PITFCS

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PART 2

At the beginning and end of this story, Holger Carlsen, a young, husky, American-trained engineer, is fighting the Nazis as a member of the Danish underground. In between, whisked mysteriously to another universe ("Wave mechanics already admits the possibility of one entire cosmos coexisting with ours"), he finds himself opposing, instead, Middle World giants, trolls, witches and warlocks. His conscious objective is to return to his own universe, but he soon learns that he can do this only by first discovering his new identity in Faerie land. He is variously helped, impeded, and wooed along the way by a lovely young lady who is also a swan. It is an imaginative yarn, told with skill and polish. (End of quotation)

Boy! That first paragraph gets me right here. God help us all, he's bitching because the story is not stereotyped! And does he really think that the categories of intellectuals, adult readers of mysteries, and teen-agers seeking fictional adventure are all mutually exclusive? Well, at least he like the story.

A request for a favor: I would be obliged if someone would send me the unexpurgated version of "The Bastard King of England". I have the Oscar Brand recording, but I know it has been shortened and bowdlerized, as I have heard, but don't remember much of, a longer and (of course) dirtier version. * * * * * * * * * * * *

DEPARTMENT X1: SF CRITICISM AND COMMENT FROM OTHER PUBLICATIONS

ACCIDENTALS AND NOMICS
by james blish

This column is more than likely to be a ragbag, on principle,. Some of the comments I hope to make in it will find their way in from scratch, so to speak; but inevitably others will be stimulated by what I read in Warhoon, and still others by what I read in other fanzines. That third category, I anticipate, will save me a lot of time and postage. In fairness, I'll do my best to quote enough from The Other Fanzine to make my comments intelligible, or at least to show why I can't make them intelligible, and give specific dates and page references.

To begin with, however, in fond memory of Seacon member #335 -- and in view of the fact that my remarks on Algis Budrys' "Rogue Moon" seem to have enraged everybody in fandom with the possible exception of AJ himself -- I've got a book on hand, Robert A. Heinlein's "A Stranger In A Strange Land".

Price and pagination of this new adult novel by Heinlein can be specified at this writing -- this review is being written from a set of galley proofs. Nevertheless, I can say without doubt that the book is l-o-n-g: 141 galleys, with the text proper starting on galley #5. The bound book hence will run to more than 400 closely-set pages. If this is not the longest single science-fiction novel of the last three decades, at least it has very few peers.

Despite its length, it seems crowded, and for good reason: it is about everything.* In the course of unfolding the plot -- which is itself very rich in incident -- Heinlein explores politics, aesthetics, ethics, morals, theology, the occult, history, economics, a double handful of sciences, and a whole hatful of subsidiary matters. The result is not only impossible to do justice to in a review, but almost impossible to describe or characterize; I hardly know where to begin.

In such circumstances it is the part of wisdom to follow the author's lead and begin at the beginning. The book is s-f, as the opening sentence establishes firmly: "Once upon a time there was a Martian named Valentine Michael Smith." Smith is the bastard of an adultery which occurred on the first manned expedition to Mars, and the

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* I am told that the MS. was longer, but that the author did his own cutting.

sole survivor. (It is quickly established that the book is not a juvenile, either.) He has been raised from infancy by the Martians, and thinks of himself as one of them. He is the stranger of the title, and the Earth, to which his brought back at about the age of 25, is the strange land.

Ostensibly, the novel tells the story of his education, career and fate on Earth, a standard gambit for a satirical novel with a long and distinguished lineage. Heinlein, however, does not follow the usual procedure of showing how ridiculous our Earth customs are to Smith's Martian eyes, except in very small part. This role is allotted to an Earthman, one more in Heinlein's huge gallery of marvellously crusty eccentrics "Jubal E. Harshaw, LL.B., M.D., ScD., bon vivant, gourmet, sybarite, popular author extraordinary, and neo-pessimist philosopher," who takes Smith in when the heat becomes too great for the fledgling. and rapidly takes on the role of Smith's foster-father on Earth. As a popular author, Jubal sits beside a swimming pool in the Poconos dictating amazingly soppy confessions, love stories, and anything else he can turn into money, to three beautiful secretaries who also help run his household; as a "neo-pessimist philosopher," he is charged with interpreting everything on Earth to Smith, to everybody else in the plot, and to the reader. He is livelier as a philosopher, but much more expert at soppy copy; of this, more later.

As for Smith, he is often amazed at Earth customs but tends to be uncritical, largely because it is Martian to grok every experience (the words means to drink, to drink in, to understand, and a host of related concepts) in the hope of embracing it, rather than rejecting it. Thus he is enabled to accept many Earth customs for which Jubal has nothing but scorn, and sometimes seems to Jubal to be in danger of being swallowed up in one or another of them. And in fact one does swallow him: sex, which on Mars in completely sensationless, accidental and uninteresting.

From about this point on, "A Stranger In A Strange Land" becomes so heated on this subject that it may well inspire twice as many would-be book-burners as "Starship Troopers" did. Heinlein supplies no on-stage orgies, no anatomical details, and no woman solely as a sexual object; indeed, his attitude is about as far toward the opposite pole as it is possible to go, short of "Barchester Towers". I choose my example carefully, for Heinlein's treatment of the subject is confessedly, avowedly, specifically reverent -- and this very reverence has produced the most forthright and far-out treatment in the whole history of s-f, guaranteed to turn blue noses positively white.

At this point I am going to abandon the plot, which has already developed as many knots as a gill-net, and which in any event can be depended upon to take care of itself. It goes, as good Heinlein plots always do, and this is a good one. Now, however, I think I have reached a position from which to characterize the novel:
It is religious.

No communicant to a currently established religion is likely to think it anything but blasphemous, but its dominant subject is religion, and its intellectual offerings and innovations are primarily religious too. The sex, the politics, the sciences, the action, all are essentially contributory; the religious material is central. The religion is a synthetic one, of which Smith is the messiah (or perhaps only the prophet), and the main task of the novel is to show it as sane, desirable and exalting -- in contrast to both the systems of large established orders such as Islam and traditional Christianity (toward all of which Heinlein is sympathetic and apparently well informed) and those of highly commercial enterprises like the California nut-cults (some features of which, with Smith's Martian assistance, he also manges to view with at least moderate tolerance).

Heinlein-Smith's eclectric religion is a fascinating pot pourri, amazingly complicated to have come from a single brain rather than from centuries of accumulated haggling and hagiography; it contains something for everybody, or bravely gives that appearance, though by the same token it contains something repulsive for everybody too. I am not going to say which parts I like and which I don't, this being a purely private act of value-judgment which must be reserved by each individual reader to himself; but the purely intellectual parts of the structure are well worth some analysis, particularly since they are often in conflict with each other as are those of all other Scriptures I have ever encountered.

Heinlein-Smith's system is pluralistic; it admits of no single God, but instead says "Thou art God"; and if you are capable of understanding this sentence, then you are God whether you agree with the sentence or not. In other words, every being capable of thinking, understanding, embracing, is God, and that is all the God there is. Since a proper God cannot really die, survival after death is granted by the system (dead Martians continue to hang around the planet composing art-works and giving advice, but dead Earthlings go somewhere else, location not given); Heinlein shows directly (that is, without the interevention of Smith) that the dead are busy running the universe, as befits gods, and suggests in at least two places -- though not explicitly -- that they are at least occasionally reincarneated as "field agents". Because all who grok are God, there is no punishment in the here-after; even the worst villain in this life graduates directly after death to being as assistant Archangel, though he may find himself not in a position to give order to someone who was less villainous than he.*

Thus far, then, the system resembles that of the "Perelandra" trilogy in its especial emphasis on intelligence and empathy (you will remember that C.S. Lewis says that any hnua or reasoning being is a special child of God regardless of its shape or demense); it also includes much of Schweitzer's "reverence for life" whether thinking or not, as is demonstrated early in the book when Smith is reluctant to walk on grass until he groks that it grows to be walked on; but there is no overall deity. The suggestion of reincarnation, if I am not misreading Heinlein in raising this question at all, is a common feature of Eastern religions, and I think it would naturally appeal to a writer trained in the sciences because it is conservative of souls, thus preventing the afterlife from becoming overcrowded beyond the limits of infinity and Judaic, though without Judaism's 600-fold intellectual modesty on the subject; and the absence of any sort of punishment in the hereafter might be traced to many sects, a number of them Christian (see for example the heresy of Origen, who maintained that such was the pity of God that if there is a Hell it must be empty).

Now, what are the implications of this for the living? That is to say, how should we behave if all this should be true? Here the Heinlein-Smith religion, asked to supply its ethical imperatives, becomes a little murky, but at least a few

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*My flippancy of tone is not intended to denigrate the subject-matter, but to reflect the treatment. Like George O. Smith, Harry Stine and other engineers-turned-writers, Heinlein sometimes tries to prove his characters wits and sophisticates by transcribing page after page of the painful travelling-salesman banter which passes back and forth over real drawing boards and spec sheets. There is not an intolerable amount of this in "A Stranger In A Strange Land", considering the length of the whole, but unfortunately the conversations of the dead in heaven are conducted entirely in this style. Though I value the Laughing Buddha for his laughter, I don't want him to sound like his about to sell me a set of vacuum-cleaner fixtures as soon as I'm suitably off guard.

doctrines can be fished up. Since there is no death -- only "discorporation," A MaryBakerEddyism if ever I saw one -- murder is not necessarily a crime. It is under some circumstances wrong to push a soul on into the afterlife if it doesn't want to go, but if the adept "groks wrongness" (for instance, if the offender is threatening someone else's life and no easy alternatives present themselves) then he may kill without compunction. Smith frequently does this; he's the bloodsheddingest holy man since Mahomet, though he is delicate enough not to leave behind any actual bloodstains. The system implies that the true adept will always make the right decision in this matter; and besides, even if he's wrong. he won't be punished. Not even the gas chamber can punish him, since for the true adept discorporation can be no more than inconvenience or an inartistic exit.

