



Robert Heinlein's 'Stranger in a Strange Land': A Postmodern Study

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Abstract— Robert A. Heinlein, “a handy short definition of almost all science fiction might read: realistic speculation about possible future, events based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method”. Rod Serling’s definition is “fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science fiction is the improbable made possible. *Stranger in a Strange Land* is a 1961 science fiction novel by American author Robert A. Heinlein. It tells the story of Valentine Michael Smith, a human who comes to Earth in early adulthood after being born on the planet Mars and raised by Martians. The novel explores his interaction with and eventual transformation of terrestrial culture. In 2012, the U S Library of Congress named it one of 88 “Books that Shaped America”.

The title “*Stranger in a Strange Land*” is an allusion to the phrase in Exodus 2:22. The novel is set in the backdrop of newer technologies, space exploration, psychology liberal ideologies and physical freedom. It presents a critique often an ironic view of the Heinlein’s contemporary society. It explored the nature and limits of the religious institutions especially of the Fosterites.

Keywords— Cultural Degradation, Dystopia Post modernism, Science –Fiction.

I. INTRODUCTION

J.A Cuddon’s entry in his ‘*Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*’ describes postmodernism as characterized by ‘an eclectic approach, [by a liking for] aleatory writing [and for] parody and pastiche’. *The Waste Land*, for instance, is a collage of juxtaposed, incomplete stories, or fragments of stories. Also ‘*aleatory forms*’, meaning those which incorporate an element of randomness or chance, were important to the Dadaists of 1917, who, for instance, made poems from sentences plucked randomly from newspapers. The use of parody and pastiche, finally, is clearly related to the abandonment of the divine pretensions of authorship implicit in the omniscient narratorial stance, and this too was a vital element in modernism.

A major ‘moment’ in the history of postmodernism is the influential paper ‘*Modernity – an Incomplete Project*’ delivered by the contemporary

German theorist Jurgen Habermas in 1980. For Habermas the modern period begins with the Enlightenment, that period of about one hundred years, from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century, when a new faith arose in the power of reason to improve human society. Such ideas are expressed or embodied in the philosophy of Kant in Germany. Voltaire and Diderot in France, and Locke and Hume in Britain. In Britain the term ‘*The Age of Reason*’ was used to designate the same period.

The so-called Enlightenment ‘project’ is the fostering of this belief that a break with tradition, blind habit, and slavish obedience to religious precepts and prohibitions, coupled with the application of reason and logic by the disinterested individual, can bring about a solution to the problems of society. This outlook is what Habermas means by ‘modernity’. The French Revolution can be seen as a first attempt to test this theory in practice.

For Habermas this faith in reason and the possibility of progress survived into the twentieth century, and even survives the catalogue of disasters which makes up that century's history. The cultural movement known as modernism subscribed to this 'project' in the sense that it constituted a lament for a lost sense of purpose, lost coherence, a lost system of values. For Habermas, the French post-structuralist thinkers of the 1970s, such as Derrida and Foucault, represented a specific repudiation of this kind of Enlightenment 'modernity'. They attacked, in his view, the ideals of reason, clarity, truth, and progress, and as they were thereby detached from the quest for justice, he identified them as 'young conservatives'.

II. POSTMODERNISM

The term 'postmodernism' was used in the 1930s, but its current sense and vogue can be said to have begun with Jean- Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester University Press, 1979) Lyotard's essay 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?', first published in 1982, added in 1984 as an appendix to *The Postmodern Condition* and included in Brooker's *Modernism/ Post modernism*, 1992, takes up this debate about the Enlightenment, mainly targeting Habermas, in a slightly oblique manner. Lyotard opens with a move which effectively turns the debate into a struggle to demonstrate that one's opponents are the real conservatives. For Lyotard the Enlightenment whose project Habermas wishes to continue is simply one of the would – be authoritative 'overarching', 'totalising' explanations of things –like Christianity, Marxism or the myth of scientific progress. These 'metanarratives' ['super- narratives'], which purport to explain and reassure, are really illusions, fostered in order to smother difference, opposition, and plurality. Hence Lyotard's famous definition of postmodernism ,that it is simply, 'incredulity towards metanarratives' 'Grand Narratives' of progress and human perfectibility, then ,are no longer tenable, and the best we can hope for is a series of 'mininarratives' which are provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative and which provide a basis for the actions of specific groups in particular local circumstances. Postmodernity thus 'deconstructs' the basic aim of the Enlightenment that is "the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject".

'Everything comes together subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body. consciousness and the unconscious, the

disciplined and the transdisciplinary everyday life and unending history'.

Another major theorist of postmodernism is the contemporary French writer Jean Baudrillard, whose book *Simulations* marks his entry into this field. Baudrillard is associated with what is usually known as 'the loss of the real', which is the view that in contemporary life the pervasive influence of images from film, TV, and advertising has led to loss of the distinction between real and imagined reality and illusion, surface and depth. The result is a culture of 'hyperreality', in which distinctions between these are eroded. His propositions are worked out in his essay, 'Simulacra and Simulations' reprinted in abridged form in Brooker, 1992. He begins by evoking a past era of 'fullness', when a sign was a surface indication of an underlying depth or reality.

The Marxist critic Terry Eagleton draws attention to the unusual perspective brought in by post-modern writers:

Post-modernism takes something from both modernism and the avant - garde, and in a sense plays one off against the other. From modernism proper, post-modernism inherits the fragmentary or schizoid self, but eradicates all critical distance from it, countering this with a poker faced representation of 'bizarre' experiences which resembles certain Avant- garde gestures.

The term postmodern literature is used to describe certain characteristics of Post-World War II literature and a reaction against Enlightenment ideas implicit in Modernist literature Postmodernist writers often point to early novels and story collections as inspiration for their experiments with narrative and structure Don Quixote, 1001. Arabian Nights. The Decameron. and Candide, among many others. In the English language Laurence Sterne's 1759 novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, with its heavy emphasis on parody and narrative experimentation is often cited as an early influence on post modernism. There were many 19th century examples of attacks on Enlightenment concepts, parody, and playfulness in literature, including Lord Byron's satire, especially *Don Juan*, Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*; Alfred Jarry's ribald *Ubu* parodies and his invention of 'Pataphysics; Lewis Carroll's playful experiments with signification; the work of Isidore Ducasse, Arthur Rimbaud, Oscar Wilde. Playwrights who worked in the late 19th and early 20th century whose thought and work would serve as an influence on the aesthetic of postmodernism include Swedish dramatist August Strindberg, the Italian author Luigi Pirandello, and the German playwright and theorist Bertolt Brecht.

In the 1910s, artists associated with Dadaism celebrated chance, parody, playfulness and attacked the central role of the artist Tristan Tzara claimed in "How to make a Dadaist Poem" that to create a Dadaist poem one had only to put random words in a hat and pull that out one by one. Another way Dadaism influenced postmodern literature was in the development of collage, specifically collages using elements from advertisement or illustrations from popular novels (the collages of Max Ernst, for example) Artists associated with Surrealism, which developed from Dadaism, continued experimentations with chance and parody while celebrating the flow of the subconscious mind. Andre' Breton, founder of Surrealism, suggested that automatism and the description of dreams should play a greater role in the creation of literature. He used automatism to create his novel *Nadja* and used photographs to replace description as a parody of the overly- descriptive novelists he often criticized. Surrealist Rene' Magritte's experiments with signification are used as examples by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Foucault also uses examples from Jorge Luis Borges, an important direct influence on many postmodernist fiction writers. He is occasionally listed as a postmodernist, although he started writing in the 1920s. The influence of his experiments with metafiction and magic realism was not fully realized in the Anglo- American world until the postmodern period.

Both modern and postmodern literature represent a break from 19th century realism. In character development, both modern and postmodern literature explore subjectivism, turning from external reality to examine inner states of consciousness, in many cases drawing on modernist examples in the "stream of consciousness" styles of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, or explorative poems like *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot. In addition, both modern and postmodern literature explore fragmentariness in narrative-and character-construction. *The Waste Land* is often cited as a means of distinguishing modern and postmodern literature. The poem is fragmentary and employs pastiche like much postmodern literature, but the speaker in *The Waste Land* says, "these fragments I have shored against my ruins". Modernist literature sees fragmentation and extreme subjectivity as an existential crisis, or Freudian internal conflict, a problem that must be solved, and the artist is often cited as the one to solve it. Postmodernists, however, often demonstrate that this chaos is insurmountable; the artist is impotent, and the only recourse against "ruin" is to play within the chaos. Playfulness is present in many modernist works (Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* or Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, for example) and they may seem very similar to postmodern works, but with postmodernism playfulness

becomes central and the actual achievement of order and meaning becomes unlikely.

