

PROMETHEUS

Interview with S. Andrew Swann

By Thomas E. Jackson

S. Andrew Swann writes science fiction and fantasy and has published 19 books so far, with more soon to come. His latest science fiction novel, *Prophets*, is the first book of a new trilogy, Apotheosis, and subjects future mankind to a collectivist menace. Readers will get their first glimpse of whether mankind can be saved when DAW Books comes out with *Heretics* this year.

Swann is the pen name for Steven Swiniarski, who lives in Solon, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. He works as a database manager for a private child services agency in the Cleveland area. Swiniarski also recently has begun publishing a series of novels for Ballantine that he describes as a “historical fantasy paranormal romance.” The first book in that series, *Wolfbreed*, came out in August 2009.

Swiniarski blogs and offers samples of his writing at his Web site, www.sandrewswann.com, and can be found on facebook under his pen name. He agreed to take questions about *Prophets* and his writing career.

Prophets, your latest science fiction novel, returns readers to the same universe as the Hostile Takeover trilogy, published about 13 years ago. What compelled you to return?

It was in the planning stages for nearly that long. A long string of personal issues managed to delay all my writing projects for a big chunk of that time, and there were two other novels in the queue beforehand. So it was more a matter of things preventing my return, rather than a sudden impulse to revisit the universe.

The planet Bakunin in Prophets is a rather unflattering depiction of anarcho-capitalism. You have describe Bakunin as “more like Somalia with venture capital than a libertarian utopia,” and the reviewer at I09, Christopher Hsiang, wrote that after getting a look at Bakunin, “paying some taxes and following building codes doesn’t seem all that bad.” Should we assume you are a limited government libertarian rather than an anarchist?

I’ve been described as a Jeffersonian Anarchist. My political view is, in essence, that the State is pretty much an inevitable side effect of groups of people working together, and that the

only way to prevent any one group from gaining totalitarian control over the whole is to have as many competing interests at odds with each other as possible. If you have a weak or non-existent State, guess what, some other entity will fill that void—even if it is a bunch of Ayn Rand fanboys picking up guns so no one else can harsh their capitalist mellow.

Does holding a regular job give you the freedom to take your time with the books and do the job right? It seems to me that Roger Zelazny, a Cleveland area native whose writings I really like, did not become a better writer after he quit his job to work full time.

I wish it did. It really means that I have less time to devote to the work, even if I take longer periods of time to produce a novel. What a day job does do is give you financial security so you don’t end up taking projects you don’t really want to do just for a paycheck, it also keeps you grounded in reality so your characters don’t all become reflections of a whiny frustrated writer.

Who are the writers who have had the biggest influence on your writing?

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The newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society

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2010 Prometheus Hall of Fame finalists announced

The Libertarian Futurist Society has announced the finalists for the Prometheus Hall of Fame Award. This category honors novels, novellas, stories, graphic novels, anthologies, films, TV shows/series, plays, poems, music recordings and other works of fiction first published or broadcast more than five years ago.

The Libertarian Futurist Society's Hall of Fame committee has selected four finalists for the 2010 award, from a field of 13 nominated works:

- "As Easy as A.B.C.," by Rudyard Kipling (1912)
- *Cryptonomicon*, by Neal Stephenson (1999)
- "No Truce with Kings," by Poul Anderson (1964)
- "Repent, Harlequin!," Said the Ticktockman," by Harlan Ellison (1965)

Final voting will take place in June and early July of 2010. All members of the Libertarian Futurist Society are eligible to vote. The winner will be announced after the counting of the votes; the award will be presented in a ceremony at the World Science Fiction Convention.

The Prometheus awards for Best Novel, Best Classic Fiction (Hall of Fame) and (occasional) Special awards honor outstanding science fiction/fantasy that explores the possibilities of a free future, champions human rights (including personal and economic liberty), dramatizes the perennial conflict between individuals and coercive governments, or critiques the tragic consequences of abuse of power—especially by the State.

The Prometheus Award, sponsored by the Libertarian Futurist Society (<http://www.lfs.org>), was established in 1979, making it one of the most enduring awards after the Nebula and Hugo awards, and one of the oldest fan-based awards currently in sf. Presented annually since 1982 at the World Science Fiction Convention, the Prometheus Awards include a gold coin and plaque for each of the winners.

The Hall of Fame, established in 1983, focuses on older classic fiction, including novels, novellas, short stories, poems and plays. Past Hall of Fame award winners range from Robert Heinlein and Ayn Rand to Ray Bradbury and Ursula LeGuin.

Founded in 1982, the Libertarian Futurist Society sponsors the annual Prometheus Award and Prometheus Hall of Fame; publishes reviews, news and columns in the quarterly newsletter, *Prometheus*; arranges annual awards ceremonies at the WorldCon; debates libertarian futurist issues (such as private space exploration); and provides fun and fellowship for libertarian SF fans.

A list of past winners of LFS awards can be found on the LFS web site at www.lfs.org.

For more information, contact LFS President Chris Hibbert (hibbert@mydruthers.com).

LETTERS

Dear Prometheans,

I agree with Cory Doctorow's assertion (last issue) that SF authors often contrive situations to justify acts that would be repugnant in normal life. His example—Ender Wiggin—is one of many Cardian characters who use the “abused ubermensch” trick Van Vogt pioneered. Nerdy readers identify with mutant-plus kid who's bullied because of his superiority—which he then “regrets” having to use, ruthlessly, putting the thumb on humanity for our own good. Classic pandering. Yum.

The trick is used in many subgenres, even feminist utopias. As of 2003 (when last I checked), all but one were premised on some mega-calamity or holocaust, conveniently excusing counter-discrimination, often against males. (Don't be smug; libertarian SF also has expedient cliches!)

Hence, I was nodding with interest when (*screech!*) Cory veered to cast a barb my way! Though off-topic from “sf'nal contrivance,” it was fascinating, redolent and many-leveled.

“We see also in non-Science Fiction from some of science fiction's practitioners, books like (David Brin's) *The Transparent Society*, the kind of council of defeat that holds that our ability to control our political rulers will never allow us to stop them from spying on us, so we should just give up, and nevertheless hope that we can somehow have enough power over our political rulers that we can force them to let us spy on them.”

Whoosh, so many layers in one concise stab! Starting with...Cory, is this the 5th time I've answered strawmen by asking that you *read* the book? Or eschew the same dismissive contempt you ascribe to OS Card?

For example, credit me with the same motivating drive I see in you—fierce dedication to this narrow window of Enlightenment freedom? We both worry the window may close and civilization revert to the 4000-year norm - pyramidal hierarchy, only now tech-empowered to surveil us and even read our minds. Oligarchy forever. Is preventing that and preserving enlightened individualism your driving goal? It is mine. (*Meta-remark: see how I both paraphrase Cory and ask if I did it well. Adults do this, when they are more curious than reflexively hostile.*)

Given that same, fierce goal, Cory, how plausible is it that my thesis arose out of “defeatism”? You may disdain as *useless* my proposed method to preserve freedom. But unprovenanced contempt for my motives is nasty. Further, your reasoning re: transparency is strange. Show us one time when elites failed to utilize every extant power to see. As Papa Heinlein said, “the chief effect of privacy laws is to make the bugs smaller.” And they *will* get smaller, endlessly.

The trick of our narrow renaissance was citizens looking back! Watching the watchmen. Reciprocal accountability is the basis for science, markets, democracy... and libertarianism. So, how do we restrict govt surveillance without FIRST seizing the *sousveillance* power to supervise, invasively-criticize, and thus enforce those well-meant privacy laws?

Isn't my prescription the prerequisite for yours?

But put that aside. Your jab wasn't posed as argument,

but insult. (Parsed semantically: “Brin is a defeatist wimp.”) Which proves you never cracked open *The Transparent Society*, a militant manifesto for citizen power, ferociously pursued and sagaciously fought for. My call to strip the mighty—elites of right or left—down to their underwear is as pugnacious as anything you ever said.

David Brin

<http://www.davidbrin.com>

Dear Anders,

I'm pleased to announce that I have confirmed that Orson Scott Card will be speaking and attending all three days at FreedomFest this year (July 7-11, Las Vegas). It was really tough, I worked three years, to get him... But he is now firmly committed to speaking. His topic is “Fictional Science,” and he will be on a panel about Ayn Rand, plus a talk about *Ender's Game* and his other works.

As for other speakers, we have a great line-up...

