

PROMETHEUS

My Favorite Poet

By David D. Friedman

“Modern poetry” suggests to many people innovations in technique—free verse instead of sonnets, unconventional capitalization, and the like. If I thought such innovations actually resulted in writing better poems, perhaps I would agree—but I don’t and don’t. To me, the interesting feature of modern poetry is content, not form.

Consider, for an example, “Hymn of Breaking Strain,” which takes as its central image the table of breaking strains in the back of an engineering handbook, a table which tells “what traffic wrecks macadam, what concrete should endure” but does not provide the same information for human beings who, like materials, are sometimes subject to strains “too merciless to bear.” That poem could not have been written very far into the past because no such tables existed then.

Or consider “The Secret of the Machines” and “The Miracles.” The subject of each poem is the miraculous world of modern technology:

...
 You will find the *Mauretania* at the quay,
 Till her captain turns the lever ‘neath his hand,
 And the monstrous nine-decked city goes to sea.

...
 I sent a message to my dear —
 A thousand leagues and more to Her —
 The dumb sea-levels thrilled to hear,
 And Lost Atlantis bore to Her.

Behind my message hard I came,
 And nigh had found a grave for me;
 But that I launched of steel and flame
 Did war against the wave for me.

Which may help to explain why my favorite modern poet is Rudyard Kipling.

To be fair, e.e. cummings, more conventionally thought of as modern for his stylistic quirks, has some modern content as well:

Lenses extend unwish through curving wherewhen
 till unwish returns on its unself

Or the poem that uses driving a new car as a metaphor for making love to a virgin.

But Kipling is better.

Like most Kipling enthusiasts—he has been my favorite poet since I was about ten—there are a considerable number of his poems I am particularly fond of. My favorite is probably “The ‘Mary Gloster,’” a Robert Browning Monologue, a poem in which a single speaker reveals a great deal about himself in the process of speaking, which I think is better than any of Browning’s.

The speaker is a dying 19th century shipping magnate, a self-made wealthy entrepreneur, speaking to his worthless son. One of the impressive things about the poem is the degree to which the poet persuades us to the speaker’s point of view. The son’s interest in “books and pictures” ought to appeal to the modern reader—but doesn’t. “[Y]our rooms at college was beastly—more like a whore’s than a man’s” ought to turn the modern reader off—but doesn’t. What the reader is left with is the picture of a bitterly unhappy old man whose only remaining wish is to be buried at sea by the wife who died when they were both young, the wife whose memory has been the driving force in his life ever since.

Another I reread recently is “Cleared”—a ferocious invective against the terrorism associated with the Irish independence movement. It is a bit of history that we almost always see with a pro-rebel slant, thanks to folk singers such as the Clancy

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THE LIBERTARIAN FUTURIST SOCIETY

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Editor

Anders Monsen

Contributors

David Craddock
David D. Friedman
Chris Hibbert
Max Jahr
William H. Stoddard
Rick Triplett

Letters and Submissions:

Anders Monsen
501 Abiso Ave.
San Antonio, TX 78209
editor@lfs.org

Subscriptions & Advertisements

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

LFS Online:

<http://www.lfs.org>

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President's Letter

The various award committees in the
Libertarian Futurist Society are on track
to have a good slate of candidates to vote
on in July. There was a minor hiccup
when the chair of the Classic Fiction
committee unexpectedly resigned, but
Bill Stoddard has been on that com-
mittee for a long time, and has agreed
to handle the duties for the year. The
Special awards committee is reviewing
several suggestions, and the Best Novel
committee has quite a few promising
candidates to consider.

Our membership is basically holding
steady at just over 45 dues-paying mem-
bers. About a dozen members let their
membership lapse, and 14 new people
joined (welcome!). We've been talking
about placing some ads to encourage new
memberships to ensure stability, and we
will be placing some ads via Google, and
others on BlogAds, as well as looking into
some exchanges for ads in *Prometheus*
with other organizations. We will be tracking
which of the ads produce results in order
to know which are worth the effort.

There are plenty of projects that both
new members and old are welcome to
help out on. We have a vacancy on the
Board, a need for someone to organize
our award presentations at the World-
Con, and a desire to add an assistant
treasurer. In addition, content for the
newsletter is always welcome. If you are
interested in writing for *Prometheus*, please
submit something to the newsletter editor

(editor@lfs.org).

Board members are elected to rotat-
ing three year terms; the open seat has
one year remaining. If you're interested
in participating in quarterly discussions
about the direction of the LFS and tak-
ing a larger role in our direction, please
let me know.

If you attend science fiction conven-
tions, or are willing to take responsibility
for making arrangements with the con-
vention staff and coordinate with other
LFS members to ensure that someone will
run the Prometheus Awards ceremony,
please get in touch with me or Fred
Moulton, the past Programming chair.
Fred and I are currently making the
arrangements as a team, and we'd both
prefer that someone else take responsibil-
ity. Fred has been handling this for several
years, and is happy to share the job for
a year if someone will volunteer to take
over. In addition, Fred would like to rotate
out of the Treasurer position, so we're
looking for a volunteer to handle that as
well. We don't spend a lot of money, so the
duties aren't very time-consuming. Our
biggest budget items are the newsletter
and the annual awards.

If you are interested in discussing
libertarian science fiction (broadly con-
strued) online, we have a yahoo group.
Browse over to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LFS-discuss/> and ask to
join.

In Liberty,
Chris Hibbert

BOOK REVIEWS

The Sunrise Lands

By S. M. Stirling

ROC, 2007

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

S. M. Stirling made his reputation by writing alternate histories, starting with his Draka novels, which combined standard alternate history with a detailed portrait of a grimly authoritarian dystopia. But much of his fiction since then might be called “alternate alternate history”: It appeals to the same time-frame of readers, but it does so with a different starting point than a simple might-have-been past event. His Nantucket Island series, for example, followed the lead of L. Sprague de Camp’s classic *Lest Darkness Fall*, plunging not one twentieth-century man, but an entire twentieth-century island into the historical past, where the islanders’ struggles to survive created a new historical timeline. His latest series, beginning with *Dies the Fire*, in effect plunged the entire twentieth-century world into the past, as some unknown force altered the laws of physics on Earth so that electric power sources, combustion engines, and explosives all stopped working, forcing the human race to return to medieval technology to survive—and killing off the overwhelming majority of humanity.

Stirling’s latest novel, *The Sunrise Lands*, explores this premise further, taking up the story a generation later. This is the first volume of a new trilogy. Some of the events it portrays suggest that subsequent volumes will actually reveal the hidden agents responsible for shutting down human technology. This may also explain the event at the start of the Nantucket Island series, as *Dies the Fire* began with reports of the strange phenomena leading to Nantucket’s return to the Bronze Age, as seen from outside. There are small discrepancies between the two trilogies—Ian Arnstein, a central character in the Nantucket novels, describes himself as a widower, yet his divorced wife Pam turns up alive and well halfway through *Dies the Fire*—but these are probably a minor auctorial memory lapse, rather than a hint that the starting points are two almost identical parallel Earths, or, more mundanely, that Ian Arnstein was

lying about his past.

The first trilogy in this setting showed people turning to older customs and beliefs for survival. This second trilogy carries the process further; it’s very nearly a fantasy novel, with a mystical vision leading to an epic quest across the desolated landscape of North America. Its worldbuilding has a fantasy-like quality as well, with newly emerged peoples occupying the old landscape; one of the earlier novels explicitly referred to ethnogenesis, the emergence of new peoples out of times of troubles, and ethnogenesis seems to be one of this novel’s themes. An even closer fit, though, might be Poul Anderson’s portrayal of successor societies in his classic *Orion Shall Rise*. Stirling gives us the new societies of Oregon—a feudal quasi-empire based in Portland, a neo-Celtic and mostly pagan clan, a more benign feudalism with Nordic cultural roots, and a city-state run by a university, among others—but adds several more: the Mormon community of New Deseret, a claimant to the presidency of the United States based in Boise, and the apparent villains of the piece, a charismatic religious despotism called the Church Universal and Triumphant, based in Montana, along with more distant communities in the interior. His plot takes nine young men and women (the traditional number for a quest, as one of them observes) from Oregon into the interior, on the first leg of a transcontinental journey, and into the midst of a war and a coup d’état. The book ends with Stirling’s “fellowship” being scattered by their enemies, with several of them in need of rescue.

