

PROMETHEUS

Naam and Doctorow win Prometheus Award Hall of Fame to Bujold, Special Award to Fish, Lifetime award to Vinge

The Libertarian Futurist Society has announced its Prometheus Award winners for 2014—including a tie for Best Novel, our annual Hall of Fame entry for Best Classic Fiction and a rare Special Award, the first by the LFS to a filksinger-storyteller.

Awards for Best Novel, Best Classic Fiction (Hall of Fame) plus a Special Award was presented at 8 p.m. August 16 during the Special Awards ceremony at Loncon 3, the 72nd annual World Science Fiction Convention, which was held August 14-18, 2014 in London.

In a separate awards ceremony, four-time-Prometheus-winning author Vernor Vinge received a Lifetime Achievement Award presented during Conjecture/ConChord October 10-12, 2014 in San Diego, California.

Doctorow, Naam tie for Best Novel

There was a tie for Best Novel: The winners are *Homeland* (TOR Books) by Cory Doctorow and *Nexus* (Angry Robot Books) by Ramez Naam.

Homeland, the sequel to Doctorow's Prometheus winner *Little Brother*, follows the continuing adventures of a government-brutalized 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 struggle against the invasive national-security state.

Nexus 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.

The other Prometheus finalists for best pro-freedom novel of 2013 were Sarah Hoyt's *A Few Good Men* (Baen Books); Naam's *Crux*—the sequel to *Nexus* (Angry Robot Books); and Marcus Sakey's *Brilliance* (Thomas & Mercer).

Lois McMaster Bujold wins Hall of Fame

The Best Classic Fiction (Hall of Fame) winner was *Falling Free*, Lois McMaster Bujold's 1988 novel that explores free

will and self-ownership by considering the legal and ethical implications of human genetic engineering.

The other 2014 Hall of Fame finalists: "Sam Hall," a 1953 short story by Poul Anderson; "As Easy as A.B.C.," a 1912 short story by Rudyard Kipling; "Repent, Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman," a 1965 short story by Harlan Ellison; and *Courtship Rite*, a 1982 novel by Donald M. Kingsbury.

The Prometheus Hall of Fame award for Best Classic Fiction 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.

Leslie Fish wins Special Award

Author-filksinger Leslie Fish, perhaps the most popular filk song writer of the past three decades and one who often includes pro-freedom themes in her songs, received a Special Prometheus Award in 2014 for the combination of her 2013 novella, "Tower of Horses" and her filk song, *The Horsetamer's Daughter*.

Fish's novella (published in the anthology *Music of Darkover* edited by Elisabeth Waters) faithfully tells the same story as her Pegasus-winning filk song. The story's characters (especially the 12-year-old title character of the song) resist control of a

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PROMETHEUS

The newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society

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wizard-backed government that wants to regulate, tax, and conscript them.

This Darkover story thus sheds new light and fresh libertarian perspective on the world of Darkover by focusing on the peaceful voluntary cooperative lives of farmers and small-town traders struggling to preserve their freedom and independence—rather than the usual Darkover focus on the planet's leaders or ruling elite, some well-intentioned but some abusing power.

About the awards

The Prometheus Award, sponsored by the Libertarian Futurist Society (LFS), 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 the winners.

For more than three decades, the Prometheus Awards have recognized outstanding works of science fiction and fantasy that stress the importance of liberty as the foundation for civilization, peace, prosperity, progress and justice.

Prometheus Awards

One Award season has come and gone. With 2014 almost over, now is the time to mention books that deserve attention for the 2015 Prometheus Award, as well as the Hall of Fame award. There are two email addresses in the column to the left. If you have read any good libertarian fiction this year, current or classic, please send an email to one of these addresses.

If you read short fiction, and you wonder why there is no Prometheus Award for short fiction, the LFS is strongly considering this as a new category. We need your help. Consider volunteering for a short fiction selection committee. *Prometheus* will print reviews of short fiction, as well novels, movies, essays on liberty and fiction.

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.

