ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

SCIENCE FICTION

The Water Thief
Nicholas Lamar Soutter
CreateSpace
978-1-4679-7227-7
Three Stars (out of Five)

Boston writer Nicholas Lamar Soutter acknowledges in his new novel, *The Water Thief*, the canon of dystopian works, with clever allusions to Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, an ending homage to George Orwell's *1984*, and a brilliant rebuttal of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*.

In a world owned by corporations—perceptions management executive and corporate asset belonging to the Ackerman Brothers Securities Corporation—Charles Thatcher is starting to wonder if there is more to life than ruthless competition. After a woman accused of stealing water vanishes due to his exaggerated report portraying her as a revolutionary bent on destroying the current corporatocracy, guilt drives Thatcher to learn more about her. What he discovers is an underground movement as seditious as the one he imagined. This alternative view of how the world might operate intrigues him, but his association with the underground is dangerous. The company's secret police have eyes and ears everywhere. Or, just as fatal, his futures value could collapse. Either way, he runs the risk of the company dropping him into lye vats to be rendered into soap and sold.

The Water Thief is a good book that has the potential to be a great book. Soutter writes well. He tells an interesting story with a deeper message. He balances the philosophical exploration of his protagonist and corporate antagonists against the right amount of action and adventure. And he never world builds for the sake of world building: each detail is carefully chosen to reveal more about the characters and their universe. Even the cover design, with its simple economy, is perfect for the book.

But that's only the beginning of creating a great book. The second and more difficult part is editing. Poor editing detracts from a story by undermining the author's authority. It makes it harder for readers to suspend their disbelief and to buy into the writer's world. Inconsistent punctuation and garbled sentences frustrate the narrative experience, as in the following example: "They had the right to blackmail, murder, extort, survey nearly anyone in order to colleagues' fidelity to Ackerman" frustrate the narrative experience. In the same way

that a great artist builds on what came before, so do the skills of an experienced editor.

Soutter holds degrees in philosophy and psychology from Clark University. *The Water Thief* is his first published novel.

Joseph Thompson