Last week we confirmed Greg Mortenson, author of the famed book *Three Cups of Tea*, which has been on the *New York Times* Bestseller “trade paperback” list for 100 weeks and sold over 4 million copies. Have you read his book? It's an incredible positive story of his building now over 130 private schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan, mainly for girls. He's the most admired American in the Middle East now, and the Taliban won't touch him... a great libertarian success story. (Yet oddly nobody in *Reason*, the *Freeman*, or *Liberty* writes about him—why is that?)

Mortenson gets thousands of requests to speak each year, and he wants to come to FreedomFest (on July 8)... A real feather in our cap.

I'm listening to his new book right now, *Stones Into Schools: How to Fight the War on Terror with Education, not Bombs and Soldiers*, now #5 on the *New York Times* Bestseller list. Really inspiring. He doesn't just talk the talk, he walks the walk.

Here's his website: <http://www.gregmortenson.com/>

Those who sign up for FreedomFest before April 15 get the early bird special (\$100 off per person/\$200 per couple), plus an American Eagle Silver Dollar, symbol of FreedomFest.

Best wishes, AEIOU,

Mark Skousen

[Editor's Note: If any LFSers are planning to attend FreedomFest, *Prometheus* would certainly welcome any conference reports. Orson Scott Card's latest novel, *Hidden Empire*, is a finalist for the 2010 Prometheus Award in the Best Novel category. Although Card probably does not identify himself as a libertarian, his appearance at FreedomFest certainly should open some interesting discussions.]

The Unincorporated Man

By Dani Kollin and Eytan Kollin

TOR, 2009

Reviewed by *Chris Hibbert*

Dani Kollin & Eytan Kollin's *The Unincorporated Man* is a wonderful exploration of an economic idea, in the vein of Barry B. Longyear's Circus World series. *Circus World* looked at what might happen if a society tried to base all interpersonal actions on buying and selling. The citizens of that society were descended from a crashed circus spaceship, and they paid one another for everything: unsolicited advice, pulling out a chair, telling a story around a campfire. If the benefits weren't obvious, you might have to pay people to listen to your spiel, which is the position of the protagonist in that story. Building a story around the exploration of an outlandish idea is a common approach in science fiction, and this story is a great addition to that genre.

In this novel, the Kollin brothers explore an idea that might have been invented by Robert Shiller: fund education and other personal development by allowing investors to take a share of a person's future income. In the society presented here, everyone is incorporated, and the government, parents, higher education, and others own shares in a person to compensate them for the work they've done raising that individual. Most people start out with a minor stake in their own net worth, and many of their options in life are controlled by the investors. Those who do well can use some of their earnings to buy back shares and try to gain control. Getting to "majority" is a big deal, but it's not enough to be in control of your own destiny. You have to get to 70% or so in order to protect yourself from minor setbacks and lawsuits from investors who can claim that you aren't doing all that you owe for the shareholders' value.

There are obviously lots of potential drawbacks with this kind of system, and the events in the book illustrate them well. But there are also many ways that this could work out, and many people who might be better off if someone else would benefit from ensuring that they got all the training and support that would help them to provide the best value to the economy. Since everyone in the society takes the system for granted, they provide arguments and illustrations for how well it works, and how the system enabled them to reach their present position, even as they struggle to gain control of their destiny.

Into this society (a little more than 300 years in our future) steps a man from our present. Justin Cord was a successful industrialist, a powerful, ethical, individual achiever who built a business empire before having himself cryonically frozen in the face of a cancer diagnosis. Cord didn't trust the standard cryonics providers, guessing that they would be attractive targets in the time between his de-animation and revival. He is proven correct—many others were frozen, but all the known preserved remains were destroyed in the riots after the great collapse. Cord has a contemporary outlook, with a strong pro-freedom bias, and doesn't accept the idea that anyone else should own his shares. This causes numerous problems, which gives the Kollins many opportunities to explore the implications. Cord's struggles to remain free make him the target of

the world's dominant company, which has some good reasons and some bad reasons for not wanting any exceptions to the world's economic set-up.

The characters are very well drawn; even the bad guys have a mix of noble and ignoble motives, and are smart enough to be worthy opponents. Cord himself has strengths and weaknesses, so his actions don't have an air of inevitable success (other than his ability to survive amazing attempts on his life.)

The story does a very good job of showing both pluses and minuses for each side of the debate. The story is rich, and the characters constantly interesting. I think this book deserves to be a Prometheus award finalist. It takes a strong position that liberty is important and worth fighting for, and the characters spend their time pushing for different conceptions of what freedom is. I'll have to read a few more of the nominees before I decide whether it's my favorite.

Transition

By Iain M. Banks

Orbit, 2009

Reviewed by *Thomas E. Jackson*

Iain Banks has maintained a dual literary career since publishing *The Wasp Factory* in 1984, publishing mainstream novels as "Iain Banks" and science fiction novels, usually but not always set in his future history of the Culture, as "Iain M. Banks." Confusingly, his new novel, *Transition*, was published using the mainstream byline in the United Kingdom and with the "Iain M. Banks" moniker in the United States. The American publisher, Orbit, would appear to have gotten it right. *Transition* is a science fiction novel, about characters who travel from one parallel world to another, and is as good a science fiction novel as I have read this year.

The time travelers work for an agency called "The Concern," which intervenes in the various parallel worlds, ostensibly for humanitarian purposes. The novel tracks the missions of one secret agent, Temudjin Oh. In some cases, when a person aids humanity with his good work in some of the worlds and dies young in others, Oh intervenes to save the person when necessary so he doesn't die prematurely. Soon, however, he goes much further, assassinating bad guys at the behest of the Culture to prevent them from doing evil.

As the novel progresses, The Concern is revealed as an organization drunk with power, one that abuses its abilities for its own nefarious purposes. One of those purposes involves a very science fictional element, one that I won't reveal because I don't want to provide a spoiler. There is also plenty of discussion on the uses and abuses of torture, with Banks arguing convincingly that torture is wrong in all instances. (One of the characters is a professional torturer who is known as the Philosopher.)

The novel is written from several points of view, includ-

—Continued next page

—*Banks review*, continued from previous page

ing a character who is hiding out anonymously in a mental hospital on one of the worlds. At first, it is not clear how the various characters and story lines relate to each other, but as the book advances, everything comes together in a very satisfying fashion. Libertarians will enjoy Banks' observations on the corrupting quality of wielding coercive power over others and his arguments for civil liberties.

But I haven't nominated *Transition* for the Prometheus Award. What's not to like? Well, there is this, in Chapter 13, on page 326 of the American edition. The novel's heroine, Mrs. Mulverhill, who has revolted against the evil Concern and is apparently also one of the greatest sex partners on all possible worlds, is in conversation with Oh, discussing some of the people he has assassinated. Oh asks if one of the people he killed, Yerge Auslander, really deserved to die, and Mrs. Mulverhill assures him he did:

"No, he really was a shit. He wasn't really a genocidal racist as such but whenever he's not stopped he ends up causing such havoc he might as well as been. Wanted to buy up a state in the U.S. midwest and build an impregnable Nirvana for the super-rich; Xanadu, Shangri-La. Fantasy made real. A Libertarian." From his expression she must have thought he wasn't entirely familiar with the term. She sighed.

"Libertarianism. A simple-minded right-wing ideology ideally suited to those unable or unwilling to see past their own sociopathic self-regard."

I might add that there's nothing in the plot that makes it necessary to attack libertarians by name. Banks apparently just wants to take a shot at libertarians.

And it's hard to understand why he would be so vehement. The libertarian Cato Institute says that it stands for "individual liberty, free markets, and peace," a pretty good brief summary of what mainstream libertarians believe. As Banks is solid on peace and individual liberty, he is arguably much more of a "sociopath" than almost any Republican politician you could name. The only exception that comes to my mind is Ron Paul, who is, after all, a libertarian.

One could argue, I suppose, that if Banks has a problem with libertarians, it is his problem, not ours, and that we have a right to consider giving his novel an award, even if it pisses him off. We've been giving awards for the past few years to many authors who would not describe themselves as libertarians. It would seem like a stretch, though, for an organization that calls itself the "Libertarian Futurist Society" to overlook a passage that directly attacks libertarians.

Still, I feel comfortable suggesting that many readers would find much to like in *Transition*.

Moving?

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The Prisoner

By Carlos J. Cortes

Spectra/Ballantine Books, 2009

Reviewed by Fred Curtis Moulton

Carlos J. Cortes's novel, *The Prisoner*, was recently announced as finalist for the Philip K. Dick Award — www.philipkdickaward.org

This book is a page turner. The novel moves quickly even in those spots where there is an info dump to bring the reader up to speed on the technology central to the novel. This future technology is a method of putting humans in a state of hibernation. The hibernation method is used to replace traditional prisons. The state and federal prisons become obsolete as prisoners put in the new ultra secure high tech hibernation facilities. The Department of Homeland Security has been on a power grab and exerts great influence and control.

