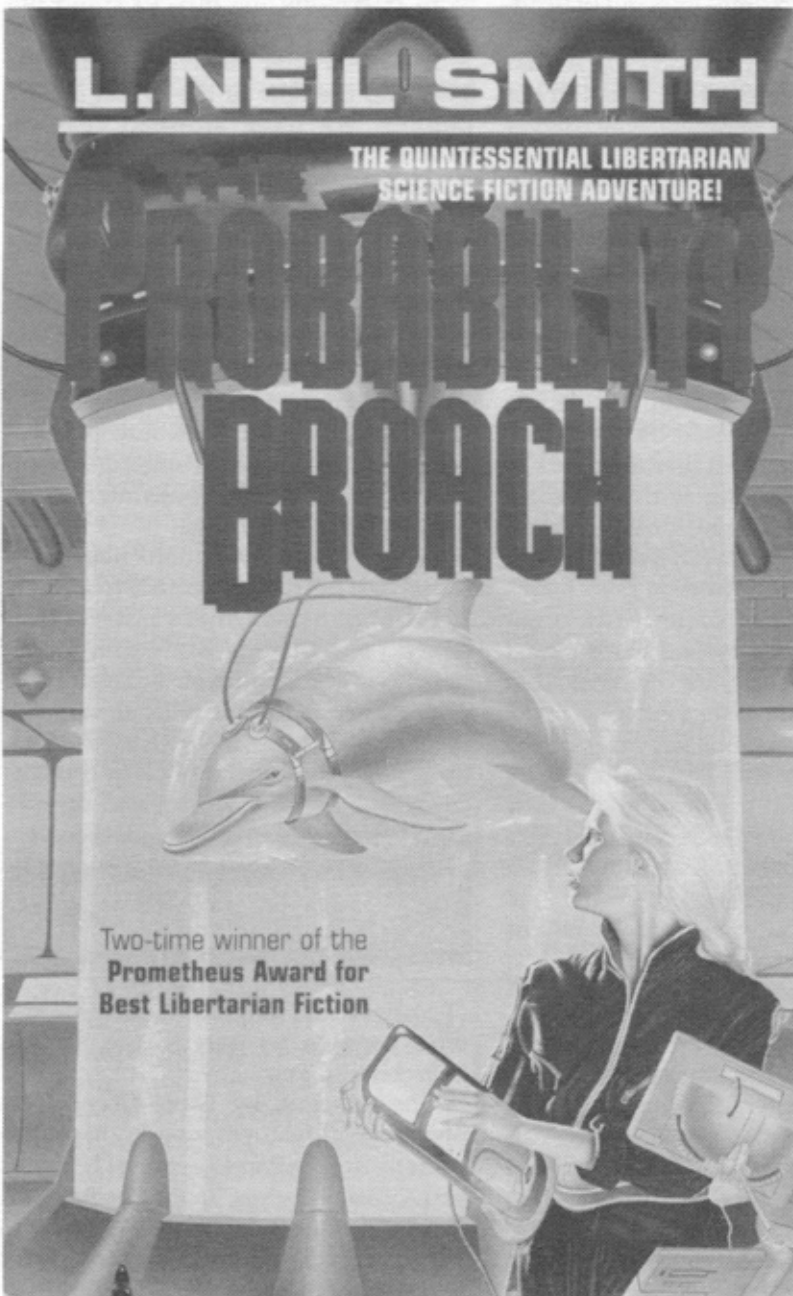


PROMETHEUS

\$3.00



"This anarchist's Disneyland"
TOR reprints L. Neil Smith's
long out of print, riveting
first novel of libertarian sf,
The Probability Broach.
Pages 2, 6

Ken MacLeod's first novel,
The Star Fraction, claims the
1996 Prometheus Award,
presented at LA CON III,
the 54th Worldcon, in
Anaheim, California.
Robert Heinlein wins third
Hall of Fame Award for
Red Planet.
Page 4

PROMETHEUS

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Inquiries and Submissions:

602 Purple Sage Dr
Round Rock, TX 78681
512-388-2423/amonsen@aol.com

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The novel that started it all

Celebrating the re-release of L. Neil Smith's classic libertarian sf novel

by Anders Monsen

The Probability Broach is a brilliant, subversive novel. It exposes individuals to libertarian ideas and possibilities, and in many cases, succeeds in opening their minds. It is a powerful first novel first published in 1980, and long out of print.

The original print run of around 44,000 copies ran dry around 1988. At that time, Smith organized an effort to get Del Rey to reprint the novel, which never happened. On pages 6 and 7 we have reprinted some of the letters he received to aid his effort. This is only a fraction of the fan letters Smith has received, but space considerations prevented me from reprinting more comments. Clearly, this is a unique and pathbreaking novel.

A letter sent to Neil Smith in November, 1986, illustrates the subversiveness of the book. Discovered by the letter-writer in the Christian literature rack at his workplace (along with works by Johan Most and George Smith's book on atheism), *TPB* was saved from the fiery fate of those other "treasonable" books by its innocuous appearance (the original cover, after all, looked like a Planet of the Apes novel, quite different from the new cover by Peter Peebles).

And that innocuous appearance, the writer laments, was "his mistake. My teenage son read the book and is now further from the church than ever. My wife and I have tried very hard with him and now, it is hopeless. And you [L. Neil Smith] are to blame. He actually laughs

at us now. He says he has found a whole new world and is going to buy every Smith book he can find! His strange behavior has us really worried because the little things he does are so weird. He renamed our cat Lysander, has gotten into trouble with his history and social studies teacher. And even though he has never had a drink, he talks about whisky rebellion."

In re-reading the novel I could not help but feel that this is a timeless book. It does not matter that it was written in 1979 and the date of the action is 1987 (should we have stopped reading Orwell's 1984 after that date passed?). Some details do become dated, but the not essence of the story. The restored material gives the book a more detailed and realistic feel.

This is a book that any libertarian could buy and hand out as gifts to friends and others. *TPB* is a murder mystery that turns into an alternate universe story, takes a hard bank into political thriller, and packs a solid entertainment-savvy punch. And, 19 books later, Smith has lost none of his edge.

When someone mentions libertarian sf, the first person that comes to mind is L. Neil Smith, and that's not a coincidence. Here there is wonderful invention, hope and optimism, and a glorious celebration of the individual, and the positive *society* of individualists. Pick up a new copy of the book and rediscover this exciting world, and reserve me a table at Meep's Texas Barbecue.

