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WORK IN PROGRESS

Chapters and Notes Towards a Science Fiction Story

by Arthur Jean Cox

With sketches, drafts, and studies

by Charles Schneeman

Possible titles --

Conjunctions	Signs
Signs in the Sky	On Other Grounds
In the House of Earth	
Son of Saturn	

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Chapter One. A draft.

It was the Season of Venus.

The planet was invisible in the morning sky, but Proudfit could feel its presence and see its changing lights and shadows on the stream of faces passing him. The steady faces of those born under Mars were softened, the facile faces of those born under Mercury were made warmer, the contemplative faces of those born under Jupiter were made more open. And all these qualities, softness, warmth, and openness, were reflected in their clearest light in the countenances of those born under the now-prevailing star, Venus, the Sign of Love.

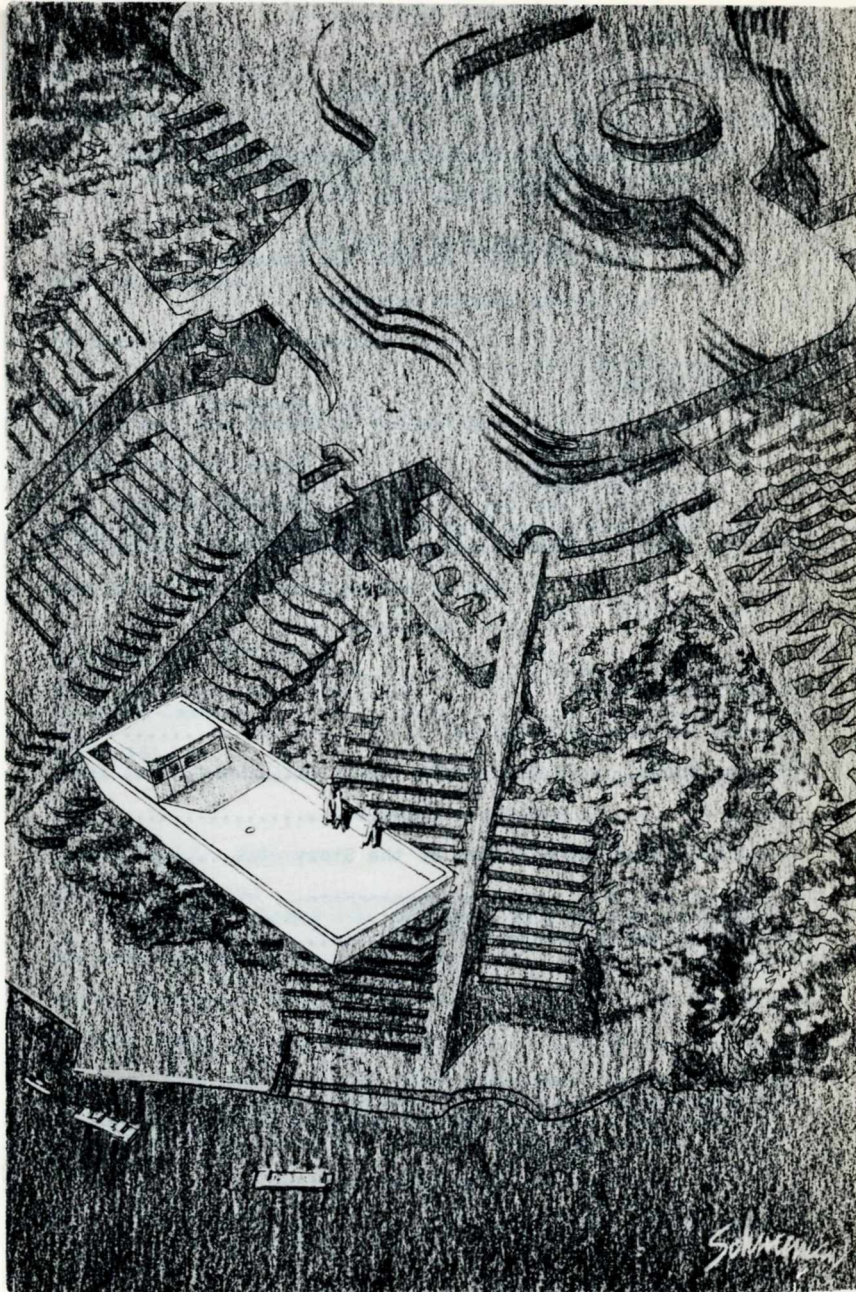
Even such familiar observations as these had their charm for him, now that he had returned to New Memphot. It was as if the world were fresh and new this sunlit morning. He was excited by the spectacle of so many people swarming in the streets. He was amazed anew at their numbers and diversity of dress, delighted with the general confusion, the variousness of activity and accent. Looking about him as he walked, at the people, the bright awnings, the massive white buildings, he felt a kind of proud affection for it all -- for this, despite everything that had passed, was his city, one of the great capitols of the world.

But before him was the strangest sight he had witnessed yet. Groups of men in red tunics and broad felt hats were darting here and there like predatory insects across the surfaces of the flowing streets and stagnant courts, dipping into the dark interiors of shops, taverns, stalls, and bobbing out again with wiggling captives to see them in the light: the Sacerdotal Police, searching desperately for someone. Proudfit hesitated--in such a mood they might challenge even his identity--then shrugged and walked toward the police, a bold spectator.

A uniform approached, an officer, judging by the white plume in the hat. Proudfit recognised the man who the evening before had delivered an invitation from His Reverence, the Divine Chatalane, for an audience. He was followed by a subordinate.

The officer bowed. His face, cast in the Martian mold, showed surprise. "Alone, Cham? Where are your attendants?"

Proudfit's "attendants" had vanished the night before, taking alarm at the appearance of the invitation and the body of police, led by this man, who had accompanied it; taking also his plate and gold ware which he, in turn, had taken, or rather, wrested, from the true Cham.



Chapter One.

Their absence might prove embarrassing unless he could find others.



"In my city, Captain, great men may walk where they will without fear of annoyance. I assumed the same was true of yours."

The man protested quickly: "Oh, it is, Cham, it is. But here you are not known. Your degree is evident only in your bearing and your clothing, and some one might take both to be the trappings of some rich--" He paused, evidently groping for a comparison that was at once appropriate and inoffensive.

"Rogue," supplied Proudfit. "But surely"--gesturing at the energetic police--"what you are doing is more interesting" (this, with condescension). "Tell me, what is happening here?"

The Captain replied in a tone of casual self-importance. "News came that a heretic was in this street. Greythwart." He 'dropped' the name, leaning forward a little and watching the Cham's reaction, which disappointed him. "We even knew the house he was in, but he somehow escaped. The man's cunning knows no bounds. He is somewhere about, somehow disguised."

"Disguised?" Proudfit lifted an eyebrow: the subject had struck a note of personal interest. "How do you know?"

"He would have to be. Otherwise, he'd be recognised instantly by anyone."

"He is well known, then?"

"Only by reputation. Very few have seen him."

The Captain had no chance to resolve this paradox. The junior officer, who had been standing idly in the background, stepped forward and whispered in his senior's ear. His eyes were on the Cham, his manner was that of a man who has grasped the solution to a riddle.

Had the fellow penetrated his disguise? Proudfit's hand rested lightly on the curved hilt of his dagger.

Chapter One.

But the junior officer has merely been averting his eyes from another object of suspicion: he has noted a man in rags, with a sack-cloth over his head, leaning upon a staff, not far from them. The Captain questions the seeming beggar, who answers cryptically; upon which the policeman draws a gun and announces his intention to have some sport with the wretch on the subject of what he carries about in that sack: the tender season having made the Captain playful. But the similarity of their circumstances has inspired in Proudfit a sympathetic identification with the mysterious heretic--if indeed this were he--and he intervenes.

"It is hardly necessary. There can be no doubt but that he is a most foully diseased beggar, such as I have found all too common in your city."

The two looked at him in surprise. "Can't you smell him?" questioned the Cham. He lifted his nose, waved a perfumed handkerchief under it. "Have your nostrils become so dulled from long association with the rabble that you cannot sense even that vile odour?"

He saw that this remark had fallen on sensitive ears and pressed his advantage. "In my country we have a saying, 'The gods have blessed the vulgar by blunting their sense of smell.'"

This move won the game. The beggar was roughly ordered away, with many expressions of disgust. But: "Cham," said the Captain, "allow us to accompany you the rest of the way to the Palace, so that any further embarrassment may be avoided." The Cham could only nod his acceptance, but he would have preferred some private conversation with the beggar to an interview with His Reverence. Glancing back, he saw the beggar threading his cautious way through the crowd, his cane tapping on the ground.

Chapter Two (mostly complete).**CHATALANE**

the cushion and placed it on the chair he was expected to occupy, and sat down.

Time passed. He suspected that Chatalane was keeping him waiting in order to exercise the superiority of his position. His chair faced a wall which was completely hidden by heavy hanging curtains; these stirred presently, as if touched by the wind. They parted, and a man as tall as himself, with broad shoulders, came into the room. He wore a red silk robe and a black skull cap. Like himself also, the man was a Jovian; and his deliberative face was further complicated by an accident of texture. He had a complexion like quilted satin, pink glowing features caught in a net of tiny wrinkles. The resultant impression was one of grave beauty and indeterminate age.

Proudfit did not rise. He nodded from where he sat and Chatalane bowed slightly. "We meet again, Cham."

"Again?" Proudfit's voice held no more than a polite hint of surprise.

"I am afraid you don't remember me," said the other, smiling. "We met as boys thirty years ago when your father brought you with him on a trip to the Two Lands. Let me say that you hardly show your age, Cham. What brings you now to New Memphis?"

His escort left him at the gate and the Palace guards conducted him to the chamber in which the audience was to be held. He looked about, feeling that enlargement of the spirit which a grand and spacious room imparts, a sensation not unmixed, in his circumstances, with more rueful feelings. He examined the superb paintings and carvings, the brilliant tapestries, the luxurious rugs, with a wry proprietary interest.

At one end of the room there were two chairs, facing each other in a confidential fashion; one held in its lap a deep silk cushion on which was embroidered the ostentatious insignia of his host. Proudfit smiled...removed

Chapter Two.

"A taste for adventure, Your Excellency. Life has grown dull of late in Laskar: no revolutions, no assassinations, no heresies--"

The priest laughed, lowering himself into his chair. "I was told that you had witnessed our most recent effort to put an end to the heretics." His expression changed when he discovered the hard wood; he shot a glance at the cushion on which the Cham sat, but said nothing.

Soft-padding domestics appeared at their elbows, poured them cups of a dark wine and then tucked themselves discreetly out of sight.

"Tell me," said Proudfit, "what is this heresy and who are the heretics?"

Chatalane made a grimace. "Well...I understand your curiosity. But you must know, Cham, that these heretics are not pagans like yourself. They are atheists."

Proudfit nodded to show that he understood His Excellency's meaning. The wine seemed very mild.

"These heretics deny the first tenet of our faith. which is--to correct any misinformation you may have--that the Astral Seasons are the moods of God. His moods are directly felt by his creatures as subtle, all-pervading influences, each mood being marked by the appearance in the sky of a Sign representative of it: Mercury or Venus, Mars, Jupiter or Saturn. We believe," he insisted gently, for here he touched upon a point of difference with his polytheistic visitor, "that the Signs appear in the heavens as tokens of the One God's present disposition towards Man."

"This is what the heretics deny. They are obsessed with a gross idea: that the planets actually cause the Seasons--that the Influences felt are physical radiations materially affecting the bodies of animals and men. They say that the sun is always radiating an unseen energy which is reflected back down upon the earth from the various planets. Each planet reflects it back differently because each absorbs a different quantity of energy due to the peculiarities of its chemical and physical character: for this reason, each planet affects us in a unique way."

"Very clever," said Proudfit. "But if the idea is true, why do only five planets affect us? Why don't the other planets, the stars, the moon -- the sun itself?"

"Believe me!" cried Chatalane, with an urbane exasperation, "you can conceive of no question to which these devious men have not fashioned some answer."



Chapter Two.

"They say that these other physical bodies do influence us, but we are not aware of the influences because they are constantly present, just as water is tasteless because it is always in our mouths. That is Greythwart's analogy. We do not notice the distant planets and stars because they are the stable background against which the more moving planets are felt. The same is true of the sun and, somewhat differently, the moon—which is present so often and so fleetingly that only the most sensitive or the most distraught are ever aware of it."



"Their arguments are many and elaborate," he concluded, "but that is their general tone. Everything is explained by recourse to physics and medicine."

Proudfit thought a while, then shrugged. "Why not let them believe what they wish?" But he knew the answer. In a church-state, heretical thought is revolutionary thought. The priests' position as rulers of the Two Lands was justified by their claim that they were the intercessors between God and man, and any person who challenged that claim cut directly at the foundations of the Church's worldly power.

"Ah, you heathens," murmured Chatalane. "In your country any man may fashion a lump of mud into the rude semblance of some creature and pronounce it a god. No wonder you find our concern difficult to understand!"

"But I do understand it," replied the Cham. "The poor man who has but a single prized possession lives in fear of losing it, whereas the rich man breathes more easily."

Both laughed.

"And who is Greythwart?"

"The most subtle of the heretics. We know nothing of him except that he is the author of a book in which these heresies are set forth in the most daring words. During the last Season of Judgement we challenged him to a public debate, with myself as spokesman for the Church. To our surprise, he accepted. An incredible man, both in appearance and intellect..."

He added with emphasis: "If my police are quick enough, you may meet him within the hour. You will understand much when you see him."

Another riddle, thought Proudfit.

Chapter Two.



As he spoke, the celibate priest ran his hand absently over the rich brocade of his dress. Perhaps it was merely one of those habits characteristic of the current Season, but Proudfit thought: Chatalane is afraid he will lose that robe.