What Makes This Book So Great

By Jo Walton

Tor, 2014

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

For the past six years, Jo Walton has been blogging at the Tor Website about books she's read. While many are now collected into this book, these blog posts aren't "reviews," because they aren't about new books, or about her first readings of books; rather, they're about second or Nth readings of older books. They're not "criticism" in the formal or scholarly sense. They could best be described as the reactions of a fan to the things she's a fan of—but an exceptionally perceptive fan, and one who expresses those reactions with clarity and wit. I can't think of any fannish commentary to equal this since James Blish (as "William Atheling, Jr.") wrote the fanzine pieces that became *The Issue at Hand* and *More Issues at Hand*. Blish's spirit was more "critical" in the popular sense of the word: Much of what he did was holding up various writers as examples of failed literary craft, sometimes at a very basic level. Walton's essays, even when they point out faults, are celebratory in spirit.

This shows up very clearly, for example, in the two long series of essays embedded in this collection: One on all of Lois McMaster Bujold's Barrayaran novels (except for the most recent two, written after a long hiatus) and one on all of Steven Brust's Dragaeran novels. I'm not a wholehearted fan of Dragaera—only the Paarfi of Roundwood books strike me as really enjoyable—but I've read all the Barrayaran corpus, and I found something thought-provoking in every one of Walton's essays on it. And writing about an entire series in this way is clearly the expression of fannish enthusiasm.

Walton clearly isn't a libertarian, despite her 2008 Prometheus Award for *Ha'Penny* (a dystopian alternate historical police procedural). But her choice of authors to reread includes several who have won repeated Prometheus Awards: Robert Heinlein, Vernor Vinge, and Ken MacLeod. Walton acknowledges the libertarian ideas in their writing, without treating them as a barrier to appreciation; writing about MacLeod's Fall Revolution books, for example, she says that "They're a fully imagined future where the capitalist criticism of communism is entirely true, and so is the communist criticism of capitalism. They're kind of libertarian (several of them won the Prometheus Award) and they're grown up about politics in a way that most SF doesn't even try."

And then she goes on to point out that MacLeod's *The Sky Road* is structurally similar to fantasy; in fact, she identifies all the elements that it shares with "The Ballad of Thomas Rhymor" or "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." Or, in other essays, she points to the grim dystopian settings of Heinlein's juveniles, or to the tragedy buried within Vinge's *A Deepness in the Sky*, which can only be recognized by someone who's read *A Fire upon the Deep* as well.

One of the very best pieces in this book, number 95, "SF reading protocols," discusses the peculiar mental skills that are needed to make sense of actual science fiction or fantasy. (In particular, she points out that readers of literary fiction

expect the dragons in fantasy, the zombies in horror, or the space travel in science fiction to be a metaphor for the novel's real subject, rather than seeing that the envisioned reality of those things IS the novel's real subject.) Reading Walton's book was very much like having a long conversation with a newly met fellow fan—a highly intelligent and civilized one, but one whose enthusiasm for SF as such is never in doubt for a moment.

Raising Steam

By Terry Pratchett

Doubleday 2014

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

In the later Discworld novels, Terry Pratchett has been fictionalizing the history of the Enlightenment, especially in England. Past novels have looked at newspapers (*The Truth*), telecommunications (*Going Postal*), and the abolition of slavery (*Snuff*) and have explored the nature of political change (*Night Watch*). *Raising Steam*, as its title implies, goes all the way into the age of steam, portraying the building of the Ankh-Morpork and Sto Plains Hygienic Railway, the Discworld's first railroad. In effect, Pratchett's fantasy has now become steampunk, of a kind very different from the fashion statement that the steampunk movement lately seems to have turned into—one that actually explores and indeed celebrates the technological transformation of everyday life. (Incidentally, there's a really beautiful old-fashioned railway map as a frontpiece in this book.)

Raising Steam also reads like a celebration of the Discworld as a whole, and especially of Ankh-Morpork, its greatest city and Pratchett's analog of London, in a way that gives it a valedictory quality. The plot brings onstage a large cast of major and minor characters from earlier novels and largely reconciles their conflicts. We see Samuel Vimes and Moist von Lipwig as allies (William de Worde, Pratchett's earlier attempt at providing an alternative viewpoint for novels set in Ankh-Morpork, is almost entirely offstage, though the Ankh-Morpork *Times* is not), and the Low King of the Dwarfs, Rhys Rhysson, gaining unquestioning support from his former political rivals Albrecht Albrechtsson and Bashfull Bashfullson in a time of crisis. In fact, the story's main opposition comes from the most fanatically traditionalist dwarves, turning to assassination, terrorism, and political authoritarianism to oppose new technologies and new customs—but in an odd way, this reads almost like a subplot. The main story is one of Moist von Lipwig's ingenuity in solving the novel problems of building a railroad, from securing rights of way to avoiding lethal accidents. In a way, it's the same kind of story Robert Heinlein told in "The Man Who Sold the Moon."

