

Twilight

By Brendan DuBois St. Martin's Press, 2007 Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

Twilight hasn't been marketed as science fiction, and that actually may be sound judgment on the publisher's part. It's set in the near future, but its Wellsian "impossible assumption" isn't technological, scientific, or even philosophical: it's a political "what if" that's actually disturbingly plausible. And the focus of the narrative is on the human consequences of that assumption, with only minimal concern for technological aspects. Despite this, this is a book that readers of *Prometheus* may find worth taking a look at.

DuBois shows us a future United States that has disintegrated legally and politically after a terrorist attack. This isn't anything as trivial as flying airplanes into buildings; DuBois imagines an attack using nuclear weapons to set off an EMP (electromagnetic pulse) that brings down the entire American electronic communications network. This is quickly followed by the death of every major American city, as they lose both the financial resources to pay for food and the communication to coordinate its shipment. Hordes of refugees flee to the countryside, where they are not welcome.

The story starts in medias res (or, in the middle of the story, as ancient literary critics said of Homer): the viewpoint character, Samuel Simpson, is already caught up in the action, and both his personal history and the global backstory come out in flashbacks. Simpson is a young Canadian journalist sent in with a United Nations team to provide aid, help restore order, and investigate the reported murder of thousands of urban refugees. This last part of his mission makes the surviving local authorities his enemies; proof of mass murder would bring in other countries' forces for a prolonged stay, and would reveal that many local authorities were complicit in the crimes.

Simpson is hardly prepared for the horrors of this dying United States. The real story is largely about his "seeing the elephant," and learning to function in a violent world, through the example of two other men in his unit: a British ex-policeman and a black American marine. It's also about his gaining hints that someone in his unit is a traitor, in league with the very people they're meant to be investigating. He deals with not knowing who he can trust, and with making the wrong choices and being betrayed, more than once. Fans of Robert Heinlein will find this story of a young man learning to cope familiar.

The political values aren't based on detailed analysis, but they're surprisingly sound. On one hand, we see a look at the ethics of emergencies, and about the fatal temptation to make them an excuse for brutality and hatred. DuBois gives us a different type of dystopian landscape: Not a dictatorship, not even a civil war, but a thousand petty local dictatorships with no concept of law. And on the other hand, Simpson comes to accept the ethics of defensive force, and to be willing to use violence against the violent. And his personal relationships evolve in the process, including his old hostility to his soldier father. DuBois's characterization is persuasive and makes this grim story all too plausible.

I don't normally read a lot of non-fantastic fiction. But this

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Heroes and Legacies

My formative years, when I started reading science fiction and fantasy, were spent in Zambia in the 1980s, where Famous Monster of Filmland never reached, as far as I know. After I moved to the states and started reading not just fiction but articles about the creators of the sf genre, the name Forrest J Ackerman loomed as one of the still-living giants of the field. In terms of LFS history, Ackerman accepted the 1988 Hall of Fame Award on behalf of Alfred Bester.

I met Forrest Ackerman very briefly at the 1996 World-Con in Los Angeles (or, to be correct, Anaheim). Though the meeting was brief, Ackerman (I'm not sure I can call him Forry), radiated enthusiasm and joy; science fiction was an integral part of his identity. Indeed, many of the obituaries published after he died in early December 2008 described him as science fiction's number one fan-boy, which I am sure would have delighted him greatly. Ackerman's death dims the chain of bright lights that connect us to our science fiction past. If modern science fiction was born out of the early 20th century (ignoring the many 19th century precursors), we now stand on the cusp of the second century of the science fiction mind. It's then almost mind-boggling to realize that Ackerman introduced Robert A. Heinlein's Guest of Honor speech at the Third World Science Fiction Convention, in 1941!

I read about Ackerman's premature death and then real death at Locus Online in December. A few days later Brad Linaweaver emailed me and mentioned Ackerman's passing. I have known from many discussions with Linaweaver that Ackerman meant a great to the science fiction writer community in general, and a great deal personally to Linaweaver I saw a posting at Victor Koman's blog where he paid tribute to Ackerman, and also a note online by F. Paul Wilson at the Repairman Jack forum. No doubt there are scores of other such reminiscences online and in print by now. Literary heroes mean a great deal to me. I wanted to honor someone like Ackerman. Prometheus strives to mention and honor writers and individuals who have influenced libertarian science fiction and libertarian science fiction writers, from Robert Shea, Robert Anton Wilson, Poul Anderson, Samuel Edward Konkin III, as well as former members of the LFS such as Kerry Pearson Adam Starchild and others.

I therefore asked Linaweaver if I could use anything he had written about Ackerman for Prometheus, and asked the same of Koman and Wilson. I received permission from all three. The tribute by Linaweaver is original to *Prometheus*, and Wilson modified some of his original text for this issue. I welcome any other tributes or memorials about Ackerman, or any other literary person of influence.

In this issue I also have a brief note about the death of Patrick McGoohan, who died this year. McGoohan is best known for his short-lived TV show, The Prisoner, which LFS honored with a Prometheus Hall of Fame Award in 2002. What the judge stated in the final episode about Number 6 applies equally to McGoohan: "He has gloriously vindicated the right of the individual to be individual."

Anders Monsen

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book, despite being essentially a realistic thriller, was worth reading. It's a solid cautionary tale in the spirit of *It Can't Happen Here*, with a well-crafted plot. If you enjoy military conflict as a fictional theme, take a look at it.

Victory Conditions

By Elizabeth Moon Del Rey, 2008 Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

Victory Conditions is the final volume of the Vatta's War series. We come into it with a whole series of plot threads waiting to be resolved: the struggle against interstellar piracy, the rebuilding of Vatta Transport as a commercial enterprise, the cleaning up of corruption, incompetence, and malinvestment in InterStellar Communications, the growth of Kylara Vatta's abilities as a fleet commander, her cousin Stella's guardianship of their orphaned younger relative Toby, and Kylara's own unresolved (indeed unacknowledged) romantic tension with Rafe Dunbarger, now the head of InterStellar. Moon manages to resolve all of these, and even to introduce and resolve some new threads, including notably Toby's romantic involvement with a classmate whose family proves a source of further complications, and Kylara's accumulated emotional stress from her many losses and life changes.