Page 6: more comments on The Probability Broach

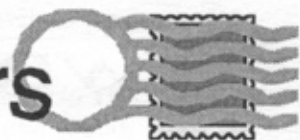
Announcement

Brad Linaweaver announces the return of his favorite childhood magazine, Forrest J Ackerman's *Spacemen*. This magazine went out of publication in the mid-60s. It now returns with a feature on 2001 by none other than Brad Linaweaver. Other contributors who may be of interest to *Prometheus* readers are Victor Koman and Steve Tymon

(Tymon is a Hollywood screenwriter who used to be part of the Konkin anarcho village).

The cover is by Dave (*Rocketeer*) Stevens and features well-know political activist Jane Fonda in one of her most provocative poses from *Barbarella*. Readers interested in finding out how to get the new *Spacemen* may write Brad Linaweaver directly at 8833 Sunset Blvd. Ste 304, Los Angeles, CA 90069

Letters



L. Neil Smith's comments on the current state of science fiction and fantasy (*Prometheus*, Vol. 14, No. 3) show an unfortunate tendency to class as out-right enemies of liberty writers who had significant libertarian tendencies with some flaws or inconsistencies. His dismissal of E. E. Smith as a "right-wing socialist," conservative, or "even out-right fascist" is a major example. (In what follows, I will refer to EES and LNS to avoid confusion due to their shared surname.)

EES's overall philosophy is best illustrated by his major work, the *Lensman* series. In that series, the ultimate villains, the Eddorians, are characterized as motivated solely by a desire for power. In contrast, their opponents, the Arisians, seek to encourage the growth of Civilization through the smallest possible interventions, not only for artistic reasons but because they fear that too much help would prevent the races of Civilization from developing their own strength.

Civilization has democratic mechanisms combined with safeguards to individual freedom—the traditional American pattern—while Boskone is a dictatorship wholly devoted to war.

Vintage Books in July reprinted two of Aldred Bester's great novels, in very nice trade paperback editions. **The Demolished Man** (Vintage Books 0-679-76781-9 \$11.00, 243pp). And, perhaps more importantly, the LFS Hall of Fame Award-winning, **The Stars My Destination**, (Vintage Books 0-679-76780-0 \$11.00, 258pp).

Bester is one of sf's greats, and these books are highly recommended. He writes as if his pen is on fire, with terse, innovative style and a plot that never lets you drift. The latter novel is the kind that never should be out of print.

In a discussion in *Gray Lensman*, Port Admiral Haynes tells the hero, Kimball Kinnison, that "with the restriction of government into its proper sphere," wealth-producing enterprise and interstellar

commerce have expanded, permitting the Galactic Patrol to be supported by unprecedentedly low taxes—3.592 percent in the highest income tax bracket!—and in fact the Galactic Patrol has to reduce tax rates regularly to avoid having its surplus funds tie up too much capital and bring on a depression. The reference to "wealth-producing enterprise" is typical of EES's strongly pro-capitalist outlook. In fact, EES was basically an old-style, pre-New Deal Republican, an outlook ancestral to libertarianism as we now know it.

This economic outlook shows up even more strongly in a later novel, *Subspace Explorers*, whose heroes are as strongly drawn entrepreneurs and business managers as any of Ayn Rand's characters—in fact, EES conveys the aggressive and competitive drives of such people even more forthrightly than Rand does, though his characterization is certainly less subtle. Set in a future where an Earth controlled half by outright communism and half by welfare-state socialism confronts colonial planets that favor free enterprise and individual ability, this novel offers some very interesting political and economic ideas, including a private interstellar navy with its own court system. Moreover, EES offers a Principle of Enlightened Self-Interest as the basis for his colonial planets' societies.

Both in this novel and in the *Lensman* series, EES accepts private ownership

and use of weapons, one of LNS's own most strongly held views. Kimball Kinnison, playing the part of William Williams, ex-meteor miner, can wear his sidearms throughout his stay at a planet's highest-class hotel, and while his choice is regarded as being in questionable taste, the hotel doesn't call the police or even ask him to leave. EES's characters regularly use deadly force in self-defense.

The worst flaw in EES's often admirable views is his intolerance of drugs. In fact, I count it as a major inconsistency in the *Lensman* novels that the *Lensman* spend so much time hunting down drug dealers. I can only say that on this point EES's views were those of his time, which he failed to question. But I'm not prepared to condemn him outright on this basis, any more than I'm prepared to condemn Thomas Jefferson outright for his lifelong ownership of slaves. LNS's remarks suggest that he should denounce Jefferson as an enemy of freedom unworthy of libertarian admiration—but I don't think he's likely to do so.

Virtually no writer, not even Heinlein or Rand, was an absolutely consistent advocate of libertarianism; what matters is the main tendency of a writer's thought. EES's outlook was largely congruent with Heinlein's, as Heinlein made clear in his own essay on EES—above all, both believed in the value of individual competence and of societies free enough to let it be exercised, and both looked to the exploration of space to let such societies be established. If Heinlein deserves LNS's outspoken admiration, then EES deserves at least his respect and sympathy.

—William H. Stoddard
July 29, 1996

LFS on the Web —still crawling

The address remains:
<http://www.libertarian.com/LFS/>
Special thanks to Tod Casasent for work on the html, and Ambuel Ulakey for hosting the site.

Hugo nomination for *Prometheus*?

A suggestion to all attendees of the 1996 and/or 1997 Worldcons:
Nominate *Prometheus* for a Hugo Award for best fanzine and advertise LFS and the *Prometheus* Awards.

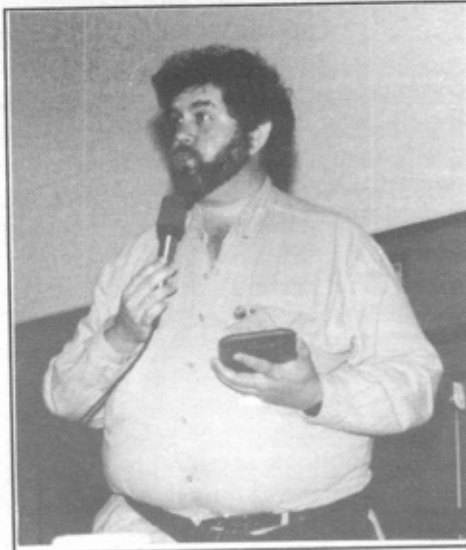
1996 Prometheus Awards

by Anders Monsen

The 1996 Prometheus Awards ceremony at the 1996 Worldcon in Los Angeles drew perhaps the largest gathering of past winners of the Prometheus Award. Who could image that in the same convention, and for the most part in the same room were the following: Vernor Vinge, Brad Linaweaver, Victor Koman, James P. Hogan, Victor Milán, J. Neil Schulman, Michael Flynn, Larry Niven, and Jerry Pournelle. Noted libertarian writer and editor Melinda Snodgrass also was at the Worldcon, as well as a multitude of libertarian fans.

