

PROMETHEUS

The Journal of the Libertarian Futurist Society

Vol. 12, No. 3

Summer 1994

Writ in water or gold?

New books reviewed

When John Keats penned his own bitter epitaph in 1822, saying that "here lies one whose name was writ in water" he could not have foreseen the truer future. Far from a fading name, washed away by the tides of history, his memory is etched in literary and popular minds as a tragic but giant Romantic figure and poet.

When we glance at the novels of speculative fiction of 1994 there is no way to predict them as flash in the pans or benchmarks of brilliance. The books reviewed below, however, are remarkable enough in many ways to be remembered at year's end and beyond.

Each year the Libertarian Futurist Society recognizes outstanding works of fiction that contribute to our understanding of liberty and human action. Since 1982 the annual Prometheus Award has noted such works with stamp

of approval, a gold coin. In this issue the finalists for 1994 are reviewed.

The following two reviews draw attention to the beginning of this annual process of selection, nomination and final vote that will culminate in the 1995 Prometheus Award for best novel of 1994.

The Select, F. Paul Wilson
(Morrow, \$22.00, 335 pages)

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

For more than a decade F. Paul Wilson has crafted a significant role and body of work as a horror writer. Since his switch from science fiction to horror in the early 1980s, the critical acclaim within the horror field has worked to build his reputation toward the threshold of genuine fame and general recognition.

Many of Wilson's horror novels reached the general market as paperbacks after first going through the specialty press in expensive and finely printed hardcover editions. In 1984 Whispers Press published the first Repairman Jack novel, *The Tomb*.

Dark Harvest, one of the foremost small press publishers of the last decade, published *Reborn*, *Reprisal*, and *Nightworld*, a trilogy that loosely links with *The Tomb*, *The Keep*, and *The Touch* to form a six volume epic called The Adversary Cycle. Dark Harvest also in 1991 published the erotic thriller *Sibs*,

Inside

What if? — page 4

L. Neil Smith on books, guns, and threatened rights.

Prometheus Award finalists — page 6

Nancy Kress, Charles Platt, and others.

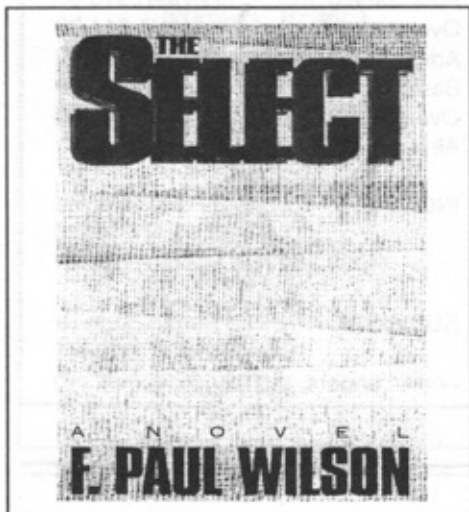
Timeless truths — page 7

Hall of Fame finalists.

Future attractions

Next issue is of *Prometheus* is planned for October with reviews of new fiction, awards information, and convention reports.

Projected for future issues are more stories on the government and cyberspace, Hall of Fame previews and reviews, interviews, and cutting edge news on libertarian authors.



just this May released in mass-market paperback.

Wilson's first mass-market hardcover since 1986's *The Touch*, focuses like that novel on a medical theme. In contrast to the mystical overtones of *The Touch*, the 1994 novel *The Select* is almost mainstream. A true medical thriller it is one of his best works to date: tense, well-crafted and decidedly libertarian in tone and expression. Showing his versatility as a writer, Wilson delves into the human heart and mind to find scary themes while stretching the horror label.

— Continued on page 3

Fragments of a commentary

Anders Monsen

Prometheus unbound

Despite rumors of an untimely demise, the Libertarian Futurist Society is alive and well and taking medication, working out, pumping Promethean iron. It is a tremendous accomplishment for a voluntary organization that recognizes libertarian science fiction to consistently have accomplished that mission for more than a decade.