That last story leads to Kylara's undergoing a short mental health intervention, at the urging of Master Sergeant Pitt from the Mackensee Military Assistance Corporation, who has played the role of Kylara's "voice of experience" since the first volume. In this case, Pitt's speech to her discusses the ethics of force in a way that will make sense to libertarians:

"Most of us...were brought up to be good, decent citizens of wherever we grew up. Religious, some of us. We had all sorts of social rules for how to behave, among them not killing other people, and not letting friends get hurt if we could help it...And now you kill people for a living...But the thing is, if you didn't, the people who do nothin' *but* kill for a living would win. If you hadn't come in to Boxtop and shot up some enemy ships, I'd be dead, for one."

Jane Jacobs' theory of ethics, which I've mentioned before in reviewing these books, asserts that a basic principle of sound ethics is the functional separation of force from economics; citing Plato, she argues that mixing the two leads to injustice. Moon's story shows the harmful effects of this mixture, including the erosion of defensive strength under the cost-cutting measures necessary to private firms, dramatized through both Rafe's and Kylara's difficulties in combating the pirates. Whether this is a libertarian idea is debatable; a constitutionalist such as Ayn Rand would likely support it, whereas an anarchocapitalist would likely believe that private firms could solve it. In economic terms, though, what Moon shows us is that the various defensive forces have been invading their own capital, boosting their short-term profit at the expense of long-term assets--a temptation to which both private

investors and democratic governments are subject.

One of the ironies of this story is that Kylara, whose true role is to be a warrior, is characteristically a straight arrow, playing by the rules, while Rafe, who emerges in this volume as an entrepreneur and manager, is happiest at the edge of legitimacy, or a little beyond it. Moon shows them dealing with all the complications that result from this personality difference, as well as the external complications caused by the fixed conviction of Rafe's Board of Directors that the Vattas are criminals allied with the corrupt manager who nearly destroyed their corporation. By the end of the novel, they have reached, if not a resolution, at least a *modus vivendi*.

As in nearly all of Moon's fiction, the surface plot of adventure is supported by some sophisticated worldbuilding in the background. In particular, a theme running through this series is the genetic or technological modification of the human form and the political tensions over its legitimacy. Moon shows us religious beliefs that condemn such "unnatural" changes, political régimes that discriminate against the modified (and against racial outgroups in general), and the primary villains' manipulation of this bias to gain support for his campaign of mass murder and plunder. On the other hand, this volume shows a few adherents of a religion that restricts modifications coming to the defense of their own world against the pirate fleet, and themselves being protected by their upgraded friends and neighbors. The emphasis in this series is on individual responsibility, not on collective guilt.

This is a well-told and entertaining story, whose heroes are good people by libertarian standards. Anyone who's a fan of military science fiction should take a look at this series.

New Dreams for Old

By Mike Resnick Pyr Books, 2007 Reviewed by Chris Hibbert

Mike Resnick's New Dreams for Old contains several very good stories. If you haven't been reading (or listening to 1) recent nominees for the Hugo awards 2, it's worth picking up. Out of 20 stories, half were nominated for or won a Hugo.

I'm a fan of Resnick, though I can't claim to be a completist. I have his name on my list of authors, so when I'm in a bookstore with time or money to spend, I make sure to look through his books and often find something interesting to read. I think he writes good adventure SF, but this collection also contains some interesting fantasy.

With short stories, the element of surprise seems more important than with longer works, so I'm hesitant to say much about these stories. There are a couple ("Robots Don't Cry," "Travels with My Cats") in which Resnick shows an ability to quickly make us care deeply about characters whether or not they're human. "The Chinese Sandman" is a wonderful evocation of the fairy tale genre, with an oriental flavor.

Some are serious investigations of serious issues; "Hot-

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house Flowers" and "Down Memory Lane" talk about how important quality of life is to those in their declining years. I think they make important points, even though I expect the state of medicine to improve sufficiently in the next couple of decades to make the issue obsolete.

Since I'm a fan of Resnick, I jumped at the chance to read it. I'm glad I did, even though I was already familiar with the best stories in the collection.

Resnick's stories should resonate well with libertarians, even though there's nothing overtly political in them. "Guardian Angel" and "Keepsakes" take different views of dealing with criminals. In one case, the police aren't called in because the principals include ganglords; in the other, the police have to step gingerly because the "criminals" involved don't seem to have broken any laws. In both cases justice is served, though in one case justice isn't very satisfying. Resnick also has a healthy respect for self-sufficiency, and many of his characters could have come from the pages of a Heinlein story.

Notes: 1 — http://pl745.pairlitesite.com/hugos/>

Russian Amerika

By Stoney Compton BAEN, 2007 Reviewed by Rick Triplett

Russian Amerika is a strikingly original tale of resistance fighting, with an Alaskan setting. SF author Eric Flint has described the book as "an exciting story of war and revolution." The setting is 1987 Alaska, but it is an alternate history story: the Communist Revolution never happened, and Alaska is still in the possession of Czarist Russia. Moreover, North America has evolved into nine different nations.

The author, Stoney Compton (www.StoneyCompton.com), though born in Nebraska, lived in various parts of Alaska for over thirty years. While there he worked at an astonishing variety of jobs, including clerk, gandy dancer, emergency firefighter, tour operator, and stints with the Department of Fish & Game and with Health & Social Services. Naturally he became very familiar with the Native Americans who live there, including many in the interior, and he acquired a deep appreciation for their sense of community, their way of life, and their resentment of colonialist mistreatment. I like to think of this novel, his first, as a tribute to the admirable peoples of Alaska whom he came to know and respect.