The Tolkienian inspiration for all this is obvious, and Stirling points it up for the reader familiar with Tolkien, especially through one of the emergent new societies consciously modeled on Tolkien’s Dunedain, two of whose people are participants in the quest. There’s a fair bit of Tolkien’s invented elven language Sindarin in this book, and some jokes about it, such as a scene involving a Sindarin translation of “The Ballad of Eskimo Nell,” a famous traditional bawdy song. But there are other literary references as well. The soldiers of Boise sing a heroic ballad that’s almost a direct quotation from Thomas Babington Macaulay’s “Lays of Ancient Rome”—which may not be quite plausible but neatly points up the Roman inspiration of the successor state in Boise. The Portland Protective Association draws on Arthurian legends, but also on the actual history of Norman feudalism. Stirling’s world is full of splinter cultures based on various literary works.

It’s noteworthy that most of these societies preserve core American values; notably, they have freedom of religion—the pagan MacKenzies don’t expel or forcibly convert Christians, and the Central Oregon Ranchers’ Association, which might be expected to have turned to fundamentalism, also endorses freedom of religion and accepts pagan immigrants. On the other hand, established churches are found in the equivocally evil Portland Protective Association and the unequivocally monstrous Church Universal and Triumphant. Stirling’s people may live in a medieval world, but they don’t live by medieval values. They’re still heirs of the Enlightenment. This same

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, \$20. Strauss, 10 Hill #22-LP, Newark NJ 07102.

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Hogfather

Directed by Vadim Jean

Based on the novel by Terry Pratchett

Starring: Michelle Dockery, Marc Warren, David

Jason, Ian Richardson

SkyOne DVD, 2007, \$19.95

Reviewed by Max Jahr

Director Vadim Jean's adaptation of Terry Pratchett's 20th Discworld novel, *Hogfather*, is faithful, funny, entertaining, and ideally suited for the small screen. Originally broadcast on British TV in the week before Christmas 2006, the first live version of any Discworld novel runs around three hours. Nearly one year later it appeared on US television under the cable auspices of ION, a channel probably not very well known despite a huge market penetration. The DVD appeared in the US at around the same time, but only in Borders bookstores; online searches at Borders might not even have turned up any mention of the DVD, as Borders sells through Amazon.com, but the *Hogfather* DVD was not available through that outlet.

Thus, many of Pratchett's American fans might have missed this event entirely, or stumbled upon it by chance as I did when I saw the TV listing while the show was halfway through. Some subsequent research led me to the limited way of buying the DVD, and I wondered throughout my search of the low-profile release of this version of his book in America. In the UK, Pratchett is a national treasure, and even here his books sell well, but I would have imagined a somewhat better campaign around the show, such as a tie-in re-issue of the novel, and a more, um, well-known TV channel. But then, producers at bigger stations might have requested major changes. For how can Santa Claus be imitated by a tusked man driving a sleigh led by four massive hogs capable of going "wee" in the middle of a store? What would the children think?

Themes dealing with individual liberty often run deeply through Pratchett's books, especially *Feet of Clay* and *Night Watch* (the latter won the Prometheus Award for Best Novel in 2003). *Hogfather*, however, is generally not focused on the politics of the Discworld, but rather, through that strange personification of the search for human morality and behavior, Death, the question and role of belief itself. Throughout the Discworld books, Pratchett deliberately uses parallels, parodies, and inspiration of events and ideas from 'our' world as driving forces or themes in the Discworld. With its obvious allusions to Christmas and Santa Claus, the mid-winter festival of Hogswatch (taking place on the 32nd of December), and the Hogfather who hands out presents on Hogswatch Eve (along with other familiar and not so familiar beings like the Tooth Fairy and the Soul Cake Duck) are ideal targets for Pratchett to examine the role they play in society and humanity.

With a few minor exceptions, the TV version of *Hogfather* is extremely faithful to the novel. A certain group who sees themselves as the auditors of reality view human belief and creativity as out of place in the universe. They decide to fix this by contracting through the Assassin's Guild the elimina-

tion of the Hogfather. There may be countless gods in the Discworld, and few people who can agree on which is supreme, but most of the Discworld inhabitants tend to hang up their stockings every year and wish for something special from the Hogfather. Handed this most difficult task is the young assassin apprentice, Jonathan Teatime, pronounced (at least according to himself) "Teh-ah-tim-eh." Teatime is a peculiar character, a pure sociopath who kills quickly and suddenly, with no moral qualms. And, he seems to possess certain supernatural powers, moving faster than thought itself. He assembles a band of thieves, a down-on-his-luck student of wizardry, and a master locksmith, and they manage to find a way into the magical house of the Tooth Fairy, where Teatime plans to control the minds of all children through very old magic.

Against the auditors stands Death himself. Pratchett's version of the grim reaper has been present since the beginning of the Discworld books, but after an odd viciousness in the first two books, Death has settled down into a sort of melancholy Pinocchio, as someone not human yet who yearns to be more human (in the very least tries his hardest to understand every facet of humanity). Thus, he seems more human than most humans. He becomes a mirror against which Pratchett examines the best and the worst of us; Death's role is after all a thankless one, having to collect the souls of all the dying. And yet, as his servant Albert and granddaughter Susan observe, he tries so hard to emulate human behavior and occasionally morals. Death cannot directly oppose the auditors, but as the Hogfather goes into hiding to evade their assassination plans on Hogswatch Eve, Death decides to assume the role of the Hogfather. He straps on a pillow, dons a fake beard and jolly robe, and makes the rounds on the sleigh drawn by the Hogfather's four pigs. Tradition must be followed, Death argues, to keep alive the hope and belief in the lies that make life bearable. Onward Gouger, Rooter, Tusker and Snouter!

Death does have other cards to play, including his granddaughter, Susan Sto Helit, last seen in the novel *Soul Music*. Susan is a steady, almost unemotional young woman, very much aware of her connection to the collector of souls, yet seeking instead a "normal" life—which to her means working as a governess for two young children. Death drops some hints of what's going, and Susan feels driven to investigate the disappearance of the Hogfather. She traces the footsteps of Teatime, setting up a riveting confrontation. Other familiar characters make their appearance as well. The Death of Rats plays a much smaller role here than in the book, and while the Librarian is not present at all, the rest of the wizards at the Unseen University act like pure comic relief, and even Hex the thinking machine writes a letter to the Hogfather to get into the spirit and keep alive the vital force of belief.

Fans of Terry Pratchett's work have well over 30 volumes to read and re-read, but here in the first live adaptation of his work to the screen, the reach of Pratchett's world and humor can extend even to non-fans. The heart-warming story at the center of *Hogfather* creates a fantastical Christmas-time allegory.

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Spaceman Blues

By Brian Francis Slattery

Tor, 2007, \$12.95

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

The subtitle of Brian Francis Slattery's debut novel is "a love song," and could just as easily refer to the love between two individuals, as it could the love of a city. This relatively slim book gushes forth words in a mad rush, a heady feeling that again reinforces its subtitle. Many times throughout the novel I was reminded of the lines from William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet/Are of imagination all compact." The style of the book takes on a life of its own, pushing and pulsing through the pages like the music-mad world of the setting, a full-boil melting pot stew of New York City. Reading the novel at times left me almost mentally exhausted from the non-stop surf of words, or with the feeling I was drinking from a water hose of prose. There are frequent brief flash-backs and flash-forwards, a la the TV show *Lost*. And yet, the book is far from being in a "substance over style" quandary. It combines love story with detective fiction, pulp alien invaders with superhero action, and almost manages to pull off this impossible act.

The book opens with an explosion that tears out a huge chunk in the building where Manuel Rodrigo de Guzmán González lives. The police find no sign of a body, and Manuel appears to have no obvious enemies. Although stunned by the event, most of Manuel's friends (and he has many, many friends) believe him to still be alive, somewhere. His current lover, Wendell Apogee, begins a quest to find out what happened, and to locate Manuel.

The syncopated prose sketches a vibrant New York, in mid-summer with a "sun that's already baking concrete, melting the antennae of cars." In a city that feels more like Rio in its meld of music and masses, we're introduced to a host of strange and colorful characters. There's the man who lives on a boat, tracing the fates of interconnected individuals in strings hanging on the ceilings of his floating and well-stocked abode. He provides a critical clue to Wendell.

