

PROMETHEUS

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1991 PROMETHEUS NOMINEES

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by D. L. Carey

Star Trek Novel #57: *The Rift*
by Peter David

The Infinity Gambit
by James P. Hogan

Fallen Angles
by Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, and
Michael Flynn

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Victor Milán

!!!AND!!!
Much Much More

Editorial

by William Alan Ritch

Welcome to another incredibly late issue of *Prometheus*. Once again its lateness is entirely my fault. No one else is to blame. Just me. Victoria Varga has called me on the phone a million times to get this damn thing out and each passing day, another problem emerged.

Now I know that you do not want to hear any lame excuses so I will keep this short. The main thing that I did wrong was to buy a house. This was my first house, and I did not correctly estimate the enormous amount of time that it takes to select, process, close, and move into the house. Actually I did correctly estimate the time that it takes to move all my stuff (since I have thousands of books), but the rest of the time just disappeared like crazy. I never would have realised...

Then there is my job. In the current economic situation, even computer geeks, such as myself, have seen jobs dry up. I have personally ridden two companies into bankruptcy, and I fear that the third is soon to come. I have been working exceptionally hard to get products out so that the company I work for them can sell them, be profitable, and pay me. Unfortunately, once the products are out, no one seems to be buying. The recession has everyone holding on to their money real tight.

Complaining about the economy to a bunch of libertarians is definitely preaching to the choir, so I will move on to the next disaster: after I moved I discovered that I

had killed another hard disk drive. I have this power over hard disk drives that is most magickal. I have killed nearly 10 hard disk drives on PCs and Macintoshes over the past 12 years. Quite a record! I followed all the rules about moving my PC: I parked the disk drive, moved the computer myself, and set the computer back up on a nice level surface. Nonetheless, it died. So I had to buy a new disk drive.

Well, I cannot say enough about having back-ups of your hard disk drive. I thought I did, but with the move, some of my floppy disks went walkabout and made the recovery difficult. Now I am prepared. I have a large cartridge tape drive for my computer, and I can backup all the files on one or two tapes. I hope that I do not have to go through this again, but I bet that I do.

Congratulations to Prometheus Award winner Michael Flynn and Hall of Fame winner F. Paul Wilson. You can read of the giving of the awards at Chicon V in Robert Shea's article, "*Hasta la Vista, Chicon*", later in this issue.

Finally, my sincerest personal apologies to J. Neil Schulman. I had a copy of an anti-gun-control article that he sent me via GENIE, but unfortunately, it disappeared with my hard disk crash. Since the issue is very long anyway, I decided that I could reschedule it for a later issue. Thanks, and I'm sorry Neil.

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Where's the Libertarianism?

A Reply to Lenda Jackson's "From the Editor"

by Victoria Varga

In 1975 I read Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* for the first time. I could hardly get through the book. Reading it sent me into acute cognitive dissonance (academic jargon for ideological discomfort). After all, I had read *Atlas Shrugged* at least 400 times. I knew very well what made a novel "moral" by Objectivist standards, and *The Dispossessed* certainly did not qualify. The book's hero, Shevek, lived in a communal society, for god's sakes, where people were intimidated into sharing from the very youngest age. People in Shevek's commune made fun of "propertarians", but the society they were making fun of was fascist: property was owned by the people, but controlled by a very authoritarian state.

A few years later I read Le Guin's book again at the suggestion of a libertarian friend. I'd long-since been kicked off the Ayn Rand Letter subscriber list for daring to disagree with Rand, by mail, on some point or another, I think it was her intolerance. *The Dispossessed* no longer made me uneasy. This time I noticed the subtitle: "An Ambiguous Utopia," and I finally began to see what Le Guin was trying to do. She had created the best anarchical-communal society possible, the "best of all possible worlds" according to the ideals of a couple of centuries worth of non-free market anarchists. Then she demonstrated to the reader that the best wasn't good enough. Un-

less Shevek had control of his work, of his property, he could not be free. *The Dispossessed* -- like the 1991 Prometheus Award winner, *In the Country of the Blind* -- reminded us that The Government is merely a symptom of the disease we must fight: people's desire to control one another by ANY means except open persuasion.

Of course many LFS members don't see *The Dispossessed* in that same light. The most striking characteristic of libertarians, after all, is their advanced ability to disagree with one another. A free-market anarchist friend of mine thinks that *Atlas Shrugged* is an elitist novel that has only one libertarian character: Ragnar Danneskjold. That's his opinion.

In her editorial, Lenda Jackson lists qualities that she has decided are required by good libertarian fiction: a successful hero/ine, an idealistic view of the human condition (proof that human action is worthwhile), and understandable, interesting prose. I wouldn't agree that all of these characteristics are necessary, or even desirable, for good fiction, though I would acknowledge that they are probably what all LFS members are looking for in good libertarian fiction.

I would like to suggest, however, that each member will find these qualities in different books, and we will often disagree about what we've found. To me, for instance, *The Dispossessed* fulfills all Lenda Jackson's requirements. It

boasts stunning (and understandable) prose. It also features a memorable hero, Shevek, who disobeys the restrictions of his culture, finding in the process that the problems of the "propertarians" are caused by a dictatorial government -- not property. Shevek then, personally, foments a revolution. The necessity and efficacy of individual action are thus extolled, and the "good guy" wins.

After listing the necessary qualities of libertarian fiction, and discussing the books that do not have these qualities, but are nominated anyway, Jackson asks: "What is the essential missing point? And who is missing it?" To me these questions have a slightly sinister tone: perhaps because I am one of those she is addressing. When LFS was being organized, many worried that non-libertarians would join and vote for statist books. As far as I can tell, our paranoia has so far been unjustified. No non-libertarians want to join, and most of the books that have created controversy between members have been nominated by people who have been active libertarians for over a decade. Perhaps they have been secret statist agitators all this time, perhaps they have worked within the movement without really understanding libertarian principles, or perhaps intelligent, freedom-loving people can disagree.

What about nominees that don't seem to be libertarian by anybody's

"Where's the Libertarianism?" (continued)

standards? How could such books possibly be nominated? First, sometimes people nominate -- or even vote for -- books before they've finished reading, or before they've done a thoughtful appraisal. A few members have admitted that they nominated books because the cover blurb, or even the title, was libertarian-sounding. Perhaps we all ought to read a little harder, and be a little more careful.

But I do not exactly share the concerns expressed in a letter by Prometheus award-winning author Victor Milán, who wonders why books by decidedly non-libertarian writers are nominated. George Orwell was not, and Ray Bradbury is not, a libertarian, but *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fahrenheit 451* are extraordinarily libertarian. The presence of these two books in our Hall of Fame helps to explain what we are all about to outsiders, perhaps encouraging them to read something less familiar on the awards list.

More to Milán's point, some of us have been guilty of nominating and recommending books that, upon reflection, seemed to be written by someone who was decidedly working against libertarianism. For instance, I would never again nominate a John Shirley novel for a Prometheus award unless he undergoes a brain transplant. He not only seems to hate libertarians, but all life, human and otherwise. The more I read his stuff, the less I want to continue doing so.

As Victor Milán suggests, I, and others who make the mistake of nominating the "wrong" books, probably confuse rebellion with libertarianism. And I do tend to get

enthusiastic about anybody who is fighting against tyranny. So from now on I promise to ask myself the following question before I nominate a title:

"After the protagonists have overthrown the dictator/alien warlord/police-state/king, will they destroy the throne or -- like John Shirley -- place their own asses upon it?"