"This--man," said Chatalane, "offered to prove that the Astral Seasons were natural rather than supernatural. He said that if the Seasons are the mood of God, those moods would be felt equally and in the same manner everywhere, since God is all-present. That of course is true. But he offered to put this truth to the test by flying a vessel from the ground to one of the Signs--to a planet--to Mars or Venus.

"He said that if the influences we feel when the Signs appear are physical radiations reflected by the planetary bodies, the sensations a person experiences would alter as he left Earth, crossed the gap between, and alighted on Mars. He even said that the Sign of the planet on which he landed would somehow be occulted--because it would be the new stationary ground against which all else is felt--and that the earth, which he speaks of as a planet of no more central importance than the others, might itself become a new Sign for this daring traveller, evoking some mood of its own. He said he would undertake this voyage."

Proudfit let out a bark of delighted laughter. "A mad idea!"

"Exactly."

"A mad idea -- in a mad world!"

Chatalane continued. "Greythwart denied that he was an atheist, but he also denied that God manifests Himself especially through the Astral Seasons. He argued that we do not encounter Him any more directly in the Seasons than we do in the atmospheric seasons, or in any other natural phenomena. He said that since God is the creator of everything, we do not have to make vain references to Him while discussing any one thing, but may confine our attention solely to its material character. You will agree that this is the most perverse nonsense. The Astral Seasons are so obviously supernatural that only a madman would deny it."

Chapter Two.

Chatalane was grave.

"Yes, yes, of course," murmured the Cham. "Now tell me, is such a flight really possible?"

"No. In the wastes above the earth a person would smother for lack of breath, be scorched by oppressive waves of heat and chilled by black shadows. Further, the familiar categories of experience would fade away. Up would be confused with down, there would be no east or west, north or south."

"If that is so, why don't you encourage the heretics to make the flight? You would be well rid of them."

"No, no," rejoined Chatalane, shaking his head. "The attempt itself is sacrilegious. The very idea is an affront to the Divinity. Who knows what such an undertaking might call down upon mankind...?" He said this with a profound uneasiness, all the more impressive because it was so vague.

"And what happened after this mad idea was proposed?"

"Naturally, we moved to arrest him. He had convicted himself of blasphemy out of his own mouth. The Sacerdotal Police were waiting in the hall. We anticipated no resistance. The common laymen who had been admitted to the debate had all been searched for weapons, because we thought the madman might have sympathisers among them. But as the police came in, they were felled by a shower of needles coming from the ranked tiers of priests sitting on the stage. The heretics had committed a further outrage by garbing unsanctified persons in the gowns of novices and bringing them onto the stage as holy scholars!

"I escaped with my life only by crouching behind my pulpit; it was splintered by dozens of needles. The hall was filled with shouting and confusion. In the turmoil Greythwart and all the false priests escaped...You find this amusing, Cham?"

"A coughing fit," said Proudfit, between spasms. "A touch of tropical fever --but do not fear; it is not contagious."

"I see."



Chapter Two.

An odd idea inserted itself into Proudfit's mind, one with tantalizing possibilities. Looking down on Chatalane--for the cushion on which he sat elevated him above the priest--he said, "So it is not definitely known who this Greythwart is, or where he is from? Do you think it's possible that he could be the missing Prince? The grandson of Proctor VI? The one who disappeared from New Memphot about ten years ago?"

Chatalane was puzzled. "You mean -- Shroudfit?"

"Proudfit!" corrected the Cham, his tone sharpened by incredulity. He saw that Chatalane was somewhat taken aback, and tried to disguise the meaning of the exclamation with: "Yes, yes, that was definitely it! I remember now: Proudfit. I heard the name some months ago."

"You have a better memory than I. Why do you think this Greythwart might be the Pretender?"

"An idle fancy. His character reminds me much of Proudfit's as I've heard it described--bold, imaginative, resourceful. It would certainly be ironic if the grandson of the king slain by you priests forty years ago in the Civil War should, in turn, take part in a revolution against you."

His host was amused now. "Cham, I think you're in sympathy with the old kings! I can understand that, as you are of royal lineage yourself--but don't be afraid: the dreaming mystics and priests of your country will never threaten your position."

"I am not afraid. I will never allow the priests of my country to become its treasurers, so wealth will never awaken their ambitions." Proudfit said this with the deepest conviction and seriousness--for in this matter he was no imposter; he was representing the sentiments of the true Cham.

Chatalane was pained. "Let us not quarrel, friend. Remember, our two countries are military allies, however different they may be. But my vows obligate me to correct your mistaken views. Our struggle against the king was a spiritual, not a materialistic, matter. The kingship was bound up with paganism. The king held his position because his father was a king and because he claimed as his remotest ancestor, the Sun-God. But a man's nature is determined not by who his parents or ancestors were, but by the Sign in the sky at the moment of his birth. Therefore, the king's claim had no true grounds."

Proudfit's voice sounded thick and heavy to his own ears. "Your logic is inconsistent. If a man's nature is not determined by who his ancestors were--why did you persecute the young Proudfit because his grandfather was a king?"

"I doubt that he was 'persecuted'--merely watched and guided, perhaps. He was, you must admit, possibly dangerous."

Chapter Two.

"Yes," Proudfit heard himself saying, "so dangerous that his foster parents were forced to abandon him at an early age! So dangerous that he had to be guided from one crust of bread to another! So dangerous that he was followed and taunted by snivelling priest-boys in the market place! So dangerous he had to leave New Memphot to escape his watchers!"

He stopped. He saw in Chatalane's face the expression of the junior officer when he had divined the identity of the beggar.



(Proudfit escapes from the Palace, somehow.)

Chapter Three. A partial draft.**BEGGAR**

The next step is to connect Proudfit with Greythwart. The meeting is initiated by the canny Greythwart. His motive: Proudfit has a skyboat (given to Laskar in token of its military alliance with the Two Lands) and it is needed for the Flight. He takes the boat and sends a messenger, Jug (a Mercurian), to contact Proudfit. Jug does so and brings Proudfit to a respectable home in the suburbs, where three men rise from a table to greet him. And he is somewhat puzzled: Could one of these be Greythwart? Somehow he had expected something more than sophistication and intelligence. But these are only Greythwart's confidential friends. Their names? Nightquill. Barking. Lime. There is a girl, too. Clea-Nece. "She spoke with a slight Deltan accent, pronouncing it 'Clay-a-neeze.' "

And now, Greythwart. Proudfit goes to the 'water-porch' to wash off the stain and dye and to remove his turban (so as to impress the girl with his great good looks: he has fair skin, blond hair, and blue eyes, "that colouring so typical of the later members of the Royal Family"). As he comes back into the room, everyone rises. He graciously nods...then sees that they are facing not him, but the door opening into the garden. A man dressed in the rags of a beggar stands there.

Proudfit stared at the newcomer. He had seen other Saturnians before, of course, but only in savage communities; in civilised societies they were usually destroyed at birth. Those he had seen had been madmen and for that reason held in awe by their ignorant fellows. Looking about, he was forcibly reminded of that now. Only in the Mercurian's exaggerated bow was there a touch of disrespect.

(Proudfit is invited to sit down.)

Chapter Three.

Greythwart seated himself likewise, and Proudfit was able to observe closely the marred and weathered face opposite him. It was calm, the face (no doubt) of a Saturnian who has just relieved his madness with a fit. The man's skin was ashy, his eye was grey, his voice and manner had a dull neutrality of tone: such were Proudfit's first rough impressions. He recalled Chatalane's words that he would understand much more when he met Greythwart. Saturnians were by nature dyspeptic and gloomy; they were popularly regarded as sceptics, cynics, and scoffers, but this view was more conventional than accurate. The sour distemper, rising in response to the Sign, could take many different forms (he seemed to remember a certain lofty disdain he had felt once) and the native sons of Saturn mostly were not articulate enough, not sane or social enough, to be cynics or sceptics. But there was some truth in the notion, and during the Season of Saturn--there had been only one such in Proudfit's lifetime, the Sign not being often dominant--a kind of license was extended to all resentment and fault-finding, even to disloyal and rebellious mutterings, with the convenient understanding that these were not to be taken seriously when the Season had passed.



Chapter Three.

But he had an idea that the present government of the Two Lands was not to be so indulgent. It was fitting that a Saturnian should be the leader of the heretics, but it was disappointing too, in view of the way these particular heretics, who had impressed him so favourably, had deferred to the fellow. Since his motives in attacking the Church were those naturally congenial to his race, it meant that these others lacked seriousness and nobility of purpose. It rather cut the ground out from under them, he thought.



But in the discussion which follows they convince him of the possibility, at least, of the Flight. Greythwart tells him that they want his "glad consent" to use the skyboat (even though they already have taken it by cunning and force.

Proudfit glanced at the others and saw what the Saturnian said was true. They were actually waiting for him to give his answer, waiting without the slightest hint of mockery or reserve. He felt a touch of amused contempt. These bookish men didn't want him to spoil the drama they were acting out, and in which they had assigned themselves such attractive roles, by forcing them into any unseemly action.

Chapter Three.

He agrees to let them use the skyboat, on one condition: He goes everywhere it goes; this includes the Flight to the Sign.

He knew that such a resolution gave him the highest claim for keeping the skyboat always in his sight, reminding them of his title to it (for in their busy pursuit of their own plans, they might come to overlook that in time); and, further, it would ally him with these people and give him a place and an occupation in the Two Lands. And, besides, there was the girl.





#4 Notes.

There has to be a march of Seasons--has to be, because it cannot be the same Season always--and these must be somehow present in the story. But the Seasons cannot interfere seriously with the action (the drama must be one of ideas) and so the astral influences cannot appear as immediate and urgent motivations. Neither should they contribute much "atmosphere." Their significance would have to be thematic, and that of a very broad kind. Therefore, four seasons, I think (as it would be wise to avoid Saturn).

Venus, the Season of Love: during this period, Proudfit is courted. By Chatalane. By Greythwart. And perhaps by a third person, representing some third force. (Paganism? An appeal to his lost birthright as dispossessed ruler of the Two Lands?) Proudfit's courtship of the girl is begun here, too; she will help bind him to Greythwart's group.

Mercury, the Season of Wandering: a period of action and movement in the story, dangerous skirmishes, a low earth-skimming flight of the skyboat.

Jupiter, the Season of Contemplation: the gathering of resources, the planning for action, the solution of difficulties--culminating in the final reversal, and the onset of

Mars, the Season of War: the final desperate struggle with the Church.

And Earth, the Season of ???

Proudfit's skyboat: a large open boat, 30 feet in length, with a deck, railings, cabin, rudder; disguisable, in a pinch, as a common river boat or barge.

How does it fly?

Volitional energy--that ambiguous radiation supplied by the sun and reflected back from the other planets--could be adapted as the motive power.



CROWD
(FOR COVER)

#4 Notes.

Technically, the skyboat was a mystery to Proudfit, but he understood its principle. He understood that the tank contained a liquid which could be heated; understood that what he perceived as heat in an object or substance was a pervasive agitation of its minutest particles; and that the motivator was a device which, using volitional energy, could organise this anarchic movement towards a coherent end, could sway all these individual particles in a single direction. The collective pressure of these countless grains of liquid, all crushing forward against one end of the tank, swept the tank before them, and the deck to which it was solidly attached. So the skyboat flew--with the help of two smaller tanks, fore and aft, which lifted it into the air.



But the physical character of the Great Flight itself--our people sailing in an open boat from one world to another--must not be described until it happens, as it may form some part of the interest.

There has to be a discussion of the various birth-types. This could be, or even must be, put into the mouth of Greythwart.

Something like this--

A thin book lay on the table next to Proudfit; stamped on its cover in blood-red ink was a warning that any unauthorised person found in possession of the book would be put to the Question. He took it up and discovered it to be written by Greythwart. This, then, must be the book which he had heard spoken of with so much respect more than once this evening. He browsed through it. To his surprise, there was no indignation, no impassioned language, no catalogue of abuses or call to action; but rather a stock-taking, measuring and pacing language, placid almost to listlessness, with a pale glimmer of wit here and there. And yet Chatalane had called the book most daring!

The first chapter sketched out "the relevance of constitutional elements in the formation of the personality," by which Greythwart meant the influence of a person's birth-star on him. He began with what everyone knew: a person's mood was largely caused by the planet dominant at any given time, and persons born when that same planet had been dominant were most sensitive to its presence.

#4 Notes.

Greythwart thought that those "constitutional predispositions" were created by the impress of volitional energy on the untropised nervous system of the infant, and described at some length how the particular reflections from the planet Mars "predisposed the organism to aggressive behavior by making muscular activity the primary mode of satisfaction."

Proudfit skipped the chapters on the Mercurian and Venerian temperaments and went directly to what most interested him: the chapter on those born under his own sign, Jupiter. According to Greythwart, the Jovian was "over-endowed." His temperament was comprised of almost equal parts of the three previous components, Mercury, Venus, and Mars, and his character was formed by the integration of these contending impulses. This, said Greythwart, was what so often attracted Jovians to government, law, and ethics, as these are concerned with the arbitration of conflicting claims. Proudfit thought this hardly a grand conception. He saw how it was true of most Jovians, but it was not a good portrait of him. It made him sound merely prudent and judicious.

A chapter on Saturnians followed. He read it with some interest, seeking a clue to the riddle of its author. It seemed that the Saturnian was brother to the Jovian (Proudfit doubted the relationship), as he was also over-endowed; but in his case the intensity of the impulses was such that integration was seldom achieved. No personal reference was made, but Proudfit noted the word "seldom."

The book didn't limit itself to temperament only: other chapters dealt with "different orders of motivation": social, economic, and cloacal. The first two were rather good, filled with surprising statements, very likely true; but the third betrayed that somewhat childish lasciviousness so characteristic of Saturnians and led Greythwart to express himself peculiarly about the formation of sexual character and even to some far-reaching --and far-fetching --interpretations of dreams, and other vagaries. Proudfit put the book aside, feeling both disappointed and somehow relieved. He was not unimpressed, but it was obvious that the man was not the towering intellect he had been made to seem.