The hero of the story is Grigoriy Grigorievich, and he is in every sense a hero. Grisha, as he is known, is unfairly cashiered from the Czar's service, spends ten years operating his own charter boat, then suddenly gets caught up in a resistance movement he did not know existed. His path takes him through slavery, living with the Dená people, and many

violent confrontations with Russian Cossacks and regulars troops. His activities involve him with several nations and eventually take on epic proportions. The writing is so vivid that every character and every scene seems breathtakingly real. It is a hard book to put down.

Russian Amerika is a story that will appeal not only to libertarians but to anyone who loves freedom and is moved by the difficult struggles that are often necessary to sustain it. This book is engaging, edifying, and fascinating. It deserves—and will gratify—a wide audience.

The Night Sessions

By Ken MacLeod Orbit, 2008 Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

Ken MacLeod's latest novel is another near-future story, set in Scotland midway through the 21st century—a bit further away than *The Execution Channel*, but close enough so that its technological aspects are extrapolations from current developments. The one big technological innovation in the story is the emergence of human-equivalent artificial intelligence and self-aware robots. The technological focus is elsewhere: on the impact of advances in computers and other technologies on forensics. *The Night Sessions* is a police procedural, starting with the bombing of a flat occupied by a Roman Catholic priest.

This particular crime is significant because of the big change in MacLeod's future society: a radical separation between religion and politics. The previous history of his future includes disastrous wars in the Near East, which left Jerusalem a radioactive ruin; depending on who's talking about them, these are called either the Faith Wars or the Oil Wars. In their aftermath, the United Kingdom and the United States both turned against religiously motivated politics. In the United Kingdom, at least, the turn was initially brutally repressive; now things have settled down to an official policy of "non-cognizance"—more or less a religious "don't ask, don't tell"—but the main viewpoint character, Detective Inspector Adam Ferguson, has memories of taking harsh measures against churches earlier in his career. MacLeod envisions a profoundly secularized society, and explores how it might work.

But, in a well-told mystery, there's always a story behind the story: the plot of the investigation is the uncovering of the plot of the criminal. Religious concerns are much more important to the hidden plot that Ferguson uncovers. And MacLeod has been ingenious in coming up with an unexpected, but logical, religious issue, one that leads to a dramatic conclusion, and that ties together all the elements of his future setting.

I find myself ambivalent about MacLeod's political speculations. On one hand, I'm well aware of how often religion has been used as an excuse for authoritarianism, and how much harm this has led to; like MacLeod, I find the motives of American fundamentalists disturbingly similar to those of Islamic radicals. Having a radically secularized society, where religion is a purely private matter, strikes me as desirable. The

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path MacLeod imagines for getting there, on the other hand, is disturbingly authoritarian in its own right. Not that I take MacLeod to be advocating this; rather, he's envisioning how it might happen—in the ugly, bloody way so much of history happens. But it makes his imagined future hard to desire, however appealing it is to envision life in a world where religion has been stripped of any power to compel. Nonetheless, this is an interesting and thought-provoking book.

The Night Sessions also is not an easy one to get hold of, at least for Americans. MacLeod's usual American publisher, Tor, has not yet announced plans to release it. I got my copy, at some extra expense, from Forbidden Planet London, who will take American credit cards and ship internationally. I hope that Tor will make it possible for other LFS members to read an American edition of this book. But thanks to global commerce and the Internet, the impatient have other options.

Half a Crown

By Jo Walton Tor, 2009 Reviewed by Chris Hibbert

Jo Walton's *Half a Crown* completes her "Small Change" series with a distinctly different ending. The second novel in the trilogy, *Ha'Penny*, was a co-winner of last year's Prometheus Award.

Small Change is an alternate history in which Britain made peace with Hitler and itself moved toward fascism. The story follows Peter Carmichael, a police inspector in the first novel, now head of Britain's Secret Police, The Watch. Carmichael is gay, and this fact is being used by his superiors to keep him in line. But they don't seem to know that Carmichael has been secretly operating an underground railroad from inside The Watch. In *Half a Crown*, Carmichael additionally struggles to deal with the troubles of his protégé Elvira Royston, a debutante planning for her presentation to the Queen. Elvira accompanies a friend to a political rally to watch the parades, and is rounded up along with the provocateurs after a riot erupts. The government decides to make an example of the provocateurs and Carmichael has to scramble to extract Elvira from the mess at great cost to himself and his friends.

The books provide a clear depiction of innocent well-meaning people getting caught up in a totalitarian struggle, and having to choose which of the things they value they will work to preserve and at what cost to their other values and to the rest of society. The first two books had downbeat endings, as Carmichael and others gave in on major issues that allowed the totalitarian government to take power in order to preserve a small amount of personal autonomy. This third book has the same feeling most of the way, but in the end Elvira finds a way to turn the tables and expose the machinations that led to the government takeover. I don't know if Britain's government really would work the way Walton portrays it, but as an American, it felt like *deus ex machina*.

The characterization is interesting. We've come to know

Carmichael from the previous books, and his motivations (protecting both his lover Jack and Elvira, furthering the secret projects that allow some people to escape) are clear and well-established. Elvira is a newcomer to the story, and Walton demonstrates her thinking and motivations clearly in alternating chapters that Elvira tells in the first person. The others, which mostly follow Carmichael, are given in third person, which allows Walton to follow other characters when necessary.

Half a Crown has been nominated for this year's Prometheus, and it's a strong candidate. The application to libertarianism is clear, but I think there are other books which will do better. Cory Doctorow's Little Brother seems a more powerful cautionary tale along the lines of It Can't Happen Here. Walton's book is well written, and my only complaint is that the happy ending seemed forced. I don't think dystopias have to end in a downbeat to be effective, but the total collapse of Britain's fascist government seemed to run against a lot of previous descriptions showing how that the government had co-opted most of the country's leaders and that the institutionalized prejudices were in harmony with those of the populace who were learning to get along with the other consequences of institutionalized repression. The quick turnaround in response to a single speech was a surprise. This is, after all, still an alternate history in which the Germans and the Japanese have taken over two thirds of the globe. Britain will have to figure out how to co-exist with an external world dominated by fascism.