On another level, this is a sequel to *Small Gods*, the novel that made it clear how gods are created on the Discworld, by the power of mortal belief. Over the course of this novel, the first locomotive of the Discworld, Iron Girder, emerges as a goddess of rapid transportation and of technology, not only metaphorically but literally—a goddess whose essential identity

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2014 Prometheus Award winner

Best Novel: *Homeland*

Cory Doctorow:

I'd like to thank the LFS for a third time for honoring me with this extremely prestigious prize which I value very, very highly.

The central question of *Homeland*, and I think, of our time, is the question of whether technology is good or bad for us. Whether it helps the cause of human progress, justice and dignity. And I increasingly think that that's not the right question to ask. The right question to ask is what we can do to ensure that technology serves that purpose.

The person who wrote the afterword to this book was a young man name Aaron Schwartz whose story you may be familiar with. He died shortly before the book came out. You may have heard that the cause that Aaron was involved with was whether or not information wants to be free.

But, as it turns out I had occasion earlier this year to go on retreat with information. We went to a cabin in the Cotswolds. We told stories about our parents. We wept. We drank okay Chardonnay. At the end of it information confessed to me that it wants nothing at all, except for us to stop anthropomorphizing it. But what is certainly true is that people want to be free and when you live in an information society, you can't be free without free information.

This last year has seen the coincidence of the publication of this book and the leaks by Edward Snowden, who I think of as a hero, that went to expose the deep rot that is at the core of this book, particularly the news that the US and British governments have been participating in the sabotage of the network security in the which the networks that all of our individual security depends.

But it also had a another parallel. One that I'm not very happy with at all, and is both saddening and shocking to those who have kept a close eye on it. Two days ago I woke up in my hotel room to discover hundreds of tweets from people saying, my goodness, I didn't want to inhabit the Cory Doctorow future #Ferguson. And if there's one thing that Ferguson has shown us, it's why we need the projects to find out how technology more free. Aaron Schwartz and Edward Snowden.

The increased militarization is the result of the increased disparity in our society, the increased wealth and injustice that we've seen in our society. It is true that there is no dignity in the fact that some of us clean toilets and all of us use toilets. But if we were to figure out tomorrow how to automate a way how to clean toilets it would be just as much an indignity and an injustice if we found nothing for the people who had cleaned our toilets to do and declared them, therefore, worthless.

And so this is the project of the book, and I hope that it is a project that we can take on as a field. To automate our way out



Cory Doctorow, author of Homeland

of drudgery, to use technology to organize the downfall of the establishment that sees scarcity as a feature and not a bug.

It's why I wrote this book. It is why I got out of bed this morning. And, I think it may be a first for a libertarian prize, I'd like to thank you for your solidarity in your participation in this project.

Thank you.

Cory Doctorow is the author of ten novels (including a graphic novel and a collaboration with Charles Stross) and three collections. He has won multiple Locus Awards, the John W. Campbell Memorial Award, the Sunburst Award, the White Pine Award, and the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, as well as the Electronic Frontier Foundation Pioneer Award.

Doctorow's novels, Little Brother and Pirate Cinema also won the Prometheus Award for Best Novel.

Doctorow was born in Toronto, Canada in 1971 and became a British citizen by naturalization in 2011. He is a noted writer and speaker on intellectual property and an opponent of digital rights management.

2014 Prometheus Award winner

Best Novel: *Nexus*

Ramez Naam:

Thank you very much. It's a great honor to win this award and I want to thank the LFS.

As a matter of fact I have a great respect for the intellectual rigor and honesty of this award that you can see by the fact that more than half of the winners of the award in part are probably Marxists or socialists. At least as many Marxists or socialists have won this as libertarians in the past. I think this is a testament to the honesty of the award. By awarding it to whatever book and author has most advanced liberty from whatever end of the political spectrum it has come.