As with all stylistic eras, no definite dates exist for the rise and fall of postmodernism's popularity. 1941, the year in which Irish novelist James Joyce and English novelist Virginia Woolf's both died, is sometimes used as a rough boundary for postmodernism's start. The prefix "post", however does not necessarily imply a new era. Rather, it could also indicate a reaction against modernism in the wake of the Second World War (with its disrespect of human rights, just confirmed in the Geneva Convention, through the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, the bombing of Dresden, the fire-bombing of Tokyo, and Japanese American internment). It could also imply a reaction to significant post-war events: the beginning of the Cold War, the civil right movement in the United States, post colonialism (Postcolonial literature) and the rise of the personal computer (Cyberpunk fiction and Hypertext fiction). Some further argue that the beginning of postmodern literature could be marked by significant publications or literary events. For example, some mark the beginning of postmodernism with the first publication of John Hawkes' *The Cannibal* in 1949, the first performance of *Waiting for Godot* in 1953, the first publication of *Howl* in 1956 or of *Naked Lunch* in 1959. For others the beginning is marked by moments in critical theory: Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play" lecture in 1966 or as late as Ihab Hassan's usage in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* in 1971. Brian McHale details his main thesis on this shift, although many postmodern works have developed out of modernism, modernism is characterized by an epistemological dominant while postmodernism works are primarily concerned with questions of ontology. Though postmodernist literature does not refer to everything written in the postmodern period, several post-modern developments in literature (Such as the Theatre of the Absurd, the Beat Generation, and Magic Realism) have significant similarities. These developments are occasionally collectively labeled "postmodern"; more commonly, some key figures (Samuel Beckett, William S. Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar and Gabriel Garcia Marquez) are cited as significant contributors to the postmodern aesthetic.

The work of Jarry, the Surrealists, Antonin Artaud, and Luigi Pirandello and so on also influenced the work of playwrights from the Theatre of the Absurd. The term "Theatre of the Absurd" was coined by Martin Esslin to describe a tendency in theatre in the 1950s: he relates it to Albert Camus's concept of absurd, the plays of the Theatre of the Absurd parallel postmodern fiction in many ways. (For example, *The Bald Soprano* by Eugene Ionesco is essentially a series of clichés taken from a language

textbook). One of the most important figures to be categorized as both Absurdist and Postmodern is Samuel Beckett. The work of Samuel Beckett is often seen as marking the shift from modernism to postmodernism in literature. He had close ties with modernism because of his friendship with James Joyce; however, his work helped shape the development of literature away from modernism. Joyce, one of the exemplars of modernism, celebrated the possibility of language; Beckett had a revelation in 1945 that, in order to escape the shadow of Joyce, he must focus on the poverty of language and man as a failure.

His later work, likewise, featured characters stuck in inescapable situations attempting impotently to communicate whose only recourse is to play, to make the best of what they have. As Hans-Peter Wagner says, "Mostly concerned with what he saw as impossibilities in fiction (identity of characters; reliable consciousness; the reliability of language itself; and the rubrication of literature in genres) Beckett's experiments with narrative form and with the disintegration of narration and character in fiction and drama won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. His works published after 1969 are mostly meta-literary attempts that must be read in light of his own theories and previous works and the attempt to deconstruct literary forms and genres. Beckett's last text published during his lifetime, *Stirrings Still* (1988), breaks down the barriers between drama, fiction, and poetry, with texts of the collection being almost entirely composed of echoes and reiterations of his previous work. He was definitely one of the fathers of the postmodern movement in fiction which has continued undermining the ideas of logical coherence in narration, formal plot, regular time sequence, and psychologically explained characters".

"The Beat Generation" is a name coined Jack Kerouac for the disaffected youth of America during the materialistic 1950s; Kerouac developed ideas of automatism into what he called "spontaneous prose" to create a maximalistic, multi-novel epic called the *Duluoz Legend* in the mold of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. "Beat Generation" is often used more broadly to refer to several groups of post-war American writers from the Black Mountain poets, the New York School, the San Francisco Renaissance, and so on. These writers have occasionally also been referred to as "Post moderns". Though this is now a less common usage of "postmodern", references to these writers as "postmodernists" still appear and many writers associated with this group (John Ashbery, Richard Brautigan, Gilbert Sorrentino, and so on) appear often on lists of post-modern writers. One writer associated with the Beat Generation who appears most often on lists of postmodern writers is William S. Burroughs. Burroughs published *Naked Lunch* in Paris in

1959 and in America in 1961; this is considered by some the first truly postmodern novel because it is fragmentary, with no central narrative arc; it employs pastiche to fold in elements from popular genres such as detective fiction and science fiction; it's full of parody, paradox, and playfulness; and, according to some accounts, friends Kerouac and Allan Ginsberg edited the book guided by chance. He is also noted, along with Brion Gysin, for the creation of the "cut-up" technique, a technique (similar to Tzara's "Dadaist Poem") in which words and phrases are cut from a newspaper or other publication and rearranged to form a new message. This is the technique he used to create novel such as *Nova Express* and *The Ticket That Exploded*.

Linda Hutcheon claimed postmodern fiction as a whole could be characterized by the ironic quote marks that much of it can be taken as tongue-in-cheek. This irony, along with black humor and the general concept of "play" (related to Derrida's concept or the ideas advocated by Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*) are among the most recognizable aspect of postmodernism. Since postmodernism represents a decentered concept of the universe in which individual works are not isolated creations, much of the focus in the study of postmodern literature is on intertextuality: the relationship between one text (a novel for example) and another or one text within the interwoven fabric of literary history. Critics point to this as an indication of postmodernism's lack of originality and reliance on clichés.

Science fiction (often shortened to SF, sci-fi or sci-fi) is a genre of speculative fiction, typically dealing with imaginative concepts such as futuristic science and technology, space travel, time travel, faster than light travel, parallel universes, and extraterrestrial life. Science fiction often explores the potential consequences of scientific and other innovations, and has been called a "literature of ideas". It usually avoids the supernatural, and unlike the related genre of fantasy, historically science fiction stories were intended to have a grounding in science-based fact or theory at the time the story was created, but this connection is now limited to hard science fiction. Hugo Gernsback, who was one of the first in using the term "science fiction", described his vision of the genre: "By 'scientifiction' I mean the Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe type of story – a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision".

In 1970 William Atheling Jr. (James Blish) wrote about the English term "science fiction": "Wells used the term originally to cover what we would today call 'hard' science fiction, in which a conscientious attempt to be faithful to already known facts (as of the date of writing)

was the substrate on which the story was to be built, and if the story was also to contain a miracle, it ought at least not to contain a whole arsenal of them". According to science fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein, "a handy short definition of almost all science fiction might read: realistic speculation about possible future, events based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method". Rod Serling's definition is "fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science fiction is the improbable made possible.

III. SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction is largely based on writing rationally about alternative possible worlds or futures. It is related to, but different from fantasy in that, within the context of the story, its imaginary elements are largely possible within scientifically established or scientifically postulated physical laws. The settings of science fiction are often contrary to those of consensus reality, but most science fiction relies on a considerable degree of suspension of disbelief, which is facilitated in the reader's mind by potential scientific explanations or solutions to various fictional elements. Science fiction elements include:

- A time setting in the future, in alternative timelines, or in a historical past that contradicts known facts of history or the archaeological record.
- A spatial setting or scenes in outer space (e.g. spaceflight), on other worlds, or on subterranean earth.
- Characters that include aliens, mutants, androids, or humanoid robots and other types of characters arising from a future human evolution.
- Futuristic or plausible technology such as ray guns, teleportation machines, and humanoid computers.
- Scientific principles that are new or that contradict accepted physical laws, for example time travel, wormholes, or faster-than-light travel or communication.
- New and different political or social systems, e.g. utopian, dystopian, post-scarcity, or post-apocalyptic.
- Paranormal abilities such as mind control, telepathy, telekinesis (e.g. "The Force" in *Star Wars*).
- Other universe or dimensions and travel between them.