The January Dancer

By Michael Flynn Tor, 2008 Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

The January Dancer takes place a long time in the future, in a region of the galaxy light-years away. Humanity has spread out from star to star, terraforming likely planets and seeding them with Earth-derived life. In the process, human cultures have mutated and hybridized. Earth itself is a distant planet, off the edge of the map, and no longer has much historical significance, though Terran exiles have been scattered among the stars by an oppressive empire, and seemingly every starport has its Terran quarter, filled with traders and petty criminals.

Flynn makes this the setting for a classic science-fictional adventure story, driven by an alien artifact found abandoned in ancient ruins. For most of the story, this seems to be no more than a maguffin, a science-fictional Maltese Falcon, existing to be the object of a quest. But, in the end, it turns out to be more than that. It's comparable to the One Ring of Power, and presents Flynn's heroes with similar choices. So this book asks the question Plato raised through his fable of the Ring of Gyges (a precursor of the One Ring): Is power a desirable thing to have?

The Freedom to Remember—Ackerman 2009

By Brad Linaweaver

Forrest J Ackerman was the best friend science fiction ever had. The man who loved Frankenstein movies would appreciate the observation that he was more than the sum of his parts. He was an agent. He was an editor. He was a writer. He was an actor. He was a splendid raconteur. He was the supreme collector.

But more than any of that was the importance of his love affair with what he called Sci-Fi. Some of us throw up artificial barriers between science fiction, fantasy and horror. Forry knew better. We may wonder if that strange creature trampling us is an alien or a monster, but Mr. Ackerman would run the same picture in his seminal film magazines, *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Spacemen*. The same picture.

Is that giant robot on the horizon a tool, a friend or an enemy? It all depends on the point of view. As children we learned empathy and how to make distinctions from a number of unlikely sources. Perhaps FJA was the best.

Our kindly uncle was that rarest of aliens, a welcome teacher. He was the Walt Disney of science fiction! He took us on a time machine, borrowed from H.G. Wells, and showed us that the past still lived in his favorite city, the Gothic futurama of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Forry invited us into the lair of Rotwang, the mad scientist's house; but here was an old house haunted not by ghosts, but by dreams of the future.

The Ackermonster built his own magical castle on several occasions at different locations. The most famous was the mansion on Glendower with its Lovecraftian basement for the kids, Grislyland. Wherever he lived, he made it Hollyweird, Karloffornia, surrounded by loved ones and loved objects. He departed the world at the age of 92 in his own Mad Lab.

His lifelong friend, Ray Bradbury, was in contact with him in his final days. Along with another friend, Ray Harryhausen, these men made an indelible mark on the imagination of the world.

They were members of LASFS, America's oldest science fiction club. Robert A. Heinlein was a member back then, as well. Those were golden days in Los Angeles before World War II.

The battle for freedom never ends. Appropriately, as a close friend of the author of *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury, Forry was a lifelong opponent of censorship. In common with J.R.R. Tolkien, Forry knew that those who condemn escapist literature are actually jailers. Young minds should be free citizens of the Imagi-Nation.

Forry often said if he ever wrote an autobiography the title would be *I Never Met Jules Verne*. Think about that. Whether writing a script for a Boris Karloff record album or befriending Bela Lugosi, he who was known as the poor man's Vincent Price always found time to blast off in a private rocket ship and attend The World Science Fiction Convention. He wore the first Worldcon costume (inspired by *Things To Come*) in 1939 and received the first Hugo from the hands of Isaac Asimov in 1953. He was the premiere science fiction fan, enjoying the



Brad Linaweaver (left) Forrest J Ackerman (right) signing their book, Worlds of Tomorrow: The Amazing Universe of Science Fiction Art at the San Diego ComicCon, the Sky Captain booth. The book was cross-promoted with the film. Photo 2004 by Lenny J. Provenzano. Arm by Jessie Lilley, editor of Mondo Cult.

highlights of the 20th Century on his journey to the 21st.

How appropriate that he would be the literary agent of A.E. van Vogt for many of those decades—a grandmaster of science fiction who came up with so many memorable aliens that influenced generations of movie monsters.

A unique gift that Forry offered to young fans of several generations was a long road to the future that went gently winding through the past. Apprentice barbarians were civilized to the point of being able to sit through silent movies. Unlike their contemporaries they developed an attention span. Because of Uncle Forry they even managed to read the long sentences and absorb the vocabulary of 19th Century writers. On a journey to the center of the Earth we encounter Dracula and the Frankenstein Monster, both of whom complain that they have been prematurely interred.

An encyclopedia could be produced listing all those who received inspiration from Forry to pursue careers in the entertainment field. The famous, the not so famous, the infamous, the obscure, we all have our stories. Here's mine, starting with a fan letter in the original *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and going all the way to my participation in his last film, *The Boneyard Collection*.

(To be continued).

Brad Linaweaver is a Nebula Award nominee for the novella "Moon of Ice," and Prometheus Award winner for the novel, Moon of Ice. His novelizations of Doom (co-authored with Daffyd ab Hugh) appeared on the New York Times bestseller lists. This is a non-commercial work made available to the field in hopes that others will donate their Ackermemories to an ongoing love letter for our departed friend.

Mr. Science Fiction

By Victor Koman

Forry Ackerman died Thursday, having heroically made it to his 92nd birthday Nov. 24th, despite pneumonia and congestive heart failure, for which he had been hospitalized a few weeks before. I'll miss him. One of the first magazines I'd ever purchased with my own money was *Famous Monsters* #27, March, 1964, the one with the Cyclops on the cover (yes, I still have it—it's one of my prized possessions).