In many other ways the system is ethically even more permissive, and it has no visible use at all for custom or morality. Because all experiences must be grokked to the fullest and embraced, and because the act of every grokking being is the act of a God, it would be very difficult to predict under what circumstances an adept would "grok wrongness", other than in circumstances when his own will or desire is about to be thwarted. Heinlein-Smith shortcircuit this objection to some extent by making the sharing of experience (which equals the sharing of Godhood) superior to solo grokking. From this value-judgment emerges the novel's emphasis upon promiscuity, communal mating, orgy and voyeurism; there is an extended defense of the joys of strip-teasing and feelthy pictures which is both extremely funny (Heinlein's wit is surer here than it is almost anywhere else in the book) and rather touching (because it emerges from the completely unclouded naivete of Smith, who does not yet recognize, and indeed never wholly recognizes, how much heartbreak can be bound up even on the peripheries of sex), but the same value-judgment also allows Heinlein-Smith to read many people out of the Party as people it is not possible to grok with, and who therefore can be rejected and discorported (" murdered" is a word I am fond of in this context) because they are boobs. (And besides, boob, "thou art God" and it doesn't really hurt.)

One of the more curious acceptances of the system is cannibalism. In part this emerges out of the givens of the plot: the Martians conserve food as they conserve water, and after an adult Martian discorporates, his friends eat him before he spoils, praising as they do so both is accomplishments and his flavor. This Martian custom is explicitly, if delicately, carried over into the Heinlein-Smith religion on Earth: In very nearly the last scene of the novel, Smith deliberately cuts off a finger, and his father-surrogate and his closest friend make soup of it. (It turns out to need a little seasoning; one suspects that so critical a remark would have been blasphemy on Mars, but the pun for once is pungent.) This scene has been prepared by a long analysis, by Jubal Harshaw, of the role ritual cannibalism has played in almost all the great Western and near-Western religions, in which the well-known present-day facts are buttressed at length from Fraser.* Heinlein, also a very thorough-going Freudian --

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* A minor puzzle is why the author has made Jubal so tentative on this point, expecially in view of the enthusiastic way the novel tramples on toes considerably more sensitive. I do not see that it would have offended anybody -- and it would have strengthened Jubal's case considerably -- to have pointed out that in most major communions of the Christian faith, "Take My body and eat; take My blood and drink" is not only a symbolic command, but also and most explicitly a literal one, since the wafer and wine of the Eucharist not only represent but become the body and blood of Christ through the miracle of transsubstantiation (a point perfectly clear to every medieval Englishman through the much more vigorous, if more homely word "to housle"). However the character Jubal is speaking to presumable belongs to a Middle Western Protestant sect which retains the ceremony but does not expouse transsubstatiation; a poor excuse, all the same, for dodging this point in favor of Frazer, whose doctrines are preached in no church watsoever.

as has been evident ever since "Gulf" -- does not mean this equivalent of love, death and breakfast to pass unnoticed, but it more interesting for its unorthodoxy than for its patness; Freud, a reductionist on the subject of religion, is here made to serve as the theorist for a ceremony of reverence. It's also interesting that in this scene the father eats the child, an act unsanctified in any society less primitive than that of guppies, and ruled out on Mars by the givens of Martian society; this is to my eyes the most extreme example of Heinlein's permissiveness, and he may have inserted it to suggest (as Smith himself has earlier suggested) that the Martianizing of Earth has gotten more than a little out of hand.

Almost all of the other ethical questions in the novel are subsumed under the head of bilking the mark, from the world of the carnival to the world of high politics -- a subject on which Heinlein is as expert and amusing as always (and as infuriating to readers who believe that all grokkers were created equal). Their exploration takes up a substantial part of the novel, that part devoted mostly to Smith's education, but they pose few ethical problems unique to the system. Most of the prises are brought off by Jubal, not by Smith, without reference to the system, which is still in a state of very imperfect revelation while these machinations are going on. Most of the interesting minor characters, however, get in their licks in this earlier part of the book, and tend to fade back into the tapestry as the theology emerges -- which is a shame, for they're a wonderful crew while they last. Thereafter, only Jubal and Smith continue to appear in the round. The others are ghostly and disconsolate, their promise not so much unfulfilled as pushed off onto a spur-line while the Powers and Propositions thunder by.

Nor does it seem to me that Jubal Harshaw's rather extended remarks on the arts constitute a true system of aesthetics referrable back to the central vision. Mostly, they are made in defense of representational or story-telling art, and this is what might be expected from a glorified, curmudgeonly and rich hack-writer, which is how Jubal is defined, so perhaps they are only characterization. They only other hint we are offered in this area is an account of a work of art which was being composed by a gifted Martian when he inattentively discorporated; though Heinlein says that the nature (that is, the medium) of the art-work cannot be described, he makes it plain that this too is a story-telling work, and that the Martians are prepared to spend centuries thinking about its value. On this showing, if the Martians ever do turn out to be a menace to us we can ship them the score of Liszt's "Mazeppa" or a Saturday Evening Post cover and immobilize them to the end of time. Heinlein-Jubal reads a fine story, instinct with the courage the author has always admired and which is vaguely integrated into the religion of "A Stranger In A Strange Land", into Rodin's Fallen Caryatid, but except for a few such insights his aesthetics have always been those of an engineer and continue to be so here, neither contributing to nor detracting from his present subject.*

The final question I would like to raise--not the final one raised by the novel, not by a thousand -- is that of the metaphysics of Heinlein-Smith's system. Ordinarily this is a very late inquirey to bring to bear upon a religion, because it is usually accepted that God is only acting sensibly in not trying to make His early prophets explain quantum theory to a pack of goat-herders; better stick to the ethical imperatives, the orders involved are accompanied by a rain of fire or some other practical use of

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* This raises once more the perennially interesting question of what Heinlein actually thinks, a form of mind-reading I would prefer to eschew if it were not that so much of this novel is specifically author-omniscient -- that is, presented without the intervention of any character's point of view. The passage about the Martian work of art is one such; but again, it could be dismissed as only the groundwork for a plot point (though not a plot point of which the novel stands in any need, or of which any important use is made) rather than an illustration of the author's biasses. This view would have the advantage of allowing Jubal's aesthetics to remain strictly Jubal's

physics. Later on, medieval scholars may presume that the God wrote two works, one being the universe conceived complete and perfect, and the other the Scriptures ditto; and still later, somebody (who will be burned for it will ask why the metaphysics of the first work are so badly out of true with the metaphysics of the second. In the first or prophetic stage, however, this question is generally deemed unfair.

But it can hardly be deemed unfair to ask of a science-fiction writer, who starts from assumptions about the nature of the real world which are as sophisticated as modern knowledge allows (this is not true of most of us, but it is true of Heinlein, at least by pure and consistent intention). In "A Stranger In A Strange Land" he enforces the current acceptances of modern (scientific) metaphysics by beginning every major section with an author-omniscient review of how these events look in the eye of eternity; furthermore, he is scornful throughout of anybody (read, boobs) who does not accept this specific body of metaphysics.

So it is fair to ask him about the metaphysics of his proposed system; and it is, to say the best of it, a shambles. Smith appears on the scene able to work miracles, as is fitting for a prophet; in fact, he can work every major miracle, and most of the minor ones, which are currently orthodox in Campbellian s-f. He can control his metabolism to the point where any outside observer would judge him dead; he can read minds; he in a telekinetic; he can throw objects (or people) permanently away into the fourth dimension by a pure effort of will, so easily that he uses the stunt often simply to undress; he practices astral projection as easily as he undresses, on one occasion leaving his body on the bottom of a swimming pool while he disposes of about 35 cops and almost as many heavily armored helicopters; he can heal his own wounds almost instantly; he can mentally analyze inanimate matter, for example to know instantly that a corpse he has just encountered was poisoned years ago; leviatation, crepitation, intermittant claudication, you name it, he's got it -- and besides, he's awfully good in bed. My point is not that this catalogue is ridiculous -- though it surely is -- but that Heinlein the science-fiction writer does not anywhere offer so much as a word of rational explanation for any one of these powers. They are all given, and that's that. Many of them, the story says, turn out to be communicable to Smith's disciples, but the teaching, unlike the love-making never takes place on stage and again is never grounded in so much as a square pood of rationale.

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*and never mind that he is obviously the wise man of the novel -- the only one who can grok without reading minds -- whose opinions are more to be respected than anyone else's even Smith's 90 percent of the time. 8 It would also leave unposed the question of why, if story-telling is the essence of the best art, Heinlein is on record with an expression of contempt for opera; under Jubal's aesthetics, the opera, the tone-poem and the song should be the supremem forms of music, while "absolute" music such as string quartets without accompanying literary programs should be as beneath notice as non-representational painting (presumably the work of composers who can't read music, as abstract painting is said to be the work of painters who can't draw). This is clearly one of the few questions about which Heinlein has not had the opportunity to think very much, and has formed convictions in the absence of data; he has never, for example, shown any interest in or knowledge of music -- in "A Stranger In A Strange Land" he invents a "Nine Planets Symphony" from which he can extract a "Mars movement" for a minor plot purpose, rather than invoking the famous work of Gustav Holst which, being real, would have served his purpose much better, and have spared him the embarrassment of being caught with the notion that nine movements is a reasonable, let alone a likely number for a symphony. (I am aware, to be sure, that "Das Lied von der Erde" ha six; but Mahler did not call it a symphony.) 8 The consequences for the novel in question are vanishingly small, of course; but it's interesting, if fruitless, to think of how much larger they might have been. Suppose that Jubal, during his tippy-toe discussion of the Eucharist, had happened to think of "Parsifal"? . . . Oh well.

The more general features of the system fare equally badly. In what kind of continuum or metrical frame do the Martian Old Ones and the Earthly sub-Archangels live on -- and in what sense do they live on? How is an intricate relational system like a personality conserved without a physical system to supply energy to it? What role in the vast energetics of the known univers can be played by the scurrying sub-managerial dead souls, and how are the pushed applied? What currently warrantable metaphysical system requires this illimitable ant-hill of ghosts; or, what possibly warrantable system might require it, and if so, how would you test the system?... I think it more than likely that a brain as complicated as Heinlein's might have produced a highly provocative schema of metaphysics in support of the rest of the system; I don't pose these questions because I think them unanswerable, but only to call attention to the fact that Heinlein didn't even try.

