

Change of Society and Culture in Robert Anson Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*

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Abstract

Robert Anson Heinlein is one of the most renowned and influential science fiction writers of the modern era. His works are marked with their author's provocative, highly opinionated voice, and most of his early books were written for children and young adults. In fact, critics often prized his young adult novels with their careful plotting and clear, vivid writing as more satisfying than much of his adult science fiction. His most famous novel is the satirical *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961). Considered a classical science fiction novel, it centres on Valentine Michael Smith, a human who is raised to adulthood by Martians open returning to Earth, Michael must contend with the clashing of his completely alien viewpoints and those of his fellow humans. Through this construct, Heinlein examines human cultural, political, and religion with a socially critical eye. He attacks contemporary society, in particular and the belief in general.

Keywords: Provocative, Cultural, Political.

Heinlein is an influence on other science fiction writers. He is a leading science fiction authors, he was cited 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 suitable his broad and seminal influence. Marks of science fiction writers from the pre-war Golden Age through the present day proudly and enthusiastically credit Heinlein for blazing the trails of their own careers, and shaping their styles and stores" (91). Scientist sends its first human expedition to Mars. The spaceship's crew coming on the planet and are never heard from again. Twenty-five years later, next mission is sent, and the child of two of the first ship's crewmembers, who has been born on Mars and raised by the unique Martian race. It is invented and brought back to Earth. He has a variety of legal precedents, Valentine Michael Smith, the Man from Mars. He is the inheritor to a lot fortune, and because of another precedent known as the Larkin Decision. Mike has a declare to legal rights of the planet Mars. Hence, he has the possible to be extremely influential in matters of Earth politics, and he is kept under close guard at a hospital by the leader of Earth's government, Secretary General Joseph Douglas. At the hospital, Mike gradually teaches his body to adapt to the Earth's atmosphere and he begins learning Earth culture and language, which differ extremely from Martian ways of idea.

As a motivated reporter, Ben Caxton, believes that Douglas is using Mike as a pawn in his own political power games and may be scheduling to kill him. Ben enlists his friend and old flame, Jill Boardman, a nurse at the hospital, to help him spy on Mike's treatment at the hospital. When Ben lets on to the influence that he has an idea of their plans, they kidnap him. Jill sneaks Mike out of the hospital. At the time police officers try to kidnap them as well, Mike makes the officers vanish from existence, one of many psychic super powers Mike has learned on Mars.

Jill takes Mike to the only man she believes can help them. Jubal Harshaw is a well-known doctor, lawyer, writer, and general cultural observable fact Jubal lives in a big house with three good-looking secretaries (Anne, Miriam, and Dorcas) and two male servant (Duke and Larry). Jubal accepts to help care for Jill and Mike from the authorities. Mike learns about Earth culture at Jubal's estate, reading everything in Jubal's library and becoming attentive with Earth religions. The police eventually found Mike's where about and come to arrest Jubal and his coterie, but at the last moment, Jubal is competent to get through to Douglas personally and convince him to call off the police. Jubal gets Douglas to release Ben from police captivity. Through legalistic manoeuvrings and rhetorical brinksmanship. Jubal is able to resolve Mike's political importance, arguing that Mike cannot be the legal authority of Mars since the Martian race inhabited it long before Mike was born. Jubal makes Douglas an ally by convincing him to become overseer of Mike's enormous personal fortune.

Subsequently on Mike's fascination with religion. He, Jubal and Jill go to meet the headquarters of a religious group called the Fosterites. The Fosterites have violently built a massive following, in part by enlisting entertainers, such as football players and strippers, to convey their message, and incorporating vices like gambling into their organization. The Fosterite Supreme Bishop, Digby, hopes to enlist Mike to lend his celebrity to their cause, but, when they are alone in a room together, a conflict arises and Mike makes Digby very sad.

