

PROMETHEUS

2008 Prometheus Award Finalists Announced

Best Novel

Ragamuffin — Tobias S. Buckell

The Execution Channel — Ken MacLeod

Fleet of Worlds — Larry Niven & Edward M. Lerner

The Gladiator — Harry Turtledove

Ha'penny — Jo Walton

Best Classic Fiction

A Clockwork Orange — Anthony Burgess

“As Easy as A.B.C.” — Rudyard Kipling

That Hideous Strength — C. S. Lewis

The Lord of the Rings — J. R. R. Tolkien

The Once and Future King — T. H. White

The Libertarian Futurist Society has announced Best Novel and Hall of Fame finalists for this year's Prometheus Awards, which will be presented at Denvention 3, the 66th World Science Fiction Convention August 6-10, 2008 in Denver, Colorado.

Best Novel

First presented in 1979 at the World Science Fiction Convention, the Prometheus Award for Best Novel recognizes pro-freedom novels of speculative fiction or science fiction/fantasy, that dramatize the value of personal liberty, expose abuses of coercive power to the extremes of tyranny, offer anti-authoritarian satires or imagine a fully free future.

All five finalists are splendid stories that carry potent messages about the preciousness of freedom. They range from the near future to the far, and from planet Earth to planets so distant they can only be reached through wormholes.

Ragamuffin, by Tobias S. Buckell, is set in the same world as his first novel, *Crystal Rain*. Humanity has spread through much of the galaxy and met several interesting and picturesque alien races. But all races are under the domination of a technologically advanced race called The Satrapy. Being the uppity type we are, humans scrabble about under the oppression attempting to form loose alliances to break free of the Satraps. There are exciting escapes and battles, heroic individuals, turncoat humans, odd cultures, and even Aztec warriors! A nicely complicated story that never bores. This is the first time Buckell has been nominated for our award.

The Execution Channel, by Ken MacLeod, tells of a near future that extrapolates painfully well on the excesses of our own time. Terrorism, paranoia, espionage, and disinformation have become common, as has torture by governments. Like a cautionary Greek chorus, a rogue media outlet broadcasts murders and executions via high tech spying all over the world. This is a convincing and detailed depiction of governments

grown too large. MacLeod shows us that beyond a certain size, they acquire a life of their own, they become unaccountable, and they become dangerous to human life. This is the ninth nomination for MacLeod, who has won three times (*The Star Fraction*, *The Stone Canal*, and *Learning the World*).

Fleet of Worlds, by Larry Niven and Edward M. Lerner, is a prequel to Niven's classic *Ringworld*. Here is a novel that takes a very close, very personal look at what it means to be free. A technologically advanced alien race, called “Citizens,” is has among its worlds a small population of humans, called “Colonists,” who are grateful for the support of their hosts. But are the hosts really benevolent, really honest? This remnant of humanity learns to ask questions and to rediscover truth and justice. In this complex plot and fascinating world, even the Citizens learn something about themselves. The reader is left with the feeling that this story is almost epic in its working out of change in at least three intelligent races. This is the third nomination (all as collaborations) for Niven, who won in 1992 for *Fallen Angels* (with Michael Flynn and Jerry Pournelle).

The Gladiator, by Harry Turtledove is one of his Crosstime Traffic tales. The story takes place in Italy, and the Soviet Union

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has won the Cold War, leaving the stamp of Marxism-Leninism all over Europe. Some curious teenagers frequent a game store, where they rediscover capitalism by playing games that illustrate its principles. Who runs this game store? Why haven't the authorities shut it down? The kids discover the answers to these questions and many more in several harrowing adventures. The reader, meanwhile, rediscovers his love of independence and the horror of living under powerful ideologues. This short book was written for a younger audience (young people need this book!), but is well written enough to be savored by mature readers as well. Turtledove has been nominated once before, for his novel, *Between the Rivers* (1999).