The Prisoner opens with a team being processed into the facility and put into hibernation. The reason is so that they can break out and take a particular prisoner with them: someone who was never convicted of a crime and supposedly died in a car crash several years before.

The escape goes through the sewers of Washington D.C. and provides a lot of interesting background about sewers and what you find there. The personal relationships of the main characters are revealed during the course of the novel and provide a richer texture than just the typical thriller.

Given that this is a novel about abuse of government power, there is dialog about the general issues of the need for transparency and of the abuse of government power. Some readers may want more philosophical substance; however, I think the author aimed at a level which is sufficient for the more sophisticated reader but does not lose those readers who are reading primarily for the thrill of the story.

I found the novel very enjoyable and much better than what one usually gets in this type of novel. The characters in the novel are rich enough to carry the plot. This novel is set over 40 years in the future which is one point that did not feel quite right. To me it would have read better if it was set 10 to 15 years in the future, but this is a minor quibble. This novel gets my recommendation.

Jack: Secret Histories

By F. Paul Wilson

Tor, June 2008

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

I hesitated buying F. Paul Wilson's young adult Repairman Jack novel for over a year. Don't get me wrong; I'm a huge RJ fan, having faithfully shelled out far more than the mass market hardcover price and buying the limited edition books from Gauntlet Press so I can read them the moment they are available. Call me "old school," but I felt a certain snarky attitude toward the idea of a young Repairman Jack.

The story in my eyes began with *The Tomb* (aka *Rakoshi*), first

—Continued on page 6

—*Secret Histories review, continued from previous page*

published in 1984. I cheered when Wilson resumed the story many years later starting with *Legacies*, and now as we approach the end of the RJ saga, I find myself reluctant to see Jack in any other light than post-*Rakoshi*. Sure, a couple of references to his childhood had cropped up, but a trilogy about Jack entering high school seemed no fun at all. Not that I dislike YA books; I enjoyed all the Harry Potter novels. However, books like the Potter series *begin* with the characters as kids. To go back after over a dozen adult novels and retroactively create a pre-history seems a little too convenient. Then again, Wilson heavily revised the two book-end novels in the series (*The Tomb* and *Nightworld*), recasting Jack's adult life nearly twenty years ahead of where it originally started. There's already some precedent for adjusting facts to fit a greater story. While the RJ YA novels might not contain as many fixes, they appear geared to exploring more about the forces behind the secret history in Wilson's fictional world. When I finally bought and read *Secret Histories* one year after it was published, I found that I liked it much more than I expected.

The book opens with a trio of teenagers biking through the Jersey Pine Barrens one muggy July afternoon. Jack and two friends, Eddie and Louise "Weezy" Connell are on a mission led by Weezy—locating and destroying illegal traps placed by hunters (an allusion to the short story, "Pelts"). It is the summer before Jack goes to high school, placing him at 14 and a half years old. He is a smart, athletic kid willing to follow his friend Weezy into the Barrens. Not yet the ruthless yet ethical individualist from the regular RJ books, Jack only has the beginnings of a sense of justice. For the most part his interests lie in monster movies, *Weird Tales* type magazines, and Americana from a bygone age. After destroying the traps the kids examine a strangely barren hill. By accident they discover

an artifact that only Jack is able to open, and then on further digging they find an old corpse.

The cops are brought in to investigate, but the discovery unleashes unexpected lethal events in town, as members of the secretive Septimus Lodge, a group which gains more prominence later in Jack's life. There are many such references that readers of the regular series will recognize, such as Walter from "Dat Tay Vao" and *The Touch*, currently the town drunk always looking for "the one" to which to pass on his gift, and mysterious Mrs. Clevenger, who calls herself their mother.

But the central mystery revolves around the mysterious cube that Jack and his friends discovered, as well as the murders of several Lodge members. Young Jack, not even in high school, begins to put together some minor fixes, and finds them intoxicating. Yet he is also restricted in what he can accomplish as a kid in a world ruled by grown-ups, parents included. Jack's lack of knowledge about his father's years in the war drive him to snoop. He discovers a locked box that he tries to pick to no avail. The locked box appears to be the same that Jack's father had with him in *Gateways*, one that Jack was able to pick easily then. This indicates just how much Jack has learned in the almost 20 years since his youthful indiscretion.

The novel ends with almost more questions than answers, but this is the first of a three-book series about Jack's early teen years. At times it is refreshing to see the pre-lethal Jack. His talent for fixes is raw and exciting, and although he has seen death the darkness that will invade and consume his life is still decades away. The sequel was published on February 1st 2010, and you can bet I'll read the new book a lot quicker than I did this one.

—*Swann interview, continued from page 1*

My influences are many and varied, but you can count among them Robert Heinlein, Mack Reynolds, and the Illuminatus! Trilogy (aka, the trifecta that explains my wacky politics.)

Do you have any particular favorite libertarian authors or thinkers?

Does Heinlein count?

Your book dedication in *Prophets* jumped out at me. [The novel is dedicated "To Michelle, for putting up with all my crap."] Do you want to tell us anything about Michelle, and what she has to put up with?

Michelle's my wife, who's been very supportive...when I get off my butt and start treating this writing thing seriously as a business. She's doing work as my in-house publicist, arranging everything from ads to cons to book-signing events. This means we have four full-time jobs between us, and she's got the one that doesn't pay anything.

Do you have a favorite among your books?

Cheap answer: the one I'm working on now, the *Apotheosis Trilogy*, which is really a very long novel in three volumes, much like the prior *Hostile Takeover*. More thoughtful one: *Wolfbreed*, the historical dark fantasy that came out last sum-

mer may be the best writing I've done to date. Prior to that, my two non-Swann novels, *The Flesh, the Blood, & the Fire*, and *Stranger Inside*.

You've lived in the Cleveland area for years. What do you want to tell the rest of the world about Cleveland that most people might not know?

We're not Detroit? On a more serious note, living here has taught me something about writing, and that is any location is appropriate for fiction. The history of my town is so rich and varied and interesting, I've had no problem setting near a dozen novels in the area. And this is not because Cleveland is particularly unique; it's because everywhere is unique. If you're setting a story in L.A. or N.Y. for no particular reason, especially if you've never been there, you're actually making things less accessible. Anything grounded in a real sense of place will be much more engaging, even if it is Cleveland. (Or even Detroit, for that matter.)

Thomas E. Jackson lives in Berea, Ohio. Read his blog at clevelandokie.blogspot.com

Private Worlds: A Revised Atlas Poetry and Haikus

By Scott Green

Abbott ePublishing, 2009

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

With Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble's Nook, and Apple's iPad, the future of publishing has hitched its post to electronic print. The fact that Amazon sells six Kindle editions for every 10 print editions speaks volumes. People read books, magazines, and newspapers on these devices, as they can pack multiple works in an easy and convenient format for trips and daily commutes. Aside from convenience, eBook pricing might entice readers to new discoveries. Scott E. Green is a poet who has been writing and publishing science fiction/fantasy and horror poems for over 35 years. His collection *Private Worlds: A Revised Atlas*, is available for \$2.49 as an eBook in mobipocket format and is available exclusively at Abbott ePublishing online (<http://www.abbottepub.com>).

In his slim volume of 99 haikus and short poems about science fiction, fantasy, and horror writers plus actors and directors, Green manages to condense down into a few spare words the essences of his subjects. As I read through these poems multiple times, I felt the most powerful effects initially when coming across names that I recognized. When I later revisited poems with more unknown names, I felt the authors reach out and call for additional discovery.

Almost every poem bears the title of the inspiration, along with the word "world," such as "Baum's World," "Ellison's World," "Vance's World," etc. A few contain first names—"Raymond Chandler's World," "Ed McBain's World," "Bruce Lee's World"—there are several that might require clarification, such as "Fort's World." One is simply entitled, "Hanna-Barbera." Another employs word play—"Disney World."

Although arranged alphabetically by the author or auteur's last names, rather than by theme or genre, the poems could just as readily be approached in any order. It would be both impossible and unfair to review every poem here. Instead, I hope that by showing some highlights I can describe the breadth of scope in this massive homage. The aforementioned "Hanna-Barbera," for example, resonated deeply with me, as I grew up watching many of their cartoons. I could not help but smile as I read the lines:

In their world
Talking animals
Are smarter
Than the average
Human
And wiser, too, in
Their foolishness.

In the emotions created by these poems lie their strength. No one who has read or seen *The Wizard of Oz* can escape the imagery of three elegant lines, in "Baum's World":

Snares lie by the side
Of the road to home.
Waiting for the unwary.