As a means of understanding the world through speculation and storytelling, science fiction has antecedents which go back to an era when the dividing line separating the mythological from the historical tends to become somewhat blurred, though precursors to science fiction as literature can be seen in Lucian's *True History* in the second century, some of the *Arabian Nights tales*, *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* in the 10th century and Ibn al-Nafis's *Theologus Autodidactus* in the 13th century. A product of the budding Age of Reason and the development of modern science itself, Johannes Kepler's *Somnium* (1620-1630), Cyrano de Bergerac's *Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon* (1657), his *The States and Empires on the Sun* (1662), Margaret Cavendish's "The Blazing World" (1666), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Ludvig Holberg's novel *Nicolai Klimii Iter Subterraneum* (1741) and Voltaire's *Micromegas* (1752) are some of the first true science fantasy works, which often feature the adventures of the protagonist in fictional and fantastical places, or the moon, Isaac Asimov and Carl Sagan considered Kepler's work the first science fiction story. It depicts a journey to the Moon and the how the Earth's motion is seen from there. Following the 18th century development of the novel as a literary form, in the early 19th century, Mary Shelley's books *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Last Man* (1826) helped define the form of the science fiction novel, and Brian Aldiss has argued that *Frankenstein* was the first work of science fiction. Later, Edgar Allan Poe wrote a story about a flight to the moon. More examples appeared throughout the 19th century. Then with the dawn of new technologies such as electricity, the telegraph, and new forms of powered transportation, writers including H.G Wells and Jules Verne created a body of work that became popular across broad cross-sections of society. Wells *The War of the Worlds* (1898) describes an invasion of late Victorian England by Martians using tripod fighting machines equipped with advanced weaponry. It is a seminal depiction of an alien invasion of Earth. In the late 19th century, the term "scientific romance" was used in Britain to describe much of this fiction. This produced additional offshoots, such as the 1884 novella *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* by Edwin Abbott Abbott. The term would continue to be used into the early 20th century for writers such as Olaf Stapledon.

In the early 20th century, pulp magazines helped develop a new generation of mainly American SF writers, influenced by Hugo Gernsback, the founder of *Amazing stories* magazine. In 1912 Edgar Rice Burroughs published *A Princess of Mars*, the first of his three-decade-long series of Barsoom novels, situated on Mars and featuring John Carter as the hero. The 1928 publication of Philip

Francis Nowlan's original Buck Rogers story, *Armageddon 2419*, in *Amazing Stories* was a landmark event. This story led to comic strips featuring Buck Rogers (1929), Brick Bradford (1933), and Flash Gordon (1934). The comic strips and derivative movie serials greatly popularized science fiction. In the late 1930s, John W. Campbell became editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, and a critical mass of new writers emerged in New York City in a group called the Futurians, including Isaac Asimov, Damon Knight, Donald A. Wollheim, Frederik Pohl, James Blish, Judith Merril, and others. Other important writers during this period include E.E. (Doc) Smith, Robert A. Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, Olaf Stapledon, and A.E. van Vogt. Working outside the Campbell influence were Ray Bradbury and Stanislaw Lem. Campbell's tenure at *Astounding* is considered to be the beginning of the Golden Age of science fiction characterized by hard SF stories celebrating scientific achievement and progress. This lasted until post-war technological advances, new magazines such as *Galaxy*, edited by H.L. Gold and a new generation of writers began writing stories with less emphasis on the hard sciences and more on the social sciences.

In the 1950s, the Beat generation included speculative writers such as William S. Burroughs. In the 1960s and early 1970s, writers like Frank Herbert, Samuel R. Delany, Roger Zelazny, and Harlan Ellison explored new trends, ideas, and writing styles, while a group of writers, mainly in Britain, became known as the New Wave for their embrace of a high degree of experimentation, both in form and in content, and a highbrow and self-consciously "literary" or artistic sensibility. In the 1970s, writers like Larry Niven brought new life to hard science fiction. Ursula K. Le Guin and others pioneered soft science fiction. In the 1980s, cyberpunk authors like William Gibson turned away from the optimism and support for progress of traditional science fiction. This dystopian vision of the near future is described in the work of Philip K. Dick, such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *We Can Remember It for You Wholesale*, which resulted in the films *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*. The *Star Wars* franchise helped spark a new interest in space opera. C.J. Cherry's detailed explorations of alien life and complex scientific challenges influenced a generation of writers. Emerging themes in the 1990s included environmental issues, the implications of the global internet and the expanding information universe, questions about biotechnology and nanotechnology, as well as a post-Cold War interest in post-scarcity societies; Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* comprehensively explores these themes.

Lois McMaster Bujold's *Vorkosigan* novels brought the character-driven story back into prominence. The television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987) began a torrent of new SF shows, including three further *Star Trek* continuation shows (*Deep Space 9*, *Voyager*, and *Enterprise*) and *Babylon 5*. *Stargate*, a movie about an ancient portal to other gates across the galaxy, was released in 1994. *Stargate SG-1*, a TV series, premiered on July 27, 1997 and lasted 10 seasons with 214 episodes. Spin-offs include the animated television series *Stargate Infinity*, the TV series *Stargate Atlantis* and *Stargate: Continuum*. *Stargate SG-1* surpassed *The X-Files* as the longest-running North American science fiction television series, a record later broken by *Smallville*. Concern about the rapid pace of technological change crystallized around the concept of the technological singularity, popularized by Vernor Vinge's novel *Marooned in Realtime* and then taken up by other authors.

Forrest J Ackerman is credited with first using the term *sci-fi* (analogous to the then-trendy "hi-fi") in 1954. As science fiction entered popular culture, writers and fans active in the field came to associate the term with low-budget, low-tech "B-movies" and with low-quality pulp science fiction. By the 1970s, critics within the field such as Terry Carr and Damon Knight were using *sci-fi* to distinguish hack-work from serious science fiction. Around 1978 critic Susan Wood and others introduced the use of the odd pronunciation "skiffy" which is intended to be self-deprecating humor but is inconsistent with the documented genesis of the term "sci-fi" (i.e., one would not pronounce "hi-fi" as "hiffy") and Ackerman's own words engraved on his crypt plaque which read "Sci-Fi was My High". Peter Nicholls writes that "SF" (or "sf") is "the preferred abbreviation within the community of sf writers and readers". David Langford's monthly fanzine *Ansible* includes a regular section "As Others See Us" which offers numerous examples of "sci-fi" being used in a pejorative sense by people outside the genre. Science fiction has criticized developing and future technologies, but also initiates innovation and new technology. This topic has been more often discussed in literary and sociological than in scientific forums.

Cinema and media theorist Vivian Sobchack examines the dialogue between science fiction films and the technological imagination. Technology impacts artists and how they portray their fictionalized subjects, but the fictional world gives back to science by broadening imagination. *How William Shatner Changed the World* is a documentary that gave a number of real-world examples of actualized technological imaginations. While more prevalent in the early years of science fiction with writers like Arthur C. Clarke, new authors still find ways to make

currently impossible technologies seem closer to being realized.

Hard science fiction, or "hard SF", is characterized by rigorous attention to accurate detail in the natural sciences, especially physics, astrophysics, and chemistry, or on accurately depicting worlds that more advanced technology may make possible. Some accurate predictions of the future come from the hard science fiction subgenre, but numerous inaccurate predictions have emerged as well. Some hard SF authors have distinguished themselves as working scientists, including Gregory Benford, Fred Hoyle, Geoffrey A. Landis, David Brin, and Robert L. Forward, while mathematician authors include Rudy Rucker and Vernor Vinge. Other noteworthy hard SF authors include Isaac Asimov, Arthur Clarke, Hal Clement, Greg Bear, Larry Niven, Robert J. Sawyer, Stephen Baxter, Alastair Reynolds, Charles Sheffield, Ben Bova, Kim Stanley Robinson, Anne McCaffrey, Andy Weir and Greg Egan. Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* is one of the earliest examples of soft science fiction. The description "soft" science fiction may describe works based on social sciences such as psychology, economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology. The term is sometimes used to describe improbable plots, absurd "science" and cardboard characters.

Noteworthy writers in this category include Ursula K. Le Guin and Philip K. Dick. The term can describe stories focused primarily on character and emotion; SFWA Grand Master Ray Bradbury was an acknowledged master of this art. The Eastern Bloc produced a large quantity of social science fiction, including works by Polish authors Stanislaw Lem and Janusz Zajdel, as well as Soviet authors such as the Strugatsky brothers, Kir Bulychov, Yevgeny Zamyatin and Ivan Yefremov. Some writers blur the boundary between hard and soft science fiction. Related to social SF and soft SF are utopian and dystopian stories; George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* are examples.

