

PROMETHEUS

The newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society
Vol. 22, No. 1, Winter 2004

Prometheus Award Nominees

- Naked Empire*, by Terry Goodkind (Tor Books)
The Anguished Dawn, by James Hogan (Baen Books)
State of Disobedience, by Tom Kratman (Baen Books)
Crossfire, by Nancy Kress (Tor Books)
The Pixel Eye, by Paul Levinson (Tor Books)
Hecate's Glory, by Karen Michalson (Tor Books)
Spin State, by Chris Moriarty (Bantam)
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, by J.K. Rowling
(Scholastic)
Quicksilver, by Neal Stephenson (Harper Collins)
Ruled Britannia, by Harry Turtledove (Roc/NAL/Penguin)
Red Thunder, by John Varley (Ace Books)
Gateways, by F. Paul Wilson (Forge)
Sims, by F. Paul Wilson (Forge)
The Holy Land, by Robert Zubrin (Polaris Books)

Hall of Fame Nominees

- Let Us Prey*, a novel by Bill Branon
It Happened Here, a film by Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo
A Clockwork Orange, a novel by Anthony Burgess
Rainbow Man, a novel by M.J. Engh
V, a television mini-series by Kenneth Johnson
As Easy as ABC, a short story by Rudyard Kipling
Dark Rivers of the Heart, a novel by Dean Koontz
That Hideous Strength, a novel by C. S. Lewis
It Can't Happen Here, a novel by Sinclair Lewis
The Star Wars Trilogy, a set of 3 films by George Lucas
V for Vendetta, a graphic novel by Alan Moore
Unintended Consequences, a novel by John Ross
A Time of Changes, a novel by Robert Silverberg
Lord of the Rings trilogy, novels by J. R. Tolkien
The Ungoverned, a short story by Vernor Vinge
The Weapon Shops of Isher, a story and novel, by A. E. van Vogt
The Book of Merlyn, a novel by T.H. White

Life member SEK3 passes away in Los Angeles, CA, Feb. 23

Samuel Edward Konkin III, known as SEK3 in libertarian and science fiction fandom circles, died February 23, 2004 at his home in Southern California reportedly of natural causes.

Sam was born in Canada in 1947. As a young child his family moved to Edmonton and he lived in that area through college. He graduated from the University of Alberta with a degree in Chemistry in 1968 and then entered the University of Wisconsin for graduate studies in Chemistry. During his high school years he had been interested in the Social Credit movement and by the time he entered the University of Wisconsin he was a fan of science fiction in general and especially the works of Robert Heinlein in particular the novel *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*.

SEK3 transferred his graduate studies to New York University where he received a Master of Science in Chemistry. While in New York he became acquainted with many of the libertarians who were gaining prominence at that time. In 1975 he moved to Southern California where he lived for the remainder of his life except for two years he lived in Los Vegas.

Sam published many newsletters, pamphlets and magazines on libertar-

—continued on page 4

Editorial

The Prometheus Awards have gained more recognition, and more respect, in the science fictional community than might have been anticipated when they were first established. Publishers supply copies of nominees to a mailing list of LFS Sponsors, and authors attend Prometheus Award ceremonies, even if they aren't part of the libertarian community. At least some of the reason for this has to be that winning the Prometheus Award helps to increase a book's audience. And since that's what the awards were instituted for, we can count them as having a measure of success.

But this recognition is an asset whose value has to be maintained. If we give awards to books that don't merit them, readers will put less value on the Prometheus Award—and in the long run, so will authors and publishers.

Choosing award recipients is a delicate balancing act. Recipients should have libertarian content, envisioning a free future, or a movement to attain freedom, or showing the dangers of arbitrary power; and it's even better if the

author has something new to say about libertarianism. But recipients should appeal to general readers, not just to people who already agree with libertarian ideas; the fictional content has to carry its own weight. On the other hand, the ideas must be there; claiming popular or well written books as "libertarian" on any vague pretext will do nothing to expose more readers to libertarian themes.

In a few months, LFS members will be voting on this year's award nominees. Read carefully; your choices matter.

From the Incoming Editor

Prometheus, with all it contains, represents the face of the Libertarian Futurist Society to the rest of the world. Not only does this publication serve to inform members of nominees and relevant organizational news, but it also serves to inform the rest of the world what our reviewers think of the novels that we nominate.

Due to this, I believe it is of extreme

importance that we receive reviews of these nominees from as much of the membership as possible. How we as an organization view nominees is more than just the few people who currently write reviews of these books.

I'm not looking for Gene Siskel. As a member, you've read a nominee. It is possible that you loved it, hated it or

didn't find anything remarkable about it. Write down your thoughts! Tell us why you felt the way you did. If you felt anger, joy or boredom - let it show in your review. And when you are done, what should you do with it? Mail or email it in.

It doesn't take a professional book reviewer to submit reviews. It just takes somebody who cares.



PROMETHEUS

Prometheus is a quarterly publication of the
Libertarian Futurist Society
(URL: <http://www.lfs.org>)

Editor: William H. Stoddard
Layout Editor: Bruce Sommer

Contributing Editors: Michael Grossberg,
Bill Howell, Lynn Maners, Steve Trinward

Letters, submissions:
Bruce Sommer
P.O. Box 110543
Campbell, CA 95011-0543
bes-lfs1979@sommerfamily.org

Subscriptions, advertisements:
Libertarian Futurist Society
650 Castro St., Suite 120-433
Mountain View, CA 94041
moulton@moulton.com

Basic memberships: \$25/yr (\$30 overseas)

Full memberships: \$50/yr.