Even with this cautionary note, I would like to request that we not be afraid of considering novels that later turn out to be "unworthy", or of an author that later turns out to be a non-, or even an anti-libertarian. The process of deciding and the arguments that result are the most interesting part of being an LFS member.

Along the Timeline

by Thomas Cron

a review of
The Shield of Time
by Poul Anderson

Tom Doherty Associates, Inc.
Hardback, \$18.95

Poul Anderson's Time Patrol series now boasts a new chapter with his novel *The Shield of Time*. This epic spans the ages of the Patrol's timeline, from ancient America to the 1990s. Every page rings with the high adventure and excitement that have been hallmarks of

Anderson's writing for decades.

Shield consists of three loosely connected novellas, all involving the legendary time-traveller Manse Everard and introducing new Patrolwoman Wanda Tamberley. The first part describes the Patrol's third battle against the superhuman Exaltationists; future-born beings out to turn history into their private amusement park. The second turns on Wanda Tamberley's torn allegiances, as she tries to reconcile the need to maintain the proper historical record with her feelings for a tribe in neolithic America. The third involves the whole Patrol as its members fight to restore the timeline that produced them after a sort of undercurrent in time changes history in the 11th century.

Poul Anderson flavors his narrative with sharp insights on the human condition. Libertarian readers will appreciate his bitter comments on government (at one point Everard reflects that war is what government does best of all) and will especially like how the actions of individuals can change the course of history or the outcomes of great struggles.

The Shield of Time is a powerful book well worth the reader's time and money; Anderson has once again proved that he can write history in SF better than most, and entertain his readers while doing it.

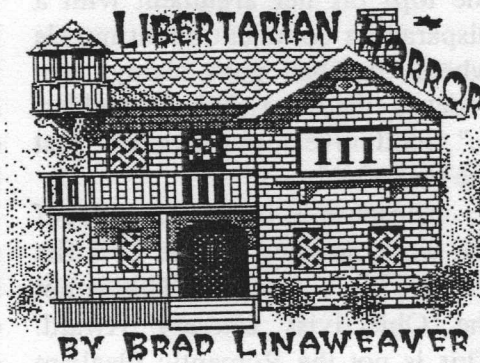
Thomas Cron is an Atlanta SF fan who specialises in Alternate Histories. He has encyclopedic knowledge of the genre.

In her editorial for the Summer 1991 issue of *Prometheus*, editor Len Jackson asks an interesting question about certain works that have been nominated for the Prometheus award: "What do people see in these dark novels? Lots of them have been nominated." Although she doesn't mention *V for Vendetta* as an example of darkness, it certainly fits her description of stories that "depict worlds with oppressive governments ..." I bring up *V* because I was hoping that it would win the award, although I believe it lost less for the darkness of its world than because it was in the graphic (i.e., comics) medium. This is not meant to disparage the winning novel.

As tales of horror are about as dark as fiction gets, it seems reasonable to answer Jackson's question in the last installment of this series. What people see in these dark novels is an imaginative commentary on current dangers. But the issue raised by Jackson has absolutely nothing to do with this. She is complaining about that old bugaboo, "Sense of Life"!

Now there has been some question as to what sort of works

Brad Linaweaver is a member of both the Science Fiction Writers of America and the Horror Writers of America. He is currently seeing what trouble he can get into in Hollywood (for example, Brad and Victor Koman are on camera several times during the *Horror Hall of Fame II*, a syndicated TV show that ran all over the country during October 1991.)



should be honored by the LFS. The award has been perceived as every bit as much a science fiction award as a libertarian award (the odd fantasy is easily included under the rubric of SF). I have always supported works of a fantastical nature for the award; but I'll be breaking with that tradition for Best Novel of 1991. The overwhelming quality of Kay Nolte Smith's *A Tale of the Wind* inspires me to sing the praises of a "mainstream" novel this time. Elsewhere in this issue, Victoria Varga reviews this masterful novel. Allow me to add my voice in support of what Varga has to say. Smith's achievement is worthy of Ayn Rand and Victor Hugo. It is the best Romantic novel in years and years. But what should be of interest to the LFS is the fact that *A Tale of the Wind* makes the strongest possible case for human liberty.

I believe that *A Tale of the Wind* deserves to win for the manner in which it combines high literary quality with a pro-freedom/anti-tyranny message. If there were an award for Romantic Literature, then Kay Nolte Smith deserves to win that award, too. But the trouble

with Len Jackson's editorial in the last issue of *Prometheus* is the suggestion that only Romantic novels should win the award. If anyone doubts that this is what she is saying, I suggest they re-read her editorial very carefully. "Libertarian Futurist" may be restricting the award too much... but nowhere does the name of this society say "Libertarian Romantic."

It is strange that I feel called upon to make this particular argument. I have been insisting that much of horror fiction is the dark side of romanticism. You can see the truth of that claim in everything from Poe and Stoker to Bradbury and King. Still, it is not necessarily true. Perhaps the greatest horror writer of our century was H.P. Lovecraft, and he crafted a consciously anti-romantic approach to fiction. (He also combined science fiction and horror in a manner so original that the reverberations are still being felt.) Still, the romantic sensibility goes fine with horror even in a Lovecraftian universe, as witness the HBO production of *Cast a Deadly Spell*. When other writers employ HPL's innovations they rarely resist the temptation of including very unLovecraftian heroes.

In her editorial, Len Jackson tells us that she likes the new movie, *The Rocketeer*. (Both *The Rocketeer* and *Cast a Deadly Spell* use period Los Angeles settings.) I like it, too. It is certainly a very romantic movie. The only SF type picture that could be said to be more ro-

Libertarian Horror III (continued)

mantic in 1991 is *Late for Dinner*, the best science fiction love story since *Time After Time*. There is also plenty of romanticism in the SF blockbuster, *Terminator 2*. Romanticism and movies go hand in hand.

Jackson says she's not sure if there's anything libertarian about *The Rocketeer*. Her instincts are sound. There isn't anything libertarian about *The Rocketeer*. She announces that later she will be discussing two other movies as well, *Die Hard* and *Tucker*. Well, from where I sit, there isn't anything libertarian about *Die Hard* either. *Tucker*, on the other hand, is one of the most libertarian movies of the past decade. I arrive at these conclusions by analyzing subject matter, theme, any speeches the characters make, and stuff like that.

I frankly admit that I allow ideological considerations to come into play when I think about a novel or movie that might deserve to be honored by a libertarian award. Many people have criticized these awards for being so up-front about political motivation. I don't think the LFS has anything to be ashamed of insofar as it is honest about honoring fiction that promotes a libertarian outlook. But Jackson proposes a standard of value (I can use the Randian phrases, too) far more narrow than what this award has been about. She writes that there is a "certain set of rules that make up a good novel. Or, for that matter, a good movie. First, there has to be an heroic main character. ..." She then goes on to say that bad novels "show us that any human action is pointless, futile and doomed to failure." Then

she tops off her argument with a disparaging comment about novels where "the bad guys always win because they're richer or luckier. ..." Good novels, she says, are "just the opposite."

Nonsense. It is true that most of the work honored by the LFS fits these rules, but not all! This is not the Objectivist Literary Award. This is not the Romantic Idealism Award. It's an award for fiction that aids the cause of libertarianism.