New York is a city of immigrants and teems with life. Manuel himself was an immigrant, as are the four Guatemalan lovers of another of Manuel's friends, all of whom work at the airport cleaning the runway, and thus can spot the trends of travelers and their moods. Masoud Azzi, a former fighter pilot for Syria now turned pacifist, joins Wendell on his quest, and regains his fire for life.

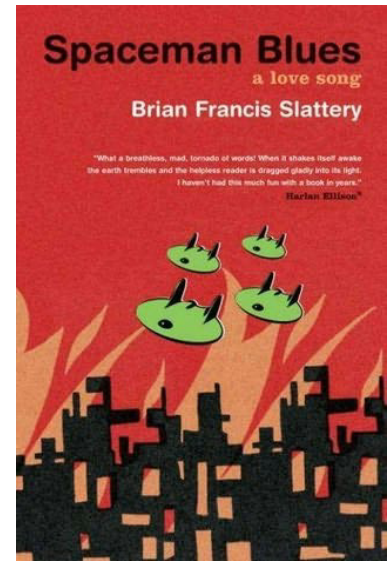
Others also are seeking Manuel. Officialdom appears as the strangely named inspectors Trout and Salmon. They interview and catalog, but appear to solve the mystery of the explosion and Manuel's disappearance. One of Manuel's enemies, or perhaps a competitor, specializes in smuggling illegal immigrants, shows that Manuel was far from a saint, and casts a shadow over Manuel's ethics. A clue early in the book mentions the new Church of Panic, whose members float above the pavement, and warn people to begin stockpiling weapons.

This is a clue readers should not take lightly, even though it fits neatly in the varied menagerie of the rest of New York's strange denizens. Do these members of the Church of Panic know something connected to Manuel's disappearance?

As we trace Wendell's journey through the city, even deeper into the bowels of an underground world, almost a mirror image of the one above, whisperings and rumors of four strange creatures appear. These massive humanoid beings fly through the skies on floating platform. Like relentless and seemingly unkillable Terminators, they pursue the trail of Manuel and those associated with him. Wendell begins to realize that the fate of Manuel and the arrival of these creatures somehow are tied together, and together with Masoud they begin a rigorous training course in martial arts and weaponry. Wendell emerges from his travails as a new super-hero, Captain Spaceman, who takes on these Four Horsemen. The first battle is like most such encounters—one in which he suffers defeat, but he survives and learns enough to fight another battle. What started as a mystery story about the disappearance of one person evolves into a more traditional sf story: a potential alien invasion. The tone of the novel also changes, becoming more somber than the initial party scenes and wild music. This trend continues to the book's ending, which casts both a despairing and optimistic tone, and a new future for Wendell; he has journeyed far.

In many ways *Spaceman Blues* is an anomalous science fiction novel. Published by Tor Books, a more "mainstream" sf publishing house, this novel feels more modernistic or slipstream-like, quite different from the hard sf for which Tor is best known. *Spaceman Blues* has drawn strong critical praise from fellow genre writers—a blurb from Harlan Ellison is featured prominently on the cover. The obvious sf elements tend to stay on the fringes until the very end. Still, the descriptions of New York City, of the strange inhabitants and their extraordinary abilities, these all could have taken place off-world, or in that strange super-hero reality that after all is welcomed as an integral node in the science fiction world.

Slattery's novel is quite amazing for a debut effort. It takes some skill to pull off the literary aspect of the book, and the final pay-off isn't that shabby either. Many recent movies (ie. *I am Legend*, *Cloverfield*) have pushed the theme that New York City must be destroyed. The novel concludes with a similar possibility; yet there is hope and life, passion and will emanating from the pages of this book that all harken to Pandora's Box, that hope might just be all we need. *Spaceman Blues* is a challenging book, yet unforgettable and ultimately rewarding.



Meeting Father Rahl: An Interview with Terry Goodkind

By David Craddock

David Craddock: In past interviews, you've said that you felt "driven to write" *Wizard's First Rule*. When did you know that *Wizard's First Rule* was but the first in a series?

Terry Goodkind: I'm a born storyteller. My earliest memories are of telling myself stories. I lived with the characters from the stories in my head. When I was little I remember playing in the backyard, writing and directing plays for the other kids in the neighborhood. Just some simple kidnapping storylines or whatever. So I've always told myself stories. When I say I was "driven to write," it's not as if I felt overcome with the need to write *Wizard's First Rule*; I've always wanted to write.

When I started thinking about *Wizard's First Rule*, I eventually felt that the time had come to write it down on paper. Until then, I never wrote stories down. I have dyslexia, so written words have always been something that have given me difficulty, so I never bothered with them. I was perfectly content to keep the stories in my head and tell them to myself, and to this day that's exactly what I do: I tell myself the stories. Now I write them down, of course, but it's always been my dream to write novels, so when I decided it was time, I had this character in my head—Kahlan. I was finishing building our home in Maine, so I decided that was the time, and I was thinking about Kahlan during the entire time I finished the house, so after that, I started writing.

DC: It's good to hear that. I'm attempting to publish several novels myself, and while I spent plenty of time thinking about them, about the characters and what they'd experience, I didn't know that I was ready to write until I heard an internal alarm clock begin to beep.

TG: I think that's critical. I get letters from people all the time saying, "I'm 13 years old and I want to write a book and get it published. What's the secret? What do I do?" You can't explain to people that they're just not intellectually prepared to write a novel. A novel is a thing of incredible complexity. Human beings are genetically evolved to understand the most subtle clues from other human beings. The most fascinating thing in the world to us is other people, and because we are so hyper-connected to the way other people behave, and to the body language [signals] they give off, the meaning in their words that are different from what they may be saying, and their moods—all those kinds of things make writing about human beings the most difficult thing in the world.

As a consequence, these young people think that novels are a collection of explosions, creatures, and magical elements. They don't understand that that's not what they're writing

about. They're not intellectually equipped to write at that age. Likewise, somebody who's 18, early 20s, they think, "Okay, now I'm going to write a book." They consequently submit it all the time, and it's continually rejected because it isn't good enough. It's the same thing as the 13 year old writing a book: it isn't good enough, and they don't understand that yet. When you get to be 20 you think you're grown up, but you're not. Your brain doesn't even stop developing until you're 24, 25, something like that. The intellectual aspects critical to worthwhile novels don't develop in a person that young.

If I would have tried to write a novel when I was 20 years old, it would have been a failure, just like all the other 20 year olds who can't get published. It takes a certain amount of living, and that doesn't mean traveling the world, going to war torn areas, and all that kind of stuff; it means watching how other people move, talk, think, and behave. You need to build up a reservoir of experience watching the sun go down so that when it comes time to write a romantic sunset scene, you know how to make that scene different

with words as opposed to, say, an ominous sunset scene. The sun is going down in both scenes, but to pick the words for each scene that a human being will understand, and pick up on clues that signify that this is ominous, or romantic—those things take living, they take experience.

I wasn't ready to start writing until I was 45. When I wrote *Wizard's First Rule*, I was ready. That doesn't mean that everybody has to be 45. My point is that you have to be able to draw on a well of life experience, and someone who's 13, who's 18, they just don't have that experience. When someone says to me, "I want to write a book but I just can't figure out how to get it down on paper. What do I do?" it makes me want to pull my hair out. If you don't know what to do, then you're not a writer. By default, if you're asking me what to do, you can't do it. I didn't ask anybody what to do...I was simply driven to do it. A writer is a born writer: they're born to do it, they have this internal drive, and they're hungering to tell a story to themselves. That's what makes a true writer: a person who's burning to tell themselves this story.

From the very beginning and still to this day, I just love telling myself stories. I knew what the conclusion to the series [would be] from the very beginning. There are things, startling things that happen in *Confessor* that I've kept to myself for over a decade; I haven't told anybody: my agent, my editor, my wife—no one. Being a storyteller, the most fun is to tell someone a story, and I don't want to spoil it by giving

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away the punch line. I've kept incredible secrets of what's happened in the series to myself. When I write them, that's when they happen.