Countless horror stories circulate among libertarian sf fans from previous Worldcons. The Awards always appear to end up in some basement or backroom, due to the program committee's deliberate or accidental planning. It was a pleasant surprise instead this year, to find the Awards set for Saturday evening in a large and well-attended room. Many of the attendees and organizers of the event spoke of this as one the best Award ceremonies ever.

Thanks to the efforts of the smooth-talking Brad Linaweaver, LFS received



J. Neil Schulman speaks about Robert Heinlein's influence on his own life, after accepting the Hall of Fame Award for Heinlein's *Red Planet*.

a fantastic time spot, 5pm on a Saturday.

As one of the organizers, I did not get a chance to meet as many of the people there as I would have liked, and next year in San Antonio, LFS definitely is planning a party after the event, unconstrained by the time limit imposed by the ceremony.

Linaweaver introduced the Master of Ceremonies, two-time Prometheus Award winning hard sf writer James P. Hogan. Hogan presented the main prize, the 1996 Prometheus Award, for best libertarian sf novel

published in 1995. Hogan, the past recipient of two Prometheus Awards (in 1983 for *Voyage From Yesteryear*, and 1993 for *The Multiplex Man*), announced that award went to a fellow Brit, Ken MacLeod, for his critically acclaimed debut novel, *The Star Fraction*.

John Jarrold, MacLeod's editor at Legend, accepted the Award on behalf of MacLeod, a one-half ounce gold coin mounted on a very handsome plaque. MacLeod was unable to attend, and Jarrold read to the crowd a note from the author:

"Many thanks to the Libertarian Futurist Society for this award. I deeply appreciate it, and I'll always be proud of it.

"Libertarian ideas influenced me through science fiction for a long time before I ever heard of libertarianism. 'It usually begins with Ayn Rand'—but for me, it began with Poul Anderson's *The Last of the Deliverers*, and continued through his *Trader to the Stars*, as well as Heinlein's *If This Goes On—*, Eric Frank Russell's *The Great Explosion*, Kornbluth's *The Syndic*, and several other dangerous subversive stories. I read the entire *Illuminatus!* trilogy without getting any of the in-jokes—I mean, who is John Guilt?

"On the left-hand path, so to speak, there were the imagined stateless socialisms: the austerity of Le Guin's *Annas*, the workmanship of Morris's *Nowhere*, the technological exuberance of Iain Banks' *Culture*. Long may Libertaria and Utopia continue their Cold War in our minds.

"As well as science fiction there's *Real Life™*, and the arguments and activity over the years, with socialists and libertarians. Thanks to all of them, and to all of you."

MacLeod's thank you note was well-received, and laughter erupted at the John Guilt reference.

Unfortunately, MacLeod's novel is only available in a UK edition. The hard-cover edition is available via the Internet for 10 pounds at <http://www.bookshop.co.uk/> A paperback edition is due



James P. Hogan (right) presents the Hall of Fame Award for Robert Heinlein's *Red Planet*. Noted libertarian writer J. Neil Schulman accepts the Award on Heinlein's behalf.

—Continued next page

Continued from previous page

in October, 1996. The sequel to *The Star Fraction*, called *The Stone Canal*, was released in late September. *The Stone Canal* will be reviewed in the January issue of *Prometheus*, and we hope by then that MacLeod will have found a publisher in the US. The strange fact is that it isn't as if MacLeod is not selling in the UK—quite the contrary, as the hardcover has sold more than 4,000 copies over there. Several copies of the British edition have been snapped up in the US at specialty SF bookstores.

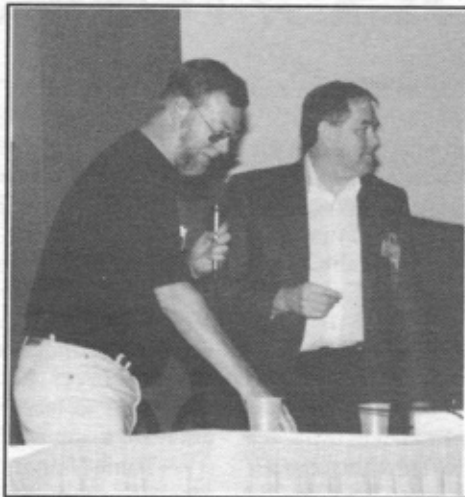
Hogan spoke warmly about the spirit of the Awards, and also presented the Hall of Fame Award to Robert Heinlein, for his 1948 novel, *Red Planet*. Heinlein's widow, Virginia, had asked libertarian writer J. Neil Schulman to accept on Heinlein's behalf.

Schulman gave an eloquent and moving speech on Heinlein's influence on his life. Unfortunately, the convention only taped panels, not award ceremonies, and I did not bring my tape recorder. Still, the gist of Schulman's speech is such that few can forget it.

Schulman said that without Heinlein, Schulman probably would not have been there, in more than one sense. Heinlein's writings, he said, rescued him from probable suicide at the age of 14. Heinlein's writing both saved and inspired him, and helped him write his own fiction, *Alongside Night* and *The Rainbow Cadenza*.

For one person to have such a profound impact on another, literally midwifing a rebirth, speaks volumes. Robert Heinlein's impact in the libertarian sf is no less profound. No author ever bats 1000, but Heinlein's powerful style, compelling characters, and uncompromising ideas make him the father of libertarian sf. *Red Planet*, as several people have said, is one of his best juvenile novels, and highly deserving of the honor of the Hall of Fame Award.

Looking back at this year's Prometheus Award I think we can say that the future for LFS and libertarian sf looks bright. New libertarian writers are emerging who one day may claim their own Prometheus Award. The lib-



James P. Hogan presents the Prometheus Award for best libertarian sf novel, *The Star Fraction*. John Jarrold (left) of Legend, a UK division of Random House, accepts the Award on behalf of author Ken MacLeod.

ertarian sf movement is still going strong, and perhaps revitalized. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the announcement that *Free Space*—a major libertarian sf anthology—would finally see light of day was made at the Worldcon.