Or perhaps he did, and the results got cut of the MS. If that is the case, had I been the author I would have cut the aesthetics instead, since they have nothing to do with the system; but I'm not the author, to the gratitude of both of us; so all that remains is that there's no accounting for tastes, as the master said as he kissed his Sears-Roebuck catalogue. Certainly the version left us in the galleys, for all its omissions, is as provocative, difficult and outré a science fiction novel as Heinlein has ever given us. Buy it; it will entertain you for months -- or perhaps if it does what it sets out to do, for the rest of your afterlife.

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IN CONTRARY MOTION

An Examination of two opposing viewpoints on human destiny, as presented in "The Star Dwellers" by James Blish (Putnam, 1961) and "Starship Troopers", By Robert A. Heinlein (Putnam, 1959).

by robert a. w. lowndes

At the risk of offending some readers who may resnt their inference (not my implication) that they are being charged with ignorance, and boring others who may not want to be bothered with such considerations, I am going to start with some very elementary propositions.

Many, if not most, examples of science fiction (including the two specimens under discussion) can be likened to problems in Euclidean geometry textbooks: we start with something given. A fundamental rule of the game is that the reader should not start arguing the validity of the given data, however nonsensical they may appear to be at first glance.

We will now leave geometry, since the given is never to be questioned in geometry textbooks, while in science fiction, the given must be justified on way or another by the time the story has concluded. We demand further of the science fiction writer that his extrapolations follow with a reasonable degree of logic from his initial premises; and if his starting point is in flat contradiction to what (at present appeares to be established scientific fact, or the best theory, then we shall expect that, somewhere in the story, he will present us with a plausible explanation for this contradiction.* We do not demand that the story wind up with an overwhelming

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* Making allowance for theories considered acceptable when the story was written. The Hayden Planetarium shared the authors' preference for the dustbowl theory of Venus (as described in "The Duplicated Man") at the time of writing.

aura of truth so that we shall permanently discard the established scientific facts which have thus been thrown in doubt, but only that the author's fictional dissent be reasonably convincing on its own terms. And we must have similar rigor with respect to his subsidiary propositions: that each one either flow logically from the initial premises, or that any apparent contradictions be satisfactorily resolved, so that (at the very least) while we are reading the story we do not get the the feeling that any one of various other possibilities (both as to plot and background logic) might just as easily have been employed.

A story which convinces while it's being read can be considered good in this respect, whatever leaks may be found in contemplating it later on; a story which stands up to rigorous examination after the spell of reading has evaporated rates higher.

For example: in "The Sixth Glacier" by Marius (Amazing Stories, January, February 1929; author's identity still unknown), the justification of the glacier itself goes down reasonably well while one is reading. However, the author's assertion that the great ice descended upon New York with the speed of an express train is justifiable only if there is a special explanation for such un-glacierlike activity: alas, there isn't.

In "The World of Ā" it is given that Gosseyn behaves according to the discipline of Korzybski's General Semantics; however, all through the story Gosseyn shows evidence of confused, disordered, etc., semantic reactions -- an outright contradiction of the attitudes and behavior Korzybski proposes as proceeding from successful indoctrination in General Semantics discipline. Van Vogt does not account for the discrepancy.

In these stories, neither the question of whether there ought to be a new glacial period, or whether Gosseyn or anyone else ought to follow the formulations of General Semantics discipline, is a legitimate starting point for assessing the story's value, as science fiction. One can, and usually does, take sides on the philosophic, moral, etc., implications of stories, science fiction or otherwise (and in fact on such implications in any and all art forms -- although the imputation of moral statements to music, as such, is irrational to say the least*) but this is a different question. The first question of importance in regard to any work of fiction is: is it well done? If the answer to that question is "yes", then we have a good story regardless of how anyone answers such secondary questions as, "Was it worth doing?" or "Do you (or should you) agree with the philosophic propositions presented in the story?" And the question that is almost invariably asked, "Do these propositions represent the beliefs of the author at the time he wrote them?", while of psychological interest, has nothing whatsoever to do with a story's value as fiction.

We have here two novels with the same theme, although the outward differences are so great as to obscure the fact. Each story, in its propositions about the fundamental questions, is in contrary motion to the other, and the second ("The Star Dwellers") was to a certain extent planned that way.

The common theme of "The Star Dwellers" and "Starship Troopers" is this: Given (1) that human beings are not the only intelligent life-forms in the universe, (2) that Man's nature is such that he must try to expand throughout the universe, (3) that in the course of this expansion he will encounter other intelligent life-forms -- what assumptions ought to be made about such encounters, a priori, and what attitudes and behavior patterns necessarily follow?

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* The question of predictable affective results of a particular performance of a given work of music is another matter entirely.

Blish does not offer any explicit philosophic rational for (2), although it is implied throughout the story; Heinlein's Professor Dubois specifically states:"'Man is what he is, a wild animal with the will to survive, and (so far) the ability, against all competition. Unless one accepts that, anything one says about morals, war, politics -- you name it -- is nonsense. Correct morals arise from knowing what Man is -- not what do-gooders and well-meaning old Aunt Nellies would like him to be.

"'The universe will let us know -- later -- whether or not Man has any 'right' to expand through it.'"

Blish's constructs recognize the Heinlein definition as partly valid, and show implicit agreement that correct morals arise from knowing what Man is -- but Man is not dismissed simply as a wild animal with the will to survive, etc. And, in fact, Heinlein modifies this definition in practice, inasmuch as he (like Blish) asks: in what way must this wild animal be tamed and trained in order to fulfill its manifest destiny?

We accept the right of science fiction authors to rig their problems and questions, to set up the sort of human societies wherein. (a) the sort of illustrative situations desired will necessarily arise, and (b) the sort of behavior desired in meeting the situations will follow logically.

Heinlein further assumes, in relation to (1) that among the intelligent life-forms in the universe which Man will encounter are other wild animals with the will to survive etc.; and therefore such an encounter is bound to lead to inter-species warfare. Blish assumes in relation to (1) that any other intelligent life-form which has a technology capable of waging interplanetary warfare may also be capable of realizing that "'. . . his willingness to kill you also means committing suicide.'" (He does not, however, state that such realization can be considered a certainty.)

The society required by Heinlein in order to illustrate his thesis is a military utopia; and his presentation of this society palces "Starship Troopers" among the great Utopian novels, however the reader may like or dislike the society depicted. It is not presented as perfect: "'Under our system every voter and officeholder is a man who has demonstrated through voluntary and difficult service that he places the welfare of the group ahead of personal advantage. . . .

"'He may fail in wisdom, he may lapse in civic virtue. But his average performance is enormously better than that of any other class of rulers in history. . . .

"'. . . we have democracy unlimited by race, color, creed, birth, wealth, sex, or conviction, and anyone may win sovereign power by a usually short and not too arduous term of service. . . Since sovereign franchise is the ultimate in human authority, we insure that all who wield it accept the ultimate in social responsibility -- we require each person who wishes to exert control over the state to wage his own life -- and lose it, if need be -- to save the life of the state. The maximum responsibility a human can accept is thus equated to the ultimate authority a human can exert. .'

This, then is Heinlein's answer to the question" Given that Man's nature is such that he will periodically find himself fighting for his continued existence, during the course of his expansion throughout the universe, what is the most rational social order for him? What are the best measures to insure against this social order being corrupted?

The social order we find in "The Star Dwellers" is not alien to that which we know today. Blish assums that the continued existence of human civilization at an expanding level of technology involved the subordination of national sovereignties to the control of the United Nations. Diplomancy has successfully staved off intraspecies

Both novels are juveniles in the sense that the leading characters are young men, under legal age; both deal with the training of young men for responsible careers. In the Heinlein novel, this involves military training and a term of duty in the service, after which the lead, Juan Rico, will be a voter, and eligible for civil authority. In the Blish novel, the lead, Jack Loftus, qualifies for training as a foreign service cadet; he, too, will -- if successful -- be qualified for a position of high civil service, diplomacy, intra species and inter species.

In both stories, this highest type of service is voluntary (there are no conscripts in Heinlein's armed forces), difficult to get into, and easy to get out of -- either through flunking or resignation. In both, the training conditions are rigorous: Juan Rico discovers that boot camp was made "...as hard as possible and on purpose." The purpose is to discourage and weed out every recruit who does not really want to be in the army, or who is simply incapable of measuring up to the requirements, however willing he may be. (There is a place, however, for the latter.) The end result is an efficient individual soldier, who knows that he can count upon the soldier next to him in a crisis insofar as human frailties allow certain and sure dependence. Thinking is not only permitted the soldier, it is required -- despite the area wherein unquestioning obedience is necessary.

Jack Loftus finds that while he is not under the full measure of regimentation one find in Heinlein's army, he must go through a rigorous course of study which includes dangerous field [illegible], and must take a vow of celibacy during his training period. Dr. Langer explains: "'...hauristics -- the theory of learning. It all derives ultimately from a gimmick in the brain called imprinting. In ducklings, for example, the first twenty-four hours after they're hatched are crucial. The first moving object that they see during that period, they accept as their mother -- whether it's a live duck, a rolling ball, or even a man. At the end of that day, you can't imprint a duckling any more -- or unlearn any false impressions it may have gained.* Something of the sort takes place in people, too, but in people it goes on for quite a long time.

"'While we are teaching you what we want you to know, we want it to stick. That is why we teach you solid geometry and many other rather hard subjects as early in your high school career as we can -- at the imprinting age. Once sexual awareness enters the picture (and by that I mean just a simple interest in the fact that there are two sexes), you have encountered a very powerful biological force which heavily interfers with imprinting. Some men never become able to cope with it, and their brains freeze. Hence the celibate rule. ...

"'...We can use it'" (the imprinting mechanism)"' to teach you now what you need to know now. But to do that, we have to keep you away from the stimulus that most affectss the imprinting surfaces of the brain, so that the space that's supposed to be occupied by knowledge and skills doesn't get displaced by pin-up pictures, soupy poetry, dawally bad popular music, and all the other props of chain infatuation.'"