I just always wanted to do it, and I decided that I needed to get started. It's like when you decide you need to clean the house. [laughs] There's no one moment where it hits you; you just know you need to clean the house and at some point you just know you need to get started. In my mind, it was a continuing process that was ongoing. The actual sitting down and writing the story was no different than any other stage of preparing the story than any other stage of my life.

DC: Do you have a process you undergo when you prepare to write? For example, some authors have said that when they're not writing, they like to do a lot of reading.

TG: Everybody is unique. From what I have been able to gather in terms of how other writers function, I don't operate anything like them. I can't even remember the last time I read a novel. I rarely read novels, partially because I have dyslexia; it takes me a long time to read. I'm a very slow reader, and I like to pay attention to words. Every word has a meaning, and I detest people who skim because they miss the essence of what the writer is saying, they miss all the little clues that give the characters their humanity.

With *Confessor*, people are already saying, "Hey, I bought the book last night and I'm already done with it!" Well, no, you're not. You flipped the pages, you didn't read it. In *Confessor*, I deliberately wrote certain things that people are going to be missed by people who skim. For example, the wizard's rule: if you skim that book, you're going to miss it. I did that on purpose, because it just ticks me off when people say, "I read the book in three minutes, it was great!" They didn't read the book.

Every word that I write is critical. I will sometimes spend half a day on one paragraph because I'm trying to get the exact right words that convey the exact, proper connotations of what the human beings are thinking, doing, whatever. Every single word I consciously intend to be there; they're not accidental. To skim and just kind of hit a few words in every paragraph, you miss all the work that I put in to make those characters humans. So when I read, I read the same way: pay attention to all the words so you understand what the writer intended. Yes, for me it's partially the dyslexia, but I also want to pay close attention.

I remember when I was in a high school creative writing class. The problem I had in school with reading was, they made you read fast. They timed you. Then you had to take a test on the highlights of what happened, and I hated that because it didn't get the essence of what the writer was talking about. You got the facts, but you didn't get the humanity. The creative writing teacher I had at the time opened my eyes to the possibility that I could be a writer. She said, "I don't care

how long it takes you to read this, I want to know what you think about what the author had to say." That's always been attitude: when I read, I pay attention to what the author is saying, and that means reading the book, not skimming it.

I don't have time to read a lot of books because writing is just such a long process for me; like I said, it might take me half a day to get a paragraph done properly. I'm writing 15 hours a day, seven days a week, so I don't have time to read other material. Also, I don't read other novels because I don't like to be distracted by how other authors do things. I find it a huge negative to read other novels; it puts things in your head of how they described things, of how they created a story, how they worked a theme, all of those things. I want my work to be totally original. I read nonfiction things because I always want to learn something new.

Some people want to write in boxers, some people want to write in a tuxedo. I don't think it makes any difference. It's their drive to write that makes them a writer.

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DC: What was it like to write *Confessor*, knowing that it was the last book in the Sword of Truth series?

TG: I didn't have time for any emotions because the schedule was so incredibly tight. I just didn't have time to ponder anything, I only had time to be in the world, in the book with the characters, writing their story. *Confessor* is a book that I've been waiting over a decade to write. I simply had to get it done. My publisher gave me a schedule for the book that was well outside my comfort zone, so I was writing *Confessor* on the ragged edge. I wrote the last 80 pages in one sitting, total stream of consciousness. I never re-read it, I just sent it off to the publisher. What you read in *Confessor*, the last 80 pages of the book, is what came up on my computer in one sitting, no editing, nothing. That's a decade worth of planning and just writing it out. It's raw Goodkind [laughs].

DC: Now that the Sword of Truth has concluded, where do you see your work taking you? Perhaps more adventures in the Sword of Truth universe, or something entirely new...?

TG: When you finish *Confessor*, you'll understand better what I'm saying, but the Sword of Truth series is, in essence, a prelude to what comes next. It's a prologue to all the things in my head. There are stories that branch out from this point into all sorts of directions. There are many things I would like to write. I would like to write more about this universe that I've created; it's fun being there every day. On the other hand, I get incredibly frustrated by the realities of the marketplace when you're labeled as a fantasy writer; it's very debilitating for your career, because everything you do is judged on that scale.

—Continued on page 8

—*Goodkind interview, continued from page 7*

I'm not writing about fantasy. And you recognize that! You recognize that I'm dealing with larger issues and the things that are central to all people. I want to write to an audience that includes all people, and fantasy limits that due to its mechanics: the mechanics of where it's placed in bookstores; the mechanics of the covers; the mechanics of the word 'fantasy' on a book; all of those things [make it more difficult to] reach a broader audience. I would like to write contemporary novels. The stories I'm telling are not fantasy-driven, they're character-driven, and the characters I want to write about could be set in any world. I'd like to address a broader audience.

However, I also like writing about this universe, the Sword of Truth, and I may write many more books [within it].

DC: You've often said that your books serve as the missing link between our world and the world of myth. What exactly do you mean?

TG: Until you read *Confessor*, you won't know what I'm talking about in terms of that statement. Stories are something that have always been instrumental to human beings. When cavemen sat around a fire, I'm sure they told stories. Stories have always been the way people have passed their knowledge and their culture on to other people. It's the way they describe their understanding of their world and their existence. Stories are central to the human experience, and help us understand how we fit into the world.

At the same time, a story is a representation of the author's values. When you share those values, when you have the same values as the author, you're reading a story and seeing your values which may be difficult to understand in daily life because they take place over such a long range. When a reader sees those values realized in a story, it energizes him into believing in himself and understanding that yes, he can be the best person he can be, he can achieve goals and overcome difficulties. The reader sees someone else do those things in a story and gives

him hope, courage, the strength to struggle on.

There are parts of stories, the parts that contain myth, that have always fascinated me. How did myth get into the storytelling tradition? The Sword of Truth series is my explanation of one way that myth became part of our world. When you

read *Confessor*, you will understand where myth came from. It's a mind-blowing concept, and I just think it's the coolest thing ever. I don't know if anyone has ever done anything like this before. When you read *Confessor*, you understand the larger meaning of what I've been doing. Like I said, I never tell anybody what I'm up to, I just keep working and telling myself stories.

There are things that have happened throughout the series that have all been working toward the final book, the conclusion of

Confessor. It's kind of like foreshadowing: you don't realize it until later, but those things are all there for a reason. When you get to *Confessor*, all of those elements that have been in the back of your mind all the way are suddenly brought to the forefront, that *Confessor* is the keystone of this entire series. And you see the series in an entirely new light. All the books that you liked before, you realize the part they played in a large context, not just in Richard's life and in his struggle with the Imperial Order, but his whole world, and our whole world, and how they fit together. I just think it's the coolest thing ever. It's a jaw-dropping experience to see what happens, and I think it's something that is really going to be a delight for readers.

In that way, I guess I can understand why people skim, because some stories are so exciting, you just have to know what happens next, you just can't wait to know and you have to go as fast as you can because you want to know what happens. I think *Confessor* is a book that people will want to go back and read again, because after they've satisfied their overwhelming, all-consuming, burning ambition to know the outcome, they'll want to go back and re-experience all of the details. It's a really fun ride.

DC: One aspect of your series that was given center stage in *Confessor* was the game of Ja'La. What was your inspiration in the creation of this brutal sport?

TG: Well, that's a very difficult question because of the word inspiration. That's not the way I write. I write from broad concepts and I think up a story to fit the concept that I'm trying to illustrate. For example, if you want to illustrate the concept of individual liberty, it's too broad of a concept to just say, "Freedom is good, slavery is bad." That has no emotional impact. You need to tell a story that gets that emotion across. That's what *Faith of the Fallen* was. It was a story

—*Continued next page*

Moving?

Please send any changes in your mailing address to:

David Tuchman
1364 Mapleton Ave
Suffield, CT 06078
Email: dtuchman@gmail.com

derived to illustrate that broad theme, so what I'm doing is illustrating a broad theme.

Ja'La was a very conscious, deliberate goal on my part to get across certain things about the characters. I wanted to illustrate how, in a society that is repressive and mindless, and values mediocrity above all else, and values no one excelling, an enforced equality where no one is allowed to be better than anyone else, where no one is allowed to do their best—I wanted to illustrate how people find outlets for their desire for excellence. Ja'La is that outlet for people, to see someone rise up and do better. It's done in a controlled context within that society so that it gives a release that diverts people's attention from their own life, from their own desire to rise up and do better. It's like a pressure release valve on a pressure cooker that keeps the society from exploding.

