

PROMETHEUS

Sarah Hoyt Wins 2011 Best Novel Award George Orwell wins Hall of Fame For *Animal Farm*

Darkship Thieves, a novel by Sarah Hoyt (Baen Books) won the 2011 Best Novel Prometheus Award. The Hall of Fame award was won by *Animal Farm*, a short novel written by George Orwell in 1945. Sarah Hoyt received a plaque and a one-ounce gold coin, while a smaller gold coin and a plaque was presented to Orwell's estate.

Darkship Thieves features an exciting, coming-of-age saga in which a heroic woman fights for her freedom and identity against a tyrannical Earth. Hoyt's novel, dedicated to Robert A. Heinlein, depicts a plausible anarchist society among the asteroids. Hoyt is a prolific writer of novels and short fiction, though this is her first time as Prometheus Award finalist.

Orwell won the Hall of Fame award for his novel *1984*, fittingly, in 1984, the second year the award was given. *Animal Farm* has been a finalist for the Hall of Fame award multiple times. *Animal Farm*, a short novel, retells the story of the Russian Revolution in the literary form of a beast fable, reflecting the post-World War II disillusionment of many communists. The story introduced the phrase "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others," which has been borrowed innumerable times to pillory many political movements that claimed to be fighting for equality. Orwell's story is widely considered both a classic work, and a devastating critique of Stalinism.

The other finalists for Best Novel were *For the Win*, by Cory Doctorow (TOR Books); *The Last Trumpet Project*, by Kevin MacArdry (www.lasttrumpetproject.com); *Live Free or Die*, by John Ringo (Baen Books); and *Ceres*, by L. Neil Smith (Phoenix Pick (print edition) and Big Head Press, online publication at www.bigheadpress.com/lnelmsmith/). Ten novels published in 2010 were nominated for the 2011 award.

The other finalists for the Hall of Fame award were "The Machine Stops," a story by E. M. Forster (1909); "As Easy as A.B.C.," a story by Rudyard Kipling (1912); "Repent, Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman," a story by Harlan Ellison (1965); and *Falling Free*, a novel by Lois McMaster Bujold (1988).



Sarah Hoyt, winner of the 2011 Prometheus Award, and award chair Fred Moulton on behalf of the George Orwell Society.

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PROMETHEUS

The newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society

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Readme

By Neal Stephenson
William Morrow, 2011
Reviewed by Chris Hibbert

Neal Stephenson's *Readme* is an exciting fast-paced story, set in the present day. I'd say that it's a strong contender for this year's Prometheus Award, even though the science fiction element is thin. Like several other recent books, the story takes place both in our physical real world and in an MMORPG, the virtual reality game T'Rain. And another of this year's tropes, the major characters include Richard Forthrast, the original developer of the game, and several members of the development team.

A bare outline of the story is that gold farmers in the MMORPG release a virus in an attempt to get money faster, which leads to problems for many people. One of the people who is impacted is holding data for the Russian mafia, and is connected to Forthrast through his adopted niece Zula and her newly ex-boyfriend Peter. The Russian who is most exposed tries to take matters into his own hands, but he doesn't understand the technology, so his focus is on the real world. He ends up taking Zula and Peter as hostages, hoping to force them to help him find the gold farmers who have encrypted his data. What follows is a multi-continent adventure that throws in British intelligence, middle-eastern terrorists, and CIA operatives. Nearly everyone spends some time in T'Rain, but most of the action is in the real world, with firefights and chase sequences involving all the parties and all the locations.

By the second half of the novel, the Russians lose Zula to the terrorists, and most of the other parties eventually figure out that the terrorists are planning something big and must be stopped. In the end the terrorists are thwarted by the equivalent of Vinge's armadillo from "The Ungoverned." But that's not the only libertarian touch in the story: Forthrast has been evading and avoiding the government for a long time. T'Rain has an in-world currency that's completely convertible into real-world currencies, and the game's operators encourage gold farmers to participate in the economy and help people transfer money around real-world borders. There are quite a few scenes in which peaceful citizens learn to and use weapons in self-defense. Some of the characters work for the government, but they mostly get important things done by going around their handlers and supervisors. The government agencies provide logistics and support, but are depicted as pretty ineffectual as far as strategy and understanding of the overall situation are concerned.

The terrorists are played as closed-minded and unimaginative. Their leader is pretty smart, but with only well-armed narrow soldiers on his side and with many inventive individualists opposing him, he doesn't really stand a chance.

As has become usual for Stephenson, the book is huge at more than 1000 pages, but it's well worth it. I really liked the characters, but then he doesn't seem to have left himself much room for a sequel. I recommend reading it.

The Immune

By Doc Lucky Meisenheimer

LJS&S Publishing, 2011

Reviewed by Steve Trinward

You wake up on what seems like a normal day, and flick on the news as you're getting ready to roll. Suddenly, the screen is filled with scenes of death and destruction. You stare horrified as hundreds, maybe thousands, of people are dying right before your eyes. Even though this is happening in some foreign land, you're still mesmerized by the vision.

No, we're not talking hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons or other "natural" disasters; nor are we dealing with human terrorists, of whatever ethnic stripe. Welcome to the world of *The Immune*, a fascinating near-future adventure novel by Doc Lucky Meisenheimer. Taking one part H. G. Wells, several bits of Robert A. Heinlein and a few echoes of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and other dystopian visionaries, he's created an allegory that encompasses the 9/11 attacks, environmental mutation fears, government corruption and man-against-the-State, producing a stunning page-turner in the process.