Thanks to Linaweaver for his organizational skills, Victoria Varga for the wonderfully made plaques, Fred Moulton for taking pictures, and everyone who attended the 1996 Prometheus Awards, and made it the best ever.

The 1997 Prometheus Awards will be held at the 1997 Worldcon, LoneStar Con II, to be held in San Antonio, quite possibly the best city in Texas.

Tell your friends about *Prometheus*, or buy them a gift subscription for only \$10 a year.

Free Space, at last

The long awaited libertarian sf anthology, *Free Space*, edited by Brad Linaweaver and Ed Kramer, is scheduled for hardback release by TOR books. Rumor has it that it should be out in June of 1997. Readers of *Prometheus* will notice a number of familiar names from the contents page, printed here with gracious permission from co-editor Brad Linaweaver. Below appear, in actual order, the titles and authors of stories as they will appear.

1. "Crisis in Space," William F. Buckley, Jr.
2. "Nerfworld," Dafydd ab Hugh
3. "Day of Atonement," J. Neil Schulman
4. "No Market for Justice," Brad Linaweaver
5. "Kwan Tingui," William F. Wu
6. "Madam Butterfly," James P. Hogan
7. "Early Bird," Gregory Benford
8. "Of What is Past," Ray Bradbury
9. "Tyranny," Poul Anderson
10. "The Killing of Davis-Davis," Peter Crowther
11. "Demokratus," Victor Koman
12. "The Hand You're Dealt," Robert J. Sawyer
13. "How Do You Tell the Dreamers From the Dream?" Wendy McElroy
14. "If Pigs had Wings," William Alan Ritch
15. "A Matter of Certainty," L. Neil Smith
16. "The Limits to Gross," John DeChancie
17. "The Performance of a Lifetime," Arthur Byron Cover
18. "The Last Holosong of Christopher Lightning," Jared Lobdell
19. "Between Shepherds and Kings," John Barnes
20. "Free at Last," Robert Anton Wilson

In praise of L. Neil Smith's

◆ **The Probability Broach** starts off like street-level Heinlein and then leaps into an alternate America that boggles the mind. There's action, adventure, and a host of interesting characters, but it's the ideas that count. Neil Smith jumps headlong into moral, legal, and social situations that will shock, enrage, and confound a few readers, but will delight, liberate, and enlighten so many more. What a world! Whenever I want to smile, I think of one of the Ayatollah's thugs trying to hijack a plane in Neil's American Confederacy. Good luck!

—F. Paul Wilson

Author of over 14 novels, including the first Prometheus Award winner, Wheels Within Wheels

◆ I truly hope you can restore **The Probability Broach** to print. It's one of those rare ones whose dealing with the future remains sharper and fresher as time goes on. Surely an imaginative publisher could exploit that virtue. How many novels can claim to have a view of the future, or futures, that isn't outdistanced by actual events or made absurd by them? **The Probability Broach**! I can even imagine it being used in political science classes to get the waterlogged students to shake their minds into activity.

—Karl Hess

Legendary libertarian thinker and activist, speechwriter for Barry Goldwater, and former editor of Libertarian Party News

◆ Every work of libertarian science fiction that has been written since **The Probability Broach** first exploded on the scene in 1980 owes a debt of gratitude to Neil Smith's trend-setting novel. In time, this book will be seen to have had as profound an influence on the future of liberty as *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*.

—Brad Linaweaver

Author of Prometheus Award-winning novel Moon of Ice, co-author of four Doom novels, and novelization of the TV show Sliders

◆ There are many special beauties to **Broach**: its intriguing premise, its carefully thought-out version of society-as-it-could/should be, its wonderful irreverence toward social norms. Many premises which appear in other novels are thought-out and presented in careful detail in **Broach**, such as the concepts of self-defense and justice in a free society.

—Carol B. Low

Editor of Nomos

◆ I finally found a copy of **Probability Broach**. It's a great book. I don't see that it's dated at all. I'd like to see it in print again.

—Robert Adams

Author of the "Horse Clans" series

◆ [TPB is] so full of original, imaginative, intriguing ideas, and many have stuck with me; intelligent apes and cetaceans fully integrated into society; most people armed in self defense, etc. Of course, the basic premise—an alternate universe where the good guys triumphed during the Whiskey Rebellion—would have won my heart by itself.

—Jeffrey Rogers Hummel

Noted historian who specializes in the pre-and post-revolutionary period. Author of Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men

◆ L. Neil Smith's **The Probability Broach** is a fine first novel, one that still makes me envious...I'm always a sucker for a good combination of SF and mystery and humor. And what a thoroughly worked out alternate history... Smith has an excellent eye for detail. He lets you taste the convincing flavor of a gritty future.

—John E. Stith

Author of Redshift Rendezvous, Scopescope, and others

◆ I think the idea that impressed me about the book was a new respect and understanding for weapons. I have never owned a gun, nor have I ever shot one. After reading your book, I felt that it was important to learn more about self-defense and weapons, and I attended a seminar demonstrating weapons that women might use.

—Tonie Nathan

First US woman in history to win an electoral vote

◆ I most heartily think that **TPB** should be kept in print! The combination of a serious societal inquiry with a time travel plot is loads of fun, and I should think it would sell well and amuse and instruct particularly the younger generation for a long time to come.

—Roger Lea MacBride

Constitutional scholar and former Libertarian Party candidate for president, MacBride is co-creator of Little House on the Prairie

◆ **The Probability Broach** is that rare phenomenon: a book that stands on its own as engrossing fiction and also deals seriously with socio-political ideas. Those with terminally closed minds who shiver in fright at the prospect of having their biases and preconceptions challenged, might do well to avoid it. For everyone else, it's a pure delight.

—Alan W. Bock.

Orange County Register, Senior Columnist

◆ I'm delighted you're bringing out a revised edition of **The Probability Broach**. I never agreed with Del Rey that the deletions were desirable. I look forward to seeing them replaced.

As you can probably guess, my own copy of **TPB** is long gone, having been loaned out once too often. Good luck with the new version; I'll be watching for it.

—Frank Kelly Freas

Noted painter and illustrator and "most popular sf artist in the history of the field" (Encyclopedia of Science Fiction). Winner of 10 Hugo Awards for Best Professional Artist

◆ **The Probability Broach** is a humorous, adventurous tale of alternate world, showing how much better off America would be today if its history had diverged in a libertarian direction two centuries ago. Full of surprises, suspense, technological ingenuity and knockabout fun, **The Probability Broach** combines elements of the classic private eye yarn, the classic science fiction alternate-worlds story and classic utopian novel. I feel certain it, too, is destined to be a classic. While getting across an upbeat message, it never misses a beat as first-rate storytelling.

