

# PROMETHEUS

## 2014 Prometheus Award Finalists

The Libertarian Futurist Society Best Novel and Best Classic Fiction (Hall of Fame) for its annual Prometheus Awards were presented during Loncon 3, the 72nd annual World Science Fiction Convention August 14-18, 2014, in London.

Here are the Best Novel finalists (in alphabetical order by author) of this year's Prometheus Award for the best pro-freedom novel of 2013:

**Homeland**, by Cory Doctorow (TOR Books) is a sequel to Doctorow's Prometheus winner *Little Brother* and follows the continuing adventures of a government-brutalized but still-idealistic young leader of a movement of tech-savvy hackers who must decide whether to release an incendiary Wikileaks-style exposé of massive government abuse and corruption as part of a battle against tyranny and the national-security state.

**A Few Good Men**, by Sarah Hoyt (Baen Books), set in the same future as Hoyt's Prometheus-winning *Darkship Thieves* and the beginning of her Earth's Revolution saga, blends drama, romance, intrigue into a suspenseful struggle against a vicious tyranny of an entrenched and cloned elite that offers lessons about the roots of dictatorship, the seeds of revolution and our American heritage of freedom.

**Cruz**, by Ramez Naam (Angry Robot Books), is the sequel to *Nexus* and further extends a fascinating exploration of possibilities for both freedom and vicious mind control with emerging medical/computer technologies.

**Nexus**, by Ramez Naam (Angry Robot Books), offers a gripping exploration of politics and new extremes of both freedom and tyranny in a near future where emerging technology opens up unprecedented possibilities for mind control or personal liberation and interpersonal connection.

**Brilliance**, by Marcus Sakey (Thomas & Mercer), is a futuristic suspense thriller about human mutations that expand abilities but also threaten the status quo and trigger efforts to suppress emerging differences that undermine a free democracy.

Nine novels were nominated in the Best Novel category. The other 2013 novels nominated were *Seven Against Mars*, by Martin Berman-Gorvine (Wildside); *Armageddon's Princess*, by Anthony Pacheco (Amazon, Barnes Noble); *The Long War*, by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter (Harper Collins); and *Shadow of Freedom*, by David Weber (Baen Books).

The 2014 finalists (in chronological order) for the Prometheus Hall of Fame award for Best Classic Fiction:

"As Easy as A.B.C.," a short story by Rudyard Kipling published in *London Magazine* in 1912, presents an ambiguously utopian future that has reacted against mass society (which was beginning to emerge during Kipling's day) in favor of privacy and freedom of movement.

"Sam Hall," a short story by Poul Anderson published in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1953, depicts a regimented future America obsessed with security and facing a libertarian revolution aided by cybernetic subversion.

"Repent, Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman," a short story by Harlan Ellison published in *Galaxy* in 1965, is a dystopian satire set in an authoritarian society dedicated to punctuality, in which a lone absurdist rebel attempts to disrupt everyone else's schedules.

*Falling Free*, a novel by Lois McMaster Bujold from 1988, explores free will and self-ownership by considering the legal and ethical implications of human genetic engineering.

*Courtship Rite*, a novel by Donald M. Kingsbury published in 1982, portrays a harsh desert planet's exotic human culture founded on applying the mathematical concept of optimization in biology, political organization, and ethics.

The Prometheus Awards honor outstanding fiction that explores the possibilities of a free future, champions human rights, dramatizes the perennial conflict between individuals and coercive governments, or critiques the tragic consequences of abuse of power—especially by the state.

### Inside Prometheus:

#### Review:

*Exploring Capitalist Fiction*, by  
William H. Patterson, Jr.

#### Reviews:

*Freefall*, by Mark Stanley  
*The Creative Fire*, by Brenda Cooper  
*A Darkling Sea*, by James L. Cambias  
*Alongside Night*, by J. Neil Schulman



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## William H. Patterson, Jr. RIP

Earlier this year, I received an email from Bill Patterson, scholar and author of the two-volume biography of Robert Heinlein. He asked if I was interested in running a review in *Prometheus*, and I immediately said yes. We had some back and forth discussions. He sent in his review, and I sent him a proof copy. A few days later he apologized and said he had been ill. A week later I heard he passed away.