Basketball players often talk about individuals stepping up when star players experience their occasional bad games. This is not a noble gesture, but a chance to do something for the team and themselves. In this case, I am the person stepping up, hoping to make a difference as editor. However, as the Genie in Aladdin mentions, there are certain provisos, addendas, and quid pro quos.

A newsletter such as *Prometheus* derives its life-blood from reviews and referrals of works of libertarian fiction. Write and send in your reviews either to me via monopoly mail or e-mail, or the same way to Victoria Varga, who'll send them on to me. I have included her e-mail address in this issue and from now on for any inquiries.

Aside from reviews, the newsletter needs articles, fiction, interviews, and convention reports. This is just part of the deal. LFS needs more supporting members, especially at the basic level. Encourage subscriptions and memberships. At \$10 a year, the rewards of the revival of *Prometheus* along with a Hall of Fame vote and the ability to nominate novels for the Prometheus Award, a Basic Membership is a steal.

The death of libertarian science fiction?

"Those readers who have been hoping that Hogan would someday return from his libertarian sermons to the kind

of old-fashioned hard sf that he used to do so well are going to get more than they bargained for here."

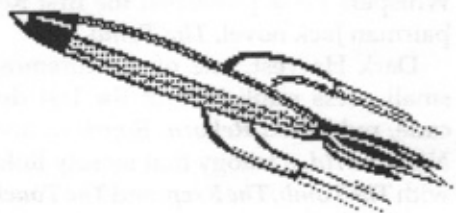
Gary K. Wolfe, in a review of James P. Hogan's 1993 novella *Out of Time* (Bantam Spectra, 1993, \$3.99), in *Locus*, December 1993.

Alongside guns

J. Neil Schulman, winner of the Prometheus and Hall of Fame awards for his novels *Alongside Night* and *The Rainbow Cadenza* recently published a new book. That's right, book, not novel. *Stopping Power: Why 70 Million Americans Own Guns* (available from LFB, 1-800-326-0996 at \$19.95), was featured in the June, 1994 Laissez Faire Books catalog as resulting from Schulman's "personal crusade for gun ownership rights." And I thought Neil Smith was the libertarian fiction writers' voice on the right to own guns...

We are beggars all

Nancy Kress' latest novel, *Beggars and Choosers*, is set for publication in October, 1994 as a Tor hardcover. This is the novel quoted by Kress in Victoria Varga's review in the previous issue as "being much more libertarian than" the Prometheus Award finalist *Beggars in Spain*. Look for reviews of *Beggars and Choosers* in the next issue.



LFS Advisory Members

John Anyesworth
Richard Bartucci, D.O.
Steve Gaalema
Michael Grossberg
Christopher T. Hibbert
John Hilberg
William R.N. Howell, Jr.
Lenda Jackson
Dr. Bonnie Kaplan
Samuel E. Konkin III
Tom Lauerman
Lynn D. Manners
Joseph P. Martino
Anders Monsen
Fred Curtis Moulton
Ben & Sylvia Olson
Robert Poole, Jr.
Andrea Rich
William Alan Ritch
Karl R. Sackett
Robert E. Sacks
George T. Thurston
Victoria Varga

©1994 by the Libertarian Futurist Society. All rights revert to the contributors. *Prometheus* is published quarterly by the Libertarian Futurist Society. Letters and reviews are welcome. Bylined articles are strictly the opinion of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the LFS membership.

EDITOR: Anders Monsen
PUBLISHER: Victoria Varga

SUBSCRIPTIONS:
Four issues (1 year): \$10.00
Overseas (airmail): \$14.00
Advisory Membership: \$50.00
Basic Membership: \$10.00
Overseas Basic Membership: \$14.00
All memberships are per year.