The cyberpunk genre emerged in the early 1980s; combining cybernetics and punk, the term was coined by author Bruce Bethke for his 1980, short *Cyberpunk*. The time frame is usually near-future and the settings are often dystopian in nature and characterized by misery. Common themes in cyberpunk include advances in information technology and especially the Internet, visually abstracted as cyberspace, artificial intelligence, and cybernetics and post-democratic societal control where corporations have more influence than governments. Nihilism, post-modernism, and film noir techniques are common

elements, and the protagonists may be disaffected or reluctant anti-heroes. Noteworthy authors in this genre are William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Neal Stephenson and Pat Cadigan. James O'Ehley has called the 1982 film *Blade Runner* a definitive example of the *cyberpunk* visual style. Time travel stories have antecedents in the 18th and 19th centuries. The first major time-travel novel was Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

The most famous is H.G.Wells' 1895 novel *The Time Machine*, which uses a vehicle that allows an operator to travel purposefully and selectively, while Twain's time traveler is struck in the head. The term *time machine*, coined by Wells, is now universally used to refer to such a vehicle. *Back to the Future* is one of the most popular movie franchises in this category; *Doctor Who* is a similarly popular long-running television franchise. Stories of this type are complicated by logical problems such as the grandfather paradox, as exemplified in the classic Robert Heinlein story "All You Zombies" and the Futurama episode "Roswell That Ends Well". Time travel continues to be a popular subject in modern science fiction, in print, movies, and television. Alternative history stories are based on the premise that historical events might have turned out differently. These stories may use time travel to change the past, or may simply set a story in a universe with a different history from our own. Classics in the genre include *Bring the Jubilee* by Ward Moore, in which the South wins the American Civil War, and *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick, in which Germany and Japan win World War II.

The Sidewise Award acknowledges the best works in this subgenre; the name is taken from Murray Leinster's 1934 story *Sidewise in Time*. Harry Turtledove is one of the most prominent authors in the subgenre and is sometimes called the "master of alternative history". Military science fiction is set in the context of conflict between national, interplanetary, or interstellar armed forces; the primary viewpoint characters are usually soldiers. Stories include detail about military technology, procedure, ritual, and history; military stories may use parallels with historical conflicts. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* is an early example, along with the Dorsai novels of Gordon Dickson, Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War* is a critique of the genre, a Vietnam-era response to the World War II- style stories of the earlier authors. Prominent military SF authors include John Scalzi, John Ringo, David Drake, David Weber, Tom Kratman, Michael Z. Williamson, S. M. Stirling, and John Carr. The publishing company Baen Books is known for cultivating several of these military science fiction authors.

Robert Anson Heinlein was an American science fiction writer. Often called the "dean of science fiction

writers", his controversial works continue to have an influential effect on the genre. Heinlein became one of the first science-fiction writers to break into mainstream magazines such as *'The Saturday Evening Post'* in the late 1940s. He was one of the best-selling science-fiction novelists for many decades, and he, Issac Asimov, and Arthur C. Clarke are often considered the "Big Three" of science fiction authors. A notable writer of science-fiction short stories.

IV. ROBERT HEINLEIN

Heinlein was one of a group of writers who came to prominence under the editorship of John W. Campbell Jr. at his *'Astounding Science Fiction'* magazine – though Heinlein denied that Campbell influenced his writing to any great degree. Within the framework of his science – fiction stories, Heinlein repeatedly addressed certain social themes: the importance of individual liberty and self-reliance, the obligation individuals owe to their societies, the influence of organized religion on culture and government, and the tendency of society to repress nonconformist thought. He also speculated on the influence of space travel on human cultural practices. Heinlein was named the first Science Fiction writers grand master in 1974. He won Hugo Awards for four of his novels, in addition, fifty years after publication, five of his works were awarded "Retro Hugos"- awards given retrospectively for works that were published before the Hugo Awards came into existence. In his fiction, Heinlein coined terms that have become part of the English language, including "grok", "waldo", and "speculative fiction", as well as popularizing existing terms like "TANSTAAFL", "pay it forward", and "space marine". He also anticipated mechanical Computer Aided Design with "Drafting Dan" and described a modern version of a waterbed in his novel *'The Door into Summer'*, though he never patented or built one. In the first chapter of the novel *'Space Cadet'* he anticipated the cell – phone 35 years before Motorola invented the technology. Several of Heinlein's works have been adapted for film and television.

Heinlein was born on July 7, 1907 to Rex Ivar Heinlein and Bam Lyle Heinlein, in Butler, Missouri. He was a 6th generation German- American; a family tradition had it that Heinlein's fought in every American war starting with the War of Independence. His childhood was spent in Kansas City, Missouri. The outlook and values of this time and place (in his own words, "The Bible Belt") had a definite influence on his fiction, especially his later works, as he drew heavily upon his childhood in establishing the setting and cultural atmosphere in works

like *'Time Enough for Love'* and *'To Sail Beyond the Sunset'*.

Heinlein's experience in the U. S. Navy exerted a strong influence on his character and writing. He graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland with the class of 1929 and went on to serve as an officer in the Navy. He was assigned to the new aircraft carrier USS Lexington in 1931, where he worked in radio communications, then in its earlier phases, with the carrier's aircraft. The captain of this carrier was Ernest J. King, who later served as the Chief of Naval Operations and Commander-in-chief, U. S. Fleet during World War II. Heinlein was frequently interviewed during his later years of military historians who asked him about Captain King and his service as the commander of the U. S. Navy's first modern aircraft carrier. Heinlein also served aboard the destroyer USS Roper in 1933 and 1934, reaching the rank of lieutenant His brother, Lawrence Heinlein, served in the US. Army, the US. Air Force, and the Missouri National Guard, and he rose to the rank of major general in the National Guard.

In 1929 Heinlein married Elinor Curry of Kansas City in Los Angeles, and their marriage lasted about a year. His second marriage in 1932 to Leslyn Mac Donald (1904-1981) lasted for 15 years. Mac Donald was, according to the testimony of Heinlein's Navy buddy, Rear Admiral Cal Laning, astonishingly intelligent, widely read, and extremely liberal, though a registered Republican while Issac Asimov later recalled that Heinlein was, at the time, "a flaming liberal"

In 1934, Heinlein was discharged from the Navy due to pulmonary tuberculosis. During a lengthy hospitalization, he developed a design for a waterbed. After his discharge, Heinlein attended a few weeks of graduate classes in Mathematics and Physics at the University of California at Los Angeles (U C L A), but he soon quit either because of his health or from a desire to enter politics. Heinlein supported himself at several occupations, including real estate sales and silver mining, but for some years found money in short supply Heinlein was active in Upton Sinclair's Socialist End Poverty in California movement in the early 1930s. When Sinclair gained the Democratic nomination for Governor of California in 1934, Heinlein worked actively in the campaign. Heinlein himself ran for the California State Assembly in 1938, but was unsuccessful.

While not destitute after the campaign- he had a small disability

pension from the Navy – Heinlein turned to writing in order to pay off his mortgage. His first published story, "Life - line", was printed in the August 1939 issue of

Astounding Science – Fiction. Originally written for a contest, it was instead sold to Astounding for significantly more than the contest, it was instead sold to Astounding for significantly more than the contest's first – prize pay off. Another Future History story, "Misfit", followed in November.

Heinlein was quickly acknowledged as a leader of the new movement toward "social" science fiction. In California he hosted the Mafiana Literary Society, a 1940-41 series of informal gatherings of new authors. He was the guest of honor at Denvention, the 1941 Worldcon, held in Denver. During World War II, he did aeronautical engineering for the U. S. Navy, also recruiting Issac Asimov and L. Sprague de Camp to work at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in Pennsylvania. As the war wound down in 1945, Heinlein began reevaluating his career. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, along with the outbreak of the Cold War, galvanized him to write nonfiction on political topics. In addition, he wanted to break into better-paying markets. He published four influential short stories for *The Saturday Evening Post* magazine, leading off, in February 1947, with "The Green Hills of Earth". That made him the first science fiction writer to break out of the "pulp ghetto". In 1950, the movie *Destination Moon*- the documentary like film for which he had written the story and scenario, co-written the script, and invented many of the effects- won an Academy Award for special effects. Also, he embarked on a series of juvenile novels for the Charles Scribner's Sons publishing company that went from 1947 through 1959, at the rate of one book each autumn, in time for Christmas presents to teenagers. He also wrote for *Boy's Life* in 1952.