Ha'penny, by Jo Walton, an alternate-history story set in 1940's Great Britain. It is a sequel to *Farthing* and will be followed in September 2008 by *Half a Crown*. In this story, Hitler did not loose WWII, and Britain signed a costly truce with him. Part of this cost is a growing loss of civil liberties and persecution of minorities. How this fascist state of affairs could work and grow is portrayed by the interaction of very well drawn characters. This is a complex, moving, and beautifully written story of how injustice works its ugliness into the lives of everyone. This the first nomination for Jo Walton.

Special congratulations to TOR Books, for its grand slam of all five finalist slots for only the second time in this category's three-decade history. The Best Novel finalist-judging committee considered more than 15 novels this past year as awards possibilities, including nine official nominees. The other nominees were: *The Gardener's Tale*, by Bruce Boston (Sam's Dot Publishing); *Echoes of an Alien Sky*, by James Hogan (Baen Books); *Gradisil*, by Adam Roberts (Prometheus Books' Pyr); and *Off Armageddon Reef*, by David Webber (TOR). The Hall of Fame finalist-judging committee considered more than 20 classic works of fiction in all categories.

Hall of Fame

Novels, novellas, stories, graphic novels, anthologies, films, TV shows, TV series, plays, poems, music recordings and other works of fiction, first published or broadcast more than five years ago, are eligible for the Prometheus Hall of Fame. This year's Hall of Fame nominees are a group of true classics—the earliest was first published in 1912, the latest in 1977. All five nominees are by well-known British authors. Despite their age, these works still have things to say to present-day libertarians.

Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (1963), a stylized cautionary novel of behavior modification gone wrong and a classical-liberal warning against the denial of human free will.

Rudyard Kipling, "As Easy as A.B.C." (1912), a short story by the great 19th-century novelist that looks back at the racial conflicts of the twentieth century from the perspective of a global civilization of the future.

C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (1945), a novel that completes Lewis' science-fiction trilogy and brings out the libertarian strain in his Christian faith in its portrayal of a corrupted research organization that hides totalitarian ambitions behind the name of science.

J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), a three-part fantasy novel that affirms the classic values of Western and British civilization by weaving lessons about the terrible temptations of unlimited power through an epic journey to destroy the Ring of Power and the Ringbearer's struggle against the Ring's addicting nature in a war against the totalitarian state of Mordor.

T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*, a separately published five-part noel (1938-1958) including a posthumously published finale *The Book of Merlyn* (1977) weaves anarchist-libertarian themes into its classic fantasy retelling of the Arthurian legends as an attempt to subordinate power to the service of justice, freedom and peace.

A Proud Prometheus History

Originated and first presented in 1979 by author L. Neil Smith to recognize a long-standing libertarian strain in science fiction and encourage more fiction in the proud tradition of Robert Heinlein, Eric Frank Russell and other golden-age sf authors, the Prometheus Award is one of the most enduring awards after the Nebula and Hugo awards, and one of the oldest fan-based awards currently in sf and fantasy.

The annual Best Novel winner receives a plaque and one-ounce gold coin, recently worth more than a thousand dollars. The Hall of Fame winner receives a plaque and a smaller gold coin. A full list of past winners in all Prometheus categories is posted on the Libertarian Futurist Society website:

<<http://www.lfs.org>>

[Written through the collaborative efforts of Michael Grossberg, Chris Hibbert, Anders Monsen, William H. Stoddard, and Rick Triplett]

Prometheus Submission Guidelines

Prometheus seeks reviews, esssys, articles, and columns of interest to libertarian science fiction fans. As the newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society, *Prometheus* focuses on Prometheus Award-nominated works, but also publishes reviews and articles beyond the Prometheus Award candidates.

Reviews of books, movies, TV series, and other media are welcome, as are convention reports, general letters, and essays dealing with fiction and liberty.

Contact the editor at editor@lfs.org about your material. If you include your submission in the text of your email, also attach a document in Rich Text Format. All submissions may be edited for grammar, spelling, and style.