1st COVER COMPREHENSIVE

#4 Notes.

What is the secret of Greythwart's quiet stability, so unlike his kind? The answer would go something like this:

"He has surrendered all his demands on life. His passions are dim and easy to control. He is like a man who has been crippled in an accident and must live from that time on a lower level of expectancy. Never biting off very much, he finds it easy to chew. It might be said that in electing to make a daring flight to another world, he has taken a very big bite indeed, but this is an impersonal thing with him. He wants nothing for himself. He doesn't want money or fame. He doesn't eat much. And sexually he is non-existent.

It must take our hero a while to recognise this last fact. He is jealous of Clea's great admiration of the selfless Greythwart, and treats him as a rival. But the ever-conscious Proudfit could not be kept in ignorance of Greythwart's sexual character for long...However:

He knew that she was constantly drawing comparisons between the two of them, with himself invariably coming off the worse. How could she make such a comparison, he wondered, without being somewhat dulled and put off by the man's bookish self-abnegation? Without seeing that he, Proudfit, was much the more prepossessing of the two--the livelier and stronger, the more manly in appearance and conduct? And yet he couldn't help but be conscious that Greythwart's serious absorption in his work had something in it that was highly flattering to the man, especially when contrasted with his own trivial lack of concern, his merely coming along --he coined the phrase-- for the ride.



3RD COVER SKETCH

#4 Notes.

"Mercury, the Season of wandering"? There might need to be some justification of this, as it would seem to be the most arbitrary and unlikely of the five Seasons, and the Mercurian temperament not psychologically plausible. I think it can be justified. Like this:

Characteristic of the Mercurian is a general flexibility. The manner is not aggressive and yet not submissive, the face is facile but not very expressive. The Mercurian is cool. He is not bound strongly to others by bonds of aggression--the need to act upon and master them--nor by bonds of tenderness. He is detached--unattached--and yet he has energy: so he moves.

(The faces expressive of the birth-signs might be sketched lightly, in a cartooning way; they would be stylised versions of the expressions we see in the photographs in the Szondi test. Mars would be a tightness of the mouth, the lips a straight line, with a steady and outward-looking face. Venus would be a looseness in the mouth, perhaps even a slight pursing of the lips (in Season, say; but this detail might be disgusting to some readers), the eyes sometimes alert but never steady. Jupiter would be 'thoughtful'--that is, the face quiet but not vacant, the manner self-contained. Mercury has been touched on fleetingly above. Saturn would be a sourness of expression--like the 'Before' in a 'Before and After' ad. These things would have to be done casually, even slightly, or they could dehumanise the story.)

In short, what distinguishes the temperaments from each other is a 'tension' acquired at birth and continuing through life.

But not after death? No.



#4 Notes.

The body was lying face down. It was dressed in a robe of yellow cloth, stained here and there by small dark splotches. Proudfit pressed the toes of one foot under the crumpled form and lifted, raising the body up onto its side. The head lolled back with a suddenness that made him start, and unseeing eyes looked up at him. The features were those of a man who might have been Clea's father (say). He was sure it was...and wondered what her father's birth-sign had been during life. It was impossible to tell now: the muscles of the face had relaxed so completely that that peculiar tension with which everyone is familiar but which hardly anyone has been able to define, and which proclaims this man to be a Martian and that one a Venerian, had faded away. Involuntarily, he shuddered--as a horse shudders when it sees a camel. He had looked upon the Face of Death many times, but had never come to easy terms with it.



And perhaps this--

Later, they dropped in the skyboat with the body of Clea's father to a desolate spot at the foot of the mountain. There, in the warm dry sand, the body would remain for a long time without decomposing...The dead astronomer lay looking up at the night sky, his face showing that Sign which is evoked by no known star, until the sand from their scoops blotted that Mystery from their view.

This last would hint at something which must, I think, be one of the true interests of the story: what is Earth the Sign of?

This mystery to run through the book.

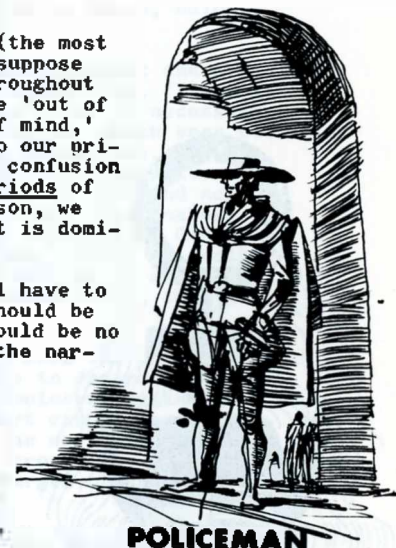
Clea's father an astronomer? (This might need to be reconsidered, because in such a world and society astronomy would be strictly a priestly function--laymen would not be allowed access to its study, as a likely breeding ground of disaffection.) He could be a priest. Dissident. De-frocked, perhaps. Or secretly heretical.

#4 Notes.

The physical nature of a Sign's influence might be plain to observant men other than astronomers. For wouldn't it have a diurnal character? And couldn't a Sign be eclipsed? And what would happen during an eclipse of the sun by the moon?

To answer the first question (the most important), it would be best to suppose the effect of a Sign diffused throughout the earth's atmosphere; otherwise 'out of sight' would be literally 'out of mind,' another Sign taking over. To keep our primary notion from collapsing into confusion and disorder, we must imagine periods of influence. And for this same reason, we must suppose that only one planet is dominant at a time.

Some idea of these things will have to be conveyed, but the situation should be kept large and loose, or there would be no free-play in the development of the narrative. As an example--



It was the Season of Jupiter.

The change had taken place about mid-morning, on the day after their visit to the observatory. Within the space of a few minutes, volatile Mercury had dissipated before the presence of the Star of Judgement. Or so it seemed. Greythwart said that Mercury had a lower threshold than Jupiter, which meant it was the more powerful of the two. Its influence had waned simply because the transitory planet had disappeared around the skirt of the sun, leaving the heavier duller planet to hold undisputed sway.



But Mercury cannot be allowed to have a lower threshold than all the other planets; because if it did, it would prevail most of the time--since its 'year' is only 88 days in length.

#4 Notes.

One other possibility: that there might be no Sign present, all the planets being on the other side of the sun. This could happen very infrequently, but had happened (let us say) once before: on the eve of the Deposition thirty? forty? years before. It was then, in a moment carefully anticipated by the priests, that God Turned Away His Face--in disgust, as they would have it, justifying their action. (Their statement cloaks a guilty consciousness too--they had murdered the king when God wasn't looking.)

But what about the accidental 'impress' of a wandering asteroid? Or, more dramatically, a comet?

The man, then, born in the Sign of a comet. His nature, his curious cast of feature and mood. His birth-chord not to be struck again until the comet returns. Seventy-six years later.

There is a danger here. Such a person must not appear too prominently in the story, as he would tend to divide the singularity of Greythwart's character.

Something might be made of this too. Being mostly outside the story, he could represent some quality outside its scope, some recognition--and this is an opening of possibilities, a chance to repair a defect in our imagined world--of the visionary character of religion, as exemplified by, say, William Blake (more suitable for our purposes than Yeats, who is touched with theosophy and astrology, the very things which must be rigorously excluded). This new figure could not appear in his own person, he could not take part importantly in the action, which is a dispute over facts and the interpretation of facts. He could be present in absentia only, or by proxy.



POLICEMAN
(A Martian under Venus)

#4 Notes.

It might be best if Greythwart alone spoke of him. He is present only through Greythwart. Or he is behind Greythwart? But that might be fatal.

Rintrah? No. Omoloorn.

His face is covered with a white beard, which conceals his expression.

Omoloorn is opposed to both Greythwart and Chatalane, but not to their mutual opposition. "There is no progress without contraries." What is necessary, says Omoloorn, is the double vision: which sees both the world of dead nature and, above this, the visionary world--which is expressive, figurative, allegorical, the world of art, poetic myth and achieved human culture. The priests insist that nature is not dead--they are wrong. They insist that God has a living community with man--they should go further and see that God is wholly in man and of man. "If the priests would persist in their folly, they would become wise."

Greythwart sees clearly but sees the physical world of nature only. He wishes to destroy the priests' view of nature, and Omoloorn thinks this in itself is good. If Greythwart can succeed, much debris would be swept out of the way, and "confusion would be clarified into error." For Omoloorn thinks that religion must be purged of what is naive and literal.

But Greythwart is nevertheless in error and so in evil. Omoloorn's final judgment on him is

May God us keep
From single vision and Greythwart's sleep.

But all this must be delivered as an aside, or a series of asides. If our story tried to incorporate visionary religion in any large way, it would cease to be science-fiction without, perhaps, successfully becoming anything else--it would cease to be literal and would become something figurative, symbolical, mythological, or perhaps something distantly like those "allegories addressed to the intellectual powers" which Blake wrote. That would be too venturesome for this occasion. Greythwart is our hero and we'll follow his example. He has given up, along with his princely claims on life, all loftier ideals, all searching for absolutes, and has fallen back on the short-range, the pragmatic, and the practical. We'll stick with him and the via media. We'll keep our footing on the low safe ground of science-fiction and content ourselves with a story of the first flight to another planet.

SATURN	JUPITER	MARS	VENUS	MERCURY
Usually, none.	Lawyers, priests, clerks, politicians, accountants, analysts, administrators and executives, sometimes engineers.	Soldiers, policemen, hunters, mechanics of all kinds, politicians of some kind, pirates, robbers, bouncers, horse-trainers and athletes.	Wives, prostitutes, gigolos, actors and performers of sort kind, politicians, rhetoricians, teachers, nurses, masseurs.	Sailors, traders, commercial travellers, explorers, messengers, vagabonds of all kinds.
Iconoclast	Casualist	Crusader	Evangelist	Pilgrim
Sour and gloomy.	Face steady and not very expressive; the manner is 'thoughtful' and self-contained.	Eyes steady and watchful, mouth firm; manner is aggressive and active.	Face soft, mouth loose and limp (sometimes) slightly pursed; voice soft.	The face is facile and yet not very expressive; the manner is not aggressive and yet not submissive. The Mercuryian is 'cool'.
Manic-depressive and, sometimes, epilepsy.	Chastity	Sadism	Paranoia	Hysteria
				CHARACTERISTIC PATHOLOGY

#5 Possible Further Development Of the Story--

The preparation for the Flight, the clearing out of the way of various difficulties, should be told, I think, somewhat synoptically. The main emphasis in this middle section would lie elsewhere, in the struggle with the third party. Paganism, a reactionary throwback to the period, not so very long ago, when the Signs were personified as individual gods, Venus, Mars, and so on. The paganism is embodied in Akimbo? Kudo? Castor?

Then, a reversal: the discovery of the slaughter of Greythwart's confidential friends--



POLICEMAN

Greythwart's knees seemed to give way and he sank into a chair with a groan, "The worst has happened!"

Jug gave an insane burst of laughter. "Not yet," he cried, "not yet!"

--not, however, by the police, but by the third party, which is successfully defeated and cast out.

But Jug is right. On the very eve of the Flight, our friends are arrested by the Sacerdotal Police. Chatalane has watched their movements from afar all this while, has let them bring their plans to the very edge of achievement, so that the blow, when it fell, would be all the more crushing--and at a time when they, through their long and dangerous preparations, had exhausted all resources and involved all possible allies.

The confrontation with Chatalane--the scene should be largely his--ends with the sudden opening of the Season of Mars, "as if a scale had fallen from the planet." This was the moment when our little group had planned to launch the Flight.

Tentatively--

#5 Possible Further Development of the Story--

It was the Season of Mars.

"Stand up," ordered Chatalane. Proudfit and Greythwart raised themselves to their feet, as did Clea-Nece. Outside, the drum was a blare of sound. Feet tramped, uniform voices chanted, and a company of men, pennants flying, marched through the gate and into the city.

All three stood defiant and seemingly unafraid. Proudfit noted with pride the brave countenance of Clea-Nece. And Greythwart's face, it struck him, was curiously luminous, as of a man inspired. Suddenly, Greythwart had fallen--arms and legs thrashing, sending a footstool, a chair, crashing against the wall--eyes rolling, mouth foaming.

Proudfit felt an intense spasm of shame and loathing.

The Saturnian was having a fit.



This is the lowest point in their fortunes; in every sense, for they are taken to the archaic cells, surviving from a more barbaric age, far below the magnificent Palace, and put to the Question.

The intended result of these developments is to make more and more depend upon the Flight --which is not entirely hopeless as long as the police have not discovered and destroyed the skyboat. The closing episodes will detail the escape from the Palace (and its destruction?), the final struggle with the police, and the capture of Chatalane: the priest must be one of the passengers aboard the skyboat when it makes its historic flight, he must be one of those to first set their feet upon the Mars-ground, for unless there is present the representative of the Church, this supreme moment would lack some part of the conscious purport it might otherwise have.

#5 Possible Further Development of the Story--

Greythwart has chosen well his time for the Flight: if the Sign of War is occulted when they land upon Mars, Earth will have to be dominant, because it will be the only planet in the sky of Mars at that moment. He does this because he bravely wishes to risk the most telling demonstration of his theory.

There is, of course, only one thing of which Earth can be the Sign. But that must remain discreetly unmentioned until the end.



"Illustrations by Schneeman"

The above words always mean that a terrible struggle has taken place, and we're never sure who won. Sometimes the scrap-heap is knee deep, and this is what you have been glimpsing in these sketches for RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY.

The concept of how the hero, Proudfit, looks was partly settled when Jean Cox remarked over the phone that he saw him as a blonde. Out went my guess that he was a Latin type, see (p. 7) sketch of fellow with handkerchief to nose and black mustache. The cover action was firm in mind from first reading of the MS.