The book opens innocently enough: Dr. John Long is having a meal on Grand Cayman Island with the woman he loves, Cassandra Shelly. (It's all so sweet: He pops the question, along with the ring, during dinner; the next day they're diving together off a coral reef.) Within a few pages, however, this idyllic setting of bliss turns into the televised horrors of an attack in Nigeria, and the adventure begins. In this case, though, the attack-force is not terrorist Muslims or other human elements, but a number of gigantic floating jellyfish (imagine a genetically mutated cross between a Portuguese Man o' War and a blimp).

These "airwars" float across the sky, their tentacles drooping down with lethal stings, gathering up and digesting any organic substance along their paths. Nobody's safe, and thousands die in the first attack. As more "advanced" societies attempt to fight back, the next surprise unfolds: killing an airwar by puncturing its air-sac only causes it to reproduce, releasing thousands of smaller versions of itself! The reaction of the nation-states (and the power elites who run them) is instantaneous: if you can't beat them ... lie down and let them pass in peace! Within a matter of days, the sole officially accepted response to an airwar attack is "run, hide, do no harm."

Advocating any other maneuver makes you a traitor to humanity, subject to censorship, lock-up...even death. Soon, even the most allegedly "civilized" societies and nations kowtow to the edicts of the Airwars Scientific Council (ASC), which formed instantaneously (almost too quickly) after the first attack. Meanwhile, even larger airwars versions, spanning two or three football-fields and known as Colossi, start surrounding most cities.

Needless to say, the larger effect of this is to aggrandize power among those few (self-appointed) overlords at the very top of the societal food-chain. The ASC quickly morphs into the Airwars Security Council, assuming control over the world government that's formed in the wake of the terror. Its members include the usual suspects: A few (mostly near

the top of the pyramid) are elected officials; the vast majority are either military officers or government bureaucrats, along with a number of unelected recent political appointees (it also seems a lot of U.S. Senators, along with other top politicians, have been dying of natural causes ...).

Naturally, not everyone's willing to play under these rules. A few brave souls form into militias, most notably Mad Mike's Liberty Fighters, to seek out (and attempt to destroy) the invaders. Unfortunately, each attack on an airwar only releases those thousands of baby-versions, so Mad Mike and his lads are soon declared enemies of society, and targeted by both police and military forces. Alongside this political overlay, rumors mount that at least some humans may be immune to the stings, including one Nigerian fellow named Ube Watabee.

Enter Dr. Long, who (having lost his beloved Cassandra to an airwar attack) swears vengeance on the beasts and their reputed creator: Dr. Joseph Sengele, a mad biologist who's now been captured and held incommunicado somewhere, while ASC scientists (now the only approved scientists on the planet) torture and interrogate him. Long also has stopped caring whether he lives or dies, so when confronted with a nearby airwar attack over water, he dives in, swims into the tentacles, and (through a combination of happenstance, medical knowhow, deductive reasoning and dumb luck) manages to down the critter, without firing a single shot or releasing any "babies" into the air. What's more, he does this without sustaining a single sting from the airwar.

This makes him a hero and media darling, but it also puts him in peril from ASC overlords with other agendas. Fortunately, it brings him to the attention of Navy Admiral J. P. Beckwourth, who uses his power as ASC's propaganda director to rescue John (now dubbed "The Immune") from a ghastly demise, and make him the figurehead for his informational (and disinformational) campaign, designed in part to keep the lid on reprisals against airwars. The Admiral builds his own power-base in the process, while commandeering a small force of immunes (who also swim well, and are thus able to mimic John's methods for airwar-downing).

If this seems a long buildup for a book review, it's at least partially necessary; there are enough details in *The Immune* to sate the most demanding literary palate, although for the most part they're smoothly integrated into the dialogue and a few brief expository segments. Meanwhile, *The Immune* has enough plot twists and turns to satisfy any reader. Just when you think you've figured out how it ends, how the airwars came to be and how they're conquered (even whose side each character is really on!), some new item twists those conclusions into a pretzel. (The careful reader may notice tiny clues within the early text, hinting at something much bigger going on. This reviewer only caught most of them on the second read-through, but they're clearly there.)

In addition, a libertarian audience will find more than enough anti-statism in this work. Almost without exception, the politicians are corrupt, venal and power-driven; the same goes for most of the high-ranking military officers. Dr. John Long, on the other hand, is a man of integrity and honor, who only

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To Remain Free, part 2

By Jay McIntyre

Unfortunately, by the time the shareholders had realized the danger they faced and sent the alert throughout the colony, two individuals had already sold out.

The younger of these two was Asar Barrett. He had always sought the path of least resistance, especially when it came to doing his share of the work. He appreciated the freedom of Prospero, but resented the responsibility that came with it. He agreed to help the surface colonies; his plan was to sabotage the power infrastructure; electronics were his skill. But that presented two problems. First, the infrastructure was not centralized, which meant a lot of work dealing with the sections. Second, he would have to work around the attempts by the colony interfacers to correct any faults, all while not getting caught.

A lot of work, especially for someone like him. But if he pulled it off, it was the last work he would ever have to do in his life. That was what he signed on for; a life of leisure and luxury as his reward. It would be more than worth it. He felt a little guilty, but not nearly enough to stay his hand.

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The older of the two traitors was Marcus Donner. He was the secretary to one of the major shareholders. Oh, technically he was a shareholder, too, every citizen of Prospero was; but a very minor one. Only four shares. He wanted more. He was more ideologically inclined to Prospero than Barrett was; but he was also older, had worked harder, and waited longer, without any real result. It pained him more than it did the boy to 'sell out', but he was much more determined and motivated.