I had met Bill a few years ago, but cannot say I knew him personally. Yet his passing left a deep void in my soul. The review in *Prometheus* may well be his most recently written work, yet when we last spoke he had expressed an interest in writing other articles for *Prometheus*, and was excited about the forthcoming 2nd volume of his Heinlein biography. It is tragic that he will never experience the reaction to his new book.

### 1939 retro Hugo Awards feature Rand, Lewis

Several classic works of fiction of interest to libertarians are on the just-announced ballot for the retro Hugo Awards. These awards are part of a project over the past decade or two to extend backwards through time the reach of the Hugo Awards, the leading annual recognition of outstanding sci-fi and fantasy by the world's science fiction fans.

C. S. Lewis' novel, a finalist nominee in the top Best Novel category, is the first of his sci-fi trilogy that includes *Perelandra* and culminates with *That Hideous Strength* (a frequent nominee for the Prometheus Hall of Fame award for its strong critique of mid-20th-century collectivism and scientism).

T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*, also a finalist nominee for Best Novel, is the first of the five "books" that make up "The Once and Future King," White's popular retelling of the legend of King Arthur and explicitly champions individualism over collectivism.

Ayn Rand's early work *Anthem*, a poetic parable about the rediscovery of the ego in a collectivist world, is one of five finalists in the Best Novella category. Rand's most serious rival for the honor may be *Who Goes There?* by John W. Campbell, the legendary sf editor who is considered a father of modern sci-fi and who worked closely as an editor with Robert Heinlein and other masters of sci-fi's golden age.

*Who Goes There?* was voted one of the finest sf novellas ever written in 1973 by the Science Fiction Writers of America, inspired three sci-fi horror films (including *The Thing*) about a dangerous alien discovered near the North Pole.

But Rand's *Anthem* may have a good chance to win—especially if more of her fans find out about the retro Hugos and decide to join the Worldcon as at least voting members in the Hugos and retro Hugos.

The 2014 Hugo Awards—and the 1939 retro Hugos—were be announced Aug. 14 in London at Loscon 3, the World Science Fiction Convention. *The Sword in the Stone* won for best novel, while "Who Goes There?" won the best novella. Another former *Prometheus*-winner, Ray Bradbury, won for best fan writer.

# Fade Into Day: A review of J. Neil Schulman's *Alongside Night*

By Jerry Jewett

Ayn Rand published her monumental magnum opus *Atlas Shrugged* in 1957. Producing it for the big screen took until 2011 for the first of three segments, an achievement Rand did not survive to experience. J. Neil Schulman wrote *Alongside Night* in 1979, with a substantially shorter 'gestation period' to reach the big screen in 2013.

Both movies have in common that they deal with philosophies, ideas, and the consequences of ideas, shockingly radical ideas offensive to neo-cons, majoritarians, liberals, or other conventional or statist thinkers: ideas about moral culture, property, liberty, and economics that are at odds with contemporary dogma and in defiance of historical trends. Both movies have a missionary quality, a quality that requires study by the interested viewer, to come to grips with the inner core of what is being expressed. Both movies are driven by the story, to the extent that celebrity performers might actually distract from the thematic import of what the movie means to convey.

*Alongside Night* features the tribulations of Professor Martin Vreeland, his wife Katherine, and their children Elliott and Denise. Dr. Vreeland has the distinction of having advised the European Community on how to salvage its failing economy, while the American economy slides into the dustbin, the victim of central control and tinkering with the economy, with too many exact parallels to real-world events to detail here.

The powers-that-be seek Vreeland's assistance in reversing the dreadful downward spiral which federal regulation, experimentation, and mismanagement have triggered.

Dr. Vreeland, an academic with great practical reason, is played with restrained gusto by Kevin Sorbo, the "anchor star." Vreeland is in a position somewhat like that of Hank Reardon in *Atlas Shrugged*, in that he has a naive hope the system can be rebuilt. However, no John Galt is needed to turn his beliefs upside down and cause him to take a deeper second look, for federal agents, particularly NSA thugs, attempt to kidnap his family to hold them hostage, nabbing his wife and daughter. This incredibly hostile act radicalizes him to the point where his loyalties vacillate, then switch polarity, so that he decides he is not meant for even limited-government government service.

The Revolutionary Agorist Cadre consists of free-thinking individuals of the libertarian, agorist, and anarchist persuasion.

The group stages guerilla-style acts to expose the hypocrisy of the government (the federal government, that is) as well as to cast sand into the gears to slow down the mechanisms of oppression of the people by the elites.