The ones that drew me back again and again were the ones

which dealt with people whose names were familiar, like Jack Vance who merited two poems. Strangely enough, I did not feel Green's words here captured the essence of Vance, but we may have different perspectives of the writer. In the first, the lines about an

Edifice of words,
Carefully selected,
Propelling man into
The future

seemed only partially true, as Vance seemed to me less concerned about the future than a certain timelessness. Perhaps that's just my interpretation of Vance, as certainly many of his science fiction tales were futuristic.

Certain poems brought out the most well-known characters or themes in writers, such as "M.W. Wellman's World":

Music poured from silver
Strings
And a true heart,
The only barrier against
The old gods who haunt
Wooded hills and the song
Of the lark.

Wellman's stories about John the Balladeer, aka Silver John, may not be as well-remembered today as in the 1980s, but anyone who has read even one of those stories would immediately recognize the subject from the first line alone. Where Green succeeds best is when the few lines convey a recognizable essence of his subject's world. Where he stumbles is when the reader must think too long about what was said.

Although the people who inspire the poems range from sf writers to puppeteers (such as Gerry and Sylvia Anderson), writers from two centuries hence as well as much more recent ones, martial arts artists and cartoonists, they all share in common the ability to create art, and through their creations inspire others to create art. We enter our favorite creators' worlds like explorers, and stand in amazement at what shape they take with words and motions, where we feel "like some watcher in the skies," as Keats wrote about Chapman's Homer. Such amazement Green must have felt, and tried to convey, after being inspired by the subjects of his poems.

While barely noticeable in a novel, typos in such a short volume as this one stand out starkly when they appear. Surely writer and editor would have caught such obviously reoccurring ones as "there" instead of "their" ("Where robots cry over there dead Creators," "By the brights of there spandex," and "There eyebrows are always raised."), the more egregious "Steal" instead of "Steel" (in a poem about Superman's creators). When they occur in titles, such as "Macen" instead of "Machen," and "Stroker" instead of "Stoker" the effect is more jarring. These mistakes do nothing but detract from an otherwise fine book, and lend ambiguity in at least two poems. This *must* be fixed for any future editions. These unfortunate typos are the only downside to the publication.

Poetry in sf tends to be a narrow field, with few opportunities for general publication. Abbott's eBook enables reasonably priced access compared to print. Electronic press will only gain in popularity and showcase more authors. Anyone who enjoys sf poetry would do well to give this collection a try.

The Power of the Poor

With Hernando de Soto

DVD, 57 minutes

Produced by Free to Choose Media

Reviewed by Jerry Jewett

Peruvian economist and reformer Hernando de Soto narrates this simple yet dramatic documentary about the challenges Peru suffered and how careful changes in the law transformed the country from a rural backwater into a growing economic powerhouse.

Peru had been under tyrannical central rule for most of its existence. Large landholders and a cultural and administrative elite, primarily those of European descent, ran the country, while rural people worked the land in conditions akin to serfdom, perpetuating a tradition of exploitation dating back to Pizarro himself. Though they might have lived on the land for generations, the indigenous people lacked legal title, nor had they any formal legal personal identification. As a result, obtaining credit was largely impossible. Subsistence agriculture was the norm.

Owing to historical misadventures, Peru was nearly bankrupt by 1929. Exchanges of power between civilian and military authority, and consistent domination of the economy and land holdings by the Eurocentric oligarchy, kept the country sharply divided into a minority of haves and a majority of have-nots. Widespread prosperity had never prevailed in Peru. Beginning in the 1970s, the Maoist guerrilla faction Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) exploited these stresses as they fomented civil insurrection and terrorism. The insurrection threatened the stability and survival of Peru.

Hernando de Soto was born in Peru, but during one of the periods of military rule, his exiled family relocated to Switzerland. There, de Soto learned that Switzerland had once been a poorer country. In 19th Century Switzerland, the federation of cantons was loosely organized, with each canton retaining its traditional French, Italian or German character, folkways, and business and legal practices.

Though Switzerland had been “an island of prosperity” at the end of the Thirty Years War, succeeding centuries saw rule by oligarchy over the cantons. An economic depression following the Treaty of Paris in 1815 lasted about three decades. At the time, there was not a strong national economy. Among the reasons? Perhaps the oligarchy favored only its own members to the exclusion of others, but there were structural factors, as well. Title, instruments of credit and other incidents of commerce were ill-developed on a broad scale. Each canton had a patchwork of customs and practices that might be at variance with any other Swiss canton. As a result, Switzerland had glorious scenery but a largely agrarian economy, as it has done for centuries. Trade was mostly local. But legal reforms attributed to one man changed Switzerland’s laws and its economic situation.

Eugen Huber was born in Zurich in 1849. By 1872 he had a doctorate in jurisprudence from the University of Zurich. Circa 1888-1892, Huber conducted an elaborate field study of the private laws of the cantons, yielding four volumes of

findings. In 1892, the Swiss government asked Huber to develop the Swiss Civil Code.

Rather than consult with university professors, economists, and lawyers as to the most desirable order of things, Huber went among the people to find the commonalities and shared values that held true most generally across Switzerland. As a result of his survey, he drafted a thousand-article Civil Code for Switzerland to adopt. When it was adopted, this put all cantons on an equal legal and business footing, creating the basis for a robust national economy well able to compete in international trade. Within generations, Switzerland changed from a lovely and mostly rural country a bit on the poor side, to one of the more affluent countries in the world.

While exiled to Switzerland, de Soto became a student at the University of Bern, and also a student of the development of Switzerland over its past century or so. He observed some similarities between Peru and Switzerland. Both countries in the 19th century had largely rural economies of mostly agricultural nature. However, Switzerland had since metamorphosed into a dynamic, prosperous, and growing economy. His studies in Bern persuaded de Soto that Eugen Huber had been the chief architect of the transformation of Switzerland into a powerful national economy. Huber may serve as a Swiss model for Karl Llewellyn and his work on the Uniform Commercial Code in the United States. As de Soto studied the work of Huber, he realized that the ideas, the principles and organizational plans which Huber developed, were not intrinsically Swiss in nature, but could be portable. Though the problems of Peru were not identical to what Switzerland had faced, there were parallels.

Creating a legal system that was not to the disadvantage of the poor was a key change for Peru. De Soto notes that to build a bridge enabling the structurally deprived to cross over into full economic participation, three things must be so. First, the bridge must anchor in the custom and practice of the people, with a solid foundation that will not crack. Second, it must be sufficiently well articulated and flexible that it won’t crack with the problems that develop over time. Third, it must be broad enough for everyone to cross.

Upon his return to Peru, de Soto studied the economic and legal situation in Peru. He observed the huge migration of people from rural areas to the outskirts of the cities, in desperate search for a life better than subsistence agriculture. He knew that the poor and the structurally disadvantaged were aware of the benefits of life in capitalist free societies, and wanted the benefits of such a life for themselves. He also notes that 2/3 of the world’s population lives in poverty in shanty towns or similarly undesirable circumstances. For those who make the migration from country to city, they typically were born without documentation of identification and have not acquired any.

The lack of any form of identification that reaches beyond the knowledge of fellow members of village and clan seriously hinders people of an entrepreneurial bent. Without a birth certificate or driver’s license or the like, one cannot get a formal loan in most cases. Without title to the property where one’s

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—*Power of the Poor*, continued from previous page

family may have lived for generations, one cannot get a loan secured by the land in order to improve the land or expand one's production. The very right to contract or fully own property is abridged in such cases. Here are people who want to enter the capitalist system, but are shut out from within.

De Soto realized that these poor people are excluded from the purported benefits of globalization, as they are unable to market beyond their locale, or to perform contracts with foreign trading partners, for the lack of identity. Rich and poor all want the same things: homes, shops and businesses, roads and public works, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure to support their lives. For more than forty years in Peru, throngs had left the land for the towns and cities, seeking education and prosperity, spontaneously forming markets where specialization of labor would benefit all. But all too often they were thwarted by legal systems that had been designed without regard for them.

When squatters settle on waste land that they do not own, their lack of title, lack of a specific address, and absence of personal identification rule out the provision of electric power and street lighting, water mains and sewer systems, improved streets, and other infrastructure so taken for granted by Westerners.

De Soto's studies convinced him that major reform was needed. To counter The Shining Path, he laid out his vision in a book, *The Other Path: The Economic Answer to Terrorism*. De Soto was also instrumental in founding the Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD). This organization worked in Peru to ascertain causes of the plight of the structurally disadvantaged, and to seek solutions. One finding was that, even when fully financed by the Institute and guided by lawyers with knowledge of the system, getting a small sewing business registered as a legitimate enterprise took 289 days. Another discovery was that where a person without title, whether a rural farmer of many generations or a squatter just moved to the outskirts from the hinterlands, wanted to obtain title, the process took six years and 207 steps to secure title to their land.