What the police were doing was the problem. How to get them, the crowd, and Proudfit all into the picture was a real brain teaser. After the crowd action was approximated in sketch #1 (p. 21), several tries were made to put

Greythwart into the foreground. These wound up in the waste basket. Then sketch #2 (p. 23) solved that. Sketch #3 (p. 24) became the cover after many tries to improve it had failed. The moment the action is clarified the impression of untold goings-on is lost.

Turning the scene to bright midday made an excellent drawing in fine line, but I still liked the sketch better. You might see the sunlit job on the cover* because somebody liked it better.

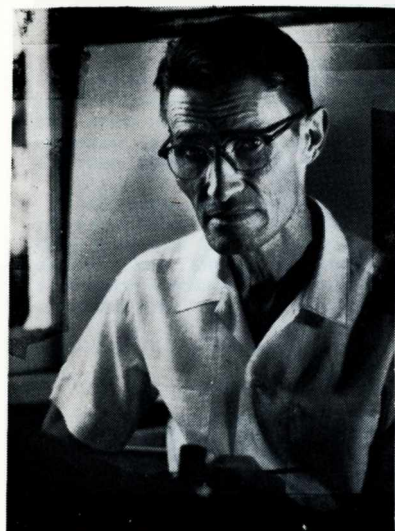
That is the struggle of being an artist: deciding what to draw, and then how to draw it. I hope you like the final results.

Charles Schneeman

*Note:

Mr. Schneeman is right: the sunlit drawing is the cover actually used because somebody (the editor) did like it better.

L.S.



HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION

Part II

The Period of Alienation

by ALEXEI PANSHIN

1. Heinlein's Third Period

From the time he began to write in 1939, one of the hallmarks of Robert Heinlein's writing has been his concern for facts. He doesn't just like facts, he relishes them, and he sprinkles them through his stories with a liberal hand by means of dialogue, demonstration, and if all else fails, omniscient exposition. There is a very tender line beyond which factual lectures become tedious irrelevancies in fiction, and Heinlein has occasionally come close to this line; but if there is anything amazing about his writing it has been his ability to write for, say, ten pages, as he does on space-suits in Have Space Suit--Will Travel, without losing or even seriously slowing his story.

The one most obvious thing that marks the five novels of Heinlein's third period is the change in those things he has lectured about. Instead of concerning himself with facts, he has written about morality, sex, religion, war, and politics; but he has treated these opinions as though they were facts. More than this, he has so concentrated on presenting his opinions with every available narrative device that he has neglected story construction, characterisation, and plot, as though they were completely subsidiary to his opinions-as-facts. Why this change has come I cannot say exactly, but I suspect a combination of financial independence and a desire to say the things he most strongly believes. The result from an artistic point of view is a mistake.

Certainly, any author's strongly held beliefs are likely to

turn up in his stories; but in fiction, at least, I demand that those beliefs turn up in only certain ways. That is, either a character, acting as spokesman for the author, can present the belief or the story itself can serve as a case for the belief. The important point is relevance to the story--there is no excuse for dialogue without internal justification that continues for five or ten or twenty pages, as in recent Heinlein stories, solely for the purpose of presenting the author's opinions.

Let's take an actual example of an idea that Heinlein has put forward on at least four different occasions: that man is a wild animal, the roughest, meanest crittur in this neck of the universe. Cross him at your peril.

Heinlein predicts in an article entitled "As I See Tomorrow," in the April 1956 Amazing, that this point of view will eventually be generally recognised. In its context, this is clearly legitimate. The context is an article giving Heinlein's personal opinions.

The idea appears again at the end of The Puppet Masters, and again it is clearly legitimate. First, it suits the narrator's character that he should think this: he is a secret agent, used to finding violent solutions to his problems. Second, the opinion comes as a culmination to a set of events that seems to demonstrate its aptness. Third, it is not presented as fact but only as the viewpoint of the narrator.

Heinlein's second fictional use of the idea comes in Tunnel in the Sky. In this case, it is presented as the opinion of the instructor of the Advanced Survival course. It is in character for him to make such an opinion, and a good part of Heinlein's book is an attempt to make a case in action for the opinion. I think the case is not made convincingly--within an hour of the start of a survival test scheduled to last from two to ten days, the hero comes on evidence of a murder and theft whose only reason seems to be to provide evidence of man's savage, untamed nature--but the opinion is clearly not out of place.

The fourth appearance of the idea comes in Starship Troopers, the first novel written in Heinlein's third period. Heinlein has his narrator "prove" as a class assignment that war and moral perfection derive from the instinct to survive, thereby putting a stamp of approval on war. Rico, the narrator, concludes, "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." This is a complicated argument for "might makes right." It is hard to say whether it is in character for Heinlein's narrator to deliver this argument because the narrator is never defined closely enough for us to tell his

attitudes and capabilities. The story itself only partly offers evidence for the argument given: that is, we only know that Heinlein's men are willing to fight. Most important, the argument does not of necessity belong to the story--it is tossed in solely as an off-the-cuff remark. In other words, the presence of this opinion in this story as it is given is of a different order than its presence in Heinlein's other two stories. It is frequent intrusions of this sort that have damaged Heinlein's recent stories beyond any repair.

The impression Heinlein has given by this change in emphasis is of a man standing in a pulpit delivering sermons against an enemy that no one but he can see clearly. Since these opinions he has delivered are obviously of primary importance to him, negative reactions to these stories of his seem only to cause him to state his opinions all the more strongly. I think that having changed as much as he has, he will not change back and that whatever fiction he prints from now on will continue to deal heavily in editorial opinion and will treat opinion as fact. What makes the novelists of the last century, particularly the bad ones, difficult and dated reading is that they continually moralised, and their moralisations have not aged well. My own belief is that Heinlein's moralisations will look just as odd to our descendants and read as poorly.

In other words, I think the Heinlein stories that will be read for enjoyment will come primarily from Heinlein's second period, and to a lesser extent, from his first. His last stories will be only psychologically interesting.

2. 1959

In 1959 Heinlein published only two stories, a short and a novel, both in ESSE, both very interesting. The short, "... All You Zombies" (March 1959), seems to belong in Heinlein's third period for the aggressive way it involves sex and seduction, subjects Heinlein had never touched on before.

"... All You Zombies" combines sex and time travel, a very interesting combination indeed, fraught with possibility. Time travel has always fascinated Heinlein, from "Life-Line," his first story, which involved a skinned version of time travel, through Have Space Suit--Will Travel, the last story of his second period. The range of switches that Heinlein has used on the subject is vast: men popping into the future, men meeting themselves, men previewing their own deaths. "... All You Zombies" came up with an idea new for Heinlein, but one that had been touched on a few years earlier by Charles Harness.

Harness is a very interesting writer, although I doubt that he has published more than a dozen stories all told. His forte has been what Blish calls the "intensively recompllicated" story. Damon Knight calls it "the kitchen sink technique," which may be more accurate--the sort of story where idea is piled on idea, complication added to complication, switch thrown on switch, until nobody knows what in hell is happening, including

the author. Most often, because they are so complicated, these stories are done poorly. Van Vogt did them and almost always did them badly, like balance sheets that never add to the same total twice. Harness was unique in that his stories combined ideas, inventions, insights, complications, and extravagances, and still managed to make sense.

One of Harness's best stories was a time travel piece entitled "Child by Chronos." Its punch was that the main character, a girl, by ducking through a time machine became her own mother. Biologically this seems impossible, since a child gets only half its genes from each parent, so a daughter should be only half what her mother was. But then, both mother and daughter do have the same parents. It isn't possible to prove Harness wrong. The story is a very tricky bit, and it is made all the better by the switching around in time not being done solely for the sake of the final effect. There are problems of character involved, and the story, with all its switching, solves them quite neatly.

The intensively recompllicated story has never been Heinlein's interest, although "By His Bootstraps" is a neatly choreographed, though empty example. "...All You Zombies" combines the intensively recompllicated involutions of a "By His Bootstraps" with an idea that goes Harness one better.

Shorn of its complications, the plot is as follows: In 1945 a one-month-old girl is abandoned on the steps of an orphanage in Cleveland. The girl grows up and at the age of 18 is seduced and left pregnant. It turns out that she is both a functional female and a potentially functioning male. She has the baby, but her female organs are so damaged in the process that they have to be removed and she/he is given hormone shots and turned into a male. The baby, meanwhile, is stolen from the hospital.

The girl-now-boy becomes a confession story writer. After seven years, he is picked up by a bartender with a time machine in his back room and carried back to look for the seducer who done him wrong. The bartender meanwhile hops forward a bit, steals the baby and takes it back to the 1945 orphanage, then hops again to pick up the young man just after he finishes seducing his younger female self. The bartender, who is the young fellow grown older by thirty years, then takes himself forward to 1985 where he recruits his younger self into a time police corps.

This is a wild story with every knot tied. In about one-quarter of the length of "By His Bootstraps" it comes to a far sharper point and assays out as considerably more of a story.

Biologically, it fires straighter than Harness, too. Baby, bartender, girl, and boy are all one--what other baby could girl and boy have than the one they do?

The end of the story goes even further: "I know where I came from--but where did all you zombies come from? . . . You

aren't really there at all. There isn't anybody but me--Jane--here alone in the dark. I miss you dreadfully!"

If ever a story was meant to be told in the first person, this is it. In style and denouement it is pure Heinlein: in tone and technique it is a departure.

Starship Troopers (F&SF, October-November, as Starship Soldier), Heinlein's 1959 Hugo award-winning novel, has been widely taken as a militaristic polemic. I don't see that any other reading is possible. Not only does the story line actively put the military life in the most glamorous terms possible (note, for example, the emotional difference between the magazine title, the editor's choice, and Heinlein's preferred title, that of the book version), but there are numerous classroom interludes and asides by the narrator that attempt to give a direct philosophical justification for government by the military and militarism as a way of life. The book's nearest cousin is the sort of recruiting film that purports to show the life of a typical soldier, with a foreword and sound track commentary by kindly, fatherly General X, who interprets what we see for us. The outstanding characteristic of a film of this sort, and of Heinlein's book, is slick patness.

The story line of this book is actually quite simple: the training of a "Mobile Infantryman" of the future and his participation in a future war. However, Heinlein disguises the simplicity of his story by employing a very involved order of narration that, much simplified, goes as follows:

One.--Mobile infantrymen are dropped from a starship during a future war. There is a quick strike, given in detail, ending with the death of one of the armored, heavily-armed soldiers as they are picked up from the raid. This, of course, is just what a recruiting film would do, use a large slab of action as a narrative hook to arouse interest and sympathy with some death-and-glory to tickle those young adventurers susceptible to its appeal.

Two.--Just as the recruiting film would do, cut back to pick up the eager young narrator on the day he enlists (instead of going to Harvard, as his rich father would have him). The next five chapters give an account of basic training: the tough sergeant, the rigorous training, the hero fouling up and being straightened out. Then graduation from basic.

Three.--Neatly eased into the above is a flashback to the hero's high school class in History and Moral Philosophy, a course that the society's rulers have decreed must be taken by all (though passed by no one). There is also a ruling that this course must be taught by an ex-serviceman, and this class and the narrator's teacher, Colonel Dubois, are brought up again and again.

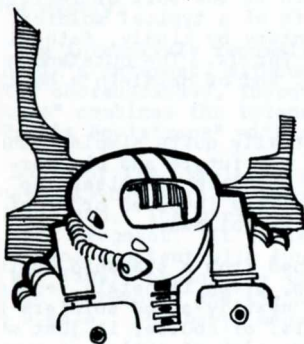
Four.--The early career of a raw young soldier. This is where the raid that opens the book naturally fits. Following it

is an account of leave and the narrator's application for Officer Candidate School.

Five.--A very long chapter showing Rico, the narrator, as an officer-in-training and then as a student officer in an important combat situation.

Six.--Close with the narrator as a seasoned officer in a reprise of the situation that opens the book.

Starship Troopers is in no way an account of human problems or character development. There is no human conflict at all. The story is the account of the making of a soldier, or, rather, a marine, and nothing more. The narrator goes in a recruit at one point and emerges a lieutenant at the other, and that is all.



Heinlein's "soldiers" really are marines, by the way, based on today's Marines, not on regular infantry. They are a small, highly disciplined elite corps with a strong sense of esprit who are carried on board ships run by the Navy and used on planetary raids. Heinlein's officers are called "mister" and his basic training is called "boot camp," both true of Marines but not of the Army.

Although the book is told in the first person, Heinlein's narrator remains curiously anonymous. At the end you know nothing of his tastes, his likes and dislikes, his personal life. The course of the book changes him in no way because there is nothing to change--Rico remains first and last a voice reading lines about how nice it is to be a soldier.

The other characters are even more sketchy, or simple expositions of an attitude. Rico's father, for instance, is used at the beginning of the book to oppose his son's decision to join the service and then resurrected as the corporal who replaces Rico when he goes off to OCS (I said the story was pat).

The slickness of the story is quite bothersome to me. War in the story involves death and glory and that is all; disease, dirt, and doubt are missing. All the soldiers we see are tough, smart, competent, clean-cut, clean shaven, and noble.

Who is Rico's replacement? His father, of course. Who serves under him as platoon sergeant at the close of the story? His father, again, of course. When Rico is fighting as a student officer, who is the sergeant under him? Why, his sergeant from basic training.

When Heinlein introduces a character, it is with this parenthetical paradiddle: "The Commandant had a permanent rank of fleet general (yes, that Nielssen); his rank as colonel was temporary, pending second retirement, to permit him to be Commandant." That is war for you: dangerous, heart-thumping, as sweet and glorious as a soldier cutting down a regiment all by himself.

It is, of course, Heinlein's intention to make war glorious. He wishes to exalt the military and the common soldier. He says explicitly, "A soldier accepts personal responsibility for the safety of the body politic of which he is a member, defending it, if need be, with his life. The civilian does not."

