that of the kaiju. Something there set life on a dramatically different course, unhindered by the square-cube law that determines the largest size a living creature can be on Earth. To protect our world and keep the kaiju where they

belong, the titular society was established; but others have come to know about it, not all of whom have the best interests of either world at heart. Hugely enjoyable, intelligent and good-humoured fun.



[The Way of the Worm](#) by Ramsey Campbell (Flame Tree, £9.95)

The concluding volume of the Three Births of Daoloth trilogy brings the story of Dominic Sheldrake's lifelong struggle against a sinister cult into the present day. The cult has become a worldwide religion, the Church of the Eternal Three, and

Dom's own son is a member. The previous book held out the faint possibility that Dom had been driven mad by his own paranoid obsession, but this astonishing, apocalyptic conclusion does not. Although now better known for his subtler evocations of unease, Campbell's early stories were heavily influenced by HP Lovecraft. Here he returns to his roots, even outdoing Lovecraft in his

depictions of full-on cosmic terror.

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