

Destructive Criticism on Heinlein

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by

Douglas Webster

Since it seems the habit to becloud the mind with doubtful aphorisms, I'll start off by mentioning that you can fool most of the fans most of the time, while there are some of them who refuse to be fooled at all. A common method of fooling is to produce vague personal opinions dressed up as criticism with high-falutin arguments. I escape any charge of this by criticising the 'criticism', not stories.

An example was the critique by Ted Carnell in TT7. I take it Ted's a young reader, one of what RGM calls 'new fans', since his name wasn't in the recent list of Fandom's GPO and hasn't appeared since. This is born out by uncertainty in mentioning authors, etc., and jumping between an intimate 'Bob' and a needlessly formal 'Mr. Campbell'. He is also fooled into believing that Heinlein writes psychological yarns on politics. Now of the few Heinlein stories I have read there have been several psychological dashes, which is in itself commendable. But the psychology has been of a tiro, and the results screamingly funny.

"Sixth Column" contained one of the funniest dashes. You may remember the fellow Calhoun (?) had been making himself generally a nuisance, was a brainy devil, and would be difficult for the author to dispose of. So Heinlein had him go loopy and imagine he was the god Mota, (whom he knew to be hypothetical). This was directly contrary to what small amount of character Calhoun had been given, and if anyone doesn't think so I'll be glad to argue it out psychologically.

On both counts - politics and psychology - I think young Carnell has been fooled by the belief he mentions himself. Namely, RH is 'over his head'. Ergo, RH is an admirable guy. But Einstein's relativity theory is 'way over my head, and that's no reason to say Einstein's an amazingly clever chap and relativity is the cat's pyjamas: on the contrary, until such time as I am able to understand Einstein mathematically, it's all the more reason to regard his theory with a fair scepticism. I have read two Smith stories (and have no intention of reading more) and am prostrate in admiration of Ted's comparison between Heinlein politics and Smith galaxies though maybe not for the same reason.

Sam Youd put what I was thinking more succinctly than I could, when he said 'Probably they think they're getting sugar-coated politics now, instead of sugar-coated science.' Verily so . . .

As you know, I was objecting to Heinlein long before the other chaps thought of it. I think he's got a lot in him - much more talent than most of them. But he's doubly annoying because he never produces his best. "They" in UNKNOWN contained a peach of an idea which could have made an extremely fascinating fantasy yarn; yet Heinlein just toyed about with it for a few pages and let it drop. Criminal . . . Quite naturally Campbell, who is a very astute editor indeed, will play up good and novel points for the readers. But there are poor points as well.

But despite his insistance on fallacious criticisms (count his 'superbs's and superlatives) I think there's probably a bright future ahead of your frined Ted Carnell. He has enthusiasm. Some day, I should

n't be surprised, he'll be a real top-notch fan. And don't forget the beer, don't forget the beer. For my Aunt Jobiska says everyone knows that a Pobble is better without his toes.

PERHAPS we had better explain that we accept no responsibility for any actions resulting from published matter. And also that the editor does not necessarily agree with the contents of said matter. (I'll say that he don't, and then some!) If we were very lowbrow we might endeavour to break up the continuity of these comments by inserting our own, personal views on various statements; but no, we let him say his say - uncensored, you'll note, DU. Now we leave you to fight it out amongst yourselves, lads, in someone else's sheet! And Ted, I'm looking for you in future on Heinlein's side in this affair -- go to it boys!!

Maybe, if you are at all observant, you are wondering why we want this discussion carried on in someone else's sheet? Some of you probably know; and if you don't, I think that you will find out if you re-read your FIDO. So.... Greetings from the Navy, Fans; Hail and Farewell --- THE TACKS is at an end. To American readers - thanks fanzine (or fanag) editors who have sent me copies of their 'zines in the past, presumably in exchange for this. If, in future, you have a spare copy of the apple of your eye, and nothing to do with it, it will still be welcome at the old address... I'll have a darn good try to repay you fellows someday, somehow. (Low Martin - what's happened to my DENVENTION stuff?)

My, my! Was that an Editorial? Whew!

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REVIEW is unavoidably absent, as we simply have nothing to review - September ASTOUNDING has not yet arrived; well to say that we have nothing is rather incorrect, we have a copy of Fall '41 PLANET, this however we have lent out without tackling it - the Paul cover is enough to waken even the greatest Paulite from his sleep. Then we have nos. 150 & 151 of FANTASY NEWS, the former being the Annish, 12 pages. They convey a news item or two that may be of interest to you lads. UNKNOWN WORLDS' first feature novel is a de Camp-Pratt collaboration, "The Land of Unreason". Doc Smith's sequel to "Gray Lensman" is to appear as a four-part serial starting in November ASTOUNDING - length 108,000 words. Fred Pohl has been released from the editorship of ASTONISHING & SUPER, being replaced by Alden H. Norton. SCIENCE & FUTURE FICTION combine with the October issue. L. Ron Hubbard has received a specialist's commission in the US Navy. (Thanks, Will, and FW; I definitely won't do it again!)

OOOOOOOOOO

May I reprint some more? Thanks, I will - presenting a couple of pieces of poesy that are slightly related to the present situation.

Reprinted from July '41

RAW-ATIC (thanks Cab), a little jingle by Archer Cusp:

And from another; original, source, * esn *

I'd rather have science than fiction,
I'd rather have plots than have diction,
And I'll be a fan as long as I can,
And that's till I'm caught by conscription!

The sun goes down in golden glory,
Its colours faded in song and story-
The tranquil hush of twilight falls,
While through the dusk a nightbird calls,

***** "What a -----y dump this is!"

TT was typed at 31, Bezwel Road, Downham Market, Norfolk, by DON J Doughty. Thanks very much for the duplicating & distributing, Michael.