At the same time, within that game, the emperor [Jagang] has his own ego invested, and the interplay in all of those things is what I wanted to show. When someone comes along who isn't going to play by the rules, who's going to lay down the law even though he's a prisoner and not allowed to have his own freedom—the freedom comes through in the way he behaves. I wanted to show that even in that kind of situation, an individual can accomplish something on their own even though they're restricted in many ways. The Ja'La games served a lot of different purposes.

DC: Does Ja'La reflect any personal views you have of sports in general?

TG: Human beings are driven to succeed. Sports are, in a sense, a very simplified story of overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal. For example, young people need to be able to practice life, they need to be able to practice challenges and accomplishing things, and how to overcome difficulties. In a hunting society, they might have been taught how to shoot a bow and arrow, and they learn to hunt by those activities. Sitting around campfires and passing on stories about great hunts was a way of passing on experience.

In the society we have now, stories help by being part of that function. Because of the deterioration in modern literature, as well as things like TV and movies, those values are relegated to a bin. The destruction of values leaves young people no outlet for how to learn about life, to learn about overcoming challenges. As a consequence, they turn away from reading because it doesn't fulfill that basic human need. They turn to things like video games. In video games, you create your own story. You're the young hunter, or maybe you're going on a quest, and you're overcoming obstacles and difficulties in order to achieve success.

Society has stripped away so much of the challenge of life. Everybody's got forced self-worth, and you can't hand people self-worth; self-worth is earned. In stories, and in movies, in

school, in TV, you're handed self-worth. They teach that as a human being, it's your right to have self-worth. As a consequence, people don't know what it's like to achieve self-worth, so they turn to things like video games to learn the accomplishment of overcoming difficulty and succeeding. Games are the same kind of thing. Watching games allow you to participate in sharing the mental challenge of, what's the next play, how are we going to get by these guys to score a point?

It's all part of life. It's about learning to strategize, learning to analyze, to figure out and perceive the plan, a cause and effect. So much of all of those things are taken away in life, so people turn to sports. It's just like the Old World in the *Sword of Truth* series. There's no way for people to experience those things except through sports. In societies that are stripped of values, they turn to things like sports because it's the only place where they can see values exercised, even if those values are simplistic.

DC: The cover art for most of your novels is extraordinary. How did you come to work with Keith Parkinson?

TG: I got Keith Parkinson because I was so disgusted, angry, and infuriated with the original cover of *Wizard's First Rule* that I almost quit writing for public consumption. I was livid. The cover on *Wizard's First Rule* did not represent in any way what I was writing about. It represented a juvenile, immature vision that reflected nothing about the book. It was complete deception by the publisher, trying to fool people into thinking that I was writing for adolescent males. I was absolutely livid, and I just about tore up my contract and said, "That's it, I'm not writing anymore books." My editor said, "If you don't like this, then who do you like?" I said, "Keith Parkinson."

Keith did the cover of *Stone of Tears*, but he couldn't do the cover of *Blood of the Fold*, so we were back to the idiotic covers. After that, Keith did all the covers. Throughout the series, my goal has been to steer the covers away from traditional fantasy covers because I'm not writing fantasy. I'm accidentally published by a fantasy publisher so I get thrown in with that genre, but my books are no more fantasy than a detective novel is a "gun book." What makes me nuts about the fantasy genre is that, unlike any other genre, people become obsessed and focused on irrelevant things. For example, in a detective novel, if a detective has a Snub Nose 38, no one asks him questions like "Can we know more about the Snub Nose 38?" or "Have you ever thought of doing some kind of special story just about the Snub Nose 38?" It's a distraction.

To me, fantasy is no more important than the romance, the intrigue, the political maneuvering, historical fiction elements—all the other kinds of things in other books. I like those elements, and I enjoy writing them, but they're just elements

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Ragamuffin

By Tobias S. Buckell

Tor, 2007, \$24.95

Reviewed by Rick Triplett

Tobias Buckell's first novel, *Crystal Rain*, was described by one reviewer as "compulsively readable." This description applies well to his second novel, *Ragamuffin*, in which we find an abundance of picturesque characters, a complicated plot, brisk action scenes, and the heroic pursuit of freedom by humans under the oppression of a merciless alien race.

Humans and several other intelligent races are scattered among forty-eight star systems connected by wormholes. The most advanced of these races (technologically, not morally) is a reclusive but powerful one referred to as the "benevolent Satrapy." A network of these Satraps controls all worlds by controlling teams of subordinate races that do its policing. These minions have as their primary goal the detection and utter destruction of any effort to develop advanced technology. This is the far-future equivalent of "gun control," which of course means "victim disarmament." One character, defending that policy, remarks "You can't arm yourself and say you are harmless at the same time," to which Nashara, the main character, replies: "When it comes to genocide, the unarmed are always at a disadvantage. I'll fight here and now rather than suffer a peaceful death later." Humans, being the uppity type we are, scramble about under the oppression, forming loose alliances in hope of breaking free of the Satraps. For their part, the Satraps quietly decide that the unruly humans should be exterminated.

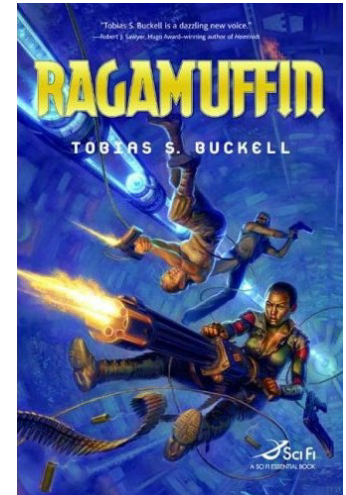
There are several interesting nonhuman races, which play important roles in this story. The author reveals his contempt for collectivist ethics when he has his most interesting character, Pepper, say of the alien Teotl, "These aliens, with their focus on adaptive personal engineering and sublimation of self to the greater good, were effective and dangerous."

The Ragamuffins are a ragtag coalition of humans endeavoring to free themselves of Satrap tyranny and simply lead their lives. They are tolerant, hardworking, and just. They face huge odds and take great risks, but they fight not for conquest but to be left alone. In contrast, some of the humans support the Satraps and are as dangerous as the Vichy French they resemble. (The Satraps do employ mind control technology to overcome any shift of allegiance.) But gradually we discover the potentially more dangerous League of Human Affairs. This League assists the Ragamuffins in a vital skirmish, but its xenophobic patriotism soon becomes apparent. The author likely had our contemporary neocons in mind when he depicted this group. Pepper agrees with one character who says to him, "We can shut these artificial borders, but even at sublight speeds, sooner or later, we will deal with other species, and creatures stronger and more powerful than ourselves. If we don't have models for dealing with this that don't involve all-or-nothing antagonism, we will, not now, but one day, become extinct as a species."

By the end of the book, the Ragamuffins may pat themselves

on the back for a considerable achievement, though much remains to be done. There is abundant room for a sequel, and I eagerly look forward to one.

Any tale of resistance fighters will thrill readers and will showcase heroics, but will not necessarily imply a libertarian philosophy. But this novel appealed to me a great deal because of the pronounced individualism of the main characters and the tolerant, minarchist philosophy of the Ragamuffins. I urge any fan of freedom to obtain a copy, for you will find it a treat.



Stewards of the Flame

By Sylvia Engdahl

BookSurge, 2007

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

Stewards of the Flame is Sylvia Engdahl's seventh novel, yet her first new book in over 25 years. Her previous novels were all directed at the young adult market as fantasy books, while her latest is a full-fledged sf book aimed at an older audience.

Jesse Sanders, the captain of a star freighter, takes a moment of shore leave to get a drink in a bar on the planet Undine, and wakes up in a hospital, finding his life turned into a nightmare. It seems that the government of Undine is run by doctors, who see their mission as aggressively eliminating any threat to the well-being of its inhabitants, namely their free-will. Here's a brilliant twist on dystopianism, taking that which most people see as humanitarian and proper—the care and well-being of fellow human beings—and pushing the logic to the extreme. After all, as many a politician and intellectual has remarked, most people are unable to see their own best interest, and all too often engage in self-destructive behavior, such as smoking, extreme sports, fast food, and alcohol. People fail to see their own addictions, and an occasional glass of wine or whiskey is naturally an indicator of a dangerous addiction.