When I did a review of a new biography of George Orwell for *National Review*, I remembered a speech I gave at the LA WorldCon for the Hall of Fame award going to 1984 ... in 1984! Were I to hold Len Jackson's position, I'd have to suggest that we revoke the award for Orwell. When later in this article I get to a brief list of some scary novels that might deserve a Hall of Fame, I must begin the list with a novel that has already been so honored; a novel that is the ultimate example of libertarian horror: "He loved Big Brother." With those four words, Orwell gave me a chill that all the graveyard shrouds in the world couldn't make me feel. ORWELL WROTE A WARNING. He didn't let the bad guys win because he liked the idea of the bad guys winning. Orwell had lived a real life and suffered real danger when he sat down to write, in the twilight of his life, the greatest dystopian novel ever penned. He wrote the book to scare us so we wouldn't let the nightmare become any worse than it already was when he conceived his dark world.

Now it may be asking too much

to expect pampered modern-day libertarians to appreciate a man like Eric Blair, or understand why he became George Orwell. But I don't think it's asking too much for libertarians to try and use their little gray cells (as Hercule Poirot might say) so as to grasp, however lightly, the idea that works of art can serve different functions. It is possible to like vanilla ice cream without having to dislike chocolate, or positively loathe lime sherbet. It isn't necessary to write a book called *The Vanilla Ice Cream Manifesto* to decry all other flavors as unworthy because they just don't taste the same as your favorite flavor.

I'm amazed that I'm still making the same arguments in part 3 of this series that I made in part 1. It's as if my painfully simple point (it's only one point, really) is just too difficult to get across. But allow me to present a logical corollary to what has gone before in this seemingly interminable series of mine. IT IS POSSIBLE TO DO A WORK OF ROMANTIC ART THAT IS ANTI-LIBERTARIAN.

All sorts of things may be advanced with a romantic treatment. For example, Fascism may be advanced through romanticism. The National Socialists of Germany had some talented romantics in their ranks who had a sense of theater and drama that served them well when they were cranking out their propaganda. The Italian Fascists had their moments, too, but they just weren't in the same league with the German version. Poor old drab, dull, gray Soviet Totalitarianism never could get the knack of it. The communist evil was so boring that

Libertarian Horror III (continued)

it just kind of crept along long after it died and the world didn't notice it was really dead until the Kremlin made it official. The Nazis, on the other hand, required and got a spectacular send-off. We also have an industry dedicated to the proposition of keeping the Nazi images alive forever, in which regard my *Moon of Ice* is only the smallest of footnotes. I'm talking about a full-time preoccupation of the mass media.

To wrap up this endless prologue, allow me to suggest a modest thought experiment regarding *The Rocketeer*. There is a scene where the Rocketeer heroically stands by an American flag right before his takeoff to confront the evil Germans in their villainous zeppelin, which aircraft has an evil swastika on it. Now this is fine. I have no problem with this. I really don't. But the thought experiment goes like this: imagine the Rocketeer is a German, the flag he's standing by is a swastika, the aircraft is American, and there is an American flag on that aircraft. Now this next part is a little harder. Wouldn't the same scene be just as romantic if the symbols were reversed? If the answer is yes (as it must be in simple logic), then we see how romanticism does not guarantee either a pro-libertarian or even a neutral stance. If anyone answers no, then we are operating on a very different idea of what constitutes romanticism.

Enough. On to the list:

1) 1984 by George Orwell.

'nuff said.

2) *The Trial* by Franz Kafka.

I have two problems here. The first is to make a convincing argument that this is horror. When I was getting my masters degree from Rollins college, I wrote a long paper arguing that a comparison of Kafka and Lovecraft is productive. Monsters, terror, fear, paranoia ... these two guys really knew their stuff. Some academics were as upset with me on this subject as they were with my contention that *Moby Dick* is a monster story. (There has never been a sperm whale as big, as smart, as indestructible as *Moby Dick*. Just because Melville used the whale as a symbol in no way diminishes the monster aspect of the tale.) But for people who have a category they mark LITERATURE with a sign next to it reading: *Science fiction, fantasy and horror need not apply*, the idea that Kafka wrote horror is unbearable. For many romantic-loving sci-fi fans, however, Kafka is certainly horror. They use that as an argument against the poor guy. For our purposes, the issue is a libertarian one. *The Trial* is the ultimate indictment of the State's legal machinery. It's another downer where the protagonist of the story is destroyed. Sorry about that. No other work does a better job of making bureaucracy into a threat at the metaphysical level. This novel has influenced many, many, many libertarian works of science fiction. I once wrote that the TV series *The Prisoner* had the feel of an Ayn Rand hero dropped down into the center of Kafka's world of *The Trial*.

(Several of Kafka's short pieces are every bit as effective for our

purposes, among them "An Old Manuscript" and "In the Penal Colony." Alas, the LFS is strictly focused on novel-length work. This leaves out a Bradbury short story as powerful as his Hall of Fame winning novel, *Fahrenheit 451*. The story is "The Pedestrian," and it is libertarian through and through. Last time I talked about how Bradbury's "Usher II" would qualify if it happened to be a novel. There are many short stories by writers famous for horror that would make the grade. Finding novels to fit the bill is more difficult.)

3) *The Last Man on Earth*
by Richard Matheson.

Filmed twice, once with Vincent Price and once with Charlton Heston, the philosophical power of this short novel has yet to reach the screen. On one level, it's the story of the last man in a world of vampires. But Matheson goes way beyond the simple melodramatics of the situation. He demonstrates how class divisions are created and maintained in a manner every bit as striking as what Wells did in *The Time Machine*. On another level, the story has the same stark power as *Anthem* and its portrayal of a lone human ego in a world that is a collectivist nightmare.

4) *Firestarter*
by Stephen King.

Several years ago, I had the pleasure of talking to King about why his novel was receiving some votes for the Prometheus award. Although not a libertarian, he had no trouble understanding why

Libertarian Horror III (continued)

those of our point of view would embrace this particular novel. "The Shop" is his version of the most dangerous agencies of the State, the CIA and KGB sort of operations -- but for a libertarian, "The Shop" becomes a metaphor for The State, period. Rarely has a hero wreaked more havoc on the bad guys than at the climax of this riveting story. The LFS missed a chance to give it the Prometheus award so how about the Hall of Fame? This novel fits all of the Rand/Jackson criteria to boot! The little girl heroine is a fine romantic portrayal.

5) That Hideous Strength
by C. S. Lewis.

In this, the third novel of the *Perelandra* trilogy, Lewis comes the closest he ever did to writing an old-time horror thriller. When I'm asked why I so often lump science fiction, fantasy, and horror together, I like pointing to some stories that combine all three (or make it very hard to draw clear lines of demarcation). This is such a work. There are some very gruesome scenes. Fans of Ayn Rand may note strange similarities between Lewis's N.I.C.E. (National Institute for Coordinated Experiments) and the government scientists working on Project X in *Atlas Shrugged*. (I pointed this out in my afterward to J. Neil Schulman's *The Rainbow Cadenza*, a novel that includes some powerful moments of sheer terror.)

6) The Puppet Masters
by Robert A. Heinlein.

At this point, I can imagine

some shrieks of dismay and even accusations of heresy. But I have very good reasons for including this novel, the one time Heinlein dealt in horror at novel length. (Some stories in his collection, *The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag*, including the title novella, qualify as horror by my definition.) But let me use my best evidence! In *Grumbles From the Grave*, RAH expresses the following thoughts about softening the impact of his most frightening novel:

"Oh yes -- Bradbury [Walter Bradbury, science fiction editor for Doubleday] wrote to me about *The Puppet Masters*; I wrote back agreeing to make all suggested cuts and changes, but nevertheless expressing some difference of opinion as to the advisability of the revisions. In my opinion a horror story -- which this is -- is not improved commercially by watering it down. Edgar Allan Poe wrote a great many things; I own and have read all his works -- he is known for about 5% of his published writings, all sheer unadulterated horror, much of it *much* more grisly than mine...." (January 5, 1951)

All questions of grisliness aside, I can't imagine a more perfect example of science fiction horror than *The Puppet Masters*. Although never filmed, one can get an idea of how effective it would be as a movie by watching Siegel's *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. There is probably no more terrifying concept in science fiction than this one. It is the ultimate portrayal of dehumanization. As for the libertarian angle, what is more potent than the individual trying to protect his humanity against the ul-

timinate THEM?

