

PROMETHEUS

An Adventure in Sound—The Robert A. Heinlein Audioplays

By Anders Monsen

Old Time Radio

Radio more than once sparked major changes in my life. As a high school kid in western Norway in the mid-1980s it opened up worlds for my music sensibilities as I listened to John Peel's BBC Radio 1 shows late at night on old portable. As a college student in the early 1990s in Austin, Texas, driving an old VW bug with only AM radio, it fired an interest and love for baseball listening to college and professional broadcasts. Where TV failed in igniting the imagination, as baseball on the small screen is far duller than in real life, radio listeners must pay greater attention, and the announcer's spare no effort in their descriptions.

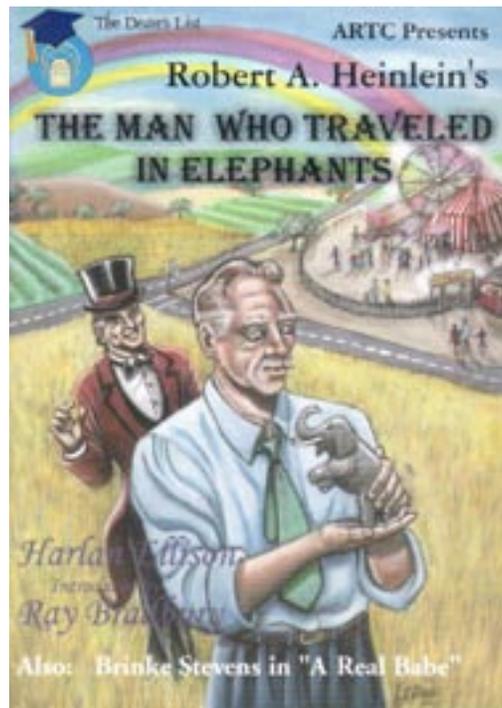
In 1998 I conducted an interview with Brad Linaweaver and William Alan Ritch that ran as a two-parter in the pages of *Prometheus*, called "Traveling in Elephants" (Volume 16, No. 3 & 4). Linaweaver and Ritch had just completed their first adaptation of a Robert A. Heinlein short story, "The Man Who Traveled in Elephants," into a radio audioplay performed by the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company. This group, which might be called an amateur production company with professional abilities, put together performances at local sf shows and other venues, and recorded these as well for sales as CDs. In 1995 I witnessed one of their many live performances at DragonCon. Although many years passed and I never heard "The Man Who Traveled in Elephants," I kept thinking about reviewing it for *Prometheus*. In 2005 I checked out the ARTC web site <www.artc.org> and saw that they had adapted two more Heinlein stories, all available online to order as CDs under their Dean's List program. Call me a procrastinator, but I didn't order the three CDs until the summer of 2006.

The age of radio broadcasts for entertainment purposes dates back to the 1920s, whereas wireless transmission dates

back even further. With all the different forms of entertainment available to radio, such as sports, religious sermons, political talk formats, and music, adapting the written word into a form of audio theatre is merely one other format. And yet, there's an inherent nostalgia around this format, for in our present age listening to a play seems quite old-fashioned compared to watching TV or renting DVDs. Orson Welles 1938 adaptation of H.G. Wells story, "War of the Worlds," on his show entitled *The Mercury Theatre of the Air*, stands out perhaps as the pinnacle of the power of entertainment on radio. In those days the lines between news and entertainment were still blurred. The imagination of the mind so suited for radio made it quite popular was a way to reach millions of eager young kids and adults, especially fans of the growing science fiction genre.

In the 1950s NBC carried two shows of adapted science fiction stories, *Dimension X* (1950-1951) with 50 stories by now well-known writers in the field, and *X Minus One* (1955-1958); the latter started as a revival of *Dimension X*, but offered over 100 new episodes. Some of the stories adapted into audio plays on *Dimension X* included

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Inside *Prometheus*:

Fiction by Tamara Wilhite;

Reviews of fiction by John Scalzi, Lewis Sinclair,
& Jack Williamson;

Review of Brad Linaweaver's political broadside;

Preliminary *Prometheus* Award nominees; & Letters



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On re-reading the classics

I first read Sinclair Lewis' novel, **It Can't Happen Here**, over twenty years ago. I found copy of the book, a hardcover British edition dated 1936, in a used book store in Bergen, Norway. I had recently acquired some of the early letters about the founding of the LFS, and seen the title listed in several recommended sections, so naturally I checked that section for any books by Lewis. Time and a host of other books since then had erased many of my memories of that novel, first published in America in 1935. Still, almost every year someone nominates **It Can't Happen Here** for the Hall of Fame award. Every year it falls short, and I remind myself that I need to re-read the book.

Recently a weird idea crept into my head. By strange synchronicity, "King Lear" and "Sinclair" sound very much alike. A long time fan of the poet John Keats, I remembered his poem, "On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again," and the English Lit geek in me thought it might be neat to use this poem as jumping off point to riff on re-reading Sinclair; thus perhaps the strangest review in life that appears elsewhere in this newsletter. I read **It Can't Happen Here** and a biography on Lewis, and found to my surprise that it's a damn good book, and he led quite an interesting life. Though no one can say he's a libertarian, he certainly is a contrarian, an ambitious writer who found himself a perpetual outsider then as well as now. He dedicated his 1927 novel **Elmer Gantry** to H. L. Mencken, and saw it banned in Boston as well as other cities. His more famous novel **Main Street** (1920) also was banned by overly sensitive towns. Lewis was a masterful satirist, who wrote about small-town life and conformity. His novels are filled with idealists, rebels, non-conformists, many who ultimately fail to break free but instead fall back into the sludge of their bland communities.

Lewis recognized the threat of state control. Critics usually allude to **It Can't Happen Here** as showing the growth of right wing tyranny in America, yet this is because people see socialism as to the left and fascism as to the right on the political spectrum. Lewis once wrote that "[w]hen fascism arrives in America it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross," and today this concept is firmly rooted in evangelical Republican Party conservatism. So in that sense, the corporate Rotarian fascism portrayed in the book certainly stems from the

right. But we can't forget that Buzz Windrip, the American Führer who rises to fame and power in the novel, defeats Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the Democrat *primary*. The key platforms in Windrip's campaign all are working class related, and he draws his support from the less fortunate (he also courts big business and a host of contradictory interests as well).