—Robert Shea

Co-author with Robert Anton Wilson of the Illuminatus! trilogy, as well as many solo novels, Shea presented the Prometheus Award to The Probability Broach at the 1982 Worldcon

The Probability Broach

◆ I could mention the memorable characters, deft satire, sizzling polemic, and a lot of old fashioned hot damn swashbuckling action. I could say that like all worthwhile works it is uniquely his own, but that it could in justice be compared to a blend of Chandler, vintage Heinlein, and the Marx Brothers. Whoever reprints **The Probability Broach** has a gem on their hands.

—Victor Milán

Author of over 70 novels, including the Prometheus Award winning, The Cybernetic Samurai

◆ Of course I've read **The Probability Broach**. I've read it three or four times. Not only that, because of the confusion regarding our names, I've been congratulated for writing it almost as much as for writing either of my own novels.

I like the way it starts out in our own "world" before it shows us the world of what "might have been." I like the fact that the viewpoint character you chose—a cop—is a representative of the political philosophy of our worlds, and as such is a perfect skeptical innocent to learn about the non-political philosophy of the Broach world. I like the detective thriller format of the novel and the way it propels the action forward; the way that we learn about the Broach world not because the author is preaching at us but because the philosophy and alternate history is necessary to understand the action.

—J. Neil Schulman

Author of the Prometheus Award winning novel, The Rainbow Cadenza, the Hall of Fame Award winning novel Alongside Night, and non-fiction books, Stopping Power, and Self-Control, Not Gun Control

◆ **The Probability Broach** is one of the sanest, most humorous looks at the dangers of uncontrolled government. His character is a perfect everyman walking the streets of an inflation-ridden society, and then making his way through the surprises of an unregulated parallel universe where people rule their destinies, not government. **Broach** is without question the finest presentation of a Libertarian society in Science Fiction

—Melinda Snodgrass

Author of the Circuit trilogy, and former editor on the TV series Star Trek: the Next Generation

◆ I read **The Probability Broach** when it first appeared in 1980. It was one of my favorite books of the year, and more; It contained ideas I wish could be shouted to the world, ideas that come from the American heritage of freedom and which could bring still greater individual liberty, greater technical progress.

—Vernor Vinge

Author of Prometheus Award winning novel, Marooned in Realtime, and Hugo Award winning novel, A Fire Upon the Deep

◆ **The Probability Broach** was one of the books that I read when I first discovered the libertarian science fiction genre. If for no other reason, as the first in the North American Confederacy series, it deserves to remain in print.

—Carl Watner

Editor of The Voluntaryist, and author of a biography of Robert LeFevre, Truth is Not a Half-way Place

◆ **The Probability Broach** is a darn good story, with lots of interesting details and, more seriously, food for thought.

—Poul Anderson

SF GrandMaster. 'Nuff said

◆ As a long time science fiction fan, I can say that **The Probability Broach** is one of the best in that genre I have come across in a long time.

—Dr. Walter Block

Austrian economist and author of Defending the Undefendable

◆ The cameo appearances by John Wayne and others; that wonderful alternate universe; and most especially, crusty-but-simpatico Win Bear—a magical mystery tour, well worth the price of admission and numerous return trips.

The Probability Broach is a book that reminds me a lot of the way Robert A. Heinlein saw things—the craft of writing and nature of the world alike.

—Brian Daley

Author of the Han Solo trilogy, and the White Ship series

◆ I was disgusted to hear that **The Probability Broach** has been allowed to go out of print. I enjoyed it and have recommended it—as well as other L. Neil Smith books—to my friends. This book in particular is the first in his alternate-universe series, and hence is supported by other books on the market. That this work should be unavailable for even a short time is amazing.

—K. Eric Drexler

Author of The Engines of Creation, and lectures on nanotechnology at Stanford

◆ I was most impressed by the breadth and depth of vision with which Smith rendered his alternate North American Confederacy. Everything that I had dreamed would be part of my future was here—and a lot more!

Broach began a new direction for science fiction. For the previous two decades, sf seemed mired in two camps: the doomcriers who declared that all effort was futile, that only massive enslavement of the human race could prevent us from slaughtering one another; and the "nuke 'em and let God sort it out" macho jingoists who wrote of wars to exterminate Others so that We could have our way. Smith brought back to the sf world the People of Efficacy by answering the question of what would happen if people were free, *really free* to run our own lives?

Perhaps I'm pouring it on too thick. Here's the bottom line: **TPB** is a fun, thoughtful, engaging novel. If it were to be published as Smith intended, instead of the shorter version Del Rey put out under a so-so cover, I expect that current fans will buy it to re-live an enriched version of the world they encountered [16] years ago. And new readers will discover a book just as fresh and incisively witty as the day I first picked it up. Classics have a way of sticking around.

—Victor Koman

Author of the Prometheus Award winning novels, The Jehovah Contract, and Solomon's Knife, and the 1996 Net published novel, Kings of the High Frontier

See page 8 for more on L. Neil Smith's fiction

Reviews

This review originally appeared in the Wyoming Freedom Monthly, as a concurrent and opposing view to Vin Suprynowicz's glowing review. The latter was reprinted in the Summer, 1996 issue of Prometheus, and in the interest of debate, Wolfe's blistering review is hereby reprinted, with permission.

Unintended Consequences, John Ross
(Accurate Press, \$28.95)

Reviewed by Claire Wolfe

There is a scene about one quarter into **Unintended Consequences** that sums up everything both interesting and objectionable about this book. If you like the scene, you will probably like the book. If not, not.

The protagonist stumbles upon a gang rape in progress in the woods. He kills three of the four perpetrators. The author tells us the bullet weights, the manufacturer of the bullets, the manufactur-

ing technique, the brand and model of the hero's gun, the length of its barrel, the muzzle velocities of the shots, and even the fact that the gun has a 24-karat gold insert in the front sight. We learn the physics of various disintegrating body parts.

Then, with the tortured victim still tied to a log, the would-be rescuer has a conversation with the surviving rapist. The rapist admits he and his friends planned to murder the girl and throw her body to their hogs. He expresses regret merely that he hadn't had his turn before the rape was interrupted. At last, the "hero" reaches down and cuts the bindings holding the girl. He does not remove the gag from her mouth. He does not speak to her. He does not look

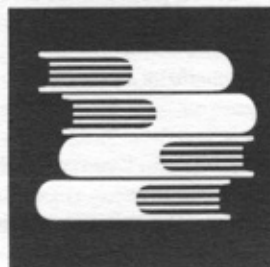
at her. He does not check her condition. He does not comfort her. He does not attempt to clothe or cover her. He does not take her to safety. He leaves her in the care of the rapist.