Sponsors: \$100/yr.

Benefactors: \$200/yr.

Subscriptions: \$20 (\$25 overseas)

All membership s include one-year subscriptions.

Changes of address: Please send any changes in your mailing address or e-mail address to Victoria Varga at the address above.

Classified ads: 50 cents/word, 10 percent off for multiple insertions. Display ad rates available.

Send memberships, subscriptions, and newsletter ads with checks made out to the Libertarian Futurist Society.

Prometheus is copyright 2004 by the Libertarian Futurist Society. The Libertarian Futurist Society retains a non-exclusive license to republish accepted articles on its Web site; all other rights revert to the author on publication. Bylined articles are strictly the opinion of the signed author and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Libertarian Futurist Society's membership.

Letters, News, and Notes

Publishing News

Six years in the making, *Molôn Labé!* (mo-LAWN lah-BAY), by Boston T. Party (Javelin Press) has been confirmed to ship in February, 2004.

The story revolves around Wyoming Governor James Wayne Preston, a decorated Desert Storm Marine helo pilot, elected in 2014 on the Laissez-Faire Party ticket, who must deal with the tyranny of the U.S. Government in his efforts to bring greater freedom to the people of the State of Wyoming. Will the conflict between the U.S. Government and the State of Wyoming lead to secession?

More information can be found at http://www.javelinpress.com/molon_labe.html.

Film and Television News

David Heyman, the producer of the Harry Potter films, and producer Mike Medavoy have hired Tim Minear, a genre television producer (*Angels and Wonderfalls*), to script an adaptation of Robert Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* for film production. Minear describes himself as a Heinlein fan and states that he wishes to stay as close as possible to the spirit of Heinlein's story, citing the script of *The Lord of*

the Rings as a model for the type of adaptation he wants to do.

Awards

The Libertarian Alliance, a British libertarian organization, has announced its Liberty Awards for 2003, in association with the Libertarian International. The awards were presented November 22-23, 2003, at Liberty 2003: The Annual Conference of the Libertarian Alliance and the Libertarian International, in London's National Liberal Club. The Liberty in Theory Award went to David Marsland, Professor of Health Informatics at Brunel University, for his contributions to the sociological study of open societies and his critiques of biases in mainstream sociology. The Liberty in Action Award went to Dr. Robert Lefever for his demonstration of the possibility of free-market alternatives to Britain's National Health Service and his work in the treatment of addiction. The Dead Liberties Award went to Peter Fahy, Chief Constable of Cheshire, for his investigation of Peter Forster, Bishop of Chester, following Forster's statement that homosexuals should seek psychiatric help in changing their sexual orientation, even though making such statements infringed no existing British law. For further information

on these award, e-mail to Dr. Chris R. Tame at director@libertarian.co.uk.

Commercial Ventures

SpaceDev, a space technology corporation, has been awarded a \$200,000 contract from DARPA to undertake conceptual design of orbital constellations made up of hundreds of small satellites. This is one of six current contracts; SpaceDev also has contracts with Scaled Composites and the Missile Defense Agency and three contracts with the Air Force Research Laboratories.

Other SpaceDev accomplishments include launching CHIPSat, the first orbital Internet node, on January 12, 2003, and testing an innovative rocket motor in a supersonic manned vehicle on December 17, 2003.

For more information, see <http://www.spacedev.com>.



Advertisement

Now un-reduced print in *The (Libertarian) Connection*, open-forum magazine since 1968. Subscribers may insert two pages/issue free, unedited. Lots of stimulating conversation. Eight issues (year) \$20. Strauss, 10 Hill #22-LP, Newark NJ 01702.

LFS Directory

Director: Victoria Varga (vvarga@rochester.rr.com, 585-582-1068)



Assistant Director: Fran Van Cleave



Webmaster: Tod Casasent (kuroneko@kuroneko.org)



Board of Directors: Chris Hibbert, President (hibbert@mydruthers.com, 650-968-6319); William Stoddard, Vice President; Fred Moulton, Treasurer; Tod Casasent; Michael Grossberg; Lynn Maners; Joseph Martino; Bruce Sommer; Victoria Varga.



Committee Chairs: Victoria Varga, Finances; David Tuchman, Membership Services; Chris Hibbert, Publicity; Fred Moulton, Programming; Michael Grossberg, Best Novel Awards; Lynn Maners, Hall of Fame Awards; Bruce Sommer, Special Awards

continued from page 1—

ian topics. He was an early member of the Libertarian Futurist Society and was the Fan Guest of Honor at the 1984 Coppercon. He began publishing the Daily Frefanzine at major Science Fiction conventions and it was a common sight at many Worldcons. In this magazine *New Libertarian* he published a full issue devoted to Robert Heinlein.



A Tribute to SEK3

On the properly Discordian 23rd of February, 2004, at age 56, the libertarian/science fiction fan/writer/activist/publisher, and one of the founding members of the LFS, Samuel Edward Konkin III, passed away in his apartment in West Los Angeles, California, apparently of natural causes.