INQUIRIES: 89 Gebhardt Rd
Penfield, NY 14526
74033.2607@compuserve.com

SUBMISSIONS: 602 Purple Sage Dr
Round Rock, TX 78681
online: anders_monsen@capmac.org

— Writ in water, Continued from page 1

In *The Select*, Quinn Cleary eagerly and desperately wants to become a doctor. Her only setback: relative poverty. Her stipends and scholarships that financed her through undergraduate premed won't extend into med school, and her only choice seems to be deep debt or service to the Navy in return for her training. Then there's the other choice: acceptance into the elite and prestigious, and free to all accepted students, Ingraham College, a high financed, far reaching research facility and medical school.

After a strange and grueling entrance exam and long wait Quinn makes it into the Ingraham, along with a friend and fellow student. Once inside, the ever curious and suspicious Quinn begins to note certain strange new behaviors and thoughts among her fellow students and the institute set-up.

To Quinn, the tight security seems way overdone, and dire hints and events propel her to discoveries that in turn threaten her life. When her friend/lover, fellow student vanishes, Quinn uncov-

ers the true secret behind the generous nature of the Ingraham.

The libertarian touches are strongly evident in this novel. Wilson's opinions on centralized medical care, as voiced by Quinn, make the case that such care would instead be stripped of all human compassion in the true meaning of "care." The debate of the proper use of scarce medical resources is a potent contemporary dilemma, constantly in the news today with Clinton's crusade on universal health care.

The Select is a tight, compact thriller that kept me unnerved and on edge throughout, hands shaking in anticipation as the novel screamed to a close. Highly recommended.

Lovelock: The Mayflower Trilogy, Book 1,

Orson Scott Card & Kathryn H. Kidd
(Tor, \$21.95)

Reviewed by Victoria Varga

In his foreword, *On Collaboration*, Orson Scott Card declares that many collaborative works are actually written by the lesser-known of the two authors, but in this case he and Kathryn H. Kidd really did write *Lovelock* together.

Nonetheless, the novel lacks Card's fictional voice, that complex, intelligent, and full-of-surprises mind that his fans love so well. The style here is unadorned and, considering the narrator, that is entirely reasonable.

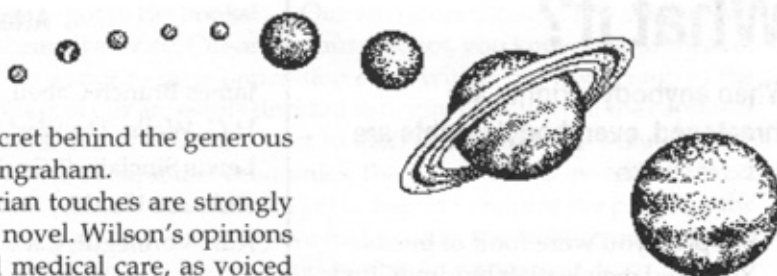
The novel's setting is the Ark, a colony ship on a faster-than-light journey from Earth to transform and colonize a new planet. The narrator, Lovelock, is an enhanced monkey, engineered with software and genetics to be utterly devoted to a famous gaiologist who will be in charge of creating a planetary ecology in their new home. To his owner he is a servant, a pet, a thing to be patronized

and a means to an end—utilized mostly as a "witness," recording the events around the famous scientist, but also helping her with her research.

During the journey, Lovelock becomes more and more aware that he has been programmed to be a slave, and he becomes determined to break that programming and free himself. In the process he becomes far more intelligent and sensible than most of the other characters in this novel.

The book, in many ways, is an account of the programming almost everyone has received: "Who am I to question?" "The government must know best." "If humans were meant to fly [explore space], they'd have been created with wings [with rockets up their backsides]." Others among the colonists learn that the emotional slavery they have created in their relationships with others can be eradicated. The first book of this trilogy is a tribute to all those who have fought against the boundaries of what they have been taught, and have learned to think for themselves.

I always hesitate to recommend the first of a trilogy; who knows what the next two books will be like? On the other hand, Card is committed to professionalism, and I've read enough of his work to note the libertarian direction it often takes. Therefore I feel confident that the next two books will at least be interesting. The story-line so far is very libertarian and should continue in that direction. The ending is a little abrupt, but there is an ending, and it works. I can't wait to read the second and third parts.