As Sanders discovers, he has no rights on Undine. His superiors have been informed of his dereliction of duty. His ship has already left orbit, and he is slated for a drastic and brutal cure that will result in violent illness the next time he touches alcohol. As Sanders undergoes this intrusive treatment, he discovers he has allies. At first it is simply the nurse who attends him. They discover a mutual spark, maybe instant love. She seeks to aid his escape, but complications arise and he finds himself deeper in trouble. But, just when all seems

—Continued next page

—*Engdahl* review continued from previous page

lost and he faces total loss of mental control for his willful disregard of his own good, he is as suddenly released. Sanders, now stranded on a strange and dangerous planet, turns to the only person who showed him any kindness, Carla, the nurse who tried to aid his escape.

Carla invites him to a weekend island excursion with some friends, and Sanders quickly feels at ease with them. There is something unusual about this group, as they seem far more relaxed about life and not as cowed by the medical strictures the rest of the planet must suffer. Indeed, Sanders quickly discovers they are rebels of a sort. They do not seek to overthrow the current regime, or oppose it directly. Rather they seek refuge in a world that grows less and less free. Medical checks take place regularly and any small danger to one's health is instantly cause for action. In this world, no one dies, but remain horrifically "alive" in massive vaults of the undead, bodies sustained but minds and other functions gone or diminished.

Sanders discovers an additional secret. This group he has joined possesses certain unbelievable powers. They can heal wounds through self-control, and appear to communicate through telepathy. At first Sanders resists all these strange

notions. Despite having gone through a terrible experience at the hands of the over-zealous medical establishment, Sanders seems to reject everything presented to him. His barriers of belief require repeated pressures before accepting what seems quite logical and obvious. Initially, I saw this struggle as strange and frustrating, but to give in quickly and without thinking would have rendered Sanders too pliable a character. Instead, Sanders asks probing questions along his path of discovery, which through doubt makes him much stronger.

Engdahl's book has a definite individualist bent. Although one can question some of the characters' abilities on the basis of science, their passion for liberty and the desire to live free lives cannot be denied. The book builds just the right amount of tension, and shows the stark reality of benevolent tyranny, one that any so-called liberal democracy could creep towards quite easily. I've read countless 20th century dystopias, and this reminded me of several (Ira Levin's *One Fine Day*, for example). While some of the characters are almost too perfect to be likeable, the two main characters and a handful of the supporting cast make up for this. With a cliff-hanger ending one might think that a sequel is in order. *Stewards of the Flame* manages to speak strongly for our rights to choose our own destinies.

Rebody

By Clive Warner

Citiria, 2007, \$17.95

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

The future is a strange and savage place in Clive Warner's gonzo futuristic novel, *Rebody*. Hugh Toffle, a bitter and somewhat wimpy English college professor at a San Antonio college in 2003, has a disastrous affair with a not so bright but extremely hot student, is murdered by her father and wakes up 300 years in the future in a different world and alien body. While on a date with his student, Hugh wins a cryogenic option on his head, which proves a blessing and curse. Three hundred years in the future, the corporation that manages his head decides to unfreeze him and start reclaiming its assets.

In the future, Hugh discovers, every trace of humanity has vanished, and robots rule the world—or at least, the city of San Antonio. With humans gone, other "uplifted" species roam free, including various apes who act as the police force mediating the uneasy truce between sentient cats and dogs, while rats manage the taxis that transport these beings around the city. Meanwhile, he must serve as an indentured servant to robot owners, his human head connected to a machine somewhat like a vacuum cleaner. Waking in such a state might send the most balanced of us into a state of shock, or perhaps gibbering insanity, but Hugh manages to persevere. Amid fantasies of his dalliance 300 years in the past, he struggles to think about the future. If he earns enough credits perhaps he might be able to buy enough parts of a body to re-attach his head and become human again.

When circumstances throws a wrench in his plans, he escapes

his servitude and ends up amid the apes, who transplant his head onto the body of an orangutan. Things go from bad to worse, as he lands in the middle of a canine/feline war. While trying to survive this and maybe find some order in his chaos he falls back into the hands of the robots, who subject him to further changes. Although little of his humanity appears to remain, Hugh assembles the uplifted animals into a last-ditch battle against the robots, where the fate of all beings hangs in the balance.

While the concept and plot certainly show promise, the style of the novel lacks polish, and the pacing at times seems unfocused. For a professor of English literature, Hugh's narration comes across as crude, as if the author hasn't fully absorbed his protagonist's character. Typos appear at odd times, such as in the names of San Antonio highways (as a resident of the city I noticed these, though casual readers might miss them), and in the year of Hugh's death. The book has a definite first-novel feel to it. The ideas alone can't carry the novel, but if Warner manages to smoothen out his dialog and narrative style, his subsequent books may bear watching.



Pan's Labyrinth [El labertino del fauno]

Directed by Guillermo del Toro, 2007

Starring: Ivana Baquero, Doug Jones, Sergio López

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

Pan's Labyrinth is a fantasy film, but one that owes nothing to Anglo-American genre fantasy. Rather, it looks back to the older sources of present-day fantasy in fairy tales and mythology. In the style of some recent Anglo-American fantasy, it integrates this material from older stories with a modern setting: Spain in the 1940s. The perfection with which it bonds the two together gives the film an impressive strength.

The fantastic part of the story involves a young girl, Ofelia, traveling with her mother to live with her mother's new husband, Capitan Vidal, on his house in the country. Along the way, they encounter the remains of an ancient labyrinth, and Ofelia believes she sees a fairy flying about it, like the ones in her favorite storybooks. The rest of the film shows us her further encounters with fairies and with other supernatural creatures, including a faun and a terrifying manlike creature with eyes in the palms of his hands, whose actions might have been inspired by Goya's painting of Saturn. (Pan does not appear anywhere, which may puzzle a viewer who knows only the English title; the Spanish title, "the faun's labyrinth," is more accurate.) In a classic fairy tale plot, Ofelia is given three tasks that she must complete, and prohibitions that she must observe in doing so. Like a proper fairy tale heroine, Ofelia shows herself to be both determined and inventive in carrying out her quest. And as in the better fairy tales, her quest ultimately comes down to the necessity of moral choice.

The context of this fairy story is a realistic narrative focused on Ofelia's mother and stepfather, and on Mercedes, a servant in her new household. Capitan Vidal is shown as an authoritarian figure, obsessed with schedules and constantly

consulting his watch. Over the course of the film, we see this in a wider context: The reason he's at that house is that he's been assigned by the Franco regime to hunt down and destroy the remnants of the other side in the Spanish Civil War. His methods range from rationing of food and supplies to starve the rebels out, to executions without trial, to torturing captured rebels for information. In a particularly striking bit of cinematography, we see him use almost exactly the same speeches at the opening of two different interrogations, making it clear that he's tortured enough people to have reduced it to a routine. It seems quite fitting when, at the end of the film, his outward appearance becomes monstrous; he and the government he serves are the real monsters of this story. On the other side, early in the film, Capitan Vidal reads from a captured revolutionary pamphlet that calls for "No God, no state, and no masters."

Ofelia's quest, then, is for a way out of this brutal world, recalling Tolkien's comment that one of the pleasures of fairy tales is escape and that the people who find escape most objectionable are jailers. Readers of Ayn Rand's literary essays may recall her comments on traditional romantic works, where the hero's pursuit of values leads to his death, because their authors didn't regard values as attainable in the real world. Del Toro gives us a story where this belief appears in an extraordinarily pure form: Ofelia's hope is not to live in this world but to escape to a magical realm that is her true home. But he also shows us that the actual obstacle to pursuing values is political authority—as it was when A. E. Housman wrote "I, a stranger and afraid/In a world I never made," referring not to some abstract metaphysical despair, but to the very real prospect of being sent to prison if he acted on his desires for other men. This film gives us a romantic idealism that hopes for a better world elsewhere, but also a romantic realism that hopes to make this a better world, through struggle against its very real monsters.

—*Stirling* review, continued from page 3

heritage shows up in the reliance of most of these societies on citizen armies, where every adult has weapons and a measure of training—though that has actual medieval precedents, in the English yeoman with his longbow, and the comparatively free societies in this world encourage skill in archery for the same reasons the English did.