At the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard he had met and befriended a chemical engineer named Virginia "Ginny" Gerstenfeld. After the war, her engagement having fallen through, she moved to UCLA for doctoral studies in chemistry, and made contact again. As his second wife's alcoholism gradually spun out of control, Heinlein moved out and the couple filed for divorce. Heinlein's friendship with Virginia turned into a relationship and on October 21, 1948- shortly after the decree nisi came through- they married in the town of Raton, New Mexico shortly after having set up house in Colorado. They would remain married until Heinlein's death.

As Heinlein's increasing success as a writer resolved their initial financial woes, they had a house custom built with various innovative features, later described in an article in *Popular Mechanics*. In 1965, after various chronic health problems of Virginia's were traced back to altitude sickness, they moved to Santa Cruz, California, at sea level, while they were building a new

residence in the adjacent village of Bonny Doon, California. Robert and Virginia designed and built their California house themselves, which is in a circular shape. Previously they had also designed and built their Colorado house. Ginny undoubtedly served as a model for many of his intelligent, fiercely independent female characters. She was a chemist, rocket test engineer, and held a higher rank in the Navy than Heinlein himself. She was also an accomplished college athlete, earning four letters. In 1953-1954, the Heinlein's voyaged around the world, which Heinlein described in 'Tramp Royale', and which also provided background material for science fiction novels set abroad spaceships on long Voyages, such as 'Podkayne of Mars' and 'Friday', Ginny acted as the first reader of his manuscripts. Issac Asimov believed that Heinlein made a swing to the right politically at the same time he married Ginny. The Heinlein's formed the small "Patrick Henry League" in 1958, and they worked in the 1964 Barry Goldwater Presidential Campaign.

When Robert A. Heinlein opened his Colorado Springs newspaper on April 5, 1958, he read a full-page ad demanding that the Eisenhower Administration stop testing nuclear weapons. The science-fiction author was flabbergasted. He called for the formation of the Patrick Henry League and spent the next several weeks writing and publishing his own polemic that lambasted "Communist- line goals concealed in idealistic- sounding nonsense" and urged Americans not to become "soft – headed". Heinlein had used topical materials throughout his juvenile series beginning in 1947, but in 1959, his novel 'Starship Troopers' was considered by the editors and owners of Scribner's to be too controversial for one of its prestige lines, and it was rejected. Heinlein found another publisher (Putnam), feeling himself released from the constraints of writing novels for children. He had once told an interviewer that he did not want to do stories that merely added to categories defined by other works. He rather wanted to do his own work, stating that, "I want to do my own stuff, my own way". He would go on to write a series of challenging books that redrew the boundaries of science fiction, including *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) and *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966). Beginning in 1970, Heinlein had a series of health crisis, broken by strenuous periods of activity in his hobby of stonemasonry.

The decade began with a life-threatening attack of peritonitis, recovery

from which required more than two years, and treatment of which required multiple transfusions of Heinlein's rare blood type, A2 negative. As soon as he was well enough to write again, he began work on *Time Enough for Love* (1973), which introduced many of the themes found in his

later fiction. He wrote five novels from 1980 until he died in his sleep from emphysema and heart failure on May 8, 1988.

Heinlein published 32 novels, 59 short stories, and 16 collections during his life. Four films, two television series, several episodes of a radio series, and a board game have been derived more or less directly from his work. The first novel that Heinlein wrote was 'For Us, The Living: A Comedy of Customs (1939), it was intriguing as a window into the development of Heinlein's radical ideas about man as a social animal, including his interest in free love.

In 1957, James Blish wrote that one reason for Heinlein's success "has been the high grade of machinery which goes, today as always, into his story-telling. Heinlein seems to have known from the beginning as if instinctively, technical lessons about fiction which other writers must learn the hard way. He does not always operate the machinery to the best advantage, but he always seems to be aware of it".

From about 1961 (*Stranger in a Strange Land*) to 1973 (*Time Enough for Love*), Heinlein explored some of his most important themes, such as individualism, libertarianism, and free expression of physical and emotional love. Three novels from this period, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, and *Time Enough for Love*, won the Libertarian Futurist Society's Prometheus Hall of Fame Award designed to honor classic libertarian fiction. Jeff Rikkenbach described *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* as "unquestionably one of the three or four most influential libertarian novels of the last century". *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* tells of a war of independence waged by the Lunar penal colonies, with significant comments from a major character. Professor La Paz, regarding the threat posed by government to individual freedom.

After a seven year hiatus brought on by poor health, Heinlein produced five new novels in the period from 1980 (*The Number of the Beast*) to 1987 (*To Sail Beyond the Sunset*). These books have a thread of common characters and time and place. They most explicitly communicated Heinlein's philosophies and beliefs, and many long, didactic passages of dialog and exposition deal with government, sex, and religion. These novels are controversial among his readers and one critic, David Langford, has written about them very negatively. Heinlein's four Hugo awards were all for books written before this period. Some of these books, such as *The Number of the Best* and *The Cat Who Walks through Walls*, start out as tightly constructed adventure stories, but transform into philosophical fantasies at the end. It is a

matter of opinion whether this demonstrates a lack of attention to craftsmanship or a conscious effort to expand the boundaries of science fiction, either into a kind of magical realism, continuing the process of literary exploration that he had begun with *Stranger in a Strange Land*, or into a kind of literary metaphor of quantum science (*The Number of the Beast* dealing with the Observer problem, and *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* being a direct reference to the Schrödinger's cat thought experiment).

Most of the novels from this period are recognized by critics as

Forming an offshoot from the Future History series, and referred to by the term *World as Myth*. The tendency toward authorial self – reference begun in *Stranger in a Strange Land* and *Time Enough for Love* becomes even more evident in novels such as *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls*, whose first person protagonist is a disabled military veteran who becomes a writer, and finds love with a female character.

The 1982 novel *Friday*, a more conventional adventure story continued a Heinlein theme of expecting what he saw as the continued disintegration of Earth's society, to the point where the title character is strongly encouraged to seek a new life off – planet. It concludes with a traditional Heinlein note, as in *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* or *Time Enough for Love*, that freedom is to be found on the frontiers. The 1984 novel *Job: A Comedy of Justice* is a sharp satire of organized religion Heinlein himself was agnostic. Several Heinlein works have been published since his death, including the aforementioned *For Us, The Living as well as 1989's Grumbles from the Grave*, a collection of letters between Heinlein and his editors and agent, 1992's *Tramp Royale*, a travelogue of a southern hemisphere tour the Heinlein's took in the 1950s; *Take Back Your Government*, a how-to book about participatory democracy written in 1946; and a tribute volume called *Requiem: Collected Works and Tributes to the Grand Master*, containing some additional short works previously unpublished in book form. *Off the Main Sequence*, published in 2005, includes three short stories never before collected in any Heinlein book (Heinlein called them "Stinkeroos"). Spider Robinson, a colleague, friend, and admirer of Heinlein, wrote *Variable Star*, based on an outline and notes for a juvenile novel that Heinlein prepared in 1955. The novel was published as a collaboration with Heinlein's name above Robinson's on the cover, in 2006. A complete collection of Heinlein's published works has been published by the Heinlein Prize Trust as the "Virginia Edition", after his wife. Heinlein's books probe a range of ideas about a range of topics such as sex, race, politics, and the military. Many were seen as

radical or as ahead of their time in their social criticism. He has also been accused of contradicting himself on various philosophical questions.

Heinlein has had a nearly ubiquitous influence on other science fiction writers. In a 1953 poll of leading science fiction authors, he was cited more frequently as an influence than any other modern writer. Critic James Gifford writes that "Although many other writers have exceeded Heinlein's output, few can claim to match his broad and seminal influence. Scores of science fiction writers from the prewar Golden Age through the present day loudly and enthusiastically credit Heinlein for blazing the trails of their own careers, and shaping their styles and stories.

V. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

The title "Stranger in a Strange Land" is an allusion to the phrase in Exodus 2:22. According to Heinlein, the novel's working title was *The Heretic*. In 1991, three years after Heinlein's death, his widow Virginia Heinlein, arranged to have the original uncut manuscript published. Critics disagree about which version is superior, though Heinlein preferred the original manuscript and described the heavily edited version as "telegraphese".