It was obvious that the poor were systematically excluded. They were aware of their limitations, as well. The Shining Path guerrillas exploited the discontent of the poor and threatened to wreck Peruvian society in the process. Sendero offered protection to those who were left out of the system. Speaking of the poor, De Soto notes, 'We will give them a stake in the game or they will bring down the game as many times as necessary until the game accommodates them,' or much to that effect.

What de Soto found was that the poor who were excluded from the formal legal system were compensating by extralegal means. That is, they were working against the black-and-white letter of the law but with the support of the people. The makeshift poor had learned how to hold property, to create and enforce contracts, and trade among themselves without recourse to the State and its legal system. One might call it a gray market; it worked well within its limitations. But growth was sharply limited and expansion almost impossible because of the constraints associated with lack of title and other legal

documentation.

In 1969, apparent reforms took place. Redistribution of the land from big landlords occurred, but the recipients were collectives, ruled by directors appointed by bureaucrats from Lima. This change did not benefit the poor. Meanwhile, the Sendero activists excited the people with a Maoist vision of equality, which incited the discontented populace to support the terrorist insurrection. De Soto notes that to be poor is to be assaulted by impossibility. He also noted the extent to which such impossibility is man-made, and hence subject to change. And he reasoned that exclusion from possibility, rather than pure poverty, leads to violence and terrorism.

The law has to make sense, in order to integrate extralegals into the system. And getting them into the system has manifold benefits. First, the extralegals who enter the system develop the ability to obtain credit, have long-term contracts, expand their businesses, reach into larger and even global markets, and otherwise improve their own conditions very substantially. They are fully self-supporting and productive. Secondly, in so doing, they become employers and thus provide incomes and inspirations to 'first-generation' migrants to the cities. Thirdly, they very much stabilize society in the sense of investing in it, rather than attacking it for injustices experienced.

This is where de Soto's learning of Huber's work enters. Upon his return to Peru when it became safe to do so, de Soto founded ILD. He undertook research and education that led to entitling the poor. Setting up a secure property system created a foundation of order. By the end of the reforms pushed by the ILD, over 50% of Peruvians had title to their land. The time to register a business was shortened to one day, from 289 days. The amount of time required to formalize title to real property was cut to 45 days, from six years. By securing property to Peruvians of many walks of life, they were enabled

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Prometheus Submission Guidelines

Prometheus seeks reviews, interview, essays, 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.

Letter of comment also are welcome, whether about the reviews, or any questions about LFS, the nominating and voting process. In this digital age the printed press continues to matter, but we need your help to sustain this newsletter.

Contact the editor for more details via email at: editor@lfs.org

My name is Inigo Montoya

By Sarah A. Hoyt

I'll start by coming clean and admitting I swiped the title from a speech given in Johannesburg by my friend Dave Freer. I swiped the intention of the title, too. Dave used it to mean that the pseudo-literary aspirations of science fiction had killed what was different and interesting about the genre. He meant that classical science fiction had "fathered" him and that he meant to carry on its legacy, regardless.

My reference is more specific. Years after Robert A. Heinlein had died, my husband and I managed to—yes, it did take some work—have the child we'd been trying to conceive for six years. He was—still is!—a boy, so we named him what we had always planned to name him: Robert Anson Hoyt. Because he'd been due on the Fourth of July (I spent months singing Yankee Doodle Dandy to my belly!) when—incidentally—labor started, we didn't realize the significance of his birth date on the seventh. Not until my husband called my brother and told him the name of his brand new nephew. My brother said, "Oh. And on Heinlein's birthday."

The coincidence was too much for my husband who forced me (trust me, it took forcing) to send a birth announcement to Mrs. Heinlein. This initiated a correspondence between us which—eventually—extended to my having her AIM handle. This handle was Astyanax. In one of the last conversations we had I asked her about its significance.

I was, of course, aware that Astyanax was the offspring of Hector and Andromache and supposedly thrown from the walls of Troy after the sacking of the city. But in some versions of the story Astyanax lived on to found settlements in Corsica and Sardinia.

Ginny—I could never call her that while she was alive, though she asked me to, respect forced me to call her Mrs. Heinlein—told me that was exactly what she meant. Just like the Greeks thought that they'd successfully put Hector down and that no one would survive to avenge him, so the establishment thought it had successfully put Heinlein down and no one would survive to avenge him.

On the face of it, this seemed absurd. After all Heinlein died in his eighties, after a successful career. He was not murdered. His city was not sacked. Even for a metaphorical city, where it referred to Science Fiction, you could attribute falling readership to myriad conditions, including changes in US retail.

However, I knew exactly what she meant. You see, I'd come at Heinlein from an odd direction. In fact, it was many years before I realized that the first book of his I read must have been when I was nine or so. *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel*. At the time I didn't realize it was science fiction. I had no concept of Science Fiction. To me my Science Fiction reading started with—of all things—*Out of Their Minds*, by Clifford Simak. In fact, when I first read Heinlein after realizing what science fiction was, something about the way his characters acted and talked, scared me a little.

I was more comfortable in Clifford Simak's quieter universe, with its more docile heroes. Except some books of Heinlein's

would demand to be read again and again—*Puppet Masters*; *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress*; *Starship Troopers*. Little by little, Heinlein grew on me. The first time I encountered the notion that taxes were a form of extortion was in his books. First argument against gun control, too, in *Red Planet*. First argument for individual freedom—*The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress*. First statement that the future is always better than the past—*The Door Into Summer*. Growing up in a country that had been a monarchy for most of its existence, a country where in fact, the citizens were held to owe something to the country, not the other way around, this seemed like insanity. But it stayed with me. And it took root.

By the time I was in my early twenties, I knew that Heinlein was not only my favorite author, but—hands down—the greatest influence in forming my mind and spirit. (This, by the way reading mostly his adult books, as only about half of his juveniles were ever translated to Portuguese and available at the time I was buying.)

I was very shocked when I came to the US and found that it was not fashionable, and—in some quarters—not acceptable to be a Heinlein fan. Considering his beliefs, and his work, ranged from hard left to pragmatic right, not just because he was not captive of a view point, but because his beliefs changed through his life, Heinlein is, like the Bible, something in which everyone can find something to criticize. There were, for instance, the people who objected to what seems to be the militarism of *Starship Troopers*. (Never understood that one. *Starship Troopers* is if you're hit, hit back and you have a right to survive but that's me.) There are people who object (oh, of course. Even Heinlein saw that more than the rest, I think, because he expected it) to the sex which ran the gamut of everything people might consider offensive. There are people who object to his views on religion. There are people who object to his female characters wearing high heels. I'm sure I'm leaving a lot out.

(Though I never heard anyone object to *Puppet Masters*, which is odd, since the story questions our perceptions; our ability to know we're our own people; media behavior and, incidentally, the limits of Constitutional liberties. No, I don't object to the book. You see, like Heinlein I believe scary subjects are the ones that should be explored. In an entertaining manner. To make money and make people think, too.)

However, over time, criticism in the field I aspired to enter coalesced around objections coming mostly from the left. This happens possibly because with obvious and clear exceptions the writers and critics in the field, range from left-of-center to left-of-Stalin. (This is not a criticism, merely an observation.) So we hear that Heinlein was unfair to women, too militaristic, too pro-business, too pro-space-colonization and of course, that one thing he could never escape forever (given that if he'd lived he'd now be 102) a dead white male. And yes, we

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DO hear that he has too much sex, from people who clearly haven't read their field for a while. Needless to say those who think the proper place of genre literature is competing for space in college reading lists find him "too simplistic" and not nearly "nuanced" enough.

By far though, the shrillest criticism I've heard of Heinlein—perhaps because being female I move in female circles socially and sometimes professionally—comes from college-educated women. A female friend told me she'd gotten furious when reading Friday's rape in the beginning of *Friday* and had never read him again. The idea baffled me, since lots of authors write about rapes—lots of romance authors, who are mostly female. Mystery, too—and it doesn't mean they enjoy them or approve of them. It was clear from the raid after Friday's liberation that the rapists were killed and their organization destroyed. (Yes, one survives, but he was constrained to rape her, which changes things. And at any rate, he undergoes his own trials by fire. And he was like Friday, an artifact, so not a free man.) There was punishment for the act, so why the outrage?