So this is a good adventure story, with interesting fantastic elements, and with a well-worked out background and some entertaining little jokes. And it also has serious themes, ranging from the emergence of new societies out of the fall of a previous civilization to the preservation of rationality and liberty as human values. In effect, *Stirling* is retelling the story of the fall of Rome, with the United States in the role of Rome, but with the survivors having a chance to get things right this time. The story that results was well worth reading, and promises interesting developments in the rest of this second trilogy.

—*Hogfather* review, continued from page 4

Rather than attempting to restate a purely religious aspect of Christmas, *Hogfather* combines its spirit of giving and kindness, with the deeper idea of believing in something else out there, such as hope. Pratchett, who recently publicized he had been diagnosed with a rare form of Alzheimer's, will keep writing for years to come. But, this three-hour adventure shows that live-action Discworld works wonderfully.

Vadim Jean now is filming the first two books in the same manner. Although Pratchett didn't really hit his stride in the Discworld mythology until the third or fourth book, seeing *The Colour of Magic* and *The Light Fantastic* realized in the same faithful manner as *Hogfather* should warm every Pratchett fan's heart. His books may lack the instant American fan appeal of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* turned into majestic film, or even the slow progress of C. S. Lewis's seven volumes of *Narnia* groaning under heavy Hollywood purse-strings. But the Discworld is as fanciful if not more so than these two sagas.

Mondo Cult, Issue #2

Edited by Jessie Lilley

Publisher: Brad Linaweaver, 2007,

\$9.95, 120 eye-popping pages

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

Brad Linaweaver's long resumé includes writing, acting, winning the Prometheus Award (for Best Novel with *Moon of Ice*, and a Special Award for co-editing the libertarian sf anthology, *Free Space*), editing, interviewing, massive knowledge of B-movie cinema, and now, magazine publisher. In 2006 the first issue of his magazine, *Mondo Cult*, appeared. Now, in the waning months of 2007, using words that probably should be printed in bold, red, jagged font, comes the BIGGER!, BETTER! BOLDER! second issue. Weighing in at 120 pages, this magazine is a cornucopia of pop culture to which the fan of old-time cinema, classic horror, screen legends within the inner circles of movie-making and far more, will return to again and again.

I confess to lacking much historical cinematic knowledge. My passion has been in the form of books, and thus I'll know far more about the pulp writers of the 1930s, than about cinema before the 1980s; and even then, I probably wouldn't win any trivial pursuit games on movies after the 1980s either. But, I can appreciate the passion of the writers in *Mondo Cult* for their art. And certainly, putting together such a massive issue as this one, with interviews of such disparate individuals as special effects master Ray Harryhausen, actress Traci

Lords (whom I believe I've only seen in the movie adaptation of Stephen King's *Tommyknockers*, again a testament to my limited movie knowledge, as in reading the interview she's been in considerable TV shows and movies), B-movie director Fred Olen Ray, and stunt-woman Kim Stys make for interesting reading. Not to be missed are the two essays by former Prometheus editor Bill Ritch, the first on the movie adaptation, *V for Vendetta*, and the second on the long-running TV series, *Doctor Who*; The former appeared online shortly after the release of the movie, and quick search via Google will bring up the original version.

Editor Jessie Lilley has managed a Herculean task putting together this issue, which includes reviews of books and movies (from a blockbuster hit like *The Chronicles of Narnia* to J. Neil Schulman's independent movie, *Lady Magdalene's*, as well as a vast variety of others: *Scared to Death, 1776, Journey to the Center of the Earth, The Tingler, Children of Men*, and too many other titles to list here). There are scores of B/W photos (many of scantily clad actresses, a staple of B-movies in the horror genre, it seems), reproductions of movie posters, but nothing too gory or excessively outrageous.

The issue is dedicated to Linaweaver's friend Chuck Hamill, a fellow libertarian and sf fan. *Mondo Cult* also notes the passing of other greats, such as Robert Anton Wilson and Jack Williamson. Hopefully issue #3 will appear soon, but Linaweaver and Lilley face the prospect of topping this issue, which in terms of breadth of content would seem pretty near impossible.

Editorial: The joyous surprise of C. S. Lewis's mundane sf novel

In keeping up with efforts to read older works of fiction often mentioned as pro-liberty, I recently turned to C. S. Lewis's space trilogy. Published in the late 1930s and early 1940s, they form a trio of unique books, starting with *Out of the Silent Planet* (set on Mars), *Perelandra* (set on Venus), and *That Hideous Strength* (set on Earth). The last book is a perennial nominee for the Hall of Fame Award, which until this year I had not even read, though always kept meaning to attempt.

Although I read all the Narnia books as a child, I struggled to get into Lewis's sf books, abandoning them upon several occasions. Although I finished *Out of the Silent Planet* last year, it reminded me too much of David Lindsay's 1920 novel, *A Voyage to Arcturus*, a somewhat boring but far better book than Lewis's novel. *Perelandra* remains unread, but after aborting the effort to read them in order, I skipped ahead and picked up *That Hideous Strength*.

I had been familiar with Lewis's life, his Oxford career, and his friendship with other writers, especially J. R.R. Tolkien, and also the whole Inklings gathering of literary minds in the 1930s. I also knew of Lewis's strong Christian views. As an atheist, I didn't think that his 'adult' books with their overt Christian themes would appeal to me. Yet while *That Hideous Strength* as a novel contains many flaws (especially its *deus ex*

machina of an ending), this book has far more life and vigor than the other books. Perhaps the fact that the setting was more familiar to Lewis played a role. As the book takes place on Earth, Lewis doesn't need to invent strange flora and fauna, or peculiar words and linguistic exercises. Instead, he focuses on the bizarre world of collegiate professors and bureaucrats, with which he was quite familiar from his years at Oxford.

These few words lay no claim as a real review of *That Hideous Strength*, but rather a statement of surprise and appreciation. Certainly, there are pro-liberty sentiments in the book, or at the very least anti-statist views. Much like the socialists that Freidrich Hayek denounced many times over for their planners' conceit, we see the same experimental sociology denounced by Lewis, in quite a convincing fashion.

After finishing the novel I turned to a biography, the very personal one by George Sayer, a former student, a book simply called *Jack*. I also picked up a set of books, both fiction and non-fiction, including *The Screwtape Letters*. Lewis is going through a period of rediscovery, as his Narnia tales reach the big screen. In the meantime, if you haven't read any of the space trilogy books, take a look at *That Hideous Strength*, a well-written and nearly timeless work of fiction.

—Anders Monsen

—*Kipling*, continued from page 1

Brothers and poets such as W. B. Yeats. It's interesting to see it from the other side.

Less black than we were painted?
Faith, no word of black was said
The lightest touch is human blood
and that, you know, runs red.

Kipling had a very high reputation, especially as a short story writer, early in his career, but fell out of critical favor later, I think mostly for bad reasons. Certainly he had politically unpopular views—but they were not the views generally attributed to him.

Perhaps the clearest example is the often quoted “For East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet,” taken to describe the fundamental gulf between European and Asian cultures. Its point is actually the precise opposite, as one can see by reading the rest of the first verse, and still more clearly by reading the poem.

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the
twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great
Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed,
nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they
come from the ends of the earth!

Similarly on race. *Kim*, Kipling's one entirely successful novel, is set in India. Most of the attractive characters are non-European. The Lama, after Kim the central figure, is a convincing portrayal of a saint—and Tibetan. While there are positively portrayed European characters, both the English and their European opponents mostly come across as incompetents dealing with a culture they do not understand very well, sometimes well meaning, sometimes not.

The book obviously regards British rule over India as a good thing, but not because of any innate superiority of the British. For further evidence of that, consider the two stories (“A Centurion of the Thirtieth” and “On the Great Wall”) set in Roman Britain, where the Romans are the imperialists and the British the ruled.

I like many of the short stories, especially the historical ones, and have reread *Kim* many times. But it is the poetry that really sticks. For other examples, illustrating the range of subjects covered:

“The Palace”—Kipling's verdict, I think, on his own career as writer: “After me cometh a builder/Tell him I too have

known.”

“The Peace of Dives”—An allegory of economic interdependence as a force for peace. If I ever put together a collection of literature to teach economics, it will be included.