SEK3's influence on libertarian science fiction was pervasive. In 1973 and 1974 Sam serialized my 25,000-word interview with Robert A. Heinlein across six issues of his semiprozine,

New Libertarian Notes, combining publication with J.J. Pierce's *Renaissance*, which increased circulation of both publications by ten times. SEK3 published 101 weekly issues of *New Libertarian Weekly* from December 1975 through January 1978, and subsequently *New Libertarian*, which devoted a yearly issue to libertarian science fiction and published significant contributions by such writers as Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea, Brad Linaweaver, L. Neil Smith, Victor Koman, and me, all of whom were represented in a widely distributed Heinlein memorial issue in 1990, SEK3's largest circulation magazine issue, period.

Sam considered that fiction and drama—in particular science fiction and fantasy—were more important in changing society than nonfiction, and he made it a point to surround himself with talented novelists, playwrights, and screenwriters. He



Photo of Samuel Edward Konkin III in 2003 by J. Kent Hastings. Copyright ' 2003 J. Kent Hastings. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

did not consider science fiction and fantasy peripheral to his work as a libertarian, but the centerpiece of it. His fannishness was not his hobby but the core of his libertarian mission. SEK3 published, made editors of, and inspired the current generation of libertarian science fiction writers, who have won media and publishing credits, critical acclaim, reknown, and sales equaling or exceeding those of our generation's libertarian nonfiction lights.

SEK3's writings on countereconomics were the deep background for my novel, *Alongside Night* (Crown, 1979), which I dedicated to him, and which went on to win endorsements from Milton Friedman, Thomas S. Szasz, Michael Medved, Anthony Burgess, Robert Anton Wilson . . . and the Libertarian Futurist Society's Hall of Fame Prometheus Award.

He also inspired Victor Koman's Prometheus-award novel, *Solomon's Knife* (Franklin Watts, 1989). Three-time Prometheus winner Koman says, "I am grateful to Sam for inspiring my novel, *Solomon's Knife*, but what I most will remember him for is his complete, total, and utter fannishness."

Double Prometheus Award winner Brad Linaweaver, co-editor of the Prometheus Award SF anthology, *Free Space* (St. Martins, 1997), called Konkin the "spiritual cheerleader" of that book as well.

Other than a few long letters I'd written at age 16 for my high-school underground newspaper, Sam was my first publisher. He published my first short stories (which is why he's on the dedication page of my short story collection, *Nasty, Brutish, and Short Stories*) and my first articles in his

magazine, *New Libertarian Notes*, and he made me one of his editors.

From 1974 until his death SEK3 made his living as a pre-press production specialist in magazine and book publishing, beginning as a typesetter and layout specialist, and eventually becoming an accomplished graphic artist and book designer, skills that served him well in his fan activities, including publishing the libertarian *apa Daily FreFanzine* at various SF conventions, including Worldcon, since 1996. He was the book designer and producer of over 60 hardcover and trade paperback books, many of them for Pulpless.Com's science-fiction and fantasy line.

Born July 8, 1947 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, SEK3 earned a BS(Hon.) from the University of Alberta, attended graduate school at the University of Wisconsin for two years, and then moved to New York City in his twenties to seek a doctorate in theoretical chemistry at New York University. He achieved a Master's degree there but refused to turn in his doctoral thesis, after he had completed all work, because "I didn't want to spend the rest of my life working for the military-industrial complex." (SEK3's NYU thesis advisor, Mark Ratner, subsequently went on to win the 2001 Feynman Award.) SEK3 took a vast cut in security and lifetime pay when he chose to walk away from a doctorate that would have allowed him to teach, design weapons of mass destruction, and pursue other lucrative enterprises. In his later years, unwilling to abandon his principle of living without state subsidies or permissions, he sometimes lived just above poverty level.

Michael Moslow, a roommate of his while Sam was at NYU, tells me Sam's post-graduate research solved a problem in theoretical chemistry that later resulted in several Nobel prizes. Since Sam never wrote up his

dissertation, much less turn it in, we'll never know for sure, but he may also have walked away from what a career leading to a Nobel Prize.

SEK3 was an unending fountain of out-of-the-box thinking, wherever he was. Brock d'Avignon, who worked with Sam in the early 1990's at an Orange County company selling satellite-TV broadcast services to presidential candidates, ascribes Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential election victory to SEK3. He writes, "Sam's action in proposals to presidential candidates with the satellite PhoneVoter Television Network starting in 1992 changed history from uplinking an obscure Arkansas governor with \$50K to Senator McCain in 2000."

Already an active libertarian anarchist before getting involved in fandom, he is credited with coining the fan term "frefan" (libertarian SF fan) and is credited in libertarian circles as the father of "Agorism." He was an inveterate participant at science-fiction and mythopoeic conventions, often throwing room parties. He was 1984 Fan Guest of Honor at Coppercon and regularly attended meetings of the LASFS in Los Angeles and SNAFFU in Las Vegas.

Since his birthday, July 8th, was the day after Heinlein's, Sam threw an open Heinlein-Konkin Birthday Party for libertarians and science fiction fans just about every year.

I first met Sam in 1971 in New York City, at the first libertarian meeting I ever attended, the New York Libertarian Association, in libertarian attorney Gary Greenberg's living room. I'd already started a campus libertarian group at the branch of City University of New York I was attending. Sam, a believer in the "libertarian alliance" concept of stringing together libertarian groups, immediately found this naive 18-year-old worth talking to.