Mike contemplates intensely on his action, and eventually comes to feel that. He had made the finest decision possible in a complex moment. Mike is imbued with new self-confidence, and decides to set out and see the world. With Jill as his companion, Mike travels to various cities incognito, experiencing Earth culture. They build up a magician's act that exhibits Mike's powers and join a carnival, but despite Mike's amazing abilities, he lacks a sense of showmanship, and they are fired. A Fosterite tattooed lady in the carnival, Patty Paiwonski, goes to meet them at their hotel room, hoping to convert them before they leave. Mike reveals to her that he is the Man from Mars, and reveals his powers. Patty decides that Mike is a new prophet sent to Earth, as powerful as Foster himself.

Jill starts to learn the Martian language and some of Mike's psychic powers as they keep on to travel together. Mike comes to grasp many human concepts that have eluded his understanding, such as wish and humor. Finally he believes, he understands Earth culture and he is ready to help people get past the little fears and jealousies that enslave them. He founds a church, called the Church of All Worlds, which uses flashy salesman, like techniques much as the Fosterites do to attract new groupies. The church grows in prominence group of followers the ninth circle - live together communally, where they all work at learning Martian and developing psychic powers. They are not wearing continually their clothing and engage in group sex and partner swapping in a manner disconcerting to outsiders. Ben goes to visit

them and is intensely unnerved by their cultish behavior and open sexuality, but soon enough he has overcome his fears and joined them as fine and good.

Jubal who has come to think of Mike as a so worry about the increasing persecution Mike is facing, and wonders if Mike is not confidence this persecution. When Mike's temple is burned down, Jubal rushes to see him. So Jubal loves Mike, he has resisted visiting Mike's church. Jubal's ideas are all deeply individualist, and Jubal, like Ben, is unnerved by the cultism of Mike's process But Jubal is comforted among Mike's flock, who all treat Jubal as a terrible father figure.

Mike wonders audibly to Jubal if his attempts to help humanity are fruitless. If his information is being lost because of an inherent need in humans to make unhappiness and trouble for themselves. Jubal encourages Mike to stay true his beliefs and ideas. An angry group gathers outside the hotel where they are staying, and, in true showman fashion, Mike presents himself to the mob, exposed and defense less. They murder him and he ascends to Heaven where he becomes an archangel alongside such other self-made prophets as Foster and Digby. Jubal and Mike's followers forge ahead with Mike's work on Earth.

Michael brings to Earth a whole new social rules and regulation, where all are God including every living being, not just humans and all should be water brother. Nationalism has no meaning in this order, nor does religious or racial superiority. These attitudes became foci during the 1960s, but as history has shown, the changes are limited by a reality that does not include Heinlein's Martians. However, some of Heinlein's proposed changes have, to degrees, take hold. The so-called sexual revolution led to a better understanding human sexuality, if not the consequences of casual sex. STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) is, unknown in Michael's church due to members being able to control their bodies or Michael's ability to blink disease out of existence. For a period of time to come closer together in the real world, but this sustained. People had no water- brother concept, nor did they understand what grokking something truly means in Martian, as the language is fictional.

In Heinlein's story change inevitably comes from a new understanding of the and Universe and realization of human potential In the real world, social change moves slowly and not always for the better. Some changes may be impossible, such as the elimination of jealousy, anger and Poverty may be an unavoidable life condition. Political and religious conflicts may be characteristics of any society on any planet in the Universe. Heinlein's story is fantasy with a touch of science fiction, a what-if scenario that if nothing else, reveals the absurdities of life. Social change may or may not arise from these observations.

Stranger in a Strange Land is an excellent yarn, creating its own atmosphere of fantasy and fascination as it proceeds. It is Alice in Wonderland for grownups of the space age. Disturbing vestiges of human actions and reactions in the characters who play their topsy turvy roles in this extravaganza project a mirage of veracity that lures us on and on. In the quaint vernacular of our everyday world, a man from Mars . . . becomes the protagonist of the fable. It is he who justifies the title, as well as the author's avowed intention in writing the book in the first place. It is he who reveals our mores and our morals to ourselves. He forces us to see ourselves as others see us - some god has given us, thru him, the gift to do so.