Both novels demonstrate present-day education of children and young people as insane, considering "education" as total environment, not merely what is taught in formal calssrooms. Heinlein's Dubois uses the "juvenile delinquent" problem as his illustration, stating that no man has any moral instinct or is born with moral sense, but that

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* Blish gives the permanent damage to the nervous system resulting from the conversion of left-handedness to right-handedness in early childhood as an example of imprinting that cannot be unlearned. Whether the side-effect of stammering is (or will remain) incurable remains moot; but the fact is that, according to today's knowledge, there is no cure for such stammerers. Another side-effect (which may or may not be universal, but is known) is permanent confusion between left and right: such persons are unsafe drivers and may also have considerable mechanical disability.

the latter is acquired. Rejecting the term "juvenile delinquent" as meaningless in that, "'Delinquent' means 'failing in duty'. But duty is an adult virtue -- indeed a juvenile becomes an adult when, and only when, he acquires a knowledge of duty and embraces it as dearer than the self-love he was born with. ...'", Dubois describes the situation thus:

"'These juvenile criminals ... Born with only the instinct for survival, the highest morality they achieved was a shaky loyalty to a peer group, a street gang. But the do-gooders attempted to 'appeal to their better natures', to 'reach them,' to 'spark their moral sense.' Tosh! They had no 'better natures'; experience taught them that what they were doing was the way to survive. The puppy never got his spanking' therefore, what he did with pleasure and success must be 'moral'.

"'The basis of all morality is duty, a concept with the same relation to the group that self-interest has to the individual. Nobody preached duty to these kids in a way they could understand -- that is, with a spanking. ...'"

Blish uses the issue of corruption of taste and censorship as examples of social insanity, and uses popular dance music as a factor in imprinting. Dr. Langer says: "Of course, music for dancing has to be different from concert music in kind. But in those days it was vastly inferior in quality, too; in fact most of it was vile. And it was vile mainly because it was aimed at corrupting youngsters, and then after that job was done, the corrupted tastes were allowed to govern public taste in music as a whole. ... The stuff that was being peddled to young people was aimed at exploiting their inexperience in man-woman relationships; the producers knew that their targets weren't very well equipped by experience -- and experience is the only teacher in that realm -- to tell the false coin from the true, and there was a lot of money to be made by exploiting them. And nothing could be done about it."

Both of these examples are valid, though the Heinlein is weakened by half-truths, and gives he appearance of saying that all we need is not to spare the rod in order to avoid spoiling the child. The Bish analysis is more penetrating; corruption of taste, and exploitation of young people's inexperience, has a far wider effect than debasing the arts, and I think the author is implying this, too.

At first glance, I thought the argument was weakened by exaggeration; the author seemed to me to be saying that certain evil people set out to corrupt youth and, after casting about for a method that would be both most effective and most profitable for business, came up with this one. But discussing the matter with persons well acquainted with the advertising industry convinces me that I'd gotten the order mixed up. The initial question was, "How can we make a lot of money" Answer: by corrupting youthful taste; the evil lies first of all in the willingness of such people to use such means of making money, and the results are the insanity we see around us (although in many ways we may ourselves be tainted to the extent that we do not recognize it). To recapitulate: the purpose of corrupting youthful tastes is to imprint attitudes which will make consumers for the particular products; the advertisers, etc., are not concerned with other by-products of the corruption. It's a lot like the Old Dope Peddler in Tom Lehrer's song: "... he gives the kids free samples/ because he knows full well/ that today's young, innocent faces/ will be tomorrow's clientele."

The corruption is to a large degree irreversible, and in many instances incurable by today's psychotherapy.

Heinlein does not make it clear (even briefly) just how the revolution in attitude toward juvenile delinquency penetrated to the bottom of society; but neither does Blish, in speaking of his educational revolution; however this is something which we can take as given, particularly where an author does not have the elbow room to develop his society in toto. Blish gives a hint:

"'It was already an age that suffered badly from censorship, which is itself a crime against the mind. They couldn't suppress the trash without putting the same weapon in the hands of people who would have used it against masterpieces. The answer, as they gradually came to realise, was to fortify the minds of the youngsters against trash -- in short, the education revolution. ...'"

Jack Loftus suggests that they might have ruled that the bad stuff was a form of dope, always a tempting solution; but Langer points out that no one had the power to make such rulings, and that legislation over taste is a cure worse than the disease.

The authors' initial assumptions about the nature of Man and the good society -- that social order best suited for the fulfillment of human potentialities -- result in a fundamental difference in the way men go out into space. Heinlein's spacemen are armed to the teeth, expecting trouble and ready to overpower it; Blish's spacemen are unarmed, expecting that trouble can be handled with rational diplomacy. And both authors have exercised their right of setting up the situation so that their answer is logical and seems to be been justified by the events.

Both hedge about the violence question, Heinlein with an ingenious half-truth (Professor Dubois is a master at countering ingenuous half-truths with brilliant half-truths), and Blish with an evasion. Heinlein answers the half-truth objection that "violence never settled anything" with the half-truth that it certainly has, and gives valid examples. What Dubois neglects to mention is that all violence really settles is the question of who can be the more successfully violent, and that resort to violence further changes the subject whenever that is not the original question. (Violence certainly settled the question of whether the Confederate States of America could get away with secession from the Union; it did not settle the question of whether, under the Constitution of the United States, 1860, a group of states legally had the right to secede. Upsetting the chess board solves no chess problems whatsoever.)

In the Blish novel, Dr. Langer notes the matter of violence changing the subject, and acknowledges that the old pacifist problem is a real one: "'How do you cope with a man who's perfectly willing to kill you to gain his own ends?'" But he doesn't answer this question; he evades by pointing out that, "'... when both sides have nuclear weapons, as is necessarily the case in any conceivable intersteller war, that man has to bear in mind that his willingness to kill you also means committing suicide.'" Fine. But the history of mankind shows that innumerable men have been perfectly willing to commit suicide under just this sort of situation; and since we have not data whatsoever, we have to assume that the possibility that human beings are unique in this respect. Since Blish does not justify his given material at this point, Heinlein comes out a little ahead on the question; his men in space are prepared to use either violence or diplomacy. He postulates a rational military -- one which does not fight for the sheer love of warfare and is not trigger-happy; and despite the preponderance of trigger-happy militarists in Earth's history, some of the best commanders have been rationals: the threat of massive violence as coercion was to be preferred to assault whenever possible.*

Please note that I have not stated that I agree with Heinlein's answer, but merely that he has given an answer, where Blish did not. The flaw in Heinlein's answer is that when men are ready and able to resort to violence, they will tend to call an end to diplomacy earlier than may be necessary.

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* See Liddell-Hart's "Strategy"; some of the greatest military victories have been achieved with the least fighting, and not a few without any clash watsoever. The enemy, outmaneuvered and in a hopeless situation, resigned from the game.

Although Heinlein declares that man has no moral instinct, his society is nonetheless rooted in two very high-order moral propositions. Despite the seeming anthill regimentation of the military society, (1) the individual is actually regarded as of infinite worth: one unreleased prisoner is sufficient reason to start or resume a war, (2) "Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend." These are commonly regarded as Christian values in our society, although holding them does not automatically make the holder a Christian.

Blish's unstated ethic strongly suggests the principle that it is better to accept the role of victim if violence is perpetrated on one, rather than partake of the insanity of violence, even in self-defense. While the limitation is suggested that this applies to situations where the alternative is nuclear war, it is not clarified as well as it might be. The spacemen go out unarmed. What if they are attacked by beings who do not have nuclear weapons, but are still willing to resort to violence with such lesser weapons as they do have?

Should we take it as given that no intelligent aliens who might possible resort to violence or threat of violence, but who do not have nuclear weapons, exist? Or is it a question of the self-perpetuating nature of violence -- which, once started, is deemed as such that even lesser weapons must be put aside? These questions are not raised, and very likely in the compass of a novel this length, they could not be raised. The second one involves a philosophical problem which has been debated throughout history. I no one man in 1961 can be flunked out for not answering it to everyone's satisfaction.

What we are left with seems to be a "thus far, but no farther" ethic; violence is forsworn, whatever the price, when the alternative is the sort of suicide involved in nuclear warfare. Opposed to this is the Heinlein implication that an interstellar nuclear war might be won by one side, which further implies survivors.

Heinlein's military utopia has a flaw which is almost inevitable with fictional utopias. (I know of none which avoids this flaw, so Heinlein is in very good company.) We are introduced to this ideal military some time after it has been established, and the ad hoc assumption is that the system is still operating at maximum level and will continue to do so -- because the old evils which caused the irrational and venal behavior in the former societies were eliminated. (Few actually put it quite as baldly as that, and Heinlein doesn't, either.)

But what keeps the ideal army from being convincing is the total lack of corruption in it. Not only do we see no evidence of corruption in Juan Rico's experiences (which would not be absolutely necessary in any event) but there's no indication that either (1) any sort of corruption exists, or (2) any sort of corruption is possible. It's not just a case of scandals being efficiently covered up; there just aren't any scandals. Now granted that the rational set-up for this military ought to reduce corruption drastically, and make it less likely at any given point than in any other army (real or fictitious) in human history, the author has not substantiated his given material here.

I am not speaking of crimes committeed by military personnel, or evidences of misjudgment, downright stupidity, etc. This is granted; this does happen in the story. But I speak of corruption of the military sytem itself, either in small or in large. The civil system, Heinlein grants, can suffer corruption.

A similar flaw mars the convincingness of the assertion that the society as a whole is the most democratic that the world has yet seen. We are told nothing about one of the essential aspects of any social order: what manner of redress is open to the citizen, voter or not-voter, who is victimized by failings (criminal or otherwise)

of the administrative and justice process itself? What about the person who is wrongly accused or convicted of crime? One way of assessing the true measure of "democracy" in any social set-up is to determine what means of redress for this sort of wrong are open and legal. Is a man accused presumed guilty until proven innocent, etc.? Is his only recourse revolution? (Irrespective of his chances, of course.)*

Let's recapitulate just what it is I have against Heinlein at this point. Professor Dubois contends that civilians in this military utopia enjoy full democratic rights, and enjoy them in a larger measure than in the former society. But the author's failure to make clear whether or not civilians had at least as full a measure of civil redress against official injustice as we have today makes the contention unconvincing. Just one reference to an example would have made the difference. (In this point, however, as in the earlier point of corruption of the system, all other utopian novels I have read fail, too; Heinlein is by no means alone)

Blish, not attempting a utopia, but merely a development (melioristic of present-day society has an easier task; he gives indications, without going into great detail that corruption is still with us and that, irrespective of failures of justice, that sort of redress I am speaking of is present in the structure of society.