What he didn't have was a plan; unlike Barrett, he was not creative. So he sat and brooded, trying to work something out in his mind.

Each insurgent was aware of the existence of the other, but not their specific identity. Nor was there any coordination between them. This was deliberate; the surface colonies wanted multiple attacks. If one failed, the other might succeed.

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Prospero's main bulk was at the bottom of the cold European sea. Most of the population lived and worked there, including the shareholders and the interfacers. There were a few shareholders still back on Earth, but only to maintain a presence there; most everyone else had moved to the colony years ago.

Donner knew the history; the power of various governments (and the world government, first under the aegis of the

United Nations, and later under the successor organization of Global Dominion) had waxed and waned over the years. Some people were tired of it; they wanted out. By then private space tourism was already an industry in its own right; trips to the Moon and various space stations. A group of rich and middle class people had pooled their resources and bought one of the private space companies outright, renaming it Prospero. Europa had already been scanned by then, and shown promise; but the governments had sent only robotic probes to analyze it. So the Prospero company had outfitted three ships and launched them. They had found landing relatively easy, but building the undersea colony proper more difficult. The first generation had struggled; but after that, the colony had thrived. Shares had been inherited by descendants who were born and raised here. They still got occasional new members from Earth, but their numbers were steady. At least until terraforming technology became viable, which at the most optimistic estimate was still 20 years away.

There were no windows here on the deep sea colony, not because they weren't curious for a view, but because there was nothing to see in the deep waters. European indigenous life was barely above the microbial level in any case. So they made do with computer simulations. Some of these were recorded or reconstructed Earth views, but most were art. News reports weren't given wall space. The only time any information was displayed on the big walls was when there was a danger to the colony.

Not to say that this was any kind of censorship; the colony didn't recognize such. It was just that, by consensus, technical information wasn't displayed on the wall monitors. Personal datascreens and implants were used for such things.

Trade was lively on the main meeting floor, and in the access tunnels. Barrett and Donner passed within twenty feet of each other, never noticing one another in the crowd of haggling people. Barrett was looking for access points; Donner, still trying to formulate a plan, was staring at the wall art as it moved and shifted.

Prospero was no utopia. The fact that everyone was armed and that almost anything other than people could be bought or sold made things a bit...tense at times. And of course they had their dissidents, besides the two traitors. But even those dissidents owned a bit of Prospero, and felt pride and responsibility for what they were. While it was true that they had an Earth presence, they were neither bound nor beholden to any nation or collection of nations. That was part of the surface colonies' problem with them. Prospero was their home, their

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—*To Remain Free*, continued from previous page

nation, their realm.

Event Donner and Barrett felt that way; but for them, it was no longer enough.

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Barrett skulked around in the lower areas, near the depths where the interfacers life support pods were. The interfacers who had raised the alarm had already been re-jacked into a different pod, to ensure any enemy interfacers attack would do him no harm. Barrett was vindictive enough to want to find him and hunt him down for that; but he hadn't even known which pod the interfacers had been in before, much less the new one. Besides, once he shut down some of the power infrastructure, all of Prospero's interfacers would have their hands full just staying alive.

And shutting down the interfacers first was a priority; otherwise, they would detect the sector shut down as they occurred, and notify the unhooked population. There were no security monitors of the hallways and byways in Prospero, but there was most assuredly status indicators on the colony's infrastructure. It was one of the tasks of the interfacers to monitor them. The colony's survival in the deep seas was always a concern. There were back ups, but Barrett knew how to block those, as well. His main concern was to shut them all down without getting caught.

He came to the very top of the first stairwell leading down to the interfacers life support pods. There were no elevator shafts down here, by design; anyone who wanted to see the interfacers had to really want to. Medics, of course, were trained to run down there fast while carrying their equipment.

But Barrett didn't need to go all the way down; didn't want to, either. He had passed by one power node on the way down here, deliberately ignored it. He knew how these systems were organized, with their cold chemical fluid links. More than two generations more advanced than those old fashioned electronics still being phased out back on Earth, the links tended to be self sealing when interrupted. While not toxic, they were bitterly cold. That feature had been included to prevent the sort of sabotage he was planning now. But the very nature of his work excluded him from suspicion.

No one had remarked upon him wandering around with his gear, bag of tools, and gloves. Goggles pushed back on his head, he seemed more cheerful and energetic than usual. No one had taken this for the danger sign that it was, instead choosing to see it as an improvement.

Barrett had bypassed the earlier power node precisely because he knew that doing so would enable him to take both of them out by accessing this one first; neutralizing the backup as well as the primary in one fell swoop. Carefully he keyed in the access code for that particular wall panel; the keypad beeped, and the whole wall segment came loose in his hands. Slowly, he peeled it back. He glanced around nervously; no

one should be down here now, but after the interfacers had sent his warning, someone might be down to check on them, just to be on the safe side. Of course, in one of the government run facilities there would be security cameras. Not here. But that cut both ways; it was entirely possible that someone else might come down here and find him.

Carefully he took his injector. Severing the connections would not be enough; they would self seal, and given time they would re-connect. His injector was full of green bile mixed with the miserable chemical cocktail from Europa's oceans, which was technically water but had a lot of other unpleasant things in it. He injected the power node three times, then waited long enough to see if it was having an effect. Nodding to himself, he resealed the wall panel.

The lights already were flickering as he returned upstairs.

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His injector was full of green bile mixed with the miserable chemical cocktail from Europa's oceans, which was technically water but had a lot of other unpleasant things in it.