In the society of Heinlein's book only ex-servicemen have the right to hold office, to vote, and to teach History and Moral Philosophy, a subject that presumably only they understand. The society is defined as right. Heinlein bulwarks his position by making it the supposed result of "a scientifically verifiable theory of morals," a stacking of the deck that seems an attempt to cut off all debate. I have no final answers myself, and I am distressed by the ease with which Heinlein churns out his "right" answers and dismisses all other possibilities.

As an example, Colonel Dubois, who teaches the scientific theory of morals and hence should know what is what, says flatly that value is not an absolute ("Wrong," he says, when Rico guesses it is). Value, according to Colonel Dubois, is only in relation to living persons--value is cost and use; if you value freedom highly you must be willing to give your life for it. A lot of other thinkers, including Plato, have held the opinion that value is an absolute, but Dubois is able to dismiss them out of hand. He is right, you see, and hence doesn't have to explain, refute, or argue. This, I am afraid, is how rigid and self-satisfied such a system would actually be. "Our system works better than any used by our ancestors," says another teacher of History and Moral Philosophy, and I have no doubt his definition of "better," like that of any contented man, is "things as they are."

In one class in History and Moral Philosophy, the reason is given that this "perfect" government has never been overthrown: "If you separate out the aggressive ones and make them the sheep dogs, the sheep will never give you any trouble." This, to my mind, is the justification of a sheep-shearer. Luckily, of course, Heinlein defines his government as altruistic, and since

everything is done by definition in this story, there is nothing to worry about.

I can't help but wonder what the story (recruiting film) would be without a war. The war of the story begins after Rico enters basic and no clear reason is ever given for its start. It is simply needed for illustrative material. Starship troopers do not look quite so glamorous while sitting and polishing their weapons for the hundredth time because there is nothing else for them to do.

This book was written to be published by Scribner's as a juvenile, but they refused to accept it, thereby ending their long association with Heinlein.

3. Stranger in a Strange Land

In 1960, for the first time since World War II, Robert Heinlein published no fiction. In 1961, he published Stranger in a Strange Land, by a good margin his longest book, a heavily sexual, metaphysical, thoroughly annoying piece of work. It, too, won the Hugo award as the best science fiction novel of its year.

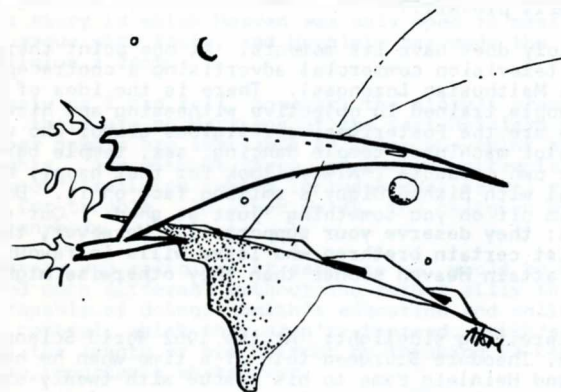
Several years ago I was asked to write about Stranger in a Strange Land but declined because I disliked the book too much to take the page-by-page notes necessary to discuss a story of its complexity. At the time, I wasn't any too sure how much of my dislike was because the book was every bit as annoying as it was meant to be and how much was because the book was badly flawed. The first of these is something a critic can't afford.

The book is flawed. It seems to me that Heinlein tells not one, but three stories in this book, and that they do not fit together. There is an adventure story, the story of founding a new religion, and there is a satire. Potentially the strongest of these is the satire. According to the jacket copy, Heinlein's purpose in writing Stranger in a Strange Land "was to examine every major axiom of Western culture, to question each axiom, throw doubt on it--and, if possible--to make the antithesis of each axiom appear a possible and perhaps desirable thing--rather than unthinkable." If that was Heinlein's purpose, I don't think he succeeded. His satire becomes drowned in the other two stories.

In a future year (unspecified, but 1980 as a guess from internal evidence) an expedition of four married couples is sent to Mars and never heard of again. Twenty-five years later a second expedition finds a lone survivor, Michael Valentine Smith, illegitimate offspring of the ship's pilot, and Mary Jane Lyle Smith, atomics engineer and inventor of the "Lyle Drive," which powers all modern ships. The young man has been raised by Martians and thinks of himself as one. The Martians think of him as something of an idiot, though by human standards he is quite bright.

Young Smith is heir to his mother's fortune (considerable), his mother's husband's fortune (considerable), his true father's fortune (considerable), and the considerable fortunes of every other member of the first expedition. He also has a pretty good claim under human law to be the sole owner of Mars. As soon as he is brought back to Earth he is salted away in a hospital and kept incommunicado. An actor is brought in to pose for him in a television interview.

Ben Caxton, an administration-baiting columnist, begins to think it possible that Smith may be considered dispensable and either killed or kept in a hospital out of the way for the rest of his life; so he and Jill Boardman, a nurse friend of his, contrive to break Smith out and spirit him away to the protection of a man who is too prominent to be steam-rollered. This man is Jubal Harshaw--doctor, lawyer, and writer of popular trash.



Harshaw takes them in because he feels in the mood for a good scrap; and then in his own elderly, cantankerous, individualistic way he settles things so that an even more prominent and powerful person--the Secretary General of the Federation, no less--has to worry about the disposition of Smith's financial affairs. This removes Smith from his position as pawn in a power struggle and leaves him free to enjoy himself.

Through the story so far, Mike Smith has been learning more and more of what humans are like and what they do, but his understanding is incomplete. Jubal has three beautiful young secretaries, one of whom, which one we are never sure, initiates Mike into sex. Soon after his independence, he and Jill Boardman, the nurse, leave Jubal's home to travel, Mike working thereafter at a number of jobs. While on this extended trip, he

sees monkeys in a zoo picking on one another and, thereupon, according to Heinlein, understands humanity, and incidentally decides to found a new religion.

Ben Caxton, the newspaperman, goes to visit Mike's temple, becomes shocked with the group sexual activities that go on there (Mike likes sex and has made it an important part of his religion) and leaves hurriedly. Jubal, who explains everything to everybody in the book, explains to Ben: 1) when you go into somebody's home you have to accept the way they do things, and 2) you're just jealous because Jill is sleeping around. Ben goes back and tries again and finds that he likes it this time.

Finally, even old Jubal goes to take a look. He likes it all, too.

Mike, by choice, then allows himself to be martyred by an angry crowd. We have, however, good reason to believe that his religion will prevail.

The story does have its moments. At one point there is a very nice television commercial advertising a contraceptive (Wise Girl Malthusian Lozenges). There is the idea of Fair Witnesses, people trained in objective witnessing and hired to do it. There are the Fosterites, a religious group, who use salesmanship, slot machines, temple dancing, sex, temple bars, and sell their own products ("Always look for that happy, holy seal-of-approval with Bishop Digby's smiling face on it. Don't let a sinner palm off on you something 'just as good.' Our sponsors support us; they deserve your support."). Moreover, they forcefully assist certain brethren who leave wills in favour of the church to attain Heaven sooner than they otherwise might.

An interesting sidelight: At the 1962 World Science Fiction Convention, Theodore Sturgeon told of a time when he had run out of ideas and Heinlein came to his rescue with twenty-six story ideas and a check. Sturgeon did use a number of these ideas, giving credit to Heinlein indirectly by including characters sporting one or another of Heinlein's pen names. One of the stories, entitled "And Now the News," was about a man whose overconcern for the daily news drove him crazy. Heinlein alludes to that idea in Stranger in a Strange Land: "Remind me," Jubal told her, "to write an article on the compulsive reading of news. The theme will be that most neuroses can be traced to the unhealthy habit of wallowing in the troubles of five billion strangers." -----

The adventure story lies in the first half of the book: spiring Mike to safety and winning him his freedom and inheritance. The satire lies in showing how men look to a Martian. The third story is the founding of Mike's religion.

Unfortunately, founding a religion is not all there is. I've left out Mike's Martian-trained ability to do almost anything. James Blish puts it like this: "He can control his

metabolism to the point where any outside observer would judge him dead; he can read minds; he is 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 thirty-five cops and almost as many heavily armored helicopters; he can heal his own wounds almost instantly; he can mentally analyse inanimate matter, well enough to know instantly that a corpse he has just encountered died by poisoning years ago; levitation, crepitation, intermittent claudication, you name it, he's got it--and besides, he's awfully good in bed." Mike's ability to do almost anything and the similar abilities of the followers of his religion make his religion right by definition, like Heinlein's military government in Starship Troopers, and hence trivial.

If you grant the story's premises, you cannot argue with its religion, just as my religion would be beyond argument if I were to write a story in which Heaven was only open to mass murderers. You can't argue with facts, and Heinlein has made the rightness of his religion a fact.

As nearly as I can tell, however, the story's premises are not true: there are no Martians of the sort Heinlein writes of, and no super powers are available to those who think proper Martian thoughts. And without these, anyone who attempts to practice the book's religion (which includes mass sexual relations) is headed for trouble. In other words, the religion has no point for anybody.

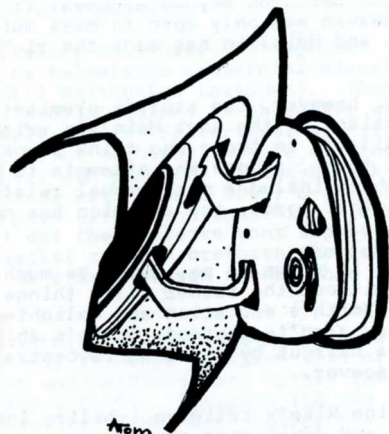
Both story and religion, it seems to me, would be much sharper and much different without the rather silly things that Smith is capable of doing. Smith's education and enlightenment should be central, which they aren't--instead, Smith's ability to control the length of his haircut by thinking is central, and that has no importance whatsoever.

Those capable of accepting Mike's religion (ability inborn in one person in a hundred) and developing super powers are God, the only God there is, so it seems. Since they are God, they continue to be God after death--the book calls death "discorporation." They run the universe they have invented (how, why, and from where, like so much of all this, remain unanswered) and for no good reason wear wings and halos. This construction of things seems to render all human action in the story completely irrelevant, but let that go. It also seems pretty foolish as story material, but let that go, too.

Heinlein's concern with his religion is so great, unfortunately, that he neglects all character development. Michael Valentine Smith (and it is no accident that "Michael" means "who is like God" and that "Valentine" has sexual connotations beyond its explicit meaning) is diminished by his super powers. Jubal Harshaw, too, is lessened by his super powers (doctor, lawyer, etc.); his multiple training seems a gratuitous gift from

Heinlein without reason or explanation. He redeems himself somewhat by his crusty nature, but nevertheless I find him suspect.

Some of the minor characters have life temporarily at the beginning of the story and then lose it, overcome by the flood of talk that engulfs the last half of the novel. Which secretary sleeps with Mike his first time out? They are so lacking in definition that it is impossible to tell. Jill Boardman supposedly loves Ben Caxton, but won't sleep with him. She will, however, go off around the country with Mike on a sleep-in basis. Why? I can't say. At any time it would be no surprise to me for her to unscrew her foot and stick it in her ear--she is capable of anything. And Ben Caxton's motivations are never made clear.



Those parts of the satire and the religion that can be applied to human beings in a normal situation--and this is the only kind of satire that has any meaning--are sharp enough to cut. It is almost impossible to read Stranger in a Strange Land without bleeding a little, which is, of course, a very good reason for reading it. It may also be the reason that it has sold the least well of any of Heinlein's third period novels. If so, it is too bad, because "Stranger," despite its imbalance, is worthy of respect.

4. 1962-1964

Heinlein's last three novels, Podkayne of Mars, Glory Road, and Farnham's Freehold, are not at all successful and, unlike Stranger in a Strange Land, command very little respect. It almost seems that Heinlein, in the attempt to plead special cases, has forgotten most of the things he once knew of story construction and has come full circle to the point he once started from.

Podkayne of Mars is, with Rocket Ship Galileo, the least of Heinlein's juveniles. In some ways, it is a return to Heinlein's first novels for Scribner's. Like them, and unlike his more recent books, his lead is only a fifteen-year-old child

in a dependent situation. This immediately limits the scope of the book.

The main character of the story is a young girl. Anthony Boucher, in his round-up review of 1963 science fiction books in The Ninth Annual of the Year's Best SF, hailed the story in these terms: "The first 1963 Heinlein, and one of his best in many years, was Podkayne of Mars, a shrewd and successful effort to widen the s-f audience by a teen-age heroine. Poddy's first-person narrative reveals her as a genuinely charming girl (perhaps the most delightful young female in s-f since Isaac Asimov's Arkady Darell), and her creator as the master absolute of detailed indirect exposition of a future civilization." I couldn't agree less.

I do agree that there is a place for young girls in science fiction (as with old men, middle-aged women and any other advance over young men aged 20-30), but I find Poddy no more charming than I found Arkady Darell, the central character in Second Foundation. In fact I can think of only one truly delightful female character in modern science fiction and that is Pauline Ashwell's Lizzy Lee from that excellent story, "Unwillingly to School."

Moreover, Podkayne is not really a first-person narrative. It is a journal kept by Poddy with occasional marginal notes by her younger brother Clark. I can think of two faults with this. One is that journals kept by fifteen-year-old girls are likely to be filled with gush and irrelevance, which means that any resulting book is likely to be a poor story or an unconvincing journal. Heinlein has chosen to write a convincing journal. Also, the journal is kept while the action is going on, not written afterward in one piece. The result is that we are jerked from one actionless moment that provides the calm needed for writing to another, fed corrections of things we have been told before, and in general exposed to a helter-skelter narrative. Fine again for a journal, but not for a story.