So I make a jest of Wonder, and a mock of Time
and Space,

The roofless Seas an hostel, and the
Earth a market-place,
Where the anxious traders know
Each is surety for his foe,
And none may thrive without his fel-
lows' grace.

“A Code of Morals”—The risks of inadequate encryption on an open channel.

“A General Summary”—Nothing much has changed in the past few tens of thousands of years:

Who shall doubt the secret hid
Under Cheops' pyramid
Was that the contractor did

Cheops out of several millions?

“Arithmetic on the Frontier”—The economics of colonial warfare:

The captives of our bow and spear
Are cheap, alas, as we are dear.
A point of perhaps renewed relevance today.

“Jobson's Amen” and “Buddha at Kamakura,” sympathetic portrayals of Asia set in contrast to English (and Christian) ignorant intolerance, show just how far Kipling was from the usual cartoon version of the British imperialist.

“Cold Iron” and “The Fairies Siege” are about the limits of physical force—and so, I suppose, of political realism—while “Gallio's Song” is an approving description of how an empire deals with religious conflict.

“The Last Suttee” has one of my favorite examples of the use of meter in storytelling:

We drove the great gates home apace:
White hands were on the sill:
But ere the rush of the unseen feet
Had reached the turn to the open street,
The bars shot down, the guard-drum beat—
We held the dovecot still.

I'll stop now. For a pretty complete webbed selection, go to:
<http://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/kipling/kipling.html>

[This essay originally appeared as two separate entries on David Friedman's blog <<http://davidfriedman.blogspot.com/>>. It was revised and expanded for publication in Prometheus—editor]

—*Goodkind interview, continued from page 9*

in telling a human story. I don't believe fantasy is valid unless it's used to illustrate other important themes. Magic in and of itself is no more interesting than a rock laying on the side of the road.

The cover of fantasy art tends to illustrate those themes of those authors who are writing those kinds of books. I'm not one of them, and I don't want to be seen as one of them. From the beginning, my goal has been to steer the cover art away from those representational images. Keith became a really good friend, and he would do covers before I even wrote the books. I was describing to him what a cover needed to look like, and then as an artist, I could convey to him very accurately what I wanted him to paint. He and I got along very well and had a great time designing covers. My goal was to pull out of Keith something more noble than the typical red dragon.

For example, with *Faith of the Fallen*, I need[ed him] to paint a painting that illustrated the nobility of the human spirit. He said, "Oh, gee, don't give me anything too hard, Terry!" [laughs] My goal has always been to write above that kind of representational art. Even with covers like *Temple of the Winds* where you see a guy [on the cover] holding a sword; that, to me, is a really cool piece of art, I love it—but as a cover, I don't like it, because it turns off vast amounts of readers. You automatically disqualify the book for consideration by much of the public. And these are people who love these types of books, but the art doesn't convey to them that they like it.

I've gotten most of my readers by word of mouth. My typical reader, probably 80-90 percent of my readers, don't read fantasy. I'm the only "fantasy" author they read, otherwise for them it's general fiction. They recognize that the books aren't fantasy books, they're books about people, they're character-driven. My goal has always been to change the cover art in a way that represents the spirit of what the book is about. With *Chainfire*, *Phantom*, and *Confessor*, those are the first books that are truly my vision of what I want the covers to be. I've finally achieved the kind of covers that I want, that give you a hint of the mystery, romance, intrigue, and even a little bit of the fantasy elements in the book, but at the same time, it illustrates how the books are meant for all people, for all people who just like stories.

After *Temple of the Winds*, I got contractual cover control. Keith and I designed the *Chainfire* template of how those [three] books looks. When you see *Chainfire*, *Phantom*, and *Confessor*, you're seeing my pure vision, unadulterated by what anyone else thinks it should be. Keith and I designed everything down to the smallest detail.

DC: As popular as your books are, you've never won any awards, though you have been nominated several times. How

does that make you feel? I get the feeling that you don't even care about awards.

TG: This is the first time I've ever heard that I've been nominated for any award. I don't know what I've been nominated for, I'm...I'm completely unaware! I've heard of the Hugo Award...I don't know any other kinds. I could care less about awards. My award is a reader opening their wallet and giving up their hard-earned money to read my stories, and more than that, giving up their time. As I said, time is mankind's greatest value. It's the only thing you really have. When a reader gives up a part of their life to allow me to tell them a story, they're giving me something precious. That's my award. Doing my best to satisfy myself, and ultimately my readers—that's the only award I care about.

DC: What are your thoughts on Sam Raimi converting *Wizard's First Rule* into a television series?

TG: Sam Raimi is a person who believes in heroes. His *Spider-Man* movies are obviously about a heroic person who's rising up to challenges. Sam was instrumental in making that movie about a real person. He understood that [Spider-Man] is about a real individual who had to rise to challenges and be heroic. He strongly believes in the sacredness in heroes for all of us, for kids and adults alike. That's something that really drew him to *Wizard's First Rule*: he loves the characters; he loves the heroic aspects of [the story]. The reason he wants it done for TV is

because he says that if he were to do it as a two hour movie, it would ruin the story. He has so much respect for the story that the last thing in the world he wants to do is ruin it; he wants to do a television format.

Right now he's working on who [the audience] it's going to be for and what format will it take, whether it's going to be an hour [per week] miniseries. He's in the early planning stages, and he wants me to be intimately involved in all aspects of it—more involved than I have time to be! He's told me he wants this to be true to my vision, because if I love it, my fans will love it, and if my readers love it, the general audience will love it. He thinks my involvement [in the project] is integral to its success, and he wants me to be there for every stage of it—and I plan to be.

He's just one of the nicest people I've ever met, and I'm excited to have the opportunity to work with him. He's the first person whom I've encountered that I had enough respect for, and who I thought could do the job, that really excited me.

DC: Did your surgery in 2006 affect your writing?

TG: The short answer is: no. I had a defect in a major artery that supplies blood to my heart, and it would have killed me within a couple of weeks. They had to bypass that

My award is a reader opening up
their wallet and giving up their hard-
earned money to read my stories, and
more than that, giving up their time.

—Continued on page 16

—*Goodkind interview, continued from page 15*

defect, which was like a kink in a garden hose. They used an artery from my chest, and it was successful. They said I have no heart disease or anything like that, and in fact the surgeon said it was a pleasure to operate on someone who was healthy for a change. [laughs] It was just one of those things that, had I not been as healthy as I was, it would have killed me. The defect was in what they call the widow artery. It's the artery that, when you have a heart attack, you can't be recovered, so I was fortunate in that they were able to fix it in time. Having open heart surgery was no fun, but all it did was reinforce everything that I believe.

My wife is the most important thing to me, and she was my guardian angel. I knew she was right there standing over me, watching over things, and so I knew that I could be put to sleep and she would take care of everything, and would be there for me. When you open your eyes and the people you love are there to smile at you and say "Hi," that's what matters. The other stuff is all fun, but the important things are the values I write about. It didn't change my values, it just proved to me that those simple things such as the people around you who you care about, and who care about you—that's all that really matters. That's the joy of life.

DC: It's such a rare and beautiful thing to have that, to have a real connection with another human being.

TG: Yeah, and that's one of the things that's been so important to me throughout the whole series: to write about a caring relationship in which the people are very real. They're realistic about each other, how they can get angry at each other over something, but it doesn't mean they don't love one another. Even when they're angry, they maintain their respect. They may be angry at the situation, at what someone did, but they don't hate the other person. Love is still the basis of their relationship. I wanted to show how beautiful connection can be.

There are so many people that think, "I'll be with this person for a while, and if we don't like each other, we'll part," and they mistake momentary pleasure for human joy. In so doing, they make a trade in which they end up being the loser. They sacrifice a part of their life that they'll never get back for an experience that is ultimately not worthwhile.

This interview originally appeared online at Fantasy Book Critic on December 10, 2007 <<http://fantasybookcritic.blogspot.com/2007/12/interview-with-terry-goodkind.html>>. It is reprinted here with kind permission. Due to length and space constraints, it has been split into two parts for Prometheus, and will conclude in the next issue of Prometheus. In the second part of the interview Goodkind talks at length about the influence of Ayn Rand and Objectivism on his books and life.



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501 Abiso Ave.
San Antonio, TX 78209