And then I started hearing it from everywhere. Heinlein was anti-woman, they said. This despite the fact that he always maintained in his books that women were superior to men in most ways, and my having first encountered the concept of "date rape" in his books. Heinlein didn't even write real women, only men with tits. This last baffled me even more since, on a smaller scale—I was never built on the heroic scale. Emotionally and mentally, at least. The hips are getting downright monumental, these days—I'd always identified with his women. And I knew lots of women like them. Ironically some were women who didn't like him because—they said—he wrote men with tits. At the same time, while being accused of being too masculine, his women were attacked for liking men, for enjoying sex and wanting to be pregnant and for not having ever been told that "all penetration is violation." (Like a lot of Heinlein criticism, the contradictions can make your eyes cross and your head spin around three times.)

Sometimes the very fact that his women were larger than life was brought up as evidence that he hated women. A puzzling idea, since his men were also larger than life. It's what made his books so appealing. Very few people—outside college reading lists—want to read about average Joe getting up and struggling with the heart break of Psoriasis.

Sometimes the fact that his women liked men and were willing to dress and behave to please men was brought up against him. Children, if you don't know what's wrong with that reasoning, I can't help you. (Though I might find you some diagrams and a couple of very good manuals.) Women will always dress and behave to please men (even when that includes pretending they won't) and men will always dress and behave to please women.

Yeah, there are the exceptions, but then they're really only playing on the opposing team and the same rules apply. Heinlein himself said that everything from poetry to nuclear physics were only variations on the old game. Humans—mirabile dictu—are driven to mate and will go out of their way to make themselves attractive. (Shame on Mr. Heinlein for making his women human, instead of poreless rubber dolls

with agendas.)

I soon realized none of these people—mostly women, though also a few men—had ever actually read Heinlein. Certainly no more than a few pages. They had heard how terrible he was and made up their minds about him before they read the first sentence. But they knew...just knew...all that they'd been told was true. And possibly more.

Which is how we came to the sad state of affairs where pros in panels can dismiss Heinlein by saying that like any old man he was obsessed with sex and politics.

The true reason for all this—though I won't say it was coordinated. Most of it can be attributed to stupidity, a wish to belong and fear rather than malice—is that Heinlein scares the living daylights of those who would restrict the operation of human reason. And so he should.

Yes, his politics varied over his lifetime. He tackled themes that no sane human being would tackle, for fear of retribution. Themes in which powerful elites have a lot invested. Power. Sex. Money. Religion. The definition of human. Obliquely and sideways, race. The changes technology can bring to all of those.

Now, some of the themes were less than elegantly handled. Sex for instance. But when you're examining the effects of extreme longevity on the incest taboo, it is quite possible there is no delicate way to tackle it.

However, more important than his themes or his political inclinations, or his preoccupation of the moment was his determination that the human mind should be free...free to examine and discover. Free to know. Free to find the truth. Which is why I perceived him—first in rejection, and later in embrace—as the quintessential American writer. His values were—always—of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. The primacy of the individual over the state or the church or the coercive group. It could be argued that having been educated in Heinlein I had to become an American citizen. In fact, had become one, in all but name and law long before I landed on these shores.

As he said it himself When any government, or any church for that matter, undertakes to say to its subjects, "This you may not read, this you must not see, this you are forbidden to know," the end result is tyranny and oppression, no matter how holy the motives. Mighty little force is needed to control a man whose mind has been hoodwinked; contrariwise, no amount of force can control a free man, a man whose mind is free. No, not the rack, not fission bombs—not anything—you can't conquer a free man; the most you can do is kill him.

He never anticipated...or perhaps he did (he did after all mention the crazy years)—an ideology (political correctness) that would make it impossible for anyone to talk about anyone else's problems, particularly for a man to write about the problems of women without oppressing them by his very act of "usurping" their "victimhood." An ideology—or perhaps merely a belief—that would make it impossible to disagree with the verdict of the cognoscenti once they'd declared any person's ideas forbidden, any person's reasoning offensive.

Mighty little force is needed to control a man—or a woman,

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Ground Zero

By F. Paul Wilson

Tor/Forge, 2009

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

The endgame approaches. The third to last new novel in F. Paul Wilson's Repairman Jack series bears the dicey title linked so closely now to the gaping hole where once the twin towers stood in New York City, *Ground Zero*. The books have almost ceased to exist as independent novels. Old threads continue along their course, a new threads appear that shed light on other aspects of Jack's life and history, and the grander secret history of the world. The cast continues to grow. Early chapters provide a brief run-down of the current events, which have become less about Jack the individual and more about his role in the battle against evil.

Jack, the lone wolf fixer who lives outside official society was enlisted against his will in the fight against the Adversary as the potential Heir to the Adversary's previous nemesis, Glaeken. This former warrior, now an old man retired and virtually powerless, appears finally ready to mentor Jack in their battle against Rasalom, aka the Adversary, aka the prime instrument of the Otherness in this world.

Gia, Jack's lover and almost mother of his child seems strangely distant in this novel. Her brush with the forces of the Ally that took her unborn child in *Harbingers* has affected her deeply. She and her daughter are the center of Jack's world. More and more, however, Gia and Vicky have faded into the background as the story becomes less about Jack and more about his role vis a vis the Adversary and the various groups and characters on the chess set of the Secret History.

Another recurring character is Diana. An Oculus, or seer of the humans on the side against the Adversary, she is but a teenager thrust into her role by the death of the previous Oculus. Her group and Jack face the same enemy, but are not necessarily on the same side. Her father, the previous Oculus, interpreted his visions in such a manner that Jack and Gia's unborn daughter died.

Meanwhile Dawn, pregnant with her step-brother's child, remains a captive by Rasalom. Her unborn baby is another hedged bet against Glaeken, and a possible key to opening the gates to the forces seeking to consume and enslave our world. She almost aborted her child in the previous book, and she knows she is a pawn in a terrifyingly larger picture than she can imagine, and only wants out.

Jack has infiltrated the Kickers on the part-time basis to better keep an eye on them. The Kickers are in the midst of a turf war with the Scientologist-like group first seen in *Crisscross*, the Dormalists. Ernst Drexler, a high ranking member of the Septimus Order and a faithful servant of Rasalom, continues working on the Opus Omega, seeking to open up the doorways to the creatures beyond, hoping for favors from Rasalom after he transforms into his victorious form and takes over our world. When Rasalom instructs Drexler to recruit one of the Kickers into a scheme to create a new weapon against the Lady, the mysterious force manifested in various of the novels as a woman with a dog at her side, Drexler selects

Darryl, who out of desperation agrees. The strange egg-like structure Drexler calls the Orsa subsumes Darryl, and begins to transform him at a cellular level.

Meanwhile, a woman is posting messages on 9/11 truther bulletin boards, taking great care to remain anonymous. She turns out to be Louise Connell, Jack's childhood friend whom everyone called Weezy. She is now a target by the servants of the Adversary for having stumbled across images of Rasalom as he conspired with Osama Bin Laden to bring down the Twin Towers. Gifted with a photographic memory, she has noticed that images of one of Bin Laden have changed in print, always removing the same person from photos—could this be Rasalom? Jack is hired to find Weezy by her brother, Eddie Connell, after a hit and run sends her to the hospital. Find her he does, and in the process kills some of the agents sent after her. Weezy tells Jack after learning he killed two men who were trying to kidnap her from the hospital, "You're not the Jack I knew. You're scary." And she should know; according to the novel *Secret Histories* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), she and Jack were best friends during their teen-age years. Jack enlists her to decipher the Compendium, as her eidetic memory may well give them a method by which to decipher the continually shifting text.

With Weezy in the picture, life gets complicated on a personal level for Jack. They were best friends for many years, and both very likely harbored unfulfilled crushes on each other. These feelings bubble up again to the surface, more so for Weezy as Jack has Gia. Meanwhile, Eddie has transformed himself. Always the overweight kid who cared more about video games, he is now a trim go-getter. When Weezy discovers that he is a member of the Ancient Septimus Fraternal Order (Drexler's group), she freaks out. Clearly they have not shared everything despite being in touch daily after her husband died a few years ago.

Plot and character are the two steady pillars of Wilson's fiction. In *Ground Zero* Wilson seems to be marshalling his troops, especially those against the Adversary. Various groups are jockeying for position on the other side, hinting at potential conflicts of interest that may benefit Jack and his forces. With only two books remaining in the series, one might surmise that the regular fix-it aspect of Jack's life will become less important, and the effort to understand his role and what they are up against will become more critical. None of the characters can yet see how close they are to the edge, but every hint is there to readers who have followed the series. Despite working with a known ending, Wilson's build-up remains strong and full of questions, just the way to keep a series going.

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.