Poddy's lack of charm for me is the product of a kind of handling that no Heinlein juvenile hero has ever had before. I suspect Heinlein treats her so badly simply because he does not feel comfortable with a young female character. First, she is given to setting down sentences like, "At first I thought that my brother Clark had managed one of his more charlataneous machinations of malevolent legerdemain," and "I got kissed by boys who had never even tried to, in the past--and I assure you that it is not utterly impossible to kiss me, if the project is approached with confidence and finesse, as I believe that one's instincts should be allowed to develop as well as one's overt cortical behavior." Her expressions of vituperation are "dan-druff," "dirty ears," "spit," and "snell-frockey." Above all, she is incredibly coy. She refers to one character throughout, for instance, as "Miss Girdle FitzSnugglie," generally shortened to "Girdie."

Even less appealing, and less likely, is Poddy's

eleven-year-old brother, Clark, who, like an earlier Heinlein-described child--little Ricky in The Door into Summer, who at six could not bear to be touched--is thoroughly sick. Clark is totally asocial and has an insatiable desire for masses of money, an obvious love substitute. In the earlier case, Heinlein apparently didn't realize the sickness of his character, but here he makes slight mention of it at the end of the story. It is, in fact, the only claim to a point that the story has.

The unlikelihood of Clark, who is the novel's true central character, is not in his sickness but in his catalog of abilities. His IQ is given by Heinlein as 160, which is fairly high, but not all that rare. He can, however, do these things: tumble; operate a slide rule; read lips expertly; win piles of cash from "unbeatable" gambling houses; do expert photography; unhoax a time bomb; act as a successful smuggler; read English (a foreign language) that is written in Martian Oldscript (a script known only to experts); break into secret diaries and leave messages written first in ink visible only under ultraviolet light and then in ink that becomes visible only after two days; break into a sealed delivery robot, rewire it to do what he wants it to, leave no traces, and completely baffle the manufacturer of the robot in the bargain; separate dyes from film, given as a thing ordinarily possible only by a master chemist working in a special laboratory; and kill a large adult woman with his bare hands.

There is no real story for two-thirds of the book. Poddy and Clark set out from Mars to Earth, stopping on Venus on the way, in company with their Uncle Tom, who is to represent Mars at an important triplanetary conference. Shortly after they all arrive on Venus, Poddy and Clark are kidnapped by some people who wish Uncle Tom to follow their particular line at the conference. Knowing their Uncle Tom will not change his vote under pressure and that they will be killed by their captors, the kids escape. Period.

Glory Road is a sword-and-sorcery fantasy, a second cousin to Jack Vance's excellent The Dying Earth, Robert E. Howard's Conan stories, and Edgar Rice Burroughs' stories of Mars. The novel is, in fact, dedicated to the readers of a magazine that is devoted to sword-and-sorcery fantasy. Glory Road, unfortunately, doesn't share the color, atmosphere, action, and good fun of its models. Instead, it spends the bulk of its energy on conversation about the relativity of customs; the second-rate nature of sex as practiced on this planet (Earthmen are Lousy Lovers), with Earth being the only place in Twenty Universes where prostitution is practiced; the primitive nature of democracy and its ineffectiveness as a system of government; and similar topics. The sword-and-sorcery fantasy merely comes as interlude in the conversation, as though clowns were to pummel each other with bladders as an entr'acte on Meet the Press.

The narrator of the story is Evelyn Cyril "Oscar" Gordon, college football star, newly-discharged veteran of the fight

in Vietnam, hero in the making. He is recruited by an ad in the Paris edition of the Herald Tribune for a job as hero--not realizing that Professional Heroes are silly asses at best and at worst causes of more destruction than they ever know. But Gordon shows himself throughout to be an unbright malcontent and the point escapes him. The job he takes promises high pay, glorious adventure, and great danger. His recruiters are a handsome young girl (whom Oscar soon marries) and a runty old man (who turns out to be the young girl's grandson).

The three of them pop through to an alternate universe, where (between conversations) Gordon is handed a number of cardboard monsters to dispose of. This is his training for a final swordfight that wins "the Egg of the Phoenix," the lost property of the girl. It is then revealed that the girl is top dog of the aforementioned Twenty Universes. Oscar mopes around with nothing to do for sixty pages and then goes back home. At the end, he is prepared to go out looking for more adventure.

At least one-third of this 290-page book, exclusive of conversations, has no reason at all for existence, since it does not affect the main goal of the story, the winning of the Egg. It establishes merely that Oscar doesn't like our present world, that sitting around after he has won the Egg doesn't suit him either, and that after coming home again, he is still unhappy.

Beyond that, of course, the interminable conversations do nothing but demonstrate Heinlein's pet notions, again given protection from attack by being called "facts." They have nothing to do with the adventure, of course, and don't belong in the book.

Finally, the procession of adventures does not build to a climax. Monsters simply appear every so often to be disposed of by Oscar. Even the fight for the Egg of the Phoenix lacks the bounding appeal it ought to have because we only learn afterward what it is and why it is worth fighting for. At the time it is won, it is simply a name, a meaningless bible-bibble.

Enough doubt eventually penetrates Oscar's mind after the adventures are over that he goes to visit the runty old geezer who was his companion in adversity to ask him if what he went through was really necessary. The old fellow assures him that it was, and this is enough for Oscar. I demand more compelling evidence, however, and it isn't in the story.

 The protagonist of Farnham's Freehold is Hugh Farnham, a well-to-do, self-educated contractor and all-around-competent man. The other central characters are his wife Grace, their son Duke and daughter Karen. Karen's sorority sister Barbara (a divorcee), and their houseboy Joe, a Negro accounting student.

The time of the story is the near future. We are at the height of an international crisis that turns into a nuclear war while the family is sitting around after dinner playing bridge. Mountain Springs, the scene of the story and clear analogue of

Heinlein's home town, Colorado Springs, is a prime military target. Consequently, the bridge game is adjourned to Farnham's well-equipped sub-basement bomb shelter, where Barbara plays out the most incredible fictional bridge hand of all time: seven no-trump, doubled, redoubled, and vulnerable.

Three bombs are dropped on them, the third while Farnham and Barbara, who have just met, are making love in the back room. The third bomb kicks them into what they believe is an alternate universe (it turns out to be the future). The location of the house is exactly what it always was, but the climate is now sub-tropical and the country wild. They make a life for themselves, though Karen dies in childbirth, something Grace, who is an alcoholic, blames her husband for, although the fault is not his, but lack of proper medical facilities.

At this point, they are discovered by the local rulers, who are Negroes. Whites are slaves and table-meat, and the Farnham group are made slaves. Farnham makes a nice place for himself by translating books and turning present-day games into marketable items for his new master. The others in the original group (except for Barbara, who has borne Farnham twins as a result of that night in the back room) have all gone to hell in their own particular ways: Joe, the Negro accounting student, has become a part of the local power structure and is perfectly content; Grace is the master's fat little pussycat; and Duke has been castrated and turned into a household pet.

Farnham eventually decides to run for the hills with Barbara and the twins, but they are caught before they get out of the palace. Their master decides to be generous with them and send them back where they came from in a genuine time machine that his scientists have whipped up.

They land back in Mountain Springs the night that the bombs fell and scoot out of town, headed for an abandoned mine that Farnham owns. When the bombs stop falling, they set up a store in a little enclave bounded from the world by mine fields and protected by rifles. And since this world varies slightly from their original world, they have the comfort of the hope that their future need not be finally determined to be the one they have just come from.

The minor characters--everybody but Farnham--are defined just enough to seem odd. Karen cheers when her father and her friend come out of the back room, and then dies in childbirth. Barbara automatically does what she is told to do by Farnham. Grace is a fat, fatuous, useless lush. Duke is tied to his mother by a silver umbilicus, takes up a narcotic drink at first opportunity, and doesn't mind being castrated because it puts him in a more secure position.

Farnham himself is one great big inconsistency. He is a libertarian who orders people around at gunpoint. He threatens quite seriously to kill his son when Duke won't obey him, and then becomes hysterical when Duke willingly lets himself be

castrated. Most important, although he is the archetype of the competent man, he does not one thing to avert the global war he has seen coming. In fact, he is a very odd candidate for the title of competent man: he botches everything from his familial relations to the escape attempt.

These familial relations are very odd, too. Barbara first becomes attracted to him for the way he handles his family, but look at the family: a lush, a mama's boy, and a daughter home pregnant from college. Barbara later assures him that the situation is not his fault. If Heinlein is aware of any inconsistency, he doesn't show it.

It is interesting that despite the concern with liberty and competence that Heinlein demonstrates in this story, his characters do not actually determine anything that happens. They suffer attack, are blown into the future, are found, are sent home again. They remain passive, suffering and impotent throughout. The story is almost a study in the varieties of impotence. The nasty future regime is not caused by the characters, affected by the characters, or disturbed by their leaving. The final situation, in fact, seems like nothing so much as an attempt to keep from being the subject of further manipulation by an implacable universe, an attempt on Farnham's part to be for once the cause of events: "World stay out or be blasted in two! In Farnham's Freehold, Farnham rules."

Only one story purpose emerges in the end that makes any sense: Heinlein's characters survive. Survival at all costs is a theme that is very important to Heinlein, but it fails to carry this book because it remains inexplicitly realized. Heinlein thinks he is talking of liberty when he is really talking only of life; liberty becomes redefined as "living to suit myself"; that is all that Farnham achieves, and it is enough to content him.

As I have said, there is a psychological interest in Heinlein's last period. These novels, explicitly stating some of Heinlein's ideas that were only partly clear before, have made it possible to see distinct patterns. As fiction, however, the stories are less satisfactory, and I see no reason for the ordinary reader--who is not interested in Heinlein as a psychological phenomenon--to bother with them. It seems clear that Heinlein, like an engine that has been derailed, has lost his ability to advance, and I doubt now that he will regain it. I'm sorry, too, because I have enjoyed his stories. Sic transit gloria mundi

1959

- "... All You Zombies" Fantasy and Science Fiction,
Mar. 1959
- Starship Soldier Fantasy and Science Fiction,
(Starship Troopers) Oct.-Nov. 1959
- STARSHIP TROOPERS Putnam (juvenile novel, serialised 1959)
- THE MENACE FROM EARTH Gnome Press (collection)
- THE UNPLEASANT PROFESSION OF Gnome Press (collection)
JONATHAN HOAG

1960

No fiction published

1961

- STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND Putnam (original novel)

1962

- Podkayne of Mars If, Nov. 1962; Jan., Mar. 1963

1963

- Glory Road Fantasy and Science Fiction,
Jul., Aug., Sept. 1963
- PODKAYNE OF MARS Putnam (juvenile novel, serialised 1962-1963)
- GLORY ROAD Putnam (novel, serialised 1963)

1964

- Farnham's Freehold If, Jul., Sept., Oct. 1964
- ORPHANS OF THE SKY Putnam (two stories: Universe, Common Sense, 1941)
- FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD Putnam (novel, serialised 1964)

SEASIDE SKETCH

The sea, driven into spray
against the rock-fanged shore,
Is like a man spitting
through his teeth in fury.

While the fancy controls,
this beach on this morning
Is like a mulatto slave
cowering before his master.

The white sea-master
and the yellow beach-slave:
They do not know that the poet
is master of both.

The sand does not remember
that I have walked here before,
And the water has no memory
of sea-faring men.

So I do not play the master
but silently regard them
With the respect of a lone man
to unknowing strength.

--- DALE HART

Critique of "The Once and Future King"

Part 2 My Mother's Curse

by Barbara Floyd

"The Queen of Air and Darkness," the second book in this series, begins with a thoroughly laid groundwork in Scottish legend as it pertains to King Arthur. His cousins, Gawaine, Gaheris, Gareth, and Agravaine, still young boys, are repeating the tale of Arthur's heritage: illegitimacy. For, Ingraine, who bore Arthur from her rape by Pendragon, was their grandmother; and so they swear a pact of hatred against the new British King.

It is here that we get a new description of Arthur, and one that is unusual. White says he "...was a young man, just on the threshold of life. He had fair hair and a stupid face, or at any rate there was a lack of cunning in it."

This picture of Arthur remains consistent throughout the books. He is "stupid" in his inability to make practical decisions in everyday affairs. What he sees in a situation is not the need for action, but a philosophical problem for study and contemplation. He is naive in the business of being a king, and takes great fun in skirmishes with Scottish rebel forces within the country, viewing them as carnivals of banners, lances, and pagentry.

Merlyn feels compelled finally to point out that thousands of peasants and serfs are killed because they are without horses and armour, this having escaped Arthur's notice altogether. Exasperated that Arthur is so thoughtless, Merlyn draws a parallel between Arthur's knights and local marauders, who wear armour, ride horses, and choose to loot, pillage, and rape. Does having horses and armour and lances make one right?

Arthur says he will think about it, but he was not very concerned. As White says, "So far as he Arthur was concerned, as yet there might never have been such a thing as a single particle of sorrow on the gay, sweet surface of the dew-glittering world."

The author then follows with a terribly confusing and disjointed account of the then-current world conditions, spiced with notes of impossible history. Why White persists in speaking all at once of the Boer War, Gaelic nationalism, Victorian foxhunts, and Henry the Third is a mystery.

In the next passage of any importance, Arthur calls a council of his relatives and boyhood friends in order to deliver a kindly speech. He has finally begun to consider his way of life. "You see," he said, "Might is not right. But there is a lot of Might knocking about in the world, and something has to be done about it. It is as if People were half horrible and half nice. Perhaps they are even more than half horrible, and when they are left to themselves, they run wild ... King Lot, and Uriens and Anguish and those, they are the old world, the old fashioned order who want to have their own private will. I have got to vanquish them with their own weapons ... they force it upon me, because they live by force ... and then the real work will begin. Now what I have thought is this. Why can't you harness Might so that it works for Right? We will try to get the bad knights into our Order ... make it a great honour, fashionable and all that. Everybody must want to be in. And then I shall make the oath of the order that Might is only to be used for Right ..."

And so the dreaming idealist emerged and brought into the world his idea that was to become the Round Table, Romantic chivalry, and all the rest.