We found out almost immediately that we shared an interest in science fiction (particularly Robert A. Heinlein) and the works of C.S. Lewis, whose Narnia chronicles I'd read as a child. Sam was only the second other person in my life I'd met who had read Heinlein, and the first other person I'd met who'd read Lewis. It was Sam who told me that Lewis had written more than the Narnia children's books, introduced me to Lewis's nonfiction and adult fiction, and took me to my first meeting of the C. S. Lewis Society of New York, which we attended together regularly. Sam also took me to my first science fiction convention, 1971's Lunacon, in New York City, to my first World Science Fiction Convention, Torcon, in Toronto, Ontario, in 1973, and to my first meeting of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS). We joined the just-formed Southern California C. S. Lewis Society together in 1975, and Sam and I each served on its governing council for a number of terms.

In New York, Sam took me to lectures where I met Murray Rothbard, introduced me to the writings of Ludwig von Mises, and took me to my first libertarian conference at Hunter College in New York City, where I first met Robert LeFevre. We audited recorded playings of the Brandens' Basic Principles of Objectivism lectures together, also at Hunter College.

Sam and I toiled around New York City, searching out "underground gourmet" restaurants, and always (on the first day when possible) catching the latest Woody Allen movie or the latest James Bond movie.

Sam was a speaker at both of the libertarian CounterCon conferences on countereconomics I organized in 1974 and 1975.

We left New York together to come out to the promised land, southern

Book Reviews: Fiction

Susan Wells and Scott Bieser, *A Drug War Carol* (Big Head Press, 2003)

Looking for a great Libertarian Christmas gift for under \$6.00?

Check out *A Drug War Carol* by Susan Wells and Scott Bieser.

Employing a beautifully drawn comic-book format, *A Drug War Carol* starts off at the Christmas Eve press conference of Scrooge McCzar, who declares medical marijuana "humbug" and orders the arrest of a pot-smoking multiple sclerosis patient, Mary Jane Cratchet.

That night, Scrooge McCzar is visited by the lugubrious chain-dragging ghost of Harry Anslinger, America's first drug czar, who takes him on a journey through history -- the **true** history of our absurdly insane Drug War. It takes true brilliance to cast lying Harry "Mary Jane" Anslinger, who wouldn't have known the truth if it blew his brains out, as our guide to those chest-beating champions of yore who enacted this profoundly racist legislation.

Meticulously researched and foot-noted, *A Drug War Carol* goes far beyond any comic-book in presenting us with the information we need to combat the shiny cocoon spun around the festering sore of pot prohibition.

Does this sound a bit too intense for Christmas? If yours truly, who once faced a possible ten years in prison for possession of Ecstasy, can rejoice in ADWC's wonderful satire, I think you and your friends will too.

You may purchase single copies immediately at retail from Renaissance Books, Liberty Book Shop or from Amazon.com, or in comic-book stores throughout North America starting in December.

Multiple copies are available from BigHeadPress. Prices are \$2.95 per

copy in quantities of 10 or more, or \$2.45 per copy in quantities of 120 or more, plus shipping. Contact sbieser@bigheadpress.com.

—reviewed by Fran Van Cleave

John Varley, *Red Thunder* (Ace Books, 2003)

Red Thunder is mostly a fun book with strong pro-personal -responsibility overtones and private space travel.

It is essentially an updated Heinlein juvenile, maybe targeted at young adults instead of young teens, but it reads almost the same. It also requires the same suspension of disbelief that the Heinlein juveniles did.

Four young people accidentally run into an ex-astronaut and end up meeting his idiot-savant cousin, who has invented something that can provide unlimited power to space ships (among other things).

With propulsion taken care of and a handy million dollars (one of the kids and the cousin are rich) they build a space ship and fly it to Mars in three days, beating the Communist Chinese and NASA missions that have been traveling for months.

Along the way you get to know the characters, most of whom are just scraping by. However, they take personal responsibility for their situation and don't blame others. They don't want handouts, and the mother of one character uses firearms to defend her property. All in all good stuff.

Where it breaks down is when they reach Mars. It seems from that point on that Varley is trying to rush things through. The ending, where the technology is turned over to an international agency for safekeeping, is especially disappointing. A private

solution would have been much more satisfactory, not only from a libertarian point of view. It would have been more consistent with the rest of the book.

Overall, while not an ideal candidate for the Prometheus Award, this is a well written book and has quite a bit of appeal for libertarians.

—reviewed by Jorge Codina

James P. Hogan, *The Anguished Dawn* (Baen Books, 2003)

The Anguished Dawn is a sequel to James Hogan's *Cradle of Saturn*, a past Prometheus Award finalist for Best Novel.

Both are good stories, but suffer from the same problem. Hogan is over the top in his promotion of a Velikovskian cosmology. It seems that he is not really trying to tell a good story. He is pushing Velikovsky's eccentric theories.

In *Cradle of Saturn*, Earth is devastated by a near collision with a planet ejected from Jupiter. In *The Anguished Dawn* the civilization based in Saturn's moons (the Kronians) decides to return to Earth and help survivors rebuild. A small team is sent. The team is made up of Kronians and former rescued Terrans. Most of the Terrans are unhappy with the Kronian model of mutual aid and want to return to the old Earth statist methods. The Pragmatists, as they call themselves, stage a coup on Earth and assert themselves by force, taking over the Kronian ships and ground base.

One of the rescued Terrans, Landen Keene, has fully integrated himself into the Kronian culture and is very happy with it. He does not want the old statist model to return. Only he can stop the Pragmatists, as only he fully understands what they are doing.