He disabled a second, then a third node without being detected; twenty minutes of nerve-wracking work, followed by long minutes of walking or using elevators to avoid suspicion. After he shut down the second node, his personal text communicator beeped. Only the interfacers had datastream implants here, unhooked people like himself avoided such cybernetic

surgery. He could've had a full vidlink communicator, but freedom of choice was of course respected. The text message was from his more experienced coworker, Anishai. They had no bosses; each of them were independent contractors. She was checking to see if he had gotten the alert; he assured her he was already on the job. Perhaps he would've smiled as he texted it, but he was too nervous. His palms weren't quite sweating yet, but they were shaky.

The fourth panel was actually in a semi-populated area, but as he expected, people had received warnings by now, just as he had, and were either keeping to their own homes and activating private generators, or else gathering on the main floor. By the time they suspected him, there'd be so many dark zones for him to hide in that it would be too late. He'd signal the surface colonies, and they would send 'humanitarian' aid...

A hand landed on his shoulder. He turned and saw the grim face of Alston Peth, one of the few colony members who had come to Earth in the last few years.

"Sloppy," he said, voice thick with disgust. "You didn't really think you'd get away with this, did you?"

"I don't know what you mean—" Barrett began, trying to keep the nerves out of his voice.

"Anishai contacted me. Thought you might need 'moral support'." Peth's face twisted. "She actually liked you, you know."

Barrett was caught, but going by his manner, Peth hadn't told anyone else. He could still savage this. His fear left him and he drew himself up straight. "She felt sorry for me," he

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Sarah Hoyt: Prometheus Award Acceptance Remarks

I wrote *Darkship Thieves* because I was furious. Right about the time that cloning started being talked about, I expected and wasn't disappointed, to see the spate of books coming out, about how cloning was a bad thing, because it was going to lead to people being cloned for sexual objects, or people being cloned for spare parts. In fact there was a movie about that recently. And all that stuff, that I expected, I expected the dystopian view. What I also expected but didn't like was the fact that the tone of all these novels was, "there ought to be a law." And the fact that all these corruptions of the technology were envisioned as happening as if society were "free," and people were able to do this. And that made me furious.

A free society is better for preventing that kind of abuse. For one, cloning an entire person, to have your brain placed in them, is incredibly inefficient. The same way that slavery is inefficient. Raising humans is very expensive. And it's not worth it. It would be much easier to clone body parts, which in a free society is more likely to be enforced by public opinion. While if we make it illegal, it will go underground and then all sorts of abuses happen. And this connects to the fact that people tend to react to new technology, particularly technology that can enhance human life, which cloning can by allowing people to live longer and thereby lowering our risks of failing. And extending human life and extending our possibilities in a thousand ways.

People tend to react to this with fear, and by saying there should be a law. Anything that's enforced by law will get corrupted. Look at the French Revolution. Liberty, equality, fraternity. There is no way to enforce the last two, except by becoming a tyranny. And that's why we had the guillotine. And that's what will happen. Every time you enforce something, no matter how high your virtue, by the force of law, which ties in to *Animal Farm*.

Animal Farm by the way, had the force of a completely subversive work to me, when I read it in Portugal shortly after the revolution, because, again, in the Portuguese revolution they were trying to enforce equality by law. And that always goes wrong. So reading *Animal Farm* was a profoundly freeing experience, because I went, "Yes, I'm not alone in seeing the



Sarah Hoyt with the Prometheus Award plaque and gold coin for her novel, *Darkship Thieves*.



As promised to the readers of her blog, Sara Hoyt shows off her fishnet stockings.

problem with this!"

So, that was why I wrote the book. Because I wanted to contrast a society where bioengineering—cloning, all sorts of bio advances—were illegal, and therefore went underground and became profoundly corrupt. To a society where they were allowable, and therefore public opinion could police them, and make it inadvisable for individuals to go to the extremes. Humans aren't angels, and laws aren't going to make them angels. We're more likely to get there in our own self-interest, and by being watched, and having things in the open.

My son, when I told him about having to speak about the novel, said I should say two things, and I'm going to say them because he couldn't be here—he's driving his younger brother to school. My son said to tell you that the future is free, but the past is extremely expensive. That is, technology can free us, and can allow for more individual scope, but if we insist on trying to narrow technology and doing things the way that it's always been done, and flattering up to the past, it's going to cost us a lot, not just in money, but in lives and in opportunities.

We see this right now. A lot of professions, including mine, are changing very rapidly with technology. And people are trying to legislate us back into the past. Or to use tricks to bring us back into the way things were done. That's never going to work, and it's just going to cost opportunities. It's going to cost money. It's going to cost lives. In the same way, my son said to say, that it's possible, in fact the future is a boot stomping on the human face forever. However, when a boot is stomping on your face you're in an ideal position to kick the person in the nuts.

Renovation - Worldcon 2011 Convention Report

By Fred Curtis Moulton

The 69th World Science Fiction Convention was held Wednesday August 17 through Sunday August 21, 2011 in Reno, Nevada, USA. The Reno-Sparks Convention Center was the site for most of the events with some held at the Peppermill, in particular the Masquerade and the Hugo Ceremony. The Atlantis Hotel hosted the Hospitality rooms (aka Room Parties) and the Con Suite. Being held in casinos in Nevada meant there was more smoking than many attendees might have been used to, however, it was not as bad as I had expected.

The hotels and convention center are located south of downtown Reno and thus were not near the classic older Reno hotels such as the El Dorado or the Silver Legacy. While it would have been better if the Peppermill was closer to the Atlantis and Convention Center, the separation of less than one mile did not appear to me to be a major issue. I was able to walk from the point where the Peppermill property meets the sidewalk to where the Atlantis meets the sidewalk in about eleven minutes the evening following the Masquerade. And there were shuttles which ran from the Peppermill to the Convention Center and to the Atlantis Hotel.