The story focuses on a human raised on Mars and his adaptation to, and understanding of, humans and their culture. It is set in a Post- Third World War United States, where organized religions are politically powerful. There is a World Federation of Free Nations including the demilitarized U.S., with a world government supported by Special Service troops. A manned expedition is mounted to visit the planet Mars, but all contact is lost after landing. A second expedition 25 years later finds a single survivor, Valentine Michael Smith. Smith was born on the spacecraft and was raised entirely by the Martians. He is ordered by the Martians to accompany the returning expedition.

Because Smith is unaccustomed to the conditions on Earth, he is confined at Bethesda Hospital, where having never seen a human female, he is attended by male staff only. Seeing this restriction as a challenge, Nurse Gillian Boardman eludes the guards and goes in to see Smith. By sharing a glass of water with him, she inadvertently becomes his first female "water brother", considered a profound relationship by the Martians.

Gillian tells her lover, reporter Ben Caxton, about her experience with Smith. Ben explains that as heir to the entire exploration party, Smith is extremely wealthy, and following a legal precedent set during the colonization of the Moon, he could be considered owner of Mars itself.

His arrival on Earth has prompted a political power struggle that puts his life in danger. Ben persuades her to bug Smith's room and then publishes stories to bait the government into releasing him. Ben is seized by the government, and Gillian persuades Smith to leave the hospital with her. When government agents catch up with them, Smith sends the agents irretrievably into a fourth dimension, then is so shocked by Gillian's terrified reaction that he enters a semblance of catatonia. Gillian, remembering Ben's earlier suggestion, conveys Smith to Jubal Harshaw, a famous author who is also a physician and a lawyer.

Smith continues to demonstrate psychic abilities and superhuman intelligence, coupled with a childlike naiveté. When Harshaw tries to explain religion to him, Smith understands the concept of God only as "one who groks", which includes every extant organism. This leads him to express the Martian concept of life as the phrase "Thou art god", although he knows this is a bad translation. Many other human concepts such as war, clothing, and jealousy are strange to him, while the idea of an afterlife is a fact he takes for granted because Martian society is directed by Old Ones the spirits of Martians who have "discorporated". It is also customary for loved ones and friends to eat the bodies of the dead, in a rite similar to Holy Communion. Eventually, Harshaw arranges freedom for Smith and recognition that human law, which would have granted ownership of Mars to Smith, has no applicability to a planet already inhabited by intelligent life.

Still inexhaustibly wealthy, and now free to travel, Smith becomes a celebrity and is feted by the Earth's elite. He investigates many religions, including the Fosterite Church of the New Revelation, a populist mega church where in sexuality, gambling, alcohol consumption, and similar activities are allowed, even encouraged, and only considered "sinning" when not under church auspices. The church of the New Revelation is organized in a complexity of initiatory levels: an outer circle, open to the public; a middle circle of ordinary members who support the church financially; and an inner circle of the "eternally saved", attractive, highly sexed men and women, who serve as clergy and recruit new members. The Church owns many politicians and takes violent action against those who oppose it. Smith also has a brief career as a magician in a carnival, where he and Gillian befriend the show's tattooed lady, an "eternally saved" Fosterite named Patricia Paiwonski.

Eventually, Smith starts a Martian- influenced "Church of All Worlds" combining elements of the Fosterite cult especially the sexual aspects with Western esotericism, whose members learn the Martian language

and thus acquire psychokinetic abilities. The church is eventually besieged by Fosterites for practicing "blasphemy", and the church building is destroyed; but unknown to the public, Smith's followers teleport to safety. Smith is arrested by the police, but escapes and returns to his followers, later explaining to Jubal that his gigantic fortune has been bequeathed to the church. With that wealth and their new abilities, church members will be able to re-organize human societies and cultures. Eventually, those who cannot or will not learn Smith's methods will die out, leaving Homo superior. Incidentally, this may save Earth from eventual destruction by the Martians, who were responsible for the destruction of the fifth planet, eons ago.

Smith is killed by a mob raised against him by the Fosterites. From the afterlife, he speaks briefly to grief-stricken Jubal, to dissuade him from suicide. Having consumed a small portion of Smith's remains in keeping with Martian custom, Jubal and some of the church members return to Jubal's home to regroup and prepare for their new evangelical role founding congregations. Meanwhile, Smith reappears in the afterlife to replace the Fosterites' eponymous founder, amid hints that Smith was an incarnation of the Archangel Michael.

Heinlein named his main character "Smith" because of a speech he made at a science fiction convention regarding the unpronounceable names assigned to extraterrestrials. After describing the importance of establishing a dramatic difference between humans and aliens, Heinlein concluded, "Besides, whoever heard of a Martian named Smith?" "A Martian Named Smith" was both Heinlein's working title for the book and the name of the screenplay started by Harshaw at the end. The title *Stranger in a Strange Land* is taken from Exodus 2:22. "And she bore him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land".

In the preface to the uncut, original version of the book re-issued in

1991, Heinlein's widow, Virginia, wrote: "The given names of the chief characters have great importance to the plot. They were carefully selected: Jubal means 'the father of all', Michael stands for 'Who is like God?'"

Valentine Michael Smith known as "Mike" or the "Man from Mars", raised on Mars in the interval between the landing of his parents' ship, the *Envoy*, and arrival of the second expedition, the *champion*; is about 20 years old when the *champion* arrives and brings him to Earth. Gillian (Jill) Boardman a nurse at Bethesda Hospital who speaks Mike out of government custody; she plays a key role in introducing him to human culture and becomes one

of his closest confidantes and a central figure in the church of All Worlds, which Mike develops.

Ben Caxton, an early love interest of Jill's and an investigative journalist, Jill sees him as of the "lippmann" or political, rather than the "winchell", or celebrity gossip inclination, who masterminds Mike's initial freedom from custody; he joins Mike's inner circle but remains somewhat skeptical, at first, of the social order it develops. Jubal Harshaw, a popular writer, lawyer, and doctor, now semiretired to a house in the Pocono Mountains; as an influential but reclusive public figure, he provides pivotal support for Mike's independence and a safe haven for him; elderly but in good health, he serves as a father figure for the inner circle while keeping a suspicious distance from it.

Anne, Miriam, Dorcas – Harshaw's three personal/ professional secretaries, who live with him and take turns as his "front" responding to his instructions; Anne is certified as a Fair Witness, empowered to provide objective legal testimony about events she witnesses; all three become early acolytes of Michael's church. Duke Larry, a handyman who work for Harshaw and live in his estate; they also become central members of the church. Dr. 'Stinky' Mahmoud a semanticist and the second human (after Mike) to gain a working knowledge of the Martian language, though he does not "grok" the language; becomes a member of the church while retaining his Muslim faith. Patty Paiwonski is a "tattooed lady" and snake handler at the circus Mike and Jill join for a time; she has ties to the Fosterite church, which she retains as a member of Mike's inner circle. Joseph Douglas - Secretary - General of the Federation of Free States, which has evolved indirectly from the United Nations into a true world government. Alice Douglas sometimes called "Agnes", Joe Douglas' wife. As the First Lady, she manipulates her husband, making major economic, political, and staffing decisions. She frequently consults astrologer Beck Versant for major decisions.

Foster the founder of the church of the church of the New Revelation (Fosterite): now existing as an archangel. Digby is Foster's successor as head of the Fosterite church; he becomes an archangel under Foster after Mike "discorporates" him. Heinlein's deliberately provocative book generated considerable controversy. The free love and commune living to the book's exclusion from school reading lists. After it was rumored to be associated with Charles Manson, it was removed from school libraries as well.

Writing in *The New York Times*, Orville Prescott received the novel caustically, describing it as a "disastrous mishmash of science fiction, laborious humor,

dreary social satire and cheap eroticism"; he characterized stranger in a strange land as "puerile and ludicrous", saying "when a non-stop orgy is combined with a lot of preposterous chatter, it becomes

unendurable, an affront to the patience and intelligence of readers".

Galaxy reviewer Floyd C. Gale the original edition a mixed review, saying "the book's shortcomings lie not so much in its emancipation as in the fact that Heinlein has bitten off too large a chewing portion". Despite such reviews, *Stranger in a Strange Land* won the 1962 Hugo Award for Best Novel and became the first Science fiction novel to enter The New York Times Book Review's best-seller list. In 2012, it was included in a Library of Congress exhibition of "Books That Shaped America".