And, assuming that suicidal irrationality is a strictly human trait, the aliens his heroes meet are necessarily rational and open to dplomacy. Diplomatic skill, is, in fact, Man's only weapon in dealing with other species. It succeeds; a mutually acceptable compromise and treaty issues from contact with the Angels, one of the most fascinating life-forms encountered in science fiction.

Heinlein's bugs are no less fascinating and covnincing. And it is made clear (as many military writers have made clear in dealing with terrestrial wars) that while the nature of the antagonists leads to conflict the extension of it is due to the failure in communication. Not only communication failure, but inability to communicate in the first place. Earth does not want the war to continue to its mutually disasterous finale -- the total destruction of the respective worlds in question. But only establishing communication can possibly bring about any sort of armistice; scientists labor on this problem -- meanwhile, the army must fight.

Is inter-species warfare the only acceptable alternative when communication fails, or cannot be established and the "other side" won't give way? Blish, as we have seen, evades the question. Heinlein's basic assumption about human nature suggests that the answer is "yes" -- but it is not clear whether, in this instance, Earthmen had the opportunity to avoid conflict by withdrawal from bug territory of whether what Blish calls the Patrick Henry syndrome settled the question: "... the Patrick Henry syndrome, emotionally stated as Give me liberty or give me death, but at the bottom meaning only Agree with me or I'll kill us both." In relation to the bugs the "liberty" would be the liberty to expand throughout your territory as we will.

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* On the surface, this point may appear to have been covered in Professor Dubois' statement that the civilization recognized no disabilities on the basis of race, sex, or creed, and his demonstration that advancement in the army is on ability only. However, it is possible to have all these desirable features in society without the type of civil redress against miscarriages of justice, etc. mentioned above. There may be full democracy of opportunity and a citizen may still be guilty just because some official said he was.

(In the mouth of a pacifist, the same phrase could mean: If I cannot live on my own terms, I choose to die, without requiring any death other than that of the speaker. But this is not the Patrick Henry syndrome.)

The characterization in "Starship Troopers" is especially vivid (in "The Star Dwellers" it is good, but not outstanding), and Professor Dubois, who is the vehicle for a preponderance of the philosophic background, stands out. He is a master of the propaganda trick, who seems to believe what he says, and someone whom I would not want to meet in argument: brilliant, witty, biting, and strongest at making the opposition argument look like idiocy and the holder of such opinions an object of pity, at best; for all this, there is a great deal of genuine warmth in Dubois.

Major Reid, who takes over Rico's education later on, is also interesting as a worshipper of symbolic logic -- which seems to be the most charitable way to put it -- and appears to be ecstatically unaware that all propositions are not accessible to proof or disproof by such means. Note that "appears"; it might be that Reid's frequent instructions to "bring a proof in symbolic logic to class tomorrow", in relation to some proposition which won't even stand up to semantic analysis are an attempt to get the student to see for himself that the assignment is impossible, meaningless, or both. As with Professor Dubois, I'll give Major Reid the benefit of any doubt -- but a mark should be chalked up against the author for not clarifying later on.

(We should give the characters the benefit of doubt, in cases like these, in order to avoid what P. Schuyler Miller calls the Oliver Wiswell syndrome -- the automatic assumption that an author's characters times, the principle of proof beyond reasonable doubt should be invoked in the author's defense -- particularly when the opinions, etc., are ones you, personally, consider loathsome, irrational, etc. Nor is the fact that the author himself, at one time, may have expressed similar opinions as his own to be considered as proof positive. It's relevant, surely; but a previously held, now rejected, viewpoint may certainly be useful to an author for the purposes of fiction.)

Of course the term "juvenile delinquent" is technically a misnomer; there is nothing essentially wrong with Dubois' definition of responsiblility in this relation. But what his argument conceals is that (a) the way the generality of people use terms now is more relevant than any dictionary definition, and (b) the term represents a rational progression from an earlier position of looking upon children as miniature adults and treating the young offender in the same manner as an adult criminal.

The distinction between discipline and punishment is so carefully blurred by Dubois, that I may be falling into a semantic trap myself by charging him with maintaining the false and irrational proposition that delinquency and criminal behavior are correctable by punishment -- thus charging him with ignorance of their being symptoms of illness, illness needing healing. Punishment is always injury, always vengeance; discipline is healing, and while the process may be painful, the manner can avoid injury.

This sounds pretty dogmatic, so let me qualify. 'After all, we see many people around us who certainly fit the description of moral imbecility and make Dubois' assertions seem valid. But what has been generally established in psychology is that this is a very good description of the psychopathic personality.

(See Lee Steiner's "Understanding Juvenile Delinquency," Chilton, 1960. The author notes, in describing the psychopathic personality: "There is a total lack of feeling for people; lack of closeness to anyone; a total disregard of responsibility; bizarre thinking, and a pathological amount of egocentricity. ... These are the people

who fill our courts and prisons. The characteristic that gets them into trouble with the law is that they cannot postpone their wishes. All desires must be immediately gratified, regardless of consequences. Characteristic also is that punishment has little or no effect other than to make them vindictive. They do not learn from experience. ... Usually their antisocial behavior is caused by their inability to coordinate their wishes with the rules of society. Their way of thinking admits of little or no consideration of the rights of others./ "There is no known therapy that will lift this disorder." Mrs Steiner goes on to note that such personalities often are combined with a high degree of leadership qualities such as to make them irresistible to persons whose moral sense might be described as weak, but who generally do not get into criminal behavior unless they are led into it. Whether the condition is actually incurable, through any means of therapy known today, may be a moot question; but it certainly seems to be beyond cure in most instances, and there is no doubt that punishment does not work.)

Are they born that way? No, it would rather seem that the psychopathic personality arises from early imprinting, possibly a permanently-established identification between punishment and discipline. Loosely speaking, you might call the infant a psychopath -- but with discipline he can go beyond that stage. Some, as we see, never do; early experience fixes them there.

Is this the same as Heinlein's saying that human beings have no moral instinct? I don't think so. What this is saying is that human beings have the capacity to respond to discipline (love), but in some cases this capacity is destroyed in early life -- and we do not know of any way in which it can be restored, no medical or psychiatric techniques, that is.

Punishment, as noted above, is always injury, always vengeance, and you cannot heal a person by injuring him. This raises the question of how discipline (which is often as painful as punishment) can be distinguished from punishment. To oversimplify, the difference lies in the manner. The man who is being punished is rejected; the hatred (and guilt) of those administering punishment are projected upon him. The man who is being disciplined is not being rejected; there is neither hate, nor vengeance, nor the projection of guilt from those administering discipline. The manner of the process includes reassurance that the subject is not being condemned nor rejected.

Obviously, calling punishment "discipline", or discipline "punishment", is not going to make any difference. The differenct lies not in the words used, but in the unspoken attitudes revealed (although what is said may play an important part). Note what happens when Juan Rico is whipped. He is badly hurt; he is made to feel that his actions have been bad -- but he has not been rejected. His worth as a person and as a member of the group has been reaffirmed, not denied. While the particular manner of it may be crude and debatable, this is still "hurting for the sake of healing"; however primitive the method may be, love, not hate, is being expressed. Rico is able to endure this and come back stronger later on because he has understood the difference between the whipping he received and the whipping that others, who were being rejected and cast out, received. Rico was disciplined; the others were punished.

Was Dubois actually expressing these thoughts after all? We have to bear in mind that he is known for intentional obscurity. His purpose is to provoke, irritate, sometimes seduce, cajole, and exhort his students into thinking. And whether or not Dubois-Reid =Heinlein, the purpose behind "Starship Troopers" is to make the reader think.

There are no such semantic pyrotechnics in "The Star Dwellers". Dr. Langer is also trying to get his students to think; but when he explains he aims at maximum clarity. Let's go back to the question of legislating against bad taste. Jack Loftus has said that they might have ruled that the bad stuff was a form of dope -- which, in

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effect, it is. Langer replies, after pointing out the unfeasibility of determining just what is "bad stuff" by law or administrative decree, "...'the very worst way to deal with dope is to make the traffic in it a crime. Addiction is a sickness; if you make it a crime, you can't get the victims to submit to treatment, and you run up the price on the stuff until it becomes so profitable to deal in it that some people are delighted to break the law to make their fortunes. The same goes for literature. Tell me, have you ever read any books with really wild sexual material in them?'

"'A few. It gets kind of dull after a while.'

"'Precisely. But in those days, publishing that kind of thing was against the law -- so an enormous amout of it was published, and commanded huge prices.'"

In both novels, the lead character, being a juvenile, would not ordinarily play a star part in historically crucial events, and this is one of the problems the writer of juvenile novels has to solve. His leading character has to take over in the main crisis; the situation where this opportunity arises has to be plausible, and the fact that the lead is capable of doing the job has to be made believable. In the good juvenile the author as so worked out his entire novel that this assumption of authority on the part of the lead proceeds naturally; in the poor juvenile, it becomes clear that certain peculiar events (or behavior on the part of other characters, or situations) have occurred just so that the hero can step into the starring role.

Heinlein's set-up is made to order; in military service, promising young men are groomed for positions of authority and a place in the chain of command as soon as possible -- and once a man is in the chain of command any emergency may thrust him into the star position. Thus, Juan Rico's rise is convincing at all times, both in the fact that it is a normal occurrence in this frame of reference, and in that the author has been working toward it convincingly all along.

In "The Star Dwellers", the crisis and command-taking are plausible and the single arbitrary contrivance did not strike me for what it was until after I had finished the story. ("Arbitrary" in the sense that while the event is justified in the long run it does not have the full flavor of inevitability.) To specify would be to give too much away to the reader in advance.

To summarize: the mere act of writing a novel in contrary motion to a recognized materpiece (and published by the smae company, in the same series of books, within five years) requires courage. Comparisons are bound to be made, and examinations will be more rigorous than usual otherwise. It does not demean "The Star Dwellers" to say that it is not a masterpiece; on the contrary, to say that it comes out as a good work under these circumstances is to rate it highly. And very good it is.