—continued on page 7

The Korians are hopelessly confused as they have never dealt with coercion before. They don't understand what is happening.

Keene must somehow solve the problem without resorting to the Pragmatist methods of force and compulsion. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the solution is a copout.

The other sub-text is Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, which is explicitly mentioned in the book. As this isn't pushed anywhere near as hard as Velikovsky, it actually works. The description of a voluntary society based on the concept of mutual aid instead of direct competition and compulsion is interesting and believable, up to a point.

The concept of respect as currency is especially appealing. If anything, I wish Hogan had developed these ideas further. His description is shallow. For example, how are scarce goods, such as housing, allocated? This type of voluntary system raises a lot of interesting questions. Unfortunately the book neither asks nor answers them.

—reviewed by Jorge Codina

F. Paul Wilson, *Gateways* (Forge, 2003)

Repairman Jack's adventures don't skirt the fantastic -- they hang ten on it, written in clear, transparent prose celebrating an utterly believable free man. What a pleasure it is to see such an interesting hero who acts on principle, takes responsibility, and makes justice happen.

In this novel, Jack flies to Florida to be with his father, now in a coma after an auto accident. Jack deals with post-9/11 airport security in his own inimitable way: smuggling a weapon aboard the plane and making humorous observations: "When did 'wand' become a verb?"

In Florida, Jack discovers that his dad was the target of a hit-and-run, and that other residents of his senior community, Gateways South, have died under strange circumstances. Gateways South impinges on the Everglades ... or maybe it's the other way around.

A young woman named Semelee who lives in the swamp with her peculiar tribe senses that Jack has arrived, and the Otherness kicks into gear. Off we go for a wild ride. A neighbor of Jack's dad named Anya is a fascinatingly eccentric character, and involved in the plot up to her earlobes.

Jack's strategies in seeking answers and justice for his father, and in preventing further harm to him -- along with other characters Jack has formed a bond with -- are deeply felt as well as profoundly libertarian. Jack's relationship with his dad, who has more in common with him than either of them realized, emerges into a respectful connection, one I find far more compelling than exquisitely nuanced emotional reminiscences or paeans to the 'faith of our fathers.' It's about doing the right thing.

—reviewed by Fran Van Cleave

Terry Goodkind, *Naked Empire* (TOR Books, 2003)

Naked Empire by Terry Goodkind is the eighth book in the "Sword of Truth" series. It is a fairly typical Sword and Sorcery novel. The hero, Richard Rahl, with a company of brave companions is on a quest to defeat a great evil. They have many trials and make surprising discoveries along the way. Of course, since this is a series the great evil is not defeated. A battle is won, not the war. The series will go on.

One of the things discovered is a previously hidden empire. The magic barrier that shielded the hidden empire has come down, exposing it to the outside world for the first time in

3000 years. The people in there don't know how to recognize evil because their philosophy, being completely relativistic, does not accept that evil exists. They believe that people are not evil, just misunderstood. These people have been invaded by the great evil, which is destroying their land, raping the women, killing people, etc. Since they can't accept the existence of evil, they can't fight it. They turn to Richard for help.

Discovering their completely anti-life philosophy, Richard gives them several speeches worthy of John Galt and puts them on a rational, moral, life affirming, path. He also identifies some of his own anti-life behaviors and corrects those. Richard converts the people much too easily and he wins his battles much too easily. But this is typical of the genre.

Other than this and a few other minor complaints, it's not a bad book, and it has a strong Libertarian/Objectivist message.

—reviewed by Jorge Codina

David Brin and Scott Hampton, *The Life Eaters* (DC Comics, 2003)

In 1986, David Brin published "Thor Meets Captain America," an alternate history in which American soldiers faced the Norse gods, necromantically summoned by mass human sacrifice to aid the Nazis during World War II. The Life Eaters both extends that story and translates it into a different medium, the graphic novel. I believe this is David Brin's first comic book script; but his use of the medium is consistently effective, and Scott Hampton's art well suits the grim world Brin describes.

This story explores one of Brin's recurrent themes: the dangers of those who consider themselves raised above human beings, entitled to spend human lives for their own higher purposes. In this setting, they are gods, or purported gods, empow-

continued from page 7—

ered by human sacrifice. Brin envisions an alliance of Muslims, Christians, and Jews as a central element in the opposition to them, one looking back to the Old Testament's prohibition of human sacrifice. Gods and aristocrats may be fascinating, Brin suggests, but giving in to that fascination is a fatal mistake (much the same point that Terry Pratchett makes in *Lords and Ladies*, where the witches of Lancre battle the allure of the elves).

But to battle such superhuman forces, Brin's heroes need to assume superhumanity themselves – and after all, this is a comic book, the home of the superhero. But Brin's defenders of humanity have an important difference: after their victory, they put off their superhumanity, returning to human life, a climax much like that of Vernor Vinge's classic "True Names."

"Thor Meets Captain America" was one of Brin's best stories, partly because it's an idea he's passionate about. The *Life Eaters* grows out of that same passion. And it's one that many readers of *Prometheus* may view sympathetically, whether they're long-time fans of graphic novels or *The Life Eaters* is their first encounter with the form. Brin finds the concept of superheroes imaginatively appealing, but ultimately he concludes that human beings must save themselves and not turn to superior power for protection—and that's a clearly libertarian message.