At the same time, the introduction of The New Dollar causes uncertainty, fluctuations, and dislocations. One problem is that the unpaid U.S. military service members seem to desert in droves, some of them joining the Revolutionary Agorist Cadre. Brad Linaweaver appears as Kurtis H. Landy, union negotiator for the deserters.

Radio Free Enterprise is another cultural resource devoted to undermining the status quo, with The Crypto-Hippie Darknet as another. No plot spoiler is involved in revealing that free-market insights and references abound. Von Mises on the Liberty coin is one. Elliott's substitute teacher Murray Konkin is an obvious splice-up of Murray Rothbard and Samuel Edward Konkin III (who makes a posthumous cameo appearance).

The hip-hop send-up of Frederick Hayek is briefly quoted, as well as a small section from Linaweaver's recent *Silicon Assassin*. This is where the well-informed viewer will find cues and hints that may escape the general audience.

The U.S. president is portrayed as a populist buffoon, clearly a figurehead or policy-puppet without a clue, perhaps not unlike the real world around us, in that particular sense. An early scene depicts a foot-chase by FEMA agents of some pedestrians, which savors somewhat of Keystone Cops comedies, somewhat of a Monty Python skit, and somewhat chillingly of *Fahrenheit 451*.

Delving too deeply into the plot would constitute a spoiler; not the point of this review. The question of whether the good guys win or not turns entirely on who one thinks the good guys are. I think the good guys win, but then I am the wild radical, after all. The movie features natural tensions, fraternal camaraderie, familial anxiety, social unrest, family animosity, stark philosophical conflict, death and violence, vista and scope, plots and schemes, indoor and outdoor action, and a lot of cultural references, wisely inviting audiences of many demographic characteristics to join in the fight for the restoration and enjoyment of freedom. Freedom is not the domain nor the objective of any group, but the objective of self-aware individuals, whatever their group affiliation.

An aside: in an early scene, Joe (the character played by Schulman), who, as a Resident Assistant at George Mason University, let then-student Martin Vreeland smuggle his classmate Katherine into his dorm room, offers slight reproof to a visitor to the bookstore, which Joe owns and operates: "It's all in Rothbard, it's just all in Rothbard; what DO they teach in the schools these days?" Intentional or not, this purely echoes Professor Digory Kirke, after speaking to the Pevensie children in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*: "he muttered to himself, 'I wonder what they do teach them at these

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## 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.

—Continued on page 8

# Exploring Capitalist Fiction

By William H. Patterson, Jr.

Edward W. Younkins, *Exploring Capitalist Fiction: Business through Literature and Film*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014. 331 pages, \$100.00 (discounted on amazon.com to \$80.79; kindle \$56.99)

“Fiction can be used to teach, explicate, and illustrate a wide range of business issues and concepts.”

—Edward Younkins interviewed by Allen Mendenhall for “The Literary Lawyer”

*Exploring Capitalist Fiction* is a discussion of eighteen novels, a play, and six films, depending on how you count them: the distinction becomes a little blurry, as some of the books were also made as films. The selection covers more than a hundred years of America’s somewhat crochety, fractious, and obsessive love-hate/hate-love-hate-rinse-repeat relationship with business in all its forms.

*Exploring Capitalist Fiction* gives detailed discussions of this selection from the eighty works Prof. Younkins has used since 1992 in his “Business Through Literature” course in the Wheeling Jesuit University’s MBA program.

It would have been catchy and clever to title this review “From *Main Street* to *Wall Street*,” for the book’s discussions do end with Oliver Stone’s 2010 *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*. Unfortunately for the conceit of critics, *Exploring Capitalist Fiction* does not begin with Sinclair Lewis’s *Main Street* (though *Babbitt* does come under the critical lens as Chapter 6). It begins instead with *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885) by William Dean Howells, a book and an author both much admired by Mark Twain.

I thought at first this was an odd choice for a start, and it might have been more appropriate to begin with the book that put Twain on the map and gave its name to an era, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (1873) or perhaps Anthony Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* (1875), but Professor Younkins knows what he is about: while he makes no attempt to shade or evade the various unpleasant views of business and businessmen in his literary sample-box (treating them in his conclusion as features of sociological history), he is able to conclude the first of his many discussions by pointing out the businessman’s honesty and integrity that motivate Silas Lapham throughout and without exception, even as he is driven into bankruptcy by trying to appease his wife’s ill-informed sense of honor (one has to wonder if Ayn Rand didn’t derive at least some insights into Henry and Lillian Reardon from reading Howells).