-- (Reprinted from WARHOON, No. 13, October 1961)

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AN ALIEN IN THE ACADEMY
by geoffrey d. doherty

As a schoolmaster, a teacher of English to be precise, who happens to have a taste for sf, I have certain difficulties to contend with that would never occur to the average addict -- whoever that may be. For instance, as a guardian of the moral virtue of the young and a custodian of the ancient monuments of Eng. Lit. I have certain responsibilities to the Establishment which make me very sensitive to some of the more obvious weaknesses of sf.

It is easy enough for the addict who is only concerned with his own amusement etc.

to brush off or turn a deaf ear to those attacks on sf which deride and criticise such elements as:

(i) obscene sexual elements,
(ii) sensational overwriting,
(iii) mere escapism,
(iv) interstellar cowboys and indians,
(v) lurid presentation,
(vi) general puerility,
(vii) vampire horrors, and so on.

The list could be extended ad nauseam. Of course, we all know such ideas are firmly based, for the most part, on ignorance. What I have to contend with in school, however, is the evil image of sf which exists in the academic mind. Evil image, note, not bad name. There are considerable advantages, financial and social, in having a "bad" name, like Brendan Behan, for instance, or the "Angry Young Men". It's a good thing to know (sort of) about avant guarde stuff. Sf, unfortunately, is neither that nor on the O.K. list of Eng. Lit. This is probably because it has never shaken off its associations with pulp magazines and those deliciously provoking, technicolour pictures of monsters, hirsute, tentacled, bug-eyed, dragging off some naked pneumatic wench to a fate obviously worse than death in a polyhedral space-ship poised for blast-off on some unlikely lunar crag. It is bad lifemanship to be caught scanning such confiscated titbits by the Senior Mistress.

Carrying out a bit of frank self-analysis, I can well recall the day when I used to smuggle tattered copies of "Astounding Science Fiction" or "Weird Tales" into a secret box under my bed. Except for the picture they were very disappointing as pornography even in those days. Now "Astounding" has been transmogrified into "Analog" it conceals a decline in sf standards behind a socially acceptable cover in semi-abstract style. More and more sf is published in hard-back format and even finds its way onto the shelves of the more progressive public libraries. Penguin Books have smiled upon John Wyndham and are, it is said, soon to publish a new anthology of sf short stories. Despite these moves towards respectability, however, the image I have referred to still remains.

Regrettably, it must be agreed that there is plenty of cause for these reservations. For instance, what do I do when I find one of my girls reading a passage like this?

> "She rose, and down about her in a cascade fell the squirming scarlet of -- of what grew upon her head. It fell in a long alive cloak to her bare feet on the floor, hiding her in a dreadful, wet, writhing life. She put up her hands and like a swimmer she parted the waterfall of it, tossing the masses back over her shoulders to reveal her own brown body, sweetly curved. She smiled exquisitly, and in startling waves back from her forehead and down about her in a hideous bacground writhed the snaky wetness of her living tresses. And Smith knew that he looked upon Medusa."

It gets worse, much worse. Is this the sort of stuff to put before a young virgin of sweet sixteen? Of course, this is taken from a book by a well-known writer of FANTASY not sf, as any fan would complain when confronted by this criticism. Almost all horror stories provide a happy hunting ground for the Freudian analyst, but this book is described as Science Fiction in the blurb. Bad publishing helps to sustain the bad image.

Then there are certain stylistic weaknesses which recur with depressing regularity in sf stories, both long and short. The most irritating of these is the crushing

platitude stated as though it were a philosophical profundity:

> "What was the common factor?
> 'I could give you many examples-'
> 'Wait a minute!' Roos halted. 'I can see the common factor! Inferiority complex! Am I right?' He turned to face A'Kren, realisation lighting his eyes.
> He smote his brow with the heel of his hand. 'I'm a fool, we're all fools!'
> They began to talk again.
> A'Kren told him. 'Inferiority inspires greatness, through deformity, ugliness, failure, lack of stature, a thousand causes."

The effect of this is somewhat akin to the bathos peculiar to sf, which is produced in those stories where a complex plot leads to a huge climax through which, you think, some new truth will be revealed. No such luck, the story turns out to be a gimmick, and all those interesting questions: who were the aliens, why did they..? etc., remain forever unanswered. Theodore Sturgeon, well-known in the field and no mean writer, commits this crime in a story called "The Golden Helix". We meet an interesting group of humans who are just waking up out of cold-storage after a long star-hop. Eventually they find they are on a new world at a very early stage in its evolution and, horrible realisation, they are hundreds of light years away from where they ought to be. Well, they were put there by the mysterious intervention of a super-race. How? Why? Any moment we expect a revelation of philosophical truth. It never comes. Of course, at the plot level they have been planted there in order to provide a productive seed in the evolutionary cycle of a new world. The most interesting implications are never resolved -- very frustrating -- and in retrospect some of the highly wrought poetic style seems overwriting:

> "April said later that it was like a cloud....To Tod, the object had no shape. It was a luminous opacity between him and the sky, solid, massive as mountains. There was only one thing they were agreed on, and that was that it was a ship.
> And out of the ship came the golden ones."

There are many other weaknesses that could be illustrated, as for instance, a frequent descent into crudity or sentimentality when dealing with emotions rather than ideas. The supposed lack of interest in characterisation in sf is notorious. However, one of the most difficult hurdles for the non-addict is the plethora of bewildering conventions which the fan calmly takes for granted. Concepts such as psionics, hyperspace, stasis, time-warps, are gibberish to the uninitiated, but as commonplace as radio and television to the regular reader. It would be quite easy to explain how and why these conventions arose if this were a treatise on the history of sf. Here, however, it is sufficient to say that too much reliance on this kind of gimmicky approach soon causes mental indigestion in the reader, and it is true to say there is now plenty of good sf in which they do not appear at all. At the same time, the general reader will not get very far with sf without a working knowledge of astronomy and general science -- a point in its favour I should have thought.

I have tried to point out some of the <u>particular</u> failings of sf: it would be easy enough to dwell on general literary weaknesses that apply equally well to any kind of popular writing today. To be constructive is a good deal more difficult. Before we go any further, I think sf should be distinguished to some extent from fantasy -- horror, supernatural, out-of-this-world by magic or pseudo-science. Generalising wildly, in all true sf, there is a scientific or technological factor integral to the story and very often the story will have some sociological or philosophical interest as well.

For the purposes of this definition, I would accept psychology as one of the sciences. The best sf today is closely related to Utopian literature and the old philosophical tale. Occasionally sf and fantasy have so much in common that it is impossible to distinguish them. Indeed, it is a well-established bardic function to convert mankind's inner fears and frustrations to legend and myth. This kind of material is easily debased, and in sf and fantasy, just as in any other kind of contemporary writing, some authors make the worst use of their material for the worst reasons: "Shambleau", "A Voyage to Arcturus", and "The Lord of the Rings" exist in parallel, so to speak.

Having trimmed and carped like this in deference to academic scepticism, we are left with a considerable body of worthwhile reading, of which, I think, Wells and Verne were the true progenitors. They were the product of an age. How does the imaginative man, agnostic but not unaffected by "those thoughts that lie too deep for tears", react to an age of scientific materialism? Who will deny the poetic element in, say, "The Time Machine"? This is typical. The future symbol refers back in some way to the present. It would be pleasant to expand upon the "poetic" symbolism of sf. We might just say, however, that the imagery of sf is drawn from a 20th century urban and technological civilisation, and is consequently valid for, and available to, an ever widening audience.

Perhaps my defence of sf has now become more clear and my reasons for its inclusion in the Eng. Lit. syllabus in school more understandable. Not the least important of the English teacher's many functions is to induce his pupils to consider themselves, their society, its problems moral and philosophical -- in other words to become thinking human beings. Sf is frankly popular fiction with a high entertainment appeal, but at the same time it opens more interesting vistas than all but the very best in accepted literature. Many will go on reading sf: few will even start reading the latter.

Of course, one has to know where to look for good material and what to advise one's pupils to read. Personally, sf has given rise to some of my most interesting lessons -- some excellent classroom dialectic, particularly in the middle school. Impartially, I observe its growing popularity, even amongst the forms I do not teach!

--(Reprinted from VECTOR - 13, The Journal of the British Science Fiction Society)

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HEINLEIN'S STARSHIP TROOPERS
by brian aldiss

This the second - rate novel about which there has been all the third - rate talk.

Most of the comment I have seen on "Starship Troopers" suggests that it glorifies war. A careful study of the text (a truncated version of which appeared in F&SF) suggests this is not the case at all. Although warfare certainly enters the book, its chief subject-- the one on which Heinlein works up his most delicious sweats -- is the subject of harsh discipline.

Only by keeping this firmly in mind can any critic, amateur or otherwise, talk meaningfully about the novel.

The tale is told by Juan 'Johnnie' Rico. Because it is therefore in the first person, we must be careful to distinguish between Rico's attitudes and those of his creator, since the two may differ considerably. Rico begins by telling us something of his life at high school and how insulting his teacher, Mr Dubois, was ("He would just point at you with the stump of his left arm (he never bothered with names) and snap a question"). Rico blossoms under such treatment and graduates. After graduation, he and his best

friend go to join up. So does a girlie classmate of theirs, Carmen Ibanez, although Rico is quick to disclaim her: "Carmen wasn't my girl -- she wasn't anybody's girl."

Spurred on by insults and obstacles, the trio joins up for two years. How do Rico's parents take it? "Father stormed at me, then quit speaking to me; Mother took to her bed." Never mind, Mother will pay for that lack of understanding of the male mind later.

So Rico joins the services and trains to become a Mobile Infantryman. Thus we lose our last chance of a glimpse at the world of 5,000 years in the future -- from now on we are confined to camp. Our peeps at it so far have been hazy but suggest a world amazingly like the present, with Ming vases still miraculously surviving and a teaching system so unreformed that tyrants like Mr Dubois still flourish. We have learnt little of the sociological system, except that newspapers and cigars are still in fashion, and that you have to serve a term in the services before you can vote; or, as it says here, "the franchise is today limited to discharged veterans".