—reviewed by William H. Stoddard

Neal Stephenson, *Quicksilver* (Harper Collins, 2003)

The book *Quicksilver* is the latest by Neal Stephenson, and takes place in the same "universe" as his book *Cryptonomicon* but hundreds of years earlier. It is the first of a three-part epic he calls *The Baroque Cycle*. The next two books in this ambitious series are *The Confusion* and *The*

System of the World.

In *Quicksilver*, Stephenson introduces characters such as Daniel Waterhouse, an ancestor of the Randy and Lawrence Waterhouses of *Cryptonomicon*, a mysterious man named Enoch Root, and historical characters such as Isaac Newton, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and William Prince of Orange. The book covers much of the early scientific revolution, discusses various efforts to use machinery to perform calculations, goes into some detail on early ciphers and cryptography, and reflects at great length on the perks of monarchy.

We are left with a number of loose threads at the end of the first book, just as it should be. For example, Daniel Waterhouse is returning to London in 1713, ostensibly to bring peace between Newton and Leibniz over the invention of calculus. Yet, the dread pirate Blackbeard has taken an interest in Daniel's trip, and seeks to take him captive – which suggests there may be more to Daniel Waterhouse than has yet been revealed.

Quicksilver is a very thick book, but the reading is quite lively. It moves from one sequence to another, follows multiple threads of story, and gives an excellent picture not only of the time and people, but also of the culture which preceded the great revolutions for individual liberty (USA 1776, France 1789). Moreover, it is a fascinating look into the lives of historical scientists such as Hooke and Newton, men who had their own foibles.

Some of the freedom related issues it handles include the history of religious freedom in Holland, England, and France, the cultural acceptance of gentlemen going about armed, and the difficulties for those not of gentle birth gaining liberty or justice. It is also a fascinating look at some of the difficulties Europe had with coinage over the years, especially with clipped, debased, and devalued

national coins.

Stephenson points out that a man with a sword (who was otherwise appropriately attired) was taken for a gentleman. It was fitting and proper for men to go about armed, because it was their duty as gentlemen to uphold the law and defend the realm. Clearly, postmodern culture has fallen away from this tradition, to our detriment.

Some of the most enjoyable scenes in the book have to do with monarchs getting their heads chopped off, getting their infected hemorrhoids removed, or having the lively attentions of the female protagonist. Among the monarchs we meet in passing are Charles I, Oliver Cromwell (whose role as Lord Protector was effectively monarchical – he even tried to make it hereditary to his son), Charles II, James II, of England, William of Orange and his wife Mary, Louis XIV. The honor and integrity of these men varies a great deal, and Stephenson takes them to task for their shortcomings.

Possibly the most important issue in the book as regards freedom is the institution of slavery. Stephenson points out that in the 17th and 18th Centuries, many European men and women were captives and slaves in the Ottoman Empire as well as in the New World. Slavery was never exclusive to black Africans, and was a horror perpetrated on whites and other groups right along. The attitudes toward slaves and people in related condition such as serfs are captured very well and should be instructive to those seeking to understand their own destiny under a police state.

You should read this book because it is a lot of fun, because it has a lot to explain and illuminate, and because it is going to be a classic trilogy with a length and stature to match *The Lord of the Rings*. I can hardly wait for the next installment.

—reviewed by Jim Davidson

Tom Kratman, *A State of Disobedience* (Baen Books, 2003)

To read the first few chapters online just go to:
<http://www.baen.com/chapters/W200312/0743471709.htm?blurb>

As a child I was an unapologetic fan of the Saturday afternoon matinee, swashbuckling adventure, rousing shoot em ups, in short the sort of films boys like.

I unapologetically like Tom Kratman's first novel *A State of Disobedience* for many of the same reasons. The novel set in the near future is a tale of the next American revolution.

From the obligatory inside flyleaf:
It's time to remember the Alamo-Again! They feel our pain? Do they? 2060 in the so-called United States of America. A Body Politic transformed into a bloody state for partisan revenge and state-controlled terror. One President vying for dictatorial power. One mild manner governor determined to stop the madness, yet not sacrifice democracy in the process. Did they feel it when they roasted twenty-six of our children alive in a storm shelter? Did they feel it when they blasted us to bits with their gunship rockets and machine guns? Like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln before her, Juanita Seguin is a leader slow to anger. But, like them, once pushed to the limit, she is indomitable in her resolve- and relentless in the fight for freedom. Feel our pain? They will soon feel our rage! Welcome to the Second American Revolution. You're in for the fight for your life.

This is the sort of novel that will appeal more to conservatives and populists and less to doctrinaire libertarians as Kratman's work is decidedly pro-life. Yet I've seldom come across a work more pro-gun than this one and he understands and

gives life to the notions of religious freedom and the first amendment.

Of particular satisfaction is Kratman's correct use of military nomenclature and detailed descriptions of the firearms being used, a departure from the usual Saturday afternoon matinee. I've read countless books and watched numerous movies where the suspense is ruined by inaccurate or implausible technology or jargon used incorrectly. Kratman who now works as an attorney has been an Army Infantryman for most of his adult life.

A State of Disobedience has various thinly veiled references of police state atrocities of recent vintage. Everything from the assault of the Branch Davidians in Waco to our government's inane reverence of political correctness is lampooned. The American President, Ms. Wilhelmina Rottemeyer bears an uncanny resemblance to Hillary Clinton which is not an accident or coincidence.