The Atlantis Hotel was connected to the Convention Center by an elevated and air conditioned walkway. However, I found that I seldom used it since I enjoyed being out in the fresh air. Plus there was an added bonus of the side exit from the Convention Center nearest to the Atlantis had an enclosed entryway with metal pieces mounted near the ceiling being struck and producing a surprisingly soothing sonic experience. I would occasionally just stop and listen and relax before heading to the Atlantis and I noticed that I was not the only one.

The convention center was large enough for most panels and only a few were standing room only. The events featuring Dr. Demento were well attended by fans who enjoyed the recordings he played and the commentary about them. Of course, as with any Worldcon, it is impossible to attend every event. However, there were always quality events throughout the day.

The dealers' area had a good variety of merchandise and interested fans and was well arranged with aisles wide enough



that traffic jams were not a common event. In the dealers' room were L. Neil Smith and Scott Bieser at the Big Head Press table

Greg Benford's book *Chiller* was reissued as an ebook with additional material. To involve the more traditional booksellers with ebooks, there was a card purchased from the traditional booksellers which has a code for the purchaser to redeem online for the book; I found that this worked well.

The Art Show had interesting works on display. Although a few were for display only and not for sale, there were many which could be had at very reasonable prices. And the temptation to purchase was great (I only gave into temptation once). In addition there was a special exhibition of works from the collection of the late Kenneth A. Moore, a longtime fan, Con runner, and lover of art.

An important feature of this Worldcon was the special track for teachers held on Wednesday the first day of the Con. These panels focused on teaching SF and facilitating literacy. The reports I heard were very positive. By not having this Worldcon over Labor Day weekend this special programming for teachers was possible. Because so many schools are starting before Labor Day many families with children, teachers or even older students have conflicts with Worldcons scheduled on Labor Day. Persons complaining about the "graying of fandom" should take notice. The Renovation Worldcon had a date and a series of panels which worked for teachers. Not to mention that Labor Day conflicts with Burning Man and DragonCon.

Each Worldcon has a Business Meeting and the Business

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Wolfsangel & Fenrir

By M.D. Lachlan

Pyr Books, 2010 & 2011

Reviewed by Karen Brown

“Warriors, he thought, had too much of the world. If it was ruled by merchants there wouldn’t be half the killing.” These, the thirteenth and fourteenth sentences of M.D. Lachlan’s *Fenrir*, echo sentiments from the first book in this werewolf series, *Wolfsangel*. A merchant proves to be a pivotal character in each book, both of whom view their craft as the peaceful alternative to the warfare overtaking their worlds by the Northerners, the Norsemen, the Vikings. In both books, the introduction of the merchant character in these terms—which is stated more prominently in the second than the first—leads the reader to think it will be a theme of the stories. Unfortunately, that is not the case, but the repeated notion that trade creates a better chance for peace makes these books worthy of mention. In fact, Lachlan (a pseudonym for mainstream author Mark Barrowcliffe) makes a remarkable (if unintentional) case for the merchant’s craft (and therefore, peace) is undermined by the whims of the powerful.

But we get ahead of ourselves. The series is first and foremost a story about Odin, the god of gods in Norse mythology, who is entertained throughout the millennia by his self-created destiny with a werewolf, also of his own making. Odin has created his own “Groundhog Day,” in which the story repeats itself throughout all time until Odin finally meets his ultimate demise to the werewolf, presumably in the third book to come. The main characters repeat themselves as well. The great mystery, though, in each book, is which character will play Odin, and who will play the three mortals: the werewolf, the werewolf’s brother, and the werewolf’s lady interest (who unknowingly finds her way to Odin and then becomes the werewolf’s bait). Odin, apparently, likes to keep such details unknown even to himself, making the game that much more entertaining.

This mystery is the heart of each book, and the reader is meant to be kept guessing for substantially the entire length of each novel. Unfortunately, such a feat in a novel is a very difficult one to pull off, when the characters themselves do not really know who they are. In his first book, *Wolfsangel*, Lachlan attempts to achieve this complex goal with much character introspection. For fast-moving, action adventure novels, featuring berserkers and werewolves, this introspection—usually chapters at a time—causes continual drags in the action. The introspection in some cases is so repetitive and mind-numbing, that even though it actually moves the complex concepts forward, it does so at a snails-pace.

Fortunately, in its second incarnation, *Fenrir*, this introspection (in which the characters, and the reader, try to figure out what role they took in the first book and what role they will take this time) takes place at the same time the characters also are moving forward physically in the book. *Fenrir* could be read independently of *Wolfsangel*. But having read the books in the correct order, it’s hard not to imagine that the characters are thinking about Vali, Feilig and Adisla from *Wolfsangel*. It

doesn’t help that Lachlan purposefully uses these *Wolfsangel* names periodically throughout *Fenrir* to remind us that these characters are simply new physical manifestations of Vali, Feilig and Adisla. Oh, and of course, Odin. Consequently, either because the reader already has met these characters and knows they will be searching for their identity, or because Lachlan has learned how to tell the story better the second time around, *Fenrir* is an easier read than *Wolfsangel*.

Even so, *Fenrir* is a confusing book. Both books suffer from “too many characters” syndrome. Obviously, the author wants to keep you guessing, but sometimes enough is enough. The book is absolutely silent about one particular character’s motivations, one who repeatedly saves the life of Adisla and provides a guiding light for her. But why? He is then discarded about midway through the book, and we never learn anything more about him. Unfortunately, his role appears to be nothing more than a plot device.