When re-reading **It Can't Happen Here**, I was shocked at how much I had forgotten. The quick rise of despotism seems a little unreal, but happens to this day in many other countries, with little room for resistance. Witness the despair in Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, the former breadbasket of Africa, where people are reduced to eating rats to survive, and government agents abroad justify this as quaint tribal delicacies. America in the 1930s, in the midst of a crushing depression, might have experienced the same fate. Our perceptions are clouded by what we see today, and we all probably think, like many of the respectable people in the novel as they were hauled away to concentration camps, or saw former friends summarily shot in the streets, that it still can't happen here.

What protagonist Doremus Jessup sees as "this comic tyranny" of Windrip's reign, becomes a series of tragedies, one after the other, as people lose life and hope while the party members willingly give up their humanity. It can't happen here? Really? Our own Imperial President assumes greater power with each legislative interpretation. In the guise of "security" we lose freedoms almost daily, and in many cases remain blissfully unaware. So far there are no concentration camps, but instead countless lists and databases, each secret and classified. And yet people justify and support their very existence, as supposedly critical tools in the never-ending "War on Terror." There's a thin line indeed between being on a list so prone to error that toddlers and Senators are denied the ability to board airplanes, and ending up behind bars for crimes unstated, with no recourse of *habeas corpus*.

So, if you want a terrifying work of fiction, read Sinclair Lewis' **It Can't Happen Here**. This is a novel that highly deserved the Hall of Fame award, which long has been overdue recognition from a group that promotes the way liberty is discussed in fiction. I only hope that next time twenty years does not pass before I re-read this book.

—Anders Monsen

BOOK REVIEWS

The Ghost Brigades

By John Scalzi (Tor Books, 2006)

ISBN: 0765315025, \$23.95

Reviewed by Chris Hibbert

John Scalzi's **The Ghost Brigades** is likely to be a strong candidate for this year's Prometheus Award. It may be the best I've read so far. (Since the competition includes Vinge, a past winner, and Stross, a past nominee, that's an achievement.)

Humankind is one of many species competing for living space around the galaxy. There's a little cooperation, and a lot of war. Our government is keeping most of the population in the dark about who our friends and enemies are, and how we're fighting them. Our best weapon is an army of vat-grown, genetically enhanced soldiers who are effectively brainwashed slave labor.

The conflict arises when Charles Boutin, the genius scientist who has helped develop the technologies, becomes convinced that the government was careless about protecting his wife and daughter, and in his grief, lends his assistance to some of humanity's enemies. In order to help track him down, his memory backup is loaded into the mind of Jared Dirac, a custom-designed soldier. Since the mind transplant doesn't take at first, Dirac develops his own personality, with idiosyncratic quirks and abilities. This isn't on the program for the enhanced soldiers, which results in a lot of trouble.

Many of the tropes of near-future technological enhancements are on display here: mind melding soldiers, nano-suits that protect the wearer from minor injury, instant access to information. Scalzi does a decent job of merging them into a plausible society: Dirac is as likely to use his tools and skills while joking around with his buddies as he does in battle.

The deeper issues include Dirac and the other soldier's ability to make choices and control their own fate, the moral issues surrounding combatants and bystanders in war, and the morality of allowing population pressures to force the choice of going to war. Scalzi lets Dirac and his fellow soldiers explore the issues without forcing particular answers on them or us.

I liked the answers Dirac came up with better than those Ken Chinran came up with in Michael Williamson's **The Weapon**. Chinran was a nearly omnipotent military force on his own. He accepted his assignments without question, carried them out as best he could and worried about ethics after the fighting was done. Chinran sometimes made morally doubtful tactical choices in the heat of battle that undermined his strategic objectives, and ended up several times regretting his choices. But he never learned to make better choices in battle.

Dirac considers the possibilities as he proceeds, and limits his tactical choices to behaviors he has already decided are

morally acceptable acts of war. In one incident, Dirac and his squad are tasked with abducting the immature heir to the throne of one of humanity's enemies, the Eneshan. The squad recognizes that the morality is questionable. Some members, while willing to participate in the raid, ask to be left out of the dirty work, so the squad leader asks for volunteers. Dirac recognizes it as dirty, but accepts the necessity in a time of war. The important point for the story is that Dirac and his companions are making moral choices, even though they weren't given any choice about being soldiers.

Dirac continues to make moral choices right through the end.

The Humanoids

By Jack Williamson

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

The title of Jack Williamson's first published story, 1928's "The Metal Man," eerily foreshadowed his most famous works of fiction. Williamson, a science fiction grandmaster and author of over 50 novels (and who died in late 2006 at age 98), wrote three pieces that dealt with 'gentle' robots so attentive to the needs and safety of humanity that they stifled freedom and suppressed joy out of pure concern. "With Folded Hands" (1947), perhaps Williamson's most famous story, appeared in *Astounding Stories*. This novella expressed almost perfectly the story, how the humanoids were created, how they insidiously and inevitably inserted themselves into the lives of their supposed human masters (resistance here was indeed futile), and how some individuals attempted to oppose the machines. At the urging of editor John Campbell, Williamson adapted his story into a novel 1949, **The Humanoids**, changing a few components and extending the details of the humanoid origin. He also added, at the urging of Campbell, the pseudo-science of ESP as the key method for humanity to oppose the unstop-

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Moving?

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America 2049

FICTION

By Tamara Wilhite

I spent all day in line with my only daughter to get permission to have a baby. A season elder desperate to be a grandmother who pleads the justification for permission to have a baby is often a strong factor in those decisions, although officially emotion is never supposed to be a factor in such a serious matter.

Then came the pager message. Dad was sick. Again. That was a problem. A federal message came through to after his health notice reached me; his government account was running out of money. This was now officially a disaster.

Ever since the baby boomers retired, the government had taken over all of that financial mess. The government accounts were meant to solve all the problems. All his property and money were sold and transferred to the account, so he couldn't be taken advantage of by any schemer; it also meant he couldn't transfer assets down the family line to avoid paying for his own care. The government took two thirds up front to ensure that taxes were paid. After all, we have to make sure the system is funded up front. Then Dad went to the state funded nursing home. He was there right now.