Central to the story and the catalyst that causes the revolution is the FBI's raid on a Catholic mission. The government had passed laws of emotional terrorism which were then used against those who protest abortion. The scene below is taken from chapter 3 where the FBI's lead agent by the name of Musashi, a reference to Ruby Ridge killer sniper Lon Horiuchi? Horiuchi if you remember was the FBI's hostage rescue sniper who shot the unarmed Vicki Weaver in the head while holding her infant child in the 1992 Ruby Ridge, Idaho standoff. I found this particular passage which details the response of Elpidia and Miguel, two children being helped at the Catholic mission well worth the cost of the book.

Just outside the door, Musashi and his team halted. Though readied, their knocker was placed to the ground.

Musashi reached up a hardened hand and knocked briskly, twice. Sister Sofia turned away from the two priests, likewise turned the inside door knob and asked, Who is She didn't have time to finish as Musashi's assistant pushed her roughly aside. In burst the agents. FBI! FBI! Hands in the air, they shouted. What is the meaning of this? Montoya demanded.

This is God's place. You have no right here. Musashi didn't answer immediately.

Scanning the area quickly his eyes came to rest upon a quailing Father Flores. We're here for him. Stay out of the way and nobody gets hurt.

I'll get hurt, Jorge, Flores reminded with trembling voice. Montoya looked at Musashi, measuring him. The agent reminded the priest of certain Viet Cong he had known in the past, however brief such acquaintance may have been.

Montoya looked and knew then that Flores did not exaggerate. He was a dead man unless given sanctuary.

You will take nobody, Montoya announced, interposing himself between Flores and the FBI. Musashi snorted at the idea of some silly old man trying to gainsay him and began to push the obviously injured and ailing priest out of the way...And found himself, breathless and stunned with his back against the thick adobe of the mission walls. Instinct long honed took over. Musashi's right hand leapt towards his left breast.

* * *

In their darkened alcove, Elpidia and Miguel stopped instantly as the main door smashed inward and three strangers entered with shouts and alarm. A fourth remained, faintly perceived, by the mission door. While the girl's hands merely tightened on her small caliber rifle, the boy instinctively unslung and drew his shotgun to his shoulder. He took a general aim, muzzle pointed downwards. Miguel had had

continued from page 5—

California, where he lived the rest of his life, except for two years in Las Vegas. Our automobile journey west with two other libertarians (Bob “Kedar” Cohen and Andy Thornton), in July and August 1975, took us to the Rivercon science fiction convention in St. Louis and to the home of science-fiction magazine publisher Richard E. Geis in Portland, before we arrived in Los Angeles on August 10, 1975, where we spent our first night sleeping on the apartment floor of Dana Rohrabacher, Sam’s libertarian mentor, and now a U.S. Congressman from Orange County, California. Even today Dana still speaks fondly of Sam’s genius and imagination.

Dana introduced us to Chris Schaefer, who managed an apartment complex in Long Beach. This became the AnarchoVillage (named after Sam’s recent six-floor walk-up apartment on East 11th Street in NYC, which he’d dubbed the AnarchoSlum), and we lived two apartments away from each other until 1984. Many, many days were spent collating, folding, stapling, and mailing out magazines (many with articles of mine) with eating and drinking afterwards. When I was broke in those days, Sam was

always happy to pick up the check and lay a “meal ob” on me, a concept we got from Eric Frank Russell’s libertarian SF novel, *The Great Explosion*.

A few years later I returned the favor when I set Sam up in an apartment he dubbed the AnarchoVilla, on Overland Avenue in Culver City. That apartment was production central for my book publishing. Sam was the production backbone and book designer for every book that came out from Pulpless.Com and a talented graphic artist for many of the covers.

He is survived by his 13-year-old son, Samuel Konkin IV, his mother Helen, and his younger brother Alan. He was buried in a private service next to his father, Samuel Konkin II, in Edmonton, on March 5th. A memorial with over 100 of his many friends and admirers attending will be held in Torrance, California, on March 28th.

Sam may only have had one biological brother. But he was my brother, also, in every other sense. I would not be who I am, what I am, or where I am if it were not for Sam. With rare exception, I would not have met my

current friends, including a long list of prominent authors, starting with Victor Koman and Brad Linaweaver. If I had succeeded in becoming a writer, I would not have written any of the books I’ve written. I would be living an unrecognizable life in an alternate universe. I know lots of other writers who can make the same statement.

One of my last extended conversations with Sam was my using knowledge, logic, and vocabulary I learned from Sam to challenge his premise that there was no reason to consider the existence of God. At the end of that conversation, Sam was left without challenges and said that he thought I’d made a comprehensive case. If my case was correct, then Sam already knows it.

We’ll resume that debate whenever Sam and I find ourselves on the same side of that Great Divide . . . and wherever that might be, as before, I am confident there will be plenty of dark beer to lubricate the philosophy.

— J. Neil Schulman



continued from page 9—

dealings often quite unpleasant ones with law enforcement agencies before. Elpidia stood frozen for long moments as she watched the priest, the father she had never had, put his own body between an unshaven, unkempt man and the one who had announced he was part of

the dreaded FBI. She stood frozen as she watched the injured father pushed to one side. She stood frozen as she watched him smash his assailant’s back to the wall. She watched as the FBI agent’s right hand slipped into his suit. She saw, as if in slow motion, as the butt of a pistol began

to emerge. Screaming an inarticulate No! Elpidia unfroze. Her rifle flew to her shoulder and her finger to the trigger. If the range was short, the shooter was unpracticed. If the shooter was unpracticed the rifle had nine bullets still in the magazine. If the bullets were small caliber they

continued from page 10—

were each hollow points. The muzzle of Elpidia's rifle flashed fire.