What if?

When anybody's rights are threatened, everybody's rights are

by L. Neil Smith

Suppose you were fond of books.

You liked their leather bindings, their fancy endpaper, the way they speak to you of other times and places, the way they feel in your hand.

You even liked the way they smell.

Naturally you were aware that books are dangerous. They give people ideas. Over the long, sad course of history, they've resulted in the slaughter of millions—books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Das Kapital*, *Mein Kampf*, even the Bible—but you had too much intelligence, too much regard for the right of other people to read, write, think whatever they please, to blame the books themselves.

Now suppose someone came along who agreed with you: books are dangerous—and something oughtta be done about it! Nothing you couldn't live with: numbers could be stamped inside them, not just in each kind of book, each title or edition—but in each and every individual book.

"We can keep track of 'em better that way—it'll help get 'em back if they're stolen."

But wait... Isn't the right to freedom of expression, the right to create, exchange, and collect books—without a trace of government harassment—to read, write, and think whatever you please, supposed to be guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution? No matter who thinks it's wrong? No matter how "sensible" their arguments may sound for taking that right away?

You tried to defend your rights, but nobody listened. You appealed to the media; they were even more dependent on the Bill of Rights than you were, and American journalism always gloried in

its self-appointed role as watchdog over the rights of the individual. But the sad truth was, that during its long, self-congratulatory history, it was more like a cur caught bloody-muzzled time after time, savaging the flocks it had been trusted to protect.

You were alone. You insisted that books don't kill people, people kill people. They laughed and told you that people who read books kill people.



Time passed... Still they weren't satisfied. They wanted the serial numbers written down in record books. Then they wanted your

name written down beside the numbers, along with your address, your driver's license number, your age, your race, your sex: "Cause we gotta right to know who's reading all those books!"

Soon they were demanding that book stores be licensed. They forbade you to buy books by mail or in another state and required that your dealer report you if you bought more than one book in a five-day period. They forbade you to buy more than one book a month. They demanded that you wait five days, a week, three weeks before you could pick up a book you'd already paid for—at a store subject to unannounced, warrantless inspections and punitive closure by heavily armed government agents. In Massachusetts and New Jersey, the mere possession of a book meant an automatic year in jail. At one point they

offered to spend tax money to buy your books: "You've got too many. This is a purely voluntary measure—for the time being."

Now they want to confiscate any of your books they think are too long. "No honest citizen needs a book with that many pages!"

Your taxes will be spent to burn them, and somehow you have a feeling that it's just the beginning. That some dark midnight, no matter how peaceable or agreeable or law-abiding you are, you're going to hear that knock on your door...

Yes, books are dangerous. They start holy wars, revolutions, and make people dissatisfied with their lives.

But this is ridiculous!

Is it a nightmare? Another Gulag horror story? A bloodsoaked page from the history of fascism? No, it's just the commonplace oppression people suffer every day when they feel about guns the way you feel about books.

Okay, maybe that feeling's hard to understand. But just try justifying your own love of books to a Reverend Donald Wildmon or an Ayatollah Khomeini. The very requirement that you must, in violation of your basic human rights, will make you inarticulate in rage.

Gun owners laugh at the notion of human rights, because they have none.

Guns are dangerous. Like books. Like books, the right to create, exchange, and collect them without a trace of government harassment, is supposed to be

Attempts at banned fiction, a selection

James Branch Cabell, *Jurgen* and *The Devil's Own Dear Son*.

H.G. Wells, *The World of William Glissold*.

Lewis Sinclair, *It Can't Happen Here*.

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*.

Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* and *Slaughter-House Five*.

Source: *Banned Books, 387 BC to 1978 AD*, by Anne Lyon Haight (4th ed., 1978, R.R. Bowker Corp., New York & London).