I left my daughter to the bureaucrats. At 25, she was of legal age—barely. And now old enough to have a baby with federal approval. And she was young enough that if she went through the rejections for a few years, she'd still be young enough to have one without paying for fertility treatment. It was her first time to try, and I wanted to be there. I couldn't stand to leave. We'd actually gotten up to the front of the line!

I let her start all the paperwork. If she did it wrong, we'd have to wait a year before reapplying. She was theoretically old enough to do this on her own, but I was still protective. Boomers had wanted to raise the age of legal maturity to 30, but too many people voted against it. If you could be taxed when you started working in school at age 12, you should be able to vote at least a decade and a half after that. The clerk asked if I was abandoning my minor. I let my daughter pull out her ID cards. Once proven to be theoretically able to fill out the electronic forms by interview, I left. I had to take care of the older generation.

The tram was delayed. Again. If I'd had my own vehicle like I had been my daughter's age, I could have routed around the protesters. They thought public transportation used up too much power and despoiled the natural beauty of the city. They were the "not one more" crowd who thought we should all go extinct, but they couldn't do it gracefully or leave the rest of us out of it. I hated those people. If I admitted hating

anyone, I would have been rounded up and dumped in the psych ward.

The compromise with the environmentalists had created the birth right system. The government said we citizens and noncitizens alike were allowed to number 325 million people. Each person alive at the time had permission to replicate themselves. If you were too rich or too incorrect, you got one and the other went to the state to redistribute more fairly. If you were middle class and middle of the road, you got two birthrights. If you were immigrant or poor, you were usually allowed three, so we could ensure a future supply of labor or a continuation of the breeder culture. Nuts of politically incorrect varieties got sterilized and saw their birthrights reassigned. I couldn't risk that classification hitting my family. Not now. Not when we were so close to adding a new member.

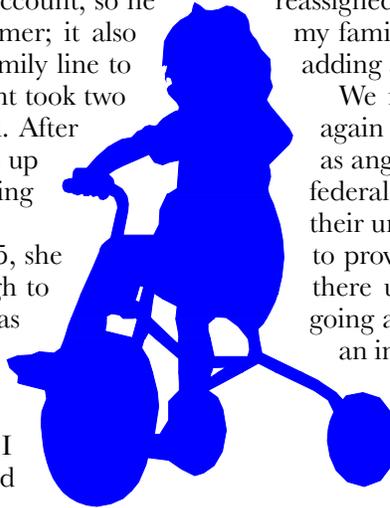
We finally got underway. The pager went off again and again. I tried to put it in vibrate mode as angry strangers made various gestures, but the federal messages overrode that option because of their urgency. I couldn't pay unless I was in person to prove I authorized the payment. I couldn't get there until I got there, and the transport wasn't going any faster. But the messages kept coming at an increasingly urgent pace. Louder and louder, too, over-riding the sound settings on my pager, as if I were the type to try to sleep through a bureaucracy ready to pull the plug. People were looking at me funny. I jumped off a station early and ran. I made it

past the correct station before the train, though I had to jump over de-haired anti-hair/anti-fur activists to do it.

The building was the same white on white every other building was to reflect back sunlight; to reduce global warming, we were told, just as population control was meant to do. My sunglasses flickered against the glare. The nursing homes always seemed to have more reflective pigment; it made the building glow by day and night. Heavenly, if one was allowed to believe such things.

The guard let me in. Dementia and demented patients couldn't leave. Potential disturbances couldn't enter. Upset people were normally turned away, but he made an exception from the very audible pager tone – he knew what was going on. The financing crisis over-rode all other restrictions.

I was running to the administrative desk when the pager wailed out in a high pitched banshee tone. Everyone within earshot turned to stare at me. We all knew what it meant. Funds at zero. I panicked and tried to get my own debit card



—Continued from previous page

out. I'd pay for it out of my daughter's college fund, if I had to. The transaction would take only a split second, if I could get the card out in time. The warning banshee scream meant they'd pulled the plug.

The State couldn't afford to provide care for those who could no longer contribute to the State; there were too many elderly and too few taxpayers. If the rate of return for the investment of medical care was worth it, the doctor was allowed to treat the patient. Sick kids, almost always. Sick adults, usually. Sick old people, never. Not unless it was paid for from the government managed account or from private money. No more money, no more treatment. No more treatment, no more life. No one was allowed to drain the coffers anymore; we couldn't afford it anymore. We left this world as little in our name as we had when we entered it: even on all accounts and equally empty-handed.

The card was in my hand and approaching the reader when the second banshee cry came. It was longer and lower pitched. Patient terminated. He was dead. The drugs would have been released into his system already. I hadn't been fast enough. The horror was starting to hit me. It hadn't even been an hour! The grace period was supposed to be longer than that!

"Don't worry, honey," the middle aged admin tried to console me, "they don't feel any pain."

"I want to see him."

"That's not possible."

"I came as soon as I could. I have to at least see him —"

"The Cleaners arrived when as his account started running low. He's already in route to the crematorium."

"Then I'll go there, then —"

"We can't risk anyone interfering with an orderly disposal of the dead."

"He's my father!"

"You'll get an official death certificate and probably a conciliatory note because of the circumstances. You did, after all, go to extraordinary attempts to pay. Most people only argue over the phone." She saw my expression and misjudged the reason, "Don't worry. It won't affect your credit rating. We don't let accounts go negative anymore."

"Your speech sounds rather practiced." I wanted to strike her, but the thought of my daughter's sterilization kept my hand still. Violence begets violence, and the violent didn't beget.

"This happens all the time," was her cool response. The woman had her hand visibly resting on a taser she lifted perceptibly into view at my lack of compliance. Government employees had the right to self defense and defense of government property of any degree of force they deemed necessary. Only government officials were allowed to have such weapons, and they were trained in how to use them. If I breathed wrong, I had a chance of ending up in the ER. I could pay for it, this time.

My pager went off again. I took several steps back to try to read it in a mockery of privacy. There was a dozen staff still staring at me. It might have been every ambulatory person in the building, aside from the hundreds of patients.