Younkins’s method throughout is a detailed plot description of each book or play or movie, pausing as the opportunity rises for thematic and sometimes historical commentary—but always articulating where the business theme is being presented, even when a reader might not automatically notice it.

It would be impossible to discuss the discussions in any satisfactory way within the scope of a review; a list of the book’s contents must suffice:

1. William Dean Howells — *The Rise of Silas Lapham*
2. Edward Bellamy — *Looking Backward*
3. Frank Norris — *The Octopus*
4. Theodore Dreiser — *The Financier*
5. Abraham Cahan — *The Rise of David Levinsky*
6. Sinclair Lewis — *Babbitt*
7. Garrett Garrett — *The Driver*
8. F. Scott Fitzgerald — *The Great Gatsby*
9. An American Romance (dir. King Vidor)
10. Arthur Miller — *Death of a Salesman*
11. John P. Marquand — *Point of No Return*
12. Henry Hazlitt — *Time Will Run Back*
13. Cameron Hawley — *Executive Suite*
14. Cameron Hawley — *Cash McCall*
15. Sloan Wilson — *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*
16. Ayn Rand — *Atlas Shrugged*
17. Ken Kesey — *Sometimes a Great Notion*
18. Wilfrid Sheed — *Office Politics*
19. Stanley Elkin — *The Franchiser*
20. David Mamet — *Glengarry Glen Ross* (play)
21. Oliver Stone — *Wall Street* (movie, 1987)
22. *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* (movie, 1988)
23. David Lodge — *Nice Work*
24. *Other People’s Money* (movie, 1991)
25. Stone — *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* (2010)

Professor Younkins also provides appendices listing five hundred additional works that might be used in such a context, and his conclusion, though largely taken up with a defense of teaching a non-literary subject through fiction, takes a brief ramble though some other works.

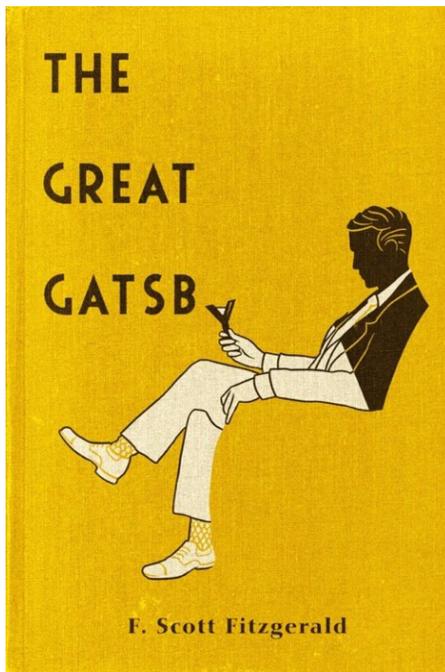
The treatment of *Time Will Run Back* is one of the book’s minor treasures. Economic journalist Henry Hazlitt is best remembered known for his 1946 classic *Economics in One Lesson*, but *Time Will Run Back* is a utopian novel first published in 1951 and revised for republication in 1966 (Mr. Hazlitt lived until 1993, the year after Younkins inaugurated this course). *Time Will Run Back* is a kind of anti-*Looking Backward*, which centers on the re-discovery of market economics from within a thoroughgoing socialist command economy. This book, perhaps more than any of the others, neatly illustrates Younkins’s extended defense of teaching about business through fiction.

The summary-and-commentary format can give the chapters on the larger-scaled works a somewhat elliptical character, as Frank Norris’s 1901 *The Octopus* (Wheat! Wheat! Fields of wheat! I’m dying, and they’re talking about wheat!) or the centerpiece of the book, in the most literal sense, *Atlas Shrugged* (Ayn Rand, 1957), complemented by a short and disconnected discussion of what is probably the primary source-influence of *Atlas Shrugged*, *Calumet K*, in the conclusion. Professor

—Continued next page

—*Exploring Capitalist Fiction*, continued from previous page

Younkins' discussion concludes unequivocally: *Atlas Shrugged* is arguably the greatest combination of philosophy, business, and literature written to date."