A strange, seemingly symbolic episode follows in which Arthur's Scottish cousins kill a unicorn, in order to please their mother, Morguase, who is playing hostess to a party of English knights. They catch the unicorn with the reluctant help of a virgin kitchen maid, but for some reason they feel compelled to slaughter it. After all this, their mother fails to notice the unicorn head which they finally bring home -- and when she later realises what they have done, she has them whipped.

(This is only one of several incidents that fill out this rather short book and which seem to be there only for the sake of making a moralistic point and taking up space.)

White gives us views of Morguase in several contexts: her attempted seduction of the English knights -- despite the fact that her husband, King Lot, is at war with England and Arthur -- and her pretence that everything is a game, as when she is affectionate to her sons, while admiring herself in the mirror as she plays the motherly role.



morguase

In the last chapters, Morguase becomes bored with trying to entice the English knights, who, somewhat like children, have gone off on amusements of their own, and sets out for England. She travels to Camelot and goes before her brother Arthur, now in his late teens and beginning to be aware of his manhood in several ways. She seduces him, and so conceives a son by him. (All the while he is unaware that she is his sister.) This baby Morguase then raises to oppose his father.

Morguase's actions, however, were not out of loyalty to her husband's cause (although that is what she said), nor were they caused by actual true emotional hatred for Arthur. For Morguase was (almost) a witch, with the legendary oneness of purpose and the traditional lack of human emotions. She was not a sorceress like her sister, Morgan La Fey -- she couldn't even contrive a disappearance out of boiled cat's bones, a supposedly elementary diversion -- and so she set out to work something spectacular in the only way she could, as a human and as a woman.

Morguase, then, functions in the human world, but is not to be judged by human standards. She seduces Arthur in order to entertain herself with a great drama in which she alone brings ruin upon the highest person in the land.

Whether it is Arthur's own sin or the mistakes of his father catching up with him, or simply the will of a warped and revengeful son of an incestuous union, does not matter. The fact remains that it all began this way and that this is the machinery of Arthur's failure. (White even draws a diagram of the family tree, as if to stress this contrast between the earlier light-hearted children's fantasies and the unpleasant reality of adulthood in the later books.)

As noted above White probably had trouble finding enough scattered material to fit into this book. Nevertheless, this particular volume is essential because it contains the seed for the whole organism of Arthur's tragedy.

(to be continued)

WHENCE LIE THE ANSWERS?

We cry in terror on a night
 When black blots out our self-deceptions.
 Leaves us naked, facing dark
 With only heartbeat comfort.

After youth we're disenchanted,
 Humbled through maturity.
 Senile childhood brings again
 Death, life's sole reward.

Striving for a pattern, we
 Construct our thoughts, philosophy
 But disenchanted find no pattern there.
 We sigh again and sit and stare
 Into the darkness of the past
 Where questions were unanswered, too
 Our solace but oblivion.

--- JOYCE POLLARD

ALL YEAR IN A DAY

a book review by

JIM HARMON

The current state of science fiction is not represented either in the 15th Anniversary issue of GALAXY MAGAZINE (60¢, Oct. 1965) or in THE 9TH ANNUAL EDITION: THE YEAR'S BEST S-F (75¢, Dell 9775). Both of these annuals are better than the current condition of s.f., although one of them isn't very much better.

For its fifteenth anniversary, GALAXY got an impressive list of names and it even managed to get stories with these bylines. For its sixteenth anniversary number, another s.f. publication presented an equally impressive list of names, but the contributions bearing these signatures were only a few lines long, very brief "letters to the editor" in effect. Fact, the semi-literary magazine (for the semi-literate), has been widely taken to task for a similar policy of headlining contributors of a dozen lines. Of course, in GALAXY, in some cases, you wish certain authors had contributed letters instead of stories.

Nearly half the magazine is taken up with the first installment of a serial by its editor, Frederik Pohl. It's fortunate that Mr. Pohl likes to buy stories from himself, because he is one of his best writers. "The Age of the Pussyfoot" is a novel projecting the hedonistic aspects of our society into the future, a future whose Bible, although not named by Pohl, is Playboy and whose God is James Bond.

The story seems to be only another job of superb craftsmanship you expect from Pohl. Maybe he is too consistently good; from the evidence of the first third, this novel deserves more enthusiasm than the s.f. public seems prepared to give it. In a sea of mediocrity, with leaky craft awash, it stands a beacon. But perhaps Pohl has turned on too many lights; they all shine with equal illumination and, alas, a certain sameness.

The bulk of the few remaining s.f. magazines comprises more and more serial installments and one-shot novels. Acceptable novels are easier to get than short stories, it seems. After all, novels also can be sold as paperbacks, reprints or originals if the magazine editor doesn't go along.

There are now only three markets, realistically speaking, for fantasy short stories: ANALOG, F&SF, and the GALAXY group of magazines, fully as many as there were in 1935. (AMAZING, FANTASTIC, HORROR, and GAMMA are primarily reprint, although they may be considered as marginal markets, I guess.) Science-fiction may finally get to the position where there is only one place for new short stories -- only the quarterly pulp-size RANCH ROMANCES regularly publishes Western shorts -- or even less than one.

The shorter contributions to the 15th Anniversary GALAXY don't cry out in defense of preservation of the art form.

The best of the shorter works is by GALAXY'S former editor, H.L. Gold. "Inside Man" is a story of a man at odds with something commonplace, a story reminiscent of Gold's "Trouble with Water" in some ways, although the similarity between a man being in telepathic communication with machines, as here, and a man who can't touch water is more readily discerned than explained. Certain sexual touches suggest the story may have been intended for a man's magazine like PLAYBOY, but they are not terribly intrusive. This one should make an anthology or two.

Three other stories in the issue are engagingly readable.

"Founding Father" by Isaac Asimov is a very nice little short-short with perhaps not a sock punch ending, but a neat, satisfying one. It would be nice to see something like "Foundation" or even Caves of Steel from Asimov again instead of those science popularisations that can be understood even by idiot children, but are totally incomprehensible to me.

"Three to a Given Star" by Cordwainer Smith and "Shall we have a little Talk" by Robert Sheckley are a pair of fairly good novelets, saying things these authors have said before and saying them in not-their-very-best ways.

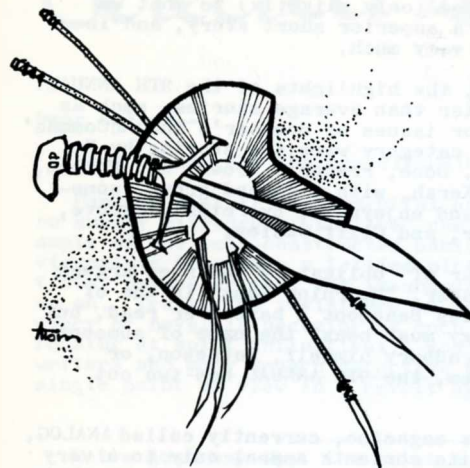
The remaining stories by Clifford Simak, Edgar Pangborn, and Fritz Leiber are as poor as any I have read by these three fine talents. Better forgotten.

The remaining features are interesting.

A two-page verse by Ray Bradbury says things he has also said before, but in a new format. Wiley Ley reviews fifteen years of science writing and Algis Budrys reviews the same decade and a half of s.f. book publishing, and each knows his respective business.

In the line of drawings, Wallace Wood's illustrations for Pussyfoot are almost as good as the ones he is currently doing for Marvel Comics' "Captain America." Gray Morrow is the best new artist to come along in some time. The Pederson cover is insignificant.

All-in-all, the 15th Anniversary GALAXY is mostly readable and often entertaining, but not a product of anybody's Golden Age.



You might well get the impression that s.f. was going through a vintage period from Judith Merril's ninth ANNUAL. For the eighth ANNUAL the incomparable anthologist scoured up stories that were all the width of a flea's duelling scar above average. But the ninth ANNUAL is a prize effort indeed, too good to disappear from print in twelve months. Next year, it would seem entirely in order to have not only a tenth ANNUAL, but a second volume, a decade of the best of the best, including a number of selections from this penultimate selection.

My own personal favorite from the book is "237 Talking Statues, Etc." by Fritz Leiber (or it might be said, very appropriately, Fritz Leiber, Jr.). Like the vastly less successful story in the fifteenth anniversary GALAXY, the story is taken from Leiber's personal experience, or at least his personal background. In this fantasy of a gifted son coming to terms with the ghost of his famous father, Leiber comes to terms with life and reality in the way that only an exceptional and fine human being can do.

All of Alfred Bester's stories are gimmicked, and "They Don't Make Life like They Used to" is no exception. The last man and the last woman on Earth meet. From this, tension builds in an irritating manner, and with an anti-sexuality that somehow seems sordid at times. Yet in the end, Bester uses his gimmick to say something well. The gimmick has achieved justification, but Bester is a good enough writer to get along without gimmicks. But, no misunderstanding, this is a striking, memorable story, one that just misses being a milestone in s.f.

"Nobel Prize Winners" by W.J. Gordon from the Atlantic Monthly is a good short story that reads like an article from the Saturday Evening Post, and is s.f. by the height of the head of a gnat severed in a duel with a scarred flea. The story can only be called "science-fiction" by the aficionado's judgement that he knows it when he sees it. It is hardly "fiction" at all! Still, I know that scientists really are not so charming and sensual and friendly as so engagingly presented here in this story of the corruption and misuse of our priesthood. Scientists are culturally estranged, aloof, and socially ill-graced--at least, the vast majority I have met (with, of course, many exceptions).

While I won't presume to judge poetry, "The Jazz Machine" by Richard Matheson if converted (only slightly) to what we recognise as "prose" would be a superior short story, and in its verse form it was enjoyed very much.

These were, in my opinion, the highlights of the 9TH ANNUAL. There were also some much better than average stories, such as might have appeared in superior issues of Boucher's and McCommas' MAGAZINE OF FANTASY. In this category were the stories by R. Bretnor, Bernard Malamud, J.F. Bone, Frederic Brown, Ray Nelson, Cordwainer Smith, and Gerald Kersh, with a second group, somewhat below this but readable and enjoyable, by Peter Redgrove, Allan Danzig, Bruce McAllister, and Cliff Owsley.

There seemed to be a number of "obligatory" entries argued by circumstances or the publisher. "Mourning Song" is one of the slightest stories by Charles Beaumont I have ever read, but of course, every s.f. anthology must boast the name of someone from the "Bradbury School"--Bradbury himself, Matheson, or Beaumont. With Matheson's poem, the 9TH ANNUAL has two out of three.

Naturally, John Campbell's magazine, currently called ANALOG, must be represented, even if its contents appeal only to a very specialised audience within the small specialised audience that reads s.f. at all. There are four stories from the magazine, whose name Miss Merrill abbreviates as Anal. Three of these are short-shorts by Lloyd Biggle, Jr., Walt and Leigh Richmond, and Frank Javor that achieve readability. The same can be said for the reprinted ANALOG novelet by E.C. Tubb.

Miss Merrill, in being scrupulously fair to all kinds of s.f., also included what might have been considered a "fair" story in the ASTOUNDING of the 1940's--"Fortress Ship" by Fred Saberhagen. It is the best Campbell-magazine-type story, and significantly, it did not come from ANALOG.

Hal Clement's "Hot Planet" is another Campbell-type, this time from GALAXY, but it isn't much better than the stuff from ANALOG.

There are a few other things in the book: a well-done but routine space article by Ben Bova, a fine cartoon (or comic strip, rather) by Jules Feiffer that deserved reprinting, and two cartoons by John Gallagher and Mort Gerberg that didn't particularly. However, the notes and "Summation" by Miss Merrill and "Books" by Anthony Boucher are fine, and take far too few minutes in the year.

Selected Letters — 63

542 Frontera Drive
Pacific Palisades, Calif.

Dear Leland--

Many thanks for the new RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY.

Panshin's stuff is thoughtful and worth publishing, though he surely misjudges "Lifeline" completely. That is a fine example of the well-constructed admirably brief story using many viewpoints to create a telling picture of our culture--scientists, newspaper men, the insurance industry, the courts...and so on. Truly, the insistence on the single viewpoint for a story or novel is becoming as much of a critical cliché as fussing at split infinitives!--and mostly because a few modern writers and many modern detective story writers have used the single point of view in a revolt against Dickens, etc.

Fritz Leiber

Let's just say that the relationship of the Single Viewpoint to the contemporary story "duplicates" that of the Three Unities with respect to the classical French drama, in each case there being a rule justified by a non-existent authority.

57 Church St, Twesbury
Gloucestershire, England

Dear Lee,

...one thing I did particularly like: Paul Kalin's definition, "Science-fiction must remain a colourful but calcified wart on the body of literature..."

Banks Mebane's letter: I don't see the connexion between Comte and Wittgenstein and the debunking of Newtonian mechanism. The Logical Positivists did a wrecking job? I bet they'd be pleased to hear it. When you take define-your-terms to the stage they did, people tend to stop listening to you or arguing with you...I think Mr. Mebane is giving over-importance to what was, after all, only an abstract philosophy.

Panshin's criticism is among the best I've read, although rather too harsh, if anything. For example, in criticising "Lifeline" he says Pinero brings his death upon himself and "would he still have died from some other cause at the same exact moment he predicted if he hadn't made his machine public?" A ridiculous thing to say, for if the Lifeline machine could predict the future it would know that he was going to make the machine public, and the time of his death would be fixed on that data.

But, as Panshin says, why Pinero should make his machine public to make money if he knew he was going to die isn't explicable. Except that there would have been damn little story otherwise.

Jim Harmon's review of Time to Come reveals that my edition is missing the Arthur Jean Cox story. A pity.

The best of the poems is Joyce Pollard's "Unreachable Memories."

Yours,
Graham M. Hall

It was not the Logical Positivists, but the Quantum Mechanics, Uncertainty Principle, etc. of Planck, Heisenberg, and Co. that demolished Newtonian Mechanics.

The totality of circumstances which caused Pinero's death included the advertising of his machine, so I must agree that it is meaningless to ask the time of his death had the machine's existence never been revealed.