It was the official death notice. All legal ends were already tied up electronically. His data file was closed and being sent to a data-crunching bureaucrat. All his personal files would be deleted unless otherwise noted to be transferred. I would get confirmation messages of all the transactions on my private message account. I had nowhere to go but home. So I did.

My daughter came back that evening. Her father was working a second shift to make up for us not working that day. We were so odd to our neighbors, me still living with her father and her still living with us. She was overwhelmingly happy. I mechanically asked what happened; the shock of loss was still hitting home.

"They processed it and gave me immediate approval!"

I dared ask, "How many?"

"One birthright confirmed. Two confirmed birthrights if I find a man who hasn't already had one child." My father's death had probably been translated into immediate approval for the grandchild. It wasn't a conciliation prize. It was a replacement now on order.

"Who were you thinking of being the father?"

"Liu, maybe. Or Chandra. I haven't decided yet."

"Are either of them willing to commit?"

"Commit what? A birthright?"

"Maybe you should have two children by the same man."

A traditional thought, I knew, but not unreasonable.

"If I marry both, I might get permission to have three!" She smiled broadly before disappearing into her room, amused at her witty jab back and my thrilled reaction. We both thought we won, if for different reasons. I heard her eagerly begin calling up people. Talking to her friends or the men in question or total strangers. Girls tended to act fast on those permissions, just in case the government pulled the plug on its permission in a later review. At the thought of plugs pulled too soon, my smile faded. Euphemisms again glazed over the reality of life and death to little technical terms ... how long before someone decided to pull my plug for not being plugged in utterly and completely to the official reality?

Classifieds

The (Libertarian) Connection, open-forum since 1968. Subscribers may insert four pages/issue free, unedited. **Factsheet Five** said, "Lively interchange of point, counterpoint and comments". Eight/year, \$20. Strauss, 10 Hill #22-LP, Newark NJ 07102.

—*Heinlein Audio plays*, continued from page 1

classics by Jack Williamson, Ray Bradbury, Jack Vance, and others (available as mp3 files at <<http://www.archive.org/details/Dimension-X>>). Four of the works were originally written by Robert A. Heinlein—“Requiem,” “The Green Hills of Earth,” “Universe,” and “The Roads Must Roll.” Radio and pulp sf seemed like perfect partners because they both embrace and extend our sense of imagination and wonder, but aside from a brief revival in the early 1970s, and the occasional aficionado keeping the format alive, other formats now rule the air waves.

Fully Soundscaped and Dramatized for Audio

Each of the three Heinlein plays run around 30 minutes. The \$12 (plus shipping) CDs are packaged in a DVD style box, and whereas the cover of “The Man Who Traveled in Elephants” bears a full-color painting, the two other packages are more subdued and consistently designed.

(Two other stories are mentioned as part of the Dean’s List—“Our Fair City” and “All You Zombies...” but are not listed on the ARTC web site.) Rounding out each of the CDs are one or two smaller plays, including Brad Linaweaver’s ghost story, “A Perfect Babe.”

Adapting the written word for audio goes far beyond merely reading the pages out loud. Just as screenwriters do more than transcribe books into movies, anyone adapting a story must take into effect the order of events, characters and dialog, and even adding material. At the same time, care must be made to retain the original idea that formed the story. The final product is often quite different from the original source you add ac-



tors who emphasize certain elements of their voice and tone, the effect can either distract or enhance the listening experience. Special effects come to play as well, contributed by Foley artists adept at the way sound influences the story. This is perhaps seen with greater effect in movies, but strip out everything except the dialog, and while often you end up with something quite boring, too much sound acts also as overkill. The movie *Cast Away* notoriously left out a musical score for much of the movie, emphasizing the isolation of the main character, while horror movies like *Saw* and *Psycho* are inextricably linked to score and audio effects.

The oldest story of the Heinlein trio, “So-

lution Unsatisfactory,” appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1940, under the byline Anson MacDonald. Written before the American entry into World War II, before Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima, this story details the escalating search for weapons of mass destruction amidst the very real events of that same war. A dramatic introduction prefaces the production, which was adapted by Daniel Taylor. John DeFries, the story’s narrator, relates how he was shoved from an ordinary life into the council of rulers, and found that these rulers were ordinary men like himself, just as prone to error and confusion. As America remains outside the current war (fought primarily in the air between Great Britain and Nazi Germany), military leaders in the States are preparing for what they see as the inevitable entry into the war. To this end, Colonel Clyde Manning seeks out scientific solutions, and stumbles upon an awesome weapon with devastating consequences. DeFries works for Manning, and witnesses the discovery of radioactive dust, which in Heinlein’s story replaces what our history went through with the atomic bomb.

This dust, when spread by air can kill an entire city in slow agonizing death. As the president and his council debates whether or not to use this dust, they are keenly aware of their now absolute power, and the corrupting effects of such power. Will the republic stand, or wither away into tyranny by the one who controls the dust? In the end, after several warnings and demonstrations, the president decides to employ the dust against Germany, and wipes out every living being in Berlin. Just as the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were justified on the grounds that countless lives were spared from a costly ground invasion, the president and Manning see this as an opportunity to end the war now, and Germany quickly capitulates. Yet the war is not over, for now the race is on for other nations to secure their dust. Manning see this as a greater threat than individual liberty and a constitution, and goes to great lengths to secure a monopoly of dust, as a sort of benevolent dictator. The result is indeed a solution unsatisfactory.

The audio play, on the other hand, is superbly done. The dramatic tone is sustained and heightened by snippets of radio newscasts, and all the characters perform their lines with seriousness and gravity. Considered in the light that the ARTC recording session for the play took place on September 12, 2001, that tone is all the more understandable. I remained riveted to my headphones.

Although Heinlein wrote “The Man Who Traveled in Elephants” in 1948, the story did not appear in print until 1957. Generally seen as a fantasy, the story falls outside Heinlein’s normally rigorously crafted science fiction mechanics. The adaptation of this story features the inimitable and often histrionic voice of Harlan Ellison, and an introduction by none



—Continued from previous page

other than Ray Bradbury. It contains a full range of audio effects, from trumpeting elephants, crowds, to the ever-annoying circus organ music in the background. Adapted by Brad Linaweaver, whose own experience with carnies serves him well, centers around John Watts, who after retirement used to travel around the country with his wife, Martha. Under the guise of selling elephants, they visited fairs, expositions, and circuses, until Martha's death left him alone. Now, Watts rides on a final bus-ride to the greatest circus of them all.