Even so, the earthbound reader may well be excused if he disregards this elaborate examination of our culture, except in passing, and finds his chief enjoyment, instead, in

the wide ranging fantasy of the story for its own sake. The initial experience of the Envoy and subsequent investigation by the Champion, World war III changes politics dramatically. Another dramatic change is the discovery of an intelligent race of Martian who have raised Valentine Michael Smith as one of their own. Little is known of Michael or his Martian parents and culture, but what is known is that he is very different from any other human on Earth.

Simple English he had freshly learned to speak, less easily than a Hindu used it to trade with a Turk. Smith used English as one might use a code book, with tedious and imperfect translation. Now his thoughts, abstractions from half a million years of wildly alien culture, travelled so far from human experience as to be untranslatable. (9)

Though Michael has abilities far beyond most humans. He is not speak English a suitable form of grammar structure or understand money, but he has complete control over his body and mind. This implies that whatever reactions he may feel upon exposure to women will be more highly controlled than his caretakers can image. Heinlein's introduces a highly important Martian ritual, the sharing of water. This results in the creation of water brothers, people who are tightly coupled beyond the concepts of friendship and marriage. Ben and Jill realise that Michael is in grave danger. The attempts of Secretary General Douglas, as superior of the President of the United States in a Post- Third World war coalition of nations, to swindle Michael out of his claims to Mars triggers their concern for Michael, especially after Jill points out the fake Michael on the stereo tank.

Heinlein reveals a future world political intrigue has not only survival but becomes worse. Government bugs could be anywhere. The people one encounters are not necessarily who they are. The public tax is can be controlled remotely and are equipped with knockout gas. Heinlein describes the seemingly peaceful Michael culture that can turn terribly violent once a situation is fully grokked. At one time, a fifth planet existed where the asteroid belt is currently. The Martian decide that the planet was wrong and, just like that, destroy it.

Michael reads very quickly, and Jubal's contains plenty of reading material, but Jill must guide him through the simple convention's of society. He has much more to learn before he can enter it. Two of Michael's superhuman abilities are levitation and making things, including people, disappear. The levitations abilities is relatively harmless and more of a convenience than a threat. However, the ability to make things disappear can be deadly, and has already been demonstrated as such. Jubal makes a wry joke about a list of people he knows that may deserve this treatment, but without Michael's trained- in Martian sense of grokking and sensing wrongness first, the human population of Earth could rapidly diminish.

Heinlein builds an interesting premise. What if a human being has superhuman powers but also superhuman ethics? Could such a human be used by the government as an ultimate weapon? More than likely the superhuman ethics would disallow this out come. Might the human declare himself dictator of the world through intimidation? Again, the ethics block this direction. Yet Michael has already killed humans who threatened the life of Jill, his first water brother: "Okay, so I'm from Kansas. Never was any Cannibalism in Kansas. I' m eating in the kitchen until he leaves" (120).

The argument between Duke and Jubal gives Heinlein a platform from which to explore the attitude of the American culture. Duke expresses disgust with the idea of cannibalism, which he assumes is universal. Jubal points out that not too long ago some Native Americans often practiced cannibalism and also many ancient tribes. With Michael, the idea is to honor the dead by eating of their bodies. The point Heinlein makes is that just because society believes something, this does not make it true or right.

Regarding Duke's ignorance of Michael's powers this reflects another social attitude among Americans that size and power go together. Not only is this wrong for a small – framed martial arts master, it is especially dead wrong for Michael. Behind his mild and innocent person lies a potential killer for which there exists no defense. Michael can think a person's life away without any more effort or delay than blinking his eyes.

Heinlein uses Michael's learning of human ways to bring up the subject of religion. Michael and the Martians, no religion exists. Only the truth exists, and every Martian knows what this is. Religion has no religion has no word or concept on Mars. Everyone agrees that each is God, the death does not mean the end of consciousness, and that the universe has no beginning or end, only the eternal now. This is certainly not the way things work in many earthly religion, especially those from the Middle East such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Another of Michael's superhuman powers emerges. He can take a walk in his ethereal body while his physical body remains in the dormant state, and his other abilities take people and realize the wrongness of situations.