— Continued next page

— Continued from previous page

guaranteed. No matter who thinks it's wrong. No matter how "sensible" their arguments may sound for taking your rights away.

So what makes you think your books are any safer than your neighbor's guns? Whether you like books or guns, the issue's the same: WHEN ANYBODY'S RIGHTS ARE THREATENED, EVERYBODY'S RIGHTS ARE THREATENED.

[Editor's note: I first saw this essay in *The Voluntaryist*, February, 1994. It is reprinted with permission from its original source, *Libertarian Party News*, May, 1993.]

L. Neil Smith is a proponent of the rights of gun owners and a science fiction writer who won the Prometheus Award for his novel *The Probability Broach* in 1982. To date he has published 17 novels, and is perhaps best known for *The Probability Broach*, *The Crystal Empire*, and *The Wardove*. His latest novel, *Pallas* (1993), is a Prometheus Award nominee.

"And then we got to the books! . . . Our ancestors thought it was more fun not to burn them all at once. Cat-and-mouse tactics, you know. Assurances of moderation, so as not to raise opposition even within our own camp at the start. The leaders of our ancestors decided to begin merely on all the capitalist economic books. No one could object to *that*! So on one fine May Day we burned the whole of capitalist economics, the whole rotten system of direct apologetics. . . . I don't think we have yet to begun to realize the progress the world made on that day! Naturally we had to burn the answers to capitalist apologetics, too, so that nobody would be able to reconstruct from them an idea of what capitalist economics was like."

from Henry Hazlitt's *Time Will Run Back*

"Liberty lies in the hearts and minds of men and women. When it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it."

— Judge Learned Hand

"If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of free [individuals], we must live for all times, or die by suicide."

— Abraham Lincoln

Is a free future possible?

The members of LFS think it is. Perhaps you do, too.

Freedom is possible only if most people are unafraid of it. One of the best ways of demonstrating the practicality, and relative safety, of a free society is to let people live in the future through fiction. Every year the Libertarian Futurist Society honors the best current libertarian novel with our Prometheus Award, and we vote a classic libertarian novel into the Hall of Fame.

Libertarian Futurist Society, 89 Gebhardt Rd, Penfield, NY 14526

YES! I want to belong to the Libertarian Futurist Society as a:

☐

Basic Member. Send me *Prometheus* and *LFS News*. I enclose \$10 for each annual membership. (Outside US, \$14 per year.)

☐

Advisory Member. I want to vote for and sustain the Prometheus Award. I enclose \$50 for a one-year membership.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

Online Address _____

Prometheus finalists

Below follow brief reviews of the finalists for the 1994 Prometheus Award. The voting deadline is August 15.

Rainbow Man, M.J. Engh

This is a funny and ultimately a terrifying story about a woman spacer who decides to settle on what is supposed to be a planet without government.

Only after her ship departs does she gradually learn that this planet without laws does have customs, and the punishment for breaking those customs is unbelievably nasty.

A good book for libertarians who can't remember that oppression doesn't always have a government label. The book argues for guaranteed safeguards for individual liberty, and it makes that argument clearly and dramatically.

Beggars in Spain, Nancy Kress

This is a stunning, highly crafted work of libertarian fiction. The questions raised in this novel draw from the ideas, thoughts, and dilemmas of

human relationships raised in Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* and Ursula LeGuin's *The Dispossessed*, while forging an attempted synthesis of both.

What is the moral relationship be-

tween talented individuals and those who benefit from their talents? This is the question that genetically altered non-sleepers ask themselves and deal with in different manners.

Benefitting from increased intelligence, more time and energy, and tremendous longevity, the non-sleepers grow and develop into a realization of their own differences. Set in the near future and an America in collapse from envy and a collectivist economy, the non-sleepers take alternate views on the relations to "normal" humans.

The development of the characters and the value system presented by Kress make this a fascinating libertarian achievement. If as rumored her next novel is even more libertarian it will truly be a delight.