Beware. Both *Fenrir* and *Wolfsangel* are gruesome, but *Fenrir* on a scale far deeper than *Wolfsangel*. In *Fenrir*, we meet one of the characters (who could be Vali, Feilig, or Odin?) feeding tender, juicy pieces of one monk to another monk (who could be Vali, Feilig, or Odin?).

But what of the merchants?

In *Wolfsangel*, Veles is an extraordinarily wealthy merchant (whose home features, get this, separate rooms for his animals) with critically important ties to the ruling parties of all of the lands across which his trade reaches. How a man of his talents can introduce products to the different cultures in this ancient age, thereby improving the standard of living across the lands, is very libertarian indeed. Because everyone (generally) wants the fruits of his talents, he and/or his agents are welcome just about everywhere, except perhaps a berserker boat.

Veles is a hero, ready to save the characters for whom the readers, at least by that point, have developed quite a bit of sympathy. (WARNING: SPOILER ALERT) Unfortunately, however, when the merchant’s wellbeing, if not life, is tied to the authorities who are in conflict with the characters Veles seeks to save, the merchant must take a less than heroic role. Veles jeopardizes the main characters’ lives, and then ultimately—seeking profit, of course—frees the werewolf from his everlasting trap. The result is a character very much akin to a corrupt Wall Street businessman, at least as portrayed by Occupy Wall Street and mainstream media.

Would Veles have taken this corrupt position had his livelihood, and therefore his life, not been threatened by the loss of royal favor? Probably not. Lachlan’s portrayal of Veles is a complex one. Veles is not a savior; he is a greedy businessman, albeit one whose profession could ultimately mean peace if it were not so corrupted by those in power. Fortunately, or not, Lachlan just tells a story, and is never preachy. What the merchant brings, though, is a fascinating and unexpected thread through, of all things, a werewolf story.

What a nice surprise, then, to see a merchant play a more prominent role in *Fenrir*. The book opens with Leshii, an eastern (likely Russian?) trader who has found himself in France, looking upon the Viking encampment outside Paris’s

—Continued next page

—*Lachlan reviews, continued from previous page*

walls pondering the peace that merchants could bring to the landscape.

Leshii, a less than prosperous but optimistic merchant, at almost all times, thinks in terms of supply and demand. In other words, he judges his course of action by what will bring him the most profit, the least loss, and the greatest likelihood of survival. Fortunately for him, for the most part, this course of action jives with one of the characters he accompanies through a large part of the book, the reincarnation of Adisla, Aelis. Aelis, who can read emotions of the living creatures in the book, views Leshii as conniving and dishonest. Would this be less so if Leshii were not trying to sell his goods (which is none other than Aelis herself) to a king?

To his credit, Leshii is not truly a dealer in human flesh (which is consumed in great quantities in both books, by the way). Leshii begins the book with packmules overflowing with silks and eastern treasures, and a lock of Aelis's hair he hopes to sell to royalty to make a wig. (WARNING: SPOILER ALERT) Unfortunately, when the invading Viking king Sigfrid takes possession of Leshii's goods, Leshii has practically no livelihood left and is left with no choice but to deliver Aelis to a Rus king Helgi in return for a reward. While he is never completely straightforward with Aelis that he intends to seek a reward for her deliverance, he is otherwise upfront and honest with her: he is taking her to Helgi who everyone believes will deliver her from all the harm she faces from practically the beginning of the book. Leshii is old, a bit overweight, and not a fighter; but Aelis could do much, much worse for a traveling

companion.

These are not libertarian novels. They do not shed light on a free economy. But whether the author intended it or not, he portrayed images of what a free economy could be like if the merchants were left unfettered to ply their trade.

At least Lachlan pays some tribute to merchants in this ancient time, where an entire city in what will become Denmark has been built for trade, and the far-reaching port of that city is not meant for protection but to ensure fast and efficient trading for the ocean-bearing vessels. Youngsters run alongside boats selling food and drink (the forerunners of our hospitality industry), and there are lodgings for rebt; there is nothing despicable and dishonest about these portrayals. It is an admirable depiction of a free market.

Fortunately, Lachlan loves a mystery, and despises consistency. Will Leshii prove to be Vali, Feilig, or Odin, or someone better than them all? The surprise is worth the read.



2011 Prometheus Hall of Fame winner - *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm has been described as “a dystopian allegorical novella” and few would disagree with that description. However, for our purposes today, let us consider some particular aspects of the work.

This 1946 novella by George Orwell is a work that is well within the scope of SF; that is Science Fiction, Fantasy and related fields. Consider that the first UK edition had the subtitle “A Fairy Story” although this subtitle was dropped in most later editions. And whether *Animal Farm* is shelved and/or listed in SF or in general fiction, it is most certainly SF.

As a work of libertarian SF, *Animal Farm* excels in a number of areas. It is explicitly anti-totalitarian, it has powerful imagery and it has stayed in the public mind for many decades.

The anti-totalitarian nature of *Animal Farm* is well known but we are far enough removed in time from the 1930s and 1940s that it is worth reminding ourselves that *Animal Farm* is also implicitly critical of the regime of Joseph Stalin in the USSR. Consider the Stalinist era practice of persons being removed from photographs and contrast that with the changes over time that occurred with The Seven Commandments which were painted on the big barn at the farm. Orwell was masterful in showing how changes over time can be made until the Seven

Commandments had gradually been reduced to one:

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL
BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

In the novella the changes were made without notice by the pigs and the other animals either did not perceive that there had been changes or did not create a challenge. This lesson of maintaining transparency and openness in legal systems and of not letting the historical record be whitewashed is wellworth remembering.