Odysseus the Rebel

Story by Steven Grant, Art by Scott Bieser

Big Head Press, 2009, \$12.95

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

Big Head Press runs several concurrent comics online at www.bigheadpress.com. Pages are serialized over many months, building massive narratives in black & white or color. Once completed, many of these narratives find their way between paper covers. Previous such works that have been reviewed in *Prometheus* include the graphic novel version of *The Probability Broach* (with L. Neil Smith), and original graphic novel *Roswell, Texas*. The latest such publication is *Odysseus the Rebel*, which deals primarily with the tail end of Odysseus's long journey back to Ithaca after the Trojan war.

I first read the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* as a teenager. In the midst of a mythology phase I read everything I could find primarily about Norse and Greek gods and legends. I have since read both of the works attributed to Homer many times, and recently read Dan Simmons reweaving of the tale thousands of years in the future in his novels *Ilium* and *Olympos*. The story of the ten year war between the Greeks and Trojans, and one lone man's ten year journey back to home and family remains an enduring legend. Steven Grant and Scott Bieser's *Odysseus the Rebel* is but the latest interpretation of the tale, but by adding a mere two words after the protagonist's name they have already set the tone. Not Odysseus the Cunning, nor cruel or deceitful Odysseus as he is known in most account, but a rebel. A rebel against what, the reader may ask. The answer appears swiftly. After a couple of pages to set the time and location—"ten years since Troy fell...and ten years of fighting before that"—we find Odysseus adrift at sea, in a confrontation with his worst enemy among the gods, Poseidon. Though seemingly helpless and near death, the Ithacan king remains defiant, refusing to acquiesce anything to this god, one of the most powerful among the Olympians, save only Zeus and Hades, and ruler of the ocean upon which Odysseus is but a speck.

Herein lies the essence of the title, the theme of the book—Odysseus' anger and rebellion against the gods. He firmly believes that he alone is responsible for his own fate, that despite the gods' insistence on his obedience in return for an easy journey back to his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus, he will make it home on his own terms. His will and defiance are far stronger traits in Grant & Bieser's work than any other variation. And certainly, such traits would endear him as a libertarian hero.

A few of the other Greek heros appear, all in fairly minor roles. Agamemnon comes off the worst, a brutal killer (and

not merely content with the enemy). Menaleus appears as a simpleton, and Achilles a whimpering poser concerned in the afterlife only about whether his name is remembered. The times were rough, 3000 years ago, and swords appeared swiftly as methods to resolve disputes. Blood flows freely in many of the scenes. Nudity is almost casual, from young to old.

Grant's story deviates in several episodes from the more well-known sources, in particular with the death of Ajax. One strange anachronism is Odysseus's journey to the underworld. I could find no mention in this book as to why he had to make the journey there, save something briefly said while on the way. But once there, the underworld is a strange and ghostly modern American city, maybe even New York City. The dead look like homeless people, and shades of modern people can be seen walking the streets, as in a hazy mirror of the future.

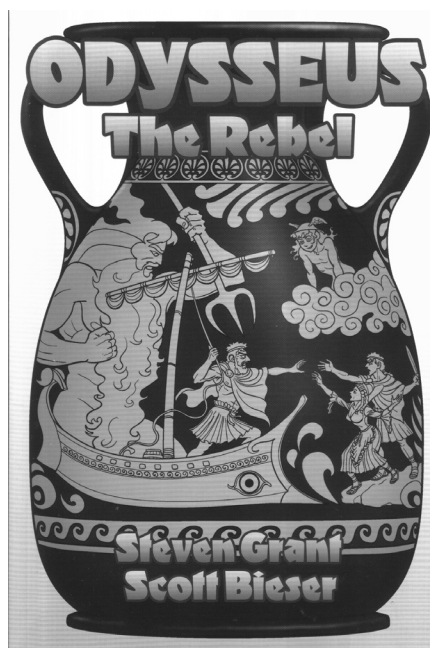
And the gods? Well, the gods are as cruel and vain as always, concerned only with being worshiped. Herein lies the modern mystique of the state—once people stop believing, you have lost them forever. Religion and the state works pretty much the same way; the gods and system must be obeyed, logic be damned. As Odysseus gives the gods no favor, he is the ultimate rebel. They do not want him dead, they want him broken, crawling back to them for forgiveness and favors. But he will not yield.

The story ends, not so much in the same manner as the original, but rather along one of many alternate interpretations, with Odysseus embarking again on unknown voyages, "to sail beyond the sunset," as in Tennyson's poem. I felt sorry for poor Penelope, but Odysseus made some sense in his explanation, although the transition is almost too swift, too abrupt. Man and god seem almost reconciled. Both claim victory, yet despite past animosity seem

like old friends.

I have read this book several times from beginning to end, and occasionally just opening a section at random to look at the art and how it interacts with the plot. This is not a retelling of the entire *Odyssey* in graphic novel format. Such an undertaking would span several volumes.

Bieser's art sketches a variety of scenes with equal acumen, from raw and bloody brutality (much as it was in the original), tenderness (such as Odysseus's faithful dog waiting until his master's return), and a range of other emotions experienced by gods and humans alike. While the story takes occasional liberties with the original source, Grant tells a great yarn. If the *Iliad* was all about Achilles's rage, the Green and Bieser's interpretation of the *Odyssey* is all about Odysseus's rage. His rage at being dragged into a war that lasted a decade, and then fighting Poseidon and other gods ten more years to get home makes his tale legendary. Odysseus is far more known today than any other Greek or Trojan hero, and a worthy tale for this and many more re-imaginings of his story. His rebellion add a certain anti-authoritarian twist and perhaps an added cachet among libertarian readers.



The United States of Atlantis

By Harry Turtledove
Tor, 2009

Reviewed by Chris Hibbert

Harry Turtledove's *The United States of Atlantis* is the second book of his series of a mythical extra continent in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean, and how its history progresses parallel to the real North America. The story starts up a decade or two after the close of *Opening Atlantis*, so the main characters from the end of that book are the focus characters throughout this one. In this book, the British tighten up on taxes and import restrictions until the settlers say enough and start a revolution parallel to the American one. Victor Radcliff, who was pursuing a retirement career as a farmer after the previous novel, is chosen by the rebel Atlantean Assembly as their General. He has to recruit and arm an army, manage his political overseers, and run a campaign against a force that is better armed, better trained, has control of the seas, and is far from home. Of course, Radcliff has all the advantage of knowing the territory, protecting his home, and having the support of (most of) the populace.

The focus follows the military action almost exclusively. The campaigns are reasonably realistic and well told, with

each side winning their share, but the eventual outcome is predictable, so it's never a surprise when Radcliff's setbacks are followed by bigger triumphs. The surprising thing to me was there was no attention paid to the events among the Assembly, which was attempting to form a government. It seems to me that the possibilities for alternate history in the area of politics are far richer in this time of intellectual and political ferment than for alternate military history. As it was, freedom-related themes are mostly subliminal. We know that the characters are fighting for the independence of their home, and they occasionally talk about their feelings for the British Crown, but they don't talk about liberty, or how to organize or regulate a free society.

Alternate military history, on the other hand, is pretty simple, particularly when the geography and forces aren't constrained to mimic another battle or campaign closely. It's an interesting sequence of fights, and the stratagems and tactics employed are interesting, but they don't reflect much on any particular previous war.

This book was nominated for the Prometheus Award, and in a weak year it may win. There are hints that the third book in the series (*Liberating Atlantis*, released in November, so it could be eligible for 2009 or 2010) might be much stronger. Of the nominees that I've read, *The Unincorporated Man* is the only one that I like more for the Prometheus award.

2010 Prometheus Best Novel Finalists

In March 2010 the Libertarian Futurist Society Best Novel committee selected the finalists for this year's Prometheus Award in the Best Novel category. The following finalists were selected from a field of 13 novels, all nominated by LFS members.

Hidden Empire, by Orson Scott Card (TOR Books) — The sequel to Card's *Empire* (also a Prometheus finalist) covers the emergence of an imperial president and the role of voluntary action in saving human lives. Card has had three previous novels nominated for the Prometheus.

Makers, by Cory Doctorow (TOR Books) — An inspiring story of entrepreneurial competition in the near future. The story makes Schumpeter's creative destruction visible, and shows how even the poorest can be helped by competition and invention. Doctorow's *Little Brother* (TOR Books) won the 2009 Prometheus award.

The Unincorporated Man, by Dani and Eytan Kollin (TOR Books) — This novel explores the idea that education and personal development could be funded by allowing investors to take a share of one's future income. The story takes a strong position that liberty is important and worth fighting for, and the characters spend their time pushing for different conceptions of what freedom is. This is the first nomination for the Kollin brothers.