Ellison, who appears as the ring master, at times channels Robin Williams, but also has the range of voice and talent to pitch a sale softly. As Watts and the listener slowly discovers the true destination, one can see why this story was one of Heinlein's favorites. The sense of humanity and enduring love in this story is such that it could bring a tear to the eye of even the most stoic listener.

Appearing firmly within RAH's Scribners juvenile period is the delightful tale of young Holly Jones, "The Menace from Earth." Much like William Alan Ritch who adapted the tale, this has long been one of my favorite Heinlein stories, all because of the protagonist. This 15 year old geeky girl resident of Luna City is forced to guide a gorgeous groundling from Earth, and learns about life and love in the process. Holly Jones is all business. She's an aspiring space ship designer (working on the star ship *Prometheus*) with her partner, a slightly older boy, Jeff Hardesty. Holly finds herself guiding around a gorgeous groundling visiting the Moon, the actress Ariel Brentwood. Well-aware of physical shortcomings when compared to Ariel, little Holly struggles with the prospect of losing Jeff, unaware of her love for him, and blind to how much he cares for her.

The story rotates around Holly, and the play uses both an inner voice or narration as well as the standard dialog of a play. The actress doing Holly's voice switches between the two formats with ease, and you can sense the teenage rush of thoughts from the tone and word use. Her spoken voice is far calmer, like someone trying to appear more grown up, especially when dealing with someone like the sophisticated Ariel. The play is rife with engineering metaphors. Heinlein might have based the character on a fictionalized young Virginia Heinlein, his third wife, who was an engineer like himself. He certainly understood the language, and Holly's grasp of the terms and concept seems dizzying for someone her age, and makes her seem all the more vulnerable.

Aside from Holly and Ariel, there are only five or so additional voices: Jeff Hardesty himself, who comes across as

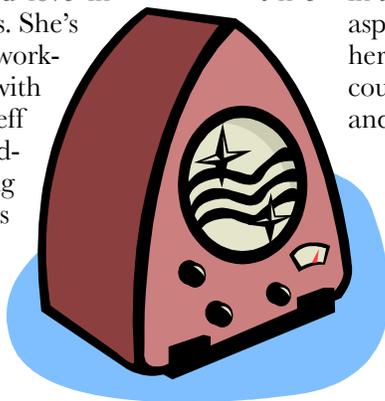
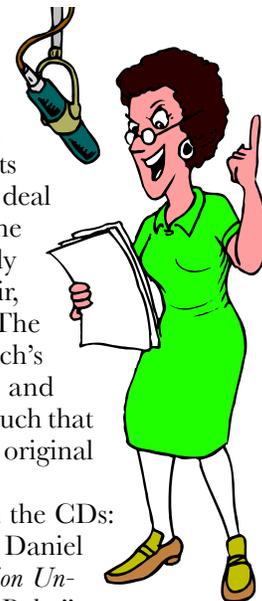
nerdy dork; Holly's high school friend Mary, who steps in now and then to push Holly into action; Holly's dad, a very typical father totally clueless about his teenage daughter's thoughts or feelings, but who grants her a great deal of leeway in her life. The pivotal scene in the Bats's Cave, where Lunarians fly through use of artificial wings, thick air, and low gravity, is handled quite nicely. The credits roll after the final chapter. Ritch's adaptation is masterfully executed and compelling; I enjoyed this version so much that I immediately wanted to seek out the original story and read it again.

Four smaller stories that appear on the CDs: Gerald W. Page's "The Assassins" and Daniel Taylor's "Grandma's Diary" on *Solution Unsatisfactory*, Brad Linaweaver's "A Real Babe" on *The Man Who Traveled in Elephants*, and Ron N. Butler's "Rory Rammer – Space Marshall" on *The Menace from Earth*. Linaweaver's "A Real Babe," which originally appeared in Peter Straub's anthology, **Ghosts**, is hands down the best of the non-Heinlein tales. Featuring scream queen Brinke Stevens in a role almost written for her, as an intelligent actress who aspires beyond bimbo roles in low-budget movies (Stevens herself is a writer, producer, and director in addition to her countless movie roles), her sultry voice transcends the story and other characters.

Must-Have Audio

Individually, these three Heinlein audio plays represent new ways to understand Heinlein's stories. The writer who stares at the written word and must transform them into live, spoken voices probably must feel some trepidation at the task ahead. And yet, the transition in these plays seem seamless. No two stories are alike, from the serious ideas of "Solution Unsatisfactory," to the awkward teenage angst of "The Menace from Earth," and lastly the joyful tale of love and life amid the circus like atmosphere of "The man Who Traveled in Elephants."

The work done by ARTC each year to maintain and extend old time radio shows the power of their passion. Their labor of love continues to yield strange and wondrous fruit such as these Heinlein adaptations, as well as other works. Their CDs are both great entertainment and an investment in our sf past. One can only hope that more of Heinlein's stories become available soon in the same format. No longer limited by tape or CD, digital players like the iPod allow people to listen to these plays while in the car, jogging, or relaxing at home. You no longer need to be huddled around cathedral radio sets to experience the sounds of sf.



—*Williamson* review, continued from page 3

pable machines. In 1980 Williamson returned to the universe of the humanoids with **The Humanoid Touch**.

It easy, perhaps to hold up the humanoids as mirrors to current liberals who simply have your best interest in mind when they wrap warm red tape around everything. The world is full of people unable to manage their own lives, but find their calling in managing the lives of others; it's far simpler to look at something broken from the outside and believe you have the perfect way to fix everything. Even individualists sometimes feel that others would benefit if they read the same book, moved to the same city or state, acted the same way, would find enlightenment and reason as if they just flipped the right switch. Certain works (of fiction and non-fiction) manage to capture key essences of life, and within Williamson's pieces on the humanoids we detect just such essences. Just as people want to take care of others, and often go to extremes in their efforts, so the world is full of people who enjoy being taken care of, or feel the need for such care. Life remains a constant active battle against entropy. The existence of these two kinds of people drives a wedge into the lives of those willing to exist on their own terms.