It's also an honor to share this with Cory [Doctorow], an author who exemplifies the use of the word to advocate for and advance freedom.

I wrote *Nexus* because I was incredibly enthusiastic about the power of neuroscience to advance human kind, to advancing the human mind, and by connecting their minds together.

I also wrote it because I was concerned about the abrogation of freedom in my country and throughout developed countries in the name of the war upon drugs, and the war upon terror. And that abrogation continues.

Now, I want to be clear, I'm an optimist. I believe that, in the long run, humanity has become more free. That we have more freedom than we had generations ago, that we have more mobility than we had generations ago, and that technology has played an important part.

That increase in freedom has not been homogenous, it has not been continuous. There are places in the world where we are growing less free. There are certain sorts of freedom that are being rolled back, and technology is playing a role in that. Even as technology increases the ability of people to communicate, it also make certain sorts of abrogation of freedom, certain sorts of surveillance and certain sorts of totalitarianism more scalable and easier, too.

I believe that in the long run we will find ways to use technology to enhance our freedom, but I believe that it is incumbent upon all of us to strive to make that so. To not treat it as a given, but to dedicate our work and our efforts, and those of us who are writers, our words, to making that hope become a reality, so thank you very much.



Ramez Naam, author of Nexus

Ramez Naam was born in Cairo, Egypt, and came to the US at the age of 3. As a computer scientist he spent 13 years with Microsoft. He has published four books, two non-fiction works and two novels.

The Infinite Resource: The Power of Ideas on a Finite Planet and More Than Human: Embracing the Promise of Biological Enhancement are futurist works that explore planetary change and the development of the human mind. Nexus, his fiction novel, won the Prometheus Award for best novel in 2014, while its sequel, Crux, was a finalist the same year. The third book in the series, entitled Apex, will be published by Angry Robot Books in 2015.

In 2014, he was nominated for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer.

Naam lives in Seattle, Washington, and is a full-time writer.

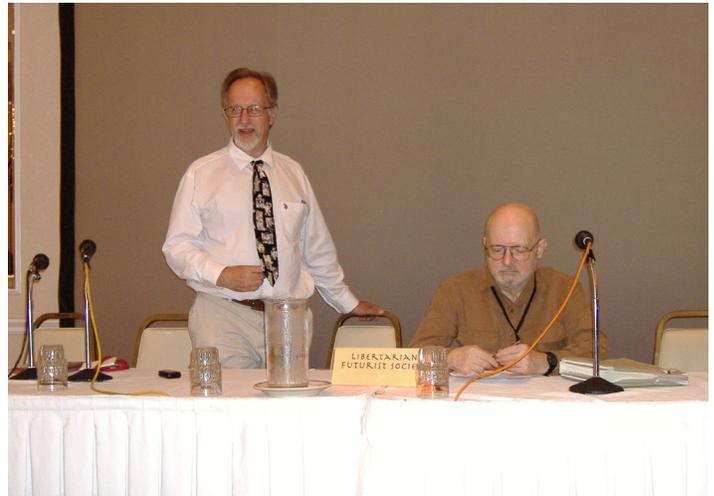
Vernor Vinge receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Science fiction writer Vernor Vinge received the Libertarian Futurist Society's Special Award for Lifetime Achievement on Saturday, October 11. The ceremony took place at Conjecture/Conchord, in San Diego, California. Among the audience were David Friedman, Dani and Eytan Kollin, and Todd McCaffrey.

LFS President William H. Stoddard briefly reviewed the history of the LFS and its various awards, and discussed Vinge's significance as a writer, his contributions to science fiction as a literature of ideas, and his ongoing exploration of libertarian themes. In particular, he pointed to the contrast between positive-sum and negative-sum relationships in the Zones of Thought series, and the preference for positive-sum relationships, as essentially libertarian ideas.

In his acceptance speech, Vernor Vinge discussed his early sense of the ethical gulf between voluntary personal relationships and governmental coercion. He identified David Friedman's *The Machinery of Freedom* as the key work that inspired his more explicitly libertarian works. Finally, he remarked on the advantages of fiction, especially science fiction, in exploring novel and radical ideas.