The Silicon Man, Charles Platt

A highly advanced and sharply extrapolated work of near-future science fiction, this novel details an FBI agent's attempt to trace a high-

tech underground experiment. Built around dreams of electronic immortality, the minds behind this experiment will do anything to protect and finish their work.

The novel is graced by an authentic feel for place, describing Los Angeles in vivid detail. The questions raised about means and ends are controversial and thought-provoking, and the technical details of storing the mind and its memories electronically are handled in an adept, original manner.

Pallas, L. Neil Smith

In one of Smith's most ambitious works to date, two very different groups of colonists settle a large asteroid and strive in their separate ways to influence

the course of both societies.

Yet much more than this, *Pallas* is a well constructed libertarian novel with memorable characters, a highly-driven plot and sudden surprises. The protagonist, Emerson Ngu, is a quintessential libertarian without being preachy; his philosophy expresses itself in his actions, core beliefs, and creative entrepreneurship.

Virtual Girl, Amy Thomson

I always though Isaac Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics were very anti-libertarian in nature. By limiting robots' rights to use force, these laws

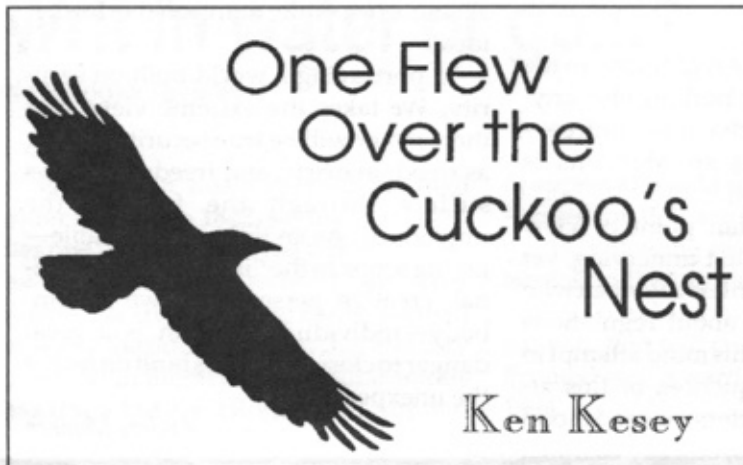
robbed them of the right of self-defense.

Such laws and other insidious anti-tech views are propelled by fear that the superior technology of robots threaten humanity. Finally along comes a novel that declares independence for robots and all thinking individual beings.

This brilliant first novel spins a powerful tale of a robot in female form whose growing self-awareness derives from a stronger law: that each thinking creature is her own master, a lesson she takes beyond her own person.

Hall of Fame finalists

Below follow reviews of two of the five finalists for the 1994 Hall of Fame Award. The voting deadline is August 15. The focus on only two novels is in no way intended to influence voting, but merely a decision by the reviewing editor to examine certain novels that previously may not have received a great deal of attention. The opinions expressed are solely those of the reviewer.



The analogy of Plato's cave is usually mentioned as an intellectual exercise; it's defined in simple graphic terms, we laugh and scoff at primitive philosophy, and move on to discuss the real world.

Yet this analogy fits perfectly in with movies adapted from novels, and there is no exception; such a movie is a mere shadow of itself on that illusive silver screen. The projected image is superflu-

ous, devoid of analytical self-reflection, only a mirror reflected in the expressions and actions of the actors. The movie version of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, though powerful and libertarian in tone, is a fine example of Platonic metaphysics.

The brash bravado of Jack Nicholson and his over-the-edge acting mesh perfectly with the role Ken Kesey created 32 years ago. Nicholson and the character he plays, Randal Patrick McMurphy drives the story forward, electrifying the viewer as well as his co-characters. McMurphy is a flesh and bones

libertarian hero. Like Hercules and Dionysus (not a distant ideal, like John Galt, nor the poor accidental rebel Winston Smith), McMurphy is a rollicking, death-daring, capitalist-spirited dynamo, looking out for number-one, but generous in friendship and trust.