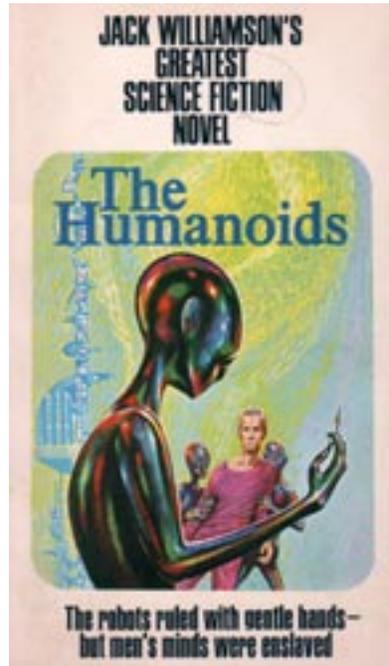
The setting of **The Humanoids** is a familiar sf trope: aeons hence, humanity scattered to the stars, forgot their origins, and now find themselves embroiled in interplanetary wars. This is Earth's history repeated on a larger scale. Dr. Clay Forester, a scientist working in a top secret military installation on one such planet, is contacted by a strange band of wanderers. They each possess certain psionic powers, such as telepathy, and teleportation, and tell Forester that they are hunted by machines. These man-like and perfect machines already have infiltrated Forester's planet, and plan to announce themselves shortly. In a guise to end all wars and conflicts, they will assume the duties of protecting each person from harm. This requires certain concessions, innocuous at first, but as they tell Forester, these demands soon will result in the absolute loss of freedom for all humanity. Under their dictum—"To serve and obey, and guard men from harm," anything that could harm someone is prohibited. This includes certain professions or fields of study, including those that could cause angst or frustration, and especially those that pose physical risks. People who remain unhappy are given *Euphoride*, a drug that reduces people to the mental state of childhood.

Frank Ironsmith, an affable mathematician working at the same complex as Forester, seems unperturbed by the humanoids. In contrast to the excitable and frazzled Forester, Ironsmith accepts the humanoids and faces none of the re-

strictions imposed upon other people. Forester finds his world shrinking in his one-man revolt against the humanoids, until the group that first told him about them manage to teleport him to a secure location. Here they begin a desperate plan to infiltrate the humanoid world of origin and reprogram them, amending their prime directive by adding these words: "But we the humanoids cannot serve or defend any man except at his own command, or restrain any man against his will, for men must be free." In the end, not every works as planned, and the ending of **The Humanoids** comes across as a sort of depressing ambiguity. Similar endings rendered such books as George Orwell's **1984** and Yevgeny Zamiatin's **We** no less significant in the emotional impact of the protagonists' revolt. One might argue that a more pleasant ending would leave readers unsatisfied, or the book forgettable. I certainly think that the ending of the book, while somewhat surprising, caused the overall impression of it as a novel of ideas to stick in my mind to a greater degree than a simple, neatly packaged solution.

For many years, Jack Williamson's novel, **The Humanoids**, sat unread in my library. The book has twice been nominated for the Hall of Fame award, each time failing to become a finalist. Williamson, who voted Libertarian in the 1990s, comes across in some comments and interviews as quite individualistic. Yet,

when I read my first Williamson novel, **The Silicon Dagger**, I could not finish the book. When I read his short story contribution in the recent Baen Books anthology, NAME (LFS Special Award winner in 2005), I thought it nearly the worst of the lot, especially stylistically. And yet, **The Humanoids** remained strongly in my mind, as I vaguely knew the content and felt it to be an original idea. When I finally picked up the novel this year, I was surprised at how much I had missed because of my two bad experiences. The ideas behind **The Humanoids** are powerful ones of great interest to libertarians. How do we resist people (or machines) or will stop at nothing to ensure our well-being? However misguided such efforts, we see constant examples of this in our daily lives, from seat belt laws to dietary laws. Although I feel that "With Folded Hands" may be a more powerful and less pseudo-science tale than **The Humanoids**, the novel is a dense and well-written appeal for freedom, whatever the cost.



Robert Anton Wilson, RIP
January 18, 1932 — January 11, 2007

Post-Nationalism—**George W. Bush as President of the World**

By Brad Linaweaver

KoPubCo, 2006, \$12.95

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

To invert a famous quote, I come not to bury Brad Linaweaver but to praise him. Although still publishing fiction, Linaweaver's latest book is a collection of non-fiction, mostly political essays dealing with current events, especially the second half of current president George W. Bush, the Republican from Texas. With this slim volume of essays, Linaweaver joins the ranks of libertarian fiction writers who have published political essays (see for example, L. Neil Smith's **Lever Action**, and J. Neil Schulman's **Stopping Power** and **Self-Control**).

One of the manifold effects of 9/11 was the wedge that the subsequent American-led War on Terror had on the libertarian movement. Although trivial when compared to the loss of human life on that day and after, the rift sent libertarians into mainly two very distinct camps: pro- and anti-war. As someone who often spoke of "slipping in" libertarian ideas into his fiction, Linaweaver now has the opportunity to use both barrels. Although I was dismayed how quickly so many libertarians abandoned their principles and "went to war," I see Linaweaver's confession of the causes for his pro-war views and how these have changed over time as hopeful signs that liberty still remains strong in the minds of libertarian intelligentsia, despite the seduction of rallying around the flag.

Post-Nationalism contains four main essays, plus a few smaller items including a letter to Playboy about Pat Buchanan, a review of Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11, and a revealing afterword about Linaweaver's political changes post-9/11. This afterword may be the key to understanding why Linaweaver published this book. He details how he and other fellow libertarian writers, such as J. Neil Schulman, Victor Koman, William Alan Ritch, Kent Hastings found themselves wrapped up in the American flag following 9/11 and the initial Bush response. Much like how Pearl Harbor crushed isolationism in 1941 and swept America into war and Japanese Americans into concentration camps, 9/11 brushed aside many libertarian opponents to state aggression. The libertarians who went to war, who now called themselves realists and pro-American, set aside the idealism of libertarian ideas to join the hunt for Bin Laden. Whereas some libertarian writers, notably L. Neil Smith, opposed the war from the start, suddenly these were in the minority.