Heinlein got the idea for the novel when he and his wife Virginia were brainstorming one evening in 1948. She suggested a new version of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894), but with a child raised by Martians instead of wolves. He decided to go further with the idea and worked on the story on and off for more than a decade. His editors at Putnam then required him to cut its 220,000-word length down to 160,067 words before publication. In 1962, it received the Hugo Award for Best Novel. *Stranger in a Strange Land* was written in part as a deliberate attempt to challenge social mores. In the course of the story, Heinlein uses Smith's open-mindedness to reevaluate such institutions as religion, money, monogamy, and the fear of death. Heinlein completed writing it ten years after he had (uncharacteristically) plotted it out in detail. He later wrote, "I had been in no hurry to finish it, as that story could not be published commercially until the public mores changed. I could see them changing and it turned out that I had timed it right".

Heinlein was surprised that some readers thought the book described how he believed society should be organized, explaining: "I was not giving answers. I was trying to shake the reader loose from some preconceptions and induce him to think for himself, along new and fresh lines. In consequence, each reader gets something different out of that book because he himself supplies the answers..... It is an invitation to think-not to believe".

The book significantly influenced modern culture in a variety of ways. A central element of the second half of the novel is the religious movement founded by Smith, the "Church of All Worlds", an initiatory mystery religion blending elements of paganism and revivalism, with psychic training and instruction in the Martian language. In 1968, Oberon Zell-Ravenheart (then Tim Zell) founded the Church of All Worlds, a Neopagan religious

organization modeled in many ways after the fictional organization in the novel. This spiritual path included several ideas from the book, including polyamory, non-mainstream family structures, social libertarianism, water-sharing rituals, an acceptance of all religious paths by a single tradition, and the use of several terms such as "grok", "Thou art God", and "Never Thirst". Though Heinlein was neither a member nor a promoter of the Church, it was formed including frequent correspondence between Zell and Heinlein, and Heinlein was a paid subscriber to the Church's magazine *Green Egg*. This Church still exists as a recognized religious organization incorporated in California, with membership worldwide, and it remains an active part of the neopagan community today.

The word "grok", coined in the novel made its way into the English language. In Heinlein's invented Martian language, "grok" literally means "to drink" and figuratively means "to comprehend", "to love" and "to be one with", "To understand thoroughly through having empathy with". This word rapidly became common parlance among science fiction fans, hippies, computer programmers and computer hackers, and has since entered the Oxford English Dictionary.

Stranger in a Strange Land contains an early description of the waterbed, an invention that made its real-world debut a few years later, in 1968. Charles Hall, who brought a waterbed design to the United States Patent Office, was refused a patent on the grounds that Heinlein's description in *Stranger in a Strange Land* and another novel, *Double Star* (1956), constituted prior art.

Heinlein's novella *Lost Legacy* (1941) lends its theme, and possibly some characters, to *Stranger in a Strange Land*. In a relevant part of the story, Joan Freeman is described as feeling like "a stranger in a strange land". The Police released an Andy Summers. Penned song titled "Friends", as the B-side to their hit "Don't Stand So Close to Me", (1980) that referenced the novel. Summers claimed that it "was about eating your friends, or 'groking' them as *Stranger in a Strange Land* put it". Billy Joel's song "We Didn't Start the Fire" mentions the novel.

The 1961 version, which, at the publisher's request, Heinlein cut by over a quarter. Approximately 60,000 words were removed from the original manuscript, including some sharp criticism of American attitudes toward sex and religion. Sales were slow at first, but after winning a Hugo Award *Stranger* became popular among college students. The book remained in print for 28 years. By 1997, over 100,000 copies of the hardback edition had been sold along with nearly five million copies of the paperback. None of his later novels would match this level

of success. The 1991 version, retrieved from Heinlein's archives in the University of California, Santa Cruz, Special Collections Department by Heinlein's widow, Virginia, and published posthumously. In literature, postmodernism is usually held to connote playfulness, genre bending and denial of neat aesthetic or moral wrap up above all, writing that knows and presents itself as writing, rather than as innocent portrayal. Postmodernism is encompassed by and represents a special type of modernism. It allows a further tentative conclusion: a story that alludes either solemnly or blasphemously to some work of antiquity, in case of *Stranger in a Strange Land* it closely mirrors the New Testament of the Bible in a blasphemous way.

Although the narrative of *Stranger in a Strange Land* operates on many different levels, one obvious interpretation of Mike's story would be as a postmodern retelling of the Jesus story. Before the novel even begins, we see that the title of part one is "His Maculate Conception", a satirical reference to the mythology of Christ's immaculate conception. Although Mike's biological parents are entirely human, hence his conception being "maculate" rather than immaculate, Mike's birth and childhood on Mars make his origin as unique on Earth as Christ's. Like Christ, Mike begins to preach a message of peace and love to mankind attracts followers. Mike's "ninth circle" is roughly equivalent to Christ's disciples, and he is persecuted by the Earthling institutions that seek to preserve their status quo at any cost. Mike is aware of his parallels to Jesus. So when he allows himself to be murdered at the end of the novel, he quite self – consciously engineers his death to reference Christ's, even positioning himself to be struck by the light in such a way that it appears he has an angelic halo.

As soon as Mike is discovered on Mars, he is subjected to the wills of massive Earth institutions. He is brought back to Earth and put in a hospital where he is ostensibly being observed and cared for. In fact, he is a defacto prisoner of Secretary General Douglas and his administration, who know that Mike's political importance as a celebrity, a man of enormous wealth and arguably the owner of the planet Mars, is too great for them to allow freedom. It is just like how Pharisees treat Jesus Christ. At one point Douglas considers murdering Mike to preserve his own political power. Any institution has a tendency toward self – preservation, but Heinlein demonstrates here that that tendency is often allowed to override basic morality. This is just as true of the Fosterite church as it is of the governments and the Fosterities of course are supposed to be at their root, upholders of morality and goodness. And yet, though Jubal teaches Mike to mistrust institutions. Mike discovers that he needs to build an

institution of his own, the Church of All Worlds, modeled largely on the Fosterites, in order to reach the public.

In his time on Earth, Mike slowly learns about his own race, and what characteristics define humankind. The narrator tells us early on that the single most important difference between human beings and Martians is that Martians lack bipolar (male/female) sexuality. By the end of the novel Mike has come to believe that sexuality and the sexual act, are the greatest gift that belongs to humanity. Mike's first notion of intimacy, learned on Mars is the act of "water sharing" or drinking from the same glass as another. From there, Mike learns the human act of kissing, its own sort of water-sharing. Soon enough Mike discovers sex, the ultimate "growing-closer". He believes that the mental bond shared between lovers during sex is the deepest "growing-closer". He believes that the mental bond shared between lovers during sex is the deepest "grokking" known to man.

Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), and Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light* (1967) are important science fiction works of the 1960s, a period when the genre's focus shifted dramatically towards exploring the social ramifications of scientific developments rather than the intricacies of the technologies themselves. Centered on messianic figures that readers are invited to associate with Christ, these Hugo Award winning novels use science fictional worlds to critique contemporary religious institutions and to explore possible alternatives. The psychological approach of the texts to human behaviour in general and to religion in particular has affinities with the British "New Wave" science fiction of writers such as Michael Moorcock and J. G. Ballard. Their focus on the phenomenon of messianism and alternative religious movements equally reflects widespread interest in these subjects in a range of British and American science fiction of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Stranger in a Strange Land, differs from such New Wave Critiques of messianism in their affirmation of the power and responsibility of the individual to resist the frequently malign influence of institutionalized religion. The novel upholds the authority of the individual in questions of religious judgement and rejects many features of traditional theism and organized religion. For the most part, the concepts retained are those of one of the most liberal and well-educated segments of 1960s American society, the mainline Protestant upper and middle classes. As Wade Clark Roof points out, in the mid –to-late 1960s Liberal Protestantism was in hegemonic decline, even though it enjoyed a cultural triumph of sorts; values long identified with its heritage, such as individualism, freedom, pluralism, tolerance, democracy and intellectual inquiry, came through liberal values of the society.

Heinlein was the principal American responsible for leading some science fiction out of the ghetto first to become integrated in to the American popular culture.

In a postmodern fashion the novel dealt with the impact of technological changes, Heinlein moves one to concentrate on future war fictions, stories of science and technology, the thematics of utopia and catastrophe, and journeys to both unknown worlds. Far from constructing fantasy's attempt at erosion of hegemonic ideology as a mere embrace of barbarism or of chaos, it is possible to discern it as a desire for something excluded from cultural order—more specifically. For all that is in opposition to the capitalist and patriarchal order which has been dominant in Western society over the last two centuries.