"It is later than you think" could not be expressed in Martian—nor could "Haste makes waste," though for a different reason: the first notion was inconceivable while the latter was an unexpressed Martian basic, as unnecessary as telling a fish to bathe. But "As it was in the Beginning, is now and ever shall be" was so Martian in mood that it could be translated more easily than "two plus two makes four"- which was not a truism on Mars. (57)

Heinlein introduces most of didactic and expository elements of the prose within conversations between characters, and tends to reserve the omniscient narrative voice for dry reportage of facts. But infrequently as in this quote from Chapter VIII, the narration offers lessons in Martian and human culture alike. This quote describes an early exploration of the differences between the mindsets of the two planets' cultures. Learning to bridge the gap between the two cultures will form the key challenge for Mike throughout the novel of *Stranger in a Strange Land*.

Heinlein is greatest commercial success came wide stranger in a strange land, which first appeared in 1961 . . . like the rock opera Jesus Christ superstar, it blends contemporary materials with the story of Christ. But where the opera projects modern elements back into the biblical setting, stranger reenacts the story in the near future, Valentine Smith, an cartman trained on Mars, comes to earth and performs miracles of extrasensory perception, telepathy and psychokinesis. He founds a cult and teaches others how to use the same powers. Above all, he teaches is faithful to "grok" thinks to understand them by harmonizing with their essences. His followers enjoy great sexual freedom, and great communal rapport.

When he is “crucified,” they drink both made from his remains, “savouring it, praising and cherishing and grokking there donor” (57).

The value of sixties could hardly have found a more congenial expression. Valentine smith is a combination of caption Marvea and Christ a Jesus Christ superman who builds a commune in to a great religious cult. Heinlein” smith as America as Mormon Joseph Smith, and Heinlein works it. The values of Agn Rand and the hippie communes of the late sixties manage a precarious combination in the novel, so as to tell a lot of different readers what they want to hear.

Strangers in a strange land has an odd fascination, despite its fault; it remains one of Huxley’s Highland in its attempts to offer a schema for better living, but one imagines that Huxley would have been horrified by its barley concealed power fantasy . . . Stranger in fact represent the apotheosis of magazine science fiction, and so of the long pulp tradition (273).

Rather than giving us a full, in-depth portrait of Martian thought processes, the narration instead illustrates Martian philosophy obliquely with examples of the difficulty of translation. The truth that our most basic mathematics do not translate to complete that the Martian understanding of mathematics and sciences operate at a higher level than our own, which will be borne out by Mike's mental ability to make objects and people vanish. For example, two plus two need not be four if, like Mike, one seems to have access to more than the three physical proportions we humans know. As it was in the Beginning, is now and ever shall be this line from the Bible, and the fact that it translates easily to Martian foreshadows Mike's attraction to Earthling religion as a connection between his Martian learning and his human heredity

The future, there is no specific dates are given - readers are told that the novel takes places after "World War III," that space travel has become reasonably simple, and that the moon is colonized. There is an indication that the novel may take place in the late 20th / early 21st century. There are references to Jubal being under 100 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 distant enough in the future to base the future Heinlein presents.

Heinlein didnot make it entirely clear whether his portrayal of Heaven. A humorous combination of old conventional halo-and-wings angelic imagery with the structure of a corporation, with God as a boss expecting results from his worker angels - is meant to be taken literally or metaphorically. Heinlein likes any religious assertion, it needs to be able to be understood both literally and metaphorically. Eventhough it may seem counterintuitive that men like Foster and Digby, both of whom have committed several and grave sins in their lives on Earth, would be allowed into Heaven. On the other hand, the narrative suggests that it is their progressing influence on Earth among the many passionate Fosterites, that makes them as angels watching over the Earth. As angels, they literally influence Earth occurrences, and as deceased leaders whose teachings continue to affect history, they metaphorically wield influence. When Mike joins their company at novel's end, we know that his force on Earth culture will be lasting.

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