I met Forry many times over the years, beginning in the mid 1970s at science-fiction conventions in Los Angeles. He was always the most joyous and polite of men (and that's saying a lot in fandom!), and when my daughter Vanessa was old enough to show up with me, he doted upon her like a loving grandfather.

In the 1980s, I found out that he hosted Saturday tours of his Ackermansion and Vanessa and I made several pilgrimages to that sacred place.

Forry has been disparaged by many fans for somehow sullying science fiction with his childlike enthusiasm and his coining of the term "sci-fi." I—and anyone who ever leapt with joy at the arrival of a copy of FM or Spacemen—declare otherwise. He did more to bring science fiction to popularity than nearly anyone else. Without Forry, would there have been a Steven Spielberg or a George Lucas? Early influence is everything in human development, and Forry caught us all as kids, at our most malleable.

His influence on generations will not be adequately gauged until decades from now. He has inspired innumerable people to enter the arts and sciences. He helped to build the future he wanted to see.

As an atheist, he did not think he would "go" anywhere when he died. Many hope he's wrong, and that somewhere he and Wendy can hang out with Bela and Boris and all the citizens of the ImagiNation. *Mi amas vin Kvari*.

Victor Koman is a three-time winner of the Prometheus Award for Best Novel—The Jehovah Contract, Solomon's Knife, and The Kings of the High Frontier. He lives in Southern California.

RIP, Forry

By F. Paul Wilson

I was standing in Bronson cave with David Schow yesterday afternoon when he told me Forry had died the night before. One of my regrets in life is never meeting him despite many opportunities. Whenever in LA I was always on a tight schedule and kept telling myself, "Next time." (Another regret is never meeting John Campbell when I had the chance.) I know nothing about his personal life, and not much about his professional life beyond his editorship of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. But that's enough.

FMoF was a huge influence on me. It made me into a scifi/horror movie geek. I'd see a still of a cool-looking monster, jot down the name of the film, and hunt theater and TV listings until I found it. Sometimes it took years.

As a kid I wrote him a fan letter asking a question about some film mentioned in the mag...AND HE WROTE BACK! Signed it "4SJ." It made a teen fan boy's year. I have that letter somewhere still (I think). Now I'll have to go look for it.

For obvious reasons, I dedicated *Nightworld* to him. RIP, Forry.

F. Paul Wilson has received the Prometheus Award twice for Best Novel (Wheels Within Wheels and Sims), and twice for the Hall of Fame (An Enemy of the State and Healer), and received numerous nominations for other novels. Wilson is perhaps best known for his Repairman Jack novels, as well as horror novel The Keep, and his World War II novel, Black Wind. Wilson is the 2009 recipient of Horror Writers of America's Lifetime Achievement Award.

RIP, Patrick McGoohan

By Anders Monsen

Number Six has finally left the village. Actor, writer, director, and producer Patrick McGoohan died on January 13, 2009, after a life rich in legacies. Born on March 19, 1928, in America to Irish parents, McGoohan grew up in Ireland and England, where he rose to fame as the lead actor in the TV show *Danger Man*. He turned down the lead characters in the James Bond and *The Saint* movies on moral grounds, and in the middle of *Danger Man*'s fourth season proposed a new show, for which he will remain indelibly linked—*The Prisoner*.

Although this show ran only 17 episodes, McGoohan's role as the former secret agent who awakes in the colorful village (filmed in Portmeiron, Wales) and the moniker "Number Six," held prisoner until he bows to the will of the people in charge. First aired between 1967 and 1968, *The Prisoner* has since reached a cult status, virtually trapping McGoohan within his most famous and visible role.

McGoohan later went on to act in movies like *Escape From Alcatraz*, *Silver Streak*, David Cronenberg's early sf movie *Scanners*, *The Phantom*, the TV show Columbo (for which he won two Emmys), and others. He appeared as the intimidating King Edward Longshanks in *Braveheart*. He received the Prometheus Hall of Fame Award in 2002 for his work on *The Prisoner*, which he originated, produced, and wrote for under his own name and pseudonyms. His role epitomized the refusal of an individual to let his will be bent by others, enduring optimism, and the immortal words, "I am not a number—I am a free man!"

—**January Dancer** review, Continued from page 5

But The January Dancer has libertarian aspects other than that. Flynn shows the reader a variety of planetary civilizations, each with its own laws and customs; and those often have libertarian aspects, as when the planet of New Eirann hires a contractor to run their government. And Flynn's vision of the dynamics of history often reflects libertarian insights, as when New Eirann falls into civil war because its administrator is honest, its wealthy men want to replace him with someone more willing to bend the law in their favor, and its common people recognize that the incumbent planetary manager was doing a good job and want to keep him on. There is also the attractively loose United League of the Periphery, reigned over—but not ruled—by a high king and defended by special agents called Hounds who are classic larger-than-life spaceoperatic heroes (at one point, Flynn evokes the Lens of E. E. Smith's Galactic Patrol). Several Hounds, and one aspirant, play major roles in Flynn's story, along with other, equally vivid characters.

Beyond this, Flynn's style is a pleasure to read. He's endlessly inventive in language, from names of future dishes such as "hodags and sarkrat" to names of planetary cultures such as the Century Stars or the Dao Chettians. He makes each planetary culture memorably different. And his framing narrative, in which a wandering harper persuades a reluctant old man to tell the story of the whole quest, gives both characters distinctive voices and makes their conversation a story in its own right.

The January Dancer is a return to classic science fiction...but a return that makes it seem fresh again. And for libertarian readers, Flynn offers an appreciation both of the value of freedom and of the ease with which it can be lost, whether to pirates, corrupt administrators, or authoritarian states. This is an entertaining, moving, and well-told story that deserves more readers.