Linaweaver's condemnation of "an administration melting down" admits that he saw it on the right track at the start. He applauded GWB's words and actions in the direct aftermath of 9/11, which were expressions of machismo straight out of Hollywood. Then, some time in 2005, things changed for Linaweaver. Perhaps, as the messy war in Iraq dragged on with no end in sight, he joined the ranks of former libertarian conservatives seduced by the gung-ho attitudes of the Bush administration who now have grown disillusioned. The stories appearing ever-more frequently about illegal wire-tapping, financial snooping, traveler profiling, and massive inter-department databases covering every aspect of American life all now emerging after years of activity has alarmed the pro-freedom individuals who once bought into the

—Continued on page 12

On Sitting Down to Read Sinclair Once Again

O knife-tongued Satire with bitter wit!
 Flense the rust of memory with thine hate
 Toward the chained mind. A palpable hit
 Scored against those who wield the sword of state,
 Lies within those fading pages. What fate
 Befalls us now, who in quiet rooms sit
 And fret upon the close and choking fit
 We let the tailors measure? How abate
 Their fervor now? Whilst we in silence gape
 With horror yet unlifted arms, freedom
 Falls, enduring daily a savage rape
 In small degrees. Ere all hope is undone,
 Rather ashes than dust! Thus we oppose
 Tyranny, through the red hawk's snarling prose.

A. Monsen

2007 Prometheus Award Preliminary Nominees**Best Novel**

Empire, by Orson Scott Card (TOR)
Harald, by David D. Friedman (Baen Books)
Variable Star, by Robert A. Heinlein & Spider Robinson (TOR)
Engaging the Enemy, by Elizabeth Moon (Ballantine Books)
The Ghost Brigades, by John Scalzi (TOR)
The Clan Corporate, by Charles Stross (TOR)
Red Lightning, by John Varley (Ace Books)
Rainbows End, by Vernor Vinge (TOR)

*Please send any remaining nominations to Chair Michael Grossberg
 (at mikegrossb@aol.com or call 614-236-5040).*

Hall of Fame

Ensign Flandry, (1966) by Poul Anderson
A Clockwork Orange, (1963) by Anthony Burgess
Time Will Run Back, (1966) by Henry Hazlitt
Courtship Rite, (1982) by Donald Kingsbury
"As Easy as A.B.C.," (1912) by Rudyard Kipling
That Hideous Strength, (1946) by C.S. Lewis
It Can't Happen Here, (1936) by Sinclair Lewis
Circus World, (1980) by Barry Longyear
The Girl Who Owned a City, (1977) by O.T. Nelson
Animal Farm, (1945) by George Orwell
A Mirror for Observers, (1954) by Edgar Pangborn
2112, (1976) by Rush
A Time of Changes, (1971) by Robert Silverberg
The Lord of the Rings trilogy, (1954) by J.R.R. Tolkien
Empyrio, a 1970 novel by Jack Vance
"True Names," (1981) by Vernor Vinge
The Humanoids, (1949) by Jack Williamson



Chuck Hammill, longtime libertarian, throws a Frefan party at WorldCon with Brad Linaweaver and greets science fiction legend Forrest J Ackerman.



Forrest J Ackerman, honored by having the Big Heart Award named for him, poses with Lydia van Vogt and Brad Linaweaver at Brad's WorldCon party promoting the release of his audio adaptation of The Weapons Shop.



Forry with Martina Pilcerova (Slovakian artist currently creating book covers for the Victor Koman's Captain Anger series).



*Forry meets **Battlestar Galactica** star and author Richard Hatch, introduced by his co-author Brad Linaweaver.*

LETTERS

Dear Anders,

I read Fred's report on WorldCon and I was surprised that even though he showed up one evening at Brad and Chuck's two-night FreFan party no word of it appeared in the report. For the record, everything promised in the party flyer actually happened (how rare is that in the libertarian world)!

Lydia van Vogt charmed everyone at the party with her grace and warmth as guest of honor to hear the premiere of the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company's presentation of Brad Linaweaver's adaptation of A. E. van Vogt's **The Weapons Shop**. More Prometheus Award winners and Hall of Famers were in that one room than anywhere else at the con! Brad Linaweaver was there, of course, as host. Neil Schulman made an appearance and showed a portion of his film *Lady Magdelene's*. I was there, too (I won a couple of Prometheus awards, I recall). Other authors, such as John deChancie, Forrest J Ackerman, Brad's *Anarquía* co-author Kent Hastings, and *Battlestar Galactica* star and author Richard Hatch were all in attendance. Libertarian scholar Dr. Sharon Presley dropped by to raise a glass in SEK3's honor. Lovely libertarian filmmaker Bretigne Shaffer made an appearance, and

the beautiful and talented SF cover artist Martina Pilcerova (currently working on a new cover for **Captain Anger #1**) came all the way from the Slovak Republic to hang with us! The Van Cleves dropped in, too. Many more showed up than I can remember (I served as bartender for others and most especially myself).

The event also introduced the first edition of Brad's New Isolationist Broadside ripping the Neo-Cons a new one—**Post-Nationalism, George W. Bush as President of the World**, courtesy of KoPubCo.com.

As if all of the above weren't enough, the party served not only as an opportunity to continue the 30-year tradition established by Samuel Edward Konkin III of a libertarian fannish party at WorldCon, but to announce the publication of the 25th anniversary edition of his seminal work **New Libertarian Manifesto**.

Victor Koman
KoPubCo

[Editor: Thanks to the lens of Victor Koman we are able to bring a few images of the WorldCon FreFan party to the readers of Prometheus, as well as the original flyer that heralded this event. We certainly hope to see reports of this annual event from future WorldCons, and invite any attendee to send in a con report. I attended a few of Sam Konkin's parties in the past, with the vivid memories of lugging crates of beer through the hills of El Paso at a WesterCon for a Konkin frefan party some years ago. The parties were always well-attended; photos appeared the next day in the Daily Frefanzine that Konkin edited.]