This novel employs metafiction, pastiche, etc. Robert A. Heinlein blossomed out into the freedom of the 1960s. In much of Heinlein's late work the central theme is a strong plea for sexual emancipation. The disease with sexuality, perhaps on cultural in origin, is also reflected in a recurrent image of overtly sexual science fiction: a mind / body dualism in which the body is seen as "alien" and governing the mind rather than governed by it or in partnership with it. On the more positive side, science fiction that consciously judges the sexual prejudices of our own society by imagining societies with quite different sexual expectations began to flourish from the 1970s on, though remaining rather a small subgenre within science fiction as a whole.

Stranger in a Strange Land is a postmodern utopian work, it forecasts a

frightening future the aftermath of space exploration and World War III. It speaks of a world of our own inner doubts, wishes and fears, the text speaks to the whole culture. It explores the relationship between literature and technology. The major theme of the Heinlein's novel is to explore human preoccupation with sexuality, whether it be divine or demonic, angelic, bestial, mechanical, or extra terrestrial, the panoply of fantastic lovers throughout the ages reveals long standing obsession about desire and identification. Mating with a Martian namely Michael Smith reintroduces the sexual equality. It also looks at fictions about homosexuality. It has analyzed various aspects of the genre, including scientific experimentation, alternate time/space continua, weaponry, psychic phenomena, cyberspace, bionics, alien life and the future. It juxtaposes themes like nature and technology, theory and popular culture, experience and analysis, science fiction and autobiography in the hope of generating a variety of perspectives from which to grasp the utopian.

Although most of the story is told in a conventional fashion, relating character's thoughts and

conversation on a moment by moment basis, sometimes the narration takes a step back to encompass the large scale events on Earth and Mars, and often referencing quickly and nonchalantly vast chunks of cosmic history. This cosmic perspective is so vast as to sometimes give the impression that the novel is being told from a viewpoint that could only belong to a higher power outside of our universe, like a god. The narration is written in the third person, omnisciently switching between the adventure and thoughts of various characters throughout the story. The tone is satirical when lampooning cultural institutions like politics, religions, and the media, but generally affectionate and sympathetic to its characters, typically portraying its main characters as exceptionally talented and wise. The future, though no specific dates are given—we are told that the novel takes place after "World War III" that space travel has become relative simple, and that the moon is colonized. There is an indication that the novel may take place in the late 20th /early 21st century, as there are references to Jubal being under hundred years of age and his adolescence having been during "the Harding administration" 1921-23, presuming that this refers to U.S president Warren G. Harding. The novel was published in 1961, when the 1990s/2000s were still far enough in the future to base the future Heinlein presents.

In Diane Parkin-Speer's interpretation of the work, which argues that Heinlein's presentation of sexual freedom and polyamory is genuinely emancipator for women, because in the extended family model of the Nest, women are not relegated to passive status, Michael's commune is patriarchal but Martian discipline has a revolutionary effect on women: women desire sex and conceive voluntarily: rape is impossible; there is no fear or guilt; women are 'invulnerable'.... The lack of concern for paternity is another of Heinlein's unorthodox twists. This is understandable, in that it challenged the 1950s assumptions of the mainstream Christian patriarchal nuclear family, which was in keeping with 1960s radicalism.

Turning to the treatment of religion in *Stranger in a Strange Land* both readers and critics have struggled to find a satisfactory interpretation of the novel because unlike the issue of sexual liberation, which he embraced and practiced in life, Heinlein rejected Christianity and frequently spoke of his dissatisfaction with all religion and those who took refuge behind religious authorities. Interestingly, he was similarly dismissive of secular creeds such as atheism, scientific humanism, and agnosticism, although for different reasons. He considered these non-religious worldviews to be intellectually bankrupt, his assessment of religion is equally harsh:

Critical assessment of Heinlein's presentation of religion have often focused on the fact that he divides the world into the 'Elect' and the 'others'. Mike's superhuman abilities mean that when he or his water- brothers are threatened, he just disincorporate perceived enemies by the power of his mind. In a lesser being, this would be murder, but Mike is a Nietzschean superman, His elect have all gone through a special process, an initiation, acquiring hidden knowledge, and they associate together in secret or semi-secret societies working for the betterment of humankind. The Sanskrit phrase *tat tvam asi* is matched to 'thou art God', noting that Hinduism is the source of this notion.

Heinlein was regarded as an inspirational spiritual leader. The 1960's was a decade in which America was wracked by intergenerational conflict. The Christian-based family values of the conservative 1950s were called into question and street protests demanded gay rights, black rights, liberation of women and an end to the Vietnam War. The values of the 'Beat Generation' of the 1950s exemplified by writers Jack Kerouac (*On The Road* 1951) and Allen Ginsburg ('Howl', 1956), which included sexual experimentation, the rejection of wage- slavery, anarchist notions of freedom, Buddhism and other Eastern spiritualities, drugs, and altered states of consciousness, moved from the fringes of youth culture to the mainstream. Disaffected youth, or 'hippies', espoused the values of the counter culture; lack of competitions, absence of sexual jealousy and possessiveness, opposition to discrimination, peacefulness, antiracism, concern for community, and the quest for spiritual awakening. The water-sharing ceremony functioned both as a sign of intimacy and community, and a reminder of the need to cherish the natural world. Mike's sacrifice demonstrated the need for a commitment to the values of freedom and truth.

As the 1960s advanced, Heinlein reluctantly became aware of the mushrooming of new religions throughout America, and of the inspirational role he played for some of these movements. In 1970 *Time* magazine published an article that argued that this novel was one of the foundational texts of Manson's murderous vision. It appears that he failed to appreciate its final message; true, Mike may have disincorporated enemies (this might have inspired Manson to murder), but he also died voluntarily at the hands of a violent mob, rather than use his powers to survive.

While it is irrefutable that the Church of All Worlds is now a vibrant and influential part of the Pagan revival, and that revived Paganism provides anauthentic spiritual path in the contemporary West, scholars have often remained sceptical about the value of religions that were recently founded and even more so in the case of

those religions that openly admit to being based on fictions. Heinlein did not anticipate the rapturous reception that *Stranger* would receive, and when groups as different as the Merry Pranksters, the Manson Family and the Church of All Worlds made use of the novel, Julia List argues that Heinlein adapts: the figure of the messiah to fit within a non-theistic philosophical framework and provide an alternative value system for the modern world that does not rely on reference to a personal, omnipotent deity.. 'Salvation' is translated into success in the temporal world, in which hard work and an emphasis on family and friendship become the key to combating flaws in human nature.

VI. CONCLUSION

The traditional boundaries of two genres namely postmodernism and science fiction have collapsed in the pages of Heinlein's postmodern Sci-Fi novel *A Stranger in a Strange Land*. For understanding the transformation of Western culture into a culture of chaos, generic protocols and thematic systems the study of the text is mandatory. The various drastic transformations, especially in information/ simulation technologies, of the post-industrial West can be analyzed through the present study of the text. As *Stanger in a Strange Land* is a collaboration of science fiction and postmodern elements, it has ingrained futurism and with the catastrophic failure of traditional humanistic thought, this novel has rushed in with a treasury of powerful metaphors and icons capturing the reality of insecure borders: the cyborg, the simulacrum, the word coined by Heinlein i.e. "grok" that it is means to understand.

The novel investigates extra-terrestrial life (Martians), strange worlds, life in moon, the after math of World War III, weird science and extraordinary technologies. If 1960s with the arrival of Heinlein's outrageous novel the *Stranger in a Strange Land*, American science fiction entered a new era of critical respectability. It was a blend of science fiction conventions with literary sophistication and contemporary thought. It portrays a clash between science and religion and attempts at their reconciliation. It has merged two culture, science and the humanities, the genre represented in the novel is both scientific and literary. The novel is set in the backdrop of newer technologies, space exploration, psychology liberal ideologies and physical freedom. It presents a critique often an ironic view of the Heinlein's contemporary society. It explored the nature and limits of the religious institutions especially of the Fosterites.

The alien encounter or the encounter with the maculate protagonist Valentine Michael smith can be

viewed as a metaphor for the exploration of the psychological and existential depths of human consciousness and how the human condition, Literary, philosophical and cultural values and issues are dealt within the novel. It explores the Next Generation with an outlook for the future, it is influential and innovative, will stress the literary, social, political and imaginative qualities of the works.

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