Perhaps part of the genuinely enormous impact *Atlas Shrugged* had into the 1960's was that it appeared in the most deadly part of the "organization man" era, and it may well be that there are too many works of that cultural era represented here. Younkin's discussions are always thorough and illuminating, but I could wish for some lighter material to balance out the fairly ponderous lineup—say, the charming and instructive *The Solid Gold Cadillac* (in the

book appendix) or even *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (in the film appendix), whose broader satire can be just as illuminating as more sober and more earnest lamentations.

While Younkins's book could surely be labeled a "good start" on understanding the various views Americans have taken of business over the decades, it omits, from the appendices as well as the text, all science fiction (with the possible exceptions of *Looking Backward* and *Time Will Run Back*—utopias—and *Atlas Shrugged*, whose status is still being debated).

This is a very odd and very conspicuous omission for this book, for science fiction has been exploring economics in futurity and alterity for most of its existence. And this exploration is continuing even now. Neal Stephenson has recently published more than 2,000 pages of a more-or-less science fiction-historical-hybrid, *The Baroque Cycle*, which turns on the transition out of Medieval-Renaissance business models and into modernity that was taking place in the Netherlands at the end of the 17th century, and Charles Stross's *Merchant Princes* series which occupies itself with replacing a feudal-era business model with a more contemporary business model—amid the blood feuds of clan operations. This series represents present as well as future science fiction, as Stross's publisher has announced a third trilogy in the series.

Nor should we omit explorations like the "reputation economy" that has been explored in William Gibson's last several books (and Stross's *Accelerando*) . . . or Poul Anderson's trader-guild Polesotechnic League. Or the coalition of 19th century trusts who finance Jules Verne's *Voyage to the Moon*.

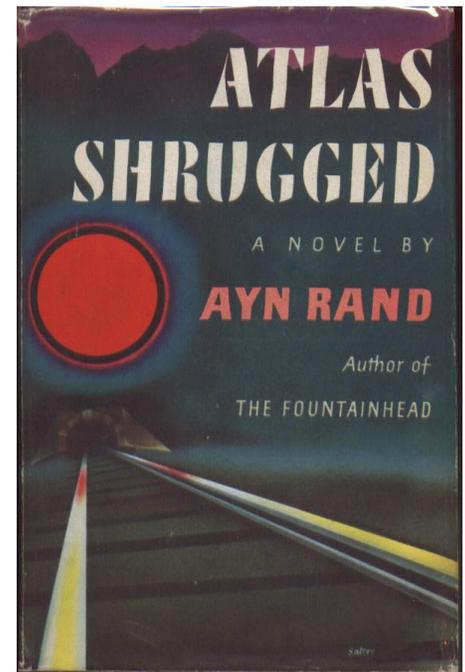
But the most astonishing omission of all is: no Heinlein,

not even in the appendices. Here is a highly influential writer who spent much of his life working with business and economic themes, and there is no mention at all. "The Man Who Sold the Moon" (1950) caused a large real world corporation to approach Heinlein to conduct a reorganizational seminar, and Dr. Peter Diamandis (*Space Ship One*, X Prize) refers to that novella as his "business plan," so its ongoing influence

is reaching well into the 21st century. Nor is that the end of Heinlein's economics-and-business related work: *The Rolling Stones* (1952) is built around a sketch of the economics of a "triangle trade" in the early days of solar system settlement. Since this was a book written for the Scribner's juvenile line in the early 1950's for which its intended audience was fifteen-year olds (give or take), it ought to have been a fairly important inclusion in the project. And just a few years after that, Heinlein wrote *Citizen of the Galaxy* (1957) for those same juveniles (that is, the generation that runs the world today), which is built around the business infrastructure of the slave trade, on an interstellar scale. These books are still in print, still bought and read, still highly influential in shaping young minds and minds no longer so young . . .

Professor Younkins's comments in interviews suggest he intends the book first as a class text (which may help explain the high price of the volume), and he does not believe his MBA candidates will relate to science fiction. Perhaps he is right—

—and that may ultimately be all the indictment of the current state of affairs in American business that is necessary or possible.