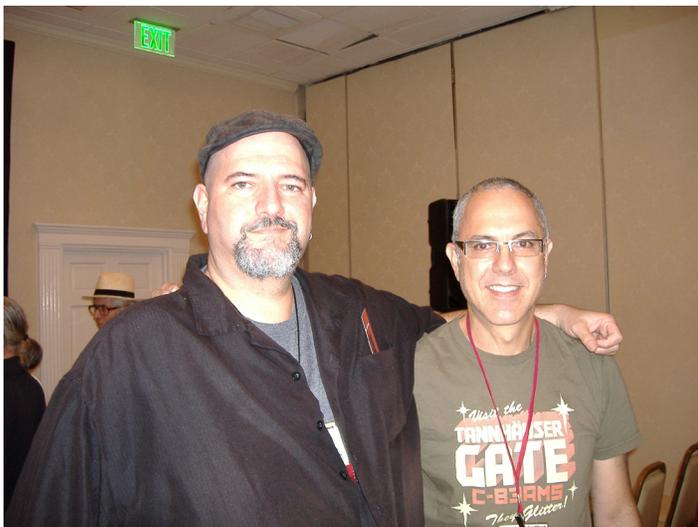
The ceremony was followed by a short question and answer period, in which David Friedman cited Robert Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (winner of the LFS's Hall of Fame Award in 1983) as having inspired his own ideas on the legal institutions of a libertarian society.



LFS President William H. Stoddard speaking about the Lifetime Achievement Award



William H. Stoddard presenting the first LFS Lifetime Achievement Award to Vernor Vinge



*Dani and Eytan Kollin, Prometheus Award winners for *The Incorporated Man*, at Conjecture/Conchord.*



David Friedman and William H. Stoddard

All photographs by Carol Kalescky

Lois McMaster Bujold

I'd like to thank the Libertarian Futurist Society for honoring *Falling Free* with this award. I admit, the transition from “new writer Bujold” to “classic” seems abrupt from my point of view, but such is the subjective nature of time. 1988—not that long ago, in geologic terms. I'm glad the book seems to be holding up, and especially that it still is able to entertain a new generation of readers.

I note that *Falling Free* has been a perennial nominee in this category for many years, off and on, which also says something about the virtues of persistence on your voters' parts. This seems a splendid way to retire from that space and give it over to other works that deserve notice. But a gold coin is certainly as good as a gold watch as a retirement gift. My plaque was mailed to me earlier this summer, and a very fine object it is. Again, thank you.

—Lois McMaster Bujold



Amy H. Sturgis presenting the Prometheus Awards at LonCon, the 72nd World Science Fiction Convention, 2014

—*Raising Steam*, continued from page 3

is, in the words of her builder, “power under control.”

But that same phrase could apply to the political themes of this story. Pratchett is celebrating the state, for its power to accomplish things, in a way that libertarian readers may find somewhat foreign—but he celebrates it as power under control: the control over Ankh-Morpork's Patrician, Havelock Vetinari, a tyrant who uses his power for largely untyrannical ends. The climax of the novel indeed is motivated by Vetinari's unreasonable goals for the railroad; but most of what he does, having set them, is to stay out of the way of the characters who actually accomplish them.

And there are a lot of libertarian notes in this story, starting with Moist von Lipwig's speech about how technological change has always meant that some people benefit and others lose out, starting with the first bronze tools making stone tools obsolete. There's a delightful conversation between von Lipwig and the Quirmian Marquis des Aix en Pains, who comments that “as you understand, bandits and governments ‘ave so much

Leslie Fish

Friends and fellow fans, I hereby accept the Prometheus Award with mixed delight and amazement.

Back when I first wrote “The Horsetamer's Daughter,” I could never have expected that it would have evolved so far and reached so many. I'd loved the Darkover series since I read the first novel, published as an Ace Double, never mind how many years ago.

I was fascinated with the complex history, ecology and politics of that planet of psychics, but—as the merry Anarchist I was, even then—I could also imagine a host of problems with a basically feudal society, even if the aristocracy was made up of telepaths. What recourse would the common folk have against their rulers' abuses? Ah, but given the rulers' tendencies to throw their genes around, as well as their weapons, I guessed that ultimately they'd breed their own rebellion—and thus the seed of the ballad was born.