With Rico in training we enter the main body of the book. It seems to me that the freshest point Heinlein makes in "Starship Troopers" is that however far into the future you go, or however deadly your weapons, there will be a place still for the infantryman. In other words, plus ca change...which unfortunately applies also to the training course; apart from the addition of a few colourful details -- and a not able absence of humour -- Rico's squaddie days are personally and boringly familiar to thousands of us.

We hear little of the other trainees. Sergeant Zim is the man who takes Rico's fancy, Zim the old fire-eater, Zim with his perpetual flow of orders, energy, and invective. "He described our shortcomings, physical, mental, moral, and genetic, in great details. But somehow I was not insulted," says Rico. Naturally he was not insulted; being disciplined and degraded were meat and drink to him.

This explains why we hear more about flogging than about Rico's equals. It also partially explains a strange remark Rico makes about his power suit.

The suit is a nice sf invention, well described and understandable; here Heinlein really draws the detail for which his admirers praise him. Oddly -- and since his subject is not warfare I think also significantly -- he devotes little time to the M. I.'s actual weapons: they remain far less vivid than, for example, the splendid armoury toted by the colonists in Harry Harrison's "Deathworld". Anyhow, Rico loves his suit in a burst of sentiment he says, "If I ever find a suit that will let me scratch between my shoulder blades, I'll marry it." One reader at least felt that this would be a perfect match.

Grim day follows grim day. A glimpse of the outside world is afforded us with a letter from Mother ("A thousand kisses to my baby") and a far nicer one from old Dubois. For all his nastiness, old Dubois is okay. Now at last we have the explanation of his "snotty superior manner" -- he too was in the M. I.

Even Zim has a misty moment at the thought of it.

Soldiering on, Rico is appointed to a ship and becomes one of Rasczak's Roughnecks. We had a foretaste of him doing his stuff with this outfit in the first chapter. Events become rougher. Rico signs on for twenty years. Despite what Father said on page 24 ("We've outgrown wars" a war is in progress, the Bug war, and Rico sees action. He loses his mother when Buenos Aires is smeared but -- well, hell, that's war. Far more wounding is when Rasczac himself is killed, Lt Rasczak, "the head of the family from which we took our name, the father who made us what we were."

After that, if anyone in the outfit did anything wrong, the sergeant had only to say "The Lieutenant wouldn't like that," and "it was almost more than a man could take". Even a big strong masochist like Rico.

It is nearly time to leave Rico, still learning "how to be a one man catastrophe". He is a Lieutenant himself now, and it's a stroke of luck that his name begins with R, so as not to ruin the old alliteration now that his outfit is renamed Rico's Roughnecks. More joy: Father has joined up since Mother was smeared, and wins promotion in the same mob, so that Rico can legitimately hug his platoon sergeant before they go into action. . .

To end with martial music: "To the everlasting glory of the Infantry".

I have said enough, and Rico too much, to show that this softcentred soldier should have been recommended for a psychiatric report rather than promotion, and that from a Freudian point of view, "Starship Troopers" is a shower of hoarse horse laughter. Rico longs to be humiliated, searches for trouble and a substitute father figure, both of which he finds of course in the M. I. -- referred to significantly as a "Paternalistic organisation".

Evidence shows that this was not the portrait of Rico that Heinlein intended. There is no sign of awareness (as for instance there was in that fine and authentically tough film "End As A Man") that this sort of military establishment breed bullies and bastards and toadies; nor could there be, for the whole novel -- whilst passing itself off as a semi-documentary be eschewing plot -- is too far from reality.

Consider how much sentimentality has warped it from the truth in the scene where Rico fights an uppish squad leader, Ace. They fight hard and rough in a locked shower and Rico is beaten. Fine. He comes round to find Ace reviving him and begging to be hit. So Rico hits him. Ace collapses and says "Okay Johnnie, I've had my lesson".

This does not ring true, nor does the scene where officers almost weep over a flogging they ordered. In the words of the old joke, these people aren't tough; they only smell strong.

Such fogging by sentiment gives us a very cloudy novel about soldiers. Here are the old cliches of the genre: the tough lovable sarge, the cub who makes good, the over-heated loyalties, the velvet hearts in iron gloves. But more tolerable cliches (i.e. cliches more in line with fact and the eternal verities of soldiering) don't appear. Such items as swearing, boozing, shirking, brotherl-going, etc, come not within Rico's straight-jacketed gaze.

About the sf side of the novel, which is slender, I find little to say apart from what I have already said about the weapons and the powered suit. The two enemy races named, the Skinnies and the Bugs, are hardly portrayed, the latter in particular being no more than pulp BEMS, there merely to provide targets. How should we learn more of them with a narrator as coldly inhibited against anyone or anything outside uniform as Rico? When he blasts a Skinny building, "I didn't know what it was I had cracked open. A congregation in church -- a skinny flophouse -- maybe even their defense headquarters". It's all one to this ill-starred trooper.

Finally, what of that unimportant point on which some people have concentrated: is "Starship Troopers" pro-war? Purely as a guess, I'd say Heinlein wrote this in disgusted reaction against the soft aimlessness that threatens democratic courntries as severely as Communism. He knocks over a pair of straw dummies, the old platitudes that 'violence never settles anything' and that 'the best things in life are free', but what's controversial in that?

No sir, this novel is guaranteed not to harm a fly, despite a few unhealthy mother and father-things floating in its shallows. It's quite drinkable, but very small beer.

(Reprinted from VECTOR - 13)

((The above four articles are reprinted because of their intrinsic interest and as illustrations of the kind of material needed for Department X. In leafing through the fanzines that have come across his desk during the past year, your secretary has been pleasantly surprised at the large number of articles by members of the Institute which have appeared in their pages. PITFCS would be most grateful for similar material. TRC))

FRITZ LEIBER SAYS:

I've been free-lancing for about five years now, making about half what I did as associate editor of Science Digest, which seems reasonable for a mid-life change of occupations. To show for this (measuring accomplishment in wordage as an Indian counted coups) I've got a couple of sf novels, an aborted suspense book, and perhaps a half million words of assorted short subjects: sf, fantasy, articles, and mainstream.

So far my attempts at so-called mainstream have tended to bring me home rather than carry me into other literary worlds. Meaning I've sold a couple of psychological stories and two little cat-stories to fantasy-sf magazines (which take them in spite of their mainstream taints) and a few crime-suspense pieces to sf-editors who have drifted into another field -- Leo Margulies and Hans Santesson. (Oh yes, and I've done four Buck Rogers continuities -- about a year of strips.)

It's been a period of rising cost of living and falling prices for the free-lanced word. The paperbacks, with their mounting number of originals, are coming to seem quite a bit like the old pulp magazines in a new form -- a monthly publishing quota, tight deadlines, sharply categorized fiction, standardized appeals.

I'm in favor of unionization for writers (naturally!) yet I'm so much more worries about my small output than I am about the declining compensation for it that I'd be poor union material. (Can you imagine a plumber, for instance, saying, "Gee, fellows, I don't know -- I'm racked by guilt -- I need somebody to make me plumb more, not somebody to fight for more money for me for the miserable little plumbing I do." Of course, I suppose that in some limbo there are unions for the guilty. . .)

I've seen enough of TV and movie writing out here in LA to confirm me in my belief that it's mostly for those who want to concentrate on it full time.

I've discovered, I think, why I've had little success with poetry in the past. I've been more interested in exploring inner worlds -- my own and those of others -- than I've been in creating little word-worlds for their own sake. When I've got the illusion of really being in the other world -- when I've identified with the character, by the actor's idiom -- and described it as vividly as I can with the best words at hand, I feel I've done my job; I don't have the impulse to kepp on combing through the words, arranging and rearranging. To generalize excessively, fiction writing is a mad adventure, poetry is cutting jewels.

The first years of my free-lancing I concentrated on the classics and stayed away from the current scene. Science Digest had allergized me to newspapers and most periodicals. Now I'm reading the latter a bit and getting some strange impressions. For instance,

apparently the Trotskyite Socialists of the Thirties have convinced almost everyone in America that the only thing worth doing in this world is worrying about Stalinist Communism and getting ready for Ragnarok. But when Russia now denigrates Stalin, the best thing the LA Times, at any rate, can think to do is go off on a no-honor-among-thieves kick. According to Gallup, eighty percent of Americans prefer all-out atomic war to supervision by Marxist egghead gangster types. I'm tempted to go back to the classics ...but probably I'd just find myself reading about the Great Athenian Campaign of Liberation in Sicily... Not that I'm inclined to take a quick look at Las Vegas, the Denver cops, Hoffa, quiz programs, and the sex-and-sadism books and come out whooping it up for superior totalitarian morality at the home-and-office levels and the virtues of a dose of communist puritanism. Guess I had better get back to the classics and history. ... and maybe read about how a Protector is bound to be morally superior to the House of Stuart...

When I worked for Science Digest, sf background research was one of the valuable byproducts (valuable to me for story purposes). Now I have to do it in my own time, which ups the manufacturing cost per story. And perhaps because I like to be thought a knowledgeable writer, I find myself tempted to do stories requiring considerable background research, especially in the astronomical direction. Some research is necessary and desirable, but it can be pushed too far. We can't all be Ike Asimovs or Arthur Clarkes and run-of-the-mill sf writer is reqarded for erudition or had even a wooden medal pinned on him for "having faith" in space flight and atomic power before those things were achieved. As a group we're not admired for our foresight -- we're thought of as sensationists who concoct wrong ways of doing things NASA and AEC are doing right. How many newspaper science reports have I read containing the phrase, "Contrary to the sensational notions of science fiction writers...!"

But maybe we ought to be sensational. Come to think of it, I find it fruitful. I don't mean sensational in the sense of being lurid and piling one stock surprise on top of another, but in the sense of taking an idea on the edge of or in the very heart of crackpottery's domain and then using a story to make this idea as vivid as possible and to explore it as deeply as possible while in the state of creative exaltation. Surely this is the vital and unique contribution of the fiction writer in any field -- to explore people, situations, speculative notions, etc., while projecting, identifying, dramatizing, feeling like god, and being otherwise in the hopped-up state of mind peculiar to creativity...this is the thing the scientist, scholar, and critical thinker can't do and we can. In the heat of writing we make your "discoveries." We can't plan them ahead of time, we can at best leave room for them in our story outlines. Soemtimes they're nonsense, sometimes they're not, often they remain mysteries for other writers to explore.)