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*William H. Patterson, Jr. (1951 - 2014) has written articles on SF theory, Robert A. Heinlein, James Branch Cabell, among others. He is the author of the two-volume authorized Robert A. Heinlein biography; volume one appeared in 2010 and the second volume was published in 2014, both by Tor Books.*

*Patterson was active in Phoenix SF fandom in the 1970s, founded the Heinlein Journal in 1999, and helped organize the 2007 Heinlein Centennial in Kansas City in 2007.*

*This essay was written for Prometheus.*

## Freefall

By Mark Stanley

1998-2014; <http://freefall.purrsia.com/ffdex.htm>

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

*Freefall* has been appearing as a Webcomic since March 30, 1998. Recently, Jerry Pournelle mentioned it at his Web site. His praise of its serious science fictional content made it sound interesting, so I took a look—happily, the entire run is available online! What I found was an entertaining story that does have actual scientific substance and also has a surprisingly libertarian worldview.

The premise sounds like the setup for a joke: “A robot, a squidlike alien, and a genetically enhanced wolf are the crew of a spacecraft.” And, in fact, much of the story is comedic, with some great dialogue and an often excellent sense of timing—for example, the pie-throwing sequence builds up to a perfectly timed climax. Nor is the comedy limited to “idiots, explosives, and falling anvils” (in the words of Bill Watterson); like much of the best comedy, it grows out of character.

In this case, though, the character is not only personal but species character: It reflects the distinctive origins of the various nonhumans. The robots are mostly programmed to follow Asimov’s Laws of Robotics, and Stanley’s exploration of their logic is sometimes more ingenious than Asimov’s, not to mentioned often being funnier. The uplifted wolf, Florence Ambrose, has also had those laws programmed into her neural architecture—but overlaid on human-based cognitive architecture overlaid on the brain of a wolf, which gives her a lot of flexibility, enough to work around her constraints, increasingly easily as the story continues. This is helped by her exposure to the alien captain, Sam Starfall, a member of a race of land-dwelling cephalopods who attained intelligence as scavengers. In his native culture, theft, fraud, and trickery are considered virtues; he’s not merely a cunning rogue, but a cunning rogue who in his own view is heroically doing what’s right. A continuing motif of the strip is Sam and Florence each trying to set a good example for the other, taking pride in being a good influence, and worrying about being tempted—Florence into deceit and illegality, Sam into loyalty, truthfulness, and hard work!

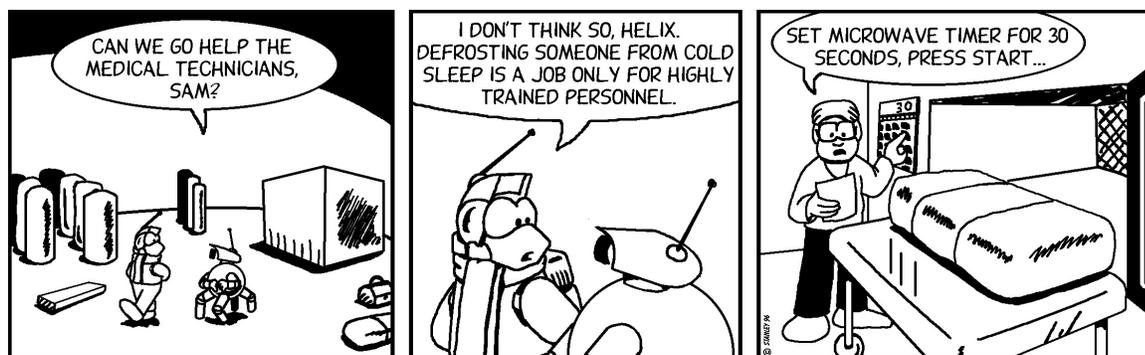
In other words, this strip is in part about the clash of different moral perspectives. And that leads to one of its major continuing themes: The question of the rights of artificially created beings, such as robots and uplifted animals. It’s established very early that Florence is not legally a person, but property: She belongs to the young human man whose family raised her, and whom she regards as her brother, though at this point in the story he’s on his way to another solar system and has never appeared on

stage. Moreover, the planet Jean, where the story takes place, is occupied by millions of robots, often highly sophisticated, who are regarded not as people, not even enslaved people, but as equipment. Both the robots and Florence are compelled to follow direct orders from human beings—and the category of “human being” is rigidly defined: neither Florence nor Sam counts as a human being. Both the robots and Florence are subject to reprogramming and memory erasure. This gives rise to one of the most brilliant scenes in the strip, in which Florence has been taken into custody by the corporation that manufactured her, and her recent memories have been erased—but her sense of smell repeatedly enables her to reconstruct the events she has forgotten, and she begins leaving herself Post-it notes as an external memory. (Seeing this, I thought both of Echo in *Dollhouse* and of Qiwi Lin Lisolet in *A Deepness in the Sky*, two stories based in part on the horror of memory editing.)