Little Brother

By Cory Doctorow Tor, 2008 Reviewed by Chris Hibbert

Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother* is a fun, modern, flashy, but stark warning in the vein of Sinclair Lewis's classic *It Can't Happen Here*. Like Ken MacLeod's *The Execution Channel* from last year, it takes place in the current anti-terror climate, but Doctorow focuses more on the consequences and costs of the resulting repression and shows how we (or at least those with a connection to technology and time on their hands, meaning smart high school kids) might fight back.

Doctorow even has an afterword from Bruce Schneier and a bibliography to underline the fact that technologies for privacy are available and urging people to do more to prepare for the resistance now. Since I can attest that all the technology in the book is either available or easily developed, the book has to be placed in the future history category to qualify as science fiction. It has been nominated for this year's Prometheus and I'd have to say it's the best candidate I've read so far.

The story is told from the point of view of a small group of teenagers in San Francisco who are imprisoned by DHS in a general sweep after a terrorist attack on the Bay Bridge and BART tunnel. Once they are released, they (principally Marcus Yallow, a hacker and LARP player) work to undermine the terrorist state and build tools that their friends can use to communicate privately and organize out of the government's sight. There are enough details about what tools they build and what systems they compromise to serve as an outline for budding hackers who aren't sure how to fight back. These details occasionally intrude into the story in the form of Marcus explaining things to his audience, but I think readers for whom they aren't obvious will take it as necessary background.

The story also shows clearly how torture can come about, and without taking their viewpoint makes the actions and motivations of the guards and torturers believable. Marcus and his friends react to their harsh imprisonment in a variety of ways, just as the people on the outside react to the increasing repression differently. It's not surprising that kids in school (who are used to hiding some of their activities from their parents and teachers) adapt readily to using surreptitious means to hide from DHS as well.

The story doesn't have a young-adult feel; even though the protagonists are mainly teenagers, the story is told with an adult sensibility. Being youngsters, Doctorow has plenty of opportunity to show them growing intellectually and emotionally. The characters are well filled out, and have appropriate conflicts that drive the story. The story is exciting and well motivated. Marcus starts working with a journalist early enough in the story that her role in the denouement isn't a surprise. And compared to the Queen's similar role in Jo Walton's *Half a Crown*, it seems completely plausible.

I really enjoyed this book. It had some of the flavor of Vernor Vinge's "Fast Times at Fairmont High," without being as far ahead of the curve, and gave an exciting depiction of the fight against an enveloping tyranny (harking back to *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*) along with a concrete vision of how and why we'd fight back set in an all-too-plausible near future.

Classifieds

The (Libertarian) Connection, openforum since 1968. Subscribers may insert four pages/issue free, unedited. Factsheet Five said, "Lively interchange of point, counterpoint and comments". Eight/year, \$10. Strauss, 10 Hill #22-LP, Newark NJ 07102.

Starship: Rebel

By Mike Resnick Pyr, 2008 Reviewed by Anders Monsen

Starship: Rebel is the fourth book in Mike Resnick's science fiction series about Wilson Cole, former decorated hero of the human space navy in the vast Republic, since his mutiny in the first novel he and his crew have wandered through many career changes, from fugitives, pirates, mercenaries, and by the end of this novel, a full-fledged rebellion against the very Republic in which he once served. The series is set to conclude with a fifth novel sometime next year.

The books are both entertaining and infuriating, somewhat like a reality show on TV, which you feel strangely compelled to see through to the end. But this is not reality. Instead the books remind me of pulp stories from the 1930s, or something along the lines of the original *Star Trek* TV series. Wilson Cole is the perfect leader, self-assured and competent. His crew members and various associates idolize him, and he seems able to turn every negative situation to his advantage, much like Captain James T. Kirk, although unlike the serial romantic Kirk, Cole maintains a monogamous relationship (with his security officer, who snoops on every conversation in the ship, an eerie anti-libertarian theme).

What wins me over as a reader, despite my dislike for the all too perfect Cole and his colorful cast of associates and crew members (such as the Amazonian pirate queen who is indefatigable in lovemaking and combat, and the metal-human hybrid leader on the space station Cole's crew calls their current home), the story keeps me riveted. Ever since the first book, I have read each novel in the series faithfully almost the moment I received them. They are pure entertainment, which in and of itself is not a bad thing. To mix another metaphor, they are like the aging boxer who has been around the block, the tough guy from the streets with a heart of gold, who you want to see succeed, and you follow his saga with keen interest and an overwhelming yet guilty sense of enjoyment.

In the previous installment Cole and the crew of his aging Republic gunship, the Teddy Roosevelt, had shifted occupations from pirates to mercenaries. Since Cole insisted they be honorable pirates, they seemed ill-suited to that role. As mercenaries, Cole continues his noble view on life. Instead of killing all who oppose him, Cole seeks to first win them over with words and promises. He presents them with fair ultimatums: join us, depart, or prepare to die. This methodology gradually lets him build up a space navy of his own. Though seemingly safe while the Republic remains at war, Cole is still a fugitive. When some of his crew is captured and killed by the Republic, Cole vows revenge, and course that will set him at odds with a government that can call on millions of ships against his few inexperienced rag tag vessels.

So, if you like your space cowboy action fast and light, vivid and thrilling, here's a series worth reading. Gloss over the science, the occasional cartoonish characters, and instead live life joyously and lightly. While Cole can be both infuriating and worth admiring, he is one of the good guys.

Dystopian Dusk

By Bruce Boston

If it had happened all at once like a curtain falling swiftly and blotting out the light,

if they had severed our choices with the flash of a blade both sudden and bright,

or leveled our lives with some artillery shell's whistling explosive flight,

if they had slapped blinkers on our eyes, narrowing our vision to all they claimed was right,

we would have raised an alarm, cried out in protest and summoned the will to fight.

Yet each turn of the screw that tightened the bonds on our lives was ever so slight,

we barely noticed the loss of our freedoms and the limits on our sight.

Now we wait in the shadows of a thickening dusk where all cats are black or white,

and a bare reflection of the sun's last rays heralds a fascist night.