7) The Island of Dr. Moreau
by H.G. Wells.

The first work of science fiction to use anything like genetic engineering, of all the Wells novels this owes the most to the props of the horror story. On one level, it is a fable about evolution and progress. On another level, it's about a mad scientist filling up an island paradise with monsters. As for libertarian interest, Wells was a socialist, but like George Bernard Shaw he approached socialism in the spirit of individualism. As such, the issue of rights was important to him. To the extent that libertarians are interested in debating Natural Law and rights, this novel raises profound questions. When does an animal (through a process of accelerated evolution) acquire rights? "What is the law?"

8) Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Once again, we have something that works on many levels. A Randian approach will focus on the issues of mixed premises; a religious approach will concern itself with questions of sin; a biological approach will explore territoriality and primate psychology. We're in mad scientist country again, and what was once original has become a cliché over time, but what concerns Stevenson is how far the individual may explore the myriad possibilities within himself before he violates the rights of his fellow men. As in the case of the Wells novel, this work is only of interest to libertarians to the extent that

Libertarian Horror III (continued)

they are interested in the idea of rights.

At this point, the reader has certainly noticed a preponderance of classics in my list. One thing you can say about the oldies but goodies -- they've been around long enough to qualify for the Hall of Fame. If I don't stop here, I'll include *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. I'm even tempted to suggest *The Nightland* by William Hope Hodgson. (That's no stranger than the very interesting article in *Prometheus* where Michael Grossberg made the case for Mervyn Peake.) There are passages and scenes in the work of John Wyndham, Charles Beaumont, Clive Barker, Robert Bloch, Rod Serling, Brad Strickland, Tanith Lee, Dennis Wheatley (yeah, even a Monarchist has his moments), Russell Kirk, Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen, Alan Moore, and on and on that sort of fit my weird requirements for libertarian horror. I'm so crazy that I even think Shakespeare's *Macbeth* qualifies. You've got your spooky witches, you've got your power corrupts, you've got the Orson Welles film that looks like the Wolfman is going to jump out and grab somebody by the kilt....

And so as the blood red moon slowly sinks in the black cavern of the night, I end my series on libertarian horror, hoping that others will carry the torch (and pitchfork). The novel I really wanted to promote for an award doesn't exist yet. I'd like to see an *Atlas Shrugged* of libertarian horror. The person I think most qualified to write such a masterpiece is F. Paul Wilson. After all, he's a Prometheus winner

for science fiction... but his greatest success has been in horror. There are moments in his horror novels (particularly the ones with World War II settings) that suggest what such a work might embody. But these are idle musings born of the frustration that much as I love *The Keep*, I didn't include it in my list.

If I ever do a full-length novel combining horror with a libertarian message, I'll try something that I don't believe has been done yet. I include the suggestion here in case someone has seen a version of the idea and can pass the information on to me. Ideas are a dime a dozen, especially out here in Hollywood where everyone pretends that the most trivial variations on time honored clichés are worth their weight in platinum. Well, it gives the lawyers something to do.

Here's what I'd like to do, or like to see someone do: every representative of the State is a monster of some sort, and every private citizen who doesn't cooperate with the government is fully human. As for those citizens who always do what they're told -- who try to follow all the laws and pay all their taxes -- well, they're slowly changing into monsters, too. But the change comes slowly.

Now who is going to tell me that that's not LIBERTARIAN HORROR?

*Weird plug from
Brad Linaweaver*

Writing in the August 26 issue of his *We Are the Weird* newsletter, horror film expert Joe Bob Briggs writes on how I "frequently expound in the pages of *Prometheus* on arcane topics like whether there is such a thing as 'libertarian horror.' I'm afraid it's too deep for us, but if you want to check it out...." He then gives our address and subscription info. Hoping editor Ritch will allow me to return the favor, I pass on the following:

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Joe Bob makes this amazing offer: "We will send one free sample copy to anyone in the world. Just send us the name and address." Only someone who likes horror and weird stuff is ever that generous. Romantic types who have a wonderful and heroic sense of life *never* make generous offers like that. (It is important to note that Joe Bob has his romantic side, though. The August issue has two pictures of the wonderful, beautiful, delightful porn queen Traci Lords. That's romantic enough for me.)

Viva Art, Viva Liberty
by Victoria Varga

a review of *A Tale of the Wind: A Novel of Nineteenth Century France*, by Kay Nolte Smith
Villard Books, 1991. \$22.00

From 1827 through 1897, Paris was nothing if not politically and artistically tumultuous. The 1795 French Revolution had almost immediately degenerated into a bloodbath of executions for ideology's sake. Amid this chaos and violence, terrified French conservatives of all classes demanded order at any cost. The resulting dictatorship lasted until Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815.

Again and again over the next decades, France teetered between rebellion and repression. In the art world, the ideals of the Revolution grew out of the ashes as Romanticism blossomed after 1815. The fortunes of painters and writers rose and fell as liberal and republican schools of thought fought with bland conventionality and rigid classicism. The glorification of the individual and a renewed search for the truth of the human condition became the renewed concern of novelists, playwrights, musicians, and painters.

It is in 1827, at the peak of the Romantic movement, where Kay Nolte Smith's novel, *A Tale of the Wind*, begins. Here she assembles a cast of characters that includes desperate and filthy rag-pickers and the highest bourgeoisie. The story, centered in the world of the theatre, where the low and the high of society often met, weaves through the lives of several generations of Parisians as many citizens attempt to

make real the cry of "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité." The world of fictitious characters intertwines with the lives and works of the great artists of the time: Victor Hugo, Henri Matisse, Henrik Ibsen and Edmond Rostand, author of the 1897 *Cyrano de Bergerac*, for example.

Ms. Smith's greatest achievement is to demonstrate for the reader the revolutionary effect of great art on the world, and she could not have picked a more compelling setting. This was a period, after all, when the public was fully aware that art and ideas are connected, and that the connection effects the lives and dreams of every man, woman and child. While reading this novel, one can only feel regret that s/he was not alive during such a time.

But *A Tale of the Wind* is a joy to read for several other reasons. Smith's sympathetic characters demonstrate a point of view not often represented: they desire liberty, but are too devoted to the sanctity of individual rights to desire it at any cost: economic and political freedom must be secured for all, not just a select group of ideologues. Several characters feel horror at, and speak against, the brutal suppression of the Paris Commune even though they do not share the ideology, or condone the savage tactics, of the communists that are suppressed.

The remarkably strong and

memorable personalities that populate this book are also very human. They are sometimes confused and often incorrect about the actions that they take. Many, however, not only attempt to live within the boundaries of their own personal moral code, but break through the strictures of convention to create a code that is interesting and compelling to us in the next century.