* * *

Though again Elpidia aimed for center of mass, her first bullet took Musashi in the throat. The soft lead slug entered just below the Adam's apple. As it met the resistance of flesh the lead peeled back, expanding and tearing its way through larynx, meat, blood vessels and cartilage. Musashi's mouth gaped like a fish. His body shuddered from shock and pain. Rifle weaving, Elpidia struck next the agent's right collar bone, missing the rectangle of light body armor the agent wore under his suit. Under the bullet's impact, the bone shattered, casting its own splinters inward along with the fragments of lead. Musashi groaned and, letting go his pistol, reached both hands up to where his throat spurted crimson. Elpidia's third shot missed her target's right ear, but her next two punched into and through the agent's face, doing a fair job of scrambling his brain. The girl's next shot missed completely as an incredible, shocking roar exploded in front of her own face; Mogul's shotgun.

All in all I found *A State of Disobedience* a worthy first book, where the good guys win. If you want a fun romp, and your literary expectations are not too high, then I highly recommend this Saturday afternoon matinee read.

—reviewed by Freematt



Movie Review

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (directed by Peter Jackson)

With this film, Peter Jackson's version of *The Lord of the Rings* is complete and can be seen and judged as a whole. And it proves to be an impressively satisfying re-creation. The Two Towers wasn't entirely satisfactory, but *The Return of the King* seems to have gotten back on track. The result isn't perfect, but it's far better than Tolkien fans had any reason to hope for.

Some of the unsatisfactory parts come from the sheer scale of what Jackson is attempting. He had to fit the events of a thick book, plus a few chapters from the preceding book, into the narrower compass of a film. Even with nearly twice the screen time of a typical film, he ended up rushing things. The climactic movement of the story, from Frodo's captivity and the battle of the Pelennor Fields to the final confrontation with Sauron, seems to rush by in moments, with none of the long weary march across Mordor or the nerve-racking wait for Sauron's next assault on the West.

At the same time, Jackson links these two movements together in such a way that the relation between them is vividly real. The viewer sees exactly how the forces of the West are engaged in a war of disinformation and covert operations against a stronger foe. This is all in the book, but Jackson brings it into focus. In fact, in general, Jackson is excellent at using crosscuts and parallel narratives to show all the events of the story as a single action.

And the nature of that action is war. That's one of the most radical things about this film: it shows the willingness to go to war as a virtue. At a key point in the film, Faramir, the surviving son of the Steward of Gondor, leads a cavalry force out to try to retake the fortress city of

Osgiliath, lately captured by Mordor, and the women of the city, one by one, throw flowers under their horses' hooves—not cheering, or expecting victory, but honoring the courage of their defenders. This kind of sentiment has become unpopular, and deservedly so, after a succession of bad and stupid wars; but Jackson repeatedly makes the point that willingness to defend oneself is a virtue, however often abused, and however regrettable the need to do so may be.

That was Tolkien's point as well, of course, despite his own losses during World War I, when, as he wrote, all but one of his closest friends died. A case can be made that the ultimate theme of *The Lord of the Rings* is elegiac. Its central figures of fantasy, the elves, are above all living embodiments of memory, immortal and unfading; and the greatest grief of their departure is the fading of that memory. Instead there remain mortal witnesses and their books. And at the end of the story, Bilbo and Frodo's departure takes them into the realm of the elves, the realm of undying memory, leaving their friends to go on living without them. The basic soundness of Jackson's judgment shows best in his keeping this seeming undramatic sequence for his conclusion.

In getting there, he left out or skipped over a lot of details. We may hope that an extended version on DVD will fill some of these in, as happened with the first two installments; among other things, the story of Eowyn cries out for full resolution, both for its own sake and as a way to dramatize Aragorn's kingship through his power to heal. But the essentials are there, and Jackson's judgment as to what was essential and what was not has averaged good enough to show that he was the right director for these films.

—reviewed by William H. Stoddard



Without You None of this Would Be Possible

The Libertarian Futurist Society is not a large organization, so we achieve our successes through the efforts of our volunteers, and based on the contributions of our members. We are pleased to have our basic and full members; they pay for our routine work and enable us to produce the newsletters and provide annual prizes to our award winners. But we really appreciate those who go out of their way by becoming Benefactors, Sponsors or Life members. Their extra contributions enable us to broaden our visibility in the science fiction and libertarian communities. Thanks for your help.

Life

Grossberg, Michael
Konkin, Samuel E., III
Monsen, Anders
Sommer, Bruce E.
Varga, Victoria

Benefactor

Jacknow, Gerald
Starchild, Adam
Triplett, Rick

Sponsor

Casasent, Tod
Codina, Jorge
Gaalema, Steve
Gaylor, Matt
Glass, Tom
Hibbert, Christopher T.
Howell, William R., Jr.
Innis, Mac
Markowitz, Jesse
Martino, Joseph P.
McCarthy, Joseph
McEwan, James P.
Morrison, Charles
Moulton, Fred Curtis
Nash, Edward, Jr.
Poole, Robert, Jr.
Rich, Andrea
Stoddard, William H.
Talvola, Erik
Tuchman, David
Van Cleave, Fran



P.O. Box 110543
Campbell, CA 95011-0543