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Bruce Boston's 2007 dystopian novel The Guardener's Tale was a Bram Stoker Award Finalist and Prometheus Award Nominee. His work has appeared in hundreds of publications and received numerous awards, including a Pushcart Prize and the Grand Master Award of the SFPA.

This poem first appeared at Strange Horizons, http://www.strangehorizons.com/2008/20080804/boston-b.shtml>.

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The Whiskey Rebels

By David Liss Random House, 2008 Reviewed by Anders Monsen

I feel somewhat conflicted about reviewing a work of historical fiction in the pages of Prometheus. After all, science fiction is about the future (setting aside alternate histories for the moment), the possibilities and wonders more so than fact and long ago events. Still, there are sf connections to the topic of this novel, even libertarian sf connections. If we look at L. Neil Smith's novel, *The Gallatin Divergence*, we see his entire North American Confederacy founded on the very idea of the Whiskey Rebellion. The events surrounding this very real episode in American history, early enough in the infancy of the American Republic that George Washington himself rode out to face the rebels, tend to be forgotten, footnoted on the way to meatier matters like the Civil War and Vietnam. The fact of the matter is that the events in the early 1790s relate in many ways to the current economic crisis, and virtually every economic crisis in the United States of America. Banking was at the root of the troubles then as it is now, and amid the banking rot lies the heavy hand of the state guided by favoritism and personal connections.

Davis Liss is a well-known author of historical fiction. In earlier novels he covered such topics as the South Sea Bubble in Europe, the introduction of coffee into the old world, and political upheavals in 18th century England. In *The Whiskey Rebels* he frames the action around the people and causes of the 1794 rebellion, but sets the action a few years earlier. Liss makes the book as much about ideas as characters. There are passages in the book that feed the very fires of liberty against central government, and although the doomed outcome is familiar, one cannot help but cheer for the rebels.

Alexander Hamilton, as Secretary of the Treasury, launched his national bank in the summer of 1791, called the First Bank of the United States. Hamilton has experience with starting banks, as he launched one in New York after the Revolutionary War. This new bank was funded through the sale of stock, which led to major speculation in all the various US stock exchanges. Unlike current European nations, where stock exchanges tended to be centralized in a single city in each country (i.e. London or Paris for Great Britain and France

respectively), several exchanges existed in the United States, in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston. The stock sale alone would not fund the bank, and so Hamilton pushed his idea of increased taxes on imports of wine and spirits, as well on local distillation of whiskey, which was the primary cause of the Whiskey Rebellion.

At the center of the novel is someone not directly associated with the rebels, Captain Ethan Saunders, a former spy for Washington's army who lost his honor and status when accused of treason along with his mentor, Richard Fleet. Saunders, now a penniless drunk, has driven himself to his position through stoic despair. For money he seduces rich married women, and he almost dies when a cuckolded citizen sets upon him with armed associates. Saunders is rescued by the timely appearance of his slave, Leonidas, along with a mysterious Jew called Kyler Lavien. The latter is a ruthless agent of Alexander Hamilton, now Secretary of the Treasury. Lavien's mission involves finding a speculator called Jacob Pearson, who married Cynthia Fleet, daughter of Saunders' former mentor. Cynthia was supposed to be Saunders' bride, but when the charges of treason surfaced Saunders felt he had failed her and left.

Woven amid Saunders' tale is one narrated by Joan Maycott, who turns out to be one of the driving forces behind the rebellion, at least in early stages. Here the novel strays from historical events, but Maycott's tale is a compelling and personal tragedy that lies at the soul of the novel. Maycott had married a former soldier of the revolution. Because of birth order he cannot inherit the family farm, and must seek his fortune elsewhere. After a brief stay in New York City, the Maycotts are lured to Western Pennsylvania by the sales pitches of a speculator called William Duer. Duer advertises rich farmland for the taking outside Pittsburg in exchange for the chance that Maycott's war salary will be paid by the government. The Maycotts exchange one risk for another, only to learn their purchase was a mere lease, and a harsh one at that. However, they discover a way to make excellent whiskey, and see this as a chance to improve their lot, until Hamilton destroys their hopes yet again.

Hamilton's tax to finance his new bank fell on the production of whiskey, not revenue from its sale. When the whiskeymen heard this they were outraged. The government passed a tax

—Continued next page

2009 Prometheus Award Hall of Fame Finalists

Falling Free, a novel by Lois McMaster Bujold (1988)

Courtship Rite, a novel by Donald M. Kingsbury (1982)

"As Easy as A.B.C.," a short story by Rudyard Kipling (1912)

The Lord of the Rings, a three-volume novel by J. R. R. Tolkien (1955)

The Once and Future King, including The Book of Merlyn, a novel by T. H. White (1977)

The Golden Age, a novel by John C. Wright (2002)

which would ruin them; they make no money from their product, but use it for trade. Whiskey is their "coin of the realm." In the words of Joan Maycott, "What was immediately clear was that the tax would drive smaller distillers out of business and the only benefits would go to wealthy men back east and large-scale distillers...who had cash and could shoulder the cost. The excise had been promoted in Philadelphia as hurting none and benefiting all, but it benefited only the wealthy, and it did so upon the backs of the poor." The whiskeymen see Hamilton and his cronies get rich off the war debt, getting the American people to enrich those in government through taxes in paying off that debt. "We fight against England for oppressing us, but when we do it to ourselves, when our own government places men like Hamilton and Duer in a position to destroy the soul of the nation, do we take our ease and do nothing?" They are preaching a revolution, the right revolution. The fact that Washington raised a vast army to crush this rebellion only a few years after winning his own rebellion speaks volumes about the young Republic: power was more important than liberty, even in 1794. "This country began in a flash of brilliance, but look what has happened. The suffering of human chattel ignored by our government, a small cadre of rich men dictating our national policies. In the West, men die...as a consequence of this greed. This is not why my husband fought in the Revolution. I suspect it's not what you fought for either," Maycott explains her cause to Captain Saunders.