This kind of story is naturally going to appeal to libertarians. But there are passages that suggest the author’s sympathy for libertarian views. Early on, Florence asks the robot member of the crew, “Helix, how can you even think of breaking the law?” and gets the answer, “Sam’s been teaching me. He says that blind obedience to the law could result in robots supporting a tyranny. We have to decide for ourselves if a law is just or oppressive.” And more than a decade later, this is exactly what happens in one of *Freefall*’s major storylines.

There is also a lot of satire both of bureaucracy and of corrupt corporate management. And, even more strikingly, one fairly recent strip offers a comment on centralized corporate management of robot maintenance being inefficient, and letting robots keep some of their earnings to spend on their own maintenance producing optimized results, which could have come straight from Ludwig von Mises—as a throwaway line, but libertarianism needs more such throwaway lines in popular entertainment! Finally, this is a story that takes it for granted (though not all the characters do) that all rational beings need to be free and to have rights.

At a deeper level, this is a story about cooperation between very different people pursuing different goals, but finding ways to work together. And it’s a story about the qualities needed for success in market competition: both the integrity, honesty, and hard work that Florence embodies, and Sam’s ability to improvise and love of trickery. Seeing the two characters play off each other, more than anything else, makes *Freefall* a pleasure to read.



## A Darkling Sea

By James L. Cambias

Tor, 2014

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

James L. Cambias has been writing for Steve Jackson Games for a number of years. In *A Darkling Sea* he ventures into fiction for the first time, with a first contact novel. Vernor Vinge, whose own writing about alien races and first contacts has been excellent, compares Cambias to Hal Clement, one of science fiction's great masters of worldbuilding and alien race creation. Happily, this praise turns out to be deserved—but there's more going on in this novel than that.

In fact, Cambias gives us two different alien races. One is native to the planet where the story takes place, a world very different from Earth, whose geology and biology have been worked out in impressive detail. The other is a starfaring race, far older than humanity, but with a troubled history that makes them cautious about advanced technology, population growth, and interstellar exploration. This second race, the Sholen, want humanity to be equally cautious—especially in their contact with the newly discovered inhabitants of the world humanity has named “Ilmatar,” after a character from Finnish legend. There lies the primary conflict of the novel.

But there are many secondary conflicts, not between races but within each race. Humans, Ilmatarans, and Sholen all have their divergent viewpoints, their factions, and their conflicts. Cambias's narrative builds up to a climactic struggle between two emergent multiracial alliances. And as a result, no character of any race can be reduced to a one-dimensional sketch.

Of the three cultures, the Ilmatarans are shown in the greatest detail, partly because their entire society is on stage; for humans and Sholen, the reader sees only expeditions sent out for different purposes, each a small sample of an entire race. Cambias pays attention to Ilmataran laws and political institutions. Despite having evolved in a radically different environment, they have to solve many of the same problems as early human civilizations, including scarcity, limitation of violence, and preservation of capital, and they often have parallels in human customs, ranging from analogies to Icelandic law to an Ilmataran group somewhat resembling the early Royal Society. In fact, the plot begins when Ilmataran scientists detect, capture, and dissect a human observer with too much confidence in his stealth technology!

In an odd way, *A Darkling Sea* reads almost like a satire on *Star Trek*, with Sholen in the role of Vulcans as a self-appointed wise elder race disapproving of younger, more daring humans. But the conflict that emerges is rather more overt! And the Sholen are hardly the cold, rational Vulcans of *Star Trek*. Ironically, early in the story, the Sholen leader, Gishora, tells his main aide, Tizhos, that he anticipates little trouble from humans, who are obsessed with rules, pride themselves on behaving rationally, and thus will be entirely predictable! The story that follows dashes that hope, showing the unpredictability of all three races, and, indeed, celebrating it.

Despite this appealing subtext, I don't think this novel can be described as “libertarian” in any overt sense. But it does have

ideas that libertarian readers will find appealing. In particular, there's a scene where Broadtail, the main Ilmataran character, explains to Holdhard, his juvenile apprentice, the virtues of peaceful cooperation over combat, leading to a summation that libertarians will applaud:

“Working makes food?”