Many phrases from *Animal Farm* have entered into common usage in the 65 years since publication. The powerful imagery of the book is accessible to readers at many levels and thus is an excellent choice for young adult readers. This is why many readers first encounter the work as students.

Animal Farm is often included in the lists of the best English language novels of the 20th-Century. And in 1996, at L.A. Con III, a Retrospective Hugo for Best Novella was awarded to *Animal Farm*.

This Libertarian Futurist Society Hall of Fame award plaque will be shipped to The Orwell Society in the UK.

—**The Immune review**, continued from page 3

seeks to avenge his dear love's murder. He's also surrounded by characters possessing varying degrees of these qualities, not all of whom turn out to be what you expected.

Meanwhile, the allegorical (often literal) comparisons with how the IRS, DEA, CIA (and, most recently, the Department of Homeland Security) came to be and to hold such immense power, are as striking as they may be instructional. The author's portrayal of how liberty falls instantly in the face of fear and the promise of "public safety" brings alive Ben Franklin's immortal advice: "*They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither...*"

Meanwhile, the text is peppered with wonderful aphorisms about the abuse of power ("*politicians are experts at reckless compassion*," p. 35; "*The problem with politicians is they always come to believe power is wisdom*," p. 62), the tenuous status of liberty ("*... a fragile gift; take one vial of fear, add three drops of lust-for-power, and it's easily poisoned*," p. 341) and this reviewer's personal favorite (p. 226): "*All societies have a ruling class, and all ruling classes have privileges. The certainty of this fact ranks up there with death and taxes.*" (Promotion for this book might consider a t-shirt or bumpersticker franchise; there are ample opportunities for new catchphrases entering the culture within the text.)

In addition, the entire book is built upon considerations of the "FS maneuver" (defined loosely as "a deception hiding an underlying agenda"). The plot is itself a series of deceptions and red herrings, some delivered by the various characters, others by the author directly. The term gets its name from the diversionary tactics that brought about the successful D-Day invasion at Normandy. "FS" stands for Fortitude South, which was the code name for that operation, and reportedly involved dummy rubber tanks, faked transmissions from fictitious army units and many other aspects of disinformation. The author's ingenious use of this technique adds a whole new layer to the narrative, and will twist the average reader into knots trying to predict the ending. Best advice: strap in securely, open the book and enjoy the ride!

Doc Lucky (Dr. John) Meisenheimer seems an unlikely author for a book like this, at least at first glance. His current position as an Orlando dermatologic surgeon (chief of that division at Orlando Regional Medical Center) is preceded by his times as a national champion swimmer and a yo-yo collector (and author of a book about such collecting), along with a recent stint as writer-director of a National Lampoon production, a look-behind-the-scenes of the making of the parody *RoboDoc*.

However, he has somehow taken this eclectic combination

of skills and experience, added a truly libertarian perspective on politics and culture, and woven a cautionary tale about how too much reliance on society and trust in government solutions can only lead to more need for individual creativity and self-determination to unwind the spools of red tape and power-lust, and actually find a solution to life's problems.

Along the way he presents a love story, a number of family interactions, looks into the hearts (of various shades of red, black and grey) of politicians, soldiers, sailors, airmen, doctors, lawyers and so-called "ordinary folk" alike, with a unifying theme about the danger of letting liberty be subordinated to false security. *The Immune* deserves to be added to both your summer-reading list and your collection of pro-liberty dystopian visions. It may proudly take its place alongside the classics of libertarian-themed speculative fiction by Heinlein, Spider Robinson, L. Neil Smith and their ilk.

The Immune is available from LJS&S Publishing, or via <http://www.immune.com>.

This review originally appeared online at Rational Review <<http://www.rationalreview.com/content/92205>> and is reprinted with the author's permission.

Anthem: The Graphic Novel

By Ayn Rand

Adapted by Charles Santino and Joe Staton

New American Library, February 2011, \$15

Reviewed by Max Jahr

Three of Ayn Rand's novels have been adapted into film: *We the Living* (an Italian production in 1942), *The Fountainhead* (1949), and most recently *Atlas Shrugged* (Part 1 appeared in 2011 and Part 2 currently is in production). Yet, in my opinion, her most visually striking work remains the novella, *Anthem*, first published in 1938. Told in the form of a diary, it is perhaps the least suited for the screen, more suited as an animated movie, or graphic novel. And now that it's been rendered as an actual graphic novel, I think that medium enriches the story and adds depth to Rand's dystopian/utopian vision, despite some flaws in the actual production quality of the final product.

The world of *Anthem* stands with the ranks of early 20th century dysopias, such as Yevgeny Zamiatin's *Wz*. It predates many of the more famous dystopias like George Orwell's *1984* or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and even Rand's own *Atlas Shrugged*. There is a jarring sense of unreality when first reading *Anthem* for the first time, for Rand removed the personal pronoun, and characters refer to themselves as "we" rather than "I" throughout most of the story. In this future world, technology has regressed. People live in small communities, their lives and vocations, marriage choices and names decided for them by a close-minded council antagonistic towards any personal choice or idea of self. This is the antithesis of Rand's later ideals of the "virtue of selfishness" that she would embrace

Moving?

Please send any changes in your mailing address to:

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—*To Remain Free*, continued from page 5

corrected Peth. “There’s a difference.” He kept his eyes on Peth’s. He could’ve gone for his gun, but Peth would likely anticipate that; his own shields would deflect it anyway.

So instead he used his injector, which was already in his hand. He stabbed under-handed, which most people wouldn’t anticipate.