Everything is connected in this book. Saunders and Maycott will meet, and although Saunders is no Hamiltonian, the two strong character find each other opposed. Maycott, driven by her need for revenge after the tax enforcement efforts lead to the death of her husband, sees Saunders as dangerous, and he must be neutralized. "Do you want to stand with the virtues of the Revolution, or do you submit to Hamiltonian greed?" they ask him. At this point he cares little for either point, but when Cynthia needs his help he joins her side, even if that means he becomes an enemy of the whiskey rebels.

The rebels see Hamilton and Duer as the root of evil, destroying the noble experiment of America. They are not alone. In Philadelphia, Jeffersonian supporters who hate Hamilton see the "American project to have already been tainted by venality and corruption." Certainly in the characters of Willian Duer and his associates, that view could only be confirmed. Speculators are linked with bankers, and bankers are linked with people in power. Those in power see speculators and bankers as necessary evils, required to fund the growth of a central government based upon the ideas of British rule. Contrast this situation to the present one, where the banking crisis grew out of the ideas of certain people in power pushing agendas completely at odds with market forces, inflating the money supply to win political points. The crash at the end of the novel, as with other crashes and especially that of 2007-2009, show that government will justify any action to prevent the ill effects caused by its own meddling.

These editorial comments reflect only this reviewer's views. The novel stands alone without comparing events from 200 years ago to those of today, but I could not help but notice the similarities. As one character notes, "[m]any investors lost

everything they had, but clever men made themselves richer." Jeffersonians saw the massive speculation as a "destructive force," and that it would turn the nation into its former enemy and colonial ruler. Those in power collude with uscrupulous people, then as now. No doubt Hamilton, who admired the British system of government, would agree, though not as a form of criticism. When the Maycotts reach their small plot and realize how they were cheated and by whom, Joan concludes "that the law, the principles of the republic for which [they] had fought, had already been abandoned." When Sauders later faces down Maycott as she prepares her final thrust at the heart of Hamilton's new system, he asks her, "[w]hat if something worse comes from the chaos," Maycott replies as any libertarian radical might, that "the world will have to wait for just governance...Better anarchy than an unjust nation that masquerades as a beacon of righteousness."

The Whiskey Rebels is a superb novel, capturing the essence of its time period, the nasty and vile conjunction of commerce and government, and rife with vivid characters whose hopes and fears resonate strongly among friends of liberty.

Macdonough's Song

By Rudyard Kipling

Whether the State can loose and bind
In Heaven as well as on Earth:
If it be wiser to kill mankind
Before or after the birth—
These are matters of high concern
Where State-kept schoolmen are;
But Holy State (we have lived to learn)
Endeth in Holy War.

Whether The People be led by The Lord,
Or lured by the loudest throat:
If it be quicker to die by the sword
Or cheaper to die by vote—
These are things we have dealt with once,
(And they will not rise from their grave)
For Holy People, however it runs,
Endeth in wholly Slave.

Whatsoever, for any cause,
Seeketh to take or give,
Power above or beyond the Laws,
Suffer it not to live!
Holy State or Holy King,
Or Holy People's Will,
Have no truck with the senseless thing.
Order the guns and kill!
Saying—after—me: —

Once there was The People, Terror gave it birth; Once there was The People and it made a Hell of Earth. Earth arose and crushed it. Listen, O ye slain! Once there was The People—it shall never be again!

The Legend of Anarcho Claus:

The Secret Story of Santa's Rebel Son By Samuel Edward Konkin III and Victor Koman KoPubCo, December 2008 Reviewed by Anders Monsen

In December 1976 and December 1977, in his *New Libertarian Weekly* publication, Samuel Edward Konkin III wrote a two-part fictional fable about the unknown rebel son of Santa Claus. This little episode in libertarian fiction has been nearly impossible to find for three decades. Revised and expanded by three-time Prometheus Award-winning author Victor Koman, the tale of Anarcho Claus once more is available through Koman's publishing venture, KoPubCo, accompanied by some anarchist re-renderings of famous Christmas carols written by Konkin and Victor Koman (such as "Smashing through the State/In the Anarchist Brigade/Non-Coercive folk/Freeing all the way"—to the tune of Jingle Bells).

Little Janie White is a young girl who still believes in Santa Claus. Christmas Eve finds her desperate to stay up until midnight so that she can declare her wishes to the benevolent gift dispenser directly, as these run contrary to her own parents' strict desires for her. She instead encounters Santa's very subversive son, and finds out the truth about Santa, alternate dimensions, and Counter Economics.

Anarcho Claus, as Santa's son calls himself, teleports into

Janie's living room as she waits for the real Santa. Anarcho Claus hands her a chemistry set, something she always wanted but her parents refused as being too dangerous for a pre-teen girl. Not a problem says the black clad elf. He enlightens Janie that the real Santa uses Christmas to dump the elves waste product and re-packages it as "objects of human amusement." But the real danger, Anarcho states, is that lately old red Coat has been bringing back human ideas about government and taxation to their alternate universe, and is determined to control everything.

This control includes very watchful eyes in the sky, especially tracking his son's activities. When Anarcho's accomplices warn him of impending discovery, he transports back to his sleigh, with Janie inadvertently in tow. In a rush to return to his hideout he takes Janie with him, and she gets a tour and description of the whole operation.

The original story, written by Konkin in the mid-70s, is infused with his theory of counter economics, or agorism, where black market activity may eventually lead to the destruction of the state. Koman makes slight changes to the original text, though he does not excise some of the cultural references and slag of that era. The story remains fairly slim at short-story length. The message is one of joyous liberty. The kids are just as able as adults to understand the concept of individual liberty, and that life should not be compressed into tidy, safe little boxes. *The Legend of Anarcho Claus* is a delightful little tale, both for young and old audiences.



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