“Exactly! Fighting only steals food, but working makes more.”

With ingenious worldbuilding, complex and appealing characters, a tense storyline leading up to a dramatic climax, and intelligent themes, *A Darkling Sea* is a creditable first novel. I hope Cambias will give us many more.

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## The Creative Fire

By Brenda Cooper

Pyr, 2012

Reviewed by David Wayland

Aboard an old generation starship that is slowly falling apart, young Ruby Martin is resigned to a dull life down below, fixing robots and doing other menial work. Then one day during one of the many ship incidents of mechanical failure, she meets someone from a different part of the ship, someone with high status who never interacts with members of her class. To keep him calm, she sings to him, and when rescued, almost begs him to remember her, hoping for some chance to be lifted out of the drudgery of her current existence.

Brenda Cooper's novel *The Creative Fire* reads almost like a tale of Eva Perón in space. Indeed, Cooper acknowledges the Perón story as the genesis of her own book in the author's note that appears at the start of the novel. Eva Perón rose from a low birth into prominence as the wife of Argentina's military leader, Juan Perón, and in her own right as the “spiritual leader of the nation.”

From equally humble origins, Ruby Martin begins her own meteoric rise in the society aboard the starship, from which the novel derives its name. Within the vast generation ship there are layers of stratification, from the very low to the very high. The grays are the menial workers, the lower class. The blues are the elites, who supposedly run the ship. The reds enforce the laws; they have no scruples when it comes to beating up on the grays. When the blue that Ruby met takes her under his wing, she discovers that having a foot in each world doesn't bring security.

As Ruby is lifted to the next level, her friends begin their own rebellion, seeking greater freedom. Although their ship is supposedly on its way home, no one on board is old enough to remember its origins, which are steeped in myth.

Much like in the Eva Perón story, or rather the fictionalized musical *Evita*, Ruby becomes the voice of the rebellion through her singing. She becomes a focal point for those seeking change, either through violent means or behind the scenes.

The book is a fast read. The story of conflict within a generation ship is aptly written and fascinating. The book's conclusion is such that a sequel is inevitable, and following the path of Ruby and her co-horts and future enemies and rivals a compelling draw.

—*Alongside Night*, continued from page 3

schools.” (Page 54 of HarperTrophy paperback edition.)

Great music elevates this movie to a higher level. The title song by Soleil O’Neal-Schulman stunned me: at first, I thought I was hearing Shirley Bassey (the golden voice who sang the title song to the movie rendition of Ian Fleming’s *Goldfinger*), her voice is so rich. The professional orchestra which plays the score is first-rate, with variegated but fascinating incidental music thrown in at intervals.

The movie comes to us from a book, but unlike *Atlas Shrugged*, which also sprang from a book, the writer here keeps a steady hand on the whole thing, for J. Neil Schulman produced, wrote, directed, and has a role in this engaging production. Schulman freely admits to Rand’s influence in his extensive acknowledgments section at the end. However, considerable inventiveness and ingenuity, combined with evident prescience (the book was written nearly 40 years ago; but the movie, with some technological updates, speaks to the present time very powerfully) make the work as contemporary as this morning’s weather, something briefer and different than Rand’s work.

Street demonstrations play a recurring role in this movie. The speakers and singers at the principal demonstration do real justice to laissez faire and libertarian themes. One could wish for more of the protest singer’s fare, and the lyric sheet. In fact, one could wish for crowds who chant “It’s not my debt” in response to the National Debt and all that implies.

When such a mass uprising actually does occur, the State’s days are numbered.

The movie has the great advantage that the powers of the market are not on the defensive here. A pretty well-laid scheme of counter-attack gets put to the test. “Putting up with it” is never treated as an option. That theme of pro-active resistance partakes of Rand’s masterwork in the sense of vigorously fighting back, though by different means.

Those who have succumbed to “putting up with it” may be emboldened by this movie. Those whose longing for freedom takes on a practical aspect may find inspiration here. Those who favor Empire and domination will be repulsed, of course; how sad . . .

Abundant professional talent and an adequate budget supported the making of this fine movie. The result is visually bright and stunning, laced and layered with great music, and pregnant with the theme of the unquenchable human spirit seeking liberty.

No animals were harmed in this carbon-neutral production, but we must dispel the rumor that J. Neil Schulman is the long-lost younger cousin of Ayn Rand; alas, he is not.

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