But his injector thudded uselessly against body armor. His eyes widened; Peth shook his head. “Three tours as a mercenary against the Global Dominion. kid. That’s why I came out here.”

Barrett felt a deep, dark pit of despair open under him. Desperately, he lashed out with a kick; but he was slow and untrained. Peth knocked him out with one punch.

— • —

The trial was short, the sentence brutal; death by being ejected into the deep ocean without a pressure suit. Donner watched without apparent emotion as Barrett was sentenced.

He felt for the boy, but didn’t dare give himself away. Only the girl Anishai wept for him; and everyone knew why that was. Only Barrett had misunderstood her affection.

But the boy’s sacrifice had not been in vain; he had given Donner time to come up with a much better plan.

And very soon now, he would carry it out....

...*To be continued*

—*Worldcon report*, continued from page 7

Meeting for this Con had several long and complicated issues relating to various subcommittees and the Hugo awards. Several contentious issues were handled and for those interested, video of the proceedings are online.

The Libertarian Futurist Society awards ceremony was held on Friday at 1:00 PM. The event began with remarks about the Hall of Fame winner *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. Then the Prometheus Best Novel was presented for *Darkship Thieves* and Sarah Hoyt delivered some well-received acceptance remarks. The question and answer session followed, and then the event concluded with photo opportunities.

On Sunday morning, various LFS members and friends gathered for breakfast in the Purple Parrot restaurant in the Atlantis for breakfast and lively conversation.

The conversations were far ranging and I had several positive reports about the enjoyment of the breakfast gathering.

The Con as a whole seemed to be upbeat. Various groups were seen either in fan tables or at room parties. The Heinlein Society had their annual meeting and a table in the hall near the fan area, as well as displaying three paintings previously

owned by the Heinleins. The Heinlein Society project of supplying a CD of materials is having a good reception amongst teachers. Several of the bids for future Worldcons had well attended bid parties. There was discussion of various new conventions being planned for various areas and hopefully these plans will come to fruition.

The only complaints I heard were related to difficulties with the Con Suite and room parties in the Atlantis. Perhaps the Atlantis was made aware or could not accommodate some traditions of SF fandom in particular, the Con Suite was very restricted on what types of items it could serve. From the reports I heard, the Security personnel at the Atlantis had differing approaches to working with the fans, particularly on the party floors; my personal experience was that they were generally friendly and in at least one case, a hotel security person asked to be assigned to the party floor just because he enjoyed the fans. I also heard about the security person who had read SF for decades and was not aware of SF fandom and conventions until Worldcon was at the hotel at which he worked.

At the time of the writing of this report the final membership numbers both supporting and attending are not available. However, based on what I have heard, unofficially membership was higher than many people expected. This worldcon set a record with 1006 valid Hugo nominating ballots and yet another record with 2100 valid Hugo final ballots.

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, \$10. Strauss, 10 Hill #22-LP, Newark NJ 07102.

—*Anthem graphic novel review*, continued from page 10

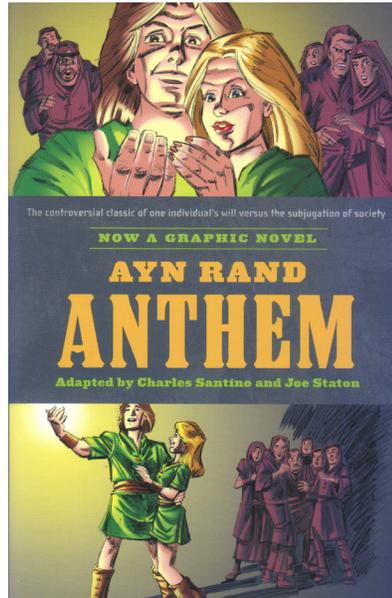
as integral to her philosophy of Objectivism.

The graphic novel version of *Anthem* hews very closely to the original. It tells the story of Equality 7-2521, a young man who yearns to learn science, but is assigned a vocation as street sweeper. He discovers a hidden trap door that leads to an underground area dating to “the forgotten times” and dares to explore the tunnel and everything that lies within, without first notifying the council. By keeping his secret, teaching himself science from his discoveries, he begins a journey toward freedom.

In Equality 7-2521’s life on the surface, he sees and falls in love with a girl, Liberty 5-3000 (given the interesting name, The Golden One, by Equality). In his society, love is forbidden—spouses are assigned by the council with the purpose of propagation. Yet Equality dares to love and dream, to seek knowledge, and kindles a spark of his individuality. This spark leads him to value his own thoughts and feelings as primary, rather than convention and council decrees. Equality’s

first and perhaps naïve thought is to share his invention with his society via the council of scientists. When instead he is hounded and his invention slated for destruction, he is faced with a choice—what does he value most? As Equality grapples with this decision, he speaks to the soul of every libertarian/individualist. Contrary to anti-individualists, this doesn’t mean we see the world as society vs. the individual—both co-exist from a libertarian viewpoint that see society as arising from consent and voluntary interaction. Only to the anti-individualist can the individual be seen as the enemy, and the “community” as supreme. They make the idea of a community and society concrete objects, and the individual a mere cog, with specific roles, and minimal freedom.

In terms of execution, this graphic novel both succeeds and fails. The graphics come across as sketches, not fully realized art. Each page is broken down into three horizontal panels of art; this uniformity in *Anthem* slows the pace and robs it of some visual appeal. Still, having *Anthem* appear in this format might broaden the appeal of the book, and the ideas within. It contains a story we often forget, that invention and daring sometimes find themselves at odds with the ruling class, the differences are scored and feared, yet the fire to improve ultimately can prevail.



PROMETHEUS

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