Liberating Atlantis, by Harry Turtledove (ROC/Penguin Books) — The third book in Turtledove's Atlantis trilogy illustrates why people of all colors should be treated equally,

and shows slaves in an alternate history demonstrating their humanity by fighting for their rights. Turtledove's *The Gladiator* was a Prometheus co-winner in 2008. The first book in the trilogy was a finalist in 2009, and he had one other novel nominated for the award in 1999.

The United States of Atlantis, by Harry Turtledove (ROC/Penguin Books) — The second book in Turtledove's Atlantis trilogy covers his alternate colonies' revolution to free themselves from the British crown. This is the first time an author has had two books as Prometheus finalists in a single year.

Since 1982 the Libertarian Futurist Society has presented the annual Prometheus Award for best libertarian novel. The award consists of a one-ounce gold coin on a plaque and voted upon by members of the LFS.

For a full list of Prometheus Award nominees and information about past winners and nominees, visit the LFS web site, and <http://www.lfs.org>

Novels published since January 1, 2010 are eligible for consideration for the following year's Prometheus Award for Best Novel. LFS members may nominate works by contacting the committee chair Michael Grossberg at Mikegrossb@aol.com. Authors and publishers also may submit works for consideration and possible nomination. Reviews of nominated books are always welcomed for publication in *Prometheus*.

The Prometheus Award will be presented at the 2010 WorldCon (Aussiecon IV), to be held in Melbourne, Australia September 2 through 6.

—*My name is Inigo Montoya*, continued from page 11

or a child—whose mind has been hoodwinked.

They've managed to lock Heinlein's ideas, his thoughts, his persuasive, infectious insistence on individual will and free reasoning, behind walls where most people won't dare trespass. They have killed him as dead as they can, because—to quote Shakespeare, possibly talking about Marlowe—When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child/Understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room.

They think they are safe. The man's words are dead. His wit is not available to the new generations. Even his gallant wife is gone.

But, alas, they counted without Astyanax. We are legion. And as long as there is a library standing, as long as the net remains reasonably free and gives us access to his works and those of other believers in freedom, more of us will appear.

I am not going to pretend I am equal in greatness to Heinlein. Would that I were. It was in full humility and sense of my own ineptitude that I dedicated my book *Darkship Thieves* to him. I hope there is in it at least a spark of his genius, but I know there's probably no more than that.

But I was raised by Heinlein through his books, and I hope at least the spirit and the intention of the search for truth and individual freedom remains in my work. As well as the certainty that it's always easier to be a live lion than a live lamb or a dead lion.

I am sure many stand ready to kill me—or at least my career—I'm sure I'll be held to have despicable personal habits and low mental prowess. Heaven knows, I quite often feel tired and dispirited, as though I'm bleeding from multiple wounds.

But the need to awaken people drags me up again. I start writing to remind others of their innate freedom to think beyond the boundaries imposed by any ideology, any government, any church, any in-group, any literary current. The belief animates me that, so long as we keep fighting for Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness and using our minds to improve the present, the future will always be better than the past.

And then, like Inigo Montoya, the mad Spaniard in *The Princess Bride*, I rise again and resume my search for those that killed my father: that intransigent refusal to think; that serf-like willingness to believe the wisdom of the self proclaimed “betters”; that boneless, spineless conformity that goes along to get along.

My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.

Sarah A. Hoyt was born in Portugal. She acquired a degree in English from the University of Porto, and moved to the United States. She lives in Colorado with her husband and two sons, and has been writing professionally since 1994.

Her novels include Draw One in the Dark and Gentleman Takes a Chance (Shifter Series), Death of a Musketeer, The Musketeer's Seamstress, The Musketeer's Apprentice and A Death in Gascony (Musketeers Mysteries series), and Heart of Light, Soul of Fire and Heart and Soul (from her upcoming Magical British Empire series). She also has an acclaimed Shakespearean Fantasy series (Ill Met by Moonlight, All Night Awake and Any Man So Daring) and a collection, Crawling Between Heaven and Earth. Her most recent novel is Darkship Thieves, from BAEN Books.

This essay first appeared on <<http://theeternalgoldenbraid.blogspot.com/2010/01/my-name-is-inigo-montoya-administrative.html>> and is reprinted with permission from the author. Her web site is <<http://www.sarahahoyt.com/>> and she blogs at <<http://sarahahoyt.livejournal.com/>>

Sylvia Engdahl novel back in print, other news

By Sylvia Engdahl

This is to announce that my Young Adult novel *This Star Shall Abide* (known in the UK as *Heritage of the Star*) is now back in print, separate from its inclusion in the one-volume edition of the Children of the Star trilogy. It is of interest to younger readers (age 12 up) than the rest of the trilogy. It has been the most popular of my novels apart from *Enchantress from the Stars*. I've reissued it to be discovered by a new generation. There are no plans to issue print editions of the others, but all three will remain available as ebooks.

The book is available only at Amazon.com and from me. The retail price is \$10.95 but I'm selling signed copies at a 20% discount, i.e. for \$8.75, with free Media Mail shipping (please add \$2 for Priority Mail). Discounted international shipping is \$8 to Canada and \$10 to other countries. There's an order form for PayPal at www.adstellaebooks.com. I am selling to schools and libraries at a 50% discount plus shipping cost; I accept purchase orders, which can be faxed to 866-302-3827.

Also, I have signed copies of my other YA novels available at sale prices: *Enchantress from the Stars*, hardcover \$15; *The Far*

Side of Evil, hardcover \$10, paperback \$4; and *Journey Between Worlds*, hardcover \$10, paperback \$4. The order form for these is at www.sylviaengdahl.com/purchase.htm. You can also buy *Children of the Star* either there or at Amazon for its regular price of \$20, while the copies last—they are now almost gone.

In other news, this year I am giving a free set of my novels for grown-ups, *Stewards of the Flame* and *Promise of the Flame*, each month to a public library randomly drawn from among entries—readers, please tell your librarian! I'm hoping this will draw traffic to my Ad Stellae Books site, www.adstellaebooks.com. The instructions for entering the drawing are on the Review Quotes page there.

And of course, you can still order signed copies of *Stewards of the Flame* and *Promise of the Flame* for \$14 each, or both for \$25. If you've already read one or both, I'd love to see your comments.

Sylvia Engdahl — www.sylviaengdahl.com & www.stewardsoftheflame.com. New novel, *Promise of the Flame*, is now available.

—*Power of the Poor*, continued from page 9

to leverage their growth.

One example given was an LP gas supplier, Miguel Gutierrez. He had started out with only a few LP gas canisters which he carried on a route he walked, then he got a wheel barrow to let him carry more canisters, and later used a bicycle to improve his productivity. He bought a small piece of property in a shanty town, taking full legal title. Then he used the title as security for a loan for \$4,000 for a used station wagon. The increased prosperity led him to purchase a truck. He is now CEO of Multigas, a large LP gas distribution business with several dozen employees, all made possible because the background circumstances of ownership and commerce were so vastly improved. He always had the energy and talent but it took the reforms to permit him to establish his business at an enduring and prosperous level. Other examples were given, as well.

With secured property rights, access to capital, and opportunities to compete on a world market, substantial growth and prosperity followed. Hernando de Soto notes that brain power and research, economists and lawyers working together to improve the conditions for entrepreneurship, were what really defeated Sendero Luminoso. That the conflict was direct was proven when Sendero once bombed the headquarters of the ILLD.

Of course, persuading an entrenched elite to surrender

or diminish power for the benefit of the masses is a hard sell on purely philanthropic or altruistic grounds. But the ILLD activists tried no such thing. Rather, they noted that, apart from the increased stability resulting from a vested populace with an interest in the economy, the domestic economy itself would grow. The ILLD noted that this would benefit the elite in many ways, which the elite were able to understand, so they did not stand in the way of the reforms.

Since the successes in Peru, *The Other Path* has been translated into several other languages. The ILLD activists and de Soto now consult with leaders in other societies in underdeveloped or post-Communist lands, to show how conditions may be made favorable for the growth of dormant or stagnant economies from within, by simple reform measures. Though there is far to go, the example has proven the workability of the concept. This documentary confirms in many respects what Butler Shaffer says in *Boundaries of Order: Private Property as a Social System*. As some may recall, that lesson is that respect for human rights to own property, specifically private property, is at the root of good social order and human prosperity, with only the most limited role for central government.

The author is a graduate of the University of Iowa College of Business Administration and the Juris Doctor program at Southwestern University School of Law. He has previously been published in Cult Movies, Mondo Cult, The Lamp-Post of the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society, and Prometheus.



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