In the world of author John Ross, neither logic nor humanity play any role. In all of this rambling, 861-page book, there is not a single character who appears to have a moral center or an ounce of sense.

There is also little plot, no character development and no scene setting.

What there is, is plenty of technical information about firearms, and a wealth of information about the way gun laws are being used to steal American freedoms. It is this latter facet that turns this novel from a

—Continued next page



...and, in praise of L. Neil Smith's Lando Calrissian novels

The second installment the Star Wars Saga, *The Empire Strikes Back*, was notable for two things. One, it featured a heartbreaker of a cliffhanger ending, and two, it introduced us to a suave, debonair, and thoroughly intriguing scoundrel by the name of Lando Calrissian.

For the first time, we were seeing a different breed of spacer in the Star Wars universe. Rather than a wisecracking cynical hero, hard-bitten bounty hunter, or even an idealistic, purpose-driven rebel, Lando was something else entirely. A character introduced relatively late in the film, Calrissian not only plunges our heroes into their darkest moments (and yet he makes us almost understand why), but then turns things around in the nick of time to save Luke and the Princess and, very nearly, Han Solo. In the film's closing moments, Lando is even setting out to redeem himself on that score. A smooth-talking, self-made spacer, walking the razor's edge between cold self-interest and loyalty, between the powers of light and darkness. Lando proved to be a man capable of dealing with both and beholden to neither, but able to do the right thing in the end.

In 1984, Del Rey Books released a trilogy of Lando's early adventures written by libertarian science fiction author L. Neil Smith. In these three novels, Smith brought a different

facet of adventure into the Star Wars Universe, chronicling Lando's earliest exploits following his acquisition of the Millennium Falcon. Like the Han Solo books before them, **Lando Calrissian and the Mindharp of Sharu**, followed by **Lando Calrissian and the Flamewind of Oseon**, with **Lando Calrissian and the Starcave of ThonBoka** to round out the trilogy, showed readers different, unimagined aspects of the Star Wars Universe. They explored the development of a character only known to them in the films.

The Lando books provided a more sophisticated, esoteric kind of adventure. As such, they originally had trouble catching on with fans, who expected pure slam-bang, shoot-'em-up space opera. Having only a limited original release, the books have since found a niche in re-release with the old guard Star Wars fans, who often describe them as "surprisingly entertaining to re-read."

The books have also caught on with the new generation of Star Wars enthusiasts, who have enjoyed Lando's continued appearances in the post-Trilogy comics and novels.

Back in '83, Smith wrote all three novels in a crunch, literally in a matter of months, as a favor, he once told me, to the now late and sorely missed, Brian Daley.*

Three novels in as many months...

It's taken me nearly two years on and off, to complete a gaming sourcebook based on the worlds and concepts he created. Part of my tardiness can be attributed to conflicting work schedules, a bit more to... procrastination.

But the rest...to my desire, no, "obligation" to do justice to his unique corner of Uncle George's universe.

If you know Neil, you know what I'm talking about...those textures and irreverencies that comprise the subtle, but unmistakable Libertarian flavor that heart and soul of, not only Neil's work, but arguably, all free spacers in science fiction.

So, I now follow his steps to keep Lando true and to show that you can't keep a good scoundrel down.

—on either side of the page.

—Brian Thomas 9/6/96

[* I'm very touched by Brian's testament, but feel I must correct one minor error. I did not write the Lando Books as a favor to my friend Brian Daley, but because I needed the money. I was offered the job, I'm told, because Brian (completely innocently) fell out of favor with a faction within LucasFilm. The complete story is very complicated and even more stupid, but it was Brian Daley who did me the favor, by paving the way.—L. Neil Smith]

Continued from previous page

forgettable compendium of trivia and trash into a tragedy. We need a novel that eloquently defends gun rights; that reaches our brains by appealing to our hearts. This book could have been it. It is most emphatically not.

Unintended Consequences is sweeping and ambitious. It begins in 1906 and carries us into the present. The lives of several fictional characters gradually weave together, focused on a gun collector named Henry Bowman. These lives are counterpointed with those of historical characters—from gun designer John Moses Browning to Randy Weaver.

This should have worked. The real-life incidents gave Ross good opportunity to examine the wholesome use of guns and the abuses perpetrated against gun owners.

However, for the first 600-plus pages, Ross simply presents us with a string of unrelated, or thinly related, scenes involving firearms, followed by scenes in which people talk about firearms.

Logic is missing. A local cop goes on a federal raid—without even asking what agency he's accompanying or what variety of criminal he might expect to encounter. A rising young New York lawyer establishes rapport with a rising young Wall Street stock analyst by taking him shooting—shooting rats—at a dump.

There are no intimate relationships. People simply do things in each other's presence. Women (with one exception) serve as wallpaper behind macho, adolescent bondings.

Occasionally, the characters kill somebody. In every case, the killings are so exaggerated they come across as nothing but fantasies.

The "good guys" kill and torture as sadistically as the villains—in fact, more so. In what may be the most egregious scene in the book, a young woman, believing her life is in danger from a sexual sadist, pulls a long, wooden hair pin from her chignon and jams it into her

tormentor's eye. It's gruesome, but you do what you have to do.

Then, however, Ross depicts this alleged victim mounting the dying man and thrusting herself to orgasm as she gleefully "stirs" the stick in his eye. John Wayne Gacy would have been proud.

The actual plot doesn't begin until after page 600, when Henry shoots some raiding federal agents, then goes underground. Spurred on by Henry and his friends, people all over the country begin to rise.

Unfortunately, even after the action begins, logic stays behind. Henry spends all night torturing, videotaping, killing, then dismembering the feds, without a thought that anyone might show up to check on their whereabouts. (What, these people had no radios, no backups?)

The president and top officials meet, in scene after scene, to try to puzzle out who might be leading the growing rebellion. Not once do they suspect the missing Henry or his missing friends whose homes were being raided by the ATF on the night the agents disappeared and the killing began.

There are some isolated scenes that evoke a Second Amendment supporter's most pleasurably perverse fantasies. Characters representing Janet Reno, Charles Schumer and Howard Metzenbaum meet creative and painful ends. But you won't believe these scenes for a minute.