This is Kay Nolte Smith's best novel so far. Her voice is strong and her own. She, too, has broken from the moral and stylistic strictures of her literary mentor, Ayn Rand. She gives us the world as it is, in its entirety, even as she shows us a glimpse of how it might be. Her very human characters know darkness and light, pain and beauty, good and evil. They recognize, and exist within, what Smith calls a "harmony of opposites." One painter, Marc Vollard, worries about his attraction for the "dark, sad streak" of his lover's poetry. "In his own work," he thought, "he was mesmerized by light and its brilliance; why should he find his heart stirred by verbal images of night and misery and decay?" His lover believes that they are "two opposing and uncomplimentary halves of a single being...." Smith, unlike Rand, is able to believe that this is possible in a good man, and is able to acknowledge the varieties of experience necessary to be fully human.

HASTA LA VISTA, CHICON

A Report on the 49th World Science Fiction Convention

by Bob Shea

A Question of Legitimacy

During the week leading up to Chicon V, I discovered to my disappointment that many friends with whom I'd spent time at my two previous WorldCons -- Chicago in 1982 and Atlanta in 1986 -- were not coming to this one, mostly because money was short. No Discordian Business Meeting? No Libertarian Writers' Mafia? Alas! A lack!

So I was glad that I'd signed up for a lot of program events in the hope that if the con made money I'd be reimbursed the \$115 I paid for membership. Now I saw another advantage in being fully booked: I wouldn't be wandering around at loose ends all the time and would have a way of meeting people apart from being introduced to friends of friends or -- shudder! -- talking to total strangers.

The week of the convention I got a call from Bill Ritch, one of the editors of *Prometheus*, the newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society. Since I live in the Chicago area, he asked me to make whatever phone calls might be necessary to arrange a time and place at the convention for the LFS to present the *Prometheus* and the Hall of Fame awards.

Every year since 1982 -- Chicon IV -- the two LFS awards have been presented at the World Science Fiction Convention. Every

year there's been some kind of screwup. It has crossed the minds of LFS members that this is, as Josef Stalin used to say, "no accident."

Bill had previously called the con committee with inconclusive results. Brad Linaweaver had written them an unofficial "to whom it may concern" letter urging them not to give the LFS the same short shrift previous con committees had. Brad was worried that his letter might have provoked hostility among the committee members, but my guess was that it had simply slipped through some bureaucratic crack.

I began making phone calls. I really got worried when I talked to one committee member who said she'd never heard of the Libertarian Futurist Society and doubted its "legitimacy", and anyway everything was all set and absolutely carved in granite and why hadn't we gotten in touch with the con committee earlier? Fortunately, she relented from this hard-line stance just enough to mention a few other names I could call.

On Thursday I talked about the awards to one K.T. FitzSimmons. She said she'd do what she could, but managed to sound icy and spacey at the same time.

The Libertarian Party was having its convention in Chicago over the Labor Day weekend, so I called Carol Low, the editor of the libertarian magazine *Nomos*, who said

she was sure the LP would welcome our award ceremony. I hoped we could stick to tradition and do it at the SF con, but it was comforting to have an alternative.

Political Correctness, Threat or Menace?

The Hyatt Regency overlooks the south bank of the Chicago River, just where Lake Michigan flows into the river, this being one of the Engineering Wonders of the Midwest. A block or so from the hotel lines of brass plaques on the sidewalk mark the site of Fort Dearborn, built in 1804 in the midst of the original log cabin settlement of traders and farmers known as Checagou. I parked in an underground garage near the hotel.

At the convention registration desk I picked up my badge, which had a clever, useful feature pasted on the back, a computer printout of my schedule, listing times and places.

I checked the Voodoo Message Board, one of the services that Filthy Pierre, aka Erwin Strauss, provides at WorldCons. All con members are listed on bulletin boards. If there's a red sticker next to your name, it means there is a message for you filed alphabetically in one of the boxes by the bulletin boards. Pins formerly were used instead of stickers, whence the name "Voodoo". I found a message for me -- from Filthy Pierre him-

Hasta la Vista, Chicon (continued)

self, suggesting that we meet at a later time near the message board.

I took the elevator to Bill Ritch's floor. Bill had also talked to K.T. FitzSimmons, who had not yet been able to find a room assignment for the LFS. Bill and I went to a panel on "Censorship from the Left", one of a number of panels planned to deal with hostile pressures on SF, fantasy and gaming.

The first speaker at this panel was John Norman, author of the oft-deplored, much-read *Gor* novels. His example of censorship was an editor who had declared that he would not even look at a manuscript bearing the name "John Norman". He ended his remarks with a resounding call to arms. The panel's moderator, Michael Flynn, a Prometheus Award candidate, responded with a dry, "Kawabunga!"

The other panelists gave similar accounts of encounters with what have come to be called "politically correct" views. I tended to sympathize with the causes the panelists represented but the fact was nobody could point to an instance of censorship in the strict sense of the word -- the use of force to prevent something from being published or distributed. The panel left me feeling that the Left -- whatever that term might mean -- is nowhere near as big a danger to freedom of expression as authoritarian conservatives, Fundamentalist Christians and George "Ban Flag-Burning" Bush.

Publish or Perish

In the Pocket Program an "m" next to a panelist's name meant that

person was expected to be moderator. On Friday, August 30th, I discovered, I was "m" for the "Cross-Bred Genre Writers" panel. The other panelists were Nancy Atherton, Ginnie Dazzo, Don Keller, John Maddox Roberts and Lillian Stewart Carl. At the last minute we added literary agent Donald Maass, who had endeared himself to me before I met him with an article in *Science Fiction Chronicle* entitled "Who'll Get Rich Writing Fiction in the '90s?"

I didn't think this panel would generate much controversy, but we did get an argument going over whether genres per se are a Good Thing or a Bad Thing. The conclusion seemed to be that they are bad for writers who feel imprisoned by them and good for writers who enjoy them (as I enjoy space opera, for example) or for writers who write whatever they feel like writing.

A SFWA meeting was scheduled right after the panel, and when I walked in they were arguing over something I'd always wondered about -- whether people like me really belong in SFWA. People like me being those who've somehow gotten enough SF into print to qualify for active membership but haven't published any SF lately.

Under the current rules, originally proposed by Robert Heinlein, as long as one keeps paying dues (currently \$60 a year for active members), once an active member, always an active member. Jerry Pournelle, who seems to be the point man for this particular movement, wants the rules changed so that to retain active membership status one would have to publish an

SF novel once every three years or three short stories a year. Pournelle, who defended this proposal with vehemence and bluster, seems worried that SFWA will be taken over by amateurish neophytes whose policies would run counter to the interests of the practicing pros.

I've always felt grateful that SFWA granted me active membership, and as long as I don't write more science fiction I intend to hold my peace about its policies. Still, I resent Pournelle's implication that people who don't publish SF regularly are, *ipso facto*, fools who would run the organization into the ground, and I jolly well won't vote for a rule change that would deprive me of the right to vote from then on.

In the early evening I met Filthy Pierre, who sat with his breath-powered keyboard in his lap in the big hallway near the Voodoo Message Board. Filthy said that Timothy Leary had showed up on Thursday to register as a participant and had been asked to prove that he really was Timothy Leary. Probably by the same person who never heard of the Libertarian Futurists.

Bill Ritch and I approached K.T. FitzSimmons yet again; we actually met her in person this time. She finally came through with a slot for the LFS award: Sunday night at 6. Bill hurried off to get fliers printed.