It proved to be an epic in the classic sense: 15 verses long, with choruses! I recall that the first time I sang it, at the filksing the first night of World Fantasy Con, Marion Zimmer Bradley commented only: “Leslie has a lovely voice, but the song was about 15 verses too long.” Nonetheless, all the rest of the evening and the next day, dozens of individual fans came up to me and asked to make xerox copies of the lyrics.

Later came requests to reprint them in fanzines, then to record the song, and finally to write the prose version—which became the novella, “Tower of Horses.” This is an eerie parallel in reverse order to, of all things, “The Ballad of Tom Joad,” which was written by Woody Guthrie after he saw the movie version of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Such strange similarities happen in the weird world of folkmusic—not to mention Science Fiction.

It's been a long and fascinating journey for what is essentially a science-fiction protest song! I am, as I said, amazed and delighted that it's traveled so far and stirred so many. Thank you all.

—Leslie <;)))>< Fish”

in common that they might be interchangeable anywhere in the world.” (Incidentally, the legal issues in Quirm suggest that Pratchett may have been reading some of Emmanuel Todd's studies of how family organization and inheritance give rise to political ideologies, which are one of the most interesting developments in recent sociology.) And beyond the level of appealing speeches, Pratchett seriously explores the role of improved transportation in expanding commerce and economic opportunity, and the role of legal institutions in making all this possible—in securing such things as rights of way, for example.

Pratchett retains his touch for comedy in this novel. But, as has become increasingly visible in his writing, his comedy is often about serious things. The serious content of *Raising Steam* has many rewards to offer the libertarian reader, and the comedy blends with it remarkably harmoniously. And if this reads in some ways as the denouement to one of the great mock epics of recent literature, it's a fitting and rewarding one, in which modernity and technology appear not as a falling away from cherished fantasy but as its ultimate fulfillment.

Expanding markets for liberty and fiction

Recently a group unaffiliated with the LFS created a web site called Libertarian Fiction Authors <<http://libertarian-fictionauthors.com>> to gather and promote libertarian writers of fiction, across all genres. There are currently over 40 individuals listed in their directory, spanning several genres and publication methods, from traditional print to eBooks, mainstream publishers to self-published novels.

In 2014 the LFA, together with Students for Liberty, created a short story contest <<http://prometheus-unbound.org/2014/02/10/libertarian-fiction-authors-association-and-short-story-contest/>>. By the time the LFA announced the close of the contest, they had received over 150 entries. They announced the winners and runners up of the contest in March <<http://libertarianfictionauthors.com/2014/03/19/the-best-libertarian-short-stories-of-2014/>>. The winners are scheduled to appear in the Students for Liberty magazine, *Ama-gi* <<http://studentsforliberty.org/ama-gi-magazine/>>.

Whether this becomes an annual contest remains to be seen, but this clearly shows there are large numbers of libertarian writers actively being published or trying to get published. The rise of non-traditional publishing such as Kindle, eBooks, and other outlets, combined with social media outlets like Twitter, Facebook, and the like, points to new opportunities for writers, as well as ways for readers to discover new authors. With

self-publishing no longer simply the venue of vanity presses, established authors such as Victor Koman also have begun to convert backlisted items into Kindle versions.

Another possible site of interest is Liberty Island <<https://www.libertyislandmag.com>>. While this site leans more toward the conservative spectrum, the focus on fiction could lead to some interesting new discoveries. Prometheus Award-winning author Sarah Hoyt interviewed the site's founders on PJ Media recently <<http://pjmedia.com/lifestyle/2014/03/22/interview-adam-bellow-unveils-new-media-publishing-platform-liberty-island/>>.

With the expanding markets for libertarian fiction, or fiction dealing with liberty, it will be interesting to see what sort of stories appear.

—David Wayland

[Editor's note: In the following comments include several links to websites. As this appears in print rather than online, copying and pasting these links won't work. Rather than typing in the links in a browser, those interested in exploring these ideas further might enter keywords into their favorite search engine. There is also a chance these links some time in the future will stop working.]



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