By being sensational I don't mean whooping it up in story after story for one fringe concept like psionics. Or rather, if you do, to try to do it differently each time. One trouble with psionics as a story element is that there's so little variety to its manifestations: a character knows something happening elsewhere or elsewhen...and that's it. This, incidentally, is exactly what a fiction writer does: he projects himself into distant beings and scenes and influences events. Perhaps psionics is so like creativity itself that it makes the writer feel boxed in.

At any rate there's a place for sensational sf and outright fantasy. The field would be rather dull if it were all that sort of realistic, ultra-backgrounded sf that tries to keep itself in line with the very latest research report in every branch of science and technology -- with the whole story hanging on what the last scholarly paper on the spectrum of Venus says about the presence or absence of water vapor in the atmosphere.

As I'm sure other people have, I find the chief problem of fulltime fictioneering is to avoid vegetating and getting lost in minutiae, becoming too much of a spectator. Thank God for a place like PITFCS!

JOE KENNEDY SAYS:

It was a happy jolt to receive the proceedings of the Institute, the like of which I hadn't felt since the last time I was goosed while swimming at a Swedish sunshine camp. A bit bokily (no pun) I hurry to accept Dean McLaughlin's kind backing of my candidacy, and hereby enlist $2 and my fine prehensile mind toward the study of the Twenty-First Century. It sure will be good to be able to put down the name of a learned society when filling out college-teaching job applications. Always feel embarrased and leave those spaces blank. But in all honest I ponder: of what use can I be to a legion of s-f professionals so obviously in the current of things? The last work of science fiction I really felt I got to the bottom of was something about little nasty guys in caves, written by Richard S Shaver. (It made such a profound dent in me that in that very year, 1949 or thereabouts, I suspended my sterling fanzine Vampire and retired for a decade of meditation.) Since then, I haven't done a lick of work that's of any science-fictional interest to anybody, save only two obscure stories in vanished Lowndes and Palmer prozines, a sober and enlightening article about the movie King Kong in Dissent (in which I set forth the thesis that giant apes are the white hope of socialism), and recently a ballad about a man in a satellite in a book called Nude Descending a Staircase (Doubleday, October 1961, $2½ with a beautiful blue dust jacket, and roundly hailed as the work of "a possibly promising young poet" by the Virginia Kirkus Library Bulletin). So you see I am likely to be the most inert turd-like lump upon your membership list that you ever did see. But anyway, it is good to see once more Damon Knight and Algis Budrys and Chan Davis in mimeograph ink. ((Multigraph: TRC)) There is something humane about things written in mimeograph ink: it looks realer somehow. Chan Davis might like to know that at the U of Michigan, where he made his early stand against the forces of McCarthy, he's just about a mythical hero, no crap.

William F. Temple Says:

"Everything I want preserved has been published between hard covers." (Arthur Clarke). Shouldn't he have said "lead covers"?

Agree with him about the memorableness of the work of John Creasey, Britain's thriller-to-formula churner-outer. Report says he's written 435 books. Report is wrong. He's written only one book -- 435 times over.

References to so many thousand words a day are meaningless if quantity and quality are confused. Some authors claim their best work is done at white heat -- Haggard was one. He wrote She in 6 weeks flat. As a kid I thought it a wonderful book -- and it still has memorable moments. But, like the others who've re-read it in adult life, the biggest wonder is how I ever plowed through all those long, long tediously repetitive speeches of She's. Things written at fever heat are like fever-delirious speech -- gas, gas, gas, as Hamlet nearly said. Take Thomas Wolfe...

Better if Haggard had written less and with more care; he may then have produced at least a brace of masterpieces, instead of one near-miss (Nada the Lily). Which is all that Lewis Carroll did. Hugh Walpole isn't the only prolific best-seller who's admitted he'd trade all his own work just to have written the two Alice books. Certainly, he'd have gained on the deal.

Jane Austen's handful of novels will outlast all Trollope's conveyor-belt work, and Coleridge's few poems live where Scott's many have already died.

There was a s-f author who used to fill ASTOUNDING, AMAZING, etc., under half a dozen pseudonyms, year after year. His real name was J.R. Fearn. He wrote me once that he was producing 10,000 words a day. Recently he died. Who even noticed? I never saw one obit.

there was an English thriller-writer named J.S. Fletcher, who wrote for 16 hours a day, year in and year out. He probably wrote more than Edgar Wallace. Wallace is still breathing gently but Fletcher's deader than a doornail.

"'But what good came of it at last?' quoth little Peterkin. . ."

Well, they earned their daily bread, and did what they wanted to do.

Or did they?

Theodore L. Thomas Says:

Where are the science fiction stalwarts these days? There are six magazines left in a field that has nurtured many of us. These magazines are hurting for stories; they need them to stay alive. Yet writers who supposedly love the field don't mind standing by and watching them go under. This is downright fink-like. It seems to me that science fiction writers owe a kind of duty in times like these to turn out a magazine story now and then instead of turning their backs on the field. It is no good saying that is the magazine field is dead, let it die. There is nothing wrong with extending a helping hand. Furthermore, there are others among us who don't mind appearing in the higher paying science fiction magazines, but who refuse to appear in the lower paying ones. These literary snobs ought to be strangled in their beards. In short we seem to be a pretty snide and selfish bunch.

HARRY HARRISON SAYS:

Phil Farmer skal taller Navajo, ja, men hvor mange PITFSCer kan taller findt Dansk? Jag og Poul-- og den er nok. Kaj ne forgesu mi mem sole parolas Esperanto.. do kio estas ci tio Navajo idea?!

John T. Phillifent SAYS:

The name at the top, my own, won't mean much to you, but I write science-fiction and fantasy under the pseudonym of 'John Rackham', which name will, I hope, mean just a little. Nothing of false modesty, here. I've only come up lately, as a writer, but I have been reading since-fiction, from the core right out to the fringes, ever since I was ten, which is some thirty five years now. Just by way of interest, I have a long-ish story coming up soon in Fantastic. Called "Point". . . . I am looking forward to joining a community of ideas which seems to be the kind of thing I've been looking for for some time.

SERGE HUTIN SAYS:

I take the pen, today, for praising to you s hort fantastic novel able to interest you, in spite of concerning old dreamlands rather than the modern form of the fantastic (i.e. science-fiction): Ithell Colquhoun, Goose of Hermageres, published by Peter Owen Limited (50 Old Brampton Road, London SW 7, England). Apart from the fact of being written in a splendid prose (more poetic than many "verse"), this little book presents the distinctive feature to be crammed (but never in a tedious, artificial way) by an increasing logically arranged symbols and trials: the successive acts enacted or endured by the young heroine in a mysterious island of imitations (governed by an all-powerful Hierophant) are corresponding to the various operations necessary to achieve the Hermetic Magnum Opus. Isn't it, then, a sort of complicated allegory, a very tedious one? Not in any way: as she herself wrote to me in a personal letter, the entire

book consisted in the transcript of the successive sequences of an extraordinarily vivid "initiation dream" made by her. More and more it seems we are never to forget that dreams may be, even in 20th century, a true gateway to the archetypic symbols which are the moving elements of traditional occult systems.

GEOFFREY D. DOHERTY SAYS:

I am much indebted to my friend Brian Aldiss for proposing my membership to your fascinating "Institute". Until last year's BSFA's annual convention, I was unaware of your existence; however, I hope to remain an enthusiastic member.

To an Englishman whose knowledge of contemporary pressures in American society is limited to the comments of what Osborne calls the "posh" Sunday newspapers, No. 140 provided plenty of food for thought. However I found the remarks of such contributors as F. Bordes and Eric Frank Russell the most immediately provoking. Tell me, why do your SF writers emit such a howl when pohed by the"critics", whoever they are?

A few observations: Oddly enough, people read SF. A great deal of it is crap -- much crap SF; more, much more, crap literature. On the other hand SF has something to say that is worth reading about. I would have thought that there is a tendency for "orthodox" critics (and reviewers) to notice this, and that much criticism is sympathetic. After all, even a mediocre SF novel must provide a welcome change from the monumental drivel that the average reviewer has to put up with week after week. Why these coy reactions to their constructive advances?

I would suggest that one good reason is that many writers -- and readers -- of SF suffer from schizophrenia. Consciously or unconsciously they suffer from delusions of power -- you know "the unacknowledged legislature of mankind", sort of feeling; i.e. they feel their ideas are important enough to be taken seriously. On the other hand they consider "literature" a dirty word! We write for fun! Entertainment! Ours is a popular art! They howl like Milton's fallen angels as soon as the Eng. Lit. boys appear on the horizon. This is a type of inverted snobbery that makes me sick.

Since when has literature not been fun? Would Bordes suggest that Shakespeare wrote "The Tempest" for some Jacobean Moral Rearmament group? Or (v. Eric Frank Russell) that he had no eye on his box-office takings? Hogwash! The fact is a bad writer is a bad writer, whatever his conventions; an incompetent an incompetent.

It has always seemed to me that what characterizes a SF writer is a point of view, (quite unoriginal as a matter of fact, since it is pretty medieval) which is different from the basically psychological approach which the main stream novel perfected during the late 19th century. And that, gentlemen, is all. The rest is incidental. All the usual canons of taste, technique, control, etc. still apply. Instead of wailing, when he takes a justified boot in the backside, about dilution of the mystique, or responsitsilk botue yoks ((my apologies to colleague Doherty but after struggling with his handwriting for two weeks the last three words still come out as "responsitsilk botue yoks". It may be some of the 'new small talk'. TRC)) your average SF writer 'you know what I mean) would do well to indulge in a little serious self-criticism.

I like reading SF. I like reading good stories. Listening to the maniac views of some devotees, one would imagine the two were incompatible.

SPECIAL REQUEST TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Gerard Pick, Space Technology Laboratories, Inc., Post Office Box 95001, Los Angeles, California is preparing an anthology and would like to contact Raymond F. Jones, M.C. Pease, and Harry C. Stubbs. If you know the present addresses of any of the three, it would be much appreciated if you would direct a card to Dr. Pick at the above address.