I listened to some of the guest of honor speeches but around 8:30 was seized by a powerful urge to eat and left before Hal Clement spoke. I had supper in a *Vie de France* in the underground tunnels

Hasta la Vista, Chicon (continued)

that radiate out from the Hyatt like tree roots. A woman at the next table had the nerve to -- shudder! -- speak to a total stranger asking me if I was having a good time and showing me a T-shirt she'd bought in the dealer's room depicting Arnold Schwarzenegger as the shotgun-wielding *Terminator 2*, with the legend, "*Hasta la vista, Baby.*"

Back at the Hyatt I went with Martin Morse Wooster to the *Fos-fax* party. Martin told me the editors had chosen to stop publishing one correspondent's letters because a number of other readers found them offensive. Seems he had murdered his girlfriend and was bragging about it. This had given rise to a pseudo-censorship controversy. I left with three recent issues.

At home Mike was waiting for me, having driven all the way home from Indiana State University in Terre Haute in his well-worn '84 Ford Tempo. I'd been worrying about him in the back of my mind all afternoon. A downer for me this weekend was that he'd be home but I wouldn't be able to spend much time with him. Mike and I had gone together to Confederation, and now I sat up for a couple of hours filling him in on Chicon.

Sound, Wholesome Americans

Saturday morning in the Green Room, where participants hung out between gigs, I talked with John Maddox Roberts about his *S.P.Q.R.* series of historical mysteries set in ancient Rome. He tries to write twenty pages a day, doesn't start till the deadline is almost upon him, writes the whole novel in

about two months and does little or no rewriting. Since it has been taking me about two years to finish a novel, I am envious.

That afternoon I was on a panel entitled "High Weirdness Update" with Philip José Farmer, Timothy Leary and Bob Wilson. Again I had that "m" next to my name, and I welcomed it because I expected that the other panelists would be talking about their encounters with consciousness-expanding software, brain machines and virtual reality, whereas I've just been sitting home writing books. It was scheduled for Grand Ballroom A, the largest of the conference rooms, and people told me they expected it to be the best attended of any of the panels.

Wilson and Leary were in town primarily to speak at the Libertarian Party convention, which was happening several blocks away at the Marriott, and I wondered how aware they were that they were expected at the science fiction convention. I figured Farmer would show up, since I was told he'd asked to be on the panel. And another last minute addition to the panel at his request was Jim Frenkel, editor and erstwhile publisher, who had long ago worked on *Illuminatus!* and whose Bluejay Books had published two of Wilson's *Historical Illuminati Chronicles*. But the panel might consist only of me with no weirdness to talk about and Frenkel and Farmer, whose weirdnesses were an unknown quantity to me.

So I was relieved to see Bob Wilson standing by the door to Grand Ballroom A. We hugged each other and he told me Leary, who is about 70 years old, had

tired himself out the day before and might or might not come.

The room was packed, with people standing in the back. At 10 after 2 Leary still had not showed up. I decided to start the panel and announced that I would introduce each panelist with a superlative. I called Farmer "the best science fiction writer in America" and Frenkel "the bravest editor of all time." As I was about to turn to Wilson a voice from the rear shouted, "Dr. Leary is coming!" and a moment later another voice called, "Dr. Leary is here!"

Leary strode up the center aisle and by the time he had reached his seat everyone was standing, clapping and cheering.

I introduced Leary as "the most important and revolutionary figure of the twentieth century," which he took with becoming modesty, and finally Wilson simply as "a genius."

Weirdness, as expounded by the panelists, turned out to be mostly their observations of domestic and international politics. Wilson declared that he was not anybody's idea of a sound, wholesome American. Farmer said, "I am a sound, wholesome American. I never met anybody else who was, so that makes me the standard."

Leary was full of cheerful energy and kept turning to make warm eye contact with the other panelists as he talked. In his view the USSR was saved from a hard-line Communist takeover by Russian youth, inspired in part by the ideas of the counter-culture that are still reverberating around the world. The three young men killed trying to stop armored vehicles menacing

Hasta la Vista, Chicon (continued)

the Russian Parliament were hippies, he declared, and one of them, Ilya Kreshevsky, had spent his life questioning authority.

After the panel Wilson's fans swarmed around him, and he asked me if we couldn't somehow disappear. I didn't feel critical of him for that; once when overwhelmed by too many admirers Jesus himself vanished. We ducked through a back door that led to the empty hall next door. Thence, moving fast, we headed for Stetson's, a bar in the hotel, where we raised and lowered a few pints of Guinness's and had good talk for a couple of hours.

I called home and Mike said that Frank Robinson had left a message for me. I called Frank in his room and we made a date for dinner. This was unexpected good luck; at the last two WorldCons I'd spent more time trying to find Frank than I had talking with him.

I went down to the Dealer's Room and bought a "*Hasta la vista*" T-shirt for Michael, but couldn't find a copy of Frank's new novel *The Dark Beyond the Stars*, which I'd hoped to have him autograph for me. One dealer who'd sold all her copies said she wished she had another fifty. I reported this to Frank, and he was gratified but said Tor just hadn't printed enough copies. He said they'd already had to go back for a second printing. A writer doesn't want his book to be sold out, he wants it to be selling out.

Frank and I and two friends of his had dinner in the Swissotel Hotel, a small luxury hotel connected to the Hyatt by underground passageways. Everywhere in the Swissotel, merry folksy Swiss music

plays constantly. After an hour or so you start seeing cuckoos.

We had a good couple of hours talk, among other topics reminiscing about the Chicago pubic wars, when Frank was the *Playboy* Advisor and one of his advisees was his friend, the editor of *Gallery*, whose office was right across the street.

"Whatever the fuck you want!"

Sunday I sat in the green room with A.J. and Edna Budrys and Bob Silverberg. Another writer at the table talked about his study of French science fiction, which I gather is in bad shape, partly because French publishers are interested only in American SF and partly because the French stuff is so badly written. These factors, it would seem, are mutually reinforcing. It made me very sad to hear that Isaac Asimov is feeling so poorly these days that he isn't writing, which is like hearing that Niagara Falls has dried up.

I had lunch with Jeanne Cavellos, the editor responsible for Dell's science fiction line, which a few years ago was non-existent except for *Illuminatus!* and is now gradually expanding. She said *Illuminatus!* continues to sell briskly -- I wonder whether that would make me a "real" SF writer by Pournelle's standards -- and they'd like to see Wilson and me work together again. I told her that seemed like a good idea to me, provided the two of us can get our other commitments out of the way.

After lunch I all but ran, being a little late, to the Marriott for yet another panel with Timothy Leary and Wilson and this time Carl

Oglesby, one of the founders of Students for a Democratic Society, the most prominent revolutionary organization of the '60s, on "From the '60s to the '90s." I needn't have hurried; when I got there I found the panel hadn't started and Wilson was chuckling because Don Meinshausen, organizer of the event, had been told it couldn't take place unless he produced a paper authorizing it, which he was having trouble locating.

"Don has to come up with a magic piece of paper or we can't have the panel," Wilson said. "Typical of the Libertarian Party."

Meinshausen found the magic paper, and we trooped into a huge hall in which, a short time earlier, the Libertarians had nominated their Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates. The state placards were still up, and workmen were taking everything apart, stacking folding chairs, sliding movable walls into place, shouting at each other over intercoms. In the midst of this Carl Oglesby talked about his peregrinations in the '60s that had led him from liberal Democratic politics to S.D.S., ending with his conviction that in the '90s the Libertarian Party represented S.D.S. grown up and, he hoped, more powerful. Wilson, when his turn came, congratulated Oglesby on giving his talk in the midst of something like an Ionesco play, with the set being torn apart even as the actors carried on.

I reminisced about how I'd discovered the counterculture as editor of *Cavalier* back in the '60s and made *Cavalier* the only girlie magazine to publish articles by Leary and Wilson and about Ogles-

Hasta la Vista, Chicon (continued)

by's early S.D.S.