The irony, amid all this gore and mindless action, is that Ross obviously thought he was showing members of "the gun culture" as this country's best people. However, these morally null individuals are "the best" at only one thing: skill with firearms.

It is "good" to shoot a buffalo with a perfectly placed shot. It is "good" to set a world record for shooting holes in flying objects. It is "good" to know every technical detail of an obscure brand of machine gun. Nothing else in the

entire scope of human life matters.

Even in the midst of the long-awaited action, the villains serve mainly to enable the author to strut his knowledge of weaponry. In a climactic scene, an FBI agent, having just watched a colleague's head being blown off, and facing the same fate, doesn't beg for his life, snarl in defiance or try to maneuver his way out of death. No. He asks, "Why'd you use a 20mm instead of a regular rifle?"

That is the ultimate problem with this book: Ross is so wrapped up in his hobby he forgets his first job is to tell a story. Even though I am demonstrably a member of the "gun culture" Ross is writing about, ennui was my response to these constant and egregious displays of knowledge.

Not merely ennui, but disgust. And that is the biggest "unintended consequence" of the novel.

Read **Unintended Consequences**, if you wish, for the volumes of legal and technical information it contains. Or enjoy it as the macho-man's equivalent to a romance novel. But if you're looking for the *Atlas Shrugged* of the 90s, or the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the 20th Century, you'll just have to go on searching.

Claire Wolfe is a corporate communications writer who has also written four business books under another name. This year she'll be publishing two books under her own name: *101 Things to Do 'til the Revolution* (Loompanics Unlimited, November 1996) and *The Guerrilla Politics Manual* (Gun Owners of America, co-authored with K. Parker Stoops, Charles Curley and others).

Paths to Otherwhere, James P. Hogan (Baen Books 0-671-87710-0 \$22.00, 416pp, hardcover) February, 1996. Cover by Gary Ruddell.

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

For close to two decades James Hogan has lived and written on the edge of scientific discovery. In contrast to popular fears of science and scientists, Hogan always has made heroes out of scientists, celebrating their actions and discoveries.

We have grown up in this century immersed and conditioned to the idea



—Continued on page 12

The War That Never Ends

Forward to Piers Anthony's novel **Volk**

by Brad Linaweaver

Piers Anthony is a writer of passion. Something has been growing in his work for years—and this is not a reference to fecundity. His bestsellers occupy whole shelves in the chain bookstores! The largeness to which I refer is a special kind of empathy. He sees the universe from a variety of points of view but always with an emphasis on youth. Adults know all about the pain of loss. The young still feel the pain of longing.

There is no literature without passion. Yes, I said *literature*. Academic snobs automatically discount a writer who has the temerity to be popular with teenagers. Their attitude seems to be that Piers Anthony is the guy who made a fortune selling puns to adolescents. They are immune to the cleverness of the Xanth books. Word play offends people who do not want to play. Nor are the old at heart likely to appreciate his best science fiction and fantasy.

So when Piers Anthony turns to historical subjects, and produces *Serious Novels* by any conceivable standard, he faces the challenge of finding the right audience. It helps to educate young readers who then grow up to read the author's major work. William Morrow published such a novel, **Tatham Mound**, about Native Americans. The publicity campaign was virtually non-existent compared to the treatment afforded his genre series. At least **Tatham Mound** was published in hardback and attracted critical attention.

For me, it created a hunger for another historical novel by Piers Anthony. Nothing satisfies this appetite better than what you now have in your possession thanks to Pulpless.Com. Anthony has turned to one of history's true turning points to tell an unforgettable story.

Volk is a masterpiece, a love story set during World War II. It is certain to arouse controversy because it is not a hate story. Without giving away any of the carefully developed plot, the theme may be safely discussed in this foreword. **Volk** brings together three people

who become close friends despite profound differences in belief. Quality is a Quaker who volunteers to help the sick and needy in war-torn Spain. She is a woman who in her quiet way demolishes the insults of those who doubt the courage of a true pacifist. Lane is an American patriot who wants to go to England and be a fighter pilot with the R.A.F. He anticipates eventual hostilities against the Third Reich. After all, the Spanish Civil War was the warm-up act for the most horrible war in history. There were a number of prescient Americans like Lane who couldn't help but see the handwriting on the wall. So far, so good. Right?

The remaining member of the trio is Ernst, a Nazi. No, I don't mean the clichéd "good German;" who often appears in fiction set during this period. Ernst is a party member, a true believer in National Socialism. A Nazi. There is no deception between these good comrades. Lane and Quality know what Ernst is. So how can a woman in the Society of Friends be friends with two warriors, one of whom serves a perfidious regime? It takes a writer with the skill of Piers Anthony to provide the answer. Sometimes it is the person who feels emotions most deeply who is willing to think through a situation to its logical end, and act accordingly.

Anthony's characters are not reworkings of stock characters from other people's fiction. He draws on life and a close study of personality, a sure way to get into trouble. **Volk** is the kind of novel Victor Hugo would write if he'd lived in our times. A true Romantic can make a personal possession into a symbol of anything he chooses, inverting or reinforcing the original intent of the symbol, baptizing or exorcising a symbol, reinterpreting it as befits the ideology of the human heart. So it is that Ernst's silver swastika takes on a meaning undreamed of by Adolf Hitler.

Come to think of it, Victor Hugo might have had trouble placing a novel this

honest about material normally treated with a host of considerations taking precedence over characterization. Piers Anthony did his homework. The historical figures ring true. For example, no movie has come close to capturing the real Reinhard Heydrich whose style was both urbane and sinister. Generally, the movies give us interpretations that would barely achieve credibility in a cartoon. When Anthony insists on reality here it bodes well for believability in the rest of the narrative.

Which leads to another problem. Some readers may find **Volk** too convincing. A doctorate in history shouldn't be necessary to figure out that in a war there will be good people and bad people on all sides. Common sense should be enough. But as the night follows the day, and black markets follow Total Victory, so too does ill treatment of prisoners of war happen no matter who is in charge.

Sometimes the losers die. That's why it's better to win. **Volk** shows us that for some German prisoners at the end of hostilities, it was better to fall into British hands than American or French or Russian hands.

Hold on. Did I say American? We all know Germans didn't want to surrender to Russians. That's well documented. Besides, we've seen this acted out in uncounted numbers of Hollywood films. That's where most of us get our history. But as already noted, Piers Anthony did his homework. **Volk** would be a great novel even without the unpleasant history lesson about certain American-run camps at the end of the war. There will probably be critics who complain that the British come off too well.