Fred,

Wanted to say thanks for the receipt of your Fall newsletter—and a very pleasant surprise to see a review of **Kickback** in the issue. I'm pleased to say I've had several great reviews of that book of mine, but this comics business being what it is, I've had all kinds of trouble getting it in stores. If retailers miss that one solicitation in *Previews* that heralds it's publication three months ahead of time, because the ad isn't quite big enough or they miss the page or they're tearing their hair out over **Civil War** or some other meaningless thing they have to get in stock for their core customers, well, it just ceases to exist for them—and that's the situation that **Kickback's** found itself in, despite it's quality and provenance. I'm currently entirely engaged in making up for that shortfall of knowledge by my own efforts, and getting the surprise of seeing that review in your newsletter is the sort of thing that makes those efforts very much easier to bear.

Very best,
David Lloyd

Photos and flyer courtesy of Victor Koman.

COME TO THE ANNUAL WORLDCON LIBERTARIAN/FREFAN PARTY!
FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NIGHTS AT 8:00 PM
5TH FLOOR HILTON, ROOMS 5534 AND 5536
CHUCK HAMMILL & BRAD LINAWEAVER
 HONOR THE MEMORY OF
SAMUEL EDWARD KONKIN III
 AND SALUTE OUR GUEST OF HONOR,
LYDIA VAN VOGT!

HEAR Brad's adaptation of A.E. van Vogt's "The Weapons Shop" in an ARTC (Atlanta Radio Theatre Company) production starring Richard Hatch.

CHECK OUT Brad's new book from KoPubCo — **Post-Nationalism: George Bush as President of the World** — in which he tears into the Neo-Cons for their bogus War on Terror!

DE'VOUR copies of *Mars!ed* — the exciting new magazine of popular culture from Jessie Lilly, with contributions from Ray Bradbury, Forrest J Ackerman, and the late Ray Way!

PLUS: New *Libertarian Manifesto* is back, also from KoPubCo, in a 25th Anniversary Edition with essays by Murray Rothbard, Robert LeFevre, and WorldCon Gonfan Filby Flame!

SEE Nichelle Nichols in scenes from *Lady Magdelene's*, a film by J. Neil Schulman.

SEIZ another chance to buy a copy of Brad Linaweaver's and J. Kent Hastings' *Anarquía!* — The Alternate History novel of the Spanish Civil War that was the *Isolationist* for the Prometheus Award!

MARS!ED at new editions of Victor Koman's just-better-is-better-for-the-Prometheus-Award novels *The Jehovah Contract* and *Satan's Knife*, also from KoPubCo!

MEET THE AUTHORS! Buy their books and get them signed in an atmosphere of cheer and forthright good cheer! Brad Linaweaver, Lydia van Vogt, John deChancie, Victor Koman, J. Neil Schulman, J. Kent Hastings, and others will be here!

KOPUBCO

—*Linaweaver* review, continued from page 9

homeland defense mentality. Maybe this war on terror isn't such a good thing after all?

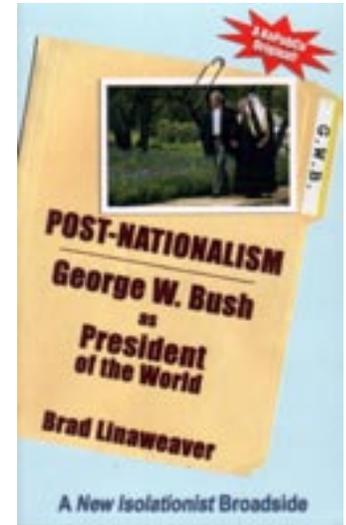
As Linaweaver explains, what turned him away from being a card-carrying Bush supporter was his growing disillusionment with the neo-con vision that took over American foreign policy; instead of the hunt for Bin Laden, or looking for “weapons of mass destruction,” history’s primary weapon of mass destruction—the state—now turned itself to “exporting democracy.” Linaweaver’s broadside, then, is a passionate disavowal of the neo-con vision, as well as roadmap of his growing disillusionment with George W. Bush. Linaweaver’s favorite president, Ronald W. Reagan, reveals a conservative streak amid Linaweaver’s libertarianism, which probably seduced him to the dark side. Thinking that American needs a strong leader to stand against the Islamist horde, Linaweaver fell for GWB’s Commander-in-Chief action figure moment. Much like Linaweaver’s own despised “Reich-Wing radio” commentators hyping of Bush’s military leader role, this strong-man side of the president’s role in America is light-years away from a libertarian stance.

Post-Nationalism’s main essays concern themselves with various aspects of American foreign and domestic policy from 2001 to 2006, such as the rise of the neo-cons, the Patriot Act, the Dubai Ports deal, the slavish role of talk radio, and more. There are no footnotes or references; this is not a scholarly work, but an emotional polemic, much in the style of the Levellers in the 17th century, or the pamphleteers just prior to the American Revolution. There are times when Linaweaver stoops to the level of those he despises, such as the witty term “Reich-Wing radio.” Though this term he

falls into the same trap as rabid conservative talk show hosts, who blithely spew forth nonsensical Nazi Germany-linked neologisms as “Islamofascists,” “feminazis,” “Hitlery,” and the like.

There’s no doubt that Brad Linaweaver is a skilled writer. Will he appeal to current conservative-libertarians and pry them away from their belief that it’s Bush or die? Possibly not. However, I do think that in the past couple of years we have already started to see an intellectual movement away from unquestioned support of the Commander in Chief and this terribly mistaken war. As Robert Higgs detailed so many years ago in **Crisis and Leviathan**, every

war leads to a massive expansion of the state. In the past few years we have certainly witnessed such an expansion and concurrent losses of individual liberty. **Post-Nationalism** may long stand as one of the earliest disavowals of the Bush era by a former supporter. More scholarly works detailing all the legal shenanigans and maneuvering of the Bush administration involved in the war, especially on the domestic front (all strangling individual freedoms, while clothed in patriotic language) may one day emerge, but few will contain the passion and anger as expressed in this book.



The Newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society
501 Abiso Ave.
San Antonio, TX 78209