Kesey's 1962 novel, repeatedly nominated for the Hall of Fame, deals with liberty and authority, responsibility and

sanity, in the form of a brilliant analogy: the insane asylum as mirror of our society. Like those patients we are the wards of the state, unless we declare our independence and self-responsibility.

Set in an insane asylum, in a ward run under tight rein by Big Nurse Ratched, the initial view for the reader is one of peace and order imposed upon the patients for their own good. Like government's relation to its governed, the myth of benevolent control is loudly and often trumpeted. Yet the purveyors of this myth know that it cannot withstand criticism or suggested alternatives that must be avoided or repressed at all cost.

Along comes McMurphy, the non-conformist, a natural and instant foil to Nurse Ratched. If a natural assumption is made that people are placed in insane asylums for one of two reasons, i.e. that they are sick and curable, or that they are sick and incurable, then those two groups are found in Ratched's ward, but with no cure intended. (Libertarians recognize government is not there to make us self-reliant, no matter what the slogans and campaigns promise, but rather government exists to stamp out individualism, self-reliance, and independence.)

When McMurphy sees how Ratched has crushed the spirits of her patients in the guise of trying to help them, he makes it a crusade to expose her frauds to the other patients. She is not the caring, kind mother figure as they see her, but someone who cares only for order and control, and who will use any means to achieve her goal.

The personal cost of McMurphy's crusade is devastating for himself and for many other individuals in the ward. Yet in his defiance, he stirs something in their hearts that changes them forever, and sets in motion events that shatter the calm and order of Ratched's ward. The lesson brought home in this novel is undeniably libertarian: that we alone

"People are committed to mental hospitals neither because they are 'dangerous' nor because they are 'mentally ill,' but rather because they are society's scapegoats, whose persecution is justified by psychiatric propaganda and rhetoric."

—Thomas S. Szasz, *Ideology and Insanity*

"I went to the woods because I wanted to live deliberately, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

—Continued next page

—Continued from previous page

are responsible for our lives, and that we must act as such.

Is this a "science fiction" novel? In a stark and limiting sense: no. Yet like *Atlas Shrugged* and *1984*, it demonstrates the greatest expression of individuality and self-worth, and that makes it a strong candidate for the Hall of Fame Award.

— Anders Monsen

An uncanny early twentieth "dystopian" novel, as much science fiction as speculative fiction, *We* stands in the ranks of *Anthem*, *1984*, *A Brave New World*, and *This Perfect Day* as a classic indictment against authoritarian utopias.

In the world of the United State (the name of the country in the novel), individuals are reduced to numbers, beauty is found in unfree experiences and events, and each movement, each emotion, is precisely planned, rationed, and regulated. To a libertarian reader such a



world is a terror and a nightmare; to the narrator, who knows nothing else, anything he encounters that is not unfree—that which appears spontaneous is frightening, irrational.

This anti-libertarian point of view makes the novel at first unnerving, yet as the narrator encounters a woman who appears not to care about regulations and protocol, we see his mind attempt to expand. The consequences of this attempt resonate the bittersweet sad mood throughout the novel, and say as much about human character as about the soul-killing world of the collectivist state and society.

Freedom and security tower above the history of humanity as the bloody dichotomy that has eaten millions in its double-hinged jaws. In its wake are the destroyed minds of those who believe in this dichotomy, and that to fully achieve one the other must be sacrificed; and it is always freedom that ends up on the altar. Rather than necessary fact, this dichotomy allows the state to manipulate its subjects, using freedom and security as carrot and stick, all the time slicing off a little more of the former ideal.

In portraying a world built on security, *We* takes the extreme view, that there never will be true security as long as freedom exists, and freedom always suffers through the fear of the unplanned. As an unknown variable—giving scope to the "independent, original, creative personality" we all embody—individual freedom is a great danger to closed societies built on fear of the unexpected.

— Anders Monsen

PROMETHEUS

The Journal of the Libertarian Futurist Society

89 Gebhardt Rd

Penfield, NY 14526