The research and expert storytelling combine to make **Volk** a modern classic. Thanks to Pulpless.Com, we finally get to read this important book.

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Brad Linaweaver is author of the critically acclaimed *Moon of Ice*, about what the world might be like if the Nazis had won World War II. He is also author of 50 short stories, some radio and film scripts, *Sliders: The Novel* and is co-author with Dafydd ab Hugh of the best selling *Doom* novels based on the popular video game from id Software.

Volk is available at <http://www.pulpless.com>

Short story reviews

"Sam Hall," by Poul Anderson. First published in 1953 in *Astounding Science Fiction*. Reprinted in *The Best of Poul Anderson* by Pocket Books.
Reviewed by William Howell

Over 40 years ago, Poul Anderson penned a description of one of the great and enduring libertarian nightmares: the totalitarian state coupled with an all encompassing computer network. Annoyed by the petty regulations of what was even then a very statist Europe during a bicycle trip, Anderson carried this trend to its logical conclusion in a future, totalitarian America, producing "Sam Hall."

The story centers around Thornberg, the head technician operating "Matilda," the great mainframe containing the central citizen database. Matilda monitors all aspects of daily life, recording every transaction, every long distance travel, every possible misstep which might alert the authorities to suspect activity.

After a distant relative is arrested on suspicion of subversive activities, Thornberg uses his access to conceal his relationship to him. Consumed with guilt over having dis-

owned his relative, Thornberg releases his anger at the system by creating a fictitious individual in the database, named Sam Hall after a murderer in an old English drinking song. As the story progresses, this non-existent mystery man becomes the focal point of discontent. As Thornberg continues to embellish his reputation by slyly altering computer reports, the rebel underground begins to use him as their rally cry. Eventually, the forces of freedom (the "Libertarians!"—How's that for accurate prediction?) overthrow the police state and Matilda is destroyed.

Almost 50 years ago, Poul Anderson was articulating the concerns being voiced today by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the Electronic Privacy Information Center, and others. This cautionary tale regarding the power which would belong to anyone who could actually control the flow of information in this country reads very well today, though some of the technology has been superseded, of course. As always, Anderson builds his story around the humanity of his characters and how they respond to challenges they face. A final word from Poul Anderson: "The duty of those who love free-

dom is to ward off tyrants both outside and inside their countries. Then perhaps revolution will never be necessary."

"Hackers," by Rick Cook. *Analog*, 1989
Reviewed by Thomas Cron

A story was published in *Analog* in April, 1989 that one would think would've been taken to heart instantly by libertarians. But, instead, it's virtually forgotten. This story is "Hackers," by Rick Cook. It's set on alternative timeline, where the Sputnik program failed and space race never happened; individual rocket-racers and organizations put people into space. The National Geographic Society put men on the moon in 1975. The narrator hints that people are regularly exploring the moon in 1989, space stations are in place, and man is planning to go to Mars.

"Hackers" concerns Crazy Eddie, an astronaut from our world who wants very much to have one more ride into space. He sneaks aboard the spaceship belonging to the narrator and his friend, gets his ride, then brings the ship down safely when it's crippled in space.

Eddie's story of his origins as related to the rocketmen is powerfully told; when he says that his government spent billions on

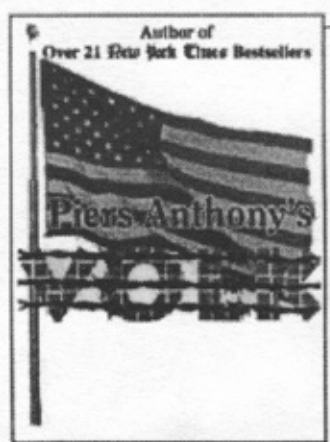
space and got little in return, one is forcefully reminded of America's failure to do much with space.

Cook's point is that individual effort is cheaper and better than the wasteful government, which spends billions and achieves less. Libertarians should like this story, but they'll have to find the issue of *Analog* in which it appeared; it's never been reprinted, to my knowledge.

Brad Linaweaver is pulling *Land Beyond Summer* at the end of the year, so download your copy now—Editor.



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TO PUBLISH THESE BOOKS.



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Paths to Otherwhere review, continued from page 9

and reality of Big Science as much as Big Government to the point where science seems almost impossible without some form of government support. Where there is financial support it also follows that there is control. In such a controlled environment pure scientific discovery (or at least, useful, profitable scientific discovery that will benefit mankind) falls prey to science for weapons, or political power.

Rather than simply castigate or dismiss government, Hogan strives more to realize a world where science and the free exchange of ideas are positive realities. His focus is on the individuals who create and deal with science, and the actual forms of science, theoretical and applied, with which they work.

Paths to Otherwhere examines the theories of parallel universes, or the multiverse, as Hogan terms the multitude of parallel worlds that exist. Hogan employs an interesting twist to this travel. Rather than a physical transfer as seen in the Fox TV series, *Sliders* (which,

incidentally, recently was novelized by Brad Linaweaver), the jump into alternate worlds in Hogan's book is mental. Individuals along one time-line jump into the body of their 'analog' in another time-line.

Such a body take-over in itself raises a multitude of questions and possibilities, some of which Hogan deals with in admirable fashion, but others that seem strangely unresolvable in a worldview that respects the individual's self-identity and self-ownership.

Otherwhere takes place against a backdrop of a near-future America, where a group of scientists are brought together by the US Government to study the potentials of the multiverse in weapons and espionage. A group of these scientists strike out on their own to reach other worlds in the multiverse, first to test the scientific possibilities, and then later to think about actually moving to one of these worlds to escape the all-intrusiveness of their government employers and wrecked world in which

they live. Interestingly, and perhaps sadly, all but one of the worlds they find turn out to be variants of their own nightmarish reality, or worse.

When they find a decent world, which they term Otherwhere because of its near perfect society, it is a world I believe Hogan himself finds dear to his heart. Otherwhere is a place where science is free and respected, though not idolized like some pro-science utopias. Government is of little concern in everyday life; individuals are more concerned about living and enjoying their lives, not ruling the lives of others. Of course, ambitious people from their own government try to take over this world for their own use, and threaten the scientists/discoverers.

The book is a great read that raises more questions than it answers. Hogan's **Otherwhere** is a refreshing utopia with potential and hope.

A slightly different version of this review appeared in the Worldcon Daily Frefanzine, edited by Samuel Edward Konkin III, at LA CON III, the 1996 Worldcon.



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602 Purple Sage Dr
Round Rock, TX 78681