Sällskapsvagen-7
Stockholm-48, Sweden

Dear Leland,

As for RQ #4, the main item of course was Alexei Panshin's article on Heinlein--interesting, to the point, and entertaining, even though I feel that the writer rested perhaps a bit too much on the contents of the various stories, and sometimes wrote more of a "summary of contents" than a critical review--but then, this may well be because I recently re-read all Heinlein's books...and therefore feel a bit bored when I have the contents of a story I read a month ago described in detail to me. Still, Panshin's article was very good...

Very best,
Carl Brandon

Granted, that plot-summaries do not constitute literary criticism. However, Mr. Panshin's reason for the synopses in the first three chapters is to make more intelligible his criticism in the last three.

9042 Adelia Circle
Huntington Beach, Calif. 92624

Dear Leland:

I was very impressed with the Heinlein materials and differ only on one point. Panshin gives very short attention to the novel Sixth Column, saying that "its issues are over-simplified to an incredible degree. It is easy to read a story like this but very hard to take it seriously."

In my opinion, this novel was representative of good writing and careful thinking...I cannot fathom Panshin's comment about it being "very hard to take...seriously." What is involved here? Pure science, objectively evaluated? Relaxing fiction, subjectively enjoyable? If the latter, who is to be over-serious, as long as the story-line is of interest...and the plot unfolds with deliberate speed?

A.C. Germann

In the fictional context, plausibility is surely more important than possibility; but the question raised by Mr. Germann of how much more important is difficult to answer, since there is no well-defined boundary line beyond which an ingenious author cannot make an impossible event appear possible.

1397 N. 2nd Ave.
Upland, Calif.

Dear Lee,

The cover on #4 is one of the better ATOM illustrations, at least...in RQ. I wish you could get some CRY-ish art work from him: I think his best work was done for CRY.

I was planning to subscribe to QUARK sooner or later, but it looks like it'll be soon -- either that or not get the second chapter of Panshin's work on Heinlein. If the second chapter is anything like the first, I certainly don't want to miss it.

The use of pen names is often because of a writer's style and the way he writes. When he changes his style and writes a story which doesn't fit in with his past writing, he'll often use a pen name. That could be possibly true for Heinlein...

Now, on to the Evil of Banality. There's one hole in that idea I could put a World Con in the middle of: the existence of the word "sercon." You state that "sercon" [designates] an abnormal mode of behavior; [for] something which is normal (you said) ...no special term would be needed. If your idea were true, no such word as "life" would exist because it is the normal state of being, neither would there be a word for anything which was normal. The word "sercon" exists because it fits a certain part of fandom; it doesn't exist because it is "odd" or "out of place."

Best,
Dwain Kaiser

I regret that QUARK (for reasons I cannot ascertain) will not print chapter Two after all. Nor will it appear in RQ, since Mr. Panshin feels that if the entire essay is to be published as a book, it should not run on indefinitely (six instalments or eighteen months) in its present serialised form.

This matter of pen names was put most succinctly in a note from associate editor, Jim Harmon:

"Panshin fails to realise the real reasons a writer uses pen names. One...is to cover the fact that he has two or more stories in a particular issue of a magazine. Another is to protect the primary value of his own name...while he may write material he...may consider inferior under a less valued pen name."

Concerning normality--note, first, that expressions like "stamp collecting philatelist" or "coin oriented numismatist" are redundant, since "stamps" and "coins" are notions already included in the respective terms "philatelist" and "numismatist." Normally, then, we should expect "sercon"--which designates an s.f. fan who reads s.f.--also to be redundant; unfortunately it is not.

3933 N. Janssen
Chicago, Ill. 60613

Dear Lee:

...Judged solely as a fanzine article, "Heinlein in Dimension" is...of near classic standards. However, considered as the opening chapter of a book, it leaves something to be desired...Panshin stressed in his YANDRO article that he is a professional writer--not merely a good amateur. If this is true, then why the hell is he writing like a fan?

There is nothing inherently wrong with fannisms, you understand; but I don't think they belong in what the author claims is professional criticism. But...I sincerely think that "Heinlein in Dimension" is, despite its "fannishness," one of the finest pieces of criticism...it has...been my privilege to read.

There is indeed a place for serious discussion of s.f., but I am constantly irritated by people who insist that fanzines should carry nothing but material devoted to science-fiction. Why should they? If a person has other interests and can write coherently about them...why shouldn't he publish them in fanzines? Are your mental horizons so limited that you have no other interests outside of s.f.?

The term "sercon" is one of sarcasm and ridicule. A good many of the people who classify themselves as being "serious constructive" fans would be better termed "serious destructive" fans...Is it not the sercon fan who continually pans the literate "modern" s.f. story in favour of the hoary so-called "classics" of the past? I have repeatedly heard the praises of that stylistic horror, *The Blind Spot*, sung by various sercon fans, and I ask "why?" Austin Hall was ignorant of the rudiments of English grammar and lacked imagination as well.

...In conclusion, I must point out that the people who have advanced from...fandom into professional s.f. writing have largely come from the ranks of the so-called "fannish" fans--Ted White and Terry Carr are two recent examples.

Best wishes,
Ben Solon

That "sercon" is a term of sarcasm and ridicule bears out my thesis--for these "other interests" of the fan writer often converge toward his own self, concerning which non-trivial statements cannot be made.// The nostalgia for the "good old days" (which, of course, never existed) will be discussed in future editorials.// True, Ted White and Terry Carr have written "fannish" articles; but if their capabilities had not extended beyond this sort of thing, they never would have attained professional success.

423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Dear Leland:

If this instalment of the Panshin essay is the manuscript that Heinlein excommunicated from the public prints, I can't comprehend why he took such action. Certainly this chapter shows no sign of the malice that is the only grounds known to me for basing a libel claim against an item of literary criticism.

The one big omission that I find in this summing up of young Heinlein is the failure to explain more fully the newness that Heinlein brought to s.f. by inserting into his stories authentic passages about the way things are done in the real world. It was the first time that we'd found... episodes that showed...how an expensive project is financed, the manner in which management copes with labour unions... during times of unrest. Such things had been summed up in a sentence or two in s.f. up to then, obviously through the same mechanism as the famous way one fictional hero was extricated from a crisis: "With a supreme effort, Garth broke loose from his bonds."

Even if Panshin had disclosed that I was another pen name for Heinlein, I don't think I would have reacted with more than a couple of suggestions about how the essay might be improved. The fundamental procedure of writing about each story in chronological order is not ideal. Possibly in later chapters Panshin takes up matters that sprawl across various Heinlein stories that weren't written one after the other, but even so, this method of writing criticism has some of the faults of a history that attempts to explain all the important things about a war by describing each of its major battles.

I was happy with the stern view that Jim Harmon takes toward these anthologies. Anthology has shared the fate of high fidelity and limited edition and kit and many another term that once promised something special but now has become the source of groans and indifference. The dictionary gives me no support for my belief that an anthology should be ...of higher quality...than a simple collection...But it's still a shame to find the term applied to a skippy paperback containing four or five mediocre stories chosen blindly...

We won't fight now about the Evil of Banality...because I think I have an article on this topic coming up soon, if Steve Pickering...publishes the magazine for which he requested the article...close to a year ago.

Yrs., &c.,
Harry Warner, Jr.

As usual, Mr. Warner's remarks are so accurate that they require almost no addition or qualification. I agree that the chronological order of discussing literary events does not necessarily correspond to the logical order. Inquiries about Mr. Pickering's forthcoming semi-professional fan magazine should be sent to the address listed below.

1928 1st St.
Bakersfield, Calif. 93308

Dear Leland,

At least one of science fiction's characteristics is illustrated in Alexei Panshin's superb article on Robert Heinlein...It is a characteristic rather difficult to define except that it is related to that sometimes childish, sometimes magnificent passion for scale in ideas that younger fans have remarked of -- in organising far-reaching concepts, our fondness for hyperbole in "myth" and popular speech, and our habit of applying superlatives to our accomplishments. Efforts to explain it have been most unsatisfactory: the result is usually a contradiction in which we are represented as a rare thing that is at once too civilised and not civilised enough. If Robert Heinlein interprets, as I believe he does, the extreme giantism of a twentieth century Man's mind and imagination as the sign of a possible inflated decadence resembling that of Alexandria and the later Roman Empire, others, like Ray Bradbury, discover in it the simpler expression of a race still unawakened from childhood.

What is to be seen in the works of Heinlein and Bradbury is the methodic science fiction imagination adhering to the process of multiplication. We have had novels and short stories about ideas and societies before, but never one in which the desired effects depended so strongly upon sociological fluctuations...

...Heinlein is, indeed, the primary mover of the genre... when his concepts are analysed, one is struck with the forcefulness of their implications, the brilliance of Heinlein's mind. The ingenuity...which went into some of his best novels to make them plausible was...so remarkable as to advance the possibility that Heinlein's next novel (scheduled in one of Frederik Pohl's magazines at the beginning of 1966) will be even greater.

.....

Best,
Stephen Pickering

Of course, exaggeration, hyperbole, etc. are hardly 20th century inventions. // Caution must be used in comparing Heinlein and Bradbury, since much of the latter's work, e.g., "Pillar of Fire," "And the Moon Be Still as Bright," is not science-fiction but social commentary with a future setting. The prime characteristic of Heinlein's early fiction is its literalness; whereas Bradbury is concerned more with our present attitudes than with a literal transcription of what might or could happen.

THE EVIL OF BANALITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 70

These writers fail to perceive that relative to "social" activities all conventions are alike, whether of the Marine Corps League, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers, or the Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society. Thus convention reports are worthwhile only when they concern relationships (expressed in speeches, panels, debates, etc.) which are unique to one particular group, whether Marines, wheat farmers, or science-fiction readers.

Now, I called convention reports implicit arguments for banality because their very existence means that more important articles cannot occupy the same pages. But one might object that in such a magazine less trivial material would not be printed under any conditions. For, an editor who prints convention reports is exactly the person who likes convention reports, so that more serious material would be appreciated by neither the editor nor his readers, whose tastes would be similar to his own.

This objection, unfortunately, is valid; and the reason for its validity, the science-fiction fan's growing preoccupation with Self (and his corresponding neglect of science-fiction) is also the reason for the present editorials.

THE EVIL OF BANALITY

(PART
TWO)

Last time, I cited some explicit defences of banality in U.S. fan magazines, which sometimes print interdicts on negative criticism and arguments on the benefits of saying nothing.

However, there is another type of obscurantism which does not prohibit (or even mention) criticism, but which merely occupies space. Convention reports (with one exception: the "Chicon" report of Walter Breen) are invariably of this character, being simply catalogues of places visited, parties attended, and food or beverages consumed. Such articles can be regarded as implicit justifications of banality, since in addition to being inconsequential themselves, they occupy space which might have been allotted to material of greater import.

Some typical quotations (on two different conventions):

Sunday morning: Early but a trifle fogged inside...
Caugran was slumbering on a bed in his shorts...
Breakfast...in the coffee shop, ordering the fruit plate and milk and rolls, because anything else was way too unreasonable.

Wednesday and Thursday after the con we spent on the bus... and in spite of the Greyhound Co...we had a pretty good trip ...Friday was spent in...Albuquerque. I slept the better part of the afternoon..That night..we caught a bus for Los Angeles.

(Those readers who can identify these passages are urged not to communicate their findings to the present editor.)

The first of these reports occupied nine pages, with a two page description of costumes at the Grand Ball, but concerning the guest-of-honour speech we learn only that it was "rambling" at the start, it presently "warmed to its subject," and that "it was a good one," what the subject was or why the talk about it was "a good one" the reporter fails to specify.

(The second writer, however, showed better judgement, since he at least mentions the ostensible subject of the Big Speech and (correctly) states that the speaker actually said nothing.)

Sometimes, of course, as in these next examples, science-fiction is neglected by necessity--

The Editors' panel was next, but I missed it, as I'd been down in the bar.

The speeches?...I didn't hear most of them. I was very busy out in the anteroom...trying to huckster off enough ...to pay my hotel bill.

--but usually these extra-curricular activities are of a less serious variety (cf. Anthony Boucher's remark about "fandom as a Way of Life" being a spoonerism).

(continued on p.69)

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"Professor Whataschnozzle, you must abandon this fiendish plan!"

"My preparations, Dr. Huer, are completed. Your television program will never take place because in one minute every member of the cast will be brain-washed!"

"But think of the evils the George social philosophy can prevent--unemployment, poverty, depressions..."

"Hee, hee! To you, Henry George is one of the heroes! But what do you know of the Deroes--the little green men hiding in their underground caves? Right now my Dero battalion is focusing its mind-blasting rays on the television studio. In exactly forty seconds---"

"But surely these innocent people do not deserve---"

"I tell you, Huer, in thirty seconds everybody in the studio will be changed into an idiot! Then instead of learning the George economic philosophy the public will see the Billingsley Pot Bellies, I mean the Hiverley Pill Boilers, I mean the Beverley Hill B---"

"Your action is madness, think of the----"

"Why will you say that I am mad? Nothing wrong with me! Tee hee hee! Wrong with me!"

"Listen, Whataschnozzle, this knowledge is vital to the economic development of the United States and Canada!"

"Certain things, Huer, are not meant for humans to know, and these include the teachings of Henry George. All this is forbidden knowledge because I forbid it! And now to give the signal--!"

Nevertheless, disappointed reader, you need not stay consigned to the realm of idiocy. Merely write to

Henry George School
50 E. 69th St.
New York, N.Y. 10021

and ask about their free correspondence courses in Economics or their free adult discussion classes held in every major city. Dr. Huer (like the Deroes) exists only in the imagination, but the George economic philosophy has been endorsed by such real people as Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill, and John Dewey, and it can give you a new insight into the causes of national economic distress.

Handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is written in cursive and is mostly illegible due to fading and the quality of the scan. It appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly related to a collection or inventory.