After our initial presentations, Leary jumped up to respond to a hostile-sounding question: "Now that women have been liberated from being women, can they be liberated to be women?" Leary told about a conference he attended in Barcelona where nine languages were spoken. A French Marxist woman asked sarcastically, "Dr. Leary, now that you have liberated us, what should we do?" and he answered, "Whatever the fuck you want!" which had the nine translators in their glass booths looking at each other in dismay.

I'd seen Leary before but never really met him, and appreciated being able to observe him close up. He displays great charm, energy and quick wit, apparently not at all depleted by his experimentation with drugs or his strenuous life.

Back at Chicon, we Libertarian Futurists gathered at 6 p.m. in the assigned room for the awards ceremony. Suddenly a woman in a black evening dress appeared and demanded that we vacate the room at once. She needed it -- right now -- for the Chesley Awards, the major honors for SF artists.

The conspiracy or curse or whatever it was had struck the LFS again! On the program the Chesley Awards were scheduled for 7:30, but they expected to have a cocktail reception before the ceremony, and they wanted time to set up the bar and stuff before the reception. We told the Chesley lady we only needed 15 minutes and talked her into going away.

Bill Ritch presented the Hall of Fame Award to a representative of F. Paul Wilson for *An Enemy of the*

State and I presented the Prometheus Award to Michael Flynn for *The Kingdom of the Blind*. I said that Flynn's novel dealt with a conflict between free will and historical determinism, and in his acceptance he said he was glad to finally learn what the novel was about.

The Chesley lady interrupted these proceedings after only ten minutes, waving her arms and screeching, but one of our guys flew at her, waving his arms and screeching, and drove her out of the room. We finished the ceremony and dispersed as promised.

Martin Morse Wooster had been spreading the word that Golden Apans and their friends would meet after the LFS awards to have dinner together. Eleven of us got together, Bill, Carol, Cosmo, Dave, James, Jeff, Martin, Nancy, Tom, T Rev and me. As often seems to happen with such large groups, we seemed to spend more time hunting for a place that could accommodate us than we did eating. We ended up in the Hot Dog That Ate Chicago, a fast-food joint decorated in a humorous take-off on the style of the '50s.

I finished up the evening sitting in a circle on the carpet on a lower level of the hotel. T Rev told us about his ideas of God, that he is an audience for whom we perform, or perhaps a performance artist himself. A fellow who sounded suspiciously like an Objectivist told me he had no trouble getting himself to do anything his reason told him he should do; he had lost 150 pounds five years ago and was keeping it off without difficulty. I suggested he write a book -- *The*

Ayn Rand Diet.

The Cuckoo's Nest

The day started with a heart-breaker. Last spring I'd been invited to VolgaCon in Volgograd, USSR; however, the Russian organizers could not pay my plane fare. I wrote back that I would come if it turned out I could afford the transportation. I asked a bunch of questions about what they'd be wanting me to do when I got there. My earnings were poor over the summer, and I let VolgaCon's July 15th deadline for informing them on specific travel plans go by. And they didn't respond to my questions. On August 25th I wrote them a letter telling them that very regretfully I wasn't coming. Monday morning, September 2nd, a woman on the VolgaCon committee called to find out when I'd be arriving -- having naturally enough not yet received my letter -- and I had to break the news to her that I wasn't coming. I felt terrible because I'd disappointed the Russian fans and because I'd missed what would have been, especially at this moment in history, a marvelous experience.

That day my panel was "SF and Fantasy on the Live Theatre Stage." The other panelists were Ann Chancellor, Carol Severance, Gretchen Van Dorn, Grant Carington, and a scholar who knew a lot about the many science fiction plays of the nineteenth century but whose name got away from me. I talked about the two stage productions of *Illuminatus!* Everyone seemed to agree that you can't do science fiction and fantasy special

Hasta la Vista, Chicon (continued)

effects convincingly on the stage these days, but should rely on your imagination and ingenuity to come up with exciting gimmicks that suggest special effects. And trust the imagination of the audience to help you.

My last event was a reading from my own stuff, scheduled for 3 p.m., in the Geneve Room, located between two floors in the Swissotel Hotel. Apparently the only access was a flight of iron stairs that ran past a lot of pipes and wheels and things in a space that looked like the innards of a giant steam-driven cuckoo clock. Merry, folksy Swiss music played constantly.

Considering the obscure location, my not being as well known to the con-goers as many other writers, and the timing -- the afternoon of the last day of the convention -- I fully expected to read to an empty room. As it turned out about eight people found their way to me, and I considered myself fortunate. I read the scene from *Illuminatus!* in which Otto Waterhouse kills Milo Flanagan and the scene from *Shaman* in which the band rejects White Bear's vision and decides to raise the war whoop.

After that L. Sprague de Camp came to read. Despite the remote location and the late hour, he drew a pretty big crowd, deservedly so. De Camp's story was about time travel and dinosaurs. My love of science fiction began with an interest in dinosaurs.

And with that I bade *hasta la vista* to Chicon V. We hadn't had to take to the streets to present the LFS awards, and Wilson and Leary had showed up for the High Weirdness panel. I had spent pleasant

hours with Bob Wilson and with Frank Robinson in the same day, had enjoyed myself, hadn't worried too much and even -- shudder! -- had talked to total strangers.

Indeed do many things come to pass, but generally not the things you expect.

Romancing the Mind
by Brad Linaweaver

Another review of *A Tale of the Wind* by Kay Nolte Smith.

This review was originally scheduled for *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* but was pulled.

A Tale of the Wind is a new novel written in the spirit of the great Romantic novels of the Nineteenth century. Appropriately, its setting is Nineteenth century France and Victor Hugo appears as a background figure. In one sense, Ms. Smith is writing a tribute to Hugo's own works, particularly *The Man Who Laughs* and *Les Misérables*. But this is no literary stunt of appeal only to antiquarians. Just as the very successful musical version of *Les Misérables* addressed contemporary concerns, so too does *A Tale of the Wind*.

The novel is divided into three parts, covering a span of time from 1827 to 1885. The primary setting is Paris. Ms. Smith moves effortlessly from the world of the theatre to the drawing rooms of the most successful families of the bourgeoisie. She is at her best in detailing

the nature of class tensions; and her plot allows her to address every possible variation on the subject of hypocrisy. Jeanne, the daughter of a ragpicker, becomes pregnant by the idealistic son of a wealthy business family. In the moment of crisis, he fails her. The novel follows her adventures, the adventures of her daughter, and finally of her granddaughter.

Tying it all together is the best realized character of Ms. Smith's six novels, Nandou the dwarf. He is a hero in all the best senses of the word. It is through his eyes that we see a turbulent period of history and understand what inspired men and women to risk their lives in the cause of freedom. Nandou knows that ideas matter, and that true beauty is to be found in the mind. His love is the driving force behind an unforgettable story.

LETTERS

Victor Milán
September 10th 1991

Dear Tory,

Thanks for the letter. Go ahead and publish my addresses on both services; SFWA already pubbed my CompuServe address, and anyone on either service can find me in the Membership Directories.

At a flat rate of five bucks a month -- provided you don't stray out of the so-called Star or Basic Services -- GENie's hard to beat, though it's a little clunkier to use than CompuServe -- CIS as it's officially abbreviated, CI\$ as users universally do it. Anybody using GENie should get hold of the free proprietary software ALADDIN, which helps you get around GENie and saves you much time -- and money, especially if you stray outside the Basic Services.

GENie's SF roundtable -- SFRT is the address, naturally enough -- is among the Basic Services, which means you can read and leave messages on the bulletin board to your heart's content for nothing. Among other things we have a private Wild Cards Category where the WC mafia can discuss current and projected schemes, plus monitor the progress of the Wild Cards motion picture (contracts signed, treatment pretty much accepted, and it looks as if George and Melinda are going to get to go ahead with the script. Yay!)

Inasmuch as the SFRT sysops are so accommodating, it seems to me that it'd be possible to get them

to give us a Prometheus or LFS Category to play around in, comment on books, recommend books (or shitcan them, whatever), that sorta thing. The message boards are neat -- also addictive, which makes it fortunate the RT's covered by the monthly fee.

Melinda is online. Her GENie address is MELINDA.

One place worth looking into is JERRY or JERRYYP -- yes, I'm very much afraid it's the Jerry Pournelle Roundtable. I mean, I know Jerry's a pill, but he's a fairly consistent libertarian (Larry's the authoritarian one; Jerry's just loud), and when he doesn't have his Asshole Cap on I find myself in frequent agreement with what he says. It seems to be the closest thing to a libertarian watering-hole on-line (Neil Schulman hangs out there) -- which I suppose is compelling evidence of the need for a libertarian CAT on SFRT.

I was very impressed by the James Hogan piece on the space program; in fact, it's something that might be productive to upload so that non-LFSers can read it, maybe onto the JERRY RT on GENie. Is that James P. Hogan, the SF writer, or is it James sans P. Hogan who's somebody else? Either way, he did a good job. [*Yes, that is the James P. Hogan -- editor Bill*]

I gather that I didn't win the Prometheus. I'm not really cut up about it. I seem to be in the minority on this, but I think SAMURAI's a better book than SHOGUN, as well as more explicitly libertarian

(I don't know how it could've been any more libertarian without my repeating "Fuck the State!" on every page, Neal Wilgus' knock notwithstanding). I'd have been happy and honored to accept had I won, but I don't necessarily think I deserved it.

I kinda suspect from the editorial in the last newsletter that *V for Vendetta* won. I haven't yet seen it. If it lived up to *Watchmen* it was certainly of high enough quality -- *Watchmen* was overrated, but still quite good. And if the message was as consistently anarchistic as the reviews I've seen indicate, hooray. *Watchmen*, on the other hand, ended with a sort of paean to World Government, which makes me wonder if people aren't blinded by the widespread acceptance of Alan Moore and trying to jump on the bandwagon -- rather, I suppose, imagine that he's on our bandwagon.

Which brings up a problem that's bugged me for a while, and which was addressed by another editorial: how do some of these things get nominated for the Prometheus? I've never read anything by S.M. Stirling, but I know he is not a libertarian -- he says so in print. I have read David Brin, Walter Jon Williams, and John Shirley. Brin's a pretty explicit totalitarian, Walter is explicitly not a libertarian, and Shirley is a vehement and indeed vicious foe of libertarianism. Yet all were recommended for the Prometheus.

I think the reason may be their

Letters (continued)

popularity, or perhaps trendiness is a better word. Libertarians are a pretty fringe group, and anything that smacks of acceptance naturally quickens our little hearts. Brin's a big bestseller, Williams and Shirley were epiphenomenal to the Cyberpunk craze, now defunct.

Perhaps the element of rebellion in books such as *The Uplift War* and *Eclipse* misleads people. *Uplift* is ultimately about the revolt of the fascist Terragens against the Psychedelic Nazi Galactics; Mussolini versus Hitler, to remove it from an SF context. Cyberpunk, meanwhile, is not about the rejection of authority; it's a plaint that the jackboot is on the wrong foot. Shirley is no more a rebel than George Bush; he's merely pissed off that he's not Emperor of the World.

Now, in this era of Politically Correct witch-hunting, it's a little unnerving to be putting in a plug for doctrinal purity. But the Prometheus does not exist simply to extol good writing; there are already plenty of awards that do that, starting at the top with the Hugo and Nebula. It was my understanding, anyway, that the Prometheus was meant to applaud works which were both good and libertarian. Rather than trying to coat-tail whoever's got his picture in *Locus* this week, shouldn't we concentrate on recognizing works that serve the cause of liberty?

I thought the parody was more than somewhat slightly on the limp side. Satirizing satire is so intrinsically self-defeating that it's not really worth trying.

There's something else here, too. It's 1991, and even though

communism is vanishing with an abruptness that shames the dinosaurs, other collectivist shams and scams -- the Greens, "Third Way" social democracy, Ravi Batri communitarianism -- are crowding forward to fill the perceived "power vacuum." The US government, meanwhile, has never been so swollenly, arrogantly powerful -- or intrusive. The media have never been so explicitly hostile to libertarian ideas. Even the bold P.J. O'Rourke, America's best-known near-libertarian writer, cannot bring himself openly to condemn the DEA, America's Securitate, instead taking covert stabs at it while flagellating himself for lack of civic discipline.

All of which is to say, we've won a battle, against communism, but that masks the fact that we've never been closer to losing the war. Is this really a time to devote half your magazine to dumping on one of the best known works of libertarian SF? Where's the point? Do we believe that by making one of us look small, we magnify the rest of us?

Ah, well. After a screed this lengthy, you probably are glad I'm such a terrible correspondent, and devoutly hope I'll return to my negligent ways. Actually, it took me several years to get worked up to this outpouring, so you're mostly out of danger.

Hope to see you -- and others -- on-line. It really is a hoot, and might even prove constructive. It will almost certainly make LFS more participatory. (All right, it's lame. So sue me.)

Best,
Victor Milán

Libertarians on GEnie

Victor Koman	V.KOMAN
William Alan Ritch	W.RITCH
J. Neil Schulman	SOFTSERV
Melinda Snodgrass	MELINDA
James L. Sutherland	J.SUTHERLA10
Victoria Varga	V.VARGA

This list is, by no means, complete. If you would like to add your name to this list, please write us at the news letter. If there other addresses (CompuServe, BIX, Internet, etc., I will be happy to post them also.)

To join GEnie, call
1-800-638-9636.

The Jerry Pournelle Round
table is page 245.

Electronic Frontier
Foundation

Freedom of speech and privacy is continually violated by the government when the government clamps down on "computer crime". There is an organisation fighting them:

Electronic Frontier Foundation
One Cambridge Center
Suite 300
Cambridge, MA 02142
phone: 617-577-1385
Internet: eff@well.sf.ca.us

LFS HALL OF FAME NOMINEES

The Hunt for Red October by Tom Clancy

Tai-Pan by James Clavell

Cash McCall by Cameron Hawley

Time Will Run Back by Henry Hazlitt

Courtship Rite by Donald Kingsbury

The Dispossessed by Ursula K. Le Guin

This Perfect Day by Ira Levin

Circus World by Barry Longyear

Oath of Fealty by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

A Time of Changes by Robert Silverberg

The Venus Belt by L. Neil Smith

The Nagasaki Vector by L. Neil Smith

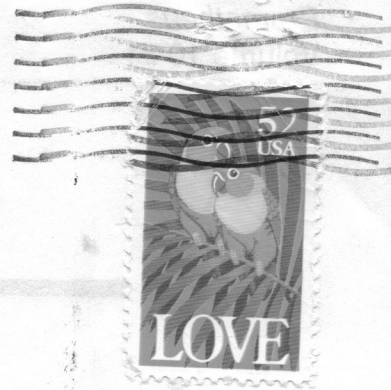
Tom Paine Maru by L. Neil Smith

East of Eden by John Steinbeck

Emphyrio by Jack Vance

Hardwired by Walter Jon Williams

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